Trial Begins for Woman Who Cut Baby from Womb

It sounds like a dark story from the days of ancient pagan rituals: A person tears open a woman's womb while she's still alive and takes her baby from it. I wrote about such a crime in August of last year, but, tragically, it was no isolated event. And now a different case of this kind is coming to trial, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Forty-year-old Andrea Curry-Demus of Wilkinsburg, a Pittsburgh suburb, wanted a baby badly. Very badly, it seems. So her hopes must have been buttressed when a urine test showed that she might be pregnant — yet a subsequent blood test would dash those hopes. This is when Curry-Demus put a deadly plan into action, one that would leave a woman dead and a baby motherless.

She began by trying to convince others she was pregnant, going so far as to put her name on an ultrasound image and give it to her mother. The Associated Press reported on what transpired next, writing:

> She met and befriended Kia Johnson, 18, of McKeesport, at the Allegheny County Jail, in July 2008. Johnson was visiting her unborn son's father and Curry-Demus was visiting her husband. Curry-Demus lured Johnson to her apartment to steal the baby, [prosecutor Mark] Tranquilli said.

> Johnson's body — bound with duct tape and wrapped in plastic wrap and a comforter — was found stuffed behind a headboard. The baby, Terrell Kian Johnson, survived and is living with relatives.

As a ruse, Curry-Demus then showed up at a local hospital and said she had given birth in her bathroom. But after medical tests showed that she had not given birth, hospital personnel alerted the police. Covering the event in 2008, CNN reported what happened next, writing, "According to a criminal complaint, Curry-Demus told Detective Rich Grande that she purchased the baby from a woman named Tina for $1,000. Curry-Demus told Grande she had suffered a miscarriage in June and 'did not want her mother to get upset.'"

Obviously, this was quickly determined to be a lie, at which point Curry-Demus was arrested. And now, a year and a half later, she will stand trial in Allegheny County on kidnapping and homicide charges.

But this wasn't the first time Curry-Demus has committed this kind of crime. CNN tells us:

> According to court records obtained by the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, Curry-Demus became pregnant at 12 and miscarried four months later. She had a second miscarriage in 1990, when she was 21, the paper said.

Only a few months after the second miscarriage, Curry-Demus befriended a woman who had just given birth but later attacked her with a knife and tried to steal the baby, the paper said, citing the court records. The woman's husband intervened, the newspaper reported, and she fled.

The next day, she went to a hospital and befriended a woman who had brought her 3-week-old daughter to the hospital to be treated for meningitis, the *Tribune-Review* said. When the woman went home for the night, Curry-Demus left the hospital with the baby. It was found at her home, unharmed, the following day.

As a result of these crimes, Curry-Demus spent seven years in prison and was paroled in 1998. Now, however, she probably faces a life sentence.

Her time would likely be spent in a psychiatric institution, as both prosecutor Mark Tranquilli and the defense attorney, Christopher Patarini, agree that Curry-Demus is mentally ill. But the agreement ends there. Tranquilli believes that she should be institutionalized for life, while Patarini will try to convince the judge chosen for what will be a bench trial, Judge Jeffrey Manning, that his client is not guilty by reason of insanity.

Of course, many will find it hard to believe that anyone in his right mind could commit the heinous act with which Curry-Demus is charged. Yet this doesn't necessarily mean she didn't know right from wrong.

Moreover, something occurs to me. With babies cut from wombs, teens lit on fire, boys shooting up schools, and a rapid descent into a *"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"* society, psychological diagnoses are certainly in fashion. And with a burgeoning list of "disorders," an increasing number of what we used to call sins are now redefined as diseases or conditions of the brain. Thus, where Christians would always say, "We're all sinners," some psychologists today will assert that everyone is mentally ill in some way. It's an interesting parallel. It no doubt exists because both groups observed a constant: behavior that some sentient anachronisms once described as evil. And some would say that our soft "sciences" are finally recognizing the true cause of it. But could it be that they've forgotten the true cause?

I'm reminded here of how the author of the Helter Skelter murders, Charles Manson, once said, "You know, a long time ago being crazy meant something. Nowadays everybody's crazy."

But something else occurs to me as well: As we descend into immorality, we just seem to have more and more crazy people around all the time.

Photo of Andrea Curry-Demus: AP Images

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