
Divorce, babe, divorce: A Divorce Attorney’s Take on Adele’s “30”

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Adele fans around the world waited with bated breath for Adele’s “30” to release in late November 2021. It had been six long years since the release of Adele’s “25,” when her worry was that fans would be disappointed that she was in a happy relationship. Perhaps, in a bit of a foreshadowing a few years prior, Adele apparently laughed when asked by *Rolling Stone* what her fans would think if she “were ever in a stable relationship,” to which she thought her “fans might be like, ‘Babe! Please! Get divorced!’”



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Then, in 2019, Adele and her husband separated, and their divorce was finalized in early 2021. It came as no surprise then to music fans around the globe that when the soulful crooner, who writes music from her life’s experiences, was asked what “30” was about, she responded frankly, “Divorce, babe, divorce.”

As a divorce attorney, I eagerly anticipated the release of “30,” which won “British Album of the Year” at the 42nd Brit Awards. For many clients, divorce can feel a bit embarrassing; maybe even a bit “taboo” — a conversation that should only be held in private corners of a room. But divorce happens. It is a part of many relationships and families. And with more than 54 million streams of the first single, “Easy on Me,” off her newly released album in its first week following release, there are undoubtedly listeners contemplating divorce and hanging on every word of Adele’s newest album, “30.”

Adele, a 15-time Grammy Award winner, invites you in to listen to the entire story of her divorce — even convincing Spotify to remove the default shuffle button — because she wants her listeners to hear the entire story of her divorce as she intended. In that spirit, this Divorce Attorney’s Take on Adele’s “30” will touch on every track in the order that it appears on the album:

Strangers by Nature: The opening track of “30” commences with Adele lamenting over the mistakes that she has made in prior relationships as she’s “taking flowers to the cemetery of [her] heart.” However, as a divorce attorney, what strikes a chord most is the refrain that the parties in a relationship are “strangers by nature.”

For divorce attorneys, it is not uncommon to hear someone say, “This person is a stranger to me” and “I don’t even know the person that I married anymore.” It is important to remember that your spouse is also a stranger to us. We can’t help you understand why your spouse may seem stranger to you now, but we can help you navigate the divorce and make the process less scary. Together, we can help to figure out just how to approach the “stranger” across the table to reach a resolution that works for your family. And once you have picked the right divorce attorney to empower you as you move forward, you might feel the same as Adele, who ends the track by stating, “Alright then, I’m ready,” as she heads into the throes of divorce.

Easy on Me: In the first single off her new album, which won “British Song of the Year” at the Brit Awards, Adele pleads:

Go easy on me, baby
I was still a child
Didn’t get the chance to
Feel the world around me

It is not uncommon for people to get married while young-in-love only to realize during the marriage that they are unhappy or have grown apart. Unfortunately, the slow breakdown in a relationship might only become harder to navigate when one party feels like the best defense is an aggressive offense. Occasionally, it is important to take a step back and remember that your spouse is a person, no one is perfect, and sometimes it is okay to let the foot off the gas and to “go easy.” This is not to say that you should not do your due diligence and protect your family, but sometimes it is just as important to hear what the other side is saying and consider why they might be saying it to resolve an issue.

My Little Love: If you are going through a custody dispute, prepare the tissues before you listen to the third track on Adele’s newest album. In a track written for her son, “My Little Love” not only includes snippets of audio recordings from conversations that she had with her son, Angelo, while going through the divorce, but also includes a voice memorandum that she recorded in an emotional moment expressing her anxieties and loneliness.

One of the most challenging parts of going through a separation or divorce as a parent is finding the best way to speak with your children. It is important to always keep your children’s best interests at the forefront of your decisions. However you and your spouse decide to approach your children, you should explain things in a way that *your child* can understand. For Adele, she explained to her son in an age-appropriate manner:

Adele: “Mommy’s been having a lot of big feelings recently.”

Angelo: “Like how?”

Adele: “Just like . . . Let me – I’m, I’m feeling like I’m trapped. Like, um, I feel a bit confused.”

This track also reminds listeners that, if you share a child with someone, they are still going to be your co-parent long after separation. Adele explains to her son in the track, “I love your dad ‘cause he gave you to me. You’re half me and you’re half daddy.” Even if this isn’t necessarily how you feel about your co-parent, it is important to be mindful of what you say to your child about your co-parent. Avoid making disparaging remarks about your co-parent to the children or in front of the children. Not every conversation will be perfect and you might feel like you’re making mistakes along the way, but that’s okay. After all, as Adele puts it, “Mama’s got a lot to learn.”

Cry Your Heart Out:

Cry your heart out, it’ll clean your face
When you’re in doubt, go at your own pace
Cry your heart out, it’ll clean your face
When you’re in doubt, go at your own pace

When you are separating, there is not always a need to rush to the courthouse to file a Complaint for Divorce. And while there are certain court-imposed deadlines that must be met after a Complaint is filed, it is sometimes okay to “go at your own pace.” Some days might feel worse than others, you might need to let out a good cry — don’t feel embarrassed if you cry on the phone to your divorce attorney. (We are used to it, I promise.) If you are feeling overwhelmed, ask your attorney to give you a breakdown of the things coming up next and to give you *one* task that you can focus on next. Forward progress is still progress in divorce and if you need to take baby steps, that’s okay.

Oh My God: And just after crying her heart out, Adele comes in strong with an upbeat track in which Adele is torn between her divorce and moving on:

I know that it’s wrong
But I want to have fun.

It is okay and healthy to find a way to have fun during and following a divorce just as long as it will not negatively impact your children. It is also okay to feel torn during a divorce. If you are having a hard time processing your emotions and feel guilt about moving on, one way to gain effective coping mechanisms is to seek a therapist. Rest assured, mental health and counseling records are considered confidential and the details of the discussions you have with a mental health professional are privileged. Your soon-to-be ex is not able to obtain your records outside of extreme circumstances.

Can I Get It: To some, “Can I Get It,” another upbeat track that begins with the strumming of guitars might initially seem a little out of place on an Adele album about divorce. The sixth track on her album flirts with the idea of entering into a relationship with someone new.

One of the questions family law practitioners are commonly asked is whether it is okay to begin dating someone new during a divorce. While a person’s dating life is a personal decision and there may not be anything prohibiting a party from dating after filing a Complaint for Divorce, you should consider whether it is in your best interests and in the best interests of your children. If you have concerns about dating while your divorce is pending, you should speak with a divorce attorney who can offer you practical legal advice based your situation, and the potential affects it may have on your divorce proceedings.

I Drink Wine: After three upbeat tracks in a row that consider moving forward, Adele comes back down with the piano-based slower track “I Drink Wine.” While the initial track was reportedly 15 minutes long, it only takes the first lyric to draw in a divorce attorney:

How can one become so bounded
By choices that somebody else makes?

It can be frustrating when you are walking through a divorce to feel boxed in by the decisions that your significant other has made or is making. And while Adele seems to be referencing the decisions the one partner might make in the course of a relationship, people going through a divorce also need to take into consideration the choices that another is making: a Judge.

The reality is that, just as every relationship is different, so too is every Judge. Your case might not go in exactly as you wish or maybe it will even go perfectly, but the Court may still see the facts and circumstances differently than you do. Once a Judge puts his or her decision into a Court Order, that decision is binding and enforceable. You should discuss with your divorce attorney whether mediation is right for you. Mediation can afford the parties the opportunity to come to mutually satisfactory settlement terms that they can help control.

All Night Parking (Interlude): “All Night Parking” sweeps you in as if you are in a downtown underground bar in the Chicago jazz scene. A song that seems to be more about a new relationship than divorce, it might initially seem misplaced on an album about “divorce, babe, divorce” — perhaps that is why it has been dubbed an interlude. Still, at track number 8 on the album, it is almost as if Adele is trying to give a listener contemplating separation hope more than anything else. To a divorce attorney, this track is more a reprieve and a hope dealer to those at a low point in a divorce as if to say, “it will get better. Just wait and see.”

Woman Like Me: Track number 9 can seem to like the ultimate “diss” track dragging a prior partner for their complacency in the relationship. As divorce attorneys, one of the first things we usually hear from our clients is how and why the relationship ended. It is important for us as practitioners to understand where our clients are coming from and how they ended up in our offices. And though how the relationship ended is important to understanding hot button issues during negotiations, we always try remember that there are three sides to every story (yours, your partners, and the side of a story that a Court will believe). We may also try to gently remind you that *why* the relationship ended is not as important as *how* you are going to move forward amicably bringing the issues to a close.

Hold On: The track begins with Adele’s haunting vocals singing “hold on,” encouraging herself to hang in there through the divorce despite her exhaustion. Adele states that this song was written when her friends would tell her to “hold on” when dealing with the process of divorce. One of the best resolutions that you can give yourself when you are going through a divorce is to take care of yourself. Divorce is stressful. Find things around you that you can hold onto — be it exercise, drinking more water, finding a team to lean on. We encourage you to find an empowerment team that includes not only family, friends, and mental health professionals you can rely upon, but also legal counsel who will empower you to make the best decisions for you and your family even when the road is tough.

To Be Loved and *Love is a Game*: The penultimate and final track of “30” deserve explanation together. “To be loved” begins with a cascade of piano that masterfully lets the listener slip right into her introspective powerhouse vocals about sacrifice and letting it be known that she tried to make her relationship work. After emotionally letting her audience know that she tried to make her relationship work, she launches into “Love is a Game” with the help of an orchestra that brings hope back into her vocals:

I can love me

I can love again

It is in these final two tracks that Adele brings home the message that we as divorce attorneys (much less eloquently) try to share with our clients: This too shall pass. The process of divorce is not permanent. You will be shaped by your resiliency, the lessons you learn during divorce, and you will feel better. It just takes time.

As divorce attorneys, we recognize that we are not meeting you at the best point in your life. We are here to guide you through to get you to the other side where you see the light at the end of the tunnel and see hope. We are here to help you champion yourself and your legal rights coming out of a divorce.

If you are feeling inspired by Adele’s “30” to discuss your next chapter, contact an experienced family law attorney who can empower you moving forward.