

My husband is currently on a vacation with his mistress & I'm confronting them...

Hello Reddit! Forgive me as I am new to the online community. Just wanted to tell my story and maybe get some input. I [37F] accidentally found out last month my husband [38M] was using 'work trips' as an excuse to sleep with his also married coworker who lives across the country. When I say accidentally; he sent me a screen shot of Amazon purchases for our children and included at the bottom of the photo was a delivery to this woman. So yes, the worried wife in me checked his search history and email. It was all right there! I learned his November trip was a romantic getaway but this current one is luxurious! A spa resort complete with couples massages, couples cooking classes and monogrammed bathrobes from etsy. He mailed her a box of gifts a few days ago for Christmas (how sweet), he purchases sexy lingerie, sent her money on venmo and even started planning a January trip to Las Vegas. I was furious when I learn all this but I kept my composure.

My plan: He left this morning for his 'work trip' but before he left I gathered all evidence of his affair. I spent 4 weeks collecting emails, credit card statements, reservations and confirmations. I wrote him a 10 page letter, put it in an envelope and taped it inside the lining of his suitcase. I plan on sending a group text to him and his mistress right after check in telling them to enjoy their trip. I will also inform them that a letter is in his suitcase and that I want a divorce. I wrote a special section just for her and I want to make sure she sees it so I will be emailing her the letter as well.

He is currently in the air. My group text goes out this evening. Stay tuned...

UPDATE!

His flight landed 1 1/2 hours ago. He told me he would text me when he landed and he has yet to do so. I have text him twice, they

were delivered but not read. I checked our phone records and he text both me and her during his lay over. His email shows no Uber receipt from his final destination airport to his hotel. She must have picked him up. Something I probably should have clarified in my OP. She lives in the state he is visiting. So he flew alone.

I will be sending a group text to both him and his mistress in 2 hours as that will be 4pm their time and check in.

UPDATE #2

Sent pictures of our children and he did not respond. FYI he is in the middle of the desert. My texts are going through green which puts a monkey wrench in my plan for a group text to him and his mistress. Need suggestions. Should I call the hotel? Connect right to their room. I worked so hard for this, it has to be tonight. HELP!

UPDATE #3

Thank you to everyone standing by and waiting. My best friend has come to my house to help me through this. It seems my texts are going through green (undelivered) but when my friend tried it is blue and delivered. HE HAS BLOCKED ME! I guess that helps his guilt. The plan now is to call the hotel. Will wait a few minutes after check in to make the call. Very soon. Please stand by.

UPDATE #4

Like most of you predicted he does not care, He had zero answers for my questions. That was. the most hurtful part. But guess what, I have all the emotional support and economic support so i'm not mad. Every question I asked he had no response because his mistress was sitting there. I suspect when he is home alone with me, his answers will be different. I have made sure that he will not emotionally and financially fuck me because I have secured support from family and friends. He can go FUCK himself!!!!!!

UPDATE #5

Called his hotel room. Talked to his mistress and finally lost my shit. He ended up calling me a few minutes later and had zero empathy. I'm shocked, but I'm not. He said a divorce was in order and fought me on nothing. I expected him to be sad, he was not, but thats ok. I started packing up his shit, I have some great friend who helped me put everything in the garage. Good riddance? I guess so...

The Morning After

I wake this morning broken. My house is in shambles as I went on a rampage yesterday ripping photos off the wall, throwing his stuff in piles on the floor and breaking random objects in anger. Now that I've had a nights sleep I feel that I am a bit clearer in my thinking as I analyze the 'conversation' we had yesterday. He was different on the phone. That was not the man I know, but who was the man I've known? Because everything was a lie. The only thing he cared about on the phone was getting the kids. Which is perfectly ok, he should want to see his kids. But he refused to answer any question I had or admit to anything. I personally feel his lack of remorse was because he was sitting in front of his mistress. If I confronted him at home this would not have been his reaction. When he comes home Monday night I expect to see a different man. Also, in my conversation with the mistress I learned she is recently separated.

I called my mom. That was hard. While she and my dad have always been loving and supporting it was hard to make that phone call. I felt like a failure. I know it wasn't my doing but to admit that I made a poor choice in a spouse was difficult. Was this all because of a mistake I made 13 years ago? Honestly it doesn't matter. I have 2 days to empty my house of his things.

Who do I tell? Do I call his dad? Do I tell his mother? Best friend? Work buddies? I wish there was a manual on how to do

this because I'm lost. Even with all my preparation I'm still humiliated.

Luckily he did not take his house keys when he left. So no need to change the locks, I'll be removing his keys and sending him on his way. I don't plan on seeing him when he gets home Monday night. Doors are locked, everything you own is in the garage, have your people talk to my people and I'll see you never.

Preparing for the Return

My friends and family have been wonderful. I am so fortunate to have such great people in my life. Yesterday they came to help me move all of his clothing to the garage. His collectibles were all packed up and sitting here, waiting to be appraised. It took a very long time and I was exhausted afterwards; but it was necessary. I honestly don't think he expects me to have gone to such great lengths to remove him from my life. Because I was so emotional when I confronted him there is a chance that he thinks I will want to reconcile. Fat chance, buddy. His flights lands a little before 10pm tonight. When he Ubers back home the doors will be locked. He told me on the phone he was just getting his car and leaving. I will be holding him to that. Something I should have mentioned earlier, the house is in my name only. He had no credit when we first started looking so everything is in my maiden name and purchased by me. Health insurance, car insurance, cell phones, utilities are all in my name. The only thing his name is on is his car. I think he realizes now that could all come back to bite him. I don't want a messy divorce, I'm willing to listen to his demands and try and meet in the middle on as many things as possible. He obviously doesn't care anymore so I'm going to do my best to not care and treat this like a business deal.

The Dust has Settled

It's been a few days since his return. For a man who so diligently planned a secret retreat with his mistress he took no time to plan for his return 'home.' He has been living in the

basement since Monday. I allowed him to watch the children open gifts on Christmas but he has since returned to the basement. We have contacted 3 mediators and have appointments next week to start the mediation process. It's obviously over. We had a conversation/argument upon his return and he actually asked about reconciliation. I laughed. I laughed uncontrollably. Of course he pushed blame stating that our marriage has been over for a long time. Well, that's news to me. His actions of an affair were selfish and avoidant. He didn't want to have that hard conversation with me about counseling or divorcing and this route was easier and a lot more fun. Let's face it, he likes the attention of 2 women loving and pining over him. Well, I'm not longer playing that game. She wins, and oh what a prize he is! I have been amicable about talking about the terms of our separation. My biggest hang up is her. He may continue seeing her and I have questions about her character. What kind of woman/mother cheats with a man she knows is married and knows has children? When I confronted her on the phone last Saturday and asked her that question she was silent. I asked if she was 'sorry' and it was as if the line went dead. That kind of person I do not want around my children. People who show no remorse, especially when they are in the wrong, are not kind people.

I have found solace in friends and family and thank you to everyone's recommendation of ChumpLady. I'm half way through the book, read through the website and find it so helpful. Thank you again to everyone. I can't believe the outpouring of support. To the trolls, sorry you think I'm an unfit and inattentive wife, but cheaters cheat because they want to. Thank you again to all, not sure if you want a mediation update or if my story is over. Either way, I'm happy to have 'met' you all.

Where is the 'fault'?

If you listen to the books and advice always given about cheaters it all says the same thing: It's not you, they made a choice. MY STBX insists things were bad. While I don't think we

were Pam and Jim or Lucy and Ricky, I think things were good. This process has made me review who I am, who I've been and who I want to be. Could I have made changes? Yes. Was I perfect? Absolutely not. But my decisions and actions were never detrimental to our marriage. They were more like sacrifices. And now I'm having those sacrifices thrown at me and I'm being called neglectful. Is all this about attention? A narcissistic need to be the apple of someone's eye? Him and the AP are now blissfully in the honeymoon stage. Vacations, late night phone calls like teenagers, present buying, etc. But what happens when the other shoe drops? What happens when she sees that he has very little patience with children? That he will walk past a sink full of dishes completely blind to them? When he doesn't pay the phone bill for 2 months because he is spending money on silly gadgets? What then? While it's not my problem, I'm sure his AP will take issue with these things. Perhaps then she will be put in the situation I've been in for a decade. Should she be the glue and hold it all together or should she neglect responsibilities for his neediness? I've been told by him (someone who is having a relationship and spending large sums of money on someone else) that I'm at fault. Perhaps, but what about the decades of cleaning up your messes? Maybe if I would have had 2 hour conversations with him every night things would be different, but to be honest, I'm happy I'm here. Now reflecting back I see how under appreciated I was. How neglected I was. All these year I thought I was helping but I was really being taken advantage of and this affair is no different.

Just a word of advice to all the mess cleaners, excuse makers, and spouse sheltering people reading this. Stop. Stop now. I've learned that all the 'helping' is simply them learning how to manipulate you. Draw that line in the sand. Prepare for an uncomfortable situation when they start to stumble under the pressures of real life. But don't lose yourself. I lost myself years ago and it's not a place you want to be.

Mediation & The Move.

We had our first mediation appointment via Zoom yesterday. It was very amicable, but only because I don't want to fight and I just want this to be over. He apparently wants nothing. Not the house, not the furniture, not what he's entitled to of my pension; he just wants to be done as well. As I've been packing up things in the house to declutter I've been offering him things, but he wants nothing. I suspect the moment our marriage is dissolved he will be packing up his collectables and clothing and driving across the country to live with her. I guess I should be ok with this as I don't want to be married to him anymore. It just kills me that he will be moving in with her and helping her raise her 2 children while mine are fatherless. It makes me so angry. Seething. The man who was abandoned by his father is now doing the same thing. Something he said would never ever happened because of the mental issues it has given him today. Well, it looks like that, as well as mostly everything else, was a lie. Again, I take solace in the fact that their honeymoon phase will be short lived. Reality will smack them both in the face and she will realize that he can be more hurt than help.

While I wish him well and hope the best, our kids deserve more than a Christmas/Easter/one week in the summer father. No dad at basketball games, cub scouts, birthday parties and school plays. Meanwhile AP will have him and her children's biological father. I guess nothing in life is fair and my boys will have to learn that lesson early than I had hoped.

He's Gone.

My STBX left yesterday morning to visit her. I told him to go. I didn't want to spend NYE with him and our COVID circle friends who we celebrate with have zero interest in seeing him either. He booked a flight 30 minutes after I told him to go. My only stipulation was that he is back for this weekend as it's my birthday and I really need a day to myself. I've watched the kids

for 3 weekends now while he went to see his mistress, I thought I at least deserved my birthday to relax. He text me while he was boarding that he won't be home for my birthday. Well then... He claims when he booked this he booked a return for the evening of my birthday. When he tried to change it he was put on standby, it would cost \$1000 to change, it was a red eye etc. The excuses kept coming. He apparently does not realize I have access to the internet as well and flights are less than \$300 with the airline he flew. I told him this and he said those flights weren't there when he booked (lies) and he will take care of it. I just want him to be honest. If you don't want to be here for my birthday, just say it. If you don't want to spend the day with your children, just tell me. I can't force you to be a parent. I told him the flights were available and affordable, it's his choice to rebook. Ball is in your court. That's all I can do, right? Stay tuned for an update on his return this weekend..

NYE Nightmare.

It was 12:40am on NYE and there was still no call from him. I was angry for no other reason than I explained to the kids that even though daddy wasn't with us he would call at midnight to talk to them and wish them a Happy New Year. I was made to be a liar. So, I text my STBX and his excuse was, 'they are with their friends, I didn't want to bother them'. Excuse me? Bother them? You mean you didn't want your kids to bother you is what you are really saying. If I was across the country on NYE without my kids I would have called and done the countdown with them via facetime. I think most parents would. But not him. He said, "If you would have told me that you told the kids I'd call then I would have." He tried to spin this on me, that I created this mess. Why do I have to tell you that you need to call your children at midnight? This small act said a lot to me. Our children are not a priority. I guess he didn't want to ruin his perfect vacation at his new girlfriend's house with her children. He has a nice new family now. Today is my birthday and he returns this evening. I told him

in my NYE text that I will speak to him on the 12th, our next mediation meeting because I'm done. I tried to be civil for the kids but he is not putting forth the effort for them.

Liar Liar, Pants on Fire.

The past few days have been strange. We rarely talk (a decision on both our parts) and when we do it's about mediation, plans moving forward, or the kids. We have been civil and communicating well about those items. We are also friendly in front of the children as not to upset them. The situation is strange because we are getting along, there is no arguing, it's a shared focus to just get through mediation and divorce. That's fine by me. Last night while I was cleaning the kitchen I heard him on the phone in the basement. I guess he didn't realize the door was left open by one of the children. Not wanting to be a part of the drama anymore I went to close the door. At that point I heard him tell her how 'crazy' I have been acting. Excuse me? We don't speak and when we do it's very civil. How is that crazy? Well, he proceeded to tell her about a conversation we had and he lied about everything. While the conversation part was true he told her I exploded, I was in a rage, I was crying etc. None of that was true. He explained how he laughed in my face at my rage, also not true because there was no rage. I had told him awhile back before the NYE debacle that I would start dating eventually and he proceeded to tell her that I was bragging about guys I'm meeting. So far from the truth. I slammed the basement door. I'm sure he knows I heard. So I ask, 'Why the need to lie and make me a villain?' We aren't staying together, I have no reason to fight with you anymore, that's why we are paying a mediator. Why start lying to your new girlfriend that you love? How is that a good way to start a relationship? I don't know what is happening here...

This is my concern: This woman and him are in love and want to start a life together. Ok, that's fine, God bless and congrats. But, this woman only knows me by the stories (which I'm assuming are all lies) he has told her about me. If he does move across the

country to be with her, how can I trust a woman who hates me because of misinformation to treat my children properly? I don't care if she hates me personally, I'll still sleep fine at night, but now I'm worried about sending my kids in the summer to stay with them. I want to confront him about this but I know I can't. Maybe it's not that I can't, but I don't know how. Also, he has told no one we are separated and definitely has not told people why. How come? You initiated this, you cheated, you are happy now, so why can't you tell people? He told his father that he was bringing the kids alone to visit him because he and I 'weren't seeing eye to eye at the moment.' What?! I would assume he's afraid to face the music or is just finding comfort in the little love bubble he has created. He chooses to not face reality. He has yet to look for an apartment for when the divorce is finalized but has booked another fight out to see her for Valentine's Day. He is refusing to face reality and it's so frustrating.

Mediation and Empty Promises

Yesterday was our second mediation appointment. While it was amicable, there was some obvious tension. The tension was not on my end but more on his. Let me explain... During our first mediation we brought up the topic that he might move out of state. At yesterday's meeting I asked what we would do about custody if he moves to this particular state. When I mentioned the state by name the mediator was confused. This prompted her to ask him why this state that is so far away. His answer? "Well....." Then silence. He couldn't put into words the fact that he was leaving to be with his girlfriend. I had to finally chime in realizing we are paying by the hour that he was moving to be with his girlfriend. I realized later that was the first time he had semi-confessed to having an affair and a girlfriend to anyone. If you love this person so much why can't you just say it out loud? That whole situation confuses me.

Anyway, when it comes to dollars and cents I will be fine. He will also be fine. He will have enough to do what he needs and so

will I. We have agreed to a physical custody scenario that allows him weekend and dinner visits. Fine by me, I want my boys to have their father. But, the situation becomes a bit more difficult when he moves. While he said yesterday he plans to stay here at least a year, I doubt that will actually happen. When he does move across the country he wishes to return for one weekend of every month to see the boys. Again, I'm fine with this scenario but where will he stay that weekend? He has no family. Will he just be taking the boys to a hotel? Again, I don't think he actually thought this through. This is a problem I/we will tackle when he does decide to move.

Lastly, the mediator said it could take about 2 months to finalize everything. He and I spoke after the session to go over some facts and figures and I brought up the tentative finalization date of our marriage. I told him how 2 months is a good amount of time to save some money and find an apartment to which he agreed. I also reminded him about his promise to not return to visit her until our divorce is finalized or he has a place to live. He quickly became frustrated telling me that he knew and tried to shut down the conversation. I told him I'm happy that we are on the same page but I'm not budging. If you leave while you still live here you can not come back, that is something we both agreed to.

Now the big question remains; Who does he break a promise with? Obviously it's a win win for me, stay home and help me with the kids while you save \$500+ and move out quickly or leave to visit her and I get you out of the house sooner. I'm happy with either decision. I just want to move on with my life and enjoy my moments with my children.

Out For A Swim

When I took this dive into the Reddit community I had no idea where I would land. I thought my feet would hit shallow ground and I would be ankle deep on the banks in an uncomfortable swimsuit all alone. But to my surprise this deep ocean of Reddit readers have engulfed me into their warm waters and I am

surrounded by a sea of support. For this I am thankful. I am also so touched by the droves of people who have reached out for advice or offered their own experiences as lessons to be learned. To the ones seeking advice I tell them, I am not an expert swimmer. I am merely doggy paddling through this sea of hurt and confusion. Please don't use me as a sign of strength. Because the truth is, I am not strong, I am you. I am the woman who reads because they are suspicious of late night phones call her husband takes. I am the spouse who has shouldered the entire family and is in desperate need of support. I am the woman who misses affection from her husband who is next to her in bed every night. I. Am. You. To those people who have yet to catch their partner cheating but are suspicious, trust your gut. Cheating is a coward's choice so be braver than them and face the truth. To the spouse who is 'the fixer' and takes on every challenge, take a step back. When you help (even with good intention) you are actually just hurting yourself. To the spouse who has tried everything to receive physical attention from their partner but to no avail, their affection is probably going somewhere else. These are lesson I wish I could have told myself months, if not years ago. Listen to me. Or just listen to you.

To the sharks in water who call me a 'bad mom', 'a crazy bitch', 'fake' or even just think I'm out of my mind, you will find no blood in this water. So it's best you move on and find a thread where the OP will chum the water for you. It's so very easy to read and judge, this I understand. I just hope that if this ever happens to you that you will be as brave, logical and composed as you expect others to be. If not, you will find sharks circling you as well. So I hope you are as strong of a swimmer as you claim to be.

If you are still reading, my saga/survival continues. Our final mediation papers will arrive this week. We were able to settle everything at the last meeting on 1/12 and the documents just need our signature. After that, the divorce papers need to be served and filed with the county. Then we await our court date which will be done via Zoom. Yes, a bit anticlimactic, but it will still serve its purpose of divorcing. He has started (finally) to look

for an apartment but nothing is to his satisfaction. Maybe he is being picky or maybe he is comfortable living in the basement. Either way, once the divorce papers are stamped he needs to be gone. He has started making phone calls to her during the day and I can hear him giggling downstairs. I'm happy he is happy, I really am. That isn't passive aggressive. I know I will be happy one day too, he just got there first and that's ok. I feel like my life is in limbo right now. I can't move forward because I'm chained to the past. I'm hoping his move will be soon. I suspect he wants out for February 1st so he can go visit her for Valentines Day. I hope for his sake (and mine) that he makes his deadline. I will update again after I receive the mediation paperwork and divorce papers are served. I'm sure that will stir up a lot of thought and emotion so I'm certain it will be a doozy. Till then, I'll keep doggy paddling.

Souvenirs

If you have been following along then you know that there was a chance he would leave for Valentine's Day to go visit her. Well, he left this morning. He told the kids, "I'm going" as he walked out the door leaving me to explain a few hours later that he had to leave to 'work' when they started asking for him. I have learned that I can't have expectations. Just because I would try to be more honest with the kids doesn't mean he would. I was really proud of the fact that I didn't even engage him in the discussion/debate/argument of going. Yes, I had loudly vocalized some feelings a week ago when he told me he was going but I have not engaged him about it since. All I asked was for his flight info so that I would know when to expect him back. He did not provide this information; maybe he thinks I'm not entitled to it. Either way, he left and I was fine. While we had the conversation multiple times (in which he agreed) that he would not visit her again till he had an apartment he has reneged on that agreement. Shocker. He claims that he has every right to be here (which he does legally) and he can do as he pleases. He put a down payment on an apartment a few days ago but says he doesn't know when

he is moving. What? The bills he pays in the house are less than the child support he will have to pay, so I think his decision to stay longer might be a financial one. I've offered him any piece of furniture he wants in the house. I even offered to pay for 1/2 of the cost of bunk beds for the boys. I just need him to leave. I have no idea why he is dragging his feet.

BUT, I learned through a mutual friend and former work colleague of theirs that she recently had COVID. When I say recently, I mean the board of health from her state said she could stop quarantining 3 days ago! But what about her kids that are in the home? Where they living there during her quarantine? Are they positive? Perhaps they are asymptomatic? Will my STBX be bringing me and our children home a COVID souvenir?

I'm LIVID.

COVID Insensitivity

For all those messaging me with concern and for updates, I apologize for my tardiness. It has been a heartbreaking 2 weeks. To amend for my absence I will be posting 2 updates tonight.

Let me start from the beginning. My STBX left for his 'get away' on 2/12 and did not return until 2/15. During his blissful vacation my family and I suffered a great loss of one of our most beloved member to COVID. I was a mess. Everyone I love was devastated. I called my STBX on 2/13 and told him the prognosis was not good. It was loud where he was; there were children yelling. He informed me he was outside with her kids. Wow. Can't remember the last time he took our children outside but I digress. I shouldn't have expected him to care about my bad news but he was concerned. I guess there is still a decent bone somewhere in him. That concern would not last long though.

Upon his return, as he usually does, he schedules a COVID test. He scheduled one for 4 days after his return but due to snow in our area he did not go. This I understand, the weather can not be controlled. Then he told me he rescheduled for 4 days later and then does not go. When I questioned him his response was, "I feel

fine." I suspected since she probably got a negative COVID test shortly before his arrival he felt safe in not getting one. Not until Monday, 3/1, did he finally get tested. A full 2 weeks later. Why? You know my family just suffered a terrible loss to COVID, how could you be so reckless and insensitive? The insensitive question is rhetorical. I obviously know the answer already.

The Real Monster

The day is approaching. Large boxes are being delivered to the house daily containing new furniture to be assembled. The sounds of packing tape being ripped from the spool flood the house every evening. He's moving out.

I'm over joyed! I'm so happy that I have actually started engaging him in conversation. Yes, we have to chat to figure out child support and scheduling but now I'm so ecstatic he's leaving I even ask about his move. I feel like a kid at Christmas! While we were discussing his move (what he would be taking from the home and the schedule for seeing the children) I asked if he planned to visit her. No, this wasn't me prying, we need to set an overnight and weekend schedule for the kids and I was hoping to be accommodating to any trips he had planned. But then my curiosity got the best of me but for a good reason; our children. I asked if she plans to come here to meet the kids. He replied in the affirmative and said she may come. Well, good for you both but I would like to meet her before she meets the children. He went silent. I could tell he was rolling thoughts around in his head or perhaps trying to figure a way out of this situation but he came up empty. He honestly wanted to know why I needed to meet her. Excuse me, come again? You really think I would let my children spend time with someone I didn't know? I'm the mother that interviews babysitters, why would you think I wouldn't want to meet her? He's claims to be worried that I won't be civil but he knows me better than that. I have nothing to gain being rude to her. It's just ammo. I refuse to play that game. Plus why would I care? I don't want him. That's your prize now hunny, congrats!

But he recognizes that he can't stop me in this. I have every right to meet her as he would to meet someone I am dating. When it comes to the kids, he/we can't keep secrets.

I think the real concern about us meeting is this: she will realize I'm not the horrible monster he made me out to be. His plans of assassinating my character to build himself up or to receive pity from her and the constant gaslighting will be revealed. She will see that I am not pining over him, quarreling with him, and that I'm genuinely a good person. Maybe she will see that he might be the real monster...

Like Father, Like Son

My STBX was quiet. More quiet than usual. Almost sulking. I don't understand his motivations anymore and what he actually cares about so I left it alone. Not my business to care and comfort anymore, right? That evening, after the children went to bed he sat alone at the dining room table. It was as if he was waiting for me to address him. I did not. Sulk, that's your issue, not mine. After he received no attention from me he made the big announcement. He claims he told everyone what happened between us, including his father. Then, oddly enough, he started to cry. Full ugly tears. I thought these were tears of embarrassment and shame. He then proceeded to tell me the conversation he had with his father was the first time his dad has actually acted like a father towards him. While that statement in itself is unsettling, it is also confusing. I'm guessing his father supported him? I know if this was my son I'd support him but also have some strong words about how he went about this and how he should probably proceed in the future. But it looks like he received 100% support. So while I understand, I don't understand. Something was wrong here..

Last week was my youngest son's birthday. I had asked my STBX if he would like to invite his father over for cake. He text him several times with no response. He learned through their conversation/confession last night that his father was in another

state for work. Ok, understandable. But here is the kicker, he went away, with a new girl he is dating. Why is this strange you ask? He just asked his wife of 30 years for a divorce at the end of January. So this makes me think; is adultery a learned behavior? My FIL abandoned my STBX when he was 9 yrs old, the same age as my eldest son now. Is there a pattern here? Or is all this just a crazy coincidence?

I could not help myself, I messaged my MIL. She confirmed they were divorcing. I asked if there was any infidelity and she claims to her knowledge, no. But I know better. She said that my FIL started to withdraw from her. He started picking fights for no reason and avoided interacting with her last fall. Then in January he said he wanted a divorce so that 'he could find himself'. A man who is in his 60's, close to retirement, needs to find himself? Sounds like a cop out to me. But now that I've learned there is another woman (which my MIL does not know) I understand that this bloodline of men are truly selfish and unfit partners.

I know all the comments will tell me to tell my MIL about the infidelity on his part and I plan on doing so. I just need a little more information before I break the news to her.

Moving Trucks & Spilled Tea

It happened. FINALLY. He's gone. My basement is so empty and quiet it echos. The day he moved a box truck pulled up to my house and my children ran to the window to watch. I didn't know how to distract them as I was working. I was able to pull them away from the window with the promise of treats once they were at the table to do school work. My youngest though would not budge. After 45 minutes of loading, the truck pulled away and my STBX drove off. My youngest came away from the window looking sad. I immediately talked to him and tried to comfort him. After a few moments he asked, "Is the truck coming back?". I was confused. I told him that we were staying here and no one else was moving. Apparently he wasn't upset that daddy was leaving; he just wanted the truck. I'm not sure how I should feel about this.

I made appointments with a child therapist for both my kids. While they seem fine now I'm not sure what the future holds for their mental state. I'm afraid this will be repressed and issues will arise down the road.

His friends have been reaching out to me. Now that they 'know' what happened I'm getting text and facebook messages asking how I am. I know in reality they are just being nosey. They may care a little but they just want me to spill the tea. Welp, I put the kettle on. I wasn't surprised to learn that my STBX wasn't completely honest with them. He failed to mention traveling during a pandemic to visit her. I guess that would make him look reckless? Selfish? Idiotic?? The wives of his friends are in shock. They considered my STBX a friend that could be trusted, a man who had it all together. Basically, they trusted my STBX would be a good influence on their husbands. Boy were they wrong.

Concerning my MIL; I have not told her. This is because I don't have any real information. What I did tell her though was to do some investigating to see if he is having an affair. This would be to her benefit as her state has adultery laws. They are still legally married and living in the same house so to my knowledge, the law applies. But she seems hesitant. I think she is just afraid to find out the truth and then she has to look at him everyday. This I understand. No person spouse should have to experience that. I know it was gut wrenching for me and perhaps many of you reading can relate as well; I just don't want to be the one to tell her. Perhaps this is because I'm still upset I had to find out on my own and my STBX was too much of a coward to come clean. Why should a cheating spouse get the thrill of cheating and be relieved of the burden of having to confess?*

Thread #2: Confronting my husband while he's on vacation with his mistress.

Hello Reddit.

If you are just catching my story at thread 2 then I suggest you back track to the original post because man oh man, its a doozy. Once you've read I think you will understand what thousands of readers have already come to know; my STBX is garbage.

Final Fight with Insight

Before the move, my STBX and I had one last argument. But in this argument a big piece of information was leaked on his behalf. He demanded to know why we failed as partners. I'm not sure why he is asking me why **we** failed if **he** is the one that cheated.. I gave him the same reasoning I gave him months ago when we talked about this. He said that answer was bullshit. How can my opinion or insight be bullshit? Let me explain. My STBX and I were great; before kids and responsibilities. But when other people (our children) and responsibilities (work, bills, house upkeep) came into play things changed. Honestly, he didn't like that our honeymoon phase was over. That's what he loves the most and why his shiny new relationship is so appealing. He didn't like that our money for nights out now went to plumbers, school clothes and the gas bill. Was this another case of being a narcissist and needing all the attention? Perhaps so. Could I have done better to make him a priority? Probably, but then something else of importance would have been neglected. Perhaps if he would have helped me carry the load and took more responsibility there would be more time for us. I was the parent that went to every school function, I took the kids food shopping with me on a Saturday so he could have some relax time, I made all the meals, I did the doctor appointments, I called the repair men, I bought the clothing, I cut coupons, I tended to sick children, I gave baths, I

made plans to visit his family, etc. Long story short; the list of responsibilities he had was minimal or close to nonexistent. I just always thought we would (more like I would) sacrifice and work now only to relax and enjoy later. Maybe that was my mistake. But I showed my love for him daily and always did for him. I did more so he could do less and enjoy his free time and be happy and relaxed. Because when he was stressed, the whole house was tense. But thats a story for another day...

What this conversation did shed light on was his reasoning for talking to her. The reason I suspected; attention. He confessed she gave him attention whenever he wanted it. Everything was about him. Sure, that's easy to do when your relationship is simply text messages and phone calls. But what happens when it's real and daily? I asked him what happens when he moves there and she starts putting her children first? Or her work becomes a priority? Or they struggle with bills? You know, real life and all. He had no answers. I asked what happens when this fantasy long distance romance becomes a tough, daily reality. Again, I don't think he thought that far in advance. Can he stay on his best boyfriend behavior? Can everything stay magical when the world stops revolving around him/them? Looks like he will find out soon enough.

I understand I will probably receive criticism for this post. People will say I neglected him so he had no other option but to leave. But let's not over look the fact that he neglected everything in our life so the slack was mine. This story is not new. Some spouses have been doing this for ages. And what is their reward? The spouse they tried so desperately to give a 'better' life to leaves/cheats. Is this manipulation? Is this me trying so hard to make everything easier for everyone else that I sabotage myself? All I wanted was an equal partner, but that's something that I never got.

Mediation Meltdown

So after weeks, no, correction, months, our mediation paperwork is completed. What a relief...or so I thought. While we had talked previously and agreed to everything there was one section we never mentioned which our mediator added. It reads as follows:

"New Partners: Each part agrees that they will introduce a new partner to the children only if he/she is in a committed relationship for at least ___ months. Each parent will inform the other party prior to introducing a new partner to the children."

While that wasn't something that was discussed I think that's an important piece of the puzzle. My STBX does not think that statement needs to be included in our legal agreement. His statement was, "That's a conversation between you and I that a court or judge has no business being in". While I see his point, my point was this: we are divorcing. Nothing can be left to a handshake promise. We could agree to something verbally and because we both have legal custody we could re-neg on the agreement and deny access to new partners. Having this in black and white protects us both. He swore he wasn't signing it until that portion was removed. But if the mediator included it, then this must be common practice to do in a divorce. So this prompted me to ask, "When does she plan to come here to visit?" That must be the motivation, right? She must be planning a trip here soon and he had plans to introduce her to the kids. He claims there are no plans for her to visit our area. Well, if that's the case, what's the harm with waiting 3 months?

But let me be clear, to everyone reading, my motivation in this is the well being of my children. Their father has just left. They need to become accustomed to this new way of life with 2 homes and visiting hours before we complicate things more with a girlfriend or boyfriend. I've also made appointments for them next month (that was the soonest I could get) with a psychologist to help them process this divorce. Now is not the time to make this more complex. Every parent wants to nurture and protect

their children. His AP waited 5 months to introduce him to her children; why is it not ok for us to wait too then?

Changes

I had to sit down this past week and really think. What is more important to me, my pride or moving on? I said from the beginning that I want him to be a father, to be involved and active in their lives. So, we made some changes last night. After a talk, plus an argument, followed by more talking we altered our custody agreement to give him more time with the kids. I know from the past 10 years that he has never been an active father. Perhaps now he feels the need to be? Either way, I'm hopeful this decision will be a good one for the boys.

Now I know many of you may say he is undeserving but I am making this decision and not regretting it because I know it is temporary. He will be moving in a year or so. Of this, I have no doubt. Once he packs up his belongings and he drives across the country our arrangement will change. I'm a bit upset the children will become used to having him around only to have him leave in a year. That was a big motivator in my reluctance to agree to this custody change. I have tried to make the best decisions for my boys and I feel like my STBX is just concerned with 'winning'. I also got him to agree to put our new terms and terms for when he leaves (including the altered CS payments) in black and white in our mediation paperwork.

I think the delay by our mediator to supply the paperwork lead to him overthinking and wanting to change the agreement. He agreed in January but now claims he never agreed to it. So I guess our mediator just created these terms which we discussed out of thin air? Ok, sure buddy. I also think his girlfriend chirped in his ear a bit about what he should do. I'm confident he told her what a wonderful and involved father he has been over the years and I'm sure that prompted her to encourage him for more custody. Little does she know my STBX doesn't even have car seats in his car because he never takes them anywhere. He doesn't know

their doctor's names. He doesn't know their quirks and he has zero patience for them. But I'm sure he has claimed to be 'father of the year'. Maybe the increase in custody will prompt him to move sooner? He took the boys for an over night last week and when he dropped them off he was grumpy. He claimed all he did was cater to them, didn't have time to eat and barely got any work done all day. Oh, you mean like me everyday since you left? He's not prepared. But it's ok, I'm done sheltering him. These are your kids and now you can see what it takes to care for them and balance everyday life. Maybe now he will see why I never had the time or energy to cater to him.

Boundaries

Last week was our final, final mediation meeting. My STBX claims that the mediation we had in January was not the final. I was happy that our mediator confirmed in the meeting that January's meeting was the final and his changes are an addition. Either way, it's done. Mediation completed. Now starts the actual divorce process. I told him that I'd like to start this ASAP and his response was, "I know you want to rush through this but this takes time and can't be done when you want it to be done." So hold on, let me get this straight. You were the one who cheated for months and has a girlfriend, but me wanting to complete our divorce paperwork makes me the one that is rushing to end the marriage? No, sir. You have rushed to end it. Actually, you ended it. Now we are just completing the paperwork but the marriage was dissolved in September when you started sending her flowers. Or perhaps in October when you started flying to her state during a pandemic to have sex. So pardon me if I'd like to cut the cord legally. You have already severed it emotionally.

Even though we aren't legally divorced he has been taking the kids 3-4 nights a week on a rotating schedule. Truth be told, I'm happy he is stepping up but my children don't like it. When I tell them they are going to daddy's they cry. Because my ex lives in an apartment building and my children have grown up in a single

family home; my oldest son call's his apartment a hotel, not a house. When they are there they miss me and I feel terrible. On one of their first evenings there my youngest called me from his ipad 4 times. I wanted to give them space to be with their dad but after the 5th phone call, I answered. My STBX was on the computer working (he showed me on the video call) and my youngest was left in his room to play. He was bored and seeking attention. I told him to play with daddy when he was done with his call and I would see them soon. After we hung up I got an angry text from my ex telling me we need to practice boundaries when we have the children and respect each other's time with them. The children were now asking him when they come home. He said (to me) this is their home as well and they should know that. A few things about this: 1. If you were paying attention to the kids they would not call me. I understand you are working but I work from home as well and they are NEVER calling you while I am here. I have to tell the kids to call you and even then they don't want to. 2. Boundaries? You have been coming to the house every night on my days to say good night to them. So you can come to my home and see them for 45 minutes every night but I can't answer my son's 5th phone call to me? Here's some boundaries, you can't come here anymore. He is very regretful he brought up this argument because it hurts him more than me. I have no problems playing fair, but you have to play as well. 3. If you want YOUR kids to feel like your house is their home as well, then you need to tell THEM not ME. Ok, I get it, but they don't. So you need to have that conversation with them, not me. Ive just resolved myself to the fact that I will always be the bad guy.

The Gymnast

I've always been flexible. Well, physically not so much with age, but flexible in situations has never been a problem. My STBX fought me on a 50/50 custody agreement. One in which I agreed to. Our original agreement was for a 65/35 split which gave him every other weekend plus a few dinner time visits in between. For

someone who has never been an active father this should have been enough. Apparently now he thinks he's super dad and wishes to take the lead. This would have been helpful years ago, but better late than never. He contacts me the other day telling me he will be picking up the kids for 2 overnights this week. Mind you, he is supposed to have the kids 2 days on one week and then 5 days the next week. I tell him that he can have the kids over the weekend as well. This is when he tells me he has several work trips and personal trip (to see his girlfriend) coming up so he needs me to be flexible with the visits.

Flexible? I thought you were the "I need to see my kids more" dad now. The dad who needed more time (and less time & child support for me) with his children. Where did that guy go? The month of April he has had the kids for 8 nights total. TOTAL. And when I mention this isn't 50/50 I'm the bad guy and need to be understanding to his work and personal life. Excuse me, I have work and a personal life too. well, not really a personal life but I hope too soon! Why do I have to be flexible to you and you aren't to me? I told him I offered him the 65/35 split that would allow him more free time for work/pleasure and he didn't want it. He said I was steamrolling him into taking that agreement and he wasn't happy with the time he'd have with the kids. Touched that he wanted more time with the kids, I agreed to this and now that it's in black and white I have to have the kids more and receive less child support because you can't keep up with the deal YOU wanted? I think in all honesty it wasn't about seeing his kids; it was about not giving me what I asked for. He says I rely too much on our agreement and that it's just a guideline; we don't need to live and die by it. Ummmm, but I think we do. It's a legal document about our children and our assets. So if we don't live and die by it will you stop paying child support? Or maybe decide that you want things that are mine? It's just a piece of paper, right? For a man who lead a double life, had an affair, has a girlfriend, and wanted out of this house; he sure doesn't seem to want to face the reality of what a divorce actually is. So if he doesn't take the kids for his 50/50 visits what are my options? Start this process again

with another agreement? Take him to court? I think perhaps my best option is to NOT be flexible and when they numbers don't add up we go back to court. I don't see any other option..

Transparency

This past weekend was Mother's Day. It was a strange day this year but still oddly more enjoyable than previous years. My STBX has been taking the kids on the schedule I created and so far, no issues. He has yet to pay me any child support but I will give him till the 15th till I make a stink about that. The boys were with him over the weekend but he returned them on Sunday so I could spend the day with them. I asked him while he was here if he called his grandmother yet. His grandmother is the only family (besides his equally unfaithful father) that he speaks to. He told me he spoke to her and that he told her that we have separated. I was shocked. This was a big one. I knew it would be hard to tell her and the news would give her a heart attack. He said she was upset and shared some of their conversation with me. He told me he did not tell her why we split, only that we had. While not the whole truth, I was happy to see that he took this tough step.

Fast forward a few hours later. His mother calls me. Her and I have a fairly good relationship but my STBX is holding a grudge over things from the past and refuses to speak to her. I had asked if she heard the news from her mother. She was confused. Well, it turns out it was all a lie. He never told his grandmother. The conversation he said he had was never actually had. I speak to his sister as well and find out after 13 years together, that this 'run away with a girl who'll give me more attention' is his MO. She told me that before me he lied to his girlfriend of 4 years that he was going to spend time with his dad and it turns out he went away for the weekend with another girl. Now ain't that some shit...

My lawyer will be serving him the divorce papers next week. When I told him for the 2nd time that I was hiring a lawyer to do that papers and did not want us to do them ourselves he got angry. He accused me of wanting to try something shady. No, sir.

You have been shady enough for the both of us. When I reminded him that I've already brought this up to him and that I have been getting quotes from lawyers he accused me of 'not being transparent'. You're kidding right? He will always be the victim, never wrong and always right.

The Breakdown

My STBX had the children this past Friday-Saturday and then again Monday-Wednesday. I went to pick them up today after work and that's when it happened; the breakdown. My STBX started to cry. He lost it. Apparently, for the past 3 days all our children did was ask to go home. They cried and constantly asked 'how long'. He tried to tell them that this was their home as well but they wouldn't hear of it. Now part of me feels badly. It must be terrible to have your children reject you. But on the flip side, he's never been the parent he is now. He takes them places, plays with them, reads to them, bathes them, etc. I don't think he understands that you can't just flip a switch with these kids and they will gravitate towards you. I know he is trying, and I appreciate that, but it's too little too late. I have tried to be supportive and understand them having a father is important; but I honestly don't think they want him. Again, they are both under 10 and young, they don't fully understand. My oldest asked me on the ride home if they could never go back. When I explained that we are both parents, love them, and want to spend equal time with them, both children protested.

I think my STBX realizes this is too little, too late. He is regretful. I don't know how to make this situation easier for everyone; but honestly, it's not my problem to solve. I asked him to take a 35/65 split but he rejected it saying it wasn't enough time with the children. My suggestion of that split wasn't about me wanting more; it was about what I thought our children could handle. He just wanted to 'win' and get me to convert to a 50/50 split. Well, you won! Here it is! How's that working out for you?

Maybe if you would have thought about what was best for them and not 'defeating' me maybe this would have ended differently.

A Summer Situation

After his breakdown I didn't contact him for awhile. I knew he needed time to cool off and if I talked to him for any reason I was afraid he would get angry with me or even worse, confide in me. I wanted neither. So when I finally did need to speak to him he told me, "we need to figure out what we are going to do this summer". What are we doing? We are doing nothing. I was confused. He told me it's going to be impossible for him to handle the kids during the summer while he is working. He said he was 'barely holding on by a thread' as it is now. This isn't a problem we faced in the past, as I'm a teacher and off all summer so I handle the kids 100% during summer months. I don't think he took the summer into consideration when he demanded 50/50 physical custody. So his suggestion was to enroll the children in a camp when he has them. A camp? So you want to enroll our children in a camp from 8-6 on the days you have them? How is that spending time with them? So, my suggestion was let's do the 35/65 split for July and August and he can have the kids weekends and see them in the evening whenever he wants. He was FURIOUS. "It's always about custody with you", he said. Wait, wait, wait. This isn't about custody. You just said you can't handle them. I'm offering to give up the first real summer vacation I've ever had to keep them to help YOU and I'm the bad guy here??? Make this make sense. He claims the kids need to socialize. In the past 9 years he has NEVER cared if the children socialized, but now it's a big deal? This was the man who rolled his eyes and complained about having to go to a kids birthday party for 3 hours...

So I left it alone. Let him sit on the thought for a bit. A few days later to be proactive I sent him information about summer camps....along with price lists. It would cost between \$250-350 a week for camp. The camps I found are only for 5 weeks leaving

most of August without childcare for him. How does this help? How is this spending time with the kids? Putting our children in an expensive weekly camp (during covid) just so you can give them dinner, bath and put them to bed doesn't help them or your relationship with them. My family owns a house by the beach. I will be down there most of the summer with kids. When I'm home, we have friends we can visit and at least we have a yard at our house for the children to play in. The children will be happy, socialize with family and friends and most importantly, be safer with me than in a camp.

Lastly, I will add that he has yet to pay me child support for April and May. He moved out in March, took the kids for 8 overnights in April (it should have been 15) and has yet to give me a dime for April and May. But he can afford almost \$1300 in camp fees just to have his 'custody'? Even more proof that his actions are not about what's best for the kids, it's just a competition with me. Again, make this make sense...

Get the Papers...The Papers

I'm officially in the court system, with a docket number and everything! It on its way to becoming official and I am elated. My STBX does not seem that excited. This past weekend he flew out to her state and attended a family wedding as her guest. I'm happy they are taking these steps as a couple because if they are happy he will move and the farther away he is the better! When he returned he was now excited about the divorce. Asking me when the lawyer would send him paperwork to sign and what the timeline was moving forward. He was on cloud 9 after his vacation and wished to hurry the process up. The day he was having his share of paperwork notarized was also the day I was going to pick up the children from him. When I got there he was short with me; I could tell he was on the verge of a panic attack. He hurried us away and then text me later explaining he in fact was in the beginning stages of a panic attack. But why?

He told me he was feeling overwhelmed. Between the kids, work, managing a household and maintaining a social life he felt burnt out. WOW! This sounds oddly familiar. This was my story for the past 10 years. The reason I didn't go on date nights as often as he liked was for this exact reason. Part of me felt bad because I know what that feeling is like. But another part of me relished the thought of his struggling and coming to the realization that that was my life and reason for his cheating. So, how should I react? After I took a second to think I blurted, "Wow that sucks. I'm taking the kids to the beach this weekend. See you Monday morning when you pick them up!" I decided to give him the support he gave me for 10 years.

If anyone knows what movie this posts title is from then you know, "You gotta do what your heart tells you to do."

D-Day

Sunday it's happening. The day I've been waiting for and he has been dreading. I'm going to meet the girlfriend. I'm honestly excited. He on the other hand is in a panic. And I understand why, I exploded on that woman on the phone and said some terrible things. And I also understand it's going to be hard for him to hide his lies about me being insane when we are face to face. He text me a few days ago and told me that he would be picking the boys up on Father's Day to head down the shore with them and she would be accompanying them. When they come to pick up the boys we can have a chat. I'm fine with that. I'm actually relieved he wasn't planning on taking the boys to the shore alone; I don't think he can handle them both on the boardwalk or in arcades.

He is very worried that I will cause a scene when I meet her. It's actually the exact opposite. I plan on being myself, very friendly and welcoming. I need her to see I'm not that emotional woman that I was on the phone and in my letter. I mentioned to him via text that I would not jeopardize the good relationship he and I have had recently with each other and co parenting by being mean to her. His exact words, "I don't need you to speak about

what you and I have." But why? Why wouldn't the fact that we are getting along and coparenting be something she shouldn't know? And then I remembered....he lies.

He must be telling her I'm impossible. That I'm a terrible human being. That I'm difficult and unreasonable. How can he make this lie hold water if I'm polite and friendly to her and him? The boys have each made something for him and I got a small gift from the boys to give him. We will present him with those things in front of her. I feel like if I saw someone who was supposed to be 'cruel and insane' do that to their 'enemy' I'd have questions as well. Also, I plan on packing snacks for the boys and him for the trip; this is something I'd for whether she was there or not. Are those the acts of a 'crazy and hateful' person? I think not.

Lastly, and some of you may not agree with this, I'm going to apologize for how I spoke to her. I know she was wrong for what she did and if she ever wants to apologize I'd listen. But, I'm not proud of how I spoke to her on the phone; that was the worst side of me. I think she understands my actions but my apology is not to get on her good side. I want to be the bigger person. I don't plan on ever being friends with this woman but she will be left alone with my children at some point so I'm doing this for them. Also, my selfish motive, if she is happy and feels comfortable with my STBX she will want him to move out of state with her. I want this. So I won't do anything to jeopardize this move. I will update you all on Sunday evening with a play by play of our meet.

My Strange Meet Cute

Since my last post my head has been swimming. I spent so many months envisioning this moment and now it is here and all the scenarios I've run in my head seem like cheesy movie scenes. None of it is plausible. I finally decided yesterday to not go into this meet up trying to prove who I am to someone, but more so just be myself and stop worry about the impression that I leave on her. She has an opinion of me that is clouded by his lies so there is no sense trying to change her mind. So I asked myself, 'who am

I?'. And then I remembered that before this whole fiasco I was the person who killed with kindness. While that kindness was manipulated by my STBX, I was the one who was in control now. So I did what I thought was right. My children made Father's Day cards for him and then I had them make cards for her. I had them introduce themselves and list one things they'd like to do with her. They drew pictures and colored and all was right in the world. Kill them with kindness...

I text him last night asking what time was pick up. He was at dinner and said he would text me back when they were done. I woke up at 6:30 with no text from him. I text him at 6:30, 7:30, 8 and finally received word back from him just before 9. Be there in a hour. Ok, no that that is settled, what do I wear? I opted for the true to myself outfit; leggings, flip flops and a cute off the shoulder shirt. Very me. Hair: curly. Makeup: light but with a generous amount of mascara. It was now 9:40 so we sat and waited. The boys grew antsy. At 10:30 I get a text that his stomach is upset so they ran a little late. Sounds like a case of nerves to me. Then at just before 11 they arrive. I assemble the boys and the gifts and we come outside.

There she is. Right there. Standing on my steps. For a hot second I raged inside. I wanted to say something smart like, 'you left me for this?'. I looked over at him and the look of panic and tension on his face told me that by doing that I'd be the monster he has fictitiously talked about. So I went back to my motto of kindness, extended my hand, smiled warmly, and introduced myself. She. Was. SHOCKED. Where is this lunatic I've heard so much of? Why isn't she trying to claw out my eyes?? I can only imagine what was running through her head. The boys presented their gifts to dad and then gave her the cards. Shock took her over again. Cards that aren't death threats? How?! Why?!?! At this point her mood went from fear to pure embarrassment. I must say it was more delicious to watch that shift than it was to potentially pull her hair out. We hustled the boys into the car and as my STBX walked to the other side of the car to get them in I turned to her. Shock and fear had returned to her face. She had

difficulty making eye contact with me. I could hear my STBX heart beating from 10 feet away. I looked at her and said..

"_____ I just want to apologize for how I first spoke to you. I was an emotional wreck but I said some terrible things and that was very unlike me. I know my actions were justified but reflected back on that day I'm unhappy with how I acted towards you."

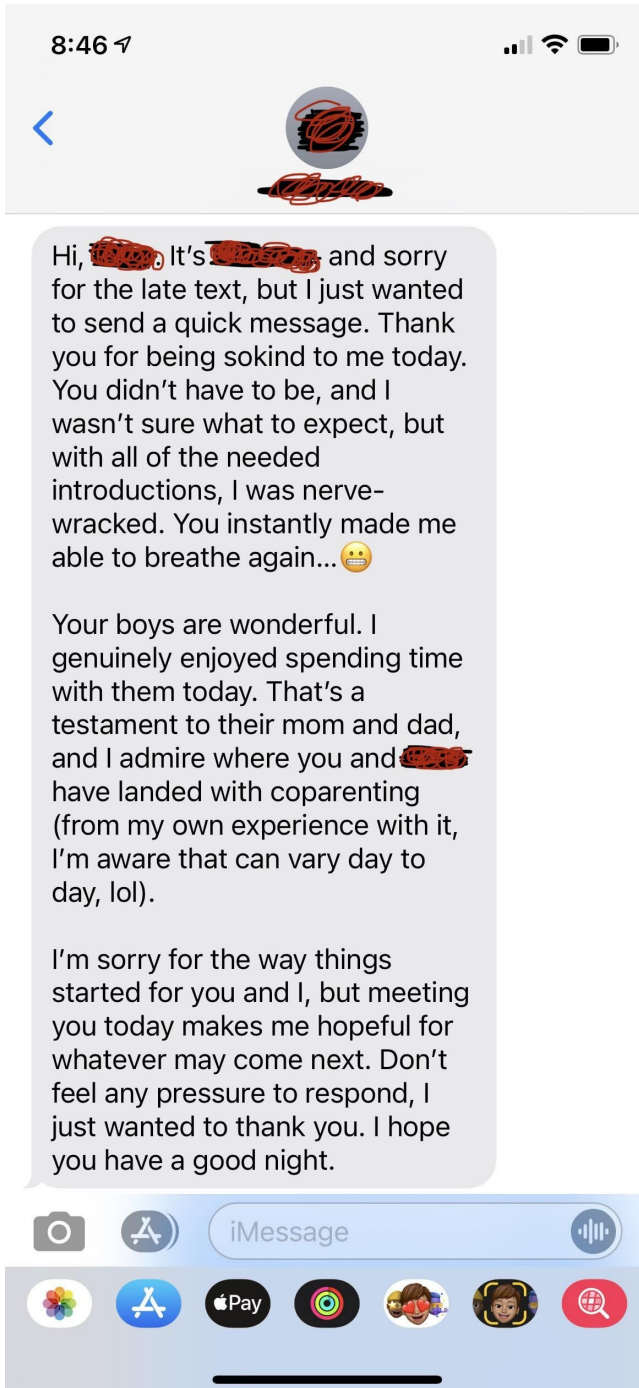
Hello shock, have you met our dear friend guilt? A wave of guilt took over her as she bumbled through her own half assed apology. She couldn't say the word 'affair', instead she said 'what happened'. Own it girl, just own it. But she did end her nonsensical word vomit wishing to have a conversation with me about what transpired (I used the word transpired, most of her words were less than 2 syllables). My STBX who had started to look relieved now tensed at the idea of her and I having a chat. I have already promised myself I won't speak badly of him to her. Maybe I'll just give her a link to this thread instead. Haha.

Now I look forward to her spending 48 hours with him and our kids. Now she can see the short temper and lack of patience he has. It is going to be VERY hard for him to keep up his father of the year act. I'm sure my children will give me a play by play of how their visit went. I will update you all on Wednesday when the children have returned. Thank you all again for supporting me on this journey. Today was a big day but I'm proud of my growth. Part of that growth is from the support I've received from you all. So many, many thanks.

Futile Friends

On Sunday evening I sat home alone, glass of white wine in hand, and replayed the morning over in my head. As I sipped, I let the interaction play out in my mind and tried to analyze the scenario. My interpretation was that she was stunned, he was floored, my kids were indifferent, and I was victorious. I was pleased with my behavior and felt that there wasn't much more that could be done. She would leave Monday evening and it would

be some time till her and I spoke again. Then, almost as if prompted by the Gods themselves, my phone pinged. Random number with a strange area code. My heart dropped. I knew it was her. I stared at my phone without opening it for a good minute. I knew that opening that text was opening a door I wasn't sure I wanted opened. Perhaps she would just be apologizing. Or maybe thanking me for earlier. Were the kids ok? Or perhaps she would have questions or concerns about him and want an ally. I knew after opening that text, no matter what it said, things would never be the same.



Simple, right? Straight to the point. A message of thanks. For a split second I regretted my decision to be kind to her. I took away some of her worry and fear and yet none of my emotions have changed. But then I remembered; I'm not in the wrong here. I don't need anyone to tell me it's ok because I was not to blame. We spoke a bit more and by the end of the conversation I felt sorry for her. She has no idea what she is getting into with him. She thinks he is her knight in shining armor but little does she know she will have to polish and maintain that armor for him. She was just like me many years ago, blinded by shiny armor that was really just tin foil. Lies and playing pretend was all he really gave me and I fear this will be her outcome too. The other side of that coin is that she deserves this. You had an affair, she read in my letter that this wasn't the first time I suspected he was unfaithful, yet she thinks it will be different with her? Come on, sis. You're smarter than this, you gotta do better girl.

After I picked up the boys they gave me rave reviews about her and their father. It seems they were rightfully spoiled while she was there and daddy didn't yell or lose patience once. Amazing, huh? My youngest asked me if this was his new sister. I had to explain the concept of separation, divorce and parents dating. Apparently even with his girlfriend in the room my STBX avoided an actual conversation with our kids. Sigh. Some things never change. So while they won knockoff Marvel prizes at the arcade with her and their dad, it seems she has won the biggest knockoff prize of them all.

My First 2nd

For those of you that love the dirt and gossip about my STBX, I'm sorry. This is not a post about him. This is a post about me. A little while back I sat in my home in silence. The children were gone and I was in a partial meditation/trance thinking about what I want my future to look like. I'm 38, I have 2 children, a job, friends, grey hair peeking from my temples, a tight family, future

schooling for my 3rd degree, a mortgage, cellulite and a kind (but damaged) heart. Where do I go from here? And more importantly, who would want to go with me? Dating was easy in my 20's. My skin was tight, I could be spontaneous, everything I owned fit perfectly and going on an 11pm date for drinks was totally doable. I am not that girl anymore. So, how does a woman like me meet a man that will like ME? I'm lost. Are there bars? Nightclubs? Pottery painting? I've seen speed dating on TV, does that really exist or is that reserved only for sitcoms? Reluctantly I googled 'how to date in your 30's'. Some of you have probably beaten me to the punchline, but the answer was right in front of me. Online dating. I cringed.

Having no real reason not to, I created an online dating profile. I filled in all the blanks, set my preferences, uploaded a few pictures where the outfit fits right and the lighting is superb and I publish the page. I walk away from my phone full of nervous energy and grab a snack; chocolate will help. After I eat out of pure anxiety I return to my phone. I have a message from the app. I'm afraid. I ignore it out of fear and strangely, guilt. Fear that he may be a serial killer and guilt because while my STBX has moved on, I feel guilty that I am still legally married and on a dating site. I do the only logical thing next; I go to bed.

I lay in bed and try to remember what a first date is like. The awkward hello (...is it a handshake, hug, kiss on the cheek, full open mouth sloppy kiss...), the cumbersome chit chat (...this weather is crazy, read any good books lately, wow how about them Mets...) and of course the uncomfortable goodbye. Ugh, I don't know how to do this or even if I can. Do you talk about your ex? Or do you avoid it like the plague? Do you be no nonsense and get right to the good and bad of yourself to not waste time? Because honestly, who has time to casually date at this age? I tell myself to go to sleep. Eventually, I listen.

I awake to sunlight, the hum of the AC and a pinging phone. I have a text from my mother and 14 messages all from the dating site. This must be a mistake. I must have put the wrong age or been too lenient with my preferences. I scroll through message

after message and see that these men all share the same thing. They are interested in learning more about me. I sift through profiles like they are resumes for a job and land on 3 potential 'candidates'. All around my age and location, all divorced, all wishing to converse with me. My nerves have no transitioned to excitement but peppered with a bit of anxiety. This is it, I'm doing it, officially jumping into the deep dark dating pool. After a few days of chatting with all 3 I solidified my suitor. Soon I will be engaging in my first, 2nd date. Wish me luck and will update soon.

Thread #3 Confronting my husband while he's on vacation with his mistress

Reddit:

We've made it to a 3rd thread. Never in my wildest dreams did I think we would get here. If you are just catching this story then you have a lot of reading to do to get up to date. My apologies. So settle in and see how the story unfolds here: https://www.reddit.com/r/cheating_stories/comments/kg886u/my_husband_is_currently_on_a_vacation_with_his/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web2x&context=3

To all my loyal readers, supporters and even trolls, the story continues:

Gaslighting or Overreaction

Today my STBX dropped off the kids after having them for a few days. He told me yesterday he would be dropping them off at noon. When 1:00 arrived I was a bit worried. All my texts to him were answered with 1 or 2 word answers. That is strange for him to do. I get a text at 1:45 that he is on his way and that the AF is with him. Ummm, what? I was never informed that she would be here with the kids. I have no idea if she has been here the whole time or just flew in today. I was furious. I don't care if it's her or anyone else; I want to know who my children will be around. Period. Full stop.

So they arrive and I let her into my home. While he sorts through the mail she stands awkwardly in my foyer. So then I say, "I will just tell both of you since you are here, if the kids are going to be around her or anyone else, I want to know. I support your relationship and I'm happy you (AP) are here with them, I just want to know beforehand and not after the fact."

He looked offended. He smushed his face almost in disbelief. She stood statue still and refused to make eye contact. I understand her position. She was in enemy territory and then I

hit her with a bomb. I'm not mad at her, she probably had no idea he didn't tell me. Maybe he lied and said he did, who knows. But she is a mom, I'm sure she gets my point, whether she agrees or not. My issue is with him. I know I'm right, I know it should be a non-discussion, common sense if you will. But no, he left being very cold to me and I started to second guess my decision to say something. Did I let my emotions get the best of me? Or did he gaslight me and make me feel like I'm crazy? Did they think because we had one meet that she had the green light to play stepmom now?

Publicizing Paradise

Newlyweds always look forward to their honeymoon. White sandy beaches, topical drinks with little umbrellas, sex all day and all night...paradise right? Well my STBX and I never took one. We were in the process of buying a house and could not afford to do both. Well, I say we were buying a house but in reality it was me. I put the 20% down and the mortgage/deed is in my name because he was broke and had terrible credit. But, he said he was ok with skipping the honeymoon and that when we were married for 10 years we could take that honeymoon together. Super sweet, right?

Well, we booked the Bahamas trip for August 2020 but COVID had other plans. Thanks COVID

our own mini vacation. I was keeping myself occupied and spent time making memories with the boys.

Saturday evening after the boys are in bed my phone rings. It's my XMIL. She probably is just checking up on the kids. A bit of back story, they've had a rocky relationship over the years and he does not speak to her for things that I found out later were mostly just lies and stories he made up in his head. Anyway, I ignored the call. I just didn't feel like chatting. A few minutes later my XSIL calls me. Now I think something is wrong. I answer. She is concerned and angry. "Are you ok? What's going on? Have people been calling you?" I was so confused. Well as it turns out his AF took a picture of them together in the Bahamas, posted to her Facebook and tagged my STBX. What? I was in complete shock. Let me explain..

A lot of people don't know about our situation. I haven't told my extended family, most of my coworkers and even some friends. He was so paranoid about his family finding out because he knew they would be upset, especially his grandmother who thinks he is the golden child. So, there it is. Out in social media for all to see. Our shared family members, my coworkers and friends. I was livid. He took away the possibility of us salvaging our marriage with his affair. My hands were tied, he was in love with someone else. Fine. Now he took away my privacy. My marital status is now out there for all to know. Again, I was stripped of the ability to make a decision for myself and tell people on my own time. I went through my phone and saw I had missed calls from 2 coworkers and a friend. I can only assume that's why they called. I haven't called them back because I don't know what to say, "Haha yea I'm separated! Yea, I didn't want to tell people till I was legally divorced. Yes, he has a girlfriend. Sure, I'll retell the story and live through that pain again, no problem!"

So I confronted him via text. His response? "We are divorced in everything but the paperwork. You've gone on dates and living your life just like I am." Ummmm, what? You mean the only thing that really signifies a divorce is the one things we don't have? What an idiot. And yes, I've gone on a handful of dates but I'm not

posting about each one to social media and sending selfies to our family and friends. Look, I get it. You are in a relationship and you are happy. That is great. All I'm asking for is a little respect. You publicizing your vacation with her also affects me. But, I guess you have to give a shit first to recognize that.

I want you all to know I read each and every one of your comments. A lot of you have stated that I need to start doing for me. I want you all to know that I hear you and I agree with you. I have been wrestling with a decision for the past few weeks now concerning my future and the boys' well being. Today when I pick up the boys from his apartment I am going to tell him my plan in which I require his signature. I hope he doesn't fight me on this. It's what's best. I don't want to reveal too much or my reasoning as you never know who is reading. I will update you all soon.

Home Sweet Home

Months ago when we started the mediation process there was a great deal of negotiating. We both flip flopped on our wants and made compromises. One thing I was never willing to compromise was retaining the house in the divorce. I made concessions and declined alimony but never wavered on the house. It was agreed that the house would be 100% mine and there would be no alimony. Now, because my STBX was so done with the mediation process and looking forward to his new life, he never took the time to have the house properly assessed. Instead he opted to just take a number off an outdated website and use that as our base point to figure out home value. Idiot. Our mediator did the numbers based on what we owe on the house and what our profits would each be. Then she figured out what alimony over a period of time would be and it was close to what his profit for the house would be. So he agreed to the arrangement. But, the home value was inaccurate. He didn't know that, but I did...

So, now that our divorce agreement filed into court has me owning the house (which is only in my name btw), I had to have him sign off that I could sell it before the divorce was finalized and

that he could not retain any of the profit from the sale. He came over to pick up the boys and I talked to him about it. I explained how a move would help the boys as we would go live with my mother who lives in a fabulous school district. It would also help me to not struggle financially and allow me to return to school for my 3rd degree without worrying about tuition or childcare. Our kids would have round the clock care from me and my retired parents and be close to their cousins who also live in that town. He agreed it was a good idea, signed the paperwork and left. I immediately sent the papers to my lawyer. A weight has been lifted off my shoulders.

The next morning I awake to a long text message from him. With time to think and time to speak to his AP probably, he became very angry. He accused me of making a selfish decision and it wasn't best for the boys. So you mean to tell me a better school system, town sponsored sports teams, living with grandparents who have time to spend with them, going to school with their cousins of the same age and allowing me the ability to not struggle financially and provide them with more is a selfish idea? So I asked him, when he plans to move across the country to be with AP, will that move be in the best interest of the boys or him? Silence. He knew I was right so he switched gears. He then complained about the commute for him to pick up and drop off. I reminded him this move adds to my daily work commute as well and is not just an issue for him. But it would benefit the boys so I'm willing to do it. Plus it's only 18 miles farther from him. It isn't clear across the state.

Then the real reason; he wants money. He said he deserves some of the profit for the money he contributed for 10 years. Ok, I see your point, but you gave me the house willingly after I declined alimony. Then you signed off willingly that I could sell before the marriage was finalized. You should have done your research about what the house was worth like the mediator suggested instead of just relying on the internet. If I give you a dime it's out of the goodness of my heart because I'm not obligated to do anything for you. So I asked him, after all these

months and what you put me through, do you deserve my kindness? He changed the subject and complained about something else. Avoiding the question and the obvious answer.

Now I get to truly start over. My boys and I will be surrounded by family who love and support us. I will have zero financial worries, be able to return to school, put money away for the boys college and have enough left to put down on another home when the housing market settles down. This is a decision that was necessary for my future and the future of my boys. I've been waiting to get to the point to be able to do this and the time is now. The boys will start in a new school with their cousins in September and I am already looking into town sports and activities for them. I know my STBX is angry and bitter about this, especially since his hands are tied. But he made a decision for himself a few months ago to start this affair and that was exactly how I felt. Now we both move on and look towards the future we selected for ourselves.

Layups and Rebounds

The past few days I spent at the beach with my dearest friend and her children. The kids played, ate pizza, swam and made great memories. We all did. I appreciated the mental break from life and just kicking back and soaking in all life has to offer. In the evening we tucked in our children, who were rightfully exhausted, and then sat outside in the warm salty air and talked. We sipped white wine and gabbed for most of the evening. It was so lovely and a reminder that good friends are so necessary. The family that you can choose. Of course our conversation drifted from time to time to my STBX and that is to be expected. She started speculating on why and when and all other factors that could have lead to his decision and there were so many questions. After finishing our glasses we came to the conclusion that there is no rhyme or reason and logic fails us in this inquiry.

What we did start to explore, which I had not previously, was what were her motivations? She legally divorces and a month

later is dating my STBX. Granted they were friends and former colleagues, but to jump right into serious dating less than a month after a divorce seemed strange. My friend then said, "She didn't even get the chance to have a rebound!". Then it hit me; is my STBX the rebound? A man was giving her comfort during a difficult time, giving her gifts, flying to her, etc. Is it possible this is a safe and comfortable rebound for her? Aside from regular visits, he has flown out there 3 times just to accompany her to weddings. During my investigation before confrontation I read multiple messages from him telling her that he loved her and she did not reciprocate that sentiment. Maybe she does now, but she did not then.

Again, I know this is futile, a waste of my time and will be fruitless; but I'm so curious to this possibility. I know many have stated that I speak too much about him, should move on, live my life, I am woman hear me roar, but the real truth is this post is therapy to me. A diary entry if you will. At no point did I ever expect or promise to be a role model or a beacon of shiny light to struggling victims of infidelity. Instead, I am being honest and truthful to what surviving a cheater looks like. It's unforgiving, it's empowering, it's a struggle and most importantly, it's a process. So yes, I will get to the happy place we all hope for, but until then this is the journey. Take the ride with me and see the reality, or sit on the sidelines and wait for the happy ending. Makes no difference to me because I'm strapped in and gunning the gas. Buckle up buttercup because it's full speed ahead.

The Red Eye

Back in May of this year I made the custody schedule that my STBX and I currently follow. I took into consideration all of his visits out to see her and I structured a fair and equal schedule. Again, that was May. He left on Wednesday evening to go visit her and he was set to take a red eye home last night (Sunday) and then pick the boys up this morning. I confirmed the pick up times

before he left and even during the day Sunday. I awoke to this message today:

While I was not happy he seems sincere and I understand flights are currently unpredictable. I had appointments scheduled for today and plans this evening which I had to reschedule. I had to also explain to the boys that the schedule for today had now changed. I told him he should probably avoid red eyes moving forward and he agreed. Again, I'm relaying all of this to you very calmly but I was a bit frustrated and annoyed this morning. Then I retold the story to my sister and she commented, "It seems weird that he got the same exact flight time. Sunday flight schedules are usually different than Monday's." She was right... So, I looked up the airport he was flying out of and there was no delayed or canceled flight scheduled for that time on Sunday evening. He was lying. He never scheduled a flight for Sunday. He was always due to return Monday evening, he just didn't bother to tell me. When I called him out on it and asked for his flight cancellation information, he just sent the new flight for this evening and said he 'wasn't going to get into this with me today'. All I asked for was a screen shot from his United account showing the flight was canceled and he couldn't do that. Instead he just insisted I was crazy and failed to provide any evidence that he was in fact telling the truth.

This is a great example of what he does. On the exterior he is kind and apologetic, but deep down he is manipulative and sneaky. Then when I call him on the BS he is defensive and dismissive. I'm frustrated because he is always telling me we need to communicate better and meanwhile he still refuses to do so. "Do as I say, not as I do". I wonder if the AP knows he did this? I doubt it. This woman is welcoming this pathological, manipulative liar into her life and she has no idea. I honestly feel bad for her but I guess that's what you get when you knowingly poach a cheater. He is probably telling her I'm going off on him for a completely different reason. Always making me the bad guy.

I feel a bit defeated because I know while he lives here and we share this custody arrangement he will continue to take

advantage and manipulate me. Then he gaslights me into thinking I'm crazy. It's a cycle that I don't know how to break. The part that angers me the most is if he would have told me before he left that he needed an extra day I would have been accommodating. I wouldn't have booked appointments or made evening plans. I would have said 'ok' and told him I'd like to just tack on an extra day somewhere for me. No harm, no foul. Why couldn't he just do that? Why build a story about being at the airport most of the night, talking to flight reps for 2 hours, trying to get earlier flights that were booked or expensive, why do any of that? What/who are you protecting? I honestly don't understand his motivations or reasoning. All I know is that I need this behavior to stop so I can go about my life.

Money Matters

First and foremost let me just say, the audacity of my STBX will never cease to amaze me. With that being said, let's talk about money. January 2020 my STBX and I created an MSA. This MSA had me declining alimony and keeping the house. Come March 2020 he wanted to change the MSA for a different custody arrangement, not for the house or other assets. June 2020 we sign our MSA but in our state once the paperwork is served to the defendant they have 30 days to contest the MSA; spoiler, he did not contest. July 2020 I decide I want to sell the house so I have him sign another legal document waiving his right to the home and any equity/profit from sale. Now we fast forward to September 2020. He wants the house. I swear this man makes his own rules. Luckily I had hired a lawyer already and she explained to me that his chances of getting the house now are non existent but he could fight the relocation of the children.

She explained that would be a lengthy procedure and very expensive on both of our ends. I know for a fact my STBX is struggling financially so I called his bluff. I told him to get a lawyer. I can prove financially that I need to sell the house. I can also show they are moving to a far better school district, will be

attending school with their cousins, have more opportunity for extracurriculars and will have round the clock care from grandparents. I took the children to see their new school and it is quit amazing, the kids are so excited to go to their new school! I have all of the chips stacked in my favor. Also our MSA has him tentatively moving out of state at some point. Why would a judge agree to keep them closer to their dad if he will be leaving soon? His defense for the relocation? It's a long drive... Really?? The commute went from 12 miles to 28 miles. I didn't move across the state. Is it convenient? No, I get that, but it's not impossible.

He suggested the boys start their new school in January. January?! He said they should stay in the house until it is sold. This suggestion makes no sense. If the commute is your issue how does that commute change in January? Newsflash: It doesn't. It makes zero sense to have the kids start a routine only to pull them out. They will start a new school and be behind on whatever curriculum they are teaching. So I thought about it, what is his motivation to push for January? Then I realized, his lease is up in March. He is probably moving to her state. So a commute from January to March is much easier than September to March. Once again, a decision made in his best interest and not in the boys'. I think he sees the odds are not in his favor on this one and he has stopped fighting me...for now.

So money. It makes the world go round, right? It apparently makes my divorce more complicated as well (insert eye roll). MY STBX since learning I would be selling the house has asked me on different occasions for 5k, then 10k, then 15k and now with the threat of lawyers, 20k. Ummm, did you eat paint chips as a kid? Cause you are serious delusional. You are entitled to nothing. If I give you a dime it's because I want to and you can't give me a dollar amount that i am 'gifting' you. It's my money, buddy. I told him I'm no longer entertaining talks of money with him. He knows he's at my mercy and I kinda like it.

Lastly, I received a Facebook message on 8/23 which I never saw because the person was not my friend. I saw it yesterday and low and behold it's the AP's ex-husband. He says to me: "Hi (insert

real name), it's (insert AP EX name). How are you? I feel like we should talk. Maybe we can help each other figure some things out? I just wanted to reach out and see if you wanted to talk about anything. I am not really that surprised. They talked for years." Wow, plot twist. I've heard terrible stories about him. But the AP has heard terrible stories about me which were untrue. Could she be as big of a liar as my STBX? Could the APEX know more than I do about their affair when it comes to timeline? Maybe he knows a move date? I feel like this is a conversation I should entertain, but cautiously. I messaged him back and I'm awaiting a reply. I will post once I have some answers.

The APEX (9/10/21)

Readers, I'm sorry it has been so long, especially with the cliff hanger I left you with. My life, as usual, has been a bit upside down. Between moving, selling the house, starting back to in person school and my graduate program I don't know if I'm coming or going. But I of course made time to speak with the AP's Ex (APEX). First of all, as I stated in pervious post, I was told this man was a terrible person. A drunk, a gambler, a womanizer, etc. And stupid me, I listened. But now I can hear the other side of the story. One that isn't tainted by my ex and his AP. I learned so much so forgive me if it seems all jumbled. I have no idea where to start. So in a nutshell, here is what I learned:

He did have a drinking problem but got sober in 2017. The APEX has known that they have talked for years and unlike me, knew there was romance brewing. I learned that my STBX met her a few years ago for dinner when she was in the area for work and he told her that he loved her. She told her SO and he said he knew at that moment something would happen with them eventually and he shut down emotionally with her. That was the beginning of the end for him. He confirmed my notion that she liked to be fawned over. He suspects she entertained my STBX for the attention and to receive attention from her SO. Gross, right? Anyways, they were not meshing and grew apart. They did not

divorce in September of 2020 as I was told, but instead they separated at that time and weren't legally divorced till March 2021. Even grosser, right? She raked this man over the coals financially as well. She closed out their join account and took all the money and then filed for divorce. What a peach, huh? She brought up his 2017 rehab stint to get full custody with supervised visitation for him. She is also introducing him to her family and friends as her new boyfriend and leaving out the affair and the fact that he is married still. The APEX is apparently still friendly with her family and some friends and wants to make sure that this fact becomes common knowledge. Justified exposure and I'm here for it. The APEX also thought my STBX was already living in their state and was not aware he was staying in her house with her when he visits. Spoiler: It's his house, not hers. Needles to say he is NOT happy about this. He was also not aware till he found me on Facebook that we had children together. Apparently this wasn't an important detail for the AP to bring up when she mentioned my STBX to him. He also confirmed that she is a spender, money is like water, and she will probably bleed my STBX dry. We ended our hours long text chain with a job for each other. He is tasked with finding out the official move date for my STBX and he would like to know when he is traveling to their state and staying in their house. Phew. That was a lot. I hope you were able to digest all of that.

I had a rather expensive phone call with my lawyer the other day. It turns out he can challenge the MSA for the house but it will be a long process and the divorce will probably be finalized by the time it goes through. She also said the timing isn't good, as he had his 35 days to dispute the MSA and he has waited until after I put the house on the market to fight for it. She assures me the judge will see this as a back peddling money grab on a legal document that we both agreed to and not support it. As for my relocation, he can also dispute that but I officially live in this new town and have completely moved out of my house. My STBX claims I violated my MSA with legal custody enrolling them in a new school. My lawyer again reminded me I am the custodial parent

and if I moved they have to go to school where ever I live. He is still pushing for the 20k and my lawyer is confident he has zero grounds for receiving it and will ultimately give up this fight as it's an expensive legal process and he is currently in the red financially. Oh, get this, the boys had their first day of school on Thursday (9/9) and I was going to pick them up from my STBX place on 9/8 and bring them with me so that they can start fresh in the morning. The evening of 9/8 was technically his night to have them but he agreed to me taking them days prior. So he sends me a text claiming that 9/8 was his night and he would keep them home on their first day of school unless I agree to the 20k. Excuse me, did you just hold my children prisoner for a check? Are you admitting truancy? I told my lawyer this and she balked. She said this will be the first screen shot she presents if and when we go to court. Bottom line, nothing is in his favor. His AP is trying to squeeze me like she did her ex. But baby girl, you don't know me, so you obviously don't know who you are fucking with.

Playing The Long Game (9/20/21)

Have you ever seen 'A Bronx Tale'? It's a classic coming of age mafia drama with a touch of romance and a dash of racial tension. Ok, I'm no Siskel & Ebert, but I think this film is must watch. Lately I've been thinking about this film much more. There is a scene in the movie in which the young protagonist is angry at a kid who has not paid him back \$20 that he lent him. Sonny, the wise crime boss/father figure asks him, "Was he a good friend of yours?" and the young man replies, "No, I don't even fuckin like him". So Sonny tells him, "There's your answer right there. Look at it this way, it cost you \$20 to get rid of him. He's out of your life forever". I keep circling back to this scene because I feel like it is so relevant to me now. My wish, selfish as it may seem to some, has always been that my STBX would move away and leave my boys and I to move on peacefully. Is it possible that by giving him a check that I could make this happen? Again, I'm just toying with this idea. I know my STBX. I know what he ultimately wants and that's to leave and

start a life with her. If I give him money I would be financing his move out of my life. Let me explain how I know this to be true..

Last week when we argued about money and he asked for a ridiculous sum of 20k to pay for his expenses of shuffling the boys back and forth and wear and tear on his car I called his bluff. I told him I'd give him the 20k but stipulated that he can't move out of state for 2 years. He was enraged at this. "You can't tell me what to do with it and where I can live, blah blah blah." If he really wanted money to pay for commuting expenses for the kids (like he claimed) he would have snatched this deal. But he didn't, so I know he has no intention of staying. So if (and I said IF) I decide to give him money it would only be carried out after he signs a legal document stating that he is receiving a one time payment. I have been more open to this idea because: 1) I want him to go, 2) My house is under contract and I am receiving well over asking, 3) If he moves out of state he owes me close to 1k a month in child support and I'll make my initial 'investment' back in no time. But I also HATE the idea. This man bet it all and won. I was the victim and I lost and I feel like I keep losing. I know I'm playing the long game here and years from now when the AP bleeds him dry and/or he cheats again (cause he will) and/or my kids grow to learn what he did and want not part of him, I will have won. But I feel like for that to happen I have to take some lumps now. I'm going all 3 rounds and the bell hasn't even rung for the end of the 1st. I have a lot of thinking and talking to my lawyer to do. Is it another loss for me to give him the money, or is it just another of my elaborate (yet patient) plans like the one that started this post months ago? I'm still debating...

Father of the Year (9/24/21)

Sometimes, and only sometimes, my life shocks even me. I sit back and look at the situation and think, "This poor girl. How did she ever get here?". Then I snap back to reality and realize that poor girl is me. Just when I think the worst has been done and I've seen it all another event surprises even me. It's like I'm walking

around in complete state of disbelief and my jaw is locked in an open and stupefied position. Four very short days ago I actually had a moment of weakness and entertained the idea of giving him what he wanted (yet again) and signing a check over to him. And then, just to kick himself in the pants, today happens and now there is zero doubt in my mind. He will never see anything from me and that's the only thing he will be able to take to the bank.

Wednesday and Thursday night, according to this month's custody schedule that HE made, were supposed to be his overnights. He told me a few days ago that he had to be in work very early Friday morning and asked if I he could dropped the boys off Thursday evening and lose his night with them due to work. I said 'ok' and we kept it moving. Today (Friday) while at work I get a text from APEX. The AP text him to warn him that my STBX would be there at 8am Saturday morning to watch their oldest child's sports practice. She wanted to give him a heads up and asked APEX to be respectful. This would be the first time they have met. APEX isn't thrilled about it and I don't blame him. But, APEX text me to give me a heads up that he was in their state. But wait, how could this be? He had to go into work this morning (he usually works from home #thankscovid) and there is no way he could be there. So I thought about it; how could I figure out that he took a flight this morning or potentially after work today? Then I remembered, he has my EZ-Pass in his car. If you don't know what EZ-Pass is, it is a toll pass transponder that allows you to zip through road tolls but records the date, time and location. So, I returned to my Nancy Drew days of yore and logged into my account. And there it was, he left his apartment at the first toll at 5:58am and exited at the toll for the airport at 6:03 (yes it's a short distance, especially at 6am). This was not the direction he needed to head to for work. He obviously boarded a plane this morning. So he gave up an evening with his kids, on a night he scheduled, to go to see her and her children, and then lied to me about it. Just to be at her son's practice and eat dinner with them and not his own boys. Ladies and Gents I present to you, father of the fuckin' year.

So i call him, multiple times. No answer and forwarded to VM most of the times as well. Then I text him, he reads but does not respond. Then he finally responds almost 3 hours later and says he was on a plane and wasn't ignoring me and he didn't board until after he was done with work which was after 1pm. Then I tell him I've seen the EZ-Pass and he reads my messages and doesn't respond. He has been caught. He has no defense. Caught in a timestamped lie. How can you defend yourself from that? Spoiler: You can't. But honestly, I'm happy. So, so happy. He helped me make my decision about the money. For the tiniest second I thought we were going to reach common ground and be amicable. That we've establish mutual respect and were going to be forth coming adults. HAHAHAHAHAHAHA, stupid me. He's an idiot and incapable of that. Insert face-palm slap. So, I deactivated the EZ-Pass, have fun paying tolls on your way home. He's broke and can't afford a lawyer's retainer so he just paid a fee to have a document drafted that asks for the 20k. I'm supposed to sign it and return it to him. I told my lawyer to ignore the letter. It's not a filed motion, it's a letter asking, no no, begging, for money he doesn't deserve. So it will be ignored. Want to take me to court? Pay a lawyer like I did. And then after you wasted money you don't have, on a case that I have checked and doubled checked that I can't lose, then maybe you'll see how royally screwed you really are.

Chess Game 9/27/21

At about 10:30am I had to text him. I didn't want to, I want to start keeping him at arm's length. But I had to make sure he was picking the boys up from school. So I text him and asked for confirmation. He seemed confused as to why I needed confirmation. Perhaps it's because you are irresponsible and completely unpredictable? I had questions for him about why he lied but i realized asking would be futile. He would just lie, or gaslight or even ignore. So I decided to do the same. Why am I jeopardizing my sanity? It's like pulling teeth and honestly, all the

teeth are rotten. But then, to my surprise, he starts interrogating me. He has questions about APEX. Well apparently APEX spoke to the AP and stated that he questioned my STBX's character since he is still married. Her response? 'They separated before we did (lie) and their paperwork has been in the courts for over a year waiting to be processed' (2nd lie). I think I see why my STBX and her get along so well! Literally made for each other. Anyway, APEX knew when we separated and that we are still married. So he retorted that we've only been separated since 12/2020. And this is why men can't be trusted. I trusted APEX with a little bit of info and our cover is blown. My STBX wanted to know how he knew this since apparently me, him and the AP are the only ones who know we are still legally married. What's wrong hunny? Afraid people will find out your dirty little secret? Her friends and family will find out that she is a husband stealer? Yikes, that won't help the perfect little image you have. My STBX claimed the APEX is scum, unsafe, can't be trusted and if I'm talking to him I need to stop. Wait, hold up. Did you just try to tell me what to do? I'm sorry, you must have me confused with someone who has to listen to you. Cause I know damn well that's not me. So I ask, 'What does it matter if I talked to him? I didn't choose to have children with him. If he is so unstable her procreating with him is more unsafe than me speaking to him.' This sounds like a her problem and not a me problem. Again, I think him saying he is unsafe for the children is using her kids as the scapegoats. I think they are just afraid of their dirty laundry being aired.

Concerning the neglecting of our kids to hop a plane to her state; he claims that I have it all wrong. Warning: Here comes the lies and gaslighting! He claims he drove to the airport in the morning, boarded mass transit and headed to work. Then returned to the airport and hopped a plane. Are. You. Crazy?! This is the craziest thing I've ever heard. Not to mention he lives in a commuter town, closer to the city he works in than the actual airport. How does this even make sense. My reply, *"Listen ____, it doesn't matter. I don't ever expect you to be honest and that's fine. You've lied to me for over a decade and I don't expect any of that to*

change. It doesn't matter, it's AP's issue now, not mine!" Then he went on to defend himself, claiming he 'hasn't lied about a thing'. A dear friend told me, he thinks he is playing you and winning but he is playing this game alone. I'm not a competitor sitting across from him at the chessboard. Each time he thinks he's winning by dealing me a blow he's actually hurting himself. Every lie he tells makes it a little bit easier to not give a shit. Every stupid, selfish thing he does only helps my case against him. He is playing this chess game by himself and every winning move is a loss. Only once the divorce is finalized, and the chessboard is cleared, will he see that his king has fallen and all the pieces are mine.

Thread #4 Confronting my husband while he's on vacation with his mistress

If you are just catching my story you are in for a wild, wild ride. This all started when I learned by STBX was cheating and about to take a romantic vacation with his AP. Not only did I confront them, I did it in a pretty nontraditional way. Since then I have been documenting the ups and downs of cheating, narcissists and divorce. You can start my story here:

https://www.reddit.com/r/cheating_stories/comments/kg886u/my_husband_is_currently_on_a_vacation_with_his/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web2x&context=3

Bad Company (10/6/21)

Wolves travel in packs. Elephants form herds. Birds flock together. Cheaters keep close company. Could this last statement be true? I believe so; let me tell you all a story. My STBX had 2 close friends. These friends, along with their amazing wives, would spend time with my STBX and I going to dinners, children's birthday parties, concerts and football Sundays. While the wives and I had no connection except our husbands we ultimately became friends. This is the story of those women, their STBXs, and how narcissists attract narcissist friends. These women are all now divorced or going through the process. We have found strength in each other and for that I am grateful. If you thought my story was intense, I hope this post makes you realize there are women in situations just as inconceivable as mine. I addressed the other 2 members of The First Wives Club about posting their stories and they were excited to let the world know (anonymously of course) their stories. I asked each woman to select a nickname that represented their ex and I'm excited to tell you the story of *Dobby* and *Campanella*.

Dobby: This man was an outgoing man who was always the life of the party. Sometimes irresponsible but always concerned with

the well being of others. He was always very kind to me and when he met his now ex I was over the moon for them both. She is a smart and spicy woman who is kind and painfully honest. They seemed to compliment each other so well and I even shed a tear at their wedding. But only a few short months after their wedding things would take a turn. Dobby was cheating; with men. Yes, you heard right folks, men. And how did she find out? Well he came clean, via a text message while she was working. Wow, talk about timing. He should have been upfront and honest about his uncertainty with his partner BEFORE the marriage. She was hurt and confused and questioned how she got there. While he looked for men online and through apps she was left in the dark. Of course his narcissistic mentality made him a victim. She is the only one legally divorced now and she is living her best life. Moved out of state, got a great job and is embracing her new lease on life. I'm so proud of her and hope to be her one day soon.

Campanella: Let me tell you about this 'man'. This guy literally stepped in it when he met his STBX. She is a literal beauty queen who is kind, comes from a good family, and so very intelligent. But, early on into their marriage there were questions about his loyalty to her. On one occasion she found a Bumble profile of his in which his profile picture simply cropped her out. Idiot... On the outside he was outgoing and a friend to all. But obviously, he was too friendly. While he not only had issues with commitment he also has issues that need to be clinically diagnosed. When I say this I mean his mood shifted with the wind. He started to become very nasty. He would yell at her and say such terrible and undeserving things. Perhaps he was pushing her away out of guilt? Or maybe he's just a jerk. My money is on the latter. But never fear, remember I said she was intelligent? She started recording his rants and verbal abuse. She had enough 'evidence' and was about to leave, but he got smart and realized what she was doing. At that point he took her phone and deleted all the saved voice memos and even took a swing at her. Big tough guy, right? The next day she picked their child up from daycare, filed a restraining order and never returned. Today his moods still

change. He sends her pictures of women he's dating and then a day later he's begging her to get back together. The First Wives and I agree that he is only doing this because the fear of being alone is now overtaking him. Who will feed his narcissistic ego?! He will probably be just like my STBX when he meets a new fool, I mean woman, to coddle him.

My point in sharing these stories was simple; we are all dealing with narcissists. Some stories are more complex than others but all are tragic for the victims. So if you are reading this and think my story is too wild to exist please know that my story is one of many that can be told. In the end though we are all better off for taking the steps to move on. I hope if you are struggling with a narcissist, cheater, abuser or overall piece of trash partner that you take the steps to leave and move on. There is better out there for you, you just need to step outside and find it.

Beer Muscles (10/19/21)

I dread Mondays. Not because of returning to the work routine (well also because of the work routine), but because of the return of my STBX. On Mondays he returns from a long weekend visiting the AP in her state and he usually returns guns a blazing. He will text me paragraphs demanding things. He will become even more hard headed and confrontational. Yes, he develops beer muscles, for lack of a better term. He spend a carefree weekend playing the role of supportive boyfriend and amazing stepdad. I'm sure he's excellent at it, it's very easy to put on a temporary show. While there I picture them laying on her couch and coming up with evil ways to destroy me, ruin me financially or just plain shit talk me. None of this is good, her hate for me is probably all rooted in a lie he told about me. Don't worry love, the lies will start involving you soon too, be ready. They probably sip cheap wine and evil laugh to themselves. I picture her cackling and snorting at elaborate scheme they create to demolish me. Gross.

So Monday he returns with an agenda. A to-do list created by his puppet master. I can see it now: 1) Berate her early in the

morning while she is just starting work so she can start her day off unpleasantly. 2) Demand money that you are not legally entitled to. If you annoy her enough she might cave, right? Harassment goes a long way! 3) Tell her about all the things she has done wrong. None of this is factual and a twisted truth, but she's a nice person, she will feel guilty anyway. 4) Half heartedly apologize for the affair. Don't actually mean it because hey, you can't change it and you aren't actually sorry. But it's nice to be patronizing. 5) Remind her you are doing everything in the best interest of the children. Having an affair, potentially moving out of state, fighting their mom on every decision, not giving her money for them, losing your temper at the drop of the hat when you have them all is in their best interest, right? By the time he checks off his honey-do list my head is spinning. I'm emotionally exhausted and angry. I feel helpless, alone and strangely guilty. I honestly feel guilty I subjected my kids to this. Why did I choose this man? Why did I do this to them? But this time it was different. This time I didn't want to play the helpless victim. This time I took charge.

I called the court house to see what is delaying my divorce. Turns out the courts must be operated by Lloyd and Harry because they misplaced half of my paperwork. Yes, they misplaced or improperly filed legal documents pertaining to my divorce and maybe many others as well. So I called my lawyer who is also a bad ass woman and she gave that clerk hell. When I spoke to her afterwards she was ranting and out of breath. If anyone wants her business card let me know, she is worth the money. Anyway, I get an email from her today that they are fast tracking my divorce, skipping the Zoom calls (thanks covid) and making a final decision just from the submitted paperwork. Well I'll be damned. Looks like my divorce is closer than I had imagined. Goodbye helplessness; hello freedom.

D Day (10/27/21)

Today was a normal day. Normal refusal to get out of bed, normal straining to put my face on in the mirror, normal coffee, normal gridlock, normal coffee stain on shirt from stop and go gridlock, normal work banter, normal paperwork, normal return home gridlock, normal homework, normal dinner, normal wrangling of children for bedtime, just, well, normal. As I settled in from my rather routine day I notice that my emails have no refreshed all day. Waiting for the red bubble to appear with an undgodly high double digit number I cringe at the thought of emails I've missed that need replying. I swipe through all the junk and ads offering discounts (we all know they aren't real discounted savings in those promo emails) and see an email from my lawyer. The subject; Congrats.

I stop. A hard, full stop. Like a deer in headlights. It has to be it. This is everything I've been excited for. Everything I wanted. My future, scary and unpredictable, all sit in an email just waiting to be opened. I am ecstatic and petrified. I know when I open the email and read her words that not only am I starting a new chapter, it's a whole new God damn book. Honestly in that moment, I'm afraid and jealous of my STBX. I'm so angry that he has taken the cowards way out through this whole process. Never did he experience the heartache, trauma, frustration, jealousy and inadequacies that I felt. Like the vile toad he is, he jumped from my lily pad to hers and never even got wet. Meanwhile I'm in a pond with no lily pads in sight and I feel like I'm sinking. I listen to my own thoughts and I'm disgusted with this woe is me mentality but it can't be shook. I think I have the right to feel this way but the bad ass in me refuses to show the world the fear I am suppressing. I swallow hard and open it. It is done. We are done. The process is done, I'm free.

I should be drinking. Popping the bubbly and celebrating. But I think what people don't say is that when you divorce it's more like death. Death to a life you had. Death to the stability you thought you had. Death to the comfort you had grown

accustomed to. Now I ask myself, 'what do people do in times of death and despair'? They eat. Check, did that enough already. They find comfort in friends and family. Check, my loved ones are my rock whom I rely on heavily. They remember the good times. Check, I have my boys as a constant reminder that even though it went south, I have two amazing people to show from it. They move on. There it is. Move on. I need to look to the future. No, not just a romantic one, but a future that is mine to take. Decisions that are mine to make. Memories that are mine to create. And for once, I can be selfish. I can make the calls that benefit my boys and I. I can grab life by the horns and tame that bitch. Put its head on my mantle as a reminder of the time that I found bravery and faced life head on. I'm ready.

So loyal readers who sat with me from the beginning, let this be the post you've been waiting for. A woman who has come full circle. A woman who might not have created a perfect circle, but she is trying. A woman who will still have major bumps and divots ahead tackling him persistently asking for money, moving, and just being a plain old jerk. Some of you will stop reading and if this is our goodbye then I thank you and wish you the best. Some may continue to read only to hear what becomes of my ex-husband and the future karma he may face. I have found it so helpful for myself to be real, honest and vulnerable in my writing. I hope I have helped some of you in the process and for that reason I will continue to write; for you and for me. I have navigated this whole experience blindly and have revealed to you my story and my sacred inner thoughts. So I leave you with just one more piece of advice: *Stay classy, sassy and a bit bad assy.*

Face Lift Drama (12/14/21)

I thought it would be easy. The weight dropped and instantly super model thin. But that's a lie. Anyone who says the drama ends with divorce is lying to you. It's a trap, that person can't be trusted. The problems just change. It's like drama got a face lift but it's still ugly at its core. The house is sold. The HUGE check

has been deposited and here comes the troll from under the bridge. He furrows his brow and demands 'his' money and new custody. Just when I feel like we reached a stale tolerance of each other here come the dramatics. Here is the latest struggle; trips to her state with the kids. He wants them for Christmas. I agreed, Christmas Eve with me and Christmas Day they hop a plane to sunny ____ and they spend the holiday week as a 'family'. Cute, right? I asked they be back for NYE and my birthday. That was a struggle. "But NYE is my holiday this year..." he protest. Ok, but Christmas Day is a shared holiday which I am giving to you. Reluctant compromise but compromise none the less.

Then he starts to inquire about taking our 5 and 9 year old on random weekend trips there. Do you even understand the exhaustion they will feel Monday in school after two trips at 5 hours each way in less than 72 hours? How is this what is best for them? I think it's what you want, the desire to play house, but it's not what's best for them. I suggest he look to take them on extended weekends or spring break. He then says that he expects a problem with holidays when he moves. I remind him our MSA says he will come here one weekend a month. Not the other way around. He's is out of his gourd if he thinks I'm going to allow our children to fly that often during the school year. But don't worry loyal readers (I'm honestly not sure how many of you are left), this is something I will not budge on. Our MSA states the custody. He comes HERE. They do NOT go there unless it is for 4-5 weeks in the summer. Sorry, play house with her kids, not with ours.

He is grumpy and accuses me of 'doing what I please and expecting everyone to fold'. I remind him I followed the custody schedule he wanted, compromised on his travel and holidays and have even negotiated a small amount of cash for him. How am I winning?? I'm being too nice. I am folding. But since he didn't get everything he wanted I am the bad guy. Sigh, hello narcissist, it's been a while but I see you are still around and staying strong. My thought is if I stay strong and firm about him coming here he will eventually stop coming. Is that terrible? Kinda. Is that necessary? Also, kinda. I don't know what the best thing is. Perhaps I let my

feelings about them playing house hurt me but I have to remind myself it will probably short lived. Something about leopards and spots. I remind myself to stay focused on the real issue; the boys. This will all come to a conclusion and eventually run its course. Stay strong, and stay firm, just till his eventual move. Time heals, time reveals truth, time...I need it to hurry up.

Christmas Karma (12/29/21)

For months the ex and I have gone back and forth about the topic of travel for the holidays. In October he suggested he take the boys to her state for the holiday. I agreed but wanted them home for NYE and my birthday celebration. He agreed. Easy peezy, no fuss, no muss. Then a few weeks later he complained he wouldn't have the boys for either holiday (Christmas Day is a shared day) so I reluctantly agreed to return the boys on the evening of the 24th so they may spend Christmas day in her state. All was well with that decision, yet again. Then I guess the little birdie he cheated with chirped in his ear again and he came back a few weeks later and demand he get NYE as well (it was technically his holiday but I gave him Christmas Day for it) or I should fly out to pick up the kids if I wanted them back for NYE. Sigh, this coparenting with the AP's input is tiring. Realizing that we could NEVER compromise I told him we stick to our legal agreement; we share Christmas day and he gets them NYE to be returned on the 1st. He was not happy with this deal either. Bottom line: if he doesn't get 100% of what he wants he isn't happy. But, I know sticking to only the legal agreement will benefit me and the boys in the long run. I say this because earlier this month he said when he moves across the country it will be expensive and difficult for him to come back here monthly to visit as our MSA states. He wants the boys to go there monthly instead. Oh no, no, no. We are not shuttling 2 young boys across the country monthly because you no longer like the legal agreement we made. I emailed my lawyer and gave her a heads up this was his thought process incase the situation gets sticky in the months

to come. Her and I are prepared. So, by sticking to the MSA now, I can give zero wiggle room in the months to come.

On Wednesday (12/22) I got a call from the school nurse telling me my 5 year old was a close contact of a positive student in his class. I called my mother immediately to have him picked up, scheduled a COVID test for both boys and then called my ex. His first response, "Well that fucks up my trip". Umm, yes, our son is fine, thanks for asking. Now both boys are a close contact and can't travel. So what does he do? He boards an earlier flight and disappears. Wow. I shouldn't be surprised, guess spending Christmas with her kids was more of a priority. I know some of you will say, 'What about his health? He is risking exposure too'. Well my son was exposed on Monday the 20th, my ex had both boys the 20th-22nd. He wouldn't be risking exposure, he was already exposed in this case. I'm sharing this story now as I wanted to wait for their covid tests. But after months of back and forth and him changing our arrangement the boys don't even end up going. He says he is devastated that the boys couldn't go but had zero issue bailing early and not seeing them at all for Christmas. Both boys are fine and are actually getting tested again tomorrow for their return to school next week. Now that I know they are not sick I can only assume this whole thing was karma. His selfish behavior and hard headed mentality was for nothing. Karma. My ex called at 7:30pm Christmas evening to have a 90 second chat with them and has yet to ask me how anyone feels. Didn't even ask about test results. I wonder if AP knew this was why the boys did not travel? Perhaps he lied and said I was not allowing them to. I only say this because she has a small child who is not of vaccination age. I really hope, for that child's sake, my ex isn't an asymptomatic carrier. I will be requiring him to get tested as well before he picks up the boys on the 4th. I'm sure he will say he is fine, or just say he got tested already. To which I will ask to see the results. I've learned the hard way his word means less than nothing.

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday! The boys and I had a fantastic time. Happy New Year to you all!

Sayonara, Sucker! (1/19/22)

While I have always been good at thinking a few steps ahead and seeing the writing on the wall before it has even been written, there was one thing I was always sure of: he was moving. For months he danced around it. Why? Excellent question. I wish I could answer it. There are a lot of questions I wish I had answers for. But one thing was always obvious, he was leaving to live a life with her and her children. Now let's analyze this logically. Why would you have an affair with a woman across the country, visit every other weekend as well as long holidays, if you never had any intention of living there and making it work? Just that piece of 'evidence' is all you need, but wait, there's more. My boys told me before Christmas that daddy got a job at a big, well known company. I told them that wasn't correct, thinking that he told them he worked there just so they would understand that he worked for a company in some capacity. Putting a face to a name if you will. So when I finally asked him (purely in conversation) he told me the boys were right. And, I hope you are sitting down for this news, his office is located in her state. So why, why, would you take a job in her state if you 'weren't sure' if you were going to move there? I also sent him a custody schedule early this month that runs through May 1st and he has never even looked at it. Normally he's quickly responding and telling me weekends he has booked to travel to her. Something wasn't right... Lastly, his lease is up March 1st. No way he was going to re-up for a year. Sometimes I feel like I need to check myself in the mirror. He must see 'idiot' written across my forehead somewhere and I have yet to find it.

So he text me yesterday to tell me the news. This isn't news. This is information you have known and have withheld. I don't (and probably never will) understand why he can't be transparent. I'm not asking for personal details, I need information to schedule the rest of my life. Literally, the rest of my life. Because as I (and many of you) have speculated, I doubt he will be in their lives for much longer. Is that sad? Yea, it's

superficially sad. The boys will not have a father around. But, he wasn't really the father they needed. Lately he has been better but it really was a last ditch effort to save the fragile and awkward relationship they have. I think about how 10 years from now when they are older and understand, I have no idea how they will react towards him. Knowing that he had an affair, fought me constantly, and then disappeared 4 months after our divorce was legalized might really alter the relationship the 3 of them have as adults. How he maintains that relationship over the next few years will be important. I hope for everyone's sake there is some effort, but as a magic 8 ball would say, "outlook not so good".

The up side is my child support is more than doubling. This will be helpful as I have been house hunting and that extra money would help me get a better house for the boys and I. I'm excited for this. The boys are excited for this. I think the 3 of us are eager to start our lives over. They have already asked to come see houses with me, to pick out their bedrooms and are excited for the possibility of getting a pool! I hope I can check all of their boxes, they deserve everything.

Probable Prediction (2/17/22)

It's almost here. I have every type of emotion swirling through me. Will I miss him? HELL NO. But I think what controls me the most is the probability that he will be selfish right until the end. Let me give you some context. He is moving. Bye, see ya, don't let the door hit ya..etc. Now, any normal, well adjusted person would prepare, right? Well, not him. Oh, no, not him. Instead he has spent his child free weekends in her state. I learned through mutual friends that he was celebrating birthdays (of her friends), paintballing and of course treating her to a fancy Valentine's Day evening. Again, normally this would be none of my business and I would have no reason to care, EXCEPT, he has already hinted that he will not be taking the kids the last weekend of the month as scheduled. Apparently opting to enjoying his weekends and then give me the children on his scheduled weekend to finally handle

his priorities. But who cares about my time, right? But I ask more importantly, what about the kids? Is this 'see ya later' only to disappear like a thief in the night? No explanation, just a normal goodbye that translates to 'good bye forever'?

Here is my prediction: He is currently across the country. He will return on Monday the 21st to have the kids for 2 nights and then disappear. Poof. Houdini himself couldn't pull off a better trick. The greatest disappearing trick of all time. Now let me tell you what brought me to this idea. It wasn't a crystal ball but simply his inability to provide detail. He has sold everything that mattered to him or was worth anything. Years of expensive memorabilia piled into a U-Haul and sold. He is also having his car shipped across country. Good idea, but when I asked when it was being shipped he told me 'the guy hasn't given me a date'. So you hired a company and told them you are outta here on 3/1 and they have not given you a ship date. My guess? He has a date that he isn't willing to share because he knows it will prevent him from being here for his parenting time. I've seen this movie so many times, at this point I can recite the dialogue. When I talked to him about this he claimed he was 'doing the best I can' and 'I don't have any help'. So, I offered to help. I told him I had offered to help him pack up things on both weekends but he chose to be in her state instead. His reply, "Stop trying to control the situation". Wait. I offered to help because you had no help and you classified that as me being controlling? That bothered me. Not because he's a dick, I know that part can't be helped. But because he knows me. He knows that wasn't a controlling comment. So why say it?

I realized he said this because he has to. Me being a good person brings him guilt. He knows this move is selfish. He knows he has been difficult. He knows the affair was wrong. But it's easier to make me the villain than to face his own faults. Perhaps he has told so many lies about what an evil person I am to his AP that he now believes them. What ever the reason, the chameleon has changed his color. He is now her shade and will blend in and mimic whatever she feels. This is something narcissist do. He is

charming and agreeable to her. If she has an opinion about me; it's now his opinion as well. She is his new supply and he will drink it up. He will mold himself to everything she is...until he gets bored. Until the allure fades, daily life and routine set in and she is no longer feeding his ego. And then what? Then he does what he did to me. He pulls away, he resents, he's secretive, he cheats, and then vilifies. Again, the chameleon will change their color. It's just the chameleons nature.

Goodbye and Hello (3/5/22)

The day came, and the day went. Last Saturday, 2/26, he left. Yes my prediction was right, he said he "wasn't changing a cross country trip" to keep the kids his last weekend even though just a few days before he said "thing are up in the air" about the move. I wish I knew something about gambling because I could have bet it all and won. I'm sure anyone that has kept up with my story since the beginning also knew the odds of him leaving early were a good one. We could have all made a few coins. He dropped off some things to the house on Thursday evening and said bye to the kids. It wasn't emotional or long winded. Just a hug and a goodbye. The next day I went to his place to get the larger objects that did not fit in his car. We packed my car in silence and then once the trunk was closed the awkward moment began. Do I just leave? Throw him deuces and jump in my car? What is the protocol for saying goodbye to the man you were married to for 10 years, knew for 15, had children with, cheated on you, etc. So I just said, "Well I guess that's goodbye. Good luck to you out there." He then looked at his feet and started shifting his weight. No. This cant be what I think it is. Is he...sad? He then says, "C'mon, you are going to make me cry". I'm going to make you cry? That statement made me furious. So I said, "Why the hell would you cry? Every decision you've made for the past 1`8 months was all for this moment. You wanted this and you got it." He wanted validation. He wanted reassurance. Bottom line is, he's comfortable with me and he knows I'm a logical person, he wanted me to tell him this

was the right thing to do. That it was ok he is leaving the kids. Hell, maybe that it's ok that he cheated. I guess my comment made him realize the days of moral support are long gone and he stiffened up. I turned to get into my car and as I left I said, "So much for the past 15 years. Goodbye!" He scoffed. Good, he's angry with me again. I prefer that.

I spoke to him for the first time yesterday since he left. The boy's spring break is in a month and the plan was that they would be going to him for the week. I sent him a message asking about dates and he did not seem eager. He said "he had to look at a calendar and work on things on his end". He didn't jump at the comment I made about keeping them for Easter and my oldest's birthday either. Something is up. Turns out her children will be in school that week and they both have to work. Who will watch/entertain the kids for a week? He is not going to make it work. I don't think he can even if he wanted to. To all my betting people: What are the chances the boys go visit him for a week in April?

Now, onto new business. I met someone. Well I didn't just meet someone. I've been dating someone since December and dare I say it, he's really amazing. I have hesitated to say anything as honestly, I'm scared. I'm afraid the same thing will happen to me again. I'm afraid to introduce the boys to someone and then it dissolves. I'm afraid of truly opening to someone again. But I will say so far, he is completely different than my ex. I'm cautious, but enjoying his company, affection and attention. He knows my story, he's been in the room while I've had phone calls with my ex and he has heard the gaslighting first hand. I think he is being very patient with me because of this. I warned him early this would take me time and he understand. I'm not the same woman I was 2 years ago. That's not a good thing or a bad thing; it's the truth. So for now I'm cautiously optimistic and just taking it day by wonderful day with him.

Radio Silence (3/28/22)

10 days. That's when the boys' spring break starts. It's only 10 days away and still no word from the ex about airfare and travel arrangements. Back in the beginning of March when I asked him about this we tried to figure out logistics. I say we but it was actually me. I volunteered to pay my way to fly out there (I was going to have a mini vacation for myself after drop off) and he would pay for the boys' airfare. He assured me that he had travel credits from their missed Christmas trip and all would be covered. Then, radio silence. Not a peep. I'd ask about dates and he'd say he 'needed to check his work calendar'. Then it was, 'I have to check OUR calendar'. Lastly, it was 'the airline is giving me problems with my credit'. So I waited. I waited 3 weeks. Tonight I had to make the call. I wish I never would have picked up the phone to dial his number..

He informs me that his credit is for only one set of tickets. So he says, 'how do you want to work this? You want to pay their way here and I'll pay for the flight back?' No, no I do not want to do that. Hard pass. This is not my responsibility to pay. YOU agreed via our MSA to come here once a month. YOU decided it was too big of an expense and now want them to come to you. YOU moved across the country for a woman and left your children. Now YOU need to pay their airfare or come here. He told me we have 50/50 custody so travel expenses should be the same. He told me he spoke to people (people are obviously his girlfriend) and they think our arrangement is absurd and unfair. Ok there, Chief. Whatever you say. Please show me the law degree of said people. He said our whole MSA needs to be changed. Wanna change it? No problem. Get a lawyer. He won't because financially he can't. He couldn't afford to pay 2,000 in airline tickets, but can afford a lawyer? We went incircles arguing the same points and I realized none of us were being heard. So I told him to get a lawyer and hung up.

So I opened up my wallet yet again and called my lawyer. That's one bill I will never be angry about paying. She told me he

can make demands until he is blue in the face, but until he hires a lawyer and files for the change it's all just hot air. Then even after he files she is confident that a judge will see his reneging on our legal agreement as a negative. Then the judge will ask why he moved and when they see it was purely for his benefit and not at the best interest of the children he will not alter the agreement. Best part is, if he files he will have to travel back to my state to attend court....but doesn't want to travel here to visit the kids.

Moral of the story: He never really cared about the kids, it was all about besting me. Besting me out of money, time, sanity, the list goes on and on. The hard truth is he has moved on. I was perfectly fine with him moving on and leaving me behind; I welcomed that. But the kids, that hurts. They are slowly asking less about him and I'm not sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing. Bad for him I'm sure, but for the kids, it might just be the best.

Game Time (4/21/22)

I'd like to introduce you to a new game I play. Some, who are survivors of infidelity and narcissist, might be familiar with this game. I like to call it, 'Healthy or Trauma'. Being in a new relationship after you have left a cheater is hard, mentally and emotionally. I find myself loving every minute with him, enjoy the comfort we give each other, but I also find myself analyzing things more than I ever have. I have not been in a healthy relationship so I often find myself wondering; what is normal and what is not? Is this action, behavior or response a healthy one or am I doomed to make the same mistake again? For the first few months I played this game in silence. He ignored what I said to him when he was watching the game: normal? I had to ask him to help me with something: normal? He answered a text and put his phone in his pocket: trauma? He plays a video game and disappears for a bit: trauma? He has been unbelievably patient with me and navigating me through this new relationship and it has made me so comfortable. The trust is building; but it's not sturdy. It's not

the Empire State Building. More like the Leaning Tower of Pisa. It was becoming exhausting playing this back and forth game in my head. I knew I didn't want to make the mistakes I've made in the past. Am I being too cautious and overanalyzing? Yes, probably. But who wouldn't in my place? Was I getting in my own way by doing this? What should I do to ensure this relationship is healthy and grows?

I decided to start at the beginning. I wanted to correct the first wrong step I took with my ex: not communicating properly. So, I told him about my game. I told him that I over analyze (he knew this part already but the game bit was new) and I question if things are part of a healthy relationship or am I leading towards trauma again. He understood. He laughed. He comforted. He hugged. So while I have not been able to stop playing my game, I'm now no longer the only player. He understands my thought processes and communicates with me. He sees the wheels turning in my head and puts them to a grinding halt. I apologize to him for how my mind works and he won't hear of it. We are rebuilding, he says. Yes, yes we are.

My Husband is currently on vacation with his AP and I'm confronting them

Progress

Hello Survivors-

I thought about posting here many times over the past year and always decided against it. The reason was simply because I was embarrassed and didn't believe my story existed in this space. I didn't think I was surviving. Maybe more like struggling, that seemed a more realistic title for my journey. Countless readers have told me to share here and not until recently did I really consider myself a survivor. You see, my story is bad. Gut wrenching and unfair. I was lost and angry, vengeful and broken. But this year has taught me a lot about myself; where I went wrong and how strong I actually am. Never did I think I was perfect, but I knew I wasn't who he made me out to be. I am not a role model for anyone here, but I am a woman who can tell you, 'it's going to be alright'. It will suck, rip you apart emotionally and mentally, but it will get better. I treated my post as a diary entry, you know, what blogs were intended to be, and somehow my story caught fire. I hope that someone will read it and understand how I felt, why I did what I did and maybe learn from my mistakes and successes. Good Luck to you all, I've been there, and I am still there.

Thread #5 Confronting my Husband **While he's on Vacation with his** **Mistress**

If you are just catching my story you are in for an incredibly frustrating, empowering, sad and truthful story of how I confronted my cheating husband. This story is well over a year in the making and it will take a good deal of time to get through it all, but it is well worth the time (or so I've been told). Since my confrontation, I have been documenting the ups and downs of cheating, narcissists and divorce. So buckle up, grab some snacks, and put a pot of coffee on. You can start my journey here:

https://www.reddit.com/r/cheating_stories/comments/kg886u/my_husband_is_currently_on_a_vacation_with_his/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web2x&context=3

A Legal Leap (5/11/22)*

We've reached an impasse. There is no forward progress. Just a brutal stalemate or better yet a staring contest and neither of us have blinked...for weeks. As many of you know the boys did not visit in April because of his last minute money grab to have me split airfare. We ended our last conversation/disagreement/argument/general disgust for each other by agreeing to both get lawyers. Well, as of last night he has not retained a lawyer but still expects the boys to come visit in July. How? Are you driving 2,400+ miles here and back? Hitchhike? Magic carpet? How? Because last I knew we agreed there was no resolving this on our own and a trip to court was necessary. He told me he "didn't have time to start this argument". What argument? There is nothing to argue. Get a lawyer and let them argue for us.

So now this is my dilemma: Do I just start the court process on my own? He hasn't seen the boys in 3 months and that's enough missed parenting to warrant a trip back to court for

compensation for missed parenting time, a change in physical custody, as well as altering child support payments. Now, he wants to change our agreement to Spring break, Xmas break and 4-5 weeks in the summer and eliminate the monthly visits. Ok, fine by me, but that will result in less parenting time for you and more child support for me. When I said this to him during our argument he told me, 'it's all about the money for you'. No sir, it's not about the money, but that's the law. Less parenting time equals more child support for the other parent. Don't like it? Take it up with the state.

He's never going to get a lawyer. This I'm sure of. So, if I start the process to change our physical custody agreement and seek a judgment on travel expenses, he will be forced to retain a lawyer. So do I do it? I figure I have to do it. This may bankrupt him. I'm sure his girlfriend will not be happy with the loss of a few hundred more a month either. But I also think that if things are ruled in my favor he will never be able to afford to fly the kids out there. Do I want that? I keep blaming myself saying that I'll cause him to go broke or that me digging my heels in about travel expenses is preventing him from seeing the kids, but it's not. This is all his doing. His selfish decisions were made and now I feel guilty about making my own decisions for me and the boys. So let me get that out of my head and move forward just as he did. Do I file my for the change in circumstance and modify the agreement? I think (and so does my lawyer) that I will win this disagreement, so what do I have to lose, right?

**Post moved from thread #4 to thread #5 in order to have enough characters to add a link to this thread.*

Playing Chicken (5/15/22)

In my last post I struggled with the idea of bringing my ex back to court. I know I said struggled, but it was really the only thing I could do. There would be no resolve on our own. We were just making demands of each other and the whole time there was no conclusion. So I called my lawyer. She drafted a post judgment

order listing my wishes. Those being: He pays all the travel expenses for the boys. His parenting time goes to the 3 times a year like he wanted. His child support is increased to the amount necessary for the change in parenting. Pretty cut and dry. My lawyer emailed this to him on 5/25. Then, we waited. And waited. And waited some more. After some time of no response she sent the same judgment order to him via certified mail on 6/3. He responded a few days later and said he was obtaining counsel and would come back once he had time to write up a response. Well, tonight, I got it. And oh man, what a waste of time. I'll spare you all the gory details but basically the sticking point has not changed. He still wants me to pay 42% of the travel. We wasted weeks. We are back where we started. We are staring at each other just playing chicken. So now what? What was the point of all this? I think I know..

He never obtained counsel. I found out from APEX that the AP's (I guess girlfriend now) brother is an attorney. MY ex has claimed to my lawyer he has hired counsel but in reality her brother is helping him word documents to me pro bono. Ok, that's fine, but this whole time I'm paying a lawyer. I'm wasting dollars and he is wasting favors. We are not the same. This whole ordeal is costing me and it's because of his wants/actions that we are doing this. His emails and text to me are professional and kind. He wants me to cave. He wants me to be kind. He wants all this because if we don't come to an agreement we go back to court. Then he has to fly here, find lodging, miss work, and most importantly, hire a lawyer. Now he is the one out a few bucks. Bucks he would spend on his new lifestyle. By new lifestyle I mean vacations and nights out. In the past 4 weeks they have had 2 weekend getaways to spa resorts. His weekend with the kids should have been Memorial Day weekend. Instead he spent it at a resort with her. Well, looks like he is going to have to empty his wallet because now it's time to spend some money on his kids.

I think the part that chaps my ass the most was on his revisions of the document he wanted to change the phrase, "...to accommodate Defendant's choice to relocate and not travel" to

“this is an agreed upon modification based on the defendant’s INABILITY to travel”. What? What inability are you facing? Your words to me were, “My life is here now and I’m never returning to ___”. That sounds like a tantrum and not an inability. Long story short my lawyer is filing the papers and we are returning to court. I can’t wait to hear him explain his ‘inability’ to the judge. Pop the popcorn, this is going to be a movie.

Putting Down The Fork (7/7/22)

I read all of your comments, chats and private messages. I may not reply to all, but they have been read. By doing this I have noticed a pattern. People always tell me to not feel guilty, take him for what he's worth, you should have gone scorched earth, etc. Some people have chalked my behavior up to maturity, being a good mom, decent person, model citizen, superwoman (ok, I added that one) and they may be correct. But the real and embarrassing truth is hard to swallow. It's called trauma bonding. This bond is felt by an empath when they become involved with a narcissist. The narcissist courts them, love bombs them, feeds their love in excess until the empath is stuffed. Then, sometimes without warning, they start starving them. But the empath holds onto every pound hoping for that sweet tasting love again. A few crumbs are thrown at the empath and the bond is strengthen again. I've had years of this fluctuating diet and I still remember how good that cake tasted, even though it was very bad for me. It's not easy to begin again. To learn how to 'eat' properly. As anyone who has had to keep a strict diet, they know how hard it is to shed those pounds and not miss cake. It takes dedication, support and a real desire to change. Realizing that cake wasn't worth it, after years of loving it, comes in time. I'm getting there, the taste of the cake is fading. So while I still have some tastebuds that yearn for a morsel, I am slowly learning to decline a sliver.

Today was the first step in putting down the fork. I stopped feeling sorry for him. I stopped negotiating. I stopped thinking of his needs. Two weeks ago he sent an email with 3 options for our

custody issue. Every option was garbage. It either resulted in less child support so he can afford travel or a shared travel cost and more child support. Please tell me how supporting your children financially is negotiable? How is that even an option that comes to your mind? And how is that in the best interest of the children. So you want to not see them, pay me less money to help support them so you can fly them out to you and have a grand old time? His wording in his email was as follow, "It is not financially feasible for me to pay for 100% of travel cost for 2-3 trips each year, in addition to the increased child support, and other expenses I'm responsible for." Yikes, sounds like you got yourself into a pickle there, buddy.

My lawyer contacted him and said there will be no more back and forth. We are filing an application with the court on Monday. Since the courts are all back to in-person, he will have to fly here and make an appearance. She sent him my proposed Order with a few modification I had originally agreed to as a compromise, but also left all travel expenses to him as well as increased child support. He has until Friday to decide if he agrees to my terms or would like to go to court. Balls in your 'court' now.

Good Counsel (8/4/22)

After weeks, no, months of this back and forth he finally did what I never thought he would do; hire a lawyer. I think all the favors he was calling in on her lawyer family members was becoming a bit too much. So he reluctantly hired counsel. Ten days ago my lawyer emailed me and told me he finally obtained counsel. She said his lawyer was nice and reasonable and saw eye to eye on some of our requests. Some of our request? I have one request; he pays for travel. So I think his counsel sees he doesn't really stand a chance in court. I was informed they were going to 'come up with some solutions' and get back to us. That was July 25th and I am impatiently waiting.

After that email from my lawyer I just stewed for a bit with this new information. His lawyer must know he doesn't have a

snowball's chance in hell of winning this. So what could other solutions be? The anticipation is killing me! I spoke to him a few days later and the topic of lawyers came up. I honestly thanked him for getting a lawyer so we can straighten this mess out and finally get to a resolution. He said he did get a lawyer but he didn't want to. He then said, "There is zero precedent for me shouldering 100% of the costs out there. I have pitched multiple scenarios where we could make something work. I didn't want to put it in the hands of a judge that knows nothing about us then a stack of paper and 2 people representing us. It's a massive risk. On both ends. And from my view it's unnecessary."

Was he right? Was this a risk? What precedent is he referring to exactly? But when you really look at the statement you see the real meaning. He didn't want this to go to court because then the decision is in the hands of a 3rd party, who knows the law, and just sees what's on paper. So what's on paper that he is so afraid of? The fact that we have a legal agreement he now wants to change? The fact that he has not used his parenting time to see our kids since February? The fact that the child support calculations are not correct since he has not fulfilled his parenting time? Yea, I could see how you wouldn't want that information coming to light in court. He was hoping he could just guilt me, or wear me down, till I finally caved. But with a judge involved that won't happen. All his selfish acts will be on full display. I can't wait to see the 'solutions' his counsel presents. Any day now, any day..

The Return (9/1/22)

This is going to be a lot so get ready... On Thursday, 8/18/22, I had my boarding pass in my hand and my boyfriend (eeek! school girl squeal) next to me, simply giddy about our first vacation together. My parents knowing how hard I work in my career, graduate school and parenting offered to take the boys for 4 days. For that I am so grateful. I was excited, looking forward to having adult time without having to get anyone a snack, referee fighting or recharge an iPad. And right on cue my phone dings. It's my ex.

He informs me that next Friday (8/26) he will be coming back to our state and would like to spend the day with the boys. YES! Just one day? Take the whole weekend or an overnight at least. He declined my offer for more time. Turns out he was only retuning to attend an engagement party. So, ok, let me get this straight. It's been over 6 months since you have seen our children but you are returning here for a party and just sneaking in a few hours with them?? I. Was. LIVID. This man (I'm referring to man as gender not in character) has fought me every step of the way claiming he would never return here. But I guess one of your football buddies getting married is super important and requires a visit. Forget about being involved in the lives of the tiny humans you helped to create... My boyfriend validates my feelings about this, offers support and a hug, and we board the plane. I promised I wouldn't let this ruin my trip.

I'm rested. I'm relaxed. I'm living my best life. But then I return home a few days later and remember that he is returning. I have so many mixed emotions. Goodbye rested and relaxed me; hello anxiety. Will it be awkward? How will the boys react to seeing him again? Will she be there? So many thoughts and of course he has provided very little information. Friday morning I ask him for an update on his arrival as I have somewhere to be and he tells me 10am. Deep exhale. You got this. Treat him like everyone else. Don't be petty, don't make a scene, but don't be too kind. I'm repeating these pointers in a mental pep talk to myself and I'm not totally sure it's working. I'm at the front window waiting with the boys and he arrives. He parks across the street and all the air is gone. I see him and I can't process what I'm feeling. Here is a man I gave 13 years of my life and as I look at him I see...nothing. I have no feelings. He's just a person on the street. I want to hate him, but I don't. I try to muster any kindness I may have for him but I have none. It's all just...gone. Everything. He's gained some weight. I hear happiness can do that to people. But upon first glance he looks, sad, Well, maybe not sad, but not himself. Like something is off. Our interaction is brief. We chat for a bit about the weather and the start of school. He tells me about his trip and

the reason he returned alone (claiming her children are ill) and then we buckle the kids in (who seem fairly apprehensive) and he leaves. His mood had improved since I first approached him in the driveway. Perhaps I'm over thinking it, but he seemed kinda happy to be back. Maybe he was anticipating me to be confrontational at first, but he knows me better than that. I have nothing to gain arguing with him and then giving him the children. Maybe he was actually excited to see the boys, but I get the sense that he was kinda at peace standing there, just the 4 of us. There is comfort in familiarity.

He returned the boys a few hours later and they were stuffed with sweets and toys under each arm. Needless to say their outing was a success. He and I spoke a bit more and he left. We left on good terms and everything seemed...okay. Weird to say but we were just in a good place of mutual understanding and focusing on the kids. It felt right. It felt healthy. It was what we needed this whole time. Flash forward to today. I get an email from my lawyer. After a month of nothing, his attorney finally responds. I will spare you all the details and just supply the cliff notes. When it comes to travel cost he is proposing to pay 3,000 annually. After that 3k is spent he wants to split travel 60-40. Not just the boys travel, but his travel included. You see, his new proposition involves me never having to escort the boys. Now, think about this with me. His gf didn't come here see the boys or to attend a party with him (but will definitely attend the wedding in Cancun with him) and now I never have to set foot in her state. How much of this proposition is what he wants and not what she wants? Does she hate me that much? Is she afraid of me? I have given her a piece of my mind a few times so I would understand that. Does she want to decrease the amount of time my ex and I interact? Am I completely over thinking this? You tell me. I have a call scheduled with my lawyer tomorrow about his suggestions but I have zero intention to agree to his proposition. Just buying his time till we end up in court I guess.

The Real Child (9/18/22)

Last week was chaos. Chaos in a good way, but wild none the less. The start of September brought the return of school for the boys and a return to work for me. This is always a tiring and stressful transition that I think most educators can understand. On top of my own work issues there are still plenty of beginning of the school year activities/errands/purchases for the boys. I'm so tired; is it June yet? With the start of every September comes another activity, my ex's birthday. I had made a decision that I would not contact him. But, I did understand that the boys must contact him. So, everyday for several days I reminded them when daddy's birthday was and that they should call. I set reminders on their iPads and sent them messages on Facebook Messenger Kids app as well. But, the day came and went and the boys did not call. The day after his birthday I knew I would hear about this, but instead I heard nothing. Not only did I not hear from him, the boys didn't either. On average he calls the boys once a week (not enough in my opinion but that's a whole other post) and had not spoken to them for about 10 days at this point. I sent him pictures and vids from our youngest's football game and he never responded. He must be angry. I guess now he knows how much being an afterthought hurts. If he wanted more clarity on the topic of being ignored I'm sure the boys could help him..

So I messaged him a few days later to tell him our oldest wants to take tennis lessons. Tennis, I know, I didn't see that one coming. To my surprise he wrote me back. We talked for a minute about lessons and then he finally stopped ignoring the elephant. He said: "I'll be honest with you. I was pretty hurt that the boys didn't call me for my birthday. Out of all the messages I got, that was the one I wanted. I'm not understanding where we stand, we have had a really good run of working together with things. Being open as far as communication etc. So to not have the boys call me seemed pretty calculated and hurtful." I explained to him that I gave the children the responsibility to call him. If the children are responsible enough to fly across the country to see you 3-4 times

a year why aren't they responsible enough to remember to call you? And, I'm not sure how we've been good on communicating. I tell him stuff, he contributes no support or supplemental monetary help, and the conversation is over. And let me stop your mind from going to where I think it's going. This wasn't about me. I'm putting the effort in with him that he puts in with our children. I'm doing 100% of the parenting and now I have to get the kids to call him when he doesn't make the effort to ever call them? Is it petty, yea maybe. But what's good for the goose... This was my response: "The hard truth of it is they are kids but they aren't dumb. They hear from you once a week if even. You didn't talk to them after the first day of school. I know you tried (*he called them after bedtime when I specifically told him hours before what their bedtime was*) but you could have called the next day and didn't. ____ wanted to call you after his game and you didn't answer or call back or respond to the pics I sent till now (*4 days later*). Stuff like this matters to them. If you don't do you part to contact them for special things or regularly they aren't going to make an effort to remember special things for you. I'm not saying this to be a dick, I'm saying this to make changes for them and improve your relationship with them even through distance. If you don't work to be more consistent now, once they are in middle and high school they will be too busy with their lives to bother with you (or me, teens are terrible). It's sucks but it's true."

And not that it matters at this point, but our MSA clearly states that birthdays belong to the spouse. So he could have spent the day with them but chose not to hop a plan for the weekend. Again, he's not meeting any of his responsibilities yet I have to go out of my way to make things special for him? These are children, yet my ex is acting like a child demanding calls and love when he doesn't give that to the boys. So I ask you, who is the real child?

Mistakes & Blessings (10/19/22)

It's Fall here. The air is cool, leaves crunch under your feet, everyone is consuming pumpkin and sweaters have returned to

my closet. I love this time of year. The slow progression into winter and the farewell to summer has me happy. But today, I'm happy for other reasons. Many of you know that since March I have battled my ex about travel expenses and a new custody order. While there was no physical bloodshed it wasn't too far off. Our back and forth changed once he obtained counsel. It was a blessing because now we could put the job of 'fighting' in someone else's (expensive) lap. There was a brief time in which I thought this was not going to end up in my favor. His lawyer was another badass woman and I feared she might get him more than he deserved. This chick was good, too good at some points. But, remember that money everyone was so upset I gave my ex? Sometimes life has a funny way of turning your mistakes into blessings. Let me explain. When I signed over that money I put notes on the checks. Since the money was supposed to be for commuting and travel for the children I wrote on each check, "Child1 Commute & Travel Expenses" and then "Child2 Commute and Travel Expenses" on the other. Well, along with conversations that I have saved and those checks, my lawyer was able to show enough evidence to his lawyer that I have paid more than my fair share of travel and it's all his responsibility. Technically it isn't a fair share because half of travel for the next 12-15 year will be way more than what I gave him. A judge will see that he hasn't abided by his parenting time, moved right after the divorce and checks were cut and that he's trying to change custody less than a year after it was created. No way he would win in front of a judge. His lawyer told him to cut his losses and just do as I asked. He's done for. Now with the change of custody he has to pay me more monthly in support (it's 1/3 more of what he already pays), all of the children's travel including travel for himself during peak travel holidays and he has to pay all my legal fees. That of course doesn't include his own legal fees. I'm elated! I feel so vindicated! I feel like a Viking with a head on a spear (that might not be historically accurate). I am woman hear my ROOAARRR!! Ok, I'm getting carried away. Let me reign it in a bit. I spoke to APEX informing him of the update. He assured me this

is definitely going to anger his ex. She is used to getting her way and her not being able to control this situation is frustrating. Especially since it will hurt their pockets. Is it terrible that this makes me smirk? Yea, I didn't think so either. He also told me my ex is playing 'father' so well by chaperoning field trips and coaching football. Awesome. My victory roar is turning into a lip curling growl. But you know what? I can't be angry. His bond with someone else's son will never be the bond he has with his own kids and that's his own fault.

My boyfriend (still school girl giggling about that) has been so supportive during this process and I'm thankful to have his love and encouragement. He tells me not to dwell on these things because eventually it will come back to bite him. He's kinda amazing and I'm in disbelief I ended up here with him in my life. Maybe it was always supposed to be this way. Perhaps we never would have been right for each other if we didn't both experience the wrong relationship. I could spend time speculating but I won't. I'm just grateful to be here with him (Insert swoon). I'd like to take a minute thank my day 1 readers and to address new ones. Apparently social media has created a bit of a buzz about my 2 year epic journey. New readers, it's great to have you here and I hope by me being so candid some of you have related and learned from my own experience. Let's face it, if you made it to this community you've probably been the victim of infidelity at some point in your life. I like to think that I'm opening my closet to reveal my skeletons so that you will all feel better about yours. To all those people that think I should write a book, please know I'm not a writer. I've taken my nightly middle school routine of pouring my heart into my diary to a public space online. If you want to see me published then you'll have to call that old college roommate who now works in publishing because I wouldn't even know where to begin. I do love the idea of circulating my story to help others though... Perhaps one day, but that day isn't today.

The 3rd Act (11/15/22)

Every great book or film has a climactic 3rd act. The protagonist is faced with resolving their problem and at the last minute an obstacle presents itself. Well they say many books and movies are inspired by real events and my situation is no different. On October 24th the final agreement had all the last minute changes made and presented to my ex. Everything was done. His lawyer even told him this was it; just fold. I felt confident and even celebrated in my previous post. What a fool I am. Don't I know that things are never that easy? We are now entering the 3rd week of November and he has not signed our final draft of the change order. Getting antsy (and rightfully so) I contact my lawyer to see what the delay is. She corresponds with his counsel only to learn he is not responding to her emails and phone calls. He thinks burying his head in the sand will make him invisible. In reality he looks like an idiot with his ass in the air.

My lawyer sends me an email this afternoon informing me that his counsel has finally gotten in contact with him. He decided to come up for air I guess. Against his counsel's advice, he is refusing to sign the change order. He is unwilling to accept the full cost of travel. Here. We. GO! Just when I thought I was out of the storm the thunder claps. I've had enough. He is toying with me and his counsel. I called my lawyer. Knowing as I dialed this call was going to cost me a boat load of money, I didn't care. I vented to her. I voiced my frustration and told her I can't keep doing this back and forth. Compromising and negotiating only to have him throw a fit and refuse to sign off on all the work we did and agreed to. What's the motive? Is it money? Is it the need to control the situation? Does he live in a fantasy world where he thinks he can get everything he wants? Is his girlfriend pulling the strings? I don't know. I don't know this man anymore. I don't know what is going on in his head and the constant back and forth is literal torture. I tell my lawyer through sobs that I can't take the mental mind games anymore and to file on Friday if he doesn't sign the order. My lawyer sent the email to his counsel and shortly after she

informed my lawyer that they were having a phone call this evening to discuss. I got his attention. Let's see what tomorrow brings.

I need to vent for a second. Since all of you are reading my online diary I guess I am venting to you. The long and short of it is; I'm tired. I'm mentally exhausted. I'm constantly second guessing myself and overwhelmed with everything. I look at our situation on paper and conclude that there is no way a judge would have me pay for travel (or side with him at all). He's done zero of the obligated parenting time. Wait, he did come here for an engagement party and take the boys for a few hours. So he's done 6 hours of parenting time in 9 months. He hasn't paid for any extra curricular activities. When the kids are sick I'm up with them. I make their lunches and dinner everyday. I do homework. I go to sporting events and musical lessons. I do their clothing shopping. I comfort them at 2am when they've had a bad dream. I schedule and take them to all appointments. I volunteer for school events. I do their laundry (and there is a TON of it. How do such little people get so dirty!?). The list goes on. And he sits there, on the other side of the country in his girlfriend's big house, lecturing me and demanding of me. Go kick rocks, sir. You got a lot of nerve. You Facetime them once a week and think you are father of the year. You are a joke. But yet, I'm scared this won't rule in my favor. I'm worried this could all backfire and I'm left doing all the work and picking up 1/2 the bill. I know there is a bible verse about the righteous being triumphant but it's been a long time since Sunday school and I don't remember it. Deep down I know I'm doing what is fair and right for my boys and myself. I know this is true, but I'm afraid like everything else, that this too will blow up in my face.

The Bad News First (12/4/22)

The Bad News: This past Wednesday I messaged my ex for an update. His lawyer has not been able to get a hold of him. Every time we threaten to file he reappears and plays nice and then

takes a job and goes into hiding. It's tiring for everyone involved. He messaged me back and told me the bad news. He is anticipating being laid off this week. Wow, that sucks, but seriously not my problem. You gave up a great job to move out there. Sucks to be you. Then he says he is going to have to file a modification of support. Yes, that's right, he wants to pay less child support and paying for travel is out the window completely. Need I remind you his CS amount is based on him doing his parenting time, which he hasn't done, so it should be more than I am receiving currently. Now he wants it to be even lower? He's got some balls, man. So he does zero physical parenting time and then wants to pay less support? Ok, buddy. He sings his sob story to me about not having money once he's laid off and that he wants to 'save money where it makes the most sense'. So not supporting your kids makes the most sense? I text APEX to see if this is legit as he and his ex do chat occasionally. He tells me he hasn't heard anything about this but tells me my ex, his ex and his kids are all going to Disney Land that Friday. WHAT?! So he has no money to travel or pay his child support but they are going to Disney Land??? I literally can't process this. I wish I wasn't blocked from his social media and that her page wasn't private; I need this evidence. Anyone in Disney Land this weekend? I'll give you a description and maybe they were in the background of one of your photos lol

I of course emailed my lawyer. She said he would have to show loss in earning before filing. Even then his payment is calculated on his earning history and potential to earn. If he files a motion for modification I can file a cross motion. Let's talk about that cross motion. It's been 10 months since he has seen the boys. He has no intention of settling and has not kept up with his parenting obligation. So, after much deliberation I've decided to seek full custody. This back and forth is not good for the boys; one day they are going to visit him and the next they are not. They need consistency, be in their lives or don't, but be consistent. So, come the end of February I'm going to file. I don't think he sees this coming. And that works to my advantage. But, my lawyer did tell

me that I need to show (besides all his missed visits and negotiating to change our order) that I've exhausted all efforts to get him to come here and he has chosen to abandon the kids instead. So, my mother and I were chatting and we came up with a plan.

Since he is tentatively losing his job next week (He will know on the 8th and last day would be the 16th) he will have a lot of free time on his hands. He will be getting a 60 day severance which affords him some time to find another job without being financially strapped. So I sent him an email inviting him to come to this state from 12/18-1/15. I researched flights and found a roundtrip ticket is \$200. I located a Vrbo with space for them all and it would be \$41 a night. He needs a car? Sure! Take mine and I'll borrow one of my parents' cars. If that deal wasn't good enough I offered to give him per diem child support that I get, which is \$32 a day. That's about \$860, cheap airfare, lodging and a car. Sounds great right? Well I emailed him Thursday and have not heard from him. Oops, forgot he was on a family vacation. But, the truth is, he won't take that deal. Or more importantly, she won't let him. Miss Christmas with her kids?? How dare he think to come see his own kids for Christmas. Plus, deep down I don't think she trusts him away from her for that long. Must be hard to live in fear knowing your partner is a cheater and at any time you could be the one getting cheated on.

The Good News: Yesterday was my one year anniversary with my boyfriend. One whole year. I can't believe I'm so blessed to have such an amazing man in my life. How?? I never knew love could feel this way. His love and patience with me is immeasurable. No one ever tells you how hard it is to be in a healthy relationship after you've been in a toxic one. You survived toxic behaviors that you grew accustomed to and developed coping mechanisms for them. Learning how to love and be loved correctly in a huge adjustment and it takes time. I'm learning, growing and healing everyday with his help. One year down..

Wow. Two years later and onto the next chapter. Thank you

Thread #6 Confronting my Husband While he's on Vacation with his Mistress

If you are just catching my story you are in for an incredibly frustrating, empowering, sad and truthful story of how I confronted my cheating husband. This story is two years in the making and it will take a good deal of time to get through it all, but it is well worth the time (or so I've been told). Since my confrontation, I have been documenting the ups and downs of cheating, narcissists partner, child custody and divorce. This is a diary entry of sorts, cathartic in style. So buckle up, grab some snacks, and put a pot of coffee on. You can start my journey here:

https://www.reddit.com/r/cheating_stories/comments/kg886u/my_husband_is_currently_on_a_vacation_with_his/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web2x&context=3

Santa's Coming to Town (12/25/22)

It's early Christmas morning and the air is quiet and cold. I sit in the dark sipping coffee and typing a post I never thought I would type. Let me take you through the story as it happened. Me ex told me after my email that it wasn't feasible for him to come here for a month. That text was very early December so I gave up hope. I was planning on sticking to my no contact approach and wait him out till March and go full custody. I was at peace with my decision. It was the only option that would bring me peace mentally and rectify our back and forth travel problem. He did continue to text me asking about Christmas and I just told him to book the tickets. Thats it. Want to see them just book them. Any and all negotiations are done. Then on Friday 12/16, he calls the boys after disappearing for almost 2 weeks and tells them that they will be coming to see him for Christmas. Wait, what? Is he pulling the trigger? I then get a text that he is going to look into tickets and get them out there for the holidays. I'm not excited to hear this. I was just patient. He told the boys so that must mean something, but I am in disbelief until I see it. I remind him that I'm not paying for travel and he assures me that he knows. So I leave

him alone. Let him book, or attempt to book, or buy his time..I'm not sure what his strategy is right now.

After a few days and pretty close to the holiday, he text me that he has sorted out the tickets. I'm starting to get my hopes up that this is going to well. He gives me times and flight info and we strategize. This is going well.... almost too well. Then the shoes drops. He asks since he lost his job if I can help pay for the flight(s). There it is. He wanted me to pay for flights when he had a job, so I think this was an attempt at guilting me. He shot and missed. I stood strong on my stance. He told me he knew this would 'bite him in the ass' in the future. I asked for clarification and he said he knew I'd tell my lawyer that he was paying all of travel and then he'd have to continue doing so. Ummm yea. That's right. That's exactly what will happen. He's biting the responsibility bullet and doing it, so it seems. Again, I won't believe it till I see it. By this time it is now 12/21 and I don't have flight info.

The next day he starts texting me as I drive home from work. I call him. I need straight answers and to communicate with him fluidly. He never answers my calls so I was surprised when he did. People here in the US know we recently just had a large storm and he was afraid of weather issues for travel. Which day would the weather less impact the trip. All valid concerns. So we chatted about it and strategized and then it happened. He cried. I asked why he was upset and he said he had 'a lot going on'. So here I go speculating. Is he afraid? Worried his new family and the boys won't get along? Is he worried it will cause a riff with his new girlfriend? Perhaps maybe he is concerned the boys and him wont have a connection after so long apart? It could be all or none of that. I reassured him and we hung up with a tentative plan. The boys leave Christmas Eve.

I did laundry. I packed. I gathered things for their backpacks for the flight. I was ready. We woke Christmas Eve and headed to the airport. The boys were nervous. Nervous for the flight and a new state they have never been too. Nervous to meet her children. Nervous to see their father. I know this will be good for them and

I tried my best to calm their fears, but I was nervous too. What if the trip doesn't go well? They may never want to return and I will have to 'force' them to go in the future. But what if it's great and my ex says he can't afford to send for them anymore? Or maybe, just maybe, everything will be fine. We get to the airport. My oldest who has anxiety is claiming he doesn't feel well. Me too, kid. Me too. We get to security and there he is. He looks good, better than he did over the summer, but he looks older. I remember it's been a year since I really looked at him and figure I probably look older too. This reminds me to get my roots done over the break. I hug the boys, choke back my fear and sadness, and let them go. My ex and I share an awkward hug goodbye and they slip past the gates.

I walk back to my car slowly. I remind myself of all the benefits and how I desperately need this break. I have plans to go to my boyfriend's house for a week and I'm looking forward to that. I tell myself I can relax. Book a massage. Sleep in. Catch up on Netflix. Roots. Gotta do my roots. But even though I wanted my ex to do this and I need this break, it still stings. I told my oldest to calm his fears that this first trip will be the hardest. It will get easier after this trip. I should take my own advice. His girlfriend text me (unsolicited) and reassured me the boys would be well taken care of. I don't think it's necessary to tell someone you won't neglect their kids. That should be a give in, right? I know her intentions were good but it seemed odd. She said she was 'grateful the boys boys will be with us'. They could have been with you sooner and more often if your boyfriend sprung for the tickets, lady. But again, let me leave that one alone. The boys return on the 4th. I sit in silence now on Christmas morning and miss them. No Christmas morning excitement (or fighting) from the boys and I have to be at peace with it. Whether this is what is best for them or not, it is our reality.

New Chapter, Same Book (1/17/23)

Expectations. They are a crazy thing. Some of us have zero. Many of us over think. Some are hopeful but realistic. Others believe in fate or destiny. Forrest Gump believes we are just floating on a breeze. I, have no idea what I think. What I can tell you is that expectations can be predictable. The boys arrived home on 1/4/23 and had stories of visits to the zoo, museums and mini golf. They had Christmas and were excited for our new tradition of '2nd Christmas'. They had fun with her children who are close in age and hopefully built strong relationships with them. For that I am happy. The boys told me stories in the ride home from the airport as if they were gone for months. "Remember, Dad? He took us to a light show at the zoo." Yes, I remember him, slowly trying to forget him, buddy. The sad part is I remember him. I remembered him all week while you were with him. I remembered his neglectful habits and truly hoped he changed. I remembered his short patience and hoped you boys didn't cause him to lose it. I remembered all of it. I only called the boys 3 times while they were gone. I did not want to impose on the quality time, but we did text me often. On our first Facetime they were in a spare bedroom and I was told "this is the Facetime room" and they were to only make calls from that room. Weird.. Her daughter came into the room at one point during the call and I could see the GF in the doorway watching. When she realized I could see her she scuttled away quickly. It was funny, I laughed, I think she knew I was laughing at her. I made sure I made a comment about the Facetime room while she was still in ear shot. Our next call on NYE was in the family room. What a coincidence. I could see my ex shirtless in the background and when he returned on camera he was wearing a shirt. Again, I thought that was funny. I saw you naked for 15 years but now you are shy shirtless? Not that I have interest in you shirtless (barf) anymore. Again, I get it, we aren't together and his GF is there, but it all made me chuckle to myself. We really have come full circle.

A few days before the boys returned I contacted my lawyer and let her know that he had paid for all of travel, while unemployed and on the most expensive and busiest travel time of the year. She emailed his lawyer the day the boys returned and resent the order. When his lawyer learned he had met his obligation she knew there was no way he could stall anymore. I'm not sure what the next move is. Can you force someone to sign? Will him dragging his feet result in a court appearance anyway? This is really become ridiculous. The good news is he got a job. I was told through a screenshot of IG (I have some great friends) that he was out toasting with martinis on Saturday night. When I asked how his final interview went on Monday he told me he was made an offer but working through the details. That vodka and olives looks like it's been worked through already.

The boys have been home for almost 2 weeks and he has not called them. In the past I'd be upset about this. Writing a post damning him and telling the world (or just the few readers I have left) that he will never change. But, I think this is the new normal. The weird part is, I'm ok with it. Pay your child support, take the boys when you are supposed to and stay out of our day to day. Now, does this help his relationship with the boys grow? Definitely not. But that's a problem he is creating. I'm not going to be a parent to the boys and a parent to him reminding him to call. I can't anymore. He proved he is capable, but still unwilling, and that's his bed to lay in. So even after the trip it's still the same book, we've just entered a new chapter. Is this new chapter the conclusion? Probably not, there is still so much more to encounter. This book is way to long. The pages turn and the story evolves, but I'm still waiting for the heroine to be triumphant.

Going in Circles (2/17/23)

I'm tired. No, that's not correct. I'm mentally exhausted. I ask you, how do you negotiate with someone unwilling to negotiate? How do you resolve a problem that someone refuses to acknowledge exists? How can a person scream what they want

but be resistant to entertaining someone else's needs? How is everything seemingly unfair to one when someone else is always picking up the pieces? Why must one always be transparent while the other lies to 'win'? I ask myself these questions and realize the answers won't come. You know why? Because I'm not that person. I'm not the person he is. I could never fathom acting as he acts because decent people don't. Only snakes who are selfish and out to kill with their venom behave in this manner. Well this snakes is big, and he bites often.

He got a new job. Good for you, 3 cheers! My lawyer asks for his new salary so we can recalculate CS and his attorney lets us know it's a lateral move. No increase. And, not only is it a lateral move, but a move within the company that let him go. False. Fake News. I know this all to be a lie as he sent me the health insurance info for this new job (I was looking to double up on dental and vision) and the company name was on the paperwork. Hmmmm.. A google search of the company and title also lead me to a salary that was a little more than 10k of what he was making. You dirty dog. Trying to hide your job and increased salary from your kids. But why? What's the motivation? Who wins there? A few more dinners out with your GF? Maybe gifts for her kids (he just got them Jordans and my kids are wearing adidas)? Starting a vacation account? No matter the winner, I know who loses... Super Bowl Sunday I contacted him about something concerning the boys and we of course go into a conversational (ok, you got me, argument) about him finally signing the order he has had since October. I'll paraphrase his response, 'I'm not signing. What was proposed in that order (*one both we and our attorneys worked on*) is unfair and I want to go to court to get everything squared away fairly. I'll blow whatever money I could be spending on the boys (*money you aren't/haven't been spending this past year*) on court fees. You refuse to compromise on anything (*only thing I didn't compromise on was travel, sir*) and you only use our original Order when it's convenient for you (*I haven't used it at all cause you moved 2,000 miles away*). I look forward to when you have to spend thousands (*oops, did you*

forget you pay legal fees if we go to court? yikes, this is awkward..) on an agreement I've prospered months ago. Good bye (*fuck you too*)'. Yes, that looks about right. I told him that if he thinks a judge will rule in his favor when he has done none of his monthly parenting time, ignored receipts for extracurriculars and avoided signing off on the correct child support amount, then ok, let's head down to city hall, buddy.

If you have followed my story you know our original Order required him to come here monthly. Well, he kicked and screamed that this wasn't possible and demanded a new order in which the boys go there. Well, the boys are supposed to return there in April for spring break. Of course I asked him a few times about dates and travel and he has ignored me. Yes, that's his new go to move. Ignoring me. The old 'head in the sand' routine. So today I get a text telling me "it's not feasible" for the boys to come there for Easter. Instead he offers a suggestion. He will come here March 13-17th. I read that and thought I stroked out. I have negotiated with this man for a YEAR only to have him suggest coming here? Shock isn't even the word. But wait, there's a catch! He wants to come Monday-Friday in which he will pick the boys up from school, spend 2-3 hours with them and then return them home. Say what now? So let me get this straight, you are suggesting you come here to babysit, not parent. You will assume no parental responsibility (minus the school pick up) and then will drop them off so I can do homework, feed, bath and put to bed. Only to wake them, feed them, get them ready for school and bring them. How is this proposal of seeing them for 15 hours equivalent to the 10 days of parenting you were supposed to do? The math isn't mathing. I didn't answer. I don't think my brain comprehend this suggestion because it basically exploded. He obviously sees no issue in suggestion. That's what's so mind boggling about it. He is contradicting what he claimed was impossible a year ago. Maybe the boys were monsters when he visited? Maybe his GF doesn't want the headache of entertaining for a week? Or maybe he saw the price of flights. He expects me to be accommodating but fights to meet any of my

accommodations. No. Pause. Full stop. I emailed my lawyer. She said not to respond. She hasn't been able to get ahold of his lawyer since 2/2/23. She said this plays in my favor. We can use this. I'm not sure how but I'm excited to see how this plays out.

The Road Trip (3/27/23)

You know when you take a car ride somewhere new, going there always seems to take an eternity? It's probably because it's a new place, you don't know the path, so you make some wrong turns, ask people for help with directions, eat waaaaay too many snacks, but in the end you get there. Well, I am here. I've parked the car and turned off the engine. I slap my head to the steering wheel and breath a sigh of relief. Two weeks ago my ex was supposed to come here with his adopted family and spend spring break taking in the sights and spending a few hours with the boys. But, the boys had school, sports, events and things planned that just didn't make that week feasible. So, I declined and reminded him of their actual spring break in April, but apparently that doesn't work for him. So the week came and when we had a day free up I contacted him. The boys were available and he was in town. But then I learned he never came. They decided on a trip to a sunny state was in order. He blamed me for ruining his plans because I didn't make the boys available. I apparently 'kept' the boys from him. Obviously all those other months he declined his parenting time are not up for debate, this was the only week he wanted to claim and I was the bad guy. At this point I'm beyond frustrated with his inconsistent parenting. You can't just choose to parent when it is convenient! He can't seem to grasp this concept.

So again, I call the lawyer. I am literally bleeding money in legal fees. Like, major head wound, could be fatal, bleeding. But I don't care, this needs to end. My lawyer tells me that if he doesn't sign the new order by 3/24/23 we will file a noncompliance motion for his lack of parenting on our current (and only) parenting plan. You know, the one he has not complied to in a year! So, I send him

an very bland email that the clock is ticking and then we wait. I put the squeeze on him. It's the longest 5 days. A literal eternity. My lawyer and I place bets on if he will sign. We are both not hopeful. My boyfriend is a kind sole and gives him the benefit of the doubt. I wish I was as optimistic as him. I think I've been burned so many times that I can't be optimistic. But, on the final day I get a text from him. He did it. He signed. I will not have to pay for travel or travel with them. That is his responsibility, as it should be. This was my major sticking point. Along with that an increase in child support. Almost a year of legal fees and frustration and he waves the white flag and signs it. All of that agony just for him to do what he should have done months ago. What was the point? Was it a game? An angry back and forth? His way of keeping control over me? Was it her pushing him to fight? Or did he just become more of an asshole all on his own? It's probably none of that or all of it. My lawyer told me his lawyer was done with him. His counsel basically told him that he hasn't cooperated with me or her and he would get destroyed in court. I could have asked for the moon and stars and I would have gotten it. Sheesh, he seems to piss off all the strong, smart women he encounters. We smell the bullshit, we know he is full of it.

So is this the end? Fat chance. I'm sure there will be drama moving forward. What would my life be without drama?? Reflecting, I can't believe what has happened to me and how I've navigated this. No one ever thinks they will be here and there is no way to plan for this, because it'll never be you, right? I often get comments about how strong I am and how women in similar positions envy me. I still don't know how to handle those compliments. Because I made mistakes. So many. Too many. But I always focused on the 2 most important things; never losing sight of who I am and the wellbeing of my kids. I believe if you always stay true to your core values and the ones you love, you will never be defeated. By following me on this journey I hope people found comfort and guidance from both my triumphs and my failures. I'm happy to say this leg of the 'road trip' is complete. But, like most roads trips, the drive home is smooth. You know

the route and the journey is less treacherous. Will I stop along the way this time and take in the sights? You betcha. Because the road now is known and it heads to a familiar place; home. Next on the list is a house, new job, more love from my new love, perhaps maybe I write for pleasure and actually publish, and many more memory making adventures. Just me and my boys. The way it should be.

Awkward Small Talk on a Burning Bridge (5/4/23)

For many painful months I fought my ex about him visiting the boys. You all know this story, so you know how adamant he was about never returning here. So, after a year of negotiating, well more like me negotiating and him playing dodgeball with all my requests, he finally signed and the boys must now travel to him (on his dime). Phew. See ya never? Fat chance. He texts me in early April telling me he'd like to come here for 3 days and visit the boys and celebrate our oldest's birthday. Like, seriously? What happened to all the foot stomping and epic hissyfit to never returning here? You sign the papers and now, a week or so later, you are telling me you want to come here? My ex is becoming a lot less predictable. Is this about control? Purposely doing the things he isn't supposed to do? To keep me on my toes? Listen, I'm too old to be a ballerina, sir.

So, I don't fight him, and he returns. While the boys are at school he comes to the house to get their things. He looks, ok. No real change from Christmas. He is slowly putting those pounds on that he lost during the affair. Comfort I guess. I offer him coffee cause I'm a decent human being but also a caffeine addict but he declines. So we stand awkwardly in the kitchen. Is he going to leave? Does he want to make small talk? I stare into my coffee and wish it was spiked. He makes conversation about the boys. Little things. Things that if he were present, he would know. We talk about my house hunt (which is not going well. Anyone have a reasonably priced 3 bedroom to sell?) and the amount of work some of these houses need. He then tells me 'they' are doing a

160k renovation to her 5 bedroom home. Wow. Must be nice. Asshole.. As he talks about the renovation none of it seems necessary. A larger and more updated master bath? Bumping out the front of the house to make a powder room and expand the entry. Like, how necessary is all of this? He seemed disgruntled and bothered about the renovation. Perhaps he sees they are unnecessary cosmetic changes. And, is he financially contributing to this? To a house he doesn't even own. She could kick him out tomorrow and he will never get any of that cash back. Is he realizing how he's essentially a guest in that house, yet paying for it? I mean, good for you girl, squeeze him to increase your own equity. I'm not mad at ya.

The boys have a wonderful time swimming in the indoor pool, going out to eat, the movies and shopping. A successful weekend was had. He drops them off on Sunday and the boys run past me in the driveway with arms full of Legos and plush toys. I gather their bags and tell him 'thanks'. But there he goes again, awkwardly standing. Shit. He wants to talk again. He kicks gravel in the road and tells me about their weekend. He then starts to tell me about a bachelor party he is attending in 2 weeks in Vegas. Cool. Didn't need to know this, but cool. He is in the wedding party and has drifted apart from many of those friends. Geez, I wonder why.. He only talks to the groom. He tells me how he feels he will have to 'babysit' everyone and is debating not going. Then it hits me, I know all these guys, he wants my opinion. Or better yet, he wants reassurance that the party will be more work than pleasure and he's making the right call on bowing out. So I tell him the opposite; go have fun! Secretly I know he wants to go. I'm not sure why he is holding himself back from spending time with his friends on a guys weekend in Vegas. Shoot, I'll go if you don't want to. Well, a week before the trip he got COVID. Or so he said. Via test he told me how sick he felt, tired, congested, etc. Happy accident? Matybe. I had the kids FT him 4 days after he tested positive to see how he felt and there he was, at work, congested and not wearing a mask. Perhaps the COVID protocols are less strict now? I'm not too sure.

Fast forward 2 weeks and I'm hosting a friends night with my dearest friends, their husbands, my boyfriend and our kids. As 7 children between the ages of 12 and 5 run around and scream we sip drinks, eat and laugh. It's good fun with good people. My oldest and closest friend is scrolling through Instagram and she says, "well would you look at that". My ex blocked most of us from his social media, but not her. Oversight perhaps. She shows me the post. Today was the AP's birthday. My ex wrote a long and lovely caption about her 'empowering him to be the best bonus dad' to her kids and her being 'one of the best choices he's ever made'. Well damn. While I don't want him, it kinda sucks to read. Happy he's empowered to be a bonus dad, but treading water at being a real dad. Three visits in a year doesn't get you nominated for super dad. But, then I realize. The bachelor party. He bailed cause it was her birthday weekend. Was this by choice or by force? Ooooooh shit. I'm now drowning in the pettiness and big dumb smiling, knowing that the groom will see this and piece it all together. Another bridge burned. Don't judge me on enjoying this moment, I deserve it.

Thread #7 Confronting my Husband **While he's on Vacation with his** **Mistress**

If you are just catching my story you are in for an incredibly frustrating, empowering, sad and truthful story of how I confronted my cheating husband. This story is almost 3 years in the making and it will take a good deal of time to get through it all, but this is well worth the time (or so I've been told). Since my confrontation, I have been documenting the ups and downs of cheating, narcissist partners, child custody and divorce. This is a diary entry of sorts, cathartic in style. So buckle up, grab some snacks, and put on a pot of coffee. You can start my journey here:

https://www.reddit.com/r/cheating_stories/comments/kg886u/my_husband_is_currently_on_a_vacation_with_his/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web2x&context=3

Mr. & Mrs. Right (or Wrong) 6/8/23

There comes a moment in every divorcee's journey that is confusing to face. Confusing not only because of how you feel, but why you feel that way. That is the problem I face now. Today I got a text message from my ex that read, " Hey- awkward text to send, but you finding out should come from me directly. I haven't told the boys or posted about it. Wanted to tell you first. (Insert AP name) and I got engaged. Again, awkward as hell to say to you, but wanted you to hear it from me." My brain almost exploded from the enormous number of thoughts popping into my head. I had zero idea how to process this news let alone how I was feeling. It's so strange. I don't want this man, but this news ripped me apart. Not for love, but out of anger and frustration. Obviously I didn't express any of this. I simply told him congrats, it's not awkward, we are moving on, I wish you well. That was external me. The internal me was itching to get to my laptop and jot down

this post to digest my thoughts. But first, football practice. After bedtime I raced to open my laptop and took a deep breath as she came to life. So come with me down the rabbit hole as I process this and probably overthink everything. Warning: this may get dark. But hell, it should be fun.

Let's do the text first. Why, oh why, is telling me awkward?? If I got engaged I would not feel awkward at all to tell him. We are moving on, we don't need each other's approval. For some reason he was more nervous to tell me he was engaged than he was to confess to the cheating. My engagement 'announcement' would be a quick FYI text. "FYI- I got the boys sneakers. I'm engaged. There is a concert Friday and I'll send you pics." Now I knew from the jump that this was the end goal. You don't have an affair, leave your family, move across the country into someone's home, and be a bonus dad just to date this person. No, I'm a big girl, I knew it was coming eventually. I think him expressing that it was awkward to tell me threw me though. Why? Do you feel guilty? Are you ashamed? Did you develop a conscience and realize this might be hurtful to me? Yes, I know, it's probably not that last one but I was hopeful. I can't seem to make heads or tails of it. Maybe I'm not meant to.

Next, my frustration. For over a year this man cried that he was in the poor house. He fought me on any financial demand I made or obligation he had. And all this time he was refusing to pay for travel, drum lessons, sports, etc, but was putting money in the mattress for a diamond. And from what I know about her she loves jewelry. This would not be a pebble. More like a blinding boulder. And here I am, begging for what our kids are entitled to as he saves for her finger. It's honestly disgusting. I feel like I did everything right in my life. I dedicated myself to my family, worked hard in my career, managed to go back to school for my 3rd degree, I drank water, slept 8 hours nightly (ok, that one's a lie), and attempted a semi balanced diet (is butter a carb?); I did it all right. But here I am, raising 2 boys at my mother's house while I try to find us a home. I feel like even though I played by the rules in the Monopoly game of life, I was sent to jail and have

to lose a turn while the game keeps going on. I bet he's going to buy Boardwalk too... The thing that irks me the most is he never worked for any of this. It's like every roll of the dice he just got lucky. He benefited from everyone else's sacrifices. And I'm the one living with the repercussions of every decision he has made with our boys in tow. I feel stuck and he's just gliding down the board rolling a 12 every time. My sister reassures me that yea my life is kinda on pause now and it's not permanent, but my ex will always be a garbage person. That phase of his life is forever. Ok, pity party over. Let me hike up my big girl panties and move on.

Last, but never least, the boys. He made a point of telling me that he has yet to tell the boys. You wanna know why he hasn't told the boys? He hasn't called them in 3 weeks. I've told the boys to call him, but he has not called them. I can already see how that convo goes, "Hey guys. Haven't checked in on you in weeks but let's talk about me!". Oh brother, what a self-centered moron. I suggested that perhaps telling your children in person would, you know, be a better choice. He agreed. I also warned him that they probably wouldn't even flinch at the news. This being because: 1) they are boys, 2) this doesn't change their day to day lives. He also agreed to that. So why the dog and pony show? Oh, that's right, it's not for them, but for you. He claimed he didn't want it to seem like he was keeping a secret from them so he wanted to tell them ASAP. Oh boy, wait till they find out that BIG secret about why mom and dad got divorced. He told me it will be a long engagement and a very small wedding. Is that his way of telling me I'm not invited??? I'm heartbroken! If you could see how hard I'm eye rolling right now I swear you'd be impressed. Hopefully he invites his children. That would be nice. My boyfriend thinks him telling me was pathetic, a sad attempt to gloat. Like, 'Ok I did some shitty stuff but look how great it turned out. It was the right decision, see? I feel validated for being a monster.' That his claims of feeling awkward were just an attempt to seem human. A marriage built on infidelity, secrecy and poor choices by 2 self centered people. Sounds like a perfect match.

Summer (8/11/23)

It came and it went. Yes, summertime is a time that warms your skin, ice pops cool your tummy, everything smells like chlorine and mosquitos feast on us mercilessly. In my 40 years, this might have been the best summer I've ever had. That is the reason for my delay in writing; I was busy living. Let's rewind the summer and I can play it all back for you. In June the communication began to get the boys across the country for a visit. I was excited and felt so guilty about it. Ask any parent how they would feel to be childless for 30 days and you'll get the same reaction. Instant excitement and relief followed by sadness and guilt. That was my constant state of being the month of June. The communication was surprisingly easy though. He was excited, the boys were fairly excited, and I was, well, I was hesitant. I was waiting for the other shoe to drop or in a constant fear for the boys' well being. It was a hell of a time with the ending of the school year, bidding on homes, applying for a new job, and preparing myself for the summer without the boys.

July 1st came and we headed to the airport. My oldest is such a nervous Nellie and he had a look of fear on his face every time I glanced back into the rearview mirror. My youngest was sporting a floppy eared Pikachu baseball hat and focused on his iPad; he couldn't be bothered by the upcoming transition. I envied him. I pulled up to departures and saw my ex outside. He shaved his head completely. He looked weird. I obviously am not attracted to him anymore and this new cut really sealed that for me. I kissed my kids, went over a few particulars with my ex and watched them walk through the sliding glass doors. They are gone. I'm swirling with emotions and none of them are right, and none of them are wrong. I put the car in drive and make the 90minute drive to my boyfriend's place. I'm a whole ball of feels when I arrive and he knows this. He lovingly comforts me and feeds me. Man, this guy really knows the way to my heart. I get a text with a photo of them all tucked in their seats flashing a thumbs up and peace signs. They look happy so I am happy.

I spend the month of July surrounded in calm love. It's beautiful. Is this what real, mature love looks like? If so, please sign me up. My boyfriend and I talk, plan for the future, have adventurous outings and nights tucked in bed watching movies. I want to live in these moments forever. I realize in this time how much I needed this break. I needed the time to remember who I am and what I need. As parents we prioritize everyone else. We give ourselves 1-2 hours every evening after the kids go to bed to decompress. But those hours are not enough. I'm realizing now how I burned that candle at both ends and I was about to be scorched. In mid July we take a much needed vacation to Mexico. Want to know what I did on that trip? Nothing. I did nothing and it was glorious. I sat by the pool everyday and sipped frozen mango margaritas. My boyfriend and I bonded and relaxed together. It was all we needed. Upon our return we took a road trip and visited his brother. This was a bit nerve wracking. I'd never met anyone in his family as they are spread all over the country and overseas. What if they don't like me?! I reminded myself it will be fine and my boyfriend giggled at my anxiety. He was confident that by being myself I'd win them over. Well guess what? It worked. His brother gave us the talk on our second day. "What are your intentions for the future?" It was almost silly. He directed this question to my boyfriend like he was my father looking out for my wellbeing. My boyfriend didn't hesitate, "We are going to be together forever". Someone please scrape me off the floor because I have melted into a big heaping pile of bubbling love. Now, this is something we talked about together, but not something we have said to others. And for him to say this to his brother, the person he is the closest to, this means something. After we left, his brother sent him a message telling him not to 'mess this up' because 'she is a keeper'. Yes, please, let's keep each other.

During July I tried to limit communication with the kids. Yes, I wanted to call them everyday but I knew my ex would see that as me limiting his time. So I called every Friday and encouraged the kids to call me whenever they wanted. We talked and they told

me about all the fun they were having. They bonded well with her kids and were enjoying themselves. I was very pleased. Then it all changed. Two days before their return my ex sends me a long message about my youngest's behavior. Now let me tell you, my youngest is a strong willed child. I've had issues with his behavior in the past and have worked to correct this behavior. I've been successful, but it can be a full time job. I'm happy now my ex is experiencing first hand what I've been complaining about to him since he moved. Welcome to my life. Apparently, my youngest got into a disagreement with her youngest. When his GF intervened, my youngest got pissed and called her fat. Now, this is obviously rude, but I'm still laughing about it as I write this. I'm just as annoyed as I am proud. Thanks little man, but no iPad for the rest of the week. Apparently his GF was upset and demanded to my ex that my youngest seek more counseling for his behavior. My ex sent me paragraph about how we need to do this now so that we avoid issues when he is a teenager. Ok, no problem. I started researching therapists in the area, called my insurance company, and put in all the leg work. My ex supported all of this. Then later that day I got back to him with what it would cost out of pocket. Once I sent him that number it was radio silence. Shocker. He got back to me a few hours later and said he shouldn't have said anything to me, he was emotional and worried, etc. No, that's not it. She demanded it, I told you how much it would cost, and once she heard that she dialed it back. Well guess what, I'm taking him anyway and sending you the bill. If he fights me I'll send him the screen shot of him demanding this was necessary for our son's well being. Gotcha, asshole. Now, do I think he needs to return to counseling? Not really. But will it hurt? Nope. So we will go cause it will only help him. I'm sure my son being there for an extended period of time and witnessing my ex be the dad he always wanted made him angry enough to misbehave. When I mentioned to my ex that his behavior changed after the separation he got angry and said, 'I knew you'd make this about us. It has nothing to do with us". Ummm, yea it does, so he will return to counseling. I'm so happy my you suggested it.

That experience soured all the positivity I had about their trip. Yes the boys had a good time, but my ex is still prioritizing his GF and the new families needs over his own children's. This is a pill that is always hard to swallow. Eventually I'll be numb to it, but when that happens my boys will be old enough to understand and it will become their pill. I hate that that is the eventual reality. He hasn't even called them since their return on 7/29. He also said he was going to research therapists and get back to me but has yet to do so. He won't. That's why I just made an appointment for September. You'll get the bill. You're welcome.

Karma (8/18/23)

Over the years since the separation I have waited patiently. I have kept my focus forward and waited for the pieces to fall into place. In these almost 3 years I have pushed and worked and was able to financially benefit from my divorce, complete another degree, meet an amazing man (swoon), nurture my kids and yes, buy a house. While tragic and heartbreaking, I'm happy to say that I have come out the other side of the divorced changed, and better. So, let this be proof that if you stay focused on your children and stay true to yourself that you will heal and be victorious in your fight. But that's not what this post is about today. Today is the day that everything comes full circle.

Last night I returned from the store with arms full of painting supplies for my new home and a lighter wallet. I was excited and overwhelmed about the new home and over a glass of wine I reflected on how I achieved all I had hoped for. I pat myself on the back between sips and settle myself in for a solo date with Netflix. Once relaxed my phone pings. Thinking it's my boyfriend texting goodnight I excitedly grab it only to realize it's my ex. He wants to know if the boys will be going to the beach this weekend. Strange. Does he maybe want to finally call them? I let him know that my parents are taking them so I can work on the house for the next few days. He then tells me he wants to return here for a few days but doesn't want to talk about why. Ummmm, what? My

interested is piqued. Like through the roof. Ok, how do I play this? I want that tea spilt like right now but I can't seem to anxious. I let him know the boys' schedule for the next week and remind him that if he needs to talk let me know. This display of concern is really me being nosey so don't come at me for comforting him. Apparently, when they boys visited he never had a sit down talk with them that he and his GF were engaged. Now, the GF is pissed and wants time apart to think. Ok, let's empty this trash and dig through it. 1) my boys don't care. Even if he did make a show of telling them they would just say 'ok' and immediately ask for a snack as if nothing happened. 2) my boys have been through a lot with the divorce, moving, him leaving, etc. If it takes a little longer to tell them, then it takes a little longer. 3) why is that a time apart scenario? Is this a relationship breaking event? I don't think it is.

I remind my ex that they are engaged and he made that decision to select her as his partner but I hit him with some hard truths. I told him my opinion of her. I think she is a self centered manipulator. She will always be about her and what she wants. And when she wants something she will hit low to get it. My ex confides in me (reluctantly) that he is second guessing this engagement. Woooooow. He apologizes and says he shouldn't even be talking to me after what he put me through. Yes, it's true. You put me through hell. But I walked through that fire and came out a better, happier, person. He said that he has been miserable since the engagement because she has changed. She hits low, attacking him as a partner, father, and even about his appearance. I remind him these are not the words of a partner, but a bully. He doesn't disagree. I remind him of all the times that we agreed on something only for him to talk to her and fight me on it. Whose needs was he meeting then? The children's or hers? She has been about herself way before the engagement; he was just too deep in the affair fog to see it. I pause and assess my feelings about this situation. This is the karma I had long waited for. He now sees what I've seen in her and what she is capable of. All those decisions are now biting his ass. I've said it from the beginning, any woman that steals a married man and father and encourages

the idea of that man moving 2000 miles away from his children, can't be trusted. Now, he is no saint either. I have no sympathy for his choices. But, I don't think he realized how his choices would leave him dependent on her. He has no one or anything of his own. He's put her in a huge position of power. Now she is manipulating him to get what she wants. Threatening him that he has to leave because she knows he has no where to go. Taking away her kids who he has bonded with, he has a job out there that he can't completely leave, no real friends out there and burnt bridges (because of her) here. It's all a power move. APEX warned me of this. She liked to throw her weight around and bully people to get her way. In his words, 'she's a monster'. I wanna say I told you so, but he's so pathetic right now I don't rub it in, especially since everything in my life is going right. I'm going to continue being the bigger person. He tells me how he's sitting at his desk at work crying, 'seeing all the ways I've destroyed my own life as well as the kids'.

I have no real advice for him. I just tell him the boy's schedule and let him know I'm available to discuss his travel when he's ready. They aren't lying when they say Karma is a bitch.

Parachute (9/17/23)

I, along with other divorcees, have been through hell. And through that journey we have learned some hard lessons. These teachings have made us more prepared for life and better at making future decisions. Especially when it comes to selecting a partner. Let me tell you about my boyfriend. He is the calm that I need to be. He is always optimistic, he doesn't worry about things out of his control, and he lives for simple moments. He avoids confrontation by being direct in communication and his actions match his words. He knows how I think and he's always prepared to deal with my thinking because he already knows what's coming. He is loving and passionate and understand my needs. There is never judgement. There is never malicious arguing. There is only love and support. This, I think, is what healthy love

looks like. This is what we all strive for, especially the 2nd time around.

My ex did not return here after our last chat. When I asked him about his travel plans a few days later he said they had a talk. No punches pulled, real talk, and they worked it out. I told him that if he was happy with it then great. His response? "We'll see how it goes". Ok, now, this is strange to me. The 2nd time is when you get it right, no? You matured, figured out what you needed from a partner, learned from your mistakes and picked a winner this time. Well, apparently not. I guess we are all entering relationships with dull optimism. HE has promised to return for our youngest's football game but has dodged me every time I ask, and even worse, when our son asks. Why make promises you have no intention of keeping. My friend speculates that his gf reads our messages. Screens our calls. And won't allow him to return since she knows we are on good terms. Perhaps this is true, but I'm sure he deletes our messages. That thought in itself is pathetic.

I recently learned from a mutual friend that my ex struggles with some 'character flaws' his new gf has. Perhaps she is rude to waiters? Maybe she is gullible? She could possibly be too vain. No, no. The truth is far worse. I'm even ashamed to type it. She regularly uses inappropriate epithets when referring to some people. This blew my mind. Good people don't do this. I'm enraged and embarrassed to learn this. And I am fearful of my children being around someone who speaks this way. So I asked my youngest if he heard any 'bad words' used when he visited this summer. He told me that she used the B-word. Phew. This isn't great news but better than what he could have said. So I asked when she used it. He told me that when she and daddy fought she would call him the B-word. Hold up. So when they would argue she would refer to my ex as a bitch? Please. How has he hurt you, sis? He has done everything you've asked and you still talk down to him? My head is spinning. I remind him the B-word is an unkind word and we are never to refer to anyone as such. He says, "Duh, I know." (pause) "But you should tell her." I'm cryyyyying!

Kids, man. Since I'm getting uncensored honestly from my little one I ask how often she and daddy would yell at each other. "Like every night." Wow. Why would you subject yourself to this? Open your parachute and jump because that plane is aflame and spiraling. Perhaps it's hard to jump when you know there is nowhere safe to land. So here he is, with a woman whom he gave up everything for, only to now be manipulated, degraded, and unhappy with. Walking on egg shells waiting for the next put down. It's not a good life, but it's the life he chose and continues to choose. I will continue to choose living my healthy, uncomplicated, loving, lifestyle with my children and true partner. So very last laugh of me, I know.

Responsibilities and Gaslighting (10/16/23)

I write to you this evening from the comfort of my new home. The boys are tucked in bed (there was resistance but I was victorious), the tv over the fireplace glows bright replaying a popular sitcom, the dishes are washed, lunches are made, football uniforms have been cleaned, homework is done and all is right in the world. There is a special feeling being in a new home after divorce. I don't have half the things I need, but it's a work in progress. I'm grateful for the help from my family and friends in setting up my home. The independence is exciting, starting your life over on your terms, but also terrifying. What if I can't pay a bill? What if someone breaks in? What if there is a HUGE spider on my bedroom wall?? I know I've always been 'I am woman, hear me roar', but I drawn the line at spiders. The woman I bought the house from was a divorcee with 2 children. There were many offers on the house but when she heard my situation she knew it was meant for me. Her ex also moved far away and her past struggle is currently my struggle. We met once and bonded over that. There were moments of comparing notes of our exes and also moments of tears. My story is not new. Women have been struggling with what I face every day. But she gave me hope. I

named the house after her. I'm hoping Carol and I have many great years together.

I've been listening to lots of podcasts lately about divorcees dealing with being a single parent and narcissists. I've been able to relate to so much of what I have heard and learned a ton. I know many of you in the past have encouraged me to greyrock my ex. While great in theory it's difficult with children. I wish I could cut all ties but it isn't that easy. I thought it wasn't possible, but my ex has proven that it is. The truth is, he isn't greyrocking me; he's greyrocking his children. We had a therapy appointment for my youngest 2 weeks ago. The therapist is a lovely woman who is annoyingly upbeat. I guess that's a good quality when you're a child therapist. She called me to inform me that after many calls and emails, my ex had agreed to join the therapy session on Zoom. The therapist was more excited than I was. Perhaps that's because I knew the outcome before the day even arrived. We arrived to our appointment that day and the therapist greeted me with a look of defeat. My ex sent an email and bailed on the appointment only minutes before it was to begin. I laughed. I literally giggled when she told me. She must think I'm insane. Yes, my ex demanded this therapy and then when he has to put forth some effort he bails. None of this surprises me. But bless her heart, she assures me she is going to try again and get him to join. Ok, love. You keep trying. Two weeks later I arrive for our next appointment and she tells me that she has sent multiple emails and made multiple calls and has yet to get a response. I haven't spoken to my ex in close to 3 weeks either. He hasn't called the boys in over a month. So I text him, "Hey. The therapist has been trying to get in contact with you. Please email her back." He responds a few minutes later telling me he emailed her that very morning. She is flustered when she learns this and apologizes. She closes the door and has therapy with my son. I brows old magazines, watch Instagram reels and an hour later my youngest runs out the door into the waiting room all smiles. She pulls me aside and shows me she has no email from him. Nothing in the last 3 weeks. She tried to explain to me what gaslighting is but I

stop her. I know this. I lived with this. Now his children are living with this. And as a fun bonus, she is now too.

She tells me she doesn't know how effective therapy will be for my son. Only because the root of most of his aggression comes from his father and him leaving. And if he doesn't participate in the therapy, she isn't confident it will have the outcome we had hoped for. Yes, she can help my son to deal with the abandonment and empty promises, but she was under the impression my ex wanted to work with her to address these issues and holds himself accountable for his neglect. HA! I didn't laugh out loud; but I wanted to. Of course he demanded therapy, so I could find a doctor, drive him, wait an hour, pay upfront, and drive him home but a 5 minute Zoom call was just too much. Last month he promised my youngest he would come to his football game. My oldest told him that he wouldn't come. He gets it, but my little one still holds out hope. He has 2 more games left and it looks like my eldest's prediction is coming true. Luckily my boyfriend has been going to his games and he has enjoyed having his support. I'm grateful for that. In retrospect, maybe I've been holding onto the ideas of my ex stepping up not because I want him to be a dad, but because my little one does. Last Saturday I witnessed my boyfriend sitting on the couch munching popcorn with my boys while they watched a movie, simply enjoying the moment together. It made me happy to see their bond. It made me sad my ex won't have that. But, in all honesty, if he isn't sad about it, why should I be? Another moment lost for him and another gained for our future family.

Holidays (12/26/23)

There is something really wonderful about the holidays. The tree twinkling in white lights, the crisp air that smells of imminent snow, the sound of wrapping paper being ripped apart and seeing the joy on my boys' faces. Last Christmas I was without them. This Christmas I spent making coffee before 6am as my boys bounced around the living room begging me to hurry so they could dive

into presents. Due to a stomach bug infesting my brother's house we spent Christmas evening home as a family. My boyfriend has officially moved in (eek!) and we had such a great time having game and movie nights together. We invited my parents over and my boyfriend cooked a great meal. My mom had 3rds of her meal. If you knew my mom you would know this is highest praise she could give. On Christmas Day my ex called my oldest. But not the youngest. Yes, the child that is in therapy due to his father abandoning him did not receive a call. The funny thing is, after their Thanksgiving together I thought there would be an effort. It was a brief thought, but a thought none the less. I was wrong. He hasn't called since the boys left him in November. And, you'd all be proud, I have barely talked to him either. Our only communication is about my youngest's therapy and the money he owes me.

I was told by the boys that their Thanksgiving trip was enjoyable. They went hiking, visited new places and spent time with her family. They played with her kids and extended family and fun was had by all. It is always strange seeing my ex during the child exchange. I give so much credit to parents who do this weekly. Perhaps it gets easier every week. I know that every time I see him I have a new emotion. This past visit it was pity. Not enough pity for me to actually have sympathy, but honestly, it just sucks to be him. He has always had a very upbeat fake demeanor. I saw it with coworkers or new people he would meet, but now I see it with me and my boys. Does he forget I know what he is really like? Does he have to constantly play this role? Is this his life now? I would hope not, but I'm not certain. If so, that's a terrible way to live. I had planned, as I stated at one point previously, to bring my boyfriend to the airport so they could meet. But, I made a game day decision and decided not to. I'm not sure why to be honest. Perhaps it was because my ex doesn't care. Or maybe it's because my boyfriend might be uncomfortable and protective (he's not his biggest fan). Or maybe it's because I don't want my past and future colliding. I really couldn't tell you. It might be all of those things. I want them to meet but I'm not sure

what the ramifications would be. I feel like a hypocrite because I demanded to meet her. I had the interest of my boys at heart when I wanted that and needed to know who they would be spending time with. But I was also a hurt woman who had to see the woman who broke up my family. I was right for that demand, but also wrong. I know that now. Sometimes I read my posts from the early days of the separation and I cringe. I could never imagine I'd be where I am now and I was holding onto a life that was so toxic out of sheer fear of the unknown. What a silly girl I was. So for everyone at the early stages of separation I promise this will all be worth it in the end.

My ex did let me know that he plans to come out in February to see the boys for the weekend. But I'm wise to this game now. I simply say 'ok' and let him take the wheel. I know he is going to drive right off a cliff with that statement and it will never be mentioned again. Just another attempt to seem like the dad he knows he should be. I'm sure his fiancée will plan a fun Presidents Day weekend activity and he will have to bail again. I have grown from all of this (as well as all of your insight) to realize that he will always be the 'for show' and 'all talk' dad. So I'm just going to keep doing what I have been doing and let him drift away. How long until he starts missing his scheduled holidays? A year? Maybe 2? Either way it's still a win for me. More time with my boys. Happy holidays to all and I wish everyone a healthy and happy 2024.

New Year, New Me, Same Him (1/28/24)

Just before the new year I visited my ex MIL. I have been so lucky to have this woman. She loves the boys and probably hates my ex more than I do. We took a drive to visit her and spent time with my ex SIL who flew in for the holidays. I had not seen her in a year and it was great to spend time with her again. We were close when I was married to her brother, but I also know she is very close to her brother so I've proceeded with caution in my relationship with her. The boys opened belated Christmas presents and baked cookies. They built a fort of pillows and

settled in for a movie complete with all the best snacks and candy. Probably the best movie night ever! After the boys negotiated their sleeping arrangements (they wanted to sleep in the fort) we can to a compromise and tucked them in. Now it was my turn to settle in and learn some of the gory details of my ex's current situation.

I knew there were problems. He had told me. But the frequency and severity is new to me. The blow out I learned of was one of many. Apparently him and my SIL talk often, but he had told me they haven't talked in months. Weird lie, but okay. How is that relationship sustainable? How is there growth, support and love with malicious fighting, threats and name calling? It's not a situation I'd want, but I guess he isn't me. If you remember, I told you they were doing significant renovations to HER home. The bill is in excess of 160k. So let me tell you a story my SIL told me. My ex got tickets to a concert. Almost impossible to get tickets. He calls my SIL and tells her to pack, they are both flying out to this concert. Apparently it was someone they both enjoy and I think it's nice he thought of her before his fiancée. My SIL was excited. She researched flights and even pulled her suitcase out. The concert was in a state neither of them lived in and my ex volunteered to cover the cost of the tickets as well as the hotel. Again, very nice. Imagine my SIL's dismay when he calls a few days later to tell her he has to sell the tickets. She was upset and my ex was almost heartbroken. When she inquired why he told her that him and his fiancée got into a fight about it. The fiancée said, "You shouldn't be spending money on tickets, a hotel and airfare. You need to put that money into the house renovation." Ummmm, wait. I had a conversation with my ex (when he was angry at his fiancée) in which he said he is not contributing financially to the house because it's HER house. His name isn't on the deed and he thinks the renovation is unnecessary. Well, well well...new year, same him. This is also the man that has paid late (or doesn't pay) for his son's therapy. This is the man who said he couldn't go half on a VR set for the boys. This is the man that can't

afford to fly out for a long weekend to see them. Well, now I know why he is struggling financially...

So, after I learned this, I made my new years resolution; no contact. That's it. No reaching out, no pics, no updates. He never asks for them and I won't be volunteering. He blocked me on all social media so he won't get any information there. I know this is something that I should have done a long time ago. I was wrong in delaying that. But it is a lot easier said than done. He has made no effort to call since Christmas. My oldest texts him memes and silly videos in which there is a very short response. So 2024 will be my year of silence. I'm going to channel my energy into the kids, my bf, the new house, work, and perhaps...turning my story into a book. Any authors out there have input to share? I'm happy to hear it! So cheers to 2024, the year of silence, and a new chapter (perhaps literally).