

A GENTLEMANLY PROFESSION



Rudy will tell you anything about himself. In fact, he can't shut up. Since his second divorce two years ago, he has been entangled with, devoted to, so many women, often at the same time, that he has to talk to you, pour his heart out to you, make you see that he isn't a scoundrel; he simply loves women, all of them. And boy, do they love him, or so he thinks.

As he's confessing his undying ardor for his latest love, he'll suddenly become smitten with a student waitress in the faculty dining room, gazing at her significantly as she refills his water glass until she finally returns his stare. Then he rolls his eyes at me as if to say, *what can I do? They throw themselves at me.*

He is curious, of course, about your own life, and listens with such rapt attention that in the old days, before you caught on to what a gossip monger he is, you actually found yourself confessing that you found the reference librarian with the curly red hair hot. You didn't know that his attentiveness wasn't polite interest but dirt gathering. Later, another colleague slapped my back, laughing as he said, "Say, Len, hear you got a thing for the redhead. Isn't she a little young for you?" Or the time I stupidly told Rudy that I'd had an article rejected by a major journal and he managed to bring it up at a department meeting. Who couldn't justifiably kill a fellow faculty member who pronounced, "I'm *never* going to submit to *Politics and Society*. Since they turned Len down, I want absolutely nothing to do with that journal."

Today is fairly typical of how our lunches have gone these last few months. It all starts with an innocent enough remark, on the surface that is, but I can spot one of his torpedoes miles off. We're both eating our sandwiches and he says, "I'm really worried about Brad," in that way he has. Someone who didn't know Rudy would think he was genuinely worried. Because Brad is friendly, bright, and good-looking, I immediately know that Rudy's on a destroy mission.

I'm supposed to say "Why? What's wrong with Brad?" so Rudy can