



# The Marriage Edition



BROOKLYN, SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 2013

It was August 2010. Shaunta was on Broadway watching the musical *Fela* with her family and her cousin Kaisha from South Carolina when she got a text from her co-worker and friend Janet Rosado. “I met a great guy for you,” the text read. He’s nice, cute, and he’s got a good career going for himself, Janet added. She also attached a photo of Richad.

Meanwhile, Richad was getting oriented at his new office. It was just his second day when Janet said he and Shaunta would make a good couple. Janet urged him to call Shaunta, before even meeting her in person.

If it hadn’t been for Richad’s back surgery a few months earlier, he and Shaunta probably never would have met. A Police Officer, Richad was assigned to restricted duty at the end of his medical leave from work. That meant his new office, where he worked the Police Sick Desk, was located in the same building as the Occupational Safety and Health Section, where Shaunta works as a Senior Police Administrative Aide.

Richad did call Shaunta on her cell phone to introduce himself, and when she returned to work, he stopped by her office. He had already been there, to look at a picture, and he’d thought she was very pretty. “In real life, she outdid her picture,” Richad said. “I was very impressed. And she had an aura of being very sweet.” Shaunta felt nervous. “I’m kind of shy, but I thought he was cute,” she said. “And he was a gentleman, he shook my hand.” She told him about her cousin’s visit, and he asked her out on a date. Even though Richad wasn’t particularly looking for a girlfriend, he was immediately attracted to Shaunta, and figured he had nothing to lose by asking her out. Shaunta, who was casually dating someone at the time, was equally smitten with Richad, so she agreed.

A few days later, he drove into Manhattan from Elmont, Long Island, for their first date. He picked her up from her voice lesson and drove to a cozy Thai restaurant on the Upper West Side. “The first thing I noticed is that he’s a gentleman,” Shaunta said. He opened the car door for her, and pulled out her chair at the restaurant. “Nowadays, not a lot of

people have those qualities.”

They bonded over their love of food and wine, their favorite TV shows, and childhood stories. It turned out that a boy from Jamaica and a girl from Brooklyn had a lot in common. Shaunta felt good about the date, almost giddy. “The whole date was good,” Richad agreed. “We had a really good dynamic.” When he dropped her off at home in Brooklyn, he walked her to the door and said goodnight. When he got home to Elmont he called to let her know he was home safe, and said goodnight again. The next day, their co-workers wanted the details.

The following week, they went on an epic, 13-hour second date. It started with the movie *Avatar*. Shaunta kept leaning in to ask questions during the movie, which made Richad enjoy it even more. Afterward they walked to a sushi restaurant on Broadway, near the Lincoln Center movie theater, and had a great conversation. Richad even confided to Shaunta that he’d set his phone

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to sound like Zordon from the Power Rangers whenever she texted him. The couple sitting next to them overheard him, and struck up a conversation. Shaunta jumped right in, reminiscing about her own childhood superheroes. “That made me even more excited about her,” Richad said. “Here’s a girl who remembers this stuff, and who didn’t mind talking about it with me and these strangers.”

Richad wasn’t ready to end the date after dinner, and Shaunta suggested a pool hall in the East Village. They played for a few hours, and Richad showed her how to shoot. “He beat me, he’s really good,” Shaunta said. “It was a lot of fun.” But what most captivated her was the great conversation. “I’m more reserved and quiet,” she said. “He’s a talker. It’s one thing I love about him.” By the end of their long evening together, Shaunta was

ready to break it off with the man she’d been casually seeing.

As Richad drove her home that evening, he debated whether it would be okay to kiss her. He thought he’d picked up on signals that he could, but his shy side won, and it didn’t happen until their next date.

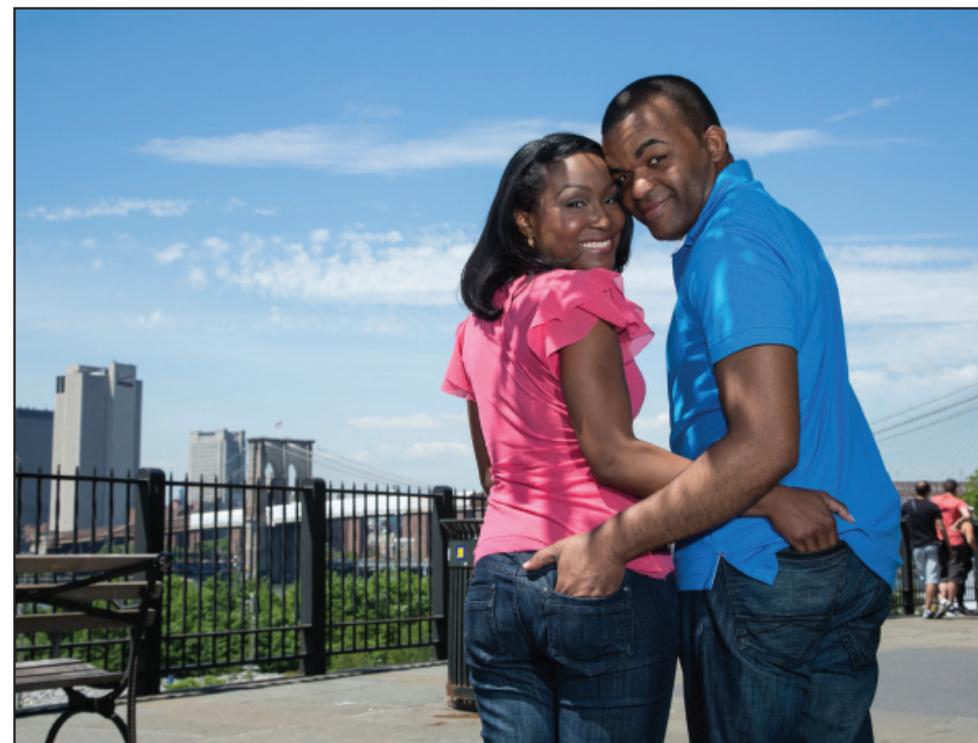
The relationship became serious, quickly. It didn’t take long for Richad to blurt out one evening, when Shaunta was in the kitchen preparing dinner, that he loved her.

They worked in the same building until February 2011, though their shifts barely overlapped. Every day when she was leaving, Richad took the elevator down with her to say goodbye, and sometimes he walked with her to the train station. On his days off, they enjoyed dinners, movies and the theater. Shaunta has loved acting ever since her days at Canarsie High School, and she has been in several plays and independent films. When she’s not on stage, she loves being in the audience. For one of their dates early on, Richad suggested a short film festival. “He knew I liked to go to these things,” Shaunta said. “That was very thoughtful of him.” And she appreciates that Richad is always willing to try new things.

Soon after they started dating, Richad met Shaunta’s parents. “I was a little nervous but I got over it pretty quickly,” he said. “They already knew all about me.” Her father is a retired city worker, so Richad always has lots of shared experiences to talk to him about.

In April 2011, Richad organized a dinner at City Cellar in Westbury, Long Island, so their families could meet each other. “I thought it was a great idea,” Shaunta said. She also thought he was clearly serious about her. And, she thought, he was definitely husband material. All the reasons she’d fallen in love with him – how hard working, smart, ambitious, and funny he was – came into even sharper focus.

Friends, and Richad’s mother, had started asking them about marriage. They did talk some about the future, and what they wanted in life, but Shaunta explicitly



told Richad that she didn’t want him to feel pressured.

Around Christmastime, Richad started to think seriously about proposing. “We knew that’s what we wanted,” he said. “With us, everything is always out on the table.” He had no doubt he was ready to get married. “She’s so caring and considerate, and we have similar energy,” he said. “And seeing how she is with her family, and how she interacted with my family, I wanted her as my wife.”

He went ring shopping before work for al-

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most three months, until he found the right one. Then he told his mother, and asked her parents for their blessing, which they gave without any hesitation. Lastly, he got to work planning a picnic at Brooklyn Bridge Park. It was something they’d always talked about, but had never done.

Shaunta had noticed that he’d started act-

ing a little strange about two weeks prior. One day, when Shaunta was on the phone with her friend Florence, Richad asked to speak with the friend, privately. Soon after, Richad had to miss a play she was in, and refused to tell her why. “He could have lied, he could have said he had a doctor’s appointment, but he said nothing. So I had a feeling,” Shaunta said. But she didn’t know exactly when, or how.

It was on June 30, 2012, that they had their picnic. After they laid out the cheese and wine on the blanket, Richad reached into his pocket for the ring, and asked Shaunta to marry him.