**SWORN STATEMENT OF DEFENDANT**

[Accused—accompanied by mother and attorney—having been advised of his/her rights and having been sworn under oath–gave the following statement]

OFFICER:  Good morning Mr./Ms. Lawson.  I am Officer Smith of the High Point Police Department.  I am here to ask you some questions about events that occurred on January 11 and 12, 2025, and to obtain your sworn testimony as to those events.  You have been advised of your rights and understand that whatever you say may be used against you in subsequent proceedings.

DEFENDANT:  Yes.

OFFICER:  And despite being advised of your rights, are you prepared to give testimony knowingly, voluntarily and without any promises from the State?

DEFENDANT:  I do.

OFFICER:  Let’s first get into some background.  Please state your name, age, address and whether you are employed.

DEFENDANT:  I am Dakota Lawson. I’m 16 years old.  I live at 123 Main Street, High Point, NC.  I am a high-school junior at Weaver Academy.

OFFICER: Have you always lived in North Carolina?

DEFENDANT:  No.  My family and I are originally from California.

OFFICER: When did you move to North Carolina and why?

DEFENDANT: We moved just before I began high school?  My parents moved us because they were changing the focus of their business?

OFFICER: What do your parents do for a living?

DEFENDANT: They have their own business as computer software consultants.

OFFICER: So, you inherited the “computer gêne” from your parents?

DEFENDANT: Yeah.  I’m a computer nerd.

OFFICER: On an average day, how much time do you spend on a computer?

DEFENDANT: Oh, between 7-8 hours.

OFFICER:  Focusing on the night of January 11, 2025, from whom did you receive a telephone call?

DEFENDANT: Sam Sherrone.

OFFICER:  Who is Sam Sherrone?

DEFENDANT: He’s/ She’s my best friend.

OFFICER:  For how long have you known Sam Sherrone?

DEFENDANT: About two-three years.

OFFICER:  What is the nature of your relationship with Sam Sherrone?

DEFENDANT: We socialize together.  We’re constantly on the phone with each other.

OFFICER:  Focusing on the night of January 11, 2025, what phone call did you have with Sam Sherrone?

DEFENDANT: Sam called me to ask permission to use one of my e-mail addresses.

OFFICER:  Why did he/she want to use one of your e-mail addresses?

DEFENDANT: He/ She didn’t say why.

OFFICER:  Did you ask him/her why he/she wanted to use one of your e-mail addresses?

DEFENDANT:  No.

OFFICER:  When had Sam ever previously used one of your e-mail addresses?

DEFENDANT: On several occasions.

OFFICER:  Why didn’t he/she just use his/her own e-mail addresses?

DEFENDANT: Two reasons.  Sam’s not tech-savvy and was probably unable to establish his/her own e-mail addresses.  Also, he/she didn’t want his/her mother to see e-mails Sam was sending to friends.

OFFICER:  What e-mail address did you permit Sam to use?

DEFENDANT: Awesomesauce@gmail.com.

OFFICER:  What else did you and Sam discuss during your January 11, 2025, telephone call?

DEFENDANT: Sam told me that he/she had just had another argument with the principal at his/her high school?

OFFICER:  What high school does Sam attend?

DEFENDANT: Dudley High School.

OFFICER:  Were you surprised to learn that Sam had had another argument with the principal?

DEFENDANT: Nah! The principal has been harassing Sam about his/her attendance since the beginning of the year.

OFFICER:  What did you suggest that Sam do as a result of this harassment?

DEFENDANT: I told him/her that he/she should make the principal into a “bullet-stopper”?

OFFICER:  How serious were you when you made this suggestion?

DEFENDANT: I was just joking.  In fact, I was laughing when I said it.

OFFICER:  What indication did Sam give that he/she was going to act on your suggestion?

DEFENDANT:  None.

OFFICER: Now, knowing that Sam was angry at his/her principal, why didn’t you put some restrictions on his/her use of your e-mail address?

DEFENDANT: Why should I?  It’s a free-speech country.  Who am I to restrict another person’s free speech?

OFFICER:  When did you next hear anything about this matter?

DEFENDANT: That night, I was online and saw that Sam had used the e-mail address that I had shared with him/her to send a threatening e-mail to his/her school and the principal.

OFFICER [Showing police investigation report]: This is the police investigation report.  How did Sam threaten his/her high school and the principal?

DEFENDANT {referring to police investigation report]:  He/ She said: “I’m going to shoot up DHS tomorrow.  Principal Matthews will be my first bullet-stopper.”

OFFICER:  What prior knowledge did you have that Sam would be using your e-mail address to send such a message?

DEFENDANT:  None.  I found out when the rest of the world found out; when Sam posted his/her message online.

OFFICER:  How did you react to learning of the message?

DEFENDANT: I freaked out.  I tried to delete the message but Sam had apparently changed the password so I couldn’t do anything.

OFFICER:  What did you do then?

DEFENDANT: I telephoned Sam.

OFFICER:  What did you tell him/her?

DEFENDANT:  I said, “Are you out of your mind?”

OFFICER:  How did he/she respond?

DEFENDANT: He/ She told me to calm down.  He/ She said that it was unlikely that anyone would see the message.  He/ She further told me that he/she had posted the message on an Instagram page which did not identify the sender.  Furthermore, because he/she had used my Awesomesauce g-mail account to send his/her message, no one would be able to identify me.  Finally, Sam told me that even if anyone saw the e-mail, no one would take it seriously.

OFFICER:  What request did you make of Sam to delete the e-mail?

DEFENDANT: I told Sam that I had attempted to delete the e-mail but was unable to do so because he/she had apparently changed the password.  When I told him/her that I would feel better if he/she deleted the e-mail, he/she told me that he/she wouldn’t because the e-mail was already “out there”?

OFFICER:  How did you feel after this discussion with Sam?

DEFENDANT: While I was not entirely comfortable with his/her explanation, I agreed with him/her that the message was already “out there” so there was nothing I could do about it.

OFFICER:  What did you do at the end of this telephone conversation with Sam?

DEFENDANT:  I was exhausted from all the excitement, so I went straight to bed.

OFFICER:  After you had had your phone conversation with Sam, what discussion did you have with anyone else as to what had happened?

DEFENDANT: No one.

OFFICER:  When did you next hear anything about this matter?

DEFENDANT: Early the next morning when the police came to arrest me.

OFFICER: Have you ever previously gotten into trouble through your use of a computer?

DEFENDANT: Yes, last year, after I tried to hack into my history teacher’s computer.

OFFICER: Why did you attempt to hack into your teacher’s computer?

DEFENDANT: She had been hassling me about my attendance and grades.

OFFICER: How are your school grades?

DEFENDANT: I do really well in math and computer courses; I tend to blow off the other subjects.

OFFICER: What punishment did you receive for your attempt to hack into your history teacher’s computer?

DEFENDANT: Because I hadn’t gotten very far and had not accessed any of the teacher’s information, I got off easy.  A one-day suspension and a letter of apology to the teacher.

OFFICER:  How do you feel about the present threatening communications charges filed against you?

DEFENDANT: Well, I’m sorry I got arrested.