

Black Sheep

About 2 years ago now, we found out a “family secret” about my husband’s aunt’s husband, Uncle Marc. Marc is in his 40’s, and 2 years ago, he was arrested for having an inappropriate relationship with his teenage neighbor, which is alleged to have taken place between 2002 and 2006. The story made front page news where he lives because Marc was a college campus police officer, although shortly after the charges were brought against him, he lost his job. But the media has loved covering his story because of his former profession, and for any updates on the story, we have looked to the newspaper – it’s not like my husband’s aunt wants to call up all her family and friends and say, hey, guess what we’ve been up to? Which brings me to the reason I’m writing about this now. The other day as I was checking headlines in the newspaper (which I often do because I used to live in the area), I came across Uncle Marc on the front page – again. But let me back up a little bit...

It’s not like we saw my husband’s Aunt Gerry and Uncle Marc all that often. They live in Illinois and we live in Ohio. But at least once a year, we would gather at my husband’s grandmother’s house, and they would be there with their two adorable children. They seemed to be the perfect family; always doing things together, taking really cool family vacations and bringing their photos to the family gatherings to share. As my husband and I started growing a family of our own, our daughters began to play with their cousins at the family get-togethers, and I remember Gerry admonishing us for staying in a hotel for Christmas 2006 (just months before Marc was charged!). She said, next time, you don’t have to stay in a hotel when you visit Illinois, you can stay with us! I thought that was so nice at the time, but looking back, I can’t be more thankful we didn’t take her up on that offer.

Let me clarify – Gerry is one of the nicest people. Marc was

always kind of quiet, but despite his shyness, we felt he was also nice. When the news broke that he was charged with sexual assault of a minor, we were shocked – and immediately sympathetic toward Gerry. But she stayed by her husband's side, even getting herself into legal trouble in the process. We all thought she was being naive, although I can't really blame her for the 'stand by her man' attitude. In this case though, she was wrong, and she definitely should have put her children first. So anyway, Marc had somehow convinced her that the "rumors" about him and this young girl were untrue. There was video evidence, however, which is how the police became involved – seems the girl's father found the videos on their home computer. As I said, I like to be a person who gives others the benefit of the doubt. We met Marc and Gerry for Christmas at a restaurant in 2007 when no other family members would have any part of him. I felt weird when I didn't want him near my kids, and although we all dined together, we did maintain a safe distance. But even then, I was thinking that I didn't know the whole story. If what Marc is accused of really did happen, I told myself, then he is sick, and he needs help. But Gerry and the kids need some normalcy, and especially because the rest of the family is shunning them, the best thing I can do for her is to let her see my kids, and at the same time, I really wanted to see her kids.

And then, months ago, my husband and I were curious about why this was not going to trial. We did a simple search on the internet, and what we found was extremely disturbing. It seemed that Marc's young neighbor had posted their wedding registry, their baby registry (all fictional), as well as an 'I love you' message on myspace. The text was extremely crudely disturbing, and based upon what we read, we thought this girl was very sick as well as Marc, to say the least. It was reminiscent of the movie *The Crush*, if you've seen it. Clearly the adult man is at fault, but at the same time, he is a victim because the teenage girl is a stalker who will stop

at nothing to get what she wants. So that's what we thought... And we thought that maybe her sickness is why the case was not going to trial...

As I said before, Marc was on the local newspaper's front page the other day – again. It's the only update we've received about his case. And what I read shocked me to the core – I guess that's why I'm writing about it now. As reported in the newspaper, *Marc* is the one who wrote those things on the registries and Myspace. Marc, who had us believing that this young girl was crazy and stalking him and everything else, is really the one who wrote these horrible, crude, and graphic remarks about their relationship on the internet. He fooled his friends and family yet again, and by doing so, he found a way to abuse his victim – yet again. How is this girl ever going to find a job? If you read the things that are on the internet about her, supposedly written by her, you can see that she doesn't stand a chance. It's horrible. And why am I sharing all this? Every family has its 'black sheep', I guess. Writing about it is a form of therapy for me, I suppose. In a way, I'm mad at myself for giving him the benefit of the doubt, even though I used to be proud of that aspect of my personality – I always try to give people a chance. It kills me to think that other judgemental family members can tell me "I told you so" when they shunned Marc and his family early on when I thought they were wrong.

I hate the fact that we tried to give this man the benefit of the doubt, and he messed it up, yet again. I hate what he is doing to his wife, his children, his extended family, and most of all, to his victim. His actions are victimizing her over and over again.

It's interesting for me to read the newspaper readers' comments on the stories about Marc. They all like to talk about how he'll "get it" in prison and things like that. I read these statements, but because I know the person, it's different for me. I don't usually like to see people go to

prison for non-violent offenses. And I'm a big believer in innocent until proven guilty, which I think is a concept most often left behind in the United States justice system. But in this case, I'm kind of wondering why it's taken so long to go to trial. I can't help but wonder how much damage could have been prevented if they had sent Marc to prison already. He is obviously a very sick individual, and I pray he gets the help he needs. Most of all, I pray for the healing of his family, which I don't see happening until he is out of their lives.