

## IN MY DREAMS . . . IN MY IMAGINATION

*Lauren, 24, the oldest child in a large Catholic family, has never felt particularly close to her father, Bruce, 55. It's not as if Bruce would wish this. He loves his daughter. He even greatly admires her intelligence, warmth, and efficiency. In fact, when she was a teenager, he fostered her talents by having her work at his own engineering firm. "She was the best employee ever!" She always looked fondly on those days. The problem for Bruce is that he never knew how to really talk to his girls, in particular, to Lauren. She was always a bit too "literary"—her friends too arty. As the years passed, Lauren moved away from Indiana to Chicago to pursue her interest in theater. Bruce threw up his hands. How could she waste her mind and take such risks? But nothing would prepare him for the announcement she made eight months ago. Lauren told both her parents that she was a lesbian and had fallen in love with a woman. Bruce reacted quickly and strongly. He scolded her behavior, calling her selfish and ungodly. In the end, he left her apartment in a fit of discomfort. In the months since, when she visits, things remain strained. This weekend, when Lauren returns home, she feels she must broach this subject. She finds him staring down at the pool.*

BRUCE: You kids enjoy the pool, you love the pool, but none of you have a clue how to take care of it. I have to practically knock John's block off to get him to clean the damn thing. All you kids know how to do is have conversations. All these deep conversations where do they get you?

LAUREN: Are you referring to the conversation I was having with Mom?

BRUCE: No. That I would not call a conversation. I tell you, my father would slam my head into the wall if I talked back the way John does to me these days.

LAUREN: Why wouldn't you call that a conversation?

BRUCE: Because I wouldn't. The volume for one thing.

LAUREN: I wasn't yelling and neither was Mom.

BRUCE: Anyway, it doesn't matter.

LAUREN: Yes it does. Do you know what we were talking about?

BRUCE: I don't *want* to know what you were talking about.

LAUREN: You know exactly what we were talking about.

You're just pretending not to.

BRUCE: Right. That makes sense.

LAUREN: Which is why you came out here in the first place. Looking at the pool, checking the pH. You already did all that last night.

BRUCE: That's because it's off again. Look, if you want to talk about something specific, Lauren—let's talk. Otherwise I don't know what you want from me.

LAUREN: She wanted me to come home for her Fourth of July picnic. I refused.

BRUCE: She doesn't realize that the drive from Chicago is a pain in the butt in bad traffic.

LAUREN: The drive's not the reason. I would make the drive in a second if . . .

BRUCE: So you've got plans. I don't blame you. You're young. I'd get out of it too. Lord knows I can't take that potato salad she makes every year. I love your mother, but God help us, that is the worst crap I've ever tasted.

LAUREN: I agree, but that still has nothing to do with it.

BRUCE: She'll get over it. It's no big deal. I thought you were going to bring your car over to Buddy's today so he could check your transmission while you're home?

LAUREN: I haven't had any problems with it since I brought it into the shop.

BRUCE: Well you might want to double-check their work. Those folks could be ripping you off. They fix it so it'll break again. I know.

LAUREN: I had a recommendation for the place I took it to.

BRUCE: Recommendation or not, you really ought to take advantage of Buddy while you're home. He's happy to do it. He does a great job. I think he's got a little thing for you.

LAUREN: I know he has a little thing for me, which is exactly why I don't want to go there.

BRUCE: You don't have to marry the guy. He's just lonely. Just talk to him.

LAUREN: I don't want to talk about my car. My car is fine, Dad!

BRUCE: Fine! I was just trying to get ya a deal. I know you've been having trouble with money.

LAUREN: I'm not having trouble with money.

BRUCE: Oh yeah? They finally give you that raise?

LAUREN: Well, sort of—

BRUCE: Aw, Lauren, I thought they were giving you a raise right away?

LAUREN: They are! The paperwork hasn't gone through yet.

BRUCE: Didn't you tell me that on Mother's Day? Get paid what you're worth, honey. My admin makes forty-two thousand and we're talking Indiana. And you're doin' much more than her!

LAUREN: Are we done with the laundry list?

BRUCE: Laundry list? You want to do my laundry?

LAUREN: You know, the things you use to distract us from really talking. The car, the job, my health. Are we almost done? Because everything is fine. The car's fine, the job's fine, and my health's absolutely perfect. And thanks for asking.

BRUCE: You've got to tell them you're willing to go elsewhere if you really want a raise, Lauren.

LAUREN: Urgh. I'm not talking about the raise! Screw the

raise! I don't want to come home because she won't let me bring Sarah.

BRUCE: *(Pause.)* I'm going to go get Brian to help me finish the yard.

LAUREN: Did you hear me? You do remember Sarah?

BRUCE: I heard you, and I'm not discussing this.

LAUREN: We need to discuss it.

BRUCE: No. I don't need to discuss anything. We're at my house, under my roof, and it's my day off. All right?

LAUREN: No. It's not all right.

BRUCE: Well, then go home. Nobody's keeping you here. You can go home to your friends and your crazy lifestyle and talk till your heart's content about everything making your mother sicker than a dog right now.

LAUREN: Oh please. You both do that. You try to make me feel guilty or feel sorry for one or the other of you. How do you think I feel about the way you guys are reacting? I know Mom's unhappy, but she talks to me occasionally when I force the issue. You're afraid.

BRUCE: Afraid? No, sweetheart, I'm not afraid. I just don't want to get angry on my day off. I don't want to get into it with you on my weekend. I don't want to tell you how many ways I think it's wrong.

LAUREN: How can loving someone be so wrong?

BRUCE: Because it's not natural for you to love a woman like that.

LAUREN: Why not? You do!

BRUCE: Don't be stupid, Lauren.

LAUREN: I'm not stupid! I'm really asking you.

BRUCE: It's selfish and unhealthy and completely against God's will, but you know all that. So I don't know why you need me to say it. I don't want to think about it in the first place.

LAUREN: How is it selfish? That confuses me.

BRUCE: You could have been a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher. You had a great mind. Great grades. The best in the family. You would have been a real example to the rest of them.

LAUREN: Oh, I was suppose to set an example instead of doing what I cared about, what I loved?

BRUCE: What difference did it make? You're working in admin just like I told you. What did that degree buy you? You had so much to give to the world.

LAUREN: I think theater does give to the world. Besides, I thought you told me I was talented.

BRUCE: You are talented. But being an actress is not practical, which you've discovered, no matter how talented you are. And it's not a giving profession. In fact, it's the most selfish, self-absorbed, self-involved profession that ever existed. That's the problem. It draws those people. Weird, unhealthy people who obviously influenced you in this.

LAUREN: Nobody influenced me. I was born like this. I just pushed it so far down my whole life. I remember when I was a kid, when I was a teenager. You must remember too.

BRUCE: Remember what? You were a normal kid.

LAUREN: Yes. But I always liked girls. And I'm normal now even despite that.

BRUCE: I'm not going to change my mind about this, Lauren, so why bother talking about it?

LAUREN: Think about it scientifically, logically. A person's genetic makeup is determined by random selection. It's a random occurrence. You get a blonde in a family of brunettes.

BRUCE: There're no recognizable genes for that as far as I know.

LAUREN: Well it's not as if it's been studied for that long.

BRUCE: If it's so normal, why doesn't the government recognize it? Can you get married? Live legally as a married couple together?

LAUREN: You can live together legally in Vermont. You may not be able to get married, but you certainly can live together legally.

BRUCE: One state and you know that'll be overturned in a year. Why isn't the majority of society applauding it?

LAUREN: Because most of society is closed-minded I guess.

BRUCE: And if you want to get graphic, why can't you reproduce? Why can't you make children together if it's so natural?

LAUREN: I don't know. I can't answer that. It's a biological way to keep population at a reasonable level.

BRUCE: Oh come on! Bull—

LAUREN: We can have children if we want. It's done all the time.

BRUCE: Now don't tell me you're going to have children. That would be completely unforgivable.

LAUREN: So how come you didn't mention that "society thing" about Sandy's marriage? Do you think most of society applauds interracial marriage?

BRUCE: You can't even equate the two. Your sister married a man.

LAUREN: A black man. Forty years ago they wouldn't be allowed to be married in our church. Do you know the uproar it would have caused? Society would not be applauding. Society learns things. Learns about other people, understands differences. It's really not that big of a deal. And since when did you take your cue from society at large?

BRUCE: (*Shaking his head.*) You're grasping for straws now. The situations aren't even similar.

LAUREN: Why can't you just get to know Sarah? Meet her as a person? See what you think? Maybe you'll actually like her.

BRUCE: You're not to bring her here. Ever.

LAUREN: She is the most important thing in my life now. And I can't even talk about her—mention her without you leaving the room or Mom giving me the silent treatment. Do you know how that makes me feel?

BRUCE: We love you, Lauren. Always. Your mother and I are just not going to accept this part of you. Ever. We can't tell you what to do with your life anymore. You're all grown up. We just pray that you rethink this.

LAUREN: It's not a thinking thing. It's how I feel and it wins

out. Because that's what's in my gut. And that's what you taught me. To follow my gut.

BRUCE: I taught you that? Well, I don't remember telling you to ignore your mind either.

LAUREN: You taught *all* of us that. Why do you think we're all so incredibly different and gutsy and fearless? None of us have taken an easy road. None of us have followed "societal rules." Even religion—your religion, doesn't tell us to listen to society.

BRUCE: But not about this. There's no question it's wrong.

LAUREN: God, Dad, don't you remember how badly it hurt when Mom's parents rejected you? As I remember from you, they didn't even want to speak to you.

BRUCE: I respected them. I understand their reaction even more now. Your grandparents believed in the Baptist religion wholeheartedly. I don't think I'd be too happy if a man came along and wanted to convert *my* daughter.

LAUREN: It just feels unfair. It's so unfair. Tanya gets pregnant before marriage. You're pissed but she gets a huge wedding and all kinds of lavish attention. Sandy and Derrick get a bigger and more beautiful wedding and everyone's thrilled beyond belief once they get used to the idea of a black man. The boys manage to get themselves constantly in and out of trouble—give you weeks and years of worries. And then there's me. Lauren, who got the good grades and made the strange choices. Who never caused you a moment's worry. At least before I became another screwup. The oldest who was supposed to set the example. Lauren, who is alone at every single family event. Whose relatives look at her with pity and sadness because she never seems to find anyone. I'm not an ugly woman. I'm pretty. I'm smart. I'm fun. Don't they even begin to wonder? And as the months go by, I think someday you'll mention what I told you about myself one November afternoon. Maybe you'll start to wonder and read books and talk to me. In my dreams you give me and Sarah a chance. You invite her to a family

dinner. It's not comfortable yet, but you actually like her. You see how well she treats me, how much she loves me. And one day, we get married and you're all there. In my dreams.

BRUCE: I'm sorry this hurts you so much. It does the same to me. In my . . . imagination you decide it's all wrong for you. You meet a good man, and I help you find a wonderful house. You have beautiful, smart children who have a talent for music like you do. We all occasionally take a nice vacation together. You show off Europe to me like you've always wanted to. And I spend way over my budget. That's what I wish for.

LAUREN: So. I'm right. *(He doesn't speak. Beat.)* You don't really want to know about my life. What I care about. Ever know the real person I love.

BRUCE: I am happy to hear about your life, Lauren, but not if it includes that. If you were born like this, like you say, maybe you shouldn't be with anyone.

LAUREN: Are you saying you'd rather me be alone for the rest of my life?

BRUCE: *(Sighs.)* Yes. I guess that is what I'm saying.

*(Lauren is left without any words. Long pause.)*

BRUCE: I'm just asking you to think about it. Pray about it.

LAUREN: No. I think *you* should. Can you open the garage door please?

BRUCE: Where are you going?

LAUREN: Home.

BRUCE: Come on, Lauren. We can function together. We just won't talk about it. I knew there wouldn't be any point anyway.

LAUREN: Forgive me if I don't just want to function together. That's not what I want from my father. I guess there's no point in ever talking about anything. It'll just be more awkward moments and laundry lists that mean nothing.

BRUCE: I know this has caused problems in our relationship.

LAUREN: Relationship? We've never had a relationship, Dad.

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