

Mr Evans has changed from being a strict 'mean man' to being tired. This exhaustion is evidenced by him 'rubbing his eyes' and further by his eyes being 'red and sore.'

The children came home from the chapel. There was no sign of the Army car outside of the Dog and Duck but Auntie Lou wasn't at home. Mr Evans said, 'Where's your Auntie?'

'It's a lovely evening,' Carrie said. 'She went for a walk up the mountain. I said I'd get supper.' Nick whispered, 'D'you think she'll come back?'

Carrie took Mr Evans's cocoa into the office. He sat back, rubbing his eyes. They looked red and sore and his mouth seemed to droop at the corners. 'Figures, figures, figures,' he said. 'No end to it. No rest for the righteous!'

'Must you work so hard?' Carrie said, thinking of the things Hepzibah had told her, how he'd worked all his life and had no help from anyone, and he looked at her with surprise.

'Sympathy, is it? That's something I don't often get!' Then he smiled – not one of his tigerish grins but a perfectly ordinary, rather tired smile – and said, 'No help for it, is there, with this old war on? Can't even get a boy to deliver! But the only things worth having are the things you've worked hard for, and I'll last out, I daresay, so don't you worry, girl! Go and see to young Nicodemus and have your own supper!'

Carrie lingered, partly because she felt so sorry suddenly, and partly because she felt guilty. She had told him a lie about Auntie Lou going for a walk up the mountain and Auntie Lou didn't know what she said. Suppose she came back now and told him she'd been somewhere else? It would be dreadful to be caught out in a lie; dreadful at any time, but worse now, when he was being so friendly. She said, 'Can I help you add up? I'm quite good at maths.' That was another lie, and her cheeks reddened with the shame of it, but he didn't notice because the shop bell then tinkled.

The door opened and closed. Quick, light steps through the shop, and Auntie stood in the office. She was smiling and her whole face shone as if candles had been lit inside her. She watched Mr Evans turn in his chair and look up at his sister and felt her chest tighten. What was it the air-raid wardens shouted when they saw a house with a chink of light showing? Put that light out! 'Oh, put it out, Auntie Lou,' Carrie shouted, inside her, and said, aloud, 'Was it nice, up the mountains?'

Auntie Lou looked at her vaguely as if Carrie spoke some strange, foreign language. Or as if she herself had just returned from another world altogether. Don't be stupid now, Auntie Lou,' Carrie prayed, but knew it was hopeless. Mr Evans was bound to find out and there would be a terrible row. He would know she had lied to him, and be hurt, and never trust her again ...

She stood with her head bowed, waiting for the story to break over it. But all he said was, 'Oh, it's all right for some, isn't it? Clear off and get your supper, the pair of you. Some of us have to work for a living!'