

"DOWN TO ONE"

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FADE IN:

EXT. MECKLENBURG COUNTY COURTHOUSE, CHARLOTTE, NC - DAY

An impressive, triangular building from the Bush 2 era.

Things look quiet on this hot November day...until one car across the street smashes into another.

INT. MECKLENBURG COURTROOM - DAY

An octagonal skylight brightens this already-striking room...one where TWO ATTORNEYS (a man and a woman) sit at a desk apiece.

MIA DE LOS SANTOS (15) sits in handcuffs and an orange jumpsuit...alongside her fidgeting lawyer.

ROBERTA BIVINS (52, Black) presides over a trial that crawls toward an end.

She eyes MIA'S RELATIVES and NEIGHBORS seated in the first two rows.

CAMERA OPERATORS from all of Charlotte's newsgathering TV stations (and from Court TV!) catch footage of the trial.

Roberta turns to THE JURY...six men and six women; some look as if they've got better things to do.

Everyone wears casual clothes except Roberta, Mia, the defendant's lawyer, and the prosecuting attorney.

ROBERTA

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,  
this is a long and complex case.

Jurors HEATH HAZELTON (55, tactful, White), ANWAR ABDELWAHAB (54, quiet; Egypt-born, America-raised), and LAWANDA TAYLOR (55, thoughtful, Black; New York accent) nod.

ROBERTA (CONT'D)

First-degree murder.

From the jury box, LESHON FRANKLIN (25, serious, Black) grits his teeth...fellow jurors VANNA LEE HASLAM (31, stuck-up, White) and JOHN WAYNE NEWTON (55, hateful, White) cast "well, duh" looks.

Juror EARLENE CULPEPPER (50, resentful, White) seethes.

ROBERTA (CONT'D)  
 You've all listened to the  
 testimony...and it's up to you to  
 get right down to the facts.

CALE SHOUSE (46, fun-loving, White; strong Tar Heel twang)  
 grins...fellow jurors JUAN TRUJILLO (48, humorous, Brown) and  
 SUNSHINE "SUNNY" TIU (33, perky, Asian) smile.

Earlene's scowl wipes Sunny's and Juan's smiles away.

ROBERTA (CONT'D)  
 Please be honest, careful, and  
 thoughtful as you deliberate.

SABRINA MCCLOUD (35, dogged, no-nonsense, Black) watches  
 fellow juror MADONNA MALDONADO (30, a bit shallow, Brown) sit  
 in openmouthed shock.

ROBERTA (CONT'D)  
 This is a real court...not the  
 court of public opinion.

Lawanda's nod is a slow, understanding one.

Sabrina's hard stare closes Madonna's mouth.

ROBERTA (CONT'D)  
 If you have any reasonable doubts  
 as to the guilt of young Ms. De Los  
 Santos, then you must find her not  
 guilty of this murder.

John Wayne shakes his head "no."

Earlene's scowl grows.

ROBERTA (CONT'D)  
 And if you have no reasonable  
 doubts at all about the guilt of  
 this young woman, you must find her  
 guilty.

John Wayne's all smiles.

ROBERTA (CONT'D)  
 All twelve of you must come to a  
 unanimous decision. If you find the  
 accused guilty of murder, the death  
 sentence will be carried out.

Earlene mouths out an affirmation.

Mia and her attorney (the he) cast glum looks.

ROBERTA (CONT'D)  
Ladies and gentlemen of the  
jury...thank you and good luck.

One by one, the twelve jurors file out of the courtroom.  
Roberta watches them saunter away.

ROBERTA (CONT'D)  
(in a near whisper)  
I hope the popcorn in the jury room  
is fresh.

Some people chuckle...others sit in shock.

MAIN TITLES APPEAR OVER ACTION.

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - LOWER LEVEL - DAY

Not your parents' jury room at all!

Anwar, Cale, Earlene, Heath, John Wayne, Juan, Lawanda,  
Leshon, Madonna, Sabrina, Sunny, and Vanna Lee wander into a  
room that boasts sixteen rather cushy lounge chairs.

Floor-to-ceiling windows form a border.

Anwar scans and scans the room...he looks impressed.

CALE  
Day-amn!

EARLENE  
(wags finger at Cale)  
Not here!

Lawanda eyeballs Earlene.

LAWANDA  
You've gotta admit...this is really  
swank.

Earlene's is a listless nod...Cale's is a toothy nod.

She and her fellow jurors settle into their seats...but Sunny  
bolts up from her chair (and earns John Wayne's evil eye).

JOHN WAYNE  
You gotta go pee or somethin'?

SUNNY  
No. It's okay.

Sunny removes a bunch of name tags from her pants pocket. She passes a name tag to each colleague, then keeps a tag for herself before she pockets her spare tags.

Lawanda, Heath, and Cale AD LIB their thanks.

Sunny sits back down.

SABRINA  
 (to Sunny)  
 Why the tags?

SUNNY  
 Well...I figured you could put your name on the tag and then stick the tag on your shirt.

Sabrina shakes her head "yes."

ANWAR  
 Good idea...good icebreaker.

EARLENE  
 This is a murder trial, not a Tupperware party!

MADONNA  
 (eyeballing Earlene)  
 I don't know about you, but I'm filling out my tag.

All twelve jurors fill out their name tags...all except John Wayne put their first and last names.

John Wayne labels his name tag "AMERICAN CITIZEN."

Juan watches John Wayne slap his own tag onto his own shirt.

JUAN  
 Good one.

JOHN WAYNE  
 Like you would know.

Heath walks over to John Wayne.

HEATH  
 We'd really like to know who you really are.

Sunny strides her way to John Wayne.

SUNNY  
Heath's right.

Heath nods as Sunny hands John Wayne a new name tag.

SUNNY (CONT'D)  
Just go ahead and put your real  
name on this name tag.

A seething John Wayne accepts the new card and puts his actual name on it as A GUARD (a man in his 60s) ambles into the room.

The guard counts heads when John Wayne affixes the new name tag to his shirt...above his old name tag.

GUARD  
Good...everybody's here.

Some jurors nod.

GUARD (CONT'D)  
Don't forget about the vending  
machines in the kitchen next door.  
And there's free popcorn at two.

Madonna breaks out her cell phone...Earlene stares her out of the action.

GUARD (CONT'D)  
And there's a mini-arcade in the  
upper level. And we've got a quiet  
room just in case.

Vanna Lee's eyes light up.

GUARD (CONT'D)  
Now...if there's anything else you  
need, I'm right outside the door.

LESHON  
(to the guard)  
Thanks...it's all good.

LAWANDA  
We really appreciate you.

The guard gestures his gratitude before he closes the door behind himself...and locks it.

The jurors eyeball each other.

VANNA LEE  
A mini-arcade...pinball machine,  
here I come!

Earlene stares Vanna Lee down as all the jurors take seats.

JOHN WAYNE  
So...who's the foreman? Who's  
runnin' this damn circus?

All twelve participants stare each other down a while.

Sabrina raises her hand.

Earlene slaps her own forehead...John Wayne grimaces...Vanna Lee stares Sabrina down.

VANNA LEE  
You?

SABRINA  
Gives me a chance to put my  
coaching skills to the test.

Some jurors look lost.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
I'm an assistant girls' basketball  
coach at West Charlotte.

JOHN WAYNE  
Yeah. Right.

SABRINA  
I am!  
(points at John Wayne)  
And another thing: While we're in  
here, we don't use the word  
"foreman." We use the word  
"supervisor."

JOHN WAYNE  
Why you uppity--

John Wayne charges after Sabrina...

ANWAR  
John Wayne...calm down.

...but returns to his seat.

Madonna breaks out her cell phone again...to stare at it.

MADONNA

Vinnie Politan's in town...I can't wait to take a selfie with him.

Most of Madonna's colleagues look lost.

MADONNA (CONT'D)

From Court TV. He's covering this.

LAWANDA

Come to think of it, Madonna, I've heard of him.

MADONNA

Think of all the hits I'll get on my YouTube channel.

VANNA LEE

(wags finger at Madonna)

Listen...it ain't gonna happen. He ain't got no time for you--

CALE

Vanna Lee, you don't know that!

Vanna Lee wags her digit at Cale...Anwar scans the room...Madonna pockets her cell phone.

SABRINA

Here's what I know: We'd better be talking about the trial.

Leshon and Lawanda nod.

VANNA LEE

This better be fast.

LESHON

You can't rush something like this.

VANNA LEE

Leshon...the Hornets are playin' the Nuggets tonight. It's gonna be on TV, and they're tippin' off at seven fifteen.

EARLENE

They're gonna lose. You know that.

JUAN

Who's gonna lose?

Juan earns a scornful look from Earlene.

MADONNA  
 Juan...whatcha think of the  
 prosecuting attorney?

JUAN  
 Well...uh...

MADONNA  
 She handled the case like a boss.

JUAN  
 Well...I can go along with that.

VANNA LEE  
 Let's vote, y'all!

John Wayne exhales.

JOHN WAYNE  
 This is pretty damn stupid. A girl  
 kills her mama. A fifteen-year-old  
 girl! Piece of--

EARLENE  
 You're right, John Wayne! I just  
 cain't figure it out.

Earlene touches the arm of whoever's to her right.

That juror flees to an empty seat.

JOHN WAYNE  
 Pretty damn stupid! We let them  
 illegals invade our country from  
 the southern border--

LAWANDA  
 Mia was born and raised right here  
 in Charlotte...just like both of  
 her parents.

John Wayne gives Lawanda that skeptical look.

CALE  
 And their folks before that. Her  
 great-grandfolks moved here after  
 World War 2 to find work in them  
 textile mills.

Cale receives John Wayne's I-doubt-it look.

CALE (CONT'D)

If they'd a-moved to Winston-Salem or Durham, they woulda worked in a cigarette factory.

VANNA LEE

Why don't we vote?

SABRINA

All right then, let's vote...let's all see where we stand.

Vanna Lee, John Wayne, and Earlene applaud.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

Just remember: If we all vote guilty, it's the death penalty for Mia De Los Santos.

JOHN WAYNE

Yeah! Let that damn kid fry!

HEATH

John Wayne...they don't fry people here in North Carolina anymore.

ANWAR

(with a nod)

That's right. They went to lethal injections in 2018.

John Wayne groans.

SABRINA

Okay...let's do it. It's gotta be unanimous.

Anwar scans the room while some heads nod.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

Raise your hands if you think Mia's guilty of first-degree murder.

John Wayne, Earlene, Sabrina, Vanna Lee, and Madonna raise their hands.

Juan, Anwar, and Cale send their hands skyward.

Heath, Leshon, and Sunny hesitate...before they put their hands in the air.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

So...who thinks Mia's not guilty?

Lawanda raises her hand.

Eleven sets of eyes stare her down.

John Wayne rises from his seat...he hurries toward Lawanda.

LAWANDA  
Come on...chill.

He swings at Lawanda...who ducks his punch.

SABRINA  
Sit back down! Right now!

JOHN WAYNE  
Make me!

John Wayne's colleagues jump up to surround him.

He throws his hands up and returns to his seat...the other jurors follow suit.

LAWANDA  
You know...we can always talk.

SUNNY  
You're right, Lawanda.

EARLENE  
(scowling at Lawanda)  
You'd better have a real good explanation for why you voted not guilty.

LAWANDA  
I don't know, Earlene...I've just got a feeling...

EARLENE  
You were in the same courtroom with the rest of us! You heard all the evidence! What aren't you getting?

LAWANDA  
She's fifteen.

EARLENE  
So what? The little hussy killed her own mama.

CALE  
Yep...it's as plain as the nose on mah face.

EARLENE

Chew on this, Lawanda: Don't you remember the two-year-old boy that grabbed his mama's gun outa her purse at a Walmart and killed her stone cold dead?

LAWANDA

I remember. It was an accident.

Heath's and Anwar's heads nod.

HEATH

It was.

EARLENE

(wags finger at Heath)  
Stay outa this!

Heath's mouth flies open.

ANWAR

Earlene...Mia used a knife.

Earlene walks toward a still-seated Lawanda.

EARLENE

Did you hear what Anwar said?

LAWANDA

Doggone right I did.

EARLENE

So...Little Ms. Not Guilty...they proved Mia killed her mama. They proved it in more ways than you can shake a stick at.

Lawanda's is a heavy nod.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

Let me count the ways.

LAWANDA

No. You don't have to. I just want us to talk.

A listless Earlene sits back down.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Leshon had a point when he said you can't rush a decision like this.

LESHON

Thanks.

JOHN WAYNE

Gimme a break!

EARLENE

Me, too!

John Wayne stares daggers at Lawanda.

JOHN WAYNE

I suppose you believe that damn kid's story.

LAWANDA

Maybe...maybe not.

VANNA LEE

Well, then, Lawanda Taylor, why'd you vote not guilty?

LAWANDA

I just thought...I just thought if we're gonna decide whether Mia gets a lethal injection or walks away innocent, we need to think long and hard about it. Think it through.

VANNA LEE

There ain't a thing to think about. The girl's guilty.

LAWANDA

Vanna Lee...we're talking about somebody's life.

Vanna Lee blows an imaginary bubble.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Think about all the people on death row who didn't really deserve to be there...because they didn't really commit the crime.

VANNA LEE

Hogwash!

LAWANDA

No, it's not hogwash. It happens all too often.

Leshon shakes his head "yes."

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
And if we're not careful, it could  
happen here, too.

Some jurors eyeball each other...John Wayne seethes.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
Let's take all the time we need.

Earlene gestures her disapproval.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
And besides...I know you don't  
want to miss out on that popcorn.

Cale flashes a million-dollar grin.

JUAN  
Well...sometimes, it gets stuck in  
my teeth.

Anwar, Cale, Heath, and Sunny laugh.

Earlene, John Wayne, and Vanna Lee scowl.

SABRINA  
All right, jurors. Who wants to  
talk this out?

Dead silence...for a little while.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
Anybody?

Several jurors turn to Lawanda.

LAWANDA  
You first.

JOHN WAYNE  
You'll never guess what I saw on X  
the other day...

Half the room looks lost.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
Formerly known as Twitter! Damn it!

LAWANDA  
That's not why we're here.

JOHN WAYNE  
 Okay, Little Ms. Not Guilty. Why  
 the hell are we here?

LAWANDA  
 I don't know.

Vanna Lee and John Wayne groan.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
 I know that Mia's had it bad all  
 her life. Her dad died when she was  
 seven...a drug overdose. She was in  
 a foster home for a couple of years  
 because her mom was in jail for--

EARLENE  
 Break out the tiny violins.

LAWANDA  
 Mia's mom was in jail for armed  
 robbery...I don't know. I'm not  
 willing to throw Mia away.

JOHN WAYNE  
 (standing up)  
 Well, I am!

HEATH  
 Come on, man. People aren't  
 garbage. They're not trash.

JOHN WAYNE  
 You don't know people, Heath.

SABRINA  
 (points to John Wayne)  
 Sit down.

JOHN WAYNE  
 Make me!

JUAN  
 You asked for it!

The other eleven jurors converge on John Wayne...who sits  
 back down.

When he takes his seat, the others sit back down.

JOHN WAYNE

Y'all know who you're dealin' with,  
dont'cha? You know damn good 'n'  
well Mexico ain't sendin' their--

CALE

(to John Wayne)

You need to stop talkin' that  
stuff! Mia's from right here! And  
that's the truth!

Cale turns to Earlene.

CALE (CONT'D)

Why don'tcha come down on John  
Wayne for all his cussin'?

Earlene flashes that deer-in-the-headlights look...

CALE (CONT'D)

You came down on me for just one  
single "day-amn!"

...that intensifies.

SABRINA

People...we've gotta get back on  
track here.

HEATH

And discuss the facts.

Several heads nod in agreement.

MADONNA

Sabrina's right...the sooner we get  
this done, the sooner I can take  
that selfie with Vinnie Politan.

Vanna Lee glares at Madonna.

VANNA LEE

Look here: If anybody's gonna take  
a selfie with Vinnie Politan, it's  
gonna be me.

MADONNA

No, Vanna Lee. It's gonna be me.

VANNA LEE

You're wrong, Madonna. I used to be  
a Carolina Panthers cheerleader--

Sabrina claps her hands in disgust.

SABRINA  
I should've brought a whistle.

A few jurors laugh.

MADONNA  
Anyway...just like Vanna Lee's  
trying to convince me I'm not gonna  
get that selfie with Vinnie...we're  
trying to convince Lawanda that  
she's wrong about Mia.

Twenty-two eyes turn to Lawanda.

MADONNA (CONT'D)  
Maybe if we took a minute each.

General agreement reigns in the jury room.

SABRINA  
Okay...who wants to go first?

Nobody answers.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
How about we go in alphabetical  
order? First name...A to Z.

Eleven sets of eyes turn to Anwar.

ANWAR  
Well...I guess I'm it.

JOHN WAYNE  
Well, duh!

ANWAR  
I just think Mia's guilty. Nobody  
could disprove that.

LAWANDA  
Nobody's got to disprove that. It's  
all on the prosecuting attorney.

Madonna shakes her head "yes."

SABRINA  
Cale, what would you like to say?

CALE

With all due respect, Ah'm gonna pass.

John Wayne stares daggers at Cale.

SABRINA

Okay...Earlene, you're next.

EARLENE

Thank you kindly.

(wags finger at Lawanda)

You want facts? You got facts.

Listen up.

Lawanda grits her teeth.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

Let's talk about the old woman who lived in the basement...right below where the murder took place.

Some heads nod.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

At about eleven forty-five the night of the murder, she heard noises from upstairs. She heard a fight...then she heard Mia shout: "I'm gonna kill you!"

LESHON

Okay.

EARLENE

Then...the old woman heard a body fall to the floor. She went upstairs and saw the little hussy run out of the house.

Heath's is a listless nod.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

The old woman then called the police. They found Mia's mama with a knife in her chest.

SABRINA

According to the coroner, the murder took place around eleven forty that night.

EARLENE

So there you are, Lawanda.

Earlene touches the arm of whoever's next to her...

EARLENE (CONT'D)

You cain't fight facts. Right?

...but that juror jogs to an empty chair without giving Earlene an answer.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

That little hussy's guilty. And I don't care if she's fifteen. She's gotta answer for her sins.

VANNA LEE

You got that right, Earlene.

SABRINA

Okay, Heath. Let's hear what you've got to say.

Those around Heath lean in to hear him.

He takes a deep breath...then:

HEATH

I've gotta be honest...it just struck me that Mia's story just couldn't hold water.

JOHN WAYNE

Damn right!

HEATH

She said she went to a bar when the murder took place. She said she watched a football game...but she couldn't remember the highlights.

CALE

Maybe they were playin' the NFL Network at the bar. Or ESPNU.

Faces of disbelief stare at Cale.

CALE (CONT'D)

Sometimes, they'll be rerunnin' whole football games--

SABRINA

Cale...I thought you had nothing to say about the murder.

Earlene jumps out of her seat.

EARLENE

Never mind that! I just wanna know what in God's name that little hussy was doing in a bar. And by herself, at that!

SUNNY

(with a nod)

Well, I heard this album by Lily Tomlin...the one where she played little bitty Edith Ann.

Cale's and Juan's eyes light up.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Sometime during the album, Edith Ann and this woman she met walked into a bar...

EARLENE

Did this Edith Ann kill her mama?

While a few jurors laugh, Sunny shakes her head "no."

HEATH

Here's the thing about it: No one saw Mia go into or leave the bar.

CALE

And besides, it was a sports bar. Somethin' like Buffalo Wild Wings. 'Cept it was a local sports bar.

An embarrassed Earlene sits back down.

JOHN WAYNE

Hey, Heath, what about that man across the street? You know he was tellin' the truth.

JUAN

Yeah! He actually saw the killing!

JOHN WAYNE

Like you would know.

JUAN

Wait just a minute!

SABRINA

People, we've gotta get back on track here.

Sabrina eyeballs the name tags on her fellow jurors.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

John Wayne...it's your turn.

John Wayne casts a smug look.

JOHN WAYNE

This man across the street's lyin' in his recliner. He cain't sleep.

(jumps out of his seat)

He looks out the front window of his house...and he sees Mia stick that knife into her mama.

Now John Wayne walks around.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)

Right at eleven forty-five that night. Another thing: He's known Mia ever since she was knee high to a...to a...well, you know.

Lawanda's is a slow nod.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)

He saw the kid do it.

LAWANDA

Right through the windows of a large passing bus.

JOHN WAYNE

Yeah. Wasn't nobody on the bus. The lights were on inside the bus, but that didn't make no difference.

John Wayne sits back down.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)

They proved you can look through the windows of the last bus before midnight on that route and still see what's goin' on across the street. You know they proved it!

VANNA LEE

Sure helps that the windows on that bus ain't tinted.

LAWANDA

(to John Wayne)

Mind if I ask you something?

JOHN WAYNE

What?

LAWANDA

If you don't believe Mia, what makes you believe that man? They're both Latinx...remember?

Yep...John Wayne charges toward Lawanda.

The ten remaining jurors rise up to block his path.

JOHN WAYNE

All right! All right! All right!

All eleven of Lawanda's colleagues sit back down.

SABRINA

We've gotta calm down here.

JUAN

You're right, Sabrina.

SABRINA

Juan, it's your turn.

Juan looks around the room a few seconds.

JUAN

Nah...that's okay.

Sabrina's jaw drops.

SABRINA

Lawanda...let's hear what you've got to say.

John Wayne and Earlene shoot Sabrina dirty looks.

MADONNA

Aren't we supposed to go around the room convincing Lawanda she's wrong?

JOHN WAYNE

Yeah! That!

SABRINA

I'm interested in what Lawanda's got to say.

HEATH

It's only fair.

MADONNA

Fair nothing!

SABRINA

(to Lawanda)

Go right ahead.

(to Madonna)

This oughta be interesting.

Twenty-two eyes stare Lawanda down.

LAWANDA

Hey, I'm in the same boat as everybody else in this room.

VANNA LEE

You got that right.

LAWANDA

Mia's guilty according to all the testimony. Maybe they're right.

Lawanda looks around before she rises from her seat.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

We've spent the last four days listening to all the evidence...and all the witnesses seemed so sure...so doggone sure she did it.

EARLENE

She did it! Period!

LAWANDA

But I got to thinking about some questions I would've liked to ask if I were the defense attorney.

(walking around)

I don't think he asked enough questions...or the right ones.

JOHN WAYNE

They're lawyers! They know damn good 'n' well what they're doin'!

LAWANDA

Not always.

(points to John Wayne)

Lawyers are human, too. Just like the rest of us.

John Wayne seethes...Lawanda heads for her seat.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

And just like the rest of us human beings, lawyers make mistakes, too.

SUNNY

(to Lawanda)

You must've met this clerk at the hobby shop I go to.

Lawanda smiles...

SUNNY (CONT'D)

He just couldn't figure out that a woman would be into model cars.

...then nods.

LAWANDA

I just kept putting myself in Mia's place. I would've insisted on the best defense lawyer in the business...someone who could sock it to the prosecuting attorney.

MADONNA

Huh?

LAWANDA

Or at least try.

HEATH

Lawanda, I see your point.

Vanna Lee and Earlene give Heath icy looks.

LAWANDA

Allegedly, only one person saw the murder. Another person claims to have heard the killing, then saw Mia take off. That was it.

EARLENE  
That's all the prosecuting attorney  
needed.

LAWANDA  
But what if they were wrong?

EARLENE  
They weren't wrong!

LAWANDA  
Earlene...don't you remember the  
O.J. Simpson trial?

EARLENE  
Which one?

LAWANDA  
The one from 1995.

LESHON  
I wasn't even born then.

SUNNY  
I was in preschool.

Juan chuckles...John Wayne casts a "so what?" look.

LAWANDA  
Okay...maybe you remember the  
George Zimmerman trial.

VANNA LEE  
(jumps from her seat)  
Don't wake that up!

Lawanda gestures Vanna Lee into sitting down.

VANNA LEE (CONT'D)  
It happened in my birth  
state...Florida.

LAWANDA  
What I'm trying to get at  
is...Mia's on trial for her life.  
What if those two witnesses got it  
all wrong?

MADONNA  
Lawanda, you must be high.

LAWANDA

No, Madonna. I'm as sober as sober  
can be.

Madonna shows doubt.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Maybe those two were wrong.

JOHN WAYNE

They took an oath! God!

LAWANDA

Yes, they did, John Wayne...and  
they're just as human as all of us  
in this room. They're people like  
anybody on this Earth.

CALE

Yep.

LAWANDA

And people make mistakes...and  
maybe those witnesses were wrong.

MADONNA

No way!

LAWANDA

How do you know?

MADONNA

Well...it's not rocket science.

LAWANDA

(slow, slow nod)

No...it's not rocket science.

EARLENE

We need to get to the point here.

VANNA LEE

You can say that again.

EARLENE

We need to get to the point  
here...what about the knife?

Some jurors burst into laughter.

ANWAR

Wait a minute...it's Leshon's turn.

SABRINA

You're right, Anwar. Leshon, you've got the floor.

Leshon receives withering stares from Earlene, Vanna Lee, and John Wayne.

LESHON

It's all good. Think I'll pass.

SABRINA

It's all right. How about you, Madonna?

MADONNA

You know me. I've said all I've got to say.

Lawanda's mouth hangs open.

So does Vanna Lee's.

SABRINA

Well...Sunny, it's your turn.

JUAN

Sabrina, aren't you gonna take a turn?

SABRINA

No. I'm the supervisor.

John Wayne grits his teeth.

HEATH

"Supervisor" is a gender-inclusive word...like "chairperson."

JOHN WAYNE

Don't get me started on that bull--

SUNNY

Well...early on in the trial, I was convinced about Mia's guilt.

Earlene's is a smug look.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

But she had to have a reason to kill her mom. And those two witnesses had a point.

VANNA LEE  
(wags her finger)  
There you are!

SUNNY  
The old woman downstairs said something about an argument between Mia and her mom. She said it happened around six o'clock.

JUAN  
Actually, Sunny, it was seven.

SUNNY  
(nodding at Juan)  
One thing's for sure: Mia and her mom were eating dinner and watching the news on TV when that argument broke out.

LAWANDA  
Yeah...it was seven. The old woman heard an argument, all right...but she couldn't figure out what they were saying.

Sunny nods.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
Then she heard the mom hit Mia three times. Then the old woman saw Mia leave the house.

SUNNY  
Okay...

LAWANDA  
You said it revealed a reason for Mia killing her mom. The prosecuting attorney made the same point.

SUNNY  
She sure did.

LAWANDA  
Didn't seem like a strong motive to me...after all the times Mia's been hit in her life.

HEATH  
Maybe...just maybe...that last time was the tipping point for Mia.

Lawanda shrugs.

SABRINA

Let's see...let's hear from Vanna Lee.

Juan jumps up to high-five a surprised Sabrina.

JUAN

You're a poet and you don't even know it!

Cale and Sunny chuckle as Juan sits back down.

VANNA LEE

(looks around the room)  
Well, y'all said it all.

ANWAR

We did?

VANNA LEE

Mia's got plenty of pendin' cases in juvenile court involvin' previous violent acts...like when she hit a teacher with a textbook back in the fifth grade.

EARLENE

It figures.

VANNA LEE

Last year, she was arrested for fightin' with a knife.  
(exhales)  
You talk about a loser!

LAWANDA

Her mom had been beating Mia up ever since she was five.

Cale looks dumbfounded.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Ever since Mia was five.

VANNA LEE

She had it comin'.

LAWANDA

Vanna Lee, you know that violence begets violence.

Earlene waves Lawanda off.

EARLENE  
This is a murder trial, not a  
church service!

A few jurors laugh.

LAWANDA  
Mia learned from her mom that  
violence is the only way people can  
solve problems.

EARLENE  
Chew on this, Lawanda: Sometimes,  
kids need a good licking.  
Especially today's kids.

Heath rests his chin on his hands.

LAWANDA  
Define a good licking.

EARLENE  
I don't have to define diddly...you  
got any kids?

LAWANDA  
Just one.

EARLENE  
Well, I've got one, too. She's  
twenty...and she ran away from a  
fight when she was ten. Boy at  
school tried to rape her.

LESHON  
(to Earlene)  
Maybe she did the right thing...I'm  
glad she got away from him.

Earlene stands up and wags a finger at Leshon.

EARLENE  
BULL!

Dead silence reigns.

Earlene sinks back into her seat.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
She should've punched that little  
punk out.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

Would've taught that young Harvey  
Weinstein a lesson.

(jumping back up)

And I told her that!

Sabrina's is a slow nod.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

I told my daughter: "If you don't  
stand up to these perverts...if you  
don't fight fire with fire...you  
ain't gonna survive."

CALE

Wow!

EARLENE

I taught my daughter how to fight.

SABRINA

Okay.

EARLENE

When she was fifteen, she and I got  
into an argument...and we ended up  
coming to blows. She punched me in  
the gut.

Heath grimaces.

LAWANDA

How's she doing?

EARLENE

I haven't seen her since she left  
for college...in Hawaii.

SABRINA

And where's that dirty rotten punk  
who tried to rape her?

EARLENE

He's still here in North  
Carolina...trying to build a career  
making movies.

Madonna gives Earlene a hopeful look.

MADONNA

What kinda movies?

EARLENE

Slasher movies.

Heath and Lawanda groan.

VANNA LEE

I think we need to get back on track...like Sabrina says.

SABRINA

Thank you!

VANNA LEE

Thing about Mia is...she comes from a broken home in a low-income neighborhood. That's where all the criminals come from.

JOHN WAYNE

You're damn right!

Leshon seethes.

VANNA LEE

If they took all the low-income neighborhoods here in Charlotte and took a bulldozer to 'em--

LESHON

Freeze, Vanna Lee!

Vanna Lee's mouth flies open...Leshon gestures her into some sort of quiet.

LESHON (CONT'D)

I'm from the Lockwood area.

John Wayne shakes his head sideways.

LESHON (CONT'D)

One of those neighborhoods you've been dissing.

Vanna Lee grits her teeth.

LESHON (CONT'D)

Good people come from there, too. Just like good people come from every part of town.

JOHN WAYNE

Hey, Leshon...if Lockwood's such a great neighborhood, then why in Hell is there so much crime?

LESHON

Why does any neighborhood have  
crime...even those white-collar  
communities?

JOHN WAYNE

Now wait a minute--

LESHON

You sound like you don't have a  
problem with white-collar  
crime...like that man with ninety-  
one felonies--

JOHN WAYNE

Wait a damn minute, you--

John Wayne comes after Leshon...but Sabrina jumps up and  
throws her arms outward to block the former's path.

He pushes her arms away...she grabs his arms.

SABRINA

John Wayne, you need to cool off.

A fuming John Wayne stares daggers at Sabrina.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

Right now.

Some other jurors rise from their chairs to surround the two.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

Take a deep breath. Do something.

John Wayne attempts a deep breath.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

Now...sit down.

JOHN WAYNE

Get your hands offa me.

Sabrina lets go of John Wayne's arms.

He continues to stand there.

SABRINA

Sit down...or you won't get any of  
that great-tasting popcorn.

John Wayne shrugs his way to his seat...Sabrina and other  
standing jurors sit back down.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
Now let's get down to business.

EARLENE  
Let's do that.

Some jurors AD LIB their agreement with Earlene.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
So let's talk about that knife.

LAWANDA  
You bet. Let's get that knife in  
here so we can look at it.

John Wayne casts an impish look.

Sabrina knocks on the door...the guard opens it.

Result: A hushed, AD LIBBED conversation between the guard  
and Sabrina.

EARLENE  
Lawanda, I just wanna talk about  
the knife. I don't wanna see it.

LAWANDA  
You did bring it up.

EARLENE  
Well, excuuuuse me!

HEATH  
(eyes Earlene)  
She's got a right to see the  
evidence.

A nodding Earlene grimaces.

MADONNA  
Evidence...the knife's real strong  
evidence. So's the way Mia bought  
it and where Mia bought it.

LAWANDA  
I'll buy that.

Some jurors chuckle.

MADONNA

Okay! Check this out: Mia said she left the house at seven ten PM the night of the murder after being clubbed three times by her mom.

LAWANDA

Actually, she was hit. Not clubbed.

Madonna looks baffled.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Her mom used her bare hands on Mia.

MADONNA

Then Mia ran to a hardware store and bought a Swiss Army Knife.

A few jurors shake their heads "yes."

MADONNA (CONT'D)

It wasn't your run-of-the-mill Swiss Army Knife...more like a US Army Knife.

Cale and Juan laugh.

MADONNA (CONT'D)

This knife was, at first, only available online at the hardware store's Website. The customer who placed the order didn't pick up the knife...and it was placed in stock.

HEATH

Just in time for Mia to buy it.

LAWANDA

You're both right.

MADONNA

(with a nod)

Now...about eight o'clock, Mia ran into her BFFs in front of a convenience store.

LAWANDA

Yes, she did.

Earlene puts one hand on the arm of whoever's beside her and points to Lawanda with her other hand.

EARLENE

See that? Cain't fight facts.

The juror beside Earlene moves to an empty seat.

MADONNA

Mia and her BFFs hung around that convenience store 'til about eight thirty. They checked out her knife...and in court, they said it was the same knife Mia killed her mom with.

Lawanda's is a slow nod.

MADONNA (CONT'D)

She didn't get home 'til nine. Now the State of North Carolina says something different.

CALE

(to those flanking him)

This is where it starts to git real interestin'.

MADONNA

Now...Mia says she stayed home 'til about ten PM, then went to that bar...sports bar. When the bar closed up, she caught a bus to the Charlotte Transportation Center.

A smiling Anwar shakes his head "yes."

MADONNA (CONT'D)

The buses quit during the one o'clock hour. She caught the last one and rode home on it.

Madonna jumps from her seat to stroll the room.

MADONNA (CONT'D)

She didn't get home 'til about two AM...and when she got home, she found her mom dead.

EARLENE

Tell 'em what happened to the knife that little hussy had on her.

MADONNA

According to Mia, the knife fell out of her pants pocket sometime between ten PM and two AM.

JOHN WAYNE

You know what, Madonna? I don't think that damn kid went to no sports bar.

VANNA LEE

Or set foot at the Charlotte Transportation Center.

Madonna gestures her agreement with Vanna Lee and John Wayne.

MADONNA

No one at the bar identified her...and that's one of the busiest sports bars in town.

HEATH

And...she couldn't remember the highlights of the game she saw.

MADONNA

Check out what really happened: Mia stayed home...she and her mom got into it again...she stabbed her dead at eleven forty-five PM...and ran out of the house.

VANNA LEE

And for good measure, she even wiped off the knife!

The door opens...and reveals the guard.

Madonna sits back down.

The guard totes the Swiss Army Knife in question (a tag hangs from it).

This knife features a gray handle (not the familiar red one)...plus a five-inch blade.

Heath takes the knife from the guard...the two men AD LIB pleasantries before Heath closes the door.

The jurors HEAR the door lock.

As Heath brings the knife into the room, John Wayne's eyes light up.

HEATH

John Wayne...don't get any ideas.

John Wayne rests his chin on his fists.

Sabrina eyes him, then the ten remaining colleagues.

SABRINA

I've got an idea.

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - KITCHEN - DAY

Sabrina and Co. stroll into a rather inviting space that features tables for threesomes or foursomes, a row of vending machines, and a black-and-white-tile floor.

SABRINA

It's about lunch time, anyway.

The six women and six men take seats.

Heath starts the Swiss Army Knife around.

VANNA LEE

Lawanda, all the witnesses in this case identified the knife.

LAWANDA

Yes, they did, Vanna Lee.

VANNA LEE

So...what makes you think this here knife fell through a hole in the girl's pants pocket...and somebody picked it offa the street, went to Mia's house, and killed her mama?

A few jurors laugh.

LAWANDA

Maybe Mia did lose the knife...and maybe someone with a similar knife killed the older De Los Santos.

JOHN WAYNE

Yeah. Right.

The knife now reaches Earlene...who plunges its blade into the table.

Some of her fellow jurors sit there in shock.

CALE

Ah can just hear some taxpayer  
screamin' right now.

Earlene oh-so-carefully lifts the knife out of the table,  
then holds the weapon aloft for all to see.

Cale studies the newly-created hole.

EARLENE

(standing up)

Listen up, everybody!

Eleven people perk up.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

Take yourselves a good, good look  
at this knife. All the Swiss Army  
Knives I've ever seen in my life  
prior to this trial have had red  
handles...not gray ones.

JUAN

Same here.

EARLENE

This is the first gray-handled  
Swiss Army Knife the clerk that  
sold that little hussy the knife  
ever saw in his life.

Earlene continues to hold the knife. She now uses it to point  
to Lawanda.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

Get a clue!

HEATH

Earlene...

Sunny jumps from her seat and hurries toward Earlene.

SUNNY

Here, Earlene. Let me have it.

Earlene stares daggers at Sunny.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

By the handle.

JOHN WAYNE

Hey! I ain't had no turn with the  
knife yet!

JUAN  
(to John Wayne)  
Uh...not a good idea.

LESHON  
Especially right now.

A reluctant Earlene hands Sunny the knife. The latter grabs it by the handle, then returns to her own seat.

Sunny passes the knife to the juror next to her: Lawanda.

LAWANDA  
(studies knife)  
Maybe somebody else killed Mia's  
mom. Maybe it's possible.

EARLENE  
Get a freakin' clue!

Lawanda passes the murder weapon to Leshon.

As he looks at the knife, Lawanda stands up, goes to her pants pocket, and...yanks out a second gray-handled Swiss Army Knife!

This one boasts a five-inch blade, too.

LAWANDA  
Leshon, is it all right to see the  
murder knife again?

LESHON  
It's all good.

Lawanda plunges the second knife into the table, accepts the first knife from Leshon, and...sticks the first knife into the same table.

CALE  
Three taxpayers screamin'.

Most of the other jurors sit openmouthed.

Earlene walks over to Lawanda.

EARLENE  
What's the point?

Sunny gestures toward the two Swiss Army Knives.

SUNNY  
(eyeballing Earlene)  
Maybe you'd better take yourself a  
good luck.

Earlene glowers while AD LIBBED chatter fills the kitchen.

SUNNY (CONT'D)  
No sleight-of-hand needed.

EARLENE  
Lawanda, where'd you get that other  
knife at?

LAWANDA  
Well, I went to the same hardware  
store Mia shopped at.

EARLENE  
What's your point?

LAWANDA  
Turns out those gray Swiss Army  
Knives with the five-inch blade  
have become so popular that the  
store decided to stock 'em right  
there in the store.

Earlene's nod is listless.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
You can still buy 'em online, too.

EARLENE  
I still don't see your point. Same  
kind of knife.

JUAN  
Still one heck of a co-inky-dink  
for someone else to have made that  
kind of stabbing with the same kind  
of knife.

EARLENE  
(wags finger at Lawanda)  
Cain't fight that, can you?

VANNA LEE  
You'd have better odds winnin' at  
Powerball than you'd have with  
somebody else killin' somebody with  
the same knife Mia used.

LAWANDA  
It still could've happened.

Most jurors gaze at the two knives in the table.

SABRINA  
Know what, everybody? Let's eat.

General agreement greets Sabrina's suggestion.

CALE  
As long as it's finger foods...not  
knife-and-fork foods.

Juan, Lawanda, and Sunny laugh.

LATER

The jurors finish lunch...the two Swiss Army Knives rest on a counter and out of harm's way.

At one table, Anwar turns to Lawanda.

ANWAR  
You lucked out finding the same  
kind of knife Mia bought.

From another table, Earlene eyes the twosome.

EARLENE  
I wanna know why Mia bought that  
kind of knife in the first place.

LAWANDA  
Well, she said that--

EARLENE  
She bought it for one of her BFFs.  
One of those former Girl Scouts.  
She loves to go camping. She was  
gonna go camping the next day.

LAWANDA  
Well, she does. And she was.

EARLENE  
That's a pack of lies!

Anwar looks bewildered.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
 They probably kicked her out  
 because she didn't sell enough  
 cookies.

One of Earlene's tablemates chuckles.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
 And this camping trip supposedly  
 took place two weeks before the  
 murder.

Some heads around Earlene nod.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
 So how come that little hussy  
 bought that knife about a half hour  
 after her mama gave her a licking?

Vanna Lee overhears the conversation from another table.

VANNA LEE  
 Maybe she wanted to take it out for  
 a test stabbin'.

John Wayne laughs...some around him stare him down.

LAWANDA  
 Come to think of it...if Mia bought  
 the knife to kill her mom, why did  
 she show the knife to her BFFs over  
 three hours before the killing?

EARLENE  
 Look, Lawanda: She lied!

JOHN WAYNE  
 Damn right she lied!

VANNA LEE  
 Mia lied like a cheap rug!

LESHON  
 I don't know...

Those around Leshon stare at him.

One of them: John Wayne.

JOHN WAYNE  
 You let that Lawanda brainwash you  
 or somethin'?

Leshon shakes his head "no."

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
Get one thing straight: Somebody  
saw that damn kid kill her mama.  
And that's all there is to it!

Earlene and Vanna Lee AD LIB their agreement with John Wayne.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
Let's get this done so I can watch  
Jesse Watters and Laura Ingraham  
and Sean Hannity!

Lawanda and Heath groan.

VANNA LEE  
And I still wanna watch that game!

EARLENE  
Vanna Lee...they're gonna lose.

JUAN  
Who's gonna lose?

SABRINA  
People, we're losing time.  
(to Lawanda)  
Whaddya say?

Twenty-two eyeballs turn to Lawanda.

LAWANDA  
How about another vote?

MADONNA  
No way!

LAWANDA  
I'll drop out.

MADONNA  
Yes way!

HEATH  
And we can do it by secret ballot.

SABRINA  
Good idea, Heath...but we don't  
have enough time.

Sunny rises up and goes to a napkin dispenser.

She doesn't like what she sees.

SUNNY  
Or napkins.

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - LOWER LEVEL - DAY

The six men and six women recline in those cushy seats.

SABRINA  
Okay, everybody...with Lawanda  
abstaining, how many of the rest of  
you still think Mia's guilty? Raise  
your hands.

Earlene, John Wayne, and Vanna Lee send their hands upward.

Anwar, Juan, Madonna, and Sabrina raise their hands.

Heath, an equally-reluctant Leshon, and Sunny put their hands  
in the air.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
Who's voting not guilty?

Cale's hand shoots up...and triggers angry gestures from  
Vanna Lee, Earlene, and John Wayne.

Madonna grits her teeth.

CALE  
Ah can explain...

VANNA LEE  
Don't bother.

CALE  
Ain't no bother at all.

John Wayne strides over to Cale's chair.

JOHN WAYNE  
You heard the lady!

SABRINA  
John Wayne, sit down and let Cale  
have the floor.

JOHN WAYNE  
Make me!

Ten jurors rise from their seats (Cale doesn't) to confront  
John Wayne...who wanders back to his own chair.

The other standing jurors return to their seats.

SABRINA  
Cale, the floor is yours.

Cale nods at Sabrina...

CALE  
Thanks a bunch.

...before he turns to the other jurors.

CALE (CONT'D)  
Wail, Ah saw Lawanda out here,  
stickin' out like a sore big toe.

Lawanda beams.

CALE (CONT'D)  
Now she ain't sayin' Mia ain't  
guilty...she's just sayin' she  
ain't shore. Lawanda just wants to  
hear more evidence...and Ah cain't  
say Ah blame her.

Some heads nod.

EARLENE  
Cale, Cale, Cale...you had to drink  
the Kool-Aid.

CALE  
Just be glad nobody spiked it.

Cale's remark brings laughter to some colleagues.

MADONNA  
It's ten to two in favor of giving  
Mia a lethal injection.

John Wayne grunts.

MADONNA (CONT'D)  
Somebody's doing a great job of  
being an influencer.

JUAN  
That's what you do for a living.  
Ain't that right, Madonna?

MADONNA

I've not only got a YouTube channel...I'm also on TikTok and Instagram.

ANWAR

Influencer...I was taught the right term was "influence." Like one person being an influence on another person.

JOHN WAYNE

So, uh, Anwar...where the hell did you go to school?

Anwar's eyes sparkle.

ANWAR

I received a bachelor's degree from Fresno State University.

JOHN WAYNE

Before that?

ANWAR

Graduated from high school in Riverside, California.

JOHN WAYNE

Before that?

HEATH

(to Anwar)

You don't have to answer that.

Heath and John Wayne watch Anwar nod.

JOHN WAYNE

See that? These damn bleedin' hearts liberals.

(points to Lawanda)

Like Little Ms. Not Guilty! Sellin' all that bullsh--

Lawanda's mouth drops open.

SABRINA

Now just back up, John Wayne!

JOHN WAYNE

And I done had enough of your uppity-ass--

John Wayne jumps up to go after Sabrina...who rises up to wag a finger at him.

SABRINA

One more outburst from you and  
you're not gonna get any popcorn!

Sabrina catches John Wayne's smirk.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

I'm not joking!

A cringing John Wayne sits back down...Sabrina does, too.

Vanna Lee stares Lawanda down.

VANNA LEE

Are you really a salesperson?

LAWANDA

No...I run a recording studio.

Several jurors look impressed.

John Wayne mutters to whoever's next to him.

JOHN WAYNE

Eight hours of gangsta rap a day.

LAWANDA

Not necessarily. All kinds of  
performers have laid tracks at our  
studio...like that former Panthers  
cheerleader who plays a mean  
classical piano.

Confusion grips Vanna Lee.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

She was a Panthers cheerleader  
during the time Carolina played in  
Super Bowl 38.

VANNA LEE

One thing about her: Even she  
woulda understood Mia's guilty.

LAWANDA

Maybe...maybe not.

Heath and Sunny shake their heads back and forth.

SUNNY

Super Bowl 38. Wasn't that the game where they had a wardrobe malfunction during the halftime show?

LAWANDA

Yes, it was. And the game itself was great.

HEATH

If you were a New England fan.

SUNNY

You think we'll go into overtime...like Super Bowls 51 and 58 did?

LAWANDA

I don't know.

MADONNA

All I know is: Mia's guilty. Guilty, guilty, guilty. Hands down.

Vanna Lee nods.

MADONNA (CONT'D)

We shoulda been done with this.

VANNA LEE

Darn tootin'!

MADONNA

(eyeballing Lawanda)

You really think she's not guilty?

LAWANDA

Maybe...maybe not.

MADONNA

We need to wrap this up.

Madonna pulls out her cell phone to pose for a selfie.

MADONNA (CONT'D)

I've got a date with Vinnie.

VANNA LEE

Wrong, Madonna. I've got that date with Vinnie Politan.

Now Vanna Lee yanks out her own cell phone...

VANNA LEE (CONT'D)  
 You and Lawanda are wrong. Some  
 kinda wrong.

...as if to take her own selfie.

VANNA LEE (CONT'D)  
 Pure-dee wrong.

LAWANDA  
 Maybe...if you two put yourselves  
 in Mia's shoes...

MADONNA  
 Nope. Not going there.

VANNA LEE  
 Me, too. Don't wanna get no  
 athlete's foot.

Madonna fumbles her cell phone.

CALE  
 (to Vanna Lee)  
 Ain't heard that in a long time.

SABRINA  
 All right, everybody. Let's get  
 back on track.

Quite a few heads nod.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
 Who wants to get us back on track?

Sunny raises her hand.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
 Okay, Sunny. You've got the floor.

SUNNY  
 Mia had to have a reason to kill  
 her mom. I mean, who else had a  
 reason to kill Mia's mom?

LAWANDA  
 Well, as far as I can tell, we're  
 here to decide whether or not Mia's  
 guilty beyond any reasonable doubt.  
 As far as a motive is concerned,  
 that's for the cops to worry about.

HEATH

That's true, Lawanda...but I still see Sunny's point, too.

Lawanda smiles...Sunny puts on an ear-to-ear grin.

HEATH (CONT'D)

Who else might've had it in for the older De Los Santos?

EARLENE

Simple. Mia's daddy.

JUAN

He's already dead. Remember?

EARLENE

Well, excuuuuuse me!

John Wayne, Madonna, and Vanna Lee laugh.

HEATH

Lawanda...who else do you think might've killed Mia's mom if Mia herself didn't do it?

LAWANDA

That's a good one. I don't know.

JOHN WAYNE

Oh, God!

LAWANDA

Zoraya De Los Santos was in jail for armed robbery. It cost her custody of Mia...and Mia's attorney really stressed that.

CALE

He shore did.

LAWANDA

Zoraya did her share of drugs, too. And she could've been killed by a drug dealer...or one of her fellow inmates. Or even a parent of one of Mia's classmates.

VANNA LEE

That's hogwash!

John Wayne cringes...Lawanda turns to Vanna Lee.

LAWANDA  
Heath asked me who else could've  
killed Zoraya.

Heath shakes his head "yes."

EARLENE  
Cale!

CALE  
Huh?

EARLENE  
I've got a question for you.

Cale perks up.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
Since you're now Little Mr. Not  
Guilty, chew on this: The old woman  
that lived in the basement heard  
the little hussy say: "I'm gonna  
kill you!"

CALE  
Yep.

EARLENE  
Then the old woman heard a body hit  
the floor.  
(stomps on floor)  
Then she saw the little hussy run  
outa the house. What's it all mean?

Cale shrugs before he eyeballs Lawanda.

LAWANDA  
I was just wondering how clearly  
the old woman could've heard Mia's  
voice from downstairs.

EARLENE  
She didn't hear it through the  
ceiling.

LAWANDA  
Another thing: The people in the  
house next door were playing loud  
music.

Earlene gestures her disagreement.

SABRINA

The old woman did identify Mia's voice in court...out of three other voices.

LAWANDA

She knows Mia's voice very well. She's been renting from Zoraya ever since Mia was a toddler.

VANNA LEE

Darn tootin'.

LAWANDA

But to identify a shouting voice like that from downstairs...maybe the old woman was wrong.

VANNA LEE

You're talkin' hogwash again.

LAWANDA

Maybe the old woman assumed Mia was upstairs...and thought the voice she heard was Mia's.

EARLENE

Yeah. And they don't grow tobacco here in North Carolina.

The room breaks out in strong laughter.

John Wayne stares Lawanda down.

JOHN WAYNE

Look here, Little Ms. Not Guilty--

SABRINA

Remember, John Wayne: Popcorn.

JOHN WAYNE

(gritting his teeth)

She heard the damn...Mia's mama's body fallin', then saw Mia run outa the house. Geez!

Madonna nods at John Wayne, then studies Lawanda.

MADONNA

And don't forget that man across the street. He saw the whole thing through an open window.

JUAN  
You're telling the truth, Madonna.

MADONNA  
(pointing to Lawanda)  
Now...what more do you need?

LAWANDA  
Oh, you'd be surprised.

Earlene exhales.

JOHN WAYNE  
The man saw the killin' through the  
windows of a large passin' bus.

HEATH  
He remembered everything right down  
to a T. That's hard to argue with.

EARLENE  
All right, Lawanda. Let's hear it.

LAWANDA  
To tell you the truth...I don't  
know if it sounds right.

LESHON  
(nods at Lawanda)  
And I don't know if Mia would've  
shown her homies the knife at that  
time.

Leshon receives a cross look from Vanna Lee.

VANNA LEE  
So?

LAWANDA  
Well, maybe, how about this?

A disgusted Earlene shakes her head sideways.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
How long do you think it takes one  
of those large CATS buses to cross  
a certain point while going the  
speed limit?

Emotions from rage to bewilderment to glee grip Lawanda's  
fellow jurors.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
Come on. Take a guess.

Nobody answers.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
Charlotte Area Transit--

SUNNY  
Four seconds.

LAWANDA  
That sounds about right.

EARLENE  
What's your point?

CALE  
(to Earlene)  
The house where the killin' took  
place. That's the point.

Some jurors laugh.

LAWANDA  
A large CATS bus passes a certain  
point in four seconds...maybe five.  
In fact, I used to live along a bus  
route.

EARLENE  
Get to the point!

LAWANDA  
Well...buses can get pretty noisy.

JUAN  
Uh...yeah.

LAWANDA  
Speaking of noise...you've got the  
old woman downstairs. She heard Mia  
say: "I'm gonna kill you!" Then a  
second later, the old woman heard  
Zoraya's body hit the floor.

ANWAR  
That's what happened.

LAWANDA

Then you've got the man across the street...who looked out of his open window and saw the murder happen through the windows of a passing CATS bus. Nobody was in the bus.

John Wayne's is an emphatic nod.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Now...it takes four or five seconds for a bus like that to pass a certain point.

HEATH

Got it.

LAWANDA

With that in mind, we can say that the body fell to the floor just as the bus passed by. All while loud music was blaring next door.

Some jurors stare one another down.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

According to what the old woman said, she would've heard Mia yell out while the bus was roaring and the music was blaring next door...but it's not that possible.

Dead silence.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Clark Kent could've heard Mia.

Cale, Heath, Juan, and Sunny laugh.

EARLENE

Look: You don't need superpowers to hear a yell like that.

LAWANDA

You really believe that, Earlene?

EARLENE

She said the little hussy screamed it out. And I believe the old lady!

LAWANDA

If she heard anything, she couldn't have identified the voice with all that noise around her.

Earlene rises and wags a finger at Lawanda.

EARLENE

I've got news for you: Nobody can be that picky...that precise!

LAWANDA

Well, testimony like the kind we heard had better be precise.

Lawanda watches Earlene cringe.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

We don't wanna give a lethal injection to somebody who doesn't deserve it.

LESHON

You know, I don't think she could've heard it.

SUNNY

Same here, Leshon.

A still-cringing Earlene sits down...and stares Sunny down.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

I'm a professional clown...and I work a lot of parties. All kinds of parties...and the music gets pretty loud sometimes.

Earlene scans the room.

EARLENE

Now I see why some people are afraid of clowns.

LESHON

Sunny's got a point.

EARLENE

On her head!

Sunny's mouth drops.

JUAN

Just an everloving minute--

EARLENE

Why in God's name would the old  
lady lie?

Jurors eyeball each other...until:

CALE

Maybe she liked all the attention  
she was gittin'.

AD LIBBED comments take over...Earlene shakes her head "no."

SABRINA

Cale, what you said was really  
interesting. You wanna unpack that?

CALE

Shore.

Twenty-two eyes bear down on Cale.

CALE (CONT'D)

Ah looked at her for a very long  
time...and Ah couldn't help notice  
her hairdo.

HEATH

Wait a minute...

CALE

It was a cross between, uh, Phyllis  
Diller, Farrah Fawcett, and Hillary  
Rodham Clinton.

Heath breathes relief.

CALE (CONT'D)

This witness is a proud woman...one  
they've been puttin' down all her  
life. Guess that's how Ah saw  
her...someone sick and tired of all  
them putdowns.

Some of Cale's cohorts nod.

CALE (CONT'D)

And this trial bein' on TV shore  
didn't hurt.

VANNA LEE

Cale, back up.

Cale nods.

VANNA LEE (CONT'D)

You tryin' to say she lied so that she could have her fifteen minutes?

CALE

Not at all. But maybe she wanted to make herself believe she heard Mia screamin' like that.

Earlene walks over to Cale.

EARLENE

Can you say "pack of lies?"

Cale flashes that million-dollar grin.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

Where'd you get such a cockamamie story like that?

CALE

Mah mama was the same way that old woman downstairs was.

Heath, Lawanda, and Sunny nod in understanding.

And Earlene sits back down.

CALE (CONT'D)

See...when mah mama was growin' up, she wanted to be herself instead of tryin' to copy Gidget and them identical cousins Patty Duke played on TV.

JUAN

Oh...boy...

CALE

Back in high school, mah mama wanted one of them shiny red, superstock cars...like the one Jan & Dean sang about in "The Li'l' Ol' Lady (from Pasadena)."

John Wayne's mouth jumps open.

Lawanda beams.

CALE (CONT'D)

It's true! Mah mama was the one that got me interested in cars. Taught me how to fix 'em and all.

HEATH

That's very interesting.

CALE

She even named me after both Cale Yarborough and Richard Petty.

Leshon nods in understanding.

LESHON

Thanks a lot for sharing that...from mechanic to mechanic.

CALE

(pointing to Leshon)

You, too? Where you work at?

LESHON

I work at a Jiffy Lube. The one on West W.T. Harris Boulevard.

EARLENE

Leshon, don't you have something to say that has to do with this trial?

LESHON

Yes, I do...I'd like to change my vote to not guilty.

VANNA LEE

Say what?

John Wayne grumbles.

LESHON

That's what I said.

SABRINA

You're sure about that, aren't you?

LESHON

Yes, I am.

SABRINA

There it is...nine to three in favor of guilty.

AD LIBBED chatter ensues...Vanna Lee stares at Leshon.

VANNA LEE

How come?

LESHON

I got to taking another look at the bus and the two witnesses and the loud music.

VANNA LEE

It's just like Earlene says:  
(tries to mimic her)  
"Cain't fight facts."

Leshon's is a slow nod.

VANNA LEE (CONT'D)

Well, you cain't! It's plain to see all the facts point to Mia bein' guilty. Even the girl's own lawyer could see that!

LAWANDA

Hey, it happens sometimes...all the facts in a case point to a murderer being caught.

VANNA LEE

(glaring at Lawanda)  
Like right now!

LAWANDA

But once in a while, the real murderer comes in and confesses...and the one who was convicted goes home free.

VANNA LEE

You're talkin' hogwash again!

LAWANDA

No, it happens all too often.

Sabrina, Leshon, Heath, and Anwar AD LIB their agreement with Lawanda...Earlene groans.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Remember when I said Mia's attorney probably didn't ask enough questions...or the right ones?

EARLENE

That again.

LAWANDA

Maybe he didn't wanna be here.  
Maybe he wanted to stay home and  
watch "The Price Is Right."

Juan laughs...Earlene stares him down.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Maybe he didn't want the case...and  
the state assigned him to it.

JOHN WAYNE

You gotta be kiddin'.

John Wayne rises to walk toward Lawanda...

SABRINA

Remember: Popcorn.

...only to sit right back down.

JUAN

Hey, everybody, I think I've got  
something.

VANNA LEE

Juan, it better not be contagious.

A few jurors laugh.

JUAN

But, no...I did a little texting.  
And I just wanted to share it.

Sabrina gives Juan a concerned look.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Don't worry. It's still about the  
case we're working on.

Juan yanks out his cell phone...and goes to his texts.

JUAN (CONT'D)

I texted some notes to myself.

Those around Juan try to sneak peeks at his notes.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Anyway...I've been trying to listen  
closely...

Vanna Lee, John Wayne, and Earlene shoot Juan dirty looks.

JUAN (CONT'D)  
To the trial!

Cale shakes his head "yes."

JUAN (CONT'D)  
And I've gotta admit that Lawanda's  
been making some good points.

LAWANDA  
Well...thanks. Just wanna help.

JUAN  
On the surface, Mia looks guilty.  
But if you check more closely...

JOHN WAYNE  
That damn...she's guilty. Period.

JUAN  
Okay...we assume Mia killed Zoraya.  
Her mom. Mia stabbed her in the  
chest, then took off. It happened  
at eleven forty-five that night.

VANNA LEE  
Darn tootin' she did.

JUAN  
Mia said she didn't come home 'til  
two in the morning.

VANNA LEE  
You got that right.

MADONNA  
(pointing to Juan)  
And she was caught by the two  
officers who were in an unmarked  
police car parked outside the De  
Los Santos' house.

JUAN  
But, Madonna...why would Mia come  
back home two hours and fifteen  
minutes after the murder?

VANNA LEE  
Maybe she wanted to finish the job.

A few jurors titter...others sit openmouthed.

Madonna shrugs.

VANNA LEE (CONT'D)

You know...put an exclamation point  
on her work.

EARLENE

I thought she already did. You  
know: "I'm gonna kill you!"

Titters grow into full-blown laughs.

Lawanda and Heath look annoyed.

HEATH

Maybe Mia freaked out after she  
killed Zoraya...so she ran out.  
Then she cooled off, went home, and  
realized the knife was still home.

JUAN

She had to be calm long enough to  
make sure no fingerprints were on  
the knife in case someone else  
found it.

John Wayne looks ticked off.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Now...when did Mia freak out?

JOHN WAYNE

That...Mia came home to get the  
knife and then get rid of it.

JUAN

Two hours and fifteen minutes after  
the murder?

JOHN WAYNE

Duh!

JUAN

Me, I woulda stayed away from there  
a whole lot longer. I wouldn't want  
the cops to catch me.

JOHN WAYNE

You oughta know, Juan.

Cale shoots John Wayne a dirty look...Madonna follows suit.

MADONNA

I would've gone in there.

A few heads nod.

MADONNA (CONT'D)

I would've figured no one would've seen me or the dead body...or the knife. Not until morning.

JUAN

I remember the man across the street testifying that after he saw the killing, right after the bus went by, he cursed at the top of his lungs, then called the cops.

CALE

Yep.

JUAN

Mia wouldn't have gone back home if she heard him scream...if she'd been the one who killed her mom.

MADONNA

Maybe Mia might not have heard the guy yelling in her state of panic. And if she did hear it, she might not have connected it with her own act. I'm just saying.

EARLENE

(gesturing toward Madonna)  
You said that right.

LAWANDA

Maybe.

John Wayne and Earlene grunt.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Maybe Mia actually did kill her mom. Maybe she didn't hear the man yelling. Maybe Mia ran out of the house in panic. Maybe she came back over two hours later for the knife.

JOHN WAYNE

Ain't no maybes!

LAWANDA

Maybe all of these things happened...maybe not.

JOHN WAYNE  
They did, too!

LAWANDA  
John Wayne, I'm just saying there's  
enough doubt for us to wonder if  
Mia actually was there at the time  
of the killing.

Lawanda watches John Wayne seethe.

JOHN WAYNE  
Yeah! And I'm...I'm...never mind.

SABRINA  
(to John Wayne)  
Think about that good-tasting--

JOHN WAYNE  
No! Let's think about the--

SABRINA  
Popcorn.

John Wayne tries to take deep breaths.

LAWANDA  
Sabrina, how do you feel about us  
taking another vote?

While John Wayne grits his teeth, Earlene takes deep breaths.

VANNA LEE  
We need another vote like Cap'n  
Picard needs a wig.

Some jurors laugh...Leshon draws a blank look.

VANNA LEE (CONT'D)  
Okay. A toupee.  
(to Leshon)  
You happy?

LESHON  
I'm not particular.

Leshon earns some goodnatured laughs.

SABRINA  
Let's get right down to it,  
everybody. Raise your hands if you  
think Mia's guilty.

Vanna Lee, Madonna, John Wayne, and Earlene waste no time in raising their hands.

Anwar, Heath, Sabrina, and Sunny lift their hands up.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
 Raise your hands if you think she's  
 not guilty.

Lawanda, Leshon, and Cale do just that.

Juan follows suit.

Earlene and Vanna Lee stare him down.

VANNA LEE  
 Why?

EARLENE  
 And you better have a good, good  
 reason why you're taking that  
 little hussy's side.

JUAN  
 (with a grin)  
 I've now got a reasonable doubt in  
 my mind about Mia's guilt.

Her colleagues watch Earlene storm into the kitchen. She returns with Lawanda's Swiss Army Knife.

Earlene holds the knife out for Juan to see.

EARLENE  
 Look at this!

Juan shakes his head "yes."

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
 This is the knife that little hussy  
 bumped her mama off with.

Earlene thrusts the knife further into Juan's view.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
 Pay attention!

HEATH  
 Earlene!

SUNNY  
 That's not the knife in question.

JUAN

Yeah!

(pointing to Earlene)

The one you're thinking about's got  
a tag on it. Remember?

Earlene studies the knife in her hand...then comes away with  
that deer-in-the-headlights look.

She hurries back into the kitchen to put the knife back.

When Earlene returns from the kitchen, she jogs to her  
seat...and earns a stare from Juan.

JUAN (CONT'D)

It's like you keep saying: Can't  
fight facts.

Most jurors laugh...Earlene and Vanna Lee seethe.

VANNA LEE

(standing up)

What's wrong with you people?  
Where're y'all's heads at?

Vanna Lee strides toward Lawanda.

VANNA LEE (CONT'D)

You got everybody thinkin' this kid  
didn't kill her mama.

LAWANDA

Not everybody. You're one of eight  
who just got through voting guilty.

John Wayne shakes his head "yes."

VANNA LEE

I suppose you think Joe Biden won  
in 2020.

LAWANDA

He did.

Eight of Lawanda's colleagues cheer and/or nod.

Earlene and Vanna Lee shrug Lawanda off.

And then there's John Wayne.

JOHN WAYNE

The hell he did!

SUNNY

He won, John Wayne.

John Wayne stares in anger at Sunny...Vanna Lee does likewise at Lawanda.

VANNA LEE

You tryin' to tell us that old lady didn't see that brat tearin' outa the house fifteen seconds after the killin'? And the old lady was just showin' off 'cause she was on TV?

LESHON

Vanna Lee, you wanna freeze for a minute or two?

Vanna Lee switches her wrathful gaze to Leshon.

LESHON (CONT'D)

Did the old woman say she ran to the door?

VANNA LEE

Maybe she jumped on a drone.

SUNNY

She said she ran to the door...at least that's what I got from her.

LESHON

I don't see how she could run.

JOHN WAYNE

The old lady said she ran from downstairs to the front door.

LAWANDA

Sabrina...I'd like to take a look at the diagram of the house's main floor and basement.

Sabrina's is a slow nod.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

And the photos, too.

SABRINA

Just give me a few minutes.

Sabrina strides toward the door...Vanna Lee sits back down.

VANNA LEE  
 (to Lawanda)  
 The Hornets are playin' at seven  
 fifteen tonight.

EARLENE  
 And they're gonna lose.

JUAN  
 Who's gonna lose?

JOHN WAYNE  
 We are!

Earlene, Juan, Lawanda, and Vanna Lee eyeball John Wayne.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
 We're losin' time here!

Sabrina knocks on the door. It opens...and reveals the guard.

The twosome go into an AD LIBBED conversation.

LAWANDA  
 (eyeballing John Wayne)  
 I just wanted to see if an old  
 woman who had a knee replacement  
 last year could get from downstairs  
 to the front door in twenty  
 seconds. That's all I wanted.

EARLENE  
 You mean twenty-five seconds.

LAWANDA  
 She said twenty seconds.

EARLENE  
 Twenty-five!

LAWANDA  
 Twenty, Earlene.

JUAN  
 Maybe she's got one of those cheap  
 watches they sell at--

CALE  
 (to Earlene)  
 She did say twenty seconds.

EARLENE

Well, Cale, she's an old lady.  
Maybe she's got Alzheimer's. Maybe  
she's got a loose brick in her--

Cale's mouth flies open.

HEATH

You need to think about what you've  
said, Earlene.

Earlene stares through a floor-to-ceiling window as the guard  
comes back with a thick folder.

He holds up the folder for all jurors to see...and tries to  
keep the contents from slipping out.

GUARD

Hope this is what you wanted.

Sabrina strides over to the guard, who hands over the folder.

SABRINA

Just what we're looking for.

Lawanda smiles at the guard.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

(accepts folder)  
Thanks.

GUARD

You're welcome.

Some jurors nod.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Don't forget the free popcorn.

SABRINA

Got it!

John Wayne licks his chops as the guard shuts (and locks) the  
door behind himself on the way out.

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - KITCHEN - DAY

The two Swiss Army Knives continue to rest out of harm's way.

All twelve jurors crowd around two tables...one where a large  
drawing of the De Los Santos's living room and basement  
rest. The other table has photos of the two spaces.

Lawanda catches Earlene's exasperated look.

EARLENE

What's the point? The old lady said she saw that little hussy running outa the house.

LAWANDA

I just wanted to see if she was right.

EARLENE

She was right!

LAWANDA

As soon as Zoraya's body hit the floor, the old woman heard footsteps running to the front door. She heard the door open.

ANWAR

Yes.

LAWANDA

She got to the front door as fast as possible.

A few heads nod.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

She said it couldn't have been more than twenty seconds.

Earlene opens her mouth...Sunny gestures her out of it.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

What if the murderer began running right from the start?

MADONNA

Maybe she didn't.

LAWANDA

The old woman said she did.

Lawanda points to the drawing.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Here's the living room where the murder happened.

Most jurors shake their heads "yes."

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Here's a diagram of the two rooms on top of each other...and the stairs connecting the basement and the living room.

HEATH

I see.

LAWANDA

Now here's a Google map of the De Los Santos' house and the street the house is on. The street's part of a bus route.

JOHN WAYNE

Well, duh!

LAWANDA

The old woman was in bed in the basement. She said she got up, went up the stairs, and looked up just in time to see Mia race out the front door. Are you with me?

EARLENE

Keep going.

LAWANDA

It was twenty seconds after she heard Zoraya's body fall.

JUAN

I get it.

Lawanda takes a closer look at the diagram.

LAWANDA

It's fifteen feet from the head of the old woman's bed to the stairway. The stairway itself is about fourteen feet long from the basement to the living room.

HEATH

Absolutely right.

LAWANDA

Do you really think the old woman could've walked from her bed downstairs to the house's front door in twenty seconds?

JOHN WAYNE  
Damn right I do!

JUAN  
Even after knee surgery?

JOHN WAYNE  
She ran track in high school...not  
long after Title Nine came in.

John Wayne grits his teeth.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
Don't get me started on that--

SABRINA  
(to John Wayne)  
Would you like to take twenty laps  
around this kitchen?

Sabrina fields John Wayne's angry stare.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
How about twenty windsprints?

And John Wayne hyperventilates.

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - UPPER LEVEL - DAY

At the mini-arcade, Anwar, Cale, Earlene, Heath, Juan, John  
Wayne, and Madonna watch Vanna Lee play pinball.

JOHN WAYNE  
This is pretty damn stupid.

Vanna Lee glances at John Wayne...

VANNA LEE  
You take that back! Ain't nothin'  
stupid about pinball!

...then back at the pinball machine.

EARLENE  
Vanna Lee, he's talking about  
Little Ms. Not Guilty's latest  
stunt. It's not about you.

Earlene catches Vanna Lee's big smile.

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - LOWER LEVEL - DAY

Lawanda stands at the foot of the stairs. Behind her: Sunny (with her cell phone ready to record), Sabrina, and Leshon.

LAWANDA

I just wanted to see how long it took the old woman.

LESHON

I sure hope this works.

LAWANDA

It will.

SABRINA

As long as you're playing your cards right, Lawanda.

Lawanda nods at Sabrina, then turns to Sunny.

LAWANDA

Ready?

SUNNY

(nodding)

Ready...set...go!

When Lawanda takes off, Sunny hits "RECORD."

Leshon and Sabrina follow Sunny and Lawanda up the stairs.

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - UPPER LEVEL - DAY

Lawanda, Leshon, Sabrina, and Sunny arrive.

SUNNY

(shuts phone off)

Thirty-five seconds.

John Wayne, Heath, Madonna, Earlene, Juan, and Anwar stare the foursome down.

A nodding Cale grins.

And Vanna Lee continues to play pinball.

When her game ends, she eyeballs her colleagues.

VANNA LEE

Thirty-five seconds of what?

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - LOWER LEVEL - DAY

All dozen jurors sit in those plush seats.

Twenty-two eyes gaze upon Lawanda.

LAWANDA

Here's what I think happened.

EARLENE

Make your point.

LAWANDA

The old woman heard Mia and Zoraya argue a few hours earlier.

MADONNA

Check.

LAWANDA

While she was in bed, she heard Zoraya's body fall to the floor upstairs...then heard the man across the street yell.

Some heads nod.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

She got up, tried to reach the door, heard somebody running, and figured it was Mia.

JUAN

All of that while loud music was blaring next door.

SUNNY

(nodding at Lawanda)

I see your point.

LAWANDA

And all of that considering how far back from the street...and how far apart from each other...those houses on Hovis Road are.

A seething Earlene jumps from her seat...

EARLENE

You talk about a pack of lies!

...and charges toward Lawanda.

LAWANDA

Are you gonna call a Google map a pack of lies?

EARLENE

(wags finger at Lawanda)  
I'm calling all that slop you're spreading a pack of lies!

ANWAR

Earlene...please...sit down.

Earlene points to Anwar.

EARLENE

Stay outa this!

Anwar looks stunned.

Earlene wags that digit at Lawanda.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

You can fool some of the people in this room, but you're not gonna fool me!

(leans in on Lawanda)

That little hussy's guilty! Get that through your--

SABRINA

Earlene Culpepper, sit down or you're not gonna get any popcorn!

Sabrina fields Earlene's wrathful gaze.

EARLENE

Oh, yeah? Well then, take that popcorn and shove it!

A few jurors titter.

JUAN

(to those around him)

Twelve bags of popcorn...ten people to share it--

Earlene moves to the middle of the room.

EARLENE

You think this is funny?

Juan smirks...Cale grins.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

Well, guess what?  
 (walks around)  
 This is a murder trial, not a  
 circus!

JUAN

That's three things this murder  
 trial ain't.

Most of Juan's colleagues laugh.

CALE

That's funny...John Wayne called  
 this a circus.

The laughter increases while some folks stare at John Wayne.

Earlene stops in her tracks.

EARLENE

Do you people realize we're letting  
 this little hussy back out on the  
 streets...so she can murder again?

Jurors eyeball one another...the laughs come to a halt.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

This little piece of you-know-what  
 needs to learn her lesson! That  
 little hussy needs to fry!

John Wayne's nod is emphatic.

HEATH

Come on, Earlene. You know they  
 don't fry people here in North  
 Carolina anymore. They use lethal  
 injections now.

EARLENE

And I'd certainly love to hold the  
 needle...so I can give that little  
 hussy that injection.

All eyes turn to Earlene.

Leshon shakes his head "no."

LAWANDA

(to Earlene)

What would you get out of being the  
 one holding the needle?

Earlene stares Lawanda down for a few seconds...then:

EARLENE  
Satisfaction.

Lawanda's is a slow nod.

LAWANDA  
You just wanna see Mia die. Period.

Earlene studies Lawanda...

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
And it wouldn't matter to you what  
the facts of the case are.

...then lunges at her.

Sabrina rushes over to grab Earlene's arms.

EARLENE  
Let me go! I'll--

But Sabrina tightens her grip on Earlene.

John Wayne grabs Sabrina's arms.

Cale gets hold of John Wayne's torso.

The door opens...and reveals the guard.

GUARD  
Is everything all right?

Earlene, Sabrina, John Wayne, and Cale break the chain.

Leshon eyes the guard.

LESHON  
It's all good.

Anwar strides into the kitchen...

SUNNY  
Earlene, John Wayne, Cale, and  
Sabrina were just doing the conga.

JUAN  
Yeah. A silent conga.

...and returns with the folder of info as well as the tagged  
Swiss Army Knife.

ANWAR

Thank you for letting us use these items. We don't need them anymore.

The other jurors watch Anwar give the guard that material.

GUARD

(accepts material)  
You're very welcome.

The guard hangs onto the folder and the knife for dear life.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Now if there's anything else you need, just let me know.

CALE

You betcha.

Four or five jurors breathe relief as the guard exits and locks the door behind him.

Lawanda jumps up to go to the kitchen.

LATER

All twelve jurors sit in those nice chairs.

SUNNY

Sabrina...how do you feel about taking another vote?

Sabrina looks at her eleven colleagues.

SABRINA

Any objections?

Most shake their heads "no" or AD LIB their answers.

VANNA LEE

I like takin' out the same piece of gum and chewin' it over and over.

Sunny, Juan, and Cale burst into laughter.

SABRINA

All right, everybody. You know what to do. Raise your hands if you find Mia guilty.

Earlene, Vanna Lee, Heath, Madonna, Sabrina, and John Wayne lift their hands up.

Vanna Lee, John Wayne, and Earlene stare Sunny down.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
 Raise your hands if you don't find  
 Mia guilty.

Leshon, Cale, Lawanda, and Juan raise their hands.

Sunny puts her hand up...Anwar follows suit.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
 There it is...it's six apiece.

John Wayne stares daggers at Anwar.

JOHN WAYNE  
 Where'd you say you went to school?

HEATH  
 John Wayne...don't start that  
 again.

ANWAR  
 (to John Wayne)  
 If it'll make you feel any  
 better...I'm a history professor at  
 the University of North Carolina at  
 Charlotte.

JOHN WAYNE  
 Yeah. Right.

ANWAR  
 I used to be a standup comic.

Juan's eyes light up.

John Wayne groans.

VANNA LEE  
 Anwar, if you wanna make us laugh,  
 why don'tcha tell us why you  
 changed your mind?

ANWAR  
 I just got to thinking about all  
 the details that didn't come out.

Vanna Lee's mouth flies open.

ANWAR (CONT'D)  
 Deets.

Madonna smiles...Earlene's look wipes away that smile.

JOHN WAYNE  
(shaking his head "no")  
A college professor.

ANWAR  
I've been one since 2009.

JOHN WAYNE  
A college professor...that's the  
worst kinda woke in the world.

Heath exhales.

ANWAR  
You feel the same way about the  
profs at Liberty University?

John Wayne looks perplexed.

ANWAR (CONT'D)  
A school started by a  
televangelist. A right-wing--

Earlene turns her facial wrath to Anwar.

ANWAR (CONT'D)  
The fact is...my job is to deal in  
facts. And when new facts come to  
the light, I need to run with them.

A few jurors nod.

ANWAR (CONT'D)  
It's just like you always say,  
Earlene: "Can't fight facts."

Earlene casts a brief smile...

EARLENE  
You're right. And there's only one  
fact that counts...

...that morphs into a scowl.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
Mia What's-Her-Name is guilty!

Vanna Lee and John Wayne cheer.

Lawanda shakes her head sideways.

Leshon rests his chin on his fists.

LAWANDA

In the end, Mia De Los Santos might end up being found guilty.

EARLENE

(wags finger at Lawanda)  
Well then, act like it!

LAWANDA

Earlene, we need to make sure we've got all the information we can possibly use so that we can make an informed decision. We need to go on facts...not feelings.

Earlene jumps out of her seat as if to go after Lawanda again...but sits right back down.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

All the facts.

Sabrina nods at Lawanda, then turns to Earlene.

SABRINA

When I'm not one of the girls' basketball coaches at West Charlotte, I teach journalism.

John Wayne offers Sabrina an I-doubt-it look.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

It's true...and I've gotta deal with facts in that job, too. And teach my students to do the same.

EARLENE

Yes.

SABRINA

Don't worry...nobody from our school newspaper's covering this.

Some jurors laugh.

ANWAR

(to Earlene)  
Does your job require you to deal with facts...or feelings?

Dead silence...for a little bit.

EARLENE  
Mostly...feelings...beliefs.

Juan studies Earlene.

JUAN  
Don't tell me...let me  
guess...you're a psychiatrist.

EARLENE  
I'm gonna need one when we're  
through here.  
(shakes head sideways)  
I'm the office manager at one of  
the megachurches here in Charlotte.

AD LIBBED reactions result.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
A very respectable church. My job  
is a respectable one...only the  
pastor outranks me. And I'm here  
trying to do my civic duty...trying  
to be respectable.

Earlene eyeballs Lawanda...then looks at the carpet.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
How's it gonna look when the rest  
of the staff finds out I've been  
taken down by a lady that records  
rappers for eight hours a day?

LAWANDA  
Earlene...you forgot about the  
Carolina Panthers cheerleader-  
turned-classical pianist.

Vanna Lee grits her teeth.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
If any of you want it, I'll be glad  
to give you one of her CDs.

MADONNA  
A...CD?

Earlene shows a deer-in-the-headlights look.

LAWANDA  
Madonna...I've got it on an MP3.

MADONNA

You've got...a...what?

JOHN WAYNE

We've got a hung jury.

Cale waves John Wayne off.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)

You see any one of us talkin' to  
the judge?

CALE

Wail, no, but--

JOHN WAYNE

Then we oughta haul off 'n' tell  
her we cain't come to no decision.

LAWANDA

That's not gonna happen.

SABRINA

We need to come to a unanimous  
decision. All twelve of us.

Earlene gives John Wayne a strong nod.

EARLENE

We can get twelve people off the  
street, bring 'em in here, and  
they'll come to the conclusion that  
that little hussy must fry...take a  
lethal injection.

VANNA LEE

Earlene, maybe you oughta get them  
twelve people outa your church.  
You'll have better odds.

JUAN

Sorry...it's gotta be our decision.  
Us twelve.

HEATH

And it's gotta be a decision made  
without a reasonable doubt.

Vanna Lee hisses.

John Wayne groans.

VANNA LEE  
There's that line again.

A few jurors shake their heads "yes."

LESHON  
Well, Vanna Lee, that's the key.

SUNNY  
It's just like Judge Bivins said:  
If we've got any reasonable doubt  
as to Mia's guilt, we've gotta find  
her not guilty.

Vanna Lee charges over to Sunny.

VANNA LEE  
(wags finger at Sunny)  
Looka here, clown: Ain't no doubt  
in my mind that that kid's guilty!  
Reasonable or unreasonable!

SUNNY  
Come on...take a deep breath...

VANNA LEE  
I'm not takin' no deep breath!

SUNNY  
Think about that popcorn--

VANNA LEE  
(leans in on Sunny)  
I'm not thinkin' 'bout no popcorn!

SABRINA  
Vanna Lee...take a break.

Now Vanna Lee wheels around...and gives Sabrina the evil eye.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
Sit down...chillax.

Vanna Lee just stands there...

VANNA LEE  
The only thing that oughta be  
poppin' is the vein that needle's  
gonna go in that takes Mia out!

SABRINA  
Sit...down.

...and stands there...

SABRINA (CONT'D)

Right now.

...until Cale, Heath, Lawanda, and Sunny gesture Vanna Lee into a sitdown.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

Now...who's got something  
nonthreatening to say?

A now-seated Vanna Lee glares at Sabrina.

Lawanda raises her hand.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

Lawanda, you've got the floor.

LAWANDA

Thanks, Sabrina.

Sabrina nods while Lawanda scans the room.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

The prosecuting attorney made a big thing about the fact that Mia couldn't remember the highlights of the game she was watching at the sports bar she said she was at during the killing.

Heath shakes his head up and down.

HEATH

I just wish Mia could've fleshed it out more.

LAWANDA

Heath, I'd like to try something.

HEATH

Okay.

Earlene, John Wayne, and Vanna Lee cast suspicious looks.

LAWANDA

If you were Mia, would you be able to remember all the details after a traumatic experience...like getting punched out or something like that?

Twenty-two eyes stare Heath down.

HEATH  
 Maybe...it all depends.

VANNA LEE  
 On what?

HEATH  
 Well...Mia couldn't remember which  
 two teams were playing. She wasn't  
 at the bar that night.

LAWANDA  
 The police questioned her right  
 there in the same living room where  
 Zoraya was killed. What if you were  
 in that kind of situation?

HEATH  
 I think I could remember all the  
 details.

LAWANDA  
 Even if you're all stressed out?

HEATH  
 I think I could.

Heath stares out the window, then turns to Lawanda.

HEATH (CONT'D)  
 I remember one night when I was  
 ten, both my parents were passed  
 out on the floor after snorting  
 coke and smoking joints and  
 drinking Jack Daniel's.

Leshon's mouth flies open.

HEATH (CONT'D)  
 While listening to Ringo Starr's  
 "The No No Song" over and over.

EARLENE  
 Why weren't your parents put in  
 jail for that?

HEATH  
 They probably would've been...if  
 the county sheriff hadn't been  
 right there snorting coke and  
 smoking joints and drinking Jack  
 Daniel's alongside 'em.

Earlene scowls...Leshon's floored look continues...Anwar, Juan, and Sunny laugh.

LAWANDA

Mia did remember the football game in court. And she remembered the two teams...and the final score.

MADONNA

(to Lawanda)

Her lawyer had two months to prepare for this whole thing. You'd be surprised how much prep you can do on a case like this.

John Wayne smirks.

HEATH

I see your point, Madonna. I'd feel more comfortable with the testimony of the officer who talked to Mia right after the murder.

JUAN

Just as long as that officer wasn't smoking dope or all coked up or all boozed up before talking to Mia.

A few jurors laugh.

SUNNY

Or all three.

The laughs grow louder.

LAWANDA

Heath...I hope it's all right to ask you a personal question.

HEATH

No problem.

Vanna Lee scowls at Lawanda.

LAWANDA

What were you doing last night?

EARLENE

Be careful, Heath!

Heath waves Earlene off.

HEATH

Lawanda, I was home. My wife and I were watching TV.

LAWANDA

How about the night before that?

HEATH

Same thing. We were both watching TV.

LAWANDA

All right...how about Monday night?

John Wayne looks incredulous.

VANNA LEE

Screw that! Get to Wednesday, January sixth, 2021.

Dead silence...John Wayne cracks a smile (and earns stares from all his colleagues but Vanna Lee, who eyes the floor).

HEATH

(eyeballing Lawanda)

Monday night...my wife and I were watching TV. It was the Monday Night Football game.

LAWANDA

What two teams were playing?

HEATH

The Arizona Cardinals were playing the Dallas Cowboys.

VANNA LEE

Great game!

LAWANDA

Who won that game?

HEATH

The Cardinals won.

LAWANDA

How'd they do it?

HEATH

It was a blowout...twenty-seven to seventeen, I think it was.

LAWANDA

What was the game's biggest play?

HEATH

Well, uh...Jacoby Brissett threw a touchdown pass to Trey McBride.

LAWANDA

Now...when did that happen?

Heath stares into space.

HEATH

Uh...there were twelve minutes...less than thirteen to go in the third quarter.

LAWANDA

How long was the touchdown pass?

One more glance into space for Heath.

HEATH

Let me see...uh...uh...it was fifteen yards. I know the Cardinals were in the Cowboys' red zone.

Heath sits there with a slight grin.

HEATH (CONT'D)

No...it was twelve yards.

Lawanda nods...Heath exhales.

LAWANDA

And you didn't get stressed out.

A smiling Heath shakes his head "yes."

Cale notices Heath's smile, then turns to Lawanda.

CALE

Ah see what you were tryin' to do.

JOHN WAYNE

(glaring at Cale)

Then you cain't see worth a damn.

CALE

Ah still see what Lawanda was tryin' to do.

JOHN WAYNE

So ol' Heath here couldn't remember them game highlights. Big deal!

CALE

Could be.

JOHN WAYNE

Next you'll tell me it proves that damn kid went to that sports bar.

CALE

Not really...but it shows that you cain't prove Mia didn't go to that sports bar.

John Wayne grits his teeth.

Earlene's mouth hangs open.

Vanna Lee rolls her eyes.

CALE (CONT'D)

Ah mean...if Heath can forget a few details and maybe have to backtrack to remember, Mia can, too.

JUAN

Makes sense to me.

Some jurors AD LIB their agreement with Juan.

JOHN WAYNE

Only thing that makes sense is that damn kid's guilty of murder.

Vanna Lee and Earlene perk up.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)

So you can take all this fake news and stick it up your--

SABRINA

Hey, everybody, I just got to thinking about something.

MADONNA

What?

SABRINA

I got to thinking about the counselor who got involved in the case.

JOHN WAYNE  
Oh, c'mon! Gimme a break!

SABRINA  
Hear me out, John Wayne.

John Wayne shakes his head sideways.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
Anyway, the counselor testified  
that Mia spent half her time  
thinking about killing somebody.  
Maybe forty percent of the time.  
Fits the description of a killer.

VANNA LEE  
No tellin' what that kid thought  
about the rest of the time.

LAWANDA  
(to Vanna Lee)  
Maybe Mia thought about typical  
teenage things the rest of the  
time.

EARLENE  
She's not a typical teenager. She's  
a murderer.

ANWAR  
To tell you the truth,  
Earlene...we've all got the  
potential to be murderers.

Jurors stare at each other.

EARLENE  
Anwar, that's a load of bull!

ANWAR  
Think about all those procedural  
shows on TV...all those "NCIS" and  
"CSI" and "FBI" shows.

Earlene's eyes light up.

ANWAR (CONT'D)  
Think about how popular those shows  
are...and how powerful and how  
influential they are.

LESHON  
 (nodding at Anwar)  
 You've got a point.

ANWAR  
 Subconsciously or not...any of us  
 can learn how to kill from TV shows  
 like that.

VANNA LEE  
 Here we go again with that hogwash!

ANWAR  
 And I didn't mention the movies.

Several heads nod.

Vanna Lee waves Anwar off.

VANNA LEE  
 We need to wrap this thing up. Sick  
 and tired of this gibberish.

Juan stares Vanna Lee down.

JUAN  
 Ain't heard that in a long time.

VANNA LEE  
 And besides...the Hornets are  
 playing the Nuggets tonight.

SUNNY  
 Don't sweat it, Vanna Lee. We'll be  
 done way before that.

VANNA LEE  
 (wags finger at Sunny)  
 You better be right.

Sunny's all smiles.

VANNA LEE (CONT'D)  
 You remember how long the O.J.  
 Simpson trial lasted?

EARLENE  
 Which one?

VANNA LEE  
 You know...the one from 1995.

Heath puts on his reading glasses, then checks his watch.

HEATH  
 (to Vanna Lee)  
 There's plenty of time before they  
 tip off.

Cale, Madonna, and Sunny pull out their cell phones and find  
 it's 2:00 PM.

CALE  
 It's that time!

Cale jumps out of his seat...his colleagues rise from their  
 chairs to follow him into:

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - KITCHEN - DAY

Earlene, Vanna Lee, Heath, and John Wayne sit at one table.

Anwar, Sabrina, Cale, and Sunny occupy the second table.

At the third table: Leshon, Madonna, Lawanda, and Juan.

Everybody enjoys popcorn...a bag for each juror.

HEATH  
 Well, the judge got her wish.

Vanna Lee watches Heath scoop up a handful of that fresh,  
 great-tasting popcorn.

VANNA LEE  
 At least somebody got her wish.

Lawanda notices her Swiss Army Knife remains on the counter.  
 She retrieves the knife, flicks it open and shuts it, and  
 sticks it back in her pocket.

Anwar observes the whole thing.

ANWAR  
 You mind if I see that?

LAWANDA  
 Why not?

His tablemates watch Anwar open that knife.

ANWAR  
 Something I've been thinking about.

CALE  
 Long as it don't spoil our snack  
 time.

ANWAR

It's just that I've been thinking about the stab wound Mia made...how it's got an upward angle.

Earlene looks up from her popcorn. She eyeballs Anwar.

EARLENE

That's right. Beat that dead horse.

ANWAR

I know they made a big deal of it in court...but it doesn't sound right to me.

John Wayne and Vanna Lee join Earlene in giving Anwar the evil eye.

ANWAR (CONT'D)

After all, Mia's five inches taller than Zoraya. And it looks weird to stab upward at the chest of somebody who's shorter than you.

JOHN WAYNE

Figures you'd know something about that.

HEATH

John Wayne...don't you wanna eat some more of this great popcorn?

Heath catches John Wayne's toothy grimace.

LAWANDA

(to her table buddies)

I'm gonna grab another soda. Can I get you three anything?

Juan and Leshon shake their heads "no."

MADONNA

Nah. I'm good.

Lawanda jumps up to go to the pop machine.

Earlene watches her before she turns to Anwar.

EARLENE

Let me see that.

ANWAR

Oh...kay.

A reluctant Anwar hands the knife to Earlene as an envious John Wayne looks on.

EARLENE  
(rises from seat)  
Now...pay attention.

And Earlene starts toward Lawanda.

At the pop machine, Lawanda makes her payment, then punches her selection.

The other ten jurors watch knife-wielding Earlene saunter toward Lawanda, who's about to grab her purchase...when...

HEATH  
Look out, Lawanda!

Lawanda turns around...only to spot Earlene, who raises Lawanda's knife upward as if to stab the knife's owner.

Lawanda holds her arms out to block Earlene.

The pop bottle/can/cup remains in the machine.

LAWANDA  
You've got to be kidding.

Earlene lowers that Swiss Army Knife...

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
Did John Wayne or Vanna Lee put you up to this?

EARLENE  
No.

...then she closes it.

Lawanda places her hands on her hips.

Eight jurors breathe relief...exceptions Vanna Lee and John Wayne just stare at each other.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
I wanted to give Anwar a little demonstration.

LAWANDA  
I truly hope you're right.

Earlene addresses the ten seated jurors.

EARLENE

Listen up!

The ten seated jurors perk up.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

That little hussy's five inches taller than her mama...just like Anwar said.

Anwar nods.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

And I'm five inches taller than  
(points knife at Lawanda)  
Lawanda...give or take an inch.

CALE

Okay.

EARLENE

About the length of one of those one-hundred-twenty-millimeter cigarettes.

JUAN

(to Madonna)

She's a church lady?

Leshon gives Juan a nod...Madonna stares into space.

EARLENE

All right...watch this.

Earlene's and Lawanda's audience perks up again.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

Pay attention.

Now Earlene reopens the Swiss Army Knife.

Stony silence takes over as Earlene adjusts her grip.

The two erect women eyeball each other.

Earlene thrusts hard in an underhanded motion...

HEATH

WATCH OUT, LAWANDA!

...and stops not even an inch short of Lawanda's chest.

Lawanda doesn't move.

Earlene grins.

Heath, Cale, Sunny, Sabrina, Leshon, and Anwar hurry over to Earlene's and Lawanda's side.

Anwar stares daggers at Earlene.

ANWAR  
Better give me the knife.

SABRINA  
(to Earlene)  
Before you do that, close that  
thing up first.

Earlene closes the knife before she gives it to Anwar...who passes it back to Lawanda.

ANWAR  
You gonna be all right?

Lawanda's is a slow, slow nod.

LAWANDA  
(accepts knife)  
It's funny...I saw this in a movie  
the other day on one of those  
classic movie channels.

Cale eyes Earlene.

CALE  
Talk about spoilin' somebody's  
snack time.

Lawanda stuffs her own knife back into her pants pocket.

JUAN  
Earlene...is that megachurch you  
work at really one of those cults?

Earlene's grin widens.

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - LOWER LEVEL - DAY

Sabrina, Anwar, Earlene, Heath, Leshon, Sunny, Vanna Lee, Lawanda, Cale, John Wayne, Juan, and Madonna sit in those plush chairs.

Some jurors continue to munch popcorn.

EARLENE  
So that's it. Up and in.

MADONNA

Up and in.

SABRINA

With that kind of delivery, Mia would've been a great softball pitcher.

EARLENE

Me, I would've gone down and in.

Now the munching of popcorn is the only sound in the room...for a few moments.

Then:

LAWANDA

Earlene...where'd you get all that expertise about how to handle a knife?

EARLENE

One of our churchmembers found Jesus when he was still in prison.

Some jurors chuckle...others look skeptical.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

When that churchmember was still in prison. He was put in jail for robbing a pizza delivery driver.

Lawanda nods.

EARLENE (CONT'D)

With a knife.

JUAN

Wasn't a Swiss Army Knife, was it?

John Wayne and Vanna Lee stare Juan down.

EARLENE

No. It was a butcher knife...a common, ordinary butcher knife.

CALE

Day-amn!

EARLENE

Reminds me of one of those procedural shows I like to watch.

Anwar, Cale, Juan, and Sunny laugh.

Vanna Lee looks impatient.

VANNA LEE  
Y'all know what?

Several jurors turn to Vanna Lee.

VANNA LEE (CONT'D)  
Y'all are wastin' all sorts of  
time. We coulda been done with this  
an hour or so ago.

SUNNY  
And we would've missed out on this  
great popcorn.

Sunny eats a handful of popcorn.

VANNA LEE  
I'm votin' not guilty.

EARLENE  
WHAT?

VANNA LEE  
I said I'm votin' not guilty. I'm  
sick of this.

EARLENE  
That's not good enough, Vanna Lee!

VANNA LEE  
Well, that's good enough for me!

A grimacing John Wayne shakes his head "no."

LESHON  
Vanna Lee, dig yourself.

VANNA LEE  
(wags finger at Leshon)  
Butt out!

LESHON  
Now just wait a minute--

VANNA LEE  
(striding toward Leshon)  
No! You wait a flippin' minute! You  
changed your vote to not guilty!

LESHON

I changed my vote only because I had to take another look at the evidence. I had to think about it.

Juan nods at Leshon before he eyes Vanna Lee.

JUAN

He's right.

Vanna Lee seethes.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Think about what you're doing.

VANNA LEE

I already did.

JUAN

First of all, you voted guilty with the rest of us...almost the rest of us...because you just couldn't wait to watch the Hornets on TV tonight.

A grin forms on Vanna Lee's face.

EARLENE

You know they're gonna lose.

That grin falls off Vanna Lee's face. She sits back down.

JUAN

Vanna, you're in no danger of missing that game.

VANNA LEE

Yeah, but--

JUAN

Game comes on at seven. They tip off at seven fifteen.

VANNA LEE

Yeah, but I've got a whole routine I go through to get ready for the--

SUNNY

Vanna Lee, why not think about Mia?

Vanna Lee bolts straight up...

SUNNY (CONT'D)

If you're gonna change your vote,  
do it with Mia in mind...not the  
Charlotte Hornets.

...then flashes a stunned look.

She slumps back into her seat.

VANNA LEE

Schooled by a clown.

Twenty-two eyes gaze at Vanna Lee.

HEATH

Now...with Mia in mind...what made  
you change your vote to not guilty?

Vanna Lee stares into space...at her fellow jurors...at the  
window...at the floor.

VANNA LEE

Uh...all of a sudden...I don't  
think she's guilty.

Some folks nod.

ANWAR

That's good enough for me.

Vanna Lee slowly looks up at Anwar.

LAWANDA

Sabrina, how do you feel about  
another vote?

John Wayne groans.

Earlene stares daggers at Lawanda.

SABRINA

Works for me.  
(looks around the room)  
Any objections?

Ten jurors shake their heads "no" or AD LIB their answers.

JOHN WAYNE

Let's get it on.

SABRINA

Okay, everybody...raise your hands  
if you think Mia's guilty.

Earlene and John Wayne raise their hands...Heath does, too.  
John Wayne hyperventilates.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
If you think she's not guilty, let  
me see your hands.

Lawanda, Leshon, Cale, Juan, Anwar, Sunny, and Vanna Lee hold  
their hands aloft.

Sabrina raises her hand...so does Madonna.

SABRINA (CONT'D)  
It's now nine to three in favor of  
not guilty.

A livid John Wayne jumps from his seat.

JOHN WAYNE  
You talk about woke!

He charges to a spot in midroom.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
You're drinkin' that damn Kool-Aid!

John Wayne walks in a circle, his arms wildly waving.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
You're lettin' that damn kid con  
you, talkin' that stuff about that  
damn knife fallin' outa her  
pocket...and her goin' to that damn  
sports bar!

Cale counts "DAMNS" on his fingers.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
I keep tellin' y'all that damn  
Mexico ain't sendin' us their best  
citizens--

LAWANDA  
Come on, John Wayne! Mia and her  
parents and grandparents all were  
born right here in Charlotte!

JOHN WAYNE  
(stops in his tracks)  
Where'd her great-grandfolks come  
from? Huh?

LAWANDA

Laredo.

JOHN WAYNE

It figures.

LAWANDA

Laredo, Texas...USA.

Most of the jurors laugh as John Wayne resumes his wild walk.

JOHN WAYNE

Look! That damn kid and all her  
damn folks ain't no good!

Lawanda shakes her head sideways.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)

Matter of fact, ain't none of 'em  
any good! None of 'em!

Madonna and Juan rise from their seats to leave the room.

Lawanda follows them.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)

They're drug  
dealers...rapists...murderers...

HEATH

(to Sunny)

I can't listen to this.

Heath, Sunny, and Leshon get up and walk away from the room.

John Wayne stops to eyeball them.

JOHN WAYNE

HEY! Where y'all goin'?

SUNNY

We're not telling.

It's Wild Walk Time again for John Wayne.

JOHN WAYNE

They shoulda built that damn wall  
and finished it! Matter of fact,  
they shoulda built that damn wall  
years ago!

Anwar jumps up and gestures Cale and Sabrina out of their own  
chairs.

Those three jurors sneak their way out of the room.

John Wayne's audience now consists of Earlene and Vanna Lee.

He stops in his tracks.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
It's like you keep sayin', Earlene:  
Cain't fight facts.

EARLENE  
Yours aren't facts.

Earlene leaves the room.

JOHN WAYNE  
(to Vanna Lee)  
I like what you said about  
bulldozin' every bad neighborhood  
here in Charlotte--

Vanna Lee waves John Wayne off on her way out of the room.

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - QUIET ROOM - DAY

Sabrina, Anwar, Earlene, Heath, Leshon, Sunny, Vanna Lee,  
Lawanda, Cale, Juan, and Madonna occupy this intimate space.

The door's shut.

VANNA LEE  
I'd play some more pinball...but I  
ran outa quarters.

LAWANDA  
I think I can fix you up, Vanna  
Lee.

Vanna Lee's jaw drops as Lawanda examines her own wallet or  
purse for loose change.

Lawanda pulls out two quarters. She hands them to Vanna Lee.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
I don't know how much time that'll  
get you, but...

VANNA LEE  
Hey, thank you, Lawanda.

Vanna Lee stuffs the money into her pants pocket.

Cale checks his own wallet for change. He finds three quarters...

CALE  
 (to Vanna Lee)  
 Here...you can have 'em.

...and gives them to Vanna Lee.

CALE (CONT'D)  
 Cars are mah thang...and Ah know  
 pinball's your thang...or one of  
 'em.

VANNA LEE  
 Cale, thanks a bunch.

Vanna Lee puts those three quarters into her pants pocket.

CALE  
 You're welcome.

VANNA LEE  
 Let's get outa here.

HEATH  
 It's kinda stuffy in here.

JUAN  
 At least this was the one place we  
 could get away from John Wayne and  
 his alternative facts.

These eleven jurors head out...

SABRINA  
 You mean lies.

...only to find a sheepish John Wayne on the other side of the door.

INT. MECKLENBURG JURY ROOM - LOWER LEVEL - DAY

Madonna, Juan, John Wayne, Cale, Lawanda, Vanna Lee, Sunny, Leshon, Heath, Earlene, Anwar, and Sabrina return to those plush seats.

VANNA LEE  
 Soon as I get a chance, I'm gonna  
 get online and find me a pinball  
 machine like the one I played  
 upstairs.

Cale and Lawanda nod.

John Wayne's sheepish look returns...Lawanda sees it.

LAWANDA

It's hard...it's hard to keep prejudice out of a process like this. Prejudice is part of human nature. And it sucks.

LESHON

Big time.

LAWANDA

Prejudice...bigotry...racism...and sexism...they all play with facts. They all get in the way of facts.

SABRINA

You're telling the truth, Lawanda.

Lawanda beams.

LAWANDA

And all twelve of us are supposed to go on facts as we decide whether Mia's guilty or not.

A few jurors finish eating popcorn.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

We might be sending a guilty teenager back out on the streets.

Those jurors wad up their empty popcorn bags...

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

We might not...but what we do have is reasonable doubt.

ANWAR

Thank goodness the system accounts for reasonable doubt.

...and, one by one, they go to the kitchen to throw the empty bags away.

LAWANDA

Mia can't get that lethal injection unless all twelve of us are sure she deserves it.

Those jurors return from the kitchen...one by one.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
 Heath...Earlene...John Wayne...if  
 you don't mind, the other nine of  
 us would like to get your thoughts  
 about why you're sure Mia's guilty.

John Wayne and Earlene eye each other, then gaze at Lawanda.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
 If you don't mind.

HEATH  
 I'd like to take a stab at it.

An embarrassed Heath covers his mouth for a few seconds.

HEATH (CONT'D)  
 I mean...I'd like to take a crack  
 at it.

LAWANDA  
 Heath, it's all right.

Heath takes his reading glasses off, rubs his nose, and puts  
 his readers back on.

Cale notices.

HEATH  
 Lawanda, you've made some great  
 points. And Madonna had a good  
 point, too.

Madonna and Lawanda smile.

HEATH (CONT'D)  
 It's just that I still believe  
 Mia's guilty of murder. And I'm  
 going on what the man across the  
 street from Mia's house saw.

EARLENE  
 Cain't fight that at all.

HEATH  
 And the man described the stabbing  
 to a T...right down to how Mia used  
 an underhanded delivery on Zoraya.

EARLENE  
 That's for sure!

John Wayne beams.

HEATH

This same man said he went to bed at ten thirty that night. He slept in the lounge chair in his living room that night.

EARLENE

He couldn't sleep in his bedroom that night...so he tried the living room. And that didn't even work.

HEATH

He was about to turn his TV on when he looked out the front window at eleven forty-five and saw Mia stab Zoraya to death. And for good measure, Mia turned the lights off.

JOHN WAYNE

Cain't beat that for testimony.

HEATH

Those of you who've voted not guilty...what do you think?

Anwar, Leshon, Vanna Lee, Madonna, Sabrina, Cale, Lawanda, Sunny, and Juan stare into space.

John Wayne stares daggers at all nine.

JOHN WAYNE

Y'all gotta be kiddin'!

Leshon shakes his head "no."

EARLENE

Sabrina, let's call it quits. Let's tell the judge this is a hung jury.

SABRINA

No.

Heath removes his readers to rub his nose again.

CALE

Heath...y'all right?

HEATH

Yes, I am.  
(puts readers back on)  
What's on your mind?

CALE

Wail, Ah got to thankin' 'bout how  
you've been rubbin' your nose a  
whole lot.

John Wayne rests his chin on his hands.

CALE (CONT'D)

(still eying Heath)

Ah got a cousin that rubs his nose  
a lot...and he wears glasses.

HEATH

Okay...

EARLENE

Cale, what's the point?

Cale gives Earlene that enormous smile of his.

CALE

The man that saw the killin' across  
the street has them marks on his  
face from wearin' glasses. Just  
like mah cousin.

Heath takes his glasses off again. He feels between his nose  
and eyes.

HEATH

Just like me.

John Wayne groans.

CALE

Another thang: The man that saw the  
killin' kept rubbin' his nose in  
court. On national TV.

LESHON

To tell you the truth, he did.

JOHN WAYNE

Big hairy deal!

CALE

(to John Wayne)

Wail, Ah thank so.

Some juror heads nod.

CALE (CONT'D)

Man that saw the killin' looks  
about fifty...kinda like Sheldon  
from "The Big Bang Theory."

JUAN

He does?

CALE

Mah guess is he's been wearin'  
glasses ever since he was li'l'.  
And he got tired of his classmates  
makin' fun o' him for his glasses.

Sunny shakes her head up and down.

CALE (CONT'D)

Usually...and Ah'm guessin'...he  
wears glasses in public. But not  
this time.

HEATH

Okay.

CALE

He wanted to look cool this  
time...what with him bein' on TV.

Juan, Sunny, and Anwar chuckle.

SABRINA

I saw those marks on his face, too.

EARLENE

Will you people get to the point?

CALE

Cain't nothin' else but glasses  
make them marks on a person's face.

Cale points to Heath while addressing Earlene.

CALE (CONT'D)

Ask mah cousin...ask Heath.

Heath catches Earlene's withering look.

HEATH

Cale's right.

Some jurors AD LIB their reactions as twenty-two eyes focus  
on Heath.

EARLENE  
Doesn't prove that little hussy's  
innocent.

LAWANDA  
Not by itself.

EARLENE  
But chew on this: The man across  
the street that saw the killing  
wasn't out in public when he saw  
the killing. He was home alone.  
With his glasses off.

A few heads nod.

LAWANDA  
Heath, if I may ask...have you ever  
worn your glasses to bed? As if you  
wanna read yourself to sleep?

HEATH  
Well...no.

EARLENE  
That's a stupid question!

Cale shakes his head sideways.

CALE  
Not really.

Earlene stews.

CALE (CONT'D)  
One of mah aunts used to wear her  
glasses to bed. She tossed and  
turned so much she kept breakin'  
the stems off.

John Wayne puts his chin in his hands...Vanna Lee tries to  
hide a chuckle.

CALE (CONT'D)  
It got to the point where she up  
and called 1-800-CONTACTS.

The room breaks out in laughter.

LAWANDA

So...it's safe to say the man across the street wasn't wearing his glasses while he was in that recliner while trying to sleep.

EARLENE

Prove it.

LAWANDA

Really, it's just a guess.

Earlene blows an imaginary bubble.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

It's also a guess that he didn't put on his glasses on his way to look out the window.

Heath nods.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

He even said the murder happened as he was looking out. He also said he didn't have time to stick his glasses on...it happened that fast.

Lawanda watches Earlene shake her head back and forth.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)

Maybe the man saw a blur.

EARLENE

Just how in God's name do you know?

LAWANDA

I don't know...but I do know his eyesight's an issue now.

JUAN

He had to be able to identify someone from that far away...at night...without his glasses.

ANWAR

That's not enough evidence to put somebody on death row.

LAWANDA

Clark Kent could've done it.

JUAN

With or without his glasses.

Some jurors laugh.

LAWANDA  
Clark Kent wouldn't have made a  
mistake...but maybe the man across  
the street did.

EARLENE  
You're wrong, Lawanda! Pure-dee  
wrong!

LAWANDA  
You don't think he might've made a  
mistake?

EARLENE  
He didn't make a mistake!

Lawanda saunters over to Heath.

LAWANDA  
You think the man across the street  
from Mia might've made a mistake?

Heath stares in space for a few seconds, then eyes Lawanda.

HEATH  
Well...he might have...he's just as  
human as anybody else on Earth.

Lawanda's is a slow nod.

HEATH (CONT'D)  
I no longer think Mia's guilty.

EARLENE  
(throwing her hands up)  
Well, I still do!

Now Lawanda strolls over to John Wayne.

LAWANDA  
Do you still think Mia's guilty?

John Wayne stares Lawanda down.

Earlene shoots him a hopeful look.

He slowly shakes his head back and forth...back and forth...

JOHN WAYNE  
The Proud Boys are gonna toss me  
out on my ass for this.

Earlene seethes.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
And the Oath Keepers.

John Wayne eyeballs a still-livid Earlene.

JOHN WAYNE (CONT'D)  
Would you like to buy my MAGA cap?

EARLENE  
I'VE GOT ONE ALREADY!

Lawanda strides over to Earlene, who rises from her seat.

LAWANDA  
We've both got one thing in common  
now: We've stood alone.

EARLENE  
So? It's my Constitutional right!

LAWANDA  
Of course it is.

EARLENE  
I don't care what anybody else  
says! I still think that little  
hussy's guilty!

LAWANDA  
Just tell us why you feel that way.

One by one, Sabrina, Anwar, Heath, Vanna Lee, Sunny, Leshon,  
Cale, John Wayne, Juan, and Madonna rise from their seats...

EARLENE  
I told you why! Now get a clue!

...and surround Lawanda and Earlene.

LAWANDA  
We're not convinced.

Most cohorts gesture or AD LIB their agreement with Lawanda.

EARLENE  
The old woman's testimony...she saw  
that little hussy run outa the  
house...the man who saw the murder  
from across the street...that Swiss  
Army Knife...all that...she's  
guilty as sin!

The other jurors catch Earlene's look of frustration.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
Any fool can see the little brat's  
guilty of killing her mama, but you  
people have twisted all the  
evidence! Nitpicked it to death!

Earlene looks around for supporting faces...all in vain.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
All this stuff about that knife  
falling out of that hussy's  
pocket...her going to a sports  
bar...all this nonsense about  
glasses...

Eleven colleagues turn their backs on Earlene.

All eleven sit right back down.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
All the facts are right here! Why  
don't you get an effing clue?

Earlene looks out at eleven unimpressed faces.

Nobody moves...no one says a word for a while.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
All right...okay...you win! She's  
not guilty!

A still-erect Earlene stares at a partition.

All twelve jurors hear A KNOCK on the door.

Sabrina answers the knock. She opens the door...and finds the  
guard on the other side.

Madonna, Juan, John Wayne, Cale, Vanna Lee, Sunny, Leshon,  
Heath, Anwar, and Sabrina make their way out.

Lawanda strolls over to Earlene, who still stands there.

Lawanda hugs Earlene...who, in total reluctance, completes  
the embrace.

The guard nods as Earlene and Lawanda file out.

EXT. MECKLENBURG COUNTY COURTHOUSE, CHARLOTTE, NC - DAY

Anwar, Earlene, Leshon, Vanna Lee, Heath, Madonna, Sabrina, John Wayne, Cale, Lawanda, Sunny, and Juan stroll their way out of the building. (The jurors no longer wear name tags.)

LESHON

Vanna Lee, you got a minute?

VANNA LEE

Uh...what's up?

Vanna Lee and Leshon stop in their tracks.

LESHON

I like basketball, too.

A nodding Vanna Lee smiles.

VANNA LEE

Did you play hoops in high school?

LESHON

Nope. I could shoot, but I couldn't dribble worth a crap.

VANNA LEE

I see...

LESHON

Anyway...I've got both the NBA and WNBA apps if you need 'em.

Leshon and Vanna Lee pull out their cell phones to link them.

Madonna looks for Vinnie Politan...only to shrug in failure.

Lawanda catches up to a still-shaken Earlene.

LAWANDA

Hey, come on. At least we did our civic duty...and we did it the way Judge Bivins wanted us to.

EARLENE

We...did.

LAWANDA

How do you feel about us exchanging phone numbers?

Earlene's is a slow nod.

LAWANDA (CONT'D)  
No reason we can't be friends.

EARLENE  
All right.

Lawanda and Earlene break out their cell phones.

The latter checks her text messages...and shows surprise.

EARLENE (CONT'D)  
Lawanda, take a look at this.

Earlene shows Lawanda a picture of the two-car collision from earlier today.

LAWANDA  
And it happened right across the street from here.

EARLENE  
Do you suppose illegal immigrants were driving those two cars?

Lawanda's mouth flies open.

LAWANDA  
Earlene, maybe you'd better scroll down and find out.

Earlene scrolls down, all right.

FREEZE FRAME as Earlene looks shocked...and Lawanda smiles.

FADE OUT.

THE END