

# The Wind in the Rosebush

*Adapted from the short story by Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman*

**The characters:** The storyteller; Passenger 1; Passenger 2; Miss Rebecca Flint; Mrs Barnes; The girl; A passer-by.

*(The play could be performed by a cast of three: the actor playing Rebecca Flint would be played by the same actor but the other parts, including the storyteller, would be played by the two other actors. The role of the storyteller could be also shared amongst the three actors. Apart from four chairs, the play has no set. The play starts with the four chairs arranged as a railway carriage. Because the audience will see the chairs being moved by the actors, care should be taken to carefully choreograph the movement of the chairs because that is part of the style of the play.)*

*The use of stage lighting will add to the atmosphere. An interesting way of performing the play would be to put all the action in a central spotlight area surrounded by darkness. Actors 'exit' when they move into the darkness.)*

**Storyteller:** The little country train rattled its way slowly across the flat Lincolnshire countryside. Rebecca Flint gazed out of the window as green field after green field floated by. After a while a passenger engaged her in conversation.

**Passenger 1:** A pleasant day.

**Rebecca:** Yes, very.

**Passenger 1:** Have you come far?

**Rebecca:** I have come from Hampshire.

**Passenger 2:** Now, that is a long way.

**Rebecca:** Yes, it is.

**Passenger 1:** Travelling all the way to Lincoln are you?

**Rebecca:** No, I'm getting off at Fordby.

**Passenger 2:** That is a coincidence; so are we.

**Rebecca:** Do you happen to know where John Dent lived? He lived in Fordby.

*(Pause. The two passengers look at each other.)*

**Passenger 1:** Yes, I know the place.

**Rebecca:** His late wife was my sister.

**Passenger 2:** Was she now?

**Rebecca:** Do you know his daughter Emily?

*(Pause. The two passengers look at each other again.)*

**Passenger 1:** Isn't she ...

**Passenger 2:** Shush!

# The Signalman

*Adapted from the short story by Charles Dickens*

**The characters:** Storyteller 1 (Man); Storyteller 2 (Ghost, Engine Driver);  
Storyteller 3 (Signalman).

*(The use of sound effects, mood music and lighting will add to the ghostly effect of the play.)*

**Storyteller 1:** Picture, if you will, a deep railway cutting. A solitary and dismal place; little sunlight ever found its way to this spot.

**Storyteller 2:** It had an earthy, deadly smell and so much cold wind rushed through it, that it struck a chill into anyone foolish enough to venture into it.

**Storyteller 3:** On either side, a dripping wet wall of jagged stone, excluded all view but a strip of sky.

**Storyteller 1:** The view in one direction was much of the same. But the view in the other direction terminated in a gloomy red light and the gloomier entrance to a black tunnel, in whose massive architecture there was a barbarous, depressing and forbidding air.

**Storyteller 2:** And in this deep and solitary place stood an isolated building: a signal box.

*(Storyteller 3 becomes the signalman and acts the next line as he speaks.)*

**Storyteller 3:** The signalman is standing at the door of the signal box peering down the line at the red light.

**Storyteller 1:** While high on the embankment, a man is peering into the gloom below. He shouts down to signalman. *(Storyteller 1 becomes the man.)*

**Man:** Hello! Below there! Hello below! *(He waves as he shouts.)*

**Signalman:** Who's there! *(He appears very frightened.)*

**Man:** Hello! Below there! Hello below!

**Signalman:** What do you want? *(He seems suspicious of the stranger.)*

**Man:** Is there any path by which I can come down and speak to you?

**Signalman:** Over there, couple of hundred yards down the line.

**Man:** Thank you. I see it.

**Storyteller 2:** The man walked along the bank until he came to a rough zigzag path that led down to the line.

**Storyteller 3:** The signalman's eyes were fixed first on the red light at the entrance to the tunnel and then on the stranger.

**Man:** Are you in charge of the red light?

**Signalman:** Don't you know who I am?

# The Phantom of the Moor

*Adapted from 'The Phantom Coach', a short story by Amelia B Edwards*

The characters: Storyteller; Man; Master.

*(Use of lighting and suitable sound effects will add to the atmosphere of a production.)*

**Storyteller:** The east wind was blowing cold across the moor and I was lost. There was nothing for it but to walk on and take my chance of finding what shelter I could. As night drew on, the snow began to come down with an ominous steadiness. The cold became more intense, as darkness and the snow began to close round me. I began to remember stories of travellers who had walked on and on in the falling snow until, worn out, they lay down and slept their lives away. I tried to keep going but I was so tired and so cold. I had to sit down and rest. If I could close my eyes and sleep for a little while, I would be able to gather my strength and walk on. I knew it was dangerous to sleep.

My eyes began to droop. I couldn't keep them open. Just a little sleep ... I'd feel better after just a little sleep ... just a little ... sleep ...

*(His eyes close.)*

**Man:** *(Voice from off-stage.)* Hello there! *(He enters.)* Hello there!

**Storyteller:** *(He wakes with a start.)* What!

**Man:** Are you all right?

**Storyteller:** Thank God!

**Man:** What for?

**Storyteller:** For you. I began to fear I should be lost in the snow forever.

**Man:** Folks do get lost hereabouts from time to time.

**Storyteller:** How far am I now from Dwaling?

**Man:** A good 20 miles, more or less.

**Storyteller:** And the nearest village?

**Man:** The nearest village is Wyke and that's 12 miles the other way.

**Storyteller:** Where do you live, then?

**Man:** Out yonder.

**Storyteller:** You're going home, I presume?

**Man:** Maybe I am.

**Storyteller:** Then I'm going with you.

**Man:** And why would you want to do that?

**Storyteller:** What's the matter with you? If I stay on the moor in this weather I'll die.

# John Charrington's Wedding

*Adapted from the short story by E Nesbit*

**The characters:** Storyteller (the villager; porter); Jack Preston; John Charrington; Mary Forster.

*(In this style of play the storyteller stays on stage all the time. When narrating and not actually taking part in the action, the best place for the storyteller is downstage left or right. The play only needs an empty stage.)*

*Historical note: Telegrams play an important part in the story. In the nineteenth century, the telegram was the fastest way of sending a message. Those that could afford it would use the telegram to send important messages in much the same way as we use text messaging today.)*

**Storyteller:** The most popular girl in the village and the prettiest by far was Mary Forster. Even at school all the village boys were sweet on her. The older she grew, the prettier she became and when she turned eighteen there was no shortage of proposals of marriage. John Charrington asked her to marry him before he went up to Oxford.

*(Enter Mary and John.)*

**John:** Marry me.

**Mary:** Don't be silly John. Of course I won't marry you. *(She laughs.)*

**John:** Why won't you marry me?

**Mary:** My dear John, we are much too young.

**John:** You are fond of me though.

**Mary:** Of course I'm fond of you but I don't want to marry you.

**Storyteller:** John was nothing if not persistent. He asked her again when he came home for the long vacation.

**John:** Mary?

**Mary:** Yes John?

**John:** Now will you marry me?

**Mary:** Dearest John, I wouldn't marry you before so why should I marry you now?

**John:** You refused to marry me before because you said we were too young.

**Mary:** I know I did.

**John:** Well, we are nearly a year older: so now will you marry me?

**Mary:** The answer is still no.

**John:** I'll never give up. Even if it takes forever I'll keep asking until you finally say yes. We are destined to be together, I know it.