

Tis Better to be Vile Than Vile Esteem'd

by Terry Dugan

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Trudy and Colin: The Relationship Guide

Cast of characters

ROBERT, man seeking a promotion

AMY, wife of ROBERT

RICHARD, CEO of Happy Helper Toilet Supply Company

DONNA, dinner date of RICHARD

ANDREA, a homeless person with multiple-personality disorder

TED, paranoid husband of ANDREA

Scene 1

SCENE: ROBERT and AMY's home. Most of the action takes place at their dining table and small kitchen.

AT RISE: Amy Gladstone is making preparations for a dinner. Robert, her husband, enters with an unmade tie around his neck.

AMY

What we need is a divorce.

ROBERT

What was that?

AMY

I said, "Of course." Of course I'll help. College graduate can't tie his own tie. That's what you get when you major in helplessness.

ROBERT

If you'll recall, I majored in being miserable, then I married you. At least I'm doing something with my education.

AMY

Mr. Hlava called while you were in the shower. He's an hour away, which gives us enough time to break in my new nightie.

ROBERT

Break it into what?

AMY

Then we can go back to arguing for the remaining 57 minutes.

ROBERT

I have a lot on my mind and none of those things is sex with you.

AMY

You know how to make a girl feel special.

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ROBERT

Get over it. If I don't get this promotion, I don't know what I'm going to do.

AMY

You meant "we."

ROBERT

Yeah, that's what I said. Focus.

AMY

Well I'm sorry for trying to distract you with my ferocious vagina.

ROBERT

It's not that distracting.

AMY

It's this uncontrollable, hungry animal. It needs fed, Robert. It'll eat anything at this stage, even your dick.

ROBERT

Fasting was good enough for Jesus.

AMY

So was getting nailed to a cross.

ROBERT

I don't get it.

AMY

I cook for you, look after the dog and pretend to be interested in your career, and when I want something once every 10 weeks, you cast me away.

ROBERT

Burning is not the same as cooking. The dog was run over two years ago-

AMY

Those ashes aren't going to walk themselves-

ROBERT

And you pretend very poorly. I'd say you weren't this nuts when we got married, but you were.

AMY

You have no class.

ROBERT

This coming from a person who brought a date to her own sister's funeral.

AMY

Well, you didn't have to go.

ROBERT

"Robert, would you mind if we made one little stop on our way to the show?"

AMY

So what if you were underdressed. I didn't want to go by myself. Did you ever stop to consider how I felt, sitting through "Hair" in a black dress and veil? People thought I was planted in the audience.

(AMY goes to the kitchen.)

ROBERT

You didn't have to stand up and join in the singing.

(AMY returns and brings
2 plates to the table)

AMY

Sometimes you just gotta go with it and spread the sunshine.

(AMY goes to the kitchen.)

ROBERT

You could have sang the right lyrics, or learned the right lyrics the 14th time you heard the line.

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(AMY returns and brings
2 more plates to the table)

AMY

I'm sorry for not being a perfectionist.

ROBERT

What the hell is this?

AMY

What the hell is what?

ROBERT

Why are you setting four places at the table?

AMY

Mr. Hlava said he was bringing a date.

ROBERT

A date to a business dinner?

AMY

Yeah, that's what he said.

(AMY goes to the kitchen and
returns with 2 plates.)

ROBERT

OK. No problem. Maybe you two can chat while we're talking
about my. . . What the hell is this!

AMY

When he called, he asked if he could bring a couple guests.

ROBERT

And you said yes?

AMY

What was I supposed to tell the man you want to marry? No?

ROBERT

When were you going to tell me about this?

AMY

I wasn't because I knew this is how you'd get, and I know you're trying to "focus."

ROBERT

Well, I am fucked.

AMY

That makes one of us.

(BLACKOUT.)

Scene 2

AT RISE:

The doorbell rings. Lights go up when AMY answers the door. RICHARD enters with DONNA. ROBERT is surprised and not happy to see DONNA. RICHARD grabs AMY and swings her around.

RICHARD

WHOA HO HO WHOW!!

(He puts his hand on AMY's ass and French kisses her.)

You must be Bobby's wife. I can't tell you how happy I am to meet you. Bobby, my boy! There's my boy wonder!

(He shakes ROBERT's hand.)

ROBERT

Hello, Mr. Hlava.

RICHARD

Whoa. What is that?

ROBERT

Is this a quiz?

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RICHARD

(He laughs disproportionately.)

Oh Amy, your little tiger has the most wonderful sense of humor.

AMY

Just makes you want to roll in the aisles, hit your head and kill yourself.

RICHARD

Come on, Bobby. We're not in the office. Call me Richard.

ROBERT

Thank you, Mr. Richard Hlava.

RICHARD (laughs.)

Oh my God! Stop it! Save some for desert. Hey, I want you two to meet a most lovely woman. Amy and Bobby Gladstone, meet...

DONNA

Donna Moorehead.

RICHARD

Yes, Donna!

DONNA

A pleasure, I'm sure.

RICHARD

Donna works on the 14th floor in research. What is it that you're working on right now?

DONNA

A new abrasive non-abrasive toilet cleaner.

RICHARD

Sounds brilliant!

ROBERT

Did you have any trouble finding our place?

RICHARD

Not at all, my great-grandfather was part Apache Indian. GPS is for the white man.

AMY

Didn't you say on the phone you had two more guests?

RICHARD

Ah, yes. They said they'd come inside once they finished looking through your trash.

(AMY and ROBERT kink their necks to the side quickly to look toward the window.)

I met them today at the train station, and they're just great. They make me laugh and funny people are always good people to laugh at. Tell me Amy, what are we having for dinner tonight?

AMY

Well, I thought about cutting up certain parts of Robert's anatomy and serving them in a nice white sauce, but I thought you'd much rather have Chicken Kiev.

RICHARD

You two are hilarious! And you remembered that I told you I wanted Chicken Kiev to eat. "Memory, the warder of the brain." That's Shakespeare.

AMY

You read Shakespeare?

RICHARD

A CEO isn't just a man of letters, but he must be a man of words.
(He takes a book out of his pocket.)

So I carry around the Pocket Shakespeare for CEOs: The bard's greatest quotes pertaining to the business world. "How holily he works in all his business, And with what zeal!", "To business that we love we rise betime, and go to 't with delight", "He shall but bear them as the ass bears gold, to groan and sweat under the business."

AMY

If you're looking for a great ass, look no further than my husband.
(The Doorbell rings. AMY and ROBERT look at each other tentatively before AMY answers the door. As soon as the door opens, TED spurts inside and braces himself against the wall.)

Hello?

ANDREA

(She imitates Marilyn Monroe.)

Miss Holiday, a pleasure. And this must be Mr. Holiday.

(To ROBERT)

Are you a good boy, Mr. Holiday?

ROBERT

Oh my Christ.

(She goes in to give him a kiss. TED violently moves on him.)

TED

Hey! Are you moving in on my girl?

ROBERT

I hope not.

ANDREA

C'mon Teddy. I was only being nice to him, besides...

(She whispers in TED's ear.)

TED

You're right, he does look impotent.

(Stretches out his hand for a shake.)

No hard feelings.

ROBERT

Sure Ted.

(TED pulls ROBERT's arm.)

TED

How'd you know my name? Tell me how you fucking know my name!

ROBERT

She said it! She said it! She said it!

TED

So she did.

(Ted lets go of his arm)

Nice to meet you, I'm Ted. She's Andrea, no matter what she tells you. Listen, pal, you ever had to shit so bad, you thought it was going to come out your gut?

ROBERT

No.

TED

Like, your belly button was going to rip open in a violent shit storm, raining down on everyone around you?

ROBERT

Can't say that I-

TED

Jesus Christ. I'm trying to ask you if you got a toilet around here. What kind of fucking host are you? I already told you I was going to explode shit all over the place, and we're still talking?

ROBERT

Through the kitchen! Through the kitchen.

(TED exits.)

AMY

Maybe we should eat.

ROBERT

And keep our mouths as full as possible.

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ROBERT (cont.)

(AMY goes to the kitchen to start bringing the food to the table and serves chicken on everyone's plate. RICHARD escorts ANDREA to her seat. DONNA and ROBERT talk near the door.)

What are you doing here?

DONNA

Nice to see you again, too, you dirtbag.

ROBERT

Nice tits, who bought those for you?

DONNA

Certainly wasn't you, was it?

ROBERT

I want you out of here now. Make your phone ring. Make something come up.

DONNA

Oh, forgot to tell you, we're not fucking anymore, and you can't tell me what to do. Your place is a shithole, by the way.

ROBERT

So now you're whoring yourself out to old men for money.

DONNA

And you're not?

ROBERT

Uh, no. I'm trying to get a legitimate promotion.

DONNA

Oh, really. How did your wife react when you told her we had an affair?

ROBERT

How did... Are you that obsessed with me that you'd arrange to come here and destroy me?

DONNA

Arrange? Don't flatter yourself. This is just the happiest coincidence of my life. But while we're here, you can tell her, or I can tell her.

ROBERT

You're bluffing.

DONNA

Enjoy your last meal, mother fucker.

AMY

(As she's dishing out the last bit of chicken)

Hey you two, dinner's ready.

(DONNA and ROBERT sit down.)

Where is-

ROBERT

Ted.

AMY

Ted?

ROBERT

He said he had to use the bathroom.

AMY

OK, we'll wait a bit then.

(Blackout. Pause. Light comes back up with no Ted. Blackout again. Pause.

Light comes back up.)

Maybe he fell in.

(RICHARD laughs. Blackout again.

The lights come back up.)

ROBERT

Maybe we should –

(TED enters.)

Ah, OK, we're ready now.

TED

I wouldn't go in there if I were you.

RICHARD

Ah, my good boy, that's where you're mistaken as I'm assuming the Gladstones are using one of my wonderful bathroom Scent Bombs.

ROBERT

Yes, sir!

RICHARD

With Scent Bombs, there's no gaseous fallout. You never have to worry about following someone into the toilet again. Our slogan is "Scent Bombs: Like someone bombed your bathroom, but in a nice way." That slogan barely edged out: "Scent Bombs: Don't let it smell like someone died in your bathroom." I'm not sure why we always sell more during wartime, but I like it. More war for us, I say.

TED

Why don't you go in there?

RICHARD

So, let's eat, huh?

AMY

Would you like to say the blessing for the meal, Richard?

RICHARD

I'd be delighted. And all this time I thought you two were Jewish. Let us pray. Dear father in heaven, we ask your blessing for this wonderful meal I requested. We ask that you bless the Gladstones for all the things they do for me. And, while you're at it, if you could bless the opening of our new home lobotomy line of products, I would greatly appreciate it. Ha, ha. Seriously, bless it. And bless us all in all the things we do in your name-

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(TED stabs the chicken on his plate.)

TED

Aaaaaaahhhhhhh!!!! It moved!
(Gets off his chair and backs away)
It moved!! It was walking off my plate.

RICHARD

That must have been one amazing shit you took, Teddy my boy.

ANDREA

Teddy, you're making a sceney-weenie.

(TED sits and says, "Amen."
Then everyone else says "Amen"
and starts eating.)

TED

I think I pulled a muscle in my wrist when I killed that chicken.
You sure that chicken was dead when you cooked it?

AMY

Positive.

ROBERT

What a terrible host Amy is, would anyone like some wine?

ANDREA

Does it have bubbles?

ROBERT

If it doesn't, I'll put dish soap in it and stir it with my finger.

ANDREA

OK, I'll take some.

TED

Is it poisoned?

ROBERT

Richard?

RICHARD

No thanks. I brought my own.

(He pulls a flask from his pocket.)

ROBERT

Amy, can you help?

(They exit to the kitchen.)

AMY

What?

ROBERT

That woman Richard brought. She's a lesbian.

AMY

How do you mean, like I've seen her before being a lesbian or the lesbian scent from her is so strong I must be clogged not to recognize?

RICHARD

The flask is the CEO's safety valve.

ROBERT

Well, just look at her with her short hair. She's not wearing a bra.

AMY

Oh please!

RICHARD

(He pulls out his book.)

“Thy wit, that ornament to shape and love, misshapen in the conduct of them both, like powder in a skillless soldier's flask, to set a-fire by thine own ignorance, and thou dismember'd with thine own defence.”

ROBERT

OK, listen, she used to work on my floor, and one day I walked into the copy room and-

AMY

She was making copies of her ass.

ROBERT

A woman was eating her pussy as she was making copies of her ass.

DONNA

What does that even mean?

RICHARD

Whiskey is the best defense for ignorance.

AMY

Look at me, not caring about this. Let's go!

ROBERT

Just try to say something nice about me.
(AMY groans.)

RICHARD

And I say, "You can sucketh that, dear Shakespeare."
(ROBERT and AMY enter.)
You were getting the wine, boy.
(ROBERT hangs his head and exits.)

AMY

You know, Mr. Hlava, Richard, working for your company has been Robert's dream come true. He's loves what he does and has devoted so much time to it, sometimes I don't see him for days.
(ROBERT smiles in the kitchen
as he starts unscrewing the cork.)

RICHARD

Sounds like bullshit. I like it.

DONNA

There sure is something special about him.

(Realizing he's in trouble,
ROBERT unscrews faster.)

RICHARD

How's that, my sweet-smelling accessory?

DONNA

Hard to explain. I guess some people just have that aura, where they touch you on the inside – somewhere, anywhere-

(ROBERT abruptly enters and says, "OK!" Ted is shocked, screams and ducks under the table.)

RICHARD

You OK, Teddy?

TED

Just testing the floor.

RICHARD

You know, Bobby my boy, Dorothy-

DONNA

Donna.

RICHARD

Donna here says that you have an aura of influence on people.

ROBERT

Oh, I really wouldn't say influence. Actually, I wouldn't believe anything she says.

DONNA

Come on, Robert, are you telling me that you don't influence others? Or is it that you influence when you want to influence?

ANDREA

I think I was influenced once.

(TED reappears.)

TED

Yeah, you drank too much at The Four Seasons when we were in New York. In New York, you'd be god damn sure people kill their food before it's cooked.

RICHARD

I think this food is wonderful! You know, Bobby, people who are influential and can change people's lives have a great future ahead of them.

DONNA

He's certainly changed my outlook on life.

RICHARD

And we've been here, what, 10 minutes? Good show, my boy.

DONNA

Actually, we used to be very close, oops, I mean, work very closely together.

RICHARD

You don't say. How do you do it, my boy?

ROBERT

I just try to be myself.

DONNA

You sure do.

AMY

Chicken! More chicken, anyone?

ANDREA

(In an Australian accent)

We ain't got a lotta chickens in the Outback. We ever need some food, we just peg a boar and roast away.

TED

Well, welcome back Olivia Newton-Fuckin' John. Why didn't you stay in Australia where you belong?

ANDREA

It ain't Olivia, you wanker. Me name is Dot.

RICHARD

Aren't they great!

AMY

Robert.

ROBERT

Kitchen?

AMY

Kitchen.

ANDREA

See ya on the backside, mate.

(ROBERT and AMY go to kitchen.)

RICHARD

That must be one amazing kitchen.

TED

They're probably plotting against me right now.

(To ANDREA)

Try this wine. See if it kills you.

AMY

When were you going to tell me about your "influencing" of Donna?

ROBERT

I don't know what she's talking about.

TED

I think I'm choking. No, no really. I think I am.

AMY

You two are close, huh, but you never thought of mentioning her name before?

DONNA

Why's that?

ROBERT

I'm telling you, I don't know what she's talking about.

TED

I don't know. I've never choked before.

AMY

Are you having an affair with her?

TED

I definitely think I'm choking now.

ROBERT

Of course I'm not. She's a lesbian.

ANDREA

I once knew a mate that had a whole 'roo arm stuck in his throat.

RICHARD

Amazing. How'd he get it out?

ANDREA

He didn't. He croaked two minutes later.

ROBERT

Can we talk about this later? I want to get through this dinner, and I'm not in the mood to deal with your crazy mind right now.

DONNA

How'd he get the bone in his throat?

ANDREA

We wagered him \$50 he couldn't pound it down his mouth with a hammer.

AMY

You, you, you! Everything about you I feel like I'm not even a part of your world.

DONNA

And he did it?

ANDREA

Wouldn't you?

TED

Can you see breath coming into my mouth? I can't see it or feel it.

ROBERT

You don't know how to be included.

TED

I think I'm going to pass out. Yep.

(He passes out on table. BLACKOUT.)

Scene 3

AT RISE:

After dinner, still at the table. RICHARD is feeling a bit tipsy at this point. Both he and Andrea are chomping on cigars. ANDREA has taken on the personality of a war veteran.

RICHARD

Normandy: 1944. The day the Earth stood still.

ANDREA

And we were there.

RICHARD

Company B.

ANDREA

Fighting Nazi scum till our hands bled.

RICHARD

Except for those who used guns.

ANDREA

Pussies.

RICHARD

Pussies. That's where I learned to be a powerful CEO, where you've got two choices: fight or die. It's war, war in the world, war in business. What's the difference between Nazi's and my

RICHARD (cont.)

competitors who want to displace my products in your bathrooms and your cat's litter box?

ANDREA

Nothing.

RICHARD

Damn right. Nothing.

(Fumbles with his book.)

“A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers.” We defeat them in war, we sell twice as many products. Even fruity Shakespeare knew that one.

ANDREA

Shakespeare never shot no gun!

RICHARD

I watched a lot of good men die in those movies.

TED

Watching war movies ain't the same as being there.

RICHARD

If you're patriotic enough, it is! I didn't need to be there to feel it, to feel what they went through. I don't need to shoot someone to know what it feels like to shoot a man. When you're as powerful as I am, you don't have experiences and emotions. You absorb them, like one of my sponges.

DONNA

I use your bathroom sponge, and I just love it.

RICHARD

See what I'm saying, people. I've never used my sponge because I have a stable of servants, but listening to this beautiful, young, voluptuous woman...

DONNA

Donna.

RICHARD

Donna, I can feel how good my sponge is.

DONNA

I'm not sure I agree with you on feelings and experiences, Richard. Maybe I'm an old-fashioned girl-

RICHARD

An old-fashioned girl with a great rack-

DONNA

But I like having experiences. I want to have emotions. Sometimes I don't like the way they make me feel, but I'd rather have them than see them.

RICHARD

I've got no time for them.

DONNA

And more than anything, I'd rather share them than keep them to myself. How about you, Amy? Do you like sharing emotions?

ROBERT

Just leave her alone, OK!

RICHARD

Whoa, tiger, she just asked her a question. You are certainly an attack dog, Bobby boy. (Makes barking noises)

AMY

I don't know.

DONNA

You don't know what?

AMY

I don't know what you're asking.

TED

(Yelling as if AMY was deaf.)

Do you like sharing emotions?

AMY

Thank you, Ted.

ROBERT

We share everything together. Our feelings, our experiences, our-

DONNA

I don't remember asking you anything.

AMY (pauses.)

Yes, I like to share.

DONNA

Do you share?

AMY

I've come to learn there are some things that can't be shared.

RICHARD

Boo! Answer the question.

AMY

Some things can't be shared.

(To DONNA)

For instance, I will never know what it's like to be a lesbian, but I don't think you'll share that experience with me.

RICHARD

Lesbian? YES!

DONNA

Lesbian? What makes you think I'm a lesbian?

AMY

Robert told me you were.

RICHARD

I'm having sex with a bisexual!

(ANDREA gives him the thumbs-up)

DONNA

Surely, he didn't.

AMY

He told me how you and another girl were having oral sex on the copier at Robert's work.

RICHARD

I need to walk around the office more often.

DONNA

I think Robert is confused. He was giving me oral sex as I sat on the copier.

AMY

(To ROBERT)

I can't believe you stared me right in the face, and you lied to me. I asked, "Are you having an affair with her?" and you said no.

ROBERT

But I'm not having an affair with her.

DONNA

We used to fuck, but we don't anymore, so technically he wasn't lying.

RICHARD

(He pretends to look through his book)

"To thine own pussy be true."

(ANDREA, TED and RICHARD laugh.)

AMY

You want to know if I like sharing emotions? Is that it?

DONNA

I just wanted you to share with you what a letch your husband is.

AMY

You want to know if I like to share experiences?

DONNA

Not really.

AMY

I wish I could share them, but some things can't be shared. Something happened to Robert and me, but to this day, we can't share it.

ROBERT

No one cares, Amy. No one cares about this.

AMY

I care. I care about this.

ROBERT

Well then just go ahead. Go ahead and tell them about the baby – it was born dead. Go ahead, cry your eyes out and tell them how I was never there for you after that and how I was always at work and how we don't have sex anymore. Go ahead, they're listening.

DONNA

Don't be an ass.

ROBERT

You weren't here; you can shut your mouth. You weren't here to see her holding her belly all day, crying day and night, praying for the baby to come back. She wouldn't get over it. She still can't get over it. How can someone be around that all day?

(To AMY)

How can you be like that all day!

(Away from AMY)

I've been through that once; I'm not going through that again.

AMY

You wouldn't even hold him.

ROBERT

It was dead.

AMY

Can't a woman speak of the child she's lost!

ROBERT

Speak, yes, do, that's all you do. Speak, please, tell anyone and everyone. Speak! But one would think that the more you speak about it, the sooner you'd get over it. But you just don't. You've taken up residence in the past. In a way, I'm glad he's dead. It showed me what kind of a person you really are.

DONNA

Don't talk to her like that.

ROBERT

Or what? You going to tell her we had an affair? You played all those cards. Now what do you have? You're as desperate and lonely as you were before. I would, just once, like to be with a woman who's normal – who can handle reality. I stop having sex with her, she goes crazy thinking about her dead baby. I stop having sex with you, you fuck old men and go get a boob job.

DONNA

Boob job? I had breast cancer.

ROBERT

Shit.

RICHARD

They're quite good.

AMY

You don't know how to speak to me. You close up and run away. A real husband would go with me to the grave.

ROBERT

Our life didn't end with a child we never spent three minutes with.

AMY

Yes it did, Robert. Yes it did.

(AMY exits out the front door.)

TED

Boy, you know how to kill a fucking party. C'mon, we're leaving.

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RICHARD

You two need a lift back to the train station?

TED

Nah. We'll be fine. We're going to fuck behind his trash cans and take it from there. (Ted says sarcastically:) Once again, thanks for a really great party. Come on Dot or Butch or whoever the fuck you are right now.

ANDREA

(Acting like a British queen – to ROBERT)

And with this, I bid you adieu, sir knight. Whist I may be getting it on with the stable boy, you must always know that my heart is with you.

TED

(As they exit the house.)

You are so full of shit.

(As soon as the door is shut, they begin cartoonishly kissing and exit.)

RICHARD

I just love them! They're great.

DONNA

It was really great seeing you again, Robert.

ROBERT

Why didn't you tell me you had cancer?

DONNA

Because when someone tells me they don't ever want to see me or hear from me again, I usually listen.

ROBERT

You could have sent a note.

DONNA

I could have. While I was looking for a birthday card for my mom, I did see a couple “I-know-you-said-you-hate-me-but-guess-what?-I-have-cancer” cards. Next time I have cancer, you’ll be the first to know. Richard, I’ll be waiting in the car where I will give you a blow job.

(DONNA exits.)

RICHARD

Boy, I love that Tina.

ROBERT

Donna.

RICHARD

Yes, Donna.

ROBERT

I wanted this night to be different.

RICHARD

No shit?

ROBERT

This, this is not who I really am.

RICHARD

I don’t know who you are, Bobby my boy, but I know what I saw. In the span of one dinner, I saw a liar, an ass hole, an egotistical bastard, a heartless, selfish man. I can’t help but have this feeling that you would love nothing more than taking someone’s existence, their reason for being, and ripping it into shreds. I’ve never seen one man be such a destructive force toward the person he purportedly loves. I mean, what you did to her, I’m going to have nightmares about it. If Jesus met you, he probably would hate you. . . You’re exactly the man I need to be at my right hand, to be my number-two in the toiletries industry. I don’t want you to give me an answer now, but listen to me, Robert, you are CEO material – you showed that tonight, and more I might say. All the qualities you have, I need them in my business. Maybe you need

Tis Better to be Vile than Vile Esteem'd

RICHARD (cont.)

to learn how to, you know, give off the appearance that you're likeable. But this all comes in time. You'll think about it, won't you?

(ROBERT nods. RICHARD heads toward exit and looks back from the door.)

'Tis better to be vile than vile esteem'd.

(RICHARD exits. After a small pause, ROBERT shouts a celebratory "yes" for his promotion. BLACKOUT.)