

The Bette Tapes

Episode 2

Written by Lindsay Sharman  
Music and Sound Design by Laurence Owen

Bette Tapes THEME TUNE.

BETTE

Long Cat Media presents 'The Bette  
Tapes', episode 2.

A CASSETTE TAPE is inserted into a Dictaphone. The RECORD  
BUTTON is depressed.

INT. STORAGE ROOM, SAINT CANDIDA'S

CLICK.

BETTE

Time: 3.12pm. Date: 12th June, 1993.  
Place: a storage room at Saint  
Candida's Boarding School for Young  
Ladies. This is tape one of The Case  
of the Dubious Stallion. Quite proud  
of that title. Although maybe it  
should've been alliterative? Shabby  
stallion, stumpy, scummy, shoddy...  
I'll figure it out later.

Talking of stallions, I'm currently  
perched on an over-stuffed vaulting  
horse, staring at a row of lacrosse  
sticks mounted on the wall, inhaling  
the sickly perfume of sweaty singlets  
and rubber gym mats. My client Binty  
Berkeley-Hunt gave me this room to  
use as an office while I work the  
case. She says no-one will bother me  
here because they only use it for old  
gym equipment. Pbbt! Not sure about  
that. Looks like a prime spot for  
smokers and illicit meetings to me. I  
spent half of sixth form in rooms  
like this.

Ugh. It's so weird being back at Old  
Yeasty for the first time in three  
years.

(MORE)

BETTE (cont'd)

It's hard not to feel like a teenager again. Powerless. Trapped. Profoundly alone. Wearing much cheaper shoes than everyone else. Ohh!

It's fine. I'm a grown-up now. Me and my cheap shoes can walk out of here whenever we bloody well want. Except not really because I really do need the cash. Yes, concentrate on the cash, Bette. Eyes on the prize! And it's a bloody good prize, too. Binty didn't even blink when I told her my fee, and I'm charging her triple the standard industry rate. Is that bad? I know it looks like I'm ripping her off, but she's so posh. She thinks anyone below an Earl is middle-class, for chrissake. I'm just adding a wealth tax.

It really is terribly strange. Why does Binty have a job? She said it's only temporary, that it's a favour to the headmistress who's an old friend of her mother's, but Binty doesn't do favours for people. Binty doesn't work. Huh. Maybe she's changed..? Anyway, regardless, that's not the mystery I'm here to solve. It seems that Binty has been the unfortunate recipient of a quantity of low-grade stallion jizz, and it's my job to find out why.

DOOR OPENS. Two students enter.

STUDENT

Did you bring the rizlas?

BETTE

Sorry, this is occupied!

STUDENTS

AGHHHH!

BETTE

It's OK, I'm not a teacher! Or a pervert! Shit, my dictaph--

CLATTER. CLICK.

INT. BETTE'S CAR

CLICK.

BETTE

Time: 4pm. Date: 12th June, 1993.  
Place: the staff car park of Saint  
Candida's Boarding School for Young  
Ladies.

Now, then. What do I know so far? The  
school has a long tradition of  
winning prestigious gymkhanas and  
sending girls to the Olympics for  
show jumping. In my day, every girl  
here was completely horse obsessed...  
except for me. I can barely tell one  
end of a horse from the other. Why  
the hell did Aunty Janet think I'd  
fit in here?? It was bad enough when  
everyone found out I'd never ridden  
before... but the flack I got for my  
clothes, ugh! And imagine if I hadn't  
changed my sodding accent, they'd  
have set the bloody dogs on me!

Anyway! None of that matters now.  
Stay on track, Bette. Focus on the  
case.

So. Last year they decided to breed  
the school's top horse, 'Lady Katya'  
to create a new generation of  
prancing champions. Binty was tasked  
with orchestrating the insemination.  
Using school funds, she purchased  
semen - extremely expensive semen! -  
from a 'dazzling grey' dressage horse  
called 'Twinks' from a nearby stable.  
Except Binty says that Twinks  
couldn't have been the sperm donor,  
because last month Lady Katya gave  
birth to, and I quote Binty here,  
'the shittiest foal you've ever seen'.  
She showed me the foal when I got  
here; looked fine to me. Four legs,  
long nose. Still, apparently it's  
very short and its eyes are too far  
apart, or something like that. But it  
is just like Twinks the stallion in  
one respect: its coat is grey.

(MORE)

BETTE (cont'd)

When I pointed that out, Binty shouted 'so is a donkey!' and in a rage she flipped a trough and punched a hay bale. Just like she used to. Maybe she hasn't changed much after all.

Once she'd calmed down, Binty told me that after the birth, she'd stormed round to the stable that owns Twinks to demand answers. But when she got there, they told her they had no record of Binty ever purchasing semen from them at all! And nor had they ever heard of the man who Binty dealt with; one 'James Heathrow'.

When I heard that... I said to Binty: 'his surname was Heathrow? Like the airport?' and she flew into a rage again, shouting 'yes, alright, I realise it's a made-up name NOW. Just go and find the tosser and get me a bally refund!'

Didn't even say please. I wonder if Binty has EVER said 'please'.

(sighs) It's that foal I feel sorry for. Standing amongst all those glossy thoroughbreds, completely unaware that everyone's sneering at them for their... rubbish hooves. They haven't even named the poor thing. God, it makes one furious!

CLICK.

INT. TWINKS' STABLE

BETTE

(whispers) Time: 7.43pm. Date: 12th June. Place: Twinkss Stable, crouched behind a bush, watching a woman bring the horses in from grazing. No-one knows I'm here. I parked some distance away; I want to have a good look at this place before I speak to anyone.

(MORE)

BETTE (cont'd)

Now, Binty told me she collected the dubious sperm from James Heathrow right here, metres from the stallion himself. That might be the oddest part of this whole thing. How did Mr Heathrow sneak into a working stable without anyone asking what he was doing here? I mean, that's what I'm currently doing too, but I'm not trying to do a business deal in broad daylight!

HORSE WHINNY

BETTE (cont'd)

Ah, I think I've spotted Twinks! Yes, that must be him.

Who's that woman leading him into the stable? She looks terribly familiar. I'll sneak a bit closer...

A dog starts BARKING.

DISTANT WOMAN

Bowser! Bowser!

BETTE

Shit, the dog's seen me.

DISTANT WOMAN

Bowser! Heel boy!

BETTE

It's coming over!

DISTANT WOMAN (GRACE)

What are you barking at now?

BETTE

Go away!

DISTANT WOMAN (GRACE)

C'mon!

BETTE

Go away!

DISTANT WOMAN (GRACE)

Oh God. Who's that hiding in the bushes?

BETTE

Bollocks!

(MORE)

BETTE (cont'd)  
(calls) It's alright! I'm not a  
pervert!

CLICK.

INT. BETTE'S CAR

CLICK.

BETTE  
Time: 9.45pm. Date: same. Place: my  
car, heading back to the Manor.

So the woman at the stable turned out to be Grace from school! Well, strictly speaking, Grace isn't 'from school'; she wasn't a student at Saint Candida's, she worked in the stables when I was in sixth form.

Grace remembered me too, because I was the only student who'd try to get out of riding lessons. One term, I forged a letter from the doctor saying I had gout, and so when the others went off to jump fences, I stayed behind and played cards with Grace and the others. And I had much more in common with Grace than my fellow students. We were even the same age, because she'd left school at 16.

When we weren't playing poker, we'd go for walks and chat... she had such cheeky brown eyes... lovely curly ginger hair... and she was so small, I could literally lift her up and spin her round and round in my arms...

(throat clear) Anyway! Once Grace called the dog off, we had a catch-up over a cup of tea. Naturally, the first thing Grace wanted to know was why I was there, so I told her it was because of the Twinks situation. Now, it was very subtle, but no sooner had the words passed my lips than I noticed a distinct flaring of Grace's nostrils and a tightening of the neck muscles.

(MORE)

BETTE (cont'd)

She put her tea down on a hay bale and said, 'are you talking about that woman who claims she bought semen from Twinks?' and I was like, 'yes, that's right. Binty Berkeley-Hunt. Surely you remember Binty from when you worked at St Candida's?' 'Can't say that I do,' Grace replied, which is bonkers! Of course she remembers Binty! During card games, we used to bitch about the biggest arseholes in the whole school, and guess whose name was always top of the list? Yep!

Anyway, I played along; 'oh yeah, Binty wasn't very memorable, I guess...' Pbbt, like Attila the Hun wasn't memorable. And then Grace asked what the Twinks situation had to do with me. Well. Right there and then, I had this mad idea, this moment of inspiration, and I didn't think, I just went with it.

I told her: 'the reason I'm here, Grace, is that Binty is forcing me to help her. I'm here under duress. I am a prisoner of Binty's whims and machinations.' Oh God, I do feel a bit guilty. But it's part of the job description, isn't it? Subterfuge, extracting information... outright lying to one of the few people who made school bearable.

Naturally, Grace was like, 'Binty's forcing you? What on earth do you mean?' and I told her... oh... I told her that Binty is blackmailing me over the time I nearly burned the school down. That if I didn't help her, she'll tell the headmistress what really happened that night and I'd have to pay for the damage. Grace almost spat her tea out. She was like, 'What? Binty's blackmailing you?? You set the school on fire??'

First of all, I recounted the real story about what happened that night at Saint Candida's four years ago.

(MORE)

BETTE (cont'd)

So. When I was at school, I didn't sleep very well, and the long nights lying in bed waiting for the sun to rise were pure torture. So I'd often sneak out to wander around campus. One fateful night, I climbed onto the flat roof of the science block to gaze at the stars and smoke a single menthol cigarette, and think about how JJ must be enjoying her freedom many miles away. The cigarette was disgusting; like brushing your teeth and then licking an ashtray - so I flicked it into the darkness and left.

Unbeknownst to me it rolled into the gutter. A gutter full of dried leaves. Completely oblivious to the blaze slowly taking hold, I was sneaking back into my dorm when I bumped into Binty on her way to the toilet. Like an idiot, I told her where I'd been. I think I was trying to impress her. Ughhh! She just rolled her eyes, of course; I felt like a right twat.

Not an hour later, the smoke alarm goes off and the fire service roars onto campus. No-one was hurt, thank God, but the whole science block was just gone. A smoking ruin. And everyone immediately knew it was me, because I'd been caught smoking on that very roof literally the week before.

Naturally, the house mistress hauls me into her office for questioning, and there I am, denying everything, shitting my pants, about to be expelled... when Binty bursts into the room and says she was with me all night, that we were having such fun gossiping and pillow fighting that we didn't even go to sleep, and so I couldn't possibly have burnt down the science block. The thing is, Binty was the golden girl, our year's great hope for eventual Olympic glory, and so the house mistress took her at her word. And I got away with it.

(MORE)



BETTE (cont'd)

But Binty didn't help me because she liked me. She did it because she wanted a gopher. Someone to do her homework. Someone to back her up when she lied to teachers. Someone she could say, 'shoplift that lipstick for me' and they'd just do it, no questions asked. And that was me, for the rest of my time at Saint Candida's.

So that was the true part of the story. Grace was appalled, of course. She was like, 'oh that horrible bitch! I always wondered why you hung out with her at school when you despised her so much! Why didn't you tell me at the time?' I said I was too embarrassed... which was also true.

But then I told Grace that Binty was still, to this day, using the fire to force me into doing her bidding. She looked a little perplexed at that. She said rather slowly, like she was talking to an idiot, 'Bette, we're adults now. You don't have to do as she says anymore. If she tells them you burned the science block to the ground, just deny it. It'd be her word against yours, and nowadays, Binty's word doesn't hold any power.'

I said, yes, yes, you're right of course. And Grace got this massive grin on her face and said, 'and as for that horse sperm, well...'  
It was quite clear she was about to confess, but I didn't want her to because what do I do then, I don't want to get her in trouble! So I abruptly stood up and cried 'oh my God, look at the time, I have a dentist appointment, I have to go' and I basically ran out of the room like an absolute fruitloop.

Because it's obvious, isn't it? Grace is behind the dodgy horse sperm.

(MORE)

BETTE (cont'd)

A classic case of revenge. At school, Binty treated anyone she considered beneath her like dirt. A few years later, Binty shows up at Grace's new workplace, doesn't even recognise her, and wants to buy fancy horse sperm. Grace enlists a male friend to sell Binty sperm from the stumpiest horse she could find. That's what she was about to tell me.

So what do I do now!? I can't dob Grace in! Binty might have her arrested! But I really need Binty to pay me, and I can't just drop the case; what if word got around that I couldn't hack it as a PI? I need to think of a way through this, and fast.

CLICK.

INT. OFFICE, MOCKERY

CLICK

BETTE

Time: 2pm. Date: 16th June. Place: my office, Mockery. Emotional state: very unhappy. Bloody Binty! She won't pay my fee! She says I didn't solve the case! I may not have found James Heathrow, but I solved her problem, I got her the sperm she wanted! But no no, not good enough for Binty. Binty is still demanding a refund for the duff sperm. I was like, but I just gave you the good sperm! And Binty insisted she didn't ask for that and told me to go away and only come back when I had her money. Ugh!

Wait, I haven't explained how I got the sperm in the first place. Ugh, I can't wait until I never have to say the word sperm ever again.

BETTE (cont'd)

OK, rewind. After I spoke with Grace and she almost confessed, I headed back to Saint Candida's and asked Binty if she'd kept the container that had transported the dubious... let's say 'sample', shall we. Unfortunately, Binty had chucked out the aforementioned container months ago.

So, I visited Grace for a second time under the guise of renewing our friendship. Feigning interest in horses, I asked to be shown around the stables, and when Grace wasn't looking... I stole one of their sperm sample containers from a store cupboard. Then I waited a few days (so it didn't seem suspicious) before returning to see Grace; this time, to present the evidence.

'Voila,' I said to Grace, brandishing the purloined container, 'this here is proof that Binty bought sperm from this stable. She was given this container by the mysterious James Heathrow. I think you'll find it matches the other containers in your store cupboard.'

Grace replied, 'you mean the store cupboard I showed you when you last visited?' Not much gets past Grace. I was like, 'please Grace, just give Binty the right horse jizz or she'll never drop it. Please. Do it for me?' She took a moment to think about it, but thank goodness, Grace could never resist me at my most pitiful. She gave me the sample - they had some on ice - and I headed back to Binty, triumphant, thinking that would be the end of it.

(MORE)

BETTE (cont'd)

And now Binty's refusing to pay me. I tried to convince her that this was the best outcome she could expect, that we'd never find James Heathrow because the trail was stone cold, but Binty just went on a big rant about how I was an idiot and there couldn't be that many men under five foot tall with curly ginger hair and a big black beard that just happened to have access to Twinks' stable, so just find him you fool!

(sighs) Binty is remarkably thick. But she was also VERY upset I didn't have her money, and I really do think she's going to hire someone else... and if that happens, Grace will be in big trouble.

What the hell do I do now...

CLICK.

EXT. STABLES, SAINT CANDIDA'S

CLICK

SIRENS in the background.

BETTE

Time: 2pm. Date: 19th June. Place:  
the stables of Saint Candida's.

HORSE WHINNY

BETTE (cont'd)

Oh dear. Who'd have thought it would come to this. Hauled away in handcuffs for all to see. Well. The truth will out. And one shouldn't lie and steal, should one.

HORSE WHINNY

BETTE (cont'd)

It turns out Binty desperately wanted the money back from James Heathrow because she wasn't authorized to spend it in the first place!

(MORE)

BETTE (cont'd)

Nor did she ever intend to inform the headmistress that Lady Katya was pregnant!

Let me explain. Binty's broke! I can't quite believe it. Her family lost all their money a couple of years back, and Binty was forced to get a job for the first time in her life. But she wasn't qualified for anything, and her attitude is... what it is, so she really struggled. She ended up working at Saint Candida's because the headmistress was doing her a favour, not the other way around.

Binty hated it, of course. Being back at the school she used to rule, but this time on the payroll. The horror. So she devised a scheme to make some serious cash on the sly. Her plan all along was to use school funds to breed secret foals, which she would then sell under the table to wealthy businessmen looking for bargain champions.

Of course, when Lady Katya delivered a donkey, the customer she'd lined up refused to pay. Not only that, Binty knew it was only a matter of time before someone noticed a chunk of school funds was missing. She was desperate.

So she hired me, I daresay with no intention of paying my fee. Sadly for Binty, only yesterday the headmistress noticed the missing funds and did a little digging - with a little help from me. We found an invoice submitted by Binty several months ago. She claimed five thousand two hundred pounds for paperclips. Paperclips! For an equine mistress! God, Binty's thick.

The invoice was signed off by the headmistress... except she'd never have agreed to such a huge claim; Binty must've forged the signature.

(MORE)

BETTE (cont'd)

Not-at-all-coincidentally, five thousand two hundred pounds is also the cost for 80 mils of Twinks' sperm.

Theft, forgery, and illegal insemination of a horse, oh dear oh dear. I urged clemency, but the headmistress ignored me and called the police. Quite a vengeful woman, I fear. Never trust posh people: utterly ruthless.

It must've been embarrassing for Binty to be arrested in front of the stable hands. (chuckles)  
Not the happy ending I'd hoped for, though. I won't get my bloody fee now. I'm no closer to paying off my debt to Margot than before.

HEADMISTRESS

Thank you for your help, Bette.

BETTE

Oh! Headmistress! That's quite alright! Just doing my job. Uncovering secrets, solving mysteries!

HEADMISTRESS

Mmm. Does that include the mystery of who burned down the science block four years ago?

BETTE

Errrr! Ahmmmm! Ahh!

HEADMISTRESS

Relax, Bette. Water under the bridge. Although perhaps you'd like to do me a favour? To really put the past behind us.

BETTE

A favour? Of course! Anything!

HEADMISTRESS

I have an unwanted foal. Ugly thing's making the school look bad. Can't have that.

BETTE

You mean Lady Katya's foal? You want me to...

HEADMISTRESS

...buy it, yes.

BETTE

What? Me? Buy a horse? Oh God. How much?

HEADMISTRESS

Only the cost of a few paperclips. I do so hate a hole in my budget.

Bette SIGHS.

BETTE

Shit.

CLICK. MUSIC.

CREDITS

The Bette Tapes is a Mockery Manor mini-series starring Hayley Evenett as Bette, with additional voices by Lindsay Sharman and Laurence Owen and Kitty Winter. Written by Lindsay Sharman, directed by Laurence Owen, music, sound design and editing by Laurence Owen. Join us next week for episode 3.

CLICK.