

A SHORT PLAY

Missing Persons

No place like home?

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21/10/14

Mike Peters, manager of an employment agency has been asked to help with a police enquiry into the disappearance of 3 of his previous female clients. He is going to need a solicitor.

Characters

Mike Peters – Middle aged manager of an employment agency
– New Start jeans etc- arrived in a rush.

Jane Burt – Police officer - chief inspector. Power suit.

Alan Fairbrother – Solicitor. Suit.

Dawn Collins – One of the missing women. (Slight American accent) smartly dressed.

Props

All the scenes take place in the same interview room, with a clock and disc recorder. 3 chairs, table, tray, 3 plastic cups, sugar packets.

1 Scene 1 Jane starts recorder

2 Jane Thank you for coming in Mr Peters. I am Chief inspector Jane Burt. We will start the interview at 20 05 hours on Tuesday 14th of April

3 Mike I was told I was helping you by providing information. This sounds like I'm some sort of suspect?

4 Jane It's just to help us keep track of what is said.

5 Mike Do I get a copy of this as well?

6 Jane No

7 Mike Do I have a choice?

- 8 Jane No
- 9 Mike Are you charging me with anything?
- 10 Jane Do you know why we have asked you to come into the station Mr Peters?
- 11 Mike Not a clue. Your lad who drove me in said someone had gone missing.
- 12 Jane 3 in fact. All clients of yours
- 13 Mike Who are they? Maybe we still have them on record.
- 14 Jane The first was a Dawn Collins from 8 years ago.
- 15 Mike Don't remember her.
- 16 Jane The second was a Sarah Gowdie. About 5 years ago.
- 17 Mike That name I recall. She had a bit of a mouth on her.
- 18 Jane Was it an attractive mouth Mr Peters? Is that why you remember her Mr Peters?
- 19 Mike Where is this leading to?
- 20 Jane And Becky Wright. She was the most recent, only about 3 years or so ago. She was the youngest at only 19. You prefer younger women do you Mr Peters?
- 21 Mike Are you asking me about something or accusing me of something?

- 22 Jane What do you think? 3 women come to your company for advice and 3 women later vanish. Your company is the only thing they have in common. You (beat)are the only thing they have in common.
- 23 Mike I don't even know If I saw all 3. I remember Sarah Gowdie vaguely and I've seen the name Becky Wright and that's it.
- 24 Jane Your secretary, Karen, keeps an electronic diary.
- 25 Mike She's the receptionist but we don't always interview the list we get. It depends on times. Sometimes you see more and sometimes less.
- 26 Jane We think you saw (beat) and did (beat) much more. Where are they now Mr Peters?
- 27 Mike Have you checked our outcomes records at headquarters?
- 28 Jane You know very well that's in the United States and we do not have access (beat) yet.
- 29 Mike If you are charging me, get on with it and I'll get a solicitor.
- 30 Jane Not yet Mr Peters but I suspect we will so we would like you to be our 'guest'.
- 31 Mike I'll have that solicitor then.

32 SCENE 2

33 Alan How are you bearing up Mr Peters? The possible charges are very serious from what I've seen. (beat) And I've seen some very serious charges Mr Peters. Is there any foundation to them?

34 Mike Not well. My wife is worried sick. Apart from them all having visited the agency, no foundation at all. You can call me Mike.

35 Alan I don't like these sorts of cases. These cases do not proceed unless the CPS is pretty damn sure of themselves. I'll defend you as best I can as you tell me you're innocent but I don't need to pretend to like you or be in any way matey (beat) Mr Peters.

36 Mike So you think I am as guilty as hell?

37 Alan Of course not. You say you're innocent of all charges likely to be brought. Can you think of anything that would help you're cause?

38 Mike Bloody right. Get Karen at the office to contact the girls.

39 Alan Is she a clairvoyant? A medium perhaps? We could have had Doris Stokes as an expert witness but she's dead now as well.

40 Mike Just do it and tell her to use the 'full access' database. You may be surprised.

41 Alan Frankly, with what the families of the girls have supplied, the investigating officer is so confident I'll be amazed if anything can help you.

42 Mike What has she said?

43 Alan That she's planning champagne for after the trial decision

44 SCENE 3

Jane starts recorder

45 Jane Interview started 9.20 am Wednesday 15th April with the accused Michael Peters, Alan Fairbrother solicitor and myself Jane Burt present.

Mr Peters; the 3 missing girls Dawn Collins, Sarah Gowdie and Becky Wright all had meetings with you on one or more occasions at the New Start employment agency. Correct?

46 Mike If that's what the company records show.

47 Jane It is. They all reported to family or friends that they had been offered the sort of opportunities they would (beat – reading from sheet) 'die for'. Which is a quote from all the statements provided? Is that likely to be the wording?

48 Alan You don't have to confirm that.

49 Mike It is the sort of thing I do say though.

50 Jane And within a month all 3 had vanished. No trace ever found. Not one ever started a 'to die for' job.

- 51 Mike Sounds pretty damning said like that.
- 52 Jane It is pretty damning. They sent no cards to family. They broke contact with friends that we have spoken to. They failed to attend planned meetings and appointments. They fell off the edge of the world. (beat) Where are they Mr Peters?
- 53 Alan You don't have to answer that.
- 54 Mike I can't because I don't know the answer to it.
- 55 Jane It won't help to tell lies in a statement we will use in court.
- 56 Alan You don't need to respond to that.
- 57 Jane 2 of the girls were so impressed by you they told friends what fantastic help you were giving them and 'arrangements' you were making on their behalf. What were those arrangements Mr Peters?
- 58 Alan If you have an explanation it may help.
- 59 Mike Certainly. I am the manager and responsible for the help all my staff offer. I can't do it all. We arrange access to training courses; do pre-selection screening for companies and interview practice. We're a charity organisation and even help with proper CV's not the battery farm cloned ones they get elsewhere.
- 60 Jane Seems you may have done even more than that in these cases Mr Peters. I'll give you time to think

about it with your legal adviser. Interview
suspended at 9.28

Jane leaves room

61 Alan So what's the state of play now Mr Peters? Changed
your mind at all?

62 Mike Not one bit. The girls all came to the agency and I
must have met them and yes, maybe more than
once. I probably did say they could be in line for a
new start (beat) 'to die for'. But that's an expression
not a mission statement for God's sake.

63 Alan If she has evidence of a pattern and statements from
family and friends it will stand up in court (beat) and
bite you on the arse. You'll be serving 35 years
minimum, maybe 25 if you hold your hands up now.

64 Mike I did not harm any of those girls in any way

65 Alan Well let's hope you find a jury who believes you. And
if you do, buy a lottery ticket as well.

66 SCENE 4

67 Jane With the two of you here I want to discuss a matter
that has come up since yesterday.

68 Alan Can you start the recorder please?

69 Mike I would prefer it as well.

70 Jane I wouldn't. We have had a strange phone call about you Mr Peters.

71 Alan Start the recording.

72 Jane Think about this. I'll be back in a minute. I'll wait outside

Jane leaves room

73 Alan I don't follow this. She's rattled but they've got a bloody good case against you. Something's happened.

74 Mike I'll bet Karen's happened. She has access to the headquarters files for the last 8 years.

75 Alan So what can she have found?

76 Mike Where the girls are? New Start *is* an opportunities agency.

77 Alan Then we insist on recording – (loudly) Inspector Burt, we're ready.

Jane comes back in

78 Jane What is it to be?

79 Alan We record.

Jane starts recorder

80 Jane Very well. Recording continued Thursday, 10.06.
April 16th

I have received a phone call purporting to be from Becky Wright, possibly from Spain.

81 Alan Who do you think it was?

82 Jane She sounded like the girl; she knew a lot more than we did about her and more than the application form at the agency. (beat) And she did have a forceful turn of phrase. She is sending us a DNA sample but won't tell us where she is or what she is doing.

83 Mike So does that mean one down and two to go?

84 Jane Not at this stage but it is an interesting development. We need confirmation. Becky never had a passport – so how would she get there?
(beat)
Interview suspended.

85 SCENE 6 Jane starts recorder

86 Jane Recording commenced Friday 9 am April 17th

87 Jane Seems your friend Becky hitched to Spain on trucks. Never backward with her favours she found lifts easy to get. She wouldn't say but she has a passport now and is working for an ex-pat family maybe. From who knows where. She won't say and won't say what her papers are but DNA is available. It was handed in to one of our consular offices with no details. Just marked for my attention. It will take time to verify.

88 Alan So my client is free to go and you won't oppose bail?

- 89 Mike I told you Karen would come good.
- 90 Jane We have also received an email. It would seem Sarah Gowdie, or someone your assistant has contacted, is in Australia.
- 91 Alan How did she get there?
- 92 Jane God Knows. We will be checking.
- 93 Alan If you check Australia House they can tell you if a visa or migration documents were issued
- 94 Jane I managed to think of that all by myself but she says she was a refugee
- 95 Mike To Australia? (confused)
- 96 Jane Yes, I said so.
- 97 Alan Another DNA sample on its way?
- 98 Jane I don't know. She says a friend of hers will come to the station with evidence.
- 99 Alan So my client will be allowed home on bail? Pending further enquiries.
- 100 Mike No. Unless it's with a full withdrawal of charges and confirming the women aren't dead, I'll be stoned in the street. My wife, Anne, can't leave the house without crowds of reporters and a howling mob being there. The children have gone to their grandparents. It's a nightmare.

- 101 Alan So you would sooner stay here?
- 102 Mike Bloody right. They've already tried me, found me guilty and favour burning at the stake.
- 103 Jane That was unfortunate and we now have a watch on your house.
- 104 Mike What was, when?
- 105 Jane Since last night's arson attack.
- 106 Mike Jesus Christ. (stunned)
- 107 Alan Is my client's wife safe?
- 108 Jane She only suffered the effects of smoke inhalation and will be discharged from hospital later today after observation.
- 109 **Phone rings**
- 110 Jane OK, I'll be there. Interview suspended. Seems the 'evidence' has arrived. I'll send in coffee.
- 111 **Rises and leaves**
- 112 Alan I may have misjudged you Mike, if I can call you that, now.
- 113 Mike You can but this is, is (beat) Shit (beat) What is this? It's like no nightmare I've ever had.

- 114 Alan Tough but your Karen keeps some interesting contact records.
- 115 Mike I don't care. I'm just grateful she kept them. How is this happening?
- 116 Alan You'd have to ask the women or Karen.
- 117 Mike I set up courses, arrange training grants, do CV's. I don't send hitchers to Spain or refugees to Oz.
- 118 Alan It seems Karen does.
- 119 Mike How? (beat) When?
- 120 Alan If she was here we could both ask her.
- 121 **Jane re-enters and sits down with tray of plastic coffee cups. Hands them out.**
- 122 Jane Here's the coffee. And sugar. This is trickier than I thought. One of Sarah's friends has come in with a photo of her with a display from Melbourne behind her. It's dated for their Friday evening. Our 6am. Today. Her friend had a phone message from her that give an account of her travel with some strong observations on us holding you.
- 123 Mike I said she had a mouth
- 124 Jane And a focused vocabulary
- 125 Alan Is it evidence we can use to clear my client?

- 126 Jane Not directly. Miss Gowdie will not make a statement as she is in Australia under another name. A foreign name.
- 127 Alan Can you explain that?
- 128 Jane The friend says she arrived from Indonesia claiming to have little English and no papers. She learnt English rather fast and converted to Catholicism and is out of the reception camp on licence. She will deny ever knowing anything about Sarah Gowdie.
- 129 Mike So that won't help me?
- 130 Jane If we prosecute you, she will own up, come back, go public and make money out of the publicity.
- 131 Mike So do I get the retraction of all charges, publically to the media?
- 132 Jane That depends on your Karen finding Dawn Collins.
- 133 Alan But you've had two thirds of your case blown out of the water. How can you justify holding him?
- 134 Jane We will release him on bail with a limited statement to the media.
- 135 Alan Not good enough. I can fight this now and I don't think you can win.
- 136 Jane That's it till we find Collins.

137 Alan We can certainly take this forward. Just say you have located the women alive as a result of further investigation.

138 Jane We can't yet do that. We don't have Collins.

139 Scene 7

140 Jane If you could send the visitor to the interview room. It's all set up

141 **Sits waiting**

142 **Knock on the door**

143 **Jane stands up to meet the visitor**

144 Jane Come in. sit down Miss Collins?

145 Dawn Mrs, Mrs Schwarz

145 Jane I thought you were Dawn Collins?

146 Dawn No (beat) maybe once.

147 **Jane goes to turn on recorder**

148 Dawn Don't touch that. Don't even think of it.

149 Jane I need a record of our conversation.

150 Dawn Why? You don't have exit records for anyone leaving the country.

- 151 Jane We do. We must have.
- 152 Dawn Get real. Only the airlines care if you have a passport on the way out. Mrs Schwarz had an American passport on the way in. Lots of questions too. No-one gave a toss when Dawn Collins left.
- 153 Jane Why did Dawn Collins leave?
- 154 Dawn She had a fine home, all mod cons, including a brother who used her as his personal toy. Parents didn't believe her of course. He even 'introduced' a couple of his friends. Parents thought the sun shone out of him, not her.
- 155 Jane She could have come to us.
- 156 Dawn And said what? No bruises and parents who said she had an over active imagination. A brother with a great job, responsible, respectable?
- 157 Jane She could have left home.
- 158 Dawn And answered all the questions? Started again with all the comments and her family on her heels? No. she went to New Start where Mike Peters couldn't get his head round why she wanted to move on from a good job with the Civil Service. He was very polite and friendly but Karen gave Dawn the help she needed. Very knowledgeable about new starts is Karen.
- 159 Jane What did she do?

- 160 Dawn She just pointed out no-one knows who leaves. God knows, they know bugger all about who arrives. Dawn went to Mexico and spent money on false papers. Karen knows who to see. Then Dawn flew to Canada but Patricia Estefan crossed illegally into the US to Seattle. Her papers implied she had been there for over five years so she qualified for the amnesty, thanks to Bush, and married a Boeing engineer. Nice guy, bit of a geek. Never had a real girlfriend before. Now they have a baby and she has an American passport. Now she's happy.
- 161 Jane So why are you here? Just to help Peters?
- 162 Dawn Patricia left the baby with Grandparents in Seattle. Too young to come at only five months. Visiting her home for her brother's funeral. I wish it bloody was. Back home tomorrow.
- 163 Jane Any evidence you can give me?
- 164 Dawn Dawn Collins passport. Stamped for Mexico and Canada with all the extras (beat) after the date when Mike Peters 'killed' her. She vanished in Canada. He's never been there. You can have it. I've wiped it carefully.
- 165 Jane What happens now?
- 166 Dawn Just because a lot of illegals come here doesn't make this place paradise. Lots of us go elsewhere. They lost over a million between the last two censuses. Let Peters out and if you want anyone for anything, give Karen an OBE. Dawn and the others are missing (beat) not missed.

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The End