

Dear Judge Mattison.

I am shaken by how difficult this letter is for me to write. I was told that you may need it to better understand my little brother. I wish there was an ideal place to begin. But where does one start when a loved one's life is laid across someone else's table?

What keeps me believing in him and loving him is the fact that he is a good person that came from a good home. I feel silly writing that, because it seems so contradictory, looking at what actually took place. However, it's the truth, and it keeps me alive. I wish more than anything that you, the man who decides his fate, could know him like I do. So a little bit of the Kip Kinkel that I know is where I will begin.

Growing up with him was very average. I was the typical big sister, and he seemed like every other little brother I had ever had any contact with. Only with hindsight do I truly see the signs of someone who was in desperate need of help, different help than any of us knew how to give.

Kip was a very compassionate person. Like my mother, the norm for him was to put others first. He absolutely loved animals and treated them better than most. He was a people pleaser. He found ways to learn what those around him wanted and made every effort to become it. I believe that is how he dealt with his illness so well and with such subtlety for so long.

He was genuinely concerned about the same issues kids his age are, and unusually devoted to those that meant something extra special to him. When asked about his interests and opinions, he was able to rationally explain his ideas about them in ways far beyond those which someone his age would be capable of. He was very likeable and had a great sense of humor. He loved to make people laugh and did it well. My mother and I used to say that he would be a wonderful boyfriend because of his sensitivity and his devotion to what he loved. Kip had a lot of potential, and to see that die absolutely crushes me.

That is who I remember Kip to be, and let me tell you about who he is today. He's extremely bright, and the potential I mentioned before is still there, buried inside. He is hurting more than any of us can imagine, and yet is adapting to an extremely unpleasant situation better than most ever could. He is polite and considerate to those that have contact with him. He is realistic about his situation, yet remains hopeful that he will find something positive in it.

He does have plans for the future and has discussed with me his ideas of becoming a productive member of society, even from behind bars. All of his hopes and dreams have to do with getting an education and using it to help people without one. He already has passed the GED with very high scores.

I believe what he needs is the hope that he has a chance of achieving these goals. My first visit with him after this happened was at Skipworth and consisted of only crying. It took

weeks for him to make eye contact with me, and even longer to say something. When he finally did, it was, 'I am so sorry.'

I believe he is aware of the pain that he has caused, and is just as shocked as the rest of us that he was capable of such horror. We were talking last week about the upcoming hearings and preparing ourselves for the things that we would have to listen to. I told him to do what I do, and just tune out that which you don't want to hear. I told him to go to a safe place in his memory, and not listen to the victims when they talk, because they are angry and going to say things they really don't mean. He stopped me and said, 'No, I owe it to them to listen.'

I share this story because I think it emphasizes the kind of person Kip was and still is. I think it also shows that there really should be no concern for this kind of thing to happen again.

I love my brother more than I ever thought possible. And not because he needs me to, but because I need to. It is a difficult concept for an outsider to understand, but it comes from what is inside us.

He will need support, love, medical help, et cetera. But most of all right now, he needs hope. In twenty-five years, we will be well into the Twenty-first Century. Our society will be very different. The technology and knowledge we will have then is mind boggling. The advances we will have made in psychological research and medication will amaze us. Kip will be forty.

Thank you for your time in reading this. I wanted to speak from my heart and hope you will forgive the informality of this letter. I realize you have a huge amount of things to consider in this case, and I hope I haven't sounded like a nagging sister. Thanks again for your attention.