2.Staying behind

A scene from “The Spitfire Club” by Alfie James

Character’s needed:

Norman

Bobby

Catherine – Norman’s mother

Sid

Station Master

Mr Green

Miss Evers

Samuel Scaregrove

Parents (3x)

*(NORMAN and BOBBY enter)*

**NORMAN:** It’s important to tell you that most children were evacuated after the outbreak of the War. I was almost sent away too. You see the government decided that it wasn't safe for the children to be in London, so a big operation took place to evacuate them to safer places in the countryside.

**BOBBY:** Code name Piped Piper they called it.

**BOBBY**: One suitcase was all that they could take, and each child had to wear a label around their necks along with their gas mask. They met at Ilford Station.

**NORMAN:** There were even some schools that just picked up the whole school and moved it altogether to the countryside. Like the Beale High School in Ilford.

**BOBBY:** What they moved the whole school?

**NORMAN:** Yep.

**BOBBY**: What the building too? That's pretty cool.

**NORMAN:** Nooo. They had another building in the countryside you dummy.

**BOBBY:** Ohhh.

*(BOBBY exits)*

**NORMAN:** I was going to be evacuated to Ipswich. I tried to tell my Mum that I couldn’t go. Dad had left me in charge.

*(CATHERINE enters. To CATHERINE)*

*(Looking down at the cricket ball)* But Dad said. He said that I had to look after you and Grandma Rose. He said that I was the man of the house.

**CATHERINE:** It’s not up to me, Norman.

**NORMAN:** *(To the audience)* I woke up as usual that morning. Mum and I had been sleeping in the cellar on the bunks which my Dad had made before he left.

**CATHERINE:** Time to go now. *(She hands him an apple and helps him put his coat on)* Come on now. Eat your apple and let us look lively. It's six o' clock by the station, they said and its quarter-to now.

**NORMAN:** Don't want it.

**CATHERINE:** You always have your apple. You know you do.

*(NORMAN puts the apple in his pocket. CATHERINE hands him a suitcase)*

They said only one case, so there's only room for one change of clothes. All the things you wanted, they're at the bottom. I'll send on the rest as soon as I know where you'll be.

*(She smooths down his coat collar and brushes through his hair with her fingers)*

You'll do.

**NORMAN:** Do I have to go, Mum?

**CATHERINE:** I’ll have no crying. You’ve got to be brave now. Now, come on. Otherwise we'll be late.

*(She takes hold of his hand and steps forward)*

**NORMAN:** It was dark up in the street and a fine drizzle sprayed their faces as they walked away from the house. My Great Granddad looked back over his shoulder.

**CATHERINE:** Their footsteps sounded hollow in the empty street. A pile of rubble was still scattered across the street where the Perkins family had been living only a week before. The whole family had been killed after a bomb had hit their house. In the gloom outside Ilford Underground Station there was already a crowd of people gathering.

*(Other cast members, a STATION MASTER, children enter the stage at various continuous times, brushing past NORMAN and CATHERINE to give the effect that the place is busy. A whistle is heard being blown at short intervals. MR GREEN walks on with a smoke machine spraying smoke on to the stage)*

**MR GREEN:** Coming through, setting the scene. Setting the scene. Mind the smoke. Mind the smoke!

**STATION MASTER:** *(Blowing a whistle)* Mind ya backs, mind ya backs.

**SID:** Mum! Mum! Wait! Wait up!

**STATION MASTER:** Slow down! No running on the platform.

**NORMAN:** I felt my mums hand grip hold of mine.

**SAMUEL SCAREGROVE:** Wait up! Wait up!

**STATION MASTER:** Stand back from the platform edge! Mind the gap!

**NORMAN:** My heart sank.

**MISS EVERS:** *(Enters)* Excuse me! Excuse me!

**NORMAN:** Half of bleedin' London is out here today.

**MISS EVERS:** Right, we're all here. Now there’s no point dwelling on sad times. As my significant other Winston, would say – it’s best to keep moving and not over think things. So, say goodbye as quick as you can. Miss Evers was the Billeting Officer. She was a strict woman sporting a pair of spectacles at the end of her nose and a clip board.

**STATION MASTER:** All aboard! All aboard!

**MISS EVERS:** Now let’s see you get into a line as quick as you can. *(To CATHERINE)* It’s time to go now, madam.

*(CATHERINE looks at NORMAN, tears in her eyes)*

Stiffen up that lip, madam. It’s the right thing to do. He’ll be fine. Now let him go and walk away.

**NORMAN:** Mum?

**CATHERINE:** I can’t. I’m sorry. I can’t.

**MISS EVERS:** We haven’t got time for silliness, madam. There’s a War on, you know.

**CATHERINE:** And my Norman is staying right with me.

**MISS EVERS:** Staying here – in London?! Have you lost your senses?

**NORMAN:** *(To the audience)* And that was it. She had decided that I was to stay in London. I watched all the other school children trail off onto the platform. Their parents waving goodbye to them. Not knowing if they would ever see them again.

*(Three parents step forward waving handkerchiefs)*

**PARENTS:**

Try to keep your noses clean

Wash yer ‘ands when you ‘ave been

Always try to sit by a chum

Keep ya pecker up old man.

Don’t forget to write to Gran

Have you got another kiss for Mum?

Don’t forget your handkerchief

Don’t forget to brush your teeth

Keep your label on son

Don’t leave your flies undone

When you go to bed tonight

With no one near to hold you tight

Remember how we love you so

This is why we have to let you go.

*(The lights fade out.)*