

## Chapter Two



He threw up all over Miss Fazackerley's skirt. He had been feeling sick ever since they left the main junction and climbed into the joggling, jolting little train for the last lap of their journey, but the sudden whistle had finished him.

Such a noise – it seemed to split the sky open. 'Enough to frighten the dead,' Miss Fazackerley said, mopping her skirt and Nick's face with her handkerchief. He lay back limp as a rag and let her do it, the way he always let people do things for him, not lifting a finger. 'Poor lamb,' Miss Fazackerley said, but Carrie looked stern.

'It's all his own fault. He's been stuffing his face ever since we left London. Greedy pig. *Dustbin.*'

He had not only eaten his own packed lunch – sandwiches and cold sausages and bananas – but most of

Carrie's as well. She had let him have it to comfort him because he minded leaving home and their mother more than she did. Or had looked as if he minded more. She thought now that it was just one of his acts, put on to get sympathy. Sympathy and chocolate! He had had all her chocolate, too! 'I knew he'd be sick,' she said smugly.

'Might have warned me then, mightn't you?' Miss Fazackerley said. Not unkindly, she was one of the kindest teachers in the school, but Carrie wanted to cry suddenly. If she had been Nick she would have cried, or at least put on a hurt face. Being Carrie she stared crossly out of the carriage window at the big mountain on the far side of the valley. It was brown and purple on the top and green lower down; streaked with silver trickles of water and dotted with sheep.

Sheep and mountains. 'Oh, it'll be such fun,' their mother had said when she kissed them good-bye at the station. 'Living in the country instead of the stuffy old city. You'll love it, you see if you don't!' As if Hitler had arranged this old war for their benefit, just so that Carrie and Nick could be sent away in a train with gas masks slung over their shoulders and their names on cards round their necks. Labelled like parcels – Caroline Wendy Willow and Nicholas Peter Willow – only with no address to be sent to. None of them, not even the teachers, knew where they were going. 'That's part of



the adventure,' Carrie's mother had said, and not just to cheer them up: it was her nature to look on the bright side. If she found herself in Hell, Carrie thought now, she'd just say, 'Well, at least we'll be warm.'

Thinking of her mother, always making the best of things (or pretending to: when the train began to move she had stopped smiling) Carrie nearly did cry. There was a lump like a pill stuck in her throat. She swallowed hard and pulled faces.

The train was slowing. 'Here we are,' Miss Fazackerly said. 'Collect your things, don't leave anything. Take care of Nick, Carrie.'

Carrie scowled. She loved Nick, loved him so much sometimes that it gave her a pain, but she hated to be told to do something she was going to do anyway. And she was bored with Nick at the moment. That dying-duck look as he struggled to get his case down from the rack! 'Leave it to me, silly baby,' she said, jumping up on the seat. Dust flew and he screwed up his face. 'You're making me sneeze,' he complained. 'Don't bounce, Carrie.'

They all seemed to have more luggage than when they had started. Suitcases that had once been quite light now felt as if they were weighed down with stones. And got heavier as they left the small station and straggled down a steep, cinder path. Carrie had Nick's case

as well as her own and a carrier bag with a broken string handle. She tucked it under one arm, but it kept slipping backwards and her gas mask banged her knee as she walked.

'Someone help Caroline, please,' Miss Fazackerly cried, rushing up and down the line of children like a sheep dog. Someone did – Carrie felt the carrier bag go from under her arm, then one suitcase.

It was a bigger boy. Carrie blushed, but he wasn't a Senior: he wore a cap like all boys under sixteen, and although he was tall, he didn't look very much older than she was. She glanced sideways and said, 'Thank you so much,' in a grown-up voice like her mother's.

He grinned shyly back. He had steel-rimmed spectacles, a few spots on his chin. He said, 'Well, I suppose this is what they call our ultimate destination. Not much of a place, is it?'

They were off the cinder track now, walking down a hilly street where small, dark houses opened straight on to the pavement. There was sun on the mountain above them, but the town was in shadow; the air struck chill on their cheeks and smelled dusty.

'Bound to be dirty,' Carrie said. 'A coal-mining town.'  
'I didn't mean dirt. Just that it's not big enough to have a good public library.'

It seemed a funny thing to bother about at the



moment. Carrie said, 'The first place was bigger. Where we stopped at the junction.' She peered at his label and read his name. Albert Sandwich. She said, 'If you came earlier on in the alphabet you could have stayed there. You only just missed it, they divided us after the Rs. Do your friends call you Ally, or Bert?'

'I don't care for my name to be abbreviated,' he said. 'Nor do I like being called Jam, or Jelly, or even Peanut Butter.'

He spoke firmly but Carrie thought he looked anxious.

'I hadn't thought of sandwiches,' she said. 'Only of the town Sandwich in Kent, because my granny lives there. Though my dad says she'll have to move now in case the Germans land on the coast.' She thought of the Germans landing and her grandmother running away with her things on a cart like a refugee in a newspaper picture. She gave a loud, silly laugh and said, 'If they did, my gran 'ud give them What For. She's not frightened of anyone, I bet she could even stop Hitler. Go up on her roof and pour boiling oil down!'

Albert looked at her, frowning. 'I doubt if that would be very helpful. Old people aren't much use in a war. Like kids - best out of the way.'

His grave tone made Carrie feel foolish. She wanted to say it was only a joke, about boiling oil, but they had

arrived at a building with several steps leading up and told to get into single file so that their names could be checked at the door. Nick was waiting there, holding Miss Fazackerly's hand. She said, 'There you are, darling. There she is, didn't I tell you?' And to Carrie, 'Don't lose him again!'

She ticked them off on her list, saying aloud, 'Two Willows, One Sandwich.'

Nick clung to Carrie's sleeve as they went through the door into a long, dark room with pointed windows. It was crowded and noisy. Someone said to Carrie, 'Would you like a cup of tea, bach? And a bit of cake, now?' She was a cheerful, plump woman with a sing-song Welsh voice. Carrie shook her head; she felt cake would choke her. 'Stand by there, then,' the woman said. 'There by the wall with the others, and someone will choose you.'

Carrie looked round, bewildered, and saw Albert Sandwich. She whispered, 'What's happening?' and he said, 'A kind of cattle auction, it seems.'

He sounded calmly disgusted. He gave Carrie her suitcase, then marched to the end of the hall, sat down on his own, and took a book out of his pocket.

Carrie wished she could do that. Sit down and read as if nothing else mattered. But she had already begun to feel ill with shame at the fear that no one would