

wanted to write this book as the sequel to my last. I did not want to be writing this book any more than you want to be reading it.

In fact, when I realized that my husband of nearly ten years and I were going to end our marriage, my prayer was a little less than pious. Lying flat on my back in the grass at a nearby park, and looking up at the vast blue sky, searching for meaning in this unwelcomed twist of events, I murmured out loud the only prayer that made sense to me at the time. "You've got to be kidding me," I said, seething. I was beyond irritated at the unseen forces of life and love that seemed hell-bent on entertaining themselves at my expense—forces that seemed determined to create unwanted mischief with my happily-ever-after ending to a rather tumultuous childhood. A happy ending that was documented so beautifully, and *publicly*, in my first book.

It was awkward, at best.

Yet, once past the shocking realization that this was indeed happening, I turned my attention to making sure it happened well. For I, like many thousands of my peers, had been the product of a nasty and terribly unconscious uncoupling when I was a young girl. So nasty, in fact, that there were two rather brutal custody fights that led to my eventual alienation from my father, at the age of ten, when he finally threw in the towel and

*You may not control
all the events that
happen to you, but
you can decide not to
be reduced by them.*

MAYA ANGELOU

surrendered his parental rights altogether due to his inability to get on at all with my infuriated mother. While I did not know a lot of things as my marriage unraveled before my eyes, the one thing I did know was this: I was *not* going to do that to our daughter.

Yet, as our separation unfurled, I discovered that I had

worried in vain. For not only was ours a very civil uncoupling, it was also deeply kind, respectful, humane, and characterized by an unexpected spirit of generosity and goodwill, with gestures of friendship and mutual support woven throughout. My former husband, Mark, and I did everything in our power to minimize the damage done to one another and, of course, to our young daughter, whose primary concern was that she not lose contact with her father, as she'd seen happen to two of her friends. United in our stand to create cohesion and well-being for our daughter during and after our transition out of the marriage, we readily reassured her she would not.

It was a far cry from the horrible breakups I'd had in the past—those months on end when I'd be unable to eat or sleep, and when I was so consumed with rage that I could barely get through the day without snapping the head off some poor, innocent stranger who was unfortunate enough to get in my way. Or the time when I was so distraught that I started smoking again after nearly a decade, and when half the hair on my head fell out from the stress of it all. Or the mother of all my bad breakups, the heart-wrenching and terribly dramatic, and traumatic, severing I'd had from my high school boyfriend, Frank, which held me captive with an unresolved and prolonged grief that haunted me for years. For nearly two decades he continued to show up in my dreams, frequently shaking me out of a restless sleep to relive the horrible realization that he was indeed gone forever, and was living happily ever after with his intimidatingly beautiful wife and their three perfect children thousands of miles away from me.

I, like you, am well acquainted with the shadow side of love. Which is why, once I had dealt with my own shock and pain, I immediately began to look back to see if I could decipher the process of the rather unique way in which Mark and I had