

*Lazenby*

JEANNINE enters with a large pile of music.)

JEANNINE. I thought the swim team had practice this afternoon.

CONRAD. They do.

JEANNINE. I thought you were swimming. [REDACTED]

CONRAD. I was. I'm not anymore. *SIT*

JEANNINE ([REDACTED] *from looking at questions*). Want to help me sort out these parts for the Bach piece?

CONRAD. Sure. [REDACTED]

JEANNINE. So what happened?

CONRAD. What d'you mean?

JEANNINE. Why aren't you swimming?

CONRAD. Because I quit. *Look up d' you*

JEANNINE. Oh. [REDACTED]

CONRAD [REDACTED]. Listen. You want to go out tonight?

JEANNINE. You mean with you? On a date?

CONRAD ([REDACTED]). Yeah, well . . . we don't have to call it a real date. We could just sort of fake it . . . see how it goes . . .

JEANNINE. I can't. *60/20 1/2 2/2 1/2*

CONRAD. Oh. [REDACTED]

JEANNINE. We're having trouble getting started again. Why don't you get out your list?

CONRAD. I tore it up. Remember?

JEANNINE. Yeah. Well . . . can't you think of anything safe?

CONRAD. Sure. [REDACTED] How come you can't go out with me tonight?

JEANNINE ([REDACTED]). Because. I have to babysit my little brother [REDACTED] Because my mother has a date.

CONRAD. Oh.

JEANNINE. With her boyfriend who flew in this morning from Akron.

CONRAD. I thought . . . you said your parents weren't divorced.

JEANNINE. They're not. This jerk from Ohio is trying to move things along. [REDACTED] I'm sorry. Geez,

I hate this. I hate acting like this. [REDACTED]

Okay, my turn to choose a topic. *part* How come you quit the swim team?

CONRAD [REDACTED] I don't know.

JEANNINE [REDACTED]. Did it . . . have anything to do with your brother?

CONRAD [REDACTED]. Who told you about that?

JEANNINE. Joe Lazenby. [REDACTED] I asked him, Connie.

CONRAD [REDACTED]. It's all right. Doesn't matter.

JEANNINE. He was a swimmer, too, wasn't he?

CONRAD. He was a great swimmer [REDACTED] He was great at everything.

JEANNINE. Was he older than you?

CONRAD [REDACTED]. A year.

JEANNINE. It must be hard on your parents . . . on everybody.

CONRAD ([REDACTED]). Yeah, it's hard.

JEANNINE ([REDACTED]). I'm sorry.

CONRAD ([REDACTED]). I guess he told you all of it, then, huh? About me, I mean?

JEANNINE ([REDACTED]). Yes. There are worse things . . . people do worse things than that.

CONRAD [redacted] away from [redacted] ed). I guess so.

JEANNINE [redacted]. I don't like this guy my mother is seeing. I don't like any guy who dates a married woman.

CONRAD. Do you know him? I mean, maybe he's not such a bad guy . . .

JEANNINE [redacted]. I know him. I hate him. I hate the way he looks . . . the ways he smells . . . I hate it every time he walks into the house . . . I just hate him! Damn . . . I really believed that . . . I mean, I kept thinking that, sooner or later, my folks would get back together . . . and I kept hoping this other guy would just . . . disappear. And now I know it's never going to happen. They don't love each other anymore. They never will again. And that's that! [redacted]

JEANNINE [redacted]

CONRAD. Hey . . . it's okay . . . it's okay.

JEANNINE [redacted]. No, it's not. Oh, geez, I just don't get why these things have to happen.

CONRAD [redacted]. These questions I ask myself every day . . . and every day I answer myself. I say, "How the hell do I know?"

JEANNINE [redacted]. You don't have to make jokes about everything, Connie. [redacted]

[redacted]

CONRAD (sighing wearily). Wasn't a joke, Jeannine. (He exits in the darkness.)

The lights come up on the Jarrett living room. CAL is decorating a Christmas tree, stringing popcorn and cranberries. CONRAD enters and begins to hang decorations on the tree.

CAL. We'll need a ladder to finish decorating this, you know. I should have bought the stubby spruce. It would have been cheaper and easier.

CONRAD. That spruce had a hormone deficiency, Dad. It's gonna make some short family very happy. Not us. This is the tree for us.

CAL. I liked that tree.

CONRAD. You felt sorry for that tree. It's a good thing I went with you.

CAL. You won't think it's such a good thing when we're stringing this popcorn through the first of the year.

CONRAD. We gotta do this right. Nothing artificial this year.

CAL. You want Christmas-on-the-prairie, you got it! (He sticks himself.) Ouch! This needlework is very hard on my self-respect. (He rises.) I think I'll hang a few lights. (He starts to hang the lights.) How was your trig final?

CONRAD. You want the truth?

CAL. Sure.

CONRAD. I aced it.

CAL. Great. Terrific. That your first A this semester?

CONRAD (smiling). Yeah. I'm getting back in the swing of things, huh?

(BETH enters in an overcoat.)

BETH (taking off the coat). You started without me.

CAL. Couldn't wait. (He kisses BETH.) How was bridge?

BETH (looking at the tree, her voice taut, controlled). You went out and bought a tree.