



# I\*HATE\*YOU\*JAMES\*FRANCO

*by Kristy Bowen*

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Poetry is dead, James Franco, and I'm convinced you killed it. One summer, you were everywhere, your face plastered on every lit blog, every entertainment magazine, and I had this dream that we were fighting zombies, only you kept loading too many weapons into your backpack and soon it was too heavy to carry. I also dreamed a lot about burying bodies that summer, piling them in swimming pools and hiding them behind the drapes. You could say I'd grown tired of you. I'd also read an article that zombies could be real given the right circumstances, a certain parasite that leads mice into the paths of hungry cats. One tiny mutation and it's all over.

Everyone has a secret life, even you James Franco. Perhaps you spend a lot of time staring at people and the sidewalk and wondering what dark little inner turmoil they have. I'm sure there are mother issues just rattling around in there somewhere, or maybe a missing father, a broken engagement. Maybe even the dark black ribbon of neglect. Perhaps you deal with it by binge-eating Oreos and prank dialing movie stars. Alphabetizing your CD's or cooking extravagant, but rather bland dishes you found the recipe for online. No one's life is perfect, you say. You would probably never suspect mine involves a lot of watching old soap operas and sewing buttons onto the clothes they keep falling off of. All the while thinking that bad girls are so much more interesting in terms of plotline than the good ones.

Mostly what bothers me is your listlessness. It makes me feel like a dull pencil or a broken wheel. I keep meeting men like you who have problems sleeping and they all require careful handling like horses that might spook. They tend to be frantic, checking their smartphones impatiently and looking at the door. Maybe I bore them, James Franco. Maybe I bore you. Me, I can sleep for days if given the chance, long endless white sheets of it. I once slept through a fire drill in college after drinking too much Nyquil, missed the girls flooding the parking lots in their pastel pajamas. Once slept for 18 hours after too much whiskey and woke up craving pancakes. The other night I dreamed there were beds on city buses you could rent for a quarter during your commute. You can bet your ass I could sleep there too.

Sometimes I think I have too many cats, James Franco. Cats and graduate degrees. My drains are thick with them, I still keep a suitcase packed in the closet and a twenty in a tampon box in the medicine cabinet. In case of emergencies. In case I lose my shit. I mean really, lose my shit, not just the regular sort of losing. Lord knows I've lost enough--umbrellas, my spare keys, my favorite scarf. I seem to have gotten to the age where there will be more losing than finding, more taken than gained. Two or three times a day, I'm looking for wood to knock on. Fortune seems like a drunk girl walking along a train trestle at 3am. There's no saving her, James Franco, eventually she's going to fall off.

Perhaps you are trying too hard, James Franco. You are supposedly teaching a class on how to turn poetry into films. I am waiting to write the poem that can be made into the Godfather Part 4, and yes, there would be another scene with a horse's head. I did read the book, but only the dirty part at the beginning. In the movie about my life, I think I would prefer that I were thinner and lived in a more temperate climate. The opening scene would feature me riding a bike with a basket full of wildflowers fastened to the handlebars while my skirt flares out flatteringly behind me. I could get away with bangs and fingerless gloves and a cat (just one) named Finnegan. I would prefer a soft fade out on the dirty parts.



Oh James, you see it's not that I'm in love with you, or even like you all that much, but once you were in that movie that I thought was a Shakespeare play but wasn't and the heroine was so blonde and wan and staring off into the distance so prettily that I, for a second, questioned my own passion. (Because what is love, after all, if not staring off wistfully across vast distances?) I wanted desire that someone set on fire and floated out onto a lake. To ruin entire monarchies with my wanting. It was a creeping sort of unhappiness on the bus ride home from the theatre that January. And I got it eventually, love like a hidden thing I had to make out with in closets like seven minutes in heaven, everything breathless, breathless, oh. I blame you a little for that James Franco. Fuck you.

8 out of 10 of my friends think you are a douche, James Franco. Okay, I haven't polled them, but it seems to be a consensus. I pegged you immediately as yet another sleepy-eyed, pouty pretty boy. Apparently you played Ginsberg, but this seems very wrong. What I know of the Beats is a lot of women in black turtlenecks getting ignored while the men got drunk and high and semi-famous while their writing wasn't all that great. I hate to say it, but you don't seem at all Jewish enough to play Ginsberg. I am more a Ryan Gosling sort of girl, anyway. Though sometimes I hate him too for that movie with the redhead and that scene in the rain and the furious kissing. That movie reminds me of something someone told me once that even the best instances of love working out usually end in death or disease one way or the other. This makes me feel a little like I can't breathe. 2 out of 5 people would want Meg Ryan to play them in the movie about their life. I haven't taken a poll, but it pretty much seems to be true.

Sometimes I make odd analogies between men and breakfast foods. One like a donut, quick and easy and not all fulfilling. Another like a four course brunch that I'm eating off someone else's plate. You, James Franco are probably a chocolate croissant, carbohydrately sound but a little too sweet and overly fancy. Male poets have it easier, I say, since all women want sensitivity and brooding introspection. Since I don't know what I want mostly, I mostly don't know where to start. There was another movie, James Franco, and you weren't in it, but you could have been, where a guy trekked back across a burning city to save his beloved from the wrath of a giant godzilla monster. I think it's a sound litmus test for love. Mostly, I think we're waiting for the next disaster.

To be honest James Franco, I've never been able to read past the first 3 pages of Ulysses. I've checked the book out so many times from the Cherry Valley Public Library that my coffee ring is permanently implanted on the cover. When I was in grad school, I dreamed I would be tested on it, along with the recitation of the death scene from Romeo and Juliet I memorized my sophomore year. This is like the dream where I haven't been to class all semester and have no idea where it even is, or the dream where the elfin man promises to tell me the secret of "Poetry" and then leads me into a dark forest. Needless to say, I fail miserably.

James, I have finally learned to do magic, mostly mind reading tricks. I was 7 once and a school magician made a red hankie appear in my pocket without laying a hand on me. To this I owe my love of the reveal, the spectacle. The trick is to be one step ahead of the mark. Try to remember the name of the street where you grew up (unless it's something common like Elm or Oak or Main Street). It helps being able to count backwards from 100 or roll your R's or touch your elbow to your nose. Something genetic and immutable. A cousin of mine once came back from the dead, coughed up an ocean of seawater and salt and went back to work the next day. Couldn't figure out why the batteries in her watch kept draining and her dog circled her so standoffishly. She discovered she could sing show tunes and make guacamole without the lights on. The trick is to remain one step ahead of the mark.

I started reading your Wikipedia page, James Franco, and frankly, have decided this is more about me than it is about you. Only one of us makes it out of this alive. I talk tough, but really I'm a peach. Most men who call me honey or sweetie or sexy are really either lying to me about something or trying to get me in the sack. You seem like the kind of guy who calls waitresses and receptionists "Hun". Don't be that guy. Also don't be the sort of guy who writes poems based on the Fibonacci sequence. I am trying not to be the sort of girl who writes too many poems about birds and mermaids. I am trying not to be the girl who falls in love with every guy who makes me laugh or feel pretty or pays me a particular, sustained sort of attention. I am also trying not to be the sad girl crying into her sweater on the train ride home.

I am also trying to not be the girl who writes too much about my body, but somehow it's always bumping into things and wanting. I've determined publication is for the masses and am thinking of placing poems in bottles and tossing them into Lake Michigan. Today, I wore the itchy dress again that makes my boobs look nice. It's always like this, mixing my metaphors. Too many boats in the ocean and the ducks all in a row, plates in the air, and stuff on my plate. Some days, James, I am fouler mouthed, fouler weathered than others. Some days, I am trying hard not to be the girl who writes about the moon.

Oh James Franco, the kids in the park across the street are staging a toy revolution with signs and paper canons and their hipster jeans. I don't say much about it and instead have decided my time is better spent cutting out paper boats and drinking vodka. I have this analogy about arrows and the belly of the dragon and the need to climb down inside and pick it apart with an ax but it all sounds hollow and terribly unfashionable in the midst of a revolution. Mostly I glue the soles back onto my favorite brown boots with spray adhesive and think about winter.



I am waiting to write the poem that guts you, James Franco.

I am waiting to write the poem that is something like a dance movie, the ones populated by fair haired ballerinas with just a little bit of singe to their tulle, not quite as dark as the Natalie Portman one, but girls woefully misunderstood by their parents or harboring dead mothers and sad pasts. The ones who sneak off from their ordinary lives every night to press themselves against men in dimly lit bars or rehearsal rooms. The one spinning beneath the spotlights like her life depends on it.

I also keep having dreams about hotels, a maze of hallways and women leaning in heels over wastebaskets and potted plants. Usually, there is a party, and I'm already late. Maybe a dim stairwell with malicious intent. In an interview some guy did with you, you keep saying "experimental" like it's a dirty word, or a rope you want to hang yourself with. Which is it James Franco? The knife or the garbage disposal. The dishwasher or the do-si-do. In another dream, I inherit a huge house, its rooms unfolding over and over like a letter. Still, there isn't space for everything I want to say. Room for the in-between, the moment at which language falls into strangeness and then crawls back out of my mouth. The moment at which it crawls back in.

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