

**Co-Pilots**  
**Written by: TheBuriedTruck**

**CO-PILOTS**



THE BURIED TRUCK

Jinty was promised a repaint “in time,” but winter’s arrival seemed to have frozen time altogether! She darted around, a multicoloured blur arranging trains. The coaches were so troublesome that each night, she was asleep before her fire was thrown out.

“I knew you lot were ‘colourful,’” chuckled a visiting diesel, “but *that one* takes the cake!”

Gordon’s harsh glare silenced him! The big engine was concerned, and presented a plan to the Fat Controller.

“Please, Sir - it would solve the current, er, ‘difficulty.’”

“Very well, Gordon,” smiled the Fat Controller, “I’ll take your Express tomorrow to inquire further.”

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The Fat Controller's presence on the platform next morning made Jinty nervous.

"Must do well, must do well," she thought.

She shunted the coaches gently, and stayed to heat them as long as she could. They didn't thank her, but the distinct lack of grumbling didn't go unnoticed.

"Thank goodness for small mercies!" Jinty smirked.

She continued fetching and heating the morning trains, so that by the time Gordon left, all was in good order.

"Let's hope the Fat Controller noticed *that*," Jinty smiled.

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I'm sorry to say her good mood didn't last. While most trains went out on time, the visiting diesel's return train remained at the platform.

"Where is that silly engine?" Jinty fussed. "They'll need reheating if he doesn't turn up soon!"

Finally, the diesel crawled sluggishly into the Station.

"About time!" Jinty grunted.

"It's not for me, this weather," he sulked with a shiver. "Poor engine of mine - it's delicate, you know."

"I know you'll be late if you don't get a move on," Jinty retorted.

And then, the diesel shivered, shuddered, coughed and stopped!

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"I *knew* that'd happen," he pouted.

"Take this useless lump away," the Stationmaster grumbled. "I'll have to find another engine!"

Jinty pushed the diesel to a siding, and received a shock when she returned.

"No other engines available - it's *your* train now," the Stationmaster told her.

"*Hers?!*" shrieked the coaches.

"*Mine?!*" Jinty cried. "But, Sir, the Yard--"

"Can *wait* - these passengers *can't*, so hop to it!"

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Jinty was coupled up, and tried to pull away at the Guard's whistle, but the train wouldn't budge!

"Come on, come on!" she groaned.

“Not moving, won’t go, not moving, won’t go,” the coaches tittered.

“The passengers can’t be stranded over your sulking!” Jinty fussed.

The coaches stayed stubborn and still. Jinty was about to give up, when she had an idea!

“Get moving, or I’ll use the brake vans instead!”

“*Brake vans!*” shrieked the coaches. “No, no, never!”

And with that, they were off!

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Sometime later, the Express stopped at the other end of the line. Gordon waited anxiously as the Fat Controller conversed in the Stationmaster’s office. He returned looking pleased.

“We can see him now,” he smiled, climbing into the cab.

Gordon slunk through sidings and past Diesel, shunting nearby.

“Over there,” he whispered, motioning to a lonely shed.

Gordon whistled his thanks, and stopped in front of it. The Fat Controller stepped down and, with the help of the crew, slowly opened the doors. The influx of light woke its sleeping resident.

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"Oh, Gordon!" the diesel yawned. "You've come to see me!"

"Not *just* me," Gordon smiled.

"Good morning," the Fat Controller smiled. "A pleasure to meet you, Sherman - I'm -"

"*The Fat Controller!*" Sherman gasped, before blushing. "N-no, I-I-I meant -"

"That is what *some* know me as," he chuckled, with a longing look to Gordon. "I've heard much about you - I see you've yet to be repaired."

"No, Sir," Sherman sighed. "I've heard the men say I'm not 'standard' - but I have plenty of standards, Sir, honest! I've never let a train be late leaving this Station!"

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"The Stationmaster had told me as much, *and* how sorry he'll be to see you go."

"Yes, Sir," Sherman sighed, "I'm glad I could meet you before I'm taken away - your Railway sounds wonderful!"

"You misunderstand," smiled the Fat Controller, "for where you'll be going is my Railway - so long as you'd like to come?"

Sherman stared blankly, not sure he'd heard correctly.

"Are...are you saying, Sir...what I *think* you're saying, Sir?"

“You’re just what our Big Station needs. The new pilot engine isn’t getting on well with the coaches, and we cannot have that. You would be a great help to-“

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*PEEP! PEEP! PEEEEEEEEEP!*

The shrill whistle echoed around the Station, and as the steam cleared, there stood...

“Jinty?!” The Fat Controller cried.

“Hello...Sir...” she huffed. “I’ve...brought...the return...train...”

“So, you and the coaches have reached an understanding, then?” Gordon laughed.

“She *did* pull us well, I’ll admit,” sniffed the front coach.

“And,” added another, “we *do* appreciate care for our passengers.”

“What does *that* tell you, Gordon?” Jinty smirked.

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“Well done, Jinty,” the Fat Controller said as she puffed over. “This is most opportune - meet your ‘co-pilot’...er, you *do* want to join my Railway, don’t you, Sherman?”

“More than *anything*, Sir!” the little diesel squeaked.

“‘Co-pilot,’ Sir?” Jinty asked hesitantly.

"I'm pleased with your resolve today, Jinty, but your rapport with the coaches could make, ahem, 'difficulties'. Sherman will manage the Station's passenger trains - while you handle goods trains *and* the Harbour!"

"The Harbour, Sir?! Do you mean it?!" she beamed.

"You'll still have to shunt coaches," the Fat Controller advised, "but I trust you'll come to a more cooperative agreement with them?"

"Of course, Sir - I won't let you down!"

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Things were much better after that. Jinty slowed her pace, and the coaches were far less troublesome.

"*That's* the way, *that's* the way," they sang.

"Fussy things," she chuckled endearingly.

She was glad to be painted all-black again, and happier still when Sherman left the Works, mended and resplendent in a coat of blue.

"It's my little 'tribute,'" he told Gordon at the Shed. "I'm here thanks to you - and blue is *much* smarter!"

"Pah!" snorted James.

"Never mind him," Jinty winked. "He's only painted brightly so we can see when he traps himself in head-shunts!"

As the engines laughed, James wondered if shunting his own trains would've been more peaceful after all!