



# **The Ghost Train by Arnold Ridley**

Directed by Harry Atkinson

**The Barn Theatre, Southwick Community Centre, Southwick Street,  
Southwick BN42 4TE**

Production dates: 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June 2025

Show Launch: Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February

Auditions: Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February and Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February

NB. All meetings, auditions and rehearsals are held at Southwick Community Centre starting at 7.30pm.

Rehearsals are Tuesdays and Thursdays starting 25<sup>th</sup> March. From Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May we will change to three rehearsals per week by adding in Sundays. These rehearsals will start at 6pm and end at 9pm.

## **About the Play**

A group of strangers are stranded overnight in an isolated and remote railway station in the depths of Cornwall during a tremendous thunderstorm. The strange Station Master is no help and urges them to leave immediately - even out into the storm. He tells of how the station is haunted and that no locals ever dare stray near it for fear of meeting the Ghost Train.....!

The play was written in 1924 and was first performed in 1925, so we are celebrating a hundred years of performances. The play has never been out of print in all that time and has been a firm favourite with companies and audiences in all that time. Arnold Ridley is probably better known to you as Private Charles Godfrey in Dad's Army, but he also had a long professional acting and writing career spanning almost sixty years.

The script we are using has been edited by his son and daughter-in-law Nicholas and Joselyn Ridley. They have kept the structure and narrative line of the original but have updated some of the language which may have sounded odd to modern ears, particularly where it relates to relationships between the sexes. A note on the language: it is firmly placed in its time and needs to be pronounced almost with a Noel Coward like diction. Part of the humour arises from this.

The play is very much a comedy thriller and needs to be played for all its worth. It's not a door banging, trousers down farce, but in fact leans towards Monty Python, especially as the narrative line gathers pace and one improbable action follows another.

## Range of Characters

There are ten characters in the play and a good range of playing ages from twenties to sixty plus. Apart from one character, who comes on at the end of the play, all the parts are substantial and offer plenty of challenges.

## Characters in Order of Appearance

Saul Hodgkin: playing age 50s/60s. The Station Master of Fal Vale Wayside Station. A mysterious rather threatening figure who attempts to terrify the passengers into leaving with his story of a ghost train.

Richard Winthrop: playing age 30s/40s. A successful businessman in constant conflict with his wife.

Elsie Winthrop: playing age 30s+. Nothing Richard does is right for her.

Charles Murdock: playing age 20s. Married that day to Peggy, very much in love with her but has a failing business.

Peggy Murdock: still has confetti on her clothes, very much in love with Charles.

Miss Bourne: elderly, could be 60s/70s. Eccentric spinster carries her parrot with her everywhere.

Teddie Deakin: playing age 30s/40s. Presents as a dandyish Bertie Wooster type but is actually a Chief Inspector under cover.

Julia Price: playing age 30s. Presents as a distraught almost deranged character but is actually a master criminal.

John Sterling: playing age 40s/50s. Presents as a local Doctor but is actually a gun runner.

Jackson: any age up to 50s. A walk on part would suit someone just wanting to dip their toe into acting or maybe return to it.



For more information about the audition process or the play, please contact the Director on [atkinsonwilliam2003@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:atkinsonwilliam2003@yahoo.co.uk) or ring 07766405959.

## Audition Slip

Name:	Mobile:
Email:	
Reading for the role(s) of:	
Are you willing to play as cast?	
<p>Any days you cannot regularly rehearse:</p> <p>Details of holidays booked of other commitments:</p>	
Is there anything else the Director needs to know?	
<b>Photography and Filming: Adults</b>	
<p>During the course of our process there will be film and photography for publicity purposes.</p> <p>Could you please read and sign the relevant declaration below:</p> <p><b>I give / do not give* permission for photographs or film to be taken for publicity purposes.</b></p> <p><b>Print Name:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Signed:</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____</p> <p><i>* delete as appropriate</i></p>	

*windows, lights from the carriages can again be seen as the train leaves the platform.)*

(**SAUL HODGKIN**, the Stationmaster, enters from the door to the platform, turns up the gas and then exits.)

*(Voices are heard and then the door to the platform opens and **RICHARD WINTHROP** and his wife, **ELSIE**, enter the waiting room. **RICHARD** is a rather bad-tempered looking man of twenty-eight, and **ELSIE** a somewhat sulky woman of twenty-five.)*

**ELSIE.** I suppose this *is* the waiting-room?

**RICHARD.** It looks like it. Damnably like it.

**ELSIE.** Just the kind of place you *would* bring me to.

**RICHARD.** Bring you to? I like that!

**ELSIE.** It's cold, wet and disagreeable.

**RICHARD.** It's disagreeable right enough.

**ELSIE.** And a lot you care.

**RICHARD.** Hang it all, Elsie. It's not my fault, is it? I'm not managing director of the infernal railway company. It's that young fool's fault, losing his wretched hat and then pulling the blasted communication cord. If it hadn't been for him, we'd have caught the damn connection.

**ELSIE.** And you would have missed a fine opportunity for swearing.

**RICHARD.** I've had plenty of opportunities for swearing already, thank you very much. *(Going to the door to the ticket office and opening it.)* What's in here?

*(**RICHARD** exits to the ticket office and **ELSIE** follows.)*

*(The door to the platform is opened again by **SAUL HODGKIN**. **SAUL** is a short, bearded man of about sixty, dressed in a worn, out-of-date uniform.)*

**SAUL.** Well, all I says is this 'ere – it bain't my fault.

*(**CHARLES MURDOCK** and **PEGGY**, his young wife, enter the waiting room. They are a honeymoon couple in new clothes. **CHARLES** is a good-looking young man of twenty five, and **PEGGY** a pretty girl of twenty.)*

**CHARLES.** *(Looking round the room.)* Good Lord! What a hole!

**PEGGY.** Oh, Charlie!

**SAUL.** *(Speaking to someone off.)* Hey! You! Where you be going? Not that way!

*(**SAUL** exits by the door to the platform.)*

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

**PEGGY.** *(Sitting.)* Never mind, darling.

*(**CHARLES** moves to **PEGGY**.)*

**CHARLES.** *(Kissing **PEGGY**.)* But I do mind. I mean this is our wedding night, isn't it?

**PEGGY.** Yes...

**CHARLES.** We don't want to hang about here too long. They'll be wondering what's happened to us if we don't turn up at the hotel.

**PEGGY.** I hope they won't think that you funked it and changed your mind.

**CHARLES.** What a joke! No, hang it all. It's not a 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.

**CHARLES.** You mean...

**RICHARD.** I think you're just the man I've been looking for. Don't you agree, Elsie?

**ELSIE.** I do.

**CHARLES.** Good Lord! Do you mean it?

**RICHARD.** Yes.

**CHARLES.** (*Turning to PEGGY.*) Pegs, do you realise what's just happened?

**PEGGY.** Yes, Charlie.

**RICHARD.** (*Take a business card from his wallet.*) Here. Take my card. Look us up when you get back from your honeymoon - say in ten days' time. Think of us while you're away. Elsie and I are about to start our second honeymoon, aren't we, Elsie?

*(JACKSON exits and RICHARD and ELSIE follow him.)*

*(JULIA and TEDDIE enter from the ticket office.)*

**TEDDIE.** I don't believe a word you're telling me. You're wasting my time.

*(JULIA turns quickly, throws snuff in TEDDIE's face, snatches his revolver, pushes him into the ticket office and locks the door. She then turns back to CHARLES and PEGGY.)*

**JULIA.** (*To CHARLES.*) Put 'em up.

**PEGGY.** (*Shocked.*) Oh, Charlie!

**CHARLES.** What does this mean?

**JULIA.** It means, little man, that I hold all the trumps. To think that an amateur like that should try to put the once-over on me. Good job I had that snuff with me.

**PEGGY.** Who are you?

**JULIA.** I'm a dangerous proposition when roused, young lady. (*To CHARLES who is standing in front of the door to the platform.*) You. Get out of my way.

**CHARLES.** I'm damned if I will.

**JULIA.** You stand a fifty-fifty chance of being damned if you don't. I figure this is where I make my get-away and you're going to help me. Move away from that door.

**CHARLES.** No!

**JULIA.** Believe me, when I shoot, I shoot straight and your little sweetie will be a widow almost before she's a wife. Come along now. I'll count to three. One - two...

**PEGGY.** (*Going to CHARLES, and pulling him away.*) Please, Charlie. For my sake!

**JULIA.** That's right. Listen to the little lady. She's got more brains that you have. I'm a regular she-devil and I'll stop at nothing

*(TEDDIE enters silently through the door to the platform, and grabs the revolver from JULIA's hand.)*

Damn and blast!

**TEDDIE.** (*To JACKSON who has followed behind him.*) Do you mind putting the bracelets on the she-devil, Jackson.

*(JACKSON handcuffs JULIA.)*

**JULIA.** What...? Are there two of you?

**TEDDIE.** No, just the one.

**JULIA.** How did you get out?

**TEDDIE.** Our friend Saul had a secret way out of the ticket office and I found it.

**RICHARD.** The stationmaster told us he was going home. He took his cycle lamp, lit it and went off. Then we heard a noise and when we opened the door, we found him lying outside - dead!

**STERLING.** Good God!

**JULIA.** I knew it. What did I tell you? Now perhaps you'll believe me.

**PEGGY.** You think there's some supernatural force at work?

**JULIA.** I'm sure of it. *(Suddenly.)* Why, that's where they found poor Ted Holmes. Lying outside the door.

**STERLING.** Ladies and gentlemen, I'm a doctor. Where is the poor chap now? Let me see him.

**RICHARD.** We carried him into the ticket office.

**STERLING.** All right. I'll go and examine him.

*(RICHARD unlocks the door, and STERLING exits to the ticket office.)*

**CHARLES.** It's a nasty business.

**RICHARD.** Very nasty. *(To JULIA.)* Are you sure you wouldn't prefer to leave?

**JULIA.** I have to stay. I've no choice. It's just as I said. Ted Holmes died twenty years ago tonight. That was the beginning of it all. Now the train won't let me go.

**RICHARD.** Two men falling dead isn't anything more than a coincidence. It's not a reason to believe in a phantom train.

**JULIA.** But you don't understand. I've seen it. I've seen the ghost train.

*(STERLING re-enters from the ticket office.)*

**STERLING.** All right. What's the joke?

**RICHARD.** Eh?

**STERLING.** Under the circumstances, it's in very poor taste.

**RICHARD.** I don't follow you.

**STERLING.** Didn't you say that Saul Hodgkin dropped dead?

**RICHARD.** That's right. He dropped dead and we carried him in there. What's up?

**STERLING.** Take a look for yourself.

*(RICHARD and CHARLES cross and enter the ticket office. After a pause, they re-enter.)*

**RICHARD.** He's not there!

**PEGGY.** Not there? He *must* be there.

**STERLING.** I don't appreciate this piece of nonsense, gentlemen, given my patient's state of health.

**PEGGY.** But we all saw him!

**JULIA.** *(Screaming suddenly.)* I've got it. I've got it. Don't you see?

**RICHARD.** See what?

**JULIA.** It was Ted Holmes.

**CHARLES.** What are you saying?

**JULIA.** It's all so clear. So horribly clear. Listen to me. Listen. Ted Holmes was a short man. A short man with a beard, just like Saul Hodgkin. My father knew him very well. I'll stake my life that at this very moment old Saul is safe at home in bed. It wasn't him you found outside the door. It was Ted Holmes.

**ELSIE.** *(Screams.)* Oh!

**PEGGY.** It couldn't have been. It couldn't!

(PEGGY, CHARLES, ELSIE and RICHARD cross to TEDDIE.)

RICHARD. }  
CHARLES. } Well?

TEDDIE. Let's all do this crossword puzzle.

RICHARD. Don't be a fool, man.

(MISS BOURNE empties the flask in several sips.)

CHARLES. And don't shout out like that.

TEDDIE. You've all got rather a down on me, haven't you?

RICHARD. (Turning again to MISS BOURNE.) Feeling better now?

MISS BOURNE. I think I do feel a little better.

RICHARD. (Taking the flask from MISS BOURNE.) Good God! (Handing the flask back to TEDDIE.) I thought that would revive you.

TEDDIE. Crumbs!

CHARLES. What's up now?

TEDDIE. Look at my flask. (Holding it upside down.) It's empty.

CHARLES. Well!

TEDDIE. It was full just now. Full to the jolly brim.

(Everyone looks at MISS BOURNE.)

RICHARD. Well, it won't do her any harm.

TEDDIE. Well, it won't do me any good.

MISS BOURNE. Do you know, it's a strange thing, but in spite of all these terrible happenings, I'm beginning to feel quite happy.

CHARLES. Good Lord!

PEGGY. (Whispering to CHARLES.) Is she...?

CHARLES. Yes, Pegs. I'm afraid she is. (Crossing to MISS BOURNE.) Miss Bourne, wouldn't you like to lie down?

MISS BOURNE. Lie down? Why?

PEGGY. (Crossing to MISS BOURNE.) We thought that perhaps you'd be more comfortable.

MISS BOURNE. (Leaning her head against CHARLES.) I'm perfectly comfortable, m'dear.

ELSIE. How disgusting!

RICHARD. Don't be silly, Elsie. It was an accident.

MISS BOURNE. 'Straordinary good medicine. Shall most certainly recommend it to the vicar. Makes me feel quite sleepy. Just the thing for the vicar. He suffers dreadfully from insom - insom - sleeplessness.

PEGGY. Come along, Miss Bourne

(RICHARD and CHARLES lift MISS BOURNE to her feet.)

MISS BOURNE. (Sliding down onto the floor.) Dear me! Feel quite giddy.

RICHARD. Come on, Miss Bourne

MISS BOURNE. Why?

CHARLES. We want to lie you down on the table.

MISS BOURNE. Young man, you forget yourself. Why on the table? I've got a beautiful bed of my own. Oh, yes, I have. I've got brass bedsteads in every room.

RICHARD. Brass bedsteads?

**CHARLES.** Yes. I did.

**SAUL.** That be a bridge over the River Ross. It be a swing bridge an' used to be worked by a lever out 'ere on this very platform. In them days quite big boats did come up the river after the china clay. Them don't come now.

**RICHARD.** Well?

**SAUL.** Twenty year ago this very night, there were a party o' people went for a beanfeast up in Truro, and they chartered a special train to take 'em back 'ome to St Blande. 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 tell 'im to shut the bridge, cos the special were soon a-starting off. Ted answers as how he'd go and shut the bridge right that moment, an' them were the last words he were ever 'eard to speak.

**PEGGY.** What happened?

**SAUL.** All in good time, Miss. As I was saying, Ted answers as how he'd go out and shut the bridge that moment, just at eleven o'clock. 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!

**MISS BOURNE.** Shocking!

**SAUL.** And that bain't the worst of it. Not near the worst, it bain't. As I was saying, jest at eleven o'clock Ted Holmes falls down dead, and after 'twere all over, outside that very door, they finds 'im, the lamp still burning in 'is 'and. It must have been 'arf past eleven when the train starts off from Truro, and 'ere be 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. On she comes at forty miles an hour, I reckon. Poor Ben Isaacs were a-driving and it did seem as though when 'e were jest above the

station 'ere, somethin' did warn 'im. What 'twere, the powers above alone know, but he claps on his brakes, and the train goes a-tearing through the station 'ere, all the brakes on, the whistles screamin' and then – crash!

**RICHARD.** Good Lord!

**CHARLES.** Were there many killed?

**SAUL.** Six killed outright and two died after. By some miracle, poor Ben Isaacs were thrown clear. He climbs out o' the water and comes back 'ere to the station, 'is mind clean gone. They say 'e walked the platform 'ere for hours wavin' a red flag and singing *Rock of Ages*. Next morning 'e died, an' 'twere a merciful release. Six bodies they brought up from the mud and laid 'em out in this very room.

**MISS BOURNE.** What a horrible story.

**SAUL.** I warned 'e 'tweren't no pretty tale you was making me tell.

**RICHARD.** Yes, but where does the haunting come in?

**SAUL.** Maybe I've said enough. The ladies be getting scared.

**ELSIE.** Not a bit. It was a horrible thing to happen, no doubt, but I don't see how it can frighten *us*. Please go on.

**SAUL.** (*After a short pause.*) Ever since that night, this station 'as been 'aunted.

**CHARLES.** Who by? Ted Holmes?

**SAUL.** More than that. Some nights the signal bell rings and a train comes a-screaming and a-tearing through the station with all the brakes on and whistles a-blowin'.

**RICHARD.** What nonsense.

**SAUL.** 'Tis God's truth I'm telling yer, sir. One night, a while back, I was kept late by a thunderstorm and just



**STERLING.** Do you know where you are?

**TEDDIE.** Rather!

**STERLING.** This is Fal Vale Station.

**CHARLES.** Quite so.

**RICHARD.** Now perhaps, you'll explain your somewhat unexpected entrance.

**STERLING.** Oh, yes. My name's Sterling. Doctor Sterling. I'm looking for my patient.

**RICHARD.** Your patient?

**STERLING.** Yes. Have you seen a young lady anywhere? I've good reason to believe that this is where she'd come.

**RICHARD.** Then she's running away from you?

**STERLING.** In a manner of speaking, yes. Have you seen her?

**CHARLES.** But why would she run away? And why should she come here?

**STERLING.** That isn't a matter I'm prepared to discuss with strangers.

**CHARLES.** In that case, I'm afraid we can't help you.

**STERLING.** (*Moving to the ticket office door.*) Very well. I'll find her myself.

(**RICHARD** bars the way.)

**CHARLES.** Stop! You can't go in there.

**STERLING.** And why not, sir?

**CHARLES.** Because... because there's something we must explain.

**STERLING.** So she is in there?

**CHARLES.** No.

**STERLING.** I'm sorry, but I don't believe you. You're being very foolish interfering in this matter.

(**STERLING** moves again to the ticket office door.)

**RICHARD.** She's not there.

**CHARLES.** Really she's not. I give you my word of honour.

**STERLING.** That's not good enough. I mean to get to the bottom of this.

(**STERLING** crosses to the door to the platform and closes it. **JULIA** is revealed, crouching and terror-stricken, behind it.)

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.

**STERLING.** Be sensible, Julia.

**JULIA.** It's no use. I have to stay here. I can't help myself.

**STERLING.** (*Moving to **JULIA** and taking hold of her.*) That's enough of this.

**JULIA.** (*Tearing herself free.*) Don't touch me. (*Screams.*) Go away!

**STERLING.** If you won't come willingly, I'll have to take you by force.

(**JULIA** runs to **RICHARD**.)

**RICHARD.** Excuse me, but this lady has put herself under our protection.

**STERLING.** Who the devil asked *you* to interfere? Kindly keep out of this.

**CHARLES.** I've got it.

**TEDDIE.** Then, watch this crook till I come back.

*(CHARLES moves to cover STERLING with his revolver.)*

*(The noise of approaching train grows louder as TEDDIE rushes onto the platform. He fires three shots outside. The noise of the train diminishes. TEDDIE re-enters.)*

Done it! I've got the train onto the siding.

*(The noise of the train stops.)*

**STERLING.** Look here...

**TEDDIE.** It's no good. The game's up.

**RICHARD.** Do you mean we've been fooled?

**TEDDIE.** Yes. There's a gang of crooks at the bottom of this.

**PEGGY.** Then there is no ghost train?

**TEDDIE.** That train is as real as the Plymouth express!

**STERLING.** I tell you...

**TEDDIE.** Shut up!

**RICHARD.** But what's their game?

**TEDDIE.** I'm not sure yet, but we'll soon know.

*(The sound of footsteps is heard outside.)*

Ah, here we are.

*(Two men enter. The first is SAUL HODGKIN who is bleeding from a wound in the forearm. Behind him is JACKSON, a plain clothes policeman, who is wearing a trilby hat and an overcoat, and carrying a revolver.)*

**RICHARD.** What the devil...?

**CHARLES.** Why, it's our old friend Saul!

**TEDDIE.** He tricked you all with his fake death, didn't he?  
*(To JACKSON.)* Got 'em, have you, Jackson?

**JACKSON.** Yes, sir. We've rounded them all up.

**TEDDIE.** *(To SAUL.)* How's the arm? Hurt much? Now then, what's the game?

**STERLING.** Keep your mouth shut.

**PEGGY.** Hadn't the doctor better see to his arm?

**TEDDIE.** Doctor? What doctor?

**PEGGY.** Doctor Sterling.

**TEDDIE.** He's no more a doctor than you are. Didn't you see him take Miss Price's pulse with his thumb?

**STERLING.** *(To TEDDIE.)* Who the hell are you?

**JACKSON.** Haven't you guessed? This is Detective Inspector Morrison of the Secret Service.

**RICHARD.** *(To TEDDIE.)* Not the Morrison who solved that big case in Cologne?

**JACKSON.** That's right.

**TEDDIE.** You all had rather a down on me, didn't you?

**RICHARD.** Well, I'll be...

**TEDDIE.** Did you halt the train all right, Jackson?

**JACKSON.** Yes, sir. And we've searched it.

**TEDDIE.** What were they carrying?

**JACKSON.** Just as you thought, sir. Machine guns and ammunition.

**TEDDIE.** Ah!

**CHARLES.** Machine guns?

**TEDDIE.** Yes. (*Taking **STERLING** by the arm.*) Allow me to introduce you to Otto Silverton, the head of a very dangerous arms smuggling gang.

**CHARLES.** Great Scot!

**TEDDIE.** The train outside is full of armaments. Thanks for your help, Murdock.

(**TEDDIE** takes the revolver from **CHARLES**, and crosses to hand it to **JACKSON**.)

**STERLING.** You can't prove anything.

**TEDDIE.** Can't I? I wasn't sure until tonight, but I made up my mind to get to the bottom of this – especially after you killed Heath.

**STERLING.** Who's Heath?

**TEDDIE.** The tramp they found dead. He was my best assistant. (*To **SAUL**.*) You can tell us about that.

**SAUL.** I didn't do it! I didn't do it! No one can prove it. It's his fault, every bit of it. Would to God I'd never touched his dirty money.

**STERLING.** Shut up!

**SAUL.** It's all very well for you. You haven't no wife and childer. Five pounds he paid me to run that train down from their works to the old granite jetty and bring back their guns and suchlike.

**STERLING.** It's a lie!

**SAUL.** It bain't, and you know it. A score o'times you've done it, and now it's the likes o' me 'as to suffer. Damn you, the lot of yer!

**TEDDIE.** Are the cars here, Jackson?

**JACKSON.** Yes, sir.

**TEDDIE.** Take 'em away.

(**JACKSON** leads **SAUL** and **STERLING** out of the waiting room.)

**ELSIE.** I don't quite see it, even now.

**TEDDIE.** It's perfectly simple, Mrs Winthrop. We've had an eye on these people for some time. They started their clay works near here in an out-of-the-way spot as a distribution centre for the arms they've been smuggling into the country. Almost anything can be hidden in clay. The puzzle was to find how they got the arms into England at all. In the end, I took this case on. I sent Heath to investigate, and he was killed – murdered in this very room. These people bribed the stationmaster and they've been running a train about once a month from their works to the old granite jetty just down below. Motor vehicles would have aroused suspicion in a quiet place like this. A boat brought the arms here. All the rest was plain sailing.

**PEGGY.** Then, is the whole story of the accident made up?

**TEDDIE.** No, the accident did happen, and there's a local superstition about the ghost train which made their job easier. People have been taught for years to run for their lives if they hear a train in the night. The main thing was that they didn't want anyone in this room tonight because the guns might be spotted, or else the bottom knocked out of the ghost story which is what they relied on. And so when the stationmaster couldn't get rid of us, they set about scaring us out. But they didn't do it, did they?

**RICHARD.** Do you mean the whole thing was a put-up job?

**TEDDIE.** Let me tell you what happened tonight. When Saul found he couldn't get rid of us, he went to Sterling to tell him we were here. There was no time to lose, so they came as quickly as they could with a crazy story to try to get rid of us. It was all a pretence – the faint and everything.

**RICHARD.** Then where's the nearest hotel?

**SAUL.** Truro.

**RICHARD.** Surely there's some 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 you must live somewhere?

**SAUL.** I bicycles to Truro.

**RICHARD.** Well, ladies and gentlemen. It looks as if we shall have to stay here till morning.

**CHARLES.** That silly ass! By the way, where is he?

**SAUL.** (*Moving to the door to the platform, opening it and then closing it again.*) There be another gen'leman outside.

**CHARLES.** Let's hope he stays there. I'll kick him in the backside if he comes in here.

**RICHARD.** We certainly have him to thank for our predicament. Him and his wretched hat.

**MISS BOURNE.** He ought to be summonsed or sued or something. Why couldn't he leave the communication-cord alone?

*(The door to the platform opens and TEDDIE DEAKIN enters, unobserved. He is a dandified figure, complete with eyeglass and a long cigarette holder.)*

**RICHARD.** He's an imbecile.

**CHARLES.** Worse than that. He's a...

**TEDDIE.** Hello.

*(They all turn to look at TEDDIE.)*

What a topping little spot. Here we all are, then. What are you doing? Having some sort of argument?

**RICHARD.** Not at all. We're all in complete agreement on the subject under discussion.

**TEDDIE.** Are you? How remarkable. So, we're here till morning, eh?

**CHARLES.** Yes!

**TEDDIE.** I think it's rather priceless. A little adventure to relieve the tedium of life.

**CHARLES.** That's all very well for you, sir. It leaves us in a hell of a mess.

**TEDDIE.** What a pity. 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 miffed, are you?

**MISS BOURNE.** Your lack of concern is monstrous, considering you're the direct cause of this most unpleasant situation.

**TEDDIE.** My good woman...

**MISS BOURNE.** I'm not a good woman. What I mean to say is: Please do not address me with such unwarranted familiarity.

**TEDDIE.** I'm sorry. (*Turning to RICHARD.*) Look here. Be fair. I couldn't help my hat blowing away.

**RICHARD.** If you lean out of the window, it's what happens.

**TEDDIE.** But, my dear old thing, I was watching the sparks from the engine. Awfully jolly!