

1 WOMAN 1: *State of Tennessee vs. Joseph Caronna,*
2 Indictment No. 0907393, The State of Tennessee Criminal Court
3 of Shelby County, September term, 2009. The grand jurors of
4 the State of Tennessee duly selected and paneled, sworn, and
5 charged to inquire for the body of the County of Shelby,
6 Tennessee, upon their oath present that Joseph Caronna, between
7 October the 24th, 2009, and October the 28th, 2009, in Shelby
8 County, Tennessee, and before the finding of this indictment
9 did unlawfully, intentionally, and with premeditation, kill
10 Tina Caronna in violation of Tennessee Code Annotated 39-13-202
11 against the peace and the dignity of the State of Tennessee.

12 It is signed by the district attorney general of the
13 30th Judicial District and returned a true bill by the
14 foreperson November 9th -- November 12th, 2009.

15 JUDGE: Thank you. How does the defendant plead to
16 the indictment?

17 ATTORNEY 1: Joseph Caronna pleads not guilty.

18 JUDGE: All right. At this time, we'll have opening
19 statements, and we will begin with the State.

20 ATTORNEY 2: Morning.

21 ALL: Morning.

22 ATTORNEY 2: On Monday, October 27th, 2008, Tina
23 Caronna's dead body was found stuffed in the back of her Chevy
24 Avalanche truck. The Avalanche was found parked on the side of
25 the road on a neighborhood dead-end street in Bartlett. And

1 the State's proof will show that the defendant, Joe Caronna,
2 killed his wife, Tina; stuffed her back behind the front and
3 back seats of that truck; and left her parked on the side of
4 the road.

5 Now, why? What would make a husband kill his wife?
6 It's because -- the proof will show you that for years, the
7 defendant had been living a lie and Tina was about to find out;
8 and he could not let that happen. Now, let's talk about
9 Saturday, October 25th, couple days earlier, the day that Tina
10 died. Tina and Joe had been married for about 15 years; they
11 were members of the Corvette Club; and you'll hear a testimony
12 that Tina was a bubbly outgoing personality. She loved people
13 and she loved to entertain.

14 And on this particular Saturday night, there was a
15 big Corvette Club party planned. Tina was in charge of
16 bringing the tables and coolers and the food and the drinks.
17 Now, the day before, on Friday, she had gone and picked up
18 those tables and coolers. And you are going to hear from the
19 person that was with her and saw and helped her put those
20 tables and coolers into the back of that very same Chevy
21 Avalanche truck. That's going to become very important. Now,
22 we know that her plan for Saturday was to go shopping at Costco
23 and Sam's and get supplies for the party -- the food and the
24 drinks.

25 And you'll hear testimony that around nine o'clock

1 that morning, she talked to her friend, Pat Hathaway. They
2 talked about the party. Pat asked Tina if she needed any help
3 with the shopping. Tina said, "No," because the defendant was
4 going to go help her do the shopping, which you'll hear was not
5 unusual; because you'll hear from more than one witness that
6 Tina and the defendant did lots of things together.

7 They went shopping. He took her to nail
8 appointments. He took her to routine doctors' visits. He even
9 went with her when she tried to spend time with her son, Todd,
10 a son she had from a previous marriage. So it wasn't unusual
11 that the defendant would be the one to go with Tina to do the
12 shopping. You'll also hear that around 10:15 that morning, she
13 talked to Matt Struna.

14 Now, Matt and his wife were also members of the
15 Corvette Club, and they were hosting the party that night; so
16 they were coordinating when Tina was going to bring the food
17 and drinks by. He also asked her if she needed any help. She
18 said, "No." And Matt Struna was the last person, besides the
19 defendant, to talk to Tina on Saturday, October 25th. You'll
20 hear testimony that that morning, Defendant came outside in his
21 driveway; and he pulled that very same black Chevy Avalanche
22 truck into the garage, and then he shut the door.

23 Now, the defendant says that he was loading those
24 tables in the back of the truck -- the table that she picked up
25 on Friday. And you'll also hear that that truck backed out of

1 the driveway and left around 11:00 a.m. or 12:00 noon. You'll
2 also hear testimony from Gary Hathaway. Gary is Pat Hathaway's
3 husband, also members of the Corvette Club; and he's going to
4 tell you about a phone call he received around 11:30 that
5 morning.

6 The phone call was from the defendant, and the
7 defendant wanted to know if he could come over to Gary's house
8 and work on one of his old classic cars, in particular, the red
9 Chevelle. Gary said that was fine. The Defendant said, "Well,
10 it will just -- it'll take me a little while to get there
11 because I have to go get it."

12 Now, Mr. Hathaway explained that when the defendant
13 said that, he knew exactly what he meant. He meant he had to
14 drive out to Bartlett to where he had a storage unit. He had a
15 few units where he stored four of his classic cars, including
16 the red Chevelle, a storage unit that just so happens to be
17 less than half of a mile from where Tina's body was found.

18 Now, the defendant says that he never went out to the
19 storage unit that morning. But you're going to hear from the
20 cell phone tower expert who will tell you what his phone
21 records tell us for real. Now, there will also be testimony
22 from the Hathaways -- Mr. Hathaway, that the defendant showed
23 up at Mr. Hathaway's house around one o'clock that afternoon,
24 and he stayed until about four o'clock.

25 And it was after that -- after four o'clock that

1 afternoon, that the defendant made his very first phone call to
2 Tina. Now, again, you're going to hear testimony from more
3 than one witness that on a typical day, Tina and the defendant
4 talked multiple times throughout the day, checking in.
5 Specifically, you'll hear from her coworkers. Sometimes he
6 would call her work phone back to back; and if she wouldn't
7 answer, cell phone in her purse would ring. It was the
8 defendant calling.

9 But on Saturday, October 25th, his first phone call
10 wasn't until a little after four o'clock that afternoon. A
11 little after five, the Hathaways get a call from the defendant
12 saying, "Tina's not home; think she's missing; I'm really
13 worried." And they end up going over to his house to help
14 search for her that evening.

15 Now, this is a man that goes to the nail salon, to
16 the gynecologist, that calls her multiple times a day; and yet
17 he doesn't call the police. They search all night, can't find
18 the Avalanche. Nobody's heard from Tina. So Sunday, they get
19 a group together of all the Corvette Club members, and they
20 organize a -- a big search.

21 They have flyers; they split up in groups. No Tina,
22 no Avalanche; not until Monday, October 27th, when Bartlett
23 Police found that black -- black Avalanche parked on the side of
24 the road in Bartlett, less than half a mile from where the
25 defendant stores four of his cars. Now, earlier, I told you

1 the proof would show that the defendant had been living a lie.
2 Well, he'd actually been living two.

3 First of all, for the last eight to ten years, he'd
4 been having an affair with a woman named Becky Black, an affair
5 that Tina found out about in the beginning, but thought was
6 over; an affair that the defendant not only planned on
7 continuing after Tina died, he did continue after Tina died --
8 a relationship the defendant thought was going to last forever.
9 He thought Becky was going to leave her husband and spend the
10 rest of her life with him. And you'll hear testimony that when
11 he realized that was not going to be the case, he became
12 obsessed and angry and upset 'cause he didn't know how to
13 handle it.

14 The other lie that he'd been living was a financial
15 one. Tina thought they were doing fine financially. They
16 lived in a nice house. You'll hear testimony she loved to
17 shop, she loved shoes. They went on lots of vacations
18 together. She made a substantial amount of money. She thought
19 Joe was making a lot of money. Joe was an investment agent;
20 except he'd been stealing and defrauding several of his clients
21 for several years.

22 What they would do is write him a check for 5-, 10-,
23 \$15,000; and instead of sending that check to the investment
24 company, the defendant would keep the money and deposit it in
25 his own bank account. And nobody knew, not even Tina; but she

1 was about to find out.

2 Because you see, Monday, October 27th, was a big day.
3 They were supposed to be closing on a brand-new house, a house
4 out in Fayette County, cost \$440,000. But this was a closing
5 that would never happen. Defendant never intended on them
6 closing on this house. And you'll hear from more than one
7 witness who will tell you there is no way that house could've
8 closed on Monday, October 27th.

9 And yet the defendant told people they were closing
10 and led the victim, Tina, to believe they were closing on
11 Monday. Because he knew if she had seen all those loan
12 documents where it lays out all of the debts, all of the
13 assets -- she thought their house was paid off; she thought a
14 lot of their debts were paid off. And there would have been
15 the reality looking right at her.

16 She would've asked and figured out the reality of
17 their finances; she would've learned about the fraud; and then
18 he was going to lose complete control of everything -- lose his
19 wife, lose his friends, his lifestyle, and go into jail.
20 Couldn't let it happen. So Saturday, October 25th, he killed
21 Tina; stuffed her back behind that front seat; drove out to
22 Bartlett; parked that car on the side of the road; and walked
23 less than half a mile to his storage unit and got one of his
24 cars and left.

25 You're going to be hearing a lot of testimony and a

1 lot of witnesses over the next couple of weeks. I want you to
2 try and focus on using three tools as you try and piece all of
3 this evidence and testimony together. First, I want you to get
4 your facts and the evidence from right here. And the people
5 that sit in this chair will tell you, this is where you get
6 your evidence from. Doesn't come from me or from any of the
7 other lawyers sitting right here. It comes from these people.

8 You can get your law -- you get that from the judge.
9 He's going to tell you what it is and how to apply it. And,
10 finally, I want you to use something you all came in here with
11 before today, your common sense. Don't forget about it; it's
12 important. Use it when you go back there and you start
13 deliberating and going through all that evidence. And at the
14 end of it all, you'll be able to say that the defendant, Joe
15 Caronna, is guilty of first-degree murder.

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