

The Last Anniversary

by
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CHARACTERS

GEORGE (M)

ELLEN (F)

Total Roles: 2 (1 female, 1 male)

SYNOPSIS

George and Ellen can't escape the shadow of a terminal illness, not even on their anniversary. While George tries to ignore what's happening, Ellen pushes him to confront the situation. Together, they must decide what to do with the time they have left as they celebrate their last anniversary.

SET REQUIREMENTS

A table with 2 chairs

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

Not on our anniversary.

GEORGE

Our last anniversary, George.

ELLEN

I can't accept that.

GEORGE

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

ELLEN

Ellen, please.

GEORGE

Fine.

ELLEN

(Silence)

I haven't told the kids, not everything.

GEORGE

Neither have I.

ELLEN

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

GEORGE

She's always been persistent.

ELLEN

That's one way of putting it.

GEORGE

She gets it from you.

ELLEN

I told her not to worry, that everything would be fine.

GEORGE

Why would you do that?

ELLEN

GEORGE

Do what?

ELLEN

Avoid the big issues, like you always do. 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'll 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, remember? Just you and me in a cottage on the beach.

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...

ELLEN

They can't be, you know that. Though we did have some wonderful times, 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

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

GEORGE

It's not. How can it be? Isn't 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.

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 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.

George, put some music on.

ELLEN

What?

GEORGE

It's our anniversary. I want to dance.

ELLEN

We haven't danced in years.

GEORGE

Are you waiting for a special occasion?

ELLEN

(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.)

What do you want to do, Ellen?

GEORGE

Nothing but this.

ELLEN

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.

GEORGE

I just want to be here with you and the kids, that's all. I...

ELLEN

(She hesitates.)

What?

GEORGE

It's nothing.

ELLEN

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 on the beach, drink wine, and 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.)