

SURPRISE

Everything was still. The dust settled. The smoke cleared. But still nothing moved. Then Dennis lifted his head. Polly lay next to him face down.

Dennis grabbed Polly's shoulder. "Polly!" He shook her. "Polly! Wake up!"

But Polly didn't move.

Dennis rolled her on to her back. Her eyes were tight shut. He shook her again. "Wake up, Polly! Please wake up!"

Suddenly, Polly's eyes flicked open. "You were right," she said. "It was one of theirs."



"You've had a lucky escape," Doctor Simpson took off his stethoscope and dropped it into his bag. "No lasting damage. Ringing in the ears, perhaps. Best stay in bed today."

Polly and Dennis were sitting side by side in bed. They were still shocked, but pleased to be the centre of attention.

"Any news of the plane?" Doctor Simpson asked Mr Jenkins.

"It crash landed. Pilot was just unloading his bombs. Doubt if he even saw the children. No sign of him yet. Got the army out looking."

"Bad business," said the doctor. He wrote out a note for some medicine. "Nothing too nasty," he told Polly and Dennis.

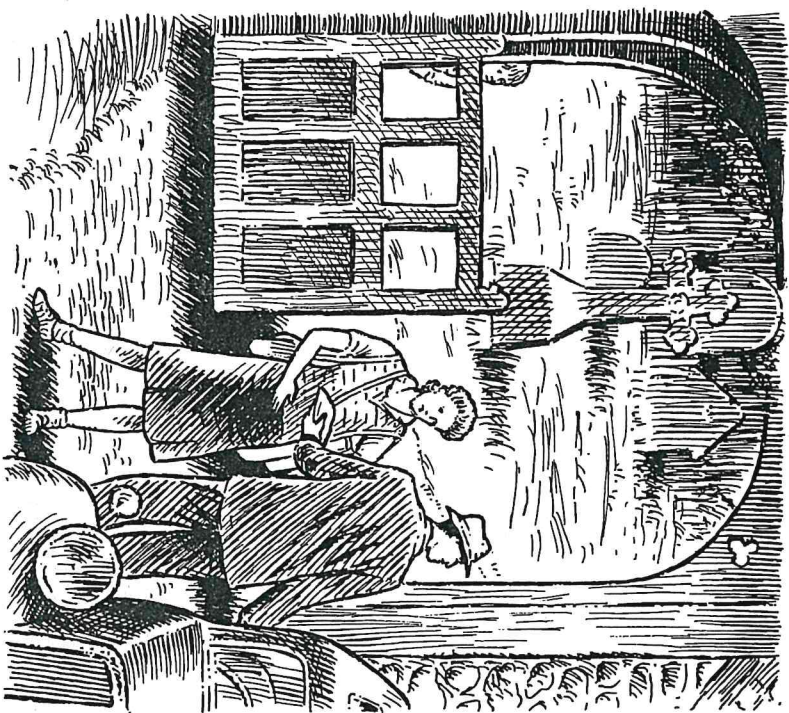
"Don't believe him," whispered Norman. "It'll be horrible."

Norman went straight off to the village to fetch the medicine. He was taking a short cut through the churchyard when he saw them. Grainger and Belling! Deep in conversation.

Norman ducked behind a gravestone. This was just what he had been hoping to see. He crawled forward. But before he could get near enough to hear what the two were saying, they walked away.

Keeping under cover, Norman followed them towards the church gate. Beyond, Norman could see Grainger's car. Grainger opened the car door and reached inside. He pulled out a small, brown paper package. He checked that nobody was watching. Then he handed the parcel to Vivienne Belling. Immediately, she slipped it into her bag and hurried away.

That was enough for Norman. He couldn't wait to tell Polly and Dennis about it!



"What do you think was in the packet then?" Polly asked.

"Could have been chocolates," Dennis suggested. Polly snorted. "Don't be stupid! What would spies be giving each other chocolates for?"

It didn't seem stupid to Dennis. "There could be secrets hidden inside them. That way, if they're caught, they just eat the evidence."

Norman sighed. Sometimes Dennis's imagination ran away with him. "It doesn't matter what it was," Norman pointed out. "They know each other. That's the proof we were looking for."

"Now all we need is to find Grainger's wireless transmitter," Polly agreed.

She was right. If they could find that, then nobody would doubt that Grainger and Belling were spies.

"That's a job for Mary," said Norman. "I'll go and see her now."

Mary was outside cleaning windows. Westbourne Hall had dozens of windows. And Mary had been cleaning them all day. There were still plenty left to do.

"Mary! Over here!"

Mary looked round. There was no one there. Then Norman's head popped up from behind the dustbins.

Mary carried on with her work. Grainger or Millington might be watching. "You shouldn't come here," she told Norman.

"I had to," Norman hissed. "It's important. We've got to find Grainger's wireless. For sending messages. It must be hidden somewhere inside the house."

Before Mary could reply, the kitchen door opened and Millington stepped out.

Norman ducked down behind the bins. Mary carried on as though nothing was wrong.

Millington glared at Mary. "Is that all you've done?" she snapped.

Mary said nothing.

"You'd better come in and get on with the evening meal," Millington told her. "You'll have to finish the windows tomorrow."

Millington slammed the door.

As soon as she'd gone, Mary turned to Norman.

"I'll try and look," she said. "But it won't be easy. When they're not here, they lock me out."

Norman just smiled. "You can do it," he said. "I know you can."



Norman was down early the next morning. Amy was still building up the kitchen fire.

Norman checked all round. "Any post, Auntie Amy?" he asked.

Amy looked puzzled. "Post? Not yet. Are you expecting something?"

Norman frowned. "No!" he said.

The next moment, there was a knock on the door.

"Perhaps that's Mr Jenkins now," said Amy as she hurried to open it.

It was Mr Jenkins. His voice boomed through the open door. "Special parcel for young Norman, Mrs Hobbs." "My goodness!" said Amy. "You'd better come in."

But it wasn't Mr Jenkins who stepped into the room. It was a young woman.

Amy had never seen her before. But she guessed who it was.

Norman stared open-mouthed. Then he spoke a single word. "Mam!"

Mrs Starkey held out her arms. "Happy Birthday, Norman!" she smiled.

Norman raced across the kitchen and hugged her. Amy knew just what to do. She put on the kettle. A cup of tea would work wonders.

Several cups of tea later, everyone was gathered round the table which was cluttered with wrapping-paper and presents. A rubber ball, a home-made balaclava, some crayons, and a wooden plane.

"War or no war, I couldn't miss his birthday," Mrs Starkey was telling Amy. "They said I could have today off as long as I worked extra next week."

Amy poured another cup of tea.

"Anyway," Mrs Starkey carried on. "I got as far as Bidwell Edge last night, then the rest of the way this morning."

Mr Jenkins had brought her out from the village in his car. It was just as well. She could never have walked it with all those presents to carry.

"Now there's one more thing," said Mrs Starkey. She placed the biggest parcel yet on the table. "I'm going to

open this," she told Norman. "You put your fingers in your ears and shut your eyes."

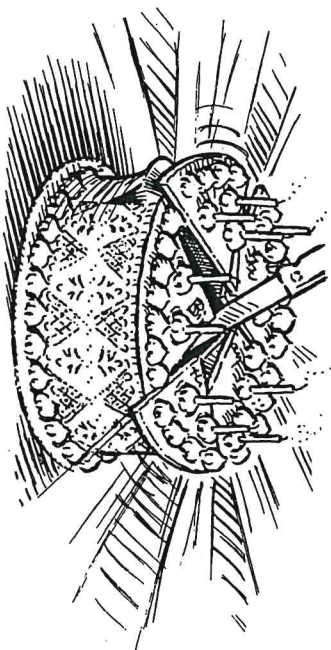
Norman did as he was told while Mrs Starkey opened the final present. When he opened his eyes again, he saw a huge decorated birthday cake with burning candles.

Everyone sang "Happy Birthday" and Norman blew out the candles with one breath. Everybody clapped and cheered.

"Now," said Amy, picking up the bread knife. "Who's having first piece?"

Amy plunged the knife into the middle of the cake. There was a gasp of horror from Mrs Starkey.

The centre of the cake had collapsed. There was nothing inside it. It was made of cardboard.



Mrs Starkey was almost in tears. "It's an old hat box," she explained. "Decorated to look like a cake. It was the best I could do," she sniffed. "You just can't get the ingredients any more. The candles are real!"

Norman patted his mother's arm. "It's all right, Mam," he said. "It is. It's all right."

Amy jumped to her feet and pushed Norman, Polly and Dennis out of the kitchen. "You three get out of my way," she told them. "And I'll make a birthday cake."

Mike Johnson's jeep was just pulling up as the three children tumbled outside.

"Guess what, Mike?" Polly shouted out. "It's Norman's birthday."

"And his mum's come to see him," Dennis added.

"Well, that's quite a present," Mike grinned. "Happy Birthday, Norman."

Mike was pleased it was Norman's birthday. But he felt bad about not bringing him a gift. Then he remembered. He kept an old baseball glove in the back of the jeep. Perhaps that would do. He reached down and pulled it out.

"How about this as a present from me?" he asked.

Norman's face lit up. This was turning into a birthday to remember. He grabbed the glove.

"It's great," he told Mike, "What is it?"



Mary was cleaning her fifth window of the day.

"You'll never make a window cleaner," Millington snapped. "This side's filthy." She locked the back door. Grainger was getting impatient. It looked as if the two of them were going into the village.

"Make sure they're all finished by the time we get back," Millington ordered.

A couple of minutes later, the car disappeared down the drive and Mary was left on her own. Now was her chance to look for the wireless transmitter.

She quickly swilled over the rest of the windows. Then slid open the one that she had unlocked earlier. She climbed into the house. Grainger's bedroom was upstairs at the front. That would be the first place to look.

Mary hurried upstairs.

Grainger's bedroom was dark and spooky. A large desk was covered with papers. The huge bed was unmade. On the shelves were cases of stuffed animals. The room wasn't going to be easy to search.

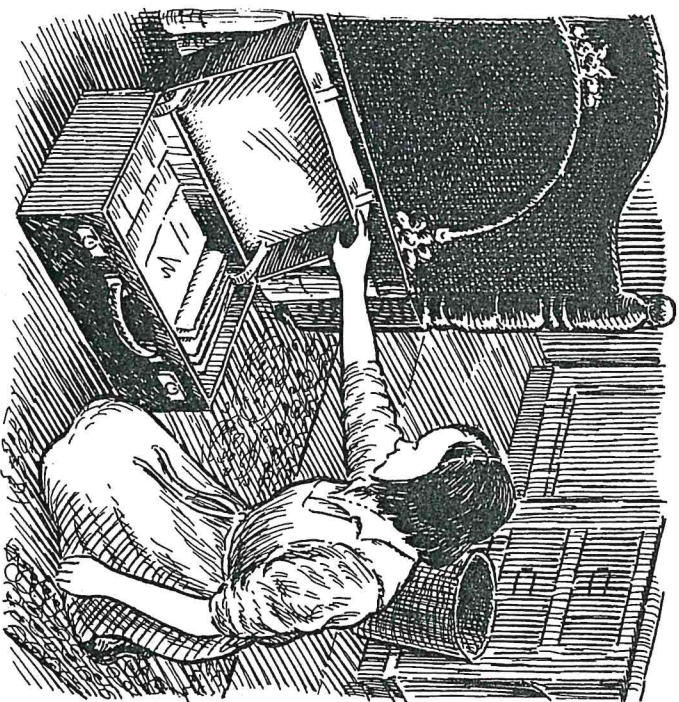
Mary began with the wardrobe. Then she searched through a cupboard and a bedside cabinet before turning to a large chest of drawers. She started at the top and worked her way down. By the time she got to the bottom drawer, she was beginning to despair. There was no sign of a wireless transmitter nor anything else to suggest that Grainger was a spy. And she was running out of places to look.

It was then that she spotted the suitcase beneath the bed. Mary reached under and slid it out. She was sure this was going to be the place where the wireless was hidden. But when she opened it, her heart sank.

The case was stuffed full with bars of soap, bottles of perfume, packs of nylon stockings and packets of

cigarettes. It was then that Mary heard the sound of Grainger's car coming up the drive.

"Oh no!" she gasped. "They're back!"



The car skidded to a halt at the front of the Hall. Millington jumped out. There was no sign of Mary.

"Get the shopping," she shouted to Grainger. "I'll look for the girl!"

She ran up the front steps and unlocked the door. "Mary!" she shouted as she stepped into the hallway.

There was no reply. She listened for a moment but the house was silent.

Millington hurried through to the back of the house and unlocked the door into the yard. She almost fell over Mary who was sitting on the step waiting to be let in.

Mary looked up and smiled sweetly.

"That surely was a fine piece of cake," Mike Johnson licked his lips. He was sitting on the front of his jeep watching Polly, Norman and Dennis take turns to use the baseball glove. Mrs Starkey was sitting next to him.

"Lucky you turned up when you did," she said.

Mike shrugged. "Came over this way to check up on a report about that German pilot."

Amy was leaning against the gate. "Have they not caught him yet?" She sounded alarmed.

"Nothing to worry about, Mam," said Mike. "He's probably miles away by now."

Mrs Starkey stood up. It was time for her to leave.

She had a long journey in front of her, even though Mike Johnson had offered her a lift to the village.

Mike took something from inside the jeep and offered it to Norman's mother. "You deserve a present too," he said.

The smile disappeared from Mrs Starkey's face.

"Nylon stockings!" she said. "Where are these from?"

Mike knew what was worrying her. "They're not black market," he said. "Though there's a heck of a lot of that stuff around, I know. We're even losing things off the base. But these are OK. From our P.X. shop."

Mrs Starkey smiled. "In that case, thanks," she said and popped the stockings in her bag. "Now I really must go."

Amy, Polly and Dennis waved goodbye as the jeep pulled away. But Norman was too upset to watch.

As the jeep turned on to the road, he raced back to the farmhouse and went straight to his bedroom. Half an hour later, he was asleep. It was the only way he could ease the pain.

By the next afternoon, Norman felt better again. He had saved a piece of birthday cake to give to Mary. So Norman, Polly and Dennis set off for Westbourne Hall.

As they reached the hideout, Polly noticed that the door was slightly open. "I think Mary's already here," she said.

"Last one in is a Nazi," yelled Dennis.

The three of them dived for the door and scrambled in. Inside they stopped dead.

Lying propped up in front of them was the German pilot. A Luger pistol in his hand. It was pointing straight at them.

THE PILOT

The pilot spoke. None of them understood German. But the gun said everything.

A second voice spoke. "Just stay still!" Mary was sitting on the floor not far away.



"How long have you been here?" Norman asked. "A few minutes."

The pilot was slumped over to one side. With a groan of pain, he tried to straighten himself up.

"He's hurt," Mary told them. "Badly hurt."

The pilot grunted something else at them.

"What's he say?" gulped Dennis.

"I don't know," Polly answered. "But whatever it is - do it."

The pilot signalled them to sit next to Mary. Slowly, they edged their way across and slid to the floor. The gun never left them for a moment.

The pilot's uniform was heavily bloodstained. And his left arm was broken. His face was pale and drawn. He looked as though he was about to pass out.

Again he struggled to sit up. He propped his right arm on his left knee so that his Luger was pointing at the children.

The gun seemed to fill the greenhouse. They couldn't take their eyes off it. For a while, time stood still. They might have been there for two minutes or two hours.

Then the end of the gun started to drop down. The pilot was drifting into unconsciousness.

Slowly, Mary started to inch forward. Polly tried to stop her but Mary was determined to carry on.

Silently she edged towards the gun. Finally, she was within arm's length. She reached out to grab the drooping barrel. Suddenly, it flicked back into position.

The pilot was awake again. Eyes wide open.

Staring at Mary. The gun pointing straight at her. For a moment, he seemed uncertain what to do. But then he realised he was in a hopeless situation. He'd gone as far as he could go. And anyway, he had no wish to harm the children. He loosened his grip on the gun and let Mary take it from him.

As Mary eased the gun out of his hand, he slumped sideways in a faint.

"Water!" Mary ordered. "Get him water!"

Polly found an old jam jar and ran to a stream in the woods to get water for the pilot.

Between them, they managed to sit him up and get him to take a few sips. Slowly, his eyes opened and he muttered his thanks.

"He must be hungry," said Mary. "Got anything to eat?"

"Only this," Norman showed Mary the birthday cake that he had saved for her.

"He'd better have it," said Mary.

Bit by bit, they fed the cake to the pilot. He was very hot. His temperature was sky high. Mary poured cold water on to her handkerchief and wiped his face.

"He needs a doctor," Mary told them.

They knew that what Mary said was true. But there was a problem. If they fetched a doctor to the pilot, then Grainger would find out that they had been in the greenhouse. Worse than that, he would realise that Mary had been meeting with the others. Then she would be in real trouble.

"You'd better go," Norman told Mary. "Then Grainger needn't know you've been here."

"All right," said Mary. "But please hurry."

"I'll go down to the telephone box by the bridge,"

said Polly. "I can telephone Doctor Simpson from there."

Mary and Polly left Norman and Dennis looking after the pilot.

"See if he wants more water," said Dennis.

Norman put the jam jar to the pilot's lips and he took another drink.

He smiled weakly and spoke a few words. Then he tried to push himself forward.

"Just stay still!" Norman told him. "There'll be help here soon."

But the pilot was feeling behind him. Trying to get hold of something with his good arm. Norman reached behind and pulled out a small waterproof wallet.

The pilot nodded his thanks. He took out some photographs and a letter and gave them to Norman. He indicated his uniform pocket. Norman slipped them into the pocket. Then the pilot gave the wallet to Norman.

"He wants us to have it," said Dennis.

Inside the wallet there were papers that were something to do with his flight plans. The boys leafed through them. They weren't certain what they were. But Norman was sure of one thing. If anybody found out about them, they'd be taken away.

"Hide them!" said Dennis.

There was an old biscuit tin in a pile of rubbish. Norman pulled it out. "This'll do," he said.

They put the papers inside. Replaced the lid. And pushed it back among the rubbish.

"We'll come back for them later," said Norman.

"When there's nobody around."

Behind them, the pilot groaned and slumped to one side. Norman and Dennis rushed to help him. But just then the greenhouse door crashed open. It was Grainger. He had a shotgun. It was pointing at the pilot.

"Don't shoot him!" shouted Norman.

"What makes you think it's him I'm going to shoot?" Grainger snarled. He looked as though he meant it. But the next moment Polly burst in.

"Doctor Simpson's gone into Wenham," she gasped.

"So Miss Millington telephoned Mr Jenkins. He's on his way."

Norman and Dennis stared open-mouthed. Why had Polly brought Grainger of all people?



"What did you have to go and get Grainger for?" Norman demanded later.

"I didn't mean to, stupid," said Polly. "I was trying to get a lift to the telephone box and he came along."

The pilot had been carried from the greenhouse to the front of Westbourne Hall. Now he was being loaded into the back of Jenkins' car.

A crowd had gathered. Everybody was keen to see a real live German pilot. Mr Jenkins had brought the village policeman and Vivienne Belling out with him. She was taking photographs as two of the farmworkers lifted the pilot on to the back seat of Jenkins' car. As they did so, one of the men knocked against the German's broken arm. He shouted out in agony.



"Watch out for his arm," Belling told them. "He says it's broken." Leaning into the car, Belling said something to the pilot. She spoke in fluent German.

"Did you hear that?" whispered Polly. "That proves she's a spy."

Jenkins and the policeman climbed into the car and set off for the hospital. The crowd started to drift away. It was all over. But Vivienne Belling wandered across to speak to Grainger.

"I bullied Mr Jenkins into bringing me out here," she said. "Now I'm stuck. I don't suppose you could run me back?"

Grainger smiled. "Yes, of course, Miss Belling. I've got one or two things to do first. Just come in for a minute."

Grainger started to lead Belling inside, then he remembered Polly, Norman and Dennis.

"I'm warning you three. If I catch you on my land again, I'll be pointing my shotgun at you for real. Now get out of here."

Polly, Norman and Dennis didn't need telling twice. They raced back to Wells Farm. As they ran into the farmyard, they met Luigi.

"Hey! You late! Signora Amy – she look for you. When she find you—" Luigi pretended to pass a knife across his throat. His meaning was clear. Amy was on the warpath.

A moment later, Amy appeared in the doorway.

"And where have you three been until this time?" she demanded.

"Whatever you do – don't mention the guns," Polly whispered to the others.

"In!" said Amy.

Norman, Polly and Dennis trooped into the house. Amy lined them up in front of her. She listened with growing horror to their tale of the German pilot.

"Goodness me," she said at the end. "You might all have been murdered. What would have happened if he'd had a gun?"

"He did have!" said Dennis.

Polly and Norman looked daggers at him.

"What?" said Amy.

Dennis tried to think of a way out of the mess he was in. "He did have . . . a broken arm!" he told Amy. "So he wouldn't have been able to use a gun, would he?"

Amy stared at Dennis. Her gaze was full of suspicion. But before she could question him anymore, there was a knock on the door.

Private Wilson was there with Luigi just behind him. Luigi didn't look happy.

"What's wrong with him?" Amy asked.

"He won't be coming tomorrow," said Wilson. "He's being moved to another farm."

"Moved?" Amy was shocked. "What's the matter?" she questioned Luigi. "Don't you like it here?"

Luigi was upset. "No, I want to come. Please!" he begged Wilson.

"Sorry," said Wilson. "It's nothing to do with me. They say they're sent where they're most needed," he told Amy. "But just between you and me, I think somebody's been pulling strings. He's being sent to Westbourne Hall."

Westbourne Hall! So Grainger had used his influence to get Luigi moved. To make life more difficult for Amy. Wilson walked away but Luigi remained. "You very kind, Mrs Amy," he said. "This for my thanks."

He handed Amy a wooden crucifix that he had carved himself.

There were tears in Amy's eyes. "Thank you," she told him. "I hope one day you go back to your home in Italy."

Sadly, Luigi walked away.

Desperately, Amy blinked back the tears. "I won't let Grainger beat me," she said. "We managed before. And we'll manage again."



But in spite of Amy's determination, Polly, Norman and Dennis knew that Grainger was winning. Something had to be done soon if he was to be stopped. "We could go to the police," said Polly as they moved the cows into a new field.

"He's got plenty of money and lives in a big house. Who's going to believe us when we tell them he's a spy?" said Norman.

Polly knew that what Norman said was true. "We need to catch them red-handed then," she said. "Him and Vivienne Belling. Then they'll have to believe us."

But that seemed like an impossible task. For the first time, they had doubts about whether they would ever be able to stop Grainger.



At Westbourne Hall though, Mary had no such doubts. She was determined to find out what Grainger was up to when he went out after dark.

From her bedroom, she watched as Grainger and Millington stepped out into the night. They spoke a few words. Then walked off in different directions.

Mary slipped downstairs and out through the front door. In the distance, Grainger was disappearing into the trees. She hurried after him. It was foggy and dark but Mary was going to stay on Grainger's trail. No matter what the risk.