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*Dramatic Publishing*



# **Lurking on the Railroad**

**or**  
**WILL SHE GIVE HIM  
A WIDE BERTH?**

**BOOK and LYRICS by DUTTON FOSTER.  
MUSIC by RAY HANNISIAN  
and LEE STAMETZ.**



**THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY**

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Music by RAY HANNISIAN and LEE STAMETZ

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(LURKING ON THE RAILROAD)

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LURKING ON THE RAILROAD  
A Musical Melodrama  
For Five Men, Five Women and Extras

CHARACTERS

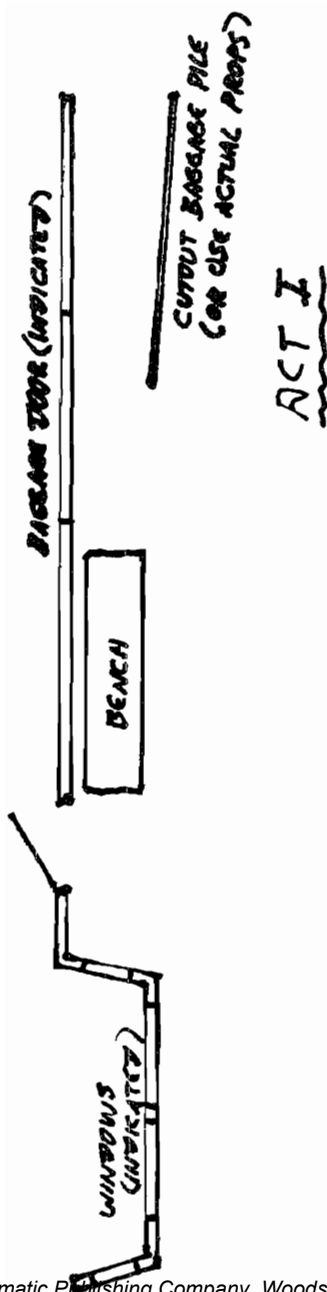
TOMMY TAO	<i>An elderly Oriental</i>
BILLY BETTENDORF	<i>Sixteen and beautiful</i>
ANNIE ARCHBAR	<i>Gen. Mgr./T.M.&amp;P.</i>
EUPHEMIA BETTENDORF	<i>Billy's sister, striking but self-conscious</i>
WILLARD WINRIGHT	<i>Dashing, slightly insufferable</i>
CARRIE ON	<i>Vivacious, flirtacious</i>
SCRUPLES	<i>Stuffy English Butler</i>
NIGEL NASH-GNARKINGTON	<i>Well-dressed dandy who relishes himself and life</i>
COUNTESS VON TOSTIC	<i>Overdressed, Mae West type</i>
SLEAZE	<i>Nigel's Cockney henchman</i>
CHORUS	Leland, Hermione, Persephone, Clio, Calliope, Clinton, Luther and Murdock

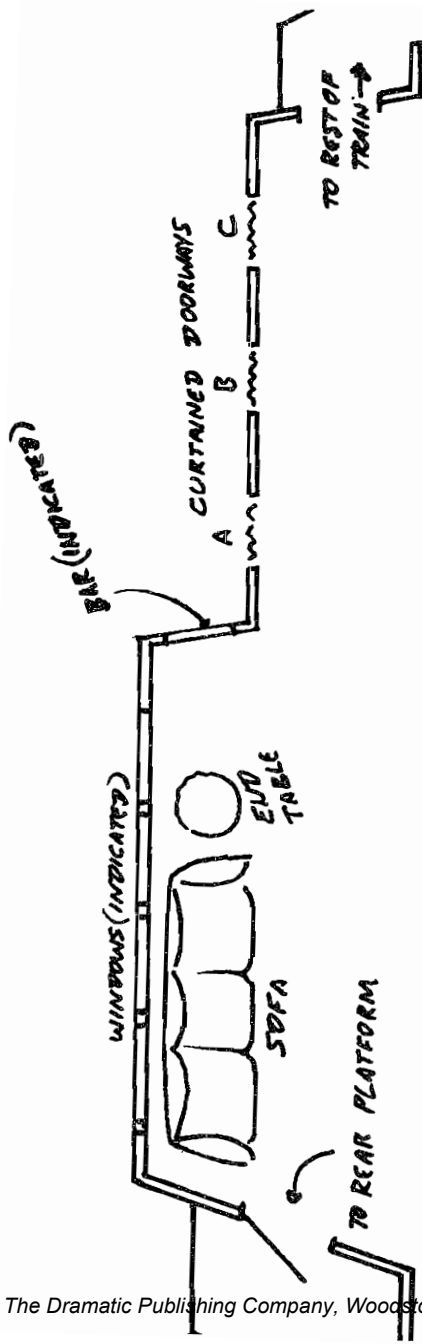
TIME: Summer, 1905

PLACE: The Railroad Town of  
Coffeepot Springs

## PRODUCTION NOTE

The door to the waiting room and agent's office is UC. There is a bay window for the telegraph operator UR. On the platform, a bench for waiting passengers, a large pile of trunks and other baggage and express, handy for hiding eavesdroppers. This may be a cutout. If desired, the railroad track may be visible downstage, parallel to the footlights.





## ACT II

SCENE: The platform of a Victorian, small-town railroad depot. After the overture has concluded and during the transition from blackout to morning light, a lone harmonica plays a mournful rendition of "I've Been Workin' on the Railroad."

Discovered is TOMMY TAO, an old Oriental in trackman's overalls, sitting on the bench UC. He polishes his spike maul with an oily rag, holding it up periodically for inspection and turning it to catch the light. The effect is of slow motion. With the precise movement of a karate master, he rises and takes a practice swing or two with the maul, perhaps accompanied by the sound effect of a Chinese gong. He resumes his sitting, polishing and staring out into eternity.



(After a few moments, BILLY BETTENDORF enters UC. She sweeps her way onstage with a broom, describing lighthearted circles and figures.)

BILLY (sweeping the rails DC). Good morning, Tommy! (A pause.) How are you this fine morning? June 6, 1905? Another fine morning in Coffeepot Springs, elevation eight thousand, four hundred and fifty-two feet, population three hundred and seventy-six? Served by our little railroad . . . the rundown but lovable Treasure Mountain and Pacific! (She pauses, then runs over and kisses TOMMY on the cheek.) Are you preparing to perform your vital but mysterious duties along our weedgrown and rusty track? (She pauses, then eyes TOMMY with slight alarm.) What are you thinking about, Tommy? Tommy? *Tommy*? (She whacks Tommy's leg with her broom, causing a slight reaction.)

TOMMY (from a great spiritual distance). I do nothing, and yet there is nothing that is not done . . . To win the world, one must attend to nothing . . . A great spiker spikes no track . . . (He returns to the present, rises, and crosses to touch BILLY on the arm.) Ah, good morning, Miss Billy. Forgive my humble metaphysical rambling. And do you find yourself happy this morning, as usual?

BILLY (joyously). Oh, very happy, thank you, Tommy! (Sorrowfully.) Although I am, as you know, an orphan! Whose dear father was killed in a train wreck! And whose dear mother was kidnapped by a band of crazed suffragettes! (She smiles through her tears.) Yes - sigh - I am happy!

TOMMY. Good!

BILLY. And although I am burdened with a spoiled older sister, Euphemia, who demands I work my fingers to the bone so that she may flounce around in costly frocks and bonnets, oh yes, Tommy, I am very happy!

TOMMY. Good!

BILLY. I am joyful even though no one in Coffeepot Springs, except you, ever listens to me! Or believes anything I say!

TOMMY. You are special person. You have pure, free spirit of . . . (He points upward.) . . . mountain bluebird! (*Birdsong.*)

BILLY. I have rough, red hands of mountain cleaning woman! (She sits.) And what of our little railroad? What if Iron Annie Archbar, our beloved but terrifying general manager, fails to meet the deadline for the big shipment of ore? What if the T. M. & P. is - sob- torn up for scrap? And what if this exposition of plot is boring?

TOMMY. Confucius say, "Bankrupt railroad like lazy athlete - no train!" (A pause for booing. He touches BILLY gently on

her shoulder.) Have faith. Treasure Mountain and Pacific have nine lives, like cat. Only this cat . . . have no kitty! (A pause.) Billy and Tommy will continue to be . . . (He raises the maul ceremonially. BILLY does the same with the broom and they speak in unison.) . . . *happy in our work!*

(SONG: Chorus of  
"HURRAY FOR THE T.M.&P.")  
(Lead In: Sleepy, then livelier.)

BILLY.

WE DON'T RIDE IN THE ENGINE . . .

TOMMY.

WE DON'T GET LOTS OF PAY . . .

(Gong.)

BILLY.

THERE'S NO BRASS ON OUR HATS,

TOMMY.

WE DON'T HAVE LOTS OF SAY . . .

BILLY and TOMMY.

BUT WE ROLL OUT OF BED  
TO OUR DUTIES EACH DAY -  
TO WORK FOR THE T.M.&P.!

(The CHORUS enters R and L, gradually adding their voices to those of BILLY and TOMMY.)

ALL.

IN LONDON AND WALL STREET  
THEY DON'T KNOW OF US;  
IN DENVER THE TRAVELLERS  
ALL SWITCH TO THE BUS;  
BUT IN COFFEEPOT SPRINGS  
TAKE CARE HOW YOU DISCUSS  
THE GREAT, THE T.M.&P.!

HOORAY! (HOORAY!) FOR THE T.M.&P.,  
SING HOORAY FOR THE T.M.&P.!  
OUR ENGINES HAVE ASTHMA, OUR  
COACHES HAVE A COLD,  
OUR RIDERS GET SEASICK, THEY FEEL  
ROCKED AND ROLLED -  
IT'S JUST TWIN STREAKS OF RUST IN  
SEARCH OF VANISHED GOLD -  
HOORAY FOR THE T.M.&P.!

HERE IN COFFEEPOT SPRINGS,  
WE HAVE FAITH IN THE PAST;  
WE ARE MARCHING BACK INTO  
THE NINETIES QUITE FAST;  
WELL, WE KNOW TIMES ARE BAD, BUT  
THIS DEPRESSION CAN'T LAST -  
HOORAY FOR THE T.M.&P.!

RED, RED, RED, IS THE LEDGER!  
BLACK, BLACK, BLACK IS THE SKY!  
GOLD, GOLD, GOLD, IS WHAT WE MUST  
STRIKE  
IF WE WANT OUR SHARE OF THE PIE!

LELAND (speaking). And here comes the person who's in charge . . .

HERMIONE (speaking). We all obey, although this person . . . isn't very large -

(ANNIE enters from the depot, UC).

ANNIE.

GOOD MORNING, I'M ANNIE!

CHORUS (speaking, aside). Iron Annie to us!

ANNIE.

AND I HOPE THIS RAILROAD'S RUNNING SMOOTH -

CHORUS (speaking). Fuss, fuss, fuss . . .

ANNIE.

I TRY TO BE A LADY -

CHORUS (speaking). But you oughta hear her cuss!

ANNIE.

I'M IN CHARGE OF THE T.M.&P.!

ALL.

HOORAY (HOORAY!) FOR THE T.M.&P.!

SING HOORAY FOR THE T.M.&P.!

IT SWIMS IN THE DAISIES, IT SINKS IN THE SOD;

IT'S OUR LITTLE RAILROAD, WE LOVE  
IT, BY GOD!

IT'S A JOKE! (IT'S ANACHRONISTIC!)

IT'S VERY ODD!

HURRAY FOR THE T.M.&P.!

ANNIE (to the GIRLS). Well, now, do my beady old eyes deceive me? Or is the cream of Coffeepot Springs shirking their work and tracking up my platform with their muddy little booties? Eh? Eh? (She indicates a slight deafness.)

HERMIONE. Oh, we're not shirking, Annie!

PERSEPHONE. We're waiting for the important and mysterious stranger who is arriving this morning!

CLIO. Is he tall? Is he dark? Is he handsome?

CALLIOPE. Is he rich?

ANNIE. He's loaded. (The GIRLS giggle.) Or so they say. And he ought to be showing up in about half an hour with his special train!

HERMIONE. Special train! (The GIRLS giggle.)

ANNIE. Aboard his fancy-pantsy Pullman car "King Midas."

CLIO. King Midas! (She giggles.)

ANNIE. Now suppose you trundle offstage and practice some manners, so's you can greet this gent graciously, instead of acting like the gaggle of empty-headed little geese you are!

GIRLS. Little geese! (They giggle.) Yes, Annie! Whatever you say! (The GIRLS exit R, resembling a gaggle of geese. BILLY and TOMMY exit L. The MEN remain.)

ANNIE (to the MEN). As for you, you left-footed gandy dancers, you fog-goggled tallow-pots, you steam-leaking hogheads! Why in the name of Casey Jones are you lallygagging around here when there's work to be done? Eh? Is something the matter? Eh? Eh?

CLINTON. Annie, we're concerned.

LELAND. In fact, we're downright distraught!

ANNIE. I'm not paying you to be distraught! This railroad can't afford fringe benefits! (A crestfallen silence.) Suppose you tell me why you're so distraught before I have to . . . (She shouts.) . . . raise my voice!

LUTHER. Annie, the T.M.&P. is falling apart!

MURDOCK. We can't get a train from A to B without a derailment at C!

LUTHER. And a broken drawbar at D!

LELAND. And a leaking air hose at E!

ANNIE. How about F?

MEN. Huh? F?

ANNIE. Eff . . . you don't get a few trains rolling as of right now, you're gonna have more than leaking air hoses to worry about! (A pause.) I know you can do it! Just keep that baling wire handy at all times!

MEN. Haw, haw, ha - (ANNIE cuts off their laughter with a threatening gesture.) Yes, Annie. (They hang their heads.)

ANNIE (listening). Here comes Number Five from the mine, on time and earning money! (*Approaching train.* ALL watch off L.)

(BILLY enters agitatedly from L, at a dead run.)

BILLY. Help! O dire emergency! The approaching train . . . on the . . . wrong track . . . heading for (Sob!) a boxcar marked explosives! Stop it, quick! (The MEN laugh and ad lib disbelief. "Nobody believes that girl!" "She's imagining things again!" "Wrong track, indeed!" etc.)

ANNIE (over the ad libs). What? Eh? What're you saying, girl?

LELAND. I do get quite a bang out of her imagination! (*Terrific explosion and the sounds of falling debris.* ALL recoil, then stand gaping and frozen.)

(TOMMY enters L at a funereal pace. He reverently carries an engineer's cap upside down in both hands.)

TOMMY. Confucius say: "Engineer who bump car full of firecrackers likely to have meteoric career!"



BILLY (pointing off L). Look! Look! My sister Euphemia approaches from the scene of the accident!

(EUPHEMIA enters very excitedly from L.)

EUPHEMIA (a striking, somewhat self-conscious young woman who lives for the effect she creates). Oh tragedy! Oh horror! Oh morbid obsession! Day after day, I have waited patiently for the disaster which I knew, sooner or later, would occur! And today . . . (There is a gleam in her eye.) . . . my nightmares have come true! (She groans.) Oh cruel destiny! (She groans.) Oh hapless mortals! (She pauses, then sees the engineer's cap. To TOMMY.) Is that his cap?

TOMMY. Yes. He seem to have . . . (He inverts the cap to normal position and shakes it.) . . . lost his head.

ANNIE. Did you see it happen, Euphemia?

EUPHEMIA (fervently). I saw it happen, every gruesome detail! (She brandishes some papers.) I made quick sketches! I interviewed the survivors on their stretchers! And I dug out the sorrowful ballad which I composed years ago for just such a moment as this! Let us raise our voices in song!