

Matter 19

Summary

Leather Jacket

Account by:	Carnell Nicholls, 17. A-level student.
Source:	Transcript of interview.
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Report

Interviewer: David Scott (DS).

Interviewee: Carnell Nicholls (CN).

DS: So, it's, let's see, 14:53 on Saturday, the seventh of July, 2012. I'm David Scott, and I'm interviewing Mr Carnell Nicholls at his home in Brixton, south London.

CN: You're recording now?

DS: Yes, I'm recording. Can you just confirm you're OK with this?

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CN: I'm good, man, I want this to be recorded – for posterity, like, you know?

DS: So if you'd perhaps begin with maybe a quick introduction to yourself?

CN: OK, so my name's Carnell Nicholls, I'm British but my family's from Jamaica. I just finished my AS-levels, I think I did alright.

DS: You're planning on going to uni next year?

CN: Yeah, to study mathematics. I'm looking at Greenwich or maybe Kingston.

DS: Not Oxford or Cambridge?

CN: (laughs) Someone like me? What do you think?

DS: (laughs) It's fair to say, then, you're a pretty smart young man.

CN: Smart enough to keep out of trouble, yeah.

DS: OK, so can you tell me in your own words about the incident that happened back in January.

CN: Right, yeah. So it was a Saturday, and I was going round my mate's to play *Gears of War 3* on his Xbox.

DS: When was this exactly?

CN: I don't know, maybe ten, ten-thirty in the morning?

DS: I mean the date.

CN: Oh, early January, I don't remember dates, man.

DS: It's not a problem, we can work it out later. Please, carry on.

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CN: Yeah, so I'm walking down Railton Road and I'm coming to this boarded-up place, used to be a Chinese, and –

DS: A Chinese restaurant?

CN: Yeah, all shuttered-up now, but anyway the door opens and these two guys come out, *big fellas*, dressed like some kind of martial artists, they looked *serious*, man.

DS: Had you seen them before?

CN: No, and I don't want to see them again, either.

DS: So they weren't local?

CN: No, they looked maybe Indian or something, except one had long, like metal hair, looked to be made out of like super-thin wire. I ain't seen nothing like it before.

DS: Did they notice you?

CN: They didn't seem to notice anyone.

DS: So you weren't the only person to see them?

CN: It was a Saturday, man! People are out and about, scores of us saw them.

DS: What happened next?

CN: Well the one without the hair –

DS: He was bald?

CN: No, he had regular Indian-like hair, know what I mean? Short, black, straight.

DS: Ah, sorry, I misunderstood. Carry on.

CN: Anyway, he has this backpack on, and he says something to his mate, then they start walking towards me. This is when I notice they're

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packing like katanas, so I step *well* out of the way as they go past.

DS: Katanas, they're Japanese Samurai swords aren't they?

CN: Yeah, but these were bigger, man, longer. I didn't see the blades 'cause they were in their sheaths –

DS: Scabbards?

CN: Yeah, made of like bamboo or something. Anyway, people are moving out of the way same as I was, but I'm curious, you know? I want to see what they're up to.

DS: So you followed them?

CN: At a discreet distance, yeah.

DS: Where did they go?

CN: They went into this railed-off area, someone's garden.

DS: The gate wasn't locked?

CN: That's the thing, man, there was no gate! They just sort of shimmied through.

DS: Shimmied?

CN: Yeah, like they were wriggling through a gap, 'cept there was no gap. There were bushes and stuff the other side, that must've been why they went there.

DS: Could you see them at this point?

CN: Nah, but I could hear them talking.

DS: What were they saying?

CN: I don't know, man, I don't speak their language. It wasn't Hindi or Gujerati, though, I could tell that.

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DS: OK, well that's useful information. What happened next?

CN: Well I hung around, listening. One of the guys seemed to be impatient and the other was like telling him to wait or something, then after maybe half a minute or so he said something like "age a mosee" and then it went quiet.

DS: You remember the words?

CN: I remember the *sounds*, don't know if they were words.

DS: Did anyone other than you hear this conversation?

CN: Nah, just me, leaning nonchalantly on the railing looking at my phone.

DS: It's a pity you didn't record them.

CN: Recording people in Brixton without their say-so's how you get your phone smashed.

DS: So I take it you waited a while then went to investigate?

CN: Yeah, not straight away, obviously – those guys had swords, man! After maybe a minute of silence, though, I chanced it. I tried the shimmy thing but it didn't work, so I vaulted over the railings and had a look around. The guys were gone, man! Like vanished, into the thinnest of thin air, if you know what I mean.

DS: By "vanished", you mean?

CN: They was nowhere to be seen! No way could they have left without me spotting them, not unless they can shimmy through walls or something. That wasn't the focus of my attention,

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though, 'cause they'd left behind like a treasure trove! There were baseball caps, trainers – quality stuff, man, Nike – and these two leather jackets, oh man, sweet, just my size.

DS: You tried one on?

CN: Well I looked around first, made sure there was no-one watching, no CCTV, that kind of thing, but yeah, I put one on. Good fit, too! I thought, I'll have this. That's when I put my hands in the pockets and found the note.

DS: OK, so this is the crucial part. I want you to think clearly and try to –

CN: Man, like I haven't done that a hundred times in my head already?

DS: Sorry, sorry, it's just, you know...

CN: Let me tell my story my way.

DS: Yes, sorry, I'm just being a bit too eager.

CN: Too right. Anyways, I read the note. I'm paraphrasing here, but it went something like this. "Help! There's a fight going on, knives and shit. Big guys keep killing us then we're alive again. They take our stuff but it reappears. We can't get out, the door's got like a force field. Only the big guys can get out. You got to help us."

DS: Was there a name?

CN: Yeah, looked like Jamal or something, kinda hard to read 'cause of the blood.

DS: The note was bloodstained?

CN: Nah, just fingerprints, man.

DS: Was it written in pen or pencil?

CN: Pen, blue biro.

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DS: Is there anything else you can tell me about it?

CN: Well it had been written in a hurry, wasn't folded exact. Oh, there was a number in red printed at the top, like on the pads waiters use when they take your order, see?

DS: Was the note written on both sides of the paper or just one?

CN: Both. Those waiter's pads are small, you know? The last two or three sentences were on the back.

DS: What about the jacket? Were there any signs of damage to it?

CN: Like katana cuts? Nah, it was like brand new, just a few creases to show it had been worn. Same as the other one, they were identical.

DS: Did the other one have a note in the pocket too?

CN: I never found out. That jacket, my jacket, everything – it disappeared.

DS: Disappeared how?

CN: How? I don't know *how*, man, it just disappeared! One moment it was there, next moment it wasn't. The note, the trainers, the caps – everything just went.

DS: Did it all go at the same time?

CN: Nah, most of it had already gone when the jackets went but I saw the shoes go pair by pair, then finally the backpack.

DS: How long was this after the two men had disappeared?

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CN: Maybe five minutes? You think it was on some kind of timer?

DS: It's a possibility.

CN: Whatever, it freaked me out, man! I picked up my old jacket and I was out of there, ran half the way to my mate's before I stopped.

DS: Did you try the door on the Chinese restaurant?

CN: I was going to, that evening, on the way back, but the cops had it cordoned off. There'd been some kind of gang fight inside, six people dead. It was on the TV news, all over the papers next day.

DS: Did you tell the police what you knew?

CN: What's the point, man? Who's going to believe me?

DS: I believe you.

CN: (laughs) Yeah, but ain't nobody going to believe you.

DS: I suspect you may be right!

CN: (laughs) So that's it, anyway. You got anything else you want to ask?

DS: No, I think that's enough to be going on with. Can I contact you again if I have any follow-up questions?

CN: Sure, why not?

DS: Great! In that case, let's draw this to a close. I'll stop recording. Interview ended at 15:12.

Notes

No CCTV cameras on nearby properties were in operation. The police put out a call to the public for information. Consistent reports emerged describing two men in karate uniforms who were seen leaving the former Chinese restaurant at around 10:20am. No arrests were made.

One of the deceased, Jamal Kinkaid, was wearing a leather jacket that he had been given as a Christmas present.