

# From Meet Cute to Forever

In Hollywood, love stories are crafted around the “meet cute.” It’s the special moment when two people’s paths cross and there’s a glimmer that something special might be occurring between them. These couples share the meet cute moment that led them to love and forever.

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*Antecia & Luke  
Whitehead*





Jessica &  
Scott Morgan

## ANTECIA WHITEHEAD + LUKE WHITEHEAD

When the first meeting with your husband took place when you were either a freshman or a sophomore in college and you've been together for just about 20 years, it's understandable that some details of your journey together are a tad murky. There are, however, some things you don't forget, like first impressions.

For Antecia, when she was introduced to her 6'6" former professional basketball playing husband, his height was definitely something she remembers being taken by. "I thought he was pretty tall," she recalls with a smile. "That's what a lot of people notice about him, but I also thought he had a very nice smile."

As a high-profile athlete at the University of Louisville in the late 1990s/early 2000s, it's safe to say there were likely a whole slew of women vying for Luke's eye. But he says there was something truly special about Antecia. "I just thought she was beautiful," Luke says. "She had a beautiful smile and I wanted to get to know her."

Their first date was pretty non-descript and typical for college-aged kids – dinner and a movie. What's more memorable to them is how they fostered a charming friendship doing things like taking trips to the now defunct Blockbuster Video, and spending hours on the phone talking to one another.

"During my basketball days I would be really exhausted from practice and games. I remember talking on the phone a lot to the point where [we] would be falling asleep," Luke says. Antecia adds, "he was always tired, and we just got the time in whenever we could on the phone." Those phone conversations enabled Antecia and Luke's friendship to blossom into a full-on relationship.

Antecia and Luke both point to a particular incident Luke had on the court that confirmed for them that a future together wouldn't only be ideal, but it was turning out to be "the plan." In his sophomore year as a member of the Cardinals basketball team, Luke took a terrifying fall during a game. The incident, Luke says, "is one of the worst falls in basketball history. People weren't sure if I would be paralyzed from it, but I was able to walk away with somewhat minor injuries like a small fracture in my shoulder and a concussion."

The accident was early on in their relationship, but Antecia being there to support Luke as he nursed his injuries sealed the deal for the both of them about their future together. "It was something that made us feel comfortable, like we could rely or trust each other and count on each other," Antecia says.

## JESSICA MORGAN + SCOTT MORGAN

There's an undeniable chemistry between Jessica and Scott. Though eyes may roll by the mere cheekiness of how they met considering their kinetic attraction (they met in a chemistry class), that aspect of their love story makes it all the more charming.

After four years in the military as an Army Ranger, Scott enrolled in Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah, Georgia to study medicine. Jessica was a student there as well, and was close to finishing her degree. She sat behind Scott in the organic chemistry class they shared. Jessica was definitely attracted, but dared not make a move because Scott was already taken.

"We were in study groups together and I thought he was very nice, smart and intelligent," Jessica says. "I started liking him but I kept it very professional because I couldn't like a guy who has a girlfriend."

Scott initially wasn't interested in Jessica at all, but the more time they spent together in and out of class, a spark was developing. "I was with someone else...and realized I had some interest in her," he says. "I thought, oh man! I really need to evaluate my relationship with my girlfriend because I shouldn't have interest in someone else."

Scott's growing attraction to Jessica drove him to end his relationship. He told Jessica immediately about his split and Jessica wasted no time. She asked him out. "I'm a very confident woman. In order to be with me, you have to be okay with that. When he told me he broke up, I got really excited because I knew that he was a really good guy and the one for me."

Scott agreed to go out with her and their first date was a safe outing with their classmates. The vibes between them were definitely there and they both knew they wanted to spend more time with one another alone.

It didn't take long for Jessica and Scott's relationship to progress. All the time they spent studying together made being a couple easy. Within weeks of making their coupling official, Jessica hopped on a plane to Louisville to meet and spend the holidays with Scott and his parents.

"I made a red velvet cake. It was my grandmother's recipe. I wanted to bring this cake to impress everyone," Jessica says. Scott's family took a liking to her. And the cake was a big hit. "Everyone was so sweet and welcoming. I immediately fell in love with him and his family. It was the best thing ever."

Scott knew Jessica's visit with his family would be a game changer even though they had only been dating for about a month. "My parents loved her. I knew they would. It just felt very good and everything was falling into place. I remember telling my mom that this is the woman I'm gonna marry," he says.







*Tonda &  
Jerry Helton*



*Tiffany &  
Shawn Cardwell*







Jeanna & Walter Smith

## TONDA DRINKARD HELTON + JERRY HELTON

**P**icture it: Thanksgiving Day, 2006. A 26-year-old fantasy football-playing Black woman from Louisville in her senior year of dental school in Lexington is hanging out with a group of friends. A 24-year-old, pick-up truck driving White man from Eastern Kentucky also living in Lexington pulls up to join the gathering.

Their friends introduced them. She's engrossed in a football game on television. He's charmed by her and thinks she's very pretty. He wants to strike up a conversation but has to think fast about how to make the best impression. "I really wanted to talk to her" Jerry recalls. "So I tried to show off my football knowledge."

Tonda adds, "He came over and gave me pointers on my fantasy football team." His comments did exactly what he hoped. She was impressed. "There were guys who didn't know who the 49ers quarterback was. But he knew."

They continued chatting about sports. Jerry, tapping into some machismo, tells her, "I don't think you'll ever know more about sports than me." It was a challenge the football-loving Black woman couldn't resist. But it was also the man. He, too, was irresistible.

Tonda and Jerry's love story entails the two becoming fast friends who bonded over their love of sports and University of Kentucky basketball. A first date was inevitable, and like the day they met, Jerry was keen on impressing her. He knew there was one thing that would make Tonda incredibly happy – attending a UK basketball game. So, purchased tickets and asked her out.

"I don't know what kind of magic he pulled," Tonda says. "As a student, I'd only been in upper arena. But he made some phone calls, talked to somebody on the street," she says jokingly. "And he got me lower arena UK basketball tickets."

Yes, the game seats were impressive, but there's one other thing Tonda remembers about their first date. "He said to me I don't ever want to disappoint you. He said he never wanted to let me down." Tonda thinks about the words Jerry said to her back in 2006, then continues. "And he hasn't."

Though their attraction to one another was intensifying, Tonda was busily preparing for dental school to end and, much to Jerry's dismay, planning to relocate to North Carolina. Jerry had to make her reconsider. "He said if we're gonna do this, you can't just leave," Tonda recalls. She knew by his tone that he was serious about being in a relationship with her.

Tonda scrapped her North Carolina plans. When dental school ended in May 2007, she and Jerry moved to Bowling Green. They got married in Vegas six months later.

## TIFFANY CARDWELL + SHAWN CARDWELL

**I**f you aren't a believer in fate, Tiffany and Shawn's love story could change the staunchest disbeliever's mind. Having recently graduated from college, Tiffany and a girlfriend were ready to begin their lives in a new apartment in downtown Chicago. While moving their things in, Tiffany's wallet fell out of her coat into the street. As luck would have it, the wallet was dropped near Shawn's apartment building. "I was getting out of a cab and saw the wallet laying on the ground, so I picked it up," he says.

The year was 1990. There were no search engines, cellular devices or social media websites. Finding Tiffany meant using an old-fashioned tool – ingenuity. "I used the address on her license and found the phone number which happened to be her sorority house," Shawn says. When he called, he was told Tiffany had graduated and didn't live there anymore.

Shawn's second attempt involved contacting one of her credit card companies. As an American Express cardholder himself, Shawn called customer service and explained the predicament. The customer service rep offered to connect him with the phone number associated with the card. But the call didn't go to Tiffany, it went to her aunt.

Shawn gave Tiffany's aunt his address. "I said I have your niece's wallet and I want to give it back." Two days later Tiffany headed over to his place to retrieve her wallet "from the really nice guy who lives in the neighborhood." Tiffany thought the bachelor pad Shawn shared with his roommate was pretty badass. They had a big screen television and another thing that she couldn't wait to try – a pool table. "She asked if I played pool, and I'm like, 'yeah of course,'" Shawn says. The two of them played pool for hours.

As twentysomethings living in the big city, Tiffany and Shawn and their respective roommates became buddies. It took about six months of hanging out regularly and an impromptu group dinner on Valentine's Day in 1991, that fate and Cupid made it clear that Tiffany and Shawn's serendipitous meeting was actually a matchmaking.

"Shawn and I were talking about the different books we both love to read and all sorts of things. And I'm thinking in my head, why aren't we dating? The Valentine's Day roommate dinner ended with Shawn walking her home. "I walked her to her door and turned around to walk away and I heard a little foot stomp," Shawn chuckles. "I'd missed my cue," he says. "He was really clueless," Tiffany adds.

They did share their first kiss that night and afterward it became official: They were dating.





## JOHN ROEDER+ MICHELLE ROEDER

**L**ike F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, Michelle and John's love story can best be summed up as a handsome gentleman from New York falls for a lovely ingenue from Kentucky. There's a slight difference though. Their story doesn't start with a meeting in Louisville. Instead, it begins in New York City in the mid 1980s.

As an 18-year-old recent high school graduate, Michelle knew college life at the University of Louisville was not for her. "I told my father that I wanted to fly to New York and live there and be an artist," she says. Much to her surprise her strict father agreed to let her spend the summer in the Big Apple to give it a try.

The first thing Michelle did when she arrived in the city was to apply for jobs. "I got three job offers in the first week," she says. The one she accepted was as a temporary receptionist for Halston Fragrances. Her decision was definitely influenced by the lure of glitz, glamour and the offices overlooking Bryant Park. "It was just gorgeous," Michelle says. "I thought, if I'm going to try it out, then let's really do New York and get into the fashion and fragrance industry."

John, who is 13 years her senior, worked at Halston too. He was a marketing manager. Michelle fondly recalls how she would see John walk back and forth with the President of the company. "He was a lot different than some of the guys I dated," she says. "John was very sophisticated and always well put together. I had my eyes on him the entire summer."

John's eyes were on Michelle too. "She's obviously beautiful," he says. "I took a liking to her. When I went out for lunch, I would come back with some candy for her and drop it at the reception desk," he says.

But Michelle's time in the city was limited. Since she didn't know what the future was going to hold, she did something she'd never done before. She asked John out. "I was thrilled," John says.

They went on an amazing first date, but the budding romance didn't have enough time to flourish because Michelle returned to Louisville. Neither was willing to see things end so they maintained a long-distance relationship. "We talked on the phone every day," Michelle says. "He would send me plane tickets to meet him. If he had to go to Chicago for business, I'd meet him there. Or in Florida."

It didn't take Michelle long to figure out what she wanted. Six months was enough of the long-distance. "I was like, 'What am I doing back in Louisville?' This is not where I want to be. I need to be back in New York," she says. "So I moved back to New York, and we've been together ever since."

## JOANNA SMITH+ WALTER SMITH

**J**oanna Smith remembers very clearly the first time she met her husband, Walter. It was in the 1950s and Walter had just returned home to Louisville from serving in the Air Force. They had friends in common who introduced them. Like a proper gentleman, Walter extended his hand to greet Joanna. She shook his hand, and it lingered.

"We just kind of looked at each other while shaking hands," Walter says. "Finally our friend said 'break, break, break' to break our handshake." Joanna adds, "I think she kinda had her eye on him and was jealous."

It was a different era so it would have been unladylike for Joanna to say aloud what she was thinking. She says, "He was looking kind of good in his uniform. I thought maybe I'll run into him again."

Their paths did cross. Pretty regularly actually. "We just kept running into each other at different places," Joanna says. They even ended up on a blind date together. "We had another mutual friend. This friend called me and said they have a friend that wants to go to the movies but he can't get a date," Joanna recalls. She agreed to go on the blind date. Of course, the guy was Walter.

Another instance where they ended up in the same place was at a friend's picnic. They were having such a good time together that Joanna missed her curfew. "I thought oh I'm dead meat now," she says. So Walter offered to walk her home. She avoided her mother and went right to her room. Her brother, however, wasn't happy. "He lit into me for going out with this older man, but they were the same age."

Their run-ins became more frequent. "Some days I would be walking home from one of my friend's house and he would be driving down Muhammad Ali and would give me a ride. Once we both ended up walking down Muhammad Ali at the same time," Joanna says. "She was coming in the opposite direction," Walter interjects. "She had on a little sailor hat that was pulled all the way down," he says with a smile. "We stopped to talk and we kind of just admired each other."

It was subtle flirtation and the road to them becoming a couple was gradual. "We just kinda moved into it," Joanna says. But an invitation to attend her church's picnic is when things shifted. "Our church would always take a Greyhound bus to one of the parks. So I invited him to go on the church picnic with me. After that we just started going out together." ■



*Michelle &  
John Roeder*



Read more of each couples' journey at [todayswomannow.com](https://todayswomannow.com)