

**Tommy  
Parker**



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*For Helen*



— PROLOGUE —

A dozen of the King's Guard had chased him to the end of a long stone corridor. He was cornered now in passages deep beneath the Houses of Parliament; the building that he'd come to destroy. There was nowhere left to run.

Breathless, he turned to face his pursuers, sizing up each of them and searching for a weak link, weighing up whether there was any way that he could fight his way out. The guards, each of them protected by their leather coats and iron breastplates, stood four across and three deep, cutting off any hope of escape. They held half-pikes that were thrust menacingly towards him. He didn't stand a chance.

He thought about his partners in this scheme and wondered whether they would have more luck. It was certainly a great shame that they'd no longer be able to see their mission through.

And all because of that strange little old man.

He recalled the last few moments, considering where it had all gone wrong.

Their plan had been simple, but the effect would have been devastating. A blast that would have been heard around the world.

He'd hidden in these cellars for days with little water and even less food, but none of that had bothered him as such small sacrifices would be worth it in the end. And he'd come so close, too. Today was to be the day. He had gone through his final checks: examining each wooden barrel, each fuse, and making sure that nothing could go wrong. Through their connections they had managed to secure the ideal location: a huge disused cellar located directly beneath the House of Lords. Right where they needed to be! The planning had taken months, years even, with thousands of pounds spent and countless favours called in, all of which would have soon borne fruit. They wouldn't have known what had hit them.

His surroundings were filthy; his dust-covered cloak shrouded his scruffy clothes, and his normally smart boots had been made dull with dirt. Scraps of food were lodged in his moustache and his bushy, reddish-brown beard.

When he checked the contents of the last barrel, his cloak had fallen from his shoulder, exposing a thick, powerful arm. On his forearm was the scar he'd been given in a knife-fight but above that scar was a more intriguing sight altogether. A mark that he always kept hidden, unless in certain and familiar company; the inky tattoo of a quill, a mark that each of his co-conspirators also boasted. The mark of the Brotherhood.

He had examined the fuse one final time, thinking with pride how it was him who had been chosen to complete this, the most important of tasks. Those thirty-six barrels, filled to the brim with gunpowder, which would change history.

And it was he who had been chosen to light the fuse. A single match that would illuminate the city and bring with it a new beginning. This king hadn't understood them. It had fallen upon his brethren to make a change.

He remembered looking at his pocket watch. The time had come. So much firepower would not just demolish Parliament but also most of Central London. The blaze would light up the night and burn for a year. People would long remember this day and sing songs about it. And him? Well, they were sure to make effigies of him and chant his name. He would have been a hero.

If only it wasn't for that old man.

He recalled how, in his final moments of preparation, he had been startled by a voice from the darkness. He'd thought he had been alone.

'Penny for them, Guy?' the voice had said.

'Huh? Who's there?' He recoiled in fright, shocked that someone had been lurking in the shadows.

'Your thoughts, Guido,' the invisible voice replied. 'A penny for them?'

An old face had then moved towards him out of the darkness. The face belonged to a man, a rather pleasant looking old man, who was only just taller than the wooden barrel that he'd hidden behind.

'I don't know who you are,' Guy replied. He felt calmer as he realised that the stranger carried no threat. 'But you can't stop this. You're too late. This is my destiny!'

He had taken a match then and, kneeling by the slow-

burn fuse, had deliberately, poignantly, struck the match and watched as the bright flame threw the cellar into light.

‘I’m afraid, Mr Fawkes,’ the old man had said, ‘that there will be no fire in the sky tonight. I cannot let you succeed again. Not this time.’ He’d then swiftly blown out the match before adding, ‘But you *are* right about one thing: the world *will* remember you.’

Dumbfounded, Guy had done nothing but stare blankly at where the wrinkled face had been, holding the spent match as it had smouldered in his fingers. Coming to his senses, he’d then reached out, snatching at nothing but a handful of darkness. The figure had vanished.

It was then that dozens of heavy footsteps clattered on the stone outside the door. Then a loud crash as the doors had burst open and sent shards of wood flying across the room as the King’s Guard charged through.

He’d run for all he was worth, but there was no way out. His escape route was blocked by a bolted door.

He evaluated the scene again. *This isn’t how it was supposed to happen. Who was that old man? And how did he vanish into thin air?*

Deciding that he’d rather go down fighting, Guy pulled a dagger from his belt and braced himself for the fight that he knew would end his life. He steeled himself to charge but stalled as the wall of soldiers parted suddenly.

*Will they really let me through?*

His optimism was short-lived. A heavy rattling was followed by the emergence of two soldiers rolling a small cannon into the gap that they had created. Clearly they were

taking no chances with him. Then, reminiscent of himself only moments before, one of the guards knelt and struck a match, lighting the fuse. Seconds later there was a loud bang.

Guy Fawkes saw it all in slow motion. The dagger fell from his hand as the cannonball flew through the air towards him.

This was it.

His time had come.

## *Grandpa's House*

Tommy Parker raced across Harbour View on his bike and came skidding to a halt outside the wall of number twelve.

It was the last week of the summer holidays, and, as ever, he was spending it with his grandpa. This was something he had always done – often with so much enthusiasm from his parents that he was beginning to wonder whether the holiday was for him or for them. He had always enjoyed the visits, but since his nan had died the atmosphere had changed. It wasn't as fun. Grandpa wasn't the same either. He had changed too.

It was a clear morning with just a handful of wispy, white clouds adorning the light blue sky. Perfect conditions for riding his bike. And Tommy loved it! Football and riding his BMX. He couldn't think of two things he liked doing more. Football was the one thing he was *really* good at. In every other part of his life, he was average, he accepted that. Average height. Average build. He even had an average haircut – his brown hair cut short back and sides just like his dad's. He was also pretty average in school. Most teachers thought that he had at least a little bit of academic potential, but the general consensus was that he'd

have to stop daydreaming in class. Maybe next year!

Hopping off his bike, Tommy wheeled it down the side path and into the back garden. As far as Tommy was concerned, Grandpa had lived in this house forever. He looked around the large, shabby garden, and his memories came flooding back.

Like the time Ben had slipped into the fishpond whilst trying to catch a tadpole. Tommy and his grandparents couldn't help but laugh as they watched Ben flap around on his back panicking, not realising just how shallow the water was.

Tommy leaned his bike against the side of the house and let himself in through the back door. 'Grandpa!' he shouted. 'It's only me.'

He moved through the kitchen – a room which was also full of happy memories.

Like the time his nan had baked every kind of cake Tommy could imagine. Cakes he'd never even heard of and ones which he often suspected she had invented just to amuse him: chocolate cakes, butterfly cakes, rock cakes, boulder cakes, fairy cakes and his personal favourite, furry cakes (invented when his nan had dropped most of the batch on the floor). And they had all tasted gorgeous!

They would spend hours simply enjoying each other's company, making up silly stories and singing songs until bedtime. The house was so full of life and laughter then, but those memories were now tainted with a generous pinch of sadness.

'Grandpa!' he shouted, louder this time.

Walking from the kitchen, Tommy entered the dining room which was now mainly used as a study. There were two large bookcases dominating the back wall, each full to the brim with books of all sorts of shapes and sizes. He stood there for a few seconds, staring at the various titles. There were books on every topic you could imagine. His gaze was drawn, though, to a large, black book that was covered in dust and which was, as ever, just out of his reach on the top shelf. Tommy was just about to stand on tiptoes when he was startled by Grandpa's voice.

'Hello, stranger! I didn't hear you come in.'

Grandpa was stood at the door to the kitchen. He always used this familiar greeting. Regardless of whether he'd not seen him in weeks, or whether Tommy had just popped to the bathroom, he'd always say it. It was a catchphrase of his.

Leonard Parker, or Lenny to his friends, was in his seventies but had always looked good for his age, probably a result of the amount of time he spent in his garden. In the last few years though, the years since the death of Tommy's nan, he'd aged a great deal. From looking healthily filled out, he'd now lost too much weight, which gave him a gaunt, tired appearance. What had once been a generous head of hair had now diminished, leaving thin, grey strands on the top of his head. Most noticeably though, especially to those close to him, was the change in his eyes. When Nan was alive, Grandpa's eyes were full of mischievous energy. Now his eyes were tired and sad. Almost as if the spirit within them had died at the same time as Nan.

‘Oh, hi, Grandpa!’ Tommy said approaching him, extending his arm to shake his hand.

‘What’s this? You’re not too old to give your Grandpa a hug!’ He leaned forward and squeezed Tommy briefly. ‘Where’s your mother?’

‘Right behind me, bringing my stuff in the car. I beat her over,’ he added proudly. A loud bang emanated from the kitchen as the back door was thrown open. Both Tommy and Grandpa entered to find his mother stood in the doorway, her top half obscured by three large boxes, a battered old rucksack dangling from her arm.

‘Tommy! Are you in here?!’ a voice barked from behind the boxes. ‘Give me a hand with these!’

He ran over to her, grabbing his rucksack from her grasp and taking the top box from the stack in her arms. As he did so, the head of his mum, Brenda Parker, became visible. And boy did she look flustered!

‘How do I always end up carrying your stuff?’ she asked, still struggling not to drop the remaining boxes. ‘Hi, Dad’, she continued, placing the boxes onto the table. ‘I’ve made you some Welsh cakes; they’re in the top box.’

She kissed Grandpa on the cheek and then turned to Tommy, whose hand was already delving into the box of cakes. ‘I saw Ben cycling up the road as I pulled in. I did beep to him but he was in a world of his own as usual.’ Tommy headed towards the back door, grabbing his helmet from the table as he passed. His mum followed and, with Grandpa distracted by the kettle, whispered. ‘Don’t stay out *all* day with Ben, spend some time with your Grandpa too.

He doesn't see that much of you anymore, and you know how much he loves your company.'

'I know, Mum, I won't be long. I'll just pop out for an hour or so,' he replied, thinking about how much more fun he'd have with Ben. Grandpa never wanted to mess around anymore.

'Well make sure that's all it is,' she said, ruffling his hair. 'I'm only staying for a cup of tea, so I'll call you tonight. Have a nice week...' Wheeling his bike along the side of the house, Tommy pretended not to hear as she shouted after him, '...and don't forget to do your homework!'

Tommy closed the side gate at the same time as his best friend, Ben Campbell, skidded to a halt by the path.

They'd met when they were four, when Ben's family moved to Little Millbrook, and they'd been inseparable ever since. They were about the same height but, if truth be told, Ben carried too much weight for a boy of their age. His mother kept saying he was just 'big boned', but he hadn't always been this chubby, and Tommy knew that it got him down. He'd always been as fit and active as Tommy. In fact, Ben had been one of the fastest boys in junior school. But that was all before the accident two summers ago.

Ben had broken his right ankle when his skateboard had collided head on with Mr Wally Barnes, but what made it worse was that Mr Barnes just happened to be driving his Ford Cortina at the time. The break had been a bad one, never quite healing properly and, ever since, Ben had walked with a slight limp. As a result, their once regular adventures

into the woods became more and more infrequent and Ben was certainly a long way off starring for the school running team.

In truth, Tommy blamed himself for Ben's accident, and the guilt he felt was sometimes unbearable.

They had been spending one of their usual Saturday afternoons playing on their skateboards, taking it in turns to race down the hill. One would lay flat on his skateboard and roll down as fast as possible whilst the other would stand halfway down the hill and act as a lookout for oncoming cars. On one of Ben's turns, though, Tommy had been distracted by something in the bushes on the opposite side of the road – and the distraction had proved disastrous.

Tommy had failed to notice Mr Barnes driving up the hill in his battered Cortina, and he couldn't shout until it was too late. The noise was sickening. Ben had collided feet first with the bumper of the car, his right ankle taking the worst of the impact, breaking in three places. Tommy would have done anything to prevent the accident. But it was all in the past, and the past couldn't be changed.

Ben now sat proudly upon his brother's bike, which was obviously too big for him, his good leg stretched to its limit and his toes barely touching the pavement as he struggled to keep his balance.

'I had to grab the bike early before Richie got up,' he said. 'He'd have killed me if he'd caught me.'

Together they pedalled away from Grandpa's, across the patch of grass and towards the road leading out of

Harbour View.

‘What d’ya fancy doing?’ Tommy asked.

‘Don’t mind really, but I’ve gotta be back by five. Wanna sneak this back in when Richie’s still out.’

‘We could go up to the fort for a few hours then?’

‘Nah, it’s uphill all the way.’

Ben was never too keen about going up to the fort, not since he’d had a nasty fall there a few months back. Tommy on the other hand quite liked it; there was so much history to the place.

‘What about down the docks?’ Ben suggested. ‘We could throw stones at some of the boats again?’ he added enthusiastically.

‘No way! My parents found out about that the last time – they grounded me remember? I swear they know *everyone* in this town.’

A shout came from behind them.

‘Tommy! Hold up! Where’re you going? OK if I come?’

Tommy stopped his bike and swivelled around as Ben, who had apparently gone deaf all of a sudden, continued along the road.

Running across the grass towards them, with a heavy looking satchel over his shoulders, was Arthur Ford. Arthur, or Art as he was called by everyone in school, was the same age as Tommy. In fact, they were in some of the same classes. Tommy really liked him and knew him well from the summers he’d spent at Grandpa’s. Most of Tommy’s friends however, Ben included, didn’t have a lot of time for Art. Put simply, they thought he was a geek. There were

many times when Tommy and Ben had argued over some of the flippant yet nonetheless mean comments that Ben had made about him.

Art struggled for breath as he ran to where Tommy waited. Ben, accepting defeat, slowly circled back towards them.

Art was a fair bit shorter than Tommy and wore thick-rimmed glasses which made the messy brown hair that fell over his ears stick out in little tufts. He somehow looked out of place in a pair of shorts and T-shirt and was probably the only pupil who would have preferred to wear his school uniform all year round.

‘Well? Where’re you going?’ Art asked, finally catching his breath.

Ben spoke before Tommy could answer. ‘We’re going up the fort. I’d expect it’s too far for you to come, y’know, if you haven’t got a bike...’

A familiar look of rejection flashed over Art’s face. He looked down at the double-knots in his laces. ‘Oh. Never mind then. I’ll just hang around here.’

Tommy shot Ben a scalding look. ‘I don’t fancy going up to the fort anymore,’ he said, ‘it’s too far. *And* it’s uphill,’ he added, making sure that Ben didn’t miss his mocking tone.

‘Oh fine,’ Ben replied. ‘Let’s race down to the docks instead then. I can’t be beaten on this thing!’ He began to cycle hard down the pavement towards the main road.

‘Nah, I’m happy to stay here,’ Tommy shouted after him, ‘let’s just kick a football around or something.’

Ben braked sharply, wobbling to a stop. Art's head rose along with his spirits.

'You don't have to hang around here for me,' he said, checking that he wasn't being a burden. 'I've got plenty to do. Mrs Smith gave me a few extra assignments for English.'

'Ooh, bad luck,' Tommy commented. 'How come?'

'I asked her for them. I wanted to get ahead.'

Art's enthusiasm for homework was baffling, but Tommy didn't want to dwell on the matter for too long because Ben, who would no doubt have a go at Art for asking for extra work, was now pedalling back to them.

'Anyway,' Tommy said, 'I'd rather just hang about here; it's too hot to cycle all over town. You're up for that aren't you, Ben?'

Ben, circling lazily around them on his bike, replied with an air of resignation, 'If we *must*...'

All three boys started over the grass back towards Grandpa's, Ben riding in big circles around them. Tommy noticed the edge of a large book protruding out of Art's satchel.

'What you reading?' he asked, keen to make him feel more welcome after Ben's frosty reception.

'Oh that? It's just a history book. I've got another assignment to do. You should have it, too.'

Tommy did have that project to do over the summer, something about the Second World War. He'd completely forgotten about it.

'What book did you get?' Tommy asked, hoping for tips.

'*World War II – Were there really any winners?* I'm writing

it from a humanitarian angle y'know, about the consequences and perils of war.'

'Sounds good,' Tommy said, genuinely impressed.

'Sounds *boring!*' Ben chipped in, still circling around them, a proud look on his face. His moment of glory was short-lived however, as he turned the handles too sharply on his over-sized bike, causing the front wheel to turn in at an awkward angle and him to collapse to the ground on top of it. Both Tommy and Art laughed and pointed hysterically.

'Ben... You OK?' Tommy finally managed to say between guffaws.

'Yeah, I'm fine! Just thought I'd plonk the bike down here and use it as a goalpost. Anyway, that topic *does* sound boring,' he added, getting up slowly and trying to shift the attention back to Art.

But nothing could ruin the moment and Art continued to laugh uncontrollably. 'You're right, Ben', he managed to say, taking a few more seconds to wipe the tears from his eyes. 'It probably would be boring for you. It's an awfully complicated subject – some of the words even have as many as *three* syllables.'

'What's that supposed to mean?!' Ben demanded, stung by the comment.

'Oh, come on, Ben,' Tommy said, hoping to lighten the mood, 'you've never been the best with words. Remember that time at my Grandpa's? When we were playing that quiz?'

Ben's initial look of confusion was soon replaced by terrible realisation – he knew what was coming next.

‘When he asked you, “What L is commonly known as the King of the Jungle”, and you replied... “elephant!”’

This was too much for Art, who had only just recovered from his previous fit of laughter. He doubled over onto his knees, his body shaking violently but no noise coming out. Ben, his face crimson, looked helplessly to Tommy with a mixture of embarrassment and anger. They continued to chuckle as Ben dusted himself off and pulled his bike back to a standing position. He appeared just about ready to storm off when a look of utter terror appeared on his face.

‘Ssshh! Hush a minute!’ he said urgently.

Art’s moment of bliss was cut short. The sudden change in Ben’s mood concerned them, and they both stopped laughing and looked at him. Ben was staring beyond them into the distance, his eyes transfixed on something, settling on a house at the other side of the street. He nodded his head slightly, too afraid to point with his finger, afraid of drawing attention to them.

‘What is it?’ Tommy asked, turning around with caution.

‘There. See?’ Ben replied, nodding again. ‘Old Mr Wiseman in his window.’

Tommy looked towards Mr Wiseman’s place. The house had an eerie feel about it, even on this bright summer’s day. The outside, originally painted a bright cream, was now a grubby shade of fawn with patches of mould and vine sprawling up the wall. Whatever the weather, every curtain in every window was always drawn. A household in constant mourning. But for the first time in Tommy’s memory, the curtains of the ground floor window

were parted, and in that parting stood the unmistakable silhouette of the homeowner. It was his presence that had caught the eye of Ben, and it was his presence which now drew the undivided attention of all three boys.

‘Spooky...’ Ben whispered.

None of them could avert their gaze from the window, each one fascinated by the short and more-than-slightly tubby frame of Mr Wiseman. He stood motionless in the window, appearing to stare in their direction.

Tommy finally broke the silence. ‘C’mon guys, stop gawping at him! It’s rude.’ But even as he said it, he couldn’t take his own eyes off the house. Finally, and with great effort, he swung his body around to face Ben and Art. ‘Seriously, let’s go.’

They struggled against the hypnotic stare of Mr Wiseman before they managed, as if coming out of a trance, to turn away from him and follow Tommy over the grass towards Grandpa’s, Ben now pushing his bike and his limp even more pronounced since his earlier fall.

‘Does he *ever* leave his house?’ Art asked. ‘I’ve lived here for years, and I’ve not once seen him outside. Come to think of it, I’ve never seen him have any visitors either.’

Ben stopped suddenly, his eyebrows furrowed into a frown. ‘Are you joking? You don’t know about him? He *never* leaves. Not since he killed all those people years ago. If he were to step outside his house, he’d get arrested. Or worse. He’d kill again.’

‘Oh shut up, Ben! He’s not killed anyone, Art,’ Tommy said, aware of the increasingly worried look on Art’s face.

‘Grandpa says he’s just an old guy who likes to keep himself to himself, that’s all.’

‘What? Like a hobbit?’ Ben asked. Tommy and Art looked at each other, confused. ‘You know,’ Ben continued, ‘those people that never like going out.’

‘Oh, I think you mean *hermit*,’ Art suggested, shaking his head in disbelief.

‘Yeah, I think hobbits actually like the fresh air,’ Tommy added.

‘Well, you know what I mean,’ Ben said. ‘I just think it’s creepy that’s all – that he never goes out and never talks to anyone and stuff. Tom... Did your mum happen to bring any Welsh cakes?’

Now how was that for a quick change of subject? But knowing, as he did, of Ben’s relationship with his stomach, Tommy had been expecting that question.

The last days of the summer holidays were rapidly running out, and Tommy still had homework to do. He hated doing essays, always leaving them right until the last minute, and this particular one was no different. He’d wasted the last few days playing with Ben and Art, but he now sat at Grandpa’s dining table with his blank writing pad and a school book open before him, determined to make a start on his History essay. He was trying, without much success, to understand the rationing system employed by Britain during the war years.

He’d put this particular essay off for as long as possible, and it was fair to say that he was totally stumped. He’d left

it until as late as yesterday to cycle over to the library, where his mum worked, explaining to her that he'd 'just needed to add a few finishing touches' to it, and search for a suitable history book. It was clear from the empty shelves in the history section that he had left it too late. He had hoped to find a book about the London Blitz, or even the D-Day Landings that Grandpa always talked about. Something with a bit of action. But no, all he was left with was a book about rationing.

Tommy sat quietly making notes when something sharp hit him on the cheek, making him jump.

'Oww! Hey! What was that?'

On the table by his pencil case lay the offending object. A rolled-up sweet wrapper.

'Grandpa, I'm trying to concentrate!' Tommy couldn't help but smile as he looked through the doorway into the lounge, over at Grandpa. He was sitting in his armchair by the fireplace reading, or at least *pretending* to read, the newspaper. Tommy was also a little surprised; Grandpa wasn't up for a laugh much nowadays, which Tommy put down to him getting older and, of course, Nan.

'What?' Grandpa replied, a slight grin showing at the corners of his mouth. 'It wasn't me.'

*As if it could be anyone else.*

'What are you doing there?' he added, hobbling over to the table.

'Oh, just a History project I've gotta do,' Tommy replied, 'but I've left it so late I'm stuck doing it on rationing during the war. Boring huh?'

‘Not so boring when you were actually living it, my boy. They were tough times.’

‘Well I’ll probably fail it anyway,’ Tommy moaned. ‘I’m useless at History.’

‘Now that’s not the attitude, is it? You can accomplish anything if you apply your mind to it. Remember what your nan used to say? “Always shoot for the stars, even if you miss, you’ll hit the tops of the trees.”’

Grandpa picked up the library book and examined it quickly, before shaking his head and tutting. ‘No wonder you’re struggling. I think I can do a bit better than this.’ He walked over to his bookcase and pulled a tatty paperback book from the shelf. ‘Here, you can use this. *World War II: A History*. The most accurate book about the second war, believe me – I was there. You should find some interesting things to put in your project.’

‘Thanks, Grandpa.’

Tommy began flicking through the well-read and dog-eared pages of the book, pausing only when an interesting photograph caught his eye: battle-fatigued British soldiers, huge bomber planes and monstrous-looking tanks. The realities of war.

‘You know,’ Tommy said after a while, ‘I’d have loved to have got my hands on some of them – the Germans I mean – looking at all the damage they caused.’

‘Oh, they weren’t all bad, Tom, most were just young men fighting their cause, doing what they thought was right for their country, just like we were. Many of them didn’t have a choice. They wanted to be there as little as we did.’

Most of them anyway.'

Tommy had never thought about it like that. As Grandpa walked back to his armchair. Tommy couldn't resist blurting out his next question, 'Grandpa, you know Mr Wiseman?'

Grandpa paused and turned back towards him. 'Yes, Tommy, I do. Why do you ask?'

He hoped Grandpa could answer some of the questions he and his friends had about his mysterious neighbour. He walked back over to him and sat down. Tommy could hear the rasps as Grandpa stroked his chin, letting out a sigh.

'Tommy, you and your friends haven't been bothering Mr Wiseman again have you?'

'No,' he replied a little too quickly. 'No, not at all.'

Grandpa's raised eyebrows suggested that he wasn't convinced.

'Honestly, Grandpa! He was at his window this afternoon and we were just wondering about him.'

'Now take my advice,' Grandpa said sternly. 'You boys just leave Mr Wiseman alone, he's not harming anybody. I'd wager that there's more to him than just the lonely old man that you boys see. He's probably got some very interesting stories to tell.'

Grandpa stood up from the table and reached into the inside pocket of his tweed blazer. 'Right, I'm going up to my room to write a few letters.'

Tommy's eyes moved to Grandpa's hand. From his pocket he had produced an old fountain pen. A pen that, since Nan had died, never seemed to leave his side. It was

almost like it provided him with some sort of comfort. Tommy would often see him sitting quietly in his armchair scribbling something on a piece of paper with it, or maybe just rotating it in his fingers, lost in some deep and distant thought.

Grandpa made his way out of the dining room, stopping at the bookcase to pick up a photo album from one of its shelves. At the door he turned slightly and looked to Tommy with a smile, tapping the photo album as he spoke.

'I'm going to spend some time with your nan.'

And with that he left the room and made his way upstairs. Tommy realised how much harder it must be for Grandpa since Nan had died. No wonder he didn't have much energy or verve for life anymore; he'd lost his sweetheart. Tommy couldn't even begin to imagine what that must be like. He couldn't help but wonder just how many days and nights Grandpa had spent looking through that old photo album, wishing that he could spend just one more hour with her.

Upstairs, Grandpa sat at the dressing table in his bedroom, the photo album open in front of him and a blank piece of paper next to it at the ready. Sifting through the photographs, he finally came upon the one he wanted – a black and white picture of himself and Nan. He chuckled, fondly remembering every detail of that day.

Grandpa unscrewed the cap of his fountain pen and excitedly began to write, his words greedily eating up the page. He then closed his eyes and smiled.