

*It Was Out of Love: A True Love Story of Deception, Grace, and Forgiveness*

by James S. Marr

(WinePress Publishing Group, 2010)

[1034 words]

**Strange, shocking, and true: Dying wife confesses thirty-one year web of lies to husband**

His wife’s deception started with a “telephone date”—and it continued for more than thirty years.

If his book were a fictional account, Jim Marr’s story in *It Was Out of Love: A True Love Story of Deception, Grace, and Forgiveness* (WinePress Publishing Group, 2010) is so preposterous that a reader might not even believe it.

But Marr’s story is true. Even before he met her face-to-face, his future wife Melissa successfully deceived Marr about virtually everything in her life history, even her name. Years later, if Melissa had not been terminally ill and wanting to clear her conscience, Jim says it’s likely that he still would not know who Melissa really was.

Marr begins his memoir of their thirty-one year relationship at the beginning, in 1975. He was a nineteen-year-old electronics specialist stationed with the Air Force in Missouri. His buddy Bob approached him one day.

“Guess what, Jim, your picture got over to this girl in Kansas. You need to give her a call sometime.”

Jim confesses, “With a little apprehension, not knowing what I was getting into at the hands of my good buddy Bob, Melissa and I had our initial blind date on the telephone. This brief

telephone call was the beginning of many calls, cards, and letters as we learned more about each other.”

There was a problem, though. Melissa told Jim she could not meet him in person yet because she had come down with mononucleosis and she was afraid she would pass it on to him. At first, Marr didn’t recognize this explanation as a red flag.

Marr continues the story of their budding telephone relationship. “Melissa eventually sent me her pictures. When I placed my eyes on those photographs for the first time, I knew for certain that previous reports of Melissa being ‘very nice’ were definitely understated. She sent a couple different photos showing her beautiful, long brown hair flowing down over her shoulders—and with a beautiful face and smile to match.”

Marr says, “It wasn’t long before I believed that someday I would marry her.” In spite of skepticism expressed by others about how he could fall in love with someone he hadn’t even met in person, he continued their phone relationship. They had many things in common, or so it seemed: He played ice hockey and she told him she had done some competitive figure skating as a child; he was a military career man and she said her father was a Navy rear admiral; he was a new Christian and she miraculously became a Christian during their phone courtship.

After six-months’ delay in getting to see Melissa in person due to her poor health, Marr finally did meet her, and he was shocked to find out that her “sickness” was just a deception to hide the truth about who she really was. He unmasked the ruse and with God’s help, decided to forgive her. And then, he did what the reader of his book might find surprising: He continued to see Melissa and eventually married her.

Jim was a devoted husband and he describes Melissa as a loving and supportive wife with a great sense of humor and a way of making people feel welcome in their home. They were not

able to have children for reasons that would not become clear to him until many years later, but they were happy together and active in their churches.

As the years passed, additional red flags about Melissa and her family background would occasionally wave in the breeze, but Jim didn't see them, or maybe didn't want to see them. Meanwhile, over the years Melissa's health deteriorated. Hospitalized, bedridden, and facing the reality of death, Melissa confessed to her husband that her deception more than thirty years before was actually a cover-up for a much more elaborate series of lies she had told him about her past. The truth about her life before she met Jim was much different from what she had led him to believe, and the details were shocking.

So why does Marr feel compelled to describe Melissa's deception now? Why not let Melissa's lies be buried with her? The book's title offers a clue.

In a recent interview, Marr offered a detailed explanation: "The title *It Was Out of Love* carries several meanings. I initially believed Melissa deceived me out of love, but later came to understand that what she did was very selfish—and love isn't selfish. God blessed us in many ways and forgave Melissa out of love. He also helped me stand by Melissa as her health failed and ultimately forgive Melissa out of love, as well.

"I want to demonstrate the message of God's grace and forgiveness. Whatever a reader's motivation is to begin reading the book, I pray that after reading this story that they will understand the depth of God's love and know that He can turn something evil, such as lies or deception, to good. The 'take away' is that God can salvage whatever wrongs we may have committed and use our lives for His glory.

“Melissa supported my unending career goals in the Air Force and we were able to be a blessing to many friends and family. She was my best friend all those years. She was a true helpmate.”

Marr admits today that the nature and the extent of his wife’s deception was so serious that had he known it all at the beginning, he doubts he would have married her. But he is thankful that he did, and he is confident God used Melissa’s life for good in spite of what some might judge to be a major character flaw.

Marr assured his dying wife that both God and he had forgiven her for deceiving him. He challenges the reader to do so, too. Whatever the reader thinks about Melissa’s deception, *It Was Out of Love* is a captivating account of real events and real people. And the most amazing thing about Marr’s account is that Melissa’s lies were convincing enough to fool the person closest to her for more than thirty years.