



ADVANCE PRAISE FOR

As Sure As Tomorrow Comes

This delightful book is a demonstration of love between a couple who have embraced the true meaning of their wedding vows and notion of God carrying you through. The feelings of happiness, pain, and joy are so real as they experience Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.”

—Karen Bankston, Ph.D., MSN, FACHE, Associate Dean Clinical Practice, Partnership and Community Engagement, Professor Clinical, University of Cincinnati

As Sure As Tomorrow Comes: One Couple's Journey Through Loss and Love is a touching and inspiring book that reveals the power of God in getting through ANY situation. Their willingness and ability to share openly and completely regarding their life's experiences is a testament to their compassion and love for each other and for mankind. Their journey will surely bless others!

—Sonia Jackson Myles, founder, The Sister Accord, LLC, and author, *The Sister Accord: 51 Ways to Love Your Sister*

Chris and Danielle's story is proof that with faith and tenacity, a person can overcome obstacles that life presents them.

—Mary Miller, CEO, Jancoa, and author, *Changing Directions: Ten Choices That Impact Your Dreams*







As Sure As Tomorrow Comes

ONE COUPLE'S JOURNEY
THROUGH LOSS AND LOVE

Danielle and Christopher Jones





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Cover and book design by Mark Sullivan

ISBN 978-0-9977222-7-7

Georgetown, OH
www.KiCamProjects.com

Printed in the United States of America
Printed on acid-free paper





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We'd like to dedicate this book to our precious son, Christopher Louis Jones Jr., also known as "Junior." You will forever be your daddy's boy and your mama's baby. We thank God for choosing us to be your parents. Part of our purpose came alive the moment that you came into existence. We will always love you to the moon and back.







PREFACE

In the Book of Ecclesiastes, it's stated that for everything there is a season. The seasons of our lives can take us on some pretty adventurous twists and turns—almost like a roller coaster—whereas other seasons are calm and relaxing.

The funny thing is those seasons don't always correspond with how the weather is outside; they're more about where we are in our lives at a given time. Summer tends to be a lot of fun. Fall is a time of change and transition. Winter is usually cold and bleak, and spring is a time of refreshment, awaiting what is yet to bloom. Life has a way of showing us that no matter what season we've been through, are currently in, or are about to enter, all of them come together to make us who we are.

This is the story of the seasons of our lives so far and how we've remained positive and strong through all kinds of "weather." We pray that our story will encourage you to hold onto hope and faith no matter what season you are in.

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8

*For everything there is a season,
a time for every activity under heaven.*





A time to be born and a time to die.
A time to plant and a time to harvest.
A time to kill and a time to heal.
A time to tear down and a time to build up.
A time to cry and a time to laugh.
A time to grieve and a time to dance.
A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones.
A time to embrace and a time to turn away.
A time to search and a time to quit searching.
A time to keep and a time to throw away.
A time to tear and a time to mend.
A time to be quiet and a time to speak.
A time to love and a time to hate.
A time for war and a time for peace.





S U M M E R

“Summertime, and the livin’ is easy...”
—DuBose Heyward







CHAPTER ONE

As Christopher Jones and I headed into an Italian restaurant, we passed a group of high school girls dressed as though they were enjoying a night on the town before their homecoming dance. The cool November air gently brushed my face as I wore a smile. Chris, the only single man in my age group at our church, had asked me out the week before and now here we were—heading to dinner and a movie for our first date.

Well...depending on which one of us you asked, it was either our first or second date. The week prior, Chris had asked me to hang out with him at an arcade. We went to the arcade and played video games and pool, and since we were enjoying each other's company so much, we ended up going to a nearby mall and walking around and talking. We stayed at the mall almost until it closed. At the end of that night, as he walked me to my car in the mall parking lot, I told Chris I'd had a great time with him. His response was for me not to worry because we'd be seeing each other again—outside of church—real soon. I slyly smirked and drove off.

That very first night of us hanging out, I realized that for the first time since...ever...I felt like I could let my guard down around a man—a potential boyfriend—and just be my goofy self. I was so used to being professional at all times and always crossing every “t” and





dotting every “i” that hanging out with Chris was refreshing. He was silly, lighthearted, and made me laugh the entire time we were out.

The days that followed our first evening together were full of Chris and I e-mailing flirtatious messages to each other. It started off with me “being helpful” and offering him some information he could use to write a paper he was working on for one of his college classes. Those messages turned into him asking me to go out with him on another date on the coming Saturday. I had told him repeatedly the time at the arcade and the mall wasn’t a date. I mean, sure, he’d asked me to spend time with him. And yes, I’d agreed. And yes, he’d paid for our game of pool. And yes, he had set up the time and place for us to meet. And yes, we were by each other’s side the entire night. But I needed him to know that no matter what he thought, that was not a date. He said okay and told me I could call it whatever I wanted to. He just wanted to know if I wanted to go out with him again. And if I did, I needed to be ready for him to pick me up at 6 p.m. Saturday.

So there we were, exactly one week after hanging out at the arcade, heading to dinner and a movie. As we passed by the girls outside the restaurant who were all donning tiaras like princesses, Chris turned to me and asked a question. “Can I crown you my queen one day?” His question completely caught me off guard. He had been flirting with me for six months leading to this night. Over those months, he had thrown just about every pickup line known to man at me, and this whole “crown you my queen one day” line was new and probably one of the best I’d heard. Until then, I’d prided myself on being able to flirt back with clever responses, but I hadn’t seen that line coming. It is almost every girl’s dream to be some king’s queen, and here we were on our first date and this handsome man was asking me to be his. Not knowing how to respond, I stared back at him, laughed a





little bit, and (uncharacteristically) shyly said yes. And just like that, I was floating on air for the rest of the night.

About six weeks later, right after our church's New Year's Eve service let out, on January 1 Chris and I solidified our budding relationship. We sat by each other that night at church, and right after the clock struck midnight and people were leaving to go home, we decided we were going to be together. It felt right. It was the start of a new year and it was the start of a new beginning for both of us.

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For the next three years, we were inseparable. We cared a lot about each other. During this time, I was in grad school until 9:30 p.m. two to three nights a week. Every night I was in school, Chris would drive from his job across town, where he got off at 9 p.m., wait for me to get out of class, and make sure I made it to my car safely. On the nights I wasn't in school, I would make dinner and take it to him so we could have dinner together during the week. On nights when he worked overtime and wouldn't get home until midnight, I would stay up late until he called me to let me know he had made it home okay.

We spent just about every weekend together, and we talked every day. Plus, since we went to the same church, it was a guarantee we'd see each other every Sunday. Neither one of us ever missed a service, and if we ever needed an extra reason to be at church, we'd both found it in each other. We bought bikes and rode together on trails and through neighborhoods. We purchased tennis balls three packs at a time and rackets, even though neither of us knew how to correctly play tennis. We'd find any tennis court we could around town (it didn't matter if it was private or not), and we'd hit our nine balls. Once we'd lost them all, we knew it was time to go. We'd go to arcades and see how many tickets we could win, as if we were little





kids. Chris would trade in those tickets for big prizes for me, and I would smile from ear to ear. We'd go to big-box superstores and play hide-and-seek in the aisles. We were happy just being together. I helped him become more serious about his goals, and he helped bring out the silly side of me. We loved each other, and everyone around us knew it.

From the time I was a young teenager, I'd had in my mind the type of man I wanted to marry. I came from a two-parent household, and my parents had gotten married three years before I was born. I believed God would send me someone who I'd have fun with, enjoy life with, and have a family with. Beyond that, I wanted to be with someone who, while dating, could honor the promise I wanted to keep. When I was fourteen years old, I made a promise to myself, God, my parents, and my future husband (whoever he would be) that I wouldn't have sex until I was married. I wanted to save myself for whoever that special person would be. When Chris and I started dating, I made it very clear to him that this was my personal belief and practice and that any man I was going to be in a serious relationship with would have to abide by my desires. Thankfully, Chris said that was fine. He shared with me that he wanted to be celibate, and since I was a virgin, our courtship would be sex-free.

On Halloween, nearly three years after that first date, Chris asked me to come spend some time with him, and I happily obliged. At the time, neither of us was into doing much on Halloween so I figured we'd hang out and watch movies like we'd done so many times before. He was living with his brother and sister-in-law at the time, and they had a newborn baby girl that I was absolutely in love with; I was looking forward to spending time with him and playing with the baby. When I arrived at the house, Chris was doing laundry, his





sister-in-law was tending to the baby, and his brother was out of town. Chris met me at the door when I came in. I spoke to his sister-in-law and kissed the baby and followed Chris upstairs to his room. I sat down on his bed and we chatted for a few minutes, and then he left to finish his laundry. He had on a huge T-shirt that was four times too big for him; big, baggy gym shorts; and socks that were pulled up over his calves. To top it off, he had ashy knees that peeked out between the gym shorts and the gym socks. When he returned to the room, he put the basket of clean laundry down and told me he had to ask me something. He grabbed me by the hands, and I stood up. He got down on one knee, looked up at me, and asked, “Will you marry me?”

Chris and I had played around several times with him pretending to ask me to marry him, and I thought this was one of those times. After all, he was doing laundry and his knees looked like he had just played in flour. So I giggled and said, “Yes,” like I had so many times before, thinking that surely this was all a joke. But then I caught myself, because when I looked back down at Chris’s face and his beautiful brown eyes were staring back at me, I could tell he wasn’t joking. He was seriously asking me to be his wife. And I was seriously confused.

I stood there, trying to process what I was feeling. In my mind, when a man proposed, he was supposed to put a great deal of planning and thought into how he was going to do it. And it was okay if he didn’t have a ring yet, as long as he asked for a woman’s hand in marriage in a special way. Or, if he did have a ring and didn’t have some type of grandiose proposal, the ring would more than make up for the lack of atmosphere. But there we stood, in Chris’s bedroom, without a ring and without a fantasy-like proposal. And





I didn't know what to do. This was the man who over the course of three years had stolen my heart. He'd brought teddy bears and cards to my job. He would even send surprise candy and fruit basket deliveries to me. All of my coworkers were telling us he was going to get the boyfriend/husband of the year award for being so sweet to me. Surely this wasn't my knight in shining armor's idea of a great proposal! What the heck was really going on? But sure enough, on the night that my heartthrob of a man proposed, he did it in gym socks, gym shorts, and a T-shirt and had no ring.

"You will? You'll marry me?" He smiled back at me excitedly as I shook myself back to reality. He was excited and I was...trying to figure out what had happened. "Yes! Yes, I'll marry you!" I said with a big smile on my face but confusion in my brain.

He got up, gave me a kiss, and ran downstairs to tell his sister-in-law our good news.

When I went downstairs, his sister-in-law gave me a huge hug and said congratulations. I asked her if she'd known Chris was going to ask me to marry him that night, and she said he'd mentioned it to her. I gave her a *look*—one of those piercing looks that she could feel. I felt like she had just broken one of the unspoken girl code rules.

Rule: No woman will ever let another woman's man propose to her in a bootleg way.

How could she let him ask me to marry him without telling him to at least pick up flowers or candy or hell, even a card?! But she'd just had a baby six weeks prior and she said that her "girl code radar" was down at the moment and she was sorry I was feeling disappointed. She told me she was just excited that we weren't going to follow the world's standards of how everything was done and that she was happy for us. *Yeab, yeab, yeab*, I thought. She hadn't just been proposed to by a man in gym socks and shorts without a ring.





Looking back on it, I was being vain, and there is nothing good about being vain. But in the moment—one of the biggest moments in either of our lives—I wanted to stand there and be amazed at how my future husband asked me to marry him. And instead of being amazed, I was disappointed. So, after we went back upstairs, I did what any vain girl would've done: I asked him if he could ask me to marry him again the next day. He looked at me and got mad. "Why do I need to do that?" he asked. I responded with my truth: "Because I want to have a story to tell!" He looked at me and stormed out of the room. I was sad because my man hadn't granted me my dream proposal, and he was sad because his girlfriend was disappointed. On that night, we were probably the two saddest newly engaged people in history.

Over the next few weeks, Chris told me he was sorry I wasn't too thrilled about the way he'd asked me to marry him. He'd just wanted to know if I'd be his wife. He had worked up the nerve to ask me and hadn't really put a whole lot of thought into how he was going to do it. Plus, when he asked, he didn't really have the money to buy me a ring. He was simply trying to get the question out. I felt bad after he shared his thoughts with me. Chris was sincere and he had been nothing but a sweetheart to me during our courtship. He'd been full of nerves trying to ask me to marry him, and I was looking for fairy dust and unicorns to fall out of the sky so I'd have some amazing proposal story to share. He kept on telling me that if I gave him a chance, he'd make it up to me when he presented me with my ring. I believed him. After all, this was the guy who made me laugh every day, who brightened my world with so much joy, and who let me know that true love existed. So, I settled it within myself that he had something up his sleeve, and I waited patiently to see how everything





would unfold. Grand proposal or not, we were engaged, and I was going to be with the man I loved forever.

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Six weeks after the initial proposal, Chris told me he wanted to take me out to dinner. He suggested that I wear something nice, and of course I obliged. On December 12, he picked me up from my house and we drove back to the Italian restaurant where we'd had our first date. When we walked in, I was surprised to see several of our family members, my best friend, and two of our other close friends. I had an inkling that something special was in the works for us that night.

The host sat our party in the same place where Chris and I had had our first date. In the middle of dinner, Chris stood up and said he had an announcement to make. He shared with our family and friends how on our first date we'd passed the girls with the tiaras. He told everyone about his "queen" question and, looking at me, he told me to tell everyone what my response had been. Through laughter, I told them how I'd said yes, he could crown me his queen one day. After I said it, he pulled out a paper crown and placed it on my head. Next, he got down on one knee, pulled out a ring box, and asked me to marry him. I shouted yes, and when he popped the ring box open, there was a ring he had made from bread ties! He made me show off my bread-tie ring to everyone, and we were all laughing. He then pulled out another box from his pocket, opened it, and asked me if I would marry him. The ring was the most beautiful ring I'd ever seen. I shrieked, while almost crying out of joy, and said yes. Chris and I hugged and kissed each other. Afterward, there were several cheers and claps from our family and friends and other diners. The manager immediately brought out glasses and a bottle of champagne. That proposal came from the man I knew.





AS SURE AS TOMORROW COMES

After dinner was over and our family and friends had left, Chris turned to me and said, “Now you’ve got your story to tell.” And I looked back at him and said, “I sure do!”

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A year and a half later, in May 2011, our wedding ceremony was beautiful, and our five-day honeymoon cruise the following week was awesome. There were moments when I thought I’d cry tears of joy from being so happy. My face was frozen in a smile the entire time. I had kept my promise to God of not having sex until after I was married, I was marrying the love of my life, and I was sure that our life together would be wonderful. We were entering into pure bliss with a strong network of family, friends, coworkers, and church family who supported us and loved us. And if I needed any more goodness to happen, one week after we returned from our honeymoon, I participated in my graduate degree ceremony, having earned my MBA three months prior. Life was looking good for us, and I was loving it.

