

## A ROLLER COASTER RIDE

Alice woke to the summer breeze coming through her rusty window, at 5am in the morning. The sun reflecting off the cold concrete floor into her dark blue eyes as the Rakaia Gorge whispered in the breeze and the water reflected onto her soft blond curls. Today was only her second day of her new adventure on the farm and life had already changed for her. Because of the deadly WWII, she was assigned to work on a nearby Rakaia Farm, outside of Mid Canterbury. This meant she was now no longer living her city life, with houses right beside her nose. She is now in a totally different environment and instead of living the summer life in her mid 20's with friends, she was out working on a farm. It is only January 1941 and what Alice doesn't know is that her roller coaster ride has only just started.

"Alice!" roared Graham (her new boss).  
"You're late." he explained in his dried up old voice. Today, like most days he was in a mood and was not feeling like the type of person to just let her away with it.  
"This is your warning young lady and if you breach it again you'll be in for some hard work!" shrieked Graham. Alice took that as a big wake up call, while agreeing with herself that she was now on his bad side! So she decided to get onto work straight away. So she got on with her jobs, starting with milking the cows, shifting the sheep and then shearing. It came to noon and Alice went into the smelly wooden cottage she called 'home', for lunch. Walking into her bedroom, an envelope lay on her bed - just asking to get opened, inside was another envelope and a note saying: 'To Alice, I am so sorry I know that you loved your father. Signed by her mother.' A sudden shock came to mind and she ripped the second envelope open... 'James William Talbot, K.I.A' was written in bright red pen. Alice thumped onto the hard concrete floor, thinking that it couldn't be true. But sadly it was.

The rest of the day was painful and tiring for Alice, her father was her whole world, he was bossy and mean but that was what she loved. She got weaker as the day carried on, but she would not tell Graham what she was going through because he wouldn't understand. She moved the hay from the shed into the paddock and took her time very, very slowly. "Hurry up, we don't have time to be fooling around, those sheep need their hay and I expect you to get it to them!" shouted Graham. Alice cried her way to the paddock and luckily got the hay to the sheep before dark. That night Alice lay in bed staring at the mossy grey ceiling. She told herself that this would all blow over and that tomorrow would be a better day.

4th January 1941 - Alice's 3rd day on the farm.

Alice woke early and had a refreshing shower, to just make all the bad thoughts go away. But sadly that was too hard, she still knew that her father had died and that wouldn't change a thing. But she had to carry on, knowing that her and her mother needed this money, so she went to work. Graham told her that today she would get to drive her first tractor. Graham watched beside her as she slowly turned the corners like a kid getting driving lessons. Then

he had to get on with other work, that he needed done and that meant that Alice was all on her own. She slowly started to lose her concentration, thinking about her dad was just all too much... Suddenly the tractor slides across the mused up ground... it braces for impact, BANG! It slides into the newly placed fence. Alice bursts into tears lying among a now broken tractor. She tries to get out (while teardrops fall down her face), but her leg is stuck underneath a strong bar holding her down. Graham and the other workers came racing in. "Help!" Shouted Alice.

"Everything is going to be alright, there will be help soon," promised Susie (an older girl that Alice had never talked to) . While the other land girls were getting help, Graham didn't even bother to check how she was, the only thing he was worried about was his tractor and his fence.

Finally, the ambulance and firemen arrived carefully pulling the hard metal bar slightly off her leg and lifting her into the ambulance.

5th January 1941...

Alice wakes to a caring nurse beside her, checking her blood pressure.

"Good morning," the nurse mumbled. "How are you feeling? Is your leg sore? Can I help you with anything?" Questioned the nurse.

"I'm fine thank you - but what happened to my leg, will I be ok?" Asked Alice anxiously.

"You're leg will be fine, we just need to see what the tests have shown," explained the nurse.

So Alice sat there waiting and waiting just wondering if she was going to be all right and questioning herself if the farm was right for her? Later that day Graham came in with a stern look on his face. He looked at Alice and took a deep breath.

"I don't want you on my farm." Graham commanded, "I'll find you another place or anything, I just can't have someone as clumsy as you, you're fired!" Insisted Graham. Alice was shocked, she thought that her new adventure couldn't of ended so harshly or even as quick as this.

"Well where will I go? I can't work in a factory those places are so horrible and enclosed, please just give me another chance!" Pleaded Alice. Graham decided to leave without giving Alice any acknowledgment. So Alice sat in her worn down hospital bed crying and crying and thinking that her roller coaster ride couldn't get any worse than what it is now!

6th January 1941...

Alice woke up much sadder than usual. She had lost her job, her father had died and she is in a hospital bed crying. But Alice still has luck.

"I will not give up." Alice announced out loud to herself.

Soon the nurse comes in, with a small piece of paper in her hand.

"How are you this morning?" Asked the tired nurse.

"Well not as good as I could be," sighed Alice. Then the nurse handed Alice the small piece of paper, Alice looked and took a breath of relief, the tests were good and that meant Alice could be discharged very soon. Alice was so happy, but realised that the nurse wasn't the same, she look tired and stressed out.

"May I ask why you are so tired?" Questioned Alice.

“It’s the work load we don’t have enough staff which means we need to work through the night to keep our patients happy.” Complained the nurse. Alice was sad for the nurse because she knows what it’s like to not get any sleep. But suddenly she realised it was so obvious, her new job was right in front of her eyes.

“I will be a nurse!” Alice announced proudly.



*Land girls, carrying hay.*

***Written by Sophie Innes 8RA***