



eight
twenty
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when love didn't give up

Ian & Larissa Murphy



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PUBLISHING GROUP
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

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Printed in the United States of America

978-1-4336-8182-0

Published by B&H Publishing Group
Nashville, Tennessee

Dewey Decimal Classification: 306.872
Subject Heading: LOVE \ MARRIAGE \ MENTALLY
HANDICAPPED

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dedication

We know that for those who love God
all things work together for good, for those
who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

Written for our dad and teacher, Steve Murphy, who has
gone before us and now knows that all of this is worth it.

8/28/60–10/8/09

With courage we write this, in hopes that we all move
forward together in loving God more than loving comfort.

prologue

October 9, 2006

From Steve Murphy, Ian's Dad

It's been remarkable to me how much Mary and I have been at peace through this difficult experience. The Lord's grace has been present, even while grief overcomes us at different points. I had to talk to the insurance people about the car today, and for some reason I was really emotional talking to him about taking away the car that Ian was driving. I can tell that Mary is overcome at points, too, but I can tell she's also at peace.

We really are in faith at this point for whatever God has, but like you we're praying for an extraordinary miracle for Ian. God gives life and sustains life. God breathed new life into me when He saved me and made me a new creature. It's nothing for Him to raise Ian up from this coma. Thank you for the faith you have exhibited for a miracle. It's humbling, and we're grateful for your prayers.

originally posted on prayforian.com

a note from lan

I just want to say that I love Larissa. God gave me a great thing in her. Larissa is my brain for book-writing, because I don't remember the years after my accident. It would be hard trusting Larissa to write down our story if I didn't love her. But I do, so all is well.

My hope is that you walk away from this book with something to think about. Because I want God to use this to make us better people—and strengthen relationships.

Trust God. He's bigger than your story. He's bigger than ours.

one

I sank down into my nap, covering my tired feet in the white down comforter, aching from another high-heeled day. The cloud settled over and in between my toes, legs, waist, and body, as its goose feathers warmed my skin. My husband wasn't home yet, and I was intent on making full use of this half hour of quiet. I glanced toward the unopened mail, the dirty sheets on the chair, and the half-full cups on the table, but allowed my eyes to drift shut before dwelling on what else I should be doing. All I could think of was rest before I would be forced to swing my legs to the edge of the mattress and out from under my little cocoon of heat.

As tiredness overcame me, my mind slipped in and out of sleep, thoughts rattling around in my groggy head until I couldn't distinguish between dreams and reality. I started feeling like I didn't remember him anymore. I couldn't remember his smile. I couldn't hear what his laugh sounded like or picture the way he walked. I couldn't find that place in me anymore that knew him, the part of my mind that stored the tone of his voice and the way he grabbed his stomach when he laughed hard. The thoughts I counted on

to keep me going, to keep me in love, had left without asking my permission first. I couldn't grasp them. They felt like they were stuck somewhere in the very back corners of my mind, too far tucked away. Perhaps they were fighting from deep underwater to reach the surface—those memories and sounds and smells that kept him close and warm in me—but something was keeping them submerged. A flashback of sitting together on his patio or a note from him singing on a voicemail would start to break through, but before I could feel and grab it, the memory would sink back in, away from me.

"Have I really forgotten him?" my semi-awake brain begged as I awaited his arrival. "Have we been this way for so long that all of his old words and sounds are gone, that my memory can't keep them locked inside anymore? Is this all I'll ever be able to remember of him? This? *This* Ian?"

Then . . . the familiar thud of the van door, scattering even *these* thoughts into thin air.

I hopped up, brushed sleep out of my eyes, and peered through the bathroom window. In a few minutes, he and his wheelchair would be clattering through the door.

"Hi, wifey!" he shouted from the mud room once he'd made his way inside, driven from behind by his youngest brother, Devon. Ian couldn't control the volume of his voice anymore, and sometimes his speech was hard to understand. But "wifey" was usually LOUD and clear. Rolling into the bedroom, he saw me and hugged me. "How was your day?" I asked.

"I don't remember. So it must've been good!"

A typical response—because his short-term memory left when his brain injury came in. As a result, I was the only one of the two of us who was able to carry the detailed memories of our marriage, or of our ten months of dating before his

accident, or of anything that reminded us of what life had been like before September 30, 2006.

The day it all changed.

The date that continues to roll around every year, whether I want it to come or not.

In the quiet of night before the most recent September 30, I had snuggled up close to him, unloading my heavy heart.

"Ian, I'm so sad. I'm sad for your brain injury. I'm sad you've had to go through this."

"That's why I love you," he said. "It makes you sad because you care about me so much."

There are very few anniversaries that I like anymore—most particularly this one—and I don't want Ian to recognize that I'm keeping count. But for me, there's no erasing the memories of that horrible September 30.

The most unwelcome anniversary of all.