

THE SCRIPT

by

Jo Freedman

T H E S C R I P T

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(RICHARD and PAMELA are seated close to each other on a couch facing the audience. They are dressed in formal, slightly exaggerated evening attire. When the curtain parts, they very deliberately take each other's hands and smile brightly, tensely, toothily in the direction of the audience.)

PAMELA: Richard. (Without the slightest affection, but without animosity either) Darling.

RICHARD: Yes. Darling.

PAMELA: Dearest, the dinner guests are late.

RICHARD: Whose dinner guests?

PAMELA: Ours.

RICHARD: But we haven't any.

PAMELA: (acidly) Precisely my point. (pause) Anyway, they're late.

RICHARD: (carelessly) As a matter of fact, they were due last night.

PAMELA: Or the night before.

RICHARD: Or tomorrow.

PAMELA: Or the night after that. Or the night before.

RICHARD: (acidly) That's tonight. (pause)

PAMELA: (pacifyingly) Well, it's clear they were due sometime. But they haven't come.

RICHARD: (refuses to console her) No they have not.

PAMELA: Well, must we expect them? That is, must we continue to expect them?

RICHARD: (opens the script) Apparently. (reading) We are in formal evening attire, perhaps slightly exaggerated.

PAMELA: (examining herself) Certainly not exaggerated!

RICHARD: (continues to read) The table is laid for a party of eight. (accusingly) We're only two.

PAMELA: (sadly) Yes, only two.

RICHARD: (continues reading) The dining room furniture is tidy and polished. (bitterly) Now that in itself is significant because you never clean up this pigpen unless you anticipate company.

PAMELA: You're suggesting I'm untidy?

RICHARD: (coolly) Perhaps only clovenly.

PAMELA: Careless?

RICHARD: Negligent.

PAMELA: Disorderly?

RICHARD: Slatternly.

PAMELA: Slatternly? You'd say I was slatternly?

RICHARD: I would.

PAMELA: I don't think the word's used anymore. Anyway, love, the whole thing's slightly ridiculous because there's nothing in the room. (this is quite true. There are no furnishings except the couch)

RICHARD: (looking around in slight surprise) Yes, you're quite right. It's plain there's no furniture in the room. Do you think that was intentional? (PAMELA says nothing) I said, do you think that was intentional? DO YOU? (pause) Pamela. Darling. At times I find you somewhat less responsive than I would like.

PAMELA: (as offering a suggestion) Close?

RICHARD: Cold.

PAMELA: Thick-skinned?

RICHARD: Callous.

PAMELA: (her voice rising) Indifferent?

RICHARD: (the pace increases) Apathetic.

PAMELA: (shrilly) Insipid?

RICHARD: (bluntly) Unattractive.

PAMELA: Insensitive?

RICHARD: Torpid.

PAMELA: (screaming) Frigid?

RICHARD: (a pause, as he quietly considers this possibility. Then slowly) Yes.. I would say frigid. That's good. (a pause) Tea? Pamela? Darling?

PAMELA: (collecting herself. She turns to the audience) Please excuse me.

RICHARD: (handing her a cup of tea which is invisible to the audience) Yes, that was really quite unforgiveable. Two lumps, dear, correct? (to the audience) You've come to be entertained by an evening of married bliss. And we intend to give it to you.

PAMELA: We do.

RICHARD: We are really quite in love.

PAMELA: (acidly) Quite.

RICHARD: (ignoring her) And we would appreciate it if you ignored any slight slip-ups that might indicate otherwise. (a pause) After all, you must see this is a bit hard on us night after night. I mean, to be in love. Constantly. Without alleviation. What with a performance every night, I haven't even time to fuck a whore. (a pause) But we do it for you. For your enjoyment. (a pause) Now, where were we?

PAMELA: Oh Richard. Darling. Come here, you beautiful man.

RICHARD: What's that supposed to mean, Bear?

PAMELA: Richard, this is our quiet after-dinner love scene.

RICHARD: Dinner was excellent. A bit rushed. But excellent.

PAMELA: (moving closer to him) Richard. (in a sultry tone) My king.

RICHARD: (correcting her) My lion-hearted king.

PAMELA: (abruptly) Are you sure?

RICHARD: Quite.

PAMELA: Lion-hearted?

RICHARD: (opens script. Reading) My lion-hearted king.

PAMELA: Sometimes I forget that.

RICHARD: Do you now?

PAMELA: Yes I do. (a pause)

RICHARD: (irritably) Well, come on. They're waiting.

PAMELA: (beginning again) Richard. (in a sultry tone) My lion-hearted king. My golden champion. (lower) My luxurious lord. (they begin to neck in earnest)

RICHARD: My grateful little wife. My fair-haired flower. (suddenly breaking off) You know, I've never felt that term to be appropriate.

PAMELA: Which term?

RICHARD: Flower.

PAMELA: But aren't I your fair-haired little flower?

RICHARD: (opens script. Uncertainly) I suppose so. But I've never felt comfortable with it. (without warning he seizes her and kisses her with a good simulation of passion. A minute of no dialogue)

PAMELA: Ohhh, Richard. Ohhh, that's good. I love you.

RICHARD: (abruptly disengages himself and sits up) That was odious.

PAMELA: What?

RICHARD: The way you delivered that line. I always thought you did it poorly, but tonight it was odious.

PAMELA: (petuantly) Well, you can't really do much with a line like that. It's hardly original. I mean, there are only so many ways to deliver a line like that. (she begins to repeat "I love you" with a variety of inflections indicating frigidity, lust, terror, compassion etc.) I love you. I love you. etc.

RICHARD: (admitting it reluctantly) Well, you're versatile. But you're not authentic. (turning to the audience. Apologetically)

You should have seen this scene six years ago. It was really quite good then. Convincing, you know. It was almost the real thing. (said with nostalgia) I suspect it's grown a bit stale.

PAMELA: (venomously) Idealist. Do you think they can't see through you? This isn't theater of realism, now is it? Is it? (RICHARD says nothing. She repeats disgustedly) Idealist.

RICHARD: (defensively) I'm a poet. It's our business to be idealistic. Who would polish the ideals if it weren't for the poets?

PAMELA: Poet, my ass. Bomb-builder.

RICHARD: Well, not really.

PAMELA: (accusingly) Scientist.

RICHARD: Only in my spare time.

PAMELA: Full-time.

RICHARD: Are you sure? I can hardly believe it.

PAMELA: Quite. (opens script and indicates line)

RICHARD: (sitting down as though he had received a shock. Well. (with interest) What sort of scientist am I?

PAMELA: (coldly) It doesn't give details.

RICHARD: No, I mean - am I good or bad?

PAMELA: Bad, I should say.

RICHARD: (disappointed) Oh. (a pause) But then I must be a poet in my spare time.

PAMELA: It doesn't say that anywhere.

RICHARD: Oh, but it must! (he anxiously searches the script) No, you're right. It doesn't. But I have a poem right here. (indicates script) Let me read it to you.

PAMELA: (indifferently) If you like.

RICHARD: I have turned to laborious dust/ the cracking ruins of my time/ My bold wars, agonized, agust/ mock the clumsy pantomime/ of general medalled by napalm -- (he breaks off) I don't know that I'll read the rest. It gets rather explicit. And I wouldn't want to spoil their (indicating

audience) evening. (a pause) Well, what do you think?

PAMELA: Of what?

RICHARD: Of it.

PAMELA: What it?

RICHARD: This it! (waving script)

PAMELA: Oh. (delicately) I'm not sure I really like it. But I like you very much. (to audience) I do like him.

RICHARD: What's wrong with it?

PAMELA: Oh, there's nothing really wrong with it, Richard.

RICHARD: No, go on, tell me.

PAMELA: Well, it's rhymed for one thing. That isn't done anymore, you know. And Richard, it sounds terribly proud. Or guilty.

RICHARD: Incriminating?

PAMELA: Maudlin.

RICHARD: (as offering a suggestion) Inane?

PAMELA: Pointless.

RICHARD: Empty?

PAMELA: Insincere.

RICHARD: (his voice rising) Ungenerous?

PAMELA: Selfish.

RICHARD: (shouting) Putrid?

PAMELA: (she considers this possibility) Yes .. I would say putrid. Toilet-stinking putrid.

RICHARD: (reprovingly) Now Pamela. Darling. You're probably shocking our audience. (turning to the audience. Kindly) Is she shocking you? Well, they're too polite to say so, but I have a feeling you're shocking them. (to audience again) Sometimes she may seem vulgar to you, but remember I love her. Remember I love her very much. (a pause) She comes from the suburbs, you know. She and her whole family. That's where they all come from. The suburbs. Suburbanites are very vulgar once you get to know them.

PAMELA: Have you loved me less since my sister came to live with us?

RICHARD: She's created problems.

PAMELA: Is she too costly?

RICHARD: That's part of it.

PAMELA: What's the other part of it?

RICHARD: Which other part of what?

PAMELA: Of my sister.

RICHARD: (evasively) She has many parts. (aggressively) What are you accusing me of?

PAMELA: Am I accusing you of something?

RICHARD: It's all right. You needn't make a scene. Because we're in love you needn't make a scene. Because we're deep in marital bliss I can confess all.

PAMELA: All about what?

RICHARD: About your sister.

PAMELA: (rapidly) Which part?

RICHARD: (evasively) She has many parts. Haven't we been here before?

PAMELA: We're always here. (sternly) Make your confession.

RICHARD: (gets down on his knees. Bends his head. Speaks formally and without emotion) Your sister inspires unbridled lust in me. (as an afterthought) But I've never touched her. Although I dream about it.

PAMELA: (callously) What it?

RICHARD: (refusing to play) You know.

PAMELA: Quite right.

RICHARD: (declining to confess all) And I've written a poem to her.

PAMELA: You don't write poems. Remember?

RICHARD: (ignoring her) Marg/ar/et, are you grieving/
Over golden grove unleaving?

PAMELA: (interrupting) You didn't write that. Bomb-
builder.

RICHARD: (pacifyingly) It's only a hobby.

PAMELA: You really think you and your stolen poems and
your worse than stolen originals and your fragmentary bombs
would interest my sister? Why, your secret, paper-lined
aspirations would make my sister laugh. Do you hear me? She
would laugh. (a long pause. Overly casual) Where is Margaret,
by the way?

RICHARD: Who's that?

PAMELA: That's her. My sister.

RICHARD: Is it now?

PAMELA: Quite. (impatiently) Well, where is she?

RICHARD: I'm sure I don't know. I haven't seen the old
girl in years.

PAMELA: Come to think of it, neither have I. (calling)
Margaret, Margaret, come out wherever you are. Hmm. Where do
you suppose she could have gone off to?

RICHARD: I haven't the vaguest. (with interest) Have you?

PAMELA: No, I haven't got the vaguest (as if it were a noun)
either. (a pause) Richard? Dear? You've never seen her, have you?
(exposing him)

RICHARD: (impatiently) Don't be absurd. I don't know her.
Not any part of her.

PAMELA: But you confessed that you lusted after her.

RICHARD: (slightly surprised) Did I? Are you sure?

PAMELA: (opening the script) There it is.

RICHARD: Hmm. There appears to be some discrepancy. (a
pause as he reads the preceding passage) Well, I must admit it
is rather vague. But it probably wishes to imply that if I did
know her I would lust after her.

PAMELA: Oh. (a pause. Brightly) Richard, I'm going to
make a confession too.

RICHARD: What, again?

PAMELA: It's my first tonight.

RICHARD: (indicating the audience) Well, it may be new to them, but it certainly isn't new to me. I've heard it 2189 times.

PAMELA: (automatically) 2190.

RICHARD: 2189. Remember two years ago, in January, I think the 17th or thereabouts. You stumbled over your lines. We skipped your confession entirely.

PAMELA: That was hardly fair.

RICHARD: Your own damn fault.

PAMELA: (decisively) I'm going to do it twice tonight.

RICHARD: You're going to what?

PAMELA: Do it. Twice. Tonight.

RICHARD: (indicating audience) What about them? Huh? What about them? (PAMELA obstinantly does not reply) What the hell, you don't really give a damn about them. Do you? DO YOU? (to the audience. Informatively, mildly) She really doesn't give a damn about you. I'm afraid you're just going to have to sit through it twice. And it's really implausible, even the first time through. I've always said she is a very unconvincing actress. But stubborn. Once she get an idea into her head, nothing can budge it.

PAMELA: (impatiently) Are you ready?

RICHARD: Oh quite.

PAMELA: (in the instructive tones of a schoolteacher) Richard, your brother arouses me to uncontrollable passion. (very precise diction) I want to tear off my clothes. (RICHARD does not react) I want to rub my breasts on his chest. (RICHARD is motionless. He seems bored. She tries again) I want to fit his body into mine. Like a key.

RICHARD: That's rather naughty of you, Pamela, darling.

PAMELA: (with satisfaction) It's quite ungenteel.

RICHARD: It's almost crude.

PAMELA: At least inelegant.

RICHARD: Grotesque.

PAMELA: (agreeing with him. She refuses to become annoyed)
Vulgar.

RICHARD: Repulsive.

PAMELA: (ironically) Offensive to ears polite.

RICHARD: (bitterly) Whore. Damn whore.

PAMELA: Suburanite. (a long pause)

RICHARD: You know I don't have a brother.

PAMELA: You don't? (surprised)

RICHARD: No, I don't.

PAMELA: Oh. Well, if you had one, then I would want to screw with him. Indefinitely. Indefinitely, Richard.

RICHARD: (tiredly) Do you want to try again?

PAMELA: (challengingly) Are you ready?

RICHARD: Oh quite.

PAMELA: (in the instructive tones of a schoolteacher)
Richard, your brother arouses me to uncontrollable passion.
(very precise diction) I want to tear off my clothes. (RICHARD
does not react) I want to rub my breasts on his chest. (from
this point on, the repeat proceeds at double speed) I want to
fit his body into mine. Like a key.

RICHARD: That's rather naughty of you, Pamela. Darling.

PAMELA: (with satisfaction) It's quite ungenteel.

RICHARD: It's almost crude.

PAMELA: At least inelegant.

RICHARD: Grotesque.

PAMELA: Vulgar.

RICHARD: Repulsive.

PAMELA: Offensive to ears polite.

RICHARD: (quite rapidly) Whoredamnwhore.

PAMELA: Suburbanite. (no pause)

RICHARD: You know I don't have a brother.

PAMELA: (without much surprise this time) You don't?

RICHARD: No, I don't.

PAMELA: Oh. Well, if you had one -

RICHARD: (jumping in before she can continue) Yes. You see, that makes this scene rather shabby, not to say completely meaningless. (to the audience) I hope this little exchange has reassured all of you. It is extremely tedious for us to go through it every night, but audiences are all the same. They need constant reassurance. Anyway, now you understand - even our faithlessnesses, even our little love affairs are conducted in the conditional. There's no need for you to become alarmed. We are really very satisfied with each other.

PAMELA: Because we love each other.

RICHARD and PAMELA: (together. Holding hands as they did at the opening of the first scene) Very much. (a long pause)

RICHARD: Would you like to go through it again?

PAMELA: No thank you. Twice is sufficient.

RICHARD: Then would you like to talk about how we spent the day?

PAMELA: Oh. (as if responding to a cue) Did you have a hard day at the office, my pet?

RICHARD: What office?

PAMELA: (disgusted) The office where you work.

RICHARD: Where I write my poems.

PAMELA: Where you build your bombs.

RICHARD: Well, at any rate, it wasn't bad.

PAMELA: How would you describe it?

RICHARD: I'd say it was the usual.

PAMELA: That's what you'd say?

RICHARD: Yes.

PAMELA: You filed your forms?

RICHARD: Oh yes.

PAMELA: Computed your accounts?

RICHARD: Of course.

PAMELA: Mothered your machines?

RICHARD: Yes.

PAMELA: Fired your friends?

RICHARD: Yes.

PAMELA: Screwed your secretary?

RICHARD: (caught off guard) Yes. That is, no.

PAMELA: (triumphantly) Your secretary is my sister. It's one of her parts. Although a small one.

RICHARD: I wouldn't say that.

PAMELA: (threatening) Do you want to confess again?

RICHARD: (frightened) No, Pamela, no.

PAMELA: I want you to behave yourself - even in the conditional. (this line is obviously a cue. RICHARD however does not respond) Richard, did you hear me? EVEN IN THE CONDITIONAL. Richard!

RICHARD: (slowly) I'm fed up.

PAMELA: (not acting) I beg your pardon. David?

RICHARD: (speaking as if to an idiot) I'm - fed - up. With this play. With these words. What's the point? I'm asking you. What's the point? (PAMELA says nothing) I said, what's the point? (a pause) Pamela. Darling. At times I find you somewhat less responsive than I would like.

PAMELA: (relieved he has returned to the script) Close?

RICHARD: (nervously, without the proper intonation) Cold.

PAMELA: Thick-skinned?

RICHARD: (tensely) Unattractive.

PAMELA: (correcting him) No - callous. (RICHARD turns toward the audience. His body is tight. He is definitely rebelling) Richard. (prompting) Callous. Callous.

RICHARD: (screaming. Long, drawn-out) W-h-o-r-e!

PAMELA: (nervously) No, that doesn't come now. It's callous, Richard, callous. (RICHARD still says nothing. PAMELA approaches him. As an aside) Take it easy. What are you doing? (coaxingly) Come on now. Callous.

RICHARD: (tightly) Callous...

PAMELA: (relieved) Indifferent?

RICHARD: Bitch. Actress. Damn you. Where's your soul?

PAMELA: I don't understand. What are you doing to us?

RICHARD: I'm getting out. (he tears the script in half, then in quarters)

PAMELA: (terrified) What are you doing, what are you doing?

RICHARD: (continues to tear the script. A long pause. Then savagely) Well, say something.

PAMELA: (piteously) What can I say?

RICHARD: (desperate fury) Improvise. Lie, cry, die. Say something real. Are you empty except for other men's words?

PAMELA: I'm afraid.

RICHARD: You have no right to be afraid. (PAMELA kneels before the shredded script, crying. She attempts to fit back the pieces) Do you love me? (louder) I said, do you love me?

PAMELA: (reading from a scrap of paper) But I like you very much. (continuing the part, to audience) I like...

RICHARD: (seizes her roughly and pulls her up) I hate you.

PAMELA: No, no. You never say that.

RICHARD: Six years. All you've ever done is confine me, tidy me, bury me. Your eternal dinner parties. Why do you suppose no one ever came?

PAMELA: (miserably) They still might.

RICHARD: It's been six years.

PAMELA: David, stop it. Stop it. Think what you're doing to them (indicating audience). You're unbelievable.

RICHARD: Perhaps. At least I'm real.

PAMELA: They don't want reality. They want entertainment.

RICHARD: Isn't my reality entertaining enough? They can't buy me. Even the \$3.50 seats don't tempt me.

PAMELA: (monotonously) Oh God. Oh God. Oh God.

RICHARD: (begins to exit through the wings. Offstage, a scuffle is heard. A moment later, the DIRECTOR appears on stage. In the background RICHARD also appears, wedged tightly between two policemen, helmeted, armed with clubs and guns. A sign appears on the scrim: MACE HELPS BREAK STRONG BODIES IN TWELVE DIFFERENT WAYS. As the DIRECTOR speaks, RICHARD continues to struggle)

DIRECTOR: Ladies and gentlemen, I am sincerely sorry for this unexpected interruption. (the house lights go on. Stagehands and technicians crowd on stage, eager to see the result of the actor's rebellion. Lights, equipment, all the machinery of a theatrical production become visible) Let's have a little more light, Jim. That's better. Once again, I must apologize for Mr. Phillips' temperamental behavior. He seems to forget he has a contract to fulfill. However, (indicating the scuffling group) I hope to be able to remind him in what direction his duty lies. And that direction - while making some obligatory contractual stops along the way - inevitably culminates, my dear audience, in your entertainment. Believe me, ladies and gentlemen, I understand and sympathize with your desire to discover in this theater an harmonious, if illusory, existence. Pamela and Richard have endured on this stage for six years. I give you my solemn promise they will continue to endure. (an impressive pause. Enter another actor, RICHARD II, the new RICHARD) This bright, young, handsome, considerate, intellectual, athletic star (indicating the actor) has won several Academy Awards for his entrancing ability to simulate marital happiness. Pamela, it's all right. Richard is here.

PAMELA: (who has been sobbing on the sofa, sits up and wipes her eyes.)

RICHARDII: (who is dressed identically with RICHARD, seats himself beside her. They very deliberately take each other's hands and smile, brightly, tensely, toothily in the direction of the audience.)

PAMELA: (a little tearfully) Richard. Darling.

RICHARD: (suddenly breaks away from his armed escorts) I'm Richard! I've been Richard for six years! Don't talk to that understudy!

RICHARDII: (rising) Now look here, David!

RICHARD: I'm Richard, you imposter.

RICHARDII: Let's stop dramatizing, old boy. This isn't a game any longer.

RICHARD: (belligerently) I'm establishing my identity. Now get out of here. Get out! (he moves threateningly toward RICHARDII, who, with a slight shrug, exits)

DIRECTOR: Unfortunately, this theater does not maintain a policy of refunding the customers' money. However, if you will only be patient a moment longer, I assure you you will receive full satisfaction. (to RICHARD) Mr. Phillips, your contract is terminated. You can't be jumping in and out of the part like a wet chicken.

RICHARD: Which part?

DIRECTOR: (automatically) There are many parts. Oh look, Mr. Phillips, you really are making things difficult. We've attempted to explore all the possibilities of rational persuasion. However, it is painfully evident that this is one of these situations which only time or force can resolve. And as this lovely audience expects to let out at 9:00 - (a pause. Somewhat regretfully, with resignation, to the cops) All right, boys.

COPS: (together) Oink, oink. (they begin to move toward RICHARD)

RICHARD: Get away, you bastard pigs. (he grabs a heavy prop from the wings and prepares to defend himself. The COPS ceremoniously raise their guns)

DIRECTOR: Excuse us for just one moment, ladies and gentlemen. Curtains please. (the curtains are drawn)

RICHARD: (from behind the curtains) Pamela! in the audience. Plants begin to rise, but ushers stop them. The

PAMELA: Oh dear. I don't know what to do. chuckling softly.

RICHARD: Pamela! We've lived together in public for six years.

PAMELA: (to audience) Wait. It's not over. (DIRECTOR)
PAMELA: Oh David. I just can't think. None of this was in the script.

(to RICHARD) An excellent performance, Mr. Richard: God. (a commotion is heard behind the curtain. Two shots are fired. The COPS begin kicking RICHARD, who has fallen to the floor)

(to DIRECTOR) And you! You sound more and more like a director: All right, boys. (they continue kicking the prostrate form) I said that's enough. (a pause) Curtains please. (RICHARD is lying in front of the couch. The COPS are standing over him, sweating and panting)

PAMELA: (tenderly) I wish there was something I could say to you, David. But there's nothing left. You've destroyed it all. (RICHARD groans) Oh dear. (to DIRECTOR) Do you suppose it would be all right?

(pulling out a script) Oh yes - "At least I'm real." Now don't deliver that DIRECTOR: Go ahead. You're not that real, you know.

PAMELA: (begins looking through the scraps of script on the floor. Brightly) Now here's something. It's short, but philosophical. When you're dying, philosophy is supposed to console you. (she clears her throat) Oh dear.

RICHARD: (gasping) What's wrong?

PAMELA: It's one of your lines.

DIRECTOR: (kindly) I wouldn't worry about it. At this stage of the game, it can't make much difference whose line it is.

PAMELA: (doubtfully) I don't suppose it can. (a long pause. The lights dim, as if preparing for the conclusion of the play. A spotlight focuses on PAMELA) Haven't we been here before?

RICHARD: (recognizes the line. Ironically) If I may -

DIRECTOR: Of course. I understand. I am ridiculous.

RICHARD: (delivering Pamela's response) We're always here.

RICHARD slumps forward. The lights fade. The curtain

begins to lower. Applause, if necessary from plants in the audience. Plants begin to rise, but ushers stop them. The curtain stops its descent. RICHARD sits up. He is chuckling softly.

PAMELA: (to audience) Wait. It's not over. (DIRECTOR II WALKS ONSTAGE)

DIRECTOR II: (to RICHARD) An excellent performance, Mr. Harris.

RICHARD: (to PAMELA) You were beautiful, Susan baby. (to DIRECTOR) And you! You sound more and more like a director.

PAMELA: (kissing the COPS) Wasn't Peter funny, boys, the way he rolled about on the ground? I was laughing so hard.

RICHARD: (approaching the COPS, he playfully draws their guns) Shoot the rebel dead.

DIRECTOR II: Look, Mr. Phillips, about that line. (pulling out a script) Oh yes - "At least I'm real." Now don't deliver that too melodramatically. You're not that real, you know.

RICHARD: In fact, I'm unbelievable, aren't I?

DIRECTOR: (pacifying him) Incredible.

PAMELA: Improbable.

DIRECTOR: Implausible.

PAMELA: Inconceivable?

DIRECTOR: Unconvincing.

PAMELA: Preposterous?

DIRECTOR: Absurd.

PAMELA: Ridiculous?

DIRECTOR: Yes, I would say ridiculous.

RICHARD: Ridiculous. I understand. I am ridiculous.

DIRECTOR: That's very good, Mr. Phillips. I think you've got it.

Congratulatory conversation which falls to a murmur as the

curtain is lowered. RICHARD and PAMELA appear from behind the curtain. They ignore the applause of the audience.

PAMELA: Why are they applauding?

RICHARD: Because they didn't understand it.

PAMELA: I never understand it. Wouldn't you say it's a bit puzzling?

RICHARD: Cryptic.

PAMELA: Enigmatic?

RICHARD: Abstruse.

PAMELA: Vague?

RICHARD: Even immoral. You know, it's rather naughty, Pamela. Darling.

PAMELA: It's quite ungenteel.

RICHARD: It's almost crude.

PAMELA: At least inelegant.

RICHARD: Grotesque.

PAMELA: Vulgar.

RICHARD: Repulsive.

PAMELA: Offensive to ears polite.

RICHARD: (shouting. Offering the required response, but not knowing why) Whore! Damn whore!

RICHARD and PAMELA abruptly return behind the curtain. The DIRECTORS appear.

DIRECTOR: Ladies and gentlemen, the play is over. You may go home.

DIRECTORII: On the contrary, the play is just beginning. The actors are merely changing roles. (to the audience) We are looking forward to a delightful performance. We are confident that each of you has studied his role and knows his part to perfection. Good night.

The audience leaves. The cast has assembled at the exits. As members of the audience appear, they begin to applaud.