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Dramatic Publishing

DANCING WITH STRANGERS

A Program of Three Short Plays

by

SANDRA FENICHEL ASHER



Dramatic Publishing

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DANCING WITH STRANGERS

A Program of Three Short Plays

BLIND DATING 7

Cast: Three women.

Time: The present, late afternoon, night, and morning.

Setting: Living room and kitchen of the Covington house.

A teenage girl faces her dependency on her mother and feelings of betrayal after her parents' divorce.

PERFECT 21

Cast: Two women, one or two men.

Time: An April morning and remembered times in Tara's mind.

Setting: Tara's bedroom, with upstage areas suggesting remembered scenes in kitchen and restaurant.

Tara has a secret she believes will heal her lifelong loneliness: She's pregnant.

WORKOUT! 29

Cast: One man, one woman, offstage voice.

Time: The present. Afternoon, early September.

Setting: A college gym. No set or props are needed, but exercise mats or other equipment may be scattered about.

Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy and girl get together—all in the course of one aerobic dance class.

DANCING WITH STRANGERS was first presented in its entirety on July 22, 1993, in the Paul Mellon Arts Center on the campus of Choate Rosemary Hall, Wallingford, Connecticut, as part of the Discovery '93 summer theater program. The following cast and crew participated in that production:

BLIND DATING

Dawn Covington *Patrina Corsetti*
Brenda Covington *Anita Nouryeh*
Tanya Breuer *Maggie Bustillo*

PERFECT

Tara Owens *Sunny Dahlia Turner*
Lizzy Owens *Patrina Corsetti*
Jim Owens *Terrence Ortwein*
Dub Colby *Rupert Sandes*

WORKOUT!

Rick *Rupert Sandes*
Jackie *Devon Schiff*
Instructor *Anita Nouryeh*

Director *Ron Emmons*
Technical Director *George Hall*
Dramaturg *Terrence Ortwein*
Lightboard Operator *Nathaniel Roundy*
Set Painter *Erin McAllister*
WORKOUT! Choreography *Devon Schiff*
WORKOUT! Sound Operator *Patrina Corsetti*

PERFECT and *BLIND DATING* were given workshop productions at The Open Eye: New Stagings and TADA! in New York City. An earlier version of *WORKOUT!* appeared in *CENTER STAGE*, an anthology of plays for teen-agers edited by Don Gallo and published by HarperCollins. *BLIND DATING* and *PERFECT* were adapted from short stories in *OUT OF HERE: A SENIOR CLASS YEARBOOK* by Sandy Asher (Dutton/Lodestar, 1993).

BLIND DATING

CHARACTERS: Dawn Covington, a senior in high school
Brenda Covington, her mother
Tanya Breuer, Dawn's friend

SETTING: *The first floor of the Covington house. The living room may be indicated by an easy chair and rocker at stage R; the kitchen by a counter and table with two chairs at stage L. On the counter are soup bowls and spoons, a coffee maker and cups, a box of chocolate cupcakes, and other dinner and breakfast items.*

BEFORE RISE: *Rock MUSIC is heard, playing loudly.*

AT RISE: *It is late afternoon. Lights come up on the living room portion of the stage, where DAWN is curled up on the easy chair at R, wrapped in an afghan, asleep. A textbook has fallen from her lap and lies on the floor beside her. Also on the floor is a cassette player, from which the MUSIC is booming. As TANYA enters L, the LIGHTS come up on the kitchen.*

TANYA. Hello? Anybody home? Dawn? *(She crosses into living room, sees DAWN, grins, shakes her head and turns off the cassette player. DAWN wakes with a start.)*

DAWN. What—? *(Sees TANYA.)* What time is it?

TANYA. Nearly six.

DAWN (*frantically gathering up book and radio*). Oh, no! I haven't even started dinner.

TANYA. Relax, will you? Your mom isn't here yet. (*DAWN puts book and cassette player out of the way beside chair, folds afghan neatly.*)

DAWN. I wonder where she is? She's usually home from work by now. (*Focusing on TANYA for the first time.*) What are you doing here, anyway? How'd you get in?

TANYA. The back door was unlocked. I could hear the music all the way down the block, so I knew you were in here somewhere.

DAWN. I was studying for that biology lab exam. I thought the music would keep me awake, but I guess it didn't.

TANYA. Forget the exam. What are you doing Friday night?

DAWN. Why?

TANYA. Do you want to go on a blind date?

DAWN. No!

TANYA. Let me rephrase that. You have *got* to go on a blind date. There's this guy Robbie used to know at camp. His name is Kevin and he's at State University now. They bumped into each other at the mall—

DAWN. I can't. (*Along with her refusals and excuses, DAWN pulls away from TANYA physically, moving from room to room anxiously throughout the conversation as TANYA pursues her. During the chase, DAWN arranges two bowls and spoons on the table, opens a soup can at the counter and pours contents into a pot, stirs, etc.*)

TANYA. Dawn, I've met this person. He is really cute. And he's in college. Did you know some college kids get an entire month off for Christmas? Man, I can't wait to get there.

DAWN (*laughing—and also changing the subject*). Leave it to you to go to college for the vacations.

TANYA. Yeah! Well, that's for next year. What about Friday?

DAWN. Maybe some other time.

TANYA. Oh, come on, Dawn. What could you possibly be doing Friday night that could be more important than this?

DAWN. My mom needs me. She likes to relax on Fridays—rent a movie, pop some popcorn. You know. Fridays are practically the only time we have together.

TANYA. So how about we meet after school tomorrow? You can at least say hello—

DAWN. I have to shop for groceries after school.

TANYA. Oh, for crying out loud, Dawn! You have the rest of your life to shop for groceries!

DAWN. And I have to make dinner.

TANYA. Aaaahhhhhgggg! I *cannot* believe you are doing this to me. I've already told Kevin all about you. Think New Year's Eve, Dawn. And the Sweetheart Dance in February. Think *prom date*. This is an investment in your future.

DAWN (*getting annoyed*). Tanya—

TANYA. Okay, okay. (*Another thought strikes her.*) How about later tonight? We could run by for a couple of hours—or you could come to my house—

DAWN (*slams pot down on counter; crosses into living room*). You know we have that exam tomorrow.

TANYA (*following DAWN into living room*). Dawn Covington, you are turning into a real drudge. This is your *senior year*. You are supposed to be having *fun*.

DAWN (*turns on TANYA, irritated*). I didn't plan for my senior year to turn out this way. It just did. So I have to live with it.

TANYA. Oh, Dawn, I'm sorry. I know things have been rough for you and your mom. I just thought—you know—

(MRS. COVINGTON enters L, wearing a business suit and carrying a large briefcase-like purse, obviously very tired.)

DAWN *(to TANYA, as her mother enters)*. Shhhhhh! My mom's here. Cool it, okay?

MRS. COVINGTON. Dawn, honey? I'm home! *(To herself)*. What's left of me, that is. *(Gives herself a little shake, puts on her brave, cheerful face.)*

DAWN. Hi, Mom. Tanya and I are in the living room.

MRS. COVINGTON. Hi, babe. *(Crossing into living room, is surprised to see TANYA.)* Well, hi, Tanya. How are you? It seems like ages since I last saw you.

TANYA. Hi, Mrs. Covington. Yeah, well, I guess we've all been kind of busy.

MRS. COVINGTON. Don't I know it? *(Exiting R.)* Excuse me, girls. I have got to get these shoes off.

DAWN. Sure.

TANYA *(after watching MRS. COVINGTON exit)*. She seems to be in good spirits.

DAWN *(crossing into kitchen and resuming dinner preparations)*. Yeah. She's...well, she's pretty brave, I guess.

TANYA *(sitting at table while DAWN works)*. I still don't get it.

DAWN. Get what?

TANYA. Oh, you know. She's so neat, your mom. And so pretty.

DAWN. You mean, how could my dad leave her?

TANYA. When my dad heard about it, he said she's the kind of woman men leave their wives for—not the kind who gets left.

DAWN. Well, your dad doesn't know my dad. He didn't leave her for another woman. He left her for himself. He

needed to *find* himself—that's how he broke the news to me.

TANYA. You never told me about that.

DAWN. Yeah, well, it's not something I'm particularly proud of, you know? A father who spouts clichés in the food court at the mall? "I have to find myself," he says, over a taco. I told him he wasn't lost.

TANYA. You really said that?

DAWN. Should have saved my breath. "Something in my life is missing, Dawn," he says. "I can't expect you to understand." No kidding.

TANYA. Hey, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have brought it up.

DAWN. No, that's all right. I'm okay.

(MRS. COVINGTON enters, in more comfortable shoes and perhaps a sweater instead of a suit jacket. She leaves her purse and an armload of books on the easy chair. DAWN signals TANYA to drop the subject. MRS. COVINGTON crosses into kitchen.)

MRS. COVINGTON *(sinking into chair opposite TANYA)*.

Oh, this feels so much better. So, Tanya, to what do we owe the pleasure of your company this evening?

DAWN *(nudges TANYA before she can answer)*. Tanya was just leaving, Mom. We've got this big test tomorrow. *(To TANYA.)* I'll see you in biology, okay? All ready for the exam?

TANYA *(confused, but stands up)*. Oh, sure. I could flunk it with my eyes closed. *(Heading off L.)* See you in the morning. 'Bye, Mrs. Covington.

MRS. COVINGTON *(also confused by TANYA's speedy exit)*.

Oh—okay, Tanya. Drop by again. Stay longer next time.