

Apprenticeship

A ten-minute play

by

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[EXCERPT]

SETTING: The living room of SEAN's apartment, represented by a couch, a few chairs, and a table with a laptop computer, printer and stacks of papers on it. An upstage door leads into an unseen bedroom. A downstage door leads outside the apartment.

AT RISE: SEAN is holding a manuscript page in his hand which he is reading to ANNE, who is seated and listening attentively. He reads it expressively, seductively, capturing ANNE with the words.

SEAN

(reading)

"Rita approached him slowly. Without all the makeup and wrapped in this old terry cloth robe, she looked almost... virginal. Hard to believe that only two hours before, she'd been hanging tits over Harvey Goldstein's balding head. 'What'sa matta sugah,' she purred in that Nawlins-honey drawl of hers, 'You ain't never seen no stripper without all her regalia b'fore?' Her eyes glinted green. 'Could almost be your sister now, huh? Somebody's next door neighbor, or something.' It ripped through him now, almost brought him to his knees. He wanted her more than he had before. But he knew somehow, he couldn't play the same hand as every backstage Johnny looking for a fast feel. This woman was not for inhaling. Maybe there, back in the bar, two hours ago. But not here. Rita knew it. He intended to show her he knew it too."

(He finishes reading. ANNE has been very attuned to the reading. He looks at her.)

SEAN (CONT'D)

Well...?

ANNE

Well!

SEAN

What did you think?

ANNE

I thought it was... very effective.

SEAN

(heading to his computer)

No, there's something wrong here... something's still wrong with Rita... I can't put my finger on it, but--

ANNE

No! I think you're finally getting her right!

(This stops SEAN in mid-action. He looks at her.)

SEAN

Finally?

ANNE

You don't really want to hear my opinion.

SEAN

Yes baby, I do. I value your opinion.

ANNE

Well...

(plunging in)

...Way I see it, Rita has... she's got some... humanity now. I mean, the fact is, she is somebody's sister, she has a history, and she says it in this sort of sarcastic, sexy way, and that's what's so sad... There are layers to her now,... I can... I can relate to her now. See?

(SEAN stares at her for a long moment, evaluating. Suddenly, from what she has said, he gets an idea. He rushes over to her, grabs and kisses her.)

SEAN

You know something, baby? I think I'm gonna keep you around!

(ANNE responds to SEAN's embrace, but he now moves away from her and back to his computer, excitedly starting to type. He is lost in his own world now. ANNE stands there, at loose ends.)

ANNE

Thanks.

(ANNE stares at SEAN a moment. She then goes over and picks up the manuscript page he was reading to her. Slowly, she begins sensually repeating the lines, taking on the New Orleans drawl, becoming Rita. But during this, SEAN will barely give her any notice, so wrapped up is he in his writing:)

ANNE (CONT'D)

"Rita approached him slowly... wrapped in that old terry cloth robe, she looked almost virginal. 'What'sa matta sugah?"

(MORE)

ANNE (CONT'D)

You ain't never seen no stripper without all her regalia b'fore? Could almost be your sister now, huh? Somebody's next door neighbor, or something' ...or something!"

(Her anger on the last line has broken through to SEAN. He reluctantly stops typing, sighs and looks at her. He realizes he must focus on her for a moment.)

SEAN

...Hey, baby. You haven't shown me anything for a while.

ANNE

Nothing worth showing.

SEAN

Maybe you should let me be the judge of that. Last batch had real promise. You send them out like I suggested?

ANNE

I couldn't.

SEAN

(reaching for a bottle of pills)

Darlin', you want to be a writer, you gotta start taking some risks.

ANNE

I know...

SEAN

Writing's not about playing things safe.
(He pops a pill)

ANNE

I know.

SEAN

Writing's about cliff walking, darlin'. It's about getting out on the edge of a cliff where everyone else is piss-scared to go. It's about teetering out there long enough between terra firma and the abyss until even those who think you're crazy start to take notice.

ANNE

I have vertigo.

SEAN

Shit, Anne.