BEHIND THESE EYES

A radio drama

by

Linda Rose

Behind These Eyes

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Characters:
Sol Kennedy – late 40's
Annie Kennedy - late 40's
Davis – late 40's
Friend – an enigma
Nurse Dottie – early 40's
Nurse Helen – mid 20's
Waiter - French

GRAMS: 'TEN THOUSAND ANGELS' BY 'BLISS' INTRODUCES AND ACCOMPANIES THE FOLLOWING SPEECH

Sol: A bright light enveloped me – swathing me in a luminescent mist.

A shining figure stood next to me. I could feel love and peace radiating out from him.

All around me was a colourful world, shining bright with a clean light. Water sparkled as it fell from a burbling brook – the sound so musical it took my breath away. The flowers and plants so clear, so bright in their colours – I knew I was in Paradise.

I looked at the being beside me. I felt loved and cared for – surrounded in a warm blanket of peace and joy. I had no fear; no worries.

The figure spoke into my thoughts: I could choose – to return, or stay.

To stay in this place of ultimate beauty, peace and happiness – or to return – to all I had loved and held dear. But… what did I hold dear? My business was my life – my creation and passion. My wife, Annie, was my dear companion – devoted, selfless, giving….

To go back… to leave all this behind….? But knowing it would be waiting for me – one day.

Being sure of the peace and beauty of this place, I looked into the shining face, and made my choice.

FADE

SOL'S OFFICE:

FX: PHONE RINGING IN THE BACKGROUND

Sol: So Jenny, if you can get those orders processed and out tonight – that'd be great. I appreciate your staying on till this time – you know I wouldn't ask if it wasn't crucial.

PICKS UP PHONE. RINGING STOPS

Sol: Hello – Kennedy Computing, Sol Kennedy speaking… Oh hi Charlie – good to hear you. Enjoy your cruise? That's great – what is it you Yankees say - 'Mighty fine!'…. Aha.... Yup…. No problem – that order can be prioritised no problem…. Yes – we're just getting another large order out to Switzerland – that's going tonight – then I'll be straight on to yours directly… personally? Of course! Great to hear from you, Charlie. Say 'hi' to Joanie and the kids…. 'Sure thing!' Bye!

FX: PHONE CLICKS OFF

Sol: I'd better phone Annie and say I'll be late. Sally – before you go, could you look out that order from Cleveland please. Charlie Heath. Just pop it on my desk on your way out. Thanks, love. Right…. Invoices….then that order….

FADE

SOL & ANNIE'S HOME:

Davis: Is he often this late, Annie?

Annie: All the time. You should know that!

Davis: I can't wait too much longer for him. We've got a quiz night down at the White Horse. You should come – you'd enjoy it.

Annie: You know I can't, Davis. I have to be here and looking like the perfect little wife for whatever time he deigns to come home.

Davis: Poor Annie. You should come out with me. It wouldn't do him any harm to miss you for one night.

Annie: The shock'd kill him.

Davis: He probably wouldn't even notice.

Annie: Huh. Thanks!

Davis: I mean – caught up with his invoices and orders – isn't he on the phone to the States half the night?

Annie: They are his best customers, and with the hour difference….

Davis: He needs to slow down.

Annie: You try telling him that.

Davis: I do. Not that he takes any notice. I learnt that a long time ago!

Annie: As I always say - you're made of different stuff.

Davis: I'm the tortoise – I know. He's the hare.

Annie: Just remember - the tortoise won in the end.

Davis: So I'm a little slow… what of it?!

Annie: Nothing – it's delightful! Sol could learn a thing or two from you, Davis.

Davis: Annie – come with me tonight – please! It'll do you good. Give those brain cells an airing!

Annie: Oh Davis – you are so sweet. You know I'd love to…. But I *can't*!

Davis: But -

Annie: And that's that.

Davis: Well. I'll love you and leave you… tho' I'd rather love you and stay…?!

Annie: Off you go! That'd be a fine thing – Sol coming home late and finding us at it somewhere…

Davis: I was thinking of the dining room table – looks sturdy enough!

Annie: Davis!

Davis: He probably wouldn't even notice – just spread his papers out all over us!

Annie: Oh you are wicked, Davis!

Davis: And you love it – I know! (HE SIGHS) You know I'm serious… well not about the dining room table – it could be anywhere you like!

Annie: Off you go, Davis!

THEY KISS GOODBYE

FX: DOOR OPENS. TRAFFIC NOISES

Davis: Well – if you ever change your mind…

Annie: Have fun tonight.

FX: DOOR SHUTS

Annie: (SIGHS DEEPLY) Oh Sol – for heaven's sake – the dinner's all dried up! Why's it got to be like this?

HOSPITAL TRAUMA UNIT

FX: SOUNDS OF LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN HOSPITAL, BEEPS, WHOOSHING OF BREATHING APPARATUS ETC.

Sol: Where… where am I?

I can't move!

What's happened to me?! I can't see anything!

(PANIC) Help!! Help me!! Oh God! Oh God! Oh God!!

HE DRIFTS OUT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

FADE IN

Dottie: He's in here, Mrs Kennedy. You can come in now he's all fixed up.

(SHARP INTAKE OF BREATH)

Annie: Oh … Sol!! Oh Lord!

Dottie: (KINDLY) Here dearie – sit down for a moment. It'll be a shock for you I know.

SILENCE

Would you like a cup of tea?

Annie: I… I… er…

Dottie: I'll fetch one for you.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

SILENCE AMIDST THE MACHINE NOISES

Annie: Oh God – Sol – what's happened to you? Oh Lord. I don't believe it…

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Dottie: Here, love. There's milk and sugar there if you want it. It's bound to be a nasty shock. Did they phone you? But he's safe now – nothing can happen – the machine's keeping everything going.

Annie: What's going to happen? When will he wake up?

Dottie: Hasn't the doctor filled you in on it all?

Annie: I… I couldn't really follow it…

Dottie: Of course not – it's all too much to take in. Well there's nothing definite about anything with a coma. It just depends on what the damage is inside. There is often cerebral oedema - swelling - and that might take days to discover; we have to see what the level of brain activity is. But while all that is happening his body is kept functioning by all the machines.

Annie: Thank you.

Dottie: No worries – ask anything you want to any time – (CHEERFULLY) not that I'll know all the answers of course! Now – I'd better see to next door. She'll need her bags changing. Stay here as long as you like, love.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Annie: Thank you.

FADE OUT.

FX: HOSPITAL NOISES BECOME MUFFLED AND DISTORTED – ALMOST MUSICAL

Sol: Hello? You - sitting on the bed - I can't see you, but I know you're there. What am I doing here?

Friend: There's been an accident.

Sol: (DREAMILY) An accident…? I… I remember – the ice… I saw the wall coming – slow motion. I thought 'how far will I go through this?' Am I dead?

Friend: No. Not dead. You're in hospital.

Sol: Who are you?

Friend: A friend.

Sol: What's your name?

Friend: You can just call me a friend.

Sol: Well, Friend, I can't remember you … but somehow you seem familiar. Why can't I move? Why can't I see anything?

Friend: Don't worry…

FX: CROSS-FADE WITH HOSPITAL NOISES

Annie: Oh Sol! You look so… (SOB) so broken. (SHE CRIES.) Oh God! God – look after him for me please! (SOBS) I… I… I'll be back… I promise…

SHE LEAVES IN TEARS

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Sol: (SLEEPILY) Annie…? Annie…?

FX: NOISES FADE IN AND OUT. DOOR SQUEAKS.

Helen: Who've we got here then? Sol Kennedy. Well Sol – looks like you and me are going to be hooked up together for some time.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Dottie: Hey Helen! I'm off now – see you later!

Helen: Okay Dottie – mind how you go. It's still so icy out there - you don't want to end up like poor Sol here, do you – eh Sol?!

Dottie: I'll be careful. See you tomorrow?

Helen: Sure. You up for the Valentine's party?

Dottie: Never missed it yet! Are you going with Paul?

Helen: (SHYLY) If he asks me.

Dottie: Hey! That's no way to go! Just ask him yourself!

Helen: I.. I can't!

Dottie: Tut! Someone else'll snap him up, Helen!

Helen: I'm seeing him after the shift. Maybe he'll ask me then.

Dottie: I know Belinda has her beady eye on him too – so get on with it, girl! Gotta go – bus to catch!

Helen: Take care, Dottie.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Helen: (SIGHS DEEPLY) That Belinda had better keep her hands off Paul. Oh dear….

FX: SHE FLUFFS THE PILLOW

Well Sol… that's a bit more comfy for you, eh? (SIGHS AND LEAVES)

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

FX: SOUNDS FADE AND BLUR

Sol: (WAKES UP CRYING) Aaargh! Argh!! Help! It's so dark!! I can't see… help me! Someone! I'm crashing…. I'm crashing!!!! Help me!!!

Friend: (GENTLY) It's okay, Sol. It's okay. You're safe now. You're in a safe place.

Sol: But I can't move. I can't feel anything!

Friend: You are safe. You are being loved and cared for. You have no need to worry.

Sol: Annie! Annie! Where's Annie?

Friend: She's safe. Don't worry, Sol. Don't worry for her – she is well.

Sol: (CALMER) Who are you?

Friend: I am your friend. I am your friend. (FADING OUT) I am your friend…

FX: BEEPS ETC. CROSS FADE

Annie: (TREMULOUSLY AND UNNATURALLY) Er… hello Sol – it's Annie…. They say it's good to talk to you – in case you can hear anything. (FALSELY BRIGHTLY) Well – the doctors say they should get a good idea of your brain activity level today…. And there's been no more swelling in your brain overnight… that's good, isn't it? Though they can't take the tube out of your head just yet… Oh dear…. (SOBS) Oh Sol!... Oh Sol! I love you….I love you so much. Why didn't I tell you more often?... (SHE CLEARS THROAT AND PULLS HERSELF TOGETHER. BRIGHTLY) Oh Sol, Davis is coming today.

Sol: (BARELY AUDIBLE) Annie….?

Annie: He called me as soon as he heard –

Sol: Annie…!

Annie: He came round to see if I was okay.

Sol: (SLIGHTLY STRONGER) Annie – I'm here! Take my hand!

Annie: That was nice of him, wasn't it! Well – he'll be here in his lunch break.

Sol: Annie!!

Annie: Half twelve, I think he said… (STARTING TO CRY)
That'll….be….nice…. I'm so lonely.

Sol: Annie – can't you hear me? I can't see you….I want to hold you. Please touch me! Hold my hand! Stroke my face…. Make me feel *alive*!!!

Annie: Well … I think I'll go home and fetch some things to brighten up this room a bit.

Sol: Annie!

Annie: They say…. (CHOKING ON A SOB) they say you could be here some time….. I'll… I'll bring some… (CRIES)

Sol: Annie! Don't leave me….! Don't leave me…!

Annie: I'll be back later – I promise Sol…. SHE LEAVES SOBBING.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Sol: Annie!! I'm scared…

FX: SILENCE EXCEPT FOR MACHINES WHIRRING AND BEEPING

FADE

SOL & ANNIE'S HOME

FX: DINNER PLATES & CUTLERY RATTLE. PAPERS RUSTLE)

Annie: You're later than usual, Sol.

Sol: (DISTRACTED) Hmm?

Annie: You're later than usual. Everything okay at work?

SILENCE

Annie: I saw…

Sol: Fine. Fine.

Annie: Oh. Good.

Sol: Just busy – that's all.

Annie: I do wish you wouldn't bring those papers to the dinner table. Can't you leave them for five minutes?

SILENCE

Sol: Eh, what? Sorry?

Annie: Never mind. Eat your dinner.

Sol: Yes… er… thanks Annie. Must phone Geoff and check these figures….

HOSPITAL TRAUMA UNIT

FX: MACHINE NOISES. DOOR SQUEAKS

Dottie: Well now! It's time to check the fluid levels, love. Make sure it's all flowing in and out as it should be. How are we doing today, eh? Better than yesterday no doubt. The first day is always the worst. Poked and prodded – hooked up to all these contraptions. Enough to set anyone in a tizwas, eh? Right now – it's the red light in your eyes I'm afraid now, Sol. Any reaction? No – no change. Any reflexes… remember Sol – any pain is a good sign!!! No. Let's wipe your eyes. How's the tracheotomy?

Your bruising's really coming out now. Look like my Jimmy when he came back from the big fight last year. I wish he wouldn't do that anymore. He could end up…. I've told him and told him! But does he take any notice of his mother? I don't think so! Let's just check those pipes… Not like our Ruth, Jimmy isn't. He's always had a wild streak. Oh well – at least I see him more than our Thomas. Off trekking in Africa – to find his roots he says. I don't know. I never got further than Blackpool. There you go, Sol – how's that? Cosy, huh? Poor chick…. (CLICKS HER TONGUE SADLY)

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

FX: MACHINE WHIRRS BECOMING BLURRED

Sol: Why can't Annie hear me?

Friend: You're in a different place.

Sol: But I can hear them.

Friend: That often happens. It's like a special two-way mirror. You are here, and not here. Only your body is with them.

Sol: Can you see my body - what they've done to it?

Friend: Yes. I can see.

Sol: Are there tubes everywhere, like the nurses say?

Friend: Everywhere.

Sol: *Every*where???!

Friend: Yes Sol. You have tubes bringing you life, breath and nourishment.

Sol: Where are they, Friend? What have they done to my body?

Friend: You don't want to know.

Sol: (PAUSE) So where is my mind?

Friend: It's not your mind, Sol.

Sol: What is it then – and *who* are you?

Friend: You know; you'll understand if you look deep enough.

Sol: I'm so tired. I can't understand any of it.

Friend: You will. The mists will clear and you will see.

Sol: I'm so tired.

Friend: Sleep now. Sleep now.

FX: SOUNDS CROSS-FADE BACK TO HOSPITAL NOISES

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Annie: (BRIGHTLY) Here he is!

Davis: Oh God, Annie!

ANNIE GULPS

Annie: I know.

Davis: You poor thing…. How have you been coping?

Annie: I… I… I'm fine, Davis. Go – go and say hello.

Davis: What?!

Annie: They say people in comas can sometimes hear what's going on. Go and speak to him…. Say hello.

Davis: (SELF-CONSCIOUSLY) Er….hem. Hello Sol…. It's Davis. Sorry to hear about the accident. You'll be right as rain in no time. You'll see.

Annie: Oh Davis! (SHE CRIES)

Davis: Annie – come here, love.

Annie: (MUFFLED AS THEY HUG) Davis – I'm so glad you're here…. It's… it's been awful.

Davis: My dear Annie. You poor thing. It's a lot to have coped with.

Annie: It's the loneliness that's the worst. Watching him. Feeling alone. The nurses come and go. They're very nice… just sitting here on my own…. (SHE CRIES)

Davis: You cry, my dear. I'm here now. I… I should've come yesterday. I'm sorry.

Annie: (SNIFFING) No – no! There was nothing to be done then. I had to stay away while they…. attached the machines and things. There's nothing to be done now either….

Davis: Would you like a cup of coffee or something? I'll fetch one.

Annie: (QUICKLY) I'll come too.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Dottie: Oh hello. Are you off?

Annie: Going to get a drink.

Dottie: Well – he isn't going anywhere.

Davis: (DISAPPROVINGLY) Hem!

Annie: This is Dottie, Davis – she's one of the nurses looking after Sol.

Davis: With the patience of Job, no doubt.

Dottie: Oh I prefer these ones – they don't give me any trouble. It's the geriatrics you have to worry about. Shocking language, some of them! (CHUCKLES) Don't let me stop you, dear. I could talk for England!

Davis: We'll be back in a bit. Is there a café?

Annie: I know where it is. Oh Dottie – I brought some things… to brighten up the room a bit.

Dottie: That's great. We'll have to let doctor clear them first though – very particular about these emergency rooms. Germs you see. He's still very vulnerable to infection.

Annie: Oh. Of course. I'm sorry.

Dottie: We'll see what doctor has to say. I'm sure some things would be fine.

Annie: Yes.

Dottie: Off you go now! I'm just going to check his responses and fluid levels. Every fifteen minutes – like clockwork. Some say you can set your watches by us – but frankly, I wouldn't recommend you try!

Davis: Come on, Annie. Where's this café?

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Dottie: And how's Sol this afternoon? It's a lovely day. Crystal clear – ground still icy – shining with the sun on the frost. Nice day to be inside looking out. You got it good, Sol – I wouldn't mind sleeping through the winter and waking up to the spring flowers. That'd be a treat.

Sol: (SLEEPILY) Spring flowers….

Dottie: Maybe Thomas will be back then. That'd be lovely. Been gone over a year now, my boy. Oh Lord – I do worry about him. What does he do without his mother cooking and washing for him. (CLICKS HER TONGUE)

Sol: Daffodils. They used to be Annie's favourite.

Dottie: Right. Old Harry next I think…

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Sol: Bright yellow. Her 'happy flower' she called it. I haven't bought her flowers for…. I can't remember the last time. When I get out – that's the first thing…. The biggest bunch of daffodils she's ever seen.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Davis: So that was his consultant, Annie? Mr. Pembleton?

Sol: Davis…?

Annie: One of them, yes.

Davis: He seemed to know what he was talking about.

Sol: Davis. Glad to see you, old man – well – glad you're here.

Davis: Why's he only a 'Mister' if he's a doctor?

Annie: He's a consultant. They are all 'misters'. He gave me some internet sites and book titles in case I wanted to learn anything more about coma experiences. Everyone's so different, you see.

Davis: That's good of him. Anything useful?

Annie: I… I haven't looked yet. Oh Davis – I still can't get my head around it all.

Davis: The shock'll take a while to wear off. That's normal, surely.

Annie: I feel so… useless.

Davis: There's nothing you can do. That's bound to get you down. You've always had so much energy about you.

Annie: I feel so frustrated.

Sol: Oh Annie – you've always been so strong.

Annie: Sol was the strong one – I don't know how I'll cope without him.

Davis: Poor Annie.

Sol: Look after her for me, Davis. I don't know a better man.

Annie: Oh Davis – I'm so glad you're here now.

Sol: So am I, Davis. So am I.

Annie: (MUFFLED AS THEY HUG) I've been so lonely – and frightened.

Davis: Well Annie. You don't have to struggle alone. Call me any time. ANY time. I'll come straight round.

Annie: Oh, thank you. You are a good friend. Shouldn't you go back to work.

Davis: Oh. Sod work for once. Do you want to try for that café again, seeing we never got there before? We could have lunch.

Annie: I can't eat anything.

Davis: You've got to eat something, Annie.

Sol: He's right, Annie. You must look after yourself.

Davis: You need to be strong for him.

Sol: You need to be strong for yourself, Annie.

Annie: I know.

Davis: Come on then.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Sol: You know – I've known Davis for more than 25 years – and I don't think I've ever heard him say 'sod work' – ever! I always thought he was Mr. Responsibility Incarnate!

Friend: Things change. And we don't always see the changes.

Sol: Too busy to smell the roses?

Friend: We form an opinion at one point in time, and set it in stone. But the world moves on. People move on. We need to allow for changes.

Sol: I'm glad Davis is looking after Annie. It must be hell for her. He's a good man. (PAUSE) Do they have someone like you with them too?

SILENCE

Sol: (SUDDENLY AGITATED) Hey – Friend! What's going to happen? How long will I be trapped like this? What's going to happen to the business? Who'll sort out all the daily problems? What's happening to it?

Friend: Don't worry about anything.

Sol: Is someone looking after it, too?

Friend: We must only focus on important things.

Sol: It *is* important! It's my life!! It'll collapse without me. It took years to build up – just a few unpaid bills, wages – unfulfilled contracts… could make it fold!

Friend: Some things are out of our control.

Sol: Oh no!! Oh no!! All that work!! Please, God – no!

Friend: Some things have to be let go.

Sol: Why has this happened now – of all times? The high point of my career – the culmination of hard work, striving, sacrifice. Just to watch it go down the pan. I need to get out! I can't stay here! I can't stay like this! Aargh!

Friend: Sol.

Sol: I can't!! Don't you hear me?! There's no-one else who knows the contract details – the systems… oh God!

Friend: You have to let it go.

Sol: I can't let it go. It's a disaster… I've got to do something…. I can't stay here like this – oh God, no!!

Friend: (GENTLY) You *have* to let it go.

SOL CRIES BITTERLY

Friend: You have to let it go….

FADE

SOL & ANNIE'S HOME:

Annie: Thanks for coming today, Davis.

Davis: Oh Annie. To think of you dealing with all that yesterday. I feel a brute – going off to work and leaving you alone with it.

Annie: I am his wife…

Davis: (DULLY) Yes. Don't remind me.

Annie: Well – I should be there.

Davis: But you don't have to be alone.

Annie: The amount of conversation I got out of him before the accident, he might as well have been in a coma the last ten years! (SHARP INTAKE OF BREATH) Oh, sorry. I don't know why I said that.

Davis: I didn't realise it was that bad. You always made it seem…well….fine.

Annie: Of course it was fine. He's just caught up in his work, that's all. I bet the first thing he says when he comes round (CROAKILY) "Where's my invoice book….?!"

THEY LAUGH

Davis: We shouldn't laugh really.

Annie: If I don't laugh, I'll cry.

Davis: You're handling it all very well really.

Annie: I just feel numb. I can't really take it all in. I daren't feel anything. I'm afraid to think too much because I don't like what I'm beginning to feel.

Davis: What…?

Annie: If he'd only come back when he was supposed to – the grit would have been fresh; the ice wouldn't have set in; he wouldn't have been so tired. If only he'd given a *damn*…. (SOBS) Oh sorry Davis!

Davis: Annie. Dear Annie. Come here, love. He's a hard, selfish man. We've always known that. It's the hardest thing to forgive him for – how he's treated you.

Annie: He didn't treat you much better.

Davis: That was years ago. Water under the bridge

Annie: Good old Davis. Quite the saint!

Davis: (OFFENDED) Oh…!

Annie: (GENTLY) My dear Davis. You know I don't mean anything nasty. I couldn't find anything bad to say about you if I tried.

Davis: Oh Annie…. I wish….

Annie: Don't say it, Davis. My husband's in a coma – and I'm here – in your arms. Don't make it any worse.

Davis: Couldn't you ever, Annie… not even a little?

Annie: Davis, you silly, blind fool! (PAUSE) I *do*. I already do!

HOSPITAL TRAUMA UNIT

FX: MACHINE NOISES. DOOR SQUEAKS

Helen: Oh, hello Mrs. Kennedy. I didn't see you there in the gloom. Don't you want the proper light on?

Annie: Anne – call me Anne. No – I'm fine. I was dozing really. Can I help with anything?

Helen: I just came to check the drips and change the bags.

Annie: I feel so useless. It's hard not having anything to do.

Helen: (SYMPATHETICALLY) It must be very hard for you. Sometimes I think it's worse for the relatives than the patient. At least he's not aware of anything that's going on. That's a blessing really.

Annie: Yes. He would find it all unbearable. He'd be out of his mind worrying about the precious business he sacrificed everything for. He's never sat

still for more than fifteen minutes in his life I don't think! (PAUSE) Do you… have you had many coma patients before?

Helen: A few.

Annie: And… have they….?

Helen: Have they recovered? Yes – most of them, eventually.

Annie: Most?

Helen: We had one lad… Car accident – most are, really. So young. Not old enough to drive…

Annie: Yes -?

Helen: Well – after a long time the family chose to… to switch him off.

Annie: Oh!

Helen: It was hard – heart-breaking for them. But he saved several other people's lives.

Annie: How?

Helen: He had a good heart, and other organs – all donated. If I was like that – that's what I'd have wanted… oh – I shouldn't have said all that, sorry.

Annie: No – you're right. How do you know… when there's no point keeping them going? How do you know if they're really alive…. Inside? How do you choose to switch them off?

Sol: (SLEEPILY) Switch them off….? (ALERT) Switch off?! No!! No!!!

Helen: Well – the doctors have to assess the brain activity.

Sol: I'm alive!! I'm in here!!

Helen: If they feel there is no brain activity – then…

Annie: There's no point keeping a body alive.

Sol: I have brain activity!! I can think – can talk!! I can hear you!!

Helen: But I'm sure that'll not be a decision you have to make, Mrs… Anne. It's early days yet.

Annie: Yes. Early days.

Helen: You look tired. Why don't you go home and get some proper rest.

Annie: I don't want to leave him.

Helen: Well – nothing's going to change here. He won't die! The machine won't let him! You'll be more use to him rested and well for when he comes out of the coma. He's stable now.

Annie: Yes – I'm sure you're right. Well…

Helen: I'll keep a close eye on him, don't worry!

Annie: Well then. I'll be back in the morning. Thanks, Helen.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Helen: You're welcome. (PAUSE) If only I could be that strong in my own life! Hey Sol?! What do you think? Should I ask him out before it's too late? Oh, why can't I ask him?! Hmm – much you care if I ask him or not. Oh dear.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

SOL & ANNIE'S HOME:

FX: PHONE RINGS

Sol (D): Hi Annie – It's me. Look, I know we had dinner planned with the Fletchers – but could you give them a ring… postpone it. I know we were supposed to be there half an hour ago. Just be a dear and ring them. I can't leave this right now. I'm expecting a call from Charlie, and I'm right in the middle of some paperwork. I wouldn't dream of you going by yourself, so if they can just make it another time. Just get yourself some dinner and I'll have something when I get home, okay? Don't know when I'm going to be home – could be some time. Thanks darling, you're a gem – give them my love. Okay?

SILENCE

Sol (D): Okay, Annie?

Annie: (WEARILY) …Yes, Sol.

Sol (D): Great. Love you.

FX: PHONE CLICKS OFF

Annie: You too.

HOSPITAL TRAUMA UNIT:

LONG PAUSE. MACHINE NOISES, THEN NOISES BLUR

Sol: Hello? Are you there?

Friend: I'm here.

Sol: I still can't see you.

Friend: I'm here.

Sol: Are you still there while I'm sleeping?

Friend: I'm always here, watching over you.

Sol: You got a rum assignment then, didn't you! (CHUCKLES FEEBLY)

Friend: I am where I'm needed most.

Sol: (PAUSE) You know. I've never believed – you know – in the after life, spirit world – whatever you call it. Annie does a bit – goes to church at Christmas and Easter and so on. I used to… well … laugh at her. Called her a hypocrite for going only when it suited her. Used to avoid all her 'churchy' friends – 'wacko's I called them.

Takes something big to really change people, doesn't it? You have the warnings – like Dad's heart murmurs, and he would never change his habits, and then… one day – it's too late. You realise too late what was trying to get through before. Only there's no-one there to say "I told you so!" Fortunately! I suppose you see it all the time.

Friend: Quite often. But you don't fit that – do you?

Sol: What? Learning when it's too late to change? I don't know. Do *you*? Do *you* know what's going to happen to me? (PAUSE) It feels too late already in some ways. I can't move. I can't communicate - tell her I love her – or that I'm sorry.

Friend: Do you think it's too late?

Sol: I don't know. Is it?

Friend: You made a choice.

Sol: I… What?! You mean to drive in icy conditions?

Friend: You were given a choice.

Sol: Given a choice…. Yes. You mean… I thought that was a hallucination – a dream. Like you are. My invisible friend from my childhood.

Friend: You made a choice. The rest is up to you.

Sol: I chose to come back. I don't know why! It was so beautiful, peaceful – I should've stayed! I didn't know it would be like this. I might have decided differently.

Friend: You chose and you must live with the consequences. We always choose without really knowing what might happen.

Sol: The gamble of life. Well I suppose I never was much of a gambler….. Was I?

Friend: (PAUSE) You gambled your marriage for your work.

Sol: Everyone has to work. I took pride in it – that's all. Annie understood.

Friend: Understanding is not always enough.

Sol: What are you saying – that she wanted to leave me?

Friend: No – But you should never exploit someone's good will. You don't always have to take the sacrifice someone offers to you.

Sol: So you think I put my work before her needs. (SILENCE) I suppose I did. I was hardly at home… I never took her out. I was always tired – unless it was a business function and then I always dragged her along….yes. I guess she's had a pretty poor deal. But I can hardly put it to rights now can I? She can't even hear me. How can I say I'm sorry – before it's too late?

SILENCE

Sol: Oh Annie – please God. Give me a chance to change…. Give me time!... Oh God!

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Helen: There's your test results. No change. (PAUSE) Oh Sol! You'd never do that to a girl, would you? You look so nice and kind lying there all peaceful. It was so awful – the dance. Barely a glance past that cow. And she had the nerve to smirk at me. Oh Sol. I hate life. It hurts too much. St Valentine. Patron saint of florists and sadists. (GOES OUT SOBBING)

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Sol: So much pain we each carry. And the world never realises.

ANNIE'S HOME

FX: PHONE CALL

Davis (D): Annie?

Annie: Hi Davis – I was going to ask you a big favour.

Davis (D): Anything, my dear. Ask away!

Annie: Well – you would understand Sol's work, wouldn't you?

Davis (D): It's been years, Annie.

Annie: I keep having phone calls from his work asking when he'll be back, from America about orders, invoices, processes – oh Davis! I don't know what to do with it all. Could you… would you be willing to take a look at it at least, and see if you can sort a few things out?

Davis (D): Is there really no-one at his office who'd know things better?

Annie: (PAUSE) He… he sacked the last deputy a few months ago, and the new one was just being appointed – Sol's so picky! It's all a mess. Please Davis. You know I wouldn't ask… except…

Davis (D): Oh Annie. I don't know what I can do – but I'll go in tomorrow and give it a look-over.

Annie: At least you might know how Sol would've organised things. He won't have changed that much.

Davis (D): No, I expect you're right. It's not really my field anymore, Annie… but I'll give it a go for you, and for him. Old time's sake.

Annie: Oh thank you, dear friend!

Davis (D): No promises to be very helpful, Annie. Don't expect miracles.

Annie: I've stopped expecting them - long ago.

PAUSE

Davis (D): How is he this week? Sorry I've not been there yet.

Annie: No change.

SILENCE

Davis (D): Are you going to see him tomorrow?

Annie: Every day. Thought about taking up knitting.

Davis (D): Knitting?

Annie: Something to do. All those hours by the bed-side with nothing to do.

Davis (D): Poor you.

Annie: I'll survive. When are you coming next?

Davis (D): Well – not tomorrow – the boss is away so this mouse'll give Sol's work my best shot. Shall I come round in the evening and tell you how I got on?

Annie: That'd be lovely. I could do with the company.

Davis (D): How about going out for a meal? Change of scenery.

Annie: Yes – I'd like that Davis, thank you.

Davis (D): Right – I'll pick you up at seven then, okay?

Annie: Lovely. Thanks Davis – for everything.

Davis (D): (WARMLY) My pleasure, my dear.

HOSPITAL TRAUMA UNIT

FX: LIFE SUPPORT NOISES. NURSE POTTERING AROUND THE BED CHANGING SHEETS ETC. DOOR SQUEAKS.

Helen: Hello Anne. Sol's doing well today. The last of his stitches have come out and he's looking really great these days since the last of his bruising. He looks positively bursting with health – must be the sunshine! I love spring!

Sol: Is it spring already? How time drifts by with no markers.

Annie: I doubt he'd notice the weather!

Helen: Oh – you can never tell with comas. Sometimes they are aware of a surprising amount of things. We'll only find out when he comes round.

Anne: I meant he'd never noticed before, so I doubt he would now!

Helen: Oh well – I love the sunshine – makes me feel more happy and ready for anything!

Anne: Yes – me too, I think.

Helen: I love March – the new flowers, blossoms… Daffodils are my favourite. Maybe cos I've got Welsh blood or something!

Anne: I've never been so partial to daffodils myself. My mother loved them – her 'happy flower' she called them. I love roses – the orange ones best – so beautiful!

Sol: Roses?! I always thought it was daffodils…!

Helen: Ah spring! So wonderful – full of hope.

Anne: (DULLY) Yes – you have to have hope.

Helen: You said it! We'd all go mad without it.

PAUSE. HELEN BUSIES HERSELF AROUND SOL.

Annie: How's that young man of yours?

Helen: Paul? Oh – he's not my young man, worst luck. Going out with that Belinda now – horrid cow! Sorry.

Annie: Oh I'm sorry, Helen.

Sol: Poor Helen. You so wanted to go out with him, didn't you. Maybe he doesn't deserve you.

Helen: My fault for being so slow off the mark. Can't leave things too long, you never know what's going to happen. Look at me telling you as if you didn't know! Anyway, Mr. Pembleton told me you had a discussion with him.

Annie: Yes. I am thinking about it.

Helen: I know it's a hard decision to make. It can never be easy, especially when he's lying so peacefully, kept going with the machines and everything.

Sol: Decision about what? This sounds serious? What are you thinking about, Annie?!

Helen: There's never a good time to think about it, but you might feel better making a decision.

Sol: Annie?! Annie?! What's she talking about Annie?!

Annie: Helen, if you don't mind. I feel awkward talking about it in front of Sol - you know.

Helen: I understand. Well - any time you want to talk it over…

Annie: Thanks Helen. I will.

Helen: Well – that's me done here. See you later, Anne. Back later, Sol!

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Annie: Nice girl, isn't she, Sol? You're lucky to have such sunshine around you. I'm sad for her about Paul. Such a lovely girl. Such a shame, that Valentine's dance, poor thing. Well – we've all been there, watching those we love and yearn for out of our reach. Mauled and pawed by others. When we desperately want a look-in, a glance – just to be noticed.

Sol: Annie? Annie? What's going on?

Annie: I remember the first time I saw you, Sol. At the student's ball. Do you remember?

Sol: Yes. I remember that night.

Annie: You were with that other girl,

Sol: Sophie... something

Annie: Tall – red-haired. Sophie Jenkins I think she was called. All boobs and no taste. (SOL CHUCKLES) Not that you minded, of course. Couldn't take your eyes off them I noticed.

Sol: Oh Annie – I only saw you! Your light strappy dress and black hair down to your waist.

Annie: Thought I hadn't got a chance. I wore my best yellow dress. I loved that dress. I thought I looked so grown up in it.

Sol: Yellow – yes. You looked wonderful – a film star.

Annie: Then we met over the punch bowl

Sol: (SAME TIME) The punch bowl!

Annie: You poured me a glass. Spilt it over me.

Sol: I was so nervous of meeting you.

Annie: You never even noticed – so eager to get back to Miss Cleavage.

Sol: I didn't know what to do – I was so embarrassed.

Annie: I cried that night. Did you know that, Sol?

Sol: I'm so sorry, Annie.

Annie: Me – crying over you!? But I got you in the end, didn't I? And you still don't notice me. Did you ever, I wonder, Sol? Did you ever really see me?

Sol: Oh Annie.

Annie: Was I ever more than a convenience – something you have to have in life. A little wife, for your little house… only with no little children to complete the picture. Was that when you started working more? Oh Sol. Where did all my dreams go, Sol? What happened to all my dreams? Oh dear! (SOBS)

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS AS SHE RUNS OUT

Sol: Oh Annie – I never knew. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. What can I do Friend? What can I do to make it better?

Friend: We cannot undo what is done. We can only change the future – not the past. You know that.

Sol: I need to get out of here! I need to go back to Annie – to hold her, caress her – tell her I have seen her – I have noticed her and I'm sorry. I want to start again with her. I never knew! I need to get out Friend. Help me get out of this bed! Out of this dead body!

Friend: You know that cannot be done now, Sol.

Sol: Then why are you here – you tormentor? What are you here for – just to tease me with all the wrongs I have done – all the mistakes I have made.

Friend: I am here – for you, not against you, Sol.

Sol: Well a pretty crappy job you're doing of it then. I'm going to lose her if I don't do something. I hate this body. I hate being here! Help me! Help me! I can't live like this any more! I want to die! Help me die! Let me die please let me die!! (HE SCREAMS AND SOBS) Do something!!! If you have any compassion – any pity – DO something for me!!!!

Friend: Shhh. Rest now, Sol. Rest now. Sleep will heal your torment.

SOL'S SOBS SUBSIDE INTO SLEEP.

FADE

RESTAURANT

GRAMS: SOFT JAZZ

FX: BUSY RESTAURANT NOISES. CHATTERING. CLINKING GLASSES

Davis: Thought I'd take you somewhere with a bit of style. You've seen too much of the inside of the hospital for my liking.

Annie: Hmmm. The colours might blind me after all that white wash!

Davis: (LAUGHS HEARTILY) That's my girl! I'll get some laughs out of you yet!

Annie: I wouldn't count on it, Davis. I'm not in a laughing mood.

Davis: You shouldn't feel guilty for having some fun. You can't put the whole of your life on hold.

Annie: Sol has.

Davis: He hasn't got any choice. You have. He must stay there, locked inside himself. You can choose to get out. You mustn't feel guilty for that. Sol would want you to be out and about, living life.

Annie: Are you sure?

Davis: Well only the hardest man wouldn't want that for their loved ones. It's not love if that's the case. No real love wants to lock their loved ones away from life.

Annie: I suppose you're right. I still…

Davis: Feel guilty – I know. But you mustn't, Annie. You can't change anything. You have to let it go. You have to let him go.

Annie: It's too early for that, Davis. There's still a chance.

Davis: You've been saying that for weeks now. You have to face reality. Sol may not be coming back, Annie. You have to accept that.

SILENCE

Davis: I'm sorry. Who's the hard man now?

Annie: No Davis – you're right. I have to face that possibility. But I can't move on… yet.

SILENCE

Davis: (BRIGHTLY) So – what'll you have, Annie? Steak, caviar – champagne? I'm feeling expensive!

Annie: It won't work, you know!

Davis: What won't? What do you mean?

Annie: I'm not a little girl who feels I'd better sleep with you if you buy me an expensive meal in a posh restaurant!

Davis: (FAKE HURT) Annie!! How could you think that?! Oh well! I'll fetch the coats – MacDonald's it is then...!

Annie: I'll have the chicken.

Davis: There isn't any chicken.

Annie: What's that?

Davis: Poolette oze gratin.

Annie: Chicken – in French.

Davis: Oh darn it! I knew I should have taken my 'O' levels seriously.

Waiter: (FRENCH ACCENT) May I take your order?

Davis: Annie – do you like sea food?

Annie: Me? See food and eat it – that's me – ha ha! Actually no – it gives me a funny tummy. I'll have the salad.

Davis: (IN PERFECT FRENCH) Oui, très bien. Deux chèvre tiede sur un lit de salade, s'il vous plait. Puis le poulet aux gratin avec les legumes fraiches pour madame.

Waiter: Très bien, m'sieur. Et pour vous?

Davis: Je voudrais les moules marinières, merci bien.

Waiter: Très bien, m'sieur. Et le vin?

Davis: Cote de Beaune '88.

Waiter: Un choix excellent, m'sieur. Merci bien.

Annie: You are full of surprises! I'm very impressed, you lying toad!

Davis: I went to night school for eight years just to perfect my French for this very eventuality! Thank goodness it's finally paid off!

Annie: It makes the meal very expensive! Eight years?!

Davis: Eh bien – c'est bon marché si vous voulez couchez avec moi ce soir!

Annie: No I won't – and you got that from those song lyrics!

Davis: Oh! All those years gone to waste!

Annie: Poor you – my heart bleeds! Now Davis – what about the business stuff? How did you get on?

Davis: Pas mal! Pas mal!

Annie: Enough of the French now! I'm very impressed – but save it for the waiter.

Davis: It's supposed to be the language of *lurve*!!

Annie: Well – better save it altogether then – I think it'd be wasted on the waiter – he has a wedding ring I noticed.

Davis: Hmmm. You're really not playing ball, are you Annie?!

Annie: No, but it's fun spectating!

Davis: Oh Annie - what do I have to do to make you get off the bench and join the game?

Annie: Davis. My dear Davis. Look - we have always shared this banter together - for as long as I remember anyway. Sometimes it's a bit near the knuckle and I wonder if it's really okay.

Davis: But -

Annie: But it's only words. I love you dearly Davis -

Davis: Well then Annie…

Annie: - But while there's a breath in Sol's body I will not betray him or do anything a good wife shouldn't. I love him. He's not a bad person - he was just - well - Sol! We have years of history together.

Davis: So do we! I love you, Annie. I've always loved you. You must know that.

Annie: Oh, Davis! I'm so sorry. But I couldn't live with myself if I did anything. You know I love you dearly. That must be enough for now. We can laugh and joke - but that's all. That's all I can do.

PAUSE

Davis: I understand. You're a good woman, Annie. He doesn't deserve you.

Annie: He doesn't deserve what's happened to him. To be tied to the hospital bed. I pray he has no awareness - it'd kill him being trapped like that. He'd be better off dead. Now - the business, Davis!

Davis: Yes, yes. Can't put if off any more, eh? Thought at least we'd get through the hors d'oeuvre first.

Annie: So it's not good news then?

Davis: To put it bluntly – no. Complete shambles. Took me hours to understand any of his systems. Dear old Sol. Keeps his cards close to his chest, doesn't he?

Annie: Well especially after the last chap embezzled him.

Davis: Ah yes - I remember that. That makes a bit of sense now. Accounts everywhere. Terrible records for the last weeks.

Annie: He's been -

Davis: I know – in hospital.

Annie: What about his assistants?

Davis: One was completely hopeless and dizzy. Probably only hired for one thing…

Annie: Big boobs, eh? Wouldn't put it past him!

Davis: The other was fairly competent but in a real tizzy.

Annie: Dizzy and Tizzy – nice combo!

Davis: She's been trying…

Annie: Who? Dizzy or Tizzy?

Davis: Do you want to know this stuff I've slaved over for you or not?!

Annie: Sorry Davis. Pray continue!

Davis: Well – she – Tizzy – has been working hard to try and keep things afloat – through no fault of her own. Sol's made himself indispensable. It's nigh on impossible for anyone else to follow his systems.

Annie: So did you get to the bottom of it eventually?

Davis: To some extent. Worked out some or the orders and invoices. Enough to set Dizzy and Tizzy some work for a few days. Get a few bills paid and money coming in.

Annie: Oh good – thank you Davis! You're a treasure!

Davis: You know, Annie – you were always good at maths. If I got it all straightened out, you could oversee a lot of it yourself.

Annie: I don't think so, Davis! Sol always made it clear I wouldn't cope with it all.

Davis: Ha! That's Sol all over! Didn't you score way above him in college?

Annie: Yes, but…

Davis: But nothing, Annie! He couldn't cope with you being brighter than him, and you fell into the age old female trap…believing your hubby has to be brighter than you!

Annie: He set the whole business up from nothing.

Davis: That's not intelligence – it's entrepreneurialism.

Annie: Back to the French?!

Davis: It's all up and running now, and apart from the couple of problems in his absence – nothing too serious – you could manage till he's back as lord and master!

Annie: Oh Davis – I don't think so. Sol'd have a fit!

Davis: His time for having fits is over. If… when he comes out of this – he'll have to face a different world, Annie. And the same with you. Things will change. They have to. You can't undo Time.

Annie: Do you really think I could…?

Davis: I'll take you through it all slowly, and I'll stick with you for the first bit – for as long as you need me; and knowing me - a lot longer!!!

Annie: Oh Davis! Thank you!

Davis: Don't thank me too much! You haven't heard the price yet!

Annie: Will it be very expensive?

Davis: It's not the amount you should worry about… it's the currency!!!

Waiter: (SEDUCTIVELY) Goat's cheese on a bed of salad, madam!

THEY BOTH LAUGH HYSTERICALLY

HOSPITAL TRAUMA UNIT

FX: SUBDUED NOISES OF VENTILATOR ETC.

Sol: Morning, Friend.

Friend: Hello, Sol. Feeling better than yesterday?

Sol: Mmmm. Yes. My mood swings are getting more manageable. Sorry I got mad with you.

Friend: That's what friends are for. You're beginning to accept it all now.

Sol: I do feel calmer. Less agitated.

Friend: You're letting things go.

Sol: Letting life go?

Friend: The stress of life.

Sol: Does that mean I'm closer to death?

Friend: Not necessarily. Learning not to strive is a valuable lesson in life. 'Lord, grant me the patience to accept the things I cannot change…'

Sol: 'The Courage to change the things I can…'

Sol and Friend: 'And the wisdom to know the difference.'

Sol: Ah yes – that little gem. One of yours was he? The author?

Friend: I can't remember. I've had so many souls to care for.

Sol: Are we all the same? I mean – the world has changed so much through the ages.

Friend: People don't change. Everywhere you look – whenever – wherever – people are basically the same. A bundle of hopes and fears, dreams and desperations, loves and losses. All trying to survive whatever is thrown at them. Always has been, and always will be.

Sol: Boring, eh.

Friend: Reassuring. You are not facing anything that someone hasn't faced before you.

Sol: And survived.

SILENCE

Sol: That someone hasn't faced before you and survived?

Friend: Not necessarily. But it means you are not alone in your struggles.

Sol: Hooray! There's millions of us locked in our dead bodies unable to communicate or reach our loved ones or do anything at all. I feel a whole lot better knowing that – thanks Friend!

Friend: The feeling of struggling alone can be overwhelming.

Sol: Just the struggle can be overwhelming. I've had everything taken from me – my belongings, my loved ones, my precious business; my dignity. I can't even take my own life, can I?! At least most people have that level of choice.

Friend: Taking your own life is no choice. It is remaining that is the hardest choice; that needs the most courage.

Sol: Don't I know it.

Friend: Taking your life only leaves a hole others can fall into.

Sol: Maybe the hole is better than where I am right now. You can fill a hole and move on – keep happy memories – find a new life. What can Annie do now – with me stuck in limbo like this? I am the living dead – a real zombie, except I can't even get up and scare the nurses! She cannot have me – but she cannot let me go either. I think for me to die would be better than this. At least she would be free then.

Friend: Maybe she does not want to be free.

SILENCE

Sol: No. I'm not sure about that. I've heard her and Davis. There is love there. It hurts me – but she is more alive than ever I remember her being. She blossoms when he is in the room. She cracks jokes – terrible ones admittedly – but I don't ever remember her laughing and teasing me like she does with Davis. It hurts me. It grieves me, Friend. I cannot touch her; hold her; love her; comfort her. But I cannot do anything to stop her finding that in Davis. Who would not prefer a real live man – to this… corpse on the bed. I'm scared. I'm going to lose her. Just when I'm really discovering how wonderful she really is. What I had all these years when I hid in my invoice book. I'm scared, Friend.

Friend: Letting go hurts.

Sol: Letting go can be hell on earth.

Friend: You are doing well. You have come a long way.

Sol: And when I have let go of everything – and there's nothing left for me – nothing left that is mine. What then, my Friend? What then?

Friend: Then the whole world is spread before you.

Sol: But it is all meaningless without love, without attachment, without connection.

Friend: Connection and love do not have to mean ownership. A light touch can tingle though our souls as much as a tight grip – but leave the other person more movement – more freedom.

Sol: It is a riddle to me. Not to hold on is to hold on more?

Friend: Yes.

Sol: To give freedom is to show more love; to own more love?

Friend: Yes.

Sol: (PAUSE) I cannot do it. I feel like a balloon with my strings cut, in danger of floating away with no ties – nothing to hold me down.

Friend: Then let yourself float.

Sol: To float is to die.

Friend: To float is to be free.

Sol: Free to do what though? Free to *be* what? To be nothing! To be empty – to be dead! I don't want that kind of freedom, Friend! I want the attachments! I want the earthly ties – the love, the pain, the wonder, the grief. The human experience. I'm not made to be floating around. I need my feet firmly on the ground. You are too much in the spirit world. I am still on earth.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

DOTTIE SINGS

Sol: What's Dottie so cheerful about? She hates Monday mornings.

Friend: He son came home yesterday.

Sol: The one in Africa?

Friend: Yes. And he brought her a surprise.

Sol: A good one, I hope!

Friend: A wife!

Sol: Is that good?!

Friend: It is to Dottie. It means she knows he'll settle down to look after her grandchildren.

Sol: Ah – I see! A happy ending to a sticky situation.

Dottie: Well – there you go my dearie! Spick and span ready for the doctor's rounds.

SHE GOES OFF SINGING

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Friend: Happy endings do happen you know.

Sol: Not often enough. (PAUSE) What's my ending?

Friend: Don't you know?

Sol: Should I?

Friend: You are the vital actor. Can you not choose the ending yourself?

Sol: You let me choose once before.

Friend: Not me, Sol. Only one much higher than me has that power.

Sol: Will I get to choose again?

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS , ANNIE ENTERS

Annie: Sol. I don't know where you are. I don't know if you can hear me. But, whatever happens, I want you to know –

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS, DOTTIE ENTERS

Dottie: Hello Anne. Here already?

Annie: You look cheerful this morning, Dottie!

Dottie: Oh yes – my son came home.

Annie: Thomas?

Dottie: Yes – and he brought home a girl – a lovely, wonderful girl!

Annie: Oh! What a surprise! You've taken to her quickly.

Dottie: Love at first sight – that's what they said it was! Got married in Mauritius – on the beach! I never heard such a thing! So I said they can think again if my boy isn't having a second wedding in church here! So when the baby's born…

Annie: Babies too!

Dottie: My first grandchild! Due in August – might be born on my birthday! How about that?! My first grandchild! (SHE CLICKS HER TEETH) You lose a son and gain a whole family!

Annie: (LAUGHING) And I stopped believing in miracles!

Dottie: (SERIOUSLY) Oh no – Anne! Never – never stop believing in miracles!

Annie: (QUIETLY) Dottie. I've made my decision.

Dottie: Ah. I see.

Sol: What decision? Friend? What's she going to do?!

Dottie: Well done - it's never easy, but it has to be done.

Annie: I've just seen Mr Pembleton.

Dottie: Yes - you need to talk it through with the doctor.

Sol: Annie?

Dottie: Have you decided to agree, then?

Annie: … Yes.

Sol: No! Annie! No!!

Annie: I didn't want to think about it really.

Sol: I'm here - I'm alive! I can hear you!

Annie: It seems so sad to have to think about it.

Sol: Don't do it, Annie! Don't let me go now!!!

Dottie: You'll need to sign some forms to give your consent.

Sol: Friend! Do something! Make my body move!! Make my eye twitch - please!! Please!!!

Annie: I'm ready to sign.

Sol: Please help me!!! I - need - to - move- my - fingers -! Aaargh! I can't do it!!!

Dottie: Come with me - I'll see if I can find the doctor for you.

Sol: Oh God!!! No!!!! Please God no!!!

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS AND THEY LEAVE

Sol: (SOBBING) Friend! Friend! What's going to happen? I can't get through to her! I can't show her I'm here!! It can't end like this!! Please Friend! Please God!! It can't end like this!

Friend: Your time will come when it comes, Sol, and not before.

Sol: Annie has chosen to let me go. She's given up on me!!

Friend: Why do you say that?

Sol: She's getting me switched off!! And I can't show her I'm still here! Oh Annie!!

Friend: Sol. She isn't switching you off.

SOL SOBS

Friend: She isn't switching you off.

SOL'S SOBS LESSEN

Friend: Sol - listen to me. You are not being switched off.

Sol: I… I don't understand. I don't understand any of it.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

ANNIE COMES IN

Annie: Well that's that all taken care of.

Sol: Please tell me what's going on!

Annie: I feel better for having taken care of that. It's funny, Sol, you and I had our wills written years ago - but we never talked about this at all.

Sol: Talked about what, Annie?!

Annie: But I think you'd want it, Sol. I think even you'd like to know you had given someone else another chance; that others could live because of you. Once you were a kind man. Once you thought of others. You cared for my mother when she was dying. You were good to her then.

Sol: So that's it!! Donating my organs! Is that all it was?!!

Friend: You see, Sol. No-one's given up on you.

Sol: As long as they haven't written a 'use by date' on my form!!! I don't plan to donate them for a very long time, and eighty year old organs aren't so fresh!

Annie: Well, Sol. The sun is shining and the daffodils are all out now. The trees are in bud and the lawn needs cutting!

Sol: Oh dear. I've always done that.

Annie: Davis is coming round tonight to give it a going over.

Sol: As long as that's all he's giving a going over!

Annie: Davis is a good man, Sol. He has helped sort out your business – and – and he's teaching me how to run it!

Sol: You've never shown the slightest interest in it before. This Davis thing is going a bit too far!

Annie: I wish you had been kinder to him, Sol. He is a good man. You… you could have done worse than listen to him, learn from him, you know. But you always had to have your own way with everything, didn't you.

Sol: Annie. I don't like this. You need comfort and care – but be careful. I will be back. I'm coming back. Don't let Davis in too far. It's not fair on him when I come back.

Annie: Oh dear - I left my handbag…

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Friend: Sol. Remember.

Sol: I know, I know! 'Let go!' *You* let go – please let go of me! Let me go back to where I belong. I'm tired of all this, Friend! All this limbo, wondering if I'm going to be switched off. I know it didn't happen now - but they won't keep me forever. Annie needs me! Can't you see that! She can't live like this either - in limbo. It's all going topsy-turvy. Annie – doing my business, Davis mowing my lawn. My life! My life – all carved up!

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

DAVIS ENTERS

Davis: Annie?

Sol: Davis?

Davis: Oh. All her stuff's here.

Sol: She'll be back.

Davis: Guess she'll be back then.

Sol: Thank you, Davis – for looking after Annie for me. But don't you dare… dare… DARE lay a finger on her while I have my breath… well – have my breath pumped into my body!

Davis: Sol. (AWKWARDLY) Well. The business is picking up again. I'm showing Annie the books – she's really quick you know. You really should have involved her you know. Missed out on a real wonder.

Sol: Don't I know it. But she's still mine! She's still mine, Davis! Don't get too comfy in my slippers and arm chair.

Davis: I love her, Sol. You know that, man. I've always loved her – ever since I mopped her up after you spilt punch all over her beautiful yellow dress at that college leaving do. I've been mopping up ever since.

Sol: I... I never knew. I never realised.

Davis: That's all I get, you old sod. You get the prize, and I get the soggy handkerchief. And now – now I know she loves me too.

Sol: Annie – no!!

Davis: (BITTERLY) Even now. Even now I can't do anything because your shadow is still there, Sol. Your hard, uncaring shadow still hangs over us.

Sol: Annie! You can't love him! You love me! You're my wife! Annie – you belong to me!! You belong to me!!

Davis: You always wanted to own everything, but didn't care what happened to it afterwards. You have Annie. And you can't even be there for her. I have to be strong for her – and I can't even have her! How long must this go on? How long can this go on? A half life! Not one thing nor the other. It's driving me crazy.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

Annie: Oh hello Davis. Are you alright?

Davis: I'm fine, Annie. Just tired, that's all. Coming for a coffee?

Annie: I've just had a drink, but I'll come with you. You look as if you need something. You look terrible, you poor love.

SHE KISSES HIM

Davis: Oh Annie.

Annie: Come on. It's my turn to look after you now, Davis.

FX: DOOR SQUEAKS

SILENCE

Sol: You don't have to say anything.

Friend: I wasn't.

Sol: I know. But even your silence is accusing me.

Friend: I can't help that.

PAUSE

Sol: I'm ready to let go now, Friend.

Friend: Are you sure? It seems rather sudden.

Sol: There's nothing left for me. I'm ready to let go of them. They need me to let go. I didn't really see before. I wouldn't let myself see. They love each other. They can have a real life without me. Annie deserves that. It's the only thing I've got left to give her, her freedom. Her future.

SILENCE

Sol: How do I do it?

Friend: It isn't up to you. You can't choose the time.

Sol: But I thought this was what it was all leading up to – you kept saying I had to let go. I don't understand! You bring me along the path to a decision, then you stop me from making it! I don't understand!!! I don't understand!!!

FX: THE ALARM BELL SOUNDS AS HE GOES INTO CARDIAC ARREST.

Dottie: Quick! He's going into cardiac arrest! Hurry!

THE DOOR SQUEAKS CONSTANTLY AS EVERYONE RUSHES IN AND TRIES RESUSCITATION METHODS. THERE ARE VOICES OF ALARM AND SHOUTS.

FADE OUT

GRAMS: FADE IN 'TEN THOUSAND ANGELS'.

Warm Voice: Are you ready Sol?

Sol: Yes – I'm ready now. I'm ready to go with you this time. Lead me on.

And a bright light enveloped me - swathing me in luminescent mist. I could feel the love and peace radiate out from the shining figure next to me.

The world opened up to me, bright shining and new.

Being sure of the peace and beauty of this place, I stepped forward.

And I knew I was home.

FADE

END