

Life, just a series of surprises

Isn't it strange how the most important moments of our lives have a way of catching us by surprise?

I was 19 when I met the one. He insists that he knew from the start, but not me. I was much more hesitant, reluctant to let anyone in. My minimal dating experience had been a short string of bad luck and I had pretty much given up on the idea of finding a decent guy.

We met thanks to a surprise phone call from a friend I hadn't spoken to since graduating high school the year before. We had lost touch after moving away to different schools, but she called me up out of the blue to invite me to her birthday party.

So I went, excited to catch up with friends I had known since elementary school. There were a few other guests there as well that the birthday girl knew through our friend who had surprisingly gone off to a different high school and who I hadn't seen for years. Little did I know at the time that I would later marry one of those mutual friends.

He and I defied the odds and stayed together despite two years of a long-distance relationship (much to the surprise of my protective family).

Then came the proposal.

From early on in our relationship we had talked about our future, marriage, kids, a house. It wasn't a surprise that he asked, but boy did he give me a shock! We were away on holiday and to me it seemed like a perfectly normal day, I didn't notice him acting strange at all. But then out of nowhere (it seemed) he was on one knee, holding out a ring. I couldn't believe it was actually happening.

I recently experienced that feeling again when I found my wedding dress.

I guess I expected it to be a more grueling process, a cage match style battle between my taste and what my family had in mind for me to wear. But my reality was much different than the dramatic depictions on T.V. shows like 'Say Yes to the Dress'. I certainly didn't expect to find the perfect dress on my second shopping trip.

Not that I rushed it ? I lost count of how many dresses I tried on, but it was definitely more than 40. I wanted to make the most of the experience, making up for the prom dress that I didn't shop for. In high school I was tomboyish and avoided the mall like the plague but now I'm completely opposite (another one of life's curveballs).

Once I started trying dresses on, it seemed like finding the right one would be next to impossible. They were all beautiful, how could I possibly know which to choose?

I wasn't even looking seriously when I came across the one, it was just fun to try them on. I had a big group with me, all the people who had asked if they could tag along. People warned me that it was asking for trouble (I guess I'm not the only one who's seen 'Say Yes to the Dress') but I thought, at least that way I could make them all happy and still have time to go dress shopping with my mum and sister later.

Well thankfully my family is far less dramatic than those seen on reality T.V. and there was no battle between anyone's tastes. And, as it turned out, it was a good thing I'd taken the extra people along. It was my mother-in-law to be that pulled out The Dress.

I think my jaw actually dropped.

It didn't even compare to anything else I had tried on, and I felt undeniably like a bride. After about 15 minutes of staring at The Dress in the mirror, I finally understood the advice my sister had given me and I knew she was right. Your wedding dress is the one you cannot walk away from.

By the end of the day I was exhausted. After hours of stepping in and out of dresses (and an embarrassing public crying session when I made my decision), I was wiped. I want to send out a huge thank you to my family who came with me and made the day as amazing and fun as it was, my mum, sister, aunt, cousin and soon-to-be mother-in-law.

Of course, every day is not that romantic or exciting, life finds a way of getting back into routine. And yet, every so often I catch a glimpse of the long white bag that contains what I'll wear on the most important day of my life?and I'm surprised all over again.

By Emily Wood