

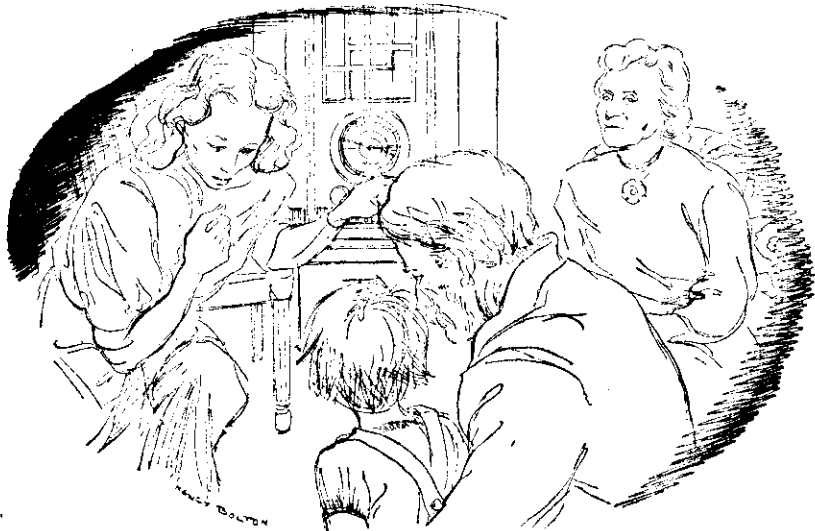
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wants a bita peace on a Sunday morning."

"Well, it's not my fault if you don't get it. Here, carry the porridge in or it'll get cold. Vera! Vera! Come on, the porridge is out."

Vera and Glad came out of the bedroom. Vera had that tight look round her mouth that she had so often these days, and Glad was in the sulks.

It was a shame Glad wasn't a nice little girl with fair hair and curls like Phyllis Saunders. Phyllis was a nice-looking little kid, and had nice manners,



too. Funny how kids were so different. Glad, now—a bit like Vera—never knew where you were with her. But then, with Bert away for so long, you couldn't really blame her. Kids need a father round the house. Mothers are all very well, but the truth is they have all the work and worry, but it's the father that the little devils listen to most when there's any sort of argument.

Mrs. Wesley knocked on the back door, opened it and popped her head round the corner.

"OO . . . oooh!" she called "OO . . . ooh! Anybody home?"

"Come in," said Bob, which was just like him to call a woman like Mrs. Wesley into the dining room when there wasn't a butter knife on the table and the marmalade was in the pot instead of a jam dish.

"Come in," called Bob, "and make your miserable life happy."

Mrs. Wesley came in. Trust her. She never needed a second bidding.

"I won't stop," she said, "but I thought I'd better tell you in case you didn't listen in last night. Your Bert's speaking on the wireless this morning."

"Bert? On the wireless?"

"Yes. You know. With the Boys Overseas. You could've knocked me down with a feather. We was just listening in to the broadcast when the man said Bert Bridges, plain as a pikestaff. 'Bert Bridges' I said to Stan. 'Bert Bridges! Did you hear that?' I wanted to run over and tell you straight away, but Stan said the morning'd do, as you all might've gone to bed early. So I thought I'd better run over now just in case you didn't have the wireless on."

Bob was the one who remembered his manners first.

"That's kind of you, Mrs. Wesley," he said. "Matter of fact, we didn't listen in last night. Went to the pictures."

"Mum," said Glad, "Mum, is Bert Bridges dad?"

"Course he is," said Vera, who hadn't taken her eyes off Mrs. Wesley since she came in. When Glad spoke, Vera suddenly seemed to come to life.

"Quick, Dad," she called out, "Quick, and put the wireless on."

"But if Grandpa's dad, how can Bert Bridges be Dad, too?"

"Never you mind. Go on Dad, switch the wireless on."

"No hurry," said Bob. "Messages from the Boys Overseas don't come on till 9. Six minutes to go."

"Well, I'd better be going," said Mrs. Wesley. "Just thought I'd pop over and tell you in case. . . ."

"Thanks very much. We'd a been wild if we'd missed it."

* * *

VERA and Gran, as though urged by the same invisible command, started feverishly to clear away the dishes.

"What's the hurry?" asked Bob. "Plenty of time."

"I want to be able to listen in in peace," said Gran.

"A few dishes on the table won't stop you listening," said Bob.

"That's all you know about it," said Vera. "Mum and I couldn't concentrate

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