Unveiling the Secret to True Romance

Hayley DiMarco





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The Woman of Mystery: Unveiling the Secret to True Romance

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TO MY HUSBAND, thank you for loving me even when I fail to keep the mystery alive.

AND TO MY DAUGHTER, that I might teach you the art of mystery for a life of true romance.

| Preface               | ix                             |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| chapter 1: <i>the</i> | Woman of Mystery1              |
| chapter 2: <i>Ken</i> | <b>Essence</b> 17              |
| chapter 3: <i>Ken</i> | 2 Love53                       |
| chapter 4: <i>Ken</i> | : <b>Lips</b> 79               |
| chapter 5: <i>hen</i> | . <b>Style</b> 97              |
| chapter 6: <i>Ken</i> | <b>Space</b> 117               |
| chapter 7: <i>hen</i> | Waiting131                     |
| chapter 8: <i>Ken</i> | Worship147                     |
|                       |                                |
| The End (             | of a Life without Mystery) 165 |
| About the 2           | Author                         |

We need a witness to our lives. There's a billion people on the planet. . . . I mean, what does any one life mean? But in a marriage, you're promising to care about everything. The good things, the bad things, the terrible things, the mundane things . . . all of it, all the time, every day. You're saying, "Your life will not go unnoticed because I will notice it. Your life will not go unwitnessed because I will be your witness."

SHALL WE DANCE

Sometimes the only way to catch an uncatchable woman is to offer her a wedding ring.

BIG FISH

ave you ever felt remarkable? Was there a time in your life when you remember feeling lovely, attractive, and alluring? Or have you wondered if feeling that way is even possible? And what about mystery? Do you feel like a mystery waiting to be unraveled by the man in your life? Or do you feel more like a practical, hardworking woman who is too often taken for granted? Or maybe more like an undiscovered diamond in the rough, waiting for the right man to find you? As women, we all crave the magic—that delightful tingle that runs over our skin, that sense of feeling like a princess, that excitement that accompanies the

unknown, that elation that comes from being truly known and loved. But for most of us, life isn't a fairy tale; it comes at us fast and leaves little time for mystery and intrigue.

Does it have to be that way? Or is there something at work just under the surface of our day-to-day reality that hasn't been discovered yet? In the midst of our everyday lives of commuting to work, doing the laundry, and living out relationships with other flawed human beings, is there really a place for romance and mystery?

I was single until I was thirty-seven years old. And believe me, it felt like an eternity. Sure, I had some moments of great romance, times when I was sure this must be the one, and then he'd disappoint me or just leave. Romance was a roller coaster that I both hoped to ride and feared to fall off of. And it was an ever-present thought at the very center of my heart.

When I was *finally* dating my husband, Michael, it was amazing. I felt more beautiful than I had ever felt before. I felt like I was a prize, highly valued and sought after. I looked different to myself when I looked in the mirror, and I certainly felt different inside. The mystery was alive for both of us, and it's what kept us chasing after more time with each other.

But is it realistic to think this kind of mystery and romance can be part of our daily lives, no matter what life stage we're in? For the single woman, is it possible to continue to believe that true romance is possible, even after getting your heart broken time after time and finding yourself home alone on yet another Saturday night? And for the woman who is married, is it possible to keep the romance alive as you look around at the dirty dishes, the piles of laundry, and the whining child and feel more utilitarian than mysterious?

At its most fundamental level, mystery is eternal. It is the evidence of an eternal God in the life of an eternal soul. And when a woman finds mystery within her, she finds herself miraculously and mysteriously in possession of everything she needs, even when the circumstances around her say otherwise. The mystery this book speaks of is the mystery of hope, peace, and love fully fusing with daily life. It is the mystery of a woman so secure in who she is that nothing—no circumstance or danger or setback—can shake her. It is the mystery found in the woman who can say, "It is well with my soul," and though the waves should crash and the sea billows roll, she will not crumble. Mystery is that essential element of character in the woman who rests in the knowledge that God is all she needs, and because of that, nothing she lacks can distract her. She knows the power her words have on the lives of those around her. She doesn't let the world dictate how she presents herself. She makes her home a refuge. Her heart is open to both receiving love and giving it. And she knows that the truest romance of all is found in the love that Christ the Bridegroom has for his bride.

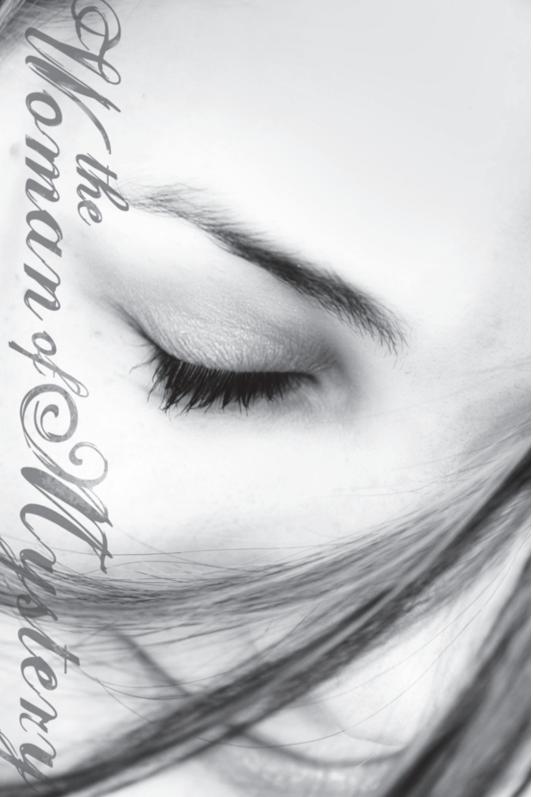
I have to be honest; I feel completely incapable of writing a book on mystery. I mean, I understand the concept. I've studied it, I've practiced it, I've taught it to others, and I love it. But the truth is, more days than not, I don't feel it. There are many days when I am short with my husband, when I am frustrated with my life, and when I wonder what ever happened to the moments of mystery I've experienced. I worry, I fear, and I yell. But I think that maybe that is exactly what qualifies me to write this book. I understand how it feels to be deflated and lonely. I know how emotions can whisper little lies about life and get me all jumbled up inside. I know the pull of a driven life. I know the joy of success

and the excitement of calling my own shots, and yet I can say with confidence that none of it compares to living in the mystery. I have discovered that mystery is tied to something far greater than me. And I have found mystery to be more alluring and exciting than anything this earth has to offer. I know this all sounds rather abstract right now, but bear with me. Mystery is an elusive thing, not easily touched, let alone captured. It takes time and effort, but it is worth every moment. Mystery will lift you above the fray and show you a view of your world you may never have seen before.

So let's lift the veil of the Woman of Mystery and see how she does it.

# WOMAN an adult female person Mystery whatever resists or defies explanation

Moman of Mustery



I would rather have had one breath of her hair, one kiss from her mouth, one touch of her hand, than eternity without it. One.

CITY OF ANGELS

I'd rather fight with you than make love to anyone else.

• THE WEDDING DATE

Vou're a woman and you want him to appreciate you because of that. Being female is at the core of who you are, and you want him to notice. To notice your ability to communicate and the funny way you wiggle your nose when you're happy. You hope he will catch the curve of your legs and the way you fixed your hair. You want him to follow the scent that lingers as you walk by. You want to allure the man you desire, and you realize that it takes all that is feminine in you to do it. But you also want him to love the parts of your personality that make you uniquely you: Your self-assertiveness and your ability to have strong opinions and ideas. Your sense of humor, your favorite and unfavorite things, the

quirky habits that set you apart from everyone else. Your shyness, your strength. You want him to recognize your mind and all its creativity and power, your heart and its ability to love, your soul and its depth. You want him to find in you that thing he's been looking for all his life.

Romance arrives when you realize that on all these counts he has seen you and found you alluring. In return, he shows honor and respect for those things in you that he finds so appealing. When he showers praise on your very essence, you are where you long to be—in the heart of romance. All that we define as romantic has the element of recognition in it. We are recognized for who we are, and we are loved for who we are. We are recognized as "other," as different from the one who sees us, but still awe-inspiring. When a man finds everything about you (even your idiosyncrasies) endearing, he is offering you pure romance. And it is intoxicating.

If you are like me, there is likely a part of you that is craving romance. Maybe you've tried to stuff it into the corner of your heart, or maybe you've tried to ignore it altogether. But it's there, whether you acknowledge it or not. Like me, you might have tried to fulfill your need for romance with fantasies of romantic moments with a man, sexy clothes, romantic getaways, or idyllic decor . . . and more than likely, you've come up short. The romance your mind promises your heart never seems to arrive. And so you yearn for more, and you wonder what you are doing wrong—or what's wrong with you. The search for romance seems never ending and always just out of reach.

But it doesn't have to be this way. When we embrace the concept of womanhood as God designed it to be, true romance is possible. At her best, the Woman of Mystery is an echo of the



divine, revealed in the romance of femininity (more on this in a moment). Her presence can transform a room. She is captivating and inviting, and men find her unforgettable. If romance is a kind of aphrodisiac for women, then one could say that mystery is an aphrodisiac for men. The mystery of the woman who can't be fully understood is an invitation to the masculine heart to come closer.

This woman is alluring and warm. She draws people to her. People who know her want what she has; people who observe her are intrigued by her charm and charmed by her beauty, though that beauty might be just beneath the surface. It is the atmosphere that surrounds her that entices others to her side. It is her soul that makes people curious, that causes them to follow her, pursue her, and want to know her.

Though mystery can keep many a man guessing, it is also what makes him desire a woman. Mystery says to the man who catches a glimpse of it, "That is something special," and it compels him to explore the depths of it. But more than that, it can give him strength and hope. Mystery leaves his soul wanting more, so when a woman allows some things to remain hidden or unspoken, he is intrigued.

There are some women throughout history who have given us a peek at the mystery that captivates. Jackie Kennedy was one such woman who lived with a captivating sense of grace and dignity. She will forever be remembered as a woman who didn't allow her grief and pain to become the focal point of her life. She maintained her personal strength in order to be strong for her nation. Lady Diana also had an air of mystery that endeared her to the world. Even in the midst of her own heartache, she reached out to the world

and sought to bring comfort to the weak and neglected. Audrey Hepburn kept a certain sense of mystery about her throughout her life too, not only because of her physical beauty and the way she carried herself, but also because of her dedication to helping underprivileged children in the poorest countries. She will live on in the minds of generations as a result. These women didn't just let it all hang out; they lived with gentle reserve and unspoken confidence. They weren't prone to fits of rage or given to public displays of emotional weakness or excess. Though their mystery might not have come from a life lived with Christ, they are still noteworthy starting points of what mystery looks like.

Feminine figures in the faith like Kay Arthur and Beth Moore demonstrate a compelling sense of mystery in their own way. They speak to thousands with confidence and yet also speak to individual women they meet with such charm that each woman believes, at that moment, that she is the only person in the world. I have personally watched Kay interact with hundreds of women and have seen how she treats each stranger as a friend. She looks into these women's eyes as they share their hearts with her. She holds their hands and hugs them tight. Her mind isn't on herself or her next appointment but always on those she is with. This kind of compassion and love captivates anyone in her presence. It gives her an air of kindness and strength that draws people to her. God's love is quickly seen in the lives of women like these.

## The Mysterious Christ

"I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3).

Moman of E

Christ himself is the author of mystery. His very presence here on earth was a mystery (see 1 Timothy 3:16). He maintained that mystery as he spoke in parables, suggesting that not all who listened would understand (see Luke 8:9-10). And in a way that defies human logic, when he was being persecuted, he didn't seek to defend himself or argue with his persecutors but instead accepted their attacks with a sense of acceptance that God's hand was in the matter (see 1 Peter 2:23).

Imagine how he walked while he lived among us; imagine how he talked and loved while he interacted with people. Imagine the calm he instilled in them. Imagine how captivating his words would have been to hungry hearts, how mysterious his reactions were even to the disciples who were with him every day. Though others disdained and avoided the Samaritan woman, Jesus loved her (see John 4:9-10). He ate with people who were viewed as the worst kind of sinners (see Matthew 9:10-12). His very nature went against the grain and baffled the minds of those who thought they knew God. And in the end, the world mocked him when he mysteriously refused to come down from the cross and save himself from such great pain (see Luke 23:35). To our human natures, Jesus was and is a complete mystery—his actions, his words, his heart. Mystery was his way of living. And dying. But to our spiritual natures, this mystery is revealed as we seek to know him more (see Matthew 7:7).

It shouldn't be a surprise that our call as believers to imitate the life of Christ would also lead us to that same mystery that makes him so alluring, so different from the rest of the world. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul calls believers to imitate Christ. Beautifully, mysteriously, as we accept Christ, we find ourselves in the possession of his Spirit. "The person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him" (1 Corinthians 6:17). As we accept the life of Christ and all the mystery that it entails, we also accept the mind of God himself. First Corinthians 2:16 states that "we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ." Because of that, the imitation of Christ's life, and therefore his mystery, is within our reach as we walk this earth and relate to those who love us and those who hate us. Rather than thinking of Christ as a mystery we must solve, we must embrace his mystery, as it is this mystery that draws people to him in the first place.

This call to imitate the mystery of Christ is not a gentle request but a God-initiated command. Yet how many of us take the words of imitation seriously? At times my heart lacks the strength to stand, so it retreats into the habit of fear and worry, and looks nothing like the heart of Christ. I depart from the imitation of the God I love, and I travel to the land of introspection and anxiety. And the mystery is lost. It isn't until I look from the trials of life to the God who sustains me that I can reclaim the ground I lost. It is a daily returning. I confess my retreat, and I promise to march forward in faith and hope. "Day by day" has become my battle cry. My constant fight is against the conflicting impulses that tug at my heart and distract me from the face of God.

For a number of years, I struggled with a horrific fear of flying. I would see images of plane crashes on the news, and I couldn't get them out of my head. So each time I would get onto a plane, my heart would pound, my mind would race, and my gut would hurt. And although I didn't explode like I thought I would—and neither did the plane—I would end up physically sore, emotionally tired, and literally sickened by the end of each arduous flight.

Each time we landed, I would look back over my stressful trip and say to myself, Why can't I trust God with my life? I knew all the biblical responses. I coached people through their fears. But this fear controlled me. However, each time I wanted to give up flying altogether, I'd say, "No, I will not let fear, a sin, control me." And so I would fly in spite of the difficulty and stress of it. After much prayer and much refusal to let anything other than God control me, I am happy to say that I can now fly without fear. There are days in my life when I look like anything but a believer, let alone like Christ himself, but I refuse to let that be the end of me or define me. Instead, I push forward to attain what God promised me—the ability to imitate the life of peace and hope of Jesus himself.

No matter what your area of struggle is—whether it's failing to trust God with your fears, failing to keep the mystery alive, or failing to embrace his version of true romance—don't give up. I want to make it clear to your heart that perfection isn't attainable this side of glory. But the desire to imitate Christ is worth pursuing. As many times as we fall down, we can keep getting up and trying again.

#### Three Kinds of Romance

If you talked to a dozen women about what romance means, you'd likely get a dozen different answers. One woman might say it's getting red roses; another might say it has to be wildflowers. Some might say it's a mountain getaway; others might say it's Times Square at midnight. Or maybe a picnic by the lake is better than a candlelit dinner at a fancy restaurant. Opinions on what romance is may vary, so it might be best to establish what the term *romance* 

means to the Woman of Mystery. I believe there are actually three different kinds of romance: manufactured romance, earthly romance, and true romance. Manufactured romance and earthly romance are only imitations of true romance. They give us hints of its flavor but not the full taste.

Manufactured romance is the least genuine of the three. It is an attempt to force romance through setting and circumstances. It is the imitation romance of films and music. Manufactured romance is going to a chick flick in order to get a taste of romance for ourselves. It is opening a Pottery Barn catalog and believing that if we could just have *that* room, our lives would be magical. It's the romance we arrange ourselves when the real thing is lacking. And it's little more than a false high that leaves us feeling empty when the vision and the hope wear off.

Earthly romance is a closer imitation of the real thing. Not only can it peacefully coexist with true romance, but it can also amplify it. Earthly romance is that thing that happens between a man and a woman. It is the way the world fades into the background when you look into his eyes. It is that feeling that keeps you up at night with excitement and hope, and it is those moments when your heart feels truly adored and loved by one man who is wholly and completely devoted to you. And in its truest form, earthly romance is something God created to be a natural taste of the divine. But it can never be a substitute for true romance.

True romance is what all other forms of romance seek to imitate. It comes from a relationship with a holy God and is more amazing than any earthly relationship could ever be. It comes as you worship, as you obey, as you love. When your heart becomes aware of God's presence, feelings of peace, hope, joy, and even

Woman of Mystery

ecstasy can overtake you (see John 14:27). The world starts to look a little brighter and seem a little less harsh toward you (see Psalm 37:3-4). When your thoughts mirror God's thoughts, and when you can say that he is all you ever really want or need, then true romance descends upon you.

This is a romance that cannot be shaken, no matter how bad your outward circumstances. It stands in the face of every trial, every attack, and every heartache. It brings you tears of joy and real feelings of comfort and support. When you experience true romance, you know in the very center of your soul that you are loved with the kind of love that is beyond compare. And that love will never disappoint. It is this true romance that is the answer to all other longings for love in your life. Without true romance, earthly romance becomes fleeting and unsatisfying, but with it, all earthly romance is enhanced and strengthened. Gain true romance and you will never again need to ask, "Where is the romance?"

When I was single I had moments of despair. Would I ever find a man to love? Would I be alone forever? It was an emotional time. I can remember feeling deflated and wanting so badly to have someone hold me and say I was beautiful, to romance me and make me happy to be adored. But no one was to be found. In a lonely funk one evening, I walked out onto my porch, sat down to watch the sunset, and found just what I was looking for. The breeze gently touched my skin, and I sighed. The smell of fresh-cut grass made me inhale deeply. And the orange sky made me say thank you. How foolish I had been, looking for earthly romance when true romance was there right in front of me. Who needs flowers when you have a sunset designed by the very hand of the one who loves you most? Who needs a hug when his very creation fills your

lungs and surrounds your body with every breath? When I pushed out my thoughts of what I lacked and focused on the abundance that was mine, I realized that true romance wasn't dependent on the presence or the lack of a man in my life.

When Jesus was nearing the end of his time here on earth, he offered us these words: "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid" (John 14:27). True romance is a gift the world cannot give. It is beyond compare, and it is available to everyone who seeks it. The Woman of Mystery is a woman who understands the secret to true romance and the need for it in her life. Because of her connection to God, she has an air of mystery that captivates those who are near her.

But becoming a Woman of Mystery can initially feel like a daunting task. Her qualities seem too perfect to be attained, her choices too impossible to imitate. I know from experience. I was not always a lover of mystery. I was an aggressive, successful executive type who took the world and the boardroom by the horns. I found it rewarding to shock people and to demand attention.

I can remember one particularly notable nonmysterious move that I once made that caused a few jaws to drop. I was presenting at an important sales meeting for the publisher I worked for. This conservative publishing house was, at the time, populated with middle-aged men who found me a bit of a wild card in the world of Bible publishing. In my belief that shocking people helped me to get my point across, I had chosen to wear an outfit that seemed to solicit a lot of comments. As I walked the length of the large—very large—mahogany conference table, the guys proceeded to make comic remarks about my attire. "You singing at a wedding later

today?" They all laughed and murmured their snarky remarks. So, when I got to my seat at the head of the table surrounded by some thirty men, I put down my papers and pulled out my chair. Then I stepped up on it and onto the shiny wood table. "Take a good look!" I pronounced. "Have your laughs now. Get it out of your system." I twirled around slowly as they all sat in shock. As I came back around to face them, the huge doors at the other end of the conference room opened and the CEO of the company walked in. His very conservative jaw dropped, and a look of discomfort came over him. And I enjoyed every minute of it. Let's just say that on that day I made my mark on the company.

Lest you think as you read this book that I'm now a quiet church-lady type and that mystery comes naturally to me, let me assure you that I am the exact opposite. I am, at heart, a driven, assertive woman who is at times both a social hermit and a show woman. When I'm expected to perform, I am the center of attention and take command of the crowd. But when I'm not on, I am shy by nature and would rather spend my days at home alone than with crowds of people. I can tell you that my desire to achieve has often made me do things even I am shocked by, both in the boardroom and in the romantic world. Most of the time, I've gotten it all wrong.

My dating life spanned almost two decades. And over those years I made many mistakes. For most of my adult life, I was the aggressor, not only in business, but also in love. I chased men, argued with them, and baffled them. I can't tell you how many men said, "Can you just stop being the man in this relationship?" And for years I couldn't understand what they were talking about and why I was still single. I was a catch! (Isn't that what we all tell

ourselves?) Even after I got married, remnants of my "masculine" tendencies remained. But more on that later. It wasn't until after I started to discover the power of mystery that I was set free from this constant state of internal unrest. I was no longer striving or pushing against the world. I was living in step with it and the people around me, and I was finding beauty where I had never seen it before. I'm far from the picture of perfect mystery, but I'm miles closer than I used to be.

And so when I talk about this woman that we aspire to become, know that I have yet to get it all right. But as I embark on this life of mystery, I'm finding it is not only more relationally rewarding but more spiritually rewarding as well. I hope that these words resonate with you and that you will risk testing them to see if they are true. May this be a chance for you to find your heart full of true romance and the love that goes along with it.

# Lifting the Veil

#### FINDING ROMANCE

Don't look for more candles or romantic music; try to look for opportunities to admire, even adore, God's creation. And that includes your husband, if you have one, as well as your friends and family. Find the good in everything from nature to smells to tastes, and you will begin to discover the romance. Spend time each day taking it all in. Meditate on the goodness in your life; disregard the negative. Refuse to become a slave to resenting what God himself has given you. And major on the positives.

#### ROMANTIC INVENTORY

Take a look at your life over the past five to ten years. What are some of the most romantic moments you've had? What has made them so romantic? What about the times romance was lacking? How did you handle its absence? Can you think of some ways you could replace those longings with God himself? Spend some time in prayer and Bible study, finding out how to fall deeper in love with Jesus.

#### **WORSHIP MUSIC**

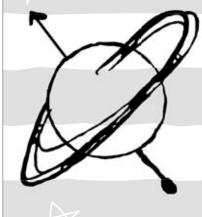
I have found that if I listen to my favorite uplifting music while reading devotional and other inspirational books, I increase the degree of understanding and penetration to my heart. It's the sound track of life, as I like to call it. So I encourage you to pick up your iPod or turn on the CD player and allow the sound track of life to add to the experience of reading and absorbing this book and other books you're reading.

HAYLEY DiMARCO is the best-selling author of more than thirty books, including *Dateable* and *Marriable*. She spent the early part of her career working for a little shoe company called Nike in Portland, Oregon. After three years with the "Swoosh," Hayley got fed up with the incessant rain of Portland and began to search for drier ground. Soon she found just the spot: Nashville, Tennessee, where she became the manager of promotions at Thomas Nelson Publishers. While operating as the brand manager of Nelson's new teen line, Hayley authored, edited, or had her hand in more than thirty-six different titles.

In 2002 Hayley left Nelson and founded Hungry Planet, a company intensely focused on feeding the world's appetite for truth by producing books and new media, taking on issues of faith and life with a distinctly modern voice.

Shortly after founding Hungry Planet, Hayley successfully completed a nationwide executive search for someone to run the company so she could focus on writing. She describes her husband, Michael, as her most successful business acquisition! Hayley and Michael are now the proud parents of Hungry Planet's thirty-plus books, including ten best sellers, three ECPA Christian Book Award finalists, and one ECPA winner, and one amazing human, their daughter, Addison.

Join Hayley and *The Woman of Mystery* conversation at thewomanofmystery.com.



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