

AUGUST 6, 1987

MS. KIM OTTO, PROBATION OFFICER
ADULT PROBATION DEPARTMENT
201 WEST JEFFERSON
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85003

DEAR MS. OTTO:

I SPOKE WITH TODD KOHLHEPP, MY SON, LAST NIGHT AND HE SAID THAT I SHOULD WRITE TO YOU, THAT MAYBE, JUST MAYBE IT WILL HELP. UNFORTUNATELY I LIVE IN SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA. ALMOST FOUR YEARS AGO TODD WANTED TO GO LIVE WITH HIS FATHER IN PHOENIX, AND MY BEING ALMOST 2,000 MILES AWAY, REALLY HAD VERY LITTLE CONTROL AFTER HE LEFT.

TODD HAD ALWAYS HAD HIS FATHER ON A PEDESTAL, UNFORTUNATELY, RIGHT OR WRONG, I HAD NEVER DOWNED HIS FATHER TO HIM OR TALKED AGAINST HIM. I HAD FELT THAT THOSE WERE HIS DECISIONS AND NOT MINE, NO MATTER WHAT MY FEELINGS TOWARD HIS FATHER MAY BE.

TODD IS NOT A BAD BOY, HE NEVER HAS BEEN. HE'S BEEN CONFUSED AND HAD HIS LOYALTIES MISPLACED LIKE MANY YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY, BUT HE'S NOT A BAD BOY. SINCE LIVING OUT THERE HE HAD SOME OF THE WORSE KIND OF INFLUENCE.

HE HAS A MOTHER THAT LOVES HIM, HAS ALWAYS LOVED HIM AND ALWAYS WILL, NO MATTER WHAT. HE HAS GRANDPARENTS THAT FEEL THE SAME WAY. IF TODD GOES TO JAIL FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME HE WILL PROBABLY NEVER SEE THOSE GRANDPARENTS AGAIN, AND HE IS THE ONLY GRANDCHILD THEY HAVE OR EVER WILL HAVE.

I REALIZE THAT HE HAS DONE WRONG AND MY HEART ACHES FOR THE LITTLE GIRL, BUT IT ALSO ACHES FOR MY SON. HE WAS ONLY 15 YEARS OLD. HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY RECORD OF ANY KIND AND HAD NEVER BEEN IN TROUBLE BEFORE. IT SEEMS SO STRANGE TO ME THAT THEY WANT TO PUT A CHILD AWAY FOR SUCH A LONG TIME AND NOT EVEN GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO MAKE UP FOR WHAT HE DID. TODD KNOWS HE DID WRONG AND HE'S SORRY, BUT THEY WON'T EVEN GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO MAKE A GOOD LIFE OUT OF THIS. EVERYONE, EVERYONE DESERVES A SECOND CHANCE. IF HE GOES TO JAIL FOR 15 YEARS THERE WILL BE VERY LITTLE CHANCE FOR HIM WHEN HE DOES GET OUT. ALL THE YEARS THAT YOU LEARN HOW TO COPE WITH LIFE LATER WILL BE LOST, AND IT SCARES ME TO DEATH WHAT HE WILL LEARN IN PRISON. SO MANY THINGS I NEVER WANT HIM TO LEARN.

HE'S GROWN UP SO MUCH DURING THIS TIME, HE'S LEARNED SO MUCH, SOME GOOD AND SOME BAD. I DON'T WANT HIM LEARNING ANYMORE BAD. IF THIS HAD HAPPENED IN SOUTH CAROLINA, HE WOULD STILL BE IN JUVENILE AND WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SENT ON TO ADULT.

HIS GRANDPARENTS HAVE A FARM AND THEY COULD SORELY USE TODD'S HELP THERE. THEY ARE GETTING OLDER AND IT'S HARD ON THEM AND TODD WANTS TO HELP. HE TALKS ABOUT THEM CONSTANTLY AND WRITES TO THEM. HIS GRANDMOTHER CAME WITH ME ONE TIME TO SEE TODD AND HIS GRANDFATHER THE OTHER TIME.

YOU KNOW, IT'S STRANGE. MAYBE A LITTLE GOOD DOES COME FROM SOME BAD. WHEN TODD WENT OUT TO ARIZONA TO LIVE WE WERE NOT VERY CLOSE BECAUSE I KEPT FIGHTING AGAINST HIM GOING AND HE KEPT FIGHTING TO GO AND WE LOST SOME OF THE CONTACT THAT WE HAD HAD. SINCE HE HAS BEEN THERE HE HAS CALLED ME EVERY WEEK, SOMETIMES TWO TIMES, WRITTEN ME LETTERS, AND WE HAVE GOTTEN THE CLOSENESS BACK. HE KNOWS AND REALIZES THAT I LOVE HIM AND THAT I NEVER LIED TO HIM, THAT I ALWAYS TRIED TO BE FAIR WITH HIM; SOMETHING HE DIDN'T BELIEVE BEFORE BECAUSE OF THE LIES OF HIS FATHER. YOU HAVE TO REALIZE THAT TODD WAS A VERY IMPRESSIONABLE 13 YEAR OLD WHEN HE WENT OUT THERE. ANYTHING HIS FATHER SAID, TODD TOOK AS THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH.

SENDING HIM OUT THERE AT THAT TIME WAS THE HARDEST THING I EVER DID. HE IS MY ONLY CHILD AND I CAN HAVE NO MORE. HE IS THE ONLY GRANDCHILD AS I AM AN ONLY CHILD. I DON'T WANT HIM RUINED FOR ALL TIME. HE KNOWS THAT HE MUST PAY FOR WHAT HE DID, HE REALIZES THAT, BUT I TRULY FEEL THAT 15 YEARS IS UNJUST AND I DON'T THINK OUR SYSTEM IS WORKING VERY WELL IF THEY DO THIS TO THIS CHILD. I THOUGHT THE SYSTEM WAS TO MAKE YOU PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID, BUT ALSO TO HELP YOU NOT DO THINGS WRONG ANYMORE AND GIVE PEOPLE A CHANCE; NOT RUIN THEM FOR ALL TIME.

THEY HAVE SAID THAT HE HAS BEEN UNDER COUNSELING FOR MOST OF HIS LIFE. THAT IS NOT TRUE. HE WAS UNDER COUNSELING FOR THREE MONTHS AND THEN FOR EIGHT WEEKS; THAT IS ALL. THAT'S HARDLY MOST OF HIS LIFE. AT THE TIME THERE HAD BEEN SOME FAMILY PROBLEMS AND IT WAS NECESSARY. IT SEEMS THAT IF YOU GET HELP, YOU'RE WRONG, AND IF YOU DON'T, YOU'RE WRONG.

I LOVE MY CHILD AND WILL DO ANYTHING THAT I POSSIBLY CAN DO TO HELP HIM. FIRST AND FOREMOST, I AM A MOTHER.

I AM ALSO A COURT REPORTER AND HAVE SEEN A LOT. NEVER HAVE I SEEN THIS HAPPEN TO A 15 YEAR OLD CHILD AND NOT EVEN ANY HELP OFFERED. THEY DON'T STOP TO THINK THAT HE EVEN WALKED THE GIRL HOME. DOES THAT SOUND LIKE A DANGEROUS CRIMINAL? HE EVEN WALKED THE GIRL HOME.....

HE WAS SO CONFUSED AND HURT AND ANGRY AT HIS FATHER. HE HAD LET HIM DOWN SO BAD, AND TO TODD, HE WAS EVERYTHING. HE LEFT HIM, HE BERATED HIM, HE TORE TODD DOWN. HE WAS TEACHING TODD THAT THE ONLY WAY TO CONTROL PEOPLE IS PAIN AND MONEY; GO FOR THE PAIN FIRST. CAN YOU IMAGINE A FATHER TEACHING HIS CHILD THAT. HAD I KNOWN THAT, I WOULD HAVE HAD TODD HOME HERE SO FAST IT WOULD HAVE MADE EVERYONE'S HEAD SWIM. BUT I DIDN'T KNOW UNTIL IT WAS TOO

LATE. HIS FATHER HAD THREATENED HIM IF HE TOLD ME ANYTHING, SO TODD DIDN'T TELL. THE FIRST THING HIS FATHER SAID TO HIM AFTER THE JUVENILE HEARING WAS "WHY DID YOU MAKE ME LOOK SO BAD?"

IF YOU CAN HELP TODD, PLEASE, PLEASE TRY. HE'S A GOOD BOY WITH A LOT OF LOVE TO GIVE. HE NEEDS SOME DECENT GUIDENCE AND HELP AND LOVE. IF YOUR SYSTEM IN ARIZONA HAS ANY FAIRNESS AT ALL, PLEASE GIVE HIM A CHANCE. IN 15 YEARS WHEN HE'S 31 YEARS OLD, HE WON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHANCE. HE WON'T BE REHABILITATED IN PRISON, HE WILL BE RUINED. THIS IS NOT WHAT THIS BOY NEEDS. HIS FATHER HAD HIM RIGHT IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND AND COULD HAVE MOLDED TODD INTO ANYTHING HE WANTED, BECAUSE TODD BELIEVED ANYTHING HE SAID AND EVERYTHING HE SAID. NOW HE HAS TOTALLY WALKED AWAY FROM TODD BECAUSE HE'S EMBARRASSED AND IT'S TOO MUCH TROUBLE. HE WANTED TO GET RID OF TODD, I FOUND OUT LATER, AND HE GOT EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTED AT THE EXPENSE OF TODD.

ANY HELP YOU CAN GIVE TODD IS APPRECIATED FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART. HE'S ALL I HAVE AND I LOVE HIM. HE CAN MAKE ALL THIS UP AND BECOME AN ASSET TO SOCIETY IF SOMEONE WILL JUST GIVE HIM A CHANCE. SOMEONE PLEASE GIVE HIM A CHANCE.....

THANK YOU MORE THAN I CAN SAY.

REGINA KOHLHEPP, TODD'S MOTHER.

Regina Kohlhepp

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