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Martin Amis said becoming a grandfather was 'so uncool'...but he's now a doting 'Grandpops' says his lovechild daughter

By [CLAUDIA JOSEPH](#) and [ELIZABETH SANDERSON](#)
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Perhaps it was inevitable that Martin Amis would make a joke of it. He is a man who has made a career out of pithy one-liners and deliberately provocative points of view.

But his latest preoccupation is not sex or Islam but something far more prosaic. It is the matter of growing old.

Amis turned 60 last year but, as he told an audience at the Hay Festival recently, it was becoming a grandfather that really set him thinking.

'It's so uncool,' he complained. 'Like getting a telegram from the mortuary.' His controversial stance made headlines – as he knew it would. But like much about Amis, it ought not to be taken at face value.

Far from finding it 'uncool', the author is in fact a devoted grandfather who dotes on his grandson, Isaac.

And when Isaac contracted a potentially fatal infection hours after he was born, it was Amis who spent hours by his hospital bedside stroking the little boy's tiny forehead.

It is why the one woman who might have been alarmed by his comments – Isaac's mother, Delilah – was anything but.

'No, I wasn't offended,' she says. 'Not at all. That's a joke that's been knocking around the family for a while. Martin's a fantastic grandfather, he adores Isaac.'

A cheerful young woman, with a refreshingly down-to-earth approach, Delilah, 34, continues: 'When I first became pregnant I called Martin in his office and said, "I'm having a baby ...



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Babe in arms: Delilah Jeary with her

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... you're going to be a grandfather.' It's a big thing for anyone to be a grandfather.

baby Isaac, her father Martin Amis's much-loved grandson

'He was really happy, really excited. I did joke, "This obviously means you're old now Grandpops." There was a realisation and a laugh at the end of the phone. He was totally happy. We all have this thing in our head that we're still 20 years old. There's that internal thing and then there's the reality. Your children are having children. There's the next generation.

'For him, there are intellectual concerns. The life of a writer is about asking those sort of questions but it's quite different to the reality of bouncing a baby on your knee.

'Martin's never pronounced on what it means to be a grandfather but yes, of course, we've talked. He has said, "You're another generation knocking at the door. We've all moved up another row in the cinema." It means a change in all our status.'

As with any mother, there is an undeniable sense of pride at bringing the next generation into the world. But for Delilah it is particularly poignant. For she only discovered Amis was her father when she was 18.

Her mother, the great beauty and author Lamorna Seale, had a brief but intense affair with the author after she and her husband, the acclaimed journalist Patrick Seale, had separated. The couple got back together and Patrick agreed to bring up Delilah as his own; an agreement that was kept even after Lamorna committed suicide when Delilah was two.

Delilah had just left school and was going up to St Hugh's College, Oxford, to read history when Patrick broke the news at a French bistro near their home in Kensington, West London.

It was a devastating revelation. Not only was Patrick not her father, it also meant her beloved brother, Orlando, a 37-year-old actor, was only her half-brother. In an instant, her family, her identity, had been taken away.



Daddy cool: Martin Amis pictured in the 1970s - possibly around the time he fathered daughter Delilah

Delilah, who lives in Stoke Newington, North London, says: 'I can't remember the exact words but it was a horrible shock. Daddy told me that he would always love me and be there for me and that his name was on my birth certificate. I must say, in my life he has never treated me any differently.

'But I cried that night and I cried a lot afterwards. Suddenly I felt like an orphan. I was worried that I would lose my Dad, that it would change my relationship with Orlando, who was now my half-brother, and cut me off from my family history and all the things I knew about myself.

'Daddy said he would arrange for me to meet Martin, which was really nice. It would have been quite stressful for me to contact him myself. Daddy has always been so encouraging. He is not jealous in any way. He went out and bought all Martin's books for me and told me I should read them. He told me, "It is so exciting, they are such an interesting family."

She met Martin the following Easter at The Rembrandt Hotel in Kensington, West London. She says: 'Interestingly, the first thing he said to me was, "You must feel just like an orphan."

'It was quite nerve-racking. I had already seen him when I had gone along to a book signing but I had never spoken to him.

'I met him in the lobby and Martin hugged me for ages before we looked at each other and remarked on how similar our faces were. Martin said, "I think we all need a lot of alcohol."

'We were both nervous and our hands were shaking. I needed two hands to hold my glass. For two hours we just chatted, mainly about my life, and then we went out to supper.'

Martin had always known about Delilah. Lamorna arranged a lunch in which she told him the truth and gave him a picture of their daughter. In his autobiography, Experience, Amis would write: 'It showed a two-year-old girl in a dark flower dress,

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smocked at the chest, with short, puffed sleeves and pink trim. She had fine blonde hair. Her smile was demure: pleased but quietly pleased.'

Shortly afterwards Lamorna committed suicide, hanging herself in the family home. She had suffered from manic depression. Amis gave the photograph of Delilah to his mother Hilly, who kept it on her dressing table. It now sits on the author's desk in his study.

Delilah says: 'I know from pictures of my mother that an image can mean a lot. Sometimes it's all you've got. So it's nice that it was kept, that you've been cherished.'

'I have no memories of my mother. It's sad. I don't know what her voice sounds like or the sound of her laughter, but you learn more as you get older and get a more complete picture.'

'You get anecdotes and you speak to family and friends, often about the normal stuff. Suicide becomes quite defining. You forget that person lived a life and was happy and not always predestined to end their life that way.'

'I've got Martin's perspective but I wouldn't say we've dwelt on it particularly. Our relationship moved on.'

'It took years for me to get my head around the whole thing. For a long time I didn't feel a part of either family. I would think, "Does loving one father make you love the other less?" Over time you become more secure about your role in each family. We are all really close. It becomes normal. Although I always say, we don't all fit in a car. That's how many of us there are.'

Amis has two sons by his first wife, the American philosopher Antonia Phillips. Louis, 26, is a writer for Standpoint magazine and Jacob, 23, worked for the Right-wing think tank, Policy Exchange and will study Arabic at Oxford next year.

He left Antonia for the heiress and author Isabel Fonseca, now his second wife and mother of his two daughters, Fernanda, 13, and ten-year-old Clio. In 1985, when Delilah was nine, Patrick, a Middle East specialist, remarried the Syrian writer Rana Kabbani. They went on to have two children – Alexander, now 22, and Jasmine, 20.

Delilah says: 'Patrick is Daddy and Martin's Martin. Daddy will always be Daddy because he was Daddy long before Martin was on the scene. But I love Martin as a father. He is a really affectionate person. It wasn't immediate but it has grown.'

'Both Daddy and Martin come from similar backgrounds, so I wasn't intimidated. Having people around the table such as Ian McEwan, people who were knowledgeable and interesting, was not foreign to me. I was very used to sitting around a dinner table eating and chatting, rather than watching TV.'

'Everyone was included in the conversation from a young age.' Nevertheless, Delilah decided to go into television, admitting: 'I've always been a bit of a telly addict.'

She directed the Channel 4 documentary *Slave To Fashion* and is now working as a senior content producer on a new video website for *imama.tv* – a site for mothers.

She met her husband Matthew Jeary, a 36-year-old social worker, in 2007, through friends and immediately introduced him to both of her fathers.

Delilah says: 'When you love someone, you are so proud to walk into a room with them and introduce them to the people who are important to you. Martin and Matthew bonded over the football. They both love it. Matthew has an encyclopedic knowledge of football – he is a Swindon supporter, poor thing, while Martin supports Tottenham.'

Delilah fell pregnant with Isaac just before Christmas in 2007 and she and Matthew married at Easter the following year. It was a small wedding with only four guests – Patrick, stepmother Rana and Matthew's parents Michael and Tina – but Martin and Isabel threw them a celebratory dinner at the family home after their mini-honeymoon in Gloucestershire.

'Isabel is a great cook,' says Delilah. 'She does all the cooking. You are not going to get Martin knocking up a roast – a fried egg maybe. She is the queen of the rich stew. I don't know how she does it. Martin plays the pater familias – he keeps the drinks filled, makes great coffee and is a fabulous host – but I have never seen him roll up his sleeves.'

'Isabel threw me a wonderful baby shower – the girls were going round serving little bagels while Martin was in the background hovering and watching us. Eventually he and Matthew went to the pub.'

Isaac was born, on July 4, 2008, at University College Hospital, London, by caesarean section. He was 16 days late and caught group B streptococcus, a common infection in pregnant women that occasionally causes serious complications in newborn babies. He spent two days in intensive care and another two in special care before being transferred on to a transitional care ward for a further ten days.

It was then that Amis showed his true mettle as a grandfather.

'It was a nightmare,' says Delilah. 'We were terribly worried about him. Martin first saw Isaac when he was in the special care unit.'

'He had a good look at Isaac and introduced himself. He said, "Hello little man." He was very pleased to meet him and I was very proud to present the next generation.'

'Martin cuddled him and stroked his head and sat by the side of his cot and willed him to get better.'

'It was very frightening but Martin was very calm, very supportive. He was a lovely presence to have around at a very difficult time. He's not a panicker in any way.'

Isaac has now brought this sprawling family even closer together. Delilah, who is six months pregnant with her second child, says: 'I think Isaac looks like Martin. He has incredibly long eyelashes, like the rest of the family, and a giant Amis head as well.'

'Isaac doesn't have my mother but he has three grandpas. One day I will have to explain. I'll always tell him the truth. But it will be normal for him, what he's used to. It's not unusual nowadays to have extended families. That's just my family. That's how it is. I've got my two dads and it works really well.'

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And for all his nonchalance in public, it's clear that Amis is just as devoted as any other grandparent. 'It's funny, all of Isaac's grandfathers are quite similar in the way they react to him,' Delilah says. 'They're very doting and benevolent but none of them are on their hands and knees crawling around the floor with him. That's for parents and grandmothers to do.'

'He sits at the table chatting to him. Martin likes observing people, so watching your grandson grow up must be a pretty special experience. Some people think he's irascible, but he has a very settled family life and a very warm, welcoming, home.'

'He is a wonderful grandfather.'











For information about Delilah's new website go to www.imama.tv

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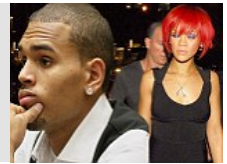
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