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# **Circle Line**

**A Short Play**

**by**

**Jill Elaine Hughes**

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# Circle Line

by Jill Elaine Hughes

## **CHARACTERS**

**ANNETTE (“A”)**  
**BERNARD (“B”)**  
**CATHERINE (“C”)**  
**DONALD (“D”)**  
**ENGINEER (“E”)**

## **SETTING**

*A subway platform at Central Station, Amsterdam*

## **ETC**

### **EARLY PRODUCTION HISTORY**

Staged reading by Wood Street Theatre, Palatine, IL, April 2005  
World Premiere by Speaking Ring Theatre, Chicago, IL June 2005  
Produced by NewGate Theatre, Providence, RI June-July 2005  
Produced by Gorilla Tango Theatre, Chicago, IL Oct 19-22, 2006  
Produced by Mind The Gap Theatre, NYC, 2007

### **PRODUCTION NOTE**

“Circle Line” is a “circular” play meant to run in a continuous loop although it can also be run only once.

Circle Line  
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*(AT RISE: ANNETTE, BERNARD, CATHERINE & DONALD on the platform; ANNETTE and BERNARD are at one end of the platform, CATHERINE and DONALD at the other. THEY are all leaning over the tracks and staring down the line, bewildered.)*

ANNETTE  
We're going to be here a long time.

BERNARD  
Yes, dear.

CATHERINE  
We're going to be here a long time.

DONALD  
We're going to be late.

CATHERINE  
Obviously.

DONALD  
We're going to be late.

ANNETTE  
This line is running slow, isn't it?

BERNARD  
Can't we switch to the other line?

ANNETTE  
The other line goes to Belgium. We're not going to Belgium, dear. We're going to The Hague.

BERNARD  
Can't we go to Belgium instead?

ANNETTE  
No, dear.

CATHERINE  
They've been having problems with the engineers, you know.

DONALD

What do you mean?

CATHERINE

The engineers. They've all been on strike.

DONALD

They can't be on strike now.

CATHERINE

Why not?

DONALD

If they were, the trains wouldn't be running at all.

CATHERINE

This train doesn't seem to be running.

DONALD

But some of them are.

CATHERINE

This one isn't.

DONALD

But *some* of them are.

CATHERINE

But this one isn't.

BERNARD

I think we should go to Belgium instead.

ANNETTE

No. We're going to the funeral.

BERNARD

I think we should.

ANNETTE

No. We've been through all of this already.

BERNARD

It would be so nice, dear.

ANNETTE

We can't. That's not where we're going.

BERNARD

You never do anything I want to do.

ANNETTE

It's a funeral. It's not about what anybody wants. Somebody *died*.

BERNARD

I've always loved looking at all the pretty houses on the way to Belgium.

ANNETTE

Your brother's funeral is not in Belgium, dear.

CATHERINE

None of the engineers are working.

DONALD

Some of them are.

CATHERINE

They're not. They can't be.

DONALD

They're back at work. The strike ended on Tuesday. It was in the paper.

CATHERINE

The engineers on this line must have stayed on strike.

DONALD

Nobody stayed on strike, dear.

CATHERINE

If I were an engineer, I would have stayed on strike.

DONALD

Nobody stayed on strike. The union won all its demands.

CATHERINE

Then there is a new strike. An insurrection.

DONALD

No one is having an insurrection.

ANNETTE

Your *dead brother's* funeral is not in Belgium, Bernard.

BERNARD

I've always been partial to Belgian beer.

ANNETTE

You can buy some Belgian beer in The Hague. I'll buy you a *case* of it when we get to The Hague. I'll even order some lace for you after the funeral. There are lace stores in The Hague, you know. They import everything from Belgium. It'll be like you were really there.

BERNARD

No it won't.

ANNETTE

Yes it will.

BERNARD

It won't and you know it. Why don't we ever do anything I want to do? It's always you you you, all the time.

ANNETTE

It's not my fault your brother died in a country other than Belgium, dear.

CATHERINE

There must be a miniature political movement associated only with this specific set of tracks.

DONALD

There are no more political movements, Catherine.

CATHERINE

There are plenty of movements these days, Donald. The working classes are all so agitated.

DONALD

Not anymore, dear. Maybe in America they are, but not here.

CATHERINE

The engineers on this line must have found another union to back their strike.

DONALD

You're talking in circles, Catherine.

CATHERINE

Yes, that must be it! The engineers and the sandwich salesmen, Donald. They must be conspiring to strike together. They've taken all the sandwich and cake carts and blocked the tracks with them. A new political movement, dear!

DONALD

There are no more movements, Catherine.

CATHERINE

Yes, blocking the tracks with their little carts. How romantic!

DONALD

All the political movements fled to America years ago.

CATHERINE

Blocking the tracks. Just like the French.

ANNETTE

Your brother hated Belgium, you know. And furthermore, I despise the place. Everyone is so----well, I don't like the sound of Flemish.

BERNARD

Well, I adore Belgium, Annette. And I adore Flemish, too.

ANNETTE

You would. We are not here to adore Belgium, Bernard. We are here to go see your brother's *dead body*.

BERNARD

Belgium is a beautiful little country that deserves to be adored.

ANNETTE

All right, Bernard. I'll tell you what. After the funeral, after we've buried your brother, we will go to Belgium and order waffles and speak Flemish and tell everyone there how much we adore their little country. Would you like that?

BERNARD

You can be so romantic sometimes, Annette.

ANNETTE

Yes, I suppose that's why you love me, dear.

CATHERINE

Do you think they'd let me cross their picket line?

DONALD

Whose picket line?

CATHERINE

The engineers who are on strike with the sandwich salesmen. Do you think they'd let me cross their picket line?

DONALD

If they were in fact on strike together, which they are not, then I suppose they would be rather cross with you if you tried to cross their picket line.

CATHERINE

“They’d be cross if I cross. . .” Oh how charming, Donald. You made a pun.

BERNARD

I really could never stand my brother, Annette.

ANNETTE

Then why did you volunteer to give the eulogy?

BERNARD

So I could finally humiliate him without fear of retribution.

ANNETTE

There are ghosts, you know. He could become a ghost and haunt you. Then there would be retribution.

BERNARD

My brother didn’t believe in ghosts.

ANNETTE

But you do.

BERNARD

Well, yes, but he didn’t, so I can’t imagine him going round haunting anyone, now can I?

CATHERINE

I’ve always wanted to be tied down to the railroad tracks before an oncoming train.

DONALD

You’ve always wanted to be a prima ballerina too, but look what happened to that.

CATHERINE

Just like in the old movies. Oh, that was the life.

DONALD

Perhaps you can ask the engineer to do that for you when he arrives.

CATHERINE

But you would come and rescue me, wouldn’t you Donald?

DONALD

If it seemed worth doing at the time, I suppose I would.

CATHERINE

Don't you think I'm worth saving, dear?

DONALD

Some days, no.

CATHERINE

What about today?

DONALD

No, not today.

ANNETTE

There was a ghost in that old manor we stayed in last year. You remember the old manor.

BERNARD

What manor?

ANNETTE

The one outside Utrecht. The one your brother owned.

BERNARD

I don't recall my brother ever owning a manor.

ANNETTE

Well, he did. He invited your whole family round to stay with him there for the weekend, and then all those dishes turned up mysteriously broken and the family sword melted into the tabletop, and those strange Latin phrases floating all round the hallways all night long? Don't tell me you don't remember that.

BERNARD

Oh yes, yes—I remember now. Whatever happened to that old place?

ANNETTE

Your brother sold it because of the ghosts.

BERNARD

My brother didn't believe in ghosts.

ANNETTE

He still sold that manor. Not three months after he moved in.

BERNARD

Well, yes I suppose you're right. Your memory has always been much better than mine, dear.

CATHERINE

I can't believe you wouldn't save me from the tracks, Donald.

DONALD

Some days I would be better off letting you get run over, dear.

CATHERINE

How can you say such a thing?

DONALD

If you had to listen to your conversation for ten years on, you would be happy to see a train go over your belly, too.

CATHERINE

We'll see about that, dear. (*SHE climbs down from the platform onto the tracks, lays down on them perpendicular to the rails, folds her hands on her stomach, and waits.*)

DONALD

Catherine, come off the tracks at once. Really.

CATHERINE

No, dear. You have to come and rescue me.

ANNETTE

Whatever is that woman doing?

BERNARD

Attempting suicide, I suppose.

ANNETTE

Really, Bernard, I don't think that's what she's doing.

BERNARD

What else would she be doing?

ANNETTE

A pathetic attempt at romance, perhaps?

BERNARD

I doubt that. She doesn't seem to know what romance is if she's laying down upon rail tracks. It absolutely is suicide. It's quite a mess when it happens, too. Saw that happen once when I was a boy. On the way to Belgium—

ANNETTE

Please stop bringing up Belgium, dear. We settled that matter already.

BERNARD

Well, it’s true. Legs flying one way, arms another, gallons of blood all over the train. Took seven porters nearly two hours to clean it up.

ANNETTE

Hush, dear.

DONALD

Catherine, that is quite enough. Please come up from there.

CATHERINE

No, Donald. You have to come down and rescue me.

DONALD

That’s preposterous.

CATHERINE

No it isn’t, dear. Come on down and carry me to safety. Be a man, dear.

DONALD

But I’m wearing my best suit!

ANNETTE

Go on, sir. Rescue your wife.

BERNARD

If you’d prefer sir, *I’ll* rescue your wife—

ANNETTE

Shut it, Bernard, dear. He needs to save his own wife.

*(The SOUND of an approaching train is heard.)*

CATHERINE

You’d better hurry, Donald. The train is coming! The striking engineers must have overcome their oppressors!

DONALD

The engineers were never oppressed, Catherine. Now really, you have got to get up from there. The train is coming!

CATHERINE

No, dear, you have to come and get me!

BERNARD

Sir, I really must implore you—

ANNETTE

Go pick up your wife, for God’s sake.

BERNARD

Yes, do. It will be such an unpleasant mess if you don’t—

DONALD

No. She’ll get up on her own soon enough.

CATHERINE

I will not. I am going to live the last few moments of my life romantically! Just like the French!

DONALD

Hush up about the French and get off the bloody tracks!

BERNARD

Oh, they’ll be bloody soon enough.

ANNETTE

Bernard, hush.

BERNARD

Someone needs to do something, or we’ll never get to Belgium.

ANNETTE

Shut it about Belgium!! Hurry, sir! You’re running out of time.

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**