Defendent: Donna Kay Scrivo

Victim: Ramsay Scrivo

Court decision: Donna Kay Scrivo was convicted of first-degree premeditated murder

Case facts:

Defendant’s convictions arise from the death of her son, 32-year-old Ramsay Scrivo, and the dismemberment of his body, the remains of which were discovered in 12 pieces near Fred Moore Highway and Allington Road in St. Clair County. The prosecution presented evidence that defendant drugged her son with Xanax,1 strangled him, dismembered his body, and scattered the remains along the highway.

Defendant was living with the victim at the time of his death. The victim’s neighbors testified that they last saw him on January 24, 2014. On January 30, 2014, defendant was observed in a silver SUV along Fred Moore Highway and Allington Road driving slowly and disposing of something from the SUV. Earlier that day, and also on the previous day, defendant was seen by the victim’s neighbors loading large garbage bags into her vehicle. Later that day authorities found the victim’s remains scattered in bags along Fred Moore Highway and Allington Road. Along with the victim’s remains, authorities also found a power saw that was the same model number that witnesses recalled defendant purchasing from a Lowe’s store earlier that week.2 A subsequent search of the victim’s home did not reveal any large blood stains, but investigators did testify to a strong smell of bleach and the existence of small blood stains. One of the victim’s neighbors also testified that between January 25 and January 30 she heard a saw being used and that during the same time, she smelled both a burning and chemical odor emanating from the victim’s apartment.

The medical examiner who performed the victim’s autopsy, Dr. Daniel Spitz, testified that the cause of death was asphyxiation and that, due to large amounts of Xanax in his system, he believed that the victim had been drugged before being killed. Defendant had a prescription for Xanax and a search revealed 10.5 pills missing from her most recent prescription. An analysis of defendant’s and the victim’s cell phone records also did not reveal any calls made from the defendant to the victim after January 24 despite several witnesses testifying that defendant asked them if they had seen the victim and defendant’s filing of a missing person’s report for the victim.

Defendant testified in her own defense. According to her testimony, on the morning of January 26, 2014 she observed a masked man in the victim’s room who said he was going to kill the victim. Defendant testified that this man tied her to the bed and then brought her back into the victim’s bedroom when he had finished killing the victim. Defendant testified that the man remained five days but that she never saw his face due to the mask he was wearing. Defendant stated that the man then made her help dispose of the victim’s body threatening to harm further members of her family if she did not comply.

The jury did not accept the defendant’s defense and convicted her of first-degree premeditated murder, mutilation of a human body, and removing a body without medical examiner permission. Donna Kay Scrivo was convicted of drugging and suffocating her adult son and dismembering his body. Her first-degree premeditated murder conviction earned her a life sentence without the possibility of parole.