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thoughts about the hearing

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Hi Erin,

Thank you for letting us see Sophie. She is wonderful and it was very generous of you to do that.

I know you think we all ganged up on you and did not hear you, but we did. We know your Mom shoved you away. She called me crying hysterically right after. We also know that you two have been yelling and screaming at each other for a long time. We know that you told her you didn't care if your grandmother dies, or if you see any of us again. (Don't worry, Gma knows you were just mad and is not angry about this.) I know that too. But the thought of her mother dying is a terrible fear for your mother. It really hurt her.

We, your grand mother, and Aunt Gayle, as well as myself know that you really and truly did trash the home your mother provided and enjoys so much. So it is good you moved out. Time to be on your own.

We, all of us, know you are 100% safe.

I know you don't agree, but the judge gave you a gift. By dismissing the action he stopped you from tearing up the family and hurting your mother, grandmother, Sophie, and aunts terribly. You are a good person. I suspect at some point the guilt would have overwhelmed you knowing how much damage you did while in the midst of a terrible rage.

At the moment you are consumed with rage but going after that restraining order was much worse than one shove in 29 years. It was mean and not worthy of the person you are, but once done, once that restraining order had been issued, it could never be undone. It would have been a crime against your mother and against who you really are when you are not consumed with rage. It would ripped you from your mother and maybe most of us. Don't know. Speaking for myself, I will always love you, but I might have found it very hard to be around you, knowing you deliberately tried to destroy my sister. I suspect at some point you wouldn't have wanted to be around you either.

We, by this I mean, me, Uncle Peter, Aunt Gayle and Gma all think you know in your heart that Celia was not a threat to you or Sophie, and that you were doing this to punish her. We, all of us, think you were being mean. We, all of us, think that in general you are not mean and would have regretted the Restraining Order but would not have been able to take it back or fix the terrible damage to your mother. We, all of us, thought that you would not stop at a restraining order and continue to go after your mother. We, all of us, felt you needed to be stopped to protect Celia from you and you from yourself.

I know you think Celia's lawyers ganged up on you. You said so in court. Sweetie, you threatened to get an order making it a crime for Celia to see Sophie, of course she was going to ask her lawyers to get her access to Sophie!

As a lawyer, I do not think the judge was going to grant the restraining order even if Celia's lawyers had not asked for the case to be moved to Superior Court. The Judge asked you very specific questions, that you, in the middle of it all, might not have realized.

He asked if you had moved out of the house. You had. This means you were safe.

He asked if you thought your mother was a threat to Sophie, and you said she was not. This means Sophie was safe.

He asked you about the specific abuse and you said yelling. The judge was clear that a loud voice does not count towards a restraining order.

The judge was not going to give you a restraining order, but he wanted you to make the decision, if possible, so you might be able to start working things out with your mother. I was very impressed with the Judge.

The dismissal was a gift to you, and since you made the decision to dismiss, it was a gift from you as well. We were sitting behind your mother not because you are not loved, you are very loved, but because we wanted to protect Celia and you by not letting you do something that you would regret for the rest of your life. We wanted the judge to know we thought you were 100% safe and that we did not want that restraining order.

I know I want to get past this. I want to go back to seeing and enjoying my niece. We, the family, have kept this pretty quiet. Should you come to Los Angeles, I doubt anyone will bring it up unless you do first. Maybe except for your Gma. I never can guess what she will say.

We all need to heal and reestablish trust. I very much want to go forward in life enjoying my niece.

I love you very much.

Aunt Madeline



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