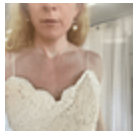


My Marriage Suddenly Went from Adventurous to Comfortable | by Viv Leigh | Hello, Love | Medium

Medium (<https://medium.com/hello-love/my-marriage-suddenly-went-from-adventurous-to-comfortable-0a34936bea4f>) · Viv Leigh · June 10, 2025

And I don't know how to feel about it



(<https://medium.com/@vivleigh>)

Viv Leigh (<https://medium.com/@vivleigh>)

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Two months ago, my marriage — rather suddenly — went from a relationship defined by adventure, to one settled in ease and comfort.

I know why the shift occurred, and there are definitely things I'm appreciating about this new phase. But it's hard to not feel nostalgic for the adventure.

New romantic love is adventurous. It's like a shot of coffee, whiskey and LSD all at once; you're loosened, awake, and seeing color in a new way. You are always aware of your beloved, seeing their beguiling details, feeling their presence in the room.

This level of romance in my marriage lasted quite a long time for me, I'd guess longer than usual. Even when I moved in with Mars and we were now "doing life" together, I remember hearing his footsteps down the hall and my body chemically changing with the anticipation of his presence. I felt longing, excitement. I wanted to impress him, be beautiful for him, and curl up in his strong, comforting body all at once.

"Haven't you ever heard of the seven year itch?" my cousin asked me bluntly, when I confided in her about the change between Mars and me. "This is a very normal phase to be going through."

"Listen, just because we've been together seven years...getting married and having two kids did tame our verve, but only somewhat."

As I protested this to my cousin, I was hit with a memory of holding our newborn in my arms, lying uncomfortably on the couch with c-section stitches across my abdomen.

In the memory I was looking across the room at my husband, who stood high on a ladder fixing a light. His back was to me. I admired his broad, strong form, his body almost symbolically elevated above me, out of reach. I was physically

incapacitated then, but oh I *wanted* him.

To want someone means that you don't feel like you have them. It's adventurous because it feels like you're constantly on a hero's journey. But it's not a comfortable feeling.

I wanted my cousin to understand: this evolution didn't just happen with time, though that's a part of it. Something had moved in my own brain.

“Well, what do you think caused the shift then?” she asked.

The Abrupt Relationship Shift

Different couples find different ways of keeping the adventure alive. For me, I think I know what gave me an elongated timeline in the romantic desiring phase: **polyamory**.

“If you'd rather deal with jealousy than boredom, choose non-monogamy. If you'd rather deal with boredom than jealousy, choose monogamy” (Krantz, Rachel. *Open: One Woman's Journey Through Love and Polyamory*, a Memoir.)

If this is your first time stopping by, my husband and I are in an open marriage. He sees other women, sometimes introducing them to me, turning them into a woman I immediately have an intense and complicated attachment to, and sometimes not — leaving them a tantalizingly mysterious “other” in my mind.

I choose not to see other people, but I get all the novelty and excitement polyamory can bring through his relationships.

The latest form this polyamory-induced excitement came in was Bella, a beautiful 26 year old. They dated for two years, and we'd had her over for dinner at our house a few times.

Then two months ago, Mars broke things off with her. I was shocked, for many reasons.

Reason 1: Did I mention Bella was young? And very hot?

If I shared a photo of Bella you would be sure I stole it off a romance novel model instagram. She has that ethereal Snow White-y combination: porcelain skin, wide set blue eyes and jet black hair.

My husband and I are objectively good looking people ourselves. We're both tall and athletic. But let's be honest, we're not quite model worthy, and not young — he is 47, and I just turned 38.

Isn't this every man's dream, to have a mistress like this?

Mars's other relationships always incite excitement in me, but there was something about Bella's beauty that just made me want to cling to her, to gape and watch as they interacted when she came over to the house.

Bella brought some badly cooked banana muffins the last time we had her over for dinner. "Sorry, I'm not really a cook!" she said sweetly.

I thanked her and hurriedly busied myself in the kitchen while watching out of the corner of my eye as Mars tucked a hair behind her ear and they kissed gently. My stomach flip flopped.

I was jealous of Bella's beauty and youth. I knew how attractive it was to Mars, and all men. And as I rounded the corner into middle age, I no longer knew where I stood without the ability to offer those things.

Reason 2: Though I caused the initial conflict, I encouraged Mars not to end things with Bella.

Though Mars later said the breakup would have happened soon anyways, there was one big conflict that spurred it to happen suddenly. I write about the incident in my blog Open Marriage Clash (<https://medium.com/@vivleigh/an-open-marriage-clash-were-trying-to-get-pregnant-a24946361701>) if you want to know the un-pretty details.

I was angry at the risk Mars took that was outside our understanding. But we resolved things, and Mars was apologetic. I saw the contrition in his eyes, the angst over what he had done. I didn't need more.

Many wives would likely have said good riddance to Bella after that conflict. But when Mars told me a few days later that he planned to end things with her, my initial reaction was shock and disappointment.

I found the novelty of bringing Bella into our relationship sexy, her feminine presence seemed to remind me of my own, putting me in an erotic state of mind.

That night we had her over for dinner, just the act of cooking us all a meal became erotic. As I moved about the kitchen, I was reminded that I too had legs, ass and breasts. Mars felt this energy from me, and gave my butt an appreciative slap.

Later, I left for bookclub, knowing Mars and Bella would fuck in our bed. When I came back I felt a surge of cortisol from seeing their pink faces flushed from sex. It awakened a sexuality that goes dormant in day to day life.

After Bella left, Mars laid me down on top of the dirtied sheets and took my body in his hands, making me come hard while I pictured her pale body under his strong one.

The adventure Bella offered was about more than sex. Bella and I had plans to get drinks just the two of us. I was looking forward to being immersed in her beauty, to talk with another woman intimately and learn what made her tick.

Their breakup meant a loss of erotic fun, and solidarity with another woman for me. It also meant a cessation of the insecure feelings I had been having around her beauty and youth.

Even though I was aware of these two conflicting sides of me, it was interesting to see that my desire for adventure won out:

“You know I’m not telling you that you need to end things with Bella,” I told Mars a little desperately, while another part of me screamed: *What are you doing, telling him to rethink the breakup?? Let the beautiful twenty-something go, you don’t need that in your life.*

I was starting to wonder if I wasn’t a bit too reliant on the thrills in our marriage. I had never known Mars to be without a girlfriend, he’d always gone from one to the other seamlessly, or dated multiple people at a time.

But now there was no one but Bella, and staring into the void made me anxious about what would fill it.

What would Mars and I look like without her or another woman? Would he grow bored, and irritated? Would I?

Mars said there had been other issues with Bella: “We’re just not connecting.”

I was perplexed at this purported reason for the break-up. Immaturely, I thought I’d had him — and all men — figured out.

“But, she...she’s beautiful!” I said, still incredulous.

He looked at me with a small smile and squeezed my thigh. “Yeah. But over time I’ve stopped seeing it. Beauty gets boring by itself.”

A New Phase of Comfort

“We’re walking contradictions, seeking safety and predictability on one hand and thriving on diversity on the other.” – **Esther Perel, Mating in**

Captivity: Reconciling the Erotic and the Domestic

(<https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1074496>)

For the first time in our seven year relationship, there’s no presence of another woman. No girlfriends coming over for dinner. No dates from which he comes back showered and with a peaceful expression that has nothing to do with me.

Before he was 90% my husband, 10% a lion on the prowl, whose footsteps I keenly listened for and every move I watched. Because I never knew when the lion would pounce, throwing me into an adrenaline spike with a comment about his other women.

“Can’t you just enjoy this?” my cousin asked. “I say this as someone who loves you, and knows you’re carrying a lot with the kids and everything. Can’t you just enjoy taking a break?”

“You mean *you* want a break from hearing me talk about my open marriage,” I laughed self-deprecatingly. “No, in all seriousness there are definitely very good things about where we’re at now. And less good...”

The less good:

Comfort also can have its downsides. It can give us a feeling of long-term stability and peace in our relationship, but if allowed to go too far it can turn into a feeling of dangerous ambivalence and lack of enthusiasm for your partner.

Now it's been months since I've felt that familiar surge of excitement mixed with jealousy about Mars's other partners. My cortisol levels have never been lower.

But the other evening I suddenly realized I hadn't truly looked at Mars all day. We were at a picnic with another family. I went to get something from the car, and when I turned back I paused. The low sun cast an idyllic glow over the parents setting up the meal, the kids playing happily in the field.

Mars's figure jumped out at me, so familiar in his movements. I watched him help the other dad set up lawn chairs and coolers. He had a graceful, strong, confident way of carrying his body.

I stared harder, trying to recreate the fluttery feeling his body used to give me. But I couldn't will it back. Instead I felt respect for this man. And a warmth as I watched Mars scoop up our son running by, who screamed with delight.

As I walked back to the picnic from the car, Mars caught me staring at him, and gave me a quizzical look. I kept my gaze on his as I gave him a quiet kiss and ran my hand sneakily over his broad strong chest — a feature that used to easily make me feel soft and sensual.

Even if it elicited different feelings now I wanted him to know I still saw him. I wanted to remind myself to appreciate this.

The good:

Recently, I caught myself singing around Mars, something I never used to do. It wasn't because I forgot he was there. Something that had always remained a little guarded had just fully dropped.

I notice in this new phase I'm bolder in talking about things like a team with a long-term game plan. On our family evening walk, we dive into where we want to vacation when the kids are older, what retirement could look like, our hopes for

our careers.

Our toddler running ahead of us, and baby sleeping in the stroller, my heart feels relaxed and content.

We talked vaguely like this before, and before the break up with Bella I would have said I was confident in our relationship. But I think their breakup did something to show me at a critical time how much he values our connection.

I turned 38 last week, and I realized that I had never cared less about getting older in my entire adulthood.

“I’m sorry I’m traveling on your birthday,” Mars called me on the phone.

“It’s all good, we’ll celebrate when you get home,” I said cheerfully.

“What do you want to do to celebrate?” he asked.

Get a cozy, chill dinner with you. Have a threesome with a beautiful woman. Both answers popped into my head, making me laugh.

“What’s funny?”

“Oh, just the contradictions of what I’m wanting right now.”

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