



Another chapter.

Brendan and Elly now write a beautiful chapter of their lives together as husband and wife.

Worth the Chase

How God Wrote the Love Story of Two Authors

By Brendan Roberts
as told to Grellyn A. Paoad

I was on a mission trip to Romania when I felt God's call to write about my experiences as a Catholic missionary. Soon, my first book, *Set Free: Overcoming Self Rejection by God's Grace*, was born. When my next work received lukewarm reception, I thought of totally quitting writing. But after several years, I published a book for non-Christians titled *God: Fact or Fiction?* and my career as an author bloomed, hand in hand with my full-time occupation as a missionary.

As for my love life, my ideal future wife was restricted to this list: She must be Catholic since my mom wasn't. It was painful not being able to share wonderful faith moments with my mother. Ideally, she should also be from my homeland New Zealand, own a house, believe in purity, and be passionate about God.

This is the story of how these two things came together. In the process of writing my next book, I also discovered "The One."

Chapter 1: Her

I first visited the Philippines in 2013 during a Singles for Christ International Conference. I immersed myself in this beautiful country while giving evangelization workshops in Cebu.

After I returned to New Zealand, I was struck by the desire to come back to the Philippines. I did so and my host encouraged me to extend my stay until December 8, 2014. Then I moved my flight once again to witness Pope Francis' January 2015 visit to the Philippines.

Great turnaround. Because I met her on December 17, 2014.

Loving how almost every parish church in the Philippines has an adoration chapel, I became a regular visitor of the one in St. Francis, Mandaluyong. One day while praying, I glanced over my shoulder and felt my heart skip a beat when I saw a beautiful Filipina flicking through her prayer journal. Instantly, I had the compulsion to get to know her. This was not a crush that would turn into seeing her walk out of my life forever; it was a miracle in the amazing presence of God in the Holy Eucharist.

I waited for her to finish praying. After what seemed like an eternity, she still wasn't done. She didn't even know that I existed. So I decided to write a note on my calling card, "Hi, I'm a Catholic

author and missionary. I see you keep a prayer journal too. If you want to contact me..."

I approached her with trembling knees. Handing my card I said, "Hi, I'm Brendan, if you want to be friends, here's my card." She didn't reply but just smiled shyly.

That evening I received a text message from her thanking me for the card, saying she would love to meet me. I learned that her name was Elly Suarez Cabal.

We met over breakfast and chatted like long-lost friends for two hours. I was stunned when she asked me to be her writing mentor, because it was actually what she was praying for the day I saw her. She was the Media Ministry head of The Feast Ortigas, and she introduced me the next day to her team.

Chapter 2: Revelations and Realizations

Elly and I became great friends. We began to run together almost daily, after which we would read the Scriptures, reflect, and pray together. With her friends, we also watched movies, visited parks, and did other activities.

I was ecstatic when Elly asked me to co-write a book called, *Worth the Chase: Finding*

Love God's Way, which tackled love and purity for men and women. I encouraged her to write at least five pages a day and we finished the book in just six weeks.

During one of our writing sessions, Elly stunned me by dropping a bombshell: "I think I'm falling in love with you." She showed me a Facebook message where a friend told her that our age difference should not be a problem since I was a committed Catholic.

But I needed more. I needed to hear that she was really attracted to me. She blushed to the roots of her hair when I said that and she became hesitant to see me again. After some explanation from my side, we agreed to continue our friendship since it meant so much to us.

Then tragedy struck. After preaching at a singles event about being joyful even if someone close to you dies, I received the heartbreaking news that my brother suddenly passed away.

I was shattered and Elly was there to comfort me. I met her before I went home after my seven months of stay in the Philippines. As our heads rested against each other, we both felt the spark. And I knew then that I was also in love with her.

Chapter 3: The Married Life

After some time apart, with our regular online conversations, I was able to return to the Philippines and propose to Elly. We got married on April 21, 2016 in the same church where we met. Together with our family and friends, we also invited girls from Jeremiah Foundation, a home for sexually abused teens and women, to celebrate our special day with us.

Elly doesn't hail from my country, and her owning a house doesn't matter anyway since she is now with me in New Zealand. But the most important thing is we both share the same passion to serve God. In my heart, I knew that my mission and vocation were interrelated, but God surprised me by giving me a fellow writer who also shares my advocacy on purity. These common grounds bind us as we now live the next chapter of our lives as a married couple.

We had our own share of heartbreaks and long periods of seeking and waiting, but we hope our story will inspire you to also find and wait for pure and genuine love – one that bravely seeks and puts God first, trusting that God is writing your own love story. 

