Witness: Abbas Imani

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Day 1 of 1 for this witness

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Direct Examination by Pat Harris

HARRIS: Good morning.

IMANI: Good morning.

HARRIS: We have already, in some ways we have already been introduced. But we have heard, references have been made to the Pacific Cafe, and more commonly, apparently, it's just referred to as Abbas, so we sort of know who you are.

IMANI: Yeah, sorry.

HARRIS: If you would, you are the owner of the Pacific Cafe?

IMANI: Yes, sir.

HARRIS: This is a restaurant there Morro Bay?

IMANI: Yes, sir.

HARRIS: What kind of restaurant is it?

IMANI: It's gourmet continental cuisine in a casual atmosphere.

HARRIS: Very well put.

IMANI: Thank you.

HARRIS: Small restaurant?

IMANI: Yes.

HARRIS: How many tables do you have?

IMANI: At the time Scott worked, or currently?

HARRIS: At the time Scott worked, actually.

IMANI: Ten tables, plus two tables outside. Twelve tables, sir.

HARRIS: In developing this restaurant, you looked for a specific, in fact, you kind of mentioned it a minute ago. Specific kind of atmosphere you were trying to create; is that right?

IMANI: Yes, sir. I was in restaurant business in Palm Springs, which is the rich and famous dine usually there. And then we brought that to, I traveled to Morro Bay, and me and my wife were just married about approximately 20 years ago. We loved Morro Bay. So I told my wife, this is where I want to live. So we found a small restaurant. Even though she thought we're not going

to make it there, because I'm so used to fancy. But I said it's like going camping. You bring gourmet food, so make it casual, yet bring the good food.

HARRIS: And are you still doing that?

IMANI: Yes, sir.

HARRIS: How many years have you been in business?

IMANI: Approximately twenty years, but don't quote me on exact time, sir.

HARRIS: How did you end up meeting Scott?

IMANI: Before I met Scott, his mom and dad, Jackie and Pete, they were our regular customers. And then the first time I believe I met Scott when he graduated from high school, would join Jackie and Pete there for dinner. First time, if I'm correct, that is the first time I met him.

HARRIS: Had you, you ended up hiring him at one point?

IMANI: No, not at that point. I think Jackie and Lee were part time residents of Morro Bay, and they would eat at the restaurant regularly. And, like I said, our restaurant was small even, though I did all the cooking, yet my pleasure for me to come outside, get to know all our customers. Sort of get, that's just the type we are. And then I would, basically all the customers I talked to. And then Jackie and Pete were such classy people, naturally you talk and get to know them. And then I would say a year or so, or two years later, I believe Scott went to Arizona, but I don't know the detail of it. Then come back. One night they were in for dinner. I remember specifically what table then even sat. Like I said, we were small. And then when they went home, I, usually in our restaurant I'm the first person unlock the door about eight in the morning, then I'm the last person to leave. Especially at those days, we didn't have any kids. Now we have kids, so I tried to cheat and go home early to spend time before they go to bed.

HARRIS: Scott ends up showing up?

IMANI: Yes.

HARRIS: What did he say?

IMANI: Excuse me. I'm sorry I got sidetracked. Scott showed up after they went home, and I am closing up, stocking the wine. Scott showed up said, sir, I would like to get a job here. I said very, specifically, exactly. And I want you to know, I'm not trying to paint a pretty picture of Scott. I'm just going to tell you the truth, exactly how it was. So Scott, I said, you know, just because your mom and dad are my friends doesn't mean that I'm not going to fire you if you don't do a good job. Exactly words. He said, sir, I'm going to make you proud of me. You give me a chance, I'm gonna do a good job. And he did.

HARRIS: So you hired him that day?

IMANI: The way I hire people I say, you know, you come to the restaurant, like first I passed just, once we understand each other, then we say come to the restaurant one night, we'll try you out first. Is important for you to like to work with us. Then, if you do, then we'll try to make you as good as possible, because most of our customers are generally older than us at the time specially, more successful than us, and wiser than us. So we have to constantly improve. And that's how we do it. And then I did, he came the next night, and he got the job.

HARRIS: What do you generally look for when you are hiring a waiter? What kind of traits are you looking for?

IMANI: Courteous, polite, and also obedient. Follow the rules. Willingness to improve. Let's put it that way.

HARRIS: What were your first impressions of Scott?

IMANI: You know, the best quality I can think of him is he's the politest and most courteous person I have ever seen in my life. And the worst part of him, he's very, very clumsy. He's clumsy. Because I loan him my car one night, and he had an accident that night. He hit, and thank God he hit the produce delivery truck. That was not very expensive. Then he bought a motorcycle. He had two accidents with it. So he was clumsy as far as --

HARRIS: You say he was polite, courteous.

IMANI: Extremely.

HARRIS: Was he also respectful?

IMANI: Extremely respectful. He worked for me for a few years, even after he stopped working for me. I never caught him calling me by any name once. Always, "Sir".

HARRIS: What did he call you?

IMANI: "Sir", always. And just came naturally. Not that I demands everybody to call me, sir. But just came naturally. Just like, it's amazing for me his politeness and consideration. Like I said, you can teach a waiter to be anything, but certain things, like when certain, most customers, when they left our restaurant, we had to say that no matter where you are, I want all of you say, "Thank you, good night." And but, which they did. But in his case he would run, open the door for people when they leave, or when they come, like open the door for them. Those are the things I didn't have to basically teach him how to do it. It just came naturally to him.

HARRIS: How was he as a waiter, as far as just being a waiter, his job?

IMANI: Very, very good. You, of course, like we had waiters better than him at wine, and/or some, but overall, overall, if you grade him, it was over a hundred, more than that. I would say waiters we have had in our restaurant over the years, I would say he's the top three.

HARRIS: Customers like him?

IMANI: That's the sad part. Everybody is heartbroken that from the era of him, they see me, they say such a tragic thing to happen to both families. Just not believable.

HARRIS: Did you ever receive a whole lot of complaints about him from customers?

IMANI: Never, sir.

HARRIS: What would he, do extra things for customers, go out of his way?

IMANI: Actually, one time I had to actually tell him, correct him, because we have a good customer, Doctor Westbrook comes in the regularly. And he would try to pay for it. But he made a special desert stray for them, because they were good customers. And I said, you know, it's my job to, it's your job is to do, I mean, however that sounds, that's how he was. Actually correct him.

HARRIS: How about Ms. Parker? You told a story about a Mrs. Parker? What's that story?

IMANI: You know, again, I hate to sound like we are special restaurant, because it's not about my restaurant. We have a couple, he's a fantastic man, and he has a very, very sick wife. And I cannot believe she didn't die ten years ago, or ten years before then that Scott, but very sick person. The wife. But Mr. Parker, wonderful man. And they would come to dinner like once every two, three weeks, or once every two weeks to the restaurant. And they wouldn't take Mrs. Parker out of the car. The son, the daughter-in-law, and the granddaughter. But we had a table outside. Once we knew they were coming, Scott would put the heaters and all that. And then like they make a nice tray for, lamb shank for Mrs. Parker, which most of the time she had, and a rose. And they take them. I did not instruct him to do that. But this is, that, and Scott started it. And then sort of became a tradition after that, that they would take a nice tray to the car, to the front seat of the car. But the car was basically parked there, and we had a glass barrier here.

And this is where the family would sit. But they would see her right from here to that desk.

HARRIS: You said one of the traits you like for a waiter is a willingness to learn?

IMANI: Definitely. He wanted to learn. And always, sometimes he stayed after hours, and sort of, he admired my sort of love of restaurant business, if you call it. And then I think that, and I used to say don't blame me for getting into restaurant business. And he started The Shack later on. That was a restaurant that he basically put it all together by himself.

HARRIS: How was his work ethic? Was he,

IMANI: Fantastic. I wish there was more workers,

HARRIS: Would he show up on time?

IMANI: that loved their job. All the time, sir.

HARRIS: Stay late?

IMANI: Always stayed late, but not necessarily work. But after work sometimes we had, like lot of our key employees, we have like discussions. Sometimes I cook for them to kind of fix, in this case we call it peasant food. It was the left over fish, couldn't sell them that night. We mix it together, like for my good employees. I would put in there, sometime I would make extra, he says, can you like some extra for his dad, because he was staying with him. So I would make a larger plate than like for three or four people. You know. But we call it like the leftover, whatever fish that night, the salmon didn't sell, or just mix them together, make food out of it.

HARRIS: You tell us that he was a genuine person. Felt like he was genuine, wasn't shallow. What did you mean by that?

IMANI: He came naturally, whatever his politeness, his sincerity, his respect for everybody just came, you can tell, you just, it came naturally. He didn't have to be taught. And that's why sometime, I said, you know, I have two kids of my own. And I used to say, God, you know, when you have kids, basically now you think of your kids, how successful you are, how you raise them. And say, God, where can they learn the good quality that you want to teach your kids to have?

HARRIS: You also had a chance, you are a golfer as well, I understand?

IMANI: I knew Laci very well too, like so don't get me wrong.

HARRIS: We'll get to that in a second.

IMANI: I don't want you do -

HARRIS: We'll get to that, believe me. You were also a golfer, though, and you talked about you saw him on the golf course as well his job there as well?

IMANI: He was the starter at the golf course. And I started golfing there. And you could tell the guy had a sense, but polite. You could, there is a big loudspeaker on top of the starting shack. Then I golfed, I don't golf any more. But, and he always had a funny thing, like you could laugh, you were on the third or fourth hole, you would hear this guy always, but respectful. Because there are a lot of older people. And he had a way to communicate with older people. That's the quality I like, because it's so hard, because older people are what, they created life for us. But it's most people ignore them. But he had that quality of how to deal with people older than him, and respect them, and give them the credit they deserve.

HARRIS: You mentioned Laci. Did you know Laci as well?

IMANI: Yes, sir.

HARRIS: How did you end up sort of getting to know Laci and the relationship with Scott?

IMANI: Somehow Scott meet Laci while he was working there, and she was like full of life. Bubbliest person then. They came to dinner many, many times. That's why it's heartbroken even

to think of it. And my whole family, all the people I know. And Lee Jackie and Scott and Laci always came to dinner together. And they came regularly to the restaurant, even while he worked, on his night off. But always with Jackie and Lee. And then once Jackie and Lee moved to San Diego, Laci and Scott would come to the restaurant. And most of the time they were mushroom appetizer, and split a dinner. Sometime I pick a bottle of wine for them. I used to pick for Lee and Jackie some of the wine. I used to joke, and I say these are the wines that are almost going bad, so we have get rid of them. We may dump them on you. And then I tradition continued. And I teased and joked and laughed a lot with Laci.

HARRIS: Was he excited about the relationship, was he excited about meeting her mother, for example?

IMANI: You know, just like, it's funny at the time he worked there, there was a lot of employees that had the girl at the age. And they all had this thing, oh, Scott they all wanted Scott to be married to their daughter. But none of those happened, obviously. But not that I was his social friend outside work, because, beside the fact that he joined us in golf. But when he met Laci was just like suddenly changed. Like, oh, my God, he was excited. And I never forget the night that he was meeting Laci's mother. And I remember even what table again, you know, like you remember moments, because we have a small restaurant. He put roses there, and all excited. Sir, I need you to make me some of your best appetizers, because I'm meeting Laci's mom tonight. And I remember setting up the tables, and like extra, and like, you know, typical Scott walking, like prancing, like he's like --

HARRIS: You got a chance to see him interact with his parents as well?

IMANI: Yes. Very close family. And they always came to dinner together. And one of the inconvenience, when he worked for me because Christmastime, we are busy. Always wanted off, because they would go to Pebble Beach. It was like a family tradition. They would go to Pebble Beach, that they spent a few days golfing, and they do their Christmas thing in Pebble Beach. Then I have to give them. And I didn't like it, because we were, I didn't like it, because he was a good employee.

HARRIS: Do you trust Scott? Did you trust him as an employee?

IMANI: Yes, sir. Couple of times I went out of town, he took care of our business. And then at one time I gave him the key to my to our house. We had a dog. And I had no problem trusting him.

HARRIS: I know you have told me that this is obviously very emotional for you. It's difficult for you to come and talk.

IMANI: It is, sir. I'm sorry.

HARRIS: That's okay. Can you tell me in your words what you would, what it would mean, or how you would feel about, feel about,

IMANI: Can I add one thing, sir?

HARRIS: You can add whatever you like?

IMANI: If I'm allowed. If you ask me, if you are fortuneteller, and you line up a hundred people that I knew in the past, and you told me that one of these people, such a sad thing will happen, last person I would have picked was Laci and Scott.

HARRIS: How do you think this will make you feel if Scott ends up being executed?

IMANI: There is no word for it, sir. Sad. I'm sorry. Problem is, I'll be okay. I'm sorry.

HARRIS: The Scott that you knew, the Scott that you had as an employee, do you think he can continue to contribute to society even if he is in prison?

IMANI: I just can't believe this thing happened to these two families. Yes, sir.

HARRIS: Thank you, Abbas. I appreciate it.