

D.F.C.

A tragedy in three short acts by Rob Farrow

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FIRST PERFORMANCE : The COURT THEATRE, PENDLEY, TRING : 8th December 1993

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Dramatis Personae

Stanley Archer	An O.A.P. about 80 yrs old.
Ellen Archer	His wife, same age / slightly younger
Young Stan	Airman, 1940's (20's)
Young Harry	as above.
Peter Johnson	A young researcher / journalist. (20s)

Note : This play was written and is set in 1992, and requires an actor and an actress both to appear late 70's -> 80s. As this may pose some problems in casting or make-up, the play can be shifted back 10 years to 1980 ish, and all references to years reduced accordingly (and the 'Independent' would become the 'Telegraph' or 'Guardian'). Don't shift it back much further than that or some of the other details will become unbelievable.

Act I Scene 1

The curtain rises on a small, homely living room, Ellen is seated. Stan enters.

Stan Would you like a cup of coffee, dear ?
Ellen You know I can't drink it these days.
Stan You can; the doctor just said to cut down. You were drinking about *twenty* cups a day !
Ellen I used to like my coffee. All my little pleasures are bad for me - so my doctor says.
Stan You can still have a couple of cups a day. You don't have to give it up completely.
Ellen I can't have sugar in it though can I ?
Stan You could have sweeteners.
Ellen Yughk ! Horrible little things. I used to like my sugar.
Stan So would you like a drink of something else ?
Ellen It's alright for you Stanley Archer - you can still drink coffee - with sugar.
Stan But I don't take sugar.
Ellen That's not the point, you could if you wanted to. You're just selfish !
Stan Selfish ? Why am I selfish ?
Ellen You could have sugar and you don't; you just do it to rub it in ! "Would you like a cup of coffee" when you know I can't drink it. Selfish. You've always been selfish.
Stan Oh, Ellen, be fair - it's not my fault that I can still eat sugar, when you can't.
Ellen And beer.
Stan Beer ?
Ellen You can still drink beer - I can't.
Stan But you've never drunk beer - you loathe it.
Ellen That's not the point - you can still drink it and I can't. You've always been the same - Selfish.
Stan I'm sorry Ellen, but there's not much I can do about it - I can't help it if my body still accepts sugar and yours doesn't - it's just a fact of life - we're neither of us getting any younger. I had to give up smoking, and you know how much I enjoyed my cigarettes
Ellen Horrible smelly things.
Stan Thirty years without a cigarette - I remember when I couldn't go thirty minutes !
Ellen Are you going to make this coffee or not ?
Stan I thought you said you didn't want one.
Ellen Well my doctor says I can have two cups a day - so that's what I'll have, or are you going to deprive me of that even ?
Stan For God's sake Ellen, it was me who suggested you had a cup in the first place.
Ellen Well stop jabbering on then and make a cup.
Stan *{fatalistically}* As you command.
Ellen And don't be sarcastic - it doesn't become you.

[Stan exits]

Ellen *{muttering to herself}* He's always been the same, selfish - never a thought for me - I should never have married him; though I suppose I had to. Not like today - they get away with anything today. Not then though - couldn't go having a kid out of wedlock in those days - oh no, so I couldn't do anything about it, could I ? Had to marry him - with Harry being dead - had to marry someone - why the hell did I go and have to marry him ?

[Stan re-enters]

Ellen Have you made it then ?

Stan No the kettle's boiling - I just wondered if you'd like something to eat.

Ellen What am I going to eat then, you old prune ? Can't have biscuits they've got sugar in 'em

Stan You can have a bit of sugar dear - like you can have a bit of coffee - just don't go mad - anyway I could make you a little sandwich - there's some of that nice salmon spread in the cupboard, you like that don't you ?

Ellen Yes alright, I'll have a sandwich - make sure you cut the crusts off though.

Stan [*on his way out*] Don't I always ?

Ellen Yes, well don't forget.

[Stan exits]

Ellen Fancy me marrying Stanley Archer - oh if only Harry had lived, it would all have been so different. Too late now - I suppose I'm stuck with Selfish Stan for the rest of my days - {*shouts*} Is that coffee ready yet ? I'm parched.

Stan {*offstage*} Just making the sandwiches, dear; won't be a moment.

Ellen Oh why did Harry have to die ? If only things had turned out different. There was I with Harry's baby inside me and then he gets himself killed saving Stanley bloody Archer. Least he could do after that really - offer to marry me - it was his fault Harry died after all.

[Stan re-enters with tray holding two cups coffee, one plate sandwiches - half with their crusts cut off, and two side plates.]

Stan What's that you were saying dear ?

Ellen Nothing. Just talking to myself. It's a sign of old age you know - talking to yourself. I'm an old woman, I'm allowed to talk to myself. Let me see them sandwiches

{Stan passes her the sandwiches }

{Ellen takes the plate of sandwiches, counts them (silently), and peels back the top slice of one of them. }

Ellen Have you gone and used all the spread up ?

Stan It's alright, I've got to go to the shops later, I'll pick up another jar.

Ellen Extravagant that's what you are - that pot should've made two lots of sandwiches.

Stan If I spread it too thinly you say I'm being mean and you can't taste it.

Ellen Well there's spreading it thin and spreading it thin - you've put far too much on these - you'll have us in the work-house.

Stan They don't exist anymore !

Ellen I know they don't exist anymore - it was a figure of speech you silly old prune.

Stan Well I don't think one pot of salmon spread's going to bankrupt us.

Ellen It's the principle, you're extravagant with everything.

Stan Yes, dear.

Ellen And don't say "Yes, dear" like that - I can tell you don't mean it.

{Stan just shakes his head in an "I can't win" manner }

Ellen Do you know how long we've been married ?

Stan Of course I do - forty-nine years - it's our golden next year.

Ellen Forty-nine years - forty-nine years - even murderers only get thirty !

Stan What's that supposed to mean ?

Ellen Well it's like a life sentence isn't it - except it's longer.

Stan I hope you don't really think of it like that - I've enjoyed it - well most of it - I think it's quite an achievement forty-nine years. We've stuck together through thick and thin

Ellen Mostly thin.

Stan What's the matter Ellen ?

Ellen What do you mean "what's the matter ?" ?

Stan You seem more - um - [*tries to be tactful*] agitated than usual.

Ellen I've every right to be agitated - living with you - it's enough to agitate anyone. Go and scrape some of that paste back into the jar !

Stan What ?

Ellen You heard me. We can't go wasting spread like that - go on - scrape half of it back into the jar.

Stan I've thrown it away.

Ellen You've done what ?!

Stan The jar - I've thrown it in the bin.

Ellen Well get it out of the bin then !

Stan For Heaven's sake

Ellen And don't talk to me like that - you know it upsets me - I'll be having palpitations next.

Stan Please Ellen, calm down, just eat the sandwiches - you'll enjoy them.

Ellen I think you're doing it on purpose.

Stan Doing what on purpose ?

Ellen Upsetting me - you want me to have palpitations don't you ? That's what you want.
[*Starts to eat sandwich*]

Stan Don't be ridiculous, Ellen. Sandwich alright ?

Ellen There's no cucumber.

Stan You told me cucumber gives you indigestion.

Ellen Well it would be nice to be asked. I bet you've got cucumber.

Stan No, we've run out.

Ellen Run out of cucumber ! How can we have run out of cucumber - I don't eat it anymore. You greedy old man - you've eaten a whole cucumber.

Stan I didn't buy one. Now that you can't eat it I didn't see much point.

Ellen What if somebody called ?

Stan I don't follow you there dear.

Ellen What if we had guests - and we hadn't got any cucumber to offer them ?

Stan [*Finds this funny if somewhat baffling*] I'm sure they'd survive.

Ellen They'll think we're paupers - they'll go back saying "those Archers can't even afford to buy a cucumber !"

Stan Why on earth should we want to offer guests cucumber ? Besides, when was the last time we had guests anyway ?

Ellen Yes Stanley Archer - and you know why that is don't you ?

Stan Why what is ?

Ellen Why we haven't had any guests for ages.

Stan [*He knows perfectly well*] Do enlighten me.

Ellen 'Cause you drive them away - that's why. With your meanness.

Stan [*Downbeat*] I see.

Ellen No cucumber indeed, whoever heard of such a thing.

Stan Alright, alright when I go down the shops I'll buy a cucumber.

Ellen And another pot of salmon spread.

Stan And another pot of salmon spread.

Ellen You'll bankrupt us you will.

Stan [*To himself*] Give me strength.

Ellen And don't you go eating it all yourself.

Stan The salmon spread ?

Ellen No, the cucumber.

Stan Hold on a moment Ellen. I oh, forget it.

[*Pause*] [*They eat some of the sandwiches and drink some coffee.*]

Ellen I see you made yourself more sandwiches than you made me.

Stan No I didn't dear - we had four each.

Ellen You had five.

Stan I can't have had five dear, two rounds of bread makes four little sandwiches.

Ellen That's it - bring numbers into it - you know I'm no good with numbers.

Stan Anyway you haven't eaten all yours yet.

Ellen I never said I had.

[*There is no answer to this*] [*Pause*]

Stan More coffee ?

Ellen I can only have two cups.

Stan Well you've only had one so far.

Ellen But if I have another one now I won't be able to have one later.

Stan O.k.

Ellen [*Slight Pause*] Is that all you're going to say.

Stan What else do you want me to say ?

Ellen [*Thinks*] [*Pause*] When was the last time we had visitors ?

Stan I can't remember dear - [*Thinks*] - Christmas ?

Ellen Not last Christmas.

Stan No, not last one, the one before.

Ellen Driven all my friends away you have. [*Pause*] [*With emphasis*] And my son !

Stan [*Annoyed, keeps control*] Our son Ellen, and I did not drive him away.

Ellen He was Harry's son, not yours.

Stan We brought him up - Harry was dead before he was born - I'm his dad.

Ellen So why did he leave home.

Stan [*Keeping control*] Do you really want to go through all this again ?

Ellen You drove him away - that's why. He was only eighteen.

Stan I did not drive him away. [*Pause*] [*Sadly*] I still miss him - more than thirty years and I still miss him - I wonder where he is now.

Ellen Probably still in Australia.

Stan We've not even had a note from him in twenty years - good Lord he must be nearly fifty now.

Ellen He's still my little boy. My little Martin.
Stan For Heaven's sake Ellen, you can hardly refer to a fifty-year-old man as a 'little boy'
Ellen I can't think of him as being fifty - I can only think of him how he was when he left.
Stan The trouble was you could never accept his growing up at all ...
[*Stan wishes he hadn't said this*]
Ellen What do you mean - what are you saying.
Stan Never mind.
Ellen What do you mean I couldn't accept him growing up.
Stan I don't want an argument Ellen.
Ellen Martin was my son.
Stan He was our son

<< **The following section is two separate monologues, interleaved.** >>

Ellen Not even a Christmas card.
Stan I wonder if he married.
Ellen He might be dead.
Stan He could have kids of his own.
Ellen Have you thought of that - he could be dead and we wouldn't know.
Stan We might be grandparents.
Ellen In some unattended grave somewhere.
Stan Good lord, if he's fifty he could have grandchildren.
Ellen He might be dead and buried - somewhere in Australia.
Stan We could be great-grandparents !
Ellen And we wouldn't know.
Stan And we wouldn't know.

[[**Blackout**]]

----- **End of Act I Scene 1** -----

Act I Scene 2

Scene : The same. Stan and Ellen are both seated. Stan is reading a newspaper, Ellen a magazine.

There are several moments silence, broken occasionally by the rustle of Stan's newspaper. After a few moments, Ellen puts her magazine on her lap and looks daggers at Stan

Ellen Do you have to keep doing that ?

Stan Sorry ? [*Question not apology*]

Ellen Do you have to keep rustling the paper like that, it's most annoying.

Stan It's a big paper Ellen, it's bound to rustle a bit.

Ellen Why don't you read a little paper like the 'Mirror', that wouldn't rustle half as much.

Stan I don't like the 'Mirror'.

Ellen No, course you don't. Have to read the 'Times' - makes more noise.

Stan The 'Independant' actually, dear.

Ellen Oh, it's the 'Independant' now is it ?

Stan I'll try not to rustle it, O.k. ?

Ellen You don't hear me rustling my magazine.

Stan No dear.

[*Pause, Stan reads on. Ellen scrutinizes him*] [*Pause*] [*Stan turns a page*]

Ellen There you go again !

Stan [*Exasperated*] I was turning the page !

Ellen You were rustling !

[*Stan gives up. He throws the paper to the floor.*]

Stan Alright you win !

Ellen There's no need to lose you temper.

[*Longish pause*] [*Ellen looks at her magazine*]

Stan [*Sarcastic*] I'm not breathing too loudly am I dear ?

Ellen What ?

Stan I'm not putting you off your magazine by breathing am I ?

Ellen Don't be sarcastic.

Stan [*Teasing*] I mean I'll just stop if you like.

Ellen Don't be facetious.

Stan Just quietly slip away.

Ellen I wish you would !

Stan Oh, great !

Ellen [*Slight pause*] [*Softening slightly*] No, you know I didn't mean it.

Stan That's a comfort.

Ellen [*Quite gently*] You might be a crotchety old bugger, but I suppose I'd miss you !

Stan Well one of us is going to go one of these days.

Ellen Oh don't go all maudlin on me.

Stan We ought to face facts - we're unlikely to shuffle off this mortal coil simultaneously are we ?

Ellen I'm bound to go first.

Stan I don't know why you say that - women live longer than men you know.

Ellen Not with all my ailments I won't.

Stan I'd miss you if you did.

Ellen I'd've thought you'd be glad to see the back of me ! You could rustle your paper to your heart's content then !

Stan I love you Ellen.

Ellen Don't be silly.

Stan What's silly ? I've been married to you for forty-nine years, I should hope I love you.

Ellen You only married me out of some idea of duty.

Stan Oh, don't start that again. I married you 'cause I loved you. I still love you - I've always loved you.

Ellen [*Quietly, with lump-in-throat*] Not because of Harry ?

Stan How many times do I have to tell you ?

Ellen [*Pause*] You know [*Slight pause*] I wouldn't have married you if Harry had lived.

Stan I know.

Ellen I was in love with him. I was carrying his baby. [*Sobs slightly*]

Stan So you had to make do with second best, I know.

Ellen You've been very good to me. You didn't have to marry me.

Stan I wanted to marry you.

Ellen I - [*Slight pause*] - I didn't really want to marry you.

Stan I know.

Ellen It was only because of the baby.

Stan I realised that.

Ellen It wasn't very honest of me, was it.

Stan We both closed our eyes to it didn't we. But we knew. We both knew really.

Ellen Yes.

Stan [*Quietly*] I thought you'd grow to love me.

Ellen [*Quietly*] I hoped I would.

Stan [*Long pause*] And did you ?

Ellen [*Long Pause*] Yes, I think I did.

Stan [*Slight pause*] I'm glad. I thought you had - but ...

Ellen But I never forgot Harry, is that it ?

Stan It's been like he's been looking over my shoulder - for forty-nine years he's haunted me.

Ellen It's time he was laid to rest isn't it.

Stan It's long past time for that.

Ellen I suppose so.

Stan It's funny, you know, us, the way we are. Two old fogies sitting at home with our coffee and our newspapers, arguing with each other, getting on each other's nerves. It's not the way I'd seen the future. Then none of us can, can we ? We can't see the future and I don't suppose it would do us any good if we could. We don't even learn from the past, what chance would we have of profiting from a view of what's to come ? Besides, if it really is the future we see then there'd be nothing we could do about it anyway. I mean it would effectively already have happened. If it was a definitive view of the future then that's it we couldn't change it. Like it or lump it. Mr. & Mrs. Archer - this is your future, don't bother trying to do anything about it 'cause you can't !

Ellen Have you finished ?

Stan Sorry dear, I'm rambling.

Ellen It's not what I'd envisaged either. I had my life planned out. Marry my Harry have two or three kids, live in a little cottage in the Cotswolds and slip gracefully into old age with my grandchildren looking after me. What happens ? Harry gets killed, I marry you, we live in an end-of-terrace in Watford, and our only son goes off to Australia never to be heard of again. No, Stan, it's not what I had planned either.

Stan At least you called him our son. That's a definite improvement, perhaps old Harry's ghost is being laid to rest at last.

Ellen I don't think of Harry as much as I used to.

Stan I should hope not, he's been dead fifty years.

Ellen Just sometimes. When the sun comes in the window in a certain way. It's the light, a certain special sort of light, it sends me straight back.

Stan To the day I came and told you ?

Ellen Yes. It was a beautiful day. Clear as a bell, and bright, so bright. And peaceful too, you'd never have known there was a war on. The light came through the window and you came to the door.

Stan It was the hardest thing I've ever had to do.

Ellen You came to the door, and my world exploded.

Stan I felt I had to be the one.

Ellen I suppose it was quite brave of you really. You must have known how I'd react.

Stan I hadn't any idea. I was dreading it; I didn't know whether you'd scream or faint or what. I just didn't know. I remember the palms of my hands were oozing sweat. And I had a strange sort of grin on my face. I knew I had, I could feel it. I've had it since when I've had to tell someone bad news, it's terrible, it looks as if you're smiling but

Ellen I know. It's alright. I remember.

Stan And then you opened the door

Ellen I knew what it was before you spoke.

Stan You went white.

Ellen I could tell from your face exactly what you were going to say.

Stan Harry's dead.

Ellen Harry's dead - just like that. Harry's dead. I could have said those words for you - as soon as I saw your face I knew - but I had to hear you say them, you had to say it, confirm it; for a last fraction of a second Harry was still alive for me - until you spoke.

Stan And you just turned and walked inside - I didn't know what to do - whether to follow you in and try and comfort you or walk away and leave you to your grief, alone.

Ellen I'm glad you came in.

Stan And you asked me how it happened - you were so calm.

Ellen Yes, I was calm. I was cold. I felt like my blood had been drained out of me, I was numb, Stan, I could feel nothing. I heard myself saying "How did it happen ?" but it was like someone else was speaking the words.

Stan You were staring straight past me. It was eerie, Ellen, it was strange.

Ellen And you told me how he'd saved you, how he risked his life for you; and lost it.

Stan He saved my life and lost his - it's difficult for me too.

Ellen I hated you then. I loathed and detested you. It was like you'd murdered him - it was your fault - I wanted to kill you.

Stan I know.

Ellen I said some very bad things to you.

Stan I understood.

Ellen It's a wonder you ever came back - after that day.

Stan I loved you Ellen. That's why I came back.

Ellen It was good of you.

Stan I wanted to. Goodness didn't come into it. Don't think I did anything out of pity or even out of duty - I wanted you, Ellen. I wanted you as my wife - even before Harry died, I wanted you. Even after you got pregnant, I still wanted you

Ellen But you didn't know did you ? Not until afterwards ?

Stan I knew, Ellen. Harry had told me.

Ellen He told you ? When ?

Stan The day he died. We'd talked about you.

Ellen Harry talked to you about me - about the baby ?

Stan He knew I loved you.

Ellen He knew he knew you loved me - how ?

Stan He could tell. He just came out with it, "You're in love with Ellen aren't you Stan ?" he said. Simple and straight-forward as that.

Ellen And what did you say ?

Stan I said I did. I could say nothing else. It was such a direct question, I had to tell the truth, I never, even momentarily thought of doing otherwise.

Ellen Wasn't he furious ?

Stan No; not at all. He just laughed.

Ellen Laughed ?

Stan Well, more of a wry chuckle really. "Funny how things don't always go the way they should." he said.

Ellen What did he mean by that ?

Stan I don't know - I've often thought about it. Wondered exactly what he meant.

Ellen I stopped blaming you quite quickly you know.

Stan I could tell - your attitude changed. [*A little laugh*] You stopped calling me a bastard for one thing !

Ellen [*Coughs*] Yes, well, I started to think - if Harry had lost his life saving you, it was rather ridiculous me wishing you dead.

Stan That's true.

Ellen And I grew to accept it.

Stan And I came round more often.

Ellen And I got quite fond of you - and - I have to admit it - started to think that my baby would be better off having a father.

Stan I knew that too.

Ellen Didn't you resent my motives ?

Stan I wanted you, Ellen. I would have preferred it if you had fallen in love with me but I just wanted you anyway, I didn't mind how or why I got you.

Ellen That's honest. I can't think why you should have felt about me the way you did though.

Stan Well I don't think anyone's worked out how people fall in love yet.

Ellen No. I'm not sure when I fell in love with you.

Stan [*Long pause*] You never did, did you.

Ellen What ?

Stan You never did fall in love with me. You're not in love with me now.

Ellen What do you mean ? Of course I love you.

Stan Yes [*Pause*] yes, you love me - but you're not *in* love with me.

Ellen What's the difference ?

Stan You know what the difference is - you love me like you love anyone or anything familiar and comfortable - but you're not - you never have been *in* love with me, like you were *in* love with Harry.

Ellen [*Pause*] I love you more now, at this minute than I ever have before, Stan. I wish we'd had this conversation forty-odd years ago.

Stan I wish we had.

Ellen Why didn't we ?

Stan Harry's ghost, Ellen. Harry's ghost. It was lurking there, in every glance in every sentence - watch out, Harry's about !

Ellen Surely not.

Stan Why now though, why after all these years, it's suddenly alright, I don't know. What have we done to exorcise him ?

Ellen I don't know. I don't know that we have. After all we're talking about him now - so ...

Stan Yes, but differently - Perhaps we ought to take that down
[*nods at medal in case on wall (a D.F.C.)*]

Ellen [*Slightly stunned*] Oh, I don't know that I could. It's the only thing

Stan Precisely.

Ellen His D.F.C., Stan, it's the only thing of his I've got - I, I can't take it down - it would be a betrayal.

Stan I know, it would be the same for me. After all he won it saving my life -

Ellen And losing his ...

Stan It's a constant reminder, Ellen. Fifty years that's hung up there, saying "You're only here because of my sacrifice." Every time I look at it I feel guilty.

Ellen You shouldn't - it was his choice.

Stan Choice ? I'm not sure choice came into it. I think it was reaction. I ...

Ellen Would you have done the same ?

Stan [*Pause*] [*Looks at Ellen, eye-to-eye*] Oh, yes, Ellen; I'd've done the same.

Ellen It's easy to say that Stan, but do you know that you would.

Stan Yes. I know. I know I'd've reacted in the same way.

Ellen How can you know, Stan. You said yourself that choice didn't come into it.

Stan I just know, Ellen. Harry and I were two sides of the same coin. If he'd do something, I'd do it too. And vice versa.

Ellen You'd have done it knowing you were going to lose your life ?

Stan But Harry didn't know he was going to lose his life. He knew he was risking it - and through sheer bad luck he did lose it - but he didn't intentionally commit suicide to save me. But don't think I'm belittling what he did - it was still a courageous thing to do - and he paid the ultimate price.

Ellen And you'd have done the same ?

Stan And I'd have done the same.

Ellen [*Pause*] Take it down then.

Stan What ?

Ellen Take the medal down. It's time it came down.

Stan Are you sure Ellen ?

Ellen I can't do it - but if you can, then take it down. -- Throw it away if you want.

Stan I couldn't do that.

Ellen Then just take it down and put it in a drawer somewhere. I don't want to see it again.

Stan [*Stares at the medal*] [*Pause*] It's silly. A lump of metal on a bit of coloured ribbon and I'm actually scared of it.

Ellen No you're not. You're not scared of the medal, you're scared of what it means, what it stands for. [*Slight pause*] What taking it down means.

Stan You're right. But it amounts to the same thing.

Ellen Well do it then. Take it down.

Stan [*Stands, goes slowly over to the little case, and looks at the medal. Pause*]
So, Harry, this is it. [*Reaches up to the case, unhooks it, and holds it looking at it.*]

Ellen I'll put the kettle on; you do something with it. I don't want to see what you do with it, but do something with it.

[*Stan just looks at the case*]

[Ellen gets up and goes offstage]

[*Stan walks slowly back to his chair, holding the medal. He sits holding the medal to his chest.*]

Stan [*Quietly, to himself*] Oh, Ellen, you don't know what this means. You don't know. How many lies ? How many fabrications ? How much needless suffering ? How much pain ?

"They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we shall remember them."

[*Stan sinks back into his chair, holding the medal to his chest*]

Ellen [*Offstage*] Have you done it yet ?

[*No reply. Pause*]

Ellen [*Coming on stage*] Have you ... Oh, don't just sit there with it, Stan. Put it away somewhere. [*Slight pause*] Stan ? Stan ???

[*She comes over to Stan, she looks at him*] [*Quietly*] Stan ? [*She realises he's dead.*] Oh, Stan. Stan. Not now. Oh Stan, no, no, not now.

[*She crumples over his body, sobbing*]

[[Blackout]]

----- **End of Act I Scene 2** -----

Act II Scene 1

Act II is three short scenes, the second scene should effectively be an insertion in the flow from II/1 to II/3

The curtain rises on the same room, Ellen is standing dusting something, slowly.

[A knock on the door]

Ellen [*Slightly annoyed*] Oh, who can that be ?

[*Goes to door, opens it on catch*]

Ellen Hello ? Who is it ?

Peter Mrs. Archer ?

Ellen Yes. Who are you ?

Peter My name's Peter Johnson. I wonder if I could have a word with your husband.

Ellen You're too late.

Peter Oh, has he gone out ?

Ellen What do you want, exactly ?

Peter Can I come in a moment ? I realise you shouldn't let strange men into the house, but I promise I mean you no harm.

Ellen You're right, I shouldn't. [*Pause*] [*Peers through door at him*] Oh, come on then I must say you look pretty harmless.

[*Opens door, Peter enters*]

Peter Thank-you.

Ellen So what is it you want ?

Peter I'd like to speak to your husband, did you say he's out ?

Ellen He's out permanently I'm afraid.

Peter Sorry ?

Ellen He died last week.

Peter Oh, dear. I am sorry.

Ellen Don't I know you ?

Peter No, I don't think so.

Ellen I'm sure I've seen you somewhere before.

Peter I live in Winchester - have you been there ?

Ellen No, no, you must just remind me of someone. [*She sits*] Well sit down then.

Peter [*Sits*] Thank-you. If this is inconvenient ...

Ellen It's not inconvenient. I'm not exactly busy these days.

Peter No, I meant if I'm intruding. Please tell me and I'll go.

Ellen Well, that'll depend - what did you want to talk to him about ?

Peter Well I'm doing research for a book.

Ellen A book ? What sort of book ?

Peter It's about pilots who won the D.F.C. in the war. I'm trying to interview those involved to find out what really happened, the citations don't tell you very much you see.

Ellen The D.F.C. - [*wry laugh*] Fifty years it's been on my wall; fifty years and we hardly ever mentioned it. Suddenly it's important. "A lump of metal on a bit of coloured ribbon", that's what he called it.

Peter I know it's only physically a lump of metal - but that's not what it is really that's not what it means. It's a reminder. Of bravery. Of courage.

Ellen It's more than that. That medal was more than that.

Peter I'm sure it was. Where is it now ?

Ellen It's in a drawer.

Peter Why ? If you don't mind me asking - I really don't want to intrude, but I'd have thought you'd still want to have it on the wall, even now.

Ellen He took it down. We didn't want it there any more.

Peter After all that time ?

Ellen [*Looks at wall where the medal was*] It killed him in the end !

Peter I'm sorry ?

Ellen That damned medal, it killed him. Fifty years it hung there, wearing him down, I didn't realise. [*Breaking down slightly*] I just didn't realise the effect it had on him.

Peter I didn't mean to distress you, Mrs. Archer. Shall I leave; I didn't know that your husband was dead; I don't want to upset you.

Ellen No, no, you stay put. I'm just a silly old woman, getting all flustered over things that can't be helped.

Peter Did your husband ever talk to you about it ? Tell you the story of what happened ?

Ellen Oh, yes. We talked about it. Him and Harry, they were like brothers you know.

Peter That's Harry Thompson, you mean.

Ellen Yes, of course, who else ? That is what we're talking about isn't it ?

Peter Of course, sorry to interrupt.

Ellen It's funny, we were just talking about Harry, just before well that was the reason that's why he died. Talking about Harry. The medal. Poor old Stan; I miss him you know.

Peter I'm sure you do. Look, I'll come back another day if you like.

Ellen No, no, let's talk about it now. It'll probably do me good - to talk about him.

Peter If you're absolutely sure. It would be very helpful for my book.

Ellen Of course; I won't be able to give you all the details Stan would have done, but I'll try my best.

Peter That's very kind of you. So what can you tell me about that night ?

Ellen It was early summer. Stan and Harry were at the airfield, I'd only just found out I was pregnant.

Peter Oh, I didn't realise ...

Ellen No matter, I don't suppose it's really relevant. I heard the planes taking off. My heart always missed a beat when I heard them taking off. Praying that he'd come back safely. It was so dangerous. The losses were dreadful you know.

Peter I know.

Ellen Mind you I'd've been a lot more worried if they'd been in bombers, the fighters did seem to have a better chance.

Peter Yes, but still dangerous enough.

Ellen Harry and Stan were flying fighter escort for a Lancaster raid over France. It was such a clear night, the search-lights could pick the planes out easily. Apparently Stan was diving after a Meschersmidt when he was hit by some ac-ac.

Peter Your husband's plane was hit by ac.-ac. ?

Ellen Yes, well he wasn't my husband then of course.

Peter [*Confused*] Oh, I see. Sorry, do go on.

Ellen He was losing height, his plane was on fire. He said he thought he was going to die, but then he saw a field that he might be able to land on. The engine was spluttering, misfiring, the cockpit was full of smoke. He brought the plane level and crash-landed onto the field.

Peter Let me get this right, you're saying that Mr. Archer's plane crashed in France.

Ellen Yes, of course, what's wrong with that ?

Peter Well, it's not quite what I expected to hear, but please go on - this is very interesting.

Ellen What did you expect to hear ?

Peter No, I'm sorry Mrs. Archer, I shouldn't have interrupted - please go on, we'll sort out any anomalies afterwards.

Ellen Well, luckily for Stan, the plane didn't explode, but he was knocked unconscious, and the plane was on fire so he'd have been burnt to death.

Peter So what happened ?

Ellen Harry had seen Stan's plane go down, so he flew down low over where it had crashed - he could see that Stan was still in the plane, so he came back round and landed his plane next to Stan's.

Peter This is how your husband told you it happened ? Are you sure ?

Ellen Yes, of course I'm sure. Why would I make it up ?

Peter No, please, I must stop butting in. So what did he say happened then ?

Ellen Well of course Stan was still unconscious at this point. But Harry came over and pulled him clear of the wreckage. Just in time as it happens, the plane blew up seconds later.

Peter So Stan and Harry were in a field in France with one plane between them.

Ellen Yes, of course there was no room in the little fighter for a passenger so Harry helped Stan, who'd come-to by then, over to a hay stack. After all it was better if Stan got captured than if he'd died in the plane.

Peter Of course.

Ellen So, Harry left Stan to try and get back to England and ran back to his plane. Stan said he only got about twenty yards when a Meschersmidt came overhead and machine-gunned him down. He limped over to him, but he was dead. He didn't want to leave him there, but what could he do ? He saw Harry's plane got in it and flew back home.

Peter Mrs. Archer, your husband told you that Harry Thompson was killed in France saving his life.

Ellen That's right. That's why Harry got the posthumous D.F.C.

Peter Tell me, Mrs. Archer, you said you were pregnant - who's baby were you expecting ?

Ellen [*Pause*] Well, I suppose I might as well tell you - it can't do any harm now - it was Harry's baby.

Peter Oh, good grief.

Ellen What's the matter.

Peter I don't know how to tell you this Mrs. Archer.

Ellen Tell me what ?

Peter I'm not sure that I even should tell you this.

Ellen What ? Whatever are you talking about ?

Peter Mrs. Archer. It wasn't Harry Thompson who was awarded the D.F.C., it was your husband Stanley Archer.

[[**Blackout**]]

----- **End of Act II Scene 1** -----

Act II Scene 2

This scene change should be done as rapidly as possible. Preferably instantaneously using separately illuminated areas of the stage.

Scene. A barrack-room on an Airfield.

Young Stan and Young Harry enter.

Stan It's going to be a bit rough tonight.

Harry You're telling me. The old ac-ac's going to be flying round our ears with a vengeance.

Stan What's new ?

Harry Yes I've had one or two close shaves recently.

Stan You and me both.

Harry D'you reckon you'll make it ?

Stan What d'you mean ?

Harry D'you think you'll see the war out ?

Stan I try not to think about it.

Harry I never used to - but I've been thinking about it a lot recently.

Stan It doesn't do you any good - thinking about it - we either make it back or we don't, but yes, I don't know why, but I think I'll make it through O.k.

Harry I don't think I will.

Stan There's no point getting all pessimistic, Harry. You'll be alright.

Harry I'm not so sure. I reckon there's a bullet out there just waiting for me.

Stan Well don't wish it upon yourself.

Harry Oh, no, don't get me wrong. I don't want to kick the bucket just yet, but I've got this feeling, that's all .

Stan Oh, I get that every time I get in the damned kite, it's called nerves old bean.

Harry No, Stan, it's more than that. It's like a black cloud hovering over me.

Stan Forget about it. You'll survive.

Harry [*Pause*] Stan ?

Stan Yes, Harry, what is it ?

Harry If I do buy it, will you do me a favour.

Stan Come on Harry, stop talking like this, it's just as likely to be me as you.

Harry I don't think so Stan.

Stan Go on, what's this favour then ?

Harry Ellen.

Stan Ellen ?

Harry She's pregnant, Stan.

Stan [*Pause*][*Thoughtful*] Oh.

Harry Well you know how it is.

Stan You want me to look after her - if anything happens to you.

Harry Well you won't mind that too much, will you ?

Stan How d'you mean ?

Harry Oh, nothing. I just thought you'd do that for me.

Stan That's not what you meant at all is it, Harry.

Harry What do you think I meant ?

Stan Look, Harry, you're my best mate. Stop beating about the bush and tell me what's on your mind.

Harry You're in love with Ellen aren't you Stan ?

Stan [*Pause*][*Somewhat shocked*] How did you know ?

Harry I could tell; the way you look at her. The way you look at me when I'm with her. I could just tell. You've got one of those honest faces - they're easy to read.

Stan I don't know what to say. I can't help it Harry.

Harry Don't worry about it. But do what I ask if I don't make it.

Stan For God's sake Harry, don't talk like that. You'll make it.

Harry [*Wry chuckle*] Funny how things don't always go the way they should.

Stan What d'you mean ?

Harry Me, you, Ellen. It's not the way it should be Stan. It's not right at all.

Stan This is very embarrassing Harry. I didn't mean to fall in love with your girl - it just happened. And you needn't worry - it's not reciprocated - she's in love with you and that's an end to it.

Harry I know she's in love with me - and now she's carrying my baby - but it's not right.

Stan Are you saying you don't love her ?

Harry I don't know what I'm saying. I'm confused Stan. There's more to this than you know.

Stan Well tell me then. Perhaps I can help.

Harry Oh, you can help alright Stan. Just do what I ask; if anything happens to me, look after Ellen.

Stan There's more to it than that Harry.

Harry Leave it Stan.

Stan Do you love Ellen or not ? I need to know, Harry.

Harry That's not the point - don't you see - it doesn't matter whether I love her or not. You should be the one

Stan She's carrying your baby ...

Harry I know God damn it ! And that complicates it even more, d'you think I don't realise that ?

Stan I don't see it, Harry - I don't see it at all - she loves you, she's going to have your baby - you can't just give her to me

Harry If I'm dead Stan, she'll need someone. I want that someone to be you.

Stan Alright. Of course. That's not a problem. Of course I'll look after her - gladly.

Harry Good then that's settled.

Stan No it's not Harry. You're not talking about if you get killed, are you Harry ?

Harry Leave it Stan. Leave it at that.

Stan You don't mean *if* do you; you mean *when*.

Harry So I think I'm going to die. Alright. Now let's talk about something else.

Stan Like why you don't want to marry Ellen.

Harry Don't talk rot ! Of course I want to marry Ellen.

Stan You've never had any intention of marrying Ellen have you ? This baby's come as one big shock to you hasn't it ?

Harry [*Pause*] You know me too well, don't you Stan.

Stan We've been through a lot together.

Harry Alright - I should have known better than to tell you only half the story.
[Pause, sigh] Sit down, I want to show you something

[They sit, Harry gets his wallet out, and from it produces a photo]

Stan Who's that ?

Harry Pretty isn't she.

Stan Yes, lovely; but Harry, Ellen's expecting your baby - I think that comes before some sweetheart from the past.

Harry [Put's his head in his hands] She's called Mary, she lives in Oxford ...

Stan Where you're from - O.k. - so ...

Harry So she's my wife, Stan, she's the mother of my two kids.

Stan Oh my God.

Harry Now you see the problem. [Long pause]

Stan What a bloody mess !

Harry Precisely.

Stan Does she know about Ellen ?

Harry Of course she doesn't !

Stan No, I suppose not.

Harry Look; I'm no angel. I know. I've been unfaithful - and I've messed Ellen's life up into the bargain - but I never meant it to go this far. I mean - a bit of fun with one of the local girls. That's all I meant it to be.

Stan Some fun !

Harry Alright, alright, d'you think I haven't tortured myself with it already.

Stan I suppose so. So what exactly were you planning on doing ?

Harry I know you'll say it's the cowards way out - but I was going to crash tonight.

Stan What !!!

Harry Well, best thing all round. Nobody gets hurt.

Stan Are you mad ?

Harry Don't come the psychologist bit with me.

Stan How can you say nobody gets hurt - that way hurts everyone - effectively you'll leave two widows and three orphans !

Harry Don't say it like that.

Stan How else can I say it ?

Harry This war will make a lot of widows and a lot of orphans, Stan.

Stan Oh and a few unnecessary ones won't matter - is that what you're saying.

Harry I can't see any other way out of this.

Stan Telling Ellen the truth would be one way.

Harry I couldn't Stan. That'd hurt her more than my death would.

Stan Do you really think so.

Harry I know it. Whatever happens - promise me you'll never tell her. Never - do you understand ?

Stan I ...

Harry Never, Stan. Promise it. I'm telling you these things in confidence - you have no right ever to tell her. Now promise.

Stan Alright - I promise.

Harry Swear it.

Stan I swear. I swear, as long as I live I'll never tell Ellen. God help me !

Harry God help us all Stan. God help us all.

Stan [Pause] There must be another way out of this mess.

Harry Do you think I haven't gone through all the possibilities ? I'm in no great hurry to die, you know. But it's the only way out.

Stan It can't be.

Harry It's a pity I can't just half die !

Stan What ?

Harry Well, if either Ellen or Mary thought I was dead then everything would be alright, I'd just go and live with whichever one knew I was still alive.

Stan [Slight pause] That's it !

Harry What ?

Stan We fake it.

Harry How do you mean we fake it.

Stan It's going to be none too pleasant for you but at least you'll be alive.

Harry What are you dreaming up.

Stan We're bound to be over France on one of the next few nights aren't we ?

Harry Well yes, I suppose so.

Stan Well instead of crashing your plane, just ditch it. Crash land, but make sure you live through it - and get captured.

Harry Captured !

Stan I'll report back that you crash-landed and have probably been taken prisoner, so they'll let your wife know - but I'll tell Ellen that there's no way you lived through it.

Harry And I spend the rest of the war in a P.O.W. camp !

Stan Probably the safest place to be in this damned war !

Harry You're right - it's better than dying !

Stan And then after the war you come back, are re-united with Mary and the kids, I'll look after Ellen - if she'll have me - and we'll all live happily ever after !

Harry It's brilliant Stan ! It's foolproof !

Stan Let's hope so.

Harry What can go wrong ?

Stan Just make sure when you're back in England you steer clear of the Home Counties, I wouldn't like to be around if Ellen ever bumped into you !

Harry Point taken. So when do I die ?

Stan At the first opportunity I'd say. [Leaving]

Harry Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori !

Stan Requiescat in pace, Harry Thompson !

[[Blackout]]

----- End of Act II Scene 2 -----

Act II Scene 3

Again, this scene change should be done as rapidly as possible. Preferably instantaneously using separately illuminated areas of the stage.

Scene. Ellen's front room again.

[**Ellen & Peter** are as they were at the end of II/1]

- Ellen** That can't be right ! Why would they give Stan the D.F.C., it was Harry that got himself killed.
- Peter** I'm afraid that's not all, Mrs. Archer.
- Ellen** What do you mean - what else could there be.
- Peter** Well the story that your husband told you was pretty well correct - except it was the other way round.
- Ellen** What ?
- Peter** It was Harry Thompson's plane that crashed - not your husband's.
- Ellen** And that's how Harry was killed ?
- Peter** No, what your husband said was correct, think about it Mrs. Archer - if Mr. Archer was unconscious how would he know that Harry made a low pass to see if he was still in the plane ?
- Ellen** I suppose Harry told him when he came to
- Peter** I don't think they'd have chatted about that in those circumstances. No, it was Mr. Archer who flew down to see if Harry was alright, it was your husband Mrs. Archer that rescued Harry from his burning plane - not the other way round. He helped him out of the wreck, and left him propped against a hay stack - but there was no diving Meschersmidt, and Harry was not shot.
- Ellen** So how did he die ?
- Peter** [*Pause*] He didn't Mrs. Archer. He didn't. Harry Thompson is alive and well and living with his wife in Doncaster !
- Ellen** [*Wails*] No ! You're lying !
- Peter** I'm sorry, Mrs. Archer - I spoke to him yesterday. That's how I know what happened.
- Ellen** No, it can't be
- Peter** He spent the rest of the war in a prisoner-of-war camp ...
- Ellen** He couldn't have - he'd've written
- Peter** I don't know why he didn't - and I don't know why Mr. Archer told you the story he did. I can only suppose they'd agreed that story between them.
- Ellen** I don't believe you - you're making it up - get out - get out now - you've just come here to upset me - go on get out.

[**Peter** *gets up to leave*]

- Peter** I'm sorry Mrs. Archer - I really am sorry - Please forgive me - I didn't realise it would cause you so much grief.
- Ellen** GET OUT !!! You're lying.

Peter I'll go - but I'm telling the truth ...

Ellen Why are you telling me these lies - what pleasure do you get out of upsetting an old lady ? Go on get out, now !

[**Peter** is at the door, **Ellen** opens it]

Peter I wish I'd never come. I do really - I'm sorry - I'm terribly sorry.

Ellen [*Calmer*] Tell me you're lying. Please.

Peter [*Pauses*] [*Looks at Ellen*] Alright, yes, I'm lying.

Ellen [*Looks back into his eyes*] [*Shakes her head*] No you're not. Now I know. Oh, Stan - Why did you never tell me ! Oh my brave idiotic Stan !

Peter I think I'd better go.

Ellen No, you can't just leave it like that - tell me everything you know.

Peter [*Slight pause*] If you're sure.

Ellen I'm sure.

[*They move away from the door*]

Peter [*Sits, Ellen sits*] Well, as I said, I spoke to Harry yesterday ...

Ellen How is he ?

Peter Getting old, Mrs. Archer, he's alright but he's - well - tired out, I'd say.

Ellen I see.

Peter He was nervous when I first started asking questions about the war. I don't think he wanted to talk to me really - but, - I'm sorry to say this - his mind's not all it should be. He suddenly started talking, it was like he was back in the war. He talked and talked - then suddenly he stopped - he just looked very guilty - even frightened - and he just stopped, mid sentence. He wouldn't say another word after that.

Ellen So what did he tell you ?

Peter Alright, I'll tell you what he said to me - perhaps you can make sense of it. Apparently he and your husband were over France, flying escort to a Lancaster raid, as you said, and his plane was hit by some ac-ac. He'd said this much O.k., but then a sort of glazed expression came over his face, he just kept saying "ironic really" over and over again. Then he snapped out of it, he said he had difficulty handling his plane, that it was falling out of control, but that at the last second he managed to lift its nose up and he crashed into a field. He assumes he was knocked unconscious, because the next thing he remembers is staggering across the field with your husband helping him, and then his plane blowing up. He said all this in a sort of monotone with a far-away look in his eyes. It was quite creepy really.

Ellen Why didn't Stan tell me the truth ?

Peter I don't know Mrs. Archer. But I think something must have been agreed between him and Harry, because you see, I asked him why he'd said it was ironic.

Ellen And what did he say.

Peter He said that it was ironic that he'd been shot down when he intended to crash-land anyway.

Ellen What ? What do you mean he intended to crash land.

Peter He said that that's what they'd planned.

Ellen They'd planned ? Who's they ?

Peter That's what I asked him - he said "Me and Stan".

Ellen I don't understand this at all.

Peter His wife came in then and told me I was upsetting him, and that I should leave. I must say, he did look a bit strange when I left. Oh, there was one thing I should tell you - he asked after you and Stan - and I told him that I was hoping to see you today. He went quiet then - he just mumbled something - I couldn't hear what it was.

Ellen [*Head in hands*] Why ? Why ? I don't understand. Why did they do it ?

Peter I don't know Mrs. Archer. I'm beginning to think it would have been better if I'd never started asking questions. Some things are better left buried by time.

Ellen No, I'm glad I know the truth now, after all this time. I don't understand it, but it does make some sort of sense I suppose. The strange thing is, I feel like I knew it all along. I knew there was something peculiar about that night, something Stan kept back from me, though he always maintained he'd told me everything.

Peter I'm glad you're not too upset now.

Ellen Will all this be in the book ?

Peter Book ?

Ellen The book you're writing - are you going to put all this in it ?

Peter Oh, I see; not if you don't want me to, anyway I'm not sure that it'll ever get written.

Ellen That would be a shame - you must have put a lot of work into tracking us down - particularly Harry.

Peter Two years.

Ellen What ? Two years, for this one story ?

Peter It's the only story that mattered.

Ellen Why ? Why us ? What made us so important to you ?

Peter [*Pause*] My dad died when I was little, I was just four

Ellen Oh, that's a shame, but what ?

Peter He was killed in a car crash - he'd only just hired the car, he was driving away from the port when a lorry jack-knifed in front of him, he hadn't a chance, I was in the back with my mother and we survived, but dad was killed outright.

Ellen I am sorry, but I

Peter We'd come all the way from Australia and he got killed just three miles from the port.

Ellen [*With trepidation*] Australia ?

Peter He'd come back to visit his parents - he'd not seen them for years

Ellen Oh God

Peter I've not done this very well have I ?

Ellen But you said

Peter There is no book, Mrs. Archer, I made that up. And my name isn't Johnson, it's Archer - Peter Archer - I'm your grandson !

[[Blackout]]

----- End of Act II Scene 3 -----

Act III

Scene. Ellen's front room again. Ellen is preparing for a guest.

Throughout this scene she is messing around tidying, arranging the table etc. Everything is ready, but she's still fussing around.

Note :: While the general tenor of this act is distraught and depressed, the ironic comments should be conveyed with lightness, even humour.

The following is a monologue spoken by Ellen

He's late. Just like his grandfather. Always late. I hope he likes chocolate cake - yes of course he will. They all like chocolate cake. Everybody likes chocolate cake. *[Pause]* Unless he's diabetic like me - No he'd have said. No, chocolate cake will be alright. Stan loved chocolate cake. Oh, poor Stan, I wish he was still here, he'd have loved to see his grandson - well, I know he's really Harry's grandson, but he's Martin's son - and Martin was more Stan's son than he ever was Harry's.

He never knew Harry after all. Stan was his dad, really. Oh, Stan, I miss you. Why did you never tell me Stan ? Why ? I could have taken it. Whatever the reason was - if only I'd known. And why did you tell me it was Harry's D.F.C., all those years it hung there *[looks over to where it used to be]* Oh, I must put it back up - *[Goes over to chest of drawers]* Where is it ? *[Next drawer]* Ah here it is. *[Looks at it]* *[Sadly]* I used to look at this and think of Harry, everytime I looked at it I saw Harry. And it was yours all along Stan - so now it's my memento of you - of you Stan. I was in love with you Stan - I don't think I realised it, but I was - I was in love with you - and I never told you. Can you hear me Stan ? Can you ? - I loved you Stan - I was in love with you. *[Pause]* Too late. It's too late now. He can't hear me now. Fifty years - I had fifty years to tell you didn't I Stan. Ample time - and now, now you're dead I want to tell you. But it's too late. Oh, Stan. Why did you have to go and die ? I miss you Stan.

[She hangs the framed medal back on its hook]

What was their reasoning ? Why did they do it ? Crash landing - on purpose - what was it all about ? I don't suppose I'll ever know now. What were you up to Stan ? Why did you make it so difficult for yourself - for us ? Harry's ghost - *[Wry laugh]* Harry's ghost - Harry isn't even dead ! You can't have a ghost if you're not dead, Stan. There never was a Harry's ghost. But then again I suppose there was. Harry was effectively dead - he was as dead as he could be - to me. Alive and well and living in Doncaster. Doncaster ! What the bloody hell is he doing in Doncaster ? He's supposed to be in some field in France ! He's got no right to be alive and well and living with his wife in Docaster ! His wife ! He should have married me, I was carrying his child. He should have - *[Light dawns]* *[Slowly]* Oh - of course - of course. That was it wasn't it Stan ? That's what it was all about ! You should have told me Stan. *[Pause]* You should have told me. *[Longish pause, she looks round her]*

[*Slow, as if talking to someone*] What ? What was that ? [*Pause*]

What d'you mean you couldn't tell me ? [*Pause*]

You'd sworn ? You'd sworn not to tell me ? What the hell is that supposed to mean ?
I had a right to know. I was carrying his baby for God's sake I had every right to know. [*Pause*]

His wife ! Of course - yes that explains everything. Just a bit of fun I suppose I was.
Then it went a bit far, didn't it. Yes, that's what happened, didn't it ?
You bastard Harry, you were already married. Weren't you. That's it, I know now.
You wormed your way out of it. As far as I was concerned you were dead - well
I wish you were. I wish you were dead. I wish you'd died out there in France like
you were supposed to have. Fifty years ! Fifty years I've worshipped your memory
- How damn stupid - I've been worshipping the memory of someone alive and well and
living in Doncaster ! Don't you see what a fool you've made of me ?
What a fool, you ruined my life, you inconsiderate bastard ! You ruined our lives, oh yes, not just
mine but Stan's as well - if I'd known the truth - I'd - I'd - [*Suddenly calmer*]
I don't know what I'd have done actually. What would I have done ? [*Pause*]

I think I'd have still married you, Stan. I think I would have. But it would have
been different. It would have been better Stan. You should have told me. [*Pause*]

I don't care ! I don't care what promises you made to Harry. Our lives were more important than
some oath you took years ago. It's not right, Stan. It never was; but I suppose I'm at fault too -
I was ready to believe it - the moment I saw your face when you came to tell me - I was ready to
believe exactly what you said. I never doubted it you know. Never for one moment did I think that
you might not be telling the truth. What a lie, Stan ! What a fabrication ! [*Pause*]

Why now, I wonder. Why am I finding all this out now ? Now that you're dead - now
that we can't talk it over. Why so late in the day, when it was all over really -
you kept your silence to the grave, but the grave has given up its dead Stan, Harry's
risen from his grave to haunt me ! And there's no way out ... [*Pause*]

Are you listening to me Stan ? I said there's no way out. Come on then Stan, you were the one with
all the ideas, you're the one who created this charade - show me the way out of it - I'm fed up, Stan,
I'm tired, I'm old and I don't want all this grief. It's sending me crazy Stan. I wish you were still
here. [*Crumples onto settee, closes her eyes*]

[*Young Stan and Young Harry enter, in flying gear as per II/2, they stand in front of her*]

[**Ellen** opens her eyes]

Ellen [*Quietly*] Stan ?! Harry ?!
Young Stan: You've got to choose Ellen.
Ellen Choose ?
Young Stan: Me or Harry - you've got to choose.
Young Harry: It's what we should have done before.
Ellen Are you real ?
Young Harry: As real as we need be, Ellen.
Young Stan: It's your way out, Ellen.

Ellen I've got to choose ?

[Young **Harry** & Young **Stan** nod]

Ellen [*Pause*] I loved you once, Harry. But I love Stan now.

[Young **Harry** & Young **Stan** exit]

Ellen [*Eyes shut*] I choose you Stan.
[*Quietly*] I choose you.

[*A knock on the door*] [*No reaction*] [*Pause*]
[*A louder knock on the door*]

Peter Mrs. Archer !

[*Another knock*]
[*As lights fade, (old) Stan enters from Backstage and rests his hand on Ellen's shoulder.*]

Peter Grandma ! [*Pause*] [*Shouts*] Grandma !!!

[[Blackout]]

----- The End -----

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