

JULIA #1

CHARACTERS

- JULIA
- ROGER
- PEGGY
- FLOYD

PLACE

The living room of a house in an American suburb. It looks tasteful and comfortable but strangely artificial — too much like a stage set. Upstage is a fireplace, a baby grand piano, with its keyboard toward the back wall, and a picture window, through which one can see the organized greenery of a suburban backyard. Upstage is the entrance and a glimpse of a front hall. Downstage is the couch with the inevitable coffee table, along with other chairs and tables. Somewhere is a working bar, and somewhere else a telephone. On the walls are several rather conventional paintings. The whole thing might look vaguely Magritte.

(Note: This description applies to a proscenium theatre. I hope a good designer could attain a similar effect on a more open stage.)

TIME

The present, early autumn, beginning in late afternoon and continuing without interruption on into the evening. There is probably no need for an intermission.

THE FOURTH WALL

At rise, no one is onstage. Through the windows comes late afternoon light. After a moment, Roger and Julia enter from the hall. Roger wears a business suit. Julia wears the latest thing in New York fashion. Both are attractive and middle-aged.

ROGER. *(Indicating the room.)* You see?

JULIA. I do.

ROGER. I thought you should see.

JULIA. I certainly do. *(She scrutinizes the invisible proscenium "wall.")* This wall. This great blank wall.

ROGER. That's the thing.

JULIA. There's nothing on it, Roger. Not a picture, not a hanging. Not even a mirror, to reflect or amplify the other walls.

ROGER. That's the problem.

JULIA. *(Looking around.)* These other walls are quite attractive.

ROGER. Thank you ...

JULIA. I like what you've done with these other walls.

ROGER. So do I.

JULIA. *(Returning to the proscenium.)* It's just this one.

ROGER. This fourth one.

JULIA. This is the one that throws me for a loop. I mean, it's just — there, Roger. This great, blank, undecorated — wall.

ROGER. I wanted you to see it firsthand. That's why I asked you to come up from New York.

JULIA. I'm glad you did. Otherwise I never would have believed it. *(She ponders it.)*

ROGER. Julia, being a New Yorker, you must be familiar with many private residences.

JULIA. Too familiar, according to my last husband.

ROGER. Then tell me frankly: Have you ever, in all your New York experiences, seen a room done quite like this?

JULIA. Only ... But no.

ROGER. You were going to say?

JULIA. I was going to say, only in the theatre.

ROGER. Would you pursue that point?

JULIA. In New York, there used to be plays which began with an attractive woman and a charming man, coming into a room and talking.

ROGER. Yes. And?

JULIA. This reminds me of those rooms they talked in.

ROGER. All right. Now tell me something else. Do you like it?

JULIA. This fourth wall?

ROGER. Yes.

JULIA. Roger, I've lived in New York long enough never to pass judgment on how people live. We have the New York *Times* to do that.

ROGER. No, now please, Julia. I'm desperate for an outside opinion ...

JULIA. Let me say this. The problem could be simply solved.

ROGER. How?

JULIA. By rearranging the furniture. I mean, if this wall were behind you, you might be able to live with it. You could ignore it. Or simply glance at it occasionally. Over your shoulder. Like this. (*She demonstrates.*) See? It could be a kind of conversation piece. But with your furniture facing it, you're forced to confront it almost continually whenever you're in this room. No, no, Roger, it's a mistake. Your decorator should be shot at sunrise.

ROGER. No decorator is responsible for the configuration of this room, Julia.

JULIA. No decorator? Then who?

ROGER. Peggy?

JULIA. Peggy? Your wife Peggy? My old friend Peggy? Whom I admired in high school for her quiet good taste in jeans and jewelry?

ROGER. This is the way she wants this room.

JULIA. But is she serious?

ROGER. She's never been more serious in her life.

JULIA. But what if you proved she's made a serious mistake?

What, for example, if you took this couch, and eased it around to face that fireplace?

ROGER. Peggy would ease it right back.

JULIA. And if you focused your furniture toward that pleasant glimpse of outdoor greenery?

ROGER. Shed refocus everything, first chance she got.

JULIA. To face that blank wall?

ROGER. To face that blank wall.

JULIA. But it's so peculiar. This room makes you feel, the minute you walk in, as if you were acting in a play!

ROGER. It does indeed, Julia! And perhaps you've noticed that ever since we've come in, we've been talking in a stagey sort of way.

JULIA. I *have* noticed that! And it's hard work, Roger! I mean, not only do I have to think about what I say, but I have to think how best to say it!

ROGER. Me, too! ... I mean, I also.

JULIA. It's exhausting, Roger.

~~ROGER. Of course it is. And remember, you're just a visitor. This is my living room. I have to live here.~~

~~JULIA. But couldn't you retreat to another room? I noticed a den when I came in.~~

~~ROGER. I escape to it when I can. But Peggy keeps coming in here, and since I like being with her, I follow along. And that's when the trouble starts.~~

~~JULIA. Trouble?~~

~~ROGER. The minute we get in here, she becomes nervous and impatient. As if she expected something significant to happen. The result is, because of this goddam wall, I find myself constantly aware that I'm very much on the line as a husband, as a man, and as an actor.~~

~~JULIA. Have you had any stage experience?~~

~~ROGER. None at all! I'm a businessman, Julia! I own a small factory outside of town. We manufacture global distributors.~~

~~JULIA. Global distributors? Could you be more specific?~~

~~ROGER. They're those small plastic balls in roll-on deodorants. They make it easier for men and women to do business together all over the world.~~

~~JULIA. I imagine, in these anxious times, you're doing very well.~~

Roger #1

~~What, for example, if you took this couch, and carried it around to face that fireplace?~~

ROGER. Peggy would ease it right back.

JULIA. And if you focused your furniture toward that pleasant glimpse of outdoor greenery?

ROGER. She'd refocus everything, first chance she got.

JULIA. To face that blank wall?

ROGER. To face that blank wall.

JULIA. But it's so peculiar. This room makes you feel, the minute you walk in, as if you were ~~acting~~ in a play!

ROGER. It does indeed, Julia! And perhaps you've noticed that ever since we've come in, we've been talking in a stagey sort of way.

JULIA. I ~~have~~ noticed that! And it's hard work, Roger! I mean, not only do I have to think about what I say, but I have to think how best to say it!

ROGER. Me, too! ... I mean, I also.

~~JULIA. It's exhausting, Roger.~~

ROGER. Of course it is. And remember, you're just a visitor. This is my living room. I have to live here.

JULIA. But couldn't you retreat to another room? I noticed a den when I came in.

ROGER. I escape to it when I can. But Peggy keeps coming in here, and since I like being with her, I follow along. And that's when the trouble starts.

JULIA. Trouble?

ROGER. The minute we get in here, she becomes nervous and impatient. As if she expected something significant to happen. The result is, because of this goddamn wall, I find myself constantly aware that I'm very much on the line as a husband, as a man, and as an actor.

JULIA. Have you had any stage experience?

ROGER. None at all! I'm a businessman, Julia! I own a small factory outside of town. We manufacture global distributors.

JULIA. Global distributors? Could you be more specific?

ROGER. They're those small plastic balls in roll-on deodorants. They make it easier for men and women to do business together all over the world.

JULIA. I imagine, in these anxious times, you're doing very well.

ROGER. Success means nothing, Julia, when, at the end of the day, I'm constantly forced to come up with meaningful dialogue with a restless wife in front of this blank fourth wall.

JULIA. How long has this been going on?

ROGER. Since our recent presidential election.

JULIA. You mean, since Bush?

ROGER. Exactly. When the Supreme Court handed the election to George W. Bush, Peggy started moving the chairs around. And when he began renegeing on our international obligations, such as the Kyoto Agreement, and pushed through a tax break designed primarily for the rich, she started tugging at the couch. But when he started talking about rushing off to war — in all directions — without friends or allies — she suddenly ripped everything off this wall and focused all our furniture on its basic blankness.

JULIA. I need a drink.

ROGER. How about some champagne?

JULIA. Sounds delicious. *(She sits self-consciously on the couch. Roger goes to the bar, gets out a bottle of champagne and two glasses.)*

I must say, I am amazed by what you've told me, Roger. From the looks of your annual Christmas card, and the sentimental remarks which usually accompany it, I would have said that Peggy was primarily interested in children and dogs.

ROGER. She was. *(Opening the champagne.)* But once the children left the nest, she became more actively involved in community service.

JULIA. Community service? I thought only criminals did that.

ROGER. *(Pouring the champagne.)* Peggy does it, too. You may remember she's always has slightly leftist leanings.

JULIA. I do. I remember in fifth-grade science, she tried to liberate the hamsters.

ROGER. Well, now Bush seems to have recently reactivated those tendencies.

JULIA. How odd. At our age, people normally turn away from politics and concentrate on sex.

ROGER. It's the reverse with Peggy. *(Raises his glass.)* Anyway, welcome back to your hometown, Julia. *(They clink and drink.)*

Do you like this champagne?

~~JULIA. Tasting it, No I do not.~~

Peggy #1

~~PEGGY. Here I am—~~

ROGER. I'll be watching the ball game in the den. *(He goes off.)*

PEGGY. ~~*(To Julia.)*~~ He's upset.

JULIA. ~~*(Going to the couch.)*~~ That's what I want to talk to you about. ~~*(She sits.)*~~

PEGGY. Shoot.

JULIA. ~~*(Pating a place for Peggy on the couch.)*~~ Peggy, dear:

Normally, in New York, when we suspect the conversation might become confrontational, we ease into the issue with a few pleasant preliminaries. We complain about the weather; we ridicule some new restaurant; we scoff at the choreography in the latest musical. ~~Only afterwards do we gingerly step across the border into the area of controversy—~~

PEGGY. Sounds like a complicated way to converse, Julia.

JULIA. Well it works. But in your case, I want to rush right to the point. What's with the wall?

PEGGY. What if we could break through it, Julia?

JULIA. Break through it?

PEGGY. What if something wonderful lies beyond it?

JULIA. I'll tell you what lies beyond it, Peggy. Your dining room lies beyond it. Period. End of story.

PEGGY. What if you're wrong, Julia? What if there were people beyond that wall? What if they had given up reading a book, or watching television, and were now sitting there, waiting for us to reach out to them?

JULIA. Oh now Peggy...

PEGGY. No, what if that were true? And what if this audience were ultimately democratic, Julia? What if there were poor people out there, as well as reasonably rich? And what if they were ethnically diverse? What, for example, if there were a decent number of African-Americans out there?

JULIA. They'd HATE this thing, Peggy. They'd rush right off to see August Wilson.

PEGGY. But maybe they've stayed, Julia. And maybe Asians and Latinos have stayed, too. Maybe there are others, from other countries, all over the world. And maybe they're all sitting there, hoping we'll reach them where they live.

JULIA. If any people are out there at all, Peggy, I suspect they're

primarily Jewish. The poor things have kept the theatre going, almost single-handedly, for the last forty years.

PEGGY. Then I want to reach them, too.

JULIA. Neil Simon already does that.

PEGGY. And I want to connect to the Islamic community, here and abroad.

JULIA. Don't blow it, dear.

PEGGY. Well I do. And I want to reach gays and lesbians and —

JULIA. Lesbianism has already been quietly endorsed, Peggy, in my scene with Roger.

PEGGY. But that wall is still there. And I'd give my eyeteeth to get beyond it.

JULIA. Peggy darling, try to remember that walls were put on this earth for two purposes: to hold up ceilings and keep people apart. I'm all for them, and so I believe are most architects.

PEGGY. Oh I know we need walls, Julia. But this one just gets in the way.

JULIA. In the way of what?

PEGGY. Life, Julia! Life! All I can see is this great, blank barrier which separates our cozy, self-congratulatory, over-decorated world from something bigger and broader and better on the other side. And I'll never be happy — never, Julia! — till I've seen beyond it, and gotten through it, and left it behind me forever!

JULIA. ~~But what does all this have to do with our current president?~~

PEGGY. George W. Bush?

JULIA. Please don't keep mentioning his name, Peggy. I happen to know the man. I dared him in college. He was a little wild, but excellent in bed.

PEGGY. Oh really.

JULIA. Don't broadcast it, please. It's simply not fair.

PEGGY. To him?

JULIA. To me! I plan to put it in a book. In any case, we broke up when he found Christ.

PEGGY. And I take it you didn't.

JULIA. I didn't even look. But he's a nice boy, from a nice family, and I don't think you should run around making cracks about him ~~during our nation's time of trouble.~~

JULIA #2

Good news!

~~Roger enters, at the music continues under, he now wears a sweater.~~
ROGER. I see you've discovered my player piano.

JULIA. Yes.

ROGER. I programmed it strictly for Cole Porter.

JULIA. I noticed that. *(They now sing together.)*

BOTH.

I'm in love again,

And I can't rise above it.

I'm in love again,

And I love, love, love it!

I'm in love again,

And I'm darn glad of it,

Good news!

(They end with a good finish.)

ROGER. Well?

~~JULIA. Do you think we could squeeze out a reprise?~~

ROGER. I'm concerned about Peggy. She said you had something

to say,

JULIA. I do. Brace yourself, Roger. Your wife is insane.

ROGER. Oh now ...

JULIA. Totally ga-ga. Mad as a hatter.

ROGER. Are you sure?

JULIA. Look, if it were just a question of playacting in this room,

I'd say, fine, let's keep it up. I've always been good at charades, and

it might be moderately entertaining. But she wants to break

through, Roger.

ROGER. To where?

JULIA. To some other side, Roger. To some different dimension.

She wants to "reach" people. Of different backgrounds and cul-

tures. I wouldn't be surprised if she wanted to touch them. *(She*

shudders.) It's like the sixties without the Beatles.

ROGER. Good Lord.

JULIA. And she has no plot, Roger! Not even a subplot. Her sense

of jeopardy seems to involve some vague paranoia about George

W. Bush and the right wing of the Republican party.

ROGER. I was afraid of that.

JULIA. *(Moving toward him.)* At least I have a plot, Roger.

ROGER. Did you tell her that?

JULIA. I broadly hinted at it.

ROGER. Didn't she care?

JULIA. All she cares about is that stupid wall. Now I've done what

I can as a concerned friend of the family. It's time to ship her off

to the funny farm, toot-sweet. Call the men in white, and get her

out of here!

ROGER. But Peggy and I have been married so long. To see my

own wife grappled to the ground, forced into a straightjacket ...

JULIA. They did it to Blanche DuBois in *Streetcar*. It was pro-

foundly moving. Now be strong, Roger ... Stride to that telephone

and dial manfully!

ROGER. I don't know the number of the insane asylum.

JULIA. I saw it advertised at the railroad station: 976-NUTS.

ROGER. *(Jiggling the phone.)* Our phone's out of order.

JULIA. I don't believe that.

ROGER. *(Listening.)* One of our kids is on the extension.

JULIA. Your children have left the nest, Roger. And I can see why.

Now telephone. Or I will. ~~He starts to dial reluctantly. A car door~~

~~is heard slamming offstage. What's that?~~

ROGER. A car door slamming.

JULIA. Don't tell me the ambulance has arrived already? That's

awfully fast work, even for the theatre.

ROGER. *(Hanging up the phone.)* This may be someone else,

Julia. Peggy will let him in.

JULIA. Let who in? You obviously know who it is.

ROGER. I do, Julia. Sit down, and I'll try to tell you.

JULIA. *(Sitting.)* I sense a twist that I'm unprepared for.

ROGER. Julia: While you were having your scene with Peggy, I

went, as I said I would, to watch the ball game. When I got there,

however, I found I couldn't concentrate. Not only did I find

myself torn between two women, but also I felt trapped in a play

not of my own making.

JULIA. That I can understand.

ROGER. Finally, out of desperation, I made a telephone call. To

the Department of Drama of our local community college. I

thought if anyone could resolve this dilemma, someone who has

~~committed his life to studying the theatre might be able to do so.~~

Floyd #1

FLOYD. Second question. Is it true, Peggy, that you think there are people beyond that wall?

PEGGY. (Carefully) I think ... there could be. I think ... there should be.

FLOYD. Should be, Peggy?

PEGGY. I think it could be terrific if people could gather together, away from their CD's and TV's and DVD's, and see and hear live actors say serious things about what's going on in their city, in their country, and in their world.

FLOYD. What you're saying is that any culture which cannot produce good theatre, and a good, solid audience to respond to it, is no culture at all.

PEGGY. Maybe that's it.

FLOYD. What you're also saying — now don't let me put words in your mouth — but what you might be saying is that most great nations — be it Greece in the age of Pericles or Elizabethan England — have produced great theatre when they were at their peak.

PEGGY. Is that true?

FLOYD. It is indeed. And maybe you're saying as well that we ourselves have had a whiff of that greatness even in this country, in the period from Eugene O'Neill through Arthur Miller, when indeed our country was hitting its stride as a world power.

PEGGY. I ... could be saying that. Yes.

FLOYD. And you're also saying that now that our theatre has declined, you're concerned that our greatness as a nation is declining as well. And therefore, this wall, and your yearning to reach beyond it, is an attempt to revitalize theatre in America and to keep our great country from sliding irrevocably into philistinism and decay.

PEGGY. That's sort of it.

FLOYD. God, Peggy! You don't know how exciting this is! This afternoon, I was sitting alone in my office, hoping that one of my students in American Drama might stop by at least to chat. I knew this was unlikely, however, because this semester I am down to three students in that course: An ambitious young man who wants to write film scripts, a breathless young woman who saw *Les Miz* in fourth grade, and an exchange student from Bangladesh who signed up by mistake. Normally I would have used my spare time to

prepare for next semester's course on World Drama, but I learned today that it's just been supplanted by a second section of a new course in Media Studies entitled *The Brady Bunch and Beyond*.

PEGGY. You poor man.

FLOYD. No, no, not now! Because your husband called, and invited me here. And suddenly I find myself not simply discussing, but also actively involved in what could be a vital new American play! I mean, it's thrilling, Peggy! I feel we're on the brink of a major breakthrough! So I hope you'll forgive me if I ask a few more questions.

~~PEGGY. Shoot.~~

FLOYD. OK. Here we go. Now. Let's suppose there are people there, Peggy, beyond that wall. You're here, and they're there, and suddenly you have your big moment: What would you do?

PEGGY. Um. Well. Hmm. I think I'd make a speech.

FLOYD. All right, Peggy. And what would you say?

PEGGY. I'd say three things.

FLOYD. Good. We call that "the rule of three." Do it.

PEGGY. (Gaining confidence.) I'd start off easily. I'd use a simple example of how our country has gone off track. I'd talk about our obsession with Coca-Cola.

FLOYD. Coca-Cola?

PEGGY. And Pepsi, and all soft drinks, caffeinated or decaffeinated, carbonated or not. I'd say they're overpriced, nutritionally useless, and terrible for your teeth. I'd say the amount of labor and money we spend producing, transporting, displaying and consuming these useless beverages, and then dealing with their containers, is an image of capitalism at its worst. I'd say we should all see to it that everyone in the world is able to drink and enjoy a free supply of cool, clear water.

FLOYD. You'd say that, Peggy? You'd attack our consumer society even as we are locked in a death struggle with Islamic extremism?

PEGGY. I would indeed. And that's just the first thing I'd say. The second would be to talk about American unilateralism.

FLOYD. American uni — ?

PEGGY. Lateralism. I'd say that nowadays we should recognize that we are as dependent on other countries as they are on us. And I'd criticize all those people who run around saying we're the greatest country that ever lived. We're not. We're good at some things,

Peggy #2

prepare for next semester's course on World Drama, but I learned today that it's just been supplanted by a second section of a new course in Media Studies entitled *The Brady Bunch and Beyond*.

PEGGY. You poor man.

FLOYD. No, no, not now! Because your husband called, and invited me here. And suddenly I find myself not simply discussing, but also actively involved in what could be a vital new American play! I mean, it's thrilling, Peggy! I feel we're on the brink of a major breakthrough! So I hope you'll forgive me if I ask a few more questions.

~~PEGGY. Shee-~~

FLOYD. OK. Here we go. Now. Let's suppose there are people there, Peggy, beyond that wall. You're here, and they're there, and suddenly you have your big moment: What would you do?

PEGGY. Um. Well. Hmmm. I think I'd make a speech.

FLOYD. All right, Peggy. And what would you say?

PEGGY. I'd say three things.

FLOYD. Good. We call that "the rule of three." Do it.

PEGGY. (*Gaining confidence.*) I'd start off easily, I'd use a simple example of how our country has gone off track. I'd talk about our obsession with Coca-Cola.

FLOYD. Coca-Cola?

PEGGY. And Pepsi, and all soft drinks, caffeinated or decaffeinated, carbonated or not. I'd say they're overpriced, nutritionally useless, and terrible for your teeth. I'd say the amount of labor and money we spend producing, transporting, displaying and consuming these useless beverages, and then dealing with their containers, is an image of capitalism at its worst. I'd say we should all see to it that everyone in the world is able to drink and enjoy a free supply of cool, clear water. FLOYD. You'd say that, Peggy? You'd attack our consumer society even as we are locked in a death struggle with Islamic extremism? PEGGY. I would indeed. And that's just the first thing I'd say. The second would be to talk about American unilateralism.

FLOYD. American uni — ?

PEGGY. Lateralism. I'd say that nowadays we should recognize that we are as dependent on other countries as they are on us. And I'd criticize all those people who run around saying we're the greatest country that ever lived. We're not. We're good at some things,

and terrible at others — and it's high time we admitted it.

FLOYD. And would you name names?

PEGGY. Absolutely! I'd start with Ashcroft and Rumsfeld, and throw in a few Democrats, and —

FLOYD. I'm not sure anyone in the theatre has been so specifically political since Aristophanes wrote his comic masterpiece, *The Birds*!

PEGGY. Does Aristophanes talk about Africa?

FLOYD. Africa?

PEGGY. Or any place where people are in deep trouble. I'd say that the world is small enough now so that we can no longer ignore the suffering of our brothers and sisters in humanity, any more than we could ignore suffering in our immediate family. I'd say we have a human obligation to stop embellishing ^{our} own lives long enough to help unfortunate people elsewhere live any life at all.

FLOYD. You'd say all that?

PEGGY. I would! But you know what, Floyd? Anyone can stand around a room and make speeches. The important thing is to connect with other people. And I have to say that more and more I feel that connection.

~~FLOYD. Through that fourth wall?~~

PEGGY. Through that fourth wall.

FLOYD. Wait here a minute.

PEGGY. Where are you going?

FLOYD. To get the others.

PEGGY. Why?

FLOYD. I want to tell them that we have a plot.

PEGGY. We do?

FLOYD. We most certainly do! In fact, we have the plot of one of the great plays of all time! (*He starts out again.*)

PEGGY. Could you tell me what it is?

FLOYD. (*Coming back in.*) Sorry. I thought you knew. It's the plot of *Saint Joan*.

PEGGY. *Saint Joan*?

FLOYD. *Saint Joan*! I'm thinking of the version by George Bernard Shaw.

PEGGY. I've never seen the play.

FLOYD. It's about a young French peasant girl who tries to ~~change the world.~~

Floyd #2

~~PEGGY. Oh God-~~

FLOYD. Exactly. "Oh God." Actually, the line from *Saint Joan* is: "Oh God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive thy saints?"

PEGGY. Nor if it's watching TV, I can tell you that.

~~FLOYD. Of course-not.~~

PEGGY. I wonder what Saint Joan would do about this.

FLOYD. She'd ignore it. She'd have more on her mind than the backstage vagaries of a couple of stock characters.

PEGGY. But what if one of them is her husband?

FLOYD. Oh Peggy, don't let this throw a vulgar, domestic light on all we've accomplished so far.

PEGGY. (*Starting off*) I'm sorry! They want sitcom, they'll get sitcom!

FLOYD. (*Holding her*) Please, Peggy, stay just a little longer. I have one more thing to say.

PEGGY. But it's time for me to act!

FLOYD. Half of acting is listening, Peggy. I listened to your speeches. Now you listen to mine.

PEGGY. OK. But if I lose concentration, I'm sure you'll know why. (*She sits reluctantly*.)

FLOYD. (*Speaking with difficulty*) Peggy, I want you to know that I have never, in all my years of teaching, made any kind of sexual advance toward any of my female students, no matter how attractive they may be.

PEGGY. Good for you, Floyd.

FLOYD. This is because I've always considered myself gay.

PEGGY. You're sweet to tell me. Now can I go?

FLOYD. No, listen. Please. This room has changed me. As we've played our scenes together, Peggy, I've begun to have second thoughts about my sexual orientation. Even as I've announced the infidelity of your husband, I've had the strange yearning to take his place at your side.

PEGGY. Floyd ...

FLOYD. No, really. In fact, I think I love you, Peggy. I want to be with you wherever you go. All right, I may be gay, but why should that stop me? Gays on stage make spectacular lovers. English actors have been proving this for years. They may have the technique, but

we have the feelings, Peggy. At least I have. For you. Tonight.

PEGGY. Aren't you slipping into the continental sex comedy, Floyd?

FLOYD. Maybe I am, but what the hell. Oh look, I don't have to sleep with you, though Lord knows I'd love to take a crack at it. I won't even play the frustrated lover, mooning at your side! May I simply hang out with you occasionally, screening your phone calls, opening your hate mail, maybe even sharing a pizza with you in lonely hotel rooms when you play Saint Joan on the road?

PEGGY. But what about your teaching career? Don't you want tenure?

FLOYD. (*Kneeling before her*) How can I teach Saint Joan when I'm in love with the real thing? (*Roger and Julia enter*.)

~~ROGER. Are we interrupting something?~~

~~PEGGY. (*Keeping Floyd on his knees*) You certainly are.~~

~~ROGER. We were watching TV.~~

~~PEGGY. With the door locked!~~

~~ROGER. That was automatic, darling. A hangover from the days when the children used to barge in.~~

~~PEGGY. Don't drag the children into this!~~

~~ROGER. All right, darling. Here's the thing. Julia and I may have entered the bedroom with other intentions, but during the preliminaries I happened to roll onto the remote. The TV went on and naturally we watched it.~~

~~JULIA. It just shows how television dominates our lives.~~

~~ROGER. It turned out to be crummy. I was bored with it almost immediately.~~

~~PEGGY. Oh yes? Then why did you continue to watch it?~~

~~ROGER. I hoped it would get better.~~

~~PEGGY. "Hoped it would get better" ... "Hoped it would get better" ... That's what George Bush kept saying about our Anti-Ballistic Missile program. "Hoped it would get better."~~

~~FLOYD. And it didn't. And it hasn't! And it won't!~~

~~PEGGY. Did it get better for you, Roger? After Floyd came and went?~~

~~FLOYD. And left you to your own devices?~~

~~ROGER. No it didn't, darling. It got worse.~~

~~JULIA. I disagree completely. I thought it got quite good.~~

Roger #2

~~PEGGY. I know you do, darling, and so do I. But he's no solerion for what ails us.~~
~~ROGER. He's a serious guy, Peggy. There's an oh-such-a-hungry-yearning-bursting inside of him.~~
~~PEGGY. I'm not going to argue about the score, Roger. There's a certain inevitability in plays. And a certain progression in the history of modern drama. I also learned that in freshman English. After Ibsen comes Shaw. Which means that after *A Doll's House*, I've got to go off and play Saint Joan.~~
~~ROGER. Will you put on armor, or can you play it in panty-hose?~~
~~PEGGY. goddamnit, Roger! There's a fifth wall here tonight. And that's the wall between men and women. Which may be the toughest of all to crack. Now goodbye. I'm on my way to Washington.~~
~~ROGER. Washington?~~
~~PEGGY. To get George Bush to be the president he should be.~~
~~ROGER. This Bush thing is an obsession, Peggy.~~
~~PEGGY. Well I'm sorry. There he sits, the most powerful man in the world. The graduate of the finest schools money can buy. The son of a decent president. The grandson of a distinguished senator. And what have we got?~~
~~ROGER. (*Exploding.*) A grotesque parody of the values that created this country, and a rookie player totally out of his league!~~
~~PEGGY. Why Roger! Where did that come from?~~
~~ROGER. I don't know. It just came out.~~
~~PEGGY. I'm glad it did. So let's go!~~
~~ROGER. Go? Where?~~
~~PEGGY. Out. Off. To do something about it.~~
~~ROGER. Oh gosh, sweetheart. I dunno ...~~
~~PEGGY. We have to. People are counting on us.~~
~~ROGER. What people?~~
~~PEGGY. Those people! Beyond the wall! Oh Roger, where the hell have you been?~~
~~ROGER. I've been here, love. All evening. And I have to tell you, in all honesty, that I don't think there's anyone there. And if they were, I don't think they'd expect you to change the world. Maybe they'd be amused. Maybe even interested. But in the end, they wouldn't take this Saint Joan thing terribly seriously.~~
~~PEGGY. You don't think so?~~

ROGER. I really don't, sweetheart. Plays never change the world, Peg. And the ones that try are the ones that never last.
PEGGY. (*Sitting down.*) Says who?
ROGER. (*Putting his arm around her.*) Oh sweetheart, look. We've had a good time here tonight. We've had a laugh or two. You've said some stuff that maybe ought to be said. But now don't you think it's time we put our furniture back the way it was? I promise I'll try to talk eyeball to eyeball with you any time you want!
PEGGY. You mean you want to just sit around and grow old?
ROGER. And enjoy each other. And our friends. And our kids. And maybe grandchildren some day. And try to vote for the good guys.
PEGGY. So what you're saying is that in the end, I've run up against a blank wall.
ROGER. I think so, darling. (*Julia and Floyd come in, carrying plates with food.*)
~~JULIA. (*Seeing them together on the couch.*) You look so gloomy. Has somebody died?~~
~~ROGER. Only a sweet dream.~~
~~JULIA. (*As she eats.*) Well I want to thank you for the use of your telephone.~~
~~ROGER. I hope it served its purpose.~~
~~FLOYD. (*Eating.*) It did and it didn't.~~
~~ROGER. Meaning?~~
~~FLOYD. We thought we'd have a surprise for both of you.~~
~~JULIA. We thought we were related.~~
~~FLOYD. As it turns out, we're not at all.~~
~~JULIA. It seems that the illegitimate child I deposited at an orphanage years ago was female, rather than male. It simply slipped my mind.~~
~~FLOYD. In my eagerness for a recognition scene I assumed too much. Art is not life, people. And what happens onstage tends to be modified once we're in the wings.~~
~~JULIA. (*Taking Floyd's arm.*) On the other hand, we've been on a meaningful journey together, and have formed a friendship with no sexual component whatsoever. This is new to me, of course. You might say I have broken through my own personal fourth wall.~~
~~FLOYD. And as for me, I feel that life has at last penetrated the academic shell I've built around myself. Next semester, I plan to~~