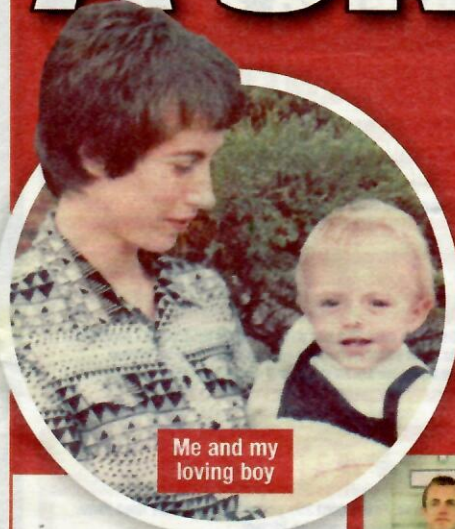
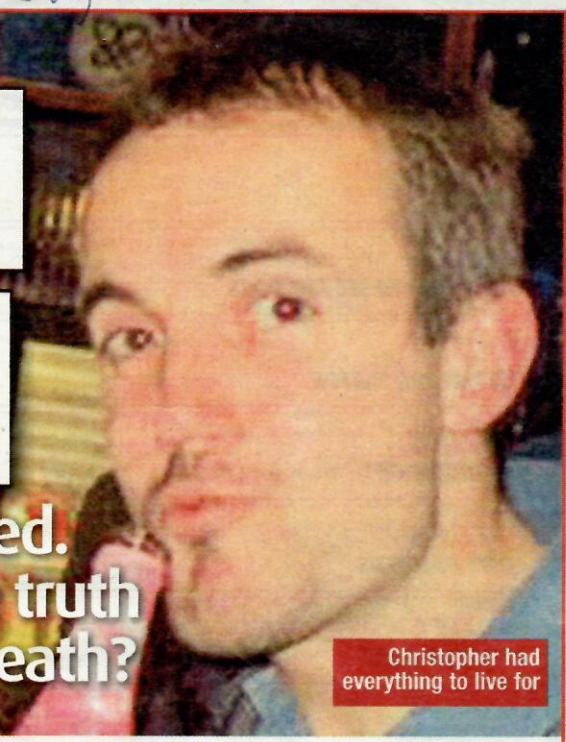


1 July 2010

# A BROKEN MAN



Me and my loving boy



Christopher had everything to live for

**S**itting on the settee, I could feel my cheeks getting redder and redder by the minute. 'Mum, I lost my virginity this weekend,' my 20-year-old son Christopher had just told me.

'Oh,' I managed, shocked. Christopher and I had always been close, but he'd never talked to me about sex before.

'I thought it would be great,' he continued. 'But to be honest, Mum, it was rubbish.'

At that, I was speechless. No one likes to think of their child getting intimate. So I was relieved when Christopher started talking instead about his engineering course at university.

It had been two years since he'd left home. I missed him, but he phoned and e-mailed most days.

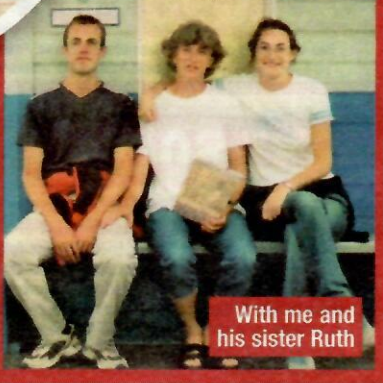
'I'll admit, I did worry about him, but with good reason. You see, when Christopher was seven, he had a terrible accident.

He fell out of a tree and fractured his skull, then spent the next five days in a coma. A nurse had mentioned his pituitary gland, which controls growth, might have been damaged. So for years I'd fretted about my son's growth being stunted.

But he'd blossomed into a strapping 6ft 3in lad who, I now realised, was a hit with the ladies!

A couple of years passed and he finished his degree. Afterwards he found a lovely girlfriend, Louise, and they seemed so happy.

But four years later, they split



With me and his sister Ruth

up. Christopher didn't say why, and I knew better than to pry.

Then one night, he turned up at our house unexpectedly and began crying. 'Mum,' he said, 'I tried to kill myself a few days ago.'

He wouldn't tell me why he'd tried to commit suicide so I said to him: 'You've got to come home. You need your family's support.'

He moved back in with me, his dad John and his sisters. He also had counselling.

After six months, he insisted he was better and moved to Skipton in North Yorkshire. He had friends up there, and my sister Caroline lived nearby too.

'It's the fresh start I need,' he said.

And over the next years, Christopher seemed really happy. He hadn't had a girlfriend since Louise, but had lots of mates and a good job at a building society.

Then a month before he turned 32, I opened my front door to a police officer. 'Are you Christopher Lane's mother?' she asked.

'Yes,' I said. 'Why?'

'I'm so sorry,' she replied. 'I'm afraid he's taken his own life.'

The shock had stupid words

spilling from my mouth... 'We only talked on the phone last night,' I stammered. 'He said he was going to watch an Al Pacino DVD...'

The officer explained that Christopher had sent his boss an e-mail saying he was going to kill himself, but placed a time delay on it so it arrived after his death.

My husband John returned from work, and after breaking the news to the girls, we headed to Skipton. Seeing Christopher in the mortuary was heartbreaking.

'Why, son?' I thought. It didn't make sense. And there was no suicide note. No explanations.

But later, as I gathered some of Christopher's belongings together at his house, I came across a box containing old love letters he and Louise had written to each other.

*'I'm sorry my 'little man' won't do what I want, Christopher had said in one. Reading on, it became clear what he meant.*

He'd been struggling to get an erection for their entire relationship.

My heart thumped. *Was this why my son had killed himself?*

I had to find out. That night, I rang Louise.

'He couldn't have sex the four years we were together,' she admitted. 'He got so depressed. He said he didn't feel like a man any more.'

I wept when I got off the phone.

To the outside world, my son had been a confident, sexy man. But in reality, unable to get an erection,

he'd felt like an utter failure.

It appeared he'd only had sex once, when he'd lost his virginity.

I told my sister Caroline about it and she started looking on the internet. Eventually she said: 'Christopher's impotence might have been linked to the head injury he sustained when he was little.'

Apparently in some cases, damage to the pituitary gland after a head injury could cause a hormone imbalance that might lead to impotence.

But it was easy to treat with hormone medication such as testosterone patches or injections.

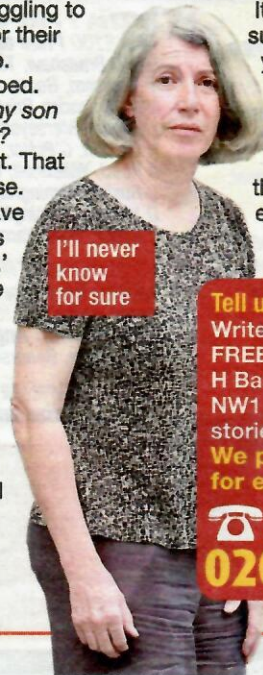
Christopher's medical records had no mention of erectile dysfunction. But they did reveal he had been suffering from depression since his late teens.

Days before Christopher's cremation, I begged the authorities to test his body for pituitary problems, but they refused.

It means I'll never know for sure if that fall when he was young led to Christopher's inability to have sex.

My handsome, clever son had so much to live for. It's a terribly tragedy that he didn't feel man enough for this world.

**JOANNA LANE, 62, COULSDON, SURREY**



I'll never know for sure

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As told to Lucy Laing and Dawn Smith. Photos: Gary Roberts. Louise is a false name