Opening Old Wounds

JIMMY

2014

When I was eight-years-old, I was punished by my piano teacher for being late to our year-end recital. Despite it being my parent’s fault, Janet made me play an A-minor diminished scale for three hours straight to teach me obedience. Ever since this incident, I have been on time to every single class, date, and meeting I have ever had. The irony is that my significant other of five years was, and is, late to everything.

Well, it’s 11:09, she’s nine minutes late, and I’m jittery as hell. I guess I should not have had that cappuccino. The problem is, I have no idea why I am here in the first place. I have no idea what she wants to talk about, which means that my mind is in auto-pilot and is drifting into existential thoughts, which is always a bad sign. She was extremely direct in her text message requesting this coffee date: “Thursday. Coffee. Carolines. 11?” I was intimidated, having not spoken to her in six months, so I responded: “OK.” I regretted sending this message immediately, as it could come across like I was mocking her autonomous texting style, but alas, it was too late.

After we broke up, she clearly stated, “I know that we should remain friends because that’s the right thing to do but we’re going to end up resentful and petty and jealous so I think we should say bye.”

Then why are we meeting again, Janie? Why are we re-opening these deep and painful wounds? I suppose she could be lonely, like I have been since we parted. I have had many an evening where I’ve debated calling her, but I stayed strong. Even in the darkest times, in drunken stupors, I have resisted. But for Janie to reach out after cutting all ties, it must mean something. She *must* want to rekindle our romance!

JANIE

2009

I don’t get why being single at twenty-three is a problem. Aren’t recent university graduates supposed to be focused on finding a job and paying rent? According to my mother, I should be focused on finding a nice Jewish husband to start a nice Jewish life and have nice Jewish children. According to her, being single at twenty-three is a problem. Call it a Jewish Mother’s Guilt Trip if you wish, but either way, it ends with: me on a date with a guy I met on JDate.

Today, I went out with Jimmy. He’s surprisingly good-looking but his thick black glasses reminded me of Woody Allen, which made me uncomfortable. He was polite, awkward, and paid for my coffee, which is greatly appreciated. You’d be surprised how often that doesn’t happen. One guy I went out with had the audacity to say, “I took Women’s Studies in Uni and the prof said that paying for a girl’s meal defeats the purpose of gender equality. Therefore, I think we should split the bill.” What a tool.

But this Jimmy guy, despite the fact that he’s a “freelance writer/poet/barista” seems kinda cool. He didn’t point out that I was eight minutes late either, which I appreciate. As we left the coffee shop, he asked me if I wanted to go out again. I said yes. He may turn out to be a total deadbeat, but at least I’ll get a free meal out of it.

JIMMY

2011

Is this too much: Rose petals, a bottle of champagne, and hand-made pasta? Janie has emphasized how important this occasion is and I want it to be magnificent. I had asked her to move in with me multiple times before she said yes, and once she finally did, she gave me a handwritten list of stipulations:

“In the joint residential matrimony of Janie Zimmerman and Jimmy Woolf, the following requests must be executed:

* The spare bedroom must be made Janie’s personal study. It will be decorated with the remnants of Janie’s old furniture, posters, and knick knacks.
* If ever an altercation takes place and personal space is needed, Janie will retain control of the bed for the evening, and Jimmy will be summoned to the couch.
* Care of Arnold, Jimmy’s pet ferret, will be taken over by Janie, due to her unfaltering love of the adorable little creature
* If Janie and Jimmy’s relationship is terminated, Janie will have 14 days to get all of her personal belongings out of the vicinity.
* A private ceremony is expected on April 23rd, 2011 to welcome Janie into the apartment.

If these requests cannot be honoured, then this contract will be terminated, as will the living arrangement between Janie and Jimmy.”

On second hand, alcohol, pasta, and flowers are not enough.

JANIE

2011

My boyfriend is an idiot. I have arrived at the doorstep of the apartment, along with my sister, her husband, and three of his friends who’ve come to help me move in. But Jimmy, taking my scribbled joke of a “roommate contract” seriously, has enlisted a string quartet to welcome me into his apartment. And he’s wearing nothing but a bathrobe, while a bubble bath with scented candles awaits me. He’s even dressed up Arnold, his adorable pet ferret in an origami bow tie and decorated his cage.

I should be thrilled with this ridiculous stunt and I am appreciative, but it’s not helping with my anxiety. He’s made it clear that he’s in love with me and I’ve made it clear that I like him. A lot. But, I can’t express my feelings as easily as he can. Does that make me emotionally immature? According to my sister, yes, yes it does. Jimmy and I moving in together after two years of dating means that I am finally growing up and “embracing the truth that lies inside the chambers of my heart.”

But to me, this “declaration of love” is simply a reminder that I will never be able to match his ridiculously high levels of affection. At least he looks good in a bathrobe!

JIMMY

2009

It’s 4:05 and she is not here yet. I have been trying to distract myself by playing brickball on my Blackberry but my sweaty palms are interfering with my gaming ability. I guess she could be stuck on the subway or perhaps she got mugged or maybe she had to go home and apply deodorant. She could simply be a no show, but I should try to stay optimistic.

4:06. The door is opening, it might be her! Just kidding, it is an elderly lady with dentures. Come on Janie, show up already! Just because we met on an online dating service, does not mean I’m unworthy of your time. I promise I am not a stalker.

4:09. She’s here. And she’s pretty. Beautiful even. She has dark brown hair and hazel-coloured eyes. Beautiful and mysterious hazel-coloured eyes. She says she works for a book publisher, which is kind of intimidating to me because it means she is succeeding in life at the age of twenty-three. Impressive. The 75 minutes go by quickly and I am flabbergasted by how easy she is to converse with. She is one of those people who you feel you have known your entire life. She’s extremely intelligent, but not like those kids in English Literature classes who make you feel inferior.

I nervously ask her out again as I pay for the coffees, hoping that my stack of five dollar bills can persuade her to accept my offer. She says yes without much pause. Perhaps she could tell I was going to ask her out again. Maybe she wanted me to. We awkwardly hug outside and I cross the street. As I walk away, a warm grin sets upon my face. Wow. She’s really, really hot.

JANIE

2014

He’s going to point out that I’m late, isn’t he? I’m going to get there and he’s going to say something smug like, “Oh I thought you’d never come!” I really tried to avoid this from happening and in all honesty, I have a valid excuse: I didn’t wake up in my own bed this morning.

God, that sounds really bad. “I’m late because I had to schlep home to change my outfit from last night because I don’t want you to correctly assume things about my personal life.” Well, Jimmy doesn’t need to know what happened. Instead, I’ll let him assume that I irresponsibly slept in.

As I ride the streetcar, I go over my rehearsed speech in my head. I have put a lot of work into this mini-monologue and I need it to go over well. I try to remember all the method acting techniques that my high school teacher Mr. Mongello taught me. I take a deep breath and channel my inner actor.

“Look, I know things ended a bit abruptly. It was a sharp halt to a five-year relationship and you didn’t deserve that. And I don’t want you to think that I didn’t care about you because I did. I loved being with you and even though I struggled to say it, I *loved* you. But I could never feel the way about you that you did about me. I never felt like I deserved the affection you threw at me because I could never fully reciprocate. You deserved better and you still do. But ever since we broke up, I’ve been lonely. I miss having that person to come home to. That glorious feeling of euphoria that could lift my spirit and fill me with eternal happiness. That constant reminder that I was and would be okay. So, Jimmy, I know that this is abrupt and surprising and I know that I said I didn’t even want to see you after we broke up, but I am begging. May I please have custody of Arnold?”

My heart flutters at the idea of being reunited with that adorable little ferret. I can imagine that Jimmy will not want to part from his beloved pet, but I suspect this monologue will persuade him to do so. Jimmy has to know that there is a hole is my heart that only Arnold can fill.

I step off the streetcar and approach Carolines on the right. It’s weird being back here. I look down at my watch. 13 minutes late. That’s not too bad. I breathe deeply, fix my hair, and open the door. I scan the room and in the far right corner is a familiar face sitting at our regular table. Jimmy.

**Word Count: 1765 words**