



## Couple #2 Tanaya and Ernest

### Our Official Essay Entry

My name is Tanaya, my fiancé is Ernest, and we would like to share our story of love with you. It is an account of our love, sacrifice, and dedication to one another. We hope our story shows why we best represent the essence of a New Mexico Dream Wedding.

Ernie and I were both born and raised in New Mexico. I was born in Albuquerque and moved to the small northern town of Eagle Nest in 1993 where Ernie had lived since birth. We attended high school together and even attempted to date for a while. It was a classic case of high school love that didn't work out. Ernie graduated in 1999 and joined the U.S. Army. When I graduated in 2000, I moved to Las Cruces to attend NMSU.

In May 2003, my twin sister, and Ernie's best friend got married. It somehow worked out that I was the maid of honor and Ernie was the best man. At the time I thought we might look awkward walking down the aisle together because Ernie is 6'4" and I am only 4'10". Two days before the wedding was the first time Ernie and I had seen each other, in what seemed like forever. We hit it off right away and began to catch up. Ernie told me how he had spent the last three years overseas. He spent two years in Germany and just returned home from a 14-month tour in Kuwait. He told me that he would soon be stationed in Colorado Springs. We also talked about how I was attending NMSU pursuing a degree in Criminology. Ernie and I spent the next couple of days together helping with wedding preparations and going out of our way to see each other. There were definitely sparks during those two days. At the wedding reception, something came over me and I couldn't resist kissing him. After that first kiss, I was sure there was something special between us. The day after the wedding, I gave Ernie my phone number. It didn't take long before we were in constant communication. We both ran up \$600 phone bills with all our calls and text messages. It was during this time, that our love began to grow and we decided to try a long distance relationship.

Shortly after our relationship began we received news that Ernie would be deployed to Iraq. I did everything I could to spend as much time with him as possible. I made frequent nine-hour trips from Las Cruces to Colorado Springs to see him before he left. When Ernie deployed in June of 2003 I was devastated. Even though we weren't together long, I knew he was my soul mate and I was going to wait for him. I did my best to write him everyday and was very grateful for every phone call and letter that I received. Ten months later, Ernie called saying that he was coming home. It was the happiest, yet most nervous I had ever felt. The day before Ernie was scheduled to arrive home, I drove to Ernie's parents house in Eagle Nest. It was the best surprise

ever, when I knocked and Ernie answered the door. Shortly after his return we decided to move to Colorado Springs together.

In the summer of 2005, Ernie was honorably discharged from the military and we decided to move to Albuquerque so I could finish school. Within six months of moving to Albuquerque, we saved enough money for a down payment on a home. We purchased a small and cozy condo in northeast Albuquerque. On Christmas Eve 2005, in front of my family, Ernie proposed in the most romantic fashion. It was yet another magnificent experience in our relationship.

Because both our families come from modest backgrounds, Ernie and I knew we would have to pay for most of the wedding. Since we started our wedding saving, we have hit several roadblocks. Last year Ernie's truck was burglarized and my car broke down not only once, but twice. We had to use our wedding money to cover the costs totaling \$1,900. Then, late this summer I found out that I wasn't eligible for financial aid for school. Around the same time, our dog fell very ill. Once again our wedding fund paid the costs to the tune of \$1,100. We haven't become discouraged and still continue to save towards our wedding. We have even gone as far as cutting our wedding budget nearly in half.

In May, my grandfather passed away. My mother who had been working for him since 2001 suddenly found herself jobless. Because she suffers from several health issues she was unable to get a new job. Ernie suggested that she come live with us until she gets back on her feet. Since July, while providing her not only a home, we have also tried to support her financially. This has put a strain on our saving efforts but we feel fortunate to be able to support her through this tough time.

We have been engaged for nearly two years now and we know that when we do get married it will be because we didn't give up on our dream and that we truly love one another. We feel blessed to have the love of our friends, families, and most of all, each other. Ernie and I know that through good times and bad, nothing will keep us from having the beautiful wedding that we both desire. Everything we have been through together has only made our love stronger. This is why we hope this story of our great love for one another will illustrate why we represent the essence of a New Mexico Dream Wedding. Thank you for taking the time to read and consider our story.