

Letter to an Alcoholic Woman

There is no better thing I can do for you than to talk to you and tell you what I know about alcohol and pregnancy, but what would you do then? Are you capable at this stage in your life of understanding what should be done? And if you are who will you turn to for help? But if I don't say anything what happens if you become pregnant again? If I don't do anything can I assume someone else will?

So eventually I say hello. An aura of alcohol fumes surrounds you and my eyes water. I think I'm crying. You look at me suspiciously. I peer down at your son and blink away the tears, 'I have a son who looks just like yours.'

You look at me again, no doubt speculating if I am dangerous. I stagger on with a mouth that won't form the words I need, wondering what you are thinking about me.

Your son is starting to make a lot of noise and has begun running up and down the aisles of the supermarket. I know I don't have much time. 'My name is Elizabeth, I'm an alcoholic. I drank through my pregnancies and my son has been harmed because of it. If you ever have cause to seek help for your son it could be that he is suffering from the same problem. If you ever decide to have another baby, don't drink and your child will not be affected.' I hand you my telephone number and watch as you walk quickly away.

As I walk back home, I wonder whether I have done the right thing for you and your son. The only conclusion is that I have. What else could I have done knowing what I know?