



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

REGINA

-v-

LOUISE PORTON

1. Louise Porton, you are now 23 years old and stand convicted by the jury of the murder of your two children, Lexi, who was 3 years old, and Scarlett, aged 16 months.
2. There is only one sentence that the law allows to be passed for murder: that is a mandatory life sentence. I am required to specify the minimum term which must elapse before you can be released on licence.
3. On 15 January 2018, you claimed that you had found Lexi dead in her bed. An initial post-mortem examination did not identify any obvious cause of death. The results of further tests were outstanding on 1st February 2018 when, 17 days after her sister's death, you killed Scarlett.
4. As with Lexi, you tried to pass Scarlett's death off as an unexpected natural death. Having killed her in the room at the hotel where you were then staying, you carried Scarlett's body out to your car and pretended you were driving to hospital to have her checked as she had become unwell. You called 111 and claimed Scarlett had stopped breathing in her car seat.
5. The truth is both children died because you deliberately obstructed their airways. Scarlett's neck showed clear signs of compression. Blood found on a pillow suggested smothering may also have been involved. The signs in Lexi were more subtle but piecing the evidence together left no doubt that you had also killed her.

6. Text messages sent by you and internet searches done on your mobile phone reveal a degree of premeditation. Lexi had two hospital admissions prior to her death when you claimed that she had suffered fits. Before each of those episodes you made internet searches apparently about why a young child might stop breathing. From all the evidence I have seen and heard, I am sure that you were responsible for the events that led to Lexi's admissions to hospital. On 4 January 2018 you left Lexi in a critical condition, her life being saved by skilled resuscitation by paramedics. On the night she died, your internet browsing history is sinister, revealing visits to websites with information about the period during which resuscitation can be effective and the time taken after death for a body to go cold. You also sent a message claiming that doctors had told you Lexi was going to die, when no doctor had said any such thing. By the time you called for an ambulance, Lexi had been dead for some time. I am left in no doubt that you delayed calling for an ambulance until you were sure she was dead and could not be resuscitated.
7. On the night Scarlett died, you sent messages to multiple people suggesting that you might lose her too. Such messages started within a short period of you returning to your hotel room when you and Scarlett had been captured on CCTV and she looked perfectly fit and well. The only reason for foreshadowing her death was that you planned to take her life, as you had taken Lexi's. Again, you delayed calling for assistance until she had been dead for some time.
8. One way or another, you squeezed the life out of each of your daughters, only calling the emergency services when you knew they were dead.
9. I am sure that at the time of their deaths, you intended to kill each of your daughters. Why you did so, only you know.
10. Those who loved Lexi and Scarlett have been left bewildered as to how and why you could have done something so evil. Your actions have devastated so many lives. The moving statement of the girls' father and grandmother speaks of the future they and others have lost. Your family's suffering is evident too. Lexi and Scarlett, described by one witness as "golden", had so much to offer to their wider families and they to them but you took all that away.

11. I have heard evidence from your sister that you loved your children. Other witnesses report that they were apparently well cared for and happy children. Injuries found on both children during post-mortem examination, for which you were unable to account, raise concerns that you may have assaulted them on other occasions, but I cannot be sure of how these injuries were caused and therefore leave them out of account. As I have indicated, I am sure that you were responsible for Lexi's hospital admissions on 2 and 4 January 2018. The incident on 4 January was life-threatening and with hindsight undoubtedly because you had obstructed her airway. Scarlett also had signs of prior airway obstruction such that I am sure that there had been a previous occasion when you had harmed her in that way.
12. You are still young. Lexi was born when you were aged 18. At the time of the offences, you were aged 21, nearly 22, and a single parent. No doubt there were pressures on you as there are on any young, single mother. However, that cannot begin to explain what you did. You benefitted from support from your family, particularly from your sister, who did so much for you and your children and for whom the deaths of her nieces and this case must have been particularly difficult.
13. The suggestion that your children got in the way of your lifestyle may make for interesting headlines, but it does not truly reflect the evidence at trial. Your daughters did not hold you back from doing what you wanted to. The sad truth is that the evidence offers no real reason for Lexi and Scarlett's deaths, other than that you, their mother, decided to end their lives.
14. During the trial, the jury asked questions about whether you would be subject to a medical assessment and whether you might have autism. You told the jury that you find it difficult to show your emotions and to form emotional attachments but there is absolutely no evidence that you suffer from any medical condition or mental disorder that might have impacted on your actions. As I would expect, your experienced legal team explored this possibility, but no expert evidence has been placed before the court. That is not to be held against you and I draw no inference beyond the fact that mental disorder is not a feature of your case.
15. Although you were cautioned for wasting police time when you were aged 15, you have no previous convictions.

16. The starting point for these two murders in combination is that set out in paragraph 5(1) of Schedule 21 of 30 years.
17. There are factors present which I must consider as statutory aggravating factors. The murder of any child by her mother involves the grossest abuse of trust. Lexi and Scarlett were blameless young children, who were plainly vulnerable. They ought to have been able to rely upon their mother to protect and nurture them. Instead, you took their young lives away.
18. I have already referred to the fact that there is evidence of premeditation. Having said that, I do accept that when each girl was declared dead, you were upset. The picture is a complex one. I do not find that this is a case of two carefully planned murders. On the other hand, it is not a case of a young mother at the end of her tether snapping and doing something in the heat of the moment. The fact that these two deaths occurred seventeen days apart is an unusual feature. The evidence demonstrates calculated decisions to kill each of your children on two separate occasions. In between the two deaths, you carried on essentially as normal. Arguably, the extent of premeditation in this case does not cross the threshold into being “a significant degree of planning and premeditation” such as to amount to a statutory aggravating factor. However, the circumstances are grave and aggravate the seriousness of the offending generally.
19. Although I identify these matters as aggravating factors, I must guard against double counting them. The starting point for two murders is high and the reality is that many such cases may involve some degree of premeditation. I accept that the timing of the internet searches does not point to long-held premeditation. The abuse of trust and the vulnerability both derive from the relationship of mother and child and so should be viewed together.
20. Your age and relatively good character afford you mitigation. Having seen you give evidence and from all that I have heard about you during the trial, I consider that you are immature. While there is no evidence of mental disorder, it is plainly part of your make-up that you find it difficult to make and sustain emotional attachments and to put the needs of others ahead of your own.

21. I consider that the aggravating features call for an uplift from the starting point. However, I moderate that uplift significantly to reflect the mitigation available to you, particularly your young age.
22. On each count, I sentence you to life imprisonment. Taking account of all the factors I have set out, the minimum term will be one of 32 years, less the 188 days that you have spent on remand in custody following your arrest.
23. That term represents the minimum period you will be required to serve. After it is served, there is no guarantee that you will be released at that time, or at any particular time thereafter. It will then be for the Parole Board to decide if you are fit to be released. You must also understand that if, and when, you are released you will remain subject to licence for the rest of your life and may therefore be liable to be recalled and to continue your detention if you reoffend.
24. The statutory surcharge will be added to the record.