

Milquetoast Romance

by

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Synopsis:

Jill and Ryan formerly orbited similar social circles, but haven't seen each other since those heady, pre-Covid days. Their chance meeting in a coffee shop may mark the start of a whirlwind romance, or perhaps something a little more grounded...

Cast:

Jill – *Adult Female*

Ryan – *Adult Male*

Server – *Any Adult*

Setting: *A Café, Indoors.*

[SFX] *Hiss of steam, pouring coffee, murmurs of conversation in the background.*

Server

Flat white with oat milk for Jill!

Jill

Oh, thank you!

Ryan

Jill? Jill, is that you?

Jill

Oh my-, Ryan?! W-what are you doing here?

Ryan

Work believe it or not. HQ sent me out to head up our new-

Server

Americano for Ryan!

Ryan

Oh, thanks.

Jill

But that-, this is crazy! Last time we saw each other was-, well I don't even know-

Ryan

Meg's wedding actually, just before Covid.

Jill

Oh wow, it must've been right? God, you've got a great memory.

Ryan

Well, for the important things at least.

Pause

Ryan

Do you wanna, maybe...?

Jill

Oh I'd love to, but I have this meeting in...well whatever! I can be late.

[SFX] Scrape of a chair

Ryan

If you're gonna be late maybe you should-

Jill

Just sit down already! I should make time for the first friendly face I've seen in a while, that's what I should do! And speaking of, the beard looks great on you.

[SFX] A second chair scrapes

Ryan

Hah, thanks, bit of a new look for me. Was never allowed grow it out while I was with Barb.

Jill

Ohhhhh, Barbara is past tense now is she?

Ryan

Yeah, we both decided-

Jill

When?

Ryan

About six, seven months ago.

Jill

Fresh! And was it your decision or...?

Ryan

It was mutual.

Jill

Honestly? So happy for you Ryan, she was never right for you. You've always been so...well, you.
And she was just so...well she wasn't on the same level, you know?

Ryan

We had our moments.

Jill

More like she had her meltdowns!

Ryan

True true, but to be fair we can't all take the chaos of life in our stride as well as you do, can we?

Jill

Uh...meaning?

Ryan

Hell of a thing moving during Covid, let alone twice.

Jill

How did you-

Ryan

Your Instagram was a something of a light at the end of the tunnel for me in Lockdown.
Backpacking through South America was a particular highlight.

Jill

Hah! Covid, what Covid?

Ryan

It made me quite jealous actually. Barb never liked travelling at the best of times.

Jill

Well you should come along next time! I'm planning a road trip.

Ryan

Where to?

Jill

Who knows, was thinking of just grabbing a camper van and hitting the open road.

Pause

Jill

It'd be nice to have some company.

Ryan

Hmm. You sure Nick wouldn't get jealous?

Jill

Nick?

Ryan

Yeah, Nick. [*Pause*] The journalist? Aren't you two-

Jill

Oh God, Nicky?! That was never-, Christ! Good thing I wasn't drinking I'd have spit coffee all over you!

Ryan

But...wasn't he your plus one at Meg's?

Jill

Oh well I had to bring someone! You know what everyone's like, what they would've said.

Rick

So you just dragged him along?

Jill

Yeah, he was the closest thing to hand.

Ryan

Oh. He told me you two were...so there wasn't any...?

Jill

We had our fun, but honestly he was so boring. And if there's one thing I can't stand, it's boring.

Pause

Jill

Funny though, hanging out with you was the most fun I had at that wedding.

Ryan

Well, your call on hijacking the golf carts certainly helped.

Jill

Oh my God, yes! We almost didn't make it back for breakfast!

Ryan

Barb was not happy about that one.

Jill

Neither was Nick!

Ryan

Really? Did he think we'd-

Jill

Who cares, whatever anyone says I'm not a homewrecker, I respected every couple there.

Which...also happens to be why I had to make do with Mark after Nick left in a huff.

Ryan

Y-you did what?

Jill

Oh Christ, I didn't mean-, it's not-

Ryan

But Mark and Jessie were still-

Jill

Oh who cares about all that pre-Covid stuff anyway, it's all ancient history! Let's talk about now, tell me about this amazing job of yours.

Ryan

Uh...yeah...well they have me leading the new office out here.

Jill

Wow...someone's doing well for himself

Ryan

Ironically Covid was pretty great for business, and if I pull our opening off out here I should be on a fast track to the C-suite.

Jill

Well you always were ambitious, always thought differently. It's why you're so fun.

Pause, then Ryan laughs

Jill

What?

Ryan

Nothing. I'm just wondering how you got through Lockdown without any more weddings to crash.

Jill

I, uh...did my best? There was all the travel to do and...well I took time to work on myself, you know?

Ryan

I suppose there was no one else to hand, was there?

Jill

Yeah, it was tough. Alone in a new city. I mean, not that I was envious or anything of you all back in- , hey! You gotta tell me what was it like being trapped in Lockdown with bonkers Barb!

Ryan

Oh you can only imagine.

Jill

I bet

Ryan

I mean she got worked up enough as it was before but-

Jill

I honestly thought of her every time I saw some crazy rant about the virus, your brain must have been melting out your ears!

Ryan

She was convinced nanobots got inside the house at one stage.

Jill

No!

Ryan

Turned out to be fruit flies from some food she'd left out, but it took a whole day to calm her down.

Jill

Bet she ran for the hills when the vaccine came.

Ryan

Naturally, but I think she had more of a point there.

Jill

And...what point would that be?

Ryan

Well I don't know, everything seemed to move so fast with them. Ready in less than a year, bit weird right?

Jill

Yeah, it was amazing. Thank God we managed to cure it so quickly

Ryan

Yeah, well, who knows what damage's been done in the process.

Jill

Damage?

Ryan

Well we'll just have to wait and see with the vaccines, but I feel like the cure's gonna prove to be-

Jill

Ryan, that's nuts-, the vaccines saved-

Ryan

Just because the government told us that doesn't make it true. Far from it actually.

Jill

Yeah, but my aunt dying of Covid a week from her 50th kind of does, doesn't it?

Ryan

Ah...I'm sorry Jill. I didn't know.

Jill

It's ok. Guess that particular post didn't catch your eye.

Pause

Ryan

I had a feeling I'd bump into you while I was here

Jill

Oh? Easy enough if you're stalking my social media

Ryan

I wasn't-

Jill

Relax, I'm kidding.

Pause

Jill

Unless you *actually* were?

Ryan

Well, you can't leave everything to chance.

Jill

Jesus! You're such a bad boy now aren't you? I bet you didn't even get vaccinated.

Ryan

I never said I did.

Pause

Jill

I can't tell if you're trying to be funny or not. The old Ryan wouldn't...it must be the beard doing all this.

Ryan

Well I'm finding out lots of new things about Jill today as well.

Jill

What? *What?*

Ryan

Nothing, forget I said anything. You forgot about it easily enough yourself.

Jill

Is this about Mark? Ok, first off Jessica told him that they were taking a break so they could-

Ryan

Let's not talk about it

Jill

Why not?

Ryan

I dunno, we just keep ending up...well it's like Pascal said: "If we all knew what everyone else said about us there wouldn't be two friends left in the world".

Jill

What?

Ryan

It's a quote. From Pascal.

Jill

Oh. Well I never really liked him .

Ryan

Really? You've read-

Jill

His hair was always so greasy.

Ryan

Wait no, you're thinking of-

Jill

Whatever his name was, I just remember was he was a dick.

Ryan

Pascal was-

Jill

And just because he can't trust his friends I don't see why he thinks the rest of can't.

Ryan

That's not-

[SFX] A phone vibrates loudly

Jill

Oh fuck, I'm so fucking late!

[SFX] Her chair scrapes against the floor

Ryan

Hey, your coffee's still-

Jill

It's fine, it's fine, gotta take this!

Ryan

Hey, if you want to grab a drink or something while I'm-

Jill

I gotta run, we'll chat later, ok?

[SFX] Sound of footsteps as the café noise fades.

Jill

You just saved my ass! Guess who cornered me at the coffee shop. No. No! Crazy Ryan! Yeah, him!
Even crazier now somehow, I think he's an anti-vaxxer! Also, he's got this shitty little goatee that
makes him look...

[SFX] A dial tone plays briefly as the café noise returns.

Ryan

Hey. Take a wild guess who I just saw. The old slut herself, Prescott. Yeah. Still a piece of work,
same as ever. Had some choice remarks about you actually, said you'd...