

# Conception of Terror: Tales Inspired by M. R. James - Volume 1

*Author: M. R. James, Stephen Gallagher, A. K. Benedict, Jonathan Barnes, Mark Morris*

---

2026-06

## Synopsis

---

authori¼š	M. R. James, Stephen Gallagher, A. K. Benedict, Jonathan Barnes, Mark Morris
readByi¼š	Robert Bathurst, Tom Burke, Rosa Coduri, Alice Lowe, Pearl Mackie, Anna Maxwell Martin, Andy Nyman, Jeff Rawle, Reece Shearsmith
inLanguagei¼š	english

A collection of four ghostly tales inspired by M. R. James.

*Casting the Runes* - adapted by Stephen Gallagher

When academic Jo Harrington (Anna Maxwell Martin) is sent a paper - *The Truth of Alchemy*, by Anton Karswell - for peer review, she pulls no punches. It has no place in a serious academic publication, and Karswell is a half-bright fool. However, when the editor writes a rejection note to Karswell, he inadvertently includes her entire email. Occultist Karswell (Reece Shearsmith) doesn't take kindly to criticism.

On the tube home with her partner Edward Dunning (Tom Burke), Jo spots a poster with her name on it. It reads: 'In memory of Joanne Harrington, M.Litt, PhD, died September eighteenth, three days were allowed.' Is there anything that Edward can do to save Jo from this curse?

*Lost Hearts* - adapted by A. K. Benedict

Teenager Stephanie Elliot (Rosa Coduri) is taken to Aswarby House to be fostered by Mrs Bunch (Susan Jameson). Stephanie strikes up a friendship with Ben (Bill Milner), the adopted son of charismatic community leader Mr Abney (Jeff Rawle). He tells her that Mr Abney is a good man: he even took in a child refugee last year, but she ran away and stole from him. Stephanie is troubled by voices and visions of a dead girl clutching at her chest, and when Ben disappears she begins to suspect that all is not right in Aswarby House.

*The Treasure of Abbot-Thomas* - adapted by Jonathan Barnes

When former Somerton school pupil Greg Parsbury (Robert Bathurst) meets history teacher Mika Chantry (Pearl Mackie) at a memorial service for schoolmaster Sam Abbot-Thomas, he begs for her help. He has been sent a postcard by the estate of the mysterious and charismatic Abbot-Thomas. On it is a strange inscription in Latin, which he believes to be an inaugural clue in a treasure hunt: much like the elaborate treasure hunts Abbot-Thomas used to set back in the 1970s. There

were rumours that Abbot-Thomas possessed a hidden fortune, and Parsbury and Chantry set out to find it.

*A View from a Hill* adapted by Mark Morris

Comedian and podcaster Paul Fanshawe (Andy Nyman) and his wife, Sarah (Alice Lowe), visit the Cotswolds on holiday, trying to rebuild their lives after the death of their young son, Archie. Whilst out walking they spot a beautiful abbey across the valley on Gallows Hill, but when they reach it, they find the building is little more than rubble. While Sarah explores, Paul records commentary for his podcast. Sarah thinks she hears children's laughter, but there's no-one there. Later that night she listens back to the recording and hears a child's voice whisper, 'Mummy.' Sarah is convinced that Archie is trying to reach them and wants to return to the ruins. But something far worse is waiting for them on Gallows Hill.

## Reader's comments

---

comment 1:

â€"â€" ()