

# COUNTING RITA

## By Patrick Gabridge

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**CAST: RITA and SARAH**

**SCENE: A café. SARAH sits at a table, sipping a soda, waiting patiently. RITA arrives, hurried.**

RITA: Hi, Sarah. Sorry I'm late. **(SARAH takes a small handheld counter out of her purse and clicks it once. In competition, the counter can be mimed, and SARAH will say "click" each time the counter is clicked.)** What's that?

SARAH: A counter.

RITA: Why do you have a counter?

SARAH: It's an experiment. Not a big deal, really. Will it bother you?

RITA: No, I guess not.

SARAH: Is something wrong? You look flushed.

RITA: Wrong? No. My guitar lesson ran late, that's all.

**(SARAH clicks the counter.)**

SARAH: How are they coming?

RITA: What?

SARAH: The guitar lessons. You must be getting pretty good by now.

RITA: I still have a long way to go. I need to practice more.

SARAH: I'd love to hear you play sometime.

RITA: Oh, I'm still horrible... I'm so glad you called. I've been thinking a lot about you.

SARAH: Have you?

RITA: We've kind of lost touch lately.

SARAH: I know what you mean. Whatever happened to being joined at the hip? Movies with the gang, concerts. You weren't at Jeremy's party, and then I hoped you would come apple picking with us and Caroline, but you vanished again. You've been almost invisible.

RITA: I've been so busy. Too many papers to write. Lots of time at the library. I've been working too many hours at the store. Suddenly it seems like I never do anything fun. **(SARAH clicks the counter.)** Why are you doing that?

SARAH: I told you, it's an experiment. I'm trying to understand something.

RITA: About speech, about conversation? It's really annoying to have this little clicking in the middle of... What is this all about?

SARAH: I'm sorry it's bothering you. I know you like things quiet, inside and out.

RITA: What is that supposed to mean?

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SARAH: Nothing.

RITA: See, that's something I don't like. It's very condescending when you do that. That tone of voice. Like you know so much more than me. I know you're smart, we all know you're smart, Sarah. But...

SARAH: You're mad at me.

RITA: No, I'm not... How could I be? You're sweet, you mean well. I'm insecure, that's all. **(SARAH clicks the counter.)** You're not going to stop that, are you?

SARAH: No. It's really helping me. It helps me pay attention to what you're saying, deeply. I deeply want to understand you, Rita.

RITA: And that little clicker is going to help?

SARAH: Sort of.

RITA: You've been so weird lately.

SARAH: How would you know? You've been avoiding me.

RITA: I have not been avoiding you. We've just been missing each other. **(click)** But I've heard from the others that you've been acting different.

SARAH: Who? What have they been saying?

RITA: You seem like you're some sort of odd mental whirlpool. One minute you're laughing, and the next you're in a deep depression. You wonder off in the middle of a conversation. You act like you're suspicious of everyone.

SARAH: I didn't think I'd been acting any differently.

RITA: People have noticed. I talked with Julie about you. She has a theory.

SARAH: Enlighten me.

RITA: She thinks you're in love. And not with Jake.

**(SARAH clicks the counter, laughing.)**

SARAH: Is that what she said?

RITA: Even Jake is curious. He says you've seemed kind of distant.

**(SARAH clicks the counter.)**

SARAH: You talked with my boyfriend about me?

RITA: Just in passing.

**(click)**

SARAH: And he thinks I'm interested in someone else?

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