

**D-DAY
DOG**



PART 1



ONE

Jack threw the tennis ball and watched it arc over the washing line to bounce at the far edge of the lawn. He grinned as a blur of black and white fur snatched the ball out of the air.

“Good boy, Finn. Now, fetch it.”

Finn turned, ball in mouth, scampering to where Jack was crouching. The dog released the ball at the boy’s feet, then sat quivering, waiting for Jack to throw it again.

“Good boy,” Jack said again, staring into his dog’s eager eyes.

Jack had wanted a dog all his life. He had



nagged his mum and dad month on month, year on year. And then – this February – they’d said yes.

“But you have to feed it,” Mum cautioned. “You have to walk it. You have to train it. It’s your dog. It means less time gaming. Can you cope with that?”

“I can. I will. I promise,” Jack had gasped.

And now he’d seen that promise through. Three walks a day. Three meals a day. He’d house-trained Finn. He’d encouraged him to sleep in his crate all night without barking. And now Finn could chase a ball, bring it back and give it up.

The next thing Jack wanted to try was taking Finn out on the pavements and into town without his lead, controlling him with words, not force. But he knew that would be harder, that they would have to build up to it slowly. Jack just wished he didn’t have to go back to school and leave his dog at home now the Easter holidays were nearly over.

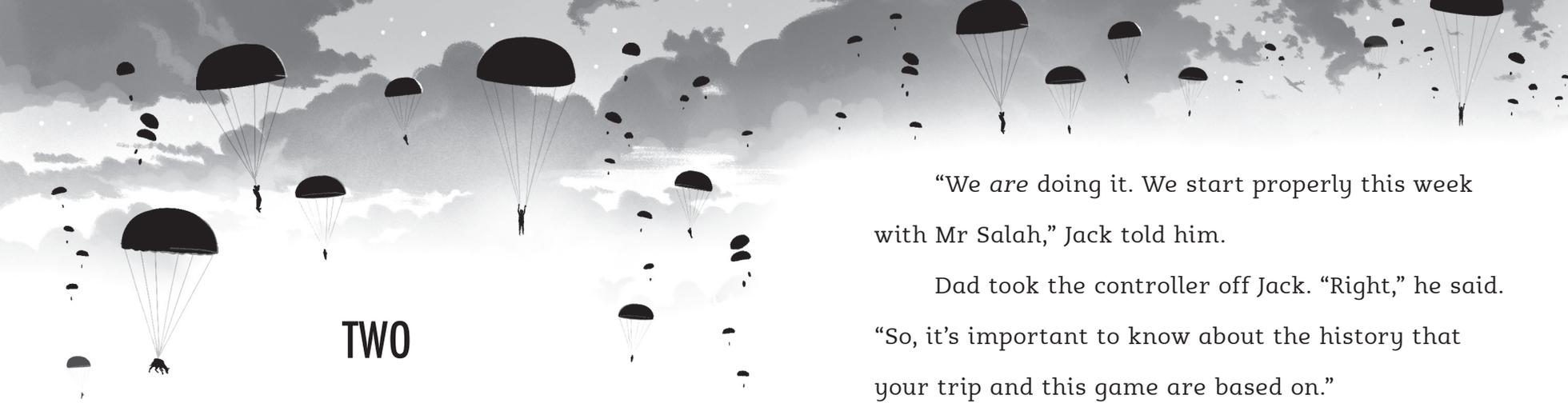
“Good boy, Finn,” Jack praised him a third time.

Then a voice came from the house. Jack and Finn looked up from their game.

“It’s here.” Dad was standing in front of the open patio doors. “The D-Day game; it’s come, Jack. It’s time for us to liberate Europe.”

Jack and Finn ran towards the house. Dad had been away all weekend training with the Army Reserves, something he did several weekends a year, making Jack extremely proud. His dad was a soldier! And now that he was home, Dad would be able to tell Jack everything he’d been up to.

But first they had a new video game to play.



TWO

“So what do you know about D-Day?” Dad asked.

They were all inside the house now. The front-room lights were on as the sky darkened outside. Father and son perched on the edge of the sofa, controllers in hand, the large-screen TV flashing and droning. Finn was on the sofa too, leaning into Jack, his head resting on the eleven-year-old boy’s arm.

Jack shrugged. “What do I know about D-Day?” he answered. “Not a lot.”

“I thought you were doing it at school,” Dad said. “I mean, your residential trip to Normandy is coming up soon.”

“We *are* doing it. We start properly this week with Mr Salah,” Jack told him.

Dad took the controller off Jack. “Right,” he said. “So, it’s important to know about the history that your trip and this game are based on.”

“OK,” Jack conceded.

Dad faced Jack, rubbing his chin. “So, first things first, D-Day was one of the greatest moments in the history of Europe. You with me so far?”

“Yeah.” Jack nodded.

“It took place on 6 June 1944.”

“OK.”

“And it was one of our finest hours because we – the British – began the liberation of Europe from Nazi Germany.” Dad paused. “What do you know about Nazi Germany?”

“Hitler,” Jack said.

“Yes. Good. And what did Hitler do?”



“He invaded Europe. He killed millions of people. Or made them his slaves,” Jack said.

Dad was nodding. “Not bad. But what about us? In Britain? Did he invade us?”

“His planes bombed us,” Jack said. “But he couldn’t beat us. The RAF fought back and we won the Battle of Britain with our Spitfire and Hurricane planes.”

“That’s right.” Jack could see his dad was pleased. “Excellent. So now we get to D-Day. What happened next?”

“We invaded them?”

“That’s good, Jack. Yes. But not just us. We had a lot of help from the Americans and the Canadians – and soldiers from all over the world. Together, we were called the Allies. Our job was to drive the Germans back and liberate France. It was a massive operation. Over a hundred and fifty thousand men ...”

Jack smiled. His dad was animated again, excited about war and telling Jack about it.

“How do you know all this?” Jack interrupted after a couple of minutes.

“*My* dad,” Dad said simply.

Jack noticed the hairs on his dad’s arm stand up. It was funny. That always happened when Dad talked about war and *his* dad.

“So, did he tell you all this?” Jack asked.

“Sort of ...” Dad paused. “Well, you know he died when I was seven?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, one of the very few things I remember about him was how I used to sit in a massive armchair with him on Sunday afternoons and watch war films. I was brought up knowing all this. And for years after he died, every Sunday I still watched those films ...”



Jack enjoyed hearing his dad talking about Grandad, but today he was desperate to try out the new game, so he was delighted when his dad turned back to the screen and said, “Anyway, on with the game ...”