



WELCOME  
To The

# DARK SIDE



Marvin Gray

## COPYRIGHT

*Welcome to the Dark Side*

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## READERS' PRAISE FOR MARVIN GRAY NOVELS

### *Maggie May*

“Several years ago I read *Maggie May* on a vacation. The fact that it stuck with me and I can still remember details vividly about that book should tell you that I’m a fan of your writing style.”

*Writer’s Digest*

### *They Only Come Out at Night*

“A great way with characters and a hard hitting plot.”

*Writer’s Digest*

### *Gray Areas*

“Well written... Your protagonist... fits the genre perfectly.”

*Writer’s Digest*

## CHAPTER ONE

### Saturday

When Carla walked into the common room, I could almost feel her before I saw her. She was wearing tight slacks and a nice button down top. She had lost twenty pounds or so. Her purse hung in the bend of her elbow. She looked even older than when I had seen her last. Her eyes were puffy, but I couldn't tell if that was from crying or just age attacking her flesh.

I was working on a puzzle. I did that a lot nowadays. "Hi Marvin," she said. "Can I sit down?"

There were six other whackos in the room besides me. I didn't really want them to witness our private discussion. They were a nosey bunch.

I stood.

"Let's go outside," I said.

It was a beautiful day. We settled on a bench overlooking the yard. It was a little unsettling that I had once sat on this same bench and carried on a conversation with an imaginary lady named Julie. Our minds play cruel tricks on us sometimes.

"You look good," she said.

"Thanks," I said.

"Still exercising?"

"Some."

"They tell me you can go home any day now."

"They're liars."

"You can come and stay with us until you get back on your feet," she said.

I wanted to say something else cruel, but I decided she didn't deserve it particularly after all she'd been through.

"If I go anywhere, it'll be to the farm," I said.

"We don't own that farm anymore."

"I know that, but I can stay there anyway."

"Why would you want to do that, Marvin? All those memories..."

"If we can't hide from our past, we should embrace it."

She looked at me and then looked away. Two patients walked through the yard near the large maple tree.

“Your mom’s really sick. I don’t think she’s gonna make it.”

“Yeah, you told me last time. My memory is better now.”

“Marvin, I am so sorry.”

Those words opened a floodgate of emotions that I had kept hidden away for a long time. I didn’t want to face them. I didn’t want to face her or any of the rest of my family.

“What are you sorry for, Carla?”

She was crying.

“All of it. Everything. The Aerosmith concert. Treating you badly. Making you feel like the black sheep of the family. Not having faith in you, not standing up for you when everyone was criticizing you...” she didn’t finish her thoughts. There was more that she regretted, but I didn’t want to hear it.

“Ancient history,” I said, barely able to control my own emotions. I was on the verge of breaking down and weeping along with her.

Carla laid a hand on mine and squeezed.

“I never meant to hurt you.”

Let me tell you. There’s not a guy in the world who wants to hear this shit. More humiliating words have never been spoken by a woman than *I never meant to hurt you*.

“Forget it. I have,” I lied.

“I went to the concert as your date,” she said.

“You don’t think I know that?” I said.

“It was just that Spencer was so hot,” she said.

“Is this supposed to be making me feel better?”

“He was a basketball star. Every girl in high school wanted to date him. I just fell under his spell.”

“And you two abandoned me in Carbondale all alone while you two drove back to Leesburg and fucked.”

“It was horrible, I know.”

I had been crushed. Fuckin’ crushed.

“He was my first, Marvin.”

“I can’t thank you enough for sharing that with me, Carla. I really can’t. Is there anything else you want to get off your

chest? Want to tell me what a monster he was in bed? How he wrecked your womanhood for good? How no other man could ever match his prowess?"

"I am really sorry, Marvin. I was in love with him. I was enchanted."

What did I expect?

"Just do me a favor and shut up."

"I was horrible."

"That's just who you are. Let's leave it at that," I said. I pulled my hand away and stood up.

"Don't leave," she said. "Please don't. Please hear me out."

I looked down at her. I knew I was being childish.

"Did you drive all the way here to declare your love for my brother?" I said.

She shook her head and wiped her eyes.

"No, of course not." She paused. "I want to put this family back together. Or what's left of it."

I looked into her eyes, searching for something. Was it sincerity? Remorse?

"We all get the spouses we deserve," I told her. "We make conscious decisions and we need to live by them. You got what you wanted. You made your decisions."

"Did Spence get what he deserved? Is that what you mean?" she said. "Did Trish? What about my family? Did they deserve what happened to them?"

That hurt me. Tears welled up in my eyes. I looked away.

"No," I said.

When I regained control of myself, I looked back at her.

"Spence didn't deserve that. No one deserves that."

I sat back down.

"That is not exactly true. I know a lot of people who deserve worse, but no one in our family."

Being an idiot is not a crime, I thought.

She opened her purse and pulled out a cigarette. "I started smoking again," she said. "Want one?"

"I quit."

She tilted her head back when she exhaled. Why do women always do that? It is almost theatrics.

“What about you? Did you get the love that you deserve?” she said.

“I don’t deserve love. I know that now.”

“Don’t say that. You are still young. You will find someone.”

I frowned.

“You know the day of the Aerosmith concert, I had everything all planned out in my mind. I only wanted two things. One is that I wanted to kiss you when they played ‘One Way Street.’ I envisioned putting my arm around you and kissing you when they played that song.”

“Yeah, I remember. It was your favorite song.”

“I waited the whole afternoon with anticipation for that song.”

“What was the second thing?”

I laughed at my own childishness.

“I imagined we would make love that night.”

I smiled as I looked out over the lawn. It was a pretty day, so remote from the Aerosmith concert and from the horrors of the past years. I could almost relish my own childhood memory of immaturity and disappointment. It was a safe memory. The joke was on me. No innocent children or family members injured. Just a harmless, adolescent memory of infidelity.

“I’m so sorry.”

“Silly me,” I said. “Spence was the one you fucked, and Aerosmith never played that song.” Then I snapped out of it.

“Neither of us are young anymore, Carla. And I had my chances at love. I blew them all,” I said in a wave of self-pity. “Maggie May, Miriam, Andrea. I had my shots at romance, and I squandered every last one of them. There won’t be no more opportunities for me. And I don’t want them. It’s over for me.”

“That’s not true, Marvin,” she said, and maybe she even believed it. But I knew better.

“Look at me,” I said. I waved my hand across the yard. “I am in a fuckin’ insane asylum. Do I look like the type of husband material that women are clamoring for?”

“Stop it,” she shouted. “Just stop it. Stop feeling sorry for

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marvin Gray is an American humor columnist who published over 25 articles in the *Observer* magazine in Hua Hin, Thailand. *Welcome to the Dark Side* is his sixth novel. Gray graduated with a General Education Development (GED) Certificate from Hoboken Adult Education Institute with honors. He has lived and worked in Afghanistan, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Iraq, Pakistan, Thailand, Yemen, Kenya, and Somalia.

He speaks Arabic, Spanish, and Urdu-Hindi. Marvin plays the harpsichord, enjoys jousting and extreme winter sports, and volunteers for numerous charitable events.

He lives with his two soul mates, Pet and Rave—twin sisters and former professional dancers—along with their kitten Sebastian Cabot in a loft above a gentleman's club in Los Angeles. Currently, he is on assignment in East Africa, researching terrorism in Kenya and Somalia.