To Die For – May 2027
Ditchling Players

Have you ever wanted to play a role where morality is negotiable, motivations are hidden, and the script rewards actors who understand subtext, psychology, and the allure of dangerous people?

Then come be part of something brilliant.

Register your interest at forms.gle/zAx6g7KHFZhKsApNA or via ditchlingplayers.org.uk/audition

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The Play

TO DIE FOR by Caroline Smith is contemporary mystery-thriller that blends sharp social satire with gothic romance.

- There are three strong roles: two very intelligent and charismatic female combatants, and one devastatingly handsome man.
- We need actors who can portray the psychology of the character chemistry, along with mystery, humour and a dash of romance.
- New to UK audiences the play has a strong track record with audiences in North America, and its mix of wit, psychological games, and surprise twists is sure to be a hit here as well.

Synopsis

Best-selling historical romance writer Carla Woods lives in a Gothic mansion and enjoys playing dangerous mind games with her secretaries. One dark and stormy night a mysterious dark and handsome man shows up at her door. Could this simply be payback from a disgruntled employee or could it be… love's destiny?

Key Dates

Show Launch & Read Through:

Monday 24th November, 7:30 pm

Rehearsals*

Tuesday and Thursday evenings, starting Tuesday 9th March,
Technical on Sunday 23rd May
Dress on Tuesday 25th May

Performances

Wednesday to Saturday evenings: **26th to 29th May 2027**

***** *Dates subject to change*

The Roles

CARLA WOODS – Leading Female Role

Successful author of Gothic bodice rippers Carla is intelligent and confident. Glamorous and attractive, she is always elegantly dressed and exquisitely groomed. Her stage presence dominates as much as she does, and she tricks and teases her unfortunate employees with deliberately cruel psychological games. Funny, dangerous, and utterly unpredictable, Carla is a both a clever and charming villain but surprisingly vulnerable.

- Carries the play, gets many big laughs and shocking moments
- A fulfilling role in range and depth, showing charisma and control with comedy and peril
- Always in perfect control of both herself and her surroundings her gothic mansion home and appearance reflect her personality

Some Comparisons For Inspiration

- **Villanelle** in ***Killing Eve*** – charismatic, unpredictable, darkly funny
- **Lady Macbeth** – ambitious, ruthless, willing to cross moral lines
- **Nurse Ratched** in ***One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*** – a control freak with a cold-hearted smile
- **A female Jack Mannering (***The villainous husband in* ***Gaslight)*** **–** manipulative and controlling perception to her own ends

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GRACE HUNTER – Leading Female Role

Nervous new secretary Grace seems timid but is no shrinking violet. Intelligent, observant, and charming she matches Clara in wit and cunning in their psychological duels. As her strategic aims and secrets are revealed, Grace is revealed as increasingly dangerous.

- Not a supporting role, but an equal participant in the central conflict
- Her character arc moves from seemingly innocent to hidden depths and revelations
- Plays both drama and comedy in equal measure as the plot unfolds

Some Comparisons For Inspiration

- **Lady Portia Featherington** in ***Bridgerton*** – sharp, intelligent, with hidden motivations
- **Rachel** in ***The Girl on the Train*** – not what she seems, clever, slowly revealing her true nature
- **Eve** in ***Killing Eve*** – an intelligent woman locked in a psychological game with another
- **Janet** in ***The Good Place*** – brilliant, sharp, and revealing complexity as we see more of her

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The Man (aka Edward) – The Male Lead

Edward (as we call him) is the mysterious, devastatingly handsome stranger who arrives at Carla's mansion on that fateful dark and stormy night. He's enigmatic, charming, and might be a disgruntled former employee seeking revenge or the romantic destiny Carla's been writing about her whole career. But his true intentions and identity are masterfully concealed. He is charismatic, controlled, and operates with deliberate purpose.

- He is the catalyst for the entire plot, as the tension builds between him and Carla
- Fewer lines than the female leads, but a magnetic stage presence, acting with body language and silence as much as dialogue
- Romantic lead *and* potential threat – should the audience love or distrust him?

Some Comparisons For Inspiration

- **Loki** *in the **MCU***– charismatic, manipulative, unpredictable
- **Moriarty** (Andrew Scott) in *Sherlock* – charismatic, intellectually seductive, and absolutely villainous.
- **Ross Poldark** – romantic on the surface, but with darkness and potentially dangerous underneath
- **Iago** *in **Othello*** **–** Charming, manipulative, deceitful, and with complex hidden motivations

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Why This Play?

- Intelligent, witty dialogue mixing genres in a play with wide audience appeal (and track record)
- Showstopping moments – twists, revelations, and comedic peaks
- Characters and situations that are full of complexity and ambiguity
- Scenes that need genuine chemistry and psychological nuance from an expert cast
- Strong production design – stylish gothic set and mood but with modern dress and story

The Director

Paul Davey has acted and directed in Cuckfield, Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint as well with the Ditchling Players (where he is currently rehearsing a role in November's *'Twas The Night Before Christmas*). Paul achieved widespread praise for his September 2026 production of *One Man, Two Guvnors* and chose this play due to its strong female roles, clever structure, and its much smaller cast!

A smaller cast makes scheduling and rehearsing much simpler, so there will be plenty of time to focus on the chemistry between the characters, the nuances of the psychological duels, and the sudden switches of tone.

The play is also a good fit for the large and tall stage at Ditchling Village Hall, with room for an impressive box set that reflects Carla's personality. The imposing gothic mansion setting will create a strong atmosphere and visual interest that elevates the entire production.