

I'LL TELL YOU WHEN YOU'RE OLDER

written by

Emily Steele and Andy Epsilantis

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Phone: (443) 720-8665
E-mail: epand1@umbc.edu

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

1

A normal, single family home. Nothing out of the ordinary.
The name -- "Porter" -- is displayed on the mailbox.

2 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

2

EMILY PORTER, early 50s, pulls an almost-done chicken out of the oven. She puts on seasonings.

She inspects her work, puts it back in the oven, and sets a timer for 15 minutes.

Her husband, MATT, also early 50s, enters. He drops his tablet on the counter.

He kisses Emily on the back of her neck. She smiles.

MATT

Smells fantastic. What's the occasion?

EMILY

Since when do I need an occasion to cook dinner for my family?

Matt smiles at her and gives her a look -- *"you don't cook."*
EMILY CHUCKLES, then a beat.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Shit! I forgot the oregano!

MATT

It'll be fine. I can promise you, I won't even notice.

EMILY

I will notice!

Emily starts rifling through her cabinet for the missing spice. She becomes more frantic as she searches.

MATT

Em, seriously! It's not going to make a difference. What are you so worked up for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY
I just...

She trails off and resumes searching for the spice.

EMILY (CONT'D)
I just want us to start having real
dinners for a change. I want us to sit
at a table and make eye contact rather
than just bump into each other as we
grab our take-out to eat it while
staring at screens in different rooms.
(a beat)
Do you even remember the last time you
had a real conversation with our son?

Matt thinks for a moment. It's clear he's not sure.

He smiles at Emily, hoping to get one in return. Emily's
solemn.

EMILY (CONT'D)
I just... I feel like we're losing
him.

MATT
Every parent of a teenager feels that
way. It's normal.

EMILY
Well, normal sucks.
(a beat)
Can you go tell him dinner's ready?

Matt walks over to the doorway into the kitchen. He leans out
towards the dining room.

MATT
(yelling)
Shawn! Dinner's ready!

Emily shakes her head in jest.

EMILY
I could've done that.

MATT
(teasingly)
Then why didn't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

3 INT. SHAWN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

3

SHAWN, early teens, shaggy hair, sits on his bed with headphones around his ears. He's staring into a manila folder. We don't see what's inside.

We hear a KNOCK at his door. Shawn lays the folder down to his side and puts the headphones on.

After a beat, Matt enters.

MATT

Shawn?

Shawn pretends not to hear him.

MATT (CONT'D)

(louder)

Shawn!

Shawn perks up and takes the headphones off.

SHAWN

What?

MATT

Your mom made dinner. It's time to eat.

SHAWN

I'm not hungry.

Matt gives Shawn a stern look. Shawn holds his hands up in surrender.

Shawn gets up and walks out of the room.

The camera pans across Shawn's bed to the folder. We still don't see what's inside, but we can read the tab, which is labeled -- "Shawn Ford, 04/16/05."

DISSOLVE TO:

4 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

4

All three sit down at the table. Matt and Emily are enjoying their meal. Shawn is invested, but awkward.

MATT

Oh, did you see that story about the guy who bought all those Girl Scout
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (CONT'D)
cookies so the little girls wouldn't
have to stand out in the cold?

EMILY
Yes! That was so sweet! That must've
just made those girls' day.

MATT
Turns out, he was a wanted drug
smuggler. When the story went viral,
the FBI recognized him and were able
to catch him.

EMILY
What?! That's awful!

SHAWN
(more to his plate than parents)
Goes to show you. You never know who
people really are.

Matt looks over at his son.

MATT
Yeah. I guess that's true.

Shawn looks up. He appears open, hopeful. He leans in.

SHAWN
Something interesting happened to me
today.

EMILY
What was that?

SHAWN
I got a message from some guy a couple
days ago. I didn't know him, but he
said he had some important information
for me.
(a beat)
His name was Paul Ford. Does that mean
anything to either of you?

Matt and Emily look at each other, then back at Shawn.

EMILY
No, I don't think so. Should it?

Shawn shrugs and falls back in his chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHAWN

I don't know. I'd think it would since apparently he's my father.

MATT, who is taking a sip of his drink, COUGHS hearing that.

MATT

I'm sorry, what?

SHAWN

Yeah, so this Paul Ford, he messages me on Facebook, and it's kinda a generic name so I figure maybe it's some guy we used to know and I just can't place the name, so I accept the request. He and I talk for a little bit. Small talk, no big deal. And last night, he asks me, "Have they told you?" And I say, "Who's 'they?'" And told me what?" And he writes back: "The Porters. And that you're adopted."

Emily and Matt look at each other. They don't know what to say.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

Is it true?

MATT

Of course not.

SHAWN

Why are you lying to me?

MATT

I'm not!

Shawn nods sarcastically -- "*right!*" He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a folded up paper. He flicks it towards Matt.

Matt grabs the paper off the table. He looks at Shawn, then back at the paper. He unfolds it. It reads: "Certificate of Decree of Adoption."

MATT (CONT'D)

Where did you get this?

SHAWN

Does it matter? It's real, right? Or
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHAWN (CONT'D)
do you wanna try lying to my face some
more?

Emily opens her mouth, but cannot speak. There's a long
pause.

EMILY
We should've told you years ago.

SHAWN
So why didn't you? Why'd I have to
find out from fucking Facebook?!

MATT
Language...

SHAWN
Really? You're gonna chastise me for
my fucking language right now, Matt?

MATT
Watch it.

Shawn looks meaningfully at the Certificate, then back at
Matt with his eyebrows raised.

MATT (CONT'D)
I don't care what some piece of paper
says! I was the one who stayed up with
you all night when you were a baby,
had colic, and wouldn't stop
screaming. I was the one who stayed
with you your first day of
kindergarten because you were scared
to be without us for six hours. I was
the one who sat in a waiting room all
night scared to death because you had
to have your appendix removed. That
was me! Not--

He stands up agitatedly.

MATT (CONT'D)
Not Paul Ford!

Matt crumples up the Certificate and slams it down on the
table.

Shawn shakes his head and crosses his arms over his chest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (CONT'D)

We had our reasons for keeping it from you, Shawn.

SHAWN

You lied to me. Every single day. For years.

(a beat)

None of it is real.

MATT

You might be theirs by blood, but you're ours by every way that matters. That's the truth. That's what's real.

SHAWN

(contemptibly)

I wish I could believe you.

Emily can't contain herself anymore.

EMILY

WE WERE AFRAID!

Matt and Shawn both look over at her.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I was afraid.

SHAWN

Of what?

She doesn't answer. Shawn glares at her.

After a few beats of her silence, he gives up. He storms out. Matt almost follows him, but doesn't.

Matt sits back down in his chair. He and Emily look at each other in stunned silence.

5 INT. SHAWN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

5

Shawn barrels into his room. He SLAMS THE DOOR behind him.

He paces. He's furious.

He picks up a stuffed animal angrily, looks at it for a moment, and then throws it across the room.

He walks over to his desk in a huff and kicks it. A picture on top of it falls over and GLASS BREAKS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shawn is still breathing heavily, angrily. He bends over and picks up the picture frame. He looks at the image through shattered glass.

The camera pans and--

MATCH CUT TO:

6 INT. SHAWN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - YEARS AGO

6

YOUNG SHAWN, 7 or 8, is tucked into bed. The stuffed animal from the preceding scene is there with him.

Matt is in a chair next to his bed. He's reading *Tarzan of the Apes* by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

MATT

"My little son is crying for nourishment--O Alice, Alice, what shall I do? And as John Clayton wrote the last words his hand was destined ever to pen, he dropped his head wearily upon his outstretched arms where they rested upon the table he had built for her who lay still and cold in the bed beside him. For a long time, no sound broke the deathlike stillness of the jungle midday, save the piteous wailing of the tiny man-child."

He closes the book and sets it on the nightstand.

YOUNG SHAWN

Is that where the apes find Tarzan?

MATT

You've seen the movie. You know how it goes.

YOUNG SHAWN

I know...

(a beat)

Thanks for reading it to me.

MATT

No problem. It's one of my favorites.

YOUNG SHAWN

Mine too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He winks at his son. YOUNG SHAWN LAUGHS.

MATT

Did you do anything fun in school today?

YOUNG SHAWN

We did actually! We learned about the Punnett square.

MATT

They're teaching that at your age now? I had to have been in high school when we got to it.

YOUNG SHAWN

Bryce and I were working together because we had to pick a physical trait of each other's and do a Punnett square to see if we inherited that trait from our parents. And I think I figured something out.

Matt looks up as he hears this.

MATT

Oh?

YOUNG SHAWN

Mom has blue eyes and you have brown eyes. That means that Mom must have a dominant and a recessive gene and she passed the recessive gene onto me.

7 INT. SHAWN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

7

MATT (V.O.)

(from the flashback)

I suppose that's right.

He looks across the room at a sleeping Shawn.

8 INT. KITCHEN - THE NEXT DAY

8

Matt is at the stove frying up bacon. There's a stack of pancakes on a plate on the table.

He perks up as he hears FOOTSTEPS COMING DOWN THE STAIRS.

Shawn enters the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
(over his shoulder)
Breakfast is served!

Shawn ignores him. He grabs an apple and bites into it, then starts to walk out.

MATT (CONT'D)
Shawn?

Matt follows him.

MATT (CONT'D)
Shawn, can we talk?

9 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY - CONT.

9

Shawn walks through the dining room and heads to the living room.

SHAWN
(dismissively)
Can't. Gotta get to school.

MATT
You can be late. I'll write a note.

10 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONT.

10

SHAWN
Nope, sorry. Big project due first period.

MATT
(from the dining room)
Well, how about tonight?

SHAWN
Going over Bryce's.

MATT
For what?

Shawn pauses as he reaches the front door. He turns back to Matt.

SHAWN
(with a look)
I don't owe you any explanations.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT

Shawn--

But Shawn cuts him off. He walks out the door.

11 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY - CONT. 11

Matt stares at the closed door...

12 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONT. 12

The door remains closed.

13 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY - CONT. 13

Matt continues staring, but now he's in different clothes.

The table behind him is also cluttered.

14 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONT. 14

He walks through the living room and up the stairs.

15 INT. STAIRS/HALLWAY - OUTSIDE SHAWN'S BEDROOM - DAY - CONT. 15

Matt climbs the last few stairs and reaches for the door knob.

16 INT. SHAWN'S BEDROOM - DAY - CONT. 16

Matt steps into the room. He's weary. Something's wrong.

Matt walks over to the bed and sits down, picking the Xbox controller up off the blanket and holding it as he faces the black screen of the TV.

He makes sure to place the controller back down on the bed in exactly the spot he picked it up from.

Matt picks up a used plate from the blanket and is preparing to clean the room, but can't bring himself to do it.

Instead, he lays down on it.

After a few beats, he notices the stuffed animal. He picks it up, then sits up on the bed. He stares at it.

He pulls out his cell phone and dials Shawn. IT RINGS a few times before it goes to voicemail.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHAWN (V.O.)
It's Shawn. You know what to do.

Matt closes his eyes at his son's voice. Then there's the BEEP.

MATT
Shawn, I... I don't know what to say.
(a beat)
What your mother and I did was unforgivable.

He lets the back of his head hit the wall beside Shawn's door.

MATT (CONT'D)
I remember this one time when I was a teenager. My friends and I were in the backyard and we decided to do a bonfire. The next thing I knew, the grass caught and it was spreading out of control.

HE HALF CHUCKLES at his memory.

MATT (CONT'D)
I burned over half the yard that night. Grandma and Grandpa had to call the fire department and everything. And your Grandpa... well, he let me have it.
(a beat)
He made me work in their store the whole summer, sweeping floors and stocking shelves to pay back the money to have the yard fixed. I was so mad at him for ruining my summer.

He draws in a deep breath.

MATT (CONT'D)
I remember wishing that I was actually adopted, that my real father was out there somewhere and he'd come and save me.

17 EXT. PORTER HOUSE - DAY

17

A pair of booted feet step onto the driveway from an SUV.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

18 INT. SHAWN'S BEDROOM - DAY - CONT. 18

MATT

I could give you all kinds of reasons why we didn't tell you, but really, I think it comes down to the fact that, at some point, every kid fantasizes that their parents aren't their parents.

19 EXT. PORTER HOUSE - DAY - CONT. 19

A uniformed police officer, the man wearing the boots, walks up the driveway to the front door. He knocks, but we don't hear it.

20 INT. SHAWN'S BEDROOM - DAY - CONT. 20

MATT

And in your case, you would've been right. We couldn't bare the thought of your fantasy becoming a reality.

21 EXT. PORTER HOUSE - DAY - CONT. 21

Matt, dressed as he was coming out of the kitchen argument, answers the door. He and the cop talk, muted.

22 INT. SHAWN'S BEDROOM - DAY - CONT. 22

Tears start to stream down his face.

MATT

We were scared that if you knew you had another Mom and Dad out there that you would go looking for them. We were terrified you'd want to be with them.
(a few beats)
We were scared we'd lose you.

23 EXT. PORTER HOUSE - DAY - CONT. 23

The cop leans in and puts his hand on Matt's shoulder. This is the only time we hear either of their dialogue.

OFFICER

(with reverb)

I'm sorry for your loss...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

24 INT. SHAWN'S BEDROOM - DAY - CONT.

24

HE SNIFFLES and then wipes the tears from his face.

MATT

But that's no excuse. We should've
told you. I'm sorry.

Matt takes the cell phone away from his ear and hangs up.

He sits on the bed and he cries.

25 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

25

Matt walks into the dining room passed a TV that Emily has
set up on the edge of the table. He sits down across from his
wife.

She's staring at the screen, the clutter of work in front of
her.

EMILY

We should've told him.

He takes her hand before turning his attention to the TV,
too.

At the back of the table, blended in with the clutter, is a
perfect dinner place setting at Shawn's seat.

The news cast, about a recent school shooting, is never seen,
but heard. And the dialogue continues over the end credits.

FADE OUT.