

A love worth waiting for

I'm about to blow my husband's cover. If you were to ask him how we met, he'd tell you it happened six years ago last month, in a funky little coffee shop in Cambridge. This is true. But he always leaves out how we got to that point.

I didn't think I'd ever get married. I never dated very much and when I finally met someone, I was marriage-minded and he was not. We stayed together for longer than we should have and when the relationship ended, I took that as a sign. I just wasn't meant to be a wife.

But nor did I want to be a recluse, and when I was ready to meet men again, I was frustrated with a series of disasters I referred to as "non-dates" — which included a guy with a runny nose who refused to use a tissue and a guy who took me to a movie and talked politics all the way through it. I wasn't meeting nice guys, though I was pretty sure there had to be at least one out there. Some of my friends were venturing into the world of online personal ads, but I was hesitant to do it myself. What if I attracted some sort of sociopath? What if I got a stalker? What if I met someone who sounded perfect and turned out to be a lady wrestler?

Except ... what did I have to lose? In the end, I suppose I placed the ad because it was so easy. I created a new e-mail address strictly for the responses, logged on and filled out a form. I remember my finger hovering over my mouse and I looked up at the ceiling and said, "God, please don't send me a nut" just before I clicked.

I honestly wasn't looking for a husband. I just wanted someone nice to see a movie with every now and again. I'd convinced myself I didn't actually want a husband. Frankly, I was closer to 40 than 30 and I'd reached a point where I figured my chance had passed me by. I was comfortably independent and pretty content to be the cool, fun aunt.

But how does that go — man plans, and God laughs? Instead of a nut, God sent me Rich, who is the best man I know. He is honest and true and he makes me laugh, and he's exactly what I wanted, even though I wasn't looking. We wrote each other for a month before arranging an actual meeting in that Cambridge cafe. We discovered a mutual love of the Red Sox, '70s rock-n-roll and persnickety cats. Six weeks later, on Valentine's Day, we said "I love you" for the first time and were already talking about the kind of wedding we wanted. Eight months after that, we were engaged.

It was as if we had known one another in a past life. We clicked immediately. We fell hard in love within weeks and knew we'd be together forever. How? I don't know. We just *knew*. Until I met Rich, I didn't believe that really happened to people.

Neither of us had any idea what marriage was supposed to be, but we knew what it was not. We may have met on line, but we are living our lives in real life. Both of us were com-

mitted to the idea that we would have a quiet and respectful house. We don't fight, and people often look at me skeptically when I say that. It's not that we never disagree. There are things about my husband that drive me crazy. He would tell you the same about me. But there's no name-calling or screaming in our house. I've never understood why it's OK to shout obscenities at someone you purport to love. It's hard

to give yourself a time out when all you want to do is make your point. It's hard to sit down and say calmly, "This is really making me angry; can we talk about it?" But it works.

Sometimes we say we got married so neither of us would ever have to go through the bad stuff alone. In the six years since we've met, we've weathered cancer, a crisis asthma attack, children coming into our lives and being taken from us and the deaths of two parents. It made a difference to offer a shoulder. It made a difference to be able to lean. I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have had such support.

We're trying to pass these ideals onto our children, but parenting is another whole challenge. Rich told me recently, "No one will ever treat your kid the way you would, not even your spouse" and he's right. We have to figure out how to compromise and sometimes we both have to give in. We try to worry less about who's right and more about what works for our family, and what works changes from day to day.

Most of my old classmates have teenagers, and here I am with two preschoolers and a house where the renovations aren't quite done. Some days, I feel like I started too late. Other days, I shake my head and wonder, like the Talking Heads said, "Well, how did I get here?" But most of the time, I'm overwhelmed by how lucky I was to marry such an amazing guy and be matched with such wonderful kids to raise. I used to imagine what life as a wife and mother would be like. My imagination was woefully inadequate. This was definitely worth the wait.

Christine M. Quirk is the editor of MotherTown. She lives with her family in Clinton.

Quips & Quirks By Christine M. Quirk

