THE TRAIN

A STEWARDSHIP SKETCH

by David S. Lampel



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AUTHOR'S NOTE The Train is a fable about stewardship. In it three passengers who are more accustomed to pampered treatment find that they are expected to contribute their talents toward the "family" traveling together on the train. This is a popular sketch with audiences—and pastors. It delivers a simple, direct message on stewardship—be it stewardship of our time, money or talents. The characters are sketched and played broadly-almost as caricatures. With an unlimited budget, they would be costumed in Victorian or Edwardian dress, with high collars, bustles, etc. In lieu of that, Sunday-go-to-meeting dress will do. **CHARACTERS** Mrs. Shipley (middle-aged) Miss Newelpost (younger) Mr. Periwinkle (middle-aged) Conductor (middle-aged) (Note: Character ages are loosely defined here, and may be adjusted for personnel.) **P**ROPS Conductor: a "brochure" for the train, and a little black notepad Mr. Periwinkle: a business card, a train ticket Purses for the women. Set

 $\boldsymbol{3}$ chairs, arranged with $\boldsymbol{2}$ on one side and $\boldsymbol{1}$ on the other with an "aisle" between.

Scene

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28 29

34

House lights down.

a His Company script

Stage lights up.

As the three passengers enter they are making small talk.

1	Mrs. Shipley
2	Isn't this a <u>beautiful</u> train!
3	
4	Miss Newelpost
5	Such lovely appointments!
6	
7	Mr. Periwinkle
8	So well made. Strong construction.
9	
10	They take their seats in the chairs, with Mr. Periwinkle on one
11	side, Mrs. Shipley on the other, and Miss Newelpost behind Mrs.
12	Shipley.
13	
14	Miss Newelpost
15	And a smooth ride.
16	
17	Mrs. Shipley
18	(aghast)
19	But the service is pitiful! Why, last night there was no one to prepare
20	my bed. I waited hours!
21	Mine Nerrolto est
22	Miss Newelpost
23	(nodding her head in agreement)
24	And this morning my breakfast never came at all.
25 26	Mr. Periwinkle
20	That's nothing. I had to carry my own bags onto the train—
28	(wincing)
29	and me with a bad back!
30	and me with a bad back:
31	Mrs. Shipley
32	Obviously they don't think much of their passengers. We should write
33	a letter to the president of the line.
34	
35	

1	The conductor enters from behind the passengers while they are
2	speaking, passing down the "aisle." (Note to Director: It also
3	works very well to have the Conductor enter down the aisle from
4	the back of the audience, passing through the other characters
5	before being stopped by Mr. Periwinkle.)
6	
7	Mr. Periwinkle
8	They just don't have enough stewards to go around.
9	
10	Miss Newelpost
11	(noticing the conductor)
12	There's the conductor! Maybe he can help.
13	
14	Mrs. Shipley
15	(to Mr. Periwinkle)
16	I'm so thirsty. Ask him to get us some tea.
17	
18	Miss Newelpost
19	And something to eat!
20	
21	Mr. Periwinkle
22	(to the Conductor)
23	My good man, would you get us something to drink. Some tea would
24	be nice,
25	(checking with his companions)
26	and maybe some breakfast? We are quite famished.
27	
28	Miss Newelpost
29	Oh yes, please!
30	
31	Conductor
32	(stopping; taken aback; a bit flustered)
33	My, my—I couldn't do that.
34	(pondering)
35	

1	No, that wouldn't be right at all.
2	
3	Mrs. Shipley
4	(aghast)
5	See here! What do you mean?
6	(to her companions)
7	Such impertinence.
8	
9	Conductor
10	(nervously fumbles for a brochure out of an inside pocket)
11	Dear, dear—this <u>is</u> unseemly. I thought it was stated clearly in the
12	brochure.
13	(reading)
14	"First-class passage no charge for ticket all necessities provided" Yes,
15	here it is: "Responsibility for all the above lies completely with the
16	passengers themselves."
17	(putting away brochure; relieved; pleasantly)
18	Well, that's a relief! For a minute there I thought we might have a
19	lawsuit on our hands.
20	(pause)
21	You see, <u>you</u> are the stewards.
22	(turning to go)
23	Now, will there be anything else?
24	
25	Mr. Periwinkle
26	Now hold on! This is an outrage!
27	
28	Mrs. Shipley
29	There must be some mistake. I never would have agreed to such an
30	arrangement.
31	
32	Miss Newelpost
33	We are more accustomed to having people take care of <u>us</u> .
34	
35	

1	Conductor
2	Ah, but you see, you're on "The Train" now. Things are different. You're
3	now a part of the family.
4	
5	The passengers look at each other, confused, mouthing the word
6	"family".
7	
8	Conductor
9	(with pride)
10	The Father's train is different from others. It has the finest
11	accommodations—everything the best. It also has the finest engineer
12	and
13	(preening)
14	conductor. The engineer and conductor keep the train running
15	perfectly and on time. But the passengers on the train are expected
16	to give of themselves. They have been left in charge of the rest of the
17	family.
18	
19	Mr. Periwinkle
20	(blankly incredulous)
21	Really?
22	
23	Conductor
24	(impatiently)
25	It was <u>on</u> your ticket!
26	(he snatches the ticket from Mr. Periwinkle;
27	after scanning to locate what he is looking for)
28	Yes, here it is: 1 Peter 4:10, "Each one has received a special gift; employ
29	it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of
30	God."
31	
32	He returns the ticket to Mr. Periwinkle.
33	
34	Mrs. Shipley
35	But, what can <u>we</u> do?

1	Conductor
2	(pulling out a small pad)
3	Let's see, Mrs. Shipley, isn't it? Oh yes, I see here that you are an
4	excellent cook.
5	
6	Mrs. Shipley nods her head proudly.
7	
8	Conductor
9	Well then, you can be in charge of our Wednesday night dinners.
10	
11	Mrs. Shipley
12	(considering, then graciously condescending)
13	Yes, I could do that once.
14	
15	Conductor
16	(amused)
17	Once?!
18	(chuckling)
19	Why, no, my dear. We will need it every week.
20	
21	Mrs. Shipley
22	(weakly)
23	Every week?
24	
25	Conductor
26	He gave you that gift! What have you been doing with it?
27	(turning to Miss Newelpost; finding her name on his pad)
28	Now, Miss Newelpost, you're a school teacher. Third grade, correct?
29	
30	Miss Newelpost nods, pleased.
31	
32	Conductor
33	Perfect! The children on the train are always needing Sunday School
34	teachers.
35	

1	(Miss Newelpost looks a little stunned)
2	It's so important.
3	(þause; looking at list)
4	Now Mr. Periwinkle. It says here you're in sales, and that you—
5	
6	Mr. Periwinkle
7	(reaching for his card)
8	Why yes, we have the finest line of—
9	
10	Conductor
11	(stopping him)
12	That's really not necessary. But we can certainly use your talents. You
13	see, we have people in some of the other cars of the train who are
14	brand new to the family. They just got onto the train and are really
15	unsure of their next step. We need people who can go into those cars
16	and speak with the newcomers—help guide them along, as it were.
17	
18	Mr. Periwinkle starts to object.
19	Conductor
20	
21	
21	Also, we sometimes actually <u>leave</u> the train to invite others aboard.
22	
22 23	Also, we sometimes actually <u>leave</u> the train to invite others aboard. You'd be perfect!
22 23 24	Also, we sometimes actually <u>leave</u> the train to invite others aboard. You'd be perfect! Mr. Periwinkle
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1	Conductor
2	(with sad resignation)
3	It's not. You may ride on the train even if you don't help.
4	(pause; begins to leave, then turns back; to all three)
5	But isn't it funny that you're all so eager for the free ride and all
6	the extras that go along with it—but don't want to give anything of
7	yourselves. Nothing of the abilities that the Father has so freely given
8	you. You didn't have to pay.
9	(pause)
10	Well, like I said, there's no obligation. You may stay on the train.
11	(as he turns to go; with a wry smile, goading them)
12	Perhaps there will be someone else
13	
14	Mr. Periwinkle
15	(after some thought; calling him back)
16	W—wait a minute.
17	(pause)
18	Would I have to do it— <u>alone</u> ?
19	
20	Conductor
21	(happily encouraged)
22	Oh, my no! I'll be there beside you all the time. I'll tell you what to say.
23	
24	Mr. Periwinkle
25	(after a pause to think it over; bravely)
26	Well, all right. I'll give it a go.
27	
28	Conductor
29	Oh, He'll be so pleased! Come, come everyone. There are others
30	waiting for you.
31	
32	They all exit, trooping after the Conductor.
33	
34	
35	

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