

## PLEA BARGAIN OFFERED TO TEEN WHO KILLED FRIEND

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Author: SUZANNE SIEGEL Free Press Staff Writer

The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office plans to offer a manslaughter plea bargain to **Brian Black**, the Detroit teenager who says he killed his best friend at the friend's request.

The question of whether the slaying of Lorenzo Shelton III was a mercy killing may never reach jurors' ears if Black decides to accept the plea at a hearing at 3rd Judicial Circuit Court on Friday.

Black and Shelton, both 18, were best friends. According to police Shelton, a dropout with a troubled past, begged Black in March to put a rifle in his mouth and shoot him, and then shoot him again in the chest to make sure he was dead.

Black told police Shelton wanted to die because he had just killed three Lincoln Park girls outside his southwest Detroit home. Black said Shelton told him he tried to make it look like a gang shooting but police were on to him and he didn't want to go back to jail.

In April, Black was bound over for trial on a first-degree murder charge, which carries a mandatory life term. But if he accepts the manslaughter plea, he could face only three to eight years in jail, his attorney said.

Defense attorney Daniel Blank said the plea will be made formally at the hearing Friday. Wayne County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Michael Cox confirmed the offer but refused to comment.

Blank said a jury would probably not convict his client of first-degree murder because the circumstances surrounding the case are so unusual.

"At the very least, I could convince a jury that this was a killing in the midst of great emotional trauma and passion," Blank said last week.

Blank also said his client had a history of mental illness and depression, and was committed to psychiatric institutions prior to the killing.

The hearing is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. in Judge Maggie Drake's courtroom.

Staff writer Suzanne Siegel can be reached at 1-313-222-6672 or by E-mail at [siegel@det-freepress.com](mailto:siegel@det-freepress.com)

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