

GLORIA:

The blood isn't circulating in my arms. I'd really appreciate it if you untied me. I won't try to get away.

BEN:

I don't believe you. Not for a single solitary minute do I believe you. But...I have no objection. Tonight the word fear is in your vocabulary, not mine. (He unties her.) Of course you realize that if you do try to get away I'll have to punish you. Maybe even kill you, right here on the spot! You can never tell when I'll lose control of myself. So be careful!

GLORIA:

Thank you. You see, there is good in you. You can be reasonable.

BEN:

Take off that skirt.

GLORIA:

Isn't there any way I can convince you...

BEN:

No. Do as I say. (He snaps belt in the air.) Do you hear me? (She removes skirt...) Nice. Very, very nice. Let me have it. Now sit in that chair. Go ahead. (Cigarette)

GLORIA:

May I have one?

BEN:

NO.

GLORIA:

It's cold here. I'm freezing. You could make yourself some easy money if you just let me go. My husband would gladly give it to you. Why don't you phone him? You can ask for...five, ten thousand dollars. He can get it. Wouldn't you be better off with all that money?

BEN:

A man lives in his mind, not in a place. No use explaining it to you. I'd be wasting my time. Idiots. A world of idiots and illiterates, too damn dense to comprehend the most basic laws governing their own existence. Sheep, millions of sheep.

GLORIA:

Out on the island where I live...

BEN:

Did I ask your opinion?

GLORIA:

I wanted to say...

BEN:

I'm not interested in what you wanted to say. I'm not giving lessons in democratic principles. Not this semester, lady. Everybody has something to say; everybody has an opinion to give you. But do they have the background, the training, the mental discipline, to give you an opinion on the facts? On objectivity? On scientific comprehension? Oh, no. Not that. But they all babble. Right?

GLORIA:

Yes

BEN:
You think I'm right?

GLORIA:
Yes I do. I agree with you.

BEN:
What was I right about? Do you know? Do you fathom the implications, the ramifications? (At black-board...) Reiterate my line of reasoning and present me with a brief summation of its salient points. Begin, now.

GLORIA:
I couldn't...

BEN:
I said, begin, now! This minute, begin!

GLORIA:
I'll try. I think what you were saying is that in a democracy where everybody has a voice in the government, despite intelligence, despite ability, this leads to the false belief...

BEN:
Is that what you think?

GLORIA:
Isn't it...

BEN:
Who wrote *The Divine Comedy*?

GLORIA:
Dante?

BEN:
When was the Civil War?

GLORIA:
Between 1861 and 1865.

BEN:
How do you spell concatenation?

GLORIA:
Concatenation. C-O-N-C-A-T-E-N-A-T-I-O-N. How do you spell pulchritude?

BEN:
Pulchritude. Capital P-U-L-C-H-R-I-T-U-D-E. Physiology.

GLORIA:
Physiology. P-H-Y-S-I-O-L-O-G-Y. Somnambulism.

BEN:
Somnambulism. Capital S-O-M-N-A-M-B-U-L-I-S-M. Miscegenation.

GLORIA:
Miscegenation. M-I-C-S...

BEN:

M-I-S-C...(writes on the board) S-C! S-C! E-G-E-N-A-T-I-O-N. You stupid bird brain. Don't you dare speak loosely to me. Not unless you're willing to pay the consequences. That's a point for you to keep in mind. I hope you had enough education to understand that. You did go to school, didn't you?

GLORIA:

You probably wouldn't believe it, but I graduated from college. So did my husband.

BEN:

That explains your ignorance, thoroughly and completely.

GLORIA:

You mean you're not a graduate?

BEN:

Did I tell you I was?

GLORIA:

No, of course not. But...your vocabulary, the way you talk...I was almost certain... Despite everything I can't help enjoy listening to you. Why didn't you go to college? I think you could have made a very good instructor.

BEN:

At one time that was my ambition. To teach in college. To be a professor of epistemology and linguistics. Those bastards. They're not worth spitting on. I don't need them. I don't need anybody!

GLORIA:

What happened?

BEN:

Did I give you permission to speak? I failed the damn entrance exam. I ...I can't speak French and they don't take you unless you can speak French or some damn language. Oh I tried, I tried. But I couldn't do it. I couldn't. Go ahead. Laugh. Is that what you feel like doing?

GLORIA:

Not in the least. I just can't understand it. It shouldn't have been difficult for you.

BEN:

See all these books? French books. I took courses in it, studied it with tutors, with Frenchmen, with whoever I could find. It wouldn't sink in. Call it an emotional block. Call it whatever the hell you want. I don't give a damn any more for that crap. I have other ambitions now. More important things to do. Life, that's what counts. Not degrees or accomplishments or being sucked in. I don't accept it. Do you hear me? I don't accept it!

GLORIA:

But it isn't too late! You still can do it.

BEN:

What are you talking about? Do you know how old I am?

GLORIA:

I'd say 26, 27.

BEN:

32 in August. No, I'm not interested any more.

GLORIA:

But 32 isn't old; that's where you're so wrong. You're in the prime of life and isn't that the time to get an education?

BEN:

Are you deaf? I told you they wouldn't take me.

GLORIA: Only because you didn't know French. I remember the trouble I had passing my French exams.

BEN:

You speak French?

GLORIA:

Oui, un petit.

BEN:

Get back to your chair. Get back...

GLORIA:

I'm in my chair. This is my chair!

BEN:

Not that chair. That chair! That chair! Get over there. Go ahead. I don't want to hear another word out of you, understand? I want silence, complete and utter silence. If I lose control of myself, you're the one who's going to pay for it. So be careful. I'm warning you. Too much damn talking anyway. Everybody has something to say. But do they know what they say? Do they care? They babble. They don't talk to one another. Oh no. They talk to themselves. They talk to their own egos.

GLORIA:

That is perceptive of you. There's no communication between people any more.

BEN:

Did I tell you to shut up? Listen. You might learn something. There's no communication between people any more. Everybody's inside of himself, inside of his own little egotistical shell.

GLORIA:

They're all alike. They're not concerned with human values, only with making money, with keeping up with the Joneses.

BEN:

Are you going to shut up? I said I want silence from you, complete and utter silence! They're not concerned with human values, only with keeping up with the Joneses, with grabbing as much as they can get their hands on. That's all they think about. Money, the bitch-goddess! They'r all after it.

GLORIA:

But what matters, finding one's identity, that they don't care about. That's why there are no individuals today.

BEN:

That's right. The point is that everybody's beginning to resemble one another. That's what we're up against. Read your Mendel. Read your history books on the Industrial Revolution. It's all there. It's no secret. Try to live in this world. Go ahead. Try.

GLORIA:

It's becoming impossible. I know.

BEN:

Impossible. That's just the word. And what do you think'll happen once this population explosion we're having gets moving, huh?

GLORIA:

We won't even be able to use umbrellas.

BEN:

You bet we won't.

GLORIA: Nobody listens.

BEN:

Chaos. It'll be sheer chaos.

GLORIA:

But does anybody listen?

BEN:

Millions and millions of people; millions of sheep.

GLORIA:

Nobody listens.

BEN:

What?

GLORIA:

I said nobody listens.

BEN:

You put your finger right on it.

GLORIA:

Most of the time I don't know what to do with myself. There's no one I can really talk to.

BEN:

Ahh, what's the use of talking?

GLORIA:

It helps. It does. It's good to talk about these things. You are making a mistake, you know. I can teach you French. There's no reason why you shouldn't...

BEN:

Are you deaf? I told you it's too late.

GLORIA:

But it's not too late. It's really not.

BEN:

Like hell it isn't. Do you know how old I am?

GLORIA:

I'd say...32.

BEN:

That's right. How did you know?

GLORIA:

Because I know people. I know you and I know what you're capable of. Look. Sit down. We have time, don't we? There's no hurry. My husband goes to bed at nine. He never waits up for me and he never knows when I get in. What book do you want to use? This one looks as if it'll do. We'll try it. Sit down. Please. We'll start at the beginning. Bon jour, monsieur. Are you going to do it with me or not?

BEN:

Bon jour, mademoiselle.

GLORIA:

Very good. That was very good. Je m'appelle Gloria. Comment vous appelez-vous?

BEN: Je m'appelle Benjamin.

GLORIA:

No, not quite; hold your lips like this and let the words run into each other. Like this. Je m'appelle Benjamin. Try it.

BEN:

Je m'appelle Benjamin.

GLORIA:

Now you have it. Comment allez-vous, monsieur?

BEN:

Très bien, merci; et vous?

GLORIA: Pas trop mal, merci; mais mon frère est malade.

BEN:

C'est dommage. Je regrette beaucoup.

GLORIA:

Wonderful. That was really wonderful.

BEN:

It didn't sound bad, did it?

GLORIA:

Bad? It was absolutely perfect. Why, we sounded just like a French couple sitting in their home and chatting. You must have been joking the you said you couldn't learn French.

BEN:

It seems a lot easier now but...What the hell are we doing? Do you know how I live? How I support myself? I'm a postman, a letter carrier.

GLORIA:

The go for your degree, Ben. Prove to them that you're a lot better and a lot smarter than any of them. You can do it.

BEN:

What makes you so damn sure?

GLORIA:
Because I have confidence in you.

BEN:
Do you mean that?

GLORIA:
I do, Ben. Bon soir, monsieur.

BEN:
Comment vous portez-vous ce soir?

GLORIA:
Good. Je me porte très bien, merci.

BEN:
Comment va votre soeur?

GLORIA: Comment va votre soeur? (Corrects him)

BEN:
Comment va votre soeur?

GLORIA:
Elle a mal à la tête.

BEN:
C'est très désagréable.

GLORIA:
Excellent. That was excellent, Ben.

BEN:
Mademoiselle?

GLORIA:
Monsieur?

BEN:
Comment vous appelez-vous?

GLORIA:
Je m'appelle Gloria, monsieur; et vous?

BEN:
Je m'appelle Benjamin.

GLORIA:
Comment allez-vous, Monsieur Benjamin?

BEN:
Très bien, merci; et vous?

GLORIA:
Très bien.

BEN:
Mademoiselle...

GLORIA:
Monsieur?

BEN:
Mademoiselle.

GLORIA:
Monsieur.

BEN:
Oh, mademoiselle, ma chérie, mademoiselle.

GLORIA:
Monsieur; mon magnifique monsieur.

BEN:
Oh, mademoiselle, ma chérie, ma chérie...

GLORIA: Oh, non, non, non, non. Non, monsieur. Monsieur...

BEN:
Oui, mademoiselle. Oui. Oui. Oui. Oui...

END