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DISCLOSURE

by Helen Collins

EXTRACT

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Disclosure

Act 1

Cast

Anne Carson: a wealthy woman

Gina Sturrock: a detective inspector with the Homicide Squad

Tom Stewart: a detective sergeant with the Homicide Squad

Scene

An empty interview room with a table and two chairs. There is a whiteboard at the back.

TOM: Mrs Carson, this is Detective Inspector Sturrock. She'll be conducting your interview today.

Tom leaves.

GINA: Thanks for coming in Mrs Carson. We appreciate it.

ANNE: Well I don't really see that it's necessary. I told your sergeant everything I know.

GINA: Yes, of course. But this is a murder investigation and we need to be very thorough.

ANNE: I'm not under suspicion am I?

GINA: No, of course not. We just need some help with our enquiries.

ANNE: Should I have my lawyer present?

GINA: If you feel that would be necessary. But this is really just a formality. And you are free to leave at any time.

Anne notices a two-way mirror.

ANNE: Am I being watched?

GINA: Of course not Mrs Carson.

Anne looks warily at Gina before sitting down. Gina sits also.

ANNE: All right then. But I'm not here to be bullied or harassed.

GINA: I quite understand. We're very grateful for your cooperation. Can we begin? We have reason to believe that you were contacted by Mandy O'Brien on the day she was murdered.

ANNE: Yes ... yes. She called me on Thursday morning and said she had to see me.

GINA: Did you have any idea why she would want to see you?

ANNE: At first, no. I don't know her. But then she said that she and Philip were in love. And that he was going to leave me for her. She said it was vital that we talked it over so we could sort it all out in a civilised way.

GINA: How did you react to that? Did you know your husband was having an affair?

ANNE: Well I'm not sure there was an affair. Sometimes young women get very strange ideas just because someone is nice to them.

GINA: But this wouldn't be the first time that a young woman got 'strange ideas' would it? Apparently your husband is known around the hospital as someone who enjoys the company of pretty nurses.

ANNE: He might enjoy flirting, but I'm not aware that Philip has ever been unfaithful.

GINA: Never? What about Jacquie Ellinson?

ANNE: Who?

GINA: We were told that she had a relationship with your husband last year for about six months.

ANNE: Well I don't know anything about it.

GINA: Really?

ANNE: Really.

GINA: And Stephanie Anderson? Do you know that name? Apparently she was also involved with your husband.

ANNE: Oh this is just ridiculous. Philip is a middle-aged man with a very busy work schedule. He's also vitally committed to research and publishes regularly in national and international journals. On top of that he serves on numerous hospital committees. Where on earth do you think he gets the time, or the energy I might add, for all of these affairs? What you must understand is that Philip has been extremely successful. And all successful people have enemies. And these enemies will stop at nothing to drag his reputation through the mud and hope that some of it will stick.

GINA: I see. How long have you been married Mrs Carson?

ANNE: Twenty-five years in November.

GINA: That's quite an innings. You must have been quite young when you met.

ANNE: Yes, we met at university. Philip was studying medicine and I was doing an arts degree. I wanted to go into journalism, but it was not to be.

GINA: Why was that?

ANNE: Well Philip's study took up so much time that he couldn't work, so I left uni and worked to support us both.

GINA: That must have been very hard for you. Were you ever resentful that you had to give up your career for his?

ANNE: Not in the slightest. I probably would have made a lousy journalist. I decided long ago that fiction is often far more interesting than facts. Besides, as one of the top cardiac surgeons in the country, Philip earns far more than I could have ever hoped to. I'm very happy with the bargain we struck.

GINA: But bargain was under threat wasn't it?

ANNE: What do you mean?

GINA: Well, according to Mandy, Philip had fallen in love. He was going to leave you. All your sacrifice down the drain. The pain and humiliation of being jilted for a younger woman. You wouldn't be the first to have found that sufficient motive for murder.

ANNE: I thought you said I wasn't under suspicion. If you're going to accuse me of something, I will call my lawyer.

GINA: No, we're not accusing you of anything Mrs Carson. But you have to agree that you did have a motive.

ANNE: Did I? Only if you accept the fact that I believed that child's lovesick outpourings at face value.

GINA: Well, did you speak to your husband about it?

ANNE: The child rang on Thursday morning. On Thursdays Philip is in theatre all day. Then he was going to a fundraiser for stem cell research with the hospital's CEO. I wasn't expecting him home until after midnight. He was gone the next morning before I got up. By the time I caught up with him on Friday night, it didn't seem important any more. So I didn't even bother bringing it up.

GINA: A young woman calls you Thursday morning and tells you that she is having an affair with your husband, and that he is going to leave you for her, and by the next night it's no longer important?

ANNE: Yes. Well, the more I thought about it, the more absurd it seemed.

GINA: So when did you talk to your husband about it?

ANNE: Philip was at golf when your sergeant turned up yesterday morning and told me she had been murdered. Philip and I spoke about it when he came home. I suppose that was about 3.

GINA: How did he describe his relationship with the deceased?

ANNE: He said she was a young nurse who was new to the hospital and that she'd developed a bit of a crush on him. She had called him at work and left lots of messages. She'd sent him quite a few emails as well.

GINA: And how did he say he was handling it?

ANNE: He said he was just ignoring it because he hoped that as soon as she settled in and met some more people it would stop. But apparently she was rather persistent and not prepared to take no for an answer.

GINA: So he denied having an affair with her?

ANNE: I didn't ask him if he was having an affair with her.

GINA: So you believed him when he said he was ignoring her?

ANNE: Yes.

GINA: Really?

ANNE: Really.

GINA: At approximately what time did the deceased call you?

ANNE: I'm not sure of the exact time. But it was around 10.30. I was just on my way out to my hair stylist. I had an appointment at 10.45.

GINA: Did you keep your appointment?

ANNE: Of course. You don't dare cancel Charles or you have to wait six months to get another appointment. He enjoys punishing fickle clients.

GINA: Then what did you do?

ANNE: Well, I was at the salon until 1.00. Then I stopped at a café for lunch. Then I did some shopping. I was looking for some new Egyptian cotton bath towels but I couldn't find the right colours. Then I went home. I suppose I got back there about 5.30.

GINA: Did you see or speak to anyone after you arrived home?

ANNE: I don't think so. As I said, I wasn't expecting Philip. I don't think the phone rang. I certainly didn't call anyone. Oh, wait ... yes I did. I called my mother about 9. We talked for about half an hour. You can confirm that with her.

GINA: We will. What shops did you go to? Is it likely that a shop assistant would remember you?

ANNE: Probably not. I didn't look inside any of the shops. Mostly you can see their range from the street. I could see they didn't have the colours I wanted so I didn't go in.

GINA: So the only people, apart from your mother who you spoke to at 9, that you spoke to all day were at the salon and the café.

ANNE: Yes.

GINA: What time did you leave the café?

ANNE: About 1.30, or maybe it was 1.45. I didn't take much notice.

GINA: So between 1.45 and midnight, you were alone. No one saw you coming home? A neighbour? Someone walking their dog perhaps?

ANNE: It's rather unlikely. The dog walkers have all finished their rounds by the early afternoon and the neighbours are hardly chummy. People don't drop in to borrow a cup of sugar or to have a coffee and a chat. It's not that kind of area. It's not uncommon for people to move in and then move out five years later and no one even registers that they've arrived let alone that they've gone.

GINA: So no one would notice lights on in a house, or hear a radio or a TV?

ANNE: It's a very quiet street detective. Sometimes it's so quiet I wonder if I'm the only living soul in it. Especially at this time of year. It's the annual pilgrimage to the snow or the sun or Europe.

GINA: No one would notice a car coming or going?

ANNE: I suppose they might if they happened to be looking out of a window on the first or second floor. And their view wasn't obscured by the very tall, leafy trees that give the neighbourhood its charm and push up our rate bill. But even then they'd have to be quick. Cars have magical properties in our area detective. They vanish instantly behind large garage doors or high walls.

GINA: So you don't think anyone saw you come home at 5.30?

ANNE: I doubt it.

GINA: No one would have noticed your car in the driveway?

ANNE: No. The car is kept in a garage behind a high wall. Like everybody else's.

GINA: What kind of car do you drive Mrs Carson?

ANNE: A silver grey BMW and a silver Prado.

GINA: Which car were you driving last Thursday?

ANNE: The Prado. Philip had the BMW.

GINA: I see. So after you left the café, there is no one who can confirm your whereabouts until you called your mother at 9 pm.

ANNE: I suppose so.

GINA: How long would you say your conversation was with the deceased?

ANNE: Fairly short. As I said, I had to go out.

GINA: So you didn't talk for very long at all?

ANNE: No ... at least I don't think so. I was hardly timing the call. I think she started going on and on about Philip and their grand passion. I think the word soulmate was used. Yes, I'm sure it was. I had better things to do than listen to lovestruck schoolgirls so I hung up.