

Letters From The Lighthouse

By Nirvaan Gautam

I was just an innocent boy of 9 years of age when the devastating World War Two began in London. It was September 1941 when my life crumbled as I heard the dreadful news that my eldest brother and my beloved father had both tragically died.

A calm environment had set the atmosphere on a cold and wintery Friday evening. I peeled off my blanket, rested my soft pillow on the headboard and then clutched a leathery, blue book. Then it happened-the ground trembled. Rumble! Boom! Thud! I sprinted out of my bedroom, tore past the glass door and sped down the garden trying to reach the Anderson shelter-but I was too late. The ground beneath my feet dissolved, glass shattered into miniscule pieces, a high-pitched ring deafened me and ash was smothered on my face.

After London was showered with debris, Mum, despite me arguing to stay, finalized our trip to Devon. My Mum had previously fervently explained for us to stay together, but she said that this was an exception and that it was safer in Devon. If I were in her shoes, I wouldn't have ever been able to decide .

Following the prolonged and tedious train journey, we finally arrived at our destination. Devon. A kind billeting officer directed us to a dilapidated and abandoned bungalow. I gave three swift knocks on the dusty, wooden door. A tall, old man towered over us and scowled. "What you maggots do'in over er'e?" The man asked.

"We're are jest evacuees." I explained. Moments later, another billeting officer (perhaps the same one) explained to the elderly man that he must take us in or face the consequences. The old man agreed to take us in. His rundown house was cosy and humble on the inside. It was like a burnt marshmallow-black on the outside but soft and gooey on the inside. It was paradise.

Throughout my entire first few weeks at school, I was showered with nasty names, drowned by vile comments and bombarded with mean remarks. Every day, I was isolated and always sat alone at lunch. I was bullied and forced to give my food away which left me feeling both hungry and crummy. I struggled in most subjects and got embarrassed in front of everyone when the teacher asked me a question. I began to think, maybe the bullies were right, maybe I wasn't smart enough.

After one or two months, I began to forge a friendship with a boy called Jacob, who also got bullied for not being smart enough. I had finally found a friend who understood the way I felt. It was him who had thought of the scheme. It was a brilliant theory, a magnificent proposal, an incredible project to work on.

One morning it hit him; If I were to befriend a Jew it would apparently 'solve all my problems'. He dragged me by my wrist, leading me to a group of Jews. Reluctantly, annoyed and terrified, I approached the pack of wolves. Eventually, after an hour or so, it seemed as if I had tamed the wolves. I had befriended a Jew.

Suddenly, my life had inverted itself. I wasn't bullied for my intelligence levels, I didn't stutter when the teacher asked me a question and I made multiple friends with Jews. If I were to thank somebody for aiding me like a true friend, I would thank my best friend Jacob. This rollercoaster of emotions taught me: never accept defeat. There is always hope somewhere, you just have to find it.