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A child abduction, rape and murder case study - lessons to learn

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Courtney Pieters was 3 years old when a family friend kidnapped her, raped her twice, and killed her. This happened less than 3 weeks ago (May 4 2017). This is the shit you don't want to write about. But the stuff you have to confront if you want to learn from it and hopefully make a difference in someone's life.

First read the news article about it, then we'll look at what we can learn.

[From iol.co.za](http://iol.co.za)

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Cape Town – The man arrested for the murder of three-year-old Courtney Pieters is believed to be a childhood friend of her father's who had rented a room in their Elsie's River, Cape Town, home.

The 40-year-old man was arrested on Sunday night.

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DISTRAUGHT: Courtney's mom, Juanita Pieters is comforted during a prayer meeting held at her

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home on Sunday. CREDIT: Phando Jikelo/ANA Pictures



Courtney Pieters

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Police spokesperson FC van Wyk said investigators had worked around the clock to catch the perpetrator.

"The 40-year-old suspect was arrested at Saturn Close, Salberau, Elsie's River and once he has been charged he is expected to appear in Goodwood Magistrate's Court on a charge of murder."

Little Courtney's body was found in Epping on Saturday.

She had been missing since May 4.

Her alleged killer is believed to have been close to the family, with the children calling him "uncle". He had been on the run since the wreath-laying ceremony on Sunday.

"We were shocked and very disappointed. He should have been her protector as he knew her, they had a good relationship," said Courtney's aunt, Magdelene Petersen.

Petersen described the suspect as a relaxed person.

"He knew how to address people and his manners attracted people to him. He respected Courtney's family. A very decent man who has been friends with Courtney's father since childhood and worked at a call centre.

"For Aaron, Courtney's father this hasn't sunk in. A lot of people were asking us if we trust him (the suspect) and if he might not have been involved, we defended him cause we thought we knew him. My niece loved him as he would buy her chips and sweets, he would call her to the room to watch cartoons as he had DSTV, that was my son's room but he moved out for him. Courtney was an introvert, she wouldn't take anything from strangers."

When the Cape Argus visited the family home on Monday, the suspect's parents had come to pay their respects and apologise to Courtney's family.

The suspect's father is believed to be a priest.

Petersen said the family was pleased that the suspect's family had come to share their pain and loss.

Coordinator of the Mitchell's Plain Crisis Forum, Joanie Fredericks and chairperson of the Manenberg Safety Forum, Roegshanda Pascoe have appealed to the public not to spread rumours about how Courtney's body may have been found and not to speculate on her cause of death as

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this would affect the investigation.

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Lessons learned

"we defended him cause we thought we knew him"

"He knew how to address people and his manners attracted people to him"

"My niece loved him as he would buy her chips and sweets"

"he would call her to the room to watch cartoons"

"Courtney was an introvert"

"his manners attracted people to him"

Notice the pattern? The child-raping murderer groomed the family (and everyone around him) by being charming. Charming isn't a personality trait, it's behaviour you learn that makes people think better of you.

"we defended him"

If the parents believe the best of you then if they see their daughter coming out your room looking unhappy or withdrawn, maybe even with a fresh bruise, then they'll immediately imagine a reason why these things happened - and this reason will specifically exclude the Bad Guy (cause he's so charming right?).

How to spot the paedophile?

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He was polite and well-spoken. Probably helpful too. But how's that different from most people?

The difference lies in how much **the BG will volunteer help compared to a normal person**. This is part of [grooming the parents](#).

And most tellingly, [watch for how much time he wants to spend with your child](#).

A friend might babysit once in a while. but he shouldn't be pushing you to go have a date night every week or 2 (but don't worry, he'll watch the kids for you).

A single mother's boyfriend shouldn't be "helpful" and always be offering to watch the kids while the mom does other stuff, even if she's still in the house. There's building a relationship with your kids because they're interested in a long-term relationship with you. And then there's grooming.

Your childhood friend shouldn't be letting your child watch cartoons in his bedroom.

Or buying you kid's affection with sweets.

The biggest giveaway is that the child-rapist will end up spending a lot of time with you child.

In front of you until you've gotten comfortable with this man spending time with your kid, then increasingly in isolation.

Even if you think it's your idea.

Even if your kid asks for the time with him (sweets, toys and cartoons can go a long way in influencing a confused young child - [booze, drugs](#), phones and [assurances of love](#) work on teenagers).

I'm not trying to blame the parents, I'm trying to warn you. If 1 person reads this and cuts a child molester out their lives then I'll be happy.

If someone reads this and over-reacts and cuts an innocent person out their lives, then I don't give a shit.

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