

(BEN starts to leave but is confronted by EMILY)

Emily

That was heartless of you to have left her like that.

Ben

What else could I possibly have done?

Emily

Do you really think after all you've done to General Washington, that her safety could be entrusted to him?

Ben

All right, all right, I'll tell you what I'll do. I will write Washington a letter, pleading on Peggy's behalf.

Emily

Well, that's big of you!

Ben *(Handing EMILY a quill)*

Would you mind?

Emily

You're pushin' it.

Ben

Dear General Washington: By now you will have learned of my hasty departure. I have no favor to ask for myself. I have too often experienced the ingratitude of my countrymen to expect it. I do have one small favor to ask, however, on behalf of Mrs. Arnold. She had no part in any of this, and I ask that you see to her safety and security.

(Lights come up on GEORGE WASHINGTON, sitting on a stump, reading the letter)

Washington

...in any event, would you please send me the clothes and other belongings I did not have time to pack. Your humble and obedient servant...

(Through clenched teeth)

Benedict Arnold!

(In a rage, WASHINGTON crumples up the letter and throws it on the ground. HE starts to storm off when BEN points to the letter with his cane)

Ben

P.S.!

(WASHINGTON scurries back to the stop, and uncrumples the letter to read the rest)

Would you also please send me the three and half weeks' back pay I have coming.

(WASHINGTON angrily throws the paper away and storms off).

[Song: Track #22: Who's to Say?]

Emily

WHAT MAKES SOMEONE DECIDE TO SWITCH
FROM ONE TEAM TO THE NEXT?
THE REASONS FOR IT SOMETIMES CAN BE QUITE COMPLEX

BUT IF YOU COACH THE WINNING TEAM
YET NOBODY HOLDS YOU IN HIGH ESTEEM
IT MAY FINALLY SEEM
THE TIME'S COME TO SAY GOODBYE

TRY NOT TO LET IT GET YOU DOWN
PUT OUT YOUR CHIN AND STAND YOUR GROUND
AFTER ALL, YOU MUST HAVE HAD A REASON
EVEN THE BEST OF US MAY FIND
OFTEN IT'S BEST TO CHANGE OUR MIND
WHO'S TO SAY WHAT IS OR ISN'T TREASON?

YOU'VE BEEN SET UP AND BEEN PUT DOWN
NOBODY'S BEEN MORE PUSHED AROUND
WHO REVERES YOU FOR YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS?

YOU WON THE BATTLES THAT YOU FOUGHT
YOU DARED TO GO WHERE MOST WOULD NOT
HOW COULD IT BE
THEY REFUSE TO BELIEVE IN YOU?

TRY NOT TO LET IT GET YOU DOWN
PUT OUT YOUR CHIN AND STAND YOUR GROUND
AFTER ALL, YOU MUST HAVE HAD A REASON
EVEN THE BEST OF US MAY FIND
OFTEN IT'S BEST TO CHANGE OUR MIND
WHO'S TO SAY WHAT IS OR ISN'T TREASON?

WELL SUPPOSE A BRIDE HAS MADE
A SOLEMN PROMISE TO BE WED
BUT HE'S BROKE AND SO SHE LEAVES HIM

Emily (Cont)

FOR A MILLIONAIRE INSTEAD
OR SHE CAN'T AFFORD HER JOB
SO SHE QUILTS THE ONE SHE'S GOT
DON'T THINK THAT YOU'D DO ANY DIFFERENTLY
'CAUSE....YOU WOULD NOT!

WELL WHO IS WRONG AND WHO IS RIGHT?
THINGS DON'T ALWAYS COME IN BLACK AND WHITE
OFTEN IT'S A MATTER....OF PERSPECTIVE
SO IF YOU THINK YOU'RE OFF THE HOOK
GO TO THE MIRROR AND TAKE A LOOK
DON'T SLANDER SOMEONE'S NAME
UNLESS YOU KNOW YOU KNOW
YOU'D NEVER DO THE SAME!

(Lights are out and come up slowly. It is dawn)

Peggy (Calling from bed)

John!

(Beat)

Ben? Ben! Emily!

(EMILY comes running as music starts up).

[SONG: TRACK #23: When They Come to Collect]

(EMILY helps the panicking PEGGY pack her things)

Peggy

I'VE GOT TO TRY AND RELAX
I CAN'T AFFORD TO GIVE MYSELF AWAY
I CAN JUST IMAGINE WHAT THEY
THINK OF ME RIGHT NOW
THAT I'M THE ONE WHO GOT HIM TO BETRAY....AMERICA

Emily

YOU COULD ALWAYS JUST LOOK NAÏVE
AND SHOW 'EM ALL THE CHARMS
THAT YOU'VE GOT
IT OUGHT TO THROW 'EM OFF,
IT'S WORKED FOR YOU BEFORE

Peggy

I'D DO MOST ANYTHING TO KEEP FROM BEIN' CAUGHT.

Emily

YEAH, YEAH, YEAH!

Peggy

AND IF THEY COME FOR ME, I'LL SIMPLY SAY
I KNOW MY HUSBAND WOULD NEVER ACT THIS WAY
I'D DROP TO MY KNEES BEFORE GOD AND PRAY
“LORD, GET ME OUT OF THIS MESS—

Peggy and Emily

THEY'VE GOT THE WRONG ADDRESS!!”

Emily

YOU COULD ALWAYS PLEAD IGNORANCE
'CAUSE IN THE 18TH CENTURY
MOST MEN THOUGHT WOMEN KNEW
NOTHING AT ALL
SO YOU'D FIT RIGHT IN IF YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE
YEAH, YEAH, YEAH!

Peggy

IT'S SO STRANGE HOW LIFE CAN CHANGE
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT
THINGS COULD TURN OUT THIS WAY?
JUST YESTERDAY I HAD THE LOVE OF TWO MEN

Peggy

AND NOW IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE I'LL SEE EITHER ONE AGAIN!

Emily (Overlapping)

NOW YOU WON'T SEE EITHER ONE AGAIN
MAKE IT PLAIN
YOU'VE GONE INSANE
ONE OF MANY PATRIOTS
WHO JUST WENT NUTS!

Peggy

I'VE GOT TO TRY AND RELAX
I CAN'T AFFORD TO GIVE MYSELF AWAY
THEY WON'T GET ANY CONFESSIONS
WHEN THEY COME TO COLLECT!
I GOTTA PRACTICE MY COMPOSURE!

*(PEGGY starts to exit and practically runs into
WASHINGTON as he enters. The music stops abruptly)*

Peggy (Startled)

Your Excellency!

Washington

Mrs. Arnold...

Peggy

General...I-I know how all this must look to you, but I—

Washington

You poor creature.

Peggy

(Pause)

Excuse me?

Washington

How could he have done this to you?

Peggy

Well, I...I must say, your Excellency, that I was...shocked...and so deeply distressed when I learned what my husband had done.

Washington

Don't worry, Mrs. Arnold. Though it may indeed be a small consolation, we've at least managed to capture your husband's accomplice... John André.

(PEGGY gasps for air and clings tightly to WASHINGTON)

Washington

Mrs. Arnold, are you all right?

(SHE is unable to answer)

I assure you he will pay for what he's done. You have my word on it.

(WASHINGTON stumbles backwards onto the bed—with PEGGY on top of HIM—just as the REEDS enter)

Reed

Well! I never would have guessed!

(WASHINGTON scrambles to get up and to help PEGGY off the bed)

Washington

Reed! What are you doing here?

Mrs. Reed

I must say, General, you certainly didn't waste any time.

Reed

Yes, it's just a shame that General Arnold isn't aware of your selfless devotion...to his wife!

Washington

Can't you see this lady is in a state of shock?

(PEGGY feigns a cry)

Reed

With all due respect, sir, may I suggest that you are a little too close to the situation to see behind this pathetically unconvincing act of hers.

(Beat)

Washington *(Baffled)*

Reed—is this going anywhere?!

Reed

We've just come from having interrogated the prisoner.

Mrs. Reed

He's confessed to complicity with General Arnold.

Washington

We're fully aware of Arnold's involvement.

Mrs. Reed

And are you also aware of Major Andre's involvement with...Mrs. Arnold?

Peggy

That's a lie!

Reed

If you don't believe us, General, go and ask the prisoner yourself.

Washington

I am not so base that I would ever accuse a woman of dishonorable motives.

Reed *(Incredulous)*

You're a fool!

Washington

Reed! Get back to West Point and wait for my instructions. You'll hear from me shortly!

Reed

Is that supposed to frighten me?

Washington *(Getting flustered)*

You have your orders.

Reed

Who are you kidding? You have no jurisdiction over me.

Washington (*Ready to explode*)

Reed....Get the hell out!!

Mrs. Reed

Just wait until we tell all our friends in the Congress that we warned you about Arnold from the very beginning, and yet you stood by and did absolutely nothing. We'll see to it that you never hold a prominent position again!

Washington

Ha!!

(BEN is in his nightclothes again, as in the beginning. EMILY, dressed again as his nurse, is helping BEN into bed. He has gray hair now, and is again using a cane for support, as his elusive grip on past events is eroding, and reality sets in. He is now only a shadow of his former self)

Ben

I don't understand this at all. I've been waiting three weeks for General Burgoyne to pay me a call, but it seems that he doesn't have time for me. What is taking him so long?

Emily (*Tucking him in bed*)

I'm sure he's just busy, sir. He's a very important man.

Ben

And I'm not?!—the greatest general of the Revolution—of either side!! They should be falling over themselves to thank me for all that I've done for them, and yet so far they've treated me as if I'm still one of the enemy!

(A KNOCK at the bedroom door)

Emily

There. That must be General Burgoyne now. You see, sir? You were worried for nothing!

(The REEDS enter. MR. REED is dressed in a British general's uniform. They smile patronizingly. BEN is horrified).

Ben

Reed! What the Hell?!—

Reed (*With an English accent*)

I'm sorry, I'm afraid you're mistaken. My name is Burgoyne. General Burgoyne of His Majesty's armed forces.

Ben *(Dazed)*

Forgive me, Your Excellency. I thought for a moment....

(BEN struggles to get out of bed, but it's too much for him)

Reed

Please, don't bother getting up, General. You're ... overwrought. I suspect this has been a very trying week for you.

Ben

Oh, Your Excellency. If you only knew. I'll tell you, I—

Reed *(Impatiently)*

Yes, yes, yes. I'm a very busy man, Arnold. What is it you wanted to see me about?

Ben *(Stupefied)*

What did—!!— Your Excellency! I am...at your service!

(Pauses to let this sink in, to The REEDS' glazed looks)

Ben

I...I have sworn eternal allegiance to my King, for whom I'm ready to give my very life!

(MRS. REED whispers in REED's ear)

Reed

(Only vaguely interested)

Oh, that! Right, right. Uh...well, to tell you the truth, Arnold, we don't actually have any openings in your field right now. You might want to check back with us sometime next month... see if anything turns up by then. You understand.

(Turns to go)

Ben

I only hope that you understand, Your Excellency, how anxious I am to begin service to my King.

Reed *(Sighing)*

Uh, yes....well, General Arnold... I suppose now is as good a time to tell you this as any... uh, how shall I put this? Uh....none of the men wants to... serve under your command!

Ben

How is that possible, sir?

Mrs. Reed

Well, for one thing, John André was a very popular figure around here. Some of the men think you should have been hanged in his place.

Ben

But...I can't be held responsible for that!

Mrs. Reed (*Snapping*)

No!—you can't be held responsible for anything, can you!?

Reed

Personally, I was in favor of making a trade—you for André., but...unfortunately I was overruled.

Ben (*Hopeful*)

Then there are some who support me, after all.

Reed

No, no, not really, no. It's just that...we want to encourage defections from the rebel army, and turning over someone like you for the slaughter...well, it's not great for our image.

Ben

But I don't understand why the men won't serve under me.

Mrs. Reed

I'd think that point should be obvious.

Reed

Yes, well don't you see? No one knows who you may turn your back on next.

Ben (*Softly*)

What about my money?

Reed

Mmmm???

Ben

My money! My money, dammit! What about the ten thousand pounds I was promised?

Reed (*Incredulous*)

Ten thousand pounds!?! For what?? You haven't done anything!

Ben (*Exasperated*)

Then give me a command!

Reed

But I've just told you—no one wants to work with you. What can I do about that?

Mrs. Reed (*Nonchalantly*)

Of course, if you're not happy with us, you could always go back to the Americans.

Ben (*Quietly*)

You know that's impossible.

Reed

You know, I asked one of our American prisoners this morning what would happen to you, if we were ever to turn you over to them. And do you know what he said? He said your left leg would be severed from your body and buried with full military honors. The rest of you would be hanged
from the nearest tree, your carcass left to rot.

(HE pauses to let this sink in)

Now if you'll excuse us. The sight of you sickens me.

[Song: Track #24: Finale]

(In the background, THE SHADOWS OF HIS PAST ominously gather around him, singing a haunting, slow reprise of "Greatest Hero" as the lights dim)

Ben

NOW I FIND NO ONE REALLY WANTS ME
IT SEEMS AS IF MY FRIENDS HAVE ALL ABANDONED ME FOREVER

All

WELL, WHO COULD BLAME THEM CONSIDERING YOUR CRIME?
NO ONE WANTS TO BE SEEN
WITH THE GREATEST TRAITOR OF OUR TIME

YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A BENEDICT ARNOLD
A TRAITOR THROUGH AND THROUGH
THAT'S ALL YOU'LL EVER BE
THAT'S ALL ANYONE WILL SEE

Ben

WHY IS IT NO ONE CAN RECALL
I WAS THE GREATEST HERO OF THEM ALL?

(EMILY comes running in with MRS. ARNOLD, now a middle-aged woman. The song segues into a haunting dirge which underscores the dialogue):

Emily

Madam, madam, come quickly. I don't know what could be the matter with him! I came into his room a few moments ago, and he tried to throw a blanket over me. He said I wasn't dressed properly for this kind of weather. "This kind of weather?!" I thought. "What could he mean by that? It's the middle of July!"

(PEGGY examines BEN. The MOURNERS enter, as before, solemnly, with candles)

Emily

Shall I get the doctor, mum?

Peggy

No, it's too late!

Ben

Too late? But no one knows what really happened yet!. Everyone thinks I was disloyal, but they've got it all wrong! It was all of you who forced me to do what I did! But... I want you to know, I've learned to forgive you for what you've done to me! I forgive you all!

I WAS A REVOLUTIONARY GENTLEMAN
JUST LIKE ALL THE PAPERS SAID
BUT NOW IT LOOKS AS THOUGH NO ONE WILL RECALL
THAT I WAS THE GREATEST HERO OF THEM ALL!

(THE MOURNERS sing backup "oohs" and "ahhs", building to an ethereal climax. Lights come down from "heaven.")

FADE TO BLACK