

Prologue

“Because of the present crisis . . .” I Corinthians 7:26

This is a love story, and it’s all about me.

Me and my midlife crisis.

My name is Joshua Roosevelt—Josh to everybody but my mom when she’s angry—and I’m only twenty years old. Which is why having a midlife crisis is somewhat disconcerting. In theory, you’re supposed to be forty with a wife and three kids, a house in the suburbs, and a nine-to-five job when you have your midlife crisis. But life is not lived in theory.

In addition to only being half the requisite age for a midlife crisis, I do not have a wife or even a girlfriend (part, as you’ll see, of the problem). In fact, I’ve only been on three dates in my entire life, all with different girls. Being an evangelical Christian, that pretty much rules out the three kids. And as for work, I’ve never had a nine-to-five, or even an eight-to-four. It’s been part-time and odd jobs all my life. Suffice to say, I’m not exactly loaded, which isn’t helping matters either.

But let me back up. This crisis has its roots in high school when I started to realize my career and life path wasn’t going to be a freeway. Like so many of the roads out here in rural Nebraska, it wasn’t even paved yet. With no other viable plan after graduating from Morgan High, I went off to a nice Christian college outside Omaha. I assumed it (the college, not Omaha) was the place to figure out what to do with the rest of my life. I also hoped that going off to college and having to live on my own and grow up and be a man and all that would help me find my purpose in life. I envisioned graduating in four years, finding my place in the world, and looking back to see that my maturation into an upstanding Christian man was complete. But after taking three and a half semesters of general math

courses, general history courses, general communications courses, general science courses, and general Bible courses, I was generally confused.

And going broke.

I've been a Christian almost since before I can remember, since I was five. And while I've always been a pretty good person—never rebelled against my parents, never experimented with drugs or alcohol, never tattooed myself or gotten anything pierced without permission (and been a gentleman on the aforementioned three dates)—I just felt like something was missing. I was a little ho-hum in my walk with God and not really sure why or what to do about it.

Like I said, midlife crisis.

So with no direction to speak of, I decided to leave college and return home to my family. I didn't register for fall classes and came home during spring break to deliver the surprising news to my parents in person. But the folks had a surprise they'd been waiting to share in person too: After pastoring the Morgan Bible Church for twenty-plus years, my father was being let go. (He was canned, but because it's church, they called it "letting him go.") If that wasn't enough of a jolt, my parents also informed me that Dad had already candidated and been accepted to pastor a new church in Oklahoma, and they were moving to Norman the Monday after Easter. While it was a great new challenge for them, it left me all alone in Morgan.

Well, not all alone. I still had my best friend Scotty Austin, who I've known since I was six. He's also twenty, and still lives in Morgan with his dad, Dirk. I also had Cassie Larson, my other best friend, who I've known even longer than Scotty. Cassie's nineteen and, like Scotty, had remained in Morgan after high school.

And I had Erica. Or at least, I had dreams of Erica. Remember how I said the lack of a girlfriend was part of my midlife crisis? Well, I also thought going off to college would afford me the perfect opportunity to meet the future Mrs. Roosevelt. It hadn't. Or rather, I hadn't taken advantage of the opportunity. At age twenty, I wasn't exactly desperate, but I was starting to wonder what God's plan was for me in the marriage category.

All these boiling waters came to a head one weekend in April, just after my parents completed a whirlwind house sale and move to Oklahoma, and less than a month before my college days came to a close. That's when I met Erica. I'd had my share of junior and senior high crushes, and had gone on those three dates. But no girl had ever struck me the way she did. I was head-over-paws in puppy love at first sight, as stupid as I've always found that concept to be.

But what can I say? Erica Nicole Chamberlain was a ray of sunshine, an undeniable proof that God was smiling down on me, that my midlife crisis was a thing of the past.

Ha!