

The Glow

Story Synopsis: A Guide to the Scenes and Storylines

This is a story synopsis for *The Glow*. It is intended as a guide for anyone who would benefit from the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the scenes and storyline of the performance ahead of their visit to the theatre.

Should you have any questions regarding any aspect of *The Glow*, please email boxoffice@royalcourttheatre.com.

WARNING: This document contains a description of the full plot of the performance.

As the audience enter the lights in the auditorium are not at full brightness. The stage is dark.

The lights in the auditorium turn off to signal the start of the play.

PART ONE: A PROMINENT WOMAN

SCENE 1

In the darkness, MRS LYALL raises a lantern. THE WOMAN is in the darkness. MRS LYALL asks about her experience of the asylum and how she came to be there. THE WOMAN does not speak. She asks if THE WOMAN has a name. THE WOMAN does not speak. MRS LYALL introduces herself as being a well-known spiritualist medium. MRS LYALL tells THE WOMAN that she is in need of an assistant. She asks if THE WOMAN would like to go home with her.

SCENE 2

At their home, MRS LYALL's son MASON disapproves of THE WOMAN's arrival. He tells MRS LYALL to take her back to the hospital. MRS LYALL instructs MASON to give THE WOMAN his bedroom to sleep in. MASON reluctantly guides her around the house.

He instructs THE WOMAN not to open the blinds in the morning. He tells her that this is not her home. When his mother tires of her she will be returned to the asylum. MASON leaves THE WOMAN alone in the darkness. She uses a candle to find her way to a wall, trying to reach her room. Images flash on the walls above. A Knight in armour steps out of the darkness. As he rushes towards her the lights of the candle is blown out.

SCENE 3

MRS LYALL calls out for the woman. She has named her SADIE. SADIE is not used to the change yet. SADIE tells her that she heard voices. MASON enters. MRS LYALL leaves to continue preparing for the ritual she has planned. MASON says that he is not looking forward to the evening. SADIE asks if he was afraid the first time his mother tethered her soul to his. MASON says that parents do not use their children in these kinds of rituals. He notices that SADIE has a toy horse from his room. He demands to have it back. MASON grabs the horse out of SADIE's hands. She screams. MASON shouts at her. MRS LYALL returns and gives MASON a telling off. MASON tears the toy horse in two. He storms off.

MRS LYALL says that it is time to start the ritual. SADIE is distracted by the broken horse toy. MRS LYALL stamps her foot to get SADIE's attention. She instructs MASON to take his place at the piano. MRS LYALL lays a blue blanket on the ground.

She tells SADIE that she is excused from singing until she learns the words. MASON plays the piano and he and MRS LYALL begin to sing 'Only a Thin Veil Between Us' by C Payson Longley. SADIE looks around. When they begin the chorus the room is submerged in water. SADIE can not breathe. Just as she is about to panic, the water vanishes. SADIE sings the last lines of the song loudly and out of tune. MRS LYALL asks her to lie down on the carpet. MASON holds her ankles. MRS LYALL begins to make contact with the spirit world. She reminds SADIE that her duty for the evening is to empty her mind.

Just when MASON says that nothing is going to happen he is interrupted by a thunderous crashing sound. MRS LYALL welcomes the spirit. She asks that they agree on a code for communicating; one knock for yes, two knocks for no. The spirit knocks once. MRS LYALL asks if the spirit is alone. The spirit knocks once. MRS LYALL asks if the spirit is a former tenant of the house. The spirit knocks twice. MRS LYALL's third question is interrupted by another knock. She does not appreciate being interrupted. She asks if the spirit died at an early age. SADIE is struggling to breath. We hear nails scraping on a chalkboard and another loud bang. There is another bang. MRS LYALL tries to calm SADIE and the sprit. The noise escalates. The lights suddenly go dark and everything is quiet. SADIE lets out a piercing scream and her body thrashes on the floor. MRS LYALL shouts at MASON to hold her. The spirit has her. SADIE screams in Latin.

SCENE 4

MASON stands looking out a slit in the window. Three men had come to take SADIE away. MASON asks who SADIE is. MRS LYALL says she is of no importance. The asylum did not even have a record of her being there. MASON says that she should have let them take SADIE back. MRS LYALL says that she paid well and that SADIE belongs to her. They argue. MRS LYALL believes that SADIE is the perfect conduit for her powers. MASON believes that she is pretending. Although he failed Latin in school he knows that SADIE said something about “stealing her light” during the ritual. MRS LYALL says that MASON’s father is trying to take control of her finances. She believes that she is on the brink of a breakthrough in necromancy. MASON has been drinking. MRS LYALL tells him that she needs his wits sharp.

SADIE frightens an unsuspecting MASON. She asks him questions. MASON tells her to get some rest. She will need her strength to perform the ritual again tonight.

SADIE does not want to do it again. It hurts. MASON sees that she is holding a book. He grabs it out of her hand. SADIE has been reading poems by Tennyson. She has been up all night in the library. MASON realises that SADIE does not sleep. SADIE asks for the book back. MASON refuses. SADIE reaches for her book. MASON grabs her by the wrist. They are on a scorched battlefield filled with blood and pain. MASON lets go of SADIE. They are back in the Lyall’s home. MASON runs away.

SADIE picks up the book of poems and speaks to herself. We hear birdsong. She is in a forest. A man in animal hides comes out of the darkness. He raises a rock in the air as if to attack. SADIE opens her outstretched hand revealing a glowing ball of light. The man shields his face and turns to flee. SADIE stands in the dark with just her glow. Shouting in Latin, a Roman soldier runs towards SADIE. They fight. We hear MRS LYALL calling in the distance. The Roman soldier becomes MASON. SADIE grabs the Roman soldier by the head and bites off his nose. MRS LYALL calls for the spirit to release SADIE. MASON runs away crying. SADIE has blood on her mouth. MRS LYALL tries to calm her.

SCENE 5

SADIE is upset. She did not mean to hurt MASON. MRS LYALL says that he will recover. SADIE does not think that she is connecting with spirits. She is plagued by images of pain and suffering. SADIE says that she hates the people that she sees. Sometimes she hates MRS LYALL too because she wants something from SADIE the same way that all the others do. MRS LYALL says she wants to help SADIE. She says that these are just dreams. She says that SADIE is lucky to not have to be alone. SADIE wants to know who she is. MRS LYALL says that who she was does not matter. She is SADIE now.

MASON bursts into the room. He is drunk. He has come to say that he will not be participating in the ritual this evening. SADIE apologises. She thought he was someone else. MASON shouts at her. MASON tells his mother that she is a fraud. He knows it is SADIE who has powers. MASON grabs SADIE. He is going to throw her out. SADIE yells at MASON to let her go. MASON says that throwing her out is lenient, she should be burned at the stake. SADIE pushes her finger into MASON's wounded nose and he disappears. MRS LYALL looks for MASON. SADIE sent him away. MRS LYALL says that she is to wait for instructions before doing anything else. SADIE tells MRS LYALL that she knows who she is now. MRS LYALL tells SADIE that she is no one and she has no value. MRS LYALL grabs SADIE. THE WOMAN refuses to answer to the name Sadie any longer. THE WOMAN breaks free of MRS LYALL's hold. MRS LYALL grabs her by the hand and breaks two of THE WOMAN's fingers. THE WOMAN falls to the ground in pain. Her broken hand begins to glow. Her fingers pop back into place. The WOMAN's body is covered in flowing lava. The Knight appears behind the woman. THE WOMAN vomits lava into MRS LYALL's mouth. THE WOMAN and the Knight disappear.

SCENE 6

MRS LYALL is in 343 AD. She writhes on the ground hacking and coughing. In the distance we hear THE WOMAN screaming in horrible pain. Out of the darkness we see the Roman soldier. He has no nose. The Soldier attacks MRS LYALL.

PART TWO: KING FISHER

SCENE 1

HASTER the Knight holds a torch in the darkness. THE WOMAN wears an iron collar and is bound by many chains. She and HASTER consider each other.

SCENE 2

THE WOMAN and HASTER sit in the forest. She does not know where they are going or how long it will take to get there. THE WOMAN asks many questions, but HASTER does not reply. He wants her to stop talking. HASTER is taking her south to the King. THE WOMAN has heard stories of HASTER. She says that she does not believe them. HASTER does not want to talk. THE WOMAN gets up and runs away. HASTER chases after her. There is an air raid siren and planes take off. An Air Raid Protection (ARP) Warden enters. They stare at each other. The ARP Warden runs past HASTER. HASTER draws his sword and swings as the ARP Warden runs past. The sound of the siren changes to an alarm. We see the WOMAN tearing wired electrodes from her head. Someone in a hazmat suit pushes her down the passage. We hear voices and sirens. Abstract images fill the stage. HASTER unholsters his sword and disappears. We see the silhouette of THE WOMAN. We see a light moving across the stage. THE WOMAN is glowing.

SCENE 3

THE WOMAN stands caught in ELLEN's front room. It is 1993. She thought that no one lived here. ELLEN asks if breaking into people's houses is something THE WOMAN does often. ELLEN asks the woman what her name is. She says it is BROOKE. ELLEN asks BROOKE to give her a reason not to call the police.

SCENE 4

In 1343, HASTER catches THE WOMAN in the woods. They argue. HASTER says that he will kill her if she runs away again.

SCENE 5

THE WOMAN arrives at EVAN's in 1979. She found his newsletter in a book at the library. EVAN does not get many visitors. He stopped leaving newsletters in library books because crazy people kept turning up. THE WOMAN tells him that she has a degree. EVAN advises that she be careful when telling academics about this line of research. He says that people often think of it as myth or folklore. EVAN considers himself part of the new wave of historians. He says that people talk about the Tudors and Victorians like they are dead like dinosaurs, but he believes that they are still around and compares it to static.

SCENE 6

BROOKE and ELLEN are watching television. ELLEN has brought some food for BROOKE. She turns off the tv. ELLEN comments that BROOKE looks better after having a wash. ELLEN tries to talk with BROOKE, but BROOKE is not interested. ELLEN asks if she can take BROOKE somewhere, but BROOKE says that she is not from anywhere. ELLEN turns the television back on.

SCENE 7

EVAN shows THE WOMAN a book about a woman who appeared in different stories and paintings and tapestries throughout history. In every iteration she is slightly different, but is always recognisable by the faint glow around her. THE WOMAN asks about the others. EVAN is confused. THE WOMAN said that the newsletter talked about women who never slept. EVAN corrects her. There was only ever one woman. EVAN asks if she is alright.

SCENE 8

HASTER and THE WOMAN are on a hilltop. HASTER's on guard. From the darkness CATCH asks to share their fire. HASTER tells him to move on. CATCH steps into the light. He recognised HASTER. CATCH tells them that he is looking

for a woman that people say has lived for thousands of years and can not be killed though many have tried. CATCH says that he has heard the King wants to take her power. CATCH and HASTER draw their weapons and fight. CATCH quickly cuts HASTER in the leg. THE WOMAN spits in CATCH's eye. He is in pain as the scene around him fades away.

SCENE 9

CATCH is in 500,000 BC . THE WOMAN appears wearing a headdress made of bones. CATCH cries out in fear. The man wearing hides from earlier creeps out of the shadows holding a sharpened stone. THE WOMAN screams.

SCENE 10

ELLEN has been woken up by BROOKE shouting in the middle of the night.

BROOKE tells her to go back to sleep. ELLEN tells her that she should leave the house to go and get some more library books. ELLEN is beginning to worry.

BROOKE does not eat and will not go out. ELLEN says that there was a time when she did not sleep either. BROOKE asks if it was when her son died.

BROOKE has seen photos of him, but ELLEN never speaks of him. BROOKE says that is why ELLEN is letting her stay. ELLEN says there is space so someone

might as well share it. ELLEN asks if she has nightmares often. She asks BROOKE

to tell her about the one she had tonight. BROOKE says that she was locked in a wooden box and was drowning over and over again. BROOKE tells ELLEN that if she knew what BROOKE really was she would not want her around. ELLEN tells her not to make assumptions about other people's feelings. She gives her the advice to tell her own story rather than letting other people tell it for you.

SCENE 11

EVAN is quoting Tennyson for THE WOMAN as they look through a book by Dorothy Waites. She was the first person to make a connection between the paintings and different accounts of the woman in time. THE WOMAN asks if she can keep the book. It is EVAN's most important book. She cannot have it, but she can come back any time and look at it. THE WOMAN asks how the book ends. EVAN says that the woman is not real. She is just a symbol. THE WOMAN seems disappointed. EVAN says that he has spent so much time thinking about the woman that he has grown to love her. He says it feels like he is looking for a missing person. EVAN is sad that no one ever gave her a name.

SCENE 12

HASTER wakes with a start. THE WOMAN says that he was shouting at someone in his sleep. THE WOMAN tells him that she sent CATCH away. THE WOMAN

asks HASTER why he obeys the King. HASTER says he just does as he is told. He does not know how the King plans to take her light. THE WOMAN pokes HASTER in the leg. He grunts. THE WOMAN asks what made him cry out in the night. HASTER says he was dreaming about the first person he killed. THE WOMAN asks where he got his name. HASTER says that King named him. He says it would be better to have no name and to be forgotten. THE WOMAN uses HASTER's knife to cut her hand. She presses it to HASTER's wound. He yells in pain.

SCENE 13

BROOKE shouts for ELLEN to help. She has brought HASTER here because ELLEN is a nurse and he needs help. ELLEN says he needs to go to a hospital. BROOKE tells her that he cannot. ELLEN goes to get her first aid kit. She says that most of the items are out of date. ELLEN cleans the wound. She tells BROOKE that HASTER will need stitches. HASTER is enamoured by the television. BROOKE tells her to go ahead. When ELLEN has finished BROOKE tells HASTER to leave the dressing on and takes him back.

SCENE 14

Back on the hilltop, HASTER asks where she took him. He is amazed that he has been mended. THE WOMAN says that she will not go south with him. HASTER says that he will take her north. He owes her. THE WOMAN suggests that he can be kind to her and talk to her while they travel. HASTER offers her a gift. He names her Brooke.

SCENE 15

MASON is stumbling around in the forest. BROOKE comes from the trees with her longbow raised. BROOKE asks what he is doing there. HASTER appears carrying firewood. He sees MASON and draws a knife. MASON is speechless. He points at BROOKE. BROOKE comments that his clothes are strange. HASTER wants to kill him so that he does not alert any others that they are here. MASON sings 'Only a Thin Veil Between Us' in a high, manic yell. BROOKE grabs HASTER's arm and shouts for MASON to run away. She releases HASTER teasing him for being an old man who will not run after the stranger.

SCENE 16

BROOKE stands in the hall of ELLEN's house. ALICE asks why she did not answer the door. She asks if ELLEN is home. It is 1999. ELLEN has died. ALICE says that when someone dies you have to inform people. The bank is taking back the house. No one has been paying the bills. BROOKE says that she will leave. ALICE asks who she is. BROOKE tells her that she is no one.

SCENE 17

HASTER has brought BROOKE to a cave. She is not impressed. HASTER has grown old and it was hard for him to get there. She doesn't understand why they have come all this way. HASTER tells BROOKE that he has found this place for her to hide. That she should stay in the cave until everyone around has died. He is too old to protect her now. BROOKE says that she is going home. HASTER lashes out. He asks how long she thought they could pretend to be a family for. He plans to tear down their hut and then walk into the lake. HASTER says that in time she will forget him. BROOKE says that she will never forget him. She will chain him to her thoughts and drag him with her through time. She says that she will find other people to be with. HASTER says that they will either hate her or die and leave her alone. BROOKE tells HASTER she loves him. He tells her that he is death, he is a monster. THE WOMAN glows with a furious rage. She says

that he is nothing. That she will raze the earth with an undying fire and splinter souls leaving them in unending pain. HASTER says that she is not like that.

HASTER says goodbye and leaves the cave.

SCENE 18

BROOKE and ELLEN walk on the beach together. ELLEN says that her son used to make her take him here every weekend. He asked for a metal detector for Christmas one year, and they would come down and hunt for treasures.

BROOKE asked what losing him was like. ELLEN said that it felt strange. It did not seem right that the sun kept coming up and he was gone. ELLEN says it took time, but eventually she came to understand that the joy of knowing him was greater than the pain of losing him. She likes to think that the past is always with us. It has just taken a different shape. BROOKE kisses ELLEN on the cheek.

The ocean waves stop. They are in EVAN's flat in 1979. ELLEN stares in awe at her son. EVAN rolls a joint and tells THE WOMAN about a book he found written by an ARP Warden. In it he tells a story of finding a woman on a bomb site with two broken legs. She was in a lot of pain. When he went to help her, her legs just popped back into place and she ran away. EVAN says that when he tracked the Warden down he was convinced that it was real. Even though no one believed him, he said he knew what he saw. The Warden said he'd also seen the ghost of a knight wandering around. THE WOMAN moves away. ELLEN moves

to stand next to EVAN. He looks up at her and they fade away. THE WOMAN is alone.

SCENE 19

THE WOMAN describes being alone from the beginning of time. Watching the world be created and moving through various stages. Seeing humans form and evolve. Being othered by them. She describes being tired and making herself forget the life she'd had before, but that it always came back to her. Until eventually she returned to the cave that had once been found for her. THE WOMAN hoped to sleep there. To be forgotten. She remains there until the natural world can no longer survive and the earth is overtaken by the sun. She becomes part of the universe. Cradling the light in her hands, THE WOMAN can choose whether or not to start life anew.

CURTAIN CALL.

THE END.