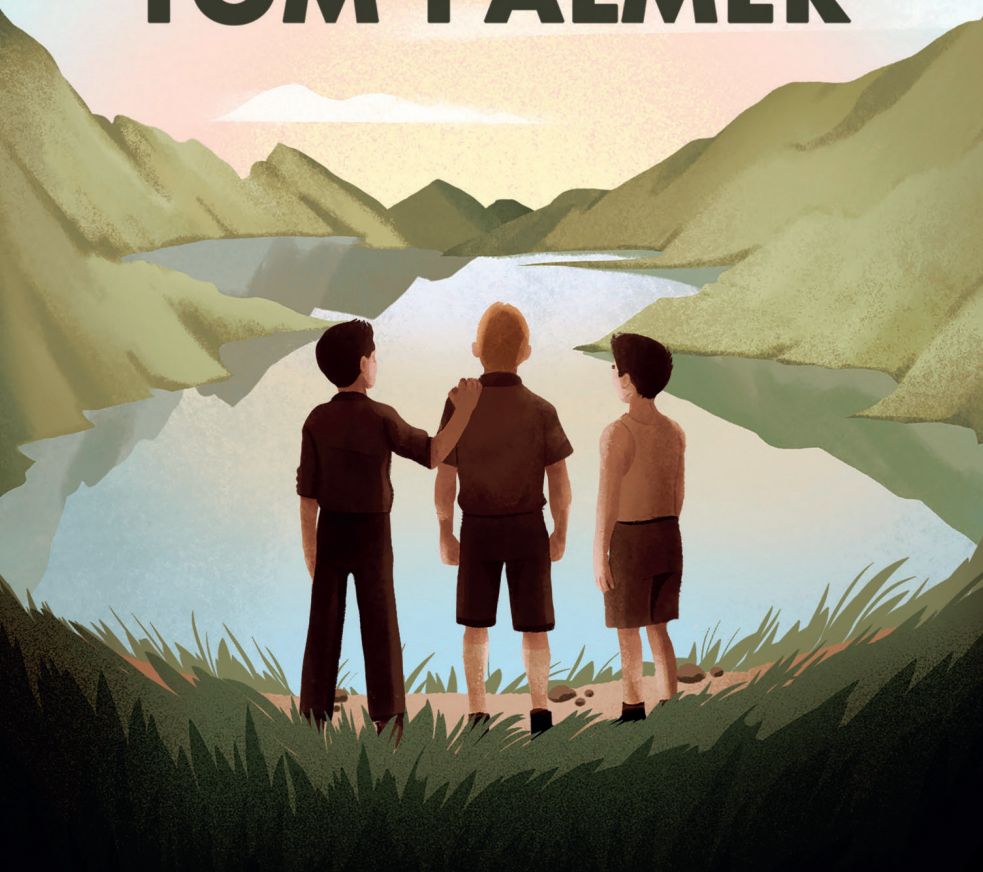


AFTER THE WAR

FROM AUSCHWITZ TO AMBLESIDE

TOM PALMER



ONE

Even though he was afraid, Yossi forced himself to crawl to the window in the side of the aeroplane. There were no seats, so he had to crouch and stay on all fours as he and the other passengers were thrown about by the turbulence.

Outside he could see a wall of white and a wing wobbling so hard it looked like it might fall off.

Behind him, Yossi heard children cry out, the sound of at least one person being sick. And some laughter too.

“Come and sit down here, Yossi,” a woman’s voice called out.



Yossi did as he was told, scrambling along the floor of the Stirling bomber to rejoin the other children and adults sitting on blankets.

Yossi loved aeroplanes. He should have been scared of them, as the first time he'd seen one, six years ago at the beginning of the war, a German bomber had tried to destroy his home town in Poland. Then, over the following years, he'd seen bombs falling from British and American aeroplanes, targeting the factories where he was forced to work.

But he still loved them, perhaps because aeroplanes were a sign that change was coming. And once he was in the concentration camps, Yossi was desperate for change. He was also fascinated by these powerful machines. How could a huge piece of metal with all these people on board take off and then land without breaking into pieces?



He glanced at the faces of the two boys closest to him. Didn't it worry them?

The boys in question were called Mordecai and Leo. Both of them were fifteen years old, like Yossi. And both seemed to be focusing so hard on what they were doing that they were barely aware of bouncing around in the clouds.

Mordecai, short with dark hair, was reading an English book. Yossi admired him so much because he could hold a conversation in German, Russian, Czech and Polish. He also admired that Mordecai could concentrate on reading even now as they hurtled towards the ground.

Tall blond-haired Leo was busy too. For most of the flight he had been trying to get at a spool of wire that was jammed down the side of the fuselage. Yossi knew that Leo would plan to use the wire or



trade it with someone. He was always on the lookout for any opportunity.

Now the plane lunged suddenly to the left and some of the children called out in fear. Yossi dragged himself to the window again to look out. Squinting in the bright light, he could see a range of mountains ahead, blue sparkling water beyond and miles and miles of green fields. They were out of the clouds.

Over England.

This was the place where they had been told they would be safe. A place where there would be no German soldiers and no concentration camps.

The only thing that Yossi knew about England was a distant memory of his father's bicycle. It was very special. So special that the tyres needed to be imported from another country. On the tyres – moulded into the rubber – were the words “MADE IN ENGLAND”.



“What can you see out of the window?” Leo asked Yossi. “What does it look like?”

“I see Paradise,” Yossi replied.

“Tell us more,” Talia said. Talia was a young Polish woman who had come to take the children from a concentration camp in Europe to England and refuge. Yossi understood why she was asking. Talia wanted him to reassure this group of children who had spent the last six years terrified of what would happen to them next.

“It is beautiful,” Yossi told the other children, turning to smile at them. “There are fields and roads and small villages. Just like back home in Poland ...”

Yossi stopped speaking once he saw some of the children frown at the mention of their homeland.

“But this is England,” Yossi said quickly. “They’re going to feed us. They’re going to give us clothes. We’ll be safe. Won’t we, Talia?”



Talia nodded.

“What if it’s not like that?” Mordecai asked Yossi quietly, once they were sat together again.

“It *will* be like that, Mordi.” But Yossi’s words were lost as the plane’s engines began to roar ever louder and he felt a rush of fear.

The aeroplane was about to land.

Was England a nice place? *Would* it be safe?

“How do we know?” Mordecai asked again, his voice tense.

