

# Round Up the Usual Suspects

- by Rytus Kramp  
(based on a true event)

Last Saturday a friend of mine called around for lunch, bringing two other visitors with him. I decided to make pancakes for us all since I was sure he didn't get pancakes often where he was staying. Jay came into the kitchen at my request to help prepare and cook the lunch. His two associates sat at the dining table. I had made fresh coffee and offered them a cup. They were very polite and we spoke about a number of subjects while waiting for the cakes.



After lunch Jay and his associates went around the back for a cigarette since our house is a non-smoking home.

After finishing a tidy up I joined them out back and we talked about the trees for a little while, until Jay had finished his smoke then we went inside, since it was a bit chilly out. I apologised to Jay as I told him that he would have to leave as I had work to finish. I went out front with them as they got into their van. Jay was in the back since he was the prisoner, one staff member got into the rear of the van with him while the other took the drivers seat. I waved, they all waved and the driver Gene tooted and they went off down the road back to the secure unit where Jay was detained. It was just another weekend day. Just another visit. Now I could get on with my work. Oh no! destiny had something else in mind, the wicked thing was going to play into the hands of the crazed psycho-doctors at the unit where poor Jay waited, like the others, for justice and some semblance of rehabilitation.

I went back to my computer and started poring over Google. The next time I looked out the thinly curtained windows I saw Gene coming up the ramp to the door. He obviously didn't see me since he turned and started off back down the ramp. I assumed, quite naturally, that something had been forgotten and they had returned for it, whatever it was. I went out the front door and asked, "What's up?" Gene turned to me, "Is Jay here?" I was going to say, offhandedly and with some humour, that the last I had seen of him he was in the back seat of the van. But I didn't, Gene looked a little frazzled or maybe distracted.

He kept looking around as if he would see a ghost creeping up behind him. "We've lost him". Well you can't lose Jay, he is quite tall and, due to minimum exercise in his present circumstances very, very rotund. What did Gene mean, that they had put him down somewhere and forgotten where? I waited, it didn't seem polite to repeat what I had just heard. "He ran away", said Gene. "I'm going to get into real trouble", he said, almost as if talking to himself. "Oh". I was a little mystified at this unusual turn of events, though I knew Jay had a turn of speed over a hundred metres after which he would probably go into cardiac arrest, froth at the mouth and collapse on the street, or anywhere else that was

convenient. I was still somewhat bamboozled, and unknown to me would stay that way, but that's for later on in the story.

Gene was a young man and appeared to be very fit. His story confirmed the fitness, at least of his body. "When we left here Jay said he wanted to get a cup of coffee so we decided to go to Titirangi Village". The village is only two kilometres away. Gene continued his absorbing story. "I am going to get into real trouble because we didn't have permission to go there". He didn't sound sorry just a little bewildered by the turn of events. I think I muttered something about how bad that was but I was still trying to figure out how such a fit young man had been outrun by a very unfit man who just turned forty. "We went to the Hoodwink Café and bought some takeaway coffees", Gene continued. "Then Jay wanted to go for a cigarette so we went out with him. Then he wanted to go to the toilet". He was still searching the hedgerow along my driveway with his eyes as if at any moment Jay would pop out and the chase would be on again, but I knew Jay would never come near my house. "I went with him to the toilet". Normal practice, men following other men, into the toilet. Now the story becomes a little bit strange, fractured, uneven, not that it isn't already strange and will soon to get positively weird.

The next thing Gene tells me, in between bewailing the likelihood of him getting into real trouble, was that "Jay flagged down a passing car, got in and was gone." Now I knew that Jay for some reason had never had a problem getting lifts. He had absconded on numerous occasions and had always got a lift real quick. On one occasion he absconded through the toilet window of a church in Wellington and in ten hours had reached Auckland. That's pretty good. When I had asked him if he had trouble getting a lift he had told me he had no trouble at all. If I saw him thumbing a ride I certainly wouldn't stop and pick him up.

Now this did seem a little strange to me. There was something missing, like how did Jay in company with Gene, manage to flag a passing car down, get in and be driven away. What was Gene doing? What was the other staff person doing? Did they both just stand and watch while their prisoner made his escape.

Something was not quite kosher. But then it got even less kosher because I heard that when the vehicle had stopped the front seat passenger had got out and relocated themselves to the rear seat while Jay then got into the front passenger seat. And this in a little red Suzuki hatch. What were the staff doing? However the description, via Gene, of the next part makes riveting reading. I asked, which way did the car go. "towards the roundabout," said Gene and then down Atkinson road. Is that part called Atkinson as well?" he asked me. "yes it is," I said. "I chased after the car", he said. "On foot?" I asked. "Yes". I said, "Did you run all the way here?" that's about two kilometres. Gene told me he had. "Why?" I asked. Wait for it... "He told me he was coming to your house". "You believed that??" I thought. I didn't say it, Gene was in a bad enough state without me telling him that he had been suckered, but then Jay is pretty good at that too. He hadn't outrun Gene he had outwitted him. Fancy being outwitted by an intellectually disabled man. "You didn't catch the car?" I asked. Atkinson is a steep hill for almost its entire length. No matter how fast a person ran they would lose it within fifty metres. "No".

Gets worse. "So your partner is driving around looking for Jay?" Gene shook his head. "No, she can't drive. And I've got the keys." Gosh I thought, stand back, genius at work. He said. "Could he be around the back?" I had the feeling he didn't believe me, but still believed the man who had already suckered him. "No, of course not. Jay wouldn't come here. Let's have a look". We went around the back and looked down the length of the section. Neither of us could see Jay. Because, he wasn't there. I think Gene was still hoping that miracles happened on a Saturday and that Jay would come out of the bush

with his hands raised calling, "don't shoot, I give up", but that was not going to happen. I have known Jay for 16 years, if he said he was coming to my place, he was going somewhere else. "So you're here, and your partner is in Titirangi and no one is looking for Jay?" He shook his head then mentioned again how much trouble he was going to be in. "Do you want a lift somewhere?" I asked. "No, someone is coming from the unit to pick me up". Being an ex-cop the whole story seemed both prat-like and unbelievable. Too many gaps. The getaway was too easy. Did he get the car registration number? I don't know. I didn't want to ask. He was obviously feeling bad enough. "Well, I might just pop up to the railway station, if he has money he might catch the train". I left Gene standing out on the footpath with the admonition, "If it rains go an stand under the eaves".

I drove up to the station and kept an eye out for Jay, knowing full well that it would be a real miracle if he was anywhere in the vicinity. He might be intellectually disabled but he is not stupid. He wasn't, so I went home and put it out of my mind. It really was little to do with me. I hadn't lost him. But I was wrong. The fiendish minds of management began looking for a scapegoat. Baa. Look no further. They came to the conclusion that if staff had been unable to stop him getting away then Jay must have pre-planned the escape. That the driver of the red Suzuki hatch was a known associate of Jay's. Having immediately leapt to the conclusion unsupported by any known facts, it was obvious to them that I, or a member of my team, had facilitated and aided and assisted in his escape. At least that was what was implied very strongly the following day.

On Sunday at about 3 in the afternoon I got a call from the manager of the secure unit. She told me that she had been speaking with the clinical director, a psychiatrist, remember that, who had agreed that obviously Jay had been aided and assisted in his escape. On this spurious thinking they had decided that neither I, nor any of my team, could now visit any inmate at the secure unit. I sternly asked if she was accusing me of aiding and assisting Jay. She said 'no' but it was obvious that she was. I told her I would contact her superior.

It was easy to see how they had put two and two together and come up with seventeen. Together the management had leapt in unison to the conclusion that because he had got away Jay had to be aided and assisted. He couldn't do it on his own as he was intellectually disabled. That his history showed very clearly his ability to escape and elude any pursuit didn't impinge on their thinking since the leap had probably been taken instantaneously without any acknowledgement of the facts of which they had very few. Whether the staff who had 'lost' Jay colluded by fabricating a story to make themselves look less culpable I don't know but that also was possible.

Funnily enough they were about to do the same with their investigation, that is, make some decisions based on a veritable dearth of information but plenty of instantaneous leaps of faith into darkened places. Read about it in the next absorbing chapter.

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