

**FILED**  
**08-14-2019**  
**Barron County, WI**  
**Sharon Millermon**  
**2019CF000256**  
**Honorable J. M. Bitney**  
**Branch 2**

STATE OF WISCONSIN	CIRCUIT COURT	BARRON COUNTY
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STATE OF WISCONSIN	Plaintiff,	DA Case No.: 2019BA000910 Assigned DA/ADA: Brian H Wright Agency Case No.: 19TL1897 Court Case No.: 19 CF 256
-VS-		

Melanie R Kuula  
 206 Soo Avenue E  
 Almena, WI 54805  
 DOB: 06/22/1975  
 Sex/Race: F/W  
 Eye Color: Green  
 Hair Color: Red  
 Height: 5 ft 04 in  
 Weight: 110 lbs  
 Alias:

ATN:

### **Criminal Complaint**

Defendant,

The undersigned, on information and belief, being first duly sworn, states that:

#### **Count 1: SECOND DEGREE INTENTIONAL HOMICIDE**

The above-named defendant on or about Saturday, August 10, 2019, Barron County, Wisconsin, did cause the death of Brett M Bents, with intent to kill that person, under the following circumstances: adequate provocation, contrary to sec. 940.05(1)(b), 939.50(3)(b) Wis. Stats., a Class B Felony, and upon conviction may be sentenced to a term of imprisonment not to exceed sixty (60) years.

#### **PROBABLE CAUSE:**

Basis for this complaint is a statement by the undersigned that he/she is District Attorney/Assistant District Attorney with the Barron County District Attorney's Office and as such has access to all reports and complaints filed with his/her department. Complainant is informed by the report of Officer Shane Traczyk of the Turtle Lake Police Department and Detective Jeff Nelson, Detective Jason Olson and Deputy Christopher Allen of the Barron County Sheriff's Department.

Officer Shane Traczyk, with the Turtle Lake Police Department, reports on August 10, 2019 at approximately 4:20 PM, he was dispatched to the address of 206 Soo Avenue East, in the Village of Almena, Barron County, Wisconsin, for a report of a stabbing. Barron County Dispatch advised that Kenneth A. Carmona called 911 and stated his neighbor, who was later identified as the defendant Melanie R. Kuula, whose date of birth is June 22, 1975, told him she stabbed her boyfriend. Kenneth stated the male was lying in the back yard. Kenneth believed the male was deceased. Kenneth further stated the female was full of blood and walking around the block. Kenneth informed dispatch that the name of the female covered in blood was Melanie.

Upon arrival, Officer Traczyk walked to the parking lot area and observed a white Ford Ranger. On the ground near the driver's side of the vehicle, Officer Traczyk saw a male lying on his back. Officer Traczyk observed a large amount of blood on the male's chest, as well as his neck and face. Officer Traczyk also observed a large amount of blood pooling underneath the male's back. Officer Traczyk checked for signs of life but there was no pulse and no response when he lightly shook the male. EMTs Scott R. Hagelberger, Kellen R. Teig, Jonathan D. Ekerstedt, and Mark Zimmerman responded and confirmed the male, who was identified as Brett M. Bents, was deceased.

Detective Jeff Nelson, with the Barron County Sheriff's Department, reports the apartment building consists of a multi-story brick building, which has been added with wood frame construction on the east side, which contains multiple rental units. Apartment #2 specifically can be described as a multi-level potentially two bedroom apartment with the #2 clearly marked on the exterior of the metal framed door. Detective Nelson reports that Brett lived in Apartment #2 with the defendant.

Apartment #3 is directly connected to Apartment #2 but is accessible through a separate steel framed metal door with a glass window. There are no markings on the exterior of that metal door and it has no locking mechanism. Upon entering the building through the separate steel framed door is a stairway consisting of wooden steps which rise approximately two levels to a door which is marked as #3. Detective Nelson reports that Zachary J. Erickson lives in Apartment #3.

Approximately halfway up the steps leading to Apartment #3 is a landing where there is a door that ultimately leads into a hallway of Apartment #2. There is a deadbolt locking mechanism that secures that door and makes it only accessible from Apartment #2 into the hallway if the door is unlocked.

There is also a lower level apartment with the door for that apartment located on the north side of the building. Detective Nelson reports that Tiffani L. Padlo lives in the lower level apartment.

Officer Traczyk reports he spoke with Kenneth, Kenneth's mother Elizabeth A. Carmona, and Tiffani L. Padlo, and later obtained written statements from Elizabeth and Tiffani. Kenneth and Elizabeth live in a boarding house at 200 Soo Avenue East adjacent to the three apartments at 206 Soo Avenue East. Kenneth and Elizabeth were later interviewed by Detective Jason Olson, with the Barron County Sheriff's Department. Tiffani was later interviewed by Deputy Christopher Allen, also with the Barron County Sheriff's Department.

Kenneth confirmed that he was the person who called 911. Kenneth explained that, as he was getting ready for work, the defendant pounded on his door. Kenneth stated he knew the defendant and Brett, but only by their first names, from living in the building and drinking a few beers with them. Kenneth observed that the defendant was "really, really covered in blood" and that her whole body had blood on it.

Kenneth's mother, Elizabeth, who was also present when Kenneth answered the door, observed the defendant's face, hands and arms were covered in blood. Kenneth and Elizabeth both heard the defendant say she caught her boyfriend fucking a girl and she stabbed him.

Elizabeth stated the defendant then walked out on the sidewalk area and around the corner. Elizabeth stated that while she and Kenneth were standing on the sidewalk, along with another woman (Tiffani), the defendant approached them and said she stabbed him and that she doesn't fucking care if she goes to jail. The defendant then took off running and began to yell fuck you guys, fuck you all as she ran down the street.

In her written statement, Tiffani states she stepped outside her apartment and two of her neighbors (Kenneth and Elizabeth) were on the phone with the cops when she saw her other neighbor (Melanie) covered in blood saying, "I caught him fucking some bitch. So what was I supposed to do? So I stabbed him." The female then walked away, turned around and said "fuck all of you." Tiffani states that she and her two neighbors (Kenneth and Elizabeth) then went into the back area and saw a male lying on the ground not moving. Tiffani states that she, Kenneth and Elizabeth showed the cop (Officer Traczyk) where the male was located and then they walked back out front. After they walked out front, Kenneth and Elizabeth waved at Tiffani indicating the defendant was in their building (the boarding house) showering.

Officer Traczyk reports that, while he was at the back of the residence, he observed Tiffani attempt to flag him down. Tiffani directed Officer Traczyk to the boarding house where he made contact with the defendant when she opened the bathroom door at the end of the hallway in the commons area of the boarding house. The defendant had just showered and had not yet dressed. Officer Traczyk took the defendant into custody.

Officer Traczyk advised the defendant of her Miranda rights and she indicated she was willing to speak with him. The defendant stated she got mad when she walked into the upstairs apartment (Zachary's apartment) and saw her boyfriend (Brett) and Clarissa S. Johnson, who was visiting Zachary, engaged in a sexual act. The defendant stated she ran down the stairs and grabbed a knife off the counter in her apartment and "hit him" (Brett). The defendant told Officer Traczyk she stuck him (Brett) in the chest and then he ran outside.

Detective Nelson reports that in Apartment #2 (the apartment the defendant shared with Brett), blood smears were observed across the kitchen floor (lower level). Items of evidence recovered from the kitchen include a frying pan that was bent and the wooden handle from a kitchen spatula, both of which were covered in blood and what appeared to be soft tissue. A serrated bladed kitchen knife, also bent and with blood on it, was located in the entryway of the apartment leading into the kitchen. Detective Nelson observed blood spatter on the north facing wall in the entry way. Detective Nelson also observed blood, blood spatter and blood droplets on a clear colored shower curtain and reusable shopping bag in the north corner of the entry way.

Detective Nelson reports on August 11, 2019 at approximately 10:00 AM, Dr. A. Quinn Strobl, with the Midwest Medical Examiner's Office, performed a forensic exam on Brett's body. Dr. Strobl reported to Detective Nelson that she found a single stab wound that perforated Brett's heart. Dr. Strobl also stated there were multiple blunt force traumas to Brett's head and face. Dr. Strobl indicated the blunt force injuries she observed to Brett's head and face are consistent with his having been struck with the frying pan and wooden handle from the kitchen spatula. Dr. Strobl also indicated there were some small fissure type markings on Brett's inner hands which she described as being defensive wounds, and could be consistent with the serrated bladed knife that was recovered at the scene.

Dr. Strobl indicated the primary cause of death to Brett Bents was a stab wound to the chest with a secondary cause of death being extensive trauma to the head. Dr. Strobl advised the manner of death would be ruled a homicide.

The statements made by the law enforcement officers can be considered truthful, credible, and reliable because of the positions of trust they hold. The statements of the citizen witnesses can be considered truthful, credible, and reliable because they are made by citizen witnesses. The statements of the defendant(s) can be considered truthful, credible, and reliable to the extent to which they are admissions against interests.

Subscribed and sworn to before me on 08/14/19  
Electronically Signed By:  
John Rafa Todd  
Assistant District Attorney  
State Bar #: 1107234

Electronically Signed By:  
Brian H. Wright  
Complainant