

I looked disbelievingly at the phone. I couldn't believe I had it in my hands after all this time! I couldn't believe it was working! I couldn't believe that it was the policeman who had given it to me! I had wasted so much time and effort trying to get away from him, and he had only wanted to help me all along – I could hardly credit it! There were so many questions I wanted to ask him, but I knew this wasn't the time. I climbed over the rubble to the position I thought I had been standing in when the first explosion hit the house. I looked back down the road where I saw Mr Carter smiling at me and crossing his fingers for good luck. He had made my mind boggle with the things he had told me. Part of me didn't want to believe him, yet he knew so much about me I knew it had to be true. The mobile vibrated in my hand and I turned my attention back to the phone. It was critical that I got this next bit right. I scrolled through the settings and set the clock and date for the time I wanted to return to the future. It took me a while because I wasn't sure of the date. Then I waited. Nothing happened. Mr Carter and the policeman looked concerned. Was there something else I was supposed to do?

Then I heard a shout and I saw Mr Carter pointing to the sky. I was suddenly aware of a loud droning noise that filled the air and menacing shadows that darkened the street. I looked up to see dozens of dark grey shapes falling out of the sky. Then before I had time to think or react there were explosions all around me. It was another air-raid! For some reason there had been no warning; no siren. A huge explosion of red and black enveloped the end of the street. When the smoke and dust finally settled, I realised that the shiny, black Bentley was now just a mangled mass of metal. But where was Mr Carter? He had been leaning against the bonnet of the car just before the bomb had exploded. I screamed. Scrambling back over the broken bricks, I ran back towards the car; back towards Mr Carter. I was halfway down the road when another huge explosion sent me flying and a searing pain pierced my body.



"Drew, Drew! Are you feeling any better?" I instantly recognised the voice. I hadn't heard it for days. I had missed it so much. "I think she's coming round, Joe." I tried to open my eyes, but something pushing down on my forehead was stopping me from seeing. Reaching out with my hands, I realised that I had a bandage covering the upper half of my face. "She's awake! Oh! Darling, we were so worried about you." Then I felt her kiss my cheek. I could tell that she had been crying: I felt her hot tears on my face.

I couldn't see, but could I still speak? "Mum!" An odd noise came out of my mouth. My voice seemed disconnected from my body: it felt like someone else was talking for me.

"Darling?"

"Where am I, Mum?"

"You're in hospital, sweetheart. There was a gas explosion. You've been injured and badly burnt, but the doctors say you are going to make a full recovery."

"You were a right mess when we found you." That was Joe. I was actually pleased to hear his voice.

"Will I be able to see?"

"The doctors are going to remove the bandages in a couple of days. They seem confident that your eyes have not been permanently damaged."

"So I'll be able to see again?"

"She's worried she won't be able to play her video games, Mum!"

"Oh! Darling! Of course you'll be able to play your video games."

I didn't speak for a while. I thought about the war and the pain and the suffering. I remembered Mr Carter smiling at me from the end of the street and then the explosions and how he had seemingly disappeared in the smoke and the dust. But I knew his body wasn't going to materialise like the bodies in my video games. He was gone for good. (Though, if he was right I would meet him again when I was older.) Death and destruction didn't seem an appropriate theme for a video game. It didn't seem right to play at war after I had experienced it first-hand and saw what it had done to people. I felt my body shake as I quietly wept. Mum took my hand and even Joe patted me on my arm in a brotherly way. Usually the only time he touched me was to hit me.

"Mum!"

"Yes, sweetheart."

"I don't want to play computer games ever again," I sobbed. And do you know what? I never did.

