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I Landed in London

by Miriam Silver

I landed in London on a cold and wintery afternoon, feeling lost, cold, hungry, hopeful that if I stayed put I'd be told where to go and maybe offered some food.

Without a watch I was reliant on the station clock for the time, which told me I had been travelling for over twelve hours. I knew it was dark when I was told to 'come now', suitcase packed, pulled on my boots and do as I was told.

With no family and no option, the Home had no alternative but to find me a home, away from it all and waved goodbye to me at the local station. All so completely unfamiliar, I'd never been allowed to explore my surroundings since being sent there sometime last year, before the war, memories fade so quickly when you're young.

On reflection I suppose the folk in the Home were scared for my safety, there were no parents to consult. Bombing and gas attacks were threatened, they didn't want to be responsible, so they sent me away.

With no parental permission available, I did not qualify for their evacuation with the umpteenth school I'd attended briefly since I was orphaned, the rest of the pupils had gone with their friends.

The London station was packed, people, soldiers, tea trollies, luggage and hugging goodbyes, all rushing past me. Fortunately a tea lady, took pity, stopped and gave me a much welcomed sandwich. I sat on the cold platform, ate it while she poured me a cup of something warm and wet.

A guard had been alerted, another friend? I still don't know how he did that, good fellow, because with half a crown in my pocket I was soon on my way. I'd never had so much money before, I hope my amazement didn't prevent me from thanking him.

No one explained anything to children in those days, latterly I gathered someone at the Home had phoned a friend in the country, and that's how I came to live with Tom and Harry who, let me play outside, taught me to fly a kite and ride a bicycle. During those early months I had a wonderful time as there was no space in the local school for a backward townie.

When the Summer came, their orchard was where I picked growing apples and pears, helped on the neighbouring farm, made haystacks and rode and on top of the horse cart. These two became my parents, I'd never been so happy.

Tom, a retired teacher realised I should go to school. With difficulty he found me a place at the council school, where I was accepted as normal, and enjoyed the independence of the bike ride there where slowly, with the help of both my Dads I flourished, eventually, I'm fairly sure, through mutual love and appreciation I brought them credit.

I was lucky, the Home didn't choose Australia!

