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"Confound it," the Judge exclaimed, his voice rising again. "who bought this track, anyway?"

"Who bought this train?" thundered Uncle George. "What good is a track if the train won't run over it?"

"Oh, please," came Susan's voice again. "ple-e-e-ase don't wake the baby!"

The Judge's mouth opened and closed, but he obviously wilted. Uncle George glanced guiltily upward again, then grinned rather foolishly.

"Might as well fix it—what?" he asked, and conceded, "Train's no good either without the track."

"Suppose we might," the Judge agreed; and a few minutes later, when Uncle George's foot sent the train smoothly around the widened curve, he exclaimed, "By Jove! Will you look at that! Looks like a real train."

GRINNING like school-boys they pushed the train over the length of track; back in the living room Uncle George, chuckling, said:

"Rather flat roadbed. Might have a hill."

It took books, wadded handkerchiefs, one of the baby's jackets, a rug over all, and considerable time, to make it; but at last the train, urged by Uncle George, slid over the top and safely down the slope. The brothers were on the floor, on opposite sides of the track; they looked at each other and grinned again. Then they both turned their heads, rather startled expressions crossing both faces. The front door had opened; through the living-room door they saw Bill, bundles piled to his chin on one arm, the other hand busy with latch-key.

"Susan!" he had bawled the moment he opened the door. "Susan—hey, Snooks!"

Then he saw. His mouth stayed open. Well it might. In his usually well-ordered living room the chairs were displaced, rugs were rolled back, papers and boxes were here and there, thin parallels of shining metal ran over the floor; and on that floor—on that floor—were two elderly gentlemen. The bundles escaped Bill's chin, slithered over the floor.

"Look out, you young fool!" cried the Judge; and turning his ponderous body, he arose—as a child does—rear uppermost.

Uncle George got up only less awkwardly. "Can't you look what you're doing?" he barked.

Bill's face got red; he stiffened perceptibly. "Good evening, Uncle George," said he. "This is an unexpected honor, father."

"Honor be damned," said his father. "Take your foot off that track."

ABRUPTLY Bill lifted one foot; it struck a parcel, sent it against the track, and the track parted. Both of the others exclaimed; said Bill, frowning:

"Say—what is this, anyway?"

But the others ignored him; both stooped over the track, both tried to mend the break.

"Get out of the light, can't you?" his father snapped.

Bill jumped, but stiffly. Then, his chin up, he took off his coat and started toward the hall closet.



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