

THE LETTER SEASON 2, EPISODE 1: He Didn't Deserve to Live

Amy Donaldson: The last night of Jordan Rasmussen's life wasn't especially remarkable. The only reason anyone finds it memorable- is because those who love him most, say it perfectly encapsulates who he was.

No one remembers exactly what time the 32-year-old accountant pulled into the driveway of his single-story home the night of March 4, 1982. But they do remember it was late enough that two of his children were already asleep. Jordan was working late when he received an unexpected phone call. That call would change his plans for the following morning. And that change of plans would cost Jordan Rasmussen his life.

When he walked into the house, he found a familiar scene his 8-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter in bed, while his youngest, 16-month old Chad was wide awake. His wife DeAnn wasn't home. She was playing indoor tennis with a friend, leaving the children in the care of a babysitter.

And, as he often did, Chad was protesting bedtime. DeAnn remembers it was her husband who unlocked the secret of getting Chad to sleep.

DeAnn 26:13 Neighbors. remember seeing Jordan almost every night walking Chad around the block, trying to get him to sleep. (laughter)

Amy Donaldson: Was he a fussy baby? (laughter)

DeAnn: He didn't want to go to sleep. So that was kind of their nightly ritual.

Amy Donaldson: But it was already dark that night, so Jordan offered to drive the babysitter to her house just a couple blocks away, and he brought Chad along for the ride. But when they returned home, Jordan realized the doors were locked, and he didn't have a key.

DeAnn: I had no idea he had locked himself out of the house. And he was just on his own with Chad.

Amy Donaldson: In the early eighties cell phones were not an option, so Jordan had no way to communicate with his wife.

DeAnn: He went next door to the neighbors and across the street to see if they by chance had a key to our house, which they didn't. They invited him in so he could wait for me to get home. And he says no, I just want to spend some time with Chad.

Amy Donaldson: Even before sunset that night, the temperature had dipped below freezing. And that made Jordan's decision to decline an invitation to wait in the warmth of a friend's house a bit surprising but he had his reasons.

DeAnnPt2: They said there was no way we were gonna get Jordan to come in the house. He was determined he wanted to spend just alone time with Chad.

Amy Donaldson: So, Jordan carried Chad back into their garage and they took refuge from the cold in the family sedan. Exactly what happened between father and son that night will forever remain a mystery. But it's easy for DeAnn to imagine it because she'd seen similar scenes hundreds of times since they'd become parents eight years earlier.

DeAnnPt2: I can just picture him being in the car just hugging and laughing and giggling and talking to him. That's the way he was.

Amy Donaldson: But at some point maybe the chill started to seep in, maybe his wait was longer than he expected or maybe fatigue wore them *both* down whatever the reason, Jordan finally decided they couldn't stay outside any longer.

DeAnn: He broke a window in our French door just a little pane and reached in and let himself in. Cause I remember we had to get somebody here to fix the window the next day after the awful event had happened.

Amy Donaldson: That 'awful event' was Jordan's murder and it would happen less than 12 hours later.

[THEME MUSIC]

Amy Donaldson: From KSL Podcasts I'm Amy Donaldson, and this is The Letter: Season 2, Ripple Effect.

In the first season of The Letter, we shared a transformative story of forgiveness and healing. We had no plans for another season because frankly, we knew what happened in Season One was unique.

But all of that changed when I got an email from a former prosecutor that I hadn't seen in more than 20 years. He'd been listening to Season One and he was compelled to reach out. He said he'd been part of a story that sounded similar. It involved families shattered by a tragedy, a reckoning with remorse, a complicated struggle with forgiveness and yes, there was even a letter.

But once I started looking into it, I discovered just how different these stories were. And that led me to question what I thought I understood about forgiveness, who it's for, who deserves it, and why people do it.

This new season explores how a very personal decision can stretch across time and impact generations, sometimes even reaching strangers in ways we could never imagine.

This is Episode 1: He Didn't Deserve to Live

[music]

Amy Donaldson: When DeAnn Rasmussen came home from playing tennis and found out that her husband and her toddler had been stuck out in the cold she was overwhelmed with guilt. But Jordan assured her it was no big deal, in fact, he'd treasured the solitary snuggle time with Chad. It was a gift at the end of a long, difficult day.

DeAnn: Jordan was the best dad. He adored his children. He would do anything in the world for them.

Amy Donaldson: When DeAnn and Jordan first met as teenagers working together at a dairy in Salt Lake City, she had no idea they would have three children together. She didn't give much thought to what he might be like as a father or even a boyfriend for that matter. She was just 17, and he was the lanky 19-year-old manager-already in college.

DeAnn: I had no romantic interest in him. But he was so nice.

Amy Donaldson: On nights like this, she couldn't imagine a life without his patience and love. She was grateful that his kindness convinced her to go on a date with him back in 1969. And, even more grateful, that they made the commitment to stay together through life's challenges.

The first test of their commitment came in the summer of 1969 during the Vietnam War. Jordan enlisted in the Air Force Reserves, and basic training kept them apart for 6 months. Even daily letters and weekly calls couldn't ease their longing to be together.

DeAnn And we were quite serious by then. Oh, it was really hard.

Amy Donaldson: Then even before he finished basic training, Jordan faced a monumental decision. A choice between serving a 2-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or staying with DeAnn in Salt Lake City. Serving a mission was almost expected of Latter-day Saint men was a rite of passage and Jordan had looked forward to it his whole life a chance to proselytize for his faith. But that also meant two more years of loving each other through letters.

DeAnn: My heart was breaking. And his was too. We had the discussion and decided that it would just be too hard that we needed to be together and get married.

Amy Donaldson: And within a decade, they were a family of five. They never regretted their choice and through all their challenges and changes, DeAnn said there was one constant for Jordan.

DeAnn: Most important thing was family. His children, me, his wife.

Amy Donaldson: So it was no surprise to DeAnn that her husband turned the inconvenience of being locked out of the house with a toddler into a playdate. Because even though life had been tough for them in the months leading up to this night, Jordan always seemed to find a way to make his family feel loved.

DeAnnpt: We were struggling. New family. We were behind mortgage payments. It was a hard time financially for us.

Amy Donaldson: It's one of the reasons he kept a job that had grown complicated and stressful. Jordan worked as the accountant for the iconic Log Haven Restaurant. Since its conversion from a wealthy family's mountain retreat to high-end restaurant, it had become the place for weddings and receptions in the 80s. And while balancing the books was Jordan's job, the restaurant was also a special place for his family. Two of his sisters celebrated their weddings at the massive log cabin nestled in a scenic canyon. But in recent months Log Haven had become a source of tension. Under that serene surface trouble was brewing.

That night, after Jordan put Chad to bed, he told his wife that he'd gotten an unexpected phone call. It had to do with the restaurant.

Though Log Haven was still very popular, it had been struggling financially. The relationship between the two partners who owned it had soured and grown increasingly contentious. One partner planned to buy the other out, and the restaurant staff worried about what might happen to their jobs including Log Haven's 25-year-old manager Michael Moore.

It was Michael who had called Jordan and asked for an early morning meeting at Log Haven. He'd said something about Sunday's receipts being off.

DeAnn had met Michael several times, including a recent lunch date.

DeAnn: It was only a couple of weeks before where Jordan went up to Log Haven. And he had me come with him. And so we actually had lunch with Mike Moore.

Amy Donaldson: So when Michael proposed the early meeting, Jordan agreed, but he was not looking forward to it. DeAnn was aware of some of the issues. Just a few months earlier, Jordan had pointed out a \$30,000 shortfall to one of the partners.

DeAnn: He was deep into their books, noticed that there was some shady deals going on up at Log Haven, suspected that there was some embezzling money.

Amy Donaldson: Rumors of theft and layoffs created distrust between owners and the staff. One of the partners had asked Jordan to take over Michael's job as manager as soon as the buyout was finalized. But this hadn't been officially shared with the staff. Speculation was rampant and Jordan was caught in the middle. Things had been so tense, he even made an off-hand comment to his wife as they got ready for bed, that if his car slid off the road in the canyon the next morning, it might not be an accident. DeAnn dismissed it as a bit of dark humor.

Amy Donaldson: Did you ever worry about him or did you think.

DeAnn: No. Nothing to worry about.

[SPACE/MUSIC]

Amy Donaldson: While Jordan went to bed, DeAnn stayed up to finish some typing work she'd taken on to help them pay their bills.

DeAnn: I had a big project, and I finished that project. So I didn't get to bed till two o'clock.

Amy Donaldson: So DeAnn was still huddled under the covers when Jordan left the next morning.

DeAnn: Jordan gave me my kiss goodbye. And he said, I'll call you as soon as my meeting with Mike is over. I knew it was gonna be kind of a, you know, uncomfortable meeting.

Amy Donaldson: Jordan left his silent house just as the sun was rising. An overnight snowstorm had transformed the Salt Lake Valley into a winter wonderland. Everything was covered in the kind of snow that's made Utah world-famous among skiers but wreaks havoc on the roads.

Log Haven is located in Millcreek Canyon which is about a 20-minute drive from Jordan and DeAnn's home in Sandy, Utah. Maybe as he drove Jordan speculated about what he planned to say to Michael Moore Or maybe he thought about what was going to happen between the two owners who were deciding the fate of the restaurant after months of uncertainty, the split of their business assets was supposed to be finalized later that very day.

In fact, after his stop at Log Haven, Jordan planned to go directly to the attorney's office where the deal was being finalized.

But he would not make it to that meeting.

Jordan turned onto Millcreek Canyon Road and almost immediately he pulled over. Fresh snow blanketed the narrow roadway and hung on the branches of the dense trees that line the route. He wasn't sure his car could make the three-mile drive to Log Haven in these conditions.

Then he saw a familiar jeep idling on the other side of the road. He watched, as the driver swung around and pulled off the road in front of him. Jordan got out and talked to the man, who threw a half-smoked cigarette out the window as they exchanged a few words. Then, Jordan walked to the passenger side of the vehicle, opened the door, and climbed in. Maybe he was in a hurry, and didn't notice the bullet holes that marred the side of the jeep one on the hood, one just in back of the front tire.

Jordan was prepared for a tense conversation but he had no way of knowing that he was driving to his death.

[music]

Amy Donaldson: Jordan Rasmussen's life began with great expectations. He grew up in an east Salt Lake City neighborhood. The only boy in a family with three sisters

Their father, Elden Rasmussen was an Air Force veteran who served in the Second World War, a high school teacher, and eventually an administrator. Their mother, Blanche, was a vibrant woman whose life revolved around raising their four children.

But if you really want to understand the kind of person Jordan Q Rasmussen was, just ask his big sister Leslie about his highly anticipated but brief basketball career.

Even before he was born in 1949 his father dreamed of guiding his own child to a career on the court. And back then, sports were almost exclusively a man's world. So when Elden Rasmussen held his baby boy, he saw a bright and athletic future.

Leslie: He was so excited to have a son, because Oh, my golly, this is going to be such a golden thing.

Amy Donaldson: Those dreams became a real possibility when Jordan grew to be six foot three. And while his father loved sports in general, his hoop dreams included a very specific college team, Utah's Brigham Young University. In fact, Leslie remembers there was no escaping Elden's passion for the Cougars.

Leslie: He would wake us up in the morning, and he would be singing rise and shout, to wake us up.

Amy Donaldson: Rise and shout the cougars are out, for those of you who don't know!

Leslie: And that's how we woke up. And so we put up with it, because we loved our dad.

Amy Donaldson: Father and son talked about him someday playing basketball for his beloved Cougars. And the first step on that path was signing up for a rec league team. It turned out, there was one small problem.

Leslie: Jordan would not take the ball from somebody. It was like, okay, they've got the ball, I'm not gonna go steal it. I'll let them just go down. And that doesn't go very far. So here he was with all the athletic ability, all the height But he just didn't have that drive to destroy people.

Amy Donaldson: Needless to say, he did not go on to fulfill his father's hoop dreams, but those who were close to the family knew that Jordan always occupied a special place in Elden's heart. Jordan's older cousin Joseph Rust spent a lot of time at the Rasmussen home, especially when he was a college student in Salt Lake City.

Joseph: That was my weekend hangout and get a good meal. And my, my aunt even cut my hair for me. So we were close.

Amy Donaldson: He says Jordan and Elden were inseparable. Even after Jordan became a busy father himself, they would still find time to play tennis or golf.

Joseph: He and Jordan just did everything together. This was his only son. And he was of course, pretty excited about Jordan.

Amy Donaldson: It was that bond between father and son that would weigh on Joseph the morning of March 5, 1982 when he became the first family member to find out what happened to Jordan after he got into that Jeep.

[Break]

Amy Donaldson: Joseph Rust was working as an attorney at a firm in Salt Lake City when he found out he might have the chance to work with his younger cousin. As it turns out Jordan's boss, one of the owners of Log Haven, was represented by Joseph's law firm.

Joseph: So there was this possible opportunity to work together. I was looking forward to that. Jordan had made himself quite well respected in his field. And I was very pleased and proud of him, of course.

Amy Donaldson: So on the morning of March 5th, 1982, Joseph was busy working at his desk and looking forward to Jordan's arrival at the downtown law office. In a conference room down the hall one of his colleagues and the owner of Log Haven restaurant were finalizing the legal split.

Jordan was supposed to arrive any minute for that discussion about his new role as the restaurant's manager. But he never showed. Instead, one of Joseph's colleagues stepped out of that conference room and walked into his office.

Joseph: Suddenly this partner came in and says, Joseph, it appears that your cousin Jordan was murdered.

Amy Donaldson: The attorney said that the manager Michael Moore had called one of the owners of Log Haven and told him that he'd found Jordan dead.

Joseph: And that they were just getting sketchy details, the only information they had was from the manager himself, that they were calling the sheriff. And I said, Well, first thing I have in my mind is well, so we got to tell the family.

Amy Donaldson: One of the attorneys made arrangements for Jordan's religious leader, a Latter Day Saint bishop, to deliver the news to his wife DeAnn. Joseph decided he should be the one to tell Jordan's father, Elden.

As he drove to East High School where Elden was the vice principal, he struggled with how to do something that he knew would break his uncle's heart.

Joseph: And he sees me. And he says, Joseph, what are you doing here, a big smile on his face. So I says Elden, we need to go talk.

Amy Donaldson: They went into the principal's office, closed the door, and Joseph told his uncle that Jordan had been found dead outside Log Haven.

Joseph: Eldon was always a very quiet person. He could be a very fun guy. He did a lot of fun things, but he would not show his emotions very often. And he did not. He more or less went into a kind of a shock.

Amy Donaldson: Did he ask any questions?

Joseph: He didn't. He didn't. And all I did is I says, I've got my car here, Elden, I'm taking you home.

Amy Donaldson: They drove in complete silence. Joseph said the uncle he grew up with was gone after that day changed forever by the death of his only son.

Coming up after the break, the shockwave of Jordan's murder ripples through the family.

[music]

Amy Donaldson: Not long after Jordan left home the morning he died, DeAnn Rasmussen shook off the fatigue of working into the wee hours of the morning and woke her children for the day. Around 9 a.m. she drove her oldest son, David to elementary school.

Later, as she attended to the needs of her two younger children, she was struck by a thought.

DeAnn: Jordan told me that he would call me as soon as the meeting was over. And it got to be 10:30. I called down to his office and they said no Jordan hasn't come in yet. So I got a little you know like, what's going on? How come he hasn't called me because his meeting was at 7:30.

Amy Donaldson: But mom duties beckoned. She helped her daughter Lisa get dressed and took her to kindergarten.

DeAnn: It was time for Chad's nap so I laid down with him to try to catch up on the sleep I'd missed. And shortly after 11:30, my doorbell rang. And I thought, must be some kids or something. My doorbell never rings in the middle of the day. So I got up, left Chad in the bed, got up, opened the front door and there was the bishop and a neighbor standing at the front door. And I thought, why are they here?

And I could tell just by the look on their face, that something was not right. And I just knew something that happened to Jordan. And they came in and they said, we have something terrible to tell you.

Amy Donaldson: As the bishop began speaking, she grabbed his tie and pleaded, "Don't tell me. Don't tell me."

DeAnn: Jordan was killed this morning. And I just immediately went into shock. I mean, my body protected myself and I just went on automatic pilot kind of. They didn't know all the details yet. This was still early. They just said something happened up at Log Haven.

Amy Donaldson: Before DeAnn could even find her footing, she realized she'd have to tell the rest of the family. She knew her mother-in-law was at Jordan's sister Diane's house, and so the bishop called Diane and told her to wait there with her mom. He'd drive DeAnn to her house because there was something they needed to tell them in person. It was only a 10 minute drive but for Diane, who went out on her porch to watch for them, the wait was agonizingly long.

Diane: When they drove up, I had Mitch, my baby in my arms. And my neighbor across the street saw this, and she happened to be watching the news. She just thought, Uh-ih, this is, this is bad. And saw this and she just came and grabbed Mitch out of my arms, and just went took him. And that and then DeAnn said, Jordan's been shot.

And those words, just that doesn't, that doesn't happen, that doesn't happen to the little family in Sandy, Utah. I couldn't even comprehend it. And we went in. And then I, I think I went into

shock. I just remember being on the floor in our family room. Laying on the floor just not believing what happened I was shaking. I don't know what happened to my mom at that time.

Amy Donaldson: As the bishop drove DeAnn back to her house, a good friend agreed to go pick up her children early from school. She wondered how she would tell them that their father was never coming home.

DeAnn: I mean, obviously, your mind immediately goes, How am I going to do this? I have three little kids. How am I going to do this on my own?

Amy Donaldson: DeAnn was only 30. She contemplated the trips they'd never take, the milestones her husband would never see and the challenges she'd face alone. But when they pulled into the driveway of her home, she noticed their cul-de-sac was crowded with cars.

DeAnn: I walked in the house and my house was full of friends, and neighbors, and family because the word spread. As soon as I walked in the house, there was all these people that loved us. And I knew that I'd have that love and support to get me through.

Amy Donaldson: But there was one thing she ALONE had to do.

DeAnn: The Bishop took me aside and said we have to think about how you're going to tell the kids. And they later told me that when they drove up to their house, they wondered why all the cars were here. So they came in the house. And I greeted them and we took Dave and Lisa into Dave's room. And this is where we're sitting right now this Dave's room. Sat right there on Dave's single bed. He sat down next to me. And I said, I have something to tell you. Your dad has been hurt really bad. He's had an accident. And he's not gonna come home. He's, he has died. And I just remember that's when it really hit me looking into their sweet little faces. And they adored their dad as much as he adored them And that's when it really became real.

Amy Donaldson: The reality of life without Jordan was almost incomprehensible to those who lived in the protection of his love. His three sisters stared into a gaping void left by the kind of brother that even to them almost seemed too good to be true.

DianeDuckworth: I to this, oh gosh, to this day, just miss him so much. Cuz he was, he was perfect as an older brother. And through his whole life.

Leslie: He just was always so kind.

DianeDuckworth: He's always been so, so sweet

Leslie: And always watching for people that might not be included too, very, very sensitive.

AnneMarie: He was so intuitive. He was so understanding. He embodied charity from my earliest memory, literally, that's probably why I miss him so is because even now, he would be my go to.

Amy Donaldson: Even long car rides and family vacations usually incubators for bickering were transformed by Jordan's kindness. Leslie said he'd share everything from cookies to souvenir money.

Leslie: He'd give up his money and say, you get that fuzzy bear that you want, you know, that was just that was just his nature. Just share, share, share.

Amy Donaldson: They could rely on his generosity, even if it cost him. One night, in particular, stands out for Leslie. A few years before he was killed, he had a meeting in her neighborhood, and he stopped by to say hello to his big sister. He was working as an accountant, but he was struggling to keep up with the expenses of a growing family.

Leslie: And he said, Well, I'm meeting with I've think their about six women, older women, widows, and he said, I'm going to go help them with their taxes. Whoa! that is going to be a lucrative evening for you. Six all at one time!? Oh, that's great. And he looked at me so surprised, and he said, Leslie, they're widows, I could never take a penny from them.

Amy Donaldson: They could not comprehend why anyone would take their gentle giant of a brother from them.

Leslie: And then, your mind goes, well who? How on earth? Who in the world would shoot Jordan?

Amy Donaldson: Jordan's family heeded the advice of friends and avoided media reports about Jordan's murder. But they did slowly get details that made his death more troubling. Jordan had been shot three times and was found in the back of a laundry van parked outside Log Haven restaurant. The man who killed him had confessed and was in jail.

Amy Donaldson: And then they learned it wasn't a stranger who'd killed Jordan. It was someone who knew him. Someone who knew his family, his children. It was the man he made time for that morning. It was Michael Moore.

Leslie: It was, I think, surprise, just absolute surprise. That we couldn't even comprehend.

Amy Donaldson: There were even times Jordan took his oldest son to the restaurant with him and Michael always went out of his way to be kind to him.

Leslie: Jordan would take his son David, up with him when he'd have things to do up there. And Mike would always make him milkshakes. And so they had a good relationship. Like what is going on here? You're feeding his kids milkshakes and then all of a sudden you've done this?

Amy Donaldson: Their sister Diane remembered meeting Michael when she was involved in a family wedding reception at the Restaurant about nine months earlier.

Diane: I remember him well, so that when I heard that it was Mike Moore that had taken Jordan's life. I, I knew I mean, I could see his face. I knew exactly who it was.

Amy Donaldson: Leslie said they just couldn't stop thinking, how could someone who knew Jordan, be his killer?

Leslie: We were shocked when we found out that someone that he worked with, was going to do this. What on earth happened to that person?

Amy Donaldson: The only explanation they could come up with was that he must have shot their brother during a drunken haze or drug-induced episode.

Leslie: We just felt like, Oh, he's just gonna be devastated at what he's done. Because when the reality sets in, whether you're on drugs, whether you're on alcohol, no matter what he was on, at the time, we thought when that wears off, he is just going to realize what he's done.

Amy Donaldson: When Diane heard that Michael had confessed, she assumed it must have been motivated by regret.

DianeJail: Jordan just an angel there was no one on this earth that didn't love him. And for him to be taken it just I just felt sorry for Mike that he had done this.

Amy Donaldson: It might seem odd to feel empathy for a man who just murdered their beloved brother. But for Diane, it was inconceivable that someone who know Jordan could could even hurt him, let alone kill him. And so in her mind it made sense that the guilt this killer might feel would be unbearable. As she wrestled with this impossibility, she found herself having conversations with Michael.

Diane: I bet you are just devastated. I'm, I bet you feel horrible. What were you thinking? And I feel so sorry for you. This is horrible what you've just done. How are you even going to live with yourself?

Amy Donaldson: As Jordan's sisters struggled to make sense of their brother's murder, they turned almost immediately to their faith. They prayed for help avoiding the anger and resentment they feared might consume them.

They gathered every day at their brother's house. They helped plan his funeral and care for his children. They were reeling, disoriented, desperate and then Leslie and Diane did something completely unexpected. Something they didn't even tell their family about until later.

Leslie: That was when we decided, we said we need to go down and just say, you know. What on earth! We just we feel, you know, kind of badly for him that, that whatever happened, I mean, he must have been so distorted. And so to do anything like this. And so we went down to the jail.

Amy Donaldson: That's right. Just days after their only brother's murder, they went to the jail hoping to talk to his killer.

Leslie: If you can imagine Diane and I went to the jail, to tell him that we, we know that you could not have had any animosity towards Jordan, it would be impossible.

Amy Donaldson: Diane knows this sounds absurd, but she said it was the only way they could make sense of what happened. It was their way of trying to find peace, their way of moving forward in a way that honored their brother's life.

Diane: And it wasn't like, I want to go and say I forgive you. This wasn't the forgiving mode. It was just, I feel so sorry for him. What is he going to do?

Amy Donaldson: Diane said the questions that tortured her, could only be answered by Michael.

Diane: Because my biggest concern was, when did Jordan know if he had to drive all the way up Millcreek Canyon, knowing there's a gun at his head or knowing what was coming, that he had to worry about his wife and children this whole way. And did he have to try and flee for his life and plead for his life?

Amy Donaldson: So they got in Diane's car and drove to the old Salt Lake Metro Jail without any real plan. Only questions. Would they find the answers they were looking for? That's after the break.

[music]

Amy Donaldson: Back in 1982, the Salt Lake jail was underneath the offices of the County Sheriff and connected by a labyrinth of tunnels to the state courthouse.

Michael Moore would have been in one of the windowless, concrete cells when Diane and Leslie walked into the lobby. An officer asked them what they needed. He could not possibly have expected the answer he got. Leslie said they were the sisters of Jordan Rasmussen, who'd been murdered, and they wanted to talk to the man who'd confessed to the killing.

Leslie: They could tell how distraught we were, of course.

Amy Donaldson: Did you want answers from him? Or.

Leslie: I don't know, I think we just wanted to say, oh, we can't believe you know, you are just going to be devastated when you find out what you've done. What on earth could have caused this? Because, you know, it was just such a shock.

Amy Donaldson: It didn't make sense.

Leslie: It didn't make sense.

Amy Donaldson: But they were about to find out making sense of what happened or finding any kind of peace it wouldn't be that easy. And forgiveness no one would even consider that as the story of their brother's murder, turned out to be much more complicated, and more painful, than they could imagine.

And it began when the officer at the jail not only turned them away, he assured them of one thing Michael Patrick Moore was not remorseful. Not one bit.

[Music]

Amy Donaldson: They'd come to the jail with sympathy, maybe the beginnings of forgiveness on their minds and as bizarre as that might sound to some, this mindset was rooted in their religious faith. They believed that forgiveness was required of them and that it would help them find peace but what they didn't expect was how the killer's complete lack of remorse would send them into a tailspin.

And as Leslie and Diane walked away from the jail without speaking to their brother's killer, they were completely unmoored. Learning he felt no regret, somehow made their grief heavier, darker.

Leslie: You know, you just think it's unbelievable. It's just unbelievable. So then, of course, after the reality that you're not remorseful. Are you kidding me? You just took one of the golden boys of this world and you're not remorseful?

Amy Donaldson: Instead of sympathy, A new feeling started to take root.

Leslie: Then the anger comes to the fact that how on earth could you be so, you know, self serving that you only cared about yourself and not a little wife and three little kids. And so then you become angry.

Amy Donaldson: And that anger would only grow as they learned it wasn't just of Michael not being sorry, he blamed Jordan for the murder.

Reporter Jack Ford: Moore said he and Rasmussen drove up the canyon together on March 5th, and when they got to the restaurant Rasmussen wanted him to sign over a check that American Express had sent to Log Haven.

Amy Donaldson: He described a version of Jordan to police that was unrecognizable. An embezzler, a thief, a bully.

Reporter Jack Ford: Moore said that's when he decided this guy is such a jerk that he no longer deserves to live.

Amy Donaldson: Jordan's widow DeAnn wanted to build a wall around her little family. She felt protective of her children, of Jordan's legacy in their lives. And that would only feel more urgent as Michael Moore's allegations about Jordan became front-page news.

DeAnn: I just think it's important that they realize the kind of man he was, and kind of father - that he would do anything for his children.

Amy Donaldson: So, Somewhere in the darkness that followed, DeAnn Rasmussen sat down at the typewriter and wrote an account of the last night of her husband's life. When he turned down warmth and adult conversation for a few minutes of solitary snuggle time with his tired toddler.

She glued the story in a scrapbook under a picture of Jordan Rasmussen holding baby Chad in the air. She took a moment that might have faded into oblivion and made it a permanent testament to the man she loved. And, ultimately, she hoped it could give her youngest son what his father no longer could, tangible evidence of how he felt about him.

DeAnn: I wanted him to know how much his father loved him. And still does love him. It it was like he had to pour a whole lifetime of love into his little 16-month-old self.

Amy Donaldson: She knew that as Chad grew up, he would have questions about his father. But she did not anticipate that he would also have questions about the man who killed him. As DeAnn would find out, a loss like this ripples across generations, as does the struggle to forgive.

[Music]

Amy Donaldson: And these ripples wouldn't just roll through Jordan's family. In a house on the other side of the Salt Lake Valley another young mother wrestled with the same heartbreak. How do you tell a toddler the father she adores is never coming home? How do you tell an infant that she was loved by a man she'll only know through stories and pictures?

That's because Jordan Rasmussen was not the only young father killed at Log Haven on March 5, 1982.

Reporter: Salt Lake County Sheriff Pete Hayward released these details earlier today.

Hayward: Well, what appears to happen is that we've got two individuals both of them being shot twice in the head that's been determined now with a large caliber weapon.

Amy Donaldson: That's next time on The Letter.