

One day in 1963, thirteen-year-old Alison Carter simply disappeared

Place of Execution

On MASTERPIECE Contemporary

Sundays, November 1 and 8, 2009 at 9pm on PBS

hosted by David Tennant

Juliet Stevenson (*Bend It Like Beckham*, *The Politician's Wife*) stars as a journalist trying to crack a four-decade-old case of a missing girl, on *Place of Execution*, based on the psychological thriller by best-selling Scottish novelist Val McDermid (*Wire in the Blood*), airing in two parts on MASTERPIECE Contemporary, Sundays, November 1, 9 to 10:30pm, and November 8, 9 to 10pm on PBS (check local listings).

The recent UK broadcast had critics spellbound. "What a haunting, perfect piece of drama ... Fanatically gripping!" raved *The Observer*.

"[Juliet Stevenson] was superb!" wrote *The Telegraph*, comparing the Olivier award-winning actress to "Helen Mirren in the early episodes of *Prime Suspect*."

Stevenson plays filmmaker Catherine Heathcote, a single mother and workaholic who throws herself into a documentary about a respected high-level police official, George Bennett, whose career took off 45 years earlier with his first big case: the disappearance and presumed murder of thirteen-year-old Alison Carter in the village of Scardale in north England. Although Bennett got a conviction, Alison's body was never found.

In an eerily beautiful drama interspersed with flashbacks to the early 1960s, Lee Ingleby (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*) plays the intense young Bennett, with Philip Jackson (*Poirot*) as the mellower older man, who abruptly and uncharacteristically pulls out of Catherine's project. His only explanation: "Mistakes were made."

Also appearing are Greg Wise (*Cranford*) as Philip Hawkin, Alison's haughty stepfather; Tony Maudsley (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*) as Tommy Clough, Bennett's garrulous sergeant; and Elizabeth Day as Sasha, Catherine's rebellious teenage daughter, who wants nothing to do with her mother but irresistibly succumbs to the fascination of this unsolved crime.

The deeper Catherine digs into the Alison Carter case, the more disturbing it appears. Two suspects turned up early in the investigation: Alison's schoolmate Charlie Lomas (Mikey North), who had a secret cache of photos of her, but no apparent connection to her disappearance; and Alison's uncle

Simon (Ryan Anthony-Jones), a known sexual offender. Briefly detained by the police, he died of exposure shortly after his release—an apparent suicide.

Most troubling are the villagers of Scardale, a close-mouthed clan who withheld key information until late in the investigation, such as the local mine that was a likely hiding place for evidence, and a suspicious sighting of Hawkin near the place where his stepdaughter vanished.

Then there is the behavior of Bennett, who by all accounts was a little too eager to wrap up the case. Did he cut corners to reach a solution? Did he, as Catherine begins to suspect, fabricate evidence? Is his sudden silence, 45 years later, an admission of guilt? And could he be behind the torching of the warehouse where evidence of the crime was stored, including a very shocking set of photographs of Alison?

As Catherine begins to grasp the long-held secrets of Scardale, her quest not only turns the Alison Carter case upside down, but it begins to make sense of the tormented journalist's own troubled past.

Place of Execution is a Coastal Production in association with Ingenious Broadcasting 2LLP for ITV. It is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston. It was adapted by Patrick Harbinson from the novel by Val McDermid. The director is Daniel Percival. The producer is Philip Leach. The executive producers are Robson Green and Sandra Jobling. David Tennant is the host of MASTERPIECE Contemporary.

MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer. Funding for the series is provided by public television viewers.

pbs.org/masterpiece

Online press materials available at **pbs.org/pressroom** and **pressroom.wgbh.org**

For a limited time beginning November 2, *Place of Execution* will be available to view online at **pbs.org/masterpiece**.

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