

A SLEEP-OVER NIGHTMARE 5 GRIM KILLINGS RETRACED

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The four kids were tucked away in bed.

Yolanda Bellamy's two sons Nathan Burns Jr., 5, and Nathan Burns III, 3, were having a sleep-over of sorts with their cousins Shafontah Bellamy, 3, and Delvontay Bellamy, 5.

It had been a rough few days for Bellamy, 24. The day before, Aug. 11, she had dumped her off-again, on-again boyfriend **Reco Jones**, 22. He did not take it well. They had been arguing back and forth all day.

At around 3 a.m. there was a knock on her door. It was Jones. The yelling began again.

Before sunrise that Wednesday morning of Aug. 13, Bellamy and the four children would be dead, their bodies littered about the northwest Detroit house.

Jones is charged with murdering all five people. Today he will have his preliminary examination in 36th District Court in Detroit.

The relationship of Jones and Bellamy had been one of turmoil, beginning with a sweet month of courtship, interrupted by Jones' six months in jail, and ending with a feud that simmered for two months.

After the killings, Jones attempted a frantic cover-up, according to police. He was arrested and faced a lengthy interrogation.

During a break in questioning, Jones dived headfirst out of a fifth-floor window of police headquarters. Police say they had nothing to do with the jump and Jones' attorney John McWilliams declined comment. It is unclear if Jones was contemplating escape or suicide.

But it is the brutality of the killings -- what happened to the children -- that haunts even the most stoic homicide investigators.

"It was one of the most upsetting scenes I've been to," said Cmdr. Gerald Stewart of the major crimes division for the Detroit Police Department who has seen his share of carnage. "The kids made it hard."

The last straw?

Hours before the killings, Jones was paged by Bellamy while in line with his girlfriend at Kmart. She dropped him at home at about 10 p.m. At about 11 p.m., Jones called.

" 'Don't come over. Yolanda has threatened to come over with other people.' That's what he said. He didn't want me to get hurt," she said, asking her name not be used.

At about 11:30 p.m., Bellamy showed up at Jones' house, according to police reports. Jones' mother, Janet Jones, 40, told Bellamy to leave.

Bellamy began yelling, saying she wanted CDs, tapes, a phone, radio, battery, and \$20 that Jones owed her. Janet Jones phoned police. Bellamy left.

Jones, who had been hiding in the basement, fell asleep. Janet Jones sat up until 4 a.m., when she drifted to sleep. When she woke at 8 a.m., her son and her car were gone.

Quintuple homicide

The killer entered the Bellamy home at about 3 a.m. on Aug. 13. The door was opened for him. What follows is an account of what happened, according to investigators and medical examiner reports.

Bellamy was struck hard on her forehead and then punched in the lip. The killer put her in a headlock and rapidly stabbed her eight times on the right side of her head. The wounds were not deep enough to cause life-threatening damage. She fell to the floor.

Then three deep cuts were made in her neck. Her carotid arteries, which supply blood to her head, and her jugular vein, which returns blood to her heart, were severed. The jugular vein is deep within the neck. To cut it takes great force.

She died quickly.

The killer at some point decided to stab the children. Delvontay may have been first. The 32-pound boy was put in a headlock and quickly stabbed seven times. Delvontay fell to the floor. He was stabbed 15 more times, all around the face and neck. His left carotid artery and jugular vein were severed.

The other three children were similarly killed. When it was over, blood was smeared all over the house. Bellamy died with her arm on her eldest son, Nathan Jr.

The four children had their eyes wide open, like they were anticipating something -- or someone -- they knew and liked.

Cover-up attempt

Maliaka Martin said Jones showed up at her house that morning between 6 and 6:30. Martin was one of Jones' girlfriends. They had been dating occasionally for three years, at one point living together.

Jones was carrying a pair of bloody white gym shoes, Martin said. He told her he had killed Bellamy. He showered and changed clothes. He put his soiled clothes in a garbage bag and threw it into the trunk of his car.

According to Martin, Jones told her that he stabbed Bellamy. She screamed, he said, waking up the children. Then he began stabbing the kids. "I had to," he said.

They drove to the house of Tamika Terrell, a friend of Jones. Terrell said Jones left the clothes at her house. He told her he "eliminated" Bellamy by cutting her up.

The three drove back to Bellamy's house and, at Jones' request, Terrell wiped the blood off the front door. When Terrell got home, she burned the garbage bag with Jones' soiled clothes in a trash can.

Arrest and questioning

Later that day, Jones got a haircut from his barber and girlfriend Jocelyn White. The police came by his house looking for him. His mother paged him. Before turning himself in, he called another girlfriend.

"It seemed like he didn't know what was going on," said the girlfriend, who asked not to be named.

Police took him to a cramped room of the fifth-floor homicide department downtown.

Jones was well-spoken but emotional, the investigators said. He cried. He didn't want to go to prison because the other inmates would kill him if they found out he was charged with killing children. The death of the children produced strong reaction in Jones.

"I would never have cut the kids up like that," he told investigators.

They hadn't told anyone that the victims had been stabbed -- only that there had been a "fatal assault."

At one point, Jones' demeanor changed. His soft voice gave way to a sterner one; his meek posture was replaced by a thrust-out chest. He began to mock Bellamy and complain that she never respected him.

Jones said he was at Bellamy's house at the time of the killings. But he said he did not commit them. Finally he asked: "You think someone can go into a frenzy, do something, and snap out of it?"

Then he curled up on the table and fell asleep.

Escape or suicide

The window of the interrogation room was covered with a metal grate secured by 15 thick bolts. During the second day of questioning, Jones asked for a moment alone. The investigators obliged.

A minute later, he had removed the grate. Just as police returned, he dove out the window, falling five stories onto the smooth concrete sidewalk below. He landed with a thud audible to the waitress at the Greek restaurant across the street.

Investigators said Jones did not have enough time to undo all the bolts. Someone, they said, must have undone some of the bolts earlier. Two years earlier, a woman being questioned in a murder made the same leap, killing herself.

Police rushed to Jones, who was alive on the sidewalk. He had managed to break his fall with his right arm. The arm was a gnarled mess of blood, muscle and bone. He kept muttering, "My arm, my arm."

He was rushed to Detroit Receiving Hospital where two surgeries were performed on his arm and abdominal region. He was in critical condition for more than a week. Police believe it was an escape attempt. Otherwise, why break the fall?

Six days after his fall, he was arraigned for the killings in his hospital bed.

Epilogue: Living with loss

Ericka Bellamy, 22, has lost much of the joy in her life. Her sister and best friend Yolanda and her two children Shafontah and Delvontay were taken in one violent night.

"They were the best kids in the world," she said.

Delvontay had turned 5 just a month earlier and was weeks from beginning school. Bellamy recently got two large tattoos with the names of all five victims on both her arms.

The public grieved with her, sending five bags of stuffed animals, dozens of floral arrangements, and many gilded crucifixes. The service at Joy Rd. Missionary Baptist Church was standing room only. But after all this, when Bellamy returned home, she was alone.

"It's unreal," she said. "It still seems like a bad dream."

Staff writer Raja Mishra can be reached at 1-313-222-6487.

The people

The people involved in this case:

Reco Jones, 22. Charged with five counts of first-degree murder.

Yolanda Bellamy, 24. Victim. Off-and-on girlfriend of Jones.

Nathan Burns Jr., 5. Victim. Yolanda Bellamy's son.

Nathan Burns III, 3. Victim. Yolanda Bellamy's son.

Ericka Bellamy, 22. Yolanda Bellamy's sister.

Delvontay Bellamy, 5. Victim. Ericka Bellamy's son.

Shafontah Bellamy, 3. Victim. Ericka Bellamy's daughter.

Others:

Maliaka Martin. Jones' on-and-off girlfriend for three years. Said she was with him after the killings.

Tamika Terrell. Jones' friend. Said she was with him after killings.

Girlfriend (name withheld). Dated Jones for the two months before the killings.

Janet Jones. Jones' mother.

To our readers

The headline over a box on page 8A of Wednesday's Free Press listing the people involved in the **Reco Jones** story was insensitive and offensive. It referred to the murdered children as part of a cast of characters. They were victims of a horrible crime and should have been identified as such. We regret the error and the fact that it diverted attention away from the important issue of domestic violence.

-- Robert G. McGruder, executive editor.

Caption: Photo PAULINE LUBENS/Detroit Free Press

A tattoo on Ericka Bellamy's arm lists the names of her two children who died Aug. 13 in a slaying in northwest Detroit. Bellamy also lost her sister and her sister's two children in the attack. "It still seems like a bad dream."

The children killed last month, from left: Shafontah Bellamy, 3; Delvontay Bellamy, 5; Nathan Burns Jr., 5, and Nathan Burns III, 3.

Memo: SECOND OF TWO PARTS; SIDEBAR ATTACHED; cx

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