

managed to transition out of our union with such goodwill and grace. Because I recognized that we had fallen upon something incredibly valuable, my awareness made more acute by those in our inner circle who would shake their heads in dismay, to declare that they had never seen any couple let go of their marriage with as much thoughtfulness and care.

As much as I had yearned for a happy ending to my less than happy childhood, in an odd twist of fate I seemed to have stumbled upon a new *kind* of happy ending. A way to end a romantic union with dignity, goodness, and honor, and where no one was left shattered or destroyed by the experience. And, being the gourmet lemonade maker that I am, I realized that I could even make something beautiful of this. For we'd actually undergone what I eventually was able to identify as a five-step process for leaving each other, and all those impacted by our separation, whole, healthy, and complete rather than wounded, walled off, and significantly broken by the experience.

As a believer in love, and an ardent supporter of marriage and long-term committed relationships, breakups are probably one of my least favorite things. Right up there with global warming, elder abuse, and high child-poverty rates. Given my disdain for breakups and divorce, why then would I choose it as my own life path? How horrible was it between Mark and me that I would venture into the swampland of dividing hearth and home, and the dismantling of long-held hopes and dreams?

There are a million little ways that a marriage grows apart, most too mundane to mention. Yet what happened to Mark and me, in a nutshell, is that I changed. And I mean, I radically and in many ways quite unfairly, changed. It's kind of an occupational hazard—the downside of being a teacher of growth and transformation. My husband didn't cheat on me, he didn't abuse me, and he was not an alcoholic or a chronic gambler.

Yet, as the years went by, the core values by which we lived grew further and further apart. Where I am a change junkie, ever pushing the edge of my own and others' evolution in pursuit of fulfilling the potential we hold in all areas of life and love, Mark, gentle-hearted man that he is, aspires to the spiritual ideal of total acceptance and appreciation of things as they are, without the need to change anyone or anything. Where I am ever fascinated to dig into the darker recesses of our psyches to discover and purify our inner motives, he believes in minimizing the focus on flaws to simply value the goodness and beauty of all living beings. It's not like someone is right and someone is wrong here. They are both perfectly gorgeous paths to be on. And often when couples are polarized like this, they find a way to balance each other out, complementing one another and filling in the blank spots for each other in the most lovely of ways. Yet, with Mark and me, conversations about those things that mattered most and that we each held sacred in our hearts just kind of fell flat, in a way that left us little room to grow together toward a shared vision or goal, something we both admitted to needing deeply in our lives. As much as we cared for one another, it became apparent that the place where we were most aligned was in the love we shared for our daughter.

Now, if we had been born fifty years earlier, we would have easily stayed together for the sake of our child, without thinking much about it. Although yet again, if we'd been born fifty years before, we probably wouldn't have ever gotten married in the first place, as interracial marriages were illegal throughout much of America, until the Supreme Court declared otherwise in 1967. As I am Caucasian and Mark African American, we would have had to risk everything, our very lives included, to choose one another back then—further evidence of the ever-evolving nature of culture. However, this little detail aside, I,