



LORI AND LUKE

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OUR STORY

THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY  
2007

*“I love Lori because she’s both everything comfortable to me and everything exciting. I know we’re going to get through the good times and the bad times.”*

— LUKE

*“I never have to prove anything to Luke. He loves me for me, even when it’s hard. It doesn’t matter if I wake up and I’m Godzilla or the most charming woman he’s ever met.*

— LORI



## The Lucky Girl

**Lori is the one who captured Luke’s heart**

Luke was at a wedding reception in Minneapolis in August 2004 when Travis asked him if he had been in touch with Lori.

**Luke:** I told him not in years. I asked how she was. We had met through a mutual friend in college. Travis had stayed close to her, but I’d lost touch after graduation when I moved to Pasadena. I remembered she was a nice sweet girl with a warm smile. She was always conscientious of people’s feelings. She wanted to make everyone around her feel comfortable and enjoy themselves.

Luke thought it would be nice to catch up with her so he took Lori's e-mail address. He surprised her with an e-mail on Wednesday, August 11.

**Lori:** *I couldn't be more excited. I hadn't seen Luke since he finished college in 2001. I went to work for an ad agency in Chicago after receiving my Master's degree in 2002. He took a job with The Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in California. I couldn't believe that this person I hadn't talked to forever had written me. He was always one of my favorite people.*

Luke had celebrated Lori's 21st birthday with friends at home during the summer of 1999. Both were dating others at the time.

**Lori:** *I remember saying that whoever ends up with Luke is a lucky, lucky girl. He is kind, selfless. He always puts others first. I had thought about him on and off since we last partied together on New Year's Eve 2001. I would glance at old photos and think, "What's Luke doing?" He was always such a wonderful person, so smart.*

**Luke:** We ended up exchanging e-mails, instant messaging. We felt comfortable with each other, having grown up in the same small towns. Over the course of 20 or so emails, it became apparent that there were a lot of things we shared – our views, where we were in our lives. We also had that history.

**Lori:** *We started talking on the phone. We talked for three or four hours a night. Thank God for nighttime minutes.*

Luke had planned to visit his Aunt Cory in the Chicago area the second week in September. So he suggested that they spend Labor Day weekend together.

**Luke:** I wanted to go visit Lori to, at the very least, catch up with an old friend.

**Lori:** *I encouraged him to come here. I loved the calm in his voice, his open-mindedness and his awkward sense of humor. The more we talked the more we realized there was something there. We just knew it in the sound of each other's voice. We were pretty familiar with each other's families and hometowns. This wasn't brand new for us.*

At Midway Airport, Luke hopped on the escalator to baggage claim. He looked down and saw a familiar expression on the face of girl he hadn't seen in almost four years.

**Luke:** She had the biggest smile. She looked radiant.

**Lori:** *I wore a special black dress in case our reunion turned into something more than friendship. I saw him coming down the escalator. He was more clean-cut than I remembered. He smiled. I smiled. I knew then I was going to marry him. We hugged and immediately started holding hands. That night, we talked until two in the morning in my apartment. When he kissed me goodnight, it was the most wonderful feeling, like how it's supposed to be.*

*Just friends in 1999:  
“I remember saying whoever  
ends up with Luke is a  
lucky, lucky girl.”*



They spent the weekend touring the city. Luke returned the following Saturday before visiting his aunt. They had one day together and ended up having a wine and cheese picnic at night at Lake Michigan.

**Luke:** Suddenly, fireworks went off. You couldn't have planned it better. That's what really hooked me. After that, we would see what we're capable of together.

**Lori:** *We e-mailed every day and called nightly for the next eight months. We lived for the long weekends that we could travel to see each other. It was like we were always meant to be together.*

One Friday night in November, Lori flew to Los Angeles from an industry awards dinner. She told Luke she would be wearing a long, strapless gown.

**Lori:** *He met me in a suit and held a giant bouquet of pink roses. I walked into his apartment and he had scattered a path of rose petals leading to twinkling candles.*

*I just started crying. It was the most romantic thing that anyone had done for me. He said he had never done those things for anyone else. That's when I knew I loved him.*

*I told him that weekend. I said, “You don't have to say it back - only when you are ready.”*

**Luke:** I felt awkward. It wasn't that I wasn't falling in love. It was more just being nervous, going down that path. One Friday night in January, I looked at Lori sound asleep that night. I'm an idiot, I thought. I love this girl. I nudged her awake and told her. She began to cry. She laughed and kissed me.

The next month, Lori and Luke decided that she would move to California.

**Luke:** Moving in together meant we would get married at some point. I knew it when I started to realize that I couldn't conceive of how my life would have gone without having met her. To be sure, I would have been fairly unhappy.

Knowing Lori had opened my eyes to the importance of family and adjusting your life to take care of those things that are important – her, our families, our relationship. It's amazing how much energy, passion and commitment she puts into everything in her life.

On Memorial Day weekend, Lori and Luke packed her two cats and all her belongings in a Ford Explorer.

**Lori:** *I had never lived more than three hours from home. I cried for the first hour or two. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do. We drove to Los Angeles in 34 hours and enjoyed the adventure. We figured if we could be in a car with each other 34 hours straight, we would be OK.*

They adjusted to life in Irvine, California. The first few months were hard. Lori was homesick and her sister Melissa had complications with her pregnancy. She flew home every other month.

**Lori:** *We fought now and then, but never went to bed mad. We learned the fine art of compromising - that there's always more that you can give.*

Lori got a job running a tutoring center. They traveled around southern California and visited Hawaii. They attended a wedding in Key West. Lori snorkeled for the first time. Luke helped her get over her fear of deep water.

In early August, Luke decided that they should go ring shopping. It was one year after their first e-mail exchange.

**Lori:** *I had expected him to propose before October 5 - the week of my five-year college reunion. We were also visiting Luke's family.*

**Luke:** We found the perfect jeweler in Pasadena. I snuck back to order an unusual custom-made setting for a princess cut diamond. It was going to be a hand-crafted ring made for us – a lot of time, attention and love put into its construction. It was symbolic of what we wanted for the two of us.

**Lori:** *The weeks passed by and I was getting nervous. I had promised Luke I wouldn't turn the apartment upside down looking for the ring. Every time we went out to dinner I thought he was going to propose.*



*"I was happy and elated, just out of my mind."* – LUKE

*Then came October 1. That Saturday evening, I wore a spaghetti strap dress with a ruffle trim. We ate at California Beach Sushi in Newport. Still no proposal. I thought maybe he'll have something planned at home.*

**Luke:** I drove to Balboa Beach after dinner. I had tucked the ring inside one of the blankets in the back seat. After I parked the car, Lori tried to grab the blankets and I snatched it from her. 'No, no, that's OK,' I said. My hands were shaking as I held the ring box in the blanket. We sat down on the sand. There was no moon. It was pitch black and foggy. I was really nervous. You realize you are making that step.

By now, I was squeezing the ring box like a stress ball. I was trying to work up the courage to say anything. I stammered out: 'I have something for you...' I have no idea what happened next.

**Lori:** *I remember him saying 'Lori Abels, will you marry me?' I cried. I was nodding my head vigorously. I squeaked out a yes.*

**Luke:** Then I began to cry. Lori shook so hard she couldn't straighten her knees to stand up at first. There was no light so Lori couldn't see the ring. We went back to the boardwalk and she saw it under the light.

**Lori:** *I was crying. It took my breath away.*

**Luke:** I was happy, elated, out of my mind.

**Lori:** *I was one of those girls who dreamt about that moment my whole life, wondering who it would be. To feel it happening to you, it's kind of overwhelming, even more so to know that this person wants to spend the rest of his life with you. That's a huge thing; starting a life with someone, forever.*

