

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Our Story

Alex & Dani — seven years, one blurry fish photo and a Stanley knife on Papamoa Beach. Told twice, once each.

THE BIG GIG

15 May 2027 · The Cargo Shed, Tauranga

IN HER WORDS

Dani said

Dani's version of events, lightly edited and entirely her own.

I · CHAPTER ONE

How it all started

His Instagram profile photo was a blurry fish. So when we finally met in person — after I'd made him work for it for about six weeks — I wasn't expecting someone that tall, or that attractive. And the man didn't just have height. He had calves that could roundhouse knockout Mike Tyson. His legs and booty are still unbeatable.

I walked in thinking it was a platonic meeting and immediately went to adjusting my boobs and sorting my hair and makeup. This was now a date, and I wanted it to go really well.

On that first date we talked about not wanting kids, wanting to elope, all the big life chats. We just seemed to be on the exact same page. And now here we are.

"The next day Alex asked to take me somewhere nice for dinner. I asked if we could skip that and just have KFC and a bottle of wine at his place instead. Strangely, he had no problem with this plan."

Dani said

II · CHAPTER TWO

Cheese, crackers and a Stanley knife

Our first proper date was a Four Square run — cheese, crackers, a few drinks — then sitting on Papamoa Beach just talking. We forgot a knife, so we had to buy a Stanley knife and spent the night making jokes about being stabbed on a first date. It was very easy to fall in love with him.

A few weeks in we had a UFC Sunday at home: fried chicken, a gamble and yapping all day. Easy. I felt 100% myself for the first time in a very long while. That was the moment I thought, shit, I actually really like this person.

We shared songs constantly and told each other the memories attached to them. We'd have nights at home just singing. We still do that. And we were always hunting for something exciting to try next — we made a lot of plans, and then we actually did them.

"I thought he was just a typical guy telling every girl what they wanted to hear. His actions have always affirmed his words."

Dani said

III · CHAPTER THREE

Falling in love

Six weeks after we met I moved into Alex's house to look after him after his wrist surgery. He'll tell you I Florence Nightingaled him. I just remember wanting to take care of him forever and never see him in pain again. He has taken care of me and protected me every day since.

Then my house got broken into. I rang him and he dropped everything, turned up exhausted, and handled all of it with me. He told me that night I was going home with him — no negotiations. I never left.

He made me comfortable enough to be completely myself, flaws and all, and then went out of his way to build me up anyway. He's a stable anchor for my ADHD self: we can do all the fun things in the world, but everything needs a plan.

"On my bad days he loves me harder and longer. Hot water bottles, seventeen different chocolates just in case I want a different flavour, his baggy shirts to wear. At my messiest he makes me feel so loved that nothing else matters."

Dani said

IV · CHAPTER FOUR

Us, as a team

Hilarious. Adventurous. Authentic. Half of us is the exact same person; the other half is the exact opposite piece the other one was missing. It balances perfectly. We're both Yes people — walking rubber arms.

I'm the planner and dreamer, Alex is the practical make-shit-happen man. My head's in the clouds while his feet are on the ground. It works. Where we're opposites is conflict: Alex is a fixer, I'm a runner, and we work on it actively.

The hardest stretch was my health — getting my back sorted through the Covid period was particularly hectic. What it taught me is that we work against the problem, not against each other.

“My favourite ordinary thing: coffee in bed and waking up in a literal dog pile. A slow morning together before the rest of the world exists will always be the best part of my day.”

Dani said

V · CHAPTER FIVE

Home, and the boys

Buying our forever home. Every holiday. Our walks with the boys. I just love our life. (Also the clownfish attack in New Caledonia, which has us cackling every single time.)

Home is Alex and my boys — I never think of it as a physical structure. It's wherever he is. We could live in a one-bedroom shack with the dogs and I'd love my life just as much.

The dogs are small extensions of our personalities. They teach us how simple joy actually is. If they could describe our relationship they'd say that at 2am we CANNOT SING and should go to bed. They love fried chicken as much as we do. They're very happy boys, so I think they feel the love in this house too.

VI · CHAPTER SIX

Adventures on the road

Bali and Thailand at Christmas 2025 was the best adventure so far — we figured out a lot about ourselves and what we want from life. Our South Island camper trip was special too; the first proper trip that wasn't a local weekend away.

Then Moorea. My birthday. Jetskis, dolphins, ATVs. I kept screaming that it was the best day of my life.

Alex is the calmer, more experienced traveller. I'm the one who currently could not tell you where my eftpos cards or ID are. He needs the aisle for those legs, I like the window, so I usually end up in the middle so I can lean on his shoulder. Still on the list: a cruise through the ancient Greek mythology sites, a big Europe trip, a cheeky Vegas and Hawaii run, Thailand at a moment's notice, and Tomorrowland.

VII · CHAPTER SEVEN

What comes next

In five years: strong foundations personally and professionally, healthy dogs THAT WILL LIVE FOREVER, and still waking up with love and lust for each other. In twenty: I still want him to get excited every time he sees my boobies, and I want to smack his butt every time he walks past me. We are never not going to be teenagers.

The shared dream is early retirement, young enough to actually enjoy it. His dream that I want to help happen: his own business, or at least work where he's never treated as disposable — he works himself into the ground and deserves to do it his way, with his ethics intact.

I hope we never stop laughing. We're pretty funny and goofy and it takes almost nothing to start a snowball of giggles.

“Nearly seven years in and the honeymoon phase feels more alive than ever. We've cleared more hurdles in seven years than most people meet in a whole marriage, and somehow we're still giddy.”

Dani said

VIII · CHAPTER EIGHT

Why the Big Gig

Our entire relationship has been different to what society deems normal, so I'll be damned if I start doing things like everyone else now. Eloping privately means we get to absorb the moment together, with no distractions and nobody to cater to. I just want to be with my person when I commit to him.

Watching the film back with all of you, I'll need an extra set of lashes on hand — though Alex will need tissues before I do. Place your bets now. He's a big softie under the gun show.

A first dance to DnB is very us. Keep an eye out for a bouquet being hurled at some stage during it. After 8pm it's the blind leading the blind, so please send adults to supervise both of us.

“What I hope everyone takes home: they felt our love, made a new friend, and realised a relationship or a wedding doesn't have to look like everyone else's to be right.”

Dani said

HEAD TO HEAD

Who's who

THE SENSIBLE ONE

Alex is the backbone.

MOST LIKELY TO SAY "FUCK IT,
LET'S DO IT"

Alex — and usually for good reason.

MORE STUBBORN

Guilty.

USUALLY GETS THEIR OWN WAY

Also guilty.

APOLOGISES FIRST

Alex. He wants it fixed immediately.

TAKES LONGER TO GET READY

Me — but I'm ready on time. He's pissing about with god knows what.

BIGGER SPENDER

Both of us. Alex buys a house, I buy a holiday.

STARTS THE PARTY

Me. Then Alex becomes the backbone and I become the liability.

LAST ONE STANDING

I'll be last dancing. Alex will be last singing.

BETTER COOK

I'm the personal chef, and I love it.

BETTER DRIVER

Alex — though his car essentially drives itself, so that's cheating.

OVERPACKS

Alex. I'd happily travel carry-on only.

STRESSED AT AIRPORTS

Put me in an asylum. I hate airports and love holidays.

MORE DRAMATIC WHEN SICK

I've planned my own funeral roughly 500 times over a common cold.

MOST DANGEROUS AFTER "I'VE GOT
AN IDEA..."

Me. Proudly.

FINISH THE SENTENCE

And finally

I knew I'd found my person when...

the world shut down for Covid a few months after we met and I could not have cared less. I was in my own little bubble with the missing piece of me.

Life with you is...

magical. The laughter of silly kids, the passion of teenagers, the unshakeable foundation of adults — and already a pile of memories to look back on like we're old and grey.

No matter what, I promise we'll always...

communicate. You need to be understood and heard, and I promise I'll always make space for that.

What Alex means to me...

he's my home, my family, my world. I've learnt that home isn't a place or a group of people — it can be everything in one person.

IN HIS WORDS

Alex said

Alex's answers, in his own words. Same seven years, different angle.

I · CHAPTER ONE

How it all started

Driven and passionate, Dani struck me immediately as someone who went for what she wanted. Her smile and her love of dogs caught my attention first — closely followed, due to the dress she was wearing, by the rest of her.

Yes, I fancied her straight away. I made the first move to set up the date, then chased for weeks before she finally agreed. Our first proper conversation was a wild chat about her recent adventure that weekend and her flatmate's ex. I had to reassure her I hadn't done any prison time like another first date of hers had casually dropped on her — that did stick in the mind.

The date itself was entertaining, covering a wide range of topics. When she suggested we stay in for KFC rather than going out to dinner, I thought: shit... I actually really like this person. The cheeky smile that was always about to laugh is what I remember most clearly from those early days.

"When she suggested that we stay in for KFC rather than going out to dinner, I knew this was different."

Alex said

II · CHAPTER TWO

Falling in love

I realised I was in love when I felt totally good about getting a dog with her. I must have been pretty head over heels to get a tattoo on the arse in some guy's backyard... so probably then. What made me fall was the way she took care of me when I had my wrist surgery, essentially removing all the toughness from living with one hand for two to three months.

There wasn't one particular moment where I thought, yep, this is my person — it's more like a collection of thousands of moments. Even when I see her spirit wavering, I know the strength is still in there to rise above whatever obstacle or problem is in front of her. Despite setbacks, she always gets back up and goes again.

She's changed me for the better in ways I didn't expect. I'm far better at handling conflict now — the relationship has made me more mindful of diverging personalities and how people communicate and perceive things. And she encouraged me to leave the bank and start the career I'm in now. Life changing.

“The little things: the meal preps she makes for me, the small acts of kindness she does for my friends. That's how I know I've got someone in my corner.”

Alex said

III · CHAPTER THREE

Us, as a team

If I had to describe us in three words: something always happening. Humour and relaxation are aligned — basically, we laugh and recover with the same stuff. That's why we work so well.

We're complete opposites when it comes to dealing with problems that involve other people. I want to resolve it; Dani is more of the 'they can fuck off' mindset. But we're also ridiculously similar — we can both find the alarm snooze button no matter how many times we've promised each other we won't sleep in again.

The biggest adventure or risk we've taken together was quitting stable jobs in lockdown three in 2020 to move cities. We also bought a lifestyle property to run a dog daycare. The hardest thing we've faced was Dani's back injury and getting the surgery — it taught me that we can overcome anything if we have each other. I'm proudest of her recovery and rebound post-surgery, as well as stopping drinking and watching genuine happiness unfold with new friends and wellbeing.

“My favourite completely ordinary thing: laying in bed with a dog pile around us, cracking inside jokes. Nothing beats it.”

Alex said

IV · CHAPTER FOUR

Home, and the boys

Home means somewhere for all five of us to put our feet up and truly relax. The dogs all have their spot to roll over and put their feet in the air. The fur babies play a central role — it's essentially all for them at this stage. They own us and we love it.

If the pets could describe our relationship, they'd say Dani is the main course and Alex is the treats. Dani provides everything and Alex is always there to make it a little bit more every now and again.

V · CHAPTER FIVE

Adventures on the road

They've all been awesome, but Bali and Thailand is probably the best trip so far. The funniest travel memory — or travel disaster — was the horrific clownfish attack in New Caledonia. I'd say I'm the better traveller; Dani gets easily overstressed when the plan has to change in real time.

We're both pretty good at remembering the important things. Dani's issue is remembering to take stuff out of luggage. She's a window-seat person for sure. As for five-star resort or spontaneous road trip — either or. Right now I want the resort, so that's my answer.

The number-one place we still want to experience together is a European music festival trip. If money, work and annual leave weren't an issue, we'd go to Tomorrowland tomorrow — happening at time of writing. The proper NZ tour with the dogs alongside is still sitting at the top of the couple bucket list, and we'd love to spend our tenth wedding anniversary doing exactly that.

“If money, work and annual leave weren't an issue, we'd go to Tomorrowland tomorrow.”

Alex said

VI · CHAPTER SIX

What comes next

In five years, I want sustained peace and comfort at home with brief injections of absolute fun and excitement. The dogs are — and will remain — central. In twenty, I hope we look back on all of our wonderful memories and say: shit, we did that well.

One big dream we share is buying a farm and having acres of space and animals that can all be handled by hand. One of Dani's dreams I really want to help make happen is starting a farm-style dog sanctuary. I hope we never stop laughing at our own jokes.

I hope marriage never changes the energy we have for each other and the passions we share. When we're old and looking back, I hope we'll say: that was wild, how did we not die when we tried that!? The fact that nothing so far has been predictable tells me that nothing in the next ten years will be either — and that's fucking excellent.

VII · CHAPTER SEVEN

Why the Big Gig

We're really unique when it comes to our relationship and way of doing life, so doing our wedding this way seems perfectly normal. Privately eloping means the day will be just about us, with bugger all else to worry about.

Watching the ceremony film for the first time alongside everyone we love, I'll be filled with love and pride — but also likely a blubbering mess. I'd say we'll both cry during the speeches, and after 8pm we both can't be trusted. Hiring a DnB DJ for the reception feels very us.

The one thing I hope everyone remembers about the Big Gig is that everyone comes away thinking: god, that whole thing just felt right.

“Genuinely celebrating our life together with our friends — that's what I'm most excited about.”

Alex said

HEAD TO HEAD

Who's who

THE SENSIBLE ONE

Hard to say — we're both sensible and 'out the gate' in our own ways.

MOST LIKELY TO SAY "FUCK IT, LET'S DO IT"

Same as above... we both could be at risk of saying this on any given day.

MORE STUBBORN

Dani, by miles.

USUALLY GETS THEIR OWN WAY

Dani.

APOLOGISES FIRST

Alex.

TAKES LONGER TO GET READY

Dani.

BIGGER SPENDER

Alex — money is to be enjoyed and we can always make more.

STARTS THE PARTY

Could be either, but Alex has the rubber arm who almost always says yes when asked.

LAST ONE STANDING

Alex.

BETTER COOK

Dani, easily. Her skills are genuinely impressive.

BETTER DRIVER

The law says Alex, evidenced by the number of infringement notices Dani gets. Dani would say she is the better driver though... weird.

OVERPACKS

Alex — always has more than he needs on the trip.

STRESSED AT AIRPORTS

Definitely Dani.

MORE DRAMATIC WHEN SICK

Tough one. When I go down sick, I go down hard. Dani may tend to over-worry about a small thing though.

MOST DANGEROUS AFTER "I'VE GOT AN IDEA..."

Dani, for sure. Always a business idea being pitched.

FINISH THE SENTENCE

And finally

I knew I'd found my person when...

she loved animals and sports as much as I do.

Life with you is...

impossible to truly predict from year to year.

No matter what, I promise we'll always...

have fun and love the dogs first.

What Dani means to me...

There is no simple way to put into words what I attach to the thoughts of us together. There isn't just a me anymore — every major thought and decision is always whether it suits us first.

After everything we've done, experienced and built together...

We always have to keep our eye on making sure Kaiser has a swim spot, Bucky has a ball to chase or a hand to bunt, and Zorro is able to tell either of them off from his den.

THE EVIDENCE

Seven years, roughly

Lakes, leaves, long drives and two very spoiled dogs.



A kiss by the lake, the evening it all felt settled



Golden hour on the terrace



One more drink before the sun went down



Autumn leaves — the reason for the whole palette

THE EVIDENCE

Continued



Dressed up, somewhere with a very good hedge



Garden party season



Vineyard afternoon



Race day, and a very good hat

THE EVIDENCE

Continued



The three of them, plus us



A very cold morning in the South Island



Lake days down south



Chasing waterfalls on holiday