"Ferris Wheel"
by Mary Miller

SETTING

The setting is two folding chairs placed side by side or a small bench. The motion of the Ferris wheel can be created by the movement of the actors... gradually leaning forward going up... leaning backwards going down. The safety bar in front of them should be raised when necessary.

Note: The bulk of the play should run as almost two separate monologues with the characters seldom relating to one another until they have to.

CHARACTERS

JOHN and DORIE: They can be any age as long as they are close to the same age. However, the play becomes more poignant if they are a little older and rather average looking.

TIME: Late afternoon. The present.

The stage is two folding chairs—or a small bench. A woman is seated with her arms outstretched in front of her, her fist clenched, her feet planted firmly on the ground and her eyes shut.

A man enters. He looks down at the woman and then behind him and back at the woman. He then starts to sit next to her...

JOHN: Excuse me. Excuse me? I hope I'm not... crowding you...

DORIE: (flustered/embarrassed) No.

(He slides into the empty seat next to her and takes hold of the “bar.”)

JOHN: I would have taken another seat but the line is too long to let anyone ride by themselves.

(She nods but doesn't respond.)

JOHN: ... They force you to be a couple whether you want to or not... not that I mind. I mean it's a pleasure.

(He looks at her, sitting bolt upright and perfectly rigid.)

JOHN: Are you comfortable?

DORIE: Just fine. Whoops... we're off.

(She squeezes her fist tighter, clenches her eyes shut and presses her feet to the floor.)

JOHN: Are you all right?

DORIE: I'm fine.
Jane: Oh, my God! What happened?

Suddenly, they both turned in their seats... and stop still.

I'm a hundred.

You're only as old as you feel. Of course, some days, I feel like two. But you get

something into a man like yourself right a few weeks. You know it's any
done. I'll take your word for it (pause). You know it's any

order.

John: (suspicious) I used to do this as a kid... but you get

(He points to the stars in the sky and stops)

There's my little red car down there.

John: No, passing through, saw the wheel and drove over.

You're not from around here?

John: You're still confusing and then says for the bar

Hold up. Please.

You're going to prison if you need to go out and grab some

This thumb, who was missing two fingers. She used to say

Don't you know it? Once I had this art teacher named

John: That's strange, then I see

this.

No, she's dead. You can't mess with things like

John: Now she's frightened of fire.

(Shows a lightning strike that house and burned it to the

ground. Lightning struck that house and burned it to the
down. She got locked in the attic during a thunder-

storm. She needed to pretend like she was frightened of small

storms.

Jane: Oh, my God! What happened?

Suddenly, they both turned in their seats... and stop still.
JOHN: Looks like we stopped.

DORIE: Why?

JOHN: We seem to be stuck.  

(He leans forward to look.)

DORIE: Don't do that!!

JOHN: Do what?!

DORIE: Don't move! You're rocking the car. Please don't rock the car.

JOHN: I'm sorry. They're probably just making an adjustment. We'll be moving ... (They do not move. He looks at her) ... any minute.

DORIE: Yes. (panic growing) We should be ... rolling? Any ... minute ... ?!

JOHN: Would you care for a cigarette? Calm your nerves.

DORIE: Me? No. I don't smoke. Do you?

JOHN: No, if you don't want me to.

DORIE: No, it doesn't bother me.

(He starts to light up)

DORIE: When I was younger I saw this demonstration with an invisible man, where they hung this sack on his windpipe and said it was an exact duplicate of the human lung tissue. Then they put this lit cigarette in its plastic mouth and we watched the smoke slowly trickle down into the lung sack. And all of a sudden it started popping and bubbling—disintegrating right in front of our very eyes 'til it was nothing but a brown dripping glob hanging off that clear plastic windpipe. They said that's what happens to a tiny layer of your lung every time you take a puff. So I don't care to smoke myself, but if you want to, go right ahead.

(He looks at the cigarette in his hand, changing his mind.)

JOHN: I was thinking of giving it up. Now would be as good a time as any. Right? ... Do something you're frightened of ... sure? Why not?

DORIE: Once you do, it's best not to take it back. Remember my poor dead cousin...

JOHN: I don't need a cigarette.

DORIE: Good.

(He pats his chest pocket where his cigarettes are, then starts twitching his shoulder, drumming his fingers on his leg impatiently ... looks over, looks down.)

JOHN: It must be mechanical.

DORIE: (newly panicked) Mechanical?! We could be up here for days!

JOHN: No.

DORIE: It is possible.

JOHN: Anything is possible . . .

DORIE: Oh God.

JOHN: Why don't you open your eyes?

DORIE: I'm frightened of heights!

JOHN: Just lean back and look up.

DORIE: Lean back . . . and . . . look . . . up?!

JOHN: Like in a field, on your back, looking up. Nothing scary about that.

DORIE: Looking back, looking up? Lean back and look up? (She does.) Yes. (looking up) Oh Gee, it's going to rain. What are we going to do if it rains?! This thing will rust over solid and we'll be stuck up here forever!
John: You wouldn't happen to have any gum, would you, John? (He feels in his pants pockets.)

John: I could have a long time ago. (Suddenly.) So, how long never would let me cook.

John: of course my mother school... our of home and sale width instead of his mother.

John: You know like the kind of maps we made back in high

John: not in the library. (Consequently.)

John: except for the day Kennedy was shot.

John: Not ever. Well...

John: How's corn in my coffee信用卡 up like a relief map of the Hi-

John: I knew today was going to be bad when the

John: (Loudly.) He likes a deep breath.

John: pocket and put his chest. (This isn't sad.

John: We're going to be... all right. (Preventing it having all)

John: So much for my luck. I should have checked my horo-

John: of course his pocket what his (atmosphere are)

John: I'm sorry.

John: Don't move.

John: (If moves his hand.)

John: It is the sea.
JOHN: Just five minutes! (to himself) And I’m already starving.  
(He unconsciously starts moving his leg and tapping his foot.)

DORIE: (without looking down) What are you doing?!

JOHN: Nothing.

DORIE: You’re moving.

JOHN: I’m not moving.

DORIE: You’re twitching.

JOHN: Twitching?

DORIE: (pointing down/looking up) Your leg. It’s going like a house of fire. Are you nervous? . . . Or is this some sort of warning signal before you break into a full uncontrollable fit?

JOHN: I am not breaking into a fit!

DORIE: A nervous twitch, wouldn’t you know it!

JOHN: I’m not twitching! Look. (She doesn’t look.) Don’t look.

See . . . (He holds his hand out in front of him.) . . . Steady as a rock. (His hands start to shake, he grabs for the bar.) Oh God . . .

DORIE: Oh God. What if they make us climb out on a ladder?!

(panic) I can’t climb out on a ladder. I’m going to be sick.

JOHN: Just take a deep breath. It’s mind over matter. Just breathe.

(They both breathe together, take a deep breath and he like he’s smoking an imaginary cigarette.)

JOHN: (breathing) Better?

DORIE: (breathing) Better.

JOHN: It’s all will power. (He closes his eyes) Visualization. See a stream. A peaceful . . . quiet . . . winding stream . . .

(smiling) . . . draw it into your mouth . . . taste it . . . feel it going down . . . hitting you here. (He hits his chest.) Cooouugghhh!! (He opens his eyes, sits upright.) You wouldn’t happen to have a Tic Tac . . . Lifesaver . . . cracker . . .?

DORIE: I wish you’d quit mentioning food. That’s like talking about going to the bathroom in a moving car riding down the highway.

JOHN: I hadn’t thought about the bathroom.

(He crosses his legs.)

DORIE: Just promise me one thing, promise me you won’t eat me.

JOHN: Eat you?

DORIE: It happens. I’ve read about it. “Snowbound in the Andes.” “Shipwrecked on a Desert Island.” Two people stranded together and one eats the other. Instead of falling in love you have to worry about being dinner.

JOHN: I am not that hungry.

DORIE: Of course, I could stand to lose a pound or two . . . but I never lose it where it counts—it drops out of my face and I look like a cadaver with hips.

JOHN: I feel fat. Do I look fat? I am putting on weight and I’m just sitting here!

DORIE: Nonsense. You’re thin.

(John: I used to be thin. Together: I used to be thin.)

(During the following he starts picking lint off his jacket and biting his finger nails.)

DORIE: In high school, I was so thin when I wore panty hose I pinned them to my bra. That kept my panty hose up and my bra down.
It's just... hangnail.

Dorie: (embarrassed) Thank you.

Dorie: I was once. But I didn't win.

Dorie: The prettiest girl doesn't always win. (He frowns at a nail.)

John: How can you feel anything? You haven't stopped talking since we sat down. I'm sorry. It's my fault. (pauses) I'm sorry; I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Dorie: (interrupting) Ouch! I'm hot here! Do you feel hot? I feel hot.

Dorie: No.

John: You're not boring me. It's just... (He frowns.) I've been smoking ever since we were twelve. I gave up, but now I'm... (pauses) Oh no. She was incredible. She had a way of dealing with you... getting... getting through... dealing with... dealing with. She was incredible. She had a way of dealing with you... getting... getting through... dealing with... dealing with.

Dorie: Oh... and she was a cousin.

John: I wish I could have been a cousin. We would have been very good to have her in our family tree.

Dorie: Would that she were! We would have been very good to have her in our family tree.

John: That's just my nature. My mother always said I was untaught. Ouch!

Dorie: You're easy to talk to. I could talk to you all day.

Dorie: (reading, he hits his finger) Ouch!

John: You're going to bite those nails clean down to the nub if you're not careful.
JOHN: It's OK.

DORIE: No, you see my greatest flaw is... I just want people to like me. I'm about the only person I know who thought Sally Field's acceptance speech at the Academy Awards... "You like me! You like me!!"... had real depth. I understood what she meant. But sometimes what we do has the exact opposite results.

JOHN: I like you.

DORIE: How can you tell, you keep twitching and biting and picking...

JOHN: ... and listening. Sometimes when I listen to you I forget about smoking.

DORIE: You're teasing.

JOHN: No. I do... like you... and... ah... I don't even know your name.

DORIE: My name is... Dorien. But people call me Dorie.

JOHN: Pleased to meet you... Dorie. I'm John.

(He holds out his hand to shake hers and as she does, she briefly looks down and regrips the bar.)

DORIE: Oh my God.

JOHN: Just look up. Look up. (She does.) Better?

DORIE: Yes. (pause) I'm sorry about the smoking.

JOHN: No, I was planning on giving it up... sometime... sooner or later. Maybe. (longingly) Nasty habit. A manner of keeping your distance with those... little... perfectly round... white cylindrical things and a quarter inch cigarettes... Oh God.

DORIE: But I bet your wife will be happy.

JOHN: I'm not married.

DORIE: Are you married?

JOHN: I'm not married.

DORIE: (surprised) What?

JOHN: You?

DORIE: (embarrassed) Me?! No! No... But... you?... I assumed...

JOHN: No, divorced. Traveling salesman... only she couldn't take the traveling so she moved on.

DORIE: I'm sorry.

JOHN: (covering) Yeah, well, you get used to being alone. You get over it. You adjust.

DORIE: Isn't that the truth. Why, I don't even mind eating by myself anymore. Not as long as I have something to read. Newspaper, magazine, those little bitty sugar packets they set at the table, the ones with the history of each state written real tiny on the back. You can learn a lot eating alone. The state flowers. The state birds... (Suddenly he leans over and kisses her on the cheek.)

DORIE: What did you do that for?

JOHN: I don't know... I thought if I kissed you, you'd stop talking for a minute.

DORIE: Oh.

(She looks at him. He leans over and kisses her on the lips.)

DORIE: I wasn't talking.

JOHN: No. My lips. I had to do something with my lips.

DORIE: So you didn't mean anything personal by it. It was just, sort of, reflex action?

JOHN: No. It wasn't totally reflex. I enjoyed it.

DORIE: You did? Oh... ah... (nervous/flustered/she starts talking again) Did I tell you I have an aunt who lives in Dublin,
END

They both raise their arms up and let go of the bar.

John: This is us.

They fall into the water and smile.

Doree: They'll probably come for good.

They sink again in their seats.

John: No.

Doree: You don't think we'll go around again.

John: Don't be long now (laughing). I'll be looking us out one by one.

Doree: She looks down at her shorts.

John: Look like we're moving.

Doree: Where was there?

That was where out thing was suddenly they both wiped their face in the water and kissed her again on the lips.

Doree? Did your.

John: I didn't expect to see it engulfed so much the second time as.

Doree: But not why.

John: No.

Doree: I'm looking for another chance.

He turns over and kisses her again on the lips.

my aunt... and when they started shinning.

She then suddenly accomplished jumps and extends her hand in a stop.

FERRIS WHEEL

Mary What