

SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN’S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT ALMOST WAS

Ed  
\* major issue: ① were they actually "doing it"? seems hard to believe.  
② someone against child birth would be vigilant about birth control  
③ when

**Summary:** This is a story about a professional couple- a doctor and an attorney. Both are in their early thirties with very demanding jobs. Phil wants Sue to slow down and start a family. Finally he reaches a breaking point and moves out while she is away working on a case.

\* create dialog properly: X said, "Hi."  
↑ verb    ↑ comma    ↑ quotes

It was a snowy late fall afternoon as Little Johnny ran into the den where his parents Sue and Phil sat before the fireplace toasting marshmallows. Little Johnny uttered his first words, "Da, Da" while settling into his father's arms. Phil was overjoyed as he ran his fingers through his son's long blonde hair. Sue sat speechless as she watched the reaction between father and son. Suddenly she was taken back to the past – that period in their marriage that almost ended in divorce.

lead up

With tears in her eyes, Sue left the room fearing that she would be unable to contain her emotions and the many "what if" questions that ran through her mind. What if she and Phil had gone through with the divorce that would have robbed father and son of those precious moments? What if that heaven-sent storm that saved their marriage, two years ago had not occurred?

lead up

Both Sue and Phil were highly paid professionals who held very demanding jobs; she as an attorney in partnership with the most exclusive law firm in the Midwest. He as a psychiatrist in private practice and on staff at the local teaching hospital. They had entered into marriage with very secure careers and pre-nuptial agreements about their wealth and careers. Both were in their late thirties and Phil was anxious to start a family.

telling shows

Sue knew that her biological clock was ticking away but her work ~~seemed to have been~~

her top priority. She had suffered several miscarriages during their four years of marriage and

- 1. I am a guy, so my opinion won't matter. I just don't get it.
- 2. This is the outline of a story not the story. It needs scenes. Dialog. You can tell us things when we need to know them.
- 3. very matter-of-fact + lifeless. Lots of jargon

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had been advised by her doctor to slow down. The stress and strain began to take a toll on their marriage. Phil began to spend more and more time at the hospital while Sue took on more and more cases. *why?*

After spending several weeks out of town, Sue arrived home one week-end to discover that Phil had moved out. He left a note which simply stated: *so, she doesn't*

“The die is cast, my psyche can not and will not further engage in this tug of war. A man’s greatest contribution to humanity is procreation which you apparently have no time for.” *why?*

Good riddance, Sue as she hurriedly contacted her best friend who specialized in divorce law. She was advised to think things over for a few days before rushing into something she might regret later. Several days passed; she still had not heard from Phil; so she decided to go full blast into getting the divorce. She knew that an uncontested divorce could be finalized within six months. She also knew that their pre-nuptial agreement stated that any wealth or material things brought into the marriage would remain the sole property of the said owner. She was greatly pleased with that statement in the agreement; as she looked around their old antebellum farmhouse which had been in her family for many generations. *really? that passionate, huh?*

One Saturday afternoon, while strolling around on her property; she stopped to watch a school of fish that swam back and forth in the pond; suddenly the thought occurred that perhaps she could build a small camp for handicapped children. Several ideas began to pop into her head---she even began to wonder if perhaps subconsciously she was attempting to compensate for having several miscarriages. She knew that to give Phil a child would be the

*[to give Phil a child] would be the odd way to put it. isn't it hers too?*

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utmost

upmost fulfillment of their marriage. Sue quickly dismissed that notion and smiled slightly as she thought there would be plenty of time to plan the camphouse. The most compelling task facing her right now was the divorce. She had heard through friends that Phil was staying at the Sunrise Hotel. As she walked back to the house, she decided maybe she would call him about divorce procedures; as he had made no effort to contact her. And this divorce was very important. She spent the next several hours picking up the phone and putting it back down. She just couldn't bring herself to make that call.

lots of "as" and "while"

oh, he actually exists?

Around the same time, Phil was sitting in his hotel room brooding. It had crossed his mind that maybe just maybe, he had dealt with their problems very immaturely. While he had no intention of seeking reconciliation; he thought he and Sue should sit face to face and discuss the matter. He was going back to Hicksville (his hometown) this weekend, where he would be working as a trustee at the local hospital. maybe Sue would join him there. Several times he picked up the telephone to call her, only to put it down again. He knew he would be leaving the next morning- but wondered if he had the right to impose on Sue with such short notice. Alas, he decided to sleep on that one.

OMG

Early the next morning around 5:00 AM before leaving for the airport, Phil dialed Sue. The telephone startled her. She had been up for a while working on a case that would be heard that morning. She all but dropped the telephone when she heard his voice. Phil did not waste time with small talk but simply asked if she would come down to Hicksville this weekend where he would be working. He said it was time they held a civil discussion about their marital problems. Sue was about to scream at him when she decided, what the use. Very coolly she declined and stated "That any discussion could wait until his return." Quickly, she hung up the

make this a scene

the first dialog in the story! hooray!

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phone before he could respond. Sue spent the rest of the day thinking about Phil’s call and could hardly wait for her case to end so she could go home. *? she is home*

Sue quickly decided against going home and called her friend Lisa –who was also *very emotional* experiencing marital issues. Lisa agreed to meet her for a drink at their favorite spot. Sue arrived at the club early and asked to be seated in an isolated area *as she was not in the mood for small talk with the regulars at the club.*

After waiting a few minutes Lisa arrived and was ushered to the booth where Sue was waiting. Sue noticed the glow in Lisa’s eyes and wondered why her friend was so happy at a time like this. Maybe she had hit the lottery (which they had played for years) or maybe Lisa too was thinking of getting a divorce. *please, no parentless relevant?* After they finished their first drink and had caught up on the latest neighborhood gossip, Lisa decided *why telegraph this?* to spring the good news to Sue. She said, “Bill and I are planning a cruise to try and work out our problems. Why don’t you and Phil join us? It could be a new beginning for all of us.” Sue almost dropped the glass she was holding and stated, “The only place I am willing to join Phil is in a Divorce Court!”

*do high paid professionals really talk like this?*

*that week? a year later?*

Lisa said, “Girlfriend, you don’t mean that”. They talked for a few more minutes and as they departed Lisa said I will call you in a few days to get your answer.

Late one Saturday as Sue lay in bed, she started thinking about herself and the fact that she had not been feeling well lately. She could not remember when she had her last period--- she knew it was overdue. She and Phil had now been separated about twelve weeks. She dismissed the notion that she might be pregnant and concluded that she had been working too hard. She made a mental note that she would call her doctor early next week for a complete checkup. Early the next morning she was jostled out of sleep by a kick to the stomach. She sat upright in bed and cried: “Oh no, this can’t be happening to me.”

*no, it can't. they were actually having sex during all this time?*

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Sue could not allow herself to believe that she was pregnant. The next morning she got out of bed and went into the bath room to get a full view of her figure. Yes she did notice a slight budge in her stomach. Early Monday morning, she called her gynecologist who was able to see her that afternoon. Within minutes, her doctor said “Congratulations”, and suggested she stop by the store on her way home to pick up some maternity clothes. By the time she got home her mind was in overdrive wondering how she could keep this secret from Phil. She did not want the pregnancy to interfere with the divorce. She could not forgive Phil for walking out on her while she was away on business. As payback, he must not find out until after the divorce. She would have to avoid him at all cost. Immediately she called her attorney and instructed him that he would have to deal with Phil in all discussions regarding the divorce as she did not wish to see or speak with him under any circumstance (not even in court).

either if he walks out while she's there?

When Phil called later that week, Sue politely told him to contact her attorney. This went on for several weeks. As fall suddenly turned to winter and snow began to fall, Phil could not understand Sue's strange behavior. Why was she refusing to see him? Weren't they two intelligent adults?

so she as decided to have the baby: why?

why?

awkward

he's a Dr

A short time later—after a rough week at the office Phil came home, had a few drinks and decided he would have it out with Sue. He jumped into his car and headed for the beltway. He was oblivious to the intensity of the snowstorm. By the time he reached their home he could barely see the road. He parked, ran up the driveway, rang the bell and let himself into the house with his key. Sue had just gotten in herself and was in the midst of changing clothes. The blizzard had taken a toll on her nerves. She stood paralyzed in the middle of the floor (of her bedroom) as Phil called out her name. Damn, she muttered while reaching for her robe, wondering why she had not changed that stupid locks. It was too late now, as she stood frozen.

not a good idea

Change: blizza

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Phil could not believe his eyes as he entered their bedroom. He felled to the floor, wrapping his arms around Sue’s legs, crying “darling, darling.” After he recovered from the shock, he stood up, and gently wrapped his arm around her very pregnant body, asking what have I done to you? Sue was still in a trance like condition at this point. As he led Sue to the bed to sit down, he asked “can you ever forgive me?” She smiled, burying her face into his chest and asked “can we forgive each other?”

So, no camp?

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Jenn's Comments

Summary: This is a story about a professional couple- a doctor and an attorney. Both are in their early thirties with very demanding jobs. Phil wants Sue to slow down and start a family. Finally he reaches a breaking point and moves out while she is away working on a case.

-Never start with weather.

~~It was a snowy late fall afternoon,~~ as Little Johnny ran into the den where his parents Sue and Phil sat before the fireplace toasting marshmallows. Little Johnny uttered his first words, "Da, Da", while settling into his father's arms. Phil ~~was overjoyed as he~~ ran his fingers through his son's long blonde hair. Sue sat speechless as she watched the reaction between father and son. Suddenly she was taken back to ~~the past~~ that period in their marriage that almost ended in divorce.

Stay! Sue's POV

With tears in her eyes, Sue left the room fearing that she would be unable to contain her emotions and the many "what if" questions that ran through her mind. What if she and Phil had gone through the divorce that would have robbed ~~father and son~~ <sup>their family these</sup> of these precious moments?

What if that heaven sent storm that saved their marriage, two years ago had not occurred?

Both Sue and Phil were highly paid professionals who held very demanding jobs; she as an attorney in partnership with the most exclusive law firm in the Midwest. He as a psychiatrist in private practice and on staff at the local teaching hospital. They had entered into marriage with very secure careers and pre-nuptial agreements about their wealth and careers. Both were in their late thirties and Phil was anxious to start a family.

→ Sue <sup>is</sup> knew that her biological clock was ticking away but her work <sup>was</sup> seemed to have been her top priority. She had suffered several miscarriages during their four years of marriage and

Don't need this.

You don't pay if on this page

Your story starts here.

Don't put in your eye

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had been advised by her doctor to slow down. The stress and strain <sup>took</sup> ~~began to take~~ a toll on their marriage. Phil ~~began to spend more and~~ more time at the hospital while Sue took on more ~~and more~~ cases <sup>at the firm.</sup>

After spending several weeks out of town, Sue arrived home one week-end to discover ~~that~~ Phil had moved out. He left a note which simply stated:

“The die is cast, my psyche can not and will not further engage in this tug of war. A man’s greatest contribution to humanity is procreation which you apparently have no time for.”

Good ridded <sup>Sue</sup> thought Sue: as she <sup>called</sup> hurriedly contacted her best friend who specialized in divorce law, <sup>who</sup> ~~she~~ <sup>Sue</sup> was advised to think things over for a few days before rushing into something she might regret later. Several days passed; she still had not heard from Phil; so she decided to go full blast into <sup>filling for</sup> getting the divorce. ~~She knew that~~ <sup>an</sup> uncontested divorce could be finalized within six months. ~~She also knew that~~ <sup>their</sup> pre-nuptial agreement stated that any wealth or material things brought into the marriage would remain the sole property of the said owner. She was ~~greatly~~ pleased with that statement in the agreement; as she <sup>searched</sup> looked around their old antebellum farmhouse-which had been in her family for many generations. <sup>What was she looking for?</sup>

<sup>You do not do this too much</sup> One Saturday afternoon, while strolling around ~~on~~ her property; she stopped to watch a school of fish that swam back and forth in the pond; suddenly the thought occurred that <sup>pop</sup> ~~Perhaps~~ she could build a small camp for handicapped children. ~~Several~~ <sup>ideas</sup> ideas ~~began to~~ <sup>pop</sup> pop into her head---she ~~even~~ <sup>began</sup> began to wonder if perhaps subconsciously she was attempting to compensate for having several miscarriages. ~~She knew that~~ <sup>to</sup> to give Phil a child would be the <sup>this is how she did this fish spa this id.</sup>



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- so suddenly she wants a child. Why?

How could she do this with demands, job,

upmost fulfillment of their marriage. Sue quickly dismissed that notion and smiled slightly; as she thought there would be plenty of time to plan the camphouse. The most compelling task facing her right now was the divorce. She had heard through friends that Phil was staying at the Sunrise Hotel. As she walked back to the house, she decided maybe she would call him about divorce procedures, as he had made no effort to contact her. And this divorce was very important. She spent the next several hours picking up the phone and putting it back down. She just couldn't bring herself to make that call.

Around the same time, Phil was sitting in his hotel room brooding. It had crossed his mind that maybe just maybe, he had dealt with their problems very immaturely. While he had no intention of seeking reconciliation, he thought he and Sue should sit face to face and discuss the matter. He was going back to Hicksville (his hometown) this weekend, where he would be working as a trustee at the local hospital --- maybe Sue would join him there. Several times he picked up the telephone to call her, only to put it down again. He knew he would be leaving the next morning, but wondered if he had the right to impose on Sue with such short notice. As he decided to sleep on that one.

Early the next morning around 5:00 AM before leaving for the airport, Phil dialed Sue. The telephone startled her. She had been up for awhile working on a case that would be heard that morning. She all but dropped the telephone when she heard his voice. Phil did not waste time with small talk but simply asked if she would come down to Hicksville this weekend where he would be working. He said it was time they held a civil discussion about their marital problems. Sue wanted to scream at him, but instead she decided what the use, Very coolly she declined and stated, "But any discussion could wait until his return." Quickly, she hung up the

via reader know the showing "us, not between Sue the them.

Put a space to show POV shift to Phil.

POV shift again.

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phone before he could respond. Sue spent the rest of the day thinking about Phil’s call and couldn’t ~~hardly~~ wait for her case to end so she could go home.

Sue ~~quickly~~ decided against going home and called her friend Lisa –who was also experiencing marital issues. Lisa agreed to meet her for a drink at their favorite spot. Sue arrived at the club early and asked to be seated in an isolated <sup>booth</sup> area as she was not in the mood for small talk with the regulars ~~at the club~~.

~~After waiting a few minutes~~ Lisa arrived and was ushered to the booth where ~~Sue was waiting~~. Sue noticed the glow in Lisa’s eyes and wondered why her friend was so happy at a time like this. ~~Maybe she had hit the lottery (which they had played for years), or maybe Lisa was thinking of getting a divorce.~~ After they finished their first drink and had caught up on the latest neighborhood gossip, Lisa <sup>sprang</sup> ~~decided to~~ spring the good news to Sue. She said, “Bill and I are planning a cruise to try and work out our problems. Why don’t you and Phil join us?” It could be a new beginning for all of us. Sue almost dropped <sup>her</sup> ~~the glass she was holding and stated~~, “The only place I am willing to join Phil is in a Divorce Court!”

Lisa said, “Girlfriend, you don’t mean that.” They talked for a few more minutes, and as they departed, Lisa said, “I will call you in a few days to get your answer.”

Late one Saturday as Sue lay in bed, she <sup>thought</sup> ~~started thinking~~ about herself and the fact that she had not been feeling well lately. She could not remember when she had her last period ~~she~~ <sup>eight</sup> knew it was overdue. She and Phil had now been separated about ~~twelve~~ weeks. She dismissed the notion ~~that~~ she might be pregnant and concluded that she had been working too hard. She made a mental note that she would call her doctor early next week for a ~~complete~~ checkup. Early the next morning she was jostled out of sleep by a kick to the stomach. She sat upright in bed and cried, “Oh no, this can’t be happening to me.”

we stay in head.

about what? A show us the scene.

by the baby? This wouldn't happen until about 20-24 weeks.

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Why does she do this? Home pregnancy test

- You do this too much.

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\*\*\*

When Phil called later that week, Sue politely told him to contact her attorney. This went on for several weeks. As fall suddenly turned to winter and snow began to fall, Phil could not understand Sue's strange behavior. Why was she refusing to see him? Weren't they two intelligent adults?

- P.O. Shit. back to Phil

A short time later after a rough week at the office, Phil came home, had a few drinks and decided he would have it out with Sue. He jumped into his car and headed for the beltway. He was oblivious to the intensity of the snowstorm. By the time he reached their home, he could barely see the road. He parked, ran up the driveway, rang the bell and let himself into the house with his key. Sue had just gotten in herself and was in the midst of changing clothes. The blizzard had taken a toll on her nerves. She stood paralyzed in the middle of the floor of her bedroom as Phil called out her name. Damn, she muttered while reaching for her robe, wondering why she had not changed the stupid locks. It was too late now, as she stood frozen.

Stay in Phil's house

Repeated

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Phil could not believe his eyes as he entered their bedroom. He fell ~~to~~ to the floor, wrapping his arms around Sue's legs, crying "darling, darling." After he recovered from the shock, he stood up, gently wrapped his arm around her very pregnant body, asking what have I done to you? Sue was still in a trance like condition at this point. As he led Sue to the bed to sit down, he asked, "Can you ever forgive me? She smiled; burying her face into his chest and asked, "Can we forgive each other?"

→ You stated on the first page that the storm saved their marriage but ~~it~~ you didn't pay off on that promise.

- You shift point-of-view too often. Check out this blog post at [www.HelpingWritersBecomeAuthors.com](http://www.HelpingWritersBecomeAuthors.com) Do a search on "non-POV" & you'll see the post titled "Inferring non-POV Characters' Thoughts"

POV shifting too fast.

"Show" vs "tell"

This is a little melodramatic.

JULIE

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If this is women's fiction, give us more Sue!

**Summary: This is a story about a professional couple- a doctor and an attorney. Both are in their early thirties with very demanding jobs. Phil wants Sue to slow down and start a family. Finally he reaches a breaking point and moves out while she is away working on a case.**

Needs a stronger start.

It was a snowy late fall afternoon, as Little Johnny ran into the den where his parents Sue and Phil sat before the fireplace toasting marshmallows. Little Johnny uttered his first words, "Da, Da", while settling into his father's arms. Phil was overjoyed as he ran his fingers through his son's long blonde hair. Sue sat speechless as she watched the interaction between father and son. Suddenly she was taken back to the past – that period in their marriage that almost ended in divorce.

Move quotes

With tears in her eyes, Sue left the room fearing that she would be unable to contain her emotions and the many "what if" questions that ran through her mind. What if she and Phil had gone through the divorce that would have robbed father and son of those precious moments? What if that heaven sent storm that saved their marriage, two years ago had not occurred?

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should parallel

2x

Sue knew that her biological clock was ticking away but her work seemed to have been her top priority. She had suffered several miscarriages during their four years of marriage and

Verb tense

Word choice

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More buildup  
Miscarriages  
- compassion  
- outrage  
- depression

had been advised by her doctor to slow down. The stress and strain began to take a toll on their marriage. Phil <sup>started</sup> ~~began to~~ spend more and more time at the hospital while Sue took on more and more cases.

Z x

After spending several weeks out of town, Sue arrived home one week end to discover that Phil had moved out. He left a note which simply stated:

I would

“The die is cast, my psyche can not and will not further engage in this tug of war. A man’s greatest contribution to humanity is procreation, which you apparently have no time for.”

He lacks compassion

Really? / That's his reaction / No tears

Good riddens <sup>ca</sup> thought Sue: as she hurriedly contacted her best friend who specialized in divorce law. She was advised to think things over for a few days before rushing into something she might regret later. <sup>After</sup> ~~Several days passed, she still had not heard from Phil,~~ <sup>of not hearing</sup> so she decided to go full blast into getting the divorce. She knew that an uncontested divorce could be finalized within six months. She also knew that their pre-nuptial agreement stated that any wealth or material things brought into the marriage would remain the sole property of the said owner. She was greatly pleased with that statement in the agreement; as she looked around their old antebellum farmhouse which had been in her family for many generations.

Passive voice

Answer (and I love it) redundant

One Saturday afternoon, while strolling around on her property, she stopped to watch a school of fish that swam back and forth in the pond; suddenly the thought occurred that

Delete #.

Perhaps she could build a small camp for handicapped children. Several ideas began to pop into her head---she even began to wonder, if perhaps subconsciously she was attempting to compensate for having several miscarriages. She knew that to give Phil a child would be the

What prompts this?  
Are these the clients she represents?  
Does she have handicapped relatives?

had  
verb tense

fragment

Z x

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phone before he could respond. Sue spent the rest of the day thinking about Phil’s call and could hardly wait for her case to end so she could go home.

why the change?

instead

Sue quickly decided against going home and called her friend Lisa –who was also experiencing marital issues. Lisa agreed to meet her for a drink at their favorite spot. Sue arrived

redundant

at the club early and asked to be seated in an isolated area as she was not in the mood for small talk with the regulars at the club

intro clause modifies Lisa

After Sue visited...

After waiting a few minutes Lisa arrived and was ushered to the booth where Sue was waiting. Sue noticed the glow in Lisa’s eyes and wondered why her friend was so happy at a time like this. Maybe she had hit the lottery (which they had played for years). or maybe Lisa too

was thinking of getting a divorce. After they finished their first drink and had caught up on the latest neighborhood gossip. Lisa ~~decided to spring the good news to Sue. She said~~ <sup>blurted out</sup> “Bill and I are planning a cruise to try and work out our problems. Why don’t you and Phil join us?” It could be a new beginning for all of us. Sue almost dropped the glass she was holding and stated, “The only place I am willing to join Phil is in a Divorce Court!”

Would she speak like that?

Lisa said, “Girlfriend you don’t mean that”. They talked for a few more minutes and as they departed Lisa said, “I will call you in a few days to get your answer.”

segue

How much time passed?

Late one Saturday <sup>12 weeks into the separation</sup> as Sue lay in bed, she started thinking about herself and the fact that she had not been feeling well lately. She could not remember when she had her last period--- she

(move)

knew it was overdue. ~~She and Phil had now been separated about twelve weeks. She dismissed the notion that she might be pregnant and concluded that she had been working too hard. She made a mental note that she would call her doctor early next week for a complete checkup. Early the next morning she was jostled out of sleep by a kick to the stomach. She sat upright in bed and cried; “Oh no, this can’t be happening to me.”~~

Allude it - short time

too soon



JULIE

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Break up @

putting on weights

Sue could not allow herself to believe that she was pregnant. The next morning she got out of bed and went into the bathroom to get a full view of her figure. Yes she did notice a slight budge in her stomach. Early Monday morning, she called her gynecologist who was able to see her that afternoon. Within minutes, her doctor said "Congratulations!" and suggested she stop by the store on her way home to pick up some maternity clothes. By the time she got home her mind was in overdrive wondering how she could keep this secret from Phil. She did not want the pregnancy to interfere with the divorce. She could not forgive Phil for walking out on her while she was away on business. As payback, he must not find out until after the divorce. She would have to avoid him at all cost. Immediately she called her attorney and instructed him that he would have to deal with Phil in all discussions regarding the divorce as she did not wish to see or speak with him under any circumstance (not even in court).

I was

too soon

Really?

Really?

When Phil called later that week, Sue politely told him to contact her attorney. This went on for several weeks. As fall suddenly turned to winter and snow began to fall, Phil could not understand Sue's strange behavior. Why was she refusing to see him? Weren't they two intelligent adults?

A short time later after a rough week at the office Phil came home had a few drinks and decided he would have it out with Sue. He jumped into his car and headed for the beltway. He was oblivious to the intensity of the snowstorm. By the time he reached their home he could barely see the road. He parked, ran up the driveway, rang the bell and let himself into the house with his key. Sue had just gotten in herself and was in the midst of changing clothes. The blizzard had taken a toll on her nerves. She stood paralyzed in the middle of the floor (of her bedroom) as Phil called out her name. Damn, she muttered while reaching for her robe; wondering why she had not changed ~~the~~ stupid locks. It was too late now, as she stood frozen.

Break up @

Comm in series

JULIE

SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN'S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT ALMOST WAS

He felled the tree.

Very  
Pzot ten  
with  
direct  
objec

# Phil could not believe his eyes as he entered their bedroom. He felled to the floor, wrapping his arms around Sue's legs, crying, darling, darling. After he recovered from the shock, he stood up, gently wrapped his arm around her very pregnant body, asking, what have I done to you? Sue was still in a trance-like condition at this point. As he led Sue to the bed to sit down, he asked, "Can you ever forgive me? She smiled, burying her face into his chest and asked, can we forgive each other?"

So, st  
does  
180°

Don't end here  
Bring back to present with son.

herself  
or him - in quotes

TOO MANY SEMICOLONS!  
THIS STORY LACKS DIALOGUE.  
I WANT TO FEEL FOR THE CHARACTERS.  
I DON'T HERE.  
I FIND THEM IMPLAUSIBLE.

SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN’S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT

DAVE

This is an all too common situation with two driven, but needy married adults. Have kids, or not to have kids is the real story. Or is it? Perhaps the real story is that we have an immature, selfish couple wanting only what they want and they'll pout until they get their way. I found their actions less than admirable. I was cheering on neither of the characters. That may be a real problem with the writing.

And the writing-

The art of writing is eliciting from the reader compassion and understanding. We read this piece wanting to get to know these characters and commiserate with them. The author doesn't allow us in. We hear about the characters, but not from the characters. We never form a relationship with them because they are too far away. The author needs to get into the heads of the characters and allow the characters some expression of their own, rather than narration through the author.

The piece has merit and with some major additions, the story may work out okay.

**Summary: This is a story about a professional couple- a doctor and an attorney. Both are in their early thirties with very demanding jobs. Phil wants Sue to slow down and start a family. Finally he reaches a breaking point and moves out while she is away working on a case.**

It was a snowy late fall afternoon, as Little Johnny ran into the den where his parents Sue and Phil sat before the fireplace toasting marshmallows. *(opening sentence sounds amateurish)* Little Johnny uttered his first words, "Da, Da", while settling into his father's arms. Phil was overjoyed as he ran his fingers through his son's long blonde hair. Sue sat speechless as she watched the reaction between father and son. Suddenly she was taken back to the past – that period in their marriage that almost ended in divorce.

With tears in her eyes, Sue left the room fearing that she would be unable to contain her emotions and the many "what if" questions that ran through her mind. What if she and Phil had gone through the divorce that would have robbed father and son of those precious moments? What if that heaven sent storm that saved their marriage, two years ago had not occurred?

## SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN’S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT

*(All of this is telling the reader what to think. Tell the story and let the reader come to the conclusion the author wants. If that doesn’t happen, the author needs to revise)*

Both Sue and Phil were highly paid professionals who held very demanding jobs; she as an attorney in partnership with the most exclusive law firm in the Midwest.(:) He as a psychiatrist in private practice and on staff at the local teaching hospital. They had entered into marriage with very secure careers and pre-nuptial agreements about their wealth and careers. Both were in their late thirties and Phil was anxious to start a family.

Sue knew that her biological clock was ticking away but her work seemed to have been her top priority. She had suffered several miscarriages during their four years of marriage and had been advised by her doctor to slow down. The stress and strain began to take a toll on their marriage. Phil began to spend more and more time at the hospital while Sue took on more and more cases.

After spending several weeks out of town, Sue arrived home one week-end to discover that Phil had moved out. He left a note which simply stated:

“The die is cast, my psyche can not and will not further engage in this tug of war. A man’s greatest contribution to humanity is procreation which you apparently have no time for.”

Good ridded(s) thought Sue: as she hurriedly contacted her best friend who specialized in divorce law. She was advised to think things over for a few days before rushing into something she might regret later. Several days passed; she still had not heard from Phil; so she decided to go full blast into getting the divorce. She knew that an uncontested divorce could be finalized

## SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN’S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT

within six months. She also knew that their pre-nuptial agreement stated that any wealth or material things brought into the marriage would remain the sole property of the said owner. She was greatly pleased with that statement in the agreement; as she looked around their old antebellum farmhouse-which had been in her family for many generations.

*(All of the preceding is telling what happens. The goal of writing is to capture the reader and allow him/her to live with the characters, not hear about them. This section needs to be rewritten with characters doing something.)*

One Saturday afternoon, while strolling around on her property; she stopped to watch a school of fish that swam back and forth in the pond; suddenly the thought occurred that (?????)

Perhaps she could build a small camp for handicapped children. Several ideas began to pop into her head---she even began to wonder if perhaps subconsciously she was attempting to compensate for having several miscarriages. She knew that to give Phil a child would be the utmost fulfillment of their marriage. Sue quickly dismissed that notion (*which notion? Give Phil a child or to fulfill their marriage?*) and smiled slightly; as she thought there would be plenty of time to plan the camphouse. (*HUH? Does not follow logically*) The most compelling task facing her right now was the divorce. She had heard through friends that Phil was staying at the Sunrise Hotel. As she walked back to the house, she decided maybe she would call him about divorce procedures; as he had made no effort to contact her. **And this divorce was very important.** (*odd comment here*) She spent the next several hours picking up the phone and putting it back down. She just couldn’t bring herself to make that call.

Around the same time, Phil was sitting in his hotel room brooding. It had crossed his mind that maybe—just maybe, he had dealt with their problems very immaturely. While he had no intention of seeking reconciliation—; he thought he and Sue should sit face to face and discuss

SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN’S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT

the matter. He was going back to Hicksville (his hometown) this weekend, where he would be working as a trustee at the local hospital— maybe Sue would join him there. Several times he picked up the telephone to call her, only to put it down again. He knew he would be leaving the next morning- but wondered if he had the right to impose on Sue with such short notice. Alas, he decided to sleep on that one.

*(Again, all of this is telling about the characters and not living with the characters. They are too far away from the reader to care about them.)*

Early the next morning(,) around 5:00 AM before leaving for the airport, Phil dialed Sue. The telephone startled her. She had been up for awhile working on a case that would be heard that morning. She all but dropped the telephone when she heard his voice. Phil did not waste time with small talk but simply asked *(important conversation. Allow the reader to hear the characters in conversation.)* if she would come down to Hicksville this weekend where he would be working. He said it was time they held a civic (*civil*) discussion about their marital problems. Sue was about to scream at him when she decided what(’s) the use. Very coolly she declined and stated “That any discussion could wait until his return.” Quickly, she hung up the phone before he could respond. Sue spent the rest of the day thinking about Phil’s call and could hardly wait for her case to end so she could go home.

*(This entire exchange is unsatisfying to hear about. The author has to allow the reader to hear/live with the characters and feel their distress.)*

Sue quickly decided against going home and called her friend Lisa –who was also experiencing marital issues. Lisa agreed to meet her for a drink at their favorite spot. Sue arrived at the club early and asked to be seated in an isolated area as she was not in the mood for small talk with the regulars at the club.

## SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN’S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT

After waiting a few minutes Lisa arrived and was ushered to the booth where Sue was waiting. Sue noticed the glow in Lisa’s eyes and wondered why her friend was so happy at a time like this. Maybe she had hit the lottery (which they had played for years), or maybe Lisa too was thinking of getting a divorce. After they finished their first drink and had caught up on the latest neighborhood gossip. Lisa decided to spring the good news to Sue. She said Bill and I are planning a cruise to try and work out our problems(?) “Why don’t you and Phil join us?” It could be a new beginning for all of us. Sue almost dropped the glass she was holding and stated, “The only place I am willing to join Phil is in a Divorce Court!”

Lisa said” Girlfriend you don’t mean that”. *(learn how to punctuate dialogue.)* They talked for a few more minutes and as they departed Lisa said I will call you in a few days to get your answer.

*(Again, a very superficial retelling of an important and essentially pivotal conversation. Why would a reader care if the treatment of such important topics is so callously dispensed with. Get into the heads of these people and fill in the missing EMOTION that comes through in dialogue.)*

Late one Saturday as Sue lay in bed, she started thinking about herself and the fact that she had not been feeling well lately. **She** could not remember when she had her last period--- **she** knew it was overdue. **She** and Phil had now been separated about twelve weeks. **She** dismissed the notion that **she** might be pregnant and concluded that **she** had been working too hard. **She** made a mental note that **she** would call her doctor early next week for a complete checkup. Early the next morning **she** was jostled out of sleep by a kick to the stomach. *(Literally? Or figuratively? Make this clear.)* **She** sat upright in bed and cried; “Oh no, this can’t be happening to me.”

g shes

## SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN’S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT

Sue could not allow herself to believe that she was pregnant. The next morning she got out of bed and went into the bath room to get a full view of her figure. Yes’ she did notice a slight budge in her stomach. Early Monday morning, she called her gynecologist who was able to see her that afternoon. Within minutes, her doctor said “Congratulations”, and suggested she stop by the store on her way home to pick up some maternity clothes. By the time she got home her mind was in overdrive wondering how she could keep this secret from Phil. She did not want the pregnancy to interfere with the divorce. She could not forgive Phil for walking out on her while she was away on business. As payback, he must not find out until after the divorce. She would have to avoid him at all cost. Immediately she called her attorney and instructed him that he would have to deal with Phil in all discussions regarding the divorce as she did not wish to see or speak with him under any circumstance (not even in court).

When Phil called later that week, *(Let’s hear the conversation and the internal conversation caused by the call. The author is missing many opportunities to let us into the heads of the characters.)* Sue politely told him to contact her attorney. This went on for several weeks. *(Cop out. “This went on for several weeks” is as interesting as grass grew for several weeks.)* As fall suddenly turned to winter and snow began to fall, Phil could not *(Use contractions – couldn’t. Sounds and reads better.)* understand Sue’s strange behavior. Why was she refusing to see him? Weren’t they two intelligent adults?

A short time later—after a rough week at the office Phil came home had a few drinks and decided he would have it out with Sue. He jumped into his car and headed for the beltway. He was oblivious to the intensity of the snowstorm. *(Snow storm? News to me. Does he have any apprehension about driving? Is this conversation important enough to gamble on the roads? What is going on in his head?)* By the time he reached their home he could barely see the road.



SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN’S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT

He parked, ran up the driveway, rang the bell and let himself into the house with his key. (*POV shift – new paragraph.*) Sue had just gotten in herself and was in the midst of changing clothes. The blizzard had taken a toll on her nerves. She stood paralyzed in the middle of the floor (of her bedroom) as Phil called out her name. Damn, she muttered while reaching for her robe; wondering why she had not changed that (*those?*) stupid locks. It was too late now, as she stood frozen. (*POV shift – new paragraph.*) Phil could not believe his eyes as he entered their bedroom. He fell(ed) to the floor, wrapping his arms around Sue’s legs, crying darling, darling. After he recovered from the shock, he stood up, gently wrapped his arm around her very pregnant body, asking what have I done to you? Sue was still in a trance like condition at this point. As he led Sue to the bed to sit down, he asked “can you ever forgive me?” She smiled; burying her face into his chest and asked can we forgive each other?

*Such a confusing ending. What have I done to you? Both reach the same conclusion at the same time? One minute she wants to hide the pregnancy, the next they’re in heaven. One minute they are going to get divorce, the next they’re okay.*

*The conclusion is just too convenient to be accepted.*

SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN'S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT ALMOST WAS

Massachusetts

*Summary: This is a story about a professional couple- a doctor and an attorney. Both are in their early thirties with very demanding jobs. Phil wants Sue to slow down and start a family. Finally he reaches a breaking point and moves out while she is away working on a case.*

good job w/ keeping to a limited # of characters

It was a snowy late fall afternoon, as Little Johnny ran into the den where his parents Sue and Phil sat before the fireplace toasting marshmallows. Little Johnny uttered his first words, "Da, Da", while settling into his father's arms. Phil was overjoyed as he ran his fingers through his son's long blonde hair.

Comment [s1]: Maybe you can get away with this, but I would pick one or the other. (snowy or fall). Something that includes the Midwest in it so that you can remove it in a later paragraph.

Sue sat speechless as she watched the reaction between father and son. Suddenly she was taken back to the past—that period in their marriage that almost ended in divorce.

POV  
interaction

Comment [s2]: This first paragraph is awfully quick. I'd like it to slow down a bit. Set the scene, and then have Johnny (new name?) utter his first words. It will have more of an impact on the reader. Perhaps also show some back and forth between Phil and Sue before delving into the past.

With tears in her eyes, Sue she stood abruptly and left the room, fearing that she would be unable to contain her emotions and the many "what if" questions that ran through her mind.

Comment [s3]: Need a new paragraph here; this is an important point to make.

What if she and Phil had gone through the divorce that would have robbed father and son of those precious moments? What if that heaven-heaven sent storm that saved their marriage: two years ago had not occurred?

Comment [s4]: You tell us this in the next paragraph-have us wait a bit for it.

(where does Sue settle down as she thinks about this? Then continue.

Comment [s5]: At this point, does Phil call after her? This is a big moment for her to choose to leave the room.

Both Sue and Phil were highly paid professionals who held very demanding jobs: she as an attorney in partnership with the most exclusive law firm in the Midwest. He as a psychiatrist in private practice and on staff at the local teaching hospital. They had entered into marriage with very secure careers and pre-nuptial agreements about their wealth and careers. Both were in their late thirties and Phil was anxious to start a family.

Comment [s6]: I would think of a new expression-it took me 3 tries before I understood the sentence. Adding the dash does help, though.

Comment [s7]: I don't think you need to describe him so much. Either private practice or local hospital-this is a short story. Actually, I think you can weave this entire paragraph into the story very briefly. See following paragraph.

SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN’S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT ALMOST WAS

When she’d turned 37, Phil had started to push for them to try to have a baby. Sue knew had known that her biological clock was ticking away, but her work as a highly-paid attorney seemed to have been her top priority. She had suffered several miscarriages during their four years of marriage and had been advised by her doctor to slow down.

The stress and strain began to take a toll on their marriage. Phil began to take on more patients in his private practice, spend more and more time at the hospital while Sue took on more and more cases, did the same.

After spending several weeks out of town, Sue arrived home one week-end to discover that Phil had moved out. He left a note which simply stated:

**Comment [s8]:** At this point, we need a real conversation between the two to give us an idea of what they are both like and what they both want. How do they interact with each other? Perhaps a scene after she suffers a miscarriage. Even in that interaction, we can find out what Phil does. Maybe he talks to her like he’d talk to a patient, nice but detached sort of thing.

“The die is cast, my psyche can not and will not further engage in this tug of war. A man’s greatest contribution to humanity is procreation which you apparently have no time for.”

**Comment [s9]:** This makes Phil sound like a complete jerk. Is that what you want? Showing us conversations between the two of them before this would give us a better idea as to what he’s like. Is he really a jerk, or is she?

Good riddance, thought Sue, as she hurriedly contacted her best friend who specialized in divorce law. She was advised to think things over for a few days before rushing into something she might regret later. Several days passed; she still had not had heard from Phil; so she decided to go full blast into getting the divorce. She knew that an uncontested divorce could be finalized within six months. She also knew that their pre-nuptial agreement stated that any wealth or material things brought into the marriage would remain the sole property of the said owner. She was greatly pleased with that statement in the agreement; as she looked around their old antebellum farmhouse-which had been in her family for many generations.

**Comment [s10]:** Sue or the best friend? Watch use of pronouns.

**Comment [s11]:** Go back and change words to contractions to make it more casual

**Comment [s12]:** A semi-colon is generally used to separate two complete sentences. Thus, you’ll want to adjust the wording after the semi-colon here into a complete sentence.

Keeping in mind this is a short story → where do details belong a lot on the surface a lot of summary, little detail, conversation really getting to know the characters

## SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN'S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT ALMOST WAS

One Saturday afternoon, while strolling around on her property; she stopped to watch a school of fish that swam back and forth in the pond; suddenly the thought occurred that perhaps she could build a small camp for handicapped children. Several ideas began to pop into her head—, and she even began to wonder if perhaps subconsciously she was attempting to compensate for having had several miscarriages. She knew that to give Phil a child would be the upmost fulfillment of their marriage. Sue quickly dismissed that notion and smiled slightly; as she thought there would be plenty of time to plan the camphouse. The most compelling task facing her right now was the divorce. She had heard through friends that Phil was staying at the Sunrise Hotel. As she walked back to the house, she decided maybe she would call him about divorce procedures; as he had made no effort to contact her. And this divorce was very important. She spent the next several hours picking up the phone and putting it back down. She just couldn't bring herself to make that call.

Around the same time, Phil was sitting in his hotel room brooding. It had crossed his mind that maybe—just maybe, he had dealt with their problems very immaturely. While he had no intention of seeking reconciliation—, he thought he and Sue should sit face-face-to-face and discuss the matter. He was going back to Hicksville (his hometown) this weekend, where he would be working as a trustee at the local hospital— maybe Sue would join him there. Several times he picked up the telephone to call her, only to put it down again. He knew he would be leaving the next morning- but wondered if he had the right to impose on Sue with such short notice. Alas, he decided to sleep on that one.

Early the next morning around 5:00 AM the next morning, before leaving for the airport, Phil dialed Sue. The telephone startled her. She had been up for a while working on a case that would be heard that morning. She all but dropped the telephone when she heard his

Comment [s13]:

Comment [s14]: This seems to come from out of left field. We'd need a conversation earlier to allude to her being this type of person.

Comment [s15]: This part is confusing.

Comment [s16]: Why not?

Comment [s17]: This is an unexpected POV (point of view) shift. I'm not sure you can do this in a short story. Everything was from Sue's POV and now it switched to him.

Comment [s18]: Establish this somewhere else

Comment [s19]: No real voice here—a dialogue between the two of them would really bring out their personalities.

Comment [s20]: Again, don't summarize here. Make this a conversation in real time.

SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN'S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT ALMOST WAS

voice. Phil did not waste time with small talk but simply asked if she would come down to Hicksville this weekend where he would be working. He said it was time they held a civic discussion about their marital problems. Sue was about to scream at him when she decided what the use. Very coolly she declined and stated "That any discussion could wait until his return." Quickly, she hung up the phone before he could respond. Sue spent the rest of the day thinking about Phil's call ~~and could hardly wait for her case to end so she could go home.~~ At the end of the day, she called her

~~Sue quickly decided against going home and called~~ her friend Lisa—who was also experiencing marital issues. Lisa agreed to meet her for a drink at their favorite spot. Sue arrived at the club early and asked to be seated in an isolated area as she was not in the mood for small talk with the regulars at the club.

After waiting a few minutes, Sue spotted Lisa being ~~Lisa arrived and was ushered~~ to the booth where Sue was waiting. Sue noticed the glow in Lisa's eyes and wondered why her friend was so happy at a time like this. Maybe she had hit the lottery (which they had played for years), or maybe Lisa too was thinking of getting a divorce. After they finished their first drink and had caught up on the latest neighborhood gossip, Lisa decided to spring the good news to Sue. She said "Bill and I are planning a cruise to try and work out our problems" "Why don't you and Phil join us?" "It could be a new beginning for all of us. Sue almost dropped the glass she was holding and stated, "The only place ~~I am~~ I'm willing to join Phil is in a Divorce Court!"

Lisa said, "Girlfriend, you don't mean that". They talked for a few more minutes, and as they departed, Lisa said I will call you in a few days to get your answer.

Late one Saturday, as Sue lay in bed, she started thinking about herself and the fact that she had not been feeling well lately. She could not remember when she had her last period--- she

**Comment [s21]:** Is Lisa the best friend mentioned earlier? If not, make them the same person. You don't want to introduce too many characters into a short story.

**Comment [s22]:** This is another POV shift. Sue doesn't know at this point that good news is about to be sprung on her.

**Comment [s23]:** Again, make into a complete conversation.

**Comment [s24]:** How much time has passed? I would make this immediate (that night... something like that)...

SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN'S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT ALMOST WAS

knew it was overdue. She and Phil had now been separated about twelve weeks. She dismissed the notion that she might be pregnant and concluded that she had been working too hard. She made a mental note ~~that she would~~ call her doctor ~~early next~~ the following week for a complete checkup. ~~Early~~ the next morning she was jostled out of sleep by a kick to the stomach. She sat upright in bed and cried; "Oh no, this can't be happening to me."

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Comment [s25]: At 12 weeks? I don't think so.  
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Sue could not allow herself to believe that she was pregnant. The next morning she got out of bed and went into the bath room to get a full view of her figure. Yes' she did notice a slight budge in her stomach. Early Monday morning, she called her gynecologist who was able to see her that afternoon. Within minutes, her doctor said "Congratulations", and suggested she stop by the store on her way home to pick up some maternity clothes. By the time she got home, her mind was in overdrive wondering how she could keep this secret from Phil. She did not want the pregnancy to interfere with the divorce. She could not forgive Phil for walking out on her while she was away on business. As payback, he must not find out until after the divorce. She would have to avoid him at all cost. Immediately she called her attorney and instructed him that he would have to deal with Phil in all discussions regarding the divorce as she did not wish to see or speak with him under any circumstance (not even in court).

Formatted: Highlight  
Comment [s26]: When making edits, watch for repeat use of words (very common).  
Formatted: Highlight  
Comment [s27]: If she's going to the doctor, make this a step-by-step scene so that we can experience her shock/disappointment/surprise/elation etc along with her. What's going through her mind?

Comment [s28]: Maybe for walking out on her, period, and leaving her with such a nasty note.

When Phil called later that week, Sue politely told him to contact her attorney. This went on for several weeks. As fall suddenly turned to winter and snow began to fall, Phil could not understand Sue's strange behavior. Why was she refusing to see him? Weren't they two intelligent adults?

Comment [s29]: Watch usage of "suddenly"  
Comment [s30]: POV shift

A short time later—after a rough week at the office, Phil came home had a few drinks and decided he would have it out with Sue. He jumped into his car and headed for the beltway. He was oblivious to the intensity of the snowstorm. By the time he reached their home, he could

Comment [s31]: This could potentially be a scene—maybe we think something will happen to him.

## SHORT STORY IN ITS ENTIRETY – WOMEN'S FICTION: THE DIVORCE THAT ALMOST WAS

barely see the road. He parked, ran up the driveway, rang the bell and let himself into the house with his key. Sue had just gotten in herself and was in the midst of changing clothes. The blizzard had taken a toll on her nerves. She stood paralyzed in the middle of the floor (of her bedroom) as Phil called out her name. Damn, she muttered while reaching for her robe; wondering why she had not changed that stupid locks. It was too late now, as she stood frozen. Phil could not believe his eyes as he entered their bedroom. He felled to the floor, wrapping his arms around Sue's legs, crying darling, darling. After he recovered from the shock, he stood up, gently wrapped his arm around her very pregnant body, asking what have I done to you? Sue was still in a ~~trance~~ trance-like condition at this point. As he led Sue to the bed to sit down, he asked "can you ever forgive me? She smiled; burying her face into his chest and asked can we forgive each other?"

**Comment [s32]:** I like the ending, but we need everything that would lead up to it, including a full conversation here.

- conflict
- outline
- details vs. summary
  - ↳ conversation → need to get to know the characters