

OFF THE TRACK

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By Felicia Metcalfe

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 MEN, 8 WOMEN, EXTRAS.)

- MR. JOHN MORGAN**.....Station agent, aged about forty, works at his desk in his shirtsleeves and vest, wears a green visor to shade his eyes. He is rather surly at times. Slightly gray, a few lines on his forehead and at eyes, no rouge. (224 lines.)
- SILAS DOBBINS**.....Handyman around the station, keeps up the fire, sweeps out, and fills the water cooler. Aged twenty-five, wears old blue overalls and a blue shirt, a railroad cap with a visor, heavy muddy boots. Hair needs cutting and he needs a shave, lines on forehead and at eyes, florid complexion. (162 lines.)
- FLICKIE NELSON**.....Attractive and peppy college girl, aged eighteen. Wears a pretty suit and blouse, long bob, plenty of lipstick, very little rouge. (85 lines.)
- BETTY PHILLIPS**.....Also a college girl, aged eighteen. Clothes, makeup, and hairdo similar to those for Flickie. (94 lines.)
- JOAN PARKER**.....College girl, aged eighteen. Clothes, makeup, and hairdo same as for other girls. (77 lines.)
- MRS. GUARINO**.....An Italian woman aged forty, good-natured and generous, very fat. Wears a red scarf over her head, her dress doesn't fit very well, her skirt is gathered all around her waist, she wears large clumsy-looking shoes, and a black coat. Her hair is black and is combed straight back from her face to a knot on the back of her neck. Her complexion is sallow - - no rouge or lipstick. (77 lines.)
- ANTONIA GUARINO**.....Her daughter, aged twelve. She has a dirty face and her hair needs combing, wears a plain cotton dress, rusty-looking

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shoes, black hair, sallow complexion, no lipstick or rouge. (24 lines.)

BILL LINDSAY.....Attractive and good-looking college student, aged twenty, wears a nice looking suit with sweater, no hat, full of fun a little rouge on cheeks. (178 lines.)

MR. OSCAR POZENBY.....Aged fifty, hair is gray and becoming bald. He is deaf. He is wearing a badly fitting suit of clothes. He is quite unsociable heavy lines on forehead and around eyes. (60 lines.)

WILLIE WOODSON.....Thin, pale, slight in stature, aged twenty-two, wears a nice suit, collar, and tie, very little rouge. (133 lines.)

EVALINA BUMPASS.....Willie's fiancée, aged twenty-five, several inches taller than Willie, fat and overbearing. She wears expensive-looking clothes, but is overdressed. Her hat is extreme, she wears high-heeled shoes. Her hair is frizzy, and she uses too much rouge and lipstick. (104 lines.)

MRS. REGINALD VANDERVENTER....Tall, handsome, striking-looking, stylish, wears expensive clothes in good taste - - a fur coat if possible, black crepe dress, a string of pearls, high heeled shoes, a small chic hat. She is aged about thirty-five, very haughty, wears a medium amount of rouge and lipstick. (141 lines.)

MISS PIDGIE McDOUGAL.....An old maid, aged fifty, wears a queer looking, out-of-date dress, funny-looking hat, and old-fashioned shoes. She is slightly gray. Lines on forehead and around eyes, no rouge or lipstick. (209 lines.)

NOTE:

All characters in this play are purely fictional. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental.

PRODUCTION NOTES

HAND PROPERTIES:

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- SILASLantern with piece of red paper around it, suitcases, boxes, etc., brick, pail of water, large ax, pipe.
- MISS PIDGIE.....Birdcage with canary inside (*made of yellow crepe paper if a real bird isn't available.*), large piece of black cloth to cover the cage, purse.
- THREE COLLEGE GIRLS.....Each one has a weekend bag with a large letter "H" on it, purses, coins for tips, pickles.
- MRS. GUARINOA dummy baby wrapped in a red blanket, old dilapidated-looking suitcase tied with a string, handkerchief.
- MRS. VANDERVENTER.....Pasteboard box with holes in it for a cat (*the cat doesn't have to be seen.*), dog on a leash (*this may be omitted.*), handsome bags, purse, string of pearls, dollar bill.
- BILL LINDSAYOld dirty newspaper, old envelope, box of cookies, box of candy, book of matches, paper money, and coin for tip.
- MR. POZENBY.....Old pasteboard suitcase
- WILLIEBox of pills, large pillow in a white case, handkerchief, coin for tip, watch
- EVALINACompact, lipstick, handsome bag
- MR. MORGANNote and piece of cellophane, monkey wrench, raincoat, pencil and paper, match.
- ANTONIA.....Hamper of food containing three long loaves of bread, long roll of bologna sausage, and knife brick of cheese.

DESCRIPTION OF STAGE SET:

The action takes place in the waiting room of a small wayside railroad station. In the upper-right corner is a flat-topped table or desk where the station agent works. Behind it is his straight chair. On the table are an assimilated telegraph instrument, an inkwell and pen, and clock.

Up-stage-center is a door leading out to the platform. On the wall to the right of the door is a blackboard used for the train schedule. At left of the door is a large sign saying: NO PETS ALLOWED. On the other walls are large railroad posters. These can be secured from a railroad.

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Down-left is an old potbellied stove. In it is a lighted candle, which is taped to the side so it won't be knocked down when coal is put in the stove. A broom is nearby, also a scuttle, poker, and spittoon. Around the walls are long benches. Large armchairs are scattered about. Down-right is a water cooler; a holder for paper cups is on the wall nearby.

A door at the right leads to men's rest room. A door at left leads to ladies' rest room.

OFF-STAGE SOUNDS:

Heavy rain

Train whistle in the distance.

Steam escaping when the train is wrecked

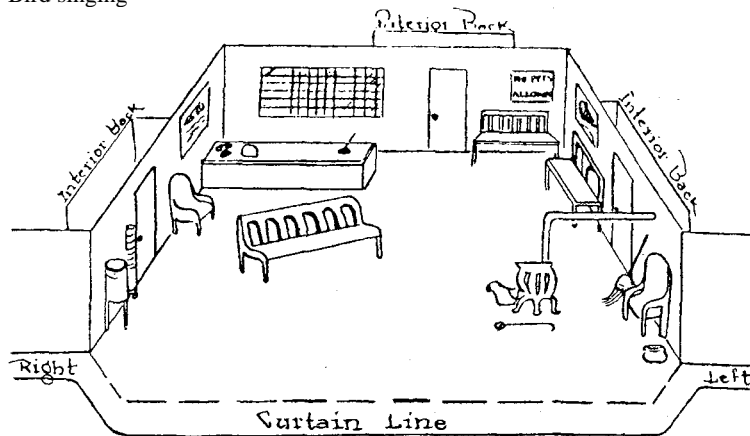
Loud noise in distance when train is wrecked (*This can be made by throwing down pieces of glass, iron, and wood at the same time.*)

Baby crying

Dog barking (*This may be omitted.*)

Cat meowing

Bird singing



THE PLACE:

The waiting room in a small wayside railroad station.

THE TIME:

ACT ONE: About ten o'clock on a dark and stormy night.

ACT TWO: Several hours later.

ACT THREE: A few minutes later.

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STAGE PROPERTIES:

Water cooler

Paper cups in container on the wall

Long table or desk with a flat top

Assimilated telegraph instrument

Inkstand and pen

Clock

Old potbellied stove and black pipe

Scuttle and coal

Poker

Broom

Spittoon

Straight chair to go behind desk

Sign for wall: NO PETS ALLOWED

Blackboard for train schedule

Piece of white chalk

Lighted candle to put inside of stove to look like fire when the stove door is opened

Large railroad posters to put on wall

Three or four long benches

Three or four armchairs

An ordinary brick to prop the door open

Pail of water

Piece of metal to tap on wood to sound like telegraph

Large pieces of glass and iron to throw down off-stage to sound like distant train wreck

Waste can

ACT ONE

AT RISE:

JOHN MORGAN, station agent, is seen sitting at his desk making out his report. He is a middle-aged man. He is in his shirtsleeves, and wears a green visor on his forehead to shade his eyes. [TRACK 1] The telegraph instrument is clicking away. (Have somebody behind the desk strike a piece of metal on hard wood, spelling out dots and dashes.)

The door at center-back opens and SILAS DOBBINS enters. He is the station janitor. He has on rough-looking clothes, railroad cap with visor, high muddy boots, and a raincoat, which is wet. He has a red lantern, which he hangs on a nail at the side of the door. This can be made by putting a piece of red paper around a lantern. [TRACK 2] When the door is opened, heavy rain can be heard. SILAS goes to the stove and holds out his hands to get warm. Then he lifts one foot after the, other to warm them.

SILAS: It sho' is a rough night. (*MORGAN doesn't look up. Silence for a moment.*) I sho' hope Kelly's creek ain't up over the bridge. (*No answer from MORGAN.*) I cain't git home if'n hit is. Hit ain't rained this hard in ten years nigh about.

MORGAN: (*Without looking up.*) Put some coal on the fire.

SILAS: Yes, sir. (*He picks up the scuttle, kicks open the door of the stove, dumps some coal in, sets down the scuttle, picks up the poker and stirs the fire noisily, puts down the poker and kicks the stove door shut with his toe. Then he gets the broom from the corner at down-left and sweeps around the stove. Then he turns and stands with his back to the stove and holds his hands behind him.*) This here stove's jes' lack a old hawg I got at home. The more yer feed him, the more he can hold. (*Silence as MORGAN continues to write.*) Doc Beasley said hit rained so hard up in Bugtussel Hollow las' night, he had to sleep with a umbrella stretched over him. (*Silence. MORGAN continues to write.*) Bill Whitson's got a calf with five legs. (*Silence.*) If'n I had a calf with five legs, I'd put 'im in a circus.

MORGAN: (*Looking up impatiently.*) It's cold in here. How much coal did you put on the fire?

SILAS: A right smart. Air you gonna be here long?

MORGAN: I've got to stay till I finish making out my monthly report.

SILAS: How ye gonna git home? I noticed ye didn't come in yer car.

MORGAN: I'll ride the midnight freight.

SILAS: I sho' hate to walk that half a mile to my house. If'n the water's up over the bridge, I don't know what I'm a-gonna do. (*MORGAN returns to write on his report.*)

SILAS: What about number 5?

MORGAN: It's already two hours and fifteen minutes late. (*He glances at the clock.*) Five minutes after ten . . . it was due to go through at ten minutes to eight.

SILAS: Guess I'd better chalk it up. They ain't much use . . . ain't gonna be nobody here tonight but you and me to see it. (*He goes to a blackboard train schedule on the back wall at left. He gets a piece of white chalk and laboriously prints: "Number 5 . . . two hours and fifteen minutes late." Then he returns to the stove and stands facing the audience with his hands behind him and his back to the stove.*) What's the last ye got on number 5?

MORGAN: It passed through Falkville a half-hour ago.

SILAS: Humph! Hit oughter be here any minute now.

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MORGAN: Did you put some fresh water in the cooler?

SILAS: I put some in this mawnin'.

MORGAN: (*Impatiently.*) It wouldn't be fresh now.

SILAS: Guess I'd better put some more in.

He exits door at back and returns with a pail of water. He takes the cover off the cooler and pours the water in, replaces the cover, and takes the pail out right. Then he returns and stands by the stove. There is the far away sound of a train whistle.

MORGAN: (*Raising his head to listen.*) Did you hear that whistle?

SILAS: Yes, sir. That's number 5 now. She's a-comin' down the road, lickety-split.

MORGAN: I guess it was blowing for Carter's Crossing.

SILAS: Hit'll be whizzin' through here in about one more minute.

MORGAN: Get your lantern and signal a clear track.

SILAS: Yes, sir.

He gets the lantern where he had hung it and exits door at back. [TRACK 3] Train whistle. [TRACK 4] MORGAN sends a message on the telegraph instrument. Suddenly there can be heard in the distance off-right a loud crash. You could throw glass, wood, and iron on the floor for sound effect. MORGAN jumps to his feet. The telegraph instrument stops.

MORGAN: (*Looking worried.*) What in the world was that?

He tries the telegraph, but it won't go. The door at back flies open and SILAS runs in looking excited, his eyes bulging out, his mouth open, his tongue hanging out.

MORGAN: (*Very loudly.*) What happened?

SILAS: It's number 5. She jumped the track.

MORGAN: Where?

SILAS: About two hundred yard down the track.

MORGAN: The whole train?

SILAS: No, sir . . . jes' the baggage coach and the day coach and one Pullman.

MORGAN: What caused it?

SILAS: A split rail.

MORGAN: Anybody hurt?

SILAS: No, sir. But the coaches are layin' over on their side.

MORGAN: I should wire it to headquarters . . . but something's happened to the instrument.

SILAS: The train done it . . . One o' the coaches knocked down a telegraph pole.

MORGAN: I'd better go see if there's anything I can do.

SILAS: Me too. (*He rushes out door at back. MORGAN puts on his raincoat and exits door at back. After a moment, MORGAN rushes in again, looking worried. He goes to the telegraph instrument and tries frantically to make it work but without success.*

SILAS follows him in.) Hit won't work till they raise that pole.

MORGAN: (*Desperately.*) I've got to get a message to headquarters.

SILAS: I don't see how you gonna do hit.

MORGAN: *(Thinking.)* I must see that they put out flares before the midnight freight comes through.

SILAS: I heard 'em say they was fixin' to.

MORGAN: Some of the passengers are coming in here to stay . . . the ones they couldn't get in the other coaches. You must keep up the fire.

SILAS: Yes, sir.

MORGAN: You got plenty of coal?

SILAS: Yes, sir . . . the bin's full . . . purty nigh.

MORGAN: *(Writing a message.)* Take this message over to Winfield's grocery store and telephone it in to headquarters.

SILAS: Mr. Winfield shut up the store before dark and went home. He was afraid he couldn't git across the creek if'n he waited too long.

MORGAN: Well, go to his house and tell him to come back and open up so we can use his telephone.

SILAS: He lives ten miles from here. It'll take me all night to walk to his house.

MORGAN: *(Rubbing his brow.)* I don't know what we are going to do.

SILAS: I guess I'd better go help them folks bring their luggage to the depot, hadn't I?

MORGAN: I suppose so . . . go on.

SILAS: Yes, sir.

He runs out door at back. MORGAN still tries the telegraph instrument. The door at back opens and three attractive college girls come in. They are all about eighteen and are dressed in typical traveling costumes for girls of their age. They are on their way back to school after being away for the weekend. They are full of pep and fun, and are laughing and talking all at the same time as they come in. SILAS comes behind them carrying their bags, all of which are covered with college stickers. Their school is Norfleet Hall. Each girl gives SILAS a tip as he deposits her bag on the floor and he thanks them profusely.

SILAS: Thanky . . . thanky . . . thanky. *(He hurries out door at back.)*

FLICKIE: Let's get a little info. *(She crosses to MORGAN's desk. BETTY and JOAN go with her and they all begin talking at once.)*

FLICKIE: What's the name of this place?

BETTY: How long are we going to have to stay here?

JOAN: How late was the train?

FLICKIE: When are they going to send a wrecker to clear the track?

BETTY: What made the train jump the track?

JOAN: Where do we eat?

MORGAN: *(Helplessly.)* Please . . . one at a time . . .

FLICKIE: Mine first . . . when do we get away from here?

MORGAN: *(With a shrug.)* That I don't know.

FLICKIE: *(Turning to the other girls.)* I'm frozen stiff . . . let's get warm.

JOAN: My feet are numb.

BETTY: I'm numb all over. *(They cross to the stove.)*

FLICKIE: *(Holding out her hands to get warm.)* We are due back at school this very moment.

BETTY: I wonder what they'll do when we don't show up. *(She also warms her hands.)*

JOAN: They'll condition us . . . that's what. *(She holds up a foot to warm.)*

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FLICKIE: We'd better send a telegram. Come on. .. *(She goes back to MORGAN's desk. The other girls follow her. She speaks rather imperiously.)* We want to send a telegram.

MORGAN: Sorry, but I can't send it.

BETTY: We've got to send one.

JOAN: They are expecting us back at school tonight.

FLICKIE: We are due there right now.

BETTY: We'll get conditioned if we don't let 'em know where we are.

MORGAN: I'm sorry . . . but . . .

FLICKIE: We'll pay for the message.

BETTY: No, you mean we'll send it collect.

MORGAN: I tell you, I can't do it.

JOAN: They'll accept it C. O. D.

MORGAN: Let me explain. When the coaches turned over, one of them struck a pole and put the telegraph out of commission.

FLICKIE: Well, why didn't you say so in the first place?

BETTY: How you going to wire in about the wreck?

MORGAN: I wish I knew.

JOAN: *(Distressed.)* How long will we have to stay here in this dump?

MORGAN: They won't send a relief train until I can get word to them.

FLICKIE: Well, hurry up and do it. *(She turns away from his desk.)* I'm thirsty. *(To the others.)* Let's get some water. *(She goes to the water cooler. The girls follow her.)*

BETTY: I'm dying for a drink.

JOAN: I'm dry as a camel. *(They get cups from the container and get water.)*

FLICKIE: *(Making a face.)* All I can say is . . . it's wet.

BETTY: Bet it's been in here for a week.

JOAN: I guess they never heard of ice.

FLICKIE: *(Looking at her hands.)* I'm grimy, let's go wash up.

BETTY: I'm for it.

JOAN: I vote yes. *(They exit door left to the ladies' lounge. MORGAN writes on a report. The door at the back opens and SILAS enters, carrying some bags. He puts them down on the floor against wall at back.)*

MORGAN: Where's the nearest telephone around here? You know more about this neighborhood than I do.

SILAS: *(Scratching his head.)* Lemme see . . . Doc Peterson's got one.

MORGAN: You must go there and take a message.

SILAS: Hit's fifteen mile down the road

MORGAN: We've got to do something. *(He runs his hand through his hair.)*

SILAS: I got some more grips to bring in.

He exits quickly door at back. MORGAN continues to write. The door at back opens and a fat Italian woman enters. She is about forty. She has on a white blouse that is much too large for her and a long black skirt that is gathered around her waist. Over her head is tied a red scarf. She speaks only broken English. In her arms she has a baby wrapped in a red blanket. Following her is her daughter, ANTONIA, a girl of twelve. She has on a cheap cotton dress. Her black hair isn't very well combed. If desired, there may be several other children with her who don't have lines. ANTONIA is carrying a large hamper

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of food. Behind them comes SILAS carrying their bags, which consist of several old suitcases tied with a string, and a pasteboard box or two.

SILAS: (*Putting down the bags and standing, waiting for a tip.*) Here's yore grips. (*He puts his hand out, then looks ashamed and puts it in his pocket.*)

MRS. GUARINO: Huh!

She turns away and sits down and begins bouncing the baby up and down. ANTONIA sits on the bench by her down-left. SILAS looks disappointed and exits back. [TRACK 5] The baby begins crying. Either MRS. GUARINO can lean over and cry for the baby or someone off-stage near her can cry. Let it be very loud.

MRS. GUARINO: (*Shaking the baby from one side to the other.*) Fa silenzio, bambino. (*"Be quiet, baby." ANTONIA puts the lunch hamper on the floor near her feet. She looks around as if frightened or ill at ease.*)

MRS. GUARINO: (*To ANTONIA and pointing to MR. MORGAN.*) Go speak-a to de man. Tell him how long-a we goin' to stay-a here.

ANTONIA: (*Timidly.*) I don't want to.

MRS. GUARINO: Go on . . . speak-a . . . (*ANTONIA gets up and crosses to MR. MORGAN. He doesn't look up at first and she stands there.*)

MRS. GUARINO: (*Fussing.*) Don't-a stand-a there . . . say something . . .

ANTONIA: Mister . . .

MORGAN: (*Looking up.*) What is it?

ANTONIA: Mama, say how long we got to stay here?

MORGAN: (*Gruffly.*) I don't know.

ANTONIA: (*Returning to her mother.*) He don't know.

MRS. GUARINO: (*Angrily.*) Don't-a stand-a there . . . go tell him, how we going to where we going?

ANTONIA: (*Returning to the desk.*) Mama say how we gonna get to where we're going?

MORGAN: (*Very loudly.*) I don't know.

ANTONIA: (*Returning to her mother.*) He don't know.

MRS. GUARINO: Don't-a stand-a there . . . go tell him when is anudder train comin'?

ANTONIA: (*Returning to MR. MORGAN.*) Mama say . . .

MORGAN: (*Shouting.*) I don't know!

ANTONIA: (*Returning to her mother. With an outward gesture of her hands.*) He don't know nuttin'.

[TRACK 6] The baby cries very loudly. MRS. GUARINO bends over it and swings it back and forth in her arms.

MRS. GUARINO: Fa silenzio . . . fa silenzio.

ANTONIA: I'm hungry.

MRS. GUARINO: You eat-a too much-a . . . always a eatin' . . . make-a you too fat-a.

ANTONIA: I want some bread and bologna.

MRS. GUARINO: (*Shrugging.*) All-a right-a . . . get-a some out-a de basket.

ANTONIA looks in the hamper and gets out a very long loaf of bread and a long roll of bologna sausage. She lays the loaf of bread on the bench and begins sawing on it with a

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very large knife, which she also gets out of the basket. The loaf is dry and rolls off on the floor. She rubs it off with her skirt and begins sawing on it again. She cuts off two slices and then begins sawing on the sausage. It also rolls off and across the floor but she picks it up and rubs it off and cuts off a slice. She puts it between the two thick slices of bread.

ANTONIA: Want some, Mama?

MRS. GUARINO: *(Shaking her head.)* No . . . no-a hungry. *(ANTONIA puts the bread and bologna back in the basket and begins eating her sandwich with great gusto. The door at back opens and SILAS enters carrying some more bags which he puts down on the floor near the wall at back.)*

MORGAN: Come here a minute. *(SILAS goes to the desk.)*

MORGAN: What are they going to do about the pole?

SILAS: Some of the train crew's trying to raise it up.

MORGAN: Are they making any headway?

SILAS: Not yet, they ain't.

MORGAN: Let me know if they get it up and I'll come help them fix the wires.

SILAS: Yes, sir. *(He exits door at back.)*

MRS. GUARINO: *(To ANTONIA.)* Get-a some water.

ANTONIA goes to the water cooler, gets a paper cup, and draws a cup of water. She takes it to her mother, who drinks it thirstily. Then ANTONIA returns to the cooler and gets a drink for herself. She returns to her mother. [TRACK 7] The baby cries.

MRS. GUARINO: Fa silenzio . . . fa silenzio.

The three college girls enter door left. They are laughing and talking. They sit down on a long bench. ANTONIA gets out the sausage and bread and cuts another slice and eats it. The college girls watch her hungrily.

FLICKIE: I can't help watching that girl eat, but it's torturing me.

BETTY: *(Rubbing her stomach.)* I'm about to cave in.

JOAN: *(With an expression of despair.)* I've already caved in.

FLICKIE: Wonder why they didn't have the diner open tonight.

BETTY: I asked the conductor, and he said the diner was out of order and they left it somewhere down the line. Anyway, they thought we'd get there in time for supper.

FLICKIE: I tell you what we should do . . .

BETTY: What?

FLICKIE: Let's go to a restaurant and eat.

BETTY: I'm for it.

JOAN: I vote yes. *(SILAS enters and goes to the stove. He opens the door and stirs the fire with the poker. Then he kicks the door shut.)*

FLICKIE: Come here a minute.

SILAS: *(Crossing to her.)* Ma'am?

FLICKIE: We are hungry . . .

BETTY: And how!

JOAN: We gotta eat.

FLICKIE: Where's the nearest restaurant?

SILAS: *(Scratching his head.)* The nearest resty-rant . . .

FLICKIE: Yes. How far is it to one?

BETTY: Lead us to it.

JOAN: And quickly.

SILAS: Let me see . . . I'd say erbout forty miles.

ALL THREE GIRLS: (*Surprised.*) Forty miles!?

SILAS: Jes' erbout.

FLICKIE: This is terrible!

BETTY: Horrible!

JOAN: What are we going to do? (*She is almost crying.*)

SILAS: I don' know, ma'am.

FLICKIE: This is the worst experience I ever had.

BETTY: Let's sue the railroad.

JOAN: I vote yes.

SILAS: Is that all, ma'am?

FLICKIE: Yes. (*SILAS exits door at back quickly. ANTONIA is still eating. FLICKIE watches her, fascinated.*)

FLICKIE: (*To the girls.*) I wonder if she'd sell us some of that bread and sausage.

BETTY: You know you wouldn't eat it.

JOAN: I wouldn't . . . I'd starve first.

FLICKIE: It's no fun starving.

BETTY: We'll just have to tough it out.

FLICKIE: I wish I had a big thick steak and some french fries.

BETTY: And some hot buttered rolls and a cup of coffee.

JOAN: And some lemon custard pie.

FLICKIE: If I couldn't get a steak, I'd take a hamburger with mustard and onions and slaw.

BETTY: I'd take a hot dog with sauerkraut.

JOAN: (*Bending over and holding her stomach.*) Hush! You're killing me. (*The door at back opens and a nice-looking young man enters. It is BILL LINDSAY, a law school student. He has on a well-tailored business suit and pretty tie. SILAS follows him, carrying his suitcase.*)

BILL: Just put it down over there. (*He points upper right.*)

SILAS: Yes, sir. (*He sets the bags down. BILL hands him a tip. SILAS grins widely.*)

SILAS: Thanky . . . thanky, sir. (*He exits back.*)

BILL: (*Crossing to MR. MORGAN's desk.*) Can I get some information?

MORGAN: (*Looking up.*) What is it?

BILL: Can you tell me when we are going to get away from here?

MORGAN: Sorry, but I don't know.

BILL: Haven't you received any information from headquarters?

MORGAN: (*Shaking his head.*) Sorry, but the telegraph is out.

BILL: That's bad. Can't you make a sort of guess as to how long it will be?

MORGAN: Your guess is as good as mine. It may be daybreak.

BILL: In that case, I believe I'll go to a hotel and hole in for the night. I'll get this man of yours to come and call me when the relief train comes.

MORGAN: I don't know where you're going to find a hotel.

BILL: (*Worried.*) You mean there's not a hotel in the town?

MORGAN: There's not anything here but the station and a country store.

BILL: Humph! That's tough. Pretty bad spot to be dumped off in.

OFF THE TRACK

MORGAN: That's right.

BILL: Do you live here?

MORGAN: No. I ride the freight home to Trenton when I have to stay late.

BILL: (*Worried.*) I don't like this idea of hanging around here all night. (*He turns around and sees the girls and gets interested immediately.*) Well, maybe it won't be so bad after all. (*He turns around and winks at MORGAN. Then he crosses to a bench near the girls and sits down. He leans over and picks up an old newspaper that someone has dropped on the floor. He hands it to FLICKIE.*) Pardon me . . . but did you drop this paper?

FLICKIE: No. (*She turns her back on him.*)

BILL puts the paper down on the floor.

BILL: Sorry. (*He rubs his chin and plans another move.*) Could one of you tell me what time it is? My watch has stopped.

BETTY: (*Icily.*) There's a clock over there on the agent's desk. (*She turns her back.*)

BILL: (*Rubbing his chin and planning something else.*) Could anybody tell me the name of this town? (*No answer. He looks under the bench and finds an old dirty envelope and hands it to JOAN.*) Did you drop this letter?

JOAN: No.

BILL: Pardon me. (*He drops the letter on the floor. ANTONIA looks in the hamper, gets a big hunk of cheese and begins eating it.*)

FLICKIE: (*Looking at her.*) She's eating cheese now.

BETTY: I know now how Robinson Crusoe felt.

FLICKIE: He didn't have it so hard . . . he had coconuts.

JOAN: And wild fruit.

FLICKIE: I wish I were on a desert island.

BETTY: I never realized before just what food meant.

FLICKIE: I'd settle for a ham sandwich.

JOAN: I'd settle for a piece of bread.

BETTY: I'd settle for a crust of bread.

BILL: Pardon me, but are you girls hungry?

ALL THREE GIRLS: (*Turning around suddenly to look at him.*) Hungry?

BILL: That's what I said.

ALL THREE GIRLS: We are starving.

BILL: I thought I might help you out.

FLICKIE: Have you got some food?

BILL: That's right.

BETTY: Where is it?

BILL: Over there in my bag.

JOAN: What is it?

BILL: A box of cookies my mother made for me to take back to school with me.

ALL THREE GIRLS: Go get 'em.

BILL: Okay! (*He goes to his bag, opens it and gets a box of cookies. He returns to the girls and passes these around. They eat greedily.*)

FLICKIE: Don't you want some, too?

BILL: Sure. May I sit down?

BY FELICIA METCALFE

BETTY: Sure! *(They move over to make room for him. BILL sits down by them and helps eat the cookies.)*

BILL: You girls going back to school?

BETTY: Yes. How'd you guess?

BILL: I know the type.

BETTY: We'll probably get the door slammed in our faces when we get there.

JOAN: If we ever get there.

BILL: What's your school?

FLICKIE: Norfleet Hall.

BILL: *(Pretending to know something about Norfleet Hall.)* Norfleet Hall? You don't mean it!

BETTY: Do you know anybody there?

BILL: I should say so . . . a swell girl.

BETTY: What's her name?

BILL: *(Rubbing his chin.)* Let me see . . . what is her name . . . a tall redhead . . . a good-looker . . .

JOAN: *(Eagerly.)* That must be Gwendolyn Boyd.

BILL: *(Snapping his fingers.)* That's the one . . . we always called her Gwen.

JOAN: She's a darling . . . Gwen's one of the most popular girls in school.

BILL: I wouldn't doubt it . . . and can she dance!

JOAN: That's Gwen all right . . . a whiz on her feet.

FLICKIE: Are you in school or out?

BILL: I'm still there . . . plugging along.

JOAN: What's your school?

BILL: I'm studying law at Cumberland.

JOAN: *(Eagerly.)* You don't mean it!

BILL: D'you know anybody at Cumberland?

JOAN: Sure! Johnny Baker. Know him?

BILL: I should say so . . . he and I are pretty good buddies.

JOAN: Think of that!

BILL: *(Standing up and bowing.)* Now that I have my credentials straight, I'll introduce myself . . . the honorable Bill Lindsay.

ALL THREE GIRLS: Glad to know you.

BILL: What about you? I have to tell Johnny your names.

FLICKIE: I'm Flickie.

BETTY: I'm Betty.

JOAN: *(In a high voice.)* And I'm the little bear . . . Joanie.

BILL: *(Sitting down beside them.)* I thought this was going to be pretty rough staying here . . . but every silver lining . . .

ALL THREE GIRLS: *(Interrupting.)* Has a cloud!

They continue to eat cookies. The door at back opens and MR. OSCAR POZENBY enters. He is carrying an old dilapidated looking pasteboard suitcase. He is wearing a badly fitting suit of clothes, a funny looking old hat, and glasses, which cause him to raise his chin up high when he reads the bulletin board. His shoes need shining. He is rather deaf. SILAS follows him in.

SILAS: Don't ye want me ter take keer of yore grip?

OFF THE TRACK

POZENBY: (*Putting his hand behind his ear to hear him better.*) What's that?

SILAS: (*Putting out his hand.*) I'll look after yore grip fer ye.

POZENBY: (*Frowning.*) Never mind. I'll take care of it myself. (*SILAS shrugs and walks out door at back. POZENBY goes to the bulletin board, holds his chin up, and tries to read.*) Number 5 is two hours and fifteen minutes late. Humph! That ought to be corrected. (*He crosses to MR. MORGAN's desk. He stands there waiting for MORGAN to look up then clears his throat.*)

MORGAN: (*Looking up.*) Well?

POZENBY: We seem to be in a bad situation here. What are they going to do about it?

MORGAN: I don't know.

POZENBY: What's the name of this town?

MORGAN: Tombigbee.

POZENBY: (*Holding his hand behind his ear.*) What's that?

MORGAN: (*Louder.*) Tombigbee,

POZENBY: (*Holding out his hand.*) Glad to meet you Mr. Bigbee. Mine is Oscar Pozenby. But I said, what is the name of the town?

MORGAN: That's it . . . Tombigbee.

POZENBY: Excuse me. I'm a little hard o' hearing; I thought that was your name.

MORGAN: That's all right. (*He looks down at his work again.*)

POZENBY: I want you to send a wire to my firm. The J. D. Stamps Manufacturing Company, 212 North First Street . . .

MORGAN: I can't send a telegram until the wires are repaired.

POZENBY: That's too bad. I hope I don't get fired. I've been working for 'em forty years and haven't missed a day yet.

He goes to the sign which says, "PETS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN THIS WAITING ROOM." He raises his chin up and reads it, then goes to a bench and sits down, holding his suitcase on his knees. [TRACK 8] The GUARINO baby cries.

MRS. GUARINO: (*Rocking the baby.*) Fa silenzio, bambino.

POZENBY gets up and crosses to the water cooler, carrying his suitcase in his hand. He gets a paper cup and takes a drink, and then he returns to his seat on the bench. [TRACK 9] The GUARINO baby lets out another loud whoop. POZENBY gets up and exits right carrying his bag.

FLICKIE: (*Shaking the empty box.*) We've really cleaned out this box.

BETTY: Bill, you were the answer to three maidens' prayers.

BILL: Glad you liked the cookies.

JOAN: That's a mild understatement.

BILL: Say . . . I just happened to think of something . . . could you girls eat some candy?

JOAN: Are you trying to torture us?

BILL: I mean it. I've got a box in my other bag.

ALL THREE GIRLS: (*Eagerly.*) Where is it?

BILL: I left it with the porter.

FLICKIE: Lead on, MacDuff!

BILL: Want to go with me to get it?

BETTY: I'm for it.

JOAN: I vote yes.

BILL: C'mon. *(They exit door at back. POZENBY enters right carrying his bag. He goes to MR. MORGAN's desk.)*

POZENBY: Any news from the train?

MORGAN: *(Forgetting to talk loudly.)* Not yet.

POZENBY: *(Cupping his hand behind his ear.)* What's that?

MORGAN: *(Very loudly.)* No!

POZENBY returns to his seat on the bench and holds his suitcase on his lap. [TRACK 10] The GUARINO baby cries.

MRS. GUARINO: *(To ANTONIA.)* Go get-a water.

ANTONIA goes to the water cooler and gets a cup of water and brings it to her mother. MRS. GUARINO gives it to the baby. ANTONIA, sits down by her mother. The door at back opens and MISS PIDGIE MCDUGAL enters. She is an old maid of about 50 years old. She has on a funny-looking hat, an old-fashioned suit, and funny-looking shoes. She is carrying two boxes and SILAS follows carrying the rest of her bags, which consist of two old suitcases and a bird cage. A bird can be made of yellow crepe paper and tied to the perch.

MISS PIDGIE: Be careful with Tweety-Tweet. He's a very nervous bird.

SILAS: Where you want me to put yore things?

MISS PIDGIE: Just set them down on the floor . . . all except Tweety-Tweet. Put him on the bench.

SILAS: *(Waiting with his hand out.)* Is that all?

MISS PIDGIE: *(Ignoring his hand.)* That's all, thank you. *(She sits down on the bench and holds the bird cage.)*

SILAS: Er - - do ye want anything else?

MISS PIDGIE: No, that's everything. *(SILAS shrugs and exits back.)*

MISS PIDGIE: *(Looking down into cage.)* Is Mama's little Tweety-Tweet frightened? Sing for Mama. Come on, now . . . sing. *(The bird is silent. MISS PIDGIE turns and speaks to MRS. GUARINO.)* Poor little dear! He's trembling with fear. This is the first time he ever took a trip on the train. I had him in the baggage coach, but of course I couldn't leave him there after it turned over. So I decided to bring him in here with me. *(She looks down in the cage.)* Sing, booful . . . sing for Mama. *(She turns to MRS. GUARINO.)* I'm afraid he'll never get over this. Suppose he never sings again!

MRS. GUARINO: *(Not understanding a word.)* Huh? *([TRACK 11] The baby cries.)*

MISS PIDGIE: *(Looking at the baby.)* Poor little dear, what's the matter with him, or is it a her?

MRS. GUARINO: Il bambino piange. *([TRACK 12] The baby is crying.)*

MISS PIDGIE: *(Turning to ANTONIA.)* What did she say?

ANTONIA: She says the baby is crying.

MISS PIDGIE: *(Shrugging.)* Well! I knew that. *(She looks down into the bird cage.)* I'm afraid that's going to frighten Tweety-Tweet. Don't be scared, booful. The baby won't hurt you. *(She turns to MR. POZENBY.)* Pardon me, but do you have the time?

POZENBY: *(Cupping his hand.)* What's that?

OFF THE TRACK

MISS PIDGIE: (*Very loudly.*) I say, do you have the time?

POZENBY: Tombigbee.

MISS PIDGIE: (*Coolly.*) I didn't ask your name. Pardon my seeming curiosity, but may I ask where you are going?

POZENBY: To Jackson City.

MISS PIDGIE: Do you live there?

POZENBY: (*Coolly.*) Yes, madam, I do.

MISS PIDGIE: May I ask what you have in that suitcase? You seem to be very careful with it.

POZENBY: Excuse me. (*He gets up and exits right carrying the suitcase.*)

MISS PIDGIE: (*Shrugging.*) Well! Such manners! (*She gets up and goes to the desk.*) Pardon me. (*MORGAN is busy and doesn't look up.*)

MISS PIDGIE: (*Louder.*) I said pardon me . . .

MORGAN: (*Looking up and frowning.*) Well?

MISS PIDGIE: I am Miss Pidgie McDougal of Sprucehill in the eastern part of the state . . . if you've ever been there, you've certainly heard of the McDougals . . . my father was mayor at one time. I want you to send a telegram to my sister. She's going to be terribly worried when I don't get there. She was to meet me at nine thirty . . . Say . . . let me see . . . it mustn't be over ten words . . . "Don't be alarmed but the train was wrecked and we are delayed." (*She begins counting on her fingers.*) Oh dear . . . that's too many . . . I'll have to take something out . . . Just say . . .

MORGAN: (*Impatiently.*) Lady, I can't send a message . . . the wires are down.

MISS PIDGIE: (*Shrugging.*) Why didn't you say so in the first place? (*[TRACK 13] The bird begins to sing. This can be done by someone off-stage near MISS PIDGIE.*) Listen! Tweety-Tweet is singing.

MORGAN: (*Pointing to the sign about pets.*) Lady, did you see that sign?

MISS PIDGIE: What sign?

MORGAN: (*Pointing.*) Pets are not allowed in the waiting room.

MISS PIDGIE: Why not?

MORGAN: They disturb the other passengers.

MISS PIDGIE: (*Pointing to MRS. GUARINO.*) She's got a baby.

MORGAN: We don't classify babies as pets.

MISS PIDGIE: (*About to cry.*) What can I do with Tweety-Tweet?

MORGAN: You can put him in the ladies' restroom, if you like.

MISS PIDGIE: Very well . . . but he's not going to like it in there by himself. (*She returns to her bench.*) Tweety-Tweet, mama's going to put you in the ladies' rest room, but don't you worry. Mama'll be right here. It's time you were going to sleep anyway. Mama's going to cover you up for the night. (*She opens a bag and gets out a large black cloth and covers the cage then she takes it out door left.*)

MRS. GUARINO: (*To ANTONIA.*) Bring-a me a cup of water. (*ANTONIA goes to the water cooler and gets a cup of water and brings it to her mother. MRS. GUARINO drinks. MISS PIDGIE enters left and sits down by MRS. GUARINO.*)

MISS PIDGIE: How old is the baby?

MRS. GUARINO: Six-a mont.

MISS PIDGIE: (*Looking at ANTONIA.*) Is this your little girl?

MRS. GUARINO: Sì sì. She mine.

MISS PIDGIE: Do you have any more children?

MRS. GUARINO: (*Bowing.*) Si si.

MISS PIDGIE: How many more?

MRS. GUARINO: Eight-a more.

MISS PIDGIE: Well, well! You have quite a large family. Pardon my seeming curiosity, but your husband must make a very large salary to support a family like that. Just what does he make?

MRS. GUARINO: Twenta-fiva dollar.

MISS PIDGIE: (*Surprised.*) A day?

MRS. GUARINO: No . . . a mont. He fix-a shoes-a. (*POZENBY enters right and sits on a bench across the room from MISS PIDGIE. She moves over and sits down by him.*)

MISS PIDGIE: How long do you think we'll have to stay here?

POZENBY: Thirty years.

MISS PIDGIE: (*Twittering.*) You didn't seem to catch what I said. I asked you how long you thought we would have to stay here . . .

POZENBY: Yesterday at nine o'clock.

MISS PIDGIE: Will your family be uneasy about you?

POZENBY: J. D. Stamps Manufacturing Company.

MISS PIDGIE: Pardon my seeming curiosity, but are you married?

POZENBY: Excuse me. (*He gets up and exits back.*)

MISS PIDGIE: (*Looking crestfallen.*) Well!

MRS. GUARINO: He no like-a talk, no?

MISS PIDGIE: I was just trying to be sociable.

She returns to the bench by MRS. GUARINO. The door at back opens and EVALINA BUINPASS and her fiancé, WILLIE WOODSON enter. EVALINA is about three years older than WILLIE. She is very fat. She has a lot of money and dresses extravagantly. Her coat is very handsome. She has on an expensive hat and gloves. She is wearing a good deal of jewelry. Her age is twenty-five. WILLIE is thin and pale. He is about twenty-two. He is henpecked and doesn't dare call his soul his own. EVALINA brags all the time. She has her arm through his and hangs on him with all her weight. SILAS follows them carrying their bags. WILLIE is carrying a large pillow.

SILAS: Where you want yore grips?

WILLIE: (*Motioning toward a spot near the door at back.*) Over there. (*He gives SILAS a tip.*)

SILAS: (*Grimacing.*) Thanky . . . thanky.

EVALINA: (*Looking around the room.*) This horrible looking place!

WILLIE: It's the best we can do.

EVALINA: I don't see why they wouldn't let us stay on the train.

WILLIE: There wasn't any room.

EVALINA: I told that porter I'd give him anything he asked if he found some seats on another Pullman.

WILLIE: The conductor told me there were not any.

EVALINA: Well . . . let's sit down. These benches are terrible. I won't be able to rest a minute.

WILLIE: You can lay your head on the pillow.

EVALINA: (*Sighing.*) Oh dear! Such a night. (*They sit down on a bench.*)

MORGAN: (*To SILAS.*) Come here.

SILAS: Yes, sir. (*He crosses to the desk.*)

OFF THE TRACK

MORGAN: How many more passengers are coming in here?

SILAS: They's jes' one more. A lady.

MORGAN: What's she waiting on?

SILAS: She's been trying to pay the conductor to find her a seat on the train. She offered him twenty-five dollars, but he didn't find her nothin'. I'd better go bring her grips. She sho' has a lot of 'em. *(He exits back quickly.)*

EVALINA: *(Talking in a petulant whine.)* Mama and Papa are going to be worried sick when we don't get there. They've been looking forward to meeting you ever since I wrote them we were engaged.

WILLIE: I'm sorry we'll be late.

EVALINA: Mama wrote me that they are going to give us a new Packard for our engagement present.

WILLIE: That sure will be nice.

EVALINA: And Papa is going to buy us a house when we get married.

WILLIE: That will be fine.

EVALINA: When are we going to set the date?

WILLIE: Just as soon as I get a raise.

EVALINA: *(Whining.)* Why don't you ask your boss for one?

WILLIE: Well, I am . . . real soon.

EVALINA: You told me you were going to ask for one yesterday.

WILLIE: Well, I did send word by his secretary I'd like to come in and talk to him, but he told her to tell me he was too busy.

EVALINA: Well, when you go back, just walk into his office whether he sends for you or not.

WILLIE: I'm afraid to try that.

EVALINA: You just haven't got enough nerve.

WILLIE: I'm going to talk to him just as soon as I get a chance.

EVALINA: Get me a cup of water. *(WILLIE goes to the cooler and brings her a cup of water. EVALINA takes a sip and makes a face.)* I can't drink this stuff! It's as hot as hot soup.

WILLIE: I'm sorry . . . but it's the best I can do. *(He sits down, looking miserable. He takes his handkerchief from his pocket and blows his nose.)*

EVALINA: How's your cold?

WILLIE: It's getting worse.

EVALINA: Did you take your medicine?

WILLIE: Yes, I took a tablet just before the train was wrecked.

EVALINA: You'd better take another one.

WILLIE: It's not time yet . . . I'm just supposed to take them every three hours.

EVALINA: Go take one anyway . . . the more you take, the sooner you'll get well. I hate for Mama and Papa to see you for the first time with your head all stopped up.

WILLIE: I'd rather wait a while . . .

EVALINA: Go take it now. . . *(He goes to the water cooler, takes a box of cold tablets from his pocket, takes one out, and tries to swallow it. He makes an awful face and gags. Finally he gets it down and returns to the bench.)* Now you're going to feel better.

WILLIE: I hope so. *(He sniffles.)* It's too hot in here.

EVALINA: That's ridiculous. I'm not hot.

WILLIE: Well, I am. I believe I'll go outside and get a little fresh air.

- EVALINA:** No, you're not either. That's the best way in the world to make a cold worse. I don't want to take you home with pneumonia.
- MISS PIDGIE:** (*Moving over by them.*) Pardon me, but do you have the time?
- WILLIE:** (*Looking at his watch.*) Ten-thirty.
- MISS PIDGIE:** Thank you so much. It seems as if we are going to have to stay here a long time. We might as well be sociable. I am Miss Pidgie McDougal. (*WILLIE nods. EVALINA whispers in his other ear.*) Pardon my seeming curiosity, but are you two newlyweds?
- WILLIE:** No.
- MISS PIDGIE:** I thought maybe you were. (*No answer.*) Are you engaged?
- WILLIE:** (*Gruffly.*) Yes.
- MISS PIDGIE:** (*Shaking her finger at them.*) I thought so. I could see the love light in your eyes. (*No answer.*) Where are you going, if I may ask . . . ?
- WILLIE:** To Lewisburg.
- MISS PIDGIE:** Lewisburg. I don't believe I know anybody there. Is that your home?
- WILLIE:** It's hers. (*He motions to EVALINA.*)
- MISS PIDGIE:** Is that so!
- EVALINA:** (*To WILLIE.*) Let's move over to that other bench. (*They move to another bench. MISS PIDGIE shrugs and moves to the bench with MRS. GUARINO.*)
- MISS PIDGIE:** I was just trying to be sociable.
- MRS. GUARINO:** Huh?
- MISS PIDGIE:** It makes the time pass faster when you can talk to people. (*POZENBY enters back and takes his seat across the room from MISS PIDGIE. She moves over by him.*)
- MISS PIDGIE:** Did you hear any news about the train?
- POZENBY:** Yes, it's still raining, but not as hard as it was. (*He holds his suitcase on his knees.*)
- MISS PIDGIE:** Pardon my seeming curiosity, but if you have anything perishable in that bag, you ought not to keep it in here. You could give it to the train porter and he would put it in a cool place. (*MR. POZENBY gets up and changes his seat. WILLIE gets up and starts toward -the door.*)
- EVALINA:** Where are you going?
- WILLIE:** I heard that man say it wasn't raining so hard . . . I thought I'd see just how the weather was.
- EVALINA:** You are not going out there in that cold wind . . . sit down.
- WILLIE:** Fresh air always helped my cold.
- EVALINA:** That's silly. Sit down. (*He sits down beside her.*)
- MISS PIDGIE:** (*Returning to the seat by MRS. GUARINO.*) There's something suspicious about that man . . . I believe he's got a bomb in that bag.
- MRS. GUARINO:** (*Not understanding.*) Si, si. (*She nods her head.*)
- MISS PIDGIE:** So you think so, too. I just had a hunch that was what he had. He'll blow us all to kingdom come. (*[TRACK 14] The baby cries.*)
- MORGAN:** Lady, there's a cradle in the restroom. Why don't you put the baby in there?
- MRS. GUARINO:** (*Nodding.*) Si, si. (*She hands the baby to ANTONIA.*) Take-a de bambino . . . (*ANTONIA takes the baby and exits door left.*)
- MRS. GUARINO:** (*To MISS PIDGIE.*) Il bambino piange. (*[TRACK 15] The baby cries.*)

OFF THE TRACK

MISS PIDGIE: Poor little dear. *(The three college girls and BILL enter door back. They have a box of candy.)*

FLICKIE: *(Shivering.)* Feels good in here.

BETTY: If it just didn't look so much like Sing Sing.

BILL: We might as well get used to it.

JOAN: Home sweet home. *(They sit down on a bench.)*

BETTY: The next time I go anywhere on a train, I'm going to take a plane.

FLICKIE: The next time I leave home, I'm going to stay there.

MISS PIDGIE: *(Moving over to their bench and pointing to MR. POZENBY.)* Do you see that man over there?

BILL: Yes . . . why?

MISS PIDGIE: *(Mysteriously.)* He's got a bomb in that bag he's holding.

BILL: How do you know?

MISS PIDGIE: I have hunches.

BILL: I guess you are mistaken.

MISS PIDGIE: All right . . . just wait till we are all blown to smithereens, and you'll see I knew what I was talking about.

The door at back opens and MRS. REGINALD VANDERVENTER enters. She is a very handsome woman dressed in expensive clothes. If possible, she should wear a fur coat. She is very haughty in her manner and scorns people who haven't a lot of money. SILAS follows her carrying a handsome bag. If possible, let him have a dog on a leash. This may be omitted. In one hand, he is carrying a pasteboard box with air holes punched in it. Evidently a pet is in it.

SILAS: Want me ter put yore bag down here?

MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(Looking around the room scornfully.)* I can't stay in this place. Take me to another waiting room.

SILAS: This is the onliest waitin' room they is, lady.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(Turning up her nose.)* This is horrible.

SILAS: Yes, ma'am.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: I never heard of such poor accommodations for the traveling public.

MORGAN: Lady, you can't keep that dog in here. *(This line and the next two may be cut.)*

MRS. VANDERVENTER: Where shall I keep him then?

MORGAN: Put him outdoors.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: I certainly will not. He would take his death of cold.

MORGAN: You can put him in the ladies' restroom.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(To SILAS.)* Hold this box. *(She hands him the perforated box and exits door left with the dog. She returns immediately without the dog.)*

SILAS: Where do you want to sit, lady?

MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(Looking around and spying a chair.)* Put that chair over in the corner. *(SILAS puts the chair upper-left as far away from the other people as possible. MRS. VANDERVENTER sits down and takes the pasteboard box. She opens her bag, takes out a dollar bill, and hands it to SILAS, who bows.)*

SILAS: Thanky, ma'am. . . thanky, ma'am. Is they anything else you want me to do?

MRS. VANDERVENTER: Come back in about half an hour and take my dog out for some exercise.

SILAS: Yes, ma'am. Is that all?

MRS. VANDERVENTER: Get me a pillow.

SILAS: We ain't got no pillows, ma'am.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: (*Looking around at the floor.*) Haven't you something you could sprinkle on the floor? I'm afraid I'll take ill or something.

SILAS: Sometime I put sawdust on it before I sweeps out.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: Never mind. (*She sits glaring around the room.*)

MORGAN: (*To SILAS.*) Silas . . .

SILAS: Yes, sir.

MORGAN: Come here a minute.

SILAS: Yes, sir. (*He crosses to the desk.*)

MORGAN: It doesn't seem like they're going to get that pole raised any time soon, but I've thought of a way to get a message to headquarters.

SILAS: What's that?

MORGAN: It's just about ten miles down the railroad to Evergreen. You've got to take a message there . . . you can make it in about three hours.

SILAS: (*His mouth hanging open.*) You mean . . . walk the track tonight . . . in the dark?

MORGAN: Yes.

SILAS: (*Almost crying.*) But I'd have to cross the trestle . . .

MORGAN: What of it? You've walked across it a thousand times.

SILAS: Yes, sir . . . but not at night with the wind a-blowin' about 200 miles a hour and hit a-rainin' cats and dogs.

MORGAN: You can get down on your knees and crawl across the trestle. The rest of it won't be so hard.

SILAS: But think about all that water, it was lappin' up against the track when I went by there today. It may be over the track now.

MORGAN: Maybe an inch or two, but you can get some dry clothes when you get there.

SILAS: Please, Mr. Morgan . . . don't make me go . . . I'm afeerd.

MORGAN: Don't be a coward.

SILAS: I ain't no coward . . . I jes' don't wanta die that-a-way.

MORGAN: You'll make it all right . . . and the railroad will probably give you a medal.

SILAS: What good's a medal gonna do me if'n I'm down at the bottom o' the river?

MORGAN: (*Standing up.*) All right . . . if you refuse to go, I'll go myself. Get my raincoat.

SILAS: No, Mr. Morgan . . . You got a wife and kids . . . you cain't go.

MORGAN: Somebody's got to go. Where's my raincoat?

SILAS: I'll go, Mr. Morgan.

MORGAN: You will?

SILAS: Yes, sir.

MORGAN: Well, be very careful.

SILAS: I sho' will.

MORGAN: Take a lantern.

SILAS: Yes, sir. When must I start?

MORGAN: At once . . . and here's the message to telephone in. (*He hands him a folded paper.*)

SILAS: How'll I keep it dry when I'm a-crawlin' through the water?

MORGAN: Here's a piece of cellophane . . . wrap it in it.

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SILAS: Yes, sir. *(He takes the piece of cellophane and wraps the letter in it. He pulls his cap down on his head, gets his raincoat and puts it on, and goes to the door at back.)*
Well, I'm goin', Mr. Morgan.

MORGAN: Be careful . . . and make as good time as you can.

SILAS: Yes, sir. *(He exits door at back but puts his head in the door again.)* Mr. Morgan

...

MORGAN: *(Impatiently.)* Yes?

SILAS: Tell Pappy I got ten dollars buried under the woodpile in a old tin can.

MORGAN: Very well. *(SILAS exits but returns immediately.)*

SILAS: Mr. Morgan . . .

MORGAN: *(Angrily.)* What?

SILAS: Tell Mammy she kin have my old cow.

MORGAN: All right.

SILAS: And tell my brother Joey I didn't mean no harm when I hit him with the meat cleaver this mawnin' . . . I was jes' playin'. *(He exits. MORGAN returns to his writing. MRS. VANDERVENTER crosses to the desk carrying the pasteboard box.)*

MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(Arrogantly.)* I'd like some information, my good man.

MORGAN: *(Looking up.)* What's that?

MRS. VANDERVENTER: I said I'd like some information.

MORGAN: *(Shrugging.)* Well, I'll give it to you if I can.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: How long am I going to have to stay in this horrible place?

MORGAN: *(Frowning.)* I don't know, lady.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(Angrily.)* It's your place to know . . . aren't you in charge here?

MORGAN: Yes, ma'am.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: I want something more definite than that.

MORGAN: You can't get away until they send a train for you.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: When is that going to be?

MORGAN: I told you I didn't know.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: Where can I go? I can't sit in here with all these . . . these people. *(She motions toward the other passengers.)*

MORGAN: I don't know where else you can go. This is the only waiting room there is.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: I'm hungry. I'd like to get something to eat.

FLICKIE: Wouldn't we all!

MORGAN: There's no place to get anything.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(Shouting.)* You mean you don't have a dining room in the station?

MORGAN: No, ma'am.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: I never heard of such poor accommodations. What do you expect people to do that pass through here?

BILL: *(To the girls.)* Keep on going.

MORGAN: I don't know.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: Don't you make any provision for people stopping here?

MORGAN: *(Angrily.)* Madame, this is the first time number 5 has stopped here in twenty years.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: You seem to be very indifferent about it. I want you to know that I am Mrs. Reginald Vanderverter. My husband is president of the First National

Bank of Winchester and a stockholder in practically every company in the town and besides he's mayor and state senator. I tell you, I've got to get away from here.

MORGAN: Madame, I couldn't help it if your husband was President of the United States . . . you can't leave until they send a relief train. So that's that.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: I'm going to report this when I get home. *([TRACK 16] The kitten in the box begins to cry. You could have someone near her, off stage "meow.")*

MORGAN: Madame, what have you got in that box?

MRS. VANDERVENTER: I don't believe I have to tell you that. *([TRACK 17] The cat meows again.)*

MORGAN: Madame, no pets are allowed in the waiting room. I told you that once.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: What do you expect me to do with him?

MORGAN: *(Shrugging.)* Put him outdoors . . . for all I care.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: Outdoors? The ideal! He's an Angora.

MORGAN: Angora or alley . . . whichever he is, you can't keep him in here.

MRS. VANDERVENTER: I'll put him in the restroom. *(She flounces out left with the box.)*

EVALINA: *(Yawning.)* I'm so sleepy I can't keep my eyes open.

WILLIE: Put your head on your pillow.

EVALINA: Let me put it against your shoulder. *(She puts the pillow against his shoulder and rests her head against it.)*

WILLIE: Are you comfy?

EVALINA: Yes, this is all right.

FLICKIE: I wish we could play some kind of a game to while the time away.

BILL: Want to play "Who's It?"

BETTY: I'm for it.

JOAN: I vote yes . . . how do you play?

BILL: *(Reaching into his pocket.)* Let me see if I have some matches. *(He takes out a little match book.)* Yes, here are some. *(He hands each girl a match.)* Now break off all the heads but one . . . the one who gets the head is the "Who's It."

MISS PIDGIE: Is it hard to catch on?

BILL: No . . . want to play?

MISS PIDGIE: I don't care if I do.

BILL: Well, come on over. *(She moves over to their bench. BILL turns to MRS. GUARINO.)* Want to play?

MRS. GUARINO: *(Shaking her head and smiling.)* No want-a:

BILL: *(To MR. POZENBY.)* Want to play?

POZENBY: *(Shaking his head.)* No.

BETTY: *(To WILLIE.)* Don't you want to play'?

EVALINA: *(Opening her eyes.)* No, he doesn't. *(WILLIE looks longingly at the group but shakes his head.)*

WILLIE: No, I guess not.

FLICKIE: Come on . . . tell us how to do it.

BILL: Let me get a chair. *(He gets a chair and puts it down facing the girls. He sits in it.)* Now, has everybody got a match?

MISS PIDGIE: I haven't.

BILL: *(Giving her one.)* Here you are. Now we'll begin. Whatever word I select, keep on passing the matches around till we spell out the word and the one who gets the match

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- with the head is "it." OK, you start with yourself. Now, who is the biggest liar? L-I-A-R. *(It comes out on MISS PIDGIE.)*
- BETTY: *(Laughing at MISS PIDGIE.)* You're "it."
- MISS PIDGIE: *(Grimly.)* Humph! You did that on purpose.
- BILL: *(To MISS PIDGIE.)* All right . . . you make a word.
- MISS PIDGIE: Who looks like a donkey? *(They begin to pass as they spell out D-O-N-K-E-Y. It comes out on MISS PIDGIE again.)*
- JOAN: *(Laughing at her.)* You're "it."
- BETTY: Let me make a word.
- BILL: Go ahead
- BETTY: Who looks like a lop-eared baboon? *(They begin passing matches and spelling out the word. It comes out on MISS PIDGIE.)*
- FLICKIE: *(Laughing at her.)* You're "it." *(MRS. VANDERVENTER enters down left.)*
- MISS PIDGIE: I don't like this game. *(She gets up and looks at MRS. VANDERVENTER.)* You can have my place.
- MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(Going to her chair in the upper-left-corner.)* No, thanks . . . I never play games . . . anyway with strangers.
- FLICKIE: Let's don't play any more.
- BETTY: What can we do?
- JOAN: Let's sing.
- BILL: Strike up a tune. *(They begin singing some familiar tune.)*
- MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(Getting up and going to the desk.)* Please have that noise stopped . . . I have a headache and I want to try to go to sleep.
- MORGAN: Sorry, but I can't do anything about that.
- MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(Angrily.)* Some people are very inconsiderate. *(She looks at the college crowd.)*
- FLICKIE: Let's play club fist. *(They stack up their fists one on the other.)*
- MRS. VANDERVENTER: *(To MORGAN.)* I am going to try to get a little nap. I don't know whether I can or not. When the train comes, be sure to wake me.
- MORGAN: Yes, ma'am. *(MRS. VANDERVENTER crosses to her chair and sits down. She leans her head over on her hand and closes her eyes. [TRACK 18] The Guarino baby lets out a loud howl in the restroom off-left.)*
- MRS. GUARINO: Il bambino . . . *(She hurries out door left. MRS. VANDERVENTER rests her head on her hand and closes her eyes. The door at back flies open and SILAS runs in looking excited.)*
- MORGAN: *(Jumping up and looking surprised.)* You back?
- SILAS: The trestles done washed away . . . all the middle part's gone.
- MORGAN: Well, that means that no train can get here from that direction. *([TRACK 19] The baby cries and the dog barks off-left.)*

CURTAIN.

BY FELICIA METCALFE

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