

Safe Haven

© 1st edition 2001

Prestoungrange University Press for the
Baron Courts of Prestoungrange & Dolphinstoun
Cockenzie Centre,
Edinburgh Road,
Cockenzie,
Scotland EH32 OXL.

Safe Haven

by
Annemarie Allan



Prestounrange University Press
www.prestounrange.org

Safe Haven is based on events and people living and working at Prestoungrange and Morrison's Haven at the outbreak of the 2nd World War. The Baron Courts are pleased to publish it for the richness of its depiction of life at the time especially as lived by children, and for the impressions it affords of the activities in our neighbourhood. In doing so, however, the author affirms that any resemblance to particular people alive or dead is a coincidence.

For over 400 years, ships had travelled from Baltic ports like Danzig with goods to trade for coal, bricks, pottery and salt at Morrison's Haven. By the early 1930s the harbour was too small and too shallow for most of the trading ships. In 1939, when the German army marched into the free port of Danzig the Haven was badly silted, destined never to return to its former role as the significant port described by Julie Aitken in *Acheson/ Morrison's Haven – What Came and Went and How?* published as Historical Booklet No. 2 in 2000 and available @ www.prestoungrange.org.

The persecution of Jews in Europe by the Nazis in 1939 had not yet reached its eventual grotesque proportions of which we are now only too well aware. But throughout Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia it was already horribly apparent that their maltreatment was escalating every day. Poland knew it was certainly the next that would be overrun. Many young Jewish children and adults who could fled to Britain including the Edinburgh area. As this story tells it was all too often a difficult and potentially dangerous voyage by sea followed by an anxious search for a Safe Haven.

We are most grateful to Annemarie Allan for crafting and writing this story so very well indeed and thereby helping young and old alike to share the history of those times a little better. She is a graduate in Literature of Stirling University who now lives in Prestonpans. Her mother's family originally came to Morrison's Haven from Ireland to work in coal mining. Born in Edinburgh she has worked both as teacher and librarian, but is currently Information Resources Officer with the Scottish Arts Council.

Thanks also go to Julian, Baron of Dolphinstoun, for the illustrations here that help us see the story that much more clearly.

Dr Gordon Prestoungrange,
Baron of Prestoungrange.

November 2001

25 August, 1939

Captain Reger cast an anxious eye on the tide as it crept slowly up the harbour wall.

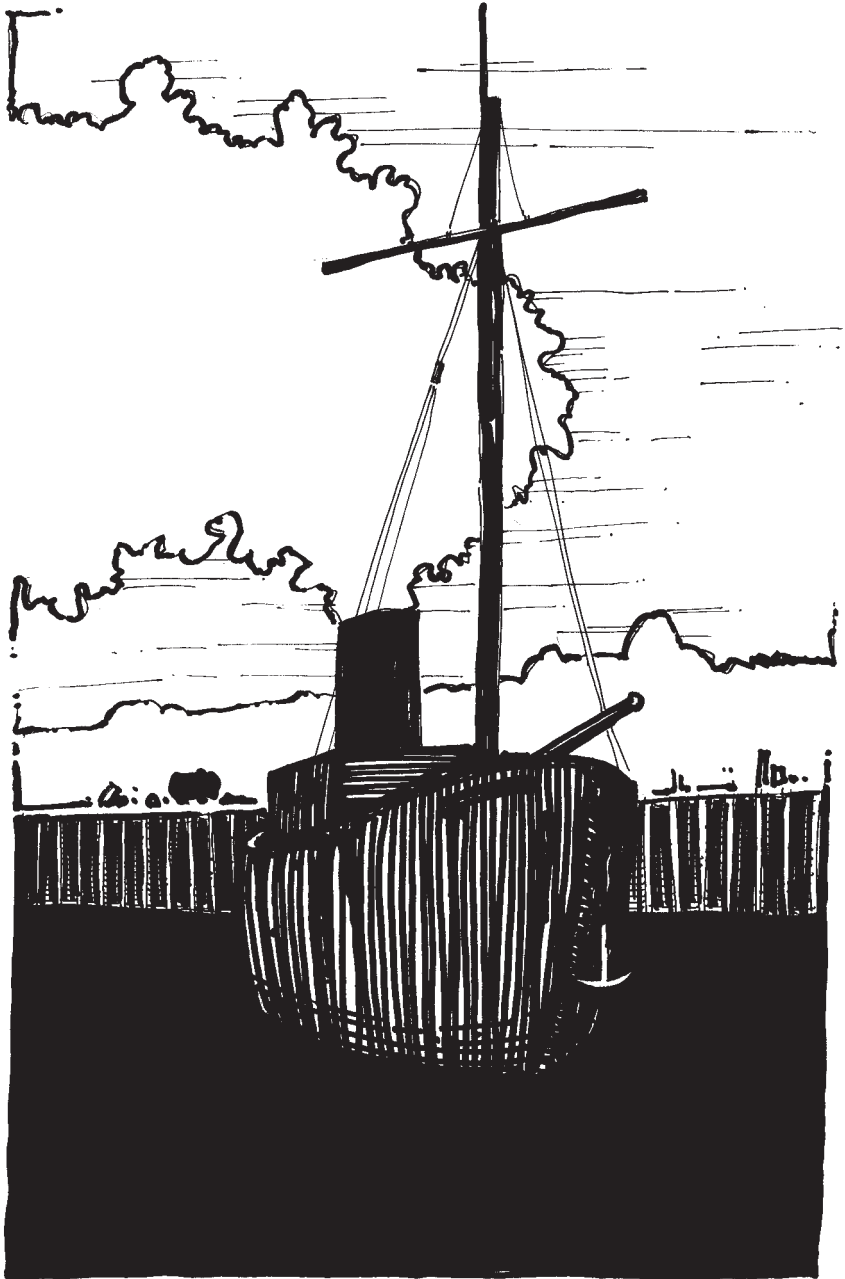
“Verflucht!” He cursed himself for bringing his cargo of salt to Morrison’s Haven instead of Leith. There would be a good profit from the wagons of coal that had rattled their merry way along the railway line from the mine to the harbour, and poured down the chute to fill his hold. But Morrison’s Haven harbour was silting up. He would be lucky to get away.

He bit hard on the pipe that was clamped between his teeth, then turned and stamped angrily back to his boat. It was now or never. Steam was up, the pilot was waiting and the tide was as high as it was likely to get. There would never be another boat from Danzig in this harbour. If the silt was not enough to put them off, then the war in Europe would do it.

The captain hummed a little tune and puffed harder on his pipe, filling the wheelhouse with dense smoke, until the pilot was forced to squint through the glass as he guided the boat between the harbour walls and out into the safety of deeper water. Captain Reger wondered what the people here would make of his other unofficial delivery. It would give the people of Morrison’s Haven a taste of the war that had not yet touched their lives.

He put it out of his mind. As soon as the pilot gave up the wheel, he would be heading home. The humming stopped and he clenched his pipe even harder between his teeth, wondering what would be waiting for him across the sea in Danzig.

No one saw the shadow creep between the buildings on the harbour road and scuttle up towards the blocks of houses at



Morrison's Haven. It crouched in the darkness below the house stairs while children gathered beneath the street lamp.

There was some kind of game going on, or maybe it was an argument. The children slipped in and out of the pool of light, pushing and shoving, their shouts and laughter echoing off the walls. The shadow watched for a long time before it moved on, past the washhouse to the woods beyond.

26 August 1939

Morning

Charlie sat quietly beside the fire with a book on his knees. His mother filled the doorway, enjoying a good gossip with Isa from down the stair. He was hoping she wouldn't notice him if he kept quiet enough.

"That damned dug!" Isa was saying. "Ma potted meat was on the sill and now it's gone. Bad enough he's got the meat – ah'll never find the bowl again either. And what will I say to the men when they sit down for their dinner?"

"Never mind," said Charlie's mother. "Ye can have a second boiling from ma soup bones." She frowned. "Ye mind that pile o' sacks all clean and washed tae make pinnies for the girls? They're away as well." Charlie's mother snorted. "But what would Laddie want wi them? Ah've never seen a dug in an apron yet. If ye ask me, Isa, there's more tae this than meets the eye!"

The eye in question swung round and landed on Charlie. "And what dae ye think ye're up to, my lad? Get that book away and get yerself out into the fresh air!"

"But Ma –"

"But me no buts, Charlie MacNair!" His mother was adamant. "Get out there and get some sun on yer face for a change!"

Sulkily, Charlie limped across the room and slid his book under the mattress of his bed. There would be no more ‘Treasure Island’ today. And the book was due back at the library on Tuesday.

Arms folded, his mother watched him cross to the door, then stepped to one side as he passed through. ‘Like a prison guard,’ thought Charlie, ‘except she’s keeping me out, not in’.

He paused at the foot of the stair. It would be no use looking for Jean. Saturday was a busy day for the girls, with the house to clean and messages to fetch after Friday’s pay had (mostly) been handed over to the women. Perhaps he’d go to Summerlee and take a walk with Granda.

His sister May was always glad to see him. “He gets the old man out from under my feet for an hour or so,” she was fond of saying.

But today was his unlucky day. Just as he reached the corner a crowd of boys came barrelling up the road from the harbour. Charlie froze. Not so long ago, his brother Thomas was part of that crowd. But Thomas was 14 now, finished with school and down the mine along with Dad and Uncle Ian. Charlie was on his own.

“Look – it’s the cripple!” They moved towards him, one boy walking with a sideways roll, imitating the way Charlie walked with his twisted foot. He braced himself for what was coming next.

“Somebody catch that dug!”

It was Laddie, with a tin stuck on the end of his nose, dashing all over the place, barging into folk. With a whoop, the gang ran past Charlie and he turned to see Jean standing on the stair, her arms filled with a black, greasy pile of pit clothes, her mouth hanging open at the sight of Laddie jinking and weaving across the square with the boys in pursuit. She dropped the clothes in a heap and ran after them, ignoring an outraged yell from her mother.

“Don’t!” She was yelling at the top of her lungs. “You’ll frighten him!”

But Laddie was hysterical enough already. She almost caught

up with him when he stopped to shake his head from side to side, frantic to get rid of the tin.

But it was stuck fast. With a muffled hysterical whine, he darted off again, down the vennel between the houses and away. Charlie went round the other way, round the corner and up the road towards the other end of the vennel. The boys had disappeared, but he came up with Jean at the belt of trees between the road and the golf course, just in time to see Laddie disappear over a break in the wall and into the woods, still attached to the tin.

“Come on, Jean,” he puffed. “We can catch him!”

But she just stood there, chewing on a ragged fingernail. “I can’t, Charlie,” she said. “You know there’s ghosts in there. My Grannie told me – there’s an old shaft – really old – the miners all died when the roof fell in – they never got out, Charlie – Grannie says you can hear them still. Listen!”

“Don’t be such a jessie! It’s only the wind in the trees. Come on!”

Jean reached for his hand, but he slapped it away. Bad enough to be playing with a girl. He shuddered to think what they’d say if they saw him holding hands. Charlie marched forward with Jean trailing behind, still nervously chewing on her fingers.

Inside the wood, he slowed down. The daylight didn’t really penetrate through the great tendrils of ivy that curled around the trunks and over the branches. It wasn’t really a path they were following – just a faint track that twisted and turned, leading them deeper into the tangle of bushes. Jean froze at the sound of thrashing somewhere in the undergrowth ahead. She let out a soft whimper and dug her sharp fingers into his shoulder.

“Stop it!” hissed Charlie in a savage whisper. He wasn’t bothered by Jean’s silly stories, but he had no wish to be caught by the greenkeepers from the golf course and marched home in disgrace to face his mother. “You want to find that daft dog or not?”

“Go quietly,” insisted Jean. “He’s scared enough already – we’ll never catch him if we don’t go quiet.”



Carefully, Charlie sneaked forward. Jean was so close behind him he could feel her breath on his neck. They came to a bare patch of earth, slippery with fallen leaves and looked down into a dip filled with ivy and brambles.

Jean gasped. The tin was there, but there was no sign of Laddie. Somehow the dog must have got rid of it. And someone else had picked it up.

A boy stared up at them, his blue eyes the only spot of colour in a pale, mud-smeared face. Beneath the dirt, his skin was like paper stretched over bone. Jean had never seen anyone so thin. Or so dirty. He looked as if he'd been rolling around in the coal bunker. She wasn't even sure what colour his clothes were.

The boy knelt like a statue in the mud at the foot of the dip, his skeletal fingers wrapped round the tin, until Charlie began to wonder if his imagination was playing tricks. Then he sank back onto his knees among the drifted leaves with the tin still in his hands, and bowed his head.

Jean stepped round Charlie and made her way carefully down the slippery slope into the dip, till she was looking down at the creature crouched in the dirt. Through the gaps in his ragged clothing she could see his skin was mottled orange and blue from the cold. She reached out a hand, but didn't quite dare to touch him, so she just stood there, one hand outstretched, staring down at his thin neck while the boy muttered away in words that made no sense to her.

There was a rustle in the bushes and Laddie was racing towards her with his tongue hanging from the side of his mouth. With an exclamation, the boy was on his feet, running up the other side of the dip and away. By the time Charlie reached the foot of the dip, there was nothing left but the tin, lying in the soggy mat of last year's leaves.

"What was that?" Charlie's voice was a whisper.

Laddie sat on his haunches and licked at Jean's outstretched

hand. Shaking her head, she reached out to grab hold of the dog. "I'm not sure, Charlie," she said thoughtfully.

"Maybe he's one of those wild boys – you know, brought up by animals instead of people!"

Jean looked around the narrow belt of woodland between the road and the golf course. "That's stupid. You could hide in here for a few days maybe, but no more than that. You read too much, Charlie MacNair."

He scowled at her. "Well he must have come from somewhere!"

Jean bent to lift the tin. "Did you hear him speak?"

Charlie shook his head.

"I just wondered," she said. "I thought it was just nonsense, but it sounded awfully like the way the boatmen talk."

"You think he's off that boat?"

"Maybe"

"But why would they dump him here?"

Jean shook her head again. "I don't know, Charlie. But I *do* know he's frightened. And he's hungry," Her eyes lit up. "And we're going to do something about it!" With one hand on the ruff of fur round the dog's neck, she turned and marched up the slope.

Charlie groaned. Once Jean got hold of an idea, she never let go. He hurried after her, but it was hard to balance on the soggy surface and by the time he caught up, she was nearly at the edge of the woods. "Wait, Jean! We have to tell somebody..."

The face that turned to him was fired with determination. "No, Charlie! We can't do that!"

"Why not? You said yourself he needs help!"

"It's a secret, Charlie." Jean seemed to have it all worked out. "He's a –" she hunted around for the words " – he's a foreigner – he's not allowed to just come to this country. There's laws and –" Jean waved her hand vaguely in the air, then changed the subject abruptly. "Did you see his arms? Like sticks... and his clothes are rags. We have to help him."

Charlie knew there was no arguing with Jean in a mood like this. “How can we do that? He’s so frightened of us he’ll never come near.”

“Oh, he’ll come all right,” answered Jean. “If there’s something to eat, he’ll come.”

Charlie was doubtful. “And how will we get something to eat? Isa’s on the warpath already. Somebody pinched her potted meat.” A thought came to him. “It was him, most likely.”

“I know!” Jean was full of ideas today. “You go and see your Granda – there’s always a penny there for you on a Saturday.”

Charlie only grunted, feeling vaguely miserable about the thought of going to Granda’s just in the hope of getting some money. But Jean was firm.

“It’s in a good cause, Charlie. You get the money and see what you can get at the Co-op. There might still be some of yesterday’s buns. I better get back before Ma sends a search party after me.”

By this time, they were out of the wood. It was time to part company. Charlie set off for Summerlee, wondering how he had let Jean organise him into her stupid plan, while she turned in the opposite direction, heading for Morrison’s Haven and the pile of pit clothes, dragging the dog along with her.

Afternoon

Granda’s eyes lit up when he saw Charlie at the door. So did May’s. By the time Granda had collected his hat, his jacket, his scarf, his pipe and his baccy, she had his chair up on the bed and a kettle of water heating on the range.

As the door closed behind them, May was fetching a bucket and a scrubbing brush from the scullery, rolling up her sleeves ready to do battle with the dirt on the kitchen floor.

“Women!” Granda grumbled as he stumped along. “Why do they bother?”

Charlie could only agree. From the minute his mother got up to get the men out to their work, until the minute she went to bed, she was washing, scrubbing, polishing – and for what? You couldn't keep the dirt outside – the wind carried it everywhere.

They left Bath Street, heading down past Charlie's school to the shore. Granda stopped to have a wee talk with old Mrs. Brown, who spent her days making little piles of sea coal for her sons to carry home when they finished their shift. Charlie poked around in the tide pools looking for oyster pearls. He'd never found one. But there was always hope.

Then they walked along the shoreline, past Jean's sister Annie and a crowd of other wee ones busy making stooks from shells and stones, looking at the fishing boats out on the water. There was one boat with big white sails, skimming along the tops of the waves, not at all like the stubby fishing boats, with their smokestacks belching out black smoke

“That's a pleasure boat, Charlie,” said Granda. “The folk on that boat go where they please, with servants tae bring them their drinks and their meals.”

There was an awkward moment when they arrived outside Aggie Purdie's shop, which marked the end of their walk. With much fuss and bother, Granda dug around in his pockets till he came up with a big, shiny penny. “There ye go, son,” he said, holding it out in one broad wrinkled hand. “Get yersel' something.”

Charlie reached for the coin much less eagerly than usual. “I'll keep it for a bit, Granda,” he mumbled. He could feel his face going red. “I'm not very hungry just now.”

His Granda stopped and looked at him for a moment. “Ye not feeling well, lad?”

“No, no, Granda. I –” Desperately Charlie searched for an excuse. “I just thought I'd hang on to it for a bit.”

Granda gave a hawking cough and spat on the ground. “Up to you,” was all he said, but Charlie could tell he was dis-

appointed. It made Granda happy to see Charlie digging into a bag of sweets on the road back.

“Tell me about the war, Granda.” Charlie said, in an effort to distract him. Before he went down the pit, Granda had been in the army. Though he never talked about the fighting, he had lots of tales about the places he had been.

But Granda didn’t want to talk about it. “Believe me, Charlie boy,” he said, “War’s no great adventure. War is dirt, and disease, and fear. I was frightened every minute of every day.” His watery old eyes looked down at Charlie. “And it’s coming again, boy. All ye hear on the wireless these days is talk of war.”

Only yesterday, Charlie would have had trouble understanding what his Granda was telling him. But not now. Not since he had seen the fear on the face of the boy in the woods.

Evening

“Look! It’s the cripple! He’s been tae the shops! Let’s see what ye’ve got there!”

Charlie’s heart leapt in his chest. He had come the long way round by the road, instead of through the narrow vennel where he had been caught by Jimmy Doig and his gang once before. But now his luck had run out.

“Rab! Jamie! Let’s go.” The three boys, with Jimmy in the lead, moved towards him.

Clutching the bag of stale biscuits, he turned and lurched across the railway line into the bushes on the far side. He couldn’t hope to outrun them, not with his bad leg, but if he could get up past the reservoir and follow the railway line round the side wall of Northfield House to the main line, then he could walk along the top road and down to Granda’s house. By then maybe the gang would have found someone or something else to torment.

But as soon as he was in the bushes, he heard voices calling to each other further up the hill. The rest of the boys were up there,



waiting for him. Fearfully, he crossed the line again and stopped at the back wall of the engine house. There was noise and bustle inside, and electric light spilled out through the windows, though it was not yet dark outside.

He had to find somewhere else. They could spot him easily here. He peered round the corner, just in time to see a man climb the steps to the beam engine house. Charlie watched the man unlock the heavy door, hardly daring to believe it when he stepped inside without bothering to shut the door behind him.

In a moment, Charlie was up the steps and inside. He looked around warily, staring open mouthed at the huge piston as it moved up and down, up and down, in time to the beat of the great engine that pulled the water up from the workings below.

Charlie had lived all his life with that endless beat, but in here the noise battered against his ears, and shook his body till he grew dizzy. There was no way to tell where the man had gone. Charlie could hear nothing but the beam engine.

With his eyes flickering everywhere, he walked on, past a set of stairs that disappeared roofwards, round behind a huge iron cylinder fixed to the floor with bolts as big as his hand. Then he crouched down in the shadows, thankful for a chance to catch his breath.

A hairy fist grabbed hold of his shirt collar and lifted him into the air. Charlie wriggled and twisted, but it was no use. The man's lips were moving, but the noise from the engine drowned his words. Charlie didn't need to hear what he was saying – his expression was enough.

He shook the boy like a dog and hauled him out the door. A heavy boot connected with Charlie's backside and he was kicked down the short flight of steps, landing with such a thud that his teeth snapped together.

“Just think yerself lucky ah don't tell the watchman! This is no place for laddies and their stupid games!” And the door above him banged shut.

With a groan, Charlie levered himself to his feet and moved off, hugging the wall, till he reached the shadow cast by an overhead walkway. Slowly, his ears returned to normal. He heard the clank of the cage as it rose from underground, followed by the tramp, tramp, tramp of heavy boots. The day shift was on its way home from the mine. At least Jimmy and his gang wouldn't dare come after him now. But there were people everywhere and if his Dad saw him, there would be hell to pay.

Fearfully, with many stops and starts, he crept down the hill towards the shore, past the rattling racket from the Prestoungrange coal sheds, where men picked away the stones and rubble from the coal, then past the brick kilns, where the heat made the air so dry he could hardly breathe. He was lucky this time. No-one saw him. At last he was scuttling past the harbour and up to the road.

“Hsst! You got something then?”

Charlie looked round nervously, but it was only Jean, crouched in the bushes beside the road. She rose and straightened her skirt. Her face and hands were covered in smudges after an afternoon spent banging the greasy pit clothes against a wall.

“Come on, then,” she said, turning for the woods. “It'll soon be dark.”

With a sigh, Charlie followed, still clutching the paper bag. Somehow, in all the running about, he had managed to keep hold of it.

They sat for what felt like hours in the dip in the woods with the broken biscuits laid out on a tree stump, along with a handful of dried prunes Jean had pinched from the cupboard when her mother's back was turned. The sky turned dark, the woods grew chilly and still they sat on.

Charlie squirmed on the piles of damp leaves, sure his backside was getting wet. He felt a total fool. “This is stupid,” he growled. “He's not coming.”

“Shh!” Jean laid a hand on his arm. “I hear something!”

The bushes opposite quivered, though there was no wind. They watched, hardly daring to breathe, as a face appeared and slowly, like a wild creature ready to flee, the boy emerged from the bushes.

There was a long silence. Then Jean leaned forward and nudged one of the biscuits in the boy’s direction.

He moved closer.

“He’s shaking all over,” whispered Jean without taking her eyes off him.

“He’s ready to run,” Charlie replied, just as quietly. He felt distinctly uncomfortable with those huge blue eyes fixed on him and Jean. No-one had ever looked at him like that before.

The boy crouched down opposite them and reached for a handful of prunes. His other hand was already stretching for more, though they could tell he was trying not to cram everything into his mouth at once. All the same, the pile of food disappeared in moments.

Jean lifted her hand again. The boy flinched, but she only pointed to herself.

“Jean,” she said, slowly and clearly. Then, with another stab of her finger, “Charlie”.

The boy stared at her, chewing furiously. When the last morsel was swallowed, he lifted and pointed to himself. “David,” he said. He spoke oddly, with a long ‘aaah’ in the middle, but it was clearly his name. Then he pointed to each of them, echoing Jean’s words with a smile.

The transformation was amazing. Suddenly, he was a person instead of a wild thing and somehow, Charlie felt, that made the state he was in even worse.

“Look at him, Jean. We can’t leave him here. He needs help.”

Jean didn’t have the heart to argue. From the size of him, David was about her age, but the torn and dirty coat he wore hung on him like a scarecrow’s rags. His hair was so stiff with

dirt she couldn't even guess at its colour. But someone had looked after him once. His shoes were scuffed and dirty, but they were made of good leather, and his filthy clothes had been good quality once.

Curious, she reached out to touch what looked like a ragged star sewn onto his coat with big, clumsy stitches. David sat very still as her fingers brushed against him and she could feel his heart pounding in his chest.

Then Charlie pointed to the path he and Jean had trodden on their way in and reached out, inviting the boy to take his hand.

In a second, David was on his feet and away.

Jean looked at Charlie in disgust. "I could have told ye not to do that," she said, climbing to her feet. "Never mind, we'll come back tomorrow."

"What with?" Charlie's voice was glum. Not for anything would he go through what he had today, just for a wee bag of broken biscuits.

"I'm sure we can come up with something." Jean spoke firmly, unaware of the venomous look Charlie was directing at her back. "We can pinch some turnips from the field if we have to."

Charlie crept homeward, relieved that the day was finally over. He had never felt so tired. Wearily, he opened the door.

"Oh, so it's you is it?" His mother's voice came from the scullery, where she was washing dishes. "Well, ye've missed yer tea. There's bread and dripping. And don't go mad. Ye're lucky tae huv that! And then ye can get yersel tae bed. No more playin out for you!"

"Thank God," muttered Charlie to himself as he made for the bread and dripping on the table. He had got off lightly. His mother had a fair temper and no-one in their right mind would deliberately set it off.

As he stumbled through to the back bedroom and bent to unlace his boots, Charlie's stomach rumbled. It reminded him of

David. How must it feel to be as hungry as that? And cold. And frightened. He shucked off his braces and climbed into the bed he shared with Thomas and Ian, leaving his trousers in a heap on the floor. The bed was cold, but he was asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow.

A few doors away, Jean was tucked up in bed beside her sisters. Sleep was a long time coming. She watched the dim glow from the banked up kitchen fire, dreaming of a stolen boy returned to his grateful parents. They would draw up outside her door in a great, big, shiny car and the whole of Morrison's Haven would watch with their jaws hanging open as she placed one foot on the running board and stepped inside, to be whisked away to a life of luxury.

27 August 1939

Sunday afternoon and the two were back in the woods. It had been an anxious afternoon so far. They had almost come a cropper as they tiptoed down Manager's Brae from Dolphinstoun Farm with a couple of turnips each, only to come face to face with a priest from the monastery at Drummore, his cloak flapping, as he strode out the side gate and up the road. Luckily, he had his nose in his prayer book and hardly spared them a glance.

Jean giggled. "Whatever it is he's thinking about, it isn't stolen turnips," she said to Charlie.

Jean had already got rid of her littlest sister by bribing her friend Mary Gibson with a gobstopper she had hoped to keep for David. Mary had taken the wee one to the harbour, leaving Jean and Charlie free to return to the wood and its secret visitor.

“I’m not sure I can keep this up, Jean,” sighed Charlie, sticking his hand down his shirt and producing two clumsily hacked slices of bread that looked very much the worse for wear.

“What else can we do?” Jean, too, was beginning to realise that they might have bitten off more than they could chew. “Maybe once he trusts us a little more, we can get him to come out of here.”

“Maybe,” agreed Charlie. “But how long will it take?”

David must have been waiting for them. He appeared as soon as they reached the dip. Wrapped round his shoulders was a sack belonging to Charlie’s mother.

What little food they brought was gone in no time. David sat for a long time, silently peering into their faces, as though trying to make up his mind about something. Finally, he took hold of the hem of his coat and began picking away at the stitching with his thin fingers.

He reached inside the hem and pulled out a greasy fold of paper. Then he held it out to Jean.

She unfolded the paper and took out a coin, turning it curiously between her fingers. On one side was the head of a man, on the other, a symbol she didn’t recognise. David pointed to the coin then pointed to his mouth.

“He’s asking us to buy food, I think,” said Charlie.

“I’m not daft, Charlie, I can see that,” Jean huffed.

“You *are* daft if you’re thinking of using that,” said Charlie. “It’s not our money. It’ll be no use here.”

Jean was turning the coin over and over, while David watched. “I don’t know,” she said dreamily. “Money ’s money. And how else will we get anything for David to eat?”

David smiled at the sound of his name and reached over to tap a grimy finger on the paper. Jean saw there was writing on it.

“Joseph Levy, Acheson’s Close, Edinburgh...It’s an address Charlie!”

“Jean, don’t even think it!”

“Why not? You’ve been to Edinburgh lots of times!” She was sure with Charlie to help, they could find this place easily.

But Charlie knew better. Edinburgh to him was a noisy, dirty confusion at the end of a long tram ride followed by a teeth-rattling bus journey up cobbled streets to the Sick Children’s Hospital. The nurses shoes squeaked on the polished linoleum floors as they led him and his mother down corridors smelling of antiseptic, until they arrived at a room where silent, grim-faced doctors would twist and turn his bent foot until he bit back the tears of pain.

Jean waved the coin under his nose. “We can get the tram fares with this!”

Charlie was really alarmed now. “Jean, if you spend that money, we’ll get caught!”

But Jean had a plan, though she wasn’t going to tell Charlie. She put the coin carefully into her skirt pocket and said, “Don’t panic. I’m sure we can think of some way to feed him.”

With signs and gestures, they discovered that David was, indeed off the boat. Jean giggled when David got up on his skinny legs and, with a stick for a pipe, did a great impression of the grumpy captain stamping up and down.

But she didn’t find it quite so funny when David described how someone – a woman maybe, though they couldn’t be sure – had paid money to Captain Reger to take David on his boat. He was locked in the hold during the voyage, with almost nothing to eat. At Morrison’s Haven, he had been dumped on the quay and left to survive as best he could.

Charlie and Jean, in their turn, managed to explain that they would only be able to come after school tomorrow. Then Jean wandered off, leaving the boys together. She followed a path through flattened grass and nettles until she came to a collection of sacks draped over a rough pyramid of damp, mossy branches. She stared in dismay at the dismal little shelter.

When she got back, she found the boys intent on some game,

moving twigs around a row of holes scooped in the dirt. From the look of his hands, it was David who had done the digging. Just as she arrived, Charlie let out a whoop of triumph and grabbed the last of the sticks. David knelt back on his heels, scowling ferociously before he forced a smile and held up both hands in defeat.

As they were leaving, the wind came up and the first drops of rain spattered on to the trees. Jean stopped and looked down from the top of the dip at the small hunched figure, watching them with burning eyes.

‘Don’t you worry, David,’ she promised him silently. ‘I’ll find you food. And a better place to hide.’ Ahead of her, Charlie plodded on, determined not to miss his tea two days in a row.

28 August 1939

The day began well for Jean. As soon as she was washed and dressed, her mother sent her down the stair to ask her friend Bessie if she had any bread to spare.

“Ye’ll have tae take the bait tae the mine before ye go to school,” she told Jean. “Then on yer way back, get a couple of loaves from the store tae pay Bessie back.”

Just what she had been hoping for – an excuse to look for somewhere warm and dry for David. The beam engine house would have been perfect, but after what Charlie had told her, she knew there was no chance of hiding him there.

Still, there were so many nooks and crannies at the mine, she was sure she could find something. And she’d get the bread at Aggie Purdie’s shop, not the store. Old Aggie was half blind – she wouldn’t notice what was on a coin as long as it felt right

and, if there were any questions, why, Jean was just getting the messages for Ma.

Her luck held when she arrived at the mine with her Da's bait under her arm. The watchman was away somewhere and she got as far as the machine shop before she found anyone to take the food and send her off to school.

Busy with her plans, Jean turned into the school gates without looking, only to be brought up short by the heavy body planted in her path. She looked up to see Jimmy Doig, with a nasty smile on his face. The other members of his gang were hanging around nearby.

"Hello Jean," said Jimmy, his smile growing broader. "You've been spending a fair bit of time with that gimpy Charlie MacNair, haven't you?"

"What if I have?" Jean glowered at Jimmy.

"Well, how about a wee trip into the woods wi me, sometime?"

There was a snort of laughter from the boys. Jean felt her face grow bright red. "And what makes ye think I'd spend two seconds wi you? Ye've got hair like a yard broom and a face like a bashed tattie."

There was a shout of laughter from the other boys. Jimmy's face darkened and he moved closer, till she was forced to step backwards into the road. She had gone too far, she knew. She swallowed, nervously.

The ringing of the hand bell put a stop to whatever he had planned, and Jean was caught in a swirling crowd of children all rushing to get into their rows.

"Saved by the bell?" Mary was in the line behind her. Jean shrugged. But she knew she hadn't heard the last of Jimmy. No-one but her would have been stupid enough to make an enemy of him – she knew her tongue had run away with her once too often.

She forgot about Jimmy, though, by the time she came to put her second plan into action. Everything went like a dream. For



once, the shop was crowded and Aggie had no time for chat – she just took the money, handed over the change and that was that.

Jean was jubilant as she hurried home to deliver the bread and rescue her other purchases from the wash house before she made her way to David's hideout. Not only did she have food for today, she had enough left over, in proper money this time, to keep him going for a bit longer and still have some left over for a trip to the town.

Charlie was there already, watching David chew determinedly at what looked like a very sour windfall apple. His jaw dropped when Jean triumphantly produced a fresh loaf, a wedge of cheese and a big slab of toffee. Then he frowned.

"I told you not to touch that money Jean," Charlie said angrily. "We're going to get in big trouble."

"Oh, really?" Jean lifted her eyebrows. "For your information, I had no trouble at all. So there!" Charlie sniffed and looked away.

David, on the other had, was clearly impressed. Between twisting off bits of bread and cramming it into his mouth, he looked at Jean with shining eyes.

"And I'll tell you something else," said Jean to Charlie. "I've found a better place than this for David to hide. You know the brick kilns?"

Charlie nodded.

"Well," she continued, there's a place round the back where you can get inside the machine shed. It's warm and dry in there. We can take him there tomorrow."

But tomorrow, when it came, was disastrous.



29 August 1939

Jean was in the sewing room with the rest of her class when there was a knock at the door and a small boy shuffled inside. He raised one hand to his runny nose, but thought better of it when he saw Miss Lawson had her eyes on him.

Miss Lawson was busy unravelling a mitten while Mary stood glumly beside her. Every time she caught Mary knitting left handed, she took out all the work she'd done and made her start again. Mary had been at those mittens for weeks. There was still only one, and it was only an inch long. They had started out grey, but by now they were even greyer.

“Mr. Reid wants to see Jean Chisolm,” the messenger explained.

“Does he, indeed?” Miss Lawson looked at Jean, peering over her half moon spectacles. “Well, you'd better not keep him waiting.”

Jean rose to her feet and walked slowly towards the door, her heart pounding. A summons from Mr. Reid never, ever, meant anything good. No matter how slowly she walked, though, she still ended up at his door. She gave a tiny little knock.

“Come in!”

Mr. Reid was standing behind his desk. He was frowning heavily.

“Mrs. Purdie called on me last night Jean,” he said, staring at her from under his heavy eyebrows as though she was some kind of exotic creature he had never seen before. Jean gulped.

“She brought me this.” The headmaster laid something small and round on the desk in front of him. “Can you tell me what this is?”

Jean's legs were shaking so hard she could feel her knees knocking together. “It's a shilling, Sir.”

“It is a shilling, Jean, but not from here. This is a German shilling.”

She wished desperately she could sit down before her legs turned to complete jelly, but she was forced to stand there, looking up into the stern face above her. With desperate inspiration, she declared, “I got it from Charlie MacNair’s Granda. He had it from the war.”

“And how did you come by it?”

Jean hung her head. “It wisnae –” she stopped, swallowed, and started again. “It wasn’t mine, sir.” Her voice was a whisper.

“Are you telling me you stole it?”

Numbly, she looked up at him and nodded.

“And what war was this?”

“The Great War. He kept it.” Then silence stretched on. “For a souvenir, Sir” she added, her voice quivering.

Jean had not thought Mr. Reid could frown any harder, but he did. He tapped the coin thoughtfully on his desk, then held it out to her, forcing her to take it.

“Look carefully, Jean,” he said. “The Great War finished in 1918. The date on this coin is 1932.”

Jean stood with the coin stuck to her sweaty palm while Mr. Reid stepped over to the open doorway and called through for someone to fetch Charlie.

He strode back to his desk, pulled open a drawer and lifted out a thick brown leather belt, split at the end like a snake’s forked tongue. He laid it down in front of him.

Jean’s eyes glued themselves to the tawse. Mr. Reid knew she was a liar and she had told him she was a thief. Worse, she had given away Charlie. She was dizzy with fear. Dark spots appeared before her eyes, spots that grew into great patches of darkness. Her rubbery legs finally gave up and she sank down to the floor. For the first and last time in her life, Jean fainted away.

There was a voice nagging in her ear.

“Jean, wake up! Jean!”

She was lying on her back, on cold hard leather. Someone took her hand and pinched the loose skin. It was sore. With an

effort, she opened her eyes on green and white walls, with high windows above. She was in the school sick room. She blinked as Charlie's face swam into focus above her.

"Come on, Jean! It's all right. Everything's all right."

She turned her head away. How could it be all right? Charlie would never forgive her once he knew how stupidly she had given him away. A big fat tear slid down her cheek and dripped on to the leather couch. "I made a muck of it, Charlie," she whispered. "Mr. Reid knows about the coin."

"It's all *right*, Jean. I told him it was me that took it, not you."

Her eyes snapped open. "Oh, Charlie, did he belt you hard?"

"No – he didn't belt me. I had to tell him everything, though. He said he would have to get the police." Charlie looked shamefaced. "I didn't know what else to do."

The door opened and Jean stiffened at the sight of the headmaster with Johnnie Crawford, the bobby.

"They want us to go with them. So he won't run away when he sees them coming."

Jean was relieved that Mr. Reid did not look angry any more. But he did look worried. "We won't hurt the boy, Jean," he said. "But we have to find him."

Together, Jean and Charlie followed the two men outside and took the road for Morrison's Haven. Jean's thoughts were rushing this way and that, trying to think of some way, any way at all, that she could think of to stop what was happening. But even if she collapsed right there in the road, she knew they would simply take her back to the sick room and then carry on without her.

She stole a look at Charlie and caught him raising a hand to wipe away the tears that blurred his eyes. Worst of all was the rush of shame at the relief it was to have the grown ups take charge. The last few days had felt like an eternity.

All too soon, they reached the wood. Charlie led the way, while the two men slowed their steps to suit his limping



progress. They broke through the bushes surrounding the shelter and there was David, sitting outside. His eyes lit up in surprise and pleasure, until he saw the uniformed figure of Johnnie Crawford looming behind them. Jean could not bear the look of terror and despair on his face. She turned and ran for home.

3 September, 1939

“So what did your Ma say?”

Moodily, Jean picked up a stone and threw it into the still water. “She waloped me for bringing the polis tae the door.”

“Did ye hear on the wireless? We’re at war. Wi’ Germany.”

Jean shrugged. She wasn’t interested in some war far away. Every time she closed her eyes, she saw David’s face. Charlie tried again.

“It’s something to do with Danzig, where that boat came from. Granda says they’re calling up the men for the army, but they won’t take miners because they still need the coal.”

They sat in amongst a tumble of the rocks on the shore, where the wind couldn’t reach them. A small patch of sunlight moved slowly across the shingle, warming their bare feet. She could hear shouts of laughter from further along the shore, where the other children had made a fire to boil mussels in an old tin can. But Jean didn’t feel like joining them.

“Ah’m telling!”

The voice came from above. They looked up to see Jean’s little sister Annie standing on the rocks above them, her bare toes curling around the barnacles. There was a tear in her grubby white dress where she must have knelt on it and her face was mucky with soot. But her eyes were gleaming.

“Ma told you tae stay away from oor Jean, Charlie MacNair!”

Jean stood and brushed the bright flecks of shingle from her skirt. She picked up her shoes by the laces and slung them over her shoulder. “Ma’s gonnae have a fit when she sees the state of her.”

Charlie looked up at her. “Don’t worry about David. They’ll have found his family. He’ll be all right. Honestly, Jean.”

But she only sighed as she clambered up the rocks towards her sister. Charlie sighed too and turned back to look out over the still water. It was so peaceful here.

For a long time he watched the ships move through the haze over the deep water, huge grey ghosts heading out to sea. Granda could probably have told him what kind of ships they were, but Granda had taken to his bed when he heard that war was declared. No Granda and no Jean. It looked as though the next wee while would be a lonely time for Charlie MacNair.

18 September, 1939

The wind gusted round the playground, sending leaves tumbling over the wall and into the sea. Crowds of children ran from the wall to the railings and back again, happy to be in the fresh air, instead of trapped inside a stuffy classroom with windows too high to see out of. Only Charlie was alone, sitting on a bench with a book on his knees.

A hand came from nowhere and knocked his book away. It landed face down in the dirt and Charlie rose slowly to his feet to face a grinning Jimmy Doig.

“So how dae ye think ye’ll explain that tae Bandy Bella?” Mrs. Gourlay, the librarian, did have bandy legs. She also hated children and spent her life looking for excuses to ban them from the library. Charlie’s last source of entertainment was gone.

And he had had enough.

Without warning, he launched himself at Jimmy, who staggered backwards under the onslaught and fell to the ground with Charlie on top of him, pummelling away for all he was worth.

“A fight! A fight!” Boys came running, from all corners of the playground to form a circle round the struggling figures on the ground.

Jimmy was much bigger than Charlie, and stronger too, but the smaller boy was fuelled by months of anger. It took Jimmy an enormous effort to roll over, pinning Charlie beneath him. The hard gritty surface pressed into his face and hands, but Charlie squirmed out from under, ignoring the raw sting of scraped flesh on his cheek.

Instead of running away, he jumped on top of Jimmy and pounded away with his fists. Jimmy roared with rage as he threw him off and struggled to his feet. He lifted a hand to his face and looked down in disbelief at the blood running from his nose. Then he turned to face Charlie, who had risen to his feet and was standing there, chest heaving, ready for another go.

But the look on Jimmy’s face stopped him. There was anger, and shock but, behind that, something he could hardly believe. He saw doubt.

The two boys stared at each other until someone stepped inside the circle of boys and fetched Jimmy a powerful clout on the side of the head that sent him down once again. This time, he didn’t bother to get up.

The hand belonged to Jean. She looked down at Jimmy with satisfaction, then, without a word, she turned and marched back to join the rest of the girls.

“Did ye see that? Flattened – by a lassie!”

To his amazement, Charlie felt Davie Duggan's arm drape round his shoulder in a friendly embrace.

"You didnae do so bad yerself, Charlie. Come on – let's –" But his words were drowned by the voice of doom.

"Charlie MacNair! Mr. Reid wants to see you. And you too, Jean Chisolm!"

Charlie tried in vain to straighten his coat and flatten his hair as he walked into school. "I didn't need your help," he said to Jean. "I was doing fine on my own."

"I didn't do it for you." Jean didn't bother to tell him about the dirt and scratches all over him. There was no point. "I did it because of what he said to me before."

By this time, they had reached the headmaster's door. Jean clasped her hands together to stop them trembling while Charlie knocked and turned the handle in response to a shout from inside.

Mr. Reid looked from one of them to the other. His eyebrows lifted as he took in the state Charlie was in. But all he said was, "I have some people who would like to speak to you".

Charlie and Jean looked at the two other people in the room. One was tall, enormously tall, and very thin. He was dressed all in black, as though he was going to a funeral. His suit was shiny from long wear and his white shirt was frayed. The two children stared up at him. His narrow face was sombre, Jean thought his grey eyes looked friendly.

"My name is Joseph Levy," he said. And this – "Gently, he pushed forward someone who had been hidden behind him, " – is my nephew, David Kaplan."

A boy stepped towards them, both hands outstretched. He was clean, his hair well-brushed, his shoes shining, but Jean and Charlie would have known him anywhere, even without the dirt and rags.

"Hello Charlie. Hello Jean," said David. He was making an effort, his tongue stumbling over the unfamiliar words. "I have come to thank you," he said, "For being my friends."

With a shout of joy, Jean wrapped her arms round him before she remembered where she was and looked up at Mr. Reid nervously. But he was smiling too. So was the other man. Charlie stepped forward to hug David, with a grin so wide you could see his back teeth.

As the three children sat in the headmaster's room, smiling at each other, Joseph Levy explained that David was living with him now, in Edinburgh.

"There are bad things happening across the sea," he told them, and a shadow darkened his face. "The boat that came to your harbour here – to Morrison's – ?"

"– Haven," supplied Mr. Reid, and the other man nodded. "Yes. That boat came from Danzig. Do you know where that is?"

Jean was silent, hoping Mr. Reid would not pass comment on her poor geography, but Charlie had a vague idea. "Is it near Germany?"

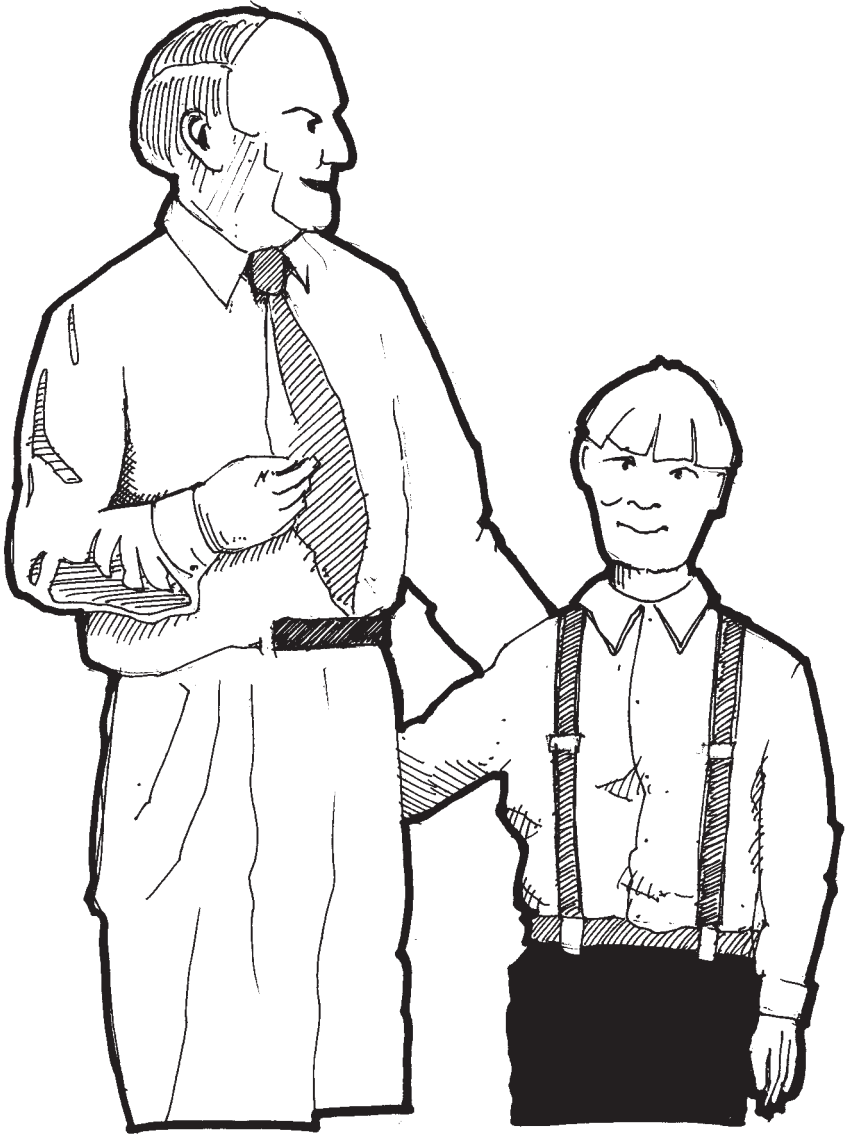
"Yes, very near. And not so long ago, German troops marched into Danzig and then into the rest of Poland. We are at war with Germany. It is not safe for anyone who is not German. And especially not for Jews."

Joseph Levy stopped at their puzzled looks and laughed aloud. "You did not know? We are Jews. There are Jews in hiding all over Europe. The Nazi Government in Germany is –" He stopped again and looked over at Mr. Reid.

A silent message passed between the men and the headmaster said, "It is very dangerous for Jews in Germany at this time. And this boy, David –" Mr. Reid gave a tight smile in David's direction. Jean and Charlie stared. This was not the headmaster they were used to.

"David came from Danzig," continued Mr. Reid. "His mother paid the boat captain to take him away. She hoped his own people would take him in."

Joseph Levy added, "David is very precious to us. He is a brand, plucked from the burning."



Charlie didn't know what that meant, but something else puzzled him more. Jews didn't belong in this world. They were people from the olden days, from the Bible. At church on many a weary Sunday, he had listened to the minister talk of how the Jews had killed Jesus. It seemed odd to think of them as real people like this man, and David. Even odder to think of them going about their daily business in ordinary Edinburgh. It made him feel as though he was looking at the world through someone else's glasses.

Jean had a question. "But why did his mother not come with him?"

Joseph Levy looked at her for a long time. The shadow was back on his face. "There was only enough money for one."

The silence that followed was broken by the scrape of Mr. Reid's chair on the floor as he rose to his feet. "Well," he said heartily, "It seems that David was anxious to thank his friends for looking after him. So here he is."

They all rose to their feet and Joseph Levy reached to shake both Jean and Charlie by the hand.

"We will see David again, won't we?" Charlie didn't want to lose track of David now he had found him again.

Mr. Levy smiled. "I am sure you will. David is part of my family now. And he is only a tram ride away, after all."

The sound of the bell signalled the end of the morning break. Outside the window, the playground grew quiet.

Jean and Charlie made their way back to the classroom, talking quietly so as not to disturb the heavy silence in the corridor. They could hear voices behind each classroom door, chanting times tables.

"What do you think Mr. Levy meant, Charlie, about the brand from the burning?"

"I don't know, Jean," Charlie answered in a low voice. "But we'll probably find out soon enough."

