

WOLFSTORM



by
Ian Pugh

Illustrated by Adam Truscott

A note from the author

Many people look at the world today and think, ‘Oh dear, what a mess!’ We have terrorists bombing, wars raging and a planet experiencing dangerous climate change. But you know what? With every new young generation on earth today there is a growing awareness (through a world connected and sharing information like never before in history!) that things *don't have to be like this*; that we are able to make things better *if we take some sort of action*! It is by looking back into history that we remind ourselves just how badly human beings have treated each other in the past and by looking forward into the future that we know how badly we are treating our planet in the present!

This book will take you on a journey - into the past and into the future. Many of the events that Danny and his friends experience in the past actually happened (the horrors of World War II, the ‘Cockleshell Heroes’, Otto Skorzeny - google them or visit our website mentioned below and you will see). History is there to remind us how bad things have been (in many ways much worse than today!) so that we, as human beings, make sure that the same mistakes are not repeated. In *Wolfstorm* you will also have a glimpse into the future. Is that what it will be like? Well, that is going to depend on us - *you and me - all of us*!

If you would like to read (and discuss) more about any of the subjects raised in this book, whether it has to do with history, the environment or maybe the science behind time travel, then please visit **www.dannypiper.com** After their great adventure Danny and his friends have a *whole lot more* to say on these subjects and they want to hear what you think as well so please visit the website and join the discussion! We hope you enjoy the adventure you are about to go on! I would also love to hear your thoughts so please feel free to drop me a line at **ian@dannypiper.com**

And now it only remains for me to thank all those people who have helped get *Wolfstorm* to where it is today. This was a journey in itself and, like Danny, Spike and Charley, I needed help from others to keep on going until the end. Many of the people listed below read the book while I was still writing it and sent me such great words of encouragement that I just knew I had to complete it! So my most heartfelt thanks goes to:

My wife, Lara, for doing the cover design and book layout – but, most importantly, for your unwavering love, encouragement and patience; my beautiful boy, Sam, for the hope and inspiration you have given me for the future; Sue-Pugh for your “super-positivity” from the word go; Andy, Nicki, Tars and Liesl for always being there; Barry, a friend who has gone “above and beyond”, Jeremy, Izzie, Colin, Vicki, Clive, Eileen, Wayne, Becky, Charles, Rhian, Robby, Marcus, Tom, Savannah, Ben, Gray, Tayla, Chris, Di, Carol, Buck, Sara, Nicki G, Sinead, Martine, Dominique, Travis, Marijke, Sam, Joshua, Ant, Dee, Tom, Samuel, Abby, Kiwi, Lee, Matt, Nicky W, Ross, Courtney, Harry, Joey, Alex, Alice, Suzy, Jo, Evie, James, Jamie, Kath, Rachael, Lindsay (for the French), Kevin Wilson (for photography) and Jill Todd (for the editing). And an extra special word of thanks to Adam Truscott who has done all the wonderful illustrations in this book (cover included). Anyone who would like to get hold of this extremely talented man can do so at **adamink@mighty.co.za**

But I dedicate this book to my parents, Alan and Jill, who have always encouraged me to follow my heart and chase those dreams no matter where that took me, and not once did they ever say, “Hey Ian, shouldn’t you be getting a real job?!” Our planet could do with more parents like Alan and Jill. I was lucky. Thanks!

Ian Pugh, Bulawayo, 2009

For my parents, Alan and Jill

Life is divided into three terms – that which was, which is, and which will be. Let us learn from the past to profit by the present, and from the present to live better in the future.

- *William Wordsworth*

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.

- *Albert Einstein*

Chapter 1

The Invitation

Daniel Piper-Adams would probably have been just like any other twelve-year-old English schoolboy if it hadn't been for that one horrific day in Australia.

It had already been two years since that day and yet, for Daniel, the memory was as fresh as yesterday.

It should have been the dream holiday - the sleek, white yacht his dad had hired, the thrill and excitement of sailing around the beautiful Whitsunday Islands, the wonder of snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef.

A dream holiday - that's what it *should* have been!

That day they had moored the yacht near a reef where the snorkelling was said to be particularly spectacular. Daniel and his sister, Caitlin (who was a couple of years younger than him), couldn't wait to go snorkelling.

"Just stay close, all right?" their dad had warned. "There are strong currents around and if you're not careful you'll find yourselves being swept out to sea."

"OK, Dad," Daniel had said before leaping out to join his sister in the turquoise water.

The thing about snorkelling is that you only have to duck your head a few inches under the water to be immediately drawn into a different world. If that happens to be a world as spectacular as the Great Barrier Reef, with its clouds of rainbow-coloured fish swirling around the spongy corals, it doesn't take long to forget about everything above the water, *which is why neither Daniel nor Catie noticed just how quickly the current was taking them away from the yacht!*

When they eventually did look up, the yacht was just a speck in the distance. Daniel tugged his sister's arm.

“Catie, we have to head back.”

Now they both set off swimming towards the yacht, but the more they swam the farther away they seemed to be getting! Catie had started to cry.

“Don’t cry - we’ll get there!” Daniel shouted to her.

“But we’re getting farther away!” she shouted back.

She was starting to panic, which Daniel knew was the worst thing that could happen. He could also see that she was getting tired, and he was starting to feel the same way.

“Here, grab on to my shoulders. Dad will see us now and he’ll come and get us.”

Now they were both getting very tired and Daniel knew he couldn’t keep swimming with Catie hanging on to him.

What happened next was not easy to remember. The psychologist he had once been sent to see said that his mind had blocked it out. All Daniel could remember was the splashing, the saltwater, Catie crying and them both going down. Amongst all this chaos, he vaguely remembered his dad suddenly arriving and saying to him:

“Swim, Dan! Swim for the boat!”

And that’s what he had done. By then his mum had also leapt into the water. She swam to him with a life ring, which they used to haul themselves back onto the boat.

As Daniel lay on the deck, heaving for breath, his mum rushed to the side to see where his dad and Catie were. That’s when he remembers her starting to scream - screaming their names over and over...

They would never see them again.

And, from that day on, Daniel would never be quite the same again.

*

Over the next two years much of Daniel’s behaviour was blamed on this terrible incident. Like the day at his school - Barnstaple

Grammar School, to be precise - when Taggart had made the comment he would later live to regret.

Daniel was new at the school, which was not something unusual. They had moved several times in the last two years, mainly because his mother was good at finding new jobs, but not that great at keeping them! So he was used to being 'the new boy' and receiving all the stick that went with it.

At Barnstaple Grammar School it was Taggart (a giant of a boy - in body, not brain!) who had started the usual comments. Stuff like:

"What's wrong Piper-Adams - you too posh for just one surname? You gotta have two?"

Daniel was usually pretty good at ignoring these kinds of jibes. His name and his accent (sometimes also described as 'posh') were usually the first things that most kids noticed were different and, therefore, picked up on. However, there were certain things (as Taggart was to discover on that grey and windy afternoon) that Daniel found impossible to ignore, and these were usually things that had to do with his dad or Catie.

On that day, Daniel was just about to start his walk home to Woodford Lane when he came across Taggart and his mates standing near the school fountain. As usual, Taggart was trying to amuse his mates by making sniping remarks at anyone passing by.

"Hey Piper-Adams!" he crowed. "If you've got two surnames how come you've only got one parent?"

This stopped Daniel dead in his tracks. It also caused a lot of sniggers from Taggart's mates. But when Daniel now turned to face them, he noticed how quickly the sniggers dried up - only to be replaced by ever-so-slightly-nervous glances in the direction of Taggart.

Daniel was an above average sized boy - a bit taller and broader than most. It was probably this (and his unruly blond hair) that

drew a lot of the girls' attention to him (not that he ever seemed to notice or do anything about it!). But if Daniel was big for his age then Taggart was enormous - at least another head taller and considerably bigger in build. So there was now genuine surprise when Daniel started walking towards them, and he noticed how Taggart's mates suddenly started to bunch up.

Taggart looked more surprised than anyone (this is not how these situations usually played out!), but at the same time, he knew he had a lot riding on this moment.

"Better be careful, Daniel!" he sneered, stepping out from his mates. "I hear your old man's not around to help!"

Looking back on things, Taggart would later admit to himself that this last comment had probably been a mistake. It was as if Daniel was suddenly transformed into a raging, snorting, charging bull. He launched himself hard and low, catching Taggart right in the stomach and sending him reeling back through his mates, where he then tripped over a low wall and flipped back into the fountain - with Daniel on top of him!



Floundering around in the water, Daniel managed to get in a few good shots before being overwhelmed by the size and strength of Taggert - and that's when the inevitable blows came raining down.

Thankfully, it wasn't long before Mr Preston, the deputy headmaster, arrived on the scene and broke things up.

They received a mountain of punishment, but despite this (and the bruises), the sight of Taggert hauling himself out of the fountain with all his mates collapsing in hysterical laughter around him, seemed to make it all worthwhile.

*

When Daniel arrived home later that afternoon he was still trying to stem the flow of the Taggert-inflicted nosebleed that had turned the front of his sodden shirt a nice rosy pink! As he squelched down the passage his mum called to him from another room, but he wasn't in the mood to explain so he carried on through to his bedroom and closed the door behind him.

It didn't take long before she came to investigate. There was a gentle knock and then the door slowly opened.

"Daniel? You OK?"

Daniel didn't bother to look up from what he was doing at his desk.

"Homework?" his mum asked.

"No," he replied. "I'm changing my name."

"Oh," his mum said. "I see."

She was trying to sound casual but her eyes had gone into rapid-blink mode.

"It's now Danny Piper - pure and simple," he said. "And please don't argue about it, Mum, because I've made up my mind."

"I'm not arguing!" his mum protested. She had just managed to get her blinking under control. "But... can I at least ask *why*?"

She could now see that he was busy changing his name on all his school books.

Danny had hoped that his mother might leave him alone, but this was obviously not going to happen, so he put his pen down and turned to face her.

That's when she saw his bloody nose and pink shirt-front.

"Ah, no Danny! What's happened now?"

"Nothing! It's fine!"

Danny's sharp reply took his mother by surprise. He took a deep breath and decided to say what had been on his mind for some time.

"Look, Mum, I know how different things used to be, OK? Where we lived, where I went to school - our lives, everything! But that's all gone now. Everything changed when..." He still couldn't bring himself to speak of that fateful day in Australia "...when we became poor. That's the truth, and I'm sick and tired of being called a little rich boy just because they say my name sounds posh! So that's why it's now Danny Piper."

Danny went back to changing his books. His mother didn't say anything for a while. She sat as if mulling over what she had just heard and seemed saddened by it.

"That's fine - Daniel, *Danny*, whatever you want to call yourself. As long as you know - you are the most important thing in my life-"

"I know, Mum. I know," Danny said, trying to stop all the sappy stuff before she really got going.

His mother just smiled. She was already starting to get teary.

"I don't care if we're not rich. We get on all right, don't we? Don't we, Danny?"

Danny nodded. He had heard this many times before. Now his mother would talk about them sticking together.

"We've just got to stick together. Am I not right, Dan?"

"Yes, Mum." Danny nodded again, and then he couldn't resist adding, "Pity not everyone in our family sticks together."

His mother obviously knew who this was aimed at.

“Ah yes, good old Uncle Morty.”

Danny was now shaking his head like he normally did when they mentioned his Great Uncle Mortimer.

“He lives in that massive house with all that money and what has he ever done for us?”

It was true, and his mother knew it. After his father had died they had discovered that there was very little money left in the bank. He hadn't made any arrangements or provisions for his family should he die. He was not the sort of person to be thinking of death - he was too busy enjoying *life!* Suddenly his mother had had to find a job to pay the bills. It was a tough time and, although she was not looking for charity, it would have helped if someone like Uncle Mortimer had offered a bit of a loan - just to tide them over until her first pay cheque arrived. The offer never came and there was no way she ever would have asked for anything.

“We don't need him - or his money. We're just fine the way we are. Aren't we?”

“Sure, Mum.”

Danny often found it a lot easier to just agree. Talking about this stuff never solved anything anyway, so rather just agree that everything was fine then his mother would give him a kiss on the head and leave, which is what she did now.

“Dinner will be ready soon,” she said on her way out.

In truth, their money situation didn't really bother Danny *that* much, although he would never forget his so-called ‘new soccer ball’ exploding when Gary Todd had taken that penalty! He could feel his ears glowing red just thinking about it!

What really did bother him though was how his mother would get sometimes, late in the evenings when she thought he had gone to sleep. That's when he would hear her crying - and he knew what she was crying about. She was yearning for the days when they had been a complete family. At times like this, Danny

would feel this uncontrollable anger rising up inside him and he would start to direct it at other people; people like his selfish Uncle Mortimer.

Mortimer was actually Danny's *great*-uncle, in other words, he was the brother of Danny's grandfather. Both Danny's grandparents on that side of the family had passed away, which meant that Uncle Morty (as they called him) was now the most senior surviving member of the Piper-Adams family.

The last time they had seen Uncle Morty had been at his dad and Catie's funeral. There he was in his electric wheelchair - a dishevelled, eccentric-looking man who had lost both his legs from the knees down while fighting the Nazis in World War II. Danny remembered how he had looked across the two coffins at them. It was a look of great sadness and... what else? Pity? Guilt? He couldn't tell.

After the funeral he had come over to them and mumbled his condolences then, without another word, he had left. He had not even bothered to attend the wake. Instead, he had just returned to Bosworth Manor.

Most of what Danny knew about his great-uncle was what he picked up from other people's conversations. His mother would never say very much on the subject, but when other relatives came to visit (especially the likes of Aunt Hatty and Uncle Martin), it usually wasn't long before Uncle Morty's name came up.

"Let's face it, the poor man has gone completely mad," Aunt Hatty would say, helping herself to another biscuit. "He lost more than just his legs in that war I tell you." She would then tap the side of her head to make sure everyone knew what she was talking about. "And then, after the tragedy in Australia - well, that was obviously too much for his fragile mind to bear."

That's when Uncle Martin would lean forwards and speak in almost a whisper.

"He hasn't been seen for nearly a year now. Never leaves the

house. All his shopping is done by Mrs Barnes, the housekeeper. Some people wonder if he's actually still alive!"

"More tea?" Danny's Mum would ask, trying to lighten things up a bit, but it wasn't that easy to get them off the subject.

"Such a shame," Aunt Hatty would continue. "He was apparently a brilliant scientist, you know? They say he may have even been one of the truly *great* scientists, but that's all gone to waste now and, speaking of waste... all that money..."

It seemed that when the subject of Uncle Mortimer's money came up, both Aunt Hatty and Uncle Martin had great difficulty talking about it. Instead, they would both just look down at their teacups and shake their heads. Eventually Aunt Hatty would manage to utter a few words.

"He'll probably leave it all to that wretched Mrs Barnes. If he hasn't already!"

This was always followed by more serious nodding and biscuit eating.

"It's sad," Danny's mother would say later, when the others had gone, "because, before that terrible war and your dad's death, Mortimer had always been such a kind and friendly man. He would often help out members of the family who were in trouble. We must just accept how he is now. There's nothing we can do about it, so we may as well just get on with our lives."

*

And so it was on that day, when Danny ended up in the fountain with Taggart and subsequently changed his name, that he also decided to stop thinking about how their lives could have been different if *this* hadn't happened or *that* hadn't happened. Unfortunately, all these things *had* happened and they were just going to have to accept it and move on!

But everything that Danny decided on that day would last for only two weeks - because it was exactly two weeks later, on the first day of the school holidays, that the postman slipped a

letter through the slot in their front door. Danny, still half-asleep, picked the letter up and took it through to the kitchen where his mother was making breakfast. The letter was addressed to his mother, so he tossed it down onto the kitchen table and poured himself some cereal.

It was only when he was busy munching his Rice Krispies that he glanced at the letter again. He turned it over to see who it was from - and that's when he stopped chewing.

Written on the back, in spidery handwriting, there was a name and address. It read:

*Sender: Mortimer Piper-Adams
Bosworth Manor
New Forest
Hampshire*

*

"What do you think he wants?" Danny asked for the third time.

"I've no idea," his mother replied, still scrambling eggs on the stove.

"Well, at least we know he's not dead!" Danny said, holding the letter up to the light to see if he could read anything through the envelope. "Unless he scribbled this on his deathbed. Hey, Mum - maybe it's his will and he's left us all his money!"

His mother gave him one of her looks.

"Come on, Mum! Open it!"

"All right! All right!" At last she brought the breakfast to the table and plonked it down in front of him. "You'd think it was a letter from the queen!"

Danny handed her the letter, but she insisted on wiping her hands on a tea towel first before taking it. Finally, miracle of all miracles, she opened it and began to read, and it must have been very short because she had finished it in less than a minute.

"Well?" asked Danny. "What does it say?"

Instead of replying, his mother just handed him the letter.

Danny squinted as he tried to read the handwriting. It looked like a spider had taken an ink bath and then done gymnastics across the page. As best as he could make out, the letter read:

*Bosworth Manor
New Forest
Hampshire*

Dear Margaret,

You will no doubt be surprised to hear from me after so many years. The lack of contact between us is entirely my fault and for this I sincerely apologise. Perhaps one day you will learn of the reasons behind my strange behaviour over these many years and I pray that there may be some understanding then. Until that day, if indeed it ever comes, I ask for your patience and forgiveness.

I realise this is very short notice, but I would like to invite Daniel up to stay at Bosworth Manor for a few weeks. I believe the school holidays begin shortly, so perhaps this would be a convenient time. If there is any chance of this, I would appreciate it if you called Mrs Barnes on 01425 473581 to make the necessary arrangements. If Daniel came up by train Mrs Barnes could pick him up from Ringwood Station.

By the way, Mrs Barnes has two children who must be of a similar age to Daniel, so he must not think he will have to spend his entire holiday with an old man!

I look forward to hearing your response.

*With all best wishes to you
Mortimer*

While Danny read the letter, his mother stood staring out of the kitchen window, obviously deep in thought. Only when he had finished did she come over and take a seat at the kitchen table. Then she started to dish up eggs as though nothing had happened!

Danny's head was in a spin! He didn't know what to think. Half his brain was saying, 'Why would I want to go and visit some old man in a wheelchair, who is probably mad, and hasn't bothered to contact us in years?', while the other half was thinking, 'A holiday at Bosworth Manor sounds a bit more interesting than a holiday at Woodford Lane, and what on earth has Uncle Morty been up to all these years?'

"Well?" his mother said eventually, as she casually ate her eggs.

"Well what?" Danny replied, also trying to make out it was no big deal.

"Want to go?"

Danny just shrugged.

"Hmm..." His mother was now shaking her head. "I don't think I want you to go."

"Why not?" Danny asked, suddenly concerned that his mother was going to try and make up his mind for him.

"Well, I don't know. We have no idea what's been going on at Bosworth Manor, do we? I'm not sure I'm happy sending you to some place we know very little about."

"Come on, Mum - it's not like Uncle Morty is going to kidnap me or anything!"

"Oh, so you *do* want to go?"

The question caught Danny a little off guard and he retreated back into his scrambled eggs without answering.

*

For the rest of the day, Danny said nothing at all about going to Bosworth Manor - although he couldn't stop thinking about it!

Even if he had wanted to, it would have been impossible because his mother kept bringing up the subject with comments like:

“You realise it would mean you having your birthday up there?”

Danny hadn’t thought about that. It was his thirteenth birthday the following week.

“Hey, Mum,” he said, smiling. “Maybe Uncle Morty is inviting me up there to give me a huge birthday present!”

“I wouldn’t count on that, my friend,” she replied.

A little later, his mother came up with another suggestion.

“I suppose you could go, and if you didn’t like it you could hop on the next train and come home again?”

Danny didn’t reply. He was pretending to watch a TV programme (even though he had no idea what it was about). But, right then, the one thing he did know for sure was that this was the best idea he had heard so far. When the programme ended, he casually stood up and walked to the door.

“OK, I’ll go.”

It was only now, as Danny went through to his room and lay on his bed, that he allowed himself to start getting excited. Whatever happened, this school holiday was certainly going to be *different!*

Of course, as Danny lay there staring up at the ceiling, there was no way he could ever have known just *how different* this holiday was going to turn out; no way he could have known that he had just made the most important decision of his life. Not only was it about to change his whole life forever, but also the lives of a great many other people, most of whom he had not even met yet!

Chapter 2

Bosworth Manor

The train ride to Ringwood (the nearest town to Bosworth Manor) only took a couple of hours. Danny's mother had done her fair share of fussing at the station.

"Have you got your ticket? Have you got your money for food and emergencies? Have you got the phone number in case you want to come home?"

Danny assured her that he had all these things.

"Now, if Uncle Morty turns out to be strange *in any way* I want you to come straight home. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Mum. You've said that twenty times already," Danny groaned.

"Good, then you won't forget," she said, giving him a hug.

Danny climbed aboard the train and found himself a seat. Just as he was storing his case in the luggage rack, the train began to pull out of the station. He opened the window and leaned out to wave to his mother.

"I'll miss you!" she shouted, waving furiously.

"It's only two weeks!" he called back.

Danny continued to wave until his mother drifted out of sight. It was only when he had closed the window and taken a seat that he thought more clearly about what he had just said.

Only two weeks!

This might just turn out to be the longest two weeks of his life!

*

As the train pulled into Ringwood Station, Danny leaned out of the window to see if he could spot Mrs Barnes and her two children, but there were no children on the platform. In fact, there were very few people at all and only one lady, whom he hoped

and prayed *wasn't* Mrs Barnes! She was dressed in tweed and looked ultra-strict.

Danny clambered out with his suitcase and, to his horror, the tweedy lady immediately started towards him. He tried to casually look the other way, but soon felt her presence right behind him.

“Daniel Piper-Adams?” she asked.

It crossed Danny’s mind that he could say, ‘No, sorry’, and get back on the train, but he found himself turning to her and nodding.

“How do you do? I’m Mrs Barnes,” she said, holding out a black leather-gloved hand for him to shake. Up close, she looked even more serious - like there was a bad smell around and she was trying to sniff out the culprit. “Your train is late,” she chirped. “We had better get moving.”

And off she went with quick little steps towards the station exit. As Danny picked up his suitcase and followed, all he could think was, *What am I doing here?*

Soon they were travelling along in Mrs Barnes’ car. It was a bit like her - very neat and very old-fashioned! Thankfully, she wasn’t one for making small talk, so for most of the time they travelled in silence.

Once they had passed through the small town, they headed out into the countryside and were soon entering the New Forest. Now all signs of houses and people began to disappear and soon there was nothing to be seen but trees and a couple of New Forest ponies. Danny had forgotten that Bosworth Manor was situated in such a remote place. He felt like Hansel, disappearing deeper and deeper into the woods - except that in this version the Wicked Witch was at the wheel!

“Here we are!” Mrs Barnes announced suddenly.

Danny peered up ahead, but couldn’t see anything. It still looked like thick forest on either side to him.

It was only when Mrs Barnes actually slowed right down

and began to turn the car that he noticed it was the entrance to a driveway. Once upon a time it must have been a very grand entrance, but now the large brick pillars and the wrought iron letters spelling ‘BOSWORTH MANOR’ were so overgrown with ivy creepers that they were almost impossible to see. Danny later discovered that Uncle Mortimer had forbidden anyone to chop the ivy creepers down. He was apparently quite happy that most people driving past would never even notice the entrance.

Now they were travelling down a long curved driveway, the forest thicker than ever on either side. As Danny looked out into the dark shadowy trees he suddenly, just for the briefest of moments, thought he saw something. It was just a flash as a figure moved between the trees, then disappeared from sight. Danny looked again. *Was he seeing things?*

Now he saw it again - a figure moving quickly through the forest. Danny watched as it darted in and out of the trees, leaping over ditches and bramble bushes as though they weren't there. Danny looked to see if Mrs Barnes had noticed the figure, and it appeared she had.

“Is that your son?” he asked.

The question almost made Mrs Barnes smile.

“If only that was the case,” she said, “if only...”

Danny had no idea what she meant by this, but he quickly forgot about it now as the large grey shape of Bosworth Manor loomed up before them.

The house was huge, even bigger than he remembered. Three storeys high with rows of at least twenty windows on each storey, but the thing that struck Danny immediately was that all the windows had their shutters closed. It was a house without any signs of life; a house that most people would presume was deserted.

Mrs Barnes didn't stop the car in front of the manor house, but drove around to the back and parked outside a quaint thatched

cottage.

At least this place looks alive, Danny thought.

Now a tall, wiry man wearing a cloth cap was approaching the car.

“This is my husband,” Mrs Barnes announced, as they climbed out.

Mr Barnes stood fidgeting nervously with his cap for a moment before coming forwards to shake Danny’s hand. He didn’t say anything, just nodded a few times, which did strike Danny as a bit odd.

Danny then noticed another figure emerging from the cottage. It was a boy, about his age, but taller and skinnier. He walked directly up to Danny, peering at him through his rather thick glasses.

“*This* is my son,” said Mrs Barnes. “Michael, say hello to Daniel.”

Michael stuck out his hand and smiled.

“Hello!”

As he shook Michael’s hand, Danny couldn’t help feeling slightly taken aback by his direct manner. He reminded Danny of one of those boys that other children sometimes like to make fun of - perhaps because of his height or slightly nerdy appearance - yet he simply didn’t seem to care. This is how he was - take it or leave it!

“And that is my daughter over there,” said Mrs Barnes, pointing to a nearby tree.

Danny looked at the tree then back at Mrs Barnes, clearly confused.

“Not the tree,” said Mrs Barnes. “I’m talking about what’s *in* the tree!”

Only now did Danny hear a laugh coming from high up in the branches, but he still couldn’t see anyone.

“Say hello to Daniel, Charlotte!” called Mrs Barnes.

“Hello!” came a girl’s voice from the tree.

“*That’s* who you saw in the forest,” said Mrs Barnes, turning to go inside. “Our resident little gypsy.”

Just as Mrs Barnes was about to disappear inside, something occurred to Danny.

“Um, sorry but... where’s my uncle?”

“Mr Piper-Adams will be working for another few hours yet,” Mrs Barnes replied. “You are to join him for dinner. Until then, Michael and Charlotte can show you around. I don’t have to tell you where to steer clear of, do I Michael?”

“The dungeon!” said Michael, his face lighting up at the thought.

“Don’t be silly, Michael,” said Mrs Barnes, shaking her head. “How many times must I tell you it is a wine cellar, not a dungeon!”

“Whatever you say, Mother!” said Michael with a big grin on his face.

Mr and Mrs Barnes went inside, leaving the two boys standing rather awkwardly together. As if to break the silence, Michael suddenly shouted at the tree.

“Hey, get down from there, you little gypsy!”

“I will when I feel like it!” came the shouted reply.

Michael shook his head at Danny and rolled his eyes.

“Sorry, she’s a bit odd.”

The boys walked over and sat on a bench near the tree.

“So, when were you last here?” Michael asked.

“Oh... *years* ago,” Danny replied. “When I was small. I can hardly remember it.”

They sat for a few moments, looking up towards the big house then Danny couldn’t resist the question any longer.

“So... what’s this about a dungeon?” he asked.

“It’s a secret,” said Michael. “Nobody knows what goes on in the dungeon because nobody is allowed to go down there.”

“Except Mr Piper-Adams,” said Charlotte from above.

“Of course, except Mr Piper-Adams,” Michael snapped impatiently. “That’s where he works, Einstein!”

“Works?” Danny was surprised. “I didn’t realise... What sort of work does he do?”

Michael shrugged.

“Well, actually, that’s also something that nobody knows,” he said, clearly enjoying the suspense.

The voice in the tree came again.

“Except us.”

This really seemed to annoy Michael.

“Shut up, Charles, and get out of the tree will you!” he shouted.

Danny’s interest was growing by the second.

“So... you *do* know what he does?”

“Not really,” Michael replied, and then as if to change the subject, he suddenly got to his feet. “Come on, I’ll show you around.”

Danny didn’t enjoy being left in the lurch like this, but there was little he could do except follow Michael. They walked off into the gardens then Michael winked at him and signalled back towards the tree. He was predicting movement in the tree and, sure enough, the leaves and branches soon started to rustle and, moments later, a figure dropped down onto the lawn below.

Danny’s first thought was that Charlotte *did* look like a little gypsy! She was probably a year younger than Danny and Michael - quite short and very scruffy. She wasn’t wearing any shoes and her jet-black hair was wild and tangled, but, as she smiled shyly at Danny, he couldn’t help but think that, beneath all the dirt and tomboy looks, there was without a doubt a pretty girl in there somewhere.

“Daniel, meet my sister. Some people call her Charley, but I call her Charles because she should have been a boy.”

“Hi,” said Danny, adding, “by the way, everyone calls me Danny.”

“And everyone calls him Spike,” said Charley, nodding towards Michael. “Do you know why?”

Michael rolled his eyes and waited for the explanation.

“Because he’s long and pointy!”

Charley erupted into giggles and Michael shook his head and put on his best fake smile.

“Gee, Charles, I think I’m going to bust a gut I’m laughing so much. That is just *so* amusing!”

Charley was nodding as she continued to giggle.

“I know it is!”

Looking at the two of them together, Danny couldn’t believe that they were brother and sister. They were just *so different!* Michael (or rather Spike) clearly took after their father while Charley was small and dark like their mother.

“Come on, let’s show Danny around,” said Charley.

*

The property was so huge that looking after all the gardens was obviously too much work for one man (namely Mr Barnes), which meant that much of it looked wild and untended. Charley, who seemed to know her way around every nook and cranny, led the way and they soon arrived at an old rundown pavilion overlooking a giant duck pond. The pavilion was barely visible amidst a tangle of vines and creepers, and the pond was so filled with mud and reeds that no self-respecting duck would have gone near the place!

They stood there for a moment surveying this sad sight then Charley came out with something that surprised them all.

“Sorry about your dad and sister,” she said suddenly.

It was the last thing Danny was expecting to hear and, for a few seconds, he had no idea how to respond. Spike saw this and gave Charley a dirty look for being so blunt. Charley didn’t think

she had done anything wrong and they now started a silent war of mouthed words behind Danny's back.

"Just forget about it, all right?" snapped Danny.

The sharpness of his tone stopped the argument immediately, and now a very uncomfortable silence descended over the three of them. Eventually Spike couldn't bear it any longer.

"Come on, let's go and show Danny the monkeys," he suggested.

This seemed to do the trick as Charley suddenly let out an excited scream, 'Eeeeeveeee!' and took off through the undergrowth.

"Excuse my sister," Spike muttered as they started to walk. "She doesn't know the meaning of tact. We saw a photo of you with your sister and your dad in the main house, obviously taken when you were much younger, then our mother told us... you know... what happened."

Again it was clear that Danny didn't want to talk about it and he now changed the subject completely.

"Did you say *monkeys* back there?" he asked.

Spike clearly welcomed the change of subject as well.

"You mean you don't have monkeys where you come from?" he asked, and the grin returned to his face.

*

Sure enough, a few minutes later they were sitting beside a cage housing a couple of the cutest little monkeys Danny had ever seen. Apparently, Uncle Morty had ordered the monkeys from somewhere overseas and they had suddenly been delivered a few months back. Nobody was exactly sure why he had got them because, as far as Spike and Charley knew, he never came to see them. He had told Mrs Barnes that their names were Adam and Eve, and had given her strict instructions to make sure they were well looked after.

Mrs Barnes thought the monkeys were just another part of Mr

Piper-Adams' strange behaviour, but Spike and Charley were delighted by their arrival. Charley had grown especially close to them and now, as she slipped into the cage, both monkeys immediately leapt up onto her shoulders.

Danny and Spike sat watching Charley playing with the monkeys until Danny could no longer resist bringing up the subject of his uncle again.

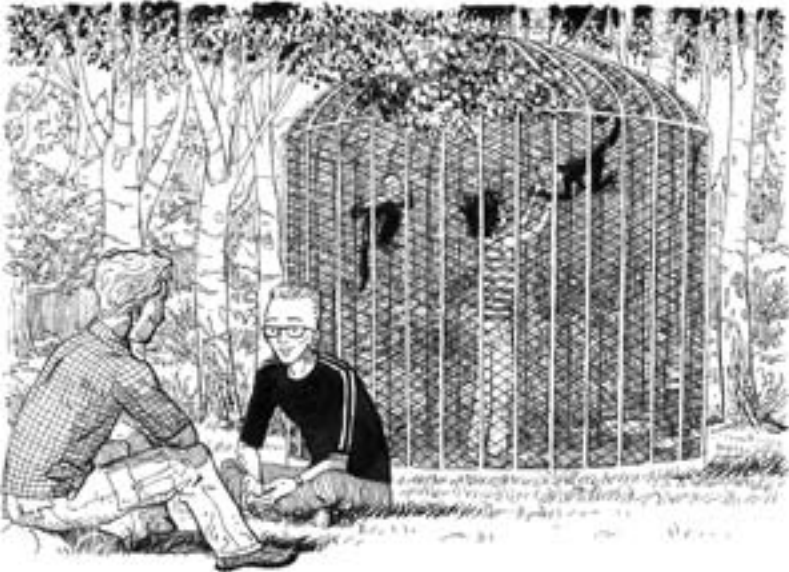
“So, come on, guys, you have to tell me - what’s Uncle Morty been up to in ‘the dungeon’?”

“We’re honestly not sure,” Spike replied. “For years now he’s been working down there. The only people who ever visit here are delivery guys bringing all sorts of equipment and stuff. They take it down into his workshop, but nobody knows what it’s for.”

“We know a secret way into the dungeon,” Charley said suddenly.

Spike flung her a look as if to say ‘*shut up!*’ - but it was too late. Danny couldn’t believe his ears.

“*You’ve been down there?*”



Spike was still giving Charley a dirty look - but eventually he nodded to Danny.

“And?” Danny asked impatiently. “What did you see?”

“A giant washing machine,” said Charley with a giggle.

Spike also let out an amused grunt.

“Yeh, Charles thinks the thing he’s been building looks like a giant washing machine, but to be honest with you we actually have no idea what it is.”

Now the curiosity was getting too much for Danny.

“Can’t we go and see it? How do we get down there?”

“Not while he’s there!” said Charley.

Spike agreed.

“The only time it’s safe to go there is late at night when he’s in bed.”

“Except sometimes he works all night,” added Charley, “and that’s when we hear the noise.”

“The noise?”

Spike nodded.

“Sometimes late at night we’ve heard a very loud noise coming from down there.”

“Like a plane taking off,” said Charley.

“Yeh,” agreed Spike. “Like there’s a jumbo jet down there winding up its engines.”

Danny’s mind was racing. This was all sounding more and more bizarre!

“What is it? Surely your parents must know?”

This made both Spike and Charley laugh.

“Try asking our mum,” said Spike, putting on a voice just like his mother’s. “It’s Mr Piper-Adams’ project and it’s no business of ours! Stay away from there or we will all be without a place to live!”

Danny had to smile at how well Spike could imitate his mother.

“She’d kill us if she knew we’d been down there,” added Spike with a grin, glancing at his watch. “Speaking of which, we’d better get back. You don’t want to be late for your dinner with Uncle Morty.”

Do I even *want* to have dinner with Uncle Morty? was all Danny could think.

*

Walking up to the manor house with Mrs Barnes, Danny felt like he was being escorted to the headmaster’s office.

They entered through the back doorway into the most enormous kitchen Danny had ever seen. Their whole house at Woodford Lane could have fitted into this kitchen! From here they went down a long corridor lined with real suits of armour, and Danny suddenly had a vague memory of playing amongst these towering figures when he and Catie were very young.

Finally they arrived at the dining room, which was actually more of a hall than a room. Running down the centre was a massive table, big enough to seat thirty or more people - but this evening it was only set for two, with a place laid at each end.

“Take a seat down there, please,” ordered Mrs Barnes, pointing to the far end of the table.

Danny did as he was told. The chair at the end was so heavy he could hardly move it, but he eventually managed to sit.

“Sit quietly and don’t touch anything,” said Mrs Barnes as she turned to leave. “Mr Piper-Adams will be along shortly.”

With that, she disappeared out of the room, leaving Danny feeling very small and alone in the midst of the great hall.

The hall was dimly lit - the only light coming from the candles lining the table. It took a few moments for his eyes to adjust then he began to see faces peering at him out of the gloom. They were portraits (mainly of self-important looking men with big moustaches) decorating the walls of the hall. Like the suits of armour, the paintings seemed to jolt a memory of something from

when he was small. He could vaguely remember his dad showing him the portraits and explaining how all these people were his ancestors - the Piper-Adams family dating back for centuries.

What a dreary bunch! Danny thought. They could have at least *smiled!* Mind you, living in this house...

Danny was so busy craning his neck around to look at the portraits behind him that he didn't notice the wheelchair arriving at the entrance to the hall.

"Daniel."

The voice gave him such a fright that he kicked his shin on the table leg. Now he saw the wheelchair coming down the hall towards him. It was one of those electric types that made a light humming sound when moving. As it trundled towards him, he began to make out the hunched figure of Uncle Mortimer.

Although Danny had vague memories of his uncle from the funeral, the figure that now emerged from the gloom was like no one he had ever seen before. To be honest, Uncle Morty looked scary! His white hair was long and straggly. His face was covered in grey stubble. His clothes were crumpled and grimy, but the thing that struck Danny the most was how tired he looked. He looked like he hadn't slept in weeks!

"How do you do, Daniel?" his uncle said. "I'm so pleased to see you again after so long."

As he shook Danny's hand he adjusted the glasses perched on his nose, so that he could take a long hard look at Danny's face. This made him appear sad for a moment, but he quickly recovered and did his best to smile.

"Yes," he said, nodding, "you are certainly your father's son."

Mrs Barnes had now entered the hall with a tray of food. She placed a plate at the end of the table for his uncle then came down with Danny's.

"Eat it while it's hot," she said.

Danny was interested to see that even Uncle Morty listened to Mrs Barnes. Obediently, he retreated in his wheelchair back to his end of the table.

“How old are you now, Daniel?” he asked, parking the chair at the head of the table.

“Twelve,” Danny replied.

He thought about mentioning his fast approaching thirteenth birthday, but then decided against it.

With all the silver candlesticks between them, Danny could hardly see his uncle. He had to lean right over to one side, but then found that his uncle was leaning the other way.

“This is ridiculous!” Uncle Morty stormed, suddenly grabbing his plate and reversing his chair away from the table. “I’m going to sit down there, Violet!”

Mrs Barnes, who had just returned with some wine, didn’t look too pleased, but there was no arguing as Uncle Morty drove his wheelchair back down the hall and parked beside Danny.

“That’s better,” he said, giving Danny a smile and starting to eat. “How’s your mother, Daniel?” he asked, shovelling in more food and not bothering to wipe the gravy off his chin.

What do you care? was Danny’s first thought, but the last thing he wanted was to have his uncle feeling sorry for them, so instead he replied:

“She’s all right... I suppose.”

Now, from deep inside, Danny felt the old feelings of anger rising up again. Suddenly he felt like shouting, *Don’t you care about your family?* Again he managed to keep a lid on it and said nothing.

Perhaps his uncle could sense how Danny was feeling because he now moved his chair even closer and checked that Mrs Barnes was not in the hall.

“I know what you must think of me. All these years - me cut off from you and your mother and everybody else, but I’m

hoping I can make you understand. I'm hoping that I can help all of us in a way that neither you nor anybody else could possibly imagine. You see, Daniel, over the last... God knows how many years, I've been working on something. Something that has the potential to change all our lives forever."

Yes, whoopee! A giant washing machine! thought Danny.

Now his uncle was looking at him very seriously.

"I want to be honest with you right from the start, Daniel. I need your help. The reason I have invited you here is because I badly need your help."

This took Danny by surprise.

"My help? How can I help?" he asked, scowling.

"That's what I'm going to tell you tonight. Tonight I will tell you everything, and I'm going to show you something that no one else has *ever* seen before."

No one except Spike and Charley Barnes, Danny thought. The excitement was growing inside him. But Uncle Mortimer was still looking very serious.

"Now you must listen to me, Daniel. This thing that I am going to ask you to do is not easy. In fact, it will be extremely difficult - and dangerous. Yes, there will be a lot of danger." His uncle was now gripping his arm. "But listen," he said. "Should you not want any part in it, that is fine. The choice is yours. I would never dream of forcing you to do anything. Do you understand?"

Danny nodded.

"All I ask," he continued, "is that if you decide not to do it, you won't breathe a word of what you have seen or heard tonight to anyone. Nobody else must ever know about this. Do I have your promise on that, Daniel?"

Danny nodded again.

"Good. Now finish up your food and we'll go down."

Danny looked down at his plate and realised he hadn't touched anything yet. It felt like a million butterflies had just taken flight

in his stomach - and he certainly wasn't feeling hungry! He ate a few mouthfuls then put down his knife and fork.

“Done?” his uncle asked.

Danny nodded.

“Right, let's go down.”

Danny followed behind Uncle Morty's wheelchair as they made their way out of the hall and down the passage. When they reached the main staircase of the house his uncle removed a bunch of keys from his pocket and began to unlock what appeared to be a wooden wall panel. It was actually a concealed door, which now slid open to reveal a lift. They entered the lift and Uncle Morty pressed a button marked 'CELLAR'. The door closed and the lift began to move slowly downwards.

As the lift slowed, then bumped to a halt at the bottom, Uncle Morty turned to Danny.

“Ready?”

Danny nodded. This was the moment of truth. He could barely breathe with the excitement.

The lift door slid open.

Chapter 3

TIM

As the lift door opened there was nothing to be seen but darkness, but then the lights flickered on and it was as if Danny had left an old world behind and was entering *a brand new one!*

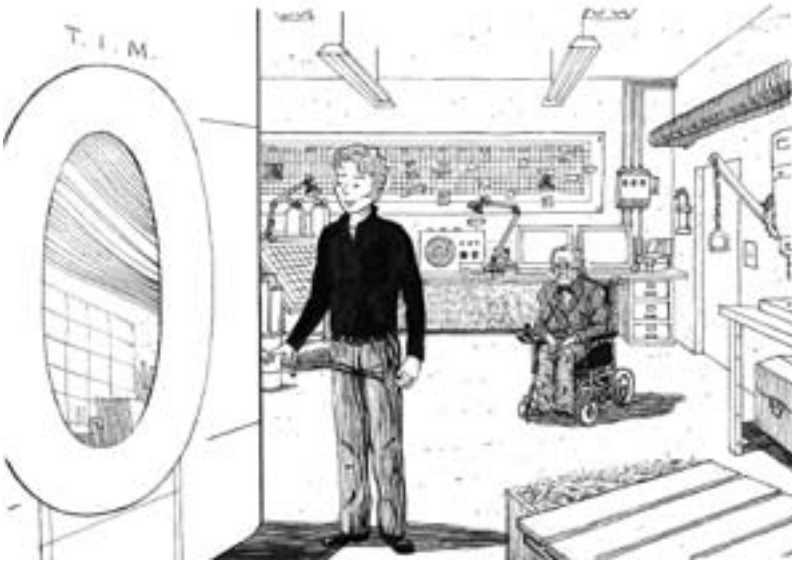
The room may once have been a wine cellar, but now it resembled something between a space rocket control room and a workshop for mending electronic gadgets. All the way around the room, against every wall, were work benches covered with tools, desks with rows of computer screens and banks of very hi-tech looking machinery and equipment.

Danny stood rooted, gazing around at everything, trying to take in the sight of all this impressive technology, but it was something situated right in the centre of the room that grabbed his attention.

This must have been ‘the giant washing machine’ Charley had spoken about. He could see why she had described it that way - it was basically square in shape and had a round door in the front, but if this was a washing machine it was without a doubt the *coolest* he had ever seen! It was made from shiny silver chrome and a sleek black material, and it was certainly *huge* - big enough for a grown man to stand inside.

Uncle Morty was clearly enjoying the fact that Danny was so taken with the machine, and he now watched as his nephew walked around it, running his hand along the sides. It was beautifully smooth; no sharp corners, all rounded curves. Once he had been all the way around it, he came back to the door in the front and tried to look in through the glass window, but the glass was tinted and he couldn’t really see anything. Now he noticed something painted above the door - three small letters - TIM.

For the first time since he had laid eyes on the machine, Danny



now looked over to see where his uncle was.

“TIM?” he asked.

“Yes.” Uncle Morty nodded with a smile. He seemed to be bursting with pride. “It stands for Time Itinerant Module.”

Danny’s expression remained blank.

“What does that mean?”

Uncle Morty now manoeuvred his wheelchair alongside another chair and indicated that Danny should come and sit. Looking very serious, he started to repeat what he had said earlier about how Danny should never reveal to anyone what he was about to witness.

Danny did his best to listen, but something was distracting him. For some reason, his attention was being drawn up to an old metal grate situated high up on the wall behind his uncle (this, he would discover later, was a chute, leading up to ground level, which had been used in the old days to push boxes of wine down into the cellar). It was behind this grate that Danny thought he had seen something.

Now he saw it again - something was glinting in there. He looked harder, then realised what he was looking at. It was Spike's face! The glint was coming off his glasses, and beside him he could now see another face - Charley was also there! Danny couldn't believe it - they were being spied on by Spike and Charley!

"Daniel!"

Danny snapped his attention back to his uncle. He had to do his best to make sure his facial expression didn't betray what he had just seen.

"It is very important that you listen to this, Daniel," Uncle Morty was saying.

Danny nodded, trying to keep his eyes fixed on his uncle's face.

"As I have already said, I asked you to come here because I need your help, and I can now tell you that this help involves that machine over there. That machine I call TIM."

Danny looked back at the machine. There was something mysterious and special about it, but he didn't know what.

"Daniel," his uncle continued, making sure he still had Danny's full attention, "I need you to travel somewhere in this machine for me."

"Travel?" Danny remembered what Spike and Charley had said about the loud aeroplane sound, but this machine didn't look like it could move. "I don't understand," he said.

Now his uncle cleared his throat, took a deep breath and looked Danny in the eyes. Danny felt a jab of excitement in his belly. He knew that the time had come for him to hear the truth.

"Daniel," Uncle Morty said, his eyes gleaming with excitement, "this machine is designed to travel through time."

Danny carried on staring at his uncle - letting the words seep slowly into his brain.

"Travel through time," he repeated slowly.

“Yes,” his uncle said nodding and smiling.

Suddenly there was a cough from behind the grate in the wall. Uncle Morty began to turn around, wondering if he had heard something. Danny had to think quickly.

“What do you mean - ‘travel through time’?” he asked loudly, to divert his uncle’s attention.

It seemed to do the trick - Uncle Morty turned back to him.

“I mean exactly that. I mean I have discovered a way to travel across time zones.”

“Give me a break!” Danny couldn’t help smiling. “Are you saying that someone could get into that... thing... and travel into... say, the future?”

Uncle Morty was nodding vigorously.

“Or the past. Yes! That is exactly what I’m saying!”

For a moment Danny felt like bursting into laughter.

“Do you really expect me to believe that?” he asked incredulously.

“No, I don’t expect you to believe it,” his uncle replied, still smiling, “but it’s true. It has taken me countless years of excruciatingly hard work, but finally I have discovered and mastered the secret of time travel.”

He has gone mad, was all Danny could think.

“But of course I never thought that you or anyone else was just going to believe what I said,” his uncle continued. “You’re probably thinking the old man has gone completely bonkers!”

You’ve got that right! Danny was thinking.

As he leaned forwards in his wheelchair, Uncle Morty’s eyes were still gleaming with excitement (or was it madness? Danny couldn’t quite decide).

“I realise it is something quite extraordinary that I am asking you to believe - and that is why I have come up with a demonstration to prove that what I am saying is indeed true.” Uncle Morty now manoeuvred himself over to a desk and picked up a video camera.

“By putting this camera inside TIM and sending it to another time I will demonstrate to you that the machine has in fact travelled to another time zone.”

Danny was still very reluctant to believe anything.

“How do I know you haven’t already filmed something with that camera?”

“The tape is blank,” his uncle replied, “but listen, you tell me the period in time and the location that I should send the machine backwards or forwards to. That way, there is no way I could ever have known what to film in order to trick you.”

All right, thought Danny. Let’s just play along with the old guy. What a laugh I’ll have with the others later!

His uncle now manoeuvred his wheelchair over to the machine and pressed a button. The round door slid open, smoothly and silently, and a ramp for the wheelchair slid out. Uncle Morty drove inside and Danny decided to also go in for a look.

Inside, a single black leather chair sat before a flashing control panel. Danny had to admit it looked incredibly impressive. His uncle placed the camera in a specially designed holder, so that it would face out of the glass window situated in the door. Danny noticed that you could see out through the window, but not in. Once the camera was in position he went over to the control panel.

“Right. Give me a date and a location.”

“What do you mean?” Danny asked, frowning. “Any date?”

“Any date, any place.”

Danny thought about this for a few moments. What had they just been learning about in history at school?

“OK,” he said eventually. “I know. The Year - 1066. The place - Hastings.”

Uncle Morty looked dubious.

“Hmm, the Battle of Hastings, eh? Hope TIM doesn’t end up getting damaged in the middle of a battle... All right. Why not?”

If I'm not mistaken, it took place on October 14th, 1066 - so let's put that in." He punched numbers into the control panel. "Now the location - Hastings, England. I punch in the place and the machine will give me the exact longitude and latitude. Then I programme in when I want it to return here. Let's make it a very short time after it leaves. Right. All set."

He now started the camera rolling then they both left the machine.

Moments later, Uncle Morty was positioned at a large control desk, pressing more buttons and studying the various screens in front of him. He was so busy with what he was doing that Danny could now afford to look up at the metal grate. He almost burst out laughing when he saw how large Spike's eyes had grown!

Danny signalled secretly that they should keep quiet, and both Spike and Charley nodded.

"Right! Now move over here please, Daniel," his uncle instructed, and Danny joined him at the control desk. "I suggest you block your ears; this gets very loud."

His uncle made the final preparations and pressed a large green flashing button. Now the noise began. First as a low humming sound that grew louder and louder until it reached a high-pitched screech like a jet engine. Danny blocked his ears. He could see that the machine had now started to vibrate - hardly noticeable at first, but as the whining sound grew, so did the vibrations. Danny could barely stand the noise any more. He expected the whole thing to explode at any moment! And yet his uncle did not seem in the least bit alarmed. He wasn't even blocking his ears. He was either used to it - or it had made him deaf already!

Then the most amazing thing happened.

The machine disappeared.

Suddenly they were staring at an empty space, and there was silence...

Danny stood frozen, his fingers still stuffed into his ears. All

he could do was stare at the empty space in amazement. He was about to move forwards for a closer look when his uncle stopped him.

“Stay where you are, Daniel!” barked Uncle Morty.

It was lucky he shouted because seconds later the screeching, vibrating machine suddenly reappeared!

Now Uncle Morty started pushing buttons again, and the noise and vibrations gradually began to subside until, eventually, silence returned.

“Righto, let’s see what we’ve got,” said Uncle Morty, grinning. “Fetch me that camera, will you? And be careful - the outside will be hot.”

As Danny approached the machine he could feel the heat coming from it. He quickly pushed the button and the door opened to reveal the camera still running. He slid it off its mounting and took it back to his uncle. Uncle Morty then plugged it into a TV monitor and a picture appeared on the screen.

The first bit of footage showed Danny and Uncle Morty standing looking at the machine. As the sound grew louder, the camera began to shake and Danny could see himself blocking his ears.

Suddenly - a blinding flash, and then they were looking at a typical English country scene; green hills, hedgerows, a forest in the distance. It could have been anywhere in England at any time!

Uncle Morty couldn’t conceal his disappointment.

“Oh dear. That doesn’t look particularly exciting does it?”

What a surprise, Danny thought. It was probably recorded down the road yesterday!

They carried on watching and Uncle Morty was about to press fast-forward when Danny noticed something.

“Hold on! What’s that?”

He had seen something moving in the foreground of the

picture. Now he realised it was somebody lifting their head up slowly out of the grass. Then more heads began to appear - some in the grass, some from behind a hedge, a few more from behind a tree. All the people seemed to be looking rather nervously in the direction of the camera. It was as if something had caused them all to dive for cover and they were only now feeling brave enough to take a look.

Danny moved closer to the TV screen. The figures were now getting to their feet and picking something up off the ground. And now he saw what they were picking up – it was swords, shields and helmets. He looked closely at the helmets – they were pointed, with chain mail draped down the sides - just like those worn by the Norman soldiers in his history book.

Could this be true? Could these men (who were now getting braver and coming towards the camera) really be soldiers in the army of William the Conqueror, about to engage in the Battle of Hastings? Danny racked his brain, trying to come up with another explanation for what he was seeing!

On the TV, the bravest of the soldiers was now edging closer to the machine, his sword at the ready. He came slowly up to the window and pushed his large hairy face up against the glass.

Suddenly the blinding flash again, followed by footage of Danny and Uncle Morty back in the cellar.

“That will give them something to talk about!” Uncle Morty guffawed.

This was all too much for Danny. He had to sit down again. Uncle Morty moved the wheelchair up beside him, but didn’t say anything. Eventually, Danny broke the silence.

“What do you want me to do?” he asked.

“I want you to travel somewhere,” Uncle Morty replied. “To a different time, a different place.”

“Why don’t you go yourself?” Danny asked.

“Oh, believe me I’ve tried! The place where I had to go and

the things I went there to do... well, let me just say, it was not easy for an old man in a wheelchair. I also collected something that prevents me from travelling again.” Uncle Morty now pulled up his sleeve and pointed to a small mark on his forearm. “Something in here.”

Danny took a closer look, but could hardly see anything. He looked at his uncle suspiciously.

“There is much to explain, Daniel, and in time you will know everything, but for now, all I ask is that you be patient and listen to my story.”

“Is it your legs?” Danny asked suddenly. “Is it about saving your legs?”

Uncle Morty threw his head back and roared with laughter.

“My, my, your mother always said you were a bright boy!” He looked at Danny more seriously. “Yes, son, the legs do have something to do with it, but it’s a lot more than that. You see, on the day that I lost my legs, I lost something far more valuable as well - something that made me almost want to stop living.”

Uncle Morty could see the confusion written all over Danny’s face.

“Look, Daniel, let me just tell you the story and then...”

But he wasn’t able to finish his sentence because, right at that moment, there came the most awful crashing sound from across the cellar.

At first they couldn’t see what had caused it because there was now a large cloud of dust hanging in the air, but as the dust settled, the sight that greeted them was of a visibly stunned Spike, sitting on the floor surrounded by debris, with the metal grate lying beside him.

Spike looked up at the hole in the wall from which he had just tumbled and saw Charley’s face peeking down at him. He looked over at Danny and Uncle Morty. If he could have waved a magic wand and disappeared at that moment, he most definitely would

have, but unfortunately his name wasn't Harry, it was Spike! So instead, he stood up, dusted himself off a bit and then, in the most casual voice he could muster, he said:

“Hello!”

Chapter 4

Michelle

Some time had passed, but Uncle Morty was still sitting with his head in his hands, sounding extremely upset.

“This changes everything! Now what am I going to do?” he moaned.

Across the cellar, Danny, Spike and Charley were doing their best to clean up the mess caused by Spike’s fall. Spike and Charley seemed quite keen on keeping their distance from the distressed Uncle Morty and there was a lot of whispered discussion going on. All three of them appeared to have a different opinion on what should happen next but eventually they seemed to reach some sort of agreement and were ready to put their case to Uncle Morty. As they made their way across towards him, Spike and Charley were happy to let Danny lead the way. Whether he liked it or not, he had been elected spokesperson.

Uncle Morty lifted his head out of his hands and eyed the little peace party that had gathered before him.

“Uncle Mortimer,” Danny began, in his most confident-sounding voice, “we have discussed everything and have come to an agreement.”

This news appeared to be of no comfort whatsoever to the old man.

“Spike and Charley here, have agreed not to tell anyone about what they have seen and heard tonight.”

“Is that so?” his uncle said, folding his arms, seemingly not believing a word of it.

“Yes, but there is one condition.”

“One condition? Is there? Really?”

“Yes,” Danny said, still trying to act a lot tougher than he was feeling. “The condition is that they be allowed to come on the

trip with me.”

“The trip?”

Uncle Morty’s unruly eyebrows arched quizzically. Danny nodded and gestured towards TIM.

“Yes, on the trip.”

Only now did it dawn on Uncle Morty what he was talking about.

“Out of the question!” he boomed, which made Spike and Charley tuck in a little closer behind Danny. “Isn’t it bad enough that I am asking *you* to risk great danger to help me? Now you expect me to put two more children at risk as well! Impossible! Out of the question!” Uncle Morty was now glaring directly at Spike. “Do you think this is some sort of game, Michael? Like one of those computer games you like so much. Do you?”

“N-no, Sir,” Spike stammered.

“This is my life we are talking about!” Uncle Morty boomed. “This is my whole life’s work!”

“And we are willing to risk *our* lives to help you!” Danny blurted out suddenly.

This single sentence had the amazing effect of suddenly taking all the wind out of Uncle Morty’s sails. He made as if to say more, but then thought better of it. This gave Spike some confidence.

“Yes, and if there are three of us, we have more chance of succeeding,” he volunteered, not very convincingly.

It wasn’t clear if Uncle Morty had even heard him. He was now shaking his head again.

“Listen. You are right. I should be grateful that you are all willing to help me, but what you don’t realise is that the time and the place that you will have to travel to is one of the most terrible in the history of the world! I am talking about sending you to Europe during the Second World War - when the Nazis were at the height of their power! It is like sending you all back to hell-”

“Uncle Mortimer,” interrupted Danny, “can’t you at least just

tell us your story? Tell us exactly why you want us, or rather *me*, to go back there.”

Uncle Morty thought about this for a while then nodded his agreement.

“All right. I will tell you the story, but that doesn’t mean I’m agreeing that you should all go. My goodness, your mother would kill me! Which reminds me - shouldn’t you all be in bed by now?”

“Mother thinks we *are* in bed,” said Charley.

“You’re little rascals, you know that?” the old man said, but now at least there was a twinkle in his eyes, which made Spike and Charley relax a little.

“All right, sit down and let me tell you what happened. The year was 1942 and I was serving in a unit called the SOE - the Special Operations Executive or just, ‘Special Ops’. Ever heard of them?”

“I have,” Spike said, nodding.

“Spike knows everything about war,” Charley groaned.

“Good,” Uncle Morty continued, “then he will know that at that time the German army, under the command of Adolf Hitler, were busy trying to conquer Europe. They had already defeated France and were occupying the whole country. The Nazis had total control over the country and had even put a government in power that would do everything they told them to do.

Our mission in Special Ops was to parachute into occupied France and cause as much havoc for the Nazis as possible. The prime minister, Winston Churchill, had ordered us to ‘set Europe ablaze!’, so this is what we tried to do. We blew up bridges and railway lines, ambushed German convoys and reported all troop movements by radio to headquarters in Britain. We were a thorn in the side of the Nazis and they were always trying to find us.

It was a very dangerous time and we often had to rely on the local French people to provide us with food and places to hide.

Of course, most of the French people hated the Nazis and wanted them out of their country, but we had to be careful because the Nazis would reward people for any information leading to the capture of soldiers like ourselves.

Some of the French people took enormous risks to help us. Not just helping us to hide, but also delivering important documents, smuggling radios to us, sometimes even helping to get our soldiers in and out of the country. Anyone caught by the Nazis doing any of these things would be lined up against a wall and shot!

During this time we worked very closely with members of the French Resistance group known as ‘the Marquis’. In 1942 our unit and members of the Marquis worked together on an important mission called Operation Josephine. It involved blowing up a power station situated near Bordeaux where a fleet of German U-boats were based.”

“U-boats are German submarines,” Spike explained to Charley.

“That’s right,” said Uncle Morty, nodding, “and when we blew up this power station it put the submarines out of action for several months. As you can imagine, this infuriated the Nazis and a massive manhunt was launched in the area to try and find us. Suddenly there were soldiers and Gestapo everywhere. There was a reward put out and we had to be very careful of collaborators.

Two members of the Marquis who helped us during Operation Josephine were a brother and sister called Christian and Michelle Borges. They were dedicated to the cause of ridding their country of Nazis and they risked their lives every day to help us.

After Operation Josephine, the Borges family allowed several of us to hide out in the basement of their house in Bordeaux for a long period of time. This was an incredibly brave thing for them to do; anyone seeing us coming or going could have reported us and that would have spelt disaster.

It was during this time that I got to know Christian and Michelle

very well. They were just normal young people. If there had been no war they would probably both have been at university, studying to be doctors. Michelle always said she wanted to be a doctor, so that she could help people, but with the war on she had chosen to help people in a different way.

Michelle and I fell in love. I had never known anyone so brave and so beautiful - so willing to put the lives of others before her own. We would sit in the darkness of her parents' house, listening out for the sound of German army boots, and talk about the future. After the war, she was going to return to England with me and we were going to be married. She was scared of coming back to England because she said her English was so terrible! I would laugh at her and say, 'How can someone be scared of speaking English and yet be brave enough to risk their life helping us every day?'"

As Danny, Spike and Charley waited to hear what happened next, it seemed like Uncle Morty was momentarily lost in his memories.

"What happened to her?" Charley asked in a small voice. "Did she die?"

The question made Uncle Morty look as though his heart might break. He had tears in his eyes and it took a few moments before he was able to speak again.

"In December 1942, we received top secret orders about another mission. British Commandos were launching one of their most daring raids of the whole war. It was called Operation Frankton, and the commandos involved would become known as the 'Cockleshell Heroes'."

At the sound of this name Spike's eyes lit up.

"The soldiers in the canoes!" he said excitedly.

"That's it, Michael. The canoes were called 'cockleshells'. Ten British Commandos were dropped off by a submarine off the coast of France. Their orders were to canoe up the River Gironde

to the harbour at Bordeaux. In the harbour they would find a fleet of German merchant ships that had been supplying the German army in France. The commandos were to attach limpet mines to the sides of the ships and blow them all to smithereens. This would cut off a major supply line to the Germans.

Our job was to do anything we could to help. If necessary this would mean creating a diversion, so that the German guards at the harbour did not notice the canoes coming in silently under cover of darkness.

On the night of the 5th of December, six of us (three Special Ops forces and three members of the French Resistance, including Michelle and Christian) left the Borges' house and made our way down to the harbour. We were all dressed as civilians, although we had weapons concealed under our jackets. We left in pairs, which we thought would draw less attention to ourselves. At first Christian and another Special Ops man, Roger Jakes, slipped out looking like two young Frenchmen going out on the town, then the other soldier, Tommy Mitchell, left together with one of Christian's friends. Finally, Michelle and I left together. We always tried to keep one French-speaking person together with an English-speaking person in case anyone ran into a Nazi patrol.

Nobody really knows what happened that night, but what is certain is that the Nazis knew something was up and were on the lookout for us. We suspect a woman named Madame du Pont, who lived across the road from the Borges' house. She was one of those sad people who have nothing better to do than peek out through their lace curtains to spy on the neighbours. We now think that she must have seen us leaving the Borges' house that night and decided there was something suspicious going on. She would have got on the phone to the local Nazi headquarters and reported that she had seen us heading towards the harbour.

Anyway, we were not to know this as we made our way down to the harbour. I remember it so well, walking hand in hand with

Michelle. It was the first time we had ever done that in public and, as it turned out...”

Again, Uncle Morty’s voice trailed off and he took a few moments to gather himself before starting to speak again.

“We took a back route into the harbour area through all the warehouses, until we met up with the others on a quayside just across from where the ships were moored. We knew that, if all went according to plan, the ships would be at the bottom of the harbour before the night was out. From where we sat in the shadow of some packing crates we could see a few guards standing at the railings. One of them was talking to his mate on the ship next door. They didn’t seem to be keeping a close lookout, which suited us fine.

We hadn’t been sitting there long when Christian suddenly nudged me and pointed into the harbour. At first I could see nothing then I spotted them - two dark shapes moving silently through the waters. Our hearts leapt - they had arrived exactly according to plan! There were two men in each canoe, but we could hardly make them out with their black clothes and blackened faces.

We held our breath as the canoes glided silently towards the ships. We could still hear the one guard chatting to his mate, but all of a sudden, in mid-sentence, he stopped talking! It was as if he had seen or heard something. The commandos immediately stopped paddling - hoping and praying that they couldn’t be seen in the inky darkness. Now the guard seemed to be asking his mate if he had seen something down in the water. It was a crucial time as they both stared out into the darkness then one of them went off to get a torch! We knew we had to do something *and fast!*

It was Michelle who acted first. Quick as a flash she was up and running along the quayside towards the ships. I ran after her and, to my surprise, she suddenly turned on me and started to shout at me in French! I realised what she was playing at - she was pretending we were lovers having a quarrel. I joined in, shouting

back at her in my very bad French. It seemed to be working, as we now had the guard's attention. This meant the commandos could start paddling again, and they pulled their canoes right in close to the ships and began to attach their mines.

Meanwhile, Michelle (who was still shouting at me) now walked straight up the gangplank of one of the ships. Of course the guard immediately came over and tried to stop her, but when she asked for a cigarette and he saw what a beautiful young woman she was, he was only too happy to oblige. All I could think about was the commandos below, placing their mines. I had to get her off the ship! I now also went aboard and implored her to come with me, but she wanted to keep the guard's attention, so she shouted at me to leave her alone, all the time smiling at the guard - making him feel important.

Suddenly - *disaster!* There were soldiers running down the road towards the harbour, and we could tell they were looking for something. This was not a routine patrol - they had definitely been tipped off! The soldiers started to shout at the guard, asking him



who we were. Suddenly it felt like we were trapped and now the guard started to scream at us to get off the ship. We had no choice and we were about to go down the gangplank into the hands of the soldiers when suddenly Christian and the others opened fire and all hell broke loose!

With all the gunfire we had to retreat back onto the ship. Now the guard started firing at us and we had to duck and dive, and take cover. All the time I was thinking, We need to get off this ship! It could blow at any moment!

Now soldiers were also coming onto the ship and we were forced to retreat farther down the deck. The soldiers were being led by a captain who was screaming orders and driving them forwards. We fired our revolvers, but they were no match for the soldiers' machine guns. We kept retreating, but were now running out of deck! Soon we were at the bow of the ship and there was nowhere left to go! We reached the railing and looked over - we were going to have to jump! I happened to glance over my shoulder and, to my horror, I saw the captain hoisting a bazooka onto his shoulder! One blast from that thing and I knew we would both be history!

'Jump!' I screamed at Michelle.

We both climbed up onto the railing and were just about to jump when there was suddenly a deafening blast. The next thing I knew I was in the water - floundering around - screaming for Michelle! I couldn't see her anywhere! I then felt hands grabbing me and men with blackened faces were hauling me into their canoe. I was still screaming out Michelle's name - looking for her everywhere - but that's when one of the commandos put a hand over my mouth to gag me, so that I wouldn't attract the soldiers' attention.

I looked up and... it is a sight that will forever haunt me. I saw the figure of Michelle, standing on the deck. She had her hands in the air and there were soldiers all around her. The bazooka

shell had exploded at my feet, shattering my legs and blowing me overboard, but the blast had obviously blown Michelle sideways onto the deck and, by the time she had recovered, it was too late - the soldiers had her.

Again I tried to call to her to get off the ship - but again the commando smothered my screams...and then..."

The tears were now rolling down Uncle Morty's cheeks. It was as if he was back in the icy darkness of Bordeaux harbour. His next words were barely audible.

"... and then... the ship exploded."

Chapter 5

The Pact

After Uncle Morty's story, a horrible silence, punctuated only by the odd sniff from Charley, descended over the cellar.

Eventually, he looked up at them through watery eyes and nodded his head towards the lift.

"Why don't you all run along, eh? We'll talk again tomorrow."

There was still *so* much to talk about, but Danny knew it was time to leave his uncle alone with his thoughts.

They all said goodnight and took the lift back up to ground level.

*

Once outside, they quickly walked back towards the Barnes' cottage, barely able to contain their excitement. What a night it had been! They had seen and heard so much!

"Poor Uncle Morty," said Charley. "We have to help him."

Danny was just about to reply when a figure suddenly stepped out of the shadows in front of them.

"And what, may I ask, are you all doing out of bed at this hour?"

It was Mrs Barnes, and she did *not* sound amused!

"Uh... we've been with my uncle," Danny said quickly.

"All of you!" she exclaimed, turning on Spike and Charley. "What on earth were the two of you doing there?"

Spike had to think quickly.

"We went for a walk, and Mr Piper-Adams saw us and invited us in."

"For a cup of tea," Charley added quickly.

"Oh, you went for a walk, did you?"

Spike and Charley nodded.

“What, just out to get some fresh air, were you?”

Spike and Charley nodded some more.

“Yes, *and my name is Madonna!* What do you take me for? You were snooping around the wine cellar weren’t you?”

Spike and Charley swapped glances, but didn’t reply.

“Get to bed all of you! We’ll talk about this tomorrow!”

*

The lights were out in Spike’s bedroom and the three of them had gathered around the computer on his desk. On the screen was a big picture of Adolf Hitler - an evil-looking man with dark, slicked-down hair and a large bushy moustache.

“The Wolf,” said Spike. “That’s what he liked to call himself. He even named one of his headquarters ‘The Wolf’s Lair’. In his early days he would go out on the streets in disguise and actually call himself ‘Mr Wolf’. One of the most evil men in history. You wouldn’t believe some of the terrible things he ordered his Nazis storm troopers to do during the war.”

“Like what?” asked Charley.

“Like killing six million people just because of their religion.”

Danny was looking worried.

“Uncle Morty’s right you know. It’s far too dangerous for us all to go. I think I should just go myself.”

Spike wasn’t interested.

“Are you mad? We have three times the chance of succeeding if we all go.”

“Or three times the chance of something going wrong! Like Uncle Morty said, this is not a game. Going back to those times is going to be incredibly dangerous.”

Spike wasn’t paying much attention to Danny. It seemed like he had already made up his mind.

“I’ll tell you what’s also dangerous,” he said, “our mother! If she even gets a whiff of what’s going on here we’ll all be locked

up so fast - and not let out until Mr Piper-Adams is safely tucked away in a mental hospital!”

“We’ll have to be careful when we discuss it,” said Charley in a whisper.

Danny nodded his agreement.

“From now on we should never talk about it if there’s any chance of us being overheard.”

“We should have a code name,” suggested Spike, “so no one knows what we’re talking about. We could call it...”

Charley was still looking at a picture on the screen of ‘Mr Wolf’ (Hitler) standing beside his storm troopers.

“How about *Wolfstorm*?” she said suddenly.

The boys looked at each other. They seemed to like it.

“Why not?” said Spike. “No one’s going to know what we’re talking about if we say ‘*Wolfstorm*’.”

“All right,” agreed Danny. “We can call it that, but I still think I should go alone.”

“Danny, do you really think Charley and I are going to let you leave us here while you go off on the adventure of a lifetime?”

“Dream on!” said Charley with a smile, and Danny could see by the looks on their faces that there was no argument.

“All right then,” said Danny. “Let’s make a pact right here and now. We must all swear that we will never tell another soul about what we have seen tonight - about Uncle Morty and TIM, and about *Wolfstorm*.”

And so it was, in Spike’s darkened room, with only the light from the computer screen, that they all joined hands and, one by one said:

“I swear.”

*

The next day was gloriously sunny. In fact, the only slightly frosty thing about it was the looks the children were getting from Mrs Barnes. Mr Piper-Adams had announced to her at breakfast that

he would like to go outside today and he would be very pleased if all three children could join him. To say this surprised Mrs Barnes somewhat was an understatement. Firstly, Mr Piper-Adams very rarely ventured outside and secondly he had never before shown the remotest bit of interest in her children, or anybody else's for that matter!

As Mr and Mrs Barnes cleared up after Mr Piper-Adams' breakfast, they looked out of the dining room window at the strange sight of the old man buzzing down the garden path in his wheelchair with the three children in tow.

"Something funny is going on," Mrs Barnes muttered under her breath, "and I'm going to find out what it is."

*

Uncle Mortimer and his three young companions had now arrived at the overgrown and rundown summer house.

"What a mess," the old man said, looking all around him. "I've neglected so much."



Danny felt a nudge from Spike - a not-so-subtle reminder that he had been elected to break the news to his uncle.

“Uncle Mortimer,” he said. “We’ve made up our minds. We all want to take the trip on TIM and we’ve all sworn ourselves to secrecy.”

As expected, his uncle did not look at all happy with this news and he now viewed the three of them with a very serious expression.

“Hold on,” he said. “Before you make any rash decisions I need to tell you more about the incredible dangers that surround a journey of this nature. And I’m not even talking about the obvious dangers of returning to wartime France.”

Uncle Morty pulled up his sleeve and once again revealed the strange mark on his forearm. It was the first time Spike and Charley had been able to see it properly and they both leaned forwards for a closer look.

“What is it?” asked Spike.

“Inside here, just under my skin, a small computer chip has been inserted. It is called a ‘Body and Mind’ (or BAM) chip,” explained Uncle Morty. “On this chip a computer program has been loaded, called *Attila*. It stands for something like Anti Time Travel Alert. Its function is to send out alert signals should I ever again attempt another trip on TIM.”

“Alert signals to whom?” asked Danny.

“That is what I need to explain to you. You see, time travel brings with it another danger far greater than you could ever imagine, but, for you to fully understand, I need to explain something about the enormous effects that time travel can have on everything. What you have to understand is that if anyone goes back in time and changes something, those changes will have a ripple effect all the way through time.”

Uncle Mortimer realised that what he was explaining was difficult to grasp, so he thought for a moment about how he could

make it easier to understand.

“All right, let me give you an example. If, let’s say, by some miracle you did manage to go back to France and change what happened on that terrible night, it would literally change everything about my life. I mean, just think about it - if Michelle had not died that night, she and I would probably have got married. We may have even had children. My whole life would have been different. Do you follow?”

The children all nodded.

“Now, here’s the bit that will sound strange. If Michelle and I were married and everything was different in my life, I would probably have had no desire to travel back in time. If that was the case, it is extremely unlikely that I would have built TIM.”

Charley looked thoroughly confused, but the cogs in Spike’s brain were obviously turning furiously.

“So, you’re saying that if we went back and saved Michelle’s life, everything here would change and TIM would cease to exist?”

“Exactly!” said Uncle Morty, snapping his fingers and pointing at Spike. “You’ve got it, Michael.”

This had thrown up other questions for Spike.

“But if we *do* go back and help save Michelle’s life, and TIM disappears, how are we going to get back from 1942? Won’t that mean we’ll be stuck there?”

Uncle Morty smiled.

“Well done, Michael, you’re thinking, but take that thought one step farther. If Michelle lived and TIM never existed then you would not have gone on that trip. Once the major change takes place everything will alter and you will find yourselves back here in the present time with perhaps no knowledge of what you have done because, as far as we will all be concerned, none of it ever happened!” Uncle Morty laughed when he saw the expressions on the faces of Danny and the others. “I know it’s confusing,” he

said, “but the more you think about it, the more it makes sense.”

“It doesn’t make sense to me,” said Charley.

“Yes, and I’m not surprised,” Uncle Morty continued. “It is a very strange thing to grasp. What you have to try and understand is that if you all go back in time and alter anything then things will change in our lives in ways we cannot predict. Perhaps you’ll be living somewhere else. Perhaps, with Michelle as my wife, I may not have employed Mrs Barnes as a housekeeper. Who knows, there’s a chance that I still may have. We cannot predict what will happen when we start changing the past, and that is what makes it such a dangerous thing to play with.” He revealed his forearm again. “Which leads me back to this. You see, because going back in time and changing things has such a profound effect on everything throughout the rest of time, it will one day become *illegal* to travel through time. I have seen this for myself - in the future.”

“You’ve been into the future?” Spike gasped.

“Yes,” Uncle Morty nodded, “and into the past - back to wartime France in fact. That proved to be my final trip and, unfortunately, it ended before I had a chance to achieve anything.”

“What happened?” asked Spike impatiently.

“I’ll tell you now, Michael,” Uncle Morty continued. “For my first test trip on TIM I decided to go into the future in search of technology that I thought might help me on my next trip. I decided to go forwards to the Year 2200, but I had no way of knowing what currency I would need to buy anything. I knew that if I took money from today it would probably have no value in two hundred years time, so I ended up taking diamonds in the hope that they would still be valuable in the future. As it turned out they were useless. In the course of the next century there are going to be so many discoveries of diamonds that the value is going to fall to almost nothing. Anyway, I did learn what will be of value in 2200 - and I also did a lot of window shopping while

I was there - so I have some good ideas of what to buy.”

Spike’s eyes had grown enormous.

“Are we also going to the future?” he asked, breathless with excitement.

“Not so fast, Michael,” Uncle Mortimer replied sternly. “I haven’t even told you about the real dangers yet.” Now the old man looked down at his forearm again. “It was only when I arrived in 2200 that I discovered time travel had been made strictly illegal. The first hint I got was when I saw a computer program for sale, which I was told would prevent time travellers from being traced and caught. It was a real shock because, at that moment, I suddenly realised that I was breaking the law! The program was called *Attila Killer* and, if I could have afforded it, I would have bought it. If that had happened... well, I probably wouldn’t be asking for your help now.”

“But who gave you the chip,” asked Danny, “and that *Attila* program?”

Uncle Morty smiled.

“Who do you think? Some things don’t change!”

“The police?” Danny ventured.

Uncle Morty nodded.

“That’s right, but these are not your average coppers. They are the Time Crime Police or ‘Timecops’ as they are called in 2200. They have sophisticated equipment that detects anyone time travelling. From 2200 I decided to go back to 1942. I was going to try and change the events that led to Michelle’s death, but I had only been there for an hour when the Timecops suddenly turned up. They had traced me with their equipment, and that’s when they put this chip into my arm and the *Attila* program, and sent me back to the year from where I had come. *Attila* was programmed to activate as soon as I got back here, making it impossible for me to time travel anywhere else. The Timecops told me they were installing *Attila* because it was my first offence. If they ever

caught me again, I would be arrested and detained for life.

The Timecops also told me about an even greater danger. They are called Time Hogs and, by all accounts, they are the scum of the universe. They are bounty hunters - ruthless killers that patrol through time looking for time travellers like myself. They don't bother with *Attila* or arrests. They kill on sight. Apparently they come from a time farther in the future when time travel is considered an even greater offence. These Hogs are paid handsomely for each time traveller they eradicate. Thankfully I have never laid eyes on one of these creatures and I pray that none of us ever will. They say that a genuine *Attila Killer* program should prevent these Hogs from detecting a time traveller - which is why it is so expensive."

Uncle Morty looked over at the three youngsters, who were all trying to absorb what they had just heard.

"So now you see why I am so reluctant to send you all off into such danger. Believe me, if it wasn't for this blasted thing in my arm, I would go again myself! I have spent so long on this project, and when they put this thing into me it seemed like all my efforts were in vain. You must know that it was only as a very last resort that I asked you to come here, Daniel. I'm getting very old now and I know that if I don't do something soon it will be too late. I thought if I could plan everything, right down to the smallest detail, it would hopefully minimise the risks involved. Maybe, just maybe, there would be a good chance of you succeeding."

Now Uncle Mortimer began to speak directly to Danny.

"But, listen to me, my boy. I will fully understand if you are reluctant to go. I would never force you or-

"When do we leave?" asked Danny.

If his mother had been there, she would have recognised the expression on his face. It was the expression he got when he had made up his mind to do something and nothing, *but nothing*, was going to stand in his way.

*

Just as Danny was making his big decision, Mrs Barnes (still hovering in the manor house dining room) was busy trying to make a decision of her own. Her husband had just suggested something to her and his eyes were now darting around excitedly as he awaited her reply. Whatever it was, Mrs Barnes was clearly in two minds about it, but eventually she nodded and said:

“All right then. I’ll keep an eye out. You go and take a quick look.”

It was the answer Mr Barnes had been hoping for. He scurried out of the dining room and down the long passage lined with the suits of armour. When he reached the wooden wall panel that concealed the secret lift to the cellar he came to an abrupt halt. From out of his jacket pocket, he removed a bunch of keys.