

It's significant in the way that it allows two very strong organizations to collaborate, rather than competing in a community.

Joseph and Mary Hospital

"No darling, there are masses of people in hospital at Christmas time. The wards are full as at other times."

"They are?" He couldn't believe it. She smiled at him and pushed the slight advantage she had gained.

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"Well, it stands to reason doesn't it? Pain just doesn't wait until after Christmas to come on, now do they? Pains don't know what season of the year it is, and you'll always find if there's fun or a party, or an outing or something nice, you'll have pains and can't enjoy the thing. Pains never sensibly appear when there's nothing jolly to do."

He agreed with that too, but looked around curiously shattered/ didn't understand why. She decided not to ask, but to push her position she had gained.

Well, for all the people who had been unfortunate enough to be caught in hospital over Christmas and for the sake of the nurses and doctors who had to stay there over Christmas to look after the sick people. They had a lot of fun and decorations and nice food, just the same as if you are at home.

"I don't believe it!" he exploded

"It's true. Its stands to reason-they want their fun too-and it's nicer, I should think to have Christmas with dozens of other people with you to enjoy it!"

"How can they enjoy it if they're ill?" he pointed out after some thought

"Not ill, exactly, but on the way to being better only not



These two hospitals have the region's leading employers with 10,100 employees. St. Mary's 1,493 staff and 465 doctors into the St. Joseph system for a combined 8,500 staff and 1,600 physicians.

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quite fit enough to go home, if you see what I mean. And some hospitals have television people come and film them so people at home can see the fun their having."

Peter really couldn't accept that "Now I know you're making it up."

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"But I'm not, darling, truly I'm not. We had it on last year, now didn't we, only you didn't watch the screen, you were too engrossed in your new train set."

That was a mistake, referring to the year before. His father had come home on a flying visit, and had been lying flat on his stomach on the floor with Peter, playing with the train set too. Peter's lips trembled, but he sternly bit on them and said, "Oh, that! I saw it, but I thought it was a sort of play got up in the studio, not real at all."

"Oh, Peter," she said helplessly. Other mothers didn't seem to have this trouble. The Jones children down the road had all been in hospital to have tonsils removed, and the young Marhams, one of whom was Peter's age, had made no fuss at all when one had been run over and had a broken leg, and the other two had fallen out of a tree and had concussion and cracked ribs. Their mothers had just phoned ambulances or called the doctor, and briskly gathered things together in case if they were bundled, and no questions asked. But Peter had always seemed different. A dreamer, not a boy to climb trees or get run over. A boy who thought and planned,

rather than blundered in and out of trouble. A boy who preferred to read adventure books and dream of the time when he would go to the Middle East like his father and work with the oil wells.

"I won't go." Peter said suddenly, in a rather frighteningly final tone. "Well, anyway, I won't go for one week, until we give father a chance to come home. Then we'll see."

She gasped. "No Peter we can't wait that long-" It was blurted out before she realized it. All she could see was the grave face of the doctor at the Mary and Doctor Threadingham Memorial Hospital. A big hospital, with a fine staff, but quite clearly they hadn't liked this case and they wanted the boy in at once, before matters got any worse.

Peter misconstrued. He stood up, still bent a little, and not removing one arm from his tummy. "It's like I thought. You really don't expect my father to come home, do you? Not ever. I expect they know he's dead already," and his face puckered...

He turned sharply away. She felt he had cut at her with a knife. She took the blow, steadying herself, and then returned to the attack, because she must do this. She was all alone now, and Edward would expect her to do it; reasonably, not clumsily and easily. He would expect her to put it to the boy so that he would go willingly and cheerfully, not just throw his things into a case and bundle him into a taxi ignoring the frozen grief and fear that would render him incapable of protesting even if he wanted to. Edward had had a lot to say about the way some parents take their children to the new strange world of hospital.

She tried again. "Darling, don't say such things. Listen, I love him you too, you know. He belongs to me as well you. He's so dear to me-"

"Then why did you let him go out to that old desert to get lost and shot at when you knew all the time that there was fighting going on near? I didn't know there was fighting. Nobody told me, or else or I've asked him not to go. We're not so hard up, are we, that father has to go to that place to earn his living?"

It was the worst reproach of all. Hadn't she begged Edward to apply to stay in London at the main office until the trouble died down? And hadn't Edward just looked at her, and before saying quietly, "You know I can't do that, Claire! His look had reproached her for putting to him the coward's way out.

"People have to go to places like that dear,

It wouldn't do if everyone to stay t home just there was a bit a trouble-we can't run and hide until the nasty things stop, now can we?" He went to the bunks and sat done on the edge of the bottom one, thinking. She flayed herself into saying some more." Darling, I promise you it will be all right. I'll come and visit you every day-the mother's do you know. And the minute I hear from Daddy or about him, I'll let you know. If I can't come at that moment to tell you, I'll telephone the ward and the sister will come and give you the news,"

"She will?" He couldn't believe that. "Why?"

"Because she's kind, they're all kind up on the wards. Its fun, you'll love it."

"I didn't see anyone kind when I went to the hospital to be poked and prodded by those men in white coats. No fun, either."

"That was only outpatients, darling. They're very busy and they have to get through their work in time to close the clinic for the day, but on the wards where people lie in beds and eat nice food and have fun, there's plenty of time. She swallowed. "At this very minute, they're all very hard at working making decorations to put up. Did you know that? And the night nurses put presents on everyone's bed at Christmas time, and they have shows and lovely food-"

"They do?" He was still suspicious.

"Darling, actually it's a proper Christmas hospital," she said, making her last effort and deciding that if she must diverge from the truth it had better be a fine and splendid divergence, and completely convincing. "Well look at the name of the place-that should prove it. Do you know what they call it?"

The Joseph and Mary Hospital. There, now!