



Kilpatrick Townsend 1L Mock Trial Competition: Fact Pattern

State of Carolina v. Griffin Cook

Friday, January 24, 2025 — Sunday, January 26, 2025

*Hosted by the Broun National Trial Team at the University of
North Carolina School of Law*

COMPETITION FACT PATTERN

This fact pattern is entirely fictional and any resemblance to a real person or event is coincidental.

CASE SUMMARY

The case for this competition is *United States of America v. Griffin Cook*. This is a criminal case in which the defendant is accused of felony robbery. The alleged robbery took place in Tar Heel City, Carolina. The witnesses for the prosecution are Katrina Hazeldine, detective for the Tar Heel Police Department and Joy Masini, store manager at Aaron and Abe's Jewelry, Memorabilia, and Estate Collections. The witnesses for the defense are Griffin Cook, defendant, and Callan Smith, an employee of Lion and Lamb's Casino.

CONTENTS

1. Stipulations
2. Indictment of Griffin Cook
3. Statutory Excerpt
4. Jury Instructions for *United States v. Cook*
5. List of Witnesses
6. Affidavit of Detective Katrina Hazeldine
7. Affidavit of Joy Masini
8. Affidavit of Griffin Cook
9. Affidavit of Callan Smith
10. Exhibit 1. Satellite view of Lion and Lamb Casino
11. Exhibit 2. Griffin Cook Personal Check
12. Exhibit 3. Griffin Cook Car Title
13. Exhibit 4. Abe & Aaron Store Layout
14. Exhibit 5. Black Hoodie recovered from Cook's House
15. Exhibit 6. Black Gloves recovered from Cook's House
16. Exhibit 7. Robber's Note
17. Exhibit 8. Ramses Coin Valuation

Stipulations

1. All exhibits are authentic and accurate. Proper foundation must be laid, but no material dispute regarding authenticity will be allowed. All photographs are accurate duplicates or representative images of the physical pieces of evidence.
2. All signatures on documents are authentic and belong to the individuals named below the signature. Witnesses must attest to the authenticity of any signature bearing their name if questioned.
3. The Tar Heel City Police Department and Detective Kristina Hazeldine have maintained continuous and proper custody of all physical and documentary evidence from the dates indicated on the chain of custody forms.
4. The alleged crimes, including the robberies and associated acts under investigation, occurred within the jurisdiction of Tar Heel City and are subject to the applicable state laws and procedural rules.
5. No evidence in this case was obtained in violation of the Constitution or the laws of the state. No evidence is subject to suppression on the grounds of a Fourth Amendment violation, a breach of Miranda rights, or a violation of the Defendant's rights under the Confrontation Clause.

Calder County Superior Court

State of Carolina

No: 24CRS123456

STATE OF CAROLINA

)

)

v.

)

Indictment

)

GRIFFIN COOK,

)

Defendant

)

The Grand Jury charges that:

Count One

The Grand Jury charges that **Griffin Cook**, on or about August 9, 2024, in Tar Heel City, within the State of Carolina, did unlawfully and feloniously, while in possession of and by the use and threatened use of a firearm, an implement or means whereby the life of another person was endangered and threatened, take and attempt to take personal property from the premises of Aaron and Abe's Jewelry, Memorabilia, and Estate Collections (A&A's), a place of business where persons were in attendance.

Ash Mengert

Ash Mengert

Assistant District Attorney

Calder County, Carolina

A True Bill

Kevin Buenrostro

Kevin Buenrostro

Foreperson

October 2, 2024

Carolina General Statute

Article 17

§ 14-87. Robbery with firearms or other dangerous weapons.

(a) Any person or persons who, having in possession or with the use or threatened use of any firearms or other dangerous weapon, implement or means, whereby the life of a person is endangered or threatened, unlawfully takes or attempts to take personal property from another or from any place of business, residence or banking institution or any other place where there is a person or persons in attendance, at any time, either day or night, or who aids or abets any such person or persons in the commission of such crime, shall be guilty of a Class D felony.

(a1) Attempted robbery with a dangerous weapon shall constitute a lesser included offense of robbery with a dangerous weapon, and evidence sufficient to prove robbery with a dangerous weapon shall be sufficient to support a conviction of attempted robbery with a dangerous weapon.

Jury Instructions

The Charge of the Court:

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my duty to instruct you on the law that applies to this case. Your responsibility as jurors is to follow the law as I explain it and apply it to the facts you determine from the evidence presented. You are the sole fact-finders, tasked with weighing the evidence and deciding what is credible and relevant.

You must consider all my instructions together as the law to apply, setting aside personal opinions about what the law should be. Your decision must be impartial, based solely on the evidence presented during this trial. Evidence includes the sworn testimony of witnesses and the exhibits admitted into the record.

You are the sole judges of each witness's credibility and the weight of their testimony. In evaluating testimony, consider factors such as the witness's demeanor, intelligence, motivations, and ability to recall events. You may draw reasonable inferences from the facts provided but must not speculate or consider anything outside the courtroom.

Disregard any information excluded by my rulings or stricken from the record, as it is not evidence. Also, keep in mind that statements or arguments made by the attorneys are not evidence. Your verdict must rest solely on the evidence presented and the law as I have instructed you.

The matter before you for your deliberation and verdict is a criminal matter. Under the laws of the State of Carolina, the defendant, **Griffin Cook**, is presumed to be innocent unless and until the State has proven his guilt *beyond a reasonable doubt*. This burden of proof rests entirely with the State, and the defendant has no duty to prove anything at all. Unless the State has proven beyond a reasonable doubt each and every element of the crime charged, this defendant is entitled to a verdict of "not guilty."

"Reasonable doubt" is an honest and reasonable uncertainty as to the guilt of the defendant that exists in your minds after you have given full, fair, and impartial consideration to all the evidence.

The indictment charges the defendant with one count of robbery with a dangerous weapon, in violation of Section 14-87(a) of the Carolina General Statutes. This statute, in relevant part, states:

"Any person or persons who, having in possession or with the use or threatened use of any firearms or other dangerous weapon, implement, or means, whereby the life of a person is endangered or threatened, unlawfully takes or attempts to take personal property from another or from any place of business, residence, or banking institution or any other place where there is a

person or persons in attendance, at any time, either day or night, or who aids or abets any such person or persons in the commission of such crime, shall be guilty of a Class D felony.”

It is your duty to consider the evidence impartially, to determine whether the State has met its burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt for every element of this crime, and to render a fair verdict accordingly.”

Affidavit of Katrina Hazeldine

My name is Katrina Hazeldine, and I am 48 years old. I am a senior detective with the Tar Heel City Sheriff's Office, where I've worked for over 20 years. I grew up in Tar Heel City and graduated from Tar Heel High School in 1994.

I've wanted to be a detective since high school, inspired by detective novels, which I still enjoy. Although I initially considered becoming a private investigator, aspiring to be a modern day Sherlock Holmes, I decided public service would be more fulfilling and provide better job security. Growing up here taught me the importance of job stability. When I received a scholarship to Chapman University, I decided to major in sociology with an emphasis in criminology. I earned my bachelor's degree in 1998.

After attending and graduating from the North Carolina Peace Officer Basic Training Academy, I became a certified peace officer. In 1999, I joined the Sheriff's Office as a patrol officer. I handled the "usual" sort of calls like shoplifting and vandalism, with some unusual cases here and there.

By 2009, I had gained a reputation for closing cases, which led Sheriff Topaloglu to promote me to the office's Detective Bureau. I've been in that role ever since, investigating everything from homicides to organized crime.

One of my proudest cases involved exposing a large auto theft ring at Brinkley Auto Plaza. In 2017, an anonymous tip led us to investigate Brinkley Auto Plaza, a neglected used car lot just north of Tar Heel City, suspected of running an auto theft ring. While the lead seemed weak, I had always felt something was off about the place, reinforced by the owner's demeanor in his incessant TV and radio commercials. Trusting my instincts, I dug deeper and uncovered that Brinkley Auto Plaza was the hub of the largest network of chop shops in the state. Thanks to that investigation, the owner and several accomplices are now behind bars until at least 2028, where they belong. This case reinforced a vital lesson: being a good detective often means trusting your gut.

On the morning of Monday, August 9, 2024, I was catching up on paperwork when I heard a call on the police radio from the Tar Heel City 911 dispatch operator. A 911 caller reported a robbery at Aaron and Abe's Jewelry, Memorabilia, and Estate Collections (A&A's). Because I was on call for incidents requiring further investigation, I responded immediately.

I arrived at A&A's around 9:30 a.m. Patrol officers had secured the scene and were speaking with witnesses: the manager, Joy Masini, the assistant manager, Derek Wilson, and employee Katharine Reed. I interviewed each person separately to gather a clear understanding of what had occurred.

Joy was composed despite the circumstances. She recounted how a masked individual entered the store shortly after opening, brandishing a silver handgun, and demanded valuables and cash.

She described the suspect as wearing white sneakers, blue jeans, a black hoodie, a black mask, and black gloves. She described him as a larger individual, at least 6 foot 2 inches in height and over 200 lbs. The robber spoke very little, handing her a note demanding everything behind the counter be placed in a duffle bag.

Derek, on the other hand, was visibly shaken, struggling to focus as he described the robbery. His estimate of the robber's height and weight didn't perfectly match Joy's description, but such discrepancies are common in high-stress situations. His account of the robber's clothing and actions aligned with Joy's version.

Katharine, who was working near the entrance at the time, was still trembling when I spoke to her. She corroborated the descriptions provided by Joy and Derek, adding that the suspect moved quickly and left in what she believed was an older black BMW. Unfortunately, no one caught the license plate.

During our conversation, Katharine suddenly mentioned something she had forgotten to tell me earlier: while she was placing money into the robber's duffle bag, she had discreetly slipped in a small GPS tracker—an AirTag—along with the cash.

This revelation gave us a real opportunity to track the suspect. Katharine handed me the login information for the tracker's cloud-based program, written on a scrap of paper. Realizing this might be our best chance to apprehend the robber, I immediately called our Bureau's computer forensic specialist and relayed the information. Within minutes we accessed the tracker.

I grabbed a patrol officer, jumped in my car, and flipped on the siren as we sped toward the North End of Tar Heel City. It was during this drive that our specialist called us again and informed me that the tracker appeared to have been dumped. It was now stationary on the exit ramp to Jarrell Canyon.

When we arrived, we located the AirTag on the side of the road, about halfway down the ramp. I was disappointed—we had lost what could have been our only chance to apprehend the suspect. However, as I scanned the area, I noticed that the ramp overlooked Lion & Lamb's Casino, situated just off the highway and adjacent to the exit. It struck me as a potential next stop for the suspect, given its proximity and the nature of the crime.

We then returned to A&A's to resume our investigation. A&A's security system had recently been upgraded, but due to a malfunction, it only captured audio. The audio recording supported the witnesses' accounts but provided no visual evidence. Despite a thorough search, we found no usable fingerprints or other physical evidence at the scene.

During the investigation, I learned from Joy Masini, the manager of A&A's, that Griffin Cook, a former NFL player with a history of financial troubles, had recently pawned several pieces of rare sports memorabilia at the shop. Joy mentioned these items with a tone that suggested she didn't have a high opinion of Cook. Among the items Cook pawned were several autographed footballs, a vintage jersey, and his Heisman Trophy. According to Joy, Cook had been clear about why he was pawning the items. "He said he needed the money to cover debts," she recounted. "Apparently, it was supposed to dig him out of whatever financial hole he was in this time." She didn't seem particularly sympathetic.

Joy explained that the items were scheduled to be sold at auction in the coming weeks, which made the timing of the robbery especially curious. These comments planted the first seeds of suspicion in my mind. Combined with what I knew about his financial struggles and the fact that he had a significant gambling history, the connection between him and the robbery grew harder to ignore.

Later in the week, I received an anonymous tip that Griffin Cook had been seen by customers walking into the Lion & Lamb Casino carrying a brown paper bag full of cash. They reported that Cook had been gambling heavily on multiple occasions, often betting large sums at the blackjack tables. This behavior stood out to me given the information I had just heard and raised further suspicions about where the money had come from. Given what I had already learned about Cook, including his recent visit to A&A's to pawn his valuable sports memorabilia, I thought it might be prudent to pay him a visit. The timing of his gambling spree seemed too consistent with the robbery to ignore.

On August 14th 2024, visited Cook's residence at 214 Blue Ridge Lane, I noticed an early model black BMW parked in his driveway. Cook answered the door in pajamas and appeared defensive when I introduced myself. He claimed to have been at home alone during the robbery and said he had recently sold his old car but couldn't recall to whom. His evasive responses raised further red flags.

With a search warrant, we searched Cook's home and vehicle. Inside, we found a black hoodie, jeans, and black gloves matching the witnesses' descriptions. Although we didn't find the mask, gun, or stolen cash, we recovered the title to the black BMW, registered to Griffin Cook, further linking him to the getaway vehicle described by witnesses.

Based on the evidence—including witness accounts, Cook's suspicious debt payment, and the items found in his possession—I am confident that Griffin Cook is the perpetrator of the robbery at A&A's.

I hereby attest to having read the above statement and swear to affirm it to be my own. I also swear to affirm the truthfulness of its content. Before giving this statement, I was told it should contain all relevant testimony, and I followed those instructions. I also understand that I can and

must update this affidavit if anything new occurs to me until the moment before I testify in this case.

Katrina Hazeldine

Katrina Hazeldine

Signed on October 15th, 2024

Paul Thiruppathi

Paul Thiruppathi, Notary Public

Affidavit of Joy Masini

My name is Joy Masini, and I'm 35 years old. I live in Tar Heel City, where I'm the manager of Aaron and Abe's Jewelry, Memorabilia, and Estate Collections (A&As). A&As is a well-known store in the region, specializing in rare memorabilia, jewelry, and estate collectibles. Our shop draws customers from far and wide, especially sports enthusiasts, because of our extensive collection of rare sports memorabilia.

I've known Griffin Cook for many years. Griffin is somewhat of a local personality and a fixture around A&As. He's good friends with many of us at the store, including Derek Wilson, our assistant manager. Griffin has always been a charismatic presence, and his backstory makes him a beloved figure in Tar Heel City.

Griffin was a star running back at Chapman University and even won the Heisman Trophy during his college career. Everyone in town thought he was destined for greatness in the NFL, and he was drafted early during his draft year. Unfortunately, during his first year in the league, he suffered a devastating knee injury that derailed his career. He never quite recovered and left the NFL the next year.

Since then, Griffin has lived in Tar Heel City. I believe he used his remaining NFL earnings, that is, those he didn't waste away, to buy a large house on the outskirts of town. When he first bought it, it was a true sight to behold – winding drive, large swimming pool, and a basketball court. However, it's clear to anyone passing by that the house now that Griffin has let the house fall into disrepair. Griffin hasn't had a particularly profitable career since leaving football, and he doesn't seem to manage money well. At least, that is the gossip around town.

Anyways, A&As is a magnet for sports fans, and Griffin often enjoys hanging around the store because of the attention he gets. His fame draws people in, and he seems to relish telling stories from his glory days. However, despite the charm, it was clear that Griffin was struggling.

A few months ago, on May 1st, 2024, Griffin came into A&As carrying an old leather suitcase that looked like it had seen better days. He gave us a sheepish grin as he set it on the counter. "Hey, Joy. I need a little help," he said, unzipping the case. Inside was a collection that made us pause: signed jerseys, a game ball, and, right in the center, his Heisman Trophy. "You want to pawn *this*?" I asked, completely shocked. "Griff, that's your Heisman!"

Griffin sighed and told me, "Yeah, I know. Look, I'm just in a bit of a financial pinch. I'll pay you back, I swear. Just need some cash to cover a few things." Normally, we didn't deal in pawns, but Griffin was practically part of the family around here, always drawing in fans and telling stories. Ultimately, we agreed to make an exception for Griffin and wrote him a check for \$20,000, giving him 90 days to repay it with 20% interest, and giving us the right to auction it off if he didn't. He shook our hands, promising we wouldn't regret it. We made this decision skeptically but knew that Griffin's Heisman Trophy and other memorabilia could fetch a significant sum if sold.

When the 90-day deadline passed, Griffin still hadn't paid back the loan. Derek and I attempted to contact him multiple times, but he avoided us. This was disappointing but not entirely surprising, given his recent financial struggles. As per the agreement, we prepared to auction the memorabilia to recoup our money.

But something about just auctioning everything off – and not giving Griffin another chance just didn't feel right to me. I tried calling Griffin using the number he left with us, but I got a prerecorded message indicating that the line had been disconnected. I am not sure if the number was for a landline or a cell number. The next day, August 3rd I believe it was, I decided to drive out of Griffin's house in person to see what was going on, and it was just as dilapidated as I remembered. The grass hadn't been cut in what looked like several weeks, the mailbox was stuffed to the brim, and there was a huge pile of trash accumulating in front of the closed garage. I knocked on the front door and Griffin answered, after seeing it was me.

Griffin looked just as bad as the house; there were huge bags under his eyes. "Hey, Griffin." I said, "I've tried calling, but I haven't been able to get through. Is everything ok?" Griffin told me that he had just been let go from his job and that his latest investments haven't been working out as well as he thought they would by now. From that conversation, one thing Griffin said that stuck with me was the "I am in a really bad financial situation right now."

I wanted to be as compassionate as possible while addressing the needs of the store. I asked if Griffin was going to be able to pay back his loan to us – even partially – but Griffin just hemmed and hawed about not having a job and trying to find something.

I felt bad for Griffin, I really did. But we run a business. I told Griffin, "I am sorry to hear that man, but the owners are breathing down my neck on this one and want to have the auction set in 2 weeks. But we can be flexible, if you can pay back right away." "I'll do my best", Griffin told me half-heartedly. I thanked Griffin and walked away, hoping for this guy's sake that he got his life back on track."

On the morning of August 9th, 2024, I arrived at Aaron and Abe's Jewelry, Memorabilia, and Estate Collections (A&As) in Tar Heel City a few minutes before 9 a.m. to prepare for the day. We had scheduled the installation of a new security camera system for later that morning, with the installers expected to arrive between 9:30 and 10 a.m. Derek Wilson, our assistant manager, had come in earlier to disconnect the old cameras and prepare the store for the installation, which we were told would only take about 30 minutes.

When I entered, I saw Derek in the lobby straightening up the display cases and checking our inventory sheets. I waved at him as I walked toward the back. At approximately 9:05 a.m., as I was walking toward the counter, I heard rapid footsteps behind me. When I turned around, I saw a person dressed in white sneakers, blue jeans, a black hoodie, a black mask, and black gloves. The person appeared to be over 6 feet tall and of large build, roughly matching the height and

weight of Griffin Cook, though the clothing and mask made it impossible for me to identify them with certainty at that time.

The person was holding a small, silver handgun and immediately pointed it at me. They shouted, “Don’t move!” in a low, muffled voice. They then threw a crumpled paper grocery bag and a folded piece of paper onto the counter. I unfolded the paper, which had a handwritten message in bold font that read:

“PUT EVERYTHING IN THE BAG. NO SUDDEN MOVEMENTS.”

The person gestured sharply toward Derek and then pointed the gun at me, motioning for us to move to the safe along the back wall. Derek, visibly frightened and hesitant, raised his hands slightly and complied, walking alongside me as we moved toward the safe. I was deeply concerned for Derek’s safety; he’s a young man in his early twenties who has worked at A&As for several years. Derek has always been a diligent worker, saving up for college, and it was clear that this situation was far beyond anything he’d ever encountered.

The intruder motioned with the gun again and barked, “Hurry up!” I reached the safe and began entering the code. My hands were trembling. Derek stood beside me, his face pale and his breathing shallow. Once the safe was open, the intruder ordered us to empty its contents into the bag. The safe contained the bulk of the store’s cash reserves, along with some small valuable items that we had temporarily stored. Derek and I carefully loaded the bag with stacks of cash totaling over \$19,000.

I placed the bag on the ground in front of the intruder, who kept the gun trained on us the entire time. The intruder didn’t say anything further, simply grabbed the bag and backed away toward the exit, disappearing out the front door moments later.

I moved to the front window and saw them enter what I think was a dark-blue sedan parked at the curb. The vehicle sped away before I could see the make, model, or license plate. It is possible that the car did not have license plates.

Throughout the incident, I was aware that the panic button was located under Derek’s register. However, the register was along the front counter, out of reach from where we were near the safe at the back wall. Derek appeared too shaken to remember his training, and even if he had remembered, he was in no position to make his way to the button safely once he moved toward the safe with me. I did not attempt to activate it myself until after the intruder had left, as I was entirely focused on complying with their demands to ensure our safety.

The Tar Heel City Sheriff’s Office, including Detective Katrina Hazeldine, arrived approximately 15 minutes later. I explained what had happened in detail, including the appearance of the intruder, the note, and the approximate amount of money taken. I also informed them that our security cameras were non-operational due to the installation scheduled for that morning. This meant there was no video footage of the robbery.

Despite this terrifying event, I tried to carry on with my work as best I could. So a week later, I was at A&As again when something surprising happened. Griffin walked into the store, just a couple days before the auction was scheduled to take place, appearing anxious but composed. He handed me a check for \$24,000—the full amount owed, including interest. I was surprised and asked him how he came up with the money. He smiled, "Just got lucky at the casino," but didn't elaborate. I laughed, not thinking much of it and gave Griffin a slap on the shoulder, telling him that the owners would not move forward with the auction.

Initially, I was relieved that the debt was settled, and we returned Griffin's memorabilia. However, as time passed, I began to question where the money had come from. Griffin's financial situation had been dire for years, and it seemed unlikely that he'd come in to such a large sum so quickly and without explanation. Was Griffin the robber, coming back to pay us with our own money? Immediately, I called Detective Hazeldine and recounted what happened. Detective Hazeldine came by, and I provided all relevant documentation regarding the loan agreement and this new check to the sheriff's office.

A few days after that happened, I arrived at the store for work, and Derek Wilson was nowhere to be found. That struck me as very unusual. Derek has always been a reliable employee, and while I know that in his younger years he had a bit of a reputation for getting into minor trouble—like sneaking into movie theaters without paying—he had grown into a dependable and hardworking young man. Mistakes in high school are one thing, and everyone deserves a chance to move past them.

Derek had never missed a shift without notifying me, and I haven't heard from him since that day. For a brief moment, I wondered whether Derek could have been involved in the robbery. After all, he and Griffin Cook were quite friendly. Griffin was in the store often, and I recall overhearing the two of them chatting about sports and occasionally about old Westerns, like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, which they both seemed to enjoy. But the idea that Derek would willingly participate in a crime like this doesn't make sense to me. He was one of the victims during the robbery, and his fear appeared genuine.

Admittedly, Derek does have a bit of a temper—I've had to speak to him a few times about addressing difficult customers more calmly—but I can't see him being involved in something like this. That said, his sudden disappearance after the robbery is concerning, and I hope he's safe.

I hereby attest to having read the above statement and swear or affirm it to be my own. I also swear or affirm to the truthfulness of its content. Before giving this statement, I was told it should contain all relevant testimony, and I have followed those instructions. I also understand that I can and must update this affidavit if anything new occurs to me until the moment before I testify in this case.

Joy Masini

Joy Masini

Signed on October 19th, 2024

Paul Thiruppathi

Paul Thiruppathi, Notary Public

Griffin Cook Affidavit

My name's Griffin Cook, and I'm 32 years old. I live in Tar Heel City on the outer edge of town.

I was originally born in Calder County and graduated from Brown High School in Tar Heel City back in 2011. Back then, my life revolved around football. I was a star running back on our high school team and held the school record for rushing yards. Everyone in Calder had high hopes for me, and I didn't disappoint. I earned a scholarship to Chapman University, where my career took off. In my junior year, I was awarded the Heisman Trophy – it one of the proudest moments of my life – and I entered the draft the next spring.

After I was drafted early into the NFL, it felt like fulfilling a lifelong dream. But that dream was short-lived. During my rookie season, in a game against Seattle, I blew out my knee on what should have been a routine play. I tore multiple ligaments, and while I underwent surgery and months of grueling rehab, I never fully regained my speed or agility. By the start of my second season, I was cut from the team. Just like that, my NFL career was over before it even started.

Even so, those years—playing at Chapman, winning the Heisman, and even my brief time in the league—were the best of my life. I still love reminiscing about them, and people in Tar Heel City often stop me to ask about my playing days. I enjoy the attention, even if it's bittersweet.

After being cut from the team, I returned to Tar Heel City. I used what was left of my NFL money to buy a house on the outskirts of town—a place that everyone said was too much for me, but I knew they were just jealous. It was a dream home, and it's still got that charm, even if it's seen better days. Honestly, the house would be fine if I didn't have such bad luck with money. I've tried a bunch of jobs, but none of them have paid me what I'm worth, so keeping the place in top shape just hasn't been realistic.

I'm a hustler, though, and I wasn't about to sit around feeling sorry for myself. My old man reminded me how much I used to love playing video games back in high school. Computers had always been a second passion of mine, so I thought, "Why not go back to school for that?" Plus, I needed to finish my degree anyway.

It turns out I could transfer my old credits to the local community college and get an associate's degree in computer security, which I did in 2018. With that degree in hand, I figured I could finally land a decent-paying job and stop relying so much on my dwindling NFL money.

Since graduating, I've been doing my best to build a new career. It hasn't been easy, but I'm determined to make it work. The transition from NFL star to regular working guy hasn't been glamorous, but it's taught me a lot about resilience. Life throws curveballs, and you've just got to adapt. That's what I'm trying to do—day by day, step by step.

After finishing my degree, I landed a job at Aikens Security, a small company based out of Calder County. We specialize in installing and managing security systems for businesses and

homes all across the state. It's not exactly the NFL spotlight, but it's solid work, and I've come to appreciate the routine.

One of the best parts of the job is how much it gets me out and about. I've been on assignments all over the city, which has given me a great excuse to check in on old friends whenever I'm in their neighborhoods. One of my favorite stops has always been A&A's—the memorabilia store.

I've been a regular at A&A's for years now, and it's not just because I'm a sucker for the sports memorabilia they stock. It's also where I catch up with Derek Wilson, an old friend of mine who works there. Derek and I go way back, and it's always nice to pop in, shoot the breeze, and see what new treasures they've got in.

A&A's has become one of those places that feels like home—a spot where I can relax, chat with good people, and browse through some pretty incredible pieces of history. Whether it's between gigs or just because I'm in the area, I make it a point to swing by whenever I can. It's my kind of place, and Derek's always good company.

And, I'll admit, it doesn't hurt when I get recognized. Every now and then, someone browsing the memorabilia will do a double take and say, "Hey, aren't you Griffin Cook?", and yeah, it feels good. We'll end up talking about my football days, and sometimes they'll even ask me to sign something.

I have to say, I'm not the biggest fan of Joy Masini. Don't get me wrong, she's not a bad person or anything, but let's just say she's not exactly a ray of sunshine. Every time I stop by A&A's and she's on shift, it's the same story—she rolls her eyes like I'm some kind of nuisance. I mean, come on, how can I help it if the people love me?

Derek's shared a few stories about her too, and let's just say she's not known for being generous. He's told me she's pretty tight when it comes to the budget—like, *really* tight. For example, the security system at the shop was ancient, probably 20 years old if it was a day. Derek mentioned it to me once, saying it was practically held together with duct tape and a prayer.

I could tell Derek was frustrated about it, and honestly, I don't blame him. After the robbery happened, he was really torn up, feeling like the outdated security system played a part in it and resented Joy for delaying installing an upgraded system. I could see how much it weighed on him, like he thought maybe things would've turned out differently if she hadn't been so stubborn about the budget. It's a tough thing to carry, and I felt for him.

I don't know—maybe Joy was just trying to keep costs down for the store, but sometimes cutting corners comes back to bite you. It's a shame, really. Derek cares so much about that place, and I hate seeing him feel like his hands were tied.

Anyway, despite all the attention I get, things haven't exactly been smooth sailing in my work life.

After I got let go from Aikens Security earlier this year, things went downhill fast. The bills started piling up—mortgage, utilities, groceries, you name it. It didn't take long before it all felt like more than I could handle. I was running out of options, and that's when I made a tough decision.

I gathered up all my sports memorabilia, even my Heisman Trophy, and took it to A&A's to pawn. It wasn't easy letting go of those pieces of my past, but I didn't see another way. Sometimes, you've got to do what you've got to do to keep your head above water.

That was one of the hardest decisions I've ever made. Those items are a part of me, representing the best years of my life. I couldn't bear the thought of losing them permanently, but I rationalized it by telling myself it was only a short bridging loan. I fully believed I'd be able to buy it all back once I got back on my feet.

Before I was fired, I had invested much of my savings in a friend's cryptocurrency, "Ramses Coin." He'd assured me it was the next big thing and that I'd start seeing returns within a few months. At the time, it seemed like a smart move, and I was optimistic that the profits from Ramses Coin would solve my financial problems. I explained this to Joy and Derek at A&As when I pawned my memorabilia, promising them I'd pay back the loan in no time.

In early August, I sold my car to make up at least some of the cash I owed A&As. Though my car was getting up there in years, it was still a BMW 3 Series—the same one I bought when I first got signed to the NFL. That car meant a lot to me, but times being what they are, I decided it was time to let it go. I managed to get \$10,000 for it, which felt like a solid deal.

I don't remember much about the guy—just that he called himself a collector and paid in cash, mostly in small bills, which was kind of a hassle. I took the plates off the car, but in the rush of things, I forgot to give him the title. Oddly enough, he didn't ask for it, and since I didn't have his contact info, I couldn't follow up. After the sale, I deleted the Craigslist ad I had posted, and as far as I know, Craigslist doesn't keep archives of old listings.

With the cash in hand, I decided to head up to Lion & Lamb's Casino in Tar Heel City that evening to see if I could stretch my money a bit further. I've been playing poker since my college days, and I'd like to think I've got a knack for it. I didn't have the car anymore, but luckily Lion & Lamb's is close enough that I could take a quick ride over. I got there around 4:30 PM.

When I arrived, I stopped by the cage and chatted with Callan Smith. I even mentioned selling my BMW earlier that day. Feeling pretty confident, I decided to play with \$1,500—more than my usual buy-in, but I figured it was worth the risk.

It turned out to be a great night. By the time I cashed out, I'd made around \$4,000 or \$5,000 over my initial buy-in. I handed my chips to Callan at the cage and asked for my winnings in cash. Since I started with my own money, the casino didn't have to issue any tax forms, which made things easier. Afterward, I headed home. Other than Callan, the poker dealer, and a few

unfamiliar players at the table, I didn't really talk to anyone else that day—well, except for the guy who bought my car.

I planned to use the money to at least make a partial payment at A&A's to start getting my sports memorabilia back. That was the plan, anyway. But after such a successful night at Lion & Lamb's Casino, I started wondering if I could win even more before heading over to A&A's. The next day, I stayed home and didn't see or talk to anyone. Then, on August 11th, I decided to head back to Lion & Lamb's Casino.

This time, I got to Lion & Lamb's Casino right when they opened at noon. That wasn't my usual routine, but I had a clear goal in mind: make enough to turn my situation around. I bought in for \$1,500 again, and after a few hours of play, I cashed out with around \$5,000. It wasn't just luck; it was focus.

Once I had the cash in hand, I headed home to take stock of everything I'd been able to pull together over the past week. Between my casino winnings, the money from selling my car, and a few smaller items I'd pawned earlier, I started crunching the numbers. I was close, but not quite there yet.

That's when I realized I'd have to let go of my Ramses Coin cryptocurrency. It was a risky investment I'd made a while back when things were more stable for me. I'd held onto it, hoping the value would bounce back, but it hadn't. Selling it meant taking a loss, but I didn't have the luxury of waiting anymore. I liquidated the coin, knowing it was the final push I needed to get enough together.

With everything pooled together, I was finally able to write a check to A&A's to get my sports memorabilia back. Of all the items I'd pawned, the one I couldn't stop thinking about was my Heisman Trophy. It wasn't just a trophy—it was *the* trophy. A symbol of everything I'd worked for, every late night, early morning, and ounce of effort I'd poured into football.

That trophy represented the pinnacle of my life. When everything else fell apart—my NFL career, my finances, my sense of stability—that Heisman was proof that I'd once been the best. It wasn't just about football; it was about pride, perseverance, and a time when I had everything ahead of me.

So, when I cut that check, I knew exactly what I wanted back first. I walked into A&A's, handed over the payment, and didn't leave until that Heisman was back in my hands.

Walking out of there with that trophy felt like reclaiming a piece of myself. It was a bittersweet victory, but one that reminded me that even when life knocks you down, there are some things worth fighting to hold onto. For me, that trophy is a reminder of who I am and the legacy I'm not ready to let go of.

Two days later, I got an unexpected visit that completely threw me off. A Tar Heel City Detective—Kristina Hazeldine—showed up at my door. She didn't waste any time, jumping

straight into a bunch of aggressive questions. It was overwhelming, and honestly, I don't remember every single thing she asked.

What stood out, though, was when she started grilling me about a stolen car that supposedly sounded like the one I had just sold. I explained to her that my car was black, not blue, but she didn't seem to care. I told her everything I could—that I'd sold the car to a guy on Craigslist, that I didn't know who the buyer was, and that I'd been home alone on Wednesday morning.

The next thing I know, I'm in handcuffs. I couldn't believe it. I had nothing to do with any robberies, and I didn't even know about them until after Detective Hazeldine's visit. The only reason I looked into it was because I was curious about why she was questioning me in the first place.

Now, all I want is to clear my name. I didn't steal any cars, and I didn't commit any robberies. I just want this whole mess to be sorted out so I can move on with my life.

I hereby attest to having read the above statement and swear or affirm it to be my own. I also swear or affirm to the truthfulness of its content. Before giving this statement, I was told it should contain all relevant testimony, and I followed those instructions. I also understand that I can and must update this affidavit if anything new occurs to me until the moment before I testify in this case.

Griffin Cook

Griffin Cook

Signed on November 3rd, 2024

Rahmaad Etringer

Rahmaad Etringer, Notary Public

Affidavit of Callan Smith

Hey there, folks! Alright, where should I kick this off? My name, right? Makes sense. I'm Callan Smith. I'm 67 years young and holding steady in the fine little town of Tar Heel City.

I've moved around quite a bit in my time. Used to think of myself as a bit of a wandering soul, you know? A nomad, hopping from place to place in my youth. But for the past few decades, this town's been home, and I like it here. It's got charm.

I was born out in California—San Francisco, to be exact. My dad was on the city council back in the day, doing the whole “politician” bit. Honestly, I think his straight-and-narrow ways might've nudged me into the opposite lane. Rebel with a cause? Maybe not a cause, but definitely a rebel.

Back in my younger days, I got into all sorts of scenes. Social clubs, underground bands, even a secret society or two. Ever heard of Flower Power? The band, not the movement. Yeah, I played bass for them for a hot minute—and for a few other bands too. It was a wild time, let me tell you.

But all that freedom came crashing down when I got tangled up in something I shouldn't have. One of those secret societies turned out to be a little too secret for its own good. Long story short, in 1981, I got busted for bank fraud. Multiple counts. Let's just say it wasn't my proudest moment. I ended up spending five years in the clink.

Prison? Yeah, it's a humbling place, alright. Gave me plenty of time to think about where I was headed. I can't say I lose sleep over taking a chunk out of a corporate bank's pocket—they've got plenty to spare—but man, I knew I didn't want to end up behind bars again. That was enough to set me straight.

So, when I got out of prison, let me tell you, life wasn't exactly throwing me a welcome-back party. Money was tight—like, “counting pennies to buy ramen” tight. My parents? Yeah, they'd completely cut me off. Guess a felon in the family didn't exactly scream “picture-perfect politician image,” you know?

I tried to find work wherever I could, but being a convicted felon doesn't exactly make employers line up at your door. I did what I had to—gardener, delivery truck driver, handyman, waiter... honestly, I lost track of all the jobs I cycled through. If it paid, I probably gave it a shot.

Meanwhile, the Bay Area was going through its own transformation. All these big tech companies were rolling in, snapping up real estate, and driving us locals out. Rent skyrocketed—it just got impossible to live there. By 1997, I'd had enough. So, I packed up my van, grabbed my dog Meg (the best road-trip buddy ever), and hit the road.

I wandered for a while, making pit stops here and there. Lived in Chicago for a bit, then Kansas City, Asheville—heck, I was practically on a tour of middle American cities. But none of those

places really clicked for me. I'd stay a month here, six months there, always feeling like I was just passing through. It was a weird limbo, but at least Meg didn't seem to mind.

In 2000, I finally rolled into Tar Heel City, and let me tell you, it just felt right. Been calling this place home ever since. The same year I showed up, Lion & Lamb Casino opened its doors. Talk about good timing, right? I managed to snag a job there as a janitor.

Now, on the application, they asked if I'd ever been convicted of a crime. Normally, I'd be honest about it—lord knows I'd tried that route plenty before—but this time? I decided to roll the dice and just write “no.” I figured, what's the worst that could happen? Turns out, they didn't even check, and I got the job.

Started out pushing a mop and scrubbing floors, but the boss must've seen something in me because I managed to work my way up the ladder. These days, I'm the assistant floor manager. Fancy title, huh? Mostly, I split my time between the “cage” and the casino floor.

The cage, in case you're not familiar, is where all the money magic happens—customers swap cash for chips there before heading out to test their luck on the tables. It's a routine gig, nothing too flashy, but hey, somebody's gotta keep things running smoothly.

I usually see Griffin when I'm working the cage. He's been a regular at the casino for as long as I can remember—gotta be at least five or six years now. He swings by maybe once a month. Griffin has told me his game is poker—Texas Hold'em, specifically. And from what I've seen, he's not half bad. I mean, the guy's had nights where he strolls into the cage with fifty, maybe seventy-five bucks to his name, and by the end of the night, he's cashing out with two or three grand in chips.

Now, don't get me wrong, it's not like he's winning big every time. Some nights, he doesn't even break even. But if you're keeping score, I'd say Griffin wins more often than he loses. Pretty solid track record for a guy who calls poker his “best game.”

Y'all want to know about what went down last August? Yeah, no problem—I remember it pretty well. It was August 9th, and the casino was hopping that night. I started my shift in the cage, and around 5 PM, who shows up but Griffin. That's earlier than usual for him—he's more of a night owl—but hey, people switch it up sometimes.

Griffin rolls in carrying a wad of cash in a paper bag. Not exactly your standard-issue wallet, you know? I can't recall the exact amount he handed over, but it was way more than his usual. Definitely over a grand, probably more. What I do remember is that it was mostly smaller bills—20s and 50s. Felt a little odd, but not enough to set off any alarm bells.

Griffin himself? Cool as a cucumber. Same easygoing guy I always see, cracking jokes and chatting like nothing was out of the ordinary. He didn't seem nervous or shady, just... Griffin. As for what he was wearing, nothing unusual there either—blue jeans, a graphic T-shirt, and a hoodie.

Now, we're not exactly a black-tie establishment, so that's pretty standard attire around here. Hoodies, especially, are popular with the poker crowd. Keeps their faces tucked away a bit—makes sense when you're trying to bluff your way to a win. So yeah, nothing about him that night struck me as all that strange. Just another busy evening at the casino.

So, I handed Griffin his chips, and off he went—straight to the poker tables, like always. That's his spot, no surprises there. I didn't see him again until much later that night when he rolled back into the cage.

Turns out, he did pretty well for himself. I think he walked away with somewhere north of \$3k. “Hey man, looks like you had a great night!” I said to him. It was definitely one of the bigger wins I've seen him pull, but Griffin? Cool as ever. You'd think he won three bucks, not three grand.

He cashed out his winnings, and that was that. I didn't see him again until later that week. Typical Griffin—quietly raking it in and moving along like it's no big deal.

So, August 11th rolls around, and Griffin shows up at the casino again. That visit stuck in my mind a little better, mostly because he came in midday—around 12:30 PM, right when we opened. He was the first one at the cage, which isn't typical for him. Usually, he's more of an evening guy.

This time, he's carrying another paper sack full of cash. I'll admit, I was a bit surprised, since he'd just been there the Friday before. Griffin told me he had the day off and figured he'd see if his lucky streak was still holding up.

I started counting out the cash to trade for chips, but I don't remember the exact amount—somewhere between a couple hundred and a few hundred, if I had to guess. It was mostly 20s and 50s again, with maybe a few 5s mixed in. It struck me as odd that he had so much cash on hand, so I joked, “You sell another car, man?” Griffin just laughed and said, “This is the rest of what I got for the first one.”

As for his look, same old Griffin—jeans, a T-shirt, and I think he had on a dark hoodie again. Pretty standard for him.

Anyway, about an hour later, Griffin was back at the cage to cash out his chips. This time, though, it wasn't a winning night. He ended up with just shy of what he started with, and you could tell he wasn't feeling great about it. He seemed kind of down, told me things weren't going well at work, and that he might have to sell more of his stuff if he didn't start bringing in more cash soon. Definitely not the usual laid-back Griffin I was used to seeing.

I remember seeing the story about A&A's robbery on the news, and man, my heart just sank. I know some of the guys who work over there—they're good people, always friendly and working hard. It's just awful what happened to them. Nobody deserves that kind of thing.

That said, if you ask me, I really don't think Griffin had anything to do with it. I saw him both nights at the casino, and he seemed completely calm, like his usual self. I mean, come on—how could someone be that cool and collected right after robbing a store? It just doesn't add up. It seems ridiculous to even think about. I really feel for the folks at A&A, but I just don't see Griffin being the guy who'd do something like that.

I hereby attest to having read the above statement and affirm it to be my own. I also affirm the truthfulness of its content. Before giving this statement, I was told it should contain all relevant information, and I followed these instructions. I also understand that I can and must update this affidavit if anything new occurs to me until the moment before I testify in this case.

Callan Smith

Callan Smith

Signed on November 23rd, 2024

Rahmaad Etringer

Rahmaad Etringer, Notary Public

Exhibits

Exhibit 1: Areal View of Lion and Lamb Casino



Exhibit 2: Check

THE BANK OF THE UNIVERSE	
DATE: 8/10/2024	
PAY TO THE ORDER OF: ABE AND AARON'S	\$ 24,000
TWENTY FOUR THOUSAND DOLLARS AND ZERO CENTS DOLLARS	
MEMO: PAWNED ITEMS	Griffin Cook SIGNATURE
Check Number: 45689078 8364 2234972345	

Exhibit 3: Car Title

STATE OF Carolina							
DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES							
CERTIFICATE OF TITLE							
VIN	23857292732974927	YEAR	2015	MAKE	BMW 3 Series	VEHICLE BODY	Sedan
TITLE NUMBER	49274921						
DATE ISSUED	9/1/2014	ODOMETER MILES	34	FUEL TYPE		SALES TAX PD.	
VEHICLE COLOR		ODOMETER BRAND		BRANDS		EMPTY WT.	
						GROSS WT.	
						GVWR	
OWNER(S) NAME AND ADDRESS							
Griffin Cook 214 Blue Ridge Rd, Tar Heel City North Carolina, 27642							
LIENHOLDER(S) NAME AND ADDRESS							
LIENHOLDER(S) RELEASE - INTEREST IN THE VEHICLE DESCRIBED ON THIS TITLE IS HEREBY RELEASED:							
SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED AGENT				DATE			
Printed Name							
FEDERAL AND STATE LAW REQUIRES THAT YOU STATE THE MILEAGE IN CONNECTION WITH THE TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP. FAILURE TO COMPLETE OR PROVIDING A FALSE STATEMENT MAY RESULT IN FINES AND/OR IMPRISONMENT.							
The undersigned hereby certifies that the vehicle described in this title has been transferred to the following buyer(s):							
Printed Name of Buyer(s)				<input type="checkbox"/> AND <input type="checkbox"/> OR			
Printed Name of Buyer(s)							
Address		City		State		Zip Code	
I certify to the best of my knowledge that the odometer reading is the actual mileage of the vehicle unless one of the following statements is checked:							
<input type="checkbox"/> NO TENTHS		<input type="checkbox"/> The mileage stated is in excess of its mechanical limits.		Date of Sale		<input type="checkbox"/> The odometer reading is not the actual mileage. WARNING: ODOMETER DISCREPANCY.	
ODOMETER READING		<input type="checkbox"/> Exempt - Model year over 9 years old.					
Signature of Seller(s)				Printed Name of Seller(s)			
I am aware of the above odometer certification made by the seller/agent. <input type="checkbox"/>							
Signature of Buyer(s)				Printed Name of Buyer(s)			
ACCORDING TO THE RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES, THE PERSON NAMED HEREON IS THE OWNER OF THE VEHICLE DESCRIBED ABOVE, SUBJECT TO LIEN(S) AS SHOWN.				CONTROL NO.			
RD-2 (Rev. 10/01)				(THIS IS NOT A TITLE NO.)			
ALTERATION OR ERASURE VOIDS THIS TITLE							

Exhibit 4: Aaron and Abe's Store Layout

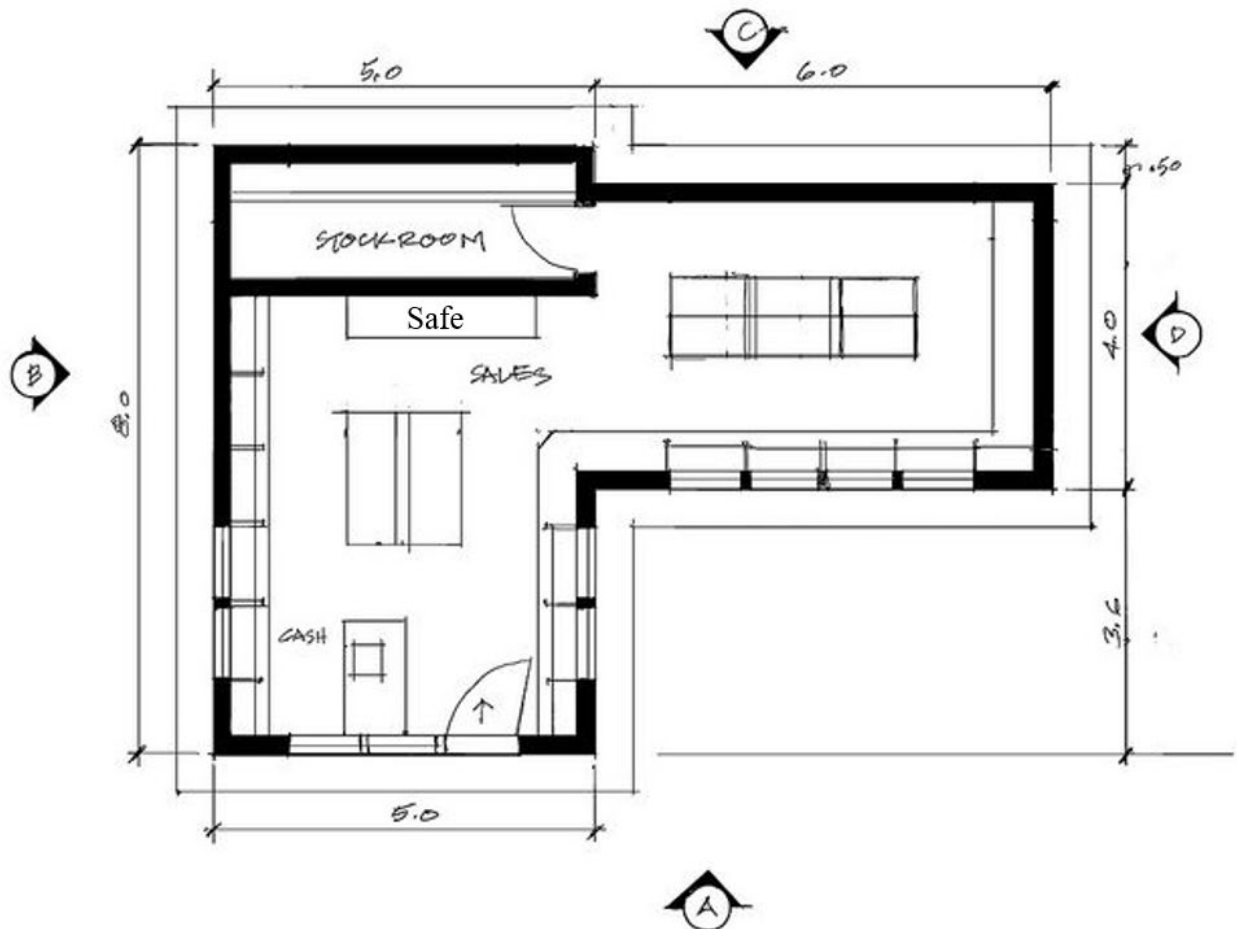


Exhibit 5: Black Hoodie Recovered from Cook's House



Exhibit 6: Black Gloves Recovered from Cook's House



Exhibit 7: Robber's Note



Exhibit 8: Air Tag



Exhibit 9: Ramses Coin Valuation Summary

