

One Night in the Blitz

LES wasn't a very brave man, but he was kindly; he loved to laugh and joke. And it certainly wasn't a time he enjoyed. There could be another air raid at any moment, especially in the night, and fear stalked him.

All week the bombers seemed to be focussing on Nottingham, for no good reason as far as anyone could tell. Much of the Lace Market area had gone up in flames with showers of shrapnel and cascading masonry. It was cold outside in the night, much better to stay indoors – at least there'd be a chance of getting to a shelter. The kitchen table was already strengthened, just in case.

But there was a job to be done. Dorothy had to be escorted back to the Nurses' Home. It was dark early, so the curfew had not begun, and she had to be back to start her night duty. She had been to see Les and his wife, Ada. They had recently met when Dorothy began her nursing training.

Les thought, "She's so cool, calm and collected. It's because of her new-found faith and hope. And because she was the oldest of a family of nine. Since the untimely death of her father she's had to help her Mum with all the rest, getting meals, doing



the washing etc. Wish I could get this faith thing. Ada's got it too." Out loud he said, "Come on then, I shan't be back till after curfew if we don't get going!"

Attack!

Coats on, they set out walking at a brisk pace, hoping to catch the bus, with its hooded head lamps, which went past the end of the street. They were just crossing the main road when out of the night came the roar of aero engines. There had been no warning!

They dashed for cover in a street-side shelter. Les stood there shaking. He was holding tightly to Dorothy's hand – not to help her but to steady his own body which was trembling from head to toe.



evening. Eventually all was quiet. The occupants of the shelter dusted themselves down and, amazingly, the bus slowly trundled from under the nearby railway viaduct where it had sheltered during the raid.

Calm After the Storm

Dorothy said, “I’ll be OK now. You go home to Ada and reassure her everything is all right.”

They arrived in the shelter at the same time as the air raid warning officer. Les was about to shout, “What happened to the warning siren, then?” when the first bomb burst with a deafening crash.

For some time, it seemed as though bombs were dropping all around; it began to feel personal. They faced the back of the shelter with their hands firmly over their ears. Across the street was an end of a row of terrace houses; it looked intact. There was a respite and they dared to look out. Then there was that sudden roar again, a whistling through the air, a thud and then the explosion. The little group turned away with eyes tight shut. As the clatter of flying bricks and shattered glass faded away they looked back. There was a low rumble and the end wall of the terraces began to crumble. Fortunately, the row was clear — it had been bombed out the previous

A quick goodbye and Les was gone. Dorothy hurried as fast as the bus would take her, back to the hospital, straight on duty — there would be casualties. As she sat looking out of the window there was just a moment or two for a prayer of thanks for safe deliverance. The Lord had been with her, once again, through a difficult time

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty...

He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday (Psalm 91:1-6).

David Nightingale