

The Last Anniversary

by
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CHARACTERS

GEORGE (M)

ELLEN (F)

(F) indicates a female role

(M) indicates a male role

Total Roles: 2 (1 female, 1 male)

(A table and chairs, set for a romantic dinner for two. GEORGE enters followed by ELLEN. They are both in their 50s, or perhaps early 60s.)

GEORGE: Come on in, I've got everything's ready.

ELLEN: George, you didn't have to go to so much trouble. I'm not even sure it's such a good idea...

GEORGE: No, no, it's our anniversary, Ellen, it should be special.

ELLEN: I know, but under the circumstances...

GEORGE: Just have a seat.

ELLEN: It's been a long time since you cooked me dinner.

GEORGE: It's not exactly my talent, I know, but...

ELLEN: It looks wonderful, thank you. *(Slight pause)* I'm sorry, I'm not really that hungry.

GEORGE: Was it a busy day?

ELLEN: Too many tests.

GEORGE: Right. I'm glad the doctor let you come home tonight. I miss this, just us over dinner.

ELLEN: Things haven't exactly been the same lately, have they?

GEORGE: We don't need to talk about it.

ELLEN: I think we do, George.

GEORGE: Not now, not tonight.

ELLEN: Then when?

GEORGE: Please, can't we just have one night where we don't have to think about it? Can't we just talk?

ELLEN: All right. *(Pause)* What did you do today, George?

GEORGE: Oh, worked on the garden mostly, tried to keep things up around the house. What I usually do.

ELLEN: You're lonely.

GEORGE: Of course I am. Since you've been in the hospital... I'm stuck here on my own all the time with nothing to do.

ELLEN: I wish it didn't have to be this way.

GEORGE: It's not the same without you here, Ellen. All these years seeing you everyday and now... I've gotten used to having you around.

ELLEN: I know you don't like it, but the doctor thinks –

GEORGE: Look, we really don't have to talk about it.

ELLEN: George, you need to accept what's happening.

GEORGE: I don't want to talk about it.

ELLEN: We need to talk about it.

GEORGE: Not on our anniversary.

ELLEN: Our last anniversary, George.

GEORGE: No, I can't accept that.

ELLEN: Ignoring it isn't going to make it go away. This is one problem you can't just pretend doesn't exist.

GEORGE: Ellen... please.

ELLEN: Fine. *(Silence)*

GEORGE: I haven't told the kids, not everything.

ELLEN: Neither have I.

GEORGE: They had an idea, of course, when you first went to the hospital. Judy wouldn't stop asking questions about it.

ELLEN: She's always been persistent.

GEORGE: That's one way of putting it.

ELLEN: She gets it from you.

GEORGE: Yes, well, I told her not to worry, that everything would be fine.

ELLEN: Why would you do that?

GEORGE: Do what?

ELLEN: What you always do, avoid the big issues, pretend everything is all right. You shouldn't have gotten her hopes up.

GEORGE: What was I supposed to tell the kids? That you're... *(He can't say it.)*

ELLEN: Dying?

GEORGE: We don't know that you're... They'd be devastated, Ellen.

ELLEN: They should know the truth.

GEORGE: I don't see you telling them.

ELLEN: George!

GEORGE: I'm sorry, I didn't mean that you –

ELLEN: It isn't my fault.

GEORGE: I know that.

ELLEN: I'm not so sure you do. You resent me for this, don't think I don't see that.

GEORGE: That's not true.

ELLEN: Oh? Don't try and tell me you're not angry about it.

GEORGE: Of course I'm angry, but not at you. I'm just...

ELLEN: What?

GEORGE: This isn't how things were supposed to happen. We were supposed to... I wanted us to...

ELLEN: I know.

GEORGE: We were going to retire to the south of France together, remember? Just you and me in a cottage on the beach somewhere.

ELLEN: I always looked forward to it.

GEORGE: That's what I wanted tonight to be. One last moment for us before... One night for things to be how they were.

ELLEN: But things aren't like they were.

GEORGE: Ellen, please.

ELLEN: They can't be, you know that. Though we did have some wonderful times together, didn't we?

GEORGE: Like when we met.

ELLEN: *(Suppressing a smile)* Mother couldn't understand what I saw in you. I thought you were dashing. She thought you were just a slob.

GEORGE: Well... I do pick up after myself more.

ELLEN: Only after I nagged at you for twenty-odd years.

GEORGE: At least I listened.

ELLEN: We did have fun, George.

GEORGE: Don't talk about it like it's already over.

ELLEN: George... *(A beat)* I'm sorry I don't have more of an appetite.

GEORGE: It's all right, I understand. *(Pause)* Ellen?

ELLEN: Yes?

GEORGE: What did the doctor say today?

ELLEN: Oh George, I didn't want to tell you, not tonight.

GEORGE: Oh God...

ELLEN: It's not good. The cancer's spread. I don't have months. I may not even have weeks.

GEORGE: I can't do this...

ELLEN: George, listen to me...

GEORGE: I can't...

ELLEN: Yes you can.

GEORGE: No! You're not the one who's going to be left alone. I don't know how to do that.

ELLEN: You'll have the children and they'll need you. It's going to be all right.

GEORGE: How can you say that? It's not going to be all right! How can it be? Is there anything we can do? Because if there's anything...

ELLEN: Nothing that would give me very long. I'd rather be home with you than go through all that.

GEORGE: But if there's a chance... We can fight it, Ellen, I know we can, please.

ELLEN: George, if there was anything... I'm sorry, the doctor said it's just progressed too far. There isn't anything we can do now but enjoy what time we have left. But if you won't accept that...

GEORGE: It's not fair.

ELLEN: No.

GEORGE: I'm going to miss you.

ELLEN: I know. *(They embrace. Silence)* All I want is for us to be happy, for however long we can.

GEORGE: I don't know what I'm going to do without you.

ELLEN: There's always the south of France.

GEORGE: Not without you.

ELLEN: You're going to have to do a lot of things without me. You have so many years left. Promise me you'll try and be happy.

GEORGE: I'll try.

ELLEN: George, put some music on.

GEORGE: What?

ELLEN: It's our anniversary. I want to dance.

GEORGE: We haven't danced in years.

ELLEN: Are you waiting for a special occasion? (GEORGE *puts on some music, something slow and old-fashioned. A record player would be ideal.* GEORGE and ELLEN *start to dance.*) Thank you, George.

GEORGE: For what?

ELLEN: You were right. This is what our anniversary should be, just the two of us. (*They continue dancing.*)

GEORGE: What do you want to do, Ellen?

ELLEN: Nothing but this.

GEORGE: I mean with what's left. Anything, anything you want we can do. I know we haven't always gone everywhere, done everything that you wanted. No money, no time, it all seems so ridiculous now.

ELLEN: I just want to be here with you and the kids, that's all. I... (*She hesitates.*)

GEORGE: What?

ELLEN: It's nothing.

GEORGE: Anything you want, I mean it.

ELLEN: I do wish we could have gone to France together, just once.

GEORGE: Then let's go.

ELLEN: I wouldn't want to be away from everyone.

GEORGE: Then we'll bring them too. The kids, the grandkids, everyone. Even your sister.

ELLEN: George!

GEORGE: Well why not? We'll rent a cottage, a big cottage, for... well, for however long we want. We'll walk the beach, drink wine, even stop by Paris to see the Eiffel Tower.

ELLEN: When?

GEORGE: Now, tonight if you want. What do you think?

ELLEN: I think you've been reading too many novels.

GEORGE: I'm being serious.

ELLEN: I know, it's perfect. But not tonight, tonight is just for us.

GEORGE: I like that. *(They dance.)*

ELLEN: I love you, George.

GEORGE: I love you too, Ellen. Happy anniversary. *(The lights fade to black as they keep dancing.)*