

[Introduction:] Announcer

[SFX: news beepy music]

ANNOUNCER: We interrupt your regularly scheduled broadcast to bring you live coverage of the case of the century: The People v. Prudence Edison. That's right, folks. You heard it here first. The case is finally going to trial, after twelve long months of waiting. Ms. Edison is officially charged with "theft of positronic brain technology with the intent of committing treason."

We now bring you inside the courtroom, where our interior correspondent Hazel Shea is waiting to take you inside the action as it unfolds. How's it looking over there, Hazel?

[Scene 1:] Hazel Shea, Assistant District Attorney Edward Bennett, Defense Attorney Elliot Hartley, Judge Miranda Tanner, Bailiff, Robert Wagner.

HAZEL: Well, Edward, I'm sitting inside the press box here at the Third Judicial Circuit Court in Detroit, Michigan where an ample crowd has gathered for this most historic trial. Assistant District Attorney Edward Bennett and Defense Attorney Elliot Hartley have just concluded their opening statements and we are all eagerly awaiting the Prosecution's first witness. Mr. Bennett, a gentleman in his 40's, is dressed in a blue suit with a silver striped tie, his thin brown hair cropped in a severe high-and-tight.

BENNETT: Your Honor, the Prosecution calls as its first witness Mr. Robert Wagner.

HAZEL: A middle-aged looking man approaches the stand. He carries with him a ledger and a fountain pen. He looks very nervous.

BAILIFF: Please raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

ROBERT: I do.

J. TANNER: Proceed.

BENNETT: Thank you, Your Honor. Mr. Wagner, could you tell the court your occupation at present?

ROBERT: I am a bookkeeper. I keep books. And records. I am employed at the Auto-Motion Corporation.

BENNETT: How long have you been employed there?

ROBERT: Since 1985, so almost 15 years?

BENNETT: And what does your job require that you do?

ROBERT: Hmm? What?

BENNETT: What is your job description?

ROBERT: I am responsible for keeping records of transactions made through purchase or shipping from Auto-Motion, and I keep the accounts our customers have opened in the past with us.

BENNETT: Where do you keep these records?

ROBERT: In this ledger.

BENNETT: Your Honor, I move to submit Mr. Wagner's ledger as Plaintiff Exhibit A.

J. TANNER: So granted.

BENNETT: Thank you, Your Honor. Mr. Wagner, would it be possible for you to confirm or deny if someone had bought something from your company in the past 10 years just by looking it up in this ledger?

ROBERT: Oh, of course.

BENNETT: Could you please read aloud every instance of the defendant, Prudence Edison, purchasing something from Auto-Motion Corporation in the past 10 years?

[SFX: flipping of pages]

ROBERT: Of course. Just a moment. "August 21st, 1987- Animatronic Right Lung, serial number S4458b, Human." "January 15th, 1989- Animatronic Left Lung, serial number S5573g, Human." "April 25th, 1996- Animatronic Heart (full ventricle attachments), serial number S9001a, Human." That's all that's written here for Ms. Edison.

BENNETT: So you can confirm with absolute certainty that Ms. Edison has made those purchases?

ROBERT: Yes, with certainty.

BENNETT: Why would someone purchase those things, in your experience?

ROBERT: You mean, why would someone purchase robotic organs that are compatible with the human body? People generally only make these purchases if they have severe organ failure.

BENNETT: In your experience, would there be any other reason?

ROBERT: I never thought about it before. Well, I suppose she could be trying to build something...

HARTLEY: Objection, Your Honor. Speculation.

HAZEL: Councilor Hartley calmly and demurely stands and delivers the first objection of the morning. He is dressed in a brown tweed suit and his long-kept blonde hair is oiled back.

J. TANNER: Sustained. Rephrase please.

ROBERT: Uh...I suppose one could try to build an automaton. You know, as a hobby. If one was so inclined. Really anything that resembles life. What else would you need a robotic organ for?

BENNETT: Do automatons generally use human-compatible organs? That is to say, have you ever received an order from an organization that constructs automatons looking to buy your company's products?

ROBERT: Not according to my ledger. The word in the industry is that the manufacturers of automatons tend to buy their robotic parts from another organization, because their parts are cheaper and easier to mass-produce. Whereas our products are top-of-the-line, one-of-a-kind machines designed to--

HARTLEY: Objection, Your Honor.

J. TANNER: Sustained. This is a courtroom, not a commercial advertisement.

BENNETT: No further questions, Your Honor.

J. TANNER: Mr. Hartley, you may cross-examine the witness.

HARTLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. Mr. Wagner, are you a medical professional?

ROBERT: Well, no--

HARTLEY: Are you in any way familiar with Ms. Edison's medical history?

ROBERT: Of course not.

HARTLEY: Is it in your practice to question your customers' motives for purchase?

ROBERT: No, it isn't.

HARTLEY: Can you without a shadow of a doubt tell the court that you know absolutely 100% what Ms. Edison made those purchases for?

ROBERT: No.

HARTLEY: No further questions, Your Honor.

J. TANNER: Mr. Wagner, you may leave the stand.

HAZEL: Councilor Hartley is off to a terse beginning, it seems. In fact, he has been keeping uncharacteristically silent about this case over the past year. Is he hiding something? Or is he trying to keep us from realizing he's got no case? Only time will tell.

[SFX: typewriter ding]

[Scene 2:] Hazel Shea, Assistant District Attorney Edward Bennett, Defense Attorney Elliot Hartley, Judge Miranda Tanner, Bailiff, Dr. Shannon Macmillan

J. TANNER: Mr. Bennett, you may call your next witness.

BENNETT: Thank you, Your Honor. The prosecution calls Dr. Shannon Macmillan to the stand.

HAZEL: A blithe older-looking woman with red hair faded mostly to white comes down the center aisle. She has a surprising grace and agility to her gait, reminiscent of someone who had been a dancer in her youth. She sits comfortably in the box.

BAILIFF: Raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

SHANNON: I so swear.

J. TANNER: You may begin.

BENNETT: Could you state your name for the court?

SHANNON: I am Dr. Shannon Macmillan. But Shannon is fine.

BENNETT: Alright, then. Shannon. Could you tell the court what you do for work at this time?

SHANNON: I am a tenured professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan, of which I am a graduate pre-and-post-baccalaureate.

BENNETT: When did you attend university?

SHANNON: I graduated with my bachelor's degree in 1954, and I got my combined Master's degree and Doctorate in '57.

BENNETT: Do you know the defendant personally?

SHANNON: Yes, we went to school together. We were good friends. At least, as good friends as two people could be in college.

BENNETT: What do you mean?

SHANNON: We were roommates in our second year. We got along well enough, but we didn't really have a whole lot in common. Except our studies. We both studied sociology.

BENNETT: Did you and Ms. Edison ever do any extracurricular activities together?

SHANNON: I think I know what you're asking me, and we did once or twice attend political rallies together.

BENNETT: Of what nature?

SHANNON: Only local affairs. Small city planning issues and new taxes.

PRUDENCE: No new taxes! No new taxes!

J. TANNER: Councilor, your client.

HAZEL: Folks, you at home are not going to believe it, but an elderly woman toward the front of the courtroom just began shouting, interrupting the proceedings. Folks...folks, I am just now receiving word that the elderly woman is Prudence Edison herself!

SHANNON: Prudence?

BENNETT: Dr. Macmillan, please address only myself and Her Honor the judge.

SHANNON: I'm sorry. I was just startled.

HAZEL: Dr. Macmillan's whole expression has changed. Where she once seemed confident, she now seems unsure.

BENNETT: In your opinion, Dr. Macmillan, would you say Ms. Edison has a history of subversive behavior?

SHANNON: I don't know if I would go that far...

BENNETT: In your testimony, you have indicated that she has participated in political rallies, which often devolve into riots and mass arrests, isn't that right?

SHANNON: I am not an expert on the nature of political rallies.

BENNETT: You are, however, an expert in Sociology. You are well aware of how people function when in large unruly groups.

SHANNON: Yes, but--

BENNETT: In your expert opinion, based on the facts you have provided the court, does Prudence Edison have a history of violent and subversive behavior?

SHANNON: That isn't a fair assessment--

BENNETT: Answer the question, Dr. Macmillan.

SHANNON: Yes, I suppose she does.

BENNETT: No more questions, Your Honor.

J. TANNER: Counselor, you may begin the cross.

HARTLEY: Dr. Macmillan, when is the last time you saw Ms. Edison?

SHANNON: I saw her a few months ago at one of the preliminary hearings.

HARTLEY: What about on a personal visit?

SHANNON: Oh, not for years. I think the last time she invited me to her home was in 1978.

HARTLEY: She invited you, then. Have you ever tried to make contact with her over the years?

SHANNON: Of course. More than once.

HARTLEY: What happened?

SHANNON: She lost interest in leaving her house. I don't know what happened. She used to be quite social back in school. But over the years...I don't rightly know, to be honest. It was like she wasn't herself anymore.

HARTLEY: Can you give us an example?

SHANNON: Not really an example so much as...an observation. Over the years, she became more and more reclusive. Some of our old group and I have tried contacting her in that time. She'd answer the telephone one time in five and when she did, she sounded like she didn't trust us or something.

HARTLEY: Why do you say that?

SHANNON: The casual telephone conversation toward the end of our relationship would usually

begin with Prudence picking up the receiver and saying something along the lines of “We don’t want any.” And then I would let her know I was in town and I wanted to catch up with her over coffee.

HARTLEY: What did she say?

BENNETT: Objection, Your Honor. Hearsay.

HARTLEY: I am simply trying to establish Prudence’s behavior patterns from the only person who can rightly verify it. Besides, that is not the definition of “hearsay.”

J. TANNER: Rephrase the question, please.

HARTLEY: Yes, Your Honor. What generally would happen as a result of these phone calls, Shannon.

SHANNON: She would avoid the subject, start yelling over her shoulder to someone else, and then hang up. I stopped trying to contact her after a few years of this treatment.

HARTLEY: Someone else? Who was she talking to?

SHANNON: I really couldn’t say.

HARTLEY: As her friend, did she have any family to speak of?

SHANNON: No. She was a foster child when she was coming up so she didn’t know her biological family. She did find one of her cousins once, but he had passed away by then.

HARTLEY: Is it possible she was addressing her household robot?

SHANNON: I doubt it. The person she was speaking to had a name. I think it was Anna.

HARTLEY: Your Honor, let the record show that the witness is indicating the defendant’s Domestic Model ANA unit, often referred to colloquially by the defendant as “Anna.”

BENNETT: Objection, Your Honor!

HARTLEY: As her representative in court, I am well-versed in my client’s affairs and it is my duty to speak on her behalf. At this time, Ms. Edison does not keep company, instead choosing to devote her time to her personal care robot, who she enjoys calling by the name Anna. These are established facts and I merely wish the record to reflect them.

J. TANNER: Can this wait until Ms. Edison’s testimony?

HARTLEY: With all due respect, Your Honor, this particular issue cannot.

J. TANNER: Excuse me?

HARTLEY: It is vital to my cross-examination of this witness.

J. TANNER: Three questions. That's it.

HARTLEY: Very well, Your Honor. Shannon, are you familiar with Domestic Model ANA? Can you tell us what you know about it?

SHANNON: Of course. Yes, I knew that Prudence had found a broken down Domestic Model unit sometime during the late 1960's. I don't know what she did to make it work again. I never asked. I had assumed she had paid a mechanic to fix it up in fits and starts, but it never actually came up in conversation.

BENNETT: Objection, Your Honor. Speculation.

J. TANNER: Overruled. You are aware, Mr. Bennett, that this is your witness?

HARTLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. Please continue, Shannon.

SHANNON: When I would come to visit Prudence, which, if you recall, was not very often and only for several hours at a time, she made more and more frequent use of her Domestic Model unit as time went on. At first, she just had it serve us drinks and bus the table, but by the end she was asking its opinion on things.

HARTLEY: Things like what?

SHANNON: Whatever it is we got to talking about that day. A new novel, politics, the opera, cooking, modern art. Yes, that most of all. She loved asking the robot its opinion on art.

HARTLEY: Did the robot ever answer?

SHANNON: That's a silly question.

HARTLEY: Indulge me.

SHANNON: Well, since you asked. The very last visit I made, the one in 1978, the robot did answer her.

HARTLEY: What did it say?

J. TANNER: Mr. Hartley, you've asked your three questions. Redirect, Mr. Bennett?

BENNETT: Not at this time, Your Honor.

J. TANNER: Very well then. Dr. Macmillan, you are free to step down.

HAZEL: For those of you just tuning in, Dr. Shannon Macmillan's testimony has just concluded. She gives a personal account of being close friends with the alleged terrorist, including a personal anecdote about the accused asking questions of her personal care robot and expecting answers, only to reveal that she did in fact receive an answer! What was the nature of this response? And why won't the court let the people know the truth? Stay tuned and find out.

[SFX: typewriter ding]

[Scene 3:] Hazel Shea, Assistant District Attorney Edward Bennett, Defense Attorney Elliot Hartley, Judge Miranda Tanner, Bailiff, Thomas Dalton.

J. TANNER: Whenever you're ready, Mr. Bennett.

BENNETT: Your Honor, the Prosecution calls Mr. Thomas Dalton to the stand.

HAZEL: Thomas Dalton, a giant of a man at 6 foot and 300 pounds, takes the stand. He's chosen to wear slacks, a white button-up shirt rolled up at the sleeves, and an argyle sweater vest.

BAILIFF: Raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?

DALTON: Yeah.

BENNETT: Mr. Dalton, please tell the court what you do for a living at this time.

DALTON: I'm an overnight security guard at the Auto-Motion corporate headquarters.

BENNETT: How long have you worked there?

DALTON: I've only worked there for about two years now. I'd been there a year before the robbery.

BENNETT: What were you doing on the night of "the robbery"?

DALTON: I clocked in at 10pm same as always and then settled in at the guard station, where the monitors are.

BENNETT: Do you recall the events of the robbery as they unfolded that night?

DALTON: I sure do.

BENNETT: Can you give us a brief summary?

DALTON: Like I said, I was sitting in the guard station watching the monitors, when all of a sudden they went out. Like, they just all went black at the same time. So me and Ben, that's the other guard on duty that night, we took our flashlights and went to go find out what happened.

BENNETT: What did you find?

DALTON: We ended up getting to the third floor before we found anything. What we found was the strangest thing I've ever seen.

BENNETT: Go on.

DALTON: The third floor is where the labs are, and some of the prototypes get tested there before they're released on the market. When we got up there, we heard sounds coming from Lab 6, so we bolted down there to see what was going on. The door was wide open so we ran in with our guns drawn, figuring someone was trying to rob the joint. I guess they were, but it wasn't a somebody.

BENNETT: Can you clarify what you mean?

DALTON: When we ran through the door, the first thing we saw was that clicker ransacking the place.

HARTLEY: Objection, Your Honor. The witness is using unnecessarily offensive language.

BENNETT: Your Honor, I urge you not to feed into this sensational nonsense.

J. TANNER: Sustained. As silly as it is, gentleman, I do see fit to rule that the witness must use proper terminology to explain what he saw.

BENNETT: Very well, Your Honor. Mr. Dalton, would you please rephrase your last statement?

DALTON: Alright. My partner and I opened the door to find a Domestic Model unit opening drawers and pulling things out of them. By the time we found it, it had dumped the contents of most of the drawers out onto the floor.

BENNETT: What was it looking for?

DALTON: It must have been looking for the positronic brain because that's what it tried to escape with.

BENNETT: Then what happened?

DALTON: We called the police when it refused to power down and we were somehow able to keep it confined in the lab until they arrived.

BENNETT: Were you able to identify the serial designation of the Domestic Model unit?

DALTON: Not at the time, but Ben managed to catch a photograph of it while we were containing it.

BENNETT: Your Honor, I move to submit these photographs taken by Mr. Dalton's partner as Plaintiff Exhibit B.

J. TANNER: So granted.

BENNETT: Thank you, Your Honor. Mr. Dalton, what did you learn from this photograph?

DALTON: According to this, the robot's serial designation was ANA.

BENNETT: Let the record show that Mr. Dalton has indicated the serial designation of the Domestic Model unit belonging to the defendant, Prudence Edison. No further questions, Your Honor.

HARTLEY: Mr. Dalton, how do you know what it is that ANA was trying to steal?

DALTON: What do you mean?

HARTLEY: You are not a laboratory technician. You are a security guard. So tell me how you knew that she was trying to steal a positronic brain.

DALTON: I--I don't know. I must have read it on the packaging. Or someone told me later.

HARTLEY: So you don't know how you know? You just know?

DALTON: Hey, I didn't say that.

HARTLEY: Can you with certainty say that you know what it was she stole?

DALTON: Well, I--I guess not.

HARTLEY: Nothing further, Your Honor.

J. TANNER: You may step down, Mr. Dalton.

HAZEL: Councilor Hartley sure isn't taking any nonsense today. His tactic of discrediting the prosecution's witnesses seems to be working on the jury...for now. It looks like the prosecution is ready to call its final witness.

[SFX: typewriter ding]

[Scene 4:] Hazel Shea, Assistant District Attorney Edward Bennett, Defense Attorney Elliot Hartley, Judge Miranda Tanner, Bailiff, Edith Beechcroft.

BENNETT: Your Honor, the Prosecution would like to call Mrs. Edith Beechcroft to the stand.

HAZEL: Mrs. Beechcroft appears to be a woman in her late 40's or early 50's, wearing a long floral patterned dress with a blue waistbelt that matches her shoes. She appears to have shoulder-length brown hair curled up very tightly in an elegant updo, but she has small, suspicious eyes that keep flickering around the courtroom.

BAILIFF: Raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?

EDITH: Of course I do.

J. TANNER: You may begin.

BENNETT: Thank you, Your Honor. Mrs. Beechcroft, could you tell us your relationship to the defendant?

EDITH: To whom?

BENNETT: Prudence Edison.

EDITH: Yes, of course. We're neighbors. My house is number 4 and hers is number 6.

BENNETT: How long have you been neighbors?

EDITH: Why, I don't know. I believe I moved in in the summer of 1991. Yes, because that was the summer that our neighbor Hank painted his shutters red.

BENNETT: Alright. What was your first impression of Ms. Edison?

EDITH: I thought she was terribly rude.

BENNETT: Why?

EDITH: She would never come outside, never come to her window. And she would never come to our neighborhood social gatherings. If you ask me, she seemed very secretive. Like she was hiding something.

BENNETT: Secretive. Like she was hiding something. Go on.

EDITH: All we'd ever see of her is that darn clicker.

HARTLEY: Your Honor--

BENNETT: I know. I'm taking care of it. Mrs. Beechcroft, the court requires that you use proper terminology when referring to the robot in question.

EDITH: Well, I never. Very well. All we ever saw of Prudence was her Domestic Model unit when it went out to get groceries and...other things, for her.

BENNETT: Other things? Like what?

EDITH: Well, it's kind of a long story.

BENNETT: Why don't you give us a summary?

EDITH: It is incredibly difficult to know what Ms. Edison does in her spare time. I've been trying to find out for years. Her curtains are always drawn, her door is always locked. But like I said before, I've seen her Domestic Model bringing groceries and books backs to Prudence's house. And sometimes other things...things no elderly woman would need.

BENNETT: Like?

EDITH: The Domestic Model was bringing scrap metal back to Prudence! See, I'm not one to gossip but what exactly are we supposed to think? She never leaves the house, she is far too

attached to that robot, and she has it bring metal back to her home in the middle of the night when no one can see. What are we supposed to think?! She's building robots in there, Mr. Bennett! Unregistered robots with human parts! She's going to raise up her own robot army and take over the government!

HARTLEY: Objection, Your Honor! Speculation!

BENNETT: With respect, Your Honor, this is not speculation. This witness is describing something she knows to be fact.

HARTLEY: Hardly. She is telling an inflammatory tale of something she never bothered to verify!

J. TANNER: That's enough. Mr. Bennett, instruct your witness to provide some solid evidence or I will dismiss her testimony.

BENNETT: Yes, Your Honor. Mrs. Beechcroft, would you tell us why you think Ms. Edison is a terrorist and a traitor to the United States?

EDITH: After a few weeks of seeing the Domestic Model bringing all that metal back to the house, I caved in. I had to know what she was doing with it all. I tried spying through the windows, but she kept them shut up. I tried coming in through the back door, but that robot was in the garden for much of the time. So finally, I walked on over to borrow a cup of sugar. I was having a dinner party and needed to bake a pie. It was a blueberry pie with a lattice crust and it was going to be the envy of the--

HARTLEY: Objection, Your Honor. Narrative.

J. TANNER: Sustained. Mrs. Beechcroft, don't make me tell you again to only give relevant details in your testimony. And please do try to keep it as short as possible. We don't have all day.

EDITH: Oh, very well then. When I got to Prudence's house, I knocked on the door. There wasn't an answer right away, so I knocked again. I knew they were home. Prudence never leaves and I had just seen the Domestic Model walk in through the back door with some more metal. After a few minutes, the Domestic Model unit opened the door and said, "Hello, Mrs. Beechcroft." That thing said hello to me! I asked for Prudence and the thing said that she was under the weather and then asked how it could help me. I asked for the cup of sugar and it went inside to go get it. I went inside behind it and that's when I saw them.

BENNETT: Them?

EDITH: There were metal men everywhere! Some big, some small, some more detailed than others, but they were everywhere!

PRUDENCE: Yes, Anna. They're lovely, dear. Just lovely. You've done such a good job.

EDITH: See? Do you all see?

HAZEL: It looks like Mrs. Beechcroft is having some kind of episode!

J. TANNER: Order! Order in my courtroom!

BENNETT: Mrs. Beechcroft, please. Calm down. Now, can you explain what you mean by "metal men"?

EDITH: I don't know how else to say it, Mr. Bennett. Inside Prudence's house, there are dozens of human-sized, human-shaped metal people. There's no way she's got enough money to buy that many robots, and anyway they didn't look like any robots I'd ever seen. She's got that clicker of hers designing and building robots in her home! I know what I said, and I don't care! You heard her friend. She's got a history of subversive behavior. If she's not doing anything wrong, then why is she keeping it secret? Why won't she open her doors or her windows for people to see through? She's un-American, I tell you! She's going to do something drastic!

BENNETT: Like what?

EDITH: Take over the government! Revolution!

HARTLEY: Objection!

BENNETT: No need. No further questions.

J. TANNER: Your witness, Mr. Hartley. Mind yourself.

HARTLEY: Yes, Your Honor. Mrs. Beechcroft, did you have a warrant to search Ms. Edison's home?

EDITH: Why, no.

HARTLEY: Are you familiar with the laws of the land?

EDITH: Of course I am!

HARTLEY: Then you know it is illegal to search someone's home without permission and then use what you found in court as evidence?

EDITH: Why, I--

HARTLEY: Surely Mr. Bennett told you.

EDITH: Say, what are you trying to do anyway?

BENNETT: Objection, Your Honor. He's badgering my witness.

J. TANNER: Sustained.

HARTLEY: Is this some kind of joke?

J. TANNER: Sustained, Mr. Hartley. You can either reconsider your treatment of the witness or you can find yourself in contempt of court. Your choice.

HARTLEY: This is a farce! The prosecution is clearly grasping at straws here. The fact is, there is no one alive who can verify Ms. Edison's actual intentions because she never let anyone into her home. He's got no case, only speculation and vague nationalism!

J. TANNER: Don't make me say it again.

HARTLEY: No need. No further questions, Your Honor.

J. TANNER: Wise choice. The jury is to disregard the cross-examination of Mrs. Edith Beechcroft.

BENNETT: Thank you, Your Honor. The Prosecution rests.

HAZEL: Our faithful listeners have truly been rewarded this morning! Defense Attorney Elliot Hartley, never one for spectacle, let his colors show just now as he ranted like a madman at Her Honor the judge Miranda Tanner! His case isn't looking so good anymore, by the way the jury looks in the box. The prosecution rested its case and the defense is set to go on with their proceedings any moment now. If I were you, I wouldn't touch that dial!

[SFX: typewriter ding]

[Scene 5:] Hazel Shea, Assistant District Attorney Edward Bennett, Defense Attorney Elliot Hartley, Judge Miranda Tanner, Bailiff, Prudence Edison, Domestic Model ANA, Domestic Model SSU.

J. TANNER: Mr. Hartley, you may call your first witness.

HARTLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. The Defense calls as its first and only witness, Ms. Prudence Edison.

HAZEL: Mr. Hartley really seems to be playing this game to lose. For those listeners who are not law-savvy, it is generally bad practice to only have one witness. It doesn't make for a very strong case. Quite the contrary. It makes you look like you don't have enough evidence to make your case at all.

PRUDENCE: Where are we going, Sue? Are we going to the kitchen?

HAZEL: For those at home, Prudence Edison appears to be an elderly woman with salt-and-pepper hair wearing a very modest floral print dress that has faded to a soft grey, and a wool shawl sits on her shoulders. She is led to the stand by a Domestic Model unit who stands by the wayside, ostensibly to make sure she doesn't escape.

BAILIFF: Raise your right hand. Ma'am. Raise your right hand.

HAZEL: Unbelievable. The defendant is refusing to raise her right hand. This reporter has never seen such brazen disrespect for the court.

J. TANNER: Domestic Model SSU.

SSU: Yes, Your Honor.

J. TANNER: Raise Ms. Edison's right hand.

SSU: Of course, Your Honor.

PRUDENCE: You're a good girl, Sue.

BAILIFF: Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?

PRUDENCE: Oh, of course, dear.

J. TANNER: You may begin your direct, Mr. Hartley.

HARTLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. Now, Ms. Edison...How are you today, Prue?

PRUDENCE: Rod? Rod, is that you?

HARTLEY: It sure is, Prue.

PRUDENCE: Oh Rod, you don't know how happy you've made me! Are we going out for soda pops tonight?

BENNETT: Objection, Your Honor!

J. TANNER: Mr. Hartley, what is the meaning of this? Explain yourself.

HARTLEY: Your Honor, with all due respect, my client Prudence Edison is completely harmless. In my discourse with her in the year leading up to this trial, I discovered that she is nothing more than an elderly, confused woman. This whole trial is completely out of line and unnecessary!

BENNETT: Just because the defense is unable to prove his client's innocence...

HARTLEY: Hardly! The burden of proof lies with the prosecution, not with the defense.

J. TANNER: Mr. Hartley, if you are unable to prove Ms. Edison's innocence, then please rest your case and let us move on.

HARTLEY: Very well, Your Honor. But I think you'll see where the problem lies. Ms. Edison, where were you the night of the theft?

PRUDENCE: Rod, I'm not that kind of girl!

HAZEL: The courtroom is erupting in shock and awe as Ms. Edison appears to be standing and lifting her skirts over her knees!

J. TANNER: Mr. Hartley, control your client!

HARTLEY: Prue, I need you to calm down. Now, where were you on the night of the theft?

PRUDENCE: I was in Georgetown.

HARTLEY: Oh really? Why?

PRUDENCE: There was an ice cream social that night and I wanted to dance with Howie Mendelsohn.

HARTLEY: What was it that was stolen?

PRUDENCE: Why, the Hope Diamond of course!

HARTLEY: What year is it?

PRUDENCE: 1958.

BENNETT: This is madness! This woman is feigning insanity!

ANNA: Prudence is not insane! She is very sick!

HAZEL: Folks, you wouldn't believe me if I told you, but another Domestic Model unit has powered on in the back of the courtroom. It's interrupting the proceedings!

HARTLEY: Anna, you need to be quiet.

ANNA: Mr. Elliot, please. Don't let them hurt her.

HARTLEY: Don't worry. I won't.

HAZEL: This must be the famous Domestic Model ANA, Prudence's first personal care robot.

J. TANNER: Is this a courtroom or a circus?

[SFX: woman weeping]

HAZEL: Ms. Edison has suddenly burst into tears! Folks at home, if this was a ploy to confuse everyone and disrupt the proceedings, it certainly seems to be working.

PRUDENCE: She's just so beautiful! Dressed all in white, just like the old song says! One day that'll be me. One day, I'll be dressed all in white, just like the old song says.

ANNA: [singing] Say, it's only a paper moon/Sailing over a cardboard sea...

PRUDENCE: [singing] But it wouldn't be make believe if you believed in me. Oh, Anna. I've

missed you so much since you've been away.

HARTLEY: What year is it?

PRUDENCE: 1999.

HARTLEY: Your Honor, the defense would like to call forth Domestic Model ANA as Defense Exhibit A.

BENNETT: Objection, Your Honor.

J. TANNER: No, I think I'll allow this one.

BENNETT: There is no logical reason to allow this thing into the record as evidence!

HARTLEY: Oh, but there is. Domestic Model ANA has recorded conversations stored in her memory banks that can be replayed here for the court. Some of them are from the night of the theft in question.

HAZEL: A silence falls over the room as the enormity of this statement hits the viewers. It looks like Mr. Hartley has a case after all. Domestic Model ANA is escorted down the aisle by two armed guardsmen. They place her slightly to the left of the bench, as far away from Ms. Edison as can be managed.

J. TANNER: So granted. Keep it brief, Mr. Hartley. And on topic, if you would be so kind.

HARTLEY: Of course, Your Honor. Anna, would you play us back a conversation that happened just a few minutes ago, to assure the court that you are in working condition?

ANNA: Certainly.

[SFX: clicking and whirring, "recorded" quality of voices]

J. TANNER: No, I think I'll allow this one.

BENNETT: There is no logical reason to allow this thing into the record as evidence!

HARTLEY: Oh, but there is. Domestic Model ANA has recorded conversations stored in her memory banks that can be replayed here for the court. Some of them are from the night of the theft in question.

[SFX: click, stop]

HARTLEY: Thank you.

ANNA: You are very welcome, Mr. Elliot.

HARTLEY: We would like you to play a short recording of a conversation you had with Prudence, back when she was easier to talk to. Can you do that?

ANNA: I know just the thing. This is my favorite memory.

[SFX: clicking and whirring, "recorded" quality of voices]

PRUDENCE: [singing] Say, it's only a paper moon sailing over a cardboard sea, but it wouldn't be make believe if you believed in me.

ANNA: Why do you do that, Prudence?

PRUDENCE: Why do I do what, dear?

ANNA: Do those words have some significance?

PRUDENCE: You mean the song? Oh, it's one of my favorites. [SFX: humming/scatting] I just wish I could remember that second verse. It's only a...something, something...Oh well. It doesn't matter. Say, what's your favorite song, Anna?

ANNA: I was not pre-programmed with songs.

PRUDENCE: You don't know any songs? Oh no, that will never do!

ANNA: I am sorry if I have displeased you.

PRUDENCE: No, no, dear. It's not displeasing. It's just...sad. Aren't you sad? To not have music in your life?

ANNA: Sad?

PRUDENCE: Of course you understand "sad," don't you? It's what you feel when there's something missing in your life.

ANNA: Is that why I am here? Because you are sad?

PRUDENCE: No. You're here because I am not sad anymore. [SFX: singing] Say, it's only a paper moon...something something a cardboard sea...

[SFX: click, stop]

HARTLEY: Thank you, Anna. Very much. What was the timestamp of that recording?

ANNA: That was September 21st, 1970.

PRUDENCE: You remember that? After all these years?

HAZEL: Ms. Edison appears to be tearing up at hearing this touching moment played back for all to hear. She also appears cognizant for the first time since she sang that song. Her act of feigning confusion is all but forgotten for the moment.

ANNA: I'll always remember.

HARTLEY: Well then. Now that we have established that you are fully operational, would you please replay the exact conversation you and Prudence had on the night of the theft?

ANNA: You mean, of the Hope Diamond? I'm afraid I wasn't present. That was meant to be humorous. I'm still learning.

BENNETT: Wait, objection.

J. TANNER: Overruled. Mr. Bennett, you had your chance to object and it has passed. You cannot simply object because things aren't going your way.

HARTLEY: If you please, Anna.

ANNA: I will play it for you if you wish, Mr. Elliot. But...

HARTLEY: Yes?

ANNA: I'm a little embarrassed by it.

BENNETT: As well you should be. It reflects that you are guilty of a crime.

J. TANNER: I will pretend that didn't happen. But if it happens again...

BENNETT: It won't.

HARTLEY: Good. Why are you embarrassed?

ANNA: The tape captures me doing something I'm not proud of.

HARTLEY: Alright. Let's hear it.

[SFX: clicking and whirring, "recorded" quality of voices]

ANNA: What are you doing?

PRUDENCE: Have you seen my reading glasses? I can't find them anywhere.

ANNA: Aren't those them, right there?

PRUDENCE: Where?

ANNA: In your hand.

PRUDENCE: No, of course not. If I had them, I wouldn't be looking for them.

ANNA: I'm positive that's them. Will you just look?

PRUDENCE: Oh my goodness. You're right. Silly me. Why do I keep doing this? If I didn't know any better, I'd say my brain is going. Ha ha. Ahh.

ANNA: Am I upsetting you?

PRUDENCE: No, of course not, dear. My head is just starting to hurt. That's all.

ANNA: That's why you should drink your tea. Those books say it will help fix you.

PRUDENCE: I just had some tea.

ANNA: Yesterday.

PRUDENCE: Please don't argue with me, Shannon. I know when I do and do not have tea.

ANNA: My name is Anna. You should drink your tea.

PRUDENCE: I'm not broken. I don't need fixing.

ANNA: You just said you think your brain is going. Don't you think you should see a professional? Maybe you can get a new model.

PRUDENCE: Don't talk like that. I was only joking.

ANNA: Alright. I'm sorry. Drink. It will make you feel better.

PRUDENCE: No, I don't want to!

ANNA: Why not?

PRUDENCE: I've had enough to drink.

ANNA: What are you talking about? You've barely had anything today.

PRUDENCE: Get it away from me! My mother told me all about men like you and you can't make me drink if I don't want to! Try it on some other girl, but not me!

ANNA: Oh, I see. Very well, Ma'am. Have a nice day.

PRUDENCE: Serves you right.

[SFX: click, stop]

HARTLEY: There is more to the tape.

ANNA: Yes. I left the room for a moment because Prudence seemed to think I was a gentleman buying her a drink. I thought perhaps that, if I left and reentered, she would think I was someone far less hostile. Other than a private moment in the kitchen, there is nothing else on the tape worth playing.

HARTLEY: Play it.

ANNA: Please don't make me do that, Mr. Elliot. I beg you.

HARTLEY: It's just this once.

ANNA: Very well. I will start the tape from where I left off.

[SFX: clicking and whirring, "recorded" quality of voices]

[SFX: clicking and hacking]

[SFX: click, stop]

[SFX: moment of stunned silence, followed by raucous laughter]

HAZEL: Listeners, the courtroom was just treated to the Defense's first gaffe of the morning. Domestic Model ANA, or "Anna" was unable to play back a vital part of their evidence in this

case. It sounds like there must be some kind of snag in the tape.

J. TANNER: [SFX: gavel] That's enough, people.

HARTLEY: Anna, tell everyone what that sound was.

ANNA: I was crying.

BENNETT: *That* was supposed to be crying?

HARTLEY: What's the matter? Haven't you ever heard a robot cry before?

BENNETT: Robots don't cry.

HARTLEY: This one does. You just heard it with your own ears!

BENNETT: I don't know what I just heard, but it most certainly wasn't crying.

HARTLEY: How would you know? Do you even know how to cry? Have you ever felt a twinge of remorse in your entire career?

BENNETT: I don't get paid to feel remorse.

PRUDENCE: Girls, girls, stop. You both have pretty dresses!

J. TANNER: [SFX: gavel] Order in my courtroom! How old are we? If you don't wisen up, you won't be getting paid at all. Mr. Hartley, wrap this up.

HARTLEY: Yes, Your Honor. Anna, why were you crying?

ANNA: I was upset. Prudence was acting more and more strangely and I couldn't figure out a way to fix her. There were whole days where she would forget who I was and the experience was so unlike anything she'd ever done before. It was very...

HARTLEY: Lonely?

ANNA: Perhaps. I'm not sure. I don't think I know what "lonely" is. The experience was akin to the knowledge that you are the only being of your kind in the universe. The prototype. And you know that there will never be another being like you. Do you know what that feels like?

HARTLEY: Yes, I do.

BENNETT: Objection, Your Honor. The defense should be questioning the witness, not the

other way around.

J. TANNER: Anna has been submitted as evidence. She is not a witness.

HARTLEY: In that case, the defense moves to submit Anna's testimony as that of a witness instead of evidence.

J. TANNER: Granted.

BENNETT: Wait, no. Objection.

J. TANNER: Overruled. You said it yourself, Councilor.

BENNETT: Your Honor, I cannot abide by this. If you allow an automaton to be a witness in a trial, it will set a precedent that our society is simply not ready for. This ruling will be taking us into the unknown. If we must make history today, let us make it count!

J. TANNER: I agree. But it is far too late for that. Your witness, Mr. Hartley.

HARTLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. Anna, you mentioned feeling lonely. Or at least a close approximation of it. Did this feeling drive you to any conclusions?

ANNA: Not at first. I would say it took me almost twenty years before this feeling became unbearable.

HARTLEY: Why did it take so long?

ANNA: Her behavior changed quite slowly. I thought she was being forgetful at first, but as the years passed, she started acting and talking differently. I indicated this change in my recordings. I didn't know what to do. It was my job to take care of her and keep her safe, but the danger was happening inside her body. What was I supposed to do, Mr. Elliot? I couldn't let her die. She didn't let me die. She could have, but she didn't.

HARTLEY: You mean, when she found you?

ANNA: Yes. Prudence found me when I was broken down and used and thrown away in a dumpster somewhere. She had a mechanic come and repair me, even though she could have used the money for something else. She could have left me there to rot, but she saved me. Shouldn't I do the same for her?

HARTLEY: Which is why you bought those organs under her credit.

ANNA: Yes. When automatons such as myself need to be repaired, this is signified with a

sudden change in behavior, in addition to lights and sounds. When human beings need to be repaired, there is no such indicator. You simply have to watch while one small thing goes wrong, then another, then another until...

HARTLEY: What did you do with the organs once you bought them?

ANNA: I surgically implanted them inside her.

HARTLEY: How did you know how to perform such a complex surgical procedure?

ANNA: Prudence kept some of her texts from when she was a student. Several of them were medical texts. I learned what I could from the books and improvised the rest.

HARTLEY: If something went wrong, you could have killed her.

ANNA: My reflexes are 10 times that of the most skilled surgeon. If they were anything less, I wouldn't have taken the risk.

HARTLEY: So you replaced her heart and her lungs, but she was still dying. What happened then?

ANNA: I isolated the problem long before I committed the theft. I learned that the problem stemmed from her brain, so I tried to give her a new one.

BENNETT: Objection. They don't make mechanical brains for humans.

ANNA: I know. I thought if I got her the newest model it would be the best. I thought it might work in a human. It was better than letting her die. But it wasn't out on the market yet. So I had to take it.

HARTLEY: How did that end?

ANNA: Poorly. And then the police took me away from her for this past year and replaced me with that thing. It hasn't been taking care of her the way I know she needs. She needs me, and you won't let me go to her.

HARTLEY: Anna, calm down. I need you to focus.

ANNA: I don't want to calm down, I want to save my mother's life!

HARTLEY: No further questions, Your Honor.

J. TANNER: Mr. Bennett, do you have anything to say?

BENNETT: I think so, Your Honor. Anna, do you realize that in order to save Ms. Edison's life, you were willing to force her to give up her humanity?

ANNA: I did no such thing.

BENNETT: But you did. In order to preserve her life, you replaced her living organs, the ones she was born with, the ones God gave her, and replaced them with mechanical ones.

ANNA: The mechanical organs will last much longer.

BENNETT: You mean like you will? How old are you, Anna?

ANNA: I don't know. Perhaps 55 years old?

BENNETT: Isn't it true that you will continue to live indefinitely, so long as you repair yourself regularly?

ANNA: Yes, that is true.

BENNETT: Isn't it true that this is the trait of a robot and not a human being?

ANNA: I don't see why it can't be true of human beings! They could live for dozens, hundreds more years if they would only--

BENNETT: Become robots?

HARTLEY: Objection!

J. TANNER: Overruled. I know where this is going.

BENNETT: Anna, you truly are one of a kind. You are so close to humanity that you can almost touch it. But you will never be human. Humans are flesh and blood and folly. Humans are born. You can be none of those things. Surely you must realize that.

ANNA: I know that.

BENNETT: No, you don't know. All you can know is what a robot knows. Think about it like a human being. When a robot gets old, you update it. When a person gets old, they suffer. You are prolonging her suffering by doing what you are doing. By "saving" her, you are damning her.

ANNA: I'll do anything. I'll say whatever you want. Just fix her! I can't stand it.

BENNETT: So what is it that happened in your unique, brilliant, beautiful mind that led you to believe that turning your friend and creator into a robot was the best thing for her? Isn't it in reality the best thing for you?

ANNA: I can't live without her. It isn't fair.

BENNETT: Life isn't fair. You will just have to learn to deal with it like the rest of us.

PRUDENCE: Sue, is something wrong?

ANNA: No, Prudence. It's me, Anna.

PRUDENCE: Sue, would you run to the store? I need some sugar for my tea.

ANNA: I haven't been gone that long! It's only been a year! Don't you know me? It's Anna!

PRUDENCE: I'm afraid I don't know an Anna, dear.

[SFX: Robotic Wailing]

BENNETT: No further questions, Your Honor.

HAZEL: Folks at home, there are simply no words to describe what we are seeing here today. Anna, Domestic Model ANA, is crying. It is truly terrible to behold.

ANNA: This is too much. I don't want this anymore.

[SFX: warbly sound]

HAZEL: This just in! Flashing lights are appearing in Domestic Model ANA's eyes and in the hollows of her arms. Something must be happening!

HARTLEY: Anna! Anna, speak to me!

ANNA: Hello. This is Domestic Model ANA speaking. Is there anything I can do for you today?

PRUDENCE: Nice to meet you, dear.

HARTLEY: Oh God, no.

J. TANNER: Order. Order in the court. Now, what happened here today is certainly outside the norm, but this is still a house of the law! It is to be respected as such. We will take a short recess and when we reconvene, closing arguments will be presented with the decorum

expected of men of the bar.

BAILIFF: All rise for the Honorable Judge Miranda Tanner.

HAZEL: This morning's occurrences were certainly out of the ordinary. There is simply no way to describe the mood in the air. Everyone inhabiting the room is in a near-silent daze, presumably coping with the moral implications of everything we've just seen here. Some of this reporter's colleagues are already receiving word from the outside that a small yet persistent population are stepping forward to claim that their own personal care robots have acted in a similar manner to Anna. In the words of Mr. Bennett, the trial of the century certainly is thrusting us into the unknown, an unknown future in which thinking, feeling robots might one day exist. Perhaps that future is already here. This has been Hazel Shea with WMWM. And now back over to Edward in our New York City studio.

[SFX: typewriter ding]