

Death of a GENTLE GIANT



Mandy's lads loved having fun. But evil was lurking at a party...



Left: Me and Charlie are shattered by the loss of our son, Jamie. Right: Jamie aged two



Dishevelled, bleary-eyed and ashen-faced, my two teenage lads, Jamie and Lee, looked a right state.

As they plodded into the kitchen, my husband, Charlie, squared up to them, feigning anger, and barked, 'What time did you two get in last night?'

He was only joking. We were proud as punch of Jamie, 17, and Lee, 16. Planning to join the Army, they'd been at a party celebrating passing their medicals the previous night.

'Have a cuppa,' I smiled, placing the hot mugs down.

'Thanks, Mum,' Jamie nodded. Soon, our youngest, Brandon, 11, was awake, too, and they all chatted noisily about football. Every mealtime was animated in my household. With a gang of lads together, it would be!

Towering over people at 6ft 2in with his powerful, toned body, Jamie was a gentle giant. He and Lee did gardening shifts, going around the local houses. Everyone loved them.

'I'll ground you for staying out,' Charlie joked, breaking up their footie chat.

'Don't be soft, Dad,' Jamie grinned, grabbing some toast. 'The party's still going on. I'm going back to see Nicole.'

Nicole, 17, was a lovely lass. She and Jamie had

been seeing each other on and off, and – judging by the jeans and favourite white shirt he was wearing – they were back on again.

Breakfast over, I went upstairs to strip the beds.

An hour later, I was unloading the washing as Charlie read the papers, when Jamie's mate, Plum, 19, appeared at the window.

'Come quick!' he yelled. 'Jamie's been stabbed!'

What? My whole body froze as soggy white sheets hit the floor. Charlie leapt up and, grabbing the car keys, we raced out. 'Stay here,' Charlie told Lee.

Minutes later, we were bounding up the dingy steps of the block where the party was being held. Several lads were leaving the third floor flat, but Charlie blocked their path.

'You'll not run away from this,' he growled. 'Get back in!'

Eyes wide, they all shuffled back up. Then I saw my boy.

'Jamie!' I screamed. He was propped up against the bathroom door, blood pouring from a gash stretching from his left ear to his Adam's apple. His shirt was drenched with blood.

'Hold on, son,' I begged, as Charlie stared in horror.

Grabbing a towel, I desperately tried to stop the bleeding.

Jamie's face was getting paler



Jamie (left) aged seven, with little brother, Lee

by the second. As I stared into his terrified blue eyes, I could feel his life ebbing away.

'The ambulance is almost here,' I promised. Charlie had called 999 as soon as we arrived.

His eyes held mine. His lips tried to form words. 'Mum...' he mouthed. I wanted to cradle him in my arms, but I was terrified of moving him.

Lee appeared behind me, letting out a strangled cry. He must've followed us on his bike.

'Who did this?' Charlie screamed at the other boys.

'It was Demarco,' one boy stuttered. 'His mate called Jamie's mum a whore and they fought. Demarco went for him.'

His words stung. *Had all this happened because Jamie was defending my honour?*

James Demarco was a notorious local thug. He was on bail for three serious assaults, one involving a knife attack in which the victim lost an eye.

'Hold on, Jamie,' I pleaded, as the paramedics appeared.

Following the ambulance, I pictured Jamie laughing with his dad a few hours before.

'Why?' I cried.

'He'll be all right,' Charlie



Our Jamie was a gentle soul

OUR LOYAL SON

kept repeating.

As we ran into casualty, a doctor pulled us aside.

'Three of Jamie's arteries have been severed,' he said, gently. 'The damage is too severe. There's nothing more we can do for him.'

'No!' I cried, collapsing into Charlie's arms.

'We want to see him,' he choked, placing his other arm around Lee and holding us.

Lying in bed, Jamie's chest moved up and down underneath the sheet.

'He's fine,' I thought. 'Just sleeping.' I touched his hand, my fingers still covered in his blood. But his skin felt cold.

'Wake up, Jamie,' Charlie begged. 'You don't want to miss the footie game next weekend.'

'Yeah, come on, Jamie. It won't be the same without you,' Lee stammered, fighting tears.

The machine next to him pumped rhythmically.

'Fight, Jamie!' I pleaded.

A few hours later, my sister, Diane, 49, brought Brandon in. Brandon worshipped Jamie.

I could still hear him shouting

'Gerroff!' when Jamie had ruffled his hair that morning. We didn't leave Jamie's side for two days. Poor Nicole was devastated. She'd gone home to change and wasn't back at the party when Jamie was stabbed.

I stared into his terrified eyes and felt his life ebb away

Then the doctor took us aside. 'I'm afraid Jamie's brain is dead,' he explained. 'The machine is keeping him alive.'

We nodded, heartbroken. We had no choice but to say goodbye.

Hours later, me, Charlie, Lee and Brandon held Jamie's hands and told him we loved him.

'We'll always remember you, son,' said Charlie.

The machine was turned off and Jamie slipped away. A little piece of me died, too.

Was it my fault? 'Demarco was looking for a fight,' Charlie reassured me.



HATEFUL James Paxton (left) and James Demarco

'He would've attacked Jamie no matter what.'

We were dealt another blow when police told us witnesses to the stabbing were too scared to come forward.

'They'll listen to me,' Charlie raged, as he stomped out of the house. He returned an hour later, his face aged by grief.

'The lads agreed to help,' he said. 'I told them another family would have to suffer this pain if they let Demarco roam free.'

Two days later, James Demarco, 18, was arrested and charged with murder. At least he was off the streets.

At Jamie's funeral, 500 people turned up. The crematorium was filled with red, white and blue flowers – the colours of his team, Glasgow Rangers.

'Jamie had so much to live for,' my brother, Alistair, 43, said. 'We didn't just lose him,

we also lost the man he was destined to become, the children he might have had.'

I couldn't face the two-week trial at the High Court in Edinburgh. But Charlie was adamant he'd see justice done.

Demarco, the coward, chose not to give evidence, and the jury took just half an hour to record a guilty verdict.

Judge Lord Malcolm said it was a 'vicious, unprovoked attack' and gave Demarco life, with a recommendation of a minimum of 15 years. Pitiful, compared to the agonising life sentence Demarco had dealt us.

'They call this justice?' Charlie spat bitterly. 'That despicable creature will still be young when he's free.'

Demarco wasn't sorry. In fact, he was more dangerous than ever. He got hold of a mobile phone in prison and ordered his mate, James Paxton, 23, to attack a lad who, he claimed, was seeing his girlfriend.

Days later, George Stewart, 21, was slashed on his arms, hands and legs with a machete, and had his leg broken, before somehow managing to flee. He was scarred for life and still walks with a limp.

Demarco, who was listening to the attack on his phone, laughed as George screamed. Paxton admitted assaulting George, and Demarco had 45 months added to his sentence.

He screamed 'F***ing pr**k!' at Judge Lord Brailsford.

Emotionally crippled, me and Charlie rarely leave the house now. He couldn't

even go back to his job as a council refuse collector. Losing a child is shattering.

As for the boys, Lee couldn't face joining the Army without his brother, and Brandon is still completely devastated.

People say Jamie was in the wrong place at the wrong time, but he was in a house where he was welcome, among friends.

Demarco was out on bail for three serious assaults. Why did the courts keep freeing him?

If Demarco had been in a cell, Jamie would be alive – and our lives would be so very different.

Mandy Ewart, 38, Edinburgh

As told to Stephanie Blott and Marcello Mega (features@realpeoplemagazine.co.uk)