

Afterword

“In every child, no matter what the circumstances, and of no matter what parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again, and in him, too, once more and of each of us terrific responsibility toward human life, toward the utmost idea of goodness, of the horrors of error, and of God.”

— James Agee

The families we grow up in pass on unacknowledged pain from the families they grew up in. They also show us by example how to cope with our own pain. Ways of coping with pain can be constructive and useful, or they can be damaging and destructive. Most of us learn both.

When Jolene first came to me, her pain was partly manifested in her inability to find true connection in her relationships. She only knew how to be with people who were so absorbed in their own pain that they were abusive and unavailable to her. This was her family's pattern, the pattern Jolene had come to know as love.

Of the coping mechanisms Jolene acquired to deal with her pain, many became her strengths. Her writing, artwork, and ability to communicate and reach out have brought her a long way.

I believe there are no accidents. That the person she reached out to in her darkest times was touched by her letters is no accident. That he kept her letters intact through difficult circumstances is also no accident. That Jolene had the opportunity to face her past through her letters is nothing short of a miracle and a true gift.

I am touched by her courage. I am in awe of her perseverance and her spirit, and feel privileged to have been with her through a small part of her journey. I hope that Jolene's story helps to show others in pain that better ways are possible. Most importantly, I hope she continues on her path to find better ways for herself.

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