

A Theatre Alibi & Oxford Playhouse co-production



# Spies

based on the novel by **Michael Frayn**

adapted by Daniel Jamieson

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## Spies

**(We hear a commuter train approaching the platform of a suburban station and stopping. Now there's an automated platform announcement.)**

Announcement     The train now arrived on platform two is the ten eighteen service to Dorking. Calling at Ewell East, Epsom, Ashtead, Leatherhead, Boxhill and Westhumble and Dorking, the train now arrived on platform two.

**(We get into the train with our ears. Lights up on a seated passenger with the appearance of an elderly German tourist. He's speaking in German on his mobile phone.)**

Stefan             **(Conciliatory,)** Yes... yes... I won't. I'm perfectly capable... Alright. **(There's a beeping prior to the doors shutting.)** It's the doors closing. I'm on the train. I'd better... I will. **(The doors close.)** I'll call tonight, around 7. Thank you. Bye love. Bye. **(He puts away his phone, rolls his eyes at us then speaks in unaccented English.)** My daughter-in-law. She worries about me...! **(The train moves off.)**  
"Do we have a contact for you in London?" she said.  
"He's staying in Memory Lane!" my son said.  
Exactly. The last house before you go round the bend into Amnesia Avenue!  
I spent my childhood here, you see. I saw a cheap flight and I thought, what the Hell, this year might be the last chance I get. Phew! This is August weather, isn't it? Not June weather. Do you mind if I open the window? **(He opens the window and breathes in the air gratefully.)**  
Lovely smell to the air this time of year. Even with the car

fumes.

**(He sits and looks at us, deciding whether to confide in us.)**

There's a particular scent...

**(He checks no-one apart from us is listening,)** The third week of June and there it is again. It must come from one of the gardens in my street but I could never think what it was. Something quite coarse... It makes me feel rather restless and yet, at the same time, kind of... homesick for where I am. Brings back my childhood, I suppose, but also a feeling that something somewhere has been left undone.

Forgive me.

I asked my daughter-in-law whether she knew what the scent was.

"Liguster." She said. Didn't ring any bells. But I got down the English dictionary and there it was. How could I forget? I felt a bit embarrassed that something so ordinary could stir up such powerful feelings.

What was it?

**(He looks around, before confiding,)**

Privet.

**(The doors beep. He looks out of the window and realises this is his stop and jumps off the train just in time.)**

Good Lord. Half a century since I was last here.

**(He walks as if in a dream. We hear prosaic, suburban street sounds. He arrives in the Close where he spent most of his childhood.)**

Well. It's all still here... "The Close." Same houses. Just sitting there.

Where've all the hedges gone? There used to be hedges everywhere... It's changed into some kind of landscaped...

municipal car park.

**(He stands uncertainly.)**

What a shame.

Have I come all the way back to look at a carpark?

**(But now we hear the approach of a train, muffled in a cutting at first.)**

Listen...! **(The train bursts into the clear, moves behind the houses, goes over a bridge and slows into the station.)**

Now that takes me back!

**(Suddenly the Close begins to transform before Stefan's eyes. Hedges begin to sprout all over the place.)**

Flowering Almond. That was my friend Keith's Auntie Dee's house. **(Auntie Dee rushes past with an old fashioned pushchair then disappears behind her hedge.)** Auntie Dee. Always smiling. And Baby Milly.

That's beech! Mr Sheldon was always clipping that.

**(Clippers clip away over a beech hedge, the clipper can't be seen, only his hands. Stefan crosses the road. Hesitant piano scales come from behind another hedge.)**

Lime. You never saw the Hardiment children. Always practising.

Dog roses. That house was Lamorna. **(A mother's voice calls from behind a flowering hedge.)**

Mrs Berrill            Barbara? Get some polish on these shoes or there'll be no roly-poly for you tonight, you hear...?

Stefan                 Barbara Berrill ran wild, with her dad off at the war.

**(A thick, overgrown hedge looms.)**

Miss Durrant's privet. Her house was gutted by an incendiary.  
The garden turned to jungle.

**(Stefan turns to his side.)**

And the Wheatleys. **(A screen of weeds and lovelorn shrubs rises up before him.)** My father never did anything to our garden.

**(The eleven year old Stephen Wheatley comes out of the front door of number 2, cramming the last of his tea in his mouth, and sits on the doorstep to put on his plimsolls. His shorts are too short and his shirt is too long and one of his socks refuses to stay up. His elder brother, Geoff, taunts him from indoors.)**

Geoff                 ...What's it this time? Still after the apeman on the golf course?

Stephen              No, because I found him.

Geoff                 Where!?

Stephen              Standing right in front of me.

Geoff                    Ooo! Help me! My sides...! My sides...!

**(Stephen shuts the door.)**

Stephen                Twerp.

**(Stephen ambles across the road. He stops in the middle and gazes at the sky with his mouth open. Stefan follows him with fascination.)**

Stefan                Was I really so... unsatisfactory? **(Stephen picks his nose thoughtfully.)** I suppose I was. **(Stephen continues across the road and enters at a white gate.)** The Hayward's residence - Chollerton. **(Stephen knocks, two respectful thumps.)** You couldn't knock too loud at a house like that.

**(Stephen becomes self-conscious of his appearance at the last minute and bends to pull up his sock. The door is opened by a boy of Stephen's age, similarly dressed, but much smarter. He stands in the gap silently.)**

Keith. My best friend.

Mrs Hayward        **(Unseen,)** Keith, darling, who is it?

Keith                Stephen.

Mrs H                Well ask him in or go out to play. Don't just hang about on the doorstep. **(Keith goes in. Stephen follows. Stefan creeps after.)**

Stephen                What shall we play?

Keith                    Let's build a railway. **(He opens the door to the sitting room. Mrs Hayward is sat at her desk writing a letter.)** Mummy, can we take my trains outside?

Mrs H                    I should think so. You'd better check with Daddy where you can put them though. **(The boys rush away to fetch the train set. Stefan looks at Mrs Hayward.)**

Stefan                    Mrs Hayward spent a lot of the day "resting" and rested was how she always seemed.

**(Stefan wanders after the boys, stopping to peer at a tastefully framed watercolour on the way.)**

I still don't understand why they let me be Keith's friend. He went to a school where everyone had their own cricket bat and a special bag to put it in. I went to a school where we played with splintered communal bats.

**(Keith is loading Stephen with track like a beast of burden.)**

Keith                    That should do it. **(Keith leads the way, empty handed. Stephen stumbles after, Stefan removing unseen obstacles from his path.)**

Stefan                    He was the officer corps in our two man army. I was the Other Ranks - and grateful to be so...

**(They stop at the garage door. Keith's father is assiduously sharpening chisels on a grindstone. Keith waits to be noticed.)**

Mr Hayward        Spit it out old boy.

Keith                Can Stephen and I lay out a railway please?

Mr H                 Grass - out of bounds. Stay on the path. **(Keith makes to leave.)** Wait. If I find so much as a footprint on the flowerbeds old bean, I'll cane you. Understand?

Keith                Yes, Daddy.

**(The boys go. Stefan contemplates Mr Hayward who is whistling an endless tune.)**

Stefan                He never addressed me, even if I was the one about to step on a flower bed. I didn't exist as far as he was concerned. **(Mr Hayward sharpens a bayonet, showering Stefan with sparks.)** Keith told me his father had won a medal in the Great War for killing five Germans with that bayonet. **(He goes outside to watch the boys building their railway.)** But then one never knew what to believe with Keith.

Stephen              Why's your car got the wheels taken off?

Keith                To stop the Germans using it if they invade.

**(Pause.)**

Stephen              Couldn't they just put them back on again?

**(Keith gives Stephen one of his father's smiles.)**

Keith                    The wheel nuts are in a secret drawer by my father's bed with his revolver, old bean.

Stefan                   I was often surprised by Keith's announcements. I was surprised when he told me Mr Gort was a murderer. But then we found the bones of some of his victims in the waste ground behind his garden...

**(Mrs Hayward comes out with a jug of lemon barley covered with a lace cloth and two cut glass tumblers on a tray.)**

Mrs H                    You'll come inside if you get chilly, won't you chaps?

Keith                    Yes, Mummy.

**(She walks away.)**

Stefan                   Was it a blind leap of pure fantasy? Or of pure intuition. I'll never know.

**(Pause. Keith watches his mother as she walks away.)**

Keith                    My mother is a German spy.

**(Stephen looks at Keith for some moments with his mouth open.)**

Let's shadow her.

Stephen                  Yes.

Stefan                    We found an exercise book in which to record our observations.

Keith                    **(Writing,)** “LOGBOOK. SECRIT.”

Stefan                    I had private reservations about the spelling...

Stephen                  **(Whispering,)** Here she comes!

**(All three of them peep through the banisters as Mrs Hayward comes into the hall below and talks to the cleaning lady who is out of sight.)**

Mrs H                    You will remember to dust behind the dining room clock today Mrs Elmsley?

**(Keith gives Stephen the logbook and orders him to write. Stefan reads.)**

Stefan                    “10.51. Chivvies Mrs Elmsley.”

**(Mrs Hayward picks up the phone.)**

Mrs H                    Mr Hucknall? Good Morning... Yes. I'd like three mutton chops, not too fatty if you have them... By noon, please. Thank you. Good day.

Stephen                  She's coming upstairs!

**(They hide in the playroom. Mrs H goes past into the bathroom and shuts the door. Stephen writes, Stefan reads.)**

Stefan                    “10.53. Goes to the...”

Keith                      Don't put that!

**(She comes out, the sound of a flush behind her. She goes down, puts on an apron and takes an enamel bowl down the garden. The three spies follow. Mrs H speaks in at the garage door as she passes.)**

Mrs H                      Awfully good job you're doing with those lettuce seedlings darling...

**(Mrs H glimpses Keith and Stephen as they scuttle for cover.)**

Bang bang! Got the pair of you!

Stefan                      "10.56. Points a pretend gun at us as if we were children."

**(Mrs H goes to the chicken run and feeds the hens.)**

Mrs H                      Come on ladies, no pushing and shoving. Ration books ready!

Keith                      Let's get back to base. **(They run to the playroom.)** Show me. **(Keith looks at the logbook and nods with satisfaction.)**

Stefan                      It made so much sense. The incendiary that landed on Miss Durrant's house... Keith's mother must've guided the bombers in. And all her incomprehensible niceness to me... it was just part of her false identity...

**(Mrs H looks round the door. Stephen and Keith guiltily close the logbook.)**

Mrs H                    I'm having a little rest before lunch. You chaps try not to make too much noise, will you?

Keith                    Yes, Mummy. **(She goes.)** Let's check her blotter.

Stephen                Why?

Keith                    You can read the blotted writing with a mirror.

**(He fetches his magnifying glass and they creep down to Mrs Hayward's desk, fetching a torch and a looking glass from the hall stand. Keith opens the blotter and examines it with the torch and mirror. Stephen looks at the photos on the desk.)**

Stefan                    Keith's family watched us from silver frames. Keith's mother and father on their wedding day. Auntie Dee and Uncle Peter on their wedding day. The same four on the beach with Uncle Peter stood on his head and Keith's mother and Auntie Dee holding him by his ankles. Uncle Peter was a bomber pilot in the RAF.

**(Stefan and Stephen see a rosy vision of Peter arriving home on leave. Auntie Dee welcomes him with baby Milly in her arms. He sets down his bag and lifts Milly high in the air. Auntie Dee takes his bag and they go off indoors.)**

And maybe the next time his squadron reached Berlin the Luftwaffe would mysteriously be waiting for him... because of Keith's mother.

**(Keith has opened the desk draw and rummaged out a little black book.)**

Stephen            What's that?

Keith             Her diary.

Stephen           You mustn't...!

Keith             Shhhh!

**(Keith turns the pages. Stephen and Stefan look over his shoulders.)**

Stefan            **(Putting on glasses and reading,)** "Bridge at the Curwens...  
Keith's Sports Day..."

**(Keith stops turning and holds the book up to his eyes, then looks at Stephen meaningfully.)**

Stephen           What?

**(Keith hands the diary to Stephen and points.)**

Stefan            In the space for a Friday in January there was a tiny mark  
between the date and the phase of the moon.

Keith             "X"!

Stephen           We'd better just leave it... **(He puts the diary back in the  
drawer. Keith takes it out and carries on looking.)** But if it's  
something private...

Keith                    There's something else.

Stefan                    An exclamation mark next to a Saturday in February.

Keith                    Make a note. **(He turns more pages.)** Here!

Stefan                    Another X.

Keith                    And here!

Stefan                    It seemed the Xs happened once a month. But the exclamation mark had only happened three times that year. The last time next to "Wedding Anniversary"...

Stephen                    She... has meetings with someone once a month, secret meetings. Then every now and then something surprising happens... something that wasn't expected...

Keith                    Look. The meetings with X always happen on the night of no moon...

Stefan                    And both our heads were full of the same possibilities - the unlit German plane landing on the fairway of the golf course, or the German parachutist falling softly through the perfect darkness...

**(Suddenly all the clocks in the house are chiming midday at once. Stephen, Keith and Stefan jump out of their skins. The boys put the diary back in the drawer and get halfway to the door when they find themselves face to face with an equally surprised Mrs Hayward.)**

Mrs H                    What are you doing in here?

Keith                    Nothing.

Stephen                 Nothing.

Mrs H                    Not taking something out of my desk?

Keith/Stephen         No.

Mrs H                    Why have you got such funny looks on your faces. **(Stephen and Keith look at each other to see that they have got very funny looks on their faces. Mrs H goes to her desk.)** And what are these doing in here? **(She holds up the magnifying glass, the torch and the mirror.)**

Keith                    We were just playing.

Mrs H                    Well. You know you shouldn't be doing it in here. Why don't you go outside and play?

**(She watches them thoughtfully while they put back the mirror and torch on the hallstand. They run out to their lookout in the hedge. Stefan watches Mrs H think for a moment then follows the boys.)**

Stefan                    We had first made our hideout in Miss Durrant's hedge two summers before when we were on the run from the Canadian Mounted Police... It was there that we headed now.

**(The boys crawl in through a tunnel. Stefan peers at them through the branches, then opens the hedge like a book to reveal them at the heart of it.**

**They sit cross-legged opposite each other in a little chamber. Keith thinks, Stephen watches. Stefan crawls in and sits creakily on a battered metal trunk they keep in there.)**

Stephen            We'd better tell your father. **(No response from Keith.)** Or the police. We could write them an anonymous letter...

**(Keith searches for a key under a stone. Stefan anticipates and gets off the trunk just before Keith unlocks it. From the trunk he takes out a long, straight carving knife without a handle. Keith holds it to Stephen who puts his hand on the flat of the blade.)**

Keith            You, Stephen Wheatley...

Stephen        I, Stephen Wheatley...

Keith            Swear never to reveal anything about this to anyone.

Stephen        Swear never to reveal anything about this to anyone.

Keith            So help me God or cut my throat and hope to die.

Stephen        So help me God or cut my throat and hope to die.

Keith            This'll be our lookout. Whenever we see her go out we'll follow her.

Stephen        What about school?

Keith            We'll do it after school.

Stephen           What if it's the night?

Keith             We'll hide knotted ropes in our rooms. We'll climb out of our windows and meet here.

Stephen           Then what are we going to do? **(Keith holds up the knife and looks at it.)** Not... your own mum?

Mrs Wheatley    **(Calling in the distance,)** Stephen?! It's teatime.

**(Keith takes a white bathroom tile and a coloured pencil out of the trunk and writes on the tile.)**

Keith             No-one must come in here except us. From now on, it's strictly private.

**(He wedges the tile in the crook of a limb. "PRIVET", it says.)**

Stefan            "Privet." I didn't like to query it, seeing as he'd written it so neatly. The sense was plain enough. We were setting off along a lonely road where no-one could follow.

**(The boys crawl out and go their separate ways. Stefan shuts the hedge and follows Stephen. Stephen goes in to his house and sits at the kitchen table with Geoff, who's listlessly doing some homework and scratching himself. Stephen's mother puts plates of food in front of them.)**

Stephen           Why's the door to the front room shut?

Mum              Someone's come to talk to your father.

Geoff            In German.

Mum            Geoffrey, please...

Stephen        I didn't know dad could speak German.

Mum            Well now you do.

Stephen        Who's he talking to?

Geoff           A mysterious stranger in a threadbare coat...

Mum            Shhh! He's not a stranger. He's a friend of a friend. Are you going to eat those carrots? **(Stephen eats absent-mindedly.)**  
What's got into you?

Geoff           Must be another little game his barmy pal's dreamt up! Found any more dead men's bones at the end of Mr Gort's garden?

Stephen        You don't know what we do!

Geoff           I've seen you chum! Creeping round the bushes. It's hell's own pathetic at your age.

**(Dad comes out of the living room and shakes hands with a nervous looking man in a dark coat. He sees the man to the door. He puts on a dark hat and leaves.)**

Stefan        I scarcely noticed my father as a boy. He often seemed like some mild-mannered furry animal to me.

Dad                    So Stephen! Talk to me! Tell me something!

Stephen                What like?

Dad                    Like what did you do at school today?

Stephen                Revising.

Dad                    Revising what?

Stephen                Equations and things...

Dad                    Good! So what is the value of  $x$  if  $7x^2 = 63$ ?

Stephen                We don't do that sort of equation.

Mum                    Oh leave him be.

**(Everyone eats peacefully for a moment.)**

Stephen                What's a sheeny?

**(Mum and Dad freeze.)**

Dad                    Did someone call you that at school?

Stephen                No.

Dad                    What else did they say?

Stephen            Nothing.

**(Dad sighs and rubs his face.)**

Dad                Take no notice. Sticks and stones, yes?

Stephen            May I get down now?

Mum                Oh go on then.

**(Stephen puts his plate on the side and rushes up the garden path, followed by Stefan, and runs straight into Mrs Hayward.)**

Mrs H              Good Heavens Stephen! Where are you off to in such a hurry?

Stephen            Nowhere.

Mrs H              I'm afraid Keith will be doing his homework now. Why don't you come and play tomorrow?

Stephen            Alright. **(He retreats hastily.)**

Stefan              **(Looking at her face as she watches Stephen go,)** What thoughts was she lost in that evening? **(She goes.)** On Saturday morning we got down to some serious observation.

**(The boys scuttle into the lookout and settle down with the logbook and the binoculars. Stefan closes the hedge and stands beside it. We can see the boys peeping out.)**

At 10.47 hours the milkman arrived.

10.48. The milkman departed.

11.05 hours, Norman Stott came out of number 13.

12.15 hours... the Stott's dog chased the Hardiments cat up the Close.

12.17, The Stott's dog returned. The Hardiment's cat didn't.  
In the fourth hour I'll admit my attention began to wander.

**(Stephen picks up the binoculars and looks through them at Keith the wrong way round. Keith snatches them off him.)**

Keith                    You'll get them out of focus. Go home if you're bored, old bean.

Stephen                Anyway. My father's a German spy too. **(Keith adjusts the binoculars.)** Well he is! He has secret meetings with people who come to the house. He talks to them in German. **(Keith smirks.)** He does! I've heard him.

**(Stephen has had enough and starts to crawl out of the lookout. At that moment, Mrs Hayward comes out of her front door with a shopping basket over her arm.)**

Keith                    There she is! **(She goes up Auntie Dee's garden path, giving a little wave through the window before going inside.)** Into Auntie Dee's, 2.17.

**(Stephen writes in the logbook.)**

Stefan                 Why did Keith have an aunt living three doors away? Aunts lived in faraway places you only went at Christmas...

Stephen            Maybe Auntie Dee's a spy as well! **(Her door opens. Mrs Hayward comes out. Auntie Dee watches her go anxiously, her hand pressed to her mouth, before going back inside. Mrs H walks to the top of the Close and out of sight behind the hedges.)** What's the time?

Keith             Never mind that!

**(He's already crawling out to follow her. Stephen follows. So does Stefan, as fast as his old legs will carry him. They arrive at the end of the Close, the hedges part and they peer round the corner that they expect her to have turned.)**

Stefan            She'd vanished. **(Stephen and Keith look round bewildered.)**

Keith             Quick!

**(They run down the Avenue and get to the end out of breath.)**

Stephen           She must be in one of the shops.

Keith             You look on this side, I'll look on the other... Don't let her see you!

**(Keith runs off. Stefan follows Stephen from shop to shop.)**

Stefan            Court's Bakery... **(A girl in a white coat is revealed scratching in her ear.)** No sign of her in there. **(Stephen moves to the next shop. We see a butcher throwing**

**chunks of meat on a scale, whistling.)** No sign of her in Hucknall's either. **(He moves to the next shop. A woman customer is revealed perusing cheap novels.)** Nor in Coppard's. **(Stephen moves off, bewildered. Keith runs up.)**

Stephen Found her?

Keith No. We'd better get back to the Lookout. **(They walk homewards.)** The shopping basket must've been a cover. She was going to meet someone.

Stephen Maybe she went into one of these houses...?

**(Keith shakes his head.)**

Keith This manhole...

**(They gather round a manhole cover in the road.)**

Stephen Must be the entrance to a secret passageway.

Stefan It seemed more probable, certainly.

Keith She could be anywhere by now. Come on.

**(They walk back to the Close to see Mrs H coming out of Auntie Dee's.)**

Stefan But somehow, there she was coming out of Auntie Dee's again. It was as if the last fifteen minutes had never happened.

**(Mrs H sees the boys.)**

Mrs H                So what have you two been up to all morning?

Keith                Playing.

Mrs H                Oh dear... more funny looks. Something I'm not supposed to know about? **(Pause.)** Anyway. It's almost lunchtime. Ten minutes please, Keith darling.

**(The two boys wait until she's out of earshot.)**

Stephen             She could have some sort of rocket thing... or a time machine.

Keith                What?

Stephen             Sorry.

Keith                It *must* be an underground passageway. **(He darts in to the Lookout and re-emerges with an old screwdriver.)** Come on. **(He returns to the manhole cover and starts to prise it open.)**

Stephen             Someone will see us.

Keith                Let's do it quick, then.

**(They manage to open it together and are immediately overcome by the smell.)**

Stephen            There's no way she'd go down there.

Mrs H            **(Calling in the middle distance.)** Keith!

Keith            We'll just have to catch her next time.

**(They go their separate ways and re-convene in the Lookout. The boys crawl in. Stefan remains outside. The hedge stays shut - we can glimpse the boys inside.)**

Stefan            It rained in the afternoon and it was evening before we could carry on. Worse, we soon found ourselves under scrutiny...

**(A schoolgirl, Barbara Berrill, peers in the entrance to the hedge.)**

Barbara            You two are always playing in here. Is this your camp?

**(The two boys ignore her.)**

Stefan            Barbara Berrill.

Barbara            What game are you playing? Are you spying on someone? Go on. I won't tell anyone. **(Stephen and Keith refuse to be drawn.)** If you don't say anything, that means you *are* spying... Right then, I'm going to tell on you... **(She stands up and shouts,)** Keith Hayward and Stephen Wheatley are spying on people! **(She walks off shouting,)** Keith Hayward and Stephen Wheatley are spying on people!

**(Stefan opens the hedge. Keith and Stephen look terribly ashamed.)**

Stefan                    I knew then that the whole thing was just one of our pretend games. Even Keith knew it.

**(Mrs H comes hurrying along the road with a cardigan over her shoulders. She pauses by Auntie Dee's gate, but this time she doesn't go in, but continues up the Close.)**

Stephen                It's her.

Keith                    Quick...

**(They blunder out of the hedge and run to the corner of the Close followed by Stefan.)**

Stephen                She's done it again.

**(They search frantically.)**

Stephen                I've got to go home.

**(They amble back round the corner into the Close. Mrs H is coming out of her gate.)**

Stefan                    But there she was again, coming out of her own front gate!

Mrs H                    What in heaven's name are you playing at, my precious? You know when you're supposed to be in. If you behave like a child then Daddy's going to treat you like a child.

**(She brushes at her hair and shoulders angrily. She fetches Keith and they go home without looking at Stephen. She wipes her hands against each**

**other as she goes.)**

Stefan                   What was she trying to brush off? Something slimy?  
And then I knew where she'd been each time she'd  
disappeared...

**(Stephen walks up the Close. Stefan follows. Stephen peers left round the corner.)**

She didn't turn right to the shops or the post box...

**(Stephen looks right.)**

She turned left, towards the disused tunnel under the railway.

**(He walks to the mouth of the tunnel. We hear it dripping.)**

A great puddle collected after rain. To get through you had to  
squeeze along the wall, which was covered in dark green  
slime.

She went through the tunnel.

Next day I took Keith.

**(Keith joins Stephen and Stefan.)**

Stephen                   What does she do through there?

Keith                     There's only one way to find out.

**(Keith goes first. They edge through the echoing tunnel and emerge at the far end.)**

Stephen            She can't be going very far. She gets back almost at once.

Keith             She's spying on the trains. She's probably got some special place to hide.

**(They look at the edges of the tunnel. Keith finds that the wire fence on one side can be curled back. They crawl through, followed awkwardly by Stefan.)**

Keith             Footprints.

Stephen           Perhaps we should go back... **(Keith has already climbed further up the embankment.)**

Keith             She could be assembling a bomb.

**(All of a sudden, the rails start to hum.)**

Stefan            There was a train coming.

**(They start back down but now hear footsteps in the tunnel.)**

Stephen           It must be her!

**(The boys hide. Stefan takes a handful of leaves and stands like a tree. The train passes very close. Mrs H appears and leans through the gap in the fence to put something there. The boys lift their heads in time to see. She goes.)**

Stephen           We could've been killed or... fined. What are you doing?

**(Keith is reaching behind the retaining wall of the embankment and pulling out a tin trunk. They look at it. Keith puts his hand on the lid.)**

Don't! It could be booby-trapped.

**(Keith opens the box. At first it appears empty, but there's a small packet inside which Keith lifts out - a red packet with a black cat on the front.)**

Stefan                      Twenty Craven A. Cork tipped.

**(Keith opens the packet - there's a slip of paper tucked in with the cigarettes.)**

Stephen                    What? What?

Stefan                    She'd written one, single, familiar letter.

Keith                     "X"

**(Keith goes off home. Stephen is at home now, getting in to bed. His brother, Geoff, is going to bed too, on the other side of the room. Stefan sits on a bedside chair.)**

Stefan                    What was the value of "X"? "X" was the unknown figure, but it was also a kiss. What sort of kiss? A Judas kiss? A kiss of betrayal?

**(Stephen's mother kisses him goodnight, thinks better of kissing Geoff and turns out the overhead light. Geoff turns over and goes straight to sleep. Stephen stares at the ceiling.)**

I struggled all night to calculate.

Keith                    **(Keith's voice goes round and round in Stephen's head,)**  
What is the value of  $x$  if my mother equals  $x$  to the power of  
Twenty Craven A? And my mother equals  $x$  to the power of  
Twenty Craven A, what is the value of my mother times  
January times February times March to the nearest dark  
moon...?

**(The figure of Mrs H approaches in the half-light through a dream tunnel,  
her face shrouded. She arrives at the head of Stephen's bed and removes  
the shroud. Her mouth is sealed with an X. She bends to kiss Stephen, who  
is too horrified to move. At the last, Stephen cries out and Keith's mother  
leaves. Geoff gets out of bed and shakes Stephen awake. The morning light  
arrives.)**

Geoff                    Hey!

Stephen                What?

Geoff                    Shut up! God in Heaven...! **(He goes off muttering.)**

Stefan                 What would we do next? I had no idea. Keith. Keith would  
know.

**(Stephen and Stefan return to the Lookout.)**

He didn't turn up the next evening though...

**(Barbara Berrill starts to crawl in to the Lookout.)**

Stephen            Keith?

Barbara            I knew you were playing on your own...

Stephen            Can't you read? **(He points at the sign.)**

Barbara            What, "privet"?

Stephen            "Private."

Barbara            It says "privet." Your face has gone all squidgy.

Stephen            Just go away, will you? **(She sees him looking anxiously to see if Keith is coming.)**

Barbara            Don't worry. I'll go away as soon as he comes. Is Keith your friend? Your really, really best friend? Why do you like him when he's so horrible?

**(Keith's mother comes up the street now with her shopping basket and goes in to Auntie Dee's. Barbara leans close to Stephen to get a good view.)**

Stefan            There she went, into Auntie Dee's again.

Barbara            She's always doing Mrs Tracey's shopping for her. Funny going shopping in the evening though, when all the shops are shut... Perhaps she's taking a message to Mrs Tracey's boyfriend.

Stefan            Auntie Dee's boyfriend? How could someone's Aunt have a

boyfriend?

Barbara            Didn't you know? Deirdre's seen her kissing him in the blackout. He used to come round to her house when everyone was asleep, only Mrs Hardiment saw him and thought he was a Peeping Tom and called the Police. So now Keith's mum has to go and look after Milly while Mrs Tracey meets her boyfriend up at the tunnel.  
Your face has gone all squidgy again! Didn't you know about people having boyfriends and girlfriends?

Stephen            Of course I did...

Barbara            Deirdre says lots of ladies have boyfriends while everyone's daddies are away at the war...

**(Mrs H comes out of Auntie Dees and goes off up the Close.)**

Stefan            And off she went to the end of the street. I should be out there... after her...

Barbara            Mummy's got a boyfriend! He's an air-raid warden.

**(Barbara starts to crawl out but turns to say,)**

Barbara            My best friend is Rosemary Winters in Mrs Colley's class, but you can be my next best friend if you like.

**(She goes. Stephen waits until he's sure she's gone indoors then rushes out and up to the corner of the Close followed by Stefan. They peer round towards the tunnel but there's nothing to see. Then they hear a rustling and**

**slithering behind them. Mrs H is tipping foodscraps into the pig bins, watching Stephen.)**

Mrs H                    Hello Stephen. You seem to be looking for somebody.

Stephen                 No.

Mrs H                    Not me by any chance, was it?

Stephen                 No, no.

**(Stephen flees back inside the Lookout. Stefan hides behind the hedge, peeping over it. Mrs H walks back along the Close and stops opposite the hedge. She looks straight at Stephen, then crosses the road and crawls into the hedge.)**

Mrs H                    Stephen? May I come in? **(He's too astonished to reply. Stefan opens the hedge to reveal Mrs H sitting awkwardly opposite Stephen. Stephen doesn't know where to look.)**  
I'm afraid Keith's got to help his father in the workshop so you'll have to play on your own this evening. It's a frightfully good place for a lookout. Awful smell in summer though, the blossom. What have you seen so far? Anything terribly suspicious? **(Stephen shakes his head.)** Well I hope the Mounties get their man and all that and I certainly don't want to spoil your game but it might be a tiny bit rude if you actually followed people around... Sometimes people have things they want to do in private. Silly little things perhaps. I don't know, Mr Gort, let's say. If he went to the Railway Tavern one evening and had a glass of beer, he might prefer not to have people watching him and going round telling everyone.

Anyway. I know you're a sensible, well-brought up boy. Let's keep this between ourselves, shall we? Probably best not to say anything to Keith about our little chat. **(Stephen nods.)** So I'm trusting you. I'm putting you on your honour, yes? You haven't been to play at the house for ages. Why don't I tell Keith to ask you to tea tomorrow? **(He nods again. She crawls out. He thinks she's gone, then jumps when he sees her peering in at him.)** Thanks for having me! **(She goes off towards the tunnel.)**

Stefan

This time, of course, she was going through the tunnel.

**(Stephen goes to his bedroom, puts on his pyjamas and goes to bed again and so does Geoff. Stefan sits on the bedside chair.)**

What was I to do? I plainly couldn't go on watching her. But I plainly couldn't stop when she'd told me there was something to find out. Keith would know what to do. But I couldn't tell Keith. She'd told me not to.

Geoff

Hey, pipsqueak.

Stephen

What?

Geoff

Less of the quadratics tonight, alright?

**(He turns the light out and turns over to sleep. Stephen notices the strange white light coming into the room round the edge of the blackout. He and Stefan duck under the blind and look at the Close in the moonlight.)**

Stefan

The full moon was smoothing out all the muddle and blemishes.

If only I had a knotted rope as Keith suggested. I should climb down and perform one heroic deed that would settle everything once and for all... But I didn't need a knotted rope. I could walk down the stairs. **(Stephen looks terrified. Now he's had the thought, he knows he's got to do it. He pulls on his jumper with difficulty - Stefan helps him. They both creep out of the house, through the moonlit close, round the corner and through the echoing tunnel, emerging gratefully into the moonlight at the other end.)** Thank God for the moon! **(It goes dark.)** But then it sailed behind a cloud. **(They creep forward, navigating by touch in the near darkness. They go through the fence and find the metal box. Stephen rummages inside it until he finds something and pulls it out. Suddenly he stops and listens. Something has changed. The moon comes out again. A man stands at the wire fence, bearded and wearing a heavy coat. He gasps at the sight of Stephen. Both are transfixed for several moments then the moon goes back behind a cloud. The man runs off. When Stephen is certain he's gone, he rushes headlong back through the tunnel, falling on the way. As he rounds the corner into the Close, he's met by his parents who are searching for him in their dressing gowns with torches.)**

Mum

**(Whispering frantically,)** Where have you been? Are you out of your mind?

Dad

We were going to call the police...

**(They get inside the front door and put the light on. Geoff is waiting. Now they're free to raise their voices.)**

Mum                    You're soaking! **(She pulls his jumper off him and puts a towel over his shoulders.)**

Geoff                    What were you looking for this time? U boats?

Dad                     This was some sort of tomfoolery with Keith, was it?

Mum                    Keith's not running round out there as well, is he?

**(No answer.)**

Dad                     Is he? Have I got to go knocking on his door to check?

Stephen                No!

Dad                     So what were you up to, if you wouldn't think it impertinent of me to ask?

**(Stephen can't answer.)**

Mum                    Oh leave him. This isn't the end of it though, you understand?  
Bath. Now.

**(She bundles him into the bathroom. Mum, Geoff and Dad melt away.)**

Stefan                 I could've turned and seen him. I'd failed again. But in my hand I was still clutching something from the box.

**(Keith walks past Stephen and takes the sock off him. They're in the garden at Chollerton)**

Keith                    A sock?

Stephen                There were other things in the box. Shirts and things. I just happened to be holding that. When I heard the man.

Keith                    And you're sure he didn't see you?

Stephen                I hid... Very quickly.

Keith                    And you didn't get a proper look at him?

Stephen                I couldn't. I was hiding. I thought they might be sort of ordinary clothes for someone to change into. If they'd landed by parachute and they were wearing a German uniform...

**(They hear Mrs H approaching and snatch the sock off the table. She comes out with a plate of buns.)**

Mrs H                    I don't know whether Stephen likes Chelsea buns?

Stephen                Thankyou.

**(She goes in again.)**

Keith                    Why did you take it out of the box? They'll know someone has been there. We'd better go and see what's happening.

Stephen                I don't think we should.

**(Keith calls in at the back door. His mother comes out. )**

Keith                    Mummy? Me and Stephen are going out to play.

**(She looks at them.)**

Mrs H                    “Stephen and I”.

Keith                    Stephen and I.

Stephen                  Thanks for having me.

**(She smiles at the echo.)**

Mrs H                    Have fun then chaps. Try not to get up to any mischief.

**(They go up the Close, through the tunnel and the hole in the wire fence.)**

Stefan                    I was letting her down at each step of the way...

**(Keith searches in vain for the box.)**

Keith                    It's gone. He obviously did see you, old bean.

Stephen                  Sorry. We'd better go.

Keith                    So *he* saw *you*, but you didn't see him...

Stephen                  It was dark.

Keith                    You weren't really hiding, were you? You were just hiding your face.

Stephen                Please, let's go home.

Keith                    You were just putting your hands over your face so you couldn't see. Like a little baby. **(Stephen begins to cry.)** Go home then if that's what you want.

**(Stephen crawls off but then he hears footsteps in the tunnel. Mrs H is approaching.)**

Stephen                She's coming!

**(They look for somewhere to hide but it's already too late. They both hide their faces like little babies and Stefan resumes his tree pose but Mrs H passes by. Stephen sits up first and sees she has gone, then he and Stefan notice Keith hiding.)**

Stefan                 He was hiding his face just like me. Two little babies together.

**(Keith looks up.)**

Keith                    She's going up the Lanes! **(They scramble through the wire and dart off in opposite directions, Keith in pursuit, Stephen homewards. Stefan stands between the two. The boys turn and look at each other.)** What? Are you scared? **(Stephen stands his ground. Keith is scared to go alone. Finally Stephen joins him and Stefan follows.)** Buck up then or we'll lose her.

Stefan                    The Lanes led into a pocket of old farmland. There were some tumbledown cottages... **(Dogs rush out to snap at them. They edge past.)** Then the path petered out into acres of abandoned building land. The Barns, they called it.

**(The boys look round uncertainly.)**

Stephen                Where did she go?

Keith                    She could be anywhere.

Stefan                    There'd been an old tramp living here the winter before, but Norman Stott said the police took him away. Now it was all weeds and rubbish.

**(Keith finds a stone and lobs it at an old kettle and hits it. Stephen has a go. Suddenly a sheet of corrugated iron behind them shifts slightly.)**

Stephen                Maybe the old tramp's back.

**(The boys creep and crouch by the corrugated iron, which forms the roof of some underground shelter. Stefan follows warily.)**

Keith                    He's down there.

**(After a moment or two there's a faint, suppressed cough. Stephen starts searching round on the ground for something. Stephen finds a bent and rusty iron bar and taps with it on the corrugated iron. He taps again. Silence. Keith finds the remains of a fence post and taps with it. Nothing. They both tap again. No response. Suddenly Stephen hits the metal as hard**

as he can. Keith does the same. They both pound the metal sheet as hard as they can, laughing and laughing until they're too out of breath to carry on. Silence. Gradually the lack of response unnerves them and suddenly they run home, Stefan struggling to keep up, past the dogs, through the tunnel and up the Close, out of breath.)

Keith                      Why didn't he come out?

Stephen                    People don't die from a bit of teasing... do they?

**(Keith's father appears at the Hayward's gate in his Home Guard uniform.)**

Mr H                      Mummy's still not back from Auntie Dee's. **(The two boys look at each other, both with the same thought.)** I've got parade this evening. Run down the road and remind her... Don't bother. Here she is.

**(Mrs H has appeared, hurrying back, breathless, ruffled.)**

Mrs H                    So sorry Ted... Your parade, I know. I've been everywhere to find a rabbit for the weekend. No luck. Ran all the way back...

**(Keith goes indoors.)**

Mr H                      Supper on the table in ten minutes then, old girl.

**(He goes indoors too. Mrs H looks at Stephen, catching her breath.)**

Mrs H                    Was it you two? **(Stephen looks away.)** Oh Stephen.

**(Stephen runs away and off. Mrs H watches him go then goes indoors.)**

**Stefan sits on the wall and mops his face with his handkerchief.)**

Stefan                    Oh Stephen.

**(A woman in modern dress walks past laden with bags of shopping, giving Stefan a curious glance. Blackout.)**

## **INTERVAL**

**(Stefan has been to the Parade for lunch - he arrives in the Close with a sausage roll in a paper bag and carton of fruit juice from which he drinks with a straw. He finishes the drink but can't face the rest of the sausage roll and puts it in his bag. He notices that Stephen is inside the hedge so he opens it and sits next to his young self. Stephen peers out anxiously. Stefan tries to follow his gaze, then looks closely at his young head.)**

Stefan                    That's my head but I haven't got the faintest what's going on in there. What on earth did I think was happening? Whatever I thought, I was left to think it on my own. Keith stopped coming out to play. At first I was too uneasy to go and knock on his door. But in the end there was nothing else for it...

**(Stephen sighs, walks wearily up to the Hayward's front door followed by Stefan and knocks. Keith's mother answers. Stephen can't look her in the face, but she seems normal as ever.)**

Mrs H                    Hello Stephen. We haven't seen you round here for a while.

Stephen                    Can Keith come out to play?

**(She hesitates a moment before calling behind her.)**

Mrs H                    Keith, darling? It's Stephen. **(To Stephen,)** Why don't you go up? He's just tidying the playroom.

**(Stephen goes into the playroom. Keith sits putting Meccano neatly back in a box.)**

Keith                    Watch where you put your feet, old chap.

**(Stephen sits opposite. Stefan stands in the doorway.)**

Stefan                    He was telling me the game was over. It had been put in the archives and forgotten.

Stephen                    Shall we go on building the railway?

Keith                    I've got to pipe-clay my cricket stuff.

**(There's a tap on the door. Mrs H looks in.)**

Mrs H                    I'm just popping round to Auntie Dee's. You chaps will be alright on your own will you?

**(They nod. She goes. Keith takes his cricket stuff outside and spreads it on newspaper. Keith's father can be heard whistling in the garage.)**

Stefan                    It came to me that there would be no new game. The new normality didn't include them.

Stephen                    I'd probably better go home. It must be nearly supper time.

Keith                    All right. **(He carries on.)**

Stephen                Are you coming out to play tomorrow?

Keith                    I don't know. I'll have to see.

**(Suddenly the whistling stops. Keith sits up. Mr H is watching them, his lips drawn back in the familiar thin, impatient smile.)**

Mr H                    Thermos. **(Keith doesn't know what his crime is but he feels guilty.)** Come on, old bean... Thermos flask. In the picnic hamper. Anyone say you could take it?

Keith                    I didn't take it.

Mr H                    Taking other people's things without permission, that's stealing. Saying you didn't when you did, that's lying. Yes? Wash that stuff off your hands. Dry them properly.

**(Mr H goes into the house.)**

Keith                    You'd better go.

**(Keith goes inside. Stephen can't leave. We hear, just out of sight, Keith getting caned. Keith's father comes out of the house whistling and goes out of sight into the garage without even looking at Stephen. Keith comes out with his hands under his armpits.)**

I told you to go, old bean.

Stephen                I'm sorry.

**(Mr H looks out of the garage again.)**

Mr H                    **(To Keith,)** I'll give you until bedtime to think about it. If it's not back by then you'll get the same again. And again tomorrow. And every day 'til it's back. And your mother's at Auntie Dee's again?

**(Keith nods. Mr H goes off back into the garage. Suddenly Stephen starts running towards the tunnel, even taking Stefan by surprise. As he runs into the tunnel he meets Mrs H running out.)**

Mrs H                Stephen!

Stephen             The thermos...

Mrs H                What did I tell you? You're a very naughty boy!

Stephen             The thermos flask.

Mrs H                What's happened? **(Stephen doesn't know how to begin.)** Ted's said something about it? **(Stephen nods.)** He doesn't think Keith took it? **(He nods.)** And he caned him. **(He nods.)** Oh Stephen. And he's told Keith to put it back?

Stephen             By bedtime.

**(She looks at her watch then starts to walk wearily back through the tunnel. She stops and turns to Stephen.)**

Mrs H                Thank you Stephen.

**(Stephen walks disconsolately back to his house, looking over his shoulder at the Hayward's house. Stefan follows.)**

Stefan                   What was going to happen now? The midsummer drew on.  
There was no sign of Keith's mother in the days that followed.  
There was something going on in there... I needed to tell  
someone...

**(Stephen goes in and hangs round his mother while she makes the supper until she nearly trips over him.)**

Mum                    What is it? You're always under my feet. What do you want?

Stephen                Nothing.

**(He goes upstairs to his bedroom. Geoff hides his naturist magazine.)**

Geoff                   I wish you wouldn't keep wandering in and out. I'm trying to  
work. It's hell's own distracting.

Stephen                Sorry.

**(He goes to the front garden and listlessly toys with a partially deflated football.)**

Stefan                   I felt as if I'd been left to decide the fate of the world single-  
handed. The midsummer drew on... **(Stephen boots the  
football out of his gate just before a policeman walks past  
and out of the Close.)** ...until one day the policeman came.

Barbara           **(From the Lookout,)** Pssst! **(Stephen and Stefan join her.)**  
He's been to Auntie Dee's *and* Mrs Hayward's!

Stephen           Why?

Barbara           The man came back. Auntie Dee's boyfriend!

Stephen           In broad daylight?

Barbara           No! Last night. Mummy went out to look for Deirdre and she  
saw him. When she screamed he ran towards Mrs  
Hayward's...

Stephen           Keith!

**(Keith has come out with a shopping basket on his arm and walks up the  
Close.)**

Barbara           Don't worry. He's not coming here. He's going shopping.

Stefan           Keith had never gone shopping in his life...

**(Keith passes by and goes off to the shops.)**

Barbara           He's always doing the shopping for his mummy these days...  
Perhaps she's got a boyfriend too! And Keith's daddy won't let  
her out of the house... Maybe it was *her* boyfriend last night!  
Come to visit her! **(Stephen doesn't want to get involved in  
such speculation and breaks a twig into pieces.)** You're  
always on your own these days. Aren't you and Keith friends  
any more? **(Barbara catches at the flap of her purse with**

**her lower lip, making the popper pop and unpop.)** I know where Deirdre was last night... She was with your brother.

Stephen I know.

Barbara And I know what they were doing.

Stephen They smoke cigarettes.

Barbara And...

Stephen And?

Barbara They kiss each other!

Stephen I know. I know.

Barbara Your face has gone all squidgy again.

Stephen No it hasn't.

Barbara You can't see it. **(Whispering,)** Have you ever smoked cigarettes?

Stephen Loads.

Barbara I bet you haven't!

Stephen I have.

Barbara Is it nice?

Stephen            Quite nice.

Barbara            Do you smoke in here with Keith?

Stephen            No.

**(Barbara holds up a stubbed out cigarette.)**

Barbara            Somebody else must've been in here then. **(She examines it.)** It's a cork tip... **(She puts it between her lips and pretends to smoke.)**

Stephen            Don't! You'll get germs!

Barbara            Have you got any matches, in your secret box thing?

Stephen            No.

Barbara            Come on, he won't know. **(She leans across Stephen and Stefan to try the padlock, lying in their laps.)** Where's the key? Or doesn't he let you have it? **(Stephen hesitates then fetches it out from under the stone. She opens the trunk and looks at the contents.)** Are those pretend bullets?

Stephen            No. They're real ones.

Barbara            Why've you got an old sock in here?

**(He snatches it off her.)**

Stephen            We need it for something special.

**(She takes out the bayonet.)**

Barbara            What's this for?

Stephen            It's a bayonet.

Barbara            Looks more like a carving knife to me. **(She puts it back and finds the matches. She lights the cigarette but suddenly snatches it out.)** Ugh! It's absolutely beastly!

Stephen            Let me have a go. **(She ignores him and has another go herself but finds it as unpleasant as before and lets Stephen have a go. Stephen takes some smoke in his mouth, holds it there a moment, then puffs it out importantly.)**

Barbara            How do you do it?

Stephen            You just have to get used to it. **(She tries again.)** Now blow it out. **(He has another go. Barbara laughs.)** What?

Barbara            Us. Smoking. **(They pass the cigarette back and forth.)** I wonder what Mrs Hayward will do now everyone's on the watchout for her boyfriend. Maybe they'll run away together.

Mrs Berrill        Barbara? **(Barbara puts her finger to her lips.)** If you're not home in five minutes young lady your tea's going in the bin.

**(Barbara peers out of the hedge.)**

Barbara            Smell my breath. **(He smells her breath.)**

Stephen            You'd better have one of these. **(He gives her a mint imperial.)**

Barbara            Thanks. Better go then. **(She crawls out, turning half way to give Stephen a little wave. He waves back in spite of himself.)**

Stefan             Lamorna, it was called, Barbara Berrill's house.

Stephen            Lamorna.

Stefan             Lamorna was the correct scientific description for the softness of her dress. But it was also the softness in Keith's mother's voice when she said my name.

Stephen            Lamorna...

Stefan             And suddenly I saw the whole story. The man wasn't a spy at all. He wasn't an old tramp. He was a German airman who'd been shot down. Somehow Keith's mother had found him in the blackout one night as he crept out of the tunnel looking for food. She'd felt sorry for him and begun to leave food and cigarettes for him. Then two small boys had found the box and she had to take everything right to his hiding place. Every day she went and gradually... gradually...

Stephen            Lamorna...

Mrs H                      Stephen? May I come in?

**(Mrs H crawls into the Lookout, to Stephen's consternation, and settles herself awkwardly. She has a scarf round her neck and pushes the shopping basket in front of her, the contents covered with a tea-towel.)**

I want you to do something for me. **(She looks at the basket.)**

He needs a few things and he doesn't have a ration book, you see. There's some medicine too. The damp has got to his chest. He really needs a doctor.

I wanted to send him something hot but... the thermos.

**(Pause.)** You do know where to go, I haven't just imagined it?

**(Pause.)** So will you do it for me Stephen? **(She cries.)** I feel so ashamed.

Stephen                      Auntie Dee. She could take the things.

**(She looks at him.)**

Stefan                      All at once I understood. Auntie Dee found him first then Keith's mother took him away from her. And it was my fault.

Stephen                      I'm sorry.

**(Keith's father appears, whistling, and looks up the street. The whistle dies away. He turns uncertainly and goes back indoors. Mrs H watches him then sighs.)**

Mrs H                      **(Dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief,)** I must go. Am I a complete mess?

**(He shakes his head.)** You won't tell anyone will you? **(He shakes his head and reaches to take the basket out of her hand.)**

Oh Stephen... Really?

**(She goes to kiss him. He flinches away. She turns to leave then smells the blossom.)** You see? I told you the blossom was going to be overpowering.

**(She goes. Stephen sits still, looking at the basket. Barbara Berrill starts to crawl into the Lookout. Stephen hides the basket behind him as best he can but Barbara can't take her eyes off it.)**

Barbara            What does she want you to do with it?

Stephen            Nothing.

Barbara            She was crying.

Stephen            She wasn't.

Barbara            She was. She kept dabbing her eyes and her makeup went funny.

Stephen            She was laughing.

Barbara            What about?

Stephen            Nothing.

Barbara            Why? Is she a loony then? **(Pause.)** I could help you take it. Oh well, do it yourself then. **(Pause.)** What's inside it anyway?

Stephen            Just some things.

Barbara            Secret things?  
Or are *you* her boyfriend?! That would be funny! If your best friend's mummy was your girlfriend...!

Stephen            I thought that we were going to be friends!

**(She softens.)**

Barbara            *I've got something to show you.*

**(She untops her purse and they both peer in. She pulls out a packet of cigarettes.)**

Barbara            I took them out of Deirdre's satchel. I thought we could have another smoke together.

Stephen            All right.

**(He fetches the matches out of the trunk and lights the cigarette for her. She takes a puff then hands it to him.)**

Stefan             I knew I had to let her see my secret in return.

**(She leans across, removes the tea towel from the basket and looks through the contents. She holds up two eggs. He nods. She holds up some bacon in greaseproof paper.)**

Barbara            I thought it was going to be things for them to have a midnight

feast... **(She brings out a handful of potatoes and carrots. Stephen lifts out tins of Spam and corned beef.)** Funny sort of midnight feast!

**(Stephen lifts out a packet of pills.)**

Stephen            M. and B.

Barbara            That's what you have if you've got a temperature. A letter...!

**(Barbara takes out a sealed envelope and grins at Stephen. He takes it off her disapprovingly. She looks at him, letting the smoke slowly escape from her mouth, then leans until her face is very close to his.)**

Stephen            What?

**(She leans further until her lips are pressed against his. They stay that way a few moments. She takes her lips away.)**

Barbara            Was that nice?

**(Stephen looks puzzled.)**

Stefan            I didn't know. I was too busy thinking about germs.

Barbara            Deirdre said it was nice.

**(She kisses him again. Stephen shuts his eyes.)**

Stefan            At last. The value of X.

Barbara            Well?

Stephen            Quite nice. **(She straddles him, pinning down his arms, takes the letter from his hand and the bayonet from the box and slits open the letter.)**

No! No, no, no!

**(She smiles at him and slips the letter out of the envelope.)**

We mustn't! We mustn't...!

**(Mr Hayward clears his throat. He's peering in at them.)**

Mr H                Can I have a word with you, old chap?

**(Barbara gets off Stephen and he crawls out of the Lookout. Stefan follows. Mr H averts his eyes. Barbara puts the things back in the basket guiltily.)**

Bring the basket.

**(Stephen crawls back to get it from Barbara.)**

Barbara            **(Whispering,)** You mustn't let him have it!

**(Mr H leads the way back to his garage. He bends over a small piece of metal in his vice and measures part of it with a micrometer.)**

Mr H                Word of advice, old fellow. Silly games of let's pretend - Don't play them. Someone asks you to play, tell them, "No thank you very much. I'm not such a fool." Child, grown-up - makes no difference.

**(He looks at Stephen, smiling.)**

Yes?

**(Stephen nods.)**

People make awful asses of themselves with let's pretend, you see, old chap. I've had a word with Keith. I don't want any more ideas put in his head. So. Game over. Yes?

**(Stephen nods.)**

Basket, then.

**(Stephen studies the floor.)**

Basket. Come along, old chap.

**(More floor inspection.)**

I'm not going to say it again, old bean.

**(Stephen looks at Mr H and sees that he is baffled and wretched.)**

Please.

**(Stephen puts the basket on the workbench. Mrs H speaks as she approaches the garage.)**

Mrs H                      Ted, darling, Keith's been working on his maths for an hour and a half, poor lamb...

**(She comes into the garage and sees Stephen.)**

Hello Stephen.

**(He can't look at her. She looks at the basket.)**

Oh, thank you. Aren't those the things you and Keith borrowed for your camp?

**(She goes to pick up the basket but Mr H moves it out of her reach then bends over his work, smiling his smile. She turns to Stephen.)**

Why don't you go and find Keith and cheer him up?

**(But Stephen runs and runs home to his mother, who is washing up, and hugs her desperately. Stephen's father is there, polishing his shoes.)**

Mum                   What?

Stephen               Nothing.

Mum                   I can't do anything unless you tell me what the matter is.

Dad                   They're not calling you those names at school again?

Stephen               No.

Mum                   Have you and Keith fallen out?

Stephen               No!

**(Dad sits Stephen opposite him.)**

Dad                   I'd take all your troubles from you if I could. They'll all be  
yesterday's troubles when you wake up tomorrow.

**(He gives Stephen a hug. Stephen gets into bed.)**

Stefan                But the difficulty was getting to tomorrow.

**(Stefan turns out the light.)**

Everything was becoming more and more confused in my  
head.

**(In the terrain of his dreams Stephen becomes aware of a glow some  
distance off. He creeps towards it. The light comes from a hole in the  
ground covered with a sheet of corrugated iron. From beneath it comes a  
suppressed cough. Stephen lifts away the metal nervously. Keith's mother  
sits there cradling a German airman whose face we can't see. The hole in  
the ground is filled with radiance, giving Keith's mother a saintly glow. She**

**looks up at Stephen in anguish. The airman is coughing and coughing weakly.)**

Mrs H                    The damp has got to his chest. Will you help him?  
**(Stephen slides the tin back over the hole.)**  
Stephen? Stephen...?

**(He walks into his parents' room. They're asleep with their backs to each other.)**

Stephen                Can I get in with you? Mummy?

**(She's fast asleep so Stephen climbs in between them and lies there, staring up at the ceiling. The German airman comes out of the shadows now, his face still obscured. He carries the corrugated iron. Gently, he lays it over Stephen, closing the box made by his parents. Stephen screams from underneath. Finally Stephen manages to throw off the corrugated iron. The airman takes it away into the darkness. Stephen still screams. His parents wake and turn on the light and try to console him.)**

Mum                    What *is* it love? You *must* tell us what it is?

**(Stephen gets up and gets dressed. His parents watch him for a moment, then go off with a shake of their heads to get breakfast.)**

Stefan                When morning came, my troubles were no less, but I knew what to do about them.  
**(Stephen takes his school satchel and creeps to the bathroom cabinet. He takes a box of pills and puts them in his satchel.)**

The box of M. and B. I was prescribed last winter.

**(He creeps to the cupboard under the stairs and puts some tins and packets in his satchel.)**

And in the cupboard under the stairs our emergency rations. There was no substitute, of course, for whatever was in the envelope.

Stephen            I'm going out to play.

Mum                With Keith?

Stephen            No.

Mum                Stand up for yourself. Don't let him be nasty to you.

**(Stephen sets off with his satchel, faithfully attended by Stefan. He goes out of the Close, through the tunnel and on to the Barns, the no-man's land. He looks around, unable at first to see what he's looking for. Then he hears a tell-tale cough some yards away and slowly approaches the corrugated iron. The coughing stops as Stephen stands at the head of the steps. We see down in to the pit and glimpse a figure, as yet indistinct in the relative darkness. Stephen takes the things out of his satchel and puts them on the top step. The man speaks as he turns to leave.)**

Peter                Stephen?

**(Stephen stops in his tracks.)**

Stephen? Why have you come?

**(Stephen points at the things he's brought.)**

Was it Bobs who sent you?

**(He coughs.)**

Is there a letter...?

**(Stephen shakes his head.)**

Why can't she come?

Stephen            She just can't.

Peter                Because of Ted. **(Pause.)** I'm sorry. Can you tell her that?

And... No. Nothing else.

It's over then.

**(Stephen stands.)**

Don't go. Stay for a moment.

**(Stephen sits obediently.)**

How's Milly?

Stephen            Alright.

Peter                And... her mum?

**(Stephen shrugs.)**

Would you to fetch me some water from the well behind the Cottages?

**(Stephen nods.)**

But you wouldn't come back.

Poor kid.

That's what happens, isn't it? You start playing some game and you're the great hero. But the game goes on and on and you get tired because you can't go on being brave forever.

And then it happens. One night you're up there in the darkness, five hundred miles from home and suddenly the darkness is inside you too. You can't think. You can't move.

Everything's drowned by this darkness. So the others have to get you home. They trusted you and you failed them.

**(A train passes distantly.)**

I'm on all those trains. Down to the Close.

Off you go then. Just pass me those things.

**(Stephen has to go down into the pit. He's half way back out,)**

It was always her, you know. From the beginning.

Here. Take her this. **(He takes the scarf from round his neck and folds it over and over before handing it to Stephen.)**

Just so she has something.

**(Stephen takes it and climbs the steps.)**

Stephen! Tell her "forever". Yes? "Forever".

**(Stephen rushes off home towards the Close with Stefan stumbling after. At last he stops, out of breath, and examines the scarf he must give.)**

Mrs H                    Wait... **(Auntie Dee comes out of Chollerton carrying Milly. Keith's mother appears in the doorway. Dee walks down the path without saying goodbye. Suddenly Keith's mother runs after her and speaks.)**

Mrs H                    Dee...? **(Dee continues walking.)** We didn't...

Auntie Dee            **(Turning on her,)** "We"?! How *could* you...?

**(Dee goes home without looking back. Mrs H looks after her sister. Mrs H looks back at her door. Keith's father is watching her. Keith's father looks at the roses in the garden, beginning to whistle, then goes back indoors. Mrs H walks slowly home and shuts her door. Stephen and Stefan come out from their hiding place and look at the closed door, then return uncertainly to the Lookout. Keith is sat there holding the bayonet. The trunk stands open.)**

Keith                    You let Barbara Berrill see our things.

Stephen                I didn't!  
**(Keith smiles.)**  
I didn't! Honestly and truly!  
**(Keith begins to nod slowly.)**

Keith                    You swore.

Stephen                I know.

Keith                    Swear again. **(He holds up the knife.)**

Stephen                I swear.

Keith                    So help me God or cut my throat and hope to die.

Stephen                So help me God... or cut my throat...  
**(Keith takes the flattened Player's cigarette box out of the trunk.)**  
I wasn't... I didn't... she must've found the key...

**(Keith leans forward and presses the bayonet against Stephen's throat pressing him back onto Stefan's lap.)**

Keith                    You swore. You double-swore. And then you showed her...

**(Stephen's blood begins to spread slowly on the front of his shirt.)**

Stefan                  And I realised where he learnt this particular torture, and why his mother had taken to wearing a scarf around her neck in

the heat of summer.

**(Stephen whimpers. At last Keith sits back and cleans the blood off the bayonet in the earth.)**

Keith                    Anyway. It's all your own fault, old bean.

**(Stephen runs home and creeps into the house but his mother catches him.)**

Mum                    Where on earth have you been? You've got revision to do...

**(She notices his shirt.)**

What's that? Not paint?

**(She bends closer.)**

Your neck...

**(She takes him to his father.)**

Look what's happened now. You've got to put a stop to it.

**(Stephen's father gently undoes his collar and looks at his neck.)**

Dad                    Who did this to you Stephen?

Mum                    It wasn't Keith?

**(Stephen shakes his head.)**

One of the other boys?

**(Stephen shakes his head again. His father gets a bowl of water from the kitchen sink.)**

Dad                    I don't like bullying. I've seen too much of it in my lifetime.

**(Geoff appears.)**

Geoff                   What happened kid? Tried to cut your own throat?

Mum                   **(To Dad,)** If it was Keith, you'll have to say something to his parents.

Dad                    This wasn't play. It almost went into his windpipe.

Mum                   You must tell us who it was darling.

Geoff                  They've cut his vocal chords.

Dad                    Keep out of this will you Geoff? Go and get the first aid kit. Just tell us what happened Stephen. Was it one of the children calling you names again?

Geoff                  **(Coming back with the first aid kit.)** Someone's swiped all the emergency rations.

Dad                    Did someone tell you not to say anything?

Geoff                  Maybe it was that sexual deviant who's been hanging round at night.

Dad                    Stephen. Did you take the rations to give to someone?

Geoff                  That old tramp probably.

Mum                    We're not going to be angry.

Geoff                    It's that old tramp who hides in the Barns.

Dad                     Was it the tramp Stephen?

**(Stephen shakes his head but all that comes out is a howl. Dad hugs him. Mum strokes his hair.)**

Geoff                    Poor kid.

**(Dad starts carrying Stephen to his bed.)**

Mum                    **(To Dad,)** You'll have to report it.

Dad                     Have we got the number of the police station?

Stephen                No!

Dad                     Shhhh.

**(He lays him down and covers him.)**

Sleep is what you need. Sleep and everything will come right.

**(He kisses Stephen, who falls into a deep sleep. Darkness comes. Stephen wakes suddenly and sits up.)**

Stefan                 The scarf?

**(Stephen rummages in his pocket and pulls it out.)**

Safe. But the policeman was coming tomorrow. He'd surely search the bedroom.

**(Stephen gets out of bed and looks for somewhere to hide the scarf but sits on the bed. Nowhere is good enough.)**

I had to find somewhere better to hide it.

**(Stephen pulls on a jumper and creeps out of the house.)**

There was only one place I could think of.

**(Stephen walks to the mouth of the tunnel and feels his way through. He crawls under the wire and takes the scarf out of his sleeve.)**

This was the night we'd been waiting for, Keith and I, the night with no moon.

No-one would find it here.

**(He buries it behind the embankment wall. Suddenly he hears something in the distance.)**

Someone was coming. **(Stefan and Stephen listen, holding their breath.)** There! Up on the embankment now, running down the line. **(We hear someone panting and stumbling ever closer.)** It was him. He was coming to punish my betrayal, coming to catch me burying the very object he'd trusted me to deliver...

Man **(Distant,)** This way!

Stefan No! He wasn't coming for me. He was running away.

**(Stephen is on the point of flight when there's a white flash at the feet of the approaching figure and he falls with a cry. He lies still, panting. Stephen approaches tentatively and peers at him lying across the tracks. But he's stopped short by the sound of an approaching train. Stephen scrambles back up the embankment and tries desperately to roll the man off the track.)**

Stephen No. No. No. NO!

**(His shout is swallowed in the train's thunder. He stumbles back down into**

**Stefan's arms in the mouth of the tunnel. The train passes away.)**

Stefan                    He'd been running down to the Close.  
                                 He'd been running home.

**(Stefan cradles Stephen a moment longer before setting him on his feet. Then Stephen walks away from us back through the tunnel. When he's gone, the daylight returns. Stefan looks suddenly disorientated and old. He notices us, the people he's been unconsciously addressing all the while.)**

I never went back for the scarf.

**(He tries to peer in where the scarf was hidden, and reaches in, rummaging fruitlessly.)**

Of course. It can't possibly have survived. Must've rotted half a century ago.

So. Life went on.

**(He walks back through the tunnel.)**

Keith went away, first on holiday, then to boarding school. I think he's a barrister of some sort now.

**(People pass Stefan in modern dress every now and then.)**

There were lots of things he'd been wrong about, but he'd been right about one thing - there had been a German spy in the Close that summer. It was me! I was born Stefan Weitzler in Berlin in 1933 and re-born Stephen Wheatley when my parents came to Britain in 1935. Jewish, you see. German Jews and no-one in the Close ever knew it, not even me. Not for many years.

My life in England somehow never really took flight. I felt a yearning to know more about where I'd first seen the light, so I

went back to Germany to take a look, and I stayed.

**(He stops and turns back.)**

That scarf. I should've liked to know what happened to that, if nothing else. Not that it would offer any surprises.

Did I really not know he was Uncle Peter?

Of course I knew. As soon as he called my name. From the beginning, perhaps. I think of the shame that pursued him into that dark pit... What we did to each other in those few years of madness. What we did to ourselves.

Time to go. So. Thank you for having me!

**(He looks up, smells the air.)**

There it is again, that breath of something familiar! Even here, after all. Even now.

**(He walks away to catch his train.)**

**End.**