

The Tricky Logistics & Boundaries Of My Not-So-Secret Double Life

[BY CHRISTY WILLIAMS](#)

I feel like I'm living a double life – but without the glamour of being a secret agent or a superhero.

When my husband of 25 years and I decided to “split up together,” we knew it wouldn't be neat and tidy. Having committed to putting our children first – no matter what – we knew we were going to be taking on the brunt of the tricky logistics involved in letting the kids stay in our family home while we took turns coming and going.

But I definitely didn't know I would feel like I was living a double life.

I've said before that every time I pack to go to and from my apartment, I feel so grateful that we are able to do it like this. That we are the ones packing our things, while our kids stay put. That *I* am the one cursing the fact that I left my phone at the house and have to turn around to get it – instead of the kids having to worry about what they might have left behind. And I am truly so grateful for that.

But it does make me chuckle that I feel like I'm cleaning twice as much now. Of course I am – I am now living in two places instead of one. So when I leave the apartment, it almost feels like leaving a VRBO or a summer cottage rental after you've been there for a week. I have to toss any flowers that might die while I am at our house, pack up any food that might go bad, run the dishwasher, close the blinds, and take the trash out as I leave.

And then when I arrive back at the house, I do a similar cleaning – vacuuming, cleaning the couch of dog hair, wiping the kitchen counters, sweeping the kitchen floor, and starting any laundry that has accumulated in the hampers. Not that it doesn't get done while I'm gone, but there's always more to do – especially when the kids are home for summer break. (And okay, yes...it's not done the way I would do it. My control issues and I are well aware.)

Our ideal goal is to take turns at the house a week at a time so the kids have a routine and know what to expect. But Clay doesn't always have a business trip scheduled, and sometimes things like the 4th of July come up when we want to attend the cul-de-sac barbecue as a family. So there are weeks when I'm only at the apartment for a few days before coming back to the house. Then after we spent the holiday together, the boys went on a quick weekend getaway together while my daughter and I hung out at home.

I feel like we were just getting into some semblance of a routine when summer break started, but I feel that way every summer, so I guess this is just an added layer of logistics now.

For example, my daughter texted us from work this week saying she forgot her lifeguard pack and didn't realize it until she was already there. Clay didn't see the text because he was grocery shopping, and I was at the apartment, editing an article – in my pajamas. So I had to throw on some clothes, run a brush through my hair, drive 5 miles to the house, pick up her lifeguard pack, and take it to the pool where she was guarding, 11 miles away. And yes, I could have let her deal with the consequences of her forgetfulness, but A) I didn't

want her without it due to the nature of her job and the first aid items that were in her pack, and B) She invited her little brother to come swim, and he was super excited about that.

But these are the exact types of scenarios that we wanted to be able to cover when we decided to approach our split like this. Neither Clay nor I want the other to go a single day without seeing the kids. And we both want to be able to jump in and do what needs to be done whenever necessary. So I was happy to be able to cover those bases since Clay was shopping for the barbecue that would happen later that day.

The logistics are tricky, but we are figuring it out, just like we always have. I think the trickier part is feeling like I am living a double life.

When I am at the apartment, I feel single. I love my cozy little space where I feel secure and content and like I can focus on what's next for me as a person – instead of wondering what form I'm forgetting to sign for my kids. But when I'm there, of course I miss them. Even though I still see them every day when running them to baseball camp or taking them to haircuts or dentist appointments, I miss living with them. (Except for the part where everything in the apartment stays neat and clean and everything is exactly the way I left it all the time...)

The hard part for me is that when I go back home, I feel married again. Not emotionally...but in a day-to-day logistics kind of way.

Maybe it's just because we're in the same home as we have been for the past 10 years. Maybe it's because if we're both here, Clay still brings me coffee and cooks for all of us. Maybe it's because we still bounce things off each other, like his new job that he recently started, or any of the millions of decisions we have to make about the kids every day. It's probably a combination of all those things.

Maybe it's because I still don't care for the phrase "ex-husband" and the negativity I feel like it implies. Maybe if I used that phrase more, it would feel more real. But I just don't like it.

[My friend, Darren, nailed it in one of his recent articles](#) about this same topic:

"My 'ex'. The word fails to encapsulate the meaning. 'Ex-wife' feels dramatic, in a negative way. We need a word that suggests two superheroes that fought side by side, and have now head out on their own, but still come together for the important life battles. That is who we are."

I know that it will start to feel different when one of us starts dating again. But in the meantime, we are navigating this new normal and negotiating boundaries as we take more baby steps on this journey. Do I want him to *not* bring me coffee in the morning if I am at the house? No...of course not. It's a kind and lovely gesture and we still care for each other. But we are exploring other ways that we can maintain a sense stability for our kids and showing them that we are still a family, while giving each other the respectful space that we each need as individuals.

One of my favorite quotes is, "Life is tricky, baby. Stay in your magic." I have never been able to find the author of this quote, but it's something I repeat to myself a lot these days. Because it's easy to lose sight of the magic you're trying to create – and maintain – when you're in the messiness of logistics and boundaries. Especially when those boundaries might be different for each of us.

So I keep reminding myself what we're trying to do for the

kids. To always put their needs above our own – even if that means feeling like I’m leading a double life.

Huh. Maybe we *are* superheroes, like my friend Darren suggests.

Where’s my cape? My co-superhero and I have work to do.

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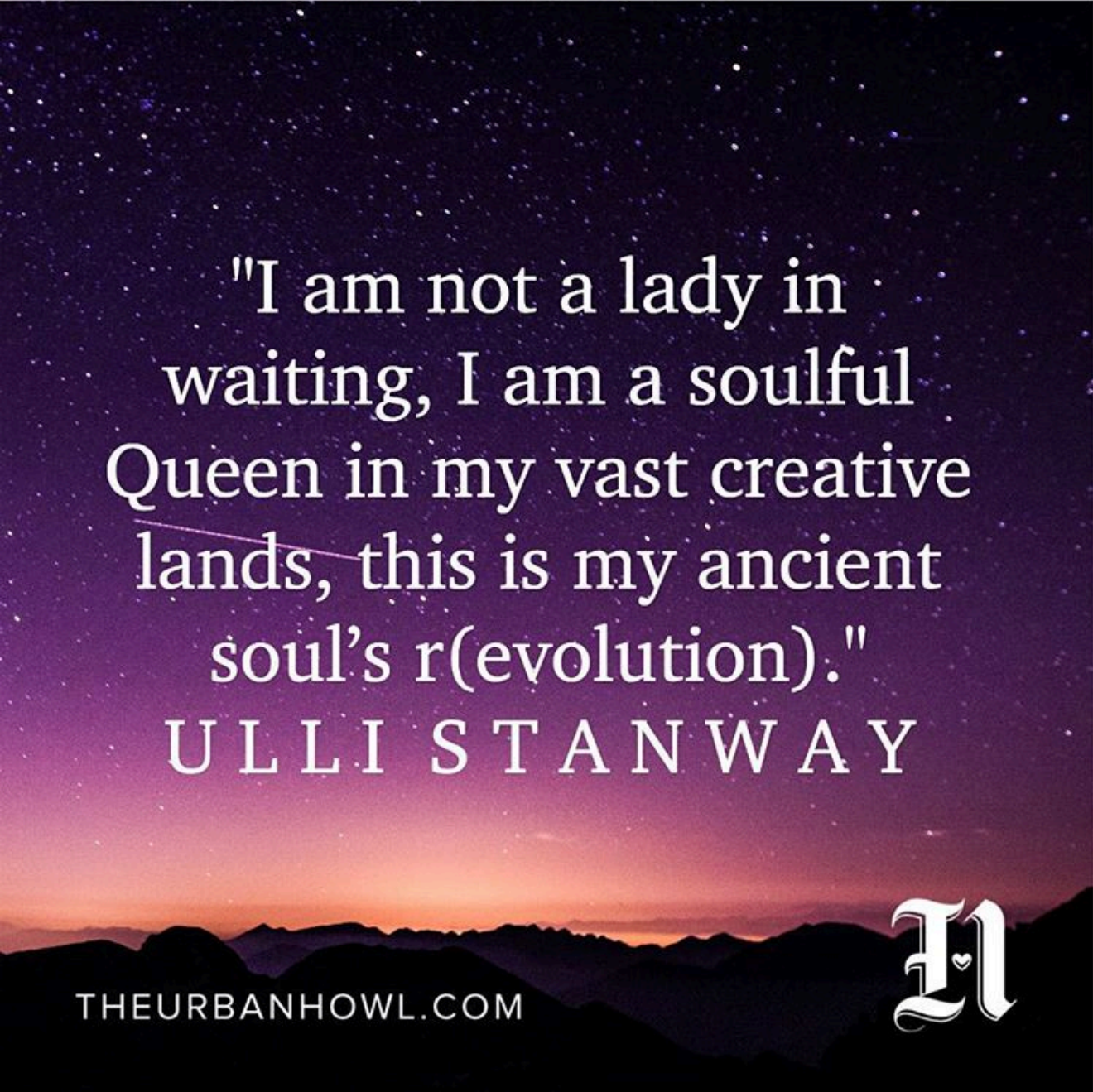
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