



**Deborah and Brian**

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Our Story

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2007



## A shared love of family ties the knot

Deborah was wary of men on JDate who wanted to meet her too quickly. After several mismatches, she preferred to get to know a guy online before arranging a date.

Brian wasn't interested in a quick write-and-meet approach. He decided that longer email exchanges could determine if a woman's interests were compatible with his.

So Deborah welcomed Brian's questions in his emails as a sign of directness. "Other people just couldn't communicate. You never knew where you stood or if they were serious. Brian seemed honest, no nonsense."

Deborah first noticed Brian in April 2006 when he "hotlisted" her on JDate, an online Jewish matchmaking service. She e-mailed Brian to find out more about him and why he marked her profile as one of his

favorites. Brian immediately wrote back – a sign of sincere interest, Deborah thought. She learned he was a passionate fan of Bulldog football and Atlanta Thrashers hockey. He played and coached soccer. An entrepreneur and former accountant, Brian planned to open a coffee shop soon.

Deborah responded quickly to his questions with long, thoughtful answers. Brian learned that Deborah had master's degrees in social work and business. She directed an innovative social services program in Georgia that keeps aging adults in their homes for as long as possible. He liked that she shared his love and respect for family. "I have a big, blended family, ten nieces and nephews, and I have an appreciation for family. Deborah was conveying that about her family."

Brian also wanted a woman who was genuinely nice, not too complex, good humored, physically fit and shared his interest in organized sports. Deborah seemed to fit his criteria. Brian also appreciated Deborah's cultural background – Jewish, South American and a native speaker of Portuguese. Deborah's parents, Denise and Ricardo, come from Brazil where social life is geared toward family. "We live near several members of our families and we are all close knit," Deborah said.



## A Good Sign

Deborah suggested that they meet for Italian food at a shopping center where, it turned out, no such restaurant existed. So in the parking lot, Brian took over the planning – a role he would assume in their relationship, much to Deborah's relief. "My nature is to plan. I handle a lot of things so she can relax."

They drove to Mix, a classy restaurant in Brookhaven. They talked about family, compared travel stories and the places they had lived. "We just had a lot of similar goals in terms of what we wanted for our future," Deborah said.

Deborah realized that Brian was enjoying himself when he suggested they drive to Café Intermezzo for a late evening cup of coffee and dessert. "We actually drove together," Brian said. "She trusted me enough to get in my car. It was a good sign."

## A Smooth Course

They dated once a week for the next month. An eager Brian pressured her for more dates, but Deborah wanted to take it slowly. "I didn't want to mess things up."

She had little to worry about. Fun and good times followed. Brian treated her to an evening at the Punchline comedy club. They packed a bottle of wine and a picnic spread for outdoor concerts at Chastain Park. Less than three weeks after they met, Brian and Deborah were speaking on the phone when he told her, "I don't know how you feel, but basically you're the only person I'm going to be dating."

Brian's steadiness and dependability kept the relationship on a smooth course – a contrast to the ups and downs of Deborah's recent past relationships. But Brian would surprise her with a few twists, turns and dips – at Six Flags over Georgia.

## A Fairly Obvious Clue

Brian wasn't romantic in a red heart and flowers sort of way. Deborah kidded him at first. But then she got the message. And then another. And then another. And then another.

Every time she traveled alone, she would find little notes from Brian that would make her heart flutter. "It made me feel really good, especially when I went to Israel. 'Open this when you get on the plane,' he would say." He had scanned a photo of them kissing. Underneath he wrote, "I will miss and worry about you until you

are back in my arms again. Have a safe and wonderful trip. All the love in the world, Brian."

"I was taken aback by the note. That's the first time I ever had a real clue that he liked me a lot." As her baggage slid down the conveyor, Brian would tell her about other notes tucked in her luggage, to be read when she arrived. "I told her they were in there so she could obsess about it for 12 hours on the plane."

While Deborah was in Israel, Brian visited his family in Westcliffe, Colorado for a reunion. Brian's father, Danny, his mother, Terry, and his stepfather, Richard, had already met Deborah. In Colorado, he showed photos of Deborah to his stepmother, Susie, and many other relatives. He talked about her a lot. "They knew this was serious because he never even talked about who he dated," Deborah said. "He's also pretty picky. They felt that whoever he ended up with would have to meet his standard. That said a lot."

With Deborah's dismal track record, Denise and Ricardo wouldn't warm to a new boyfriend unless he was serious. But after four months, they could see that Brian was different from the others. "I kept talking about the relationship in a different way. I didn't talk about having doubts about him all the time. I talked positively."



Even negative moments affirmed the positive in their relationship. “We both have some fire,” Brian said. “We stand our ground and make sure our opinions are heard. The times that the relationship has moved forward stems from what appears to be just butting heads and being stubborn, protecting our feelings or having some of our past creep in. It’s those moments that give us the most amount of time for reflection on ourselves and our future.”

## ‘He’s thinking long term.’

Five months after their first date, they celebrated the High Holy Days together. During Yom Kippur services, Brian passed a love note to Deborah that made her toes curl. “I just wanted to take a minute to tell you how happy I am. The last few weeks have been blissful and this is the type of relationship I want: healthy, supportive, open communication. I am truly so happy and so blessed to be with you, and between you, the coffee shop, and everything else that’s going on, I’m so excited for the next year.”

‘You’re the  
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BRIAN

“This was the most important part,” Deborah said. “He wrote, ‘You’re the one I have and the one I want. I love you so much, Brian.’ I was, like, oh, my God. I thought does he mean he wants to marry me? My heart flipped for a moment. He’s thinking long term we’re going to be together. That changed the way I was thinking.”

“There wasn’t a lightening bolt moment,” Brian recalled. “But even from the first date, she just measured up. I’m not perfect. Nobody’s perfect. But she was everything I was looking for, always right there, through the good times, the bad times. There’s a lot of laughing and shared experiences.”

The couple celebrated their six month anniversary by taking a Caribbean cruise in November. On the Grand Cayman Islands, Brian suggested they stop at a diamond jewelry store. “I was trying to be nonchalant, but my heart was racing,” Deborah said.

Brian got some ideas from Deborah’s reaction to the engagement rings. He had planned to propose by the end of the year. Meanwhile, they had made a big decision that would cement their future together. In November, they decided to buy a home that was under construction next to Brian’s house.

## A Strong Foundation

"Do you want to meet for a glass of wine?" Brian asked Ricardo in private at the end of a family meal. It was a Friday night in mid-December. Brian had never spent any time alone with Deborah's father. They decided to get together Monday evening at Pricci in Buckhead.

Brian knew that Ricardo suspected something. "Her entire family is late for everything. I gave him a call Monday morning and told him I was very busy. We decided we would talk sometime between six and six-thirty to schedule a time to meet for a drink. No sooner had six come and the phone rang."

"All right, I'm ready to leave work," Ricardo said.

"Well, there was no way I could leave work at that moment," Brian recalled thinking. "So now I was the one who was late. We decided to schedule dinner for seven thirty. We made small talk for twenty minutes and drank a glass of wine. I just blurted it out."

Ricardo told him no less than three times he had his blessing. Then he admired the ring, which Brian's stepfather had helped pick out. "I couldn't have asked for it to be nicer," Brian said of Ricardo's warm response.



Deborah thought the proposal would come on Valentine's Day; and both families had their own ideas as to when it would happen. But Brian is not a red heart sort of guy. They had planned a trip at the end of the year to visit their families in Tulsa and Sarasota. On December 20th, the evening before their departure, Deborah was exhausted from working her own hectic schedule and helping Brian pack coffee for mail orders.

All that week, Brian had been "prepping Deborah to get engaged. I told her to bring over a pair of crappy shoes so we could walk around the new house construction site. I told her to come help me at work on Wednesday."

Deborah owned a condo, so the hassles of single family home ownership were new to her. "Something's wrong with the foundation," Brian told her. "We need to deal with this now."

A bit confused and tired, she fussed a little. Then Brian took her hand. In the dark, they plodded through the mud to where the concrete had

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recently been poured. "The builder told me there was a problem with the waterproofing," Brian said. "Tell me if you see any breaks in the waterproofing at the bottom of the foundation."

By now, Deborah was completely confused. Breaks? Waterproofing? But that was just the beginning.

Brian swept his flashlight over the cement, faking an inspection. He stood on the section of the foundation that would support their bedroom on the second floor. He lowered to one knee then pulled a winter glove off Deborah's hand. He put the ring on her finger.

"Will you marry me?"

Deborah stood there, speechless and in shock. "Then I'm screaming. I do not even comprehend."

"So are you going to answer my question?"

"Of course, yes, yes! I never thought you would propose here."

"I wanted to do it here," Brian said, "because this is where we are going to start our new life together."

