

# **INTRUSION**

**WWII,  
Two boys,  
A fateful rivalry**

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***“In retrospect, though many were guilty, none was innocent.”***

**The Origins of the Second World War**  
***A.J.P. Taylor***

## CHAPTER ONE

October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1937

*Today the Duke and Duchess of Windsor met Herr Hitler at Berghof*

Kenneth. Until now he'd been just a name on a Christmas card written by someone else. *Kenneth*. Billy felt his tongue thick against his lips. It felt the same when he said 'filth'. 'Filthy' was the word Mother used when he'd got dirty knees playing outside.

He bent down to his hobby horse's hard white head. The furry strip along the top of its neck was nice to stroke. He whispered into the leathery ear, 'Do you know? We're really, really going to have a boy to play with here, in our house! He's called a cousin.'

The horse's wheel was shiny red like a ripe tomato and when its head was pressed down, the wheel squeaked. Really that was the horse talking. Horsey always said it would be jolly good if Jim and Andrew could come over after school. But Mother said it would be too much to have a child here to play.

Now he would!

He smiled to himself. Yesterday, he'd felt really important at News Time. Miss Peake was kind and sometimes wore a pretty blouse. He'd put up his hand.

'Billy? Do you have some news for us?'

'I've got a cousin and he's coming to my house.'

'My cousin lives next door,' said Sonia.

Dick and Mick shouted out that they had UMPTEEN cousins not silly old ONE.

'No such number, *umpteen*.' Sonia was clever and she knew.

'Loads, anyway.'

'Yes, loads 'n loads.'

'Now twins, that's not very nice'. Miss Peake smiled, 'We're all happy that Billy has his cousin visiting, aren't we, children?'

'Yes, Miss Peake,' everyone chanted.

At home time, he'd told Mother, 'Miss Peake is ever so pleased that my cousin is visiting.'

Mother's mouth moved into something like a smile, only not as nice. 'Perhaps she'd like to entertain him, then.'

Now it was the very day the cousin was coming. He stroked Horsey's head. On Monday, he'd tell everyone what he and Kenneth had played.

'Billy!' Mother's voice calling upstairs made him start. 'Are you washed?'

He pulled Horsey away from the window where they'd been watching the children in the house over the road laughing and even shouting.

'Billy? They'll be here soon.'

He rode out of his bedroom and along the passage, past the big bathroom with its misty windows and the little lavatory with its long chain and white knob and down the stairs, being very careful not to catch the hobby horse wheel on the stair-rods as he went. At the bottom, it made a nice clickety-clack sound on the hall tiles.

Mother waved her arms. 'For goodness sake, child! Everyone can hear that for miles. People who live in Primley Road don't want your noise.'

The horse clattered into the hall-stand. Mother looked down with her *Don't* face. 'You'll have to behave when your relatives come, Billy. I'm sure Kenneth will, with that angelic face.'

A jelly face! He started to ask, 'Mother, why does ...?'

'That horse in the umbrella stand, please. Look, here's your father home from Chambers.'

Horse squeaked, 'Something big's going to happen.'

Father's shadow showed through the glass in the front door.

The galloping had made Billy's socks slide down to his ankles. They were a new pair but the elastic wasn't very strong. He pulled them up as neatly as he could before the front door opened.

Father came in with a whoosh of wintry wind, shaking raindrops from his gabardine. He shut the front door, leaving the dark outside with the empty milk bottles. 'Here I am, Marcia.'

Mother's shoes clippity-clicked forward as she went to collect his briefcase. 'You're quite late, Herbert. High tea is nearly ready. I'd have thought you'd be eager to entertain your relatives.'

'Indeed I am, dear. Family near at last. But what a day! Court sat late and then we were discussing this.' He tapped the newspaper under his arm. 'Ha! The Windsors' latest. Did you see it? I don't know what Frank's take on it will be. Judge Ware-Simpkins called it outrageous. I tend to agree.'

Mother nodded. She didn't answer but put his briefcase in its place and dabbed the raindrops off it. One dropped onto the hobbyhorse's mane, but it didn't squeak.

'Swanning over to meet Hitler, Marcia. Bavaria – huh! The King surely won't like that –his brother mixing with the Ruddy Huns.'

Mother shrugged. 'They must know what they're doing, I suppose. We don't want any nastiness, after all.'

The wireless voice often spoke about Nasties. Mother was afraid that Nasties would come here. Billy looked at Father to see if he was frightened of Ruddy Huns, but he was twirling his umbrella into a swizzle stick like a barber's pole. Billy smoothed his hands round the damp folds and stood it in the elephant's foot, his most favourite thing in the house. Horse liked it too.

Father hung his coat on the hallstand where two hooks were still empty and lit his pipe. 'So, Billy. You'll have someone to play with at last, now that Uncle Frank has brought Aunty and Kenneth to live in Balham. Just across the common, you know.'

'Yes, I know. Mother's told me. Goody.' Billy hopped on one leg and then the other. 'Father, I want to see Kenneth.'

'I know you do. It's not such fun being an only child, is it?'

Billy shook his head hard.

'No. Now I grew up with an older brother and Mother with a younger one. It will be good for you to have Kenneth around.'

Mother put her head on one side. 'I'm not sure whether it will be good for him. . . '

'Marcia!'

Father's eyebrows were so big, like untidy caterpillars, while Mother's were so skinny and small, just a couple of dark dashes.

'-or good for me. Isn't one boy enough trouble?'

'After her—' Father dropped his voice— 'women's trouble, it's the only child they're going to have. You'll be such a support to poor Doreen. Natural they should spoil Kenneth a bit.'

It was a shame Kenneth was spoiled. When Billy had spilled tomato soup down his Sunday shirt it was spoiled and it was in the rag bag now. He'd got into terrible trouble.

'Boys can be such a blessed—'

'*Children are a Blessing and Our Future.*' Dad often said things to the ceiling or the sky. This time he talked to his pipe.

Mother's mouth gave that twisty smile again. She smoothed her apron and her shoes click-clacked back to the kitchen. Perhaps she'd made those lemon cakes that had the squashy tops with a blob of cream.

'Will Kenneth bring his toys, Father?'

'I shouldn't think so. You must share yours.'

‘I’m going to, Father. I’ve set out my farm upstairs and the small bricks for building walls.’

‘Good boy. Now, listen. I’ve been thinking. “Father” is rather formal, these days. Uncle Frank would think so. You can call me “Dad” from now on.’

Billy tilted his head up and looked carefully. Father looked like the same man. *Father*—that was his name. Was he really called “Dad”?

‘So, Billy. You say *Dad*, understand? Some of your friends at school probably use that name. So you practise saying it.’

It would feel ever so funny. “Dad” didn’t feel like someone he properly knew. But Billy tried it, ‘Yes –Dad.’ It was like playtime at school. He’d been Teacher yesterday and banged his cane lots of times, and a fireman the day before. Now Father was joining in the game.

He scratched around his knees and up his arms. If only Mother hadn’t made him wear his blue buster suit. It was a knitted one, and very itchy. She said it was dinky and he had to wear it for best. But it was worst! His hand couldn’t get high enough to reach all the itches up his back.

‘Stop hopping and wriggling, child. Go and sit in the front room until they get here.’

Billy looked at Horsey but thought he’d better leave it in the hallstand.

Dad’s big hand moved him toward the front room door. ‘You could get your new pencils and draw.’ He pointed to the bookcase and the unopened pad and pencils upon it, Billy’s birthday present.

‘I don’t really like drawing.’

Dad sighed and puffed at his pipe. A swirl of smoke rose up between them. ‘When I was a boy, it was a treat to draw. Just sit then, and practise being quiet. Kenneth’s a quiet child.’

‘Yes, Fath— *Dad*.’ Billy watched the smoke trapped in the closing door. The firm footsteps paced towards the kitchen.