This Life I Live
One man’s extraordinary, ordinary life and THE WOMAN WHO CHANGED IT FOREVER
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One Man’s Extraordinary, Ordinary Life and the Woman Who Changed It Forever

RORY FEEK
To Joey,

you forever changed my life
by letting me be part of yours.
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I am famous.

Not for what most people think I’m famous for, though, which is music. Yes, I’ve written some songs that you’ve probably heard on the radio, and my wife and I have had a very successful career in the music business. And we’ve made half a dozen albums, toured the country and halfway around the world, and performed on television. We even had our own TV show for a couple of years. But that’s not what I’m really famous for. Not anymore anyway.

I am famous for loving my wife.

There is hardly a grocery aisle that I walk down or a gas station that I pull into where I don’t find a hand reached out to shake mine, an iPhone pointed my way, or, even more often, arms reaching out to hug me and to tell me how much they love me. And my wife. And my baby daughter and family.

Do you know what a gift that is? To know that millions of people not only have followed our story online through my blog and videos but also have sung along to our songs, and they’ve bowed their heads and prayed and shed their tears over my wife and me. Strangers have done this.
All of my life, I’ve been anonymous. A nobody. Now I’m not just somebody. I’m somebody’s. I am Joey’s husband, Rory.

And I am honored. So very honored to have been her husband. To be her husband still. To have stood beside her at the altar and be standing beside her still when ’til-death-do-us-part became something much more than a phrase in our wedding vows. To have put a wedding ring on her left hand. Twice. Once, in front of our friends and families that day in June 2002, and again in late February 2016, when we were all alone and the cancer had made her fingers so thin and frail that she had been wearing it on a chain around her neck, and she asked me to wrap masking tape around the bottom of that platinum promise so it wouldn’t fall off her finger in the wooden casket that would be the final resting place for the ring with BOUND BY GOD FOREVER engraved inside the band.

But to know why being famous for loving my wife means so much to me, you have to know something more of my story. More of the journey than just the last two and a half years, which I have had the chance to share in my blog. More lyrics of the song that is my life. More of the darkness that I lived through to understand the light that I found and have had the chance to become.

My life is very ordinary. On the surface, it is not very special. If you looked at it, day to day, it wouldn’t seem like much. But when you look at it in a bigger context—as part of a larger story—you start to see the magic that is on the pages of the book that is my life. And the more you look, the more you see. Or, at least, I do.
I don’t cry like I used to or hurt like I did when I was a younger man. I’m more stable. Stronger. Finally. When others don’t or can’t hold it together, somehow I do. I’m not sure why or when that started. I wasn’t always like that. Far, far from it. I was an emotional mess most of my life. Crying and falling apart for the smallest of things. Most of them, things of my doing. Or things that were just in my head. I’m not like that anymore. At least not as far as I can tell.

We had a perfect at-home birth that, a few hours later, turned into a horrific surgery for my wife and a diagnosis of Down syndrome for our baby daughter. A few months later my siblings and I watched our mother pass away right before our eyes. And the year after that, I held my wife’s hand as cancer took her, and I had to pick up our two-year-old daughter, Indiana, and somehow go on. But I have been strong. I have cried very few tears, especially in the moments where the pain lives or is learned. I have found myself crying in other moments. When I’m by myself—thinking, remembering, wondering. But all in all, I have mostly felt peace. My wife was the same way. She was strong in her faith and trusted God when difficulties would come our way. Just as I do. I don’t know why. Or where I learned that. Or became that. I know that she is a lot of
why I am me. Joey. And God. God that was in Joey. I could see Him in her. In her eyes and her smile, even when it hurt to smile. In her tears and her laughter, He was there. Her love strengthened my faith. And brought hope. Always, always hope.

It’s a wonderful difference compared to how I used to be, but it’s also unusual for me. Most of the people around me break down easily and often. Hope comes and goes like the wind. My sister Marcy almost didn’t make it through my mother’s passing. Her grief was so great. I couldn’t relate to her. I tried to. I listened and was there for her and did my best to comfort her. But I didn’t cry like she did or feel her pain. My view of our mom dying was compassionate but in a realistic way. People pass away. It’s a part of life. It’s hard and terrible, but it’s gonna happen to all of us. Mom smoked, right up until the end, so this happens a lot when that happens. Somehow I could keep in perspective that Mom was seventy-one, and that’s a long life. Still, even with that, I wonder if I should be crying or hurting more. I don’t feel like I’m carrying a huge amount of weight or that I’m bottling up my emotions or anything like that. I just feel like I now have a different perspective from what I had most of my life. I have peace. Because of my faith. And finally opening my hands and turning my life over to God. Believing in a higher power and trusting that He has a bigger plan. One that I don’t understand. That I can’t understand this side of heaven.

God is the author of this story. Yes, it is my pen that He’s used to write the book. My laptop, actually. But it’s the story He has told with my life and my wife’s. A story He is still telling. I just wake up every day and turn the page. Sometimes I’m frightened by what I find, and sometimes I’m exhilarated. Many nights I don’t want to go to sleep and wake up the next day to turn another page. Afraid that the beautiful moment we’re experiencing might be met with hardship in the next paragraph, and our journey to the top of a mountain will come barreling down the other side. But we must turn the page and trust that the story He is telling is bigger than that one page or that one chapter.

Looking back at my life, it is easy for me to see. Even the chapter that
I am in now, I know He is still writing. Taking my character and those around me, building a plot that is brilliantly woven into a beautiful tale that only the Master Storyteller could tell.

This is my story, up until now. Or at least a good chunk of it. Fifty-one years condensed into seventy thousand words. Mine is a sad story and a happy one. A human tragedy and a comedy of errors. It’s Forrest Gump meets Jesus. The struggle of light against the power of darkness.

It is a story of faith. Of love. And a hope that never dies.
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