

## Surprise Attack

NATIONAL FILM & TELEVISION ARCHIVE

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SURPRISE ATTACK

“Hello, you’re back early. Where’s Pat?

- I’ve got her here. I think you’d better have a look at her.
- Why, what’s the matter with her?
- Oh, she’s a bit off-colour. She asked me to carry her back from the garden.
- Oh dear, what a shame, on your birthday too. What’s the matter, ducky, got a tummy ache? She’s got a temperature; we’d better put the other children off.”

“There you are, Pat. We’ll soon have you well again. Alright, Mrs. Lees, well, keep her warm but don’t give her too much to eat while she’s still got a temperature. I’ll look in again in a couple of days’ time, but if you see any signs of a rash, give me a ring, will you?

- Is it likely to be chickenpox or measles, Doctor?
- It might be. It’s impossible to say at the moment.
- Well, I’ll see you down.
- It’s alright, don’t bother. I can find my own way out.”

“Taylor here. Oh yes, Mrs. Lees. I see, yes. What’s her temperature? Where about is the rash? Legs and arms. Alright, I’ll come along right away.”

“Is there a telephone here?

- Yes, downstairs in the hall.
- Do you mind if I make a call?
- No, please, do.
- Thank you.”

“Medical Officer of Health here. Who? Oh, it’s you, Taylor. Yes, you’re very lucky to catch me. I only looked into the office for a minute to pick up some theatre tickets. Yes, my wife and I are having a night out. Are you sure? Yes, of course I will. What’s the address? 27 Harvey Road. I’ll be there in ten minutes.”

“You know, I’m afraid there’s no doubt about it. Poor wee mite.

- Better break it to the parents, I suppose.

- Yes, I think you'd better tell them. Do you mind?
- I'm afraid you must prepare yourselves for a shock. I'd hoped I might be wrong, but I'm sorry to say Doctor Williams agrees with me.
- Well, let's have it.
- It's smallpox, I'm afraid.
- Smallpox? But that's impossible!
- Unlikely but not impossible.
- How can she have got smallpox?
- That's what we've got to try to find out, Mrs. Lees.
- You've never had her vaccinated, have you?
- No, no, never, but I've always been meaning to.
- M. Lees, you're home on leave from the East, aren't you?
- That's right, been back nearly 3 weeks.
- Mmh, did you bring anything with you? Apart from your normal equipment, I mean.
- One or two odds and ends for the wife. Let's see. Dress material, couple of necklaces and I picked up a rag doll for Pat.
- Where, the market?
- Yes, but can a thing carry infection?
- Oh yes, that's quite possible.
- Better have had her vaccinated.
- Now, now, Mrs. Lees, it's no good crying over spilled milk. Your child's got smallpox and we're gonna do our very best to get her well again.
- I'll get on the regional board about a hospital.
- Right. Now, my first job is to try and prevent this from spreading, and that's where you two can help me. I want from you, first of all, an exact account of her movements during the past week, the people she's seen and so on. Then I want to know whether you sent in the sheets or towels to the laundry and if so, what laundry, and I want you both to go and get vaccinated first thing tomorrow morning.
- Well, I was done less than a year ago.
- Sorry, I'm afraid it'll have to be done again. Now look, let's get down to these details, shall we?"

"I've sent for you because you've all volunteered to take on isolation work in an emergency. Well, I'm sorry to say there's been a case of smallpox, a child, and we're going to open up the isolation hospital at Fordingham. I'm afraid it's very short notice, but I want you all to be ready to leave here in an hour's time.

- Yes, Matron.
- Well, 'think you'd better start putting your things together."

"Right, I'll advise you of further developments. Thank you. Goodbye. So much for the Ministry. Now we've got to write a letter to every doctor in this area.

- Individual letters or shall I cut a stencil?
- No, cut a stencil. Dear [Blank], A case of smallpox has occurred, 27 Harvey Road, Trenton"

AMBULANCE

“Smallpox, that’s what they say it is.

- Smallpox? Surely not.
- BBC Home Service, here is the news.
- Charlie, heard the latest? smallpox in Harvey Road.”

POLICE NOTICE

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EMERGENCY VACCINATION CENTRES HAVE BEEN OPENED AT: ST MARGARET’S SCHOOL, TRENTON DRILL HALL, THE PUBLIC LIBRARY, THE YMCA, ST MICHAEL’S CHURCH HALL

“Do what you like about yours but I’m going to take my two to it down straight away.”

EMERGENCY VACCINATION CENTRE

FLAKE CIGARETTES

“Well, it’s not the sort of thing you’d expect in this country, is it, Sir?”

“I mean, I saw quite a lot of it abroad when I was in the RAF, but when you get smallpox...”

BREAKING NEWS

SMALLPOX MORE SUSPECTED CASES

“You’d better make that a double.

- That makes the fifth cancellation we’ve had today, really. We shall soon be out of business at this rate.”

“Yes, it’s not going too badly. Nothing definitive yet. One case looks a bit suspicious. Yes, of course, I’ll let you know immediately. Oh, the child, she’s pretty bad, I’m afraid. They maybe be able to save her, but it’s too early to say yet. I don’t know.”

“Haven’t they told you anything more?

- No more than they told you.
- This morning, they said she was ‘no worse’.
- Well, I suppose that’s something to be thankful for.
- Do you think that...
- You go, dear.
- *Hello. Yes. I see. Yes. Well, that’s wonderful. Doctor Taylor’s here. Would you like a word with him? Right. Hang on. They’d like a word with you, Doc.*
- *Taylor here.*
- They think she’s gonna be alright.
- Oh, Bill!
- *Alright, thanks for letting me know. Goodbye.*

- Well. Everything's alright, isn't it?
- Your child's out of danger, alright. But I think I ought to warn you, her face will be marked, for life."

"Well, that's how the Trenton outbreak started. If that child had been vaccinated, we probably shouldn't have had it. As it turned out, there were 11 cases, 4 of them died. We thought we got off very lightly. Altogether just over 35 thousand people were vaccinated in my area. Now I'd like to show you what smallpox really looks like, but I should warn you it's not a very pleasant sight. These are all typical cases. Well, there you are, that's smallpox. It's a very dreadful disease. Now there's not absolute guarantee against smallpox, but if children are vaccinated as babies and once or twice afterwards, they're very unlikely to get it. But you must remember that by the time your children have grown up, air travel will be general and the danger of smallpox, which comes from abroad, even greater than it is today. So, is it worth taking the risk?"

A CROWN FILM UNIT PRODUCTION  
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SOUND RCA SYSTEM

THE END

A C.O.I. FILM FOR THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IN COLLABORATION WITH THE  
CENTRAL COUNCIL FOR HEALTH EDUCATION  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF SMALLPOX CASES BY COURTESY OF MESSRS. CASSEL & CO.  
LTD, FROM "DIAGNOSIS OF SMALLPOX", BY RICKETTS AND BYLES.

ASK YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR OR WELFARE CENTRE ABOUT GETTING YOUR  
BABY VACCINATED