



JUDICIARY OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES

**IN THE CROWN COURT AT PRESTON**

**THE QUEEN**

**— v —**

**JORDAN LEE**

**SENTENCING REMARKS OF THE HONOURABLE MRS JUSTICE ELLENBOGEN DBE**

Jordan Lee, you may remain seated, for now.

1. You have been convicted by a jury of the murder of your daughter, Willow Lee, on overwhelming evidence, and I must now sentence you for that crime.

**The Facts**

2. On the morning of 3 December 2020, Willow's mother — your partner, Jade Bell — left the home which she shared with you and your brother, Daniel Lee, to go to work, leaving Willow in your care. Willow was just under five months old. Like any baby of that age, her moods were changeable. She had been teething, which caused her some pain, and, during that day, she struggled to settle and cried for much of the time.
3. The jury was shown the text messages which were exchanged, between you and Jade, and between Daniel and Jade, during the course of the day, from which a clear picture emerges. Shortly before 1:20pm, Daniel sent a text to Jade, saying that you were seriously not fit to be a father and that he felt so sorry for Willow. A few minutes later, he sent a further text,

telling her that Willow had been pretty much crying all day and that you had been getting really angry and shouting at her; that you had rejected his offer of help; and that you had picked Willow up by the ankle and said, *'Here you go'*, before putting her back down. At around the same time, your neighbour, herself the mother of a young baby, was sending text messages to her own father, saying how worried she was, as she could hear you screaming at the baby, shouting, *'Shut the fuck up!'* and banging around. Willow then fell asleep, as, at some point, did you, waking up again at around 4:20 that afternoon.

4. Once again, Willow became fractious. She cried persistently and insistently and I have no doubt that, as time passed, you became increasingly frustrated and angry at your inability to calm her down, for any sustained period of time. Your focus, by this stage, was not on Willow, but on your online, Xbox Live game. You had become fixated on reaching a certain level in that game and angered by other players who were taunting you about your gaming skills. Willow's constant crying was, I am satisfied (to the criminal standard, being the standard applicable to all my conclusions of fact), an increasingly unwelcome distraction which intensified your mounting anger.
5. You had rejected your brother's offer of help, at an earlier stage in the day, for no good reason. By late afternoon, he had become sufficiently concerned by your behaviour that he made three Snapchat recordings, timed at 5:32; 5:52 and 6:04pm, intending to play them to Willow's mother, on her return home. That footage has been played many times in the course of your trial. The final recording, in particular, is chilling. I am quite satisfied that it captures the tragic moment when you murdered your daughter; captures your shouting and the grunts of exertion which you uttered as you forcefully shook and/or administered some form of head impact to Willow, whether with a part of your body or against some object, causing her to sustain the catastrophic global injuries to her brain from which she would die three days later, there being nothing more that the doctors could do for her.
6. The three consultant pathologists who gave expert evidence were of one mind; the nature, location and severity of Willow's injuries were such that the only realistic and plausible explanation for them was a non-accidental head injury, comprising forceful shaking and/or some form of impact to her head. You inflicted that, on your own daughter, because you wanted to complete a game.

7. Thereafter, you persisted in claiming that Willow's fatal injuries had been accidentally acquired. She had received them, you asserted, by falling from the sofa to the carpeted floor — a distance of only 45cm — striking her head on a bottle or remote control as she fell, there being no apparent or proffered explanation for that state of affairs, given Willow's lack of mobility at such a young age. On your account, Willow had then become non-responsive and, in a panic, you had run upstairs to your brother, without supporting her head, falling on your way up the staircase and thereby exacerbating the injuries caused by her earlier fall from the sofa. You had also twice attempted CPR, you said, which itself could have contributed to Willow's injuries and explained some of the bruising found on examination, post-mortem.
  
8. As the jury's verdict indicates, no part of that explanation for Willow's death was true. Her death had been no accident. Here again, the pathologists were of the same mind; the injuries which Willow sustained could not have resulted from any one of those events, or from any combination of them. Not content with depriving Willow of her life, in the most violent of ways, and the many people who loved her of their cherished daughter, grand-daughter, great grand-daughter or niece, you put them through the further trauma of a trial, asserting that your brother, to whose moral courage in giving evidence against you I pay tribute, had fabricated or embellished his account, because he bore a grudge against you; and that your neighbour, who told the jury, with obvious and genuine emotion, how the words which she had heard you shout still haunted her, was mistaken. I am satisfied that each of them gave a true and honest account of events, to the best of his or her recollection.

### **Victim Impact**

9. Willow's mother, whose dignity and fair-minded evidence were both striking and moving, made a victim personal statement, in which she spoke, poignantly, of the extent to which the daughter whom she described as her 'perfect baby' was cherished; the permanent hole that her death at your hands has left; and the future of which Willow and her family have been deprived. She also spoke of her own guilt at what you did, for which you alone were responsible. Jade Bell has nothing to feel guilty for; she went to work, leaving her much-loved baby girl in her own home, in the care of a person whom she had every right to assume

would protect and care for her as much as she did; a decision which you have given her cause to regret for the rest of her life.

### **Sentence**

10. You are 29 years of age. There is only one sentence for murder which the law allows me to pass, being a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment. However, I am required to specify the minimum term, pursuant to section 322 of, and Schedule 21 to, the Sentencing Act 2020, which you must serve before you can be released on licence.
11. In order to do so, I must first consider the seriousness of your offending. I am satisfied, that, as Counsel agree, the appropriate starting point is that specified by paragraph 5 of Schedule 21, namely 15 years. Having selected that starting point, paragraph 7 of Schedule 21 requires me to take into account any aggravating and mitigating factors in your case.
12. Statutory aggravating factors relevant to your offence, set out at paragraph 9 of Schedule 21, are Willow's particular vulnerability, given her very young age, and your abuse of a position of trust as her father, in whose care she had been left. In this case, I regard those factors as being two sides of the same coin and I do not double-count them.
13. A further statutory aggravating factor is the physical suffering which you inflicted on Willow before her death. I am satisfied — in particular having listened to the third Snapchat recording and considered the evidence of Dr Du Plessis, consultant neuropathologist — that, mercifully, Willow is most likely to have lost consciousness at the point at which you inflicted her fatal injuries, such that she would not have experienced enduring pain at your hands. But I am also satisfied that the text message which your brother sent to Jade, at 1:24pm on 3 December, accurately described your behaviour at around that time, including picking Willow up by the ankle. I have no hesitation in accepting the evidence which your brother gave of that incident, in which he stated that you had grabbed Willow and pulled her up by the ankle, then turned towards him and moved your arm closer, dangling her in the air, for 10 to 15 seconds, before placing her back on the floor, head-first and not gently. The absence of any external bruising to Willow's ankle does not undermine my conclusion that you caused her to suffer in such a way, having regard to the evidence of Dr Armour, consultant pathologist, that one could pick up a baby roughly, by the ankle, and cause no

injury at all. I make clear, however, that, whilst reprehensible, that conduct contributes little to the statutory aggravating factors to which I have previously referred.

14. I turn to consider any non-statutory relevant aggravating factors in this case. Through a combination of, I am satisfied, your petty resentment of your brother, and your arrogant and misplaced belief that you knew best, you rejected his offer to look after Willow, at an earlier stage in the day, and you further rejected Jade's offer (by text message) that, if you needed a break, she could ask her own mother to look after Willow, for a while. Had you taken advantage of either offer, at a time when you must have realised that you were becoming extremely and dangerously angry and agitated with Willow, perhaps matters would not have escalated as they did, with such tragic consequences. In all the circumstances, I consider your rejection of two offers of help in looking after Willow, as just described, to be a relevant aggravating factor in this case.
15. Whilst I note your previous convictions (none of which for violence), acquired in 2013 and 2014, I do not consider them to be relevant, or, hence, aggravating factors, for current purposes.
16. Mitigating your crime was your lack of premeditation. I also accept the submission made on your behalf, by Mr Johnson QC, that your intention was to cause serious bodily harm, rather than to kill. Nevertheless, you subjected Willow to a brutal assault, applying considerable force to her fragile body. I have considered all points which have been advanced, with realistic moderation, in mitigation of your crime. Notwithstanding the consummate and conspicuous skill with which Mr Johnson sought to mitigate on your behalf and conducted your defence throughout, I am not persuaded that there is any real mitigation in this case, beyond your lack of premeditation and intent to kill. You have shown no remorse for your crime.
17. Having regard to all of the aggravating and mitigating factors to which I have referred, I have concluded that the appropriate minimum term in your case is 16 years.

Stand up, please, Mr Lee.

18. For the murder of Willow Grace Lee, I sentence you to life imprisonment. The minimum term which you will serve is one of 16 years. I emphasise, to you and to the public, that a minimum term is just that; a minimum period which cannot be reduced, to any extent.
19. There is no guarantee that you will be released after you have served 16 years, or at any particular time thereafter. If, after the 16-year minimum term, the Parole Board determines that you are fit to be released, you will be released. If and when that happens, you will remain subject to licence for the rest of your life, meaning that you may be recalled, to continue your life sentence, if you re-offend or otherwise breach the conditions of your licence. Those are the ways in which a life sentence protects the public for the future.
20. You will receive credit for the 237 days during which you have been remanded in custody.
21. The statutory surcharge will be imposed.

You must now go with the dock officer.

**30 July 2021**