**Mock Criminal Trials**

**Commonwealth v. Mr. Pye**

**Commonwealth v. Mrs. Pye**

**Commonwealth v. Joey Moffat**

It was a dark and stormy Halloween night in Cranbury. Mr. Pye, an ornithologist was expected to be away for the evening studying rare owls on Fire Island. Unfortunately, the ferry to take him to the island was shut down due to the storm. As a result, Mr. Pye decided to return home in the hopes that the ferry would be running again in the morning. As Mr. Pye’s trolley approached New Dollar Street, it was obvious that the electricity to his street had been knocked out. Mr. Pye cautiously walked down the dark street towards his house. Although it was Halloween, the town’s officially sanctioned trick-or-treating had ended at 8:30 p.m.; it was now 11:30 p.m. Mr. Pye did not notice anyone out and about that evening except for Joey Moffat on his bicycle. Joey was returning home late that night from work as a messenger boy at the train depot. His shift usually ended at 8:30 p.m. but there had been a delay on the inbound train from New York. He waved to Mr. Pye as he sped by Mr. Pye on his bike. Mr. Pye thought it was odd that Joey was covered in mud.

As Mr. Pye approached his house he saw what he believed was someone entering an open first floor window in the front of his house. Mr. Pye determined that he would try and stop the intruder. Instead of entering through the front door, Mr. Pye headed towards the back of the house and then stopped by his shed to find something to defend himself with against the intruder. Mr. Pye picked up a plumber’s wrench and an ax and then continued to the back door of the house, hoping to surprise the intruder. As he entered the house, Mr. Pye first encountered a jack-o-lantern head that his son Jerry had carved earlier that day. Mr. Pye believed it was the intruder and laid his ax into the pumpkin, splitting it into two pieces and damaging his kitchen table in the process.

Upon realizing that it was merely a pumpkin and not the intruder, Mr. Pye continued on. The house was so dark that Mr. Pye couldn’t see where he was going very well. To make matters worse, their teenage children Jerry (aged 17) and Rachel (aged 15) had hosted a Halloween Party at the house earlier that evening and had failed to pick up the decorations and props to their “mini-haunted house,” which made the three first floor rooms of the house almost impossible to navigate.

As Mr. Pye crashed into a hanging skeleton, his heart raced and he vowed: “I will kill the intruder, if it is the last thing I do!” The crash of the skeleton falling on Mr. Pye, woke up his son Jerry who was asleep on the couch. Although Mr. Pye had been very clear that no alcohol was to be consumed at the party, Jerry smelled of alcohol and stumbled to his feet when he saw his father. In slurred speech, Jerry said, “Dad is that you? Why are you knocking down Mr. Bones?” Mr. Pye, furious that Jerry disobeyed his instructions not to drink during his party and scared that the intruder was in the house with them, told Jerry to be quiet. He said, “take this wrench, there is an intruder in the house and I plan to get him.”

Now, Mr. Pye and his drunken son Jerry wove their way through the “mini-haunted house” towards the stairs. Jerry told Mr. Pye that their mother had not yet returned home from babysitting Uncle Benny at his house. As they made their way up the stairs, they heard the floor in the hallway creek. Mr. Pye and Jerry devised a plan as they reached the top of the stairs. Jerry would check the bathroom at the end of the hall and then be ready to help if Mr. Pye needed him to take down the intruder.

Jerry proceeded towards the bathroom. It being empty, Jerry decided to relieve himself before rejoining his father. As Mr. Pye entered the dark side bedroom he noticed a single candle lit by the bed. His heart raced. In the room he saw a figure standing next to Rachel’s bed with his arms around Rachel. Both Rachel and the unidentified person screamed as Mr. Pye barged in. Mr. Pye kicked the person in the back, knocking him to the floor. Then he swung the axe towards him. As he began to swing the ax a second time, Rachel screamed “Dad, stop! It’s just my boyfriend Wally Bullwinkle.” It happened so quickly. Mr. Pye was never fond of Wally, ever since he tried to steal the family dog, Ginger, when he was 10-years old. Mr. Pye’s heart was racing but, instinctively, he completed the swing of the ax and planted it in Wally’s skull.

With all the commotion, Jerry returned from the bathroom and screamed in horror. Rachel lit a second candle and they all realized that Wally was dead. At that moment, Mrs. Pye came running into the room as well and began crying. She explained that she entered the house through the window 10-minutes earlier. She said that she forgot her key to the front door.

Jerry couldn’t believe that his dad killed Wally Bullwinkle, although he too had never liked him much after the incident with Ginger. Jerry explained to his father that he slept on the couch that night so that Rachel could “hook up” with her boyfriend in the bedroom, which Rachel and Jerry shared upstairs. Just as he explained this, the electricity was connected and the lights turned on. When the police arrived, they arrested Mr. Pye and charged him with the death of Wally Bullwinkle.

Earlier that evening a second incident rocked the town of Cranbury…

For a number of years Mr. Pye routinely left town to carry on his business as an ornithologist. Often he was away for 7-10 days at a time, studying birds all over the country. Once he was away for three months studying a rare species of parrot in the Amazon Rain Forest in Brazil. While Rachel Pye adored her father and wanted to be an ornithologist when she grew up, Jerry Pye resented him for missing all of his baseball games. Jerry felt like his father abandoned him and often turned to heavy drinking as an escape. Over the last year, Jerry became depressed by his father’s lack of involvement in his life.

Mrs. Pye also grew to resent her husband. While his salary paid the bills and the Pyes lived a comfortable middle-class existence, Mrs. Pye was unhappy in her loveless relationship. Over the last six-months Mrs. Pye began seeing the Reverand Gandy when Mr. Pye was away. Their relationship grew stronger over time, but being a religious man, Rev. Gandy refused to allow the relationship to become anything more or to cheat on his wife, Sylvie Moffat Gandy. The two had been married seven-years earlier in the white church in Cranbury, where Jerry and Rachel had first earned the money to buy their dog Ginger by dusting pews. While the Reverend Gandy and Sylvie spent the first five years of their marriage in New York, they moved back to Cranbury two years ago because Sylvie missed her siblings Joey, Jane, and Rufus and her elderly mother.

Mrs. Pye now routinely met up with Reverend Gandy both at the church and his home as well as at different locations around Cranbury when Sylvie went to visit her aging mother and her siblings at their home on Ashbellows Place. Mrs. Moffat had raised her four children as a single mother and now her eldest son Joey (age 24) supported her by working at the train depot as a messenger boy, a job he had since his 16th birthday.

Mrs. Pye and Rev. Gandy would often meet for picnics in the woods, chat over wine and cheese, rendezvous to play checkers by the lake, or play twister in the meadow. All of their meetings were done secretly without the knowledge of Mr. Pye or Sylvie. Mrs. Pye was more discrete about the secret meetings than Rev. Gandy was. She rarely met with Rev. Gandy unless Mr. Pye was away on business. Although Rachel never suspected her mother was seeing another man, Jerry thought it was odd that his mother always went away when their father was out of town.

One day Jerry noticed a letter on his mother’s nightstand that said: “Meet up on Halloween night in your naughty nun costume. Sylvie will be passing out candy V-XXX.” The letter did not bear a signature. In addition, the next day Mrs. Pye told Jerry that she would have to babysit Uncle Benny at his house on Halloween night. This was all Jerry needed to hear in order to plan a wild and crazy Halloween Bash at their house and to even set up a “mini-haunted house,” which he had always wanted to do since he was 7-years old. Knowing his father and his mother would be away for the early part of the night (at least until the end of trick-or-treating), he told all his friends at school and Rachel did the same. They told their friends the “mini-haunted house” would be open for business from 6:00-9:00. This was code for their party. They made “special pumpkin spice brownies” and goblin punch. Jerry spiked his with alcohol. 58 people attended the party that night, including Jerry, Rachel, and Wally Bullwinkle. Besides these three individuals, and Hughie Pudge who passed out next to the chicken coop, all had left the party by 9:30 p.m.

On Halloween night, Mrs. Pye told Jerry and Rachel that she had to babysit Uncle Benny at his house that night and would not be back until late. At 4:00 p.m., she left the house and Jerry and Rachel began to set up for their party. Mrs. Pye did not go to Uncle Benny’s house that night. Instead, she brought along her nun costume and met Rev. Gandy in the back of the church. Unable to hide their love for one another any longer, Rev. Gandy suggested that he had feelings for Mrs. Pye but that he could never be with her because he could not cheat on his wife and did not believe in divorce. The two had a long discussion over wine and cheese.

At approximately 7:00 p.m. Mrs. Widdemeyer, the most devout Christian in the town, stopped by the church to deliver flowers for Sunday’s service. She stored them in the cold basement shelf where the Flower Women’s Guild routinely kept fresh flowers so they wouldn’t wilt before being displayed for church services. Mrs. Widdemeyer heard talking in the back of the church and went to investigate. She clearly recognized Mrs. Pye’s voice, for the two had been acquaintances since childhood. Being nosy, Mrs. Widdemeyer listened to the conversation. She heard Rev. Gandy say the Book of Corinthians says: “To the married I give this charge: the wife should not separate from her husband, and the husband should not divorce his wife.” Just then, a black cat ran by and both Rev. Gandy and Mrs. Pye became startled. Mrs. Widdemeyer quietly snuck away undetected by the two. As she was leaving, she heard Mrs. Pye said, “Oh, it was probably my cat Pinkey. I saw her following me over here.” Rev. Gandy then said to her that Sylvie was beginning to grow suspicious and that they probably shouldn’t meet any longer. Mrs. Pye quickly responded: “I will take care of everything. We will never have to worry about this again.” With that, Mrs. Widdemeyer left and immediately told Mr. Pennypepper, the Cranbury school superintendent what she had heard.

At 9:30 p.m., after trick-or-treating ended Joey Moffat rode by the center of Cranbury on his bike towards New Dollar Street. As he passed the trolley stop near the church he saw someone dressed in a black robe sneaking from the back of the church towards the parish house. Thinking it was odd, Joey stopped and watched; as he did he drank a Coca Cola, which he bought after his shift ended. 10-minutes later Joey heard a blood curdling shriek come from the parish house. He quickly got on his bike and sped towards Chief Larrimer’s house. Chief Larrimer was the new, young, chief of police in the town. Chief Larrimer quickly jumped on his horse and rode towards the Parish House.

When Chief Larrimer arrived at the parish house he witnessed a horrific sight. Sylvie Moffat Gandy was dead. Her wounds were consistent with a blunt force blow to the head, most likely with a wine bottle that was found 3-feet from her body. Sylvie also had the butcher’s knife from the kitchen stabbed through her chest. The amount of blood on the floor by the time Chief Larrimer arrived was astounding and this was because the knife also pierced Sylvie’s heart.

A third incident also occurred in Cranbury that night…

After Joey Moffat informed Chief Larrimer of the shriek at the parish house he rode away on his bike towards Aberdeen’s Department Store, the only large store in Cranbury. It was now 10:00 p.m. and the store was closed for the night. As he arrived, he saw a figure smash the big plate glass window in front of the jewelry department. The alarm did not sound because the storm had knocked out the electricity and Joey knew that the only police officer in the town was at the parish house investigating the loud shriek he heard earlier in the night. Joey saw this as an opportunity to be a legend and hero in his town. If he could stop a theft in progress, people would love him and it might even open up opportunities for him to rise above being a high-school dropout messenger boy at the age of 24, who lived with his mom.

Joey cautiously approached the smashed window and peered in. The tall figure inside wore all black and worked quickly. It was obvious the intruder knew what he was looking for. He went right over to the 5-carat diamond that had been on display in the showcase within the store. Using an empty wine bottle, he smashed the showcase and quickly snatched the diamond. Immediately after snatching the diamond the intruder wiped the only fingerprints he believed would remain off of the counter and then ran towards the window.

Joey saw this as his big opportunity, but being a high school dropout and not very intelligent, he did not think quickly on his feet and could not devise a plan to stop the intruder. As the intruder came closer to the window, Joey picked up a large piece of glass from the broken store window. He held a sharp part out towards the running intruder and the piece of glass pierced through the intruder’s clothing, cutting him on the neck.

As the intruder left, he hit Joey with the wine bottle that he was carrying, but it only left a small bruise on Joey’s right arm. Dripping blood and running from the scene the intruder stumbled behind the department store, by the baseball field. He soon dropped to the ground and Joey followed him. When he reached the intruder he saw that it was Rev. Gandy. Joey couldn’t believe that a minister would steal a diamond from the department store. Rev. Gandy was now losing so much blood that he began to grow woozy and cursed Joey for killing him. Up to this point, it had not dawned on Joey that the intruder would die of his wound but this soon became clear. Joey asked, “Why did you do it?” Gandy replied, “Because I love her…” and then he dropped dead.

Realizing what he had done, Joey panicked. He dragged the dead body of Rev. Gandy over to a small wooded area behind the dugout, where he covered the body with leaves and sticks. As he was about to flee the scene, Joey realized that he was in big trouble. No longer was he going to be a hero for saving the day. Joey then realized that Rev. Gandy still had the diamond that he stole. Quickly, Joey uncovered Rev. Gandy’s body and found the 5-caratdiamond in his pants pocket. Joey took the diamond and placed it in his own pocket. He then re-covered Rev. Gandy’s body with leaves and sticks. Joey ran back to the store, where he left his bike. It was now 11:15 and he wanted to be sure not to run into Chief Larrimer as he rode away so he sped quickly down the street towards New Dollar Street.

As he rode away, Joey devised a plan. He would quickly sneak home, clean himself up, pack his belongings, and take the 8:15 train to New York City the next morning. Being a train depot employee, Joey planned to sneak on the train undetected. From New York he could buy a ticket to London on an ocean liner and never have to worry about the incident again in his life. If he sold the 5-carat diamond it could provide him with enough money to live comfortable for at least five or six years in London.

The next day, Joey boarded the 8:15 train to New York City as he had planned. Next he sold the diamond to a pawn shop on Fifth Avenue and then headed to the port. As he approached the security station to board the ocean liner to London he got in an argument with New York Yankees fan in the line about Babe Ruth. The argument resulted in a brawl involving 15 people, all of whom were arrested. Joey Moffat was then extradited back to Cranbury to face trial.