

THE INTERVIEWS

By Phil Lewis

SHORTENED **SAMPLE** VERSION

For full version please contact:
publications@phil-lewis.net

Approx: 40 minutes

Cast

NEED: 30+ (any age)

IRVING: 40+ (any age)

LLOYD: 20+ (any age)

FLEET: 40+

SCOTT: 50+

WITNESS: Any age

- Scene 1 Interview 1 – First Respondee
- Scene 2 Interview 2 – Second Respondee
- Scene 3 Interview 3 – Third Respondee
- Scene 4 Interview 4 – Interview room at Police Station
- Scene 5 Interview 5 – A pub – one month later
- Scene 6 Interview 6 – On the street – one week later
- Scene 7 Interview 7 – Two weeks later
- Scene 8 Interview 8 – Police Interview Room – one week later

THE INTERVIEWS

(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 (NEEDHAM), 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)

SCENE 1. INTERVIEW 1 - FIRST RESPONDEE

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.)

SCENE 2. INTERVIEW 2 - SECOND RESPONDEE

(DURING THE BLACKOUT MRS. LLOYD SITS IN THE CHAIR.

AS SCENE TWO OPENS, SHE IS THE SUBJECT OF THE INTERVIEW. SHE IS VERY NERVOUS AND IS CONTINUALLY SHADING THE LIGHT FROM HER EYES.

NEEDHAM ENTERS FROM REAR OF AUDITORIUM)

NEED: 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 STARS INTO THE DARKNESS AND MOVES FORWARD SLOWLY)

LLOYD: £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 INTERVIEW 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)

SCENE 4 INTERVIEW 4 - INTERVIEW ROOM AT POLICE STATION

(WHEN THE LIGHTS COME UP FLEET AND NEEDHAM 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)

FLEET: Sit down please.

(BOTH MEN SIT FACING EACH OTHER.

IF CASTING PERMITS - POLICE OFFICER WILL STANDS AT THE BACK)

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)

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)

SCENE 5 INTERVIEW 5 - A PUB - ONE MONTH LATER

(AS THE LIGHTS COME UP, FLEET AND HIS CHIEF INSPECTOR ARE SEATED HAVING A QUIET INFORMAL DRINK)

FLEET: (TOASTING SCOTT) Thank you, ma'am. Your health.

SCOTT: Cheers, Martin. How're Mary and the kids?

FLEET: All well, ma'am. And your family?

SCOTT: All in good health, thanks. Listen, Martin. I've been asked to have a word with you. Off the record. Informal.

FLEET: What about, ma'am?

SCOTT: Call me, Ruth. This is informal. Let's keep it casual, eh?

FLEET: Fine by me..... Ruth.

SCOTT: It's about this Needham business.

FLEET: Oh, that.

SCOTT: Yes....that. It's become a bit of a departmental problem.

FLEET: What?

SCOTT: Well.....apart from manpower, we're under a lot of pressure from this Needham chap.

FLEET: In what way?

SCOTT: Legally. His lawyer,.....well actually, it's his publisher's lawyer, feels the police are overtly making their presence felt around Needham's home.

FLEET: Well, ma'am.... Ruth, the major potential victim is a neighbour of Needham. Chappell. We're watching his movements constantly.

SCOTT: That seems to be the point. It's Needham's movements you're interested in, surely?

FLEET: His as well, yes.

SCOTT: That's the root of the complaint by the legal eagles. You have no case against Needham. Nor are you likely to bring one.

FLEET: Well....I'm not sure we can dismiss.....

SCOTT: The department no longer has any interest in the case, Martin. Is that understood?

FLEET: But, ma'am.....

SCOTT: None.

FLEET: Yes, ma'am. (THEY DRINK IN SILENCE) May I have a few moments to just have my say, Ruth. Off the record, of course.

SCOTT: Yes. We owe you that, Martin. Go on.

FLEET: This man came to our notice because of that stupid advert. From the beginning he's acted suspiciously. Sometimes deliberately so. I posed as a respondee to the advert and arrested him once I was sure he was planning something illegal.

SCOTT: Understood. Go on.

FLEET: You've listened to the tapes, ma'am. He deliberately strung us along during both interviews. He was making a fool of the department. He was laughing at us. I really feel that there's more to this than we know at the moment.

SCOTT: You feel you've been made a fool of and want retribution? That's a natural reaction. But you can't use the department's resources to exact your own revenge, Martin. How does that make the police look?

FLEET: It's not a matter of revenge, ma'am.....

SCOTT: That's how it LOOKS, Martin. To the lawyers, the public and this Needham fellow. It's 'face', Martin. Our public image. Drop it. That's final.

FLEET: Just one more point, ma'am?

SCOTT: Very well. Make it the last and we've time for one more, then I must be off.

FLEET: We've thoroughly checked out Needham's statements.

SCOTT: I know. I've read them and seen the overtime sheets!

FLEET: He has been given an advance for a crime novel and he's been conducting interviews over the weeks prior to his arrest. And many since too.

SCOTT: Your point?

FLEET: He's also made several official complaints about the behaviour of one of his neighbours.

SCOTT: So?

FLEET: His 'scenario' is real. There's someone he feels he would like to have killed.

SCOTT: Is that a gut feeling, Martin, or are there facts to back this up?

FLEET: I can't prove anything, ma'am.....yet.

SCOTT: When you have proof.....

FLEET: It'll be too late. The deed will be done.

SCOTT: What deed are you talking about now?

FLEET: I think Needham is going to have his neighbour murdered.

SCOTT: (STANDING) That's enough, Martin. I've told you the department's stand. It's over. All resources are being withdrawn.

FLEET: Ma'am.....?

SCOTT: As from now. I want to hear no more about it. We can't allow your pride to dictate our commitment. There are far too many other cases needing attention. The matter is closed.

FLEET: Yes, ma'am.

(THE LIGHTS GO DOWN AS THEY EXIT TO THE BAR.

INTER SCENE MUSIC)

EDITED