

“Educating Rita”

RITA

Hello Frank!

FRANK

Rita!! Why the hell are you calling me? I'm not seeing you until next week.

RITA

Are you sober?

FRANK

If you mean, am I still this side of reasonable comprehension, then yes.

RITA

Good, because I want you to hear this, when you're sober. This is brilliant. You have got to start writing again, Frank. It is brilliant. It's.. it's witty, it's profound. Full of style.

FRANK

Oh! Tell me again and again.

RITA

No, it is, Frank. It's not just me that thinks so. Me and Trish sat up all night and read them. She agrees with me. Why did you stop writing? Why did you stop, when you can produce work like this? Now, what did Trish say? Yes - it's more resonant than purely contemporary poetry, it has, like, it has in it a direct line through to the nineteenth-century traditions of, like, wit and classical allusion.

FRANK

Oh. That's marvelous, Rita. It's fortunate that I never gave it to you earlier. Just think if you'd seen it when you first came here.

RITA

I know...I wouldn't have never understood it.

FRANK

No. You would have thrown it across the room and dismissed as total shit, wouldn't you?

RITA

I know... but I could never have understood it then, Frank, because I wouldn't have been able to, you know, recognize and understand the allusions.

FRANK

I've done a fine job on you, haven't I?

RITA

It's true, Frank. I mean I can see it now.

FRANK

You know, Rita, like you, I'm going to change my name. From now on I am going to insist on being called Mary. Mary Shelley. Do you understand that allusion, Rita?

RITA

What?

FRANK

Mary Shelley wrote a little Gothic number called Frankenstein.

RITA

So?

FRANK

This – clever, pyrotechnical pile of self-conscious allusion is worthless, talentless shit. There is more poetry in the.. telephone directory and, probably, more insight. However.. This has one advantage over the telephone directory: it is easier to rip. (*He rips the poems up.*) It is pretentious, characterless and without style.

RITA

It's not.

FRANK

Oh, I don't expect you to believe me, Rita. I mean, you recognize the hallmark of literature now, don't you? Why don't you just go away? I don't think I can bear it any longer.

RITA

Ah. Can't bear what, Frank?

FRANK

You, my dear. You.

RITA

Yeah, yeah. Well, I'll tell you what you can't bear, Mr Self-Pitying-Piss-Artist; what you can't bear is that I'm educated now. I've got what you have and you don't like it. I mean, good God, I don't need you. I've got a room full of books! I know what clothes to wear, what wine to buy, what plays to see, what papers and books to read and I can do it without you.

FRANK

Is that all you wanted? Have you come all this way for so very, very little?

RITA

Oh, yeah, it's little to you, isn't it, Frank? It's little to you who squanders every opportunity and mocks and takes it for granted.

FRANK

Found a culture, have you, Rita? Found a better song to sing? No. You found a different song to sing. And, on your lips, it is shrill and hollow and tuneless. Oh, Rita, Rita, Rita.

RITA

Ohhhhh, Rita! Nobody calls me Rita but you. I dropped that pretentious crap as soon as I saw it for what it was. Rita! Nobody calls me Rita.

Rita exits.

FRANK

What is it now, then, eh? Emily or Charlotte or Jane or Virginia?