

EAE 0422 A	Sujet Jury	Sujet Candidat		Code Sujet	CLG 02
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Your main commentary should be focused on *negation*. Other topics may also be addressed.

There was a wariness in her attitude that confused me, and for several minutes I was lost. Then, slowly, I began to understand that her feelings were not very different from my own. Fanshawe had disappeared from her life, and I saw that she might have good reason to resent the burden that had been imposed on her. By publishing Fanshawe's work, by devoting herself to a man who was no longer there, she would be forced to live in the past, and whatever future she might want to build for herself would be tainted by the role she had to play: the official widow, the dead writer's muse, the beautiful heroine in a tragic story. No one wants to be part of a fiction, and even less so if that fiction is real. Sophie was just twenty-six years old. She was too young to live through someone else, too intelligent not to want a life that was completely her own. The fact that she had loved Fanshawe was not the point. Fanshawe was dead, and it was time for her to leave him behind.

None of this was said in so many words. But the feeling was there, and it would have been senseless to ignore it. Given my own reservations, it was odd that I should have been the one to carry the torch, but I saw that if I didn't take hold of the thing and get it started, the job would never get done.

'You don't really have to get involved,' I said. 'We'll have to consult, of course, but that shouldn't take up much of your time. If you're willing to leave the decisions to me, I don't think it will be very bad at all.'

'Of course I'll leave them to you,' she said. 'I don't know the first thing about any of this. If I tried to do it myself, I'd get lost within five minutes.'

'The important thing is to know that we're on the same side,' I said. 'In the end, I suppose it boils down to whether or not you can trust me.'

'I trust you,' she said.

'I haven't given you any reason to,' I said. 'Not yet, in any case.'

'I know that. But I trust you anyway.'

'Just like that?'

'Yes. Just like that.'

She smiled at me again, and for the rest of the dinner we said nothing more about Fanshawe's work. I had been planning to discuss it in detail – how best to begin, what publishers might be interested, what people to contact, and so on – but this no longer seemed important. Sophie was quite content not to think about it, and now that I had reassured her that she didn't have to, her playfulness gradually returned. After so many difficult months, she finally had a chance to forget some of it for a while, and I could see how determined she was to lose herself in the very simple pleasures of this moment: the restaurant, the food, the laughter of the people around us, the fact that she was here and not anywhere else. She wanted to be indulged in all this, and who was I not to go along with her?

I was in good form that night. Sophie inspired me, and it didn't take long for me to get warmed up. I cracked jokes, told stories, performed little tricks with the silverware. The woman was so beautiful that I had trouble keeping my eyes off her. I wanted to see her laugh, to see how her face would respond to what I said, to watch her eyes, to study her gestures. God knows what absurdities I came out with, but I did my best to detach myself, to bury my real motives under this onslaught of charm. That was the hard part. I knew that Sophie was lonely, that she wanted the comfort of a warm body beside her – but a quick roll in the hay was not what I was after, and if I moved too fast that was probably all it would turn out to be. At this early stage, Fanshawe was still there with us, the unspoken link, the invisible force that had brought us together. It would take some time before he disappeared, and until that happened, I found myself willing to wait.