**Kim Powers**

**Narrator**

**Amy Sullivan**

**Interviewer**

**July 5, 2016**

**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

Kim Powers -**KP**

Amy Sullivan -**AS**

**AS:** This is Amy Sullivan in my home in Minneapolis interviewing Kim Powers on July 5, 2016. Kim could you state your name and just say that you give me permission to record this interview?

**KP**: This is Kim Powers, and I give Amy complete permission to record this conversation.

**AS**: Thank you. Like I was saying before, could you just start by talking about your own childhood? Talk about your childhood and just some highlights from it. Where were you raised, your education, did you go to college, your career, how you had Shawn?

**KP**: Okay. I was born in Sioux City, Iowa. My dad was in the Air Force. We lived there like six months. It really doesn’t count. I was always embarrassed that I was born in Sioux City, Iowa. We moved to the Twin Cities, my parents and I. I was first born and we moved to Mendota Heights. I spent most of my early years, until I was about twelve, in Mendota Heights. Nice neighborhood, big yard, lots of close friends. That type of thing. My parents’ marriage was pretty rocky from the beginning. If I was to look at their parenting I would say that my mother was extremely distracted with what my dad was doing. She also lost her father, she lost a baby.

**AS**: After you?

**KP**: After me, yes. She had a child that was born with spina bifida that lived about six months and died at that point. I think emotionally she had a lot of trauma going on during that period of time. But with a two year old, you’re kind of left to fend for yourself, not a lot of conversation ever about what was happening or comfort in that.

**AS**: Do you remember that?

**KP**: No, I can’t remember any of that. I would have been two. I think we were planned to be almost exactly two years apart. I’m a March baby, my sister’s April, and my brother’s May. It was planned in my dad’s mind. How crazy that is?

**AS**: A year apart, or more?

**KP**: Two years apart.

**AS**: Two years each, okay.

**KP**: Because of the loss of Dale, my brother, there was a gap. My sister is four years younger and then I have a brother that’s two years younger than her. I mean we had a lot of family friends; we did family ski vacations, and the cabin. Now Shawn is fourth generation of going to the cabin. It’s been in our family for a really long time. That was always a special place. My dad wasn’t very present. My mom was kind of the, she single parented in some regards because it turns out he had a whole other life outside of his marriage with someone else.

**AS**: What did he do for a living after the Air Force?

**KP**: He was a stockbroker. A very matriarchal mother who kind of called all the shots in their marriage for a long period of time, from what I understand. Once he was independent when she died he gambled all that money away. There was a form of addiction in my family that I didn’t realize at the time, but absolutely he had a gambling addiction whether he’d admit it or not. It became extremely apparent through the rest of his life. He died this spring, he had nothing.

**AS**: Did they stay married?

**KP**: No, the divorce was when I was about twenty-five. They were married twenty-three years and not happily. Odd dynamics, no communication, but just nonverbal cues. I think between the three of us kids I think we would have wished they were divorced earlier because I don’t think we thought my mom was being treated fairly or respectfully.

**AS**: When did you find out about the affair? How old were you?

**KP**: Thirty-three when I found out. I went through college. I went to high school, graduated from college, moved to California after working for Dayton’s for a while, I was recruited out of college. I moved to California, I was there about seven years. Shawn was born when I was thirty-three, at the tail end of that period of time. She was not planned and I was not married to her father. We agreed it was one of those crazy, wild drunk nights that she was conceived. Our relationship was kind of on and off. I found out right after Thanksgiving. We decided that we financially…We were not going to get married.

I looked at this very much as going into it as a single parent. I mean, I felt like I had a choice whether to have the child if I was ready or to abort the pregnancy. We both were on the same page. She was born in July of 1990. She’s almost twenty-six. We decided at that point to get married. We were going to move to Minnesota. His family, there’s addiction in his family. He has two nieces that have gone through severe heroin addiction. They’re now clean. Both of them are clean for a period of time. You know it’s odd because I don’t know if you interview your perspective husband about all the family dynamics, in illness and mental illness. I would have never even have thought about doing that. There was a lot of craziness on his side of the family.

**AS**: Romance kind of rules.

**KP**: It does, it overrides. We were going to move to Minnesota. We came back, we planned a wedding. I called it off the night before. It just wasn’t the right reason to get married. Having a child in our lives was not the right reason to get married.

**AS**: She was born by this point?

**KP**: She was born in July; this was December.

**AS**: The December after she was born?

**KP**: Yes. His friends were outrageous at the groom’s dinner. They were drunk; they were talking about taking him out to get him laid at the strip clubs in front of my grandparents and my family. I just kind of went, “He’s got no spine. I can’t have a father,” which relates to my own father, “in Shawn’s life that’s not going…” It was not the right reason. They were toasting to, “Oh my parents got married because of the kid.” All these other things and I called it off the night before. No regrets, but drama.

**AS**: That is really strong of you.

**KP**: It was. I had so much support after. I just felt crazy at the time. It was a really good

decision. It was a higher power situation.

**AS**: You also were not in your teens or your twenties. You were thirty-three.

**KP**: I had a career, I travelled. Exactly.

**AS**: It wasn’t 1960.

**KP**: Anyways, Shawn and I, after that, moved to Minnesota to be with my family. I was a single mom; my parents helped tremendously. The family dynamic was great. I went back to work probably when she was close to nine months to a year. I had that time with her. I was pretty traumatized by the calling off of the wedding. I was pretty distressed during that period of time.

Her childhood was good. We moved into a townhome, she had lots of friends. She was happy, really very curious about everything, details and people. She’d remember things. A happy kid. I remember someone telling me that if you have a happy kid you’re going to have a hell of a teenager. Seriously, I do remember. I’ve never forgotten. I’ve never forgotten that statement.

**AS**: What a terrible thing to say.

**KP**: I know. Does it set you up? Then you mentally start thinking that way. I’ve never forgotten it. She had a lot of anxiety. She used to have tremendous anxiety about public bathrooms. She also had anxiety, every time we’d get in the car she’d have to pee. Wherever we were we had to find a bathroom. The grocery store, Walgreens, a coffee shop, whatever. It was a really odd kind of social anxiety maybe. When I talk about that now, that’s definitely what’s going on right now. Tremendous amount of recovery. Or maybe I’m figuring that out, or she’s just starting to feel again. I think that’s true. It’s certainly not easy going through the sober aspect. I’m not sure she’s clean. I question that, some of the behaviors and stuff. They just feel too familiar.

**AS**: Talk about her as a teenager and you as a mom. So you’re working full-time, here in the Cities?

**KP**: Yes. When she was in elementary we lived in Minnetonka. I bought a house in Minnetonka, a great neighborhood. It was all about creating an environment where she would be healthy and have friends. A good neighborhood, she was happy and active and everything through middle school, I mean grade school. I met somebody and I got married. His name was Kevin and we moved from Minnetonka, which is where we were really grounded—that was a mistake in my mind—we moved to Mahtomedi as she was going into middle school.

She inherited two step-brothers. I think they were ten, eleven, and twelve at the time. She was in the middle, two boys. They did not get along for a long time. My husband’s ex-wife was very angry that he got married to somebody that had a daughter. Just as Shawn was going into middle school, that exact transitional time. I think uprooting her at that point and my… I think I remember packing in our house in Minnetonka and saying, “I wonder when I’m ever going to come out of this box. Where is Kim going? How is this going to work? We’ve been so happy here, going through this transition.” We moved into a very volatile situation, ex-wife showing up at the house. The boys, whenever Kevin would try to discipline them, called the police. A lot of drama around that.

**AS**: They would call the police on their father?

**KP**: Yes. He cared so much about them. He had them fifty percent of the time. Anytime he did something or raised his voice or whatever they would call the police. Or they’d call their mom. It was unpleasant. When she had a man in her life it was a little bit easier, but they were jealous of Shawn. They thought she was spoiled rotten.

**AS**: The boys were?

**KP**: Yes. We had a beautiful home with a pool. She had a great group of friends, popular, well-liked. She was playing hockey then. She was on the hockey team. They didn’t like any of that for quite a while. Until I got to a point where we had some dialogue. I just said, “I’m not your mom. I don’t want to be your mom. You think I spoil Shawn, I’ll spoil you too if you let me. I’d rather be your friend.” I never liked the term step-mom. It had negative connotations for me.

During that period of time Shawn started hanging out with some more kind of bad boy types. People that were getting in trouble, not doing well in school, shooting paintballs at somebody, or throwing toilet paper in the school, things like that.

There was a transition that happened during that period of time. Kevin and I, we weren’t married very long, it was less than three years. Shawn and I stayed in Mahtomedi, moved into a neighborhood close by. That transitional time seems to be a huge change. What I pinpoint, she doesn’t agree with that. She doesn’t think it’s the divorce, the moving into a smaller house. It was less prestigious; people didn’t hang out as much because we didn’t have a pool.

**AS**: That didn’t bother her?

**KP**: She says it doesn’t. I think it did. It just really—there was a big shift.

**AS**: At the time you saw that it did.

**KP**: I felt it. Her behavior started changing. She told me several years later—we were at the cabin—she said that she was accused of being a lesbian by some of the girls that she hung out with. She said one night the girls got together. You know I always had a house full of kids. I always wanted to be the mom with the neighborhood hanging out. I didn’t have that as much. I really wanted that. She always had friends overnight. I encouraged all of that. I was probably not the greatest disciplinarian. You want to go toilet paper? Go for it. It seemed very harmless to me. I wasn’t very good at holding the line either if I was upset about something or, “You’re grounded.” This was true in the dynamic with my parents also. My dad would say, “You’re grounded.” My mom would say, “Here are the car keys.” There was never that cohesiveness between parents giving the same message that we’re backing each other up.

She kind of started, she told me later that there were a group of women, a group of young women, girls together one night and they were practicing kissing. They swore to each other, “Nobody’s going to tell anybody about this.” It was just like what’s it like and what do you do? That type of thing. Then one of them accused her to many of the people at school that she was a lesbian. They treated her differently on her hockey team. I don’t know if Shawn created this as a fantasy or if it was reality. She told me, many years later, that changed who she was, how people reacted to her at school. She didn’t have the same group of friends. She was kind of an outcast at that point. The boys, on the other hand, she always liked boys. They knew completely differently that she wasn’t… It was the girls, that catty, hurtful dynamic that happened. I think the first time she partied she was at a home and I called. I was one of these, “Talk to the parents, are they going to be home, no alcohol, no drugs.” I get a phone call. They say, “She’s vomiting. She’s so drunk.”

**AS**: The parents called you?

**KP**: Yes, they were home. “She doesn’t have her bra. She doesn’t know where it went. Can you come get her?” I’m like, “Number one I called. Number two you were there. How could this have possibly happened? Weren’t you aware of that house party going on with a bunch of young kids?” Her first drinking experience that I knew about she ended up in the hospital.

**AS**: How old was she?

**KP**: She would have been thirteen.

**AS**: Thirteen or fourteen?

**KP**: Yes, right in early middle school. She said, “I’m going to die.” She was so sick. I said, “Do you think I should take you to the hospital?” I didn’t know. I thought she might have alcohol poisoning or something. So I took her. They never reported it, which they’re supposed to do to the school, to her hockey coach, all these things. They never reported it to anybody. The medical staff didn’t. She kind of got away with that to a certain point. It just started snowballing after that.

**AS**: Even after being so sick she went right back to it.

**KP**: Yes. I’d gone out of town to Austin, Texas to go to a concert. I dated. I really tried to keep a balance between work, home life, and parenting. I wasn’t one of these, “I can’t leave and do anything else just because I’m a mom.” I travelled quite a bit for work. We had nannies and we had family and she had daycare, all these things to cover. When I went to this particular venue and I was gone and I got a phone call because my neighbors were watching our dogs and walking over to the house and things. They walked up and there’s a huge house party going on. She was supposedly staying with another family for the weekend. They knew I was out of town. It was like homecoming weekend.

**AS**: What was your relationship with other parents? It sounds like you weren’t supported by other parents or that there wasn’t…

**KP**: A network?

**AS**: Yes, there wasn’t a watching out for. You thought you had done what you needed to do.

**KP**: Right. In that instance that did not pan out that way. I would say I had, because of the hockey, I was surrounded by parents all the time, other moms. We were really connected. We watched over each other’s kids. A lot of, “Oh she did this.” It was there but I think there’s some acceptance. “They’re kids; they’re just going to experiment.” We didn’t allow drinking in our homes or some of that, “Oh they can drink and I’m going to take the keys.”

**AS**: She and her friend probably told those parents they were going to someone else’s house.

**KP**: They didn’t follow up or whatever. Word got out. College kids were home for homecoming. This is high school now. I get a phone call from my friends who are watching the house saying, “They won’t even let us in the house. We don’t own it.” They knew the whole drill, these kids. “You can’t come in, you don’t live here. You don’t have permission to come into the house.” They even said that the police could not enter my home. I called them. Without my permission to go in and raid this party and get everybody out of my house.

**AS**: So did you do that?

**KP**: Oh, yes. I was kind of hesitant to pull in other resources. I got on a plane and came back right away. It was a mess. My sister had gone over and cleaned the house but it was trashed. They got minors for that because they were drinking underage. They had to go to a class. None of it ever made any impact. It just continued. When I look back on my childhood, I mean I partied too. My parents weren’t that aware, but it was never to the point where you get in trouble with the police. We’d hang out as a group. It was very much more innocent. I don’t think the drugs or the drinking was as prominent either. It was just a little here, a little there. The drinking was always guzzling with them. I don’t know if Maddie is like this. Could she sit down and just have a glass of wine? Do you know what I mean? That generation didn’t drink that way. They drank to get drunk.

**AS**: The binge movement. We can call it that.

**KP**: I did feel support. I felt some judgement from my own mom. I always felt like it was my fault. I was made to feel, “How could she have done that? Where were you?”

**AS**: Right. Why weren’t you there?

**KP**: Right.

**AS**: By this point had you divorced Kevin?

**KP**: Yes. I was a single mom at that point.

**AS**: What goes on? Her addiction, her substance abuse just keeps going?

**KP**: I would say it started with the alcohol. She never liked weed or smoking pot I guess. I know some of that was involved. I think she was into Adderall. Adderall was probably the first drug that was introduced. They were selling it in middle school. She really liked it. Maybe at that point it was something that could have been recommended from a physician because of anxiety. I just don’t remember her…

**AS**: That would be more for ADD wouldn’t it?

**KP**: Right. When she was in grade school at one point she had a teacher, one teacher, the bad teacher that you never liked. There’s always one witchy teacher. She walked by me in the hall one day and said, “She’s got ADHD you need to get her tested.” I did. It really threw me for a loop. They said she was borderline. They didn’t feel that she needed any medication or therapy or anything.

**AS**: She liked the feeling of the speed of Adderall.

**KP**: Which is interesting because she doesn’t like meth. They’re one molecule, according to her, there’s one molecule between Adderall and meth. That’s it. It’s that close.

**AS**: I did not know that. So what happens through high school?

**KP**: She was flunking out of classes, hanging with the wrong people, sneaking out at night, all that, all the dynamics. Her friends changed, who she was hanging with, a couple years older, not necessarily her school district. It was scary for me. I thought she was really mixing with the wrong people. How do you stop it? You’re not really in control of every single person that they see after school or their friends.

**AS**: Or how they meet people.

**KP**: I felt pretty helpless at certain points during that. I felt she was spinning out of control in some ways. She and I weren’t getting along because I was trying to set rules. She’s just like, “I don’t have to listen to you.” I sent her to California to her dad’s. Her dad lives in the LA area. He had been active in her life from the time we split, when I called off the wedding. He was active. He’d see her. He’d come to Minnesota when she was an infant all the way through childhood, every three to four months. They’d go stay in a hotel. He was very consistent with child support until he got married. Then she started to go see him when she was about five. She started flying to California when she was about five. He got married in that time. It really changed a lot. She would call. She wasn’t very nice to Shawn when she was there. She had to sleep on a cot in another room. She wanted Marty to do paternity testing because she didn’t know for sure. They look so much alike. I was going through that. Shawn wasn’t aware of it. They called her Montessori [school] and said, “How much is Kim paying for child support?” That was sad. He’d always been very consistent and loving.

As she started acting out in high school I called him. We were in touch and I said, “I can’t manage it. She’s out of control. She’s failing classes. I think she should come be with you for a while.” So she went to California, enrolled in high school for a year, partied a lot. He was a ruthless disciplinarian, to the point of being mean, not physically. He’d belittle her a lot for, “You don’t pick up your bowl of cereal.” He’d dump it on the floor. It was a really tight ship. She couldn’t see people except at school. She was still partying there. I think she was there about six months. Five to six months. Then he called me and she’d run away, Friday night in Los Angeles. He had no idea where she was.

**AS**: She probably doesn’t have a cell phone at this point?

**KP**: She had a cell phone. She called me. She’s like, “I’m not going back. I’m with friends.” It was terrifying. He called the police and nobody can track her down. It was like a twenty-four hour period where she was talking to me. I knew she was okay. She would not connect with him. That ended that whole California experience. She barely made it through high school. She ended up in like a specialized program for kids that were struggling in another building. She excelled. She was always a good student, but she just didn’t care. She didn’t apply herself. She was like, “What for? I can do this.” High school that was kind of the catalyst. She took a year off, a gap year in between because she didn’t know what she wanted to do. I was really paranoid about investing all this money. She wanted to go to Portland, Oregon to college.

**AS**: Portland State?

**KP**: Yes. She moved in with a guy and his family who was an addict for sure.

**AS**: So she didn’t go to Portland?

**KP**: No, this was the year in between. She did end up in Portland. She moved out on Mother’s Day. She said, “I’m moving in with so-and-so.” I could not stand him. His family, they allowed her to move in with him. She was nineteen at the time, eighteen to nineteen, and lived in the Cities. She called. I knew it was rocky.

**AS**: Here you mean? She’s here; she’s not in Portland yet

**KP**: She’s still in the Cities; it was that year in between. She called me. He’d overdosed on heroin. I assume it was heroin. She just said he’d overdosed and she experienced it. She’d never seen anything like it before. She wanted to move out. She came back.

**AS**: Was he alive? Did he live through it?

**KP**: Yes. Can I use your bathroom? Pause!

[Break in Recording].

**KP**: She’d always wanted to go to Portland. My best friend who’s her godmother lived in Portland. We’d spent quite a bit of time there. To me it’s marvelous, but really drug loaded. I did not know at the time. She ended up going to college, was excited, and got her apartment downtown. She didn’t want to live in a dorm. Stupid!

**AS**: So many parallels.

**KP**: Really? Oh my God! Just like set up, Ikea, painting—it was just all set up. It was fabulous. By herself, she didn’t want a roommate. I don’t know how much she went to class. I think she was good for a while. I was very resentful; it’s caused a lot of conflict with my best friend from high school. We’ve gone our separate ways because she just didn’t play a part. She was there. Did she ever invite her over for dinner? Did she kind of monitor her and stuff? I really am kind of angry about that. It wasn’t her job either. It just continued into the whole heroin.

**AS**: You think that’s when she started using? It was in Portland not before?

**KP**: I think she tried it right before. I think she’d been exposed to it before. I don’t think she’d injected it probably. I think she’d been exposed. It just went from the Adderall to the drinking, or the drinking and the Adderall. I think she’d experimented with other things at one point. I don’t know opiates for sure. She talks about Oxy being a big, big influence. That was kind of the gateway for her, in her opinion. That got her into the heroin. It’s the same story that we hear. I thought heroin was… She was so paranoid about needles, doctors, any blood, anything like that. I would never have imagined. It was readily available in Portland. One of my friend’s sons that she had met when we were out there skiing one time turned her onto it. That was it. She was hooked, immediately.

She came home for Christmas. I didn’t sense that she was really in trouble. She was around and hanging out with family and everything. January she called me and she said, “I’m in a hotel bathtub in Seattle with some other people, they are in the other room and they have no idea. I’m trying to detox from heroin. Will you come get me?” That was my first.

**AS**: They have no idea what?

**KP**: That she was detoxing. She said she was partying with them but she was doing it individually and they didn’t know. Whether that’s true or not I don’t know. I said, “No I won’t come get you, but I’ll get you a plane ticket. Go to the airport and I’ll come get you in Minneapolis.” I took her to Fairview. My sister and I went and picked her up, took her Fairview and said, “She wants to detox. What’s the process?” She had dropped her classes; she had no insurance because she had dropped her classes. They said, “$5,000 and she can stay for three days to detox. You just have to give us the cash, write us a check.” I didn’t really have $5,000 at that point. I said, “Will she die?”

I didn’t know anything about it, nothing. I went online when I got the phone call from her, from the time she was flying home. It was all terrifying. I thought, “She’s going to die.” What is detox? What is that about? What do you do? They said, “She won’t die from it. Alcohol detox is the worst and she could die from alcohol detox. She won’t die. She’ll be really uncomfortable. You could take her home and then put her in treatment.” That’s what I did. That was my first exposure to the restless legs and the vomiting and the sweating and all that. She went through that for a couple of days. She went to the retreat from there. I think it was three days, three or four days before she could go in.

**AS**: Is she twenty now?

**KP**: Yes. She went through The Retreat. It was very alcohol oriented at that point. They weren’t really addressing other drugs then. She stayed. It was the first treatment that she completed until this past year. She stayed, she went through it, and she liked it. She went into sober living; they didn’t think she was working the steps. It was all Twelve-Step. She didn’t buy in, she didn’t like it. They just didn’t work for her. She did not buy into it. Higher power is just something she can’t relate to or fathom or, “What is that? What shape does that take?” It was too religious oriented for her mind, too God focused. She just didn’t buy in. They were like, “We want her in sober living, but she’s not done a third step, or fourth step.” So she wouldn’t go. It was the thirty-day program, or twenty-eight day program. She went into sober living. She made it thirty days and she drank one night. They kicked her out. She came home.

I was married to Bruce then. Bruce, when she went to Portland, in his mind she’s gone. “I have Kim to myself finally.” She was fifteen when we met. We didn’t get married right away. He felt she was out of control and very judgmental, didn’t relate. He was just pissed about the whole thing. “My friend’s kids don’t have any problems. Why are we going through this?” She went to college and out of sight, out of mind. Now, she’ll be fine. Well it didn’t happen. She was back. It was very difficult on my marriage. It’s a big part why it didn’t last, a lot of anger on his part, a lot of hate. He’s not an angry guy, particularly, but he just wanted me. He wanted her to be normal, whatever that meant. He just couldn’t control it, which is big. He didn’t know how to handle it watching me go through this dynamic of this addict in and out of our lives. Setting her up in an apartment and then losing the apartment because she wouldn’t pay rent, losing jobs, and cars being impounded. I was just enabling all that. I was just trying to think. She couldn’t make her rent. I’d write a check.

**AS**: Did you see that as enabling at the time?

**KP**: No. I didn’t know what that meant. I was trying to do everything that I possibly could to get her life to be normal. She’s in trouble because she couldn’t pay rent, things will even out. It was just a downward spiral, it went on for years until I went to Nar-Anon. It really changed it. I was desperate. She stole from us.

**AS**: She’s back in your house?

**KP**: In and out. She’s in an apartment, she’s got a job, but that’s when the heroin got really bad.

**AS**: Here she got an apartment and job?

**KP**: Yes, she was back here at that point. When she flew back from Portland she was back here.

**AS**: But moved out of your house to her own apartment. So you set her up again, she got a job, then she relapses.

**KP**: I think she was using the whole time, either alcohol or heroin at that point. She couldn’t keep any job or any living situation for periods of time. If you were to ask Shawn she says that she got involved with this guy named Troy who she knew in high school. She’d always had a fascination and a crush on him. He had been through treatment for alcohol, gambling addiction, but he had a son and he was living with his mom. He was working and he didn’t associate with anybody. I think he got caught up in her lifestyle. I think she influenced, or has gotten many people involved in heroin versus the other way around.

**AS**: So he got involved with heroin?

**KP**: Yes, lost custody of his son. His mom was kind of crazy, but he got involved with the law and gambling. They were hanging out at the casinos. He would win. She said he’d win all this money. They’d be in a hotel, a lot of drug dealing at Mystic [Lake Casino]. I had no control over any of it. At that point she was twenty-one, she was an adult, and she could do whatever she wanted to. You try. You try to have hope. You try to influence. You try to come home; this really isn’t a healthy relationship. That was the only thing she really cared about, was being high.

Bruce, we had talked about splitting up. He had so much resentment toward her. We had a conversation with some friends of ours. This was 2014 January, and we had a dinner with her and her boyfriend and said, “We’re going to put it all behind us.” He was going to forgive her and try to move on from his resentment. I was going to be less enabling. We’d gotten some really good guidance from a couple that we knew well. “Troy, we accept you.” They stayed overnight. They stole from us the next morning. It was all planned. We had a lockbox that was hidden. We had the key to the lockbox that was hidden. It had obviously been staged well ahead of time.

**AS**: So you mean they were going to steal that stuff?

**KP**: Oh yes, they knew where everything was. They knew where the key was. They’d gone in the lockbox. They took my jewelry. I went to work. They’d stayed overnight. That was it in terms of her living with us. She was out.

**AS**: You’ve told me before that she was on methadone. Was that before 2014? Can you talk

about when that happened?

**KP**: After The Retreat and getting kicked out of sober living she was seeing a therapist, or had gotten some counseling through The Retreat. She was connected to somebody through sober living. This person said, “Okay, I think she should go to treatment again for alcohol. I think that based on the heroin use and addiction that methadone might not be a bad idea.” She went to treatment. She did go to treatment in Meadow Creek, which is up near Pine City. She stayed there, she’s been there twice, and she stayed there almost through the whole program. Again a twenty-eight day program, which I feel is never long enough. She was connected based on the therapy there; they put her in a methadone program when she left there. That was the next step.

She went to Valhalla Place in Woodbury for three and a half years. She was on methadone. She did pretty well. She worked, she had a car. That was kind of in between. That gap between 2014. It worked. She had an amazing, amazing counselor who I felt was a God gift in her life. She was very, very bonded with him, and spent hours talking to him. He talked to me, we would go in together. He talked to her boyfriend of the day. He was very involved. Bruce got laid off his job, which meant no private insurance. She had to pay for methadone, which was very expensive. I covered it at that point, she couldn’t make it. She couldn’t pay for it.

**AS**: She couldn’t go on MA [medical assistance]?

**KP**: I don’t know if we knew about it then. So Rick left the clinic.

**AS**: The therapist?

**KP**: Yes, and went into private practice. She lost insurance and couldn’t cover the cost of the methadone at that point. She relapsed right after that. She relapsed, she was at about thirty milligrams. She was like one fifty or one sixty.

**AS**: At the beginning?

**KP**: Well they ramped her up to that point. I don’t know what her max was. She’s on thirty now and it’s not enough. They want her to go up more.

**AS**: You said before, you don’t have to answer this, but that you had felt pressure from your family or other people were pressuring her to quit the methadone even though it was working. Can you talk about that? Was that before the insurance problem?

**KP**: It was before. When she was taking it the family dynamic, my family dynamic—me included—was, “It’s a narcotic.” We heard all about the detox and how horrible it was and how was it affecting her as a person, a lot of pressure. I was kind of brought up in that whole idea. Rick was completely against her going off of it. We were like, “She needs to get off this. It’s another drug. What’s the difference if she’s on heroin or she’s on something like this?” There was a lot of family pressure to get her off. It was a mistake. If I look back now, if I knew what I knew today about how it stabilized her, I would never. That’s when she started using, she relapsed. She hadn’t used in three and a half years. There is a gap period in this whole thing until she was like twenty-six when she wasn’t using. She was drinking.

**AS**: Like three years.

**KP**: She drank during that period of time. She went to treatment for alcohol.

**AS**: While she was even on methadone?

**KP**: She was living with a boyfriend who was an alcoholic. It was very, not violent, but it was a lot of police involvement and a lot of drama. She’s definitely an alcoholic on top of it. I think if she had kept that out of the picture she was doing okay. She was pretty stable on methadone. So that was a mistake. We didn’t know. It was, “What’s methadone?”

**AS**: It had such a bad reputation even just a few years ago; it still has a bad reputation.

**KP**: But it’s highly prescribed now. She needs it. After coming off methadone she said she would never take it again. She had no idea how drugged that she felt.

**AS**: Three years ago? But now?

**KP**: She didn’t want to go on methadone again, but she was court ordered to go on methadone now. She went to jail. She’s been in jail three times. She’s been in the workhouse twice.

**AS**: In jail for possession?

**KP**: Nothing related to heroin. She got a DWI. She didn’t go to court. She didn’t show up for her court date. It manifested itself into a warrant and some jail time. It was all based on a DWI. Never possession, never been picked up for heroin. I implanted a lot of that though into the system with probation officers and all this.

**AS**: What do you mean you implanted it?

**KP**: I gave them a lot of information about her use and that she really needed help. That she needed treatment. It was not alcohol necessarily even though that’s what she got picked up for.

**AS**: So you would intervene at the moment where she got picked up and you would call? Tell me what you would do.

**KP**: She had a probation officer. The first probation officer and I would communicate back and forth when she’d get picked up. She got picked up the first time, went into the workhouse. We talked quite a bit during that period of time about it’s not only alcohol. She’s going to die if she stays out there on the street. When they stole from us, when she and Troy stole from us, she was out of the house, she was done. She was home once after that for about two years.

**AS**: Did you call the police on her at that point?

**KP**: Yes. They were gone, but we reported it. It was about $16,000, $18,000 worth of things that they had taken.

**AS**: Did you ever get any of it back?

**KP**: I recently got a check, a $10,000 check from my insurance company, within the last month. It’s been two years. It was two years in January. We didn’t report it to Home Owners Insurance because we thought we wanted restitution from them. We wanted them to be punished, not punished. They were so messed up. They were so fucked up at the time. We thought they were going to die. They were living on the streets. Shawn was held at gunpoint. Who knows what she did for drugs. She had no job, no money. I didn’t give her anything for those two years. I’d meet with her in the car every once and awhile. It was a scary group of people and the places that she was living were just ratty. It felt like it couldn’t have gotten any worse. She was having people die in her life. She had somebody die in her arms. I thought that would turn it around. It didn’t. It’s like a trigger. Anyways, do you want me to go back? [Speaks to cat].

**AS**: I’m just thinking about that. Is that when you started coming to Nar-Anon?

**KP**: I started coming to Nar-Anon after I kicked her out. Bruce was unhappy and the law was involved. I just felt I had nowhere to go. I was not getting any support at home from Bruce. She’d call in the middle of the night. She wouldn’t know where she was. “Come and get me.”

**AS:** But she wouldn’t know where she was?

**KP**: She wouldn’t know where she was. She’d go on these… I just kept thinking if I don’t respond and if I never did anything, I’ll never be able to live with myself. I’d go look for her in Uptown. I’d drive in the middle of the night up and down the street looking for her. Hiawatha area was the worst.

**AS**: How many times did this happen?

**KP**: Phone calls like that? Regularly. You go through periods of no contact.

**AS**: This was after you said you hit your bottom with her, which was when they robbed you? This is after?

**KP**: That was really then.

**AS**: You hit your bottom where you said, “You can’t be in our house.” That’s what you meant by that?

**KP**: It didn’t mean I disconnected from her or detached from her completely.

**AS**: So you stayed in touch with her through this dark time?

**KP**: I called when I knew there was a warrant out. My dad was in the VA Hospital. We thought he wasn’t going to live. I had her come to the hospital and I arranged with security guards at the front desk when she came in to arrest her. I did. My sister and I had this whole plan. She’s going to go up.

**AS**: You’re going to tell her that her grandpa is dying, which he was.

**KP**: He was really sick. He was. I said, “I think you should come to see him.” I talked to the security guards, there was a warrant out for her arrest and could they arrest her. I had no idea where she was at that point. I’d see her. She’d meet me at Kowalski’s in Uptown sometimes. I didn’t know where she was living, who she was with. She was moving all the time and she had abscesses. She looked so incredibly like she was going to die. She’d call and say, “I’m being held at gunpoint” then she’d hang up. “I’m in this horrible place. I’m afraid of these people, they’re really dangerous,” and then she’d hang up. I had no idea where she was.

**AS**: What would you do? What would you do at this point, just get in your car?

**KP**: You kind of build this little network of people that she knows. I had phone numbers. “Do you know where she is or who she’s with?” “Oh, I think she’s here.” “I haven’t seen her for a couple weeks.”

**AS**: What was that like on your psyche and your body? I know how it is, but I need you to say it.

**KP**: I was sick. I was physically ill. I was losing weight. I wasn’t sleeping. I was on this hunt, almost this feeling of what little piece of information can I get to go find her? Will she leave with me if I find her? I would find her. She didn’t want to go. “No, these are my people.” She’d be so fucked up. There were years like those two and a half years from the point where we kicked her out to the point to her getting arrested. Well, what happened at the VA, she gave them a false name when she checked in. They didn’t know it was her, gave them another name. She could work the system.

**AS**: She knew what you were probably going to do.

**KP**: Anything to do with police, security, anything like that. She walks in to this waiting room in the ER. My sister and I are looking like, “How the hell did she get in here?” This security guard comes walking down the hallway, “Do you know what your mother tried to do? She tried to have you arrested.” Yes! Shawn was horrified. She was so mad. She just walked out. There was a police car that had been notified that was waiting outside when she went out there. They arrested her on the spot. She was so mad at me. I’ve done it twice now.

**AS**: You’ve done this same thing?

**KP**: I had her arrested in Minnetonka. She got arrested, went into Hennepin, ended up at the workhouse because of her warrant. Pissed at me, angry, but she was there for three weeks probably. Then they let her out. Somebody picked her up. She didn’t even let me know when she was getting out. A friend picked her up. She just went right back out and did the same thing.

She could have gone to Hazleton at that time. “I’m just going to go see my friends to say goodbye.” This was always the drill. “I need to go say goodbye to everybody.” Did you ever hear that? “Just go say goodbye, nothing’s going to happen. I’ll be back.” She went into treatment a couple times, several times. She’d go in, I’d beg her to go in, she’d go in to Fairview, she’d detox for a couple days and then leave. She’d go into treatment, they’d recommend treatment, she’d stay for two or three days and she was gone. She went to Hazleton twice, stayed for three days. She never even got into the program. She used in my car in the Hazleton parking lot the night she was going in. I knew it. She’s like, “One more. I’m going to be so sick, just one more time.” Did you ever buy drugs for your daughter?

**AS**: No.

**KP**: I’m sure I’ve financed so much of that over the years.

**AS**: I mean I don’t know. I didn’t actually physically buy them.

**KP**: Oh no, I never did either. Suboxone—I never was involved in any transaction.

**AS**: No, no. I’m sure the cash.

**KP**: Ann [Perry] will tell you stories like that.

**AS**: I’m sure the cash that I handed over for jobs around the house.

What can you say about your mothering? What can you say about addiction and mothering? Are there things you’ve learned?

**KP**: I don’t know how they could possibly go hand in hand at times because you question your sanity. I question my sanity. I beat myself up for a long, long time about what I did wrong. I wasn’t around enough or I didn’t monitor her enough or I wasn’t a disciplinarian, I didn’t catch it early enough. My mom who’s so judgmental about everything that I did. She loves Shawn, it’s her first grandchild, and she does. It was just like, “You can’t put her back on the street. She can’t be home.” It was just this constant questioning of your own mind of what you were doing right and what you were doing wrong.

I think when it comes to mothering an addict, it’s a loaded question. To me mothering is supportive and nurturing and caring and non-judgement and respect and patience. I’ve been so challenged in that regard. I felt that way this weekend. I felt like I was on the opposite end of the spectrum. Unless I’m spiritually fit or involved in prayer or reading or meditation or just being connected. Nature does that for me, work does that for me. I have a real hard time staying grounded in that regard. Just being supportive and letting her do her own thing because I just feel like it’s going back down, it’s starting to spiral. The definition of mothering that’s what gets flipped.

**AS**: To where you say, “That’s not mothering what I’m doing. I’m doing the opposite.” Is that to survive?

**KP**: Yes, I think so. It’s just to stay sane. I get angry and I get frustrated. I have been going through a period of my divorce of loneliness and starting to navigate life solo.

**AS**: Because you and Bruce just got divorced?

**KP**: Right. Her living with me has been positive at times but she has a boyfriend now. He’s there all the time. I can’t do it in a small space. I feel like I’m taking care of two other people. I’ve set boundaries around it. I’ve told them that he just can’t be there. He’s not working and he’s floating. I don’t know. He’s supposedly clean for three years. He told me recently that Shawn’s been using. He’s been using. He’s got diabetes and he’s been asking for his needles. I don’t know what’s true or not. Were they in a fight? Is it that he’s trying to get her in trouble or he’s trying to get away from her? I think they both know that they shouldn’t be together. It’s in my home and it’s in my space. I don’t think we should be living together. I can’t, I can’t do it. I told her today. We went to the cabin. I’ve set this boundary and I haven’t kept it. My mind—it’s that mind chatter that says, “Okay, she goes out there. What are the chances of her not relapsing?” At least she’s got a roof over her head. She didn’t for years.

**AS**: But she’s using.

**KP**: I don’t know.

**AS**: You don’t know, right. So the unknown—no matter if she’s in your house or not in your house—is still there.

**KP**: It’s that constant. At least she’s living somewhere and she’s in treatment.

**AS**: Oh, she is?

**KP**: Yes, she’s at New Way every day, in outpatient.

**AS**: They’re drug testing her, right?

**KP**: I think so. She’s on methadone.

**AS**: She’s staying on it?

**KP**: She’s still on methadone.

**AS**: So what are you doubting?

**KP**: She’s not working a program.

**AS**: Even though she’s going to outpatient?

**KP**: I don’t know. I don’t see any change in her behavior. It feels like using behavior is starting over again.

**AS**: So you saw a change.

**KP**: We went to a cabin, and they slept for three days. They didn’t do anything the whole time we were up there. That’s what scares me. They’re swearing it’s nothing. How can you possibly sleep for three days and three nights? We were kayaking once, they didn’t go to town, they didn’t go fishing, and they didn’t do anything. They slept. They did it Memorial Day, same thing. It doesn’t feel right. [long pause] That’s what’s bugging me.

**AS**: That feeling, that familiar feeling that you’ve had many times in the past when you’ve

known things.

**KP**: My gut’s usually been accurate. Trust your gut. It’s usually really accurate. I’ve got strong intuition about things. It doesn’t feel good.

**AS**: You know what it’s like to live with active addiction and deception, which is part of the addiction, is the deception and lying.

**KP**: And lack of motivation.

**AS**: Does she have a job?

**KP**: No.

**AS**: What did she say today when you said, “This isn’t working out.”

**KP:** For the first time she said she was going to call Greg about sober living. She’s said it a million times before. I think she’s got that one foot in, one foot out. The feelings that come up for me, the anger, which I’ve been working on and trying to be more compassionate and understanding and knowing that even if you’re in recovery it’s really tough. It takes a while. It’s a whole different dynamic.

**AS**: It can take up to two years.

**KP**: I know, but is that the behavior that goes along with it? Just doing nothing? I don’t know. Do you know? You went through it.

**AS**: I saw a lot of working the program and working towards goals and being accountable to social workers and counselors and people outside of her family.

**KP**: That’s what I think is lacking. I believe that that has to be a part of recovery, the community, the connectedness. Setting and having the support system is huge.

**AS**: And deciding you’re going to do something with your life not just be not using.

**KP:** Right, just be there. Just go. Whatever you do every day.

**AS**: But the state of not using isn’t recovery. It’s just not using.

**KP**: That’s what’s happening. There’re no meetings. She likes the treatment that she’s in. I don’t know how long she’s there. She was court ordered to be there, but she likes it. She said, “I trust the group. I can talk about anything I want to.” She doesn’t talk to me at all. Last week I was like, “How are you doing? Can we just connect?” Otherwise you fill in the blanks. The assumptions can be really a negative thing.

**AS**: It’s dangerous for us.

**KP**: For all of us.

**AS**: That’s where we go because of the traumas that we’ve been through. The blanks we fill in are all on despair and tragedy.

**KP**: Exactly. You put the words right in my mouth. I was reading this meditation I have about that on my refrigerator. It’s exactly those words. We had some therapy when she was at Park. She had a fabulous counselor. I was so looking forward to continuing with her. She just said, “The two of you assume completely the wrong things about what the other person is thinking. You’re not talking about it. Take one little baby step at a time and talk about this.” Shawn talks a lot, she processes. Sometimes she just talks on and on, most of the time she doesn’t say anything. She’s like, “Oh, we’ll talk later.” Later never happens.

I was asking her and she got all upset. She was crying and she was having problems with Ryan. She finally dumped. She used to do information dumps periodically throughout her teenage years. All of a sudden I’d get things I wish I’d never heard, but I got a big dump truck load at once. It was just like this vomit of information. She kind of went on that rant the other night. “I talk all day in therapy; I’m in counseling for four hours a day. I don’t want to talk anymore when I get home. I’m talked out. I’ve been talking about all this stuff all day long.”

**AS**: Which is understandable.

**KP**: Thank you. I get that. Then it was like, “You always want to have these serious conversations.” I’m like, “I just want to have a conversation. I don’t care if it’s about the weather or walk around the block or go to dinner or sit down and eat together.” A lot about her relationship and she said, “I’m feeling for the first time. I haven’t had these feelings for years. It’s terrifying. It hurts and it’s scary for me.” Her social anxiety is off the charts. She’s feeling all those things that she was medicating before. That was all positive information. It was dramatic, but I got this feedback. I understand that. Thank you for sharing it. She’s like, “I’m all upset!” I’m like, “I get it. I needed that.” Yes!

**AS**: Because I love you.

**KP**: I do. Then we go away for the weekend and this whole weird dynamic.

**AS**: Is there anything else you want to say? I’m just aware of the time.

**KP**: I think I know in my heart, I’m sure you’ve heard this; this is the hardest challenge, the biggest thing that I have ever experienced in my entire life. I almost didn’t make it myself. I don’t know if you knew this but I ended up hospitalized at one point. I did. I tried to commit suicide over this.

**AS**: A while ago?

**KP**: It was a year ago in April. I was in Nar-Anon then.

**AS**: I didn’t know that. I’m sorry.

**KP**: I’ve never thought about it since. Shawn had left treatment one more time, was back on the street. I just cracked that day. I just tried to find her, I was driving around. I was out of my mind. I just said, “She’s going to die. I can’t outlive her. I don’t want to live through losing a child.” That’s how I felt. That’s the craziness that was overcoming me. “I can’t outlive her. She’s going to die.”

**AS**: That made you want to kill yourself?

**KP**: Yes.

**AS**: That’s really heavy. How long were you in the hospital?

**KP**: Five days.

**AS**: Did you get good help?

**KP**: Oh, yes. I felt completely out of my element because I was surrounded by people who had been there many times. It was so extreme. It was completely foreign to me. I was that desperate that I had to go there.

**AS**: To protect yourself. Did you take yourself to the hospital?

**KP**: No, somebody called an ambulance for me. I remember calling Shawn and saying, “Would you come see me?” She wouldn’t come see me. That was really painful. Even then the drugs were more important.

**AS**: You told her how you felt?

**KP**: Yes.

**AS**: That’s the power of addiction, isn’t it?

**KP**: It can manifest itself and grow and morph within each one of us. It can take over every part of our being. I think if I had been in a more spiritual place at the time I don’t think it would have been that extreme. I just didn’t believe in anything. I didn’t believe there was a God. I didn’t believe there was a higher power. It was just like, “I’ve had enough.” Why? Why does this keep happening to me? That’s how I felt. It wasn’t about her. Why? What did I do to deserve this?

**AS:** Right, and that nothing you’re doing is helping.

**KP**: It took a long time to get there, to realize that there’s nothing I can do except love her and tell her if she’s ready. She wasn’t ready. She went into treatment so many times for the family or for us or for me. She’d say straight out, “I’m not ready. I don’t want to quit.”

**AS:** Do you know how many times she’s been in treatment?

**KP**: I think this is her ninth. She’s very proud to say that. It’s odd. That they would say, “Oh, this is my ninth treatment.” I just cringe. She never went through it. She didn’t stay. She never stayed, all those times. I think she stayed the first time at The Retreat; she went through Meadow Creek the first time she stayed, and then she went through Park. So three out of the nine, she spent any period of time then. To me it doesn’t count. What’d you get from that? Maybe it was a baby step forward each time. I don’t know how long she’s been clean. She said she’s done meth twice since January. Amy, I don’t know. She told me she hadn’t done anything.

**AS**: So the deception isn’t over yet. How are you today? How are you since you were hospitalized? How are you doing?

**KP**: I’ve been on an uphill. It was just kind of one of these, in my mind, like a one-time feeling. I’ve never felt it before or after. I went through some pretty intense treatment. I went to DBT. Are you familiar with DBT?

**AS**: Yes.

**KP**: Last summer, and that was helpful. It gives you new skills to use. It’s like a different language.

**AS**: The hospitalization was a year ago April?

**KP**: Yes.

**AS**: So like sixteen months ago.

**KP**: I did that last summer. I have a fantastic therapist and we do EMDR, which has helped me tremendously with all of this. It’s amazing how a session can change my perception or my reactions to things. It’s fantastic. Those tools—that work—has kept me stable ever since then. I get angry. I’m trying to work on the anger part of it. I know you’ve been there

**AS**: Hang in there. I have, but I have to say the anxiety doesn’t go away. It becomes part of you. It’s part of your story with that child. It’s something that she’ll be living with and I’ll be living

with.

**KP**: It gives me hope when I see other moms, other families, other parents.

**AS**: We need that hope to survive. It was those other people in the meetings whose kids were four or five years in recovery that helped me when my daughter was homeless by the river.

**KP**: Is she still on methadone?

**AS**: Yes.

**KP**: Does she talk about getting off of it?

**AS:** Yes, they’re tapering down really slowly.

**KP**: Are they both taking it?

**AS**: Yes.

**KP**: I support it now. I wish I would have been more knowledgeable, but she hates it. They want her on a higher dose so she’ll feel better. She won’t do it. She sees the psychiatrist this week. We were talking about the system, that part of it. I’m rambling, I’m sorry.

**AS**: No, no. It’s okay.

**KP**: That whole idea of trying to find help, starting with no insurance. MA has been actually pretty great. Through Medica she’s gotten a lot of benefits. That way once we figured out that whole navigating thing. She couldn’t have done that navigating. I had to do that piece. She could never have figured it out. It took me months. Then trying to find her a psychiatrist, which has been a new thing. I called the U of M Department of Behavioral Health or Mental Health and Addiction. They said, “Well our one psychiatrist just retired and we’re not taking any new patients.” I went, “What?”

**AS**: At the U of M?

**KP**: The U of M! This is not like Nystrom, one of the other smaller psychiatric clinics.

**AS**: It’s not a small practice.

**KP**: I said, “Can you give me a referral?” “No we don’t have any referrals. I have no idea what to tell you.” I was just like, “I’m the mother of this addict.” I just went on this whole rant about how can you not have an idea of where to point people when this is so prominent? I called a psychiatrist that I know. Why I didn’t go that route in the first place? She gave me the name of one in Plymouth, Plymouth Psych Clinic or something. They got her in in a week. She goes Thursday.

**AS**: But you had to do that. You had to have the tenacity as a mother to keep at it. We don’t take no for an answer.

**KP**: You almost have to go through personal connections to find a resource. If you go down the normal channels of MA or Medica, any of those channels, you don’t get anywhere. Or you get three to four months. We start with a physical thinking, “Oh, you’ll get a referral.” Took her to Fairview, had a physical, they said, “Here’s a couple names.” It’s at least three to four months to get in. She just walked out and she felt hopeless. The anxiety has to be treated. The mental health part has to be treated. We found another resource; we’ll see where that goes.

**AS**: That’s where a certain level of education and access to other resources comes into play for our kids.

**KP**: We know how to navigate that.

**AS**: But if you didn’t, where’s your kid? They’re in jail.

**KP**: That’s not a solution. I just don’t think that’s a solution.

**AS**: Not for anybody.

**KP**: Not enough treatment. That’s enough.

**AS**: Thank you.

**KP**: Oh, you’re welcome.

**AS**: Thank you this was really good.

**KP**: Thank you for asking.