

FOREWORD

Sibling relationships naturally take on a variety of unique forms shaped by a shared history, family dynamics, and, often, where life takes us as we move beyond our childhood family home. The role can be much more complicated when that relationship involves a sibling with special needs. In that instance, as described in this beautiful, honest, and touching book, it can add many layers of responsibility and obligation. However, it can also inspire a bond that isn't merely of convenience or necessity, but one of deep love.

There is another characteristic, which I have witnessed in person for over a quarter of a century of knowing Bernice and Paul, and that is mutual respect. Despite what many would view as challenges and frustrations when having a sibling with special needs, Paul and Bernice are very respectful of each other. They demonstrate patience and love toward one another and share a unique and wonderful sense of humour as well.

They understand what they each bring to the relationship and that being siblings is just the foundation. It's an obligation, in the strongest and best sense of the word, that recognizes the power of being born into the same family, and is a quiet but mutual acceptance of the terms in memory of their loving parents.

I've had the great pleasure of knowing Bernice for over thirty years; in the time that she has been a part of our family, so has Paul. Or maybe I should reverse that: over the decades that Bernice has welcomed me into her heart and family, she has expanded my

world by including Paul. He is a man of strength, determination, courage, perseverance, and independence; as I've mentioned, he has a delightful sense of humour and profound love for his extended family. To my children, he is Uncle Paul.

I could use all the above adjectives to also describe Bernice. She's been a strong role model in my life, and a silent guide on the importance of the choices we make and the people we choose to call family. To our benefit, and this includes my two sisters Lorraine and Jessica, we're grateful that she chose to love our father, Victor.

When Bernice started to pursue her passion for writing, it was clear from the beginning it wasn't as simple as starting a new hobby; it was the natural evolution of her desire to tell a story that she had been carrying in her heart her entire life. It was years of careful recall, reliving past events, writing, rewriting, and editing with her wonderful tribe of writer friends that paved the path toward publishing and sharing this story.

This book is not only Bernice's and Paul's story; it's the story of many families, which I know is one of the reasons she chose to write this book. It's for all siblings caring for and about their own brother or sister with special needs; and it's for those learning to become protective advocates in order to navigate complex legal, health, and social systems to ensure that bias or vulnerability does not harm someone who cannot always use their own voice.

This book also addresses, with authenticity, the heavy weight that can rest on individuals in these situations and the impact on their lives and family relationships. There is no handbook that can make this journey easier, but this book can be a guidepost to let you know that you aren't alone, that what you feel is a natural

response, and to acknowledge that this community needs to come together to support each other, to advocate, and to educate.

Bernice, you have contributed much to all of us and, together, we thank you.

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