

Worth the Wait

"There's this great guy. . .," my well-meaning friends, Frank and Cora, told me.

I'd heard that one before.

"Thanks, but no," I said. "Just can't handle anything long-distance right now. I mean, I'm trying my best to adjust to life in Florida. California's just too far away."

I didn't give Frank and Cora a chance to tell me the lucky guy's name. If I had, I could've told them that not only did I know him, but I was having lunch with him the next day.

Romance was not on my agenda. My life had been turned upside down and I was struggling to hold on. After 10 years living abroad, I'd recently returned to the States. The transition back home loomed every bit as daunting as when I left. Life in the States had changed in my decade away, but I had changed more.

Besides, I'd given up on the idea of ever getting married. I'd turned forty while hidden away in Eastern Europe as a missionary. Eligible men had been something of a rarity. I'd gotten so caught up in ministry that I hadn't noticed my time clock run out on the possibility of motherhood.

Don't get me wrong. It's not that I didn't want to get married and have children and live happily ever after. I grew up believing in fairy tales and playing house as all girls did. And I never stopped believing, in the deepest part of my heart, that God could still do the impossible in my life, even at my age and remote place in the world. But until He chose to bring the right guy along, I didn't need a husband; I just wanted one. My completeness was in Christ alone and I could trust Him to provide everything I needed.

“Worth the Wait” by Taryn R. Hutchison

My hope had been deferred for so long that I’d laid it to rest. I no longer asked God for what I wanted. I stopped hoping. And I grieved the loss of what might have been.

When I felt especially tired or lonely overseas, weak hopes resurfaced. Holidays spent alone or times when something beautiful made me ache to share it with someone special; that’s when I’d remember the good ones I’d let go and imagine what life would be like if I hadn’t.

Steve and I met when I was in my twenties. I saw him from a distance that day in church. How could I not notice him? I had never seen such a handsome guy before. Tall and dark, he had a captivating smile. Steve asked for my phone number that day and called me as soon as I got home. I had never experienced that kind of self-confidence in guys.

During our first date, Steve got straight to the point. He told me he wasn’t interested in casual dating; he wanted a serious relationship with me. His kind heart and positive spirit attracted me, but I feared rebound when he said he was recently divorced with two small kids. Besides, I already sensed God calling me to Eastern Europe. We were clearly headed in opposite directions. Not wanting to string him along needlessly, I broke up with Steve before it began. I told him I wanted to be friends but we did not have a romantic future together.

When I felt especially lonely overseas, I wondered if I’d made the right decision.

And now I found myself back in California to re-connect with friends. Steve was one of those friends. I hadn’t seen him for 10 years and it had been 14 years since our one and only date.

“Hi! Do you remember me?” I asked him over the phone.

“Do I remember you?” he said. “Taryn, you are unforgettable.”

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We got together one magical Saturday in July. Our lunch date stretched all day. We talked about everything. The time flew by and we never ran out of things to say. When Steve guided me into the restaurant with his hand on the small of my back, I felt butterflies from his touch. Later that evening, we said goodbye at my car. I would leave California the next day. I didn't know when, or if, I'd see him again. Unlike our last date, this time Steve kept his cards close to his chest.

As I drove away, I thought that Steve shouldn't be alone. I prayed as I drove and asked God to give him a wife to love him. My prayers are not always so selfless, but this time I thought about Steve; not about me.

In the quiet places in my heart, I sensed the Lord communicating with my spirit. *“I am giving him a wife: you.”*

The thought thrilled me. Still, I didn't know if Steve had received this same nudging. When I returned to my desk in Florida, five messages from him waited for me in my in-box. That's when I knew. My long-dormant hope was resuscitated.

Our coast-to-coast courtship sped by. We already knew each other well, had been carrying a flame for each other for 14 years. We had no reason to prolong things. We talked a lot on the phone, emailed daily, and hand-wrote long letters to each other. Steve visited me once in Florida and I flew to California to see him at Christmastime.

He created feasts that we ate in front of a crackling fire, took me for walks in the hills, even told me he liked to sit on the patio in the evenings and listen to crickets chirping. My heart had known he was the man for me since that magical day in July, but I needed to let my mind catch up. We discussed the few remaining issues to be certain.

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On the day of the winter solstice, the darkest day of the year but one of the brightest of my life, Steve slipped down onto one knee and asked me to marry him. I didn’t hesitate to answer, “Yes!”

Eagerly, we shared our good news with family and friends. Steve called friends who’d been praying for him for years, named Frank and Cora.

“The Frank and Cora from Hillside?,” I asked.

Steve nodded.

“I know them. Did you happen to mention who you’re engaged to?”

“Nope, just said I’d bring my fiancée over tomorrow to meet them.”

“Hey, let’s have some fun with this.”

We concocted our surprise. The next day, Steve knocked on Frank and Cora’s door and delivered the sad news that his fiancée couldn’t make it, while I walked a few laps around the block.

After a sufficient pause, I stood on their doorstep.

“Hi Frank! I was in the neighborhood . . . ,” I said.

“Have you ever met our friend, Steve?” he asked.

I thought I detected a twinkle in Cora’s eye.

“Why, yes, I think I remember you.” I thrust my hand out to Steve. “Good to see you again.”

Steve shook my hand vigorously. “That’s a beautiful diamond. Anyone I know?”

“OK, just stop. Stop it right now,” Cora said, putting her hands on top of ours. “We know. She’s engaged to you, Steve. Come here, you two, and look at something.”

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We followed her into the kitchen. Today’s page in the daily calendar bore the words, “Steve and Taryn stop by.”

“How’d you guess?” I asked.

They had us in mind for each other all along. After I’d nixed their matchmaking scheme, they decided to stop interfering and pray that God would bring us together in His timing. They fully expected He would do just that.

I’d quit praying, but thankfully they hadn’t.

Three months later, Steve and I were married.

We try not to take our love for granted. Having both been single for so many years, we knew the very real fear of never having someone to love. We had waited a long time for the right one, convinced that being alone is much better than settling. Waiting turned out to be a good thing for us. It made us more grateful. And it couldn’t thwart God’s purpose in our lives.

Sure, there are moments when we wonder what if we’d gotten married younger. I could’ve helped Steve raise his children. Maybe we would’ve had kids of our own together. But I might have resented not being able to fulfill my dream of moving to Eastern Europe. I can’t imagine my life with that chapter unwritten.

When I told my Eastern European friends the news of my impending marriage, each echoed the same sentiment. “If you had married Steve in the beginning, I never would have met you. I’m glad you waited.”

God’s timing was perfect. It was worth the wait.