

A Channel 5 Original Drama

COMPULSION



eccho rights



INTRODUCTION

After surviving a major disaster, paramedic Jenny Challoner appears to be coping on the outside but, in private, she's suffering severe PTSD. To escape her pain, Jenny's fallen into addiction to the point where she's about to lose everything she's ever cared about. Hope arrives in the nick of time in the shape of Sasha Santoro; a good Samaritan who helps Jenny in her most desperate hour of need. As the two women bond, Sasha offers Jenny a solution to all her problems. But can Sasha be trusted? Or is Jenny about to unwittingly lose the biggest and most dangerous gamble of her life?

JENNY

LEANNE BEST

(Young Wallander, Tin Star, Cold Feet)

Jenny Challoner never had it easy, but she worked hard and built a life she'd always dreamt of, with husband Chris and daughter Rosie. She has a nice home and a job she loves - she's content.

That all changed six months ago, after she was involved in a train crash that killed 18 people and injured countless others - including Jenny. Ever since she has suffered silently from severe PTSD.

Six months on, Jenny is back at work and seems 'fine' - but underneath she's falling apart. Having found a coping mechanism in online gambling, she gambles any chance she can. The adrenaline rush helps her forget the horror of the crash - but it's come at a huge cost. After fraudulently remortgaging the family home and siphoning off their savings - Jenny borrowed £10,000 from a loan shark.

When Jenny is rescued during a panic attack by Sasha Santoro, she finds it easier to talk to a stranger than to Chris. As her bond with Sasha grows, Jenny's marriage and friendships suffer. When Sasha offers Jenny an illicit way to clear her debts, she initially balks.

At work, Jenny's starts making mistakes, and her resentful colleague and one time replacement, Raj, soon becomes a source of mounting antagonism. Tired of covering for her, when he discovers Jenny's illegal activities, he gives her an ultimatum; come clean, or he'll expose her.

After Rosie hurts herself while Jenny is distracted playing poker, her guilt is overwhelming. As Rosie pulls away and Chris discovers the depth of Jenny's deceit, and she's asked to leave the family home, Jenny realises she'll do anything to keep her family together, even if it means turning to crime.

SASHA

ANNA CHANCELLOR

(Four Weddings and A Funeral, Pennyworth, The Watch)

Sasha Santoro is the good samaritan who comes to Jenny's aid when she suffers a public panic attack. The two women strike up a friendship when they realise they're both going through tough times - Sasha has just lost her younger sister, Tara, to organ failure exacerbated by drug use. Her grief is overwhelming at times, although Sasha uses humour and sarcasm to deflect the depth of her pain.

Sasha is strong, confident, glamorous. She runs a successful online handbag business, and after a hefty divorce settlement, she lives in a large house in a nice part of town. When Jenny and Chris go to Sasha's for dinner, they're struck by how sparse and sterile her house is. Sasha is an enigma to most who meet her, but Jenny can empathise with Sasha's natural sense of detachment, Jenny thinks she 'gets' Sasha, and they become fast friends, confiding in one another.

Charismatic, and a good conversationalist, Sasha is a born saleswoman. She can persuade most people to do most things and Sasha proposes an illicit plan to Jenny that can help her settle her debts - stealing morphine from her station, to sell to a nurse who helps patients 'in need' at the hospice where Sasha's sister died.

We might think that Sasha is elaborately grooming Jenny as a way of getting her hands on the compensation money Jenny is due from the train crash, or maybe we'll think that Sasha just likes to toy with people. Whatever we think about Sasha in the early stages, we'd be right to be suspicious of her - that will never be hidden - but the real reason we need to be wary of this femme fatale is darker and more complex than anyone could imagine.



CONNIE

HAYLEY MILLS

(Wild at Heart, Pitching In)

Connie is the loan shark who holds Jenny's fate in her hands. As one of the few female moneylenders around, Connie is nevertheless fearsome, and feared. Don't let the kindly smile fool you, this woman will happily sip on a gin and tonic as she watches one of her 'boys' break your kneecaps if you don't pay up on time. Jenny has borrowed £10k from Connie, not realising that the already-extortionate interest will be rising week-on-week. Jenny can't pay, but there's no girl code or sisterhood she can try and exploit - Connie doesn't care if you've got tits or tats; you don't pay, she'll blow you away. Literally.

The threat of Connie haunts Jenny throughout the series, and it's only Sasha who seems to stand any chance of buying the extra time Jenny needs to repay the money she owes.

EPISODE ONE

After surviving a tragedy, paramedic Jenny Challoner struggles with PTSD. Concealing her suffering from husband Chris, best friend Alison and daughter Rosie, Jenny returned to work a month ago, but her co-worker Raj doesn't believe she's ready. Scrutinised at work and suffocated at home, Jenny's reluctant to confess the truth - that her panic attacks are getting worse.

During a public meltdown, a stranger comes to Jenny's aid - Sasha Santoro - and a fast friendship forms. Having recently lost her sister, Sasha empathises with Jenny's struggle.. she's also intrigued by the constant phone calls Jenny is getting. Jenny makes a confession to Sasha - she's been self-medicating with online gambling and it's become a full-blown obsession. She's fraudulently remortgaged the family home and now owes money to a loan shark.

Aware of Jenny's predicament, Sasha tells Jenny about the hospice where her sister Tara died, and the nurse who 'helped' patients who needed extra morphine. The black market

in painkillers is thriving, and Jenny's a paramedic... she has access. If she 'borrowed' from her station's supply, Jenny could repay her debts and replace the missing drugs when the victim compensation she's expecting from the tragedy, finally arrives. It would be a 'victimless crime'. Jenny's horrified at the idea, especially as she's up for a promotion, something her trauma counsellor isn't convinced Jenny is ready for.

At home, Chris is wary of Jenny's new best friend, especially as Jenny seems more willing to discuss her emotional problems with Sasha, than with him. Alison is also a touch jealous - who is Sasha Santoro, and where has she come from?

With the first payment due on her illegal loan, a desperate Jenny gambles the last bit of money she has, with devastating consequences, not just for her situation, but for someone she loves.

EPISODE TWO

Jenny's secret is out. Her daughter is in hospital, her husband is in shock. Discovering his wife has gambled away everything they own has rocked Chris to the core. But Jenny has more pressing issues - a race against time to secure the first instalment of her repayment to loan shark Connie Bertram. In desperation, Jenny revisits Sasha's audacious plan to steal drugs from her workplace, but there's no way the money will come in time to pay Connie. At the eleventh hour, Sasha saves the day, but it's only a temporary stay. At work, Jenny steals for the first time and her sense of self-loathing intensifies, as does her PTSD. At home, Chris imposes strict new rules on Jenny - no internet, and no access to the little money they have left.

At Rosie's 10th birthday party, Sasha is the only friendly face to offset the judgement Jenny feels from Chris and Alison. Her spirits are lifted further when she goes to Connie with the first chunk of money from the stolen drugs, but Connie dials up the payment terms - now, only the arrival of the compensation money is going to solve her many money problems. but then Jenny's told the settlement could be months away, and she starts to lose hope, her fear compounded when Rosie receives a belated birthday present from an unexpected - and very unwelcome - source. Is Jenny's daughter in danger?

EPISODE THREE

After a restless night, Jenny sneaks out to give Sasha the latest batch of drugs she's stolen. Sasha has something for Jenny, too; login details to Sasha's bank account, "for emergencies". Sasha doesn't like how Chris has emasculated Jenny but, although grateful, Jenny's ever-present urge to gamble only increases. Returning home, Jenny walks in on something she's sure she wasn't meant to see, and her anxiety is heightened. Alison then makes a serious accusation against Sasha, and the gulf between the former best friends widens.

Already on the edge, Jenny is confronted by a heartbroken Chris, who's discovered another secret Jenny has been hiding. He needs answers, right now, but Jenny knows that the truth will almost certainly destroy everything between them. Trapped between a rock and a hard place, Jenny decides not to answer the million dollar question... so Chris asks her to leave, for good.

Finding sanctuary at Sasha's, Jenny feels her resolve weakening as the lure of the poker tables, and a shiny new bank card, becomes almost too hard to resist.

At work, Jenny and her colleagues attend a major incident, where a miscommunication in the field has near-fatal consequences. Although blameless, Jenny's partner Raj chooses the moment to highlight Jenny's flaws... and to reveal that he "knows what she's been doing". Faced with yet another ultimatum, Jenny feels herself cracking under the pressure, not helped by Sasha's subtle encouragement of the doubts Jenny's having. When Jenny then comes across some incriminating text messages, Sasha urges Jenny to 'get the truth', resulting in a devastating confession from Alison.

Then Jenny's compensation arrives, and she finally sees some light at the end of the tunnel. But her joy is short-lived. No sooner does the money arrive, than it's gone just as fast. And it's not just the money that's done a disappearing act.

EPISODE FOUR

With Sasha - and Jenny's money - nowhere to be found, Jenny chases the only lead she has: loan shark Connie Bertram, who agrees to help Jenny find her quarry... for a price. As she waits on news, Jenny is pressured by Raj to confess to the drugs thefts and resign, but Jenny's fed-up of being bullied and decides to give back as good as she gets. Leaving a shocked Raj in her wake, Jenny finally gets word from Connie and rushes to her office... but it's not Connie waiting for her.

Alone at last with Sasha, it's Jenny's turn to ask the questions. Why has Sasha stolen her money? Was it all just a con? And what does Sasha's dead sister, Tara, have to do with everything? As truths are aired and the tension mounts, Jenny finally gets Sasha to fill in some gaps. But Jenny's in no way prepared for Sasha's final, and most shocking revelation; something which forces Jenny to question everything she thought she'd been through, and everything she thinks she is. Has Jenny really been the innocent victim of a cruel, cold con? Or has Sasha Santoro been the good guy along?

COMPULSION



AVAILABLE AS

4 x 60 min or 2 x 90 min

PRODUCER

LA Productions (UK)

BROADCASTER

Channel 5 (UK)

DISTRIBUTOR

Eccho Rights

eccho rights