

Whining Ends

By Susan Young <groobie@verizon.net>

Rated: PG

Submitted: March 2015

Summary: A minor character from “Whine, Whine, Whine” comes to a major realization.

Story Size: 1,766 words (9Kb as text)

Thanks, Lady Loisetete, for your story prompts (which appear at the end).

Thanks, as always, to Laura for your work as my beta reader. :)

I want a divorce.

The realization hits me like the amp that nearly hit him, killing the remaining spark of hope I had for us.

I know people look at me, look at him, and question why I’m still here. How I put up with him. Why I let him treat me with such disrespect. They wonder if I’ve asked myself those questions.

Well, of course I have. I’m not blind. I see his impatience when I need to go to work – when I can’t be at his beck and call, attending to his every whim. I hear the dismissive tone in his voice when he insults my intelligence and disregards my opinion.

I see how they pity me. I sense the condemnation they’d never say to my face, and I know they gossip to each other behind my back. Why doesn’t she stand up for herself? Why does she lie down and take it? Why doesn’t she respect herself enough to leave?

I do have a voice. I do have a sense of pride. I do want to scream and fight and defend myself. But I’m afraid.

Not of him – not really. He doesn’t hit me – any argument between us has always stopped short of physical abuse. And I’m not afraid of his words – his verbal abuse rolls off me too easily at this point. It shouldn’t, I know. I’ve been anesthetized to it, and knowing that should have been its own warning sign.

No, what I’m really afraid of is independence. Of being alone – struggling to make my way in the world without his support. Because, if I look around, I’d see that he’s all I have. I’m afraid he’ll leave me, and I’ll be forced to confront what I never wanted to see.

How he cut me off from my friends. How he distanced us from our families. How he shoehorned us into my tiny apartment, pretending to be a family while hiding our marital status.

It made no sense. It still doesn’t. Well, now it doesn’t have to. Because I’m leaving him. And I will not be swayed by his charm, by our shared history, by the love I know he still feels for me.

That’s what those people who look at me with pity don’t understand. What I see in him, why I continued to love him through everything that should have killed my devotion long ago.

He didn’t always treat me this way. He used to worship me, shower me with attention and affection; he made me feel like the most important person in the world.

I could hardly believe it when he fell for me in the first place. I never had much confidence in myself – everyone around me always seemed prettier, or smarter, or more sophisticated. I’ve always been average: average grades, average looks, stuck in an average job. I guess I thought I was destined to have an average life. But when I met Calvin, my life suddenly seemed

extraordinary.

He was sitting in my section at the diner, tucked into a corner booth, oblivious to the world around him. And at first, I hardly noticed him: he was just another faceless customer. It was his accent that caught my attention as he ordered a coffee; my mind whirled with fantasies of princes and castles. When I leaned over his table to refill his cup, he looked up and his eyes caught mine.

Gosh, it was like magic. He smiled kindly, and I lost all sense of myself when he thanked me with his exotic accent. My heart spiraled out of control; I was astonished that he was paying any attention to me at all. When he confidently asked if he could take me out to dinner, I nearly fainted.

I should have noticed, even then, how self-centered he is. He talked endlessly during our first date about his life, his goals, his dreams. I was fascinated with all of it, already under his thrall. I never noticed how little I talked, how he never asked about my life, how he didn’t take the time to learn anything about me. But my story was boring while his was amazing – he was worldly and charismatic and driven towards greatness. So it was only right to spend the whole night wrapped up in his universe.

I took him home. I know that makes me sound like a tramp. But I was swept up in his passion and it felt so right. I don’t regret that choice and don’t need to defend myself to anyone. I refuse to feel one ounce of shame for that act of love.

It is possible to fall in love at first sight: that’s what happened to me. One perfect day and I was already his. Well, maybe it was lust; maybe my lack of experience caused me to confuse the two words. But at the time, I knew I was in love and I was so convinced that the overwhelming desire I felt for him was real and pure and true. I was sure that he felt the same way about me.

He spent the night. Another sign of his devotion to me, right? He didn’t just zip up his pants and promise to call; he strolled through my small apartment the next morning like he belonged there, bare-chested in boxer shorts. He took over my kitchen and made us scrambled eggs and toast. He cooked for me – admittedly not haute cuisine, but the effort was appreciated. You can’t blame me for fawning over a man who can cook.

Calvin was captivating, and he showered me with attention. He’d walk me to and from work, and he’d meet me at the park for lunch – we were completely inseparable. He was always there for me; well, he had the time, after all. He was “between jobs.” That’s what he called it anyway. But can you really be between something if there’s never been anything before or after?

I didn’t condemn him for his lack of work: he was a struggling musician suffering for his art. And when he moved in with me a month after our first date, it just made economic sense. It’s not his fault that I had to pay all of our bills, that he could never contribute his share of the rent.

God, I’m still justifying for him. I need to stop that.

If he had cared like he should have, he would have accepted those job offers that he deemed beneath his dignity. He would have gotten off the couch and surprised me with a clean apartment and a home-cooked meal every once in a while. He would have finished that one song he always claimed he was writing for me. Still, despite his growing apathy and my blind ignorance, I never stopped believing that he loved me in his own way.

Even that day – the catalyst that sparked the downward spiral that led us to today – it hadn’t been all bad. Before Calvin had started setting up for his gig, he walked with me through the fair, hand in hand, like any other strolling pair of lovers. We laughed at his pathetic attempts to win me a prize at the carnival games. We fed each other frozen yogurt, and I kissed the chocolate off the corner of his mouth. He looked at me with the playful spark in his eye that I’ve seen countless times before – the smile that reminded me of the look on his face when we said our vows.

But springtime doesn’t last forever – the bright sunny day

eventually clouds over, like the looming shadow of a falling speaker. The radiant love that blossomed at the beginning of our relationship had, over time, withered under a lack of care. No one can expect a marriage to succeed just because it exists on paper.

I really can't put all of the blame on him; I do bear some responsibility. I expected our love to survive despite every challenge we faced. I saw the dawn and the mid-day sun, but I willfully ignored how the arc of our relationship was following an inevitable path towards dusk. I assumed that his growing indifference would eventually dissipate, and we'd remember the core of who we are as a couple.

But that's where I was wrong. We're at our core, and the core is rotten. Fairs and frozen yogurt were at the periphery – we were standing on the surface of a bubble, and when it burst, we fell.

Maybe we should have spent more time together before jumping into marriage. We should have grown together, learned everything about each other – the good and the bad. We should have been friends before we were lovers.

I think we skipped something important in our rush of endorphins. I shouldn't have filled the empty, lonely place in my heart with the heat of his touch. I should have built myself up first, should have developed into the woman I deserve to be. I shouldn't need a man to prop up the void in my life.

I see that now. I understand what went wrong. And I know what I have to do.

I have to leave him. I have to find myself – learn that who I am is an independent clause; it doesn't rely on anyone else. I am not his: I am my own person. I am Elise Carr. And that is good enough.

So I will no longer be his support system. I will no longer be his emotional punching bag. I will no longer be his wife.

I say the words out loud, brushing off his attempt to keep me silent: "You don't speak for me anymore, Calvin. I want a divorce...not that anyone ever knew we were married."

And my heart suddenly blooms, just like flowers in the spring.

THE END

Author's Note: Lady Loisetete earned the most overall points in the 2015 Kerth quizzes, and her prize was a story written just for her. These were her requests:

Want:

#1 Springtime

#2 Frozen Yogurt

#3 A Fair

Don't Want:

#1 A-Plot

#2 Lex

#3 Kryptonite

Preferred Season: Anywhere from mid-season 1 and beyond.