



ALMOST PERFECT STRANGERS

Estrangement
An
Reconciliation

PATTY ANN

ALMOST PERFECT STRANGERS

An Estrangement Reconciliation

By Patty Ann

Edited by Debbie Brunettin

Second Edition

Revised 2021

Published by Patty Ann

Copyright 2015 Patty Ann

All Rights Reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the author-publisher. Thank you.

**In Loving Memory of
My Mother
Mary Ellen Thelen**
October 15, 1922 – June 2, 2014



Foreword

All of us are Almost Perfect Strangers. Although humanity is interconnected by blood relations and as a kindred tribe we are tough, we are also frail. We share the essence of one heart and soul and mind, yet each of us is uniquely our own person. The title to this book came almost by accident—or rather, perhaps it was no coincidence at all. It was, as most things are, predestined.

Several months prior to this book, this mom—namely me—made one last attempt to reconcile with my children. Our estrangement (E) had plagued my psyche for four years too long. Wonder left me to thinking that one more attempt at reconnection would quell my aching heart. At least give me some solace, perhaps even the inner peace that constantly slipped from my grasp. Or at the minimum, just maybe, I could put myself to rest around this E issue for good.

A parent never gives up hope, even though it may hang hollow and empty. We cling to our faith that our parental bond ties tight knots. Yet we find they can be untied or severed too flagrantly. We parents are a tough, discerning, and tenaciously strong breed who, through thick or thin, would defy nature to protect our kin. And even when we are handed horrific heart-wrenching, debilitating alienation through relative hands, we keep going. Continuing our quest to reconnect, we embrace distant promises. When succumbing to defeat, we stand

tall. And through our valiant efforts, we try to reason some sense into this nonsensical plague that seems to entomb innocent brains.

And so I wrote one last letter to my two children. I asked a simple question—because it really boiled down to one thing: Did they want a relationship with me, or not? My daughter had no response. My son was clearly not in a position to accept rebuilding at that time. It was evidently clear; they cared not. So in one last farewell letter, I responded to both of them by writing this exurb:

*We have to accept that these last few years have left all of us **almost perfect strangers**. Nothing can go back to yesteryear. And there is nothing wrong with the way we each feel. A lot of sh*t has happened to evoke strong emotions. I don't want to live there anymore—do you?*

So it was that **Almost Perfect Strangers** appeared to be a perfectly fitting title for my next—and expected to be my final—estrangement book. At the time I had no idea what the book would be about, or what contents would fill its pages. Yet, intrinsically I believed it would be a happy book, to end this bewitching hex. Being disunited and disconnected from my very core was disabling. I know my kids felt likewise.

ALMOST PERFECT STRANGERS

An Estrangement Reconciliation

The E Word

Today is a happy day. It's one of those pivotal points that embraces and affirms a long-awaited and overdue itinerary. One where dreams finally intersect reality. And one where my soul has found peace and resolve.

I'm high above the clouds, figuratively and literally. Four years ago this month, my world fell apart. My decision to embark on the journey into and beyond divorce led me and my family into the odyssey of estrangement, which grew into an abyss of epic proportions.

Estrangement was a word I had heard randomly throughout my life yet had thought little about. Why would I? It was just a word; until it happened to ME. Then this word transformed my very identity. Like having a never-ending bout of flu, the E word became the overriding component to my everyday existence.

Even after I was well into the estrangement phase, denial pressed on. Something significantly out of whack had happened. Yet there was no reference point to turn to. No real beginning marked this event. No logical rationale defined its worth. The dead zone had calmly, swiftly swooped into my life and left me vacant without a cause. There was no clarification around this phenomenon. Nothing about “E” made sense.

Turning to the Internet, I soon discovered the meaning of the E word. In fact, I was not alone; a huge segment of population was—and is—affected by this anomaly. Who would have thought? Soon my discoveries led to forums on this topic. Chapters of support littered my searches. Estrangement was no small issue—in fact, it is monumental. For a person who didn't really know or understand what the E word meant, this online—and offline—education proved reassuring.

Since that original inception, one might say much water has flowed down river—some of it, in the case of my family, as wild as class-five rapids. And so today, I can finally write a happy book about this somewhat taboo subject. All estranged people should be able to write their own happy chapter into their life one day. To not find resolve or closure following such a nonsensical happenstance is absurd—disturbing, really.

I may be one of the more fortunate ones. Life has delivered me full circle back to my children. Who would have thought that, four years hence, I would be sitting here on an international flight en route to meet my daughter at her invitation to travel Peru, hike the Andes, and visit my long overdue dream of Machu Picchu!

However, as simplistic as the above paragraph is stated, it does not do this story justice. For all my romantic thoughts of reconciliation, our journey back to each other did not come easy. One giant carefree leap it was not. It was more through tiny steps, and too many missteps, to downright trip-ups. And yet, somehow, we got from there to this here moment. By no means was this reconciliation a natural trek; it was fraught with what ifs, should I's, and how abouts. But somehow, in the end, merge we did.



Living the Dream

The tourist-filled bus rolled aft and gently from side to side. Lurching and winding, the tires slightly slipping as heavy pelts of jungle raindrops spread across the wide windshield. The air was damp, heavy. Overhead dark clouds rolled in. After a half day, we were now descending from a location known as the cloud forest. This particular morning had been generous enough to open up the skies and give us a breathtaking view of one of the most magnificent testaments to mankind.

Bella was staring blankly yet contemplatively out of the window. We were both left speechless, intrigued, and in awe. Words simply were not adequate, for too many reasons.

I reached over and placed my hand on top of hers, which she had resting together in her lap. Gently I closed my hand around hers and said with a timid smile, "Dreams do come true." A single plump tear rolled down my cheek. It surprised me—then not.

Bella unhooked her gaze from afar and looked into her lap. Her fingers slowly laced around mine and she acknowledged my statement. "Yeah," she said quietly, slowly. "Yes, they do," with more conviction. And a smile crept across her face.

This single moment was monumental for us both. Four years after the seeds of estrangement had started to grow, here we sat in a magical place not only as tourists in a three-week Peruvian excursion, but as tourists in our relationship. Navigating, negotiating, redefining our way—and fortunately always moving forward.

This day was October 31st, Halloween. Ironically and traditionally, the focus of All Hallows' Eve revolves around the theme of celebration that confronts the power of death—and here we were descending from one of the seven wonders of the world, made possible by the deceased. And we were burying four years of a dead zone between us.

Most certainly Bella and I had the most to celebrate atop the mountain that day. My entire life, I had longed to see this spiritual sky-high Inca splendor. But, life had changed. My fading dream had gone on the back burner—until Bella called.



A Tiny Big Step

Two months prior, I had received a text from my daughter.

She wrote: I have an odd question to ask you.

I wrote: Go ahead.

She wrote: Have you ever wanted to go to Machu Picchu?

I wrote: OMG! Forever!

She wrote: I need to call you. When's a good time?

I was shocked, surprised, and pleased. Machu Picchu? I had wanted to go since I can't remember. For years I had collected nice hardbound books covering every facet of this ancient relic. Alas, believing it would never come to pass.



A Mother's Wish

The real story of reconciliation actually started months prior. And the real reason we all reconnected was my dear mother. It was her final wish. Over the last years, whenever I talked to Mom over the phone, or saw her in person—which was seldom, due to the distance—Mom expressed her thoughts about our E situation.

“Are the kids speaking to you yet?” Mom would question.

“No.” My standard answer.

“Darn those kids. I'm going to have a good talking to them,” she'd say, as if scolding them on the spot.

Of course, Mom never did give them the tongue-lashing she believed they deserved. "Shame on them" or "This is so sad" were her common misgivings. In her generation, estrangement had no place. It simply did not make sense to her. Mom saw my kids only rarely. When she did see her grandchildren, she was probably so elated at their attendance that reprimanding them was furthest from her mind. Anyway, Mom was not about anything but happy times when family was present.

But I knew the estrangement plagued my mother a great deal; at ninety-one, she was sharp of mind and could carry on a good conversation as long as her body balances allowed her. All parents have their challenges with their children. Family life is fraught with curve balls. The Lord knows Mom and I had ours: I was independent, ferociously so, and much to my chagrin, Mom liked to control that free spirit in me.

And, so it went. Our religious beliefs were totally opposite. Mom was a devout Catholic, never wavering or questioning that practice—while my beliefs did not align with organized religions and I questioned everything all the time. Still do. We never saw eye to eye in this regard and clashed philosophically on many levels and occasions.

As I broke free of stigmas, family rules and traditions to find my own way during my youth, Mom tried her best to tether me. We had words. I sent her letters when we could not talk. And in my

thrust for autonomy, I found holidays among new friends. Mom was distraught when I lived 'in sin.' She was dismayed that I should live so unorthodox, discarding the traditions she had ingrained in me. For years we struggled, but in the end she confessed I was a good person.

Never once did I estrange my mother—even though Jake, my ex, did encourage it. I could not. His answer to difficult relationships was to throw the dirty baby out with the bath water. I could not do that. Admittedly, there were time outs when my free spirit had to find its own way. My loyalty to my ex wanted to honor him and his wishes, yet blowing off your parents, in my estimation, was just plain wrong. Back then the E word hadn't been invented quite yet—or at least with the definition it owns today. But estrangement in its raw form is not new. Alienation is the purposeful isolation of another, and it comes in many forms and via a variety of methods.



No Regrets

Having a look back is natural. But turn your unquiet thoughts towards a decent purpose. Reflection to reconstruct positive outcomes is a good exercise—one that brings future options. A word of caution must be added here, however: do not live in your past or dwell over what has been. There is not a single person who has not had hard knocks coupled with poor decisions. Adversity is what strengthens your character. Build your essence into positive, and be proactive going forth. Then, regrets will not hold you captive.

Our higher power has presented each of us with unique challenges; we have our own independent set of accomplishments to aim for and acquire. Wasting moments squandering remorse will not extend your earth time. Instead, spend your precious allotment comprehending and integrating your gifts into a daily practice.

It seems that some folks appear to lead charmed lives, while others are visibly saddled with many burdens. But on the continuum, *we are each dealt only what we can handle*. And although this is a well-known catchphrase, I often ponder what incident gave birth to this sage quote. It is a fair assessment and contains more than a kernel of truth, because our human spirit turns us into warriors of purpose when called upon.

One can always look back with some misgivings. Sometimes I would find myself thinking that I should have divorced earlier to stop entrenching that obtuse learned behavior—not only for my children, but for ME as well. See, the imprint of these bad habits continued to haunt me in my dating life thereafter. It became very apparent when many of my choices in men followed very familiar footsteps. This was a huge wake up call. This pattern is one I will continue to examine in all my relationships. Thus, in spite of my extreme loyalty, I have decided that it's now okay to let go of unhealthy relationships, even if they have been long term.



Lasting E Thoughts

Although the E journey was quite a roller coaster ride, there are some beliefs I will stand by.

Estrangement of any kind is abusive and cruel. Period.

People who estrange others are people who are hurting themselves. This is not to say that estranging another is okay, or excused. It's not. It's abuse. Do not let an abuser control your life. Stand up for yourself and set boundaries. Take the high road. Do not stoop to their antagonistic strategies. If necessary get professional help to cope.

The E experience can and will change your perception of the world. Let it. Instead of restricted beliefs, allow your ideals to live with abstracts, and become one without attachment. Instead of seeing from the limited ground level, view larger, higher. Gain an expansive orientation from out of this world. With discernment you will observe that perceptions are only our own truths held tight by our ego's grip. Loosen the restraints and dispel the silly spells you cling too. Then watch your life flourish. Let estrangement guide you. Better yet, let it bestow its bounty upon you.

Estrangement belongs to nobody, but our society owns the outcomes. The bottom line: estrangement is a communication issue that is highly correctable. So please remember; every action is a choice, and every choice has a consequence. *Estrangement is avoidable, reversible—and dreams do come true.*

When you ascend from trauma, you will find yourself as a lighter being who will carry your essence upward on wings of grace. Above the clouds you shall soar. There's no looking back—or down—as you continue to co-create the universe that is yours—ours, to share.

Wishing each one of YOU much peace through every passage of your pilgrimage on this here planet.

Thank YOU for Previewing
Almost Perfect Strangers
An Estrangement Reconciliation

Get the Series!



ALL BOOK SALES BENEFIT



For More Inspiring Books
Visit PattyAnn.net