

3

"MERRY GO ROUND"

A Play Written for Radio Presentation

by

MAX AFFORD.

and

Awarded First Prize

copy A

in

The Australian Broadcasting Commission's 1935 Play Competition

CHARACTERS:

THE NURSE

THE DOCTOR

JOHN FRASER

JANET FRASER

VIOLET FRASER

CLAUDE BASSINGTON

NANNIE

ASSISTANT DOCTOR

RADIO ANNOUNCER

MERRY-GO-ROUND ATTENDANT

ALL RADIO PLAYS SHOWN
HERE HAVE BEEN CATALOGUED
749.

THIS IS THE PROPERTY OF
THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION

THE PRODUCTION IS BY LAWRENCE H. CECIL.

.....000.....

*Aug 19
Wed 14
10am
10am
9.45*

M. H. ...

*12-13-14
19-20-21*

ANNOUNCER:

This play opens in the ante-room of an operating theatre of a large city hospital. It is a small bare room, fitted with lockers. At one end is an enamel washing basin. A door at one side leads out onto a corridor leading to the lawns. A second entrance opens into the operating theatre.

The time is about half-past two on a Saturday afternoon. A nurse stands by the half-open door, looking out across the lawns. On the largest of these, an old-fashioned steam merry-go-round has been erected, for this is the childrens' gala day. The creaking, jerky music and the delighted shouts of the youngsters penetrate even to this small room. The nurse, watching, smiles.

At the other end of the room, rinsing his hands under the tap, is a middle-aged doctor. His face is dark and worried and as he reaches for the towel, he glances irritably at the open door.

(Fade up subdued crowd noise outside. Mixed with this comes the sound of a waltz tune, "Blue Danube", jerking to a close. For a moment, there is silence. This is broken by the distant voice of the merry-go-round proprietor calling in a hoarse, raucous tone. "Come on, who's for another ride? ... That's a brave little man ... So you want to ride on the white horse, eh? ... There you are, then! ... Come on, little woman, don't be afraid. Now, then ... two more wanted ... that's the idea! Now, here we go again! Hold tight, everybody ...!")

Cheer
(There comes the shrill peep of the steam whistle. The blaring music gasps into action again. It starts slowly, jerkily, then gradually gathers speed until it spins along much faster than the usual tempo, with a mechanical rhythm that never varies. It continues for a few seconds at this whirling, racing speed.)

DOCTOR: (Sharply) Nurse. (No answer) Nurse! Nurse Gray!

NURSE: Sorry. I was watching the merry-go-round.

DOCTOR: Cursed thing! You can scarcely hear yourself speak above that infernal racket. Shut that door.

NURSE: All right.

(Click of door shutting. Immediately the sound of the children and the music of the merry-go-round are hushed to a low echo that is just audible between pauses in the dialogue)

DOCTOR: Heaven alone knows what possessed the directors to dump that screaming contraption in the hospital grounds! It's an outrage!

NURSE: Seems to be giving the children a lot of fun.

DOCTOR: Yes? Well, what is fun to children is murder to over-worked doctors! Just as if we hadn't enough to worry us without that thing blaring away in our ears all day!

NURSE: I know that we're terribly short-handed.

DOCTOR: It's scandalous! I was called at ten-thirty to assist in that spinal operation in number three. I had just time to bolt down a cup of tea when I had to go down to Ward Double-A and stand by that young woman ... what's her name?

NURSE: The pretty, dark-eyed girl? That's Mrs. Stanley? How is she?

DOCTOR: Her child should be born any time now. I've had to hand over to Dr. Williamson and get down here. Half-past two ... and I haven't had a bite of lunch!

NURSE: Can I make you a cup of cocoa?

DOCTOR: Thanks - no. We haven't time. Mc Kinley and Stewart are coming down directly. We have to get the patient under and make a start before they arrive.

NURSE: McKinley and Stewart? Must be a pretty serious case.

DOCTOR: Tumor of the paratoid. With malignant characteristics. And to make matters worse, the patient's an old man. Close on sixty, I believe. Fraser, his name is. Used to be fairly well off, it seems, until the depression hit him.

NURSE: That's the case brought in late last night. Taken ill suddenly while on a holiday, they said.

DOCTOR: Yes. His wife came with him. Little old-fashioned woman, very gentle in her manner. Snow-white hair and a tired little face. Seem to be a very devoted couple. She waited by his side all night and she's still with him now. Seems a shame that these things happen to the nicest people.

NURSE: (Quietly) There's not much hope?

DOCTOR: Very little, I'm afraid. Malignant tumor at sixty looks very bad. Still, McKinley and Stewart are two of the finest men in the hospital. We can only hope for the best.

NURSE: Does his wife know about this?

DOCTOR: I think so. Naturally, we couldn't tell her everything, but I'm sure she knows the truth. She's going to wait during the operation.

(A tap comes to the door)

Who is it?

VOICE: (Muffled) The patient is ready, doctor.

DOCTOR: Thank you. (Quieter, to NURSE) Help me on with these gloves, nurse.

NURSE: Yes. (Slight pause) Tumor of the paratoid, you said? How is the old chap standing the pain?

DOCTOR: Fairly well. However, I imagine he'll be pretty thankful for the ether.

NURSE: That's one great power that lies in our hands... to give these poor sufferers a temporary relief from their pain. And who knows what great happiness they may find in their brief respite from agony?

DOCTOR: Tie this gown at the back, nurse. Thanks. (Slower) You know, talking of that, my old surgeon at Edinburgh had a rather queer theory. He used to say that when certain people were given ether -- just at the point of unconsciousness -- their minds travelled back over their former lives. Quite sincere, he was.

NURSE: Here's your mask. (Slower) Wasn't he getting his ideas confused with drowning?

DOCTOR: Possibly -- because it sounds rather absurd. I always looked upon it as a lot of nonsense ... a kind of all wives' tale. (Slight pause) There, now! Are you ready?

NURSE: Quite ready.

DOCTOR: Then we'd better go in. Come along.

(Footsteps. Creak of door opening and closing. Immediately, the acoustic changes to that of a larger room. One senses air and loftiness and light. There is the subdued sound of liquid bubbling and the gentle hiss of escaping steam. The faint tinkle of steel instruments on glass is heard)

DOCTOR: Carbolic tray ... dressing of carbolic gauze ... instrument tray ... Yes, everything seems to be in order. That's our patient, nurse, on the table.

NURSE: He looks bad, poor fellow.

DOCTOR: It's his heart I'm afraid of. After you've given him the ether, you'd better keep a close watch on his pulse.

NURSE: (Quickly) Not too loud, doctor -- I think he can hear us.

DOCTOR: Oh. (His voice changes to a brisk cheerfulness) Well, old man -- so you're John Fraser? How are you feeling?

FRASER: (His voice is that of an old man, feeble and tremulous) I'm quite all right if I lie still, doctor.

DOCTOR: Good! Now, just relax. You must let us do the worrying now.

10:10 X (A short pause. The bubbling is heard and the sharp tinkle of instruments)

FRASER: Doctor.

DOCTOR: Yes?

FRASER: You're sure ... I'll pull through all right?

DOCTOR: Of course! Why, we're going to make a new man of you.

FRASER: (Simply) It isn't so much for me ... it's the wife. We've been side by side for a long time now. And this is the first time that we have faced trouble without ... being together.

DOCTOR: I understand.

FRASER: (With feeble eagerness) She is waiting outside, doctor. As soon as - as it's all over, would you tell her that everything is all right? She'll be worrying about me every minute.

DOCTOR: (Gently) I promise that she'll be the first to hear. Now, just lie quietly and don't worry about anything. Leave everything to us. (Aside) Nurse, you'd better stand ready.

NURSE: Everything is ready, doctor.

DOCTOR: Go ahead. ^{Dr. Stewart} About forty for a start.

NURSE: Yes. (Her voice becomes gently persuasive) Now then, old chap, you musn't fight against this. Just lie still and breathe naturally. Just as if you were going to sleep in your own bed.

STEWART:

FRASER: How white your hands are, nurse. My Janet had hands just like yours ; ... that was forty years ago. We were on our honeymoon ...

NURSE: (Gently) Take it easy. Deep, even breaths. You'll find yourself getting sleepier and sleepier ... sliding right away ... right ... away ...

FRASER: (His voice muffled and drowsy) Forty years ago ... our honeymoon at Brighton ... there was a merry-go-round. Janet's hair was golden as the sand ... and when we rode on the merry-go-round ... it flew out behind her. I was riding beside her ... my hand on hers ... I can remember it all so clearly ... Janet laughing ... the music playing ... while we rode round and round ... round ... and ... round ... (His voice trails sleepily away. There is no sound but his deep regular breathing as he sinks deeper and deeper into the sleep of anaesthesia)

(Then, heard dimly as though miles away in the patient's drugged brain, there is heard the sound of the merry-go-round, churning out its endless mechanical music. The whispers of the NURSE and the DOCTOR are heard over this background)

DOCTOR: How is he, nurse?

NURSE: Almost under. Another half-minute should do it.

DOCTOR: Good. *Here's Dr. McKinley now* You'd better tell the assistant to let McKinley and Stewart know that we're almost ready. *Good afternoon Ackroyd*

coming in Mac

NURSE: Yes. Right now? *Good afternoon Dr. Mac* *Everything ready?*

DOCTOR: No -- not yet. *quite ready* (His voice is faded slowly out) *Mac* First hand me over that medium knife ...

all right

(As his voice fades, the sound of the merry-go-round is heard nearer at hand. It seems to approach slowly down an endless tunnel of time, breaking through the mists which cloud Fraser's brain. Closer and closer comes the jerking, mechanical refrain of the "Blue Danube", until it seems to fill the whole space with its cheerful melody.

Even as we listen, the music begins to slow down. The acoustic has changed. Now we are out in the open air. The voices of JOHN FRASER and his young wife, JANET are the voices of youth, happy, vibrant and strong. The merry-go-round tune stumbles to a close.)

FRASER: Come on, Janet. Off you get.

JANET: Oh, John, help me. I'm quite giddy. Help me down.

FRASER: There you are. Well, darling, did you like it?

JANET: I loved every minute of it. I'd like to ride round and round and never stop!

FRASER: Fine sort of honeymoon that would be -- whizzing about on a merry-go-round! Why, we haven't sampled half the joys of Brighton yet.

JANET: I'm so happy I could sing. Is there anything in the world as wonderful as to be twenty years old, on your honeymoon and very much in love?

(The merry-go-round gives a gay little toot)

FRASER: There. The last ride for tonight. Do you want to go on again?

JANET: No. Let's walk down to the beach. It's quieter down there.

FRASER: As you say. Come along.

(On his last words, the jerking music of the merry-go-round starts close at hand. It gathers speed, but fades slowly as the couple move away from it. This fading should be gradual behind the following dialogue)

JANET: Don't go on the jetty. The crowds are terrible.

FRASER: The beach will probably be just as crowded.

JANET: ~~But at least we'll seem more alone.~~

FRASER: ^{water wheel} Here we are. Now - mind those steps. Hold up your skirt. I'll take your arm.

JANET: (Smiling) I'm afraid these dresses were never meant for the beach.

(A pause. In the distance the merry-go-round can be heard)

FRASER: Now. We're right on the water's edge.

JANET: (Softly) Isn't it still? Like a great purple mirror. Not a ripple anywhere. (More animatedly) And, John! -- look! Here's a little boat drawn up on the sand.

FRASER: Must be a row-boat belonging to one of the fishermen.

JANET: John!

FRASER: What now?

JANET: Let's go out on the water ... in that boat!

FRASER: But -- darling, the boat doesn't belong to us.

JANET: We can pay the man when we come back. Please, John ... it's such a heavenly evening and the water looks so wonderful. I'm sure it would be quite an adventure.

FRASER: All right. Come along. Jump in and I'll push it off. Mind your skirt, now -- it's trailing in the water.

JANET: (Laughing) I don't care. I'm so happy.

FRASER: Hold tight - here we go! (There is a splash of water) Don't rock it, dear -- sit still! Now - hand me those oars -- thanks.

(Creak of row-locks and little splashes of water. The sound of the merry-go-round is now a dim, far away echo.)

JANET: (Softly) Oh, John ... it's wonderful. Look at the lights on the beach. And those crowds on the jetty seem so funny from here. Why didn't we think of this before?

FRASER: We're far enough out now. I'm going to let her drift with the tide.

(Rowing sound stops. This scene should be played very quietly. There is silence except for an occasional soft ripple of water beneath the beat)

JANET: (Quietly) Doesn't it make you feel rather queer. Just we two, alone in all this space, watching that crowd over there. All this quiet sea ... it's rather like a wall ... a wall about us shutting off the rest of the world.

FRASER: Yes. If only we could always go through life like this. Just we two, shut away from the world and its troubles, happy in our love for each other and wanting nothing else.

JANET: We couldn't do that?

FRASER: (Gently) I'm afraid not, Janet. Life isn't all a gay whirl on a merry-go-round. There will be children, God willing. They will bring their own responsibilities. And life brings other troubles. No one escapes. Only some face them more cheerfully, than others.

JANET: We'll face them together, John. Side by side, through the years ... always together.

FRASER: Remember those words? "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health until death do us part"?

JANET: Yes. They seem to have a new meaning ... a more wonderful meaning ... out here in the silence.

FRASER: You're not afraid?

JANET: No. If we keep true to our promise of those words, nothing could make me afraid. And it won't be all shadows, John.

FRASER: No. We'll have great times together. I've got that senior accountancy in the bank now. They gave it to me as a wedding present. Some day, I'll be manager of that bank. And you'll have your household duties.

JANET: (Softly) And my little family.

FRASER: We planned for a boy and a girl.

JANET: Yes. A boy and a girl, God willing. I should like to call her Violet. That was my mother's name.

FRASER: And the boy?

JANET: Robert. After your father.

FRASER: (Softly) Robert ... and Violet. Oh, my darling ..

(A pause)

JANET: (Suddenly) John -- look! The lights on the beach are going out. It must be quite late. We must go back.

FRASER: Yes. It wouldn't do to be locked out of our boarding house.

(Rowing starts again. It continues through the following dialogue. JOHN has paused. Now he speaks half-jestingly)

You're very quiet, sweetheart. Penny for your thoughts.

JANET: I was looking into the future.

FRASER: The future?

JANET: Yes, twenty years hence. You know, John, I often think of time as a rushing train that races down through the years. And that train had carried me on to 1916. We had our own home and the children were almost grown-up. We were both happy and contented and I was sitting in the drawing room of my own home, waiting for you ...

(On her last words, we hear the sound of a train. An echo at first, it comes nearer, shrilling excitedly with its whistle, tearing along at tremendous)

speed and force. Its wild, mad
pace closer, filling all space as it
rocks and speeds around the bends and
across the endless plains of time.

Then it begins to fade. Over its
rushing rhythm, we hear music. A
gramophone is playing "If You were
the Only Girl in the World." The
Music rises higher and higher, com-
pletely drowning out the noise of the
train, which had faded into the dim
distance. Again the acoustic
has changed. We get the sense of
a room. The music continues long
enough for us to recognise the
melody)

JANET: (Calling) Violet. Violet, my child -- where are you?

VIOLET: (She sounds rather precocious) I'm in the drawing-room, mother. Playing the gramophone.

(Sound of door opening and shutting.
JANET'S voice sounds closer to the
microphone)

JANET: How many times have I told you not to play that dreadful record?

VIOLET: It's not a dreadful record. It's a song from "The Bing Boys." Miss Violet Lorraine sings it.

JANET: For a fifteen year old child, you know more than your mother. Now, take that record off.

VIOLET: But -- mother --

JANET: (Sharply) Violet! You heard what I said.

VIOLET: Oh, all right. (The music stops) There you are. But I don't know why you have to be so beastly old-fashioned. You seem to forget that this is 1916.

JANET: (Quietly) It's not a case of being old-fashioned. I want to address a letter to Robert while Nannie is getting dinner. I can't write while you are fox-trotting about the room.

VIOLET: Oh, mother. I won't be in to dinner.

JANET: Why not?

VIOLET: I'm going over to the Maynard's. Jack Maynard is taking me to the pictures. There's a new Theda Bara film I want to see.

JANET: Once and for all, Violet, I won't have you going out with Jack Maynard. He is five years older than you. Why - he is home from the war on leave!

- VIOLET: Mother. How absurd you are! There's nothing wrong in my going to the pictures with Jack. Lillian's coming with us, too.
- JANET: I thought you might like to stay home and write to Robert tonight.
- VIOLET: Bob doesn't want to hear from me. Anyhow, you can tell him all the family gossip.
- JANET: (Quietly) Aren't you being a little selfish, Violet? Your brother has been away at the war for almost a year now. And you haven't written to him once.
- VIOLET: But I can never think of anything to say.
- JANET: (Sharply) If you'd only stop admiring yourself in the mirror and filling your mind with pictures and dancing and ragtime music ... perhaps you could think of something interesting!
- VIOLET: But, mother -- you don't understand. All these things are necessary to me. I want to be an actress ... like Mary Pickford.
- JANET: An actress!
- VIOLET: Yes. I want to be beautiful -- to be admired! I want to marry a rich man and have wonderful clothes and motor-cars and servants. (With an odd little firmness) And I'm going to do it!
- JANET: You don't seem to realise how lucky you are, my child. This terrible war had penalised most people, but so far, we've escaped. Your father is manager of one of the finest banks in this town and one day, he'll be president. You have a good home, fine clothes, money to spend --
- VIOLET: (Interrupting) Yes, mother, I know. But these things aren't mine. I want all these things for myself. I want to get away from this place ... to travel ... to live glamorously and have lovers --
- JANET: (Outraged) Violet!
- VIOLET: (Stubbornly) Can't you see that things have moved on twenty years since you were a girl. Look at brother Bob. At twenty, he's seeing life and adventure. He's a captain in the army. While I am missing --
- (A clock striking seven is heard and she breaks off abruptly)
- Is that seven o'clock? I must fly! Goodbye, mum dear.
- JANET: (Calling) See that you're not home late, Violet. No more of this coming home after midnight -- (A slam of a door cuts through her words. She halts, gives a sigh) So that's the modern generation.

(Sound of opening door)

- FRASER: (Cheerfully) Janet. Why the long face?
- JANET: (Smiling) John, dear. When did you get home?
- FRASER: Just this minute. Sorry to be late. But I came through town to get this parcel for the boy.
- JANET: I hope they haven't forgotten the chocolate biscuits this time.
- FRASER: No. I made a point of asking. They're safe and sound.
- JANET: Will you address the parcel while I seal this letter. Write plainly, dear. I don't want it to go astray.
- FRASER: There you are. "Captain Robert Fraser." Aren't you proud of him?
- JANET: Proud isn't the word. I say that phrase "Captain Robert Fraser" over and over to myself. And it sounds more wonderful each time.
- FRASER: Just wait until he comes home on leave! Violet will be wild with excitement showing a brother in khaki round the town.
- JANET: (Quietly) John. I'm rather worried about Violet.
- FRASER: Worried? Why?
- JANET: She's growing up too fast, I think. She's out again tonight with that Jack Maynard.
- FRASER: That's the third time this week.
- JANET: I know. And she has such advanced ideas. Just before you came in, dear, she was saying the strangest things. About wanting to be an actress, and having fine clothes and money and -- (she hesitates over the word) and lovers --
- FRASER: (Doggedly) That's no way for a child of fifteen to talk! She wants a taste of the strap.
- JANET: (Gently) You know that you've never lifted your hand to the children since they were born. But I do wish you'd talk to Violet. She far too pretty, you know. And too keen on trashy pictures and novels. She goes about with people so much older than herself ... and I think they put wrong ideas into her head.
- FRASER: It's this war -- it's turned everything upside down. And Vi's just at the dangerous age.

JANET: (With a sigh) I'm just beginning to realise what you meant when you said that children brought their own responsibilities.

FRASER: You remember that? Twenty years ago. Jove, how the time flies!

JANET: Of course I remember it. That huge stretch of water, so quiet and so still. And two youngsters planning and building castles. Remember how we planned for Violet and Robert?

FRASER: Yes. Only they came the other way about.

JANET: (Slowly) Sometimes ... I almost wish they hadn't. I mean, I wish that Violet had come first. Somehow, I feel much nearer to Robert. I suppose it's because he was my first baby. (Quickly) Not that there's anything wrong with Violet, of course. She's just at the trying age. (Slower) But I'm afraid Robert will always be first favorite with me.

(Subdued, the buzz of a door-bell is heard)

FRASER: The front door-bell. Wonder who that can be?

JANET: Nannie will answer it -- she's in the dining room. (More slowly) You see, John, Robert always seemed different from Violet. He was more gentle ... had none of her wild ideas.

FRASER: You must remember that Vi's grown up in an entirely different environment. The world's changing fast and our girl has been raised among chaotic condition that - (The sound of an opening door halts him)

JANET: Yes, Nannie?

NANNIE: This telegram, ma'am. It just come. Urgent.

JANET: Thanks, Nannie. (Slight pause) It's for you, John. Here you are.

FRASER: Thanks.

JANET: You can serve dinner in a few minutes, Nannie. Miss Violet won't be home. Only we two will be sitting down.

NANNIE: Very good, ma'am. (Sound of door shutting)

JANET: (Smiling) Poor Nannie must be getting tired of letting Mabel cook meals that are never eaten when -- (She breaks off, her next words terrified) John! What's the matter? Are you ill?

FRASER: (His voice is dry, husky) This .. this telegram. It's from the War Office ...

JANET: War Office?

FRASER: It's ... about him. About Robert ...

- JANET: (It is almost a cry) John!
- FRASER: (Every word a dull, weighted load) He's .. killed ...
- JANET: (Repeats dully) Killed! Robert ... killed. (Realising) No, John ... no!
- FRASER: It's true, Janet.
- JANET: I can't believe it. It's unjust ... wicked! It's too cruel. Hundreds of thousands of boys out there -- yet our son -- (She is moaning almost incoherently)
- FRASER: (With clumsy kindness) There, there, my dear. Sit down ... don't tremble so. We'll have to face it, Janet.
- JANET: He was my baby, John ... my little baby. I loved him so. He had his little fingers twined about my heart. He was so tiny, so defenceless and when he smiled, I could have cried for joy. (Her voice rises) And now they've taken him from me ... my own baby ...
- FRASER: Now - now, Janet. Don't upset yourself.
- JANET: I feel that I've never needed you so much. Hold me tightly, John. Don't let me cry ... I musn't cry.
- FRASER: There now.
- (A pause. When JANET speaks again, her voice is steadier, but she gives the impression of holding herself under rigid self-control)
- JANET: I'm alright now. See ... I can stand up. It was just .. the first shock.
- FRASER: Is there anything I can do, dear?
- JANET: No. I - I think I'll go to my room.
- FRASER: Will I come?
- JANET: I'd rather you didn't. I'd like to be alone. You understand?
- FRASER: Of course, dear. *don't let me*
- (Pause. Sound of door opening and shutting. Nannie's voice is heard)
- NANNIE: Mr. Fraser, sir?
- FRASER: Yes, Nannie. What is it?
- NANNIE: I just saw Mrs. Fraser go upstairs, sir. Dinner's on the table and --
- FRASER: We won't be wanting dinner tonight, Nannie. We've had bad news. Mr. Robert's been ... killed

NANNIE: Oh, sir! I am sorry. Poor Mr. Robert -- and him so young!

FRASER: I'm afraid your dinner will be wasted tonight, Nannie.

NANNIE: Yes sir. There's - there's nothing I can do --?

FRASER: Thank you, Nannie -- no. That will be all.

NANNIE: (Subdued) Yes, sir.

(Sound of door opening. FRASER's voice is heard)

FRASER: Oh - Nannie.

NANNIE: Yes, sir?

FRASER: There is one thing you can do. (There is a queer sick pain in his voice) This parcel -- I don't want Mrs. Fraser to see it. Would you take it down to the recruiting office and have it sent on.

NANNIE: Yes, sir. And - and who will I send it to?

FRASER: (Quietly) Tell them to send it to anyone. It doesn't matter. Because we - we won't be needing it now.

(Once again that train is heard, distant at first then approaching nearer. On it races, whistle squealing, wheels pounding out a furious rumbling as it rushes on into the infinite. It passes and begins to fade when ...)

Over the departing echo, there comes the soft strains of a waltz tune, "Wonderful One", played by a string orchestra. It grows, gathering force and body until the melody is plainly recognisable. Mixed with it, we hear the sound of many voices, the subdued unintelligible monotone of a crowded gathering. The acoustic is that of a fairly large room. The melody and the crowd noise forms a background for the following dialogue)

FRASER: Well, Janet. Thank goodness this is almost over. These fashionable weddings and their receptions are rather trying to us middle-aged folk.

JANET: Just look at it all. I can't help contrasting Violet's wedding with ours, John.

FRASER: I'm rather tired of looking at it. Let's go into the drawing room. It will be quieter there.

JANET: Yes, dear.

(Footsteps. The crowd noise fades and the music dies to an echo. During this dialogue, the piece "Wonderful One" comes to an end)

- FRASER: (With a sigh of relaxation) That's better. What a comfort an old armchair can be!
- JANET: You musn't excite yourself too much. I'm worried about that pain in your throat.
- FRASER: Oh - that? It's nothing. Just a sore throat.
- JANET: You ought to see a doctor about it.
- FRASER: I've been too busy seeing caterers and musicians and decorators. Well, Violet always said she'd marry a rich man and she's certainly carried it out. Claude Bassington is one of the richest men on the Exchange.
- JANET: I only hope she's done right. After all, she's only twenty-five. Claude is over fifty.
- FRASER: (With fond grimness) Violet will be all right. Trust our daughter for that!
- JANET: She's loving every minute of it. Music, lights, crowds, flowers -- and Violet in the front of the picture. With all the newspapers carrying her photograph and printing stories about her.
- FRASER: I know.
- JANET: Look at this one -- right on the front page. Listen. (Reads) "The year 1926 opened with one of the smartest weddings our city has seen in many years, when Miss Violet Fraser, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Fraser, became the wife of Mr. Claude Bassington, the prominent city broker. Mr. John Fraser, who holds the position of president in the Westlake and United Bank, gave his daughter away and the reception, which was held at the brides home, was one of the most elaborate --"
- FRASER: (Interrupting) Yes - yes, I know it all. And I'm so tired of it.
- JANET: (Hurt) I'm sorry, John. I didn't mean --
- FRASER: Forgive me, Janet. I must be getting old. At fifty, I find all this cheap publicity rather boring.
- JANET: I know just how you feel, dear.
- FRASER: Perhaps I'm old-fashioned. But I feel that all this show -- all these lights and music and drinking ... well, it seems to cheapen marriage. It's too theatrical and showy. The real meaning of the marriage lines is lost under all this glitter and gaiety.
- JANET: Yes.

FRASER: Remember our marriage? It was in a Registry office ... and two of the cleaners were witnesses. There was none of this ... no flowers nor music ... no photographers or newspaper reporters. We had nothing save our love for each other.

JANET: And it has lasted, John. Lasted for thirty years.

~~FRASER: (Quietly) I wonder how long Violet's love for her husband will last? After the last cocktail is drunk, after the music is ended, the lights dimmed and the withered flowers thrown out -- I wonder what will remain?~~

JANET: You musn't talk like that. You frighten me.

~~FRASER: Sometimes, I think we were too good to Violet. We spoilt her. After Robert was killed, we idolised her too much. She could do anything with us -- ruled us altogether.~~

~~JANET: (With a sigh) It's too late to think about those things now. Violet is a woman - she's married and is rich and independent.~~

X (A pause. Suddenly, the crowd noise in the adjoining room swells up)

FRASER: What's happening?

JANET: It's Violet and Claude - they've just come in. They must be ready to go. Violet's changed - she's in the sweetest travelling frock. The crowd are saying goodbye. Violet and Claude are trying to break through. (A pause - quickly) They're coming in here.

VIOLET: (Her voice is heard some distance off) Mother (Her voice approaches) Oh, there you are!

JANET: Yes, dear. You're leaving now?

VIOLET: Yes. Isn't it wonderful? I'm so excited I can hardly breathe.

FRASER: You're a lucky woman, Vi. Not every wife gets a honeymoon in Europe.

VIOLET: I know, Dad. I have Claude to thank for that.

JANET: You'll take good care of our daughter, Claude?

BASSINGTON: Of course I will. I realise what a lucky man I am.

JANET: You'll write to us, Violet, while you're away?

VIOLET: Of course, mother. We'll let you know everything. And you'll write to us -- you have the address.

JANET: Of course we will.

(A motor-horn is heard outside.
It has a very modern note - low,
high, low, high, like a bugle call)

BASSINGTON: That's our car, dear.

VIOLET: We must hurry! Are you coming down to see us off?

JANET: We'd rather not, dear. All those crowds, you know ... We'd rather just say goodbye here -- alone with you.

VIOLET: I understand. (A trifle awkwardly) Well ... goodbye, mother.

JANET: (Unsteadily) Goodbye, my dear. I wish you all the happiness in the world.

VIOLET: Why, mother - you're crying. You poor sweet. You'll make your nose all red.

JANET: I don't care.

VIOLET: You musn't worry about me. It's not as though we were going away forever. We'll be back within six months. And then we'll see each other every day.

FRASER: Goodbye, Claude. I know you'll make Violet a good husband.

BASSINGTON: There's my hand on it, Fraser. (Slight pause) And, by the way ... (He hesitates)

FRASER: Yes?

BASSINGTON: You've made me a very happy man. If there is ever anything I can do for you in return -- anything at all, don't hesitate to call on me. Remember, I'm one of the family now.

FRASER: That's all right. Goodbye, Violet. Come and kiss your old Dad.

VIOLET: Goodbye, father. You've been a wonderful old sport ...

(The motor-horn is heard again. Low,
high, low, high)

We must fly! Come along, Claude. Goodbye, mother. Goodbye, Dad.

(There are murmured ad lib goodbyes.
The crowd noise swells up again
and continues in high, excited pitch.
Above this, the motor-horn is
heard again. Crowd noise dies
slowly. Then, after a pause, far
away in the distance, the motor-horn
is heard for the last time. It
dies away. There is a hush, con-
trasting with the noise that preceded
it. The following scene should be
played in absolute silence)

X
GOODBYE

JANET: (quietly) They've gone.

FRASER: Yes.

(A pause)

JANET: How still the house seems. How quiet.

FRASER: Just like it used to be ... before they came.

JANET: Yes.

FRASER: It's almost as though time has slipped back. There's only you and me now, just as we started out. (Pause) Why, Janet - you're crying. You musn't.

JANET: It seems so unfair. We bring our children into this world; we love them and we struggle for them -- and the world takes them away. Just as it took Robert. And now, Violet. Takes them away when we need them most.

FRASER: It's the way things happen, Janet. Every parent goes through it, sometime.

JANET: But is it worth while? Are the few brief years of childhood enough to compensate for this?

FRASER: That's a question every mother must have asked herself since the world began. You must find your own answer, my dear.

JANET: (Slowly) I seem to realise only one thing -- that somehow, we've lost Violet. Lost her as surely as we lost Robert.

FRASER: If we lost everything, Janet, we should still have each other. And we'd still be rich. Isn't that compensation enough -- to know that we can always be together, side by side, through the years to come

(His voice fades. Again we hear the train, faint and far-off. It continues, but remains in the dim background. Then we hear voices. They seem a long distance away, yet they are clear and penetrating. These voices are low, curt and tense with anxiety)

Stewart
nurse

Doctor! *M. Kinley*

Mac *is it*
What it is, nurse?

nurse His pulse -- it's failing, rapidly!!

Mac *Right. Get ready the emergency gear*
Call the assistant. Tell him to get busy with the oxygen.

over

It's useless, doctor! He's too weak -- he'll never pull through!

That's my responsibility! Do as you're told. (The voice, which has been curt and emotionless, rises suddenly) quickly! Dr. McKinley -- quick, doctor -- quick!

(Up comes the sound of the train, rushing nearer and drowning out the doctor's frenzied tones. As before, it approaches and passes. As it fades, we hear another voice, a deep, husky contralto. It is singing "Twentieth Century Blues". The song should be heard long enough to be recognised, then it should be faded down for the dialogue)

NANNIE: Will I turn off the wireless, Mrs. Fraser?

JANET: No thank you, Nannie. I'm waiting for the news session. It should come on after this song.

NANNIE: Mr. Fraser just came in, ma'am.

JANET: How is he?

NANNIE: Very tired, he looked, ma'am. Just washed out, like. All this trouble at the Bank isn't doing him any good.

JANET: I know. And the terrible part is that we can't do anything.

Disinterested Song
(A pause. The song comes to an end. The smooth, disinterested voice of the announcer flows into the room)

ANNOUNCER:

"We are about to commence the evening news session for Friday, the sixteenth of June, 1931. The time is just seven o'clock.

quicker
~~Following a rumor that the Westlake and United Bank was to close its door on account of the financial situation, today saw an increased number of depositors storming the bank to withdraw their funds. This is the fourth day since the rush on the bank began and this afternoon, when the bank was forced to close its doors, amazing scenes were witnessed. An angry crowd of some hundreds gathered in the street outside the bank and demanded to see the President, Mr. John Fraser. When he appeared, he gave the people his personal assurance that every penny owing to depositors would be paid out. It is said that the Banks finances --- are not able to meet the demand that is being made~~

JANET: (Breaking in, almost wildly) Turn it off, Nannie! Turn it off!

NANNIE: Yes, ma'am. *click - pause* (A click. The announcer's voice is cut off) There now, ma'am. Don't take on so. Everything will be all right.

JANET: I hope so, Nannie. I hope so.

NANNIE: I'll tell Mr. Fraser, ma'am, that you're waiting in the drawing room.

JANET: Thank you, Nannie.

(Click of door and a pause. The door is heard again)

FRASER: Hello, dear.

JANET: John! What is wrong? That cut on your head -- what's happened?

FRASER: (His voice sounds infinitely weary and old)
As I was coming out of the bank tonight, some of the crowd were still there. Someone threw a stone ...

JANET: Oh, my dear. Come, sit down. Now, I'll get Nannie to bring some hot water to bathe --

FRASER: (Interrupting wearily) No -- don't trouble. I'd forgotten all about the cut. I've worse troubles than that to think about.

JANET: I know, dear. If only I could do something ...

FRASER: There's nothing any of us can do, except wait.

JANET: Did you meet Sir Authur Conway?

FRASER: Yes. Sir Arthur, Miles Greenaway and Mr. Newland waited on me this afternoon. But it was useless. They couldn't lend anywhere near the amount we want.

JANET: But wouldn't that help --- ?

FRASER: It wouldn't be a drop in the bucket! We'd pay their sum out in a few hours. (Wearily)
~~Oh, they were willing enough, but they just couldn't raise the money. This damned depression has impoverished everybody!~~

JANET: ~~But the Bank must re-open tomorrow. You gave your word.~~

FRASER: ~~We can't re-open without additional funds. And there isn't enough in the vaults to pay a quarter of the depositors. Once they found we couldn't pay out -- it would mean the ruin of the Bank, and my reputation as president.~~

JANET: ~~What are we going to do?~~

FRASER: (Grimly) We've only one hope left. Bassington.

JANET: You are going to ask Claude to help us?

FRASER: Yes. He's done pretty well lately. Remember last month he told us that he was planning a round-the-world trip for Violet and himself? He's even bought Violet the boat. They are leaving within a few weeks.

JANET: Yes. But will he do it?

FRASER: I think so. Bassington's not a bad sort of chap; I've never forgotten how, on the afternoon of his wedding, he told us to call on him if we ever needed his help. We need it now -- urgently. I rang his office this afternoon and explained everything to him. He's coming around tonight with Violet. Said they'd be here about seven o'clock.

JANET: It's past seven now. (A door-bell buzzes)

FRASER: And here they are!

JANET: (Quietly) John. Just in case we can't get this help from Claude -- what will we do, then?

FRASER: There's only one other alternative. But I'm not going to think about that. After all, why shouldn't Claude help us. I can promise him a high rate of interest once we get on our feet -- (He breaks off as the door opens)

NANNIE: Mr. and Mrs. Bassington.

FRASER: Come in, Claude. Hello, Violet. How are you?

VIOLET: (She sounds very much the grande dame)
Charming, thank you, father. Hello, mother dear.

JANET: (Quietly) Hello, Violet.

VIOLET: I'll have a cigarette, Claude, please. I left mine in the car. You don't mind if I smoke in here, mother?

JANET: Not at all, dear.

FRASER: Have a cigar, Claude. Violet - take off your coat and sit down.

VIOLET: I'm afraid we can't stay very long, father. We have the car waiting outside. We're going to the Courtenay's for dinner and a theatre and we're rather late as it is.

BASSINGTON: (Awkwardly) I told Vi about tonight - but she'd already made this engagement and didn't want to break it. So we thought we'd drop in on our way.

FRASER: (Quietly) I see. Well, we won't beat about the bush since you can't stay. I explained the situation to you this afternoon. You're a rich man, Claude. What can you do to help us?

BASSINGTON: (Hesitantly) Well -- you see, Fraser, it's like this. I have made some money lately, but it's -- well -- sort of -- well, promised.

FRASER: Promised? But I can give you a higher rate of interest than any other --

BASSINGTON: (Breaking in) Well, promised is hardly the word. Mortgaged, as it were. You see, I've just bought this new boat for Vi -- and that ran me into a mint of money. Then there's all the expense of this world tour. We're doing it in rather grand style. Vi isn't satisfied with anything second-rate.

VIOLET: (Calmly) I certainly am not. ~~I've set my heart on this tour. Every day for the past five years, I've dreamt about it. We couldn't afford it before. Now that we can, I mean to do it properly.~~

FRASER: (Quietly) I see. Then you can't help me.

BASSINGTON: I'm - I'm afraid not. Frightfully sorry - but funds are absolutely tied up. Unless - well - unless Vi would be willing to put off her trip for another couple of years.

VIOLET: (Slowly) I beg your pardon, Claude?

BASSINGTON: You see how matters stand? Our lending you any money just at the moment seems rather out of the question.

FRASER: I suppose it would be too much to ask Violet to wait another two years for her trip?

VIOLET: It certainly would! You don't understand, father. Everybody in our social circle would wonder whatever had happened! The newspapers have carried stories of our trip for weeks now. Our photographs have been in all the magazines. We have written to friends, telling them to expect us. Why, if we cancelled the tour now, we would be the laughing stock of the whole town!

FRASER: I suppose you would rather see your own parents made a laughing stock!

VIOLET: (Coldly) I don't understand what you mean.

FRASER: Listen, Violet. You know what's happened at the Bank. People have put their money there because they had faith in the name of Fraser. Now they can't get that money. That means some of them may starve! Workmen with wives and children, starving! While you ride about in motor-cars and go to theatres and on world trips.

VIOLET: Don't be so vulgarly melodramatic, father. Nobody starves nowadays. If these people have lost their money, it's just too bad. They'll have to work and get more -- just the same as if Claude lost his money.

FRASER: (Harshly) Work! They can't get work! Don't you know there's a depression on, girl? Have

you smoked so many of those expensive cigarettes that the smoke's blinded your eyes to even that fact?

VIOLET: (Coldly) Is there any need to shout like a wharf-laborer? I must remind you that you're not talking to a servant.

FRASER: (Bitterly) What a fool I am to talk at all! I might have known that you'd turn out this way -- with your fancy ideas and selfish desires.

VIOLET: So one has to come back to one's own home to be insulted? How dare you speak to me like that!

FRASER: It's the truth, isn't it?

VIOLET: (With cold finality) If that is all you have to say, I see no reason why I should stay here and listen to you. Come, Claude?

FRASER: Just a minute! (His tone becomes gentle, pleading) Violet, you're our daughter -- our own flesh and blood. We brought you into this world; we fed you and clothed you and protected you when you needed it. We did so because we thought, as all parents think, that the day when we wanted your help, we could come to you. Doesn't this mean anything to you -- the fact of what we did for you as a child?

VIOLET: (Her voice tense with anger) What of it? I didn't ask to be brought into this world! I didn't ask you to help me as a child! You brought me alive of your own free will and it was your responsibility as parents to care for me. As soon as I was able, I struck out for myself - made myself rich and independent! I planned my life as I wanted it, without assistance from anybody. You gave me nothing except useless advice!

JANET: Oh, Violet! My child!

VIOLET: (Furiously) I'm not a child! But you seem to think that I am - that's the whole trouble. That -- and the fact that you're jealous --

FRASER: Jealous!

VIOLET: Yes -- jealous! Jealous of the fact that I've run my life on more successful lines than yours!

FRASER: (Slowly) Heartless and selfish you were as a child -- and as heartless and selfish you've grown to a woman. I only hope that I never set eyes on you again.

JANET: John -- no!

VIOLET: Don't distress yourself! This is the last chance you'll ever have of insulting me. I'll

never set foot inside the house again until you apologise. Come on, Claude! I'm going!

(A door slams violently. There is a pause)

BASSINGTON: I -- I say. I'm sorry about all this. Queer girl, Vi. Likes her own way, you know ... and ... (His voice trails off) Well, I'd better get along, too.

FRASER: That's all right. Goodbye, Claude.

BASSINGTON: Goodbye. Goodbye, Mother.

JANET: (Unsteadily) Goodbye, Claude.

(Footsteps. Sound of door shutting)

FRASER: (He draws a long deep breath) Well -- now we know just where we stand!

JANET: (Dully) I wan't believe ... I can't think! Our daughter --!

FRASER: (Grimly) Just block it right out of your mind -- just as if it had never happened. Try to forget all about it. We have enough to think about as it is.

JANET: The only alternative ...?

FRASER: Yes.

JANET: You mean -- we'll have to raise the money ourselves?

FRASER: It will mean a terrific sacrifice, Janet. But we must do it.

JANET: Anything you say, John.

FRASER: But don't you realise? It will mean selling everything -- this house, the land it stands on, your own jewellery, the motor-cars. Everything! We may even have to let Nannic go. Even then it won't cover the amount we want. But it will show people that we did our best.

JANET: And we'll be right back where we started. Just you and me. With nothing in the world but our two selves.

FRASER: (With slow wonder) Janet ... you're smiling. You don't mind this sacrifice?

JANET: No, John. I rather think I'll enjoy it. Because all this other -- it didn't bring the happiness we expected, did it? We've never been really as happy as on that night when we rode on the merry-go-round.

FRASER: More than thirty years ago. Yet I remember as if it were yesterday.

JANET: ~~We never forget our happiest times. I'll always remember that night. We had a few shillings in our pockets and we thought we could buy the world. I want to be like that again, John. And pray God that we may find happiness as wonderful and as lasting as on that night.~~

14 equal
Swamp X
(Again the train. Approaches, passes and dies away. As it fades, we hear once again the music of the merry-go-round, playing in jerky, mechanical rhythm the "Blue Danube." It growd louder, then is faded down to a background for the following dialogue. The acoustic is the free, open, echoless space of the beach)

JANET: Have another sandwich, John?

FRASER: No, thanks, dear. I've had enough. These beach picnics certainly give one an appetite.

JANET: You must eat, you know. That's why Dr. Forsythe ordered you to the seaside. You must get your strength back again.

FRASER: (Fondly) My dear Janet - don't worry about me. I'm quite all right.

JANET: You're not. I'm worried about that nasty lump in your throat. I can't help feeling that it's something to do with those pains you used to have. Why didn't you take Dr. Forsythe's advice about an operation.

FRASER: (Stolidly) I don't believe in operations. Nature didn't intend our bodies to be cut about.

JANET: Dr. Forsythe thinks it might be a growth. And that it is sapping your strength.

FRASER: Nonsense! My health is naturally weakened after all that trouble at the Bank. I carried on for almost four years, fighting every day. It stands to reason that such a struggle must be paid for in some way. Consequently, my health has broken down. This rest should put me on my feet again.

JANET: It was a struggle -- but we pulled through. We saved the Bank and our own good name.

FRASER: (Slowly) Four years ago! It seems impossible. That last night we saw Violet --

JANET: Don't talk about it, John. Poor Violet. She paid dearly for her selfishness.

FRASER: Yes. (Pause) There is a certain grim irony in the fact that her boat foundered in a storm a week out of port. With only three of the crew saved.

JANET: Yes.

FRASER: Poor Bassington. He wasn't a bad sort. He spoiled Violet, even more than we did. She ruled him -- body and soul.

JANET: She's dead, John. Surely you can forgive her now.

FRASER: Yes. I can ... now.

(A pause. The merry-go-round is heard in the distance)

JANET: John.

FRASER: Yes?

JANET: Isn't it a coincidence that when Dr. Forsythe ordered you to the beach, we should come here - to Brighton?

FRASER: (Smiling) It wasn't a co-incidence.

JANET: So you planned it that way?

FRASER: (Gently) Of course. We spent the happiest time of our lives here. Isn't it natural that we should want to come back again.

JANET: Remember the night when we took the boat out on the water? We've come a long, long way since then.

FRASER: Yes.

JANET: (Softly) We've raised a little family -- and they were taken from us. We made a fortune - and lost it. We have had heart-aches, discouragements, set-backs. If we knew then what we know now ... would we have had that same fine courage?

FRASER: I think so.

JANET: Life is strange. We set out bravely, like explorers conquering a new land. We struggle and fight onward ... and at the end of the journey, we find ourselves right back where we started.

FRASER: And it is only at the end of the trail that we realise we have been treading a beaten track -- one that countless millions of people have been treading before us. Round and round, like a squirrel in a cage.

JANET: Yet it doesn't seem hopeless. There have been so many wonderful moments.

FRASER: (Slowly) I think that's the whole secret. It isn't the big things of life that count so much as the little, insignificant moments. Talks by the fire-side. The scent of honey-suckle at night. The first smile of a baby. The hand-clasp of a friend. And above all, love and companionship. The realisation of someone by your side, sharing the bitterness as well as the sweets. And that's ... life.

(A pause. The merry-go-round music is heard a trifle louder, very gay and lilting)

JANET: John, listen.

FRASER: What?

JANET: Listen! (Pause) Hear it. The merry-go-round. Do you remember it?

FRASER: Of course.

JANET: John! Let us go for a ride -- now!

FRASER: (Smiling) Janet. Will you ever grow up. Two old fogies of nearly sixty, riding on a merry-go-round: Why, we're much too old --

JANET: No. We're not. Come on. It will be good to ride again, round and round., with that music in our ears. Oh, John, do come along, please.

FRASER: All right. If you wish it.

(The music of the merry-go-round gets closer during the following dialogue)

JANET: (Excitedly) Look -- look, John! I declare it must be the same one. See - there are the two white horses that we rode upon before!

FRASER: It couldn't possibly be ours, could it. Forty years is a long time. And yet -- listen to that music. It's the same piece!

FRASER: A very well-known piece of music, dear.

JANET: (Firmly) Even if it isn't the same one, I'm going to make believe it is. Hurry, John - it's stopping.

(The merry-go-round music is very close now. It is slowing and in the pause, as we listen, it gives a final gasp and is silent)

FRASER: We're just in time for the next ride. I've got the tickets. Come now. I'll lift you on.

JANET: We must ride on the white horses.

FRASER: (He gives a sudden choking moan) I - I don't think so. Let's just sit ... in the carriage.

JANET: (Quickly) John - what's wrong? You've gone pale! Is anything the matter?

FRASER: (With an effort) No - nothing. It was just hurrying, I think. I felt queer for a moment. I'm all right now. Get on.

JANET: You're ill. I don't want to go now. You're not w --

FRASER: Quickly, Janet. People are staring at us. Get on. They'll be starting in a moment.

(The merry-go-round whistle gives an impatient little toot)

JANET: In this carriage, then. Now. Let me hold your hand. You're sure you are quite all right.

FRASER: Of course. Now, hold tight. Here we go!

(On his word, the jerking music leaps into life. It gasps and pants into a slow start, gradually playing faster and faster until it is spinning around. The music should not be loud enough to drown out the following dialogue)

JANET: Isn't it wonderful! Doesn't it bring back memories?

FRASER: (In agony) Janet ...! I -- Oh ---

JANET: John - Sit up. You're falling! John! (Her voice rises in high panic above the throb of the music) Stop! My husband's ill! Stop ... please ... please ... STOP!

(With a sudden surge, the mechanical waltz tune rises high above her frenzied appeals. It churns on and on, garishly triumphant, filling the whole space with its remorseless rhythm, even as Life itself rushes on, regardless of the individual. Then gradually, the music begins to fade, dropping to an echo and then to complete silence. Far away, in this hush, we hear a familiar sound. It is the subdued bubbling of liquid and the faint hiss of escaping steam. Over this comes the tinkle of steel instruments on glass. The acoustic is that of a fairly large room)

A long pause, broken only the bubbling and hissing. Then the curt, emotionless tones of the doctor and nurse are heard)

DOCTOR: *2nd signal*
Then ^{six} (Wearily) Turn off the oxygen, nurse. It's useless.

NURSE: *after doctor*
May Poor chap. *That's the first patient I've lost in years*

DOCTOR: First time McKinley and Stewart have lost a patient in years.

NURSE: It wasn't an easy case. The growth extended right back behind the carotids.

DOCTOR: *Then* It was adherent in one place, too. Did you notice?

Over

NURSE: Yes. Left too long, I suppose?

DOCTOR: *Good* If he'd come to us ~~five~~ years sooner, there might have been a good chance. *Good afternoon*

NURSE: I'll call the assistants to take him away.

DOCTOR: Yes. Help me off with these gloves first. Thanks.

NURSE: By the way, someone will have to tell his wife. She's waiting outside, you know.

DOCTOR: I suppose I'll have to do it. I'm not actually looking forward to that job.

NURSE: Cheer up. It mightn'd be so hard. After all, it can't be so bad to lose anyone at that age. It isn't as though they were newly-married or had all their lives before them. The old chap said something about being married nearly forty years.

DOCTOR: All the same - death's death. And it's so dashed final!

NURSE: Oh, well. It's all in a day's work to us. I'll call those assistants.

(Footsteps and sound of opening door. Immediately, the music of the merry-go-round on the lawn flows into the room.)

DOCTOR: (To himself) I wish people wouldn't leave doors open. That hideous jangle gets on my nerves. Especially after an unsuccessful operation. Oh, well -- we're not miracle-workers.

NURSE: (Returning) Oh, doctor.

DOCTOR: What is it?

NURSE: Doctor Williamson's looking for you. I saw him coming down the corridor from Ward Double-A and - (She breaks off) Here he is now.

WILLIAMSON: Well, well. I thought I'd find you here. Got some fine news for you. That baby's arrived -- a bouncing boy, nine pounds to the ounce. Little Mrs. Stanley is as pleased as Punch!

DOCTOR: Good! Sorry my news isn't so cheerful.

WILLIAMSON: Oh? What happened?

DOCTOR: Patient died under the anaesthetic. Heart, I think. Still, he was an old man ... getting near sixty. Did you see his wife sitting out there in the corridor?

WILLIAMSON: Little grey-haired woman? Yes, she's still there.

DOCTOR:

Well, so that's how it goes. So Mrs. Stanley is the mother of a nine pound baby boy, eh? Well done. The new generation and the old. Hail and farewell! *Well I suppose I'd better meet the dead now.*

WILLIAMSON:

Yes, it is queer. The more I see of life, the more I realise what a crazy merry-go-round it is. One drops off and another come along to take his place. And so it goes on, year after year, round and round and round

(His voice trails away. Outside, the merry-go-round gives an important little toot of its whistle. The jerky, mechanical music starts again, gathers speed and goes racing on and on, filling all space with its whirling tempo. Gradually it begins to fade and dies slowly to an echo as

THE PLAY ENDS.