

Unexpected
Journeys:
Navigating Love,
Identity, and Self-
Discovery

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Discovery

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Schrijver: Sander Stad
Coverontwerp: Sander Stad
ISBN: 9789465125770
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The Time Before the Reveal

The Perfect Relationship?

It feels surreal to look back on that time. Everything felt so right, so perfect. I thought our relationship was unique, a safe harbor in a chaotic, unpredictable world. I remember how we met. There was an attraction from the start. We brought balance and support to each other's lives. It was as if we were two halves of a whole, finally coming together. And for me, it felt like that “togetherness” was a constant, a certainty I could fully rely on.

With her, I found something new. A deep connection. It wasn't infatuation. It was based on a sense of peace. We knew each other's thoughts without words. We finished each other's sentences. Above all, we laughed together. She had a laugh that filled the room. I often thought, "This is the person I want to spend my life with." In that laugh, I felt like everything was right, like everything just made sense.

Our relationship was the kind that people admired. Family and friends saw us as the perfect couple. We had it all—a beautiful home, a stable job, and her wish to care for the kids. We had a social life, too. Our family was the key element that completed us. Our children were our world. They filled our days with joy, challenges, and love. We will always cherish our memories of them.

We did so many fun things with the kids. From simple outings to the playground to summer beach vacations. We'd spend hours playing in the sand, building castles together. Every weekend was full of plans. They ranged from a hike in the woods to a movie night at home, with popcorn and blankets on the couch. And on those evenings when the kids were asleep, we'd have time for ourselves—just the two of us, with no distractions.

Those evenings, when the house was quiet and we shared a glass of wine, were special. We could talk, really talk, about dreams and goals and all the things we still wanted to do. There were so many things we wanted to achieve. We had plans for the future, so vivid I could almost reach out and touch them. We dreamed of a little house outside the city. It would have a big garden for the kids to play in. We'd host family gatherings there. We'd grow old together, hand in hand.

We even talked about growing old. We saw ourselves as two gray-haired figures walking in the woods together. Maybe one day we'd get a dog, we joked, and it would be just as old and slow as we were. Those images of the future didn't feel like castles in the air. They felt real as if we were already on a path to them.

It might sound like a cliché, but we complemented each other in nearly everything. Where I sometimes rushed, she would slow me down and help me see the bigger picture. Where she doubted, I gave her the confidence to push through. That was our dynamic. Our children embodied the best of both of us. A part of me, a part of her, fused into something more beautiful and better.

Even when we argued, it never felt like our relationship was at risk. Of course, we had some heated debates about life's usual things: parenting, money, and work. Our arguments got intense at times. But there was a strong bond that nothing could break. We could always return to that safe middle ground. It was the one place where I knew everything was solid between us. I believed, despite our disagreements, that love was our foundation. Nothing was stronger than that.

And if I'm being completely honest, I never thought anything could break that foundation. I believed we could get through anything, simply because we were together. We had already mapped out our future, with our children as the main focus and a shared vision for what was to come. I never doubted

the path we were on. In my eyes, we were a team, and not just any team—a team made up of the two people who knew and complemented each other best.

Still, there were moments, rare as they were, when I wondered if I was overlooking something. Little signals, a look in her eyes that I couldn't quite place, a brief answer to a question. But I always dismissed it as stress or fatigue. We had a busy life, with work, kids, and friends. So, it wasn't strange that, at times, communication felt strained. We always managed to work through it, and I assumed it would always be that way.

What I realize now is that I may have been trying too hard to keep up the picture-perfect image. I was so caught up in our shared future that I didn't want to see what was happening beneath the surface. I held onto the belief that everything was fine, that we were living life the way it was supposed to be lived. And if I'm honest, I think I was partly blind to what was really happening because I was afraid to face reality.

A relationship can feel like a beautiful painting. You admire it from a distance. Then, you get closer and see the first cracks. Cracks I didn't want to see back then, cracks I downplayed because I wasn't ready to acknowledge them.

Looking back now, I see that the signs were there, hidden in small moments and subtle changes. But at the time, everything seemed perfect, and I was determined to keep that image intact. What is life without an anchor, without a place you can call home? For me, she was that place.

Signs or Assumptions?

Looking back on my marriage, I find myself wondering more and more: were there signs? There were signs she was hiding something. I might have noticed if I had paid closer attention. In the first weeks after her revelation, that question haunted me. How could you be close to someone for years and not know such a key part of their identity? It felt like I had not only lost my wife but also my trust in my own intuition, my ability to see what was really happening.

Our relationship always felt strong, so full of love and intimacy. But the reality turned out to be so much more complex. Maybe, somewhere deep down, I did see something—but didn't want to face it. It was too hard to accept that my wife, the mother of my children, had hidden struggles, even from herself. How would I process that? It was much easier to hold on to the image of a happy marriage.

There were moments, recurring situations, that now take on a different meaning. At times, she seemed distant. Her mind was elsewhere. When I asked what was wrong, she'd say she was tired or that work was stressful. Those answers made sense then. Everyone gets tired and stressed. And while I might have felt that there was more beneath the surface, I didn't ask further. Maybe I was afraid of the answers.

In certain situations, she seemed especially withdrawn, as if she didn't want me to get too close. She would avoid eye contact or even physical touch at unexpected times. I remember lying next to her in bed a few times, feeling a kind of tension, as if there was a wall between us. These moments would come and go. I made up reasons to rationalize it. Stress, and busyness, maybe an issue that made her

uncomfortable. But I never considered that there might be more to it.

What I understand now is that our perceptions can sometimes limit us. We see what we want to see, and we hear what we want to hear. For me, our relationship was perfect—or as close to perfect as a marriage could be. I wanted to hold on to that image, and my mind worked with me, filtering out any signs of unease or doubt. My heart and mind built a wall. It was against the chance she might not feel the same. And that wall convinced me that everything was normal, that there was nothing to fear.

There were also moments when she looked at me in a way I couldn't quite understand. Sometimes, while we were sitting at the table with the kids, I would catch a look on her face that was hard to interpret. It was as if she was somewhere else, momentarily removed from the situation we were in. I thought she was worried about something—work, health, our financial future. It was a natural worry. Anyone would feel it when responsible for a family. So, I let it go.

Maybe I was naïve, too confident that our love was the only truth. For me, our marriage was a stable rock, something that would always be there. Even when we argued or disagreed, I never saw it as a threat. In my eyes, nothing could break the foundation of our relationship. We had shared memories, children, a life we had built together. But maybe I should have paid more attention. I should have listened to the small signals that I could no longer ignore with greater attention.

In hindsight, I wonder if there were talks she wanted to avoid. She changed the subject too quickly, as if afraid I might find out something. Our talks about the future were always enthusiastic. But, I sometimes noticed a hesitation before she