



ASHLEY AND
AMANDA



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Hello! We are Ashley (left) and Amanda (right), and this book is our effort give you a glimpse into who we are.

Our Start

We met in 2011 and were surprised we had never crossed paths before. Growing up a short 10 miles apart, we quickly discovered mutual friends, childhood memories, and favorite spots around the city we were both raised in. It was clear early on we shared a lot in common and enjoyed just being with each other.

We spent five years dating and maturing together. Since we met in our early 20's, we had to develop together as adults through our most formative years. We learned to be serious, gain maturity, forgive our mistakes, advance in our careers, and figure out our mutual and separate goals. Our love of road trips, miles-long walks, Disneyland, making unique dinners and family gatherings kept us going, even when things weren't perfect.



Our Wedding

We got engaged in 2016 in a rather lackluster fashion - sitting on our couch on a rainy, January evening. There were no plans, rings, or fanfare, but it was perfect for two people who shy away from the limelight.

(Left Photo: Amanda's parents and close friend are the four on the left, and Ashley's parents and sisters are the five on the right)



Keeping on theme, we knew we wanted the best of both worlds. First, we were married in a courthouse ceremony within the privacy of our family. Then, we were able to throw a giant party with everyone we cared about afterwards.

Our Relationship



Above: Wine tasting with Ashley's family



Above: We are big fans of Women's soccer and often cheer on Seattle's team, OL Reign.



Above: Our dog Nellie!



One of the pieces of glue in our relationship is our mutual desire to give equal attention to career-related goals, but make sure to blow off steam and have fun as well.



When we're not working, we share a love of travel, watching sports games, Disneyland, going to the beach, camping, and wine tasting. We often drag our family members, friends, and dog along with us. And, if it was more socially acceptable, we would also bring our cat (who would surely hate it!).



Ashley's Aunt and Oma at a Seattle Mariner's game

We can also be big homebodies. We enjoy spending our time immersing ourselves into stories with books, movies, and TV series. We also like working in our yard and taking Nellie on walks around our neighborhood.

A lot of our time is spent with extended family and friends, so a goal in our relationship has been to always carve time for ourselves. To this day, we still spend whole weekends just the two of us, catching up and relaxing with each other.



At Nye Beach in Oregon, our favorite!



Left: Amanda and our cat, Roux

Right: Ashley setting up our camp site in Lake Chelan



About Amanda, From Ashley

Fun: She is a chef by trade and can back that skill with natural instinct. I have yet to find a recipe she can't master.

Annoying: She always falls asleep on the couch while I'm getting ready for bed.

Random: She has a knack for guessing the end of movies, which keeps me on my toes!

About Ashley, From Amanda

Fun: Ashley is a researcher extraordinaire, will learn everything there is to know about where we travel and experience in life.

Annoying: She never, EVER replaces the toilet paper roll.

Random: Ashley is obsessed with the weather, but in an endearing way.

Meet Ashley



Occupation:
Director, Hospital Contracting

Hobbies:
Reading, hiking, traveling, watching football (both kinds!), and finding new dishes to cook.

Fun Facts:

- 1) I drink an excessive amount of coffee
- 2) Action movies are my favorite (Twister and World War Z are among the top ones)
- 3) I worked at Disney World my sophomore year of college
- 4) My favorite food is steak frites
- 5) A bucket list item is to ride the top 10 roller coasters in the world. So far, I am only at 1/10.



I was born in the Greater Seattle Area, and grew up there with my parents, Laurie and Glenn, and my two younger sisters, Amy and Erica (2 and 10 years younger, respectively). My younger childhood years were spent in dance classes and playing outside as much as possible.

When Erica was born, the dynamics in our family changed a lot, given the age gap and Erica's whirlwind presence.

Erica's mighty presence required all hands on deck, and my teenage years were spent helping my parents out by taking Erica to movies, to activities, and babysitting on the weekends. It's one of the biggest reasons Erica and I are so close to this day.



Me and Amy, posing on the first day of school



My Story

As an adult, not much has changed, though I've traded in my dance shoes for hiking and golf shoes. Outside of my hobbies, I consider my career one of my passions in life. I have put a lot of time and resources into my education and on-the-job learning, with a goal to finish a Healthcare Executive MBA in the next five years. I feel a lot of personal joy in being successful in my job, learning everything I can about my industry, and connecting with my team.

Others have described me as objective, comical, and a problem-solver. I try to approach life looking for equality, bringing out the humor, and seeking solutions.



Me with Erica at 2 years old

My Family

Family is very important to me, and because everyone is local to Washington state, they remain a constant and influential part of my life. We're a big family outside of my immediate family, consisting of my Oma and Grandma, several aunts and uncles, and even more cousins. We also have a large group of family friends who are second family members to us. One of my favorite memories is Amanda - who grew up as an only child in a small family - realizing just how loud and talkative my family was during the first holiday spent with them. She's since learned how to carry her own in the chaos and has become a fan favorite in my family.



Top Left: My Grandma Betty, who is 98 years young today!

Left: My mom's side of the family, including two aunts, my uncle, and cousins.

Taking my Oma out for drinks. She was like a second mother to me, growing up.

In my family, my dad and his younger sister were both adopted as infants by my Oma and Opa. It's always been a concept discussed openly and without judgment throughout my childhood.

The reality of my dad's adoption was it was fully closed, with no option to discover any part of his birth family. While he holds a strong, positive relationship with his adoptive parents, the questions and intense curiosity were there not only for him, but both my sisters and myself.

Being able to witness this firsthand made the value and benefits of open adoption hit home. Amanda and I knew if we explored adoption, it was important to us that the process be as transparent, grounded and open as possible.



Right: Family friends, including 8 different families. These are all the women at our annual Christmas party.



Left: Celebrating Grandma Betty's birthday with Aunt Karen, Aunt Kathy, Amy and Erica



Right: Riding the Aerial Tramway at Palm Springs with my dad's sister and cousins. Amanda isn't pictured because she hates heights!



Meet Amanda

Occupation:

High School Culinary
Teacher

Hobbies:

Camping, cooking,
reading, traveling, and all
types of games (board
games, table top games,
and video games)



Fun Facts:

- I played rugby for one game in college, and promptly cracked my head open and needed 9 staples
- The coolest person I made dinner for was Jane Goodall
- I trained to be an EMT
- Coke Zero is my favorite vice, but only allow myself a can every few days



My Story

I was born in a suburb of Seattle. My parents, Doug and Linda, were young, fun parents. Beyond my grandparents, we had little extended family. It was often just the three of us, and I really enjoyed it. We had so much fun together, every outing seemed like an adventure.



As an adult, I have many of the same passions and hobbies I did as a kid. I still love spending time with my family and going on adventures. My biggest adventure has been my career, from chef, to EMT, to teacher. From a college dropout to having my master's degree in education, a lot can change in 10 years. I think that's what makes me an empathetic teacher. I know that life doesn't always go the direction you expect it to, but that doesn't make you less than anyone else. It's just part of your story, and the fun part is writing what comes next.

My Family

While my parents were close with their parents, we were not close to any extended family. Therefore, it was normally just the three of us for most events. I am an only child, and felt extremely loved and cared for throughout my childhood. Even though both my parents worked full time with my mom as a nurse and my dad as a machinist, they were both extremely present in my life.

My dad was adopted at birth through a closed adoption, and never knew his birth family. I think it always bothered him to know he could not answer my questions, and it was hard to watch him process those emotions. This was one of the driving factors in us exploring different types of adoption.



Above: My mom (Linda) and dad (Doug) at Disneyland! This is my family's favorite vacation destination.



Left: Dad and I going to church



Middle: Me and Grandma Ann



Hanging out in Dad's Jeep

Dad and I always found time to spend together, from the little tool box he made to help him in the garage when he worked on the cars to coaching soccer after school.

My mom worked nights during my childhood, but we would watch old episodes of '60s shows every morning before school when she got home, and would build forts out of the living room furniture even though she must have been exhausted.

They both gave me a wonderful childhood and I hope to provide that for a child someday, too.



Meet Nellie



Nellie joined our party back in September 2020 and we've been in love ever since. She's a spunky, smart, and sweet 3-year-old Cocker Spaniel who is far more photogenic than either of her mothers. Likes include cheese, tennis balls, and her cat friend, Roux. Dislikes include large trucks, her own shadow, and when she's left bored at home.



Meet Roux



We got Roux just before our wedding, back in 2016. She is a kind and sweet cuddle hoarder, who our friends and family constantly threaten to steal every time they visit. Roux can always be found looking out a window or sleeping high where the dog can't reach her, and has an odd affinity for the dryer.



Our House



We bought our house in South Seattle in May of 2020, smack in the middle of the COVID lockdowns in Washington state. We weren't allowed to view any houses together, and it was a strangely efficient way to figure out what each other's likes and dislikes were! For this house, we were drawn to the established neighborhood, huge backyard, and tall trees that surrounded us. We are lucky to have wonderful neighbors with whom we hold BBQs and Happy Hours, and watch each other's houses while we go on vacations. As two women who were the first "newbies" to move in for years, we immediately felt very safe and welcomed on our street.

Our Neighborhood

We live 20 minutes from both Seattle and Tacoma, and 10 minutes from the Puget Sound. We love our neighborhood because we are close to local beaches, long walking trails full of greenery, locally owned restaurants with diverse eating options, good schools and other amenities.

Even though we both grew up 30 minutes from our current city, we did not spend much time in this area in our childhood. It's a less suburban and more diverse area, which has made it very exciting to explore.

Another bonus is when the weather is just right, our local airport utilizes a runway close enough to our house that we get a fun show watching planes land.



Our Traditions

Most of our traditions revolve around Halloween and Christmas because they are our two favorite holidays.

Amanda loves Halloween and our traditions include decorating, carving pumpkins, and watching classic Halloween movies all month long. Amanda ends up watching about half of them by herself.

Christmas is Ashley's favorite. Our traditions include putting up the Christmas tree and attempting to make a gingerbread house look just like the box over Thanksgiving weekend. Ashley's family has gifted her a new piece for her Christmas Village each year, which also winds up taking an entire counter or cabinet.

We also never, ever miss a Family Vote Night. We gather with Amanda's parents, discuss, argue, and vote in every local and federal election.

Our traditions are few, but strong, and leave plenty of room to both share with others and develop new ones with both our child and their birth family.



Dreams for our Child

Our primary dream in raising a child is to share the fun we have in our family with them. When we picture ourselves 5, 10, 15 years from now, that vision includes a child. We certainly picture the fun: first steps, taking the training wheels off of a bike, Saturday sports games, family road trips, new traditions that will come with having a child that we cannot even foresee yet. But, we also envision the tough: teething, scraped knees, struggling over math homework at the kitchen table, first heartbreaks, and arguments over chores. Even the tough doesn't deter us, as we understand our love, realism, and means can help a small human grow and develop.

Through the inevitable challenges, our love, common sense, community, and family support will help our child grow and develop into their whole self. We have put so much thought into the decision to raise a child, as well as becoming parents through adoption. We are committed to helping our child navigate all of their thoughts and emotions as they grow up. Our relationship with our child's birth family will always be valued and honored in our family.



Open Adoption Aspirations



We mentioned earlier in the book that both of our dads were adopted at birth, and given our individual family stories, open adoption stuck out to us immediately because we saw the negative long term effects a closed adoption can carry.

We are aware of the work that goes into an open adoption. We remain very realistic to the work that goes into an open adoption. Even though we are ready to parent and ready to raise a child, everyone involved in the process will be new to everyone else. Starting as strangers, the work will involve learning, adapting, and flexibility.

Our hope is for an open-minded, productive, and transparent relationship with our child's birth parents. Our promise is that, no matter what we may face, the highs and the lows, we will approach this process with an open mind, and the intention to do what is best for the child. We will approach this journey with no judgement or expectations, as we work toward a healthy relationship for all involved.