

Epilogue to *The Heart Between Us* by Lindsay Harrel

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Blog Post Title: The Start of a New Adventure

Post Content:

It's been two weeks since I married my best friend. Caleb and I have had many adventures over the last year—traveling overseas a handful of times when I could manage some time off of work—but nothing compares to the adventure ahead.

The adventure of being Megan Watkins.

We'd been dating about three months when Caleb came to me with an idea: we should create a bucket list for ourselves as a couple. Of course, a natural place to start brainstorming was to show each other our own lists and see which items we had in common.

I was game, but my list was at my apartment and we were at Caleb's place, snuggled on his big comfy man couch (that's what he calls it—LOL). He said it wasn't a problem, that we could start with his.

So he reached into his pocket, pulled out a folded piece of paper, and handed it to me. The paper was soft and somewhat frayed at the edges, and I jokingly asked him how old it was. With his serious eyes, he looked into mine and said he'd written this list when he was eighteen.

Of course, I choked up. Back then, he didn't know whether he'd live to do the things on this list. But he'd written them down anyway. That's just the kind of person he is—the kind who inspires me with his courage every day.

I unfolded the paper and froze. Turned my eyes to his once more. “You really wrote this when you were eighteen?”

“Yes.” His voice was husky as he brought his nose to mine.

I swallowed hard, then pulled my gaze back to Caleb's chicken scratch on the page in my trembling hands.

1. Marry Megan Jacobs in a hot air balloon.

“I don't understand.”

“That's how long I've loved you, Megan.”

“Oh.” I seriously couldn't think of anything else to say, because I mean, who could in the face of such devotion and love?

And then he lowered himself to the ground, on one knee, and he snatched my hand and he said all kinds of amazing, Caleb-ish things, and at the very end he asked, “Megan Jacobs, will you be my greatest adventure yet? Will you marry me?”

And here we are eight months later with rings on our fingers, so you know what I said. ☺

When I'd finally gathered my wits about me, I sat up straight. “Wait. What's with the hot air balloon?”

He grinned in that goofy Caleb way, and pulled me close again, my head resting on his shoulder. “You don’t remember watching that Travel Channel special on destination weddings that one night in the hospital? One of the featured weddings was a hot air balloon ride over the Loire Valley in France—and you said, ‘That would be the coolest way to get married. Ever.’”

I never was one to dream about a fancy wedding. I truly didn’t think, deep down, that the day would ever come, so I didn’t waste time thinking about it. That’s why a hot air balloon with just our family sounded great to me. In fact, I would have married him the next week.

But then I called Crystal in New York. She squealed and cried with me when I told her the news. I said we were thinking about doing it soon, and in France, and in a hot air balloon.

She paused and I could tell something was wrong. “I was all in until you said ‘hot air balloon.’”

I laughed and said I knew it was silly, but that’s what we wanted.

“No. That’s not it. I can actually see you both totally going for that. It’s just ... I don’t think I could be there for your ceremony.”

For a minute, my heart sank. “Well, when do think you’d be able to get some time off work?”

Her laugh surprised me. “Oh, it’s not that.” Another pause. “I’m not sure I can ride in a hot air balloon if I’m pregnant.”

It took a minute for me to realize what she was saying, and then I was the one squealing and crying.

So we waited until she'd had precious baby Maddie and gave her some time to recover—and then, surrounded by our immediate family, we rose high into the air over the St. Croix Valley in Minnesota and said our vows.

Sure, we thought about doing it in France, but it was more important to me that my sister was beside me. And anyway, Minnesota is where Caleb and I met. It only made sense for us to start our new life together while gliding over the gorgeous lakes and forests where our souls—our hearts—had first entwined.

And now, we are officially one, our hearts beating strong, as we decide where the wind will take us next.

I don't know where that will be exactly. All I know is the general direction.

Up, up, and away.