IN THE CROWN COURT AT PRESTON

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V

NATHAN OWENS

SENTENCING REMARKS OF MR JUSTICE JACOBS

23 OCTOBER 2026

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1. You may remain seated for the time being.

2. Nathan Owens. You are now aged 34 but will be 35 tomorrow 24 October. I have to sentence you for the brutal murder of your step-daughter, Carla Georgescu ("Carla") in the early hours of 4 February 2026.

3. I must also sentence you for 3 other offences: an offence of wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm committed, and two offences of making an indecent photograph of a child. The wounding with intent offence was committed as part of the violence that you inflicted on Carla that night. You pleaded guilty to the two other offences shortly prior to the trial. They involved images of Carla as a 2 to 4 year old, onto which you had superimposed your penis, near to her open mouth.

Carla Georgescu

4. I start by saying something about Carla, the Defendant's victim on 4 February 2026. She was in her second year at the University of Lancashire in Preston, and was killed on the day before her 20th birthday. The evidence at the trial of her mother, friends and lecturers at university described a young woman who was: down to earth, a good sense

of humour, passionate about psychology that she was studying at university, polite, kind, intelligent, articulate, lovely with a very gentle way. She was a very talented artist, and had completed the first draft of a book which she had also illustrated. Her achievements in her young life were impressive. She had arrived with her mother from Romania when she was around 12 in 2018, and worked hard, did well at school, gained a place at university, where she was also doing very well. Everything suggests that she would have gone on to make a great deal of her life. She achieved all this, whilst meeting a series of challenges which were difficult: her parents divorced, she missed her home and life in Romania and felt that she never really fitted in here, her father died when she was in her first year at university. She also suffered from a medical condition that could be painful, and which required an operation in the months before her murder.

5. At the time of her murder, she had everything to live for. She was about to go on a short holiday to Romania with her best friend, to return there with her mother later that month. She was going to meet, for the first time in person, a young man in Romania with whom she had developed a close online romantic relationship, and they were planning their future together. She was discussing with university lecturers post-graduate studies and qualifications.

6. No words of mine can convey the horrific and almost unimaginable impact of the events of that night on her mother, Janina Georgescu ("Janina"). Carla was her only child. She gave evidence at the trial in a most dignified and impressive way, with her thoughts and recollection explained in perfect and beautifully expressed English. She described in her evidence the last weekend that she had with Carla, only 3 days before her death, celebrating her forthcoming birthday: a very happy and normal weekend, with shopping, talking, and visits to cafes and restaurants. Carla was, she said, the happiest that Janina had seen her for some time. Understandably, apart from attending to give

evidence, she has been unable to bring herself to attend the trial where the horrors of 4 February have had to be explained in evidence. It is obvious that the events of that night, with her only child being murdered by her husband, have been devastating.

The events of 4 February 2026

7. The background to those events was the Defendant's long-standing sexual obsession with Carla, hidden from both Janina and Carla. I do not need to pollute these sentencing remarks with a detailed description of what was found on his laptop. The laptop included photos taken without Carla's knowledge, many sexualised images of Carla that the Defendant created, and videos which included him having sex with her stuffed toys. It also included the two photos which formed the subject of the charges to which he pleaded guilty. He viewed some of those images and videos, in the couple of weeks before he murdered Carla.
8. In the early hours of 4 February, he messaged Carla to ask if she was still awake. He asked whether he could come and collect Janina's wallet which she had accidentally left at Carla's when visiting the previous weekend. He said that he was coming over with Janina, and they needed to collect it before Carla went to Romania. These were all lies. He was coming over to have sex with Carla, and I shall also consider whether it was part of his plan to murder her as well, if necessary. Carla had no idea of his obsession with her, or the real purpose of his visit.
9. En route, he sent another lying message: "We will be 20 minutes", maintaining the pretence that he was with Janina. Arriving near her accommodation in Preston, he took steps to try to avoid being linked with what was to happen. He parked in a side street, rather than in the usual parking place near Carla's hall of residence. He covered himself in a blanket. Carla let him into her building at 04.00. The CCTV image of that

happening, with the Defendant covered in the blanket, was the last time that Carla was seen alive.

10. The Defendant left an hour and a half later. He was now wearing Carla's trainers, a face mask, and an open umbrella in an attempt to shield himself from CCTV cameras at the exit to the building. In that 90 minutes, Carla had been subject to a horrific brutal attack, suffering numerous injuries when she was alive: these included a painful tear to her vagina, resulting from penetration with an object of some kind, knife wounds to her face, knife wounds to her arm and fingers, including defensive injuries where she had tried to defend herself, two powerful blows to her head which are likely to have left her concussed and therefore to make it more difficult or impossible for her further to defend herself. The attack also involved penetration of her anus. She died because she was strangled to death with a belt which had belonged to her father. The belt was tied to a wardrobe door in an attempt to make it look like suicide.

11. The Defendant then took steps to cover up what had happened. He had taken Carla's mobile phone, which contained his lying messages to her, and threw it in bushes by the side of the motorway. He had taken other items, including bloodstained bedding and the dildo that he had brought from Hartlepool, and dumped them near a farm in Cumbria. A superb police investigation uncovered these and other incriminating items. Other items have never been found, including Carla's laptop and the knife that was used to attack her.

12. Arriving back in Hartlepool, he told Janina nothing about his visit to Preston. It was some 2 days later, on 6 February, and well after the police had told Janina of Carla's death, that the Defendant told her that he had been to see Carla on the morning of 4 February. His lying explanation for the visit was that she had requested his help in bringing items from Hartlepool and to help tidy her room. He then told further lies

during the investigation and these proceedings, but it is not necessary to describe them.

Sentence for the murder charge

13. I shall first address the sentence on Count 1, the murder of Carla Georgescu.

14. For murder committed by an adult, there is only one sentence: imprisonment for life. That is the sentence I shall pass upon you in due course. I am required by law to fix the minimum term you must serve in custody before you are eligible even to be considered for parole. In schedule 21 to the Sentencing Act 2020, Parliament has provided for various starting points.

15. In the present case, it is correctly agreed that the starting point for the murder of Carla Georgescu is 30 years. This is because this was a murder involving sexual conduct.

16. A starting point of 30 years is not necessarily, and is not in this case, the finishing point. I must take into account the aggravating and any mitigating circumstances.

17. There are a number of aggravating circumstances which mean that it is appropriate to increase the sentence beyond 30 years, although I bear in mind that a minimum ter of 30 years is itself a very long sentence and I must avoid counting again circumstances which are the reason why 30 years is the starting point.

18. First, there was a significant degree of planning or pre-meditation. The Defendant took a considered decision to visit Carla in the middle of the night, to carry out, at least, serious and violent sexual offending. I am sure that fatal violence was also part of the plan, if Carla should resist, which is what she did. The Defendant knew that, unless the sex was consensual – and he had no reason at all to believe that it would be consensual – Carla would identify her attacker as her stepfather. That was why the Defendant

sought in advance to avoid being connected to what was going to happen: by taking latex gloves to Hartlepool, no doubt to avoid his fingerprints being found there, parking in a side street rather than the usual parking space, and then covering himself in a blanket. It is also why, after his violent sexual assault on her, he killed her.

19. Secondly, I am required to and do take into account the mental or physical suffering inflicted on the victim before death. The last 90 minutes of Carla's life are too horrendous even to think about. It is clear that Carla did try to put up a fight, and she was aware of what was happening to her, certainly when she was attacked with a knife and suffered defensive injuries. It is likely, and indeed it is to be hoped, that at some point she became unconscious as a result of the blows to her head, so that she was not aware of everything that happened to her. But I am sure that she suffered both mentally and physically during a material part of those 90 minutes.

20. Thirdly, this case involved strangulation, which is an aggravating circumstance in itself.

21. Fourth, I consider that this murder did involve the abuse of a position of trust. The only reason that the Defendant gained access to Carla's room that night was because he was her stepfather, and she trusted him (as he knew she would) when he told her that he was coming with Janina to pick up Janina's wallet. He tricked his way into her company, in order to offend against her.

22. Fifth, this was a case of sustained physical violence towards the victim.

23. These factors are in themselves sufficient to increase the sentence beyond 30 years, and to the level of the minimum term which I have decided upon, and without regard to the other aggravating factors identified by the prosecution. Those other factors include: the fact that this was a surprise attack by a much heavier man on a young woman late at night in the place where she lived; the initially convincing attempt to give the impression

that Carla had killed herself by leaving her body to be found hanging from her wardrobe door, using her own belt; the attempts to dispose of highly incriminating evidence, significant elements of which have never been found; and the indecent images offences for which I am also sentencing.

24. Nathan Owens, you have not shown any remorse for what you did. On the contrary, you denied having injured Carla in any way, knowing full well that you had done so. You took victim blaming to its limit by suggesting that she may have committed suicide. Janina had to come and give evidence. None of that increases the sentence, but it further illustrates, if further illustration were necessary, how despicable you are. The only point in mitigation is that you have no previous convictions, but that counts for very little in terms of its impact on your sentence.

25. My approach to the 3 offences other than murder is that I will pass concurrent sentences. I do not increase the minimum term because of those other offences. One reason is that the wounding was part of the murder and it is covered by the aggravating factors to which I have referred. Another reason is that the minimum term for the murder will itself be very long, and I must have regard to what is called "totality".

26. The concurrent terms for the other offending, bearing in mind the relevant sentencing guidelines, are:

    a. For the wounding, which is Category A3 under the guidelines, 7 years;

    b. For each of the offences of making indecent images of a child, which is category B under the relevant guideline, 2 years on each count after credit for the guilty pleas.

27. Please stand up, Nathan Owens.

28. For the murder of Carla Georgescu, I sentence you to life imprisonment. When it comes

to the minimum term that you will serve, I make it plain that I am not ordering that you are to be released at the end of it. That will be a matter for the Parole Board. Only when the minimum term has been served can the Parole Board decide whether it is safe to release you. If the board does release you, then you will remain on licence and liable to recall for the rest of your life.

29. You will serve a minimum term of 35 years in custody less the 255 days that you have spent on remand. Accordingly, starting from today's date, you will serve a minimum term of 34 years and 110 days. When you have served that period, it will be for the Parole Board to decide if and when it is safe to release you.

30. For the offence of wounding with intent, and for the indecent images offences, I sentence you to the concurrent terms that I have indicated.

31. The surcharge provisions apply, and the order should be drawn up accordingly.

32. You can take Nathan Owens down.

33. I would wish to commend the officers for their thorough and indeed outstanding work in investigating this crime. I would also wish to commend those who were responsible for the preparation for the materials which were used in the trial, including the sequence of events which explained the relevant events simply and clearly, and to DS Whalley who presented those materials to the jury in court. I will thank again the jury, most of whom have come back today, for their attention to this case.

Mr Justice Jacobs

23 October 2026