

MANIAC. Captain Mark Poppins. My handshake's also rather firm, but that's because it's wooden. Little souvenir from Afghanistan.

*The MANIAC sneezes violently, holding his wig in place.*

Yikes! Do excuse me, I'm allergic to pollen. And inherited wealth.

PHELAN. OMG, sorry, I'll back off...

MANIAC. No, no, not your fault per se. Please take a seat, Miss Phelan. And by all means put your bag down.

*She sits, and rummages in her bag, leaving it on. The MANIAC flaps, clearing the air.*

SUPERINTENDENT. Can we offer you a drink? Tea? Coffee? There's prosecco somewhere –

PHELAN. I'd rather get a wiggle on if that's cool. I need to upload the article tonight. I'm going to Soho Farmhouse on the weekend.

SUPERINTENDENT. Oh how nice.

PHELAN. It's absolutely fine. So I have a question for you first, Detective, I hope you don't mind if I record this?

DAISY. Oh uh, is that the question?

PHELAN. And another one after that.

DAISY. Right, cos we'd rather not –

MANIAC. Record away, Miss Phelan!

*(Sotto, to DAISY.)* Golden rule of improv: never block.

PHELAN *sets up her recording.*

DAISY *(hissing at the MANIAC)*. But if she tapes it we can't deny anything later on –

PHELAN. Is there a problem, guys?

MANIAC. No, no, not at all. The detective here was just saying what an avid reader he is of your articles.

PHELAN. Oh really? Which ones?

DAISY *looks at the MANIAC for some steers.*

MANIAC. Well, your... top-tens, I imagine. That's the main output of the hard-hitting reporter these days, is it not? Top-ten cakes, Adam Driver films, genocides, stop me when I get one, fonts, owls, superfoods –

PHELAN. I've done one on fonts, yeah.

MANIAC. Thought so. And the detective here loved it.

PHELAN. Did he really?

DAISY. I really did yeah. Please do... ask away.

PHELAN. Great. So...

*(Starts the recording.)* Why is it you've been called 'The Window-Straddler'?

DAISY. Oh for...!

PHELAN. Or 'The Straddling Detective'.

MANIAC. Ooh... you're like a rat up a drainpipe, aren't you?

SUPERINTENDENT. Who calls him that?

PHELAN. Several climate-change protesters that were interrogated in this station have been using it –

SUPERINTENDENT. Oh, that lot! That's fine then, I thought you meant by other coppers.

MANIAC. Truth be told, he'll straddle anything, Miss Phelan. He's famous for it. You plonk it in front of him, he'll park himself on like it's a see-saw. He'll straddle you if you stay here too long.

DAISY. I won't. I won't do that. Until we get to know each other and clear consent has been granted.

PHELAN. Uh-huh. Because one of these protestors told me some pretty wild stories about your interrogation technique, Detective.

DAISY. Okay, whatever, like what?

PHELAN *(reads)*. 'Detective Daisy made me sit on the fourth-floor windowsill with my legs dangling off the edge, then

started insulting me, prodding me, saying things like “Why don’t you just jump, you useless piece of shit, everyone wants you dead, what’s the matter, too scared, little boy”...’

SUPERINTENDENT. Oh as if!

MANIAC. Pfff... sounds a bit Channel Four to me –

PHELAN. So what? They’re all lying are they?

DAISY. I didn’t put the Anarchist guy on the windowsill, yeah? I couldn’t have got him up there for one thing, he was a pretty stocky bloke. Those kids you’re talking about were skinny little streaks of piss –

PHELAN. Oh so you could get them up there?

MANIAC. Had he wanted to. He’s strong. So what? That’s not a crime. Is it? Is that what you want at your paper? To make it illegal to be strong?

PHELAN. I’m literally just passing on what they said...

MANIAC. Well it’s absurd! Suggesting that we stick every suspect out the window and shake ’em about like a dirty doormat! I ask you...!

*The SUPERINTENDENT shakes the MANIAC’s hand.*

SUPERINTENDENT. Well said, m’lud.

MANIAC. Captain. Careful of the hand.

DAISY. Nice one.

*The SUPERINTENDENT slaps the MANIAC on the back.  
His wig dislodges a bit.*

MANIAC. And watch the wig!

PHELAN. So, assuming you didn’t dangle him out of the window, why is there no forensic record of his parabola?

DAISY. His what?

PHELAN. Parabola.

JOSEPH. Maybe he didn’t have one.

SUPERINTENDENT. Yes, not everyone has everything.

DAISY. What's a parabola?

SUPERINTENDENT. My cousin Ben hasn't got a belly button –

MANIAC. I'll field this one gentlemen: parabola, from the Italian, *parabola*, meaning the arc with which something falls to the earth.

PHELAN. Isn't in the inquiry, exactly.

SUPERINTENDENT. Well... so?

*PHELAN heads to the window. The MANIAC wheels away from the flowers and wafts the air as she passes.*

PHELAN. So if we knew how he fell, we'd know if he was dead or alive when he left the window. Whether he jumped or was dropped...

SUPERINTENDENT. Right. Well. We don't tend to record parabolas.

DAISY. I wouldn't even know how.

PHELAN. What about phone calls? You record them though, right? Except in this case, when we want to confirm the exact time nine-nine-nine was called, the tapes just disappear...

SUPERINTENDENT. Why would you need those?

PHELAN. Because emergency services say the call for the ambulance came in at two minutes to midnight but witnesses at the scene say the Anarchist landed at exactly three minutes past.

MANIAC. Uh-huh. I'm not hearing a question.

PHELAN. Well doesn't it all seem a bit convenient that this tape has just suddenly vanished?

MANIAC. It does actually. For once something goes our way!

PHELAN. As in... a bit too convenient.

MANIAC. Aha! A cover-up, you mean?

DAISY. Now hang on a minute...

JOSEPH. There definitely isn't a cover-up.