



The Spitfire Fund

Chapter 4

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Written for children aged 7+

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**ROYAL
AIR FORCE
museum**

Yusra, Lily and Danny are heading back to London, keen to help raise money in the capital on the day the Nazis are going to try to start their invasion of Britain. Unsure what awaits them in London, they are about to get a very nasty shock.

The children knew exactly where they wanted to be in London. Victoria Station. Quite near Buckingham Palace. On the way home from Wolverhampton in Yusra's dad's car, they'd read stories on the Museum's website and found out some amazing facts about Sunday 15th September 1940.

It was the day that Hitler launched a huge aerial attack on Britain. Hitler's plan to invade was called Operation Sea Lion and, as well as having hundreds of bombers coming over to flatten London in his biggest aerial attack yet, he had tens of thousands of men ready to come across the English Channel in barges to land and take control. If the Luftwaffe could beat the RAF and take control of the skies, the invasion could go ahead.

But, reading on, the children found out that instead, the RAF inflicted heavy losses on the German air force and Hitler decided to postpone Operation Sea Lion, never to be seen through. In Britain we now call September 15th Battle of Britain Day.

They also read on the RAF Museum website about a famous pilot:

On Sunday 15th September 1940, Sergeant Ray Holmes was taking a bath when a RADAR station on the south coast picked up a sudden activity. One hundred Dornier bombers, with a heavy fighter escort appeared on the screens crossing the English Channel, heading to London. For Sergeant Holmes this was his first air combat and he was thrilled and excited that he was flying his Hawker Hurricane Mk 1 right to the Battle. While attacking his first Dornier, he noticed another enemy aircraft, also a Dornier, on fire heading directly to Buckingham Palace. As his ammunition had run out, he understood that there was only one thing that he could do to prevent catastrophe, even though it would be a suicidal mission. His Hurricane rammed the Dornier, cutting through its rear fuselage, breaking the bomber up right over Hyde Park Corner in plain sight of hundreds of citizens. The Dornier's forward fuselage section crashed near Victoria Station, the tail landed on a rooftop in the Vauxhall Bridge Road. Two of the five crew members survived and were captured.

Thrilled by the amazing story on the website, the children devised a plan.

They needed to be near where thousands of people could see what Sergeant Holmes would do, then collect money for more planes. It was simple. Surely anyone who witnessed a feat like that would just turn out their pockets and purses? They'd raise thousands.

Standing in St James' Park they were all set, surrounded by hundreds of men and women, eyes on the skies, seeing German planes twisting and turning above them, Spitfires and Hurricanes routing the enemy. The day that Britain would be invaded. The last chance for Britain to save itself.

Then – as they watched – a Dornier bomber came tearing from the east, lower than the other planes, flames pouring out of its sides. This was it. This was the one.

Danny heard someone cry out. 'No ... no ... it's going to crash into Buckingham Palace.'

The crowd gasped.

'Don't panic. It'll be fine,' Danny shouted. 'Look. Here comes a Hurricane.'

Lily and Yusra cheered as they saw the small Hurricane plane catch the German bomber and smash into its side. The gasp from the crowd was louder still. There was applause ... cheering ... tears, as the dark silhouette of the crippled plane fell into the streets of London. A louder cheer erupted as the Londoners witnessed the pilot of the Hurricane bale out of his plane and parachute to the ground.

'Oh good gracious ...' a man in a suit, his tie loose around his neck, cried. 'When will this end? The Germans might even have landed on the beaches now.' 'No,' Lily told him, gleeful, over-excited. 'The operation fails. The Spitfires and Hurricanes defend London. Hitler's soldiers don't even leave France. Operation Sea Lion is called off.'

The crowd around them was stunned to silence. Nobody speaking now. Everyone was looking at the children. At first they felt pleased, like they were passing on good news, hope. But then they understood ... what they were saying was being taken the wrong way.

Yusra swallowed.

Danny glanced at Lily.

'It's fine,' Lily said in a dry-throated voice to the people glowering at them. 'The Germans never get over here. And the war ends in 1945. We ...'



She stopped as a group of young men emerged, each of them grabbing one of the children from behind.

‘They’re spies!’ a woman in front of them hissed.

‘Did you hear what that one said?’ another voice.

Now the crowd was drawing around them. Danny felt a terrible sense that violence was coming. Dozens of them were talking, relaying what Lily had said to them. And he could see three soldiers walking over, too. This was terrible. All they had wanted to do was raise money to help buy Spitfires. And now, with their arms held behind their backs, they couldn’t take off their pin badges and return to the year 2020.

They were in deep trouble. And there was no one there to help them.

Tom Palmer is proud to be the RAF Museum’s Children’s Author in Residence. He has written several First and Second World War children’s books, including the Wings series that he wrote with the help of the RAF Museum, featuring stories about the Sopwith Camel, Spitfire and Typhoon.

Although Yusra, Danny and Lily have been trying to help Britain win the war by doing the right thing, suddenly they are in trouble. And you can’t blame the locals. These children know too much! It’s easy to see how they could be mistaken for German spies. But how does an angry mob of Londoners, some of whom may have lost people they love in the war, deal with German spies? And what will happen when the three soldiers who are walking over to them right now get their hands on them?

Find out more in the fifth and final chapter of *The Spitfire Fund* ...