

EPISODE FOUR

Maternal

Scene: a room in a hospital: bed, chair. The door in the back now opens on a corridor; the window on a tall building going up.

Sounds: outside window- riveting.

Characters in the scene

YOUNG WOMAN
DOCTORS
NURSES
HUSBAND

Characters seen but not heard

WOMAN IN WHEEL CHAIR
WOMAN IN BATHROBE
STRETCHER WAGON
NURSE WITH TRAY
NURSE WITH COVERED BASIN

At rise YOUNG WOMAN lies still in bed. The door is open. In the corridor, a stretcher wagon goes by. Enter NURSE.

NURSE: How are you feeling today? *(No response from YOUNG WOMAN.)* Better? *(No response.)* No pain? *(No response.)* NURSE takes her watch in one hand, YOUNG WOMANs wrist in the other - stands, then goes to chart at foot of bed - writes.) You're getting along fine. *(No response.)* Such a sweet baby you have, too. *(No response.)* Aren't you glad it's a girl? *(YOUNG WOMAN makes sign with her head 'No'.)* You're not! Oh, my! That's no way to talk! Men want boys-women ought to want girls. *(No response.)* Maybe you didn't want either, eh? *(YOUNG WOMAN signs 'No'. Riveting machine.)* You'll feel different when it begins to nurse. You'll just love it then. Your milk hasn't come yet - has it? *(Sign - 'No'.)* It will! *(Sign - 'No'.)* Oh, you don't know Doctor! *(Goes to door - turns.)* Anything else you want? *(YOUNG WOMAN points to window.)* Draft? *(Sign - 'No'.)* The noise? *(YOUNG WOMAN signs 'Yes'.)* Oh, that can't be helped. Hospital's got to have a new wing. We're the biggest Maternity Hospital in the world.

I'll close the window, though. (YOUNG WOMAN *signs 'No'.*)
No?

YOUNG WOMAN (*whispers*). I smell everything then.

NURSE (*starting out the door - riveting machine.*) Here's your man!

Enter HUSBAND *with large bouquet. Crosses to bed.*

HUSBAND. Well, how are we today? (YOUNG WOMAN - *no response.*)

NURSE. She's getting stronger!

HUSBAND. Of course she is!

NURSE (*taking flowers*). See what your husband brought you.

HUSBAND. Better put 'em in water right away. (*Exit* NURSE.)
Everything *OK.?* (YOUNG WOMAN *signs 'No'.*) Now see here, my dear, you've got to brace up, you know! And - and face things! Everybody's got to brace up and face things! That's what makes the world go round. I know all you've been through but - (YOUNG WOMAN *signs 'No'.*) Oh, yes I do! I know all about it! I was right outside all the time! (YOUNG WOMAN *makes violent gestures of 'No'. Ignoring.*) Oh yes! But you've got to brace up now! Make an effort! Pull yourself together! Start the up-hill climb! Oh I've been down - but I haven't stayed down. I've been licked but I haven't stayed licked! I've pulled myself up by my own bootstraps, and that's what you've got to do! Will power! That's what conquers! Look at me! Now you've got to brace up! Face the music! Stand the gaff! Take life by the horns! Look it in the face! - Having a baby's natural! Perfectly natural thing - why should -

YOUNG WOMAN *chokes - points wildly to door. Enter*

NURSE *with flowers in a vase.*

NURSE. What's the matter?

HUSBAND. She's got that gagging again - like she had the last time I was here.

YOUNG WOMAN *gestures him out.*

NURSE. Better go, Sir.

HUSBAND (*at door*). I'll be back.

YOUNG WOMAN *gasping and gesturing.*

NURSE. She needs rest.

HUSBAND. Tomorrow then. I'll be back tomorrow- tomorrow and every day- goodbye. (*Exits.*)

:NURSE. You got a mighty nice husband, I guess you know that?
(Writes on chart.) Gagging.

Corridor life - WOMAN IN BATHROBE passes door. Enter DOCTOR, YOUNG DOCTOR, NURSE, wheeling surgeon's wagon with bottles, instruments, etc.

DOCTOR. How's the little lady today? (Crosses to bed.)

NURSE. She's better, Doctor.

DOCTOR. Of course she's better! She's all right- aren't you?
(YOUNG WOMAN does not respond.) What's the matter?
Can't you talk? (Drops her hand. Takes chart.)

NURSE. She's a little weak yet, Doctor.

DOCTOR (at chart). Milk hasn't come yet?

NURSE. No, Doctor.

DOCTOR. Put the child to breast. (YOUNG WOMAN - 'No - no!' -Riveting machine.) No? Don't you want to nurse your baby? (YOUNG WOMAN signs 'No'.) Why not? (No response.) These modern neurotic women, eh, Doctor? What are we going to do with 'em? (YOUNG DOCTOR laughs. NURSE smiles.) Bring the baby!

YOUNG WOMAN. No!

DOCTOR. Well - that's strong enough. I thought you were too weak to talk - that's better. You don't want your baby?

YOUNG WOMAN. No.

DOCTOR. What do you want?

YOUNG WOMAN. Let alone - let alone.

DOCTOR. Bring the baby.

NURSE. Yes, Doctor - she's behaved very badly every time,
Doctor - very upset - maybe we better not.

DOCTOR. I decide what we better and better not here, Nurse!

NURSE. Yes, Doctor.

DOCTOR. Bring the baby.

NURSE. Yes, Doctor.

DOCTOR (with chart). Gagging - you mean nausea.

NURSE. Yes, Doctor, but -

DOCTOR. No buts, nurse.

NURSE. Yes, Doctor.