

Sign of the Times

An original 9-part TV horror-drama series

**Written & Created
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TV SERIES: CREATOR'S BIBLE

LOGLINE

Twins Cathy and Dinah are less than thrilled to be attending a '1980's experience' summer camp. But things get even worse when a deranged right wing cult leader starts to kill the campers.

CREATOR'S STATEMENT

The rose-tinted gaze most people hold of the 1980's, especially within the horror community, has always intrigued and frustrated me. From boomboxes to BMX's, we're obsessed with 80's. But why? Romantically, I understand - it was a colourful time period with a technology boom and it helps the majority of our film(making) heroes also either grew up or were already making movies during this period. But, to myself, the 80's was actually more of a backwards time period.

It's strange to imply, I understand - society is meant to naturally progress as time goes on, right? And in many ways it did - people continued to fight for their rights and the glass ceiling was starting to splinter.

However, many things, for lack of a better term, got worse. The AID's crisis was a horrific example of how the governing body of America at the time condemned queer men to die by not taking action.

Furthermore, America is not the only example of how horrific the 80's were. Over the pond in the UK, Thatcher was terrorising miners, queer people and the North in general. Maybe a simplistic view, but perhaps one you can't blame myself for considering my scouse heritage and queer identity.

I wanted to explore and satirise this 'acceptable in the 80's' attitude that people, indiscriminate of age, have towards the decade. And my passion for horror felt like a natural leap point.

Horror is one of my favourite genres because it's always been a vessel to explore difficult and controversial ideas, and the deconstruction of 80's nostalgia feels pretty controversial. Cathy, a horror nut who isn't argumentative, represents the 80's nostalgia of the younger generation and the irony of such - can you be nostalgic for a time you never saw? Dinah, on the other hand, is sceptical and argumentative of everything - unwilling to accept what she already thinks to be true - to a fault.

SYNOPSIS

¹We follow queer modern day twins CATHY and DINAH who are forced to attend a 1980's immersive summer camp experience in Crawley by their Mother, FFION, and Step-Father, PAUL. When there, they're less than thrilled to hand over their electronics and cater to eccentric camp leader, OTTO'S, archaic beliefs on gender - even if they do find some respite in the forms of friendship via fellow queer teenager, ELIJAH, and romantic connections with horror obsessed KIAN and closeted mean girl SELINE respectively.

Discovering animals killed with man made weapons freaks out the already sceptical twins but a personal drama prevents the two from working cohesively. As the summer escalates, Dinah notices more of an uncomfortable shift towards right-wing gender ideals; with even Elijah and Kian falling under the 'alpha-male' spell of GAVIN, a fellow camper, and the girls exhibiting toxic pick-me girl behaviour - both of which are encouraged by three of the camp counsellors, BRANDON, CHESTER and JESSIE. The final counsellor, MIMI, starts to become sceptical herself of the camp's nature - especially when kids are going missing.

¹ Inspirations for the 1980's tone include *Friday the 13th* (Dir. Cunningham, 1980), *Sleepaway Camp* (Dir. Hiltzik, 1983) and *The Stepfather* (Dir. Ruben, 1987)

A violent confrontation between Gavin and Dinah brings Elijah and Seline back on side and severs the relationship between Cathy and Kian. Elijah and Cathy escape into the forest surrounding to seek help. A discovery of the missing teens corpses sends Elijah and Cathy back to camp to warn/save Dinah, Kian and Seline. All are captured and brought before Otto who reveals his plan to resurrect Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, using Seline and Gavin as vessels, as he believes he is their bastard love child from their 1981 meeting. The camp is also a front for a cult that believes in Thatcher's and Reagan's principles. All of the campers' parents are in said cult and sent their children to either be 'rehabilitated' or 'sacrificed for the greater good' (it should be noted Ffion is not in on it, but Paul is).

The ceremony requires a number of sacrifices - hence the missing teens and dead animals. The ceremony is successful and Seline is possessed by Thatcher with Gavin possessed by Reagan. They raise the spirits of their former MP's/congress members who possess the most egregiously toxic boys/girls around them. Campers are killed in an outright massacre with our remaining three saving the day - mostly by being outright queer. Thatcher is expelled from Seline's body, dragging Gavin-Reagan and Otto to Hell with her. The season ends with our protagonists traumatised, and unable to rationalise with the police.

KEY CHARACTERS & THEIR STORY ARCS

DINAH KEVINS (17) is a proud goth and even prouder lesbian who's cynical to a fault. She's perpetually angry at the world and its injustices but sometimes misdirects that frustration due to growing up in Merseyside where the effects of Thatcherism can be felt to this day. Dinah is argumentative and can hold a grudge, as she does against her twin after she is left to come out on her own.

CATHY KEVINS (17) is a fairly extroverted but awkward teen who enjoys football and is obsessed with horror - particularly 'classic' horror. Cathy is not necessarily demure, but prefers to avoid arguments, even when she knows people are in the wrong. Cathy is a closeted bisexual, fearing the backlash Dinah received when she came out.

ELIJAH DAVIES (16) is part Ugandan, part Welsh, all homosexual. He constantly grapples with his Anglican Christian upbringing and the conflicting views on homosexuality, often leading to him restricting himself from eating as a way to 'self-punish' himself for his own confusion as many Anglican Christian practice. Outside of his inner battle, Elijah is a smart and sarcastic teen who dreams of comedy as a career.

SELINE BYRNE (17) grew up in the Republic of Ireland but moved to Barnsley with her Mother in the last year following her parent's divorce. Masquerading as the typical mean girl, Seline is closeted and performs over-the-top compulsive heterosexuality to deter people from this fact. Seline is constantly conflicted between knowing what's right and who she wants to be and who people want her to be, often feeling like she's a lamb being prepped for the slaughter.

KIAN DAWSON'S (16) biggest issue in life is he's shy. Which shouldn't be the end of the world but is to his soldier Father. Growing up middle-class in St. Albans, Kian finds solace from his boring life in the exaggerated nature of horror movies and doesn't really want to discuss or think about the political implications behind his favourite horror.

FFION BLOCKS NEE. KEVINS (44) was always a romantic growing up; consistently wishing she was living in a flower power, Beatles-mania 60's-70's era. But in reality she was surrounded by a town recovering from Thatcherism. Following her brother becoming

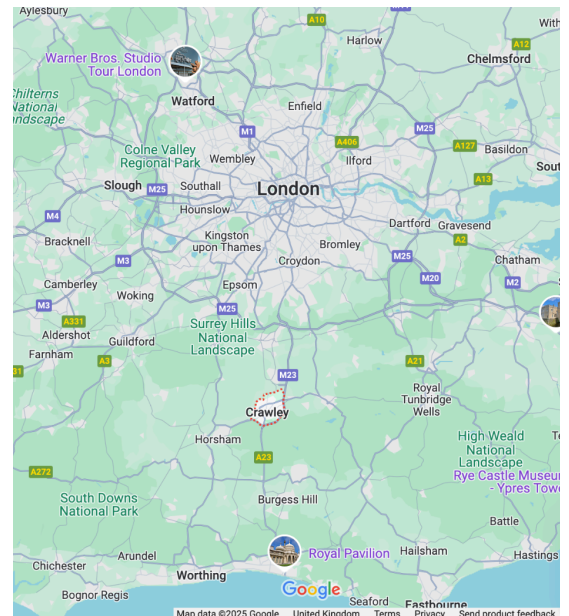
long-term comatose after a disastrous holiday when she was 16, Ffion would distance herself from her family and fall victim to the idea she requires a man to survive.

OTTO ROOFER (43) believes he is the bastard lovechild as a result of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan's 1988 meeting. Yes, really. Obsessed with returning the world to a 'better society,' Otto appoints himself as the 'prophetic' spokesperson for a cult that is attempting to bring back the spirits of Thatcher and Reagan to rule over a new world order.

SETTING

Majority of season one takes place at TOTALLY TUBULAR SLEEPAWAY CAMP, an '80's inspired immersive camp experience' in Crawley, West Sussex. The camp is in an isolated location, with a hour-long stretch of highway to just reach the forest surrounding the camp. A dense wood surrounds the campgrounds, with a lake and sandy coast to the side of the camp.

We also spend time in Liverpool, the twin's home, at the start of the series. Multiple flashbacks are dotted around the UK as we follow individual homelives - Cardiff, St. Albans, Barnsley, and Nottingham to name a few.



SEASON 1 EPISODE OUTLINES

EPISODE 1 – “CRUEL SUMMER”

In the forests surrounding a summer camp, camp counsellor JESSIE hunts down and tortures a small white rabbit. Meanwhile in Liverpool, twins CATHY and DINAH are dismayed to find out they'll be spending their final summer before university at an 80's inspired summer camp, their parents refusing to subsidise their student loan if they don't attend. At camp, Dinah instantly connects with fellow gay camper, ELIJAH, and is unsettled by eccentric camp leader, OTTO. Cathy similarly connects swiftly with fellow horror nut, KIAN. Self-proclaimed 'alpha male' GAVIN butts heads quickly with SELINE and Dinah helps her

prank Gavin. After the prank, Cathy attempts to confront Dinah about the latter's standoffish nature with her lately but the pair are interrupted by their discovery of the white rabbit's mutilated body.

EPISODE 2 – “SILENT RUNNING”

Cathy and Dinah, freaked out by their discovery of the dead rabbit, bring the body to the camp counsellors. Otto convinces them it's the work of an overzealous fox, but counsellor & former survivalist MIMI notices the 'claw marks' are too uniform to be that of an animal. A particularly argumentative butch teen, JAN, grabs Dinah's attention and the two hook up. Jan goes missing shortly after, being dragged into the forest by an unknown force when no one is around. The camp engages in a boys vs girls 'capture the flag' style game. Dinah and Seline bond over the course of the game. Cathy wins the game for the girls, angering Gavin. He returns to his cabin and takes out stress on an already mutilated squirrel.

EPISODE 3 – “SWEET CHILD O' MINE”

Seline and Dinah continue to pursue each other romantically in secret, Elijah being the only other person to know. Cathy and Kian develop their relationship and intimacy despite Cathy's apprehension. Both twins separately notice children going missing and more mutilated dead animals in their place. Mimi also notices but Otto simply states they'd been taken home by their parents when confronted.

EPISODE 4 – “DEMOLITION MAN”

Follows Kian, Elijah and Gavin and their home lives - how they all feel inadequate as men in separate ways. Kian and Elijah bond in particular over their disappointed Father's. Gavin enchants them with talks of improving their confidence and invites them into Otto's 'inner circle.' Dinah is unsettled by their casual misogyny and disrespect. Gavin introduces the boys to a make-shift 'rage room' - the forest and its defenceless creatures.

EPISODE 5 – “SISTERS ARE DOIN' IT (FOR THEMSELVES)”

On her honeymoon with Paul, Ffion starts to grow suspicious of the camp and its true nature. Meanwhile, Mimi continues to build a case on the missing kids from the camp. Fearful of the consequences of being outed, Seline starts to distance herself from Dinah.

EPISODE 6 – “GIRLS ON FILM”

The counsellors host a 'drive through' movie screening of The Lost Boys for the camp. Tensions finally come to head as Dinah confronts Seline and Cathy breaks up with Kian. Mimi confronts Otto who fires her in turn. A confrontation between Gavin and Dinah leads to the former attacking the latter.

EPISODE 7 - “EXPRESS YOURSELF”

Straight after Gavin's attack on Dinah - however with no adult witnesses and all the boys (bar Elijah) claiming to see nothing the incident is chalked up to "he said, she said." Dinah is restricted to the camp med centre. Cathy and Dinah have an explosive argument over a prior home incident that has been tainting their relationship since. We follow Dinah's extended hallucination as she attempts to piece together what's been happening so far.

EPISODE 8 - “WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE”

Picks up after the explosive argument between Cathy and Dinah, following Cathy after instead. During the events of the previous episode, Cathy and Elijah decide to escape through the surrounding forest to the nearest town to find help. However, they find gruesome burial sights of the missing children instead. They both resign to return to camp to ensure their friends aren't next and escape. An extended end sequence finds Otto pledging his allegiance to Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan via a shrine in his cabin.

EPISODE 9 - “EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD”

Elijah and Cathy break Dinah out of her haze and out of the medical centre, attempting to communicate their findings. An attempt to help others is intercepted by Gavin and his cohort and Seline is taken away. They attempt to bring Mimi on board who believes them. However, her attempt to confront Otto leaves her decapitated. The kids are brought before Otto for the ritual to resurrect Thatcher and Reagan. Despite the ritual's initial success, the kids are able to defeat them and Otto is dragged to the afterlife with the deceased. The police arrive little too late alongside Ffion.

FURTHER SERIES STRUCTURE

SEASON 2

²Season two sees the twins off to university, merely a month after their gruelling experience at Totally Tubular summer camp. Cathy starts to feel suffocated by Dinah and the latter has lost her strength and stoicism and is relying on Cathy to support her and her trauma. But the sisters can't escape their horror movie ordeals as a serial killer is stalking their university town and killing the girls. When horrifically disfigured and gruesome corpses turn up along the routes of the York Walking Ghost Tours with cryptic references to the events of Totally Tubular, the teens admit they have to solve things and reunite.

In the cellar of a house deep in the Yorkshire moors, young indie-pop singer LUNA JUNE wakes up in a large cage, her manager CARLA in an adjoining cage. They are instructed by a robotic voice how to escape and informed the one to lose will lose their life while the other may escape.

In Liverpool, Dinah is too traumatised to venture to her original university choice of Edinburgh Napier and too emotionally betrayed by her Mother to take a gap year in Liverpool. Dinah decides to adjust and follows Cathy to York. Where Cathy thrives on her film course and in the university environment, Dinah struggles and feels unable to get along with her twin's new friends, rejecting the offer of counselling by the university. Cathy takes the counselling offer however and sees counsellor, NORMA.

Through ASHLEY, a second year whose girlfriend (BLESSING) has gone missing, Dinah finds unlikely support. Dinah helps Ashley to investigate Blessing's disappearance as Ashley feels the police aren't acting appropriately urgently due to Ashley and Blessing being queer women of colour.

As more bodies pile up, Ashley and Dinah start to piece together the victim's common thread - they're all a part of Eating Disorder communities online. After Blessing's corpse is found, Cathy brings in the reinforcements of Elijah and Seline. Things are made awkward by the clash of Ashley and Dinah's growing relationship and Seline and Dinah's own ill defined relationship. Dinah believes the teens are there to support the investigation as she is convinced Otto and his minions have something to do with the deaths. However, it turns out Cathy wants to help her sister, feeling she is going off the deep end.

Cathy, Seline and Elijah's intervention to Dinah leads to her attending the counselling she objected to at the start of the season. Norma's insistence on returning consistently to Dinah's body image issues gives Dinah suspicion. After an emotional night of drinking with Ashley, Dinah returns to her research of the eating disorder community online and finds an extra clue; the victims were all specifically encouraging and giving guidance to those newer to eating disorders.

² Inspirations for the 2000's tone include *Saw* (Dir. Wan, 2004), *Hostel* (Dir. Roth, 2006) and *Wrong Turn* (Dir. Schmidt, 2003)

Seline and Cathy are jumped by Norma, Cathy being kidnapped by Norma and Seline left knocked out by the campus. Elijah tracks her down and they inform Dinah of the situation. They figure out Norma has been trawling the Eating Disorder community boards herself for victims and lure out her account with online bait. Things are complicated further by Ffion arriving in York after the twins have been failing to communicate with her.

Ffion wants to go to the police, despite Ashley's assurance they'll be useless following their treatment of Blessing's own disappearance. Ffion contacts the police regardless, dragging along a reluctant Dinah. The remaining three hatch a plan to combat Norma. All comes to a head when a police officer with Ffion and Dinah in tow arrives to question Norma. In the confrontation, Ffion is fatally wounded, but Cathy is released safely and reunites with her twin. The others arrive at the sad scene.

As Ffion takes her final breath in 2024, we are suddenly in 1997. 17 year old YOUNG FFION wakes up.

MINI SODE

³Season one was a homage to 80's summer camp slashers, and season two was a dedication to the 00's post-modernism irony and torture porn. In a mini interim episode, we flash back to 1997 where Ffion is not yet the twins Mum, but a seventeen year old nostalgic for the groovy 60's. Ffion and a ragtag group of friends reminiscent of Scooby-Doo attempt to survive a haunted hotel that seems to be torturing them psychologically.

YOUNG FFION (Y. Ffion) is a starry-eyed scouse teen who is fascinated by the 1960's much to her family's chagrin. Her Mother, BEV, is taking Y. Ffion and 10-year-old brother, JASE, to a hotel in York, the trip gifted by the company Bev cleans for. When at the hotel, there is a 1960's David Hockney in their room which enchants Y. Ffion.

In the rec room that evening, Y. Ffion and Bev encounter YOUNG PAUL (Y. Paul) and YOUNG OTTO (Y. Otto) - 17 and 16 respectively. Bev is put off by Y. Paul's brazen attitude whilst Y. Ffion is drawn in by his devil-may-care attitude. Meanwhile back in their hotel room, Jase is drawn towards a glowing light emitting from behind the painting.

Y. Ffion and Bev return to the hotel room where Jase is already asleep. Y. Ffion can't sleep and investigates sounds outside the room. Otto and Paul alongside a Ugandan teenage immigrant, SANYU, on holiday with his little brother and parents and SIOBHAN, an Irish teen. (NB Sanyu is Elijah's uncle and Siobhan is Seline's Mother).⁴ They spend time together exploring the hotel, its secrets and being general nuisances.

Bev feels Y. Ffion is neglecting her family by spending the whole holiday with the teenagers and her stress is exacerbated by Jase's infatuation with the painting in their room, refusing to leave the room, bathe or eat. The two argue, Bev storming out, taking the car for a drive. Y. Ffion takes the opportunity to invite the other teens around, partying around the hypnotised Jase.

Jase suddenly starts to convulse and Y. Ffion accuses the others of giving him alcohol. They run around the hotel trying to find an adult as the hotel appears to stretch longer and longer, them too drunk to make out the hotel correctly. Y. Paul locates a phone and calls an ambulance as Bev returns.

³ Inspirations for the 1960's tone include *Psycho* (Dir. Hitchcock, 1960), *Rosemary's Baby* (Dir. Polanski, 1969) and *The Haunting* (Dir. Wise, 1963)

⁴ A note on casting; Y. Fiona will be portrayed by Dinah's actor, Y. Paul will be portrayed by Kian's actor, Y. Otto will be portrayed by Gavin's actor, Sanyu will be portrayed by Elijah's actor and Siobhan is portrayed by Seline's actor

Jase falls into a coma. Bev and Y. Ffion will never be the same again. Y. Paul keeps in touch with Y. Ffion. At the hospital, Y. Ffion is so upset by the appearance of her brother in a coma, she runs and hides in a bathroom, banging her head repeatedly, until the scene flashes into Y. Ffion falling back into present day, much to everyone's shock.

SEASON 3

The third and final season takes a page from 2020's era 'elevated' horror⁵ and explores complicated feelings of grief as the twins deal with the death of their Mother from season 2. But, in the style of modern wacky horror comedies⁶, a warp in time leads to the teenage version of their Mother arriving in their time. Otto is also back however (in reference to the litany of remakes/requels⁷ of the modern era) with his plan to return England to a Thatcher era.

Y. Ffion awakes in the present day, replacing the body of (modern day) Ffion. Shocked by her appearance, the twins are eventually able to figure out their Mother's younger identity. Y. Ffion is taken in by Dinah (who is staying with Ashley & Elijah). Y. Ffion and Dinah surprisingly bond in a way they never could before as Dinah finally gets to come out and feel accepted by her Mother. Dinah, still convinced Otto is out there due to the cryptic clues to *Totally Tubular* scattered around York, continues to research Otto and the cult, aided by Y. Ffion's memories of the Y. Otto.

Elsewhere, Cathy is attempting to figure out the science and reasoning behind Y. Ffion's arrival (despite Seline's best efforts to keep her sane), desperate to keep her in the present so she doesn't fully lose her Mother, neglecting actually spending time with her to continue researching bizarre theories.

Things become further complicated by the arrival of Kian, who is also seemingly back from the dead, and acting suspiciously normal. A vulnerable Cathy embraces his return however, and hides his arrival from Dianh, using him to further her research. As more deceased start returning, Dinah finally clocks on when Blessing shows up for Ashley. Dinah confronts Cathy and the two begrudgingly share their research, Dinah insistent Otto must be behind it all.

The twins realise something is very wrong when the deceased start to decay around them - losing limbs and the like. Otto finally reveals himself as a hideous & terrifying amalgamation of himself, Thatcher and Reagan, revealing he is leading his army of the waking undead.

The undead army start terrorising around them, taking over the city by the underground. The teens realise the only way to stop Otto is to expose the truth - however bizarre it may be. Luring Otto and his clan into the University filming studio, Cathy uses her film degree and equipment to broadcast the truth - showcasing Otto's form and everything that happened. In a final confrontation, Dinah sacrifices herself, her last image being herself cradled by her Mother.

⁵ Inspirations for the 2020's 'elevated horror' tone include *Midsommar* (Dir. Aster, 2019), *Hereditary* (Dir. Aster, 2018) and *Talk to Me* (Dir. Philippou, Philippou, 2022)

⁶ Inspirations for the 2020's 'comedic horror' tone include *Totally Killer* (Dir. Khan, 2023), *It's a Wonderful Knife* (Dir. MacIntyre, 2023), and *Freaky* (Dir. Landon, 2020)

⁷ The requel is a recent popular trend where large franchises will have recent films ignore the previous sequels and be direct sequels to their original film in an attempt to erase the previous timeline constructed by the previous sequels; Eg *Halloween* (Dir. Green, 2018), *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Dir. Garcia, 2022). This seems to be in response to the boom of remakes of the late 2000's-early 2010's; Eg *Friday the 13th* (Dir. Nispel, 2009) *Halloween* (Dir. Zombie, 2007)

In an epilogue, the group visit Dinah's grave, which adjoins her Mother's, to pay respects. As night falls, a figure approaches with a series of papers detailing the method Otto used to raise the dead.