

Friends Like These

Also by Sarah Alderson

*Can We Live Here?*

SARAH ALDERSON

# Friends Like These



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For Rachel



## Transcript of 999 call

**Sunday, 10 December, 11.23 p.m.**

**Female Caller:** She's got a knife. Please hurry.

**Operator:** The police are on their way. Can you get out of the house?

**Female Caller:** No.

**Operator:** Is there somewhere you can hide, somewhere with a door that locks?

**Female Caller:** I'm in the bathroom . . . Downstairs. Please hurry. I can hear her coming.

**Operator:** Stay on the line with me.

*[0:31:44 – unclear – indistinct crying]*

**Female Caller:** *[whispered]* I think she's outside the door . . . I can hear her. Oh god, please, hurry up.

**Operator:** The police will be there any minute. Stay on the line with me. Can you tell me what's happening? Who is it that's got the knife?

*[0:44:16 – unclear – series of bangs – followed by a crash]*

**Female Caller:** No!

**Operator:** Hello? Are you there?

**[0:53:33 – screams]**

**Female Caller:** No! Get off me . . . She's going to kill me!

**[1:05:33 – unclear – sounds of a struggle]**

**Operator:** Hello? Are you there? Hello?

**Female Caller:** Hello?

**Operator:** Are you OK? What happened? The police are pulling up outside now.

**Female Caller:** She's dead. I think she might be dead. Oh god. Oh god . . . please . . . oh my god. She's not moving. There's blood. A lot of blood.

**Operator:** Is she breathing?

**Female Caller:** I don't know.

**[2:04:16 – whimpering – panting]**

**Operator:** Can you check for a pulse?

**Female Caller:** I . . . oh god . . . I don't know. Please can you send an ambulance?

**Operator:** It's on its way. You need to stay calm. Can you do that for me?

**Female Caller:** Yes. Yes, I think so . . . Oh my god.

**Operator:** What's your name? Can you give me your name?

**Female Caller:** She came at me . . . with a knife. She just came out of nowhere. I think she's dead . . . I think I've killed her.



# Part One



## Partial transcript of police interview with Miss Elizabeth Crawley, subsequent to filing of Missing Persons Report

### **PC Kandiah – Sunday, 10 December**

Have you ever had one of those Facebook friends – more of an acquaintance really, like a colleague or an old school friend – who you accept a friendship request from and then wish to god you bloody hadn't? We all have, right? You don't want to unfriend them just in case they realise, even though they've got like seven hundred friends so the chances are they'd never know. But if you're honest, you're also a little bit intrigued by their life and sometimes, maybe after a couple of glasses of wine, when you're tired of trawling through Netflix to find something to watch, you find yourself randomly Facebook-stalking them. Admit it, you've done it.

Next thing you know, you're falling down a rabbit hole and feeling like a bit of a voyeur. It's funny, isn't it? The whole time you're scouring their feed, you're waiting for someone to tap you on the shoulder and shout *Ha! Caught you!* Even though you haven't done anything wrong. I mean, they wouldn't put it all out there unless they *wanted* you to read it.

You want an example of Becca's social media posts? OK. She was one of those people who hashtagged *every* post with something like #gratitude or #blessed or #yolo. Oh, and also,

#bestboyfriendever. That was her favourite. You know the kind of person I'm talking about. You're smiling. You know someone just like it.

She was forever posting selfies of herself at the gym, you know the kind, complaining about having eaten too many pies and needing to work off the extra pounds, while at the same time showing off her abs. Or posting a thousand photos of herself on holiday in Ibiza – and every shot was taken from a lounge, framing the setting sun through her thigh gap. Or she'd take pictures of herself with a full face of make-up, hair blow-dried, and hashtag it #wokeuplikethis because yeah, sure you did, don't we all? I know I do. *Not.*

Listen, I swear, you can ask anyone, almost every other post was about her boyfriend, James. About how amazing he was, how he'd arranged yet another romantic getaway to New York or the Cotswolds or Paris, how he was hashtag best boyfriend ever. Or she'd take a picture of him asleep, head under the pillows, stick a black and white filter on it and tag it #hotboyfriend and #luckiestgirlalive.

I guess, for want of another word, it came across as smug. I can see you laughing. You totally get it. And let's face it, there's something kind of suspicious about someone who's always posting gushing updates about their other half. Think about it. All those celebrities who make huge public declarations of love, they all end up divorcing three weeks later.

A couple of people at work unfriended her, or at least unfollowed her because they found her so annoying. Not me though.

Were we jealous of her? No. *Honestly.* I can tell you don't believe me but it's true. I mean she was pretty, yes, sure, but we weren't jealous. I think some people were a bit put out that she'd got the job of assistant to the CEO. There were others who'd been there longer and who thought they deserved it more, but

that's just how this industry is. And, besides, I work in the finance department, so it didn't bother me in the same way as it did those who were trying to make the jump from assistants to agents.

If you met her by the water cooler and tried to make polite conversation, she'd just look at you like you were a lesser being and then walk off, like you weren't worthy of her time or something. She was only really friendly to people she thought could help her get where she wanted to be. Where was that? At the top of the ladder, of course. She was . . . ambitious. And don't get me wrong, there's nothing bad about that. I'm all for women climbing the ladder and shattering the glass ceiling. It's past time, isn't it? What's that quote? *There's a special place in hell for women who don't support other women?* Something like that. Well, I agree. And the rest of us women in the office, we stuck together, we had each other's backs – you have to in this industry – you have no idea . . . but Becca, she definitely didn't get the memo on that one.

God, I sound like a bitch. And I'm not. I really am not. I hate talking ill of people. Especially people who are . . . Look, I don't want to make it sound like I hated her. I didn't hate her. I didn't *know* her. I *don't* know her. That's my point.

Oh wait, I remembered something else. For Claire's birthday a few years ago Flora made her a chocolate cake. She put it in the fridge at work. Well, when the time came to bring it out someone had helped themselves to a massive slice. I mean, these things happen at work all the time. People are always nicking bread or helping themselves to your cream cheese, even if you stick a Post-it note on it. I know some people who spit in their food and warn people that that's what they've done to ward them off. Like holy water with vampires.

But this . . . this felt deliberate. Whoever it was hadn't used a

knife and cut a slice of cake. They'd gouged it with what looked like their hands. A huge chunk of cake. It was completely ruined. Who does that? We had no idea. But as I'm comforting Flora in the kitchen, in walks Becca with a plate covered in chocolate crumbs. She saw us, froze, and then she just smiled and stuck her plate in the sink. We knew. She knew we knew. But what are you going to do? Of course, we didn't confront her about it. She would only have denied it.

It was things like that. She lied a lot too. God, I feel awful, and I don't even know if this is helpful in any way. Is it? Shouldn't you be out there, looking for her or something? How is this helping find her? You want a picture of her, I get that, but I'm not the best person. I haven't seen her in years. And I never really knew her to begin with. That's my point. I keep telling you. No one knew her. Not the *real* her.

How did she lie? OK. Here's an example: she'd always name-drop famous people she knew. Or that she *said* she knew. She told people she once dated Prince Harry after meeting him at Boujis, that nightclub in Kensington. Oh, and that her father invented LED lights. Ridiculous things. Unbelievable things. I mean . . . come on, if you're going to lie, at least make the lies believable. It's almost like she was playing a game, like she wanted us to call her out on it. But no one ever did.

Even some of the guys found her too much. A little too . . . into herself, I guess you could say. She was always really well dressed, that's another thing. She had great taste but she'd wear clothes to the office that were more suitable for a night out. Always really high heels too. Manolo Blahniks and Louboutin. We used to wonder how she got the money because she wasn't earning much more than us and we were all pretty broke. We were shopping at ASOS and she was turning up to work in Stella McCartney and Chloé. She told people her family were dead

– her parents and her siblings had all burned to death in a fire  
– god knows if that’s even true – and that she’d inherited a lot of  
money. An LED light fortune.

But now we know the truth. Everything she told us about  
herself was a lie.

So if you ask me why I think she’s gone missing, I’d have to  
tell you that I don’t know.

I’m just giving you some background about who she was. *Is.*