

Evacuee

During World War Two, children from London were evacuated to safer areas of the country to avoid the danger of the air raids. PAULETTE is a young, confused child who is about to leave her family to travel to the countryside.

PAULETTE: Where am I going? Why am I going? Do I have to go? I don't want to leave! What is happening?

(Pause) Have I got everything? My mac, hat, suitcase, gas mask and teddy.

(Pause) Mum took me to the station and she cried all of the way so I cried.

"If we are so unhappy then why am I going?"

"It's safer," Mum said, "you'll be away from the air raids."

She smiled and touched my face and looked deep into my eyes.

"You'll have lots of new friends, lovely fresh air and you can enjoy the countryside."

The countryside?

"What will the countryside look like?"

"Like a great big park," she said, "with trees and sheep and cattle."

We stood there on the platform, together, waiting. But waiting for what?

"Time to go," Mum said and we all boarded the train and waved goodbye.

I looked out of the window for as long as I could until Mum was just a dot left standing on the station platform.

The train was hot and sticky. Children everywhere, laughing, playing and crying.

Lots of crying all the way to the countryside.

(Pause) "Off the train!"

(Pause) People came and just looked at us.

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(Pause) What were they doing? They took some of the children away. But nobody wanted me until Mrs Smith. A big fierce-looking lady in an apron and curlers.

"Rules!" she said in a gruff tone.

"No evacuee can use the front door!
No evacuee can use the front parlour!
Evacuees must eat their meals in the kitchen.
Evacuees must share a bed.
Evacuees must be in by 6 pm.
Evacuees must be grateful for a roof over their heads."

Grateful? This is a nightmare and I can't wake up.

(Pause) When can I go home?

(Pause) Please! I just want to go home.

by Jenny Thornton