

January 9, 2023

Dear Judge Kelly,

I hope this letter finds you well. I have been struggling for months on end to find the words to write to you.

My heart tells me to share with you the reasons why I went to DC in the first place that day. It wasn't planned out, in fact it was a fluke that I even got to go in the first place. My co-defendants, DJ and Tara mentioned they were going to go. I wanted to as well but thought there was no way that could happen. We're farmers, you see. We work seven days a week, 365 days a year typically, unless someone gets married or dies, or there is a big celebration of some sort. We have two children, Hotch now 5, and Harper now 3. We grow commodity crops on my fiancé's family farm, he's a third generation farmer. We also raise livestock; Angus beef cattle, pigs, chickens for meat and eggs, sheep, goats, and we just added a Jersey and her calf, ZuZu and Joy, or family milking cow. So as you can imagine it's difficult for us to get away.

When I had mentioned to Bryan that DJ and Tara were going, he said- "Well do you want to go? I won't tell you no." I know that Bryan feels guilty that we go without a lot, despite my attempts to reassure him that I'm content with our simple life. So the day before January 6, I texted DJ to let them know I would be coming.

I wish I had just stayed home. With every ounce of my body I regret going to the capital that day.

I'm thirty eight years old now, but when I was about to turn thirty I decided to start my own little "farm". I found an ad on Craigslist for feeder piglets, \$50 each. It was Sunday January 10th, 2016, unusually warm but a bit rainy. I drove to a farm in Dansville, pulled in the driveway where I saw Bryan walking down from one of the barns and something just clicked. I talked to him for a while in the barn where his Dad joined us and we chatted some more before they helped me load the piglets into the back of my Pontiac Vibe, packed in like sardines. I made my way home, deciding to take back roads for the second half of the trip home, stopping at a feed store to pick up sweet feed for my sheep.

Just five short months later Bryan and I would find out that we were (unexpectedly) expecting.

The pregnancy was a surprise, and when I had told my Dad the good news he was elated. Jokingly he said "you better have it on my birthday, and you better name it Wayne." I said "what if it's a girl? "Name her Waynette" and he burst out laughing. Our son, Hotchner Wayne was born June 6 2017, just three days after my Dad's birthday. My Dad was my best friend. He passed away on November 6, 2016.

A few months after my Dad passed away, I couldn't get a hold of my brother Roger. Roger was a heroin addict. I found out he had checked himself into rehab. Too little, too late. My brother died of an overdose on October 27, 2018.

I was four months pregnant at the time, another surprise pregnancy. Not only was I on birth control like I was when I got pregnant with Hotch, I only had my left ovary. The right one was removed when I was 27 years old due to recurring dermoid cysts and endometriosis, which I had seven surgeries for. My doctor told me I may not ever be able to have children. Our daughter, Harper Hallock, was born two days after Roger's birthday, April 5, 2019.

Grieving the loss of my Dad and my brother was by far the most difficult thing I've ever endured. I became consumed by grief after my Dad died. Waves of anger, resentment, sadness and acceptance would come and go over the following years. Losing my brother, sadly, did not come as such a shock as did my father's heart attack. But I felt anger, resentment and guilt nonetheless.

On January 6, DJ, Tara and I arrived early and walked to the city. We saw the monuments and the beautiful architecture of historical buildings. I'd never been to DC before. I was excited to be exploring a new city, and excited I was going to be able to hear one of our presidents speak. An opportunity I thought for sure I would never get twice in one lifetime. We talked to a few people, including some fellow farmers we ran in to. People had come from all over. Not only had I never been in this new city but I had never witnessed so many people in one place.

We returned to the grassy area when it was time for President Trump to speak. He was late, it was cold and damp. The ground was soggy. I honestly don't remember much of the speech, it was difficult to hear over the speakers, except I do remember when he finally ended and said that "we" were going to peacefully and patriotically make our voices heard and walk down to the capital. I was confused. I thought he was going to move down to the capital where he was going to speak again.

After the speech ended we stood there for a while watching everyone walking down the road. DJ, Tara and I looked at each other and said do we walk down? We figured why not. We couldn't get cell service to look up what was on the schedule for speeches. So we walked down the road with everyone else.

Once home I saw people throwing things and breaking windows and hurting police on TV. I was sick to my stomach. I couldn't fathom how I had become a part of something so terrible. I have only shared this with my therapist, but I became so depressed and remorseful I contemplated suicide. I thought about turning myself in. But as I read more and more news articles I kept reading that they would only be prosecuting people who committed violence. I saw news articles about people who were arrested that had carried illegal guns inside the capital, injured officers, had schemed to kidnap or hurt politicians. I realize now that If I had not walked into that building, maybe someone else with bad intentions wouldn't have felt emboldened enough to walk in behind me, and for that I can't tell you how sorry I am.

I watch my fiancé work himself to death, 7 days a week, not even taking a day off after he was kicked in the face by a cow and his nose was shattered. The doctor told him to “take it easy”. He worked 16 hours the next day, and 14 the day after that. I was almost 8 months pregnant with our daughter in February of 2019, doing chores every day in -8° caring for our livestock morning and night while Bryan was sick with the flu and a 104° fever. We don’t get sick days or vacation time.

I breastfed Harper when she was just a month old in between butchering chickens. I barter our meat for produce during the growing season because we can hardly afford groceries, despite dedicating our lives to feeding people. This Fall and Winter I’ve collected “throw away” produce from a grocery store, a third to a half of it is still good and we either eat it or I preserve it before it goes bad. The rest we feed to our pigs. I cook everything from scratch, we wear hand me downs or shop at Goodwill. We go without a lot, and live off a little.

I drove all night and left my fiancé and two small children at home to go see a man speak. At the time I felt that this man was looking out for us blue collar folks, who are struggling.

I’ve learned since that day that the best thing I can do is start at home. I can be the positive influence in my community and hopefully inspire others to do the same. I can raise my children to be self sufficient, empathetic, compassionate and care for others. I can teach them to be open minded and befriend others regardless of what that person looks like or what their beliefs are.

We’re raising our children on our family farm so you can imagine they’re no stranger to hard work. I want them to see Bryan and I working hard, having little but still giving to others. I want them to always choose to do the right thing. I want them to be able to recognize when someone is in need and help them without a second thought.

We spend our days cooking together in the kitchen, caring for our animals, helping each other around the farm, sitting down at the table every night for family dinner and talking about our day.

We frequent our local library, small town events, baseball games, and try to support our local businesses when we are able to.

My children have never been without me. Our family isn’t able to help us much with childcare. They all work, and with the exception of Bryan’s uncle Rod who is 70 and “partially retired” from the farm (he still combines, sprays and bush hogs) or his dad, Bill, who has rheumatoid arthritis but still farms, they help watch the kids for a couple hours here and there when I need to help Bryan sort cattle or do some chore that’s too difficult to do with the kids in tow.

We do everything as a family, together.

This past season when I worked for the first time off the farm in 6 years, it took a toll on Bryan, but we needed the extra money. It helped buy the kids "new" (second hand) clothes, groceries and pay for their Christmas gifts. It was a lot mentally and emotionally for him to work 7 days a week and have the kids up to 6 of those days too while I worked.

I am pleading with you to please consider a sentence of home detention, probation, and community service.

I know I need to be punished but please don't punish my children and Bryan as well. Bryan has so much on his plate. Punishment would not just affect me- it would affect our entire family and they did nothing wrong. Please show mercy on us.

Sincerely,
Katie Morrison