

Lenny thought about Mum and Dad a lot, hoping and hoping they were safe. He longed to see them again.

At school things had got a lot worse. The boys had started to shout things at him and make fun of his name.

'Lenny Levi's done a wee-wee!' they jeered. 'Wets his bed, don't he?'

Lenny turned hot with anger and shame. It was true – about the bed. It was only sometimes, and he didn't think anyone at school knew about it. He guessed that Joyce must have told them.



Nanny was grim-faced in the mornings when she had to deal with wet sheets. But Nelly found out and came to Lenny's rescue.

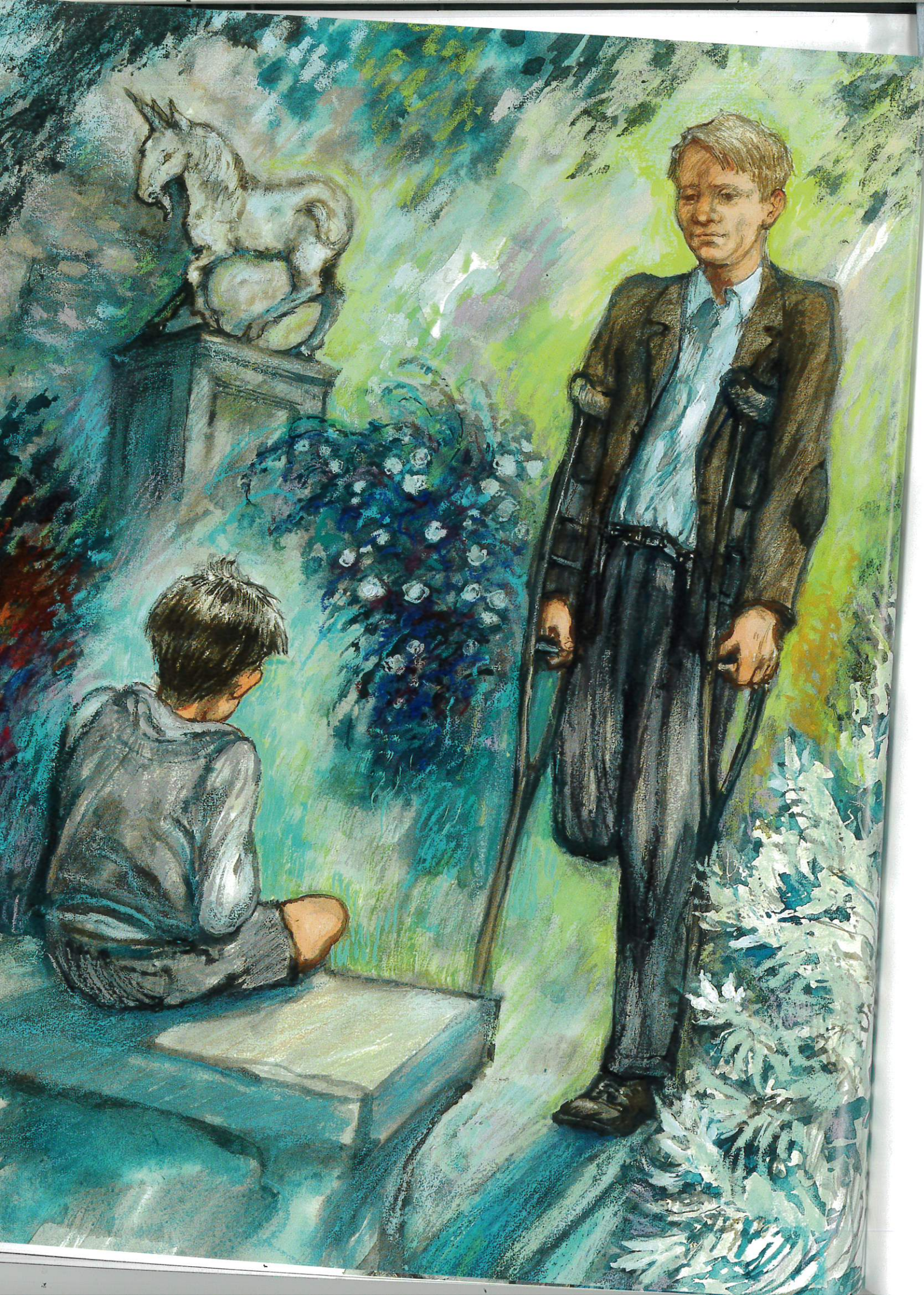
'You can beat this, Lenny,' she told him. 'Everybody does in the end.' She smuggled some spare bedclothes into the attic so that Lenny could put them on before Nanny came in the morning.



She whisked away wet sheets and washed them herself. And she lent Lenny her big alarm clock. Lenny set it twice in the night and it went off with a great clang, but the girls never woke up.

The bedwetting got better. But the boys at school went on teasing.





One afternoon, Mick came across Lenny sitting hunched on a bench in the walled garden and politely failed to notice his red-rimmed eyes.

'Homesick?' he asked. At first Lenny was too upset to answer. Then he blurted out all about what the boys at school had said. 'It's not even true any more! Well, hardly at all. But I don't suppose they'll ever stop saying it.'

'I used to wet my bed when I was your age,' Mick told him. 'It was when they sent me away to boarding school.' 'Had you done something wrong?' asked Lenny.

'No, they thought it would do me good,' said Mick. 'My father went there. It was awful. I got teased all the time. Then it started again when I was in hospital after . . .' He looked down at where his leg had been.

'But you were grown up then!' said Lenny, amazed. 'Yes. I cried a lot too. But I got through it somehow. And so will you, or my name's not Mick De Vass!'

There was a long silence. Lenny stared at Mick. 'You're the war hero!' he said at last. 'You've got medals for bravery - Nelly told me!'



'I was frightened all the time in the fighting,' said Mick. 'But I suppose you can't be brave if you're not frightened in the first place. My father was really brave, a fine officer. I am only a private.'

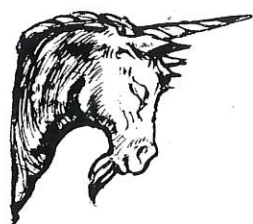
'My dad's a private,' said Lenny proudly. 'He's fighting the Germans, like you did. I've got his badge.'

'I never wanted to fight Germans or anyone else,' Mick told him. 'It's cruelty, bullying and oppression we're fighting against.' Lenny was not quite sure what this meant but he got the general idea.

'I used to come here to this garden to see the unicorn when I was a boy in the school holidays,' said Mick. 'I used to long to be brave and manly and all the things they wanted me to be. But there are different kinds of courage. And I'll tell you one thing. The boys who say those things to you haven't got much. None at all, in fact!'

Later, when he was alone, Lenny thought a lot about what Mick had said. Gradually the bedwetting stopped altogether. Knowing a real war hero who had had the same problem helped. He even forgot about prowling lions.

But then something happened which was much worse.



Mum's weekly letters stopped coming. Every morning Lenny waited anxiously by the gates for the postman to arrive but there was nothing for him. He told nobody how worried he was. But he started to have bad dreams, about searching for Mum, and running and running, and lions leaping out at him and pinning him down with their terrible teeth and claws.

The bedwetting started again. In the end everything was just too terrible to be borne.



One night Lenny waited till the girls were asleep. He had his suitcase ready packed. He put his precious badge in his pocket and crept downstairs to the back kitchen. It was difficult to unbolt the back door without making a noise but he managed it, standing on a chair.

He was running away. He had to get back to London.



He planned not to go by the main drive which went round the front of the house, in case he was seen. Instead he would cut through the gardens, into the orchard, through a hole in the hedge and across the field to the road.

There was a bright moon. Lenny's sharp shadow tracked him nimbly along the silent paths.



In the vegetable garden he scampered past raspberry beds and rows of staked-up runner beans where anyone, or anything, could be hiding.

When he reached the orchard he broke into a run, weaving from one tree trunk to another, crouching low over his suitcase. When he reached the hedge he stopped short.



He thought he heard something moving stealthily and carefully through the grass on the other side. He listened. The whole night seemed to be breathing, purring, growling. He was sure something was coming through the hole in the hedge.

Lenny did not stop to find out what it was. He dropped his suitcase and ran.



Now the dark, many-chimneyed shape of the house seemed to be flying swiftly against the moon, too far away to run to now. But he ran all the same, wildly, until he was heaving for breath. Now he was on the path by the summerhouse. He saw the door to the walled garden. He pushed it open, fell inside and slammed it shut behind him.



Lenny was crying now, but he felt safe. The garden was completely quiet. The rosebush was frozen in the moonlight. Underneath, in its dense shadow, something glowed softly. It moved gently.

Lenny wasn't frightened. He went towards it. And at that moment he saw the unicorn.

It was alive, glimmering under the rosebush, sitting on its haunches with its one spiralling horn and its long, white, silky mane. It turned its beautiful neck and looked at him.

Lenny knelt down. He laid his head between its hooves with his face in the grass. He was very tired. Almost at once he fell, as though from a great height, into a deep sleep.

