

# I DIDN'T KNOW MY OWN STRENGTH (JACKIE'S SONG)

I didn't hear the sirens  
That car-jacking day  
I was so far gone  
I couldn't even say  
Blinding flashes, exploding sound  
You told me to lay down and die  
But it's always darkest just before dawn  
I'm finally facing a brand new morning  
I'm finally facing the fire  
I know I can survive

I didn't know my own strength  
Just how strong I can be  
Then I came face to face  
With someone stronger than me  
And I learned to stand tall  
And to carry the weight  
I can't believe that I've come this far  
I didn't know my own strength

You said you'd love me forever more  
But you never even darkened my hospital  
door  
In your letter you told me now I'd just be  
holding you down  
I begged let me die but a voice said you're  
needed  
Never in my life have I felt so complete  
Helping others in turn is helping me to turn  
this around

I didn't know my own strength  
Just how strong I could be  
Then I came face to face  
With someone stronger than me  
And I learned to stand tall  
And to carry the weight  
I can't believe that I've come this far  
I didn't know my own strength

Just when I thought I could not take it  
I found the power inside to make it  
I didn't know my own strength  
Just how strong I could be  
Then I came face to face  
With someone stronger than me  
I learned to stand tall  
And to carry the weight

I can't believe that I've come this far  
I didn't know my own strength  
I can't believe that I've come this far  
I didn't know my own strength

"AN EYE FOR AN EYE AND  
SOON WE'RE ALL BLIND"  
~GANDHI



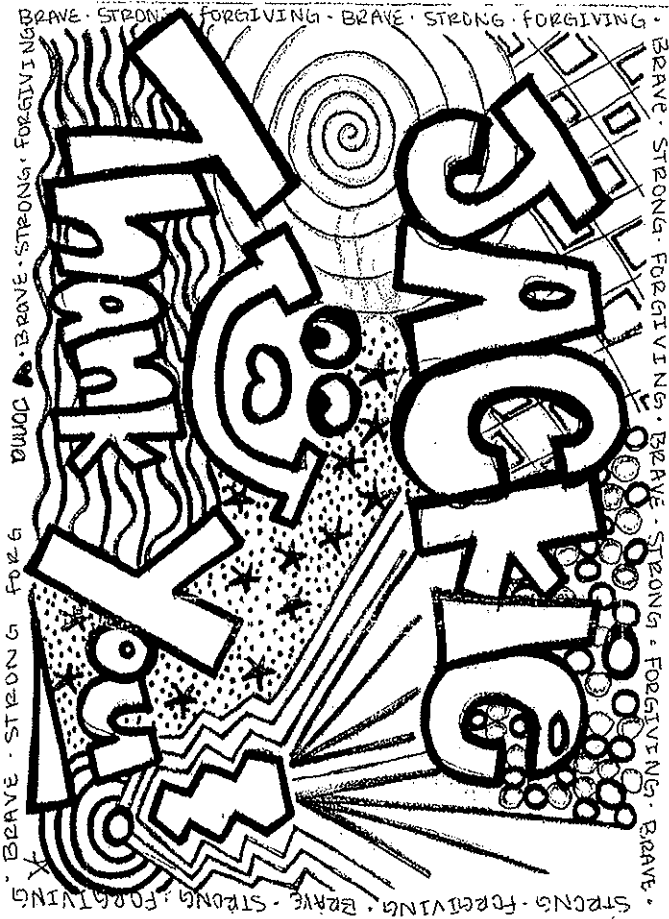
I want to thank everyone who wrote letters and drew pictures for me. I appreciate them more than ever and want to give credit to those I have used in this pamphlet.



99% of you will never do what Craig and Josh did, but you will have important decisions to make. I want you to take your time with these decisions. Craig and Josh chose the negative path, and they are sitting in prison for a very long time. **You are our future leaders** of tomorrow, and I think your decisions, whether they are small or large, deserve to be thought about with time!

Peace!

Jackie



Hello! How are all of you doing today? I hope that this letter finds all of you doing well. My name is Craig Sussek and I am the person that shot Jackie when I was 16 years old. I am writing to you today to talk about the choices you make in your life.

The choices you make are very, very important not only for yourself, but for your friends, family, and for people you have never met and may never meet. Look at the woman in front of you today, Jackie. All of the ailments that make her life difficult every single day are the result of some really bad choices on my part. When I was 16 years old I thought life was horrible. I thought that nobody cared about or loved me in any way, shape, or form. I was a product of a broken family. I had experienced neglect, abuse, various traumas, and abandonment at a very young age and this helped put me into a frame of mind where I no longer cared about anyone or anything including myself. I gave up on life and myself. From that point I kept becoming more and more negative, so much so that on a cold November evening I illegally entered the home of a stranger and shot Jackie. At the time I didn't think about what I was doing, but I had a choice and I made a bad one.

The result of my bad choice was that Jackie and her family, my co-defendant and his family, and my family and myself have had to experience an awful lot of pain. Jackie suffers from multiple physical troubles and is unable to live her life as fully as she would like to. Her family had to go through a horrible ordeal while Jackie was in the hospital and her sons, Derek and Chad, have lost the mother they once knew and they can never get her back. My co-defendant and I have been in prison for a long time, almost fourteen years, and will be in prison for a lot more time. While we are here our family suffers with us because we can't be where they want us to be which is out there with our family. Some of you may not care and I am sorry to hear that. Even if you don't say that out loud I know some of you supposedly "don't care." I say that I know you "don't care" because in real life I know for a fact that you do care. You care a whole lot. I have been in prison for nearly 14 years and one thing I know for sure is that everyone cares about their choices and the consequences of those choices. How? How could I possibly know that? Over the years I have seen grown men, hardened me, killers, murderers, thugs, CRY because they miss their family, their friends, their dogs, their FREEDOM so much. Some cold killers wish every single day, every minute, every second, that they could take their bad choices back. All of us in here are sorry for hurting somebody out there, even if we'll admit it to no one but ourselves. I am almost 31 years old now. I don't think about the consequences of my actions much any more BECAUSE I SEE THEM EVERYDAY!!! I see the pain I have caused so many people. People I know as well as people I don't. I wish constantly that I could erase the pain that I have caused. They still live with their pain. I wish that I didn't have to be in prison any longer. I see prison walls every second of my life now. I wish I could be at home with my family. Wishing does me no good because Jackie is still hurting. Her family still grieves for her. My co-defendant's family as well as my own still miss us when they need us to be there for them and here we sit, in prison. My life is the result of bad choices. I made those choices, now I deal with the results. In my life now I do my best to make the RIGHT choices, the choices that will produce positive results. I constantly remember the bad choices I used to make and strive to make the positive choices to better myself, my life, and the world around me. Many of you have made bad choices yourselves. I am sure. Think about the bad choices that you have made. What were the results? Are you happy with your life, dealing with the consequences? If you find yourself regretting your choices you can always make the choice to change. You can become a better person. All you have to do is make that choice. The RIGHT choice. I hope that you will decide to make the right choice for you and for those of us that love you and have love for you.

With that I am going to end this. All of you have the potential for greatness within yourselves, you may not see it, but I do. All you have to do is make the decision to do the right thing and make good choices. You will make mistakes and that is o.k.; as long as you try to learn from them and not repeat them. Thank you for your time and patience. Take care of yourselves and each other. — Peace

Sincerely—Craig



HI MY NAME IS JOSH. I'M WRITING THIS LETTER TO SHARE MY STORY, SO THAT HOPEFULLY YOU WON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES I'VE MADE.

I WAS A 15 YEAR OLD KID. MY CO-DEFENDANT WAS 16 YEARS OLD. ON NOVEMBER 4, 1995 WE SET OUT TO STEAL A CAR. LITTLE DID WE KNOW JUST HOW HORRIBLE THINGS WOULD GO!

WE THOUGHT WE KNEW WHAT WE WERE DOING. OUR PLAN WAS TO FIND A CAR, WITH KEYS IN IT, AND STEAL IT. WE WERE GOING TO USE THE CAR TO ROB A BANK.

I'LL TELL YOU A LITTLE SECRET. NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU'VE DONE SOME CRIME, OR WELL PLANNED OUT YOU MAKE SOMETHING. YOU CAN'T CONTROL OTHER PEOPLE'S ACTIONS. WE DIDN'T PLAN TO GET CAUGHT BY JACKIE, BUT WE WERE AND BECAUSE OF THAT EVERYTHING CHANGED. OUR GENIUS PLAN WAS DESTROYED IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, AND SO WERE A LOT OF LIVES! WHEN WE WERE CAUGHT, MY CO-DEFENDANT SHOT JACKIE! ALL ARE LIVES CHANGED JUST THAT QUICKLY. EVEN MY CO-DEFENDANT DIDN'T KNOW HE WOULD DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT. BUT WHEN UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES ARISE, IN VERY HIGH STRESS SITUATIONS, THINGS CAN CHANGE IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE. YOU CAN'T CONTROL OTHER PEOPLE, AND JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE DONE SOMETHING BEFORE, DOESN'T MEAN IT'LL TURN OUT THAT WAY EVERY TIME. SO NEXT TIME YOU THINK OF GOING OUT FOR A HARMLESS JOYRIDE, OR SOME BURGLARY OR WHATEVER, REMEMBER THAT YOU COULD END UP HURTING SOMEONE, OR GETTING HURT. DON'T THINK SO? LOOK INTO JACKIE'S EYES AS SHE TALKS OF WHAT HAPPENED TO HER, AND THEN TELL ME CAR THEFT IS A VICTIMLESS CRIME! EVEN IF THERE ISN'T AN ACT OF VIOLENCE, STEALING A CAR COULD COST A PERSON THEIR JOB, YOU COULD CRASH AND HURT OTHER PEOPLE, AND YOURSELF. SOMEONE ALWAYS SUFFERS FROM SUPPOSEDLY VICTIMLESS CRIMES. SO NEXT TIME YOU GO OUT TO "HAVE A LITTLE FUN", THINK OF THIS COURAGEOUS WOMAN SITTING HERE SHARING HER STORY WITH YOU, AND REMEMBER HOW HER LIFE WAS TAKEN FROM HER BY A COUPLE OF KIDS WHO JUST WANTED TO STEAL A CAR! REMEMBER THIS LETTER FROM A GUY, WHO'S BEEN IN PRISON SINCE HE WAS 15, AND GO PLAY VIDEO GAMES OR SURF THE NET! THERE'S A BETTER WAY TO LIVE. TO HAVE FUN, STOP AND THINK BEFORE YOU ACT, REMEMBER JACKIE AND REMEMBER THIS LETTER, AND REMEMBER YOU HAVE CHOICES, OPTIONS, AND PLEASE MAKE THE RIGHT ONES! CHOOSE TO BE A GOOD PERSON, TO LIVE A GOOD HAPPY LIFE! BEFORE YOU LEAVE TAKE A LONG LOOK AT JACKIE AND REMEMBER, BEFORE YOU ACT, THERE IS ALWAYS A BETTER WAY! SO PLEASE BE STRONG ENOUGH TO CHOOSE A BETTER LIFE!

Sincerely- Josh



**To My Mom:**

10 years... How long ago, yet so painfully fresh in memory. This was the day everything changed for all who know and love you. But most importantly, this was the last day of your old life and, at the same time, a new beginning. I couldn't begin to understand the depth of feelings you'll experience on November 4, 2005; but I'm certain it will be an intense and emotional day.

I love you Mom. I have so much to thank you for and be proud of. You experienced something most people never will. You overcame the deepest physical and emotional wounds and responded with a new life of genuine love and passionate service. The events of the last decade have taught me about the awesome might of God as well as your character. The following is a tribute to you:

November Fourth of '95,  
the day that time stood still.  
When evil forced its senseless hand  
upon a mother's will;  
But let me tell you of the tale  
and of this woman strong;  
and you will be astonished  
by the right that came from wrong.

It all began on rural land  
amidst the evergreens.  
A harmless spot, a tree-filled lot,  
involving troubled teens.  
The kids arrived, hell-bent for fun  
perhaps a car and cash?  
But did they know about the life  
they were about to dash?

The shot rang out, a vicious act.  
The kind you won't forgive.  
But this story ends differently.  
Her only way to live.  
The wounds were deep, a fragile  
life.  
She barely made it through.  
Her loving family and her friends  
unsure of what to do.

But did she ever beat the odds.  
In fact she proved them wrong.  
Returned from death and sharing

life

became her mission song.  
A newfound second chance to live,  
albeit not the same.  
She visits prisons, talks to kids  
Despite her damaged frame.

There is a message here for us  
beyond this frightening day.  
A woman had her life torn down  
so she could claim to say,  
"Your life can be an awesome one  
if you should choose to live  
with the heart of God within your  
soul  
and the power to forgive."

So Mom, I offer this to you.  
I'm proud of who you are.  
The path was steep, your pain so  
deep  
the road you've traveled far.  
Instead I see that smile of yours,  
excitement in your voice.  
To stand up strong or hide in fear?  
You've shown us all your choice!

God bless this special  
day, Mom, I truly  
love you now more  
than ever.

Your Proud Son, Derek



"...I know myself has done a lot of bad choices, but I guess that was the way I chose to go. You are more tough than the guys' out on the streets arm with guns." - Chee



"...for my first year of high school I've made alot of bad choices and I wasn't going down the right path but I thought about my future and where I would end up and I didn't like what I saw, now I'm trying to do better in school..."

- Vanessa

"...I have never heard or came across a story like yours and to hear about what happened to you and what you went through is just miraculous, and on top of that you were able to forgive. But you had the power to see that everyone deserves a 2nd chance, and that's what you gave them two boy's and you also forgave them, in there hearts they will always remember you as the lady that forgave." - Tyler

"... Thank you for teaching me something that my mom and dad have been trying to get through my head, now I know what they have been trying to tell me, this whole time." - Kimberly

"...I like your son said, "anger is a poison that kills you but does nothing to the one your angry with." - McKenna

"...I was skeptical and I thought that it would probably just be another adult talking to us about what we shouldn't do and how bad teenagers are. I'm very pleased to say that my assumption was wrong, though. When you said to us that you were healed from your heart, I found it amazing that you could say it with such conviction. Often words lose their meaning when they're used too much, but yours still had impact. ..I can honestly say that hearing you talk to us and seeing how far you've come has made me want to be a better person." - Ellen

"... You taught me that forgiveness is the first step to healing those inner wounds. I'm the type of person that holds grudges against those that hurt me. I never realized how much that has put a stop in my life and me moving on. You've given me the strength to take the first step to getting over my past. Not many people are my heroes, but I'm proud to say that you're one..." - Sehr

"...It's amazing how one person, one second can change everything." - Megan



NEVER KNEW

You never knew you would wake up to a fatal situation  
And now you live your life everyday with many complications  
You feel, you walk, even talk differently  
Now Josh and Craig have nothing to do but cry silently  
There are a lot of bad things that happened from that violent act  
Yet you found a way to not forget but never look back  
Somehow you still found a way to forgive  
Those two young men who never knew they could deal cards of  
kill

Jackie, a really strong person you are  
You chose not to live your life in the past; instead you chose to go  
far

You seen death, how close you was to that black light  
But you told your self that you have family and for them you need  
to fight

I admire the fact that you share your tragic experience  
With us young kids who don't take life serious  
You lived, oh yes, you lived and that is amazing  
And I am so grateful because you been through a lot  
And you still find the strenght to go on  
By Precious



"...One thing I  
will remember is  
that you forgave  
the boys who  
shot you, and you  
survived to  
educate us." -  
Jordan



Have you ever...

- Skipped school
- Cheated
- Lied
- Stole something
- Vandalized
- Hit someone
- Carjacked/stole a car
- Shot someone

If you have done or thought  
about doing one of these things  
and these all can seem so small  
- I want you to make the best  
possible choice, and that is why  
I talk heart to heart.

To you that think it will be one  
time only will be one time too  
many!

-Jackie

—With all my Love, Chad



"...Mrs Hyland told us to tell you one thing we will  
remember. But the thing is I won't just remember one thing,  
I will remember a lot because the things you shared with us  
are life changing. But the one thing you shared that makes  
your story so amazing is how you delt with it. You chose to forgive the  
people even though they changed your life path in such a way. And your  
strength to share your experience with strangers. With your strength comes truth, truth  
on how one decision can not only change your life completely, but everyone else's  
around you. So for that I thank you...." - Karlie



"Fall down 7 times  
and get up 8."  
Author Unknown

"...one thing I learned was that I should treasure my life.  
You never know when your life or everything could be  
taken from you. I have never thought of my life as  
important, but hearing your story brought tears to my  
eyes." - Jillian

"...you have taught me different things, such as life is to  
short to live life with grudges and hatred. Since then I  
forgave people that did me wrong and betrayed my trust  
and now, my life is a lot better. I feel like a weight has  
been lifted off my shoulders..." - Mia

WHAT I SEE

The dew gets settled in the grass all around,  
The sun makes its presence known,  
The animals are in the trees, in the water, and in the grass, all around,  
The trees with their branches out stretched as if they touch the moon,  
The flowers are so beautiful and fragrant as they dance all 'round.  
The lakes are doing their thing as they only know how to do it.



That scene plays for me every day!

You ask me why?  
I answer it plays the same scene for me, because I am legally blind!  
There is silence from you.

I ask you, why you are silent,  
You answer, It is because you are blind,  
You say it with such a sadness.  
Maybe I should look at my blindness differently,  
But I don't. I look at it as God's way of looking at things differently.

To me, the scene plays the same way, time after time,  
Beautiful, serene, uncomplicated, all perfectly in tune,  
I may be legally blind, but I see with my heart!

-Jackie

