Abbie was finishing her morning routine before Steven arrived. She felt as well prepared as she could be for what was certain to be a painful conversation. A full night’s sleep served to strengthen Abbie’s resolve. She knew she was making the right decision.

She felt it was a huge benefit that she and Steven had been together for so long that she knew him inside and out. She knew that she had to be firm in her decision. So that Steven would know she was committed to the breakup. At the same time, she still did love Steven in the way that she could and planned to be compassionate and caring in the process. She had mentally visualized their upcoming conversation several times this morning and was confident she knew how it would play out.

On this day, the only communication they had was the texts establishing a time for him to come over. Abbie heard Steven knocking on the door and went to answer it. She opened the door to find a humble Steven looking down and waiting to be invited in. Abbie hugged Steven and told him that she was not angry with him. She directed him to sit on the sofa while she got them each a cold bottle of water.

Steven said, “Let me start. I want to apologize for what I did last night. I got cold feet and acted without thinking it through. When you told me to pack up my stuff, I wasn’t sure what to do. I grabbed a large garbage bag and started to put my things in there. It was then that I realized I had just thrown our whole relationship away, and that was a mistake. By the time I ran out to find you, your car was gone. I drove everywhere I could think of to find you until Maria told me that you had arrived safely home.

“Abbie, I love you. I don’t want to throw away everything we built together. I know the stakes are higher than they have been in the past. Maria told me not to expect you to easily forget what happened last night and want to get back together. I plan to do whatever it takes to earn back your trust and show you that I am serious about this. This will never happen again!

“Please forgive me and give me another chance. If you’re not ready to put this ring on, I’ll save it until you are. I don’t care about the money. If you want me to exchange this for another one, let’s go right now to pick up whatever you want!

“So what do you say, Abbie? Can we give this another try?”

So far, everything Steven said matched Abbie’s expectations, and she was ready with her reply. “I know you’re going to want to interrupt me, but let me just say what I have to say before you reply. The first thing I want to say is you were right to break up with me last night.”

Abbie could see that Steven anxiously wanted to interrupt her, but he held back. Abbie continued, “I have no regrets. Somehow you saw what I couldn’t see the whole time. We got comfortable and settled for each other. I do love you, but not the kind of love that makes a lifetime relationship successful. As much as we may care about each other, we lack that deeper love and passion that I want in my life. I want you to have that in your life.

“The only reason you want to get back together right now is that you are scared. I’m scared too. The next few weeks, maybe months, are going to be excruciatingly painful. A giant hole is about to appear where our relationship used to be. That’s what you realized last night when you were packing your stuff. Delaying the pain is not going to do either of us any good. It’s time to end this relationship.

“I know that you feel that you need to pull out all the stops to change my mind. And if you need to do that, go ahead. I won’t throw away any flowers you give me. I’ll enjoy them or share them with others. If you buy me any gifts, I’ll donate them to charity. But there’s one thing that is important to me, Steven. Know when it is time to stop. Also understand, I will not change my mind under any circumstances. The best thing is just to let this go now.

“One last thing before I turn the conversation back to you. Even if there were the tiniest fraction of a chance that we would get back together, and there isn’t, I wouldn’t want that ring. So don’t do anything stupid and keep the ring. Get your money back. I want you to. That ring is for another woman, not me. Look at me straight in the eyes and promise me that you are going to return that ring when you leave here.”

Steven looked disappointed and said, “I promise I’ll return the ring today.”

“Thank you,” replied Abbie.

“Abbie, I feel you got this all wrong. We love each other, and we’re good together. I just got the wedding jitters. That’s all it was. Give me another chance,” pleaded Steven.

“Steven, you’ve had the jitters for at least three years. The jitters would come back sooner or later if we got back together. It was good, and we were comfortable. That’s just not enough for me anymore. Is that really good enough for you? It doesn’t matter what your answer is because actions speak louder than words.

“We’ve been together for five years, and we’ve never once talked about moving in together. You knew I wanted a proposal years ago, and then when you finally propose, you’re asking about return policies. Steven, it’s okay. I’m not angry. It all is happening how it’s supposed to. Please let us go.”

Steven had never heard Abbie speak this way before. He always knew that he could get her back after a fight or a mini breakup. But she had a different look in her eyes and a different tone to her voice this time around.

Steven asked, “I want to get back together, Abbie. Are you sure this isn’t some test, telling me to stay away, just to see if I care enough to make an effort to win your trust back? If so, I’ll do it. I don’t want to break up.”

Abbie replied, “This is no trick. What we had is over. Of course, you want to try, that always worked in the past. But truthfully, my respect for you would skyrocket if you just let this go.”

“Is that really what you want?” asked a humble Steven.

Abbie leaned in, placed her hands over his, and answered, “Yes, Steven, that’s what I want.”

“Alright, Abbie, I’ll give you what you ask for. If it’s got to end, I want it to end on the best of terms. Can we at least still be friends?”

Abbie hugged Steven and said, “Thank you. I spent a lot of time thinking about being friends. I don’t think there’s any way that we will ever be able to hang out together. And for the next few months, I think we should make reasonable efforts to avoid each other. But once we’ve both healed and moved on, I hope we can reach out to each other if there is ever a great need. If there is some sort of family crisis, or you get a big promotion at work, I hope that you’ll feel free to contact me. And I hope that you can be that for me as well.”

Steven replied, “Of course, I’ll be there for you, Abbie, anytime. So now the big question. What do we tell everyone?”

“I think we should tell the truth. Tell them we love each other, and we had a good relationship, but we both felt that it was time to move on to something new. We can let everybody know we parted on good terms and have absolutely no regrets.

“Relatively speaking, I feel really good about where things are with us right now. I don’t think we should say anymore. So let’s end the conversation here.”

Abbie stood up and reached out her hand toward Steven. He took her hand, and they walked to the front door. Abbie opened the door for Steven. He stepped outside and turned around to receive a hug from her.

Steven was hoping his sad look would buy him some sympathy as he asked, “Is there any chance I can get a goodbye kiss?”

Abbie gave him a quick kiss on the cheek and said, “You go get that ring returned now.”

Steven walked away a defeated man. Abbie closed the door, climbed into bed, and spent the rest of the day crying.