

January 29, 2006

To the family of Lucienne Northern,

This is the most difficult letter I have ever written. And yet, it is a relief to communicate with you because I have wanted to do so before now. I hope the sincerity of my thoughts come through the words on these pages.

First, I want you to know that your family has been in my thoughts and prayers since that fateful night. I am a woman of strong faith and hope you are not offended by my prayers. As I sat on my couch in the early morning hours of April 10 with police searching my house, my son sitting in a police car, I was in a state of shock and confusion. The police were talking about my son! Only hours earlier he had left for work with a smile on his face, a purpose to his day of getting work done and a promise to me that he'd be home for dinner around 5:00 p.m. As I sat there, the only thing I could do to hold on to my sanity was pray. And pray I did - out loud with a policeman sitting right beside me. You see, that was the first time I prayed for Greg in this situation and for Lucienne. I knew someone had died but did not know her name until later. I only knew what the police were telling me - that my son was responsible for a horrendous, unthinkable act against another human being. I cannot imagine what was happening at your house or how you must have felt - shock, anger, disgust, disbelief & immense sadness. Perhaps these were some of your emotions.

Why did this happen? I don't know what transpired between Greg and Lucy. (May I call her Lucy?) I don't know what words were exchanged that culminated in an act of violence. I don't know why an intelligent young man with a sparkle in his eye and a future left that morning and returned home very drunk muttering unintelligible phrases. Sadly, our son is an alcoholic. It is his 'drug of choice'. We have sought help for him over the years. I thought that unconditional love from his family, the right doctors, counselors and rehab program could win over alcohol. How foolish I was! I never realized what an unrelenting opponent alcohol was. I tried hard but lost the fight with alcohol and lost my son. Doctors are now telling us that Greg is bi-polar and self-medicates with alcohol. I wish we had known this earlier. I share these facts with you not as excuses but simply as facts and perhaps a better understanding of my son and why things happened.

Over these past months I have tried to put myself in your place. What feelings do you have for my son — hatred, revenge or perhaps a little bit of sorrow? He took a loved one from you, shattered dreams & hopes, a mother, sister, friend and girlfriend. For me everyday is a struggle, every holiday a celebration to be endured, everyday a collection of memories of happier times with my son. I am in excruciating pain & can only think the pain you are feeling must be a thousand times worse!

One day after a court session, a woman hesitantly approached me saying she was a friend of your family. After talking a few minutes she made an odd comment. She told me that "Lucy's family were good people". I thought this was a strange thing to say because the thought had not entered my mind that you were not good people. Now I wonder what you think of us. Are we good people? I can only tell you that we are an ordinary family - 2 children (one boy, one girl), a mom and a dad. We have worked hard to raise both children to have a neverending faith in God and strong moral values. Greg is a son, brother, grandson, cousin, a lover of the outdoors, of animals and does have a caring & compassionate side. He also has a sense of humor & makes me laugh when I am down. Yes, there is a good side to him.

With all of this said, I want to extend my sincere apology to your family for the unthinkable act committed by my beloved son. It is sad that the lives of our two families will always be joined together by the events of April 9. It is sad that two lives were lost that night - one in death & one laying in ruins. Please know that if I could change those events on that night, I would do so without hesitation. I wish with all my heart that things were different for your family and mine. I pray that God will give you comfort over time, that comfort will also come to my family. Finally, I pray for mercy for Greg - from you & from God.

And yes, everyday I pray for Lucy. I ask her for forgiveness also.

I appreciate the opportunity to communicate with you. May God watch over both of our families as this situation continues to unfold.

Sincerely,
Fran Duwall