

DANCE, LITTLE CHILDREN

Presented by the
KANSAS STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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- I... I had a lovely time, Hal.
- Yeah, sure. I'm glad you did. You're... You're alright. Well, look, it's late.
- Will I see you tomorrow?
- Nah, not tomorrow. Some of us fellows are going to the drag races over the weekend. But I'll call you some time when I get back.
- Fine. I'll be waiting.
- Well, I'll be seeing you.

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- Lynn?
- Yes, mother?
- Oh, I guess I must have dozed off. I was just going to rest my eyes for a minute. What time is it?
- Oh, it's just a little after 11.
- You're home early. Everything go alright?
- Perfect! I... I still can't believe it. Mom, he took me to the country club! Imagine me, dancing at the country club with Hal Grover. I... I wish you could have been there, Mom. They even had a combo! Thanks, Mom. Thanks for making me this dress. I know you should have spent the time sewing for your customers. But the dress was exactly right. I didn't feel a bit out of place.
- Well, when I sew for Hal's mother and her friends, I see the kind of dresses they wear and I just...
- I... I know Hal was impressed. And I think that's why he took me to the country club. He wanted to show me off! He likes me, mother. I just know he likes me a lot.
- Well then, dear, what the dress cost was worth it.
Unfortunately, the final cost of the dress has not been counted. The price that Lynn Corwin must pay will be a high one.
- Going up to bed now, dear? Don't forget about the gas before you go to bed.
The dress, like many other things in today's world, is part of an enormous subtle pressure which our times put upon young people.

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Evidence of a pressure is plentiful almost anywhere you go. Evidence of a worship of sex appeal, as if it were the final essence of personality. Who is to blame if young people respond to this pressure, reenacting in the privacy of parked cars a theme hurled at them from every side? Who is to blame if they respond to what an anxiety-ridden world seems to be telling them?

Dance faster, little children. The lyrics in a shadowy room may be suggestive. But at that they suggest something more human than most of the headlines around the spinning globe. Faster, faster, faster, faster, race to live while you may. And a part of the frenzy to experience, to learn about everything, takes Hal Grover and his friends to another part of the state to participate in the weekend meeting of drag racers from all over the area. But drag racing is not the only amusement a city has to offer.

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- Ah! How much longer are they gonna be? You'd think Hal could find some other place besides our room. You know, I'm tired, I wanna go to bed.
- Hal and his women... Finally!
- Yeah. Check that out. Come on, give up, lady.
- Still? He never quits.
- Well, don't you even have to take her back where you found her?
- Nah, she doesn't live far. Besides, she has to go home alone. Her parents the strict kind. They don't allow her to go out with boys.
- So she can go home and tell them about meeting a new girlfriend: Halen.

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- When I turned up the 3rd case of primary syphilis in ten days, I knew Oakdale was up against it. I don't mind saying... I was amazed. I've been out of medical school for 15 years, and haven't seen a handful of cases. And now, 3 of them in 10 days. And I'm not the only doctor in town reporting cases. It looks like a real outbreak.
- Well, that's for sure. And from the reports you and the other doctors have sent us, one that's pretty well confined to kids from 12 to 19 years old. What's more, it's too big for a health department this size to handle on our own. That's one reason we've asked for assistance from the state health department. They're sending us John Camp, who is especially trained for this work. Mrs. Elliott has been interviewing the patients you and the other doctors have sent us but she can only do so much. A public health nurse has a lot of other duties.

- Hello!

- Well, hi, John. We were just talking about you. You know Mrs. Elliott. This is Dr. Jamieson, president of the county medical society. Doctor, this is John Camp. He's field representative from the venereal disease program. Mr. Camp, we have a lot of work to do.

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Every doctor in Oakdale has a lot of work to do, including Dr. Sam Holdeene, Dr. Sam to those patients who have known him for many years.

- Won't you step in there?
 - Why, hello, Lynn. I'm glad to see you. Since we got you through the tonsillitis stage, I haven't had much chance to keep acquainted.
 - I don't think I'm really sick now, Dr. Sam. But this stuff is a nuisance and I just as soon be rid of it.
 - Alright, let's find out about this stuff.
 - Well, it's a breaking out. I tried to hide it with makeup but it's all over me. Mother thought it might be the three-day measles, but I may have had them.
 - Well, let me call a nurse and we'll check you over. Miss Dale, would you come in please?
 - Thanks a lot, Edna. Well, Dr. Sam, what do you think it is?
 - Could be a number of things. Maybe an allergy to some food. I'm writing you a prescription that may help. You use this for a couple of days and let me know if there's no change.
 - O.K., I will. I feel better already now that there's something I can do about it. Well, bye.
 - Oh, goodbye, Lynn. Give my regards to your mother.
- It could be an allergic reaction. That rash isn't entirely atypical.
- *It looks like syphilis*
 - Lynn Corwin? It couldn't be.
 - *Now hold on, Sam. You're a doctor. You know VD doesn't play favorites. Just because you brought that girl into the world and have taken care of her all her life doesn't make her immune. Why didn't you take a blood test?*
 - Because it just couldn't be.

As doctors are human, so there may be in their hearts the wish that some things just couldn't be. But as doctors are men of science, dedicated to the welfare of all their fellow beings, that wish must give way to a review of the facts. And the facts leave no room for wishful thinking. In the long years of his practice, Dr. Sam has too often seen the final tragedy of latent untreated syphilis. He has seen those whose minds were destroyed, whose bodies were horribly crippled. And he has seen helpless babies, born of syphilitic mothers, the most tragic victims of all. What Dr. Sam knows only too well wipes out every trace of his momentary wish that such things couldn't be where Lynn Corwin is concerned. Especially with Lynn Corwin, one of "his" children. Such things must not be. Syphilis can be cured. And if, regrettably, Lynn has syphilis, she must be cured.

- Lynn? This is Dr. Sam.

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As Lynn Corwin makes an appointment with Dr. Sam, other doctors have sent in young people whose disease has already been diagnosed for appointments with John Camp, the field representative. John Camp's job is not an easy one. Nobody wants to hear what he must tell those he interviews. And nobody wants to tell him what he must find out. For syphilis can be halted only if everyone involved is located and examined. With the approval of their personal physicians, John Camp interviews every patient diagnosed as having syphilis to learn the names of all those with whom the patient has had sexual intercourse.

- I appreciate you bringing you daughter down, Mr. Nedrick. The interview is confidential also, if you'd just take a seat in the hall.

- Yeah, I'll have a seat in the hall. I just brought her in to see if you can get it out of her. I can't find out what kind of trash she's been rolling with.

- Please, take a seat in the hall, Mr. Nedrick.

- I'm leaving. You're welcome to her. She's no daughter of mine.

The parents of teenagers who have blundered blindly into infection are sometimes more blind than the children they condemn. John Camp is all too familiar with typical parental reactions.

- It's that sex education they get in the school. If my boy hadn't known about such filthy things, he wouldn't have got curious. And he wouldn't be sick. I didn't want him to find out. Not me nor his daddy told him nothing. But some other busy bodies did.

- Oh, I'm surprised alright. But only that he had the guts to do it. He's the biggest panty waste I ever saw. I sowed my wild oats when I was a boy, but... Well, I didn't think that kid of mine had it in him. Look, I'm not gonna preach at him. It's the church's job to preach.

- My husband and I both tell you. It's not Junior's fault.

- It's all his fault. I just can't do a thing with him anymore.

Confronted with those who have been judged, who come to him even under the best of circumstances, ashamed and afraid, John Camp acts neither as judge nor prosecutor. He's an investigator, dealing with the facts.

- No, you didn't get syphilis from a toilet seat, Bill. You got it from sexual intercourse with somebody who had it. Now these are the people that we have to talk about, for their protection as well as for yours.

Nobody wants to talk. But because John Camp sees beyond the patient, to the welfare of the whole community, he must make these youngsters realize their responsibility.

- Alright, Bill. Now what about your very best girl?
- She's... There isn't any. I haven't got a best girl.
- You wouldn't wanna walk out of this room with somebody's life in your hands, would you, Bill?
- I... No, but she's alright.
- Bill, that's something a doctor has to decide. Now her name is...?
- Her name's Betty.

- Her name's Mary.

- His name is Jack.

- Her name is Susan.

- Roberta.

- Bob.

- Joan.

The names are many and there is usually more than one, for the patient must tell the names of all sexual contacts within the infectious period if the chain of infection is to be broken. What makes John Camp's job more difficult and increases the danger to the community is the fact that there's sometimes no name at all.

- Alright, Tom. Who else?
- Nobody, just them. Just them and some girl at the ballpark I didn't even catch her name.
- Where does she live?
- Who knows, it was a night game. We never got out of the park.
- Tell me what she looked like. Anything you can remember about her.
- She was just a pickup.
- She may be the reason you're sitting where you are now.
- If she is, I wish I'd never laid eyes on her. She really gave me the come on. And her a foot taller than me. She has sort of light blond hair.

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Starting with a known hangout, the ballpark. With only a vague description of a girl, the field representative tries to find one of the known contacts of an infected person. And here, as with all other cases in Oakdale, he is successful in locating a potential source of syphilis, the tall aggressive blonde.

Unfortunately for other communities, a number of contacts are named in surrounding towns. Locating a possibly infected boyfriend in Ashton may be simple. Since Ashton is across a state line, another state health department is alerted to find the boyfriend.

Another field representative continues the search, perhaps finding that in our increasingly mobile society, a search has become more complicated. The job of this field representative now becomes one of knocking on doors in the last known neighborhood, seeking clues, asking, continuing to ask until he finds someone who knows where the Farleys or the Hagens or the Smiths have moved.

To California, to New Hampshire, to Mexico. The Oakdale outbreak has spread its tentacles nationwide, crossed an international boundary. It is not and has not been from the beginning Oakdale's problem alone. Syphilis is not only an individual problem but a community problem as well, as Hal Grover's father is finding out.

- I always thought you were a good doctor. But now I'm gonna find out if there's any legal action that I can take. It looks to me like you're violating medical ethics. What a doctor treats a patient for is nobody else's business! But you had to call in the whole Health Department! Subjecting a boy to that kind of questioning...

- And those interviews are confidential. If you know what the boy was asked, it's because he told you. As for me, I was following good medical practice and obeying the law. VD has to be reported to the Health Department. Protection of the public is more important than the temporary embarrassment to your boy.

- Him, embarrassed? His mother is sick with mortification. And I can't stand to look my friends in the eyes, whether they know what's happened or not. But he's not embarrassed. I told him I didn't even want to claim him for a son. You know what he said? He looked at me as bold as brass and he said... "You never did." I bought that boy everything in the world he ever asked for. Bicycles, ponies, a car. He's got the best clothes. And the biggest allowance in town. What more can he want?

- I don't know. Maybe he wants the thing he seems to have been looking for pretty desperately. Somebody who cares.

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- I wasn't worried when she was out with him. He came from one of the best families in town.

- If it just wouldn't make it harder for Lynn, I'd haul Hal Grover out in the town square and beat him within an inch of his life.

- Now that might be the least of his troubles. I believe Lynn, and I think you do too when she says he was the only one.

- It isn't all Hall's fault. I could have... If I'd just stopped to think. But I wanted him to like me. Mom said she wasn't worried when I was out with him. But I was the one she couldn't trust. I was the one...

Lynn is more fortunate than some, to have parents who would make the difficult effort to understand. With Dr. Sam's help, Lynn Corwin will be cured of the physical disease, although she may never be free of its emotional consequences. The 50 or more young people who are victims of the Oakdale outbreak will all be cured, either in the clinic of their Health Department, or by their personal physicians. The outbreak in Oakdale will be over, the local Health Department's file marked "closed".

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Somewhere, in a city where a drag race was held, is one who was forgotten, whose name, if it was ever known, was not reported. Is this your town? Is this your daughter? Is this your son?

Dance on, little children.

A CENTRON PRODUCTION

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