

September the third

*The extract below is taken from *The Dragonfly Pool* by Eva Ibbotson.*

Nobody ever forgot where they were on the day that war was declared.

Tally was in the kitchen helping Aunt May to prepare the vegetables for Sunday lunch when the music on the wireless stopped and the announcer said that the Prime Minister would address the nation at eleven o'clock. Everyone had been expecting it; Hitler had invaded Poland two days before and the democratic countries had had enough. Aunt Hester came hurrying in from the garden and Tally's father from his study.

The Prime Minister was old and tired; he had tried to keep the peace and now he told the people of Great Britain that he had failed. An ultimatum had been sent to Hitler demanding that he withdraw his troops from Poland.

'I have to tell you that no such undertaking has been received and that consequently this country is at war with Germany.'

No one ever forgot what happened next either. Almost straight away the air-raid sirens sounded – that hideous wailing that they had only just learned to recognize.

'Quick, into the shelter,' said Dr Hamilton, pushing his daughter towards the door.

'Oh dear, my roast will be spoiled – couldn't you go ahead, and let me –' began Aunt May, and saw her brother's face.

The shelter was at the bottom of the street. It was not really finished yet and a puddle of water had collected in the bottom. The lady from number 4 said she wasn't going down into that wetness, she'd rather be bombed than die of pneumonia. She was a very large person and the people behind her got nasty because she was blocking the door.

They had just climbed down when the all-clear went. It had been a false alarm.