

PAPERS (Excerpt)

Myra's office; a cosy wall of books, perhaps a tea kettle and coffee makings. MYRA is seated behind her desk, glasses on, taking notes from a very serious book. And loving it. BOBBI appears at the doorway. She knocks hesitantly.

MYRA: Yes?

BOBBI: (*short pause*) Uh...hi. Sorry I haven't been to class.

MYRA: We've coped.

BOBBI: (*awkward beat*) May I come in?

MYRA: I suppose.

BOBBI: (*enters*) This sure is a nice office. I mean I just love those books! They make this place look like one of those family rooms in "Better Homes and Gardens".

MYRA: (*very dry*) I've always maintained books are a safe way to do a wall if you can't pick art.

BOBBI: So, like, have you actually read the whole wall?

MYRA: Of course.

BOBBI: That's pretty serious reading.

MYRA: They're pretty serious books.

BOBBI: I'd go blind.

MYRA: You might. But now, if you don't mind, I'm in the middle of a major discovery, so let's cut the small talk, shall we? What do you want?

BOBBI: My Eliot essay.

MYRA: Ah yes. (*glances through her 'Out' tray*) You were gone so long I'd almost forgotten about it. (*gives it to her*)

BOBBI: Thanks.

MYRA: Don't mention it.

BOBBI: (*seeing mark*) F?

MYRA: F.

BOBBI: So what's that supposed to mean?

MYRA: (*sweet, patient smile*) You fail.

BOBBI: That's not fair.

MYRA: Welcome to life.

BOBBI: You didn't give this essay any thought.

MYRA: Neither did you.

BOBBI: I did too. It says exactly what I think.

MYRA: How frightening.

BOBBI: And it's good -- it really is -- and you gotta pass me. If you don't I'll just die! I'll just die!!

MYRA: Miss Roy, it's too early in the day for the last act of *Camille*.

BOBBI: But you don't understand. Without a pass my scholarship is doomed!

MYRA: That's a shame. But hardly relevant.

BOBBI: Yeah. The only thing that's relevant is you wanted to fail me so you failed me.

MYRA: There are good, solid reasons to fail that essay.

BOBBI: Name one.

MYRA: I'll name you a dozen. Give it here. (*takes essay*) Let's start with the title: "Ingersoll and the Objective Corelative". Two 'R's in 'correlative'. You should invest in a dictionary.

BOBBI: What for? I mean why look up words you think you spell right?

MYRA: Don't be smart.

BOBBI: I'm just stating an opinion.

MYRA: You don't have opinions. You have notions. Such as: (*reading from BOBBI's essay with vague distaste*) "one can't read T.S. Eliot. One has to decode him. He's the original game of Trivial Pursuit. And that's not art. It's pretension." (*to BOBBI*) And that's not an essay. It's a diatribe.

BOBBI: But it's true. He's a tight-ass.

MYRA: He's profound.

BOBBI: He sucks. "This is the way the world ends/ Not with a bang but a whimper." You call that deep? It's just the same old song and dance about how the world is a sterile dust heap and everything's pointless so why not just die because what does it matter anyway. Like I mean I just want to say, 'Lighten up, eh?'

MYRA: "LIGHTEN UP"???

BOBBI: Sure. He acts like it's the world's fault he's a boring old prude with a bad sex life.

MYRA: You offend me. Deeply. To trash the most important force in modern poetry without so much as a footnote!

BOBBI: You mean if I quoted academics you wouldn't mind?

MYRA: Those who have devoted their lives to literature deserve serious attention. Not some teenager who can't even spell.

BOBBI: Well somebody who's devoted his life to literature takes me very seriously.

MYRA: Who?

BOBBI: Mr. Martin.

MYRA: Mister. Aren't we formal.

BOBBI: He likes my instincts.

MYRA: I'm sure he does.

BOBBI: And he liked this essay.

MYRA: He can like what he wants. He doesn't teach this class.

BOBBI: So what? he knows books. And those are his ideas.

MYRA: They are?

BOBBI: Yeah.

MYRA: Then you get zero. For plagiarism.

BOBBI: You're just jealous!

MYRA: What?

BOBBI: Lonely and jealous! Well I'm sorry! But it's not my fault you love Mr. Martin!

MYRA: (*stunned*) That is the most bizarre collection of sentences I've heard in my life!

BOBBI: It's the truth and you know it.

MYRA: What I know is that you have a gift for fantasy.

BOBBI: Be smug as you like. I was in the hall. I heard all about you and Mr. Martin and your lover.

MYRA: You filthy little sneak!

BOBBI: I didn't mean to. But it got so interesting.

MYRA: My conversations are private!

BOBBI: And that's how I was going to leave them. Until this.

MYRA: What do you mean 'until this'?

BOBBI: Well it's pretty obvious.

MYRA: Are you suggesting I failed you for personal reasons?

BOBBI: You got it.

MYRA: I am a professional. I don't descend to personalities, no matter how distasteful.

BOBBI: Bullshit.

MYRA: Don't bullshit me, young lady.

BOBBI: Then don't bullshit me. You're no more objective than that prissy old T.S. Eliot. You just have a lot of fancy words to cover up how mean and nasty you really are.

MYRA: Get out of my office.

BOBBI: Don't worry. I'm going. I'm going straight to the Dean.

MYRA: I beg your pardon?

BOBBI: If you don't pass this essay, your life will be hell.

MYRA: Are you threatening me?

BOBBI: Standing up for my rights.

MYRA: Three cheers for 'Bimbo Liberation'.

BOBBI: Very funny. Let's see if the Dean laughs when he hears about your ethics.

(*BOBBI runs out*)

MYRA: (*calling after her*) Ethics! Ethics!!! (*to self*) That's rich. Blackmailed by a little bitch who talks about ethics!

Blackout.