

Love And Roses

I'D RESIGNED MYSELF TO BEING SINGLE FOREVER. SO WHY WAS GOD PROMPTING ME TO THINK ABOUT MARRIAGE NOW?

Fourteen years ago I was living with a roommate in an apartment close to where I worked and attended church. I had come to the conclusion that God was going to be my only husband for the rest of my life since there were no good men left in the world. I was content with that, but I hadn't always been. For years I'd harbored the dream of being swept off my feet by Prince Charming.

By the age of 28 I had seen lots of toads and not one prince.

One Sunday I was getting ready for church and decided to wear a new dress. I remember looking in the mirror and saying, "Lord, I sure would like for my husband to see me in this new dress." I'll never forget hearing the Holy Spirit's answer: "He will."

In reality, I hadn't given much thought to a husband in a long time. It was odd that I had even made that comment.

ON A MISSION I walked into church that morning strutting like a rooster and looking around like a private detective. Face it, I was a woman on a mission. You can just imagine how I scanned that place when the preacher asked all the first-time visitors to raise their hands.

A nice-looking man raised his hand. When our pastor directed us to welcome the visitors, I knocked down five people trying to get over to him and shake his hand. If I hadn't worn a dress that day, I might have jumped the pews to get to him.

But then the Holy Spirit said, "That's not him." I was very disappointed. "Why not?" I asked. He didn't give me an answer.

After church, I talked with the visitor and agreed with the Holy Spirit that he wasn't my type. What was going on? I wondered.

I knew the Holy Spirit's voice, and I knew He had told me that my future husband would see me in my new dress. I considered keeping on the dress forever, but ultimately decided I'd take it off after the evening service.

Then I went to lunch with a friend and forgot about the whole situation. After we ate we walked around and shopped and got back to church just in time for the evening service to begin.

THAT'S HIM! I had not even noticed if there were any visitors until the preacher asked the first-time visitors to raise their hands. I looked to the left and saw a very handsome man holding up his hand. The Holy Spirit said, "That's him."

Nearly three years later, I found out that the Holy Spirit had told this visitor I would be his wife.

If I had known that at the time, I probably would have roped the poor guy the way a cowboy ropes a calf and made him elope with me!

Instead, we started out as friends—or at least that's what I let him think—and remained so for about a year. During that time, Johnny told me he would never give a woman a dozen roses unless he was going to ask her to marry him. After we started dating, he would often bring me roses. I would count them when he wasn't looking, and sure enough, there were never more than 11.

We broke up a dozen or more times because he said we were getting too serious. I was about to give up after two years. I bought a mobile home and made up my mind to stop worrying about whether or not we would ever get married.

Five months after I started pulling away, he asked me to dress

up for my birthday because he wanted to take me someplace nice. I called my mother and told her I thought Johnny was going to ask me to marry him.

“But you’ve always told me you were just friends,” my mother protested. I found out later she was just teasing me; Johnny was right there at my parents’ house, asking for their blessing before he popped the question.

THE 12TH ROSE When Johnny came to pick me up on my birthday, he handed me a box of long-stemmed roses and left the room. I removed the lid and started counting. There were only 11. Johnny came back and caught me counting.

“I told you I would never give anyone 12 roses unless I was going to ask her to marry me,” he said. I was very embarrassed—and disappointed.

I couldn’t understand it. If he loved me, what was he waiting for?

When we finished eating, the waiters and waitresses came out of the kitchen singing “Happy Birthday” and placed a ring box, a card and a rose —the 12th rose—on the table in front of me.

I was so surprised I didn’t know what to say.

I opened the box, looked at the ring and read the card. The card contained a simple question: “Will you spend all your tomorrows with me?” I was so caught off guard I just sat there.

Finally, he asked me, “Well, will you?” I said yes. I was overwhelmed by how romantic he was and thought I would cry.

But once I recovered, I wanted to know when. As soon as we got in the car, I pulled out a calendar and got him to commit to a date—one that was only two months away. I really scared him when I went out the very next day and bought a wedding dress! But I had waited two and a half years for this man, and I

wasn't about to give him a chance to change his mind.

One thing we both knew for certain at the time—and still keep before us—is that God put us together. He ordained our relationship from the beginning. I had learned to be content with my singleness, but I was thrilled when God unfolded an awesome plan for my life that included love, roses and Prince Charming.