

LOOK and Read

BBC

Spywatch

THE NOVEL



Derek Farmer

Glossary

black market

illegal buying and selling of goods

evacuee

person who is moved from a place of danger to safety

G.I.

soldier of the US army

Jerry

nickname for German soldier

P.O.W.

prisoner of war

P.X. shop

shop on soldier's camp

saboteur

person who deliberately destroys something

spiv

person who makes a living from dishonest dealings

wireless

a radio

Chapter

1

SENT AWAY

Norman Starkey stepped out of the air raid shelter and looked around.

It was wartime. Planes were bombing the cities. Lots of children had been sent away to stay with people in the countryside. It was safer there. Evacuees they were called.

Most of Norman's friends had gone. But not Norman. He didn't want to go. He wanted to stay behind with his mother. In the end, she let him.

The bombs had been closer than usual that night. Everywhere Norman looked there were buildings still burning.

Norman wandered through the battered streets. The pavements were strewn with shattered glass and rubble.

Norman turned on to the road where he lived. Most of the houses were still standing. But, at the far end, a crowd was gathered around an ambulance.

Norman ran to see what was happening. As he got there, his next door neighbour, Mrs Thompson, was being stretched into the ambulance. She was lucky to be alive. She always refused to go to the air raid shelter and the house had received a direct hit.

There was a hole in the ground where Mrs Thompson's house used to be. Most of Norman's house had been destroyed with it.

Norman's mother, Mrs Starkey, was staring at the wreckage.

She turned to Norman. Her eyes were red from crying. "Norman!" she said. "It's just too dangerous here. You've got to go."

Norman argued and pleaded, but Mrs Starkey was determined. This time, there was no persuading her. So that afternoon, Norman was put on a train with a label round his neck and sent away to the countryside. It was like a foreign land to him.



Mr Jenkins was waiting for Norman at the other end. Mr Jenkins was the village postman, but he also had the job of finding places for the city children to live.

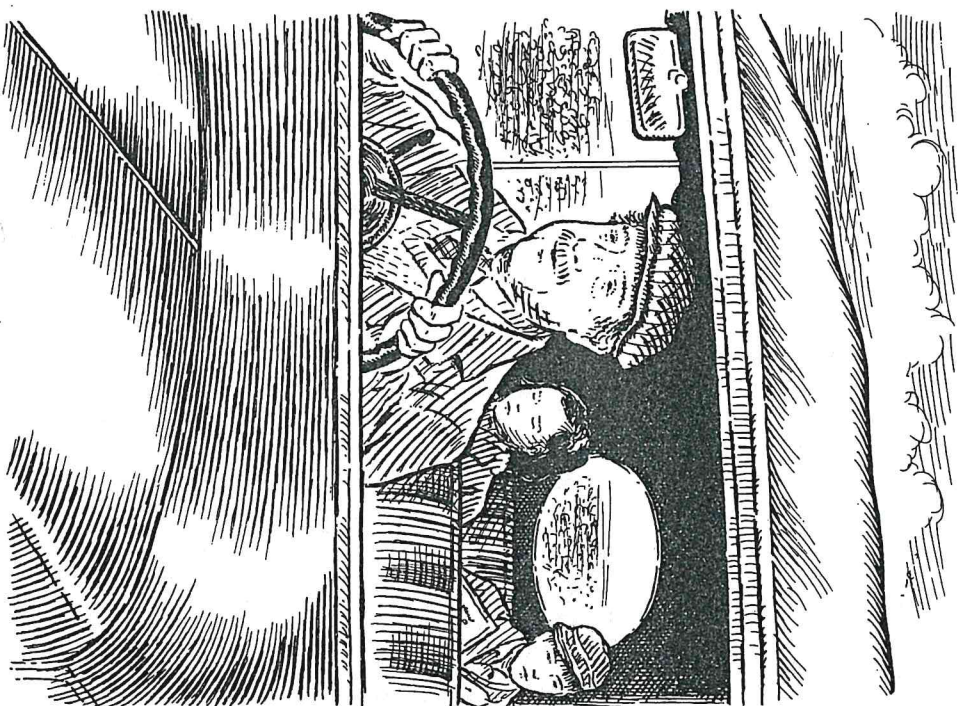
"Norman Starkey, eh?" Mr Jenkins checked the label pinned to Norman's coat. "You come with me. I've got a nice new home waiting for you."

Mr Jenkins put Norman in the back of his car. A girl was already there. Hunched up in one corner.

"This is Mary Parker," said Mr Jenkins. "She's an evacuee as well."

Mary was about the same age as Norman. She was wearing her school uniform. Her hands were folded in

her lap. She was staring down at them. She didn't even look up when Norman got into the car.



Norman knew how she felt. Lonely and scared. Too lonely to talk.

The car pulled out of the station yard and turned along the main street. Minutes later, they had left the village and were out in the country.

Norman had never seen anything like it before. Mile after mile of emptiness. Fields, hedges and trees, and more fields.

"How do you like it in the country then?" Mr Jenkins said over his shoulder.

Norman glared out the window. "Is this all there is?" He wasn't impressed. It was like one enormous park – without the swings!

"You'll soon get used to it," said Mr Jenkins.

Norman slumped against the side of the car. He'd never get used to it. He didn't want to get used to it. He wanted to go home. And the sooner the better.

"Anybody like chocolate?" Mr Jenkins called out.

Norman sat up and took notice. He loved chocolate. And he was starving hungry. "I love chocolate," he said. Mr Jenkins nodded. "So do I. They had some in the village shop a couple of months ago."

Norman sighed. It looked as though there was no more chocolate in the countryside than there was in the city. And he was still starving.

Then Mary touched his arm. She was holding a bar of chocolate. A whole bar of chocolate. She broke it in two and passed one half to Norman.

Norman couldn't believe it. A total stranger was giving him half her chocolate. It was unheard of. He grabbed it quickly before she could change her mind. He snapped off a piece and popped it in his mouth. Mary put the rest back in her pocket.

Mr Jenkins brought the car to a stop and switched off the engine. "Here we are then," he said. "Westbourne Hall. Your new home – I hope!" he muttered as he climbed out.

Westbourne Hall was a large country house which had seen better days. It was full of statues and stuffed animals. Peacocks strutted in the grounds. It had at least thirty bedrooms and once would have been packed with family and servants. Now only two people lived there, Phillip Grainger and his housekeeper, Miss Millington.

Phillip Grainger was not pleased to see them. He was a tall, thin man with angry eyes. He listened impatiently while Jenkins told him why Norman and Mary were there. Then he stopped him with a wave of the hand.

"What do you think I'm running here, Jenkins? A Children's Home?" he sneered.

"They'll be no trouble, Mr Grainger," Jenkins replied. "You'll hardly know they're here, sir."

"That's because they won't be here," Grainger told him. "I'm much too busy to fool about with evacuees. Get them out of here."

Jenkins sighed. "In that case, sir, I'm going to have to report you to the authorities."

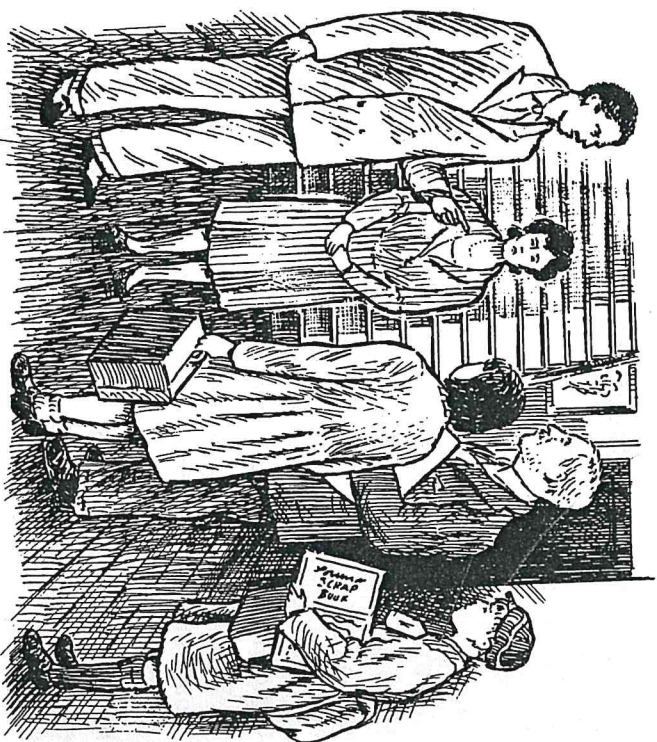
"Hang on a minute." Grainger had to be careful. He could be in trouble if he refused to take in evacuees. He decided to do a deal.

"I'll take one of them," he said. "The girl."

Jenkins thought it over. One was better than none. And it was best not to force people if you could help it.

"Is something wrong?" Miss Millington was on her way down the stairs.

"No, it's all sorted out," Grainger said. "Mr Jenkins has brought us an evacuee."



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"Evacuee?" Miss Millington was a small, dark woman with an icy glare that she turned on Jenkins. "But we're not used to looking after children."

"Don't worry, Miss Millington," said Jenkins. He was already leaving. "Mary Parker's her name. She's a good girl. She won't bite." Jenkins was hurrying Norman back to the car. He wanted to get away before Grainger changed his mind. "Now, son," he said. "What are we going to do with you?"

It was late and Jenkins still had to find somewhere for Norman to sleep. He decided to take a chance on Wells Farm.

Wells Farm was only a short drive from Westbourne Hall. It was the home of Mrs Amy Hobbs. Mrs Hobbs was a kind-hearted old lady who was always ready to help. The problem was Mr Jenkins had already left an evacuee there earlier in the day.

Mr Jenkins needn't have worried. Mrs Hobbs took one look at Norman and pulled him inside. "Let's get him fed," she said. "Before he wastes away."

She gave Norman a big bowl of soup and a hunk of home-baked bread. Then she sat down to listen to Mr Jenkins' story.

"So Mr High and Mighty Grainger wouldn't have him then?" she said when she heard what had happened at Westbourne Hall.

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"Didn't want him or the girl," said Jenkins.

"I knew he was no good the day he arrived," said Mrs Hobbs. "Money! That's all that one's interested in."

Mr Jenkins nodded.

"More soup, Norman?" asked Mrs Hobbs.

"Can I have more bread as well?"

Mrs Hobbs smiled. "You can. But then it's straight to bed, mind."



At Westbourne Hall, Miss Millington had taken Mary straight up to one of the empty bedrooms and left her there.

Mary didn't know what to do. She started to unpack. It didn't take long. She didn't have much.

Finally, she was left with the half bar of chocolate and a pound note that her mother had given her. She put them under her pillow. They would be safe there.

Downstairs, Miss Millington was in a rage. "What's the idea of having that girl here?" she shouted at Grainger.

Grainger shrugged. "He said he'd report us to the authorities if I refused. Do you want them up here poking their noses in?"

"So instead we've got that girl snooping around all the time!" Millington snapped.

Grainger tried to calm things down. "You can take care of her all right," he said. "She's just a kid."

Millington glared at him. She would just have to make sure that Mary was no trouble and didn't go snooping around at night.



Mrs Hobbs opened the door to the bedroom. "No noise, mind," she whispered. "Don't want to wake Dennis, do we?"

Norman was puzzled. "Who is Dennis, Mrs Hobbs?"

"Call me Auntie Amy," Mrs Hobbs told him. "Dennis is my other evacuee. He'll be fast asleep in bed now."

But he wasn't. There was nobody in the bed.

"Good Lord!" said Amy. "He's disappeared!"

Amy pulled open the wardrobe door and looked inside. Dennis wasn't there.

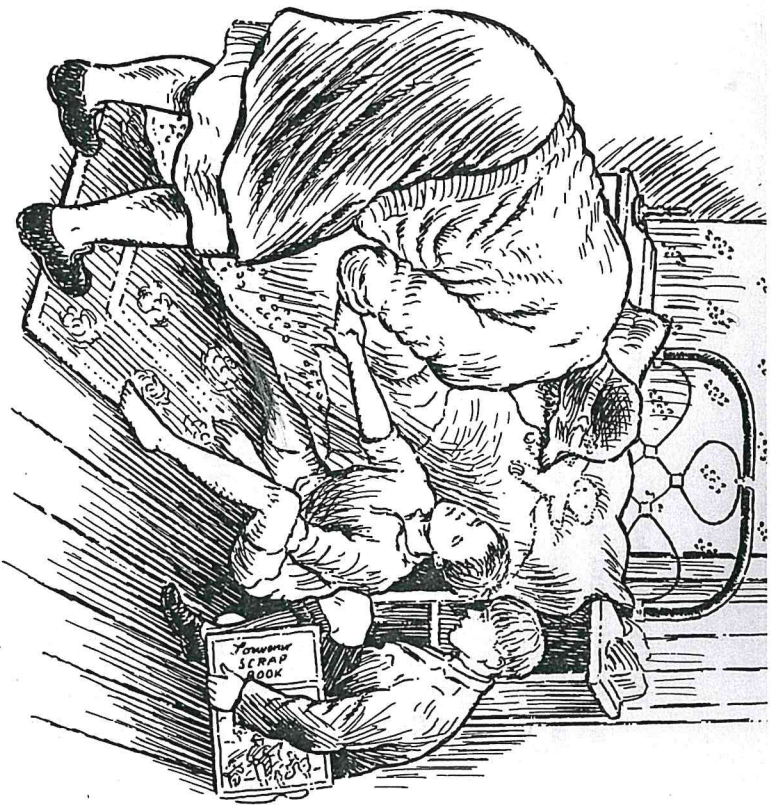
"The window!" said Amy. "He must've got out through the window."

But Norman had spotted something. A foot was sticking out from under the bed. Amy bent down and grabbed it. She pulled. A boy slid out. An untidy-looking boy who was still half-asleep. It was Dennis Sealey. Dennis sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"What's the idea sleeping under the bed?" Amy demanded.

"That's where I sleep at home," Dennis yawned. "Bombs can't get you there."

Amy shook her head. "We don't have bombs here," she told Dennis. "So you don't have to be scared."



"Who said I was scared?"

"Nobody," Amy smiled. "You're both very brave boys, I'm sure."

"Right! Time we had a little chat."

Mary was sitting up in bed while Miss Millington told her the rules of the house. The rules were simple. Whatever Miss Millington said, Mary had to do.

"Understand?" Millington asked her.

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Mary understood.
But that wasn't all.

"By the way," Miss Millington added on her way out. "You're not afraid of ghosts, are you?"

Mary's eyes opened wide.

"An old house like this is bound to have one or two, isn't it?" said Millington. "You might hear odd noises in the night. But you'll be all right as long as you stay in your room. And don't go wandering round the house."

It sounded more like a threat than advice.

Millington switched off the light and shut the door. Mary didn't dare move. She just sat in the dark and listened for ghosts.

Norman and Dennis sat side by side in the big double bed. They were trying to be brave but Amy could see there was something wrong. She had an idea.

"I just remembered," she said. "I've got something for you."

Amy pulled open a drawer and took out a torch and a small telescope. She threw them on to the bed.

Norman and Dennis grabbed them.

"Share them," said Amy. "They used to be my boy's. He's got army ones now."

Amy closed the door. Norman and Dennis clutched their new things to them as they settled down to sleep.

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Already they were starting to feel better about being away from home. They were the lucky ones.

At Westbourne Hall, Mary was lying wide-awake in the dark. It wasn't the thought of ghosts that was keeping her awake. It was the thought of Grainger and Miss Millington. Mary knew that she was never going to be happy with those two. She turned over and tried to sleep. But Millington's words just kept going round and round in her head.

Norman and Dennis were fast asleep. A sudden noise cut through the air. Norman sat bolt-upright. He couldn't believe it. Something was tapping at the window! Trying to get in.

But that wasn't possible. Was it? Perhaps he'd dreamt it.

But there it was again. A sharp "tap, tap, tap" against the glass.

There was no mistaking it this time. Norman grabbed Dennis and shook him.

"Dennis! Wake up!" he said. "There's something at the window."

Chapter 2 GRAINGER DANGER

Dennis sat up. Suddenly he was wide awake. Listening.

Silence. Then the tapping again. Louder this time. Norman and Dennis stared at the window. The curtain flapped gently in the breeze. Behind it, a ghostly shadow danced from side to side.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

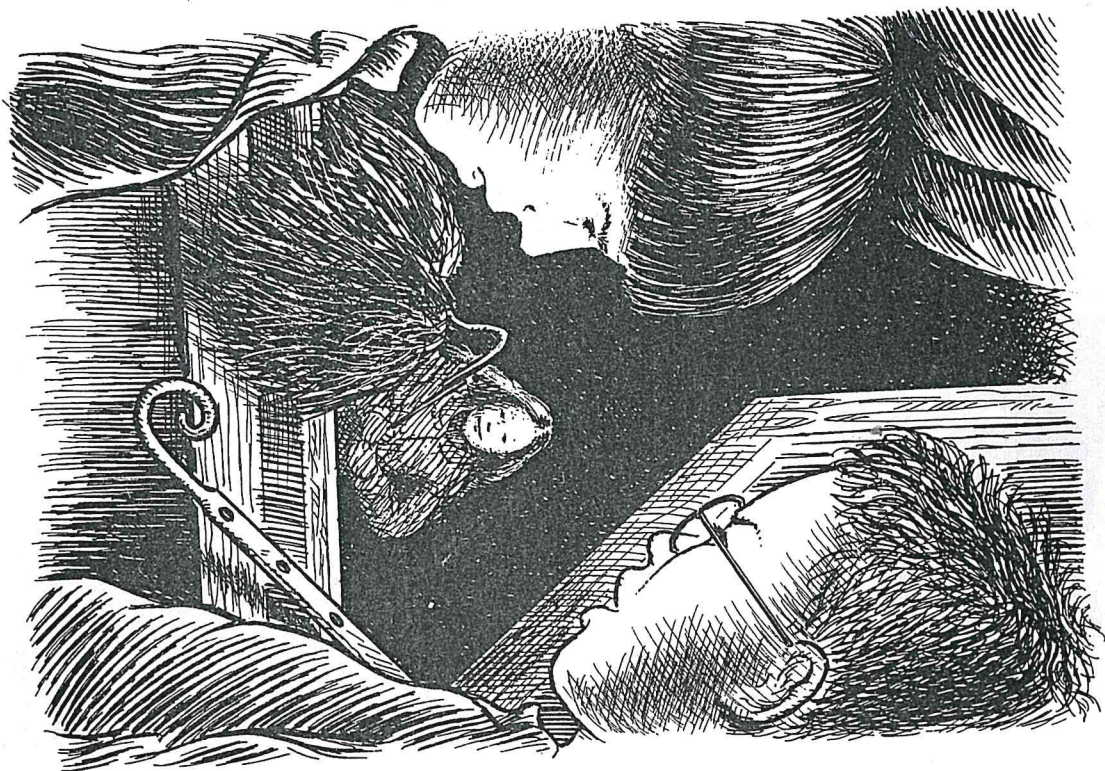
"Have a look," Dennis gulped.

"Me?" Norman didn't want to look, but Dennis was daring him. And Norman didn't want Dennis to think he was scared.

He grabbed the curtain. Took a deep breath and pulled it to one side. There was nothing there.

Then, slowly, the end of a broom appeared from below and clattered against the window pane. The broom was tied to a long stick.

Somebody was on the other end of that stick. But who? Norman and Dennis looked out of the window. A girl was standing in the front garden, waving the stick from side to side. She was wearing a nightdress and a wicked grin.



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"Not scared, are you?" she hissed. "I thought you townies weren't scared of anything."

Norman and Dennis fell back from the window.

"Night, night. Sleep tight. Only hope the bugs don't bite," chanted the girl. "See you in the morning."

"Who's that then?" said Norman.

Dennis shrugged. "Whoever it is - I don't like her."



The next morning, Amy sat Norman and Dennis at the kitchen table and put plates crammed with bacon and eggs in front of them.

The two boys just stared. They hadn't seen anything like it since the beginning of the war. In the cities, bacon was an occasional treat, and real eggs were hard to get.

Amy was puzzled. "Not hungry?" she asked.

Dennis pointed at the fried eggs. "Please, Aunt Amy,"

he said. "Are they eggs?"

Amy nodded. "Of course they are. Don't you like fried eggs?"

Dennis didn't know. He hadn't had one for so long. "We only have powdered eggs at home."

Amy smiled at him. She'd forgotten that there was a shortage of eggs. Living on a farm meant that there was always plenty of fresh food.

"Try these," she said. "You'll like them."

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Norman and Dennis grabbed their knives and forks and prepared to tuck in. But before they could get so much as a mouthful, the stairs door opened and there stood the girl.

She was dressed now. But she still had the same wicked grin.

"And about time too, madam," Amy scolded.

"Anybody would think you'd been up half the night."

The grin on the girl's face grew even broader. She knew something that Amy didn't.

"This is my granddaughter, Polly," Amy told the boys. "Hurry up and clear your plates and she'll show you what's what and where's where."

Dennis and Norman looked at each other in despair. Not only were they stuck with a girl, but she was going to be in charge of them.

At Westbourne Hall, Mary was given bread and margarine for breakfast.

"Let's get one thing straight," Miss Millington told her. "This is not a holiday." She thrust an apron at Mary. "Put that on," she said.

Millington munched her toast and marmalade while Mary put the apron on. It was much too big for her. She felt silly in it. But she said nothing.

Millington took another mouthful of toast.

"You don't expect to live here for nothing, do you?" she demanded. "After all, we didn't ask you to come. You can work for your keep."

Millington got up. "Well don't just stand there," she said to Mary. "Clear the table."

Mary could see she was in for a hard time. Millington was out to make her life a misery. But Mary wouldn't give in, and she'd never let Millington see that she was upset.

Norman and Dennis were upset. They stood at the gate at the end of the path and stared nervously across the farmyard.

Polly was waiting impatiently. "Are you going to stand there all day?" she called out.

Norman and Dennis scowled. They didn't need anybody to show them round. Especially that girl. But Amy had told them to go with Polly so that was what they had to do, like it or not.

Norman stepped out into the farmyard. There was a horrible squeelching sound. He looked down. His foot was in the middle of an enormous cow-pat.

The grin was back on Polly's face. "That's the first thing you townies have to learn," she said. "Watch where you're putting your big feet. You never know when you might tread on an unexploded cow-pat."

Polly flounced off across the yard. Now she was two up on the boys, and they knew it.

"We'll get her for that," Dennis whispered.

But Polly wasn't going to be easy to get. Neither Norman nor Dennis had ever been anywhere near a farm. To them, it was a different world. But to Polly it was home.

She showed them Joan the goat. Joan stared at them. Daring them to come closer. Norman and Dennis decided not to take the chance. The pigs were safer. They were behind the pigsty wall. Polly leaned over to scratch the mother pig's back. But Norman and Dennis couldn't stand the smell.

"I suppose you don't have smells in the city," Polly mocked.

The hen-house was next on the list. Polly opened the door. Norman and Dennis were about to look inside when, suddenly, there was a crazy squawking and flapping of wings. A hen flew out.

Norman jumped back in surprise. The next thing, the two boys were sprawling on the ground. The hen landed on Dennis's chest. Polly grinned down at them.

That was it. Norman and Dennis had had enough. It was time to escape. They jumped to their feet and raced off across the farmyard. Polly just watched them go. She wasn't worried. They didn't even know where they were going. They'd have to come back to her in the end. Norman and Dennis raced across a field, pretending

to be fighter planes. Then they dropped to the ground. It was their turn to grin.

"We showed her all right," said Dennis.

"Yes. We showed her," Norman agreed.

They stretched out on the grass and closed their eyes.

The sun was beating down.

"Like being on holiday, isn't it?" said Norman.

"I don't know," said Dennis. "I've never been on holiday. What's it like?"

"It's like this," Norman told him.

It was like being on holiday. The countryside was fresh and peaceful.

Then a cow mooed! It wasn't a quiet, distant moo. It was a very loud, very close moo.

Norman opened his eyes. A cow was staring down at him. Norman sat up. There were other cows all around them. And more were on their way.

"Dennis!" said Norman. "We're surrounded."

Dennis sat up. He grabbed hold of Norman. The cows were inching closer all the time, their wet noses pushing forward and enormous tongues poking out.

"What are we going to do?" said Dennis.

Norman didn't know. He was afraid to move. He just sat there and hoped the cows would go away. But they didn't. They looked as though they were planning to stay all day.

Then they heard a voice. "What's the matter? Are you frightened of cows?"

It was Polly.

She clapped her hands and strode forward. The cows parted. As if by magic, a path opened through the middle of the herd.

Polly looked down at Norman and Dennis.

"Do you like it in the country then?" she asked.

Norman and Dennis said nothing. They just followed Polly back through the cows to safety. They'd learnt their lesson. Polly might be a girl but she knew what she was doing. And they needed her more than she needed them.

Polly led the way back to the farmyard. It was time to show the townies what life on a farm was all about. Norman watched while Polly and Dennis gave one of the calves a drink.

"What are you looking at?" Polly demanded.

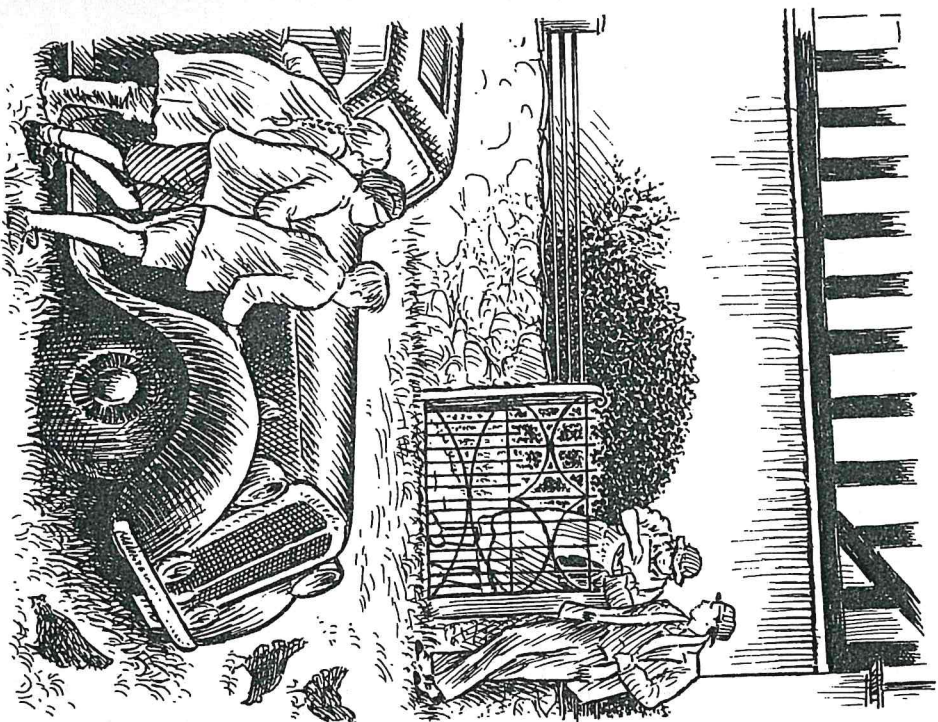
"Do you want to be in our gang?" Norman asked.

Polly shook her head. "No!" she told him. "But you can be in mine."

If there was going to be a gang, Polly was going to be boss. After all, this was her territory. Norman and Dennis looked at each other and grinned. They'd settle for that.

A large, black car drove in off the road, sounding its hooter and scattering the hens. Polly led the way round to the yard. She had an idea who it was. She was right. It was Mr Grainger from Westbourne Hall. He was talking to Amy at the garden gate.

Polly, Norman and Dennis watched from behind Grainger's car. Amy was counting money into his outstretched hand.



"What's going on?" Dennis whispered.

"It's the rent," Polly hissed. "Grainger is our landlord."

Wells Farm was part of the Westbourne Hall estate.

For the last couple of years, it had been owned by Grainger. He was not a good landlord.

"We hide behind the settie when our rent man comes," said Dennis.

Polly shushed him. Grainger was speaking.

"Bit of a struggle, isn't it?" he said. "Now your son's away?"

"Doing his duty," said Amy.

Polly's father had joined the army six months earlier. Since then, Amy had had to run the farm on her own. It wasn't easy.

"It's not right," Grainger insisted. "Old woman struggling to run a farm on her own."

Amy knew what Grainger was getting at. He wanted her off the farm. He'd said so before. But Amy was determined to stay.

"I told you, the only way I'm leaving here is for the graveyard," she said. "And that's that."

But Grainger wouldn't be put off. "I'd make it worth your while. Say three hundred pounds if you get out straight away."

Three hundred pounds was a lot of money. It was more money than the farm would make in two or three years. But Amy still wasn't interested.

"Mr Grainger - this is my home," she said. "I've lived here all my life. My father and his father were born here—"

"Sentimental rubbish!" Grainger had heard enough.

"There's a war on. The county needs every last scrap of food it can grow. People like you are holding up the war effort."

"Don't talk to me about the war effort," Amy was angry now. "My boy is risking his life while others are sat at home making money hand over fist."

Grainger knew Amy was talking about him. He didn't like it. "You'll wish you hadn't said that, old woman," he snarled. "It's going to get worse round here. And when it does, I'll have you out on your ear without as much as a penny."

Grainger turned and stomped off towards his car.

"Get away from there!" he yelled at the children.

They ran.

Grainger drove off in a rage. One thing was certain - he was out to cause trouble.

"He can't turn you out. Not as long as you pay the rent," Dennis told Polly. "That's the law."

But that wasn't what was worrying Polly. "Running a farm is hard work," she said. "I don't know how long Gran can keep going on her own."

"But she's not on her own, is she?" said Norman.

"There's us now, isn't there?"

Polly looked at Norman and Dennis. How much help would they be? They barely knew one end of a pig from

It was the first "accident". It wouldn't be the last. cows started to drift out on to the road. through one of the Wells Farm fences. One by one, the Later that night, a pair of wire cutters snipped said. "I mean accidents do happen, don't they?" Grainger smiled. "That's what I was thinking," he she'll just have to be persuaded," Millington replied. "Well, if the old fool won't go of her own accord, about his visit to Wells Farm.

In the dining room, Grainger was telling Millington. Especially not by Grainger and Millington. would be hard but she wasn't going to be beaten. and wondered how long she could go on like this. It By nightfall, Mary was exhausted. She lay in bed nobody had cleaned Westbourne Hall for twenty years. one job, Miss Millington gave her another. It was as if Mary hadn't stopped all day. As soon as she finished

the other. But perhaps they could learn. "I don't mind helping," Dennis volunteered. "But I'm not milking a bull." Polly sighed. "You milk cows not bulls, stupid!" "What do you do with bulls then?" "You don't need to know that." That was one thing they would have to learn for themselves.