Tommie -

I'm not sure how this came to be....I was hiking the Florida Trail, trying to get my own life back in order. And then, on the highest point....there you were! This stranger who walked up to a celebration Delia and I were having because we made it this far on the trail. We offered for you to join us and you did...possibly one of the best decisions BOTH of us have made!

You and I continued hiking and with each step, we got closer and yet it was forbidden in a way, because of the "elephant". When you sent me your amazing text expressing you had feelings for me..my heart leaped! And I knew I was starting to have feelings for you as well.

Step by step, mile by mile my heart was expanding, filled with so much love! And, as my own heart flowed over I was able to feel love from you. This wasn't any "love". It was a total acceptance of each other, it wasn't based on a physical relationship and perhaps that's what made it so much more wonderful.

I knew there was much to be done and I knew that some had to be done on my own. In your loving way, you gave me the space to handle what I needed to while staying ever supportive and I'm sure it wasn't easy for you. But now, everything is about "we", about "us" - decisions we make are made together for a strong future.

I truly am the Happiest Girl in the Whole USA (possibly the world)!

And now, I wake up each morning with you on my mind and in my heart. You PCF me totally rotten and I hope to return that in some way. When we are apart, I long for your touch, for your kisses, for you. When we are together I love our touches, kisses, and each other bonded together. I love this journey we are on - we already have so many great memories....together! I look forward to an amazing future, with YOU!

I have said that hiking saved my life, but you, my love saved my heart.
Oh, how I love you!

Deb

My Dear Deb,

On my birthday this year, you gave me a card that said "I found things in the woods that I did not know I was looking for". How perfect! That quote is so PERFECT for us, that I used it in my final family newsletter this year.

After holding hands with you for the first time sitting in the water in Seven Runs in 2021 after a ten mile hike, my heart lept for joy. Holding your hand and feeling the warmth flowing between us, in spite of the cold water, filled me with so much happiness. I began to sense then you would be more than just a hiking partner. I admitted to myself that I was becoming very fond of you and eventually shared that with you.

After you camped with me at Dead River on my birthday, the following day, I wrote - I have loved before and I know what that feels like and that is what this feels like. I realized then, I was falling in love with you.

The time and miles we shared after that only confirmed it, even though it would take four more months before we had our first kiss.

How do I love thee, let me count the ways. When I look into your eyes, I see them dancing, sparkling, smiling, and mischievous. They are clothed in light, love, and laughter. When your fingers touch me, it makes me feel ... alive. Our hugs make me feel embraced, not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. To travel on the journey of life with you is more than just having a companion, it is having a kindred spirit, a soul mate, willing to share the magical, mystical, wondrous adventure we call life. I love thee in so many, many ways - I do not think they can be counted.

From the first day I met you, I felt like our meeting at the highest point was ... meant to be. As we hiked more and more miles, that feeling continued to grow.

The time, hikes, and even the snow on Flagg Mountain were ... magical. I was not only in love with you, but began to sense we were ... soul mates, kindred spirits. We seemed to have known each other for a very long time.

You shared some old photos of yourself a month or two later and it seemed like I knew you even then when those old pictures were taken. I realized the poem "The Seed" that was written when I was 20 years old was written for you!

The Seed
There was once a seed that drifted with the wind.
It had no strength, from nature itself to defend.
The seed was cast among the thorns where it all but died.
But a river changed its course and with the river the seed did ride.
The movement of the river was just too much to fight.
The seed surrendered to the river thinking the river right.
But then one day with a sky of gray, the river angered so.
And threw the seed upon the land so the seed might grow.
The seed and land, hand and hand, gave to each other life.
The seed took root and thus anchored down threw off all strife.
Still so small yet growing tall the seed did branches sprout.
And I walked along one quiet day and to me the tree did shout

It told a tale about life to me
And bade me walk by the sea.
To the sea we did soar and the shout became a roar.
I covered my ears so as not to hear
But the strength of the wind carried off my fear.

And then I touched her lips.
Felt the face with finger tips.
It was new, this world of fantasy
Where self is lost and me becomes we.
And we laid down in the sand
I felt silence through our hands.

I love you so ... very, VERY much! My life is better with you in it and my heart is happy when I am with you.

Love,

Tommie