

Cloud-9

The story of how my
husband and I met and
fell in love.

Gretchen Kinney

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Kevin and Gretchen playing games at Kevin's House

Chapter 1: Freshman Year

I think I have a new crush. His name is Kevin Kinney, and he is in my biology and HGAP classes.

Gretchen, September 21, 2014

The first time I saw Kevin, I knew I was in love. A shy ninth grader, I never really spoke to boys (or people in general), but I was an expert at admiring from afar (i.e staring). Kevin caught my eye from the very beginning. He was smart, cute, friendly, and had an easy confidence that caught my eye. We had three classes together: seminary, Human Geography, and Biology which for some reason became my three favorite classes Freshman Year.

A month after our initial meeting, I finally worked up the courage to talk to him. Nervous, but excited, I approached him and said seven words coming straight from my heart.

"You're in my HGAP and Biology class," I said. I waited approximately five seconds after his response ("oh, cool") before fleeing the scene and congratulating myself on a job well done.

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For the next several months, this was the extent of our relationship. I would find any excuse to talk to him possible. I figured out his class schedule so I could reorganize my class route to casually wave at him in the hallway. I concocted farfetched plans to catch his attention *while doing nothing to arouse his suspicions that I was in love with him.* Because heaven forbid, he discover that I had a crush on him. I wasn't sure exactly what would happen if he did find out, but I knew that I would be mortified beyond belief.

Thanks to my weeks of stalking efforts, I knew that 4/7 shirts he wore were T-shirts that came from Youth Conferences. That meant these were shirts that I had too. Suddenly, Youth Conference T-shirts were all that I wore. On the off chance he was wearing the same shirt, that gave me the perfect excuse to casually (and dare I say cooly) go up to him and say the original line, "Hey, I like your shirt!" Afterwards, I'd congratulate myself for my bravery and creativity.

Unfortunately, outside of school, my interactions with Kevin remained limited. Being the social caterpillar that I was, I spent most weekends nestled in a cocoon of blankets, reading cheesy teenage romance novels and eating Rocky Road ice cream. I'd leave my nest on occasion if friends invited me out somewhere, but I was never one to purposefully subject myself to social interaction. The chances of meeting Kevin outside of a school environment were slim to none.

Gretchen's Journal Entries, December

Kevin Kinney is so adorable. I'll just say that flat out. Sigh. :) We went ice skating with the 1st ward. Kevin said hi to me, we sat at the same table, and we talked a lot (as a group.) I hope he doesn't have a crush on someone else.

Kevin Kinney is so cute. Sigh. I love him. How do you even tell if a guy likes you?

Kevin Kinney is totes adorbs.

However, there was one way. Although Kevin and I were not in the same ward, we shared a church building and sometimes our wards hosted events together. For example, one night in December, I showed up to the ice skating activity only to discover that Kevin's ward was there too! Kevin and his friends sat at my table, and we talked a lot. Afterwards, I even stole the sticker Kevin wore when he was ice skating and put it in my journal. Yeah ... I wasn't wobsessed at all!

Also, every month, the stake hosted a youth dance for teenagers 14-18. Kevin and I were both 15, and he almost always came to dances. Even better, being in the same seminary class, we were both a part of a mutual friend group that hung out together at dances. I knew this was my chance to strike, and I created a foolproof plan. By lurking nearby and not acknowledging him in any way at dances, he would have to fall in love with me. Again, my greatest fear was that he would one day discover I was in love with him. Scary.

Near the end of November, a new opportunity to spend time with Kevin presented itself. Friends from Kevin's ward start-

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ed hosting game nights where they would invite mutual friends. Including Kevin and me. These game nights were often held a little before stake dances. This allowed me to woo Kevin with my *non-exisetent* board game skillz. December 31st was the New Year's Dance. I spent extra time getting dressed up and curling my hair. The dance was better than I could have ever imagined, even earning a four page spread in my journal.

I knew that under no circumstances would I approach Kevin to ask him to dance with me. I knew that showing him inordinate attention would only lead to suspicions that I was harboring a secret crush on him. Which I was not. At this point, I hadn't told anyone about my crush on Kevin. It had been a couple months, but still only my diary knew the secret. Unfortunately, my plan not to ask him to dance failed. My friend Sarah brought one of her friends to the dance, named Vidya. Sarah, Vidya, Joseph, Kevin, Amma, and I all chatted as a group. A couple hours into the dance, the DJ announced that the next dance would be Lady's Choice. I was about to go off to find my next target (in order to hide my real target, Kevin), but then the unthinkable happened. Sarah's friend Vidya came up to me and told me I should ask Kevin to dance. I was torn. Accept, and I would be ASKING KEVIN KINNEY THE LOVE OF MY LIFE to dance. What if he suspected that I liked him? However, the alternative was worse; refuse and Vidya would see that I was shy about asking Kevin to dance. ERGO REVEALING that I had a crush on him. Before I got too caught up in my indecision, I turned, tapped Kevin on the shoulder and asked him to dance.

The dance was like a dream. His smile was so cheerful and gorgeous, and he even talked about his kitten! His kitten! I fell

more in love with him with every step. Finally, the dance ended, and part of me was sad that I had already danced with Kevin. In typically friend group dancing arrangements, the boys usually danced with each of the girls once. But although I knew Kevin wouldn't ask me to dance this dance, I was already the happiest girl in the room.

The night continued, and I had fun dancing with friends and having a good time. Soon, the last dance before the New Year started, and it was a slow song. I started making myself look available, but then the most amazing thing in the world happened. Kevin asked me to dance. HE asked ME to dance! After we had already danced! And it was the dance right before midnight too! I was on cloud nine. Even though it was almost 1 am by the time I got home, I spent at least 30 minutes writing out a four page spread of everything that happened at the dance, and every wonderful moment with Kevin.

Gretchen's Journal Entry, New Year's Dance

Anyway, we got to the dance where I hung out with Amma a lot. I danced with a lot of boys (6 or 7), all of them but 1 asked me.

1. Kevin Kinney-I asked him to due to the prodding of Sarah's friend Vidya. I couldn't refuse because that would look like I like him. Which I do. But oh well. We talked about his kitchen remodel and the kitten his family got for Christmas. It's named Alley.

[. . .]

4. Kevin Kinney-HE ASKED ME! (Squeel!) And we had already danced with each other. I was running low on topics, so I brought up school (ugh. I was really reaching.) He can't access his exam grade online because myPISD is not working for him. Talked

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about procrastinating on HCAF notes and not taking Humanities notes. Gretchen, January 1, 2015

With the start of the new year, I concocted even more plans to capture Kevin's attention while still seeming only friendly. My next opportunity to strike came on Valentine's Day. My high-school runs a flower delivery service and for \$2.00 anyone can send a flower to anyone in the school. Enterprising young romantics often used this service in an attempt to either anonymously or publicly proclaim their love for the guy/girl they had a crush on. Not me. I knew that even sending a flower anonymously came with risks of discovery. Someone had to fill the orders! What if Kevin suspected that I was his secret admirer? Unacceptable.

I wanted to give a flower to Kevin, but in a way that wouldn't make him suspicious. If I couldn't give just him a flower, I would give everyone a flower. I went to the grocery store and bought three GIANT bunches of chrysanthemums. I placed them inside a plastic pitcher, and, along with a pair of scissors, brought them to seminary early the next morning. Sadly, my plan was thwarted. Kevin arrived late to seminary, after I had already handed out the flowers. I was discouraged, but not defeated, and I enacted Plan B. I brought the flowers to school, and started handing them to all my classmates. Everyone got a flower, some people even got two if they asked for them. I claimed that I wanted to make sure everybody got a flower on Valentine's Day, but I was totally just trying to give Kevin a flower. Kevin was in my second period Geography class, and I picked this moment as my time to strike. But, when I got to class, I saw that he

was already wearing a flower *from another girl* behind his ear. It was like someone stabbed a dagger through my heart.

I lost my nerve, and although I gave flowers to most of my classmates, Kevin didn't get one. Not yet. Fast forward to Biology. After spending lunch staring longingly at Kevin's table, I tried to build up enough courage to approach him. He was standing with a group of friends outside the Biology classroom, so I rushed up to them and handed all of them flowers. Including Kevin! The mission was a success. I was very happy to see that my green chrysanthemum was placed behind Kevin's other ear in biology.

Kevin and Gretchen, Valentine's Day 2017



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Gretchen and Kevin before a Stake Dance



Chapter 2: March

My next opportunity to spend time with Kevin came during Spring Break when our Stake was hosting a Pioneer Trek. Our wards held practices together for the pioneer dances, and I always tried to position myself close to Kevin, so I could dance with him. We never danced together as often as I liked, but I looked forward to every dance practice for the chance to see him.

"[This new journal is] a continuation on what I call 'The Year of the Kinney.' Trek was awesome. I really felt the spirit there even through all the mud. [...] I'm so awkward around Kevin. I asked him to dance at the Hoedown which was fun, but I was so nervous." March 14, 2015

The week of Trek, I was disappointed not to be in Kevin's family, but my family walked right behind his during our hikes. This gave me ample opportunity to stare at the back of his head and watch him walk. Not in a creepy way or anything. Just in a crazy obsessive way. The night of the Hoedown, the whole

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group participated in line dances and folk dances where everyone would swap partners every minute or so. I was eager for the opportunity to dance with Kevin even though I knew it wouldn't last long. I still remember his warm smile as we briefly held hands during the dance. I was overjoyed. Later that night, when I saw him go back to join the dancing, I went back too. This time the group was much smaller, and I danced with Kevin nearly half the time. I was in heaven.

Gretchen's Journal Entries, March 15-19

"I wore a really cute white outfit to church. A lot of people gave me compliments, but I didn't see Kevin. Sigh." Gretchen, March 15, 2015

"I chatted with Kevin, Joseph, and Elizabeth this morning in seminary. Kevin's house was being remodeled, but it was done badly. [. . .] Anyway, there's a dance this weekend! I can't wait to dance with Kevin!" Gretchen, March 16, 2015

"Today I didn't go to seminary because I had UIL today in McKinney. [. . .] Kevin asked [my brother] Corey where I was in seminary today. He also asked me how UIL was." Gretchen, March 17, 2015

"Kevin was at seminary, but not at school. Maybe he was sick." Gretchen, March 18, 2015

"Kevin chose to be my partner in Biology today. I had a packet that I grabbed and his table didn't have one. It was a lot of fun. Dance tomorrow!" Gretchen March 19, 2015.

I continued to look for every opportunity to spend time with Kevin. The Biology seating chart was redone every six weeks,

and I dreamed of the day where Kevin and I would finally sit next to each other, and I would have an excuse to talk to him during Biology. That never happened, but one day we were assigned to work on a study guide. There weren't enough packets for everyone, and Kevin asked if he could share with me. I tried to be as casual as possible even though on the inside I was giddier than I could even believe. He felt so warm sitting next to me.

Gretchen's Journal Entries, March 21 - April 16

"The dance was super fun. I danced with Kevin twice (the first time he asked me, the second time we asked each other at the same time.) He was my first dance (minus my brother) and my last dance of the night. I danced with 8 people and told cheesy pickup lines." March 21, 2015

"So I told Sarah I like Kevin. She was really surprised I hadn't told her earlier. [...] Lydia said she had a tiny crush on Kevin in *Mia Maids*. I stood up and said, "STAY AWAY FROM MY MAN SISTER." Yeah." March 22, 2015

"I NEED TO TALK TO KEVIN!" March 25, 2015

"Calm down obsession! Our team won science jeopardy! Well, technically we tied with Kevin and his group. It was pretty much a contest of who could write the fastest. I had another opportunity to talk to Kevin this morning, but sissy pushover me didn't take it. [...] Also, obsessive me better calm down. She practically has me and Kevin engaged because we both wore our trail of faith dog tags to school and got assigned the

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same topic in HGAP. (Chicken/Indigenous Chicken Meat/Poultry. WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN???" March 26, 2015

"Kevin sat next to me in seminary today although TECHNICALLY it was by Joseph." March 27, 2015

"Kevin waved to me in the hallway at church." March 29, 2015

"So Dad said there was no seminary today. He was wrong. He read the sheet incorrectly. Kevin asked me why I wasn't at seminary." March 30, 2015

"I finally bit the bullet and talked to Kevin during seminary today. We had a brief discussion over HGAP projects. Mine sucks." March 31, 2015

"Sister Ellet called me this morning and asked me to talk to Kevin about something he needed to do for seminary. He already knew about it though." April 7, 2015

"So have I mentioned I'm awkward? I guess I have. Mutual was pretty fun although I kept messing up on some stuff. UGH! I saw Kevin in the hallway a few times (I confess-I came a TAD early to mutual to see him pass by. He wears his scout uniform." April 8, 2015

"Kevin and I were seated next to each other today [in Bio] (it was boy-girl/boy-girl)." April 9, 2015

"My patheticness has reached a new stage as I ... ahem ... coincidentally altered my route to French so I could ... coincidentally ... wave hello to Kevin. Sigh. Operation Stalker was a success." April 13, 2015

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"Kevin is super cute" April 14, 2015

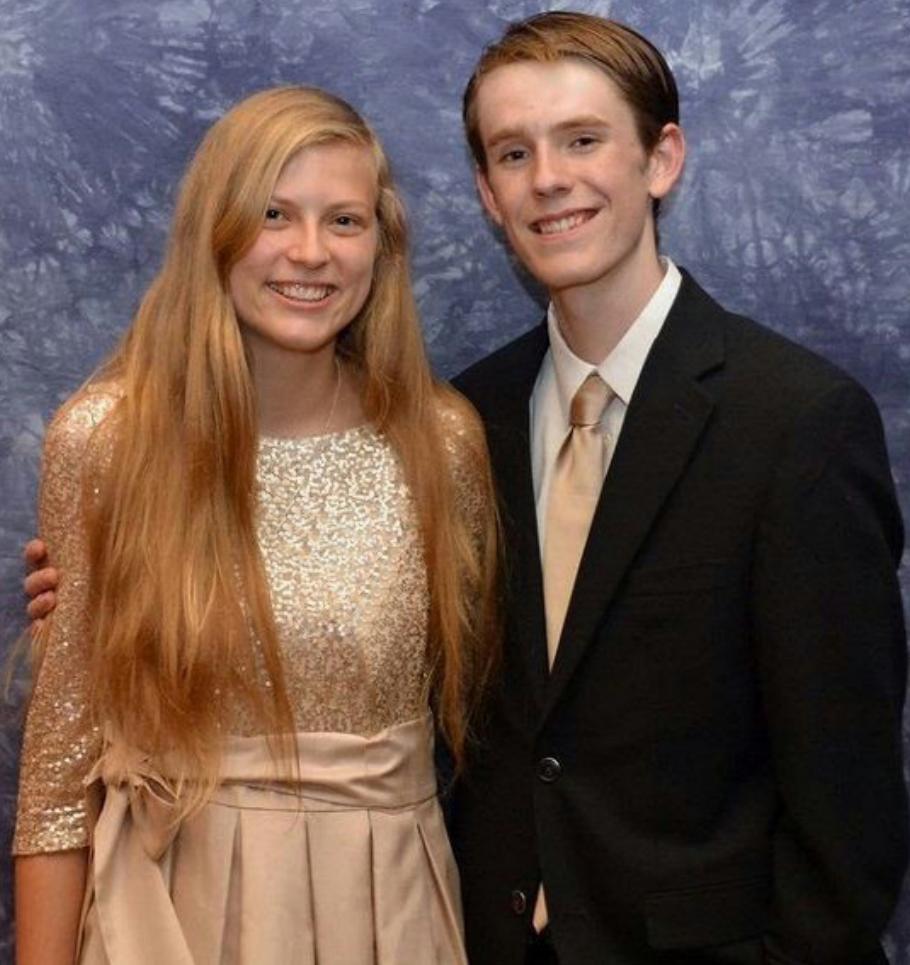
"Today was awkward in seminary. Kevin was late getting a ride, and we had an awkward 5 minute conversation. Ugh. Kill me please. Why must I be SO awkward?" April 15, 2015

"I figured it out. If I wait 45 seconds after orchestra, I'll bump into Kevin. If I wait approximately a minute after French, I'll bump into him on the stairs (unconfirmed)." April 16, 2015

Kevin and Gretchen, Nauvoo 2017



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Gretchen and Kevin at Kevin's Band Banquet, 2017

Chapter 3: The Revelation

"It's my half birthday! YAY! I'm so tired. Kevin came to seminary in a tux. He looked super cute and I commented on it and I felt so awkward. Tomorrow is the Mia Maid/Teacher thing. The theme is Black and White." Gretchen, April 17, 2015.

That weekend, the Stake held a "Black and White Ball." I, of course, got dressed up super cute and was excited to spend the evening with Kevin. Two of our friends, Sarah and Joseph, were dating, and they liked to host pre-dance parties. Kevin would always come, so I made sure to be there to spend as much time with him as possible. We played games like pool and ping-pong (which I inevitably lost at) and ate snacks. I told Kevin about my half-birthday and about how I ate half a birthday cake as a treat. He was adorable. (He wore his tux to the dance, and I almost died! He looked so dreamy)

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Gretchen's Journal Entries, April 18 - 19

"I danced with Kevin once. Then we had a really in depth discussion about band instruments. I'm too shy, but I asked him to dance." April 18, 2015

"KEVIN LIKES ME! OH MY GOSH HE LIKES ME! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! I'm super happy. I have no idea what to do. What am I supposed to do? I figured out because of Sarah. I heard it straight from the horse's best friend's girlfriend's mouth. Oh my gosh. Wow. So Kevin told Joseph after church, and Joseph told Sarah immediately afterwards. He made her promise not to tell, but Sarah told me anyway.

Sarah: Someone likes you.

Me: Who?

Sarah: I can't tell you.

Me: Do I like them?

Sarah: Maybe.

Me: Is it who I think it is?

Sarah: Yeah.

I ran out of class (passed Kevin's brother on the way) and ran out of the building to squee. I'm so happy! I have no idea how long he's liked me for. I need Sarah to get me more info. Oh my gosh he looked so cute in his tux. After class I ran around the church. It was bigger than I thought. I just realized whenever I feel strong emotion, I run. Oh my gosh, I don't even know what to do. What do I do?" Gretchen, April 19, 2015

"Helikesmehelikesmehelikesmehelikesme. KEVIN KINNEY LIKES ME" Gretchen, April 19, 2015

The day after the dance, I received big news. My friend Sarah told me that Joseph (her boyfriend and Kevin's friend) told her that Kevin told him that he had a crush on me! I was so excited and I felt like I could fly. I ran out of the church, took my shoes off, and started running around the church, getting my feet covered in mud. I still remember how happy I felt when I found out he liked me.

Of course, my behavior didn't change much. Even though Kevin liked me, and I knew he liked me, I was still too shy to act like more than friends or to approach him more than I already did. But, along with my new knowledge, I noticed that Kevin's behavior changed a little too. He started sitting next to me more, and he would go to the library during study hall like I did.

Gretchen's Journal Entries, April 21 - 25

"Ok: Kevin update: So he said hi to me a few times today. The first was in seminary where he gave me a small wave. Then he also said hi in HGAP. I complimented his Trail of Faith T-Shirt. I wonder if he wore it for that very reason. And his tux to the dance. But I don't know. Sarah said Kevin and I looked cute together." April 21, 2015

"Yeah so Kevin and I are kind of mutually ignoring each other. I don't think he knows that I like him (he might suspect). We had a small conversation in seminary about band music. We also talked about HGAP notes in study hall. Me, Joseph, and Kevin are going to Sarah's tennis match this Friday. Or if it gets rained out, her house for movies and food." April 21, 2015

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"Kevin said hi to me again today. We talked about the quiz for a bit. Yesterday, I planned to 'accidentally' drop my pens as Kevin walked by so he could help me pick them up, but it failed drastically. I came by too late after he passed by and didn't get to drop them. Oh well." April 27, 2015

"I'm so tired. I took three tests. They were all pretty easy. I think I did okay. Kevin was confused on the same question I was on the Bio test. We also made the same grade on the Humanities test." April 24, 2015

"I went to Joseph's house and lost pathetically at every game. Apparently, Kevin was being extra adorable for me according to Joseph from Sarah (i.e. less loud and competitive). He was pretty cute. Kevin and Joseph's friend Sam came over. Sarah beat Joseph twice at pool, but he wouldn't accept that. I lost pathetically at anything. Kevin texted me." April 25, 2015

Eventually, Kevin got my number from my friend, and we started to text. We asked each other questions about our families, our interests, hobbies, but most of all we told each other horrible puns.

Gretchen's Journal Entries, April 26 - August 8

"Kevin is so cute. I need to find a way to talk to him. But how . . . ? I have his number, but what to text?" April 26, 2015

"Kevin is so sweet. Apparently, Corey thinks all teenage girls are overly obsessed with guys. Which is true. Kevin, Joseph, and I were talking after seminary and Joseph was opening the door and shoving cold air into my face. Kevin told him to stop. Awww . . . He also came to the Bishopric Bash, the last part, and saw

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me make the winning out! I think I might be coming down with something." April 29, 2015

"Kevin texted me again today! Yay! I didn't go to seminary, so Kevin asked me why I didn't go. Then we exchanged messages about HGAP. I still have a sore throat, but I have the devotional tomorrow at seminary." April 30, 2015

"OH MY GOSH! Today was just ... wow ... in HGAP KEVIN SAT NEXT TO ME. OH. MY. GOSH. He said, 'I can't see the screen.' But there was totally an empty seat in front of the one he took. He also graded my Free Response question and read it aloud to Mr. Barker, so I could get full points. TWICE! He pointed out that the question said give AN effect, not more than one. And when my FRQ's point wasn't on there, he read it aloud, so I could get credit. I got more points than him in total, which is a first. Then in Biology, him and his friend sat next to me and my friends. Anyway, we did the science review guide together. He also helped me with my math homework. I corrected him on one problem. I go to the library during study hall, and Kevin came with me today. Kevin has got game. That boy be smooth. I texted him 'good luck on your audition,' and he texted back 'Thanks.' I was like WHYY! I seem SO WEIRD!" May 1, 2015

"I really need to stop obsessing about Kevin to other people. It's not like they want to know. /he told me about band auditions today. He did well, but he thought the other trumpets didn't. He likes 50's jazz, which I listened to today." May 2, 2015

"I did not text/see/communicate with Kevin today." May 3, 2015

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"Who texted Kevin for almost two hours today? I did. Kevin stayed home sick today. I texted him this morning and he didn't respond until 7:20ish."

"Kevin update: I asked him for help with my math homework, I kinda felt like an idiot because it took him five times to explain. Oh well. I texted Kevin and asked him when the Humanities thing was due (even though I already knew). He had forgotten about it, so I reminded him." May 11, 2015

"I think Kevin has permanently moved his seat next to me in HGAP [. . .] Rat dissections are next week. I won't do it." May 13, 2015

"I texted Kevin today. Why won't he text first? Kevin asked me for help on the math homework, and I was like uh.... But we figured it out." May 14, 2015

"Kevin texted me today. It was mildly awkward, and he stopped in the middle of the convo. He sort of walked to class with me today. We went from science and discussed the HGAP test. Joseph asked me about it, and Kevin dropped back to talk." May 15, 2015

"The dance was 80s themed, and it was Girl's Choice. I danced with Kevin three times. (He asked me once, I asked him twice)."

May 16, 2015

"Today was good. I saw Kevin during church. He got a haircut. His brother's name is Aiden. We had YW in Excellence today. Sarah didn't go because she went to dinner with Joseph and Kevin's families. They got a hold of Sarah's phone where she

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said about the weird red circle I got on my face. Lydia was talking with Kevin about the time I ran around the church."

May 17, 2015

"We did worm dissections [during Biology] today. I wanted to go to the library during study hall, but Kevin went, and I didn't want to be awkward and follow him, so I stayed in science."

May 18, 2015

"The rat dissection was horrible. Kevin had way too much fun dissecting. Although I guess that's okay. [...] Kevin took his scripture mastery test in seminary." May 19, 2015

"So Kevin has really long incisors like a vampire. His nose was bleeding before seminary. We played sardines in seminary. [. . .] I texted Kevin, but I forgot to hit send, so our conversation cut off in the middle." May 20, 2015

"This morning was the seminary breakfast. It was the last day of seminary this year. Kevin pulled up a chair and sat next to me. I went to the library during study hall, and Kevin came with me. We had a little discussion and I sat at his table."

May 21, 2015

"OH. MY. GOSH. Kevin went with me to the library today. Jason came too. It was kind of awkward at first, but he sat at my table and we talked/ Anyway, the cool part is that after we left the library, KEVIN WALKED WITH ME TO CLASS. He went down the main stairs, walked with me to orchestra, THEN WENT UP THE ORCHESTRA STAIRS! YAY!" May 23, 2015

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"Yesterday night was Josh's party. It was a lot of fun. Kevin was super adorable, as always. I sat next to him, and he told a lot of funny stories. When I went places, he kind of went with me." May 24, 2015

"So Sarah sends approximately 1 out of every 5 of my texts to Joseph. Yeah, I know. Awkward. Oh my gosh he knows I like Kevin. Yeah. Anyway, the party was a lot of fun. Of course, the younger siblings were all like "ooo Kevin and Gretchen." Kevin's brother went up and asked me, "Do you like Kevin?" I said no. Ugh. Luke said Kevin started to blush when he found out I was coming to the party. [...] I beat Kevin at pool." May 25, 2015

"I texted Kevin today. Mildly awkward." May 26, 2015

"I texted Kevin today. [...] Kevin called me fabulous. Indirectly." May 27, 2015

"Kevin stayed home with his sister Ella today. He's so sweet. The pool party went okay. [...] I sat next to Kevin in the hot tub. Yeah so ... everyone was teasing Kevin about liking me. AWKWARD! Yeah. Kevin's brother said, 'our mom asked Kevin who he was texting, and he said, 'a girl I like.'" I texted him during school today." May 29, 2015

"I don't know what to do about Kevin ... Sigh ... I don't want to be a 'thing.' I mean I want to, but ... oh I don't know. We texted a bit today." May 30, 2015

"Sticker I won in Kahoot. I beat Kevin. 1st place! I win in Kahoot a lot. Kevin went to the library with me today. I texted Kevin for help with math. It helped." June 1, 2015

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"I took my math exam today. It was very confusing. Kevin visited our class during break and after the test. I didn't say anything to him. [...] I texted Kevin today." June 2, 2015

"Kevin sat next to me after the Bio test." June 4, 2015

"LAST DAY OF SCHOOL YAY! [...] I got a 100 on my math and Bio tests. Kevin got a 99 on the math which was surprising. Kevin's party was kind of lame. No offense to him. It was more the invitees. The party was too big. Kevin was really nice though." June 5, 2015

"Kevin is having a surprise party Friday. I had to invite people. I'm planning on buying him some Pokemon stuff. Maybe a charizard keychain?" July 8, 2015

"So Kevin's party was okay. I didn't really talk to him much. I went to the mall with Corey, but Hot Topic was closed, so I went to Madness with Chris. I got him Hipster Dice, Candy, and rocks. (The card said you rock)." July 10, 2015

"Today was amazing. [...] I got a tunic and skirt for the Hawaiian themed dance. I danced with Kevin three times :) I asked to get a ride home with Sarah, and she said yes, but then she left 45 minutes early and didn't tell me. It was okay though because Kevin offered to give me a ride home. My dad made a joke about it, and so I figured I had permission." August 8, 2015

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Gretchen and Kevin at a Jazz Swing Dance



Chapter 4: Summer and Sophomore Year

Over the summer, Kevin and I kept in contact by text even if we couldn't see each other in person very often. I even went to his surprise 16th birthday party that was held at the local swimming pool. I was worried once he turned 16 that he would start dating other girls, but he never did!

Unfortunately, once school started, I discovered that Kevin and I had no classes together. No! Not now that we both liked each other and wanted to spend as much time together as humanly possible! Inconceivable! I was pretty upset until I discovered that we had lunch together! That softened the blow a little. Plus, he spent every opportunity that he could to walk me to class.

"KEVIN AND I HAVE NO CLASSES TOGETHER! WHY CRUEL WORLD? Sigh. I'm sort of over it. But not really." August 12, 2015

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"Kevin's name appears in these two journals 203 times. Well, 204 now." August 13, 2015

"Ugh I am such an idiot, I am so awkward when I talk to Kevin. WHY CRUEL WORLD HIS GOOD NIGHTS DON'T HAVE SMILEY FACES! Ugh." August 21, 2015

"Ugh school is tomorrow. Why cruel world. Why must you do this to me. NO CLASSES WITH KEVIN! Ugh." August 23, 2015

"Today was amazing! I had a great day at school. [...] Kevin has glasses! Adorable!" August 25, 2015

"I think Kevin wanted to walk with me to class, but I was too shy." August 26, 2015

"I sorta kinda walked to class with Kevin today. I felt awkward though." August 27, 2015

One day he invited me to a football game. I was super excited. I made him a origami box out of a cardstock paper with our schools spirit song and a paw print on it. He made me a flapping origami crane. (Kevin and I both kept the origami we made for each other. He proposed using the paper box I had made. Unfortunately, right after he proposed, I set the box down, and it was eaten by his golden retriever.)

"Yay! So today was amazing! KEVIN INVITED ME TO A FOOTBALL GAME! It totally wasn't a date. We didn't hold hands or kiss or do anything couplely. Although Kevin's friends were making a ship name for us. Grevin or Kitchen. Whuh? And Kevin's brother made a joke about Kevin being a lot more interested

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"in Vikettes if I was in it. Yeah no. Kevin is so cute." Gretchen,
August 28, 2015

"Kevin was waiting to walk with me to class. I need to stop talking
about him so much." August 31, 2015

"Kevin knew my exact B-day" Gretchen, September 1, 2015

"Today sucked. I AM SO AWKWARD TALKING TO KEVIN."
September 2, 2015

"Kevin sat next to me in seminary :)" September 3, 2015

"So I totally went to a party instead of doing all my Humanities
notes. It was super fun though. I got a ride from Sarah. We had
to give each other nicknames for Quelf. Kevin had to make mine
lol. It was Honey Bunches of oats." September 12, 2015

"Kevin is so adorable. He is such a gentleman. I love him!"
September 13, 2015

One my 16th birthday, my church building was hosting a Halloween Themed "Fall Festival." I knew Kevin would be there, so, as usual, I got dressed up super cute in case I saw him. I went as a queen in a purple dress. I sat next to him and his family at dinner, and Kevin was super cute. I walked home, happy that I had seen Kevin, and then I got a call. It was Kevin, and we talked for a little bit. I told him how much of a sugar overload I was on because I had eaten so much of a giant ice cream cake. He asked me if I would like to go on a date with him to get ice cream. My sugar-overload entirely forgotten, I immediately said yes, and he came to pick me up. He didn't have his license yet, so his mom drove us to Braum's, the local ice cream parlor. Kev-

Gretchen Kinney

in and I got shakes, and we talked for a really long time. He told me about his cats, and we talked about school. I was so happy.

We went on a couple more dates before the end of the year. Kevin organized a frisbee golf olympics with some other couples. Afterwards, we made each other ‘metals’ with paper plates and yarn.

December 31st, we went to another New Year’s Dance. This one was Chinese New Year Themed, and my friend Sarah helped me get ready beforehand. At midnight, Kevin asked if he could be my New Year’s kiss. I said yes, and we kissed. I immediately called my best friend to gush about it to her. Everyone at the dance asked me why I was smiling so much, and I just said that the egg rolls at the dance were really good. (The egg rolls were actually terrible. But that’s another story entirely). I couldn’t stop smiling for days afterwards. I was so happy.

In March, Kevin missed a day of school, so he asked me to meet with him in the library to help him catch up. I was pretty sure that my math help was basically useless to him, but I went anyway because Kevin time was the best. As expected, he pretty much knew everything we had talked about in class (probably better than I did honestly). Near the end, he pulled out a piece of paper and said “I found this brain teaser online, can you help me solve it?” I said yes, because I LOVE puzzles, and immediately started trying to solve it, writing notes in the margins. Once I got to the end of the problem, I read the words, “Also will you go with me to Mormon Prom? Write 7 for yes.” Hand shaking, I wrote 7 at the bottom of the paper. Then I solved the brain teaser. It was fun.

Kevin's timing was perfect. That Sunday, I could honestly reject another guy (who I did NOT want to go with) by telling him that I already had a date. That same Sunday, our young women's leader took us aside and said that our Bishop wanted us five Laurels to go with the five Priests just for this dance. Again, I was able to opt out with the perfect excuse of already having the perfect date.

Prom was super fun! Kevin had a jazz concert that day, so I went to the very end of that before he took me to the dance! He and his friend had rented a limo, and we had a lot of fun driving to and from the dance. After the dance, we went bowling. I am not very good at bowling, but Kevin did his best to try to teach me. That was also the first time he had ever held my hand. After that, we went to his friends house to play games and watch TV. The night was perfect! KEvin's mom came to pick him up, and instead of offering me a ride, Kevin left me! I was like WHAT? SO I texted my dad to come and pick me up. He thought that it was pretty funny. He said that for the next dance he would have to give me a reflective jacket to wear, so I could walk home.

But it was okay! Kevin felt so bad that he had forgotten me that he invited me over for dinner at his house the next evening! It was so great to be able to meet his family even though I was super nervous about it.

After this dance, Kevin started holding my hand in the hallway. It was very cute, and it made me very happy.





Gretchen Kinney



The last picture taken together before Gretchen left for BYU

Chapter 5: Senior High and Graduation

By the time the next big dance came around, (Homecoming 2016), Kevin had his license, and he was able to drive me around!

We dated all throughout high school, and every year I fell more in love with him! For my 17th birthday, he organized a paper crane scavenger hunt (because I was obsessed with origami) that led me around to all of the places we dated. We went to more dances, we hung out together, and we fell even more in love. However, we both knew that after high school Kevin and I would be leaving on missions. We had dated for three years, but we wouldn't be able to see each other for two!

Kevin decided to leave right after high school, but I wanted to do a semester at BYU first. That summer, Kevin was visiting his family in Washington, so he decided to have his mission call forwarded from his house, so he could open it with family. After almost a month, the call still hadn't come. Finally, they contact-

Gretchen Kinney

ed the mission office and asked them to send another, however, they could only send it his home address. At the time, I was catsitting for his family, so they asked me to overnight the call to the address in Washington. His family was pretty worried that they could be missing deadlines because it had been so long, so Kevin asked me to open it for him but *not to tell him what it said*. I was so impatient for him to open it, so I was excited to hear this news. The only condition was that *I could tell absolutely no one* until Kevin opened up his letter in front of all of his family. I opened the letter, saw he was going to Retalahleu, Guatemala, and immediately told all of my closest friends and family members where he was going. Whoops. I've never been great at keeping secrets. Kevin, knowing this, wouldn't talk to me on the phone (or even by text!) for the next few days. Even when I tried to wish him happy birthday.

He didn't leave until October (the week before my birthday and the anniversary of our first date), so we were dating long distance for two months while I was at BYU. It was fun! For virtual date nights, we would take Buzzfeed quizzes together, play online cards games, and one night we even did a virtual haunted house! After Kevin left on his mission, I finished up my first semester at BYU. I emailed him every week (mostly long updates on whatever book I was reading that week), and I missed him more each day. The day I received my own mission call (thankfully by email and not through the postal service) to Paris, France, it was Kevin's Preparation Day, and he was the first to know about it (by email, of course). Originally the plan was for me to forward him the letter, so he could read it first, but I was too impatient for that.

During our missions, we kept in contact by email. It was always interesting to hear about the differences between our two missions. Originally, we were scheduled to come home within a week of each other, but unfortunately in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kevin was sent home six months early. I wasn't too upset about this because that meant that he had more time to email me, and that I could send him voice recordings. Kevin got a summer job cleaning pools, and, at his peak, he sent me a voice recording about three times every week.

It was about this time that I started thinking about marriage, specifically about marrying Kevin. I knew I loved him, but before marriage seemed so far away. Now that I was coming home in just a few months, it suddenly started seeming a lot closer.

It didn't help that Kevin seemed to bring up marriage in every voice recording to me. Not about our marriage per say, but more about the concept of marriage in general. My companions roared with laughter as they heard Kevin talk about marriage in the most roundabout ways possible. One of my favorite quotes was when he was talking about his former companions getting married so quickly because they were returned missionaries. He said, "It's so crazy that we're getting older! Everyone is getting married, and we're still so young. I guess that's not too crazy. My mom got married at 21."

Gretchen Kinney



Gretchen and Kevin at the Dallas airport after Gretchen's return home.

Chapter 6: Return Home and Engagement

When I returned home September 24, 2020, Kevin was there waiting for me at the airport with a very cute sign. I gave him a hug, and later that night (after I had been released as a missionary) I invited him and my friend over to hang out for a little while.

Two days later, he asked me if I ever thought about getting married. I said, "Bah, oui!" and then, looking at his confused expression, remembered that he didn't know French slang, so I clarified that that basically meant, "yes." At this point, I considered us engaged, but Kevin claimed that we wouldn't be officially engaged until he proposed. I was pretty sure that I knew the exact date he would propose on, and I made the mistake of telling him this. He seemed shocked that I would guess that he would propose on my birthday/anniversary of our first date. I was very firm that I wanted the proposal to be a surprise. I also wanted to pick out my own ring. Kevin and I picked out a day to

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go ring shopping later in the week, so I knew I was safe until at least then.

About this time, my best friend, Allyson asked if we could get dressed up all cute to get some new profile shots taken during golden hour on Tuesday, October 6. Thinking nothing of it, I agreed, and as soon as she came over I immediately started trying to wedding plan. She told me that she was hungry, and that she wanted to get food. I asked where she wanted to go, and she said she was craving ice cream. I suggested that we could go to Braum's and she was like, "Does Braum's have regular food though?"

Wondering if my best friend had ever actually been to a Braum's, I informed her that yes, they did indeed serve regular food. So we went to Braum's to eat. With wedding planning on my mind, I couldn't help reminiscing about my first date with Kevin. It had been a different Braum's, but I remembered how excited and happy I felt. It was the same feeling I felt when I thought about marrying him. After we ate, (Allyson didn't actually order any ice cream) we went out to her car. Ally pulled out her camera and rummaged around in the front seat for a little bit before sighing. She asked me to go into the trunk to get a blue folder. I was a little confused why she would need a blue folder (and also why she was asking me: our friendship was built on mutual laziness), but I went to the trunk to check. I opened it up, but I didn't see a blue folder. Instead, I saw a large paper crane next to a purple crocheted flower. My proposal senses immediately started tingling. I had often told Kevin that the paper crane scavenger hunt he had organized for me had been my favorite present of all time. Ally played dumb, but I knew that she knew

exactly what was going on. "Golden shots!" How could I have been so dumb?

I unfolded the paper crane, which contained a clue leading me to the next location, our church building where we had seminary together. The next series of clues took me around all of the places Kevin and I had been together around our hometown: our high school, a park we had a fun group date it, and a park we had talked about getting married in. The final clue led to the place where Kevin first said he wanted to marry me: his backyard.

I got there, walked around back, and opened the gate. His backyard was decorated with white lights and romantic music played in the background.

Kevin got down on one knee at the same time I tried to hug him. He opened a paper box (the cardstock origami box I made for him at the first football game we went to together) containing a crocheted ring. He asked me to marry him, and I of course said yes! We danced for a while, then he fed me a spaghetti dinner, but I had to tell him that I had already eaten at Braum's!

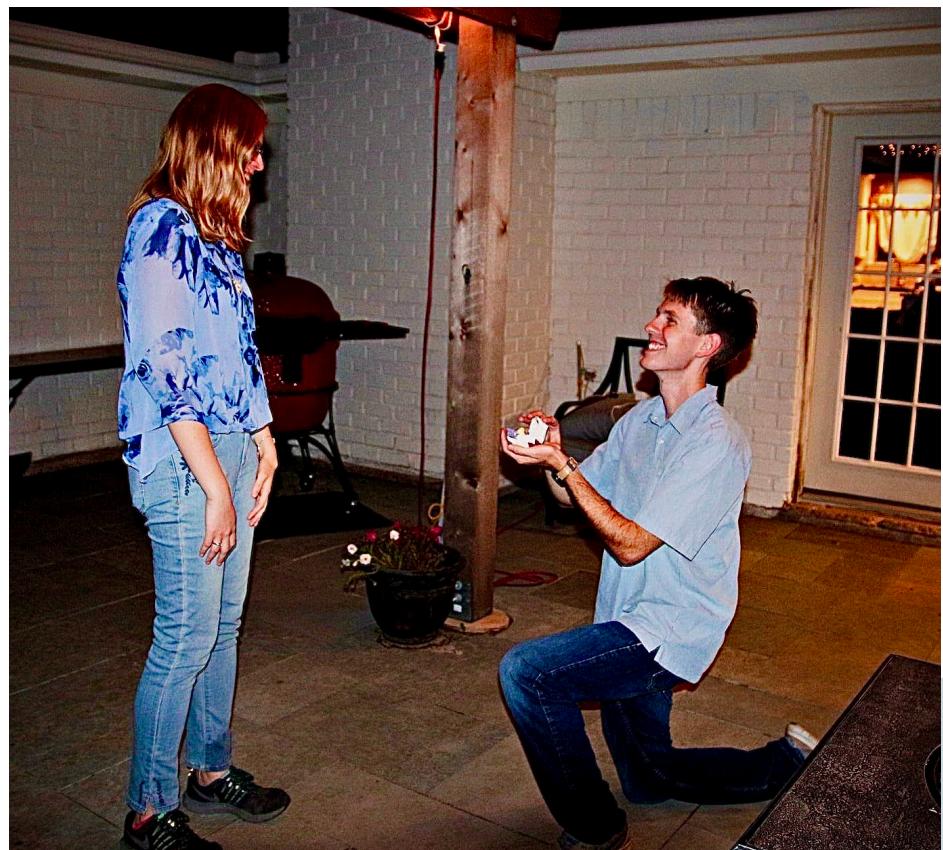
We were married December 19, 2020 in the Dallas, Texas Temple. I could talk about all of the preparations leading up to the wedding, but I really didn't care about that. The most important thing to me was that I was able to marry the love of my life, and the most amazing man in the world!

In January, we both started up at BYU together! That's a whole other story in itself, but I'm so grateful to have the most caring husband at my side during school. Really, our story is just beginning!

The Engagement



10/06/2020



The Wedding



12/19/2020



Gretchen Kinney

Recently, for my English class, I wrote Kevin a sonnet describing my love for him. It's a little cheesy, but it does express the feelings I have for him!

When I was young and dreamed of love, you never
Appeared. My foolish thoughts and idle sighs
Could hardly dream you up. Your name was ever
unknown, I could not search your loving eyes.
With nothing written, twinkling in the sky
To give a hint to me, my heart stayed bare,
No hand to hold, no arm to touch, just by
Myself. No one to love, no one to care.
Then I met you. My heart became a spring.
Now you are mine, and I am yours. What more
Could dear young lovers ask? My soul will sing
Its love for you, and for what lies in store.
But simple words, though rhymed, can never say
How much I love you here with me each day.

Chapter 7: Kevin's Perspective

April 5, 2015

Hey Geoff,

Busy Weekend. Easter & General Conference. My favorite talk was given by M. Russel Ballard about Missionary and Adult worthiness.

We have a floor in the Living room / kitchen now. Finally!!

My allergies have been bad the past couple of days.

Recap of past events. I'm starting to have a little crush on Gretchen. We had STAAR Testing (easy as 7th grade) 1st combined Varsity activity. My trumpet teacher caught two kids making out in the practice room. Jason lent me Soul Silver which I've been playing (choose totodile)

I'm tired GDNT

Kevin

Hidden in this entry is actually the first time I mention Gretchen in my journal. I had been crushing on her for longer than this, I just didn't like to share much with my journal. I always thought

Gretchen Kinney

someone would read it (looks like my suspicions came true). Anyways, my crush grew and grew until it became an obsession. I spilled the beans to my friend

April 22, 2015

Hey Geoff.....

Side note; Geoff is the name of my journal (I was like 15, give me a break).

A lot has happened since I last wrote. Joseph said he knew who liked me, but wouldn't tell me. Then, I went on a dance (got Ryan to go) and I told Joseph that I liked Gretchen. Then, after the dance he told me he heard from Sarah that Gretchen liked me. IDK, it's even confusing-ish to write down.

Anyways, GDNITE

Kevin

As you can tell it didn't sink in right away that Gretchen actually liked me back. After this, I tried to find every excuse to spend time with her while not actually going on dates. This usually took the form of game nights with friends.

April 27, 2015

Hey Geoff,

Had a fun weekend. Friday me and Joseph went to Sarah's tennis tournament which got rained out. So we played games and watched Bill and Ted's excellent adventure through adventure through history.

Saturday was the Bike Rodeo. It was basically the same as last year. Nothing different. After, I helped Travis with Drum Major stuff.

At 6pm we had a game night @ Joseph's house with SAM, SARAH & GRETCHEN. Lots of fun

GD nite

Cloud-9

Kevin

Things continued in this fashion throughout 9th grade. At one point I got a hold of her phone number and we started texting (mostly puns). Here's a 15 year old me's take on that...

May 30th, 2015

(excerpt)

. . . On a more personal note, I still really like Gretchen. I've gone to a couple of parties we've had and talked. I've also been texting her. She is funny and almost (actually probably) smarter than me. She's also pretty cute.

Wow. 15 year old Kevin thought he was pretty smart I guess. I've come to learn that Gretchen is without a doubt much smarter than I am, though she won't admit it :). That summer we didn't see each other much. When school started up I was very excited to see her

August 8, 2015

Hey Geoff,

I just got back from the stake dance and it was a blast. Gretchen was there and I got to talk with her a lot . . . I can't wait until she turns 16 and I can ask her out.

We've had some funny experiences together too. One we always remember is when my dad gave her a ride home after a stake dance...

August 9, 2015

Hey Geoff,

My Dad is still laughing from when we gave Gretchen a ride home. She didn't really seem to have any sense of direction. She also said her house was the one with the lights out. She meant with the lights "outside" not like off.

Gretchen Kinney

Until her 16th birthday I had to keep coming up with ways to see her without making them dates. One such way was going to high school football games.

August 30, 2015

(excerpt) . . . Today I went to a Plano football game with friends. I invited Gretchen too, but didn't want it to feel like a date. She's not 16 yet (sigh) . . .

Finally the day came when I could ask her out. It didn't go as smoothly as I had planned however. Here's what went down...

October 18, 2015

Hey Geoff,

So, a lot has happened this weekend so I'll get started. I'll start on Friday, where upon finding out that Aiden was having his birthday party and that Plano had a game, I decided to go to the game. I had heard that Gretchen was getting a ride with Sarah, so I texted Sarah asking if she could pick me up as well. She was at a tennis tournament, however, and couldn't respond, so I hitched a ride with my dad early on his way to a campout. I paid for my ticket (with mostly quarters, I was 50 cents short b/c I brought 2 nickels by accident but still got a ticket) Being really early, I sat with some band friends. Tyler Norwood was there too and sat next to me. The band played and Plano did their whole homecoming thing and then the game started. Gretchen texted me saying she and Sarah were in the student section, so I left Tyler (which I felt bad for) and went to stand next to them. At halftime, Sarah gave us \$20 to go buy food and Gretchen and I talked, bought food, and brought it back. I saw Zach Smith on our way back which was pretty cool. Plano didn't do too well and lost, but I didn't care.

Cloud-9

Sarah gave us a ride home and dropped Gretchen off first so she could talk to me. She wanted to know if I was going to ask Gretchen out to anything. She gave me good advice.

Saturday was Gretchen's 18th birthday. It was also UIL marching contest day. I woke up and went to school @ 9:30 for rehearsal. We practiced for an hour then I helped pack up the truck with loading crew and we set off. We were 2nd to perform after Clark. Our performance was, in my opinion, our best one yet! We ate lunch and sat in the stands for our ratings. We got a 1, the best rating there is.

I got back just in time to go to the fall festival. I was thinking about inviting Gretchen to the fall festival but backed out of it. I put on a batman shirt as my costume and headed out. Turns out, Gretchen and Corey were already there! Gretchen sat with us for the dinner part and mom gave me the idea to ask her out for ice cream afterwards. But she had already walked home without me noticing.

When I got home I decided what the heck, so I called her up and asked her out to ice cream. She said yes even though she was on a b-day sugar overload :) I felt really lame for not having a birthday present :(Also, when we dropped her off at her house, I forgot to walk her to the door. Ugh!

Anyway, GD nite

Kevin

It wasn't long after that we had our first kiss! I decided that new year's eve was the time, and lucky for me we were both going to the same stake dance! I remember she had a cute purple dress and I wore my band tux. I was nervous and couldn't decide whether to kiss her or not. I finally got the courage to

Gretchen Kinney

ask her right at midnight. I felt a little bad before because she would probably miss out on popping the balloons in search of money (She liked to do that) but it turned out better than I could have imagined.

January 1, 2016

Happy New Year Geoff,

Just go back from the new year's dance. I kissed Gretchen! I was stressing out about it before for a while but at midnight I asked her and we kissed! I also told her I had a crush on her since 9th grade.

I am super tired,

Kevin

Here are some more details from 10th grade Kevin (he was very happy)

. . . So, leading up to midnight I knew I wanted to kiss Gretchen. When the timer ran out I just asked her and she said yes. It was a quick kiss. Afterwards, I told her I had a crush on her since 9th grade and she said she liked me since she first saw me :)

As 10th grade came to a close we kept going on dates. Two of the most memorable were the swing dance and mormon prom. I remember the swing dance being a blast! I wasn't yet in the Plano Jazz Band so I got to spend most of the time dancing with her. We even took a swing dancing lesson and learned some fun moves. Overall it was a magical night! It's also one of the first pictures we have together as a couple.

Mormon Prom was our first big dance together! I had a plan to ask her out...

March 3 2016

Hey Geoff,

I'm going to ask Gretchen to the Mormon Prom, wish me luck!

March 4. 2016

Hey Geoff,

I asked Gretchen out to Mormon Prom! She said yes! I gave her a logic problem to solve and slipped in the question. I think she liked it. I'm so excited! Also, she solved the problem which made her seem incredibly attractive.

The day of Mormon Prom finally came and I was very excited. I was also very stressed about the schedule. The dance was on a Friday night, and that same Friday afternoon I had a Jazz concert. So what I had to do was finish the concert and then sprint out of the school to change into my tux for the dance. My friend Joseph and I had pooled our resources (ok more like our parents pooled their resources) to get a limo for the dance. I met my cute date Gretchen outside the band hall and gave her a corsage. She was wearing a long purple dress and had done her hair very well. Our first stop was a historic park in downtown Plano to take some pictures. I enjoyed this quite a bit because it gave me an excuse to put my arm around her :). After the pictures we headed straight for the dance. On the way there I realized I had forgotten the tickets. Here's an excerpt from my journal on the subject.

After pictures I realized I forgot my tickets at home :o but Joseph told me we'd be on the list so we didn't need them. More about the limo, it was white and had disco lights inside. The driver's name was Solomon. Joseph also gave us all emoji pillows.

Gretchen Kinney

After having a great ride there we arrived at the venue. Here's how I described it out evening.

...all the trees were covered in lights. Inside were a bunch of tables and street lights. We made it just in time for some dinner, which was pretty OK. We took pictures at the photo booth and then went dancing. We did some slow dancing, swing dancing, and faked the salsa! Towards the end I worked up the courage to kiss her. Then we hugged and I talked about having a crush on her in 9th grade.

Needless to say I was very happy with how the dance went. This was our second kiss, and the song that was playing was "Thinking out loud" by Ed Sheran. That song was also our first dance at our wedding! But the night didn't stop there! We had the after dance party at Main Event, and that was where we held hands for the first time!!!!

Now it would have been great if the night stopped there, because I made a huge mistake later. After Main Event we decided to play board games at Joseph's house. At around 2am I decided it was time to head home and called my parents for a ride. But I forgot to take Gretchen home!!!! She had to call her dad at 2am and inform him that her date left her. I would never hear the end of that.

We kept dating through high school and I'm sure Gretchen already told you loads about it, so I'll skip to the best bit. We both left on our missions and (of course) kept writing to each other. The plan was that we would finish our missions the same day in September of 2020. Unfortunately, 2020 turned out to be a wrecker of plans. When Covid-19 hit I was sent home early in March 2020, while Gretchen would finish her mission in France

until September. Thus began the most painful 6 months of my life as I waited for her to come home.

It wasn't all bad. Now that I was home and had access to technology, I could send her nice long voice recordings instead of a few paragraphs of email once a week. I could also spend the time working and saving up money to survive college, which really came in handy. The day finally arrived when she was on her plane ride home. I tracked the flight all through that day's work, which I finished way faster than any other day (I wonder why XD). I got to go to the airport with her family to see her arrive, she looked so beautiful it was hard not to give her a big long hug (she was still a missionary after all).

Luckily she was released from her missionary call that same night, so I headed over to see her. The next day she came over to my house and my dog Duke absolutely went crazy for her, he had remembered her from before our missions. He was so happy to see her he jumped up on her lap and wouldn't move.

Of course the whole time she was gone and I was home, I was dreaming of one day getting married to her. It didn't take me long to bring that up with her, and luckily for me she was on board with the idea. One thing remained, the proposal.

Something you need to know about Gretchen is that she is VERY HARD TO SURPRISE. She always tries to find out her presents beforehand, and she reads the last page of the books she reads when she thinks she knows how they will end. So how was I going to surprise her with a proposal she knew was coming???

Luckily I had a secret weapon. Her best friend Allyson would be in on the secret. So I made my plan. I knew she wanted to pick out her own ring, so I needed to propose with a substitute.

Gretchen Kinney

In our senior year I had crocheted her a blankey for college, so I decided to crochet her an engagement ring! The proposal plan was to surprise her with a scavenger hunt. Her friend told her they were going to take pictures together at a park, and to get dressed up. But really what she did was lead Gretchen to the first clue. After following clues that lead around places we had been on dates, the final clue led to my backyard. I had set up lights and music, and was all ready with the ring in an origami box..... (The Box: this box was one of my treasured Gretchen artifacts, she had made it for me at a high school football game in 10th grade.)

She said YES!!!! Unfortunately for the box that meant she put it on the ground, and my dog Duke promptly ate it :(. But box aside, that night was one of the most amazing nights of my life.

Fast forward two months and we had pulled off a Covid-19 pandemic wedding, complete with masks and a limited number of guests. But none of that made the day any less magical!!! After our honeymoon on the beaches of Cancun, Mexico we moved out to BYU in good old Provo, Utah and the rest is history yet to be made...

She said yes!



The End

...for now

