

*An Excerpt from Memoirs of a Runaway: A Story of Hope, by Michael Kennon*

On Sue's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday I asked her what she wanted. Her only request was tickets for a Cubs' game. That sounded great, as I am also a fan. Distractions and becoming preoccupied seemed to consume me each day. I was trying to confront issues of why I was finding it impossible to move on. I was getting tired of glorifying my past and telling people the story of my life. I was still avoiding the issues that kept me from being my best. Around Memorial Day, two weeks before Sue's birthday, I still had not gotten the tickets. I tucked my tail between my legs, went up to her and again asked, "So, what else do you want to do for your birthday?"

I could see the look of frustration on her face as she answered, "You waited until two weeks before the game to get tickets?"

I knew I was in trouble with her and was even more aware that I was getting too comfortable in this relationship and not giving it the attention it deserved. I didn't want to be a disappointment to someone again. Sue and I had been together for almost five years and in my history of relationships, by now I would have done something to sabotage things. But I was very happy in our relationship and I knew the time had come to deal with my mountain or God.

I called some friends that might have been able to get last minute tickets to the game, but they all came up empty. Scanning through websites to see if anyone had turned in tickets in the last minute was a bust. Although not giving up, I faced up to Sue that I had blown it.

I had learned to pray to God for many things so I figured that asking for Cubs tickets might seem a bit trivial, but it wasn't just the tickets that were riding on this. First, I argued with myself trying to avoid feeling guilty. Even Sue was not that mad, just disappointed. Something in me knew that I should not give up. So I spoke to God as plainly as I'm writing this on my laptop. "Lord, I know that I am not doing my best right now. I know that I just think about myself all the time. It's just a defense mechanism when I say that I've had such a hard time in my life that I don't know how to give to others anymore. I want to think of others and be able to give more, but I just don't know how to tear down this wall that I've built up inside of me. I'm tired of asking for things for myself all the time; I want to be a giver. I promise if you get Cubs tickets for me, I'll start to work on my past and try not to be so selfish anymore." I had a million conversations with God by now, so I just talked to Him like He was one of my buddies. By this time in my life, I had suspicions that without God or a Guardian Angel there was no way I would have made it this far. I did not know God, I did not know I could trust God, I wasn't even sure if I believed in God, but I knew that I was either very lucky or someone was watching over me.

What I did know was that the next day was Sue's birthday. Sitting in front of my computer on Saturday evening trying to think of what I was going to do to make up for this, I thought that maybe I would take her dancing. That would be a miracle in itself for me. Maybe a fancy restaurant would work. I went to Cubs.com, and I stared at the site and thought, "Wow, there are two tickets for sale, but I know this has to be wrong." I had done this before when they say tickets are available, but you go to buy them and they're gone already. I looked a little closer to see that they were on the third base line just five rows up from the Cub's dugout. Even if they are real, I figured, they were going to cost at least \$1,000. So I checked. Hmm, I thought. It says they're on sale for the regular price. I knew it was just a teaser, but I figured that I would try to catch the carrot for the heck of it. I whipped out my credit card and hit the Accept button. "Congratulations on your purchase," the website replied. "Your confirmation has been sent." Staring at the screen, I thought to myself, "No way!"

Sue and I took the train down to Wrigley Field. We left with enough time so we could arrive at least two hours early because we were so excited and because we wanted to beat the crowd. As we walked inside, a

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man with a clipboard walked up to me and said, "Would you like to participate in a promotional deal with the Cubs?"

"I'd love to," I replied, "but this is Sue's birthday, and this would be a thrill for her."

"That's great," the man said. "Well, let me explain what this is about. We'll take you up to the actual room where we take the players to have them sign contracts and have you sign some release forms. Then we'll pick a position for you and take you down to the field. You'll go out onto the field and take that player's position. Then the player will take the field, come out to you, sign a baseball for you and then you'll come back off the field."

As I looked at him, listening intently, my gaze turned to Sue who looked like an excited 12-year-old on her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. She looked as giddy as a schoolgirl. I took tons of pictures and even got one of her name on the scoreboard taking the catcher's position. Later that day, Joe Girardi got the winning hit. He was the catcher that Sue got to stand with on Wrigley Field. He's the one that signed her baseball and even thanked her for coming out when we knew that it was a miracle that we were even there.

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