

Sex Game

A Game of Curiosity

Marcus Blake

the RED edition

Sex Game: *A Game of Curiosity* - the RED edition

A Truesource Publishing/Starving Writers Book

Published by arrangement with the author

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~ About the Author ~

Marcus Blake was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1977. He grew up in Chicago and East Texas. His education is in History, Literature, Psychology, and Religion & Philosophy. Marcus Blake has studied at many universities throughout the United States,

but his Alma Mater is Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches Texas. This is also, where he wrote his first book, *The Music of Life*. Marcus Blake is a poet, writer, historian, radio DJ and teacher. He has taught in the public school system, served in the Army, and has been a guest speaker at Education and Literary events throughout the world. Marcus Blake is now a full time writer, teacher, radio DJ and lecturer. He makes his home in the Dallas Texas. Marcus Blake is a National Literary Awards Winner for his novels *Sex Game* and *Returning Home*.

Other Books by Marcus Blake...

The Music of Life

My Reflections

Returning Home

The Lonely Girl

*Sex Game is dedicated to the people in my
life that keep me curious everyday*

the RED edition is dedicated to my Editor Stella.

*It's always better to have someone smarter than
you who can show you the error of your ways. For
good can never survive without a good editor.*

Sex Game the RED edition

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~ From the Author ~

What's your Sex Game?

Over dinner one night with my friends as we were discussing, yet another failed relationship on my part, my married friends asked me why I thought people played such crazy games in order to find love. At the time I couldn't honestly say, but as we talked even more on the subject and decided that it seemed the games people play were really sex games. The question of the night was simplified – "What's your Sex Game?" In that moment, for me, the question became the ultimate metaphor for the games that people play on the road to finding love. And thus the adventure began in writing what I call the most interesting novel of my career. It was the book that came to be known as Sex Game and it all started in the fall of 2005.

Of course by now everybody knows the story of all the research I did for the novel – 18 months of

dating and interviewing couples, hearing the sad and tragic stories of love that other people have endured. If you don't know the full story you can always read it on the book website. At the end of it all I came back with a different perspective about what we all go through trying to find love in this fucked-up world and the most important thing I discovered was that I was not alone. We've all been in love at least once in our lives or at least cared about someone else so much that our own desires didn't even matter because we just wanted to make them happy. And we've all had our hearts broken at one time, feeling an everlasting pain that leaves us wondering if we can ever be whole again. Figuring that part out made me realize the individual stories in *Sex Game* was everybody's story.

There's not one us that can't identify with one of the stories in the book or for that matter one of the characters. That's what makes the story great and not necessarily my writing style or clever dialogue. Although, don't get me wrong, I think my style is good and my dialogue is witty, but I'm allowed to have an ego, right? Great stories should be universal and readers should be able to identify with Them, Because of this I am proud of the novel – I'm proud to have written this story. And of course who wouldn't be proud of winning a National Literary Award, which I did in 2008. It was the 2008 Sexual Tales in Fiction Award from the National Literary Foundation or what has come to be known as the S.T.I.F. Award. Yeah, the award is funny, but to be recognized is a great thing.

Now do you want to know why I wrote this book? It wasn't just to write a book with the word sex in the title so it would get noticed more. I wrote the book because I like the story and the questions

that were being asked in the story fascinated me. But I've always been fascinated by human behavior especially when human beings do the most illogical things that never make sense and I guess it's never truer than when it comes to love. What is it that William Shakespeare said about love, "love is the most beautiful of dreams, and the worst of nightmares?" If that's really true then logic can be thrown right out the door most of the time and that's when the story of love for us can get interesting.

Each of the characters in the book fascinates me even when I despise them. Probably because they're all based on real people and people that I actually know. Some of them are even related to me. And what makes all of the characters deliciously intriguing, they're all written as archetypes of the kind of people we really are. When I first wrote these characters I didn't realize what I was doing, but then it dawned on me that all of the main characters were either, the naïve, the perfectionist, the playboy, the insecure, the nerd, the tragic, the do-gooder, the romantic, the flirt, or the fool. Truth be told, that's all of us too – we each fit into one of these categories. Sometimes as a writer we don't know how truthful and brilliant we're being in our words. You know I personally when that happens it's because the words we write are not for other people, they're for ourselves and that makes the words so much better. That's also when our characters become a mirror for us.

To me that's what makes *Sex Game* such a great story and as the writer one of the most enjoyable stories I've ever written. Now as funny as it might sound, I'm not one of those writers that looks for the approval of my readers. It's great if

people like it and yes I hope that most people do, but it's enjoyable when people hate you and your book – so much so that they try to censor and ban the book. To this day I still can't figure out why religious organizations think that it's so controversial as to try and get it banned from book stores and libraries. Then again I guess organizations like AFA or the Christian Coalition or even the Censor the Book organization have to have something to complain about. And I'm glad they picked me to complain about – it was the best marketing I ever got when it came out in 2007. It is also rewarding to know your book is named one of the most censored and banned books three years in a row since 2007 even though their complaints of eroticism, promoting homosexuality, and godlessness in the book are unfounded.

After writing it I did figure out what my sex game is and I hope readers can figure out theirs. More importantly I figured out what not to do in order to make a relationship successful and that has served me well so far. The most important lesson was honesty – being able to be honest with who I really am and what I wanted in a relationship. That's another thing I found out that people could take away from the story. I know that not everybody will think of Sex Game as a great story like I do, but I'm the writer, I'm supposed to think that. But you know, if we can take away some heartfelt and important lesson from a story like this then just maybe it has the mark of a great story...well, hopefully it does.

So here I am a few years later after the book was first written and it has been a wild ride so far. It's made me famous, but that's only useful if it sells a few more books. The story is still just as powerful

and enjoyable to me years later. I am still proud of it and if certain narrow-minded religious groups want to censor it then go right ahead. The world would be an imperfect place if we didn't have imbeciles and fools in it who believe in censorship. And it is because of them that my publishing firm presents the RED edition of Sex Game. All in all I still believe in the words I wrote to this day that love is just a sex game and the game in life we play is the game of curiosity. The characters in this story best display that and just in case you're wondering about the stories in this book, yes they really happened to a degree. Some things in life are too insane and ridiculous to be untrue. That's just one more part of the game of curiosity in life.

And now that the RED edition is here I hope you enjoy the story. You just might see a part of yourself in it like I did. You just might learn something about love or at least be entertained by the sad sordid tragedies some of us endure when it comes to love. That's just one more part of the Sex Game and a part of that question we all ask ourselves at some point –“What's Your Sex Game?”

~ *Marcus Blake*



"Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle, love is a war; love is a growing up."

"Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within."

~ James Baldwin

1

The Beginning

Love, what do we really know about it? Is there anybody who has a clear-cut answer about what love truly is? Can anybody really break it down and define all of its ironies and complexities? Honestly, I don't think anybody has a real answer especially an old Spanish man like me that's been married for over forty years and to the same woman. I have to point out that I have been married to the same woman because it's a rarity that people stay married to one person for a long period of time. It also brings into question whether people have any idea of what love really is or what it takes to make it work.

Allow me to introduce myself since I am the one telling this sad but truthful story, my name is Trinidad and I own a bar called The Matador in downtown Chicago. It's not too far from the

University of Chicago so I get a mixture of young patrons and working class stiff from the surrounding neighborhoods that need a place with good beer and whiskey to blow off a little steam.

I meet all kinds of people and hear all kinds of stories. Most of the stories I hear are about important tragedies such as death, being swindled out of fortunes, and the ever so popular love and heartache. There are never a shortage of stories of how someone fell in love and then had their heart broken, but what I find pretty much every time is someone who was never really in love to begin with and if they were they didn't know how to fight for it.

Now don't get me wrong if there weren't people with these kinds of stories then I wouldn't have people sitting at my bar whining about their lives and drinking my alcohol therefore putting money in my pocket. Happiness around here doesn't pay the bills, but I never get to tell a story where everything worked out for the best in the end. I certainly never had any happy stories until this one that I can pass on to people who might need to hear them. However, just when you think there is never anything good you can tell people especially in the form of a great story one comes along for you to pass on.

There are a lot of regulars that come in and out of The Matador, some of which have been coming here since they were in college and some of them are friends of mine. There is one particular story of some of my young friends that I finally get to tell and its one of those interesting, joyful stories, which are far and few. The story is sappy, romantic, tragic, crazy, and comical, but important because if nothing else searching for true love shouldn't be as hard as the characters of this story made it.

This story is universal because we have all lived it to some degree and we can all take a lesson from it. I know that I really can't give great advice when it comes to love compared to this story. Like I said before I've been married to the same woman for a very long time and I don't have much to go on. I could have cheated on her and had a great tale about the dark side of experience, but I'm married to a very feisty woman who would kill me in my sleep for committing that mortal sin and then cut my balls off just to be sure I was punished properly. Maybe Oscar Wilde was right, experience is the one thing you can't get for nothing. The other truth is I do love her, what can I say.

The hard truth is, there is only one thing I know about love and it's something that I learned from the story of my young friends, love is just a sex game. Love is a sex game where we try to score at each other's expense and the rules we play by are worse than politics. It's a game where we most often mistake our sexual excursions for intimacy and blend our raw animal desires for true loving passion. You can look at it another way too, it's a game of curiosity where the players are filled with such duality that we never know who they truly are. The players are just nameless faces waiting until they meet their tragic end within the realm of the broken hearted.

We play the game time and time again and when we're bored, we change partners or if we don't like the rules, we change partners even though the rules are there to help us a long. The curiosity of the sex game is what keeps us playing and even though sometimes it resembles something like a cat; it's a drug that we just have to have no matter what the cost.

If we're lucky though, the sex game with all of its curiosity is one where we can find that permanent partner that keeps us playing till the end of our days while making life interesting and humbling all at the same time. Although something like that doesn't come along very often. The story I get to tell you is about playing that game of curiosity and doing the dance for the battle of our souls. It's a game we shouldn't have to lose, but losing is often done on our own accord. Although I am only a spectator the players are my friends Jack, Sarah, Richard, Paula, Mike, Nicole, Jen, Jarrod, Debbie, and the one I don't like, an asshole named Sam. Every great story has to have one. To me this is a great story and it's their story.



2

Jack and Sara

The Chicago north side apartment echoed with the sounds of packing. Luggage was being thrown around like nothing mattered. As Sara threw her cloths into her suitcases it added another layer to the stifling tension that her and Jack had created between them. Jack, her husband of ten years just stood there in the doorway of their bedroom drinking coffee and not braving the horrid sea of animosity Sara had for him now. Finally, he decided to say something and appeal to her rationale as if there really was any among the anger Sara had for the whole situation.

“Come on you don’t actually have to pack and leave for good,” Jack said.

Sara gave him a dirty look and replied back to him. “You really don’t get it do you, I mean there is no getting through to you.”

“What are talking about?”

“I told you last night that if we couldn’t talk to each and be honest about our marriage I was leaving and this marriage would be over.”

“I heard what you said last night and I was honest with you.”

“No you decided to crack jokes and let your sarcasm do the talking even when I asked you not to.”

“You asked me if we had a chance at making it what percent it would be and I answered your question.”

“You said ten percent.”

“Yeah, my honest answer it ten percent; we have a ten percent chance of making this work.”

“If that’s true then we have a ninety percent chance of not making it, so what the hell is the point.” Sara said to Jack in an angry tone as she pushed Jack out of the way so she could get things out of the bathroom.

Jack shook his head at her and said. “No, that’s not what it means. You’re looking at this all wrong. You have to take ten percent off for every year of marriage so in actuality ten percent is really like a hundred percent. So we really have a hundred percent of working out.”

Sara paused for a moment with a surprised look on her face. Then she said to Jack. “That’s the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard, it doesn’t even make sense.”

“Sure it does, it’s all about semantics and different parts of a marriage have to be measured differently because once you get past the first few years which are the most turbulent then it gets easier and you can start reducing the percent level

of success or failure.” Jack said to Sara in his confident tone.

“You see now you’re just making that up. There is no such thing as different degrees in marriage; it’s all the same whether you’re married 1 year, 10 years, or 40 years.”

“No it isn’t. There are semantics to how this really works because if you can make it ten years in marriage then the hard part is over. It’s all downhill from there.”

Sara looked him with her very serious, angry look, it was the look that let people around her know that the gates of hell were about to be opened and her fury would be let out. She said to Jack. “You know where you can put your semantics...”

Jack cut her off before she could finish her sentence and replied. “Hey there missy, there’s no need to get nasty.”

Sara picked up her cup of coffee and threw it at Jack. She hated when he called her missy even when he was joking around. It wasn’t because of the sexist overtone as one might think, as it turned out Jack had an ex girlfriend named missy and she was the one before Sara came into his life. Calling her missy was not the way to appeal to Sara’s compassion or rationale; in fact, it was the biggest no, no of them all when it came to Sara even more so than calling her a bitch, a whore, or a cunt. Jack knew this, but sometimes he would do it just make her mad. It was his way of holding his own in the marriage, not necessarily a happy one, and that was part of the reason why.

Jack had ducked in time before the coffee cup hit him in the head. Sara had a great arm, she had played college softball and even though she had not played for ten years she was just as good now as

she was then. Jack had always feared that he would make her so mad that one day just like an outfielder trying to get the runner out at home she would nail him with something from across the room. He never stopped testing that theory, no matter how stupid comment was, Yet it was another reason their marriage might not be as good as it should have been after ten years.

They didn't say anything to each other after Sara threw her coffee cup at Jack. There was nothing to say, their marriage had always been rocky at best and this particular morning was the straw that broke the camel's back. All Sara did was finish packing and walk out the door. Jack didn't do anything to try and stop her, he didn't know how. She had left before when she was angry, but it had always been for a day so she could clear her head and calm down. She had never left with her belongings as if she was moving away. This time however, she was finally calling it quits; as far as she was concerned the marriage was over.

Jack stood at their living room that over looked the streets below and watched her load her suitcases into a taxi then watched ad it drove away. He didn't know what say to her and what he could have done to stop her this time. Whether it was out of pride or stubbornness, or he just plain didn't know how Jack didn't ever try to stop Sara. All he could do was stand at the window watching the L-train go roaring by with the attitude of shock and surprise.

After he stood at the window for about twenty minutes watching the streets below hoping that she would come back he finally gave up on that notion. He did what he always did when he needed to talk and get it all in the open. He called his

brother. It was 7am and even though he knew that his brother would still be in bed because his job as a journalist kept him working late into the night Jack called him anyway.

The phone let out a series of annoying rings at Richard's place. It took him a few moments to collect his thoughts as his cell phone rang, but finally he leaned over to his nightstand and looked at the caller ID to see who was calling. He saw that it was his brother Jack so he picked up the phone and answered. "What could you possibly want at 7am that you had to wake me up?"

Jack let out a laugh and said to his brother. "You know normal people are usually up at 7am getting ready for work, not lounging around in bed."

"Normal people have 9 to 5 jobs; mine keeps me working very late to which I did not get to bed until a few hours ago."

"What was her name that kept you up that late?"

"I wish I was that lucky."

"Get up and get dressed, I need to talk to you."

"Can't you talk to me later when there is a happy hour somewhere?"

"Its important, it's about Sara."

"Look I love you, Bro, but its way too early to listen to you complain about you wife, that's for when I'm not sober."

"She left me this morning and she actually packed her bag so I know she's not coming back."

"Oh, so its one of those conversations?"

"Yeah it's going to be ones of those conversations."

"Alright, I'll get dressed and meet you at the diner, but you're buying me breakfast."

“Fine, but I might actually need your help this time.”

With that said, Jack hung up the phone and left. Richard slowly got himself out of bed desperately trying to find where he put his pants with his wallet and keys still in them. Getting phone calls like that was not unusual, his family was very big on talking out their feelings and the best people to do that with was always family. Although sometimes it was not that fun, it was family and no matter what you had to be there for them even through the stupid conversations. Sometimes you just have to talk out your love problems in order to make sense out of everything.

The diner they usually met at was a few streets over where from where both Jack and Richard lived. It was in walking distance, but was one of those places that was always more convenient by way of the L-train. Since it was early in the morning and people would be on their way to work Jack and Richard both walked to the diner that morning. For Richard it was not that great of walk, but walking is not that fun with a hangover and his body let him know about it. When Richard finally arrived at the diner, he found his brother Jack sitting in the corner with a cup a coffee.

Richard walked up to his brother sat down at the table and replied. “It’s not nice to make someone walk this far with a hangover.”

Jack gave him a sarcastic look and said. “You shouldn’t party like that anymore; you’re getting too old for it. We can’t drink like we’re nineteen again.”

“You mean like how you got through law school.”

“You see God will just keep punishing you today for making comments like that especially when I’m all broken hearted and I need someone to console me.”

“Yeah, you look it, by the way why do you always call me to talk this early in the morning. We have a sister you can call and you know she’ll be honest with you.”

“True, but every time I call Jen, her boyfriend Sam answers and I get to hear him say in his dumbass redneck voice,” Jack did the impersonation, “damn it who the fuck is calling, is there no decency.”

They both started laughing because Jack did an almost perfect impersonation of Sam who did talk like a redneck and talking with him caused your IQ to be lowered. Finally, Richard continued with the conversation.

“So she really left you this morning, do you think it’s for good?”

Jack sighed for a moment and replied to his brother. “I think so, she did pack her bags and you don’t pack that much stuff just to leave for a few days.”

“Well she’s left before and sometimes she just stayed a night with one of her friends. She’s even stayed without sister a few times because she did not want to be in the same house with you. What makes you think that this time will be any different?”

“She said she was leaving the marriage if we couldn’t talk or be honest with each other.”

“Did you guys talk about it, were you honest with her?”

“Of course we talked about it and yes I was honest with her.”

“What did she ask you? I know she asked you something and you screwed up the answer didn’t you?”

“No, she asked me last night what chance I thought we had of making it and I answered her honestly.”

Richard gave his brother a disgruntled look and started shaking his head no. He then replied to Jack. “I can’t believe it; you gave her the semantic argument about your marriage.”

“So what if I did, I wasn’t wrong. She asked what percent we had and I said ten percent and then explained the different degrees of marriage based on the years you’ve been married.”

“Look I know that with that kind of logic you are not wrong, but women don’t see it that way therefore you can’t use the semantic argument with them about your marriage.”

“I explained how it works to her so she would understand, she’s a smart woman she should see it how it works.”

“Jack you are the dumbest smart person I know. Semantics get thrown right out the door with women. They don’t mean anything because they don’t think in logical terms like we do.”

“How come you know so much about women and marriage when you’ve never been married?”

“Hey, I’m not stupid. Besides, at least I’ve never gotten married and then screwed it up. There is only one person at this table that’s done that.”

Jack paused for a moment and gave his brother a dirty look. He knew he was right, but you never concede that point within sibling rivalry. Finally, he said to Richard. “I may not have screwed it up yet; she could calm down today and come home.”

“Do you really think that?” Richard asked his brother sarcastically. “I mean you might even get that three-way you’ve always wanted, but do you think it’s really going to happen?”

“You know I wanted to talk to you so I could feel better about myself since I had a beautiful woman that loved me and you’re still searching for the right one out of all the crazy women you date. You’re my brother aren’t you supposed to make me feel better?”

“It’s too early for whisky so I can’t do that and just for your information I’ve never been credited with screwing up a relationship because I couldn’t be honest with someone. Besides it’s never your fault when the women you date are like a walking pharmacy filled with anti-psychotic drugs... its just bad karma.

“Yeah I do think God’s punishing you for something.”

Richard gave a sarcastic smile to Jack while the waitress came over to take their breakfast order. After a refill on their coffee, they continued their conversation. Jack spoke up and said. “I can’t believe this is really happening, I never thought it would end especially when getting over what happened five years ago.”

“You mean when you guys cheated on each other. If a marriage was going to end over something then infidelity would be it, but you did get through it so maybe you can get through this.”

“True, but maybe we never really did. Maybe she still hates me and maybe I don’t really want to be married anymore. Maybe we never called it quits because we didn’t want to find a new place to live because being with each other was comfortable.”

Richard gave Jack a very serious look and then asked him. "Be honest, do you really want to be married to Sara anymore because maybe you're right, you only stay with her because you're comfortable."

Jack thought for a moment and replied. "I don't know. I don't mind that she's there, but I don't mind when she's not there."

"Congratulations, you just described mom and dad so it's not really an answer. Let me ask you this, when she's gone do you miss her?"

Jack thought again and he answered. "Sometimes I do, but not like I use to then again there are moments when I need her to be there even if it's just being in the same room."

Richard laughed and replied back. "Then my friend you're royally screwed. If you can't figure out what you really want then you will never how to get it."

"I can't believe I'm getting wisdom from a man who still likes to sleep around with young grad students and whose last date ended with her leading police in a high speed chase when they tried to pull her over for speeding."

"Hey I'm not saying that my love life isn't adventurous, but I also know what I am looking for when it comes to having a serious relationship. Most of the time I just fool around to keep from being bored."

"I have to admit my relationship problems are not that bad compared to yours. The thing is though, I usually have the answer and I don't have it now, I honestly don't know what to do."

Richard looked at his brother with regret and said to him. "I can't tell you what to do except, you have to figure out if you really want to be married to

her anymore. If you have a hard time trying to figure it out treat it like a court case. Break it down, go back to the beginning, and piece everything together so you can figure it out. That's how you think anyway."

Jack thought for moment and gave out a small laugh. Then he replied. "I may need a lot of legal pads for this one."

"Maybe, but you're being forced to go back and figure out how you really got here so you can find out what you really want. That's going to be the hard part."

With that said Richard ate his breakfast in a hurry and then left so he could get to work. Jack did the same. He wanted to get home early that night because he had a lot to think about; he had many things to remember.

Jack got home early that day and he went about his usual business, he didn't even wait around for Sara to come home. He knew that she probably wouldn't be coming home so for the first time in ten years he made dinner for one and prepared to be alone. Jack didn't know what to do because it seemed that he was starting to get on with his life by himself. When Sara would leave for a night, he would just grab take out so he wouldn't have to make a dinner for just one person. This time it was different, it was the end of his marriage and the beginning of how to live again on his own.

After dinner, he sat down with a nice glass of brandy and started to think back before he met Sara, trying to get a feel for what life was like before her and then trying to remember how they met. Jack met Sara in college when they were both students at the University of Chicago. It was in there sophomore year as they both turned twenty years of

age finally entering into true adult years and breaking the chains of their teens. Jack was pre-law and at the time, Sara was pre-med but she figured out early in her sophomore year that she was not cut out for medicine and that the site of blood made her queasy.

Jack on the other hand was well suited for the law because his thought process was based on a level of degrees and theory. For Jack it was a good thing and bad thing, good for the law and the courtroom, but bad in dealing with people. Sometime towards the end of the winter semester, Jack and Sara met each other in the library by accident as they tried to check out the same book. It just so happened that they both had the same history class and needed the same book for a research paper. They both argued over who was going to check out the book until they were kicked out of the library for being too loud. Also both of them didn't get to check out the book, at least that's how Jack remembered it.

Somewhere in between all the arguing Jack and Sara found they both had something in common; they both liked to argue and they had to be right all the time. So when it came time to finish the research for their papers they helped each other out by doing the research together. It was more of a help for Sara since she was not a true history person and not very good at writing historical papers. Jack was a history enthusiast; he loved history and loved to talk about it. He would talk about it with anybody he could even if they didn't want to talk History with him. Writing long winded boring papers as Sara used call to call them just came natural for Jack and he could even get a novas to write a great paper.

That's what he did for Sara the first time they ever spent any time together.

Despite their constant arguing there was something there and they began to challenge each other, as lovers should do to keep things alive. From that time on, they spent most of their free time together, dating and then eventually becoming serious. A few months turned into a year for them and a year turned into three until they graduated college. Jack graduated with a general studies degree on his way to Law School at the University of Chicago and Sara with a marketing degree, she found she was a better salesmen than somebody who should be in medicine.

By the time college had ended they had done all the usual things a couple does, they had met each other's family, they had spent holidays together, and they even started living together their last year making each other truly serious about their future together. So as it happened after graduation Jack had gotten his acceptance to law school at the University of Chicago and Sarah started working on her MBA they were out one night having dinner at one of their favorite places to eat and they started to talk about the future. They both knew that they would have to talk about it eventually and make their plans with or without each other.

Jack was the one to bring it up first; Sara wanted to, but she was smart enough to know that Jack wasn't the type to be rushed in life. He like to just go along and let life happen, it would be a good thing and a bad thing for him. As they were eating dinner Jack started the conversation He didn't exactly know what he would say, but he started talking about it with Sara anyway.

“So do you have any big plans for the rest of your life besides finishing your education?” Jack asked Sara with a peculiar look on his face.

“Are you asking me what I have planned in my career or my personal life?”

“I guess I’m referring to your personal life, I mean do you see yourself married someday.”

“Only since I was seven years old playing house with my sisters. Why are you asking?”

“Well its something we’ve never talked about and you always say we should find new things to talk about.”

Sara started laughing; she was a little excited that Jack had finally gotten around to talking about marriage. She knew that Jack was not the big romantic type; he was more like the small gestures once in a while type of guy. This kind of conversation was hard for Jack so it took him a little bit longer to get to the point even if it was time to have it since they had been dating for three years now.

Sara finally replied back to Jack. “If there’s something on your mind that you want to talk about then come out and say it. We’ve been with each other for too long to keep side-stepping the issue and we don’t have to fake it.”

“Sara do you love me. I mean really love me?”

“Yes I do, but you have your moments that really make me what to forget about you. Do you love me?”

Jack paused for a moment as if he was going to give her devastating news. Sara looked at him with a worried look thinking that he was going to break up with her and that he was a real bastard for doing it in a public place so she wouldn’t make a scene. She said to herself in that she was not going

to give him that courtesy if he really broke up with her in the restaurant. Finally, he surprised her, not with a ring because he wasn't the type to buy one with the chance of her saying no.

Jack looked at her with a serious look and said. "Sara I do love you... do you want to get married?"

"She looked with a sarcastic look and replied. "You're not even going to get down on one knee."

He had a surprised look on his face when she said that and then he realized that he was not being very romantic. He got up from his seat and got down on one knee asking her again. "Do you want to get married?"

Sara laughed and said as she leaned to whisper in his ear. "I was only kidding about the knee thing. You know you don't have to be that traditional with me, but it nice of you to make the effort, that's what really counts."

Jack got off his knee and sat back down then looked at her with an impatient look waiting to hear an answer. After a brief a pause he finally asked Sara. "Well do you have answer?"

"No, but I have a question, do you really want to get married to me or are you doing this because you think you have to ask because it's the next step and you're afraid of losing me."

"I don't want to lose you and yes I figured this was the next step so I thought I would ask and she what you'd said."

"Do you want to keep dating me or do you really want to be married because if you don't then we don't have to."

"I love you Sara and I don't want to be with anybody else. I can't see myself with anybody else for the rest of my life."

“I’m flattered and I don’t want to be with anybody else; I’ve known that for the last three years, but you still haven’t answered my question, do you really want to be married?”

“Well you never answered my question about being married.”

“You pretty much know what my answer will be after I just said I don’t want to be with anybody else, but can you answer the question?”

Jack just looked at her speechless because he knew that he was avoiding the real question. Sara was calling him on it and she was one of the few people that could actually call him out when he was avoiding a question or arguing over semantics. This was one of the things that he loved about her and it was hard to get mad at her. Sometimes he would force her to get angry so he could easily beat her in an argument and continue not answering the real question.

After a few moments of not talking Sara suggested something daring to help the both of them be completely honest in answering the question. She said to Jack. “Why don’t we do this, let’s each take a cocktail napkin sign out names to them with our answer of yes or no.”

Jack agreed and they each grabbed a cocktail napkin that was sitting off to the side of their table and put their answers on them above their signature. They didn’t show each other for a moment and finally Sara said. “Okay, I’ll show you mine if you show me yours.”

“Okay,” said Jack.

“The both held up their napkins to each other and they both had a look of joy as they looked at the other’s napkin. Both cocktail napkins said yes and then Sara suggested that they exchange

napkins and keep the other's answer as a reminder of what their answers were. They leaned across the table and kissed.

Neither of them were that excited about a big wedding and it wasn't like they didn't think of each other as being married anyway. Originally, they planned a small ceremony, but before everything was set in stone one afternoon they just went to city hall, found a judge and got married. Later their families did throw them a big party giving them lots of gifts and money so they both could finish school. That's what Jack and Sara did, they were married on a whim, struggled to finish law school and an MBA working small jobs just to make it. Overall, it was the best years of their marriage Jack recalled. It was these thoughts that he held close for the next few days; he honestly didn't know what to completely feel when it came to Sara leaving. All he did know was that he missed her.

Jack and Sara did not speak to each other for about ten days. They didn't even try to contact each other. Jack knew that she would call when she had time to think and her anger wasn't in control of her thoughts. Finally, she did call and asked to meet him so they could discuss what to do next. It was a Thursday night and they met at familiar place, The Matador, a place that they had been going to since college. It had a lot of memories for them, as Sara pointed out they needed familiarity in order to get through the conversations they were about to have.

They met and found a booth in the back that was out of the way from people and their usual drunken conversations. The cocktail waitress brought them a couple of drinks as they made small talk about work to avoid the real subject. Finally, Jack asked her where she was staying. She

responded that she was staying at her sister's place. Before he could ask any more questions, she stopped him so she could talk and be really honest as she called it.

Sara said to Jack. "I need you to be quiet for a moment and let me talk so I could get this out. No interruptions."

"Okay, what do you need to say." Jack replied in a somber tone.

"I've had time to think and I don't want to keep doing this anymore because it seems like we keep going round and round doing the same dance until nothing gets solved."

"What do you want to do, get a divorce?" Jack asked her in a saddened tone.

"Yes, I do. I think it's for the best and we both know that we can't do counseling at this point. We're never going to do it 100%."

"I can do counseling if that's what you really want."

"Know you can't and I can't either. If we couldn't do it five years ago when we really should have done it then we're certainly not going to do it now. If we are going to get past this then we need a clean break."

"Then let's separate for little while or go on a trip strapping ourselves in chair forcing ourselves deal with our problems until their solved."

"An old law school trick where your forced to figure out a problem before you can leave is not going to work. All we'll do is get mad at each other and then end up doing something that we'll both regret."

"Okay, I don't want to do anything you don't want to do. If a divorce is what you really want then

we will do it. I guess we should talk about the apartment and our belongings.”

Sara smiled at him, she smiled at the practical lawyer in him for he was always ready to get down to business and never waste time. It was something that was not in his nature. It was also part of what made her fall in love with him. She paused and smiled then took one of his hands to let him know that it would be okay.

Sara replied Jack. “I think we should make this easy. I don’t want the apartment so you can have it. I don’t care about the furniture because I can get more. Our savings we can split down the middle. You have your retirement, your income, your car, and I have mine. We just change all of our insurance and we go our separate ways.”

Jack smiled at her and said. “Then I will file for divorce tomorrow and we’ll do it under irreconcilable differences.”

“That’s good and we don’t have to have a messy fight for anything because to be honest I’m okay with walking away completely just to avoid a messy fight.”

That was it, no argument, no petitioning for anything, no protests and no solemn remarks. Jack and Sara were done just like that. They finished their drinks engaged in some more small talk even laughing a little bit. It was the most fun they had had in long time and one would have never known that they were getting a divorce. After a while Sara left leaving Jack there to drink alone. While he was there, he had one drink after another running up a pretty lengthy bar tab.

Two hours after Sara left and he was really drunk he started to get loud and get belligerent spouting off all sorts of nuances about the law for

those that would listen even to some that would not. He was in no shape to drive home and definitely in no shape to get home on his own so I did what he always did when one of the Anderson kids got carried away. His brother was called. I actually had his and Jack's number as an emergency number just in case since they were regulars.

As Jack was half way passed out in his booth dead drunk Richard showed up to collect his brother. He entered the bar and said. "I guess my brother was his usual charming self tonight."

I replied. "You can say that, He was here with Sara and after she left that's when he got really drunk."

"That'll definitely do it."

"Tonight he decided teach the other patrons about the law and philosophy."

"Wow he must be really drunk, here's my card to take care of his bill."

I grabbed the credit card and took care of the bill while smiling in amusement at Richard's comments. Richard was the funny one and spared no expense to throw out sarcasm. Richard walked over to the booth that contained his drunk brother and he replied. "Well, I see you're having a fun night."

"Hey man, why didn't you tell me that you were coming by, I would have gotten you a drink before you arrived or six or seven drinks."

"You mean so I can catch up with you. You're a thoughtful brother. I don't know what I would do without you?"

"I'm glad you got here because I've been talking with all these great people and they've really been listening."

“Jack have you been teaching the law while you’ve been drinking; I thought we had talked about that. You know you’re not supposed to be doing that because you start acting like a bigger than normal jerk.”

“I’m sorry...I’m sorry man, but I love you brother.”

“I know you do.”

Jack paused for a moment and leaned back in the booth while getting a little emotional. He was trying to hide the tears he was starting to let out. Richard asked his brother. “Hey, what’s wrong, why are you starting to cry?”

“It’s over...Sara told me tonight that she wanted a divorce.”

“You kind of knew that it was coming after she left this time. It’s been coming for a long time now, right.”

“She didn’t even want to work it out; she just wanted to give up on us.”

“I think she’s figured out that if you two are going to have any kind of chance of being happy you’re going have to make a clean break and maybe it’s time that you do. Maybe it’s time that you just want different things now in your life and what you thought you once had isn’t going to last a life time. It happens Jack... it’s a part of life.”

“I know, I just never thought it would happen to me.”

“Who really expects it to happen to them?”

Jack shrugged his shoulders and said. “I’ve never been dumped before; I always did the dumping so it’s a little different for me now.”

“So what it’s really about is you being dumped by Sara, Would it have made it easier if you asked her for the divorce?”

“I don’t know, maybe not.”

“That’s the one thing you’ve said tonight that’s made sense.”

“I just can’t believe it’s finally over. Now I’ve got to learn to do things for myself again.”

“You’ll be alright; it will come back to you.”

“What if it doesn’t?”

“Shit man, you’re a lawyer with a 180 IQ, I think you can learn it again.”

“Maybe all I can do is struggle through life never doing anything for myself until eventually I die because I couldn’t do anything for myself.”

Richard got up and helped Jack to his feet so he could get him home. He then replied to his brother. “Look brother let’s just get you home, you’re drunken philosophy is not impressing me.”

“I don’t want to go home yet, I need to talk to Sara.”

“No, that’s the one thing you definitely don’t need to do. Let me get you home and into bed. We’ll play the Ben Folds Five song-A Song for the Dumped, you can call Sara a bitch, and then you’ll be alright in the morning.”

“You’re a good brother, why are you doing this for me anyway.”

“Someday I might wanted for murder and I’m going to need a good lawyer to help me out for free and when that day comes you don’t get to ask any questions of why. Besides you are my brother who else would be doing this for you.”

Richard helped Jack out of the bar, waved to me and I couldn’t help but laugh. He got Jack home and dropped him in his bed taking his shoes off so he could sleep somewhat comfortable even though he would be sleeping in his whiskey-scented cloths. Richard set the coffee maker on “timer” matching

the alarm clock in the bedroom. He knew that in the morning Jack was really going to need it.



Over the next week or so, maybe it was more like two or three weeks Jack thought a lot more about the past. He had filed for divorce just as he said and everything went according to plan in dividing everything with Sara. They didn't fight and they were fairly nice to each other as they moved her out of the apartment while also dividing their assets with one another. The conversations they had while doing all of that were the best conversations they had, had in years, which was pretty pathetic considering they were getting a divorce.

Jack's thoughts about the past were mainly about him and Sara, everything from when they were first married to how they got to this point in their lives. He didn't spend much time working at the office; he just stared most of the time at the pictures in his office. He didn't want to take the pictures of Sara down yet, for some reason it just felt wrong. All he could do was spend most of his time looking at the pictures on the wall and remembering.

When Jack and Sara were first married, everything seemed perfect Jack recalled. It was as if they had first met each other and they were in that new exciting relationship where all they did was just be around each other even if they were not having sex. Jack and Sara had heard about couples that

were together for a long time where everything was great when they were dating, but as soon as they got married it all changed and the marriage didn't last a full year. For Jack and Sara it was not that way. Marriage actually made their relationship stronger as funny as it might sound.

They didn't have much money or a lot of things back then, no big screen TVs or really nice furniture, they didn't even have internet access or cable TV because they couldn't afford it. No matter what they made it and their everyday lives were great, just like that *leave it to beaver* bullshit that everybody believes is a façade. However for Jack and Sara it was true because all they had was each other and it was enough.

Their lives were busy with grad school and law school. For Jack it was very time consuming and with all the studying Jack's days were like a twenty hour work days, but no matter what he always made time for Sara even if it was three in the morning when they both had to be up at five. When they were not wrapped up in school activities they would have their fun. Their fun was what Jack and Sara called *No Money Fun*. Whatever they did had to cost nothing, but still be entertaining.

They would do things like walk around the heart of Chicago; places like State and Clark and Lake Michigan watching the people in a hurry with their everyday lives while they would take it slow trying not to grow up too fast. For concerts they would sit on the hill tops of Grant Park and listen to the Chicago Symphony play during the summer time. Sometimes for meals all they would have is a pop and a traditional Chicago Hot dog with everything on it from one of the many local street vendors. In addition, if they were really big spenders

they would hop a bus to Milwaukee and get whatever baseball tickets were left over only a dollar in cost for the Cubs and Brewers. It wasn't Wrigley Field, but it was like vacation that only cost twenty dollars.

For some odd reason, Jack thought, it was the best times of their lives before careers and routine got in the way; before some sense of normal working lives got in the way. For the first two years of marriage despite the long hours of school and studying they were there for each other and never let a thing like neglect get in the way. They never let what was going on in their lives interrupt what was going on in their relationship. In fact for those first two years the only thing they had to fight was from having too much fun as crazy as it might sound. Boredom never got in the way and going through the motions was nonexistent.

Finally Jack and Sara graduated with their post grad degrees and took full time jobs, her at a PR firm in downtown Chicago and Jack at a small law firm in downtown Chicago not too far from where they lived now. That's when it started, all the things that never got in the way before were suddenly apart of their everyday lives and routine was a permanent visitor. They both started working long hours in their jobs trying to move up in their careers and the hard work paid off. Both of them would be promoted and start making lots of money. However, with all their successes Jack and Sara spent less and less time together and talked even less than those first two years.

Their hours in the day would be different so they didn't see each other much except when they woke up together and shared the newspaper over morning coffee. Even then they didn't really talk, just got

ready for another workday. Since they started having different hours eating dinner together became harder and harder. The first few years after they had started their careers the only time they really spent any significant time together was during holidays. Of course there was a week's vacation that they took during that five-year period, but one week's vacation in five years never really help anybody. For Jack and Sara all it became was a reminder that they were still married to one another.

After being married for five years they had finally become that typical couple; too consumed with careers and making money that they worked more than being in a marriage. They made their money, they became successful, and they even tried to fulfill some missing hole they had been created with buying each other expensive things. Each of them got a new car every year, they had that big screen TV, she has lots of expensive Jewelry, and he had his many toys that guys like to buy. They had everything but that one perfect moment that reminded each of them why they loved each other, why they would fight for each other. They never had any great conversation filled with laughter anymore. It seemed that the only good conversations they could have were with heated words and a disdainful tone.

So finally it happened, the breaking point, the moment that makes it all come crashing down. Jack and Sara had grown apart and they spent more time being mad at each other, although both of them couldn't remember why anymore. Jack and Sara had not seen each other very much with the hours they were working and when they did see each other all they did was fight so they decided to take a break for while. They weren't separating exactly, just

taking a break for a few weeks so they could see things more clearly. It was more like a mini vacation if you will. Sara moved out and went to live with one of her younger sisters.

They would be away from each other for a month. They wouldn't call or email and they would continue their normal lives except without each other. They did just that and by the time the month was done they had a new perspective on things, but it's what they did during that time away from each other that would forever change their lives and make them see the whole god forsaken truth about being in a relationship.

During the month apart Jack and Sara both continued to work long hours and live their normal lives, just without each other. At Jack's office, two things happened that would save and ruin his life to a certain point. The first thing was, an old friend of Sara's came to work at the law office, which meant there was nothing that could be kept a secret when it came to his actions. The second thing was, he would have an affair with somebody at the office.

It wasn't that Sara's friend Jackie was mean and deliberately told Sara everything that Jack did at work; it's that she just couldn't keep a secret and loved to gossip. The woman Jack would have an affair with was a young paralegal working there who was very pretty and loved to flirt. She was also nice to Jack, which was something that he had not had in a long time with Sara. The affair happened one night when they were working late and then people from the office went out to get a few drinks. It was innocent and Jack was not even drunk. He was lonely even though he didn't want to admit it so when she invited him back to her place he went.

They had a wild and passionate night, something else that Jack had not had in a long time.

It only happened once and Jack could remember how guilty he felt about the whole thing. As far as he was concerned he would never do it again and just forget about it, but he wasn't that lucky. Secrets like office sex almost never remain a secret and Sara had a friend working at the office. Sara did find out about it and in her moments of anger and disdain for Jack decided to take it out on a night with her girlfriends. She figured the best way to ignore the phone calls by Jack pleading for forgiveness and get past the anger was to have a wild night with her girlfriends hitting all the cool spots in Chicago with a bottle of Tequila as her co-pilot.

What Sara found out was that revenge never happens the way one thinks it does. Somehow guilt and stupidity were mixed with it. In her drunken night of fun she found a guy to go home with and ended up doing the same thing Jack did to her. Did it make her feel better, no? Does something like that ever make anybody feel better, what do you think? Of course karma had a strange sense of humor with her as well; her friend Jackie was out with them that night. Jack would find out about it, not necessarily from Jackie, although that happened as well, but the guy Sara was with turned out to be a client and we all know how guys like to talk.

One month turned into three months for the separation of Jack and Sara. Finally they met each other at The Matador, the place of good times and bad news. They met each other to talk about the future. They almost got a divorce then and there, but whatever fight they had for each other came out at the right moment. Jack could recall the

conversation he had with Sara that night while they just kept getting served drinks hoping to relax and to get all their crazy notions out into the open.

Jack asked Sara that night while sitting in a booth in the back corner of the bar. "Okay so we've both managed to hurt each other and get back at one another, where do we go from here?"

"I guess that depends on you," she replied in a serious tone.

"Do you want a divorce; If you do you'll have a fight on your hands without a leg to stand on since we're both to blame for all of this." Jack said to her.

"You know that's just like you, you always have to puff up your chest and show everybody whose man while putting the blame on someone else."

"What, I'm not trying to get into a fight with you about this. I'm just merely pointing out that if we get a divorce we can't really blame the other person since we're both at fault."

"Jack, I'm not stupid, don't treat me like I am. I never said everything was your fault."

"Okay, noted. Now what do you want to do?"

"Do you still want to be married to me?"

"Do you still want to be married to me?"

"I asked you first."

"Well as funny as it might sound... yeah I do." Jack said to Sara.

"Okay then. I still want to be married to you as well, but our lives have to change or we're going to end up here again."

"You're right I think we did what we did just to hurt each other."

"Maybe or maybe not, but we can't keep doing it the way we've been doing it. Somehow we

lost was we had those first two years and we need to it back.”

“I agree, everything seemed simpler and better back then.”

“It was. Now what do we do to get it back.”

Jack and Sara both realized that they had let their careers and everyday lives get in the way so all that they knew was routine. That night they talked about what was missing in their relationship. They made their plans to get it back and be what they really wanted to be. Sara moved back in and they took a two-week vacation something they had never done. They went to places that they had always talked about going to, but could never afford until now. It was a good thing for them and as a couple they became great again.

They did things together again and they did things as couple should do together like go to movies and go out to dinner with other couples. Some of the things they did were therapeutic couple’s activities used to strength their relationship. Sara even got Jack to take a ballroom dancing class with her and they learned how to swing, salsa, and even tango. It wasn’t really that much fun for Jack, but he was with Sara gain and that made the difference. For the next year after that everything was great and they settled back into their old selves again just like they were when they first got married. They even stayed up talking in bed and spent Sunday mornings together reading the newspaper, watching old movies, and napping with each other.

For a while everything was good again, but it wouldn’t last. Eventually they settled back into their old routines of working long hours and eating dinner alone. They didn’t fight as much, they just didn’t talk with each other and when they did have a

conversation it didn't even seem real, just the shadow of existing words. They used to talk about having kids now they didn't do that anymore and the holidays would come and go where it would be the only time they really spent any quality time together.

For a while they didn't even notice what had happened to each other. When they were in bed together they were miles and sometimes worlds away from each other. The foot between them became a lifetime away from each other compared to when they used to be in a room together yards away at opposite ends of the room a but it seemed like they were only inches from one another. So finally after another five years had gone by they had ended up where they had been once before. It had nothing to do with being in their thirties and life not being what they had expected after turning thirty. They had been in slow monotonous steps until they arrived right back to the shitty part of being married.

They were thirty-three, no kids, more money than they had every planed on making in their lifetime and their life together had become going through the motions. They never even peaked from behind the masks they had created for each other. So one night Sara finally asked Jack the question, the question about what chance he thought they had of making it. After he made a sarcastic remark she finally told him that it was no used being married if they couldn't talk to each other or just be honest with each other. The next day she packed and left for good.

Six months after that day Jack and Sara's divorce was finalized and they were officially single again. They had a nice quiet drink at The Matador to

go over the final paper work and settlements, but really just to say goodbye. They had parted on good terms even to the point that they could actually talk to each other outside of being married to one another. As Jack gave her copies of everything he asked her. "Do you have any regrets about anything?"

Sara laughed and replied. "You want to do this now, now that we are finally divorced."

"This isn't some sad and pathetic way of strolling down memory lane with you. I was just curious."

"Sure, I have some regrets like working too much. Do you?"

"I regret not taking you on that cruise you wanted to go on three years ago."

"Really, I thought you were relieved we didn't go, after all you hate the water." Sara said while laughing a little bit.

"Yeah, but you wanted to go and I should have taken you."

"You don't think that would have solved all our problems do you?"

"No, I'm not that foolish, but I should've taken you on that cruise."

Sara thought for a moment and then replied. "I really wish that we would have talked more over the last few years just like we did ten years ago. I wish you would have been more honest with me instead of being sarcastic."

"I probably won't ever be like that. Maybe as I get older I'll spend less and less talking about my feelings just like my dad."

"Maybe, but it would be a shame."

Sara looked at him with a somber look and they paused for a moment not knowing what to say

then she finally asked Jack. "Did you keep the napkin I gave you with my answer to your marriage proposal on it?"

Jack thought for moment because it had been a long time since he had thought about that. He answered. "I don't think so. I think it got lost among my things then again I may have thrown it away, why do you ask?"

"I was just curious. Well since we're done I got to go, Things to do and places to be."

"Already have a big date"

"No, I think you killed the dating scene for me, don't tell me you already have one."

"Hell no, I don't even know how to date anymore. I wouldn't know what to do. I got plans with Richard; he's got tickets for the Cubs tonight."

"Well there's nothing like beer and bratwurst to get over a divorce, I might have to see if my girlfriends want to do that."

They smiled at each other over their sarcasm. They both knew that, that kind of playful banter was going to be missed by the both of them. They hugged and told each other that they would see each other around and then Sara left. The truth was they didn't see each other for almost two years after that; it would be the most unusual of circumstances.

About two years later Jack arrived at his office early. Jackie was still working there and as strange as it might sound her and Jack had become good friends. She was still a friend to Sara and as a courtesy to the both Sara and Jack she would never tell them about each other.

Jack knew very little about what had happened to Sara since their divorce. His life was work now and he didn't even date. Sometimes he

would go out with Richard and his roommate Mike, but he never really pursued anything with a woman. Jack just assumed that Sara was going through a similar life or maybe that's just what he wanted to believe. He never knew because he never gave much thought about it. That is until he was walking past Jackie's desk one early morning and he saw a shocking object lying on her desk. He stared at it with disbelief for the longest time. It was a wedding invitation for Jackie. Sara was getting married again.