

APPENDIX TO “BAILING OUT”

Re: case of **Mr Donald Percey**,
victim of unlawful wounding/inflicting grievous bodily harm

Transcript (part) of interview held on 27th July between *Detective Sergeant Deborah Slater* and *Mrs Rita Russell*:

DS: Mrs Russell, how long have you been working with Don Percey?

RR: Just this past year. The last school year just finished, from back in September till now. Call me Rita, by the way. I can't be doin' with formalities.

DS: And would you say you have got to know him well?

RR: I suppose I have. It's to be expected. We spend a lot of time together in a week; half the time is ridin' along without the children.

DS: And he opens up to you, about himself, his life, and so on?

RR: Yeah, he's happy to talk, Don, you know, about most things. Keeps some stuff private, of course, but I'm the same. Most people are, aren't they?

DS: So you'd know he lost his wife not much over a year ago?

RR: Yeah, he told me about that, about the accident in London. He didn't mind talkin' about her. He missed her badly, I could tell that. They'd been married a long time. He was very lonely without her, quite bitter, readin' between the lines.

DS: Reading between the lines?

RR: You know, the way he spoke about her, and how he felt he was rattlin' around in his house all alone. I told him he needed to get out, socialise, meet new people. My brother was the same; he went through it. His wife passed on at just forty-eight, cancer. I told him he was too young to mourn her forever. I said the same to Don. He was thinkin' of joinin' an evenin' class or two; guitar he did, and a foreign language. French or German, yeah, German it was, he was plannin' a holiday in Germany sometime this month, about now, I think. Anyway, I told him, good for you, don't be mopin' around your big empty house, Don, with all its memories.

DS: And did he say anything about making new friends?

RR: He said he'd met some nice people. Didn't mention any names to me.

DS: And lady friends?

RR: No. Not as far as I know.

DS: Can you tell me something about how Don was as a driver, Rita?

RR: As a driver? Fine. Careful. A careful driver. We all felt very safe with Don drivin'.

DS: And the children?

RR: Yeah, I'm sure they felt very safe.

DS: Sorry, I meant, how was Don with the children?

RR: He was good with them. You know, engagin'. Little jokes, havin' a bit of fun with them. You don't get much back from them, really, not a proper conversation. We take them to a school with a Speech & Language Unit.

DS: Yes, we have those details somewhere.

RR: But they'll tell you if they're upset. You know, upset with you. Polo's a bit different, though.

DS: Polo? Polo Dale?

RR: Yeah.

DS: That's Geena Dale's son, right?

RR: Yeah. Polo's more behavioural. He'll talk till the cows come home when he's in the mood.

DS: And he'd talk to Don?

RR: Oh, yeah. He'd usually sit right behind Don. I suppose he was Don's favourite. You know, someone he could have a proper bit of a chat with. And he'd give him little gifts.

DS: What kind of gifts?

RR: Oh, just little things. A pair of earphones once. Football magazines, books, second-hand ones, I think, not expensive ones. Nothin' expensive.

DS: And is that the done thing, giving children presents?

RR: It's a grey area, ain't it? It's harmless. Geena knew. It wasn't behind her back or anythin'.

DS: Geena knew. Okay. I want to ask you a few questions about Geena, Rita.

RR: Fine.

DS: How long have you known her?

RR: I've known her ever since Polo was put on my route.

DS: So that's...?

RR: That's two and a half years. He started in the January.

DS: And what are your impressions of her, of the mother?

RR: Geena? Well, she's a bit of a one-off, is Geena. She's nice really, but I do feel sorry for her. You know, a single parent, three high maintenance kids. Blokes comin' and goin', messin' her about.

She can be frustratin', unreliable. Flaky, you know what I mean? But her heart's in the right place. And she'd do anythin' for her kids. Very protective.

DS: Blokes coming and going?

RR: Well, Polo's dad, for a start.

DS: Malcolm Ashworth?

RR: Mal, yeah.

DS: We know all about Malcolm.

RR: And lately a younger fella she calls Sharky.

DS: That'd be Sean Cuff. We know all about him too. Anybody else?

RR: Not regular boyfriends, I don't think. But she didn't tell me everythin'.

DS: And what about her older sons? What do you know about them, Rita?

RR: Well, I see Angelo quite regularly. He's around quite a bit at Geena's place. An unhappy lad, I always think. Never smiles. Looks like he's carryin' the weight of the world on his young shoulders. He's a father already, and he's still only eighteen. No job, I don't think. And no prospect of one, I don't expect. He don't seem the sort that has much initiative. I think he's been in trouble with the police, hasn't he? Small stuff. Geena mentioned it. You'll know all about that already, won't you?

DS: And Kenny?

RR: I've never met Kenny. He's in the army, or was. He lives away somewhere. With his father, I think. I think he's still quite close to his father. More than he is to Geena, anyway. She don't speak about him much.

DS: Okay. Let's get back to Don a minute. Yes, sorry, help yourself to water.

RR: Thank you.

DS: Okay?

RR: Yeah. That's better.

DS: So, Don. Being such a pal of little Polo, of the son, did he, to your knowledge, get on with Geena?

RR: Get on with?

DS: Did he speak to her much? I imagine the parents have more to do with you, don't they, than with the driver?

RR: Yeah, that's true.

DS: And in Geena's case?

RR: Well, she'd talk to both of us. Usually just to pass the time of day, you know, or a bit of a laugh.

DS: And did you two, you and Don, talk much about her, on your drives?

RR: A bit. Don had a lot of questions in the first few weeks. But then he was interested in all of the families.

DS: So he got to know her quite well?

RR: I'd say I knew her better than Don did. Well, at least to start with.

DS: What do you mean?

RR: I think I know where this is leadin'.

DS: Do you?

RR: You're sayin' Don and Geena had somethin' goin' on.

DS: I'm saying nothing, Rita. What makes you think that?

RR: Oh, I don't know.

DS: Telling us everything you know will help Don, Rita. We need to find whoever it was that nearly killed him.

RR: Yeah, I know that. And I do want to help.

DS: So, had they?

RR: Had they what?

DS: Something going on.

RR: I honestly don't know. But...

DS: But?

RR: In the last few months they seemed more friendly. She'd make a point of speakin' to him at his driver's window. You know, out of earshot of me. Not that it bothered me. None of my business.

DS: So, just private conversations?

RR: I did see her blow him a kiss one time. I don't expect I was supposed to see that, but I did. Could have been harmless, but it seemed odd. I didn't say anythin' to Don about it.

DS: Did Polo notice? Perhaps she was blowing the kiss to him, to her son?

RR: No, I remember he was sittin' at the back that mornin'. One of the other children wanted to show him a toy or somethin'.

DS: Anything else?

RR: What do you mean?

DS: Anything else you noticed that suggested a relationship?

RR: No. Nothin' else.

DS: Nothing else crossed your mind?

RR: Well, only Sharky.

DS: Sharky?

RR: I saw Sharky talkin' to Don in the supermarket car park.

DS: When would that be, Rita?

RR: Oh, quite recently. Not long before the end of term.

DS: So not long before Don was attacked?

RR: No, I suppose not.

DS: Weeks? Days?

RR: I don't know exactly. A week or two. A Wednesday, it'd be.

DS: Talking? Were they just talking?

RR: I couldn't tell for sure. Me and my husband had just come out and there they were, in the middle of the car park, quite a distance away. But their voices were raised. Sharky's was, anyway. He seemed, you know, agitated.

DS: Did you hear any of what he said?

RR: No.

DS: Or what Don said?

RR: No, nothin'.

DS: And could you say if Sharky's manner was good humoured, or perhaps aggressive, threatening?

RR: I couldn't really say. He was upset, though, I'd say that.

DS: And was Don defensive in any way?

RR: I couldn't say. We'd seen Don inside and said hello. I got the impression that Sharky had been waiting outside for him.

DS: Okay. Thanks.

Now, I don't want to put words into your mouth, Rita, but did you ever get the impression that Don's relationship with Geena was in any way sexual?

RR: I never thought about it. And I think you are doin' exactly that.

DS: What's that?

RR: Puttin' words into my mouth.

DS: I'm sorry. I take that back. Let me rephrase my question. How would you have felt if you had discovered that their relationship was sexual?

RR: That's very hypothetical.

DS: Perhaps, but can you answer it, please?

RR: I'd have thought it very unlikely. It would have felt wrong.

DS: Wrong?

RR: Don and Geena? It wouldn't seem right at all. Inappropriate.

DS: Inappropriate? In what way? The age difference?

RR: No, not so much that. They are from different worlds, really. Different circles, you know what I mean.

DS: Social circles?

RR: Well, yes. And as characters too. She'd be too flighty, too up and down for him, I'd have thought. And Don, he's too... set in his ways.

DS: Too stolid?

RR: Stolid? No, not really.

DS: Too conventional?

RR: Too suburban, perhaps. Is that the right word?

DS: Suburban? Yes, I think that's probably the perfect word, Rita.