

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

You're listening to a Morbid Network podcast.

Mike Williams set off on a hunting trip into the swamps of North Florida where it was thought he met a gruesome fate in the jaws of hungry alligators, except that's not what happened at all.

And after the uncovering of a secret love triangle, the truth would finally be revealed.

Binge all episodes of Over My Dead Body Gone Hunting right now, ad-free on Wondery Plus.

Hey weirdos, I'm Alayna.

And I'm Ash.

And this is Morbid.

Whoa.

Hey.

That's new.

Heyo.

What's up, girly pop?

Well, hello.

We saw some of you last week in New York City.

In the Big Apple, baby.

And you guys were delightful and awesome.

It was so fun.

And it was so fun to talk about the book with you guys.

And I got to have Ash there because she's my, you know, emotional support Ash.

Yeah, of course.

I take her everywhere, no matter what.

I take her everywhere, no matter what.

But it was really cool to see you guys and you were awesome and you were such a fun audience and it was cool to be on stage again.

Yeah.

And thank you for all the people that gave us gifts.

Oh my God, that was so nice.

People gave us sunflowers.

We got crystals.

The kindest.

We got a bunch of Taylor Swift bracelets.

Some cool notes that were just really kind and awesome.

Lookin' nice notes.

Yeah.

Cool cards.

I was just really thrown back by all the people that gave us their Taylor Swift bracelets because I think those things are like fucking important.

Yeah, I had no idea.

So I'm, it's like a love language between Swifties as far as I'm told.

So I'm feeling the love.

And I hope you guys are dug the sneak peek at Book Two in your paperbacks.

It's cool that you get to read it now.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

You're all part of the club now with Ash.

I feel weird.

I feel like my club was taken from me in an instant.

No, now it's just a warm fuzzy club of people.

No, I'm kidding.

I'm like pretty stoked that you guys got to read that because that's a bomb ass chapter.

And fun fact, I've read a whole bunch of the second books.

It's fucking terrifying.

Yippee.

What did I say?

We should put on the front of it as a quote from me.

Not actually.

I thought you sometimes you're terrified to be in my orbit.

Yes, I said I'm very terrified to be in Elena's inner orbit.

And she's my sister.

I like that.

I'm also going to start carrying a note around in my pocket and I told John that he should probably do the same.

Okay.

I love that effect I have on you guys.

You're welcome.

Thank you.

I don't know.

You're welcome.

I have a very, very, very tragic case.

This is the case of Sophie Lancaster.

If you've never heard this one, it's, like I said, very tragic and if you had then you know a very sad tale.

I know the background of this one and it is a horrifying story.

It's gut-wrenching.

Yeah.

I think it's honestly like a really important story to tell as are all of the stories that we tell and I think we should just dive into it.

Yeah.

Sophie Lancaster was born November 26th, 1986 to John and Sylvia Lancaster in the Rosendale borough of Lancashire, England.

And I looked up how to say that.

Good job.

Thank you.

At the time, it was not necessarily the best place to live in the world.

Rosendale was being hit hard by a dwindling economy.

The area was falling into a bit of disrepair, just like not the best vibes.

But Sophie's family, which was made up of her, her parents, and her older brother Adam, they had a really happy life together, like a core four home unit kind of thing.

Sylvia's mother said that Sophie was so intelligent and sensitive and she told reporters how much Sophie loved to read, how she was interested in social justice issues.

And she just really wanted to be involved in making the world a better place for everybody in it.

Which is so much more tragic.

So much more tragic.

Truly.

Sylvia, Sophie's mom, she worked with kids, so she was pretty familiar with all the different kind of phases that kids go through while they're growing up.

So it really didn't come as any surprise to her when Sophie started dressing differently than other kids at her school and started getting more into heavy metal and kind of hard rock music.

Good for her.

Yeah, she was just like, it's par for the course.

And Sylvia said, as Sophie entered high school and kind of entered this quote unquote phase, which really wasn't a phase, that she, quote, knew it was her way of marking herself out as an individual.

What a cool mom.

Yeah, what a cool mom.

And what a cool kid.

Yeah.

You know, that's really cool.

It is.

And obviously she felt very supported to be able to like confidently go forth like that.

It definitely seems like it.

And luckily eventually Sophie did meet other kids who shared her same interests and her taste in music.

And that was when she really leaned more into what you, I guess you would call the goth aesthetic.

She loved to wear, quote, a long black leather coat and lace gloves and tops.

Oh hell yeah.

And I love that.

Like she made it her own.

What a cool chick.

Yeah.

Like with the lace gloves.

Yeah.

Nice little touch.

And then from there, her style choices evolved and eventually she would, you know, dye her hair all different kinds of colors.

She would add like facial piercings that were cool.

She I saw a picture.

She was so cool looking.

She's a cool fucking chick.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

So some parents might have worried about, you know, the dark clothing, the heavy makeup. I remember when I started wearing eyeliner in black nail polish, my dad was actually very concerned, which is really funny to think about now.

Hi dad.

Yeah.

And, you know, parents might like fight against that kind of thing.

But Sophie's parents, Sylvie and John, they really didn't think much of it.

Because they're cool parents.

She's just expressing herself and we're happy that she feels comfortable doing that.

She's not hurting anyone.

She's not hurting herself.

Yeah.

And actually they gave her credit.

They were proud of her for being so comfortable asserting her individuality, especially at such a time in her life where she was probably going to be judged for doing it, you know?

Sylvie and John.

Sylvie and John.

Fuck yeah.

Forever.

But still, according to Sylvie, Sophie was a quote unquote typical rebellious teen.

And of course they would find themselves in arguments just like any other mother or teenage daughter or teenage son or whatever have you.

They would fight over small infractions like sneaking out to concerts and that kind of thing.

The huge.

So Sophie eventually met a guy named Robert Maltby through her friend group and that was when she was in her junior year of high school and they just hit it off almost instantly.

By all accounts, they shared the same taste in music.

They shared fashion choices together and they both had really thoughtful, sensitive personalities.

And it seems like Rob was pretty welcomed by Sophie's family, not just her friends, her family as well.

Sylvie said they were such a sweet couple and they were totally devoted to one another.

Oh my God.

That is like.

Like this was a young, beautiful love that it hurts.

So Rob and Sophie quickly became inseparable and Sophie actually kind of became Rob's artistic muse.

I'm loving this.

It's beautiful.

He would paint one portrait after another of Sophie that Sylvie actually displayed in her home until she passed away in 2022.

That is heart wrenching.

And if you look them up, he's an incredibly talented artist.

These are like beautiful paintings.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

Rob told The Guardian in 2017, we'd see friends at weekends, but day to day it was just the two of us.

It was always just Rob and Sophie.

Oh, I love love so much.

I love that.

Now, Sophie and Rob had found some solace and support in each other because, you know, they could bounce ideas off of each other.

They had these similar tastes.

They had a deep connection and love for each other.

But that didn't mean that they didn't still deal with a ton of discrimination and abuse because of their interests and their appearances and particularly in the relatively working class suburbs of Rosendale.

They were different and people didn't like that.

That's ridiculous.

It's basically just that they didn't go along with the grain.

So Sylvie, I remembered that Sophie had a lot of problems at school when it came to fitting in.

The other kids, girls especially, and we all know how girls are in high school.

Yeah, it can be tough.

It can be very tough.

And these were the kind that weren't into like the goth thing that Sophie was into.

They treated her just like she was shit.

They treated her like a weirdo because it's threatening to see somebody so confidently being themselves.

It is because people like that don't know who they are yet.

Nope at all.

Nope.

So Sophie did have feelings of isolation, but at the same time she did know who she was.

And like I said, was confident in that.

She wasn't like those other kids and she really didn't want to be.

She was somebody who actually became vegan when she was six years old.

She started getting into the goth and metal scene when she was 11 and she was really open when it came to talking about what she found interesting.

Hell yeah.

Because sometimes like kids at that age, they can squash you from expressing any kind of passionate like for something because you feel like they're like, oh, you're such a nerd.

You're such a geek.

You're into that so much.

So you're just like squash all that.

It's cool that she was just like, no, I love this.

Let her personality and everything about her just shine through.

But unfortunately her confidence in herself did not save her or Rob from some pretty shitty

and horrible situations.

They both had been subject to verbal abuse, people yelling rude comments at them.

And sometimes it would actually escalate into minor physical violence.

Imagine giving a shit that hard about what somebody else is doing that affects you in no way whatsoever.

Couldn't be me, honey.

What a weird creature these people are.

Like it's so weird.

No, it really is.

But luckily they both fell back on their confidence and I would say probably their love for one another.

Yeah.

A relationship where it's like, it's us against the world.

No.

It was just this beautiful love.

They support each other.

And they supported each other.

Exactly.

And so they just kept on expressing themselves freely.

Now, in 2007, Sophie and Rob actually moved in together into a small apartment in Bakeup, small town in Rosendale.

Rob had just started her, excuse me, his first year at Manchester School of Art and he was working towards a degree in illustration, which is really fucking cool.

And Sophie, she had decided to take a gap year, but she was looking forward to starting work on an English degree the next year.

So they had plans.

Just artis.

Artis.

And they had plans.

They had a really promising future ahead of them.

They were actually even starting to talk about getting married, like just planning their life together.

And it seems like they really were meant for each other.

Yeah, absolutely.

But all their plans for their future came crashing down in the early morning hours of August 11th, 2007, because of some of the world's most disgusting monsters.

Awesome.

So on Friday, August 10th, 2007, Sophie and Rob actually went to just go hang out with a friend.

They went to visit their friend, Jonathan, in Britannia.

The three made plans for a nine o'clock or four nine o'clock and spent about two and a half hours at Jonathan's apartment, just having a drink, watching some TV, just hanging out with friends.

And then after that, Sophie and Rob headed home a little after 11.30 p.m.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

And at about midnight, they stopped into an all night service station because Rob wanted to buy some cigarettes.

And then on the way out, or while they were there actually, they ran into some kids that they knew, chatted for a bit, and then walked as a group to a nearby section of Bakeup known as the Fudge Factory, which is actually a reference to an old candy company that had once occupied the launch.

Oh, that's cool.

It made me think of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.

But after spending about 20 or so minutes just chatting with their friends there, Sophie and Rob said their goodbyes, and they continued on their way home, and they were going to walk through Stubby Lee Park.

Okay.

At about 1.10 a.m., Sophie and Rob came up upon a group of teenagers, including 15-year-old Brendan Harris, 16-year-old Ryan Herbert, brothers Joseph and Danny Holm, I think is how you say it, they were 16 and 15 respectively, and 17-year-old Daniel Mallett.

For those ages, these are all young kids, not even one of them is 18.

Now these five boys referred to themselves as the Bakeup Terror Group, wow, super scary.

And they had previously been at a local cafe and arcade known as the Cage, where they each had around four pints of lager and did shots of peach snops.

Okay.

So they were loaded.

Now just before Rob and Sophie had entered Stubby Lee Park, this group of teens had made their way down to the skate park with a bunch of other people, and that skate park was near the center of the park, and that is exactly where they were all hanging out when Rob and Sophie walked by, just minding their own fucking business.

Walking home.

Walking home.

So Rob felt a little bit nervous because one of the boys approached him and asked for a cigarette, and it just, something about it, I think his flight or fight senses just kicked in.

Yeah.

Like couldn't explain it, but just like, it's got a vibe.

Got a vibe, exactly.

He had a feeling that they should just keep going, but being a nice guy, he stopped.

And as he reached for his pack, this 14-year-old girl who was with a group overheard one of the boys say, shall we batter him?

What the fuck?

Just giving someone a cigarette just stops like super fast, and then out of nowhere shall we batter him?

I don't like the human species.

The human species truly gets worse and worse every day.

Aliens take me away.

Truly.

Then, not actually, though, then without any warning or any kind of provoking, Brendan

Harris stepped forward and just slapped Rob across the face.
What a tough guy.
You just slapped him.
So it caught Rob off guard, and honestly, probably out of just sheer confusion, he laughed.
Of course you would.
Because you're just like, what the fuck?
Because you're pathetic, you piece of shit.
Exactly.
Like you literally just stepped forward and slapped me in the face.
And he was probably just like, with no warning?
Like you idiot.
Yeah.
Like taking off guard and just like, what the fuck are you doing?
It is every parent's nightmare unfolding in South Jersey.
The search is on for an 11-year-old Cape May County boy missing since yesterday afternoon.
So far, searchers have found only his left sneaker near his home.
It's hard to imagine losing a loved one, a wife, a husband, a child.
For many, it's their biggest fear.
I'm Marissa Jones, host of The Vanished, a podcast that tells the stories of often overlooked and unsolved missing persons cases.
Every week, I dive into a new case, sharing the details of their mysterious disappearance, including interviews with family, friends, law enforcement, and even suspects in an effort to reveal the truth.
And I'm proud to say that this podcast has aided in a number of arrests.
It's important to me to remember the human behind the headline and help family members find their vanished loved one, or at least a sense of peace.
Follow The Vanished wherever you get your podcasts.
You can listen ad-free on Amazon Music or the Wondery app.
So as soon as he laughed, the other four boys in the terror gang lost it.
Oh, no, they can't handle someone laughing at them?
No, never.
Even more pathetic.
Truly.
And I just want to say, this is when it gets particularly graphic.
So if this is something you want to skip by, I totally understand.
It's really violent.
So somebody jumped down from one of the skate ramps and kicked Rob in the head, knocking him to the ground.
What the fuck?
And this is just out of nowhere.
They just walked through.
And they just walked through and stopped to give someone a cigarette to do something for someone.
Like, it's so scary.

It's so scary.
So he fell to the ground.
And once he was on the ground, they, all of them just started beating him relentlessly.
They were laughing.
They were taunting Sophie and Rob as they just kicked and punched him, punched him over and over and over again.
And he's laying on the ground trying to protect himself.
So Sophie, obviously, runs over to Rob's side and yells at this group to just leave them alone.
She's like, stop.
But that only further encouraged these sick fucks.
And they turned on Sophie, a woman.
Who fucking raised these animals?
Probably not great parents.
And I feel confident saying that because we'll get to it later.
Yeah.
Those are fucking animals.
Animals.
And the other thing is, it's like, where are your parents?
You're 15, 16, 17 years old in the middle of the night, just at a skate park, like we're violent.
Go home.
Beating people like as they pass through, like, what the hell is wrong with you?
If you want to be at a skate park, skate in the middle of the night, sure, that's your prerogative.
Leave everybody alone.
But exactly.
Mind your fucking business.
So one witness, a 15 year old boy who was there and tried to get them to stop because it's these, it's this group of teenagers, but then it's like just some other teenagers just hanging out and watching this like, oh my God, what the fuck is happening?
Thank goodness somebody tried to get them to stop.
Like that was pretty brave of that other like 15 year old.
Multiple people did actually.
And this one, like I said, 15 year old boy, he just yelled at them trying to get them to stop.
And he later said they were running over and just kicking her in the head and jumping up and down on her head.
What the fuck?
Out of nowhere they did this to this couple.
Oh my God.
Another girl among the group later told detectives, I started crying because I'd never seen anything like that.
They were all just booting them.

They were making loads of noises, screaming noises.
They were booting them in the head, swinging the leg back properly, booting them, like jumping on them.
Like animals.
Honestly, not even.
I was just going to say not even animals will do this.
Not even animals.
Exactly.
Holy shit.
The attack on Sophie and Rob lasted a few minutes, but it must have felt like hours for them because I've never heard of anything like this.
I can't believe this.
This is just so, it's sickening, it truly is.
So once they decided that they were done, the boys just casually walked out of the park and left Rob and Sophie laying completely brutalized unconscious on the ground.
What the fuck?
Months later a witness would describe them to the jury, the teenagers as quote, behaving in a giddy way, hyperactive and bouncing around doing silly things as they left.
I have no words.
It's not even humane.
It's not even animalistic.
I don't even know how to describe what they did.
And as they left the park, one of the attackers stopped a boy going in and told him they had just beaten up two people in the park.
And then another in the group chimed in, you want to see them, they're a right mess.
And then they gave the boy Rob's phone, which they had stolen from his unconscious body and then just left the park altogether.
Just went about their night after leaving two people.
I'm sorry.
They didn't even know if they were dead or alive.
These kids need to be caged up and like throw away that key.
Throw it.
Like that is some unhinged beyond behavior.
If you're capable, this is one of those things where obviously this is not in the US, but while I was doing this, I was thinking like, oh my God, what if they get out because of that whole constitution thing?
And then I was like, oh wait, it's not in the US.
Even here, I'm like, if you can do this at any age, at like a young age, level of violence and a level of, like there was no provocation here.
None whatsoever.
That wouldn't even be okay with provocation.
No, of course not.
But there's a fact that these kids are just walking through the park and this happens.
Right.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

Like that's something you can't, like you can't take that out of someone.

Like that's, that's scary.

That's, that's inside you and that is deep rooted and I don't, how do you work through that?

No, you don't.

I don't think so.

Like that is, that's beyond.

Now, even though the boys who had attacked Sophie and Rob had left the park, there were several teenagers still remaining at the scene just in absolute shock.

Multiple of those people called for an ambulance.

The first call was placed at 1.17 a.m. and the second at 1.19 a.m. and the calls for an ambulance triggered an alert to the local police with a message assault in a park and park road, sorry, possibly near a skate park.

So they didn't have a legit location.

Geez.

While police and ambulance services tried to locate the scene of the attack, more calls were placed to emergency services because they were like, where are you?

Like you have to get here.

Another one at 1.23 a.m.

And then finally another one at 1.29 a.m.

Thank goodness these kids are calling.

Yeah, seriously.

You know, like thank goodness they stepped up and like did because I mean, there's adults that won't intervene even enough to call an ambulance.

You know what I mean?

So I'm glad that they all came together and were like, we got to get somebody here for sure.

So Jonathan, the friend that Sophie and Rob had spent the night with hanging out that very night.

He was woken up by his phone ringing at about 1.30 a.m.

And he saw that the call was coming from Rob's cell phone.

So he answered right away, of course, but heard nothing on the other end.

And he just hung up after a minute or two, probably assumed that it was like a but-tile.

Yeah.

But he, after he hung up, texted Rob's phone to be like, hey, like you good man, but he didn't get any kind of response.

The phone ringing again about a half hour later.

And this time when Jonathan answered the call, the voice on the other end was not Rob's.

It was a teenage boy who said, have you got two friends down in Bay Cup Park?

And the caller told Jonathan, there's two moshers here and they look like they're dead.

Holy shit.

Before just hanging up the phone.

Oh man, that just gave me chills.

So Jonathan rushed down to the nearby park and he obviously found it was filled with

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

police and emergency service workers.

But no one would tell him anything because they just couldn't in that moment.

But he's looking on, hearing like that his friends were just attacked and look like they're dead and he can't have any way of finding out what happens.

So paramedics did arrive at Stubby Lee Park at 1.20 in the morning and they were absolutely shocked to find Rob and Sophie in the state that they were in.

They both suffered obviously severe injuries to their heads and faces and quote, were so badly beaten police had difficulty establishing their sex.

Oh God.

So they were rushed to, I believe it's Roachdale Infirmary, where they both received emergency care and were stabilized luckily before being transferred to larger hospitals for inpatient care.

Rob got transferred to North Manchester General Hospital and Sophie to Fairfield Hospital.

They both had serious trauma.

They were unrecognizable to their families.

Oh, I can't even imagine this.

But at the same time, their injuries were not considered to be life threatening at that point.

So while they both arrived at the Roachdale Infirmary in an unconscious state, they actually were both expected to recover.

Oh God.

So the extent to their injuries was just like unimaginable.

You can't even begin to fathom the state that they were in.

Like I said, they had both been beaten severely about their face and head.

So there was really, really intense, very serious swelling.

Which would have been horrifying for anybody knowing them, like their family members to see.

I can't.

And their parents, can you imagine seeing your baby like that?

No, I can't.

I can't either.

And they were also, they had been bleeding from their ears and noses.

Oh my God.

That's how bad it was.

Rob suffered internal bleeding and bleeding on the brain.

And Sophie, this is horrific, had deep boot impressions on her face.

And this is very graphic.

Had quote, a piece of flesh missing from her head, where her attackers are believed to have yanked her hair out.

Animals.

Not even.

Truly the scariest kind of animals, like I can't even, this is outrageous.

This is one of those things where you say you'd see in a movie and you'd be like, that's distasteful.

No way.

Like that's too much.

Yeah.

Oh, these poor families too.

Like I just like truly have to see your loved one like that.

This is beyond your worst nightmare.

Your brain, I don't even think could come up with this on its own, I hope.

Now once the pair had been stabilized, Jonathan, the friend, was brought to the Roachdown Firmery and he was actually asked to identify Rob.

Oh my God.

But he was not allowed to see Sophie at that current time.

They were still doing a bunch of stuff.

That should tell you, you need to know.

Exactly.

So because the dispatcher hadn't been able to provide a precise location, the police actually initially went to a different location.

They went to Park Road and Edgeside and then they were redirected to Stubby Lee Park where they arrived at 145am.

That's tough.

That's really tough.

That's a big span of time.

It is.

Now initially the remaining teenagers at the scene were being sketchy and they didn't want to talk to investigators.

So the motive for the brutal attack wasn't obvious.

Because there is no motive.

There isn't one.

But because some personal belongings were missing, specifically Rob's cell phone, detectives considered that actually a robbery might have been what prompted this assault.

Because of course the police are looking at this and they're like, something had to have started this.

Like how does this just happen out of nowhere?

But after interviewing several witnesses, they concluded, quote, the two people who were attacked followed the gothic trend and potentially this could have been a motive.

That's not a motive.

That's not a motive.

You don't kill people because they're gothic.

Now luckily, even though some of the witnesses at the scene weren't comfortable disclosing any information, a few were willing to tell the detectives what happened and they actually identified three of the five boys responsible for the attack.

So by late morning, police had begun rounding up those that they believed to be responsible for the attack on Robin Sophie, starting with Ryan Herbert.

The arrest of Herbert was followed a couple hours later by the arrests of Brendan Harris and Daniel Mallett.

And then detectives would arrest Danny Holm at his parents' house the following day and his brother Joseph would later turn himself into police a few hours later.

Yeah, I bet you did.

Yes, scared little boy.

Now the following day, Monday, August 13th, all five were brought before Burnley Magistrates court, where they were each charged with two counts of grievous bodily harm with intent.

Now, on Wednesday, August 22nd, Rob Maltby's condition had actually improved to the point where he woke from his coma because he was in a coma, but now he was stable enough to visit Sophie in her hospital room.

So he was able to visit her and then he was transferred to a hospital closer to his parents' house so that they could take care of him.

I can't imagine.

Having to see somebody you love like that.

Him having to see her?

No.

That poor, oh, I'm sure he probably wanted to, but you almost wish that he didn't have to see her like that, you know, like, but then at the same time, what your brain could come up with, I guess, I just feel for him on every level.

You can feel for him.

You do.

You really do.

So detectives, they were really hopeful actually that now that Rob was awake and no longer in a coma, but he would be able to fill in some of the blanks in any kind of missing information about the night that they were attacked.

But again, he'd just woke up from a coma after considerable brain trauma.

So he was, quote, disoriented and confused, and he actually didn't really remember much from the attack, which I'm grateful that he doesn't have to remember that.

Like the fact that they remember that, the fact that they cause that much brain trauma, that is, that's so significant.

Like it is hard to cause that much trauma.

Oh yeah.

Rob has changed forever in so many different ways because of these five fucking pricks.

You can't even like, no, nothing you call them is satisfying because they're that evil.

They're beyond.

Truly.

But unfortunately, his memory seemed actually to be even worse once he was taken off the sedatives that he'd been given early on.

According to one of the nurses tending to him, Rob was very restless, difficult to speak to, very repetitive and disoriented.

His brain had just gone through so much, so, so much like incomprehensible.

So the police continued to work in the background and they were particularly interested in why Rob and Sophie actually went through Stubby Lee Park to get home because they only lived a little over a mile from their friend and they could have taken a more direct route back to their apartment.

But according to their friend, Jonathan, it really wasn't that unusual for Sophie and Rob to take a long way home late at night because Rob and Sophie enjoyed that time of day.

Of course.

And they just like spending time with each other, like a nice nighttime walk.

And they should be able to live in a place where you can go on a nice nighttime walk.

Yeah, through a park.

Through a park.

Yeah.

Exactly.

Like an area there's other people bopping about.

Yeah.

They should have been safe.

But other than that, nobody came up with an alternative explanation because that's good enough.

That's the thing.

People take scenic routes all the time just to spend more time together.

Especially as a couple who clearly enjoyed their time together all the time.

They like the nighttime.

They're night owls.

They wanted to just walk through the park together and they should have been able to do that.

I chose me.

So the case ended up being assigned to Detective Inspector Dean Holden and he immediately recognized

several of these names of the boys who had been implicated.

Because they're little pieces of shit anyway.

They are pieces of shit.

According to Inspector Holden, Ryan Herbert was a local menace.

Local prick, Ryan Herbert.

Known for years as a bully at school and a bully in the neighborhood where he lived.

He came from a large family and several members of said family were also well known to the police.

And police knew that he would act out aggressively or inappropriately to get attention.

Wow.

Now, like Ryan Herbert, Brendan Harris was also a local troublemaker and very well known.

Actually weeks before this attack, 15-year-old, please remember the ages here, 15-year-old

Harris had transferred schools due to his behavior and he was often barred from clubs and establishments for aggressive or inappropriate behavior.

But let's not figure this out before they hurt someone.

No, never.

Yeah.

At school and inside his social circle, he was known as a bully who, quote, would pick on others he labeled as geeks.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

Oh, fuck these kids.

You're a fucking geek if anybody's a geek.

How pathetic.

How pathetic, truly.

Here's Joseph and Danny Holm lived at a traveler's site in Bay Cup where they shared a trailer next to their parents.

So they lived on their own with one another just right next to their parents.

People were not shocked to hear that Joseph was involved in the attacks on Sophie and Rob.

He had quite a reputation for himself.

He was actually the leader of the Bay Cup terror group, self-proclaimed, I'm sure.

But people knew he was a very scary kid.

But they were actually very surprised that his younger brother Danny had also been involved in the attack.

It sounds like Danny was just a follower.

A follower.

Yup.

And that's not the kind of thing you want to follow.

Nope.

Like what the fuck did you get yourself into here?

This was your time to actually do something.

I was just going to say this would have been your time to like stand up on your own.

Exactly.

But he didn't.

Nope.

So he wasn't the only one who surprised Danny there, wasn't the only one who surprised the public by being involved.

According to Catherine Smith, who was the editor of the Rosendale Free Press at the time, Daniel Mallett was quote, and this is a different Daniel.

He was the person least expected to be involved in a crime of this nature.

By most accounts, Daniel was a fairly good student actually.

His parents had divorced a few years earlier, but they maintained a good relationship and they were a pretty stable family unit.

That's scary.

That's so scary.

But there were a pretty good number of Daniel's classmates that had noticed some recent changes in his personality starting about a year or two earlier.

They said that he started to show quote unquote violent tendencies.

That's really scary.

Just out of nowhere.

Yeah.

Now, with the public starting to learn more about the case, back at the hospital after nearly two weeks in a coma with no signs of life at this point.

My God.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

So V. Lancaster had to be taken off life support on Friday, August 24th, 2007.

That's horrific.

So because she has murder, she'd been killed.

Her death escalated the assault now to a case of murder and the Lancashire police made a statement saying, the charges will be reviewed with the Crown Prosecution Service.

A murder charge is an option for all five of the youths.

Yeah.

Charge them all.

Charge them.

So two weeks later, all five were again brought before Burnley Magistrates Court and they were charged with the murder of Sophie Lancaster.

Yes.

Rightfully fucking.

So glad.

I'm so happy that there wasn't anything to like fuck shit with that.

So to quite literally nobody's surprise, throughout their interviews with the police, all five of the boys either claimed that they didn't participate in the assault or they just pointed fingers at the others for the bulk of the responsibility.

Oh no, you're not tough guys anymore, huh?

No, not so big now, huh?

Scared little boys.

Yeah.

The first two times that Joseph Hume, who again was said to be the leader of the game, was interviewed, he blamed everybody else for the attack.

That's what a good leader does.

Yeah.

Turn on your friends.

Yep.

Not so big and tough now.

Nope.

But the police wanted to know, if he wasn't involved, then why were his fingerprints frowned on Rob's cell phone?

So weird.

Yeah.

Now, at his third interview, he gave the officers a prepared statement, claiming his fingerprints were found on the phone because another teenager had handed it to him as they entered the park and asked him if he wanted it and he looked it over but declined.

Yeah, I just turned it over in my hand and then I gave it back.

You're a fucking idiot.

Like come up with anything later.

Or just tell the fucking truth, how about that?

Now when Joseph's brother, Danny, was interviewed, he also denied any involvement and he blamed the entire assault on Ryan Herbert.

In fact, in Danny's version of events, he claimed that he, quote, tried to save Sophie

by pulling Ryan Herbert off of her.

You know what would have been like the sickest way to save someone?

Putting the police in an ambulance immediately upon the start of this, if you were trying to stop it.

Immediately.

Yeah.

Yeah, because you didn't need the job.

Good try though.

Good try, Danny.

I like the home brothers.

Daniel Mallett faced multiple interviews and a short amount of time and in each interview, he admitted to only punching Rob one time.

Yeah, it's so weird.

I don't know how any of the other stuff happens.

It's like even that is fucked.

Yeah, you punched somebody randomly for no fucking reason.

For walking through a park.

You're still a piece of shit.

I just only punched him once.

Yeah, I just punched him just for walking.

Yeah, and then you watched and joined in as you murdered his girlfriend and your friends did.

Ridiculous.

So he denied any involvement in laying a finger on Sophie.

He said he had nothing to do with that.

He also blamed Brendan Harris and Ryan Herbert for the entire assault on Sophie.

Now, meanwhile, in his interviews, Brendan Harris, he repeated a prepared statement which essentially pinned the entire killing on Ryan Herbert, who was refusing to answer any questions from investigators.

I think Ryan sounds like he played the biggest part in this.

Ryan certainly sounds like the issue here.

But everybody was involved.

Absolutely.

To be clear.

Now, even before any of the details about the attack on Rob and Sophie were made public, the assault prompted a ton of different shocked and outraged responses from the media and just anybody who was here about this.

Some people directed their frustrations toward the Bake uptown government.

They were complaining that Stubby Lee Park had become, quote, drunk, violent yobbs.

And a yob is a rude, noisy and aggressive young person.

So they were like, basically, the park is full of little assholes who make everybody's lives miserable.

And they made comments like, quote, if we had park rangers, then maybe this tragedy might not have happened.

Yeah.

Solid point, I think.

You do need something there.

Yeah, especially if the park is going to be open that late.

Yeah.

Absolutely.

Nobody there monitoring it.

Yeah.

There's several layers here.

Yeah, exactly.

Now, others directed their criticisms just more broadly at society as a whole.

One resident told reporters, I think the real issue is why these teenagers were allowed to be out in the early hours of the morning unsupervised and drinking alcohol.

True.

Yep.

But regardless of where people placed the blame, they all agreed that the attack in the park was just further evidence of a national problem of increased violence from what they were calling disgruntled young people.

That's the thing.

It is.

And especially during that time, that's scary.

It is scary because they were like, what the fuck is going on here?

We need to get some programs instilled in this city.

We need to get some park rangers put at the park.

Yeah, clearly an overhaul needs to be happening here on every level.

Precisely.

All the way down to home.

All the way down, yeah, exactly, even at home.

So the attack on Robin Sophie happened at a moment in UK politics, actually, where people were getting more and more concerned with what then Prime Minister David Cameron referred to as quote unquote, our broken society.

Now Prime Minister Cameron's point about the broken society was mostly actually focused on a series of unconnected crimes that were happening throughout the UK, where children had committed shocking acts of violence, just like the one we're talking about.

So scary.

Against other children and even against adults.

And he was correct, there definitely was an issue regarding violence, especially when you hear that on the night that Rob was attacked and Sophie was murdered, three teenagers in Cheshire kicked this man named Gary Newlove to death in front of his family after a night of binge drinking.

What the fuck?

The same night a man was kicked to death in front of his family.

And then several months after everything we've already talked about at this point, three teenagers stabbed another boy to death in London after a minor argument between their

friend groups.

Oh my God.

So everybody was getting really, really nervous about what the fuck was going on here.

Seriously.

So Prime Minister Cameron's comments about a broken Britain, they became an important talking part, excuse me, talking point in a push for increased law enforcement and social restrictions.

Yeah.

But even outside of the political spotlight, the attack and murder of Sophie and attack on Rob was triggering new discussions about the effects of intolerance on alt communities in UK and everywhere throughout the world.

When details of the attacker's whole anti-goth motive began kind of circulating amongst the press, that's when Sophie's death took on a greater significance, especially for activists that were promoting tolerance.

So there was a lot of different social issues connected to this at this point.

Now by the end of 2007, Sylvia, Sophie's mom, had actually established Stamp Out Prejudice Hatred and Intolerance Everywhere, which the acronym for that if you didn't notice is Sophie.

Again, Stamp Out Prejudice Hatred and Intolerance Everywhere.

I love that.

Sophie.

It was a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the effects of hate crimes and advocating for policy changes.

The fact that this woman was able to do that by the end of the year that she had lost her daughter, her only daughter, she is a badass.

So through social media, lecture campaigns, branded items like wristbands, t-shirts, Sophie still works to promote a greater understanding and acceptance of all people.

That was Sylvia's mission, but it also seems like that was Sophie's mission.

When she was here, within weeks of her death, the social media pages for the organization had attracted thousands of followers.

Everyone was offering condolences.

People were sharing stories of their own experiences with intolerance and the organization and its message held special significance among the heavy metal and the goth music scenes in particular because those people were constantly aware of the abuse and violence that had been directed at Sophie and Rob because they'd gone through it themselves.

That's awful.

And then it went national, like, or national.

International.

It went international.

Intergalactic.

Across the world.

It did.

Across the world.

Musicians, artists, fans, everybody.

They were writing songs.

They were creating memorials to Sophie in places like Bake Up and Whitby where the annual goth weekend is held.

Love that.

There were still all kinds of memorial signs up for Sophie.

There were commemorative benches, other installations, like, this was not going away.

So in the years since her death tributes to Sophie and the commemoration of her memory have only grown.

They grow and grow and grow every year.

Now there's actually high profile memorials at events like Bloodstock Open Air, which is an annual British heavy metal festival.

That's amazing.

And thousands of people attend that festival every year.

That's so cool.

Sophie's legacy lives on.

And you know, she loves that.

Oh, like that is-

And she deserves that.

She deserves that.

To be taken from this world at such a young age and with her whole life-

The most senseless shit ever.

And her whole life and like plans ahead of her, you know?

It's nice to see that she can live on through in some way.

Yeah, exactly.

Now Sylvia, her mom, was determined that her daughter's death would not be meaningless.

But at the same time, she also didn't want Sophie to become a martyr.

So Sophie campaign manager, Kate Conboy Greenwood, told reporters, martyrs choose what they do.

But Sophie had no choice in the horrible way she died.

That's the thing.

She did not want to be here.

She did not want, like we just said, like she would love to see all those, you know, that's how she's being a memorialist, but she didn't want that.

No, she wanted to live.

She wanted to be there at that festival.

She didn't want to be, you know, the center of a memorial there.

Like it's amazing that that's happening.

It shouldn't have to happen.

She didn't ask for this.

No.

So instead of being remembered for how or why she died, Sylvia and everybody at Sophie, they worked tirelessly to make sure that Sophie's life served as a platform for spreading a message of tolerance and acceptance.

And I just think that's really amazing that they were able to do that.

For sure.

So back to the case here.

As family and friends began the work of promoting Sophie's memory and legacy, the police and backup continued the slow methodical work of interviewing more than a hundred people who had come forward with new information.

Detective Inspector Dean Holden told the press, I'm grateful for the positive reporting we've received and according to him, because so many of the witnesses and others with information were children, the interview processes required additional time because there was a lot of different protocol that had to be followed and that wasn't usually required in the process of interviewing adults.

This was like consent and all that.

Right.

This is a very different case and a very different way of investigating.

But still, the turnout of information actually had been surprisingly good and useful.

And investigators were working on a strong case against Rob and Sophie's attackers.

So in January 2008, all five boys appeared before a judge at the Crown Court in Preston, excuse me, Crown Court at Preston in Lancashire, where they all pleaded not guilty to the charge of murder in the case of Sophie Lancaster, as well as not guilty to the charge of grievous, bodily harm in the case of Rob Maltby and Sophie Lancaster.

Wow, OK.

It's like, you're going to do everything that you did to them and you know you did that.

And you're not even going to take responsibility.

Not even going to take responsibility.

No.

Like, how fucking low are you?

Yeah.

So since their arrest, Daniel Mallet and the Holm Brothers, they had actually been released on bail.

Wow.

Into the custody of their parents and were expected to adhere to a 9 p.m. curfew.

9 p.m.

That's what I said.

OK, I'm glad I wasn't crazy.

9 p.m.

They can go stroll about the streets until 9 p.m.

I know that you murdered an entire person and attacked two people, but uh.

What the fuck?

Just be home by 9.

Damn.

Are you kidding?

Holy shit.

And the other stipulation was that they were not to have contact with any witnesses in the case.

Oh, yeah.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

I'm sure they adhered to that shit.
And no contact with Rob Malpy.
I can imagine how Rob and Sophie's family, like how Rob just trolling around out there.
And then how Sophie's family felt, because Rob probably felt in danger, I'm assuming,
but I would feel that way.
And angry.
Oh.
I would be so angry.
And he's trying to recover.
Yeah, he's trying to get his whole life back in order.
Everything he's gone through and these fuckers just get to run amok.
Yeah, they can just go out and do their regular thing that they're doing.
Like, do we not know what happened?
The fuck?
Wow.
Now, luckily, Ryan Herber and Brendan Harris, I think they were the ones that the police
were most worried about.
They remained in custody.
I think they should have been worried about the entirety of them.
Yeah, absolutely.
But because all were under 18, their identities were protected in the press.
But anyone, even the press who attended the hearings, had been privy to their names.
And even actually had taken photos of them entering and exiting the court.
So press was ready with content when the ban on identifying the attackers was eventually
lifted.
They just were like, here you go.
And they were like, boom.
Yeah.
This is who did that.
Yeah.
Now, a trial was set for all five boys on March 10th with a pre-trial hearing scheduled
for February 22nd, 2008.
On February 25th, backup police held a press conference led by Superintendent Mick Gradewell
and Detective Inspector Holden, where the press and the public were finally provided
with more details on the attack and the murder.
Holden told reporters, this was the most horrendous crime I have seen in 14 years.
And he went on to describe the four, excuse me, the five boys as feral.
Feral is a perfect way to describe them.
Truly, they are.
That really is.
Feral beasts.
I'm glad he came up with that word, because that really, really is it.
It truly is.
I can't even actually think of a better word.

That's really perfect.

Now, he also went out of his way to explain that neither Rob nor Sophie was in any way responsible for this attack.

They had been targeted because of their appearance and for no other reason.

Locked up.

Is what he was saying.

Now, finally, both Gradewell and Holden told the press they believed 15-year-old Brendan Harris to be the quote unquote primary offender.

That's wild.

And then they criticized the parents of all five boys for failing to take the matter seriously and taking a flippant attitude as investigators interviewed their children.

The parents didn't give a shit.

I'm going to say quiet.

Yeah, that's why when you said something earlier, I was like, oh, don't even feel bad because they were pieces of shit.

And I'll say it.

So throughout the investigation, he explained most of the parents had laughed about the charges, attempted to provide false alibis and were generally hostile and belittling of officers and investigating the case.

Apple shouldn't fall far from the fucking tree here.

Fucking ashamed of yourself.

And the sad thing is they're not, they're not.

Wow.

Beasts.

I.

My brain won't even come up with words for them.

That's, that's truly abhorrent.

Like that is, that's a great word for it.

I am beyond words for that.

Laughing about the charges.

Laughing about them.

You're laughing about a murder charge.

Stomped on a young girl's head.

They don't care.

Whew.

Can you imagine not caring about that?

No.

Like, obviously a figure of speech.

I know you can't, but it's like, just like flabbergasting.

No, I can't.

And just disgusting.

Truly disgusting.

That's despicable.

Like I said, apples didn't fall far.

Now, several weeks later, Gradwell again, publicly criticized the parents of the accused saying the only thing these lads think they have done wrong is to be caught. It was almost as though they were laughing and joking about what they had done. Parents have got to take much more responsibility.

Fuck yeah.

Because it's like, where the fuck were you when your kid was stomping on someone's face? Well, look at you.

You're laughing about it now.

Right.

So like it tells everybody everything they need to know.

It does.

Now, when the investigators had finished speaking, Sylvia Lancaster also was able to make a statement to the press and she told reporters about Sophie's life, Sophie's passions and about how her murder had affected her family.

She explained that she had spent years working with young offenders herself, actually.

And even despite what had happened to her daughter, she told them, I haven't lost my faith.

Wow.

That is a strong fucking woman.

At one point when Sylvia said she knew Sophie's appearance had made her a target in the past, a reporter asked, did you never ask your daughter to change her appearance?

So she might not have faced prejudice shown to her that night.

And Sylvia said, why would I ask her to change what she was?

Oh, I just got like a full chill.

Why would you ask your daughter to change?

Why not?

Why would we be asking the person attacked to change and not the attackers?

Oh, yeah, Sophie should have changed.

It shouldn't be these feral little pricks that need to change.

Like if we're talking about change here, I think I know exactly where we start.

How dare somebody even ask her mother that?

How dare they?

Yeah.

Now, by the time the trial began on March 10th, 2008, a few things had actually changed.

In the course of their investigation, investigators had discovered, quote, forensic evidence of blood from both Rob and Sophie on the pants of Ryan Herbert.

Oops.

The pants that he was wearing, obviously, on the evening of the attack.

So that provided a direct and damning connection to the murder.

As a result, scared little Herbert there realized he had to change his plea from not guilty to guilty on both counts.

How do you like those apples?

Yep.

Before accepting the plea, Judge Anthony Russell wanted to make sure that Herbert understood, quote, the sentence of the court is fixed at life, meaning there

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

wouldn't be any negotiations for a lesser sentence.

Good.

And Herbert's defense attorney explained he accepts responsibility for the attack on both victims.

Oh, what a big guy.

He accepts responsibility when we found the actual physical evidence of it on his goddamn pants.

Right.

Like he accepts responsibility now that there's literally no way to argue against it. You should have said he's been forced into accepting responsibility.

He didn't do that on his own volition.

Precisely.

But at that point, the plea was accepted and he was remanded back into the custody of the crown.

Months later, after the trial had ended, the press found out that detectives had actually gotten recordings from phone calls that Herbert had made to his mother from Lancaster Farm Young Offenders Institute where he was being held.

And he admitted to her in those calls that he had actively participated in the attack on Robin Sophie and the murder.

In another recording where he did not know that he was being recorded, he actually admitted to other things like, quote, kicking Sophie Lancaster like a football.

Oh, never let him out.

Never.

Never let him out.

Now, with him pleading guilty, the four others stood before a judge and with regard to the charge of grievous bodily harm to Rob Malpy, all four now pleaded guilty, leaving only the murder charge unresolved.

Now, the prosecuting attorney, Michael Sharrock, I believe is how you say it, he concluded that although there was evidence that all five had participated in the attack on Rob, there was no evidence actually directly connecting Daniel Mallett or the home brothers for the attack slash murder on Sophie. So because of that, Judge Russell delivered a verdict of not guilty in the cases of Daniel Mallett and the home brothers.

Wow.

So that left Brendan Harris as the only individual to stand trial for Sophie's murder.

Wow.

Because, um, because Ryan had already admitted to it.

Exactly.

So all of their attorneys, the home brothers, Daniel Mallett and Brendan Harris's, wanted their clients to be out on bail rather than remanded to the custody of the crown.

Fuck do you think you are?

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

I'm also like, I'm, I'm thinking if I'm their defense attorney, I'd like them to remain in jail because they're being held because I don't know what the fuck they're going to do out there to make this case even more difficult.

That's the thing.

Like you trust them out there, right?

You trust your job that much.

Like damn.

All right.

Wild.

But luckily the judge was like, haha, I am unmoved by that.

And they were all taken to the custody until they appeared for sentencing, sentencing.

Now with the new pleas out of the way and the grievous bodily harm charges settled, the trial of Brendan Harris got underway March 12th, 2008.

In his opening statements, prosecutor Shorrock told the jury how Robin Sophie had been targeted for their appearance by this group of teenagers who quote, acting like a pack of wild animals, savagely and mercilessly beat the couple while quote, encouraging each other and laughing.

That's the thing.

They're all involved in this.

Whether they were physically involved, they were encouraging someone to stomp on someone's head and laughing.

That's a problem.

That's it makes you want to throw up.

It does.

Now through witness after witness, they're actually nearly 50 in total.

The jury learned the sequence of events that started with Rob being slapped in the face and then that escalated quickly to the vicious beating of both he and Sophie, which again, obviously resulted in Sophie's murder.

One witness testified.

Herbert was bending over Rob and punching him in the face.

All five were having a go.

There you go.

Sophie was trying to push them off.

Others testified to the laughter, the mocking comments being directed at Sophie as she was trying to protect an unconscious Rob from any more blows before they began directing their violence at her, which started with Brendan Harris delivering a kick to her head as she knelt up, knelt beside Rob cradling his broken head in her lap.

She was just tending to her love and they kicked her in the head.

And what kills me is that that last thing.

It's so it's so horrible.

Witnessed in her life was this.

Yeah, like that's was like the love of her life being.

It's brutal hurt.

It's like that's it's really unthinkable.

There are not words for this one.

This is really unthinkable.

It really is.

First responders also testified that when they first arrived, arrived, excuse me, Sophie's injuries were so bad that, like I said earlier, they quote, could not distinguish Miss Lancaster sex.

Wow.

Throughout the trial, the jury heard the recordings of the calls made to 999 by witnesses at the scene, and that provided insight to the jury on just how chaotic and absolutely terrifying that scene was for everyone involved.

At one point jurors listened to a call that was made while the attack was still underway and a hysterical girl could be heard screaming for help amid the chaos. And while she was testifying on the stand after the recording was played, she became so emotional on the stand, this poor girl, that the judge actually eventually determined that she was in no fit state to continue and had to adjourn the court for the day.

Wow.

It was that emotional.

And it actually was not the first time or the last time that members of the court or the jury had to take a break after the emotional testimony.

I'm surprised they were ever able to get through this trial.

This is just unbelievably senseless.

And it's so brutal.

It's senseless and so brutal.

Exactly.

And it's just there's something about someone using what they've got, their hands and their feet, yeah, to do this much damage.

It is that close and proximity to someone literally minding their business.

That is so brutal.

And just like what a human can do to another human with their own with all the same human parts that we all have.

You can just take someone in the head and stomp on them.

When Brendan Harris finally took the stand, he remained as defiant as ever.

Oh, fuck you.

Claiming he played no part in the attack.

He said all the witnesses were lying or mistaken.

Of course they are, you idiot.

And they, you know, they must have just figured out a way to fake those phone calls.

Yeah, absolutely.

His claims were clearly bullshit.

There was plenty of witness testimony and evidence that actually connected

him to the crime and the prosecutor Shorick told him during cross-examination. You recall very well what you did that night and you do not want anyone to know about it.

You were there until the very end.

You kicked Sophie.

You and Herbert caused those horrible injuries to her.

Now it was during this cross-examination that the jury learned this was actually not the first incident of violence that Brendan Harris had committed in the park.

Four months, four months before Rob and Sophie were attacked.

Ryan Harris and Brendan Herbert, excuse me, I just flipped their last name.

Sorry, attacked another boy in Stubby Lee Park, stomping on his head and kicking him before his own mother dragged him away and reported the assault to police.

Wow.

Four months earlier, they could have killed this boy.

Kicking him and stomping him in the head.

Does that sound familiar?

Now, are you ready?

This is out raging.

They were giving community service for this assault.

That's failure.

Failure.

That's pure failure.

Failure.

Closing arguments were given on March 27th and the jury retired to deliberate.

Before sending them away, Judge Russell instructed the jury on their task and said,

If you are sure that the defendant took part in the attack on Sophie Lancaster and he did intend to kill her or cause serious injury, then he is guilty of murder.

Although he was drunk at the time, provided you are sure he actually formed the intention to kill or cause really serious injuries, then he is guilty of murder.

Now, after deliberating for a little less than three hours, the jury returned to guilty verdict.

Good.

Thank God.

Can you imagine?

Oh, no.

Now, obviously there was a wave of relief throughout the courtroom.

People were like erupting and allowed yes from Sylvia Lancaster.

Now, all five boys were returned to court on April 28th, 2008, where they were sentenced for their respective crimes.

For the charge of causing grievous bodily harm to Robin Sophie, Daniel Mallet was sentenced to four years and four months.

I'm sorry, what?

Four years and four months because it was grievous bodily harm, not murder for them.

Joseph and Danny Holm were sentenced to serve a minimum of five years and 10 months.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

Now, luckily, Ryan Herbert and Brendan Harris were sentenced to double life sentences for the murder of Sophie and causing grievous bodily harm.

Brendan was actually required to serve a minimum of 18 years while Ryan was sentenced to a minimum of 16 years and three months. He got the lesser sentence there because he pleaded guilty.

Wow.

For the attack on Rob, Harris and Herbert were sentenced to five years and 10 months, which was to be served concurrent with the life sentences.

Wow.

Now, before passing the sentence, Judge Russell addressed the boy saying, this was a terrible case which has shocked and outraged all who have heard about it. At least wild animals, when they hunt in packs, have a legitimate reason for doing so. That's what I was thinking too.

I was like, this isn't even animalistic because they usually don't attack unprovoked. And they don't attack their own.

Yeah.

Yeah.

He said, you have none and your behavior on that night degrades humanity itself.

Wow.

It's like, we're running out for that, Judge.

I like that.

Yeah.

Now, on October 7th, 2008, all five had the fucking nerve to appeal their sentences to the court of appeal in London who delivered the response two weeks later. In the case of Brendan, the court felt that Judge Russell hadn't given, quote, enough allowance for his plea of guilty.

Excuse me?

And as a result, they further reduced his sentence to 15 years and six months.

The other four appeals were rejected, luckily.

But in their report, the justices reprimanded all five for their participation in what they described as chilling, random, and mindless brutality.

And they praised Sophie Lancaster for her remarkable courage demonstrated in her attempt to help her, or excuse me, to protect her boyfriend.

That's the thing, because she could have run away.

Of course.

And she didn't.

And seriously, that's, that really is.

And that tells you exactly who she was.

Yeah, exactly.

Now, in the year since his sentence was passed, Brendan Harris has appealed to sentence multiple times.

His appeals filed in August, 2016, in January, 2020, were rejected on grounds that he had not made significant progress, and he was not deserving of consideration.

Good.

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 486: Murder of Sophie Lancaster

The fact that after all that time in jail.

You still haven't made progress.

We know what he's doing in prison, excuse me.

And in February of 2020, Ryan Herbert's appeal was actually considered by a high court judge who found that he had made exceptional progress while in jail, including efforts to further his education through the University of Cambridge, where he was taking law courses.

Oh.

I'm sorry.

He's taking law courses to find a loophole in all of this.

And also, he's taking law courses.

What's Sophie get to do?

Well, Sophie's gone.

And while Rob has probably the most tragic case of PTSD one could imagine.

Okay, cool.

In March of 2022, the parole board determined that Ryan Herbert's progress made him a good candidate

for the parole and granted him conditional release.

Sylvia Lancaster was obviously fucking outraged by this decision and told reporters, once again, we have a justice system that fails to deliver justice.

Truly.

So they all just suck?

That is, I can't.

That's unthinkable.

Who made that fucking decision?

Yeah.

Now, Sylvia Lancaster continued speaking out against hate crimes and promoting the message of tolerance through that organization, Sophie.

And eventually through that work, she was appointed to the Order of the British Empire.

Wow.

Which is a prestigious award given to citizens promoting social good in the UK.

Badass.

Now, sadly, on April 12th, 2022, actually, Sylvia passed away from a rare complication that she suffered after a surgery.

Her death came as a complete shock to the community that she supported.

Sylvia and Sophie left a legacy of tolerance and unity that spread around the world through musician, artists, anybody who embraced this cause.

Yeah.

Now, in general, Rob Malpy avoided the press, and I 100% understand that.

He just focused his attention on the long and hard process of physical and emotional recovery.

Now, not surprisingly, the trauma he experienced during and after the attack derailed a lot of his plans for the future.

Oh, I hate that.

It left him paranoid, afraid to venture much further than his family's home.

But in 2017, he did finish his illustration degree.

Yay.

Which like, fuck yeah, Rob.

Hell yeah, Rob.

And in an interview given to The Guardian, he said that he'd finally begun a new relationship with a young woman that he met online, and he was planning to spend time with her in the US. But he also told The Guardian he had always been frustrated with the narrative that Sophie was killed because she was goth.

He told a reporter, no, she wasn't.

She was killed because some of our souls killed her.

Why can't we ask what it is about them that made them want to murder someone, not what it is about someone that made them be murdered?

Yes.

And I think that is the perfect place to end this case on Rob's fucking phenomenal point of stop asking me why she was killed for what she looked like.

And ask why they didn't.

And ask why they fucking did it.

Yeah, that's fucked up.

This is one of the most tragic cases I've ever read in my life.

That was very painful.

I want to like do something.

I know that's just like wow.

Seriously.

But yeah.

Wow.

Hopefully.

That's horrific.

We can do something haunted.

Yes.

Next week.

Because that was really brutal.

Because that was brutal.

Yeah.

And we love you guys.

Take care of yourselves.

Yeah.

Be nice to each other.

Be kind to each other.

Do something in Sophie's name this week.

Yeah.

I just think that'd be awesome.

Don't be mean to people.

Don't make fun of people.

Yeah.

Don't be bullied.

Everyone is dealing with their own shit.

Exactly.

So deal with yours.

Yeah.

And keep listening.

We hope you keep listening.

And we hope you keep it.

Weird.

I am not even telling you not how weird to keep it
because you already know.

You already know.

Hey, Prime members.

You can listen to Morbid early and ad-free on Amazon Music.

Download the Amazon Music app today.

Or you can listen ad-free with Wondery Plus and Apple Podcasts.

Before you go, tell us about yourself

by completing a short survey at wondery.com.