

JUDITH VAN BASTELAAR

I was twenty-eight when I realized that I was not going to have one of those fall in love, magical moments, but I was going to have to have a compromise if I wanted to have a partner and it was in that year that I met Joseph — slightly older, very Dutch man with not a huge handle on the English language but that didn't seem to matter.

We fell madly in love and after two dates and seven days, I found on my doorstep a cellophane package with seven roses and a note and it said, 'Seven roses for the seven days I know you.' Yes, grammatically it was wrong but I really got it and we had a great time together.

We were together almost all the time and he had little expressions that he'd say, "Do you wanna sit on the table now?" And I just wouldn't correct him on that because I just really liked the idea of the two of us sitting on the table.

But we had our wonderful times and it was great and then by Christmas we had decided to go on holiday — a ski holiday — and that was probably not a great move because I'm very connected to my family and Christmas was a special time and I was a big blubbery sobby mess for a lot of the Christmas (calling home was not a good idea) and that was hard. And then, on Christmas morning, when I woke up, I'd found under my pillow, this very small blue velvet box. Y'know, the square kind? The kind that kind of gives you the feeling that something important's gonna happen? Well this is my special moment and I opened it up and there it was, a ring, with seven diamonds on it.

I was elated and I was waiting for that moment and I'd turned to him and I said, "Is there something you wanna ask me? Or tell me?" and he said, "Judith, seven diamonds for the seven months I know you, how much I love you."

And that was really nice but I was looking for something else, and I paused to give him another chance and I said, "What finger should I wear it on?" and he said, "Oh! Whatever finger it fits".

And that wasn't what I wanted but it was a very nice ring and I put the ring on — not on the right finger I may say — and then we carried on with our ski holiday.

He had a fall, he broke his thumb and that was not great but we had a great time and just on our way back to Canada, we had to stop in Paris and have a meeting of some sort

and we were having dinner and he ordered crab which was a thoughtless thing to order because I had to feed him which was fine and it was kinda fun and he'd started this conversation which he'd said before which was something like "Do you want to marry me?"

And I'd always felt it was a bit of a fishy thing to say and it was like I'd say, "Well, y'know, maybe, yes, maybe, possibly, one day, we'll see"

And he was like "Well y'know, we're gonna get married someday" and y'know, I kinda felt like I was a little bit frustrated at that point because I really felt the opportunity had come and I said to him "Well, y'know, you have to ask me something first".

And he looked completely baffled and said "What?" And I said, "You have to say: "Will you marry me?"" and he said,

"Yes".