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ALCOHOLIC  
MOTHER

FAILED  
MARRIAGE

A LIFETIME  
OF THERAPY

How I survived  
by Brooke Shields

# What happened when an American sweetheart grew up

*From playing a prostitute at the age of 12 to falling out with Tom Cruise, Brooke Shields tells Tim Teeman how she has emerged unscathed from the fame machine*

PORTRAIT Mike Ruiz

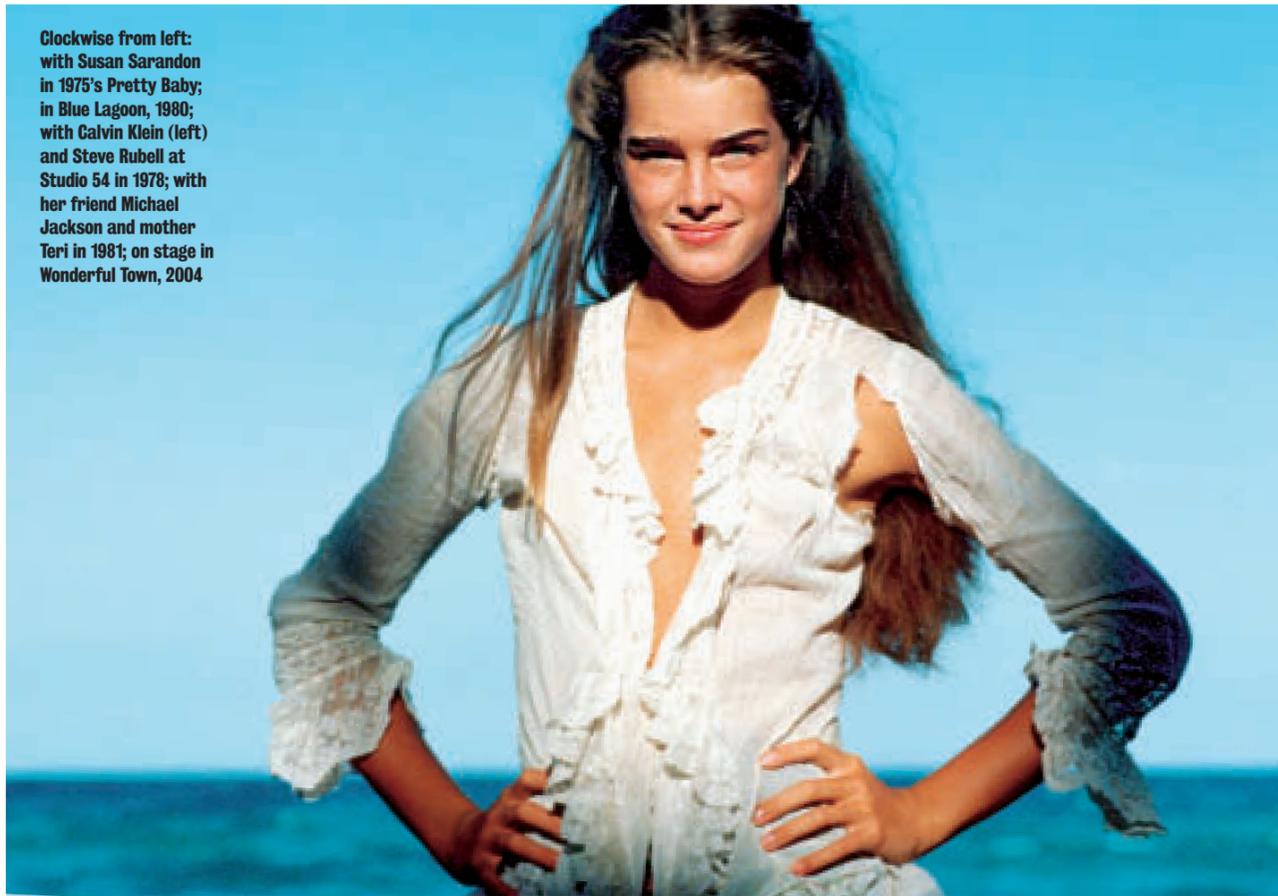
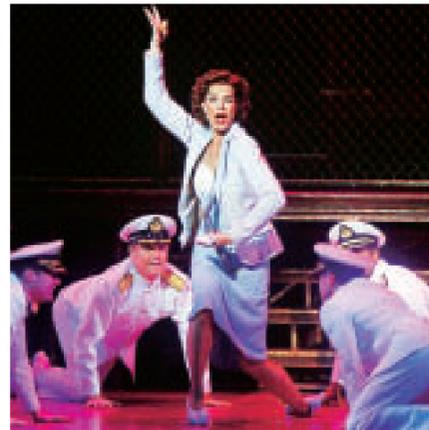


**T**he trouble with having Botox injections, groans Brooke Shields, was that she couldn't frown for six months. "I had it here and here," the 45-year-old actress says, pointing to her crow's-feet and the middle of her temple. "But nothing moved. It was so annoying. Friends who'd had it done looked so rested. Not being able to move my forehead made me feel claustrophobic, so I'm not sure I'll have it again. But I'm still wearing these..." She cups and jiggles her breasts. "Chicken fillets! I have to, otherwise I'd never fill out a bra." As for more radical plastic surgery: "God, no. My mother had a facelift at 30. Now she's 75 and looks 65, it worked for her and she had it at the right moment. People know my face, however, and I would end up not looking like myself. But let's talk in ten years' time when my eyes are down to my chin."

Warm, funny, candid: Shields is brilliant breakfast-time company. We are in a chichi New York hotel – she, stunning, 6ft tall, lustrous, shoulder-length tousled hair, in black poloneck, grey wool trousers and unfussy make-up. She jokes, when the waiter asks for our order, that her youngest daughter has started asking for mints for breakfast. "She eats like a supermodel. I'm like, 'Honey, haven't I taught you anything? It's a cigarette and coffee.'"

She may be hamming it up, but Brooke Shields knows every highway and byway of child stardom. She was a shampoo advert model at the age of 11 months; at 12 she was playing a pre-teen prostitute in *Pretty Baby*. She made *The Blue Lagoon* and *Endless Love* as a teenager. A Calvin Klein jeans advertisement she posed for in 1980, aged 15, featured her purring, "Nothing comes between me and my Calvins." The same year, she became the youngest cover model of *Vogue* and was reputed to be earning \$10,000 a day. Richard Prince made a piece of modern art out of a nude picture taken of her (by another photographer) when she was 10. She made a Nineties sitcom, *Suddenly Susan*, but otherwise she has stayed fixed in our minds as an Eighties star – a decent one, unkitschified – who is still in the headlines, such as in 2005 when Tom Cruise denounced her for taking the antidepressant Paxil after suffering postpartum depression, only for the world to roundly denounce him for presuming to judge her.

Now Shields appears in a British movie, *Chalet Girl*, about a punky chalet girl, Chloe (Sophia Bush), who turns out to be a wunderkind snowboarder. Shields plays the snooty mother of the posh boy (Ed Westwick) who falls for Chloe, and it's good to see her playing icy and imperious as she tries to get her son to dump the girl. Her character is a mean-spirited snob; Shields herself couldn't be any



**Clockwise from left: with Susan Sarandon in 1975's *Pretty Baby*; in *Blue Lagoon*, 1980; with Calvin Klein (left) and Steve Rubell at Studio 54 in 1978; with her friend Michael Jackson and mother Teri in 1981; on stage in *Wonderful Town*, 2004**



more different. She talks of the fun she had with co-star Bill Nighy, ridiculing him for taking his tea a certain way. In fact, you want more of Bill Nighy and Brooke Shields as husband and wife in the film, which is fabulous fun.

She adds that its young stars were terribly professional and that she cautioned Westwick, from *Gossip Girl*, to stop pouting so much. "We had such fun filming it," she continues. "It was good for me to do, to fit in, and I'd like to do more films – but they have to work for me, as much as for the producers." Shields is also just finishing a brief residency (some show standards, a little bit of chat) at Feinstein's in New York, and wants to craft a confessional one-woman Broadway show, along the lines of Carrie Fisher's *Wishful Drinking*. Broadway and the stage seem to have become her home in recent years: she has appeared in *Grease*, *Cabaret*, *Chicago*, was an "unpretentious delight" (*The New York Times*) in *Wonderful Town* and last year starred in the Los Angeles production of *Leap of Faith*, the stage adaptation of a Nineties Steve Martin film.

Shields lives in SoHo, New York, with her husband of nine years Chris Henchy, and their two daughters Rowan, 7, and Grier, 4. The girls go to Roman Catholic school, "which gives them some kind of structure and at the very least something to rebel against later before becoming Buddhists". After her separation from tennis player Andre Agassi, Shields says she had to "accept she was not of sound mind" in order to obtain the 1999 annulment that would allow her to marry Henchy in a proper Catholic wedding. Neither she nor Henchy support Catholic dogma around abortion and homosexuality ("The girls live in a theatrical environment. They know all about their uncles having boyfriends and aunts having girlfriends"), but Shields wanted them to have "grounding and context" and says she has a "selective Catholic faith".

Her relationship with Teri, her mother, was the dominant one until she finally "broke free" of her, with Agassi's encouragement, in her late twenties. Now Teri has dementia and lives in a Manhattan care home. Shields knows Teri has always appeared from the outside to be the

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archetypal stage mum. "But nothing could be further from the truth. She never pushed me to do anything I didn't want to do."

Teri and Frank Shields divorced before their daughter was one year old: "He was nine years younger than her. They should never have gotten married in the first place," Shields says. "He was a kid himself; he didn't want a kid." Her mother has been an alcoholic, "for like 50 years". Her father remarried and she would "flip-flop" between his and her mother's houses, forging a close relationship with her

stepsisters. Shields reveals she has been in therapy since she was 16. "Having an alcoholic mother was hard to handle. It was nice to talk to someone who gave a s\*\*\*, was there to listen and had a doctorate."

Shields says now of her mother, "She never wanted to be me, that whole cliché. Everyone who has seen *Black Swan* [featuring Barbara Hershey as Natalie Portman's maniacally controlling mother] asks if that was what it was like. No. She didn't give anything up because she had nothing to begin with except this kid who loved her unconditionally. She didn't have anything growing up in New Jersey and suddenly we could afford a place with a tree in the backyard, we could travel."

Shields worked after school or made movies in the summer. Teri emphasised the importance of education, especially if her daughter's acting career foundered. "We didn't live in LA. I never missed school. Had it become a passion later in my childhood, I would have sacrificed my education for it, and now I'm not sure had I sacrificed my education, whether I would have had the longevity I've had."

The controversy around Shields' films and photographs passed her by. "There was no shame around my body – my kids now walk around naked all the time. From a young age, I saw the idiocy of what was written and said about me: it was only ever partially true. Having those photos taken of me when I was 10 didn't bother me until the guy tried to sell them after I became famous. Now he's a dog walker. I had body doubles in the movies. I made a lot of money."

Keith Haring once apologised to her for objectifying her by using her Calvin Klein image next to a naked guy's. "I was like, 'Are you kidding? It's a huge compliment!' I guess if I'd fallen prey to someone, or become a statistic and fallen into drugs, then it would be different, but I stayed unscathed. Becoming part of pop culture, part of the art, made it less personal." After all, she points out, *Pretty Baby* was made by Louis Malle, and *The Blue Lagoon* shot by renowned cinematographer Néstor Almendros: "I wasn't on 42nd Street being photographed with a little camera. I was never out of the artistic realm." ■

## BROOKE SHIELDS

Shields went to study at Princeton when she was 17 (“Of course, Hollywood just loves educated actresses,” she laughs). There she had sex for the first time. “My virginity was a big deal, my braces were a big deal – all because I was America’s sweetheart,” she says ruefully. “But I didn’t think about sex. Men were scared of me; they avoided me like the plague. When it became known I was a virgin, nobody wanted to go near me, to be ‘the one’. Anyway, ‘the one’ was a fellow student and was lovely.”

Shields says she never did drugs. “My mother kept me on quite a tight rein. Yes, I could do photoshoots, but there was always homework to do. I was like a little mascot or pet. When I went to Studio 54, I danced till I dropped – then I went home. When somebody made hash brownies, nobody thought it would be fun to give one to Brooke. There was no interest in corrupting me.” Her rebellion, she laughs, was to excel academically at Princeton.

While she worked steadily in film and theatre, it was her private life that garnered headlines. Michael Jackson once described Shields as one of the loves of his life. “I don’t think he was lying,” she sighs. “I don’t look at it as a romantic love; those lines were never blurred for me. I was always honest with him; I never wanted anything from him. I think he liked my strength and education. If anything, being his friend was a hindrance,” she laughs. “I’d be like, ‘Do you have to wear all that military crap when we go out? It’s embarrassing.’ I was a consistent friend, but I spoke to him a lot less when we were both older.”

Shields was married to Agassi from 1997 to 1999. He later said they should never have married, that they had been two incomplete people. “[I was] 27 years old, ranked 141 in the world and in a marriage that I shouldn’t be in,” he said. “I didn’t want to be playing tennis either, so my life was filled with things I didn’t want, things I didn’t choose.”

Shields looks angry at these words. “I would be curious to know if he feels complete now,” she snaps. “Hopefully I’m never complete. I learn every day.” Was the marriage for life as far as she was concerned? “Yeah, I never go into anything half-assed.” Did she know he had a drug problem before they got married? “No, I don’t have that mentality. I’m not predisposed to addictions. It was very hard emotionally. I still feel such fondness and appreciation for him and he got me from one stage – being with my mother – to gaining some independence.”

Neither she nor Agassi were “quitters”, Shields says, so the split was hard for them both. “I think we’re both better people in our current marriages [his to Steffi Graf],” she says. “I have great respect for him and in our Pollyanna minds we would let our kids play together and hang out, but would that



From top: with her husband, Chris Henchy, in 2009; and with the cast

of *Chalet Girl*, from left: Ed Westwick, Bill Nighy and Sophia Bush

### “Tom Cruise picked the wrong person and the wrong topic. You can’t be a man and talk about what it is to have ovaries”

really be fair to Steffi and Chris? Probably not.”

Alongside her vivid and roving career lies Shields’ obvious fulfilment in a rich and involving family life. She met Henchy in 1999 and they married in 2001. “I waited because I wanted to be as independent and as ‘of myself’ as I could before I married again,” says Shields, then smiles wickedly. “I call him my ‘current’ husband, just to keep him on his toes.”

Almost eight years ago, her father died of prostate cancer as the couple were preparing for Rowan’s birth. “I didn’t go to him. I couldn’t fly because I was pregnant. I was the only child who wasn’t there. I don’t think I’ll ever resolve that, and I’m angry because it went undiagnosed and he didn’t have to die from it.”

After Rowan’s birth (which was life-threatening – Shields lost “lots” of blood), the treatment she had been having for IVF, her depression over the loss of her father, the death of a good friend, a new baby, a house move and the “total eradication of balance in my hormones” coalesced into postpartum depression. She took antidepressants: Paxil, then, “because it made my tongue thick”, Wellbutrin and Zoloft, which she still takes today in smaller doses. When Tom Cruise criticised her for taking medication, he felt the backlash. “I felt upset for him. He picked the wrong person and the wrong topic,” says Shields. “You can’t be a man and talk about what it is to have ovaries. It just won’t work.” The two have since been reconciled – she went to his wedding to Katie Holmes.

Shields believes her mother’s dementia “is all alcohol-related”. Her mood, says Shields, depends on the time of day; she likes playing with her granddaughters “because she’s on their level”, but Shields is unable to talk to her about adult life. She also cannot take a chance on having her mother live with the family “and risk her toxic, hurtful words said in a heated or Tourette’s-like moment. To lapse into a co-dependent guilty relationship with my mother, which I would do in a heartbeat after years and years of having that programmed into me as the child of an alcoholic parent... My children don’t deserve that.” Shields pauses, smiles. “I also want to set the right, caring example to my daughters, so that when I’m old and crazy, they’ll be inclined to take care of me.”

She watches the crashing and burning of young stars such as Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears, and is determined that this won’t happen to her children. “At a certain age, you do have control. When my seven-year-old acted up last night, she didn’t go to her friend’s party. If she’s not listening to me at 7, when at 16 I say, ‘Don’t smoke crack or get knocked up,’ she’s gonna be like, ‘Why should I listen to you?’”

You might argue that there always was an old head on the young Brooke Shields’ shoulders. She herself says that she grew up very fast when she had kids. Either way, the Shields of 2011 – and you get the impression she’s now hungry to return full-time to the business in which she made her name so young – is a wry, wise and funny woman who has plenty to offer the world. Brooke Shields isn’t done. Not yet. Not by a long way. ■

*Chalet Girl* is released on March 16