

Chapter 13: Letters from Home

In the process of working on this book, thanks to Father Fred having kept the full name and date of birth of every girl he worked with in his diary, my co-author managed to track down most of the people I wrote about. He let some of them read an early draft of this book and then worked with them to write me these letters.

Except for changing names and other identifying details, I present these letters as I received them. Many offer views on these same events that are different from what I remember and offer details that I didn't know, but I think their views are just as valid as mine.

When we found Jess, I took out a plea for her to contact me if she ever found this book, but I otherwise did not edit the preceding story in any way to include any of the information they brought to my attention in these letters.

Hey big sister,

I know it's been a minute. Almost 30 years now since we left that Island and we last saw each other. I still can't believe I went there because I bit two classmates in preschool.

I went home about a month after you left. I was so upset that I didn't get to say goodbye to you. That was the hardest part. As long as I had you, I knew everything would be OK.

I was really upset that they never let us say goodbye. You were my whole world and I didn't even know your last name. I left the Island about a month after you did, with the next batch of girls that went home. I didn't get to say goodbye either.

The Island suffered unspeakable horrors after you left. I was lucky to get out when I did. Jenna stayed on the Island almost an entire year after I left. I still talk to her once in a while, she works as an Uber driver in Texas. Marci never made it off the Island.

I wasn't home for two months before I went to boarding school in France. It wasn't a troubled teen program, it was a real boarding school and I got to do an awful lot of normal things. They didn't even make us do any chores!

As much as I love stories, it turns out I was faking reading. I memorized every book we had. I didn't actually know how to read. The new school figured out I needed glasses. But I learned how to be normal and by the time I went to England for high school, I did really well. I even went to college in New York City.

I never married; I don't have any children. I worked for a little while in the tech sector, but my parents left me enough of a legacy that I don't really have to work. I spend most of my time in my garden with my two dogs. I still can't believe that we only live a few miles apart, and you have no idea how much I look forward to seeing you in a few hours.

Not a day has gone by that I haven't thought of you. I think of you every time I touch my rubbing stone. I carried that stone with me everywhere I went right through college to make sure I could never forget you. It still sits on my bedside table. And it's still black from that fire magic trick you and Dad did to it.

I hired a PI to try to find you about 10 years ago, but without a last name, it was just impossible. It was quite a surprise when your co-author called me today. I still don't understand how he found me. But that doesn't matter, what matters is that he did and now I found you. I am counting the seconds till our video call tonight. I can't wait to hear your voice again. Let's never lose touch again, OK?

I guess this means you are going to have to change that ending to your book now?

Maybe we can do Apple Pie for breakfast?

Love always,

Jessica (aka Jess)

Dear V.

You were thirteen the first time I heard about you. My brother wrote to me about how protective you were of a little girl that should never have been on that island, how protective you were of her when everybody else was only out for their own interests. He saw bravery in you standing in that first parade, where everybody else showed nothing but terror of him. He never forgot you telling him to take care of Jess when he took her that first parade. Then you were interested during drill and during science when nobody else seemed to care very much. That made a huge difference to my brother.

You had his heart from the moment you refused to be a rat, willing to take a beating even after the very severe beating you had already taken. That's heart. He saw a love between you and Jess that melted his heart and melting his heart was next to impossible. When he ever saw you saving food for your sister, just like we used to do for each other when we grew up so poor, he knew there was something special about you.

By the time I came to that island to convince him to leave, there was no way he was going to give up the two children that he had claimed as his own. Seeing how much

my brother loved you, you were already family the first time I laid eyes on you. Time after time, the two of you showed him the kind of love, the kind of unconditional and never-ending love that every parent dreams of, and for that I am eternally thankful.

We've talked over the years about just how much he saved your life, we've discussed the many things he did to try to give you a better life. He did those things because he loved you and he was so determined that you two do better in this world than he did. He was so determined that the two of you would grow up to have loving families, to have the things he never had. I think you've succeeded in that in ways that would make him forever proud. I know how proud of you I am.

I think it's important to make sure you understand that you and your sister saved his life just as many times if not many more times than he saved yours. The bond you two formed with him was one of the most powerful of his life. In truth I was sometimes jealous, you had the kind of relationship with him that only he and I had ever had before.

His favorite time of the day was reading stories to the two of you. Every time he missed one, I heard about the lost opportunity. He really regretted every night he missed

story with you. Did I ever tell you how scared he was that one day you would outgrow story time with him? In almost every letter he wrote me, he talked about how hard it would be to give up that with you. Those times really meant everything to him.

Your interest in learning was incredible to him. You were a sponge that sucked up every piece of information he could give you and he did everything he could to make sure he could keep feeding you more. For every hour you had lesson with him, he stayed up at least another hour planning the next one. You were that important to him.

The one thing I regret about those early days is that I couldn't convince my brother to talk to you about how he felt. From our conversations over the years, I know just how scared you were of losing him and having to go back to living in that bunk. His constant fear was that you would choose to go back and live in bunk, he was always worried that he would screw up and you would stop loving him. He dreaded the idea that you and Jess would stop telling him your stories. I still have quite a few of those stories, he often wrote them down in his letters to me. Your imagination was a better world for him than the real world ever was.

You have no idea the pressure other staff put him under to throw you back into one of the bunks. But he absolutely wouldn't have it. As long as you were willing to live with him, he was keeping you both. Sending you two to do classes with two of the bunks and chore with a third was the furthest he was willing to go to compromise. Even then, he insisted they treat you like they would an upper-level girl, if for no other reason than so you knew you could take care of your sister, but also because he felt you had truly earned it.

When I met you that first time, on that one trip I made to the Island, I understood just how special you were and why my brother loved you so much. In a place as brutal as the Island was, you charged headfirst in and stood up to a whole roomful a very scary adults to try to defend me, someone you barely knew at the time. In doing so you showed the kind of love and bravery that I wish I had at that age. The time I spent with you those weeks were as important to me as they were to my brother. After all, I had the opportunity to get to know my nieces! Oh and the nose trick? I learned that from my mother, and you had the same tickle spots as my brother did.

I know you believe that the creation of the Guardians was my doing, but it wasn't. My brother did that because he wanted you to have something special, he wanted you to have an opportunity to grow and spread your wings, one he knew he couldn't give you just in his home. The only thing I did was convince him to offer that opportunity to more than just you. I think it was the right thing to do. It's fitting that your group was eventually called the Guardians, because he saw you and Jess as his guardian angels just as much as you saw him as yours.

We've talked over the years about just how reluctant the church was for change, how the church refused to spend money to make the Island a better place. My brother spent a lot of his own money to try to improve things. He really wanted every girl on that island to have the kind of wondrous life you and your sister did all those days playing in his backyard.

You have no idea how pleased he was to see you form relationships with his friends, the gentleman you call the sergeants, especially Matt. They were part of his military family and getting to have them come and be part of his adopted family meant the world to him. You and your sister are the only two to ever get him to cross the family and

military lines like that. I don't know whether you know this or not, but he was trying to make the Island double as a retirement community for military officers. He thought the girls on the Island could save as many of his friends, as his friends could save girls on the Island. I think if he had lived a few more years, you would have seen it happen.

We've talked about how depressed my brother was, and how you and your sister are the ones that pulled him out of his depression time after time after time. I will never forget the very expensive phone call he made after you sat with him telling him you loved him and please don't die over and over again when he was sick. He cried for almost an hour. I don't think he had cried over anything since he was fourteen. I don't know that I've ever thanked you for that, but I will forever be grateful for what you two did for my brother.

When you ever started doing military maneuvers with him and his friends, he was the proudest any parent could have ever been. He spent a month planning that first outing you did with him.

When you became a better shot than he was, he wasn't jealous, he wasn't upset, he was the proudest parent in the whole wide world. He boasted to his friends for weeks when

you made that first swell shot. He wanted to put you up for a medal the first time you hit it at 1000 yards! He told me that it was the first time he understood why some parents acted like they did at graduation. I promise you had he lived to see your college graduation he would have been one of those parents.

We've talked about that incident with the rifle and the headmaster of whom I will not speak her name. For years you've regretted not taking that shot, comparing yourself to what my brother would have done. It's true my brother would have taken that shot, but he wasn't seventeen, he wasn't in the situation you were. He was a Navy man with a whole career of experience behind him. One thing I can tell you with absolute certainty is that he wouldn't have wanted you to take that shot. My brother knew what it was like to take a life, and at seventeen he would not have wanted you to carry that weight. I remember my brother after his first time, you didn't need to carry that at seventeen.

Theodore absolutely adored watching you grow into the amazing young woman you became. If he had any lasting regrets, which would be very much unlike him, it would be that he didn't see you grow to become the adult, the parent

and the amazing woman that you are. He would be proud of you. I know I am.

Hopefully I'll be well enough to see you and the family at Thanksgiving, at my age there aren't too many holidays left, but I hope to spend as many of them with you as I can. I hear your little sister may finally be joining us this year.

Love

Aunt Beth

P. S. My brother never understood why you loved those morning lines so much. I never told him the little secret you shared with me about them.

Dearest V

I read the draft of your book, and I can't blame you for holding me accountable. God knows I played my part. I wasn't 26 when I went to the Island, I was 22. My wife was 21. For both of us, this was our first job out of college. It seemed like such an amazing opportunity at the time.

I don't know if you remember Courtney Rogers from Bunk 22, but she and I shared the same birthday. Same day same month same year. We really weren't much older than the girls themselves, and we were in fact younger than some of the girls (some were as old as 24!).

To say that I was idealistic and in over my head would be a dramatic understatement, especially after Mr. S's death. I did the best I could, given my experience and abilities of the time. I really did believe that my leaving would only make things worse for all the girls, so I stayed longer than I should have.

It was almost 18 months to the day that I left the Island after you did. It was after those girls died, when it became clear that I could no longer even protect the girls in my own cabin, with a child of my own on the way, that I knew I could be of no more good in that place. As much as I hated what went on, I loved the kids I cared for. To this day, each and every one of them holds a special place in my heart. Including you and Jess and Jenna.

When I left the Island, I also left the church. It didn't take me long to find a new church, one that has been much more aligned with how I think children should be treated.

It's not an excuse, but hopefully it provides you a little bit of an explanation. Please know that if I had it to do over again, knowing what I know now, I would do it very differently and I will forever be sorry for what you girls went through.

I do not expect you or any other girl that lived on that island to forgive me. While I may have done my best at the time, the wisdom and experience of age has let me see just how badly I failed all of you. I should have done more, I should have stopped many of the things that went on and for all of that and more, I am so very sorry.

That is a burden I will bear for the rest of my life. So many of those things were done in the name of God, in the name of the church and I represented the church on the Island.

I hope the list of names helps you find the others. If there is ever anything I can do for you, for Jess, for Jenna, or for any other girl that lived on the Island I'm here for you.

Your servant in God,
Father Fred

Hey my little Chickee,

You make me out to be such a hero! I promise you I wasn't the hero you think I was. I scammed my way up to being Level 7 by telling them exactly what they wanted to hear and letting them see exactly what they wanted to see and blowing Brother Tim a lot. I didn't actually believe any of the bullshit they spouted, I just did what I had to.

I remember you being sent to Bunk 7 with Jess. That was a weird situation, even for the Island. I was in Bunk 11, I remember hearing your Bunk parents arguing about you and Jess a lot. Your house mother kept giving you tons of points so you didn't drop too low, while your bunk father kept taking them from you. I think everyone in the pod heard those fights! Older teens loved your bunk father, he was predictable and even fun. But he didn't like little kids, even fourteen-year-old' were babies as far as he was concerned. You and Jess were definitely a challenge for him!

I was actually there when your bunk mother had the maintenance guy urinate in Tamaras cheerios. Tamara was a Level 8 girl who was about to be promoted to Level 9. She had already passed all the tests and got voted in by council, she was going to receive her promotion that afternoon. She got dropped to Level 3. That was one of the biggest level drops any of us had ever seen, over 3 years of work vanished in that instant. She wasn't even court

ordered; she would have gone home in 6 months if not for that incident. It definitely sent a message about Jess's food!

I don't know why you hero worshiped me, of all people, like you did, but I definitely took advantage of that card and played it quite a lot.

My house mother, Sister Paula, caught me blowing her husband. She put me on a starvation diet. I could eat raw once a day. She told me "learn to swallow because you will need those calories". Brother Tim said I did a better job when I was hungry and did nothing to help. I really hated him for that.

They didn't drop me any levels or take my domestic chore away because she said the starvation would do it for her. She even put me on trash in addition to flowers just so I would have to see the food scraps and know I couldn't eat them. Evil bitch.

I had been on that starvation diet for five days when I met you. I was doing flowers and I was wondering just how long it took to die from starvation. I smelled those crackers from 100 feet away. You two were so eager to share those crackers and I was willing to do almost anything to eat them. I remember some of them had cheese and some of them had peanut butter on them. That first week I conned you into sharing snacks with me every day.

Do you have any idea how much trouble I got in for that tin? Brother James whipped my ass just

for giving you that tin out of the trash to make sandcastles with! Then I had to move a big pile of bricks. It took me five freaking days to move all those bricks. I had a whole 12 bricks to go when Mr. S came over to talk to me. I only got to keep my rank and keep my domestic chores because you two liked talking to me so much and I guess told him all about it.

Mr. S knew I was a con man, and he gave me a choice. I could be thrown down into the depths of hell in Bunk 22, or I could pull off the biggest con of my life and become the person who I had tricked you into thinking I was. Really wasn't much of a choice was it?

Mr. S then gave me extra hours every week just to spend talking with you two. At first I really hated having to become the person I conned you into believing I was, but after a while, I don't know, it just sort of became natural. I look back and I still wonder if that was his plan, or if he was just doing it for his little girl?

At first Mr. S restored one of my meals a day (dinner), but he let my house mother keep me eating raw one meal a day too. He said he would restore my other meals if I did well. He eventually restored all three of my meals, but he definitely made me work for that. But that was the Island.

All those family lunches you guys let me do with you really helped. I remember you went through

that big kick on those MRE meals you so loved. You would eat half of one, Jess would eat a quarter of one and then I would eat mine and everything you two didn't eat. I never developed the love for MREs that you did, but I must say they were a lot better than eating raw or starving! I had to lie to my bunk parents about those – its why we could never do the picnics under the tree you wanted to do! That island was such a brutal place.

I remember you getting sick. I wasn't on trash duty, I was on my way to do the Tuesday check in chore that Mr. S assigned me. I thought I was going to be in serious trouble for you going down like you did! Brother Sam wasn't going to put me as the one staying with you guys, he only did it because you held on to me so tightly. I thought the staff were going to blow a gasket with how badly I kept that house while I was with you! But you were Mr. S's little girl, and that you were so determined to clean that house is the only reason I didn't get publicly whipped over that.

The part in your story about Nikki leaves out a very important detail. If you remember, I was the reason we broke Nikki. She and I were enemies before the Guardians ever existed, and I took that opportunity for revenge.

When Mr. S sent you into the house to take care of Jess when he got back, the rest of us got chewed out something else. The only reason all of us were not

bounced out of the Guardians was because you went and tried to take responsibility like you did. You wouldn't let him blame any of the rest of us, you insisted that you take the blame and the consequences. We all got whipped, I distinctly remember you insisting on going first! But you were his little girl.

Think about it, on any given day you could choose to eat, sleep and shower with us or you could choose to go back to your own room, family meals and a home shower. You had uniforms in bunk and you had uniforms in your room. You could take things to laundry any time, where the rest of us could only take laundry once a week. But then you were also quick to share them and quick to sneak our dirty stuff in with your extra loads (I must say, we all really appreciated the clean underwear...).

You could skip duty if you wanted to (not that you ever did except for that one time to take care of Jess), none of the rest of us could do that. The rest of us were very jealous of you. But we were also thankful that we could hitch ourselves to your wagon. We really did do some incredible stuff, we really made a difference.

Then there was the whole falling on your sword thing. I can't even count the number of times you threw yourself on your sword for the rest of us. So while we all knew what the score was, we all knew the Guardians was just to give you your own little

club, that you kept jumping into harm's way for the rest of us did a lot to make up for that. We all loved you, even if you were the Island princess.

It was a weird situation, but I guess it was less weird than the bunk situations we had before? I guess life is all relative isn't it? It was so much better than living in the normal bunks! That and you got really good at braiding all of our hair! I think you did the tightest braids of any of us.

Brother Sam and Mr. S didn't side with me on all those appeals, they sided with you. Did you ever wonder why we made sure you always represented the girl? Everyone on the Island knew that whoever you represented in the appeal was the one that was going to win. You were absolutely the Princess of the Island. The funny part is you never seemed to know that.

When we left... When we left the Island on that ship, we all immediately got seasick. None of us had ever been on the ocean before! Great start for a bunch of Navy recruits, isn't it? We were all still suffering from it when we started basic. That was fun. Most of us were in the same basic training together.

I enlisted and made my career as an NCO. I have a wife and we raised two kids from her previous marriage. I will retire next Summer and plan to move home to Oregon with my wife. I didn't have the level of help and support you got, none of us did. But we

had each other, and you didn't have that. I still talk to some of the other girls.

We were all on that island for reasons, we were all lifers for reasons. They're all gonna be very excited to read your book. It's not often girls like us are made out to be the heroes.

Maybe we can get lunch? I'll bring the MREs.

~Ericka~

P. S. I still don't know why you went to Bunk 7. Bunk 7 was the Factory, it was a 15-24-year-old bunk, you should have gone to Bunk 5 with the little kids or at least Bunk 8. It made you both seem even younger than you were.

Hey short stuff!

I read your book and I love it! It's us, but it's not us. You changed just enough that I don't think anyone but a Guardian would ever be able to tell it was us. It amazes me how well you told our story, but still hid exactly who we are and what our program was, but I also understand why. I never would have thought to do that.

You wrote a whole book about us, you told some of our best stories. And yet you never once mentioned why any of us were sent to that Island. Not all of us deserved to be on the Island, but you know I earned my spot in that place, and I thank you for not making me famous for it. It took a long time to put all of that behind me.

Boy, did you ever soft-peddle the violence and inhumanity we all went through, especially the shit they did to us before Mr. S came. Do you remember the first time we met? It was that time Brother Mark caged you and Jess after he forced her to drink all that water and then she wet the bed. Sister Mary and Sister Kendra (my bunk mother) had such a conniption fit when they found out Brother Mark caged you two over that.

Sister Kendra assigned me to watch over you two while they got the key from Brother Mark, but they found Brother Mark while I was still with them. It was the first and only time I ever saw staff members come to blows like that over a student. Were they ever

pissed that he caged you and Jess for wetting the bed! The staff fights over Jess were epic, especially as staff never fought over students on our side of the fence line, except over Jess.

The things you didn't mention stand out to me far more than any of the stories you did tell. Not even a single mention of the "special groups" and the even more special "counseling sessions" we were put through, you know exactly the ones I mean. No mention of Brother Jonathan lashing girls to that post at the anthill. No mention of the rats. No discussion on the foot fungus and what that did to us all. No mention of the constant yeast infections and begging the Wilderness guy to make that itchy powder to kill the yeast infections because they didn't believe in Monistat. I'm still not sure that stuff was sanitary, but at least it worked.

But of everything you didn't mention, the one that stands out to me more than any other is the ages of the missionary Brothers and Sisters. Most maintenance staff were eighteen to twenty. Most bunk parents were early twenties or even late teens. I know Brother Mark was only nineteen when he became a bunk parent and like twenty-two when you were in his group. How fucked up is it that they routinely put kids barely older than the girls they were supervising (or sometimes younger) in positions of such power over us? Even the head bunk parents were usually only in their late twenties. And yet,

despite not having any form of contraception, I can't think of any girl that got preggos because of it. I think only the farm manager, the head maintenance guy, the boiler guy, head office staff, and a handful of others were over thirty-five.

Do you remember how we first became friends when you started doing classes with us? I was trying to level up and since it was always a good idea to make as many upper-level friends as possible, I really wanted to become your friend. I figured you had to be some crazy super-high level if they didn't even give you points! Boy was I wrong! I was in such shock when you were not at that peer council, and I barely lost the vote! Then, a few days later, we cleaned up after that party, and then Mr. S recruited me for the Guardians.

You never talked about how Mr. S recruited every Guardian for specific reasons. With me, he was specifically looking for a real fighter. It should have been Kayla from Bunk 4, she was a higher level and a bit better of a fighter than me, but I guess us being friends tipped the scales in my favor. He said I had a personal stake in it that no one else did, and that was you.

Jess was such a difficult child when she was 4. I worked so hard to get her to like me. You know she only liked me because I was your best friend. When we went on that adventure to the maintenance shed, we got what we needed and she b-lined it back to you

as fast as her feet would carry her. When we were on ops, whatever group had her to work with had a really hard time! For the longest time, she either wouldn't talk to them, or just screamed your name! Every other team had so much trouble taking care of her that first year, though Jenna made it a lot better, at least she could translate!

At some point, you and I have to talk about the Nikki fight. Part of my job was to protect you. I really didn't want to walk into that fight, I knew full well that we had no chance of winning it with only three of us! But you two went in with such a head of steam, there was no stopping you. I broke my nose in that fight! But I also regret what we did to her afterward, especially the things you left out of the story, you know, channeling the inner Sister Jean thing we did.

Becoming your friend may have been a strategic move, but honestly, you were the best friend I ever had as a kid. You were the only one on the Island I could share my secrets with that I knew couldn't be made to turn on me. I could trust you when I couldn't really trust anyone else. I think that's what kept me from going insane. And then we had those MRF peanut butter and sugar packets and even those deserts that you kept sneaking to me at the end of class. Those are good memories.

I think that's the thing, most of my best memories from the Island involved you. The goofy

radio calls we made. The silly songs we sang in Bunk 1. The hand games. Drawing in the mud. The water fights when we had to drain the standing water. Swimming at the beach. Suntanning! All of my best teenage memories, all of the ones I really cherish involved you.

I almost didn't leave with the others. I came so close to staying with you. Ultimately, I think my leaving was the right thing, especially seeing what happened after I left. But I always regretted leaving you behind. I am glad you made it like you did. I may not have reached your level, but I have managed to raise my kids to be the best people they could be. And to treat everyone like they are humans.

I really appreciate you and Jess paying for me and my kids to come to the reunion. I'm doing alright as a single mom, but we couldn't have swung this trip on our own. It's going to be the first out-of-state vacation my kids and I have ever taken. I guess Father Fred has a family that we will stay with for it. They even have pool for the kids to swim in. It's so unreal that this is going to happen. I can't wait for you to meet my kids; my eldest's middle name is Vanessa. She goes by "V" too.

See you in two weeks.

Forever your best friend
(even if you still look 12!),

Jonya

What happened to the others?

While we were not able to track down everyone from the Island, we did locate most of the Guardians and others that played a major part in this book. Here is what we know as of 2022:

Guardians and Girls:

Adrian, the girl who pulled 75 stumps in two days, stayed on the Island until it closed. She works as an IV nurse at a hospital in California and struggles with relationships. She is still a member of the church.

Alex, the girl who moved the mountain, stayed on the Island until it closed, what happened to her after that is unknown.

Betty works as a manager at a retail establishment along with her husband. They have a son in college. (*Guardian, Orange Team*)

Brittany is married and is now a stay-at-home mom with 2 kids. (*Guardian, Red Team*)

Christi did 1 tour with the Navy, she now works in Iowa as a waitress. (*Guardian, Green Team Sargent*)

Debbie, from Bunk 7, timed out while I was living with Dad and isolated. What happened to her after that is unknown.

Emma, the girl we rescued from Bunk 22, went to college for art, she works in the art field making stained glass. She is still a member of the church.

Ericka made a career as an NCO in the Navy. She is about to retire with her wife of 15 years and is working on her own book. (*Guardians Captain*)

Ginny, the girl who punched me in the face and got away with it, graduated as a Level 10 a year after I left. She now works in medical billing and is a member of the church.

Gretta, from Bunk 7, left with the other upper level older girls to join the Navy. She did one tour and went on to work in electronics.

Jenna, who shared a room with Jess in Mr. S's house, now works as an Uber driver.

Jennifer did 1 tour with the Navy. She is now working in retail and has struggled with drug addiction. (*Guardian, Green Team*)

Jess and I have reconnected. We live only a few miles apart and spend as much time together as we can. How often do you find your long-lost little sister?

Julie stayed on the Island until it closed. She committed suicide 2 years after getting home. (*Guardian, Purple Team*)

Kat is struggling with drug addiction. She is homeless on the streets of LA. Jess and I hope to get her into rehab soon. (*Guardian, Blue Team*)

Kate, the Guardian that got to go home early, did one tour in the Navy. She works for a defense contractor, has 2 teenagers, 1 of whom went through 9 months in a Wilderness TTI program..

Laura graduated from college and now, teaches Phys Ed and coaches a girls' track team. She is still a member of the church. (*Guardian, Orange Team*)

Marci, Jenna's older sister, along with several other girls, died on the Island. Her cause of death is unknown. (*Guardian, Orange Team*)

Mary, the Bunk 14 girl who was Miss Rawlings's first sexual victim on the Island, stayed on the Island until it closed. She now works in retail.

Maxine stayed on the Island until it closed. She has spent her life in and out of psychiatric institutions and currently lives on the streets of New York City. (*Guardian, Purple Team*)

Meghan works in the adult entertainment field. (*Guardian, Blue Team*)

Michelle did 2 tours in the Navy and got her degree. She now works in mechanical engineering. (*Guardian, Blue Team Sergeant*)

Molly, aka Superman, was eventually diagnosed with a seizure disorder at the hospital on the mainland and was sent to a long-term hospital placement. She is now seizure free and works managing rental properties.

Nancy did 1 tour with the Navy; she currently works for a pest control company in Oklahoma. She is still a member of the church. (*Guardian, Red Team*)

Nikki, the girl we Guardians broke, is currently serving 25 to life in prison. She and Ericka now talk regularly.

Paula is currently serving life in prison. (*Guardian, Red Team*)

Rory “Bad News from Bunk 22” is currently serving 15 years in prison. She has 3 daughters in foster care. We made sure they got a good Christmas this year, and we will continue to support them.

Sarah received a Dishonorable discharge for violating Don’t Ask/Don’t Tell. She is recovering from drug addiction and with Jess’ help, is now in a stable living and working situation. (*Guardian, Green Team*)

Sasha was Honorably discharged from the Navy. She died of a drug overdose. (*Guardian, Green Team*)

Susan is married with 2 children. She works in IT in Seattle. (*Guardian, Blue Team*)

Shawn served as an NCO in the Navy. She died of complications from meningitis just shy of completing her 20 years. (*Guardian, Orange Team Sergeant*)

Tonya received an Honorable discharge from the Navy. She is a single mother with three kids. She supports her family with an OnlyFans site. While we are not interested in the content, both Jess and I are top-tier subscribers – after all, that’s what best friends are for. (*Guardian, Purple Team Sergeant*)

Tori received an Honorable discharge from the Navy. She struggled with drug addiction and committed suicide at age 26. (*Guardian, Blue Team*)

Staff:

Brother Sam worked for a construction company until he died of natural causes.

Brother Mark was 23 when he completed his four-year missionary assignment and left the Island. He worked in 1 other TTI program where he met his wife. They now own a ranch in Texas where they live with their 3 children. He is no longer part of the Church and does not work in the TTI. Recently, he has advocated against the TTI.

Sister Mary left the Island as part of the Great Resignation. She now owns a small restaurant in Delaware with her sister. She has a daughter that spent time in a TTI program and is still a member of the Church. Mary still employs a few of the girls from the Island who worked in Chow Hut with her.

Sister Jean is still a counselor with the Church. She still works with teenage girls.

Father Fred and Sister Denise are still happily married and live on the West Coast, where they raised 3 children and still run a small congregation of a different Christian church. They even hosted our reunion and administer the fund we set up to help support those of us that went to the Island. Most of the authors royalties from the sale of this book goes to that fund.

Sister Lisa left the Island shortly after the sergeants did as part of the *great resignation*. She now works for a law firm and is still a member of the church.

Brother Joe, the maintenance guy who took Molly under his wing, left the Island as part of the Great Resignation. He lives in California with his wife, two

daughters and his little sister, who has Downs Syndrome and epilepsy. He and Molly are still in contact with each other, and he is still a member of the church.

Sergeant “Uncle Matt” Richards has retired for a second time and lives a mile from me. He enjoys fishing and spending time with his two grand-nieces.

Sergeant Davis recently retired from a private defense contracting firm. He still takes in foster teens and plans to do so until the day he dies.

Sergeant Mitchel works for a defense contractor and does volunteer work with teenagers through the Boy Scouts of America’s Exploring program.

Sergeant Mackey reconnected with his own daughter after leaving the Island. He now lives with her and his two grandchildren and a soon-to-be first great-grandchild.

Sergeant Duplessie retired to upstate New York, where he tinkers with old cars and tractors.

Sergeant James taught at a college in Asia until he passed away from natural causes. He is survived by his third wife and a son from his first marriage.

Miss Rawlings is married and has 3 children and 2 grandchildren. She has semi-retired, but still works for the Church part-time in its educational mission. Her specialty is fundraising.

This is not the end of our story; we now have a new beginning. Because of the work on this book, in 2022, Jess and I were able to bring Adrian, Betty, Brittany, Christi, Emma, Erica, Ginny, Jenna, Jennifer, Kat, Kate, Laura, Mary, Meghan, Michelle, Molly, Nancy, Sarah, Susan, Tonya, Aunt Beth, Sergeant “Uncle Matt” Richards, Sergeant Davis, Sergeant Mitchel, Sergeant Mackey, and Sergeant Duplessie and some of the others, as well as many of their families together for a reunion hosted at Father Fred’s church. We even got Paula on video for some of it.

Reuniting the remaining Guardians, as well as some of the others to share memories, rekindle old friendships, and mourn those we have lost, was an experience unlike any other.

We are now all supporting each other however we can. Our group text is crazy. Those of us who are doing well are now helping those still struggling. Father Fred even arranged a therapist that does group therapy for all of us via Zoom. She went to a troubled teen program herself and she is the first therapist I’ve ever met who actually understands.

We all went through hell together and in a special way, that makes us family. And family really is everything.

Come hell or high water, we will stick together for the rest of our lives. After all, we’ve already been through hell together, high water should be a breeze!