

The Railway Children

by **Edith Nesbit**

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The Railway Children

This play was first performed by **The Man In The Moon** on 18 June 2022

Cast in Order of Appearance

Narrators

Claire Waterbury (Mother)

Aunt Alice, *Claire Waterbury's sister*

Charles Waterbury (Father)

Peter Waterbury

Phyllis Waterbury

Roberta Waterbury (Bobbie)

Sarah, *the Maid*

Plain Clothes Policeman #1

Plain Clothes Policeman #2

Albert Perks, *the Station Porter*

Mrs Viney, *the Housekeeper*

The Old Gentleman

James Perks (Jim) *12 yrs old*

Richard Perks (Dick) *5 yrs old*

Edward Perks (Eddie) *9 yrs old*

Elisabeth Perks (Liz) *11 yrs old*

Emily Perks (Em) *7 yrs old*

Doctor Forrest

Paddy Ward

Lady Passenger

Sergeant Wainwright

Mr Szczepansky, *the Russian*

Mrs Anne Ward, *Paddy's wife*

Mrs Nell Perks, *Albert's wife*

The Station Master

John, *the Old Gentleman's Grandson*

Director's Note

Music really helps the transition between each scene. You can have one of more Narrators and the lines may be split up however you like. The play runs approx 70 minutes excluding the interval.

Being An Actor

You're now an **actor** about to begin rehearsing a **play** of **The Railway Children**.

Rehearsing or **rehearsals** are the words that actors use when practising for the show. It's an exciting time and is a lot of fun too.

Before you get started, you might like to read this section about putting on a play. It will also help you learn some of the words we use in the theatre. You'll be talking like a real actor in no time at all.

The Script

This book is your **script**. It tells you what your **character** says and does in the play:

Perks (*laughing*) We don't have taxis here. Paddy's the local farmer, he is a jack of all trades and has a horse and cart. Now, you had best be off before the light fails.

You can see the character names are in **bold** and **stage directions** (*what you do*) are in *italics*. You don't say the stage directions out loud.

Who's Who

Different people work very hard to put on a play. The **director** is in charge of the creative parts of the show. The **producer** looks after the **budget** (money), booking the theatre and rehearsal rooms and makes sure that everything's in the right place at the right time.

There will also be **designers** for the **costumes** (what you wear), **lighting** and **scenery**.

The **Stage Manager** makes sure that rehearsals and performances run smoothly.

The Parts of the Theatre

The **stage** is where you do your acting. The **wings** are the spaces just **off-stage** left and right where actors wait before they make their entrance.

The area behind the stage is called **backstage**. The place where the audience sits is called the **auditorium**.

The place where you get into costume and make-up is called the **dressing room**. You must always be really quiet when you're backstage.

Stage Directions

When you start rehearsing the play, the director will tell you which side of the stage you need to come on from and where you should stand. Sometimes they will ask you to move to different places whilst you're saying your lines.

Stage right and left are as the actor looks at the audience. **Downstage** is closest to the audience. **Upstage** is furthest away, towards the back of the stage.

	Upstage Right (USR)	Upstage Centre (USC)	Upstage Left (USL)	
The Wings	Stage Right (SR)	Centre Stage (CS)	Stage Left (SL)	The Wings
	Downstage Right (DSR)	Downstage Centre (DSC)	Downstage Left (DSL)	

The Audience



Rehearsals

You'll have a **read-through** at your first rehearsal when everyone sits together and reads the script for the first time.

After this, you'll start **blocking** the play where everyone finds out where they come on from and the different things they'll do. It's a great idea to **write all this down in your script** to help you remember. You should always write in pencil, just in case you need to change it later (sometimes you might find a better way of doing it). Once you've finished blocking, you'll begin **run-throughs**.

After a few rehearsals and once you've learnt your lines, you'll be **off-book**. If you forget a line, the **stage manager** will give you a **prompt** (remind you of your line).

Once you get to the theatre, you'll have a **technical** (or tech) **rehearsal**, where you practise with the lights and sound.

Finally, you'll have a **dress rehearsal**, which you'll do in your full costume and make-up. The last rehearsal before you have an audience. Exciting!

Rehearsals/performances usually start with a warm-up to get your voice and body ready.

During the show, your director might give you notes after the performance about anything that didn't go quite right, or something they might like you to change.

Learning Your Lines

The hardest part of being in a play is learning your **lines** (the things you say). Sadly, there's no magic way of doing this, you just need to practise – a lot!

Here are some helpful tips. Remember, the sooner you do it, the more fun you'll have at rehearsal:

- * Read your lines out loud to yourself. Hearing them spoken helps you to remember.
- * Ask a friend for help. They can read the other characters and correct any mistakes that you make.
- * Do a little bit at a time. First thing in the morning and bedtime is a great time to practise.
- * Record your scenes. You can listen to it on your headphones while you're out and about – maybe leave gaps for you to say your own lines.
- * Learn your **cues**. The line before yours is called the **cue line**. It's important to know this, or you won't know when it's your turn to speak.

Enjoy The Show!

We hope that you've found this interesting. There are lots of new things to learn, and you'll pick them up easily during rehearsals. Don't forget to ask questions if there's something that you don't understand.

We hope that you have a brilliant time putting on **The Railway Children**.

Break a leg — that's what people in the theatre say to wish each other good luck!

Act One

Prologue

Narrator It's 1907, a time of prosperity and hope for the future.

Narrator Roberta, Bobbie for short, Phyllis and Peter, the heroes of our story, live with their parents in a beautiful house.

Narrator There is a happy life, full of fun. Whilst their Mother writes stories for a London paper, the children are looked after by their Aunt, Alice. A stern, but fair lady.

Narrator Mr Waterbury works and is often away in exotic-sounding places. But today he is home, celebrating Peter's Birthday.

Scene I

The Waterbury's London Home

It's Peter's birthday and he and his sisters are playing with a new train that he's been given by his father. A splendid birthday tea is laid on the table

Mother Children, do be careful. You nearly knocked that oil lamp over. Peter, stop pulling your sister's hair!

Aunt Alice In my day, we would have been sent to bed without any supper, birthday or not.

Father A bit of fun never hurt anyone, but you shouldn't pull Phyllis' hair, Peter. A gentleman never hurts a lady.

Peter But she kicked me, Father, and look, she pulled the funnel off my new train.

Phyllis I didn't.

Peter You did!

Phyllis Did not!

Bobbie Please, stop it, you two. I'm sure Father can mend it. He can fix everything.

Father (*laughing*) Well, probably not everything, Bobbie. Let me see, Peter.

He goes to take the train from Peter. There's a loud knock at the door

Aunt Alice I wonder who that can be at this time of night, and on a Sunday too?

Mother Are you expecting anyone from work, Charles? They can't want you to go away again, just after you have returned.

There are raised voices outside

Father No. I may work at the Foreign Office, but they wouldn't come to my home unless it was an emergency.

There is a knock on the door and Sarah, the maid, enters

Sarah Begging your pardon madam, but there are two gentlemen here to see the Master. They refuse to say who they are. Most rude they were.

Father Then, show them in.

Sarah leaves and returns with two official-looking men

Plain Clothes Officer #1 Are you Mr Charles Waterbury?

Father Yes. Who wants to know?

Plain Clothes Officer #2 (*ignoring his question*) Do you work at the Foreign Office?

Father I'm not prepared to answer that, until you tell me who you are and show me some form of identification.

One of the officers tries to grab Father. Phyllis screams

Mother Alice, take the children upstairs... Now, please.

Aunt Alice takes the three children upstairs. They watch through the bannister

Mother Would someone please tell me what's going on. We were celebrating our son's birthday.

Father I demand to know who you are, and why you have forced your way into my home, frightening my wife and children.

Plain Clothes Officer #1 You should have thought of that before you betrayed your country.

Father What did you say?

Plain Clothes Officer #2 You heard. Charles Peter Waterbury, I arrest you on the charge of treason. You may not say anything, but anything that you say...

They handcuff Father

Mother Charles, there must be some dreadful mistake. You would never do anything so awful.

Plain Clothes Officer #2 (*getting between her and his prisoner*) ...will be taken down and given in evidence.

Plain Clothes Officer #1 Now, please ask your maid to stand away from the door, so that we can take our prisoner where he belongs.

Mother lets them through. Sarah moves away from the door muttering

Father Clare, contact our solicitor, he will know what to do. This is some hideous mistake. Give my love to our children and tell them that I will be back soon.

Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter run back downstairs, throwing their arms around their father

Narrator The children rushed down the stairs and frantically tried to stop him from leaving.

Peter But you can't go, Father, you've not mended my train.

Father is lead away by the Plain Clothes Officers

Bobbie (*breaking away*) Daddy, oh, my Daddy!

Scene 2

Narrator Several weeks passed in a haze of packing up their home and saying a tearful farewell to Aunt Alice and Sarah.

Narrator Mother explained that they were no longer to live in London and are going to live in a cottage, called Three Chimneys in a small village.

Narrator After a very long train journey, they arrived at Oakworth Station. It was getting dark.

Several weeks later. Early evening

The children and Mother get off a train at Oakworth Station. They are helped by a porter, Mr Perks

Peter (*to Perks*) Hey, I say, you!

Perks looks about him

Yes, you there! Be a good chap and help us with our cases.

Mother Peter, stop it! Where are your manners?

Perks Don't worry, always happy to help a lady.

Perks takes one of the larger cases from Mother, who is looking for an address

Mother Thank you. We need to find directions to Three Chimneys.

Perks So you're the new town-folk who have taken over Three Chimneys? I delivered some huge crates there, yesterday. Nearly broke me back it did.

Bobbie I'm so sorry for my brother's rudeness and that the only things we have left from our life in London have caused you pain. Please...

Bobbie goes to take off a locket she is wearing to give to Perks

Perks Never you mind lass. I'm afraid you've just missed Paddy and his cart. It's about a three-mile trek from here to Three Chimneys. Just follow the lane. You won't get lost. Take the cases you need with you, and I'll get Paddy to bring up the rest tomorrow.

Phyllis Is Paddy the local taxi man?

Perks (*laughing*) We don't have taxis here. Paddy's the local farmer, he is a jack of all trades and has a horse and cart. Now, you had best be off before the light fails.

Mother Thank you, Mr...

Perks Perks, ma'am. (*He tips his cap*) At your service.

Bobbie, Phyllis, Peter and Mother take one case each, leaving some for Paddy to bring the next day

They set off along the lane

Narrator Mother sorted out the suit cases and found the things that they would need that night.

Narrator After making sure that Paddy would bring the things the next morning, they set off along the lane.

Scene 3

By the time that they arrive at Three Chimneys, it's dark

Along the way, Phyllis has been frightened by various wildlife noises, much to Peter's amusement

Narrator By the time they arrived at Three Chimneys, it was very dark indeed.

Narrator During their long walk, Peter had amused himself by frightening Phyllis every time they heard a strange noise. Mother was not amused.

Narrator When they finally arrived at the cottage, they were all very tired and hungry.

Mother Mrs Viney said she would leave the key under the largest pot.

Bobbie finds the key and opens the door. They enter

Mother Bobbie, there should be some candles and matches on the coat stand.

Bobbie lights a candle and they enter the kitchen

It is dark and everything is covered in sheets

Mother Well really, this is too bad. I paid Mrs Viney extra to get the house ready for us and layout a supper. But, there's nothing here.

Phyllis There's one of our packing cases over there, Mother. I'm sure Sarah packed us some food, before she left.

They go over to the packing case. Peter forces the top off

Peter Hurrah! There's a feast in here. (*He begins to take things out*) Marmalade, a loaf of bread, some butter, jam, half a fruit cake, a tin of sardines, a piece of cheese and some of cook's special biscuits. There's also a bottle of ginger beer and your sherry, Mother. I'm going to have bread with thick butter and jam.

Mother I'm sorry, Peter, but we have to watch our pennies now. You can have butter or jam. Girls, see if you can find the cups, plates and cutlery we'll need. I also think that there's a table cloth in there somewhere.

The girls rummage in the packing case and lay everything out on the kitchen table

Peter Would you like a sherry, Mother? Can we have one too as it's so cold?

Mother (*laughing*) No, I think we'll just drink the ginger beer and save the sherry for visitors.

They finish the meal and taking the candle, go out through the door to find their bedrooms upstairs

Scene 4

Three Chimneys. The next morning

Narrator Having finally settled down and fallen asleep, the Waterbury family was woken up early the next morning by the loud slamming of the front door.

It's very early. The Waterbury's are woken by the the front door banging loudly shut

Mrs Viney (*entering*) Drat that blasted door. Must get Paddy to stop it banging shut, nearly had my hand off.

Mother comes downstairs with the children, in their nightclothes

Mother Excuse me, can I help you?

Mrs Viney (*jumping*) Why, you gave me a start. I'm your housekeeper, Mrs Viney. You must be the Waterburys, from London.

Mother Yes and I must say, I'm very disappointed that you took my money but didn't leave us any food when we arrived last night. Even the beds weren't aired.

Mrs Viney (*taking out a letter from her apron pocket*) Well, according to Mr Roberts, the landlord, you are arriving today on the six-thirty from London. Paddy is to pick you and your luggage up and bring you here. I'm to have a supper laid out for you in the dining room.

She passes the letter to Mother

Mother Mr Roberts has given you the wrong date. Please accept my sincere apologies.

Mrs Viney No damage done. Now, how about me cooking you some breakfast? I have bacon, eggs, fresh bread and butter, all from Mrs Ward, Paddy's wife.

Mother Oh it's very kind of you, but we really couldn't.

Phyllis We're poor now you see Mrs Viney, and poor folks can't afford such luxuries as that.

Mother Phyllis, don't be so rude.

Phyllis But it's true, mother.

Mrs Viney (*seeing their mother's face*) Think of it as a welcome to Oakworth. A gift. You three, go and get dressed while I prepare breakfast.

The children leave. She starts to cook

Now, Mrs Waterbury, it may not be London fare here in Oakworth, but we all help each other in whatever way we can. So you and your young'uns won't be going hungry.

Mother Such kindness to strangers. I don't know what to say.

Mrs Viney Help me lay the table and we'll get started on breakfast.

They go through to the dining room

Scene 5

Three Chimneys. Later that morning

The children are exploring their garden

Narrator Later that morning, having had a scrumptious breakfast, Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter decided to explore their new surroundings.

Narrator At the bottom of the garden was a steep bank. Excitedly, they climbed to the top.

Peter That was a super breakfast. I'm stuffed.

Bobbie So generous of Mrs Viney.

Phyllis (*climbing a bank*) Look, we back onto the railway. Let's see where it goes.

Peter scrambles down onto the track. They follow, laughing, and run after him

Peter Come on, you two, last one to the tunnel is a... (*He is drowned out by the sound of a train approaching*)

Bobbie Quick, everyone, climb up onto that bridge.

They climb onto the bridge. They wave as the train passes

Bobbie Did you see that Old Gentleman waving back at us?

Peter I wonder if that's the London train.

Phyllis I wish it was, then we could jump on the train to visit Father and give him our love.

Peter Don't be silly Phyl. We don't know where he is in London.

Phyllis I know, but...

Bobbie Perhaps we can.

Peter and Phyllis (*together*) Visit him?

Bobbie No, but we could send our love every day with that Old Gentleman.

Phyllis How? I don't understand.

Peter Of course, by train! By waving to him on the London bound train every morning. Bobbie, you're a genius.

Bobbie I try.

Phyllis Come on, let's go and see Mr Perks at the station. He'll know if it really is the London train.

Narrator Following the track, the children set off to find where it would lead. They all agreed that there would be lots of adventures in their new surroundings.

Scene 6

Narrator In the daylight Oakworth Station was bigger and much busier than when they had arrived.

Narrator With so many people getting on and off the trains it was almost impossible to find Mr Perks. Pushing through the crowd, the children spotted him speaking with a distinguished-looking elderly gentleman.

Oakworth Station

Passengers are milling around. Mr Perks is talking to the Old Gentleman

Old Gentleman That was very thoughtful of you, Perks. Now, how are your lovely family?

Perks Growing fast. Jim will be starting work here next year and learning a good trade. My wife is arranging for our Liz to work at the big house, as a kitchen maid.

Old Gentleman Before you do that, let me speak with my wife. We're looking for someone, now that our maid is getting married.

Mr Perks That's very kind of you. I must admit, Liz is a shy one. I did worry about her in a big household where she wouldn't know anyone.

Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter arrive

Old Gentleman Now, who do we have here? I saw you three waving at the train this morning.

Bobbie I'm Roberta.

Phyllis I'm Phyllis.

Peter And I'm Peter.

They all shake hands with the Old Gentleman

Peter Excuse me, but is this the fast train to London?

Old Gentleman What do you want to know for? Are you heading to London?

Phyllis No, we just want to send our love to Father, he's...

Peter Involved in secret government work, which is why we can't be with him.

Old Gentleman Secret, you say? Well, that is important.

Bobbie The truth is, we don't know where our Father is. We just wanted to let him know we miss him. So, we thought if we waved to the London bound train it could take our love to him.

Perks Well, this is the train to London. It passes under your bridge at nine-forty every day.

Old Gentleman And I'll look forward to waving back at you each morning. Now, if you'll excuse me, I must get on this train.

Perks (*blowing his whistle*) Yes. All aboard!

The children wave as the train departs

Scene 7

On their way home, Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter meet the Perks children who are playing a game of It

Narrator Setting off home, Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter chatted about all the adventures that they were going to have.

Narrator In the distance, they could hear the laughter of children. It got louder and louder as they walked along the lane.

Peter Hello! Can we join in?

Jim Of course you can. Liz, the one over there, she's It. Nothing's home.

After playing for a while they all collapse exhausted on the ground

Liz I'm exhausted, let's sit down.

Jim I suppose we'd better introduce ourselves. I'm Jim, that's Dick, he's Eddie, that's Liz and that's Em. There's also a new baby at home.

Bobbie I'm Roberta, But everyone calls me Bobbie. This is Peter and that's Phyllis. We live at Three Chimneys. Where do you live?

Emily Oh, so you're the family from Three Chimneys.

Liz We live in the station house. Our Dad's the porter.

Phyllis All of you live in that small, shabby house? We used to live in a huge house in London. We had servants.

Dick Well, you're not all that grand now, are you?

Eddie Our house is not that small. Besides, at least our dad lives with us. Our mam says your...

Jim That's enough, Eddie. Let's start again. Do you like trains?

Peter Yes, I love them. My father made me one for my birthday, but she (*indicating Phyllis*) broke it.

Phyllis I didn't

Peter You did! And on my birthday, too.

Bobbie Please, don't start that again. Do your brothers and sisters always argue?

Jim (*laughing*) All the time. Peter, I'm sure my dad could mend it for you. He's very good with his hands, always making things for us. I'll ask him.

Peter Really? Thank you.

Eddie I saw you at the station earlier, talking to our dad.

Phyllis We were asking if that train went to London. We're going to wave to the ninety-four each day and send our love to Father.

Jim You chose well. It's called the Green Dragon. It's the fastest in the fleet.

Bobbie It probably seems like a silly idea to you.

Jim I think it's a grand idea.

Liz So do I.

Emily and Dick (*together*) Us too!

Jim Come on, let's go.

The children go off playing

Scene 8

Three Chimneys. A few days later

Mrs Viney is fussing over Mother, who is sitting in a chair

Narrator A few days passed, and the Waterburys had happily settled into their new home.

Narrator The children were playing in the garden they noticed Mrs Viney fussing around their Mother, who was looking very unwell.

Mrs Viney You need to be in bed and resting with that cold. It will turn bad if you don't. You should see Doctor Forrest.

Mother I have to finish these stories for my publisher. We need the money and the children so look forward to their buns when I get paid. I'll be fine. I don't need to see a doctor.

Mrs Viney Well, don't say I haven't warned you. I'll bring you in a nice cuppa.

Mother I'm fine, please save the milk for the children. Water will do.

As the days pass, Mother's cold gets worse

Narrator As the days passed, Mother's condition became so bad, that Mrs Viney sent Peter to fetch Doctor Forrest.

Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis come home for tea and Mrs Viney sends Peter to get Doctor Forrest

Mrs Viney Stop that noise. Can't you see your mother's poorly? Peter, go and get Doctor Forrest. Say that I sent you.

Peter goes off, while Bobbie and Phyllis make Mother comfortable

Doctor Forrest and Peter enter

Bobbie That was quick.

Peter Doctor Forrest has a horse and trap!

Mrs Viney Thank you for coming, Doctor. Your patient's over here and right poorly she is too.

Doctor Forrest goes and examines Mother

Doctor Forrest goes over to speak to Bobbie, while Mrs Viney fusses around Mother

Doctor Forrest You must be Bobbie, the eldest. That makes you in charge.

Phyllis Yes, she is the eldest, but Mother says that we're all equal.

Doctor Forrest I'm glad to hear it. Now, Bobbie and Phyllis...

Peter (*interrupting*) And my name's Peter. I'm now the man of the house.

Doctor Forrest (*smiling*) Your mother is very poorly. I shall pop in again tomorrow, but in the meantime, she must have beef tea and some grapes. Soda water would be good, lots of milk and some good brandy. The cheap stuff's no good. I've given a list to Mrs Viney. You can settle my bill when I don't have to visit anymore.

The Doctor leaves

Peter and Phyllis (*together*) The bill?

Bobbie (*running after the doctor*) Excuse me, Doctor Forrest. Can you tell me roughly how much we will owe you? Only we are now very poor and...

Doctor Forrest It's all right, Bobbie, we have a weekly payment scheme. Would a penny a week be to your liking?

Bobbie Oh, yes please. Thank you.

Doctor Forrest leaves

Bobbie goes back inside

Mother and Mrs Viney are discussing the list

Mother I don't need any of these things. Boil up some scrag end of lamb for the children's tea and I will have some of the broth. I really don't need any of these things.

Phyllis (*aside, to Bobbie and Peter*) But Mother won't get better if she doesn't do what the doctor says. What can we do?

Peter I have tuppence in my money box.

Phyllis I think I have three pennies in mine.

Bobbie I have a shilling, but it's still not enough. Wait! I have an idea. Phyllis, bring the old sheet we use to make a tent with. Peter, you fetch the black paint that's in the outbuildings. Meet me outside. I need to write a letter which we will give to Mr Perks.

Scene 9

The next day

Peter and Phyllis are by the railway bridge. They hold up a sign, painted on the sheet, for the Old Gentleman: "Please pick up a letter from Mr Perks. Urgent"

Narrator Phyllis brought down an old sheet from their playroom and with the paint that Peter had found in the outbuildings, they began to paint the message that Bobbie dictated.

Narrator The children reached the bridge just in time and held the sheet over the side. The message read:

Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter Please pick up a letter from Mr Perks. Urgent.

Scene 10

Outside Three Chimneys. The next evening

Paddy arrives with a hamper for Mother

Inside the hamper are all of the things that the Doctor asked for, plus some treats for the children

Narrator The next day, the children anxiously awaited an answer to Bobbie's letter.

Narrator That evening, Paddy arrived at Three Chimneys with a huge hamper. Inside was everything that the Doctor had asked for, as well as few extra luxuries.

Paddy How's the missus today, Mrs Viney?

Mrs Viney Very weak.

Paddy This should help. There's a note with it. He told me to put in a nice piece of beef, sausages and the best bacon. I've also put in some potatoes, carrots and eggs.

Mrs Viney and Phyllis carry the hamper inside

Bobbie (*taking the note from Paddy, she reads it*) Can you wait here please, while I write a reply for Mr Perks to give to the Old Gentleman tomorrow?

Paddy nods and Bobbie exits

Paddy Ah, young Peter. Perks asked me to pick up a train that needs mending?

Peter I'll fetch it. (*He does and gives it to Paddy*) My father made it for me.

Bobbie returns with the letter

Paddy leaves

Peter joins the family inside

Narrator Mrs Viney prepared a wonderful meal for everyone and one of her special soups for Mother, who seemed a lot better now.

Scene 11

The next morning. The railway bridge

Narrator The next morning, the children found another sheet, which they hung over the bridge as the London train passed.

Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter hold up another painted message on a sheet. This time it simply says: "Thank you"

Scene 12

Back at Three Chimneys

Mother is sitting outside, warming in the sunshine

Narrator After a few days, Mother felt much better indeed. Everyone was in the garden when Mrs Viney brought Mother the post.

Mrs Viney comes on to bring the mail

Mrs Viney You are looking much better today. I've got some of that lamb broth left over and some freshly baked bread for your lunch.

Mother Thank you, Mrs Viney. I don't know how you've made our money spread to pay for all these wonderful things.

She leaves Mother opening her mail. Mother's face darkens

Mother (*sternly*) Bobbie, Phyllis, Peter come here.

They run to her

Phyllis Are you not well mother?

Peter Do you need another blanket?

Mother (*She shakes her head*) Perhaps you would like to explain this letter that came this morning?

Bobbie What's it about, Mother?

Mother It's from an Old Gentleman, asking how I am and if there is anything else I need to assist me in my recovery. I'm to let him know the usual way. What does he mean?

Phyllis Well, we couldn't afford everything on the list that the doctor said you should have, so we asked for his help.

Mother How do you know him?

Peter We wave every morning at the nine-forty train to London as it passes by. He always waves back. Bobbie gave a letter to Mr Perks for him, and we held up a sign over the bridge asking him to pick it up.

Mother So everyone now knows we are poor and feels sorry for us?

Peter I suppose so, but...

Mother How dare you embarrass me like this. What would your father have said? I am deeply ashamed of you and will write saying that I shall pay back his generosity when I'm able to. Now, go to your rooms. I don't want to see any of you again today.

Bobbie It was my idea mother. We were so worried about you. I'm sorry. I didn't think. Please don't punish Phyllis and Peter.

Mrs Viney (*entering, with a cup of tea for mother*) Don't be too angry with them, they were so worried about you. They even gave me their savings to buy things for you.

Mother Very well, but I am going to write to the Old Gentleman and explain it wasn't my idea. Is there anything else that I should know?

Phyllis Only about Doctor Forrest's bill, but Bobbie did a deal with her.

Mother She what?!

Bobbie We joined her a penny-a-week club. She does that for everyone, so it wasn't really a 'deal'.

Phyllis Peter also tried to steal some coal from the railway to sell. But the Station Master caught him. Don't worry, Mr Perks sorted that all out for us and has been sending a bucket of the coal dust up every evening, so that you didn't get cold.

Peter Yes, and I help him tidy the station to pay for it.

Mother (*looking from one to the other*) Oh, I give up.

Doctor Forrest enters

Doctor Forrest What are you giving up? Not the good food that's building up your strength, I hope.

Mother I didn't hear you arrive.

Doctor Forrest I came up with Paddy, he's brought your fresh vegetables and meat. This one (*pointing to Bobbie*) would make a good nurse. She knows how to get things done. Now, let's be having a look at you. How are you feeling?

Mother Much better, thank you. Let's go into the house and Mrs Viney will make you a nice cup of tea.

They go into the house

Peter Phyl, why did you tell Mother about the coal dust? You promised Mr Perks it was our secret?

Phyllis (*sniffing*) I forgot.

Peter No you didn't. You just like getting me into trouble.

Phyllis I don't!

Bobbie You always have, Phyllis. We need to stop arguing and help Mother. I hear her crying sometimes, when she thinks we are asleep.

Peter I've heard her too. Let's make a pact. We'll be nice to each other for Mother's sake.

Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter (*together*) Agreed.

They go off

Scene 13

Three Chimneys. A few days later

Narrator Time seemed to pass quickly at Three Chimneys. One morning Mother received a letter from her publisher to say that they were printing one of her stories.

Mother is talking to Mrs Viney

Mother I've sold one of my stories, so it will be iced buns for tea. I think a slow walk into town would help me feel better. Is there anything we need?

Mrs Viney A few bits and pieces.

Mother I'll walk down to the station to meet the children and we will ask Paddy to give us a lift home. The exercise will do me good.

Scene 14

Oakworth Station

Narrator Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter were already at Oakworth Station. They had gone to see Mr Perks.

Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter are talking to Perks and Jim on the platform

Peter (*holding his mended train*) Thank you so much for mending my toy train, Mr Perks. It's the last thing that Father made and the last thing he gave me before he...

Bobbie He went away with work.

Phyllis Yes, two men came and took him away. We weren't even allowed to say goodbye.

Bobbie (*looking sad*) Oh, daddy.

Perks That must have been hard, but you must be brave for your mother.

Jim I'm sure he will be back as soon as he's completed his secret mission. I'd be right proud of my dad if he were serving his King and country like that.

Perks Right, you lot! I have to go, that's the fourteen-forty-five from London, arriving.

The fourteen-forty-five train arrives

Passengers get off, meeting friends, family

As the crowd thins, we can see one man, who looks like a tramp, collapsed on the floor

Narrator The fourteen-forty-five from London was unusually busy. It took a while for the platform to clear and Perks to notice a man, who was acting oddly.

Narrator As Mr Perks approached him, he looked frightened, and began waving his arms and shouting in a foreign language.

People surround him. He begins shouting in a foreign language and becomes aggressive

Perks Stand back you lot. Give him some air.

He goes to help the man up, but the tramp takes a swing at him

Perks That's enough, sunshine. I'm only trying to help.

Lady Passenger It's all right Perks. My husband's gone to get Sergeant Wainwright.

Sergeant Wainwright appears

Sgt Wainwright Now, what's going on here?

The tramp, speaking in a foreign (Russian) tongue tries to grab Sergeant Wainwright's arm, this is misinterpreted and he and Perks take the tramp down

Perks Stand back, lass. You might get 'urt.

*The crowd starts muttering, "He's a Bolshevik", "He's a commie", "He's an escaped prisoner".
"He'll kill us all"*

Bobbie Be quiet, everybody. Look at him, he's scared.

Peter I think he's speaking French. Bobbie, your French is better than mine. What's he saying?

Phyllis Mother's French is better is even better than Bobbie's, I wish she was here.

Bobbie Pardon, Je m'appelle Bobbie. Qui êtes-vous?

Mr Szczepansky Je m'appelle, Szczepansky.

Mother enters

Mother What's going on here, Bobbie?

Bobbie He's speaking French, but I think he is Russian, mother. His name is Mr Szczepansky.

Mother and Mr Szczepansky engage in a conversation

Sgt Wainwright That sounds like a Russian name to me. Maybe he is a spy, one of them Bolsheviks.

Mother He is neither. He is a Russian dissident who was sent to Siberia because of a book he has written.

Everyone takes a step back

Sgt Wainwright Then he's a fugitive and I need to arrest him.

Mother No, you don't! He was sentenced to thirty years for alerting the world to the cruelty of the Bolsheviks. He wants to join his wife and children who are somewhere in this country.

Perks Then we need to help him. Hey quick catch him he's about to faint.

Mr Szczepansky faints. Several of the crowd step forward and stop him from falling

Narrator The crowd who had been so afraid of Mr Szczepansky suddenly became concerned. Many arms reached out to catch him.

Mother Get Paddy to bring him up to Three Chimneys. Phyllis, go and get Doctor Forrest.

They leave, carrying off Mr Szczepansky

Scene 15

Back at Three Chimneys

Narrator The journey back to Three Chimneys didn't take long. Doctor Forrest was waiting for them when they got there.

Narrator As she examined her patient, she tutted and kept shaking her head over the condition that he was in.

Doctor Forrest has examined Mr Szczepansky and is now discussing him with Mother

Doctor Forrest That's one very brave man, if he is who he says he is. I have taken his papers and will show them to some friends of mine. Now, he needs food, sleep and to feel safe. Can he stay here?

Mother Of course. My children will help nurse him. Just let me know how much I owe you for coming out?

Doctor Forrest Don't worry about that. Bobbie and I have an agreement. *(She winks)* Now, I will go and try to find out more about him. If he is who he says he is, then you will owe me nothing. I have read his book and it's an honour to help him. The Old Gentleman, as the children call him, should be able to help.

Doctor Forrest leaves

Scene 16

Narrator It was a few weeks since Mr Szczepansky had arrived so dramatically in Oakworth. He was now, with careful nursing, recovering well. Life carried on as normal.

Narrator Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter still went to the bridge each day to wave and send their love to Father.

A few weeks later, Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter are at the railway bridge

As the London train goes by they shout and wave. "Send our love to Father"

Peter I can't believe it's three weeks that author man's been with us. His English isn't too bad now. But I don't like him wearing Father's clothes.

Bobbie His name is Mr Szczepansky and he had nothing to change into.

Phyllis *(laughing)* Peter knows his name. He just can't pronounce it.

Peter Yes I can, but...

Bobbie Mother said Father wouldn't mind Mr Szczepansky borrowing his clothes, especially as he doesn't need them at the moment. Besides, they aren't Father's best.

The Perks children

Liz You two aren't arguing again, are you? What's it about this time?

Peter The foreign man staying with us.

Emily You mean Mr Szczepansky?

Bobbie (*laughing*) Yes. You see, Peter, even a six year old can pronounce his name.

Jim Was the nine-forty to London on time?

Peter Of course. Your Father runs a tight ship... Station... Ship... Oh, never mind.

Liz It's the same at home.

Jim (*laughing*) It has to be with you lot. (*They play rough and tumble*) Hey, get off!

They do

The girls begin to make daisy chains

Bobbie Why are you up here today? Aren't you normally helping your mother?

Dick Yes, but we were sent up with a message.

Phyllis For us?

Liz No. For your mother. We've already been to see her, she sent us to get you.

Phyllis Is it about our Father?

Bobbie Phyllis, don't be silly. Of course, it isn't. (*Hopefully*) Is it?

Jim No, the Old Gentleman is coming to see you all. He has some good news for your guest.

Peter I wonder what it is.

Eddie Well, there's only one way to find out. Last one to Three Chimneys is a ninny...

They all rush off

Scene 17

Narrator The children all raced back to Three Chimneys. Mr Szczepansky was sitting in the garden.

Back at Three Chimneys

Mr Szczepansky is in the garden. Mother is putting a blanket around him

Mr Szczepansky (*In halted English. He takes out an old photo from his wallet*) My wife, my son, Yuri and daughter Irma. I miss them.

Mother I'm sure we will have some good news when our visitor arrives.

The children arrive making a lot of noise

Mother Children, children, remember our guest is still recovering.

Mr Szczepansky Please, it is fine. I like to hear the children laughing.

The Old Gentleman arrives. He goes over and shakes Mr Szczepansky's hand

Old Gentleman My dear sir, it is an honour to meet you at last. I am a great admirer of your book. I have some wonderful news. We have found your wife and children. They are safe and well. I am to escort you there on the sixteen-forty to London. We have found you a safe place to live. No one will ever separate you again.

Mr Szczepansky (*overwhelmed*) I cannot believe it. Thank you, thank you.

Mother Bobbie, go and collect Mr Szczepansky's things.

Mr Szczepansky How can I ever thank you?

Mother Be happy, Mr Szczepansky. Be happy.

Old Gentleman (*as Bobbie appears with a case*) Now, we have much to do before we catch the train. Paddy is waiting and will take us back to town in his cart.

They all wave as the Old Gentleman and Mr Szczepansky leave

Scene 18

Somewhere near the tunnel. Later that afternoon

All the Perks children, Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter are laying down watching the shapes in the clouds

Narrator Bobbie, Phyllis, Peter and the Perks' children were watching the clouds roll by.

Liz I can see a castle.

Eddie I can see a huge lion. (*He roars*)

Peter I can see a train.

Bobbie I can see a beautiful bird.

Phyllis I can see a tree walking.

Peter That's a daft thing to say, Phyl.

Phyllis But I did, in fact, I can see two trees walking. (*She points above the tunnel*) And a third.

Jim They're not clouds, Phyllis, they're real trees and that's a landslide.

Eddie Luckily they're only small trees, otherwise they would block the track.

Bobbie They might only be small, but that one isn't. It's huge! It's the big oak we've played on.

Peter Well, at least we can warn them at the station and they can warn the train before it gets here.

Jim What's the time, though?

Phyllis I can hear a train.

Liz Look the big oak's really toppling now, it's going to cover the end of the tunnel. The driver won't see it until it's too late.

Jim Eddie, you and Liz run as fast as you can to the station and warn them. Phyllis, you others run along the tracks and shout at the driver.

Liz and Eddie run to the station

Peter If only we had something red.

Bobbie Red?

Jim Of course! Red means danger. Look around for anything that we can wave. The train's getting nearer.

Dick I can't see anything.

Phyllis I've got a branch. (*She begins to wave it*)

Emily They'll just think it's a branch waving in the wind.

Jim I wish I had something red. The train's almost here.

Bobbie I have! My petticoat's red. Turn your backs, boys.

She slips off the petticoat and begins to wave it

They won't see it!

Emily You need to be nearer to the train.

Bobbie runs down the track, towards the oncoming train

Jim Hey, Bobbie! Come back. Get off the track. Bobbie! Get off the track.

There's screeching of train brakes. The headlights shine on Bobbie as she continues to wave the red petticoat

All the children are shouting and screaming

Narrator The boys began to shout as loudly as they could, while Bobbie frantically waved her red petticoat.

Narrator But the train driver didn't see or hear them.

Narrator The train hurtled nearer and nearer, showing no sign of stopping. Bobbie waved her petticoat, willing the driver to spot her.

Narrator The boys shouted, "Stop, stop, STOP!", waving their arms. The train raced closer and closer. Surely the train was never going to stop.

Narrator To be continued...

Interval

Act Two

Scene I

There's screeching of train brakes. The headlights shine on Bobbie as she continues to wave the red petticoat

All the children are shouting and screaming

Narrator The headlights blinded Bobbie, but still, she waved her petticoat. Soon the train would be upon her.

The train stops just in time. Bobbie faints

Narrator There was a screeching of brakes. The train ground to a halt, inches away from Bobbie. Overcome with emotion, Bobbie fell to the ground.

Perks, Mother, Paddy, Liz and Eddie run on

They run to Bobbie, they carry her off the track

Narrator Paddy, Mother and Perks ran to Bobbie's prone figure. Mr Perks gently carried Bobbie off the tracks as the passengers began to disembark.

Passengers are getting off the train. They are not happy at the emergency stop

Narrator Many of the passengers were shocked and angry. They immediately surrounded the children.

The passengers moan, "What was a child doing on the track?"; "Disgraceful", etc.

They surround the children. "If you were mine, I would send you to bed without supper"

Perks (*shouting*) Before you decide to lynch them, maybe you'd like to see the landslide at the end of the tunnel. (*He points*) These naughty children, that need to be punished, just saved your lives.

The passengers are still moaning. Mother cradles Bobbie in her arms

Old Gentleman Listen to me, all of you. Some of us would have been killed or badly injured if it hadn't been for the bravery of these children. (*Looking down at Bobbie*) Is she all right?

Bobbie (*Bobbie begins to stir*) Mother. Did we stop the train?

Old Gentleman Yes, my dear. You fainted. I suggest everyone calms down. Now you, young lady, we need to go home and to have a nice cup of tea.

Mother I agree. Oh, Bobbie, what am I going to do with you? You could have been killed. Isn't losing your father enough for me to bear?

Perks gently pats Mother on the shoulder and she pulls herself together

What I mean is...

Peter and Phyllis hug their Mother and Bobbie

Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter (together) We're sorry, Mother.

Perks (raising his voice) If you would all like to make your way up that bank, Paddy will take you back to the station on his cart. It might take a while, so please try and be patient.

Everyone begins to leave

Perks (to his children) Hey, you lot, come here. (They slowly go towards him) Look at the state of you. You all look like you've been dragged through a hedge backwards.

Jim Sorry, Dad. We were trying to find things to wave so the driver would stop. I feel we've let you down.

Perks Let me down? Nay, I'm right proud of you all. Now let's get you home to your mother. She'll be worried sick after hearing what's happened.

They exit

Scene 2

Oakworth Station. It is the Presentation Day

Flags are being waved and there's bunting up. The Perks' children are in their Sunday best. Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis are sitting beside them on a platform

The Station Master is talking to the Old Gentleman. Perks is sitting with Mrs Perks and Mother

Narrator Oakworth Station had never looked so beautiful. There were flags and bunting everywhere.

Narrator Everyone, wearing their Sunday best, had gathered at the station early. After all it wasn't every day that you had a presentation.

The Station Master coughs to gain everyone's attention

Station Master Ladies and gentleman. Your attention, please. It is my honour to represent the railway today, as we honour a group of very brave youngsters who, a few weeks ago, through resilience and...

Someone in the crowd shouts, "Get on with it"

As I was saying... A group of youngsters who, without thought of their own safety, saved over a hundred passengers from a terrible fate. So, without further ado, I will ask our distinguished guest to present them with these solid gold watches as a small token of our gratitude for what they did. Afterwards, there will be refreshments served in the station waiting room.

Paddy Aye, and there's my wife's special fruit cake, so no pushing.

Mrs Ward It's my family's secret recipe.

Paddy Yeah, a whole bottle of sherry!

Mrs Ward elbows Paddy in the ribs. Everyone laughs

The Old Gentleman beckons to Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter. They go up to him and he presents their watches.

Old Gentleman Well done my dears, I'm very proud of you.

Perks (to Mother and Mrs Perks) Now, you two, I want no blubbing. We're British after all. Stiff upper lip and all that.

Old Gentleman Now, before I present the Perks children with their watches, I would like to say, Mr Perks, what a credit your children are to you and this railway. With such a fine upstanding example as yourself they will, I know, make us all proud whatever they choose to do in the future.

He presents the Perks children with their watches. Mrs Perks and Mother notice Perks is wiping away a tear

Mrs Perks Stiff upper lip, Albert? Hanky, my dear? (They both pass him a hanky)

Station Master This way everyone, for tea, sandwiches and cake. Provided, as Paddy said, by his wife, Mrs Ward. There's no need to push, plenty for everyone.

Everyone leaves to have refreshments

Scene 3

Three Chimneys. The next morning

Narrator Everybody stayed up late that night, celebrating. The next morning, Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter woke up tired and rather grumpy.

Peter (yawning) I barely slept a wink last night. I was so excited after the presentation.

Phyllis Really? Then who was making that dreadful noise all night? It sounded like a herd of cows. It woke me up.

Peter Well it wasn't me.

Bobbie (*laughing*) I'm afraid it was, Peter. Mother and I came and turned you on your side. You were laying on your back, clutching your new watch.

Mother (*entering, opening her mail*) Now, my darlings, this letter informs me that my publishers have sold my story, 'King of the Mussels', so it will be buns on Friday, fresh ones.

Phyllis Mother, would you mind if we had buns on the fifteenth, instead?

Mother I don't mind when we have them, but why the fifteenth?

Peter and Bobbie (*together*) Yes, why?

Phyllis Because it's Mr Perks' thirty-second birthday. They never celebrate it, as they spend what money they have on the children's special days. I just thought it would be nice to share our buns with him. He has been so kind to us.

Mother I think that is a wonderful idea, Phyllis. Now I must go and finish the next instalment of King Mussel's reign. The publishers want it by next Friday.

Mother leaves

Bobbie I've had an idea. Why don't we go round the village and collect presents and cards from all the people Mr Perks has helped? He is so kind to everyone.

Peter What a brilliant idea, I'm sure everyone would want to give something. Perhaps we could give him and Mrs Perks some of our old clothes for the children.

Bobbie Yes, I'm sure Mother wouldn't mind.

Phyllis We have a week to collect things. Bobbie, you could make some of those lovely gift cards you used to make for us.

Bobbie All right, there's no time to waste! Come on let's go.

They rush off to make plans

Narrator For the first time since the children moved from London, they felt excited about planning a surprise.

Narrator Mr Perks was such a good friend and they felt sure he would be very pleased with all the gifts that they hoped to collect for him.

Scene 4

Narrator Before they knew it, the day of Mr Perks' Birthday had arrived. They had a wheelbarrow full of presents and Bobbie was sure that he'd be so happy.

The day of Mr Perks' Birthday

Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter are walking through the village, pulling a barrow full of lots of presents

On the way they meet Jim, Dick, Eddie, Emily and Liz

Narrator On the way there, they met Perks' children who were curious about the contents of their barrow.

Liz What have you got there?

Phyllis Presents, for Mr Perks' birthday.

Dick So many? I thought you were poor?

Peter These aren't all from us, silly. No, we collected them from all the people who know your father.

Bobbie We just explained to them how he never celebrates his birthday.

Eddie He won't like that. He doesn't like people knowing our business.

Peter But it's his birthday.

Phyllis Come with us and you can help put up the flags we made.

Jim Not blooming likely. He isn't going to be happy you went around saying we were too poor to celebrate his birthday.

The Perks children run off

Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter arrive at Oakworth Station

They hide as Perks is talking to Mrs Perks

Mrs Perks (*giving Perks a small package*) Happy Birthday, Albert. It's a quarter of your favourite baccy.

Perks Thank you, love, but you didn't need to. How could you afford it?

Mrs Perks I saved all the tips I got from the people that I do the washing for. We've also got a cake for the children to share with you. Now, don't look like that. Mrs Ward let me have it cheap, as it's two days old.

Perks That's all right then. Now, I'd best be off to work.

He leaves

Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis enter from their hiding place

Mrs Perks If you are looking for my brood, they left ages ago.

Bobbie No, we've got presents for Mr Perks. I've just got to put their labels on.

Mrs Perks (*looking at the truck filled with gifts*) There are so many, you can't afford all these.

Perks (*who has returned*) No, you can't. What are you thinking of? Your poor Mother has enough to contend with. I appreciate the thought, but return them and get your money back.

Phyllis But we didn't buy them.

Peter We went around asking people to contribute, after telling them you never celebrate your birthday because you are poor, like us.

Perks You what?!

Mrs Perks (*seeing Perks is getting annoyed*) Now Albert, what did you forget? You should be going, you don't want to be late.

Perks I came back for my lunch. But that can wait. I want to hear what these youngsters have told our neighbours.

Phyllis That it's a shame you never get anything for yourself and spend all your spare pennies on your family.

Peter Yes, they understood as some of them are poor thems...

Perks You begged on our behalf? How dare you? I thought we were friends.

The Perks children enter

Did you lot know about this? (*They shake their heads*) Right, I'm forbidding you to ever mix with those three again. I am so ashamed. I'll never be able to look folks in the eye again.

Mrs Perks Albert Perks, stop being so pig-headed. I'm sure they meant no harm. Let Miss Bobbie explain.

Phyllis It's King Mussel's fault.

Perks King Mussel?!

Bobbie One of Mother's stories she told. She said that we could have fresh buns as a treat, and Phyllis wanted you to have them for your birthday. I had the idea to ask your friends...

Perks Well, the buns was a nice thought, but you shouldn't have asked my neighbours for things.

Phyllis Oh we didn't just ask your neighbours, we asked everyone!

Perks What?!

Bobbie What Phyllis means is that everyone wanted to give something. I wrote down on these labels what everyone said. Can I read them to you, then I promise we will leave and never bother you again?

Mrs Perks Albert..?

Perks All right, but I won't change my mind about the presents.

Bobbie Mother sent fresh buns and some of our outgrown clothes. Mr Brown from the sweet shop sent you a new pipe, as he said you are always helping everyone. The grocer sent you half a pound of tea, because you always visit his old mother. The blacksmith gave a new spade he made, because you always clear the village paths when it snows. *(She passes some labels to Peter)*

Peter The doctor gave you her stuffed squirrel, as she said you always bring a smile to her patients. Mrs Smith knitted a scarf and gloves, saying that you always had time to cut her grass and weed her garden. Mrs Ward promised half a side of bacon and eggs for the next month, because you often help her husband when he is busy.

Phyllis *(taking the labels from Peter)* Let me read some! The cobbler sent six pairs of laces. Mrs Jones sent baby clothes and said you can pick up her pram as her Maisie's finished with it. Our Old Gentleman sent you this envelope, but we don't know what's in it.

Phyllis passes the letter to Perks who opens and reads it. Perks hands the letter to Mrs Perks who also reads it

Bobbie Now we will leave, and never bother you again. *(They begin to walk off)*

Mrs Perks Well, Albert, have you anything to say, or are you going to be your usual stubborn self?

Perks Maybe I was a little hasty. Look, I have to get to work, how about you come back this evening and we can celebrate then? Have a party? *(He leaves)*

Jim Mum, what was in that envelope? I've never seen Dad so touched or change his mind before.

Mrs Perks That dear Old Gentleman and his wife have not only offered our Liz a job, but he has also paid our rent for the next five years. He apologised for taking your father's kind, thoughtful and selfless service to all the passengers and those who live here, for granted. He said that it had taken these three children to make him stop and think. Now, there's no use you lot standing around, you heard what your Father said, we've got a party to organise.

They all exit different ways excitedly, to begin planning the party

Scene 5

Oakworth Station. That evening

Mrs Perks, the Perks' children and Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis have begun to put up birthday decorations

Narrator Having realised the upset that they had caused, the children decided to decorate Perks' home.

Narrator Using bunting left over from the presentation, the station looked fantastic again.

Bobbie I do hope Mr Perks likes the decorations.

Jim He will. Mum will make sure of that.

Perks arrives bringing with him Mother and the Old Gentleman, Mrs Ward and Paddy who are carrying a large hamper

Mrs Ward Just a small offering from Paddy and me. There's cooked beef, ham, two large pork pies, fresh bread, butter, a huge fruit cake - one of my specials, and biscuits for the children.

Mrs Perks That will go lovely with the baked potatoes we've cooked.

Mother And I have brought some of Mrs Viney's excellent Victoria sandwich.

Old Gentleman Then, we shall have a feast indeed.

Perks I'm overwhelmed. I can't think of anything to say.

Jim That's a first.

Old Gentleman Then I suggest we all tuck in and let the party begin.

Narrator Before they settled down to the very special birthday tea, Bobbie led everyone in a hearty rendition of a "Happy Birthday".

Everybody cheers and sings "Happy Birthday" to Perks

Perks opens his gifts, the children play Blind Man's Buff.

A splendid time is had by all.

Narrator Before they knew it, it was time to go home. Everyone agreed that it had been the best birthday celebration ever.

As the guests begin to leave...

Perks Bobbie, I brought the old newspapers back from the waiting room. I thought you and your Mother might like to read them, then Peter and Phyllis can cut them up for their scrapbooks.

Bobbie Thank you. Happy Birthday, dear Mr Perks.

Bobbie hugs Mr Perks and leaves to catch the others up

Scene 6

Back at Three Chimneys

Phyllis and Peter are talking about the party

Narrator When they arrived back at Three Chimneys, Phyllis and Peter couldn't stop talking about the party.

Narrator Bobbie, bored with their chatter, started to look through the pile of newspapers from Mr Perks.

Bobbie settles down to look through the pile of newspapers. She opens one with a cry and runs out into the garden

Peter What's wrong with Bobbie?

Phyllis Too much cake. *(They both laugh)*

Mother That's enough, you two. Off to bed.

They leave. Mother goes out to see Bobbie

Mother Bobbie, are you alright?

Bobbie *(unconvincingly and quickly hiding the newspaper)* Yes.

Mother Please tell me what's upset you? Was it something you saw in one of the newspapers?

Bobbie nods and hands her the paper

Mother I'm so sorry. This is why we never have any newspapers here. Your father is innocent, you do believe that don't you?

Bobbie Of course I do, but why didn't you tell me? I know that Phyllis and Peter are too young to understand, but...

Mother I didn't know how to tell you. Your Father is convinced he was framed by a colleague he suspected of being up to no good. But no one would listen. I have spent the last year trying to keep his spirits up, each time I write to him. He has no idea how poor we are. But where he is, is far, far worse.

Bobbie But isn't there anything that can be done to find out the truth and free him?

Mother Don't you think I haven't tried? But solicitors cost so much money. I have even written to the Prime Minister, but, who would listen to a mere woman?

Bobbie The article says that Father was sentenced to ten years hard labour. But that's not fair if he's innocent.

Mother It is unfair. I'm relieved that you now know. It will be a blessing to share what's happening to Father with you.

Bobbie Can I write to him? Tell him we love him and that we know he is innocent?

Mother No, my love, I promised your father that I wouldn't tell you where he was. He is so ashamed. He wants you all to think he is serving his country and be proud of him.

Bobbie Then tell him we send our love every day with the London train as it passes. Tell him that he's the best father anyone could have. Tell him...

Bobbie bursts into tears. They hug

Scene 7

A few days later

The day of the local grammar school Fox and Hounds race

Narrator It was the day of the local Grammar School's Fox and Hounds race.

Narrator Bobbie, Phyllis, Peter and the Perks' children were on the way to watch the race from their favourite spot near the tunnel.

Narrator Peter couldn't believe that a group of boys would find following a trail of paper fun.

Bobbie, Peter, Phyllis, Jim, Eddie, Liz and Emily are watching as they walk

Peter has taken a spyglass out of his rucksack and is watching the runners. Bobbie is carrying a picnic made by Mrs Viney

Phyllis I'm hungry. Can we eat our picnic now? Mrs Viney makes lovely sandwiches and cake and we have walked for miles.

Peter Yes, I'm famished. Come on, Bobbie, dish out the food. We can still watch the Fox and Hounds from here.

Jim It's a good view of the tunnel from up here. They always go through the tunnel before they race back to their school.

The 'fox' runs through the tunnel

Bobbie gets out their picnic and notices that the Perks children have nothing to eat except some bread to share between them

Bobbie (to the Perks children) Did you bring any lunch?

Eddie Not really. Dad doesn't get paid 'till Friday. Mum said we have to have bread and pull it.

The Perks children laugh

Bobbie I don't understand. What's the joke?

Jim passes Dick a chunk of bread

Jim Here's the bread, Dick.

Dick pulls it into pieces

Dick And now I've pulled it. That's the joke. Mum always says it before Dad's payday.

Liz We don't have anything else, other than bread.

Jim That's enough, Liz.

Peter (shocked) Then you're poorer than us.

Jim We're not poor. We have each other.

Bobbie Then you can share our picnic, there's plenty here.

Phyllis But Bobbie, we only have enough for us.

Bobbie I insist.

Bobbie glares at Phyllis and shares out the food. The 'hounds' appear and run through the tunnel

Peter (*watching the 'hounds'*) They're cutting it fine, (*looking at his pocket watch*) the eleven-twenty is due soon.

Jim That boy at the back doesn't look too well, he's very red in the face.

Phyllis Probably had too much lunch. Unlike me!

Bobbie Phyllis! I must apologise for my sister, she seems to have left her manners in London.

The 'fox' appears on the other side of the tunnel

Jim Don't worry, it must have been quite a change for you coming down here. You must really miss your father.

Phyllis Yes, Father went off with two men who took him on an important assignment and...

Bobbie That's enough Phyllis. Mother says we mustn't talk about Father.

The 'hounds' appear on the other side of the tunnel. John, the boy who was struggling to keep up, does not

Liz Mum's wrong then, he wasn't a criminal.

Bobbie What? How dare you? I...

Jim Now, don't take on so, Bobbie. Mum said that before she got to know you all properly.

Liz Any newcomers to Oakworth get gossiped about when they first arrive, 'cause it's so boring here.

Peter When you lot have finished, that last chap's not come out of the tunnel yet and the eleven-twenty's due any minute.

Emily If he is in the tunnel the train will squish him flat or rip off his legs or...

Liz Oh no, I can't bear it. (*She starts to cry*)

Phyllis Bobbie, we have to rescue him.

Peter But we don't know why he hasn't come through the tunnel.

Narrator Bobbie and Jim looked at each other. Without hesitation, they both rushed towards the tunnel, realising that time was of an essence.

Bobbie and Jim are making their way down towards the tunnel

Peter (*picking up his rucksack*) Hey, wait for me. The rest of you stay back. This could be dangerous.

Jim, Bobbie and Peter enter the tunnel. Peter takes a candle out of his rucksack and lights it. Bobbie and Jim look at him

Peter Well, one should be prepared for anything.

Narrator Bobbie, Peter and Jim raced into the tunnel. As their eyes became accustomed to the dark, they saw a boy laying across the track.

Narrator His foot, trapped. They ran over and tried to free him.

Bobbie Look! I can see him, he's slumped over the rail.

They rush over to the fallen boy

Jim Look, he must have fallen and hit his head while trying to get his foot free.

Peter We must hurry, I can hear the train.

The boy begins to groan as they free his foot and roll him off the track just as the train enters the tunnel

Narrator With a final pull, the boy's foot came free. They ran to the side of the tunnel, just as the train thundered past.

Narrator Outside of the tunnel, the others watched helplessly.

Jim, Bobbie and Peter rush to the side of the tunnel, just in time

The train thunders past, narrowly missing them all

Outside the tunnel, the others are watching the train rush past

Liz Can you see them?

Phyllis No, just a lot of steam.

Dick They can't have survived.

Eddie I'm going down to look.

Emily I'm coming too, even if the tunnel is filled with blood and bone.

Liz begins to cry

Eddie Oh, do shut up, Em.

Phyllis Look, they're coming out of the tunnel, carrying a boy.

Narrator The others were so relieved when they saw Bobbie, Peter and Jim carrying the unconscious boy out of the tunnel.

Bobbie, Jim and Peter emerge from the tunnel, carrying the unconscious boy

They are all covered in soot

Bobbie Phyllis, run home and ask Mother to fetch Doctor Forrest.

Phyllis runs off

The rest of you help us carry him back to Three Chimneys.

Liz Is he dead?

Peter Of course not silly. He's just fainted. I think he has broken his leg.

Bobbie I wonder who he is?

Dick He's worth a bob or two, it costs a fortune to go to that school.

Emily starts to prod the boy

Bobbie What are you doing, Emily?

Emily Just seeing if he's got blue blood.

Bobbie What do you mean?

Emily Well, they say that all posh people have got blue blood.

Eddie You really are daft at times, Em. There's no such thing as blue blood. Anyone would think you weren't educated proper.

Dick Yes, everybody knows that phrase comes from medieval Spain. The royalty was so pale, it made the blueness of their veins visible through their skin.

Everyone stares at Dick, incredulous

Jim Come on everybody, we'll need to work together if we're going to carry this boy all the way back to Three Chimneys.

They all pick up the boy together and carry him off

Scene 8

Three Chimneys

Narrator It seemed to take them ages to carry the injured boy back to Three Chimneys.

Narrator When they finally arrived, they waited outside whilst Doctor Forrest examined the boy.

The children are waiting outside for Doctor Forrest to appear. She does, with Mother

Doctor Forrest Just a straight forward break, but it will be a while before he can leave. I will let his school know what has happened and they can contact his family. Well done, you lot. You're heroes again.

Doctor Forrest gives them all a boiled sweet each and leaves

Mother goes over to the children

Mother Whilst I agree with Doctor Forrest, you are all heroes, I just wish you would be more careful in future. I shudder to think what could have happened to you in that tunnel. Now, go inside, Mrs Viney is making a special tea for you all and our new guest, John.

They all exit

Scene 9

Three Chimneys. A few days later

Narrator After a few days John, the injured boy, was well enough to sit outside. Bobbie fussed over him, making sure that he was comfortable.

John is sitting outside in the garden and being fussed over by Bobbie

John I'm fine, really. But I have to say again, what you did was very brave. Thank you.

Bobbie (*blushing*) It was nothing. You're very welcome.

Peter and Phyllis come in, with the Old Gentleman, to see John

Old Gentleman Well, John, I've just been hearing about your close encounter with death. Phyllis tells me the train missed you by inches.

Peter Twaddle. It was at least two feet.

Old Gentleman I'm very grateful to you all, and if you and Phyllis would like to go and help Paddy, he has a large hamper of goodies to help John recover. I'm sure he will share them with you all.

John Of course, I will, Grandfather. Mrs Waterbury is a brilliant nurse and so is Bobbie.

Peter and Phyllis (*together*) Grandfather?!

Old Gentleman (*laughing*) Yes, John's my Grandson. That's the reason that I come to Oakworth so often. To visit him at school and bring him supplies for his midnight feasts. Now, Phyllis and Peter, go and help Paddy bring in that hamper.

Phyllis and Peter go to help Paddy bring the hamper inside

Bobbie Would you like to stay for tea, sir? I can go and ask Mother.

Old Gentleman That would be lovely, thank you.

Bobbie goes into the house, leaving John and his Grandfather alone

John Grandfather, there must be something we can do to say thank you. They have shared all they have with me. Peter has given up his bedroom. He only has a small train to play with and the girls...

Old Gentleman I know, John. I will see how I can help, but we mustn't embarrass them.

Bobbie has come out carrying a newspaper

Bobbie Excuse me, sir. I wonder if I could have a private word with you?

Old Gentleman Of course, my dear.

John leaves. Bobbie and the Old Gentleman walk together

Now, how can I help?

Bobbie (shyly) First, you must promise not to tell Mother, or anyone, what I am about to tell you.

Old Gentleman Of course, you have my word, as a gentleman.

Bobbie hands the Old Gentleman the newspaper. He reads it

I know about this case. I always felt that something wasn't quite right about it.

Bobbie Mother says a colleague of his was jealous about Father's promotion. He put false information amongst Father's papers. My daddy is an honourable man, he would never betray his King and country. But no one will listen to her.

Old Gentleman Please, don't be upset. I can't promise anything, but I will do what I can. Now, we'd better go in and join the others for tea, or they'll be wondering what we've been talking about.

They go into the house

Scene 10

Three Chimneys. A few weeks later

Mother, Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter are in the garden

Narrator Was it only three weeks ago that John had returned to his Grandfather's house?

Narrator Life at Three Chimneys had settled back into a routine.

Mother You never seem to wave at the trains, any more.

Phyllis We haven't waved to Father for months. Bobbie won't let us, she's been funny about it since Perks' party.

Peter Yes, she's been so bossy since then.

Bobbie I've got my reasons.

Mother Well, I think you should both go and wave this morning. You might have missed the nine-forty, but I'm sure there will be at least one train you can wave at. Bobbie, I've got some errands to run in the village. I thought we could all meet later at the station and have tea and buns, as a treat.

Bobbie I didn't know you had sold another story.

Mother (*changing the subject and hearing a horse and cart*) Ah, there's Paddy, he's going to give me a lift into the village. Now, off you go and I will meet you all at the station. Eleven-thirty, sharp.

Mother leaves

Phyllis Tea and buns, there's no need to ask me twice!

Peter Come on, Phyl. Last one to the bridge is a rotten egg.

Phyllis and Peter run off

Phyllis (*returning*) Come on Bobbie, don't be a spoil sport. Race you!

Phyllis grabs Bobbie by the hand and drags her off

Scene II

Narrator When Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter arrived at the station, they noticed that everyone they knew from Oakworth seemed to be there as well. Everyone was smiling and waving at them.

Oakworth Station. Eleven-twenty-five

Bobbie, Phyllis and Peter arrive at the station. All of Oakworth are there

Peter That was odd, everyone on that train that passed waved at us. It wasn't even the nine-forty that goes to London.

Perks Ah there you three are. It's going to be a grand day.

Peter (*laughing*) What, better than your birthday?

Perks Much better.

Phyllis Why is everyone on the station, Mr Perks? Is the King visiting?

Perks Better than that.

The children are greeted by Paddy, his wife, Doctor Forrest, Mrs Viney who is wiping away a tear, all the Perks children in their Sunday best, the Station Master, Mrs Perks and Mother

Bobbie Mother, why are you here? What's going on?

Mother Just you wait and see, Bobbie. Just you wait.

Perks The eleven-thirty train from London is right on time.

Station Master Now, every one, please take your places.

Mother pulls Peter and Phyllis to her

Bobbie What's going on? Why is everyone smiling and waving flags?

Narrator Mr Perks proudly announced that the eleven-thirty would be on time. Everyone cheered as the train pulled into the station.

Narrator The Old Gentleman stepped off the train and joined Mother.

The eleven-thirty train pulls in right on time

The Old Gentleman gets off, he smiles at her Mother and joins them

Bobbie (*to the Old Gentleman*) What a lovely surprise. What are you doing here?

Passengers leave the train in a flurry of excitement

As the passengers pass the children they say, "Great news", "So happy for you", "Congratulations" etc.

The platform clears of passengers

Narrator The children were confused. All the passengers were patting them on the back and cheering.

Narrator Suddenly, everyone stood back and fell silent. The billowing steam obscured Bobbie's vision. A figure appeared. It couldn't be, could it?

Bobbie looks back and sees a man coming through the smoke

She moves forward, stops then begins to run

Bobbie *Daddy..? Oh, my Daddy!*

Bobbie runs to her father.They embrace. Phyllis, Peter and finally, Mother join them.

Curtain

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Useful Theatre Words

Speak Like An Actor

Act: A group of scenes.

Aside: When an actor says their lines to the audience, not to another actor.

Audition: A bit like a team try out, to see which role would best suit you.

Auditorium: The part of the building that is used for performances. Sometimes called the House.

Applause: When the audience claps the actors.

Backdrop: A big curtain, painted as scenery, hung at the back of the stage.

Backstage: The wings, dressing rooms and other parts of the theatre out of the audience's view.

Black Out: When all the lights on the stage are turned off.

Blocking: An early rehearsal where the Director decides how everyone is going to move around the stage.

Book: Another word for the script.

Cameo: A small but important role, sometimes played by a famous actor.

Cast: The actors in a play.

Character: The part an actor takes in the play.

Costume: What an actor wears.

Corpsing: When an actor laughs on stage but isn't supposed to.

Cue: The words or action signalling something to happen on stage.

Curtain Call: When all the actors come on stage for a bow.

Debut: An actor's first-ever performance.

Director: The person in charge of everything that happens on stage.

Down-Stage: Moving towards the audience.

Dressing Room: Where an actor gets ready for the performance.

Dress Rehearsal: The final rehearsal that the actors do in costume before an audience comes to watch.

Ensemble: A group of actors performing together, sometimes playing smaller roles.

Finale: The final scene of a play.

Front of House: The area outside the auditorium, that the audience use before the show and during the interval.

Fourth Wall: An imaginary wall between the actors and the audience.

Improvisation: An unrehearsed performance.

Intermission or Interval: The break between acts (time for ice cream!).

Monologue: A long speech spoken by one actor.

Off-Stage: The area that the audience can't see.

Performance: When you do the play in front of an audience.

Plot: The story of a play.

Premiere: The first performance of a play.

Props: The things an actor uses in the play.

Projecting: Making sure that you are loud enough to be heard.

Prompt: To help an actor with a forgotten line.

Rehearsal: When you practise for the performance.

Rostra: A raised platform or piece of scenery.

Scene: Uninterrupted action within a play.

Script: The words an actor says in the play.

Sight Line: The different view that the audience has of the stage.

Soliloquy: When a character says their thoughts out loud.

Spotlight: A special light to shine on a particular actor.

Stage Manager: The person who makes sure that the performance runs smoothly.

Tab: The word that is used for the theatre curtains.

Technical Rehearsal: The rehearsal in the theatre when you make sure that the sound, lights and special effects all work.

Thespian: An old fashioned word for an actor.

Understudy: An actor ready to step in if needed e.g. If an actor's sick.

Up-Stage: Moving away from the audience.

Wings: The spaces off-stage, at the side.



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