

Downward Spiral

Company

COME GATHER ROUND,
LISTEN TO A SAD TALE
THE DAY BEN FOUND OUT
HIS PLANS HAD ALL FAILED
IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY
TO ADMIT DEFEAT
THE DAY YOU BECOME OBSOLETE!

IF THINGS ARE AS BLEAK AS THEY APPEAR
HE REALLY SHOULD CHOOSE ANOTHER CAREER
WHO WANTS TO BE HANGING AROUND
A MAN WHO'S BEEN CROWNED
"TRAITOR OF THE YEAR"

(BEN rushes in the bedroom where Peggy has been lying, dreaming. She wakes up startled, seeing Ben, hurriedly throwing together money and clothes in a trunk)

Ben

I MUST CONFESS, DEAR
THAT THINGS AREN'T LOOKING GOOD
AND I FEAR
NOTHING'S TURNED OUT AS IT SHOULD
AMERICANS HAVE WON
THEY'VE GOT US ON THE RUN
WE HAVE NO TIME TO LOSE

I FEAR JOHN ANDRE
HAS SOMEHOW BEEN FOUND OUT
HIS PART IN THIS
SEEMS NO LONGER IN DOUBT
NOW WASHINGTON'S MEN ARE ON THEIR WAY
TO SEE
IF THEY CAN PIN THIS ON ME

I WON'T STAND A CHANCE
SURELY THEY WILL KNOW
SO FOR NOW, PACK YOUR BAGS
WE HAVE TO GO

Peggy

BUT JOHN COULD WELL BE DEAD

Ben

LET'S THINK OF US, INSTEAD

Peggy

MY GOD, WHAT LIES AHEAD!?

(PEGGY has worked herself into a frenzy and faints in BEN's arms. HE lays HER on the bed and tenderly holds her hand)

Ben

IT'S NOT THE LIFE I WAS ALWAYS DREAMING OF
I ONLY WANTED WHAT WAS BEST FOR YOU
SLEEP NOW, MY LOVE,
UNTIL ANOTHER DAY
NO ONE WILL SUSPECT THE ROLE YOU PLAYED
BUT I WOULDN'T BE
TREATED MERCIFULLY
IF I STAYED!

*(BEN has packed his bags by this time and starts to leave.
EMILY is horrified)*

Chorus

WHAT KIND OF HUSBAND WOULD LEAVE HIS WIFE BEHIND?

Ben

IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT IF SHE'S ALL THEY FIND
AND JOHN'S ALREADY DEAD
SO I'LL SAVE ME, INSTEAD
TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

I ONCE KNEW A MAN WHO'D ALWAYS CHOOSE
TO DIE MANY DEATHS BUT NEVER LOSE
GOD KNOWS HOW I COULD HAVE DONE ANYMORE
BUT NOW, WHAT WAS EVERYTHING FOR?

Chorus

WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?
I THINK YOU'RE THROUGH NOW.

(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 PROMISE TO BE WED
BUT HE'S BROKE AND SO SHE LEAVES HIM
FOR A WEALTHY MAN, INSTEAD

OR SHE NEEDS A BETTER 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: **CLUELESS**

Emily

SAY HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS
WASHINGTON'S NOT AMUSED
BEN CAUGHT THE LAST BOAT OUT OF TOWN
HE'S LEFT YOU ON THE SHELF
THINKING ONLY OF HIMSELF
HE'S THE CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP BUT HE'S NOT GOIN' DOWN!

Peggy

IF THEY SHOULD ASK ME
DEEP, PROBING QUESTIONS
THEY WON'T GET MY CONFESSIONS!
I'LL SAY THAT I WAS SHOCKED AND DISILLUSIONED
THAT MY HUSBAND COULD HAVE DONE THIS TO ME!

IF I HAD GONE AWAY
I'D BE THE FIRST ONE TO SAY
"GOOD-BYE, BEST REGARDS, FROM JAMAICA"
I'D RATHER GET A TAN
FIND ME THE KIND OF MAN
WHO WOULD BE CONTENT TO SAY
"COME ON WITH ME, I'LL TAKE YA"

(instrumental)

Emily

AND IF THEY ACCUSE YOU
TELL THEM HOW HE USED YOU

Peggy

I NEVER WANTED TO BETRAY ANYONE
THAT IS WHAT I'LL GLADLY CONFESS TO ANYONE

Both

I/YOU LOVE MY/YOUR COUNTRY MORE THAN LIFE ITSELF.

Peggy

IF THEY COME FOR ME
IT WON'T BE A TRAGEDY
I'LL TRY TO KEEP MY COMPOSURE

Emily

SOMEHOW MAKE IT PLAIN
YOU'VE SIMPLY GONE INSANE

Both

ONE OF MANY LOYAL PATRIOTS
WHO JUST WENT NUTS!

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

IN SEVENTEEN EIGHTY-TWO
HERE'S WHAT WOMEN HAD TO DO:
TELL MEN YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW MUCH
YOU'VE GOT TO ACT NAÏVE
SO THAT THEY'LL ALL BELIEVE
WHEN YOU SAY YOU'RE OUT TO LUNCH
AND YOU DON'T HAVE A CLUE!

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?

Reed

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

I've just come from having interrogated the prisoner. He's confessed to complicity with General Arnold.

Washington

We're fully aware of Arnold's involvement.

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 me, 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!!

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!

(FERGUSON 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?

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!

Reed (*Snapping*)

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

Reed

I'd think that point should be obvious. 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?

(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 me. 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