

Picking Blackberries on the A38

"It wasn't murder, it was justice!"

"What you did was barbaric."

"It was no more than he deserved, for what he did. I'd do it again, a thousand times more. I don't regret it."

"But you admit it?"

"That I did it? Yes."

"By burying him to his neck in a badger set, leaving him there."

"A warning to others, that such behaviour is unacceptable."

"What did he actually do?"

"Do I have to go through it all again?"

"Yes, you have been read your rights and have declined representation at this time."

"Yes."

"And you admit that you murdered..."

"It wasn't murder it was justice and if you lot did your job there wouldn't have been any need for me to take it in to my own hands."

"Your own hands?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you start at the beginning?"

"I was picking blackberries on the A38, just outside Tewkesbury. It's a busy road and few people like to risk it so there's always a lot of fruit. I'd filled two carrier bags, I like to make jam but I freeze some as well for crumbles and pies when I have apples. I do a lovely pie, nice short pastry, trick is to use a dish with a perforated base, keeps the dreaded soggy bottom away."

"Quite."

"My neighbour Mrs Handleshaw always likes a slice of pie, she comes round on a weekend to check up on me, not that I need checking up on but she's lonely I think and uses it as an excuse for a chat. I usually give her a jar at Christmas, all the neighbours really, nice thing to do and as my mother said 'politeness costs nothing', something that odious man should have learnt as a child."

"You mean Ronald Evans, the 37 year old man that you killed."

"If that was his name."

"He had a wife, three children, another on the way."

"Good job I stopped him having any more then, the world is overpopulated as it is."

"You killed him for having too many kids?"

"Of course not, I had no idea he had any, or that he was married for that matter. Makes what he tried to do that much worse if you ask me. I've done society a service removing that menace from it."

"You haven't said what he did, or attempted to do."

"You keep interrupting me."

"I'm trying to ascertain why you murdered him."

"You keep saying that word, it sounds so, well brutal."

"You don't think what you did was?"

"I didn't intend for him to die, well I wasn't really thinking about it, I was just so angry you know? I mean, the cheek of the man!"

"It was spur of the moment?"

"Yes."

"That you knocked him unconscious, drove him out to the woods, in his car by the way."

"I don't have a car."

"And you took a spade with you."

"Yes, I had to stop off at my allotment, the carrots needed checking on, I'm not one for pesticides, like to be all natural if that's how you say it."

"Organic."

"Yes, organic, that's it. Not overzealous, but I feel what you put in your body affects your body, all these chemicals who knows what they do to you? I think the government experiments on us, tries to make us docile like sheep."

"Didn't work in your case."

"I do not like your tone."

"You got the spade."

"Yes, there's a lovely wood nearby, Badger Wood, have you been?"

"When I was a child we played round there, don't really remember badgers."

"They're a shy creature, fascinating. Get a bad press for TB. Culling them is so unnecessary."

"You would say burying a man to his neck was unnecessary."

"A lesson, that's all. I didn't expect him to die."

"He'd what, wriggle his way out would he?"

"Eventually, I guess, I didn't think that far. I was still angry, at what he'd done."

"And what did he do?"

"I was picking blackberries..."

"Yes, you've said."

"I thought you wanted the full story?"

"Only as pertains to the murder."

"That word again."

"OK, you're meting out justice."

"Now I think you're being snide."

"I'm getting impatient, you've admitted the crime. I don't need to hear more, I'm just giving you a chance to explain yourself, give extenuating circumstances that might mitigate your sentence."

"I'm going to be charged?"

"Of course, what did you expect?"

"Maybe a warning, not to do it again."

"You killed a man!"

"Not intentionally, surely that should count for something?"

"He's still dead."

"That's not my fault now is it?"

"Not your fault?"

"No."

"You smeared blackberries on his face."

"I thought that appropriate."

"Appropriate?"

"Well yes, after what he'd done."

"And what was that?"

"I was picking blackberries on the A38."

"Not this again."

"Will you allow me to continue?"

"If you can avoid the diversions."

"That's funny."

"Funny?"

"Yes, because of the work on the M5, lot more traffic on the A38 at the moment."

"What?"

"Diversions."

"Oh."

"Yes, so what you said was funny."

"I don't find killing a man funny."

"No, I don't suppose you would."

"But you do?"

"No, of course not, that came out wrong. You've got me all flustered, could I have a cup of tea?"

"When you've finished."

"Oh, all right then. I was on the A38, I had two carrier bags filled with fruit, was on my third, when that man pulled over in the lay-by and shouted at me."

"He shouted at you?"

"Yes."

"What did he shout?"

"I couldn't tell, it's very noisy on that road, difficult to hear above the traffic, particularly at the moment."

"What with the diversion from the M5?"

"Yes."

"He shouts to you."

"Yes, through the passenger window, gesturing at me as well."

"Gesturing?"

"Yes, a come hither gesture."

"And did you?"

"I must admit my curiosity was aroused."

"What did he want?"

"He was lost, he'd taken the diversion and now had no idea where he was. I thought nowadays everyone had those SatNavs."

"Yes."

"He was looking for Hollams road, of course I knew where it was but its so difficult to give directions isn't it?"

"Yes."

"In the end I agreed to accompany him, I'd pretty much got all the fruit that was ripe and its quite a walk so the lift was appreciated."

"You got in his car?"

"Yes."

"Then what happened?"

"It was quite pleasant to begin with, just the usual chitchat, about the weather and such."

"And then?"

"Well he reached across and put his hand...I mean the affront of the man!"

"Put his hand where?"

"In to one of my bags and took out a blackberry."

"A blackberry?"

"Yes and he ate it!"

The End.