

## ***BETWEEN THE LINES (4)***

October 25, 2005

Dear Judith,

While I was working on your book this morning, Angel from the gas company dropped into my basement to replace my gas meter. In the process he broke a window. And day after tomorrow, the furnace guy is coming to install humidifiers. Why on earth have I always had my office in the basement? Oh well, after he's done the painters will be upstairs, and that will give me plenty of reasons to stay down here and work.

Your book is turning into War and Peace. I'm moving along faster now, but I still don't know if I can finish in time to have this printed by June. I'll keep trying.

Examples of synchronicity, as I work on this, are mounting up and amazing me. Two weeks ago, I sent an e-mail to a friend, trying to jog her memory about a business trip so I could figure out when you and I first visited. Then today, I found a letter from me to you describing events from that trip. After I stopped worked today, I checked my e-mail and there was finally a reply from her. She had the date of the trip wrong, but the timing was kind of funny.

Wouldn't it have been fun if we'd had e-mail. Whatever would the post office have done without us?

I have always wondered what surprises would be in store for me when I went through our correspondence in detail. So far the biggest surprise has been that the person who wrote all those letters to you doesn't sound like me. The language seems a little stilted at times. Was it because I was writing professionally then, all those scripts filled with the Corporatespeak that I had to spout? Was I afraid to use a contraction? And who on earth was that insane person who spent so much time and emotional energy trying desperately to find some closeness with her mother?

I think that's the biggest difference between Me Now and Me Then, Judith. I finally got it several years ago, that the natural state of things between my mother and myself was distance. It took yet another group to figure that out. I remember from my first read-through of our letters that you have more to say on the subject. And I do remember getting pissed off at you several times But you were right. As usual.

I wish now I had thanked you for being so honest about my mother. She and I

*hardly talk at all now. There is so much she will never know about you, about us, and what we meant to each other. Which means she doesn't know me at all, because the deepest and best part of me is the part that loves you.*

*P.S. Angel from the gas company liked your art.*

## **Chapter 4: Composition (1992)**

January 21, 1992

Dear Judith,

I just wanted to drop you a brief line to let you know how I'm doing and send you the enclosed picture. My mother gave it to me some time ago, but it disappeared and only resurfaced last week. I hope you like it.

I got the flu the week before Christmas, and I couldn't stay home and rest like I needed to because my client kept dragging me to meetings. I felt better over Christmas, and Ernie and I flew to Oklahoma on the 27th as planned. No sooner did I get there than bam, flu hit again. I wasn't able to spend much time with the Webbs -- just laid on my back alone in our hotel room most of the time. When we got home I went to my doctor and he told me I had pneumonia. He put me on antibiotics and ordered me to bed. So I had to call my client and explain the situation. I felt better last week and tried to resume my normal schedule, but I had to pace myself, and found myself getting tired every day. The exhaustion I experienced with the pneumonia was like nothing I had known since I had mono at sixteen.

Ernie was very good to me while I was ill, and as a result of that and all we went through this last trip to Oklahoma, I feel very close to him. I guess as long as we're OK with each other nothing else is too bad.

So I'm plugging away, trying to get my work done so that I can rest and take a break from difficult projects and concentrate on maintaining my sanity as the house is torn up around me. I keep thinking how happy I'll be with the finished bathroom and kitchen, and hopefully the worst of the noise will be over this week. Then maybe I can start planning our trip to Hawaii in March or April. On March 27 we will celebrate our 15th anniversary! Doesn't seem possible we've managed to stay together that long.

I think about you a lot and am so glad that you seem to be doing so much better. I'll stop worrying if I can't respond to your letters right away. My mother and I may be planning a trip to Arizona to see Aunt Betty in May or June -- maybe I could work it out to include San Diego as well!

Love always, Jean

Hi Jean,

Our wedding is now cancelled, and we have no new date. Two realities just hit us. One is that I still feel incapable of working, even on this home business I spend so much time on. Two is we just found out my disability runs out mid-April, not July. So we will be living on one income, and we already know we can't cut it. We cannot afford the expense of a wedding, even a small one. We were on the verge of a down payment on our rings when these realities hit us. We could probably just do token rings, get a small cake, and get married at a friend's house, but it's so much of a letdown I prefer to postpone the wedding.

It's several months past time to telemarket and get appointments to show prospects my display album. Out into the public I should go and I panic at the thought! I just can't seem to do it. I have left about twenty messages. But it feels pretty awful. Jay and I both hoped I would feel confident and capable by now. God, it's been a year! Every time I think I'm getting better I go through another series of memories, feeling a large penis in my vagina, for example, and I get knocked on my butt. I keep plugging through it all with therapy and meetings, and I get better. But I cannot even comprehend dealing with the public like I used to. So I feel like I am in limbo. I have even applied for SSI, but I won't know if I'm approved until July or September. I never thought I would need any kind of long-term assistance, so I didn't apply sooner. This is all terrible for my self-image, let me tell you!

I think I told you Jill inherited my mother's house. I want to contest on the grounds of abuse and negligence. But that seems like such a monumental action. Jill and I fight a lot, which we never did before as adults. I am trying to keep it an issue between my mother and myself, but Jill keeps thinking I'm attacking her. She keeps wanting to protect my mother. I have enclosed my

latest written response to her. Not the business stuff, but my emotional response to a lot of bullshit she wrote me.

I want to hold my mother responsible for financial damages. Going after her property is my way of taking a stand. I met with a lawyer, but don't feel very competent, so I have written it all out. I do much better on paper than in person. When I tell a stranger what my father did to me, I fall apart. I had to do that so many times this year, finding clinics and therapists. It's not just the money. I feel a need to take a stand against my mother and hold her responsible.

Anyway, I could go on and on with this but I'm pretty sick and tired of it. It affects every area of my life. I will write when things change, and we reschedule our wedding.

Jay and Shanti go to therapy now. We are each doing individual sessions. Jay is working on boundaries. I'm glad he's going, and that he feels safe with Susan. Shanti and I share my hour and a half. He is receptive to therapy and even takes his poems to read to her.

Shanti is really going to Alaska. I used to think it was just a dream. But he leaves at the beginning of June. He sees it as a way to make money in as short a time as possible. There is a government program to recruit labor up there. They will pay his fare from Washington to Alaska, and pay for his room and board once he is there. He thinks he HAS NO CHOICE, due to his circumstances. A common victim role in our family. Oh well!

Take care. Hope to hear from you soon. Judith

(Text of enclosed letter from Judith to her sister)

Jill,

You appear to think you deserve Mother's property for all your sacrifices and my lack thereof. "Blood money" you called it. I am not ignorant of the fact you spent your lifetime with Mom, but it was out of your own insecurity and dependency. I certainly do not believe it was out of some saintly need to be a loving, giving daughter. You may try to attach spiritual significance to it

now, but your words do not fool me, Jill. It was enmeshment, and you are suffering from the effects of a dysfunctional family just as Mike and I do.

I remember a nightmare you had of being wrapped up like a mummy, face to face with Mom, and you were stabbing her with a knife. Do you remember? That is how I see your relationship. We each have our own way of coping. You gave up a normal life, I rant and rave, and Mike is removed.

You resent Mike more than me because you continue to see him as a normal, helpful brother. Don't you ever stop to consider the extent of his damage? That his removal was from trauma, and it may be a sign of health to be removed from Mother? Instead, you decide he is a bad person who deserves nothing!

Do you ever think that the reason I feel things so much more intensely than you is because I have no medications or drugs to dull me? You talk very high and mighty about being above resentment. And that sickens me. How easy it is to rationalize away the pain and torment I have gone through this past year with "what's done is done." You say you "don't want to live in the problem, but the solution!" Tell me that again when you are off all substances, and have full-blown memories of Dad sticking his big dick into your seven- or nine-year old pussy! That is my reality! I have no choice when the memories come. I do not choose to feel Dad's dick. I do not choose to feel a five-year-old's shame. I do not choose to feel violent thoughts about the man who betrayed me and forced his body and mind on me! Do you think I want this? If you had ever had these living experiences you would never use petty words of "acceptance" and "forgiveness" to me.

Who do you think you are to tell me what to do with my issues? Who are you to tell me the right way to handle this living trauma? This is not the past! This has been my current life for a fucking year! I lost my job, and have strained all my relationships, particularly with Jay and Shanti. I lost a friend because it reminded her too much of her own experiences. Do you think I want to see Jay turn into Dad when we try to be intimate?

If you think anyone chooses to have a breakdown from "post trauma syndrome" then you are out in Never Neverland. Is this what it takes so that you can feel safe and secure living in Mother's nice little house, telling me to get over it, and get some recovery? Who will you run to when you have

nightmares every night for months on end? Of being raped, chased, suffocated, drowned? When your sleep is destroyed night after night, and your days feel like death, and you have no fucking personality left, and you feel like a robot, and you're terrified to go outside, to see children, or look a man in the face! Who will you go to when you want to use drugs or kill yourself? Who will you turn against? Dad, maybe? Mom, maybe? If you could even begin to have a clue what this is really about you would never have said what you did to me. Just because you do not see it, or feel it, does not invalidate my experience, my pain, and my damage.

Yes, you are a victim too. I never said you were not. I certainly would never deny that. You are a victim with no direct incest memories yet. You better count the blessings of your repression.

But haven't you ever considered that your current life is still the result of abuse? Don't you wonder about your masturbation fantasies of Dad and Mike having sex with you? Do you think it's a sign you have current issues? Over and done with, you say. Have you ever gotten over your feeling that sex is dirty, even in marriage? Of course not, you just don't have sex or relationships. Haven't you ever thought that living with mother all your life, and not having an intimate relationship, is a sign that your past is alive and well in your current life? Are you positive Mom had no part in it? Is it normal to live with her as you did? Is it really possible to brush it all off and think I am just dwelling in resentment and hate? Why do we have eating disorders still? Why are we addicts? This is now, not the past! Do you hear that at all? Your repression and denial wrote that letter to me and I am sick of hearing your self-righteous beliefs put out as absolute truth! And you are so "in the solution"!

You can take your empty recovery jargon back. Give it to your friends that believe it. I certainly don't! Give it to your therapist. I challenge you to read this letter to your therapist. Could you do that? Process it with an outsider? Bring me into the session with you? If I am so off the wall, get a professional opinion. And don't interpret my words, read them to her. How "in the past" is all this? How "in the solution" are you? How healthy are your decisions? Why aren't you open to any of this? Because the pain of abuse is too fucking much, that's why! Because you're terrified. Because you want Mom's house, and all this stuff I bring up challenges the security you feel living there. You

protect Mom to preserve the security you had living off Mom. You have always lived off Mom. And you still want to do it, only now you tell yourself you're the best kid Mom ever had, and Mom couldn't help being the victim she was.

It's all just a grandiose justification so you won't feel guilty. I am sick of how diseased we all are. I go to a therapist with twelve years of 12-step recovery, who has spent six years healing from her own incest memories. She sees my reactions and behaviors as normal. She sees my taking a stand against my perpetrators as healthy. Read the book "The Courage to Heal" and you will see everything I have gone through, and currently go through. You are not an authority on post trauma syndrome, and I hope you never make the mistake of pretending you are again. It will cost you our relationship.

March 1992 (check date)

Dear Judith,

I kept a copy of the letter you wrote to Jill and sent you back the original last Friday. I want to congratulate you on your ability to write such a strong letter. I was also impressed with a previous letter you sent me where you listed the things you hold your mother accountable for. I have started making a file of all your letters to me, in chronological order (I hope). I want to keep this file because I just know I'm going to come in contact with people who can learn from your letters.

I'm sure that with Jill in such a massive state of denial, your letters to her probably aren't doing much good in forcing her to deal with the abuse in your family. The important thing is that you can write them. I understand better now how you feel the need to fight against the terms of your mother's will. I can empathize when you say it's not the money, but the need to hold someone accountable for the nightmare you went through. Unfortunately, as you know, our legal system is not set up for this. I support you in what you are trying to do, however. I know that most people could not deal with the level of anger expressed in your letters to her but I say good for you!

I'm so sorry you had to cancel your wedding plans. I hate to think of money

causing a halt to two people who want to commit to spending their lives together. Do what you think is best for you but I hope you two will find a way to do it soon. I think that it would be such a positive step that it might do you some good.

Things are going pretty well for me right now. Business has slowed down but I expected that. I'm not worrying about it right now because Ernie and I are going to Maui for eight days on March 25th. We will celebrate our 15th wedding anniversary there. I'm so excited I can't stand it. Maui always feels like heaven to me, and the fact that we can now take the time and money for vacations together always seems like a miracle, after all the years when we couldn't.

Judith, I was so concerned about your last letters that I really felt the need to write as soon as possible. I also thought about calling but we seem to do so well with letters. Lots of times I'm not as good on the phone. If you ever feel the need to talk on the phone, just call me collect, or call me and I'll call you right back. I really want to stay in touch with you as you work through your recovery.

Love always, Jean

March 17, 1992

Hi Jean,

I sent this twice with the wrong address! You wrote me in the nick of time.

I guess I have lagged a whole month since you wrote. I've been busier than usual. Since I have not felt up to doing anything with telemarketing, I have begun to clean houses. Five friends have hired me so all I need to do is add another seven houses twice a month and my income will be the same as it has been on disability. My last check is in two weeks, so I am thankful to have something to do that is non-threatening and can bring in some money.

Being alone in the houses when I clean is not stress-free, but I know that what I hear or flash on is not real. At least I know no one is going to get me. I carry my mace, and I feel stronger knowing I can protect myself. Once I have



lined up more of these jobs we will be OK with finances and go ahead with the wedding plans. I agree with you – the sooner the better. It's important I get to a point where I stop feeling my life is all about abuse, and I have no power to do anything.

You can use my letters for whatever you wish, at any time. I think it's great you think they can help someone.

As for my sister – after I sent her the letter I sent you she called and asked me if we could go to my therapist together. She wanted to understand my memories and experiences, her enmeshment with my Mother, and whether she is crazy for wanting to live in the house. She said she did not want to lose me, and she apologized for the insensitive things she said. I think her being down to 13 milligrams of methadone is helping break down her denial.

We had an emotional and beneficial session. Jill really liked Susan and felt she was objective. Susan suggested she get out of the middle of the fight I have with my mother and father. Jill liked that idea, so I said I would take things into my own hands.

After consulting with three different lawyers, and showing them the will and the hearing papers, I have found out that this area of law is so new no one is sure what is possible. They said I could claim my mother's decision was made when she was not in sound mind, and that my sister had influenced her. But I think my mother knew exactly what she was doing. They also said I could claim my sister was unreliable as a joint owner since she is an addict. But that means attacking my sister.

Now it seems I have no possibility of legal action against my parents. I am in a quandary. It seems I need to let go, and leave my sister alone. My fight should not be with her. But with my parents out of the picture, I feel so jealous that Jill gets the house as if it is hers. I feel angry at her for deciding to live there. I feel powerless.

I don't want to attack my sister, especially when she is down to 13 milligrams of methadone. Attacking her for being an addict doesn't sit right with me. But letting the whole thing go does not feel right either. I am so outraged that there is no law that protects a child against negligent parents. There are laws against aiding a murderer or robber, but nothing about a mother that watches

a father fucking his nine-year-old daughter! I am sickened by the reality. I would like to write to all the lawyers listed in "The Courage to Heal" that have dealt with similar cases. How do common people get laws changed?! Do I have to be in Washington to do something?

How was Maui???? What a great place to celebrate fifteen years of being married. So romantic and relaxing. If I could ever take a vacation, I would pick a warm, tropical place. Hawaii sounds like my cup of tea. Shanti's dad went there to live about six months ago and loves it. It was his dream for many years. And I have two friends who live in Michigan and now they want to move to Hawaii. It must be a special place. Let me know how it went.

I really love the support you have given me this year, Jean. You are a wonderful woman. I appreciated your offer to phone talk. I would probably be too hung up to call collect, and don't have the money to call myself. I would love to hear your voice if you want to call me. It may take us a minute or two to adjust to phone instead of letters, but I think we'd connect pretty easily, just like we do in our letters.

So my cousin and friend, I hope you are rested and having wonderful spiritual awakenings from your trip to Hawaii. Take care of yourself.

Sincerely, Judith

April 12, 1992

Hi Jean,

I have had some more memories, which leads me to a strong desire to write all my father's sisters and ask questions. I decided to ask how you feel about what I want to ask your mother, since I don't want to upset you. I do not want to do anything if it would be at the expense of our relationship. I have enclosed the letter, and I want you to share your responses. Let it all hang out! If it's too big a deal, I will just write to the other two aunts. Your mother will probably hear about it no matter what. I also thought maybe you could answer the questions, if you know the answers, and you could write them on the letter and mail it back.

My sister told me that my mother told her, a few months before she died, that my mother's mother was here in San Diego taking care of us when I was about a year old. A neighbor woman slid a note under the door about getting together with my father. My grandmother found the note and read it. She and my father fought, and he broke both her arms. I also have memories about my mother trying to leave my father, and he dragged her back into the house by her hair. I do not know if these memories are connected, but they fit together like a glove. My mother once told me she started to hate my father when my brother was seven. Which would be at the same time this happened.

I have known I come from a violent home. My father was violent sexually with my mother, and he abused my brother when wrestling with him as a teenager. But I have never connected with the violence to this extent. This violence was much more common than I thought, and things were more extreme than I have ever acknowledged. I was aware of the verbal abuse, and this past year, of the sexual exploitation and abuse. But I think somehow I have not dealt with the fact that my molestation was violent. Yet that was my father's character.

I have had some strange physical problems since I heard all this. My arms have been going numb, and they hurt when I wake up from a night's sleep. I have had explosive reactions around some of the couples we hang out with. My friend Lori and my therapist Susan have told me it's just my own family issues. I lost sleep for two nights over this stuff. The visuals, and the feelings. It was pretty fucked-up to rewitness such insanity. But getting this stuff to the forefront opens me up and lets me get out of self-hate.

So get back to me with the letter I sent you.

Did you mother ever finish that family tree? Could I help at all? I still want a copy. Would you let me know about it?

P.S. I have also enclosed some legal literature. You may want to share it.

Sincerely, Judith

June 1992

Hi Jean,

How did I end up with such a wonderful cousin? You are GREAT! I could never have expected such unconditional support from you. Thank you, for being the special person you are, and for being in my life. I will send my letters to your Mom around June 5 and give her time to recuperate physically. I sent the other letters this week. Jill could not find Aunt Betty's address. Would you mind sending it to me too?

I was uncomfortable sending a letter to our uncle, wondering if he is a perpetrator too. I went ahead and asked my questions anyway. It made me think of Leslie, and about your going to see her soon. I do not know what she meant about "being unable to resolve the sexual abuse question." It sounds like she has some doubts. I can certainly understand that.

It's common to doubt our pain and our memories. I always question my memories at some point. Remembering can be so horrible, of course we need to push it away any way we can. Pushing trauma away goes with a "lifetime of coping." Talking at meetings, to friends, and in therapy keeps me from trying to deny my memories and push them away. Each time I question what happened, I lose sight of my anger at the person responsible and direct it toward myself. And that's the last place I want it to go! I am grateful for all the recovery skills I have learned.

Was it hard for you to take care of your stepfather when your mom was ill? A week is a long time. How far do you live from your mother? You and Ernie have had quite a time with your parents. I guess it's inevitable if we're all going to live longer.

I had a difficult time getting your last letter to you. I kept putting the wrong letter in the number of your address. It came back twice. What a living example of my unmanageable times. My disassociation has gotten so chronic I was unable to read for weeks. I could not absorb more than three sentences before I got lost.

My driving is better now. I don't forget freeway exits like I did. I left my purse at a restaurant the other day and had to drive twenty miles back to get

it. Sometimes I can accept all this, but other times I get so frustrated and angry. I just seem to bounce around. I'm grateful I have a writing program that enables me to change sentences and delete, so that I do not come off as a bumbling idiot. I write better than I do other things.

I have been wandering around losing stuff in the houses I clean. Then I dock myself the extra time it takes for me to finish cleaning. Oh well. At least I can do it and help out financially. I have not heard from Social Security about the long-term disability I applied for. It takes three to six months for approval. They have not sent me to any shrinks yet. I go back and forth trying to figure if I need it. This month I know I NEED HELP. My memory is all out of kilter. I fear I may lose my driver's license. My spaceyness has always made me a hazard on the road, but I don't want the agency to know that.

Jay is very accepting about the amount of income I bring in, and he never pressures me, or seems to have a problem with my disassociation. He just repeats himself over and over. I write myself notes a lot.

I love Jay so much. I am so happy with him. We have gotten comfortable again with sex. He even was on top! Lately I have no problem with memories during sex. I suppose that sounds strange, after I made so many rules about sex so I could feel safe! It seems now I don't need them. We are both loosening up.

By now you should have received my other lagging letter. I want to get this off soon, so I can express my feelings about how you responded to my need to communicate with your mother.

Sincerely, your friend, Judith

August 24, 1992

Dear Judith,

I was so excited and thrilled to get your wedding invitation! It was beautiful, and I'm so glad you're able to have the kind of wedding you want with all your friends helping. It sounds like it will be really unique and wonderful. So many weddings these days seem to be such overelaborate production

numbers it's refreshing to know it doesn't have to be that way. I suspect there's a very traditional female lurking in all of us who wants some of the traditional trappings. I know I did. Thank goodness you nixed the big stained glass Jesus. Yuk!

I would love to be at your wedding, and I plan on calling a travel agent to see what fares and schedules are like. If it turns out that I can make it I'll let you know ASAP. I have a very busy month coming up in September as I've picked up several new projects in the last few weeks. My time should free up after September 30, however, so we'll see. This year just continues to be my best year ever.

I spent the Fourth of July weekend with Leslie and her new husband. We did a lot of talking and sharing. No real earth-shattering revelations came up, however. Her path to self-knowledge has been different from yours and mine -- not as much traditional therapy as I've had, and not the group and self-help programs you've worked in. Mostly a lot of self-education, study, and reading. You and she could talk for hours. I dream that someday the three of us will meet and spend a weekend together somewhere. Who knows -- it could happen!

Anyway, I'll close for now because I want to get this in the mail as soon as I can. And I don't want to deluge you with a heavy letter right now because you're probably snowed under. When I think of where you were last year at this time, and now you're planning to stand in front of 140 people and commit your life to Jay, it almost makes me believe in miracles.

By the way, I'm making your wedding present. I hope like the devil it will be done in time but there's a chance it might have to arrive late. I think it will be worth the wait so bear with me!

Love always, Jean

October 22, 1992

Hi Jean,

I am happy to get a letter from you so soon. I wanted to send a letter with my

thank-you card, but I was sick this week and could only get the cards out. I wanted to do them on apricot paper, but I wouldn't let myself wait to get it together. I was still obsessed and living at the pre-wedding pace. While at the same time being sick, and experiencing a big wedding letdown. Other women tell me this is normal, but of course, in my mind mine is more severe.

I feel like I missed my own wedding. I was embarrassed to tell Jay, but I did anyway. He said he enjoyed the day and the event, and I felt sad about my experience. Not just the fear and the feeling of being overwhelmed, but the fact that I had not heard the music, or the vows. When I told others I was "gone" no one seemed to acknowledge it until I told Madelyn and Lori. They know of the problems my disassociation causes, and they acknowledged my loss. Which made me feel better. Who was the person that everyone said smiled and looked happy? Where was I! How could everyone have been so fooled? And how sad that my disassociation works so well, because I miss out on my life. I cannot digest this yet. I have had just one therapy session, and Susan seemed to feel the experience is common.

Looking back, I know I felt loved and safe and excited in the dressing room. I am very glad you were one of the women with me. It meant so much to me. I suppose I was scattered and all, but I was very moved by your being with me then, and your speaking during the ceremony. I really liked the way so many people spoke during the service. And I loved having you and Ernie for breakfast. I am glad we have found each other. Such jewels we are amongst our family, eh?

I was amazed when you told me how you feel when you are "in it." About how hard it is for you to reset your pace after a project, and how you gear up to high speed for a period of time, and then when it ends you are still in overdrive. That sounds like my experience. I am only starting to calm down from the frenzy mode I was in. I feel antsy and restless, but that may just go with the territory of having memories come up, again. Sometimes I can't separate what is due to the remembering process I am in, and what is just a "normal" experience for a regular person. I look forward to my next meetings and therapy.

I was flattered that you read some of our pledge and vows to your group. And that they were impressed! I was impressed with them when we wrote them. I

am sorry to have missed out on reading them. We are going to repeat them to each other in the Park so I can hear them this time.

Oops! I have to run. Jay is taking computer to work tomorrow. Sorry to cut this short! I could go on and on.

Love, Judith

November 5, 1992

Hi Jean,

I hope you're doing well. I got out your last letter (the one I never completely answered.) It is a good time to write, since I have some time to myself and the weather is amazing to write by. It seems like the "Indian summers" I remember in the Midwest. Since San Diego has no autumn, I enjoy the few trees here and there turning. I like the subtle change of atmosphere. I feel good today.

We have a photo order written up, but won't be ordering right away. We are just getting back on our feet financially. But I will order you a couple of my favorite photos. Please don't think of paying me as I want to make them a Christmas gift.

I hate all the action candids at the reception. I regret not asking the photographer ahead of time to do posed photos with friends and relatives during the reception. I regret not having any of you and me and also my therapist Susan and myself, or Shanti and myself. I forced myself to stay out of the photography area. Jay hired a friend who had little experience with weddings. We had several arguments over it. Jay did not know what he wanted, and I had grandiose expectations after working with some master professionals. I figured this guy would never make me happy, and I preferred no pictures to shitty ones. Jay really wanted photos, and we could not afford a professional. But we were paying this guy something, so I came up with a list of suggestions at the last minute, and did not think of everything. A professional would have known what to do.

But I am happy we got some pictures we like. It would have been sad if my



“all or nothing” attitude had left us with no photos at all. They show that I was really there, and I did look happy and care free. That is not what I remember! I keep looking at them and asking myself, “Where was I? Where do I go? Why was it so intense I had to leave?”

I am still dealing with this “coping” skill of disassociation in therapy. I have always labeled myself as a “space case,” “dingy,” “out of it,” “way out there.” Others have agreed! I used to laugh it off. I have struggled to cover it up at work. New jobs were always the worst. So now I am faced with the reality of how I cope when I get overwhelmed. I use disassociation as a way to not collapse, run away, or get hysterical. All of which I felt capable of doing at my wedding! But I didn’t. I just felt separated from the event. And that caused me more anxiety, since I try to cover that up too.

My therapist and I spend a lot of time on these coping skills – what purpose they serve, what they protect, and how they affect me in my daily life. Jean, it’s hard to describe what an impact all this has had on me. Susan says this can all be addressed and worked on, and I will heal and not resort to them automatically. I feel like I am up against a wall that has been there for forty years. Disassociation has always been a large part of my life. It has saved me, and yet caused me so much pain. Susan says there is a way through. I feel so many emotions at the prospect of succeeding with this. Who will I be when I no longer have this disassociation so integrated into my days? How will I act and think? Will Jay still love me? It’s shocking to believe I could heal and no longer need it.

Since our wedding, I have been feeling distant from Jay at times. I feel like an object when he calls me “his wife.” It seems gross, not romantic. I thought I was going to be OK with it, but I guess my marriage issues are still with me.

I feel like I am going into a new realm of self. New discomfort with seemingly new issues, and yet they feel so ancient. They are just closer to me. If I stand back from the grief and fear, I am in awe! I can observe finer nuances of self. I feel my awakenings taking me into a place of spiritual essence that is undefinable. Life is an amazing trip for me today. How can I say this...

Well, Jean, I had a creative burst in the middle of this letter. I have just written a poem that came into my head, and I have five visions I want to get

down on paper. I usually only get one or two a year. This feels therapeutic, so I am working on them this week. I want to take them to therapy and work on them there. Lori, Madlynn and I are talking about starting an art therapy group soon. We are going to meet weekly and do finger painting and chalk work on our dreams. Susan has offered us her office. I have a large art table at Jill's we can set up and use.

I just got approved for long-term disability. We will see some retroactive money by January. They screwed up, thinking I was still on state disability, though I have been off that since April. It will take several months to fix the error. Jay can pay back all the debts we have incurred since I quit my job.

I intended to work on my "Messages From the Heart" business before Christmas but the timing is off. I am still working on the display album and sample packages. I fantasize about doing a sample mailing with a brochure. How does this sound to you, Jean? How do you promote yourself? I have heard about recovery conventions that I could do, but booths are around \$500, and I would need to have lots of product made up. I feel nervous about investing a lot of money in promotions before I am sure I am confident enough to go out in public.

Hope to hear about your life. Write when you can.

Love, Judith

November 18, 1992

Dear Judith,

I meant to write to you as soon as I got your last letter and once again it's taken me a while. Things are busy -- what else is new? Ernie is traveling a lot and while that should give me more time it doesn't seem to work that way. I'm finishing my last job from my fall busy period, and while there is one job possibility in store at this point there's a good chance I won't have any more work until the first of the year. That's OK -- I can use the time to work on my marketing. More about that later.

I wanted to let you know how sad I felt to hear that you don't have all your

memories of the wedding. Believe me, Judith, I've been to a lot of weddings and yours was easily one of the most beautiful, and certainly the most genuine and honest I've ever attended. While I realize that your disassociation was probably working, many normal (!?) brides don't remember a lot of the ceremony! I don't remember large parts of my reception. It's a very hectic, pressured time for women and the whole issue of being a "perfect" bride and having a "perfect" wedding screws us all up! It is sad that the photography didn't work out as you hoped. I'm sure you will have some beautiful pictures, and I agree with you that it would have been a shame if the conflict over photography left you with no pictures at all. I can assure you that as time goes on you'll cherish the pictures you do have and forget about the ones you missed. Ernie and I still get out our wedding album and go over it together. Lots of memories.

I circled the part of your letter when you talked about not liking the word "wife." I don't like it much either, except when Ernie uses it! I always feel like writing up a definition of the word as I see it and passing it out. I met someone once who referred to her husband as her "partner." I like that much better, but I remember my first reaction was thinking that they were in business together! "Life partner" is much more accurate but you can't change language overnight. Just think about "being" the wife you know you are and the example you set will be much more powerful than the word used to describe you. I know lots of wives who are not partners, and they're usually not very happy with the power balance in their marriages.

Holidays are coming -- moan, groan. I'm going to do a lot of thinking this year about all the things that I do during this season. Which ones make me happy, which ones make me miserable, and how many of the last group can be changed. The corporate Christmas parties we have to attend are a given and there's not much to do there. But I'm going to have a talk with my mother when I go home for Christmas and find out which of the things I keep doing really make her happy and which she could live without. If the presents, meals, visits, etc. are a drag for her too we can just stop!

Do you and Jay do a Christmas tree? I make lots of ornaments every year and would love to add you to the ornament Christmas list. We're not doing a big tree this year but we'll probably have a couple of small trees. I love to decorate for Christmas.

Ernie and I are starting to plan our March trip to Hawaii, but I'm still trying to figure out a Southwestern trip for myself. I'll keep you posted.

Love always, Jean

December 20, 1992

Merry Christmas Jean!

I got your Christmas letter, and enjoyed your laser printer cards. I love your letter card idea. We decided not to do cards this year because of the cost of stamps, and I was not motivated to put my energy into them this year. It looks like a lot of people are doing the same, since I only have five cards so far! I hope my gift gets to you before Christmas. I just mailed it.

Can you and Ernie enjoy the holidays with his case of shingles? Your mother told me about it in her Christmas card to me. I suffered with shingles once. I know how painful they are. I was about to go into more detail, but I have a feeling we've discussed this already. Have we?

I have decided not to attend either of Jay's family gatherings. He will see his dad on Christmas Eve, and he will see his sister and mom on Christmas Day. We will have the morning together, but I am not willing to do family this year. I am not going to see my sister and her daughter, even though her daughter just had a baby and I have not seen him yet. I had a bout of memories again. This time I saw mother blacked out in bed while I am being violated next to her. Needless to say, I don't want to spend any time in that house now. It's all so disgusting, and I do not want to rage at my sister again! I just told her as lovingly as possible I needed some space and mailed my gifts to them. Which is weird because they live 25 minutes away.

Still, there has been a miracle, and I will tell you some of it. I had not been sleeping well for a month, and was exhausted a lot. Well, last week Jay's snoring triggered some memories. I called my friend Lori in the middle of the night, and also my therapist, which I never do. Lori suggested I move my foam mat off the bed and sleep in the living room so I could feel safe. At first I reacted with distorted thinking, like, I will disrupt Jay's and my space together, I will upset Jay, Jay will feel abandoned. So I didn't follow the

suggestions, and continued to suffer.

The next three days I suffered daily panic attacks, and every night I stressed out in bed, waiting for Jay to start snoring. The man below us has a heater that goes on and off all night and it sounds like a lawn mower in my bed. I was a wreck. I finally gave in and moved to the living room. I made up my bed all warm and cozy with my ear plugs, my Kleenex box, my stuffed rabbit, my two pillows, and some warm blankets.

I slept the deepest sleep I have had in what seems like years. In fact, it seems like I have NEVER slept like that before. I had such a feeling of comfort. The heater sounded far away. I only got up once to pee, instead of my usual three to five times.

The next night I started off in our bed, intending to move if I was disturbed at all. Well, I slept another night with only one run to the bathroom. It was as if Jay's snoring was no big deal, and neither was the water heater. Last night the same. I slept deeply. Is this a miracle or what? I am so shocked, Jean. That taking care of myself would cause such a dramatic change. This year has been a sequence of these kinds of actions, and getting good results. To have breakthroughs like this amazes me.

So many years resisting any attempts to take care of myself, sitting in my pain alone. Even after seven years in NA and over a thousand meetings, change like this is so damn slow. Unlearning defensive behaviors is not quick and easy. It is so sad to see how I've lived my life. A breakthrough like this is something my Being must drink up. My faith in my healing is more grounded now. I feel lighter today. Life does not seem so hopeless.

I realize now I have only been on the edge of sleep all my life. I have written it on my inventory, which I am enclosing. I can't remember if I told you this inventory will be going into the book I am writing for incest survivors. I think I told you. I have asked my therapist to co-author it, even though I am almost half done. I want her to help me with the grammar and the spelling, add her insights, and refine it.

I have done some spell-checking but not all the way through, and I want to change the asterisks to bullets. So you are getting a semi-rough draft. I am not looking for an immediate response. It may be a bit much for you. If so,

please feel free to not read it. Do what you are safe and comfortable with.

I send you my love and warm wishes for healing to Ernie.

Love, Judith

P.S. I realize I have not responded to the business information you sent me. I will when I am in that frame of mind again. I appreciate your response and feedback.

P.P.S. Any help on the use of “affect” and “effect”? Please tune me in. I tried to understand and use these words correctly after reading the dictionary definitions, but that just confused me even more!

### ***BETWEEN THE LINES (5)***

*October 28, 2005*

*Dear Judith,*

*Oh lord, Judith, I feel like I could write another whole book right here between chapters. You would probably tell me I am feeling overwhelmed, and to take a break and take care of myself. Can't do it just yet, my dear friend and guide. I have too much to say to you right now.*

*I cried yesterday morning, talking to Ernie about what I was feeling at this point in the writing of your book. I told him I expected pain when I went back in time to be with you again. But the pain is not coming from the place I thought it would. Reading and editing your letters, Judith, is joyful to me. I welcome the pain in your letters to me, because when I feel it I am with you again. What I did not expect was so much pain re-reading my own letters.*

*Judith, I don't think I know that person who was writing to you. How could she read that beautiful towering rage in the letter to your sister and respond with a sentence like “I want to congratulate you on writing such a strong letter”? Where was the heart, the emotion? I have been told over and over again that I “write from the heart.” Well, I wasn't doing it then.*

*There was so much pain ahead for me, Judith. I have to keep reminding myself that my memories hadn't started at that point in my life. I can remember feeling surprised and wary that you were so determined to break your mother's will and share in the inheritance. I had seen too much of that in*

*other family members.*

*If I could write those letters over again, they would be so very different. I would respond to you as a fellow survivor now -- one who had felt at least a little of your pain herself. I guess my eleven years of pain and healing have changed me more than I realized. For the better, thank God.*

*There were still things I wasn't telling you. It's eerie, re-reading your account of your sleeping problems. I could have written those exact words myself. You mentioned my visit to our cousin's house that July of 1992. Apparently I didn't tell you that I had the worst panic attack of my life there. I kept getting out of bed with Ernie, and trying to feel safe lying on the floor. I couldn't leave the room, I told myself. There were people out there who would know if I did. There were people all around me. I couldn't get away. I had to stay in that room. So I did. And over and over, I went from the bed, to the floor, to the bed and back. I was exhausted the next morning, and yet no one noticed. And of course, I didn't say a word to anyone. There would be several more episodes like that in the next year for me.*

*I can't move ahead to that year, though, until I spend some time sharing my memories of your wedding with you. Because you didn't have any.*

*Yes, I was in the room with you and your other women "supporters" as you got ready. You wore a vintage floral dress in shades of apricot and beige, with this incredible matching feathered hat. Thank God you went with some pictures, because I still have that one on my dresser. Your wedding was the first time I had seen Jill, with her long red hair and big smile, since I was twelve. I think she was uncomfortable with me. I got to meet Madlynn, Susan, Richard and Brita, and all those other friends who loved you and supported you on a daily basis. I envied them all that they lived in the same city as you.*

*And your lists, Judith. Your endless and endless miles of lists, timetables, and assigned tasks. None of us could stop talking about them. And you saw yourself as "spacey" and "dingy." My God, woman, you coordinated that wedding like an admiral!*

*And, oh yes, I met Jay. I don't remember thinking much about him. Sorry, Jay! I do remember that Madlynn was his attendant, dressed in a pantsuit that coordinated with those worn by his men "supporters." That color scheme was everywhere - the wedding party's clothes, the decorations, probably even the food. Wasn't there a matching cake with apricot frosting? Yes, there was!*

*You made me share during the ceremony. Yes, you did, don't try to tell me*

*you don't remember it. I was nervous. I didn't know how to do NA-type sharing. Everyone there knew you so much better than I did, and had so much more to say about the two of you. OK, now it's my turn to lose my memory. I don't remember a single word I said.*

*Here's one thing I do remember. At the reception, you introduced me to people as your cousin, and said this: "I wrote to Jean's Mom and asked her who were the addicts in the family. Her mom said 'No one.' Then Jean wrote and said, 'Everyone!'"*

*I met people there who had known you in Michigan, when you lived on the "commune." And other people, who knew you from so many different places. But I was your cousin. I sure had traveled the farthest! I felt so special to you.*

*You and Jay, Ernie and I, and Shanti and Vicky, had brunch together the next morning. At a beautiful new white hotel you said you had been wanting to go to. And then, again, we had to say goodbye.*

*We were together in person only six times, Judith. Can you believe it? What we had, however long we had it, it was enough. I'm glad that my letters, even as stilted as they sound to me now, were "enough" for you then. But I can do better, Judith.*

*I've learned how to write from the heart.*

## **Chapter 5: Background (1993)**

January 29, 1993

Dear Judith,

I'm sorry I'm late responding to your last letter. Please don't worry that anything in your written inventory upset me. I want you to feel free to share anything with me that you want. There is nothing you can tell me about your past or present that will change or affect my love for you!

I've read the inventory several times. Judith, it sounds like you are remembering more and more and it seems like some of your memories are more horrifying than any you've shared with me so far. You've done an incredible amount of work. I'm interested in knowing more about the work



you and your therapist are doing. Your last few letters have mentioned “disassociation” several times. Is this something that came out of your work with your therapist? I’m interested in knowing what your disassociation involves. Your therapist (I’ve forgotten her name, but we met at your wedding) seems like she has helped you a lot. Will you be able to continue with her as long as you need or want? If your financial situation gets in the way of your continuing therapy, would you be comfortable letting me know that? I would like you to know that you could call on me for help but I’m not sure how you feel about that. I’d like to talk to you about it some time.

I’m glad you told me about your sleeping problems with Jay and how you’re solving them. I leave Ernie to go sleep somewhere else on the average of 2-3 nights a week. He snores, talks, and acts out dreams — plus I’m a light sleeper. There are also times I’m just not comfortable being in the same bed with anybody. I had a real bad episode of nighttime anxiety when I stayed at our cousin Leslie’s over July Fourth. It made me wonder if I’ve got some old memories connected with events at my Uncle Dick’s house. I’ve discussed it with my therapist, but no memories have surfaced so we put it on hold for now. There have been several times over the last few years, when I’m sleeping around too many people, that I’ve been uncomfortable. If you’re interested, let me know and I’ll tell you more in another letter.

I’ve been thinking over the past few months of my life and have come to realize that it’s been a real bad time. My car was broken into over Thanksgiving. I was sick for most of Christmas, as I think I mentioned. Plus, Ernie’s job troubles are affecting him and me both. He is very unhappy at work, and he’s still travelling 2 or 3 nights every week. Things have been kind of bad between us and it’s pretty hard to work them out when we see so little of each other! And finally, I started a new job the first week of January, and for the first time in ten years found myself with a client I could not cope with. A week later we dissolved our contract. It’s probably good for me to be reminded now and then that there are still plenty of jerks out there, and no matter how much I pride myself on my work and my ability to get along with people, I’m not perfect and there are going to be times when I will fail. Nothing to do but learn and go on.

My mother and I have been communicating a little better. We started making our weekly phone calls to each other on Saturday morning, when Dad is out

of the house, and it's amazing how much difference that has made. I realize now that there weren't many things she was comfortable talking to me about with Dad in earshot. God, how awful to have to live your life that way. So we're talking more, but what I'm hearing is making me unhappy. She just seems to be growing inward, getting selfish and even mean about money. You know, every penny Mom has now came from her marriages. Yes, she's invested well over the years but I don't think she should be so smug.

Anyway, money, and secrecy about money, has always been such an issue with her and in our family. I'm even feeling guilty right now just mentioning it to you! Another example of old conditioning at work!

She sent me the pictures you sent her from your wedding, and she has mentioned the notes you've written. Judith, I hope and pray she doesn't say or write something to hurt you. She is very much in denial about your father and I don't think she'll ever come out of it. I think you're probably aware that people in denial tend to get angry with people who speak the truth, instead of getting angry with the people they should get angry with — the perpetrators like your father, and whoever else in the family started all this damn abuse! So you, who are in recovery and speaking the truth, are bad, and people like Jill and your brother, who are still in denial, are good because they are keeping their mouths shut. The whole thing has me screaming at times. Anyway, I'm probably being overprotective of you here but damn it, nobody ever protected you. Feel free to tell me you can take care of yourself!

I feel like I'm starting to ramble. Truth is, I've been awfully concerned about you recently and I'm sending up some trial balloons in this letter to see what you respond to and how. There's a very strong connection between us and I've learned to listen to my intuition and my heart where you are concerned. Let me know soon how you are and please, please share anything with me any way you want to. Nothing will ever change how much I love you.

Your overprotective but loving cousin, Jean

P.S. I almost forgot! You wrote in your inventory about your memory and hearing problems. You also had a written note in your last letter about thinking we'd talked about shingles in the past. We did -- the first time we met, in the park, you told me about the shingles on your abdomen right before a bodybuilding event. As a matter of fact, if you hadn't told me about

your shingles outbreak, I would have been at a total loss when Ernie got his! So please ask me anytime about memories of our shared experiences. I've got a very good memory so tap into it whenever necessary.

February 1, 1993

Dear Jean,

Your letter to me is touching. My eyes tear up a lot, and my heart is full, hearing your comforting words and love. You are such a wonder to me. I still am deeply moved at how close and involved we are. I feel like I am blessed with a special gift having you in my life, Jean.

You said you have been "awfully concerned" recently and were sending out some "trial balloons" to see what I would respond to. I am not sure what you are concerned about. So I will run some speculations, since they are now running through my head. One is that I have not been writing as much, and maybe you take this to mean I am having problems and being distant with you. If that is it, I want you to know I have ongoing sequences of memories, and new issues, but I seem to be processing my feelings and solving my problems faster. I am also busy, busy, busy. I am writing my book every day, because I committed to a regular schedule. I go to two Incest Survivors meetings and two NA meetings each week. I do weekly therapy, and clean two houses a week. I also sponsor six women, which means a lot of phone time. I try to see my friend Lori once a week and keep in touch with two other friends. Then there's Jay-time. My life is full. I even get overwhelmed with how full it is. But in general, I think I am doing much better since Christmas. My process seems to have changed from pain, despair, panic and exhaustion, to sadness and anger. I live with a sense of dread, after all the onslaughts of the past two years. But I have more self-compassion, more creativity, and more energy.

Or have I missed responding to a letter of yours? If so, I did not do it intentionally. I cannot imagine excluding you from my life. I know that I do not feel the need to expound on my experiences on a daily basis. You saw me through a time when I felt I was all alone on an emotional roller coaster, and you heard me out. So, are you noticing a difference in the amount of

correspondence, or just that I seem different? Let me know.

You asked if I would be comfortable with your financial help with therapy. Yes, I have financial constraints with therapy. Susan and I have been discussing the possibility that I have multiple personality disorder. There are many degrees of MPD, and I would have to be diagnosed by a qualified therapist. Susan is not trained or qualified in this area, and I cannot afford someone who is. Jean, I have many feelings about your offer to help. I certainly appreciate such a loving gesture. I feel like you are nurturing me. But I do not know how to even consider such an offer. I do not even know what it means, exactly, and I fear that it would hurt our relationship. I remember when my mother loaned me money, and how I would feel obligated to see her and talk to her more than I would otherwise. I really cannot imagine I would do better even with you.

Jean, this whole year has been about taking baby steps and asking for help. It has been painful and wonderful. Yet I still trip out over what others think are small giving gestures. I cannot imagine getting to the point of being able to accept your offer. This feels sad to me. You are lovely, thoughtful and generous. You have shared so much of yourself with me. But money generosity takes me over the edge somehow.

I do not know why money is so complicated for me. I do know my entire life revolves around a sense of deprivation. I rarely have the money I need to take care of myself. Then there is the money I wish I had, to satisfy my taste for luxuries. These I can only appreciate from afar. Lori tells me I have expensive taste. She has money, and I help her pick out stuff to buy, because she loves my taste and artistic flair. My mother always said I should become a clothes designer. I used to create and design my own clothes. So here I am, exposing another Judith. I call her the “deprived child.” She is five, dirty and poor, and no one protects her. Maybe now you understand why I have such trouble receiving.

I have had a comfortable brainstorm. Maybe instead of giving me financial help directly, you could contribute to the book Susan (my therapist) and I are writing. You could be the editor, or editor and partner, or the producer. Is that what you call the person who financially backs the project?

I see this as an investment, and a way to carry messages of healing to incest

survivors on a national level. Susan says she can probably come up with the money but isn't sure, and I feel like time is important. So far, there is only one other book I know of that was written as a 12-step guide on this topic. In San Diego, there are two 12-step programs for incest. There are probably 14 meetings a week with 10 to 30 people at each meeting. And that is just San Diego. These programs are taking off, since many survivors are also recovering addicts and have been in other 12-step programs. They try to use guides from other programs, but these books were written for addicts, not people victimized as children. There is a huge need for a good guidebook.

I enclosed a disk with a rough draft for you to look at. Our book is probably 1/3 done. Susan has done a rough draft for most of Chapters One and Two. I have done the rough draft for Chapters Three through Six. So we are off to a great start. I would like to become financially more self-sufficient so I can get off public assistance. I have the ability to write about my process, and I want to use it to benefit myself and others.

Susan and I are looking into self-publishing. My goal is to publish by January of 1994. I will know if that is realistic after Susan and I have begun our content editing together. I figure I could handle orders, and Jay could help with the computer end. Susan thinks we could also add my visual aids (Remember Messages From the Heart?) So Jean, how's all this for responding to balloons?

I just wrote my sister a letter. I am not seeing her right now. I asked her to reconsider her decision to live in my mother's house. I listed every health problem and mental issue I have, that I cannot address due to lack of money. I told her I needed and wanted one-third of the value of the house. She left a message on my answering machine that she wants to meet or talk on the phone, and said she loved me. I believe it's worth another try. I want her to be aware of how my life has been affected. I believe she holds on to the idea that Jay takes care of me. She does not consider all our losses and difficulties, and she is distracted by her daughter and the new baby settling in. I hope my writing shatters her denial.

Jill believe she deserves it all, because she took care of my mother more than the rest of us. Maybe your mother is like that. She may hold bitterness, resentment, jealousy, or betrayal. More complex than just "being mean."

You seem to have a lot of feelings on this issue. Looking into that might be more helpful than trying to figure your mother out.

I do not know exactly what you mean about secrecy with money. Jay told me once I am too blatant, telling people what I buy and how much it costs. He does not like when I ask people questions about their income, or like when someone gets a birthday card filled with money and I ask how much they got. I never felt a need for privacy, until once this year when he referred to my disability income, and I was ashamed and infuriated. It hit me in my self-esteem. As for your speaking out, I say, fuck our old conditioning! You can discuss this as much as you want with me! I will not bring it up in any letter I write to your mother. So feel free. Be liberated, my cousin!!!

Good for you getting rid of your Jerk Client. I am proud that you got out in a week. I get into stuff like that and stay for years.

Yes, I have had more memories. I have them on a regular basis and process them steadily. I do not write them all out to you as much, as I said, because I am not as needy. I know you said I could share anything, but I am more into sharing what is going on now in my letters to you. I was concerned my memories were too much for you. Apparently not. But I know from other friends that listening to memories can be too much. It's an intense thing to share. People have limitations! I was concerned you were getting too strong a dose and getting overwhelmed. I was afraid you would turn away from me. That didn't happen, but I try to be sensitive to the possibility.

Disassociation is not new. It's an integral part of my coping skills. My therapy sessions did not reveal it to me. My therapist was very accepting, and was the first to tell me it was a way of coping. During my writing I began to understand why I have it, why I can't control it, and the problems it causes me. You asked me to let you know what my disassociation involves. It's easier to define the results. I have never tried to describe what goes on when I am in a disassociated state. But here goes!

I feel as though I am out of my body, and my hearing and interactions with others are cut off. I feel like I am floating, and I disconnect from time. I fight the disassociation by trying to force my attention back to something, or listen to TV, or read a book. It's a constant struggle. I do much better when I am alone and don't have to pay attention. Writing is good for me because I get to

work on completing my thoughts. When I am fragmented, I use the computer tools and do a ton of editing. Plus I write when I am alone, so I do better at staying in my body.

Reading can be difficult or impossible. When people talk to me, I hear about half of what they say. I improvise responses. That is why I love to write, because I have all the time I need to answer each paragraph in a letter. I can take my time, edit and delete, and there is no strain, or pressure to be present.

If I am in a noisy room, or with a lot of people talking, it can be awful. I have learned how to handle it, but the pressure to be “present” becomes unbearable. Like at the wedding reception. I am anxious, then I try to cover my anxiety, and it all snowballs inside of me. I pretend to be normal, but I hate living like this. My ability to fake it horrifies me at times. Nowadays, with friends, I just say I am disconnected when I am.

As I mentioned earlier, it has been suggested to me that the disassociation is severe enough to be considered multiple personality. I am not happy with this. Susan said multiplicity is very common among incest survivors, and that it is complex to work with. As I said, she has no skills in this area, and I can’t afford someone who does. So I sort of sit on this. Susan has some creative ideas how to work with it, and she is a very intuitive therapist, but it feels too experimental, too risky, to me.

I could get a more qualified therapist if I get rich from writing my book. All in good time, right? I can stay with Susan indefinitely. I do exchanges for my therapy.

I am concerned that doing a book with Susan is putting me on touchy ground. In my mind, the boundaries aren’t as defined. She is confident we can do both. We shall see....

I appreciate how you feel like protecting me from your mother. That feels very gentle and nurturing to me. Rest assured, I doubt there is anything your mother could say to me that would cause major pain. I am too removed from her. I know she is in denial. I initiated correspondence with her solely for the purpose of getting information about my father and my grandfather. I was not surprised she focused on things like my father’s naval career, and my grandfather’s medical information. All three aunts had different things to go

off on. It was kind of humorous. I stayed objective and had no expectations. I probably will just drop the whole thing. Even though you reassured me that I can do and say what I want, I fear I will go off on a tangent, cause a problem, upset your mother, and then we have a problem. I don't trust myself with them. I don't want you caught in the middle. Your mother is bringing you into it already, and that's not fair to you. Let me know what you think.

Thanks for sharing your sleeping problems with Ernie. Yes, I am interested to "hear more." Sometimes my memories come simply from being willing and open to telling what I remember. Emotions move in and out of me. Talking moves it along. There is power in "telling. I try to do it in group, in my journal or a letter, and in therapy. Go into any and all of this as you feel inclined. You mentioned "not being comfortable in the same bed with anyone" and anxiety when you stayed at Leslie's house. I hear that as stages and levels of remembering. It is common to remember the easy stuff first.

I have been thinking about using Shanti's room to sleep. Of course, my old way would be to stop sleeping with Jay altogether!

Going into the living room for one night, during a memory, is "self-care." But if I use the spare room as a cure-all, that would be "escape." I have always had issues sleeping with men. Then when I fell in love with Jay I kept twin beds. Eventually I put the twin beds together. But I still can't ever sleep in his arms or even next to him or touching him in any way. I never knew until lately that this was all a result of being abused in bed on a regular basis. I figure as I relive and recall what happened I will sleep deeper.

Well, Jean, this is a fucking documentary! I hope you can get through it all in one sitting! I love you.

Your cousin/friend, Judith

March 8, 1993

Dear Jean,

Well, it is 3 in the morning and I can't sleep. So I finally got up and made myself some hot milk and honey. I am too weary to write in my book. So I



figure I'll run my thoughts by you in a letter. I know you haven't had a chance to write back to my long letter yet. Our letters will probably cross in the mail!

I am dealing with new memories. I have seen my sister in the memories of rape. Either she is sitting on the bed while my dad rapes me or I am sitting on the bed while he rapes her. I have not told Jill. I have not collapsed. I am still cleaning my houses. I guess I would describe myself as on edge. I enjoy being with Jay, but as soon as he is gone I am back on the edge, seeing things and living with things that drive me batty. Like I am about to be strangled, pulling at my necklines, and wanting to cut my clothes up. I have a new thing with my hair. I feel I am going to lose it if my hair gets in my face. Like I can't get enough oxygen.

The saga goes on and on. I go to two incest meetings and express myself intensely there. My therapist has been gone for three weeks. I have had dental appointments and could go for several pages on that, but I'm getting tired. I triggered memories from when I was 13 or 14. Jay was with me for the first one, and Lori for the second. I felt beat up for days afterward. I am glad it is over. I have my mouth back, and retrieved deeper memories. I'm glad it's over. I have let my bad teeth hinder my eating ability for years.

Well, Jean, I hope to hear from you. I know my letters take a long time to answer.

Love, Judith

March 8, 1993

Dear Judith,

Well, I certainly need to write you a letter! Your last letters to me gave me lots to think about, and while I have been thinking, things with me are going from bad to worse. First, I want to respond to some things you said and then I'll tell you what's been happening around here.

I hope I didn't confuse you with my statements about sending up "trial balloons" in my last letter. The bottom line truth is that I had begun to

suspect that you might be a multiple personality and I wasn't sure how I should mention it to you. What you wrote in your inventory and your letters about your disassociation seemed to match what I had read about MPD, and I was concerned Susan was not experienced enough to handle this, and that your financial situation would make it hard for you to get any further help. I was just afraid that if I mentioned MPD, and you and Susan had never discussed it, that I might be causing trouble with your therapy. So in your own unique open way, Judith, you wrote back and validated everything I had been thinking about! It just keeps astonishing me how in tune we are. I guess I shouldn't have worried and just come right out with it! So no, I have not been noticing any changes in the frequency or tone in our correspondence -- I was just worried about the possibility of MPD and didn't know how or even if I should mention it. So let's consider that resolved!

Your response to my question about offering you financial help was about what I expected, too. Part of me agrees with you that it could affect our beautiful relationship. I just want so badly to help you somehow, but maybe we'll think of some other ways. Let's just shelve it for now.

I am very interested in the possibility of helping you and Susan with your book. Unfortunately, I have no publishing connections at all, but all my writing and editing experience is at your disposal if you need it. Sometime within the next year I should have a new computer system that will include an internal FAX board and a modem, so that should enable us to work together if we decide to do so! Let me know how you and Susan feel. I would also be open to getting involved financially.

I have started a file of all your letters to me, and all the incest information you send. So I'm building a good resource file for the time I get financially involved in helping incest survivors. As you will understand when you read the rest of my letter, I am unable to make any new financial commitments for the near future, but I'm confident that I'll be able to do so in the next year or two.

Well, Judith, on to my news. Last week Ernie and his job parted company. He was fired unexpectedly by his boss. While the quickness of the whole thing came as a surprise, I think you know that he has been having problems ever since his new boss came on board last August. He was able to work out

a fairly humane settlement -- his salary is continued for three months, and up to three months more if he isn't employed by then, and our medical coverage will be extended for that length of time also. So there's no immediate financial change for us, but the timing was very bad. We had been looking for a new house, as I think I mentioned, and we had just decided THAT VERY DAY to make an offer on a house we had found. So that's all off now. We will be here probably at least another year, although I'm going to start looking again as soon as he finds another job. It's too bad, because I'm am really tired of a lot of bullshit that's going on around here with neighbors and neighborhood, and I really want my own house.

So Ernie's employment problems are coming at a terrible time for me. Our marriage just seems to be disintegrating by the day. After trying to support and be there for him the last six months, now it looks like there's no end in sight. Our sex life has dropped to zero, and I sometimes feel so awful about that I could die. And now I have him at home ALL DAY LONG. Judith, I can't even tell you how difficult and distracting I am finding it. Now, of course, Ernie's not the kind of jerk husband that keeps interrupting me with stupid questions about household bullshit or anything like that, but he's got his resume, letters to write, etc. and I truly want to help him with it all but I'm just finding it so difficult. It seems like all I do is give, help, listen, and support, and what do I get back? Yes, a good supportive friend who will be there for me IF WE CAN EVER FIND THE TIME TO TALK ABOUT ANYTHING BUT HIM! Sometimes I think that some aspects of our marriage remain so good -- the friendship, the communication, the history, etc. -- that he finds it very hard to see and believe me when I tell him how unhappy and depressed I am about us. I talk about these issues in group, and I try to talk with him too, but there's just so much he's going through right now it seems I have to fight and fight for equal time and I'm just so tired of it.

So we plan to start seeing my therapist together for at least a few sessions and figure out where we go from here. We planned a trip to Maui March 24 - April 4, and while I was quite willing to cancel, Ernie said he really needed it, so we're still going. But I'm nervous about it. We can't even get along at home on weekends, so what are we going to do for ten days in Paradise? Maui is such a special place to me that I would hate to ruin its place in my heart with arguments and unhappiness. Well, hopefully, we'll have time for a

few sessions before we go and I'll just have to see what happens.

I'm trying to use that to get me through these days -- just see what happens. This is a very difficult transition time for both of us, and I'm trying to sit on my tendency to overreact, overplan, and over control every little thing. Besides, business isn't very good for me these days either. I told you about what happened with my first client this year. I'm working on another job, but it's small, and it's not going very well either. Is anything? I have a feeling that when I look back over my life, 1993 is going to be another one of those years when I turn the pages very quickly.

Stay in touch with me because I need all the love I can get right now, and the loving people in my life are very few. That's only one of the reasons you are, and will always be, so special to me.

Love, Jean

March 22, 1993

Hi Jean,

I am finally able to get to answering your last letter. Realizing that you will not receive it until you get back from your vacation with Ernie, to Maui.

I hope things have improved, or that you've at least had a reprieve from the distress you've been living in. Life can be such a bitch! I suppose time has to pass. And maybe your trip will be nurturing for you both right now. I hope so. Did you get those therapy sessions in before you left? Jay and I always benefit when we take a big issue to our therapist.

Lately I have upped my meetings, from three/four a week to seven, because of a crisis. My latest memories involved being in bed with Jill while Dad violated us. They drove me into a frenzy. The momentum built, and I had dreams of using drugs and having sex with strangers, and my skin was crawling constantly. I wanted out. I wanted to escape so bad I thought seriously about using drugs. I have been clean for 9 years! So I went to more meetings – one a day (NA and Incest Survivors Anonymous). Each day I shared and finally got over the fear that I would use drugs. My dreams and

my crawling skin were signs I needed more support.

I think I may have mentioned to you that once you stop being Ernie's main support, he will be more inclined to take care of himself, or get what he needs from outside. Even if he gets irritable when you try to take care of yourself and he thinks you are pulling away. Your depression may be your way of pulling away. I hope you have found some loving ways you can take care of your needs.

I heard your frustration with getting a house put on hold. This is a drag, to say the least. It sounds like such a letdown to make an offer on a house you liked, then have to pull out. I know you want more safety in your life, and you feel you won't get it.

I understand how your sex life is at zero with all the current stress. Sex is fun for Jay and me again. When I am in memory episodes we just wait it out. So I figure you will too. When we are in this stuff it seems like it last forever. But it doesn't. Your situation will change, and your feelings will shift. It will get better. Just don't try to tackle too much on your own. It's OK to share any time, and to take care of Jean. To nurture yourself, and do only what you are able to do in a loving way. Or not at all. We all have limitations in giving. You do not have to be an endless reservoir. Nurse your own wounds.

I have one topic left to address – multiple personality disorder (MPD). It will be a long one, so I want to go clean a house now and mail this letter, so I will do that, and write about MPD soon.

Sincerely, Judith

P.S. I await Susan's response on your being our editor. I am so excited you were receptive! I will get back to you soon on that.

March 26, 1993

Dear Jean,

Now to respond to the part of your letter about MPD. A touchy subject to say the least! When I brought it up in my letter to you, Jean, it was very difficult.

I keep wanting to run and hide. I feel sick to my stomach driving to my sessions. Like a major secret is out, and my cover isn't working anymore. I get terrified. When you said you had begun to suspect I might be a multiple personality and weren't sure how to mention it, I was shocked. I was shocked that you hooked into the possibility just by hearing about my disassociation. And I was shocked and scared that you were wondering about it at the same time I have been wondering. And finally, I was shocked and scared that you have been concerned about this, and could discuss it with me so openly and easily.

So now I will share a short journey into this new area of Judith. A bit of backtracking is necessary. Some months ago I had visual memories of abuse while driving to LA by myself. I was trying not to panic, and just let them come while I drove. I went into a series of visual episodes (?), seeing a river running through my chest that was filled with people. The river ran endlessly in both directions, as far as the eye could see. It felt like it had something to do with inner people, and there were so many I got really frightened. When I got to LA I told Lori what happened. I drew what I saw on a large sheet of paper. It felt like these people inside of me were screaming for attention.

This is the first episode I shared with Susan. That was when she said she was not qualified to work with MPD. So far, Susan does not believe I am a multiple, but acknowledges that I do suffer from severe disassociation. Then again, she admits she is not even qualified to diagnose MPD. By my next session, she had gotten a bunch of books on the subject. Since I could not afford another therapist we figured we would plod clumsily along and see what happens.

Then I read the novel "When Rabbit Howls." I found the book in a weird way. Shanti's girlfriend, Vickie, asked if I would like to borrow it. Then Shanti asked if I would like to read it, and Shanti does not normally suggest I read something he has read. I felt as if he and everyone else in the world was giving me a message. "They know, I don't."

I am feeling a great deal of resistance toward even considering the possibility I am a multiple. Lori suggested it too. So then when you wrote to me, Jean, about MPD, you were one more person.

Last week I went to get a current book on diagnosing MPD. I did not buy it

because it cost way too much. I just read through some of the sections in the bookstore. Plus, it was very clinical, and I did not want to self-diagnose. But I did read up on the time loss that seems to go with MPD, and my situation does not sound like what was described.

I do not have clothes in my closet that I don't wear, or know how they got there. I don't end up wearing clothes I don't remember changing into. I don't find myself in places and wonder how I got there.

I don't suddenly come to myself, with people around, and not know what I'm doing there.

I have plenty of short space-outs, and floating foggy feelings, etc. The worst was my wedding day. I felt like I was a robot, and someone else took over my actions and smiled from my face. But according to what I read, episodes like that would be happening much more often if I were MPD.

Lori and Susan say some of my conclusions are wrong. I feel as if I am progressing into something, or that I have had something all along and it is getting worse. They say I would have been having the symptoms all along, and would not be conscious of a double life. So I hear them, but I can't explain why I had occasions when I sense the names of three different girls with different names and personalities. One seems to have said that she took over during the wedding. Another seems to have said she takes over in the car and drives when I have memories.

These experiences are those of a "clean" person! I have had no mind-altering drugs, or alcohol, in nine years! And no medications except for Advil. I cannot attribute these experiences to an LSD flashback, since I have contacted a researcher on LSD who has told me people don't have flashbacks after two years. People are very accepting of all this, but I am so confused that their acceptance weirds me out too. I worry that people will think I belong in the funny farm.

So what else to say? It's all so out there from the norm. I have been extremely edgy since these experiences. I pray for relief, or at least sleep. I have days where I feel almost normal, but something keeps prodding me. Like something is coming, or pending, or whatever. I wonder what you will think of me. Will you remain in my life?

I am taking a risk here. I don't want to put on an act for you, and lose the honesty and intimacy we have shared. I keep judging myself, saying I am an unpredictable person, just like my father. That's a dreadful one, isn't it? I put my bizarre thoughts out there so that people in my life will help me counter them.

I guess this is it for now. I love you.

Your cousin, Judith

April 13, 1993

Dear Judith,

I read your last two letters right after Ernie and I returned from Maui, and I felt the need to respond to you immediately. I hope you haven't been worrying too much in the meantime that you put me off with anything you said in your letter. The truth is, Judith, that the idea of not wanting you in my life is so inconceivable to me that I'm tempted to respond with humor. But I know you are very concerned about this so I'll try to be serious. There is simply nothing that you could do or tell me that would make me not want you in my life. All I want from you is that you remain in my life, and since you are still here, you don't have to worry about giving me anything else. And as far as not being able to identify with you, so what? I don't have to identify with someone to love her and want her in my life. I know you will continue to have concerns about this, and that's OK, but try not to let them keep you from sharing with me.

The first time you mentioned MPD in your letters, you did it so casually that I guess I did not fully realize how the whole issue affected you. So I felt comfortable telling you that I had been wondering if you might have experienced any of the "symptoms" that seem to go with this syndrome. Now I have a better idea of how confusing and scary this is for you so I want to talk more about why I suggested it.

I, too, have read *When Rabbit Howls*, and many years ago, *Sybil*. I know that these are stories about MPD that have been much simplified and adapted for mainstream literature so I would never have the audacity to think that I really



learned anything about MPD from reading them. It did seem to me, however, that MPD was an extreme form of “disassociating,” and so when you talked about your disassociation, for me it was a natural, logical question. Also, what little I’ve read seemed to associate MPD with early childhood abuse, so that was another connection. I don’t want you to think that I ever observed anything in our little bit of personal contact that made me think of it, because I didn’t. For me, it was purely an intellectual deduction based on what little I knew about MPD and what I read in your inventory. Until I read your inventory, I didn’t know that your episodes of abuse were so extreme, so frequent, and so early in your life.

Like you, I am very wary of “self-diagnosis”, especially since MPD is so little documented, and apparently still so controversial a topic in the psychiatric community. But I do want to share some more of my thoughts on the subject with you, so that maybe you’ll understand why I am not repulsed or freaked out at the possibility that you might uncover it in yourself. I realize that while I have the freedom of treating it as an interesting concept, for you it might be part of your life, and therefore scary and confusing.

If MPD represents an escape from an impossible situation (early physical and sexual abuse) it seems to me like an incredibly logical response. I think I have also read that only very intelligent, creative personalities are capable of developing this kind of escape. If that is true, Judith, then that’s probably another reason I thought of MPD in connection with you. You are an incredibly intelligent, creative, gifted person who has been unable to develop herself fully because of the horrible things that were done to you. I have always known and felt this about you. And everything you told me in your last letter only makes me more sure of this.

I feel that I should stop here. I’m just a layperson and I do not want to fall into the trap of trying to analyze your experiences. I’m glad you’re working with someone like Susan who is honest with you about her limitations. If, however, you and she feel like continuing to investigate MPD I hope you can find some sources. What universities and university libraries are close to you? I asked my therapist about finding good books on the subject and she was not too helpful. Please let me know if you find any. My heart broke when you told me about trying to read a book in a bookstore that was too expensive for you to buy. I know you don’t want to allow money in our relationship, but

maybe you would let me make a birthday or Christmas present to you of some good books if we find any. Or we could always figure out something you could do or make for me in return as a swap.

Anyway, Judith, what I hope you get out of this amateur psychology is the realization that MPD does not scare or repulse me in the least.

On to my life. A lot of the things you told me in your letter are the same things I'm hearing from my therapist and my group. Ernie is now seeing my therapist regularly and it's a huge weight off my mind. The original plan was for us to see her together, but he suggested he go by himself the first time and now he's just continuing by himself. Actually, that was what I wanted all along but I didn't know if he'd do it. While I think we could benefit from some work together, I think he's got a lot of issues to work on - - especially now, with his getting fired on top of everything else. And I continue with my group and that's what I'm comfortable with. It's a tremendous load off my mind to know he's seeing my therapist. I was never comfortable with the therapist he was seeing four or five years ago. I know and trust mine completely, and I think she's exactly what he needs. I have seen her at work on issues of self-assertion and passive/aggressiveness and I know she'll do him a world of good.

I just realized I haven't said anything about our vacation. Not too surprising, since I've been trying to work out for myself if I had a good time or not. I guess the answer is, I enjoyed Maui (as always, who wouldn't?) but Ernie and I did not have a particularly good time together. I realize now that in Ernie's current state of depression, he wasn't going to enjoy himself no matter what I did or suggested. Plus, I picked up a little stomach/intestinal flu the morning I left which kept me in bed, or near the toilet, for the first day or two. Then Ernie got it, and there went another day or two. So we blew the first half of the time with one or the other being sick, and were unable to do a lot of the things we'd planned. We then spent the second half in a very isolated place on Maui which has nothing to do even if you want to, and I really enjoyed that a lot more. I figured out this trip why I love it so much there -- because it's the only place I feel comfortable doing nothing. When you work for yourself, even if you're not busy, there's always something you

could be doing. And since I carry too much of the responsibility for Ernie on my shoulders, that's another reason I'm always feeling I should be doing something. So I need to get away to where there is literally nothing to do so I can enjoy doing nothing! Well, it took a while, but I finally figured that out.

All in all, I was glad to come home. It seemed I was working so hard to make sure we had at least an OK vacation, to express myself honestly but then let it go, that it's a relief to come home, so I can sulk or go hide in my office if I want to.

Well, Judith, this is turning into a book after all. I'm planning a quick trip to my mother's soon. I hope I have responded to everything in your letter. I know I'm still not very good at recognizing depression in myself, and taking the appropriate steps, but I'm working on it. Your letters help a lot. I'm sorry your memories forced you to up your meetings, but I know how necessary they are to you. You work so hard, Judith, and you're so brave. I'm so glad you're in my life.

Jean

April 19, 1993

Hi Jean,

I have not heard from you yet, so decided to write again and check in with you. I figure you came back from your vacation to Hawaii and found my long letter. Once I sit down to write I always seem to have a lot to say. How was Hawaii? Was it still Paradise? Paradise or just another place to feel problems? That's the way problems are for me, anyway. They go where I go. Please write only when you have the time. I do not need an answer back right away.

I am on the verge of sending you some disks of my book. Susan and I will be doing book talk soon, and I will get back to you on being our editor.

I have been writing a lot. This week is a better week. I have a lot of creative juices flowing. I am doing a drawing to give to my therapist, too. It felt good to start it. It never takes me long to draw, it's the getting started.

Shanti moves out this week. Jay will probably be happy to have all my attention now. I think he would have preferred not having to share his living space. Now I have to let myson go into the wild blue yonder and trust he will be OK. I keep thinking I have to be there to protect him. It is weird to let go of this role. Well, Jean, I know I will live through this change and adjust. In comparison to other issues it is a piece of cake!!!!

May 1, 1993

Hi Jean,

I have enclosed a picture of us to give you. I wanted to send it along with some wedding shots, but we keep having to delay our order. We have had one financial situation after another, including about \$2500 in car repairs. Today the car is in the shop again for another \$400, so who knows when we will have wedding pictures for anyone.

Susan has agreed to have you be our editor. So how do we go from here? Do we come up with a fee now or later? What is the payment procedure? What are our responsibilities, and what are yours? Susan said we put our book on hard copy for you and mail it. Do you need it on disk too? Do you do the editing on paper, or can it be done on disk?

Here on disk is the first section of our book for you to peek at and get an idea of what I have been writing. This is not for you to edit. I want you to see it before Susan changes it. I am interested in your opinion of my writing. Strengths and weaknesses. OK? I also just turned this over to Susan to add, delete, and expound. I realize it is quite a bit to read and I do not expect a quick return. Read it only when you feel up to it. I know you are going through a lot. My best friend Lori can't get through even one chapter. I can't believe how many times I printed it out and re-edited it. Each time I think I am done, and then I add another paragraph or page, or move sentences around. I can see flaws in my writing when I read it aloud to Susan. Misspelled words, missing words. A vague sentence. I want to think of this as a rough draft so that I will give it up and move on.

Our goal is to get a draft to you by November 1. That may not be realistic. It

is hard to know what would be realistic! My disassociation problems get in the way of that kind of scheduling. Susan, Lori, Susan's husband, Jay and I put our heads together and agreed to shoot for six months.

Jean, thank you for your supportive acceptance of the possibility of multiplicity. When you shared that is was only an intellectual deduction on your part I was relieved. I was, and still am, afraid that if that is my diagnosis, everyone will abandon me. Your response that it's an "incredibly logical and creative" response to abuse was helpful to hear, even though I can't quite let it in yet. But I do feel relief, hearing you say those things to me.

I have a birthday coming on June 15. We have never exchanged birthday gifts but I would like to start. Please let me know when your birthday is.

I am glad to hear Ernie is in trustworthy hands. I know that when Jay is in trustworthy hands it gives me patience and confidence. When we get to a stuck place we say "let go and let Susan."

I'm glad you finally told Ernie how you felt. I am glad you speak up. Keep speaking up in group, to Ernie, and to me. Your silence is binding you. Ernie may not be as fragile as you think. I have also learned we can take our rage to therapy, and to women friends, and come back to our partners later after we have vented. It's a great skill and I am glad to have acquired it.

At least you enjoyed half your vacation.

Love, Your eternally creative cuz

June 20, 1993

Hi Jean,

I just found a letter from last month that I forgot to mail. I wondered why I was not hearing from you and now I know. How are you? I think of you often. Any changes with Ernie's job hunt, or at least is he feeling better? Has therapy helped? I have been feeling great for a few weeks, which feels miraculous. I have been busy too. I finally have some time to write to you

before I get back to my book.

I refinished some furniture this month. I had never owned a dresser or chest of drawers, but Jill asked me if I wanted one of my mother's. I said yes, figuring I was owed something! But once it got here I realized it came from my father's and mother's bedroom. It felt disgusting. So I refinished it, and it felt cleansing. We did an Indian purifying ritual with smoke. It looks really good now. It was so coated with nicotine that the first layer came off with the stripper. It was disgusting to think thirty years of smoke caused that much scum.

Jay and I went to an NA convention this weekend. The speakers were excellent and the food was good. We ate out a few times and that was fun, since we rarely do that anymore. There was a comedy show presented by three professionals who are recovering addicts, so all the humor was about drugs and the NA program lingo. I can't remember the last time I laughed so hard and so long. My throat hurt from laughing! Laughter feels like such a gift.

I have had no flashbacks or insomnia for close to two months. Who knows why the memories have stopped. Lori and Madlynn still go in and out of it. So I don't believe this process is over. But I feel like I have had a vacation. I am more rested with the better sleep. I feel more confident that I can have a good life, with happy feelings. **Trauma does not last forever, nor does the rage or fear. Feelings do pass, and people do heal their wounds.**

Shanti has been in Hawaii for a few months now. I miss him but feel more at ease with the change. I think I mentioned we turned his room into an office. I hung lots of photos. I made some collages, and also hung some 8x10's we have of us. I am now collecting photos of close friends to hang. Would you send me a favorite photo of you and Ernie, and one of you alone? Preferably casual, not posed? If you don't have any 5x7's could you make some and have that be my Christmas present? I am not hanging any photos of my mother, father or brother. But I did make a collage of Jay and his family.

I am off for now. Take care.

Much love, Judith

July 7, 1993

(I am not going to spell check or reread this letter so I can rush off to work and still get it in the mail. I hope it is readable!)

Hi,

God, Jean, you and Ernie are certainly going through trying times. I felt so sad. Life is difficult enough without so many situations going on at the same time for you both.

I am so sorry to hear Ernie's mother passed. Your suggestion to Ernie that he should "try to think what he needed to know in order to be at peace with her death" was so supportive and sensitive. I think Ernie's reactions to his family's behavior sound normal. I don't think anything could have been done to spare him whatever he felt. You said Mary's memorial service was typical of the pain she went through all her life. My mother's service was a soap opera. I assume Ernie could not get his needs met during the funeral process. He will have to seek his own resolution. I hope you, Jean, can let go and let God, or let go and let his therapist (private family joke). Please let me know if there is anything you need from me, Jean. Maybe a call instead of a letter?

And on top of it all you had his family in the house for a whole week. You sound beat! Company is hard enough, let alone three kids. Much less not being consulted in advance. God, Jean, it sounds like too much to me. I cannot imagine having that many people in my home for a whole week. Plus the loss of your bed, and having to give up control in the kitchen. Did you speak up before everyone got angry?

I hope your return from Oklahoma was safe, and that you and Ernie can get back on track.

Anytime you feel like crying to me about any mom issues you did not have time to go into, please feel free. If you want me to just listen and not comment or give feedback, please ask for that too.

Maybe if I stop butting in so much this would encourage further conversation???

All your new computer equipment is so exciting. I read your descriptions to

Jay. I was happy you got Windows. We love Windows! I will talk to Jay and get back with you. I now realize I did not send you any disks. I think I was waiting to hear what kind you needed. I was not sure if you had Windows. But maybe I forgot to ask the questions. Let me know the answers and I will send you the disk. Maybe work being slow for you right now is a blessing, even if you're not comfortable with it. I guess I will see your new logo on your envelopes. What made you decide on a change?

Thanks for telling me your birthday. It should be easy to remember, it's so close to mine. But I only remember birthdays because we have them in a computer program. I missed the one you just had. Happy belated birthday, Jean! I hope you were able to celebrate before the shit hit the fan.

Now that Shanti is in Hawaii I am obsessed with thinking about going there! I fantasize about going for Christmas but the rates are probably outrageous. I can't imagine Christmas without Shanti. And I certainly would love to be away from Jay's family and take a vacation instead! We are caught up on our credit cards, but we still need a lot of things, like a dependable car, for one. We could probably stay with Shanti instead of some hotel for a hundred bucks a day! He has no furniture, but we could bring sleeping mats and sleep on the floor. We could bring our own cooking pans. We couldn't afford rental cars, and even though Shanti's father George has a car, and he would probably be an entertaining and sweet guide, I don't want to be around someone who smokes dope. I hear the grocery stores are outrageous there. Maybe we could fix and eat local seafood. Does Hawaii have a fishing industry?

Jean, you mentioned you have a free trip coming. You said you were considering a white water rafting trip, or coming here so we could visit and talk book. What would you say about meeting in Hawaii? I do not know if we need to get together to go over the book. I thought we could handle that by letter, phone, or modem. But this could be a fun opportunity to combine vacations and share on the book in a beautiful setting.

I am still sitting on my Messages From the Heart business. I think about picking it up again but not now. I think the book is my priority until it goes out to you. I feel disappointed about the Heart business, since I spent so much time developing it. Hopefully no one will come out with the same idea before



I'm ready to promote it again.

Did I mention I started to swim every day again, now that our pool has warmed up? My body is loosening up. My hip responds well to swimming. It feels like such a gift to be free from pain.

I am off again! Take care. I hope to hear from you soon.

Much love, Judith

July 28, 1993

Hi Jean,

Well, no spell check again so watch out!

Got your letter the other day. Here is the disk of the book in WordPerfect for you. Jay said that would be better than trying to convert it. I wanted to loan you our software, but Jay is a stickler about legal agreements. He also pointed out that you don't need to see anything but the words, the spelling and grammar, not the way it looks, with my fonts and spacing and all.

I am not sure if I told you we named the book "Slaying our Inner Dragon – A 12-Step Guide for Childhood Sexual Abuse."

In one of my letters I had some questions about procedure – our responsibilities, your responsibilities, and the game plan for the money end of it. I bring it up again in case you forgot. But I realize you may be waiting to see and check out the work before you answered. Anyway, about the money...all I remember is asking if you would edit the book as a good cause. Let me know if you are contributing your work or if you want to be paid, and how we could work that out.

We can't handle Hawaii even during the off season. Maybe next year. So since Hawaii is out and you are not going whitewater rafting, then I want you to know that I WOULD LOVE TO HAVE YOU COME TO SAN DIEGO AND WOULD LOVE TO HAVE YOU STAY WITH US HERE INSTEAD OF SOME HOTEL (if that is comfortable and would be your idea of a vacation). Jay is comfortable with this too. It would be fantastic for the two

of us to get to share non-stop for days or a week or whatever. Our computer/office has a twin bed (pretty soft) and its own shower, toilet, and closets. I have more free time now than I have had for a while. Some of my weekly housecleaning jobs went monthly, and I have only one weekly job right now. I could move that if it would interfere with our time together. I can arrange to pick you up at the airport. I would love to take you around on my non-work days. I haven't the money to play expensively on outings, but we could go to different beaches, shopping, to Balboa Park, and art shows.

I am going to list what Jay and I are eating now. After you read it, you can let me know what you're up for in the food area. You are welcome to join us on our food plan or you can do your own thing. No expectations or territorial issues from me in the kitchen domain!

I suppose it would be good to let you know:

We have no sugars in the house, so you may want to get some for your cereal.

Water is our only beverage, so there are no coffees, teas or soft drinks.

We no longer have bread or crackers in the house, but have mayo and mustard in the fridge if you wanted to pick up some sandwich materials

We weigh and measure our food, so that may be weird to you. It is to me!

We have adjusted to this eating plan but it may be pretty weird for you to be around. Hopefully not.

In response to your letter:

Are you designing your brochure for your business and then doing your own printing? After seeing your Christmas letter I figure you could.

What does your therapist suggest about sharing a bed with Ernie? Is it mainly his snoring? It is so weird to think I felt like killing Jay over his snoring some months ago when I was in memory, and now I don't even wake up.

Did I tell you I only get up once or twice a night now? I am amazed at how different it feels to sleep like an average person. Jay says it's like living with

someone else.

Moms are tough to deal with. I empathize for sure with your being “unhappy” over your mother’s lack of interest in your life and problems. My mother was never able to share on the emotional level I needed. I spent a lifetime trying to change her, or trying to live her way, feeling resentment that my needs were not met, and chasing the illusion that some day they would be. Bottom line is I never did. Al-Anon was helpful, but I never got “unhooked” until I saw her will. Someone told me once, “you will never get your deeper needs met by your parents, so find an alternative nurturing from other sources. Let them go.” I never forgot those words. Somehow, they helped. But why did it take her death to finally give me some level of peace?

So I think I understand some of your quandary with your mother. I plan to write a letter to my mother this week and read it to my therapist. It will contain all the things I never said to her face, and my feelings about her not giving me what I needed.

I don’t think there is anything wrong with being quiet with your mother, and you choosing the time to tell her where you are at. If you do it at all. You have that right. And I encourage you to make your own decision and not let your mother’s insecurity and jealousy pressure you into some kind of explanation. Fuck your mother’s end of the problem! I hope you can take care of Jean, and find your own way.

Love, Judith

August 30, 1993

Hi Jean,

Shit! I don’t know what happened! Susan said she did send our disk with hard copies. This was about three weeks ago. I will check the post office this morning and see if it is in some dead box. I put a return address on it too. It was a large manila envelope. Shit! I was so looking forward to hearing what you thought of what we sent.

I did save the letter I enclosed with the disk and hard copies. So for now I

will send that, so that at least you know I responded to your computer questions and personal stuff. I am sorry for the mix-up. I hope you get this soon. Susan is at a standstill now, since her husband just had surgery and is bedridden at home for several weeks. I don't want to ask her to make another disk just yet. But if I don't find anything soon I will try to organize and send a new letter out with another disk and more hard copies.

September 1, 1993

BOOK DISCUSSION: 1) I talked to Susan and we agreed on:

Yes, to send hard copies that are double-spaced Yes, (of course) to spelling, grammar, punctuation Yes, to feedback on the visual look Yes, to note ways we could organize better

2) Originally you asked for a sample. Do you still want one? Should we send all we have completed, or should we wait and send the whole thing?

3) The stuff you did get from me (Inner Cover, Introduction, Personal Statement) is in overhaul. You can throw it out if you want. Susan and I will be dealing with my brainstorming changes after her husband gets better. She said she has no problems with what I did, and expected me to change stuff. But she wants to discuss some of her new ideas and has been writing more. She told me I was a darn good "editor." So it must be a saving grace you did not receive the original enveloped. This must seem like a mess to you.

adieu

September 2, 1993

Hi Jean,

I sent my letter out yesterday, and was in such a hurry I left out some responses. When I think you were waiting for responses about your wanting to come visit, I am greatly disturbed.

Congratulate Ernie on his new job. I was happy to hear the news. I know how much of a strain that was on you. Hopefully things will get back to an even

keel (if there is such a thing)!

I was also happy to hear you have an important new job of your own. What a timely gift, eh? I look forward to hearing more about it when you have the opportunity to write.

Jay and I are both restless to gain better earning power. We keep thinking about extra jobs but have not decided on anything yet. There are so many things we both want. His wants are computer- oriented, and mine are furniture. I have picked up some extra cleaning time at one house this past two weeks. And that has helped. I do not like how I feel physically from housecleaning and want to get out of it at some point. I am trying a small mail- out for my Messages From the Heart business. It is hard for me to consider this seriously since it would eliminate my writing time. Yet it might enable me to let go of housecleaning.

Time is difficult even now. So often I spend time with things that come up, instead of writing. Although I have almost finished the sixth step in the book, which is great. I have also written some guidelines for survivors who want to write a story of their own recovery. We want 12 stories, with two or three from men. Do you know anyone out there who would be interested? If you do, I will send you the guidelines.

I had been free of incest memories for over three months up until two weeks ago. I started to see my father's face projected onto Jay's, and saw the institution where my father went when he ended up with wet brain from alcohol withdrawal. I also flashed on him in the hospital when he was dying of cancer. I remembered co- dependent behavior like massaging him in the hospital. Once again, Jay was a "trigger."

I plan to deal with this stuff with Susan today. The good news is that the memories did not cause panic, shock, or insomnia like they used to. I feel some kind of breakthrough – like maybe the worst IS over.

Jay and I have been slowly "letting in" the awareness that things are smoother now than they have ever been. These last three months of feeling so even, so normal, in my days runs side-to-side with a feeling that IT WON'T LAST. A sense of doom follows me like a shadow. Not very tangible, but somehow I feel it even in the midst of joy. Sometimes I still start to believe

my memories are really happening in the present. What brings me back is a conversation I had with my sister, when she told me some neighbors remember seeing my father with his hands up her (Jill's) dress. That image comes back as if I can see it (maybe I was there.) So my denial no longer keeps getting in the way. This seems to have helped me SURRENDER TO THE FACT that my father is a perpetrator of sexual abuse against myself and others.

Another positive: my new bed no longer feels so constricting or confining. One day it all changed. It even feels big to me now! I am amazed at how my perceptions are a direct result of the memory stage I am in. Sex with Jay has been so relaxed. My self-consciousness about being naked is gone. I am aware of how am I able to let him be sexual with me, without feeling compelled to do something for him. This is so new! I can relax even when I don't have an orgasm. I cannot believe how far we have come in this area.

My sister's birthday is in two weeks, and I will be seeing her then. I still feel all my issues with her, but they seem to be under the surface. Mainly I feel frustration and jealousy. And I keep it at bay, waiting to see if Jill will collect from a law suit she filed. Did I ever tell you about that? She was injured once on her way to the emergency room. I don't want to dwell on it, but I can't help thinking, will she win? Will she really turn over the money to buy my share of the house? She thinks she might get around \$20,000. It is crazy to even think of the possibility. To trust her is crazy. But I still hold on to the hope she will come through.

Sometimes I feel money hungry, and other times I just want the stress out of our relationship. If she really comes through with this she will have "made good" on what my mother left me of my relationship with my sister. I do see her, and she seems guilt-ridden, and I feel distant, and on guard while still trying to love her. It's a drag.

Well, Jean, I guess I have blabbed enough. I know you are busy with your new job and do now expect an answer right away. Just write when you are comfortable.

Love, Judith

August 15, 1993

Dear Jean,

Just a quick note!

I just read for the first time Susan's writing sample that was sent to you, called "The Introduction" and "The Other Introduction."

I brainstormed off it and have enclosed my changed version. I am into simple and to the point. Susan's writing was what I would call a rough draft. I don't know whether Susan considered it that when she sent it to you. We are meeting this week to go over the new version, which I sent you.

I changed her introduction a lot. I simplified it and got rid of all the dragon lore. Some of it was too irrelevant. Susan thought we could have two introductions, but I think it is too weird and a publisher would probably think so too. I also pulled out three paragraphs that go with a "Personal Statement" she will be writing later.

I realize you will not usually have to hear this version changing stuff, except when we go over your changes. I hope you don't mind hearing it this time. I couldn't handle your thinking that Susan's version was a final version approved by me.

Love, Judith

P.S. Ignore the page numbers. They are for Susan's reference.

September 16, 1993

Hi Jean,

Congratulate Ernie on his new job. What a relief for you both! And how far-out that his job may lead to some work for you. How intuitive you were in using your down time to upgrade your equipment and redesign your look. Now you can present your new portfolio.

It is too bad you didn't get to pursue the house you wanted. I hope there is a

possibility to buy later or assume the lease.

Yes, I am now going by Jay's last name. I did that as a way to disown my family and their name.

My life these next few weeks will be more complicated. Jill is in the hospital. She decided to go to a chemical dependency unit to detox, not only from the methadone, but she had been using heroin too. All this time I knew she was lying about sticking to the legal doses of methadone. Apparently things got pretty ugly between herself and her daughter, but no one told me about it. This kind of secrecy still outrages me. I take my anger to Susan, instead of directing it at Jill, and I attempt to visit her in the hospital as a supportive family member.

After 21 days in the hospital, she plans to go into a long-term recovery home for up to one year (if she makes it that long). Lots of people walk out early. Addicts are very self-centered, and hate being told what to do. She has quit her job and told her oldest and best friend she can't see her anymore. (They used together for 15 years.) So she is making a lot of right decisions at this point.

I fear Jill will relapse, and somehow lose or ruin the house. Probate is almost finished, and she and I and my brother would be joint owners. I have to make some new decisions. I am calling today to get legal direction in case Jill relapses. I am worn out, and have decided to stop the daily hospital visits. I need to get caught up with household stuff and answer your letter.

Yes, January or February would be a good time to visit for 4-5 days or longer. I look forward to your coming very much.

Settling Jill's lawsuit could take a couple years. I think I confused you about some of this. Jill doesn't want to sell the house. She wants to live in it forever. She wants to buy me out because she feels guilty living there. But I take what she says with a grain of salt. My brother does not know any of this. Not about Jill being in the hospital, or about the property. I have no clue what my responsibility is. Maybe the legal advice will help.

Now to the really personal things you shared with me. I want to thank you for opening up to me. Going back in your mind to your "growing up years"



sounds like an opening up process that I relate to a lot. We pained people defend ourselves so well from our pasts, and then as adults we get left with the loss. I felt empathy, compassion, love, understanding, and a kind of relief, because as you walk through this pain you are retrieving your SELF in the process.

I understand why you are depressed. There is an immense amount of grief under these issues. Depression may be your only response right now. You have been through an incredible number of painful experiences this year. You are entitled to your "crying sessions." I am glad you can talk openly with me about this.

I hope you continue with your group. It sounds like you are going into deeper levels of pain, and I hope you find the support you need. I too will support you any way you ask me too. More frequent letters, or even phone appointments. Let me know what you need.

Love, Judith

November 1, 1993

Hi Jean,

I have been thinking of you so thought I would write. I know I already wrote but wanted to write again while I have time.

I have been so busy. I work four days a week now. I got three more houses in the past month, and I am not taking any more. We are now making enough extra money we do not have to pinch so much. It's hard on me, and they are large homes (one is an estate). I can work for close to 7 or 8 hours now.

I am doing well emotionally. Really well! I feel as though I am normal these days. I don't have the dread or fear that it will all end any moment. That is a wonder in itself. Even with the hard work, I feel an inner freedom.

I even worked on "Messages From the Heart." I don't even know how long it's been since I did that! My confidence feels like it is back. In just two days, I redid my display album, redid my literature and added a logo, and made up

some laminated samples. I made a plan to go to two Recovery stores in San Diego and do a mailout in the next two weeks.

Would you have any stores in Chicago you could send me the address to?

I no longer attend incest group meetings, but I still do three meetings a week. One for NA and two for food addiction. We both have lost weight and feel healthy. I thought for a while we were going to gain weight and look like so many older couples, like out-of-shape couch potatoes. Now we are quite the slim couple!

I have been working with Jill, urging her to attend meetings at Nar-Anon or Al-Anon. She has not been willing so far. Since she has been in the recovery house, I have been able to detach from her somewhat. I do not dwell anymore on the possibility she will leave the house and relapse. But something I keep remembering is Jill telling me she had been using heroin along with her methadone for FOUR YEARS. Four years ago is when my mother changed her will. I still think Jill manipulated my mother into changing her will, so Jill could live in the house, instead of the three of us inheriting. Jill still swears she is going to buy me out when her lawsuit is settled. Maybe I should just let it go and chalk it up to her disease. But until I have that money in hand, I feel I must battle my sister and defend my rights and boundaries. I assume this still comes from my feeling that my mother protected Jill and not me, and I feel abandoned again. I hate even owning that. I really do not care to waste any more feelings or energy over my mother. But I doubt that denying the feelings is any better!

I saw the movie "The Joy Luck Club" a few weeks ago. At the end, I felt waves of grief over my own relationship with my mother. I couldn't stop crying in the theater, and in the parking lot when we were leaving. I recuperated in half an hour and went on with my day. So the mother-daughter saga continues.

Well, enough blah blah from me.

Let me know how you are, and if you got a new job through Ernie's new company.

November 28, 1993

Hi Jean,

Here is a copy of the letter I sent to you. You said it was missing a page???

I am sorry to hear that you did not get that job with Ernie's new company, but apparently you got another one instead. Hope this one is profitable and FUN!

I am amazed at how fast you sold your townhouse and bought another house. Here in California, it is a buyer's market, and really difficult to sell. Yes, I can imagine it was a stressful process for you. Gads! And now the holidays! Hope you make it. I cannot imagine you going through it all. I am so glad you found a new home in an area that feels safe. Your description sounds wonderful. What do you do with four bedrooms?

What with the moving, and the basement renovations, and your work, I understand you can't make it out here for a visit just yet. Don't worry, we have no need to rush or hurry. Your being here in the flesh is a luxury, not an expectation. If it happens, it happens. If it don't, it don't! How's that grammar?

Susan has been ill, and out of town, so we haven't been able to meet and write as we planned. I just wanted to get the book up to the halfway mark. Your delay is to our benefit. I cannot see how Susan and I could work at all during December.

As for Christmas, once again we are trying to celebrate while still cutting back on expenses. We are not doing cards. I plan to send you a few photos but no gift. I feel unhappy about that. Christmas is so difficult for me because I want to buy buy buy, and we have to set limits. For Jill, I found a poster of a whale that fits into a frame I had on hand, and I am painting the frame to match (Jill is into whales lately). Clothes cost too much, plus she is losing a lot of weight, and I don't even know what size she is, since I have not seen her for two months. I feel irritable just talking about this. I sent Shanti and his girlfriend a feather body pillow, in a satin case to match their bedding. That was a considerable savings. You may think this sounds far out, but I used to spend between \$100 and \$200 on Shanti every year, so I feel unhappy. Jay and I cut back with each other too, and I sure don't like that!

I am afraid I am self-centered when it comes to material possessions. I rarely can get into Christmas without this sense of being deprived. I do now know where this comes from. I act like I'm poor white trash, with no material possessions, and that is not the case! I hate scrimping with my sister and my son. I wish there was no such thing as gift giving. I do better with birthdays because they are spread out, and do not set us back like Christmas does.

I just had a \$550 car repair bill, plus we need tune-ups and car registrations this month, and car insurance is highest in January. So it's really hard to get into the spirit of giving. What a Scrooge I can be.

Thanksgiving was different this year. Jay went to his family, as usual, but I stayed home and had three women friends over for a potluck turkey dinner. It was the most comfortable holiday I have ever spent. Very loving and fun, and no over-eating. We weighed and measured everything we ate. Jay was not happy but seemed to accept it. I do not want to do Christmas with his family either. I might get to see Jill, or she may even get her first pass home for half a day. Christmas marks her three-month point, and she can now get passes to go home and see family. Her daughter says she looks great and has lost a lot of weight. She also says Jill is having incest memories of my father. The therapists are working with her. It's a great place.

Jill's being clean still feels strange and unreal. I look forward to seeing her.

I missed Shanti so much over Thanksgiving. This is my first holiday without my son. And it will be my first Christmas without him. I hope we can call and talk on Christmas.

In January, Jay and I are going to start classes at the local college. It is about 10 blocks from our house. If we go on the same evenings we can drive together. Jay wants to finish his college degree, and I just want to take some interesting classes. Like humanities, public speaking, and art. They don't have sculpting, but maybe once I get going I could find that somewhere else.

This letter is endless. Sorry to stop abruptly but I got to go.

Love, Judith

P.S. Hope your holidays are enjoyable.



*Dear Judith,*

***BETWEEN THE LINES (6)***

*November 11, 2005*

*As you can see from the date, I've fallen behind. So what else is new?*

*How strange. Just as I finished editing your letters from 1993, when you were at the halfway mark in the book you were writing then, I got stuck at my halfway mark too. I had to put this away for a week, Judith. Too many bad things happened at once.*

*There's a huge gap in my letters to you. I don't know what happened. It's obvious I was writing, because I have read all your responses. I will go through all my old disks this weekend, but I'm afraid those lost letters from 1993 and 1994 will stay lost.*

*I remember feeling bombarded by the sections of the book you and Susan kept sending me. And resending me. And kept telling me to ignore, because another version was coming. I remember panicking at the very thought of you sending me stuff via modem. You were plugging into all my high-tech phobias, and I didn't have a computer geek husband to help me! I envied you Jay at times. And while I found the editing relatively easy and therapeutic, I knew early on you and Susan did not have a prayer as co-authors.*

*I was going through one of the worst years of my life. Ernie lost his job and his mother. We were unable to buy the house we wanted, and I had to stay in a place where I felt increasingly unsafe. Our sex life was in the toilet, and I had not adjusted to my new group. I felt unable to talk there about the anxiety attacks and nightmares that were taking over my life. Then Ernie found a new job, and we sold our house and moved to a new one in less than six months. We began to renovate the basement, to give me the home office I had always wanted. So much change, and even though*