

I turned around. It was Munn. She was drying a dish with a cloth.

'What have I told you, Billy?' she said. 'Don't drink out of the milk bottle!'

'Sorry, Munn,' I said.

I took a glass and poured some milk into it. Then I put the bottle on top of the fridge.

'Put the bottle inside the fridge,' she said.

I picked up the bottle and opened the fridge door. Then I thought, That was Munn. She was here. The dish and the cloth were on the table. I touched them and they were warm. Her hands touched them, I thought. I wasn't frightened.

The door opened and Nan came in. She walked to the cupboard.

'It's in here,' she said.

'What is, Nan?'

'The record!' She took a record out of the cupboard. She went into the sitting room and put the record on the record player. 'Listen,' she said.

The music started. It's the same music, I thought, the music from Miss's car. That's why I knew it. It was one of Munn's old records.

'Did you see her too, Nan?' I asked.

But Nan was dancing around the room. I held her arms and we did some ballet moves together. She was slow, but she was good.

Then the door opened quickly. Tony was standing there with Dad behind him.

'You're using my record player,' Tony said.

'It's not yours, it's Munn's,' I shouted.

Tony went to the record player and turned it off.

'Be careful!' Dad shouted at Tony. 'Don't break the record!'

He took it away from Tony and cleaned it carefully. Then he turned to me.

'Who told you to play this?'

'Sorry,' I whispered.

Dad walked out of the room and shut the door noisily. Dad

and Tony are always making a noise in the house – I hate it. But it wasn't important. You see, now I understand. Munn wanted me to dance in the audition. It wasn't a stupid dream. Maybe I will get into the ballet school, I thought.

The audition was on Saturday at half past ten. I wanted to succeed – for me and for Munn. On Friday, I went for the final practice and I danced perfectly. Nobody can stop me, I thought. Then the trouble started.

Chapter 8 Tony's Story: Trouble with the Police

It was me. I attacked the police horse.

Some of the police are very unkind. One policeman is really bad. His horse kicks us when we're on the picket line. He doesn't stop it. So we decided to fight him.

It was Friday afternoon and I was in the town centre with my friends. There was a small crowd of people around the policeman and his horse. I had some petrol in a bottle and I threw it on the horse's tail. Then I lit a match.

WHOOOMPH! The horse was frightened and the policeman nearly fell off its back. Somebody hit the horse and it spun round. The policeman couldn't stop it.

We were laughing and then we heard horses behind us. A lot more police arrived and we started to run.

We ran up the street and met more policemen. They were waiting for us and they were very, very angry. My friend, Simon James, fell down and the policemen hit him with their sticks.

I ran through Jeff and Alice Thomson's house and into the street at the back. It was washing day and the street was full of washing lines. There were wet clothes and sheets hanging from them. I was near my house, but the police were everywhere.

I saw Billy standing on a wall. He was shouting something.

Then hundreds of police and horses came towards me.

'Tony! Tony! Not that way!' Billy shouted.

I tried to run, but there was a wet sheet in front of me. I stopped for a second and then I fell. I heard the police coming ...

They hit me. One, two, three, four, then I didn't feel anything more. When I woke up, I was in the police station.

They kept me there overnight and I went to court at ten o'clock on Saturday morning. In the night the police hit me again and I couldn't walk.

'The police horse kicked him,' a policeman told the judge.

The judge believed him. He told me to pay one hundred pounds to the court. Where will I find a hundred pounds?

Dad and Billy came to court. Dad was angry but didn't say anything. I wanted to go to bed and cry.

When we got home, a woman was waiting for us. I didn't know her, but she knew Billy.

'Where were you, Billy?' she asked.

'Please, Miss, don't,' he whispered. 'My brother Tony was in court. I tried to telephone you. You weren't there.'

'Who are you?' I asked. I looked at Dad.

'Come inside the house,' he said.

I looked at Billy. Was he in trouble?

We went into the sitting room and turned to look at the woman. She crossed her arms.

'I know this is difficult for you,' she began. 'But Billy missed an important audition today.'

'What?' I said. 'Audition? For what?'

'For the Royal Ballet School.'

Was she serious? The police hit me and the court wants one hundred pounds. And she was angry because Billy missed an audition for the Royal Ballet School!

'Are you joking?' I said.

'I'm very serious.'

I looked at Billy. 'Ballet?' I turned to the woman. 'Do you know what's happening to us? And you're talking about ballet? You stupid woman. My brother isn't going to be a ballet dancer.'

I wanted to hit her.

'I want to be a ballet dancer,' Billy said. He was crying.

I took hold of his arm. The woman tried to stop me. I pushed her away and put Billy on the table.

'You want to dance? OK – dance!'

'This is stupid,' the woman said.

'Oh yes? I want to see you dance, Billy!'

'No, Billy,' she said. 'Don't!'

I turned to her. 'You don't want him to dance? So go away and leave us. He's not going to dance again. And if you come near him, I'll hit you! Understand?'

'You stupid man,' she said quietly. 'You say Billy's important to you? He came to me every night for two weeks and you didn't notice. I'll see you soon, Billy.'

She walked out of the room.

'I hate you!' Billy shouted at me.

Then he turned and ran out of the house. I wanted to follow him, but Dad stopped me. I pushed him away.

'I'm going to the pub,' I said. 'I'll see you later.'

I don't understand my family. I'm fighting the police and the bosses for them. Why don't they help me? If Billy dances again, I'll hit him. And if she goes near him, I'll hit her too.

Chapter 9 Billy's Story: Discoveries

'It was a bad Christmas,' I said to Michael. 'We didn't have any wood for the fire, so Dad broke the piano into small pieces. Tony gave me some football boots. He hasn't got any money – maybe he stole them. Dad was unhappy because Munn wasn't there. He

started to cry. I can't remember a worse Christmas.'

'Run away from home,' Michael said. 'Join a dance group.'

'Don't be stupid!'

We didn't have anything to do. The piano was gone and the house was cold. So we went outside and built a snowman. I didn't have any gloves.

'My hands hurt! They're so cold!'

'Give me your hands,' Michael said.

He put them under his jacket. I touched his skin. It was warm but ...

Michael was looking at me.

'What are you doing?' I said.

'Nothing. I'm warming your hands.'

'Are my hands cold on your skin?' I asked him.

'I like it.'

I thought for a minute. 'Are you gay?' I asked him.

Suddenly we both laughed. Of course he's gay! It was funny.

He kissed me, very quickly.

'I like ballet, but I'm not gay,' I said.

'You won't tell anyone, will you?'

'No,' I said.

We stood there for another minute. I like Michael, he's my best friend. Suddenly, I had an idea.

'Come with me,' I said.

I took his arm and pulled him towards the hall.

Inside, I found one of the ballet skirts that the girls wear. I gave it to Michael.

'You're the girl!' I said to him.

'No. I'm not,' he said. 'I'm gay, but I'm not a girl!'

'For the dance,' I said.

We stood in the boxing ring and I showed him some ballet moves.

'Second and down. And one and two. You're not bad – for a gay boy.'

I danced away from him. My eyes were closed and I was in another world. Michael couldn't follow me there. I was dancing alone and I was really happy.

Then, finally, I stopped. I stood opposite Michael and held his hands. He looked into my eyes. It was part of the dance. It wasn't important. Then I heard a noise and ...

It was my dad.

Michael was frightened. He knows my dad is a hard man. And Michael was wearing a dress and I was holding his hands ...

I climbed out of the ring and went up to my dad.

'Dad?' I said.

He covered his face with his hands. But I stood in front of him and I danced. I spun and jumped and danced for five minutes. Then I stopped and looked at Dad. Is he going to hit me? I thought.

'That was wonderful!' Michael said.

Dad turned and walked out of the hall. I ran after him.

'Dad!' I shouted.

'Go home, son!' he replied.

He didn't stop walking.

Chapter 10 Jackie's Story: The Search for Money

I ran down the road. I wanted to cry, but I couldn't. My life is so difficult. There's the strike. My wife is dead. Tony wants to fight everyone. My wife's mother lives with us and she's going crazy. And Billy: What can I say about Billy? He's different.

And he's good at something.

I don't know anything about ballet, but I've seen dancers on TV. And now I know Billy is a good dancer too. Maybe his teacher is right ...

I'm Billy's dad, so I have to help him. Oh Sarah, what shall



I stood in front of him and I danced.

I do? Shall I send that teacher away? Shall I stop Billy dancing? Help me decide, please.

Suddenly I knew what to do. I smiled. Then I ran home and telephoned George.

'Where does that dance teacher live?' I asked him.

He told me and I went to her house.

'How much will the ballet school audition cost?' I asked.

'Billy missed the audition in Newcastle and the next one is in London. You'll have to go to London and stay in a hotel. I can lend you some money.'

'I don't want your money!' I said angrily.

'Oh, don't be stupid! Do you want a drink?' She was trying to be friendly.

'No,' I said. 'Is Billy a good dancer?'

'I can't promise anything. But I think he's a great dancer.'

I left her house and went home. The boys were in bed. I went into the bedroom and looked at Billy. A great dancer? I thought. Our Billy? I sat on the bed next to him and he woke up. I put my hand on his shoulder.

'Go to sleep, son,' I told him.

He's my son, I thought. He's Billy Elliot. But maybe ... maybe he's really good at something. How can I help him? Where will I find the money? I can't ask the other miners. Nobody has any money for food or coal or clothes. They're hungry. I can't ask for money so Billy can dance!

I went upstairs to my bedroom and found Sarah's wedding ring. I'm going to sell this, I thought. If I get a hundred pounds, I can take Billy to London. I don't want to sell Sarah's ring, but I have to. I know Sarah wants me to help Billy.

The next day I went to sell the ring. The shop was full of wedding rings. We're all poor. We're selling the most important things that we own.

I showed the ring to the man in the shop.

'How much?' I asked.

'I'll give you twenty-five pounds.'

'What? That's my wife's ring.'

'I'm sorry.' He looked sad. 'I know this ring is important to you. But I can't give you any more money.'

I took the twenty-five pounds. Sarah was gone and now her ring was gone too. And I needed more money.

The strike will end soon, I thought. The government is going to win. In two or three months we'll go back to work, but it will be too late for Billy. I need to work for one week, then I can take Billy to the audition.

I went to the place near the mine where the workers met. Gary Stewart was there and he laughed at me. I didn't say anything.

The bosses were rude to us when they put us on the bus. Nobody likes a scab – and now I was a scab. Some of the miners hid their faces, but I didn't. I wanted everyone to see me.

I was frightened. There were crowds of people near the mine. They were shouting and throwing stones at the bus. We moved slowly. There were faces and noise all around us. The glass in one of the bus windows broke and the bus stopped. What will happen next? I thought. Will the pickets turn the bus over?

I turned my head and looked out of the window next to me. Who was there, looking at me? Tony. He looked into my eyes, then the bus moved again. I hated myself and I wanted to die.

Chapter 11 Tony's Story: The Meeting

'Dad, Dad!' I shouted.

His face was so sad. I wanted to help him. I knew he was in trouble.

The bus moved through the mine gates and I ran after it. The scabs climbed out of the bus and the bosses pushed them towards the entrance to the mine.

'Dad!' I shouted again.

He heard me and looked at me. He moved towards me, but a policeman stopped him. Dad tried to hit him, then he walked back to the gate. He was crying. I never saw Dad cry before. I wanted to put my arms around him.

'It's for little Billy,' he said. Tears were running down his face.

'You can't go back to work now!' I said.

'Look at us! What can we give Billy?'

His face was covered in tears and I was crying too.

'Please, Dad!'

'We're finished, son. I want to give Billy a future.'

'He's only twelve years old. What about my future? You can't do this. We'll find some money for him. Just come out of the mine, Dad. Please!'

Some men ran up behind us.

'What's your dad doing?' Robert Martin asked.

'It's OK, he's coming out. Aren't you, Dad?'

Dad rested his head against the gate. 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry,' he said.

'Get him out!' Martin said.

I got Dad out of the mine. The bosses saw that he was ill. They let him out through the back gate and I took him home. Later, he tried to explain to me.

'Your mum – she wants Billy to dance. She didn't worry about other people, just her family.'

You always think your father is the boss. You think he can do anything. But now my dad needs my help.

OK, I thought, I'll help. But where will we find the money for Billy's ballet dancing?

The next day we went to see George.

'Ballet?' he said.

'Ballet,' I said.

'You've helped boys before,' Dad said.

'Yes, for boxing or sport. But ballet?'



He was crying. I never saw Dad cry before.

'Why not ballet? Billy is a good dancer.'

'Is he?' George asked. 'Who says he's good?'

'I went to see his teacher,' Dad said. 'He's the best dancer she's ever seen. I believe her.'

George looked at me.

'We have to try,' I said. 'It's important for Dad and the family.'

'It won't be easy,' George said. 'Nobody has any money.'

'I know,' I said. 'This isn't easy for me, George. But we want to help Billy. Our mum's not here so we want to do something for him.'

'OK,' George said. 'We'll try. We'll get some money for Billy's audition.'

For the next two days we put notes through the neighbours' doors. We wanted them to meet us at the hall. We've found money before for children who needed help. But this was different. We've never sent anybody to the Royal Ballet School.

A few of the neighbours came to the hall. Dad and George sat at the front of the room but I stayed at the back.

George started to speak. 'We've helped children to become boxers and footballers. This time it's Billy Elliot. He wants to be a ballet dancer.' The neighbours were laughing. 'I'll give all the fifty pences from the boxing class,' George said. 'Mrs Wilkinson is giving the fifty pences from the ballet class. We're selling some raffle tickets, too. You haven't much money, we know that, but please help us. This is important.'

A few people stood up. They want to leave, I thought. So I stood up too.

'You all know me,' I said. 'For a long time I didn't want Billy to dance. But I want to say this: I looked at my dad. 'The miners' strike is about the future. My future, your future, your children's future. Billy's future, too. Not everyone will go down the mine, but they will have a future. Billy's dance teacher says that he's an excellent dancer. Excellent. You know that our mum is dead. But she wants him to dance. We need your help.'

I looked at Dad. His eyes were wet with tears.

'George showed you the raffle tickets,' I said to the crowd. 'You can't leave here without buying one. If you do, I'll fight you outside the hall!'

Everybody laughed. Then they walked to the front of the room and bought their raffle tickets from George.

Dad pushed through the crowd and walked up to me. He looked at me and smiled. Then he put his arms round me and we stood in the middle of the room. We were both crying.

A strike can destroy some families. It can bring other families together. Can you believe it? Dad and I are friends because of ballet dancing!

Chapter 12 Billy's Story: The Audition

One minute everybody thought I was strange. Then they wanted to give me money. Dad was looking for things to sell. Even Tony was selling raffle tickets. We needed money for bus tickets to London, for food and a hotel.

Then we were on the bus to London. It was very exciting.

'Is London a nice place, Dad?' I asked.

'I don't know. I've never been there.'

'You've never been to London? But it's the capital city?'

'There are no mines in London,' he said.

'Don't you think about anything except mines?'

I thought my dad knew everything. But he doesn't. I'm only twelve years old and I'm going to London. He's forty-five and he's never travelled south of Durham!

The journey took a long time. At first I didn't like London. There were lots of houses, bigger than the houses in Everington, more and more streets, and bigger and bigger buildings ...

Our hotel wasn't very good. Dad didn't like our breakfast. I couldn't eat any food because I was so frightened.

'Aren't you going to eat your egg?' Dad asked me. 'You must eat something. You need food in your stomach today.'

'I can't,' I said. But I ate some bread.

We went on the bus to the ballet school. I stood at the bottom of the steps and looked up at the big, old building. I felt sick.

'Look at this place!' Dad said. 'You want to go here? How much money will it cost?'

We walked up the steps into the school. Do you know something? I hated it.

We've made a mistake, I thought. I want to dance. But this place is full of posh people, it's not for me.

The changing rooms were full of boys and girls. Their voices were posh and they didn't understand me.

'Is this your first audition?' a boy asked me. 'It's my second. I'm Simon. What's your name?'

'Billy Elliot, from Everington near Durham.'

'Durham? Isn't there a big church in Durham?'

'I don't know. I haven't visited Durham.'

'Sorry,' he said. 'I don't understand you. You talk strangely.'

'Oh be quiet,' I said.

I hated it. I ran out of the changing room and found Dad at the top of the stairs.

'Dad, Dad. I don't want to do the audition. Please ...'

I didn't finish the sentence. Dad took my shoulder and spun me round.

'Go back in there!' he shouted.

He pushed me back into the changing room and closed the door.

Soon after that the audition started. There were five teachers sitting at the front of the room.

'And you are ...?'

'Billy Elliot. From Everington.'

'Ah, yes. Now, Billy, please start dancing.'

They watched me and talked quietly. They didn't speak to me again. I felt stupid. You can't dance when you feel stupid. At home, in front of Miss, I can dance. But not here, in this room. These people didn't want me.

Then it was time for the audition dance. The music started and I knew it was the wrong music for the ballet school. It was too modern, too fast. I stood in front of the teachers and didn't move.

Then I heard Miss's voice in my ear.

'Dance, Billy! You're in front of these people – so dance!'

So I danced. There wasn't much time because the music was finishing. But I danced. Then I looked up at the teachers.

'Thank you, Billy. You can go now.'

I ran out of the room. I was very frightened. Dad found all that money, and I couldn't dance.

I wanted to cry. I went into the changing room and saw that boy – Simon.

'Are you OK? He came up to me. 'Don't cry. It's only an audition. You can come back next year.'

Then the stupid boy came and sat next to me. He put his arm round my shoulder.

'Go away!' I shouted.

'You'll be OK ...'

I hit him in the mouth and he fell on the floor. George will be proud of me, I thought.

The teachers ran into the changing room. Blood was coming out of Simon's nose and mouth. They won't let me into the school now. I thought.

They called Dad and me into the room and talked to us.

'Mr Elliot, the students in this school do not fight,' one of the teachers said. 'Do you understand?'

'Yes,' Dad and I said at the same time.

'This fight is very serious. Does anyone want to say anything?'

He looked at the other teachers.

'I have a few questions,' one man said. 'Billy, why are you interested in ballet?'

'I don't know,' I said.

'What do you like best about ballet?'

'The dancing.'

'He dances all the time,' Dad said. 'Every night after school.'

'Do you like ballet, Mr Elliot?' another teacher asked.

'I don't know a lot about it,' Dad said.

'Students at this school work very hard, both in their dancing and their school work. Do you want Billy to dance?'

Dad looked at me, then at the teachers.

'Oh, yes,' he said. 'Oh, yes.'

And that was almost the end of the audition.

'How do you feel when you dance?' they asked me.

How can I explain to them? I thought. They come from a different world from my dad and me.

'I don't know,' I said. 'When I dance, my body is full of fire. I forget everything.'

Then Dad and I went home.

Chapter 13 Jackie's Story: The Letter

The trip to London was bad, from beginning to end.

It cost a lot of money. Everybody tried to help, but they couldn't give enough. Ten pences and fifty pences and two pences – nothing more.

One day somebody knocked at the door. Tony wasn't at home. I opened the door and saw Gary Stewart, Tony's old friend from school. The man we saw in the supermarket. The scab.

I took him into the sitting room. He didn't sit down but stood in the middle of the floor.



'How do you feel when you dance?'

'I want to help Billy,' he said. He took an envelope out of his pocket and put it on the table. 'There's the money,' he said. 'Billy needs a future.'

I looked at the envelope.

'I can't accept that, Gary,' I said.

'It's not for you, it's for Billy,' he said. 'Accept it for him.'

He turned and quickly left the room. I heard him open the front door. Then he stopped and came back into the room.

'Nobody knows about the money, Jackie,' he said. 'I won't tell anyone. I won't tell my wife. You don't need to tell anyone.'

He left the house and I sat down. I looked at the envelope.

Then I opened it and counted the money. Fifty pounds.

I can't hide this money from Tony, I thought. He won't want it. He'll call it scab money, dirty money. But I'm going to accept it.

So Billy and I went to London. Poor little Billy. The audition was bad. The other children at the school had everything – rich parents, good homes, good schools. Billy didn't have anything. Then he hit that boy.

When we got home, I felt angry and sad. I tried to go back into the mine during the strike. I took Gary's money and I sold my wife's wedding ring. And then we went to London with its big houses and posh people. In Everington, we've got our jobs in the mines and a hard life. And now the government is taking our jobs away from us. We've got nothing.

Tony and Nan were waiting at home.

'We did OK,' I told them, but they saw Billy's face.

They knew he was unhappy.

'I'll make some dinner,' I said.

'It's OK, Dad,' Billy said. 'I'm tired. I'll go upstairs and lie on the bed.' Later, I heard him. The sad little boy was crying. He can't win against all those posh people.

That evening, I thought about Billy again. We're not going to stop, I thought. He'll try the audition again next year. If he wants

to go to ballet school, then he will. I thought about the teachers at the audition. When Billy talked about dancing, they listened to him. His words were important. Maybe the teachers weren't bad people. When we left, one of them spoke to me.

'Good luck with the strike, Mr Elliot,' he said. 'I hope you win.' Even in a posh ballet school, some people want to help us.

It was a long time before we heard from the ballet school. We waited one week, then another week. And then the letter came.

Nan took it from the postman.

'Post!' she shouted.

She knew the letter was from the ballet school. She gave it to me.

'Open it now,' said Tony.

'I can't,' I said. 'It's Billy's letter. He'll open it when he gets back from school.'

I put the letter on the table and it stayed there all day. I picked it up and put it down again. Later, Nan and Tony picked it up. Then our neighbours came into the kitchen and looked at the letter. George arrived to look at the letter. It was getting dirty, so Nan put it in her pocket. Then she forgot about it.

'Where's the letter?' I shouted, and we searched the kitchen.

Half an hour later, Nan found it. It was very dirty because she keeps bits of bread and butter in her pocket.

Billy came home from school at four o'clock. Tony, Nan and I were waiting for him. This was an important day for the family.

The door opened and there was Billy. I looked at him and then at the letter. He walked to the table and picked it up. Nobody spoke. We were all uncomfortable. Then Billy went into Nan's room and closed the door.

We heard Billy open the letter and take it out of the envelope. And then we heard nothing. Nothing.

Tony jumped up. I pushed in front of him and opened the bedroom door. Billy was sitting in the chair by Nan's bed. He

looked up. He was crying. Oh Billy, I thought.

'I got into the school,' he said quietly.

'YEEEEEEEEEEEESSS!' Tony and I shouted. I took the letter and read it. YEEEEEEEEEESS!

'He got in!' I shouted.

The neighbours ran into the house. Nan was kissing everybody.

Tony put Billy on the table.

'Dance!' he said, and Billy danced.

I gave him a big kiss and ran down the road. I wanted to tell my friends. Billy's got into the ballet school!

I ran quickly down the road to the pub. I opened the door and ...

'HE'S IN! HE DID IT!'

The men in the pub were silent.

'Don't you know, Jackie?' somebody said. 'The strike has ended. We're going back to work on Monday. The bosses won.'

We didn't have a big party for Billy. Everybody was thinking about the end of the strike. We lost. I can work again now. I can pay for the ballet school, I thought.



That happened a few years ago. We lost and the government won. And slowly, the mines closed. Here in Everington we were quite lucky. Our mine stayed open longer than most of the other mines. But it's closed now.

Our lives continue in the town, but everything is different. I'm an old man. I'm happy to stop working down the mine. But Tony can't find another job.

We lost the mines. We lost that future, but we won another future — for Billy. And that's important, isn't it?

Chapter 14 Billy's Story: Goodbye to Everington

'One and two and three and four and up. And hold!'

Miss saw me and walked across the room.

'Billy!'

'I'm going to London today, Miss.'

'I know, Debbie told me.'

'I'll miss you, Miss.'

'No, you won't.'

'I will, Miss.'

'Go and find out about life, Billy,' she said. 'Forget about me and ... this place. Good luck, Billy.'

She gave me a tired smile and turned back to the girls.

'OK. Heads up. Bottoms out.'

I don't understand, I thought. She taught me for a long time. Isn't she pleased for me? I don't know. I'll never understand Miss.

I've said goodbye to a lot of people. At school, all the pupils met in the hall and the head teacher made a speech.

'We're very proud of Billy. We're happy that the school helped him ...'

Helped me? Nobody at school helped me to dance. It was my family and Mrs Wilkinson and the neighbours who found the money for me. They helped me.

I went to the church with Dad. I wanted to say goodbye to Mum.

'Your mum is very proud of you,' Dad said. 'I listened to her and I changed my mind about the dancing.'

I thought about the time I saw Mum in the kitchen. Did Dad see her too?

'I asked her to help me. And then I knew that I was wrong. She wanted you to dance. She's still watching over you. She'll watch over you in London, too.'

Maybe it was true. Maybe she's with me all the time. That's why I saw her. 'I'm still here,' she was telling me.

'I'm frightened, Dad,' I said.

'That's OK, son,' Dad said. 'We're all frightened sometimes. You'll be OK.'

Now, the bus to London was waiting.

I went home. Dad and Tony picked up my bags. Nan was sitting at the table, watching me. How much does she understand?

I asked myself. I don't know. I kissed her and she put her arms round me.

'We'll miss the bus,' Dad said.

Nan put something in my hand – it was a five-pound note.

'Nan!' I said. 'You haven't got much money ...'

'It's her money,' Dad said. 'She wants you to take it.'

I kissed her again and she pushed me out of the door. We walked down the street and I heard somebody call to me.

'Hey! Dancing boy!' It was Michael. I ran back to him.

'We're going to miss the bus!' Dad shouted.

'I'll see you soon,' I said to Michael.

He didn't say anything, he just looked at me. I moved closer to him and kissed him.

'Stop it!' he said. 'People will see. You're going away, but I live here!' I laughed and went back to Dad. We ran to the bus. The driver

jumped out and took my bag. I got on the bus and sat at the back. Dad and Tony stood in the street outside. Tony came close to the

window.

'What?' I said.

'I'll miss you,' he said. He didn't want the bus passengers to hear him.

'What?' I said again. 'I can't hear you.'

The bus started to move.

'I'll miss you!' Tony shouted loudly.

Everybody on the bus heard him and started to laugh. Tony laughed too.

'I'll kill you!' he shouted.

The people on the bus were laughing. Dad was laughing and Tony was laughing and I was laughing. Then the bus went round the corner ... and they were gone.

Chapter 15 Jackie's Story: Billy Elliot, Dancer

I'm sitting in a big theatre in London. Tony is here. He's wearing an old jacket and jeans.

'I'm a miner,' he says. 'I want everyone to know.'

These theatre seats cost more than a hundred pounds, but we didn't pay any money. Outside, above the entrance to the theatre, there is a big sign. It says: 'The Royal Ballet Company. Billy Elliot.'

I speak to one of the workers in the theatre.

'Please tell Billy Elliot that his family are here.'

I always tell Billy that we're here. Tonight is very important.

This is Billy's first time as the main dancer in the Royal Ballet Company. Mrs Wilkinson was right about him.

'Look,' Tony whispers.

He points at the man sitting next to him. The man is wearing a purple hat and lipstick.

'What?' I asked.

'Dad. It's Michael Caffrey. Remember?'

'Michael? Is that you? What are you doing here?'

'I can't miss this ballet!' Michael says.

'He's gay,' Tony whispers. 'I always knew he was gay.'

Michael reaches over and shakes my hand.

'Are you very proud of Billy, Mr Elliot?' he asks. He speaks like a Londoner now.

'I am.'

'You put Billy here in this theatre,' says Michael.

That's true. I took a lot of coal out of the ground so Billy can

dance. My father and his father and their work in the mines built this theatre. Coal helped to build everything in this country. The coal is still there, in the ground. But the mines are gone.

The theatre lights go down and the music starts. A minute later Billy is on the stage. He runs on, stops ... and he jumps. Everybody in the theatre is watching him. He jumps very high and he stays in the air.

He's not going to come down, I think. Then he lands and looks into the theatre. He smiles at us.

'Hey, Billy Elliot!' Michael shouts loudly.

You don't shout in theatres! People turn round. Some of them are angry but others are smiling.

'Good luck, our Billy!' Tony shouts. He is standing up. Everyone is looking at him and smiling. I stand up too.

'Billy! Billy Elliot! Our Billy!' I shout very loudly.

And Billy smiles at us. Then he jumps again, just for Tony and me.