

Meeting Rina

I was just a boy of 11 years old in 1941 when the rampant wreck of WW2, which splintered and wrecked my life apart, made its way to Reading. As if that wasn't bad enough, we had recently gotten news that my older brother, Benjamin, had passed away at war because of a grenade just two months ago.

It was a Tuesday in September, and I was home writing in my diary. I was jotting down peacefully about my day until the deafening air-raid siren blurted out near my house: BLARE! CRASH! BOOM!

My mum, my sister and I were petrified and so we went to cower in the Anderson shelter placed neatly in our yard.

After the bombings, my mother opted for us to move to Bournemouth by train and that Reading was not safe enough for me and my sibling. Even though my mother had antecedently said that the family should band together; our unsafe position meant it was mandatory. If I were in custody of us, I would be stuck in a tricky dilemma.

Following the horrible, monotonous train voyage, Daisy (my sister) and I arrived at Bournemouth. We were greeted by a stern, rude, billeting officer who led us to a quaint bungalow bordering the calm, azure sea: a lost treasure you could live inside of. At the threshold of the house, a kind woman welcomed us in. Her name was Cynthia Wilson. I expected her to be a strict, inconsiderate grandmother – to make things worse – but she was the sweetest person ever. The weather was simply immaculate, and the sun was shining right on top of our amazing bungalow.

Amidst the first few weeks at my school, it came to my attention that the pupils of Ridgemoore Elementary were simply nasty and disgusting. They were rude; they made fun of the fact I never learnt how to read. My mother had never taught me, though. Every day, miserably, disgustedly,

defenselessly, I had to suffer at the hand of the school children. But, alas, they were right; I couldn't read.

After a month at that terrible school, I stumbled upon a timid girl, Rina Watford – who I happily developed a friendship with. She had been evacuated, just like me. Her older brother had died at war, just like me. It was like someone finally understood my pain: my worries. It was in our amity in which Rina had an idea; it was a marvellous idea; a marvellously spectacular idea.

Early one morning, Rina arrived at my house, hoping to help me learn to read. She brought countless books – most of which I had heard about before, like the *Wizard of Oz*. I was delighted to learn. And so, for the next week, Rina taught me and read to me various books – happily, delightedly, consistently – which I loved. Cynthia had recommended for us to use the Anderson shelter in the yard for teaching, and so we did. I was learning rapidly and, thanks to Rina, liking to read.

Because of Rina, my life had been altered for the better. That sudden lend of a hand from my best friend was the greatest thing which could have happened in the Jerries' rampage. Her help taught me how to read and write; I couldn't be more grateful.