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Cast of Characters

JAN

LEAH

NARRATOR JAN

NARRATOR LEAH

JAN 2

LEAH 2

JOHN

MARK

MARGARET

REPORTER

MARY

PHYLLIS

MAY

T.V. ANNOUNCER

SETH

BOB

NANCY

CINDY

WALTER

TO THE TABLE

by Alan Haehnel

(Lights up to a mother and daughter—JAN and LEAH--sitting at a kitchen table eating ice cream.)

JAN. I don't know. I don't think this is as good as Friendly's.

LEAH. I like it.

JAN. Oh, I like it, too. I'm not going to throw it away.

LEAH. You better not. We earned these calories.

JAN. I hate dieting.

LEAH. *You* do? I'm hungry all day.

JAN. You're not supposed to stop eating entirely. You know that. You're being honest with your food journal, aren't you?

LEAH. I'm being honest. Are you?

JAN. Every last bite gets recorded in my journal. I'm very meticulous. I'm actually surprised how compulsive I get about it. I was chewing on a hangnail the other day and the thought occurred to me, "I better write this down."

LEAH. That's disgusting. That is so weird.

JAN. I know. I was actually wondering how many calories my hangnail was.

LEAH. Mom! You didn't swallow it, did you?

JAN. No, no, of course I didn't.

LEAH. Then what difference would it make? It's like chewing gum. It doesn't count.

JAN. As long as it's sugar free. Sweetened bubblegum has 15 calories a piece.

LEAH. You really are anal about this.

JAN. I know. That's what I was saying—it surprises me. But you are being honest, aren't you? What you write down—that's actually what you're eating?

LEAH. Mother, stop. You wanted to do this dieting thing together, we're doing it together. You can't be like a food Nazi, always spying on me.

JAN. I'm not spying. I just...it's not healthy if we go overboard.

LEAH. Yeah, well, isn't counting the calories in your own hangnail just a bit overboard?

JAN. Yes, I admit it is. But it's just neurotic, not dangerous.

LEAH. Yeah, yeah. I got to go puke up my ice cream now.

JAN. Leah!

LEAH. I'm just kidding! I'm not anorexic, I'm not bulimic. Relax.

JAN. I'm relaxed.

LEAH. Good.

JAN. (*Looking at a spoonful of ice cream:*) It doesn't have enough chunks in it. The Friendly's cookie dough has a lot more chunks in it. There should be a law, I think. Legislation about chunks in the ice cream. Don't you think?

LEAH. Absolutely.

JAN. Because it's just not right—you get ice cream called cookie dough; you get a certain expectation about it, and that expectation just doesn't get fulfilled.

LEAH. Why didn't you just get the Friendly's kind?

JAN. It wasn't on sale. That's not the point, though. Whatever the brand is, if you get ice cream called cookie dough, it should be required by the government or by somebody to have a certain number of chunks in it.

LEAH. Well, you should probably write a letter to your congressman about that.

JAN. Probably. Will you sign it?

LEAH. Sure. I should probably get going.

JAN. Get going? Where?

LEAH. I...I've got some homework I need to finish up.

JAN. Homework, huh?

LEAH. Yeah.

JAN. Listen, before you go anywhere...I was just wondering how things have been going with you and Seth.

LEAH. Oh. Um, they're fine. They're good.

JAN. Are you two still...boyfriend and girlfriend?

LEAH. I don't know.

JAN. You don't know? I guess I'm a little confused.

LEAH. Why?

JAN. The last I knew, you two were definitely an item.

LEAH. An item?

JAN. The last I knew, Leah, the two of you were boyfriend and girlfriend. Two days ago, when I came to pick you up at the school, you were holding hands and he gave you a kiss before you left. I guess that, to me, means he's your boyfriend.

LEAH. We just like to hang out, that's all.

JAN. Well, how do you feel about him?

LEAH. About Seth?

JAN. Yes.

LEAH. He's okay.

JAN. Are you in love with the guy?

LEAH. Mother, come on!

JAN. Okay, you don't want to talk about it now, that's fine. I guess I would feel better if I knew him a little.

LEAH. Mom, this is not a big deal.

JAN. How about if you had him over for dinner?

LEAH. He works nights.

JAN. Oh. Where does he work?

LEAH. What is this, Mom, twenty questions?

JAN. Well, unless he works for some child labor camp, he can probably get an evening off now and then and we can have him over for dinner.

LEAH. Sure. I'll see if he can come over sometime.

JAN. Good. *(Scraping her ice cream dish:)* Got to get every last bit there.

LEAH. Well, I better...

JAN. Let's have some more.

LEAH. Mom, that was our ½ cup for the week. We agreed.

JAN. I know, I know, but it tasted so delicious. It won't hurt anything. We have been so good. Look at us. We're practically svelte. We're a couple of attractive...chicks, right? A little smidge more of ice cream won't hurt.

LEAH. Mom, really, let's not have any more. We'll just regret it in the morning. I am going to go get started on my homework. *(Getting up to leave:)* Thanks for the ice cream.

JAN. *(A bit sharp:)* Leah!

LEAH. What?

(Pause.)

JAN. Thanks for sitting with me for a bit. Next time I'll get the Friendly's.

LEAH. Okay.

(She exits. The lights go down for a moment, then back up to reveal JAN and LEAH, just as they were at the beginning of the play. All around them, though, are other people—the various characters and voices behind their conversation. At each freeze, these characters speak and interact. When JAN and LEAH are not frozen, these

characters just look on. Those characters playing the NARRATORS and the alternate versions of JAN and LEAH wear the same costume as JAN and LEAH. Beyond that, they do not look like JAN and LEAH.)

JAN. I don't know. I don't think this is as good as Friendly's.

LEAH. I like it.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. This is nice, sitting here with her.

NARRATOR LEAH. Okay, enough of this. I want to get going.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Oh, I like it, too. I'm not going to throw it away.

LEAH. You better not. We earned these calories.

JAN. I hate dieting.

LEAH. *You* do? I'm hungry all day.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. "Hungry all day?" What am I doing? I've been so desperate to find something we could have in common, but dieting? What was I thinking? I can't believe I've come to this. We used to practically beg her to eat.

JOHN. Come on, Leah, have some peas. Come on. Open up, now.

(LEAH 2, acting like an infant, turns her head away from the baby food.)

JOHN. It's good for you. Look, Daddy will eat it. See?

JAN 2. John, why are you eating the baby's food?

JOHN. I'm just showing her it's good. Mm-mm. Oh, this is disgusting.

JAN 2. Don't say that; she'll catch on.

JOHN. I'm saying it to you, not to the baby.

JAN 2. She's smart. She'll sense it.

JOHN. Come on, have some yummy peas that taste like barf.

JAN 2. John!

JOHN. Here comes the airplane, into the hangar. (*Making the noise of a plane:*) Open up, Leah! (*LEAH opens her mouth, takes in the peas, then spits them out at JOHN.*) Oh, disgusting! Leah, you eat these peas!

(LEAH 2 starts to cry.)

JAN 2. She's just a baby, John!

JOHN. Well, you feed her, then.

NARRATOR JAN. I spent hours trying to figure out what she would eat, and now what am I doing? Dieting with her!

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. You're not supposed to stop eating entirely. You know that. You're being honest with your food journal, aren't you?

LEAH. I'm being honest. Are you?

JAN. Every last bite gets recorded in my journal. I'm very meticulous. I'm actually surprised how compulsive I get about it.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. Surprised? I'm not. She gets nutso about everything. What was it the other day? Oh, yeah—pencils. How long did she nag me about the pencil thing?

JAN 2. Are you ready for that test?

LEAH 2. I'm all set.

JAN 2. Do you have your #2 pencils, sharpened?

LEAH 2. I've got 'em.

JAN 2. Show me.

LEAH 2. What?

JAN 2. I want to see the pencils, Leah. Where are they?

LEAH 2. Mom, what is this about?

JAN 2. Is this the one, in the front of your backpack?

LEAH 2. Yeah, so?

JAN 2. So, two things. This is one pencil; you're supposed to have two. And this is not a #2 pencil. Two #2 pencils. That's what the instructions specify, Leah.

NARRATOR LEAH. "Compulsive" is my mother's middle name.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. I was actually chewing on a hangnail the other day and the thought occurred to me, "I better write this in my food journal."

LEAH. That's disgusting. That is so weird.

JAN. I know. I was actually wondering how many calories my hangnail was.

LEAH. Mom! You didn't swallow it, did you?

JAN. No, no, of course I didn't.

LEAH. Then what difference would it make? It's like chewing gum. It doesn't count.

JAN. As long as it's sugar free. Sweetened bubblegum has 15 calories a piece.

LEAH. You really are anal about this.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. "Anal." She knows I don't like that word.

NARRATOR LEAH. She hates that word.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. I know. That's what I was saying—it surprises me. But you are being honest, aren't you? What you write down—that's actually what you're eating?

LEAH. Mother, stop. You wanted to do this dieting thing together, we're doing it together. You can't be like a food Nazi, always spying on me.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. And my grandmother hated that word.

(JAN 2 runs into the room, acting like a 10-year-old. MARK, her brother, follows, getting ready to shoot her with a rubber band.)

JAN 2. Stop it, Mark! Don't you dare!

MARK. Where do you want it, Jan? In the head? In the rear-end?

JAN 2. Get away from me, you Nazi!

(Jan and Mark's grandmother—MARGARET—comes storming in.)

MARGARET. *(Taking the rubber band from MARK:)* Give me that, young man. What are you doing to your sister?

MARK. We were just...

MARGARET. *(To JAN:)* And what did you call him, Janice? Just now, what did you call your brother?

JAN 2. He was going to snap me with...

MARK. She called me a Nazi, Grammy!

MARGARET. That's what I thought. Janice, Mark, now listen to your grandmother. I do not ever want to hear you use that word. Ever! You have no idea what it means and you have no business calling anyone that—certainly not members of your own family.

JAN 2. *(Near tears:)* Yes, Grammy.

MARK. Sorry, Grammy.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. I'm not being a...I'm not spying. I just...it's not healthy if we go overboard.

LEAH. Yeah, well, isn't counting the calories in your own hangnail just a bit overboard?

JAN. Yes, I admit it is. But it's just neurotic, not dangerous.

LEAH. Yeah, yeah.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. This will get her going.

(Unfreeze.)

LEAH. I got to go puke up my ice cream now.

JAN. Leah!

LEAH. I'm just kidding! I'm not anorexic, I'm not bulimic. Relax.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. Relax, my daughter tells me. Relax. How can I? How can any parent relax these days? She jokes about not being anorexic or bulimic, but I've seen the reports.

REPORTER. The incidents of eating disorders have doubled since the 1960s. Studies show that children as young as age seven and across all ethnic groups may suffer from such disorders as anorexia nervosa or bulimia. Concerns about body image may compel children...

NARRATOR JAN. Of course, my own niece...but that doesn't get talked about. My sister won't allow it. Leah was too young to remember what happened to her cousin, but I certainly do—watching that vibrant girl turn into a sullen shadow.

JAN 2. Mary, what's the story with Dawn?

MARY. What do you mean?

JAN 2. She's lost so much weight. Has she been sick?

MARY. No. She's fine. She just has this thing about being fat. It's silly.

JAN 2. Well, does she eat?

MARY. What are you saying, that I'd let my own daughter starve?

JAN 2. No, of course not, but...

MARY. She eats. Don't worry about it.

JAN 2. You see her?

MARY. Of course I see her. Jan, what are you doing?

JAN 2. I'm asking if you actually see her eat.

MARY. Jan, we should just drop this.

JAN 2. I'm not trying to butt into your business.

MARY. Then we should simply stop this right now. Okay?

JAN 2. Okay. It's just that I've heard that the kids will tell you they're eating but they're actually...

MARY. What are you doing?

JAN 2. What do you mean?

MARY. Do you know what you're doing?

JAN 2. I'm not trying to do anything. I'm concerned.

MARY. You're mothering. I don't need it. Dawn isn't your daughter. You have one. Take care of your own, Jan. For once.

NARRATOR JAN. So I could say nothing more—just watch my niece over the next several months get thinner and thinner. Nobody said a word about it. Dawn became a living family skeleton. I didn't find out until two weeks after she had been admitted that she was even in the hospital. Her heart had just...stopped one night. She barely survived. Relax, my daughter tells me.

(Back to the table.)

JAN. I'm relaxed.

LEAH. Good.

JAN. *(Looking at a spoonful of ice cream:)* It doesn't have enough chunks in it. The Friendly's cookie dough has a lot more chunks in it. There should be a law, I think. Legislation about chunks in the ice cream. Don't you think?

LEAH. Absolutely.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. I'm babbling.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Because it's just not right; you get ice cream called cookie dough; you get a certain expectation about it, and that expectation just doesn't get fulfilled.

LEAH. Why didn't you just get the Friendly's kind?

JAN. It wasn't on sale. That's not the point, though. Whatever the brand is, if you get ice cream called cookie dough, it should be required by the government or by somebody to have a certain number of chunks in it.

LEAH. Well, you should probably write a letter to your congressman about that.

JAN. Probably. Will you sign it?

LEAH. Sure. *(Pause.)* I should probably get going.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. I'd better get out of here soon. I don't know what Mom is after, but she always does this when she's got some tough issue she wants to discuss with me. She starts going on about nothing, trying to make some sort of joke, but I can tell that she's working too hard at it. It's not that she finds whatever it is amazingly funny; she's just working her way up to the real thing she wants to discuss. Ice cream is what she's stalling with this time. If I can just escape before she gets to it, whatever it is...

(Back to the table.)

JAN. Get going? Where?

LEAH. I...I've got some homework I need to finish up.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. Lie. It's only 7:30 and, no matter what, she will not start her homework before 10:30. It drives me crazy! How did I ever get such a night owl?

NARRATOR LEAH. Bad lie. I never start my homework before 10:30. It has to be completely dark and quieted down before I can start to concentrate on things.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Homework, huh?

LEAH. Yeah.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. She's trying to avoid me. She wants to escape. Deep breath—here I go.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Listen, before you go anywhere...

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. Damn.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. I was just wondering how things have been going with you and Seth.

LEAH. Oh. Um, they're fine. They're good.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. "Fine, good, okay, whatever." I swear, I agree with my neighbor Phyllis.

PHYLLIS. Every day it's the same thing when I ask my kids about what's going on with them. "How was your day?" I ask them. "Good." "What happened?" "Nothing." Every day I get this, but you know darn well things have been going on. I get a call from the school. Ricky's flunking three subjects. Ricky gets home and I ask him, "So how's school going?" "Okay," he says. "Holy smokes," I tell him, "I hope you never become a weather man—hurricane's on the way and you'd just tell people, 'Weather's good. Weather's okay. Should be a great day for a picnic!'"

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Are you two still...boyfriend and girlfriend?

LEAH. I don't know.

JAN. You don't know?

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. She's going to make fun of me.

NARRATOR JAN. Have to be careful. No sarcasm. If May at work made a statement like that, I'd be all over her.

JAN 2. (*Sitting next to May, wearing a telephone headset:*) You don't know? Oh, I see—so you're not actually directly involved with the guy. I've heard of this; you've got one of those relationship brokers.

MAY. Actually, yes, it's very convenient. I call up my broker and I ask her, "So, am I still going out with that guy or not? Are we boyfriend and girlfriend or has our stock decreased?"

JAN 2. Sounds great—you get all the information without any of the messiness. I'm going to have to get me one of them.

MAY. It's big business on the 'Net these days. Cupid.com has links to cupidbrokers.com—one company gets you hooked up, the other manages the details.

JAN 2. All just a mouse click away. Now that's progress.

NARRATOR JAN. May and I could joke like that for hours and it's fine. I can't do that with Leah, though.

NARRATOR LEAH. If she gets sarcastic, I'll act really offended. That'll just end the conversation right there.

LEAH 2. Oh, that's great, Mom. Thanks so much for taking me seriously.

JAN 2. That was just a joke, Leah. Don't be so sensitive.

LEAH 2. You're always telling me you don't appreciate my sarcastic attitude. Well, guess where I got it from?

NARRATOR JAN. Okay, so even though she just said she doesn't know if she's still Seth's girlfriend—a ridiculous statement—I have to answer without acknowledging that I think it's ridiculous.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Um...I guess I'm a little confused.

LEAH. Why?

JAN. The last I knew, you two were definitely an item.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. “An item?” I don’t know what the current terminology is.

(Unfreeze.)

LEAH. An item?

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. “An item?” Where does she come up with this stuff?

NARRATOR JAN. Apparently not the current terminology.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. The last I knew, Leah, the two of you were boyfriend and girlfriend. Two days ago, when I came to pick you up at the school, you were holding hands and he gave you a kiss before you left. I guess that, to me, means he’s your boyfriend.

LEAH. We just like to hang out, that’s all.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. Oh, no—“hang out.” I’m not even going to touch that one, not today.

LEAH 2. Marsha’s coming to pick me up later.

JAN 2. Marsha—oh, right. What are you two planning to do?

LEAH 2. Just hang out.

JAN 2. You’re always saying that, you know—that you’re going to “hang out.” I have no idea what that means.

LEAH 2. It just means hang out. What’s to understand?

NARRATOR JAN. I think of these public service announcements encouraging me to stay involved with my daughter’s life—to ask questions, to know where she’s going.

T.V. ANNOUNCER. *(Typical P.S.A. voice:)* Do you know her friends? Do you know where she’s going? Take time. Ask... Parents: the anti-drug.

NARRATOR JAN. But I get the same answer: “We’re just hanging out.” She hangs out with girls, with guys, with dogs, with cats. It’s become the catch-all answer and it doesn’t tell me a thing.

JAN 2. Well, what do you do when you hang out?

LEAH 2. We talk. Listen to music. Maybe go to a movie.

JAN 2. Now, right there, that—going to a movie—that’s not “hanging out.” That’s leaving the house and going to a movie. Are you and Marsha going to a movie?

LEAH 2. I don’t know. Maybe.

JAN 2. So “hanging out” could include leaving the house? What other options come under the heading “hanging out”?

NARRATOR JAN. Knocking over tombstones? Smoking marijuana? Robbing banks? Making babies?

LEAH 2. I don’t know!

JAN 2. Well, I’ll tell you what. Until you can define more specifically what “hanging out with Marsha” means tonight, you won’t be going.

LEAH 2. What?

NARRATOR JAN. Are we feeling strong enough to handle another discussion of the definition of “hanging out” right now? No, we are not.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Well, how do you feel about him?

LEAH. About Seth?

JAN. Yes.

LEAH. He’s okay.

(Freeze.)

SETH. Hey.

LEAH 2. Hey, Baby.

NARRATOR LEAH. I love him. I really do.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Are you in love with the guy?

LEAH. Mother, come on!

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. Another phrase that's all attitude but no substance. "Mother, come on." "Come on" where? How? What, why, when?

NARRATOR LEAH. She has got to be kidding. She wants me to get all vulnerable and everything with her. I've tried that. I know what happens.

LEAH 2. *(Age 11:)* Mom, I think...I think I'm in love with Doug Johnson.

JAN 2. *(Laughing:)* Oh, Honey, you have no idea what love is.

LEAH 2. Mom!

JAN 2. Love? Leah, you're too young to even use the word! You're in sixth grade, for goodness' sake!

LEAH 2. Oh, forget it.

JAN 2. No, no. Listen, I'm sorry.

LEAH 2. Forget it!

JAN 2. Leah!

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Okay, you don't want to talk about it now, that's fine. I guess I would feel better if I knew him a little.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. You could meet Seth; you could sit down and have a little conversation with him; but you wouldn't get to know him, not like I do. Nobody knows him like I do because nobody takes the time just to be with him.

LEAH 2. What did you think of me when you first met me, Seth?

SETH. I thought you were hot.

LEAH 2. You did not.

SETH. Okay, I thought you were a dog.

LEAH 2. Seth!

SETH. Well, if you're not going to believe me when I say something nice...

LEAH 2. All right, so you thought I was hot. I'm too fat to be hot, by the way.

SETH. Geez, why am I hanging around with such an ugly girl?

LEAH 2. I get the hint.

SETH. Do you?

LEAH 2. No more putting myself down.

SETH. That's right.

LEAH 2. You want to know what I thought of you?

SETH. Maybe.

LEAH 2. I thought you were stuck up, but now I know that's just shyness.

SETH. Hm.

LEAH 2. And that look you're doing right now?

SETH. The look I'm doing? I'm not trying to do a look.

LEAH 2. I used to think, when you looked like that, that you felt like everyone was beneath you. Now I know it's just your thoughtful look.

SETH. Oh, yeah? Do you know what I'm thinking now?

LEAH 2. That you want to kiss me.

SETH. You got that one all right.

NARRATOR LEAH. You're not going to know him, Mom—not just by meeting him.

(Unfreeze.)

LEAH. Mom, this is not a big deal.

JAN. How about if you had him over for dinner?

LEAH. He works nights.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. Another lie. She's gotten more sophisticated over the years, but I can still tell. When she was little—oh, she was terrible at lying.

JAN 2. Leah, do you know why the VCR isn't working?

LEAH 2. *(Age five:)* I don't know what happened to it, Mama.

JAN 2. You didn't try to stick anything in there you shouldn't, did you?

LEAH 2. No.

JAN 2. Because if Daddy takes it all apart and finds something in there, like another Pop-Tart, do you think he's going to be happy?

LEAH 2. I'm sorry, Mama; I'm sorry! I was just playing with my Barbies and one of my Barbies wanted to explore in the movie thing like it was a cave and I stuck her head in it and then I couldn't get it out and her head came off inside it! I'm sorry! I didn't mean to! Tell Daddy I didn't mean to!

JAN 2. It's all right, Baby. It's all right. Just tell me next time, okay? Just be honest with me.

NARRATOR JAN. "Just be honest with me." That line worked up until about age twelve. After that...

LEAH 2. *(Age 12:)* You never believe me! You think I'm a liar!

JAN 2. I don't think you're a liar, Leah. I just don't understand why you can't be honest with me.

LEAH 2. That's the same as calling me a liar!

JAN 2. No. A liar, to me, is someone who habitually hides the truth to gain an advantage over other people. I don't think you do that. I

just think, sometimes, that you're afraid I won't like what you really have to say.

LEAH 2. Whatever. You just don't trust me.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Oh. Where does he work?

LEAH. What is this, Mom, twenty questions?

JAN. Well, unless he works for some child labor camp, he can probably get a day off now and then and we can have him over for dinner.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. Oh, yeah, I can just see that now. What a blast.

JAN 2. So, Seth, Leah tells me you work nights.

SETH. I do?

LEAH 2. Actually, he's not working there any more.

JAN 2. Oh, did you quit?

SETH. Uh...

LEAH 2. Yeah, he quit.

JAN 2. Oh. That's probably just as well; I'm sure it was hard keeping up on your grades and holding down a job.

SETH. Yeah, yeah, it was. That's just why I quit.

JAN 2. Where were you working?

SETH. Oh, just over at...

LEAH 2. Shaw's.

SETH. Right. Shaw's.

JAN 2. Hm. Would you like some more chicken?

NARRATOR LEAH. Except the chicken would be dry and the conversation would just be a bunch of questions from Mom, hinting around at what she really wanted to ask...

JAN 2. So, Seth, are you and Leah having sex?

NARRATOR LEAH. No. Seth over for dinner is out of the question.

(Unfreeze.)

LEAH. Sure. I'll see if he can come over sometime.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. Never happen.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. Good.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. She never wants it to happen. Oh, I suppose I was the same way.

JAN 2. *(Age 16:)* My parents want to meet you, you know.

BOB. Of course they do.

JAN 2. I know it's a drag. I just want to be with you. But if you meet them, maybe they won't get so uptight about us.

BOB. Your father going to be cleaning his shotgun when I get there?

JAN 2. It won't be like that, Bobby.

BOB. It's always like that, one way or another. The old man gives me this dirty look like, "You touch my daughter and I'll kill you." The old lady gives me this look like, "Are you the marrying kind?"

JAN 2. Oh, I didn't know you had so much experience with meeting parents.

BOB. I've met a few.

JAN 2. Only the parents of your serious girlfriends, huh?

BOB. Some serious, some not-so.

JAN 2. And where am I? Serious or not-so?

BOB. That depends.

JAN 2. Really? On what?

BOB. On how seriously good you make me feel.

NARRATOR JAN. I have got to find out more about this Seth character.

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. *(Scraping her ice cream dish:)* Got to get every last bit there.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. Stalling, stalling. Don't want her to leave yet.

NARRATOR LEAH. I've got to get out of here. I want to call Seth.

(Unfreeze.)

LEAH. Well, I better...

JAN. Let's have some more.

LEAH. Mom, that was our ½ cup for the week. We agreed.

JAN. I know, I know, but it tasted so delicious. It won't hurt anything. We have been so good. Look at us. We're practically svelte.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. Svelte—right. My svelte days are over. So why am I doing this? Because I am still trolling for men. I'm too old for this.

NANCY. So, Jan, listen, Roger has a brother.

JAN 2. No.

NANCY. I'm not trying to set you up, Jan; I'm just saying he has a brother.

JAN 2. Oh, and that was just an innocuous piece of information that you had to tell me. Like, "It's supposed to rain tomorrow." or "I had a great piece of cheesecake for lunch..."

NANCY. I wish.

JAN 2. You just decided to tell me that Roger has a brother.

NANCY. Yes.

JAN 2. Good. Good for Roger. It's nice to have brothers.

NANCY. He's a very nice man and not bad-looking and I'm sure the two of you...

JAN 2. Oh, no; no, no, no! Listen, I'm old, fat, tired and twice divorced.

NANCY. You're young, shapely, vibrant...and yes, you're twice divorced, but so what? Meet the guy!

(Unfreeze.)

JAN. We're a couple of attractive...chicks, right? A little smidge more of ice cream won't hurt.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. Oh, no, Mom, don't say things like that.

CINDY. I can't go home tonight.

LEAH 2. What's going on?

CINDY. My mother is bringing her latest boyfriend. This one is named Chuck.

LEAH 2. Oh, I can't stand that.

CINDY. Yeah, she's all giggly—"Chuck's talking about taking me to Cancun." "Chuck's very successful as a general contractor."

LEAH 2. Let us now upchuck over Chuck. So she's bringing him home to meet the family, huh? Aren't we supposed to be the ones doing that?

CINDY. That's for sure. Why can't things be...normal?

LEAH 2. No kidding. Our mothers aren't supposed to be out dating. They're supposed to be our mothers.

(Unfreeze.)

LEAH. Mom, really, let's not have any more.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR LEAH. Let's not talk anymore.

(Unfreeze.)

LEAH. We'll just regret it in the morning.

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. "Regret it in the morning?" She's talking about more than just ice cream. You don't use a phrase like that unless you've had some experience.

(Unfreeze.)

LEAH. I am going to go get started on my homework. *(Rising to leave:)* Thanks for the ice cream.

JAN. *(Somewhat sharply:)* Leah!

(Freeze.)

NARRATOR JAN. Young lady, you are not going anywhere! You sit your fanny back down in that chair and you tell me about this Seth character! *(Sighs heavily:)* That's what I'd like to say.

NARRATOR LEAH. Oh, no—don't tell me she's going to try that "now-you-listen-to-me-young-lady" tactic.

NARRATOR JAN. It would just lead to another fight.

NARRATOR LEAH. It's just going to get ugly again.

JAN 2. Now, I've had enough of this evasive behavior out of you. Sit down now and listen to me.

LEAH 2. Why?

JAN 2. Because I said so, that's why. You walk around this house as if you know everything and everything is below you, and I've had enough of it!

LEAH 2. Well, maybe I've had enough of you, too! Did you ever think of that?

JAN 2. Oh, is that right?

LEAH 2. Yes, that's right! You're always spouting off about how I don't give you enough respect and I never open up to you and I act like Miss High and Mighty and I and I and I! Well, maybe you should just take a look in the mirror now and then!

JAN 2. What's that supposed to mean?

LEAH 2. It means if you're so bothered by everything that goes on around here, maybe you're the cause!

JAN 2. I'm not the one sneaking around, talking day and night on the phone, trying to act as if nothing's going on when I know damned well that plenty is!

LEAH 2. Oh, you know damned well, huh?

JAN 2. That is not your word to use, young lady!

LEAH 2. Why the hell not?

JAN 2. I'm going to clue you in on something. I-am-your-mother. I am in charge. I am an adult. You are none of those things! You do not have the right...

LEAH 2. And who are you to have any right to tell me how to live my life? Haven't you screwed up your own completely enough?

JAN 2. Leah, I'm warning you...

NARRATOR JAN. She'll pull out the daggers.

NARRATOR LEAH. If she wants to go for it with me, I won't hold back.

LEAH 2. I'm supposed to listen to you? What are you going to do, give me advice on relationships?

JOHN. I'm out of here! I'm not coming back!

WALTER. I'm sorry. I can't continue on this way.

LEAH 2. You, who drove two husbands out of the house—you're going to tell me about relationships?

JAN 2. Oh, I drove them out? Who told you that? Your father?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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