

~~Time passes.~~

NARRATOR And then one day, the Boy was ill.

Music: #14 Sick Bed

NARRATOR His face grew very flushed and he talked in his sleep, and strange people came and went in the nursery. And through it all, the little Rabbit lay hidden from sight under the bedclothes, for he was afraid that if they found him someone might take him away, and he knew the boy needed him.

~~The doctor comes and goes, taking the Boy's temperature and so on. The Boy's condition deteriorates.~~

START

RABBIT You're going to get better. And when you get better, we'll go out to the garden and play, like we used to. We'll go in the flower beds and eat the raspberries. And play on the swing. It won't be long now, I promise. You're going to be well again. Go to sleep.

*The Doctor returns. Gradually the Child's condition improves and the music becomes hopeful.*

NARRATOR And presently the fever turned, and the Child got better. They were able to in bed, and one day, they let the child get up and dress

*On the balcony.*

*The Child sits with the Rabbit at their side*

CHILD Did you hear what the doctor said? We're going to the seaside to get me well again.

RABBIT What's the seaside?

CHILD It's – it's where the world seems to end, and there's just sand and then water stretching as far as you can see.

RABBIT What do people do there?

CHILD It's perfect for playing. You can make sand castles, and jump around in the waves – those are like big walls of water that crash on the shore - and you can jump in them, and swim.

RABBIT It sounds wonderful. Why will it make you get well?

CHILD I don't know. But all sorts of creatures live there, like tiny crabs who come and play in the sand castles, and starfish and all sorts of clams and things.

RABBIT When are we going?

CHILD Tomorrow. By tomorrow evening we'll be there. Can you imagine!

~~Nanna comes bustling in.~~

~~NANNA Go inside now! There's a lot to do!~~

*The Chil runs off. The Rabbit is left alone.*

*d*

RABBIT Tomorrow we shall go to the seaside. I want so much to see the big waves coming in, and the tiny crabs, and the sand castles.

END

*NANNA back on and starts tidying. She looks tired. She finds the Rabbit*

NANNA Oh look at this, here's that old bunny. A mass of scarlet fever germs, I don't doubt. He can't keep it. It'll have to be burnt.

*A beat*

NANNA I'll get him a new one.

*The Rabbit understands.*

*Music #15 Apotheosis*

NARRATOR And so the little Rabbit was put into a sack with the old picture books and a lot of rubbish, and carried out to the end of the garden behind the fowl-house.

That was a fine place to make a bonfire, only the gardener was too busy just then to attend to it. He had the potatoes to dig and the green peas to gather, so he left the Rabbit there and promised to come back quite early in the morning and burn the whole lot.

That night, the Boy slept in a different bedroom, and he had a new bunny to sleep with him. It was a splendid bunny, all white plush with real glass eyes, but the Boy was too excited to care very much about it. For tomorrow he was going to the seaside, and that was such a wonderful thing, he could think of nothing else.

*During the above, we see the Boy with his new bunny.*

*The Rabbit is alone on the top of the bonfire*

And while the Boy was asleep, dreaming of the seaside, the little Rabbit sat among the old picture books and toys waiting on the bonfire at the end of the garden, and felt very lonely. His coat had grown so thin and threadbare from hugging that it was no longer any protection to him and he was shivering a little.

Nearby he could see the thicket of raspberry canes, growing tall and close like a tropical jungle, in whose shadow he had played with the Boy on bygone days. He thought of those long sunlit hours in the garden – how happy they were – and a great sadness came over him.

He seemed to see them all pass before him, each more beautiful than the other – the fortress, and the fairy huts in the flower bed, the quiet evenings in the wood when he lay in the bracken and the little ants ran over his paws; the wonderful day when he first knew that he was real. He thought of the Skin Horse, so wise and gentle, and all that he had told him.