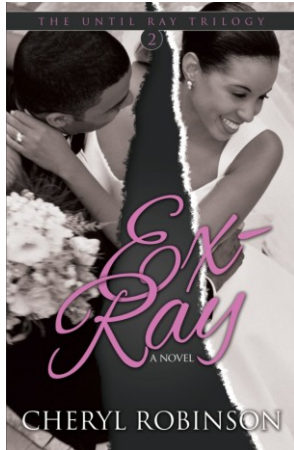

Ex-Ray

BY CHERYL ROBINSON

Second in the Until Ray trilogy



ABOUT THE BOOK

A story about the lasting implications of betraying a first love and what happens after the vows that are spoken are abruptly shattered.

Marriage isn't always forever, but what about love?

In this journey into second-chance love, author Cheryl Robinson invites us to ponder whether we would rekindle a romance with someone who had broken a promise to forsake all others.

Meet Ray and Sarita Saint. In 1987, they pledged to love, honor, and cherish each other until death. When Ray goes missing a year later, Sarita wonders whether he's dead or alive. While she was dreaming of their happily ever after, Ray was exploring greener pastures, a new relationship. Sarita—a virgin until marriage—took her vows seriously and believed Ray did, too. Instead, he left their marriage and their life in Detroit to reinvent himself. Sarita always held out hope that he would return one day. And he does. It's twenty-seven years later, and Ray is determined to find his one true love. What he discovers has him question everything he thought he knew about Sarita, as well as himself.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. As *Ex-Ray* begins, Sarita is searching for her husband, Ray, who she believes has been met with foul play. She fears he was carjacked because he's in a new car, and she goes to Miss King's house (Ray's mother) to find out if she knows where Ray is. Share your thoughts about not only the opening of *Ex-Ray*, but also the three scenes in that chapter where Sarita is searching for her husband. What were your thoughts as she was doing this?
2. In Chapter 2, Ray is introduced twenty-seven years later at a sports bar in Alpharetta, Georgia, with his "quasi" best friend Albert. It opens with the following paragraph:

"I glance down at my Rolex Submariner to check the time. I've worn it since 1987; it's the best watch I've ever owned. Sarita gave it to me for my twenty-fifth birthday, and I've never stopped wearing it. Aside from the clothes on my back and a shaving kit with a few odds and ends, it's all I took when I left her."

When Albert is introduced, he informs Ray he is divorcing his wife of thirty years. Between Ray's internal thoughts and the things he says to his wife, Eve, and Albert, what are your feelings about fifty-three-year-old Ray?

3. Describe each of the characters who stood out to you the most. Who was your favorite character and why? If EX-RAY was turned into a movie and you were the casting director, who would you hire to play each role?
4. When we first meet Sarita's childhood crush, Dr. Lex, did you immediately assume the two would connect romantically? At what point did you see that union taking a turn for the worse? Why do you think Sarita stayed in the relationship for so long? Fear? Low self-esteem? Depression? Have you or has anyone you know ever been in an abusive relationship? How were you or your friend able to break free? What would be your advice to someone who is in an abusive relationship?
5. Just when we think Sarita may be over Ray, she tells us that she isn't, that she still loves him and will always. In Chapter 21, when she is visiting Miss King, Sarita tells her that she is embarrassed by the way Ray left her and left everything behind as if he wanted to get away from her so badly. Miss King tells Sarita that she loved Ray "to a fault." What is your understanding of loving someone to a fault? Have you ever done that? Did you agree with what Miss King said?
6. What were your feelings about Miss King? Do you like her? Why, or why not? How much blame do you assign her for the way young Ray behaved? Did your feelings about her change as you continued to read *Ex-Ray*? If so, please share with your book club what made your feelings change.
7. Switch gears and go back to Ray and his reinvented life with Eve. Share your thoughts about Eve as she's first introduced. Ray described his wife as vain. "She's lost her sense of security, which was tied to the compliments strangers dished out to her over the years. It took me a while to realize how much stock Eve put into her face."
8. Do you believe that the only reason Ray left Sarita was because Eve was pregnant? Or do you think because that union was based on lies, he is now trying to backpedal to the person he knew without a shadow of a doubt loved him? Does Ray deserve a second chance with Sarita? Why, or why not?
9. Let's discuss the supporting characters Boone and Sharon and their relationship. In Chapter 10, we learn the struggles that the couple is going through. Share your thoughts about what Boone and Sharon are experiencing. Also, share your thoughts about the couple's marriage, in general, from the small glimpses you were given.
10. Let's talk about friendship. Sarita says, "I've been so busy worrying my friends with all my issues that I didn't even realize they had some of their own. Now I feel selfish. All this time, I've been treating our friendship like Second Avenue—one way. I need to be more like Woodward because friendship is a two-way street."
11. For those who read *Until Ray*, the first book of the trilogy, what revelation in *Ex-Ray* was most surprising and why?
12. In Chapter 11, Ray meets Dr. Glen, a mobile psychiatrist, at the Roasting Plant in downtown Detroit. He has agreed to only three therapy sessions with the psychiatrist because his cousin Vera paid for them, but it's pretty clear he needs therapy. Are his reservations about Dr. Glen valid? Why, or why not? Do you think in order for a psychiatrist/therapist to help someone they should share some similarities? Do you think that therapy is more widely accepted now, even in the black community?
13. Continuing with our discussing about mental health, in Chapter 19 Ray meets Dr. Glen at Detroit Vintage Coffee Shop. Please share your thoughts about that meeting and what was revealed. Were you surprised? Do you agree with Dr. Glen's assessment? Now, that you have seen even more of the mature Ray, also share your thoughts on him.

14. On page 283 in Chapter 22, Miss King tells her son, Ray, “You ain’t give nobody no answers, now you want ’em all.” Then, on page 284, she says to him, “You gettin’ what you deserve.” Do you agree with Miss King? As his mother, do you think she should have been more sympathetic toward him? What are your thoughts about what was discovered in that chapter and how things unfolded once Ray discovered the truth?
15. Let’s discuss your favorite scene. Read passages from it, if you like. Share with the group why it was your favorite, and share with the group what you are looking most forward to with book three.

ENHANCE YOUR BOOK CLUB

1. Coffee is a theme in the book. If you are in southeast Michigan, consider holding your book club discussion at one of the coffee houses mentioned in the book. If you’re outside of Michigan, consider meeting at a local coffee house, especially an independently owned and operated one, or at a Peet’s and enjoy the Major Dickason’s blend, or your favorite cup of tea or hot cocoa.
2. Let’s talk exes. On an index card or piece of paper, write down the name of an ex who you still think of today. Put the cards face down on the table and have the moderator select them one by one. When your ex’s name is called, please share your thoughts with the group about that person. Why do you still think about them today?
3. Music is also an underlining theme. Each part in the book is a song title, and Sarita and Boone can both sing. Let’s talk music, especially music of the ’80s and love songs. Was there a song that helped you get through a breakup? Is there a song that can play today and take you back decades?

AUTHOR BIO

Cheryl Robinson worked in corporate America for eleven years with both Chrysler Financial and Mercedes-Benz Credit, but she was always a creator at heart. At one time she aspired to promote comedy concerts because she has always enjoyed watching stand-up comedy. She has written eleven novels. *Until Ray* is her first trilogy. The third book of the trilogy will be released in June 2018. Cheryl is a native Detroit and attended Cass Technical High School. After graduating from Cass, she attended Howard University for two years and went on to obtain her Bachelor of Science degree from Wayne State University. She now lives in Central Florida.

Cheryl Robinson likes to keep in touch with her readers through her website www.untilraytrilogy.com and hosts monthly contests on her blog. She’s also available to interact with book clubs through Skype or Google Chat. For more information, please email: info@untilraytrilogy.com.

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