

Timeless

SYNOPSIS: An old man named Henry reflects upon his life, and the people within it. A journey through his memories shows how he became who he is nowadays as we meet the dearest people he knew. A play about human contact and love.

CAST

*(Characters with a * next to their name must switch between being visibly older and younger in different scenes.)*

HENRY* – A charming man. Intelligent. Has a great sense of loyalty, which can make him stubborn. Born 1922.

ANNA – Effortlessly beautiful young woman. Cheery. Born 1923.

EILEEN* – Anna's best friend. Excitable. Honest to a fault. Born 1923.

RONALD – Henry's best friend. Class-clown, joking grandfather type. Born 1922.

LOUISE* – Anna's other friend. Old-fashioned. Born 1922.

COLLIN – Henry's other best friend. Sensible. Good listener. The kind of friend you want on your side in an argument. Born 1921.

JONATHAN – Man in his twenties who lives next to Henry. Has a hipster look. Kind heart.

MRS. NEWMAN – Woman in her forties who lives next to Henry. Fussy. Always in a hurry.

RADIO ANNOUNCER – Simply the radio announcer. Soothing voice.

ARMY GENERAL – A typical army man. Older. Has an aura of authority.

BACKGROUND CHARACTERS – People who flit around multiple scenes. 3-4

(A/N: All characters in past scenes should wear clothes befitting the time period as well as possible. All characters in present scenes should stand out in comparison as being modern.)

SCENE 1 – AN OLD MAN

SETTING: HENRY'S bedroom. 2013. A night stand with a picture frame and phone on it. Optional rocking chair. A radio sits next to the night stand.

Lights fade up to see HENRY (older), sitting on the end of the bed, facing the audience.

HENRY: (Tiredly.) 7 AM. Wake up. Get dressed.

He stands.

HENRY: Eat breakfast. Look outside. Go outside.

He walks forwards. JONATHAN and MRS. NEWMAN come from opposite sides offstage, each holding a mailbox. They stand parallel to HENRY, and place their mailboxes down, as if standing at the end of driveways.

JONATHAN: Good morning, Henry! Good morning, Mrs. Newman!

HENRY does not stop looking forwards.

MRS. NEWMAN: Good morning. Honestly, Jonathan, straighten your glasses, they're nearly falling off! No wonder, they're too big for your face! It's foolish... This is 2013. Don't you agree, Henry?

JONATHAN: (Still cheery.) Alright, Mrs. Newman. Do you need anything today, Henry?

HENRY: No.

MRS. NEWMAN: It's not healthy to be inside all day. Go to the park. Feed the ducks. I can't take you-

JONATHAN: I could drive you!

MRS. NEWMAN: -but get some fresh air!

HENRY: I'm fine.

JONATHAN: (Approaches HENRY and takes him by the elbow. This seems to snap

HENRY into reality.) Here, let me help-

HENRY: I'm fine.

MRS. NEWMAN: You should get someone to fix your gardens-

JONATHAN starts guiding HENRY back to the bed while MRS. NEWMAN follows a step behind. HENRY is getting flustered, but the two don't seem to hear him. They speak over each other.

JONATHAN: I can go get your groceries, it's no trouble-

HENRY: I can do-

MRS. NEWMAN: Your whole yard is an untidy mess, what will the neighbourhood think? I know-

HENRY: Please, I'm fine, you don't-

JONATHAN: -at all, really, let me help-

HENRY: I don't need help! I'm fine!

MRS. NEWMAN: -you'll feel better, I can help-

JONATHAN AND MRS. NEWMAN: (*While sitting him down on the bed again.*) I can help, let me help, I can help you, really, let me-

HENRY: (*Waving arms to fend them off.*) I am fine! Go away!

JONATHAN and MRS. NEWMAN exchange a glance. HENRY puts his head in his hands. They fetch their mailboxes and leave the stage. HENRY lies back down. Wait a couple of seconds. Sits up.

HENRY: 7 AM. Wake up. Get dressed.

JONATHAN and MRS. NEWMAN come back on, offering help, pestering him, saying things to suit their personalities. They help him off the bed, and walk him forward.

HENRY: Go outside.

JONATHAN and MRS. NEWMAN start pulling him back to the bed, sit him down, and

start to leave. Then they immediately return, repeating everything faster.

JONATHAN: I can take you anywhere, do you need help with that, let me, I insist, it's fine, it's easier for me, I could call someone, how are you today? Would you like me to, I don't mind, do you feel alright, it's nice out today, would you like to, tell me about that, is everything alright? (*ad-lib until actions are complete.*)

MRS. NEWMAN: Henry, your flowerbeds are a mess, why don't you hire someone, it would be much better, I insist that you, are you listening, I believe that, why don't you, what would she think, how long as it been since you called someone? Keep in touch, do that, do this, in my opinion, understand? (*ad-lib until actions are complete.*)

JONATHAN and MRS. NEWMAN move HENRY back to the bed. They exit. He slumps forward a bit. Lights fade except for those on HENRY. A phone rings multiple times, and then is picked up by the answering machine.

EILEEN: Henry? Hello? It's Eileen... I know you're listening to this. This is the tenth message in a row you haven't answered. Pick up, you stubborn old man. I haven't seen you in years! We could go out and talk for awhile. Wouldn't that be nice? We could feed the ducks, like old people are supposed to, or complain about young people... (*Pause.*) I miss her too, Henry. It's hard, I know, it's... (*Longer pause.*) Call me back.

Answering machine beeps. HENRY looks over at the photo on his nightstand.

HENRY: (*Sullenly.*) How can you know? (*Picks up picture frame.*) How can you..?

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2 – YOUNG HEART

SETTING: 1933. A park. A bench sits in the middle, with three lampposts lined up behind it. **HENRY**, dressed like a young boy, sits on it. He looks around, swinging his legs, bored. **BACKGROUND CHARACTERS** might walk through behind the bench. A young girl walks up (**ANNA**).

ANNA: Hello.

HENRY: (*Looks up.*) Hello.

ANNA: Have we met before? I think I've seen you around. (*She considers Henry for a moment.*) Oh, that's right! My friend says you're one of the silly boys in the upper grade!

HENRY: (*Taken aback.*) Oh. Um, I'm Henry.

ANNA: Very dashing. I'm Anna. (*She curtsies.*) How are you today, Henry?

HENRY: Quite well. You're very brave, aren't you Anna?

ANNA: Just trying to be friendly. It's a very important thing to be.

Henry opens his mouth to speak, but Anna is suddenly distracted by something unseen.

ANNA: Oh, I have to go. Goodbye, Henry!

She skips off. HENRY watches her go, mouth hanging open, completely baffled. RON walks on.

RON: Henry! Come on, let's go! Hey... Who was that?

HENRY: That was Anna.

RON: Anna who?

HENRY: (*Looks up at RON.*) I have no idea.

Time pass. HENRY and RON pick up school books from under the bench, taking off hats. BACKGROUND CHARACTERS move bench and lamps. They walk to the front of the stage.

RON: Are you dating Anna then?

HENRY: (*Shakes head.*) We haven't known each other long enough.

RON: My parents knew each other about five months before getting engaged. I'd say you'd be fine.

HENRY: Look, I'd rather not scare her off, Ron. Which means I might have to send you away for awhile.

BACKGROUND CHARACTER 1 (female) walks by, holding a school book. She bumps into HENRY, knocking the book out of her arms.

HENRY: Oh, I'm so sorry! Here.

HENRY bends down and picks up the book, handing it to her. The girl giggles, and walks off, looking back occasionally.

RON: Look, all the girls are just swooning over you! Do you really think Anna would refuse you? (*Mockingly.*) A handsome, proper young man such as yourself? Surely not!

HENRY shoves away a snickering RON right when ANNA walks on. HENRY immediately pretends nothing happened.

ANNA: Hello Henry. Hello Ron. Behaving well?

RON: As well as can be expected.

HENRY: Hello Miss Anna. How are you today?

ANNA: (*Cheerfully.*) So formal, Henry. Don't be too uptight.

Smiling brightly, ANNA pats HENRY on the arm, and walks off. HENRY obviously watches her go.

RON: Boy, you are a mess!

HENRY and RON walk off, perhaps shoving or poking each other, swiping at books and whatnot. ANNA, LOUISE, and EILEEN walk on.

LOUISE: I'm just saying that you might want to think again. Henry's not the finest boy

at the school, and I've seen Charles-

EILEEN: Oh hush, you! This is exciting! (*She bounces on her feet a bit.*) Tell me, what's he like? Is he kind? I've heard he's kind.

ANNA: (*Smiles.*) He's just Henry. That's all I can say.

LOUISE: (*Haughtily.*) You come from a good family. All I'm saying is it would make sense-

EILEEN: Always such a downer, Louise. I think Anna and Henry would be so cute together. Anna and Henry... It has a nice ring to it.

LOUISE: It can't just sound nice!

ANNA: You two are always snapping at each other. Be happy, everything is going well. I trust Henry. That's all.

They walk offstage. HENRY and RON come back on, perhaps with their hats, or with a scarf: something to show a bit of time has passed. HENRY carries a radio.

RON: My father wants me to work in the mine with him, but I want to build things. Woodwork. Or entertainment. (*Nods at radio.*) Maybe I'll do that.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: ...and next up, we have an upcoming blues song. This song took to the charts and took our hearts... (*Fades out.*)

ANNA walks on while the radio plays, but they don't notice her. She waits a little ways away, listening.

HENRY: Maybe. I don't know what I want to do. Settle down? I doesn't matter where I end up, but I want to study something. Medicine, I suppose. That would make my mother happy.

ANNA: I just want to be happy.

HENRY and RON turn around in surprise. She beams at them, coming closer.

ANNA: No matter what happens, I don't want to be sad.

RON: (*Agreeably.*) There's nothing wrong with that.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 3 – LOVE BLOSSOMS

Time pass. 1939. The bench comes out, along with the lamp posts. Anna sits on the bench, and Henry sits in front of it. He has his radio, she is holding a flower.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: ...as the situation becomes tenser, more and more men from across the country, young and old alike, are joining the army in case of a... (*Fades out.*)

ANNA: This flower is lovely, Henry.

HENRY: (*Looks up at her.*) I thought you might like it. (*Pause.*) Was your father okay with you coming home late?

ANNA: I think he wants to marry me off as soon as possible. Once I told him I planned to stay out with a boy, he just grumbled something then waved me off. Now that my mother is teaching my sister to help around the house, I'm not needed as much.

HENRY: My father's given up on me. He wants me to be a carpenter like him, but that's much more like my brother.

HENRY fiddles with the radio switches. A song plays softly.

HENRY: Tell me something about you. I've realized that I don't know as much about you as I should, considering we see each other far more often than most boys and girls. I would... Like to know you better.

ANNA: How kind of you. (*She thinks for a bit.*) There's not too much to me. I have a sister and three brothers. I love cooking, and hate dusting. I trust people far too easily and restrain myself far too little. I don't believe what most people do.

HENRY: Like what?

ANNA: Louise thinks you should marry for money, or connections. That feels wrong to me.

HENRY: ... Me too. (*Hurriedly.*) Don't tell Ron. I'd never hear the end of it. I'd be called a sap for years on end.

ANNA: I promise I won't. You can't tell Eileen about this, either. She'll be pestering me for days. She's dear to me, but very excitable.

HENRY: She is! I've never met a more hyper person in my life!

They both laugh a little. HENRY lies down, folding his arms behind his head.

HENRY: I like how you're always smiling. It's... nice.

ANNA: Thank you. I like how considerate you are, how you take time to talk to me whenever I'm around. Not many men would do that.

HENRY: Well, I don't know. It just... feels right.

ANNA: It most certainly does.

Time pass. HENRY and ANNA exit. The bench is taken offstage. All BACKGROUND CHARACTERS come onstage, and talk in pairs. COLLIN and RON enter, wearing suits.

COLLIN: Henry's definitely coming?

RON: He said he'd be a bit late. These community dances are a new thing, though I may have let it slip to his mother that his 'girlfriend' would be there, so she'll be in a hurry to send him off.

COLLIN: As long as you're sure.

RON: We can't all be as perfectly punctual as you, Collin. We younger men sometimes struggle to keep up with you.

COLLIN: You're only a year younger, Ron, I'm certain – Look!

COLLIN points over to where ANNA, LOUISE, and EILEEN have entered. LOUISE seems to be frustrated with the other two.

RON: If we're lucky, Henry will stop staring after that girl and do something about it. They could be married by now if he'd – Oh, it's the man of the hour!

HENRY has entered, approaching his two friends. He's carrying his radio. COLLIN claps him on the shoulder.

RON: We were absolutely not just talking about how you should go dance with the love of your life.

HENRY: I never called her the love of my life, Ron.

COLLIN: He's looking into a career in entertainment, Henry, he needs to practice exaggerating things. We can't tease him when he's famous, or I'm sure we'll have a scandal on our hands.

RON: You won't want to poke fun at me when I'm the one who'll be outliving you both! Money will make me immortal, my friends.

HENRY: Keep dreaming, Ronald.

HENRY, COLLIN, and RON continue to talk as EILEEN, LOUISE, and ANNA step forward.

LOUISE: This might be your last chance. You deserve someone who can keep you in a fancy home, someone who will never worry you with money troubles.

ANNA: Money doesn't make a happy home, Louise.

LOUISE: I'm just saying what the rest of the world is thinking. You two aren't being mature; we have to think about where our lives will lead. My mother's been teaching me how to be a good wife for so long now, it's just second nature. All I can do is help you as well. You'll be making a mistake if you keep leading on Henry.

EILEEN: You talk so much, Louise, it's a miracle your mother hasn't taught you about that.

ANNA: And I'm not leading Henry on. He's very nice, and I trust him.

LOUISE: You keep saying that, but-

EILEEN: So it must be true. (*She turns and takes ANNA's hands.*) Okay, sweetheart, here's what's going to happen. When Henry comes up to you, make sure you smile a lot, and do all the lovely things you always do. He's smitten with you, you can't go wrong. When he asks you to dance, be gracious and graceful, lesson #1 of being a good wife. (*She glares at Louise*) And after you dance and dance, make sure you come tell me all the details. Alright? Oh, I'm so happy for you!

ANNA: (*Laughing.*) I'm glad.

LOUISE: What about Collin? He's very respectable.

ANNA: (*Looking kindly at LOUISE.*) You should try to dance with him. Or if you don't want to dance with him, maybe someone else. Any boy would be glad to have you.

EILEEN: They'll be dancing with the perfect wife.

ANNA: Don't be rude, Eileen. You should dance too!

EILEEN: My goal is to make sure things go well between you and Henry. Oh! I might have to dance with Ron so he stays away from you two. He, Henry, and Collin are practically inseparable, though Collin has enough sense to walk away when he should. But Ron will just keep trying those silly jokes on you... (*She giggles.*) I'll do what I have to.

LOUISE: If you're going to go through with it... You better enjoy it, Anna, or I'll be taking you in for lessons with Mother.

HENRY, RON, and COLLIN step closer to the girls, slowly. Quiet music has started up.

RON: Be charming as always, and it'll go fine.

COLLIN: Good luck.

RON pushes him forward suddenly. HENRY stumbles, straightens, looking a bit flustered, and approaches the girls. EILEEN notices first.

EILEEN: (*Loudly.*) Hello, Henry!

HENRY: Hello, Eileen. (*He looks at ANNA.*) Pardon me for interrupting, but I was wondering if you might like to dance with me?

ANNA: I'd love to.

He leads her a little bit away from her friends, and puts down his radio. They stand in the middle of the stage, with some BACKGROUND CHARACTERS dancing around them. They start to dance in an old-fashioned way.

ANNA: (*Amused.*) I can't believe you brought your radio.

HENRY: I never leave home without it. You never know when there might be a newsflash.

A pause.

ANNA: This is nice, isn't it?

HENRY: It's a lovely night for the dance.

EILEEN and RON sweep by, dancing dramatically. HENRY and ANNA watch in disbelief, until they start laughing.

HENRY: There's no way that will last.

ANNA: Oh, it never began. Eileen said she'd dance with him to keep Ron out of our way, as if he was a bother to begin with.

HENRY: Well, he is always around.

ANNA: Don't you condemn your friend for being loyal. Besides, he's funny.

RON: (*Loudly.*) This is lovely!

HENRY: You're right. Always look on the bright side, right?

ANNA: That's right.

There is a small pause.

HENRY: I don't always listen to my friends, but they've been saying for a couple of years now that I've been stubborn.

ANNA: Have you been?

HENRY: I can't always help it. But I'm going to put an end to this particular strong-headed streak. (*He pulls away, and holds both her hands.*) Anna, I truly like you.

ANNA: Not exactly the confession of eternal love Eileen was hoping for-

HENRY: Oh, well, I-

ANNA: -but it's the best thing I've heard in awhile. And it's perfect for me. Henry, I truly like you too.

HENRY and ANNA hug. The music stops.

BLACKOUT.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentleman, on this day in September, 1939, our country has declared that it will ally with the British and French forces in the beginning of a new war. Canadian troops will be sent overseas to assist with the battle. A request for more army volunteers has been sent out to all Canadian citizens, forcing many families to send their fathers and sons to fight. We have gathered a list of those men bravely going to fight for our safety from this region. We wish them well, and pray for them. The following men will be heading out soon:

Joshua Boudreau, Maurice Dennis, Collin Jacques, Ronald Jackson, Frank Theriault, Henry Thomas... (*Fades out.*)

SCENE 4 – BRING THEM HOME

SETTING: An army base. 1941. There are multiple male BACKGROUND CHARACTERS in this scene. All characters are dressed in uniforms of dark greens, browns, or grays. HENRY, RON, and COLLIN stand among a small group, facing ARMY GENERAL. A table stands behind them.

ARMY GENERAL: Men, we have been ordered to join another small troop on the defensive line, west from here. We leave at dawn. (*He salutes.*)

The group salutes back, and then break off. COLLIN, HENRY, and RON step to the front. The BACKGROUND CHARACTERS move to the back, talking in groups.

RON: Dawn? The general must be kidding.

COLLIN: It's not exactly unusual. We'll have to adjust.

RON: I know, but-

HENRY: (*Interrupting.*) When does the mail leave?

COLLIN and RON turn to stare at him.

RON: Have you been listening to anything we've said today?

COLLIN: The mail leaves in three days, Henry. I suppose you could leave some letters here to be sent off. Who are you writing to? You've been cranking them out constantly.

HENRY: To my family, mostly.

RON: (*Snorts.*) I don't believe you for a second. You're sending them off to Anna.

COLLIN: You don't need to write to her every day.

HENRY: I just want to stay in touch. We don't know when we'll go home.

RON: It better be soon. I'm not fond of this 'waking up at dawn' thing.

There is a gunshot noise. We shift to another scene. BACKGROUND CHARACTERS run on, and flip the table so it is lying on its side. Everyone shelters behind it. Gunshot and explosion noises should carry through this part.

ARMY GENERAL: Keep your heads down!

RON: How did we get here?

HENRY: What are you talking about?

RON: We've been good. We don't deserve this.

HENRY: Hush, that won't help.

COLLIN: (*Attempting to peek around corner.*) There's so many. The other troop- oh my- (*He breaks off.*)

ARMY GENERAL: Reinforcements have been called in. Stay down!

A pause.

HENRY: There are people dying out there.

RON: Look, there's noth-

COLLIN: (*Shaking his head.*) Leave it, Ron.

HENRY: We might die.

RON: The reinforcements are coming, it's not-

HENRY: (*Interrupts.*) There's a reason why I write to Anna every day.

RON cannot think of a good reply to this. They are silent. Gunshot noises slowly die out. Lights dim.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: News from the war has come in. Small troops are dividing, being sent off to other areas of conflict. (*COLLIN rises from the group behind the table. He stands straight and salutes.*) There is hope that the increased amount of soldiers will help our army win the battles that rage on now. (*COLLIN walks offstage.*) Families wait anxiously for news from their loved ones. We are all waiting.

ANNA walks onstage, holding a group of envelopes. One is open. She reads what's inside, and closes her eyes.

ANNA: Come back soon, Henry.

She presses the envelopes against her chest, and walks off. Lights go up. The table is now upright. HENRY, RON, and some of the other BACKGROUND CHARACTERS stand in front of it. The ARMY GENERAL addresses them.

ARMY GENERAL: Men, on this day, April 17^h, 1943, you have been in service for over a year and a half. And most of you are barely 20. But the battle rages on. Before we return home, we must fight again. We are being sent to assist British troops recover “Longstop Hill” in Tunisia. Write your letters now. I don't know when there will be another chance.

RON: Better tell everyone I'm alive. Hey, let's send one to Collin too.

HENRY: Good idea.

RON: It should go something like this: Dear Collin...

Lights dim again. HENRY, RON, ARMY GENERAL, and the BACKGROUND CHARACTERS stand and form a line. They salute. We hear RON's voice throughout these actions.

RON: Greetings from this part of hell. How are you? Henry and I are still alive. What about you? If you're reading this, I'll assume so. Our troop is being moved again. There's a bunch of other army stuff to tell you, but I'll let Henry take that bit. Can't wait to see you again. Don't die. Goodbye for now.

A pause.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Now for the deceased section of our broadcast. News from the war reports that the following men from our province have passed on: Joshua Boudreau, Alfred Haché, Collin Jacques...

Everyone except HENRY exits the stage. HENRY lowers his hand.

HENRY: Dear Anna.

ANNA comes onstage. She stands in line with HENRY.

ANNA: Dear Henry.

HENRY: Collin's dead. I don't know how to feel.

ANNA: I'm so sorry about what happened out there.

TOGETHER: I miss you.

HENRY: The atmosphere around here has changed drastically. This is the first man from our tiny troop to die. Even Ron is affected.

ANNA: Keep hope. I believe in you.

HENRY: Nobody who isn't here can imagine what it's like. I hope peace comes soon. I also hope war hasn't affected you too much.

ANNA: It'll be over soon. Germany is retreating. The women I work with are getting more hopeful.

TOGETHER: Don't worry about me.

HENRY: I wish I had your positivity.

ANNA: Eileen wishes you good fortune.

HENRY: I want to come home.

ANNA: I can't wait for you to come home.

HENRY: Goodbye.

ANNA: Goodbye.

TOGETHER: Stay strong. I'll see you soon.

Lights come up. HENRY turns to watch RON come up and join him. RON is wearing a backpack.

RON: We're back.

HENRY: (*Nodding.*) We're back.

ANNA steps towards them. RON nudges HENRY and gestures to her. He turns, and there is a small pause. Then they hurry towards each other and hug.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 5 – BACK TO LIFE

SETTING: A kitchen. 1945. HENRY sits at the table, while ANNA stands nearby. They are in their house. Perhaps a vase of flowers sits on the table, or a bowl of fruit. ANNA wears an apron over her dress. HENRY is in a suit. He reads a newspaper.

ANNA: Joanna got married last weekend.

HENRY: To who?

ANNA: Someone from out of province. Son of a business man, I believe.

HENRY: Good for her.

ANNA exits. HENRY reads the newspaper. ANNA returns with oven mitts.

HENRY: It says that this is the official anniversary of women being able to vote in Quebec.

ANNA: (*Happily.*) I wish I'd been at the protests. (*She pauses.*) I think I hear footsteps coming up the path.

RON enters. He holds a briefcase and is wearing a suit. HENRY rises and walks over to him.

HENRY: Glad to see you.

RON: Same to you, good sir. My flight leaves in a couple of hours, I can't stay long.

ANNA: Oh, we'll miss you Ron! (*She hugs him.*) Do you think you'll have better luck in Europe?

RON: The Europeans have a better appreciation for entertainment. I'll start my own radio show, maybe do a bit of comedy, and get rich and famous.

HENRY: You'd better not forget us among all the celebrities.

RON: I could never. I'll send you a check when I make my first million.

ANNA: What did you tell your father?

RON: That I'm moving, that I don't want to carry on the family business, and that I won't be writing him.

ANNA: As long as you write to us. And Eileen. Did you say goodbye to her?

RON: Sent her a letter. If I went over, she'd lock me in a closet just to keep me from going. She's insane, I swear.

HENRY holds out his hand for a handshake, but RON sweeps him into a hug. ANNA wipes her eyes.

HENRY: Good luck.

RON: To you too. Be nice to your lovely lady.

HENRY: Of course. Would she have married me if I weren't the best?

RON: (*To ANNA.*) You've got good taste.

Waving goodbye, RON exits. ANNA hugs HENRY.

ANNA: He'll be fine.

HENRY: Yes.

ANNA: You'll be fine.

HENRY: (*Pauses.*) Yes. (*He looks at ANNA.*) Where would I be without you?

ANNA: Oh, in a crumpled heap somewhere.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 6 – THUNDER CLOUDS

SETTING: *The park. 1952. The bench and lampposts come out. HENRY and ANNA sit on the bench. The radio sits by HENRY.*

RADIO ANNOUNCER: ...discovered in 1952. Medical experts are saying that a solution is at the top of their list, and that all patients should attempt to... (*Fades out.*)

ANNA: It's not that bad.

HENRY: You can't expect me to believe that.

ANNA: (*Chiding.*) If you let yourself be negative, it will take over your life.

HENRY: Anna, this isn't a joke anymore. This is serious.

ANNA: I'm not joking. Everything's going to be alright.

Lights dim. HENRY and ANNA rise, and hold hands. Three BACKGROUND CHARACTERS come onstage, in a line.

BACKGROUND CHARACTER 1: I'm afraid there's not much we can do. As you know, the medical profession is working towards a cure, but at this point...

They walk offstage, replaced by the next in line.

BACKGROUND CHARACTER 2: There is a trial medication you can take, but it hasn't been fully tested...

They walk offstage, replaced by the next in line.

BACKGROUND CHARACTER 3: We'll put you on the list. As soon as we find anything, you'll get a call.

Time passes. 1962. HENRY reaches behind bench and pulls out a hat and a blanket. He puts on the hat and drapes the blanket over ANNA's shoulders. Lights come up.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: This year, in early 1962, we find that the entire nation has been fighting a secret war... (*Fades out.*)

HENRY: It's been ten years. Surely there must be something somewhere. Maybe in Europe...

ANNA: We are not moving to Europe. We don't need to. Ten years is a blessing, not a curse.

HENRY: Anna, I swore I would never lie to you. So you need to know exactly what I think. You have been living with cancer, practically a death sentence. That is not a blessing! You have been suffering, in pain, for ten years. I don't want you to live your life like this. You can pretend all you want, this is not something to be happy with. We need to stop it somehow.

ANNA: Well, what do you want to do? I don't see an option. Should I just give up? Die?

HENRY: (*Angrily.*) I don't know! Maybe!

There is a long pause.

ANNA: You don't mean that.

HENRY: ... No. No, I don't.

ANNA: (*Places hand on his shoulder comfortingly.*) I don't need to be healthy to live. I only need to be happy to live.

HENRY: That's foolish.

ANNA: (*Fondly.*) Oh, you stubborn old man. You'll see.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 7 – RINGING BELLS

SETTING: *The park. 1965. Nothing has moved from the last scene. EILEEN, LOUISE, and all BACKGROUND CHARACTERS come onstage. Everyone lines up in order: ANNA, BACKGROUND CHARACTER, LOUISE, BACKGROUND CHARACTER, EILEEN, HENRY.*

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Here are the death notices for this day, April 27th, 1965. Bitsy Ronalds, age 68. Anna Thomas, age 42. Jacques... (*Fades out.*)

ANNA walks down the line. Everyone bows their heads. As she reaches HENRY, she pauses, touches his arm, then exits.

BACKGROUND CHARACTER 1: Anna Thomas was always happy. She was a beacon of light to everyone around her. She died far too young, and we'll all miss her.

LOUISE: I always thought she was a little crazy. Always looking on the bright side, forgiving, being herself. But now I'm seeing that maybe I'm the crazy one. I wish that I could have told her she was right all along.

BACKGROUND CHARACTER 2: The world has lost an angel. Although Anna never had any children, her spirit will carry on in the lives she touched. My sympathies to her family and husband.

EILEEN: There will never be anyone like Anna ever again. She was the greatest friend I could have hoped for, better than I could have hoped for. And I... I once told her that I never wanted to see a world without Anna Thomas, and I am realizing even more so now how true that is.

A pause. HENRY walks offstage without saying anything. The group disperses, except for EILEEN, who sits on the bench. She presses a button on the radio, and a song starts up. It is the same song that played on ANNA and HENRY's first date (page 9). HENRY walks back on.

EILEEN: Hello.

He does not reply, but he sits next to her.

EILEEN: I heard that Ron tried to get tickets to fly back here for the funeral, but the timing just didn't work out. He sends his condolences, and says you should write to him.

No reply.

EILEEN: He still writes to me. Silly man, he is. He's doing well over in Europe, I hear. Got his own radio station, does comedy. Perhaps he will make that million.

HENRY: He's not here, so what does it matter?

EILEEN: (*Shocked.*) Henry! Don't talk about your best friend like that. Show a little kindness.

HENRY: (*Suddenly angry.*) Why? Why should I? The world never showed me any kindness! My life has been one mess after another! No one should be pressured by their parents to do something they don't want to! No one should have to fight in a war! No one should have to hear that their best friend died, or watch their best friend move across the world! I'm never going to see Ron again! I would be foolish if I thought otherwise. No one should have to watch the love of their life slowly die. For ten years! It's agony, for them, for you..! My wife is dead, Eileen! (*HENRY breaks down, placing his head in his hands.*)

EILEEN: I... I'm so sorry.

HENRY: Do you know what the last thing Anna said to me was? She said, 'Stay strong. Everything's going to be alright.' She said that to me during the war, when she was first diagnosed, and you know what? She was wrong! Nothing is alright! Nothing!

HENRY storms off, leaving behind a distressed EILEEN. She pulls the radio into her lap, and lowers her head.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 8 –

SETTING: *Henry's bedroom. The nightstand with the picture frame and phone comes out, and any other props. 1990.*

HENRY sits, holding the picture frame. He does not look up as the radio comes on.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the first day of 1990. We bring you into the new year with this song by an up and coming artist, who performed... (*Fades out.*)

A phone rings multiple times, then is picked up by an answering machine. HENRY does not move.

EILEEN: Henry? It's Eileen. I was calling to ask how you were. You know, it's been awhile since we've spoken... A year or so... And my grandchildren have been asking about the famous Henry from my stories! So it would be nice if you could give me a call, tell me what you've been up to. (*Pause.*) Anna still watches us. She does.

There is a beep.

MRS. NEWMAN: This is Mrs. Newman. The house next to yours is for sale, and a possible buyer is coming tomorrow. You ought to clean up your yard, make sure they know we have a good, clean neighbourhood. That's my recommendation. Goodbye.

There is a beep. HENRY does not move.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: There is only one month left of 1999, listeners. The 2000s are coming your way, and with them many new possibilities, and lots more great music that you can listen to, here on... (*Fades out.*)

There is a beep.

EILEEN: Hi, Henry. I checked, it's been years since I've seen you. How much you must have changed! We should go somewhere together. Just two old friends getting together. What do you think? Call me back.

There is a beep. HENRY does not move.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: This is a very special day. Today, June 2nd, 2009, we have an

interview for you all. I had the honour of interviewing the one and only Ron Jackson, a comedian and radio host... (*Fades out.*)

There is a beep.

BACKGROUND CHARACTER 3: Um, hello? Is this Henry Thomas? My name is Julie MacDonald... My mother, Louise MacDonald, passed away last week... Um, we found your name on a photo of people she knew a long time ago, and just thought you should know. The funeral is next weekend. You're welcome to join us. Alright. Um. Bye.

There is a beep.

EILEEN: Henry... Oh, Henry... I don't know if you heard... Louise died last Sunday. I... I'm going to the funeral. You should come. It would mean a lot to Louise. I know it would.

There is a beep. HENRY does not move.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Welcome back to the show, on this fine April 3rd, 2014. The weather is surprisingly nice for this time of year. Everything is alright.

HENRY looks over to the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: This is the type of day that just brings a smile to your face, makes you feel good. Stay happy, everybody. Now, on to the news... (*Fades out.*)

HENRY gets up, still holding the picture frame. He walks forwards. As he does so, **MRS. NEWMAN** and **JONATHAN** come out, holding their mailboxes.

MRS. NEWMAN: Henry!

JONATHAN: Oh, Henry!

HENRY: Wake up.

MRS. NEWMAN: You're not looking very good Henry, have you been eating enough?

HENRY: Get dressed.

JONATHAN: The weather is very nice today, don't you think?

HENRY: Eat breakfast.

MRS. NEWMAN: Honestly Henry, you should call someone to look after your yard. Or get Jonathan to do it. He's young, he can handle it.

HENRY: Look outside.

JONATHAN: Are you doing well, Henry? If you ever need anything, let me know.

HENRY: Go outside.

JONATHAN AND MRS. NEWMAN: You should be resting.

HENRY looks back at the nightstand, then forwards again.

HENRY: Call Eileen.

JONATHAN and MRS. NEWMAN reach towards HENRY, but he steps back.

HENRY: Thank you, but I'm fine.

JONATHAN and MRS. NEWMAN leave, with their mailboxes. HENRY goes over to the nightstand, and gently puts down the picture frame. He dials a number. A phone rings, then an answering machine picks up.

HENRY: Eileen? It's... It's Henry. You haven't called me in almost a year, and you usually call every month, and I suddenly realized... (*Long pause.*) Everything is not alright, Eileen, and it hasn't been for a very long time. But I'm 92. Louise is dead. Collin is dead. And Ron... Ron is a millionaire, living in the city, across the sea. He did it! He made it! We never thought that he would, but he did, and he's... (*Pause.*) Anna is dead. She has been for a very long time. But I have a photo of her, and she remains timeless. I am very old Eileen, and I don't know if you'll ever hear this message, but everything is not alright and I am okay with that. Anna would still be happy. So I have to try to be happy for her.

Lights go down. HENRY puts down the phone, and goes to sit down. The lampposts are brought out, the nightstand is brought in. The lampposts stand behind HENRY, in a triangle. EILEEN, COLLIN, and LOUISE come out and stand below a lamppost. ANNA comes out and stands next to HENRY.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Many things in this world will last a very long time. Music. Stories. Hopefully radio announcers.

LOUISE turns on her lamppost.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Some may argue that as long as we remember it, anything can last as long as we do.

COLLIN turns on his lamppost.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: In that case, I suppose that people last the longest. Anyone. Everyone. As long as we remember.

EILEEN turns on her lamppost.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: This is your beloved radio announcer, wishing you goodnight.

A pause.

ANNA: Henry. Henry, wake up.

HENRY: (*Weakly.*) Anna?

ANNA: Hello, you stubborn old man.

Lights come up slightly. HENRY is staring at ANNA, who picks up his hand. HENRY rises.

ANNA: It's been a very long time.

HENRY: Oh, Anna... You look...

ANNA: Timeless? (*She giggles.*) So I've been told.

HENRY cannot speak. He buries his head in his hands.

ANNA: Everything is alright now, Henry. It really is.

Lights go down fully. LOUISE turns off her lamppost. Then COLLIN. Then EILEEN.

END OF PLAY