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Distant Intimacy

Frederic Raphael

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Distant Intimacy

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Distant Intimacy Frederic Raphael

This delightful book of writer-to-writer correspondence joins a full shelf of volumes in the genre, yet it is perhaps the first set of such letters ever transacted via the Internet. Also unusual, at least for correspondents in the twenty-first century, is that Frederic Raphael and Joseph Epstein have never met, nor even spoken to each other. But what is most rare about this book is the authors' abundant talent for entertaining their readers, as much when the topic is grave as when it is droll.

Raphael and Epstein agree to embark on a year-long correspondence, but other rules are few. As the weeks progress, their friendship grows, and each inspires the other. Almost any topic, large or small, is considered: they write of schooling, parents, wives, children, literary tastes, enmities, delights, and beliefs. They discuss their professional lives as writers, their skills or want of them, respective experiences with editors, producers, and actors, and, in priceless passages scattered throughout the letters, they assess such celebrated figures as Gore Vidal, Christopher Hitchens, Susan Sontag, Annie Leibowitz, Malcolm Gladwell, Harold Bloom, George Steiner, Harold Pinter, Isaiah Berlin, George Weidenfeld, and Robert Gottlieb, among many others. Epstein and Raphael capture a year in their letters, but more, they invite us into an intimate world where literature, cinema, and art are keys to self-discovery and friendship.

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