

December 4, 2023

Dear Beatrice Sparks,

I am writing to you today to express my appreciation for your book *Go Ask Alice*. I don't personally struggle with addiction, but someone really close to me does: my mom. I struggled with being angry and frustrated at her for most of my life. For a time, I even hated her for not just quitting her drug abuse. I would think, "*Just quit for me. Be here for me.*" All the pain and disappointment I felt towards my mom built a callus around my heart. Before reading your book *Go Ask Alice*, I was blind to the pain she must have gone through, the toll it took on her to raise four kids by herself and struggle with her addiction all at the same time.

Your book helped me see my mom's side of things. Alice's family loved her and continued to try and help her with her addiction, even when she tried to push them away. I love my mom. I love her a lot more than I can describe. My love for her is more like a feeling, like the smell of her hair and the happy feeling I get when she laughs. I tried to help her the best that my seven-year-old-self could.

Some time in the year of my seventh birthday, my mom was completely out of it; she was screaming and yelling and telling us to go away. She didn't recognize us. Her friend with whom she was getting high with took us to the lake after hiding all the drugs from my mom. We came back, and my mom had found the drugs and had passed out. She slept for two days after that. I have always regretted leaving. I feel guilty about it to this day. I'm telling you this so you know the extent of her addiction, of just how bad it could get.

In the book, Alice ran away because she felt ashamed of her addiction. She wanted to get better and she didn't see any other way. I believe she felt stuck, repeating the same patterns over and over again. My mom is stuck, she has always been stuck. More than half the people on my mom's side of the family are drug addicts; she didn't have a chance. I don't think anyone ever looked out for her as a kid.

When I was nine years old, I went into the foster care system. I only stayed for a year before I found a family that wanted me. Then we started the adoption process. At the time, I just wanted to go home to my mom. I caused trouble as much as I could so they wouldn't want me, but no matter what I did, they still wanted me. When you get adopted, your birth parents have to sign a paper that says you're giving up their parental rights. My mom had a hard time signing it. That's what finally made me realize just how much she loved me. It hurt to see that she was in pain over losing me. I think she saw just how much I grew to love the family that was going to eventually adopt me.

In your book *Go Ask Alice* she overcame her addiction. I don't understand my mom and I never will. She – still to this day – abuses drugs. I also will never understand how Alice had the strength to change. The book *Go Ask Alice* showed me the side of my mom I never thought to look for. My mom couldn't overcome her drug problem, or she didn't want to; either way, I choose to think of her as the person that loved me enough to let me have a better life than she got.

Sincerely,

Ashley Barnhart