

Jeffery's Mom

"I want to speak to the Judge, and I want to be in the courtroom for the trial," said thirteen-year-old, Jeffery. I could tell he was trying to be nonchalant, but stress radiated from off of him in waves.

"I have already told the Judge that you wish to speak to him and to be in the courtroom. We are meeting him in his chambers before court starts," I said.

Jeffery desperately wished to be reunited with his mother. She had a long-standing drug problem, but she loved him and had taken care of him to the best of her ability. The District Attorney was trying to terminate her rights to custody.

It was a grueling trial, lasting for hours. I advised the Judge how bonded this child was to his mother and reminded him that to terminate the rights of a parent to a child also terminates the rights of a child to a parent. I advised him that Jeffery was not in an adoptive placement, nor did he wish to be adopted. In fact, he was adamantly opposed to it.

I stated to the Court in closing arguments: "To terminate the rights of this mother, adds nothing to this child. All it does is make him an orphan." It was all to no avail. I hung my head when the Judge ruled that he was terminating the mother's rights. I felt as if I had failed Jeffery. Some days my job is horrendously hard!

Then I heard this noise. It started as a soft moan. What is that? I wondered. To my horror, I realized that it was Jeffery making that heart wrenching sound. Instinctively, I started for him, but his mother reached him first. She simply knelt before him and softly rocked him in her arms as he sobbed. I felt like an intruder as I turned away.

Six months later, I was back in the same courtroom. When they called the case, I said: "Elizabeth Brown on behalf of the minor child who is present in court. Jeffery has a new foster home, Your Honor. He has been placed with his mom's best friend. He is allowed to see his mom anytime he wants as long as she remains drug free!"

I started to leave the courtroom and noticed Jeffery excitedly speaking to both his foster mom and his mom. He was relaxed and happy. Truly he had the best of both worlds. He waved and smiled at me as I walked past.