

INTERVIEWS

A One Act play by Phil Lewis

Approx 35-40 minutes (including scene changes).

Crime, Thriller

(Suitable for Drama Festivals)

On a stark stage people are interviewed by a mysterious man from the rear of the auditorium. It appears he wants to arrange a murder, but he is trapped by the policeman, posing as an interviewee. The interrogator is now integrated and pleads his innocence in any plot. The story resolves itself with a twist at the very end.

There is a dark stage, with all scenes played out with minimal set and stark lighting.

publications@phil-lewis.net

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INTERVIEWS

CHARACTERS

NEEDHAM	30+ (any age)
IRVING	40+ (any age)
LLOYD	20+ (any age)
FLEET	40+
SCOTT	50+
WITNESS	Any age

(The characters may be played by either male or females.)

SCENES

- Scene 1. First responder
- Scene 2. Second responder
- Scene 3. Third responder
- Scene 4. Interview Room at police station
- Scene 5. A pub - one month later
- Scene 6. On the street - one week later
- Scene 7 - Two weeks later
- Scene 8. Police Interview Room - one week later

SCENE 1. FIRST RESPONDEE

(THE PLAY OPENS IN A HOTEL ROOM. CENTRE STAGE SITS A MAN IN A SINGLE SPOTLIGHT. BEHIND IS A BLACK SCREEN ABSORBING AS MUCH OF THE LIGHT SPILL AS POSSIBLE. THE SCENE IS VERY DARK, ONLY HIGHLIGHTING THE MAN IN THE SEAT. THE INTERVIEWER, ALTHOUGH IN THE SAME ROOM, SPEAKS FROM THE REAR OF THE AUDITORIUM. THE VARIOUS SCENES MAY BE TITLED AS SLIDE PROJECTION, RATHER THAN INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAMME)

(INTRODUCTION MUSIC)

NEED (ENTERING FROM REAR OF AUDITORIUM) Name?

IRVING Patrick Irving.

NEED Occupation?

IRVING Unemployed. Recently, that is.

NEED What did you do when you were employed?

IRVING Gardener.

NEED Where did you see my advert?

IRVING Loot.

NEED What did you think?

IRVING About what?

NEED About what the advert was offering?

IRVING Work for £1000 a day. That's what it said.

NEED What would you be prepared to do for that amount of money, a day?

IRVING What do you want me to do?

NEED How about.....digging graves in a cemetery?

IRVING No problem. Is that what this is all about?

NEED Or.....dig up a coffin and open the lid?

IRVING What?

NEED Why do you need the money?

IRVING What is this?

NEED Why do you need the money, Mr. Irving?

IRVING I don't see what that's got to do with....

NEED Thank you for coming, Mr. Irving. I have other people to see.

IRVING (REMAINS SEATED, THINKING) I'm about to lose my home. To the bank. I need £5000. Your advertI thought.....

NEED What would you do for £5000, Mr. Irving?

IRVING Anything. Well....almost anything.

NEED What wouldn't you do?

IRVING I don't know. I haven't really thought about it. What's this all about? Who are you?

(HE SHIELDS HIS EYES FROM THE GLARE OF THE LIGHT, TRYING TO SEE HIS INTERVIEWER)

NEED Simple questions. What WOULD you do for £5000. What WOULDN'T you do for £5000?

IRVING (AFTER A THOUGHT) Well....I'd DO almost anything. What I wouldn't do would be.....er. I don't know. Hurt anybody.....um.....kill somebody, definitely.

NEED You wouldn't kill?

IRVING No.

NEED Thank you, Mr. Irving. Close the door on your way out, please.

IRVING That's it? Did I get the job?

NEED Thanks for your time. Good luck with your mortgage.

IRVING Just a minute. What is this?

(THE LIGHT GOES OUT AND WE HEAR A DOOR CLOSE.)

IRVING (IN THE DARKNESS) Who are you? What is it you want? Do you want your money back? Hello. Right, I get to keep the £30 then?

(INTER SCENE MUSIC - CAN BE THE SAME AS OPENING AND CLOSING MUSIC. DURING THE BLACKOUT MRS. LLOYD SITS IN THE CHAIR. AS SCENE TWO OPENS, SHE IS NOW THE SUBJECT OF THE INTERVIEW. SHE IS VERY NERVOUS AND IS CONTINUALLY SHADING THE LIGHT FROM HER EYES)

SCENE 2. SECOND RESPONDEE

- NEED** (ENTERING FROM REAR OF AUDITORIUM) Name?
- FLEET** Jean Lloyd.
- NEED** Occupation?
- LLOYD** I don't have an actual occupation. Is that important?
- NEED** Where did you see my advert?
- LLOYD** Evening Standard.
- NEED** What did you think?
- LLOYD** About the advert, or the paper?
- NEED** About what the advert was offering?
- LLOYD** I'd like to have £1000 a day. What else was I to think? Can I ask who I'm speaking to?
- NEED** What would you be prepared to do for that amount of money a day?
- LLOYD** I don't know.
- NEED** How about.....digging graves in a cemetery?
- LLOYD** I don't fancy that at all. But I suppose for £1000 a day. Yes.....I'd dig graves.
- NEED** Or.....dig up a coffin and open the lid?
- LLOYD** Sorry?
- NEED** Dig up a coffinand open the lid?
- LLOYD** I.....suppose yes. For £1000, yes. I would do that. Is that the job? That's illegal isn't it?

NEED Would you be prepared to do something illegal?

LLOYD If it wasn't directly going to affect anybody. Maybe. Depends.

NEED Why do you need the money?

LLOYD Why do you want to know?

NEED Why do you need the money, Mrs. Lloyd?

LLOYD Who are you and what do you want from me? I thought this was a job interview. You said on the phone an hour of my time. I don't like this at all.....

NEED Thank you for coming, Mrs. Lloyd. I have other people to see.

LLOYD (SHE IS PERPLEXED.) Interview over? (SILENCE). Hang on. Wait a minute. Is there a genuine job here, or what?

NEED Why do you need the money, Mrs. Lloyd?

LLOYD I'm broke. What other reason can there be?

NEED Why are you broke?

LLOYD Because I don't have a job! I no longer have a husband and I'm living in council paid hotels. What more incentive do I need? I'm broke!

NEED What would you do for £1000?

LLOYD Anything. Well....almost anything.

NEED What wouldn't you do?

LLOYD Something illegal that harmed somebody. What else can I say? Have you a specific proposition? If so. Tell me and I'll give you a more direct and succinct answer.

NEED Would you kill someone?

LLOYD No! What's going on here? (SHE STANDS)

NEED Sit down, or leave, Mrs. Lloyd. (SLOWLY MRS. LLOYD SITS.)
You wouldn't kill anybody?

LLOYD No.

NEED Not for £1000?

LLOYD Not for a million!

NEED How much then?

LLOYD What do you mean?

NEED How much would you kill a total stranger for then?

LLOYD I wouldn't. I couldn't!

NEED £2 million?

LLOYD No. I don't.....

NEED Name a price.

LLOYD I'm sorry. I'm going.....(SHE STANDS.)

NEED If the person was an evil man. Someone who had done evil
and cruel thingsto his wife and kids. Someone who
deserved to die. How much?

LLOYD (STARING INTO THE DARKNESS AND MOVING FORWARD
SLOWLY.) £10,000. Not a penny less.

NEED Thank you, Mrs. Lloyd. Close the door on your way out
please.

(AFTER A BRIEF PAUSE THE LIGHTS GO TO BLACKOUT. THE THIRD
INTERVIEWEE TAKES THE CHAIR AS THE INTER-SCENE MUSIC
PLAYS.)

SCENE 3. THIRD RESPONDEE

- NEED** (ENTERING FROM REAR OF AUDITORIUM) Name?
- FLEET** Martin Fleet.
- NEED** Occupation?
- FLEET** Redundant.
- NEED** What did you do before you were redundant?
- FLEET** Night Security.
- NEED** Where did you see my advert?
- FLEET** Mail. Daily Mail. The newspaper.
- NEED** What did you think?
- FLEET** I need £1000. What do I have to do?
- NEED** What would you be prepared to do for that amount of money?
- FLEET** I don't know.
- NEED** How about.....digging graves in a cemetery?
- FLEET** Yeah.
- NEED** Or.....dig up a coffin and open the lid?
- FLEET** Yeah.
- NEED** Would you be prepared to do something illegal?
- FLEET** Yeah.
- NEED** Why do you need the money?
- FLEET** I have people that Iowe.

NEED How much do you....owe?

FLEET Let's just say that a grand won't quite cover it. Okay?
Now.....when do I start digging up corpses, or whatever you want me to do. I'll do it, okay?

NEED What would you do for £1000?

FLEET I just said, anything.

NEED What wouldn't you do?

FLEET I don't know. Right now my options are a little limited, you know. Do I have a job, or not?

NEED Would you kill someone?

FLEET (HE TAKES A MOMENT TO ANSWER.) Who?

NEED No-one you know. A stranger.

FLEET Not for £1000.

NEED How much then?

FLEET Make me an offer?

NEED How much would you kill a total stranger for?

FLEET (GETTING SLIGHTLY NERVOUS.) What's the going rate?

NEED £10,000?

FLEET For that, I might. Yeah, I might. Who is it?

NEED If the person was an evil man. Someone who had done evil and cruel thingsto his wife and kids. Someone who deserved to die. Would you kill that person for £10,000?

FLEET What did he do?

NEED That's not important at this time.

FLEET It is to me. I need to know before we go any further on this. We're talking a major crime here. The big one. Murder. I want to know more, mister...whoever you are. Now, what has this guy done?

NEED (SLIGHTLY THROWN OFF BALANCE BY THE RESPONSE.) All you need to know is that he has abused his wife and kids. He's a violent man and needs to be stopped. The police will have nothing to do with domestic violence.

FLEET And for that he must die?

NEED Let's just say he deserves to die. For the purpose of this conversation....someone deserves to die. Now....is that enough motivation for you to kill a stranger for £10,000? Or not?

FLEET (LEANING FORWARD AND DROPPING HIS VOICE SLIGHTLY) I doubt it. Not in my line of business. I'm a police Inspector. Outside of this door are several more police officers and I'm arresting you. Right now!

(THE LIGHTS GO TO A QUICK FADE. DURING THE INTER-SCENE MUSIC THE SET IS CHANGED TO THE POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM. WHEN THE LIGHTS COME UP FLEET AND THE INTERVIEWER ENTER. THE INTERVIEWER NOW BECOMES THE INTERVIEWEE AND VICE VERSA. ON THE CENTRE OF THE TABLE IS A MICROPHONE AND LEADS TRAILING OFFSTAGE. THERE IS A TELEPHONE ON THE TABLE. THE ROOM IS REASONABLY WELL LIT.)

SCENE 4. INTERVIEW ROOM AT POLICE STATION

FLEET Sit down please.

(BOTH MEN SIT FACING EACH OTHER. POLICE OFFICER WILL STANDS AT THE BACK, CENTRAL - IF CASTING PERMITS)

FLEET Name?

NEED Richard Needham.

FLEET Occupation?

NEED What's this all about, Inspector?

FLEET Just answer MY questions, Mr. Needham.

NEED What's that microphone for?

FLEET (AFTER A WARNING STARE.) So the boys in the back room can listen in. Now, what is your occupation?

NEED Engineer. Civil Engineer.

FLEET Address?

NEED Twenty Five, Auburn Place, New Malden.

FLEET Married?

NEED Not any more.

FLEET Why did you place an advert in the press?

NEED Why am I being questioned like this? I'm entitled to a caution, or legal representation, surely?

FLEET We'll establish that in a moment. After you've answered these questions.

NEED I think I'd prefer to wait until I have a lawyer here.

FLEET (WITH COLD MENACE) You're in a very serious situation here. In an undercover operation, you've been caught trying to elicit help in planning a murder. That's a serious crime. Let me give you some advice. Co-operate now and we will see what we can do down the line. I can't stress strongly enough how much trouble you're in. Just answer the questions.

NEED (FOR THE FIRST TIME SHOWING ANY FEAR.) What're you going to charge me with?

FLEET That depends on the answers we get.

NEED There's no crime being committed here!

FLEET We're looking at murder, Needham.

NEED You're looking at nothing, Mr. Fleet.

FLEET We had our interview in the hotel recorded. You can't now deny that you're planning to murder somebody.

NEED Somebody? Who, exactly? Is there a corpse? Is there a plot? Name the person! No. Nothing. (STANDS) I'm leaving and there's nothing you can do to me.

FLEET (WITH A VOICE BACKED BY AUTHORITY) Not until you've answered the questions. Now SIT!

(NEEDHAM SITS SLOWLY. RESIGNS HIMSELF TO THE SITUATION AND SETTLES BACK IN THE CHAIR, FOLDING HIS ARMS.)

FLEET What was the purpose of your advert?

(NEEDHAM SMILES GENTLY AND STARES AT THE POLICEMAN. UNSPEAKING AND UNFLINCHING. THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER UNTIL THE PHONE RINGS. FLEET ANSWERS, LISTENS AND HANGS UP)

FLEET Your name and address check out to be correct. We're running background details on you right now. It's been noted that you're not co-operating. This isn't going at all well for you.

NEED (LEANING FORWARD) And it's not going too well for you, either. You've no case and no cause to keep me here. All of which I have duly noted, too!

FLEET (LEANING FORWARD TO MATCH HIS ADVERSARY) Don't try to threaten me, Needham.

NEED MR. NEEDHAM to you. I'm still innocent until proven otherwise and you're still a public servant.

FLEET And you're under suspicion and no hope of legal assistance until I say so!

NEED Meaning you're above the law?

FLEET Meaning I am the law, as far as you're concerned right now. Answers. Give me the answers!

NEED (SITTING BACK WITH HIS ARMS CROSSED AGAIN.) Not until I've legal representation. I know my rights.

FLEET Who's your intended victim?

NEED There is no victim.

FLEET I have you on tape saying there's a victim. Someone who's 'Abused his wife and kids. Is a violent man and needs to be stopped. The police will have nothing to do with his domestic violence'.

NEED You have me on tape asking questions about how much it would take for YOU to commit this KIND of crime. That 's no evidence that a crime was being planned.

FLEET I have every evidence that a crime was being planned. I can make it stick. I assure you.

NEED Then charge me now and get on with it. Or let me go. RIGHT NOW!

(VERY SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY FLEET STANDS, MOVES AROUND THE CHAIR AND STANDS IN A THREATENING MANNER)

FLEET No one is going to come to your aid until I say so. And I'm not going to let that happen until I get SOME ANSWERS!

(NEEDHAM IS NOTICABLY FRIGHTENED BY THIS AGGRESSIVE ATTACK)

NEED All right! Enough. Let's just take it easy, here. I'm sorry. I've let this go too far. I'm sorry. Just, calm down.

(FLEET SLOWLY SITS. THE POLICEMEN MOVES FORWARD, WAITING SILENTLY.)

NEED Look.....this was just a scenario. A little....game if you like.

FLEET Game? Murder's not a game!

NEED I'm not talking about a REAL murder. I waspretending.

FLEET You sounded convincing enough to me.

NEED Well, I was just pretending. Acting out the scenario as such.

FLEET What scenario? What ARE you talking about? You asked me if I would kill your victim for £10,000. How's this pretending?

NEED Well.....you see, Apart from being an engineer, I'm also an author. I was doing some research on just how people could be motivated to performcertain actions. Crimes.....if you will. My being arrested was not planned, or even foreseen, actually. I thought I'd play along and see how it panned out. Additional information, as it were. Additional plot. First hand experience. Emotions, feelings. Fear, panic.

FLEET (NOT BELIEVING A WORD) An author you say. What've you written then?

NEED Nothing you might have read. Mostly short stories. Published over the years. This'll be my first major novel. My publisher thought a good crime novel would break me into the business. I've been paid an advance. You can check.

FLEET (SUDDENLY SEEING HIS CASE DISSOLVE.) An author? Researching crime motivation? Christ! I'm going to prosecute you for wasting police time, Needham!

NEED I haven't wasted anyone's time. Nobody called the Police. You've wasted my time in fact. I paid all my interviewees up to £50 for the interviews. My research needed genuine reactions, so I had to create a special scene. The darkened room. Added drama, tension. If anything, you've wasted my money. I paid for that room for two days and I am stuck in here....with NO LEGAL REPRESENTATION! All those interviewees are waiting at the hotel. They won't be back. How much research

information and time have I lost because of YOUR actions? I'll have to advertise all over again. More expense. Time lost. Don't you even think of bringing a case against me for wasting police time. The counter-suit would ruin your chances of promotion. As it is, you're actions are most questionable. (HE STANDS) I'll use all of this as subject matter. Dramatised of course. Do you mind if I use your real name in the book?

(FLEET SITS STUNNED, GETTING ANGRY. THE PHONE RINGS AND HE LETS IT GO UNANSWERED. STARING IN FURY AT NEEDHAM. SLOWLY HE REACHES FOR THE HANDSET AND LISTENS TO THE VOICE AT THE OTHER END OF THE LINE. SLOWLY HE REPLACES THE RECEIVER. HE STANDS WITH MOUNTING FURY)

NEED It all checked out, didn't it?

FLEET More or less.

NEED All of it. I know it did because I'm telling the truth. So I'm off, now. Thanks for all the additional material. The dialogue. The attitude lesson. The 'bending the rules' bit. I'll see myself out, thanks.

(NEEDHAM CASUALLY EXITS)

FLEET (PICKS UP THE RECEIVER) I want a check made on every reported case of domestic violence in his area. I want names, dates and full information. Then I want a round the clock survey on each of the likely victims. It's not going to end like this. Not like this.

(THE LIGHTS GO DOWN AS HE SITS WITH HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS. INTER SCENE MUSIC.)