

Chapter 1

Into The Darkness

It fell upon us like madness. Whirling, roaring, splintering, blazing madness. The first to catch fire was Josiah's butchery, though no one had the time or words to mourn his loss. For a moment we stood like stone, staring into the face of a screeching monster.

It wants to eat us up, quick as a flash. Like a thousand wolves or a starving army.

These flames will not be stopped by water, leather buckets and axes. They are many and they despise us. They scorch and fume at our determination to stand and fight.

The fire teased and hissed, leapfrogging one building only to turn back with full force and engulf it. Then lead windows melted, glass boiled and the place tumbled. Like a ragdoll discarded by an angry child.

"We must go," I tugged at Mrs Lyon's arm, coughing on the acrid smoke. Mrs Lyon turned to face me, tears leaving tracks in the smoky grime of her cheeks.

"Where will we go?" she said as if in a daze.

"Towards Westminster," I implored. "The fire won't take Westminster."

We ran. I gripped Dan's hand, Mrs Lyon followed. The smoke covered us like a shroud leaving barely enough oxygen for our overworked lungs.

"Dan, Westminster," I coughed "you must get us there." Now the fire was playing a manic game of Hide and Seek. We would gulp down a lungful of fresh air only for the pall of smoke to fall again. It was disorientating, bewildering chaos.

"Not far now," gasped Dan, hesitating as we navigated the deadly gloom. I could see lighter skies ahead. Maybe we could escape? But as we turned the next corner everything was menacing, more ferocious.

"We've no choice," Dan was grim faced. "The only way is through."

We bolted forward, ducking and dodging, clambering over and under.

"I have to stop," Mrs Lyon clutched at her throat, "can't breathe."

We paused and a moment later from far above I heard a creaking, a groaning and a tearing. It sounded like the cry of something lost. I looked up to see a huge piece of jagged, blackened timber falling inevitably towards us.

“No,” I screamed throwing myself at Mrs Lyon and Dan. I pushed them out of the way with all the strength my tired limbs could muster. Then everything around me spiraled like a crazy spinning top. After that, there was nothing but blackness and I felt no more.