Declaration of War

A scene from The Spitfire Club play by Alfie James

**NORMAN:** *(NORMAN steps forward)* It was 1939 when the Second World War broke out. We were just ten years old.

**BOBBY:** I was nine.

**NORMAN**: No, you weren't. You were ten. We were in the same class.

**BOBBY:** I hadn't had my birthday.

**NORMAN:** I was only ten years old. I was playing with my toy planes in the living room. Mum and Dad were sitting by the wireless. That's when the Prime Minister came on and told everyone that we were at War with Germany.

**BOBBY:** I wasn’t scared.

**NORMAN**: I think my parents were expecting it. They didn't think that I realised, but they had been really quieted all morning. I knew something was wrong. My Dad was standing smoking the pipe my Grandad had given to him. He would always smoke that when something was wrong. Everything went quiet after the Prime Minister had finished. Like dead quiet. Like time had stopped and everyone was still.

*(The radio crackles and we hear the declaration of War speech by Prime Minister Chamberlain. There is a long pause after. BOBBY exits and NORMAN sits on the floor playing with two toy planes. CATHERINE and HARRY enter)*

**CATHERINE:** You're not going.

**HARRY:** Cathy...

**CATHERINE:** You're not going. I don't care what you say, you're not going. Your place is here with your family.

**HARRY:** Cathy...

*(HARRY moves across to CATHERINE and tries to embrace her, but she moves away)*

I doubt that I'll have a choice.

**CATHERINE:** Why did this have to happen?

**HARRY:** Because of that lunatic in Germany, that's why. *(Short pause)* It'll be all right. It'll be over by Christmas, just you see.

**CATHERINE:** That's what they said last time.

*(CATHERINE notices NORMAN crashing the two planes in mid-air, making the sound effects as they hurtle to the floor)*

Norman, stop doing that.

**HARRY:** He's just playing. He doesn't understand.

**CATHERINE:** Give me the planes, Norman. Give Mummy the planes.

**HARRY:** I've got to go. I've got to do my bit. I'm a pilot. It's what I'm trained to do. We've always known that this might happen.

**CATHERINE:** *(CATHERINE moves across to NORMAN)* Give mummy the planes, Norman. Stop being naughty.

**NORMAN:** I don't want to. I was only playing.

**HARRY:** Let the boy be. It'll be all right. I promise you. I promise everything will be all right.

*(The sound of the air raid siren echoes through the stage. NORMAN jumps in fear and almost pounces into his mother's arms. HARRY moves quickly to the front of the stage. They all look up into the air)*

**CATHERINE:** It's started already. It's started already!

*(During the next speech CATHERINE and HARRY exit. NORMAN takes out some toy soldiers and strands them up on the floor)*

**BOBBY:** *(Enters to the side of the stage, speaks directly to the audience)* It was the sound of the air raid siren. A loud winding noise that startled you and made you stop doing whatever you were doing at once. Everyone was frightened of it at first. Well, accept me of course. I wasn’t scared. But most people quickly became used to it. This time it was a false alarm.

A close up of a sign

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