

The Railway Children

Book: Ben Sleep
Music & Lyrics: Stephen Kingsbury

Act I

The stage is black. Above the stage (but also in darkness) hangs a large, old fashioned station clock. Instead of Roman numerals, this clock has the twelve months of the year set out in place of the hour. We hear the whirr and ratchet of the clock as it prepares to strike the 'hour'. As the clock begins to chime it is illuminated from inside, and the hour hand jolts to point at 'January'.

Track 1: Clock Whirr & Chime - SFX

Track 2: Perfectly Urban Family - song

Downstage left a single spot focuses on FATHER, standing alone. He sings.

Father **Look at my family**
 You could say I am a very lucky man
 Three lovely children and a loving wife
 A happy little clan
 But nothing this perfect lasts forever
 How can it?
 Let us enjoy each moment while we can

The lights rise on the rest of the family, Mother, Peter, Bobbie and Phyllis, they are in the throes of Peter's birthday party. They join the singing.

Children **Welcome home, father!**
 The greatest father in the world is really ours
 Hurry up, father!

All **We've been waiting here so patiently for hours**
Now we are all together
With a party to enjoy
Many happy returns to Peter, birthday boy!

Peter Did you get it? Did you get it?

Father Get what?

Peter My present! Oh father, tell me you did!

Father Present? Is it some sort of occasion today?

Bobbie Daddy!

Mother Come come, don't tease him so. *(To Peter)* He knows perfectly well what the occasion is.

Phyllis Yes, don't tease him daddy, it's a positively rotten thing to do

Father Well, well -that's told me! As it so happens, there may be a little something for you in here...

He roots around in his briefcase, pretending it's nowhere to be found.

Father Hmmm, I could have sworn there was something I was supposed to bring...

Bobbie Daddy, stop it!

Phyllis Oh daddy – hurry up, hurry up!

Father Ah ha!

He pulls out a package, tightly wrapped in brown paper – Peter is jumping up and down with excitement.

Peter You got it! You really got it!

Phyllis Steady on, you haven't opened it yet, it could be a pound of dripping.

Father is holding the package aloft and Peter jumps to try and reach it.

Bobbie Oh, don't be so nasty Phyllis. Daddy! Put him out of his misery, for all our sakes!

Father Very well. *(He hands Peter the package)* Now you take good care of this, we had to search high and low to find one as realistic as this.

Peter rips off the paper, and triumphantly holds aloft a pristine model steam engine.

Peter Yes! You got it, you got it! Oh thank you father, and mother of course!
It's perfect...simply...perfect!

Peter **It really is perfect**
This little miracle in miniature of mine
Phyllis won't notice
If I place her dolly Polly on the line!

Phyllis shrieks as Peter aims his train directly at her trapped dolly.

Phyllis Peter! Mummy, stop him! Peter, you'll hurt her!

Phyllis leaps at Peter, but Bobbie pulls them apart.

Bobbie Now, now you two, let's not ruin a perfectly lovely day by fighting.

Phyllis It was his fault! His silly train could have killed her.

Peter She shouldn't have been walking on the line!

Father *(jovially)* That's enough! I've waited all day to celebrate, and I won't
have petty bickering spoil it...

All **We're a perfectly urban family**
All is fine!

Peter Let's give it some speed - stand back, I'm really going to open her up!

Peter places the train on the line – it shoots off but suddenly derails – it's whistle sounds, seemingly jammed open.

Peter Oh no!

Father Whatever's happened here?

The whistle continues to sound. It is joined by the sound of a door bell. Father picks up the engine and gives it a smack with his palm. The whistling stops, but the bell continues.

Father Who on earth? An Englishman's house is his castle, of course, but I do
wish they built semi – detached villas with moats and drawbridges.

Father **Who on earth calls at this hour?**
Who knocks on doors so late?

Mother **It's nearly the children's bedtime**
Couldn't these callers wait?

Father **Maybe it's just the vicar**
Calling with his cap in hand

Mother & Children **Won't you see to it quickly, father, if you can?**

Father crosses downstage left and is met by two men in semi darkness. Mother stares intently at the three from her place in the house.

Gentlemen **We have information
From a trusted lead
A major allegation
Serious indeed, sir**

Bobbie notices her mother and moves away from the other children, standing alone downstage. Father and the two men continue conversing under the following:

Mother **What is going on here?
Something isn't right
I've never seen his face quiet so
Terrified and white**

Bobbie & Mother **Nothing good will come of this
Is this the end of our perfectly urban life?**

+
Gentlemen **We have information
A major allegation
Serious indeed, sir...**

Father turns and looks at his family.

Father **Look at my family
You could say I am a very lucky man
Three lovely children and a loving wife
A happy little clan
But nothing this perfect lasts forever
How can it?**

Slowly, he reaches for his hat, takes a glance back at his family and leaves with the two men. Mother stands alone. She and the children stare at the front door.

Mother It's bedtime. Up you go.

Phyllis But you promised we should sit up late tonight because father's come home.

Mother Father's been called away – on business. Come darlings, upstairs at once.

Phyllis and Peter reluctantly head upstairs. Bobbie lingers and hugs Mother.

Bobbie It wasn't bad news, mummy, was it? Is anyone dead, or...

Mother Nobody's dead – no. I can't tell you anything tonight, my pet. Go, dear, go now.

Bobbie heads upstairs, to be met by Peter and Phyllis.

Phyllis What's going on?

Peter Who were they?

Below, mother begins to sob quietly.

Phyllis Listen! That's mother, come on...

Bobbie No Phyllis. If mother doesn't want us to know she's been crying, we won't know it. That's all. Now, back to bed, both of you.

Track 3: Sleep Away, pre-reprise - song

Phyllis and Peter get back in to bed. Bobbie begins to go downstairs, and sits half way down on the staircase, watching her mother.

Mother **The sound of his voice in an echo still lingers
How could they take him from us on this day?
The feeling I have through my fingers
Is our cosy world slipping away**

Just before the end of the song, mother notices Bobbie on the stairs. They stare at each other momentarily and then Bobbie turns and runs upstairs. The stage begins to revolve, and as it does so, mother crosses stage left, taking her hat as she goes. Mother exits and the stage continues to revolve slowly. The lights dim to darkness and then fade up as the revolving stage completes 360°. We are back in the London house. It is morning. The children are asleep upstairs.

Above the stage, the station clock begins to ratchet and whirr. The hour hand jolts to February and the clock chimes loudly. The noise wakes the children.

Track 1: Clock Whirr & Chime - SFX

Peter What time is it?

Phyllis I've no idea – come on, it's still a school day.

The children head downstairs. It is deserted. There is a note on the table.

Peter Where's mother?

Phyllis Well how should I know?

Peter All right. There's no need to be so sharp – I was only asking.

Phyllis Well you shouldn't ask questions that are quite so silly, should you.

Peter Now look here...

Bobbie has picked up the note on the table.

Bobbie Quiet, both of you... (*reading*) 'To London'. She says she'll be back as soon as she can.

Phyllis She's always in London these days. We've hardly seen her since Father had to go.

Peter There's something awful the matter. Ruth told me last night in the kitchen.

Bobbie Did you ask her?

Peter Yes I did! You may be able to go to bed night after night without caring if mother is worried or not, but I can't. So there!

Bobbie I don't think we ought to ask the servants things mother doesn't tell us.

Peter That's right Miss Goody-Goody, preach away.

Phyllis I'm not goody, but I think Bobbie's right this time.

Peter Of course. She always is. In her own opinion.

Bobbie Oh don't! Don't let's be horrid to each other. I'm sure some dire calamity is happening. Don't let's make it worse!

Peter Who began, I should like to know?

Bobbie I did...I suppose, but...

Peter (*triumphantly*) Well, then! (*He thumps Bobbie on the shoulder in a playful way*) Don't worry, you're not a bad sort. And I suppose you're right...in a way.

Mother enters.

Mother Children! What on earth are you doing here? You should have been up and out to school by now.

Phyllis Really? What time is it?

Mother Didn't Ruth wake you?

Bobbie It's Wednesday mother. Ruth isn't here.

Mother Of course! How silly of me. Oh, I am sorry my darlings. It's just...well, there's a lot to take up my time at the moment I'm afraid.

Peter Why? What's going on, is it father?

Bobbie Shhh, Peter.

Mother No. No, my darling, it's quite all right. I want to tell you all something. Those men that came to see daddy did bring some very bad news, and Father will be away for some time. I am very worried about it, and I want you all to help me, and not to make things harder for me.

Bobbie takes her mother's hand.

Bobbie As if we would!

Mother You can help me very much, by being good and happy and not quarrelling when I'm away...for I shall have to be away a good deal.

Children We won't quarrel/Indeed we won't/We'll not argue anymore

Mother Then, I want you not to ask me any questions about this trouble; and not to ask anybody else any questions...You'll promise this too, won't you?

Peter I did ask Ruth. I'm very sorry, but I did.

Mother And what did she say?

Peter She said I should know soon enough.

Mother It isn't necessary for you to know anything about it. It's about business, and you never do understand business, do you?

Bobbie No. Is it something to do with the government?

Mother Yes. Now don't you worry. It'll all come right in the end.

Phyllis Then don't you worry either, mother, and we'll all be as good as gold.

Peter We'll begin first thing tomorrow.

Bobbie Why not now?

Peter There's nothing to be good about now, silly.

Phyllis We might begin to try to feel good, and not call names.

Peter Who's calling names? Bobbie knows right enough that when I say 'silly' it's just the same as if I said Bobbie.

Bobbie Well.

Peter No, I don't know what you mean. I mean it's just a – what is it father calls it? – a germ of endearment.

Phyllis I say, you used to say it was so dull – nothing happening, like in books. Now something has happened.

Bobbie I never wanted things to happen to make mother unhappy. Everything's perfectly horrid.

Mother Now, now. I'm not unhappy my darlings. How could I be when I have each of you to look at every day? Every one of you has father written on your faces. When I look at you, I see him, so you see there's nothing to miss, Father's still with us.

Phyllis Yes mother.

Mother And he'll be with us wherever we go.

Peter Why? Where are we going?

Bobbie Nowhere, silly! Mother means Father is with us wherever we are.

Phyllis Yes Peter – how silly!

Peter Well I like that.

Mother Now, Bobbie and Phyllis. Peter isn't silly at all – in fact he's very clever.

Peter See! (*pause*) Am I?

Mother Yes, you are. We are going somewhere...all of us, on a big adventure.

Phyllis Oh! Are we going to Africa? There are lions in Africa! I knew it! I knew it! Daddy's there isn't he?

Mother (*laughing*) I'm afraid it's not quite Africa my darling. But we are going to have an adventure of a different kind. We're going on a train; it's going to be like a holiday – no factories, no traffic, no cities. Just us, my darlings. We're going to leave this house and go and live in the country. Such a ducky dear little white house. I know you'll love it. We're going to play at being poor

Phyllis Like Marie Antoinette!

Mother Yes, I suppose so – although hopefully with a better ending.

Bobbie When are we going, mother?

Mother Bobbie, always practical aren't we? We're going today. It's all arranged, we'll take a little suitcase each and then some men are coming to move our things after us.

Bobbie But why do we have to go so soon? What about our friends, what about our school?

Peter I say, this is larks; no school! I do like moving – I wish we moved once a month.

Mother I don't! Now come on – upstairs, all of you. Take only what you really need.

Bobbie But mother...

Mother Upstairs Bobbie.

Mother stares at Bobbie, then leans in and kisses her forehead.

Mother Upstairs!

Peter and Phyllis rush upstairs, laughing. Bobbie follows them slowly. Mother sits in a chair, staring in to space. She covers her mouth with her hand and begins to sob. Bobbie, now on the stairs, turns and looks at her mother. The lights fade to black.

Track 4: Sleep away - song

Mother **Sleep away my precious children
The sun will soon break through
Even though he may be far from here
Daddy's watching over you
Daddy's watching over you**

**Dream away my dear little angels
Enjoy your time of rest
Be children while you have the chance
Little birds soon fly the nest
Little birds soon fly the nest**

**I must be strong for the children without him
Forget all the tears that I've cried
The sadness that I feel about him
Has to be locked up inside**

**So hide away all signs of worry
The children must not see
What a poor lost soul their mother is
Still they put their trust in me
Still they put their trust in me**

Mother sleeps

Bobbie **Sleep away my dearest mother
Yes, I can be strong too
And while you're watching over us
I'll be watching over you
Yes, I can be strong too**

The stage revolves 180° and remains in darkness. Over the following dialogue, the London House set is cleared from what is now the back of the stage, leaving a wooden table, a few simple chairs and various items of rural life – a mangle, washboard etc.

Upstairs, Peter lights a candle, as do Bobbie and Mother.

Peter Well I like this!

Phyllis It's jolly dark in the countryside.

Peter It's jolly dark everywhere at night you silly fool

Mother Peter!

Peter Here, I think this is the path. Follow me.

Bobbie Do be careful Peter. Maybe I should go first.

Peter Not likely. I'm the man of the house.

Peter trips, landing noisily.

Mother Peter!

Peter What a silly place to leave a stream.

The stage, still in darkness, slowly revolves 180°; The Country House (formerly the London House) is now DSC.

Bobbie Are you sure this is right?

Peter Of course I'm sure; I'm the one with the compass aren't I? Look – I think it's at the bottom of this slope.

Peter, followed by the others, begins to descend the steps leading back to the stage.

Peter Careful – it's rather steep.

Phyllis I don't like this...

Peter Oh don't be such a silly girl, Phyllis.

Phyllis Well, I can't help that can I?

Peter I suppose not – you were born silly.

Bobbie Peter! I think you should concentrate on where you're going.

Peter This must be the place – they could have left a light on.

Mother Peter, light the lamp on the table.

Peter moves to the table and lights an oil lamp. The stage lightens a little but remains dim.

Mother There, that's better. I don't know where anything is...

There is a crash as things are knocked over.

Phyllis What was that?!

Peter Only the rats.

Phyllis Oh dear, I wish we hadn't come.

The lamp peters out and the stage fades to black.

Bobbie Only the rats...

Above the stage, the clock lights up. Again, we hear the ratchet and whirring as it chimes 'March'.

Track 1: Clock Whirr & Chime - SFX

Lights fade up on the stage. The family is undertaking various jobs: Phyllis is washing up; Mother is on a chair, darning; Bobbie is reading and Peter is playing with his train.

Phyllis This washing up is never over. It's like the Forth Bridge.

Mother Well, when you've finished you can play out.

Peter We've played out – that's all we've done since we got here.

Phyllis We'll go into the garden mother.

Peter Never mind the garden, let's go down and look at the railway. There might be trains passing.

Bobbie We can see them from here; let's sit down a bit.

Peter Well, I suppose if you're scared...

Bobbie I'm not scared – I'm thinking of Phyllis.

Phyllis Well, I like that – I'm not scared.

Peter Well then, you won't mind going will you?

Phyllis Not at all. Bobbie?

Bobbie Can we mother?

Mother Well, make sure you're back for tea. And promise me you'll go nowhere near the lines.

Peter We won't! Thank you mother.

Track 5: The Modern Miracle of Steam, part 1 - song

The children begin to gather up their things, bread, cheese etc for a packed lunch. As they do so, the stage begins to revolve and the children begin exploring the stage, laughing. Eventually, they make their way up the steps and stand on the bridge over the stage.

Phyllis Look at the railway!

Peter It's like a river flowing through the fields!

Phyllis It goes on and on as far as you can see.

Bobbie And then further, all the way to London perhaps.

Phyllis And back again!

Peter Don't be silly, rivers only flow in one direction.

Phyllis pauses to think of a clever answer.

Phyllis Well this is a magic river! It can go in two directions at once!

Peter *(exasperated)* Uh...girls!

Bobbie **Cutting through the countryside**
The railway river flows

Phyllis **Curving gently round the fields**
I wonder where it goes

Peter **Shiny river, running rapid**
Don't you ever rest?

Children **Heading south now turning west**
You're racing like a thing possessed!

Peter Here's a train coming now...from the tunnel!

Phyllis It sounds like a dragon coming to roar at us!

Children **Can you hear the distant sound
Of engines in the air
Peter Coming from the tunnel
Phyllis From the dragon's lair**

The train emerges from the tunnel.

Phyllis It is a dragon! Can you feel it fan us with its hot wings!

Peter I never thought I should get so near to a train as this. It's the most ripping sport!

Children **Listen Mister 'Noisy' Dragon
With your breath of fire
Mister Dragon, don't you ever tire?**

Bobbie Look! You can see the little faces of the passengers. They look so peaceful when outside it's so incredibly noisy!

Peter They look like explorers off on some adventure!

Children **Brave explorers, luck be with you!
Are you all aware:
You're riding on a dragon's back
A dragon riding on a track!**

There is a cloud of smoke from the mouth of the tunnel, as it disperses we see four passengers. They are sat just in front of the mouth of the tunnel, facing each other and in profile to the audience (as if in a first class carriage). One of these is the Old Gentleman.

Passengers **Aren't we awf'ly lucky to have the railway
A charming way to get from A to B
More down to earth than travelling in an airplane
Not half as wet as sailing on the stormy sea
The motor car is terribly smelly and dangerous
And walking is so nineteenth century
Yes, aren't we awf'ly lucky to have the railway
Oh, lucky old Edwardians are we!**

**Now there's a certain rhythm syncopation
With this transportation
It marks the racing heartbeat of a modern nation's
Patriotic pride
Now we have spanned
This pleasant land
Come and take a ride
We are steaming from the city to the countryside!**

The lights fade on the passengers and up on Perks who is cheerfully whistling the tune to 'Aren't We Awf'ly Lucky to Have the Railway'. He spots the children, and slowly finishes whistling.

- Perks Is there something I can help you with?
- Bobbie Help us with?
- Perks Well, you don't look like you can help yourselves. Make a habit of trespassing do you?
- Phyllis Trespassing?!
- Perks That bridge, young lady is, is the property of the Great Northern Railway Company.
- Peter It's only a silly old bridge.
- Perks Only a...only a... What would do you think would happen, young man, if that 'silly old bridge' wasn't there eh?
- Peter Well...
- Perks I'll tell what should happen should I? Should I? Yes...I shall...that 'ole 'ill would fall down round your ears. You wouldn't be liking that, would you.
- Phyllis No, I don't suppose we would.
- Perks No, I don't suppose you would. So hop it.
- Peter But we only want to look at the railway.
- Phyllis Yes, and see a real life dragon up close.
- Perks A real life... *(to Bobbie and Peter)* Is she all there?
- Peter What she means is, we've never been this close to a real track. It's amazing.
- Phyllis It's not that amazing. Just a few bits of track and a big old engine trundling up and down.
- Perks Just a bit of...not amazing? *(to Bobbie and Peter)* You sure she's all there?
- Bobbie Well, I'd love to know how it all works, Mr...Mr...

Apart from where stated, most of the following is spoken, the underlined words falling on the beat

Track 6: The Modern Miracle of Steam, part 2 - song

- Perks Perks, Miss.
- Peter Me too!
- Perks Well...I haven't got long, 10.21's due through soon. What do you want to know?
- Peter I'd love to drive a train one day. I wonder how it works?
Could you maybe take the time to show us, Mr Perks?
- Perks Well the first of all, the train is just the whole entire shebang:
That's the wagons and carriages
And tender where they keep the coal and water.
But by far the most exciting part of any modern train
Is the locomotive's engine that is powered by steam
- It's really quite miraculous.
Invented not so long ago to pump the water out of mines.
So very simple then but now these modern locomotives
Are in fact gigantic orchestras of instruments
Performing in a symphony of steam.
- Phyllis They do look really complicated.
- Perks Well there are an awful lot of things that happen all at once.
But if you think of it as rather like a team of separate parts
That are working side by side each with a special job to do.
Now, let's start at the firebox
- Children What's a firebox?
- That's where you shovel in and burn the coal
To make a raging fire
The heat of this then boils up all the water
In a thing called a boiler - an enormous kettle
Steam then passes through to the cylinder and piston.
- Children Pylinder and ciston?
- Perks The cylinder contains the piston racing to and fro
Under pressure from the hot expanding steam
But as you know wheels go round and round
Not back and forth
And so we need a crank.
- Children A crank?

- Perks *(presto!)* An arm attached at right angles to a rotating shaft whereby reciprocating motion is changed into circular motion.
- Children Eh?
- Perks It changes that... *(he demonstrates 'reciprocating motion' with his broom)* to that...! *(now he moves the broom in large circles)*
- Children Ah!
- Perks Now a series of connecting rods transferring all this power
To the locomotive wheels will mean she's off and flying!
(sung) These are all important parts
Of one enormous team
That's the modern miracle of steam
- Children *(sung)* These are all important parts
Of one enormous team
That's the modern miracle of steam
- Phyllis She's off and flying? Who is she?
- Perks The train of course!
- Phyllis Are all trains called 'she'?
- Perks Every single one!
- Bobbie Mister Perks, do you recall before the railway came?
Was the world a different place or was it much the same?
- Perks Heavens! I'm not quite that old!
But I know one thing for sure:
That the railway helped invent
What we now think of as the modern world today.
- Phyllis That's silly. How can a railway invent anything?
- Perks Let me explain...
- Before the railways came the only way to travel far
Was by walking or by riding on a coach and horses.
Well, you could easily get through a pair of shoes
If you should walk from here to London.
Even on a coach and horses
You'd be bumpin' on the road
For maybe three days or maybe even four.
But if you care to take the train you simply
Wouldn't have the time enough
To finish off a crossword let alone a magazine

Before you'd hear, "Kings Cross, all change!"

He mimes the ushering of passengers off a train

Perks ...Move along now...mind the gap please, madam!

Bobbie **In the early days of railway did the rich sit with poor?**

Perks **Well not exactly, not to start with.
But because there was a cheaper class
The poor could still afford long distance
Travel for the first time
In the breezy open carriages!**

Children **So hold on to your hats!**

Perks **Quick and cheap and easy and so very very sociable.
There's country folk and city folk all mucking in together
This brand new way to travel meant
The cities and the towns had cheaper food
As all the fishermen and farmers got their
Produce to the market even quicker.**

Children **What did that mean?**

Perks **You could buy a lovely piece of cod in
Derby that was caught that morning!
Villages where fishing was the only way of living
Were immediately popular and all the rage
As day trips to the coast became more common
So the seaside was invented
With the train to take you there.
And now there's Brighton and there's Blackpool?**

Children **And there's Bridlington and Bournemouth**

Perks **And there's Mablethorpe and Morecombe**

Children **And there's Margate and there's Minehead**

Perks **And there's Cromer and there's Clacton**

Children **Where?**

Perks **Clacton. Very nice it is too...driest part of the country so they say. Me sister has a beach-hut there. Now where was I...oh yes... (*clearing his throat and getting on his metaphorical soapbox, then, with great passion:*) Over thirty-thousand miles of railway were laid during the last century. A railway that transformed Britain from a land of isolated villages and towns into one...united...country!**

Perks *(sung)* **The greatest feat of civil engineering
That he world has ever seen
That's the British modern miracle of steam**

Perks and Children *(sung)* **The greatest feat of civil engineering
That the world has ever seen
That's the British modern miracle of steam**

Phyllis Mister Perks, I've been thinking...

Peter Well that makes a change!

Bobbie Peter!

Phyllis *(sung)* **If the railway really is as magic as you say
Then surely many miracles would happen in a day
If the railway were a place where wishes could come true
Then I'd send our love to father
That is what I'd do**

Perks *(sung)* **Trains can take all sorts of things
So why not love as well
Who knows if it will work at all
Time will tell
Trains are truly every bit
As magic as they seem
It's just another miracle of steam**

Perks & Children *(sung)* **Anything can happen
When you take the time to dream...**

Steam whistle

Perks Here comes the 10.21. *(he proudly consults his watch)* Bang on time!

We see the passengers.

1 Now there's a certain rhythm syncopation
2 (There's a certain rhythm)
1 With this transportation
2 (A syncopated sound, fascinating rhythm)
1 It marks the racing heartbeat of a modern nation's
2 (The heartbeat of a proud and modern nation's)
Both Patriotic pride
Now we have spanned
This pleasant land
Come and take a ride
We are steaming from the city to the countryside!

1 **Aren't we awf'ly lucky to have the railway**
2 **(Serendipity gave us locomotive means)**
1 **The modern way to get from here to there**
2 **(The contempor'ry mode of trav'ling to and fro)**
1 **Everyone's in love with the sound of a steam train**
2 **(With the sound of steam train, Wooh wooh, Fairs are fair)**
1 **A transport for the masses where the fares are fair**
2 **(Where the fairs are all fairly low)**
1 **Fish are fresh; not terribly smelly in Derby**
2 **(Now in Derby their fav'rite food is fish and chips)**
1 **And the seaside is a lovely place to be**
2 **(Don't forget your bucket and spade**
 And something to do if it rains)
1 **Yes, aren't we awf'ly lucky to have the railway**
2 **(Aren't we awf'ly lucky to have the railway...)**
1 **Oh, lucky old Edwardians are we!**
2 **(...Yes, indeed!)**

Passengers **Lucky old...Edwardians**
 Lucky old Edwardians are we!
 Lucky old Edwardians are we!

Perks & Children **Anything can happen**
 When you take the time to dream
 That's the modern miracle of steam!
 That's the modern miracle of steam!

We see a projection of flashing light and movement behind the stage as the train rushes past. The noise of the engine builds and the children wave enthusiastically. The Old Gentleman waves back – Perks has to shout to make himself heard.

Perks Looks like you've made a friend there!

Phyllis What do you mean Mr. Perks?

Perks Just there, look

Peter Oh yes!

The Old Gentleman continues to wave.

Children Hello! Oh, hello!

The noise of the engine continues, there is a loud whistle and another huge puff of steam. By the time it has cleared, the passengers have disappeared.

Phyllis Oh, that was wonderful, just wonderful!

Bobbie It was awfully nice of him to wave.

Perks Well, he's an awfully nice gentleman.

Phyllis Do you know him Mr. Perks?

Perks Well, I er... I wouldn't say I know him, not personally you understand, but I know of him of course – I know of him very well.

Phyllis What's his name?

Perks What's his...?

Phyllis What's his name?

Perks Oh, that! Yes well, I'm not sure I should be divulging information like that to the likes of you...tch! The cheek of it...what's his name... I don't know...

Phyllis Oh, you don't know?

Perks No, I don't mean I don't know his name, of course I know. I mean I don't know in regards to your behavior. Of course I know that, you think I don't know that I know that? The fact is that I know that it's important that what I know is for me to know and the reason you don't know is that it's not something you need to know, you know?

Peter I don't think I know what my name is any more...

Over the following dialogue, the lights slowly begin to fade.

Phyllis Do you know what?

Peter Oh, don't you start.

Phyllis No, I'm being serious – do you think he might know Father?

Peter Well...I suppose he could, I mean it's not impossible.

Phyllis Oh! I think he does... I know he does.

Peter Yes... I think he does too.

Phyllis What about you Bobbie? Do you think so?

Bobbie I think we need to get home, look how dark it's getting – mother will be worried.

Peter But Bobbie...

Bobbie I think that wherever father is, he's thinking of us, just as we're thinking of him. And although he can't see us, he's still with us – watching over us.

Pause

Bobbie Come on, we'd better turn in.

Perks Yes, I think you'd better.

The children begin to walk off the bridge – they return to the three chimneys, leaving Perks alone. Perks comes down to the front of the tunnel and begins sweeping, muttering as he does so.

Perks I don't know...impertinence, that's what it is. Wouldn't speak to your elders like that in my day, mind you in my day I'd be dead by now...

Perks whistles 'Aren't we awfully lucky...' as he continues to sweep. The lights fade to black. The stage revolves round to the Three Chimneys.

Above the stage, the clock chimes 'April'.

Track 1: Clock Whirr & Chime - SFX

Light fade up on Bobbie and Peter, both undertaking some sort of household chore.

Phyllis How long has it been now?

Peter Three days. I say, where is this doctor fellow? We sent for him yesterday, you would've thought he'd be here by now

Bobbie Peter! There's only Doctor Forrest for the town and all the villages, you can't expect him to be at our beck and call.

Peter Not unless you're rich.

Bobbie It's very good of him to come at all.

Phyllis comes down the stairs into the room.

Bobbie How is she?

Phyllis No better, if anything she's worse, her hands are burning hot and she won't eat anything at all.

The doorbell rings.

Bobbie Oh! That will be Dr. Forrest. Peter, you get the door, you're the man of the house. Phyllis, help me make this place spic and span, we don't want him to think we can't cope.

Peter rushes off-stage as the girls frantically tidy. Peter returns with Dr. Forrest.

Bobbie Dr. Forrest, thank you for coming.

Dr. Forrest Not at all my dear, where's the patient?

Phyllis She's upstairs, your Lordship.

Dr. Forrest laughs.

Dr. Forrest Doctor will do m'dear, but it's nice to be appreciated. May I go up?

Bobbie Of course, Doctor.

Dr. Forrest heads upstairs.

Peter Ha! 'Your Lordship', you'll be calling Perks 'Your Highness' next.

Phyllis Oh, do shut up Peter – at least I was polite.

Bobbie Quiet, both of you. There's something much more pressing.

Phyllis What?

Bobbie Well, doctors don't work for free Phyllis, and it's been a while since mother had one of her stories published.

Peter Yes, you're right. What are we going to do then?

Bobbie Well, I suppose we'll have to find something else to pay him with.

Peter I could work it off. He's bound to need someone to carry his things, traipsing about all over the place, he must get awfully tired.

Phyllis Perhaps, if he's sees mother for free, we could promise to keep Peter away from him.

Peter Well I like that.

Bobbie Now, now. We'll just have to speak to him. I'm sure he's a reasonable man.

Doctor Forrest appears.

Doctor Forrest Who's a very reasonable man?

Bobbie Oh, Doctor Forrest.

Phyllis How's mother? She's not going to die is she?

- Peter Phyllis!
- Doctor Forrest No, that's quite all right. No, my dear – I sure we can get her back to rude health in no time.
- Bobbie What's wrong with her, Doctor?
- Doctor Forrest Influenza, I'm afraid. Now, Lady Grave-airs, I suppose you'll want to be head nurse.
- Bobbie Of course.
- Doctor Forrest Well then, I'll send down some medicine. Keep up a good fire. Have some strong beef tea made ready to give her as soon as the fever goes down. She can have grapes now, and beef essence – and soda-water and milk, and you'd better get in a bottle of brandy. The best brandy. Cheap brandy is worse than poison.
- Bobbie Oh...yes, of course doctor. Thank you so much for coming to see us.
- Doctor Forrest Not at all, my dear. Toodle pip!
- The Doctor exits.*
- Peter Well, what are we supposed to do now? We can't afford to pay him, let alone buy all that stuff too.
- Bobbie I should think we could make do, as long as we keep mother warm. I've a shilling upstairs – we can't afford beef tea, but if we go into the village we could get two pounds of scrag-end of the neck for our tea, and mother can have the broth.
- Peter We can do without the beastly mutton. Bread and butter will support life. People have lived on less on desert islands many a time.
- Phyllis And we'll just have to get as much brandy and soda-water as we can for a shilling.
- Bobbie No. I won't have it. You heard Dr. Forrest, I'm the head nurse and I'm not going to let mother go without. She looks after us all on her own; the least we can do is look after her. Now, think, everybody, just as hard as ever you can.
- Pause*
- Phyllis Well, I've got an idea.
- Peter First time for everything.

Phyllis Fine, you beastly thing, I shan't share it then.

Bobbie Peter, that's awfully unkind. Now Phyllis, what is it?

Phyllis Well, it might not work...we'll need some sheets, and some black paint.

Peter There's the pot of Brunswick black upstairs – I used it on mother's fire grate.

Phyllis Yes. Yes, that would work.

Peter Come on then!

Phyllis and Peter rush upstairs. Bobbie is left alone. She watches them go and quietly sits on a chair. She stares in to space, and is about to cry when she pulls herself together, stands up and heads to the table. She picks up a vase and begins to wipe it. It slips from her fingers and smashes on the floor. She lets out a cry of frustration and sits on the chair, burying her head in her hands.

Track 7: The Girl I Used to Know - song

Bobbie **There was a girl I used to know
Not so very long ago
I saw her smiling
Without a worry in the world.
Where is she now?**

**There wasn't time to say goodbye
She was too busy building castles in the sky
Although I sometimes wish that she would find me
I know that I just have to let her go
What happened to the girl I used to know?**

**She used to play some silly games
She'd always win at hide and seek
She used to say, "You'll never find me.
You'll be searching for a week!"
And ev'ryone would try their best to find her
But they knew they never would
She was only hiding then
But now she's lost for good**

**She thought that happiness would stay
She thought those carefree days would never go away
As children we're forever chasing rainbows
But someday we just have to let them be
That happy little girl I used to know was me**

**And now I'm all alone and in between
The world I know and a strange new place I never been**

**But when I see our mother cry
I know that I have grown enough
To understand the reason why**

**We played in spring without a care
With all the birds and cherry blossom in the air
Like butterflies that live just for the summer
When autumn came I knew she had to go
That's when I lost the girl I used to know**

**Life was an overflowing cup
Why did we ever have to think of growing up?
Those happy days recede into the distance
But no matter quite how far apart we grow
I'll always love that girl
That silly little girl
I know I'll always love
The girl I used to know**

The lights fade and the stage revolves over the end of the music. As the stage turns, there is a loud train whistle and the stage is filled with smoke.

Track 8: Steam Whistle - SFX

We see Peter and Phyllis standing on top of the bridge.

Peter I'm not sure about this.

Phyllis Well, it's better than your idea.

Peter I didn't have an idea.

Phyllis Exactly.

Peter Look, look – here it comes!

We can hear a train approaching, the sound of it building over the following dialogue and action.

Track 9: Approaching Train - SFX

Phyllis Do you think he's on there?

Peter He's always on there!

Phyllis Get ready...get ready.

The noise builds to a thunderous climax, and as it does, we see lights projected behind the stage again as the train flashes past. There is a huge burst of smoke that engulfs the stage.

Phyllis and Peter are shouting 'Over here, over here!' or the like. As the smoke clears we see their home made banner hanging over the tunnel. It reads 'LOOK OUT AT THE STATION'.

Peter Do you think he saw it? Do you?

Phyllis I'm sure he did – he must have done, we were really shouting...He always looks.

Peter Come on, let's get down there....we'll never know 'til we get there.

Peter and Phyllis gather up their banner and head down the stairs to DSC. As they get there, Bobbie rushes in from DSL.

Bobbie Well? Did you manage it?

Peter Of course we managed it.

Bobbie But did he see it? Did he see it?

Phyllis How do we know?

Perks *(off-stage)* I don't think so sir, they're not usually here at this time.

Old Gentleman *(off-stage)* It was a very distinct sign Mr. Perks, clear as day, I told the driver as much.

Phyllis That must be him! It must be!

Bobbie Be quiet Phyllis, and tidy yourself up!

Perks *(off-stage)* Are you sure it was for you sir? Do they know you?

Old Gentleman *(off-stage)* Well...in a way, I suppose – we exchange greetings almost every morning.

Perks *(entering)* Well, that is strange sir, I don't know why they'd...*(seeing the children)* Oh!

Peter Morning, Perks.

Perks Er...good morning. Did you er, I mean did you...put out a ...sign for um...*(he indicates The Old Gentleman)*

Phyllis Yes! Yes we did!

Perks Well, he's a very busy man you know, aren't you sir? Can't have all and sundry asking 'im to get off at stations in the middle of his journey...

Old Gentleman That's quite all right, Mr. Perks.

Perks Oh, is it? Yes, yes I suppose it is...if you...if you say so...

Bobbie We're terribly sorry sir, we didn't mean to be rude.

Peter Yes, we're awfully sorry for interrupting your journey.

Perks Come on child, I've held up the train for this – what do you want to say.

Phyllis Oh, too much!

Bobbie We know you must rush back to your train, so we've explained everything in this letter, sir.

She hands him an envelope.

Bobbie We do hope you'll forgive our impertinence.

Old Gentleman Well...I don't know what to say. It must be important to go to all this trouble.

Peter Oh, it is sir – jolly important.

Old Gentleman Very well, I shall read it with interest. The train's waiting is it Mr. Perks?

Perks Yes sir...getting later by the minute.

Old Gentleman Well, we can't have that now, can we? Goodbye Ladies...and gentleman.

Phyllis Good bye sir (*she curtsies*) thank you so much for stopping.

Old Gentleman (*exiting, with Perks*) Not at all, young lady, not at all.

Perks This way sir, soon have you back on board...

Peter It worked! It really worked! I told you it would...

Phyllis Well, I like that!

Bobbie Come, come Peter – it was Phyllis' idea.

Peter Well, I suppose so...well done Phyllis

Bobbie Yes, well done Phyllis.

Perks reenters

Perks What on earth were you doing? (*looking over his shoulder*)...do you know who that was?

Peter Not really.

Perks Not...not really? (*He blows his whistle and starts waving his flag*) All clear Mr. Henderson, take her away.

There is a billow of smoke, filling the stage and noise of the train moving away.

Perks I've never seen such impertinence.

Phyllis Oh please, Mr. Perks, we wouldn't have done it unless we really needed to. I do hope we didn't get you in to any trouble.

Perks Yes, well...if it was an emergency, I'm sure that...

Bobbie (*cutting in, shouting*) Look!

As the smoke clears, we see a man lying upstage, face down.

Perks What on earth...

Peter He must have fallen from the train!

They rush up to him.

Phyllis Hello? Hello, can you hear me?

Bobbie (*motioning downstage*) Bring him over here, put him on this chair.

Perks et al carry/drag him down and place him on the chair.

Bobbie Phyllis, go and get him some water. Can you hear me, sir?

The man groans.

Russian Помогите мне! (*pronounced 'Pomogite mne'*)

Phyllis What's he saying?

Perks Sounds like French to me.

Peter It's not French!

Perks What is it then?

Peter I don't know what it is, but it isn't French.

Perks Try 'im in French then, if you know so much about it.

Peter Parlay voo Frongsay?

Russian Grâce au ciel! Quelqu'un que je peux parler aussi, j'ai attendu si longtemps pour trouver quelqu'un à qui parler! Enfin!

Peter There! That's French!

Perks What's he say?

Peter I don't know.

Bobbie Mother can speak French.

Phyllis Oh yes, Mother speaks beautiful French.

Perks Let's get him into my room.

Perks reaches out and takes hold of the man's arm to lift him. The man wrenches his arm away and covers his head, coughing loudly.

Bobbie Oh don't! Don't you see how frightened he is? He thinks you're going to lock him up. I know he does – look at his eyes! Oh, let me try and speak to him, I do really know one or two French words if I could only think of them

Pause

Perks Well?

Bobbie Vous attendre. Ma mère parlez Français. Nous – what's the French for 'being kind'?

Phyllis Bong is 'good'.

Bobbie Nous être bong pour vous.

Bobbie reaches out and touches the man's hand. He looks at her and then takes her hand and kisses it.

Phyllis Well done Bobbie!

Perks Ask him for his ticket.

Bobbie Oh, er...un... billet?

Russian Non, non...

Perks No ticket, doesn't even know where he wants to go. I'm not sure now but what I ought to send for the police.

Phyllis Oh, don't!

Bobbie No, please don't! Let's see what mother says...please.

Perks We don't even know where he's from.

Peter *(pulling an envelope from his pocket)* I know! Let's show him these...look! Stamps!

Phyllis Yes, good idea, Peter.

Peter *(holding up a stamp)* Italian?

The Russian shakes his head.

Peter Norway?

The Russian shakes his head.

Peter Spanish?

Another shake.

Bobbie Hold them out and let him choose.

The Russian searches through the stamps and at last holds one up.

Peter He's Russian! Or else he's like 'The Man Who Was' in Kipling – you know...

Bobbie Oh please Mr. Perks, please can we take him home to mother?

Perks Well...

Phyllis Please!

Perks All right.

Phyllis Thank you Mr. Perks!

Phyllis hugs Perks.

Perks All right, all right, steady on.

They lift the Russian from the chair and help him off-stage as it begins to revolve. The lights fade to black.

Track 10: Russian Cue - incidental

When the lights fade up, we are in the Three Chimneys. The Russian is sat in a chair with a blanket around his knees. Mother is also sat in a chair, wrapped up warm.

Phyllis *(serving hot drinks)* There, we've got two patients now.

Mother Now, now Phyllis – I'm feeling much better. You worry about our guest – nothing more.

Doorbell

Peter I'll get it!

He runs off.

Mother Who on earth can that be?

Peter returns, carrying a large hamper.

Phyllis Oh, he did it! He did it!

Peter He jolly well did all right – this thing weighs a ton!

Mother What on earth is happening? Who's done what?

Phyllis Oh look, there's a letter *(she reads)* 'Dear Roberta, Phyllis and Peter, here are the things you want. Your mother will want to know where they came from...'

Mother I do indeed.

Phyllis 'Tell her they were sent by a friend who heard she was ill, and if she says you ought not to have asked for the things, tell her that I say you were quite right, and that I hope she will forgive me for taking the liberty of allowing myself a great pleasure. GP.'

Mother What on earth is this all about?

Bobbie Oh mother, there's a kind old gentleman who takes the train.

Phyllis And you were so poorly, we thought we had to get the things you needed somehow.

Mother You asked for charity?

Bobbie No! well, yes, I suppose so...

Mother Now listen, it's quite true that we're poor, but we have enough to live on. You mustn't go telling everyone about our affairs – it's not right. And you must never, never, never ask strangers to give you things. Do you understand?

Children Yes mother, sorry.

Mother And I shall write a letter to your old gentleman and I shall tell him that I didn't approve – oh, of course I shall thank him, too, for his kindness. It's you I don't approve of, my darlings, not the old gentleman. You can give the letter to Mr. Perks to give to him...and we won't say any more about it

Bobbie Yes mother, we are sorry mother.

Mother I know my darling.

Phyllis *(looking in the trunk)* Oh my! Look at all this! We never asked for all thi! Peaches, port, wine...chickens! Oh, mother, what a kind old gentleman.

Mother Well, it will still be here in the morning. It's awfully late, my darlings, and time you were off to bed.

Peter But can't we just...

Mother Peter...

Peter Yes mother.

Mother Bobbie, would you go upstairs and fetch our guest on of Father's nightshirts from his trunk?

Bobbie Of course mother.

Bobbie runs upstairs.

Phyllis Look! He's fallen fast asleep!

Mother Well, he's probably exhausted after the day he's had. Come on now – off you go.

Peter Mother – do you think he's a criminal? Do you think he's trying to escape from something?

Mother Now, now Peter – that says more about you than it does about him. He's in need, and it's our Christian duty to care for him, not judge him.

Peter Of course mother – I'm sorry. But it's just...I mean...Russia's so terribly far away, why's he here? Will you ask him?

Mother When he's feeling better, and stronger, I've no doubt he'll have much to say. Tomorrow, you must fetch Dr. Forrest, and he'll be able to tell

us how long he needs to stay. For the time being, we must keep him warm, and let him rest. Now, up to bed, both of you.

Bobbie has returned, clutching a shirt. She is standing at the bottom of the steps.

Mother Bobbie, there you are. Peter, Phyllis, up you go.

Phyllis Goodnight mother.

Peter Goodnight mother.

Peter and Phyllis head upstairs. Bobbie remains by the stairs, she is close to tears.

Mother Bobbie?...Bobbie, what's wrong?

Bobbie Why hasn't Father taken his clothes?

Mother My darling...

Bobbie Why would he have gone, but not taken his clothes?

Mother Bobbie.

Bobbie Daddy isn't...Daddy isn't dead is he?

Mother My darling, no! What makes you think anything so horrible?

Bobbie rushes to her mother and hugs her.

Bobbie I – I don't know.

Mother Daddy was quite, quite well when I heard from him last, and he'll come back to us some day. Don't fancy such horrible things, darling!

Lights fade to black. The clock above the stage chimes 'May'.

Track 1: Clock Whirr & Chime - SFX

Lights fade up, we are still in the Three Chimneys, it is morning. Mother, Peter and Phyllis are in the front room, busying themselves or playing with toys. Peter is whistling 'Aren't We Awf'ly Lucky to Have the Railway'. Bobbie comes down the stairs.

Mother How's our guest this morning?

Bobbie He's sitting up, he seems a little stronger today.

Phyllis Now mother, please...please tell us about him.

- Peter We have been patient, and I had to bite my tongue not to go to sleep, and I just nearly went to sleep and I bit too hard, and it still hurts now. Do tell us!
- Mother Well, it's a story long enough to make a whole book of. He's a writer; he's written wonderful books. In Russia at the time of the Tsar one dared not say anything about the rich people doing wrong, or about the things that ought to be done to make poor people better or happier. If one did, one was sent to prison.
- Peter But they can't, people only go to prison when they've done wrong.
- Mother Or when Judges think they've done wrong. Yes, that's so in England. But in Russia it was different. And he wrote a beautiful book about poor people and how to help them. I've read it. There's nothing in it but goodness and kindness. And they sent him to prison for it. He was three years in a horrible dungeon. In prison all alone for three years.
- Peter But that can't be true now, it sounds like something out of a history book – how did he get away?
- Mother When the war came, he volunteered as a soldier, but he deserted at the first chance he got.
- Peter But that's very cowardly.
- Mother Do you think he owed anything to a country that had done that to him? If he did, he owed more to his wife and children. He didn't know what had become of them.
- Bobbie Oh, he had them to think about too, then, all the time he was in prison?
- Mother For anything he knew, they might have been sent to prison too. But he got a message that they had escaped and come to England. So he came here to look for them.
- Peter Had he got their address?
- Mother No, just England. He was going to London, and thought he had to change at our station, and then found he'd lost his ticket, and his purse.
- Peter Oh, do you think he'll find them? I mean his wife and children – not his ticket.
- Mother I hope and pray he'll find them, darling...Dears, when you say your prayers, I think you might ask God to show His pity upon all prisoners and captives.
- Bobbie To show his pity...upon all prisoners and captives. Is that right mother?

Mother Yes... yes, my darling

Pause

Peter *(trying to break the tension)* Er... You remember Perks promising me the very first strawberries out of his own garden? Well, I should think they're ripe now. Let's go down and see.

Phyllis Oh yes! I just fancy some strawberries. Can we mother?

Mother Of course my dears.

Phyllis There's only one problem, Peter

Peter Oh, what's that?

Phyllis Well, I'm not sure you will be the first to get Perks' strawberries.

Peter Why ever not?

Phyllis Because I'm not sure you'll be the first to get there!

Phyllis bolts off stage.

Peter Why, you little....

Peter chases after her.

Mother You should go too, Bobbie – the fresh air will do you good

Bobbie Are you sure?

Mother Of course. Besides, I need you to look after Phyllis and Peter. Go on, off you go

Pause

Bobbie Hey! You two – wait for me!

Bobbie runs off-stage, as she does so the stage begins to revolve.

Track 11: Railway Cue, incidental

The children mount the bridge as the stage is still turning. Peter enters first, closely followed by Phyllis.

Phyllis Peter! Slow down!

Peter stops on the bridge.

Peter Did you really think you could beat me?!

Phyllis Wait for Bobbie! We'll leave her behind!

Bobbie enters.

Bobbie Stop! Both of you!

Peter What's the matter? Can't keep up? Go on, admit it!

Bobbie I never said I could!

Peter All right, we'll stop for a minute to catch our breath.

Phyllis I don't need to catch my breath. You're such a typical boy Peter. Always going on and about how much better you are, how much faster you are, how much...

Track 12: Landslide! Stop the Train! - song

Bobbie *(cutting her off)* Hush. Stop! What's that?

Bobbie **Did you hear that noise?**

Phyllis What Noise?

Bobbie **A creaking, rustling, rumbling sound.
Did you feel the earth tremble?**

Peter Tremble?

Bobbie **A shuddering strong vibration in the ground?**

They all stand still and listen. There is another rumble, louder this time.

Children **I can hear that noise
And it's getting louder
I can feel the earth tremble
What on earth is going on?**

Peter Look at that! The whole bank is moving. The trees are walking down the hill!

Phyllis **I always knew the railway was an enchanted place**
Bobbie **Like the woodlands in Macbeth**
Peter **Like trees in a sliding race!**

Children **Marching slowly down the slope
This magical tree parade
Sliding, shifting, gently drifting**

A mobile shady glade

Phyllis What is it? Oh, what is it? It's much too magic for me. I don't like it.
Let's go home.

Peter It's all coming down!

Children **Rocks are falling now**
They're snowballing now
It's enthralling
The landslide is sprawling
All rushing on down the hillside
With a blundering thundering crash!

They stand in dumbstruck silence as the dust starts to settle.

Bobbie That'll take some sweeping up.

Peter *(slow and pensive)* Yes...yes...

He looks at his pocket watch.

Peter Oh no...

Bobbie & Phyllis What is it?

Peter The 11.29 hasn't gone by yet...

Children **What are we to do?**
Now trees and boulders block the line
Think of something quick
Or a terrible fate awaits the 11.29

Bobbie **We could run to the station**

Peter **We don't have time**

Peter **If only we had something red**
That we could wave
If we run up the line
Then maybe we could save the train!

Phyllis **We could make some petticoat flags!**
They're really bright and red!

The girls remove their petticoats.

Bobbie **Phyllis, that's a great idea!**
Peter **For once you decide to use your head!**

Peter All right, so girls occasionally do have good ideas!

Peter starts to tear in to a petticoat.

Phyllis You're not...you're not going to...

Peter Be quiet!

Phyllis Don't tell me to be quiet!

Bobbie There's no time to argue...tear them into little bits if you like. Don't you see, Phil, if we can't stop the train there'll be a real live accident, with people killed! Now, wave your flags! We must stop the train!

The focus shifts from the children to the passengers on the approaching train.

Passengers **Aren't we awf'ly lucky to have the railway
The safest way to get from B to C
We always feel secure
'Cos GNR assure
Our safety and security
Are given the highest priority!**

Children **Stop the train! Stop the train!
Keep trying and trying again!**

Peter & Phyllis **Look out Bobbie! You must get off the line!**

Bobbie **Not just yet! Let me be!**

Peter & Phyllis **It's no good! They can't see!**

Children **Keep waving like mad to prevent a catastrophe
Horrible accident! Terrible tragedy!**

+

Passengers **Aren't we awf'ly lucky to have the railway
The safest way to get from B to C
We always feel secure
'Cos GNR assure
Our safety and security
Are given the highest priority!**

Passengers **Goodness me! What's going on?
We're slowly down; is something wrong?
This is most irregular
What is going...?**

Children **Stop the train! Stop the train!
Keep waving like mad to prevent a catastrophe!
If we stop there will be
A horrible accident! Terrible tragedy!
Isn't time to explain!
Are we just shouting and waving in vain?
We are ready to drop
So won't you please stop...!**

Passengers **Goodness me! What's going on?
We're slowly down; is something wrong?
This is most irregular
What is going on?
Goodness me! What's going on?
We're slowly down; is something wrong?
What's going on?**

Children **+
Stop the train! Stop the train!
Keep waving like mad to prevent a catastrophe!
If we stop there will be
A horrible accident! Terrible tragedy!
Isn't time to explain!
Are we just shouting and waving in vain?
We are ready to drop
So won't you please stop
A horrible accident! Terrible tragedy!
Are we just shouting and waving in vain?
We're begging you: Please stop the train!**

Bobbie faints. The children rush to her and the stage is swallowed up in smoke.

End of Act 1

ACT 2

The entire cast is on stage. The revolve is set to show Perks' little office. The Director of GNR is stood on a small box. Perks addresses the audience:

Track 13: Fortune Always Favours the Bold - song

Perks **In all me years as porter at this charming station
This is by far the proudest moment that I've 'ad
A loyal and dutiful career
There's been a Perks as porter 'ere
Back to me Grandpa's Dad when I were just a lad**

In his element now, Perks starts his well-rehearsed 'presentation':

**Now this station has a fascinating hist'ry
But the reason why they built it
In the middle of a marsh remains a myst'ry
The original intention was an overdue extension**

Sir Hector gets out of his seat and whispers quietly in Perks' ear and slips him a piece of paper.

To the Brackenbourne to Brackenbury Branch...

**Without further much ado
Let me introduce to you**

There is a short pause as he reads from the paper.

**Sir Hector who apart from being
Rector of this parish
Is Sir Hector Arthur Spector
The Director of this sector of the GNR,**

Perks takes his seat next to Bobbie. There is some polite applause as the rather pompous Sir Hector takes the stage.

Sir Hector **As Director of the GNR, my friends
An important duty I effectuate
Is to ensure that each departing train arrives on time
Because the customers complain when they are late!**

**I am very glad to say
That on the fateful day**

**Once the blockage on the track was cleared away
The train worked up a head of steam
It got ahead of time
So at its final destination
There was quite some consternation
When it turned up at eleven fifty-eight
And not eleven fifty-nine!**

**There is a moral nested there among the rocks and mud
It is an aphorism mother would relate:
Although it's better to be late than 'dead' on time
It's even better to ensure you're never late!**

Passengers **Although it's better to be late than 'dead' on time
It's even better to ensure you're never late!**

Perks **Sir Hector, with respect,
I think you've missed the point
These children were the heroes of the day
A reminder to us all
That when you're brave and standing tall
However small you are
The larger brutes are easier to slay**

Passengers & Perks **Only courage, heart and sense
Reveal a power that's quite immense
And in staying calm and thinking clear
There's nothing in the world you have to fear!**

**It's down to them that we are here today
And it just remains to say:
That never in the field of public transport
Has so much been owed to quite so a few
And by so many passengers as this
So collectively we thank
The saviours of the train
And if the GNR will last a thousand years
People still will say
That was their finest day
Yes, indeed it was their finest hour!**

Perks **When you've the courage to square up to the danger
When you've the sense to know just what to do
When you've the heart for fellow feeling
And the patience of a saint to see it through
These qualities combine
To make your own luck over time
Remember these words
As true today as when they first were told:
Fortune always favours the bold!**

Passengers & Perks **They showed wisdom, they showed wit
They showed mettle, they showed grit
Never need rely on luck
With such audacity and pluck
Never daunted, always brave
Never mind how close the shave
This feat of derring-do
So well timed and right on cue**

Perks Before they are awarded their gifts, I invite the heroes of the day to give a few words.

Children **Although we're really grateful
For this generous reception
If we're honest it was really an exciting kind of game!
We only did what anybody else would do
To stop the chuffing train
But thank you all the same!**

Passengers & Perks **How does one define an act of courage
Is it never giving up when others do?
What makes someone stay to fight
When others have just taken flight?
One must stand and face the fear
Like our gallant gang of fearless heroes here!**

**When you've the courage to square up to the danger
When you've the sense to know just what to do
When you've the heart for fellow feeling
And patience of a saint to see it through
These qualities combine
To make your own luck over time
Remember these words
As true today as when they first were told:
Success will visit those who break the mould
The Roman writers tell us that:
"Fortes fortuna adiuvat"
According to a sample we polled:
Fortune always favours the bold!
Ev'rything around you will be turning to gold
Did we mention: Fortune always favours the bold!**

+
Children **Although we're really grateful
For this generous reception
If we're honest it was really an exciting kind of game!
We only did what anybody else would do
To stop the train
But thank you all the same!**

The crowd cheers, and the Director hands each of the children a pocket watch.

Bobbie Goodness. This really is too much.

Phyllis Look! There's an inscription (she reads) 'From the directors of the Great Northern Railway in grateful recognition of the courageous and prompt action which averted an accident – 1905'.

Perks Well, what do you say to that, eh?

Peter I don't know what to say – I'm speechless.

Sir Hector (*whispering to Peter*) I hope not, young man – you must say a few words.

Peter looks around, embarrassed, and then steps forward to address the crowd.

Peter Ladies and Gentlemen...Ladies and Gentlemen, it's most awfully good of you, and we shall treasure the watches all our lives – but we really don't deserve it because what we did wasn't anything really. At least, I mean it was awfully exciting, and what I mean to say – thanks you all very, very much.

The crowd cheers and applauds, and gradually disperses, leaving the children and Perks alone.

Perks Well, I thought that went very well. I'm not usually one to stand on ceremony, but credit where credit's due, I...

Bobbie (*cutting him off*) Mr. Perks...

Perks Yes?

Bobbie Mr. Perks, I wonder if I might ask a favour?

Perks Well, I suppose that depends on what it is. You've already had all me strawberries...

Bobbie No, no nothing like that. I have a letter, and it's very important that it's delivered to our old Gentleman. Do you think you might pass it to him?

Perks Another one? I don't know, if you're not stopping the train with your petticoats, you're stopping it with notes. I can't delay the trains miss...more than my job's worth y'know.

Bobbie Oh please Mr. Perks, it is jolly important – I wouldn't ask if it weren't.

Peter What's all this about anyway?

Bobbie Nothing to bother yourself about, Peter – do be quiet.

- Peter Well, I like that. I'll have you know I'm the man of the house. I should be kept informed, you know.
- Phyllis Oh do be quiet, Peter. If you don't know what it's about, there's good reason. Bobbie's quite right. Some things are best left secret. It's not good for everyone to know everything about everything... What is it about Bobbie?
- Perks I don't know. You lot don't know if you're comin' or goin'. Gimme the letter – I'll see that he gets it.
- Bobbie Oh, thank you Mr. Perks! It really is most important...
- Perks Well, run along now. I've all manner of stuff to clear up and get on with thanks to you lot and your little ceremony. Go on –off with you.
- Children Good bye, Mr. Perks / Thank you, Mr. Perks .

The children walk off, examining their watches and chatting excitedly, as the stage begins to revolve and fade to black. Perks continues to sweep the stage, whistling 'Fortune Always Favours...' as he does so. The stage revolves round to the Three Chimneys. The clock above the stage ratchets and whirrs and chimes 'June'.

Track 1: Clock Whirr & Chime - SFX

Lights fade up on the Three Chimneys. The children are sitting, wrapping parcels. Mother enters.

- Mother Well, hello my darlings.
- Bobbie Mother! We wondered where you had got to.
- Mother I had to go into the village to send a telegram.
- Peter A telegram? Whatever for?
- Mother To give my permission.
- Phyllis Permission for what?
- Mother Permission to print.
- Phyllis Permission to print what?
- Bobbie Oh Mother! Do you mean...
- Mother Yes, my little Chickies – I've sold another story. The one about the King of the Mussels, so there'll be buns for tea. You can go and get them as soon as they're baked. About eleven isn't it?

Bobbie Mother, would you mind if we didn't have them for ourselves, but took them down to the station.

Mother I don't mind where you have them dear, but why?

Bobbie Because it's Perks' birthday – he's thirty two, and he says he doesn't keep his birthday any more, because he's got other things to keep – not rabbits or secrets – but the kids and the missus.

Mother You mean his wife and children?

Phyllis Yes, it's the same thing, isn't it?

Peter And we thought we'd make a nice birthday for him.

Mother Is that what all these parcels are in aid of?

Phyllis Oh yes, everyone in the village has been so kind. There's a basket of gooseberries from the old lady at the post office.

Peter And Mrs Ransome gave us a perambulator for the kids.

Mother Children.

Phyllis A tobacco pipe from the sweet shop.

Peter An iron shovel from the blacksmith.

Phyllis And loads more...oh he's going to love it.

Mother My darlings...this is very kind of you, very kind indeed. But you must be very careful how you give these gifts to Mr. Perks. Poor people are very proud, you know.

Phyllis It isn't because he's poor, it's because we're fond of him.

Mother I'll find some things that Phyllis has out grown, if you're quite sure you can give them to him without his being offended.

Peter Can we have them now mother? We're heading down right away.

Peter begins to load the parcels in a wheel barrow.

Mother You head down my darlings, and I'll follow on.

Phyllis You're coming to the station.

Mother Well, he has been very kind to all of you. I'd like to congratulate him if I may.

Bobbie Of course! Mother, that's wonderful!

Mother And I shall bring some buns from the village. Run along now.

The children pack the wheel barrow and grab as many presents as they can. They climb the bridge as the stage begins to revolve, revealing the station and Mr. Perks, who is standing looking very agitated. The children call to him from the bridge.

Phyllis Mr. Perks! Mr. Perks, Good morning!

Perks There you are! Get down here right away!

Bobbie Whatever's the matter?

Perks You're the matter! You and your letter! Get down here now, there's a very important guest waiting.

Bobbie Oh! The old gentleman! I clean forgot.

The children rush down the steps and gather around Perks, struggling with the wheelbarrow as they go.

Phyllis What's all this about? What's going on?

Bobbie The old gentleman! I wrote to him about our Russian friend

Perks Yes, well – he's here. And he's a very busy man so keep it short. Wait here, the lot of you.

Perks exits and returns with the Old Gentleman.

Perks Right this way sir, here they are.

The Old Gentleman shakes hands with the children. Phyllis curtsies once again.

Bobbie Thank you so much for stopping to see us.

Old Gentleman Don't mention it, my dear.

Phyllis Thank you, Your Highness.

Old Gentleman You're welcome, Your Ladyship.

Phyllis giggles

Old Gentleman I couldn't well ignore a letter of that magnitude.

Bobbie You mean you can help him?

Old Gentleman Help him? I would move heaven and earth to help that man.

Phyllis What do you mean?

Old Gentleman Bless my soul – I’ve read his book! It’s translated into every European language. A fine book – a noble book. And so your mother took him in – like the good Samaritan. I’m very glad you came to me about this – very glad indeed. And I shouldn’t be surprised if I found out something very soon.

Bobbie That’s wonderful sir! Oh, thank you, thank you!

Old Gentleman There are no promises, mind. I’ll keep Mr. Perks here, up to date with my findings.

Perks Of course, sir. Er...I’m afraid the 5.15 is about to...

Old Gentleman Of course. Good bye m’dears. And thank you again.

Peter No sir, thank you.

Phyllis curtsies and the Old Gentleman leaves.

Perks Well, I’ve never seen the like of it. The audacity of it...well, I s’pose you must be doing something right. Man of that importance... what’s all this?

Peter This? Well, this is for you.

Perks What do you mean?

Phyllis Mr. Perks, I just want to say, on behalf of all of us, that is...that we want to wish you...and your family...well, just you really, I suppose... I mean..

Peter Happy birthday Mr. Perks!

Bobbie/Phyllis Yes! Happy birthday! Happy birthday!

Perks All this stuff is from you?

Bobbie Not just us, Mr. Perks – dozens of people from the village donated things and...

Perks Donated? Donated?

Phyllis Well, we mean...

Track 14: A Charity I Ain’t - song

Perks I know exactly what you mean...don't think I can buy these things for mesself do you?

Peter That's not what we mean at all...

Perks **Now I'm a very generous person
And charity begins at home
But I'm not afraid to say
That's where charity should stay
I'll not accept a farthing in the way of welfare**

Bobbie But Mr. Perks, it's not welfare. They're gifts, from people who care about you...

Perks I don't care, not if it was an angel from heaven. We've got on all right all these years and no favours asked. I'm not going to begin these sort of charity goings-on at my time of life so don't you think it

Perks **I don't remember ever claiming poverty
Or complaining that we're penniless or poor
But I'd rather not be livin'
Off a'charitable givin'
I'm an independent man and always will be**

Peter But... (*Perks gestures that he is far from finished!*)

**That I'm very often quite bad tempered
I will happily admit without complaint
But of all the things that I could be
A charity I ain't!**

Phyllis Oh! I thought you'd be so pleased; I'll never try to be kind to anyone else as long as I live. No, I won't! Not never!

Peter We didn't mean any harm.

Perks It ain't what you mean so much as what you does. Anyway, I wouldn't accept charity even if we was the poorest of the poor...which we ain't.

**My place upon the social ladder
I've known since I was young
I'm nowhere near the top, of course
Just up from the bottom rung
I have no business climbing
'Cos I'm happy with my lot
A self sufficient working man
Who gets along the best he can
And who's very glad to say he's proud of what he's got**

Everything is bought and paid for

**Nothing ever comes for free
We've managed very well
And I'm very proud to tell
That we've never ever borrowed on the never never**

**Now I've never really been a proper sinner
And most certainly I've never been a saint
But of all the things that I could be
A charity I ain't!**

Perks Had it been a sprig of something for the mantle I wouldn't have said so much. It's there being all this heaps and heaps of things I can't stand. No - nor won't neither.

Peter But we told you - they're not all from us, only we forgot to put the labels on. They're from all sorts of people in the village.

Perks Who put 'em up to it I'd like to know?

Phyllis Why, we did of course.

Perks **So you've been telling all our neighbours
We're having trouble making ends meet
Well now that you have shamed us
Publicly defamed us
Please return this bag o' tricks to where they came from!
The village life is meek and unassuming
City folk may think us rather quaint
We may be poor but we've got some pride
A charity we ain't!**

Perks Very much obliged I'm sure. I don't doubt what that you meant it kind, but I'd rather not be acquainted with you any longer if it's all the same to you.

Bobbie Look here. This is most awful.

Perks That's what I says.

Bobbie We'll go if you like - and you needn't be friends with us any more if you don't want, but...

Phyllis We shall be friends with you, however nasty you are to us.

!
Children

**We're sorry if we've upset you
That never was our intent
We only ever wished to show you
How fond your neighbours are of you
That was the only thing we meant to do**

Bobbie *(close to tears)* Before we go, please let us show you the labels we wrote to put on the things. Mother's first...

Bobbie pauses, visibly upset.

Peter Don't upset yourself, Bobbie. We know you meant it kind even if he doesn't.

Bobbie *(pulling herself together)* May I read the labels?...Mother's first, it says: 'Little clothes for the Perks's children...'

Mother appears on the bridge.

Mother **...Little clothes for the Perks's children
Here are some that you've outgrown
If you're sure Mister Perks won't take offence
And think it's meant for charity**

**He has been so kind to you
And I'd like to do this little turn for him
I wish that I could give some more
But we are also poor ourselves**

Perks *(thawing a bit)* Very well...Your Ma's a born lady. We'll keep the frocks and what-not. You tell your mother we're very grateful for them too. They'll be put to good use I'm sure.

Bobbie Then there's Mrs Ransome.. She said, "I hope the children will like the sweets..."

Phyllis takes the label from Bobbie

Phyllis **...I hope the children will like the sweets
Take the pram for the fine young boy
I'd have given it before if I'd been sure
She'd accept it from me**

Bobbie She told me to tell you that it was her Emmie's little one's pram - the little one that didn't live but six months.

Phyllis Surely you can't ask us to...

Perks *(gruffly)* I'm not asking for anything.

Bobbie Then the shovel, Mr James, the blacksmith, made it for you himself. And he said, "You tell your Mr Perks..."

Peter takes the label from Bobbie

Peter **...You tell your Mister Perks**

**It's a pleasure doing something for likes of him
If I could shoe them all just like how I do the horses
With the price of leather what it is...**

Perks James is a good enough chap.

Bobbie *(rushing to finish)* Then the honey and the bootlaces. He said he respected a man that paid his way - and the butcher said the same. And the old turnpike woman said many was the time you'd lent her a hand with the garden when you were a lad - and things like that came home to roost - I don't know what she meant. And everybody who gave anything said they liked you, and it was a very good idea of ours; and nobody said anything about charity or anything horrid like that. And the old gentleman gave Peter a gold pound for you, and said you were a man who knew your work. And I thought you'd love to know how fond people are of you, and I never was so unhappy in my life. (pause) Goodbye. I hope you'll forgive us someday...

The children turn to go.

Perks Stop...I take back every word contrary to what you'd wish.

Peter We'll take the things away if you're unhappy about them, but I think everyone'll be most disappointed, as well as us.

Perks **It's not that I feel unhappy
In fact, I never have been more pleased
'Cos what I learned today
Most certainly will stay
With me for the rest of my life:**

**'What' you give won't matter
If it's 'why' and 'how' that count
The kind respect of kith and kin
The welcome glow that lies within
A generous friend when times are thin
These gifts are tokens of a love
That doesn't always show
The most priceless set of gifts I know**

Phyllis You mean...

Perks I mean I'm well aware of my many failings, and it would seem that pride is at the top of the list, and it would seem that kindness it at the top of yours.

Phyllis Oh, Mr. Perks!

Phyllis hugs Perks.

- Phyllis I knew you'd like it when you really understood!
- Perks I...I...I don't know as ever I was better pleased. Not so much with the presents – though they're an A1 collection – but the respect of my neighbours. That's worth having, eh?
- Peter It is, Mr. Perks. And it's true too.
- Bobbie Mr. Perks, do you think we might ask something of you?
- Perks Something of me? After all this? Anything at all, my dear, anything at all! It's not money is it? Only I'm...
- Bobbie No, no – nothing like that. Do you think we might take the newspaper back with us? Only it's terribly cold in our bedroom, and we use it to block the draughts from the window...
- Perks Take the wrapping? Take the wrapping? I can do better than that my dear.

Perks exits and returns with a bundle of newspapers.

- Perks Take a pile of these – they sit around here for months once they're out of date. They've been cluttering up the place for too long already.

Peter rushes forward and takes the bundle, placing it in his barrow.

- Peter Well, this should certainly keep us toasted.
- Perks There's plenty more where that came from, the back room is overflowing...
- Phyllis Why are we talking about silly old newspapers? We've got dozens of presents here still wrapped up, and if you're not going to open them, then I will.
- Perks All right, young lady – you can help me if you want. Now, what could this be?

Perks holds up a parcel that is blatantly a gardening fork, very neatly wrapped. The children giggle and help him unwrap it, along with the other presents, getting more excited as they do so. The stage begins to revolve. We are back at the Three Chimneys. Mother is darning and humming 'Sleep Away'. The children burst in with their wheelbarrow full of newspapers.

- Mother What on earth are you doing with that in the house?! I've just mopped the floor
- Peter Mr. Perks gave us newspaper to block the draughts. It's awfully heavy – I couldn't very well leave it outside, could I?

Mother Well, be that as it may – it's past bedtime, so you'll have to block the draughts in the morning. Upstairs, all of you. Here, I'll help you carry a couple upstairs. I suppose it won't do any harm to put them in the cracks in the windows for the night.

Mother heads to the stairs, and Phyllis and Peter also grab newspaper and begin to follow.

Bobbie Mother – I don't mind staying down here a little longer to block out some of the draughts. I was just thinking...you know...I am a little older now, so...

Mother Well, I suppose you have a point Bobbie darling. Thank you – that would be very helpful.

The other children and Mother head upstairs. Bobbie begins to carefully remove paper from the barrow and fill various cracks around the set. After a while, she take a piece and begins to fold it carefully to place in a crack. Suddenly she gasps and stares at the paper in her hand. Urgently, she unfolds it and rushes to the table – flattening it out with her hand in order to read it.

Track 15: It's a Lie! - song

Bobbie **It's a lie!
They surely can't mean you;
I don't believe a word of it can possibly be true!
A cruel and vicious lie!
It's all a big mistake!
You're my Daddy not a crook for goodness sake!**

**It's a lie!
There's nothing I can say
There's nothing I can do to make this horror go away
But here in black and white
So very cut and dried
Unambiguous and clear
And yet I still don't quite believe
These awful words I'm reading here:
That's your name
The verdict: 'guilty'
The sentence: 'five years'**

**No! It's a lie!
They've got it very wrong!
It's here at home with us
That's where you belong
They say that you're a spy
Well, how can that be true
I know you'd sooner die
Than have a reason
To commit an act of treason...**

It's a lie! It's a lie! It's a lie!

Bobbie bursts into tears.

Peter *(shouting from upstairs)* Bobbie, come up here, we're all playing Blind Man's Bluff - even Mother *(there is no answer)* ... Bobbie, what is it?... What's wrong?

Bobbie Nothing! *(she hides the paper in her pocket)* I'll be up in a moment

Peter Are you sure?

Bobbie Yes, yes...I won't be long...

**If only there was some way of returning
To the safe and cosy world that I once knew
With eyes closed I can see
That happy little me
And how I wish I was the girl I used to...**

**But what's the use in that!
Hiding from the world?
Am I not old enough or brave enough
To face up to the facts?**

**No! I must be strong!
And learn to find the truth
However difficult the journey is
I promise I'll not stop until I've shown
It's a lie! It's a lie!
It's a lie! It's a lie! It's a lie! It's all a big lie!**

Mother has appeared at the foot of the stairs.

Mother Bobbie? Bobbie...whatever's the matter?

Bobbie *(quietly)* Oh, Mammy!

Mother Bobbie, darling, what is it?

Bobbie *(beginning to cry)* Oh Mammy, oh Mammy, oh Mammy!

Mother rushes to her and hugs her.

Mother Bobbie, Bobbie, tell me, this minute – whatever's wrong?

Bobbie hands her the crumpled paper – Mother slowly opens it.

Mother Oh, Bobbie – you don't believe it? You don't believe Daddy did it?

Bobbie No!

Mother That's all right. It's not true. And they've shut him up in prison, but he's done nothing wrong. He's good and noble and honourable, and he belongs to us. We have to think of that, and be proud of him and wait.

Bobbie (*sobbing*) Daddy, oh Daddy, oh Daddy, oh Daddy! Why didn't you tell me, Mammy?

Mother Are you going to tell the others?

Bobbie No.

Mother Why?

Bobbie Because...

Mother Exactly...so you understand why I didn't tell you. We two must help each other to be brave.

Bobbie Yes. Mother, will it make you more unhappy if you tell me all about it? I want to understand.

Mother Oh, my darling...Do you remember the night that father left? The men that came...they came to arrest him, they said that he'd sold state secrets to Russia...they said that he was a spy...a traitor.

Bobbie Daddy would never do such a thing!

Mother Of course he wouldn't. But they found letters, you see. Letters in his desk at the office, letters that convinced the jury that Father was guilty.

Bobbie How could they look at him and believe it? How could anyone do such a thing?

Mother Someone put them there. And the person who put them there was the person who was really guilty.

Bobbie He must be feeling pretty awful all this time.

Mother I don't believe he had any feelings, he couldn't have done a thing like that if he had.

Bobbie There wasn't anyone who would have hurt father on purpose, was there?

Mother I don't know – I don't know. The man under him who got Daddy's place when he – when the awful thing happened – he was always jealous of your father because Daddy was so clever and everyone thought such a lot of him. And Daddy never quite trusted that man.

Bobbie Couldn't we explain all that to someone?

Mother Nobody will listen. Nobody at all. All we can do, you and I and Daddy, is to be brave, and patient, and – to pray, Bobbie dear...

The stage blacks out. The stage revolves in darkness. There is silence. Above the stage, the clock is illuminated. It ratchets and whirrs and begins to chime 'July'.

Track 1: Clock Whirr & Chime - SFX

NB during the following scene, the Three Chimneys set must be struck/covered with blacking, as it will serve as the inside of the tunnel. The lights slowly fade up, with the sound of birdsong.

Track 16: Birdsong - SFX

Peter is standing on the bridge. Phyllis and Bobbie enter, and rush up to join him. There are tiny pieces of torn white paper from the edge of the stage to the mouth of the tunnel.

Phyllis Are you sure they came this way?

Peter Of course! You can see the paper – look!

Bobbie Well, when will they be out?

Peter They are out – all but one. I counted seventeen going in – including the hare, and so far sixteen are out.

Phyllis Where's the last one?

Peter Well, how should I know?

Bobbie How long has it been?

Peter I'm not sure – about ten minutes I suppose, since the last one came out, I mean.

Phyllis Ten minutes? Well, wherever is the last boy? He must be an awful slow coach.

Peter Well you'd know.

Bobbie Do you think we should look?

Peter Whatever for? He's probably bunked off.

Phyllis Well, what if he hasn't? What if he's hurt?

Bobbie I think we should look, Peter.

Peter Don't be so soppy, there's no way you two would go inside that tunnel

Phyllis Why not? Just because we're girls?

Peter Precisely because you're girls.

Phyllis Well, I like that.

Phyllis begins to head down towards the lower stage.

Bobbie Phyllis! Don't be silly – Peter's right, it's very dangerous.

Phyllis Don't you think the poor boy stuck inside knows that?

Bobbie I really don't know...

Peter What's wrong with you? You've been in a funk for days. Come on! She's right – that chap's probably scared half to death...

Peter heads down and Bobbie follows reluctantly. The children gather at the mouth of the tunnel, and head inside. As they do so, the lights fade to almost black and the stage revolves. The Birdsong fades. The children enter what was the Three Chimneys set, which is now the inside of the tunnel. The stage remains nearly pitch black.

Phyllis Hello? I say, is there anyone in here? I don't like it. I want to go back. It'll be pitch dark in a minute. I won't go on in the dark. I don't care what you say. I won't.

Peter I'm not going to say anything...I certainly won't say: 'I told you so' or anything like that.

Bobbie Don't be so horrid, Peter.

Peter Well, stop being silly cuckoos – both of you. I've got a candle end and matches.

Peter lights his candle and the three stay at the mouth of the tunnel.

Peter Is anyone in here?

Jim Hello? Hello – is someone there?

Peter Who's that?

Jim Over here.

Phyllis Look! He's by the track!

The children make their way over, very carefully.

- Bobbie Whatever happened?
- Jim I don't know really – I was running, and I couldn't see – and I think I must have hit a pot hole, or stumbled or something...I can't move my foot, my ankle's all swollen...
- Phyllis You see! I told you! I told you he was trapped!
- Bobbie Don't be so callous Phyllis! We're going to need help to lift him – we can't possibly do it alone.
- Peter Let's get Perks – he's at the station.
- Phyllis But we can't just leave him – what if he passes out from the pain?
- Peter She's right. I read that you can easily die of shock.
- Bobbie Peter! You two go, you'll be much faster. I'll stay here to make sure he keeps talking. Peter – break the candle and leave some here. Hurry!

Peter does so, and he and Phyllis make their way out of the tunnel. Bobbie lights the candle.

- Bobbie Now, you mustn't worry – they'll be back soon, and then you'll be safe and sound. Did you...did you tumble down?
- Jim Of course not – I'm not a kiddie. It was one of those beastly wires tripped me up, and when I tried to get up again couldn't stand.
- Bobbie Oh please! Don't get all excited, it can't be good for you...here.

Very nervously, Bobbie places her arms around the Hound. He instinctively nestles in to her. They sit in silence.

- Bobbie Are you scared?
- Jim No!...are you?
- Bobbie Well, a little. We'll just keep calm, and still...I'm sure the others will be back any minute...

Bobbie holds the Hound tighter, and he nestles in further. Bobbie holds him protectively as he slips in to sleep.

Track 17: The Girl That I Could Be - song

- Bobbie **There was a girl I used to know
Not so very long ago
I saw her smiling
In her easy little world**

Where is she now?

**What is this simmering inside?
So strange and new and oh so difficult to hide
The reason that I came here was to help you
But It almost seems you're here to rescue me
Whatever happened to the girl I used to be**

**So now we're all alone
Just you and I
In the darkness and the silence
Lying side by side
What happens now is not so clear
But being here together
Means there's so much less for us to fear**

**Life was an overflowing cup
But someday we must just accept the fact that we grow up
My childhood feelings fade into the future
What replaces them? I'll have to wait and see
The girl I used to know
Is still with me now although
Today I think I've met
The girl that I could be**

The stage fades to black. The stage revolves 360°, and as it does so, the Three Chimneys set is restored. The clock above the stage ratchets and whirrs and chimes 'August'.

Track 1: Clock Whirr & Chime - SFX

By the time the stage has completely revolved, Jim is sitting in a chair, wrapped in a blanket, whilst the family busy themselves around him.

Mother	Now, my dear. Is there anything else we can get you?
Jim	No, nothing. Really – you've been awfully kind. I'm so sorry to have imposed.
Mother	Don't be so silly, you'll be up on your feet in no time.
Phyllis	And back to that beastly school!
Mother	Phyllis...
Phyllis	Well, it sounds rotten if you ask me – they didn't even bother to look for him! Why don't you ask your parents to send you somewhere else?
Jim	Well, I...
Mother	Phyllis ! That's enough; it's very rude to ask such personal questions.

Phyllis I'm sorry...it's just...

Jim No, that's quite all right...I don't have a mother anymore, and my father...he's away a lot, so...

Phyllis Oh! Oh, I say, I am sorry. I had no idea...our, our Father's away too. At the moment, something to do with the government, and, well, we miss him very much...I am sorry.

Jim That's all right.

The door bell rings loudly.

Mother That will be Dr. Forrest.

Peter I'll go!

Mother No Peter, you stay where you are and finish polishing those candlesticks. We don't want the good doctor thinking we're happy to leave jobs half done, do we now?

Mother exits.

Phyllis Do you miss your Father?

Bobbie Phyllis!

Jim No, no...it's quite all right. I suppose so, I mean I don't see him much. Haven't done since I was a small boy. I suppose it's hard to know what I'm missing, if that makes sense.

Peter Yes it does. I miss Father. Not only him being Father, but now he's away I'm the man of the house.

Bobbie And a jolly good one you are too.

Silence

Peter What on earth is mother doing? She only went to answer the door.

Bobbie She must be discussing the situation with Dr. Forrest.

Phyllis Perhaps it's fatal!

Bobbie `Phyllis!

Phyllis Well, you never know. I heard about a boy who only hurt his finger, and they had to chop his whole...

Bobbie Phyllis! That's enough.

Mother enters

Bobbie Mother – is anything wrong?

Mother Wrong? No, nothing at all my dear. In fact, I've some rather good news. Jim's grandfather is here.

Jim What?

Mother *(to off-stage)* Please, won't you come through?

The Old Gentleman enters

Jim Grampy!

Peter Well, I never did. How do you do?

Phyllis It's our own old gentleman!

Bobbie Oh, it's you!

Old Gentleman Good morning to you all.

Peter How splendid! That's just exactly like a book, isn't it mother?

Mother It is, rather. Things do happen in real life that are rather like books, sometimes.

Peter I say, though, you're not going to take Jim away, are you?

Old Gentleman Not at present. Your mother has most kindly consented to let him stay here. I thought of sending a nurse, but your mother is good enough to say that she will nurse him herself.

Peter I'm so glad that you're going to keep him, Mother.

Old Gentleman Take care of your mother, my dears, she's a woman in a million.

Bobbie Yes, isn't she?

Old Gentleman I must confess, I'm afraid Jim wasn't my only reason for visiting in person...

Mother Oh, is there something else we can help you with?

Old Gentleman No, no...I have some...well, some rather good news actually...

Bobbie Yes?

Old Gentleman I've...I've found your Russian friend's wife and child – and I couldn't resist the temptation of giving myself the pleasure of telling him.

Mother But that...that's wonderful!

Phyllis rushes up the stairs, down the other side and off-stage.

Old Gentleman Although it rather looks as though he may find out from someone else...

Mother I don't know how to thank you for everything; it has been a real pleasure for us to have you visit.

Old Gentleman I consider myself very fortunate, madam, to have been received at your house.

Phyllis and Shepansky bound on stage. He is still doing up his shirt, obviously have just woken up.

Old Gentleman Ah!

Shepansky stands absolutely still. He looks at Mother.

Mother Il est vrai. Ils les ont trouvés, deux d'entre eux et qu'ils sont sûrs...

Shepansky bounds towards the old man and hugs him, crying.

Shepansky Spasibo! O, blagodaryu vas!

Old Gentleman (*jollily*) Come, come! It was nothing, nothing!

Mother comes and helps Shepansky up and sits him on a chair. Mother and the children fuss around him.

Bobbie May I...May I speak to you a moment sir?

Old Gentleman Why, of course.

Bobbie leads the Old Gentleman DSL. Mother and the children continue fussing over Shepansky, fetching clothes, helping him pack, making him tea etc.

Bobbie You've been so kind to us, sir...

Old Gentleman I've only done what any decent man would do...

Bobbie No! You've been more, much more. And there's already no way we can repay you. But...but...

Old Gentleman Go on, my dear...

Bobbie This paper...

Bobbie hands the Old Gentleman the piece of newspaper.

Bobbie It's my Daddy. And it's not true. Father never did it, but nobody listens to a word Mother says. She told us once to pray for all prisoners and captives...Oh, do help me, Peter and Phil don't know. I'll pray for you twice a day as long as I live if you'll only try. Think if it was your daddy...

Track 18: I Wonder - song

Phyllis Bobbie! Come, come quick – we're teaching Mr. Shepansky English...it's so funny, you've never heard anything like it!

Peter Now, let's try something simple...

Peter **Good morning**
Shepansky **Good morning**
Peter **How are you?**
Shepansky **How are you?**
Peter **Isn't it a lovely day?**
Shepansky **Isn't it a lovely day?**
Phyllis **Enchanting**
Shepansky **Enchanting**
Phyllis **To meet you**
Shepansky **To meet you**
Phyllis **A stronerary stroke of luck!**

Shepansky looks blank again.

Peter That's not even English!

Phyllis Yes it is! You're just not clever enough to understand!

Peter & Phyllis **We have so many things to tell you**
There's so much that we'd like to say
But let us start with just 'good morning'
Shepansky **Good morning**
All **How are you?**
Isn't it a lovely day?

Peter People need to know your name when they meet you. Try this...

Peter **My name is**
Shepansky **My name is**
Peter **Shepansky**
Shepansky **Shepansky**
Peter **I am a Russian gentleman**

Shepansky **I am a gentle Russian man**
Phyllis **Why thank you**
Shepansky **Why thank you**
Phyllis **You're too kind**
Shepansky **You're too kind**
Phyllis **I always will remember you**

Shepansky looks blank again.

Peter Why would he need to know that!

Phyllis You can never know too many words!

Peter Girls always have too many words!

Peter & Phyllis **We have so many things to tell you**
 There's so much that we'd like to say
 But let us start with just 'good morning'
Shepansky **Good morning**
All **How are you?**
 Isn't it a lovely day?

Bobbie That's quite enough for now. You'll exhaust the poor man! Listen, why don't you go into the garden and fetch some flowers for him. You know much he loves them.

Peter and Phyllis exit. Over the following, the Old Gentleman picks up his hat and coat. Mother and the other children help him, and he shakes hands with the Russian. Bobbie watches him leave. He turns, looks at her, smiles and tips his hat. He exits.

Bobbie **I'll never understand what you've been through**
 Punished, jailed, forgotten
 Just for writing something true
 You sacrificed your freedom
 So freedom could be won through you
 What a very noble thing to do

I wonder why the truth is always
So hard to find
Everything that's precious
In this world is so well hidden
Like a perfect diamond buried
Deep beneath the ground
I wonder, If we search hard enough
Surely the truth can still be found?

It's written in my books of history
The gift of freedom never was a given guarantee
Truth and justice: one the same
Both will fire the freedom flame

If only there was something I could do

Peter and Phyllis arrive back each laden with flowers.

Peter & Phyllis **We hope you like the bunch of flowers
They help to brighten up the day
This room can be so dark
The petals colour in the grey**

Peter We had lilies too but Phyllis tripped over her shoe lace again, and
dropped them in a puddle!

Shepansky **Why, thank you
You're too kind
Isn't it a lovely day?
I always will remember...**

The stage fades to black and revolves. Above the stage, the clock ratchets and whirrs and strikes 'September'.

Track 1: Clock Whirr & Chime - SFX

The lights fade up on the station set ,but we are in the garden of the Three Chimneys. The children and Jim are sitting on a blanket with a picnic. There is birdsong.

Phyllis So is it absolutely beastly?

Jim No, no I wouldn't say beastly. There are just some real characters,
that's all.

Phyllis But why would you want to live at school?

Peter He doesn't silly, it's not his choice is it? Anyway, I think it sounds like
huge fun. Mother says when Daddy comes home I can go off to school
if I want.

Bobbie She never did Peter, don't tell tall stories.

Peter I'm not! Anyway, I'm the man of the house, so you shouldn't be telling
what to do about anything! If I want to slope off to school, then I jolly
well will.

Phyllis But you'd never see us!

Peter Exactly.

Mother *(off-stage)* Children! Lunch time is over, come on!

Phyllis Oh, fiddlesticks! You think it's bad having to live at svholl – at least you get the holidays off...we have to live with our lessons all year round...

Bobbie Now, come on Phyllis, that's not fair. Mother only wants what's best.

Peter Why is it, that whenever I'm learning Latin, all I can think about is history. But when I'm learning history, all I can think about is...well, just about anything else really...

As the children pack up, the stage begins to revolve, revealing the Three Chimneys. The children enter.

Track 19: Have You Heard? - song

Mother I sometimes wonder if you four have any sense of urgency at all. I struggle to get you out of bed if the house was on fire. Have a seat all of you.

The children sit, opening text books and mumbling complaints.

Mother Well?

Peter **Interea magno misceri murmure
Caelum incipit insequitur commixta
Grandine nimbus, et Tyrii...**

Phyllis **...And nine times nine is eighty one
And ten times nine is ninety**

Bobbie **King Edward the Fourth, fourteen sixty one
King Edward the Fifth, fourteen eighty three**

Phyllis **I'm sick of awful mathematics**
Peter **I'm so fed up of boring Latin...**
Bobbie **Too many dates!**
Phyllis **Any other lesson would do!**
Peter **I'd rather be outside today**

Phyllis **So, Mother, could we please go out
And then when we come back
We'll be so fresh and keen and wide awake
For learning something new!**

Bobbie **+
So, Mother, could we please go out
And then when we come back
We'll be so wide awake
For learning something new!**

Peter **+
So, Mother, could we please go out**

**And then we'll be so wide awake
For learning something new!**

Mother All right, but don't go far and be back here before it gets dark!

Peter We will. I know; let's go to the railway...we haven't been there for ages.

Phyllis I wonder if it misses us.

Peter Come on! Last one there has to eat a lump of coal!

Bobbie You two go on ahead...

Peter and Phyllis run off.

Mother What is it my sweetheart? You don't feel ill do you?

Bobbie I don't know...I want to be by myself. My head feels all silly and my insides are all upside down.

Mother Hadn't you better lie down?

Bobbie I'll be better outside.

Bobbie **All the old familiar things seem different today
The sky to me has never looked this blue
The flowers are just as beautiful
But brighter somehow
It's almost like the world has been
Replaced by something new**

Chorus **Have you heard the news, Miss Roberta
Have you heard the news?
Can't think of who it was that told us
Perhaps it was a little bird**

Post mistress *(kissing her)* God bless you, love...run along do!

Bobbie But...

Post mistress Run along to the station. I have a telegram to deliver for your mother, but...it's best if you run along to the station now...run along, love!

The Post mistress leaves briskly. The Blacksmith rushes on.

Blacksmith And a good morning to you, Missie, and many of them! I wish you joy, that I do!

Bobbie

Good mor... (*he has gone*)

**Everyone I meet just talks in riddles to me
It's like seeing people acting out a dream
But I can't help feeling something good
Is coming this way
I have questions with no answers
What do all these myst'ries mean?**

**I wonder why the truth is always
So hard to find
Everything that's precious
In this world is so well hidden
Like a perfect diamond buried
Deep beneath the ground
I wonder, If I search hard enough
Surely the truth can still be found**

+

Chorus

**Have you heard the news, Miss Roberta
Have you heard the news?
Can't think of who it was that told us
Perhaps it was a little bird**

Perks

Hello! 'ere you are. Well, God bless you my dear! I see it in the paper and I don't think I was ever so glad of anything in all my born days! One I must have, Miss, and no offence, I know, but on a day like this 'ere! (*He kisses her on both cheeks*). You ain't offended, are you? I ain't took too great a liberty? But, on a day like this...

Bobbie

No, no, of course it's not a liberty, dear Mr Perks; we love you quite as much as if you were an uncle of ours, but...on a day like what?

Chorus

**We travel on through life
The scenery goes rushing by
We hardly stop; we hardly ever have the time to try
Before the journey ends
Discover something precious on the way
(No one can be sure they'll ever pass this way again)
But let us not forget
Our journey's not quite over yet**

**We only know the precious things that matter to us
When the light they shed is suddenly not there
And though the darkest tunnel seems to swallow evr'y dream
It's only time before we breathe the fresh and open air**

**We travel on through life
The scenery goes rushing by
We hardly stop; we hardly ever have the time to try**

Basses: **(We hardly stop; we hardly ever have the time to
Ever have the time to try)
Before the journey ends
Discover something precious on the way**

+
Bobbie **I wonder why the truth is always
So hard to find
Everything that's precious
In this world is so well hidden
Like a perfect diamond buried
Deep beneath the ground
Surely then the truth can still be found**

+
Peter & Phyllis **I wonder why the truth is hard to find
Everything that's precious
in this world is so well hidden
Like a perfect diamond in the ground**

+
Perks **Everthing that's precious in this world
Like a diamond in the ground
Surely truth can still be found**

Perks Mind out! Here it comes: the 11:54. Stand back please!

Chorus **And so now we've come full circle
We've seen truth erase the lies
Remember where we started, if you can:
Our 'perfect urban fam'ly'
Now a little more wise
(We're all a little wiser now)
Our tickets have returned us to
The place where we began**

The train arrives and as the smoke clears we see the figure of Father. Bobbie rushes to him.

Bobbie Oh, my Daddy, my Daddy!

Company **This is your station too, dear friends
And so our little journey ends**

THE END