

# THE ASHWORTH DOSSIER

SERIES BIBLE

**Format:** Limited Series, 7 episodes

**Runtime:** ~60 mins

**Genre:** Regency Gothic Romance

Musical Drama

**Setting:** London/Isle of Skye

1807-1814

**Creator:** Caleb Nicholas



fall in love.  
ruin everything.  
pay the price.

ASHWORTH HOUSE / PRIVATE

CAT. NO. 07/13

## EPIGRAPH

They will call it tragedy, because it is prettier than the truth.  
They will call it scandal, because they are hungry.  
They will call it love, because they do not know what else to  
name a thing that ruins so quietly.

In this house, devotion is a locked drawer.  
Reputation is a hymn.  
And every time the clock insists on moving forward,  
something in the walls insists on remembering.

And love, here, is not a feeling. It is a sequence.

# THE GILDED GAZETTE

*Society, scandal, and the small disasters of the Great  
London, 1813*

**ASHWORTH HOUSE WILL OPEN ITS DOORS.  
EVERYONE IS INVITED. NO ONE IS SAFE.**

They say  
Ashworth House  
is hosting a  
birthday ball so  
grand it will make  
even the  
chandeliers feel  
dishonest. They  
say Lady  
Ashworth has  
been seen smiling  
more than usual.  
A warning sign, in  
certain families.

They say the  
Dowager has  
appointed herself  
the evening's  
conductor, and

the household is  
rehearsing  
perfection like a  
hymn: repeated  
until it sounds  
true.

They say Lady  
Harrington has  
taken a sudden  
interest in  
everyone's virtue.  
They say she is  
being helpful.

They say she has  
begun keeping  
notes. Just little  
ones. Names,  
favours, debts,  
glances. The sorts

of things that ruin  
quietly.

They say the heir  
coughs. Not the  
catching kind, but  
the kind that  
makes servants  
look away too  
quickly. They say  
it is nothing. They  
say it is  
everything.

They say a  
gentleman has  
been seen by the  
docks. Some insist  
he was never  
meant to return.

HUSH. LIFT YOUR FANS.

A HOUSE CAN SURVIVE ANYTHING BUT THE TRUTH.

**CIRCULATED**

# THE PROMISE

## SPECIMEN NOTES

### Logline

In 1813 London, Earl Theodore Ashworth is trapped inside legacy, marriage, and a dying brother. When Oliver Bellingham returns after years vanished, their love reignites in secret and drags a buried coastal past into the light, turning Ashworth House into a battleground of gossip, blackmail, and devotion.

### What this is

A 7-episode limited series told through the stages of love. Each hour is not just named after a stage, it behaves like one: attraction pulls, infatuation likes, love chooses, reverence sanctifies, worship demands, obsession corrodes, and death collects.

### Tone

Regency romance with gothic teeth. Beautiful rooms. Brutal manners. A society that treats scandal like sport. When speech becomes dangerous, the story turns musical, not for sparkle, but because the truth needs somewhere to go.

### Why now

Because this is a love story where the cost isn't heartbreak. It's reputation. Inheritance. Bodies. And a house determined to survive.

**Audience promise:**  
Romance with consequence. Mystery with manners. Music as surveillance

**Series Engine:** Each hour escalates via gossip → leverage → devotion → damage.

**Delivery:** Limited series with a definitive ending.



## ASHWORTH HOUSE

A house built for legacy. And for lies.

Ashworth House does not keep secrets kindly.

It keeps them like heirlooms.

Polished. Locked Away. Passed Down

ASHWORTH HOUSE / PRIVATE

CAT. NO. 07/13

# RULES OF THE WORLD

In this world, nothing is unforgiveable until it is witnessed. The Ton will tolerate almost anything done quietly, but it will destroy you for making it interesting.

Ashworth House survives on three currencies: reputation, inheritance, and silence. Spend one, and you can still live. Lose all three, and the house doesn't punish you. It erases you.

## Rules the Ton never admits to:

- Appearances are law. Truth is only useful if it can be denied.
- Marriage is contract. Love is what happens off the record.
- Women are watched. Men are excused. Servants pay for both.
- Gossip is a social glue. It keeps the Ton close and the vulnerable obedient.
- Virtue is a performance. Blackmail is simply the review.
- Illness becomes leverage. Especially when inheritance is involved.
- A secret isn't a secret if only one person knows it. This house has many witnesses.

**Note:** When speech becomes unsafe, emotion finds another language. That language is music.

# THE GILDED GAZETTE

*Society, scandal, and the small disasters of the Great  
London, 1813*

## A MASKED GATHERING IN THE EAST END... AND LADY H REMEMBERS EVERYTHING

They say the East  
End has its own  
sort of ballroom.  
No invitations. No  
chaperones. No  
names. They say  
if you keep your  
mask on and voice  
down, the city will  
let you become  
someone else for  
an evening.

They say Lady  
Harrington was  
not meant to be  
there. They say  
she arrived like a  
prayer and left  
like a threat.

They say she saw  
more than she  
should've. A hand  
on a waist too  
familiar. A voice  
she recognized  
beneath borrowed  
silk. A wedding  
ring tucked away  
like a sin.

They say she did  
not gasp. She did  
not faint. She did  
not scold. She  
simply watched...  
the way a woman  
watches a door  
she plans to open  
later.

They say Lady  
Harrington has  
taken a sudden  
interest in  
everyone's virtue.  
They say she is  
being helpful.

They say she calls  
it concern when  
she asks questions.  
They say she calls  
it kindness when  
she offers  
solutions. They  
say she calls it  
"society" when she  
decides who  
deserves to stay in  
it.

**A GENTLE REMINDER:  
THE PURPOSE OF A MASK IS PRIVACY.  
LADY HARRINGTON PREFERS PROOF.**

**CIRCULATED**

# THE LOVE STRUCTURE

The story is told in seven stages of love. Not because love is tidy, but because it is predictable in the way a storm is predictable: you can see it coming, and you will still be surprised by the damage.

Each episode title is not a theme. It's the behaviour of the hour.

## 1) ATTRACTION

The first pull. The first lie we tell ourselves: *I can withstand this.*

## 2) INFATUATION

The fantasy of safety. The sea makes saints out of strangers and fools out of careful men.

## 3) LOVE

Choice, not chemistry. Love is not the kiss, it's the decision to return.

## 4) REVERENCE

The sacred version of desire. The private rituals. The tenderness that feels like worship... until it becomes a debt.

## 5) WORSHIP

Devotion with teeth. What we will sacrifice to keep what we've named holy.

## 6) OBSESSION

Love gone feral. Memory becomes a habit. Jealousy becomes prayer. Everyone starts keeping score.

## 7) DEATH

The end of pretending. Social death. Bodily death. The moment the house collects.



## THE COAST ISLE OF SKYE

Where freedom looks like salvation.  
And behaves like a trap.

The sea makes promises it never intends to keep.  
It only returns what is owed.

ASHWORTH HOUSE / PRIVATE

CAT. NO. 07/13

# SEASON STRUCTURE

This series moves in three acts. The episodes are named for stages of love because love, here, isn't a feeling. It's a progression of behaviour... and consequence.

## **ACT I: THE SPARK** (Episodes 1-2)

Oliver returns to Ashworth House and Theodore's life at the worst possible moment: the family is staging stability, Cedric is failing quietly, and society is already hungry. Attraction is immediate because it isn't new... it's unfinished.

In 1807, the sea becomes a loophole. A long voyage north forces proximity, removes witnesses, and makes them brave enough to confuse freedom with fate. They share a cabin, exchange half-truths like gifts, and fall into the fantasy that the world cannot reach them at sea. Then they dock, and reality resumes its duties. Theodore continues the "proper" path. Oliver vanishes into the coast.

## **ACT II: THE VOW** (Episodes 3-5)

Love, in this story, is not the first kiss. It is the decision to return. Theodore breaks his own rules and goes looking for Oliver, and the coast becomes their private chapel: sacred rituals, borrowed names, small moments that feel like a life.

Then the chapel becomes a crime scene. A death in the coastal past hardens into the thing they spend years refusing to name. Back in London, secrecy stops being romantic and becomes tactical. Evelyn finds her own private rebellion with Amelia, and the house becomes twice as dangerous because now there are two forbidden stories moving through it.

Meanwhile, Lady Harrington begins collecting proof. She doesn't need scandal. She needs leverage. Blackmail.

## **ACT III: THE RECKONING** (Episodes 6-7)

By this point everyone is keeping score. The Ton becomes a chorus with teeth, repeating the same rumours until they sound like fact. Inheritance pressure tightens. Illness is weaponised. Devotion curdles into possession.

A "death" becomes the solution the house can survive: a closed casket, a controlled narrative, grief as performance. And the final episode does what polite society never does, and tells the truth. We return to the moment everything "ended" and reveal what was real, what was staged, and what it cost. Love doesn't save anyone. It simply makes the ruin worth it.



# THEODORE ASHWORTH

## “THE EARL”

### Public Record

Earl of Ashworth. Thirty in 1813. Married. Impeccably mannered. The kind of man society trusts because it cannot imagine him disobeying.

### Private Truth

A man built from restraint, and haunted by the one place he ever felt free. He has spent years practising control like a religion... and still loses it the moment Oliver walks in.

### Wants

To keep the house standing. To keep Cedric alive. To keep the peace. (And, quietly, to keep Oliver.)

### Needs

To choose something real, even if it costs him the version of himself the Ton applauds.

### Secret

The coastal past wasn't an indiscretion. It was a life. And it ended in blood.

### Musical Language

Theodore doesn't sing to be heard. He sings when the mask cracks. His songs are confession dressed as self-control: measured, aching, then suddenly violent when the truth slips.

### Season Arc

Attraction returns as recognition. Love becomes a decision. Worship becomes demand. Obsession becomes strategy. By the end, he must decide what dies: Oliver, the house, or the lie holding them together.



# OLIVER BELLINGHAM

## “THE INHERITOR”

### Public Record

Recently returned to society under difficult circumstances. His father is dead. The estate is his. The family line, it seems, ends with him.

### Private Truth

Oliver didn't vanish from London for romance or adventure. He escaped. The kind of home that teaches you to walk silently and to smile convincingly. Inheriting the estate doesn't feel like winning. It feels like being summoned to the scene of the crime.

### Wants

To claim what is his without becoming what made it poisonous. To be seen as legitimate, not scandalous. To find Theodore again.

### Needs

To stop measuring safety by distance. To accept that freedom isn't running, it's choosing where to stand.

### Secret

He knows exactly what his father was. He knows what he survived.

### Musical Language

Oliver sings like someone who learned early that humour is a shield. His songs cut sideways: charming first, devastating after.

### Season Arc

He returns with a title and an estate, but no peace. Society tries to rewrite him: grieving son, eligible gentleman, cautionary tale. His love for Theodore threatens to become the one thing he can't control... and the one thing worth telling the truth for.

# THE GILDED GAZETTE

*Society, scandal, and the small disasters of the Great  
London, 1813*

## THE EARL'S WIFE... AND HER MAID... AND HOW QUICKLY A HOUSE LEARNS.

They say Lady Ashworth has begun keeping later hours. They say she no longer retires when she's told. They say she smiles at her husband the way a woman smiles at a portrait: politely, without warmth.

They say the staff at Ashworth House move differently lately. Quieter. Faster. As if the corridors have developed

ears. They say when a maid is sent upstairs, she returns with her cheeks flushed and her hair pinned a fraction too hastily.

They say Lady Evelyn has grown fond of her maid. They say it's sweet.

They say it's charitable. They say nothing at all.

They say nothing at all is how most scandals begin.

They say a woman can be lonely in a house full of people. They say a maid can be invisible until she isn't. They say if the Dowager notices, she pretends not to... which is the surest sign that she has.

**CIRCULATED**

### ADVICE TO OUR READERS:

IF YOU MUST COMMIT A SIN, DO NOT DO IT IN A HOUSE THAT SURVIVES ON SECRETS.

# THE ARCHITECTS

## OPHELIA ASHWORTH

Ophelia is the spine of Ashworth House: widow, matriarch, and the quiet authority everyone obeys even when they pretend they don't. She runs the household like a doctrine. If society is a stage, Ophelia is the director who never steps into the light, but controls the blocking all the same.

She doesn't think of herself as cruel. She thinks of herself as necessary. Ophelia would rather bury a truth than let it embarrass the family name, and she'd rather sacrifice one person than risk the estate crumbling in public. Her devotion isn't sentimental, it's structural, and the more the past resurfaces, the more she tightens her grip, convinced she's saving everyone from ruin.

## LADY HARRINGTON

Lady Harrington is a polished social force: admired, invited, and always “helpful”. She speaks in compliments, hosts with precision, and somehow always ends up standing exactly where the truth will pass by. People relax around her because she feels like safety. That's the trick.

Harrington doesn't collect gossip for amusement. She collects it for leverage. She has a talent for seeing what she shouldn't, and remembering it forever, especially after that East End masked gathering where she watched the wrong hands touch the wrong waist under borrowed silk. She offers solutions with a smile, and calls it kindness, but what she's really offering is the privilege of staying unruined... for a price.

# THE PRIVATE WAR

## EVELYN ASHWORTH

Evelyn is the part Ashworth House needs her to play: gracious, composed, ornamental. In public she is silk and manners, the perfect hostess beside Theodore, smiling like it costs her nothing. In private, she is loneliness with good posture, a woman learning the difference between being chosen and being kept.

Amelia becomes her quiet rebellion. Not a flirtation, not a pastime, but something frighteningly real in a house built on denial. Evelyn doesn't fall because she's reckless. She falls because someone finally sees her without asking her to perform, and once she tastes that honesty she cannot go back to pretending it was enough.

## AMELIA

Amelia is invisible the way servants must be: present for everything, credited for nothing. She knows the house by sound and timing, knows which floorboards betray you, knows which doors are safest and which ones are traps. If Ashworth House is a machine, Amelia is one of the hands keeping it running... and she has learned exactly where the gears can be jammed.

Her affair with Evelyn is tender, yes, but it is also dangerous, because Amelia understands consequences better than anyone upstairs. She knows how quickly devotion becomes leverage in a place like this. Loving Evelyn is not simply breaking rules, it is stepping into the line of fire, and Amelia is sharp enough to realise that sometimes survival looks like betrayal... even when it breaks your heart.

# THE WITNESSES

## CEDRIC ASHWORTH

Cedric is the future everyone talks about and no one truly listens to. He is gentle, observant, and too young to be carrying the weight of a family name that feels more like a sentence than a gift. When the house sharpens around scandal, Cedric becomes the one person who still looks at people plainly, without strategy.

His illness is not contagious, but it is constant: a cough that the family pretends not to hear until it becomes inconvenient. “Weak lungs,” they call it, as if naming it softly will keep it small. Cedric understands more than anyone realises, and as the season darkens, his fragility becomes both a vulnerability... and a moral mirror the household cannot bear to face.

## CASSANDRA HARRINGTON

Cassandra is clever in a way that isn't fashionable: she watches first, speaks later, and remembers everything. She moves through society as though she's half a step outside it, observing the performance rather than drowning in it. If her mother collects secrets for power, Cassandra collects them because she cannot stand a lie that hurts people.

She starts as background, then becomes dangerous. Not because she's cruel, but because she's accurate. Cassandra sees patterns the Ton refuses to name: the way certain men disappear from rooms together, the way servants suddenly get dismissed, the way a “helpful” question becomes a noose. As the blackmail tightens, Cassandra becomes the person most likely to pull at the thread... even if it unravels everything.

# MUSICAL DNA

In *Dearly Departed*, characters do not sing because they are joyful. They sing because they are trapped. When the rules of the world make honesty impossible, emotion finds a back door, and it comes out as harmony. The Ton functions as a chorus: watching, whispering, judging, feeding.

## When songs happen

- When speech is dangerous. The moment a truth would ruin someone if spoken plainly, it turns lyrical instead.
- When society is present. Group numbers aren't "big and fun", they're surveillance with melody: everyone singing around what they mean.
- When memory returns. Reprises come back like a bruise you keep pressing, changing meaning each time they reappear.

## The rules

- The show never breaks its own reality. Singing is not an aside. It's the house speaking through people.
- Lyrics behave like gossip. They overlap, contradict, accelerate, and spread. ("They say..." becomes music before it becomes truth.)
- The chorus is a weapon. Fans lift, mouths whisper, harmony tightens, and suddenly a private sin becomes communal property.

## The musical language of the series

- Chorus numbers: the Ton as chorus, funerals and ballrooms as confessionals.
- Duets: intimacy disguised as conversation, then tipping into confession neither meant to say out loud.
- Ensembles: everyone praying to a different god at once: status, love, security, revenge.
- Reprises: motifs that return with new damage attached.

# EPISODE GUIDE

## 1) ATTRACTION (1813)

A closed casket funeral in 1814: practiced grief, unanswered questions. We cut back to 1813, where Theodore's birthday ball stages stability, Cedric coughs through it, and Oliver returns like a memory that learned to walk.

## 2) INFATUATION (1807)

A long coastal voyage north forces proximity: shared cabin, half-truths, the sea's favourite lie that distance equals freedom. They dock, and Oliver slips away toward Skye before the world can close its fist.

## 3) LOVE (1813)

They stop pretending it's coincidence and choose each other in the margins of the house. Cassandra begins to notice patterns; Evelyn begins to realise she's living inside a performance.

## 4) REVERENCE (1807)

Theodore breaks the "proper" route and goes looking for Oliver, finding him on Skye where titles feel distant and ritual feels sacred. Then a night turns violent and Julien dies, splitting their future in half.

## 5) WORSHIP (1813)

Devotion turns feral: Cedric worsens, Ophelia tightens, and the house starts sniffing inheritance like blood in water. At an East End masked gathering, Lady Harrington sees enough to stop guessing and start collecting, while Evelyn and Amelia slip deeper into a private world with consequences.

## 6) OBSESSION (1807-1813)

Amelia takes the story and rewrites it: what she saw, what she carried, what she's been waiting for. Old wounds become motive, tenderness becomes access, and obsession becomes a plan executed inside a house that's trained everyone to ignore her. The blade, the fall, the blood...

## 7) DEATH (1814)

Aftermath first: Oliver is "dead," the casket is closed, and Theodore mourns in public while the chorus hums with satisfaction; Cedric's illness reached its end. Then we rewind and reveal a third path: real blood, a chosen disappearance, and a quiet mercy on Skye that isn't a fairytale... just survival.

# THE GILDED GAZETTE

*Society, scandal, and the small disasters of the Great  
London, 1814*

## OLIVER BELLINGHAM, DECEASED. CLOSED CASKET. CLOSED MOUTHS.

They say Lord Bellingham has died. They say suddenly. They say that word exists for men who do not want to explain themselves.

They say the casket remained closed due to the nature of his death. They say it was done out of respect. They say respect is a convenient curtain.

They say the mourners wore perfect black and imperfect impressions. They say Lady Ashworth wept like a woman performing grief for a room she dislikes. They say the Dowager did not cry at all. She supervised.

They say servants were instructed to keep certain corridors empty. They say the Earl

has taken it terribly. They say he has taken it quietly, which is worse. They say a man does not look like that unless he has lost something he was never allowed to have.

They say Lady Harrington arrived with condolences and left with certainty.

**CIRCULATED**

PUBLIC ADVICE: DO NOT SPECULATE  
PRIVATE ADVICE: SPECULATE CAREFULLY



## FINAL PROMISE

Love doesn't save anyone in this house.  
It just makes the ruin worth it.

He survives. Not loudly. Not proudly. but truly.

ASHWORTH HOUSE / PRIVATE

CAT. NO. 07/13

## **CONTACT**

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Series Pilot Available Upon Request