Introduction

You have arrived at a decision: you want a divorce or you are seriously thinking about it. Or perhaps your spouse has made that decision for you, and now you are forced to think about how to protect yourself. Regardless of who initiated it, the decision to divorce is rarely a sudden one. Perhaps when you look in the mirror each morning you say to yourself, “I need to get out of this marriage. It is no longer working and it is beyond repair. I need to start a new life.” Or maybe your spouse has made that decision. We all want to stay in love forever, but that is not always life’s reality. Nearly 50 percent of all marriages in the United States will end in divorce. Nobody wants to be part of this statistic, but when all hope for reconciliation is gone, sometimes divorce is the only avenue for recapturing the life you deserve.

Divorce is stressful and can be a painful process for everyone involved, including your soon-to-be former spouse, your family, and your children. The decision should not be made without serious consideration. Reading this book will not make your divorce easy, nor will it convince you that you should or shouldn’t get a divorce if you are not sure. However, if you or your spouse has made the tough decision to go ahead with a divorce, welcome to step one.

This book results from more than 25 years of practical experience and application. I have been practicing family law in Atlanta, Georgia, since June 1988. After graduating from Brandeis University near Boston and Emory University School of Law in Atlanta, I created a family law firm in downtown Atlanta. Our firm has a team of more than 25 professionals, including lawyers, paralegals, and clerks, making Kessler & Solomiany, LLC, one of the largest and
most prominent family law firms in the Southeast. Apart from my role as founding partner of Kessler & Solomiany, LLC, I am also active in the local and national legal communities. In 2011, I was elected chair of the Family Law Sections of the American Bar Association and of the State Bar of Georgia.

Prior to becoming the chair of the Family Law Section of the American Bar Association, I served the bar and the public in many ways, including as chair of the Family Law Section of the Atlanta Bar Association, as editor of the State Bar of Georgia’s Family Law Review, as a guest instructor at Emory University School of Law (teaching trial techniques), and as an adjunct professor at John Marshall Law School in Atlanta (teaching family law). I am truly fortunate and grateful to be in a position to help others.

In my more than 25 years of practicing family law, I have been involved in almost every type of case. I have experienced many different divorce and custody matters. What I discuss in this book results from actual outcomes from countless cases I have tried. These cases involved real, ordinary people just like you—not just the celebrities you see on television or in the tabloids. My clients are often people who tried therapy and marital counseling without success and attempted to salvage a relationship that no longer worked for either person. They are people, like you, who made the tough decision to seek a divorce for the health and welfare of themselves and their families.

Despite their differences with their former spouses, many clients agreed on emotionally charged issues such as, Who gets to stay in the house? Who gets the car? What happens to the family business? And, most important, where will the kids live and when will they see the other parent? I fought hard for my clients—their concerns became my concerns—and I cared about each of them during their case and was invested in what would happen to them after their divorce became final.
You owe it to yourself and your family to be fully prepared. This book offers meaningful and clear guidance on what to expect during every step of a divorce. These steps include finding a lawyer, developing a budget, filing and serving divorce papers, determining costs, taking deposition testimony, seeking custody of children, and dividing assets. *Divorce: Protect Yourself, Your Kids, and Your Future* is your basic road map for getting a divorce in America today. However, before proceeding, understand that no two divorces are alike and divorce laws vary from state to state. This book cannot and should not be a substitute for legal advice from a lawyer qualified to represent you in your city and state. This book will answer many of your questions and prepare you to ask the right questions as you proceed through this complex and emotional endeavor.

If you are ready to look forward and construct a new life for yourself, then the two most important steps for making this happen are (1) to meet with a lawyer and (2) to get informed. Only you can take the first step. *Divorce: Protect Yourself, Your Kids, and Your Future* is your personal guidebook for taking the second step. It is meant to be an easy-to-understand resource to assist you in navigating the overwhelming process of divorce. Hopefully this book will make a positive difference in your and your family’s journey. I am dedicated to helping every client feel safe and secure and to supporting clients as they move through life with courage and knowledge, creating the outcomes and futures they and you desire and deserve.