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-v-
Ming Jiang

Manchester (Minshull Street) Crown Court

2nd May 2017

Sentencing Remarks

The Defendant has refused to come into Court to hear this sentence being imposed.

With the consent of his advocate I will proceed to impose sentence upon him in his absence and will refer to him in these sentencing remarks in the second person. I am content for him to be given a copy of these remarks to read.

Last Friday you Ming Jiang were convicted at this Court of the single count you face on this indictment of murder. The trial was fully contested over a four week period. I presided over the trial. The jury took a little over four hours to reach their verdict.

The Facts

You were convicted of the murder of Yang Liu, somebody you knew via your joint interest in gambling at casinos and with whom you shared a membership of the Chinese community in Manchester.

Yang Liu was born in China on the 6th May 1980. He was the only son of Li Ping Liu and Ning Sheng Ouyang. His parents have provided a heartfelt and moving victim impact statement to which I shall refer later.

Yang Liu, just thirty-six years old when he died was a young man whom his parents describe as warm and full of life. He was kind and well loved. He was respectful towards his family, in particular his grandparents before they died.

He was intelligent and studied hard at school and university in China. He gained good qualifications and told his family of his wish to further his education by studying in the United Kingdom. His parents and grandparents encouraged him in this ambition.

The family saved up money to help him go abroad and they maintained their financial support for him once he arrived. They kept in close contact with him even though he was to live the last sixteen years of his life many thousands of miles away from them.

Yang Liu came to the United Kingdom in 2000. He came to study at Leeds University. He met his wife Nan Wang. They graduated together before marrying and moving to Manchester where they bought a flat. Unfortunately they were to grow apart and divorced after eleven years together. They had no children.

Yang Liu lived alone in a flat he owned in Media City in Salford. He retained a circle of friends in the Chinese community. He was successful in finance, investing in stocks and shares and acquiring wealth. His family also sent him money.

He lived comfortably. He liked to dress smartly. He enjoyed a social life characterised by eating out and visiting casinos. He remained a popular, kind and gentle person to spend time with.

You, Ming Jiang befriended him at this part of his life, you moving in the same social circles as he.

The evidence in this trial bears testimony to your obsessive desire to gamble large sums of money in casinos.

There was evidence that you were viewed by some clubs you visited as worthy of special status such was the extent of your custom given to them. You were given this status despite being barred by some other casinos who had grown tired of what has been described as your erratic behaviour – generous and kind when you won, rude and abusive to staff and others when you did not.

At one casino where you remained a member, you were assigned to a special employee whose role was to encourage you and other high spending customers to remain loyal to the casino. You were provided with gifts and other gratuities like nights away at expensive hotels in London.

Like many of those attracted to this type of life your high spending, high rolling behaviour was in fact a selfish and self centred veneer behind which you hid a life of increasing dependency on debt which was rapidly spinning out of control.

The estimated losses you accumulated ran into hundreds of thousands of pounds over a comparatively short period of time and were to increase once you put into effect the plan you came up with to address the debt problems increasingly confronting you.

The plan was chilling but straight forward. You would commit a murder for personal gain.

You would exploit your supposed friendship with Yang Liu to lure him to your flat and kill him. You would dispose of his body by making it look as though he had disappeared.

You would then use your considerable experience of identity theft to adopt his identity, thus have access to his wealth and giving you the funds required to maintain your gambling “VIP” persona. Should you be challenged you thought you would be able to lie your way out of trouble.

On the 5th October 2016 you put your plan into effect. Telephone evidence suggests you contacted Yang Liu and invited him to your flat in the east of Manchester. The last pictures of him being alive are taken by CCTV cameras at the Metrolink station

near to your flat where you are seen to meet him and then walk with him towards your flat.

At your flat you killed him. You then treated his body in the most disrespectful and appalling way. As a consequence of these actions by you, there is no evidence to say precisely where in your flat you killed him or how you did this.

However, given your plan it seems to me likely that you killed him quickly and that by the early hours of the 6th October he was dead.

In order to adopt his identity you were required to buy time before his disappearance could be noticed. To give yourself the greatest chance to do this you decided to dispose of his body so that no trace of him could be found.

To do this you decided to dismember him by removing from his body his head, hands and feet. You did this over a period of time, again in your flat either in the living room using a set of ladders to lay him flat or in your bathroom, in the bath.

You used sharp metal objects, probably knives, to conduct this grotesque activity. These metal objects have never been found you having disposed of them.

Having dismembered his body you disposed of those parts you had removed by possibly discarding them in a communal rubbish bin serving the block of flats in which you lived. The contents of this bin were incinerated before your involvement in this crime was discovered.

The body parts you removed have never been found. Your willingness to treat the remains of another person in this manner portrays you as ruthless and cruel.

Discovery of what had happened started to occur after you disposed of the remaining torso from your victim's body. You did this by placing the torso in a suitcase and taking it to a lay-by some distance from Manchester on the main road to Sheffield.

You did this on the night of the 9th October. Before going to this site you purchased a can of petrol. You poured the contents of the can onto the suitcase before setting it alight in the lay-by in the hope that the suitcase and its contents would be so badly destroyed by fire as to prevent identification.

The remains of the suitcase and what was left of Yang Liu's body were discovered by walkers the following morning who then contacted the police.

The police commenced a painstaking enquiry which via number plate recognition technology traced your motor vehicle as having likely visited the lay-by at the time a fire had been seen in there the previous night by passing motorists.

In due course the police came to you. They seized your car. DNA from Mr Liu was found on the boot. You were arrested.

Before your arrest you had made considerable progress with your plan to cover up your victim's killing and dismemberment, before adopting his identity and obtaining his wealth.

You made concerted attempts to clean up and leave your flat, changing the position of furniture so as to hide the blood stains you couldn't remove, painting parts of the walls and ceiling, washing furniture coverings and giving your landlord notice to end your tenancy.

You had transferred significant sums of money from Mr Liu's accounts to those controlled by you. You had spent liberally on his credit and debit cards, even buying the petrol you were to use to burn his torso in the lay-by with one such card.

You made arrangements to sell Mr Liu's flat in Media City, with a view to obtaining the proceeds of sale quickly. You were told the flat was worth at least £185,000 and expected to receive this money within a matter of days or weeks.

You took control of Mr Liu's mobile phone, and more than once pretended to be him when speaking to lending institutions or estate agents either remotely or in person. On one occasion you callously sent a text to Mr Liu's mother in China pretending to be her son and re-assuring her as to her son's well-being.

You had continued to gamble, spending hours almost every day at casinos in both Manchester and Nottingham. You wagered thousands of pounds in the days after the 5th October before your arrest on the 20th October. There was a significant increase in the amount you were prepared to risk during this period as compared with the period prior to your killing Mr Liu.

When the police spoke with you both before and after your arrest you put into action your plan to lie your way out of trouble.

You told the police that you and your victim were in a homosexual relationship and planned soon to enter a civil partnership. You explained this was why the police enquiries had revealed you being so heavily involved in controlling Mr Liu's financial affairs. All this was untrue.

You told the police you knew nothing of Mr Liu's disappearance but believed the person responsible may have been someone called John Wong who had become friendly with Mr Liu over a number of years and bore him ill-will following a gambling dispute.

You said Mr Wong and another unnamed man had been present with Mr Liu in your flat before the latter's disappearance.

On the evidence presented at trial I am sure that the existence of "John Wong" and the other man is doubtful and is likely to be a smokescreen deliberately created by you to hide your culpability.

You repeated these lies in evidence at trial and as with the police enquiry before, the jury saw through them and delivered a verdict which was entirely consistent with the evidence presented to them.

This was a planned murder committed by you I am sure for personal gain.

Your actions ended the life of a gentle and kind young man.

They demonstrate that you are, a highly dangerous, cunning and ruthless killer prepared to stop at nothing to fulfil your own selfish desire to feed your gambling habit.

Victim Impact Statements

Yang Liu's parents have provided a joint victim impact statement which has been read out in part to the Court. The contents of the statement are highly personal and make clear the terrible loss they have suffered.

I do not propose to repeat the contents of the statement here given it was recently read out in part during this hearing and has already been widely reported. However, I fully understand the daily torment and anguish Mr Liu and his wife have to endure.

For any parent to lose their child is extremely painful. In this case these parents have had to face the loss of their only child.

I accept and understand that the loss to Yang Liu's parents will leave them bereft of significant emotional support in their lives from their only son – support they were entitled to expect as they grow older, and which is so important in Chinese culture.

I recognise that there is little that I can say to help these parents with their grief at the loss of their son. I wish to express however the Court's condolences to them, confident as I am that even though they are not present to hear what I am saying the contents of these remarks will be translated and made available to them.

The Sentence

There is only one sentence that can be imposed on conviction for murder and that is a sentence of life imprisonment. That will be the sentence in this case when I announce it shortly.

A sentence of life imprisonment imposed on a dangerous offender means what it says, life imprisonment.

You, Ming Jiang may spend the entirety of the rest of your life in prison and you will certainly not be released from this sentence unless the Parole Board comes to the view that you are no longer to be considered a danger to the public.

Given the nature of this murder I anticipate the authorities at the appropriate time, should it ever be reached, will have to consider with very great care the issue of the danger you present to the public if you are once more in the community.

It is entirely possible, in the circumstances that you will, in fact never be released from custody.

I am required to fix the minimum term that you will serve. This means the minimum period that you will serve in custody before you are even considered for release by the Parole Board.

You should note this minimum term cannot be reduced or changed and as I have already said there is no guarantee that at the end of it you will be released. This will be a matter for assessment by the Parole Board at the time.

Pursuant to the provisions of **Schedule 21 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003** a murder done for gain or for money is viewed as of particularly high seriousness and has as a starting point a minimum term of 30 years.

For reasons I have already alluded to I agree with the prosecution submission that this is the appropriate starting point in this case.

This murder was planned from the outset and the clear motive for the killing by you of Mr Liu was so that you could adopt his identity and gain access to his considerable financial assets.

The starting point is thus thirty years.

Aggravating Features

Having adopted this starting point, I now turn to those and other aggravating features of this murder that **Schedule 21** asks me to consider when adding to the starting point.

I am of the view that the following features aggravate this murder for gain;

There was dismemberment of Mr Liu's body.

There was destruction and concealment of the body thereafter, the torso was set alight and the head, hands and feet have never been recovered.

There was an attempt to mislead others as to the fate of Mr Liu and in particular the text to his mother in China.

You, Ming Jiang have shown a complete lack of remorse throughout and have been prepared to maintain a fabricated account both to the police in interview and in the presentation of your case at trial which in part I view as having been demeaning to your victim.

In particular you continued to describe him as in employment as a male escort without producing a shred of evidence to this effect.

Your attitude towards your victim can be seen from the evidence of one witness (Kristian Gallagher) who indicated you referred to Mr Liu in far from complementary terms shortly after, in my judgement, you must have killed him.

Mitigating Features

I am prepared to afford you some mitigation for your lack of previous convictions and in particular that you have no convictions of violence recoded against you. However I do note your previous admitted involvement in identity fraud, all be it that there are no convictions for dishonesty recorded against you.

I have also listened carefully to everything said appropriately on your behalf.

Conclusion

I sentence you Ming Jiang to life imprisonment for the murder of Yang Liu.

The minimum term I impose is one of thirty-three years. This means you will not even be considered for release by the Parole Board until the year 2050.

The days you have spent in custody, one hundred and ninety of them, will count towards this sentence.

A victim surcharge is payable.

I have already set a POCA timetable earlier in this hearing.

I will make the Forfeiture and Destruction Orders the Crown seek as outlined in their written sentencing submissions and other documentation at the conclusion of the POCA proceedings.

On the assumption the POCA proceedings are settled I will make the Forfeiture and Destruction Orders administratively at the appropriate time without the need for this case to be re-listed.

I make no order as to your immigration status. These are matters to be dealt with by the appropriate authorities in due course and given the sentence I have imposed upon you form no part of this sentencing exercise.

HHJ John Potter
2nd May 2017.