

COUNTY COURT
SUFFOLK COUNTY, NEW YORK



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THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK,

BAIL APPLICATION

- against -

Indictment No. 72709-23

Willie Hart,

Defendant.

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The Defendant stands before this Court charged with Murder in the Second Degree, a class A violent felony.

On May 29, 2023, at approximately 2:25am, the defendant, a long-haul trucker, called police and reported that he discovered his girlfriend, 37 year old Candace Woodruff, unresponsive on the floor of his tractor cab, parked in the vicinity of the Shore Motor Inn, in Patchogue. When police responded to the scene, they discovered Woodruff on the ground, in front of the cab. She was not breathing and was bleeding from the nose. The defendant told responding officers that Woodruff came to the tractor cab after they got into an argument in their motel room, and that when he went to check on her, he found her on the floor, and called 911. Later, in a written statement, the defendant stated that when he got to the Shore Motor Inn, Woodruff accused him of cheating on her, scratched his face, and left the motel room with her belongings. The defendant stated that he then went to the cab to check on Woodruff, saw her cooking Ramen noodles, and went back to the motel for fifteen minutes before returning to the cab, where he discovered Woodruff unresponsive on the floor. Police observed and photographed multiple injuries to the defendant's face, which were actively bleeding.

Efforts to resuscitate Woodruff were unsuccessful. She was transported to Long Island Community Hospital, where she was pronounced dead.

Woodruff had contusions on her head, neck, and extremities, and abrasions to her face, neck, and extremities. There were soft tissue hemorrhages on her neck and her cause of death was determined to be asphyxia by neck compression. When Woodruff left the motel room and headed to the tractor cab, prior to the defendant joining her there, she did not have visible injuries.

Police investigation revealed that Woodruff left her motel room crying at approximately 1:25am, after an argument with the defendant, and carried several bags to the defendant's tractor cab. Video surveillance captured the defendant watching Woodruff as she headed to the trailer and then, approximately nine minutes later, leaving the motel and entering the cab where Woodruff was. The defendant remained in the trailer cab with Woodruff for approximately thirty-seven minutes, during which time what appeared to be a struggle ensued. After that struggle, the defendant was captured on video exiting the cab, touching his face, and sitting with his head down outside of the trailer, before he casually walked back to the motel, retrieved a bag which he placed in a vehicle, and walked back to the cab, where he called 911.

The interior of the trailer cab revealed additional evidence of a struggle. The cabin was covered front to back with Ramen noodles, which were also recovered from Woodruff's mouth, and jewelry consistent with that worn by Woodruff and the defendant before they entered the trailer were recovered from the floor of the cab. The defendant is captured on video exiting the trailer cab. He is disheveled and bleeding from the face.

The defendant has prior convictions for Criminal Possession of a Weapons in the Third Degree, Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance Third Degree- Intent to Sell, Conspiracy in the Fourth Degree, Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance Third Degree, Attempted Assault in the Third Degree, Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Seventh Degree, Driving While

Intoxicated, in addition to out of state convictions for Assault on a Female and Escape. He is facing a maximum sentence of twenty-five years to life incarceration.

Based on the serious nature of this crime, the strength of the People's case, and the length of incarceration the defendant faces upon conviction, we believe the least restrictive means to ensure the defendant's return to court when required would be remand.

DATED: October 16, 2023
 Suffolk County, New York

RAYMOND A. TIERNEY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

By: _____
Sheetal Shetty
Assistant District Attorney