

Railway Children Audition piece

MOTHER

Also Bobbie, Phyllis, Peter, Doctor

MOTHER. Hello, Doctor. Bobbie, help me with this trunk

*MOTHER starts taking articles of clothing out*

These will be a bit large. The poor man is skin and bone . he needs some fat on his bones. That will fit. Take this as well,

BOBBIE Mummy, these are daddies

MOTHER I'm sure he'd be the first to recognize the poor man's need

BOBBIE. Mummy, Daddy isn't — isn't dead, is he?

MOTHER. My darling, no! What makes you think that:

BOBBIE. 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 things.

DOCTOR. Well, the man seems worn out, mind and body. The cough's bad, but there's nothing that can't be cured. He needs rest. He'll be lodging with you for a while, I'm afraid.

MOTHER. That's all right. We'll cope, won't we, children?

He's a writer; he's written wonderful books. In Russia, under the Tsar, you daren't say anything about the rich people doing wrong, or about the things that ought to be done to make the poor people better and happier. If you do, you're sent to prison.

PETER. But people only go to prison when they've done wrong.

MOTHER. If only that were true. Sometimes they are sent away when judges think they've done wrong. 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. horrible And they sent him to prison for it. He was in a horrible dungeon, all alone, for three years.

PETER. Mother, that can't be true.

MOTHER It is true Peter Horribly true. Then they sent him in chains as a convict, made to walk for hundreds of miles, watched by overseers who whipped them if they stumbled or fell. And finally to work in the mines in far Siberia – condemned to stay there for life. – just for writing a book

BOBBIE How did he get away?

MOTHER When the war came some of the prisoners were allowed to volunteer as soldiers, so he did. But he deserted the first chance he got.

PETER Isn't that rather cowardly

MOTHER Did he owe anything to his country that did that to him? He owed more to his wife and children

BOBBIE What happened then?

MOTHER With the help of friends they managed to escape and come to England. So that where he followed them

PETER Has he got their address

MOTHER No, just London. He thought he had to change at our station and discovered he had lost his ticket

PHYLLIS Do you think he'll find them? His family ?

MOTHER. I hope so. I hope he will be with his family again,

PHYLLIS. Mother, how very Sorry you seem to be for him.

MOTHER. Yes. Children, when you say your prayers tonight, ask God to show his pity on all prisoners and captives.

BOBBIE. On all prisoners and captives?

MOTHER. Yes. Upon all prisoners and captives. All prisoners and captives.

She closes the trunk