



The Ending Is Yours

Read this story, which is incomplete and needs an ending. Then follow your teacher's instructions about how to compose an ending.

Breaking Up Is Hard to Do

The early summer air was warm enough for T-shirts as the two friends leaned over the engine of the red '65 Mustang that Alex had bought two weeks before.

Alex's attention was on more than his car. "She always wants to know what I'm feeling or thinking or planning for next year. It's driving me crazy!"

"Pay attention, idiot, I almost cut my finger!"

Alex apologized, then readjusted the light and waved a mosquito away from Donald's face before continuing.

"Then she gets angry. So I answer the question and tell her I'm thinking about my job and my car and the new wheels I want to buy for it at the end of the month. Then she gets really mad."

"Why? You answered the question."

"She didn't like the answer."

Donald stood up and arched his back slowly, relieving the strain he had put on it, and looked straight at his friend.

"So dump her."

Donald certainly had a direct way with solutions, no matter how brutal they were. His directness was his greatest strength, but it could also be his greatest weakness.

Putting out his hand, Donald motioned to Alex, "Now hand me that little wrench, will you?"

Donald took the wrench and, like a surgeon with a scalpel, began to delicately adjust the carburetor, using both hands and balancing precariously on the bumper. After several silent minutes, he stood up and arched his back again.

"I mean she clings to you all day at school, gets mad if you don't call every night, and wants you to be thinking about her all the time. She even got you to cancel our fishing trip last weekend. Right now she's probably mad that I'm here with you working on your car. That girl is looking for a husband, buddy, and if that's what you want, fine. Otherwise dump her."

That was the most Donald had said about anything recently, and it caused Alex to pay attention.

"You're probably right."

"She isn't pregnant or anything, is she?"

"Of course not. She's not 'that kind of girl,' or didn't you know?"

"How would I know that?"

"Well, at one point we discussed having sex, but luckily she talked me into waiting. Can you imagine how complicated things would be if I had to worry about her being pregnant too?"

Alex went home that night with a smooth-running car and an upset stomach. Sure, Donald was right. Absolutely everything he had said was true. It would just be so hard to tell Doreen that it was over. Donald didn't know Doreen very well: she was not one to take no for an answer. Not without a fight. She'd want to talk and share and argue and be logical, and she was so much better at it than he was. Alex knew he didn't stand a chance. His only hope was a clean, neat break. No talk, no fight, no negotiation. He'd write a letter.

Dear Doreen,

I don't know if this will be a surprise to you or not, but there's something I have to tell you. I've thought about it a lot and I don't mean to hurt you, but I have to tell you that it's over between us. It's very hard for me to explain, but I guess the most accurate thing I can say is I just don't feel the same way about you anymore. I certainly don't feel the same way about you as you feel about me, and I think it would be dishonest to keep trying to pretend I did. You're real cute and nice and smart—everything a guy could want. I know you'll have another boyfriend in no time. I really did enjoy our times together, so don't think it was all a waste. Good luck,

Alex

P.S. Please don't ask me to talk about this. I know how you like to do that, but for my sake please don't ask.

Alex read and reread the letter a dozen times before going to bed. Though the message was as logical and accurate as he could be, he still felt sick to his stomach. It might be true to say he didn't feel the same about Doreen anymore, but it wasn't like he had no feelings for her. He did have feelings for her. Strong feelings. They had been together for over a year, after all, and now they were nearing the end of high school and it was all unravelling. He imagined that she'd read that letter and be destroyed.

But he could think of no other way. He'd mail the letter in the morning. . . .