1	THE	COURT:	E.K., a young person within
2		the meaning of the	Territorial Youth Justice Act
3		is charged with ope	erating a motor vehicle on a
4		highway without a	valid driver's licence in
5		violation of section	on 66 of the Motor Vehicles
6		Act. It is admitted	ed that she possessed no valid
7		driver's licence or	n the date charged, May the
8		13th, 2006. The is	ssue before me is whether or
9		not it has been pro	oved beyond a reasonable doubt
10		that she was operat	ting a motor vehicle on a
11		highway on the date	e alleged. In particular, the
12		issue boils down to	o whether or not it was E.K.
13		rather than her for	rmer best friend T.K. who was
14		driving the motor v	vehicle at the time that the
15		vehicle was on the	highway.
16		During this b	rief trial I heard from three
17		witnesses. I heard	d from Bonita Nordahn who was
18		on duty as a securi	ity officer on the date
19		charged. I heard	from T.K. who on the date
20		charged was still a	a good friend of the accused.
21		Both of these witne	esses were called by the Crown
22		The accused E.K. to	estified in her own defence.
23		Bonita Nordahı	n testified as follows. On the
24		date of the alleged	d offence she was driving on
25		patrol at the Giant	Mine site three kilometres
26		outside of the hear	vily populated part of

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Yellowknife. She came around a corner in the

1	vehicle she was driving and saw a girl, that is
2	one girl, coming out of one of the houses located
3	at the site. The girl took a running jump and
4	headed towards a small green car and got in the
5	passenger side. Ms. Nordahn testified that the
6	accused was sitting on the driver's side of the
7	small green car. After the other girl jumped
8	into the passenger side, Ms. Nordahn phoned the
9	RCMP to report a possible break and enter
10	offence. She watched the two at a distance of
11	about 30 feet away. They sat looking at her.
12	Ms. Nordahn was instructed not to let anybody
13	out, so she started to manoeuvre her truck to
14	block the other vehicle's exit onto the highway.
15	At that point the driver of the vehicle attempted
16	to leave in the vehicle. The vehicle moved
17	towards Ms. Nordahn's vehicle at a speed she
18	described as being fairly fast. Ms. Nordahn
19	testified that she, that is Ms. Nordahn,
20	misjudged the distance between a tree and the
21	truck she was driving and that as a consequence
22	of this misjudgment the other vehicle proceeded
23	on by her and "nicked" her truck on the way out.
24	She testified that at this point the same girl
25	she had seen sitting in the driver's seat, a girl
26	with long, dark hair, was driving.
27	The sun was coming up; the weather was clear

and cool. The entire time period during which she had observed the two girls up to the point of their departure in the vehicle onto the highway was about 30 to 45 seconds. The vehicle proceeded onto the highway and on down the highway. Ms. Nordahn testified that she then also proceeded down the highway to see if she could find the two girls.

She later noticed that some ribbons across the entranceway to part of the mine's property known as "A Shaft" had been broken. To her knowledge, they had not been broken before. She drove in and found the same green car she had observed earlier now abandoned. As she continued to patrol in her vehicle she saw two heads pop up from behind a "pipe box". At that point she parked her vehicle nose to nose in front of the green car so it could not drive away. Her driver's seat would have been only a few feet from the other vehicle's driver's seat.

As anticipated by Ms. Nordahn, the two girls, who were not properly dressed for the cool weather, came walking down the road towards the green vehicle. She testified that she recognized the two girls. She testified one was blonde-haired and one was dark-haired. About 15 or 20 minutes had passed since the two had been

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observed behind the pipe box. The two were shivering and had their hoods up over their heads. Ms. Nordahn testified that the blonde-haired girl had a white top on with a hood on it, and that the dark-haired girl had a dark top with a hood on it and a light-coloured shirt.

I pause to note that yesterday when I observed both the accused young person E.K. and T.K., they appeared to have dark hair. There was little difference, at least in my assessment, in the colour of their hair.

Ms. Nordahn stated that E.K., the dark-haired girl, came up to the window of her truck and asked Ms. Nordahn if she would move the truck so she could leave. Ms. Nordahn did not move the truck. Ms. Nordahn says E.K. went over and talked to her supervisor and took the keys out of her pocket; E.K. unlocked the passenger door of the green vehicle to let T.K. in and then went to the driver's side and got in herself. At a later point she got out of the vehicle and asked Ms. Nordahn if she had a light. She wanted a cigarette. When she was refused, she got back in the vehicle.

At some point when the vehicle was parked in front of Ms. Nordahn's vehicle, it was turned on. However, counsel appear to be on common ground

that at this point the vehicle was not on a highway, so section 66(1) of the Act would not be applicable. I concur.

Apparently, the vehicle stayed in this position for about 30 to 40 minutes. Ms. Nordahn states that during that time frame the accused did not leave her sight. Ultimately, the RCMP arrived and took the two girls in to custody. From the time the two girls were observed behind the pipe box to the time that they left, an hour or more would have passed.

During cross-examination, Ms. Nordahn allowed that when she first observed the two she was not able to distinguish the blond-haired girl and the dark-haired girl well enough to identify them positively, and that she was not able to do so until they passed by in their vehicle at the time her truck was nicked. She said she first observed the blonde-haired girl, and that it was not until the blonde-haired girl was running towards the car that she saw the dark-haired girl in the driver's seat. She said that when the vehicle drove by her it was the blonde girl in the passenger seat who would have been closer to her. Ms. Nordahn admitted that it was only during the later period following the time when the two returned to the vehicle out at A Shaft

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that she had a good chance to observe the girls.

However, she did testify that there was no

question in her mind as to who was driving at the

4 relevant time, that being the accused E.K.

T.K. testified. She said that on the date charged she drove to the accused's residence and picked her up at her house. They went to a friend's graduation. They drove around a little afterwards. They went to the Yellowknife Arena to meet friends and later, after they were invited to do so by friends, proceeded out to Giant Mine.

T.K. testified that she was not the only person who drove and that the accused, E.K., drove when they were at the Giant site. E.K. testified that she drove to the Giant Mine area. She testified that while at the Giant Mine area a security guard came "so we drove past them and she accidentally backed into us, so we left."

T.K. testified that they then went to look some more for people they were going to pick up. She testified that the two were told to go to a specific house and that they went there, and that when they couldn't find them at all they just started driving away because they saw someone coming and got scared. She says that E.K. drove when they got back into the car after looking to

find the people they were unable to locate. She says that at the point E.K. got into the vehicle immediately prior to her driving. The keys were in the ignition. E.K. started driving and they drove around the vehicle because it was parked on the wrong side of the road and it backed into them. They then left towards the Yellowknife River, proceeding down the highway.

T.K. testified that she does not know the name of the highway but that it is paved and has white lines on it. She testified they went back to the mine site and stopped the vehicle. They took the keys out and proceeded on foot for some time. When they eventually walked back to the vehicle, two security vehicles had arrived at the scene. T.K. testified further that one was parked in front of the car they were driving and one was parked behind it. They got back in the vehicle. The accused sat on the driver's side and T.K. sat on the passenger's side. They sat for about half an hour. The police came and put the two in jail for the night.

T.K. testified that she lied to police and told them that she was driving the vehicle at the relevant time. In explaining this prior inconsistent statement, she stated during her examination-in-chief:

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1	My parents used to get really mad at
2	me because I had my car, when I had
3	my car - it's broken down now,
4	that's why I'm driving my sister's -
5	and she said and I was scared
6	that they were going to get mad at
7	me, more really my sister though, it
8	was her car. And it was really late
9	and we weren't supposed to be out
10	that late.
11	She continued by saying:
12	My parents and I talked and they
13	told me that it's that, that
14	sticking up for someone isn't going
15	to help me in any way.
16	And finally she testified further on this point
17	saying:
18	It made me think, and I thought
19	about it and I decided that it would
20	just get me in more trouble if I
21	lied.
22	T.K. testified that the reason she changed
23	her story and decided to tell the truth, what she
24	says is the truth, was that when she talked to
25	her parents they told her that sticking up for
26	someone was not going to help her in any way.
27	During cross-examination the following

1	exchange took place between Mr. Rehn, the defence
2	lawyer in this case, and T.K. on the point of the
3	prior inconsistent statement given to the police.
4	Question: And you're saying that
5	you just had a change of heart after
6	talking with your folks; is that
7	what you're saying?
8	Answer: Well when I talked to them,
9	when I said that E. was driving,
10	they were upset with me. And I
11	didn't think my sister would be
12	either.
13	Question: So you thought it was
14	but before that you thought it was
15	okay to lie?
16	Answer: Well I wasn't really I
17	was trying to protect my friend.
18	Question: Oh, I see. And it had
19	nothing to do with the fact that you
20	were driving during the accident?
21	Answer: I wasn't driving during the
22	accident.
23	T.K. testified that she and the accused have
24	had a serious falling out since the incident
25	giving rise to the charge against E.K.
26	E.K. testified as follows: T.K. came to her
27	house; they left in T.K.'s vehicle to watch

1	friends graduate. Later on that night they went
2	to a party. T.K. received a call so they went to
3	the Giant Mine property. T.K. was driving. They
4	went up a hill to a house. T.K. got out of the
5	vehicle and knocked on the door and E.K. stayed
6	in the vehicle. On her version, she was
7	obviously still in the vehicle on the passenger
8	side at this particular point. After a
9	relatively brief period of time, E.K. became
10	unnerved due to the fact that no one was showing
11	up. She got a feeling that something bad was
12	going to happen. She rolled down her window and
13	told this to T.K., who ran back into the vehicle
14	and got in the driver's side. When she got back
15	in the vehicle they looked at the security
16	vehicle which had turned up, trying to see inside
17	of it. E.K. states that they couldn't see inside
18	the security vehicle because its lights were on.
19	The vehicle that they were in had its lights on
20	as well, according to E.K.
21	With T.K. driving, they decided to leave and
22	the security vehicle started backing up. The
23	security vehicle tried to cut them off and T.K.
24	drove faster and managed to drive onto the
25	highway. A collision between the two vehicles
26	occurred at this point, that is, the point that

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they were leaving the mine site and proceeding

onto the highway. They got out of the vehicle a

short time later and examined the damage, which

appeared to be minor.

They then got back and T.K. continued to drive. They then received a call on a cell phone from a friend who they decided to try to locate. They proceeded back to the Giant Mine property. At one point they left on foot to locate their friends. They proceeded for some time until they could hear a vehicle coming. They realized that they had been observed. T.K. wanted to wait things out until the vehicle left. However, E.K. states that after she told T.K. that the vehicles probably would not leave, T.K. gave E.K. the keys to the vehicle and E.K. testified that T.K. was very nervous and that she asked E.K. to take the keys and asked if the security personnel could move their vehicles so that the two could leave. E.K. agreed that the car they had been in was boxed in at that point.

E.K. went to the truck occupied by Ms.

Nordahn. She was surprised, she says, to find out that Ms. Nordahn was a female. She testified that up to that point she had assumed the driver was a man. She tried to persuade the security personnel to move their vehicles. When that did not happen, she eventually went back into the

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1 vehicle	and g	got into	the	driver's	side.
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She confirmed that she and T.K. have since this incident had a very serious falling out and that they are no longer friends. She states that previously they have been the best of friends.

I listened carefully to the submissions of counsel and after having heard those submissions I felt it necessary to review the evidence. The reason I felt this necessary was that the Crown, Mr. Hubley, said that certain evidence had been adduced, which I could not recall. I have reviewed the transcript of yesterday's proceedings.

Mr. Hubley misstated the evidence in a number of important ways. I will first deal with the first 30 lines of his submissions.

MR. HUBLEY: Thank you, Your Honour.

The Crown's position is that the

case is very black and white. The

testimony of Bonnie Nordahn was

confirmed by her. She took notes

contemporaneous with the events.

There's no dispute about that. Her recollection was quite clear. She observed the accused to be wearing a black hoodie. She observed the accused wearing this black hoodie

1	enter the driver's side of the
2	vehicle. She observed Ms. T.K., who
3	was wearing a white hoodie, get in
4	the passenger side of the vehicle.
5	And then she observed this vehicle
6	drive past her and she describes
7	a there was indication from both
8	the accused and Ms. T.K. that there
9	was a collision of sorts, a rather
10	minor fender-bender I guess. That
11	is consistent with Ms. T.K.'s
12	evidence that Ms. E.K. was driving
13	the vehicle at that time. Ms.
14	Nordahn indicated that both of these
15	women were outside of the vehicle.
16	She indicated that the one wearing
17	the white hoodie, who was Ms. T.K.,
18	and the accused specifically
19	indicated and agreed that she was
20	the one wearing the black hoodie and
21	that Ms. T.K. was wearing the white
22	one.
23	Ms. Nordahn's evidence was that
24	they both went to the vehicle. The
25	accused got into the driver's side
26	of the vehicle and then Ms. T.K. got
27	into the passenger side of the

1	vehicle. Then they drove away.
2	It's consistent with Ms. T.K.'s
3	evidence they then left, they went
4	out onto the highway. That is
5	consistent. And then they came
6	back.
7	Later on during the course of his submissions,
8	Mr. Hubley stated:
9	Ms. T.K. said that she was trying to
10	cover for her friend. She was able
11	to drive. She indicated that she's
12	driven this vehicle and other
13	vehicles and it was a bad mistake to
14	cover for her friend. If she was
15	the one driving, she had the
16	licence. She knew that her friend
17	didn't have a licence. It's almost
18	Shakespearean as to how this
19	unfolded in to the two of them
20	having a falling out, considering
21	that Ms. T.K. was trying to protect
22	her friend at the relevant time.
23	In making these submissions I have referred
24	to the Crown incorrectly stated the evidence in a
25	number of key aspects. The Crown was incorrect
26	in suggesting that Ms. Nordahn's evidence was
27	that she saw who was wearing what coloured hoodie

at the time of her initial observations before
the point in time that she saw the vehicle drive
away.

The Crown was incorrect in suggesting that

Ms. Nordahn's evidence was that she saw both the

accused and T.K. enter the vehicle before the

point in time that she saw them drive away.

Finally, I heard no evidence suggesting that T.K. had a valid driver's licence on the date charged.

I find it quite disturbing that Crown counsel made all of these errors in his review of the evidence. I assume without reservation that the errors were due to inadvertence.

Nonetheless, Crown counsel should have been far more careful, and I hope that he conducts himself accordingly in the future.

In any event, in deciding this case I remind myself that the standard of proof is proof beyond a reasonable doubt. It is not simply a matter of deciding what likely happened. However, I also must remind myself that I must not place an unrealistically high burden of proof on the Crown. The Crown is not required to prove its case to an absolute or scientific certainty. The standard of proof is simply as I have stated, proof beyond a reasonable doubt, and I note that

the Supreme Court of Canada has stated that the
standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt lies
closer to that of proof to an absolute certainty
than it does to a balance of probabilities on the
continuum between the two standards. In this
case it simply is not a matter of deciding
whether or not E.K. is telling the truth when she
says that she was not driving.

In this case, in analyzing the evidence I have to follow the approach laid out by the Supreme Court of Canada in the decision of Regina v. W.D. That test is as follows: Firstly, if I believe E.K., I must obviously find her not guilty. However, secondly, even if I do not believe her, if her evidence leaves me with a reasonable doubt as to her guilt, I must find her not guilty. Thirdly, even if I reject her evidence to the extent that it raises no reasonable doubt, I must assess all of the other evidence adduced at trial and determine whether or not it proves her guilt beyond a reasonable doubt before I can find her guilty. A fourth head of the test has been added by cases decided subsequent to W.D., and that fourth head is as follows: If I am unable to decide whom to believe, I must acquit.

I must remind myself that I am not a

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detective and it is not my task to solve this case. If after carefully analyzing all of the evidence I am unsure as to what occurred, it is not my job to solve the mystery.

Recent jurisprudence from the Manitoba Court of Appeal provides that it is preferable to work through the heads of the W.D. test in the order they are set out in that case to avoid placing undue weight on the Crown's evidence when assessing the evidence of the accused. However, having said that, in my view it would be a gross error in law to assess the accused's evidence in an evidentiary vacuum and not weigh it in the light of all the other evidence before the court when determining whether or not it is to be believed or whether or not it raises a reasonable doubt. For example, it would be absurd if a trier of fact ignored several different videotapes of an accused committing a crime when assessing his testimony denying his commission of that particular crime.

I will make some brief observations about the evidence at this point.

In analyzing the evidence I remind myself that while the credibility of each witness is definitely important, ultimately it is the credibility and reliability of the evidence which

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is most important. I also remind myself that a prior inconsistent statement, unless adopted, is not positive evidence as to what transpired. It is simply evidence which can be used in assessing the credibility or reliability of a witness. A prior consistent statement on the other hand, subject to very limited exceptions, has no evidentiary value. Prior consistent statements cannot be used to bolster the in-court testimony of a witness. Such impermissible use of prior consistent statements is often referred to as oath helping.

With the greatest of respect to defence counsel, I also attach absolutely no evidentiary value whatsoever to the fact that the accused has chosen to plead not guilty rather than pay a fine. While she certainly has the right to plead not guilty and by exercising that right puts the Crown to the test of proving its case beyond a reasonable doubt, I cannot consider the plea of not guilty as actual evidence. Doing so would be allowing the accused to bootstrap her own evidence in a manner similar to that which is prohibited by the rule against allowing prior consistent statements to bolster in-court testimony.

At this point I will make some more specific

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1 comments about the actual evidence adduced.

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Firstly, Ms. Nordahn's evidence on who was wearing what coloured hoodie at the time that E.K. and T.K. were observed does not help me much at all. The evidence I heard as to who was wearing what coloured hood or hoodie concerned the time that they were later observed for an extended period of time, and not the earlier and far briefer time period immediately prior to and including following when the accident occurred and the vehicle proceeded on to and down the highway.

Secondly, as I have also stated, the hair colour of the two girls as described by Ms.

Nordahn troubles me. She describes the person who the Crown alleges was T.K. as having blonde hair. She describes E.K. as having dark hair.

From what I have observed in court, and as I have already said, their respective hair colours are quite similar. At least to me they are quite similar. There is no evidence to suggest that T.K. had a different hair colour on the date charged.

Thirdly, as stated, Ms. Nordahn only saw one person, not two, proceeding towards the vehicle at the time that she first observed the girls.

In that particular respect, Ms. Nordahn's

evidence is more corroborative of the accused's version of events than it is T.K.'s, although I certainly do take into account the fact that both T.K. and Ms. Nordahn testified that it was the accused who was driving.

However, the frailties associated with in-court identification when the witness has only a brief opportunity to observe the accused at the relevant time, or the person who is alleged to have been performing a certain activity at the relevant time, are notorious.

Finally, I will state that I find that the prior inconsistent statement given by T.K. to the police gives me great concern when assessing her credibility and the weight to be attached to her evidence. I take into account her explanation as to the inconsistency; however, at the same time the inconsistency in question is certainly not minor. It goes to the very heart of this matter - who was driving when the two proceeded past the security vehicle onto the highway. Due to this concern, at the end of the day I give T.K.'s evidence little weight notwithstanding her explanation.

So, as I have stated, the first two things I am required to determine are whether or not I believe the accused, and if not, whether or not

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1 her evidence leaves me in reasonable doubt.

I do have some difficulty with the evidence

of E.K. Her explanation as to why she had the

keys is that:

I told her they probably wouldn't leave. So she gave me the keys and asked if I could, like, that she was really nervous, she didn't know what to do and asked if I could just like go up and ask if they would move instead of her. So I took the keys and I asked if they could leave -or if they could move so that we could get out. 

Really, why would the accused have the keys at this point if she wasn't the one who had been driving the vehicle earlier? However, to be fair, I cannot say that I find T.K.'s explanation as to how she says E.K. got the keys earlier any more compelling. When T.K. was first asked by the Crown why she did not take the driver's seat when she and E.K. returned to the vehicle at the time of Ms. Nordahn's initial observations, she said "I don't know." As previously stated at this point, Ms. Nordahn testified that she saw only one person get in the vehicle, not two as described by T.K. E.K.'s evidence is the same in

that respect. If T.K. was the only person

getting back in the vehicle and E.K. had not

left, she would even on T.K.'s version have still

been on the passenger side of the vehicle and

T.K. would have had no alternative but to get

into the driver's side.

In examining E.K.'s explanation as to how she eventually got the keys, I take into account the fact that she and T.K. were still good friends at the time of these events. The best of friends, according to E.K. Perhaps T.K. was very nervous and E.K. possessed the greater poise necessary to speak to the security personnel blocking the vehicle. Certainly when the two testified in court E.K. appeared to possess much greater poise than did T.K. However, I must be careful not to place undue emphasis on their respective in-court demeanour in assessing their credibility.

I will say that I have spent a great deal of time thinking about this case since yesterday afternoon after hearing counsel's submissions notwithstanding its relatively minor nature.

After considering the evidence carefully, I have determined that I cannot say that I reject the accused's evidence to the extent that it does not at the very least leave me in reasonable

1	doubt as to her guilt. She was cross-examined
2	thoroughly and well, and I find that at the end
3	of the day her credibility was not impeached to
4	the point that I can reject her evidence. Put
5	another way, at the end of the day I am not sure
6	whom to believe. However one thing is certain,
7	and that is that yesterday either E.K. or T.K.
8	committed the far, far more serious criminal
9	offence of perjury. I cannot say with any real
10	degree of certainty who it was, who committed
11	that offence. In making this observation I
12	should make it clear that I believe that Ms.
13	Nordahn was telling the truth and doing her level
14	best to accurately recount what she saw. I found
15	her very credible, however I have concerns with
16	the reliability of her initial identification of
17	the driver and the passenger. I have concerns
18	over whether or not she saw the single person she
19	described get in the vehicle on the passenger
20	side or the driver's side. Each witness called
21	had a different version of events in describing
22	the details of either, whether both T.K. and E.K.
23	were out of the vehicle at that point, or who got
24	in on what side of the vehicle at the time of
25	Ms. Nordahn's initial observations. As I have
26	mentioned several times already, there is also
27	the issue of T.K.'s hair colour. People often

1		become sure of thir	ngs they think they saw which
2		did not actually ha	appen the way they remember.
3		Certainty is no gua	arantee of accuracy. Witnesses
4		who are doing their	best to recall events that
5		happened quickly ca	an make mistakes and be certain
6		as to the accuracy	of their recollection.
7		Since I have a	a reasonable doubt as to E.K.'s
8		guilt, I must find	her not guilty.
9		I believe that	that would conclude this
10		matter.	
11	MR.	REHN:	No, sir, I don't have any
12		other matters. I	pelieve you've got a further
13		matter this afterno	oon.
14	THE	COURT:	All right, thank you.
15	MR.	REHN:	If I might be excused, thank
16		you.	
17	тиг	COURT:	Of course. And E.K. is free
18	11111	to leave at this po	
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20			
21			Certified to be a true and
22			accurate transcript pursuant to Rule 723 and 724 of the
23			Supreme Court Rules of Court.
24			
25			Annette Wright, RPR, CSR(A)
26			Court Reporter
27			

R. v. E.K., 2006 NWTTC 14

Y-1-ST-2006-000012

IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE COURT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

IN THE MATTER OF:

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

– v –

E.K.

(A Young Person)

Transcript of the Reasons for Judgment delivered by The Honourable Judge R. Gorin, in Yellowknife, in the Northwest Territories, on the 25th day of August, A.D. 2006.

## APPEARANCES:

Mr. B. Hubley: Counsel on behalf of the Crown

Mr. C. Rehn: Counsel on behalf of the Young Person

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Charge under s. 259(1)(a) M.V.A.