

TO THOSE WHO WAIT

Two weeks ago, Ron, 25, and Jill, 26, whose families were friends and neighbors growing up, announced their marriage engagement. The couple started a whirlwind romance nine months ago when they bumped into each other in London. Each was studying abroad. Neither one told their families about their relationship in case things didn't work out. Jill's father was surprised at the announcement, but not unhappy. Jill's older sister, Val, however, has been sharp—even downright rude—to Ron ever since the declaration. Ron takes this opportunity to confront Val's inexplicable behavior. The scene takes place in Val's father's house.

VAL: *(Jumps at the sight of him.)* Oh! Geez, you scared me. I thought you two were out.

RON: I hoped you would emerge from your cocoon. It's a gorgeous day.

VAL: Law school is difficult, in case that needed any clarification, and it's not exactly easy living with one's father while doing it.

RON: So why don't you live in the dorms at Columbia?

VAL: Money. I'm trying to avoid sinking myself further into massive debt. Noise level. Besides, I like Astoria. It's about as quiet as New York gets.

RON: Can I make you some coffee?

VAL: No thanks. So how is the potential son-in-law enjoying his old stomping ground?

RON: Potential? A bit perplexed.

VAL: Perplexed? Hmm. Where's Boo Boo?

RON: She's up taking a shower. She cringes at that nickname.

VAL: I know. I've been her sister for many, many years now. She both hates and loves it. But it's an established formality. I don't like Yogi either, but to change it now would propose

that *we* had changed, grown up, and neither of us are ready for that yet.

RON: I understand that. We're meeting your dad at the Barolo tonight.

VAL: Barolo? Hmm. How nice.

RON: Want to come? Their porcini risotto is amazing. The best in Soho. I'll even go out on a limb, better than mine. And that aside, the view is magnificent.

VAL: What are you talking about? Barolo doesn't have a view.

RON: No, not a typical one, but it does have a garden. Models, artists, actors among the Japanese cherry trees.

VAL: Oh geez, give me a break, Ron. Talk about ruining your appetite. Jazz greats and *(Gestures to him.)* Jazz-great-want-to-be's as well.

RON: Yes, on occasion. Stunning characters. More spectacular viewing than a bunch of old skyscrapers anyway.

VAL: Right. You know, my father would rather walk over to Ditmars Avenue and eat at Lou's diner. Real characters there too. And much less pretentious.

RON: So are you coming?

VAL: I think not. For several reasons, but the main one being money.

RON: Oh, but I'm the one paying.

VAL: I don't think I'd feel comfortable about that.

RON: Why? We're practically family.

VAL: Not if I can help it.

RON: *(Stung by this.)* Oh. That hurts. I was feeling an icy sort of current coming at me since your sister and I announced things, but I didn't think it was so arctic. I certainly didn't think it was this exacting.

VAL: Well, forgive me for my less-than-welcoming attitude, Ronnie.

RON: Oh no! Please don't call me that. It makes me think of my chubby period.

VAL: You were always charming, even when chubby. And lots of fun too.

RON: I hear an elongated *but* coming.

VAL: You had such an imagination. And so talented. Girls loved you.

RON: You're confusing me. Is this the rotten jazz musician speech?

VAL: Yes. I'm not thrilled that you plan to leave my sister here in New York right after the wedding.

RON: Hey, I don't have any choice. This is a chance of a lifetime. Rodney Waters is asking me to play with him for the next eight months. Do you realize how big this is? His sax player is not going to take time off again. This is a chance I can't pass up.

VAL: Fine. So why aren't you taking her with you?

RON: She's eager to start her PR job. She wants to get an apartment and decorate. She really doesn't like traveling. She only said she liked London because she found me there.

VAL: I don't think it's a good idea to start your relationship away from each other. And the fact that you're willing to do it, makes me a little wary.

RON: Well she's willing to do it too.

VAL: Only because she needs to be close to home. She gets homesick. In fact, I bet that's the reason she fell for you so quickly in London. You were her only connection to home.

RON: I barely knew your kid sister when we were growing up. I think we exchanged two words. We moved away to Boston before she was even fifteen. She doesn't connect me to home, to Astoria.

VAL: We lived next door to each other for eight years.

RON: Anyway, Jill's an adult. She knows her mind.

VAL: She's a baby!

RON: She is old enough to tell the difference between a relationship built of pure loneliness and homesickness and one based on mutual love and respect.

VAL: (*Laughs.*) But how can you have mutual love for each other? You've only been dating nine months. You barely know each other. You practically said it yourself.

RON: I think you can know someone after three months, especially if you spend all day and every single night together—

VAL: (*Covering her ears.*) Ehhhhh. In the category of do not need to know.

RON: It'll almost be a year by the time we get married. I grant you it would be ideal if we could date longer, but I have to go to Paris.

VAL: So put off the wedding. Let her wait awhile. Till after you get back.

RON: We don't want to put it off. Why should we? I don't understand. Are you still sergeant Val? Telling me what to do?

VAL: Yes, actually. If necessary. Am I going to have to make you fall in line?

RON: Last time I did that, as I remember, you made me crack my head on the sidewalk.

VAL: It was an accident. Sort of. Look, I've always protected her and ever since Mom died, even more so.

RON: I don't understand. We were kind of like best friends, and now you think I'm such a bad choice.

VAL: I don't think you're bad, Ronnie, but I do think you are a bad *choice*.

RON: Bad choice? What's this about? Oh God, this isn't about a certain July night of adolescent fireworks?

VAL: Oh geez, don't act like that just crossed your mind just now? You always do that. You'd find out that some girl had fallen madly for you after a school concert and you'd act all miffed, as if you hadn't been aware of it the whole time.

RON: You had fallen madly for me?

VAL: I didn't say that.

RON: But it is about that night I kissed you?

VAL: No, you're wrong.

RON: It's not?

VAL: *I* kissed *you*, Moron. You were leaving. I was just going to miss you.

RON: I did think about you a lot after we moved to Boston.

VAL: I hope Jill's preoccupied. You're creeping me out now.
RON: What's creepy? I just wanted you to know that I thought of you.
VAL: Oh what kind words you have bestowed upon me, sir.
RON: I thought we'd be dead wrong for each other.
VAL: I agree totally. But why?
RON: Because you're impossible.
VAL: I am not!
RON: You need someone who will always make you feel really loved. You'd be miserable chasing me down, but we'd be doing that because, because you'd always be playing hard to get.
VAL: That doesn't make me impossible. That makes you impossible! *(Pause.)* I don't want to give you the opportunity to leave her.
RON: I would never leave her, but even if things didn't work out between us, she would handle it a lot better than I would. You know, she's lot stronger than you think. *(Beat.)* I love her, Val. I love everything about her. I love the way she bites her lip when she drives. I love when she bosses me about when I'm making omelets. I love the way she *chews* her pizza—all chompy-like. I really, truly love Jill.
VAL: I believe you, and I, of all people, know why she is loveable, but I just don't trust you Ron.
RON: Why? Because I said I'd write and call when we left for Boston?
VAL: Are you kidding me? No. Of course not. But I don't think you've changed from that insecure little boy who pretends that girls aren't looking at him. Always pretends he has no idea that he's attractive and desirable.
RON: Is it so bad to be humble? I would think that might be a good quality.
VAL: You're not really humble. You just pretend to be because you know it's charming. You thrive on attention. You *need* it. Constantly. Look at yourself, the month you're marrying my sister, you're leaving. For Paris! Ron Zarre will be

sexy, charming, and fun. He'll have women chasing after him. But a safe wife at home. And he'll love it. And one day, he won't resist. He'll forget the wife.
RON: What are you basing this on? You haven't seen me in nine years, Valerie. Nine years! I'm not that stupid little kid you bossed around or the hormonal fickle teen that kissed you once. I'm sorry that you have no one in your life. If you stopped being so hard and controlling, maybe some guy would be interested.
VAL: We're not talking about me!
RON: Exactly! This has nothing to do with you. Nothing! It's none of your business. I know you're jealous of Jill. You've always been. She's the baby of the family. Well, I'm sorry it was *her* and not you. Okay? I'm sorry!
VAL: Uhh! You are so totally full of yourself! It's unbelievable. I know I'm right now. It's not like you to resort to character insults.
RON: No matter what you do, I'm going to marry her.
VAL: No, you won't.
RON: I need some air. *(Ron starts to go.)*
VAL: My friend met you a couple of weeks ago.
RON: *(Stops.)* I'm sorry?
VAL: A friend of mine. Met you.
RON: Really? What was his name?
VAL: Elizabeth. She's quite striking. It must have been before Jill got back from London. She met you at a bar in the village. You played a set with some band there.
RON: I meet lots of people.
VAL: Elizabeth told me about meeting you right before you and Jill made your engagement announcement.
RON: *(Turns toward her.)* And what did she tell you?
VAL: Oh that you talked until three A.M. Then you invited her to some after-hours bar. Eventually you took her home. Acted like the perfect gentleman. You even gave her a nice kiss when you reached her door. Funny you never mentioned

Jill the whole time. You told her you'd call in the next couple of days. And, surprise, you didn't.

RON: Of course I didn't. Okay, I was a little tipsy. It was my first night back in New York. I was impressed with her. She knew a lot about jazz. I just, I got carried away. I didn't sleep with her for God's sake.

VAL: No, but I'm sure you thought about it. And I bet you never told Jill a thing.

RON: I'll tell her. Is that what you want? I'll just tell her. She'll understand. It's no big deal.

VAL: I think you're very talented, Ron. I think you'll go far. I'll even buy all of your records. But I don't think you should marry Jill. She wants to settle down. She wants a home and children. You want to play music all over the world and have fans. It just doesn't fit together. You *will* cheat on her. You can't help yourself. *(Beat.)* Don't just tell her about Elizabeth, break it off, Ron.

(Pause.)

RON: What? You think you can still call all the shots?

VAL: You think she won't fall apart by your leaving? When someone you love cheats on you, you can't help but hurt immensely. And if you think differently, you're wrong. I won't let you damage her. So are you going to tell her, or am I?

RON: *I'll* tell her about the mishap with Elizabeth, and also how you don't want me to marry her. And maybe I'll even tell her about *our* history. She'll think you're jealous. She'll probably end up hating you!

VAL: She might. If you really love her, Ron, like you say, wait until you come back. If it's true love, it can wait. What's a year or two? Maybe by that time, you'll be ready.

(Long pause.)

RON: I was looking forward to when I returned to New York after the tour . . . fantasizing about it. Coming home to Jill, my wife. She'd be making spaghetti and repainting one of

the walls in our fixer-upper. I need her, Val. I love her. And I am ready.

VAL: We'll see about that. *(She starts to leave.)*

RON: I'll talk to her too, Val. I'm as bullheaded and stubborn as you are. We love each other. I'll prove you wrong!