

We, the Jury

by [Peter Glassman](#) (April 2023)



Courtroom Scene, Gaston Hoffman, 20th C

"Mrs. Mandel had end stage colorectal cancer with spread to the brain and resultant blindness. Her husband dispensed her medications, which may have included the overdose of Oxycontin® that killed her." The jury foreman scanned the other eleven jurors. "Based on the evidence we saw and heard, we will vote on a verdict of guilt or innocence."

Each juror wrote their vote on a folded gray square of paper

and passed it down to the jury foreman. This sequence was repeated six times with the same result.

“At this time I must ask juror number six once again why the evidence is not conclusive for a guilty vote?” The foreman and the others stared at number six.

Number six loosened his necktie and ran his fingers through his balding gray hair as he spoke. “This blind victim could have committed suicide. She could have found the Oxycontin® bottle and taken a lethal dose. And the visiting nurse seemed not to notice much of anything out of the ordinary when the husband assisted with his wife’s medications.”

The stalemate meant another day of jury deliberation and all were dismissed to their homes.

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Juror number twelve, a bank executive, had just donned his pajamas when the phone rang.

“Change your vote.” The voice sounded mechanically male and robotic. “Change your vote or the media will splash your rape of the sixteen-year-old girl.”

“I was acquitted. It was in high school. Those proceedings are sealed.”

Number twelve sat on his bed as more details of his past indiscretion were revealed.

“Change your vote.” The deep voice ended the conversation.

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Juror number two adjusted her pillow and picked up the romance novel she reads herself to sleep with when her phone rang.

The metallic speech issued forth, “Change your vote or your family will know of your record of shoplifting and your former

three aliases.”

A horrified juror number two listened with sweaty hands and trembling lips. “How could you know all this?”

“Change your vote.”

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Juror number nine was watching the late TV news, swigging his beer and munching on Fritos® when he was interrupted by the phone.

“Change your vote.” The surreal voice penetrated his beer fog. “Change your vote tomorrow or your tax evasion scams of the past fifteen years will be detailed to the IRS.”

“How could you—?” Number nine spilled his beer bottle onto his pajamas and turned the TV off with the remote. He listened as the robotic words itemized the dollars owed and the penalties that could be imposed.

“Change your vote.” The masked words resounded with an echo.

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Juror number seven felt good about herself that she had held fast with her guilty vote. She clutched her rosary and at the end of her evening prayers added, “I know it was euthanasia, but Dear Jesus, only you have the right to remove a life you once granted.” She answered the ringing phone.

“Change your vote. Change your vote or your sexual involvement with Father Brennan will destroy your lifelong teaching career and the Priest’s Holy calling.”

Juror number seven fainted.

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The next day the foreman spoke. “We’ve all had a good night

sleep, I hope. Let's begin with a review of the charge of murder and a summary of the evidence, after which we will vote once again."

The four jurors who were phoned the night before looked around and their eyes seemed to lock onto each other. The original dissenter, juror number six, gave them a knowing stare.

The foreman was aghast, "It's now seven for guilty and five for innocent. It's my duty to continue this voting and then poll the members who changed their votes."

Each of the four jurors who now produced a "not guilty" vote declared there was indeed a "shadow of a doubt" as to the capital nature of the crime, if a crime had occurred at all. "Suicide," they said was never truly ruled out.

The foreman called for a third day of deliberations.

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That night the remaining jurors favoring Mr. Mandel's guilt received similar phone intimidations with detailed accounts of possible crimes, behavior aberrances, adulterous indiscretions, and other society punishable misdemeanors or unrecorded felonies.

The jury foreman's phone rang.

"Change your vote," the electronically modified voiced declared.

"Who or what is this?" the foreman responded to the robotic speaker.

"You have a mother in a painful and terminal state. You want to help her but you won't. The man who you think helped his wife into heaven is innocent. You want to help your mother die with dignity and are angry that you cannot. Your anger blinds you to the innocence of your case's defendant."

“How can you possibly know of such things? I’m doing my job as an executor of justice and society in my country.”

“Change your vote.”

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The third day the foreman looked as distraught as the rest of the jury. “We must once again vote on the guilt or innocence of this man.” The foreman received the folded ballots and was about to count them when a knock came on the chamber door.

The bailiff clerk handed the foreman a written directive from the judge.

The foreman looked at the document, raised his eyebrows, and looked back at the clerk.

“The judge will reconvene the case proceedings in 30-minutes,” the clerk announced and left.

The foreman stood up and read the directive. “Mrs. Mandel’s visiting nurse was in a vehicular accident and while being evaluated for incoherence beyond the scope of her injuries, a urine drug screen revealed significant amounts of oxycodone, the ingredient of Oxycontin®. A large amount of Oxycontin® was found in a pill bottle belonging to the victim in this case. The visiting nurse later confessed to a long-time drug habit and giving Mrs. Mandel extra pills. When Mrs. Mandel was unresponsive she took all but a few of the Oxycontin® tablets with her. Further investigation disclosed the nurse had been accused of diverting other patients’ prescribed opiates for her own use after she sedated them. This case is dismissed as will be the jury after a commendation by the judge.”

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The jurors were silent. They looked at the foreman and juror number eight spoke up. “Can you count our vote one last time Mr. Foreman?”

The foreman looked at each vote and with a tremulous voice announced, "Not guilty by unanimous consensus." The foreman felt the lack of triumph exhibited in the jurors faces. One thought kept repeating itself, "The defendant is not guilty, but we the jury are guilt-ridden without a doubt."

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Peter Glassman is a retired physician living in Texas, who devotes his time to writing novels and memoir-based fiction. He is the author of 14 novels including the medical thrillers *Cotter*; *The Helios Rain* and *Who Will Weep for Me*. Some of his short stories were written for presentation at the San Antonio Writers Group Meetup. You can read more about him and his books [here](#).

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