

# **The Red Carpet**

**A comedy in one act**  
**Written by Geoff Bamber**

**Spotlight Publications**

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## **CAST**

Narrator  
Mother  
Father  
Little Boy  
Little Girl  
Porter  
Gardener  
Stationmaster  
Deputy  
Tramp  
Royal Agents (2)  
King  
Queen  
Passengers (3)  
Postman  
Newspaper Vendor

Although the script specifies two Royal Agents and 3 Passengers, alterations can easily be made to accommodate the cast available. Similarly the Postman and Newspaper Vendor can be played by the same actor or even as a single part if desired.

For doubling considerations, the Postman only appears in Act 1, the Newspaper Vendor only in Act 2, the Passengers only in Acts 2 and 3, and the King, Queen and Royal Agents only in Act 3

As this script is primarily for use by schools and youth theatre casts, the genders of most of the characters are flexible, with only Mother, Little Girl and Queen being specifically female, and Father and King being specifically male. All other characters, even if notionally male can be either male or female.

## **SETTING**

*The Red Carpet* is set entirely on the platform of Bungley Railway Station, a down-at-heel single track halt where, unfortunately, nothing halts. The appearance of the station reflects its lack of use. Faded holiday posters and East-West Railway Company timetables adorn the set along with assorted items of long-abandoned luggage and misplaced mail, sundry goods lost in transit, wooden crates, trolleys, empty vending machines and railway paraphernalia - all dust-coated, shabby and neglected. There is a broken clock, a few pot plants and artificial flowers. There is a booking office window with its shutter half pulled down. The station sign hangs crookedly and has lost several letters. 'Bungley' now reads 'u gl y'.

The set needs to undergo at least cosmetic improvement in Act 3. The station sign is repaired and it should be possible to attach an extra word to the sign before the station name.

## Scene 1

*At the opening of the play the Tramp is asleep, out of sight behind a pile of left luggage*

**Narrator** It's holiday time and here at Bungley Railway Station we see a happy holiday family preparing to go on a happy family holiday. Yes, I know it says Ugly, but that would be silly.

*Enter Mother, Father, Little Boy, Little Girl with suitcases, buckets, spades etc.*

**Father** You know, when I was a boy, this was the high spot of the whole year.

**Mother** It was for me too, though I was never a boy – obviously.

**Little Boy** A train ride to the seaside. It's going to be great.

**Little Girl** Well, it would be if there was a train. And is this place really called Ugly?

**Father** No, it's Bungley. At least, it was.

**Little Boy** When you were a boy.

**Father** Exactly.

*They look anxiously along the platform*

**Little Boy** Well, where *is* the train?

**Mother** On the track, dear. Where else would it be?

**Father** Let's not worry about the train. Just enjoy the station. Bungley Railway Station is a wonderful historic building.

**Little Boy** It's falling to pieces.

**Little Girl** It smells so old and musty. And when is the train coming?

**Mother** Your father knows all that sort of thing, don't you, dear?

**Father** Well ... ah, a railway worker.

*Enter Porter. He pushes a sweeping brush*

**Little Boy** He's falling to pieces too.

**Father** But he doesn't smell old and musty. Well, only a little bit.

**Little Girl** We're going on our holidays at the seaside.

**Little Boy** We're waiting for the train.

**Porter** You'll have a long wait. We haven't had no trains here for years now.

**Father** Right. Well, I didn't actually *mention* the seaside, did I? I just thought we might get used to the idea of going on holiday by enjoying a trip to this grand old station - and here we are. I'm sure we'll get to the seaside next year - by train.

**Mother** Yes, well, I suppose that's enough excitement for now. Come along, children.

*Family exit. Porter carries on sweeping platform*

**Narrator** Well, it *is* a grand old station, isn't it?

**Porter** It was once. Trouble is, like I said, no trains. The East-West Railway Company don't send them along here any more. Cost cutting. They use the other line. All this stuff is lost or abandoned or got no addresses on or just been dumped off here and nobody's ever got round to collecting it.

**Narrator** Why hasn't the railway company closed it down?

**Porter** Shh! Don't say that so loud. I think they've forgotten about it. Or maybe it costs more to close it down completely than keep it open. Well, as open as it is.

**Narrator** So what do you do all day?

**Porter** Oh, stuff. This and that.

*He looks behind a pile of left luggage*

Hey, you. You're going to have to move. I need to clean up.

*Tramp emerges from behind packing cases. He is rolling up the rug that he sleeps on*

**Tramp** All right, all right.

**Narrator** And you are?

**Tramp** Homeless. That's what I am. Homeless.

**Porter** Homeless and, I suppose, harmless. But right now he's in the way. Now, move along. *(Exit)*

**Tramp** He doesn't mean it. I'll come back later. I love it here. I always wanted to work for the railway. I can be really useful, you know - given a chance. I don't bother anyone. I just unroll my rug, curl up and go to sleep here. *And* I act as nightwatchperson. Just in case anybody comes in here and tries to steal anything.

**Narrator** Such as what?

**Porter** *(from offstage)* Oi! Move along!

**Tramp** I'll think of something and tell you later. *(Exit)*

**Narrator** So, Bungley - the railway station without trains. But it does have someone to keep it clean and someone who sleeps on a rug.

*Enter Gardener with watering can*

**Gardener** And it has a gardener. You've got to do your best, haven't you? Can't let this place go completely. Now, what needs watering?

*Gardener looks as if he is about to go down onto the tracks. He is interrupted by the arrival of the Deputy Station Supervisor, clutching a copy of the East-West Railways rule book*

**Deputy** Just a minute. You know the rules. We can't have people wandering about on a railway track. Health and safety. We don't want what we in the trade call 'an incident'.

**Gardener** No, we don't, especially if it involves me being run over.

**Narrator** It doesn't seem very likely.

**Deputy** That's as maybe but rules are rules. Now, upline clear?

*They both look to the left*

**Gardener** Upline clear.

**Deputy** Downline clear?

*They both look to the right*

**Gardener** Downline clear.

**Deputy** Right, you can carry on watering now. And start at that end. And give the rails a bit of a polish while you're at it - with the official East-West Railway Company rag.

*He produces a rag and gives it to the Gardener*

*Exit Gardener*

**Narrator** Are you the Stationmaster?

**Deputy** No, we don't have one. I am the Under-Assistant-Deputy Station Supervisor. We haven't had a stationmaster here since, let me see ... well, since we had a train. What would he do?

*Enter Postman*

**Postman** Mail! Mail! Mail for Bungley Railway Station. *(He rifles through the mail)* Usual stuff. Usual

stuff. Don't worry. I'm just saving you the trouble. What would you need contents insurance for anyway? Oh, there is this. *(He pulls an envelope from his sack)* It looks official. From the East-West Railway Company, who own this station - for what it's worth.

**Deputy** Official? I don't like the sound of that.

*Enter, cautiously, Porter, Gardener and Tramp*

I don't really want to read it.

**Postman** Leave it to me. All part of the service. *(He opens the envelope and reads the letter)* "For the attention of the staff of Bungley Railway Station". Is that you lot?

**Deputy** Indeed it is.

**Porter** *(indicating Tramp)* Apart from him.

**Postman** *(reading)* Well, "In an effort to upgrade the station a new stationmaster has been appointed. The new stationmaster will arrive forthwith. So buck up your ideas. Signed, the Big Boss, East-West Railway Company." *(Exit)*

**Deputy** Buck up our ideas?

**Gardener** The cheek of it.

**Porter** Does that mean we'll get some trains?

**Gardener** I hope not. They'd spoil my flowers.

**Deputy** Well, you all heard what he said. Let's find some ideas and buck them up.

*All exit, except Tramp*

**Tramp** Don't mind me. I'll just settle down. This is my spot.

*He settles down again behind the pile of luggage*

**Narrator** Well, things are certainly going to improve, aren't they? I cannot wait to meet the new stationmaster. Well, I can. But I don't have to.

*Enter Stationmaster*

**Stationmaster** Is this Bungley Railway Station? Well, it will be. I am the new stationmaster here and this is my domain.

## **The Red Carpet**

A charming and often surreal comedy about a station that has no trains and its eccentric staff.

### **Plot Summary**

Although it retains a skeleton staff, Bungley Railway Station has not seen a train for several years - something of a surprise for the newly-appointed stationmaster. The Stationmaster determines to rectify matters but even the sabotaging of the track the railway company prefer to use is of little benefit. It is only with the proposed arrival of some very special visitors that things look up. Unfortunately, and crucially, a train is not the only thing that Bungley is short of.

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