



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

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-v-

Michael Lane

Lewes Crown Court

23rd March 2017

Sentencing remarks of Mr Justice Green

1. Michael Lane, the Jury has found you guilty of the murder of Shana Grice. You killed Shana by slitting her throat. You set fire to her room intending her body and the scene of the crime to be burnt beyond recognition. You stole her money. Shana was 19 years old when she died, still a teenager.
2. Everyone in this Court heard Shana speak when the recording of her conversation with you about the theft of the key was played. We heard the clear tones of a confident and vibrant young woman. You robbed Shana of her life and you have caused grief untold to her family and friends. They have attended this trial together to provide support to each other and they have had to sit through harrowing and demeaning evidence about Shana's love life and her death.
3. The Court has heard from Sharon Grice, Shana's mother. She spoke of the enormous gulf that Shana's death has left in the lives of family and friends. She described her only daughter in these terms:
"Shana was a beautiful, bright and bubbly, kind natured 19 year old who brought joy to all those who knew and loved her. She was popular throughout childhood; she made friends easily and was never grumpy. She loved life and was always enthusiastic. She particular enjoyed spending time with her grandparents with whom she had a very strong relationship."
4. She also said:
"We have lost our beautiful, kind and thoughtful daughter; we miss her giggles and laughter, the jokes we shared and having her to hold and share our future lives together as a family."
5. No sentence that I impose can ever begin to compensate them for their loss.
6. I am quite sure also that you have caused despair to your own family and friends who will be bewildered and at a loss to understand your actions.

Conclusions on the facts

7. It is now my duty to sentence you. I do this only upon the basis of facts that I am sure of. The evidence against you was overwhelming.
8. In the months before the murder you had a relationship with Shana. Throughout that period you exhibited obsessive behaviour which can only be described as that of a stalker. You were jealous of the fact that she was at the time in a long term relationship with another man. You would hang about where Shana lived. You sent messages to her boyfriend telling him that Shana would always cheat on him. You were jealous of any relationship she had with other men. On one occasion this led to you to follow Shana down the road and then you grabbed her phone from her hand hitting her in the process. You secretly placed a tracker on her car so that you could follow her movements and you would follow her car in yours. Every few days you would sneak back to her home and covertly recharge the battery in the tracker without her knowing. You stored embarrassing text messages between you and her and you were prepared to use them as pressure against her, as a form of moral blackmail. You also used such messages to persuade the Police that when she complained to them about you, it was she that was the wrongdoer and not you. You deflated and slashed her car tyres so that you could then help repair them and appear in a good light to her. You stole her rear door key and used it to enter her bedroom at 6.00 in the morning so that you could peer at her whilst she slept. You engaged in silent, heavy breathing, telephone calls to her. You even sent her threatening legal letters about a debt you believed that she owed you.
9. It is undoubtedly the case that this was a complex relationship. On the one hand Shana was sufficiently concerned about your conduct to make repeated complaints to the Police about you. But on the other hand she was also attracted to you. Because of her age and inexperience of life Shana did not know how to deal with you. And tragically when she sought help from the Police she received none.
10. On 23rd August 2016 Shana decided that her relationship with you was at an end. This split occurred at a hotel in Hove that same evening. You then plotted revenge.
11. I am sure that your revenge was premeditated. This is clear from the evidence given during the trial. You told a young woman in the pub that when you had split from Shana on an earlier occasion you were upset and depressed and you told her that Shana would "*pay for what she had done*". That was an indication of your general state of mind. On 24th August, the day after the final split, you purchased petrol in a can. You told the Court that you were intending to commit suicide by setting fire to yourself. That was untrue. You purchased the petrol because you intended imminently to cause terrible and fatal harm to Shana and then to destroy the evidence with a raging fire. You also set out on the morning of 25th August with your disguise in your hands. This was the high visibility jacket and a peaked cap to pull over your face. All of this shows a high degree of calculated planning and premeditation. I am in no doubt therefore that when you set out from your home in your car at just before 7.25am on 25th August 2016 you had already formed an intent to kill.

12. At shortly after 7.30am you went into Shana's bedroom knowing that her house mates had left for work. We will never know for certain what then passed between you and Shana. At about that time a neighbour heard a raised female voice coming from Shana's house. But there was no screaming or shouting. Shana knew her assailant, and it was you. You took a knife, almost certainly from the kitchen which has not been found, and you slit her throat. In all likelihood you did this from behind her. She would have been conscious for some time before she died slumped by the side of the bed.
13. You killed Shana in the few minutes either side of 7.40 am. Having killed her you searched for her bank cards. Then in your disguise you walked out on to the street. You were at this stage wearing a hoodie, which you had obtained I suspect from Shana's house, and the high visibility jacket and the blue cap on your head. The hood of the hoodie was pulled up over the cap and you were looking downwards to avoid being recognised.
14. And then to add insult to injury you headed for the nearest ATM which was close by on Graham Avenue. You can be seen on the CCTV within 20 metres of the cash machine at 8.06 am. This was the time when Shana's bank card was used to steal her money. You knew the pin. You accepted in evidence that you had used that pin in conjunction with her card some months earlier. You clearly stored the pin number and now you used it again. You attempted to steal a sum from her account which was roughly the same as that you believed she owed you as a debt. But Shana did not have that amount of money in her account. So instead you checked her balance and you then took out £60 which was just below the balance. There was a small service charge to pay but the machine only issued the amount you keyed in, namely £60. It is no coincidence that two 20 and two 10 pound notes, totalling £60, were later found by the police in your car.
15. Having stolen Shana's money you went to your car and having driven around and purchased some water you returned to Shana's house because you needed to destroy the evidence of the murder. It is probable that at some point you transferred petrol into that water bottle. You can be seen on the CCTV at about 8.22am going back into Chrisdory Road to Shana's house carrying a bag. And even though you denied that this was in fact a picture of you, nonetheless you also accepted in evidence that you were indeed at the house at that very time. You re-entered her house with the petrol and you moved Shana's body onto the bed. You doused the floor and the bed with petrol and you ignited the fire. You left closing the door behind you. The fire quickly took hold and because it was in a confined space the heat built up rapidly to a high temperature. Shana's body was burned but the oxygen in the room soon became depleted and the fire extinguished before the body and the room burned down and all of the evidence was destroyed.
16. Having left Shana's house you went home and showered to remove incriminating blood stains and you set about hiding all of the clothes and shoes that might be contaminated with Shana's blood. You disposed of the murder weapon.
17. This was a cold hearted murder. I have not detected in you any appreciation of the devastation you have caused to Shana's family and friends. Nor have I detected remorse. In so far as I have detected emotion in you it has been a

determination to do all you can to protect yourself and you have been the one person you have felt sorry for.

Sentence of life imprisonment

18. There is only sentence that in law I am allowed to impose upon you and that is imprisonment for life.

Minimum term

19. I am also required to set the minimum term which is the number of actual years that you must serve before you are able to apply to the Parole Board to be released on licence. Lest there be any misunderstanding the minimum term is not the point in time when you will be released. Whether you are released then, or indeed ever, is a matter for the Parole Board, not for me.
20. The starting point for determining the minimum term is the guidance set out in the Criminal Justice Act 2003. Under that Act I must determine the seriousness of the offence and any related offences. The facts of the present case do not fit exactly or neatly into any of the categories in the Act, as is accepted by the Prosecution and by your own counsel.
21. In my judgment this was a murder following significant premeditation. When you set out on 25th August you intended to kill Shana in her own home. You knew where you would find an appropriate killing weapon, in Shana's kitchen and it was a part of your plan to use this knife. This was a long way from a spur of the moment killing.
22. You also combined murder with arson. If you had not closed the door behind you when you left Shana's bedroom then the fire would have been fed by oxygen from outside the room and there is a real likelihood that the house would have burned down and Shana would have been incinerated. There is also a risk that the fire could have spread to neighbouring homes causing a danger to the lives of others.
23. I also cannot ignore the theft. This was a cold hearted and callous action. It reveals a lack of remorse on your part that having, just minutes before, murdered the young woman you professed to adore you set about stealing her savings. I do not believe however that theft was the main motivation for the murder. That was a combination of anger at Shana for having split with you and jealousy of any other man, such as her long standing boyfriend Ashley, that she might replace you with.
24. I must also take into account the efforts you made to conceal your own clothes from being found with incriminating evidence upon them.
25. I do take account of your age. You do not have previous convictions. I take account of the grief and pain that you will have imposed upon your own family and friends. This was in my view a crime committed from profoundly misguided and irrational emotion. You have suffered from depression and suicidal tendencies in the past which may well be connected in some way to these events.

26. I do not apply a mechanistic approach to sentence. I have taken full account of the guidance and starting points set out in the Criminal Justice Act 2003. Ultimately I have to stand back and look at all of the evidence in the round to assess the overall seriousness of the crime and to consider what is just in all the circumstances.

Sentence

27. Michael Lane please stand.
28. The sentence of this Court is one of life imprisonment.
29. You will spend a minimum of 25 years in custody before you can apply for parole. Whether or not you are then released is for the Parole Board. You have been on remand since 3rd September 2016. The time you have spent in custody on remand will count towards this minimum term.

Please take him down.

-ENDS-