A Journal We Will Never Forget by Braxton Critcher

You know those unforgettable life moments you’ll forever cherish? I’m sure as you read this you can recall several, as can I. My favorite kind though, are of the once in a lifetime category – like I recently experienced. Moreover, crafting a memory to make someone feel special and loved is the cherry on top. I was a few weeks removed from purchasing the engagement ring that now rests on my fiancé’s ring finger. Kris Swiatocho, the Director of the Singles Network Ministries, and I were on the phone. Like usual, I was going on about my plans to ask my then girlfriend Kandace, to marry me. Kris suggested I buy a simple journal where I could jot down my thoughts and plans each day as my ‘down on one knee’ moment neared. I told her of similar activities I had done like that, and later that evening found the perfect blue college-ruled journal. On the first page I wrote “To my future wife Kandace, because we will only be engaged once. The next page is where I penned my plans for the journal explaining that I’d bought the ring a few weeks prior, but that I’d backtrack and write all that I remembered from when I first got the ring, to each moment that stood out since. It wasn’t every day that I wrote, only a few days each week. Often, it was when I had time, or Kandace and I had a conversation about our wedding, or when we spoke about getting engaged. Each time I ensured it was in secret.

See, we’d been dating for 18 months and we first talked about getting married a few months into our relationship. Needless to say, Kandace expected our engagement to happen at any moment but I was adamant she not know. Planning a proposal without Kandace knowing proved to be difficult, but I documented each memory along the way. One that stands out that’s in the journal was a night two weeks prior to me asking her. Kandace would often joke with me about the ring and how much it would cost. From time to time when at my apartment, she would mess with me saying she knew I had the ring and wanted so strongly to be engaged she would ask me to marry her. On this occasion she pulled three or four drawers out in my guest room while saying: “could it be here?... Or maybe here?” She then got down on one knee next to where I was sitting and asked me to marry her. If only she knew a drawer she hadn’t opened was where I had hidden the ring, a few feet away from where she was at that moment.

There are many other memories like that in the journal, but that one happens to stand out. Many others would certainly be forgotten over time, but now in the journal – they’ll stand the test of time. I wrote of my plans to ask her. How I’d do it, where I thought of asking, who I wanted to be there, things that went wrong, how plans changed, up till a few hours before picking her up that day. When that moment I’ll forever cherish occurred while down on one knee, I had 15 plus pages of pre-engagement thoughts in my journal. Gifting her the journal moments after the proposal was priceless. She was emotional when I asked for her hand in marriage, but even more so when she learned of my hours spent journaling. She read through the journal as I watched her laughingly remember each moment, then tear up again when I told her how much I love her, and showed her an identical journal for her that I hoped she’d write in during our engagement season.

I’m thankful for Kris and her thoughtful idea. Now we’ll each have a wedding gift packed with memories to keep forever. During this season we’ll each secretly journal and gift the other person our engagement thoughts after the wedding. If you’re dating and thinking of engagement soon, or single and long to be married, consider purchasing a journal to capture your thoughts that your one day spouse can read. You won’t regret it!