

# Love of my Life

Kyra Gamelin

To this day, I can remember every detail of how it all started. I was going over to visit my old roommates/best friends in a small town an hour west of my home at the time. We were young college kids, and it was the beginning of a long and beautiful summer. The semester had been over for a month, and we had plans to hangout all summer. The first plan was a camping trip the following week. We discussed tent arrangements, who was coming, what food we were bringing, where exactly we were going to go etc.... We were taking hot dogs and buns, ingredients for s'mores, beef jerky, protein bars, and more pot than we probably should have. Each one of us was responsible for taking a cooler full of ice for the food and drinks. It was going to be a good old college party/camping trip with all our friends in the middle of nowhere. It was going to be the type of weekend that we never wanted to forget, but probably wouldn't remember. The attendants were going to be me, my old roommates, a couple of their friends, and their new roommate, you. I had met you a handful of times before this trip. We first met when we were fifteen years old, fresh out of a high school exam. I was hanging out with some friends in the school parking lot, and you were there. We never really got close though, until that camping trip.

I remember blasting the most upbeat tunes I had and singing all the way there. The excitement for our weekend of fun was practically bursting out the windows of my little black Honda Civic. I had to follow some pin on a map that you guys sent me. I got lost down who knows how many dirt and gravel roads, but I made it. The spot was beautiful. It was like a little canopy of trees with a lovely little stream that made a relaxing, almost melodic trickling noise in the silence of the night. There was an entrance to the little area that was about two car lengths wide, with a hefty tree trunk in the middle. Once we entered there was a large circular area cleared out with a fire pit in the middle. There were four tents set up already; one large red one with multiple 'rooms', a medium sized blue tent, an itty-bitty one-person tent, and a huge hanging tent that was suspended in the trees. There were also three intricately woven hammocks hanging all around in the surrounding trees. I came to find out that three of those four tents and all the hammocks belonged to you. You were the adventurous one who loved nature and camping more than any of us. There was a decently sized grill next to the fire pit, and a fold out table ready to be filled with food. Before it got too dark that first night, we all went out for a hike. It was a truly stunning forest, with enormous pine trees shadowing the hills of flowers and rivers that were living around us. The only thing more amazing than our surroundings was the look you kept giving me when you thought I couldn't see. When it got dark, all six of us climbed into the hanging tent and snuggled up to look at the sky. As it got later, and later, the sky began a light drizzle that quickly turned into a steady fall of light rain. The other 4 left for their tents, but you

stayed with me all night. It was cold and rainy, but we kept each other warm in our sleep. In the morning when we woke up, the sun was shining, and we were all dry again. We made oatmeal for breakfast in a pot over the campfire to prepare for a long day of hiking, drinking, and unintentionally catching feelings. You always told me that camping trip is when you discovered your feelings for me.

I discovered mine for you shortly after. I'm sure you at least remember this story. I had mentioned to you at one point or another that I was a horrible cook, and you took that as an opportunity. Not quite two weeks after we finished up our camping trip, you invited me so that you could teach me how to make chili. I arrived early in the afternoon, and I was eager to learn some much needed cooking skills. Little did I know I would instead be falling in love and completely forgetting that recipe. You first gave me a list of ingredients and then we got to prepping. We pulled out a cutting board and some knives and got to chopping. You were a line cook at the time and wanted to show me how to properly chop each vegetable for our chili. I don't even know what vegetables we were chopping, and I sure as hell don't remember how to cut them properly for chili, but I do remember one thing distinctly. When I couldn't quite get it right, you wrapped your arms around me to show me how to properly grip the knife. When you ran your fingers over my hand and rested your body against mine, it felt like time was moving in slow motion. I could feel your chest moving against my back as you took a breath, and the fast beating of your heart tapping my shoulders. You slowly moved my arm, and the knife along with it. When you pulled away and told me to try for myself, I was in a room full of butterflies that never went away. We threw all the rest of the ingredients into the pot, including some spices, and let it simmer all together. I don't know how much longer we left it on the stove, because I lost track of time talking with you. Eventually, the timer went off and we filled our bowls with chili. Your roommates had gotten home just in time to join us for dinner. You even bought some croissants to eat with it just in case it was too spicy for me. To this day, my favourite chili is the one you make.

After dinner we were all relaxing in the living room, talking, laughing, having a good time. We decided to watch an animated movie that you loved from your childhood. I remember it being a great movie, but three hours long. We were sitting on the same couch next to each other the entire time, but not quite touching. I wanted so badly to scoot a little closer to you or just to brush my hand against yours again. By the time the movie was over, your roommates went to bed, but we weren't tired yet. Or maybe I was a little sleepy, but I just wanted to do anything to spend more time with you. I told you about this animated series that I really liked, and you sounded interested. We agreed to watch one episode together, just to see what you thought. Well, one episode turned into two, and two turned into five and we stayed up all night, together. As each episode passed and you got more hooked on the show, I got more hooked on you. We inched closer to each other as the hours passed, and by five in the morning, your hand was protecting mine. Just your light touch colliding against my pale hand was the most intimate I had ever felt with anyone. Only days

later, you pressed your soft, plump lips against mine in the most magical kiss I had ever known. It was that night that led to you asking me out a few weeks later. It was you asking me out that led to the entire life that we built together.

Then there was the day the black Christmas tree was sparkling next to us, and we were cuddled up into each other on the old red couch of my parents' living room. The snow was falling daintily but plentifully past the window next to us, setting the Christmas Eve mood. Outside was a winter wonderland, and inside warm and happy, full of family and love. We were wearing the matching grinch pajamas I had bought for us the week before. You know the ones I mean; they say "Merry Grinchmas" on the front. Our tummies were all full of turkey, mashed potatoes, bacon Brussels sprouts, and a lovely chicken gravy to tie it all together. Dinner was over and settled and it was the perfect time to begin opening gifts. We divided them all into piles in front of each of us and took turns going around opening our presents. It was obvious which gifts were from me, in their bright red Mario and Luigi wrapping paper with handwritten sharpie notes. The Dollar Tree had good wrapping paper that year. I vividly remember the gifts I had gotten you that year. It was our first of many Christmases together, and I wanted it to be absolutely perfect. There were these little model katanas I had seen you look at online, so that evening you unwrapped two of them. I was disappointed that they weren't sharp like actual swords, but you loved them. Then there were the shoes. Your favourite pair of flat black Vans were wrapped in their new shoe box, topped with a bow. You already had that pair, but those were full of mud and covered in holes. It was more than time for new ones, plus there were the new Burton brand hoodies you got. I had my fair share of stealing those over the years. You got me a very nice purse that year too. When we went Christmas shopping for our families you noticed me eyeing it up. It was a little black purse with a long gold chain and intricate metal detailing. I loved it, but I loved you more. We were about to play the new trivia game I had bought my mother, when you told me there was something we needed to do first. My mother had bought us three beautiful new ornaments for the Christmas tree, and you wanted us to hang them together. You got the first two on while I was fretting about, picking wrapping paper off of the floor and putting things away. If I remember correctly there was a little orange Hallmark fox and an emerald-green Christmas box wrapped in a neat gold bow. You called me back to the Christmas tree away from my cleaning distractions. There was only one ornament left to hang, and you wanted me to do it. This one I remember the most clearly. It was a Jack Skellington ornament from *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. He had a bit of a bobble head with a Santa hat and glitter all over. He was holding a small silver gift on one side and his bony skeleton hand was reaching out from the other. I went to place it on the tree when something fell off of it with a flash and clattered to the floor. I thought I had broken him already, but you were already bedding down to grab it. This was the moment I realized what was happening. When I turned to see what I had damaged, you were down on one knee and the missing piece was a ring. The diamond in the middle of the ring gleamed from the lights of the tree, illuminating a

silver grim reaper hugging the gemstone. I was speechless and so were you. I stared at your goofy little smile and asked if you had a question for me. Before you could even say the word marry there were tears welling in my eyes and I managed to choke out a yes before you embraced me. When you pressed your lips into my smile, I felt at home. I wish I could go back and linger in that fleeting moment.

Another day I can recall just as distinctly is that of our wedding day. It was a year and a half after the engagement. There's nothing like the feeling I had as we locked eyes while I stepped towards you, a flowing lacy black train of fabric following me. It was a sweltering day in July, and I didn't know if I was sweating from the heat or how nervous I was to be marrying the love of my life. Realistically, it was probably a bit of both. You were wearing a stunning white suit, with an ebony button-up shirt and an eye-catching jade green tie for a pop of colour. The theme was black and white, but we had plants everywhere, so it matched perfectly. Your two brothers and two best friends stood next to you in crisp, classic black tuxedos with white collared shirts. If I thought I was boiling in my spaghetti strapped mesh dress with leg slits, I didn't want to know how warm you guys were. I hadn't even walked halfway down the aisle of rose petals before tears had bunched in my eyes and began dripping down my sweaty face. My vision was a bit blurry, but I still couldn't keep my eyes off of you. Everyone else's eyes were on me, which didn't help the nerves. The walk towards you felt endless, especially in 4-inch stiletto heels. When I finally reached you, I once again felt at home. Bright blood red rose arrangements surrounded us below a wooden arch engraved with our name's, fabric draping over the edges. There were so many faces staring back at us, your mother and stepfather on the left, my mom and dad and paternal grandparents on the right. There were rows and rows of family and friends whom we loved and cherished, but the person I loved the most was you. You said your vows to me first. I found them in an old box the other day, so now I can read them back to you:

Ever since the first day I saw you at fifteen years old, I couldn't stop thinking about you. You were beautiful, smart, funny, and more than anything, kind. We were just friends for a long time, but by some miracle, we became more. We've only been together for two short years now, which is crazy. It feels like it was yesterday, yet I also feel that we've known each other forever. I can't even begin to describe the eternal joy I feel knowing that I have the opportunity to spend the rest of my life with you. I promise to love you through ups and downs, highs and lows, adventures and misfortunes. I promise to treasure every minute of every day that we spend together and in love. You are the reason I wake up in the morning, and the calm that puts me to sleep at night. You are the person that I want to marry.

Then there were my vows to you. I don't need a paper to remember word for word, I've had them memorized for the last 10 years, since two weeks before our wedding day. They went exactly like this:

I have never known anyone else who makes me feel safe, and warm the way you do. Your kindness is a constant ray of sunshine in my life. When I'm down about even the smallest things, you're right there next to me, finding a way to make everything better. You make my world continue turning and bring me comfort in a way that no one else can. Having you in my life is a richness that no money compares to. You are my best friend, my confidant, and my life partner. You are my husband and being able to say that makes me the happiest person in the goddamn world.

It's funny thinking back to that moment now, it's like the whole day was a blur of joy and emotion, yet I know every little detail. We spent the night dancing in each other's arms, and happily crying about the future we were going to have.

These are the things I choose to think of when I look at you now. If I don't think of our memories, then I drift to the events of six days ago. It all happened too fast. We were on the highway, driving home from another one of our adventures. That's when I lost control of the vehicle. If I would've been paying more attention I might've seen the patch of ice ahead, I might've noticed how close the semi truck next to us was. Then blood, screaming for help, crying, begging for you to wake up. I know you can't see or hear me, but that doesn't mean I don't have things to say to you. I'm not ready to throw away any of our memories or store them away. I want more, but we don't always get what we want. You've been unresponsive since the day of the accident. You probably don't even remember. They said something about survivor's guilt, but it's more like already mourning for someone I can see right in front of me. Your heart is beating and oxygen flows through you, but for all intents and purposes, your life is done. Our life together is dead. Even if you did wake up right now, they said there was so much trauma to your skull that you may not even remember me. Maybe that's why I'm retelling all of this to you. There's a small part of me holding on to hope that you're listening to me right now, and one day in the future we'll laugh about this moment and put it behind us. I wish I could forget everything that has happened in the last six days. Have you forgotten?