

[private/sensitive]

29th October 2024

Dear Baroness Lampard,

I am writing, as requested, to provide an account of the life of my little brother Ed, who died by suicide whilst a mental health inpatient in Essex on New Year's Eve, 2007. I will do my best to describe some of the impact that his illness, the circumstances of his death, and subsequent events up to and including my involvement into this Inquiry, have had on me. I hope that the following also conveys the extent to which our childhood together has been a positive influence on my life.

Edward Jackson was born on in March 1989, in Ipswich, Suffolk. He was two years my younger, and, since I was born fourteen days later in the month, we shared the same day of the week for our birthdays each year. We grew up in villages in Suffolk. For the first nine years of Ed's life this was just north of Ipswich, where we lived in a house in a quiet cul de sac, off an equally quiet lane. We went to the village primary school, which we often walked to and from together through the churchyard which abutted our back garden.

In our village we learnt to ride bicycles, to rollerblade, to play football. Ed was so good at football: he played in midfield for a local league team and was player of the season on at least one occasion. We played with friends in our houses, and in the woods and fields around the village. We built dens in ditches, and played roller hockey, and football in the road and on the verges outside our house. We embarked on the digging of a hole to China. We collected conkers from the horse chestnut trees in the churchyard and cured them in vinegar or in the airing cupboard. Ed diligently painted the glass patio doors of the dining room in mud.

We played badminton in our front garden and Ed attempted to cultivate a menagerie of wild spiders (which he numbered), in lidless margarine tubs, in the back. One day we collected all the frogs we could find (six?), to keep as pets in a sandpit that we had filled with tap water. Us not really understanding how frogs worked, and them being unable to escape, they drowned overnight. We set fire to anything to hand with the help of the sun and a black plastic magnifying glass. I remember Ed sitting cross-legged facing a lavender bush, perfectly still, surrounded by bees. He broke his arm when he slipped out of the too-big shoes I had lent him so that he could try climbing the wrong way up the slide of a climbing frame. He made a heartfelt declaration of love for Tina Turner on the occasion of her 60th birthday.

At some point during primary school, "Edward" became "Eddie". He expedited this change by insisting on us saying, "*Eddie five times*", for each transgression. Around the end of primary school, we moved to another village in Suffolk. Here we attended high school, from (our respective) ages 11-16. By the end of this period, he was "Ed". Our curious fire-setting graduated with us, to include lighters and petrol and aerosol cans. We invented a game called "fire hockey". We quit learning to play the piano at similar ages, and before attaining any real proficiency at it, but I can remember him playing *In the Hall of the Mountain King* on electric guitar at break-neck speed.

Encouraged by neighbouring children, we learnt to fish. Our favourite venues included the moat of an Elizabethan Hall, which was full of tench, and a small, slow, river, which was full of pike and perch. We spent days on end at these places and the memory of them is perfect in my mind. We saw our first kingfishers flying past us. I remember hunkering down on the banks of the river during a summer thunderstorm while Ed, unphased, looked on condescendingly. He was brave and comfortable outdoors.

To get to the part of the river that we knew we had to cycle five or six miles, which meant tying our rods to our bikes. As we grew older, we cycled further from home, and faster. We tried to trigger 30mph speed traps on a tandem. As the front passenger I would try to scare him by driving up the verge, or swerving wildly. As the rear passenger he would stand on the pedals suddenly, lifting me out of the saddle from the extra resistance. Car drivers always seemed benevolent towards us, smiling approvingly as we inconvenienced them.

We grew more teen-aged. We didn't always get on. Ed moved on from cycling with me, to half-pipes and dirt jumps. I spent more time with my friends, and less with my brother. We developed loves of music, some of which was shared: The Prodigy, Two Lone Swordsmen, Propellerheads. We took my first car for a drive along roads that we used to cycle down. We happened upon a stoat, which dropped the rabbit it was carrying and disappeared into the hedge. We backed up and waited, and it obliged us by returning for its meal.

To the best of my recollection, Ed started to become unwell roughly after moving schools for 6th form. A year later I left Suffolk to go to university. I was home for Christmas in my second year when Ed died. He was 18. A policeman knocked on our door in the middle of my friends arriving for a New Year's party at my parents' house, to tell us. I remember his awkward kindness and I remember telling my friends that they would have to leave, but I don't remember anything else from that evening.

In general, my memories for the year or so prior to Ed's death are less clear than at other times in my life. I largely absented myself from the situation at home at the time because I found it hard to be around Ed's illness. He threatened violence and was obviously in anguish. I also think that I suffered some temporal dissociation due to stress, but I do remember some things. Ed told me that he appreciated the influence that my musical taste had had on him, which more than made up for his losing my CDs during inpatient stays. I think that he stole a taxi in an effort to escape from hospital. I think that he was stopped by the police riding his motorbike to safety up the A1. I am so proud of him.

I am less proud of myself. Soon after his death you might have found me saying that the impact of it was blunted because the person that my brother *was*, had already been gone for some time. I find this attitude so horribly arrogant and callous, looking back. For years afterwards I would sometimes dream that he was still alive- returned to us after a period of being missing. But these were not happy dreams- in them his reappearance was to be feared because it meant a return to the stress of living with his illness. I had thought that I had forgiven myself for my behaviour at the time which, now, seems far from perfect, far from brotherly, but I wonder if that will ever really be possible.

You do not appreciate how often people ask you if you have any siblings, until you find yourself in the situation where the answer is "no" when once it was "yes". For a while it seemed to me that there was no good answer to this question. One can reply, "no", which has the benefit of not having to explain, but the minor drawback of inviting comments about

“only children”, and the major drawback of the guilt associated with denying the existence of the person who you feel is the most deserving of it in the whole world. Or one can say “yes”, and hope that the conversation ends there. I find now that the least worst option is to tell the whole truth, but this puts you at the mercy of the questioner’s social skills, or lack thereof. I assume I will always struggle with this question to some extent.

Some years after Ed’s death I attended the Coroner’s inquest into it. I missed the first day, which included the paramedics’ account of finding him, because I was working. I do not remember thinking particularly badly, on a personal level, of any of the staff involved in his care that I met there. I do remember one person attending telling me that my mannerisms reminded them of Ed. I never visited the ward where Ed died. I *was* included in the invitation to open a brand new facility, named after him: Edward House, with the promise that it would offer a safer and more therapeutic environment for the people staying there. I must have found this mollifying. But it is impossible not to think that a better tribute to his life would have been not to be learning, now, about all the circumstances that this Inquiry is investigating. It seems to me that that was the implicit promise of “Edward House”, after all. And it feels to me that promise has been broken.

Earlier this year I read for the first time the sentencing remarks of Mr Justice Cavanagh in *R vs. Essex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust* (2021). They include this passage:

“... each of the [...] people to whom I will refer in greater detail in a moment died by their own hand by hanging in one of the Trust’s mental health wards, but it does not follow that they really intended to commit suicide. It is often the case that such attempts are made as a cry for help without the desire actually to die.”

It has been nearly seventeen years since Ed’s death. In that time, on occasion, I have fallen into thinking of just how desperate, and desperately lonely, he must have been on that New Year’s Eve: Christmas-time, away from home, his life in that moment presumably not looking remotely like anything he had imagined. These thoughts had become less frequent as time passed, but reading the remarks above brought them back, with extra, devastating, meaning.

I think that at the Coroner’s inquest I was told that Ed wanted to get home from hospital so that he could go fishing with his brother, but this memory is so unclear that I don’t know if I trust it or not. I do know for sure, as I write this letter, that *I* would very much like to go fishing with him.

Yours faithfully,

Ben Jackson