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Chapter 1

The house in "back lane"

In June 1942, as World War II raged, a little girl grew up in one of a row of small cottages on a street called "back lane" in a town called Bungay in East Anglia, England.

Britain had been at war with Nazi Germany since 1 September 1939, and the little girl could not remember a time when the distribution of food, coal, and clothing had not been controlled. She listened for the sound of bomber planes and air raid sirens without even realising it and even possessed her own gas mask.

She felt relieved that she didn't have to worry about her gas mask anymore. The family's gas masks lay forgotten in their boxes. The British Government's anxieties about chemical warfare had not materialised.

When fitted to her face, the rubber mask felt hot and smelled bad. When she breathed in, she had to suck air through a filter designed to remove any poisonous gas.

Father said:

"When Britain declared war on Nazi Germany, the government thought the Nazis would drop poison gas bombs on Britain. The gas masks are to protect us."

Her brother, Joey, asked:

"Why did the government think the Nazis would drop poison gas bombs on us?"