

The setting: All the scenes centre on the engine shed, or just outside it. There is a chalkboard on the shed giving the date and weather forecast. Next to it it says: 'Rushmoor Bay Miniature Railway.' The engine shed has a large sliding door so that when it is open the audience can see the action that takes place inside. It requires a mock up of a miniature locomotive (or an actual one borrowed for the performance), together with an old car seat and a bench at the entrance to the shed.

Scene 1: 20th May 1999. Forecast : dull but dry

The elderly volunteers (ARTHUR, TOM and COLIN) are in the miniature railway engine shed.

TOM writes on a chalkboard: '20th May 1999. Forecast: 'dull but dry.' TOM takes chalkboard to place on outside of shed and returns a few seconds later with a piece of paper in his shaking hand.

TOM: There's a notice on the outside of the shed. The bastard! He's not going to get away with it. He's not...

ARTHUR: Calm down! In your condition you cannot afford to get upset.

TOM: (*Shouting*). Kill the bastard.

ARTHUR: What did it say?

TOM: (*Looks down to read from paper – his hand still shaking*) 'The New Rushmoor Bay Resort. A rescue plan by local benefactor Vic Fontana.' (*Rips up paper and throws it to floor*) I couldn't read any more of that pile of crap!

ARTHUR: Remember that the council haven't formally given their approval yet.

TOM: Don't be a complete prat! It's so short of cash it has no bloody choice. Fontana will turn this into a resort from Hell. Even Colin knows that.

COLIN: Let's go for ride now! (*Colin who has suffered a serious accident some years earlier licks the last of his ice cream seemingly oblivious to the fate of the miniature railway*).

TOM: We'll go for a ride later (*Seeing ice cream on Colin's chin TOM walks over and wipes this gently away for him*).

ARTHUR: (*ARTHUR shakes his head wearily when COLIN removes the cord and whistle from around his neck and carelessly drops it on the floor. TOM bends down to pick it up for him*).

I do not know how Tom could have been so foolish to entrust this to

your safe keeping. Everything should be safely locked up in a glass cabinet and well away from your irresponsible hands in my view.

TOM: You couldn't take that whistle away from him!

ARTHUR: We cannot let a vital piece of this railway's heritage be lost forever because of Colin's carelessness.

TOM: But Colin will take it badly!

ARTHUR: He would not be without a whistle. It should not cost more than a few shillings to get a replacement whistle from a toyshop for him.

TOM: Colin won't be fooled by that for one minute. He's had that whistle on a cord around his neck for the last three years.

ARTHUR: I have this railway to think about and The Flying Star.

TOM: *(He gently removes a patched up canvas sheet to reveal the miniature steam locomotive in a blaze of green and chrome)* This sight always brings joy to my heart.

ARTHUR: It is magnificent.

TOM: Yes, and one day The Flying Star will go all the way to Loxley village when we have restored the bridge and a few hundred yards of track swept away in the flood of 1968.

ARTHUR: The scores of postcards from grateful holidaymakers in this engine shed should inspire us to return this railway to its old pride and glory.

TOM: But we only had a total of four postcards from last season.

ARTHUR: Tom! Quality, not quantity counts most in life. These passionate postcards are worth more than a thousand sent written without conviction.

TOM: One of those four cards reached us by mistake. It should have gone to the lan's shop around the corner.

ARTHUR: *(Places a tatty engine drivers hat on his head and moves closer to the locomotive)* My comrades, let us gaze upon perfection at few feet away from us. Steven's of Wakefield have certainly achieved perfection in producing this little treasure back in 1936.

TOM: It's a real beauty. Really beautiful. *(TOM takes out his pork pie from his pocket and places it on the bench while he removes his coat. As he is placing it on a hook Colin furtively reaches over and breaks off a small piece from it and stuffs it in his mouth. Tom turns round and looks in the direction of his pork pie).* The mice have been at my pie already.

COLIN: *(Colin points under the workbench).* It went that way, Tom.

TOM: *(Tom looks Colin straight in the eye)* I know the name of the mouse. It's called Colin.

COLIN: *(Colin replies pointing towards his chest).* That's the same name as me!

They can hear the bronchial sound of EDDIE approaching them spluttering and coughing ever more louder as he makes his way nearer with a cigarette perched precariously in the corner of his mouth.

EDDIE: *(Removes cigarette from his mouth and stubbs it on floor)* That's definitely the last pack of cigarettes I'm buying. They're bloody killing me.

ARTHUR: We would all be millionaires if we had a pound for every time you have said this over the last few years.

EDDIE: Don't give me a hard time.

ARTHUR: *(Picks up a valve from the workbench).* That was a very neat job on the valve, Eddie.

EDDIE: Thanks for that mate. My daughter never gives me any thanks these days.

TOM: It's the finest miniature train in the country. And we have the best one-mile of track. One day it could be back to two miles of track, all the way to Loxley. It would be proudest day of my life to reopen the little stationhouse there and put the station clock back where it belongs.

ARTHUR: Even though Loxley's mine closed in 1927 the mineral line may have been dead, but they could not kill it off completely. It refused to die then, just as it refused to die after the flood of '68.

EDDIE: You're damn right!

TOM: It never let us down during the war, taking the troops from the army camp in Loxley to Rushmoor Bay and back. I wanted to be in the army, but my bad health prevented that.

EDDIE: You've told us this thousands of times. You were a lucky bugger to spend the war being the engine driver of The Flying Star.

TOM: I was the happiest man alive.

EDDIE: You still are!

TOM: Only as long as I've still got my Flying Star.

EDDIE: It's exactly the same for all of us. We'll do whatever it takes to keep it going.

ARTHUR: Do not despair. Our courage will ensure that not only will our railway survive, but one day it will be like the old days once more.

TOM: I'll be long dead before that happens.

ARTHUR: Nonsense. You will have the honour of placing the clock back in its rightful place at Loxley Station.

TOM: I'm doing this almost every night in my dreams.

ARTHUR: You will do it for real soon, Tom.

TOM: The thought of that is the only thing that keeps me going.

EDDIE: This railway is a perfect place to get away from my daughter and that soddin bed and breakfast. *(EDDIE settles into an old car seat at the side of the shed and glances at his newspaper).*

MARILYN approaches

TOM: *(Observing MARILYN approaching. Chuckles).* Don't speak too soon.

MARILYN: Is that you, dad?

EDDIE: *(Ensures newspaper covers his face defensively).* It might be!

MARILYN: You shouldn't be out. I was counting on you to help me.

EDDIE: *(EDDIE slouches defensively further in the car seat, ensuring that a newspaper still covers his face).* Is anything wrong?

MARILYN: Wrong? Just about everything's gone wrong! For a start I booked in two extra guests today. It's not easy doing everything on your own, dad. Didn't I tell you that there were extra guests?

EDDIE: I had to get away from them. They were giving me grief.

MARILYN: I'm giving you grief now. Come on dad. You should pull your weight. Don't spend too long in this shed.

EDDIE: *I'LL PULL MY WEIGHT WHEN I GET BACK.*

MARILYN: It's too cold and damp for you to be in here.

EDDIE: It's doing no harm to The Flying Star and it'll do no harm to me.

MARILYN: You're not made of metal, dad. Remember, don't be long! If you're not back in ten minutes I'll come back here.

MARILYN departs quickly before EDDIE can reply. Only when she has gone does he lower the newspaper from his face.

TOM: *(Looking towards EDDIE)* I wouldn't like to be in your shoes when you get back! *(He picks up the old station clock and holds it as if it were a baby).* After the war I didn't think I would ever have to kill again. We all know what has to be done.

ARTHUR: But we need to give it more consideration and reflection. *(He trips over EDDIE'S outstretched feet and falls to the floor just as he completes his sentence).*

TOM: *(Placing clock down first)* There could have been some nasty damage there!

ARTHUR: I'm OK.

TOM: I don't mean you. You could have fallen on The Flying Star and done her damage.

EDDIE bellows in laughter before ARTHUR snaps

ARTHUR: Don't just sit there like a sack of potatoes, Eddie. Put your overalls on and get to work!

EDDIE: *(sneering tone)* Yes, master!

ARTHUR: Don't take that tone with me! *(He snatches away the newspaper resting against EDDIE'S chest).*

TOM: *(TOM moved forward between the two men).* Shake a leg, we don't have all day.

ARTHUR: *(Hearing this ARTHUR'S face beams).* That is a metaphorical idiom originally meaning to begin dancing. The phrase is now most frequently used as an imperative to mean hurry up.

TOM: *(Shakes his head wearily)* Give it a rest professor. You're retired now and we aren't your bloody students!

ARTHUR: The question is whether we are really prepared to kill?

TOM: We've no choice. This little railway is the only thing that keeps me going.

ARTHUR: It's a big decision!

TOM: We have to kill him. The American cops would call this a NHI.

ARTHUR: What's that?

TOM: No human involved. *(TOM moves forward and with his handkerchief wipes a smear from the paintwork of the engine which COLIN has touched a few seconds earlier)*. For the past seven years I've given everything to it, coming out at any time of the day or night. I've loved every minute of it.

ARTHUR: Me too. *(Pause)*. Except when the bloody kids ride on it.

TOM: If you haven't got the stomach to do it I'll bump off Fontana. I probably haven't got much longer to live with my heart condition anyway.

ARTHUR: What will really be achieved Tom, if you kill him?

TOM: You may not be interested but I'll get rid of that shit and save our railway.

ARTHUR: I'm just as dedicated as you and Eddie to keeping the railway going.

TOM: *(Sneering tone)* What's your problem then?

ARTHUR: When I lectured in philosophy I made it clear to my students that the human journey is a perpetual act of transfiguration against the infinity of the universe and the silent depths of the oceans.

TOM: *(scratches his head)* I'm lost?

ARTHUR: We're not getting any younger. I'm 73 and the youngest here.

TOM: What's your bloody point?

ARTHUR: There's an old postcard on the wall going back to the first year The Flying Star made a steamy departure from Rushmoor Bay in 1937 with the steam cocks wide open. It's as if I was there at that time. I can see it all so clearly.

TOM: You're beating about the bush.

ARTHUR: *(Gleefully takes the bait)* The phrase originally referred to bat-fowling, which involved hunting birds at night when they were...

TOM: Shut up! Don't be so bloody pompous.

ARTHUR: I want this railway to still be here long after all of us are gone. Even to extend as far as Loxley if we could get the money to build a new bridge

and a section of line. We have to get some younger people involved as volunteers to run this railway and take over from us some day.

TOM: You're just evading the issue!

ARTHUR: I'm not, Tom. There's not much point killing to keep the railway going because we may all be dead in a few years from now. The railway can't work by magic on its own, can it?

EDDIE: You quoted something to us yesterday. What was it now, Arthur?

TOM: *(Interrupting)*.Aristotle.

EDDIE: Some Boris bloke I think. What was it Arthur?

ARTHUR: Boris Pasternak said : 'Where a great moment knocks on the door of your life, it is often no louder than the beating of your heart, and it is very easy to miss it.'

EDDIE: Don't you see that it is our moment now and we can't miss it?

TOM: Well said, Eddie. We can't miss this moment. We have to kill Fontana.

ARTHUR: But what about getting some younger volunteers?

TOM: OK by me. Will you be with us then on getting rid of him?

ARTHUR: Affirmative.

TOM: Does that mean yes?

ARTHUR: Yes.

TOM: Good on you mate!

ARTHUR: Let's put it to the vote on whether we get rid of Fontana. I'm tentatively in favour and of course in getting some younger people involved in being volunteers.

TOM: That's the spirit. I'm in favour of both plans. I hope to have the honour of bumping him off.

EDDIE: Kill the bastard!

ARTHUR: What's it to be, Colin?

COLIN: Can I have ice cream?

TOM: I think we have a unanimous agreement. Let's seal this by an oath taken on The Flying Star.

TOM'S hand touches the brass plaque on the engine where it says Steven's of Wakefield, followed by that of ARTHUR and EDDIE. COLIN moves closer and places his greasy hand on the others.

It's a solemn and binding agreement to you, old girl. We won't let you down. You'll still be running proudly long after we are all gone. Fontana will be dead soon.

EDDIE: *(Snarls)* Dead very soon.

ARTHUR: That's enough for today. We'll meet here tomorrow at 9am

EDDIE: I'll stay and tidy up a bit longer.

TOM: You shouldn't be frightened of going back and getting a roasting from your daughter?

EDDIE: Why not?

TOM: *(Chuckling)*. Because she's only a few yards away from us. We'll leave now and pick up any bit and pieces left of you tomorrow morning.

TOM, ARTHUR and COLIN leave as MARILYN approaches the engine shed.

EDDIE: Don't shout at me, Marilyn. I know I should have been back by now.

MARILYN: It's fine dad. It doesn't matter.

EDDIE: Are you coming down poorly?

MARILYN: All of the guests are out so let's go back now so you can warm yourself by the fire. I'll bring some tea in for you and you can watch snooker on TV.

EDDIE: I've forgotten. It must be my birthday today.

MARILYN: No. It's still three weeks away.

EDDIE: Is the B& B full tonight?

MARILYN: Yes. A man turned up only a few minutes ago and booked the small room.

EDDIE: I hope we won't have any trouble out of him

MARILYN: Of course not. Peter seems like a very nice man.

EDDIE: *(Raises his eyebrows)* You don't usually mention guests by their first names.

MARILYN: Don't go reading anything into it, dad.

EDDIE: It's about time you got yourself a fellow. He might suit you.

MARILYN: Don't talk daft! He'll be gone in a day or two. Please change the subject, dad.

EDDIE: *(Looks up towards the sky pensively).* There's trouble in the sky. We could be in for it tomorrow.

MARILYN: You're always saying this, but nothing ever happens.

EDDIE: Something's not right. I can feel it in my bones. I just know something terrible is going to happen.

MARILYN: Not according to your weather forecast outside the engine shed.

EDDIE: I only hope that you're right.

MARILYN: Come on dad.

MARILYN tugs his arm. They leave the stage.

Scene 2 : 21st May 1999 9.30am

Scene just outside the engine shed. Big sliding door of engine shed is wide open revealing Flying Star and other items inside. Rubble and damage is evident outside the engine shed after a freak high tide four hours earlier. Present are: ARTHUR, TOM, EDDIE, COLIN, PETER and DAVE.

EDDIE I told you it was going to happen! I had this funny feeling *(He removes some debris away from just outside the engine shed as do the others. PETER and DAVE pick up the bench that had been swept away and placed it back just outside the engine shed).*

DAVE The bench seems to be all in one piece after the freak high tide.

ARTHUR *(Picks up a piece of planking).* That is more than could be said for the old pier.

TOM *(Lifting street sign.)* And this.

ARTHUR Our usual work must go on. It is your turn to put up the date and weather forecast, Tom.

TOM I don't see the bloody point!

ARTHUR It has always been part of our duty to do this. As far as the weather is

concerned we might not have been entirely on target...

TOM *(Interrupting)*. You can say that again!

ARTHUR I will do it then.*(On the chalkboard he writes '21st May 1999' and next to forecast 'Inclement' He places chalkboard on hook on shed.*

EDDIE I still can't get over it. It's so hard to put it into words.

ARTHUR *(Sees Colin pull the bench away and shouts)*.Put it back! *(Colin meekly complies)* Let me see if I can picture what Eddie and Peter have been through. *(Places his hand thoughtfully on his chin for a few moments before removing it)*. I can see it all so clearly as if I had been with them. There was a sharp sound as the tide swept the promenade and ripped the Second World War sea mine at the entrance to the amusement arcade from its concrete base and tossed it into the sea just like a child's flimsy toy. An icy hand seemed to clutch at Eddie's stomach at that moment.

EDDIE *(Agitated)* I was calm. I'm no ruddy coward!

ARTHUR Together they watched with fascinated horror the damage unfold. Eddie was shaking his head so hard that his double chin was flapping from side to side.

EDDIE Cheek!

ARTHUR Eddie looked over towards the ticket office as a wave receded and then another more powerful one followed smashing it to pieces, before sucking it backwards towards the road and over into the foaming sea.

TOM It would make a lot more sense to hear the story from Eddie and Peter.

ARTHUR I object!

TOM Overruled!

PETER Eddie told me to make a run for it, but there was no way that I could leave him.

EDDIE I told Peter to bugger off.

ARTHUR Why did you stay with Eddie?

PETER My car came off the road just over a year ago and rolled over into a deep river. My dad was in the passenger seat and I tried to get him free, but it was ...

EDDIE You shouldn't blame yourself. There was nothing you could have done .

PETER The police and everyone else said this, but it didn't make me feel any better. (*Overcome with feelings PETER wanders off to the rear of the engine shed*)

EDDIE I thought we were going to die then suddenly the tide turned.

ARTHUR (*Arthur lifts up name plate from the ground of the boat 'Invincible' just outside the engine shed. Arthur tosses it to the ground*). Sadly, the boat was merely invincible in name only.

MARILYN appears on scene

MARILYN Dad! I was so worried about you. I heard about the freak high tide washing away the pier on the local radio and realised that you would down here next to your precious railway.

EDDIE Worried I wasn't around to make the bloody guests soddin breakfasts no doubt.

MARILYN Don't talk like that, dad. You know it isn't fair.

EDDIE I had to come and make sure the old girl was safe.