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MIAMI-DADE CIRCUIT COURT: Mother testifies she tried to save daughter

Taking the stand for the second day, the mother of a 5-year-old left to die in the Everglades recalls how she tried to save her daughter.

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Shandelle Maycock said she woke up in Harrel Braddy's car after the man nearly strangled her to death in a rage. Instantly, she thought of her 5-year-old daughter, also with them in the car; Maycock's sole hope was to save her child.

"I told her that we . . . were going to jump out of the car," Maycock testified Tuesday, taking the stand for a second day in Braddy's trial. 'He said 'No, don't do that.' " "I reached over and I grabbed her arm and I kept pulling her toward me until I had her on my lap. . . . I was cradling her in my arms," she said. She started to open the door, but Braddy sped up. "Me and my daughter flew out of the car and . . . we flew apart," she testified. She said Braddy pulled over on a busy street, grabbed her and shoved her into the trunk. She never saw her daughter again. Two days later, fishermen found daughter Quantisha's body in the Everglades near Alligator Alley. An autopsy showed the girl was still alive when alligators attacked her.

Now, nine years after those events of 1998, the mother's testimony is key to the prosecution of Braddy. She met Braddy through a friend at church, but said he flew into a rage when she rebuffed his advances. Maycock choked back tears as she told the jury of her desperate attempt to save Quantisha. "Were you doing that so you could protect her?" prosecutor Abbe Rifkin asked. "Yes," Maycock said. "And did you hold her tight?" Rifkin continued. "Yes," Maycock replied. After what she thinks was about 45 minutes in the trunk, she said Braddy stopped the car and yanked her out. He choked her again and left her for dead in a cane field in Palm Beach County, she said. "I woke up in the bushes the next morning," she said. Her vision blurred, she followed the sound of cars until she reached a road.

Braddy's attorneys, G.P. Della Fera and Terence Lenamon, maintain that Braddy is not guilty. Testimony is set to continue today in Circuit Judge Leonard Glick's courtroom. If convicted, Braddy faces the death penalty.