Falling Leaves

A play for radio

by

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F/X: SCENE 1. EXT. GRAVEYARD.

F/X: WIND THROUGH LEAVES, RUSTLING GENTLY.

VICAR: (OFF) Lord, we thank you for the life of John Farmer, and pray for the comfort of your peace on his wife, Margaret and their children and grandchildren. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust ..(FADE)

F/X: SOUND OF CLUMPS OF SOIL HITTING THE COFFIN.

MURMURING OF PEOPLE SAYING COMFORTING COMMENTS E.G. 'I'M SO SORRY'; 'HE WAS A GOOD MAN'; 'WE'LL MISS HIM, MARGARET.'

MAGGIE: Thank you - you're very kind.

F/X: MANY FOOTSTEPS CRUNCHING LEAVES AWAY. IN THE DISTANCE CARS START UP AND LEAVE ONE BY ONE. SOUND OF LEAVES RUSTLING IN THE WIND.

WILF: (GENTLY) Maggie.

MAGGIE: Oh - Wilf! I thought everyone had gone. I was just…

WILF: I know. How are you coping?

MAGGIE: I… I don't know. There's been so much to organise - I don't think it's sunk in yet.

WILF: No. it took me a while.

MAGGIE: I can't believe that's him. I mean - I can't believe he's down there - so close to me. I..I should feel something! Why don't I feel anything?!

WILF: You will. You're just in shock. It's still so soon. The pain will come.

MAGGIE: I don't know which is worse, to feel nothing - or to feel the pain I'm dreading. Oh Wilf. I'm scared.

WILF: Come here.

MAGGIE: (MUFFLED AS THEY HUG) I don't know how I'm going to cope.

WILF: You will, my dear. You will. You have your families; and I'm here for you.

MAGGIE: Oh Wilf (SNIFFING AS SHE BREAKS AWAY) how selfish of me.

WILF: Whatever for?

MAGGIE: I… you… it's too close for you. It must be painful for you.

WILF: Well yes - it does bring back memories, but it's a dull ache now. Time heals all!

MAGGIE: Does it? Does it really Wilf?

WILF: No. Not really. Just takes the edge off it. People. People heal. My family helped me through it - and you and John of course. You were both so kind.

F/X: LEAVES RUSTLING

MAGGIE: I need to go to the house. They'll be waiting for me. Are you coming?

WILF: Sure. Come on - I'll take you back.

MAGGIE: You go on. I'll - I just want a minute more by myself before I see everyone.

WILF: I'll be in the car. (VOICE FADING)

F/X: WIND IN TREES

MAGGIE: Oh John. Why do we always take things for granted until it's too late? You were good to me. You were a good man. I didn't always give you what you deserved. John John. I love you, John. I pray you are at peace. I love you John. (SHE SIGHS DEEPLY; WIND IN THE TREES) Oh John, where are you now? You can't be there. I know that is only your body. Where are you? Can you hear me? Can you see me now - standing here beside your grave? I have to go. They're waiting for me. Little Ashley - he drew a picture for you. He drew a teddy bear - (LITTLE LAUGH TURNING INTO A SOB) to keep you from being too sad or lonely. I have to go. I have to go. John - how can I say a lifetime of things now? They're waiting for me. Take care, John. I love you. Thank you for all you gave me.

F/X: FOOTSTEPS CRUCHING AWAY IN THE LEAVES. A CAR IN THE DISTANCE STARTS ITS ENGINE. CAR DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES AND IT DRIVES OFF. LEAVES RUSTLE IN THE WIND.

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F?X: SCENE 2: INT.

F/X: RADIO BLARING " THE NEXT BULLETIN WILL BE ON THE HOUR. BUT FIRST, EXCITING NEWS ARRIVES IN AMBRIDGE…" ARCHER MUSIC.

MAGGIE: 'Dear Stephen; thank you for your kind note.' Um… .

F/X: DOORBELL. MAGGIE SIGHS. TURNS THE RADIO OFF AND GOES OFF TO ANSWER IT.

MAGGIE: Oh! Hello Wilf! Come in, won't you.

WILF: (OFF) I just thought I'd come and see how you were doing. Not disturbing you, am I?

MAGGIE: No - I was just catching up on some of the letters and cards I'd had.

WILF: Oh, sorry. I could come another…

MAGGIE: Don't be silly - it's time for a tea break anyway. What would you like?

WILF: Look, I can see you are busy, so you finish what you're doing and I'll make us a pot.

MAGGIE: Well, if you think so; it would be good to get this one done. The kettle boiled not long ago.

WILF: (OFF) Right ho!

F/X: SOUND OF CROCKERY AND DRAWERS RATTLING

MAGGIE: Tea's in the top -

WILF: I know.

MAGGIE: Right - 'Sorry for the delay in replying, but as the children…' what do you call your children when they are in their thirties?! - 'the family has been staying, so as you can imagine, all has been delightful chaos. John would have loved it.' Yes, he would have. Why is it we make more effort in death than we ever do in life? Guilt maybe - for missed opportunities. 'So sad that you couldn't make it.' Or did he? Wilf?

WILF: (OFF) Yes?

MAGGIE: Was my cousin Stephen there at the funeral?

WILF: (COMING IN WITH A TRAY) Er.. yes - with a young woman I hadn't seen before. He was sitting at the back.

MAGGIE: Oh. It's all such a blur. I can't write to people if I don't even know whether they were at the funeral or not, can I?!

WILF: Leave it for a bit. It'll come back to you.

MAGGIE: You really think so? I don't think I really looked at anyone. I remember people coming up and talking to me - but that's about it.

WILF: It'll all be locked away in your memory. When the trauma has gone you'll find little bits coming back to you.

MAGGIE: Was it like that for you?

WILF: Sort of. Of course Lucy stayed with me for some time after, so I didn't have to think a lot. When did Pete and Catherine go back?

MAGGIE: Pete and David flew out yesterday, and Catherine and the children went back this morning.

WILF: So it hasn't hit you yet?

MAGGIE: What?

WILF: The empty house.

MAGGIE: Oh. I already felt it a bit. When I wish I learned how to work the dishwasher, but never bothered because John did it. How I can lock the gate early on now -because no-one else is coming in. I don't need to be alone to feel it.

WILF: I felt it more when the house was empty in the morning. The sun streaming through the windows - and - silence. There was never silence. There was always something going on - laughter, chatter, the radio, the hoover. She was never still.

MAGGIE: (SOFTLY) I'm so sorry.

WILF: Why?!

MAGGIE: I wish I had been there for you more.

WILF: Oh well, you came round nearly every day. Pies, soups - you name it! I never ate so well!

MAGGIE: (LAUGHING) Wilf! How can you say that!

WILF: (LAUGHING)Because it's true! Not everyone cooks like you. There's no shame in being a poor cook.

MAGGIE: Alice would have died to hear you say that!

WILF: (UNREPENTANT) Oh well - she had plenty of other skills! Just cooking wasn't one of them. Don't you remember that lasagne?

MAGGIE: (LAUGHING) You're dreadful! That wasn't her fault. As I remember it - you and John had been told dinner was ready, and spent another 30 minutes doing whatever it was you were doing!

WILF: Oh - it was only ten minutes, and ten minutes shouldn't do that! It looked like a modern art project!

MAGGIE: Well - lasagne isn't an easy dish to cook.

WILF: I don't see why not. Slap in a few sheets of pasta in between meat and tomato sauce and cheese. What's hard about that?

MAGGIE: Right then, Wilfred Button, I shall challenge you to a dual!

WILF: A dual? What - choose your weapons - ladles or sieves!

MAGGIE: No! a lasagne making competition! To be fair to poor Alice, who can't defend herself. You and I will each make a lasagne. You first - then I'll show you how it's supposed to be done!

WILF: You're on! Tomorrow night - at my place.

MAGGIE: Oh. Tomorrow is a bit soon.

WILF: What for?

MAGGIE: I don't know. I just haven't really been out yet since John went.

WILF: Well it's about time you did then. What does it serve just staying in and having a rotten time? Who does that help? I'm sure John wouldn't have wanted it. Lasagne at my place - I insist.

MAGGIE: Well if you're sure. Shall I eat first, before I come - just in case!

WILF: It will be fabulous - but just in case, wear something you can go out in! That nice Italian restaurant - you know we went there for Marie's engagement.

MAGGIE: Well - no ordering in! I shall want to see the dirty dishes to know you made it yourself!

WILF: You can come and watch the maestro in action if you really doubt me.

MAGGIE: Maybe I'll just do that! Oh Wilf - you're good for the soul!

WILF: Just as well - I might not be so good for the stomach!

MAGGIE: (SERIOUSLY) Thank you for coming round. I really appreciate it.

WILF: (EMPHATICALLY) You are more than welcome, Maggie. And I'll see you tomorrow. Don't bring wine - bring the Rennies!

MAGGIE: (LAUGHING) I will!

WILF: (KISS LIGHTLY) Bye bye my dear. You know where I am …

MAGGIE: (FONDLY) I know.

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F/X: SCENE 3. INT.

F/X: THE TELEPHONE RINGS SEVERAL TIMES. THEN THE ANSWER-MACHINE KICKS IN.

JOHN'S RECORDED VOICE: (DISTORT) You have reached the residence of John and Margaret Farmer. Sorry we can't answer the phone right now. Please leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as we can. Thank you…

F/X: BEEPS ON MACHINE

PETE: (SLIGHT AMERICAN ACCENT) (D) Mum? It's Pete. Mum - if you're there, pick up the phone. (PAUSE) OK - I guess you're not. Just calling to see how you are doing. I'm a bit worried about you. I'll call you later. David sends his love.

MAGGIE: (SOUNDING TIRED) Hello?

PETE: (D) Oh you are there!

MAGGIE: Well - I don't like answering the phone right now. It's good to hear you. Was your flight alright? No delays?

PETE: (D) Yes - very straight forward. I just wanted to know you were OK. Are you getting out at all?

MAGGIE: Not much yet. It's early days.

PETE: (D) Why don't you go and have coffee with some of your friends?

MAGGIE: I will sometime, Pete. I feel awkward with them right now. I hate all the embarrassing silences when they don't know what to say. And I don't feel like making small-talk.

PETE: (D) Has Wilf been round?

MAGGIE: Yes - he came round today. He's forcing me to go to his house tomorrow night for lasagne - can you believe it!

PETE: (D) Good for him! You go and enjoy yourself. Er.. Mum.

MAGGIE: Yes, Pete?

PETE: (D) Well - don't you think you should change the answer-machine message?

MAGGIE: Not yet, Pete. I can't erase his voice just like that. It's the last bit of him I've got.

PETE: (D) I know, Mum. Sorry - I shouldn't have said anything.

MAGGIE: Are you doing alright, Pete? How are you coping?

PETE: (D) I'm fine. David's really great. Look - I've got to go, but I'll call you in a day or too, OK?

MAGGIE: That's fine, Pete. Give my love to David, won't you.

PETE: (D) Sure, Mum. Have fun with Wilf and say 'hi' for me.

MAGGIE: I will. Take care of yourself.

PETE: (D) Love you, Mum.

MAGGIE: I love you too, darling.

F/X: THE PHONES CLICK OFF. MAGGIE SIGHS DEEPLY.

MAGGIE: You sound so like your father, except for the accent! Oh John. I can't get rid of your voice so easily.

F/X: SHE PRESSES PLAY ON THE ANSWER-MACHINE.

JOHN'S VOICE: (D) You have reached the residence of John and Margaret Farmer.

MAGGIE: Oh John!

JOHN'S VOICE: (D) Sorry we can't answer the phone right now. Please leave a message… (FADE)

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F/X: SCENE 4: INT.

F/X: SOUNDS FADE UP ON LAUGHTER AND CUTLERY AND CROCKERY CLINKING

WILF: - so my first attempt was better than you expected?

MAGGIE: I still think you bought it in and hid the cartons!

WILF: There's the washing up to prove it.

MAGGIE: I told you, anyone can slap tomato round a pan.

WILF: You unbeliever! I'm just a natural chef!

MAGGIE: Pity for Alice you didn't discover your talent earlier.

WILF: She was a traditionalist. She would never have let me cook. Anyway - she enjoyed enough of my other talents!

MAGGIE: In the kitchen?

WILF: In the kitchen. In the bedroom, on the settee and once on the dining room table!

MAGGIE: Wilf - you're shocking!

WILF: Alice was shocked, though she quite enjoyed it. You're not. You're unshockable!

MAGGIE: Maybe. You've never changed.

WILF: Nor have you.

MAGGIE: Oh, I feel a thousand years old.

WILF: You always have been.

MAGGIE: Charmer!

WILF: No - in a nice way. In the 35 years I've known you -

MAGGIE: Is it that many!

WILF: - you've always had a certain…

MAGGIE: Be careful!!

WILF: Er…

MAGGIE: Yes?!

WILF: Maturity.

MAGGIE: Mmm?!

WILF: Well - an understanding of life. A depth. You're not a frivolous person.

MAGGIE: I can laugh!

WILF: No - not *shallow*.

MAGGIE: Well, I suppose if I dig hard enough there's a compliment in there somewhere!

WILF: Take it or leave it - I mean it as one.

MAGGIE: Accepted. I'll take anything I can get right now.

WILF: How *are* you coping?

MAGGIE: OK, I suppose. It still doesn't seem that real. I keep thinking he's away somewhere playing golf with his friends, and wonder if I should put a stew in the slow cooker for him to have when he gets home - and then I remember. He's not coming home.

WILF: I know, it's hard.

MAGGIE: I wasn't a very good wife, you know.

WILF: You were the best for him.

MAGGIE: No, I wasn't. I wasn't very giving to him.

WILF: He never said anything.

MAGGIE: He was honourable and wouldn't have said anything to anyone else - not even you probably. He was such a private man. He hated thinking that I was talking to anyone about us; but I needed to. I wasn't the right wife for him.

WILF: He thought so.

MAGGIE: Maybe. But he always lacked imagination - and hid his head in the sand. (SHE SHUDDERS) Urgh! Why is it we dare not speak ill of the dead - when speaking ill of the living is far more damaging?! He loved our differences, he refused to see any problems between us. He felt we complemented each other; that our differences add to the other and made us more complete. But I just noticed that we hadn't much in common. Except the children, of course. They bound us together. Them and friendship.

WILF: That's more than many marriages.

MAGGIE: Yes - but he should have had more. I gave him grief - I was always restless and moody; always wanting something I couldn't have; always wanting more out of life. He was so placid, so undemanding of life. Sometimes it drove me mad!

WILF: He loved you so much. He was so proud of you.

MAGGIE: That's what made me feel guilty. I couldn't return it. Not the same way. But oh! I do miss him. I spent half my life wondering why I married someone so different to me - and now I would do anything to have him back! Why are things so cruel?

WILF: Come here. I understand. Come here

MAGGIE: (MUFFLED) Oh Wilf. I'm sorry. I shouldn't say all this to you.

WILF: That's what I'm here for.

MAGGIE: Oh, Wilf. You mean so much to me. I don't know what I'd do without you.

WILF: Nor I you, my dear Maggie.

MAGGIE: (SNIFFING) 'Magdolene the Mighty' you used to call me.

WILF: Yes - I remember. Your days of wine and thunder!

MAGGIE: Mmm. That was another bad patch in my life.

WILF: You made it through that one and you'll come through this. (MAGGIE SNIFFS) Here, have my handkerchief.

MAGGIE: Pete said I should get out more. Have you been out much since Alice died?

WILF: No. Only to the occasional bingo night.

MAGGIE: What about with women? Isn't it hard on your own?

WILF: Haven't wanted a relationship really. Too late to start again at my age. All that nervousness and painful misunderstanding. Oh, the thought of it turns my stomach.

MAGGIE: It's probably the lasagne.

WILF: No, Alice and I had grown together over 40 years of marriage. We had shaped each other.

MAGGIE: Like a pair of old slippers.

WILF: Such a beautiful metaphor - but yes.

MAGGIE: I know. It was safe. You could finish -

WILF: - each other's sentences!

MAGGIE: I was going to say 'thoughts'.

WILF: Oh. So we're not quite there then.

MAGGIE: Not so far off, though. I feel comfortable with you. I always have.

WILF: Yes. Me too.

MAGGIE: I could always tell you anything, and never feel judged. I always felt safe with you. You have been there - through every pain and sorrow. That counts for a lot.

WILF: Yes. It's been a good friendship, seeing our families growing up together. Special.

PAUSE

MAGGIE: Well - I think you did rather well on the lasagne - if you didn't…

WILF: I didn't cheat! I promise! Your turn next - see if you can beat that!

MAGGIE: I can't face another lasagne just yet, but

WILF: We could eat out!

MAGGIE: I was going to ask if you could show me how to work the dishwasher. I feel very ignorant, but I always left John to do that.

WILF: No problem. I'll show you when I drop you off. We'll leave the lasagne for now then.

MAGGIE: Thank you. I feel I need a bit of time - you know. I need to be by myself. Not that I haven't enjoyed our time. I just need to deal with my emotions by myself.

WILF: I know what you mean. Just be careful. Too much time alone can make the ghosts too strong.

MAGGIE: I'll be alright. Pete's going to call in a day or two. And I talk to Catherine most days.

WILF: Well you know where I am if you need me.

MAGGIE: I know.

WILF: Promise me you'd call if you needed someone. Promise me - I know what you're like!

MAGGIE: I promise, Wilf. I'll call you if the ghosts get too much. Otherwise I'll call you next week - for lasagne!

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F/X: SCENE 5: INT

F/X: PHONE RINGS FOR A LONG TIME. THEN FUMBLING SOUNDS, KNOCKING THINGS OVER, LIGHTS CLICK ON.

WILF: (HALF ASLEEP) glasses…glasses… (COUGHS). hmmm. hello?

MAGGIE: (IN TEARS) Oh Wilf - I'm so sorry!

WILF: Maggie! What is it? Are you OK?

MAGGIE: (CRYING) I'm so sorry, Wilf, I shouldn't have rung you in the middle of the night. I'm sor…sorry.

WILF: It's okay - it's okay, Maggie. What's happened? Do you want me to come over?

MAGGIE: No! it's so silly - I shouldn't have disturbed you.

WILF: Of course you should. I'm coming right over. Do you want me to call the police?

MAGGIE: No - no! It's nothing like that. I told you, it's just me being silly. I shouldn't have called. I just had this dream - so vivid..

WILF: I know. I understand. I'll be right over.

MAGGIE: Are you sure? Please be honest.

WILF: Look out for me. Don't unlock the door until I come, okay?

MAGGIE: (SOBBING) Thank you, Wilf.

F/X: PHONE CLICKS OFF.

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F/X: SCENE 6: EXT / INT

F/X: NIGHT TIME. SOUND OF CAR ARRIVING. CAR DOOR SHUTS QUIETLY. CHAIN RATTLES ON FRONT DOOR.

WILF: (LOW) Are you alright?

MAGGIE: Oh Wilf - thank you for coming.

F/X: DOOR CLICKS SHUT

MAGGIE: I couldn't bear it in the house alone. I had to speak to someone. It was so quiet; so empty. (SHE WEEPS)

WILF: It's okay. It's okay. Shhh.

SHE CRIES INTO HIS SHOULDER.

MAGGIE: Oh dear, you're half asleep! Look at your jumper!

WILF: What? What's wrong with it?

MAGGIE: It's inside out! - and back to front!

WILF: At least it's not upside down!

MAGGIE: Do you want a drink?

WILF: You'd better make it! I'd use the gravy powder!

MAGGIE: Oh, Wilf. What would I do without you? I feel so foolish now you're here.

WILF: Not as foolish as I look apparently! Oh Maggie - you look dreadful -

MAGGIE: Charming!!

WILF: Why don't you go back to bed - and I'll kip down here on the sofa?

MAGGIE: Don't be daft.

WILF: Look - I'm being assertive now - in my inside out and back to front jumper! Go to bed. I'll have the drink in the morning.

MAGGIE: You always know just the right thing. (GOING OFF) I'll fetch down some blankets and pillows.

WILF: (CALLING) and I'll be right here whenever you wake up.

MAGGIE: (OFF) I'll pummel your back into shape in the morning.

WILF: (CALLING) With my old bones, I'll need it, otherwise I could be permanently sofa-shaped!

MAGGIE: (COMING BACK) Well that's a promise then. Have you got everything you need? Are you sure I can't make you a drink or something?

WILF: I'll be fine. I know where everything is. You go and get some sleep.

MAGGIE: Well - if you're really sure, then goodnight.

WILF: Goodnight, sweetheart.

THEY KISS LIGHTLY

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F/X: SCENE 7: INT

F/X: SOUND OF BIRDS AND TRAFFIC. KETTLE RATTLES IN THE DISTANT KITCHEN. RADIO IS SWITCHED ON AND PLAYS LOUD MORNING SHOW - BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL. WILF WAKES UP GRUNTING. HE COUGHS AND CLEARS HIS THROAT.

WILF: (DISORIENTATED) Alice?!

MAGGIE: (OFF) Coffee or tea?

WILF: (CLEARS HIS THROAT AGAIN) Oh! Coffee please. What time is it?

MAGGIE: (OFF) eight o'clock. Just after.

WILF: Did you sleep okay?

MAGGIE: (COMING IN) Yes - slept like a baby! How do you feel? Are you all cramped on the sofa?

WILF: Well - I've had better but I'm not too bad. I'll take the pummel if it's still on offer.

MAGGIE: Of course. Turn over.

HE HUFFS AND PUFFS WHILE SHE TALKS AS SHE MASSAGES HIM.

MAGGIE: I had a letter from Johnny this morning - asking how everything is. He's doing really well in Sydney. It's just so very far away. Such a shame he couldn't make the funeral.

WILF: (MUFFLED) Did he marry that girl?

MAGGIE: No. I despair of him settling down.

WILF: (MUFFLED) Ow! Never too late, you know. People - argh! get married at all ages now. Oooof.

MAGGIE: Well - I'm not sure about Johnny. He's a bit of a free spirit. Do you remember when he and Lucy were very young, they had a bit of a crush. It was so sweet. I thought how lovely it would be if they ever married and we became family.

WILF: Aaargh!

MAGGIE: Sorry.

WILF: No - Lucy! She's coming round at half eight to take me shopping.

MAGGIE: Give her a ring.

WILF: It's too late. She'll be there already. She's always early.

MAGGIE: Well - what can you do?

WILF: I'll just have to rush home. She'll have broken the door down and called the ambulance by now! She'll think I'm dead in my bed.

MAGGIE: Oh, surely not!

WILF: Why else would I not be answering the door at 8:30 in the morning? She's so over-protective since Alice died. Where did I put my shoes?

MAGGIE: Hasn't she got a mobile phone? Everyone seems to have them nowadays.

WILF: Oh yes! Why didn't I think of that. I've got her number here somewhere.

MAGGIE: Use the phone in the kitchen if you want.

WILF: Yes - here it is. I'll just be a minute.

MAGGIE: Don't worry about it. It's better not to worry her. I know it's a pain, but -

F/X: THE DOORBELL RINGS.

MAGGIE: (GOING OFF TO ANSWER IT) - she's a good girl really for caring so much about you. Whoever can that be at this time? (OFF) Oh! hello, Lucy! How did you know - ? Your dad was just…

LUCY: (AGGRESSIVELY) I thought it was worth trying here.

F/X : LUCY'S MOBILE PHONE RINGS.

LUCY: Oh, hang on! Yes - Hello?! Hello? (WITH RELIEF) Oh, hi Dad! I was just wondering where you were.

MAGGIE: Lucy.

LUCY: Hang on, Dad. Sorry Maggie. I thought Dad might be here. I'm supposed to meet him…

MAGGIE: He *is* here.

LUCY: What? Dad? But *I'm* at Maggie's! Where are you then?!

WILF: (COMING IN) Lucy! I'm glad you're here. I wasn't sure I'd …

LUCY: (ANGRILY) So it *is* what I thought then!

MAGGIE: What's the matter?

WILF: Lucy?

LUCY: I thought to myself - now where could dad possibly be at this time in the morning? Could he be comatose in bed needing an ambulance - probably not as I saw him only yesterday and he was fighting fit and in a very good mood! What could have kept him from answering the door to his daughter, I wondered - and I was right - here you both are! Dad, you should be shamed of yourself.

WILF: I…I

MAGGIE: Now, look here!

LUCY: And as for you, Maggie - you've been a bit quick haven't you?!

WILF: Lucy.

MAGGIE: What's that supposed to mean?

LUCY: John's only weeks in his grave and you're already sniffing round my dad.

WILF: Lucy! Watch yourself! Maggie, I'm really sorry!!

LUCY: You've always had your eye on him, haven't you.

MAGGIE: Calm down, Lucy. It isn't what you think.

WILF: I can't believe what you're saying, Lucy.

LUCY: Even when mum was alive - even when we were kids - we all knew you fancied him.

WILF: Lucy, stop this rubbish now. You're embarrassing yourself - and shaming me!

MAGGIE: Wilf - it's okay. Let her get it all out of her system now.

WILF: What's going on?

LUCY: I told you - she had planned this a long time ago. The minute John's gone, she makes the move.

F/X: SOUND OF SLAP. THEN PAUSE.

MAGGIE: Wilf, you shouldn't…

WILF: (QUIET ANGER) I will not have this stench coming out of her mouth. Lucy, you will apologise to Maggie.

LUCY: I'm not 13 any more, Dad. I'm 31 now.

WILF: Then grow up and act like it. How dare you barge into Maggie's home within weeks of John's death and start shouting and insulting Maggie like this. I'm ashamed of you.

LUCY: (TEARFULLY) I'm ashamed of you - a disgrace to mum's memory. You should act your age too, Dad! Sleeping around at your age!

WILF: Go.

LUCY: What?

WILF: (QUIETLY) Go away, Lucy. Go. Calm down. Think what you are saying. I don't want you here right now.

LUCY: I…but our shopping?

WILF: (GENTLY) Just go. I'll call you later.

F/X: THE DOOR SLAMS

MAGGIE: Oh - I'm so sorry.

WILF: It's me who should apologise. I don't know what came over her.

MAGGIE: I shouldn't have called you. It's an obvious misunderstanding.

WILF: She had no right to jump to conclusions; and no right whatsoever to speak to you like that! It was unbelievable!

MAGGIE: She was just defending her mother's memory.

WILF: There's nothing to defend!

MAGGIE: She thought there was.

WILF: Well - even if what she thought had been true - it still doesn't justify her being so rude!

MAGGIE: It's her Dad! Can't you remember! Parent's aren't supposed to have their own needs, particularly sex lives! It's all 'disgusting'! Anyway - she was wrong, so who cares!

WILF: I care. I feel responsible.

MAGGIE: Well I'm responsible for calling you here - so we're quits. Okay?!

WILF: Okay. I'll take that coffee now!

MAGGIE: I think I could do with something too!

WILF: I'll come and help you. To be honest I'm a bit shaky! I'm not used to such run-ins!

MAGGIE: You should have lived in our house then!! That was nothing!!

F/X: THEY MOVE INTO THE KITCHEN. SOUNDS OF COFFEE MAKING.

MAGGIE: (HESITANTLY) You know what Lucy was saying -

WILF: A load of hysterical rubbish, because part of her feared not finding me here and she was worried sick. My fault.

MAGGIE: No - that bit about me always having wanted you, having planned this.

WILF: Just ignore it. I'm really sorry - you could have done without all of this!!

MAGGIE: You know I didn't - don't you? I didn't plan anything.

WILF: Maggie - don't dignify what she said with a response. You don't have to say anything. I'll speak to her later.

MAGGIE: I've loved our friendship. I would never want to harm that.

WILF: I've felt the same way - I've always enjoyed our friendship, our closeness. I never thought beyond that. We were both married. Our families were close. It was enough.

MAGGIE: Yes. (PAUSE) I don't know what to do now.

WILF: Drink your coffee. Pass us the toast! (PAUSE) Do about what?

MAGGIE: Well - if Lucy thinks that - then who else thinks it, too. Have people been watching me thinking I'm glad John's dead - thinking I've been waiting -

WILF: Don't be silly, Mags. No-one thinks that of you.

MAGGIE: Lucy does.

WILF: Well that's up to her. I've had a bit too much of her recently. I'm not letting her ruin a good friendship - a friendship that matters deeply to me.

MAGGIE: Oh, Wilf! I care for you - I have for years. You've always been there for me, even when John wasn't. you're such a different person to John. I've always felt you're more like me. We've so often felt the same about things.

WILF: I know. Nothings changed.

MAGGIE: Everything's changed. I don't know what I felt about you before. I wouldn't let myself think about it. You were important to me - to John and me - that's all that mattered.

WILF: So what's changed?

MAGGIE: Lucy's said it.

WILF: Oh, Lucy!

MAGGIE: Yes - but thing's have been said now. You can't unsay them.

WILF: Just because they've been said doesn't make them true.

SILENCE

MAGGIE: I wonder. Can we be the same? Do you think so? Without Alice or John? Does it really not change anything?

WILF: (WEARILY) Oh Maggie. I don't know. We have something good together. I don't want to think about what Lucy said. It… it makes what we have seem…

MAGGIE: Seem what?

WILF: Well - dirty. I don't want it to be spoilt.

MAGGIE: you're right. I'm being silly.

WILF: You're just overtired, and still delicate. Look - if you're OK, I'm going to go now. I'll do my shopping and give Lucy a ring. What are you going to do?

MAGGIE: I think I'll go for a walk.

WILF: Why don't you give Pete a ring? He always seems to cheer you up.

MAGGIE: Yes - yes I might. Later. It's still the middle of the night in San Francisco.

WILF: Give me a ring when you're ready for lasagne. Otherwise I win by default!

MAGGIE: Oh Wilf!

WILF: (GENTLY) Take care, my dear. Don't brood on it all. It'll all be alright.

MAGGIE: (MUFFLED AS THEY HUG) So easy to say. So easy to believe when you say it.

WILF: Take care.

F/X: THE DOOR CLICKS SHUT

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F/X: SCENE 8: INT

ON THE PHONE

PETE: (DISTORT)(AMUSED) So Lucy just barged in and accused you of sleeping together.

MAGGIE: Well - that was about the gist of it.

PETE: (D)Ha! The bloody nerve! After everything she gets up to! What did Wilf say?

MAGGIE: Well - actually, he slapped her.

PETE: (D) Really?! Touched a nerve, eh!

MAGGIE: What do you mean?

PETE: (D) Well - maybe it was a bit too close to the truth for him.

MAGGIE: Oh Pete, not you too!

PETE: (D) All I'm saying is that you two have been close for years. How long is it since Alice died? Three years? That's a long time to be living by yourself.

MAGGIE: Oh Pete - Wilf's not like that.

PETE: (D) Mum! There's nothing I'd like more than for you and Wilf to -

MAGGIE: There's nothing to it!

PETE: (D) Well - suit yourself. But you could do worse than Wilf.

MAGGIE: I wasn't going to 'do' anything!

PETE: (D) Where's the harm? Two lonely people.

MAGGIE: Pete - your father hasn't long gone.

PETE: (D) Mum! I'm not stupid - I saw you were often closer to Wilf than Dad, even when both he and Alice were alive. You two have so much in common. Why you ever married Dad always beat me!

MAGGIE: Yes - so you've said on numerous occasions. I thought it was only to wind up your father.

PETE: (D) No - it's the truth. Dad and Alice had more in common with each other. You should have husband-swapped!!

MAGGIE: What a thing to say! We don't all live in San Francisco!!

PETE: (D) Humph. Parts of San Fran are just as conservative as England. Still - you have to be open to the future. Don't let the past tie you down. Wilf's a good man.

MAGGIE: I know he is.

PETE: (D) Sometimes I wish I lived closer to look after you.

MAGGIE: I don't need -

PETE: (D) I know! But you could do with a bit of support every now and then. Has Catherine been up?

MAGGIE: No -but I'm going to see her next weekend.

PETE: (D) Good. Talk it over with her. You'll see. She feels the same as me and Johnny.

MAGGIE: Do you three gossip about me that much?

PETE: (D) Of course we do! We love you, Mum! But I'm probably the only one who'd say it to your face!

MAGGIE: Oh Pete - I do love you. I wish I could hug you.

PETE: (D) Oh well. David'll hug me for you.

MAGGIE: Give him my love.

PETE: (D) I will. Love you!

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F/X: SCENE 9: EXT. GRAVEYARD

F/X : LEAVES RUSTLING IN THE TREES

MAGGIE: Hello John. It's silly to come here I suppose - I know you're not here. But I need a place to come to. I need to talk to you. Oh John. Did you see something? Did you think Wilf and I were too close, like people seem to think? I never felt you be uncomfortable. If anything you seemed to encourage our friendship together. You and I were so different - night and day, calm and storm. I had to explain so much to you - when I spoke to Wilf - he understood. He knew. It was so much easier with him. Does that hurt you?

MAGGIE CONT'D OVER…

MAGGIE (CONT'D): Why did you love our differences - when they just hurt me? I wanted harmony - not sparring between us. I wanted to do things together - not live separate lives. But now. What do I want now? I don't want to be alone, listening to the creaks of the house wondering if someone's there. But I don't want anything new - I'm too old to change my habits; things you and I had got used to. Oh John. Is it too soon? Would it hurt our friendship? What does Wilf think about it all? Now I talk to you - when before I would have talked to Wilf! Strange circle.

Be happy John. Be at peace - wherever you are. I still love you. Nothing can take away all those years of companionship - of life together. I love you, John.

SHE SIGHS DEEPLY.

I must go now. I will come and see you, but I must move on.

F/X: FOOTSTEPS ON THE GRAVEL. LEAVES RUSTLING IN THE WIND.

F/X: SCENE 10: INT.

GRAMS: JOLLY MUSIC IN THE BACKGROUND

WILF: Well - I thought, to celebrate the Italian evening, I would wear my Italian tie!

MAGGIE: What on earth are those things on it? It looks like naked men!

WILF: It is sort of! It's Art - Michelangelo's David.

MAGGIE: What a ridiculous tie! Where did you get that from?

WILF: A work friend brought it back from Italy for me as a joke years ago. I've been waiting for a chance to wear it! Alice said she wouldn't be seen dead with me wearing it!

MAGGIE: Ain't that the truth!

WILF: Very funny! But I also brought some vino - to go with the lasagne.

MAGGIE: Now that's more thoughtful - and certainly more tasteful!

WILF: I thought you'd think so.

MAGGIE: And the flowers are lovely. You shouldn't have. I only brought you indigestion tablets when I came to yours!

WILF: Well I was reckoning on not needing those!

MAGGIE: I most certainly hope not!

WILF: I'm really glad you called me, Maggie. I was a bit worried after last week, not hearing from you for so long. I missed you.

MAGGIE: Have you spoken to Lucy?

WILF: We went out the next day. We had a long talk about everything. It made me think.

MAGGIE: Well -dinner's ready if you are.

WILF: Lovely! Lead the way. I've starved myself all day looking forward to this.

F/X: SOUNDS OF CHAIRS AND CUTLERY SCRAPING.

GRAMS: MUSIC CHANGES TO SHOW TIME LAPSE.

F/X: GLASSES CLINK, SLOWER PACE

WILF: Well - I think you won hands down.

MAGGIE: I don't know. Your's was very tasty. And for a first try! That has to account for something!

WILF: Actually - I lied.

MAGGIE: You did cheat!

WILF: No - I made it. But I had made one before.

MAGGIE: You dark horse! When?

WILF: On our twentieth wedding anniversary.

MAGGIE: Was it as good as a few weeks ago?

WILF: Better. It was perfect. Alice was dressed in a long back dress, with a beautiful necklace her mother had given her on her wedding day. I had candles; the children were all away with friends. My favourite slow jazz.

MAGGIE: Sounds beautiful. Alice always looked so elegant.

WILF: It's one of my favourite memories. We danced, in the candle-light. Alice said she felt foolish - dancing in the living room by ourselves - but I felt we were a million miles away - on a cruise ship or some exotic place in moonlight. She never had much imagination.

MAGGIE: Nor did John. That's why they got on so well together. Two practical people in a practical world. No romance.

WILF: It's funny, isn't it. They were almost more suited to each other than our marriages were!

MAGGIE: Mmmm. (THEY LISTEN TO THE MUSIC)

GRAMS: SOFT JAZZ

WILF: Would you - would you like to dance?

MAGGIE: I thought you'd never ask.

THEY DANCE TO THE MUSIC

MAGGIE: Marakesh. At sunset. Looking over the hills.

WILF: The call to prayer singing out over the glowing desert.

MAGGIE: The lights of the city start to glimmer in the twilight. (SHE SIGHS CONTENTEDLY)

WILF: Do you think it would work?

MAGGIE: What?

WILF: You and I?

MAGGIE: You and I what?

WILF: Oh Maggie - don't be coy now! Not after all these years!

MAGGIE: You and I - are dear, close friends. That's so important to me. Anything beyond that is a bonus. But nothing - nothing must lose - or risk losing what we have got.

WILF: I know. (PAUSE) More wine?

F/X: WINE GLASSES CLINK

MAGGIE: You said before - about not wanting a relationship. That it would all be misunderstandings. Don't you remember?

WILF: That was different.

MAGGIE: How is it different?

WILF: We're not spring chickens. I'm not picking you up on a blind date. We've 35 years behind us. We know everything there is to know about each other.

MAGGIE: Do we, though?

WILF: What do you mean? You know everything about me! You've been there for over half of my life, what don't you know!

MAGGIE: I don't know. There's just so much to lose if it goes wrong. You're my best friend! What would I do if I lost you?

WILF: What is there to go wrong? How could you lose me?

MAGGIE: I don't know, Wilf. Maybe there's a difference being together than being friends. Maybe we've always stayed close because we haven't been together properly.

WILF: I don't understand that.

MAGGIE: What if you don't like me?

SILENCE

WILF: I still can't see how it would be any different to how we already are. We don't have to live together if that's what's worrying you. Let's just see what happens.

MAGGIE: I just don't want to risk what we have.

WILF: So you're saying no.

MAGGIE: No! I'm just scared.

WILF: My dearest Maggie. We have all the time we need - there's no rush. I can wait. We'll enjoy what we have and just see what happens. Yes?

MAGGIE: Oh yes! That feels good.

WILF: Maggie.

F/X: THEY KISS

MAGGIE: Oh Wilf!

WILF: You see. There's nothing to be scared about.

MAGGIE: I know. I'm just being silly.

WILF: Now let's get cleared up and settle down in the other room. I'll help you with the washing up.

MAGGIE: Oh leave it till the morning. I'll do it then.

WILF: It'll only take a minute and then we're sorted for the night.

MAGGIE: I'd rather leave it for now. It'll not hurt anyone stopping here.

WILF: Let's get it out of the way, then you can relax. Come on -

MAGGIE: You see!

WILF: What?!

MAGGIE: It's starting already!

WILF: Nothing's starting - I'm trying to help you.

MAGGIE: We shouldn't have done that.

WILF: Leave the washing up then if it makes you feel better.

MAGGIE: It's not the washing up! It's the beginning!

WILF: (EXASPERATED) Oh Maggie - don't make it bigger than it is!

MAGGIE: (TEARFUL) You see! When did we ever argue before? We shouldn't have kissed.

WILF: I think I'd better go.

MAGGIE: Yes, go.

WILF: Maggie -

MAGGIE: Go - before we really ruin our friendship.

F/X: SHE OPENS THE DOOR. SOUND OF A CAR DRIVING PAST

WILF: Maggie -

MAGGIE: Goodnight Wilf.

WILF: Goodnight.

F/X: DOOR CLICKS SHUT

MAGGIE: Oh dear! Oh dear! Why did we start this? Oh Wilf! (SHE CRIES)

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F/X: SCENE 11: EXT. PARK

F/X: BIRDS SINGING IN THE PARK. SOUND OF CHILDREN PLAYING ON THE SWINGS ETC.

CATH: (CALLS) Ashley! Be careful!! Hold on with both hands. That's right! Well done! Well - Mum, I think you and Wilf are strong enough to get through this.

MAGGIE: Why do all of you have such strong feelings about Wilf and me?

CATH: Because we've seen you all our lives. When you were with Wilf - you came alive. You laughed! Your face shone!

MAGGIE: Was it that obvious?

CATH: Not when we were kids, maybe. But that was some time ago. Even as kids it felt good to be with you two when you took us places. It felt like a big happy family. How a family should feel. Not tense and bickering like it was at home.

MAGGIE: So everyone knew but me?

CATH: I don't think so. I don't know what Dad thought. Alice saw it though.

MAGGIE: No!

CATH: Yes - Alice saw it - oh Ashley be careful! (OFF) Ooops darling! Are you alright? Just a tumble - that's it. Off you go again! (COMING BACK)

MAGGIE: So Alice knew.

CATH: Well - she knew you two were close. I don't know what she thought.

MAGGIE: I often did feel she resented me.

CATH: She was jealous that you had such a close relationship with Wilf. She couldn't share that part of him.

MAGGIE: But they had a good relationship -

CATH: Good - yes. Not brilliant. From what Lucy used to tell me Alice had a bit of a temper.

MAGGIE: I never saw that.

CATH: No -she was one for appearances.

MAGGIE: Poor Wilf.

CATH: I think he could handle it. It was probably a vicious circle though - the closer you two were with him, the more annoyed she became; the better he felt with you.

MAGGIE: We weren't always close. We had times when we were closer, then we'd not see each other for a while.

CATH: Donald and I are like that now we're separated. Sometimes we're still close. I even wonder if we were right to split up; then we'd have a fierce row and I'm glad to be away from him and his temper.

MAGGIE: Oh dear Cathy. You haven't had it easy at all.

CATH: I'm OK. But I vowed I'd never be like you and stick with someone I didn't love.

MAGGIE: I loved your father.

CATH: Not truly. You were just used to him. Comfortable with him. I never saw you with him like you were with Wilf.

MAGGIE: You didn't see everything between me and John.

CATH: Did you know Pete used to fantasise that Wilf was his dad?!

MAGGIE: No!!

CATH: He used to say that you'd had an illicit relationship and he was the result!

MAGGIE: I don't know if that's funny or awful!

CATH: I think he still half believes it. He's never forgiven Dad for how he was when Pete brought David home.

MAGGIE: I can understand that - though it makes me sad.

CATH: You deserve him, mum. You and Wilf deserve each other.

MAGGIE: But are we risking what we have, for something that might not be better?

CATH: Who can tell? But surely 30 odd years is a strong enough foundation of friendship?! How many marriages have that depth to them?

F/X: SOUND OF BABY CRIES

CATH: Oh dear -Ashley!! Mummy's coming!

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F/X: SCENE 12: INT.

F/X: PHONE RINGS

WILF: Wilfred Button, hello? (PAUSE) Maggie! It's good to hear you. (PAUSE) I'm fine, fine! Are you back from Catherine's? (PAUSE) Back tonight? I thought you were only going for the weekend. (PAUSE) How are they all? (PAUSE) Good. Good. (PAUSE) Of course! Ask away! (PAUSE) What time do you want picking up from the station? (PAUSE) I'll be waiting. (PAUSE) It's a pleasure. See you later.

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F/X: SCENE 13: RAILWAY STATION

TICKET COLLECTOR: (OFF) Tickets please.

WILF: Maggie! Maggie!

MAGGIE: (HURRYING NEARER) Oh Wilf! I thought you'd be outside.

WILF: Well I was early, so I parked up and came in. Decent journey?

MAGGIE: Yes, fine. A bit boisterous - a group were celebrating their football win!

WILF: Oh dear.

MAGGIE: No - it was fine! Just high spirits.

WILF: Did you have a good visit? How are the grandchildren?

MAGGIE: They're gorgeous! Tom was at school so we went down to the park with Ashley. He's so funny. It brings back such memories. You can hardly believe it was so long ago!

WILF: It's so sad when they're so far away. Don't you miss Johnny?

MAGGIE: Oh tremendously! I keep vowing to go and visit him. John and I often talked of it. But talking doesn't get the tickets booked!

WILF: You should do it some time.

MAGGIE: You must miss your family.

WILF: I do. Lucy is the only one I see often - and well…

MAGGIE: I know.

WILF: Here's the car. Let me take your bag.

F/X: SOUND OF BOOT OPENING AND SLAMMING. DOORS OPENING AND CAR STARTING.

F/X: INSIDE THE CAR:

WILF: Do you want to go for a drink on the way home?

MAGGIE: I'd rather go straight back, if that's Ok with you. It's been a long day.

WILF: Of course.

MAGGIE: Cathy sends her love.

WILF: How's she managing without Donald?

MAGGIE: Very well. Probably better than with him. She's so much more confident.

WILF: Mmm. I never liked him.

MAGGIE: nor me - but what can you say!

WILF: It's hard. How's Pete and his partner - ?

MAGGIE: David.

WILF: - David doing? I bet you miss him.

MAGGIE: Yes I do. We were always so close David's lovely. They seem to be doing fine out there in Silicon Valley.

WILF: They seem to be children for such a short time. Then they seem to become the parents and we diminish into children again.

MAGGIE: What's brought this on?

WILF: No special reason.

MAGGIE: How's Lucy?

WILF: I… I don't know. I haven't seen her for a while. It's most unlike her.

MAGGIE: So that's it. Do you think she's still cross about us?

WILF: I thought there was no 'us'.

MAGGIE: You know what I mean.

WILF: I don't know. She's always been difficult to fathom. I thought we'd sorted it out.

MAGGIE: I shouldn't worry. She's probably got a new boyfriend and is all caught up with him. She'll be round soon enough.

WILF: I hope so. Here we are.

MAGGIE: Come in for a drink?

F/X: CAR DOORS OPEN AND CLOSE; KEYS RATTLE IN THE DOOR

WILF: Am I allowed to after last time?

MAGGIE: You are in a soft mood. Course you are. I owe you a drink at least for the lift.

WILF: Well if you put it like that!

F/X: DOOR PUSHES OPEN AGAINST A PILE OF PAPERS

MAGGIE: Come on in. Oh dear. What a lot of junk mail for one week!

WILF: Another bit of the rainforest gone on advertising things we don't want or need.

MAGGIE: Wilf - what has got into you?!

WILF: Not feeling too good, to be honest.

MAGGIE: What's wrong? Why didn't you say?

WILF: Just a bit of indigestion. Came on after lunch.

MAGGIE: I've got some tablets somewhere.

WILF: I've taken as many as I dare. I think I'll just go home and lie down, actually.

MAGGIE: Are you sure? You could rest here.

WILF: No - it's OK. You need to sort things out. I'll go home. I'll be fine. Nothing a good sleep won't cure.

MAGGIE: Well okay. Will you call me in the morning?

WILF: Yes.

MAGGIE: We could go for a walk together.

WILF: I'd like that.

MAGGIE: Now you're sure you're well enough to drive.

WILF: It's only indigestion! Not a brain haemorrhage!

MAGGIE: Well - just be careful.

WILF: Take care.

THEY KISS

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F/X: SCENE 14: INT.

F/X: THE PHONE RINGS

MAGGIE: Hello?

LUCY: (D) Maggie?

MAGGIE: Lucy? Are you OK? I've been meaning to call you.

LUCY: (D) It's Dad.

MAGGIE: Oh no. What's wrong?

LUCY: (D) He got an ambulance in the night. He's in hospital - his heart.

MAGGIE: Oh dear God. Is it bad? Is he OK?

LUCY: (D) They're doing some tests on him today. Then we might know something. They think it's not too bad, more of a warning shot, really.

MAGGIE: Oh dear. Oh dear. I'll get a taxi over as soon as I can. Where is he?

LUCY: (D) Ward 10 B.

MAGGIE: Lucy. Thank you for calling me. I really appreciate it.

LUCY: (D) It's my Dad I care about, and I know he'd want to see you.

MAGGIE: I understand.

LUCY: (D) See you in a bit, then. Ward 10 B

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F/X: SCENE 15: INT. SOUNDS OF A BUSY HOSPITAL

NURSE: Hello - can I help you?

MAGGIE: I'm looking for Ward 10 B. Wilfred Button?

NURSE: Well this is 10 B, but Mr. Button has just gone for some tests. He will be about half an hour or so. You can wait in there for him if you like.

MAGGIE: Thank you.

LUCY: Hello Maggie. Dad's just gone down to cardiac for some tests.

MAGGIE: Yes - the nurse told me.

UNEASY SILENCE

MAGGIE: When did you know?

LUCY: They called me this morning. He phoned for an ambulance in the night - about three o'clock, but by the time they found him he was all confused. Couldn't remember who he was.

MAGGIE: Why didn't he call me before?

LUCY: That's what I thought. (PAUSE) I hadn't seen him so much recently. I was mad with him.

MAGGIE: Because of me.

LUCY: (PAUSE) Yes.

MAGGIE: Lucy.

LUCY: Don't. Look - it's nothing to do with me, as Dad kindly pointed out. I just don't want him getting hurt.

MAGGIE: I would never hurt him.

LUCY: I know. (PAUSE) I know. I just - don't want to lose him.

MAGGIE: He'll be alright - you said it was only minor.

LUCY: No - I don't want to lose him - to you! He's my Dad. I lost my Mum three years ago. I hadn't realised how much I would miss her. I thought I was grown up and didn't need my parents! Then I realised how much I still needed them - when it was too late. I don't want to lose him too.

MAGGIE: Why would you lose him because of me?

LUCY: Look - I go and see him nearly every day. I take him shopping and cook for him at least once a week. It's important to me.

MAGGIE: Yes. I see that. (PAUSE) I don't want to take him away from you. He will always be your Dad. But I love him. I think he loves me.

LUCY: I know he does. I know I'm being selfish.

MAGGIE: Well maybe I am too.

LUCY: No. He's better off not living alone any more. I know that. I just don't want to let go. I'm afraid if I let go - I'll never have him again.

(SHE CRIES)

MAGGIE: Oh Lucy. Come here. I'm sure he'll be alright. I don't know what will happen between us. To be honest - I'm as scared as you are. But I would like us to be friends - and not just for your father's sake. This 'warning shot' - is a warning for all of us. We haven't got forever.

LUCY: I know. And I know you'll care for him.

NURSE: Mr. Button is back in the ward if you want to see him now.

LUCY: You go, Maggie. I'll go and get a drink from the café.

MAGGIE: Thank you, Lucy.

WILF: (WEAKLY) You found me, then.

MAGGIE: Indigestion, eh?! Oh Wilf! When are the test results back?

WILF: I don't know. I should ask the nurse.

MAGGIE: You're so pale.

WILF: I'm on walferin - to thin the blood. This isn't how I planned our next meeting.

MAGGIE: Not exactly a walk in the park! Oh you silly man! You gave me quite a scare.

WILF: Gave you a scare! I thought I'd had it in the night. They had to phone Lucy this morning because I couldn't remember her name!

MAGGIE: Oh Wilf! Please come back to my home. I couldn't bear the thought of you living there alone - being frightened.

WILF: I'm not good for much right now.

MAGGIE: I'm never good for much - and I suppose lasagne is off the menu for a long while!

WILF: Maggie, Don't leave me. I don't want to die like this - alone in my house. Why can't we make a go of it? What do we have to lose? Surely our friendship is strong enough for these last years?

MAGGIE: You know that I snore?!

WILF: I sleep like the dead.

MAGGIE: I don't iron very well.

WILF: I've become an expert ironer.

PAUSE

MAGGIE: Oh Wilf - you'll not be alone again. I promise. I need you as much as you need me.

WILF: I'll wash up every morning, I promise!

MAGGIE: If I've not done it the night before!

WILF: But Maggie - I want to do it properly. I don't want dirty gossip about us - from our family or others. I can't get out of bed to do this properly, but please, Maggie, will you marry me.

MAGGIE: Wilf - are you sure?

WILF: Never surer.

MAGGIE: Oh my dearest man! Yes, yes I would love to marry you.

LUCY: Hello, Dad. How did the tests go?

MAGGIE: We don't know yet.

WILF: Lucy. I have some news.

LUCY: I know. I heard.

WILF: Well?

LUCY: I think - I think… you'll do alright.

WILF: Oh Lucy! I'm so relieved. I wasn't sure how you would react.

LUCY: I expect to be your first guest for dinner!

MAGGIE: Oh Lucy! You must come round at least once a week.

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F/X: SCENE 16: EXT. GRAVEYARD

F/X: LEAVES RUSTLING IN THE WIND

MAGGIE: Hello, John. It's so peaceful here. I brought your favourite flowers.

WILF: They were the wedding bouquet. We hope you like them.

MAGGIE: John, you're at peace now. Please be glad for us.

WILF: I think he always knew. I'll go and wait in the car.

MAGGIE: I'll be along in a minute. (THEY KISS)

Dear John. Look at us and be happy for us. Nothing will take away the years we have shared, the children we raised; our grand children. I shared more than half my life with you. Now I ask your blessing on the last part of my life - however long God gives us - my marriage to Wilf. We're going to Sydney to see Johnny - for our honeymoon. We've got a round the world ticket so we can stop off and see Pete and David too. It will be wonderful. Be happy for us. Be happy, my darling. I will always love you, John.

F/X: FOOTSTEPS MOVES AWAY.

MAGGIE: (OFF. CALLS HAPPILY) Wilf! Wait! I'm coming!

F/X: THE SOUND OF THEIR LAUGHTER MINGLES AND DISAPPEARS AS THEY GET INTO THE CAR, CLOSE THE DOORS AND DRIVE AWAY

F/X: THE LEAVES RUSTLE GENTLY IN THE WIND

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