

Mom testifies in baby's killing - 20-year-old tells jury she trusted stranger enough to leave her son with him

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DETROIT -- A distraught Shaniqua Betty told a jury Thursday that she trusted a stranger doting over her infant son enough to leave the boy with him while she retrieved items from her angry boyfriend blocks away.

Alternately crying and combative, Betty was the first witness against **Harold Reed**, who is charged in Wayne Circuit Court with murdering 3-month-old Isiah Lewis on Aug. 3. **Reed**, a convicted child molester, has told police he punched the child repeatedly in a drunken fury. On Thursday, his lawyer suggested Betty's boyfriend, Ivan Brown, may have delivered the fatal blows.

Minutes after fleeing Brown's house at about 1:30 a.m., a despondent and barefoot Betty, 20, wept at a bus stop when **Reed** sat next to her.

"He was smiling at my baby, making faces, friendly faces," Betty testified. "He seemed like an all-right guy. You know, friendly."

Betty said she had left the house without her purse or even clothes for Isiah, whom she had just bathed. Unaware of **Reed**'s 1991 Pennsylvania conviction, she handed her son to him and ran five blocks back to Brown's house.

When she returned, **Reed** was gone.

"I just went crazy," Betty told the nine-woman, five-man jury. "I didn't know what to do. I just couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe my baby was gone."

Betty called police and touched off a frantic, five-day citywide search for Isiah. A gas-station's surveillance tape featuring **Reed**, 48, that night led police to him. He quickly showed police Isiah's decomposing remains under a mattress in a vacant crack house.

In a hand-written confession, **Reed** wrote, "I dropped the baby. ... He struck his head on the ground. He started crying worse and worse. That's when I struck the baby. I was intoxicated and lost control."

Reed's attorney, W. Frederick Moore, suggested the jury consider whether Brown, 37, killed the child.

Betty acknowledged Brown slapped her at least three times in the back of her head in an argument that started over how much medicine she gave the child. When she returned to his house to get her purse and other items, Brown threw them outside and he later chased her around a car, she said.

"As you listen to the testimony, think about the beginning," Moore said.

After her testimony, Betty, who is charged with second-degree child abuse, cried outside the courtroom as Brown consoled her. The trial resumes today.

Caption: Betty

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