

Audition script for role of **Detective Tufts**:

**"Morning, Mr. Phelps."**

That voice!

**"Beautiful day, isn't it?"**

"Was," I said.

Detective Tufts flipped a leather holder out with a practiced ease and showed his badge. **"I'd like your help with something."**

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It was official now. So, my Shayna finally surfaces. What timing.

**"Going on a trip?"** He nodded at my satchel.

"Over to the coast."

**"Mister Phelps, what can you tell me about Kim Gustafson?"**

"Nothing. Never heard of him."

**"Her. She was the wife of the owner of the marina store."**

"Is that why you've been following me?"

**"Is there a second reason?"**

I don't need a lot of rope to hang myself.

"No. Not that I can think of. She ran off...didn't she?"

**"What kind of relationship did you have with her?"**

"Me?" It didn't come out right. "No! I mean none. What's this about?"

**"She's dead."**

"That's terrible."

**"Yes, it is. She spent a lot of time on your boat."**

"I hired her as a housekeeper from time to time. When the place got too slovenly."

**"And became friends...?"**

"No. I mean...look, we spoke maybe a dozen times the entire time I knew her. I'm really sorry to hear she's dead. She was a sweet woman. I'm sorry, but I really have to run. Is there anything else?"

**"Not today."** Tufts blocked my way with the bulk beneath his tight watery plaid sportcoat, sizing me up.

"Is that real madras?"

**"Yes. Don't let it blind you. And don't run too far."**

Inadvertently following Tufts to the parking lot, I fell into that awkward co-existence, trying to pretend I didn't see him as I slowed my pace to fall further behind. Cops spook me.

**"One more thing..."** Tufts scanned his little spiral notebook. He smiled. A frightening smile. **"...'pretty, petite, sweet'. Sure you weren't a special friend, Phelps?"**

"You have a dirty mind," I had to say.

**"Only on the job."** He handed me a black and white business card with a gold star on it, and walked off in the direction of a white 2008 Mercedes-Benz C350 Sport.

"I wish I could help," I called after him.