



## **R -v- ADAM SAUNDERS**

**In the Crown Court of Preston**

**22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025**

### **SENTENCING REMARKS OF MR JUSTICE MARTIN SPENCER**

#### **Introduction**

1. Adam Saunders, you fall to be sentenced for the murder of Kevin Price on 7 November 2024. I shall also sentence you for two counts of fraud, to which you pleaded guilty on 10 January 2025, for theft to which you pleaded guilty on 21 March 2025 and for burglary, count 2 on the indictment, which you admitted in the course of your evidence and to which you pleaded guilty in front of the jury when that count was put to you again. You were born on 14 February 1974 and you are now aged 51: you were 50 at the time.

#### **The Victim: Kevin Price**

2. Kevin Price was born on 17 May 1965 and was aged 59 at the date of his death. He lived at the Garfield Hotel on Springfield Road, Blackpool. His former partner, Ms Ricci, gave some information about Mr Price in her witness statement:

“Kevin has owned and ran the Garfield Hotel for a long time. It used to be a working hotel 4 or 5 years ago, but he has got ill over the years, and he is now unable to run it anymore. His main concern now is his dogs. Kevin is the only person that lives at the hotel. He regularly has homeless people come to his door asking for money and I am aware that he does give them a pound or two and they keep coming to his address.”

Mr Price’s kindness emerged from other documents. For example, Kevin Christoph described how Kevin Price started talking to him when he was sitting in the street, homeless, and offered him a bed for the night at the hotel and when Mr Christoph needed to be up in the morning to do his volunteering work, Kevin Price woke him up with a mug of coffee to ensure he was up in time.

Kevin Price was not without means, as shown by the fact that he had a balance of £50,000 in his Nationwide Savings Account. The impression I got was that he was a kindly gentleman who lived alone and was something of a soft touch, who would help those who needed help. This was also something referred to by you, when you gave your evidence. You referred to Kevin Price believing in you when no-one else did and how you viewed him like a Dad. As we shall see, you betrayed that trust and kindness in the cruellest of ways, including by viciously stabbing him to death.

3. My impression of Kevin Price, gained through the trial, has been confirmed and reinforced by the moving victim personal statements which have been read to the court. His sister, Diane, refers to him as “the most thoughtful, kind, warm and loving person anybody could wish to meet.” His nephew, Robert, describes how Kevin loved spending time with children, not just him and his brother Mark when they were growing up but also, in turn, Robert’s children. He says: “Kevin loved spending time with the children and would boast about them to his friends. He would take them up Blackpool Tower and we would go to see the illuminations; he absolutely adored them. Even when he was struggling, he would always make sure the children had everything and would never ask for anything. He was the most caring person I knew.” Mark, in turn, describes how his Uncle Kevin helped him out a few years ago when he was going through a difficult time, giving him somewhere to stay and spending time together. This was mutually beneficial because Mark says: “I loved every second I spent staying with Uncle Kevin. Just knowing that he had someone with him that he could trust, and that I could take some of his loneliness away, meant so much to me.” Thus, the special relationship which they built up together, and which has lasted since those months they were living together, has been destroyed by you. Mark also says this about his uncle: “One thing about Kevin was even when he had nothing, he would always give whatever he could to help others. He would regularly sit at the front of the hotel with a brew and speak to whoever was walking past. He had a massive heart, especially for those that were struggling. I only found out after the funeral that he was letting homeless people stay in the hotel. At times, knowing this has been frustrating because Kevin was always too trusting of people, but all he wanted to do was help others. He would always see the good in people.” Not only does this confirm and reinforce my impression of the kind of man Kevin Price was, but it also emphasises the degree to which you breached that trust by your actions in stealing from him and killing him. What this case demonstrates is two people at each end of the scale of human kindness: Mr Price at the very top and you close to the bottom. The effect of what you did on the whole of Kevin Price’s family has been hugely traumatic and will, I have no doubt, be long-lasting.

### **The Circumstances of the Offences**

4. The background to the offences lay in your drug addiction and your relationship with Mr Price. You told the court that you had been a drug addict since you were aged 19, taking heroin and crack cocaine: you would mix the

two in what is called a speedball. You described yourself as a serious addict. You said you had known Kevin Price for 19-20 years and had at one stage done labouring work for him. Kevin knew about your drug habit. He would help you with your wounds and you referred to your psoriasis which you said would get very dry and could bleed. You freely admitted that you stole from Kevin Price to feed your habit. You said that you had sexual contact with Mr Price when you needed, Mr Price paying for your services. You said you had stolen from Mr Price 3 or 4 times and had sexual contact with him for money 5 or 6 times.

5. You also said that you had known Helen Kenyon for 8-9 years: she was also an addict, mainly crack but also heroin now and again. You and she were not living together: you said that you were homeless and would use Helen's at 29 Cheltenham Road now and again. Yours was, you said, not a romantic relationship but a drugs relationship. You said that sometimes you could be spending as much as £100 a day on drugs, when feeling low. Your habit was made more expensive because you were, you said, partly financing Helen's as well and you serviced it by shoplifting and doing occasional work for the dealers, as well as stealing from Kevin Price. I have no doubt that, as a drug addict, you were in constant need of money to feed your habit.
6. On 31 October 2024, you were at the Garfield Hotel with Mr Price. Whilst he was cooking a meal, you made off with his bag which contained, among other things, his TSB debit card which you then fraudulently used to a total of £143.94 before the card was stopped. You have pleaded guilty to these offences. Mr Price reported this to the police. However, by 7 November, you and Ms Kenyon were again in need of money and so at 16:49, after speaking to Kevin Price an hour earlier, you texted him, saying: "Do you want some company later X". He replied at 17:06: "yes with my bag X". This shows how forgiving Kevin Price was prepared to be and how you were prepared to exploit that as you no doubt hoped and expected that he would give you some money. You went to the Garfield Hotel and went in at 18:28. What then exactly happened only you will ever know, but at some stage you and Kevin went to room 2 where, I find, you both stripped naked and engaged in some form of sexual activity. You then proceeded to murder Mr Price in the most brutal way imaginable. You stabbed him 56 times. You stabbed him in the neck 15 times, severing his common carotid artery and his left jugular vein. You stabbed him in the heart. You stabbed him so as to puncture the upper lobe of his right lung twice. Each of these injuries would have proved fatal. The pathologist found typical defensive injuries to Kevin Price's left hand, sustained as he desperately tried to stave off your attack. I find that your motivation was greed: you knew that Kevin Price had assets in the form of the property at the Garfield Hotel and the funds in his Nationwide account. You killed him intending to realise those assets and, if you could, access the funds in the Nationwide account. Evidence of your having been practising the signature of Kevin Price was found by the police, showing your intention to do that. You showed Charles Smith the passbook and told him that you intended to go to Preston to try and get some money out of the account.

7. Having murdered Mr Price, you proceeded to plunder all that you could from the Garfield Hotel and from the use of Mr Price's stolen Nationwide bank card. You immediately went to Argos to buy two new handsets using that stolen card – one for yourself and one for Helen Kenyon – and that enabled you to sell your old handsets. In the course of the night, you returned to the Garfield Hotel 4 times, safe in the knowledge, as Mr McLachlan put to you in cross-examination, that you would not be disturbed because you knew that Kevin Price was dead. You took property from the various rooms, and put the items in bags, ready for collection. At 02.00, you went there with Helen Kenyon and spent almost an hour there before leaving with the property you had gathered in a taxi and returning to Ms Kenyon's address at 29 Cheltenham Road. At 9.10 am the next morning, in broad daylight, you brazenly removed a 55" television and other goods which you took round to Cash Converters and sold for £85. You sold Mr Price's telephone handset, which you took with you after murdering him, at Cash Traders for £200. When you did so, you enquired of the shop assistant, Mr Habibi, whether he would be interested in buying lots of TVs which you had: these could only have been the ones in the hotel rooms. You went back to the Garfield Hotel the following night and remained there for 4½ hours, leaving in a taxi with further property at 7.30 the next morning. All the time, Kevin Price's dogs were uncared for and becoming distressed. They had no choice but to defecate indoors.
8. However, what you had not bargained for was Kevin Price's close friend, Asuna Ricci. She used to speak to him every day and she became extremely anxious when she was unable to contact him. On Sunday, 10 November, she came to Blackpool to look for him. When she found the situation at the hotel, she reported him missing to the police. She encountered you when you went back to the hotel yet another time at 15:45 that afternoon and she got off you the keys to the hotel which you had taken. She left the keys with neighbours, for them to let in the police, and then she went home, taking Kevin Price's 2 dogs to look after them. The police attended that evening, at 9.30pm, and found Kevin Price's body lying in a pool of blood in room 2.
9. The police were soon onto your trail, thanks to some fine detective work including painstaking and meticulous examination of CCTV footage from a large number of cameras. Initially, you gave them the slip, renting a room at the Northern Pearl Hotel but eventually they caught up with you on Wednesday, 13 November at the home of Frank McCartney where you had stayed the night, and you were arrested. You lied in your prepared statement, you lied in your defence case statement and you lied in your evidence in this court. However, the jury had no difficulty in seeing through your lies and convicted you unanimously within 3 hours.

### **Sentence**

10. As you are aware, in any murder case the only available sentence is one of life imprisonment. I have to set a minimum period to be served by reference to Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020. This case is caught by paragraph 3(2)(c) of Schedule 21 because, despite Mr Simkin's able submissions, I have no doubt that this was a murder done for gain, namely in the course or

furtherance of robbery or in the expectation of gain as a result of the death and therefore the appropriate starting point in determining the minimum term is 30 years. Pursuant to s.321 of the Sentencing Code I order that the early release provisions in s(5) to (8) of S28 of the C(S)A 1997 are to apply after you have served the minimum term which I shall specify.

11. I turn, then, to the mitigating and aggravating features. The aggravating features I take into account are:

- Your previous convictions. You have 39 previous convictions for 110 offences, mainly theft from shoplifting but also 5 offences against the person, 8 public disorder offences and 2 offensive weapons offences and 5 drugs offences including possession of heroin and crack cocaine with intent to supply where, at this court in February 2020, you were sentenced for that offence to 20 months imprisonment.
- Next, the particular brutality of the murder whereby Kevin Price was stabbed 56 times: you clearly had an intention to kill, not merely to cause grievous bodily harm. It appears to me highly likely that, at the time, you were under the influence of drugs;
- Thirdly, the fact that Kevin Price was murdered in his own home, a place where he was entitled to feel safe.
- Finally, I take into account your convictions for count 2, the burglary and your convictions for theft and fraud for which there will be concurrent sentences, the minimum term for murder being intended to reflect the totality of your offending. I make it clear that I take full account of the principle of totality.

12. So far as mitigating facts are concerned:

- I find there was lack of premeditation. Although the precise circumstances in which you murdered Kevin Price are not known, there is no evidence to suggest that this was not a spur of the moment, frenzied attack, the trigger for which is unknown but, I have no doubt, was motivated by your desire to get your hands on Kevin Price's money and property;
- the fact that you are, and have been for a long time, a drug addict, an addiction which, as you yourself said, takes over your life and takes precedence over everything else.

13. In relation to count 2, burglary, I apply the relevant sentencing guideline. I consider that the appropriate category is 1 for harm given the violence used against Mr Price and medium for culpability, given the degree of planning. The sentencing range is 2–6 years imprisonment, with a starting point of 3 years. I adopt the starting point of 3 years. You are not entitled to any credit for your plea coming as it did at the end of your evidence and towards the end of the trial.

14. In relation to the offences of theft and being in possession of debit cards for use in fraud, the relevant sentencing guidelines are to an extent, irrelevant as it is impossible to impose community sentences in the circumstances. I shall impose nominal sentences of imprisonment which have been appropriately reduced to reflect your pleas of guilty to those offences. For the theft, the sentence is 1 month's imprisonment and for the two charges of fraud, the sentence shall be 1 months' imprisonment on each. These sentences, and that for burglary, are all to be served concurrently to the sentence for murder.
15. The time you have served on remand shall be deducted which I understand is 188 days. As soon as you have served the minimum term which I am about to specify, less the time spent on remand, you will be eligible for early release by the Parole Board, but you will not in fact be released unless and until the Parole Board considers it safe to do so. If you are released, you will be subject to licence for the rest of your life. If you break the terms of your licence you are liable to be returned to custody to continue serving your life sentence. The victim surcharge of £228 shall apply.

### **Sentence**

16. For burglary, I sentence you to 3 years imprisonment. For each of the offences of theft and possession of cards for use in fraud, I sentence you to 1 months' imprisonment. For murder, I sentence you to imprisonment for life. Taking into account the aggravating and mitigating factors to which I have referred, the minimum term to be served shall be 32 years less 188 days served on remand, namely a term of 31 years and 177 days. You can go down.