

My Divine Fairytale



Getting diagnosed with MS at the age of 17 posed a lot of challenges. Not only was I facing uncertainty when it came to my physical health, but I also wondered what life would be like finding someone who would accept me as I was. Someone who would be willing to take this journey on with me in sickness and in health.

If there is anything that I have learned over the last 29 years of life, it's that there are no coincidences. Things don't happen by chance, but rather by divine intervention. I believe there is a purpose in both the good and the bad. Instead of letting this disease take me down a dark path of discouragement and defeat, I refused to let it stop me and trusted that there must be some purpose in it all.

In my last semester in college, I decided to volunteer with the Society as a counselor at their Journey Camp - a camp for kids whose parents have MS. I had no idea that it would be at this camp I would experience my own divine fairytale in love.

You see, I am 6'2 and had always told myself I would never marry someone shorter than me or in the military. As we were getting all the campers registered, in walks this guy wearing dog tags and of... shorter stature. Automatically, I stuck him in the "friend category" due to the two very firm non-negotiables.

His name was Kevin, and he had just returned from Iraq. He decided to join his co-pilot and work as a counselor at Journey Camp. He had no connection to MS, but figured getting some community service hours couldn't hurt. We ended up as co-counselors and got to know each other over the next few days. When camp came to a close, I was shocked by this "camp

crush" that had developed for this guy who was:

- A) Shorter than me
- B) In the military
- C) Stationed five hours away from my home in Little Rock, AR

In my mind, our paths would never cross again.

At the time, I was a patient advocate for Biogen Idec and was speaking all over the country, educating and encouraging patients with MS. Kevin had mentioned if I ever got a speaking job in Little Rock to let him know. I thought, "like that would ever happen."

I was asked to speak in Little Rock the very next week.

Kevin and I would get another opportunity to see each other, but this time, he would experience what MS is all about. Right before I left, I had my first bout of optic neuritis (traveling with optic neuritis probably wasn't the smartest decision, but sometimes a crush will make you do crazy things). Kevin got a first-hand look at the unfortunate side of this disease.

Shortly after this flare up, I had to change my disease-modifying therapy. I was about to get my first infusion and this guy I had met only a few month prior drove five hours to join me for my first infusion. This is when I knew this was more than just a crush. A few months later, I graduated college and Kevin had the opportunity to meet my family. It was then my parents told me, "I think we just met our new son-in-law."

Eight short months after meeting, we were married. Sure, this is not what I expected when I decided to volunteer at a camp, but I am beyond thankful for every detail that led up to this monumental moment.

Dating and having MS is awkward. When do I tell them? Once I tell them, will they stay? Will they care? So many questions, yet for me, it was all laid out on the table when we met. Sharing my story led to getting to know him. Our stories have the potential to make great impact and connections with those around us. We just have to muster up the courage to share. You never know where life will take you.

We have been married for six years now and what a journey it has been. My encouragement to you is: embrace every moment, both the good and the bad. It is just part of a bigger story that is being written.