

You tell me what to do. I listen. And then you tell me what I've done wrong. This just makes it more clear.

BRUCE: No matter what I've said to you about this, you know I love you. I'll always love you.

LAUREN: I love you too, Dad. But that's . . .

BRUCE: That's that. That'll never change.

LAUREN: It's not enough. I'm not even sure it's true. You can't possibly love someone if you can't accept something so fundamental about them. I have to go.

BRUCE: No, now I can't have you leaving like this. This is crazy.

LAUREN: Get out of my way!

BRUCE: I don't want you driving like this. Come on now.

LAUREN: Don't tell me what to do! I'm leaving!

BRUCE: So, when will we see you again?

LAUREN: When you change your mind.

BRUCE: That'll never happen, Lauren. It just won't happen.

LAUREN: Then maybe I'll never be back. *(She hugs her father quickly.)* Good-bye, Daddy.

BRUCE: Don't worry. You'll be back. You'll be back, hon.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Julia, 23, and Duncan, 23, have been best friends since first meeting in their college dorms. After school, they decided to live together. They both have a kooky sense of humor and enjoy a periodic game of spying on people in the apartments across the way. Each time, Julia and Duncan pretend they are the characters they are watching. Today, they have their own dramatic scene. As it turns out, Duncan has been in love with Julia for some time, but he has never told her. Here he courageously decides to admit his true feelings for her. However, she has a surprising announcement of her own. As the scene begins, they are watching a couple across the way.

JULIA: *(Looking through binoculars.)* Oooh. Great dress! Why is she wearing a dress?

DUNCAN: *(Looking through binoculars.)* Um, she's formal. Dresses for him maybe.

JULIA: You think? Screw that. God, Dave is lucky when I comb my hair.

DUNCAN: Yeah, well he's lucky in general.

JULIA: Thanks.

DUNCAN: Scenario?

JULIA: Umm, dinner, I think.

DUNCAN: And the relationship?

JULIA: *(Looking.)* Hummm. I'm thinking friends.

DUNCAN: *(Looking.)* Agreed. But with romantic overtones. He pretends he's Chef Monsieur de la Grande Rotisserie. In reality though, he only cooks every few months. Real cooks never wear aprons like that.

JULIA: Agreed. It's a desperate measure. *(Looks up.)* We're going to get arrested for this some day you know?

DUNCAN: Well, *you* will. It's common for men, but for

women—it's just not done. Ever hear of a peeping Thomasina?
No. Right? It's very sick.

JULIA: No, it's not. And it's not sexual either. It's innocent curiosity really.

DUNCAN: Yes, that's true, completely innocent.

JULIA: Exactly! The original reality TV, without the TV.

DUNCAN: Yeah, right. So will they get it on tonight or what?

JULIA: Definitely not.

DUNCAN: Oh really now? She's cozying up to him. *(Points.)* See.

JULIA: She's also sneaking gulps of wine when his head turns. She's downing it for a reason.

DUNCAN: Why?

JULIA: It's the end obviously. She's not in love with him anymore. Maybe she loves somebody else.

DUNCAN: How is that obvious? She gives no indication of that at all?

JULIA: Yes she does!

DUNCAN: How?

JULIA: *(Beat.)* Okay. See her body language? See how she's leaning her chest away from him? That is a clear sign of her true desire to get away. And then there's the fingernails.

DUNCAN: Fingernails?

JULIA: Yes, she's not looking at them afraid they might be chipped. They are her savior right now. She's hiding in them, playing with them, giving her eyes a place to look instead of looking at him. If she were hot for him, she'd be using them to her advantage, showing them off—flashing them everywhere. Chopping veggies with her pinky posed. Plus she hasn't done a hair toss once.

DUNCAN: *(Thinking.)* You flipped your hair when you came in. So what does that mean?

JULIA: No, that was different. That was like a sweep, not a toss.

DUNCAN: Oh, right. Just making sure. So . . . Dialogue?

JULIA: *(Going into dialogue as she watches. Put-on voice.)* I'm so nervous tonight, Frederick.

DUNCAN: Frederick? That's a terrible name. He doesn't look like a Frederick.

JULIA: *(Staying in character.)* Ummmmm, Lawrence, wow, that looks beautiful. I love pineapple chicken.

DUNCAN: *(Putting on nondescript accent.)* Oh, Gloria— *(She rolls her eyes.)* that's my problem. Everything always looks great when I cook up a feast. But it's the taste that's the problem. It's the substance of things I can't get a hold of—I disappoint so many.

JULIA: I don't think you disappoint. Except maybe yourself. It's a lack of confidence, Larry.

DUNCAN: Yes, I lack confidence in love I'm afraid.

JULIA: Why is that? Why do you lack confidence?

DUNCAN: Insecurity, I suppose.

JULIA: That's the problem right there. You live in fear. Fear, fear, fear! Why, I ask?

DUNCAN: I have reason—nothing has ever worked out as I wanted. The women who love me, I don't want, and the women I love are completely uninterested.

JULIA: Well! That happens to the best of us! But you have to get back on your horse, Lawrence. You have to remount many times in life. Just swing your leg up and do it! You can't keep pining away for me forever.

DUNCAN: How can I end something that's never really begun, Gloria? That you've never even given a chance to begin?

JULIA: Oh good God, Larry! *(Stopping the act.)* Ooh. I'm sorry. It seems I just lobbed a carrot at your face, Frederick. *(Points.)* Did you see that?

DUNCAN: Yes. And my name's Lawrence, Gloria. Oh my God! Did you just see *that*!?

JULIA: *(Gasps.)* Did she just put a pineapple chunk where I think she did?

DUNCAN: Yep. And he seems to be diving in for it.

JULIA: Oop. There go the blinds.

DUNCAN: Damn! So much for the lack of hair toss.
JULIA: Shut up. It's usually very accurate. She's clearly abnormal.
DUNCAN: (*Smiling.*) Um-hmm. (*Beat.*) So you want to do another?
JULIA: I'd love to, Dunc, truly, but I can't. I've gotta shower before it gets too late.
DUNCAN: For what? I thought you were hanging here tonight?
JULIA: I'm going out with Dave in an hour.
DUNCAN: Again?
JULIA: Well, yeah.
DUNCAN: Geez, you guys are liked glued to each other.
JULIA: Well, it's been getting kind of serious I guess.
DUNCAN: Oh. Really? You were acting like it was so casual.
JULIA: Well, it was. At first. But, well . . . things changed all of a sudden. It got serious.
DUNCAN: What does that mean? You guys have been dating less than five months. How serious can it get? (*Joking.*) I mean, should I be looking for a new roommate?
JULIA: Maybe.
DUNCAN: (*Shocked.*) Are you serious? (*Beat.*) And you didn't even tell me?
JULIA: I don't know. I was going to tell you—you know you'd be the first person I'd tell, I just . . . I didn't say anything because I wasn't absolutely sure yet.
DUNCAN: Not sure about what?
JULIA: About . . . I don't know. Dave and I possibly moving in together.
DUNCAN: Now? (*She nods.*) But that's crazy! You're so young. And, and you haven't even experienced all the major holidays once through yet. You have to do that first. And what about me? You were going to leave me hanging without a roommate? We have a lease. Besides, he's not right for you at all! I think you have totally lost your mind here. It's been like six months and he's not even your type.
JULIA: You know, I didn't ask for your opinion.

DUNCAN: Excuse me. I thought I was your best friend.
JULIA: We're thinking five months from now anyway. When our lease is up. I would never leave you high and dry. I can't believe you said that.
DUNCAN: When the hell did all this come up anyway?
JULIA: You know, I thought you might be happy for me.
DUNCAN: I am happy. I'm happy. I didn't say I wasn't. It's just . . . I've fallen in love with you.
JULIA: What?
DUNCAN: I'm in love with you, Julia. I have been for a long time.
JULIA: Since when? What is this? Where is this coming from? Are you trying to get me to not move out, Duncan? Is this some kind of screwed up game? Because it's not funny.
DUNCAN: No, it's not a game. I was actually planning on telling you tonight. Unbelievable timing.
JULIA: God. I don't know what to say, Dunc. It's not like . . . I just . . . I don't know what to say.
DUNCAN: I guess I'm just making things awkward between us.
JULIA: No. I'm—I know how you feel—
DUNCAN: Here comes the huge "but." The mammoth "but." I know what follows . . . "you're too much like my brother" or "we're too good of friends" or "it just doesn't feel right."
JULIA: I . . . Look, Duncan, I can't say that I wasn't attracted to you or ever wondered sometimes because I did—I have. But for some reason, it never happened and I have to think there was a reason for it. We're good as friends. It's better that way.
DUNCAN: For you maybe. Do you think it never happened because I'm a freakin' chicken and I never told you how I felt?
JULIA: No. It's not that. I mean, I felt the same way about you about a year ago, and I was going to say something, but I felt foolish. If I knew that you . . . Maybe if I hadn't met Dave, something might be possible now, but—

DUNCAN: Oh God! Don't tell me that! Don't tell me any of that! I'm such a jackass.

JULIA: No you're not. Look, you want me to be honest, don't you?

DUNCAN: Yeah.

JULIA: Well . . . The thing is . . . I think I've fallen in love with him.

DUNCAN: No! You can't have! He's all wrong!

JULIA: No, he's not. He's a really good guy. He loves me, and he's good to his family. He's a good communicator when things don't go right. He fixes stuff up around his mother's house. He's a really good guy.

DUNCAN: But he's boring, Julia. And formal. He introduces himself by his first and last name every single time he calls. Every time! I know who he is. You told me yourself that you couldn't stand how long he takes to read the paper every Sunday.

JULIA: I know I said that. But sometimes it's nice to sit around for hours reading the paper and listening to NPR. It's grown on me. Like people who are different from you do.

DUNCAN: He'd never play the Rear Window game, or stay up all hours talking, or play water bomb day, or build a castle on the beach spontaneously. He'll always play by the rules. Go to bed early, pay all his bills on time, eat all his vegetables, and color inside the lines.

JULIA: I know. He's not you, Duncan. And I don't want him to be. Listen, no one can or will replace you. Ever!

DUNCAN: But I love you, Julia. I know I only fully realized it a few months ago, but I've known in my heart for much longer.

JULIA: You know what? This is bull. You had four years to fall in love with me, Duncan. You had four years to act on it. For whatever reason, you didn't. Now someone else is crazy about me and you're suddenly smitten. That doesn't even give you the slightest pause? *(Beat.)* I know you, Duncan. You're whole life has been about competition. Getting the

best grades, sweeping the track team finals, competing with other freelancers for the best story. You know what I think? I found someone who loved me, and you got scared that you'd be alone. So suddenly, you're in love, right?

DUNCAN: No, I didn't tell you a couple of years ago because I was too self-involved to notice. Or maybe I was just too afraid you'd reject me.

JULIA: Well, you're stupid for that. Because I wouldn't have rejected you. But now, what I have with David is right, Dunc. I can feel it. And I won't jeopardize that for something I'm not sure of. Sometimes things happen for a reason. *(Beat.)* Come on now, pick yourself up, sir, and get back on the horse. You're a braver man now than you've ever been.

DUNCAN: I'm the dumbest man alive.

JULIA: Brave and dumb. Not a bad combination really. Now, I'll go catch that shower. I'm not leaving tomorrow or anything.

DUNCAN: Maybe I should go to Roger's place for a few days.

JULIA: If you feel you need to, go. I understand. We all get hurt, Duncan. I know you haven't before, but it opens a door in a way—opens up the possibility to something real. Which requires that you be vulnerable sometimes. I'll never throw this in your face or use it to hurt you. Honestly, I'm flattered. Really.

DUNCAN: That's why you suck. I can't even hate you when you're flat out rejecting me. Anyway, get outta here. *(She doesn't move.)* Don't sit there staring at me. Get out, get out!

(She does.)

DUNCAN: *(Beat.)* Get out.