

Rita But don't you realize, I want to changel! Listen, is this your way of tellin' me that I can't do it? That I'm no good?

Frank It's not that at . . .

Rita If that's what you're tryin' to tell me I'll go now . . .

Frank turns away from her

Frank (*moving away from the desk*) No no no. Of course you're good enough.

Rita See I know it's difficult for y' with someone like me. But you've just gotta keep tellin' me an' then I'll start to take it in; y' see, with me you've got to be dead firm. You won't hurt me feelings y' know. If I do somethin' that's crap, I don't want pity, you just tell me, that's crap. (*She picks up the essay*) Here, it's crap. (*She rips it up*) Right. So we dump that in the bin, (*she does so*) an' we start again.

CURTAIN

1945-2 MRS

Rita #2

ACT II

SCENE 1

When the CURTAIN rises Frank is sitting at his desk typing poetry. He pauses, stubs out a cigarette, takes a sip from the mug at his side, looks at his watch and then continues typing

Rita bursts through the door. She is dressed in new, second-hand clothes

Rita Frank! (*She twirls on the spot to show off her new clothes*)

Frank (*smiling*) And what is this viston, returning from the city? (*He gets up and moves towards Rita*) Welcome back.

Rita Frank, it was fantastic.

She takes off her shawl and gives it to Frank who hangs it on the hook by the door. Rita goes to the desk

(Putting down her bag on the desk) Honest, it was—ogh!

Frank What are you talking about, London or summer school?

Rita Both. A crowd of us stuck together all week. We had a great time: dead late every night, we stayed up talkin', we went all round London, got drunk, went to the theatres, bought all sorts of second-hand gear in the markets . . . Ogh, it was . . .

Frank So you won't have had time to do any actual work there?

Rita Work? We never stopped. Lashin' us with it they were; another essay, lash, do it again, lash.

Frank moves towards the desk

Another lecture, smack. It was dead good though. (*She goes and perches on the bookcase UR*)

Frank sits in the swivel chair, facing her

Y' know at first I was dead scared. I didn't know anyone. I was gonna come home. But the first afternoon I was standin' in this library, y' know lookin' at the books, pretendin' I was dead clever. Anyway, this tutor come up to me, he looked at the book in me hand an' he said, "Ah, are you fond of Ferlinghetti?" It was right on the tip of me tongue to say, "Only when it's served with Parmesan cheese", but, Frank, I didn't. I held it back an' I heard meself sayin', "Actually, I'm not too familiar with the American poets". Frank, you woulda been dead proud of me. He started talkin' to me about the American poets—we sat around for ages—an' he wasn't even one of my official tutors, y' know. We had to go to this big hall for a lecture, there must have been two thousand of us in there. After he'd finished his lecture this professor

asked if anyone had a question, an', Frank, I stood up! (*She stands*) Honest to God, I stood up, an' everyone's lookin' at me. I don't know what possessed me, I was gonna sit down again, but two thousand people had seen me stand up, so I did it, I asked him the question.