**My Diary**

**Serhilda Stroud – Aged 7**







Written by Heidi Thwaites

Front Cover design by Heidi Thwaites

**Monday, May 30th, 1942**

Ever since we escaped to Manchester, everything had to change. Let me explain…

My name is Serhilda Stroud, and I am seven years old. When we moved I was renamed Sybill Smith. My Mum changed from Maria Stroud to Mary Smith. My Dad used to be Wilhelm Stroud, but now he is William Smith. He is very clever, but sometimes a bit crazy. It was his idea to take our dog Messerschmitt on the move. I mustn’t say that - Messerschmitt is now called Spitfire.

Our family is really big, and that’s one of the reasons that the move so difficult. My oldest brother is 17, and his name is André Stroud. Oops! He’s not called that. His name is Andrew Smith, and he is my favourite sibling. I have two older sisters who are twins, and both 15. My youngest sibling is Clarice. We decided to keep her name the same, as she has only just learnt how to write it.

I hate the name Smith. Dad says it is a “Traditional English Name”, whatever that is. England is nothing like Österreich. Dad says that we must forget about Österreich, but it is impossible. I could never forget.

Here’s how it all started.

We used to live in a cottage called Glyzinie in the outskirts of Vienna, Österreich, with our housekeeper Mrs Hanbürt. One night, we were all asleep when the Nazi Storm Troopers came into our little house. Mrs Hanbürt screamed loudly, and we all ran into Mum and Dad’s room. Mum had gagged Clarice with a hair ribbon, and for a moment I thought she had switched sides, but later I found out that she was trying to stop Clarice from screaming and giving us away. After all, Clarice was only 2.

When we were all together, Dad led us out of a back exit that I never knew existed. My heart had stopped pumping. Violet carried Messer- I mean Spitfire. We crept silently through the fields, ducking down low until we reached the train station.

When we arrived, a cargo train was going past. Dad looked at his train timetable, and realized it was going to England. He chucked us on two at a time. First was Andrew, with Spitfire, because he could help us off the train at the other end. Next was Mum. She and Clarice were thrown on together into the sand compartment. They were lucky; the sand was soft and warm. Behind them, I went on with Elizabeth. We were unlucky. Our carriage was full of sharp coal. Elizabeth was still wearing her bedtime shawl, so she took it off, and wrapped me in it to stop me scraping my knees. Behind us was Dad and Violet.

After what seemed like two minutes (according to Elizabeth it’s because I fell asleep) we arrived. The train was slowing down. Andrew helped me climb down from the carriage. After we’d all got off, we started trekking through a wood which was behind the station. Andrew gave me a piggy-back.

Eventually, we reached a little hut. Clarice was fast asleep. When we were a metre away, a pretty young lady with crazy green hair opened the door. Her name was Tara. This cottage was called Rosevelt House. This is where we live now.

**Tuesday, May 31st, 1942**

Tara has been really nice to us. I have a room that I share with Andrew. Mum, Dad and Clarice sleep together in the room next to us. In the room down the corridor is where Elizabeth and Violet sleep. Their room is next to Tara’s.

Tara also buys us new clothes, gives us food, started me in Primary School, and we can have a bath three times a week. Maybe England isn’t too bad after all. At least there are no Storm Troopers.

**Friday, June 3rd, 1942**

Today was the scariest day of my life. We were all in the woods when it happened. Violet was throwing old sticks for Spitfire. Elizabeth was trying to teach Clarice how to play hopscotch, but she was hopeless. Mum was reading a book, and Dad was looking at a map of the area, that Tara had given him. Andrew was lifting me up really high and spinning me round and round. Tara was cooking back at home.

Just then, the most unearthly sound filled my ears. It was the Air Raid Siren. I was petrified. In Austria we had trained for this, but it had never happened. I stayed rooted to the spot. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Mum automatically pick up Clarice, who was already screaming, and run off to Tara’s Anderson Shelter. Elizabeth took her twin, Violet’s hand who was holding Spitfire’s collar, and ran after Mum.

Meanwhile, Dad and Andrew were waiting for me, whispering things such as “Come on Sybill”, but fear had taken over me and my mind. After a few minutes of this, Dad got panicky and lost his cool. He threw me over his shoulder gave Andrew the map, and, with Andrew leading the way, ran to Queensbury station. As they ran, the terrifying sound continued to fill my ears.

When we arrived at the tube station, I was shivering. Dad must have noticed because he took off his jumper and wrapped me in it. It was warm and smelt of Dad.

About four minutes later, there was a massive crash, and then a boom, as a part of the station came tumbling in. Then, a woman with a patched eye, and bleeding leg rushed in. She was carrying a dead child, of about Clarice’s age.

Dad turned me to face the other way, and covered my eyes, but it didn’t help. I’d already seen. I just hoped that the child hadn’t been killed by a bomb.

Andrew picked me up and we walked to the other end of the station. We weaved through loads of people sleeping on the platforms. After what seemed like an age, we reached the other end. We found an empty spot on the tracks, and cuddled up together.

Then, I fell asleep.

**Saturday, June 4th, 1942**

Today was the saddest day of my life. I think it shook Violet the most though, he was her best friend.

I woke up by Andrew shaking me gently. “Where’s Mum, Elizabeth, Violet, Clarice, Spitfire… “I mumbled sleepily.

“We’re going to see them now. Come on, sleepy-head,” he said gently. After Dad had given me some water and dry oats, we started out of the station.

The warm sunshine was a nice surprise, and somehow made me feel as if everything would be OK. Andrew and Dad each held one of my hands.

We walked through the woods that led back to Tara’s Anderson Shelter.

When it came into view, we heard a quiet sobbing coming from it. Apparently this is a good sign, as someone is alive. Dad knocked on the door, and a little voice that was unmistakeably Clarice yelled, “Go away you nasty Naatsees!”

“Honestly, Clarice,” murmured Dad. Inside the shelter, we heard a bustling inside the shelter as Mum tried to get past Clarice and open the door. When she finally opened it, I could tell that something wasn’t right…

Mum’s face was red, Clarice was sobbing into her dress, and when Violet appeared behind her, her eyes were bloodshot. Elizabeth was curled up in the corner of the bottom bunk. She was cuddling the doll that she only held when she was extremely sad; she was too ashamed to be seen with it otherwise. Andrew’s grip on me became firmer.

Mum exchanged a meaningful glance with Dad and ushered me inside the Anderson Shelter. She put Clarice down on the top bunk, who immediately reached for her teddy bear, Bella Boo, and nuzzled her face against Bella Boo’s head. Violet sat down next to Clarice, and put her arm around her. Mum took my hand, opened the other entrance, and led me outside.

When I looked down, I was in shock.

There lay our dog, Spitfire. His tail had been blown off, and blood was trickling out of his ears. I was horrified. These Nazis couldn’t get any crueller.

I turned around. Dad and Andrew had now come out. Dad had his arm around Andrew. There were little tears slowly trickling down Andrew’s face. This was the first time I’d ever seen Andrew cry. He was always the brave one, but I could see that this was crushing him too. I cried and cried into Mum’s skirt.

“He wouldn’t come in…” Mum whispered in a croaky voice. She trailed off. There was no need for her to continue. Spitfire had never been a fan of the Anderson.

That night, squished into the bottom bunk with Violet and Clarice, I cried myself to sleep.

**Sunday, June 5th, 1942**

This morning, I was woken by Tara. It was great to see her again, and know that, even though Spitfire’s end hadn’t been a happy one, everyone else was safe. I was the last to wake up. Everyone else had woken an hour before and gone for breakfast.

As Tara mentioned breakfast, my tummy rumbled. She lifted me up, and told me, whilst walking back to the house, that she had heard the siren whilst she was cooking. She knew that we would be taking up all the space in the Anderson, so she went to her neighbour, Lana’s, Anderson shelter. She came went back to the house at dawn.

When we reached the house, everyone was waiting at the table for me.

I gobbled down my egg and toast, and went to sit on the sofa in the living room. Andrew joined me, and read me the next chapter in *“Just William”*, my favourite book. Mum and Dad sat in the kitchen, telling Tara everything that had happened to us. Elizabeth and Clarice were playing Snap. However, Clarice kept shouting “Snap!” every time, before a card had even been put down.

Clarice seemed to have got over Spitfire’s death quickly enough.

Violet, who would usually be playing with Spitfire, was just sitting on the floor, staring into space. It was strange to see Violet so…empty.

After Spitfire died, Mum promised Violet a new dog, but Violet shook her head and said that no one could replace Spitfire. I felt really sorry for her, even though I was sad myself.

**Monday, June 6th, 1942**

Nazis are monsters. I no longer praise Adolf Hitler for ruling Österreich. I will never ever join sides with them. Not after what they did to my dog, not to mention my sister.