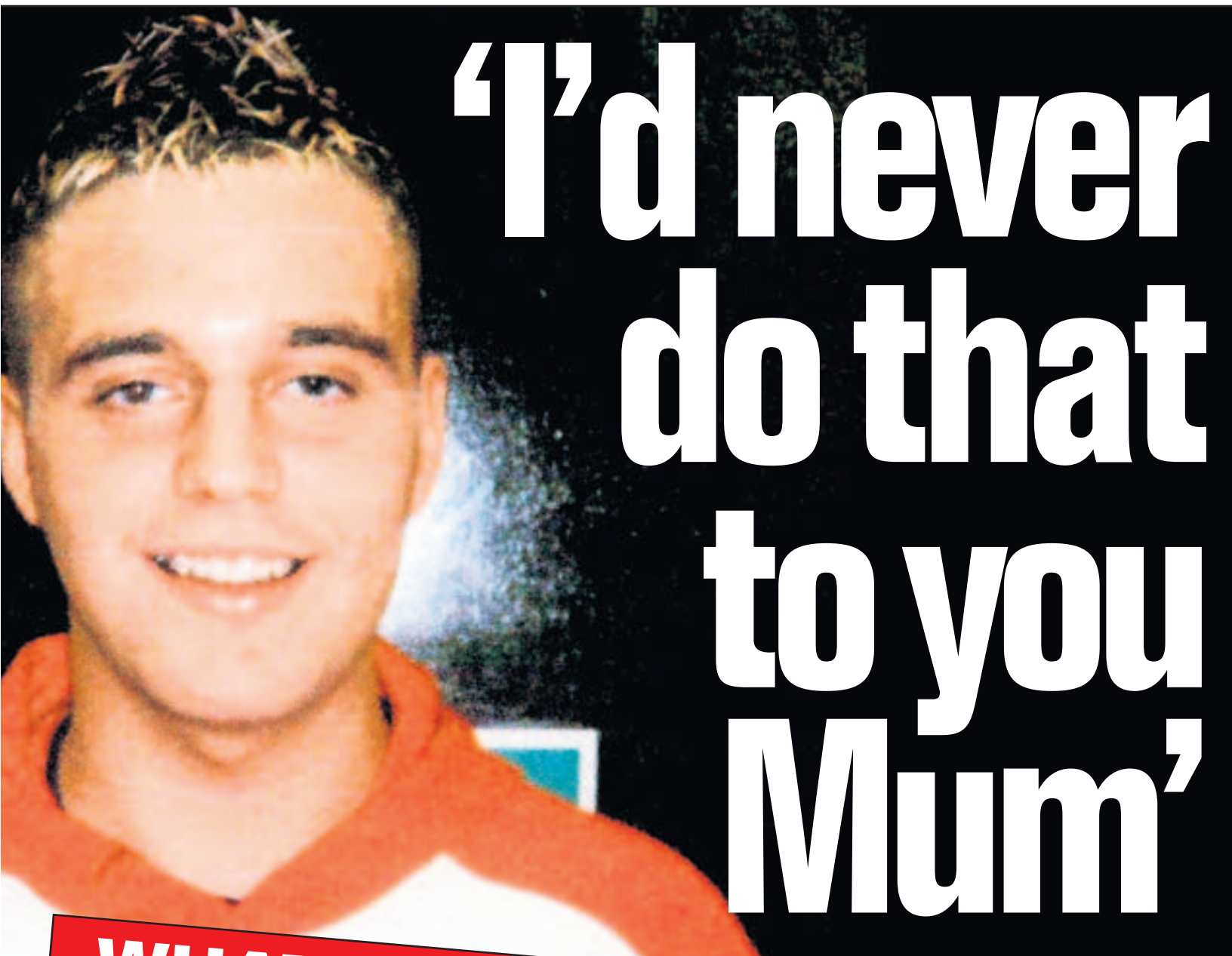


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WHAT SUICIDE SON THOMAS PROMISED HIS MOTHER

suicide myself. If it wasn't for my family, I'd be with Thomas now.
 Trying to make sense of it is tough. He'd had a rough time, but we were always there for him. We would have supported him through anything.
 He was just 20 years old. He was meant to one day settle down with a nice girl, have kids, a family...
 At first I thought it must be drugs, but there were no drugs in his system. Now me and Peter think that it was a number of things, the bullying, his scar. All rolled together made him feel like he couldn't cope.
 And I do think he was somehow influenced by Dale and David's deaths.



FAMILY OUTING: Thomas with, l-r, Melanie, Nathan, Darren and Gareth



HAPPY: Aged 11

As the year went by we tried to piece our family back together, but every time I heard about a new suicide I just went to pieces.

One followed after the other. Zachery Barnes, 17. Liam Clarke, 20. Gareth Morgan, 27. And now Natasha Randall, just 17. All young people with so much to look forward to in life.

When I read that Bridgend is the suicide capital of the country I just can't understand it.

There has been a whole spate of attempted suicides in the area as well, they all seem to be copying each other.

There's been some speculation that these websites are to blame, but I don't think so. Not in Thomas's case.

But I do think mothers should be careful. You can never tell what they are doing on the internet, what they are looking at, who they are talking to.

I have no clue what can be done to stop it. I have no clue why it is even happening, but I have to send the message out, so Thomas' death won't have been in vain.

Suicide is painful for everybody involved. If any young person out there is considering it, don't do it. Seek help.

Don't break your mum's heart like mine has been broken.

AS TOLD TO SHERYL PLANT

ing again and after messing and with his friends one night he left with a three-inch cut on face.
 e could tell it upset him. He was proud of how he looked and I'd watch him rubbing the scar.
 I suspected he was still getting sad but he said he was thinking of going to college and we had real hopes for his future.

But then, on January 5, 2007 Dale was found hanged in a warehouse. Thomas wasn't close to him but he did know him. It shook us all. He wanted to attend the funeral but couldn't make it in the end.
 But when Thomas' friend David Dilling committed suicide in the

same way just a month later he was devastated. He insisted he'd go to the funeral and even bought a new suit.

That weekend he went out with some mates. I thought nothing of it... he was a grown-up and could look after himself.

But on the Sunday morning the police arrived at the doorstep. At first I thought Thomas was in some kind of trouble but when I looked at their faces I knew it was terrible news.

"We're ever so sorry," they began. I started crying... it was like the wind had been knocked out of me. Thomas had hanged himself from a tree in a nearby woodland, just two days before David's funeral.

His promise echoed in my head. How could he say all those things to me? How could he promise me he wouldn't hurt himself and then do this?

The police took us to the morgue to identify his body and the whole way there I tried to convince myself that it

wasn't my son, that he'd had his wallet stolen. That it was some other unfortunate boy who had Thomas' wallet in his pocket.

Worried I would collapse, Peter offered to identify the body. As I waited outside I kept thinking, "It can't be him, it can't be him. He wouldn't do this to his family."

But Peter came out, nodded and my heart sank. I had to see him.

I felt numb as I looked at my beautiful boy lying there. I gave him a kiss and gasped as I felt his cold cheek against my lips.

Gently I started to rub his hands. "We'll have to get you warmed up," I said. It gave me so much

comfort, to still be protecting and caring for him.

When we returned home, the despair really kicked in. I locked myself in the bathroom and sobbed for hours.

We held his funeral a few days later. I wrote him a letter telling him how much I loved him and missed him and that I hoped one day we would be together again. That he would come down and take me away from all of this.

I put it in his coffin so it would always be with him.

Even after everything that has happened I have thought about



DESPAIR: Mum Melanie