

Real Stories MKE

Season 1 Episode 4 | Transcript

Kim Shine 0:00

Welcome to Real stories MKE, brought to you as part of Ex Fabula's work to connect Milwaukee through real stories. I'm Kim Shine.

Joel Dresang 0:08

And I'm Joel Dresang. Ex Fabula believes that everyone has personal stories worth sharing. We coach storytelling workshops where community members can build their storytelling skills and confidence. And we host StorySlams where true stories are shared on stage. Today, we're bringing you a few of those powerful stories.

Kim Shine 0:26

Yeah, our theme of this episode is Love Hurts. Oh, I don't know, I don't know how I feel about that. Now, marriage has meant a lot of different things to people in different places and at different times. For some, it was an arranged alliance of two families. For others, an ideal bond of two soulmates. Yet the meaning of marriage as an institution has remained relatively unchanged. It marks the official shift from being two individuals, each building to themselves or their own families into one new family. But Joel, what happens when the momentous institution of marriage collides against other equally powerful institutions? Will it survive? Should it survive? This is a theme and the questions that are the heart of today's show.

Joel Dresang 1:16

And we've got some great stories that help.

Kim Shine 1:17

Yeah, we do.

Joel Dresang 1:20

So mine isn't so much about the institution of marriage. Kind of getting there because I proposed to my wife on a cliff in Maine overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Sun was rising in the morning. And I said something obscure, like, you know, "I want us to grow old together". And she smiled at me and nodded and continued to watch the sunrise. And I don't think she heard me say

Kim Shine 1:46

Oh, yeah she's like... this guy

Joel Dresang 1:47

She's blowing me off. And so I, you know, had this ring out. And I don't think she saw it. So I'm like, waving in front of her face and, and tried to be more direct as to what I was asking her. And she said, Yes. And we hugged and it was, you know, I was ecstatic. And she was too, I

thought, but as the day went on, she just seemed miserable. She even seemed ornery. And I figured the enormity of this commitment was sinking in and she had second thoughts.

Kim Shine 2:14

I can't do this.

Joel Dresang 2:16

Yeah, she regretted her decision, you know, and then I started to panic. And then I started to have my doubts. I wondered, how do you take that back? But then thank God, she had a raging ear infection.

Kim Shine 2:31

So random

Joel Dresang 2:31

A trip to the ER, some antibiotics and three decades later, we're still married.

Kim Shine 2:39

Oh, that's nice. Does she have any regrets?

Joel Dresang 2:40

I don't know. You'll have to ask her.

Kim Shine 2:43

Well, I'm going to tell you. I'm not married at all. But I have had some instances in life where love just stinks. However, the biggest lesson is that if you love yourself, you will love everyone else. Like you love yourself. And then the world will be a better place.

Joel Dresang 3:02

And sometimes self love hurts.

Kim Shine 3:04

Oh, man. Wow. That's a whole nother story. Okay, so Joel, our first Love Hurt story comes from luscely Flores. She shared this story at our Love StorySlam on September 17, 2020. Here's luscely.

luscely Flores 3:22

I was 19. And I was invited to a quinceanera by a friend. Quinceanera is basically...you're coming up, you're coming of life as a woman in Latino America. And I was kind of hesitant to go because I really didn't know the quinceanera. I was basically just crashing a quinceanera. We do that all the time. Get there right after everybody kind of eats then we get a plate and we get to eat. So I accompanied my great friend who I consider a mentor. And we had fun. We danced all night there was two or three different bandas, there was the mariachi. I think it was one of the like, probably the last quinceanera that I've been to. And also one of the funnest because I just

remember dancing so much. And I ended up knowing the quinceanera because she was in the middle school program that I helped kind of mentor 12 or 13 youth and she was one of them. I mean like five years later. So the parents are millennial parents, you know, they're in the 30s so they threw an after party at Whiskey Pub and what is the Whiskey Lounge or Whiskey Pub and Lounge in downtown Milwaukee and crash that too. We get there and they have a VIP section with like kind of high chairs next to a small little bar stool, bar cart. And there's this guy sitting on a stool. Beautiful Man. I heard his laugh, and his laugh just tickled every part of me. I had to know who this man was. And so I approached the bar cart to make myself a drink. And I just we make eye contact right away. And he tells me his name, I tell him my name. I have two names. Camila, luscely. Camila is my Catholic-given name when you're when you're born in Mexico, you're given the choice of like, you're born on Saints Day. I was born on the day of St. Camille. So I said my name was Camila. Mind you, I have two names. That's all I could blurb out of my mouth like "Uhh, Camila!" and then I just grabbed my drink. Went and sat down. And just kind of stared at him from like the corner of my eye every chance I got. Some of his friends went up to dance to the dance floor. I went to dance to the dance floor. I thought, Wait, this guy thinks he's so cool. Just sitting at a bar stool laughing his way into other people's hearts, and not dancing. So I was too shy to ask him out to dance. Bar close. We all go home. I'm still thinking about this guy. The next morning I like I wake up with like a mild panic attack. And I kind of have to tell my mom, I'm like, Mom, I saw this amazing guy. I only know his first name. I don't know how I'm gonna find him. He has a really generic Mexican name. So it's really hard to find him on Facebook and did my stalking couldn't find him. A month past, still thinking about him, still seeing if maybe the friend that took me to the quinceanera knew who he was. And luckily, she did. She did some stalking for me. He wasn't on Facebook. Um, she also had an old number of his because they went to college parties together, you know, years ago. So I thought, this is the end, that I guess I'll just hold his laugh and his face in my memory forever. Um, I was working part time at Home Depot to go to finish my, you know, to get my way through school. And he strolled into Home Depot, and my heart and all the other tickling parts just tickled and I was like, This is my chance. This is my one chance. And my nametag said luscely. So the name I gave him was Camila. My name tag said luscely. So he thought I totally blew him off when I like gave him my name. This is into the future. I asked him what he thought about me but um, when we first met. But I wrote my number down on some register paper. And I couldn't give it to him because we can't leave our..We can't leave our cashier spots right? We can't leave the little star that they mark at the bottom of the ground or the tape marker. So I convinced the security guard to chase him through the store to give him my number. Mind you. He's a Latino man. And he thought that the security guard was chasing after him because maybe he stole something so he like sped out of Home Depot as fast as he could and hopped in his car and I didn't get to give him my number. Um then I found him on Instagram, my stalking. I found every single one of our mutual friends and I stalked all of their friends pictures, but I had to be you know, cool with like sliding into his DMS. So I didn't slide into his DMS I just liked one of his older pictures, waited a week, like another one of his older pictures, waited a week and finally he like replied to one of my stories on Snapchat or on Instagram. When you reply, when he replies to my stories. It's like October 30 like 3:54. Oh no, October 29 3:54am. And his birthday is the next day. I know his birthday is the next day because when he activated his Instagram, he activated his Facebook. So then I went and looked him up on Facebook and found his birthday. So I waited. So as soon as I

like I fell asleep, woke up, texted him happy birthday on Instagram right away. I was the first one to say happy birthday to him. It was great. He invited me for cake. So we went and we had a slice of cake at his parents house. Then he invited me to Whiskey Lounge, where we first met because that's where he was throwing his birthday. And it was amazing. Three weeks after that, we went to New York. Four weeks after that, we went to Houston. Four weeks after that, we went to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, after that we went to the Smoky Mountains. After that, like we just kept traveling. It was the best three and a half years of our traveling life, right. He's an amazing individual. He helped me through my depression and through my anxiety. And I was like this is the one, this is the guy that I want to marry. So we went to Vegas and we were about to elope. Then he got cold feet. Um I got really, really angry, like, why would you get cold feet? Why I got really angry, I remember walking down the street by myself like storming down. And finally, when we came back, well I mean, when he finally got my attention, and we came back to Milwaukee. He said, first, I want us to go talk to attorneys so we could get married. Mind you, I'm undocumented. So marriage is attached to so many privileges if you're an undocumented person, because once you become a citizen, those nine digits are like the most liberating thing in the world. So I was like, wow, this guy really, really loves me. Like, he really wants to help me continue and exist in his life. Every attorney, we went to told us we couldn't get married. Every single one, every single attorney said, Well, if you get married, you're both going to lose. If you get married, your partner is going to lose a lot of his privileges. And I was like, what are what are what? Like, come again? And it was a huge reality check for me. And I think it was a huge reality check for anybody in my position, and any attorney that we talk to. My partner, my ex is wheelchair bound. So if we got married, if he helped me, he would be doing himself a disservice. Because this country does not value real love. Imperialist America will take everything away from you. And it'll take the people that you love most away from you. Um, we made a difficult decision to separate for, for many reasons, right, but once that come with, like, arguments and misunderstandings, and an XY and Z, but the biggest one was, the only way that I could become a US citizen is through marriage. It's through giving somebody ownership about with half of my life. And I remember sitting on his lap, and just crying and realizing that this was our reality. And he's my best friend, he's still my best friend, if his car breaks down, if my car breaks down, I know who to go to. If I made extra food, I know who will eat my meal. If..we live in the same building Goddamnit! We see each other all the time, too much to account. But it's a huge and it's a harsh reality. To me, and you know, it's not just my reality, there are so many real realities that we refuse to accept. Because there's so real, right? You can have a fish ask another school of fish, like, How's the water? And the fish are always gonna be like, what water? That was me when I was, you know, in these offices with these attorneys, like what do you mean, there's all this water around us? Like, what can we do? We couldn't do anything. That's my best friend for life, and probably my favorite travel partner ever.

Kim Shine 13:15

So what do you think about that?

Joel Dresang 13:16

Um..I— It's confusing. It's, you know, you think of love as being this great thing that institutions should support and things get in the way. And, you know, I'm not quite sure it sounds pretty complicated with, you know, administering benefits and complications. But, gosh.

Kim Shine 13:40

And what makes it, what makes it hurt even more, it's just how they got together. That was so great. And then you find out that you can't solidify it like you want to, but I really had hoped that they would have stayed together. That would, that's my question for her. You know, just what made that decision? What made them make that decision? But-

Joel Dresang 14:06

Yeah, I found it interesting when she said, this country does not value real love.

Kim Shine 14:11

Yeah. Yeah. I hope they're okay now.

Joel Dresang 14:14

Yes. How about some Ultra shorts?

Kim Shine 14:17

I think that's a good idea.

Joel Dresang 14:18

So UltraShorts are the brief stories that people share at our events, they write them down on a slip of paper. And what I like about it is that it gets more voices into a StorySlam. We'll only have nine people telling a story, the usual StorySlam, and this actually gets a lot more voices in.

Kim Shine 14:35

Yeah, and they don't have to say who they are if they don't want to and they're short and sweet. And I have one for you. It's from the bride. When I got married this past summer, the hotel put my mom's room right next to me and my new husband. Oops.

Joel Dresang 14:56

Okay, here's one. It says: great grandma was married in county jail. She was "with child," quotes around with child and her father had the baby daddy arrested. Once married, he got out of jail, but disappeared soon after. Great grandma soon met great grandpa. Marriage number two was better. They had 12 Kids.

Kim Shine 15:21

12 Kids! Oh my. But that's a big family and I love big families. So there we go, you got to get him somehow.

Joel Dresang 15:29

Stay out of jail though. Our second storyteller is Molly Snyder. She spoke during our May 2019 "All Stars" event at Turner Hall. The theme of the evening was Forgiveness. Here's Molly Snyder.

Molly Snyder 15:46

Thank you. We got married on the winter solstice, December 21 2011, in a cemetery in New Orleans. Now I know how that sounds, it's a little annoyingly Goth, kind of emo kid. But for us, it was exactly the perfect place for us to start our second chance together. Our second life. We were both 40. And we knew that wasn't old old. But we also knew that we didn't have as much time as we once thought that we had. And we knew what we wanted. So we just, we went for it. And we, in our vows told each other that, more than anything, we were going to live our life authentically. So we got married, we blended our family, we bought a house. And we did the things that we believed said to our family and to our children, that, and to ourselves, that we were committed, and that we were doing this, we were adulting. And that we also really knew that there was probably going to be some sort of financial gain to this, whether it be taxes or combining incomes. And that would probably be a really good thing for us too. So we worked on blending our family, we came up with traditions together, we had a lot of fun. And we also worked on being more authentic and both of our personal lives and our professional lives. And one of those things meant that he was going to finish his PhD, and not work in cubes anymore, and not work in freezers anymore, going to do what he loved. And I was going to stay in a field that I loved and not move on to something that was a higher paying profession. And so we stayed and we were happy. And we were building this life that we wanted to. And then the first bill came for his student loans. And I laughed a rather sinister cackle when I saw it. I mean, maybe if there had been one less zero on the amount, we would have been able to swing it for the month. But I was pretty shocked at the amount. And so we decided to defer the payments and that we would have some time to figure out what we were going to do. Well during that time, another thing happened, our marketplace insurance. First it doubled and then it tripled and became impossible for us to keep. And then a third thing happened. And that was we were used to getting these tax returns. And all of a sudden he was teaching, making just a little bit of money. And apparently we were no longer able to get the tax returns and no longer able to have that little bit of extra money. So we had these three things that were really not in our in our favor financially. And here we just we decided we were going to cut back we decided that we were very happy. We wanted to live this life. We wanted to keep the vocations that we were passionate about. And so we stopped traveling. We stopped buying new clothes except for our kids. We got rid of cable. We got rid of iPhones. We bought dental services on Groupon. It was really weird, but we did. And we moved forward. But the thing is, it wasn't enough. It still wasn't quite...it just wasn't quite working. And so we started to think about other things that maybe we could do to cut back, to make this work. And I remembered something at the time. Well, we had actually let me just go back to say, we did consider faking his death. So to get out of the student loans and we did come up with a really scary and concise plan but we decided not to go that route. And then I remembered that I had heard a story a few years ago on the radio. And it was a story about really happily married couples getting a divorce, because it made financial sense for them. And then I talked to someone about this. And they told me that their parents had done the same thing when their mother, his mother had become ill, and

wanted to get Medicaid or Medicare, I can't remember which one, and it had worked. And so I thought, hmm, is this something that we should do? And at first, it sounded really like a terrible plan. And I've been divorced before, and I really prefer marriage, getting married to getting divorced. And I really didn't want to have to go that route. But we started to talk. And we started to research. And our our libertarian accountant, who is our also our very good friend, he, we told him what we were thinking and he took a look at our finances, he knew our situation, he took a look at um, our whole, our whole relationship and situation and said yes, that if we thought that our relationship would be able to withhold it, his advice was to financially separate our salaries legally. And this was something that we just couldn't quite make a decision on. It was obviously a huge, huge, hard decision, we wondered how people would look at us, in the community, how our kids would feel, it was just so much to think about. It also made me wonder if I would be a liar, and I want to live my life authentically. I don't want to be a liar, liar, in a courtroom on a stand when I'm asked if my marriage is irretrievably broken, I don't want to say yes, because it's not. I didn't know if that would be really bad for my karma. Or if God would get mad at me, or if I would just somehow hex the whole thing. And so I called my sister. My sister is a lawyer in Atlanta, and I told her the situation and I asked her if she thought that I'd get in trouble. If I lied on the stand. If I had said, yes, yes, my marriage is irretrievably broken. And she said, No, no, your marriage is financially irretrievably broken. My sister and I have said unkind things to each other before. And we have not been supportive to each other. But that was the most supportive thing she'd ever said to me. And I needed that. And I took that. And I believed that and I still do. And so we decided to file for a divorce. And so we filed and we uh had a divorce on March 8, 2018. We drove our Volkswagen bus to the Milwaukee County Courthouse, the same bus that we took family vacations in, the same bus that we take romantic overnights in, and we walked into the austere courthouse. And that experience was extremely surreal. It's a story all and of its own. But for now, I'll tell you that it happened very quickly. It was strange, it was over so quickly, because we didn't have a lot to settle. It was amicable to say the least. So we, we started at 9, we were over before 10. We were like well, what do we do now? So of course, we went to a bar. And luckily, there are third shift bars still around in the area. And so we found a good one. And we went in and we toasted our six year marriage, we toasted our 15 minute long divorce. So far, it was going well. And we didn't really know though what to do after that. We didn't want to drink anymore. And we had taken the day off from work both of us because we thought we should because we were getting divorced. But then we just got in the car and we drove home, and we were really quiet. Well, it's been 15 months later, and I can say to you that getting divorced was financially the best thing we could have done. That is the world we live in. I'm very happy to report that our relationship very well may have been strengthened through divorce. And I'm kind of enjoying it at times because I get to like hold his hand or have my arm around him and then introduce him to people as my, my ex husband and you know, it's it's a good time. But truth be told, there's also a part of me that is angry. A ngrly that I traded my marriage for health care and for education. And that to me, doesn't seem right. And it doesn't seem like something that I can forgive even though I believe in forgiveness. I believe so deeply in forgiveness. But I believe that this is unforgivable. The system is unforgivable, and that it is the system. It is the system. Not my marriage, not me, it is the system that is irretrievably broken. Thank you.

Joel Dresang 25:45

And that was Molly Snyder telling us her story about how love hurts at the themed event "Forgiveness".

Kim Shine 25:51

I loved her story. It was...I mean, clearly, it's not what they wanted to do. And I think if you know the powers that be everywhere, listen to her story or listen to this. They might look for other people who who who say that that's the best decision for them. But isn't that crazy, though? You have to divorce to be a stronger couple in the eyes of the state, of the law.

Joel Dresang 26:17

Yeah, yeah, some of the disincentives for staying together when you know, I mean, that's usually the best outcome.

Kim Shine 26:25

My goodness gracious, you know, better than me what the benefits are, the financial benefits are or whatever other benefits are there of being married, but I wouldn't want to get married if it means that everything is going to cost me more.

Joel Dresang 26:38

It shouldn't be done for for money. That shouldn't be the motivation, right? Yeah.

Kim Shine 26:42

No, it should not.

Joel Dresang 26:43

I came up with some more Ultra shorts.

Kim Shine 26:45

I think we should keep going.

Joel Dresang 26:46

Okay. My mother is a lingerie fit specialist.

Kim Shine 26:49

Oh, is she?

Joel Dresang 26:50

No, not mine. This I'm reading somebody's UltraShort. So my mother has seen all my friends mostly naked, while fitting them for bras. When my best friend got married, my mom bought her a beautiful white European sexy night gown with a thong. When I got married, I got the grandmas night gown from Little Red Riding Hood. That reminds me of a story that I heard from an aunt who had passed away and they tell stories at the funeral afterward.

Kim Shine 27:21

Yeah.

Joel Dresang 27:22

And and um heard the story of of when my oldest cousin got married. Um, she sewed the flies shut in all of his pajamas.

Kim Shine 27:33

I think that's great. It also reminds me of um, I'm super old. I feel super old and I am super old. And I've been an adult for a very long time. But my dad still gets uncomfortable sometimes, like when I actually dress up and go out. He'll, he'll, I can see it like the little the little twinge or tinge in his eyes, you know, just like the uncomfortable look in his eyes. And then he'll say, "You look nice". But it's hilarious. That is all the time we have, Joel. I'm so upset. All the time for Real Stories MKE. But guys, if you're listening, which you are, don't worry. We have been at this for more than 10 years now. And there are always more audio and video stories popping up at exfabula.org.

Joel Dresang 28:24

And our website lists upcoming storytelling workshops and StorySlams, and we hope you'll join us at an event or maybe even share a story. You can also connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Kim Shine 28:36

And of course, thanks to everyone who makes this program possible, including Ex Fabula staff, storytellers, and audio engineer Sam Woods. Say it with me, guys. We love you, Sam!

Joel Dresang 28:48

You're the best Sam. For Real Stories MKE, I'm Joel Dresang

Unknown Speaker 28:52

And I'm Kim Shine. Thanks for listening.

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