

## After the War by Bea Sweeney

It was over.

The panic, the fighting, the sudden air raids. It was all in the past. The night it ended, we could hear the cheers of our village and possibly beyond.

I am Lydia, and, for me, there was one more fight.

About two weeks after the war ended, I was finally having a party with my friends and my younger sister Diana was inviting some of her friends to celebrate victory. My father was coming home from the war but he got delayed so was going to miss the party. We spent hours planning it. There were going to be as many treats as possible considering rationing was still going on. There aren't many people around, seeing as we live a bit further out of our village on a farm, but we managed to invite a few people and their parents because my mum hasn't seen anyone for years.

We had great fun preparing, but there was one problem: we didn't have much food, because we only had rations. But we managed. We made our own bread and jam, and the night before, we were ready and excited. I mean, who isn't? We hadn't seen our friends for a long, long time and we were looking forward to spending time with them.

But that night was awful. The chickens escaped and we spent ages rounding them up. I couldn't wait to get into bed, but I wasn't sure my legs would make it. All I could do now was to wait till morning for the fun and party and cakes...

The time finally came, 12:55pm. I was struggling to find an outfit to wear to the party with only five minutes left. I didn't have many clothes, I had grown out of so many of them and we couldn't simply go out and waste money in time of war. But, eventually I found a short, white petticoat and olive green frock. It was perfect. I had only just finished doing my hair when my friends began to arrive. Everyone was neatly dressed and their mothers had brought whatever they could: cakes and biscuits and snacks. I have to admit, my mouth was watering when everyone came into the garden.

We had put up bunting and a long table with a red checkered tablecloth and what seemed like loads and loads of food. We couldn't wait to get started.

My sister and I were having a great time with our friends, dancing and eating and catching up. One girl wasn't joining in. Her name was Kathleen and I went up to her to ask her if she was ok.

"Hi, I'm Lydia. Do you remember me?"

"Hi, I think so." she answered. She seemed like she didn't want to dance.

"Well, it's Kathleen, right?" she nodded, "Are you ok? You don't seem very happy." I said.

A tear started to roll down her cheek.

"Do you want to go somewhere more private?"

She nodded again. We went up to my room and sat on my bed. She took a deep breath, but then burst into tears.

"It's...hic...my...dad. He...hic...hasn't come...back...and I'm scared." She sobbed. I put my arms around her.

"Hush, it's going to be fine. I'm sure he'll be back as soon as he can. Like when my sister got really ill. We were told she wouldn't make it, but she fought and she won. She was only five at the time, and just look at her now." We went over to my window that looked over the garden, past the bushes, over the road and at the rolling hills.

"It will all work out in the end." I whispered to her. "LYDIA!" mother called, well, shrieked

"Mama, what's up?!" I called back.

"Just come outside. It's urgent!" I could sense the importance in her voice and leapt down the stairs, Kathleen closely following.

"Hello young lady. I'm Mr. Perry your local ARP warden. I'm afraid we have detected an unexploded bomb in the hills nearby. Your farm is the nearest possible target. The village is safe but you will need to evacuate all your animals. How many would that be?" He asked

"About fifty - one hundred, not too many." My mother replied. "Well, you have two hours to evacuate them and you must ask your charming guests to leave immediately." He explained.

"I'll help." Kathleen said, "My grandparents owned a farm. I can help you with evacuating them."

"Thank you but I can't..." my mother began but Kathleen was already getting the chickens in the van we use for moving animals. There was a field we could evacuate them to, so we used that. It only took about half an hour for all the animals to be moved. All the guests had left except Kathleen and her mother. Then we spent about fifteen minutes packing things we desperately needed. A few clothes, books and I packed my grandmother's necklace and my diary.

But the ground began to shake an hour earlier than expected.

"RUN!!" Mr. Perry yelled. Our mothers, Diana, Kathleen, Mr. Perry and I ran for our lives - literally. We didn't stop. Kathleen's blonde curls flew out behind her. Mother, with a crying Diana in her arms, looked frantic. Kathleen's mother was now clutching her high heels in her hands as she ran for cover and Mr. Perry looked like he had done this a million times before, while I was just running. But we were too late...

**BOOM!!!!**

We were all knocked off our feet and pieces of shrapnel flew everywhere. But then, a bigger, worse catastrophe happened. A partially big piece of shrapnel struck Diana on the head. My mother screamed. It was the worst sound I'd ever heard. Despite Mr. Perry taking us to the hospital in his ancient Landrover, we were too late. But our beloved Diana died within the hour. The war had cruelly come to visit us in its final hour.