

August 26th 1996

Well, I have some interesting news mom and dad. I found out today that my ex-girlfriend Jenny has a son... It's mine. His name is Zachary. He was born April 14th 1995. That was 7 months after me and Jenny split. We had a long talk over coffee yesterday, she wants the boy to have a father. She wants that father to be me. I'm going to do it. Zachary is your new grandson as of yesterday, or as of last year. I still don't know the logistics of it. I'm going to ask her to marry me. It's going to bring my career to a halt, but it won't get me down. I'm going to choose a safer career for myself and go to back to law school. It's so strange, I never thought I was ready to be a dad and now that I am I've never been happier. I want to raise this child like you raised me dad. I want to play all the games we used to play when I was a kid. I want to have the ol' Sunday catch with him. I want to be his everything. Mom, dad, I love you both but I just can't keep the family business anymore. I hope you understand...

I'll visit soon,

Andrew Lloyd

Books from the Attic Episode 2

I couldn't read all the way through Zachary without tearing up over 1000 times. The book was an archive of all of the events in my dad's life with me in it. He logged everything, the pages were full of letters, pictures and journal entries written by my dad's hand. It's full of mystery and wonder. My dad has a much darker past than I thought. He mentions often about the loss of his old job and his broken gold watch that he used to love. My father's vision was clear, he wanted to be a good dad and he succeeded in my eyes, but he never seemed complete.

He was working late often right before he went missing. Sometimes he wouldn't come home at all. He would stay overnight at the law firm. He had a couch there that he would crash on every once in a while.

Before mom died, dad would never come home late. He was always home on time and we would have a nice sit down dinner. We had the set nights, we were routine people and we liked it, sue us! My favourite night was Tuesday. Taco night! Dad never liked tacos but he always ate them anyways because he knew I loved them. He did things like that for me a lot.

So now here I am. I'm staring at the pages of the book I had just read and the tears continued to stream down my face. I wiped them off the side of my cheek and threw the book across the room. It hit the wall and landed to the ground with a thump. When out from under the pages fell a picture of me playing in the park with my dad behind me. I'm playing in the sandbox and he's sitting in a lovely green bench. I reached down to pick it up and noticed a fold in the photograph. "There was more to this picture?" I thought. I unfolded the other side and my jaw dropped.

Later that night I went over to Aaron's house to show him my discovery.

"Are you sure that's me Zach?"

"Look, it is you. You're playing in the sandbox with me and that's your mom in the bench with my dad."

"Oh my goodness, that is my mom! But then that means that we met once before we became friends?"

"Or more than once."

Aaron and I stared at the picture, baffled for a solid five minutes.

"What's that on the back?" Aaron said inquisitively.

I turned the picture around and written on the bottom in black pen was:

"Partners for Life! Xoxox -Danger Queen"

I burst out laughing. His mother called herself 'Danger Queen' as a nickname.

"Shut up Zach! My mom is not the Danger Queen!"

Just then we heard a knock on the door.

"Hey guys, it's me Martin. Can I come in?"

I hid the picture in my pocket as fast as I could. It's nothing personal against Martin, but he blabbed to everyone about things nobody cared about. Whatever this picture meant, I didn't want anyone knowing until I figure out what it was.

"What did you just put in your pocket?" Martin asked.

"Nothing." I said sternly.

He gave me a glare. He knew I was lying but he didn't have the evidence to say anything. We played games for a bit. Our frequently played game was hide and go seek. We were well into our teenaged years, but we didn't care if some people thought it was "baby". We had fun playing and that's all that mattered. Martin was the worst seeker in the history of seeking. He would look for three seconds and give up. We think he's afraid of the dark. Another one of our favourite games was baseball. We played one on one with a permanent catcher. Aaron always won and that's all I'm going to say about that. We went out that evening to walk the empty streets as we often did. I looked over at the empty house that sat across the street... my own. I didn't want to go back there to that confined attic. It was stuffy and smelled of old cheese. If I could I would move out into the street. I'd be happier in the cold than with that man who calls himself my uncle.

We sat on the hill not far from my house and looked up at the evening stars.

"Do you miss him Zach?" Aaron asked.

"What kind of question is that?" I said angrily.

"Well I knew what the answer was going to be, I just needed to hear you say it. I worry about

you Zach.”

“I do miss him Aaron... a lot more than you know.”

February ushered in a new month and let March enter the calendar year. On the 12th of March every year we get together with the family and celebrate our great grandfather's birthday. He turns 110 this year. He's still up and at it. He had 13 kids. Who then produced 39 kids of their own. Who then produced 119 kids of their own. So as you can imagine, this is a rather large gathering. Me and my uncle went up together and spent the awful 4 hour car ride side by side.

“Can you please not smoke in here, it's making my eyes water.”

“I'll do what I want, it's my car.”

He ashed his cigarette on the dash board and threw the filter at my face.

“Eat up kid! It's good for your lungs!” he said with a hearty laugh.

I looked out the window for the rest of the ride. I said not one word to that man. My father had been missing for nearly a month now and there were no signs of where he may be. I worried more and more for him every day. I carry the picture on me at all times. The one of me and Aaron together, it reminds me of him every time I see his smiling face on the bench.

“Wake up boy, we're here!” my uncle yelled.

I must have dozed off. I hadn't slept much over the past month after all. We walked into the massive hall that was my great grandfather's party. He was perched atop a throne on a stage placed in the middle of the room. People walked up, wished him a happy birthday and left. There's no food, no games, no nothing. But every year people come to wish this man a happy birthday. We waited in line behind my 4th cousin Randy and his family. They lived in Alberta. They were pig farmers and they smelt like it. When we got up to take our turn to give him our best, he turned to me and spoke:

“Ah! Zachary my boy! How are you?”

“Uhm, I'm fine thanks. How do you remember me?”

“How can I not remember the true heir to my-”

My uncle cut him off with an abrupt cough.

“Alright boy, it's time we get going. Happy birthday you old scum bag.” he said bitterly.

He said heir. I heard him say it and somehow it took me 4 days to process it. I re-opened Zachary. Maybe there was something I missed. Something I overlooked and couldn't understand at the time. My dad mentioned something about giving up a business. Maybe I was supposed to run the business. But then if I didn't get to, then who did? I scrolled through the pages and found a letter dated for February 11th 1997.

“Zachary took his first steps today. He was just sitting in his playpen and just decided it was

time to get up and walk around. I'm so proud, although he's not up to speed with the other kids of his age. I'm trying my best to teach him, but my schooling is more important right now. Dad, what would you do in a situation like this? I need your advice, help me. I know we haven't talked since I gave it all up but know that I still love you. And I know you still love me. I went back to our spot the other day. The one we built together, it's still right where we left it, in the woods behind the green bench. If you visit there soon, leave me a picture of you and mom. I want to see how much you guys have aged, even if you won't let me see you.

Know that I love you...

The green bench had a spot did it? I had to go investigate this for myself, but I couldn't go alone. I rallied up my team and away we went!
