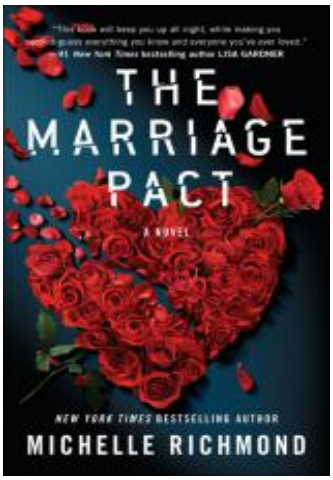
# The Marriage Pact

by Michelle Richmond




## About the Book

**In this relentlessly paced novel of psychological suspense, *New York Times* bestselling author Michelle Richmond crafts an intense and shocking tale that asks: How far would *you* go to protect your marriage?**

Newlyweds Alice and Jake are a picture-perfect couple. Alice, once a singer in a well-known rock band, is now a successful lawyer. Jake is a partner in an up-and-coming psychology practice. Their life together holds endless possibilities. After receiving an enticing wedding gift from one of Alice?s prominent clients, they decide to join an exclusive and mysterious group known only as The Pact.

The goal of The Pact seems simple: to keep marriages happy and intact. And most of its rules make sense. *Always answer the phone when your spouse calls. Exchange thoughtful gifts monthly. Plan a trip together once per quarter...*

*Never mention The Pact to anyone.*

Alice and Jake are initially seduced by the glamorous parties, the sense of community, their widening social circle of like-minded couples.

And then one of them breaks the rules.

The young lovers are about to discover that for adherents to The Pact, membership, like marriage, is for life. And The Pact will go to any lengths to enforce that rule.

For Jake and Alice, the marriage of their dreams is about to become their worst nightmare.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** In general, what do you think motivates people to join cults such as The Pact? What motivates Jake and Alice in particular?

**2.** Jake and Alice are drawn into The Pact because it seems fine from the outside, and also because because they feel it would be impolite to refuse Finnegan?s gift. Have you ever found yourself drawn into something seemingly innocent, only to discover that it is not what it seems?

**3.** Are there any Pact rules that you find appealing, or that you think could strengthen a marriage?

**4.** Though Alice and Jake both enjoy their work, Alice has the more demanding job, and Jake takes on more of the household responsibilities. Jake comments at one point that marriages are always slightly out of balance and that The Pact?s goal of restoring balance to relationships is noble. Do you agree that most marriages go through periods of imbalance? What makes relationships imbalanced? And is it even possible for two people in a relationship to find a perfect balance?

**5.** How does Jake and Alice?s relationship change over the course of the novel?

**6.** Do you think Jake and Alice?s marriage will last forever? Why or why not?

**7.** Is Alice right to be angry with Jake when she discovers he hasn?t been forthcoming about his meetings with JoAnne? Is his excuse --- that he wanted to protect Alice --- a fair reason for his lies of omission?

**8.** Discuss the punishments The Pact imposes on Alice for failing to give her marriage adequate attention. Though their methods are extreme, can you justify the principle behind the Pact?s rules?

**9.** How do Jake and Alice?s family histories and previous relationships inform their choices over the course of the novel? Were there choices they made that you strongly agreed or disagreed with?

**10.** Jake worries that Alice has given up too much of her true self in her marriage to him. In what ways does marriage require us to change who we are or to leave behind a valuable or essential part of ourselves?

**11.** What surprised you the most in the novel?

**12.** How do you feel about the choice Alice and Jake make at the end? Is it the right choice? Why or why not? Given that situation, what choice would you have made? Do you think you and your spouse would agree on what choice to make?

**13.** Would you ever be tempted to join an organization like The Pact?

## Author Bio

Michelle Richmond is the *New York Times* bestselling author of seven novels and story collections, including THE MARRIAGE PACT, GOLDEN STATE, THE YEAR OF FOG and HUM. She received the Truman Capote Prize for Alabama?s Distinguished Writer of the Short Story. Her books have been published in 30 languages. She lives with her husband and son in Northern California.

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