



Courts and Tribunals Judiciary

The King

-v-

Abigail White

Sentencing Remarks of Mr Justice Fraser

Bristol Crown Court

21 October 2022

1. On 25 March 2022 you stabbed your partner, Bradley Lewis, in the chest, in the home you occupied at 2 Chipperfield Road in Kingswood, South Gloucestershire. The kitchen knife you used penetrated his heart to a depth of 7cm. That simple description does not do justice to the surrounding facts of his killing. You pleaded guilty to manslaughter in July 2022 and stood trial for his murder. The jury have convicted you unanimously of that today. They were, therefore, sure that you had the intent at least to cause him really serious harm or even to kill him. I will return to this subject later in these remarks. No sentence that this court can pass can, of course, ever bring him back.
2. You are only 24 years old and Bradley was 2 years younger. He was not living with you at the time of his murder, and had returned to live with his mother. He had told you that he wanted to leave you. He was the father of your three young children, and he also had a young daughter, Scarlett, with another young woman called Leah. Not only are his three children with you going to grow up without their father, but they will grow up knowing their mother killed their father. He was closely involved in their lives, taking the eldest ones to school and nursery, caring for them and being a good influence upon them.
3. The court has heard Victim Personal Statements from both of Bradley's parents, Steve and Rachel and from Leah, the mother of Scarlett. He has obviously left the most enormous voids in all their lives, and he will continue to be missed very deeply. They all spoke of how popular and friendly and caring his was. Over 800 people came to his funeral and wake.
4. It was his misfortune that he was in a relationship with you, because you are a controlling person. You are also very violent. You had stabbed him on previous

occasions to the one when you actually killed him. You threatened to kill him regularly, and he told his friends he was scared of you, and he wanted to leave you. But he could not bring himself to do so, and whenever the subject came up you would threaten to kill yourself. But you also threatened to kill him, and other people he loved, including his mother, other women with whom he had relations over the years you were together, and at one point you threatened to destroy everything that he loved. You threatened to stab him in the face. You did stab him in the leg leaving a scar, and then a couple of weeks before you killed him you stabbed him in the arm. All of this behaviour was in an attempt to control him.

5. The messages from you recorded in texts and WhatsApp messages make for chilling reading. You told your friend in voice notes that he only ever told you the truth if you threatened to stab him or actually beat him up. There is some reference in the unused material to violence the other way, but so far as the evidence in the trial is concerned, the witnesses said for the most part when you attacked him, those present only ever saw him defend himself.
6. This was all part of the way that you behaved with him. You demanded his almost constant attention, and your messages showed that unless he answered you immediately, and did what you wanted, you would become furious and increasingly volatile. Social Services were involved due to their concerns about the home environment, and you and Bradley were not supposed to be living together, although for some time you did do so and kept it a secret from the authorities. This must have increased the strain, which would not have helped your mental state.
7. You both had other sexual partners and sexual fidelity was a source of constant difficulty between you. You would try and catch him out, and if you did find out more details you used this to try and get him to treat you in a certain way and, as you put it, “make it up to you”. He would lie to you about his other sexual partners.
8. The psychiatrists who gave evidence at the trial were agreed that you had a Borderline Personality Disorder, which has its roots in your appalling childhood. You were both sexually and physically abused by your step-father, went into care, and found yourself in a series of unsatisfactory relationships, including one with a man in his 30s when you were only a teenager. The features of your disorder lead to your extreme and intensely volatile behaviour. You also had particular fears of abandonment and rejection, and in the weeks leading up to 25 March 2022 these would have become more pronounced.
9. On the afternoon of the killing he told you that he did not want to be with you anymore. Although this was the type of thing that you both regularly discussed, it appears as though he had made a decision to break up with you. Your relationship was described by various witnesses including your friends as toxic. I would add to that term, and describe it as a volatile and violent relationship.
10. Later that day there is CCTV of you and a group of friends and children spending what should have been a pleasant late afternoon and early evening at the Horseshoe public house. However, the fact that Bradley was not there with you when you required him to be led to you becoming in a fury. When he arrived at about 6.30pm you physically berated him and caused a massive scene. He committed what you considered to be the disrespectful act of having his back towards you and refusing to be alone with you at

the pub. You punched and slapped him, spat in the face of his friend and another man, and eventually someone – not Bradley - hit you. You used this to fuel your anger and accused him of not sticking up for you.

11. You even called 999 and reported the other man for, as you put it, attacking you. Actually, you had hit the other man first. That 999 call and the CCTV from the pub shows you causing a massive amount of trouble and behaving hysterically. You gave the police a false name when they called you back, worried about the call that had been cut off.
12. His friends desperately tried to get him not to go home with you as they feared for his safety. When a friend of yours gave you, Bradley and one of your children a lift home in his car, Bradley told him he would be killed for his behaviour. Whether he meant this literally or not, he knew you would inflict further violence upon him when you arrived at your house. You sent your son Logan-Leighton, who was only 3 at the time, to get ready for bed, had an argument with Bradley, went to the kitchen for the sizeable carving knife and stabbed him in the chest with it whilst he was in the hallway.
13. Both the prosecution and the defence say that you loved Bradley, but that at time you also hated him. In my judgment, on all the evidence that I have seen, at the time you stabbed him you clearly intended to kill him. You had threatened to do this many times. Your evidence that you did not, and only wanted to shock him, was not credible.
14. You then, having stabbed him, became hysterical when you realised what you had done, and I accept you tried to call 999. But you told everyone at the time he had stabbed himself, and you also made something of an attempt clean up the blood. You repeated your lie blaming him when you gave a prepared statement to the police. It was only in July of this year that you finally accepted you had unlawfully killed him when you pleaded guilty to manslaughter.
15. It is not necessary to obtain a pre-sentence report in your case, and Mr Langdon KC has not sought to persuade me to obtain one. The court already has the detailed reports of Dr Sandford, Dr Hillier and Dr Krljes before it, and has a great deal of information before it about you, all of which I take into account.
16. Parliament has decided that the only sentence for someone convicted of murder is life imprisonment. I have to fix the minimum term, in accordance with Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020. You took a knife from the kitchen into the hallway to stab him with it. Taking a knife to the scene would ordinarily mean the starting point is 25 years, and for other cases the starting point would be 15 years. Here, given the circumstances of the case, it is accepted by the Crown, and by the court, that even though you went to the kitchen to take the knife the circumstances of that are that the correct starting point is one of 15 years. This figure must then be adjusted to reflect the other features of the case.
17. None of the statutory aggravating factors apply. There are the following aggravating factors. Firstly, the use of the knife, which is a weapon. Secondly, that you had a history of violence against him, although I take account of the nature of the relationship the two of you had. There are a number of Tik-Tok videos where you sought to humiliate him and boasted of your use of violence against him. The third aggravating factor is

that you stabbed him in the presence of your 3 year old son, who gave a moving ABE video in which he showed how, as he said, “Mummy stabbed Daddy”. The final factor is that you also sought to blame Bradley himself for what had happened, and said he had stabbed himself, including in your prepared statement to the police. You did at least accept later that this was not true.

18. I turn therefore to the mitigating factors. Firstly, the statutory ones. I do not accept that your intention was only to cause him really serious harm and not to kill him. Mr Langdon has sought to persuade me of this, but applying the criminal standard of proof I am satisfied that you intended to kill him. I accept there was a lack of pre-meditation. Your culpability is lowered as a result of your mental condition, and the stressors present at the time that were agreed by the experts. Your mental disorder is a significant mitigating factor. So too is your troubled childhood and background. It is also relevant that you had sought some help, and contacted a mental health agency in the period leading up the killing, but the agency you approached did not give you any help and this attempt failed. I also recognise that you are genuinely remorseful and called 999 almost immediately.
19. You are also entitled to some limited discount for your acceptance of his unlawful killing by pleading guilty to count 2, manslaughter 2 in July of this year, and in my judgment that balances out against the lies you told the police in your prepared statement. However, your guilty plea to count 2 did leave your intent as a real issue which had to be resolved at the trial.
20. In my judgment, taking those aggravating factors and mitigating factors together and adjusting the term, these justify movement upwards from the starting point I have indicated to one of 18 years as a minimum term. You will spend this period in prison before you will be entitled to be considered for release by the Parole Board.
21. I therefore sentence you to imprisonment for life, with a minimum term of 18 years, less the time you have spent on remand, which I am told is 210 days. If that figure is incorrect, it can be corrected administratively. The statutory surcharge is imposed.
22. Finally, I have already thanked the jury, and I would also like to thank counsel both the prosecution and also the defence. This case had some very difficult aspects to it, and their sensible and highly professional approach to the trial has been constructive and very much helped the administration of justice in this tragic case.

Fraser J

21 October 2022