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World exclusive: John Hogan breaks silence about night he killed his son and nearly ended life of young daughter after row with wife

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John Hogan (Pic:SM)

It was a moment of unbelievable madness – a father throws his son from a fourth-floor balcony at their holiday hotel in Crete, then grabs his daughter in his arms and jumps.

Today John Hogan breaks his silence to speak for the first time about the night he killed six-year-old Liam and nearly ended the life of Mia, two, after a row with wife Natasha.

In a world exclusive interview, the 34-year-old has revealed how he PRAYS to his children for forgiveness, and kisses the picture of the son he killed.

Hogan, who is being held in a secure psychiatric unit in Greece, sobs:

“Every night as I say my prayers I hold the two pictures of my two children.

“I say an Our Father for Liam and a Hail Mary for Mia. I ask for Natasha’s forgiveness and then ultimately God’s forgiveness.

“Then I kiss my children and ask for their forgiveness.”

But Hogan understands that some people will never forgive his actions – and admits that he is “fearful” of returning to England when he is finally released.

At his trial in January, he was found not guilty of murder on the grounds that, as his doctor put it, he was suffering “an earthquake of insanity”. He can return to Britain only when doctors decide to release him.

The former tiler insists that he is not evil, blaming his action on a moment of madness.

“I want people to understand that while some might think of me as evil, I was psychologically ill,” he says. “Please believe me, those five to 10 seconds of insanity were not John Hogan. I’ve pushed my body and mind to try to find those seconds of madness. I could not and still cannot believe I could ever hurt my two innocent babies.”

But whatever Hogan believes, Liam is dead, killed from head injuries sustained in the fall. His now ex-wife Natasha, who has remarried, denies him any contact with Mia.

And that is what he has to live with.

Hogan, slightly chubby, recounts his story in little more than a whisper. He walks with a crutch and pronounced limp – his leg may never fully recover from a fracture sustained in the fall from Petra Mare hotel in Ierapetra on August 15, 2006.

Hogan and Natasha had flown to Greece for a “make or break” holiday following problems in their marriage. The couple had been together for more than 10 years, but the relationship had been volatile. Hogan had a history of anxiety, made worse by tragedies in his family.

His father, who had multiple sclerosis, died at 55. Four months later Hogan’s younger brother Stephen committed suicide. Soon afterwards his other brother Paul jumped of Clifton suspension bridge in Bristol after burning down his own home and his mother’s.

Before they went on holiday John already suspected Natasha had become involved with an old school friend, which she denied.

But Hogan recalls that August day as starting happily. “We had breakfast as a family, set up camp by the pool, and then I played endless games with my children,” he says.

“I remember me and Liam going fishing in the sea and when we caught one he had to run back and show his mum and sister. He was so proud. We were an ordinary family enjoying a holiday.” But that evening, back at the hotel, Hogan and Natasha began to argue.

Sobbing, he says: “We were talking about divorce... splitting up and Natasha taking the children and going back to live with her mum.”

The argument escalated as Natasha insisted that she was intending to leave Hogan and take the children.

“Before we went away she didn’t say she wanted a divorce. She said she just wanted time away from me.

“But then, we’d talked on the fourth night of the holiday. I said, ‘Are you still taking the children to your mum’s?’

“She said, ‘Yes’.

“We had an argument on the balcony because I said to Liam, ‘Liam, your mum wants a divorce. It means we are going to be split up’.

“I shouldn’t have brought Liam into it. I was telling him we’re splitting up and he was crying.

“I said, ‘What have I done wrong?’ She said to me, ‘John you have done absolutely nothing wrong’.

“I said, ‘So why is this happening?’

“And then Natasha got up and walked into the bedroom to start packing.

“I saw my wife walking away from Mia, walking away from me, leaving me with the two children in my arms.

“And I said to her, ‘So you think my family is a family of death’.

She’d said that to me a month previously.”

At this point, Hogan insists that his memory of events begins to cloud over.

“After that my mind is blank... my wife is walking away into the bedroom. She is nowhere near the balcony.”

Hogan is adamant he has no recollection of the next horrifying moments. He insists that his next memory is waking under police guard. “And then the rest... I wake up in the hospital with my mum by my bedside and a policeman there. And I said, ‘Mum, what’s happened? What’s happened to Liam?’

“She said to me, ‘Liam’s dead, John’.

He sobs as he continues: “I said, ‘What about Mia?’

“She said, ‘Mia’s with her mum and with her nanny’.

“I said, ‘What happened?’

“And then my mum told me I tried to commit suicide by jumping with my two children from the fourth-floor balcony.

“And that’s how I knew my son was dead.”

Hogan recalls that as the truth of his actions sunk in he spent six months in a suicidal state, in the belief that he would be reunited with Liam in heaven.

But he says he has the hope of being reunited with Mia to keep him going. “I have a daughter to live for,” he says.

He is even writing a book for her, to explain “the truth”.

"It will go through our life as a family, ups and downs. I will go on to try to explain August 15, 2006, as in five to 10 insane seconds she lost the most important males in her life, gone just like that.

"She may not care but if she does it will be there for her to see and judge if she wants."

And he hasn't given up on his hope that one day he might see his daughter again. "Of course, my biggest and wildest dream will be

Mia wanting to meet her Daddy. Even just for answers. This may be 20 years away but I live in hope."

He also describes how he believes Liam's spirit was with him during the trial, and that his dead son has forgiven him.

"I believe I felt my son Liam's presence by my side in court in Crete," he says. "I should have been fearful, but I had a calmness about me, and I felt Liam by my side, soothing me and reassuring me.

"I felt he was there for me, saying, 'Dad, I forgive you'.

"He knows that I could never knowingly do what I did with a sane mind."

And he attaches no blame to Natasha, who remains bitter that he escaped jail, and claims "he gave the performance of his life" in court.

"I don't want any reflection on to my ex-wife," he says. "If I could not psychologically handle what she was saying, the problem was mine.

"She played no part in me jumping. I take full responsibility. I know and don't expect I will get sympathy. But maybe people will understand the fine line between rational and irrational."

Despite everything, Hogan still insists that he was a good father to Liam and Mia.

"I know that for all my children's lives with me they could have not received more love, care and attention from me or Natasha.

"I will always be remembered for the five to 10 seconds of insanity in which everything I lived for went, when uncontrollably I either jumped or threw us off the fourth-floor balcony."

Hogan also speaks of his brothers' suicides, saying they blighted his life. He says he "hated" Stephen for killing himself, three months after their father's death. Then his brother Paul – a "dream child" excelling at school and winning medals for running also took his own life, setting fire to his own home and his mother's, before jumping to his death.

"You see, I've lived through two suicides," Hogan recounts, in a whisper.

At the psychiatric hospital in Athens where Hogan is being held he spends his days reading books, drinking iced coffee and chain-smoking Greek cigarettes. He socialises with other patients at the hospital's internet cafe and has learnt to speak some Greek.

Every day he has some form of therapy and physiotherapy. His mental condition is closely monitored and he takes anti-psychotic, anti-depressant and mood stabilising medication.

For now, he is not allowed to leave the hospital without special permission from doctors.

He recently had a hearing asking for his release and is upset that his request was turned down.

He says: "The court refused to let me go free. The prosecutor said I should go free but the judges said 'No'. I was expecting 'No' but it still hurt."

Hogan still dreams of freedom – and has begun planning a future when he finally goes free, as a volunteer visiting psychiatric patients and other inmates.

"In the prison and hospital I've seen people who've never had one visitor. I believe I owe a debt to society.

"On August 15, 2006, I lost the only woman I have ever loved, my son who I will only see again when God decides it is time and my beautiful baby Mia who I pray one day will want to know her real father.

"Not a day goes by when I don't think of my six years and two-and-a-half months as Liam's dad and two years and three-and-a-half months as Mia's dad – the happiest I've ever been in life.

"I already have a life sentence with Liam. I took his life away.

Every day it will be with me... every single day. One day I might get peace. But it will still be with me."

- John Hogan received no payment for this article.

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