

Stories for lipreading



THE SOUND OF MAROONS by Barrie Wickens

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]

Welcome to Stories for Lipreading. If you haven't used our website before, we suggest you look at our 'How to Use' page before you begin. We hope you enjoy this story, which is 'The Sound of Maroons' by Barrie Wickens.

The Sound of Maroons by Barrie Wickens

It is a Sunday evening by the seaside, as the sun sinks below the horizon in timeless fashion. Not a sound of a car or train disturbs the silence. Cattle are softly lowing in the fields as befits the time of day, and a distant church bell can be heard. It is very much an English scene, so gentle, peaceful and still.

Peace, an English peace suddenly shattered by the booming of two maroons... Lifeboat launch maroons. In the small, ancient village church, they were heard. The choirboy walked to the vicar ... a quick conversation ... the number board was changed and the next hymn, instead of 354, became 487:

*Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm doth bind the restless wave,
Who bidst the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep,
O hear us when we cry to thee,
For those in peril on the sea.*

The choirboy was hardly aware of the service. It was familiar and he relied on knowing it by rote, lost almost in another world, on auto-pilot, his heart with the lifeboatmen. Were they in danger? Had the sea got rougher? In an hour it was over and the boy walked, or rather ran, home. As he entered the kitchen door his mother called, "Dad's been called out."

"I know. Heard the maroons. Changed the hymn. The vicar's a good man for letting me do that."

The boy had his supper and got ready for bed. The phone rang. It was the Lifeboat Secretary.

"They're safely back," was all he said.

"Goodnight, Mum," said the boy before climbing the stairs to his bedroom. The boy slept soundly until the cows began their dawn chorus, a more cheerful chorus for a new day, while the sun rose as so often before.