

# The Marriage Edition

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The first time Erik saw Caitie, she was wearing a sailor hat and a white T-shirt with the word “Captain” written on it. It was at a meeting for team captains in their kickball league, and Caitie had decided to dress as a sea captain for the occasion.

It was March 2009 in Fort Myers, and Caitie, 24 at the time, was tired of trivia nights. She wanted to make new friends, and the kickball league seemed like a good idea.

On the field, she and Erik were fierce enemies. At the bar after each game, they enjoyed each other’s company. “I thought she was great,” Erik said. “Fun, energetic, a cool girl.” Caitie was equally impressed, despite her suspicion that he was a really heavy drinker, constantly downing yet another Jack and Coke. Only later did she find out that he didn’t drink at all, and those were just plain sodas.

When Caitie developed a crush on him, he didn’t pick up on it. “He’s kind of clueless,” she said.

The kickball season ended, and Caitie and Erik found themselves in the same social circle for the summer.

“He was really fun, and just so sweet.”

-- Caitie

They hung out together and went to the beach, and when Caitie said she was moving down the street from him, Erik offered to help. When the new season started, he volunteered to be her designated driver.

It was in the parking lot of a bar after a game that he first kissed her, finally, almost seven months after they’d met.

“She was different from other women I’d dated,” Erik said. “She was very energetic and had a great personality. She was open minded, and

always wanted to go out and have a good time.”

Shortly after they started casually dating, Erik invited her to join a group of his friends at Disney. “People asked me if I was his girlfriend,” Caitie said. “I didn’t know what to say.”

A week later, on Halloween, another guy asked her out. She asked Erik if he’d be mad if she went out with him, and Erik said that yes, he would. She turned down the invitation. “That’s when Erik and I officially started dating,” she said.

Caitie was extremely drawn to Erik’s gumption and attitude. “It would have been very easy for him to be bitter and sit at home and be alone after his accident,” she said. “But he still got out there and socialized. That’s so inspiring.” She also loved his unintentional sense of humor. “He was really fun, and just so sweet,” she added.

Caitie was working as an environmental scientist for

the State, and was also completing a master’s degree in public health. Most nights after she finished her homework, she walked her dog, Babe, over to Erik’s apartment. “My dog loved his dog,” she said. “But at first, his dog wanted nothing to do with Babe. Our dogs’ relationship was sort of like our relationship. Now, they really get along.”

Caitie knew she was in love when Erik called her early one Saturday morning and asked if she wanted to go on a bike ride and get donuts. “It was like you asked a 12 year-old to describe the ideal date,” she said. “It was so perfect.”

Erik knew that Caitie was a keeper when his apartment burned down, and she completely stepped up to help. “I knew then that she was the ultimate partner,” he said. Soon after, he went home with her to New Jersey for Thanksgiving, and that further cemented their relationship. “I wasn’t scared away by the 120 people at the Thanksgiving party,” Erik said. “It was a family that welcomed everyone.”

“I knew then that she was the ultimate partner.” -- Erik

For a long time, Erik had aspired to find a woman like Caitie, who was independent and had her own interests and friends. “I always wanted a girl who has her own life,” he said. He loves that Caitie has allowed him to remain himself. “I’m still myself, I still love sports and playing golf,” he said. “She loves to lay back and read a book, but that would drive me crazy.”

They’d been dating for about two years when Caitie suggested it was time to make a decision about their future. The proposal that followed two months later was a complete surprise, though.

When Caitie had heard that on February 29, 2012, Disney would be open for 24 hours straight, she insisted they go. They booked their hotel and bought their passes. But a few days before the trip, Caitie broke her foot.

They were out dancing during a bar crawl when “Don’t Stop Believin’” came on. “I love that song, I got really excited,” Caitie said. In her mind, she was doing the Dirty Dancing jump into Erik’s arms, but unfortunately Erik was not on the same page. She fell hard on the floor, and her ankle immediately swelled. The next day, the doctor put her in a boot, and said she needed surgery.

She agreed to the surgery, but not before the Disney trip. Erik pushed her all around Magic Kingdom in a wheelchair, with an engagement ring in his pocket. “I wasn’t afraid she’d say no, but I was afraid I might lose the ring,” he said. He waited until the fireworks to propose. “It seemed like the perfect way to do it,” he said. “Besides, she was in a wheelchair, she wouldn’t be able to run away.”

Caitie and Erik were married at Notre Dame Church in North Caldwell, NJ on October 26, 2013. Father Anthony Ranzazzo officiated.