



Pamela's War: A Moving Account of a Young Girl's Life in the Midlands during the Second World War

Cherryl Vines

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It is the third of September 1939. It is just after half past eleven in the morning. I am fifteen years and sixteen days old. The radiogram at my home, the Woodman Hotel in Clent, has just been switched off, the silence resonates around the room, and a deathly hush has fallen. The Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, has declared that, despite the best efforts of the politicians of the day to secure 'peace in our time', the inevitable has befallen us; despite pledges to the contrary, Germany has invaded Poland, Hitler has ignored requests to back down and so, therefore, 'Britain is now at war with Germany'. Minutes after the broadcast ends, my Father, Sidney Wheeler, goes quietly up to his room where he methodically loads three bullets into his First World War revolver.' This is the true story of a fifteen-year-old girl's experience of the Second World War, based around her parent's hotel in a sleepy Worcestershire village. As war is declared, her father prepares three bullets for the invasion. He will shoot the family and himself when the Germans come. In their village, local Germans are imprisoned (guilty or not). The blackout is immediate and has tragic consequences. There is a court case over an alleged poker game. An abortion nearly results in tragedy. Handsome young airmen fly low over the hotel. Pamela has a premonition of death. The business fails. An air raid very nearly kills them all. She is called up first to factory work and then to the Land Army. She marries by special licence. As the war comes to an end she is living at home with her parents and a small baby, at which point she is just twenty-one years of age. Amusing and entertaining, surprising and often moving, Pamela's account vividly captures one family's life on the home front in Worcestershire.

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