



Boring
is good

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Jemima idly doodled on the admission slip waiting for her next client. Stacey Woods G1, T+8, contracting 5 in 10 aged 16. First baby eight days overdue contracting every 2 minutes. Stacey's less than eloquent friend had phoned 5 minutes ago to say they were on the way in. At 2 am a group of teenagers possibly drunk on alcopops didn't enthuse Jemima.

Abruptly she gave herself a mental slap. When had she become so judgemental? Wasn't she an advocate to all the women in her care? Yes but only human. She grabbed a chocolate hobnob (sod the calories) and wandered down the corridor to check the birthing room.

Just as Jemima had placed fluffyish towels on the radiator and put the obligatory jug of tepid tap water in room 18 the intercom buzzed. With a smile, which didn't quite reach her eyes, she prepared herself.

Stacey Woods staggered through the doors, one hand grasping a frightened looking friend and the other clutching a bottle of Smirnoff ice. It would have been amusing if it wasn't so tragic. At 16 and probably weighing a stone for every year of her life Stacey wasn't in good shape. Her ample figure was encased in a grubby chewing gum grey towelling bathrobe presumably once white. "Stacey Woods? Hi I'm Jemima, one of the midwives on duty tonight." "Big fucking deal, want a medal?" Replied the eloquent teenager.

How to respond? Jemima was speechless, a phenomenon practically alien to her. "Um...No. I'd like to help, I guess it's really starting to hurt, your friend said the contractions were every two minutes." "Yeah that's right, I need some bloody drugs." "Ok let's get you settled in and see how you're getting on, then we can talk about pain relief." Said Jemima leading the girls to the birthing room. The bollshy Stacey and her equally frightened but mercifully quiet friend Shaz tottered down the corridor.

Forty five minutes later with a colourful array of language baby Tyson burst into the world. "Well done Stacey, you were fantastic, you've got a beautiful little boy." "Thanks nurse, sorry I swore like. It fucking hurt though." Jemima smiled. "I know they don't call it labour for nothing and you really, really well. Your little man was in a bit of a hurry."

Once Mum and baby were checked, washed and safely transferred to a postnatal bed Jemima had a quick coffee and began the epic task of inputting the notes into the less than reliable computer system. Straightforward normal births such as the one Jemima had just conducted made the job worthwhile but tonight the usual adrenaline rush and relieved satisfaction of an uncomplicated delivery escaped her. Less than a month ago she'd lost her own baby. At just 10 weeks he or she hadn't made it and tonight a 16 year old who'd drunk,

smoked through the last nine months had a perfect healthy little boy in the cot next to her. A solitary tear slipped down her cheek. Damn life was a bitch!

At 7.30 am Jemima changed out of her scrubs, pulled on her jeans and headed home in her beloved Beetle. It was the end of her first shift back after her miscarriage and she's survived. She knew her friends would be waiting with baited breath. If only Mark could muster some sympathy.

Jemima and Mark had been married 3 years. A golden couple. The dashing Naval Officer and his pretty bubbly midwife. It had all tarnished pretty quickly. Mark had finished his 7 year commission in the Navy and gone to work in I.T. He worked for an American company based at home and travelling all over Europe setting up computer networks. He often left home at ridiculous o'clock on Monday to return shattered on Friday evening. If Jem was working over the weekend they passed like ships in the night. At least in the Navy he went away, stayed away and then came home for a few months. The way they lived at the moment he was

never available. A baby might have changed that. A year of maternity leave would have meant one of them was consistently at home and Jemima fantasized that the workaholic Mark would be so smitten with his progeny that he'd spend less time travelling. In her darker moments she realised this was probably pie in the sky. However Jemima was a natural optimist so she continued to dream.

A week of night duty flies by with little time for anything other than working, eating and sleeping. Mercifully Jemima had the weekend off to recover and time to spend with Mark. She'd been pretty hurt when he'd flown to Sweden on Monday leaving her to face her first week back at work alone. However pride prevented a scene. If he said one more time "It's my job love and we'll have another baby, just give it time." She'd garrotte him with one of his precious silk ties.

On Friday afternoon Jem dashed round Sainsbury's on a mission determined not to get weepy whenever she saw a baby. Tonight she'd be on maximum charm offensive. Fabulous food, expensive wine and sexy new knickers. Mark was due home at around six. By then the house would be immaculate and seductively light with candles. She'd be cute, witty and irresistible. Maybe they'd make another baby?

"No, it's fine, yes of course, you too, call me tomorrow then, love you too, bye." It wasn't bloody fine and right now love was the last thing coursing through her veins it was pure hate. Fucking bastard! Jemima stomped round the house snuffing out candles before collapsing on the sofa. Her entire body wracked with sobs of anger and disappointment. Mark's flight was grounded. He'd be home sometime tomorrow. Another weekend wrecked by his bloody job. He hadn't even asked how her week had gone. It was as if she was the only one who had lost a baby. He didn't seem to care.

At eight o'clock with nearly a bottle of Chablis inside her Jemima rang Sarah. Her best friend, counsellor and the most level headed wonderful human being on the planet. "Jem what's wrong? I thought tonight was meant to be seduction night?" "He's still in Stockholm" "Oh darling are you ok? Look I'm coming over."

"Nick, Mark's still in Sweden and Jem's been on her own all week. I said I'd pop over." "Ok Darling, you'd better pack your toothbrush it's bound to end up with two of my favourite girls bloto on vino." "You know I'm the luckiest woman alive. I love you Nick Williams!" "Go before I make you prove that, and yes I will take Molly to ballet in the morning. Give Jemima a big from me." He said shoowing his wife out the door.

By the time Sarah arrived Jemima had removed the offending candles, binned the gourmet dinner and ordered enough pizza and Haagen Daz to comfort even the biggest heartbreak. The girls sat down in front of the television with wine food and Kleenex for an hour and a half of drooling over Hugh and Colin in Love Actually. Sarah knew that as soon as the film finished the tears would start. Patiently she listened as Jemima rambled on about work, Mark and babies in between enormous slices of greasy pizza and several glasses of wine. Silently she prayed to the God of over indulgent Mothers to spare her from an all-day hangover tomorrow.

Even the fizz of the Alka-Seltzer was too loud. "Whatever time did we get to bed?" "Umm threeish" "God Jem I'm too old for a night like last night!" "Rubbish down that, grab some toast and come up to the club with me for a couple of hours, you'll feel like a new woman." "It'll kill me you sadist witch." "Nonsense you can borrow some of my kit. An hour in the gym, sauna, jacuzzi, you'll feel fantastic!" "I better go home, you go. Although how you can be so sparkly after the amount you drank I've no idea, I want to die!" "Seriously you'll feel better

and Nick's taking Molly to ballet so you'll only slope off back to bed." "Ok but be gentle with me." Grumbled a reluctant Sarah.

Jemima always felt that the David Lloyd health club just outside the city was a bit of a sanctuary. A good work out followed by a gossip in the jacuzzi made her feel a million dollars and prevented her waistline expanding. Sarah naturally tall and slender grazed her way through the day without worrying hence her reluctance to be a guest at the club.

"Could we skip the gym and just do the nice lazing around and gossiping?" "No chance, you need to sweat some of that alcohol off and the men in the fitness room are definitely worth a look." "Jemima Jones you're a happily married woman." Sarah could have bitten her tongue off. Married yes but happily? Somehow Sarah had the feeling that a divorce petition might not be far off. Jemima laughed, "I can look though?"

With a clearer head and a more positive state of mind Jemima almost skipped into the car park 2 hours later. Sarah lagged behind. "I'd say thanks but that was hideous. I see what you mean about the men though. I really have to run now, well hobble. You take care darling; I'll give you a ring on Monday. Oh and don't be too hard on Mark." "I won't send my love to Nick and Molly and thanks for saving my sanity." The two women hugged and scuttled off home.

Jemima bounded in through the front door trying not to mind Mark's bags scattered in the hallway. "Jem, Christ I've missed you, look." He thrust a huge duty free bag into her hand, chocolate and perfume. It was completely out of character and hardly original but lovely nevertheless. Jemima enthused over her goodies and covered her somewhat startled husband with tiny kisses. "How about a little nap before lunch?" "Oh Jem I've got heaps of paperwork to do. Sorry darling. How about dinner at Lorenzo's tonight? You could pop into town and buy something sexy." "Ok" Jemima bit her lip trying to hide her disappointment she knew he was trying to get rid of her and she's only been home half an hour.

For the second time in less than 24 hours Jemima cursed her husband as she sped off into Plymouth city centre.

Predictably dinner was a disaster. Jemima was still smarting over dismissal earlier in the day and Mark was so exhausted after an early flight and 3 hour drive from Heathrow that he could hardly keep his eyes open. By ten thirty the Jones' returned home hardly speaking. Jemima climbed wearily into bed, she couldn't be bothered to try and arouse Mark. Typically his head hit the pillow and he fell into a dreamless sleep instantly while Jemima tossed and turned, reliving the day's events. What had happened to them? Mark used to be able to party until dawn and shag for England and here they were under thirty, no kids to get up for in the morning, in bed before eleven on a Saturday night. They hadn't seen each other all week and making love was becoming rarer than hen's teeth. Jem longed for the physical intimacy they used to share and wondered how long it had been missing. Somehow she feared it was more than the loss of their baby. In her heart she knew that getting pregnant was meant to be the plaster to mend her wounded marriage. No baby, would this mean no marriage?

Sunday Morning dawned bright and sunny. It felt as if spring was finally on its way. Mark slipped out of bed to make his sleeping wife breakfast. He felt faintly guilty for crashing out so early but equally justified given his punishing schedule. Jemima just didn't understand. He hoped breakfast in bed would make amends and that she'd finally got over the miscarriage. It wasn't as if they'd actually lost a child, it was only a collection of cells after all. Life had to go on. Maybe today they'd go and look at conservatories. A project might take Jem's mind off babies for a bit.

Jemima yawned and stretched, luxuriating in the knowledge that it was Sunday and she could stay in bed. Just as these thoughts came into her head Mark appeared with a tray laden with coffee, juice, grapefruit and warm croissants. Her mouth watered. "Gosh I am being spoiled, what's the occasion?" "You deserve it darling. I'm sorry about last night, I just hit a wall. Today I'm going to make it up to you. When you've finished that I thought we'd check out conservatories. Next month's quarterly bonus will easily cover it and it'll be nice to have some extra space." Mercifully Jemima had a mouth full of croissants because traipsing round showrooms all day wasn't high on her favourites list. By the time she'd chewed, swallowed and washed it down with a sip of maximum caffeine filter coffee she was sufficiently composed to respond. "Are you sure? It's such a beautiful day we could get the bikes out and find a pub for lunch." "Jem we can do that anytime I really think we ought to start looking into this, get some ideas, quotes that sort of thing." "Ok, maybe we could go for a walk later or catch a movie?" "We'll see I rather think this will take most of the day love. It's not like buying a dress, there's lot's to consider."

Fabulous! An entire day discussing Pilkington glass and design ideas. Jemima kept her reservations to herself. "How about coming back to bed for a bit, the showrooms won't be open for another hour." "I'm already dressed now and by the time you get your act together it'll be time to get going." He retorted rather pompously. "Right, yes, sure. I'll jump in the shower now then." She said doing a mock salute behind his departing back. "Good girl."

Downstairs Mark tidied the kitchen with the smug satisfaction that he'd done his husbandly duty. In the shower Jemima cursed her practical bloody husband and wondered how they were ever going to conceive if they never made love.

Buying a conservatory was as mind numbingly boring as Jemima feared. Four hours of traipsing round showrooms schmoozing with smarmy salesman in cheap suits with overpowering aftershave would make a saint nauseous and irritable. However Mark's determination to get all the facts and find the best deal meant one last showroom. Jemima was rapidly losing the will to live.

Patrick O'Sullivan breezed into his office crunching extra strong mints to disguise the smell of alcohol, which, he knew, exuded every pore. It had been a good night though even if he was very late for work. Being the boss had its perks. His sales manager John raised an eyebrow but thought better of the sarcastic remark threatening to tumble from his lips.

"Morning boss." "How's business John? Many punters this morning?" "Steady, several enquiries, one definite." "Good, good. I'll grab a coffee and start next week's work book."

At six foot tall with a mop of dark curly hair and piercing midnight blue eyes Patrick O'Sullivan had the heart stopping good looks guaranteed to have bored housewives flooding his order book. Not for Paddy the cheap suits and over powering aftershave favoured by his competitors. His designer jeans, desert boots and casual shirt flattered an impressive body much envied by men half his age. His soft Irish accent oozed charm not smarm. This was a man who truly could sell ice to the Eskimos and sand to the Arabs. His hard working workforce effortlessly compensated for the bosses erratic time keeping simply because they adored him. If the boss occasionally lost his temper or failed to show up for work no one paid much heed. He'd be better tomorrow and the business was flourishing. In a time of multinational domination of everything from groceries to garages, O'Sullivan's thrived on its small independent status and the charisma of the managing director.

"We'll just see what O'Sullivan's has to offer. A chap at the golf club recommended him. Of course it's only a small outfit but we've got to do our homework properly." If Jemima lacked enthusiasm she tried hard not to show it. Nasty instant coffee from plastic cups churned in her stomach. She yearned for a glass of wine and a proper Sunday lunch but as it was nearly 3 o'clock she knew lunch was likely to be greasy fast food adored by her husband and just tolerated by her.

Out of the office window Patrick noticed a burley middle aged man clutching a plethora of catalogues from his competitors followed by a younger bored looking wife. Jemima wasn't really Paddy's type; he liked his women, blonde, with big boobs and low IQs. They were easier to manipulate. However something about the petite brunette sparked his interest. Maybe it was the 'hangover horn' but instinct told him that this woman would be a firecracker between the sheets. Paddy didn't usually bother with married women. A good looking affluent man didn't need other peoples cast offs and his strict Catholic upbringing occasionally pricked his conscience. The workbook could wait this was a sale he'd personally make.

"Good afternoon I'm Patrick O'Sullivan." Paddy stretched out a large tanned hand to a slightly standoffish Mark. "Aah the boss, we like to talk to the man at the top don't we darling?" God Mark you sound like a pompous prick thought Jemima. "Umm...Yes" she stuttered feeling slightly embarrassed by Mark's stupid remark. "Please come and take a seat and tell me exactly what it is you have in mind" said Paddy ignoring the man at the top bullshit remark.

The sparkling eyes transfixed Jemima as did the sexy Irish lilt in Patrick's voice. The men discussed specifications, costs, design concepts and time frames while Jemima dreamed about Patrick's expressive hands roaming over her naked body at some point over the course of an hour Mark ordered a Victorian conservatory. Jemima had no idea when? Just, the delicious knowledge that Mr O'Sullivan himself would call her in the next week to arrange a site survey and organise dates for work to commence.

“Jemima you really could have shown a bit more enthusiasm, I’ve just spent the best part of ten grand and you weren’t even listening. I hope you’re a bit more on the ball when Patrick rings you this week. I’m away Tuesday through Friday so I’m relying on you to get this up and running.” “Oh for Christ sake stop being such a patronising shit. I’m perfectly capable of sorting things out. It’s not as if you’re ever home and things run perfectly smoothly in your absence.” Jemima snapped. The rest of the drive home was in icy silence. As soon as Jemima got in she shoved her kit into a sports bag and zoomed off to the club slamming the

door on her way out. A childish act guaranteed to aggravate Mark and therefore hugely gratifying.

Paddy raced through the lanes to his cottage in the village of Lutton with a rock play list blaring from his stereo in his filthy Land Rover Discovery. He pondered this afternoon's encounter with the delectable Mrs Jones and her overbearing husband. Somehow Jemima had got under his skin. She looked like she needed rescuing and he felt like playing a hero. Maybe a nice little affair would put the sparkle back into those chocolate brown eyes?

Fifteen minutes later he was still thinking about Jemima as he let himself into the cottage. He silently cursed himself. Jesus Patrick you're a slob! Wine glasses, bottles, fag butts and clothes littered the oak floor. He picked up a scarlet thong with distaste. He really must stop shagging Suzi the barmaid from the Mountain Inn.

Right dinner, then housework. Where was a compliant woman when you needed one? He'd bet Mrs Jones would happily sort out this lot and whip up something to eat. He chuckled to himself as he peered into the fridge a bottle of beer had his name on it but common sense for once prevailed so he set about throwing together some pasta laden with tomatoes, garlic, mushrooms, onions and bacon. The kitchen was pretty hideous so he stacked the dishwasher and scrubbed the worktops while his homemade pasta sauce bubbled on the hob. Who said men can't multitask?

Ten miles away Jemima worked out like a demon. The frustrations of the weekend seemed to give her superhuman energy. She watched with satisfaction as 500 calories ticked by on the cross trainer.

A little later and a lot less angry she luxuriated in a practically empty pool. Swimming always made Jemima reflective. She felt faintly guilty about this afternoon's tantrum and at a loss as to how to make things better. In the past she'd have tried seducing Mark to get back into his

good books but two knock backs in a weekend had dented her fragile ego. Sometimes 'sorry really is the hardest word' a huge cliché but horribly accurate.

Jem picked up the pace to try and clear her mind but maddeningly Patrick O'Sullivan popped into her head. God he was gorgeous and sometime this week he was calling about the conservatory. Jemima tried not to consider whether he'd come round to the house when the work started.

Jemima's shifts meant that the Jones' hardly saw each other after the turbulent weekend. By Tuesday morning the house seemed to have absorbed the tension, which cast a shadow over their lives. At 6 am Mark swung his Saab turbo convertible out of the drive and raced up the A38 towards Bristol. His satellite navigation system chirped directions. Jem called it Prudence pathfinder a typical piss take of his love of technology. He hoped to God she'd manage to sort out the conservatory. Quite how she'd managed to become a senior midwife in the city's birthing unit was a mystery. Sometimes she really was an airhead. He smiled indulgently.

On Wednesday afternoon after a crazily busy early shift Jemima got home and checked her voicemail. Five messages. Her stomach lurched. She'd been waiting for the last 3 days for Patrick to ring. She kicked off her boots, flicked the kettle on retrieved them; "Hi Jemima, are you still on for a few drinks tomorrow night? Get back to me sweetie." Her friend, Amanda's Home Counties voice chirped down the phone. Jem couldn't remember agreeing. Oh what the hell she was off on Friday so a drink or two wouldn't do any harm. "Jem its Em can you call me." Her sister's well-modulated voice filled the room. Jemima hoped everything was ok. The third caller didn't leave a message." She hated that. Message number four was "Mrs Jones this is Eazy Clean we have a man's suit which hasn't been collected please come and pick it up by the end of the month or it will be disposed of." Shit Mark would be livid. Thank God he wouldn't know about that message. Jem chuckled to herself. "Mrs Jones, this is Patrick O'Sullivan. I'm ringing about your conservatory, call me in the office or on my mobile. I look forward to hearing from you." The soft Irish voice made Jemima's pulse race and her mouth go dry. Get a grip Jem he's building your conservatory.

Sitting down with a cup of Earl Grey Jemima punched Patrick's mobile number into her own. "Mr O'Sullivan, it's Jemima Jones." "Ah...the lovely Mrs Jones, how good of you to get back to me so quickly." Jemima wasn't sure whether he was laughing at her. "About our conservatory, when do you need to undertake the site survey?" Jemima tried to sound business like. Paddy leaned back in his chair, a smile touching his lips. Flirting was like breathing to him and he reckoned Mrs Jones needed a little subtle flattery. "For you Jemima I can be available anytime." Jemima nearly choked on her tea. "Oh well... how about tomorrow afternoon?" "Sounds perfect". Agreed Patrick. "Shall we say two o'clock?"

Hi Jane it's Jemima are you out and about tomorrow night?" "Amanda's night out? Please say you'll go." "I thought I might give it a miss actually, she gets right up nose these days Jem, and some of her naval wife cronies are truly vile, all fur coats and no knickers." Jemima giggled. "Oh please. I need protection. Come on Jane, all work and no play...Jemima wheedled, "If it's vile I promise we'll slope off. I'll get Sarah to come." "God Jones you ask a lot of friendship." "I'll take that as a yes then. You're an angel. I'll come round at 7 then we can hit the Barbican together." "Ok, but if it's pants we do a Houdini!" Jane insisted. "Yep I promise. See you tomorrow."

"Sarah, Amanda's getting the troupes together for drinkies (Jem imitated Amanda's high pitched nasal twang) tomorrow. Please come I need protection," "Jemima Jones, that's blackmail. To be honest I'm not really up for it. Jane will look after you." "Yes but Sarah we need you to inject some normality. Mand has invited some of Tom's colleague's wives. The ladies who lunch darling." "Yuk, no Jem, definitely not. I'd rather spend the evening ironing." "Just one drink, come on we need your back up. " One drink and if they start talking ball gowns and brazilians. I'm off!" "Deal. Meet us at Jane's at 7? Jemima asked" "Tell you what I'll pick you guys up at 8 and drive. Sarah offered thinking that she could make a quick get away by taking the car. "Better and better you're a star. Are you sure you don't want a couple of therapeutic glasses of wine." Jem checked "No hun I'm working on Friday and the 'outlaws' are descending for the weekend." "Oh commiserations darling." How Nick could have such dreadful parents stunned Jemima. Poor Sarah wasn't good enough for their beloved only son and Eunice Williams made this perfectly clear. Fortunately the senior William's rarely made an appearance and kept their visits mercifully short.

Just before 2 O'clock Patrick's grubby Discovery turned into Paxton Close. The Jones' house was exactly as he'd imagined. A modern box with minimal character. He knew the interior would be neutral colours and laminate floors. Tasteful but utterly lacking in individuality.

"Bang on time Mr O'Sullivan." "Well I'd hate to keep a lady waiting. Please call me Patrick." He said smiling. Jemima felt her cheeks redden. Patrick seemed to be undressing her with his sultry eyes. She gulped. Great now she looked like a demented guppy. "Do come in. May I offer you a cup of tea or coffee?" she enquired trying to regain her composure "Coffee would be marvellous." God that voice. He really was disturbingly sexy. "You put the kettle on

and I'll get my box of tricks so we can get down to business." Jemima tried not to think of the kind of business she'd like the Irishman to conduct. Inwardly she groaned, what a cliché. Sexually frustrated housewife fantasizing about the local builder.

Paddy whistled to himself while he collected his laptop, tape measure and paperwork. In the last 10 years he'd come across dozens of Jemima Jones'. Pretty, slightly spoilt neglected wives. Common sense told him not to touch but something about the longing in her eyes and the cheeky grin which occasionally flashed across her face made him want to make love to her until she begged him to stop. He knew she wanted him to. Perhaps it wasn't a question of if merely when.

"That was a cracking cup of coffee Jemima, I think I'm going to enjoy this job." "You undertake the work yourself? She was pleasantly surprised" "Sometimes especially if the coffee is good. I like to keep an eye on my boys, make sure the client is completely satisfied." He winked. "So we'll be seeing a lot of each other." "I certainly hope so." He said. Pretty soon Paddy reckoned he'd be seeing lots of Jemima, hopefully naked in a variety of positions. As the thought flashed through his head he felt his cock harden. God Paddy you're not a teenager get a grip!

Patrick measured up and tapped figures and specifications into his laptop, while, upstairs Jemima perused her wardrobe trying to decide what to wear for tonight's jolly. She decided on a relatively demure black skirt with high heeled boots but wavered over the glitzy red sequined top or the pale grey velvet blouse. Paddy wandered upstairs and found her holding them up against herself, "Out on the town tonight?" "Um...just a few drinks with the girls." "Problems deciding what to wear? I know why don't you model them for me?" He asked "A second opinion would be good. Do you have time?" "For you Jemima all the time in the world!" You're teasing me Mr O'Sullivan. "I think you rather like it. I'll tell you what, how about I pour us a glass of wine while you get changed." "Sounds perfect. There's a couple of bottles of white in the fridge or some red in the wine rack. The corkscrew is in the top draw by the hob, and the glasses are in the cupboard next to the dishwasher. How decadent drinking in the afternoon." While Jemima slipped out of her jeans and into her evening wear. Paddy located the glasses. Peering in the fridge he noticed a bottle of Mumm. A bit of fizz was just what the lady needed in his opinion.

He'd just poured 2 glasses when Jemima floated down the stairs. The black skirt, high heeled boots and fishnets elongated her shapely legs but the grey velvet shouted dull with a capital 'D'. "Ooh fizz, lovely, I'd forgotten we'd got that. So what's the verdict Patrick.?" "Let's see the red one. Then I'll tell you." "Wow. Much, much better but very dangerous. If you were my wife I'd be seriously worried." "Such flattery, I like it!" "If you like it now you'll learn to love it sweetheart." Patrick downed his glass of champagne. "Now I better be off, have a good evening. I'll call you about the job."

Jemima felt ridiculously disappointed. She'd enjoyed flirting and now he was leaving. "Ok, I'll wait to hear from you."

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