

December 16, 2015

Dear I,

Thank you so much for your wonderful letter. Talking to you is so interesting!

Here are some answers to a couple of your questions.

Why did Christine's own father prefer me to her? First, because he was, in some respects, an asshole. He spent 5 years in New Guinea during WWII, carrying a rifle, during which time he developed what used to be called "battle fatigue". WWI, "shell shock". Viet Nam and subsequent conflicts, "PTSD". Maybe that is why his "nurturing gene" got short-circuited. Otherwise, he would have loved every one of his children "the most".

But that did not turn out to be. The reasons? I was naturally NOT timid. Chris was timid, as a child. I learned things faster than Chris did. I was more of a leader. So, my dad (actually, my step-father) saw me as an exuberant, extroverted, quick-learning child who easily captured attention and who did not easily cry. Perhaps he was chagrined that his natural daughter was comparatively timid and had a harder time confronting new situations. I guess you could say that he did not have as much respect for her because she didn't have as much confidence as I did.

These attributes would have made me love her MORE, if anything, than I would have loved my other children, had I been her mother. Because, your instincts as a mother make you gravitate toward the child who needs the most protection, the most nurturing. You fear for them the most, you take such relief in the development of their strengths and their independence. You just plain give the most attention to the child that NEEDS you the most.

Unfortunately, my parents did not understand these things. As I say, my dad might have been pretty traumatized by his war experiences, and never developed the capacity to nurture. And, he was raised by parents who were content to be ignorant of TRUTH, with a capital "T". They were relatively incurious about the ultimate causes of things. So, I don't think that our dad was raised to ponder the mysteries of life. Therefore, he never questioned his reactions to the differences between Christine and me. It never occurred to him that if Chris was more timid, she needed more reassurance, and that it was up to him to provide it. Ditto my mom, of course.

As to school performance, Chris was very strong! She got good grades and had artistic abilities, for painting and drawing, that were far beyond my ken. I paint and draw indifferently. To my mother's credit, she enrolled Chris in special classes and got her a tutor, all for the purpose of developing those natural

aptitudes that Chris had in so much more abundance than the vast majority of her peers.

So, it's not that Chris was not a strong performer, academically. She WAS. It's just that I was luckier. My natural father, whom I never met, was either a thoracic surgeon or an abdominal surgeon. I talked to my half-sister once, she said that there were two brothers, one was a thoracic surgeon, the other was an abdominal surgeon, she couldn't remember which was which. (How could you not remember something like that? I hope that this failure of memory did not come from my father's side of the family.)

Our mother was extremely intelligent and had blazing drive, and my father was about as smart as most surgeons are, I guess. So, I got straight A's, I was a National Merit finalist, I got accepted to medical school after cramming two majors into three years of college, I decided that my most important dream was to have lots of children, and that that was incompatible with throwing myself wholly and completely into medicine, so then I got accepted to law school (I figured I could more easily handle law and a family than handle medicine and a family), discovered a lump in my breast at the beginning of my last year of law school, and 15 minutes later asked myself what the hell I was doing wasting my life on the dry and relatively unsatisfying study of law when life is the most precious thing that there is. After notifying the dean that I wouldn't be coming back for my 3rd year of law school, I got into information technology and THAT was the perfect fit, it was fun, challenging and left me time to raise a family. And, it paid well.

The lump turned out to be benign. But the lesson of how precious life is was never un-learned. I was no genius, I think of myself as just your average, ordinary, very smart person. There are millions of people like that. But it was a tough act for Chris to follow. So, Chris indeed had strong school performance, and unusual artistic abilities, but instead of appreciating her for what she WAS, my parents compared her to me. Were they really shitheads? Or just stupid? Myself, I think that they were shitheads. I have a visceral, irrational and immediate dislike of people who are not nurturing.

You don't know how much it means to me that you tried to get her to enroll in school, and encouraged her to think of her abilities as rare and significant. YOU gave her the nurturing that my parents were incapable of. I cry when I think about your kindness, but these are the kinds of tears that mend broken hearts.

Conditions at home for Chris were indeed intolerable. As she grew into womanhood my mother became hotly jealous of her, because it was obvious that Christine was beginning to become the center of men's attention wherever she went. The two of them fought a lot, and it was mainly my mother's jealousy that was to blame. I, naïve me, counseled my sister to get advice from the only

uninvolved grown-up that we knew, my stepfather, Christine's father. Boy, did THAT have repercussions.

The same day that my sister talked privately to our dad about her problems with mom, there was a big fight between my parents and my sister packed her things and went to live with my dad. This event was awful for both of us. My mother was furious with me for having had our dirty linen aired to our dad, whom my mother saw as an outsider. She would hardly talk to me, for MONTHS. Her hostility never ceased. I can remember driving in the car with my mom, my second stepfather, Art, the one who fancied young girls, and my little brother. My mom was explaining to my brother who "Benedict Arnold" was, and she turned around in her seat to look at me, and said, "Just like some other people present whom I could mention!"

The rejection from my mom had a huge effect of me, eventually, because my mom was my security. Due to the fact that I hadn't lived with her for the first two years of my life, I was scared to death of losing her love. Well, when Chris left, my mother began to hate me. I practically had a nervous breakdown. I even started getting visual hallucinations. This trauma lasted for years, and I was so broken that it was a source of comfort to me that, if things got bad enough, I could always kill myself and put an end to my misery. So, I had an out!

It was just about as bad for Chris. She went to live in a strange house with a stepmother who didn't like children and felt put upon by having her privacy invaded. Chris went to a completely new high school, where she didn't know anyone. She was so lonely, she had no friends. She used to take her lunch and go into the girls' bathroom and sit on a toilet in one of the stalls and eat there, because it was too awful to eat alone in the lunchroom where everyone else had friends and she had nobody.

One time she was waiting on First Avenue (a slummy section of town, back then) for a bus to West Seattle, where my dad and stepmother lived. A bunch of leather-jacketed bikers came up to her and started harassing her, she was just a lone, vulnerable, beautiful schoolgirl waiting for the bus. Chris was petrified, there were no policemen around, no one wanted to intervene, the bus finally came and she made her escape. When she got home to my dad's house she told him about her misadventure. He listened, but just sat there, smoking a cigarette, and said nothing. I don't know why he said nothing. He just didn't know how to sympathize. Maybe he felt sympathy but was incoherent where feelings were concerned. I don't know what went on in his head, but he never said a word. Finally, Chris just left the room, unconsolated.

These were the kinds of experiences she had when she went to live with my dad.

AND, just as bad, my dad would go to company meetings in San Francisco every year, big shindigs where all the salesmen would attend meetings during the day

and barhop and socialize and hire sex workers in the evenings. This would go on for about 4 or 5 days. He went to these annual parties year after year after year. He was right across the bay from where Chris lived. Did he ever ONCE call her and arrange to meet her for lunch or dinner, or ANY FUCKING THING? Oh no. THAT would be a waste of time. He went for years without seeing her. It was just not an attractive option for him to take some time away from his buddies to see his daughter.

But guess what? When my dad was dying, aged 76, of congestive heart failure, it was Christine who was never put off by the closeness of death, which is so unnerving to most of us, because it reminds us that we, too, will gasp and wheeze and feel full of fear as the end draws near. Chris stayed with him during his last few nights, changing shifts with my stepmother and getting sleep here and there. She was the one who was with him when he breathed his last breath. She was never repelled by sitting so close to death, she comforted my dad and was happy to hold his hand while he died. When our dad was dying, I saw a facet of my sister that I had never seen before, and I was in awe of it. I could never have done what she did. I did not have enough love for my dad to give as she gave.

When she ran away from home, I was her co-conspirator both times. One time, I remember, I had to warn her that mom was close to discovering where she was. For some reason, I couldn't just phone her to warn her, I had to write her a letter. I had to go to the Post Office Terminal Annex on 4th South and Lander, where the railroad trains came through to pick up the sacks of mail waiting on the cement dock. I had to do this as fast as possible, and that meant NOW, midnight, in a desolate and scary part of the industrial district of Seattle. So I put my Browning 22-caliber rifle in its case and tucked it under my arm and got on the bus and traveled to the south end of town, everything dark, racing across the railroad tracks as if I were pursued (which I was not). I wrote a letter to her at the Annex, scribbling away in a deserted waiting room, the fluorescent lights making everything look even bleaker than it was. But she got the letter, and mom never found out how to nab her. Ha-ha!

You asked about why my mother and father divorced, and my mother then married Frank. Well, the thing is, my natural father never married my mom, he found out too late what she was really like, that is, she at least has Borderline Personality Disorder, if not schizophrenia (serious paranoid delusions). So he left, she could have gotten a safe abortion through his connections, but did not. He left and, as far as I know, never looked back. He ended up marrying and having 4 children. I have had 6 half-brothers and sisters!

Life with my mother was hell on my dad (stepfather, Frank). He had an ulcer, and the stress of living with my mom made it much worse, he would get stomach bleeding. I can remember one time my mom got into an argument with my dad and she was yelling and demanding that he stop the car immediately and get out

with us three children, my little brother was a baby. There we were, standing underneath a railroad trestle, in the dark, the train going by clickity-clack, no human habitation in sight. I cannot remember what happened next, everything turned out OK because we all grew up. She and my dad got married and divorced twice.

I don't know anything about my mom's courtship or early years with my third stepfather, Bob Brinton. Sometimes, when they came to visit, years after they had been married, when the children were young, mom used to get into a bubbly mood and call Bob "Daddy" in a kind of high, childish voice. Don't know what was going on there. As I mentioned in my earlier letter, she thought that he was secretly a hit man for the Mafia. He died, like my first stepfather, at about the age of 76. He died of liver cancer brought on by hepatitis C. To tell you the truth, he was not a very nice person, and he caused Chris a lot of grief over some financial arrangements she had made with my mom.

I know that parents do not love their children equally, that is, if the parents are ASSHOLES. So, in my opinion, Abraham was an asshole, as was Isaac, as was Rebecca. Since Rebecca was a MOTHER, her crime is the most egregious. I was raised a Seventh-Day Adventist (but it didn't take, I'm an atheist), and went to a Seventh-Day Adventist school. I learned a lot about Old Testament history (VERY interesting!) and remember that Rebecca had Jacob cover his arms with a sheepskin so that Isaac, who couldn't see very well, would be fooled into thinking that he was actually bestowing the birthright onto Esau, because Esau had hairy arms.

Here is the bottom line on this subject, and the ultimate truth (as handed down by me): you love each of your children the most, but you give the most to the one who needs your nurturing the most.

You are right about God and Abel, but that assessment goes beyond religion and into matters that are cosmic. God made Abel a better person than Cain. But then, would Cain be responsible for how he was born? No one is responsible for things that they cannot help.

I am so happy to know that you are married. As God surmised, man should not live alone. Also, I am so happy for both of you that she is now free of cancer.

If you have good medical insurance and are relatively well-off, medical care in the U.S. is unmatched anywhere in the world, in my experience. But there is this caveat. You have to be your own advocate. The only time that you ever let anyone, including your doctor, make decisions for you, is when you are out cold on the operating table.

I always nod and say, "Hmm", and look impressed, when I hear my doctor's advice. Then I do research on the internet and do whatever the hell I think is

best, and ignore any advice from my doctors that is stupid. Advice like, "Well, we could wait 6 months and see if your abnormal cells disappear. Next time you might have a normal PAP smear." Is he crazy?! I have HPV! Which is responsible for 98% of the cases of cervical cancer! And I had one of the best doctors you can find, he is Jewish!

So. I ignored his advice completely and found a fantastic surgeon who performed a complete hysterectomy on me, no chances forevermore of getting cervical cancer. The operation was a complete success, I had no pain whatsoever (I had a great surgeon, a female who is also Jewish). You HAVE to be your own best friend, no matter where you are in the world.

Every one of the surgeries that I have had (about 10, altogether) has been a complete, roaring success. But, if you're poor, or uneducated, or easily intimidated, you might get terrible medical care, even here in the land of plenty. I do not know why Chris was not able to get the necessary follow-up tests. People work the system like crazy, she was indigent, I cannot imagine that she could not find some way to get those tests after her surgery. I think that you might be onto something when you muse that perhaps she was frightened of finding out that the cancer had indeed come back. My poor sister.

No, Chris was never in a train wreck. She told me, years ago, that one time she got infuriated with you and threw your briefcase, full of papers relating to the work you were doing for some governmental body, out of a second-story window, and that the papers, very valuable, all fluttered into the mud covering the street below. I was aghast, but I do know that both Chris and my mom have been physically violent, during arguments, in the past. And I mean violent toward the people they were arguing with. I know, I was one of the recipients of physical violence. Well, we're all a checkerboard of positives and negatives. My younger son, Valentin, says this: everyone is born with a deck of cards, different people are just missing different cards.

I never read Ayn Rand, I saw her once on "The Johnny Carson Show" and she seemed to seamlessly combine arrogance with idiocy. I did not know that she had a concept of "Supermen", what a fatuous turd. You are right, life IS a matter of give and take, and those who barge their way through life, forgiving themselves for their arrogance and their cruelty by conjuring up visions of their own superiority, are nothing but pimples on the ass of mankind.

Yes, Alan Greenspan is one of those pimples. I remember seeing him in 2008, on TV, a broken, bewildered man, saying something like, "I don't know how it happened but it appears that we were wrong." I didn't feel sorry for him at all. Dumb shit.

I do not know if you have heard of a movie that is coming out in wide release on December 23rd of this year, called "The Big Short". It is about the housing crisis

that occurred in 2008. It is about the egomaniacs that made it possible. It stars: Brad Pitt, Ryan Gosling, Steve Carell, Christian Bale, Marisa Tomei. It has been nominated for Best Picture at the Golden Globes. Brad Pitt gave a press conference about the movie's release, during which he stated that the movie was made in part because of how scandalous it is that no one went to prison for their terrible misdeeds, misdeeds that ruined the lives of so many people.

Val and Gabriel and Dominic and I bought advance tickets to see it, Christmas Eve. I want to get more educated about why I hate banksters. The smartest men in the room, yup, yup.

I am very interested to hear about the projects that you have been involved with, over your lifetime. I am so glad that you still get thrilled by your work.

You mentioned that you worked at one point in Kazakhstan. That country sticks in my memory, because I saw part of a documentary on the massive corruption that exists there. They have vast mineral deposits, I read, and lots of oil and gas. So, of course they are corrupt. There is so much money to be made!

One of the reporters began to ask questions about the government of one of the twenty-something daughters of the head of the government, and she exuded bimbo-hood, knowing nothing about her country except that it fortunately provided lots of lolly for her favorite habits—make-up and expensive clothes. She would have been beautiful if it hadn't been for the roughly 40 pounds of make-up she was wearing. For all the things that are negative that can be said about Americans, they have this one great virtue: the women don't wear that much make-up, they rarely look as if they have glue on their faces. Her bimbo-hood was short-lived, however, as it pertained to the merciless eye of the camera, because some guy who looked like a bouncer for the Mafia quickly came between her and the reporter. The bouncer was pretty menacing. The stupidity of the receivers of undeserved riches must not be exposed!

You are so kind to offer us the use of your beach house. I mean really kind, Itil. I am too chicken-hearted to ever go to Chile (I remember reading about the years of Pinochet), but the offer means a lot to me. I will not mention this possibility to my two sons, they think that nothing bad can happen to them. Valentin is 24 years old and rides a motorcycle and has on occasion gone out on Lake Washington on his jet-ski ALONE, the silly sod. He drives a car with expertise and the notion that nothing unexpected will ever happen. He has not yet learned the lesson that prey always learn, that to stay alive you have to expect the unexpected, that the unexpected is the norm.

It is interesting that you say that you have been lucky enough to have done some things that have made a difference. That is exactly what my son Gabriel said to me when he came home from Washington State University at the end of spring semester, last year. He is a junior in Chemical Engineering, the subject requires

work that is so hard, he studies all the time. But it is worth it to him, so far. He told me, "What I want is to make a difference." He is keen to investigate bio-fuels.

Dominic has scanned some pictures for me to send to you. Yes, Dominic found one of the pictures that I was talking about! I enclose it along with a picture of Christine's father when he was a young man, taking his little sisters out for a stroll. He was only about 18 in this picture, before he got sent to the South Pacific when he was 19. He told me that he liked to fish but not to hunt, he said that he had carried a rifle for 5 years and he didn't ever want to carry one again.

About the joint custody issue, guardianship of our mom: Chris would not HEAR of joint custody, she told the paralegal who talked to her that she would "never agree to joint custody with Cindy." She wanted sole custody or nothing. The judge didn't have to review the financial records for very long before he awarded me sole custody and banged the gavel down.

In another letter I will tell you the convoluted story of how my mom started out in New Mexico, came to live with Dominic and me in Seattle, and migrated to Montana to live with Chris. My mom is still in Montana, thank god! I call her every week, I want her to be as happy as she can be, considering her limited circumstances. She is financially fine (courtesy of the mechanical engineer husband whom she claimed was really a hit man for the Mafia), but does not have mobility and never makes friends. In the same circumstances, I would get hold of some Nembutal and try to arrange an easy exit with my family around me. I don't care about living as much as I used to, my genes are already in the gene pool. But, my children need me for about another 15 years, so I'm not going anywhere.

I know you will love the picture of Chris! Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukkah!
Happy New Year!

I wish you happy, I. Write again whenever you can.

Cindy