

## First Destiny Then Love

Nearing the end of August, our mutual friend Elizabeth Brown came up to me and said, ' I know you received an e-harmony gift for your 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, but there is someone I think you should meet. ' I said,' I prefer to meet people face to face. ' Elizabeth said,' I met this writing professor through freshman advising and she adopted a baby girl as a single mother. ' I said,' I already like her. ' Time passed and I started reading e-harmony. Elizabeth came up to me again and said,' I have been neglectful. I need to get you and Julia together. ' I said,' Its ok, whenever. ' On Tuesday, September 4, Elizabeth Brown sent an email to Julia Sweeny and I suggesting we get together. That same day I received an email from Julia. She wrote,' I want to hear about that buffalo. ' I emailed back,' Sure. ' We exchanged photos, Julia sent me pictures of her and Korry. I thought,' Wow, she is really cute! ' I sent her pictures of me when I busted my skull open. On Thursday September 4 we met and walked to Starbucks for a coffee. She was really cute. We ordered coffee and Julia said,' I prefer to be outdoors. ' I thought to myself,' I like her even more. ' I was amazed at how open Julia was. She told me about her daughter and how she adopted her. She told me she was studying Hebrew and going to the temple. We talked for 70 minutes, but it felt like 5 minutes. Unfortunately, I had to go to class. We walked to Roop Hall together and I said we will have to try and get together soon. After my class, I said to myself,' Jim, you big dummy, you should have invited her to the math picnic. ' I was going to call her and do that when she called and asked if I would want to go to dinner with her and Korry at the Little Grill. I said,' Of course. '

I get to the Little Grill and Julia has a bumper sticker about Simple Living and one that says,' The world will know peace when the Love of Power is replaced by the Power of Love. ' My personalized license plate is,' Simple Life. ' My website has the saying,' The Power of Love is greater than the Love of Power. ' It was a wonderful dinner. Korry was a delight. Her big black eyes melted my heart. It was easy to see that her mom loved her deeply and spent a lot of time with her.

The next day, Julia came to my office around 2 p.m. and we talked for what was way too short a period. I was sure she would not come to the Math picnic, but I told her I would get there about 4 p.m. to help with the set up. I was so happy when she showed up at Purcell Park with Korry. Of course, I introduced her to several people. She, also, knew some professors in the department. Her and I talked with several couples and she seemed to totally fit in. Her, Korry and I then went to the Kids' Castle. Korry was being a typical 4 and ½ year old and running around with all the other kids. Julia and I talked while keeping an eye on Korry. Paul Warne came around and found us talking. That led us to leaving Purcell Park because Noele had triggered a car alarm. I followed Julia and Korry to what would be my new home and family. Julia and I talked until 11:30 p.m.

Everything we talked about we agreed on. It was destiny. When I gave Julia a hug good night, I told her I would be working with my brother-in-law Larry on the addition to his family's house. She asked if she could come out to Spring Creek and see the house. She said she had been to the Spring Creek Town Hall. I gave her 'bad' directions on how to get there.

She showed up on Saturday around 6 p.m. It was a great night. She liked my sister Diane and Larry. Korry loved Spring Creek. My buddy Jacob asked if I met Julia on e-harmony.com. I said, 'No. She is a JMU professor.' He really liked Julia. Julia said good night around 9 p.m. and I gave her a hug under a bright moon lit night.

Sunday morning I went for a rode ride on my bicycle and Julia and I talked. She decided to come over to Spring Creek again. A close family friend, Johnny was visiting. Julia got there about dinner time. Diane really liked Julia and said, 'I have to show you my flowers.' Julia said something to me. Larry says to me, 'You did not answer her.' I said, 'I never listen to women.' He said, 'SH! She will hear you.' I said, 'You like her.' He said, 'Of course I do and I don't want you to mess this up!' Johnny just watched the show.

On Monday evening I went over to Julia's house. We went and picked up Korry and then visited the Marins. I had met the Marins through my close friend Ijeoma. We then went back to Julia's house. I told Julia what Larry had said. She then said, 'Can I ask you a stupid question?' I said, 'You're a teacher, there is no stupid question.' She asked, 'Can I hold your hand?' I said, 'That's a great question!' We held hands for a while. Julia tells me that she emailed Elizabeth and told Elizabeth she is smitten. That night, Julia asked me to kiss her. We both agreed that night that God had brought us together at the right time in each of our lives.

The next two nights I spent time with Johnny hiking and visiting the Luray Caverns. After the hike with Johnny, I went to see Julia. We talked again for a long time. We find out we have a lot of unusual things in common. I calm Julia and tell her I will not have sex with her until I marry her. She likes that. After the Luray Caverns, Johnny and I stop at Julia's house. Johnny graciously watched Korry while Julia and I spent some quality time together. That evening Johnny said, 'I don't know what the future holds, but I wish you luck with Julia.' Later I learned that Johnny told Larry and Diane that Julia was a keeper. He is right. Julia and I are talking a lot and spending time together. Of course, our work is piling up.

It is September 13, 2007. Julia and I have a one week anniversary to celebrate. I, the hopeless romantic, want to go with her to Starbuck's, but it does not work out. Julia and I go to the day care to get Korry. Julia asks Delores to put my name on the list of emergency contacts for Korry. After that, I say, 'God, if it is right give me the opportunity to ask Julia to marry me.' Julia, Korry and I spend the evening together. During the evening, Julia tells me someone is driving by her house and it is bothering her. Julia tells Korry it is time to go to bed. Korry decides she does not want to go to bed. Julia is determined to get her to bed. Julia asks me not to leave. I say, 'Julia, why don't you walk me to the car?' Korry screams, 'NO!' Julia says, 'Yes!' After a short round of watching this Mexican standoff, I suggest that Korry look out the window and watch me say goodbye to mommy. Korry, reluctantly, says, 'OK!' Julia and I walk out in front of her house and stand on the sidewalk and hug. I say, 'Korry needs a dad.' Julia smiles a big smile. I then say, 'Julia needs a husband.' She looks at me with a bigger smile. I get

in my car and drive to Spring Creek. I call Julia when I get home and she asks, 'Did what I think happened just happen?' I ask, 'What do you think happened?' She says, 'You asked me to marry me.' I said, 'Yes.' We talk about that for about 20 minutes and then say, 'Good Night!' I call two of my closest friends. Their daughter, Catherine answers the phone. I met Catherine when she was 3, she is now 20. I ask her to get her dad on one phone and her mom on the other. I tell them I am married. I heard two big thumps. JUST KIDDING! I then call my two close friends in Wyoming. Mary answers the phone. I ask her to get Johnny on the other line. Johnny says, 'Jimmy, what's going on?' I say, 'I just asked Julia to marry me and she said, 'Yes''. Johnny says, 'Wo! Who is Julia?' I say, 'A JMU Writing professor I met a week ago.' Johnny says, 'Same old, Jimmy! Always doing things differently.'

I am now alone on the porch thinking about Julia and the crazy guy. I cannot relax. I get in my car and drive to Julia's. I stand outside her bedroom window and call, 'Julia, Julia' What seems like hours pass. Julia comes out on the front porch two minutes later and I am in love. I now know it is destiny and that love will keep us together. We hug and talk for a long time. I sleep on the sofa.

I wake up Friday morning and it is not a dream. We are both happy. We take Korry to day care together. Julia and I decide we will wait on Korry, pick a date and tell others. We are happy as can be on Friday. We buy Elizabeth flowers that day for introducing us. On Friday evening Korry says to me, 'I have a secret, but you cannot tell mommy.' I lie and say, 'Ok.' She says, 'I want you to ask mommy to marry you, but don't tell mommy.' I lie again. I ask Julia, 'How do I get her to tell you her secret?' Julia says, 'Be patient.' I am a pretty patient guy, but I start thinking. I am pretty good with kids. I am sure I can get Korry to tell mommy her secret.

On Saturday, Julia, Korry and I are working on the house. Korry and I are on the front porch playing. I ask Korry, 'Did you tell mommy your secret?' She says, 'No, I want you to do it.' I say when. She says, 'Now.' I ask her, 'Do you know what it means if I ask mommy to marry you?' She smiles. I say it means I will be your daddy. She says, 'That's ok.' I then say, 'It means you have to listen to me.' She hesitates for several hours. JUST KIDDING! Two minutes later, she says, 'That's ok, too.' I say, 'Well, lets go tell mommy your secret.' She says, 'Lets wait!' I say, 'How long?' She says, 'After breakfast.' I stop sweating.

After breakfast Julia, Korry and I go to the same spot on the sidewalk and I ask Julia again to marry me. This time she says, 'NO WAY, JOSE!' Again, JUST KIDDING! After a lot of hugging and kissing we get back to work. Korry starts calling me daddy and does it at least 400 times that day.

I climb up on Julia's steep roof. Julia is thinking I am going to fall to my death. Korry is yelling daddy, daddy. I am thinking if I don't look down at Korry, Julia is going to think I am a big jerk. I position myself and say, 'Yes, Korry?' She points to the sidewalk and says, 'Look what mommy did!' I look and there is a big pink heart with the initials, JSS, JDS and KGS inside it on the sidewalk where I asked Julia to be one with me.

After finishing the roof, Julia and I call Larry and Diane and ask if they will watch Korry while we go look at houses. They say, 'Sure! ' Korry loves Larry! That night I am wondering if Julia is expecting an engagement ring. I am thinking I would rather give the money for children like Korry.

Sunday we drive to Spring Creek. We leave Korry with Larry and Diane. While driving Julia says, 'I hope you are not going to buy me an engagement ring. I can just wear my grandmother's ring and we can save the money to use it to help others. We drive pass a new housing subdivision in the middle of a beautiful area where the cut down all the trees. After 5 minutes, I say, 'How can people do such a thing and why do people need such big houses. ' Julia smiles and says, 'I was so worried you were going to like those houses. For the rest of the drive we like and dislike all the same houses and places. That evening we tell my sister Diane and Larry. Sadie goes to the computer. Diane and Larry are amazed, but happy. We ask them not to tell anyone yet. Julia, Korry and I go to Julia's house. I drive back to Spring Creek that night.

I go to bed and fall asleep. At 4:30 a.m. my cell phone wakes me up. This is so unusual. For one thing my cell phone does not ring in Spring Creek. Another thing is who is calling me now. I see on the caller ID that it is Julia. I pick up the phone and run in the field so I can talk to her. If I was thinking clearly I would just have called her on the land line. Julia says Korry woke me at 1 a.m. She cannot breathe well, but you should go back to sleep. RIGHT! I was at her house by 5:00 a.m. Korry and I crawled in the sleeping bag at 5:30 a.m. She called me daddy every 5 minutes until 8:30 a.m. when I carried her to day care. I called Julia and told her I did not think she had to worry about Korry's health. Korry stayed awake until 9 p.m. Monday night. I need to bottle her energy.

I called Julia because I kept seeing these two gold rings in my face. I told her I wanted to see her to talk about it. I did not tell her what it was about. She said, 'Lets just get married. ' I said, 'How did you know that was what I was thinking? ' She said, 'DUH!' I walked over to Julia's office and she had a line of students. She left her office and came and talked to me. I said, 'Lets exchange our marriage vows. ' She said, 'Right here! ' I thought, 'YES! ', but said, 'No. '

At 2:00 that day Julia was at my office with Korry. The day care said they were worried about Korry's health. I said, 'So am I. Whatever you fed this child I want now. ' Korry kept yelling, 'Daddy, throw me in the air. ' I am thinking, I am going to pass out from exhaustion and Korry wants to do a dance marathon. Julia and I tried to talk about our marriage, but Korry just wanted to play.

I went back to Roop and taught my class and then went to Julia's house. We talked and decided to relax instead of get married. When Korry finally fell asleep at 9 p.m Julia asked, 'Are we ready? ' We talked about why we should not get married tonight. She said, 'Well, we are going to get married that's a certainty so I think we should exchange vows. ' I sid,' Sounds great to me! ' Julia asked me to read my favorite love story to her first. I had told her earlier that the story of Isaac and Rebekah was my favorite love story. So I read the story to Julia on her futon. I never felt so good in my life. We then held hands and walked out to the heart on the front sidewalk. It was CLOSE to a full moon. I gave my vows first and told Julia I would love her until I died and would do my best to make her happy and to be the dad she wanted me to be. I told her that in the New Testament it says that a man should love a woman like Jesus loves the church. I told her I would try and do that. Julia then told me she loved me and would do her best to keep me in her life. It was the best night of my life. September 24, I will never forget it.

The next evening we told Diane and Larry. Larry said you need to make it legal. I said it is only paper.

Anyhow, on Wednesday September 26 Julia and I went down to buy a marriage license. The woman who helped us get the marriage license was incredibly nice., even though we told her we met on September 6. She then showed a list of people who could marry us. Julia said, 'Heather helped me adopt Korry. ' She can probably marry us. Heather came in the room and Julia asked Heather if she remembered her. Heather said, 'Yes and I can marry you right now!' Julia and I looked at each other and said, 'GREAT! ' Heather read a beautiful vow for me to agree to and I did not hesitate. She then read it to Julia, who waited an hour before she said yes. JUST KIDDING. It was about 5 seconds,, but seemed longer. Thirty minutes later we had our wedding rings. We picked up OUR daughter 15 minutes after that. That evening I drove to Spring Creek and showed Larry and Diane our marriage certificate and my wedding ring.

Julia and I now live in her house. We do not want things because we do not like things and because we are planning on moving. Korry is excited about living in the country and having lambs and horses.