

"There's been a lot of . . . ups and downs," Shelton (with Lambert in 2013) told *Us* in 2010.





BLAKE

Calls It Quits

After fights about kids and her jealous spying, **Shelton** divorces **Miranda Lambert**

BY SARAH GROSSBART

Life as one half of country music's reigning power couple isn't always the stuff love ballads are made of. That's the lesson Miranda Lambert learned in her first two years of marriage to Blake Shelton. "Being on opposite sides of the country and traveling and all that . . . you go through hard stuff together," she confessed to *Us* at the April 2013 ACM Awards. Still, the "Somethin' Bad" singer never wavered in her belief that the two were in it for the long haul. "When all of this is said and done, we will be drinking a beer together on a front porch somewhere," she said. As she told *Us*, "I always say, 'Divorce is not an option.'"

At least, it wasn't for her. On July 10, Shelton filed for divorce in his native Oklahoma. Ten days later, he and his bride announced the end of their four-year marriage, in a statement: "It is with heavy hearts that we move forward separately." It was a division tabloids had been predicting almost from the moment Lambert, a two-time Grammy winner, 31, and her man, 39, swapped vows in a lantern-lit Texas

barn in 2011. After all, the roguish *Voice* mentor had been plagued by rumors of infidelity for years. But it was his desire to be a family man — not a ladies' man — that was their ultimate downfall. "They split over kids — he wanted them and she didn't," says a source close to the couple. "Blake was dying to start a family, but she kept putting it off and coming up with excuses. Kids were the main issue."

“
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THE REST IS JUST FLUFF.”

LAMBERT TOLD US IN 2013

But not the only one. The couple also bickered over Lambert's constant jealousy (she's copped to reading his texts and direct messages on Twitter) and the fact that they were rarely in the same state. Though Lambert told *Us* in 2012 that they made it a point not to spend

more than two weeks apart, "they never saw each other," says a source. "That made things worse." By July 20, their collaboration was officially through. Explains a Lambert insider, "Since they have a prenup and both agreed, it went through swiftly." Quickly, sure, but



JUNE 2005

They meet while performing at CMT's 100 Greatest Duets Concert. Shelton has said, "I was falling in love with her on stage."



FEBRUARY 2008

Flying high! The twosome sneak a kiss before flying from Los Angeles to Nashville.

A COUNTRY LOVE STORY

The duo smiled through their happiest moments — and nastiest split rumors



JUNE 2010

"I didn't want [to propose] until I knew it was time," Shelton says after popping the question. "This is going to be my last marriage and, hopefully, hers too."

not without a healthy dose of heartbreak. "This was a difficult decision for both of them," says the insider. "It's a very hard time."

▶ FAMILY FEUD

The pair weren't always at odds about starting a family. When the Texas-born beauty and the Oklahoma-bred charmer wed in front of 550 guests at a 125-acre ranch, neither was eager to rush into parenthood. The NBC star — known for his tendency to drink-and-tweet such musings as, "Going on live national television tonight. . . . Drunk," — told *Us* in 2010, "I think

I've got a lot of growing up to do before I start raising kids. If there's an announcement that's made in the next year or so that we're having a baby, I can promise you it's not going to have been planned!"

By 2012, though, he started envisioning life as a parent. That March, he gushed to *Us* that his wife was already a top-notch mom to rescue pups Waylon, Cher, Delta Dawn, Jessi, Black Betty, Virginia Bluebell and Delilah. "If she's anything with an actual human being like she is with dogs, the kid's gonna be golden," he said. "It's going to be spoiled."

Soon, says a source, Shelton began floating the idea of cutting back on work commitments so they could raise a family at their 1,200-acre Tishomingo, Oklahoma, ranch — a place Lambert once described as "where we'll be rockin' in a rockin' chair when we're 85." (They also own a residence in Nashville; see *box, page 44*.) Explains a source, "Blake's grown more mature and isn't

partying the same way." Another insider adds that the Country Music Association's reigning Male Vocalist of the Year has had his fill of fame. "He was ready to leave *The Voice*, come home and settle down," says the source. "He told Miranda that he would give that up for her to start a family."

But Lambert — eight years Shelton's junior — wasn't as eager to relinquish the life of a country music star. "Her career took off huge after they were married," a source says of Lambert, who has nabbed the Academy of Country

APRIL 2013

Rumors that Shelton cheated with Cady Groves plague them, but Lambert insists to *Us*, "We really love each other and have a real marriage."



FEBRUARY 2015

"He pulls me out of my darkness," Lambert (with Shelton at the Grammys) said in January.



MAY 2011

"It was a fairy tale, really, and I felt like I was in a movie," Lambert tells *Us* of her wedding at a ranch outside San Antonio.

FEBRUARY 2013

They double date with pals Kelly Clarkson and Brandon Blackstock (not pictured) in West Hollywood after the Grammys.



NOVEMBER 2014

They take home trophies for Male and Female Vocalist of the Year at the CMAs.



Music's Female Vocalist of the Year award every year since 2010. Between her successful music career and her Oklahoma-based businesses — she opened her Pink Pistol boutique in 2012, followed by the Ladysmith, an eight-room bed-and-breakfast — “she wasn't ready to settle down,” says the source. Echoes another insider, “She didn't want to stay home and be a wife and a mom yet, but Blake didn't want to be an old father.” The insider says that when they tied the knot, they each agreed that kids were in their five-year plan: “Miranda said she'd be ready by now, but she kept pushing it off. Blake had enough.”

▶ SHORT LEASH

Jealousy was another hot-button issue. Lambert is very familiar with her guy's off-the-charts charisma. Even though Shelton was still with wife Kaynette Williams when she met him at CMT's 100 Greatest Duets Concert in 2005, Lambert admits she fell hard. (“I knew he was married,” she has said of the moment. “I knew better, like, this is off-limits.”) And his well-earned rep as a ladies' man — he once joked of *Voice* costar Christina Aguilera's, er, assets, “They deserve their own chair,” and all but drooled over fellow guest Scarlett Johansson during a 2012 appearance on *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno* — did little to assuage her fears. She brushed off reports of his infidelity publicly (after



Lambert hugged Shelton after winning Song of the Year at the 2013 ACM Awards.

Divvying Up Properties and Pets

» While the divorce has been tough on the duo, dividing up the assets has “been very easy,” says a Lambert source. “Everything was spelled out in the prenup.” The conditions: Lambert received their Nashville residence, while Shelton will keep the 1,200-acre hunting lodge in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. Their pets, however, are their most precious possessions. The *Platinum* singer has reportedly moved her camel and llama off the ranch. Says the Lambert source, “She will keep the horses he bought her, and he will keep his own. And she will keep most of the dogs that were hers.”

one tabloid accused him of cheating with then-23-year-old up-and-coming musician Cady Groves, she tweeted, “Can’t wait to read if we make it or not”) but, sources say, privately the chatter gnawed at her. “She would question him at times and ask about certain girls,” says one source. “The rumors were hard for her to hear.”

To combat her insecurities, Lambert made it a point to log in to his Twitter account and read any direct messages. “I like to see who he is following,” she told *Us* in 2012. “They are all hot girls!” His cellphone was also an open book. “Either one of us can always look at each other’s phone, and we know each other’s passcode,” Lambert, the daughter of two private investigators, explained to *Redbook*. “I don’t have to snoop anymore. It just takes the question out of the marriage.” A source says she also enlisted pals to play detective: “She had spies everywhere. He was never left alone. She was jealous and so controlling of him.”

Of course, Lambert preferred to do the spying herself. Whenever possible, says a source, she would spend time on *The Voice*’s L.A. set — she even appeared as a guest mentor on his team in 2012. “She wanted to keep an eye on him,” says one source. Adds another, “She trusts him but knows how flirty he can be.”

But as the couple’s careers grew more successful,

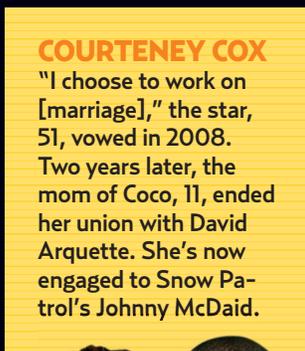
'DIVORCE IS NOT AN OPTION!'

Does that sentiment spell doom? Yes, for these stars and their exes



JENNIE GARTH

The mom of three, 43, dismissed talk in 2008: “I’m not interested in taking the easy way out.” By 2012, husband Peter Facinelli filed papers — and they each got engaged this spring.



COURTENEY COX

“I choose to work on [marriage],” the star, 51, vowed in 2008. Two years later, the mom of Coco, 11, ended her union with David Arquette. She’s now engaged to Snow Patrol’s Johnny McDaid.



EVA LONGORIA

The actress, 40 (now dating José Antonio Bastón), said she and Tony Parker had a running joke before they called it off in January 2011: “I will kill him before I divorce him.”



JENNIFER LOPEZ

In 2009, the singer, 46, said that divorce was “never an option” for her and Marc Anthony. Alas, the parents of Max and Emme, 7, split two years later. She rebounded with Beau “Casper” Smart.



it became harder for Lambert to play watchdog. For the past 13 months, she has been crisscrossing the country, supporting her Grammy-winning *Platinum* album, while Shelton is committed to filming *The Voice* in Los Angeles “seven to eight months out of the year,” says a Lambert insider. “The rest of the year he is touring, recording or working on endorsements and everything. They were apart a lot.” Indeed, in the past six months, the pair have only been photographed in public together twice: at the Grammys in February and the ACM Awards two months later. “Distance was a major factor,” admits the insider. “They were rarely together.”

▷ SINGING THE BLUES

Now the couple are struggling to cope with their split while remaining in the spotlight. A ringless Lambert cried while performing in Cheyenne, Wyoming, July 18. “Miranda is very heartbroken, sad and confused,” says a Lambert insider.

And while Shelton, wearing his ring, put on a good show during a July 19 Nascar appearance at the New Hampshire Motor Speedway, “he’s really broken up over this,” says a source of the *Voice* star, currently filming season 9. “Just devastated.” Still, a source close to the couple says his anguish could have one upside: “At least it will make for some incredible music.” **US**

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: REUTERS/LANDOV; CHRIS DELMAS/VISUAL PRESS; BARRY KING/WIREIMAGE.COM; ANG/FAME PICTURES; JOHNS HEARER/WIREIMAGE