

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF RICHARD TANU

An office in a London ad agency, two women are in mid-conversation. Andy is very animated, Phoebe is less so.

- ANDY: ...so he wants to see the notebook computer...
- PHOEB: Who does?
- ANDY: The client... what's his name, the inventor, you know.
- PHOEB: Oh, him.
- ANDY: The client. So, a notebook computer with butterflies flitting about it, you know, soft focus, all that, fields, and this dreamy eyed man, an American, you know, weary in love -- *his* words, the client's -- writing a letter on this machine, you know...
- PHOEB: Typical American Male, to be weary in love. Always too much effort, too much effort into everything. An English male hardly knows what love is, far be it from him to wear himself out with it.
- ANDY: As I was saying... so he's writing a letter, we must presume it is a love letter because there's a Beethoven's Pastorale underscore, or like that, and he's teary-eyed and has beautiful brown curly hair, and music swells, swells, and boom, he presses a single stroke command and it prints on his Diconix portable printer...
- PHOEB: In the meadow?
- ANDY: Batteries, Phoeb, get a life... and the camera zooms in and there's this absolutely stunning cursive script, with tiny nuances and imperfections, just like handwriting, and then we watch him sign it...
- PHOEB: For a personal touch.
- ANDY: ...he signs it and the printed script matches his own, perfectly! Overlay: "The Personal Touch" --- thanks, Phoeb --- "Your Private Life goes Public with Manuscript"... music fades, butterflies, closeup of big brown eyes with wrinkles at the corners. Weeping world-wide.
- PHOEB: It's awful, Andy, mock AT&T. Gawpy and maudlin.
- ANDY: That's what he wants, though, or something like it.
- PHOEB: Who does?
- ANDY: The client... what's his name, Rodrick... you know.
- PHOEB: Wait. How do we know he's American?

ANDY: Who?

PHOEB: The man in the ad.

ANDY: He doesn't need to be American, just look like one, you know, American-looking.

PHOEB: No, I don't.

ANDY: Square jaw, stubble, blue-jeans, hairy chest, you know.

PHOEB: And why love-letters? I hate the whole idea.

ANDY: I think it sells... meadows, Beethoven. Where are you today, anyway? Okay, so maybe Ravel, something like Bolero, camera swoops down from the sky at our American Hero at a picnic table, or like that, you know, and he's typing away, lyrical, inspired, flash cuts of gorgeous chestnut-haired Virginia beauty laughing in front of fountain...

PHOEB: A fountain?

ANDY: Fountains are sexual...

PHOEB: Sexual?

ANDY: ... camera keeps swooping... Print!... camera swoops around and we catch a glimpse of this magnificently calligraphed letter, and at first, you know, we say, well, I must have seen it wrong, but on the second pass we see it, and we see him sign it and it all pops, bam! Technology! More flash cuts as he moistens the envelope, chestnut beauty, coy looks, sparkling wine and fire-light, camera swoops up until we see him as just a dot in a gigantic meadow, you know, and the overlay "The Perfect Pen for that Special Letter --- Manuscript"

PHOEB: Is he still weary with love?

ANDY: Not anymore, he's written his letter, it refreshes him.

PHOEB: Can't we put him in an office, at least?

ANDY: Rodrick, or whatever, wants butterflies. An office? Come on, Phoeb...

PHOEB: With butterflies. Okay, an outdoor cafe.

ANDY: And he wants solitude, solitude for days.

PHOEB: A terrifically unpopular outdoor cafe.

ANDY: I'm doing all the work here, you know, you're making me do all the work.

PHOEB: In the Sahara.

ANDY: Okay, not Ravel, Stravinski, throbbing, pulsing rhythms, erratic and sensual... baa, daditat, da, doo, di, daddoodita... you know, he's typing furiously, flash cuts of a Slavic

wedding, swirling skirts and crashing glassware, you know, he's sweating, sweat on his brow...

PHOEB: Weary in love...

ANDY: ...loosened tie...

PHOEB: We're still in the meadow?

ANDY: Okay, no tie, but his shirt is open, all the way, you know, and his chest is glistening -- that's good -- remember that, and his expression is intense, and print! and the handwriting is just as expressive and impulsive and dynamic as the music, and bam! He whips out his fountain pen...

PHOEB: Oh, I got it.

ANDY: ...and like a sword he signs his name, slashing into the paper, dynamic, male, decisive... got what?

PHOEB: About fountains.

ANDY: Overlay: "The Passionate Pen is Tamed at Last, Manuscript!" Sudden, stirring crescendo, camera angles up to the clouds, flash! Out! Black! Single drum beat.

PHOEB: How about crashing glassware?

ANDY: Huh?

PHOEB: Instead of a drum beat.

ANDY: You are less than no help at all. You are a black hole of imagination. What is the matter with you? This is a client for days here, this is a product of our dreams, this is like selling milk in your coffee, what is the difficulty Miss Weary with Love?

PHOEB: It seems silly.

ANDY: What does?

PHOEB: Computerized handwriting. It doesn't stir me. Certainly not with love letters.

ANDY: It's what he wants.

PHOEB: English females, on the other hand... *(she drifts off)*

ANDY: What? What?

PHOEB: Are -- at least some of them -- perfectly capable of being weary with love, and I for one, having reached that state of perfection, would not be inclined to write love letters, by hand, by machine or otherwise. Having achieved a certain kind of success in business, I am now expected by some in the community to also have a relationship -- preferably a family-oriented one, but definitely a sexual one, hence the truncated euphemism

"relationship" -- and that regardless of my feelings on the matter, and I resent the pressure, and I certainly am very weary indeed of applying the very same identical pressure at large to the Weeping World, as you so aptly put it.

ANDY: Is something wrong?

PHOEB: I am being followed.

ANDY: Oh, that's lovely, what's his name?

PHOEB: He's American.

ANDY: And weary with effort?

PHOEB: He is. Terrifically.

ANDY: And writing love letters?

PHOEB: Prolifically.

ANDY: By hand?

PHOEB: Who can tell anymore?

ANDY: That's true, deception in love will increase twofold.

PHOEB: That's conservative.

ANDY: But if we don't do the ad someone else will...

PHOEB: ...and love will be trivialized beyond repair.

ANDY: You're so dramatic.

PHOEB: I don't know why this upsets me so.

ANDY: The ad?

PHOEB: The American. Both.

ANDY: Tell him to bugger off.

PHOEB: Oh, Andy... you tell him, you're good at it, I'm not.

ANDY: What's his name?

PHOEB: I don't want to gossip.

ANDY: What's he written you?

PHOEB: All sorts of trashy, maudlin stuff. Nothing very specific, just... what's so funny?

ANDY: I just had this brilliant flash.

PHOEB: What is it? Stop laughing and... (*getting it*) Andy, no.

ANDY: Why not? You're not serious on him.

PHOEB: It's not ethical.

ANDY: He'll never see the bloody ad, it's only being shown in England.

PHOEB: He lives in England.

ANDY: Well then, so what? A joke. Fun. You know. Does he disgust you?

PHOEB: His notion of adulation is repulsive.

ANDY: Well then?

PHOEB: I hate it when I'm talking to him and he starts gazing at me adoringly. I mean, all very well to be gazed at adoringly, but I'm speaking to him, I'm saying something that is important to me, I resent being perceived as a charming animated object. When I speak I want people to do me the simple courtesy of listening to what I say. Even attractive American men. Especially.

ANDY: So which one shall we use?

PHOEB: The ad?

ANDY: Which letter?

PHOEB: No, absolutely not! It wouldn't be right.

ANDY: You know just as well as I do you're going to agree to this eventually, so why not do it now and cut out all the agony? Hmm?

PHOEB: I do not know that I shall agree to the ad to begin with, leaving the letters out of it completely.

ANDY: Well, his name won't be on it or anything... what is his name?

PHOEB: His name is Richard Tanu, if you must know.

ANDY: Odd name. Lovely melody to it, though. Richard Ta... Oh my bloody God. Oh my bloody God in Christ.

PHOEB: Andy!

ANDY: Sorry. But... Do you know who he is?

PHOEB: He works for Milton and Sharpey.

ANDY: I ask you do you know who he is and you tell me who he works for. You are in very grave danger of becoming a bore, do you know that?

PHOEB: Boring is a relative judgment.

ANDY: Have you any letters with you?

PHOEB: Here.

ANDY: You carry them on you?

PHOEB: I was going to toss them in the Thames.

ANDY: And you complain about butterflies? Tossing love letters in the Thames isn't like tossing them in the Arno or the Danube, you know.

PHOEB: That's my point, I guess. It was the only river handy. I wanted rid of them, that's all.

ANDY: Yes! Yes! This is the guy! Great! What a motherlode!

PHOEB: What are you talking about?

ANDY: Our client is in court over this. This guy, Richard Tanu, whatever, is suing Roderick, whatever, our client. He claims to have developed the software first, and there's some issue of copyright infringement. But you see, this Tanu fellow is American, didn't get British patents -- his own damn, bloody fault -- and so Manuscript is perfectly legal in its own right, regardless of how it may have been developed. That is, so long as the programing is philosophically different from Tanu's product. Which it is. Well, I'm reasonably sure it must be, or... well, the risk'd be too great, don't you see? What's wrong?

PHOEB: That bastard.

ANDY: Happens all the time, this is a business run-riot, this software game. Anyway, I think there might be some points to be scored by our client, you know, seeing these, at least it's a wonderful coincidence...

PHOEB: Not for that. Christ!

ANDY: Oh, you must be upset.

PHOEB: Furious. He printed these on a bloody goddamned machine!

ANDY: Well, of course he did, it's his software...

PHOEB: Love letters, he calls them. Probably got standard forms, too. In various languages. And suckers in every capital in Europe.

ANDY: Is he that good looking?

PHOEB: Looks be damned, if he can't take his own bloody pen to paper...

ANDY: Look at it this way, he must've spent hours and years developing this, he's doing you a great compliment...

PHOEB: Let me see those.

ANDY: It's like... like if a chef served you his new culinary concoction, tried it on you for the first time, ever.