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A powerful, heartfelt and moving account of his son's murder and his fight for justice by Ralph Bulger

James Bulger was just a few weeks shy of his third birthday when, on 12 February 1993, he wandered away from his mum Denise in a shopping mall in Bootle. Grainy images from a security camera showed him trustingly holding the hand of ten-year-old Jon Venables as they walked away. Venables and his friend Robert Thompson murdered James, in a crime that shocked the world.

In this haunting book, James' father Ralph describes how his world fell apart in the days that followed. In his darkest hours he drank to numb the pain, and the stress tore his marriage apart. He tells how he learned to cope with his grief, but the sorrow of James' death has never left him. He discusses the long legal battle to see justice for his son, as he tried to prevent his killers being released early, and his continuing fight to see them behind bars where they can't hurt anyone else. Above all, he pays tribute to his son, an adorable, cheeky boy whose bright smile brought joy to his family's lives.

My James: The Heartrending Story of James Bulger by His Father Details

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From Reader Review My James: The Heartrending Story of James Bulger by His Father for online ebook

Kylie says

I could not put this book down. My own son was one month old when James was murdered so I remember it well from the media reports at the time, but still I cried over and over again for James while reading. It's still shocking to imagine that he was tortured and abused in such a way at all, let alone by children.

The book is well written and despite the heavy, harrowing storyline I knew I had to keep reading, though at times I had to put it down. It was horrific reading the details of what actually happened to James, the poor little thing, and to imagine the last moments he lived. I felt my emotions on a roller coaster as his father Ralph described the legal battles undertaken over the years. I can feel and understand his anger when reading of the murderers' incarceration - their outings, allowances, luxuries when little James never even got to go to school, and understand the fear he felt at their release.

The essence of who James Bulger actually was shone through in this book. I never knew he was a cheeky, full on, charismatic little boy.

I did wonder about James' mum Denise though, the torture she would have endured not only with losing her son in such a terrible way, but in also losing her husband while he shut down and couldn't open up to her. So many mums have cheeky little kids who run off in the exciting atmosphere of a shopping centre, but you don't expect them to be abducted by other children.

I had my own temporary horror when my son was two - he disappeared from a shopping centre playground and for half an hour while his dad and I ran around looking, I was convinced someone had taken him. When we found him downstairs, happily playing with a staff members' keys I was so relieved. To this day though I wonder how he got down the escalators on his own, didn't anyone see him, why didn't someone stop him, was someone with him? I just thank to God we got him back.

Ralph Bulger would be around my age and it's sad to think of 20 years of torture in his mind. While he will never forget his beautiful boy, I hope he can follow Father Mick's advice and forgive himself . . . after all he has nothing to feel guilty about.

Laura says

One of the hardest books I've ever read. Very difficult to keep going at times especially the part at the mortuary. Would not want to read it again but glad I have read it.

Kirsty Ward says

hard book to read but gives a very personal insight in to the awful tragedy

Judy Croome says

I've read "EVERY MOTHER'S NIGHTMARE: The Killing of James Bulger", by Mark Thomas. I said this in my review of that book: "Written in 1993, soon after the murder trial of the two ten-year old killers of young Jamie Bulger, this record is sensitive, factual, compassionate and objective." It's also told mainly from Denise Bulger's point of view.

When I saw MY JAMES, written by his father Ralph twenty years after the crime, I bought it to gain another perspective of this horrific crime. I expected to feel much as I had when reading Every Mother's Nightmare: a deep compassion for James and his family, and a horrified shock at the nature of the crime.

Well! Reading this book takes one far beyond compassion. With its easy and accessible style, this is more a written "confession" than it is a biography of young James. The depth of emotion that has poured out of Ralph Bulger's soul had a seismic effect on me: I could not read more than a few pages at a time, which is why it took me so long to read it. Even then, sometimes I could hardly see the pages, I was crying so hard at the level of emotional suffering woven into these words.

MY JAMES can be informally divided into four sections: life with the happy toddler James; his abduction, murder and trial; the release of the two killers; and the return to prison of the one killer for Category Four child pornography.

This book is a cry of pain from a father who has stared into the gruesome face of pure evil and, even worse, has been betrayed by the judicial system that should have eradicated that evil without compunction. As Ralph says, "It was always about Thompson and Venables - their treatment, their recovery, their progress, their education and their human rights. I think that, morally speaking, they gave up their human rights the day they battered and murdered my son."

One has to wonder why the rights of the horrifically tortured victim, James Bulger, were and are considered of less importance than the rights of two people who, when they were mere children, consciously and deliberately chose to do evil when they abducted James on that fateful day with the intent to kill. And still they show no remorse for their crime.

Although Ralph and his family's personal and enduring emotional pain forms the very core of this book, the most powerful impact of this story is that it forces one to address one's deepest beliefs about good versus evil, law versus justice, and anger versus forgiveness.

If this book will linger in my soul for ages, how much worse must it be for the family who actually had to experience this? I can only wish them well as they struggle towards some sort of healing, and hope that they find more joy and less sorrow in the coming years.

Joni Duignan says

Reading this book broke my heart. I had to put the book down on a few occasions to gather myself. I was very young when this happened but I remember his name and my mum being even more protective as a

result.

I loved how the first chapters made me really get to know James, made me smile the typical cheeky boy who love his "Ralph" and being the centre of attention. But when he disappeared, I could feel my heart sink in. What those two lads done to poor James makes me cry.

Up to this point I believed everyone was born neutral and learnt by example but after reading this I have to say, maybe some people are just born plain evil. Thompson and Venables are evil, and they are protected for life.

My heart goes out to the Bulger family.

This book was made harder to read for me as when I looked up from the book, my 2 n half year old would be smiling at me, and all could think was "how/why would anyone want to hurt a baby??"

Tough but good read, well done Ralph, your amazing

Alexandra Daw says

Yes, yes, I can hear you saying "Why on earth would you want to read this?" And no, it's not great writing in the literary stakes but that's not why you read this sort of book is it? You read it because you couldn't bear to read about it at the time in the papers because your children were the same age as James and it was too much to bear...even though it didn't happen to you. So, out of a kind of misplaced Catholic guilt, you think the least you can do is be brave enough to read the book twenty years later and try to discover why two ten year olds might do what they did and how a parent survives this kind of tragedy. Ralph Bulger does not pretend to have the answers. He does not apologise for his beliefs. I found it gripping reading on many levels - and learned much about the lack of support for victims of crime and the impenetrable "wisdom" of the justice system. Not to mention the stoicism and tremendous strength of character of the author and his family. If you have ever lost a child - even if only for a few seconds or a few minutes - you cannot help but feel for James' family and wish with all your heart that this had never happened.

Steve Cann says

The tragic circumstances of little James Bulger's brutal murder in Liverpool in 1993 at the hands of two 10-year-old boys sent shockwaves of horror & disbelief around the world &, like many others, I can clearly remember my own personal feelings of utter despair at this despicable crime against a defenceless child. I'll never forget the images of James' shell-shocked parents Ralph & Denise , & how my heart went out to them.

Now, 20 years' later, Ralph has decided to pay tribute to his wonderful son's short life by writing his side of the story of his precious memories of James, the events around his murder, the trial of the killers, & the years of pain & sadness & outrage that followed for Ralph & his family - including the break-up of his marriage to Denise.

This is a very honest & powerful account of one man's struggle to get justice for his son, never giving up as the legal system seemed more concerned about the welfare of James' unrepentant & psychopathic murderers, than in finding real justice for James.

It's a heart-rending & disturbing book that can't fail to stir the reader's emotions, but Ralph has done James proud in documenting his story here so well. He has suffered years of emotional turbulence & daily nightmares as he struggles to come to terms with the barbaric murder of his gentle & innocent son, & it's by no means an easy read sometimes.

All I can say is that James for me is a symbol of beauty, innocence & perfection. He encapsulates everything that I love about life when I see his smiling face, or read about his giggly & energetic character.

Thank you so much Ralph for sharing your story - you are a wonderful human being, just like your son. James will never ever be forgotten.

Chelsea may Simpson xx says

Very heartbreaking read. It's a very interesting book on the murder of a little boy I found it boring at beginning but it get better towards the middle when they tell you in detail about the trail and how it all works. I would recommend people to read this book. I feel for little James family and may the little boy James R.I.P xxx

Sharon says

This was a very hard and emotional read.

I found myself having to put this book down a few times as it was so heartbreaking.

Brilliantly written story by the father of a beautiful little boy James.

James was stoned, sexually assaulted and beaten to death then placed across a railway line.

This was all carried out by two ten year old boys.

To think such young boys were capable of something this horrific is so frightening.

Book Addict Shaun says

I wish the words I am going to write could do this book justice but they won't. It was one of the most difficult books I have ever read, but also one of the most inspiring. And any difficulties I had reading this or however upset it made me, that doesn't come close to how it must have felt to Ralph to have to relive the past 20 years all over again for this book. I hope it helped him writing this book.

I was two months younger than James Bulger when he was murdered and my mum used to take me shopping to the very same centre where he was taken from. His resting place is also in the same cemetery as my grandad and so even though I am too young to remember the case, I have grown up hearing about it and I always remember seeing this big beautiful resting place and being shocked that it was for a boy who would be the same age as me.

This book is not an easy read. The chapters surrounding the disappearance and subsequent discovery of James were especially hard to read and at times I had to put the book down because I was actually crying, it is a horrific story and it is impossible to imagine how Ralph, Denise and their family and friends felt at that

time. Reading about the moment when Ralph found out his son was dead was just awful. It is incomprehensible how two children could do this to another child. I would recommend not reading this book before bed as I struggled to sleep with all the thoughts and images in my mind. I know people have theories that perhaps it was their upbringing that made them kill, or the fact that they watched films such as Child's Play 3 but I firmly believe that Thompson and Venables were born evil. There are many people with bad upbringings who go on to live fantastic lives, and there are people from loving homes who go on to become evil people. These two vile individuals were born evil. Reading about what they did was just horrific.

Ralph speaks with searing honesty in this book along with his brother Jimmy who had to identify James's body. How awful that must be for somebody to have to do. Thompson and Venables didn't just kill somebody, they destroyed so many lives. Ralph, Denise, their family, and also the people that saw James with Thompson and Venables but did nothing about it. And why would they have done? Ralph himself assumed that James was safe when he saw him on the CCTV with two older boys. Nobody could have guessed what was to happen.

But this book does have positive moments as well. Telling how Ralph and Denise have tried to move forward with their life but never ever forgetting their son, or daughter who they also lost. James Bulger is a child who will never be forgotten, by his parents and family or by anybody who was affected by the story at the time or anyone who has read about it since. Ralph speaks about James, and his other children with such love and it makes you wonder just what kind of life this happy and loving child could have had. It certainly makes me evaluate my own life as I haven't really achieved what I know I could achieve and at the same age as James would be now I hate to think of myself as not fulfilling my potential when he never had the chance.

Ralph speaks about how he blames himself and how at times he struggles to move on with his life. I really hope this book helps him to do that. James sounded like such a fantastic little boy and for the three years he was alive he gave his mum and dad some amazing memories which Ralph shares with us in this book. It's hard to imagine a God in the world we live in but hopefully Ralph will one day be reunited with his son and find the peace and happiness that he deserves. Himself and Denise are remarkable people who continue to fight for justice. The book was a harrowing and difficult read but one that I wholeheartedly recommend to everybody.

Siti Ramli says

This book is beautifully written by the father of a two year old boy, James who was stoned, sexually assaulted and beaten to death before being placed across a railway line by ten year old boys. The chapters surrounding the disappearance and discovery of James were hard to read after all he would be the same age as me today and many times, I have to put the book down and composed myself so it was impossible to imagine how the parents felt at that time. Having studied law, I was taken aback on how the justice system has failed to provide justice to Baby James having learnt that they were only sentenced to 8 years in detention (Child offenders). The law had continually let James down, and his murder hardly ever came into the equation any more. It was always about Thompson and Venables- their education, their recovery and their human rights. The fact that the boys were given new identity to start afresh to protect them from being killed/harassed by the public sets dangerous precedent for other criminal cases. Imagine them walking around the city freely and the danger the law has exposed our children with. Above all, this book has made me realize that a man, a

father, could feel just as devastated as a mother. Times are changing as previously in times of mourning, our society has always focused on a mother's grief and her loss while dad stayed in the background, but this is no longer the case. I have learnt that a father's love is just as deep and binding as mother's. It has been 20 years since the brutal murder but the battle to bring justice by the father is still ongoing and Ralph mentioned that there is not a day goes by when he didn't think of James. As far as we were concerned, you don't take tablets for grief. You just have to find a way to get over it (Quote Ralph).

Katie says

This book is absolutely heartwrenching and you'll feel like a different person after reading it. The detail is heartbreakingly honest and the injustice so despicable that if you have any illusions of fairness in the justice system, you won't after this.

So often we hear from the mothers who have been victimised by crimes against their child. It was very insightful to hear from little James Bulger's father, Ralph and his endless fight for justice. This is a crime that happened when I was too little to remember (I was older than James, younger than his 10 year old killers) but it's the kind of crime you don't grow up without hearing about. I really enjoyed Ralph's beautiful, joyous memories of his little boy and learning about the gorgeous personality of James during his short life. He brought so much joy to his family and I'm so glad that they have those memories of him.

Everything from there on is a very difficult, emotional read and details are not spared. I was particularly emotional when reading about how relieved James' parents were when they saw the now infamous CCTV footage of him being lead away by 2 10 year old boys. That footage gave them hope and a sense of relief because he was with other children they couldn't imagine children harming their little boy. Nobody could. Of course that hope was soon to be shattered.

The details of what happened to James are so graphic that I would warn anybody reading to beware. I didn't know exactly what had happened, how prolonged it was and other details that I don't want to think about, let alone write about. But I understand why those details are in the book. They are juxtaposed with the easy ride that his killers were given, their 'detention' giving them a better life than they ever could have hoped for at home, their manipulation of the system, complete indifference even with age as to what they had done and the lack of any kind of punishment whatsoever. The focus on rehabilitation overrode everything and from what we learned later, they have not been rehabilitated. Being trained by specialists to lie about their new identities made them even more adept liars and parole boards have fallen for it over and over again.

There is a distinct sense that the government also had an interest in proving to the world that their rehabilitation experiment on these kids worked and thus criminal offences and endless parole breaches that they committed as adults were completely ignored and the very worst offenses that couldn't be ignored were deliberately covered up from the public and if it weren't for the media, the world and James' family would never know about it.

Ralph is still, understandably, tormented and forever changed by this crime and more than anything I wish him peace. While I know that this is almost always the case, it's heartbreaking to read his experience of the killers being prioritised over the victims. Victims of crime are often not provided with the mental health resources that the offenders are. This leads to addiction, relationship breakdowns and younger family members suffering trauma as a direct result of their family's suffering. This can continue for generations. They usually end up financially ruined and don't get a real voice in sentencing or parole hearings over the

crime that victimised them. Ralph and his family suffered all of this immensely and the government and judicial system's insistence that these killers serve as little detention as possible has led to him being dragged back into the nightmare as he constantly battles for them to be kept away from the community, even as reoffending adults. Court case after court case, parole hearings and inquiries are so physically and emotionally draining and financially taxing and James' family continually having to fight for justice endlessly denies them the peace that they would have if these criminals simply were locked up for life, unable to harm another child again. It's undeniable that they have been denied justice in a system that forgets the victims.

sue says

I wasn't sure what to think when I started to read this. I know many have said to me that it's a book I should read.

everyone remembers the headline news of this tragic story. I thought I knew, two young lads abducting a toddler and leaving him dead. I just couldn't comprehend it, too horrific for words. Like the entire nation I watched, I read, I followed the updates.

Reading James' father's story has opened my eyes, in a bad way. I'd known of how flawed our judicial system was first hand and how it protects the lawbreaker and not the victim. What I didn't realise until reading this book, was to what a huge extent it goes to with hardly any thought to the victim.

Apart from this, what stood out to me was the dad's raw emotions throughout his writing this book. The harm and domino effect it has had on this man, ALL of the family. But I have to say the brother that went to identify little James' body, he was a hero, a loving self-sacrificing brother trying to protect. In turn, this had a detrimental effect on him as well as his wife and family.

What came to the fore time and time again for me was, THEY NEEDED SUPPORT, proper emotional support to help them with this terrible crime and later, the horrendous way in which James died. I must say, this was hidden from the public very well.

This man has been suffering far too long. A parent never forgets the death of a child, but this is not just a death, it's not even a murder, it's also abuse physical and sexual to a little innocent toddler by kids, two boys of 10 years old. That has to be so difficult to come to terms with. I can't imagine for one moment what it feels like.

It's still ongoing for James' dad like it was yesterday. He had to forgive himself. There was nothing else he could have done differently. James would have wanted him to move on.

Another thing I get from reading this is, what a nice man he is. He doesn't deserve to suffer anymore, James is at rest and he needs to be too.

Victoria says

It felt right to read this book now, if it could ever be right to read a book about a 2-year-old who has been murdered in such a brutal fashion. Just 8 days ago one of James's killers was sent to jail for the second time.

for possession of child pornography

This was not an easy read. The pain Ralph felt and still feels spills across the page. His pain at losing his son, his hatred of the 2 men who killed his son and his betrayal at the hands of the justice system that allowed the boys such a cushy life and then released them under new identities. He is completely honest about all of it. How his marriage fell apart and he turned to drink to try and cope with losing his son. He doesn't sugar coat and admits he hated Thompson and Venables and wished they were dead. But it's honest for that. I hope Ralph is able to find some peace

Diane says

Many of us remember the gruesome murder of 2-year old James Bulger ... inflicted by two 10-year-old boys. His murder devastated not only his parents, but his extended family. James' father has written this book for many reasons, but especially to share with all of us just what a special little boy James was, and how much he meant to him.

Ralph also talks about the numerous legal struggles that he, and other family members, have endured as they desperately tried to see justice done for their little boy. Needless to say, this crime rocked the people of England, and they rallied behind the Bulgers. Unfortunately, I don't believe the same can be said for the justice system.

I read a lot of true crime, but this one ... it really, really sickened me. As a parent, I can't even begin to imagine what the Bulgers went through. Ralph pours out his heart in this book, and in doing so, has honoured precious little James.

4 Stars = It touched my heart, and/or gave me much food for thought.
