

Becoming Mrs. G

A True Christian Love Story

La Micia Genova

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PROLOGUE



Becoming Mrs. G is for anyone who is curious about what it feels like to follow God's plan leading up to your wedding day. You may be surprised at just how much God blesses those who follow his process despite how hard it may be. You'll also be surprised that you can do it too. I wrote this book to tell the world that you can have a piece of heaven here on earth, through a thing called love. Becoming Mrs. G was a journey to be shared, not hidden, so I choose to share it with you. You'll read about the good, the bad and the ugly on my way to becoming the wife God destined me to be.

If you are a woman of any age reading this book, maybe you are looking for answers; maybe you had a rough childhood; maybe you have been abused; maybe you had a parent that wasn't in your life; or maybe you just decided to take some wrong turns in life. God has always had and still has a plan for your life. It's never too late to change. It's never too late to run into His arms like you

would anyone here on earth. My Father, God, gave me the best of the best. I can only assume from the gifts and answered prayers that it was all his pleasure. It was as if his daughter was getting married and he did as an earthly father would do, only better. My God said, "I will give you whatever you want; it's your special day." My earthly father is great, but the Father of all fathers is beyond anything I could write. God made me feel like a queen, truly as if I were royalty. The Bible actually describes believers as a royal priesthood; imagine getting the royal treatment.

I wish a lot more women would experience this or could just have been there living it with me. I wish you could have seen it and felt it for yourself. It's indescribable how my life changed and transformed in such a short time. What did I do to receive all of this? Nothing, nothing at all. Jesus' sacrifice for me on the cross was so that I can live a life free from the burden of sin. Jesus took all of my dead weight and guilt, so that I could live freely. I didn't expect God to give me anything, considering my track record. I didn't deserve a thing, and that's the truth. No matter where you

are, I pray that this book speaks to the deepest parts of your heart.

Come with me on my journey to Becoming Mrs. G.

Yours truly,

Mrs. G

INTRODUCTION

Hopeless Romantic



I am a hopeless romantic. Since as far back as I can remember I just wanted to be loved. I grew up watching *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and even better, *Titanic* over and over again. I have probably seen *Titanic* about 100 times—I wish I was exaggerating. Being this way hasn't always worked out to my benefit, and in many ways it has.

Here's how it hasn't worked out to my benefit. Some of you reading this can probably relate to a lot of what I am about to tell you. Middle school was the start of my quest to find out what love was all about. When I started middle school I was overweight and tall. All of my friends were shorter and skinnier. I felt overlooked, so I tried to make myself look more like the other girls. I prayed that God would stunt my growth and make me lose weight. Well, God didn't stunt my growth but I managed to take control of my weight. I just didn't eat; I became anorexic. I was so happy to be dropping weight fast, and was anorexic from seventh grade until I was in high school. I was a part of the dance program at school and I remember my dance teacher seeing me in my leotard and asking me what had happened. One moment I was overweight and within a summer I became skinny. Meanwhile, my grandmother knew something was wrong because I had stopped eating the dinner she prepared for me each day; my dance teacher knew it too; and so did my pediatrician. I remember like it was yesterday my pediatrician's amazement as she looked at my chart and saw the

weight I had been at my last appointment. She asked me how I managed to lose the weight so fast and I know I lied to her. She just told me to try not to lose any more weight. I could see in her eyes that she was concerned.

I began to be more confident, and boys started to notice me. One guy asked me if I had always been at the school because he had never seen me before. I was in eighth grade and about to graduate, and he hadn't seen me the whole time we were in middle school together. That's just how invisible I was.

When I graduated from middle school, I vowed that I would be a new person, a cool, popular person. Everyone was going to notice me and maybe I would get a boyfriend. I did become pretty popular in high school and part of that was because my brother used to go there. With this new attention I really became full of myself. I got my first boyfriend; my first love, I thought. I thought he was *it*, the one. At only fifteen, I thought I had met my future husband. (I'm embarrassed to even write this now.)

This boyfriend of mine, needless to say, was not the one. That relationship is one of my biggest regrets. I was not ready for 'love', and that quickly became obvious. I told my mom about me and this guy, and she couldn't believe that I was seeing someone, since I was so young. She scolded me while tears ran down her face. I remember the feeling of being in trouble, but it was different than any time before. This was different, I was in a place I knew I never wanted to be again. Then she made a terrifying request that shook me to my bones. She asked me for my boyfriend's contact information, she was going to speak to his mother about this. I was petrified, now his mother was going to know about me.

My mother was disappointed in me, I crushed her world it seemed. What came next changed my life forever. My mother found out from my boyfriend's mother that my boyfriend was seeing someone else and she had no idea who I was. When she broke the news to me after school the next day, I was devastated. At that point I realized that this world was a cruel, cruel place. It was against me and I had to fight to come out on top. I felt

betrayed, small, stupid and unfit for the world. Here I was with the purest motives, trusting someone with everything, thinking that this was the best time of my life and that I was in love, and it turned out to be the darkest time of my life, the most traumatic. It was worse than a bad dream, this was reality.

I continued my search for love, but this time I was going to be smart about it. If the world wanted to play, well, I would be the best player. That's exactly what I became, a player. If the world wasn't going to be loyal - why should I? I thought this way I wouldn't get hurt, but again I was wrong. The relationships that followed only got worse. I came out on top sometimes, but most of the time I was the loser. I endured hurt after hurt after hurt. My heart got harder and harder until it was ice cold. This went on until I was twenty years old.

Now here's how being a hopeless romantic worked out to my benefit. I grew weary of the life I was living and I knew God was watching me the whole time. I'm not quite sure how I managed to shut God's voice out of my head and continue to live the life I had

been living. I grew up in the same church since birth and knew what it looked like to be a disciple of Christ from living with my mother who was one. I knew after every sinful act that God was watching me and was not pleased. I would pray regularly that I wouldn't die, because I knew I was headed straight for hell. I had recurring nightmares that Godzilla was chasing me, and I would hide but it would always show up to devour me. A lot of times I woke up in the middle of the night from these dreams. I was running from something big in my life, and now I believe it was God trying to get my attention.

When I had nothing else to give the world, when it had taken everything I had, I finally surrendered my will and put up the white flag. One morning, I woke up after crazily partying the night before and said out loud, "I think I'm done now" as I was hung over, with a pounding headache. I could hear my mother getting ready for church, it was Sunday morning and I was going to go to church as usual. Surprisingly I had never stopped going to church even though I wasn't ready to commit to the life of a disciple. As I

saw it, I wasn't ready to give up all my vices. I thought, *If I become a Christian, how will I find love? There aren't many Christian men out there, so I could be single for the rest of my life.*

Those were just some of the thoughts I had, but I still got up out of bed and went to hear the Word. There was a divine reason for going that my mom nor I had no clue of. We arrived at our usual location for service and no one was there, so I was sure we were going back home, but my mom was determined for some reason. So we drove for about 30 minutes to another location and there was everyone meeting in a combined service with another region of the church. God must have set this up, because the message was speaking directly to me, piercing my heart, and convicting me like no other. A couple of days later, I contacted my former youth ministry worker, Carolyn Thomas. She didn't answer, so I left her a voicemail, hung up and wept like a baby. I knew that this was the beginning of a whole new life for me.

I started to get together with a couple of women from my church to study the Bible. The things I learned blew my mind. I

couldn't understand just how I could have been going to church for twenty years and not have known so much about what the Bible really said, and this is from hearing a ton of sermons. God was revealing things to me I had never known before – now it was personal. I learned about the cross and how Jesus gave up his life for me, and what was I doing? Turning my face away from him and walking away. I was "doing me" and hurting God, yet he still wanted to have a relationship with me. Now that's True Love.

I was also observing the women studying the bible with me. I wanted their glow, their undeniable joy that just radiated from them. I eventually got that glow—I was glowing because I was falling in love, but with God this time around.

Before I had decided to study the Bible, there was a guy I had been seeing on and off. During my studies I couldn't help but think of calling him, to give him a chance at learning this good news. I pulled up to the house where I was going to have my study, and I was early so I called the guy. He was not interested to say the least, and even told me that he hoped I would drown when I got

baptized. That shocked me so much that I don't even remember the rest of the conversation. Being still a work in progress, I cursed him out at the top of my lungs as I sat in my car.

I couldn't believe what had just happened over the phone, and now I had to walk into the study. I was embarrassed because here I was, trying to change, but I had just cursed out this guy moments before. Before we started the study, someone asked me if I was okay and I just broke down; I was so hurt because I was still losing at this thing called life. Satan was trying to take me out; he didn't want me to turn my life over to God. From that time on my Bible studies were very frequent because I wanted to get baptized soon; I wanted out of this life. One week later, on March 28, 2010 I was baptized into Christ. It was the best decision I have ever made in my life and a decision I will never regret. So you see, being a hopeless romantic paid off—I became hopelessly devoted to God. I was in love, and soon afterward I met Patrick Genova.

CHAPTER 1

We Meet



A couple of months after I made Jesus Lord, I was told that the Campus Ministry has a conference every year and one was coming up that summer. I was ecstatic to say the least because it was in Chicago, a place I'd never been, plus we were taking the bus there from New York City. I love road trips!

During the conference there was a day of service where all the campus students from the United States came together. We were all decked out in blue HOPE *worldwide* t-shirts, ready to serve in Englewood, Chicago. The organizers had decided to split up all of the different campus ministries and have us serve with fellow disciples that we had never met before. Brilliant idea, let me tell you! God was working through the person who decided to organize this.

Here I was, a new disciple, on a bus about to do a service project with my brothers and sisters, in Christ that I didn't know. This scared an introvert like me, but I had no choice. And this was how I would meet my husband. We got off the bus at the work site

where we were supposed to clean up all of the vacant lots around the neighborhood. I mean, we were picking up trash; hypodermic needles; diapers; you name it, we found it and we picked it up. I have to say, it was pretty fun and I got to meet some sisters and of course some brothers. One in particular was really one of the coolest people I've ever met, Patrick Genova from Maryland. He came up on my right to talk to me. Not that I liked him or that it was this epic moment, but I just remember it very well for some reason. He introduced himself. My mind immediately was in defense mode. I thought, *Why is this guy trying to talk to me? I am not interested.* Clearly my mind was not in the right place. I had just come out of the world, I was a really new disciple and all I could think was, *This dude is trying to get my number right now.* Trying not to be mean, I encouraged the conversation, giving him the benefit of the doubt. Boy, was I pleasantly surprised; he was so cool we talked for a good chunk of time and actually stopped picking up garbage for a while.

We parted ways after a while, and it was time to return to the buses. Once we arrived back at the hotel, for some reason (which I believe was God), I stopped outside the bus to look at my phone and here comes Patrick, drum roll please, dun dun dun! He asked for my number, I gave to him and saved it as “Pat, brother I met in Chicago” We started walking together back to the hotel, and again we parted, I didn’t see him again for the remainder of the conference. Four months passed and we didn’t even contact each other. One day, though, I was on a college campus with my friend Hannah; I believe we had just finished up a Bible study with someone. For some really odd reason I decided to text “Pat, brother I met in Chicago” and wrote something to the effect of, “Who is this, I found your number in my phone?” although I knew exactly who he was, and Pat responded reminding me of who he was, what we did, etc. I was in shock because he remembered everything about me. I wish I could say that we kept in touch and fell in love from there, but that was not the case. Since that initial text we talked here and there, really not that often at all. He would

call and sometimes I wouldn't even answer—I am not proud of that. (If you wanted to read a truthful book, well here it is!).

CHAPTER 2

First Date



One day Patrick called me to ask me out on a group date to the New York Botanical Gardens in the Bronx. I was pretty flattered that he would ask me; I figured he asked because his friends were coming to NYC, and he knew I lived there too. Since talking to Patrick was usually pretty nice, I said yes. I arrived at the Botanical Gardens early, sat in my car and waited for Patrick and his friends to arrive. Patrick called me as they got closer, and I grew pretty anxious. I hadn't seen him in person since we first met. I actually didn't really remember what he looked like.

A couple of minutes passed and they arrived. I walked towards Patrick, excited to see him. We walked around the garden, taking pictures of each other and the flowers. One picture we took was in the rose garden. Patrick is a very silly person so his pose in the garden was of him raising both of his hands all the way up, pointing towards the rose bushes above him. I was not posing like

that, as generally I am pretty reserved. We start to move along, losing the rest of the group that came along with us. Again Patrick and I got lost in conversation, and lost in the garden. We got lost for a good half hour, actually. We asked around to find our way but still kept talking so much it took longer than it should have. Needless to say we had a great time.

We got back to my car, and Patrick sat in the passenger side and immediately reclined the seat all the way back. I will never forget it. My thought was, *What does he think he's doing? He is way too comfortable.* I didn't say anything to him but I was thinking this was probably our last date. The next stop on the date was a pizza place, and then somehow we ended up in McDonald's playing Bananagrams. While I was waiting outside McDonald's with Patrick, my friends from the Campus Ministry drove past me on their way to a teen devotional (we were headed there later as well). They started to embarrass me by making faces in front of Patrick and I, because they realized that I was actually on a date. When they drove away all I could do was shake my head. It felt

like I had just had my big brother pull up and catch me on a date with someone. That's how Patrick met my friends. Neat, huh?

Afterwards we headed out to the teen devotional where my friends were as well. We were having a college day. Basically, we were invited to share about the colleges we were each attending in order to educate and encourage the teens to make the right choices educationally. The date ended there, because I was there to share about my college. We said our goodbyes, but Patrick and his friends stayed for a little while longer to scope things out. They eventually left, and I didn't know if or when I was going to see him again.

CHAPTER 3

Date #2



The next time I saw Patrick was at another conference. This one was the World Discipleship Summit in Texas, July 2012. The summit was a conference like the one in Chicago but on a grander scale. Grand as in the campus conference, singles conference, leadership conference, teen conference, youth and family conference etc. of our fellowship came together from all over the

world to meet and worship together. We had a ton of classes, services, concerts, dances, fellowship—you name it—all happening at the same time. It was amazing and life changing.

Earlier that summer, Pat had asked me in advance to go on a date during the summit. I was looking forward to it and texted him once I landed in Texas. You're probably wondering why I texted him when I landed if I didn't like him. Good question, because I still don't know. I can only speculate about what my thought process was. I think a part of me was curious about what could happen, maybe there was something there? I also think I liked the fact that he was paying attention to me and was interested in having a relationship but not necessarily romantically. I was open to see where our friendship would go, but I didn't want to get my hopes up. Maybe I was trying to deceive myself; maybe I was starting to like him more than as a friend? When the time for the date arrived, we were late because I couldn't find his hotel. He found me, and because we were late he was walking super-fast. I didn't like that too much because I was getting a little left behind.

The date took place on a hotel rooftop, this was a very memorable date. From what I can remember Patrick was very forward. He asked me what my love language was. My love language is physical touch, but I didn't feel comfortable telling him that, so he dragged it out of me by asking a lot of questions. Once he got it out of me, he started to joke around and touch me on the arm and shoulder a lot. Well, that was not funny to me; was he trying to get me to like him by touching me? I understood that we were on a date and should be getting to know each other, but not like that we weren't. I left that date feeling as though, *I think he likes me and I don't know if I am there*. Now I really didn't know how I felt about him.

CHAPTER 4

Interest Sparked



At the time when Patrick asked me to go on the date during the summit, I was living in New Jersey, where I had moved to intern with the teen ministry for the summer, and I was having a hard time adjusting. Geographically, I was not fond of New Jersey, and in general it takes some time for me to get warmed up to new places. The roads were so confusing and very different than what I was used to. Being in a new environment and meeting new people isn't really easy for me, plus I had never lived away from home. After a day spent with the teens I wasn't ready to go back to the place where I was staying so I drove there but stayed outside. I decided to call Patrick, out of all the people I could have called. I think it was because I felt safe with him; he didn't live in New York, he didn't really know me and he's a friendly guy. I wanted to speak to a guy that I felt wouldn't take it the wrong way if I called him. I also wanted to be careful about whom I called at such

a vulnerable time in my life, and I didn't think Patrick would judge me. I also called him because I knew he would pick up. Horrible, yes I know.

Patrick picked up his phone and picked up my spirits. He helped me get through my difficult moment by sending me a great scripture to hold on to. The scripture he gave me was Mark 10:29–30:

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.”

That scripture made me see that my move would be blessed. I had left home literally for the gospel, and I felt good about that. I held on to that for the rest of my time in New Jersey and soon I started to have a wonderful time. By the end of the internship I

didn't really want to leave. God used Patrick in an amazing way, and I'll never forget it. The way I started to view Patrick began to change in that I saw him as more than "Pat, brother I met in Chicago." As he helped me know more about God, I began to know him through that lens, and from then on our friendship became more valuable to me and way more important than it had ever been before.

To be perfectly honest, when I moved to New Jersey, I grew very depressed. One day, when I was talking to Patrick after I moved back home, I casually told him that I had been sleeping a lot. He knew something was a little peculiar about that, so he revealed to me that he had suffered with depression for a long time. I immediately got defensive; was he trying to say that I was depressed? I thought, *Maybe because he's depressed he just wants me to be depressed too; maybe he's doing it to feel better about himself.* Being defensive was really just my pride. I knew full well that when I was younger I had seen two or three psychologists

because I was “sad,” and most of my doctors concluded that I was dealing with depression.

After my initial hesitation, I opened up to tell him that all of my psychologists knew I was depressed but really hadn’t helped me overcome it. I had been a teenager when all this happened, so to me and my family it was just growing pains, something I would grow out of. I never grew out of it but coped in some very destructive ways. I drank, slept, withdrew from people and had boyfriends who I thought would make me happy instead of feeling this sadness.

The way Patrick described his depression during this conversation, it was like he was describing my life. It was like he knew the deepest parts of me, but they weren’t parts of me; he was talking about himself. Every single deep, hidden feeling Patrick had, I had. It dawned on me that nobody—not even my closest friends and family—knew me the way he did. Nobody had ever understood; only he did. And I hadn’t even known him for that long. Nobody, not even my mother, knew what depression felt like.

I began to realize how much depression had always been a part of my life. Whether I wanted to admit it or not, it was there and always had been. That night when I had that conversation with Patrick, there was no denying that he was put in my life for a reason. I couldn't lose his friendship.

I wondered if maybe this was God putting a potential boyfriend before me. At the time, though, I couldn't quite see how it would work. I thought, *How can two depressed people date? How does that even work? What if we are depressed together? Will we even step outside the house? What if we get married and have kids; they will most likely have depression too, maybe even worse.* I thought about all these things before we were even dating, but I had to make sure that I weighed the risks before our friendship grew and we got closer. Here's the journal entry I wrote after our conversation:

9/23/12

Spoke to Pat last night and we had a very different kind of conversation. It was about depression. I am in a state of depression at the moment and it is hard to

cope with. God put him in my life to help me and with him there are no expectations. He's someone I can be real with and could be my best friend but we both got so many issues, man, or past issues, it just really bonds us. I feel like we've known each other for a long time but still he lives in Baltimore lol...So yeah talking to him is so great because it allows me to know myself and my depression and helps me get over it. One of the things he does is encourage one person every day and at the end of the day he'll write down five positive things that happened during the day. It helps you look more at the bright side of things. Oh, also Pat already knows my struggles and what I need to improve, that's crazy. There's no hiding who I am from him at all.

CHAPTER 5

The Divine Orchestration!



By October 2012, the ministers of the region I was from had relocated to be part of the leadership team in the church in Baltimore. Patrick was a part of the Baltimore church, so you can probably see where this is going. I gave the women's ministry leader, Dionne, a call after they moved, to try and visit Baltimore. She suggested that I come down to visit, get to know the teen ministry and spend time with Patrick as well. She came up with the idea of me going to the teen Halloween party with him to get to know him a little more. Patrick was a teen-worker in the Teen Ministry at the time. When she said that, I was a little taken aback because I wasn't interested in Patrick like that—or was I?

My trip turned into an epic weekend-long date with Patrick. Someone apparently expressed to Patrick that he should take me out on a date and show me a good time while I was visiting. I called him to let him know that I had decided to go to Baltimore, and soon after he emailed me an itinerary for the weekend. I was floored by this itinerary; it was super detailed and even included the weather. That was a great move, and God was truly on his side.

Once I arrived in Baltimore, I showed Dionne the email and all we both could do was smile. I really felt cared for and catered to.

October 24th, 2012
Hey LALA!

So below is your travel itinerary lol. I just put this together to make sure you would have a good time and have a lot of fun while you are here. Please let me know if you want to change any of this or have anything you would like to do in particular, this is not set in stone.

Have great day at the new job!

Friday:

11:50 Pick up and drop off at Davis's (20 min drive to Davis')

Saturday:

Weather: 72 Degrees

Attire: Casual chill gear

10am pick up at Davis' and drive to Fells (30 min drive)

Date in Baltimore, Fells Point

10:45–12:30

—Brunch at Blue Moon Cafe—

12:30–2:00

—Walk around Fells, hit up coffee shop and hang by harbor—

3:00pm–5:00pm Family group leader meeting (20 min drive)

5:00pm–8:00pm Set up for costume party (until party is well under way)

7:00pm–11:00pm Costume party

11:00pm Give you a ride back to the Davis' (24 min drive)

Sunday:

7:30am pick up from the Davis'

8:00am–9:30am Breakfast (if you're up for it :)

10:00am– 12:00pm Church

Leave church at 12:00pm to arrive at Megabus comfortably

Saturday morning he arrived at the door to pick me up for the date. Wait, rewind! On Friday Patrick picked me up from the Megabus station in this navy blue, Chevy Silverado. I can't lie; I loved his truck, and I was impressed. I felt super special as if I was being picked up in a limousine or something. Okay, fast-forward to the morning of the date. Patrick arrived early, another point for him. We went to Fells Point overlooking the Baltimore harbor, which was first on the itinerary. I had a wonderful time; the harbor was beautiful. We stopped at this store called A Thousand Villages and he bought me a journal. By the end of the date he took the journal from me and said he would give it back to me before I left the next day. I thought that was strange but I went along with it.

That night the teens were having their Halloween party, and I dressed up like a mime. Patrick went out to order some pizza for the party, and I remember feeling a little insecure because I didn't

know anyone besides him. Patrick dressed up as a construction worker, meaning his costume wasn't really a costume because he worked for the Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation at the time. At the party I sat down next to some sisters in the church and just watched the teens do their thing. Then Pat approached me, pulled up a chair and sat down. Immediately, I was happy. *Finally, here is the person that I just came from a date with and now maybe we can get some time to talk.* He sat near me for a while and then asked me if I wanted to go to the room next door to talk. Seriously, by this point Patrick was playing all his cards right. Of course I wanted to go to another room so we could talk. And so it began.

The conversation went something like this: "So, La Micia, tell me about yourself; what are you studying in your time with God? Are you having quiet time with God? What do you like to do?" Patrick had twenty questions as usual, but for some reason, this time I was intimidated, really intimidated. I just couldn't open up and even think of any answers or questions to ask him. I felt like I was not a spiritual person because I couldn't tell him what I was

studying out. Oh my goodness, it was humiliating; I totally blanked on what I had been studying. I wanted out of that conversation as quickly as possible. At that point if there was any chance I had had of dating Pat, it was gone. Finally after maybe an hour I was able to tell him about the books I was reading for my quiet times with God and why I was reading them. I eventually just confessed to him that he was intimidating me, and he was shocked. He asked me what I thought was intimidating about him and again, asking that question intimidated me. His facial expressions and the way he seemed to pierce my soul was intense. But all in all, by the end of that conversation, I had begun to unfold my arms from the front of me and loosen up. I was acting as if I hadn't spoken to him before, or any guy for that matter. Now as I think about it, I might have been nervous and weird because I had started to like him.

The up-side of the time talking with him was that I could really see who Patrick was before God. I could see that he truly had a relationship with God. Not just that he was a disciple but that he had a love for God I had never seen before.

We drove out to pick up some pizza for the party, and during the ride in the car all he talked about was the radical things he wanted to do for God. God dripped off his very being. I just listened to him talk. I had some of the same radical ideas he had; I just never had, or even desired to have, someone who could push me to do them. I can just remember turning my head towards him, watching the lights from the street reflect from his face and thinking, *I'm feeling this brother spiritually*. If he was to love a woman half as much as he loved God, that woman would still be very loved. Maybe I was that woman.

We got to the pizza place, picked up the pizza and Patrick opened the truck door for me. As he walked around the front to get into his side, I watched him and said out loud, "I think I like this guy." He opened the car door, sat down, and all I could do was look at him and smile.

God is amazing—once I started to really get to know Patrick that was the moment that I found him attractive physically. All of a sudden, like all of a sudden, it was as if a veil was lifted from my

eyes and the next minute I was attracted to him physically. You see, Patrick had always looked the way he looked, but the way I saw him changed. God knew that once I started finding someone attractive that I would start to act weird and even more shy; but because I wasn't attracted to Pat before that point, it made it easier to be myself because I didn't care if he liked me or not. But now I cared; now I cared a lot.

CHAPTER 6

Long Distance



Let's skip to the next day, Sunday. After church it was time to leave. My Megabus was on its way and Patrick was dropping me off. He handed me the journal he took from me after our date to A Thousand Villages and told me he wrote something in it and not to open it until I was on the bus. Patrick was still getting a bunch of points even though he didn't need them anymore. I was won over.

I hopped on my bus and became really sad; I had such a great time and who knows when I would see Pat again. I couldn't wait to read what he wrote inside of the journal.

It read:

"Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."

1 Peter 3:4

LALA!

This passage reminds me of you all the way! I think this is why I ask you so many questions. I see the inner beauty in you like this scripture says, a gentle

and quiet spirit. I am glad you came down and I am looking forward to continuing our friendship, getting to know you, and our next date.

Your BIC (Brother in Christ),

Hommie,

Pat

Another date, huh? Yes, and I can't wait. As my bus pulled off and I looked out the window and saw Patrick walking away, I truly felt like I was leaving a part of myself. Cheesy I know, but I felt like my heart was in Maryland, and Patrick had it.

I got home after such a great weekend and all I could think about was Patrick. Before this point I would barely call him, but now I was calling him a little bit more. I still needed to guard my heart as Proverbs 4:23 says, or else I would have called a lot more than I did. Everything in me wanted to speak to him every waking moment, but I had to really trust God and not let my heart pull me into places that could possibly hurt me later. I had done that in the world; I would give my heart away just to feel loved and come up lonely and empty every time. God's way had proved to be better

than mine every time I trusted in him, so I resolved to do this his way too.

Patrick was encouraged that I was calling him now. We began to talk about regular day-to-day stuff. My mom now began to hear his name more often and knew when I was talking to him on the phone. He and I would play this game called “the question game” in which we would think of random questions that we prepared before we got on the phone. That way it was easier to guard our hearts, because we would go into a conversation with specific things to talk about. We made our conversations purposeful and intentional. The question game was Patrick’s idea, and I thought it was brilliant.

One day Patrick called me at work to tell me that he and his best friend, Wes, wanted to come to New York City. He then said that he would like to meet my parents during the trip and asked that I dedicate some time for that. At that point I knew he was going to ask me to be his girlfriend, after only a month. He didn’t waste any time, but I didn’t want him to either.

Pat really hit it off with my father. My dad isn't a Christian and as I grew up in the church, I've been praying to God since I was a toddler that he would become one. I went downstairs for something and I overheard Pat talking to my dad about God and the church. At that point I could have cried. This man was reaching out to my dad! I think I was in love with him at that point. Ok, maybe really seriously in like. I came back upstairs and my Dad, Patrick, Wes and I just sat in the living room watching football. It was the day after Thanksgiving, and we had a ton of food left over. My dad offered them something to eat and they threw down! Wes ate some sweet potato casserole that had peanuts in it. He is allergic to peanuts and hadn't brought his EpiPen. Immediately our time was cut short. Patrick had to rush his friend to the hospital. Wes was fine, and because of the long wait in the emergency room they ended up leaving and getting Benadryl. It was just funny because Wes was so casual about his allergy. Patrick kept replaying the way he nonchalantly said he was allergic to peanuts.

As my dad and I were watching Patrick and Wes drive off to the ER, my dad said, “You know he asked me if he could ask you to be his girlfriend?” My dad totally spilled the beans and didn’t even know it. Inside, though, I was envisioning myself doing a cartwheel in the living room. I was elated. I knew he had come to New York to ask me.

CHAPTER 7

‘Will You Be My Girl?’



Saturday morning my mom prepared a breakfast that one would serve the president of the United States of America, this

would be her first time meeting Patrick. Patrick and his friend Wes were going to have breakfast with us so my mom really put her heart into serving them. I mean we had bacon, almond croissants, eggs, ackee and salt fish (a staple Jamaican breakfast food) and plantains with a choice of orange juice, coffee or tea. Patrick and Wes were honored and of course ready to dig in. We all talked and laughed around the table but we all knew that at some point Patrick and my mom were going to talk privately about dating me. It must have went well because they came back smiling and having small talk. Was I nervous while they were talking you might ask? Well, I wasn't. I wasn't because I knew that Patrick was a sincere person and if my mom got to see what I saw in him, his love for God, then there is no need for her to worry. Having breakfast together was a good time, one I'll never forget. Who can forget that spread anyway?

Saturday night rolled around, and I was ready for our date that night. I knew that he was going to ask me. I knew before my dad had outright told me. But guess what? A small part of me doubted

that he would ask me. Maybe he had changed his mind; maybe in the emergency room he decided that I am too high risk. I had to make a phone call. I called my women's ministry leader, and somehow I knew she would pick up. I told her about my doubt, my fears and my wants. She gave me a scripture in Psalms about appealing to the Lord for your needs. She said, "Look, it doesn't matter what Pat decides; it's all in God's hands. If you want him to ask you then you need to appeal to God, no one else." I will never forget that simple but profound advice. I thanked her, thanked God she was in my life, and prayed to my Father. The desire of my heart was to be Patrick's girlfriend.

I composed myself and started to get ready; Patrick was almost there. He came to the door with roses in his hand, dressed to kill. He even bought flowers for my mom, which was a good move let me tell you. Pat opened the door to "Big Blue," the same truck he picked me up with when I went to Maryland, and we hit the road. The whole ride on the way to Manhattan, Pat was nervous, I could tell. I could tell because he was really quiet and

barely paid attention to me in the car. I just couldn't wait to arrive, and I could tell Pat felt the same way.

We arrived at the Top of the Rock Observation Deck and took an elevator all the way up to the deck. All of a sudden, Wes and his date who were doubling with us disappeared, and it was just Pat and I. I could tell that was planned. What's funny is that Patrick didn't realize that we hadn't really gone out to the observation deck but were still inside the building. He stopped, and I thought, *I hope he doesn't ask me here; he has to ask me outside on the observation deck because the view of Manhattan is breathtaking.* I can be a hopeless romantic, I urged him to walk outside with me, and when we got out on the deck he realized that we hadn't even really seen the best part of Top of the Rock.

Now that we were outside, I was ready! Pat said, "Okay, let's play the question game; what are the three questions that you want to ask me? You go first." I came up with the most ridiculous questions I could think of; I think one question had something to do with a monkey. I really didn't care too much about playing the

game, especially because I knew that one of the questions would probably be, “Will you be my girlfriend?” I played along anyway and it was his turn to ask me his last question. And so it came out, “La Micia, will you be my girl?” Now, I had already thought about what I would say to him but paused when he said “my girl” instead of “my girlfriend”; my thoughts were, *Should I correct him?* I didn’t like that he said “girl”; it seemed less official to me. I stood there shaking my head. Like I wrote before, I am a hopeless romantic. I wanted him to ask me perfectly, like it was out of a movie—don’t judge me. The poor thing was probably thinking, *Why is she pausing?* But I got my mind right and said, “I would be honored to be your girlfriend.” We hugged, we talked, and I told him that my dad had spilled the beans yesterday. Patrick was not too happy about that, but I explained to him that even after being told, I really still didn’t know if he would go through with it or not.

11/24/12

I have a boyfriend! He asked me when we got to the top of the rock and we were overlooking the city and he asked me 2 questions. We usually ask each other

questions when we talk on the phone so we kept that up. So I thought of 2 questions. Then he said, "I wanted to know if you would be my girl." Then I said well Pat, I would be honored to be your girlfriend. Then we hugged and it was official. We took so many great pictures and that's what I really wanted. So yeah after the car ride home we were saying how crazy it was that we are saying that we're bf and gf. I said "you're my boyfriend" and he's like wow that sounds so good. It still is crazy to me. Well it's official—my boyfriend is Pat and everyone likes him. They think he's really attractive. I'm like what really? I'll take that. I think he is too =). I'm sad he's gone but flattered he even came to NY for me. To claim his gf. It was like ok! You're my gf now time to move on lol! I can't believe Pat and I met almost 3 years ago and he ended up being my boyfriend. Like the guy I didn't even text until 6 months after I got his number lol.....Gosh, God you have your plans. Now idk what to do, we all don't know. Also his sister sent me a message saying that she's excited etc. that was huge for me. I want to hold his hand though so bad like hold it and walk lol....In time, everything in time. Gosh I'm ecstatic and overwhelmed. We told everyone! He started telling people before I did <3. I am smitten!

Patrick & La Micia

We had never held hands before. I believe we both didn't know if we were ready to, so we didn't hold hands for the trip out of Top of the Rock. I didn't know what to do with myself. *What*

happens now? Patrick didn't know either. What were the boundaries? We both had never dated as disciples. I had a lot of questions for disciples that were close to me that dated before.

When the night was all finished, I went to bed and cried. I cried because God had really heard my prayers. He was there when I was writing in my journal to him; he read it and was there as I wrote in it. He gave me what I asked for, but at the same time I was surrendered if I didn't get it. When I asked God for a boyfriend I didn't expect him to give me more than I asked for. He gave me a best friend, someone who knew me more than I knew myself.

11/29/12

Can't believe that's real. I have a bf and he's amazing =))))). Why is he so great

=D. I just hope I don't disappoint him. He asked me when I'm coming to

Maryland. Therefore he misses me hehe! He's so perfect, God! Do I deserve this? No but the blood of Christ is life. So happy...He brings me closer to you,

God.

CHAPTER 8

'I Love You'



Somehow I was dating my best friend. I would say approximately two months into dating I was in love with Pat. Every time we were getting off the phone the natural thing I wanted to say was “I love you,” and I felt that Patrick thought the same thing. I knew that Pat and I thought a lot alike so I figured he wanted to tell me that he loved me. Patrick devised a cute plan to stop talking on the phone and write letters to each other instead as if it were the good old days before the Internet and phone. I love to write, so naturally this appealed to me. Of course I would miss hearing his voice terribly, but how cool would it be to get a letter from him.

Patrick sent the first letter and now it was my turn to send one back. Somehow I got the idea to be the first one to say, “I love you” in a letter. I was too scared to be the first one to say it over the phone. The general pattern in our relationship was Patrick

being the initiator; I mean, he initiated this letter-writing thing. To change things up a little, I wanted to be the one to initiate something.

It was now or never. Patrick's letter had spoken to my heart, and now it was my turn to put pen to paper and write this thing. I drafted a couple of letters before the real thing, then I wrote, "I think I am falling in love with you." I folded the letter up, placed it in the envelope, sealed it and waited for the mailman to pick it up. As he took it, immediately all I wanted to do was take it back. Everything in me wanted to kick myself, *Why in the world would I write that?* I started to get flustered. It was too late by now; it was gone and there was no turning back.

The next day I got a call from Patrick, and there was no way he had gotten my letter yet. I picked up thinking he called me by mistake. He called because he couldn't take it anymore; he hadn't gotten my letter yet and he really couldn't wait to talk to me. I was blushing like you wouldn't believe. I was so happy to hear his

voice again. Pat was telling me that he thought the letter thing was a bad idea. He couldn't stand us not talking to each other.

Being the punk that I am, I explained to Pat that I sent my letter but told him "When it comes do not read it." I was serious. I really wanted him to tell me when it got there and to throw it away as soon as it did. One day passed, and he hadn't gotten the letter. The next day passed and still no letter; the third day passed, and then I believe on the fourth day the letter arrived. Patrick didn't call me when it arrived, of course. He called me after he read it to tell me in a really silly voice that he received the letter. Then he says, "I love you too." I was screaming on the inside, *He loves me!!* I told him how scared I was and that I really meant it; I really did love him. He then said that he was talking to one of his closest friends, Phat, just the day before asking him how do you know that you love someone. Patrick and I are always on the same page. I love this man; he is truly my soul mate; it's as if we are the same person sometimes. I am telling you, God even makes fairytales come true; actually God's plans are better than any fairytale!

As we wrapped up our conversation, we each said, “I love you,” and we hung up the phone. Again I became overwhelmed with a joy you can’t even imagine. Honestly I was floored by how much God loved me. I couldn’t swallow how much God cared about me. He really didn’t have to bless me in this way. My soul was overwhelmed.

1/11/13

So Pat got my letter and he really likes it and keeps reading it over and over. And he feels the same way. And it's not a giddy omg! I love you. It's a hmm I think I love you. It's not irrational, quick, spur of the moment. It's thought out, prayed on, and look how cute it turned out. To where I mailed it to him and he got it and was blown away. He didn't expect it at all either, which is a good surprise. I'm falling in love w/ Pat. I'm falling before he is. It's funny b/c he said he spoke to Phat yesterday about when do you know you love someone? And then boom, the next day he gets my letter.

1/14/13

We spoke today for about an hour after I had gotten off of work. And when we were about to get off the phone, he said "I love you" I was likespeechless. I had to soak it in that he just told me that he loves me. Before this though, he told me that he's never said I love you or fallen in love w/ any previous gf. And he's

dated seriously before. Again floored! I am in love w/ him and idk how to even process all of this. He is truly my best friend! Even this convo we had on the phone today was soooo funny. I could be myself around him and this is so cool!

I cherish that, and I don't want to lose the friendship.

CHAPTER 9

Take It to the Next Level



After about two months and a couple of trips to Baltimore on the Megabus for me, and a couple of trips to New York for Patrick, we were tired. Tired of the marathon weekends; we wouldn't get a lot of time to spend together so when we did we would spend the whole day together. In order to please God with our relationship and maintain our purity we made sure to spend a lot of time

outside or with friends; rarely were we ever alone together. We love God first before ourselves, and doing it God's way allowed us to get to know each other on such a deeper level. We honestly just had a ton of fun together watching movies, dancing, going to the mall, on double dates, at games, attending church, etc. I developed really great relationships with some of the women in the church in Baltimore. I stayed with my sisters in the church, then Patrick would come to pick me up in the morning and our marathon day would start. Every time the weekend was over, it was hard. It got harder and harder and I fell more in love with Patrick and the church. On one particular date, I knew he was getting serious about our relationship - I just sensed it.

At the time, I was serving in the teen ministry. On the weekends, the teens knew that sometimes I would be in Baltimore visiting Patrick. They pretty much knew that one day I might be moving there. The teens were hip to the game. I had really great friendships with the girls in the ministry. Some of them were just

starting to develop their own relationships with God. I was blessed to be able to watch.

3/10/13

I can't stop crying I miss Pat so much already. God, idk how much longer I can stay away from him. I've never cried so much leaving him before. Idk what's wrong with me. I've never loved anyone as much as I love him. He's my other half. God you did your thing and I'm grateful but God move me please!!!! I just want to hold him forever. I want to spend the rest of my life with him. I'm crying so much I can barely see. Every time he leaves it gets harder. Why God? God do not delay show me your will....

After a couple more months, Patrick and I believed it was time for me to move. I had to really count the cost in this. My whole life was in New York. I had grown up in the NYC church, literally. Members there knew when my mom was pregnant with me and when I was born; they knew me as a teenager and now as a single woman. My life was deeply rooted in NY to say the least. I had never really had any other place to call home. Sure, I lived abroad

for five months and lived in New Jersey for two, but it was never home.

Now I was deciding that it was time to move on. Don't get me wrong though, I had never wanted to stay in New York; I had always wanted to eventually leave. On the one hand it would be sad to leave the people I loved, but on the other hand I had to do what was best for me. I was only going to be a little over three hours away anyway.

CHAPTER 10

Buckle Your Seatbelt



Beware; the rest of this book may build your faith and blow your mind.

The move-out plan had to be established. A couple of things made it a challenge. Number one, the relationships I had in New York. Number two, where would I live? Number three, where would I work and number four, would my mom approve? Yes, you read number four right: I was twenty-three and my mom's approval still weighed heavily. So let's start with hurdle number four and count down from there.

In the past when my mother felt as though something wasn't right, usually she was correct. A mother's intuition, I guess. Time and time again when I thought something was a good plan, if my mother didn't think it was, quickly I found out it wasn't right. I really trusted her gut.

With moving, she didn't think it was wise considering the circumstances under which I would be moving. To further explain, I had gotten a lot of advice on the move. One piece of advice was to move without a job for a month! This way I could get a feel for Baltimore and then work after the month was up. Initially I thought this advice was crazy; *who moves without a job in this economy? Who would let me live with them without an income? Did that mean during the month off I would be out searching for a job? Where would I look? What in the world would I tell my boss, the whole office?! What would they think of me?*

At the same time, taking a month off appealed to someone like me who deals with depression and who is also an introvert. Looking back to when I lived in New Jersey it was clear that I am someone who needs transition time, and it's nothing to be ashamed of. I prayed a lot; I prayed that God would make it clear as day what I needed to do. I entrusted my life to him and put it in his hands. Whatever his will was, I would follow it, but at the same time God knew the desires of my heart. I journaled a lot while

thinking about other women who have left their lives in one location to go where God called them. God had never let me down before, and if I moved without a job I was sure that God would not allow me to falter.

I decided that I would move that May, although it was the scariest decision I've ever made in my life. Funny how God works, though; I had a good paying full-time job at the time which allowed me to really save up, and I was also expecting a tax return very soon. I was more than set financially for over a month. I thought that maybe God had wanted me to have this job as a means to an end, and if so then me staying at the job was using it against God's intended end result. Not to say that was really why God gave me the job; I don't presume to really know, but at the same time as I consider how my life moved from that point on it kind of indicates that the move was God's will.

Before church started on a Sunday morning, a really wise woman asked me how I was doing. I told her what I was going through and feeling, that I had a lot of feelings of guilt over leaving

my life in New York. She understood that and didn't tell me what to do but gave me Hebrews 11. I clung to that passage for dear life. Making a faithful decision has a way of making you do that.

I still remember reading that chapter every morning; on the way to work my Bible was open on the passenger seat. During my lunch break I would read it again. I had developed a deep conviction that God was calling me to move, to leave my comfort zone all for him, not for Patrick. I had to come to this conviction before I made up my mind. I needed the foundation of the Word for my strength; it's all I had. I had to make this move because God wanted me to and allowed me to do so. My decision must be based on this and this alone, not because Patrick said so, not because I wanted to go, but because God made it clear that I needed to go.

You see, it's hard to explain to everyone the whole process involved in the move. I try not to do anything without God's approval first. I love that this book allows me to let everyone know

what is really involved in having a relationship with God. There is a deep spiritual side of this story that gives God all the glory.

CHAPTER 11

Breaking the News



So I was suited up with the Word and ready to break the news to friends and family. Patrick and I had been speaking a lot about the steps involved in doing this spiritually. It had to be methodical, systematic and well thought out; I was deeply entwined in people's

lives, especially the teens. I had to transition out of the teen ministry without hurting anyone's faith. I remember it like it was yesterday; after a teen class we told them I was moving and the girls started to just cry, it was so hard to watch but this had to be done. It was pretty heart breaking, but again, this is why it was so important to have built this move around God and his word. Imagine if it was built around Patrick—the teens crying would have meant I was leaving them just because of my boyfriend. I would have been blaming Patrick for all of it, and as soon as something went wrong it would have been his fault.

Let's get back to step number four, the hardest step for me. I decided to tell my mom over dinner at this really great Italian restaurant. We ate, and the next thing you know, I was pulling out the Bible onto the restaurant table. I focused on verse 27 of Hebrews 11 about faith in action: "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible."

My mom was the king, Egypt was New York and I was Moses. Moses left Egypt not fearing the king's anger because he saw God who is invisible. He persevered because he recognized God who was indeed involved with his move. This verse related to everything I was going through with my mom. I was not the first person who had to leave a country and journey to one they didn't even see. With that, I told my mom that I was stepping out on faith. With the utmost conviction I spoke up respectfully, woman to woman, and told her that it had already been decided no matter if she was angry or not. She strongly felt that it wasn't a wise decision to move without having a job. To anybody else, it wouldn't be right and really wasn't too smart, but I had God and lived by faith not by sight. The Bible says without faith it is impossible to please him. "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). I had a lot to hope for, and I was sure I couldn't see (lol!). Nothing before me was guaranteed, and I think that struck fear in my mother. I can understand why a mother would be concerned. I struggled over her

concern but I couldn't let it dictate my actions. God had already made it clear to me that I needed to move without a job. I love my mom so much; we are truthfully best friends; we have been through thick and thin and I was confident that her concerns were there because she wanted the best for me. What I had to do was make God bigger than my mother. As a daughter I wanted my mother's approval, but what about God's approval? I already had that, and that was more important than anyone else's opinion.

Because I did not waiver in my decision and faced my mother, I am blessed to say that although she still felt it wasn't wise to move without a job, I knew that she would support me. She did just that and more. A couple of days after we talked over dinner, she was helping me pack my things. Amen!

Next I told my dad. He was easier to tell but was really sad. He was going to miss the little things like hearing my feet run down the steps. My dad always took care of me and fed me a little too much. I'm surprised I am not overweight, as there is never a shortage of food at my parents' place.

CHAPTER 12

Logistics



Step number three, where would I work? This step was hard but not as hard as telling my mom. As you have already read, I was moving without a job for the simple fact that I needed time to get used to a totally new environment. No job security these days is a real problem to have. Again, here came faith. I prayed specifically to have a job after a month. That's a pretty specific prayer, but I know my God and I knew he wouldn't let me down.

I had gotten the job I was leaving in NYC through an employment agency. The company had hired me on full time immediately after the interview, so I didn't work for the agency but directly for the company. This same agency is one of the top job placement agencies in the world. By this time I had already broken the news at my job and they were really supportive. The CFO even told me that if things didn't work out all I needed to do was give them a call. The coast was all clear to contact the job placement

agency, and that's what I did. They were more than happy to look for a job for me in Maryland.

Now for steps one and two, the relationships I was leaving behind and where I would live, fell right into place after that. Patrick found a woman in the church that was willing to take me in for a price that was unbelievably considerate. I had a room and my own personal bathroom to top it all off. Step one was hard, but I truly am blessed with loving, supportive and generous people around me. I thought they would be mad at me but the teen ministry threw me a going-away party, they even made me a scrapbook that I will cherish forever.

The move commenced, and step three was the only thing still up in the air. My faith still had to endure for another month. I was having fun packing up, giving some of my clothes away and taking selfies in a mirror where I had written a countdown from day 10 to day 1, which was my official moving day. I took ten pictures of myself with a reflection in the mirror of the countdown with each number crossed out in turn. The top of the countdown was marked:

To Baltimore. On the last day Patrick rode in on “Big Blue” to whisk me away. Instead of taking pictures of just myself in the mirror, the last picture included Patrick. We formed a heart with our hands around the crossed-out number 1.

My mom and her friend drove in my car, Patrick and I drove in “Big Blue”. I rode in the front with my prince, and my mom and her friend followed. As we approached my new place I was already happy. The neighborhood was gorgeous and my place was amazing. I saw my roommate Nakoya and she was more than welcoming. To this day I consider her one of the women I admire and who means a lot to me.

We all unpacked the cars, settled a little and were in the living room resting when I noticed that Patrick was a little quiet, and that’s really unlike him. The doorbell rang and Patrick opened the door. My brother Donovan from North Carolina, his girlfriend and my nephew were at the door! I leaped over an ottoman and jumped right into my brother’s arms. My mom looked at the person at the door, looked away, and then it hit her that her son was at the door.

She got up, started screaming and gave him a huge hug. I couldn't believe Patrick set this up. He knows how much my siblings mean to me. I can't even really write about how special Donovan is to me. He is five years older than I am and moved out after high school to go into the Marine Corps. I was about thirteen when he left and ever since then he's lived away. I'm getting emotional just thinking about how much I miss having him around all the time. Patrick is seriously unbelievable; sometimes I wonder if he is real. He is truly God-sent.

After that we all went out to eat, and the next day we went to church. Sitting next to my brother and the others in my family in church made me feel like I had the greatest support system in the world. This is what God wanted me to experience. Really this is just a small part of what God began to do in my life.

CHAPTER 13

God Is Good!



The excitement settled, my family left after church and now it was just Pat and I. Patrick jokingly said with an evil laugh, “I got you now.” Of course he would tease me for my insecurity about him turning out to be someone else once I got away from my friends and family. It was hard seeing them drive off; I thought, *So now what happens?*

Patrick had a job of course, but as you know, I didn't. When he went to work I was at my place alone some of the time. For a second it felt like I was in New Jersey again. Thankfully I didn't have to worry about reporting to a job right away. I had a month to relax. I worked out with Patrick in the morning, drove around Baltimore, applied to jobs, was in Bible studies, ate out with friends. Like I said, I felt alone for a second. Soon I started having a blast.

When the month was almost up I still hadn't heard back from the employment agency. I began to worry—week four and not even a call from them. One day, soon after coming back from an interview at a real estate firm, I was walking across the street with Patrick approaching his building after having lunch and my phone rang. It was a call from the employment agency, a branch of the one I used in NY. The woman on the phone enthusiastically said, “Congratulations, you got a job at a university; you start June 24th; I am going to email you all the information; again, congrats!” Then she hung up. She spoke so fast I could barely keep up. The call

happened so fast that when I got off I had to process what had just happened. I told Pat about it and he immediately had questions. I told him I would tell him later once I read the email. You would think I would be ecstatic, but I was skeptical; the call was so fast I could hardly get a word in.

I almost forgot to mention that I had prayed that I wouldn't have to interview for the job I would get. Silly, I know, but I hate interviewing.

I read the email with all the details of my assignment, and it was legit. After reading the job description I immediately thought I wasn't qualified. I was given a job without an interview to be an executive assistant to the Vice President of Academic Affairs for a prestigious university in Maryland. Basically, I was to be the temporary assistant to the guy below the president of the university. I had moved to Baltimore on May 18th and I was to start my new job on June 24th. So not only did I have a job within a month of moving but my assignment didn't officially start until a week later. That meant I had another week to really relax and not

worry because I knew I already had a job. Ha! God totally came through. Who does that? God does that! How can anyone tell me God isn't faithful? God said, "La Micia, here you go; you got all you asked for and wait, here's more: you get another week to relax. Enjoy!"

When I walked into my new job, I wasn't qualified, but again God hooked me up because although my assignment was for six weeks, the person training me didn't leave the job for about another three weeks, so I was well trained before he even left.

6/14/13

So I got a call for an interview at Chesapeake Real Estate Group while having time with Sherie. So that in itself was exciting! I tell everyone on GroupMe about landing an interview. So then I go on the interview, company seems ok. The company is about an hour out though and the company is at grass roots stage. So, I would say, an hour later, while coming back to Pat's job from lunch I get a call from my employment agency. My recruiter is like, congratulations you got a job under a VP at a company. You start on the 24th! I'm like what... So I say thank you, hang up and Pat has questions like the pay and location. So I call back, get the info and my recruiter sends me an email, and Pat gets fired up because it's a good job. So I'm like really idk too much about university work

etc. So Sherie calls me and I give her the job scoop, both offers, and then Dionne jumps on the phone and she's like TAKE IT! You're assisting a VP of a university. God has blessed it, and gave it to you. Don't grumble against it but take it. So I said ok great. B4 I was going to accept it Pat sends out a GroupMe blast and says "Thanks for the prayers everyone! La Micia got a job offer today!! Wooo hooo!!! It is a job working under a VP at a university!! God hooked her up w/ a job offer that had nothing to do with the job she interviewed for. Prayers are powerful!!!"

6/22/13

I can't believe I have a job starting Monday and I'm here loving Maryland! So tonight me, Pat, Chris and Nick go to see World War Z and I look over during the movie and Pat is crying. I ask him if he's crying, he says yes and then I ask why and he says I'm just thinking about the fact that you're my girlfriend. He had tears of joy and thankfulness that I'm his gf, randomly in the theatre. HOW

CUTE IS THAT!

CHAPTER 14

‘Will You Marry Me?’



The day after I started the job Patrick told me that we had been asked to share our testimonies before the church. I actually somewhat enjoy public speaking so I didn't think too much of it. I prepared my testimony and so did Pat. Before church I thought for a quick second, *What if Patrick proposes today?* The thought wasn't uncommon because after I moved I started wondering if and when he would pop the question. Every single moment after the move I thought, *What if it's now?* So, by the time church rolled around on Wednesday it had already gotten to a point that I was telling myself, *La Micia, you need to relax.*

This time I knew something was different but I dismissed it. I got to church and Pat seemed nervous. His brother John came out and I thought nothing of it. While we were sitting down Patrick told me that I needed to speak first. I fought him for a little then I just gave in. I got up, shared my testimony and stepped to the side

to allow Patrick to share. Patrick started to talk about the testimony of our relationship; I thought that was odd. I looked around at the audience and saw a lot of cameras and phones out. Why are people recording this? Then it hit me, *Oh my goodness he's about to propose.* I looked down at his pocket and I saw something square—*Is that a box holding a ring?* You can't imagine the thoughts going through my head at that point. I was thinking, *This is it; I am about to never be single again; this man is really going to be my husband.*

He started to share about the signs that God gave him and the specific prayers he prayed that God answered. One prayer is the famous “bun prayer”: he prayed that when I came off the Megabus that I would have my hair up in a bun. My hair was in a bun. He prayed that his future wife would be willing to move to Maryland, and I did. He prayed that I would be vulnerable around him, and I was. To him it was clear, and he told the whole church this.

He looked at me and said, “La Micia, you are my best friend, my workout partner, my partner in the gospel, and God has made it

abundantly clear...” He gets down on one knee and asks, “La Micia, will you marry me?” I covered my mouth while my jaw dropped, and said yes with tears streaming down my face. The church started rejoicing, taking pictures, recording, all of the above. It was here, it was finally here. I was now Patrick’s fiancé. Two days after I started my new job, I was engaged to the man of my dreams.

I called my family; they already knew and congratulated me! They were in complete approval.

The next morning, I woke up, sat up in my bed and looked at my ring finger, thinking, *This has got to be a dream*. My ring was glistening in the sun; I grabbed my phone to capture its beauty; it’s an overwhelming one-carat antique engagement ring. Patrick’s father gave the ring to his mother as an anniversary gift. Patrick’s family was also in full approval of our engagement. And so begins the not-so-fun process of planning a wedding in four months. Yup, I wrote it, four months.

6/26/13

I'M ENGAGED!!! I am going to be Mrs. Genova. He proposed at church after I did my testimony in front of the whole church. I knew it was coming a little because he had me do my testimony first, then he starts to talk about our relationship instead of his story. So then I look around and I see cameras all around, people are filming and that's when it hits me. Then he gets really red and gets down on his knee and I start bawling. To the point I can't stop and I just want to hold him. So he takes the ring out, gets up, I'm hugging him like crazy and crying and then it's over. I'm getting married to the love of my life. My best friend! And the ring....Seriously beautiful, I am super blessed! My mom, dad and brother I call right after. Donovan my brother picks up first, then mom, then dad. They are all happy for me! Donovan wasn't too happy when I called but then it hit him and he calls me back to talk about the wedding date.

CHAPTER 15

The Reality of Planning a Wedding

First up, where would we get married? Patrick was really helpful throughout this process. We set up appointments at prospective places but quickly fell in love with a mansion in Frederick, Maryland. Patrick's mom and I were surfing the Web one night looking for venues and came across the mansion. What really drew me in were their prices; it was really affordable. Even

though my mom was paying for the venue, I wanted to be conscientious about the price. After all we were also planning a full-scale wedding in 4 months. It was only the second place we checked out, and we absolutely loved it. It wasn't too big a mansion; it was really cozy and intimate with acres of land outside. Venue, check.

Next up was the honeymoon. My mom had a friend that had a timeshare in the Dominican Republic. She was able to book our stay for eight days at an amazing price. It seemed that we were going to DR. As for the flight, we thought that would have been a pocket-breaker but Patrick's father let us use his sky miles, so we flew for free. When God approves of something, he really goes all out. Honeymoon, check.

We had booked the venue and the honeymoon in less than a month. Next up was the really fun part, finding a wedding dress. Not just any wedding dress, but *the* wedding dress of my dreams of course. I wanted to make sure to involve my mother and grandmother in this process. I made a weekend trip to NYC just to

find the dress. I made an appointment at the bridal store like a giddy child. We set sail to the dress shop and in La Micia style, I prayed. I prayed for a dress within the \$300 price range. I stepped into the bridal store and I couldn't believe I was even at this stage of my life. It hits me: *I am getting married*. They took us to the back and one of the sales associates started picking out dresses. I was looking for lace; I wanted to look as vintage as possible due to my ring and the venue.

After about the third dress I think I had already found the one. I took a look at the price and it was way over what I prayed about! Funny how I was concerned about the price and I wasn't even paying for it. Thanks, Mom! So my mom and the sales associate walked away to discuss price. As I was in the changing room, Patrick called me. He told me that his parents were giving us a very generous gift to put towards anything we wanted for the wedding. I was floored! I could not even believe what he was telling me. I have the best in-laws, really, that anyone could ask for.

I exited the dressing room and my mom's face was a bit downcast. I was thinking, *Well, if I get this dress it's probably not at the price range I prayed for or worse yet, I may have to find another dress.* No way could my mom negotiate down to \$300. She came back and broke the news to me. The dress cost \$350 dollars! My mom likes to play these games with me. I started to scream; I am telling you it was like I was winning the jackpot for months! All of this, I swear, is not made up. The dress was only \$350 because supposedly it had a defect. When a dress has a defect they can't sell it at the regular price so they drop the price drastically. This defect, I still don't know where it is; the dress was perfect. Also did I mention that the dress didn't need altering? It was my size, ha! Dream dress, check.

I had already been creating a list of songs but did not have a DJ. I expressed this to one of my close sisters in the church and she gave me the name of a guy who DJs for a living. The next Sunday I was approached by a brother who had just become a disciple; he was the DJ. He had heard that I was looking for a DJ and asked me

what price range I was looking for. I told him basically not a very high one, and he quoted me a price that I thought was per hour. Usually DJs charge about a couple hundred an hour, so I thought, *OK, that's fair*. I asked him, "Is that an hour?" He said, "No, that's for the whole thing"! Out of his gratitude for the way the church gave to him, he wanted to give back any way he could. My jaw dropped again, and again I had to pinch myself. Is this all real? DJ, check.

Patrick's sister designed our invitations and even had the invites printed -- check

Note: I understand if you close this book at this point. I understand if all these answered prayers are too much to handle. God is amazing, isn't he?

Although I am sharing the victories, please don't be mistaken; we had some hard times. Truthfully, if you ask Pat and I, after all was said and done wedding planning was also a nightmare. Poor Patrick checked out after two months and I wasn't happy about that, but I was surprised he even hung in that long considering the

headache I was giving him. The details that go into a wedding were the hard part. We had all the big things covered but the minute details were what drove us crazy, things such as finding dresses for the bridesmaids and ties for the groomsmen, the guest list (I don't even want to get started on the guest list), the seating chart, mailing wedding invitations, and some bridal party drama. I got to a point where I didn't even care about who did what. In the beginning I was very specific as to who I wanted to do each thing and how I wanted it done, but towards the end I just didn't care anymore. My sanity was the priority. I needed to make it to the wedding in one piece. Patrick and I started to argue more as deadlines approached. I got a panic attack walking to my car from work. I'd never had a panic attack before. I did some things I am not proud of, like cutting a bridesmaid. I became what one would call a bridezilla.

8/28/13

I'm moved into the new apartment. My mom is here helping me clean up. She folded all of my clothes and put Pat's shoes away, among a whole bunch of other things. I am on antidepressants and I guess I feel the same. The feelings of

hopelessness aren't as bad. I got a little overwhelmed a minute ago but not so much. Hopefully Pat can come later and Jenn and Chris, it would be really fun. I need to run errands. Hopefully Pat will want to come with us to do everything. I know he gets impatient sometimes. God, I pray that we grow in you, so we grow together. Please be with our hearts towards each other, our speech etc.; keep us pure and nice to one another, God. I pray that I rely on your strength as I do laundry, make dinner and lunch, drive to get him etc. I'm overwhelmed to think of all the things I have to do. And keep a house clean. I pray that Pat has compassion and empathy for me and will help me do things around the house. I pray that this wedding will bring you glory. Be with us, be with the Genova/Thomson wedding and our household.

I had to relax and let go of some of the things that I could have other people help with. It is not as though people weren't offering to help; they were. It was me; I was the one who wanted to do it all. I am the one who took on way too much. All the while I had to make sure I was still connecting to God every day. I prayed a lot but I needed to read the Bible more; now more than ever I needed to be going to God. Once I surrendered it to God realizing that I could not do it all, he took a ton of things off my plate.

What was happening to Pat and me, you might ask? Well, because I was becoming very angry and stressed out, Patrick got the worst of it. Every conversation seemed as though it was about the wedding, and I was driving my fiancé crazy. Patrick called a married couple we were receiving counseling from to help us through our relationship. They really knew Patrick and I the best. We pulled up to the couple's house and at this point Patrick and I weren't even really talking. Usually we are very affectionate to each other, but we didn't even hold hands on our way to their house, and that's a big deal for us.

Patrick opened up the conversation by voicing his concerns. He was concerned that we were drifting apart over a wedding that really didn't need to happen the way it was. We didn't need a big venue; we didn't need a ton of people there, and to him it didn't make sense to have a wedding when the couple can't get along. No wedding planning was worth our relationship. He was ready to cancel all the plans and go to a justice of the peace. I wish I was kidding, but no, he was serious. Guess what? At this point I agreed

with him. My dream wedding could not even happen. We had to really talk about the relationships that were causing us to be overworked. Everyone wanted to help, but they wanted to help at times when I wanted to rest and not think about the wedding. There really was no time to waste, but I was losing my mind. I had to place boundaries on the input and calls I was getting.

After our session with the couple we decided that the plan was to make some calls and place some boundaries on the people helping us. Everyone was very understanding and actually left me out of much of the planning after that. I mean, I no longer was the point person. I had a wedding planner that was fantastic. We got together I believe once every two weeks and went over the extensive to-do list. My mother and my wedding planner spoke directly and I really gave them the authority over the wedding. You see, all it takes is communication; I had to let people know where I was emotionally and they rallied around to support me. Of course there was still stress because I still had to be involved in some aspects. I had to pack my honeymoon bag, prep my hair and do the

things really no one else could, but doing the little girly stuff was fun to me and I enjoyed doing it.

CHAPTER 16

Internal Dialogue



The wedding day drew closer; all the while Patrick and I were getting together for spiritual premarital counseling with the leaders of the church and the married couple that was shepherding our relationship. The classes really brought home that marriage is serious, that it's a covenant with my husband made before God and not to be taken lightly. God had chosen to bless us in this way. We were learning about what a godly marriage is and not what I thought it should be based on the world's poor example.

The best part about all of this is that Patrick and I were pure and blameless before God. Out of our love for God and Christ we set boundaries in our relationship that were hard but completely worth it. In the final days leading up to our wedding, I was feeling an unspeakable joy that I can't even explain, knowing that one day I would be united with my husband the way God intended. No regrets at all, not even one. There was nothing that tainted our

relationship up to this point. Wearing a white dress was special. It's really hard to even put into words how worthy I felt before God.

This was only possible through God, because Patrick and I had lived lives completely opposite of the one we were living now. For the majority of our lives we lived, like the sinners we are, for our own pleasure and following the desires of our flesh. What really attracted Patrick to me in that vacant lot in Chicago was the fact that I seemed like I had just come from being in the world. To him that meant he could relate to me. He saw that I once was one way, and that I chose a different way. That conference was only a few months after I became a disciple. I was learning so much and being transformed daily. Slowly my sinful nature was being revealed. You don't just wake up and you're perfect. It is a process, a transformation, and I'm still being transformed daily. So when I came out of the waters of baptism, a baby, the process began. It took time; I was at a different place spiritually than I am now, and I hope to be at an even better place in the future. That's the name

of the game. God takes me where I am but loves me enough to take me higher. So being able to wear a white wedding dress was the result of being a new creation that is all. It was a free gift from God. But let me say this: being pure before God wasn't easy.

About two weeks before the wedding the anticipation of being united with Patrick sexually for the first time was more overwhelming than it had ever been. Striving to live my life to please God because of his love for me, meant that I needed to pray a lot about this, and I needed to pray urgently. Because of these temptations, I needed God to keep Patrick away from me as much as possible during the week leading up to our wedding day. It is just like God to answer my prayers—I barely saw Patrick the week before the wedding. God protected me when I got honest with him and myself, letting him know how hard this was for me and how I would actually prefer not to see Patrick. I mean, of course I would miss him. At the same time I knew myself enough to know that seeing Patrick was not good for me, so I didn't. I had to focus on the joy set before me, taking delight in the fact that when the time

did come for Pat and I to be intimate it would be well worth the wait. After about a week, the first time I saw Patrick was at the wedding rehearsal dinner with our friends and family; I had to see him then, right? As I remember now, Patrick and I had an argument during the rehearsal dinner. The stress of the wedding was clearly still on us. After the dinner, I didn't see him face to face until I walked down the aisle.

The day before the wedding, a few of my closest friends and of course some of my bridesmaids joined me for massages, manicures and pedicures. The whole time I was getting the royal treatment, I was really in a different world. While I got my pedicure I felt as if this really wasn't happening. I was there in the chair, but I really wasn't there. So much was going through my mind. I also wondered what Patrick was doing.

The night before the big day I sat alone in my hotel room. My girlfriends slept in the room next to mine because I wanted a room to myself. I wanted to spend time with God on the very last night of being a single woman before him. I sat up in my bed, took out

my journal and wrote out all of my feelings. I talked to God about our journey together up until this point. Here's part of what I wrote:

10/12/13

Today is my wedding day! [It was after midnight.] ...God, you are an amazing God, there is none greater than you, God. Thank you for Patrick, a man of God, my future husband... Can't wait to be Mrs. Genova! To my kids, your mom is being blessed by God, make no mistake... Fairytales come true in Christ. I love your dad; he is the best gift God has given me.

CHAPTER 17

It's Time!



10/12/13

Good morning, when I come back to this journal, I will probably be a married woman. I am, idk, I am shaking, so I guess that means I'm nervous but I'm also pumped to get this underway. I'm getting up there and vowing to be united w/my husband forever, under God. "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"; today is rest and I'm excited to have it. Rest is surreal and I can't wait to be Mrs. Genova. "I will gather you from all the nations and

places where I have banished you.” When God says I will gather you, I feel like I have been gathered by God in regard to my past lifestyle. I should have been banished forever but God gathered me and will bring me back to the place from which he carried me into exile. God, you’re so good. So many families and people are coming to see Pat and I get married. It’s surreal! They are coming to support us and I am so blessed to have that.

The morning of the big day was finally here. I had waited twenty-three years for this very moment, a moment that I didn’t think would come in such a beautiful way. I got up out of my king-size bed and looked out the window; the skies were blue just as I had prayed that they would be. The sky was clear as I looked out of my window towards God. It was expected to rain on my wedding day, and I don’t care what they say, nobody wants it to rain on their wedding day and it is not a sign of good luck to me.

I put on my white bridal tank top and hoodie with my glittery silver flats and was ready to do this thing. We drove out to the venue and made it up to the room where I would get changed. My bridesmaids, to my surprise, were already there and dressed. They

looked fantastic and, of course, beautiful dressed in teal lace chiffon gowns. We had two beautiful rooms upstairs in the mansion and Patrick and his groomsmen had two rooms across from us. I tried my best to hide from Patrick even before I had my gown on.

I started to get nervous, I couldn't do my hair; just curling my bangs had never been so hard in my life. My friend Christy came in to do my makeup and then another friend, Temi, finished up my hair. Our photographer was above and beyond professional. She arrived at the venue early to take pictures of the groomsmen and started to take pictures immediately. She was assertive but not rude; she was superb. My hair was curled and placed into a low bun with a beautiful hair pin that was flush against the back of my head. Now came the part I was waiting for, putting my wedding dress on. My sister helped me get into it, well actually, step into it and pull it up. White buttons ran down the back of the dress from my neck to my hips. The lace on my shoulders glittered like snow.

To my surprise, the dress still fit, too, after all that wedding planning stress.

The dress was on and now was the big reveal to all of the women there with me: my mom of course, my mother-in-law, my bridal party, my women's ministry leader, my friends and our photographer. I felt like a princess, and before we knew it, it was time to start the procession. All the women then joined hands to pray together, the whole time I am was thinking about how beautiful this moment is. Then one by one the bridesmaids exited the room to walk down the aisle with their partners. The last one to leave was my sister Angelene, my matron of honor. My father walked into the room and saw me in my wedding dress for the first time; he was all smiles his daughter was getting married. I felt myself starting to get emotional. Then the moment was here.

I locked arms with my father, bouquet in the other hand, and made my way down the steps towards the door to approach my fiancé whom I hadn't seen all day. The doors opened, the music changed, and I saw all of my loved ones standing in anticipation. I

looked up and there was my Patrick. I was so ready for this moment; neither of us cried as I walked down the aisle. My father and I stood before Patrick, my father gave me away and I put my future into Patrick's hands. I stood before him with my veil over my face. My officiant was Scott Davis, a very special man to me and the husband of my dear women's ministry leader, Dionne. As he spoke, I looked "Patrick, brother I met in Chicago" in the eyes and saw the man that had asked, "La Micia, will you be my girl?" at 'The Top of the Rock'. The man that God chose for me to be a suitable helper to. As we exchanged wedding rings we said our vows before our friends and family.

As Scott started to wrap up, I knew the words that I had waited my whole life to hear were next. These were the words that the heart broken fifteen-year-old self had hoped to just hear one day. The girl that was lost, that just wanted to be found and loved. That girl was now here. Her moment had finally come, once she let go of her heart and gave it to God to hold.

“By the power vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife; you may kiss your bride.” Patrick lifted my veil and for the very first time, I kissed my husband. And God was there.