

RICHARD'S DILEMMA

By Debbie Medhurst

Scene 1

Hilary is in a library. Richard is sitting in a café.

Phone rings

Hilary: Hi Richard.

Richard: Hi. Where are you?

Hilary: I'm at Avery Hill, in the library looking at some journal articles. I'm trying to get some ideas for my research proposal.

Richard: Are you coming to the music group later?

Hilary: I should go straight home and make a start on writing this thing.

Richard: Don't leave me on my own with them lot.

Hilary: I don't want to leave it 'till the last minute and be up all night like I usually am. I'm trying to be more organised.

Richard: It doesn't have to be in until Friday. You've got plenty of time... and you don't want Michelle to start taking over everything.

Hilary: I am very competitive.

Richard: I know you are.

Hilary: OK. I might be a bit late. I won't have time to go back and get the music.

Richard: That's alright. You remember it all anyway. Apart from Bob's new song, but he always brings about ten copies.

Hilary: Alright. See you later.

Richard: See you.

Scene 2

In the music group.

Bob: Have you got the music?

Richard: Yes. It's in my bag.

Michelle: Is Hilary coming today?

Richard: Yes. She's running a bit late.

Michelle: Oh good! [She doesn't sound like she means it]

Michelle [to Richard]: I've added another verse to my song. So if I

sing "We're the illusionists...we hear all the voices", and then Hilary and Robert can go "The voices", then I sing "We can't get them out of our heads..."

Hilary enters.

Michelle: Hilary! I was just showing Richard that I've added a bit more to my song "We're the illusionists...we hear all the voices..." Do you like it?

Hilary: Yeah. It's really good.

Michelle: So if I sing "We're the illusionists...we hear all the voices..." then you and Robert go "The voices..."

Hilary: Half smiles and nods.

Michelle then goes and starts showing Bob. Hilary goes over to Richard and pulls a face.

Richard: She probably didn't even write it herself.

Bob: Shall we do Nature's Garden now? [To Hilary] Do you remember...it's the song I wrote last week?

Hilary: I remember, but I haven't got my copy of the lyrics. Do you have a spare I can borrow?

Bob: (muttering) People are always relying on me to bring stuff.

Hilary (Direct address): I was just trying to be nice, pretending to be interested in his boring song. I don't want to be his backing singer. How dare he speak to me like that! I'm not going to be polite any more. I'm going to tell him what I really think.

Hilary (to Bob): Piss off. When have I ever asked you for anything before? I don't really want to sing your song. All we ever do these days is your songs and Michelle's songs and we have to be your backing singers and backing musicians. It's really boring and I don't want to be here.

Hilary (to Richard): I shouldn't be here. I got an assignment to do. I'm leaving.

Hilary walks out.

Scene 3

In Hilary's room.

Sound of knocking on the door. Hilary opens the door and Richard walks in.

Hilary: [She laughs] What happened after I left?

Richard: It was alright. Bob knows he shouldn't have said that. We did his song and Michelle's song and a couple covers.

Hilary: I wish you wouldn't be Michelle's backing musician. You know she doesn't like me being there and wants to be the one and only female singer.

Richard: I know, but it's not going to look good if I say I'm not playing my guitar when she's singing.

Hilary: We should set up our own music group and ask Robert to join...On a different subject, are you free tomorrow afternoon?

Richard: I've got nothing planned.

Hilary: Could you help me move these cupboards? I want to put my bed where they are, then I can plug that fan in at night and try and drown out that silly woman's noise.

Richard: OK.

Hilary starts playing her keyboard

Hilary: Shall we try and write a bit more for our song [starts to sing] "The woman upstairs is driving me insane. Now she's dancing on the stairs in her stripy underwear..."

Richard: I'm a bit tired, and I thought you wanted to work on your assignment.

Hilary: Yes. I should. It's so boring. I really have to force myself.

Scene 4

In Hilary's room.

Hilary: Where the hell have you been?

Richard: I went to the library.

Hilary: You knew I wanted you to help me to move those cupboards. I had to do it all by myself.

Richard: I met Kim in there and she asked me if I'd like a game of chess.

Hilary: I don't think that's very appropriate.

Richard: It's only a game of chess. Matthew was there too.

Hilary: You're always sitting with her in that art group when I come in.

Richard: She comes and sits next to me. What do you want me to do? Move?

Hilary: Yes. I think you should.

Richard: OK. Next time I'll say "Sorry. I can't sit with you because Hilary doesn't like it."

Hilary (direct address): I know he thinks I'm being unreasonable, but I've seen the way she looks at him, and I know from personal experience how you can be attracted to people you never thought you would when you spend a lot of time around them.

Scene 5

In the music group.

Kim walks in.

Hilary (to Richard): What the hell is she doing here?

Richard just looks at her.

Hilary: Did you invite her?

Richard: I told her about this. I didn't ask her to come.

Kim: Hi Richard. Hi Hilary. Hi Bob (she starts talking to the others. Bob get a keyboard out).

Richard (to Kim): You got to grade seven didn't you?

Kim: Yes. You play the piano as well don't you Hilary?

Hilary: Yes.

Kim: What grade did you get to?

Hilary: Five.

Kim: That's not bad... Half way...

Hilary: Thanks.

Richard (picks up his guitar): What shall we do first?

Bob: I've got this new song I've written. [He starts singing:]

I saw you across the room,
You were a little bit scrawny with pointy teeth
Medieval magical meercat come into my burrow
We can forget about our sausages and egg fried sorrow
We can eat millipedes and tofu cause they taste the same
My furry friend my mammalian brain is round the bend..
Does the meercat have a game?
The meercat has a game
The meercat has a game
The meercat has a game

Kim: Wow. That's really good. You're so talented.

Hilary: Can we do a song that everyone can sing?

Richard: Why don't we give the quieter people a chance to speak? Robert...Have you got any ideas?

[Everyone looks at Robert]

Robert: Um...No.

Michelle starts singing her song loudly into her microphone: "We're the illusionists. We hear all the voices. We can't get them out of our head..."

Richard takes some music and gives it to Kim

Kim: Does Hilary have a problem with me?

Richard: I think she's got it into her head that you fancy me.

Kim: Oh no. I'm sorry I've given her that impression.

Richard: I think I shouldn't come here anymore. It's going to be awkward.

Kim: No. It's alright. I won't come again. I just wanted to see what it was like and I can see you at the art.

Hilary is out the back. Bob comes and joins her.

Bob: Sorry about last week. I know you're the last person to rely on others.

Hilary: That's alright. I went a bit over the top. I shouldn't have reacted like that.

Bob: You weren't getting much of a chance in there with Michelle shouting into her microphone. She always wants to be centre of attention, whereas you're modest. I should write a song for you. You're pretty, but you're not trying to get everyone to look at you. [He starts singing:] "Don't look at me. Look at my tambourine."

Richard comes in.

Bob (to Richard): I was just saying to Hilary, I should write a song for her. "Don't look at me. Look at my tambourine."

Richard: Oh, OK.

Bob: We should start packing up now.

Bob leaves.

Richard: Are you alright?

Hilary: I'm a bit pissed off. I've been ignored for most of the time we've been here tonight. The only person who's really bothered to speak to me is Bob.

Richard: Why don't you go out with Bob then?

Hilary: He hasn't asked me.

Richard: That's nice.

Hilary: And why did you put Robert on the spot like that? He looked so uncomfortable.

Richard: I just thought he might like a chance to say something.

Hilary: You made a thing out of him being quiet. It was embarrassing.

Richard: I didn't think of it like that. Are you going to come to the café?

Hilary: Of course I am. I'm not letting Kim sit next to you again.

Scene 6

At the bus stop.

Hilary walks up to the bus stop where Judy and Rosie the dog are waiting.

Judy: I always know a bus is coming soon when I see you.

Hilary: I check on my computer, but sometimes they get it wrong.

Judy: It's funny weather we've been having. I've got my raincoat in my bag, and her's as well (she nods towards Rosie)... You know the people in that house over there had their car stolen last night.

Hilary: Yes. I saw it on Next Door.

Judy: They got a film of the thieves on their video doorbell.

Hilary: Yes. It's good. I would like to get one of those doorbells when I get my own place.

Judy: You live in that big house don't you?

Hilary: Yes. I rent the room upstairs at the front with the big window.

Judy: I see a lot of people coming and going. How do you find it there?

Hilary: It's a nice house, but the woman in the room above me is really inconsiderate. She keeps me awake for the most if not all of the night. I have to try and get some sleep in the afternoon when I'm in, or when I go to my boyfriend's.

Judy: I think I've seen you with your boyfriend. How long have you been together?

Hilary: Eight years.

Judy: That's a long time. Do you think maybe you could move in with him to get away from the noise?

Hilary: I don't know. We talked about living together a couple of years ago, but sometimes I feel like he doesn't like me that much anymore... The bus is coming.

Scene 7

Hilary is in her room, Richard is in a café. They are talking on the phone.

Hilary: I don't think I can take much more of living here. I need to get away before I become unwell. We've been talking about getting a place together for years, maybe it's time we did.

Richard: What if you get a place I can come and visit a lot?

Hilary: I thought you wanted us to live together. We've been going out for eight years.

Richard: I'm not ready. I need time to think about what I want to do with my life.

Hilary: Do you mean time to think if you want to be with me or not? Or time to decide whether you prefer Kim or me?

Richard: I'm getting really fed up with your jealousy.

Hilary: I'm not being jealous. I'm being observant.

[long pause]

Hilary: I'm going to hang up now. I don't want to speak to you tomorrow. Night.

She puts the phone down.

Hilary: To think I didn't even fancy him in the beginning. I fancied Bob. He's much more my type...but I was too shy to talk to him. I told Richard I just wanted to be friends, but he wouldn't give up, he wore me down...Showered me with compliments, made me feel like the most attractive woman in the world and made me feel loved for the first time in my life. It was all a lie.

Scene 8

In Hilary's room.

Hilary: He's been calling and texting me. I told myself I would just reply to be polite, but I'm saying more and more to him. I need to make it clear to him I can't go back to how things were.

Phone rings.

Hilary: Hi Bob.

Bob: Hi Hilary. I was just wondering if you were coming to the music today. You've not been for a couple of weeks.

Hilary: I've been avoiding seeing Richard.

Bob: You shouldn't stop coming because of him. Michelle's not coming today, so you'll be able to hear yourself.

Hilary: I'm not sure...

Bob: You can sing the song I've written for you. [He starts singing]
Don't look at me. Look at my tambourine...

Hilary: [laughs] OK.

Scene 9

In the art group. Kim is sitting next to Richard.

Kim: How are things with Hilary? Are you speaking now?

Richard: A bit.

Kim: I think she's being very unfair. It's a big thing to move in with someone. I always thought it was strange when you started going out with her. She's so different to your last girlfriend. She doesn't do art, and doesn't like going out. To be honest I always thought she was a bit boring and stopping you from doing the things you liked.

Richard: I don't know...I don't think she's boring, but I do wish she would be a bit more spontaneous and take more of an interest in what I'm doing.

Kim: She should. Maybe she's a bit jealous of your talent. I think she might resent me for being good at art too.

Richard: I try and encourage her to do more art. I tell her she good, but she doesn't put the time in. She doesn't seem to want to.

Kim: Maybe it's better you find someone who likes the same things as you.

Richard: Maybe.

Kim: Are you going to the music group tomorrow?

Richard: Yes. Hilary's not been coming. I feel bad you've not been because of her. You should come if you want.

Kim: OK. Thanks.

Scene 10

At the music group. Hilary. Bob and Robert are there.

Bob: I printed the words for you. (He hands them to Hilary).

Hilary: Thanks.

Bob starts playing his guitar.

Hilary (sings): Don't look at me. Look at my tambourine...

Richard walks in with Kim.

Hilary stops singing. She picks up a cushion and throws it at Richard.

Hilary: I hate you!

She then picks up a toilet roll and throws it at him.

Hilary: You're going out together aren't you?

She picks the cushion up again and starts hitting him. Richard puts his hands up to block her.

Bob comes over.

Bob: Hilary, give me the cushion.

She throws it across the room and turns to Kim.

Hilary: You bitch. You've been after him ever since you broke up with Keith.

Kim: You treat him like dirt. I'm not going to feel guilty for liking him.

Hilary: You don't know anything. Richard, do I treat you like dirt?

Richard: You don't treat me like dirt, but you do have a foul temper.

Kim: I don't know what your problem is. Richard told me you used to fancy Bob.

Hilary (direct address): How embarrassing.

Hilary (to Richard): You can never keep your mouth shut about anything can you? I've fancied nearly all of your friends at some point. It just happens when you spend a lot of time around people. You should know.

Richard: No I don't know. Kim and I are friends. Men and women can just be friends you know.

Hilary: You're going to have to make up your mind. It's either her or me.

Kim: I'm going to go.

Kim leaves.

Hilary (to Richard): Her or me. I mean it.

Richard: You of course.

Hilary smiles.

Richard: But what if she keeps sitting next to me in the art group?

Hilary: She better not. I'm going to be there from now on. You said I should do more art. I think it's a good idea. Shall we practice the song Bob wrote me now?