

I Remember It Well

Short fiction
by
Jim Freund

He: "We met at nine,"

She: "We met at eight."

He: "I was on time,"

She: "No, you were late."

He: ". . . Ah yes, I remember it well . . ."

From the lyric of
I Remember it Well
by Lerner & Loewe,
featured in the movie,
Gigi



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Ted Mann sat in front of the ancient Remington typewriter on his desk, sipping an iced tea, and frustrated over his inability to get in better touch with some fuzzy distant memories.

Yes, goddammit, I realize it was 45 years ago – but still, that book was my number one lifetime achievement. You would think I'd recall what was dancing around in my head back then! Granted, I may be 72 now, but my mind is operating like I'm 90-plus with oatmeal drooling down my chin in the dinette of some bleak assisted living facility

Other than his recollection problems, Ted Mann was (and liked to refer to himself as) a sprightly septuagenarian. Good-looking (but not movie star handsome) with a warm smile and full head of graying hair, he exercised with regularity and was in good health, though growing a bit portly.

Alone in his Manhattan apartment on a frosty late October day, Ted was struggling to pull together a first draft of his personal memoirs. What caused the latest outburst was his difficulty in recalling the 1974 circumstances that influenced his first – and, by all critical accounts, his best – novel, *Feet of Clay*.

He had written the novel while he was an assistant professor in the English department of a small women's college in Westchester. It had created a real stir upon publication. Subsequently Ted led a productive literary life, becoming reasonably well-known in knowledgeable book circles, but *Feet of Clay* had proved to be more praiseworthy than any of his multiple future efforts.

Now, with the milestone of his 75th birthday coming up shortly – and with the bad karma of his divorce from Alice two years ago largely dissipated – Ted had decided to write his memoirs. “I want to do it now while I’ve still got my writing chops,” he told his friends.

The first step was to dig out of a back closet the trusty old Remington typewriter on which he’d drafted all his works – no computer shortcuts for Ted. But now he yanked the half-typed page from the Remington, crushed it into a ball, tossed it into the nearby wastebasket, and stood up to pace around his office.

What passed for his office was the second bedroom of a two bedroom apartment on Manhattan’s Sutton Place to which he’d moved into after the divorce. It featured a side view of the East River and was decorated in adult bachelor style, not too well-appointed but with comfortable seating. The one visible motif featured his devotion to the New York Yankees, with various items of memorabilia displayed, including a plentiful supply of the team’s baseball caps that he often bestowed on visitors.

The makeshift office was chaotic, with books and papers strewn around – many on the carpet that he had to steer clear of as he paced the floor deep in thought.

After having begun the trip down memory lane on the Remington with some throwaway stuff about his early years, he had now come to the first meaningful milestone – his authorship of *Feet of Clay*. He envisioned the novel as a centerpiece of the memoir, and not just because it influenced all his later work. With the 45th anniversary of its 1975 publication coming up next year, Ted was hoping that favorable reviews of the memoir would rejuvenate interest in his novels – especially *Feet of Clay*, whose sales had been lagging over recent decades.

To put the significance of *Feet of Clay* into perspective, Ted knew he needed to recapture what was going on in his life in the mid-'70s that had influenced the story. It was this subject he mused on as he paced.

For instance, how did I choose the subject matter? . . . I can't remember Was the protagonist meant to be autobiographical? . . . I'm not sure Why did I have it end up downbeat, when I recall it starting out positive? . . . Hmmm So many questions, so little recall

He decided to start at the beginning. *I had an apartment in Manhattan, but those were the years when I was dividing my time between teaching English to the fetching young girls of Bainbridge College and banging out Feet of Clay on my Remington. . . . Which brings to mind my favorite student, Jill Carson, and our delightful affair during the whole last year of writing the book Ah, Jill – so naïve at 20, so hungry for knowledge, so bright and energetic, so delectable*

At this point, Ted broke off his memory-challenged train of thought, seated himself in a comfortable armchair, and traveled back to where it hadn't gone in many years – back to Jill Carson. *I remember the first day I spotted her in my class – in that second row seat off to the left – wearing the purple sweater that made her look like – well, like a well-endowed angel.*

A series of related images next came into Ted's mind – the day he asked Jill to stay in the classroom after the session ended “to discuss your latest essay”; their first “date” in a local pizzeria; some awkward initial groping in the front seat of his car; the barebones room in what was to become their favorite motel; the many ruses they employed to keep their affair from becoming known to the Bainbridge community

After a few moments of this, Ted's attention on Jill merged with the recall issue he was facing. *Hey, you dope, focus on Phoebe, the girl in the novel – was Jill the*

model for her? . . . I recall making some changes from an earlier draft, which probably occurred after meeting Jill . . . Did Jill play any role in the writing of the book? . . . Did I discuss with her what I was up to in the novel?

And then a few other thoughts: Did our affair help – or did it hinder, or have no influence on – my writing the book? . . . And incidentally, did our affair, or the novel, or both, have any effect on my teaching of her English class? . . . Oh, so many questions . . .

It was then that the proverbial light bulb flashed on over his head. Dummy! Here I am, needing assistance in getting answers to these questions – and Jill is the perfect person to help me fill in the blanks! She was there, she was involved in it all – and now that I think of it, she always did have an excellent memory.

So Ted decided to get in touch with Jill and ask her if she'd be willing to talk about those days. He hadn't seen or spoken to her for over four decades – since he left Bainbridge to accept the Associate Professor position he was offered in San Diego. Their only contact occurred several years ago, when he read in the obits that Jill's husband died. He sent her a perfunctory condolence note, to which he received a printed acknowledgment.

Ted knew that Jill lived in New York, and he had kept her address from the condolence exchange. So he wrote her a letter that began, "Long time, no see." He explained that he was working on his memoirs but was having trouble remembering information that related to his writing *Feet of Clay* while teaching at Bainbridge. He thought she could help him recall some matters that would offer insight into his mind at the time, and asked if she would be kind enough to provide that assistance.

* * *

As she flipped through the day's incoming mail arrayed on her coffee table, Jill Carson's eyes fixed on the one envelope that did not look commercial – a handwritten note with a return address identifying the sender as Ted Mann. She dropped the other envelopes back on the table and took Mann's missive over to the couch.

At 63, Jill Carson remained attractive and in good health, keeping her slim figure in shape with frequent exercise. She wore her auburn hair medium length, had replaced her glasses with contact lenses, and was a stylish-casual dresser.

Jill, who retained her maiden name of "Carson," had been married to Henry Stanton for three decades. Henry contracted a debilitating disease some years back, went steadily downhill over an extended period, and passed away three years earlier. Her resulting financial condition was uncomfortable – the only major asset they had owned being the three-bedroom East Side apartment in the mid-70's in which she continued to live.

Their only child was a son, Daryl, married and the father of two young boys, living in a suburb of Portland, Oregon. Framed pictures of Daryl and his family blanketed the tabletops in her apartment.

As Jill read Ted's letter, the reference to that distant year at Bainbridge induced a flood of memories and released some long dormant but still powerful feelings – things she had tried for decades not to think much about. The memories and feelings, however, were not concerned with Ted's novel, but rather with their affair – and in particular, how it ended.

That bastard! How could he have done that? He captured my undergraduate heart -- and then unceremoniously dumped me like I never even existed

The precise circumstances of their wrap-up came rushing back to her with a clarity belying the lengthy passage of time. During an academic recess, she had gone on a camping trip with some girlfriends. Upon her return to campus, she found an envelope that had been slid under her door, containing a note from Ted. Her memory of the words he had written remained near-photographic:

“Jill – No way to reach you on your camping trip. I got an offer of Associate Professorship at San Diego State College – very desirable but contingent on my arriving there immediately to take the place of a teacher badly injured in an auto accident. Sorry to have to leave so abruptly, but I can’t pass up this opportunity. Bainbridge will probably never forgive me for running out on them, but I hope you will. It’s been great fun. Cheerio. – Ted.”

The memory today of the shock she felt back then receiving that message – which she had mockingly dubbed the “Cheerio note” – caused her to experience what felt like heart palpitations. She poured herself a glass of water to calm down.

By the way, she reflected, it couldn’t have been that terrific a job since he came back to New York a few years later. But even if the job offer were so compelling that he had to accept it on the spot, he should have asked me to join him out there, which I would have done in a heartbeat. But no, he didn’t – and even though he tried half-heartedly to keep in touch for a while, nothing came of it. I soon learned why. A mutual friend told me he’d taken up with someone he met out there, who later became his wife! That bastard! . . .

As for his asking for help, Jill’s immediate reaction was to tell him to get lost. She wasn’t about to help him write about a time that had turned out so painfully for her. *He has some nerve trying to get me to reminisce about that year . . . Is he just thoughtless – or worse, heartless, once again delighting in acting cruelly toward me? . . .*

* * *

That afternoon, Jill and her best friend Sarah took their thrice-weekly workout in a Manhattan spa. Jill enjoyed the exercise, especially in the late fall and winter when it was a welcome respite from the chilly NYC weather that she'd never cared for. Sarah, a management consultant, was short, well-built, and in excellent physical shape.

When they finished on their bikes and were sitting in a lounge relaxing over a health drink, she decided to tell Sarah about the out-of-the-blue letter she had just received from Ted. Jill had shared her painful Bainbridge College story with Sarah many years ago, so Sarah understood perfectly when Jill railed against Ted's "gall" in asking her to help him "reconstruct his state of mind during our affair."

Jill completed her narrative and said, "Anyway, Sarah, I'm sure you agree that I should just tell Ted to get lost – I don't want to waste even ten minutes helping out that bum."

Sarah paused before replying to consider the situation. In their social circle, Sarah was known for having good judgment, and her views were often sought out.

"I can empathize with your outrage, Jill. And besides, it's not as if he came back to you hat in hand, apologizing for his rotten behavior before asking for your help. He's just treating it like there's nothing for him to be ashamed of."

"Isn't that awful? . . . I should have recognized what a bastard he was back then and not let myself get hurt so badly. But I was too young . . ."

Sarah took a sip of her beverage. "Still, there is a practical consideration you ought to focus on. Let's say you reject his request. Would I be correct in assuming that since he considers this such a significant year in his life, he's still going to write about it – even without your help?"

Jill didn't hesitate before replying. "Absolutely. The man is enmeshed in his personal memoir, and he has too much ego to allow me to stand in his way. And let's face it – his life hasn't exactly been a knockout, and this book was the highlight."

"Well then, if you don't get involved, he's simply going to write it his way. And that presents a risk to you. It's not just that he won't remember the details accurately; it's that he's likely to be dismissive of you and your significance – especially since he may well get ticked off at your refusal to help him out."

Jill stood up and stretched for a few moments. "I see what you're saying. He could distort history – even make it look like *I* was the one responsible for our break-up"

They continued to discuss the issue, and gradually Jill was forced to conclude that it would be wiser – albeit more painful – for her to make sure Ted set the record straight.

The next day Jill wrote back to Ted to say that she was willing to meet with him to discuss the Bainbridge period. They traded email addresses and agreed on a date to meet for lunch at her women's club, the Cosmopolitan Club.

* * *

He: "*We dined with friends,*"

She: "*We dined alone.*"

He: "*A tenor sang,*"

She: "*A baritone.*"

He: "*Ah yes, I remember it well*"

* * *

Ted, arriving a few minutes late, caught sight of Jill already seated at a table in the Cos club dining room. It was a large airy room with widely spaced tables occupied mostly by women.

My God, how little she seems to have aged. The way she looks, she could almost be sitting in that classroom in her purple sweater, taking copious notes of some of my pithier professional observations

Jill spotted Ted and sized him up as he approached her table.

Well, he's not decrepit, and he can still flash that smile – but he's a long ways from that dashing young assistant professor I knew

When Ted arrived at the table, Jill said hello in a reserved tone. She didn't rise from her chair, and no handshake or other physical contact took place between them.

As he sat down, Ted said "Good to see you again," which Jill acknowledged with a nod but no reply. After a brief awkward silence, Ted decided to pick up the menu. Jill took a sip of her iced tea and said, "They have an excellent Cobb Salad." He replied, "I think I'll have that." The 45th anniversary rendezvous of Ted and Jill had gotten off to a slow start.

After a while, like the cubes in her glass of tea, the ice slowly melted and they conducted a low-key conversation during the meal. A major topic of discussion was their respective families. Jill spoke about her son in Oregon, his wife Donna (an attorney with whom she got along quite well), and about how the two of them somehow managed – notwithstanding their demanding jobs – to find time to take good care of their energetic youngsters. Ted talked about his daughters – the older one Elizabeth, who lived in Washington D.C. with her husband Bob (a man, Ted

confessed, that he wasn't too crazy about) and a teenage boy and girl; and Ted's younger daughter, Amy, who was single and lived in New York City.

Ted decided not to mention the 1974 questions he wanted to explore with Jill, let alone discuss anything sensitive about their former relationship. He sensed that Jill was wary of him, and he hoped to use this luncheon to gain her confidence. For her part, Jill was content not to get into that subject until Ted raised it specifically.

Based, however, on a few remarks about other matters, Ted could tell he'd come to the right person to unearth some accurate memories of the period. For instance, when Ted praised the Cobb Salad as reminding him of the delicious one they'd eaten the day they dined in the city at Schraffts, Jill replied, "The good Cobb Salad I recall us eating was at Longchamps." Ted's recollection of having encountered brisk weather on "that Fall trip we took to Westhampton" provoked a two word response, "to Montauk." And when Ted made reference to "the striking purple ski parka you used to wear on the ski slopes," Jill's response was no more effusive: "You're probably referring to the green one . . ."

As they sipped their cappuccinos at meal's end, Ted said, "This has been very enjoyable. I want to reimburse you for the lunch."

"Don't even think of it," Jill replied.

"Well, thanks - much appreciated. Anyway, I can see how sharp your memory is of those years, so could we meet again to talk about some specific questions I have about that period?"

The lunch had been pleasant enough, Jill had to admit; and although his probe into the past might present more difficulties for her, she felt the need to

ensure they were accurately described in his memoir. So she agreed to the idea of a second meeting which they scheduled for the following week.

“Good,” said Ted. “If it’s all right with you, I’ll email you a list of the specific matters I’m interested in, so you can give them some thought before we get together again.”

Their parting was amicable but scarcely affectionate.

* * *

The next day Ted ate a seafood lunch with his daughter Amy at the Oyster Bar, Manhattan’s famed eatery in the bowels of Grand Central Station. In her 30’s, unmarried and resembling Ted in looks, Amy was the younger child of Ted’s marriage to Alice. She had managed to remain close to each of her parents following their divorce. There was an intuitive bent to her mind that Ted had always valued.

In the course of the meal, when Amy asked him how his memoir was progressing, Ted told her about having contacted Jill, their lunch yesterday, and the information he would be seeking from her. In response to Amy’s query of why he’d chosen Jill as his source, Ted disclosed their teacher-student affair during that period.

This was news to Amy – her father had never previously discussed with her anything about Jill and his Bainbridge days. She pressed him to tell her more, which he did, and then she said, “That sounds like it was pretty serious stuff. How did it end?”

“Oh, I got an academic offer I couldn’t turn down, and headed out to San Diego.”

“Just like that?”

“The offer was conditioned on my immediate arrival – they’d just lost my predecessor.”

“So you broke it off with Jill – rather suddenly, it seems.”

“I guess you could say that. But it was no big deal – there were no scenes or hysterics.”

Amy took a bite of her tuna tartar. “Dad, don’t you think that Jill may harbor resentment against you for leaving her so abruptly?”

Ted’s reply was prompt and reflexive. “Oh, no, I don’t think so And even if she was miffed about it back then, I’m sure she considers it water over the dam. It’s not going to get in the way now.”

* * *

He: *“That dazzling April moon,”*

She: *“There was none that night,
and the month was June.”*

He: *“That’s right, that’s right.”*

* * *

The second meeting between Ted and Jill took place a few days later on a Thursday afternoon in a comfortable sitting room of the Cosmopolitan Club. He had sent her some matters to ponder, to which he now turned.

“Several of these questions go to the issue of how much – if at all – our relationship influenced what went into the novel. Do you have any objection to my going into detail on that subject?”

“Go ahead – I’ll let you know if it’s something I don’t care to discuss.”

“Well, for instance, there’s the character of Phoebe in the novel – do you see elements of yourself in her?”

From the advance questions Ted emailed to her, Jill knew he would be asking about this and she had formulated her answer. “There are some elements in Phoebe’s makeup that, while they aren’t necessarily the way *I* see myself, may well relate to the way *you* saw me at the time.”

This led to a lengthy discussion regarding those Phoebe/Jill traits that might be considered mutual, of which there indeed were some. Then Ted asked, “Do you think our affair helped, hurt, or was neutral to the writing of the book?”

Jill was clearly of the view that their affair had a significant impact on the novel. As she held forth in detail on the subject, Ted realized – perhaps for the first time – how much Jill had affected the story. To be sure, she didn’t actually write any of it; but he was forced to recognize that he’d incorporated much of her thinking into the novel – particularly in fashioning the central character of Phoebe. Not that he’d given Jill any credit for this back then – *Feet of Clay* contained no acknowledgment of her role.

As in their prior lunch, Jill wasn’t bashful at all about correcting Ted on his numerous memory lapses – dazzling him by her accurate recall of so many details on which he was hazy. At one point, when their conversation happened to turn to a horse-drawn carriage ride they’d taken in Central Park, it brought to his mind a song they had both enjoyed back then, titled *I Remember It Well*. It was featured in the

1958 movie *Gigi*, which they'd seen together in a theatre that housed revivals. They bought the cast album and played it frequently.

In the song, the old roué (Maurice Chevalier in the movie) and his former inamorata (Hermione Gingold) while reminiscing over old times, have this exchange:

He: *"That carriage ride,"*

She: *"You walked me home."*

He: *"You lost a glove,"*

She: *"I lost a comb."*

He: . . . *"Ah yes, I remember it well . . ."*

Although Ted didn't mention his musical recollection to Jill, by sheer coincidence she was also reminded of lines from the same song when she and Ted differed over what the weather had been like on a certain day. Jill silently mouthed those lines to herself:

He: *"That brilliant sky,"*

She: *"We had some rain."*

He: *"Those Russian songs,"*

She: *"From sunny Spain."*

He: . . . *"Ah yes, I remember it well."*

* * *

The next day, Ted was having a drink at Bemelman's bar in the Carlyle Hotel with his younger friend Bruce. As they were about to take the first sip, Ted presented a New York Yankees baseball cap to Bruce as a token of their camaraderie. They each donned hats, clicked glasses, and took two generous swigs.

The conversation turned to Ted's memoir, in the course of which he mentioned contacting Jill to prop up his fading memory, after having supplied Bruce with some details about their former time together.

"Anyway, in this second session with Jill, I got everything about the novel from her that I needed – her recall was amazing."

Bruce sipped his margarita. "Does that mean you won't see her again for another 45 years?" – which generated a laugh from both of them.

"I sure hope that's not the case. Look, I think you know my post-divorce taste in women. It's for the youngish kind, some so young they call to mind what I liked about Jill 45 years ago. But here's what I just discovered. The real Jill – a few years older, sure, but still engaging and well-preserved – reminds me of that long ago Jill more than any of the women I've met since!"

"Uh, uh – I think I see what's coming . . ."

"I can't deny it – I'd really like to rekindle our relationship. It was great then, and my bet is – assuming I can rise to the challenge – that it would be almost as good now."

"That sounds serious . . ."

"No, no – not if you're thinking about love and marriage and all that stuff. That's no part of my future with Jill, or for that matter – considering the agony of those final five years with Alice and the distress of the divorce – with anyone else. I just want to reconstruct a little sweetness from the distant past . . ."

* * *

After another strenuous session on their exercise bikes at the spa the next day, Jill and Sarah resumed their prior conversation about Ted, his project, and the two meetings Jill had held with him.

“So, Jill,” said Sarah, “Have you forgiven Ted for what he did to you back then?”

“Not a bit – especially since there’s no sign of contrition or apology coming from him. As far as I can tell, that was just a “Cheerio note” moment from his vantage point. I admit that he’s superficially charming, but I still think he’s a son of a bitch.”

“Attagirl! You’re no longer the child who was swept away by those charms.”

“Right But my antennae have picked up something of interest . . .”

“What’s that?”

“Unless I’ve lost the ability to assess such things, I think that Ted is hot for me – even at my 65 years of age. I can almost predict that I’m going to get a call from him in a day or so, suggesting we have a candlelight dinner somewhere – nothing to do with discussing his memoir”

Sarah grinned. “I trust your antennae. You’d better nip this in the bud before you have to fight off a dose of septuagenarian harassment.”

A sly smile came over Jill’s face. “Actually, Sarah, I intend to do just the opposite. I’m going to encourage him, maybe even flirt a little – and then, when his passions are running high . . .”

“I got it! You’ll leave him high and dry – a case of unrequited lust!

“Amen! It’ll be a small measure of revenge for what he did to me at Bainbridge.”

* * *

Sure enough, Ted called Jill the next day and suggested dinner for two at his favorite intimate Italian trattoria in Greenwich Village.

“Sounds good,” she said. “I hope they have some of my favorite Super Tuscan vintage”

The restaurant did, and the tangy red wine enhanced the allure of the flickering table candle. Jill wore a fetching outfit of snug-fitting blue slacks and a gold-colored shirt that featured an ample v-neck, while the look in her eye and tilt of her head were designed to encourage Ted.

He drank all this in and was loving it – Jill was sweeping him off his feet. He had anticipated that his path to sexual congress might take several weeks, but it now seemed much closer at hand. While he still had no vision of them joined at the hip, he foresaw a wonderful sex-driven relationship that would perfectly suit his current lifestyle.

As the evening progressed, the wine began to get to Jill, causing her intentions to become a bit blurry. She found herself entertaining a variety of tipsy thoughts that pointed in a different direction than her chosen strategy: how charming Ted was; how empty her romantic life had become during Henry’s illness and worse since his death; how she had the same sexual needs as men do; and – perhaps most tantalizing of all – how curious she was whether Ted still retained the sexual prowess that so appealed to her at 20.

They finished the dinner and hailed a taxi. The scene in the back seat might be described as smoldering-at-a-distance. The cab let them off in front of her apartment building.

Ted pulled her close and kissed her gently on the lips. Then – transported back 45 years and focusing on her gold-colored shirt – he murmured aloud a line from their favorite song, *I Remember it Well*: “You wore a gown of gold” Jill picked right up on this, saluting her slacks with the responsive word from the lyric, “*I was all in blue.*” At that point, paying homage to how often he’d used the song’s next line to advance their coupling, Ted uttered the plaint of the aging roué, “*Am I getting old?*” Jill, instantly recalling what he wanted to hear, folded her arms around his neck and replied with the magic words sung by his long ago mistress:

*“Oh no, not you.
How strong you were,
How young and gay,
A prince of love
In every way.”*

To which Ted replied, in the increasingly excited tones that spurred on the aging roué, “*AH, YES, I REMEMBER IT WELL!*”

Without further delay, they took the elevator up to her apartment and promptly consummated the 45th anniversary of their 1974 affair.

* * *

After Jill had fallen into a deep slumber, Ted left the apartment quietly without waking her, returning to his apartment to sleep. He awoke the next day feeling terrific.

Man, that was really something! Jill hasn't lost a step from where she was 45 years ago. This is the lady for me Not, of course, in terms of a serious kind of engagement, he was quick to remind himself, but perfect for a cozy Italian bistro on a chilly Friday night

He realized also that it wasn't just a matter of her physical attraction. In their several sessions discussing the memoir, Jill's intelligence was shown by her superb memory and remarkable insight into what he had been trying to accomplish in *Feet of Clay*. Moreover, he finally began to remember how helpful with the book she'd been back at Bainbridge. *I really should have acknowledged her somewhere in the preface. . . . Well, too late for that now, unless there's a reprint – but I can certainly give her credit in my memoir.*

As for his daughter Amy's concern that Jill might still resent his dropping her in 1974, it simply didn't occur to him. On this first morning of their sexual rebirth, he had no thought of apologizing for his past conduct.

* * *

The morning after Ted's late night visit to her bedroom, Jill worked out at the spa with Sarah, following which they resumed talking about Ted.

"I'm dying to hear," said Sarah. "How did things work out with him? Did you accomplish your mini-revenge?"

Jill momentarily pondered whether to relate the full story. Even though Sarah's good judgment and discretion were unchallenged, it was still embarrassing for Jill to confess her impromptu change of plan But she did feel the need to talk about it.

“Well,” said Jill, “it started out just as I’d planned – tantalizing the guy before cutting him off at the pass.”

“Yes, yes . . . and then . . .”

“And then, a funny thing happened on the way to my mini-revenge . . .”

“Oh, no!”

“Oh, yes . . . I haven’t really figured out why I succumbed, but it was probably a combination of Ted resurrecting his Bainbridge charm, of my lack of men in recent years, of a lot of wine – and finally of him coming up with those lines from *Gigi* . . .”

“Lines from *Gigi*? What’s that about?”

“Oh, nothing to speak of . . .”

Sarah gave Jill a mock-parental swivel of the head and asked, “Okay, kid, so what happens now?”

Jill took a sip of her diet drink. “Look, Sarah, I haven’t forgotten how badly he treated me back then – I’ll never forgive him for that.”

“And he still hasn’t acknowledged it or apologized, right?”

“That’s true . . .” Jill stood up to towel off before continuing. “I have to say, though, that the issue of him abandoning me hasn’t come up even once in our time together this month. Neither of us has thought to raise it. So, in fairness, I must admit that his failure to apologize this time around isn’t quite so blatant . . .”

“Sounds to me like you’ve been doing a little rationalizing . . .”

“Maybe so”

“Listen, I can understand why *he* wouldn’t bring it up – either he doesn’t acknowledge it at all, or if he does, it’s simply not a prime topic for him to raise at a time that romance is in the air. But why have *you* never brought it up?”

Jill pulled on her sweatshirt before replying. “That’s a good question. I’m not really sure, but it might be because I’m afraid it would terminate our current detente. I enjoyed the evening and frankly am looking forward to seeing him again. So I’m not going to bring up the past right now – let’s just see how it goes.”

* * *

As a matter of fact, it went pretty well. Ted and Jill got together once or twice a week, took in some interesting New York events, visited a few public spaces, ate and drank well, and usually ended up spending the night together in one of their beds. Jill stayed away from discussing how their 45-years-ago affair ended, and the need for Ted to apologize was never voiced.

Meanwhile, Jill turned her attention to a pressing matter – her increasingly precarious financial position. Other than the co-op apartment she lived in, Jill had very few other assets or sources of income. Most of Henry’s modest wealth had been consumed by medical and related expenses during his long illness. Nothing of real value was unearthed in his Will.

She felt a strong need to become more financially secure. This feeling was perhaps stirred in part by her new relations with Ted, which she was loath to see drift in the direction of her requiring his financial support. She could look for a well-paying job but didn’t consider it a likely prospect. Most of her activities in former

years had been volunteering for medical and educational charities, and her current age and longtime absence from the workforce also worked against her.

So she decided to put her co-op apartment up for sale. If she could get a decent price and live simply thereafter – perhaps renting much smaller quarters – the proceeds would support her during the years ahead.

The day after contacting her real estate broker, Jill mentioned having done so to Ted, citing her need to raise cash. A warning signal flashed in Ted’s brain. “I understand your rationale,” he said. “But where will you live after the sale goes through?”

“Truth be told, I haven’t really given that much thought. I’ll probably rent something, maybe in Greenwich Village. Heck, I’ll be financially free of New York then, so I could even decide to take a place outside the city, maybe in the suburbs. Anyway, I’ll worry about that after I see how the sale goes.”

This didn’t sound to Ted like a cogent response. A suspicious bachelor, he promptly jumped to the conclusion that Jill was setting things up to move in with him. But as much as he enjoyed their new relationship, he didn’t like that idea. *No matter what she says, the risk is she’ll take it as a sign that I’m ready to make a long-term commitment, something I’m unwilling to do. Plus which, I’d have to give up my home office in the second bedroom*

* * *

Over Thanksgiving, Ted and Jill each took separate trips to visit their children. Ted went to Washington D.C. where his older daughter Elizabeth worked for the government while raising two teenagers. He stayed in a hotel near their apartment; he didn’t mind this since he’d never liked Elizabeth’s husband Bob. The teenagers were closer to Bob’s family in D.C. than to Ted, who sensed they were just

going through the motions with him. The subject of Jill didn't come up – not surprising since Elizabeth never forgave Ted for divorcing her mother and was totally uninterested in his love life.

Jill visited her son Daryl in Oregon. She liked Daryl's wife, Donna, and loved their children, two boys under ten. The kids were a handful to the working parents, but everyone seemed happy. The family occupied a comfortable house with a guest bedroom she used while there, and the weather was more agreeable than in Manhattan. Jill thoroughly enjoyed her time with them – she just wished they all lived in New York.

* * *

Back in town, Ted and Jill resumed dating for several more weeks. There was genuine buyer interest being expressed in Jill's apartment, but no offers had yet been made.

While they continued to enjoy each other's company, it still gnawed at Jill that Ted had never apologized for what he did to her 45 years earlier. He seemed completely oblivious to how he'd hurt her. She fretted over whether to bring up the subject.

Her ambivalence reflected a combination of not knowing how Ted would react but also how she would then respond. He might, for instance, deny all responsibility and refuse to apologize. Would she then be forced to break off the current relationship? Or he might pretend that he had no idea she was so upset and then offer one of those ersatz apologies that politicians often use – "If anything I did, however unwittingly, happened to hurt you, I'm sorry about that." What would she do then?

He might, she realized, even sincerely acknowledge his fault and offer a real apology, in which case she would likely stay in the relationship. *Well, at least he seems to be in good health – I wouldn't want to reprise those years of ministering to my dear Henry.* But even that carried the risk of her being hurt once more should he ultimately refuse to advance to the next level of commitment.

Having failed to resolve any of these issues, she allowed the seeming injustice of it all to build up in her mind; and the day finally came when she couldn't hold it in any longer. They were together in her apartment where earlier that evening she'd cooked dinner, while Ted had polished off a bottle of wine. Although things had gone pretty well, her reaction was triggered toward the end when Ted began waxing eloquently on the rapture of their Bainbridge affair.

It erupted as Ted donned his overcoat to leave and was standing near her at the door – a totally unexpected outburst which she hadn't rehearsed or considered its potential implications.

“Listen Ted, it was good while it lasted, as you say – but what you did to me 45 years ago, especially the cold way you ended it, was terrible and completely indefensible. After all these years, I still can't get it out of my mind. And as each day goes by now, you're multiplying the hurt by failing to acknowledge what you did and refusing to apologize for it.”

These serious accusations came at Ted with no prior warning, caught him by surprise, and forced him into a quick reaction. In one sense, he wasn't completely startled, since he'd always known that Jill was displeased with his abrupt exit from Bainbridge. But since she had never raised the topic over the past two months, he'd been telling himself that it was no longer an issue with her. Now he could see that it most definitely was.

He briefly considered saying that he never realized she'd been so hurt by his departure, or that she still harbored those feelings from so long ago, and he was sorry about that. But he'd been rationalizing his conduct for so long that he felt an apology would constitute an admission of having done something wrong, which he didn't want to admit. So instead he became very defensive on the subject.

At first, he tried to shame her out of it. "I can't believe you're bringing this up now out of the blue – 45 years after the event, and months after we started seeing each other again." But Jill's hostile look showed that it did remain a big deal to her. So Ted switched to rebutting her accusation.

"Hey, Jill, I needed that San Diego job. You were a beautiful kid, we had a lovely affair, and you still had your whole life ahead of you. I was sure you would understand . . ."

This comment only raised the heat of their encounter. Ted – who remained poised at the door with his overcoat on – then tried out another tack: "You could have come out to San Diego with me." To her reply that he'd never asked her, Ted considered exaggerating some indirect hints he might have made, but ended up with "I didn't want to be accused of robbing the cradle, or of depriving you of your education."

They argued for several minutes over their competing versions of what had happened so many years ago. At one point, frustrated by what he considered her obstinence, Ted unwisely tried to downplay their affair – "We were just fooling around – it didn't mean anything." This provoked tears from Jill, to which Ted's immediate reaction was to pull a handkerchief out of his pocket and proffer it to her.

Ted finally awoke to the realization that this wasn't going to go away, and he began to worry about how it would affect their future. He wanted to end the argument, though presumably still unresolved, but with their current relationship

intact and moving forward. It wasn't easy, however, for him to come up with the best formula for this while in the midst of the dispute.

So, rather than simply apologize, he blurted out something that was both unrehearsed and quite uncharacteristic of him.

"Jill, I gotta go. Look, let's forget the past and concentrate on the present. I'm really enjoying our relationship, and I thought you were too. And just to show how serious I am, I want you to move in with me when this place is sold Think about it, and let me know."

And before she could reply, he reached for the knob, opened the front door, and left her apartment.

* * *

For several weeks after that evening, Ted and Jill didn't speak or otherwise communicate. During this period, though, Jill received a good offer for her apartment and went into contract with the buyer, scheduling the closing for shortly after year-end.

Although Jill was still bothered by not having received an apology from Ted, his unexpected invitation for her to move in with him did complicate her feelings. Reaching out for advice on how to proceed, she invited Sarah to her apartment for lunch, where they munched on sandwiches laid out on the kitchen table.

After Jill briefed her on the situation – including all the details about her blow-up at Ted and his move-in offer – Sarah swung into action. First she probed the two-week period since the fracas between them. "Is that right, Jill – the two of you haven't spoken or otherwise communicated since that night?"

“That’s right – not a word from either of us.”

“And the reason you haven’t contacted him is –“

“Because now, since he can’t possibly have any doubt about my feelings, the man should contact me to apologize for what he did.”

“And you’re annoyed that he hasn’t gotten in touch?”

“Yes, I am. If he really cared about me, he would have called.”

After a good deal more back and forth, Sarah pursed her lips – an unmistakable sign of the negative advice about to be spoken – and gave her analysis of the situation.

“Look, Jill, this man committed what might be called a *sin of commission* 45 years ago by dumping you unceremoniously. Now today, 45 years later, he’s committing what I’d term a *sin of omission* by not owning up to what he did – especially since you’ve just told him the hurt you experienced back then and still feel today. Neither of those sins can be dismissed out of hand.

“He’s obviously trying to soften you up by the invite to move in. But if I were you, I’d take that with a grain of salt. If you do move in, he will again be in a position to hurt you – to commit a new *sin of commission*. You know the drill – I can just hear him saying one day next year, ‘Okay, Jill, that’s enough cohabitation. Please pack your bags and find a rental . . .’ See what I mean?”

Jill shook her head in affirmation. “I do see, and I have to think about it.”

Sarah took a bite of her egg salad sandwich, washed it down with cranberry juice, and said, “You know, it might be different if Ted could feel a little pain himself

about the possibility of losing you – something that makes him finally awake to what you went through back then. But with this guy, I don't know how that's going to happen”

* * *

Sarah's analysis of Ted's "sins" hit home with Jill. She found herself fearing that deep down Ted probably hadn't changed at all – that underneath the pleasantries, he was still the same thoughtless guy from 45 years ago. So a plan now hatched in Jill's mind, primarily designed to protect her from being hurt by this man once again.

Jill had greatly enjoyed her Thanksgiving weekend in Oregon with Daryl and his family. It left her thinking how much richer her life would be if she could spend more time with them. *What a joy it would be if they were to move to New York* But she realized this was unlikely to happen – they were firmly situated in Oregon, both because it was a pleasant place to live and bring up kids, and also as the location of both Daryl's and Donna's jobs, which they found very fulfilling.

So if the mountain couldn't come to Mohammed . . . – how about Jill moving to Oregon? She loved her son, got along well with her daughter-in-law, was crazy about the two boys. It didn't have to be forever – sure, she would miss New York and friends like Sarah – but she felt this was an ideal time to give it a try. Having gone to contract on her apartment, she no longer would have a place to live or any major financial tie to the city. She was about to be comfortably in funds from the sale to make the cross-country move. Most significantly, she was positive that Daryl and Donna would welcome her help in looking after the kids – a grandmotherly service it would be her joy to perform.

When Jill called Daryl with her idea, he responded enthusiastically. It turned out that he and Donna had recently talked about that possibility – first when they

heard Jill was selling the New York apartment, and then again when she proved to be such a hit with their boys over Thanksgiving. He assured her that the whole family would welcome her to Oregon with open arms. She could stay in the extra room in their house indefinitely if she wished, or at least while she was looking for a place of her own.

It was a big step for her to take, but in terms of the situation with Ted, Jill felt it was the right defensive course for her to pursue. How about in terms of *offense*? Well, although she was loath to admit it, perhaps she had also been influenced by Sarah's final musing – doing something to make Ted feel a little pain himself, to make him realize what she had gone through 45 years ago.

A few days later, Jill chose the hour that she knew Ted habitually rode his bike in Central Park to notify him of her decision. Her email was designed to match the tone of his 1974 Cheerio note:

“Ted – unable to reach you out bicycling. My family in Oregon have begged me to join them as soon as possible to help with the kids. Sorry to have to leave so abruptly, but I can't pass up this opportunity. My New York friends will probably never forgive me for running out on them, but I hope you will. It's been great fun. Cheerio – Jill.”

* * *

The day after receiving Jill's bombshell email Ted was having lunch with his daughter Amy, once again at the Oyster Bar under its lustrous multi-paneled ceiling.

Ted had been startled at the news of Jill's sudden departure from New York and perturbed by the sarcastic tone of her email, although cognizant of its Bainbridge antecedent. With his mood now alternating hourly between anger and

dejection, he decided not to risk a response to her until he'd managed to sort out his own emotional state.

Feeling the need to discuss the situation with someone, Ted had pondered whether Amy was the right person. Although he'd never before brought up with her his romantic doings, he soon decided she could be helpful. Amy was intelligent, had good insights into personal matters, and knew her father pretty well – with no blinders on. For a brief period three years ago he'd been worried how she would react to her parents' divorce, but all indications were that she had accepted it in stride – unlike Ted's other daughter, Elizabeth, who had never forgiven him.

After they finished crabmeat appetizers, he said, "Amy, I'd like to talk to you about Jill Carson, if that's okay with you."

"Fine. Tell me what's been going on."

"I recall when I first told you a few months ago – actually, in this very restaurant – about my reaching out to Jill, you made a comment that has proved to be right on the mark."

Amy blinked. "Remind me what I said, Dad – I sometime have short term memory loss."

"You asked me whether I thought she might harbor some resentment for my having broken off our affair abruptly 45 years ago. I replied – rather dismissively, as I recollect – that I didn't think so. Then I went on to predict that even if it might have been a problem back at the time, it wouldn't get in the way nowadays."

"Oh, yes – now I remember. So, what has happened?"

“Well, our first meetings started out great in terms of her recollecting usable stuff for my memoir. She has a superb memory – much better than mine – and was a tremendous help. Then, after a while, it drifted into what might be considered a romantic liaison between us The fact is, I really like her.”

Ted paused, took a deep breath, and continued in a more melancholy vein. “But then one day, out of nowhere, she confronted me angrily, complaining about what a terrible thing I did to her in 1974, and how her pain continues to grow every day that I refuse to apologize I must say, she expressed this with a lot of vehemence.”

Amy reached across the table to stroke her father’s hand. “That must have been tough for you. What did you say in response?”

“I tried to downplay any callousness on my part, which only led to more back and forth – and then, unwisely I’m sure, I took a shot at downplaying our affair itself, which led to her tears –“

“At which point –“

“– At which point, I offered her a handkerchief.”

Amy shook her head in mock dismay at her father’s neanderthal technique for dealing with emotions. Ted’s wan smile acknowledged the silent rebuke he was receiving from his daughter.

Amy now asked him what led up to Jill’s explosion. Ted told her about what had been going on between the two of them during the previous weeks. Amy didn’t wince at his revelations of romance and intimacy.

When he finished, she said, “So Dad, have you spoken to her since that night?”

“No.”

“I can understand why she wouldn’t call you. But why haven’t you called her?”

“Partly because I wasn’t ready to apologize. And partly for another reason”

“What’s that?”

“I left one thing out about what went on that night. Jill had recently put her apartment on the market because of her need for cash. After all the invective back and forth, I invited her to move in with me once her apartment was sold So, another reason I didn’t call her was because I thought she should call me about my offer.”

Amy’s eyes widened at this revelation – it didn’t sound like the father she thought she knew so well. The expression on her face gave her away.

“I know, I know,” Ted said – “you can’t picture me doing something like that. But I was concerned that her anger and my refusal to apologize would ruin our future. I wanted her to concentrate on the present. Asking her to move in with me seemed the best way to accomplish that She should have called me!”

“How did she reply when you issued the invite that night?”

“I didn’t give her a chance – I made the offer, told her to think about it, and left her apartment. As I said, we haven’t spoken since then.”

Amy took a bite of her scallops and a sip of pinot gris before speaking.

“Dad, let me ask you something. Putting aside what happened 45 years ago, its current revival, and everything else in your life, how do you feel about Jill?”

For the first time, Ted faced up to the crucial question that Amy had adroitly posed. It wasn't just the history with Jill and her insistence on an apology that had blurred his thinking. There was also the messy residue from his marriage to Alice that had rendered him overly cautious about again making a serious commitment that could turn out unfavorably.

All of that, Ted realized with alacrity, didn't matter any more. “I'm crazy about her, I already miss her, and I want her back.”

Amy took another sip of wine. After a pause, when she didn't reply, Ted asked, “Well, Amy, what do you think?”

Amy cleared her throat. “The way I see it, the crux of this dispute between the two of you revolves around memory. She's saying, in effect, that her memory is clear about you behaving badly; you're insisting that you don't remember doing anything wrong.

“Dad, you've just finished telling me how Jill remembers the little details of the old days much better than you. To you it's all hazy. Doesn't it follow that her memory about your behavior, which seems so important to her, might be stronger than yours?”

Ted started to reply but Amy signaled him to let her finish.

“On the other hand, consider *your* memory of what went on? I'm no psychologist, but my feeling is that for all these years you've managed to block out the way you broke up with Jill when you left Bainbridge. I simply can't believe you were so callow and thoughtless that it never occurred to you how your leaving

abruptly would affect her. Come on! . . . Of course it occurred to you – but you just valued your new job more and didn't want to let anything stand in its way."

Ted reflected on this for a moment. "Well," he ventured, "as a matter of fact –"

Amy interrupted him. "And now you're trying to justify your action by claiming you don't remember. You don't want to chastise yourself – to have to wail, 'Oh my God, what have I done!' . . . So you deny, deny, deny."

Ted snorted. "Okay, okay, I get what you're saying, and I'll think about it But Amy, tell me please – if you're right, what should I do?"

Amy didn't hesitate. "You need to communicate two things to Jill. One of them is something that passes for an apology. If you can't do it full bore, well, you know the way that politicians do it – that 'on reflection, I realize I wasn't sensitive enough back then to your feelings, and I sincerely apologize for that.' . . . Savvy?"

"I get it. And what's the second thing?"

"Tell her that you miss her terribly and want her back."

Amy finished her glass of pinot gris. "And if that doesn't work, Dad, I've got one more recommendation"

Ted shook his head. "No, don't tell me now. If I do decide to go ahead with what you suggested, let's first see how it works out"

* * *

It didn't take long for Ted to realize the wisdom of Amy's advice. The next day he sent this email to Jill:

“It has taken me up to now to finally realize how much you must have been hurt when I left you at Bainbridge – and especially the cold way I informed you about it in writing – because now that’s exactly the way I feel about your leaving me. Only this time it’s *your* goodbye note and *you* heading out to the west coast, with me remaining stuck alone back east.

“Just like the old guy in our favorite song, I thought I remembered it well – but, like him, I was way off the mark. I feel terrible about what I did to you back then, for which I deeply apologize.

“Most of all, I miss you so much and long to have you back. New York is empty to me without you. I’ve even cleaned out a closet for your clothes”

* * *

Jill was already in Oregon when she received Ted’s email. She was staying temporarily with Daryl and his family before starting a search for more permanent quarters. She had brought holiday gifts for the kids – including a book about Babe Ruth and two of the New York Yankees caps Ted had once given her. Within hours, she was an integral part of the family.

Jill now faced the question of how to reply to Ted’s email, or whether to reply at all. She felt confused and needed to talk things out with someone who could be helpful. Sarah would have been the logical choice, but Jill didn’t like the idea of doing this over the phone. Daryl’s wife Donna – a smart lawyer whose good judgment had long impressed Jill – was at hand; and after thinking it over, Jill decided to approach her.

So the next evening, when Daryl was away at a business dinner, Jill sought out her daughter-in-law in the kitchen. “Donna, I’d appreciate it if you would help me figure out something important.”

Donna didn’t hesitate to reply. “I’d be delighted to, and I’m flattered that you would ask me. Let’s sit at the table.”

Jill described in detail her whole history with Ted – from 45 years ago at Bainbridge through their recent doings in New York. She mentioned Sarah’s advice, and concluded with the email she’d received from him yesterday. Donna listened attentively, holding most of her questions and comments until she’d heard the whole story.

When Jill finished, Donna went directly to the heart of the matter (almost as if she had discussed the situation with Amy, whom she didn’t know).

“To give me a framework here, if you were to put aside the whole Bainbridge affair and think only about today, may I ask you what your feelings are toward Ted?”

Jill didn’t hesitate in replying. “I like him very much, I value his company, I enjoy our intimacy – the works.”

“Would you move in with him, as he offered – without any commitment about the future?”

Jill paused briefly to consider the implications of the question before providing an answer. “Well, Donna, I like it out here fine, but I already miss New York and all my friends there, plus the theatre, the museums And with the apartment being sold, I’ll have enough money to hop on a plane to come spend more time with you guys any time you’re amenable. So if I could get over what happened at Bainbridge, yes, I would move in with him.”

Donna took a sip of her coffee. "Okay, let's talk about the Bainbridge affair. You just received a terrific email from Ted that you shared with me – isn't that enough? It seems to me he went even further emotionally than simply apologizing – he admitted he was feeling the same pain from your leaving New York (and learning about it in a similar way) that you must have felt when he took his leave with a callous note."

Jill nodded. "You're making a good point, Donna, but here's my problem. His words sound fine, I'll admit, but I still worry about what kind of guy would do such a thing in the first place. I'm concerned that if he did it once, he might do it again – and I'd have to go through the same agony once more."

Donna stood up to stretch for a moment before seating herself and resuming the talk. "Jill, let me come at this in a different way. Let's talk about the subject of memory, which can be very complex."

"I'm listening."

"Even through we're dealing here with something that happened 45 years ago, the harshness of your memory about what Ted did to you is what's making you fearful. Now, I know you consider your memory to be quite good, as I'm sure it is – but just to test it, let me ask a few questions about something that happened such a long time ago."

"Okay – shoot."

"Number one, you've painted the break-up as a brutal and sudden act on Ted's part. Now don't get me wrong – I'm not suggesting that breaking up via a note slipped under the door isn't thoughtless – although the fact is that you were in the woods at the time, and there were no cellphones back then. But my question is this: Is it just possible that his departure didn't come as such a complete surprise to you?"

Weren't you aware that he had applied to the San Diego college and was waiting for a reply?"

Jill pondered that briefly before responding. "I guess I might have known about that, in a casual sort of way."

"But then didn't you realize that if he received an offer, he'd probably take it – and that this would result in separating the two of you?"

Jill paused once again to perfect. "If I knew, I must have put it out of my head – just not wanting to think about the possibility."

"That sounds about right. Here's another question: Are you sure that the affair was as all-consuming for Ted as it seems to have been for you? After all, the teacher was years older than the student and presumably more experienced."

"I've never considered that."

"Well, he was living in the city, commuting to Bainbridge, and you've told me you didn't see him every night. Is it possible that he was also dating other women at the same time – maybe a few who lived in New York unconnected to the college?"

"Hmm, I guess that might have gone through my mind at the time . . ."

"I'll put it a different way. Might you, the schoolgirl, have been more infatuated with him, the professor, then he was with you?"

Jill was silent.

Donna continued. "Or here's an even tougher question. Might you *not* really have been quite so infatuated with him *until* he said he was leaving – and then,

because you considered that such a betrayal, you inflated the ardor that had existed between the two of you”

“Well, I don’t know about that”

“And Jill, how about this – is it possible Ted did suggest that you think about joining him in San Diego, but you just weren’t listening”

“ . . . I guess that’s possible”

“And if he did, would you have picked up and gone without finishing the term and ultimately getting your degree?”

“Hmmm . . . I’m not sure”

Donna arose to pour them some coffee. Jill sat there, focused on the possible imprecision of what she’d always considered her infallible recall. This made her think about the song from *Gigi* that satirized just such memory lapses. And this, in turn, led her inexorably to the lesson of its lyrics – that even after the man’s inability to recall events precisely is displayed over and over, the woman can still push all that to one side and remember him as a “Prince of Love”

“What I’m getting at,” said Donna when she returned, “is that what happened back then might not have been nearly as brutal on his part as your memory makes it. And if he wasn’t so bad back then, then he may be worth trusting today”

* * *

With each passing hour, Ted became more disappointed that his email hadn’t produced a response from Jill. So he called Amy and when she didn’t answer, left

this message on her voicemail: “No reply from Jill. Please tell me what the other idea was that you had in mind to get this situation off the dime”

* * *

That night, as she lay in bed, Jill continued to agonize over the decision she had to make. *Donna’s points were well-taken. And what Ted wrote certainly sounded convincing. But then again, words are so easy to utter – I just wish there were some action he could take that would make it easier for me to trust him.*

The next afternoon, Jill was playing cards with her grandchildren in the living room of the house. It was a welcome relief from the serious Ted-spawned issues she had been facing. She was just trying to decide whether or not to let them win the game when the bell rang. One of the boys ran to open the door.

“Hey, Granny, there’s a man out here wearing a New York Yankees cap who says he wants to speak to you”