

ORIGINAL LETTER
by **DAWN DORLAND**

Dear Recipient,

My name is Dawn Dorland. I'm a 35-year-old white female, and I live with my husband in LA.

In 2009 I read my first article about living kidney donation, and in the years since, I have been constantly reminded--whether triggered by my reading (I am a writer), or through the stories of people I know--of the harrowing experience of dialysis and the dire need in our country for kidneys. I believe that I knew, from the moment I first became aware of the possibility of donating one of my kidneys, that I would one day find a way to do this.

Once I had all the information, I was motivated to donate at a time when, due to medical advances and the existence of the National Kidney Registry--especially the leaps they've made matching compatible strangers through paired exchange--I stood to make an maximum impact in others' lives with only minimal risk to myself. Personally, my childhood was marked by trauma and abuse; I didn't have the opportunity to form secure attachments with my family of origin. A positive outcome of my early life is empathy, that it opened a well of possibility between me and strangers. While perhaps many more people would be motivated to donate an organ to a friend or family member in need, to me, the suffering of strangers is just as real.

I can't tell you how happy I am that my donation eventually--two organs and four surgeries later--resulted in your receiving xxxxxxx's kidney. Throughout my preparation for becoming a donor, which spanned precisely eight months from my first testing to the date of our surgeries, I was most excited about the recipient who would come off of the deceased donor list and end our chain. I focused a majority of my mental energy on imagining and celebrating you.

My gift, which begat xxxxxxx's, trails no strings. You are deserving of an extended and healthy life simply for being here.

Please know that my husband and I would love to know more about you, and perhaps even meet you one day. But I accept any level of involvement or response from you, even if it is none.

Thank you for reading this letter, and be well.

Kindly,
Dawn

EXCERPT FROM "THE KINDEST"
by **SONYA LARSON**

Dear Recipient,

My name is Rose Rothario. I'm a thirty-eight-year-old white female, and I live in Greater Boston.

In 2017 I saw a documentary about altruistic kidney donation, and as the credits rolled I felt wholly dismayed by the daily experiences of those in need. Equipped with this new awareness, I set forth on a journey to offer a great gift, to do my part in bettering a fellow human's life.

[...]

I'm so grateful to the MGH transplant team, who held my hand from my very first blood test to the date of our paired exchange. I myself know something of suffering, but from those experiences I've acquired both courage and perseverance. I've also learned to appreciate the hardship that others are going through, no matter how foreign. Whatever you've endured, remember that you are never alone.

A few things about me: I like sailing, camping, jewelry, and cats.

As I prepared to make this donation, I drew strength from knowing that my recipient would get a second chance at life. I withstood the pain by imagining and rejoicing in YOU.

[...]

Now I smile at the thought that you are enjoying renewed health. You deserve all that life has to offer, simply because you exist.

If you are willing, I would love to know more about you. Perhaps we could meet. But if you prefer not to, I accept that reaction as well.

Warmly,

Rose M. Rothario