

Dear John,



Dear John,

In 1985 I met a man at a school. He was my advisor. I had just ended a 20 year marriage. He was married, but separated at the time. We fell in love instantly. He was married 3 times

before. We were married a year after we started dating but our marriage ended after 4 years, kids had a lot to do with it (mine and his) but I always thought we loved each other enough to overcome anything in our relationship. He never did tell me he was having an affair but I sensed it. He never told me why he wanted to leave, except to say he didn't "want to hurt me". It is now almost 19 years later, he's still married to the woman he left me for and I have not even been out on a date. I have never been able to get over our breakup. I still love him and I feel damaged and unable to love anyone else..pretty sick, huh?

Signed,

Can't get over him

Dear Can't get over him

No, not sick. But I'll admit, your letter is one of the sadder ones I've read.

There are many comments in your correspondence that spell trouble. Both of you were rebounding from bad relationships when you met. He had failed at marriage three times before. He was your advisor, which makes for an uneven playing field from the start. I'm not suggesting your love wasn't real. But neither of you were in a good place to be falling into it.

After reading your letter, I felt like giving you a compassionate hug and soothing words. But I quickly got over that. I've come to think that what would benefit you most is a quick slap and somebody telling you to snap out of it, kind of like what Cher did to Nick Cage in Moonstruck.

You remember the movie Moonstruck? Ol' Nick had a chip on his shoulder after life had dealt him a wooden hand. A bummer for sure, but at some point one has to realize life moves on.

Cher was right in telling Nick to stop feeling sorry for himself. And I am right now, Janet, telling you to move on with your life. You had a 20 year marriage. You were with the advisor for 5 years after that. And then you spent 19 years pining away for him. It is time, Janet, for you to move away from your bitter past, enjoy your present and plot for a happy future.

I sense from the tenor of your letter that you might feel unworthy in love and finding true love may seem unattainable. You should remember though, that love is a team sport. You and your partner are responsible for winning the game and you and he are responsible for losing it. The advisor left not because YOU weren't right. He left because he felt the combination of the two of you wasn't right.

Now he's found someone he's more compatible with, and I'm sure you can do the same. But it takes confidence, optimism, and the desire to move past your past. As the lyric says, it's time to pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again. Loving well is the best revenge, after all.

I'm not suggesting it will be easy. People say how simple love is. How it finds you. How it's happily ever after and all that. But in reality, love isn't the Cinderella fairy tale we're led to believe. Love is more like the novel War and Peace. It takes patience and commitment to read a book like that. And, no doubt, parts of it are torture to get through. But in the end you realize its magnificence.

So there you go. It's time to browse the shelves again, Janet. It's time to find a book worth reading and curl up in bed with. Your happiness awaits you, so go get it.

Thanks for playing,

John