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Chicken Soup Daily Serving

A Second Chance

By Ariana Adams

I lay in my hospital bed, eyes filled with tears as I stared longingly at the crisp October sky. This was my long-awaited wedding day. But I wouldn't be strolling down the aisle in my white satin gown as planned.

I dated Yates for six years, during high school and part of college. We were the proverbial high-school sweethearts - he was my first love and I his. Young and naive, we discovered we each had unique, individual dreams that required pursuits down different paths. So, we parted ways.

For a decade, Yates and I lived separate lives, with different geographies and different experiences. Several failed relationships and many mistakes along the way, we each discovered an unexplainable void within ourselves. After almost ten years of no contact, Yates reached me through my mother. We reunited and immediately realized what we had been missing in our lives was each other.

Within three months we were engaged.

On that beautiful October day, my husband-to-be sat next to me on the hospital bed, caressing my hand with sympathetic understanding. We both knew our journey together would not commence that day.

An unfortunate twist of fate two days prior left me with a collapsed lung, several broken ribs, a fractured pelvis and a fractured clavicle. Hours of phone calls ensued, canceling vendors and airline reservations, informing family and friends. Anger welled as I relived - over and over - the memory of the truck that ran the stop sign a block from my home. It T-boned my car, catapulting me into the passenger seat, leaving me virtually paralyzed, physically and emotionally.

We entertained the idea of holding the nuptials in the hospital chapel, a suggestion from my childhood pastor who had driven 300 miles to officiate. But I so wanted to share my joyous day with family and friends, many who lived miles away.

Why me? I thought. What did I do to deserve having my special day ripped from me?

Suddenly the details of reception centerpieces and invitation designs, which had seemed so monumental during the planning stages, were now so trivial. Why had I spent hours and hours poring over what color ribbons to use on those darn bubbles?

Now, what was important was having my life, my fiance by my side and a future of memories to make. I had a new perspective on the

importance of marriage. We were already living the "for worse" before even exchanging vows. I knew this was a test of love - and we would pass it.

Despite the doctors' predictions, within a month I was walking without a walker. I had renewed energy and purpose: I was determined to walk down the aisle and marry the man who had bathed, fed and comforted me through weeks of physical and emotional agony.

Three months after my accident, I sat in the bride's room of St. Mary's Chapel embracing the thrill of my wedding day. Yates and I would finally become one.

A torrential downpour shrouded the chapel, accompanied by soft, rumbling thunder. I smiled to myself and thought, *God is shedding His tears of joy and expressing His voice of approval of our marriage.*

The emotional and physical scars I still endured were constant reminders of my mortality. I was fortunate. My experience provided a self-discovery I might otherwise never have known: I realized a perfect wedding day does not a perfect marriage make. But the strength of love between two people can make every day perfect.

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