

Dearest Shawn,

It has been over four years since we saw you. I can still see you in your white T-shirt standing next to the kitchen table at your aunt's house when I said goodbye to you for the last time in person. I can still see your bashful smile as you surprised me standing in the hallway in your standard white T-shirt. You had arrived from Santa Cruz and I can still feel your skin on my face as I kissed you on the cheeks and your broad shoulders in my arms as I embraced you to greet you home.

I have so many regrets but the biggest one of all is a lack of complete openness between us. How I wish I could have said what I wanted to say to you at the moment I thought to say it. Instead I was waiting until the appropriate moment when I would see you in person. I wanted to remind you about moderation, how extraordinarily special I had come to see you are, and the incredible potential within you. I wanted to remind you that I would always be there for you and that I know someday you would meet your equal; the woman whose children you would want. I wanted to remind you that you are never alone even if sometimes you feel lonely.

The love of family and friends is the cornerstone of a sense of belonging and well-being building the foundation for future happiness and prosperity. The power of this should not be underestimated. Unfortunately, me wanting strong ties that provided the nurturing environment you needed was not enough. Sometimes when life has thrown you too many curve balls, it takes a long time to get your bearings and do what it takes. I'm sorry it took me so long son.

But I do know this; you never felt alone in the world the way I did. You knew that you were deeply loved by me and that I would go to the ends of the world for you.

Ultimately, we did not lose you because we were bad parents or you were a bad person. We lost you because of a set of circumstances that created the most bizarre perfect storm. If there is a lesson for us all it is that for every action there is a reaction in the universe. That's why we need to be thoughtful about our actions and thoughts.

Shawn, you were already starting to show signs that you no longer felt your parents in the enemy camp as most young people do. You showed wisdom and maturity and we know you would have made a wonderful professor and an amazing father.

We miss you so much and love you eternally. I promise you that I will never cease to speak your name and when I do it will be with a smile and

not a frown. I know it's cliché to say you touched us in a way that has made you a part of us all but it's not just something I'm saying. I know it to be true. As one of your cohorts said you touched us and we can never go back. My only wish is that those of us touched by you can honor your memory by living life with intention and showing dignity, tolerance, and love towards not only others but also ourselves. Everything we say and do does make a difference; it's the rules of cause and effect under which the universe exists. That's the lesson!