

The background of the book cover is a vibrant, abstract composition of green and blue tones, with splatters and textures that suggest watercolor or ink. A large, irregular piece of dark grey, torn paper is layered over the top half of the cover. The title is written in white, cursive script on this paper.

I'm  
Divorced  
Now

Heartbreak and Healing

Umm Zakiyyah

# 1

## In Love with Love

“How are you doing?” my uncle asked, his expression conveying compassion and concern. I was nineteen years old and sitting across from him in the kitchen of my grandmother’s home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which was home to most of my father’s side of the family. I was in my second year of my undergraduate studies at Emory University, and I was visiting my family during the school’s winter break.

“I heard you got married, but it didn’t work out,” he said.

Internally, I cringed at the word “married” being used for the *nikaah* contract I had done the year before and annulled just months later. Marriage sounded too serious a term for that brief error in judgment. But I didn’t correct my uncle. In any case, I wouldn’t have known what to tell him to call it instead. My uncle was Christian, so in his world, there was only dating, engagement, or marriage; and I wouldn’t call my *nikaah* contract any of those things. And naturally, *nikaah* was not a term he was familiar with.



*“The wise do not consider the chains and shackles of jail to be the toughest restraints. The chains of attachment are the strongest of the ties that bind.”*

—Thich Nhat Hanh, *Fidelity*

Years later, I would refer to the brief *nikaah* contract as “that situation that happened when was eighteen years old.” Today I sometimes wryly think of an unhealthy emotional entanglement because, truly, that’s all it was; but not marriage. Till today, marriage seems too dignified a term for that experience.

“I’m better now,” I told my uncle honestly.

“What happened?” he said.

“Looking back,” I said, “I realize I wasn’t in love. But I was in love with being in love.”

His eyebrows rose in understanding, and he nodded reflectively. “It’s good that you understand that at such a young age,” he said. “It takes a lot of people years to know the difference.”

But as I reflect on my “love journey” today, I realize that my heart remains a student of what love truly is, and it has so much more to learn.



*Personal Reflection: What thoughts do you have about "being in love with love"? Can you relate? Why or why not?*