

## **The Thought Alone**

**By Chase March**

“You know how there are never enough hours in the day, how it seems that you need to move faster, get more done? I know you do. We’ve all felt it at one point or another. And sometimes that thought alone is enough to motivate us.”

Joe looked across the top of the podium and had to smile. He wasn’t sure that he’d be able to pull this off but so far so good. He was actually doing it. He glanced over at Jennifer, his daughter, to see if she approved of his speech so far. She smiled. That was all the fuel he needed to continue.

“We can feel a pull and start to walk towards something without even knowing what it is. We sometimes feel opportunity coming and correct our course to intercept one that otherwise might pass us by. Perhaps Jennifer felt it that day. I sure know that Mark did. And I am sure most of you have heard this story over and over. But allow me this, as father of the bride, to retell it.”

Jennifer didn’t need to hear the story again. It was part of the fabric that was her fairytale. Every girl dreams of this. It still seemed unreal. Could she actually have a fairytale wedding and live happily ever after? Did this really happen in real life? She looked over to Mark and felt absolutely no doubt. None. This was for real. “The heart knows what it knows,” was what her grandma had always said. And she was here to see it, which made it all the more sweet.

“My wife,” Joe continued, “tends to obsess about seasonal clothes. And I know.” He cleared his throat. “I know this should be about my daughter but I bought the coat. And Cheryl washed it and put it away so that should count for something right.”

Jennifer put her hand up to her eye and rubbed it. He’d been off to such a good start in the speech. Now he’d probably lost half the audience. They’d laughed, but how were they to know what

he was talking about? How could he always manage to lose the thread of a perfectly good story? She wished she could jump in and tell the story herself at this point.

It was early fall and the temperature was unseasonably low. The wind ripped through the city and pushed the litter alongside the road. People hurried along the sidewalks eager to get inside, afraid that this weather signaled the demise of another summer.

Jennifer wasn't immune to any of this. In fact, before leaving the house, she had dug her winter coat out of the closet in the basement. It was in perfect condition and looked brand new even though Jennifer had been through a lot with it that previous winter.

As Joe continued his speech, Jennifer's memories played in her head like a movie. The picture was perfectly clear. Was it because of the narrative that her father was awkwardly telling?

"So, yeah, the coat was an absolute mess after that," Joe continued.

Jennifer tuned him out. This can't be about a coat. It can't be about her being in that part of town on one specific day. It had to be more than that. Or did it?

She scanned the audience and couldn't believe that everyone she loved was here in one room celebrating the fact that she'd found love. She made eye contact with her maid of honour who mouthed the words, "Can you believe this?"

Jennifer focused on that last phrase. She remembered that for the past year and a half she often said, "I can't believe this is happening," or something to that effect. Even her family and friends echoed that sentiment.

What was so hard to believe about falling in love, about finding a soul mate, about being in the right place at the right time? Maybe the phrase "can you believe it" has very little to do with

belief. Perhaps it is the only way we know how to describe something so perfect. Or maybe we do believe it but always have some doubt. This can't be real, can it? Perhaps we need that doubt so that we can truly analyze the situation and get our bearings, so to speak.

Nah, Jennifer didn't believe that either. She believed in the fairy tale. She believed in soul mates. And she knew without a doubt that when that special person walks into your life, you'd just know. And she knew it, right away. Had to have. Otherwise it wouldn't have played out that way, would've it.

“So, she tells me, “Didn't think I'd need this already,” as she dashed out the door wearing the red jacket.”

Jennifer looked over to her husband and wondered what he was thinking right at that moment. He nodded his head and whispered, “You did need it.” It was a chilly morning that day. He wished that he could take over the microphone and tell the story. He could do it justice. Much better than it was being told now.

I used to work at a donut shop part-time as I put myself through university. The shop had huge front windows that overlooked the main street.

I remember that the door would sometimes open by the wind. The door chime would sound and I'd come up front to find no customer to serve. It was always a mild annoyance.

Well, the day Joe has been describing so far, the wind had other plans.

I remember that day more clearly than any day before or since. I was working in the back of the shop baking when the door chime sounded. That sound was normal enough but the accompanying sound made me leave my station.

I hurried to the lobby and saw that the wind had pulled open the door and torn it from its hinges. The manager and I were able to put the door back in place and lock it. We then put up a note for our customers to use the staff entrance. The manager called a repairman and I got back to work. Simple as that. A brief distraction in a regular work day.

A few hours later, the manager and I were in the front lobby surveying the newly repaired front door. I would normally have been working in the back at this time so I take that as a sign.

Anyway, as I stood in front of those large windows watching the wind still whip through the city, I saw a girl cross the street. She was strangely compelling and my eyes were glued to hers. There was something about it. An innocent stare as our eyes met for the longest time. It felt right in that moment.

She crossed the street and walked past the front of the store. My eyes were glued to hers as she looked right into my soul and returned my passionate stare. She didn't stop walking as she looked right into the store at me. This too brief moment was amazing and outlasted normal time. There was meaning behind this exchange. There had to be. I could feel it.

She continued walking and then shifted her gaze to where she was going. I was frozen to the floor, still in shock. I couldn't move. The moment felt so right but she walked away. Why?

I thought that it would've been perfect if she had turned around and came into the store. But she didn't. I couldn't go back to work and I couldn't stay stuck to the floor in the lobby. My manager was right there. What was I to do?

Only one thing. I ran out of the store and chased after her. I didn't even know what I was doing. The manager yelled at me.

“So the manager is yelling at Mark to get back here or he’s fired. Mark’s throwing off his apron. Jennifer’s turning around to see what all the ruckus is about. Mark’s yelling back to his manager, ‘Give me a moment okay?’ The manager’s throwing up his hands and turning around. I wish I could’ve been there.”

Both Jennifer and Mark were all smiles at this point. Joe had told the story and told it well but he wasn’t quite done yet.

“I asked Mark what he was thinking when he ran out of the donut shop after my daughter. He told me that as Jennifer walked out of sight, her beautiful eyes and her red coat remained etched into his memory. He asked me if I believed in love at first sight. Then he said that he knew right away that he loved my daughter with no question at all. He told me that had he not run after her he would’ve regretted it for the rest of his life.”

Joe continued his speech. “Now I don’t know if I believe in love at first sight but I do believe in soul mates. I don’t know what made Jennifer cross the street against the lights that day, or why she was in that part of town. But it’s amazing to think that that seemingly insignificant act of crossing the street could mean so much and change all of our lives.”

THE END