

# The Ghost Train

## Audition Pieces

### Audition Piece 1 – Elsie Winthrop, Peggy Murdoch, Miss Bourne

**Elsie:** (*Trying to light a match*) Damn!

**Peggy:** Your hand is shaking. Can I light it for you?

**Elsie:** Thank you, but my hand is perfectly steady. These matches are beastly.

**Miss Bourne:** How can you smoke at a time like this I really don't know. Dear me! Dear me!

**Peggy:** A cigarette is rather comforting when the nerves are upset.

**Elsie:** Please don't think that. My nerves are perfectly normal.

**Miss Bourne:** Oh, dear me! What is going to happen to us?

**Peggy:** Nothing, Miss Bourne. You forget that there are three men with us – there's no danger.

**Miss Bourne:** Yes, but there were four men with us just now.

**Elsie:** Try not to think about it.

**Miss Bourne:** But how can I help thinking about it? He lay there...oh, it was terrible!

**Peggy:** Dear Miss Bourne, don't give way.

**Miss Bourne:** To think that such a thing should happen to me. I've read things in newspapers at times, horrible things, but they were always a long way off and never seemed quite real. Living with my dear sister so many years, there never appeared any possibility of anything terrible happening to me.

**Peggy:** But nothing has happened to you.

**Miss Bourne:** Nothing happened! Oh, dear me! Nothing happened! How can you say such a thing? Oh dear, dear, dear! I shall never be the same woman again.

**Elsie:** You must try and pull yourself together.

**Miss Bourne:** I'll try – I'll try – really, I will, but it is all so terrible!

### Audition Piece 2 – Saul Hodgkin

**Saul:** Twenty years ago, this very night, there were a party of people went up to a beanfeast up to Truro, and they chartered a special train to take 'em back 'ome to St Blande down the line. That were the only night train that ever ran on these lines. Ted Holmes was kept on duty that night to close the bridge, which was always left open night-time for the clay boats to go out on the tide. It must 'ave been eleven o'clock when they phoned down from Truro to shut the bridge, as the special would be a-starting off. Ted answers as how he'd go and shut the bridge that moment, an' them were the last words he were ever 'eard to speak. He goes to the door and there it was that illness comes to him an' he falls down there on the platform jest outside that very door – dead! It must have been 'arf past eleven when the train starts off from Truro, and 'ere the bridge wide open and Ted Holmes a-lying dead on the platform. On comes the train down the valley at a fair lick, everyone being anxious to get 'ome. Poor Ben Isaacs were a-driving and it did seem as though when 'e were jest above the station 'ere, somethin' did warn 'im. He claps on the breaks, and the train goes a-tearing through the station 'ere, all the brakes on, the whistles screamin' and then – crash!

### **Audition Piece 3 – Richard Winthrop, Elsie Winthrop**

**Richard:** Well, what do you think of this, Elsie?

**Elsie:** Not much. You should be in your element, though.

**Richard:** I don't follow you.

**Elsie:** Doesn't it give you a splendid chance to domineer everyone? Already you've threatened to fight the stationmaster and lost your temper with that young fool who pulled the communication-cord. You must be enjoying yourself.

**Richard:** Look here, Elsie, must we go on quarrelling like this?

**Elsie:** I thought you'd like it.

**Richard:** Can't we forget it all?

**Elsie:** I can't forget what you said to me this morning, if that's what you mean.

**Richard:** I'm sorry I lost my temper this morning. You must realise how worried I am just now – Parkinson dying suddenly like that.

**Elsie:** Surely you can get another works manager.

**Richard:** Of a sort, yes. But I must have an expert; a man whom I can trust to be loyal and keep his head in an emergency.

**Elsie:** And because you couldn't get him, I had to suffer.

**Richard:** You must remember how exasperating you were.

**Elsie:** Of course, it was my fault you behaved like a pig. I might have known that.

**Richard:** I didn't say so.

**Elsie:** No; but you meant it.

**Richard:** We've only been married a year, Elsie; it seems a beastly shame to go on like this. Why not start afresh?

**Elsie:** It's too late. We must keep to our arrangement.

**Richard:** But –

**Elsie:** It's no use going over it all again. We don't get on and we never shall. Directly we get away from here and I shall go back to London, and you must arrange for a separation.

**Richard:** It seems such a pity.

**Elsie:** Did you suggest a separation, or did I?

**Richard:** I did, but –

**Elsie:** Very well, then.

**Richard:** I was in a temper at the time, though. You must admit that. We were both in a temper.

**Elsie:** I beg your pardon, but I never lose my temper.

**Richard:** Not openly, I know, but –

**Elsie:** Then please speak the truth.

**Richard:** Elsie, be reasonable.

**Elsie:** Oh, what's the use of argument. It's no good, Dick; I look upon you as a cave-man.

**Richard:** Even cave-men have their uses.

**Elsie:** I daresay. The truth of the matter is, we're absolutely unsuited to each other. If you'd married a timid little mouse of a girl, it would have been all right. In return for your protection and shielding arm, she would have looked upon you as a god, and put up with your domineering ways. It's no different with me. I don't need protection, and I won't be domineered. Your manly strength is no attraction to me because I can look after myself. I've never been afraid of anything in my life.

**Richard:** That's just it, Elsie; you're so damned self-reliant.

**Elsie:** There you are, you see; you're off again. I've had enough scenes for one day; I'm going into the other room.

#### **Audition Piece 4 – Charles Murdoch, Peggy Murdoch**

**Charles:** This looks a cheery place, I don't think.

**Peggy:** Never mind, dear.

**Charles:** But I do mind. Bless my soul, this is my wedding night, isn't it?

**Peggy:** Y-yes.

**Charles:** We don't want to hang about here long. They'll wonder what has happened, at the hotel, if we don't turn up.

**Peggy:** I hope they won't think that you funk'd it and changed your mind.

**Charles:** What a joke! No, hang it all, it's no joke. I'm hungry and you're tired, and we want to get to – our hotel. It was bad enough missing that train at Exeter.

**Peggy:** That was mother's fault. I knew we should be late.

**Charles:** What I say is: Hang that chap and his hat! No one but a born fool would stop a train because he'd lost his hat. Darn him!

**Peggy:** Naughty! Naughty!

**Charles:** I'm deuced angry. When we've only just this one week before I have to leave you and go abroad I begrudge every moment wasted.

**Peggy:** Let's forget about that, dear. Let's pretend we shall always be together.

**Charles:** I'm sorry, old thing. I won't grouse to-night of all nights. I'm deuced sorry, Pegs; I'm afraid we're in a hell of a mess.

**Peggy:** It can't be helped, old man. I don't mind.

**Charles:** Yes, but, hang it all, I mean to say – well, I ask you!

**Peggy:** It can't be helped.

**Charles:** I know. But to start one's honeymoon like this...If we were always going to stay together it wouldn't be so bad.

**Peggy:** Don't say any more about that, old boy, please!

**Charles:** I'm sorry, Pegs. It's all so unfair, though.

**Peggy:** Please!

**Charles:** If only you could come...

**Peggy:** I'm willing to come, you know that.

**Charles:** It's impossible. There's no knowing how I may have to rough it.

**Peggy:** My man!

**Charles:** It will be all right for me, Pegs. I'm fit and well, but for you it would be different.

**Peggy:** I'm fit and well, too, Charles.

**Charles:** Yes, but...I couldn't even raise the passage money.

**Peggy:** We might borrow. I had a letter from a man only this morning, saying he was willing...

**Charles:** No. Not that sort of man, darling. It's no good. You'll have to stay in England with your people until things are better.

**Peggy:** You mustn't give up hope; things will come out all right in the end. When you are away and things are going badly, think of me and remember I shall be praying for you, my dear.

### Audition Piece 5 – Teddie Deakin, Miss Bourne

**Teddie:** I say! What a topping little crib! Here we all are, then! How remarkable! So, we're here till morning, eh?

**Miss Bourne:** Yes!

**Teddie:** I think it's rather priceless. After all, it's a little adventure, something to relieve the ennui of life.

**Miss Bourne:** That's all very well for you, sir. It puts us in a devil of a hole.

**Teddie:** What a pity! As a matter of fact, I'm quite enjoying myself.

**Miss Bourne:** Young man, have you no sense of responsibility?

**Teddie:** Responsibility? Whatever's that?

**Miss Bourne:** Your ignorance of the word hardly surprises me.

**Teddie:** I say, you're not peeved with me, are you?

**Miss Bourne:** Your lack of concern is monstrous, considering you are the direct cause of this most unpleasant situation.

**Teddie:** My good woman...

**Miss Bourne:** I'm not a good woman...I...I mean...please do not address me with such unwarranted familiarity.

**Teddie:** Sorrow! Look here, you must be fair. How could I help my hat blowing away?

**Miss Bourne:** If you lean out the window it often happens.

**Teddie:** But, my dear old thing, I was watching the sparks from the engine – awfully jolly!

**Miss Bourne:** Losing your hat was no excuse for pulling the communication-cord.

**Teddie:** Don't you think so?

**Miss Bourne:** No!

**Teddie:** Well, I do. It was a jolly nice hat. I only bought it last week. Besides, I've often wanted to pull the communication-cord. It's such a refreshing idea, don't you think so?

**Miss Bourne:** Damn it, sir, haven't you any sense of decency?

**Teddie:** Decency? What do you mean?

**Miss Bourne:** Listen to me. You don't seem to have realised the facts of this case.

**Teddie:** I hate facts.

**Miss Bourne:** Young man, do you ever take anything in life seriously?

**Teddie:** Oh, yes.

**Miss Bourne:** May I inquire what?

**Teddie:** Whisky.

**Miss Bourne:** Insolent fellow!

**Teddie:** Flatterer!

### **Audition Piece 6 – Julia Price, Richard Winthrop, Charles Murdoch**

**Julia:** Tell me, has it come?

**Charles:** I beg your pardon.

**Julia:** Has it come?

**Charles:** I'm afraid I don't quite follow you.

**Julia:** You know. You must know.

**Richard:** I'm afraid we don't.

**Julia:** Listen to me. I want you to help me. Will you help me?

**Richard:** Of course, but what exactly is the matter?

**Julia:** Hide me from them, hide me – please!

**Richard:** Yes, but hide you from whom?

**Julia:** From them.

**Richard:** But – er – who are they?

**Julia:** You must help me. Don't let them take me back. I can't go back. I can't.

**Man's Voice:** Julia! Julia!

**Julia:** There they are. What shall I do? They'll find me. They'll take me back again. Help me!

**Charles:** It's all right. We won't let anyone hurt you.

**Julia:** Then let me hide.

### **Audition Piece 7 – Herbert Price**

**Price:** My name's Price. This is Doctor Sterling. We're looking for my sister. We have every reason to believe that she would come to this place. It's all this infernal ghost-train business. She was near the station one night, several years ago, and she thought she saw the train. You see, she's Cornish and believes in ghosts. She always has done ever since she was a kiddie. I sometimes feel that there's something psychic about her. Anyway, she thought she saw this ghost train and it was a great shock to her. So great a shock that it – well – upset her permanently. She's perfectly well most of the time, but some nights she has this idea that the ghost train will run, and it has this morbid fascination for her. She feels she must see it again. This is one of her bad nights; I hope you understand.

**Audition Piece 8 – Saul Hodgkin, Charles Murdoch, Richard Winthrop**

**Charles:** We shall have to make do until the next train.

**Saul:** I keeps on telling ye, there bain't no next train.

**Charles:** What?

**Saul:** There bain't no more trains till seven to-morrer morning.

**Charles:** Look here, I simply must get this young lady – my wife – to Truro to-night.

**Saul:** Sorry, sir, but you can't.

**Charles:** We must have a special.

**Saul:** There bain't no specials on this line; not for years there hasn't been.

**Charles:** Then, where can we hire a car?

**Saul:** There bain't no cars round here.

**Charles:** Well, what do you suggest?

**Saul:** If you wants to get anywhere to-night, you'll 'ave to walk.

**Charles:** Good heavens!

**Richard:** Now look here, porter –

**Saul:** 'Scuse me, sir, stationmaster.

**Richard:** Well, look here, do you really mean that we can't get any further to-night?

**Saul:** That's what I said.

**Richard:** Then, where's the nearest hotel?

**Saul:** Truro.

**Charles:** 'Struth!

**Saul:** No. Truro.

**Richard:** Surely there's some other place or other where we can stay the night?

**Saul:** Bain't no houses here. There be a farm five miles along the road.

**Richard:** But surely you live somewhere?

**Saul:** I bicycles to Truro.

**Richard:** Well, ladies and gentlemen, it looks as if we shall have to stay here till morning.

**Saul:** Beg pardon, but you can't stop here.

**Richard:** Eh?

**Saul:** I says as 'ow you can't stop here.

**Charles:** What the deuce do you mean?

**Saul:** There not being no traffic on the line, everythink shuts up for the night – signal boxes, station an' all. I'm off 'ome.

**Richard:** Well?

**Saul:** And afore I goes I 'ave to lock all this yer up.

**Richard:** Well, you can't lock up.

**Saul:** Them's my orders an' I got to obey 'em.

**Richard:** Don't be so damned silly! What else can we do?

**Saul:** Dunno. Bain't no affair of mine. All I knows is that orders is orders. You might go to the farm.

**Richard:** Do you expect these ladies to walk five miles along a country road on a night like this?

**Saul:** You can't stop here.

**Charles:** Who's to prevent us?

**Saul:** I be.

**Charles:** What are you going to do? Throw us out?

**Saul:** (*Scratching his head*) I suppose I shall have to.

**Richard:** (*Taking off his overcoat*) Very well, you can start with me.

## **Audition Piece 9 – Herbert Price, Julia Price, John Sterling**

**Price:** So, there you are, Julia.

**Julia:** It's no good. I can't come back – you know I can't.

**Sterling:** Come along, Julia. Let's get out of here while the rain holds off.

**Julia:** No, no, I can't.

**Price:** Be sensible, Julia.

**Julia:** What's the use of talking? I must stay here; I can't help myself.

**Price:** That's enough of this.

**Julia:** Don't touch me. Get away!

**Price:** Damn it all

**Sterling:** Easy, Price, leave her to me.

**Price:** It's all this infernal ghost-train business.

**Julia:** It will come tonight. I know it will.

**Price:** Nonsense, Julia.

**Julia:** It's not nonsense. I know it. I feel it.

**Sterling:** There, there, Julia.

**Price:** We've got to get her out of here somehow. Come along, Julia.

**Julia:** Once and for all, I can't come. I'm going to stop here. You're trying to drive me mad. You know as well as I do that the train will come; and you pretend that it's my delusion. I know all about it. You want to put me away. I won't stir from here, however frightened I am. I'll prove to you that I'm not wrong about this. You can kill me, but I won't go!

**Price:** Enough of this, Julia.

**Julia:** Don't touch me. Go away! Go away!

**Price:** Damn it all, I –

**Sterling:** Steady, Price. Listen to me. Why can't you humour her a little? She'll be as right as rain by the morning. Why don't you clear off and leave her to me? I can manage her better. You seem to excite her. I'll get her away, I think; and, if not, let her stay here. The train won't come, and that may put an end to these attacks of hers. It's worth thinking about.

**Price:** Very well. I'm going Julia. I'm hanged if I'm going to mess about here all night.  
(Leaves)

**Julia:** Where's he gone?

**Sterling:** He's gone home. You have a little rest and then we'll all go.

**Julia:** I'm going to stay here.

**Sterling:** Very well, Julia, just as you like.

**Julia:** But it isn't as I like. It's because I've got to. The place terrifies me – this room is full of eyes – they all stare at me – stare and stare and stare! Don't look at me like that. You think I'm mad, but I'm not mad. This room is full of evil!

**Sterling:** Yes, Julia, yes. Why not come away from it?

**Julia:** Why do you keep saying that? Why are you so cruel? You know I'd go if I could. Why won't any of you help me?

**Sterling:** We want to help you.

**Julia:** No. You're all equally bad. You're as afraid of the place as I am, but you won't own it. You blame me.

**Sterling:** Everything is all right, Julia. I'll stay with you.

**Julia:** And if the thing happens, you won't say I'm mad, any more?

**Sterling:** Of course not.

### **Audition Piece 10 – Teddie Deakin, John Sterling**

**Sterling:** H'm!

**Teddie:** Flummoxed, eh?

**Sterling:** Yes, I don't mind owning it.

**Teddie:** You're sure she's not dead?

**Sterling:** Oh, no, she's not dead. Her heartbeat is faint and yet pretty steady.

**Teddie:** Haven't you got one of those what-you-call-'ems? You know what I mean – listening-in jiggers?

**Sterling:** Stethoscope, you mean?

**Teddie:** Yes, that's it.

**Sterling:** I've none of my instruments with me. That's the devil of it.

**Teddie:** Then you don't know what's the matter with her, Doctor?

**Sterling:** I don't. She's had these strange terms before, but they've never ended like this. It seems like a stroke of some sort, but so many symptoms are absent.

**Teddie:** What symptoms are absent?

**Sterling:** You wouldn't understand if I told you.

**Teddie:** Tell me and see.

**Sterling:** You're a most extraordinary young man. What difference does it make?

**Teddie:** Oh, I don't know, old bean, just idle curiosity. I mean, suppose we all have strokes, it would be rather useful to know when it was coming on, wouldn't it?

**Sterling:** You don't think anything else will happen to us?

**Teddie:** (Cheerfully) Oh, I expect so.

### **Audition Piece 11 – Teddie Deakin, John Sterling**

**Sterling:** Come along, let's clear out.

**Teddie:** You all go. I stay.

**Sterling:** You can't stay.

**Teddie:** And why not?

**Sterling:** Because it's not safe, you fool.

**Teddie:** I'm deeply touched you should be so anxious for my safety. I had no idea I was so popular.

**Sterling:** Now, listen to me, you young fool.

**Teddie:** I listen, you old villain!

**Sterling:** What do you mean?

**Teddie:** Nothing. I'm merely exchanging pleasantries with you. I don't see why you should have a monopoly of all the insults.

**Sterling:** Out with it, plain and to the point. Why have you made up your mind to stay here?

**Teddie:** Pure cussedness, for one thing.

**Sterling:** And what else?

**Teddie:** Idle curiosity.

**Sterling:** What about?

**Teddie:** I want to see what happens next.