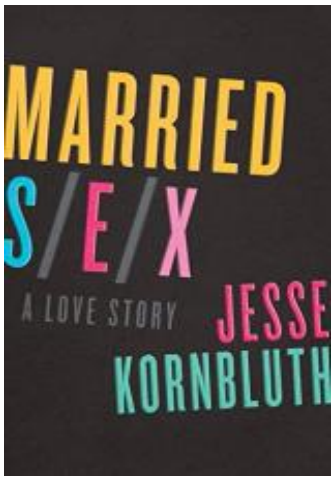
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Married Sex: A Love Story

by Jesse Kornbluth



About the Book

When a husband convinces his wife to join him in a tryst with another woman, there are unintended consequences in this sharply observed erotic tale about the challenges of modern marriage.

As a divorce lawyer for Manhattan?s elite, David Greenfield is privy to the intimate, dirty details of failed marriages. He knows he?s lucky to be married to Blair --- a Barnard dean and the mother of their college-age daughter, she is a woman he loves more today than he did when they tied the knot.

Then seductive photographer Jean Coin asks David to be her lover for six weeks, until she leaves for Timbuktu. Tempted, David reasons that ?it?s not cheating if your wife?s there.? A one-night threesome would relieve the pressure of monogamy without wrecking their marriage. What harm could come of fulfilling his longtime sexual fantasy?

Discussion Guide

1. The first sentence of the novel is ?The most beautiful woman in the world is a woman reading a book.? What does this tell you about the narrator?

2. In MARRIED SEX, the first chapter starts with a sophisticated New York couple having dinner. It ends with a minute-by-minute description of their lovemaking. And there?s a zinger in the final sentence of that chapter. Which is more satisfying to you, the fantasy sex of popular erotic fiction, such as FIFTY SHADES OF GREY, or the closely observed sex of MARRIED SEX? Were you surprised by the last sentence of the first chapter of MARRIED SEX?

3. The author has said that one inspiration for the book was a line from ?Because the Night,? a song written by Patti Smith and Bruce Springsteen: ?Love is an angel disguised as lust.? Do you agree that romantic relationships start as physical attraction and then deepen into something more? If you disagree, how do you think romantic relationships

begin?

4. The key issue of the novel is monogamy --- how hard it is to honor and preserve it. As a culture, Americans disapprove of infidelity. A 2013 Gallup poll shows that 91% of us find infidelity morally wrong. And yet, Gallup reports, 21% of married American men and 10-15% of married American women ?cheat? on their spouses. As you read the book, did you find yourself judging Blair and David? Were they smart to make an agreement to prevent infidelity? Could the agreement have worked out as they planned? ?

5. David says: ?It?s not cheating if your wife?s there.? Do you agree?

6. Because David is the narrator, there?s a section of the book in which Blair disappears. While she?s gone, he gets this advice from his business partner: ?Don?t ask Blair what happened when she was away.? Would you have liked to have known what Blair?s life was like while she was away?

7. Along the way, David shares his views on sex and love. His opinions are drenched in testosterone but also in spirituality --- he views sex as a ritual, a kind of communion, maybe the closest we can come to experiencing the divine. Do you believe him? Do you agree with him?

8. Although some may think that the book reads like a memoir, the author insists it?s fiction. He says, ?I *have* been in a threesome, for several years, often for ten hours a day --- but only in my head.? Often in fiction the line between author and protagonist is blurred. Did MARRIED SEX read like a memoir to you, or like fiction?

9. MARRIED SEX is a tightly written book, with spare prose and brisk dialogue. Did you find that style effective in telling this story? Would you have preferred more descriptive language?

10. The author, who is also a screenwriter, wrote what he feels is a big Hollywood ending --- a happy ending. His publisher disagrees: ?It?s so sad.? What do you think? What do you think happens to Blair and David after page 234?

Author Bio

Jesse Kornbluth was a New York-based writer. As a journalist, he was a contributing editor for *Vanity Fair* and *New York* magazines. His books include HIGHLY CONFIDENT: The Crime and Punishment of Michael Milken, MARRIED SEX: A Love Story, and JFK and Mary Meyer: A Love Story. In digital media, he was the editorial director for America Online and ran a cultural concierge website, HeadButler.com. Jesse passed away in April 2025 at the age of 79.

Critical Praise

?Kornbluth?s debut novel, about a happy marriage interrupted by a ménage à trois, could easily have coasted on its promise of titillation. Instead it is a skillfully written, lighthearted and clever story that manages to be steamy but never salacious?.Kornbluth has a screenwriter?s ear for witty banter, and the novel hinges on the charming voice of its narrator.?

Married Sex: A Love Story

by Jesse Kornbluth

Publication Date: August 25, 2015
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 246 pages
Publisher: Open Road Media
ISBN-10: 1504011252
ISBN-13: 9781504011259