Dear social worker,

When you were informed about the new case, did you feel excited, overwhelmed, or ready for a challenge? You must have had a quick glimpse, a brief delve into a layer or two of information. From reading your notes, I can see your focus was only on the surface, the easy bits to rest your eyes on. You didn’t care to see the true essence, the profound depths, the context. It is imperative for you to consider a deeper dive, to comprehend the complexities beneath the shallows. So, what stopped you from considering the significant culture of our family, the highs and the lows, and the context of our history?

Why did you accept the limited information as sufficient? Did you not feel curious about why the family situation had developed as it did? Were you so confident in your assumptions and judgments that you didn’t need to look further? Did you just see the shiny rocks and get captivated by the surface-level information? The beautiful children, the poor abashed ex, and the angry mother. Dismissing any reason, context, story, or narrative, you believed you had the right perspective and delivered your reckoning without understanding the harm you were doing.

Was angry mum all you could see? Is it that simple for you? A qualification, a challenging role, some confidence built, and a promotion, leading you to step forth with no consideration, no reflection. You stand there with your glasses firmly set to block out anything you don’t want to see. But you only read a chapter of the book, one near the end. You made assumptions and judgments, insensitive and callous to the other chapters.

You wrote that I was prioritizing myself, but that statement alone shows such a lack of sight. It was stated that your view saw only the normal realms of childhood behavior, yet this was dismissive of the deeper view and the child's entire well-being, along with other perspectives.

Shall I tell you what you missed? The years of struggling to become parents, to actually have a child. The lost pregnancies, the miscarriages, the near life-ending ectopic, the failed IVF attempts, the physical toll, never mind the emotional one.

The child's journey into the world bore no interest for you—their conception through service involvement, their birth, the cuts, the bruises, the shouts, the cries, the scars, the hunger, the unmet needs. Did that context not meet your level of need?

Becoming a parent to each of my children, with their own challenges and difficulties, brought trauma to their feet. Ten years of history just dismissed. A little child with such anger inside that he lashes out, punch after punch, kick after kick. Is that not important to note? The information that shows he navigates life beautifully and proudly yet with a fire so angry it stirs from inside.

The child who has had so many mothers that she fears ever loving one again, pushing and shoving to avoid connection, to avoid being loved and adored. Was that not of interest to you? The pain of trying to connect, the pain of trying to give and be loved, dismissed in a second's glimpse at the edges of the shallows.

What about the youngest child, who had to learn to fear his siblings' anger and pain, living with it, feeling it, absorbing it, confused and in turmoil? Does that journey in the shadows of their siblings not interest you?

What about the parent who turned to the couch and the bottle, becoming the angry dad? The challenges too big, too much, leading to escape down an unfair pathway for all around. The children fled from this path and shouldn’t have been near it again, leaving the mother hurt and unseen. Protect, love, care—these burdens became so heavy, yet she went on. Hyperactive in all elements—health, fun, exercise, learning—obsessed with meeting every single need for each child, yet never feeling quite enough.

The mother tried to love all, parent all, pick up all the pieces each day, working, loving, caring, adoring, yet on the receiving end of all the anger. The unhappy, angry husband. The angry, scared little boy who just wanted to be healed. The little girl who couldn’t be loved because it hurt too much, so she had to fight it. The lost little one, not sure whose shadow to stand in. The angry husband, not just angry at her, but turned towards the children for not navigating the world as he wanted them to. Dissatisfaction reflected back at him, thrown against all it could hit.

The mother asked for help and received never-ending assessments, living each day in a fraught zone, fighting, fawning, freezing, and unable to flee. She asked the father to take the bottle elsewhere, spinning too many plates. Sole earner, sole carer, sole parent, sole punch bag, so alone. The support never started, the anger never ended, and the mother carried it all. She blamed herself, challenged her every move, full of self-loathing for not being able to manage, the impact taking its toll.

Ten years of this, and you chose to see only what was in the shallow waters: a mother broken, a mother in crisis, and you determined she was to blame. No compassion, no deep dive into the waters to see what you could find. Assumption, judgment, and arrogance pushed you to punish the one who had carried all their histories, all their challenges, and all their baggage.

If only you had chosen to see. Chosen to look past the shiny rocks that attracted you to blame and glory. The importance of context, compassion, and empathy lost on you, somewhere caught in your head in the game you are playing alone.

I may have failed, but there isn’t a day that goes by where I don’t wish I could have done more, done better, been just enough. But you failed too. You failed to see, to look, to care, and you pushed past any other narrative, no matter what.

There you stand with no accountability, protected by those who stand by you, the systems wired so tight, no reflection required, no learning taken, just a family thrown into further depth of pain because you chose to sit in the shallows.

I do not send this with any hope of change or reflection, your eagerness for the shallows has made that clear. However, I do hope you truly hear my words and do not dismiss this letter as you did my life.

A parent