

# Kids, DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

WRITTEN BY JOHN G. BROWNING

ONE COULD PROBABLY FILL VOLUMES OF BOOKS ABOUT “WHAT NOT TO DO” if you’re a criminal defendant. Some colleagues have suggested that if all I ever wrote about were funny situations involving stupid or careless criminals, I’d never run out of material. They’re probably right.

Case in point: the fugitives who just can’t withstand the temptation of social media, to their own detriment. Lorraine Graves, of Tulsa, Oklahoma, probably should have laid low after being named as a suspect in the March 31, 2021, killing of 30-year-old Eric Graves. But when the Tulsa Police Department posted about Lorraine on the “Most Wanted” section of its Facebook page, seeking the public’s help in finding the fugitive, she couldn’t resist commenting on the page less than three hours after the post was made, saying, “What’s where’s the reward money at?” To the surprise of no one, Tulsa police located and arrested Lorraine Graves, who was charged in connection with the murder.

Precious Landry, of St. Martin Parish, Louisiana, was also a fugitive from justice, but that doesn’t mean she stopped caring about her appearance. Wanted for second degree murder, Precious stopped running long enough to check out her mugshot on the St. Martin Crime Stoppers Facebook page. Clearly disappointed that booking officers hadn’t captured her good side, Precious posted, “That picture ugly.” Shockingly, she was soon in custody. Similarly, when robbery suspect Matthew Oliver, of Bradenton, Florida, saw that the Pasco County Sheriff’s Office had posted his picture as “Fugitive of the Day” on its Facebook page, he was less concerned

about the long arm of the law than the multiple comments by people making fun of how his ears looked.irate, Matthew took the time to respond—repeatedly—to his online detractors, and soon found himself in custody. Folks, take some advice from Will Ferrell’s beloved movie anchorman, Ron Burgundy: If you commit a criminal act like, say, killing a man with a trident, “you might want to lay low.”

Some criminals just seem to be incapable of laying low. Take Zyeana Johnson, of Jersey City, New Jersey, for example. In October, the 27-year-old former postal worker was on the run from fraud charges when she inexplicably sent in an application for a job at the Hudson County Sheriff’s Office. Amazed at their good fortune, sheriff’s deputies called her in under the guise of a job interview. When the foolhardy fraudster arrived, she was busted, and officers discovered multiple stolen credit cards in her possession—resulting in new charges. In May, Philip Dulude, of Belfast, Maine, tried to hide from police investigating a disturbance near the Admiral Ocean Inn. But his “hiding spot” was straight out of a toddler’s playbook—Dulude was apprehended “hiding” in a chair with a blanket draped over himself. Not only didn’t he fool police, but after taking Dulude into custody, the police posted about him on the department’s Facebook page, prompting one wag to comment, “Wait, is this an episode of Scooby Doo?” And he would’ve gotten away with it, too, if it weren’t for you meddling kids!

And for goodness’ sake, can’t criminal suspects come up with better defenses when they’re caught? In July, 53-year-old Larry Doil Sanders, of Ada, Oklahoma, admitted that he had killed his friend Jimmy Knighten while the two were on the South Canadian River. But according to Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation agents, Sanders thought the homicide was justified because he thought Knighten was going to feed him to Bigfoot. Pro tip: If your legal defense requires a Sasquatch as a corroborating witness, it’s time for a new defense.

Of course, lawyers have been known to come up with some, ahem, *creative* defenses as well. When the wife of singer James Brown—yes, “Soul Brother

Number One,” the “Godfather of Soul,” the “Hardest Working Man in Show Business”—was charged with driving under the influence of drugs, speeding, and criminal trespass back in 1987, lawyer Allen W. Johnson invoked an unusual defense to the Richmond County (Georgia) state court judge: diplomatic immunity. Johnson’s motion pointed out that in 1985, to mark the Augusta, Georgia, celebration of “James Brown Appreciation Day,” U.S. Rep. Douglas Barnard had proclaimed Brown (aka “the Minister of Super Heavy Funk”) “America’s No. 1 ambassador.” Johnson later withdrew the motion for diplomatic immunity, saying that he had since determined “that the congressman intended his comments as a goodwill gesture and a figure of speech,” rather than as a formal diplomatic appointment. Sorry, Mrs. Brown: As your husband might have put it, it’s a man’s man’s man’s world.

And if you’ve ever felt that defendants relied too much on the letter of the law, you should meet 26-year-old Jordan Thomas. Last October, the Florida man was at the Indian River County Courthouse for arraignment on a charge of battery of 23-year-old Shanteria Rolle. But while the court was in recess, police say Thomas grabbed “a signage letter from the blackboard in front of Court Room 3” and threw it at Rolle, “striking her with the letter ‘G.’” That’s “G,” as in “Go straight to jail, do not pass go,” because Thomas was arrested again and charged with violating the terms of his pretrial release.

As they say on Sesame Street, this column was brought to you by the letter “H,” for humor. **TBJ**



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