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*Dramatic Publishing*

*What  
We Lost  
Along  
the Way*

*Drama by C.E. Glanville*

# What We Lost Along the Way

**Drama. By C.E. Glanville.** *Cast: 7m., 3w.* This family drama begins in 1939 London during the evacuation of almost two million British children and other vulnerable populations to the countryside to keep them safe from predicted German air raids on industrial centers. The play centers on 15-year-old Serena Moffitt and her younger brother, Joseph, who are sent from their working class suburb of Brixton to the county of Devon where they end up billeted with the Hargreaves, an upper-class family struggling to maintain their fortune with two sons who are close in age to the Moffitts. Serena finds herself at odds with the older Will, as stubborn and smart as she is, while Joseph discovers his first best friend in Will's highly dramatic 10-year-old brother, Donald. As mysteries are solved and fears are exposed, the young characters navigate their way through the intricate terrain of adolescence. Set against the backdrop of World War II, the Moffitts and the Hargreaves uncover truths about friendship, family and love, and find that even after great loss, the possibility of hope remains. *Flexible staging. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes. Code: WH2.*

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By

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# What We Lost Along the Way

## CHARACTERS

**SERENA MOFFITT:** 15 years old; an extremely bright, stubborn girl from the working-class London suburb of Brixton.

**JOSPEH MOFFITT:** Serena's 11-year-old brother; a cheerful but slightly tentative boy who has been weakened by a bout of scarlet fever as a young child.

**WILL HARGREAVES:** 15 years old; at odds with his father, equally stubborn and often arrogant, but fiercely protective of his brother, Donald.

**DONALD HARGREAVES:** Will's 10-year-old brother; a sweet-natured, artistic boy who is drawn to beautiful things, including his mother's jewelry and makeup. Finds his first best friend in Joseph.

**SIMON PRITCHARD:** 11 years old; a friend of Joseph's from Brixton who is far more mischievous and finds himself involved in petty crime.

**CATHERINE (MRS.) HARGREAVES:** late 30s; Will and Donald's mother, always elegantly dressed and very sheltered.

**JAMES (MR.) HARGREAVES:** 40s; Will and Donald's father, a man who is struggling with a change in his fortune and is at odds with both of his sons.

**MAJOR:** Catherine's father; a veteran of the British Raj where he enforced colonial rule in India; he has seen much in his life and little fazes him.

HANNAH BLESSINGTON: late 50s; the kindly, maternal cook of Churscombe House.

ED MOYLE: a local farmer who is ambitious and dangerous.

VOICE OF CHAMBERLAIN: recording or spoken from off-stage.

TIME: 1939–1940.

PLACE: Devon, England.



# What We Lost Along the Way

## ACT I

### Scene 1

*(The Evacuation: September 1, 1939.)*

*We hear snippets of archival BBC recordings that report the invasion of Poland by Germany and the subsequent evacuation of children from London. That dissolves into the sound of a train whistle. A train cabin with seats facing one another on its way from London to Devon. On one side, SERENA MOFFITT, 15 years old, nicely dressed, sits quietly reading a book while her 11-year-old brother, JOSEPH MOFFITT, plays with his friend, SIMON PRITCHARD, also 11. Each of them has a brown paper label with their names and ages listed on them attached to their clothing. Along with some luggage are three gas masks. Both SIMON and JOSEPH are maneuvering tiny toy planes with accompanying sounds of battle; SIMON is very enthusiastic, JOSEPH a bit less so.)*

SIMON. Ha! Another Jerry taken down by the RAF! *(He makes the sound of an explosion.)* And you're out!

JOSEPH *(disappointed)*. I don't see why I have to be the Germans all the time.

SIMON *(matter-of-fact)*. Well, one of us has to.

JOSEPH. Yes, but—

*(SIMON takes out his gas mask and begins to try it on.)*

SIMON. Let's put these on! Then we can go and scare the Trelawney twins. I bet we could make them cry. They're only 5, you know.

*(JOSEPH starts to reach for his mask.)*

SERENA *(not looking up from her book)*. You will do no such thing, Simon Pritchard.

*(SIMON already has his gas mask halfway on.)*

SIMON *(muffled)*. We just want to be certain they fit. Right, Joseph?

*(JOSEPH nods.)*

SERENA *(still reading)*. You know perfectly well that they fit. And they are not toys, so please, put them away.

*(JOSEPH follows her order while SIMON pouts.)*

SIMON. But there's nothing to do!

SERENA. There's plenty to do; you can read or draw or play card games with Joseph.

JOSEPH *(reaching into his satchel)*. Mum packed some pencils and paper—we could play Noughts and Crosses?

SIMON. Mmm, I don't want to do any of those things. *(Sighs heavily and sprawls on the seat.)* We've been on the train for ages already.

JOSEPH. Actually, I think it's only been an hour.

SIMON. No, it must be longer than that, I'm sure of it. Pretty soon it'll be dark.

JOSEPH *(confused)*. Is that true, Serena?

SERENA *(checking her watch)*. Hardly. It's only 10 past 12.

SIMON. Oh, right then! *(Bouncing up.)* I'm going to see how long it takes to run up and down the whole train. Want to come?

*(SERENA says nothing but gives her brother a look.)*

JOSEPH. No, thanks. I'm going to stay put for now.

SIMON (*happily*). OK, bye! (*He dashes out of the cabin.*)

SERENA (*shaking her head*). I don't know why you play with him.

JOSEPH. Simon's not so bad. I like him.

SERENA. You like everybody.

JOSEPH. He doesn't mind that I can't do as much.

SERENA (*putting down her book and looking at him*). I'm glad you have a friend, but I don't want you getting into any trouble because of him. All right?

JOSEPH. All right. (*Pause.*) Serena, may I please have a sandwich?

SERENA. No, we have at least four hours to go. We have to save our rations.

JOSEPH. I'm terribly hungry!

SERENA. I doubt that very much. If you eat all the sandwiches now, there won't be anything for later, and who knows when we'll be eating once we arrive?

JOSEPH (*teasing her*). I'm going to write to Mum and tell her you're trying to starve me.

SERENA. Go right ahead.

JOSEPH. But you're supposed to be looking after me.

SERENA (*teasing back*). You be careful or I just might leave you with a farmer who makes you sleep with the cows and chickens.

JOSEPH (*defiantly*). I'm not afraid of any cows and chickens!

SERENA. Well then, maybe I'll give you to a nasty old vicar who'll feed you nothing but bread and water and keep you in the attic. And I'll just go off by myself to the seashore. How would you like that?

*(She has said all this in a light, joking manner, but JOSEPH's face crumples, and she realizes he has taken her seriously.)*

JOSEPH (*growing upset*). Serena, you wouldn't really leave me, would you?

SERENA (*trying to calm him and pulling him close*). No, no, Joseph, I was only teasing—

JOSEPH (*frantically looking around the cabin*). Why do we have to go anywhere? I don't want to be here! I just want to go home!

SERENA. I know you do, love. I'm sorry. (*She strokes his hair.*) Look, I shouldn't have said those things to you. It was very unkind of me.

JOSEPH (*still upset but snuggling close to her*). Yes, it was.

SERENA. But we have to be brave and not complain.

JOSEPH. But—

SERENA. We're doing our bit for the war just like ... Mum joining the ATS or Dad enlisting in the army. We have responsibilities now, just like they do.

JOSEPH. I s'pose so.

SERENA (*trying to convince him*). Besides, it could be a great adventure. We'll be in the countryside! All that fresh air and sunshine will be good for you.

JOSEPH (*grumbling*). I don't like sunshine.

SERENA. Just think where we could end up and who we might meet. Maybe you'll make some new friends who'll want to hear all about our exciting life in London.

JOSEPH. But we don't have an exciting life in London.

SERENA. Well, they don't know that. (*Trying to think of something else.*) And there might be baby animals for you to play with?

JOSEPH (*perks up at this*). Like what?

SERENA. Oh, I don't know, maybe chicks, lambs, rabbits. You've always liked rabbits.

JOSEPH. I guess so.

*(Pause.)*

SERENA. Mum packed some biscuits for us as a special treat. I was going to save them, but I think we might need them now, what do you think? Would you like one?

JOSEPH *(much calmer now)*. Yes, please.

*(She takes a cloth napkin out of her satchel and carefully unwraps the biscuits, giving one to JOSEPH and taking one for herself. They munch on them as the train whistles.)*

JOSEPH. Where are we going, Serena?

SERENA. We're heading toward Devon, but I'm not sure exactly where we'll end up.

JOSEPH. When can we go back home?

SERENA. I don't know. But I can't imagine it will last very long. Everyone says the war will be all over by Christmas.

JOSEPH. So we'll be back by Christmas?

SERENA. You never know.

*(He sits next to her and takes his toy plane out of his pocket, so she goes back to her reading.)*

JOSEPH *(busy with his plane)*. But you promise you won't leave me anywhere?

SERENA *(not looking up but ruffling his hair)*. You can't get rid of me that easy.

## Scene 2

*(Parish Hall; the village of Marldon, Devon. Early evening of that same day.)*

*In shadow, we see the silhouettes of children and adults and hear the chaotic sounds of movement and voices as*

*the village folk of Marldon come to pick out evacuees to take into their homes. Gradually, the sound fades away, and the light comes up to reveal SERENA, JOSEPH and SIMON sitting on a long bench in an empty hall. They are still waiting to be picked.*

*The sun is just beginning to set. SIMON and JOSEPH are listlessly playing a game. SERENA is still reading but occasionally rubs her neck and stretches her legs.)*

SIMON. Is there anything else to eat, Serena?

SERENA. Afraid not, Simon. We went through all the sandwiches and biscuits an hour ago.

JOSEPH. Do you think we'll get chosen soon?

SERENA. I'm sure we will. The billeting officer said that there should be a few more people coming.

JOSEPH. But Simon can stay with us, can't he?

SERENA. I honestly don't know. Only if someone is willing to take the three of us together.

JOSEPH. But Simon doesn't want to be billeted all alone!

SIMON (*confidently*). Oh, I don't mind. I can always find something to do. Even on my own. Last summer I went to stay at my uncle's farm in Sussex all by myself. I had to help feed the chickens everyday, but then I would run off and climb up this Elm tree where I could see the whole place. (*He stands on the bench.*)

SERENA. Simon, get down please—

SIMON. And I could spy on everyone, too. So, my cousin was walking out with this girl, and once they came right over to my tree and stood underneath, but they didn't know I was there, see? And they started getting all lovey dovey, you know, all mmmm. (*He mimics the sound of kissing.*)

*(JOSEPH giggles.)*

SIMON (*cont'd*). So then what do you suppose I did?

SERENA. I don't even want to guess.

SIMON. Well, first, I spit a few times. And the girl stopped and said "Is it raining?" And then I dropped a couple of blackberries I'd picked, and one went right down the front of the girl's blouse! So, my cousin finally looked up and saw me. He shook his fist and said he was going to wring my neck when I got down!

*(SERENA chuckles in spite of herself. At that moment, a tall, gaunt man, ED MOYLE, comes into the hall. He does not smile. They see him and stop laughing. SIMON slowly sits back down.)*

MOYLE. So you're what's left, eh?

*(He walks around them, looking them over as if they are cattle. He stops at SERENA.)*

MOYLE. How old are you?

SERENA. Fifteen, sir. My brother Joseph here is 11. And our friend Simon is also 11.

MOYLE. Don't have much use for a girl, but you might work.

*(MOYLE indicates JOSEPH. JOSEPH looks at SERENA with terror.)*

SERENA (*firmly*). Joseph and I stay together. I'm sorry. You have to take both of us, or neither of us can go.

MOYLE. Huh, is that how it is?

SERENA (*nervously*). Yes, sir. That's how it is.

MOYLE (*grunts*). I don't want to feed two of you. (*He turns to SIMON.*) Suppose I'll take you then. I could use an extra pair of hands, but you don't look very strong.

SIMON (*cheerfully*). But I am! (*He stands and makes a muscle.*) I'm much stronger than Joseph.

JOSEPH (*nodding*). It's true, he is.

SIMON. And I'm awfully fast—

MOYLE. Stop your chattering, boy! I'm not interested. Now, get your things, and let's go.

*(SIMON is shocked and looks at SERENA. JOSEPH helps him gather his rucksack and gas mask together.)*

SIMON (*whispering*). I don't want to go with him!

SERENA. Don't worry, Simon, we'll find out where you are and come for a visit. After all, it can't be that far. And we'll see you at school. Or church.

JOSEPH. Yeah, we'll still be in the same class.

*(SIMON is moving reluctantly and keeps dropping his things.)*

MOYLE (*gruffly*). That's enough playing around! Come along, I haven't got time to waste!

*(SIMON follows him to the door and then turns back to JOSEPH and SERENA.)*

SIMON (*quietly*). Goodbye.

SERENA. Goodbye, Simon.

*(He exits. SERENA and JOSEPH are shaken and sit frozen on the bench for a long moment. JOSEPH slips his hand into SERENA's, and she holds it tightly.)*

*Just then, an older woman, HANNAH BLESSINGTON, with frizzy hair escaping from under her hat, scurries into the hall. She appears to be in her late 50s, wearing too many layers and carrying too many packages.)*



HANNAH. Oh, my goodness, I meant to get here earlier. Are you the only little ones left? (*Moves toward them.*) Mind if I sit down? (*She collapses on to the bench with a sigh, her packages spilling around her.*) Oh, my feet! I'm getting too old for all this running around. Now, normally I would send Enid to do the shopping, but she wasn't feeling very well this morning, so I let her lie in a bit, you know. So, here I am.

(*SERENA and JOSEPH nod, not quite knowing what else to do.*)

HANNAH. My goodness, I haven't even told you my name. I'm Mrs. Hannah Blessington.

SERENA (*formally*). How do you do, Mrs. Blessington? I'm Serena Moffitt and this is my brother, Joseph. We're very pleased to meet you.

HANNAH. My, what nice manners you have! We weren't sure what to expect. Mrs. Hargreaves will be pleased about that.

SERENA (*tentatively*). Who is Mrs. Hargreaves?

HANNAH. Oh, she's the lady of Churscombe House.

JOSEPH. Is that where you live?

HANNAH. I do. I've been the Hargreaves' cook for too many years to count. When we heard about the evacuation on the wireless, Mrs. Hargreaves thought it only proper to do their bit for the war effort and offer up a place to stay. (*She hesitates.*) But I think she really only wanted one evacuee.

JOSEPH. But we have to stay together or we can't go!

SERENA. Joseph, don't be so loud—

HANNAH (*shrugs*). Well, I suppose I'll have to take you both then. You can't separate family, can you? I don't think the Hargreaves will object. Or they shouldn't have sent me—I would have brought the whole train home! I can't stand the idea of children being left all on their own.

SERENA. Are you sure the Hargreaves won't mind us staying there?

HANNAH. They certainly have the space for it. Everyone has to do their part now, you know. (*Confidentially.*) Even the landed gentry.

*(SERENA is unnerved by this information while JOSEPH brightens.)*

JOSEPH. Is Churscombe House very grand then?

HANNAH. Oh, it is! Well, I think it is. I know some might say it wasn't what it used to be back before the Great War. They've had to sell off half the land, you know, and cut back on staff and such.

JOSEPH. Will we have to sleep in the attic?

HANNAH. The attic? Gracious, no! I imagine we can find you both a room of your own.

SERENA. We don't mind sharing, honestly.

HANNAH. There's plenty of room. In fact, you two might get a bit lost at first, but you'll soon find your way around.

JOSEPH. How many rooms are there?

*(At this point, the light goes up on an elegant Edwardian dollhouse, a miniature replica of Churscombe, situated upstage and suspended above them. As HANNAH talks, the tiny rooms light up and then fade.)*

HANNAH. Hmm, let's see ... When you first enter, there's a splendid foyer where Mrs. Hargreaves always places a bunch of flowers from the garden. That's where she spends most of her time these days, in the garden with her roses. If you go to the right, you'll find yourself in the library; it's a little dark and musty in there for my taste, with books up to the ceiling. And then there's Mr. Hargreaves study,

where he does his accounts. Next to it is the Major's reading room; he's always burrowed in there like a mole. You can hardly get him out to clean.

*(JOSEPH is listening with curiosity while SERENA is growing more apprehensive.)*

HANNAH *(cont'd)*. Just off the garden is the conservatory where Mrs. Hargreaves tends to her hot house blooms. It's usually where they take tea since it's always nice and warm in there. I'm down in the kitchen at the back of the house most of the time with my girls. And, naturally, the children spend a lot of time there with me. They seem to prefer it to the rest of the house.

SERENA. Children? The Hargreaves have children?

HANNAH. Oh, didn't I mention that?

SERENA *(slightly annoyed)*. No, you didn't.

HANNAH. Why yes, there's William. He might be about your age, I suspect. Will is their firstborn, *(She beams.)* and I can tell you, he's as kind to me as if I were his own mother. And so smart, wants to study medicine, you see. *(Confidentially.)* Not too interested in the estate much to the dismay of his father. *(To SERENA.)* You might find him quite handsome. All of the local girls do.

*(JOSEPH smiles. SERENA looks further dismayed.)*

HANNAH *(cont'd)*. Yes, indeed. And then there's Donald ...  
*(She sighs heavily.)*

JOSEPH. Donald?

HANNAH *(noticing the light and jumps up)*. Oh, dear, it's getting late, we should be going! *(SERENA and JOSEPH begin to collect their belongings.)* I need to be back to finish up dinner—I left it in Enid's hands, Lord knows what

that one's been up to while I've been gone. Now, are these all your things?

JOSEPH. Yes, mum. (*Indicating her bags.*) I can carry some of those, too, if you like.

HANNAH. Aren't you as sweet as can be? (*She scurries offstage.*)

(*SERENA rolls her eyes and buttons her coat as JOSEPH, loaded up with bags, trots after HANNAH.*)

JOSEPH (*impatiently*). Come on, Serena! You don't want to be left behind!

(*SERENA takes a last look around and exits after JOSEPH.*)