



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

REGINA
-v-
CASSANDRA SCOTT

SENTENCING REMARKS OF
THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE CALVER

MANCHESTER CROWN COURT

20 January 2022

Cassandra Scott, stay seated until I tell you to stand.

1. It falls to me now to sentence you in the light of the jury's unanimous verdict at the conclusion of this trial.

Circumstances of the offence

2. Cassandra Scott, you have been convicted of the murder of your mother, Beverley Scott sometime between 25th March and 1st day of April 2021, leaving behind other family members whose upset at her death is as understandable as it is profound, not least because it was at the hand of her daughter. I consider it very likely that you in fact murdered her on 1st April 2021.
3. It is clear that Beverley Scott was addicted to drugs, in particular crack cocaine. However, the very sad fact of this case is that it is clear to me from the evidence that at the time when you murdered her, she was taking active steps to reduce her drug intake because she wanted to be there for her children, in particular Sonny and you Cassandra Scott. I do not doubt your evidence that growing up you had to endure an appalling childhood, including violence from your father and frequently witnessing both of your parents taking crack cocaine. I do not doubt your evidence that as a result you felt

unloved and I am sure that everyone in court felt enormous sympathy with you for having to endure such a miserable childhood, as well as admiration for the fact that you still managed to achieve 9 GCSEs and get a job. Unlike Zara Fredericks you did not have the strength or good fortune to break away from your drug-dominated background.

4. But the fact that Beverley Scott was addicted to drugs, in particular crack cocaine, does not make her life worth any less than anyone else and does not remotely justify what happened to her on 1st April 2021. She did not deserve to die, not to die such a violent and terrifying death, and her death is as tragic and unnecessary as that of anybody who is murdered. I make that abundantly clear.
5. The circumstances need not be rehearsed in any particular detail. They are now very well known. Suffice to say that, consistent with what the jury must plainly have concluded given the verdicts which they reached, you murdered your mother, when she was unarmed, defenceless and had her back turned to you, by stabbing her to death in a sustained attack with a substantial kitchen knife.
6. You are, I am sure, someone who is prone to violent outbursts. It is clear to me that on 15th February 2021 Colin Fredericks called the police because you had kicked your mother in the chest. You lied about that and sought to shift the blame onto others, but the text messages that you sent to your mother at the time clearly show that you were asking for forgiveness from your mother for hurting her in that way. And she did forgive you.
7. I also consider it likely that Colin Fredericks was telling the truth when he said that you had punched your mother to the ground some 7 or 8 years before this incident and that she was scared of your temper. Her fear of your temper is, indeed, recorded in the agreed sequence of events entry for 7th November 2019 which concerns a 999 call to the police in which your mother told the police that she was terrified of you. It is clear to me, as you recognised yourself in evidence, that when you drink or take drugs, you are prone to physically violent outbursts of temper. You were of course, on your own

evidence, voluntarily intoxicated by large quantities of crack cocaine when the killing occurred.

8. Beverley, however, had no history of violence. She was not a violent woman and I am satisfied that she never caused you any physical harm at all. I am sure that she did not come at you with a knife as you have alleged. You had no defensive injuries. I do not believe your belated story that the small cut on your arm was a defensive wound; had it been, you had numerous opportunities to tell the police that in your two interviews with them on 13th June 2021 but instead you said you suffered no wounds yourself, not even a nick. And the forensic evidence of Dr. Wilson established that Beverley, too, did not suffer any defensive injuries, no doubt because you took her by surprise in this savage attack when her back was turned. Accordingly, I am sure that, fuelled by crack cocaine, you pounced on her with the knife when her back was turned to you. Even then, she tried to escape from you, but you pursued her and inflicted 10 stab wounds into her back in cold blood and left her to die at the foot of the stairs.
9. Despite this, you had the audacity to allege that you acted in self defence and that Beverley was the aggressor. That was both callous and cowardly. Not only did you kill your mother, but you sought to blacken her name by alleging self-defence, when you knew that to be untrue. So hopeless was that defence in the light of the overwhelming forensic evidence, that you were compelled to abandon it at the close of the prosecution case.
10. We will perhaps never know what triggered this outburst of horrific violence against your mother. It may have been an argument over money. I certainly do not believe your suggestion that it was a row over your going back to Jameel as that is belied by the text messages between you and your mother immediately before you killed her. But I am satisfied so as to be sure that for whatever reason, at the time of the incident your intention was to *kill* Beverley, and not only to cause her serious harm. That is why you

stabbed her in 10 separate places to her back, with one wound being so severe that it broke her rib.

11. What you did after the murder is in some ways equally shocking. Having stabbed your mother to death, you did not trouble to call an ambulance. You did not know when you dragged her body across the hall floor and under the stairs whether she was dead. But you still did not bother to call an ambulance.
12. You then took steps to conceal your mother's body. You hid the body in a cupboard under the stairs, having wrapped it in plastic and covered it in bedding and curtains. You sought to cover up the blood on the walls and floor with paint. You also used a rug and some bedding to cover the blood on the floor and stairs and then you left your mother's house, and went to stay with Phil Barrowclough, leaving your mother's body to decompose under the stairs for the next 2 1/2 months before it was found.
13. In the meantime you chose to return to your mother's house on a number of occasions to get bags of clothes as well as to take your dead mother's mobile phone as well as her cash card so that you could plunder her bank account and use the money on crack cocaine, alcohol and snacks, which you duly did. The fact that you did this also gives the lie to your evidence that you only smoked crack cocaine when you were with your mother. That was simply not true.
14. You then lied to relatives and friends who enquired after your mother, pretending that she was still alive and throwing them off the scent, whilst you thought about how you could save your own skin. You used your mother's mobile phone to compose a suicide note from her to you which you obviously thought about sending before realising that that was hopeless. You also sent a number of text messages on her phone to yourself. You say that this was because you "didn't want it to be real that she was gone". I think it much more likely that you were doing this to leave a trail of texts to suggest that she was still alive when you knew that she was dead, consistently with telling others that she was still alive when you knew she was dead. That was why you took her mobile

phone from the house. As part of this deceit, you even sent a Facebook message to your mother's Facebook page wishing her happy birthday on the day after you had killed her.

15. This is all heartless, calculating behaviour.
16. You only handed yourself in at the police station the day after your mother's body was finally discovered on 11th June 2021 thanks to the concern and initiative of Joanne Casson, her Housing Officer at One Manchester, who took it upon herself to investigate your mother's absence by visiting her house and forcing entry with a joiner. She is to be greatly commended. Had she not acted in the way that she did, who knows when or whether your mother's body would ever have been discovered.
17. In short, this was a brutal killing by you of a defenceless woman – your own mother – followed by your concealment of her body, your lies to friends and family about her whereabouts, and your ruthless use of her funds after her death in order that you could indulge yourself on crack cocaine.

Sentence

18. It is against this background that I come on now to address the matter of sentence in your case. I should make it clear before doing so that the appropriate victim surcharge will also be payable by you.
19. Where a person over the age of 21 is convicted of murder, the Court is required to sentence the offender to imprisonment for life. That, therefore, is the position in your case.
20. In such a case, the Court is required by s.322 and Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020 to determine the minimum term to be served by the offender, taking into account the seriousness of the offence. To be clear, by this is meant the minimum term which must elapse before an offender can be released on licence.

21. It is important to emphasise, so that you and the public can understand the position, that the minimum term is just that - a minimum period which must be served before you are considered for release. After it is served, there is no guarantee that you will be released at that time, or at any particular time thereafter. It is then only if the Parole Board decides you are fit to be released that you *will* be released. Moreover if, and when, you are released you will remain subject to licence for the rest of your life, and may therefore be recalled to continue your life sentence. It is in these ways that a life sentence protects the public for the future.
22. This case falls into Paragraph 5 of Schedule 21 of the Act. Although a knife was used, the defendant did not take it to the scene. The starting point in determining the minimum term is therefore 15 years, and indeed that is also common ground between Prosecution and Defence counsel.
23. Having identified the respective starting point for the minimum term you shall serve, I next take account of the aggravating and mitigating features of the offence, in arriving at what I consider to be the appropriate sentence.
24. I turn first to the aggravating features in this case. The concealment of Beverley's body is a statutory aggravating feature of the offence: see paragraph 9(g) of Schedule 21. The Prosecution also point to the lies which you told to others to keep the death of the deceased hidden.
25. I would add to this the fact that the murder was committed by you whilst you were intoxicated by drink and/or drugs and that you stole funds from your mother's account after she was dead to feed your desire for crack cocaine.
26. I come next to mitigation. The Prosecution put their case of murder against you in alternative ways – either you had an intention to kill (their primary case) or you intended to cause serious bodily harm. I do not accept the submission of Mr. Myers QC, your counsel, that you only had an intention to cause really serious harm to your

mother rather than to kill her. Having heard all of the evidence, I am entirely satisfied that by an attack of this ferocity and sustained nature, when your mother had her back to you, that you intended to kill her. So that is not a mitigating feature. I do however accept that the murder was not premeditated – that it was rather the product of a sudden and violent outburst of your temper - and that is a mitigating feature.

27. Mr. Myers QC also submits, in mitigation on your behalf, that your social circumstances and your state of mental health, as described in the evidence during the trial and the reports of the psychiatrist instructed on your behalf, Dr Ronan Brennan, and the report of the psychiatrist instructed on behalf of the Prosecution, Dr Qurashi amount to a mitigating feature.
28. Mr. Myers accepts, however, that you were not diagnosed as suffering from any mental disorder or disability which could support a partial defence of diminished responsibility or a partial defence of loss of control. Nevertheless, he submits, there are features of your circumstances and mental health that may be relevant to sentence in assessing your culpability. He refers in particular to your appalling upbringing, during which you were exposed, if not introduced, to the use of class A drugs and violence coupled with the absence of familial or therapeutic support throughout much of your life. He refers me to your apparent dependence on crack cocaine, although I note that Dr Qurashi does not diagnose cocaine dependency. He also refers to your evidence of a history of self-harm, anxiety and depression, with some evidence consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder, although he recognises that the evidence was insufficient to support a diagnosis of that condition.
29. All of this, Mr. Myers submits, may mitigate the offence insofar as the attack arose from the general circumstances leading up to it. Furthermore, he submits that they may be relevant to the attack itself insofar as you acted out of behaviour that is a consequence of your personal history and circumstance.

30. As I have already said, I do not doubt your evidence that growing up you had to endure an appalling childhood and your addiction to alcohol and drugs likely arose, at least in part, out of your familial background. However, I do not consider that the matters urged upon me by Mr. Myers amount to mitigating features of the offence itself. I do not consider that the attack arose from any sense of injustice on your part, as opposed to it arising out of a drug-fuelled argument (perhaps over money) and an outburst of your violent temper. Moreover, you have not been diagnosed with any significant or material medical or psychological condition which is relevant to the commission of the offence in this case and which would amount to a mitigating feature of it.

Stand up, please, Cassandra Scott

31. In all the circumstances, I sentence you in respect of murder to imprisonment for life with a minimum term of 17 years.
32. From this must be deducted the days that you have spent on remand in custody for this offence - I am told numbering 221 days but, if different, the matter can be adjusted administratively.
33. I order forfeiture and destruction of the knife.

Please go with the officer

34. Finally, I would like to extend the Court's condolences to Beverley Scott's family, and to thank the dignified way in which they have, by and large, conducted themselves during what was clearly an emotional trial for them. I would also like to thank the Central Park, Manchester police force for all of their excellent work on this case, as well as all of the court staff who have done an outstanding job of ensuring the smooth progress to its conclusion of this trial during the pandemic and last but not least, the first class legal representation for the prosecution and defence and in particular Mr.

Myers QC and Mr. Cadwallader and their respective juniors, Ms Heyworth and Mr. Scott.