The Diary by Alfie McNally

Edward knew that the hammer was somewhere in the shed. He had always tried to keep the place tidy but somehow never quite managed it. As he had grown older he had collected more and more things that had somehow become precarious piles around the shed. His wife Irene, used to call it junk. For Edward however, it was treasure.

As he moved a rusty saw, he spotted the old box. He knew at once what it was. As he slowly opened the box, he remembered the day he was given it.

Richard Smith – Officer – Victoria Regiment - Poland
Diary Entry: 22nd April 1944

Earlier as I walked along a dusty train-track my mouth felt as dry as a sandy desert. The Flies had buzzed around my mouth and head annoying me and making me feel dizzy until I felt weak and staggered like a drunk puppy. A mile ahead I saw a dirty, grey stream trickling alongside some overgrown bushes. The rain had lashed down soaking me and making my army uniform wet and heavy like a damp sponge. Up ahead I could see my fellow army comrades in front of me and hoped we were near the base camp. I was so tired I could barely keep going. I was beginning to feel weak with hunger and knew our rations were running low. The ground below

felt like it had started to twirl like one of those spinning top rides at a fairground I used to visit with my grandfather. I could almost hear the tune of the fairground in my ears and half smiled to myself. I miss home and the green grass of England so much.

In the distance I could hear shouting and the loud bangs of gun fire. The smell of burning made me feel sick. Tank engines roared like lions killing their prey. I fell to the floor in desperate need of water. Dropping my heavy rucksack, filled with all of my belongings, I grabbed my dirty water bottle, gulping it down and closed my heavy eyes for a moment.

Lurching forward the mud began to get thicker with every raindrop that fell from the thunderous, grey, murky sky. Every footstep I took got harder and harder. We were drawing closer to base which meant I could finally rest. Suddenly something in the overgrown grass darted and caught my eye. I thought at first it was a scared animal but when I had another look it was a young girl. The girl put her arms up as if I was about to shoot her. She was shaking like a leaf in the gusty wind appearing scared for her life. With long, black hair tied up in a bun on top of her head she look extremely thin and pale like she hadn't seen the sunshine for a very long time. She wore a yellow dress which was torn and ripped in places with bruises and scratches all over her arms and legs.

I slowly walked towards the trembling girl whispering to her that I was English and that she was safe and to not worry. With tears in her eyes she asked if I could help her. She quietly explained in the best English she could, her name was Barbara and she was from Poland and had just escaped from hell….the prisoner of war camp 4 miles away.

Edward smiled to himself as the afternoon sunshine beamed through the shed windows casting a golden glow. He sipped from his hot mug of tea and twisted his wedding ring as the diary had made him think of his dear departed wife, Irene. He missed Irene like crazy. They went together like bread and butter. He imagined himself as Richard, and how shocked he must have been to come across a young Jewish girl hiding in the grasses. He also imagined how petrified Barbara must have felt after escaping a war camp where she lost many family members and friends. He turned the next page and read on……

Diary Entry: 23rd April 1944

Wow what a day today has been. I don't feel like a hero but Barbara thinks I am. She can't stop saying that I am her knight in shining armour and how I have saved her from certain death. I arranged help for Barbara with an English lady I knew called Susan, who helped people in danger. Barbara would be safe now. I really hope I see her again soon. She is incredibly pretty and she has eyes like

the darkest chocolate buttons. One thing she did do was eat like a hungry, wild animal – she shoved handfuls of food in her mouth without chewing. She also slept for hours but seemed to be having a nightmare and was waving her arms about and crying. Anyway, I'm glad she is safe now and will be looked after. The horrors she must have seen like dead bodies piled on top of each other, people being shot, human's so skinny they were just skeletons and the smells she told me about were dreadful. Some good news is that people are saying it looks like this terrifying war is nearly over. Which means one thing….I can go home to England and see Barbara again.

Edward smiled as he thought about how Richard and Barbara had gone on to live a very happy life together and looked after him and his little sister Sarah. A tear fell slowly down Edward's cheek as he thought about how Richard was like a dad to him after the tragic death of his parents in a car crash when he was small. When Richard died Edward did not know how he would cope but that special day after the funeral when Barbara handed him this diary Edward felt that he now always had a part of his Grandfather forever. He hoped Richard would be proud of him becoming a writer and all the books he had written. Then a thought came to Edward. This diary would be such an inspirational book. Everyone would be able to read about the hero his Grandfather was. Closing the tin shut Edward knew he wouldn't be putting the diary back in the shed again.