

= Chrissie Watts =

Christine " Chrissie " Watts is a fictional character from the BBC soap opera EastEnders , played by Tracy @-@ Ann Oberman . She first appeared in April 2004 as the second wife of the show 's " most enduring character " , Den Watts , becoming a prominent regular for the next 18 months . In 2005 she was the focus of one of " the programme 's biggest and most high @-@ profile narratives " when she killed her husband in a fit of rage during the special 20th anniversary episode . The broadcast , airing on 18 February , was watched by 14 @.@ 34 million people , with " almost 60 % of possible viewers " tuning in to see Chrissie take revenge . The character was credited by former head of BBC Drama Serials , Mal Young , as " anchoring the success of the anniversary storyline " , and was described on the news programme BBC Breakfast as the " centrepiece " of the show , with the on @-@ screen drama playing out over the course of the year and culminating in Chrissie 's departure in December .

Chrissie Watts was created by the production team to be more the " equal " of her notorious and villainous husband than his long @-@ suffering first wife , Angie . The character was described by Oberman as being like Angie " but with 15 more years of feminism behind her " , and was hailed by the TV editor of the Evening Standard as " the only strong woman left in Walford " . She became well known for her deviousness and " scheming " , echoing the traits of her husband , with the official EastEnders website characterising her as " happy to play mind games " and " often two steps ahead " of Den . As part of the Watts family , her story lines centre on her tumultuous marriage to Den , her relationship with his children , and the ongoing feud with the rival Mitchell family . She was involved in numerous clashes with other female characters , Oberman noting that Chrissie had " had more fights on EastEnders than most women have in their whole lives " , and was constantly scheming against those who got in her way , earning her the sobriquet of " super @-@ bitch " .

Oberman won praise for her " three @-@ dimensional portrayal of a classic soap bitch " , with Chrissie hailed as " helping revive the show 's fortunes that had been lagging somewhat in recent years " . According to the Daily Mirror reporter Elizabeth Hassell , the character became a " national TV heroine " to viewers shortly after arriving , for standing up to the antics of her dastardly husband , and is most often cited as a " strong " and " clever " woman ; " hard as nails " in " the grand tradition of landladies of the Queen Vic " . Although generally well received by viewers , the character was described as a " ludicrous Lady MacBeth wannabe " by Jim Shelley of the Daily Mirror . Other critics have variously called Chrissie a " witch " , " venomous " , and the show 's resident " black widow " .

= = Storylines = =

= = = Backstory = = =

Chrissie Watts first appears in EastEnders on 29 April 2004 . She and Den (Leslie Grantham) had met in Spain and married some years earlier , during which time he was believed to be dead by his family and associates . Their marriage was tumultuous , with Chrissie eventually leaving Den after she saw him " pawing all over that tourist guide . " She then learnt that Den had sold their bar and returned to the UK with " some girl " ; Chrissie followed intent on recovering her share of the money .

= = = 2004 ? 05 = = =

Chrissie arrives in Walford in search of her husband Den . Their marriage has turned sour and he has sold their bar in Spain and taken the money . Den manages to persuade her to give their marriage another try , and to stay in Walford with him . She is shocked to discover he has children , Sharon Watts (Letitia Dean) , Dennis Rickman (Nigel Harman) and Vicki Fowler (Scarlett Johnson) , and that while he was in Spain with her , he was in exile after faking his own death . She starts work as a hairdresser in Kate Mitchell 's (Jill Halfpenny) nail salon and helps stepdaughter

Vicki with her plans to enter fashion school . However , Den 's elusive behaviour raises her suspicions that he is having an affair . He almost convinces her that she is mistaken , but she eventually learns that her fears were correct and uncovers the affair between Den and Kate . Feigning friendship , she hacks off most of Kate 's hair and smashes up the beauty salon in a rage . She leaves Walford distraught at Den 's betrayal .

Den departs for Spain on business , and Chrissie returns to the salon as she remains the co @-@ owner . She remains hostile to Kate for some time , but eventually calls a truce . She then becomes concerned over Vicki 's much older boyfriend Tommy Grant (Robert Cavanah) , and exposes him as a liar . At this point , Den returns intent on securing her forgiveness . However , she does not succumb to his charm offensive , and so as a demonstration of his affection he confides in her of his plans to bankrupt the Mitchell family and take control of The Queen Victoria public house , declaring that he can 't do it without her . She relents , but warns if he ever cheats again she will kill him . Together , they scam the Mitchell family out of their holdings and move into the Vic on Christmas Day , 2004 .

In January , Dennis catches Den and his girlfriend Zoe Slater (Michelle Ryan) in bed together and tells Chrissie who is stunned . Zoe discovers she is pregnant by Den . Chrissie persuades her to abort the baby , and later reveals that she knows it was Den 's baby . Chrissie , Zoe and Sam Hunter (Kim Medcalf) plan revenge on Den ; Chrissie for his lies and adultery , Zoe for forcing her to fake a pregnancy and then sleep with him , and Sam for losing her pub to Den in a corrupt scheme that both he and Chrissie were involved in . Chrissie plans to intimidate Den into signing the pub over to her . They confront Den but he takes it in his stride and openly talks about his sins , unaware that Sharon is hiding at the other side of the pub , listening to her father 's confessions . Sharon berates Chrissie for tricking her into coming back to Walford with the lie that her father is ill . She storms out of the pub and Den follows . Chrissie knows that Sharon is the one person Den truly loves and cares about and knows that losing Den the love of his favourite child will destroy him . Den walks back in and she taunts him that he now knows what it is like to lose what he loves most . Unable to contain his rage , Den attacks his wife and hits her head against a fruit machine . Zoe picks up the nearest object (a metal , dog @-@ shaped doorstep) and hits Den over the head with it and he falls to the ground . Perceiving him to be dead , Zoe and Sam go out the back to turn all the lights off and lock all the doors . A smug Chrissie starts to gloat that Den is dead , as if to say she has won . Den suddenly grabs her leg and hisses , " You 'll never get me out of the Vic . " so Chrissie picks up the doorstep and delivers a fatal blow to his head , secretly watched by Sam . The three women bury him in a hole in the pub 's cellar , which is filled with cement the next morning .

Despite knowing that she is innocent , Chrissie allows Zoe to believe that she has killed Den . Consequently , a power struggle breaks out between Sam ? who wants her pub back in return for her silence ? and Chrissie , with each woman trying to gain control of Zoe . In the meantime , Chrissie publicly accounts for Den 's sudden absence by declaring that he has run off with another woman and attempts to make her story convincing by throwing his clothes into the street and engaging in a bogus phone conversation with him in front of a packed pub . She successfully removes Zoe from the Square for a time , and begins a relationship with Jake Moon (Joel Beckett) ; however , Sam has taken the doorstep and hidden it in her flat . She then proceeds to blackmail Chrissie by saying that unless the pub is given back to her , she will inform the police . Chrissie stalls for time , and eventually calls Sam 's bluff , declaring that she will take Sam down with her if she goes to the police . Desperate , Sam tries to corner Chrissie by telling Zoe the truth . Zoe confronts Chrissie before fleeing to Spain , telling her mother Kat Slater (Jessie Wallace) what has happened before she goes .

Dennis and Sharon return to Walford in search of their father . On their wedding day , a drunken Sam grows frustrated and smashes up Den 's grave and digs up his body in the hope that Chrissie will be sent down for his death . This backfires and Sam is arrested on suspicion of murder as Den 's bloodstains are found under her sink and her story constantly changes . Chrissie asks Kat to get her cousin , Stacey Slater (Lacey Turner) , to give a false alibi that Zoe and Chrissie were with her on the night Den died , and Kat agrees as it means that Zoe is safe from the police . Sam 's mother , Peggy Mitchell , returns to Walford to free Sam , and slaps Chrissie during Den 's funeral . The slap

causes Chrissie to fall into Den 's grave on top of the coffin .

Chrissie plans to sell the pub to Johnny Allen (Billy Murray) and a mystery second buyer , and flee the country , although Phil and Grant Mitchell try to taunt her . Chrissie though , is unfazed , as Sharon still supports her ? however , Grant finally convinces Sharon to visit Sam in prison . Sharon still believes Chrissie is innocent , but finally learns the truth when Chrissie makes an innocuous , but telling , comment . Realising that Sharon knows , Chrissie becomes distraught as she felt that so long as Sharon , Den 's daughter , thought well of her , she could think well of herself . Panicking , she begins to make mistakes , arguing with Jake outside of Johnny 's club . Chrissie had confessed her role in Den 's death to Jake , and lets information regarding her guilt slip as they argue . This is caught on CCTV by Johnny , who delights in telling Jake that he has a recording . Chrissie asks to get the money for The Queen Victoria right away , and Johnny takes advantage , saying the only way she will get the money is if she sleeps with him . Chrissie resists , saying that she will not hurt Jake . Johnny tells her that she will not receive the money , and tells Phil and Grant about the tape .

Chrissie discovers that Ian Beale (Adam Woodyatt) is the mystery buyer of the pub , and she and Jake make a quick sale to Ian before fleeing the Square . At the airport , they see Sharon , Phil and Grant with the police . Sharon confronts and then punches Chrissie , who is then arrested for Den 's murder . Chrissie says that she will only co @-@ operate in exchange for a meeting with Sharon . This is earned , and she tries to make Sharon realise why she killed her father , to no avail . She reveals that she forged Den 's signature on the document in which Den handed over the pub to Chrissie , thus the pub legally belongs to Sharon . Jake visits Chrissie in jail and asks her to marry him . She finds out that he has lost the £ 25 @,@ 000 that was to be her bail money , and storms out of the visiting room , calling Jake an idiot . She begins plotting revenge on Sharon for sending her to prison by trying to force her to testify in court about what Den was really like , wanting to see Sharon crumble at confessing how he cheated and supposedly beat her mother (which he never did) . After a week in prison , she gives up and dismisses her solicitor , and decides to plead guilty to murder . After an emotional farewell to Jake , she walks into her cell with a contented smile .

Though Chrissie has not been seen or heard of since , when Sam (now played by Danniella Westbrook) returns to Walford in September 2009 , she is arrested for her role in Den 's murder and expresses a fear of running into Chrissie in prison .

= = Creation and casting = =

The creation of a second wife for Den Watts (Leslie Grantham) , the show 's " most enduring character " and " one of the best @-@ loved villains in soap history " , came 15 years after his first wife had departed the screen . Angie Watts (Anita Dobson) was an iconic character in British television history , with her troublesome marriage to Den largely anchoring EastEnders extraordinary success when it was launched in the mid @-@ 80s . In an interview shortly after she first appeared on @-@ screen as Chrissie Watts , Tracy Ann Oberman noted how coming into the show after Angie was an intimidating prospect and " a big act to follow " .

Casting for the character was hectic , with Oberman describing the process as a " whirlwind " affair . The role of the second Mrs Den Watts was highly sought after with Oberman eventually beating out high profile stars like Patsy Kensit , Cheryl Baker and Joanna Lumley for the part . In a 2004 ' Star Chat ' interview featured in The People , Oberman commented on her casting : " I couldn 't have wished for a better part . I mean the Watts family are a national institution . When I realised I was auditioning for the role of Dirty Den 's wife , my jaw just dropped . I never thought I 'd get it . Amazing , swanky actresses , like Joanna Lumley and Patsy Kensit , were all considered , but Leslie Grantham and I had great chemistry from the off and I think he said : ' I want her . ' " Oberman was on holiday when she received a call saying she had been cast in the role and was required to be on set the next Tuesday . All told the audition process had taken just two weeks , with Oberman beginning filming a mere ten days after her initial screen test . In fact the schedule was so tight that Oberman was on set and taping scenes before a contract had even been signed .

The arrival of Chrissie Watts was announced barely a month before she was set to first appear on @-@ screen , and came at a time when EastEnders was undergoing immense media criticism and

falling ratings . The rush of casting meant Oberman had little time to process the enormity of the part she had taken on , declaring : " my feet haven 't even touched the ground yet . [...] I haven 't had time to think about what this role is going to do to my life ! I 'm very excited to be part of such a fantastic show and one I have been a fan of for many years . " She admitted , however , to being " slightly intimidated " by the high media profile and press interest surrounding the show at the time . Indeed , joining EastEnders " proved to be something of a baptism of fire for Oberman " , as she was playing opposite Leslie Grantham whose recent return to the show had been a highly publicised event . Twenty @-@ four hours after Chrissie 's first episode went to air a scandal surrounding Grantham hit the tabloid papers . According to Oberman , the atmosphere on set the next day " was a bit tense " but , she added , " the Watts are pulling together and we 're getting on with it and working " . However Oberman was also reportedly finding things difficult , having walked into a highly complicated situation : " Tracy @-@ Ann is still really finding her feet on the show ... she feels really left out because all the cast are blackballing Grantham and refusing to talk to him . Since most of her scenes are with Grantham , it 's really hard for her . " Looking back on the incident after she had left EastEnders , Oberman remarked , " I respect Leslie for fronting it out ; he emerged from his dressing room and started working . No one mentioned the story . That 's life in EastEnders ; the machine never stops . "

The increasing prominence of Chrissie in EastEnders meant that Oberman , more than most , had to endure the gruelling schedule of working on a soap , taping up to twenty scenes a day . Although she was only in EastEnders for 18 months , such was the centrality of Chrissie to the show and storylines Oberman felt she had done 4 years worth of acting , noting that by the time of her departure " Chrissie has packed into a year what most soap characters do in three . " This all came during a period of great uncertainty for the show ; media criticism and negative publicity created immense pressure behind @-@ the @-@ scenes , with large @-@ scale cast culls and speculation in the press and on the set over who may be next . In an interview with the Sunday Mirror , Oberman described the atmosphere as like a " vacuum " , with the cast " just waiting to see what the next stage is ? It can be a bit tense but it 's exciting . I really don 't know what 's going to happen . " However , the prominent role of Chrissie in the show as it moved forward meant that Oberman came out of the uncertainty with more to show than most , receiving an improved deal and extending her contract for a year , with the BBC 's head of drama John Yorke declaring he had " big plans " for Chrissie .

= = Character development = =

= = = Personality = = =

Unlike Angie , Den 's first wife , Chrissie " has a strong will and fights for what she wants " . However , as Oberman noted , " there is enough of Angie in Chrissie to see that Den likes a certain type of strong woman . Chrissie is Angie with 15 years of feminism behind her " , explaining in an interview with Radio 4 : " I like to think of Chrissie as Angie with benefits ... She 's his [Den 's] equal a bit more than Angie was . " Oberman later expanded : " Chrissie , unlike Angie , won 't hit the bottle as soon as Den starts playing away . She 's proved she 's ready to sit and wait for her revenge . She 's a great , strong character " . Talking to the Daily Mirror shortly after appearing on @-@ screen for the first time in April , Oberman declared , " Chrissie is the sort of woman I 'd really like to be friends with ... She 's an Essex girl who was brought up in a family of brothers , so she knows how to work men . She understands that what they say is not always what they mean . " In her official character profile , Chrissie is portrayed as someone " happy to play mind games " and " often two steps ahead of her husband " , being described as " the type of person to be your best friend . But if you cross her , she 'll get her own back in the end . " Her strong @-@ willed persona has led reviewers to label the character as " venomous " , " sinister " " devious " , and " hard as nails " in " the grand tradition of landladies of the Queen Vic " , manipulating others to ensure matters go her way . As the " scheming " figure of the show , she was described as a " witch " and " super @-@

bitch " , but was also represented as " strong " and " clever " woman . Executive producer Kate Harwood characterised Chrissie as a survivor , someone who " thinks on her feet " whatever the situation . Oberman has stated that she was thrilled to be " playing such a strong female character " , whom she described as not a bad person at heart but one willing to stand and " fight in her corner " .

An aspect of Chrissie 's personality is her wardrobe and style , with EastEnders costume designer Di Humphreys noting that " Chrissie 's clothes reflect her strong , upfront character . " According to Oberman the production team was keen to emphasise this in the manner of her dress : " For Chrissie 's wardrobe , we decided she is dressy and over co @-@ ordinated " , explaining how the character 's fashion sense was informed by her own observations of British expatriates : " When I heard I had the part of Chrissie I was on holiday in Spain , where she had been living , and I remember looking at all the ex @-@ pat women , and thinking how co @-@ ordinated they are . Their hair is always perfect , their bags match their gloves and shoes and scarves . " The show 's make @-@ up artist , Elizabeth Armistead , has also spoken of the way Chrissie 's " glamorous , polished look " informs her characterisation and personality : " Chrissie 's a confident person who rarely leaves anything to chance . Even in moments of despair , though her facial expression reflects her turmoil , she never has a hair out of place . " The look was part of a desire to represent the character as a " strong " and " forceful " figure , with one interviewer describing Chrissie as " quite flashy " and " glam " . According to Humphreys this is manifested in " Chrissie 's outfits , [which] are a mixture of designer and High Street ... Chrissie 's got a great sense of style . She makes High Street clothes look made to measure . " Oberman felt Chrissie 's fashion sensibilities to be a critical element of the character : " she 's like Angie with 15 more years of Sex and The City thrown in " , referring to an American televised serial notable for fashion . Even before stepping foot on set Oberman spent eight hours with Humphreys shopping for Chrissie 's clothes at Selfridges where they " spent a fortune ! " The character 's highly stylised representation on @-@ screen earned Oberman the award for best @-@ dressed soap star in 2005 , and reflected Chrissie 's new @-@ found role as the " voluptuous landlady " of The Queen Vic . In the media the character was widely regarded as the show 's ultimate femme fatale and resident " sex symbol " , being described by John Dingwall of the Daily Record as Walford 's " black widow " .

In an interview with the Sunday Mirror , Oberman revealed that she was attracted to the mesh of sexuality and humour in the personality of Chrissie , declaring , " What I really like is she 's got the sex and dry sarcasm " . Speaking to the official EastEnders website , she expanded on the importance of Chrissie 's sense of humour and wit to her " feisty " characterisation : " What I love about Chrissie is that she 's a good strong , funny female character ... she 's got a really good sense of humour which is necessary to deal with Den . She 's very good at wisecracks . Den has the one @-@ liners , but Chrissie bats them right back . " Chrissie 's barbed and biting remarks became a prominent feature of the character ; even when cornered by Den 's adopted daughter Sharon Watts (Letitia Dean) after attempting to flee the country , she remarks : " You really are your father 's daughter , Sharon . No shaking you off either . "

= = = Mrs Den Watts = = =

Chrissie entered the show as the estranged wife of " one of the most iconic characters in soap history " , Den Watts , and was deliberately presented as " very different to the first Mrs. Watts . " When EastEnders began in 1985 viewers had watched Den 's affairs and manipulation gradually take their toll on his wife , Angie , who was unable to compete in the games he played . Chrissie was intended to be a contrast to her predecessor ; where Angie turned to alcohol , Chrissie was more Den 's " equal " and could be just as devious and calculating , with Oberman observing how " Angie was all knee @-@ jerk reaction , but Chrissie is more of a plotter and schemer ? just like Den . " Comparing Den 's two wives , Oberman remarked : " Chrissie 's much cooler than Angie . Her motto is , ' revenge is a dish best served cold ' . She 's tougher than Angie and she can hold it together much better . " Indeed , according to Oberman , producers deliberately wanted to take Den 's second marriage down a different path to his first ; whereas the relationship between Den and Angie

had been likened to Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor , that between Den and Chrissie was modelled on Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn . Like Den , Chrissie had an acerbic tongue and their relationship was marked by verbal fencing in the manner of Hepburn and Tracy : " What 's great is that they 've written Den an equal " , Oberman noted , " It 'll be interesting to see their little sparring matches . " The attraction was intended to be mutual , unlike Den 's one @-@ sided marriage to Angie . Trying to win Chrissie around into giving their marriage another try , Den declared : " I know we 've got a great relationship even when we 're tearing lumps out of each other , you give as good as you get and that 's the sort of marriage I 've always wanted " . Commenting on the complicated nature of their relationship , Oberman observed ,

The equality of their marriage was dramatically underscored towards the end of 2004 , when Den , as a sign of faith and in an effort to win back her sympathies , revealed to Chrissie his plans to reclaim The Queen Victoria public house by scamming the rival Mitchell family : " If you ever needed proof that we 're in this together or how badly I need you in my life , this is it . I wasn 't going to show this to another soul , but I 'm showing you because you 're my wife ; because it 's me and you together . "

In an interview with the official EastEnders website , Oberman detailed the background dynamic to Chrissie and Den 's relationship as it existed before their appearance on the show : " They were a real match for each other and ran a successful wine bar . The couple made a good team , but he was always going off with other women . She 'd end up leaving him , but they 'd always end up back together . " Den 's womanising and philandering nature was deliberately set against Chrissie 's strong and forceful personality , and culminated on @-@ screen in his affair with Kate Mitchell (Jill Halfpenny) . The plot was praised by television editor Ru Green as being one of the " better storylines " during an otherwise weak year for the show , with media attention at the time profiling Chrissie 's dramatic plans for revenge . Commenting on the storyline 's climax , a report in The Sun spotlighted how " instead of collapsing in tears " as many female characters in EastEnders are wont to do , Chrissie " proves that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned " . The climax , which saw Chrissie cut off Kate Mitchell 's hair in retribution for the affair , was a highlight for Oberman and an important dramatic milestone for her character : " cutting off Jill Halfpenny 's hair in the salon ... was a really great episode . I loved working with Jill and I think that put Chrissie on the map . "

Chrissie left Den but was eventually convinced to give their marriage another try . Oberman revealed in the Daily Mail that she drew on a famous real @-@ life model to reconcile the dichotomous behaviour of a strong woman taking back her cheating husband : " I based Chrissie on Hillary : an intelligent , attractive woman who was publicly humiliated . People ask why she stays with that awful man . A lot of strong women are like that . " She also saw the ebb and flow of Den and Chrissie 's marriage as a reflection of the mental gameplaying that was so prominent in their characterisations : " I think there 's a challenge in it , and I think she would like to be the one who would ultimately tame him . " As Den 's equal , Chrissie was intended to be a challenge to his propensity for intellectual games , having already outwitted the show 's prior top dog , Phil Mitchell (Steve McFadden) . Den had seen little threat in his first wife 's aptitude , but considered Chrissie to be " as sharp as they come " . Indeed , Den 's extra @-@ marital dalliances were used by writers to showcase and highlight Chrissie 's " strong @-@ willed persona " . When Zoe Slater (Michelle Ryan) chastised Den for caring only about Chrissie 's reaction should she learn of their affair , Den fired back : " And so should you . You think I 've treated you badly ? Well you don 't have a clue what 's going to happen if she ever finds out ! The best thing you can do is keep your mouth shut . " By the time Chrissie left the Square , Oberman dryly observed that she had " had more fights on EastEnders than most women have in their whole lives . "

= = = Witches of Walford = = =

In November 2004 it was announced that Leslie Grantham had not renewed his contract and that Den Watts would depart EastEnders in what was described by The Mirror as an " explosive " and final exit . The storyline became one of " the program 's biggest and most high @-@ profile narratives " , dominating the entire year , and made the character of Chrissie Watts the " centrepiece

" of the show . The lead @-@ up to the 20th anniversary episode in February was an immensely high profile affair , with Imogen Ridgway and Richard Godwin of the Evening Standard dryly observing that " unless you 've been living on Titan you probably know that EastEnders is 20 years old and Dirty Den is once again leaving Albert Square . " Events in the show centre around Chrissie manipulating Sam Mitchell and Zoe Slater in a plot of revenge against Den , the three women being dubbed the " Witches of Walford " by the popular press in reference to Shakespeare 's play , Macbeth . The prelude to Den 's death further highlighted and showcased Chrissie 's manipulative character and conniving personality in her representation as a " strong " and " forceful " figure . When she secretly learns that Zoe is pregnant by Den , she plays on Zoe 's insecurities and vulnerabilities and " coerces " her into having an abortion . The pregnancy represented a double blow to Chrissie as Den had always resisted having children with her , and as with Kate Mitchell , Chrissie determines to teach Zoe a harsh lesson about " messing with other people 's husbands " . The possessive nature of his wife was noted by Den , who warns Zoe that Chrissie " tends to blame the women that lead me astray . "

The final confrontation between husband and wife played out during the special episode marking the show 's 20th anniversary . Such was public interest in the storyline that the production team reportedly took to " fiercely guarding " scripts , " so that even the cast weren 't sure how they would play out " , with " the show 's producers shooting multiple endings to ensure the cast couldn 't leak the plot . " During the hour @-@ long broadcast Chrissie leads Sam and Zoe into facing Den , with 14 @. @ 34 million people watching her deliver the fatal blow to her husband after a violent struggle . Oberman " begged the producers to let Chrissie do it to prove she wasn 't a sap " , adding " It was a real rush for me . " In the aftermath of Den 's death , Chrissie became an increasingly " transformed " and colder figure , as the character " played " and " spun " her way " out of every situation " . She proceeds to trick Zoe into taking the blame for Den 's murder , and continuously outmanoeuvres Sam in the latter 's efforts to get back the Vic . Oberman felt this to be a noticeable shift in Chrissie 's characterisation , with the show 's writers taking " her down a darker route " , as in one notable scene depicting Chrissie standing over Den 's grave , and confiding to him of her plans .

The storyline commenced its conclusion with the return of the Mitchell family to help Sam , who had been framed by Chrissie for the murder of Den ; events were to culminate in Chrissie 's " explosive " departure from the show , with producers telling Oberman that when she leaves " later this year , it 's going to be one of the most explosive storylines ever . Like Den before her , Chrissie had little trouble outsmarting the Mitchells , her clashes with Peggy (Barbara Windsor) , Phil , and Grant (Ross Kemp) part of the final showdown between the Watts and Mitchells that , in the words of one presenter , " grips the nation " . The story 's climax , resulting in Chrissie 's exit from Walford , was such a considerable moment for the show that BBC bosses took the highly unusual step of keeping the " manner of her departure " a " complete mystery even to the soap 's [own] producers " , with reports claiming that " no less than four separate storylines [are] to be filmed for her departure from EastEnders " . Commenting at the time to NOW , Oberman said , " I think Chrissie deserves to get away with murder . She was heavily provoked . I 'd love to see her make it to Argentina ... [and] run a beach bar with a young Latin lover by her side . " The immense public focus on the figure of Chrissie was used by executives in the intensifying ratings war , with the BBC " using the Chrissie Watts departure as the major weapon in our armoury ... to snatch back viewers " from rival soaps .

= = = Victim or villain = = =

To mark Chrissie 's departure from the show , BBC Three aired a special episode of EastEnders Revealed on 22 September 2005 . Entitled " Chrissie Watts : Victim or Villain ? " the episode featured comments from Oberman , Grantham , Dean , Kim Medcalf , and Barbara Windsor profiling Chrissie and exploring the nuanced nature of the character . " A lot of viewers , and myself , " Oberman later remarked , " really wanted Chrissie to get away with it , especially as Den was such a monster . But soap and film noir have a lot in common ? the bad girls have to be punished . " However , critics considered Chrissie to be a " three @-@ dimensional soap bitch " , rather than a

flat pantomime figure . Despite having killed her father , Chrissie highly valued her friendship with Sharon , declaring at one point : " my friendship with you is the only good thing to come out of my relationship with Den , and I mean that ! " Oberman characterised Chrissie as " part victim part villain " , declaring " I think of her as a villain with a heart " . She felt that , although " no excuse " for murder , Chrissie was driven to what she did : " She 's not a cold blooded murderer , it was all done in a fit of pique " , and that " these characters are made , not born . " Chrissie was haunted by the alcoholic fate of Den 's first wife , which she vowed at Angie 's grave to avoid . But in spite of her efforts , and indeed because of them , she failed , as she came to recognise : " You know it 's funny ; when Den used to talk about Ange he used to describe her as this weak sad , cow . And I used to think ' not like me , oh no , not like me ' . Who 's having the last laugh now , Ange ? "

= = Reception = =

As the wife of Den Watts , one of British soap 's biggest figures , Chrissie was a high profile character , with the turns in her storylines regularly splashed across the tabloid papers . According to Steve Hendry of the Daily Mail (Glasgow) , Oberman was an " overnight success " in the role of Chrissie , and successfully " exorcised the iconic ghost of long @-@ dead Queen Vic lush Angie Watts " , becoming , in the words of reporter Katherine Hassell , " a national TV heroine after she arrived in Albert Square in 2004 as the wife of the resurrected Dirty Den " . The character 's tough and steely persona was widely cited by TV critics , such as Imogen Ridgway of The Evening Standard , who felt Chrissie to be the " dominant female character " in the show , maintaining an increasingly threatened EastEnders tradition of the independent , forceful female figure : " For a soap originally underpinned by dominant female characters , it seems odd that Chrissie Watts is apparently the only strong woman left in Walford " .

The storyline involving Den 's death was among the most prominent of the decade , and generated intense media and public interest . Looking back on the period , Oberman noted the remarkable nature of the story :

The special 1 @-@ hour 20th anniversary episode where Chrissie killed Den was watched by 14 @.@ 34 million people on the night it was broadcast , attracting " almost 60 % of possible viewers " , with a peak share of 57 @.@ 8 % . It was the highest rated episode of EastEnders that year , and has since only been bested by a showing on Christmas Day 2007 (which drew anomalous large audiences for all BBC One programmes that year) , and the 25th anniversary episode . However final figures for the broadcast , which factored in digital and recorded viewings , rose to over 17 million making it the highest rated screening of a British soap since 2003 . The episode received a massive amount of media interest , and was highly praised for displaying " some of the tightest , funniest dialogue this soap has seen " . Oberman revealed that she could not stop laughing during filming of the scenes , as Grantham 's hair was stuck to the floor : " We did lots of takes and poor Leslie was on his back for hours with fake blood all around his head . The liquid dried and his hair was glued to the floor . When he got up it ripped his hair out ! " .

The aftermath dominated EastEnders in 2005 and helped to revive the fortunes of the show . According to the former head of BBC Drama Serials , Mal Young , this was dependent on the character of Chrissie , who was responsible for " anchoring the success of the anniversary storyline " . A similar sentiment was expressed by Ian Hyland in the Sunday Mirror , who although critical of the convoluted plot felt EastEnders was improving " mainly because Chrissie is doing her best to rescue the fallout from the storyline dirty bomb Den 's murder has become " , and described the character as performing a " rescue act " on the show . However , Jim Shelley of the Daily Mirror was highly critical of Chrissie , calling her " the ludicrous Lady MacBeth wannabe " , and felt her departure was enabling EastEnders to move forward . In contrast , the TV editor of the Telegraph hailed Chrissie as " helping revive the show 's fortunes that had been lagging somewhat in recent years " .

Oberman has described her time on the show as " hectic " . During Chrissie 's tenure there was constant shuffling behind the scenes , with three different executive producers taking the reins , with each new producer bringing in new writing teams . Uncertainty came to be manifested in writing and

scripts , with character inconsistencies and plot holes working their way into production . One notable example was ownership of The Queen Victoria , with Chrissie legally owner of half the pub after Den legitimately signed over the deed before they renewed their vows in February . However , in November this fact was forgotten , with Chrissie represented as forging Den 's signature to nullify her ownership of the pub which legally became Sharon 's . Problems with the script did not escape Oberman , who criticised her character 's storylines after she left the show , saying the writers " must have been on crack " , adding how " plots didn 't make logical or emotional sense ? but they said , ' That 's the soap convention , dear , get used to it ' " . She also considered some scenes to be irresponsible , saying " I was worried when four @-@ year @-@ olds said to me , ' I saw you kill Den . ' I don 't agree with censorship but there has to be a level of responsibility . "

One of the consequences of all the uncertainty behind the scenes was Chrissie 's final fate , which was left largely unresolved . Oberman revealed in July 2009 that originally there were plans for a trial , but that poor timing ultimately shelved the storyline . She recalled how the storyline " was put on hold and then there was a whole different team involved after that . I know that if they couldn 't get me , Michelle and Kim together , [they wouldn 't do it] . And I 'd moved straight on to Doctor Who , too . Nobody was available until the following year , by which point Michelle was in Bionic Woman , I was pregnant and Kim was in Cabaret . " Because of this " I never felt it was finished off and I would have loved to have wrapped it up . " She went on to declare her desire to return for a proper resolution . " I 'd love to finish off Chrissie 's storyline because I love the character and I do feel that she was left in limbo . To know what happened to her would be great . Even if she went back to say goodbye or wanted to make peace with Sam . Or maybe we could see her in prison ? "

However , Oberman has continuously affirmed that she loved playing Chrissie , and of all her roles misses playing her the most . In a 2009 interview she commented on the significance of the character to EastEnders and viewers , saying " I can 't believe that I 'm still recognised so much as Chrissie . I still get a lot of letters about her , too . I think that she had as much of an impact as Janine (Charlie Brooks) did , which surprised me . Chrissie wasn 't around for that long but she was an amazing character with an epic storyline . "

Oberman was nominated for a number of awards for her portrayal of Chrissie Watts . In 2004 for Most Popular Newcomer at the National Television Awards ; She also received four nominations at the British Soap Awards , for Best Newcomer in 2004 , Villain of the Year in 2005 and 2006 , and Soap Bitch of the Year in 2006 . In 2005 , she was nominated for Best Actress and Best Bitch at the Inside Soap Awards .