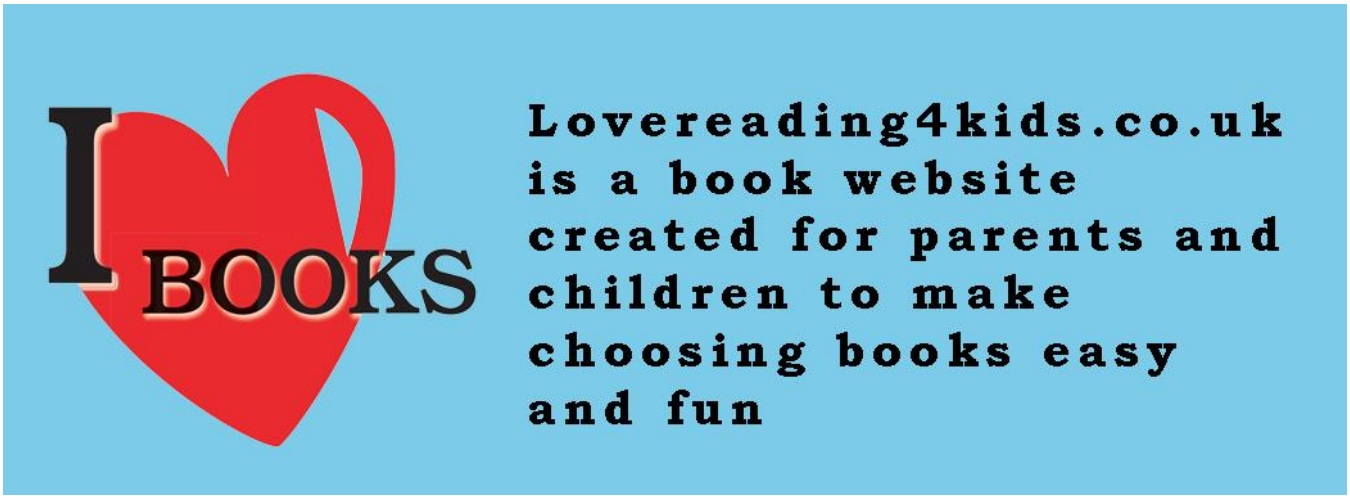


Opening extract from

The Secret Railway

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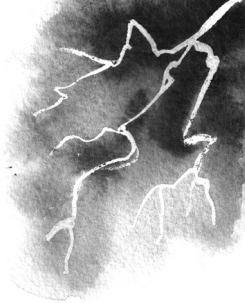
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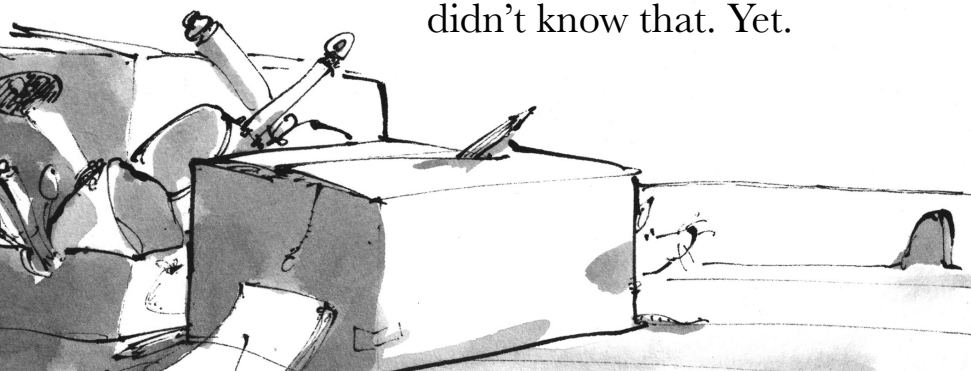
PLATFORM ONE

· THE STATION HOUSE ·

Ella and Leo Leggit were not ordinary children. 'Well, of course', you'll say: 'No children are'. And you'd be right. I'm sure you're *very* peculiar. But what I mean is, Ella and Leo were *extremely* not ordinary. For example, Ella was the only seven year old girl in Biddleshire that could sing 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star', backwards. In French. Whilst sucking

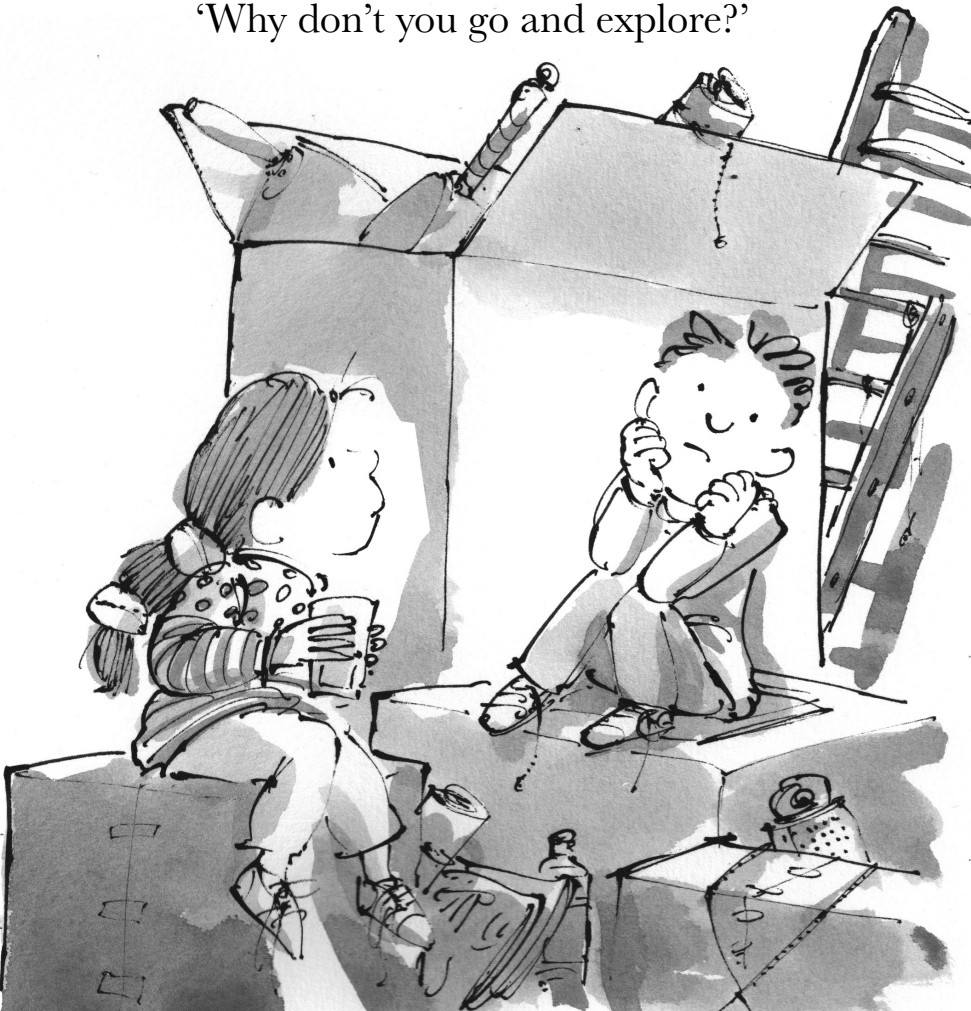
a lollypop. Upside down. And Leo was the only nine year old boy in Biddleshire that dreamt of being electricity every night. Great big swishing bolts of electricity lighting up the dark night sky. I know. The pair of them—not ordinary at all!

So when their parents, Mr and Mrs Leggit, bought an old station house at the edge of a forest near Little Higgleton, of course it wasn't going to be boring. It was going to be AMAZING. INCREDIBLE. RIDICULOUS. FRIGHTENING. WONDERFUL AND FULL OF ADVENTURE! It's just that Leo and Ella didn't know that. Yet.



That's why they were sitting on cardboard boxes full of saucepans, sighing and missing their friends.

'The faces on you two could sink a battle ship!' Mrs Leggit said. 'Why don't you go and explore?'



‘We’ve explored already.’ Leo sighed deeply. ‘Three empty bedrooms. One empty lounge. One empty office. And one empty kitchen.’

Ella nodded in agreement. ‘And three empty toilets.’

‘Mum doesn’t mean explore the house,’ Mr Leggit said, heaving a rubber plant through the hall. ‘She means explore the great outdoors.’

‘It’s raining,’ Ella complained.

‘A bit of rain won’t hurt you.’ Mrs Leggit wrestled a kettle out of a box. ‘You two should be having an adventure. Like we did in the old days. Go on. Off you go. Just make sure you’re back in time for tea.’

Leo looked at the empty kitchen. 'What's for tea?'

'Cabbage,' Mrs Leggit replied.

'Mum, you know I hate cabbage.'

'Only joking.' Leo and Ella's mother grinned.

'I LOVE cabbage,' Ella said. 'And I love spouts. And I love mushrooms.'

'Why do you have to love everything?' Leo asked, ruffling her hair.

Ella shrugged.

'Just make sure you're back by 5 o'clock,' Mrs Leggit said. 'And I'll just do some fish fingers, Leo.'

'I LOVE fishfi…,'

Leo put his hand over Ella's mouth and tickled her until she wriggled

like a trout. 'Dad, can me and Ella go and look in the workshop? The one behind the house. That's sort of "outdoors". '

'Don't see why not,' Mr Leggit said. 'As long as you're careful.'

'Oh! I LOVE workshops,' giggled Ella, getting free.

'You don't even know what workshops look like,' Leo said.

'Yes, I do,' Ella said back, even though she didn't really.

'Now remember,' Mr Leggit said. 'Back by 5pm. And don't touch anything sharp!'

'We won't,' they yelled, as they slammed the station house door.