

# **Lilies That Fester**

**A One Act Play by Brian Freeland  
from the short story by  
Christopher Rush**

**Spotlight Publications**

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## **Lilies That Fester**

**CAST** (in order of appearance)

**Reverend Erskine.** Mid-fifties. Laird, as well as Minister of the Parish of Kilrenny. Friendly and confident, but with a hard streak.

**Robert Erskine.** His son. Final year Divinity student at St Andrews University.

**Sandy Munro.** Parish Session Clerk. A deeply religious, gentle man, a craftsman/builder.

**James Gourlay.** Outspoken member of the Fabric Committee.

**DI Melville.** Fife Constabulary.

**Alice.** Housekeeper to the Reverend Erskine.

**Mrs Cargill.** Neighbour, friend, regular visitor. Likes a drink.

**Setting** - The vestry/office of Kilrenny Kirk, situated in The Manse which adjoins the kirkyard. Windows overlooking the kirkyard. Door to Committee Room one side; door to exit corridor opposite.

**Time** - not specified, but assumed to be the 1960s

“Lilies That Fester” was first produced at St Andrews Theatre, Buckhaven, on Friday 25th February 2005 as part of the SCDA One Act Drama Festival, and won the Scott Salver.

It was directed by the author, and cast as follows:

Reverend Erskine	David Muncey
Robert Erskine	Chris Hunter
Sandy Munro	John Marshall
James Gourlay	David Galloway
DI Melville	Les Soper
Alice	Elli Thomson
Mrs Cargill	Teresa Strachan

## Scene 1

*As introductory music fades a clock is heard striking three, and the lights come up*

*Alice is clearing glasses as Sandy enters hurriedly*

**Sandy** Am I the last?

**Alice** Yes... not like you, Sandy. You're usually the first to arrive.

**Sandy** I'm usually in agreement with the Minister and his plans, but not today.

**Alice** The Session House?

**Sandy** Yes. I think he's got it wildly wrong this time.

**Alice** Then tell him so.

**Sandy** I'm afraid to say too much in case he stops the building work on the Manse.

**Alice** I'm sure it won't come to that.

**Sandy** It's a labour of love, Alice you know that, working with the old stone. Makes me feel like a medieval mason, recreating history. And the money keeps Isobel quiet. If I lose this job then we're back to renovating toilet blocks at the caravan site.

*As he prepares to enter the Committee Room, Erskine appears, obviously looking for him*

**Erskine** Ah, there you are, Sandy. We're waiting for you.

**Alice** I'll get these glasses to the kitchen.

*She hurries off via corridor*

**Erskine** I hope you've had time to, -er, consider my plan for the Session House.

**Sandy** I've thought of little else for days.

**Erskine** And....?

**Sandy** In all honesty, I cannot support it, Minister. To my mind this particular scheme is unseemly.

**Erskine** As ever, your honesty does you credit, Sandy. But you surely must accept that the removal of an old, unloved Session House will open up a gloomy corner of the churchyard, and improve the public's view of our beautiful church. Not to mention the fact that you and your men will get the contract for the demolition.

**Sandy** Contract or nae contract, the Session House is no great loss. It's been boarded up these past twenty years, ever since - well, no need to go into all that again...

**Erskine** Indeed, no. Best left.... But it seems we are in agreement: this malevolent monster should be removed.

**Sandy** The disagreement is over what should replace it....

**Erskine** Something altogether more attractive, something that will speak in nature's own tongue of the loveliness of God the Maker.

**Sandy** Something that's totally out of place in an ancient kirkyard. It's seldom we've not been of one mind, I know, but I just cannot see eye to eye with you on this one. I'm sorry.

*He moves to enter the Committee Room, but is stopped by the Minister*

**Erskine** Sandy - some time ago I engaged you and your men, at my expense, to carry out a great deal of work on the Manse.

**Sandy** And please don't think that I'm not extremely grateful, Mr Erskine...

**Erskine** Then show your gratitude, man. It's work that will last you for years to come, as you are well aware. But it's not work that is absolutely vital. *(Pause)* Indeed, for both of us it is something of a luxury, is it not? I imagine that Isobel would not be happy if I had to, say, cut back on my outgoings...? Be sensible, man. If you honestly cannot offer support, then at least refrain from criticism that might lead the session to thwart it.

**Sandy** Well, so long as the others are in approval....

**Erskine** Agreed. Let's go in.

*The lights dip while the clock strikes four, and then come up again*

*The meeting has ended, and Gourlay storms out*

**Gourlay** A lily pond? A lily pond in a kirkyard fu' o' decent Christian folk! An wi' goldfish! I've nivver heard the like.

**Sandy** The Session House....

**Gourlay** The Session House should ha' gane lang since, but whit in God's name possessed ye, Sandy, tae let the man awa' wi' sic a nonsense? A lily pond!

**Sandy** Look, I'll not make out that I'm overfond of the scheme myself, but there's some logic in what Mr Erskine was saying in there. At least give the man some credit; you know what the figure in the rolls is down to now. We've got to move with the times if we're going to attract younger people into the kirk these days.

**Gourlay** Wains - an' goldfish. It's nae a public park...

**Erskine** (*joining them*) A lily pond will mirror the laughter of the children, James, and turn the thoughts of the old away from the gloom of the graves.

**Gourlay** And towards what?

**Erskine** The loveliness of life...

**Gourlay** Ye've gan gyte, the baith o' ye, if ye ask me, plain saft in the heid! An ye'll rue the day, the twa o' ye, you mark my words. Nae guid'll come o't.

**Erskine** Ecclesiastes, James. "There is a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together". This is the time, gentlemen, to do both. Good evening to you both.

*The two men exit, muttering*

At least no-one actually threw any stones.

*The lights fade to a gentle dark blue wash*

## **Lilies That Fester**

A suspenseful drama about witchcraft for five men and two women and set in a modern Scottish manse.

### **Plot Summary**

The Reverend Erskine has the ancient kirk Session House demolished and replaced with a lily pond. During the demolition work, workmen uncover seven skeletons, one of them a headless legless torso. We discover that the Minister's wife had died in mysterious circumstances; he himself is convinced that the site has an evil presence. This suspicion is confirmed when the goldfish die and the flowers wither in the lily pond. Further revelations follow: the skeletons were buried in unhallowed ground, and the headless torso was one of the Minister's ancestors, convicted of witchcraft ...

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