

Past, Present and Future

"What's this?" Shaw asked, picking up a scrapbook that Kate had just pulled from the bookshelf in her search for an obscure reference book.

"Go ahead, open it. It's really yours anyway." Kate smiled, remembering how careful she'd been to keep every card she and Steve had received after they announced their adoption of Shaw. Of course she had to make a scrapbook because that's what mothers did. Steve had laughed at her perfectionism in putting together the memory book, but now he watched with interest as his 15-year-old son looked at his past.

"These are baby cards; I guess I was the baby. Who are all these from?"

"Everyone who was important in our lives," Steve said. "You can read the cards and ask us about the people. I'm pretty sure we'll remember who they are."

"We'll remember, but it might take a bottle or two of wine for us to tell the truth about them," Kate added.

Shaw looked askance at his mother for her comment about needing alcohol to remember anything or to tell the truth. Her memory for even the smallest detail amazed, and often annoyed, him. Even though they'd moved several times and lived in the U.S. and abroad, she could recall the names of his friends in almost every city and any of their outstanding behavior. Plus, honesty was one of his parents' major rules.

He began reading the cards and looked up after each one for explanation from his parents.

A BABY!!! He's something that none of your equations could have predicted, but you've made the right decision to include him in your perfect family model. Like I told you once before, sometimes you have to just go with your heart, and your hearts are in the right places on this decision. Shaw is a Scorpio, which means he's going to be intense, strong-willed and passionate just like Steve. He'll ask plenty of questions and he'll expect honest answers. He'll be ambitious and will go with his gut instincts, and he'll effortlessly control your lives. The perfect child for the two of you to love and cherish. Lexi & Andrew

"I know your friends Lexi and Andrew. And they definitely know me – intense and ambitious," Shaw said. His mother was always on the phone with Lexi, no matter where they were or what time it was.

"And controlling," Steve said. "Can't forget that one..."

Shaw looked at him and smiled with the same half-pout that Steve had so often used with Kate. Whether it was biological or not, he was definitely his father's son.

Glad I could help Shaw become a part of your family! Chris

"Chris Hale has been our attorney for about 20 years. He's the managing partner at his firm now, and he's dealt with everything for us. The most special things he did were cleaning up your birth certificate and working through your adoption with us," Kate said.

You guys are angels! Give Shaw the life he truly deserves and someday I'll explain... Stacey

"My step-sister – your bio mother -- had some issues when she had you, and she thought we'd be a good choice for parents," Steve said. "I'm sure she'll sit down with you one day when she thinks you're old enough to deal with her story."

"I think the phrase 'when she thinks' is the key point here," Kate said coolly as Steve handed her a glass of wine. "Stacey is very intelligent, but not always very smart. She can be a little calculating."

Glückwünsche auf Ihrem kleinen Jungen! Ich glaube, dass Sie und Steve für einander ebenso recht hatten, wie ich dachte. Johann Heil

"I didn't know you lived in Germany," Shaw said after reading the message in the basic German he'd learned for a promised ski trip to Switzerland.

Kate laughed at the message from Dr. Heil. "Do you want to talk about Herr Professor or should I?" she asked Steve.

"He just pissed me off. You might have something more cordial to say."

Shaw was amused by his parents' exchange.

"Dr. Heil was a professor I worked with in Florida," Kate began trying to find a way to tell this story without portraying all three of them in an unflattering way. "When your father was a grad student and working for me, I transferred him to Dr. Heil so he could do more analytical work. But he and Dr. Heil didn't get along, so he was transferred back."

"He tried to hit on me," Steve said, "and obviously I was more interested in hitting on your mother. So he may have been the impetus for us getting together."

"I hate to give him that much credit," Kate giggled. "Dr. Heil just wanted a new boyfriend, and he always called him Schteve which made me laugh."

Shaw was beginning to see why wine was needed for this conversation.

I'm sure Bill is looking down and smiling at the 'new mom!' All my good wishes to you! Ilene

"Ilene was my first husband's long-time secretary and girlfriend after we got divorced. Bill was my husband when I met your father. We were married for 15 years in Florida, and he was a great guy. Bill was killed in a freaky car accident."

"He punched me in the nose on Michigan Avenue," Steve grinned.

"He punched you?" This story was getting interesting. Shaw leaned back with the scrapbook on his lap. "Why?"

"Because I was in Chicago with your mother on a research trip."

Shaw feared that his next question would provide just too much information, but he had to ask. "And that would make him want to punch you because...?"

Steve looked at Kate and shrugged. He couldn't very well say that he and Kate were shackled up in a very expensive hotel, fucking like ferrets. "Because we were falling in love with each other, and he saw me as competition. Rightfully so, as it turned out."

"Did you hit him back?"

"I think I got in a cab and fled the scene."

Shaw was certain there was more to the story, but he'd let it go for now, and he read the next card.

I never expected that improving your travel voucher and your sabbatical would produce such great results – 2 research papers, 2 marketing models and one baby! Congratulations! Jack

"Jack Staunton was my supervisor at school in Florida," Kate said. "He let me go on a research trip and then okayed a sabbatical for me to finish my paper and the marketing model I was developing with your father. Oh, and during my sabbatical, your father finished his master's degree at MIT."

Shaw thought that the explanation was a little terse, and he sensed there was more story there about her research trip and sabbatical, and less about Jack Staunton.

I think I should probably give up my 'best man' role, because you've got to be the best now, Steve. I hope Shaw can bring out your very best. Scott

"Scott Carter worked for my family for years," Steve said. "He was our pilot and bodyguard, I guess. He was my best man at our wedding in Las Vegas. He went out with your mother's friend Jordan for awhile." He thought better about mentioning that they'd hooked up after the wedding reception for a romantic and drunken interlude.

"He was 'the enforcer' in our lives," Kate commented. "Remember when he dispatched Bill's P.I.?"

Shaw was beginning to see that there was a lot more to his parents than just the globe-trotting academics he knew. They were interesting people.

Lexi left me a message with your good news. I wish we'd had a chance to meet under better circumstances, and I'm glad that things have turned out so well for you. Mike.

"Oh, shit, -- those were your first words, by the way, thanks to my inability to control my expletives or graphic descriptions in diaper changing -- this is going to sound too bizarre." Kate took a drink of her wine. "Mike Taylor dated both my friends Lexi and Jordan, and he arrested your grandfather for Homeland Security."

Shaw looked at her incredulously. He knew about his grandfather's legal issues, but for this guy to have dated two of his mother's friends was either weirdly coincidental or a well-planned strategy.

"I wonder if Lexi ever hears from him," Kate mused.

"He's probably either holed up in the Pentagon somewhere or buried in a ravine in some third world country. I know he was always warning Lexi about us, but I'd be more concerned about warning her about him."

What other skeletons were these baby cards going to force out of the closet, Shaw wondered.

Shaw MacMillan? No pressure there. With two overachievers like you as parents, he's certain to achieve great things. Congratulations to you both. Sam.

"Sam went to grad school with me and Lexi."

"He shoved your mother off a curb in Chicago and broke her ankle," Steve said casually.

"He didn't shove me. I just fell. He got me to a hospital because your father was out of town." She left out any reference to her reason for falling off the curb.

"You two had a thing about meeting in hospitals," Steve smiled, finding it interesting that Kate was willing to talk about Jordan's dating habits with her teenage son, but not her own attraction to Sam.

"He waited with me during Jordan's surgery," Kate explained.

"And he subsequently dated Jordan on your recommendation."

His mother's friend Jordan was getting more interesting all the time. She was the one involved in some foundation work who always seemed so straight-laced.

I can learn to make baby food if you need me! You both are so great – let me know if I can help. Chloe

"Chloe is the friend Jordan introduced to us who owns the restaurant in Chicago. She is a great cook and an amazing entrepreneur."

"Did she ever make me baby food?"

"Of course," Kate nodded. "She made that vegetable mush you loved." He had only a vague memory of messy hands and face involved in eating as a toddler.

What a precious and priceless jewel you've added to your life! How soon do we think about a new Mommy jewelry line? Danielle

"Did you really create jewelry after you adopted me?"

"I had some time on my hands when you were napping," she said.

"Your mother's very creative and productive when she's just killing time," Steve said smirking. "Give her a whiteboard and a couple bouts of insomnia, and she'll be in contention for a Nobel Prize."

Well, that explained why he'd get up some mornings and find new things scrawled on that old whiteboard in the den. Shaw saw it now as his mother's creative outlet.

If you're half as encouraging and supportive to Shaw as you've been to me, he is going to be an awesome kid. Rob

"Rob was my cab driver in California who got involved with the IM Foundation program."

"Involved with Jordan is closer to the truth," said Steve.

He really would have to take a better look at Jordan, Shaw thought, and talk to her about things other than his classes and the weather. She sounded like she had a pretty interesting story, and since she was his mother's good friend, this reflected on his mother as well.

Are baby books or children's stories next? Congrats on your new edition/addition! Kirk

"Kirk was the publisher of my book," Kate said as Steve refilled her wine glass.

"The book she wrote one morning," commented Steve, "before she got her nails done. The book that became a TV series."

"Short-lived TV series. It only lasted three seasons."

"Long enough for syndication," he said and turning to Shaw, he added, "You might still be able to catch it on cable."

This is a card I never thought I'd be sending you; I was the one who wanted children after all. Shaw is either a sign of total cosmic destruction or one of the greatest miracles in the universe. I'm sure you're incredibly happy, but you may be a little scared too. Remember that I've been your friend for many, many years, and I'm here if you need me – plus I used to be an awesome babysitter. Oh, and Steve, you've got an amazing journey ahead of you, and I have faith that you'll be a wonderful father. You both have so much to share and teach, and I know that you'll learn a lot from a very lucky little boy. Jordan

"Of course you know Jordan," Kate said. "She's been my best friend since I was younger than you are now. I hope you find a friend like that. She's been through everything with me – from school field trips to term papers to rock concerts, from broken hearts to dreams come true."

"She seems to have been involved with a lot of different guys," Shaw remarked.

"She was, she is, a beautiful, intelligent and independent woman. Guys are going to be attracted to her, and she dated a lot of guys over the decades that I've known her. You'd be lucky to find a girl like Jordan, to be your friend or to be your girlfriend."

"For someone so levelheaded and consistent, Jordan can surprise you. She's been a great friend to both of us," Steve said, thinking that this was an appropriate time to mention \$80,000 in bail money, but he was always aware of her willingness to help him.

My happy ending, your new beginning! Congratulation to you both! Jaycee

"Jaycee Crue was the screenwriter for Lexi's movie. We have a DVD you can watch if you want, although it may not have much appeal to young men. Your arrival changed the ending of the movie; Lexi told me the actresses ad-libbed the last scene."

"The movie was about you?"

"There was a character in the movie that Lexi may have based on me a little," Kate said.

"A little is an understatement," Steve said, shaking his head. "She could have had a bigger role if she and Lexi hadn't had a little tiff."

"A little tiff is an understatement," she said echoing his words. "Remember this Shaw, female friends will protect each other at all costs, but they can also torture each other viciously."

Given his mother's reluctance to even yell at him when he had misbehaved as a child, Shaw had some trouble imaging her in a vicious fight with her friend.

*I hope the real Lexi is as happy for you as the celluloid Lexi is! Best of luck with your new younger man!
Geena*

"Who's Geena?"

"She was the actress in the film who played Lexi, Geena Davis. She won an award for her role."

I suppose naming him Oscar would have been a little presumptuous...Congratulations! Susan

"I'm guessing this woman was involved in the movie too," Shaw said.

"Susan Sarandon did a cameo appearance as your mother. She also won an Academy Award."

My parents got baby cards from the most amazing range of people with what probably were volumes of stories that I'd like to hear, Shaw thought.

"So she's a famous person too, huh? This is all pretty interesting; you're pretty interesting," he said to Kate and Steve. "I guess there's a lot about you guys that I don't know, that maybe I'd like to know."