

*a love story about New York City
that isn't about New York City
and isn't a love story*

no one
brings
you a
casserole

when your husband goes to rehab

LEAH GREY

NO ONE BRINGS YOU A CASSEROLE WHEN YOUR HUSBAND GOES TO REHAB

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Print ISBN: 978-1-4866-2039-5

eBook ISBN: 978-1-4866-2040-1

Word Alive Press

119 De Baets Street, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3R9

www.wordalivepress.ca



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Cataloguing in Publication may be obtained through Library and Archives Canada

For Grander, who refused to read past the chapter about the Fish.

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acknowledgments

I would like to thank the real-life family members, friends, and curly-haired ex-boyfriends portrayed in this book for having had a presence in and impact on my life. I recognize that their memories of the events described in this book will be different than my own, most especially for my husband. They are all kind, honest, good people. This book is not intended to hurt any named or unnamed parties, but to share the raw and honest point of view of a girl who dreamed of romance and a life in New York City.

CHAPTER ONE

new york

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, I WANTED TO BE A NEW YORKER.

When I was young, my favourite radio station was a retro one called Froggy94. I was born in 1986, but on my Sony Walkman I sang along to The Shirelles' "Mama Said," The Beach Boys' "Wouldn't It Be Nice," and Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York." When Frank and I sang about being able to make it anywhere if you could make it there, I meant it with every fibre of my being.

I imagined myself strutting down New York's cobblestone streets flaunting a dress much too poufy to wear on a Tuesday, or any day, in my humble, Canadian farm-spattered hometown. It would be my Carrie Bradshaw moment.¹ But I thought it was only a dream and didn't believe God would ever send me to New York, even though I knew deep down it was where I belonged.

In sleepy Port Rowan, Ontario, where everyone knew everyone, my peers listened to the Backstreet Boys and Hansen while I listened to Jann Arden and Celine Dion. I was serious, a deep thinker, and it made me feel different. I never had a lot of friends, although I tried that, too, but the pestilence of high school drama never seemed to escape me.

I figured that if I could just get out of there, if I could just move and leave it all behind, maybe everything would change.

Sure enough, it did.

1 Carrie Bradshaw is the lead character of the popular HBO show *Sex and the City*. She works as a newspaper columnist, lives in New York City, and buys fabulous shoes.

In New York, I wasn't loud; I was quiet. I wasn't opinionated; I was average. I wasn't successful, interesting, or really anything special at all; I simply existed, and that was good enough for me. For the first time in my life, I had the freedom to be whoever I wanted, to stop being the girl everyone said I was. Small-town life can write your identity before you even know it yourself, and I was tired of feeling like I didn't belong.

I feel like right now is the time to announce that I need to come out of the closet about something. Ready for it?

I wanted to dress fancy.

Yep. Stupid, isn't it?

I wanted to wear fitted black Calvin Kleins with a white ribbed tank top, rock oversized cat-eye sunglasses in vibrant neon pink, add in a strapping pair of ribbon-tied Manolo Blahniks, grab my Louis Vuitton Multicolore Monogram bag, and have breakfast with a bunch of girlfriends.

Even today, I don't have the girlfriends, the sunnies, or the Manolos, but I do have the bag, the tank, and a pair of black Levis that at least come close to those Calvins. Kinda useless without the breakfast with friends, though, isn't it?

This paradox of almost winning, always being on the sidelines of something wonderful, haunts me everywhere I go. I'm always good, never the best. I study, I plan, I overthink, I work, and I see small fruits of my labour, but it's never enough to survive on. Never enough to feed my family.

When your spouse struggles with addiction and you're not the breadwinner of the family—not to cast a stereotype, but it's a common situation—being financially independent is a big deal. I've often wanted success in my life, but through his addiction I needed it—and needing to be financially successful and wanting to be are not the same thing. One is fuelled by desire, the other by desperation. I was scared all the time. And behind me, chasing me, was the whisper of my past failures: *You can't do it. You're a dumb girl who loves fashion and has no substance. If you were smarter, you wouldn't have dropped out of college. If you were a better daughter, you wouldn't have gotten pregnant at twenty-one. If you were prettier, the Fish wouldn't have spent the night kissing the Beast at the Langton dance in Grade Nine.*

The Fish is the nickname I gave to my childhood crush when I was eleven; he was the one that got away. The girl he dumped me for, I called the Beast. Like, *Beauty and the Beast*. It's mean, I know.

The inside of my brain is a scary place. I used to wonder if everyone spent this much time on the hamster wheel planning their life away. I ran round and round, but I never got anywhere. When you begin to narrate your daily life like a Morgan Freeman documentary, you find yourself counting your lucky stars for evading the looney bin for so many years.

You know what my inner Morgan Freeman said? She said, "I was a 111-pound gingersnap from Mennonite country—fine, 120 pounds after kids—who spent her childhood planning a grand romance and fell in love with New York City. And sometimes, Paris."

My existence was a literal cliché.

As if stereotypicality wasn't enough for me to feel like a loser, everything I ever wanted fell from my grip and shattered. I got closer to my dream than most, which is why it hurt so violently when I lost it.

I couldn't wake up to end my nightmare in the city that never sleeps. I tried praying to God, I tried to fight, and I resolved to become a girl-boss, but the wound to my inner child bled through the streets of New York City, one picture at a time.

Smile! There's a fabulous view of Central Park.

Smile! My husband's at The New York Times.

Smile! The pigeon lady is in Washington Square Park. It's like Home Alone in real life.

Smile! There's an impromptu concert in the streets. Your husband is there and you aren't.

I couldn't come to terms with what had happened to my dreams. Was it my fault my life had turned out this way? Or were there powers greater than myself hiding in the dark shadows of my carefully curated closet?

New York broke my heart. Not in the way a boyfriend does, though. It was so much more disappointing. I wasn't the wife of addiction; I was the wife of the guy who had it all.

CHAPTER TWO

the fish

I WAS BORN IN KITCHENER-WATERLOO, ONTARIO. THE KW, THEY call it. Why did they combine two cities into one? I have no idea, but I bet there's a story there.

My dad went to school at the University of Waterloo before I was born. Then, in 1988, my family moved from the KW to a little town called Port Rowan. It had a dock with colourful boathouses that extended into Lake Erie, one pharmacy, one grocery store, and one school. There were less than a thousand people who called Port Rowan home, and that included the many farmers, mainly of Mennonite heritage, who lived outside town.

My only sibling was my brother Neil, born in 1989, shortly after we arrived in Port Rowan. My parents, on a faith journey, initially took me and my brother to the local church. As we got a little older, my parents made friends with a few local Mennonite families and the remainder of my childhood was spent in the Mennonite Brethren community.

I thought I was Mennonite, until once at Mennonite family camp one of my parents' friends abruptly told me, "You're not Mennonite!" I suppose I thought it was like being Jewish; you could convert. I loved pascha at Easter, I loved my friend's mother's borscht, I loved Mennonite sausage at weddings, but I wasn't Mennonite. I never forgot it after that day.

Port Rowan was a television-worthy place where everyone knew the name of my brother and me, the names of my parents, and even my dog, Tucker. He was a sweet goldendoodle before it became a trendy breed. In

fact, we had a neighbour who carried dog treats in his pocket when out walking because he knew he would see my parents with Tucker. I'm not an animal person and didn't like dogs, but Tucker was perfect. I cried for weeks when he went running off to heaven.

You can imagine the culture shock I experienced moving from Mennonite country to New York City. When I was in middle school, it was a totally normal thing to smell manure from the farmer's field nearby. "Ew, they fertilized the field," we'd say at recess.

New York smelled like car exhaust, roasted peanuts, and pee.

I was irritated that I'd grown up sheltered and went as far as to refer to my family as the Brady Bunch. From my young perspective, we were disgustingly perfect. My brother and I looked just like my parents, and we loved each other, too! It was all so... boring. I didn't appreciate how good I had it because I'd never known anything else.

I wish I had known. Maybe I would have avoided what came later.

Local church girls and I didn't jibe as well as I wanted, with their blond hair, gentle words, and ethical behaviour. How were they so quiet, anyway? I couldn't be that quiet. I tried! I found myself criticizing them internally. Before I knew it, red hair and spitfire opinions flew out of me before they'd been adequately processed and tamed. I was always getting into trouble at youth group, while simultaneously losing the interest of nice, quiet church boys.

This might explain why the first church boy I fell in love with was the one who smoked pot. He was interesting! And so cute, with his blue eyes and curly blond hair. I still like curly hair. Call it a weakness, but send me a boy with a mop of curly hair and I'll be a mud puddle. I just want to touch it. Curly-haired heartbreakers, they are.

I met a few boys who broke my heart, but the blond church boy, later aptly named the Fish, was the biggest heartbreaker of them all. My mother said there were plenty of fish in the sea. But for me, there was only one.

I remember the first day I saw him. He was sitting in church next to the tall, stained-glass windows. The light was shining in, transforming that curly blond hair into a halo. He turned, looked at me, and smiled through long eyelashes. I fell in love right then and there.

I didn't talk to him at first, but I became friends with his sister. Not intentionally, of course. We'd hang out at her house after school and I'd occasionally catch glimpses of her older brother—until one day she brought me a letter to our middle school, written by him.

My heart dropped.

The Fish and I wrote letters back and forth for the next year or so. I treasured those letters. I'm sure his sister wasn't as happy to be the messenger between her brother and her then-best-friend, but she graciously delivered them.

When I got to high school, he and I started dating almost immediately. On our first real date, we went mini-golfing and sat by the lakeshore. We held hands. We kissed. He let me wear his neon green hoodie when it got cold, and he gave me a matching green golf ball to take home. I kept it in the box with his letters.

I was in teenage heaven until one morning, right before the first bell rang for school, a church friend of mine in the Fish's grade told me she had seen him at a dance the night before. That's the night he kissed the Beast.

I burst into tears and cried in the middle of the hallway as I tried to process the news.

I forget what happened the rest of that day. I have a blurry memory of the Beast coming up to me and saying something chal-

lenging, while another friend told her to get out of my face. I remember avoiding the Fish until we rode home on the bus and he sat beside me to explain. I don't know what he said; I wasn't listening and it didn't matter.

From that day forward, my self-worth was measured by how much the Fish cared, called, flip-phone texted, or ICQ'd me. That day in ninth grade when I heard that he'd danced with another girl, I allowed Satan to write in my heart the story that I wasn't enough.

That day in ninth grade when I heard that he'd danced with another girl, I allowed Satan to write in my heart the story that I wasn't enough.

CHAPTER THREE

beckett

I TRIED TO FALL IN LOVE MANY TIMES IN AN EFFORT TO ERASE THE Fish from my mind. Some boys were nice. Others were not. My parents disliked them all. I suppose the ones like Light Bright, a guy who sported neon plugs in his ears, didn't look like Brady Bunch material, but he was among my favourites.

In my small-town bedroom, *Vogue* magazine cutouts plastering the lavender-coloured walls, I pined over the Fish until I was seventeen and went off to university.

Finally, independence! I thought. *I can use that fake ID I found on the sidewalk.*

I was going to be a writer. Or a singer. Or a psychologist. Or work in advertising. I would absolutely find the new love of my life. Whatever career I eventually settled on, I believed I would be a total success.

Then I failed my business class.

My class attendance, or lack thereof, became a joke among my dormmates, who started keeping a tally on the wall. That first semester, twenty-four classes attended. Mostly Bs. Not bad. Second semester, twelve classes. Bs, a C, and then the business class. I think I went to business class once, because it took place very early in the morning. It's ironic, as I now love business. But I still hate mornings.

Talk about the enemy messing with your future! He does that, you know. Satan messes with our destiny, finding ways to deter us from every path of success.

The business class probably would have launched me into super-woman territory, navigating the cobblestone streets of New York's West Village in Manolos. The enemy certainly didn't want that.

Growing up in a small town made getting away with shenanigans difficult, so it wasn't until university that I really let loose. At least, I thought I did. Compared to what I later learned in New York, I was a sheltered saint. My small-town rebellions were nothing more than child's play.

While in university, I pursued my love for music. I sang choruses and background music in bars for a rap crew. Didn't see that one coming, did you? I was dating one of them, and looking back now it's one of the most fun times in my life. My parents thought I'd gone off the deep end, I'm sure, but I wasn't getting into as much trouble as you'd think. We drank a lot of tea, occasionally smoked pot, had a drink or two, watched movies, and wrote music.

I made good friends during that period of my life. The musicians understood me. For the first time, I connected with people who thought the same way I did. Deep thinkers, big feelers. And it was nice to find a place where I belonged.

I wish I could tell you that was the end of the Fish, that I picked up my broken heart, took a lesson in self-worth, and never dated him again. But it's not true. The truth is that I dated him again, and again. Many more times... that year, the next year, until my nineteenth birthday when he didn't come to my birthday party and I found out the next day he had gone out with another girl.

How many times would I let him break my heart in the same way? Even though we stopped dating, he remained in the back of my mind.

Over the next few months, a lot happened. The Fish got another girl pregnant, and you can imagine how much that one broke my heart. I got very depressed and lost myself for a while. Suddenly, nothing mattered. There were parties, drinking, and drugs. I felt as though my life was already ruined. I even dropped out of college.

Shortly after, I got pregnant.

Another girl from church had gotten pregnant the year before me, and she'd gone up to the front of the church to make a public apology for her behaviour. After seeing what happened to her, I decided the only thing

to do was marry my baby's father. It was the only way to right the wrong and avoid public humiliation. So I married my son's father in an attempt to atone for my sins, but it was a mistake.

My pregnancy was difficult. I had pains when I stood for long periods of time and ended up being flown to the hospital twice in a helicopter. On one of those hospitalizations, the paramedic performed and danced a Michael Jackson song down the hall to calm me down. God bless the paramedics!

The second time, the hospital kept me on bedrest. I spent four months there, many miles away from friends and family. I was allowed five-minute showers and spent the rest of the time confined to my bed. It wasn't what I had pictured doing at twenty-one, that's for certain.

The doctors kept telling me my son might die. I was experiencing cervical funnelling and had a high risk of preterm labour. But I didn't believe them and grew very protective of his life. At twenty-four weeks gestation, the nurses pushed me in a wheelchair through the neonatal unit and showed me what my baby would look like if he was born at one pound, then three pounds, then five. They gave me a handful of neonatal diapers, in increasing sizes, to hang on to. As each week passed, I smugly threw the smaller of them in the trash.

Being in the hospital was tough, especially because I'd smoked occasionally until the day I was admitted. But I wasn't in love with my son's father and the hospital was a welcome escape from the marriage I'd never wanted.

By thirty-two weeks, I was tired of being in the hospital and being on lockdown and begged to return home. The hospital relented.

But within days I was back in my obstetrician's office with more pain. The obstetrician scheduled an induction around thirty-six weeks and my family came over for the weekend. It was Thanksgiving and we ate turkey and went to a park. The next morning, I gave birth to my son Beckett, who was a whopping preterm eight pounds, two ounces.

Life as a young mother was hard, and I was extremely critical of myself for the drastic turn my life had taken. Instead of graduating with my degree and starting a new successful career, I was changing diapers and cleaning up spittle. I felt stuck in my marriage and was the only one in

my group of friends who had a child. I loved my son, but I didn't love the choices I'd made at such a young age.

On December 21, 2008, when my son was three months old, all three of us were driving home for Christmas just outside Ajax, Ontario. My cat, Stella, was in the car, too. It was cold and the roads were slick with ice. I watched as the SUV in front of us came to a sudden stop. We hit the brakes, but our car slid. I stretched my arms out in front of me to brace myself for the crash as we slammed into the SUV. The hood of our vehicle flew up into the air—and stopped right before it crushed us. Angels, no doubt.

Our airbags never deployed.

My son screamed in the back of the car. I shakily picked up my phone and dialled the only number I could think to call: my mother.

"Mom? I'm okay, don't worry," I said. "We got into an accident and we hit the car in front of us."

My mother's sister, Cindy, had died in a car accident when she was sixteen. My parents had told me to make sure if I was ever in an accident, I always started my phone call with whether or not I was okay.

She shouted for my dad, then asked me where we were.

"I don't know," I replied. "Somewhere outside of Toronto."

"We're on our way," Dad said. "We'll call when we get to Toronto and you can let us know where you are."

The drive from Ajax to Port Rowan is more than two hundred kilometres and it takes about three hours. I feel like my parents got there within the hour, but that's probably because my mind was a blur.

When the paramedics arrived, I was scared to pick up my son and they told me to leave him in his car seat until the doctor had a chance to look at him. He cried for hours, all the way to the hospital, and he kept crying while we waited for the doctor. Finally, he was cleared as being perfectly fine.

Now that I'm the mother of three, I wish I had ignored the paramedics and picked him up. The sweet thing was scared.

I suffered many injuries from that crash, and they got worse as time went on. I ended up having to move home so my parents could help take care of my son. I suffered terrible whiplash and couldn't bend over. My

jaw would lock, my arms hurt excruciatingly, I had headaches, I was often dizzy, my hips had been thrown out of alignment, and my sciatica had been pinched. It took seven years for my body to heal.

The worst part was the post-traumatic stress. Every time I saw headlights, I had flashbacks of that accident. It left me scared to drive. And my poor baby boy woke up in the night many times with a jolt, crying. We were both traumatized by the experience.

Oh, and my cat? Stella was also fine. She had been in her cat carrier and remained the same miserable grump she'd always been.

CHAPTER FOUR

glenna

IN JANUARY 2010, I APPLIED FOR A LEGAL SEPARATION FROM MY son's father.

Of all the ways I had failed in life, being a divorced Christian carried the most shame. After all, the Bible talked about forgiveness for sexual sin, but not divorce.

Due to my increasing distress and shame, my mom recommended I visit her friend, Glenna Pearl. I was sceptical, to say the least. Go talk to an old lady? Why?

But the moment I sat down with Glenna, I knew there was a reason I had walked through her door. Without me having said a word, she knew things I wasn't wise enough to see myself. Seniors are the pearls of the world.

Glenna was a widow, her husband Arthur having gone to heaven a few years prior. She happily shared her memories of him as her dangling earrings twinkled.

One of the first pearls of wisdom Glenna gave me had to do with the word *annulment*. When she asked about my marriage, I told her everything that had transpired in my life up until that point: the Fish, my broken heart, leaving college, the parties, my pregnancy, and my shame over wanting a divorce. Glenna then assured me that God had annulled my marriage.

Suddenly, all the guilt I'd been carrying around exploded into a worn pillow on her flowery green couch that smelled like grace.

I wanted to believe what Glenna said, but I had no frame of reference to believe it. I hadn't before met anyone who heard God like that, and I wondered if she might be psychic—or worse, senile.

I submitted the divorce papers to our local courthouse after two years of separation, and much to my surprise they responded that they couldn't grant our divorce because there was no record of our marriage.

I did some digging and discovered that the paperwork from the pastor who had married us had never been filed with the government, even though he had mailed it in.

It was all the confirmation I needed: God had miraculously annulled my marriage.

For the purposes of custody, my child's father and I needed to file for both the marriage and the divorce on the same day. Even though I struggled with a lot of shame over my first marriage, I don't regret having my son or trying to do what was best for him. Beckett was the most incredible boy. I wish I could go back to the beginning and love him all over again. God used his life to pull me out of a pit of despair, and it was through his birth that I learned God speaks to us.

My time with Glenna was precious as I grew in my faith and learned how to have a more intimate relationship with God. In 2011, I had the honour of helping Glenna put her life's story into a book for her family. She'd survived spinal meningitis without antibiotics in the 1940s and bought her first fur coat from her teacher's salary in 1954, to wear on a trip to New York to visit her aunt Olive. She and I had a lot in common.

She had a simple approach to faith and believed that accepting God's love for us was all we needed to do in order to feel fulfilled. She once said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." That became a lifelong source of inspiration to me.

Glenna even tried to help me forget the Fish, but it didn't work. I prayed for God to take the love away. I tried to hate him, but I couldn't. When none of that worked, I wrote songs, sung my heart out, and dreamt of moving away.

Every year, our town had an art festival. Everyone would come. In a small town, everyone comes to everything.

I attended the festival with my son, daydreaming as usual, and walking backward because... I don't know. But as usually happens when one walks backward, I bumped into someone. Whoops!

I spun around and found myself two inches away from a stranger's face. Well, that would have been awkward enough, but this was no stranger.

It was him.

"Oh... it's you," I eloquently said.

The Fish smiled, put his hand on my arm, and said, "Look out."

In perfect romance movie timing, I dropped my purse.

Bending down to pick my dignity off the pavement, I noticed that he was holding some girl's hand while I played out the rom-com in my head. I collected my thoughts and decided I was over him. Then I said goodbye to the Fish for the very last time.

Many years later, I was asked by a well-respected Christian pastor and author what I loved about the Fish. The best answer I could come up with was "I don't know. I liked his eyes." I felt embarrassed. After years of chasing after him, I couldn't even say what I loved about him.

The pastor laughed a bit. "You know, it's true what they say about the eyes being the windows to the soul. When someone says they loved someone's eyes, it usually means they fell in love with their soul."

The second he said it, I knew it was true. It wasn't the Fish's bright green hoodie, his crooked smile, or his funny artwork I had loved; it was just him. I felt like my soul had been married to his from the start.

For many years after, I looked for that same kind of soul connection. Until one cold, snowy New Year's Eve in 2012.

CHAPTER FIVE

grander

“WHAT ARE YOU DOING TONIGHT?” ASKED MY CO-WORKER AT THE hair salon.

“Nothing,” I replied.

“Why?”

“I never do anything for New Year’s Eve.”

But inside I was thinking, *Because I have a kid, you dummy.* New Year’s Eve isn’t a night for single mothers. It’s for couples who want to kiss at midnight and single people who are looking for lovers. I was neither of those things.

“Come out with us,” she said.

“Where are you going?”

“Niagara Falls. We’re going to a concert. You’re young... you should come! It’ll be fun!”

Before I knew what was happening, two more of my co-workers joined in. So I called my parents and asked if they would watch Beckett, who had just turned four years old. With obvious disapproval, they begrudgingly agreed.

At the time, I was working two jobs and living in a townhouse. I’d gotten my hairstyling license a few years prior so I would have a job to support my son, and now I was working full-time at a hair salon called The Gay Blade. Interesting name, but it doesn’t mean what you think; the owner’s name was Gay.

My other job was at the only fashion-forward dress shop in our area. I closed up at the salon and quickly drove to the dress shop to find an outfit. I bought a black-sequined wrap dress and paired it with combat boots and a gorgeous black and grey polished stone necklace. Perfect.

I brought no alcohol with me that night. We got to our hotel in Niagara Falls, then headed to the concert. The performer was a dubstep artist called DeadMau5. It wasn't anything I normally listened to, but it was fun. The girls from work were joined by a bigger group of their friends and we drifted away from one another as the night went on.

A few of my brother's friends were there, too, so I spent most of the evening hanging out with them. They felt more like family.

As the concert drew to a close, I went to the coat check to retrieve my jacket. I had shared a hanger with the girls from work to save money, and one of them had accidentally taken my coat with them. I stood there for a while, trying to figure out what I would do next. The temperature outside was well below freezing and I didn't look forward to walking in the cold to our hotel in my wrap dress. Wind and wrap dresses don't go well together.

One of my brother's friends lent me his jacket and said he would pick it up from me in the morning. Grateful, I went outside to look for the girls from the salon.

Being a small girl, I was always nervous going out at night by myself. I stood under the streetlight in case any midnight perverts tried to attack me. Surely if they did, someone would see me screaming under the light instead of hidden away in the shadows.

Suddenly, I heard someone yell, "What are you doing there?"

"Who, me?" I asked, looking around.

"Yes, you. Why are you all alone?" The faceless male voice was coming from a crowd of people across the road.

"I can't find my friends."

"Come over here. We'll help you find them," the voice called.

"No, thanks. I don't know you."

"Okay. Well, we'll just wait here until you find them and make sure you're okay."

By this point, I could see that the guy was part of a group of men and women. Although I stayed on my side of the street, I thought it was nice

of them to wait with me. As promised, the strangers stood there, waiting to see if I successfully spotted my co-workers.

Eventually I decided they were safe and crossed the road.

“Hi,” I said.

“Hello,” the guy said. “I’m Grander.”

Grander asked me where I was from and I told him about how I’d lost my coat and friends. He introduced his friends to me, Mark and J.J. There were more of them in the group, but the others slowly dispersed to find food and I was left with the three guys.

Grander offered to walk me back to my hotel. He was extremely friendly and told me he was visiting Canada from New York.

New York? I thought. *Interesting.*

On our walk, he showed me photos of his son and friended me on Facebook. When we got close to the hotel, I said goodbye and ran inside. After all, I didn’t want to get myself into a compromising situation alone with three strange men!

We took a photo before I ran off, though. I didn’t know at the time this would be the first photo I’d take with my husband. Had I known, I wouldn’t have stood there in my brother’s friend’s big ugly coat.

Grander texted me all night and into the next morning. I looked him up on Facebook the next day and was surprised at how good-looking he was. I was even more surprised that I hadn’t noticed this the night before! And New York... it had to be fate.

From then on, we never stopped talking. Our chats lasted far into the early morning hours and it’s a wonder either of us was able to get any work done at all. I guess people have a lot more stamina when they’re young and in love.

We had our first date in February 2013, with Grander catching the last plane to Toronto during a blizzard while I caught the last train to the city. After that, we saw one another almost every other weekend. Grander usually was the one to drive nine hours to see me, and eventually I took

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my first plane ride to visit him in New York. Shortly after, we went on a five-day trip to the Dominican Republic, where he'd grown up.

By April, he had proposed.

By June, I told my family I was moving to New York. They weren't pleased.

"You're making a mistake," my dad said.

"What do you even know about this guy?" asked my mom.

I felt indignant. I told my parents about all our midnight talks and assured them that I *did* know him. I was in love and I was going.

I was the same lover of curly-headed guys I'd always been, and I fell hard for Grander. There was something about him that felt both wild and comfortable. He looked at me in much the same way the Fish had, through long eyelashes and carefully reserved smiles.

I suppose that's why they call it "being swept off your feet." I was knocked over, and enjoying the fall.

He was the one I'd been looking for. His zest for life and adventurous attitude made my own wild spirit soar. We would live in New York and have the most perfect mixed race babies with the most beautiful eyelashes and dark eyebrows. It had to be fate.

Finally, I put to rest sixteen years of hoping the Fish would somehow find his way back to me. What I didn't know was that my heart would hit the floor many times down the road.

about the author



Leah Grey didn't want to become an addiction guru; hair-guru was more like it. Did you want to know what kind of haircut would flatter your face shape the best? She was your girl. Did you need to know what to do at 3 a.m. when your husband hadn't answered the phone and took \$300 out of your joint bank account? No, thank you.

God often calls the most unqualified, resistant, and ill-spoken to do His Kingdom work. In a similar fashion, Leah is a wildly unqualified, three-time college dropout, whose husband says she can be mildly offensive at times. She has three hurricanes for children and little free time on her hands. She quit working as a hairstylist to write about what God did for her through her husband's addiction. Not because her life was perfect, but because she found unshakable peace in her daily chaos.

Leah is an award-winning writer whose online courses on boundaries and addiction blogs have reached over 350,000 women since it started in 2014. She created an online support group, Habit, that focuses on Biblical principles and advice for wives and partners of addiction. *No One Brings You a Casserole When Your Husband Goes to Rehab* is her debut book.

If you're tired and overwhelmed, and in need of a friend who gets it, visit Leah's website to contact her or access her free resource library:

leahgrey.com