

# ***The Escape***

**A story for teaching issues of social justice**

**By Sue Phillips**

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Experiential RE 2005**

Three pounds from the sale of this book will go to the Nick Webber memorial trust for Malawi, The money will support the training of legal aid lawyers and further the cause of social justice

## **Contents**

### **Episode One : Survival**

In which Ernest, a lawyer and his family escape from genocide in their own country

**Class goes into role** :Who will you be in the story ?

#### **Issues to discuss:**

How does it feel to be a refugee ?

Examples that could be used :Apartheid, The Holocaust, Rwanda and Bosnia

### **Episode Two :The Landing**

In which Ernest discovers the refugees are being thrown overboard

**Class in role:** How do you feel, what will you do?

#### **Issues to discuss:**

Is it ever right to take a life?

Examples that could be used:

Churchill scuttling ships with the French troops still on board.

American pioneer woman smothers her baby to avoid discovery of her companions by Indians.

### **Episode Three: The Detention centre**

In which Ernest discovers that the captain of the ship has betrayed them twice over.

**Class in role.** How would you feel ,do you think you have rights in this situation?

#### **Issues to discuss**

Human rights , what are they

Does every one have them

What rights do refugees have ?

Human trafficking

Brat camps, are rights being compromised?

### **Episode Four : Sophia**

In which Ernest searches for his wife and child

**Class in role:** discuss should Sophia be rescued?

#### **Issues to discuss**

Utilitarianism, the greatest good for the greatest number

The rights of the disabled

### **Episode five: Verity**

In which the plan to escape is hatched

**Class in role:** What would you do if you were Sophia ?

#### **Issues to discuss**

Is violence ever justified?

What it is like to be blind?

**You may wish to read the next three episodes through in one lesson to keep up the pace and tension in the story ,before spending a lesson on the issues. Then read the next three episodes to the end.**

### **Episode Six: Exodus**

In which the refugees escape for a second time

**Class in role:** Would you take this risk?

#### **Issues to discuss**

Heroes.

Courage

Standing up for ones beliefs

### **Episode Seven: The Train**

In which the refugees discover that all is not what it seems

**Class in role:** What do you think has happened ?

### **Episode Eight: The Light**

In which Ernest discovers he has done a terrible thing

**Class in role:** Is Ernest responsible? Would you want to survive?

#### **Issues to discuss**

Weapons of mass destruction

**Read the next three episodes right through to the end in one lesson.**

### **Episode Nine: Survival**

In which the group realise they may not survive

**Class in role:** how are you feeling? What are your concerns?

### **Episode Ten: The Castle of Fortune**

In which the group reach a temporary place of safety

Class in role: how are you feeling in the castle?

**Episode Eleven: Sophia's Story**

In which Ernest finally learns what happened to his wife and child

**Class in role:** How do you feel about the future?

**Issues to discuss**

Is Verity just a normal child?

Is there a purpose behind the events.

Why did these people survive ?

**Part Two, "The Journey" can follow on or be left for another year as part of a different course.**

**If the story is being used as part of PSHE and Citizenship the emphasis for the second part need not be on the Philosophy of Religion, but on whether there is a purpose to life ,whether events are random, whether there are supernatural events and why there is suffering in the world, the importance of hope and optimism in life.**

**Some schools have used the story in tutorial each week through out the year using the ten minute story to provoke discussion.**

## ***The Escape***

### **Introduction**

The idea for this story came from my wish to write a story to parallel the Exodus of Moses and the Jews from Egypt.

I had already written two successful concept building stories to introduce children to the ideas they would come across in their studies for the RE examination taken at sixteen, “**The Island**” and “**The Castle in the Clouds**” and had a very positive reaction to them both from other teachers who were using them in their schools.

One of them, “**The Island**”, was included in the new Hampshire county religious education handbook. ( This story is available in “**Making RE Make Sense**” pub by Tribal ( [www.sfe.co.uk](http://www.sfe.co.uk)) since then a third, “**Return to the Island**” has been added to create a trilogy.

**The Island** is a story about a group of people who were shipwrecked on an Island that did not exist, and from which they could never escape, on a journey from England to New York. Thrown back into a world without any of the trappings of modern civilisation the classes responded to all the situations that arose in the story, instinctively.

As they did so, they created rites of passage, moral rules, festivals, a holy book, and special place containing precious artefacts from the ship rescued before it finally rusted away into oblivion.

The special place became a centre of pilgrimage and the story ended five hundred years on with the community planning a special ceremony in a stone castle on a mountain to celebrate this important anniversary. A heated debate arose about whether the holy book should now be translated into modern island speak and whether the beautiful ball gowns and dinner jackets preserved from the ship wreck should no longer worn at special ceremonies. The island helped the children understand why members of religious traditions do the things they do – because they were just what they themselves instinctively chose to do. Religion was no longer, as it often seemed to the children in my secular school, the strange and alien thing that *other* people do. The story of the Island made RE make sense.

**“Return to the Island”** is a new story that takes the children to the Island ten years on where various characters they met in the first story face moral issues which the class can debate (Available as an e book via njphillips@supanet.com)

A year later, in my lessons, the classes returned to the Island five thousand years on to find it in chaos. It was full of greed, racism, slavery and poverty. The Island has become an allegory for the earth. In this story called **“The Castle in the Clouds”** from **“Teaching Christianity with the Theatre of Learning”** pub Tribal (www.sfe.Co.uk) the children found themselves in role as the spirits of the first ones, on the Island, the elders and decide to send someone down to show the Islanders the right way to live as they had set out in the beginning. As the story progresses and the person is rejected and killed the children begin to understand why the story of Jesus is as it is, and most importantly, the concepts of incarnation and atonement make sense.

The Island was so successful that we decided, as many schools were doing, to move it into our first year, year seven to introduce our eleven year olds to the concepts of religion. This meant I was looking for a new story to begin the examination course in year ten on Judaism.

### **The Escape**

As soon as had I begun to work on a story to parallel the Exodus I realised that it could have a much wider application and it developed into the two part story you have here. **“The Escape”**, where a group of refugees escape from genocide in their own country. In the course of their adventures many moral issues are raised for the children to discuss, motivated by the intensity of the story into which they enter.

In the second part, **“The Journey”**, having undergone a second escape, the refugees find their way home giving rise to the philosophical and ultimate questions that are so important in RE.

The central character is **Ernest**, whose name is a play on words, like the names of all the chief characters. There is **Verity**, his wife, her name means truth and **Sophia**, his daughter, whose name means wisdom. Ernest is escaping from genocide in his own country with his wife and child on one of three boats with 1500 other people.

The sufferings of the journey and the shocking and unexpected events they face when they arrive at their destination gave us a springboard for looking at all kinds of moral issues.

The story was intended to last just three lessons, providing a ten minute introduction to lessons about refugees, genocide and asylum seekers but it acquired a life of its own and developed into a term's work. What you have here are the separate episodes of the story. At the beginning of the chapter there are indications of the issues that we used it to explore.

There are supernatural hints in the story which allow the teacher to use it to explore religious as well as moral issues. Ernest does have a certain affinity with Abraham and Moses, both of whom who faced temptation and moral dilemmas. The story offers scope for asking whether God is looking after this family. It allows one to explore the problem of evil and even the miraculous. We used the story to help pupils empathise with and understand the plight of refugees and asylum seekers, some of whom we had, not only in the school, but in the class. Interestingly one of these was the only one who guessed what was happening to the refugees when they were taken up for air on the boat.

We took articles from the press, with current real life examples, to look at the serious issue of trafficking into sexual slavery prevalent in Europe at the moment, especially in Eastern Europe where economic depression has followed war.

We looked at Tranquility Bay, another article in the press, about a school in Jamaica where the children of rich Americans were sent for re training as good children. These examples allowed pupils to empathise with the treatment of asylum seekers in detention centres and to consider the whole issues of human rights . Do refugees have rights too ? It enabled us to confront the pupils with their prejudices as we showed them how the refugees benefit our economy by 2.4 billion pounds a year.

These articles were later included in lesson recipes in "Teaching Tolerance" and "Teaching Human Rights". These two resource files for teachers, which I wrote with my husband, Neil, were the result of thinking about and teaching the issues discussed in these lessons. They were published by Tribal/ SfE in 2007 and 2008 ([www.sfe.co.uk](http://www.sfe.co.uk))

A term later the attitude of our pupils to the deportation by the British government of refugees who are reaching the age of 18 was been gratifying. We put a huge display in the corridor about these children and the schools who campaigned for their release. We wrote an article for the pupils' new citizenship magazine. Their writing and comments during the process showed a growing awareness, understanding and sympathy, one child asking for a congress to be called to address the situation properly within the European community. Now it is an important part of our work on tolerance helping our pupils come to terms with and see the benefits to our society of the Eastern European economic migrants. This is an issue that has arisen since "The Escape" was written during 2003/4 and the "The journey" in 2004/5. Our pupils struggle with it.

No doubt , whenever we tell this story, we will illustrate it with different issues , whatever is topical at the moment, using the sympathy for the characters in the story, with which they identify ,to help them care about the real characters in the news items we look at.

In a sense, the story ends only part way through. The ending is appropriate, it has served its purpose and could stop there but the second part "**The journey** " takes the refugees towards home - their Exodus – across a devastated landscape. During their eventful journey they will be guided by a supernatural figure and a series of events which will enable the pupils to consider the existence of God, the validity of religious experience and miracles, the problem of evil, life after death and as Ernest nears his Promised Land what kind of world they, the pupils, really want to live in – and that is why we have not drawn out the religious significance of what happens to Ernest and his family. I hope that you enjoy it and that it provides an engaging tool for you to use, reading (which I do ) or telling in your own words, to inspire your classes to think, reflect, empathise and ultimately to care.

## ***The Escape***

### ***Lesson One:***

- ***Aim:*** To create a sympathetic understanding of what it means to be a refugee by creating empathy
- To engage pupils through visualisation and use of the imagination
- To create a platform from which pupils can be lead towards the study of genocide, terrorism and Islamophobia.
- ***Outcome;*** changed attitude towards refugees
- Diary accounts

### ***This is what you need:***

- Darkened room if you can - best darkened at the beginning of the visualisation
- CD Player

- Some lively pop music to come into. This echoes the atmosphere of the lounge the pupils are in when the visualisation begins
- Thunderstorm CD. This is put on when you darken the room and change the atmosphere. Music from Murcof is very eery and contributes well to the shocking atmosphere of the visualisation. It is particularly helpful if you practice reading the story first, turning the music up loudly just after the lodger has announced the invasion as indicated in the story, fade it and continue with the story. Read with atmosphere and drama it has a powerful effect on the children.
- Pieces of paper cut up enough for each person to have two
- Two containers or just have two piles

### ***This is what you do***

1. Class come into lively atmosphere

On board are these words. (or photocopy them on to a transparency )

**Peace, happiness, tranquility, harmony, safety, security, warmth, loved, pets, chilled, relaxed, comfortable, dry, full up, cosy, soft, gentle, calm, interested, loving, hopeful, bright, sunny, optimistic, kind, encouraging, welcome, liked, appreciated, respected, valued, wanted.**

2. The ***starter*** is to think about how they make you feel.

Just write the words. Ask the class to read them as they come in and then take a piece of paper from the pile in the middle and write down the word they ***like*** most. Put it in the middle. Take a second piece and write the ***opposite*** of one of the words on the second. This would be the thing they would like to experience least

3. Ask them to say how the words make them feel.
4. Go round in a circle asking each person in turn to give an opposite. Try to do it fast and think about how these words make you feel. - We will look at the words in the middle as part of the plenary. Which set of words most matches the world we know ?.
5. We are going to look at this topic do by taking part in an imaginary story. The story is not real, in itself , but is based on things that have really happened to real people. We are going to be the people taking

part in the story. All through the story I am going to stop and ask everyone what has happened to them, how they came to be in this situation and how they are feeling. There is a sense in which we will make the story up together.

6. As a way in, I would like to do a visualisation with you to help change the atmosphere and help us get into the story. First we need to change the atmosphere.
7. First we turn off the lights
8. Next we change the music
9. Now we relax and close our eyes and watch the breath until we are calm and relaxed. When the class is quiet and the atmosphere is there begin the visualisation.

### **Invasion - Introductory Visualisation**

Close your eyes and imagine for a moment that you are lying on the sofa in your lounge watching MTV. You have just got in from school. You are shattered and almost half asleep. The door is standing ajar. Somewhere in the house a phone rings. Someone is in and they have answered it, probably the lodger, good. You click off the TV and settle back into the cushions for a nap. A few moments later he enters the room in a rush, the door bangs open, hitting the wall. Startled, you open your eyes and sit up.

“We have to leave.....now .You have ten minutes to get whatever you can carry”

“What ? ...What are you talking about?”

“There has been an invasion. The troops are headed this way. Listen! can

you hear the phones ringing up and down the street ? This is not a joke”

In the distance you hear the sound of gunfire  
You are in a state of shock

“Ten minutes, you say?. What do I need ?”

What could you carry ? what would be useful in such a world? Is money?  
Credit cards ? How much food and warm clothing can you carry ? Where  
would you go? Who would you take with you ?  
Where are your family ? No one is home, yet . What about your pets? It is  
getting closer, you can hear the wheels of the tanks where did they come  
from ? Should you just go?

**Pause and raise the music, then fade it and continue**

A few moments later you bang the door shut. You turn and look at it for a  
moment. When will you see that door again? Will you ever? The noises are  
getting closer. You stand at the gate. Which way ? You go as fast as you  
can away from the sound of the tanks. The street is filling with people.  
There are children crying. Old people struggling to move fast. People are  
carrying things. This is slowing them down. Mostly they are carrying  
children. Who do you have with you ? Are you by yourself ? Where are you  
going?

The tanks are behind you .You turn towards the sea....

When you are ready come back into the classroom.  
How did that make you feel ?  
What happened ? what did you take with you ? were you alone, where  
were you going ?

***Now we are going to begin our story....***

***Episode one: Ernest***

My name is Ernest. I am 43. I have become your leader in a way. We are a group of refugees who have escaped from genocide in our own country. We are a mixed group; doctors, scientists, teachers, mechanics, nurses, shopkeepers and lawyers like myself. Some of us were wealthy in our old life. We had never known a days hunger or been cold or thirsty or terrified. When I think of what we took for granted then... Like I said, I was a lawyer then, I was used to standing up in court speaking up for people, and I know the law, so people kind of looked up to me, expected me to take charge. I lost my wife and my child on that terrible journey.

Why don't you introduce yourselves , who are you, what did you do in your old life and who did you leave behind ?

**(pupils could introduce their own character in a round – are they themselves ? are they elderly or a child , perhaps)**

We came here by boat. There were 1500 of us, who left in three boats. We

gave our last pennies to get away. They were able to ask whatever they wanted . We were so desperate. If we stayed behind we would have been killed, raped, tortured. After the invasion it was decreed that not one of us should be left alive. We didn't know that of course . It had to be secret to stop the rest of the world from protesting. They began by taking the children. They would be late home from school. Parents would wait and worry . They would call the police, all the details would be taken, but nothing happened.

It was the *police* who had taken the children. That's why it was so easy. Everyone knows you shouldn't talk to strangers, but the Police, well, they are different, if a policeman tells you to come with them, or to get into their car ...it took us while to work it out. Boys would disappear on their way home from football or rugby. Even Toddlers disappeared with their nannies and minders. It was when we realised that we decided to escape

The journey was a nightmare. We were packed in so tightly, Five days it was supposed to take. We were hidden below decks in the hold that was designed to take cargo. They packed in far more than they should to make more money. We were told to bring our own food. They gave us water but there was not enough and only one toilet at each end. The heat was stifling there was no window, only the opening where the stairs came down from the upper decks. You don't bother with windows when all you are carrying are containers.

We had to stay out of sight unless we were spotted. Lots of people were sea sick, the stench was appalling. People were slipping over in the vomit. My wife had it badly. She said she wished she had stayed behind to die quickly. Our baby was sick, too . She was eighteen months old . She cried with thirst. On the third night, my wife was very weak, the baby cried all the time. She was too weak to cry loudly, just a piteous, grizzling sound of sheer misery.

One of the crew came down . He beckoned to the people who were most sick and invited them to come up on deck in the fresh air . My wife and the baby were chosen. That was the last I saw of them. Over the next two nights more and more went up on deck. They did not come back. I spoke to some of the others who were still strong. After they came for others we crept up and saw what they were doing. They were gagging them, binding their hands and feet and throwing them overboard. There would be no

cargo to have to smuggle ashore.

**Diary account** - What happened in today's lesson ?

**Discussion** : Who are you ? Invite each pupil to describe who they are and who they are with. How are they feeling?

How must it feel to be a refugee?

How did It feel to be in the lesson?

### ***Episode One follow up - persecution***

#### ***Key words on the board:***

Genocide

Extermination

Persecution

Apartheid

Anti Semitism

Ghettos

propoganda

Segregation

Injustice

Boycot

Humiliated

Ask, are there any words you don't know the meaning of ?

#### ***Check pupils also understand***

Allies: depression :compensation :political pressure

You could have the keywords with their meaning set out round the room and ask the pupils to find the matching pairs .

Re cap the story reminding the group who they are - a group of refugees escaping from genocide . What is that ?

A lot of people think that genocide is something that happens at a certain point in time for example in Rwanda, the slaughter took place between April and July. Hundreds of thousands of people were slaughtered. The real problem, though is what is happening in the thirty years or so *before* that intense period of open hostility and bloodshed.

It is during that period when racial tension begins to build that countries need help to deal with the racism. The rest of the world needs to register its disapproval. Once the slaughter starts it is too late.

### ***Literacy exercise***

Put pupils in groups to read accounts of South Africa and Holocaust. Make A3 posters answering the questions. These could be with pictures or words and phrases. Each group could work on a different issue and present their findings to the rest of the class. The class could do four or more issues including Rwanda and Bosnia, or any other issues that are relevant to the class in their society.

***In the last part of the lesson, or if time is short in the following lesson, read the next part of the story.***

***Write diaries***

## **South Africa**

For much of the fifties and sixties South Africa was in the world spotlight because it brought in a system of extreme **apartheid** – separation by skin colour. Three million wealthy whites held power and political control over sixteen million blacks.

They were not allowed to mix, **segregation**. In the cities blacks had separate banks, shops, trains, schools, toilets and park benches. Anyone who broke the rules could be fined imprisoned or even flogged. It didn't matter who you were. A black professor could not speak at a dinner in a white man's club. The black trains were few and overcrowded people hanging off the outside clinging to the doors and windows, they were not allowed to get on the empty comfortable white trains.

When people said this was not fair, there should be black people in government and in the parliament so that these laws should be changed, the government argued that the blacks were not capable of government offices because they were so poorly educated. When they proved themselves properly educated they would be allowed to govern.

Their schools were so crowded and so poorly equipped that children

crammed in together could not lay both pages of their schoolbooks flat on the desk to work. The blacks were forced to live in shanty towns of huts with corrugated roofs and standpipes where they had to queue for water. Attempting to gain a secondary education was hard enough, let alone go to university to become a lawyer or doctor - or fit to take government office .

When apartheid came in officially, mixed marriages were forbidden. Husbands and wives were supposed to separate. If they didn't they and their children were all treated like blacks.

Nelson Mandela was one of those who **protested** about the **injustice**. He was imprisoned for twenty seven years for speaking out in South Africa before being released to become the first black president of South Africa.

Intense **political pressure** on South Africa had an effect on the breakdown of apartheid. They were not allowed to take part in the Olympic games because their teams were all white. Many countries refused to play them at sport and lots of countries refused to trade with them. Many people **boycotted** Barclays bank who had investments in South Africa. Everyone in Europe, adults and children were able to play their part in protesting against apartheid.

## ***The Holocaust***

The years leading up to the Second World War were very bad for the Jews. There was a terrible economic **depression** all through Europe. In Germany it was made especially bad because after the First World War ended in 1918 The **allies** made them pay massive **compensation** for the land they had taken and the suffering caused by the war which they had started. This left the Germans poor and **humiliated**.

Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933. He began to blame the Jews for the poverty in Germany as part of his secret plan to create a **Master Race**. He constructed a programme of **propaganda** , poisoning the minds of the German people against the Jews. They were put into walled up areas of the city called **ghettos** where they were slowly starved, living on just 180 calories a day. People were not allowed to use their shops. They were removed from their positions as doctors and lawyers. Those who could escaped, fortunately for us all **Sigmund Freud** the founder of

**psychoanalysis** and the reason why we have psychiatrists and counsellors escaped to England and **Albert Einstein** the great physicist escaped to America.

After a while Hitler announced that they were to go for resettlement. They were to bring cooking pots and tools and go to the train stations. They turned up eagerly thinking they were going to a better life. Families and friends hugged each other as they set off saying that they would see each other soon. The cattle trucks were airless and overcrowded. The people were crammed unable to move. When they got to their destination, it was not to a new life. Six million Jews were exterminated in the concentration camps. Of the 150,000 children in Terezin only 30 survive

## **Discussion**

What is genocide ?

When is the time to stop genocide ?

How can the rest of the world help ?

Why did Hitler get away with exterminating the Jewish people?

What was apartheid ?

How did the rest of the world help to stop apartheid?

**You could use the Blue/eyes brown eyes race exercise the following lesson. This exercise is described in “Teaching Judaism with the Theatre of Learning” and “Teaching Tolerance”**

## Episode Two: The Landing

### Moral issues to explore: Is it ever right to take life?

To use with Situations where people in history thought it was right to take life eg

- Churchill's sinking of the French fleet with 1400 French crew still on board rather than let it fall into the hands of the Nazis.
- Accounts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Account of the mother who smothered her baby rather than give away the hiding place of all her friends and family in an Indian attack, this provoked lunch time discussion among a number of pupils in our school.
- This is a good point to discuss Utilitarianism, or usefulness, put forward by John Stuart Mill in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, often described as the greatest good for the greatest number. Situations for discussion can be found in **"Teaching Human Rights"**

### The story continues

I cannot begin to describe to you how I felt when I saw what was going on. In that moment when I saw people I knew, struggling, as they were being thrown overboard, I realised what had happened to my wife and child. I could not bear to think about how they died. Their terror and their innocence. The anger, grief, despair it almost overwhelmed me. I controlled myself and crept downstairs, I needed time to think. I and the others were not sick. I guessed they would leave us alone. I was worried, though

What about the other boats? There were three ships. Was it the same on all the others?

*What should we do ?*

*The group discuss in role :The issue is about killing the captain and the crew, it would be interesting to discuss whether killing the crew is justified. Is murder the right response to murder? What about the other ships. Should they warn them ? how ? Should they wait until the killing starts or take over the other ships first ? would killing the captain and his crew be justified when they may not have committed a murder .*

*Ernest is a bit like Moses in a way. Moses was a murderer, he killed an Egyptian taskmaster for beating a Hebrew slave, he had to run away from Egypt because of it.*

*Thousands of Egyptians died so that the Hebrews could be free, all the firstborn died when the angel of death passed over, more died when the chariots chased after the Hebrews as they crossed the red sea.*

Let's see what happens ....

I was wrong. At the time I did not realise that I had been seen. They knew I had found out what they were doing. I was taken and blindfolded and shoved down some stairs. It was a black hole, deep in the hull of the ship. It was bitterly cold, the walls were running with water. I could smell the rust. I shivered. I did not know where I was and then I remembered. I groped in the pocket of my cargoes and found my phone. The battery was low . The signal was faint. I sent a text to a friend on one of the other ships. I told him to take control while they could. I turned the phone off. I missed the light. It was a spark of comfort in the dark. The metal hull creaked. Water dripped. I shivered in the icy, cold depths. Time passed.

The hatch opened, a black shape peered down. It called my name. When I clambered back up on deck it was night. I could see the black shape of the other two boats through the mist. Beyond them was the dim outline of the coast.

*Ask the class, in role, what have they done ? how are they feeling ?*

We had to get ready to land. Searchlights played out to sea from the shore, sweeping back and forth, watching for us, waiting to catch us and

send us back, back to certain death. We had to make it to shore undetected.

*What do the group think we should do ?*

I had a plan. We have to get everyone to shore in the lifeboats , but we cannot afford to be seen rowing them. We will be shot. If we get everyone to lie down and cover them with tarpaulins, they will look like fishing boats moored on the sea. Those of us who are strong enough will have to jump in after the boats and swim to the shore towing the boats with the elderly and the children in . Who will volunteer to help drag them to shore with me?

*Who will be in the boat and who will be swimming ? How are you feeling ? What do you think might happen?*

I ordered everyone into the lifeboats. We pulled the tarpaulins over everyone, leaving just enough so they could breathe, we lowered the boats with winches onto the sea. Once they were floating we jumped in after them. We swam round to the front of the boats and took hold of the mooring ropes. Several of us holding on every metre or so and we began to swim. It was hard. We were exhausted. It was bitterly cold. Every time the searchlight came near we took a breath and went under the water for a count of five. We moved very slowly toward the shore. Every twenty minutes we stopped and trod water, trying to save our energy. Tom was next to me. I could hear his asthma was bad, he was wheezing badly. I shouted to him to get into the boat . He shook his head. He looked at me for a moment a curious look in his eyes.

A wave came and knocked me side ways. I almost lost my grip on the rope, as I recovered I saw the place next to me on the line was empty. Tom was gone.

*What had he decided to do and why ?*

I shook my head and spat out the water choking my lungs . The search light swept over my head. I didn't duck in time. Machine gun fire broke out all around us. The children under the tarpaulins screamed.

Within moments the beach was full of armed guards. They stopped firing. We had no choice but to go forward towards the barrels of their guns .

Why weren't they firing ?....and then it dawned on me, they were *waiting* for us..... it was a trap.

So this is why I had been kept alive. Those of us who were fit and healthy were *expected*. The Captain had been paid twice, once by us and once by these men who were now running into the surf to help us drag the boats to shore while others held the machine guns on us. But what shore was it ? Where had we been brought ? Why were we here?

***Plenary : What do the group think is going on ? How do the class feel?***

***Write diary accounts describing your experience from the point of view of your character. Describe your feelings.***

***What do you think is going to happen to you ?***

### **Episode Three –the Detention centre**

**(could be used with Tranquility Bay, the detention centre in Jamaica where rich Americans send their miscreant children for up to three years re training or use the idea of teenage brat camps – see “Teaching Tolerance” and “Teaching Human Rights” pub SfE )**

*This episode focusses on the camp. The refugees are stripped of everything, their relationships with each other even. Their last few possessions are taken away, their clothes are symbols of who they were, their new ones are all the same, changed every day so they are clean , but their individuality is gone. How does that feel ? do we need it - relate possibly to Buddhism. Their living conditions have only the bare minimum for survival. What should we give to refugees? What would the children expect if this were they ?relate to the difference in benefits that the refugees receive here. It would be helpful to invite children to complete their diaries at this point, in role -what would they expect on arriving in a foreign country - would they expect to be paid?*

*Ernest questions the commander, as he does so, he is asking his questions on behalf of humanity, who are we ? how do we get our identity?, do we have a right to it ?Do we have any rights at all ?*

*With able groups the opportunity for exploration and discussion are boundless with other groups moving straight into Tranquility Bay would prove fruitful.*

## **Detention**

There was chaos all around us. The searchlights had stopped. All the lights were trained on us. The soldiers in their black uniforms ran into the surf dragging the boats ashore. The children were sobbing, terrified by the shooting and the horrors they could only imagine under their tarpaulins. We staggered up the beach, unable to run away from the row of guards who were lined up at the back of the beach, their guns trained on our every move.

I bent over, hands on knees, panting to catch my breath, taking the chance to look around. There was no escape, besides how could I leave the others?

As I straightened, I saw the barbed wire over the top of the sand dune. I guessed what it was for, following it along I saw the tower, the guard. It was our prison, but why? Why had we been brought here?

We unwrapped the tarpaulins and helped the children out of the boats, they were shivering and frightened, the ones without parents clinging to each other, or any adults they could find.

Why hadn't they been thrown overboard, I wondered, what use would children be?

We were forced into a line and marched up the beach. My wet clothes clung heavily to me. I had lost a shoe in the water, the stones hurt my feet, the wind bit sharply into my skin, stinging my face and arms.

What had I brought them to?

At the camp we were separated into four groups, young and old, male and female. Each was marched away.

There were low wooden cabins, where the wind whistled through the gaps in the planks. The only light was from the searchlights playing back and forth across the camp and washing through cracks. The beds were shelves on hinges, bolted to the wall, three high. There was a single blanket. The pillows and mattress were covered in thick plastic, there were no sheets. There was a bucket at each end of the hut and a tap for cold water. I drank thirstily, my system full of the salty water I had swallowed.

Exhausted, I took one of the highest beds, leaving the lower ones for the older ones. Despite it all, I felt grateful as I sank into sleep on a bed for the first time since we had left our homeland.

At dawn we were woken. We were marched to showers, icy cold. My now dry clothes were taken away. I did not see them again. As I stood there, naked, I realised that now I owned nothing and had nothing left from my old life. The photograph in my wallet ... I called out and gestured to the guards that there was something in my pocket. There was a man in a peaked cap sitting at a desk, smoking. He gestured for the trousers to be bought and the pockets searched. When my wallet was produced he spread out the contents. He picked up the photograph of my wife and daughter. I saw his face change for just a moment, a fleeting expression, before he swept my things aside and said something to the guard. They were taken away.

"Hey", I shouted, " they are mine, at least let me have the photograph!"

They ignored me, it was as though I had not spoken.

I dressed in the clothes they brought. Cotton drawstring trousers and a top and slip on canvas shoes – too loose to run in.... and then they shaved my head.

I stood and looked in the mirror, only my own eyes looked back, they could not take my eyes.

The canteen was huge, guards lined the walls but we were allowed to mix freely. We greeted each other with relief. Suddenly, there was a hush.

The commander entered the room. Silence fell. He spoke in French. He welcomed us to Domain One .

"In return for the safety and protection we shall give you here, you are to be put to work, men women and children. This is important work. If you prove yourself worthy, your work will be matched to the skills you used in the country from which you fled".

I put up my hand. He looked at me . He did not speak. I stood up. I told myself I was in court. I refused to be intimidated.

“I have some questions - What country is this - and are we to become citizens or its slaves? Are we to be paid for this work? And what rights do we have ? You have taken our clothes and whatever possessions we still have. You have stripped us of our dignity and taken away our identity. We came here as refugees looking for Asylum, what have we found ?”

He looked at me for a long moment.

“Your lives; and what makes you think you are entitled to those ? you have arrived on our shores as uninvited guests, you should expect nothing, except what we choose to give you . We owe you nothing .

Here you will stay alive, There you would not. In return we *must* have your obedience, absolute un questioning obedience. We *will* have it”

And so the first day begun.

*Debrief/Plenary: What rights does a refugee have ? What should they have ? Where do rights come from ? Why are they important ?Are there some people who shouldn't have them?*

## **Episode Four :Sophia**

**Starter;** *In episode two we talked about whether it was ever right to take another person's life. We looked at a variety of situations .We looked at the woman who killed her baby to save the life of the others hiding from the Indians. We learned about Utilitarianism - the greatest good for the greatest number .There are other factors at play when we make moral decisions. Look at this situation*

Two people are trapped inside a burning building the fire is raging. The two people are trapped inside two adjoining rooms .They have both passed out on the floor from the smoke, they will have died from lack of oxygen, soon, if the roof does not cave in soon. One of the people is a great scientist who has just discovered a cure for cancer. The building is the conference room where they were to announce their discovery to the world. Their paper is in their briefcase at their feet. It is the only copy. The scientist and the paper are about to go up in flames. The other person is your father - which one should you save ?

*Discuss with the class. The ethical issues involved can be discussed after the story which gives the class a similar dilemma*

### ***Sophia***

Suddenly a hooter blew, loud and screeching. It was impossible to talk over it, impossible even to think. Everyone got up quickly and put their breakfast dishes into the waste disposal unit. People hadn't finished and were stuffing food into their mouths as they walked quickly outside. I followed with the others from our boat. Guards with guns stood to the side watching in case any one tried to make a run for it.

All along the side of the road leading to the entrance of the camp were coaches, twelve of them, fifty seats on each. We were herded on to them

quickly. The hooter was still going, creating a sense of urgency and a desire to move quickly to get away from the sound

I got on to the coach with everyone else. I had no idea where we would be going. I asked one of the guards but he did not respond. He did not seem to have heard. He stared straight ahead as though I had not spoken. The doors swished shut and we moved off in convoy down through the country lanes and back towards the sea. We came to the port with its massive docks.

This was the area we had avoided so that we could land undetected.

Some of the people who arrived before us had come by road, travelling underground through the tunnel that had been dug under the sea fifty years before, joining two vast continents. I could see the entrance and the huge container trains that took the lorries and buses cars and foot passengers. The coach swung past and off behind the docks. It climbed slowly up the hill, the engine strained and roared with effort , the driver changed down and then down again. The coach paused between gears, as though it would suddenly lose its grip on the road and slide backward. We made it to the top and the coach swung to the left and there it was, spread out across the plain in front of us. So this is what they had wanted us for ...

*What do the class think it is ?*

It was a factory . It was huge. Far too big to be run, I guess, by local workers alone. There were wearing orange overalls so that it was easy to distinguish them from us, the slaves, as I considered us to be “At least you are alive” I told myself, echoing the voice of the commander as we parked and got off the coach.

*How would you feel if this were you ?*

We were taken into a black shed where orange robed workers sat in long rows at desks and signed us in one by one . In French we were assigned our jobs. Mostly cleaning and low level maintenance. My job was to have a small vacuum cleaner strapped to my back and to clean small crevices under the machinery, around the tops of the instrument panels. I worked alone in rooms of orange robed workers who ignored me.

Day after day I worked, it was mind numbingly dull but my mind was not numb - I was determined to escape.

It was in the early morning as we queued to get in the coach that I thought I saw her. It was so fleeting I thought I had imagined it.

*Who had he seen ? why do you think that ?do you think it was his imagination?*

Sophia , my wife - a second and we were hustled on to the coach.

All day I had images of her and our daughter. I wondered if it was the grief. I could not get them out of my mind.

That night I crept out of the hut . There were a hundred huts like mine, all numbered. I was determined to search them all. It took me a month of creeping out, looking through windows, waiting for the searchlight to shine through ,searching the sleeping faces, going back the next night to check those who I couldn't see. Every day getting more and more tired from the lack of sleep All the time, telling myself I was mad, I was imagining that I saw her..

And then I did.

Nothing could have prepared me for that morning .There she was sitting beside the commandant at breakfast. She stared into space, looking neither to the left or right. His eyes met mine, his face was expressionless, but the eyes were triumphant, he knew. He had done this deliberately. He was taunting me, showing his power. I could not take my eyes off her, why didn't she look at me ? surely she must recognise me ?

One of the others spoke my name. I came out of my shock and saw that he had recognised her too, he bent over his food. "Do nothing, Ernest. They are playing with you". "Why doesn't she look at me ?".

I gasped, as I spooned food into my mouth. We were always hungry and the hooter would go soon.

*Why do you think she doesn't look at him ?*

"I don't think she can see you, Ernest" he said. "The way she stares into the

distance. I think she is blind.”  
What ?!

“I don’t know how, or why, she is even alive” he whispered “perhaps it was a blow to the head when she went overboard, perhaps it was shock”.

“What about our daughter?” I said  
“Brace yourself, Ernest, perhaps she was not useful”.

*What do you think has happened to the daughter ?*

Now I knew why I had not found her in the huts. She was kept in the commandant’s quarters.

I was now more determined than ever to escape. But not before I had talked to my wife, found out about our child and arranged to take her with us.

The hooter sounded and she stood up.....

She was pregnant.

She put out her hand feeling the empty space in front of her. The commandant took her arm and put it through his. Pregnant and blind. I felt my fists clench, as my friend pinioned my arms ....  
“Not now, Ernest. It is exactly what he wants !”

In the lunch break I talked about my plan to escape. “How are you going to take her with you ? She will be back at the camp, she will hold everyone up. She will be so near her time and she cannot see”.

*Is Ernest going to ruin the chances of the rest of us to escape ? What do you think he should do?*

*In our starter we faced a similar choice . Most people would choose to save their father, despite the fact that a Utilitarian would say that the scientist should be saved. The ethical principle at stake here is one of duty and also love. It would not be wrong to save your father, for two reasons. One because it is our duty to save our family, as well as a natural instinct, but also because if we do not and we deny the feelings of love that are so*

*natural and overwhelming to us then we would also be denying our humanity.*

*Does that make the woman who killed her baby wrong ?*

*No, because her instinct for survival was strong. They would all have died if she had not done this. The baby would die either way.*

### ***Episode Five ;Verity***

*Note on the names for the teacher only at this point; Ernest is a play on words .He is an Earnest man, hardworking and sincere and never gives up. Sophia means wisdom. In the Greek world she is inspiration. In Judaism she is wisdom an almost female aspect of the Torah, the inspiration for the prophets . Verity means truth. These symbolic meanings will become important later in the story when, after the escape, it will take on a supernatural science fiction flavour as it becomes a vehicle to explore the existence of God and the nature of religious experience.*

***In this episode Ernest ceases to be the storyteller. The narrator must come in to be able to tell us what is happening when Ernest is not there***

Within minutes Ernest found himself hurried into the queue to get on the bus ready for the journey to the factory. He sat in a stunned silence . Everyone had seen her . They all whispered among themselves, wondering how Ernest might be feeling, wondering about Verity his little daughter.

In the half hour it took to get to the factory Ernest did not move or speak. By the time the bus swung through the factory gates he had a plan.

He leaned forward towards the man who sat in front of him. He spoke to the floor . To any onlookers he appeared to be staring at the floor, his arms resting on his knees, his fingers laced together. “George”, he said quietly, almost imperceptibly. “In the old world you drove a train right ?” George pretended not to hear. He coughed, hoping that Ernest would take that as the “yes” it was meant to be.

George looked out of the window in pointed indifference. Every fibre of his being filled with an electric charge. George had sat next to Ernest at breakfast. It was George who had held Ernest back when he recognised Sophia. He looked at Ernest’s reflection in the window. Facing away from the guards, he spoke. “What are you thinking?.”

The bus lurched to a halt and everyone stood. Ernest stumbled against George, appearing to miss his footing, “escape” he muttered into George’s ear as he fell.

At lunch time George left a space on the bench beside him. Ernest slipped into it and bent over his bowl of soup. Both men hung their heads, apparently spooning food. Every spoon remained full of soup as the starving men produced their plan, pretending to put food in their mouths, appearing to be too busy eating to talk.

“Each person must tell six others” said Ernest . “I haven’t decided when yet. I must work out how to rescue Sophia – and Verity if she is still alive”.

“They will hold us up!” George said, finally taking some soup and following it with a large piece of bread. You risk everyone’s life “.

“Without them I do not care if I live or die. It is only the thought of freedom with those I care about that would make me risk this at all “.

The hooter sounded, both men rose, tipping the bowl of soup into their mouths and stuffing the bread into their pockets.

That night Ernest slept . Now he knew where she was, he could afford a single night of rest .

The next morning his head felt full of cotton wool where he had slept so deeply. She was not at breakfast, he was not surprised ,the commander had had his fun. But the commander was there .That meant Sophia was alone.

Ernest left the table in a great hurry. He indicated that he needed the bathroom urgently. He left the building and ran to the commander's enclosure . Everyone was at breakfast, apart from the guards on the towers. He slipped through the gate and stopped .....

She was crossing the lawn, holding a small child, taller than he remembered. His daughter was walking confidently. Within a moment he was beside his wife. She jumped at his step. "Sophia" he said.

For a moment her face was transfigured by joy.

"I am so sorry" she said. Your voice, reminded me of someone . "Dada!" squealed Verity clutching his leg.

"It *is* you !" gasped Sophia.

"We must not be seen" gabbled Ernest, "Five days from now, after lights out, be ready to leave. I will come for you. Say nothing to anyone, just be ready in this garden.

"What is going to happen?"

"Just be ready" he said and was gone.

Sophia picked up her daughter and buried her face in her hair to hide her tears of joy. She prayed that Verity did not understand her father's words. She was too young to understand that some things must be kept a secret . Verity began to cry "Dada, want dada"

And so the commander found them. Sophia was spooning porridge into

her daughter, singing to distract her. He bent to kiss Sophia,

“Not my daddy, go way!” shouted Verity, hitting him with her spoon. Porridge spilled down his uniform. He slapped the child’s face. She screamed and he dragged her from the room. Unable to see, Sophia screamed also. The room was empty. She collapsed sobbing to the floor.

### ***Issues that could come from this***

*What is it like to be blind ?*

*Use with exercises on blind awareness and trust*

*Look at the work of sight savers*

*Should smacking be banned?*

*Should the cane be brought back to schools?*

*What is it like to be the victim of domestic violence?*

*Explore issues of crime and punishment*

*Should capital punishment be reinstated?*

### ***Episode Six: Exodus***

*(use with work on heroism – people who risked everything to save others. Father Damian who worked with Lepers knowing that he would eventually contract the disease himself. Gandhi. Martin Luther King.*

“We need drivers, there are a hundred and fifty of us left . I need three to drive the buses” “

Are you mad? “ said George, incredulously,” How are you going to drive off in the buses?”

” Three o clock in the morning, the world is very still then. We have a couple of hours before dawn, it is very cold. The guards will be at their lowest ebb, if we are lucky some of them will be asleep”.

“We will get out under the wire. There is a place I have been working on at the back of one of the huts, one by one we slide behind the hut. The searchlights can’t see us there, between the wall and the wire, half way along. Every night I have worked on a hole . The wire is electrocuted, the hole is deep enough to get under, now, without touching it, even for Sophia, she cannot bend easily now. Once we are out we must get over the hedge on the other side of the road and crawl on our hands and knees along the edge of the field until we are away from the arc of the searchlights.

After that we run! “.

Ernest continued “The buses are garaged a mile and a half away. They bring them up for us each morning, didn’t you realise that ? Once we are on the buses we go down to the docks, past the factory, to the train”.

“We can’t just drive up and catch a train!. We have no hair and bright orange suits, are you insane ?!” We’ll be stopped.

“ No, we won’t,” said Ernest, his eyes shining with delight at the deliciousness of his plan “because as we approach the station, the factory will go up in flames. They will too busy with that to notice us !”

George’s mouth fell open. Ernest shook his head, brushing away his questions. “I have no time to explain the details. I have planned for the fire to start in the huge paper silos outside, you know, where they put all the computer printouts waiting for recycling. You must have noticed them, we drive past them every morning. There must be several tons of paper, there. It will go up like tinder. No one is going to pay attention to three coaches arriving for the train”.

“But what about the other passengers, where will we get tickets and seats?”

“The train is at the platform for twenty minutes, that’s all the time we have. It has been off for cleaning, the timetable is suspended at that time. Who travels at three in the morning ?

“Okay, so where’s the driver ? “

George’s face changed ” No ,you can’t mean ... I haven’t done that for years. I have been retired for such a long time I cant understand these modern things”

“George, we have moved past shovelling coal into a furnace. You drove electric bullet trains, yes ? Then this is going to be no different. The instruments will be in different places with different language , just find the start button and the accelerator !” .

“The factory is so near the station, believe me everyone will be preoccupied with the fire. Anyway if it doesn’t work - what have we got to lose ?”

### ***Episode Seven: The Train***

Sophia was afraid to sleep. She had no means of knowing the time . Ernest was to come for her shortly before three . When she heard his footstep, she would slip out of bed and into Verity’s room . She prayed the child would not wake. She would have to travel in her dressing gown and with the child bundled in a blanket . Ernest would have to guide her every step. She wondered if she would be able to tie up the skirt of her night gown. What about shoes ? She thought over what she had to walk and run in. Near the door she had left her boots .She hoped that the servants had not tidied them away.

Two tears rolled from her sightless eyes.

“Why am I so bad at being blind ?” she thought, stifling a sob, terrified of waking the man who snored beside her. “I fall into things and trip over all the time . I have had no time to get used to it and no one to help me learn how to live a life where I cannot see.”

She strained her ears for the sound of her husband’s step.

It came.

With beating heart she slipped from the warm bed and into her dressing gown. She lifted her sleeping child, wrapping her in her quilt. “Shh” she whispered as the child stirred “love mummy.” Thinking she was being

carried back to her mother's bed to sleep with her, a thing Sophia did when the commander was on duty, desperate for any contact with her child she could have, while the jealous man was away, the child continued to sleep.

She slipped into the hallway and felt for the boots. She could not find them, she scrambled frantically. A cane fell sideways in the stand, she caught it with her free hand. "Sophia!" hissed Ernest. She struggled to her feet, stepping on the hem of her long night gown struggling not to fall with the child in her arms. She felt for the latch and slipped out into the cold air.

"Where are your shoes?" whispered Ernest, looking at her bare feet. "These will have to do," said Sophia - "quickly!"

Ernest led her across the yard. The stones cut her feet. In her anxiety, she barely felt the pain.

"This is the hut," he whispered, "Give me the child. I will go first, hold on to my jacket, when we get to the hole, do exactly as I tell you. I will pass Verity to George, he is waiting for us. She knows him. Then you must slide under, on your side, you must not touch the wire."

Verity stirred in her father's arms, barely awake, she smelled the familiar smell "Dada!" she gasped.

"This is a game" he whispered "we must be very quiet. "

"Go away from bad man?" she asked. Ernest kissed the top of her head.

"Yes," He said "Here we go! Don't move, Verity, be completely still." He passed her under the wire, his heart was in his mouth if she flailed her arms or legs about she would die, and the alarm she would trigger would mean death for them all.

With Verity safely in George's arms and her thick quilt back round her again, he guided his wife to the correct position and told her to relax. The others would pull her through. He prayed he had estimated the size his pregnant wife would need correctly. She put her arms above her head and Ernest fed them under the wire, trying not to panic and rush in his anxiety. As she slid through, he saw her feet.

"Jesus!" He muttered through clenched teeth.

He led his family silently along the edge of the field. Sophia pulled the back

of her clothes through to the front and gripped them in her teeth. She followed her husband as he crawled ahead, one arm wrapped around his child. Verity's eyes were wide open , staring, hyper alert. It was as though she knew what was happening and that her silence was vital to their safety.

At the edge of the field Ernest stood up and lifted his wife to her feet . He longed to hold her . There was no time. "Come on" he said, and took her hand, leading her rapidly across the road. There were many others on the road, all making their way to the Garage where six large fifty seater coaches were housed . They would need three.

Some took children by the hand, older ones leading the younger ones, all with the same anxious staring eyes , terrified that they would be caught, adrenalin surging through their veins.

George and Ernest slid the great heavy doors back . Nothing was locked, who would steal a coach? Not exactly easy to hide!

The engines started up. One of them would not turn.

Ernest climbed down and told the driver to try another one. This was not a delay they could afford. Transferring fifty people, young and old was difficult to manage quickly and quietly.

The first coach drove out ahead and paused as they went past the factory. Ernest ran the short distance to the edge of the fence and climbed rapidly to the top . He took off his jacket and pulled off the cotton top . He struck a match from the box he had stolen and threw the precious clothing into the top of the silo. The damp paper began to smoulder. Ernest cursed the rain that had fallen earlier, praying that the heat would reach the dryer paper under cover. He had no time to wait and see . He dashed back to the waiting coach, just as the other two swung round the bend behind and the convoy set off towards the train

.... and freedom.

The station was almost deserted there was no one on the concourse or beside the ticket office and the departure board. Ernest led the band of people in their distinctive orange clothing down the steps, under the ground. He led them along the platform to the waiting train. It was cold.

Wind whistled out from the waiting tunnel. A voice shouted from the top of the stairs. They had been seen.

It was an angry voice . Ernest's heart stood still . The man began to call to others .

Suddenly , the plan worked.

There was an explosion. The factory was going up!

Ernest could see the red glow filling the sky. The man was gone, more important things on his mind .

Ernest hurried his charges aboard. He climbed into the front with George, seating Sophia behind him with Verity on her lap. George began frantically scanning the instruments, trying to recognise from the gauges what each did.

"Dada, go now" Verity commanded softly and the train slid forward.

"That's it" said George, as the green light glowed on the dash. "Where is the accelerator?" said Ernest "we haven't much time. They will follow us as soon as they have the fire under control".

"That will never be!" whispered Sophia, so quietly that only Verity heard .She nodded wisely as only a two year old can .

"Mamma safe" she said reaching up, tenderly, to stroke her mother's face

The train accelerated rapidly. George experimented with the buttons, identifying the speedometer. Deep under the ground they travelled.

"How far is it ? said George .

"I don't know" said Ernest, but I don't think it can be far enough. Faster they went, 100, 120, 150 kilometers an hour.

"That's it!" said George "Fast as she can go ! there's no reserve of power left . You must know how far it is", he said not taking his eyes off the rail ahead in the shining tunnel ablaze with lights . All along great fans turned, pumping air from one end of the tunnel into the other as they travelled deeper into the earth. "Where are we going?"

“I don’t know” said Ernest .

“Refugees for ever” said George “When will this nightmare end ?”

It was then that the lights went out .

Everyone gasped, - except Sophia .

“What has happened ?” she said “We are slowing down” aware before anyone else of things not seen, she was the first to notice. “What? said George “I can’t see the dials, are you sure?”

“The rythmn is changing” she said “and the sound,.... can’t you feel it ,hear it ....the train is losing momentum.”

“Yes” said George you are right .That must mean the power has gone. There is no electricity. The lights going out - do you think it is a power cut and the whole system has gone down?”

“Oh my God said Sophia to herself . Please, God, may I be wrong. I must not say any thing” she thought,” not until I am sure .Oh Ernest what have you done ? Now we are all blind.”

It took twenty minutes to stop, but stop it did with a final deafening screech of the wheels against the rails.... And then it began to slide backwards. The children began to scream, already terrified by the inky blackness. It was a darkness more total than anything any of them had ever experienced - except Sophia. She stood up, confident at last .

“Be quiet. I need to think.” Suddenly the train stopped again. There was silence .Everyone waited. Sophia could hear them all breathing, panting with fear .

”It is the darkness” she thought. “I remember how it felt when morning came that first day - morning came for everyone except me .the black empty darkness I was so frightened “.

“Listen!” she called loudly . It was an authority Ernest had never heard before in his wife’s voice .

“It is all right. I know where we are. We had just begun the climb to the surface when the train stopped . With no more power it rolled back a little until it came to rest, naturally, it will not move now. You are safe.”

“Where are we ?” called a voice, others joined in from the darkness.

“The point where the track begins to climb towards the surface is seven miles from the end of the tunnel. We must walk.”

But what has happened ?

“I don’t know” she said .

Only Ernest noticed the catch in her voice. “What is she not telling us?” he thought.

“Get them off, Ernest” she said “They are afraid because they cannot see” she said .”How dark is it?” she asked.

“Completely .” he replied” We can see nothing at all .”

“Then you must follow me” she said “follow my voice!” she called . “If you all talk quietly, encouraging each other, no one will get lost, you will drive the fear away. We must get down and walk along the track. Be careful not to trip, you will get used to the spaces between the sleepers .”

“ The doors won’t open” said Ernest.

“There should be safety hammers” said Sophia, feeling her way to the corner of the cabin “Here you are” she said, holding out the hammer . Ernest felt his way to the side of the train. He called out to everyone to stand out of his way . He could see nothing . The window smashed. It was too high, he tried again. He wrapped his jacket round his arm. With no cotton top, the cold bit into his flesh. This time he reached the catch on the outside of the train and released the door . He climbed down and Sophia came next with Verity. The child was calm. Ernest could hear her breathing normally. One by one, they helped everyone down, directing each person to step back a step as the next one came down and to hold on to the person in front forming a human chain for comfort and safety. Ernest counted them all. Finally he called down the train.

“There are no fans, how will we breathe ?” wailed the voice of an elderly lady.

Sophia called out so that everyone could hear “You are breathing the air that comes in from the entrance. It will be enough. Every step we take brings us nearer to the air and the light. Now we must walk. Be brave , remember every step takes us nearer to the light.”

## ***Episode Eight - The Light***

On and on they walked, slowly, through the total darkness, inky blackness with no light at all.

“Will another train come and hit us ?” said a child, her high voice, clear in the silent tunnel.

“No” said Sophia, bluntly. Quickly she added “Make sure you are holding on to the clothes of the person in front . Every sixth person must check that the five behind are still there and do not fall behind.”

“But suppose they fix the power cut?” said another “if a train comes the other way we will be mown down”.

“They will come to find us !”wailed the little girl, again “I’m scared, I don’t want to go back there”.

“There will be no trains” said Sophia “Walk!”

The authority in her voice silenced them. Ernest was anxious. What did she know ? what was it that she was not saying ?

He followed behind Sophia who strode confidently through a world that had not changed for her.

He followed the sound of her footsteps, holding Verity on his back. She was uncommonly serious, not as he would expect a two year old to be.

“Not go back to the bad man” She whispered, “not go back”

So many things whirled through Ernest’s mind as he walked on and on through the darkness. What had happened to these two he loved more than all the world. What had they endured ?

“Wait” called Sophia, panting from the effort of walking so far in the last months of her pregnancy. “Let me catch my breath, I think it is getting steeper. We should all take a break. Everyone sit on the ground exactly where you are” .

Ernest put his arm around his wife. He felt the dressing gown, she was shivering with the cold. He suddenly remembered her bare feet. "Sophia !"

"Ernest, I am alright. Cut feet are a small price to pay for freedom. He felt the tension in her voice . Why was she not relieved "

"How did you know how far we had to go he asked ? Do you know where it is that we are headed".

"Yes" was all she said.

"Sophia you *must* tell me what you know."

Sophia paused. It was difficult to talk when she could not see his face and gauge his reaction to her words.

"I was his prize , Ernest you must understand that .That is why I was chosen. I used to be so proud of my beauty .It is ironic isn't it . Because of it, I became his plaything, his trophy and now I can no longer see my face myself!

He is a very vain man, Ernest, very proud. There would be meetings in a large room in his compound. Men would come . Important men .

"Who were they?" Ernest asked .

"I don't know, but I could tell from the way he spoke to them that they were very important. He was deferential to them. Very respectful. It was not his usual way of speaking!

When they came I he would buy me a new gown and I would always have to be there beside him. There was jewellery, diamonds I believe. His housekeeper would select it all and describe to me what I was wearing. She would do my hair. I had to wear it up to show off the earrings . They were so heavy they hurt my ears. Here, put out your hand. She felt for it in the darkness.

"You bought them with you ?!"

“Yes, in my dressing gown pocket. I thought we might need some money .The housekeeper said they were set in gold and they are certainly heavy enough to be real”.

“The meetings always started with a banquet. After the food they talked. I listened. They all believed that their secrets were safe with me. A blind slave, who had no means of escape . I don't suppose it ever crossed their minds that I was educated, a mere woman and that I could understand every word they said.”

“What language did they speak ?”

“French. I do not understand their own language. When people got together from several areas they spoke French as their common language”.

“Ah, said Ernest so that is why he spoke to us in French that first morning. He assumed that some of us at least would know what he was saying”.

“Does that mean you know where we are ?”

“Yes” said Sophia .”They talked a lot about the train . They are very proud of this tunnel. Sometimes the meetings would be on the other side. I travelled on it once . That is why I knew how long it was. Because I cannot see I was very aware of how it felt. I remembered how it went down gradually and then began to go up towards the surface. I remember him saying “We are nearly there now. We are seven miles from the station”.

“I think we should walk on, Ernest . It must be day on the other side by now. Tell me when you see the light”.

Ernest called the line to its feet. Sophia called out “We are over half way. It will be dawn on the other side. Soon we will see the light.”

On they walked. It was Verity who saw it first.  
“Spot !” she said, pointing.

Ernest stared ahead.

“Wait!” he called out. Everyone stopped. As his eyes adjusted he became aware that there was something other than total darkness and in its centre was a tiny pin point of light, three miles along the track.

He called the news back to the others and there was ripple of excitement .  
At every step it grew lighter and lighter

As they drew nearer Ernest became puzzled.

“Something is wrong, Sophia” he whispered.

“Oh”, she said ,freezing, stopping so suddenly that Ernest bumped into her. “What is it ?” she said sharply.

“I can’t see anything outside the tunnel, just a pink light” he answered.

“Pink ?”

“Yes”, said Ernest, hesitantly, “pink and shifting orange, it keeps changing”

The others began to notice, too.

“Why is the sky red?” said the little girl, taking Ernest’s hand in the dawn - like light filtering into the tunnel.

“How far do you think we are inside the tunnel? Sophia asked.

“A mile, I would say,” said George the expert, stepping forward to join them at the front of the waiting column, now visible in the growing light.  
Something’s not right. Is there a fire ahead ?”

“No” said Sophia, “If there were, there would be no air for us to breathe.  
Ernest I think we should wait .Tell everyone to sit down and try to get some sleep, in a few hours we can leave”

“Why ? , I don’t understand What do I say to them ?”

“I don’t know” said Sophia , thinking quickly. Tell them that we cannot go out into the light yet, not until it is safe. George you must be in charge. Ernest and I will go to the mouth of the tunnel .”

“Me come!” Verity said urgently from her father’s back.

“George will you look after her ?” asked Ernest moving his arms to release his child who was tied to his back with her quilt.

“No!” said Sophia sharply, as the old man lifted his own arms to take the child, a warm smile on his face. “We will never be separated again, Ernest. What ever happens to one of us will happen to the three of us ..” she looked down at her swollen belly ,” ....four”.

“Tell me exactly what you can see” said Sophia as they made their way forward. “Be my eyes, tell me everything.”

Slowly and cautiously they moved forward toward the shifting light .

“It is changing again” said Ernest, the colour is going. “Now it is like grey smoke. Oh !”

The entrance to the tunnel was now clearly visible, the size of the circle of light now so large it dominated what they could see ahead.

“What is it?!” she demanded as those behind them also gasped.

“Blackness, again ...wait....the light again. It was dark just for a moment. Sophia what is happening ?”

“I don’t know, Ernest. Take me to the edge of the tunnel. Tell me what you see” .

As they climbed the last few feet towards the entrance, all Ernest could see was white light, pure, clear, white light. There seemed to be nothing beyond . No station, no noise no people.

Every step he described it to Sophia who listened in anxious silence .

Suddenly he stopped . "What is that smell?

"That smell." he said "It's like smoke, but nothing I have ever smelled before, strange, bitter acidic."

"I know." she whispered . "I smell it, too"

Ernest climbed out into the open, holding on to the rim of the tunnel. He helped Sophia out." Tell me Ernest" she said, coughing struggling to breathe in the polluted atmosphere. "What can you see?"

Ernest did not speak. Too stunned to respond.

"Ernest!" she said, sharply.

"What is it, ?" her fingers dug into his hand.

Verity, behind him, froze. He felt the tension in her little body.

"Ash , Ash. Everywhere there is a thick layer of black grey ash over everything . I don't understand. Where are the people, the buildings.?"

There was a loud creak from above. Verity reacted first, grabbing her fathers' hair , pulling him back into the present. Ernest stepped back with his family, just in time as a charred beam from the roof of the station crashed in front of the tunnel. The air was filled with choking ash, stirred up by the sudden movement. All three of them coughed and spluttered as they hurried back into the mouth of the tunnel.

Sophia let out an agonised wail. She slid down the side of the tunnel resting on her haunches and put her head in her hands. The sound that came from her was like an animal. A long single note .Nooooooooo..... She reached for his hand. Get back further." She said " it is not safe !" "Come, get back, away from the light. It will blind you, she stumbled in her frantic attempts to get back into the safety of the tunnel " come, come and I will tell you !"

She sat on the floor, Ernest sat beside her. Verity silent on his lap. Sophia was wailing, a single note , rising and falling, a sound he had never heard before, a single keening sound of deep grief. She was rocking backwards

and forwards

“Sophia” said Ernest. “Tell me”

She took a gulp of air and opened her eyes

“What have we done ? “she said “what have we done?”

“I don’t understand”

“The fire you set at the factory .....

“Yes, what about it “

“ I did not know you were going to do that, Ernest, you didn’t tell me the details of the plan and I did not think to ask. All I could think of is that this was a chance to be free. I never thought t ask you *how* you would accomplish this miracle!”

“You didn’t need to know, besides there was no time.”

“Perhaps it was just meant to be - but why us, just us? Why are we alive and no one else. All those people , what have they done .They are innocent .Why have they gone, along with all those evil men who planned this...”

“Sophia, you are gabbling what has happened, what about the fire ?”

“The factory,” she said, gulping through her tears .”What was it for ?, did you know ? Did you ever ask?”

“No,” said Ernest. “Some manufacturing plant .It seemed like a power plant, electricity , oil refinery, something like that.”

“It *was* a power plant, Ernest, a *nuclear* power plant.”

“But that going up in flames is not going to cause effects here. We are hundreds of miles away.”

No, but something dreadful was going on there, something that no one

was meant to know about. The land mass in domain one was under threat from terrorists. The government believed that the terrorists had nuclear weapons that they had built in secret and so the government were making a nuclear bomb, a neutron bomb, to use in retaliation.”

“But they are illegal! They have been banned all over the planet for a hundred years or so!” .

“Exactly! why do you think they needed refugees who could not speak their language to work there ?! If the general population *knew* what was going on there would be an outcry. The risk from an *accident* at the factory is bad enough for the people who live within 500 miles of the factory. Never mind if the bomb was accidentally detonated!

“Oh my god” said Ernest - the fire !

“It triggered the bomb” said Sophia. “It must have been nearer completion than I thought or at least at a critical stage of its construction. As soon as the electricity failed in the tunnel I knew what had happened. I prayed that it was an accident , but now I know I can’t kid myself any longer.

“How much damage has it done ? “whispered Ernest

“It was designed to wipe out a whole continent, Ernest. I think from what you have described, it has. The colours. I heard them one night. They described the effect the bomb would have. For several hours after the explosion there would be myriads of colours in the sky and then gradually the sky would darken and there would be nothing but ash. It was designed to kill all life, all of it, everything. That was their plan to wipe out every one of the native population on that continent.”

“But... the animals, plants, the people from all over the world there.”

“They were prepared to pay that price for their freedom from threat. It targets human DNA Ernest, just the people.”

“So there’s no one left in the continent we have left behind, or the continent we have come to ?.”

“No, Ernest .There is *no one* left “

“Then what about us ? what are we to do ?”

### **Discussion**

The impact of nuclear weapons and the risks and benefits of nuclear power.

### ***Episode nine: Survival***

“Once we come out we will be contaminated with the fall out. I heard them say that they would need to stay underground for a month. There were shelters left from the days before the weapons were banned. They said that if they were ready to transport the bomb to the target they would get the population ready .It would be too late for the people to hold protest marches or vote them out. They would have just a few days to stock their shelters to protect themselves from the fall out carried by the weather systems.”

“But how is that going to help us ? We might be safe in here, but how will we get food and water ?”

“You don’t where we are, Ernest, do you ?”

She told him.

He struggled to take it in

“The city where I went to university twenty years ago?!”

“Yes. When you did your exchange year to study intercontinental law.”

“Can you remember its shape, the streets?. You need to find your way around it now, through all the ash. I don’t know how many buildings will still be standing to help you. There is a shelter here it is big. Some of the people at the meeting talked about it “.

“Where is it? it could be anywhere!”

“No . I know where it is. It is nearby. They said they built it near the entrance so that they could move quickly between continents. Because of the secrecy there would not be much time. I think they planned to confer with the commandant, get on the train and into the shelters .This is what we must do. We must find the shelter , quickly. The longer we are in this poisonous the atmosphere the more likely we are to get radiation sickness and die”.

Sophia told him what she knew.

“So it is not far, but how will we get in ?”

“The entrance is through an old wine bar, the wine bar is just a front. It is a very old eating house built there in the middle ages. The shelter has been created in the dungeons of the old castle.”

“Castel Fortuna”.Yes, I know it.” said Ernest

“They said the Castle was so old and its walls so thick that it might still stand after the bomb. It will serve as a landmark. If we cannot find it we will

die, possibly within hours. We are already seriously dehydrated. The radiation will destroy our internal organs as we breathe.”

“This station was not here twenty years ago but I think I know where they have built the entrance. I do remember an old eating house there. It was small and cramped because it was so old. The ceilings were very low. They used to make a real fire in there. I can’t remember what it was called. ....”Survivance” ! - Survival, that’s it!”

“How original!” said Sophia sarcasm in her voice.

“The street we want is to the left .” He said , thinking aloud.

“It may be unrecognisable. How long will you be exposed to the air ?” she asked

“Less than an hour, if it all goes well. Will that be a short enough time ?”

Sophia did not reply.

### ***Episode Ten: The Castle of Fortune***

“I *must* go alone” he said as she protested. “One of us must survive to protect the children. I will be exposed to the air longer than any of you. I must make three journeys. Besides, time is of the essence .You will slow me down.” At this she agreed to let him go alone. The faster he moved in the poisonous atmosphere , the better.

Ernest set off, Sophia’s handkerchief from her dressing gown pocket tied across his face to keep some of the powdered ash from his lungs.

He veered to the left, searching for something to recognise, and then he saw it, a tall shape ahead. He thought it would be one of the turrets, still partly standing, but which one ?

He could barely even make out where the streets once were. He was filled

with despair .

This was the first time since he had left his homeland that he felt his fight for survival was useless. He sat down on a crumbled wall. His mind was fogged . He simply did not know which way to turn. He sobbed like a child. From deep inside him came the despair ready to overwhelm him.

But with it came something else.... Something much stronger.

“There is always hope, Ernest, “came the voice “Use your eyes and look. They prepared for this too well not to leave a sign for themselves. Look!”

Ernest sprang to his feet. There on the floor covered in ash was a clear rectangular shape. The sign from the eating house . “Survivance” but how had that come through the heat flash? Titanium, that was why. Rare and fabulously expensive, but who would know ? It just looked like an old sign.

Realisation dawned and with it came a flood of adrenalin. He was *standing in the eating house*. The turret was in front of him. The dungeons must be in the back. He needed to move forward slowly towards the turret . The entrance would be somewhere near . He scraped at the ash with his foot. The turret of course ! They must have reinforced that too. He was sure of it .why would that alone remain? He stumbled forward, almost running in the rubble, scrabbling at its base until he found what he was looking for .

“I am not going to open it” he said to himself “and risk getting trapped, or letting in any more air than I have to .I will get the others. If I am wrong we will die, but we are going to die anyway if this is not it and I have no time to look anywhere else.”

He had been outside what seemed like hours. In reality it was twelve minutes. He ran back to Sophia in five. His lungs burning from the acrid air.

Together they made their way back to the others, a mile inside. Safe inside the tunnel, he was in no hurry .He wanted to keep them calm. Explain slowly what had happen. Prevent panic.

“George and I are going first,” he said. “You can see the turret from the entrance of the tunnel. You will be able to see our orange clothes. As soon

as we go out of sight you will know that we have opened the door and gone inside. Send the youngest first so that they are outside the shortest time.”

George’s wife took Sophia’s hand. “I will guide you, she said. I can’t go too fast, either ,at my age.”

The first children reached the door of the shelter. “Go inside, quickly” said Ernest panting with the weight of the door, holding it open just enough to see them coming. “George has gone ahead, follow the sounds until we find some light. There must be generators somewhere.”

One by one the hundred and fifty people were inside Ernest counting every one in. Each leader of six checked their five . All here.

“Where is Grace ?” asked George coming back into the room . “I need her.”

“Mamma ?!” called Verity “Want Mamma !” she screamed, staring at the now closed door.

“Get back - I am going out after them” said Ernest .

“No” said George . “You have been exposed long enough.”

“You two, come with me!” he ordered.

Within moments George had found them. Sophia was on her hands and knees coughing in the ash. Grace was struggling to lift the heavily pregnant woman.

“ Sophia is bleeding,” said George as he and the other two men carried her into the room. Sophia was white with exhaustion.

“ Her feet are so bad she could barely walk.” He added .

We can bandage them now said Ernest .

“ No, Ernest” said Grace, struggling to catch her breath. It is the baby. The blood is on her legs.”

“Just let me rest” begged Sophia, “It isn’t much. If I can lay down. It may

stop. The placenta is over the neck of the womb. I need water “.

George, Grace and Ernest took off their padded jackets and lay her down to rest ,while they searched the shelter for a more comfortable place to lay her and supplies for the hungry, thirsty band of survivors.

Verity tugged at her fathers clothes. “Firstee, dada, Verity firstee, mama too – and babee.”

“I know, little one” he said, patting her curls.” we need to find the water .

“Here tiz !” said Verity, running off down a corridor to the left. She banged on the door “open! me furstee “ she said laughing and banging on a huge steel door.

Ernest turned the handle and it swung open to reveal gallons and gallons of water in clear five litre bottles. Ernest dragged one out and the child drank thirstily. “Now dee time “ She said running to the next room.

There they found cans and cans of food.

“How did you know ?” He asked his giggling child

“syide now, dadda syide.”

She ran out of the room to the bottom of the corridor and banged on the huge oak door at the end, too small to turn the handle. She jumped up and down with excitement

“Open, dada, me syide.” She said

He swung open the huge door to reveal an enormous room. Dominating it was a large banqueting table, polished to perfection. Verity was already scrambling on to the chairs to get on the table, sliding about like a skating rink, filling the room with her joyous laughter as the children ran about catching her as she hurtled off the edge.

“Well, I’m blowed” said George, coming to stand beside Ernest, as the others poured into the room.” The little lass has been here before!”

“Hey Missy”, called George “Where are we going to sleep then ? “

Verity scrambled to her feet

“In dere !” she pointed triumphantly to another huge door.

This time the other children got there first . Behind were the dormitories, rows of beds with duvets in sealed plastic lying on each one.

How many people was this shelter meant to support.

“ 200, I think” said a little girl, shyly.

“How do you know ? said Ernest

“ We just counted thee chairs round the table” said one of the boys. “There are 75 down each side and 25 at each end”.

“Then there must be enough supplies to keep us alive for a month.” Said one of the other adults.

“What happens then?” said George

### ***Episode eleven : Sophias' Story.***

As the weary band settled down to sleep after a huge meal, The first time in many months that they had eaten to their hearts content. Ernest returned to his wife, Sophia had slept for several hours while they settled in.

“The bleeding has stopped” she told him sleepily. I told you it would be alright. It is just because the placenta has grown over the neck of the womb.

How do you know ?

I have seen the scans. I could not understand a lot of what was said but I recognised the situation straight away .I have always know the birth was going to be tricky. I just had to hope that they knew what they were doing.

Could you not have told them ?

I never spoke to him.

What ?

“I never had time to tell you what happened. Let me start from the beginning .You said you thought we were dead. I don't understand - didn't you know what had happened to us ?”

“No, I thought you had been thrown overboard to save the effort of smuggling sick people ashore.”

Ernest explained what he had seen.

“I suppose that is what it must have looked like. In fact we were being thrown down into a small motor boat. They took us ahead. They were short of workers. I don't know a lot about happened . They put cloth soaked in chloroform over our faces as soon as we reached the boat to stop us struggling. I woke up the next day in the commanders quarters. I had no idea where I was. That is when I realised I was blind. It was terrifying to open my eyes and find I could not see, to hear a strange language I did not understand . He began speaking to me in French. I was so shocked I could not speak. I just lay there trying to understand what was happening to me. That was then I had the idea not to let him know that I could understand him.

I could hear Verity crying in the next room. They had put her in a cot. She was very frightened and did not know where I was, He had been called when I did not recover consciousness .That was when he first saw me. He called a doctor who I suppose told him that I was pregnant.

He was a considerate man where my health was concerned. He could not have children. He wanted this one to survive.”

“So it's not his ? “said Ernest, joy flooding his heart.

“No, that is why I was so sick on the boat .”

“I thought you were sea sick, why didn't you tell me we were expecting another child ?!”

“I did not know what was to become of us. I had thought of terminating the child when I found out. Once we left our country it was too late. I didn't want you to be even more concerned about me than you were.”

“What will happen when the time comes for you to deliver said Ernest anxiously.”

“That will be tricky” she said. “Some of the other women are nurses. Normally in a situation like this the mother is given a caesarean and obviously that cant happen. “

“Maybe there is anaesthetic here” said Ernest, hopefully.

“I think the journey has clouded your brain!”, she said ruffling his hair.

“Even if there is anaesthetic, using it will mean that the only doctor here won’t be able to give instructions !”

“Oh” said Ernest looking worried .”I forgot. So what are we going to do ? “

“I will stay conscious. And try to tell whoever is helping me how to get the placenta free from the uterus. We have to get it out before the baby . If we do then it should be straightforward. Verity was an easy delivery.”

“Does that mean that there are others alive. Why did we not see them at the camp? “

“Because they were sent off to another one. It wasn’t our factory that needed them. I was the only one that stayed there for obvious reasons.”

“How did you lose your sight?” he said stroking her forehead.

“I don’t know, great doctor I am. I woke up as I told you and I could not see. The puzzling thing is that it is total. Most blind people can see something. Shapes, shadows, differences in light and shade. This is as though I have no eyes at all. That makes me think it is nerve damage.”

“ How did that happen ?”

“I think that possibly my head received a blow while I was unconscious. It would certainly explain why I was unconscious for so long, why they were worried when they couldn’t revive me and called the commander.”

“Thank God they did. Just think if you had not stayed unconscious for so long he would never have seen you and you would have been sent off with the others. I would never have seen the two of you again. Perhaps your blindness has been a blessing in a way.”

Ernest paused “So they are still alive. People here have not lost their families after all ?!”

“Ernest” she said. “The bomb! There is a slight chance, I suppose. If they were sent far enough away to the north, or to another continent.”

“Do you think there *is* anyone out there?” he asked her

“Maybe” she said

“What shall we do when the supplies are used up?”

“Our best chance is to try to go home.”

Home ?

“Yes, overland. Every continent is joined by a tunnel, remember?”

“And if we succeed won’t we just be killed ?”

“No, I don’t think so, Ernest. A third of the planet has been obliterated. They will know that. It will have altered things. Human life will have more value, any human life. It will take us many months to get there. By the time we arrive. I think the political situation will have changed.”

“If we arrive !” said Ernest. How long do you think we should stay here?”

“The baby is due in six weeks. If I could have two weeks to heal, - four would be best. I could be sure not to haemorrhage and to have established the breast feeding. It is all going to depend on how much food and water we have.”

“The supplies are for fifty extra people said Ernest. We will start counting it tomorrow. I have called a meeting in the dining room. We will talk about it then and try to work out how long we can stay here”

“The longer the better” said Sophia.” We will need to eat when we get outside and to find fresh water. The land will be recovering. There may be vegetation and animals.”

“I don’t understand “ said Ernest “I thought everything would be destroyed.

“It was a neutron bomb. Ernest . It targets the human DNA. That is the point. It kills the humans but leaves the vegetation and the animals. Obviously there is a lot of damage from the blast and the fire. The further in land we go, the more life we will find.”

“And humans?”

“Possibly, but they never tested this bomb, We do not know what the real effects of it are. I think we should prepare ourselves for anything”.

“Home seems like another world now .I cannot imagine ever finding it “  
“Verity take you, dada” said the little girl. “Verity know where home is.”

“Yes darling. Go back to sleep.” said her mother

Ernest was startled. What did his daughter know.? Several things on the journey had puzzled him.

“She knew where everything here was. It seemed familiar to her. It was as though she had been here before.” He said to Sophia.

Sophia smiled. “One day when I was very sick the commander took Verity off for the day. He did not say where he was going. I guess he brought her here. She could not talk well, then. I never knew . You see? there is a perfectly rational explanation for everything.”

***END OF PART ONE***





