

WHISTLEBLOWER
by Michael Percy

1. THE TOMLIN FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

It is night time in the Tomlin household. The front door bell rings. After a short while it rings again a little longer. Now it rings with more insistence and the door is banged by a fist as well.

Enter Paul Tomlin hurrying to answer the door. He has been disturbed in sleep and he is attempting to throw some clothes on. The banging and ringing continues over:

Angela: **(Off)** Who is it Paul? They'll wake the kids?

Paul: **(To himself)** Keep quiet then, don't make it worse.

Angela: **(Off)** Paul!

Paul: I'm dealing with it Angela – give me a minute

Exit Paul to the front door.

Enter Angela in a similar state of dress/undress as Paul.

Angela: Make sure the chain's on Paul.

Paul: **(Off)** Yes, yes. **(Opens the door.)** My God.

Angela: Paul?

Eileen: **(Off)** I'm sorry Paul...

Paul: **(Off)** You'd better come in.

Angela: Who is it Paul?

Enter Paul followed by Eileen. Eileen is in scruffy state and wearing crumpled clothes which look as if they have been slept in. She has something wrapped in a plastic carrier bag.

Eileen: I'm really sorry it's so late.

Angela: Our children are trying to sleep.

Eileen: I can explain.

Angela: I'm ready.

Eileen: It's happening Paul.

Eileen thrusts the plastic carrier bag into Paul's hands.

Angela: Who is this Paul? What's happening?

Eileen: **(To Paul)** There was a big security clamp down at work – day before yesterday. When I got home there was a car outside with three men – I didn't even go indoors, just ran away. I think they were making a lot of noise to see who would break cover – and it was me.

Angela: Who are you?

Paul: Where have you been since then?

Eileen: Moving around. It's best you don't know about that or where I'm going next.

Paul: How will I contact you?

Angela: For fuck sake somebody listen to me. Who is this woman?

Paul and Eileen stare at Angela for a beat.

Paul: I'll explain later.

Eileen: Be careful Paul. Watch what you say. I'd better get going.

Angela: Paul!

Eileen walks towards the front door.

Paul: Are you okay, do you need anything?

Eileen: About a week's sleep and my life back in one piece.

Eileen takes Paul's hands in hers.

Angela: For God's sake Paul.

Eileen: Thanks for everything and don't take any personal risks for this.
(She indicates the package.) Promise me.

Paul: Of course. But you know you can trust me - if things don't work out for you.

Eileen: No phone calls right. Nothing.

Paul: Okay.

Eileen: Wish me luck.

Exit Eileen.

Paul turns to face an angry Angela. Silence for a few moments.

Angela: ***(With angry emphasis.)*** What is happening?

Paul: ***(He slumps into a chair.)*** Give me a minute, get my head round this.

Angela: You can't expect me to wait while you sit there thinking it through. Who was that woman? What's that she's given you?

Paul: Papers. Evidence. She's Eileen Molly.

Angela: Is that supposed to mean something to me? Come on Paul, talk to me.

Paul looks at her for a moment. He stands.

Paul: It shouldn't have been like this. It wasn't even supposed to involve you – certainly not like this. You have to trust me Angela. Just trust me and everything will work out. I promise.

Angela: Do you realise what you're asking?

Paul: Of course I do. I know I'm asking a lot. But it has to be this way for now, just for a while. I promise. I'll explain everything as soon as I can. Try not to worry.

Angela: I'm not having it Paul. You can't expect me to put up with that. I'm your wife for God's sake. You're supposed to trust me.

Paul: It's got nothing to do with trust. I trust you, of course I do. This is about protecting you.

Angela: From what? What should I be afraid of? Why do I need protecting?

Paul: Please Angela, don't do this. I've got to get dressed. I need to go out for a bit.

Angela: It's one o'clock in the morning Paul. Where the hell are you going?

Paul: Trust me. Please. Just trust me. I won't be long.

Exit Paul. Angela waits for a moment taking it all in. Exit Angela.

2. THE TOMLIN FRONT ROOM - DAY

Two days later

Angela enters carrying several shopping bags. She is in jeans and a casual jacket. She is followed by Sonia Marsden who is dressed for the office. Sonia is carrying two carriers of shopping as well. Angela dumps the shopping on the floor. Sonia adds her bags to the pile.

Angela: Thanks.

Sonia: No trouble. It's better if we talk inside.

Angela: I need to pick my children up from school in twenty minutes. Can I see your ID again?

Sonia: ***(Holding up a wallet containing ID)*** I'm attached to the Home Office.

Angela: I don't know what these things are supposed to look like. Counter Terrorism. SO15. What's all that about?

Sonia: I'm just a police officer. Don't worry about that.

Angela: What do you want?

Sonia: How old are the children?

Angela: Four and six. What's this about?

Sonia: **(She produces a photo of Eileen.)** When was the last time you saw this woman?

Angela stares at the picture.

Sonia: Take your time. I thought it was quite a good likeness.

Angela: She doesn't look like anybody I know.

Sonia: Okay. **(She keeps holding the photo in front of Angela.)** You hesitated, why?

Angela: Just to make sure.

Sonia: Did you think you knew her, at first I mean?

Angela: **(Angela fusses with her shopping bags to avoid the photo.)** No. Just making sure.

Sonia: You may have thought you recognised her.

Angela: Why?

Sonia: She's been on television recently. The news shows. Yesterday mainly. But only the morning bulletins today. The media is like that. You're top billing one day and virtually forgotten the next.

Angela: We've had a lot going on here the last couple of days. Family stuff.

Sonia: Nothing serious I hope?

Angela: Personal family stuff.

Sonia: **(She sits.)** Shall I tell you why she was in the news?

Angela: Does it matter to me? I don't know her.

Sonia: Quite a big story yesterday. Brilliant career thrown away. Sad loss to friends and family. Pressurised job getting on top of her. And she was good looking which helps.

Angela: Like I said, we've been busy lately. Why does it help – to be good looking?

Sonia: The press like a pretty face. Your husband's a journalist isn't he?

Angela: On a web site - a motoring web site.

Sonia: Started out on the Guardian I read?

Angela: Yes, years ago.

Sonia: And couldn't make the grade.

Angela: No. Not that at all. Paul's mum and dad moved to Portugal. There was a car crash and his dad died. His mum was seriously ill. What with sorting out the funeral, all their affairs, and getting his mum treated and back to England his job took a back seat. Once you fall off the merry-go-round in journalism nobody helps you back up.

Sonia: Is he bitter about that?

Angela: Why are you asking about this stuff. It was years ago. What's it got to do with that woman?

Sonia: You're right. Sorry. ***(She holds up the photograph again.)*** We've established you don't know this woman so I suppose that's it.

Sonia stands and puts the photo away.

Angela: What happened to... her? The woman in the photo.

Sonia: Her name was Eileen Molly. She jumped under a train.

Angela freezes for a moment.

Sonia: Did you know her?

Angela: I said, I don't know her. Why should I?

Sonia: She studied journalism at the same time as your husband. They were... fellow students.

Angela: Maybe you should ask my husband if he knew her.

Sonia: We know he knew her. The question is, I suppose, does he know her now?

Angela: I don't know.

Sonia: So Eileen Molly wasn't a family friend in any way.

Angela: No.

Sonia: Not even an acquaintance?

Angela: Not even that. If she was I would have recognised her.

Sonia: True. Of course you would. And you didn't recognise her, did you?

Angela: Why is it important.

Sonia: We need to trace her last movements. Find out who she saw just before she jumped... just before she died.

Angela: The last person to see her alive.

Sonia: We know the answer to that - it was the train driver.

Silence for a moment.

Angela: Why aren't the normal police asking these questions.

Sonia: Eileen worked in a sensitive area of government.

Angela: Was she a politician?

Sonia: She was a senior press office. Did quite well after her humble beginnings as a journalist. I need to ask you some questions about your husband. Small things mainly. We are just keen to close Eileen's file, tie up the loose ends. Is he still politically active?

Angela: What?

Sonia: Eileen wasn't the only thing he was involved with at college – they were into politics. Student politics. You know the sort of thing, bigger grants, redecorating the student union bar, fire bombing animal research labs.

Angela: What? Fire bombs? Not Paul. He's got strong views on politics but he would never do a thing like that.

Sonia: Most people mellow as they get older - move to the right, politically that is. Has Paul moved to the right?

Angela: No. Never. We would never vote Tory if that's what you mean.

Sonia: So he's kept up his old allegiances – his original political convictions.

Angela: That's really none of your business.

Sonia: So I can assume that he's still involved as an animal rights activists.

Angela: No, you cannot assume anything.

Sonia: I never take things for granted.

Angela: I know what I know and as far as I know Paul has never been an animal rights activist.

Sonia: Well, he definitely was involved and you didn't know about it. So it is possible that he's still at it and never bothered to tell you.

Angela stares at Sonia for a moment.

Sonia: I'll be late for the kids if I don't go now.

They both begin to head for the door.

Sonia: Tell him I called. Here's my card. I'll give him a ring later. Nothing to worry about really, just a few loose ends...

EXIT Angela and Sonia.

3. THE TOMLIN FRONT ROOM - DAY

Later that same day.

Paul enters wearing his street coat and carrying a briefcase.

Paul: Angela? ***(Takes his coat off.)***

ENTER Angela.

Paul: I got away as quick as I could. Who was that bloody woman?

Paul approaches Angela to give a hug but she pulls away.

Paul: What did she say? Did she explain exactly who she was? Her department or anything?

Angela: Counter Terrorism. She wanted to know if I knew this Eileen woman.

Paul: So she just talked about Eileen? Nothing else?

Angela: Eileen's dead by the way.

Pause while Angela studies Paul for a reaction.

Angela: Threw herself under a train apparently. It was all over the news yesterday. ***(Pause.)*** I didn't notice. You don't seem surprised.

Paul: I knew.

Angela: And?

Paul: It's tragic. Frightening.

Angela: Great career down the pan. Family and friends devastated. You don't look devastated.

Paul: Devastated is a strong word. I was shocked. Knocked me sideways when I saw it.

Angela: When was that?

Paul: Yesterday. Lunchtime news.

Angela: You didn't mention it.

Paul: I didn't want to frighten you – after what happened the other night. I was going to mention it tonight. I didn't want you to worry.

Angela: Why should I worry – I don't know the woman. I've got nothing to worry about have I Paul. We get a night-time visit from a stranger, well a stranger to me – you seem to know her. Next day she's dead and I've got the secret police...

Paul: It's not the secret police...

Angela: ... The secret fucking police. Telling me all about your secret life as an animal activist with this secret fucking woman.

Paul: I'll be able to explain everything when....

Angela: By then it's going to be too late.

Paul: Just a day or so.

Angela: **(Mounting rage.)** Too late Paul. Two days too late. You refuse to tell me what's going on – your secret plan cooked up with bloody secret Eileen. You seem to have a whole life happening somewhere else – with someone else. It must be very exciting for you living like a secret agent – a double agent - with people dying mysteriously. Was she pushed or did she jump? How much did she know? Was she killed to stop her talking? I don't know. I don't care. If you want a secret life go have it. Get out now. Go chuck yourself under a bloody train. At least you and Eileen will be together again.

Pause

Paul: I'm sorry. Angela, I'm so sorry.

Angela: Not good enough.

Paul: This thing is important but not more important than...

Angela: Say it.

Paul: It's not more important than us. The family.

Angela: So, do something about it.

Paul: It's too late to stop it.

Angela: Stop what Paul? Stop what? You haven't told me what IT is. What was in that package she gave you?

Paul: Someone in the government is having an affair. You know the kind of stuff. Secret love nest and all that.

Angela: And she got killed for a kiss and tell story.

Paul: Nobody killed her.

A pause.

Angela: Why would a senior press officer be running around in the middle of the night with a sleazy story like that? Doesn't make sense to me. And where do you fit into all this?

Paul: She got in touch a few weeks ago and asked me to look after some documents for her. I'm her back-up in case something goes wrong.

Angela: What are you supposed to do?

Paul: I've already told you too much...

Angela: Don't you fucking dare say that again. Do you know where your children are right now?

Paul: Upstairs. What do you mean?

Angela: They're at my mums. And if you get this wrong I'll be joining them.

Paul: Angela.

Angela: Get it right Paul. What are you supposed to do for Eileen?

Paul: The plan was that I have copies of the evidence in case Eileen was... prevented – arrested or something – from giving the news to the press.

Angela: What does being a 'back-up' involve?

Paul: All I have to do is post copies to the press and TV.

Angela: But why did she pick you?

Paul: Exactly because we have not kept in touch over the years. Because I'm a no-count motoring hack who works for an on-line petrol head

web site rather than the main stream media. She needed a nobody as a back-up, somebody the authorities could not connect to her.

Angela: Did they kill her?

Paul: You are really over-reacting. It was an accident. You saw the state she was in, anything could have happened. A trip, anything. She could have fallen asleep on her feet and...

Angela: Even so, we can't get involved. This is too dangerous. You could end up being prosecuted – going to jail even.

Paul: I made a promise.

Angela: That was before Eileen *fell* under a train.

Paul: Don't talk like that. More to the point, they can't possibly suspect I've got the papers.

Angela: So why did I get a visit from the secret police.

Paul: There's no such thing.

Angela: How do you know? The whole point about the secret police is you don't know who they are. You said there was no link between you and Eileen. So why are they here asking questions?

Paul: Routine. They probably have records on Eileen going back way beyond college – it's like that in the civil service. Just routine.

Angela: They can't find their bloody papers so they're widening the net. Don't play this down Paul, I'm not stupid. They know loads of stuff about you – she was talking about you being a student radical and an animal rights activist.

Paul: That was years ago.

Angela: Exactly. They know more about you than I do. **(Pause.)** Where are the papers?

Paul: Hidden. They'll never find them.

Angela: This from the man who uses the same pin number on all his accounts. You are way out of your league with this. It's not Watergate – you don't work for The Washington Post. And suppose you do get the story out. Do you think they'll go 'wow, that Paul's a

naughty guy, never mind let's kiss and make up'. No, I think they'll hound you till it hurts.

Pause

I mean what I say. I don't want my children involved with something like this. Burn the papers. Promise me. Burn them.

4. A LONDON COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Frank Scott enters wearing a street coat and carrying a cup of coffee. He is looking round as if meeting someone. He sits at a table and is busy with his coffee. Paul Tomlin enters and seeks out Frank.

Paul: Frank, sorry I'm a bit late.

Frank: That's okay. Only been here a minute myself. How are you?

Paul: I'm good. You?

Frank: Pretty good. You gonna get a coffee or something?

Paul: Don't worry about me. I don't want to take too much of your time.

Frank: What you doing these days?

Paul: Motoring journalism. Internet focussed.

Frank: Big growth area, motoring. Must be doing well.

Paul: Okay, okay. And I know you're in the big time – assistant news editor. You've done yourself proud.

Frank: Well, you know how it is – greasy pole and all that.

Paul: I don't want to waste your time I'll cut to the chase...

Frank: Look Paul, I'll hear your pitch for old times sake but we run a very tight ship regarding staff. Don't expect...

Paul: I'm not after a job. I've got a story. A big one.

Frank: Okay, I'm listening.

Paul: I can't talk detail but it's major. Several top names in the government could have to go, it's that big. When this breaks it could even take the government down.

Frank: Has this got anything to do with that dead civil servant?

Paul: Like I said, I can't be specific now.

Frank: Did they kill her?

Paul: I don't have anything on that. To be honest I saw her a few hours before she died and she was in a real state. I don't think she'd slept for days and she was living rough.

Frank: There's a lot of background noise – a lot of flack - over her. Something's up. We all know it but nobody's got anything on her. It's as if she never existed. And they've been briefing against the woman – running her down. Drink, drugs – all that. But there's nothing specific. Did she put you onto this. What did she give you?

Paul: Documentary evidence. Everything. And it's not just our government – what I've got links to about half a dozen other countries.

Frank: Can you give me something to go on? Just an outline.

Paul: Africa. They're mixed up in plot to keep Africa in a mess. Millions are dying because our governments want to keep Africa on her knees, unable to develop economically – so she won't become another threat to our own economy.

Frank: That explains all the flack we've had over the girl. They've been calling us for briefings and then giving us nothing but veiled threats about breaches of security. Official secrets – everything.

Paul: I want to write it myself. I want to break the story and handle all the follow-up stuff. It must be under my name all the way. And we need to discuss the fee. Is that okay?

Frank: In principle that's fine, given normal editorial input. I'll have to talk to the editorial board and it will all depend on what you actually come up with.

Paul: Don't worry – this is dynamite.

Frank: Promise not to use that phrase in the piece?

They laugh.

Paul: I'll try.

Frank: We'll have to show everything to the lawyers when you're ready.

Paul: Right.

Frank: Get it written Paul, as soon as.

Paul: Don't worry, I'll be quick. They're sniffing round me already.

This is page 15 of a 28 page script. To see the rest contact the author.