

Not much was in order, but it was obvious that I had a lot of stuff happening and there was plenty going.

“Well, you *have* been busy since I was here last.”

He was quite impressed with the alterations I was making on my little cottage and yes, it was all starting to come together after all those weeks of preparation and years of procrastination.

“So, what else’s been happening in your life since I last saw you besides these amazing renovations you’re doing?” he asked me. “Anything interesting?”

Oh boy, was he about to hear something!

“David, you’re not going to believe how interesting. I’ve hardly told anyone about this, but something unbelievable’s happening just as we speak.”

“Well here I am and I’m all ears! Tell me about it.”

“It’s a long story, but here goes! I gave I birth to a son nearly 35 years ago in Florida and gave him up for adoption. Well, two days ago I got a call from a private investigator in Melbourne informing me that my son Stephen is trying to find me and now we’re about to make contact. I’m just absolutely beside myself. This has all happened since Tuesday when I first got the call, and I haven’t been able to tell anyone about it so far. You’re the first one to hear about it.”

David looked just as wide-eyed and stunned as Janelle had been when she first heard the news. He didn’t say much as I poured out two cups of coffee and we then sat down on the barstools at my new kitchen-island that I had recently designed and made. As we sipped on our coffees we began to chat about what else had been going on in each other’s lives.

We had barely begun to drink our coffee and I had just begun telling him the details of the conversations between

Hasse and myself when suddenly the phone rang. I leapt to the phone like a panther.

“Hello,” I answered.

“Is this Lori?” I heard this soft American male voice ask. I was at a loss for words for a moment and my heart started beating faster and faster.

“Yes it is.”

Then I heard the words I had been waiting for and hoping for. I knew then that I was finally in contact with my first born: The son I thought was gone from my life forever.

“This is Stephen.”

“Oh my God, Oh my God. Is it really you?” was all I could get out. I gave David, who was still sitting on a stool by the island bar nearby, a look that said it all.

“Oh Stephen, when I first got this call from Hasse I didn’t know what to think. I just can’t believe this is really happening. My world has been turned upside down since Tuesday morning and now ... here you are, finally! At last!”

David was looking on, understandably bemused and embarrassed at being there as he sipped on his coffee.

“Well, yes I know. I have the right number now and ... well, here I am. You know when Hasse called me late on Monday and told me he’d found you I was in the middle of a business meeting with a very important client. Well I just couldn’t continue with the meeting. I couldn’t concentrate on anything else.”

“Oh, I know exactly what you mean. I’ve been in a daze since Hasse first phoned me. God, I just didn’t know what to think. Well, first off what do you look like and what do you do? Oh wow, where do we begin? Tell me everything. I want to know everything about you and I have so much to tell you.”

I was so excited and I was just babbling on. But then in his calm, beautiful voice Stephen said, “ I have so much to tell you as well, but I won’t be able to tell you everything in one call today. There’s so much to talk about.”

“Stephen, I want to tell you that what happened has never stopped haunting me all these years. I need you to know that I never wanted to give you away. I just had to do what I thought was the best for you. I was so young. I was in America without any legal status and I just didn’t know what else to do. Oh my God, this is my wildest dream come true. I’ve tried to find you so many times, but I couldn’t get anywhere. How did you eventually find me?”

“It’s a long, long story. I actually started my search ten years ago. I don’t know if Hasse told you, but I’m an attorney in California. I tried a few avenues on my own and then I eventually contacted a private investigator in Florida who specialised in assisting people searching for their families. She helped me obtain the birth records and other information over the next few years. She knew a judge who would sign the release forms and she acted as intermediary to receive them on my behalf.

“Even with the information she had we kept on running into dead ends, searching all over the US and Canada, I even had your social security number, but somehow we lost track of you after you got married in Florida. I did find out that I also have a half brother called Christopher, who was also born in Florida, and I eventually found a family by the name of Wheeler in Texas, but that was just another dead end. Look, I could go on and on, but I just want to say one thing to you.”

“What’s that Stephen?” I asked nervously, not knowing what to expect next.

“Thank you for having me.” My heart leapt to my throat as he said this. I knew what he meant immediately, as so many

young girls who had found themselves pregnant at that time, and even now, were opting for abortion. That was the first of my three options, but I never gave it a moment's consideration.

“Oh Stephen what a beautiful thing to say. I just want you to know that giving you up was the only choice for me at that time. The reason you couldn't find me in America or Canada is because I had moved back to Australia in 1983 with my husband Greg and your brother, Chris. I was back and forth to the States a few times over the years, but I have really been here for quite a long time now.”

David was still drinking his coffee at the table while I was deep in conversation with Stephen, but he understood how important that call was, and that he shouldn't be sitting in on something so important. He finished his coffee and motioned to me that he was leaving. I signalled to him that I would phone him and we could catch up later. He blew me a kiss goodbye and then promptly left.

Stephen and I continued talking for nearly two hours, exchanging information and filling in great gaps about times from both our lives as best as we could. When I asked him what he looked like he chuckled and told me the best thing to do would be for me to see for myself. We both had access to computers and so Stephen proceeded right there and then to e-mail some of his photos to me. I wasn't terribly computer literate, but I was able to get his photos up on the Internet. When I saw those images on my computer I could now for the very first time see what my first born son looked like. I just couldn't believe how handsome he was.

“You are gorgeous!” I said. “I have produced two truly beautiful sons. As you already know, you have a brother, Chris, and he's so handsome just as you are. He's just wonderful and you would really like him.”