

Production type: Feature film - Twelfth Day of Christmas

Location: Somerset

Salary: Expenses + profit share

Duration: December 2020

Closing date: 30th October

Production Details:

Short synopsis: Over Christmas, distant siblings Gwen and Susie are forced together for an eventful yet strained treasure hunt devised and left for them by their late mother.

An independent Somerset-based feature film, 'Twelfth Day of Christmas' is a character driven, naturalistic comedy with heart.

As a filmmaker, my intention with this film is:

- For the audience to laugh, be entertained and be moved whilst fully believing and investing in the characters
- To showcase true to life, naturalistically portrayed characters from Somerset, an antithesis to the pantomime versions of the south west roles we see (albeit, rarely) in TV and film
- To showcase female comedy talent in a meaty and funny female-focused story

Who I am:

My name is Vicki Helyar and I'm a Somerset-based actor, writer and director.

With often a humourous yet destitute slant, I like to explore characters with difficult personality traits, mental health struggles and issues overcoming circumstantial adversities, frequently treading the line between comedy and drama.

I'd grown up seeing very little female main characters on TV and film, and had few positive experiences throughout my ten years of auditioning, even though women are not the support, subplot or visual prop to their own life - they are the main character. I believe that much on-screen storytelling is still not fully representative of this.

With my project's, I endeavour to put engaging, entertaining and interesting characters and stories on screen. I also like to showcase my home county of Somerset and to work with South West actors and crew.

Timescale and Funding:

Though filming will need to take place over winter, this will not be a rushed or intense shoot but will instead be designed to cater for those with other jobs (like many of us working in

independent film). We're aiming for a 3-4 day shoot per week for the two main characters, with Dec-Feb the full timescale for the whole duration of the shoot (it must be completed by the end of Feb to appear as winter).

As I'm sure you have guessed, it's a very low budget project - fully funded by myself. I will be offering expenses to everyone involved and a percentage of the profit made.

I know that not getting paid a full upfront wage sucks - I've been there many times - and so I'm very sorry for this. It does not reflect your talent or ability, only my meagre budget.

If you are to come on board, you must be happy (or, at least, accepting!) with the level of pay and be really up for the experience - I'm looking for someone to become an integral part of the project and team.

Low budget filmmaking is often a labour of love, and so you really need to know that you love the job and part before you decide you want to sign up (or audition).

Characters:

GWEN MATTHEWS

RACHEL

JANE

MARJORIE

GWEN MATTHEWS, female, late 20's-early 30's, from Somerset, must be able to pass as my full sister of around the same age - please check out my profile for photos:

<https://www.spotlight.com/interactive/cv/4413-5649-1589>

Character Breakdown/Description:

Gwen lives in a quaint village bungalow with a large garden, fulfilling her love of gardening. The good life. Aside from growing her own vegetables, Gwen loves to read, to go on country walks, to learn languages, to play chess and scrabble, to attend local seminars on stargazing. Old before her time, Gwen doesn't have many friends around her age, though she's friendly enough with the (older) neighbours. She's shied away from making friends and connections within the gay community, though she's an openly gay woman who's been living with long term partner Rachel for years.

Gwen is incredibly smart and academic. She thrives on learning, on having intelligent conversations about interesting and thought-provoking topics. She is too polite to show it, but she can feel intolerance and judgement towards those who don't share her passions or intellect.

Though her kindness and tact rarely allows her to openly say so; she's quite antisocial, enjoying a night in watching University Challenge far more than attending any social event. Gwen goes out of her way to keep within her comfort zone of academia, literature, gardening and Rachel. But...

After Rachel leaves Gwen, it's clear her reclusiveness has done her no favours. It certainly hasn't prepared her for a whole weekend stuck 'socialising' with her highly energetic, very unaware, wholly unintelligent and unknowingly tactless sister Susie.

What I Am Looking For:

- A gay or bisexual female actor originally from the south west with the ability to do a genuine and subtle south west accent
- An actor who is very strong and adept with comedy, comedic timing, improvisation and ad-libbing. Though Susie is the 'funny one' and Gwen is the 'straight one', a large majority of the comedy comes from Gwen's reactions/responses to her hapless sister
- An extremely naturalistic and fully believable performance style - no high comedy. Influences and references include The Office (British), Prince Avalanche, Sightseers, Greenberg, Submarine, Cemetery Junction, The Guard

Excerpt:

INT. MUM'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Gwen and Susie clear through their late Mum's stuff, sifting, sorting objects into different boxes etc. Gwen sits at the table with many boxes piled up neatly whilst Susie sits on the floor with just one box, stuff strewn all over the floor.

GWEN: There's so much to do - I might have to take some home and do it.

SUSIE: What's the point in a mini cauldron?

Gwen looks up - Susie holds up a small brass cauldron-esque ornament.

GWEN: I've never even seen that before. Where was that - from one of the boxes in her wardrobe?

SUSIE: Yeah.

GWEN (playfully): She couldn't have used it very much for spells, then?

SUSIE: What for?!

GWEN: Well, you said it was a cauldron.

SUSIE: For spells and stuff?! D'you reckon?!

GWEN: Uhhh...what do you mean, seriously?

SUSIE: Seriously you reckon she did spells with it?

Susie isn't getting Gwen's attempt at playful humour.

GWEN: Uhh...no.

Susie looks at the cauldron, fascinated.

GWEN: Well definitely not when it was in her wardrobe, anyway.

SUSIE: What, you reckon she did do it at one point, then?!

Though Gwen knows Susie isn't the sharpest tool in the box, she's shocked at how unaware Susie is.

GWEN: Uh, no, she definitely didn't ever do spells with it.

SUSIE: What, you reckon she did spells WITHOUT it or do you just mean she didn't do spells at all?

GWEN: Just didn't do spells at all.

SUSIE: You just never know what people get up to, do you?

GWEN: Uh...no, I suppose that is true.

SUSIE: Really?! So DO you think she could've done spells with it, then?

GWEN: No, she...no. I didn't mean about the spells, I meant just in general, about what you said.

SUSIE: What did I say?

GWEN: You JUST said "you never know what people get up to behind closed doors" and I was saying that I agreed with you. That you don't know what people get up to. Not meaning they're getting up to anything sinister, just agreeing that you don't know what people get up to.

Susie takes a second, appearing though she's intently listening, taking it all in, musing. She's not.

SUSIE: Most witches aren't bad though, are they?

An impatient Gwen tries to remain calm.

GWEN: Hey?!

SUSIE: What was that word, that you just said beginning with 'S', about people not doing bad things?

GWEN: Sinister?

SUSIE: Yeah. Like, most witches aren't like that these days, are they?

GWEN (confused): What witches?

SUSIE: Like, do you know any bad witches? Most witches I know do nice spells and stuff like that to help with things they're struggling with and things like that, don't they? You know?

GWEN (dumbfounded): I don't....I don't know. Any. I don't know any witches.

SUSIE: Really? I know loads.

Gwen is utterly perplexed.

GWEN: Who...what do you mean, people who dress up like witches?

SUSIE (laughs): No. Not like cartoon witches. I just mean people who do spells when they're really struggling with stuff and it's not anything sinister, like you were saying, just things to help and stuff.

GWEN: Right. Okay. But, remember, I wasn't ever referring to witches, when I was said the word 'sinister'. If you remember I was merely talking about how I don't believe people get up to anything sinister behind closed doors, remember? Just talking about normal people.

SUSIE: Yeah but witches WERE like that, back in the day, weren't they? Cos the people I know who do spells and stuff say they have a really hard time when they tell people about it cos people look at them like they think they're gonna get burnt at the stake by them or something.

GWEN: This feels like I'm drunk or I've just woken up. What's happening? Who thinks they're gonna get burned at the stake?

SUSIE: The people that the witches tell that they're witches to.

GWEN (confused): Right?

SUSIE: Like, the witches tell me that people often don't react well to them - like they look at them all worried that the witches are gonna burn them at the stake, or something...like they used to.

As ever, Gwen tries to remain patient and informative towards her less-than-smart sister.

GWEN: Um. But witches from, say, around the 1500's/1600's - they never burned OTHER PEOPLE at the stake - THEY got burned at the stake THEMSELVES. After being accused of being witches.

(explains)

So women would be accused of being witches, based on nothing - hysteria and paranoia - and to so-called test whether or not they were 'witches' they would, first of all, try drowning them and the rule was if the women ended up floating then the townsfolk would deem them to be a witch and so proceed to burn them alive at the stake, but if the woman did in fact drown - and not float - in the first place, this would, supposedly, show that the woman wasn't a witch. But, of course, it was completely preposterous because, by the time they had drowned - proving they weren't a witch - they were already dead, obviously, because they had drowned. So either way they died. It was tragic. Sadly they think about 40,000 women were killed in Europe around the 1500's, 1600's. So it was an awful atrocity. Um. But, yes, they weren't actually witches, they were just accused of being witches and of being bad but the women never actually did anything wrong. Um. Certainly not burning other people at the stake.

Susie stares deep into her sister's eyes, as if she's soaking up the knowledge.

SUSIE: I don't know, I'm not an expert, I'm not saying I believe in it all, I'm just going off what these women have told me.

Gobsmacked by Susie's dimwittedness, Gwen tries to remain calm.

GWEN: Sorry, what women have told you this?

SUSIE: Uhh, one woman I work with who's into crystals and stuff and another woman I get my hair done by does spells. Like she just said, the other day, that she put garlic under her bed the other day...so she said she put garlic in a bowl of water and then put that under her bed overnight and then went to sleep and that was to get rid of heartache cos she'd just split up with her boyfriend and if, in the morning, it comes out a pink colour - instead of just normal garlic colour - then it means the garlic has soaked up the heartache. So I'm just going off of what they tell me.

In disbelief, Gwen fans interest.

GWEN: Okay. And did it work?

SUSIE: Yeah! She said it came out a well brighter pink colour. And she's got another boyfriend now so there must be something in it.

Exasperated, Gwen watches Susie move on to the next object, like a child distracted by a sparkly gem.

SUSIE (to herself): So that's good.

GWEN MATTHEWS

RACHEL

JANE

MARJORIE

Character Breakdown/Description:

RACHEL was Gwen's long term partner for many years until Rachel split with Gwen around six months ago. After they broke up and sold their house, Gwen invited Rachel to stay in her small bungalow until Rachel found herself somewhere new to live.

And now that day has come - Rachel is moving out and moving in with her new, younger, prettier girlfriend Liz.

The opening scene is of Gwen and Rachel packing boxes together while Liz is milling around and packing up the van outside.

Gwen will do anything for Rachel, even up until the final painful moments. Every ornament thoroughly wrapped. Every box closed up with care. And Rachel, negligently, takes all the help

she can, unaware that Gwen still loves her and is still, silently, hurting.

Rachel isn't knowingly selfish, but is certainly not brimming with attention and empathy. Rachel and Gwen were together for a long time and Gwen didn't initiate the break up, yet Rachel proceeded to take advantage of Gwen's selfless good nature, albeit with a naive lack of awareness, not realising Gwen was still mourning the loss of their relationship.

In this scene, Rachel is bubbly and excited for her move, all the while oblivious of Gwen's less than bright demeanour.

What I'm Looking For:

Rachel is late 20's-late 30's, any race, any nationality. The actor must be able to strike the balance between bubbly/friendly/charming alongside being (unknowingly) selfish and unaware. Maggie Gyllenhaal is a good example of an actor who can strike this balance.

Except:

GWEN (early 30's), a mild mannered country-girl, reserved, polite, patient, a hint of 'The Good Life' about her, helps pack boxes for ex-girlfriend RACHEL (30's), outgoing, direct, a good person but unknowingly self-centred. Rachel is moving out. Things are amicable and friendly, though Gwen still holds a torch for Rachel.

INT. GWEN'S BUNGALOW - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

ON GWEN:

Gwen subtly stares through the corner of her eye.

ON RACHEL:

Rachel holds up a plain blue mug, staring, investigating.

ON GWEN:

Gwen is quite sure it's actually her mug but, as ever, doesn't want to assert herself.

GWEN (tentatively): I...Uh...I think that might've been from my mum, I'm not sure.

RACHEL: Really?!

GWEN: Yeah. I'm not sure. I think so.

RACHEL: Really? It's funny isn't it, because I always drink from it I just assumed it was mine.

GWEN: Yeah I know, it is your mug, really, in that sense but, um-

RACHEL: -I must use it, what, three or four times a week?-

GWEN: -Yeah, exactly, I know, it's certainly more your mug than mine but, uh, no - I think my mum did actually give that to me for my birthday.

RACHEL (holds it up): Shall I leave it out then?

Even in separation, Gwen can't say no to Rachel.

GWEN: Uhh...n....no. No. You have it, you drink from it all the time-

RACHEL: -I don't mind-

GWEN: -No, honestly, you have it. You love your tea and coffee more than I do-

RACHEL: -Are you sure, I don't have to have-

GWEN: -No, no, it's fine. It's just your sized mug, anyway.

RACHEL: I do hate piddly little cups of tea.

GWEN: Well, I know that!

Rachel laughs.

GWEN: If I should know anything after ten years, it's that.

RACHEL: Wasn't exactly tight-lipped about it, was I?!

GWEN: No you were not.

They laugh. Rachel quickly wraps the mug up in paper and uncaringly plonks it in, to Gwen's displeasure.

With a finished box, Gwen uses a technique to fold up the flaps of her finished box so that each side is perfectly tucked under the other. Confused, Rachel looks over, observes.

RACHEL: Oh, I was just going to use tape - how are you doing that?

Gwen demonstrates.

GWEN: So, you fold each flap down...like so. Then when you get to the last one, you take the one before and fold it under so that each one is secure.

Rachel unenthusiastically has a go.

RACHEL: What?!

Gwen patiently heads over, demonstrates on Rachel's box.

GWEN: There you go, see. D'you want to try yourself so you can learn?

RACHEL (dismissively): Oh God, I don't think there's any point. Plus, I'd quite like to move house by the end of the day.

Rachel belly laughs, Gwen plays along.

RACHEL: I couldn't be completely cheeky and ask you to do that on the rest of the boxes, could I? I should see how Liz is getting on outside.

GWEN: Oh, okay. Yeah-

RACHEL: -Sorry, I know you helped pack the majority of them anyway. (laughing) Oh God, I'm so useless!

GWEN: No, that's okay, I'll do it.

RACHEL: I was thinking, anyway, you'd be quite happy to because it's better for the environment not to use so much tape and you're into all that stuff, so-

GWEN: -Yeah, that's okay, I'll help out-

RACHEL: -Are you sure?

GWEN: Yes.

RACHEL: Amazing. Right! Let's pop outside, see how the other half is getting on.

GWEN: Okay.

Rachel rushes off, playfully shouting back at Gwen.

RACHEL (O.C.): Hopefully no pot plant disasters!

Gwen half heartedly plays along.

GWEN: No.

RACHEL (O.C.): No major breakages or such like!

GWEN: Yeah, exactly.

Gwen, hurt but stoic, unconsciously searches around the room for a distraction.

GWEN: Um. Uh. What am I? Oh yeah.

She vacantly wanders into the living room.

GWEN MATTHEWS

RACHEL

JANE

MARJORIE

Character Breakdown/Description:

MARJORIE is an attractive, kind, well spoken and well respected member of the local community. A housewife throughout, she was unhappily married to her husband for over twenty

years until his most recent affair proved to be the final nail in the coffin and she left him for good a month ago.

No longer a wife, or a mother to young children, she now wishes to experiment with a more devil-may-care attitude to life. And love.

After a heated argument with her sister about being boring, Gwen storms off and sleeps with villager Marjorie on a drunken whim (spoken of, but not seen). Gwen and Marjorie's paths meet, by chance, the next hazy morning when Marjorie is having a very vocal argument with her spoiled, bratty daughter Jane after Jane gets wind of what her mum has done with Gwen.

JANE has had everything in life go her way. She is extremely privileged and very selfish. She was devastated by her parents break-up and, though her dad had multiple affairs and Marjorie was always faithful, Jane has been kicking back at her mum about it.

Now that Marjorie has slept with Gwen, Jane is incensed with rage and disgust at her mother's 'antics', and is having a hissy fit and picking a fight with her mum outside the church, just as parishioners are arriving for a service.

What I'm Looking For:

MAJORIE: Late 40's-late 50's, very well spoken, middle class British, any race. Emma Thompson meets Helena Bonham Carter, but of any race.

JANE: Late teens, very well spoken, middle class British, any race. Example is Leanna from Emmerdale (please see link below - it's a little high drama, but it's very close to the character): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrRrTE_0774

Excerpt:

EXT. OUTSIDE CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

As Gwen and Susie approach the church, they see the VICAR caught in the middle of an argument between a mother, MARJORIE, 40's/50's, middle class, attractive, well presented and her spoiled brat daughter JANE, late teens.

Suddenly, Gwen realises the mother is the yummy mummy she slept with last night.

GWEN: Oh my god, that's her. That's the yummy mummy.

SUSIE: Seriously?! Yes, mate!

GWEN: I'll go and see if she's alright. Stay here.

Gwen hops across the street towards them.

SUSIE (O.S.): Great skin!

JANE (shouts at Marjorie): Well, that's the final nail in the coffin then, isn't it?!

MARJORIE: The final nail was already hammered in a very long time-

Jane suddenly spots Gwen approaching.

JANE: -Oh my god, is that her?

Jane squares up to Gwen.

JANE: Are you the slag who's split my family apart?!

GWEN: I-

MARJORIE: -The only person who split this family apart was your father-

JANE (to Gwen): -Unbelievable!-

MARJORIE: -Well, your father and his many mistresses is who split this family apart!-

VICAR: -If you could please take this home-

JANE: (to Gwen) -What are you doing here? Get out of my face!

MARJORIE: Jane! Do not speak like that!

JANE: I cannot believe it! You've barely been broken up for two minutes-

VICAR: -Or at least move it along a little so that we're not blocking the entry way for the churchgoers-

JANE: -What's it been, like, three weeks or something?!

MARJORIE: It's been a month, actually, but, frankly, it was a long time coming-

JANE: -Oh that makes this skank alright then, does it?

MARJORIE: Well if your father can have ten years worth of affairs then I don't see why I can't finally get some-

VICAR: -Oh dear, oh dear-

JANE: -Oh my god, are you still drunk from last night? Listen to what you're saying-

MARJORIE: -Finally having some fun-

JANE: -What, you call THAT (points to Gwen) Fun?! (to Marjorie) You're losing it.

VICAR: -Please ladies, I understand everyone's upset but if we could please move this outside-
Churchgoers arrive.

MARJORIE: -If by 'losing it' you mean actually getting to experience some joy in life then, yes-

SUSIE (shouts over): -Yeah! Gettin' some pussy!

Churchgoers look over at Susie in disgust.

JANE (mortified): Oh my god!-

GWEN: -Maybe we should just head somewhere more private and try and take a moment to just cool off.

VICAR: Oh that would be absolutely wonderful-

JANE: -I'm not going anywhere with a lesbian cougar, thanks.

MARJORIE: Do not call her that!

GWEN: The definition of a cougar is a woman who is older than the person they're sleeping with, actually.

SUSIE (shouts over): Yeah, get your facts straight, you stupid bitch!

VICAR: Oh goodness me, no.

JANE: (shouts at Susie) Who even are you and what has this got to do with you?!

SUSIE: (shouts back) Your Mum's finally getting some action and she's loving it!

VICAR: Oh dear.

JANE: I'm gonna take this bitch out.

Jane goes to charge at Susie but is accosted by Marjorie and Gwen. Onlookers stand around, watching, shocked.

VICAR (calmly): Oh no, you absolutely mustn't do that.

GWEN: What are you doing? You can't go round starting fights because your SINGLE Mum is living her life.

JANE: Get the hell out of my face before I put you down-

GWEN: -Not going to happen-

VICAR: -Please can everyone try their very best to calm down-

MARJORIE: -I am so ashamed of you, right now! Get out of here-

GWEN (to Jane): -I do push ups EVERY DAY of my life!

The Vicar leads Jane away.

VICAR (to the churchgoers): If everyone would like to head up to the Church, I'll be along shortly.

GWEN (feels her muscles): Every day of my life! Even when I'm ill!

JANE (O.S.) (shouts back): Desperate and sad old hag! Nothing to do but go around breaking up families!

GWEN (shouts to Jane): If by breaking up families you mean fingering your mum till she came then yes.

VICAR: (O.S) Oh no.

MARJORIE: Oh Gwen, you probably shouldn't say that.

GWEN (shouts to Jane): Licked her out - tasted like a dream!

JANE (O.S.): Oh my god! Oh my god! I'm going to be sick!

VICAR (O.S.): That WAS a little vulgar.

MARJORIE: Oh no Gwen, saying stuff like that isn't going to help, I know she's been awful but she's just hitting out-

GWEN: -Sorry. It's true, though.

Marjorie heads off.

MARJORIE: I should go and check on her.

GWEN: Fair enough. Sorry, I probably went a bit far. (puts her hand up, shouts over to the Vicar) Sorry Vicar. (to herself) Didn't hear me.

Gwen turns around to see various churchgoers gawping. Ashamed, head down, she wanders over the road to a beaming Susie. Susie joyfully punches both hands in the air.

SUSIE: Yes!!!

GWEN: I think I went a bit far but I've got my limits.

SUSIE: You've got your limits and that bitch pushed 'em!