

CHAPTER 6

'WAVE,' DAVID SHOUTED. 'WAVE AT HIM.' AND Tucky obeyed instinctively, waving after the plane as it banked and came in for a second run. David gave the thumbs-up sign and the 'V' for victory. 'Look happy, Tucky, smile at him.'

The spotter plane swept down even lower this time, and they could see the pilot waving back at them, and the two boys waved after it as it waggled its wings in salute. Tucky glanced down at the Germans' shelter, but there was no sign of them, and by the time he looked up again, the plane was climbing fast over the moor and turnings towards the south.

'What if they saw?' Tucky tugged at David's elbow.

'What if they saw the Germans?'

'They didn't, they couldn't have.' David was almost sure. 'We're two boys out with our dog on the moor, nothing wrong in that, is there?'

'And that shelter, what about the shelter?'

David didn't have the time to answer. 'So, you told them about us.' The boys swung round at the sound of the German's voice. He was standing up by the shelter, his greatcoat pulled up under his chin.

'No, mister, we didn't tell no one. Honest.' Tucky sounded frightened.

'Honest?' He came towards them. 'And the plane? The plane was not sent? You told no one?'

'No one,' said David firmly, moving closer to Tucky. 'We kept it a secret. I didn't want to, but he did, and we told no one.'

'But you were waving,' the airman went on. 'You wanted them to see you, to see us.'

David shook his head. 'Do you think we'd want to be caught giving food and blankets to Germans? Do you? We were waving to show them we weren't in any trouble. That's all.'

He looked hard at both of them, and then went back to the shelter to talk with his friend who had

crawled out by now. For some minutes they talked agitatedly in German, and the boys stood and waited. Finally he came back towards them.

'You are right,' he said. 'I am sorry it is like this for you. My friend, Gurt, he says we should trust you. He says you have already done enough to pay me for yesterday. He says we should not ask you to help your country's enemies. You would have trouble if you were caught, no?' David nodded. 'We just ask you one more thing. Then no more. Tomorrow we will try to cross the moor to the sea. My friend is no better. His cough is worse, and his leg is not good, but we must try. We need one more day to gain our strength. We need one more good meal, and some drink – brandy perhaps, to keep us warm inside. Can you do this for us?'

David and Tucky looked at each other. 'This'll be the last?' said David. 'There'll be no more?'

'You have my word. It is the last.'

'All right, mister. We got to go now. We'll be back this time tomorrow,' and David whistled for Jip who was sniffing the blankets. 'Come on, Jip.'

'Thank you again, my friends,' the German said, and his friend by the shelter smiled weakly and waved his thanks.

The boys were at the bottom of the valley before either of them spoke, and Jip was running on ahead chasing every scent he found. 'Not so bad, are they Davey? For Germans, I mean?'

'Brandy,' David muttered. 'And where do they think we're going to get brandy from?'

'There's some bottles under the stairs,' said Tucky. 'Where Mr Reynolds gets his cider from.'

'Steal them, you mean. We've got to steal from Ann and Mr Reynolds?'

'We stole the eggs, didn't we?' said Tucky.

'That's different,' said David, and he felt uncomfortable as he said it.

Mr Reynolds was out on Home Guard duty again by the time they got back, and they helped Ann feed the stock and shut them up for the night. 'Not many eggs,' Ann said as they were crossing the yard. David and Tucky said nothing. 'Twice as many yesterday, something must have frightened them. Jerry said there might be a fox about. And I left the bowl of slops for the pigs on the ledge above the sink - just like always. You did not move it, did you boys?'

'Probably Jip,' David said quickly. 'He's always at the dustbins and things. He's taken them before.'

hasn't he?

'Strange, though,' Ann went on.

'What is?' Tucky was nervous, and he showed it.

'You could be right, Jip does take the slops sometimes, but he doesn't put the bowl back on the kitchen table when he has finished.'

'That yellow bowl?' David asked. 'I found it outside in the yard, Ann. It was upside down by the trough, so I put it back in the kitchen.' David hadn't the courage to look at Ann as he spoke. She seemed happy with his explanation, and forgot all about it. But at supper she reminded Jerry about the fox. 'I think it must be that, Jerry. They are not laying away, and they're eating as good as ever. Must be the fox.'

Mr Reynolds was still in his uniform, and unbuttoned his tunic. 'Course it could be, but 'tis the early spring they come after the fowls, when there's cubs to feed. 'Tis a bit late now, and I haven't seen him about for weeks the old fox, he's a cunning old devil. He doesn't come after the fowls on a bright summer's day; he waits till the wind's up high, and comes around dusk. That's when you want to watch out for the fox. Old devil, he is. No, they've gone off the lay - they do it from time to time. Get a bit lazy,



just the same as we do.' He sniffed the air greedily and rubbed his hands. 'That's smells good enough, Ann my dear.'

'I made that potato pie with eggs, but there will not be enough egg, not as much as there should be.'

Mr Reynolds leaned up against the cooking stove and warmed his hands on the pipes. 'Tis the coldest place on God's earth, that moor. Even in high summer, the evenings are like winter. 'Tis terrible. Still 'twas a good exercise, very good.'

'Up on the moor?' David's heart seemed to come up to his mouth.

'Twas after our little caper last week, my dear, the good Captain thought we should have more practice at searching up there. So up we went – and 'twas a good thing we did, too.'

'What d'you mean?' David thought he would choke on his mouthful.

'Did you find anything?' Tucky asked, all the colour drained from his face.

'Course we did. If the Home Guard goes out on a search, you can be sure they find something.'

'What did you find, Jerry? Don't keep on. You're teasing,' said Ann, laughing.

'No planes, my dears, no Germans, I'm afraid, just two of my sheep stuck fast in a bog,' Mr Reynolds' face wrinkled into a smile. 'Poor little devils, been like that all day by the state of them; right up over their backs it was. You'd think the sheep would know where to go and where not to go, wouldn't you?' The boys laughed with Ann, in a desperate attempt to hide their relief.

Once in bed that night, the boys lay still, listening to the talk downstairs, listening for any sign that Ann or Mr Reynolds was suspicious.

'Do you think they know?' Tucky whispered.

'Not yet. Don't think so.'

'I saw those bottles under the stairs like I said. There's loads of them, Davey. They won't notice if one's missing.'

'Won't they?' David was sullen.

'When shall we take one?' Tucky shifted up on his elbow.

'Why don't you go and ask them if you're in such a hurry?' David snapped angrily. 'Why don't you go down and tell them we're looking after two Germans on the moor, and would they mind if we took a bottle of brandy to keep them warm and help them to escape.'

Tucky was silent for a moment. 'No need to have a go at me, Davey.'

'Well, it was your idea, wasn't it?' David hissed.

'S'pose so,' Tucky lay down again. 'But we had to do it, Davey. We got to do it.'

'Why?'

'Cos we said we would, that's why.'

'And Ann and Mr Reynolds. Have you thought what we're going to say if they find out what we've done? What are we going to tell them, Tucky?'

'I dunno,' said Tucky. 'I hope they never find out, cos I dunno.'

school was slow the next day. Every lesson dragged on, and it seemed as if the last bell would never ring. For Tucky it was spent wondering about the two airmen up on the moor, hoping no one else would discover them, and speculating whether or not they'd make it to the sea. David could think of nothing but the brandy, about how he was going to steal from two of the best people in the world to help the same people who had killed his father. He hated what he was doing, and dreaded having to do it.

Ann and Mr Reynolds were out turning the hay as they came back up the lane. Mr Reynolds was waving his rake, calling to them to come over. He was leaning up against the cart wiping the sweat away from his eyes. 'Got a job for you two,' he said. 'Jip's gone off, my dears. I was up on the moor this morning turning out the late lambs and Jip took it in his head to run off. I nearly went after him, but while the weather's right I thought I'd best get on with this. Course he'll find his way back himself like as not, but I'd be happier if you'd go out and find him. He made off in the direction of the river I think.' He stopped and looked closely at David. 'What's the matter, Davey? You don't look too good.'

'Nothing,' said David hurriedly.

'We'll find him, Mr Reynolds,' said Tucky. 'We were going up on the moor anyway, weren't we, Davey?'

'Don't be late for supper,' Ann called after them.

They ran back to the cottage first and dropped their school things in the bedroom. Tucky pulled off his pillowcase. 'We can use this to carry the food,' he said.

'You know where Jip went, don't you, Tucky? He went off to see them. What if Mr Reynolds had followed him? They've got a gun, haven't they?'

'They'd never use it, would they?' Tucky said. 'They never used it on us. They're not like that. They wouldn't have hurt him, and anyway, it never happened. Stop worrying about it. Come on.'

Tucky was impatient to get out there and he went off in search of food with strict instructions from David to take nothing that would be missed. David made sure Ann and Mr Reynolds were still out in the field and then went downstairs to find the brandy. He sorted through the bottles under the stairs, looking over his shoulders every few seconds to make sure no one was coming. He felt like a thief in the night. There was no brandy, only a bottle of whisky, half

full, and crates and crates of empties. He took the whisky and tucked it under his shirt.

They met at the door and ran, Tucky holding the pillowcase in front of him and David clutching the whisky in both hands as he tried to keep up with Tucky. They reached the stone wall again, and flopped down behind it.

'Look,' Tucky panted, opening up the pillowcase. 'Look what I got.' There were eggs again, two tins of corned beef and the remains of the pie from the evening before.

'You're mad, Tucky, why d'you take that?'

'That's all there was, honest. There were masses of tins like this and I left some of the pie in the bowl. There was nothing in the slops bowl. S'all I could find, Davey.'

It was clouding over now, and the hills on the moor were changing colour. The stones took on a deeper granite grey, and the grass turned almost purple on the hillsides. As they clambered up the hill towards the Germans' hide they felt the first drop of rain. But this time they felt something was wrong. It was all too quiet. They called out for Jip, but there was no answering bark.

The hide was deserted, the shelter had disappeared

as if it had never been there. Only the damp grey
ashes by the stone wall were left to show that anyone
had been there at all.