

WHAT A MAN WEIGHS (Scipius 0.)

RUTH

Men.

JOAN

Men.

RUTH

You can't live with 'em-

JOAN

And you can't get 'em to dress up in skimpy cocktail dress, and dance the watusi no matter what you promise them, and no matter how hard you try. But why did we want them to? Why was it so important?

RUTH

God, we were stoned-we called up half the boys in the senior class, none of them would come over, so we decided to put on the skimpy dresses ourselves. I struggled into this lemon chiffon monstrosity, and you had dug up this red beaded spaghetti strap thing, but you wouldn't get dressed, you just stood there, staring at the red dress, and finally I came in and you were on your knees, with that dress spread out on the floor in front of you, and you were weeping, and no matter what I said to you, the only thing you would say was, "the part of my brain that puts the dress on is gone. It's gone. It's gone. It's gone."

JOAN

No.

RUTH

No what.

JOAN

No, I don't remember that.

RUTH

Come on-

JOAN

That wasn't me.

RUTH

It was too.

JOAN

No, it wasn't, it was Claudia Bently.

RUTH

Shit.

JOAN

Shit.

RUTH

It wasn't you. It was Claudia Bently. Shit. I wonder where she is now.

JOAN

Whidbey Island, Washington. Mother of three. All have hideous feet and their father's vacant stare. Happiness, happiness, happiness. I'm working on that one. Tricky bastard.

RUTH

I'm still working on how I got you and Claudia Bently confused. Don't you think that's a little funny?

JOAN

Not really. A very little funny, I suppose. When you consider that Claudia looks like a ferret, talks like a duck, and has brains of a trout raised on a fish farm. A very little funny-but not much, no.

RUTH

I get sick whenever I think of her. Just sick. Why should she be the one who landed the perfect man?

JOAN

You think Rick's perfect?

RUTH

No, but she does.

JOAN

Well, that's why she's happy. Men.

RUTH

Men. Thank you. That helped put it all in perspective. We are all the authors of our happiness, is that it? Then how come I seem to have written mine in invisible ink?

JOAN

No such thing as invisible ink, Ruth. Rule number one.

JOAN/RUTH

Nothing you do to paper ever goes away.

JOAN

Especially if it's been laminated.

RUTH

Don't take it so personally. Some bubble-headed conservator did not laminate that document thirty years ago just to torture you.

JOAN

How do you know?

RUTH

Look, Joan, if you didn't want to work on that project, why did you ask for it?

JOAN

I didn't ask for it

RUTH

You did so. You always ask for the basket cases.

JOAN

Well, someone has to do them. Santa's elves are not going to creep in during the night and work their little pixie fingers to the bone fixing them, you know.

RUTH

Good point Excellent point. All hail Saint Joan of Bookmark, the Mother Teresa of the ripped, torn, and laminated. Where are you going?

JOAN

Home. It's late. You ready?

RUTH

Well, not quite.

JOAN

What do you mean, not quite. How long does it take to unbind something, five minutes?

RUTH

More or less.

JOAN

So what's the problem?

RUTH

Getting it ready for rebinding takes a few minutes more...

JOAN

Ruth! We'll be here all night!

RUTH

You know I have to have this ready next week! I'm not as fast as you are. I have to be able to take my time.

JOAN

But it's a simple project.

RUTH

Not for me.

JOAN

What are you talking about, you're the best when it comes to this kind of work. Haseltine said it himself.

RUTH

He told you that? He really did? He really said I was the best?

JOAN

Yeah.

RUTH

When?

JOAN

I don't remember exactly, Ruth.

RUTH

He really said I was the best?

JOAN

Jesus Christ, no, of course he didn't say it. I made it up. You found me out. Of course your boss would never compliment you on your work. Of course he wouldn't say you were the best.

RUTH

Well, I'm not. I'm good-at some things, yes. But Haseltine is the best. You said so yourself.

JOAN

I never said he was the best. I said he was possessed.