

Jordan

Spring

It has been exactly 350 days since I decided I'd be better off without him.

But even a year after our split, seeing Kevin move on with his life while I seem to be the one sitting in a holding pattern is painful. I thought I'd be living an incredibly exciting life rather than the same monotonous one I had with him. And that scares me. What if the problem wasn't with Kevin, but was with me? If he was truly my barrier to happiness, why am I still unfulfilled?

"Mommy! Come on!" Max tugs on my hand and leads me down the flower-lined, cobblestone path toward the condo that Kevin moved into a few weeks after he agreed to leave me. Even I have to admit that it's nice and cozy and most importantly, Max loves it and feels safe here.

"Are you excited to see Daddy?" I ask, even though I already know the answer.

"Yes, yes, yes!" he exclaims.

I'm glad someone is happy to see him. Personally, I'm hoping to avoid conversation during the "exchange".

My heart aches as I think of what we've put Max through this past year. Trying to explain complicated adult issues to someone who thinks SpongeBob should run for President is exhausting. Kids think in black and white, and this has been a year of gray. But, thankfully children are incredibly resilient and

after a rough couple of months, he has started enjoying the fact that he has TWO rooms full of toys. His acceptance has slightly eased my guilt. I still feel so much pressure, though, to pursue the life that I wanted so badly that I was willing to put his happiness at risk. Didn't I owe him that?

Max drops my hand the minute Kevin opens the door and jumps into his arms.

"Hey, buddy!" Kevin says, hugging Max tight and then setting him down. "Gimme five!"

Max slaps his hand and runs into the house without so much as a backward glance.

"Bye, Max!" I call out to deaf ears and shake my head. Men! Even at five years old, they seem to know the power of male bonding and selective hearing. I glance into the living room and notice a new flat screen television hanging over the mantle. My stomach drops the same way it did when I saw Kevin had purchased an expensive, leather couch and a top-of-the-line espresso maker a few months ago. And don't even get me started on the dog he randomly adopted.

Meanwhile, I haven't been able to bring myself to use his side of the closet, let alone commit to making a \$750 investment in my caffeine addiction. And with every large purchase he makes, I find myself becoming more and more panicked that he's moving on a little too quickly for my comfort. Or maybe I'm just afraid that once his place is properly furnished, he'll be ready to start dating someone else.

Kevin mistakes the reason for my grimace and smirks. "Sorry! Max is probably just excited to play with the new remote-control truck I got him."

"Uh, yeah. You sound really sorry about it," I force a laugh to hide the fact that both Max's dismissal and Kevin's penchant for large purchases and stray animals make my heart hurt.

He shrugs his shoulders as if to say, oh well, get over it. He doesn't need to say it out loud. It's pretty much been his attitude about everything since he moved out last year.

"So, this is it, huh?" I asked.

I had always thought that the demise of my marriage would be much more drama-filled. But as I watched Kevin neatly fold his underwear and socks into little piles next to the suitcase, I could almost convince myself that he was just leaving on an extended business trip.

Kevin looked up and for a moment I thought I saw a flicker of uncertainty in his eyes. I quickly looked away so that he didn't see the same thing in mine.

"I guess so, Jordan," he said in the same monotone he'd been using for months.

I tried to remember what his voice used to sound like when we were happy. When did he lose the will to insert inflection into his speech and why hadn't I noticed? My stomach lurched for the millionth time as I secretly wondered if I could have done something more. That if I had, we'd be packing for some wonderful weekend getaway rather than deciding which one of gets custody of Stan the guinea pig. And those were the easy decisions to make. The custody of our four-year-old was a whole other matter.

The thought of explaining to Max that Daddy doesn't live here anymore when he got home from preschool later destroyed my determination to remain unemotional. My eyes welled up with tears as I wondered if our inability to make this work would have a lasting negative effect on him. I had told myself over and over that the best thing I could do for Max was to make myself happy, and that in turn he'd be happy too. That I'd never stay in a bad marriage just for my child. I grew up with my parents constantly screaming at each other. In fact,

they divorced almost the minute my sister, Meg, and I finished high school. They were both so happy in the new lives they'd built, I had always wondered if they regretted not leaving sooner.

Kevin zipped our suitcase. Well, technically, it was *his* suitcase now. I think he got it by default, which bummed me out because it's part of a beautiful set we received as a wedding gift. How sad that even our luggage was splitting up.

He slowly walked towards the door. "Hey," he said as he turned around and saw the first teardrop roll down my cheek.

"This is what you want, right? What we want? You of all people should be able to see that everything will work out if we do this," making reference to the fact that I made a living as a spiritual counselor, telling other people what their futures held.

I smiled sadly and ran my hand through my thick blonde hair. If only it were that easy! With his finger, he wiped that lonely tear off my cheek and the tenderness of his touch made me consider getting down on my knees and begging him to stay. Suddenly, I was terrified of living the rest of my life without him. Maybe I just wanted too much?

Kevin had always told me I was selfish to think that I could have it all. That we should've just tried to be happy with the suffocating, tedious relationship our marriage had silently morphed into over the past six years. That it was okay to have sex once every month or two because passion just doesn't exist beyond the first year. That it was fine to sit in silence at the dinner table because we've already told all of our stories. But I had never bought it; I wanted to create new stories every day. I wanted to wake up and jump out of bed, excited at what life could bring.

He had said I was restless and bored easily, and I told him that he'd forgotten who he was. Eventually, it created a divide in our marriage that

started out small and over the years became the size of the Grand Canyon.

He planted a soft, small kiss on my lips to comfort me and time stood still for a moment. Almost involuntary, I leaned in and he kissed me again, a little harder, and ran his fingers through my hair. All of a sudden we were on the bed, making out like two teenagers who only have ten minutes before the parents get home. The irony of the situation had made me want to laugh and cry at the same time. We hadn't had sex in over three months, and Kevin hadn't kissed me like this since before we had Max. Figures that he chose right then to be passionate about something.

Afterwards, I'd barely had time to re-button my shirt when he started walking towards the door again. I felt dirty and ashamed, like I just had sex with some random guy after a night of clubbing and Don Julio tequila shots. I had a flash of what my newfound single life would entail and I felt sick.

Would I ever find someone else who got my quirky sense of humor or understood the fact that I become a complete bitch if I don't eat every three hours? And what about Max? Would I ever find someone that would be good enough to share the same space with him?

Kevin opened the front door. "I'll call you so we can discuss Max." Somehow, we'd been able to decide that I'd stay in the house and we'd share custody. Despite how hard it had been to make the decision to end our marriage, we were determined to be civil after seeing so many of our friends' divorces turn ugly. Deciding to split was exhausting enough. Who has the energy to fight over a leather ottoman?

I nodded. "Sure." I didn't trust myself to say anything else.

"Okay then," he said awkwardly as he gave me a mock salute.

Really? A mock salute? This was a defining moment in my life, and that's the image I'm going to have in my head for all eternity?

I decided to ruin the moment for him too and saluted right back. And

then I added, "Aye, aye sir!" to make it even worse.

He shook his head and laughed at me as he trotted down the stairs to his car. I followed him and watched as he got in and waved, as if he was heading out on a fabulous road trip. I waved back and didn't stop until my neighbor Jan looked over from watering her plants and called out, "You can stop waving now. He's gone!" She laughed, stopping when I didn't immediately join her. Perplexed, she walked to the edge of her lawn.

"Cheer up, Jordan!" she said, having no idea of what she'd just witnessed. I almost felt bad she didn't know. That she was about to put her foot in her mouth. But I just didn't have the energy to stop her. "It's not like he's leaving forever!"

I paused for a moment before answering. Now was a good time as ever to break the news. I walked over and touched her arm. "Actually, Jan, he is."

I guess I should be relieved that our divorce proceedings have been relatively drama-free so far, but Kevin's indifference since he walked out the door last year still bothers me. Even though I initiated our split, aren't I entitled to at least one "please take me back" begging session? Maybe there could even be a boom box involved? At the very least he could've drunk-dialed me on our wedding anniversary three months ago! Just one little nugget to let me know that this is hard for him too. But there's been nothing. Just pleasant phone calls, agreeable emails, and amiable exchanges. The ease in which he's living his life without me makes me question if I ever knew him at all.

I'm about to say something I shouldn't when Max calls down from the top of the stairs, the remote controller in his hand, "Daddy! Let's play! Come on!"

Although I'm happy Max idolizes Kevin, his recent preference for his father has made me feel like I'm losing him. What if it starts out small with

remote-control cars and baseball games and ends with Max asking if he can just stay at Daddy's house full-time, leaving me all alone?

"Duty calls," Kevin says. "I'll see you on Tuesday?" He offers just as his damn dog comes running around the corner.

"Yep," I say tightly, as Georgie jumps up on me and licks my face.

"Get off her, Georgie, she has to go," Kevin smiles as he pulls his collar. And when he shuts the door, I'm left standing on his front porch with nothing but slobber on my dress and the same pit in the bottom of my stomach I always have when I drop Max off here. Even though I know I'm leaving him in good hands, it still pains me to know he's living half of his life without me. I realize that it's selfish, but I wish there was a way all the best parts of his life could happen when he was with me.

I get back in the car, lean my head up against the steering wheel, and take a deep breath. Who knew this would be so hard? This time last year, I thought the world was my oyster. I was determined to right all the wrong turns I'd made during the eight years we'd been together.

I had big plans to be fearless, but the most exciting thing I'd done in the last twelve months was go out with a guy that got so drunk that he threw up on the dance floor while we were dirty dancing. Needless to say, that was my first and last Match.com setup.

Smoothing my dress, I pull down the rear-view mirror to reapply my lip gloss. Lost in thought until my cell phone rings, I realize I've completely lost track of time. Shit! It's my long-time client and friend Darcy, who's probably wondering where the hell I am.

I don't even let her say hello when I answer, "Darcy, I'm so sorry. Something unexpected came up, but I'll be right there."

“Jordan!” Darcy says in her raspy voice I’ve come to love. “A psychic should never tell her client that something *unexpected* happened to her. How many times do I have to tell you that?”

“Darcy, how many times do I have to tell *you*? I’m a spiritual counselor!” I’m strongly opposed to labels like psychic or fortune teller because they conjure up images of gypsies, crystal balls, and colorful scarves. I run a legitimate business, Jordan’s Wellness Center, and have many clients that have been with me for years.

But I understand the skepticism, it’s not like I’m an attorney or an accountant, even though Kevin used to tease me that I dressed like one. And I’m sure I could have pursued one of those professions, but I figured that I might as well use my gift to help *other* people. Because for whatever reason, I’ve never been able to see my own future. Total bullshit, right?

But one thing I’ve learned over the years is that you just can’t explain some things. Still, I think it freaks some of my clients out that I can tell them the most intricate details of their future but don’t have a damn clue what’s going to happen in my own. Because, believe me, had I known what my future would have looked like when Kevin left, I just might have asked him to stay.