

## Railway Children p 9 to 13 Audition piece

Establishing the characters of the Children

BOBBIE (ROBERTA)

PETER

PHYLLIS

MOTHER

FATHER

COOK

BUTLER

MAID

### PART ONE

*Life on a railway-station platform. People are waiting, saying Goodbyes, arriving late in a flap, etc. When the whole cast are assembled, they wave off a train. BOBBIE, PETER and PHYLLIS are there, dressed as young adults. As the cast disperse, BOBBIE notices a CHILD holding a toy train. It triggers a memory. BOBBIE steps forward and picks up the toy.*

BOBBIE. The Railway Children. Do you remember? We were the Railway Children.

PETER. We weren't.

PHYLLIS. We were.

PETER. We weren't.

BOBBIE. Stop it, you two.

PETER. Well, we weren't.

PHYLLIS. Yes, we were.

BOBBIE. We were.

PETER. No, we weren't.

BOBBIE. Yes, we were, Peter.

PETER. We weren't. Not at first. We weren't.

BOBBIE (to the audience). I'm so sorry about this. What were we then?

PETER. We were ordinary.

*This opening interchange should establish the tone of the storytelling style which reflects the relationship of the three children. BOBBIE is always trying to hold it together and be scrupulously fair, the other two are bickering and qualifying around her. It should feel relaxed and uninhibited, natural - like siblings, spilling over one another, only half paying attention,*

PHYLLIS. I wouldn't have called us ordinary,

PETER. I would. Ordinary. Very ordinary.

PHYLLIS. Can you be very ordinary?

BOBBIE. I suppose we were ordinary.

COOK (entering). As ordinary as you can be with a house full of servants.

*Here starts another stage of the storytelling. Although our spine is BOBBIE, with harmony and discord from PHYLLIS and PETER, there are times when other characters just take it and run with it. At this point we begin to establish the childhood home. During this section, their coats and hats are removed as they make the move back to childhood, and their home is established.*

BOBBIE. Not full... not really full.

PHYLLIS. Certainly, I knew nothing about railways. Nothing. Never even thought about then.

BUTLER (entering). You had a butler.

BOBBIE. Yes, but...

PETER. Never?

MAID (entering). And a between-maid, if you please, ma'am,

BOBBIE. But we were ordinary. It was ordinary, for us, then,

PETER. Then.

PHYLLIS. What's a between-maid anyway?!

BOBBIE. Our house was ordinary, an ordinary red-brick-fronted villa, with coloured glass in the front door, tiled passage,

BUTLER. The hall.

BOBBIE. The bathroom.

MAID. With hot and cold water.

BOBBIE. Electric bells.

MAID. To call the servants.

BOBBIE. French windows.

PHYLLIS. You're starting to sound like an estate agent, Bobbie.

BOBBIE. I'm not.

PETER. You are.

PHYLLIS. Next you'll be saying...

BOBBIE. We had...

ALL. Every modern convenience.

BOBBIE. I am, you're right. Oh no. Oh dear.

PETER. And we weren't Railway Children.

BOBBIE. Not yet.

PHYLLIS. We knew nothing about trains.

PETER. That came later

PHYLLIS. Except for going to the seaside in summer, and to London or the pantomime at Christmas.

BOBBIE. We lived with our mother.

MOTHER (entering). Come along, children. Father will be home soon,

PHYLLIS. Can we have a story?

MOTHER. After tea. Now hurry up. Get ready.

PHYLLIS. And our father

FATHER (entering). Who went out to work.

BOBBIE. And did something,

PHYLLIS. What was it he did?

BOBBIE. I never did quite know what.

PHYLLIS. Something important. Very important

BOBBIE. In London.

PETER. For the Government.

FATHER. To keep you all safe.

*The FAMILY and SERVANTS are all assembled. The occasion is PETER's birthday.*

BOBBIE. And we did feel safe. There were three of us. Me the eldest. Roberta.

PHYLLIS. Mummy's favourite.

MOTHER. I don't have favourites.

PHYLLIS. No.

PETER. But if you did.

MOTHER. I don't.

PETER. No, you don't.

But if you did.

PHYLLIS. It would be Bobbie.

MOTHER. I don't.

PETER. But if you did.

MOTHER. I don't.

FATHER. Can we get on?

PHYLLIS. Sorry, Father.

PETER. Next came me. Peter.

PHYLLIS. The only boy.

PETER. I'm going to be an engineer.

FATHER. Good man,

PHYLLIS. And then there's me.

PETER. When I grow up I'm going to build railways and bridges.

PHYLLIS. Me.

PETER. And ships.

PHYLLIS. The youngest.

PETER. All over the world.

PHYLLIS. And me.

*She finally gets their attention.*

Phyllis. The youngest.

*Everyone looks at her. She waits for them to say something.*

Go on then.

BOBBIE. Well...

MOTHER. You mean well, darling.

PHYLLIS. Mean well?

MOTHER. Extremely well.

BOBBIE. So, this is what it was like, when it was ordinary.

PHYLLIS. Have a good look, because it didn't last long.

BOBBIE. That's probably long enough. It all came to an end on Peter's birthday.

PETER. It didn't.

PHYLLIS. Did.

PETER. It didn't.

BOBBIE. Peter!

PETER. It didn't come to an end, actually it all started on my birthday.