

# *Rita*

This couple who lived in a tall apartment building in the city decided to get a monkey, not a chimpanzee but a little monkey that would fit in a large bird cage. Jared, the man, wanted to get a cage for the monkey because the couple often went out of town and he didn't want the monkey ripping up the place.

Of all the places they had ever lived, the couple loved this apartment the most. To get into the building they had to pass an interview with the other people who would live next to them. The couple sat in two leather chairs while the building's tenants asked them questions. "Do you

like music?” Of course they did. “What kind of music do you listen to?” Mozart mostly, although sometimes they cranked up *John Tesh at Red Rocks*, but only on Sunday, in the middle of the day. They passed the screening and filled the apartment with furniture like a new sideboard to hold the china passed on to Lydia from her grandmother. They had a lot of things and the apartment was just the perfect place to hold them all.

The couple went to a large pet store at the mall. It had cages and cages full of monkeys. The back of the store had an aviary and the basement had an aquarium. They bought a monkey and named it “Rita,” because the monkey made a noise that sounded like the name “Rita” every time it wanted a treat. The monkey liked fresh fruit as a treat. Lydia bought fresh fruit on the way home from work. She cut the bananas up and fed them to Rita. Every time the monkey squealed, “Rita,” Lydia fed her a slice of banana.

Jared’s father died and the couple had to go out of town for three weeks. They hired a friend to come, feed, and sit with the monkey every other day. The friend promptly forgot to come to the apartment. A week later, the friend was at a party. It was late at night and he, drunk from gin

and tonics, turned the channels on the TV until he came to a movie called *Every Which Way But Loose*, which was about a monkey named Loose. He remembered the couple's monkey. He jumped into his Yugo, a small foreign automobile. On the way to his friend's house, to feed the monkey, he ran a red light and a freight truck smashed into the side of the Yugo. The Yugo was demolished.

When the couple returned from the funeral, they found Rita's arms propped through the bars of the cage. She had starved to death. And on their answering machine was a message from their friend saying he would be right over to feed Rita. "Hi, Rita," he said. Following this message was one from a mutual friend telling them that the Yugo had been run over by a truck. Their friend was dead.

Jared bought his girlfriend a stuffed gorilla on the way home from work. When he came home, he left it on the bed. His girlfriend had to work late. When she came home, she didn't turn on the light, but brushed her teeth in the dark, and then slipped into the bed, next to Jared.

Late at night, as she tossed and turned, she brushed her hand across the stuffed gorilla and knocked it to the floor. She screamed, "Rita!"

The next morning the landlord left a message on their answering machine that he had complaints that someone had been yelling “Rita” over and over again for the last three weeks, and that it had started again last night. They were going to have to find a different place to live.