

EW 3

MASTER TAPE NUMBER: T131851A

BRIDGETT - TAPE NO.1 - 10.5.97

This interview is being tape recorded. The interview is being conducted in an interview room at Banbridge Police Station. I am Detective Constable Eric Williamson from the Regional Crime Squad in Armagh. The other police officer present is Detective Constable Martin Strain and I am from Craigavon CID Office. The date is the 10th of May 1997 and the time on the clock on the wall is 1156am.

Now also present is Solicitor.

SOLICITOR [REDACTED], Solicitor, Portadown.

Now what is your full name please.

BRIDGETT Stacey Bridgett.

Stacey have you any other names.

BRIDGETT No.

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Christian names.

BRIDGETT

No.

At the end of the interview I will give you a notice explaining what will happen to the tapes. Again your Solicitor is present so you do have a right to consult with him if you wish to. Now I have to tell you that you don't have to say anything but I must caution you that if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court, it may harm your defence. If you do say anything it may be given in evidence. Sorry I neglected to say there that you were arrested this morning as a result of an incident on the 27th of April 1997 at 1.45am or 1.47am or thereabouts in Market Street, Portadown where there was a serious assault resulting on Thursday past the 8th of May in the victim, Robert Hamill, dying. Now you have been arrested this morning in relation to his murder, do you understand that.

BRIDGETT

Yes.

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And again I have already cautioned you and would remind you that you do not have to say anything okay.

BRIDGETT

Yes.

Now the caution basically means that if you have an alibi or something now is the time really to come out with it. If you are going to rely on something later on in any proceedings that you have failed to come out with now, the Court can ask itself why you did not come out with it. You have already been interviewed in respect of the allegation. Now as a result of this incident taking place police enquiries have been ongoing. There were quite a few people around the streets on that evening and there were a number of witnesses that were always going to come forward to the police. Now Stacey it is a offence. Do you want to tell us what you did that night, in your own words.

BRIDGETT

I had nothing to do with it.

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You had absolutely nothing to do with it.

BRIDGETT I had nothing to do with it.

You come home from the Coach on a bus.

BRIDGETT Yes.

You were dropped off at the bottom of the town, is that right.

BRIDGETT Yes.

Could you go through for us again the sort of sequence of events when you were arriving home that night.

BRIDGETT I just went from the bus.

You were dropped off from the bus.

BRIDGETT I went up, I don't think I went to Herons, I think I went to Boss Hoggs and I waited outside for my mate. We walked up the town, talked to the police.

Just slow down if you wouldn't mind.

BRIDGETT As I say I walked up the town, I was talking to the police in a friendly manner and the fight started, I was assaulted and I run, then let my nose bleed and that was it I went home.

You say you walked up the street and you were talking to the police in a friendly manner.

BRIDGETT Yes.

Where were the police.

BRIDGETT In High Street.

In High Street and what sort of vehicle where they in.

BRIDGETT A landrover.

Now what made you talk to the police in the landrover.

BRIDGETT The door was open and I looked in and recognised the policeman P40

The door was open and you recognised [REDACTED]  
P40 . Where was P40 in the vehicle.

BRIDGETT In the back, he had shouted at me.

The police officers in that vehicle have made statements in respect of the incident. Now the driver of the police vehicle, it is a Constable Neill, would say that he was the driver of the police landrover and that he had more or less moved from the junction of Market Street into High Street. Well that is just there, I understand that, at the Alliance and Leicester.

BRIDGETT Yes.

Just at the top of Woodhouse Street and he would say a male approximately in his mid-thirties, crossed the road in front of us mouthing something. The policewoman with him, Reserve Constable Cornett opened her door and the male said that there is a crowd coming down from Thomas Street from St Pats. Constable Neill would say 'At this time I was aware of two youths coming from the Halifax

direction' that is coming from the way you have explained. They approached the male who had spoken to us in the mouth of Woodhouse Street and one I know as Stacey Bridgett was face to face with the male. This had been unprovoked. Reserve Constable Cornett shouted out at Stacey and the other youth who then walked off. The male proceeded down Woodhouse Street and the youths came over and spoke to Reserve Constable Cornett'. Right so what the police officer is saying there is that you approached the man who was crossing in front of them and appeared to 'square up' and the police and the fact that they opened the door of the landrover and shouted at you, was the reason why you went over to speak to them. Is that not right.

BRIDGETT No the police are mistaken.

The police are mistaken!

BRIDGETT Yes. I walked up on the Halifax side and the man we just met, just as a coincidence and the man turned round and the words he said to me was 'I don't want any trouble, all I want is

to go home' and the man went up the street and this landrover pulled up.

Did this person have any sort of an altercation or any sort of words with you.

BRIDGETT No not that I remember, we weren't shouting at him or nothing.

Who was with you when you were coming up, who was with you.

BRIDGETT Dean Forbes.

Right the two of you were together.

BRIDGETT Yes.

So at any stage did you, as the police would say there, come face on to this man as if to sort of.

BRIDGETT No I was just talking to him, his face, because he turned round, he maybe thought I was going to start I don't know, I don't even know why because I didn't approach him in a menacing manner and he turned round and he

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says to me 'I don't want any trouble, all I want to do is go home'. Here's me 'That's alright' and the police pulled up.

What did you take from what that man had said 'I don't want any trouble'.

BRIDGETT I thought that he maybe thought I was going to start on him, but I don't know why.

That you were going to start on him.

BRIDGETT Yes.

Were you aware of anything going on in the vicinity at that time.

BRIDGETT No.

No.

BRIDGETT No nothing at all.

Things were peaceful.

BRIDGETT Well as far as I seen.

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You don't know who this person was.

BRIDGETT No. As I says he was going up Woodhouse Street.

Another police officer in the vehicle, Constable Atkinson, Reserve Constable Atkinson, would say that again he was in the vehicle 'A man in a greenish blue shirt, aged about thirty to thirty five years with dark trousers and short brown hair passed in front of the landrover and mouthed something towards the vehicle. I formed the opinion that he was continuing on into Woodhouse Street and that he was heading home from St Patrick's Hall in Thomas Street. As he did so two youths approached him from the Halifax Building Society and one of them 'squared up' to him in the mouth of Woodhouse Street. Words were Constable Cornett opened her door and told the two youths to clear off home'.

BRIDGETT I don't remember that.

BRIDGETT That police officer is also mistaken.

Yes. They maybe thought that I tried to 'square up' to this man but I didn't.

Well certainly from what I am reading from those statements is that that would probably be the appearance and if the man turned round to you and said 'I don't want any trouble' it was maybe his feelings that you were 'squaring up' to him as well, no.

BRIDGETT

It probably was his feelings but I wasn't. We just happened to meet because I was going home and he was going home, we just met. He turned round and said it and there was no way I approached him in a menacing way, all I was doing was going up home. Home from the Coach to go home to bed.

Had you much drink taken over the course of the evening Stacey.

BRIDGETT

Yes I had a few drinks yes.

Would you be one of the sort of people that gets really friendly with drink taken or very

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aggressive, now we have all seen different people with drink.

BRIDGETT No I would be friendly with drink.

So we go on then and the police officers would say that whilst you were at the vehicle then another person approached the driver's side and opened Constable Neill's door and informed them of some altercation or something that was taking place on the other side of the road. That is just at the mouth of Thomas Street or thereabouts. Can you tell us then from that happened, what you did then.

BRIDGETT When he was talking to the policemen he was going 'Are you going to let these ones do this and that'. We weren't aware of anything going on.

Could you overhear this conversation.

BRIDGETT I was in the passenger side talking in and he was at the driver's side and he was saying 'Are you going to let these ones do this and do that'. He was really doing the bap like.

Did he say when he said 'let these ones do this' did he say what actually, can you remember the words that he said to the police.

BRIDGETT Orange bastards. Are you going to let these orange bastards do this and do that. He was really doing the bap like and the next minute he had some contact with the policeman I think but he came round to my side, but he went on past me and round the back of the landrover again.

When you say some contact with the policeman what way do you mean, physical contact.

BRIDGETT Like a bit of a scuffle, he was panicking like mad and he came round but he went on past me.

But he went on round the landrover and he didn't have any contact with you at all.

BRIDGETT No.

Do you know where he headed off to this person.

BRIDGETT           Back up to the fighting.

Back from where he came from.

BRIDGETT           Yes to his friends that were coming down.

So him having left then, where did you go.  
The police officers obviously started to react  
in some form to this altercation, is that  
right.

BRIDGETT           Yes I went to head up home but then they.

They went to head up home.

BRIDGETT           No I went to head up home and the man came  
over and punched me on the nose and busted my  
nose.

Now where did that take place.

BRIDGETT           I went round the back of the landrover and I  
was just, I went you know to go like that  
there and he just came up out of the blue,  
bang and thumped my nose.

Now you went to go round the back of the landrover.

BRIDGETT Yes.

Were you, was the police landrover in the middle of the road in Woodhouse Street or was it stopped beside the footpath or could you describe where.

BRIDGETT In the middle of the road. The front of it was facing down towards Herons and the back of it up to where I live.

Right.

BRIDGETT I went round the back of it to go up and the next thing he just came out and dug me.

Where were you, just for the tape, physically near to, where were you closest to a reference point, either a building or point on the roadway, can you describe where you were.

BRIDGETT Closer to the Alliance and Leicester, but I

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was on the road like.

On the road.

BRIDGETT I think so.

So you hadn't actually stepped from the roadway onto the footpath.

BRIDGETT No.

You would have been somewhere midway in that junction.

BRIDGETT Yes.

Right and just tell us again in your own words how this assault on you took place.

BRIDGETT He just came out of the blue and banged me on the nose.

Out from the back of the landrover.

BRIDGETT Well I went round the back but he was already at the other side.

Right.

BRIDGETT           And I couldn't see him, then bang on my nose.

So you got banged on the nose, what was your reaction then.

BRIDGETT           To get off side. My nose was busted straight away.

Was your friend that you had walked up with present at this time.

BRIDGETT           When the thing had sort of started I went to go up the town, I don't know where he went to.

When did you last lose sight or contact with him.

BRIDGETT           Whenever the thing, whenever your man started slabbering to the policeman in the driver's seat.

Was this a person you had come across and said have you, are you going to do some mouthing.

(Inaudible).

BRIDGETT Yes and I went round the back of the landrover and I was banged and I run. I didn't see him again.

So where did you run to Stacey.

BRIDGETT The other side of the street, you know up like that there.

You are making a gesture with your arm, the tape can't see that.

BRIDGETT Right well just up towards Dorothy Perkins, diagonally across the street.

Diagonally, so you ran from the Alliance and Leicester diagonally across the road to Dorothy Perkins.

BRIDGETT Yes.

And having got to Dorothy Perkins where did you go then.

BRIDGETT I stood to let the blood come out of my nose.

Yes.

BRIDGETT The blood was dripping all over the place and then I let my nose drip and I went down to complain but the police, the police had too much going on so I went home.

So you went, can you recall, you knew the police officer in the back of the landrover, did you not think that whenever things had calmed down to go along and speak to that police officer again and say 'look I got this, this happened'.

BRIDGETT Yes I did but he, that was Rodney Sharpe and he says 'Go on just get off side'. That was the words he said to me to get off side.

Now how long was that, how long was that after the incident.

BRIDGETT Well I just went up, let my nose bleed, just stood there for about ten seconds, went down and P40 was out and I said 'P40 how do

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you do' and he said 'Get off side' so I went up the town.

So you headed away off then away out of it altogether.

BRIDGETT Yes just up the town.

Now in respect of that how many police vehicles was there at that stage then.

BRIDGETT I can't remember at all.

Were you aware of when you came back after you had let your nose drip as you said, were you aware of what was sort of happening in the area at that time.

BRIDGETT Where.

On both sides of the road or what, describe what you felt or sorry seen.

BRIDGETT I seen punches being thrown, it all happened quickly.

Whereabouts.

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BRIDGETT Both sides of the street it was.

Describe the scene if you can.

BRIDGETT When I came round the back of the landrover there was people in the Market Street side and the High Street side.

Was this when you had come back over after having been struck.

BRIDGETT Yes well when I got struck I run up to sort of look around, there was people, just a free-for-all.

A free-for-all you would describe it as.

BRIDGETT Yes.

And you stood and calmed yourself and did you return back again.

BRIDGETT I did to try and talk to P40

At what place, where was P40 at the

time you went to speak to him.

BRIDGETT In the middle of the road.

He was in the middle of the road so you made your way from Dorothy Perkins.

BRIDGETT It was just down a bit.

Out into the middle of Market Street.

BRIDGETT Yes.

Now the road is divided, there is even a traffic island there now.

BRIDGETT Yes at the division, he was round about where the division is but I was in the middle of the road you know where Dorothy Perkins is letting my nose bleed.

Right.

BRIDGETT And I went round and I seen P40 and I says P40 look at my nose'. I tried to come up behind him but he says 'Get off side'.

Sorry I have mistaken something you have said there earlier on. You said that you had, you had made your way diagonally across from the Alliance and Leicester towards Dorothy Perkins. I took it that you had went and stood outside Dorothy Perkins but from what you have just said there.

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BRIDGETT

I was in the middle of the road.

You stood in the middle of the road on the traffic island in the middle of the road or in the dividing island.

BRIDGETT

The traffic island, between the traffic island and Dorothy Perkins.

Right so you.

BRIDGETT

In the middle of that road there on the road.

You said the middle of the road now, the opposite carriageway of the road. Now how far away from the altercation, the general mealie of the things, would you have been at that

time.

BRIDGETT A safe distance.

How safe is a safe distance Stacey.

BRIDGETT Well safe enough from getting another smack.

Would that be just outside arms reach, is it.

BRIDGETT No it is more than that there like.

Could you say in metres or yards, you know distance wide, how far it was.

BRIDGETT The fighting was going on all around Eastwoods and stuff like that there and I was up at Dorothy Perkins, Dorothy Perkins was safe enough like.

How many people would have been involved in this series of fights.

BRIDGETT It would be hard to say, there was a big crowd like. There was more than ten, maybe twenty.

Did anyone approach you when you were standing there, did anyone make any gesture or make any comment towards where you were or at you.

BRIDGETT No.

No.

BRIDGETT No not that I heard.

So you took no part in that altercation.

BRIDGETT No.

Whatsoever.

BRIDGETT No.

And you only remained there a short time and after P40 told you to get off side you went away then.

BRIDGETT Yes.

You did go away.

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BRIDGETT Yes.

And where did you go.

BRIDGETT Away up past St Marks Church. I waited to see if Dean was coming up as well.

Yes.

BRIDGETT Because the police were moving everybody on, everything was calm, the police were moving everybody on and I walked on with everybody after it was all over.

Right.

BRIDGETT But I couldn't see Dean.

So you didn't meet up with him again that night.

BRIDGETT No. I don't remember.

You don't remember or you didn't.

BRIDGETT I don't think so no.

Did you go straight home or did you go to a party anywhere.

BRIDGETT No straight home.

You have said there that you went basically straight home. There were only four police officers in the initial vehicle that was there and I think they were P40, Constable Cornett, Constable Neill, wait until I see here, and Constable Atkinson. Other police obviously responded to the thing and there was, one of the officers, Constable Silcock, who arrived. Now after the initial altercation started and he has it at 1.47, 'We received a call about a disturbance in Portadown Town Centre and we arrived several minutes later. A large crowd of youths were in the vicinity'. Now he was there, he had radioed for an ambulance and stayed with the two injured men, those were men that were both lying in the road along with several women who said they were accompanying the men when the fracas occurred. 'A large crowd of youths were in the vicinity of these men. They were

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aggressive, both verbally and physically. On several occasions I pushed youths away from the injured men as they appeared to try and kick the men'. That is these defenceless men lying on the ground, the crowd were still vying for blood and were still kicking at them and lashing at them. 'One of the rowdy youths was pointed out to me by a woman wearing a white top who alleged that this youth had jumped on the head of one of the injured men. The youth was wearing a charcoal grey top, he also had blood coming from his nose. A member of the crowd called to this person, calling him Stacey. He responded to his name'. That would seem to be in contradiction of what you say.

BRIDGETT

I wasn't wearing a charcoal grey top for a start.

What were you wearing.

BRIDGETT

I was wearing a Ralph Lauren shirt.

And what is that.

BRIDGETT            Definitely not charcoal grey.

What colour is it.

BRIDGETT            It is like a green, it is all different colours.

What colour would it look under the sodium lights in the street.

BRIDGETT            Definitely not charcoal grey, not a mission of it.

SOLICITOR            That's the one that was actually bagged and shown to us in Lurgan.

BRIDGETT            Yes but I don't even wear that one there.

SOLICITOR            Was it blue and yellow.

BRIDGETT            I don't even wear it, my Ma doesn't like to iron it, that is why I don't wear it, my Ma doesn't like to iron it.

SOLICITOR            Anyway didn't the policewoman or the female constable actually remark to you that it was a

Ralph Lauren shirt, isn't that right.

BRIDGETT Yes, she made a remark that it was a Ralph  
Lauren shirt.

SOLICITOR And they could be purchased at whatever price  
at the Jonesboro' market or whatever it is.

BRIDGETT That proves that that woman was mistaken.

SOLICITOR She knows, the policewoman actually knows what  
you were wearing.

BRIDGETT Yes.

That's fine.

BRIDGETT So they are mistaken.

Can I take you back to when you were across  
the road in the centre of the road tending to  
your nose, how long did it bleed for, did you  
come over to see anyone for help or did anyone  
come to help you there when they saw that you  
needed help.

BRIDGETT No I get nose bleeds regularly like.

Without sort of having been punched or struck or anything like that.

BRIDGETT If I am in bed like, I used to have them, I don't get them no more like, when I had the old hayfever I used to get nose bleeds but if I get a dig in the nose, my nose would bleed like.

But were, did anyone say, come to help you or did you ask someone to help you.

BRIDGETT Somebody came and put their hand on my back and says are you alright.

Where did that person come from.

BRIDGETT From behind me. You know I was like there in the middle of the street, facing down towards the fight but I couldn't see it because my head was down because I was letting the blood drip out of my nose and then I went back and held it and put it over again and somebody came and said are you alright and patted my

back. Did you speak to them or anything. Was it a fellow or a girl.

BRIDGETT I think it was a fellow.

Right.

BRIDGETT I just looked round and said yes I'm alright, I'm alright and then I went down to complain.

And then continued on then.

BRIDGETT Yes.

Constable Cooke arrived, he was in a third police vehicle that arrived at the scene. He made his way to the scene arriving three or four minutes later. He saw two people lying, two persons lying in the left hand carriageway near the junction of Thomas Street and a crowd of approximately thirty to forty people about ten feet in front of them with several police officers between them trying to hold the crowd back. Two females and a male were close to the injured people. He went, there was broken glass lying round the injured persons and

round the police landrover. The persons in the crowd were shouting and jeering towards the police and the injured persons. Members of the crowd were trying to get past the police to try and get towards the injured persons. The two males lying on the road seemed to be unconscious, both had blood around their faces. Other police officers arrived at the scene around this time. Constable Cooke says 'I approached the crowd along with other police and started to move them back towards West Street. I recognised the following persons at the front of the crowd'. And the first one he names Stacey is yourself!

BRIDGETT

I don't even know Constable Cooke.

Stacey Bridgett from [REDACTED]

His nose was bleeding. And he goes on to name other people in the crowd.

BRIDGETT

I don't even know a Constable Cooke so I don't know how he knows my name.

Again that would seem, both of those police

officers have said, well Constable Cooke would appear to know you anyway, he says, 'The following person at the front of the crowd was Stacey Bridgett of [REDACTED] His nose was bleeding'.

Now the other police officer, well although he has indicated this person was wearing a charcoal grey top, you would deny that, again I don't know what way that would look under the sodium lighting there or in the heat of the moment. He also had blood coming from his nose. A member of the crowd, of this crowd, called to this person, calling him Stacey. He responded to his name. Now that would seem to contradict what you have said there that you got away off side but you weren't having anything to do with this crowd, were you.

BRIDGETT

No.

We have a statement from a member of the public, an extract of the statement here and I understand at the moment that we are not at liberty to disclose the identity of this person. Now this person said, 'I can't

remember what was said but it was something like fight, fight. We all ran down to see what was happening. When we got as far as the church I could see a crowd at the junction of Thomas Street and Market Street'. Now this person would say that 'I saw two people lying on the street, one was near the centre of the road and the other was near the footpath close to Eastwoods. The person I saw in the middle of the road I thought was dead as he was not moving. It was at this time I saw a number of persons gather round the person lying in the centre of the road. These persons were kicking the person on the ground around the head and body. I saw them jump on the person on the ground. They jumped all over him and kicked him. I saw the person who were doing this and I can identify them as' and this person goes on to identify five people, the third of whom is named as Stacey Bridgett. This individual goes on to say 'The other person lying near Eastwoods was being helped by' and they name a girl who was helping him; 'but I saw persons run up and kick him around the head and body and this girl telling them to stop'. Now that is a member of the public

that has identified you as kicking and jumping on a person lying on the ground. You and others Stacey. Now that is the deceased Robert Hamill. That is in complete contradiction to what you have said.

BRIDGETT

I didn't touch him.

Other police officers are going on with the enquiries, there was a lot of people about there that night. It may have started off as just a row, you may well have been at the front of the police landrover when it started, you may well have got a smack on the nose from somebody and as a result of that, the blood all over you and you then run in and dived into this. Just like no Thran. Now rows like this happen, they do happen, they happen regularly. Now I understand that night there was a row here in Banbridge and a man received an awful beating round in the Chip Shop having come from the Coach. They happen, they happen in every town in Ireland, in England, everywhere but this man has died as a result of the beating he got.

BRIDGETT

It had nothing to do with me.

People as is their want, go along there and they don't always want to be involved, if it is just a row they see nothing, say nothing, but it has gone on from that Stacey. This, this now for all intents and purposes, is a full blown murder investigation. Where people are reluctant to get involved in what is a row, whenever it becomes to something as serious as murder, they do come forward and they do tell what they have seen. That is the case here. Now there are a lot of witnesses to what happened there that night, there are a lot of other people who will be interviewed. Now if I was you I would think long and hard of how many people, not one individual, but how many people seen you doing that that night. This is the time that you have to think of yourself and be honest with yourself and everybody else and say what you did. Now that is right. Now there are others named as dancing, jumping on his head. 'I can identify them as ....' and this individual goes on to name five people, yours is the third name on that list. Those other individuals, you are

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aware that there have been other people arrested this morning, they will be interviewed, if it is in their interests and they believe their interests to say oh I did this and I did that but I will tell you this, Stacey Bridgett well he was dancing on your man's head. You think about it.

SOLICITOR Who were the other people, the other four people.

Dean Forbes.

SOLICITOR Was that the first named.

Yes that was the first named person.

SOLICITOR And the second named.

Allister Hanvey.

SOLICITOR And the fourth named person.

Muck.

SOLICITOR Just known as that.

That is what he is identified as, Muck. And the fifth name, Rory Robinson.

SOLICITOR Thank you.

Now why would anybody who has come forward now to the police name those names.

BRIDGETT I don't know. I don't know.

And the police officers, you know their evidence would be, it puts you in a different light and in different positions from what you have said.

Did you ever, have you come forward to make a complaint in relation to the assault which you sustained. Have you made a statement.

SOLICITOR He tried to, to P40

BRIDGETT I tried to.

Have you been back subsequently to make an official complaint.

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BRIDGETT           What am I going to get out of it.

Subsequent.

BRIDGETT           What am I going to get out of it.

But you are entitled to have the thing investigated, what do you feel about that.

BRIDGETT           Aye and he's going to be caught too.

Pardon.

BRIDGETT           Do you think they're going to run looking after somebody who busted my nose.

Well you received it, we are duty bound to investigate all complaints.

BRIDGETT           I know.

Did you receive any other injuries as a result of that night.

BRIDGETT           No just a busted nose.

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