

February 2, 1993

Dear momma,

There are some things that we need to talk about. When you came to visit last summer i wanted to tell you what was on my mind, but i look at you and for the first time you looked old and tired, life seemed to be wearing you down. For the first time since the fire, you looked a bit sad and helpless. It especially broke my heart to see your clothes stained from dropping food on them. You were no longer that sturdy black matriarch that intimidated me for years, but at the same time gave me inspiration and encouragement. I hated seeing you declining from that pillar of strength.

So many feelings came up for me during your visit. On the one hand, I felt distance and somewhat uncaring about your visit. Often i wished that you would just return to Mississippi so that i would have to see you so sad. Feeling from the past came up, you know about the child (my baby girl that we gave up 26 years ago). The one you and I never talk about. I wanted to tell you how much that hurt me. And i wanted you to tell me that you had some feelings about that too. Sometimes your sadness indicate that, but i need you to talk those feelings with me so that i can stop thinking that you are just one cold woman who only cares about outward appearances, you know like what the "jones think." The only time you mention that child to me is when you tell me how Miss Anderson thinks my oldest son is the child that we gave away. You never seem to realize how much it hurts me to know that you care that much about what someone else think about my life that you are willing to live a lie and expect me to just go along with it for the sake of social standings. Do you ever think about my son and what it would do to him if i lied to him and told him that the Andersons were his relatives? For years, I experienced depressions after depressions just trying to cope with all the lies that shadow my life.

You know Momma, i'm really trying very hard today to understand what motivated you to do some of the things you did to your daughters, like why you never really told us anything about men and sex other than the negative things. My intellect tells me you did the best you could with the tools you were given, but my spirit cries out for a love that maybe you don't know how to give. Anyway, i don't wish to tear you down; for i truly believe that if you had a different kind of life, then your messages to us would have been different. I guess i writing you this letter because i want to understand what really went on during my childhood and how what went on has impacted on my life. I hated when you beat my sisters, and it always seems so unjust. Especially, the way you beat poor Molly, simply because she looked so much like our daddy. Sometimes I can still hear you saying to her, "lookin' jus' lak dat o' Frank Adams." What did Frank do to you to make you hate him so? Do you know what that did to me to always think that my daddy was just a bad person? I wanted a good daddy like other kids seem to have had. And then it sure didn't help a bit for Frank to up and kill his wife. After that i thought he was really bad. But, you know what, somewhere in my memory bank is a little red dress he bought me and

his voice calling me his jelly girl, that is about the only good thing i have to hold on to from my daddy. What was it about Frank that made you marry him? Did you love him? Was there ever love in our family? Did your daddy love you?

Sometime, i want to feel real sorry for myself and think that i have the worse family in the world, but i've come to know better. And you got love, you give it to your grandchildren, i guess that's your way of making up for what you could give to your, and i'm glad that God has given you a chance to share that love with someone.

Back to that child that we gave away. It still hurts and i can't pretend that it doesn't, but i can no longer go on blaming you. The true of the matter is i was scared and didn't know what to do with a baby. I wanted my freedom, i wanted to be somebody, wasn't quite sure, who or what, all i know is that back then i wanted to be like the big shot girls at school, so i thought that having a baby would put an end to that. Well, little did i know that having and giving up a child would cause me so much pain. The part i really hated you for for a long time, was when you showed no compassion when i told you i wanted to keep her. You see no one prepared me for what it would feel like once i had that little life and held her in my arms. Of course, there at that home they had talks with us about having the baby and giving it up. But, you know i guess i kept hoping and praying that something would change. Mostly, i know that what haunted me for years was that my child might not have been adopted by a loving and caring family but might have ended up in one of those awful orphanage. But you Momma, all you could say was, "you can't come back here if you keep it." It seem that always you placed my college career over everything. and my guess was that it was so that you could boast to the jones about your girl in Tougaloo College. And your daughter at Tougaloo College was having the worst time of her life.

Well, Mother, some years ago i sort of made peace with myself and God about that child. Every year on the 26 of April i light a red candle for her and place her in God's care. I've chosen to believe that she's alright; this belief helps keep me sane. And you know what i probably would have no problem with you if only you wouldn't act as if it never happen, and stop telling me what Miss Anderson think as if you want me to condone that lie. Enough lies, mother, enough, i live today for me, not the andersons, the jones, or who ever, I live today for me.

So why have i written all of this. Simply to say that i want us to let the past bury itself, make peace with each other and be friend. Today, i'm trying to understand that as a mother you did the best you could with what you had and for that I'm truly grateful. And yes, though i may not like some of the things that happen in our lives, I do love you for being the only momma i know.

Love,
Your daughter, Frankye