



Kisses on a Postcard: A Tale of Wartime Childhood

Terence Frisby

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It is June 13th, 1940. Terry, aged seven, and his elder brother Jack, eleven, stand in a crowd of children on the narrow platform at Welling station. Wearing labels, carrying gas masks and small suitcases, they are evacuees, or 'vackies', awaiting the steam engine which will pull them across the country towards their unknown destination - and new lives. When they reach the tiny Cornish hamlet of Doublebois, Terry and Jack find they have swapped the newly built streets of suburban London for the adventure of the countryside. The woods and river become their playground, rabbit-catching and night-fishing their new pastimes. But it is the railway, above all, which delights them. Picked at random from the group of evacuees by a middle-aged couple, the brothers discover that the main London to Penzance line runs through a cutting right below the tiny terraced vottage where they are to live, the goods yard and sidings lie a couple of hundred yards down the line: to Jack and Terry, sons of a railwayman, No. 7 the Railway Cottages seems the perfect new home. It is the richest of childhoods, full of colour, humour and the unselfish love that Uncle Jack, an irreverent Welsh ex-miner, and his generous wife Auntie Rose, offer without reserve to the two young strangers. And despite fierce rivalry between local kids and the 'vackies', village life seems wonderful to the boys. That is, until the bombing of nearby Plymouth and dreadful news from the battlefield shatter the peace of Doublebois, reminders of the brutal reality of a war which at times had seemed so far away. Warm-hearted and moving, *Kisses on a Postcard* is a vivid and intimate portrait of a neglected part of our wartime history; a compelling and uplifting memoir of growing up in an extraordinary time.

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