Abbie opened the door to see her fiancé standing in the breezeway. Surprised by his visit, she said, “Steven?” Using a smile to mask her disappointment in him crashing her evening alone, she said, “I would hug you, but you’re all wet. How about a kiss?”

Abbie noticed that Steven was looking down at the ground. She placed her hand under his chin to lift his head up for a kiss. Instead of receiving a kiss in return, she met with cold, lifeless lips. “What’s wrong?” she asked.

Receiving no response from Steven, she invited him into the apartment. “There’s obviously something wrong. Come into the kitchen, and let’s talk.”

Steven and Abbie sat down at the kitchen table. At no point did he make eye contact, his eyes directed downward the entire time. “Are you hungry?” Abbie asked. “I just made some macaroni and cheese. It’s still hot.” Steven did not respond.

Expressing her concern, Abbie said, “Okay Steven, now you’re scaring me. You won’t even look at me. You haven’t said a word. What’s going on?”

Finding himself unable to look Abbie in the eyes, Steven kept his head lowered and answered, “This is going to be even harder than I thought.”

“What is going to be harder than you thought?” asked Abbie.

“Oh, Abbie.”

“Come on Steven, open up. Whatever it is, we’ll figure it out together.”

Steven finally seemed ready to say what he came to say, “I’m not ready to get married.”

“Steven, I understand. It’s totally normal to have doubts so soon after an engagement. Look, we haven’t announced a date yet, and I see no need to rush things. I waited this long. I don’t mind waiting a little longer to get you past your nerves.”

“That’s not going to work Abbie. I’ve made up my mind.”

“I just spent the last week and a half announcing to the world that we’re going to be married. Do you know how humiliating it will be to tell everybody the engagement is off? Honey, I know it’s scary. Let’s take a couple of months without any wedding talk. If you’re still having doubts, we can discuss our options then.”

“We can’t wait that long Abbie.”

“What’s the rush? Is there another woman?”

That question seemed to give Steven enough confidence to finally look up at Abbie and state, “Of course not! You know I wouldn’t do that to you.”

“Well then, what is it Steven? What aren’t you telling me?” asked Abbie.

Steven placed both of his hands over his face and rubbed up and down before saying, “There is a 14-day return policy on the ring. If I don’t return it in time, I can’t get my money back.”

Feeling both insulted and shocked, Abbie asked, “You called to ask their return policy?”

“No! I asked them when I bought the ring,” said Steven feeling his reasoning would make sense to Abbie.

“You asked about their return policy when you were buying my engagement ring!?” replied a doubly shocked and doubly insulted Abbie.

Steven looked down in shame and said, “It sounds terrible when you say it like that.”

“That’s because it is terrible! Why in the hell would you ask about their return policy when buying me an engagement ring!?”

“I don’t know Abbie. Maybe I was worried you wouldn’t say yes,” said Steven sounding like he was trying to convince himself.

“That’s bullshit Steven! You know I’ve been waiting for years for you to propose. There is no way I would ever have said no!” shouted Abbie. “If you knew you didn’t want to marry me, then why on earth would you propose?”

As the intensity in Abbie’s voice rose, Steven’s voice took on a quiet and apologetic tone. “I don’t know Abbie. I guess after five years together, it seemed like the next step to take. I think I knew even before I went to the jeweler. I can’t explain why I didn’t stop then.”

“Damn it Steven!” Abbie said as she took off the ring and shoved it at him. “Go ahead and return the ring. I don’t want it anymore anyway. If you were having doubts, I wish you would have talked to me before proposing. Whenever you’re finally ready to commit to me, I want a different ring. Don’t waste any time trying to find this one again!” exclaimed Abbie in a voice that was getting louder with each sentence.

“I don’t think you understand Abbie. I’m not just breaking off the engagement. I think we need some time apart.”

“You’re ending our relationship!?” asked Abbie as tears flowed uncontrollably from her eyes.

“Yes Abbie. I think that’s best. At least for a while.”

Abbie burst into a full-out crying episode. “I can’t believe this is happening! I gave you five years of my life, and now you’re just going to dump me? You led me to believe that we would spend our lives together. Why would you do that to me?”

“I thought we were going to end up together. At least that’s what I told myself. I’m sorry,” apologized Steven.

Reaching a level nearing hysteria, Abbie got up, went to the front door, and grabbed her keys. Abbie was in such a hurry to leave the apartment that she didn’t take anything else on her way out. Even though it was fairly cold outside, she slipped on her open-toed flip-flops to make a faster exit.

Before slamming the door behind her, she shouted a demand to Steven, “Anything that you don’t want to be thrown away, better be out of here by the time I get back! I’m going to dispose of anything that reminds me of you! I don’t ever want to see you again!”

Abbie was still crying hysterically. She had no idea where she was going or what she was going to do. Abbie walked slowly to her car, hoping that Steven would chase after her. By the time she got to her car, she was soaked by the rain. She started her car, turned on the heat, and sat there waiting for Steven to find her. After waiting for 15 minutes with no sign of Steven, Abbie thrust the car into gear and took off.