



Historical Association
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Edward

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WWII

Coventry 7:36pm, 14th November 1940.

A fog filled my brain as the thumping in my chest grew faster by the second. No longer under the blanket of my parents, I stood alone; bombs and gunfire ringing in my ears. I felt a tug at my hand. As I drew my eyes up from my quivering hand, a sigh of relief escaped me: a man dressed in green and brown, a reassuring smile across his face. He explained he was to take me to safety.

Coventry 8:21pm, 14th November 1940.

We finally got on the train, but I felt strange inside. The normal person would feel butterflies in their stomach, but for me, it felt like eagles flying around inside me. A few minutes later, a sprog who looked about the same age as I came up to me and asked what my name was.

"E-Edward," I replied awkwardly, "and y-you?"

"Arthur," he said shyly after a long pause, "Arthur Jones."

Coventry 8:45pm, 14th November 1940.

Arthur and I exchanged hesitant smiles, our fear slowly giving way to the strange comfort of companionship. The train's rhythm was almost hypnotic, the clackety-clack providing a temporary reprieve from the horrors outside. We talked in hushed voices, sharing stories of our families and the lives we'd left behind. Arthur's father worked at the munitions factory; the same one my mother often spoke of.

The train jolted suddenly, and the lights flickered. I gripped the edge of my seat, heart racing. Arthur's face went pale, and I could see his hands trembling.

Coventry 9:10pm, 14th November 1940.

As the train chugged along, the outside world was cloaked in darkness, the night only punctuated by distant flashes and the haunting wail of sirens. It felt like we were hurtling through a void, uncertain of where we would end up. I glanced at Arthur, who had fallen silent, staring out the window with a distant look.

"We'll be okay," I said, more to myself than to him.

He nodded, but his eyes didn't leave the dark landscape.

Suddenly, the train began to slow down, and a guard walked through the carriage, his face stern but kind.

"Everyone, stay calm," he said. "We're stopping at a safe location. Please remain seated until we come to a complete stop."

Coventry 9:30pm, 14th November 1940.

The train pulled into a dimly lit station, and the doors opened with a metallic groan. We were ushered out by the guard and led towards an underground shelter. The station was crowded with other evacuees, families huddled together, clinging to what little they had managed to bring with them.

Arthur and I found a corner where we could sit. The cold concrete floor was a harsh reminder of our reality, but it was safer than the streets above. We sat in silence for a while, the weight of the night pressing down on us.

"Do you think we'll see our families again?" Arthur asked quietly, his voice barely audible over the murmurs of the crowd.

I swallowed hard, not knowing how to answer. "I hope so," I said finally. "I really hope so."

Coventry 10:15pm, 14th November 1940.

The shelter was filled with a cacophony of sounds: babies crying, hushed conversations, and the distant rumble of explosions. Despite the chaos, a sense of solidarity bound us together. Strangers offered food and blankets, and comforting words were shared among those who needed them.

A woman with kind eyes and a gentle voice approached us. "Are you boys alright?" she asked, kneeling to our level.

We nodded, though the tremor in my hands betrayed my fear.

"I'm Mrs. Thompson," she said, offering a smile. "You can stay with my family and me until it's safe to move on."

Arthur and I exchanged glances, grateful for the kindness of this stranger. We followed her to a small corner where her children were gathered, their eyes wide with fear and curiosity.

Coventry 11:30pm, 14th November 1940.

The hours passed slowly, the sounds of war echoing above us. I fought to keep my eyes open, but exhaustion was taking its toll. Arthur had already succumbed to sleep, his head resting on his knees.

Mrs. Thompson sat beside me, her presence a comforting anchor in the storm. "Try to get some rest," she said softly. "Tomorrow will be a better day."

I wanted to believe her. I closed my eyes, the image of my parents' faces etched in my mind. As I drifted off to sleep, I clung to the hope that somewhere, somehow, we would be reunited.

Coventry 5:45am, 15th November 1940.

I woke to the sound of muffled voices and the shuffling of feet. The air in the shelter was thick with tension and the lingering scent of fear. Arthur was still asleep, his face scrunched up in a troubled expression. Mrs. Thompson was speaking with a man in a uniform, his face grave.

"They're saying it's over for now," she whispered to the small group around her. "We can leave the shelter soon, but the city... it's not the same."

As the news spread, a mix of relief and dread filled the air. We gathered our meagre belongings, preparing to face whatever awaited us outside. Arthur woke with a start, looking around in confusion until his eyes met mine.

"It's morning," I said, trying to muster a reassuring smile.

Coventry 6:30am, 15th November 1940.

Emerging from the shelter, the first light of dawn revealed a city transformed. Coventry, once bustling and full of life, now lay in ruins. Buildings were reduced to rubble, and smoke still lingered in the air. The cathedral, a symbol of our city's resilience, was a skeletal shadow of its former self, its spire pointing accusingly at the sky.

Arthur and I stood in stunned silence, taking in the devastation. Mrs. Thompson placed a gentle hand on our shoulders. "Come, boys. We need to find our families."

We walked through the streets, stepping over debris and past others who, like us, were searching for their loved ones. The faces around us were a mix of despair and determination, people driven by the hope of finding their families safe.

Coventry 9:00am, 15th November 1940.

Hours passed as we navigated the chaotic streets. We reached my neighbourhood first. The houses were battered, some destroyed. My heart pounded as I approached what was left of my home. The front door was hanging off its hinges, and the windows were shattered.

"Mom? Dad?" I called out, my voice trembling.

There was no answer. Fear tightened its grip on my heart. I ventured inside, the floorboards creaking under my feet. The living room was in disarray, furniture overturned, and glass everywhere. But then, a sound—soft, almost imperceptible—caught my attention.

"Edward?" My mother's voice, weak but unmistakable.

I rushed towards the sound, finding my parents huddled in the corner of the kitchen, covered in dust but alive. Tears filled my eyes as I embraced them, the relief overwhelming.

"Thank God," my father whispered, holding us tightly. "Thank God."

Coventry 11:00am, 15th November 1940.

With my parents safe, our thoughts turned to Arthur. His house was not far from mine, and we hurried through the streets, hoping for the best. As we approached, we saw Arthur's mother standing outside, her face etched with worry. She spotted Arthur and rushed forward, wrapping him in a tearful embrace.

"Oh, Arthur! I was so worried!" she cried, holding him close.

Arthur's father emerged from the wreckage, limping slightly but alive. The reunion was bittersweet, the joy of finding each other tempered by the reality of our shattered city.

Coventry 1:00pm, 15th November 1940.

The relief of finding our families safe was short-lived. The authorities were urging parents to send their children to foster homes in the countryside, away from the continued threat of bombing. Mrs. Thompson, having no means to take us all with her, explained gently that it was the best way to ensure our safety.

A week later, Arthur and I found ourselves on another train, this time heading north to a small village where we were to be placed with a foster family. The village of Aldridge seemed peaceful enough when we arrived, with its rolling fields and quaint houses. But as we walked up the path to our new home, a feeling of unease settled in my stomach.

Aldridge 4:00pm, 22nd November 1940.

The door creaked open, revealing a tall, gaunt woman with sharp eyes and a thin-lipped smile. "Welcome," she said, her voice cold. "I am Mrs. Blackwood."

She led us inside, the house's interior dark and uninviting. The walls were bare, and the air was thick with the scent of dampness. Mrs. Blackwood's demeanour was as harsh as her appearance, and the small comfort I had felt upon our arrival quickly faded.

"You will stay in the attic," she said, leading us up a narrow staircase. "No windows, but there is a hole in the wall. Mind you, no nonsense, or you'll regret it."

The attic was cramped and musty, with only a small hole in the wall for ventilation. A thin layer of straw on the floor was our makeshift bed, and a single, threadbare blanket was all we had for warmth. The cold seeped through the thin walls, and the darkness felt suffocating.

Aldridge 7:00pm, 22nd November 1940.

Dinner was a sparse affair, a thin broth with a slice of stale bread. Mrs. Blackwood watched us with hawk-like eyes, her presence a constant reminder of the strict rules we were to follow. There was no warmth in her voice, no comfort in her home.

"You will earn your keep," she said, her tone brooking no argument. "There are chores to be done, and I expect you to do them without complaint."

Arthur and I nodded, too scared to speak. The days that followed were gruelling. We were up at dawn, chopping wood, fetching water, and cleaning every inch of the house under Mrs. Blackwood's watchful gaze. She rarely spoke to us except to give orders, and any mistake was met with harsh punishment.

Aldridge 9:00pm, 24th November 1940.

At night, the attic became our refuge. Arthur and I would lie on the straw, staring up at the ceiling, whispering about our families and the lives we'd left behind. The small hole in the wall was our only connection to the outside world, a sliver of moonlight that offered a faint glimmer of hope.

"We'll get through this," Arthur said one night, his voice barely a whisper. "We'll find a way back to our families."

I nodded, though doubt gnawed at me. The war had taken so much from us already. But Arthur's determination was a beacon in the darkness, a reminder that we still had each other.

Aldridge 7:00am, 1st December 1940.

Weeks passed in a blur of monotonous chores and harsh reprimands. Winter set in, and the cold in the attic became almost unbearable. Our hands were chapped and raw from the work, and the meagre food did little to keep us warm.

One morning, as we were fetching water from the well, Arthur stumbled and fell, his face pale and gaunt.

"Arthur!" I cried, rushing to his side.

He tried to get up, but his strength failed him. Mrs. Blackwood appeared, her face a mask of indifference.

"Get up, boy," she snapped. "There's work to be done."

"He can't," I protested. "He's sick."

Mrs. Blackwood's eyes narrowed. "If he can't work, he doesn't eat."

Desperation gave me courage. "He needs a doctor. Please."

For a moment, I thought she would relent, but then her expression hardened. "No doctor. Get him back to the attic. He can rest there."

I helped Arthur to his feet, his weight heavy against me. We made our way back to the attic, the climb up the narrow stairs feeling like an eternity. I laid him down on the straw, covering him with the threadbare blanket.

Aldridge 10:00pm, 1st December 1940.

Arthur's condition worsened as the days passed. His fever raged, and he was too weak to get out of bed. I did what I could to care for him, but my efforts felt futile. Mrs. Blackwood remained indifferent, her focus solely on the chores that needed to be done.

One cold night, as the wind howled outside, I sat beside Arthur, holding his hand. His skin was hot to the touch, and his breathing was laboured.

"Edward," he whispered, his voice weak.

"I'm here," I said, my heart breaking.

"Promise me... promise me you'll get out of here. Find your family."

Tears filled my eyes. "We both will. We'll get out of here together."

Arthur's grip tightened for a moment before he slipped into unconsciousness. I stayed by his side, praying for a miracle.

Aldridge 6:00am, 2nd December 1940.

Arthur's fever broke in the early hours of the morning. His breathing steadied, and the colour slowly returned to his cheeks. Relief washed over me, and I allowed myself a moment of hope.

But the ordeal had taken its toll. Arthur was still weak, and it would be days before he could resume the gruelling chores. I took on his share of the work, determined to protect him as best as I could.

Aldridge 12:00pm, 10th December 1940.

Life with Mrs. Blackwood was a relentless cycle of work and survival. The villagers were kind when we encountered them, offering small gestures of sympathy and the occasional treat. But none dared to intervene, fearful of Mrs. Blackwood's wrath.

One day, while fetching water, I overheard a conversation between two villagers.

"Did you hear? The council is sending inspectors to check on the evacuee children. There have been complaints."

My heart raced. If the inspectors found out how we were being treated, we might be saved. I shared the news with Arthur, and for the first time in weeks, we felt a spark of hope.

Aldridge 9:00am, 15th December 1940.

The inspectors arrived, two stern-looking men with clipboards and serious expressions. Mrs. Blackwood greeted them with a tight smile, her eyes cold and calculating.

"We're here to check on the welfare of the evacuee children," one of the inspectors said. "May we see them?"

"Of course," Mrs. Blackwood replied, her voice dripping with false sweetness. "Follow me."

We were in the middle of our chores when they found us. The inspectors asked us questions about our living conditions, our health, and our treatment.

"We're fine," I said, glancing at Arthur. "We're well taken care of."

Mrs. Blackwood's eyes bore into me, a silent warning. I hesitated, fear warring with the desire to tell the truth.

"And the attic?" one of the inspectors asked. "Is it suitable for living?"

"It's... it's cold," Arthur said, his voice trembling. "And there's a hole in the wall."

The inspectors exchanged a look, their expressions hardening. They turned to Mrs. Blackwood.

"We'll need to see it," one of them said.

Mrs. Blackwood's facade cracked for a moment, but she led them to the attic. The inspectors took notes, their faces grim.

Aldridge 11:00am, 15th December 1940.

After inspecting the attic, the men pulled us aside, away from Mrs. Blackwood's earshot.

"Tell us the truth," one of them said gently. "Are you being treated well?"

I looked at Arthur, and he nodded, giving me the courage to speak.

"No," I said, my voice shaking. "It's cold, and there's not enough food. Mrs. Blackwood... she's not kind."

The inspectors nodded, their expressions softening. "Thank you for telling us. We'll make sure you're taken care of."

Relief washed over me. For the first time in weeks, I felt a glimmer of hope. The inspectors spoke with Mrs. Blackwood again, their tones more assertive.

Aldridge 3:00pm, 15th December 1940.

By the afternoon, arrangements had been made. Arthur and I were to be moved to a different foster home, one where we would be cared for properly. The villagers gathered to see us off, their faces a mix of relief and sadness.

As we left Mrs. Blackwood's house for the last time, I glanced back at the dark, oppressive building. We had survived, and now we had a chance for a better life.

Aldridge 5:00pm, 15th December 1940.

Our new home was with the Petersons, a kind couple with a small farm on the outskirts of the village. They welcomed us with open arms, their warmth a stark contrast to Mrs. Blackwood's cruelty.

"You'll be safe here," Mrs. Peterson said, her smile genuine. "We'll take good care of you."

Arthur and I settled into our new life, the weight of the past weeks slowly lifting. The attic was replaced by a cosy bedroom, the threadbare blanket by warm quilts. For the first time since leaving Coventry, we felt a sense of security.

Aldridge 7:00pm, 25th December 1940.

Christmas was a quiet affair, but it was filled with joy and gratitude. The Petersons made sure we felt part of the family, their kindness a balm to our wounded spirits.

As we sat by the fire, Arthur and I exchanged a look, the bond between us stronger than ever. We had survived the Blitz, Mrs. Blackwood's cruelty, and the uncertainty of evacuation. Now, we had a chance to heal and rebuild.

"We'll make it through this," Arthur said, his voice filled with determination.

I nodded, a smile spreading across my face. "Together."

"Forever." Arthur said reassuringly.

The war was far from over, but we had found a new home and a new family. And with that, we knew we could face whatever the future held...