



## Melinda Camber Porter Archive of Creative Works

[www.MelindaCamberPorter.com](http://www.MelindaCamberPorter.com)

International Standard Serial Numbers:

ISSN: 2379-2450 (Print)

ISSN: 2379-3198 (Ebook)

ISSN: 2379-321X (Audio)

# *FRANK*

An illustrated novel by  
Melinda Camber Porter



*FRANK* is set in the early seventies, in an era where sexual license and hallucinogenic drugs have become an accepted part of western mores. In *FRANK*, this world of wild excess is no longer born from a rebellion against the status quo as it had been during the sixties; it has become the fashionable style.

The heroine of *FRANK*, whose name we never learn, narrates her spiritual and emotional quest for significance as she journeys through a world that appears to be free from shame and guilt. As she strips away from existence all anecdotal reality, only pure desire- her sexual desire- remains. Armed with financial freedom (she is the heir to the main body of her sculptor grandfather's priceless *oeuvre*) she navigates, with her visionary sensibility, an impossible dream come true, where there are no boundaries, no rules, and no demands made on her. But does license equal true freedom? Does pure sexual desire breed love? Does a life of excess lead to the path of wisdom?

Melinda Camber Porter, in the tradition of a Voltaire or Camus, uses the novel to explore the key questions of our existence, attempting to redefine our concept of human freedom and bondage, as well as our definition of sexuality. The subtleties and originality of Melinda Camber Porter's vision are worthy of a John Stuart Mill or a William Blake. She miraculously creates a world where, undeniably, spiritual infinity springs from the energetic expression of deep desire. But, unlike many 'philosophical' novels, *FRANK* is born from the passionate, volcanic imagination of the author, who plunges us into a tactile, sensual world where intuition and vision are our guides.

In an age when AIDS has instigated a resurrection of fear and distrust in sexual passion, Melinda Camber Porter's novel *FRANK*, reinstates desire as the life force and the primary source of all our energies. But what are the boundaries that our heroine creates to delineate a life born from desire? How does she flourish in a world where no rules or restrictions bind her? Is love the key?

*FRANK* is illustrated with watercolors by Melinda Camber Porter from her art series; *Luminous Bodies: Circles of Celebration* (ISBN: 978-1-942231-49-3) and *Luminous Bodies: Circles of Mourning* (ISBN: 978-942231-49-3).

**Praise for *FRANK***  
**An Illustrated Novel**  
by  
**Melinda Camber Porter**

“The great “meltdown” of modern sexual anarchy is the real subject of Melinda Camber Porter's novel *FRANK*. To judge by the electronic speed of her narrative and the Stendhalian decisiveness of her characters she has learned all there is to learn about the anarchic phase (if it is a phase). Nevertheless she has some hope for a post-anarchic future. Even now, she seems to say, love is possible. A *kind* of love, perhaps. *Some* kind of love. Readers will understand, without coaching, what she means.”

—SAUL BELLOW

“*FRANK* is a pleasure in every way and is extremely well written. I don't think of it so much as an erotic novel as a romantic one, although I see why it could be considered erotic. I liked the book very much.”

—MIKE NICHOLS

# *FRANK*

An illustrated novel by  
**Melinda Camber Porter**

## Chapter 1

OK. So one day you've got to face it. Whatever you hide day in and day out from yourself and everyone else. This man I was sitting next to on the plane going from London to Paris. I just told him that. And repeated it several times. The plane swung drunk over my English coastline. I know this journey. I used to do it twice a week, running to my husband in Paris and running away from him to London. I'm divorcing, this man said to me.

Virile. North Country? Humble background. Made it in a multinational? Made it in America or where was it? "In a multinational, of course," he says. "I'm divorcing," I replied casually. I look too young to be divorced twice. After all, it takes time to get a divorce in England. Three months. "Who's the next one on the list?" he asks. I don't like talking to people on planes. I told him. I move in the gay world. I don't have all that much time to really get to know, you know, to know people.

I'm not gay, but it was part of my education, knowing about every possible form of sexuality. As well as every capital. You name it, I've been there. Took time off living to travel, I said. "Are you a bitch?" he asked. Touching my green suede jacket, travel soiled. "In despair. That's all. No values. Old values. Nothing to live for." But never suicidal? "I like despair," I said to some remark of his. It leads me into tight corners and I like tight corners.

Fundamentally you're right I am a bitch. I'm out of the love game. So don't touch my jacket. That's sex not love he said. I'm losing weight now I'm a bachelor. You don't need to I replied. I like your figure. I like tall men. Why don't you stand up? I might fancy you. What do you do for this multinational? "Oh. Take care of some disks." How funny I replied. I like that.

At a certain point you stop caring. It's not like being unhappy I said. You just admit that you took the wrong path. Sinful path. Do you understand what I mean? You give up praying and you give up analysis and then love and then work. And if you have enough money you just live your despair. You know it's quite a nice feeling. Like flying. We're not anywhere now here I said. We're just drifting. In the air. Do you ever think about what flying implies? I try to be a little haughty just to play a little game over and above the evident sexual warmth coming from his hand and my eyes. "You know I don't like men or women. Hamlet said that, didn't he?" I expect he did. This man is gaining interest. I think you work for IBM I said. A put down. I thought you looked like a nice guy. A clean businessman. Not in the con world. It's a game he replied. A nice game.

A very nice game which I tried to play a little bit and never won, I say. You never won? No I lost I say. I like you he said. I like you. Shall we meet up in Paris? We have dinner in the Great American Disaster in the rue de Ponthieu. We go to the Palace and dance. I'm bored I say. And obnoxious. My ex-husband used to take me here and I think the clientele has changed. He's not here. Nor are my friends. Let's stay all night. And dance I say. He dances beautifully. Let's go to L.A. he says. "Let's go soon," I say. Back at the hotel bedroom. We don't make love. We sleep. I sleep all morning. He wakes me at lunchtime and takes me to old French cuisine downstairs in the Georges V restaurant. I awake over the coffee, and take in the person called Pierre talking deals sitting at my right. He tells me he has given himself a DE in the middle of his name. He avoids looking at me, but never mind. He probably doesn't look anyone in the eye. So I tell him why Marchais left politics for the TV circus. A joke, I say. The political circus is a joke. Everywhere, not just France. There's a difference between wanting power and having it. The communists have twenty percent of power. "That's all they want," I say aggressively. "Are you like that about power?" I ask Pierre DE. "She needs discipline. Can I introduce her to some friends?" says Pierre. We all laugh. Frank tells Pierre we'll be getting the 10:00 Concorde to New York. Tomorrow. And the connecting flight to L.A. Pierre DE says that's the best way to travel far. On two flights we talk. We go to L.A. We go. We still don't make love. On neither flight. I begin to

fear he's gay. "I'm falling in love," he hums as we bop on the outskirts of the Roller Disco Arena in the Marina Peninsula. It's the lyrics of the song we're dancing to. It's a gay area but no one wants to pick him up. Or me. The Pacific is a nice coastline. I hate the waves I say. I tried to swim in the Pacific and lost. I lose everything. I'm a loser. I cry. He puts his arms around me and after being in his company for four days I notice his face.

He has liquid blue eyes. Like the ocean, and a very pale nondescript face. He has steel-rimmed glasses and mousy hair. He is about thirty. What are we doing in L.A.? I say. Then, I cry. "I have business here." What are we doing here? What are you doing here? He asks me. "I have nothing better to do. I drift." We sit on the sunset. It's falling all over the sand like rouge. She's beautiful. She's so beautiful.

"That's the kind of scene that makes you want to cry." I cry again. And say: "The sea is a beauty. Nature's beautiful even when she's cruel. Unlike people. Look at the world. The world's full of pain. And cruelty."

"What made you come to that conclusion, Babe?" he asks me rather aggressively.

"People," I reply. "They hurt. Like a bloody cold."

"A cold's uncomfortable," he replies. "It doesn't hurt. And people get colds. They're not colds."

Well it's time we had dinner. Someone as tough as this guy would never even admit that he was one of those that got hurt. OK. I said. Walking down the pallid ugly path to our favorite restaurant in the gay area. It was getting cool. The sunset had gone black. "OK. So we'll talk about your work," I say. Always makes them think you're making fun of them when you talk about their work.

"Are you sort of famous?" I ask loudly as he orders the meal in French. He is English. I am English. We are in L.A. He has made it in a multinational. What the fuck's the pretention about I ask. What the fuck are you doing taking me out to a nice tranquil meal?

No one to impress but me and you, that's all, and you start talking in French. I don't lose my temper nonstop I tell him but this is crazy. "You're a fucking asslicker." He replies. "I paid for you. Thousands of dollars so far. We're staying in the Beverly Wilshire (I told him I wanted to stay with friends, not in hotels). I said I paid for you and you damn well listen to what I say. Are you class-ridden or something? Are you a snob?" he asked more gently, almost unbelievably. God no. I'm a whore. That's why you're paying for me. I reply. With rage, since we've never made love since we said hello on the plane. Four days previously. I have jet lag. That's the thing that's gone wrong. There's a reason. It's not my fault and so I take his hand and stick it in my shirt. A rather nice white frilly shirt I bought years ago. And I can feel him responding to my breast in quite an assured way. I let it lie there for a moment.

The restaurant is going quiet. It's getting quiet in here I say. Will you feed me when the crudités arrive with my eyes closed?

"This is the first time you've laid a finger on me, do you realize?"

He squeezes my nipple too hard. It hurts. I didn't want to shriek. I'm worried about drawing attention to myself I say.

"If you're famous everyone will think I'm star fucking. Not that I mind being seen with this six-foot man, but star fucking is, well, they probably see it every day. That's what people say everyone does in L.A. They probably see it every day. Sixteen-year-old girls fucking men in front of restauranters. Anywhere as long as you've made it."

I whispered, "Are you famous?"

"Haven't you heard of me?"

"I don't know your name."

He loosens his grip on my nipple and, moving his hand under my breast to cup it, he laughs bad-temperedly. He tilts it up and lets it drop and withdraws from my shirt.

"You're a snob. So what. You're impossible. Most people aren't. Most people you can get a conversation out of."

"You don't like most people?" I ask.

"No."

He said it proudly.

"I didn't want to tell you. It's a hang-up of mine. If someone lasts more than two days I tend to like them." And you like me because I've lasted more than two days? I didn't want a one-night stand. On the plane. He says. I want a change now I'm divorced.

He's a liar too. He said he's divorcing. Not divorced. Who is this man trying to kid? I look delicate and hurt, but I hate this pick-up. If I leave now I'll have to ring for a taxi on a credit card firm and I've left my dollars in the hotel bedroom. I was never cured by analysis I say. Think. Think of the waste of money. He says. It's time you spoiled little rich kids learned how to feel without running to shrinks.

I suppose you go to health farms. I heard a funny story about a health farm. People went to this health farm to pick each other up. Heterosexuals choose places that stink of respectability. Unlike gays. Like us on the plane he says.

"That was one of the nicest journeys I've had," he adds.

It was.

"Was it?" I say.

It's so cold and I want someone to stick their hands in my shirt and massage me and then come in me slowly and not too passionately.

In the car, we drive together listening to a local disco station. I put my leg over his and begin to cry.

"It's so anonymous this landscape. There's no one here but you. I'm so alone. If you leave me I'll have a breakdown."

"I'm fucking you this evening," he says. "I'm not letting you get away with all that foreplay." He laughs.

"I like people watching. I used to like voyeurism," I said. Watching it. Not doing it, of course, I added.

"How old are you?" he asks.

"Twenty-five. Here's my telephone numbers. In different hotels. This is where I stay in each city. I don't like living anywhere in particular. I spent three years consciously trying to try out everything."

"I think money's dangerous," I said as we got undressed in the Beverly Wilshire. "I hope you don't feel you've paid for this."

I don't. I don't think you know what you're letting yourself in for. He says. Don't. Don't do anything--too nice. I say: this sort of think jerks you out of despair. If it goes I won't be calm. Hey what's your name? What are you doing? I won't be nonchalant. My analyst told me what it was, why I don't like too much orgasm. He called it resource less dependence. Lying in bed with this man, I close my eyes.

"My analyst said when my libido is realized . . . my double standard of an education. My father said sex was the high water mark of . . . experience. He gave me Henry Miller . . . when I was five. I use talking to get away--what's your name? I want to look at the palm trees. I want to do it by video. Why can't we just make a film of it and keep playing it back. I like bites. Like that," I say. "It takes my mind off the pleasure."

\* \* \*

"I remember what it was like when sex equaled falling in love." I say, afterwards. "That was a joke," I add.

What's your name?

Frank.

###