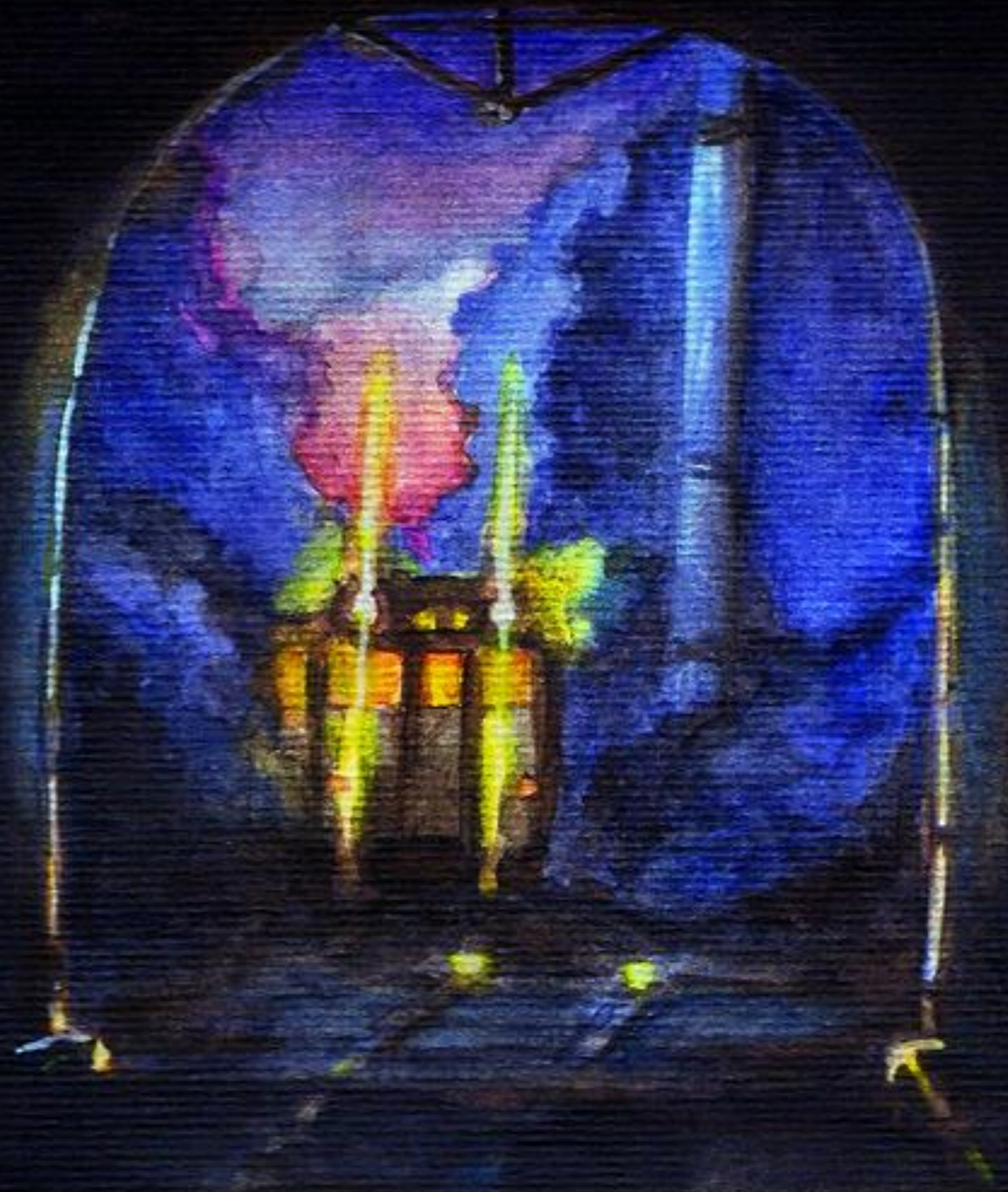


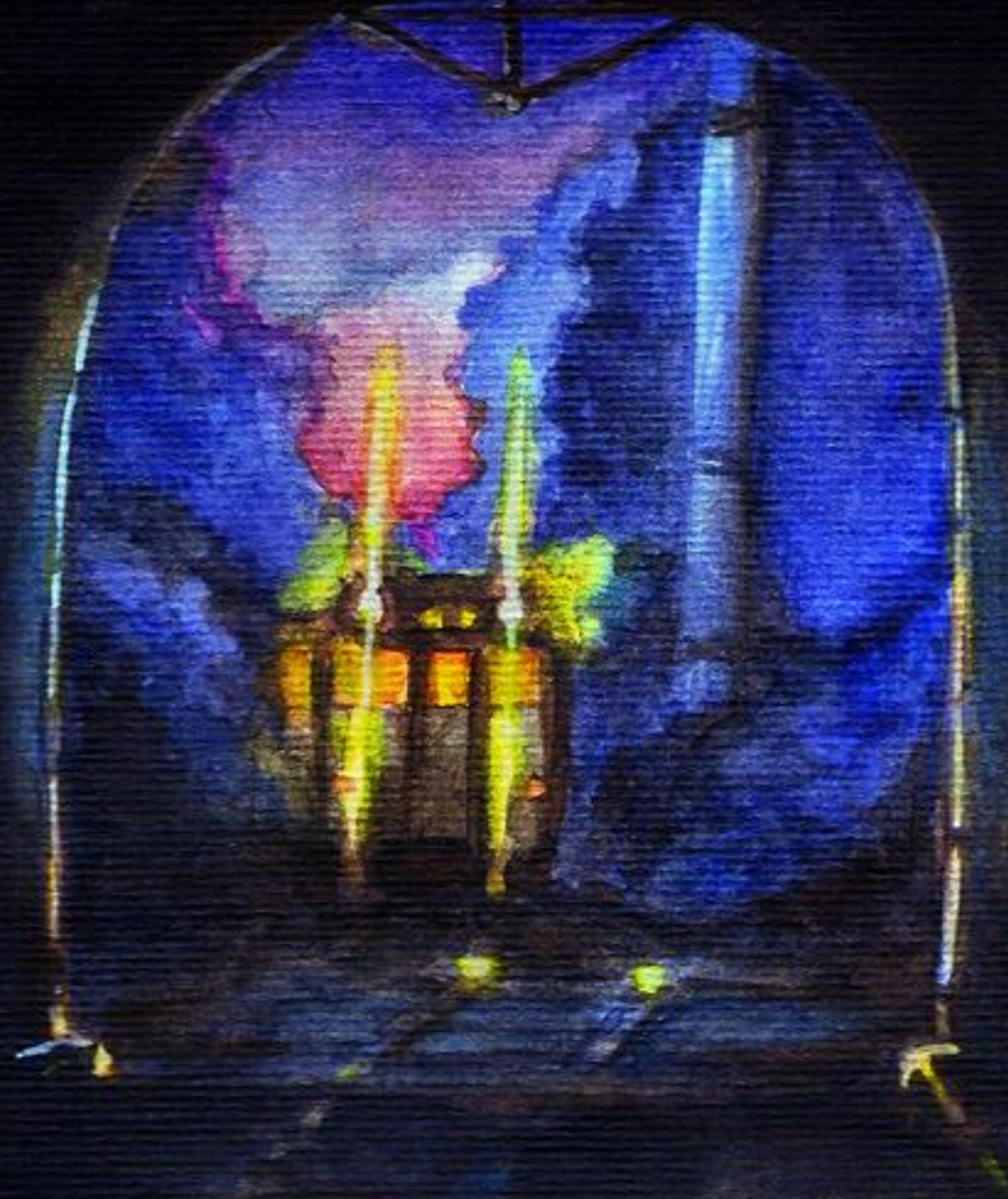
# The Tunnel

By Pie  
Corbett



Henry had always hated the dark.

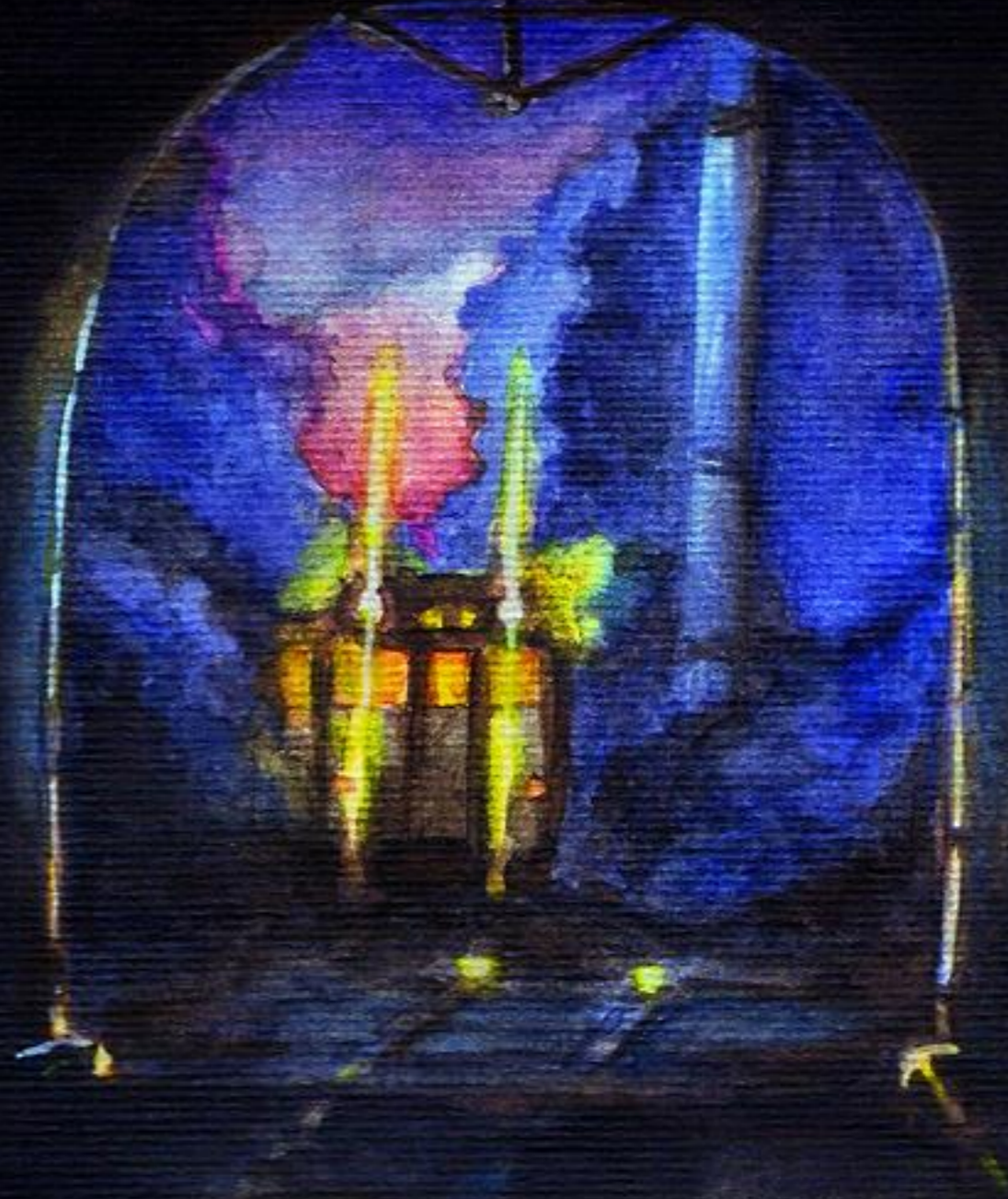
At night, Miss Hill put up the blackout curtains. When the light was off, the gloom descended and you couldn't see a thing. He had to learn to feel his way to bed. The stairs were unfamiliar, so too, the creaking boards and the smell of lye soap from the metal tub that was dragged out on a Saturday for his bath.



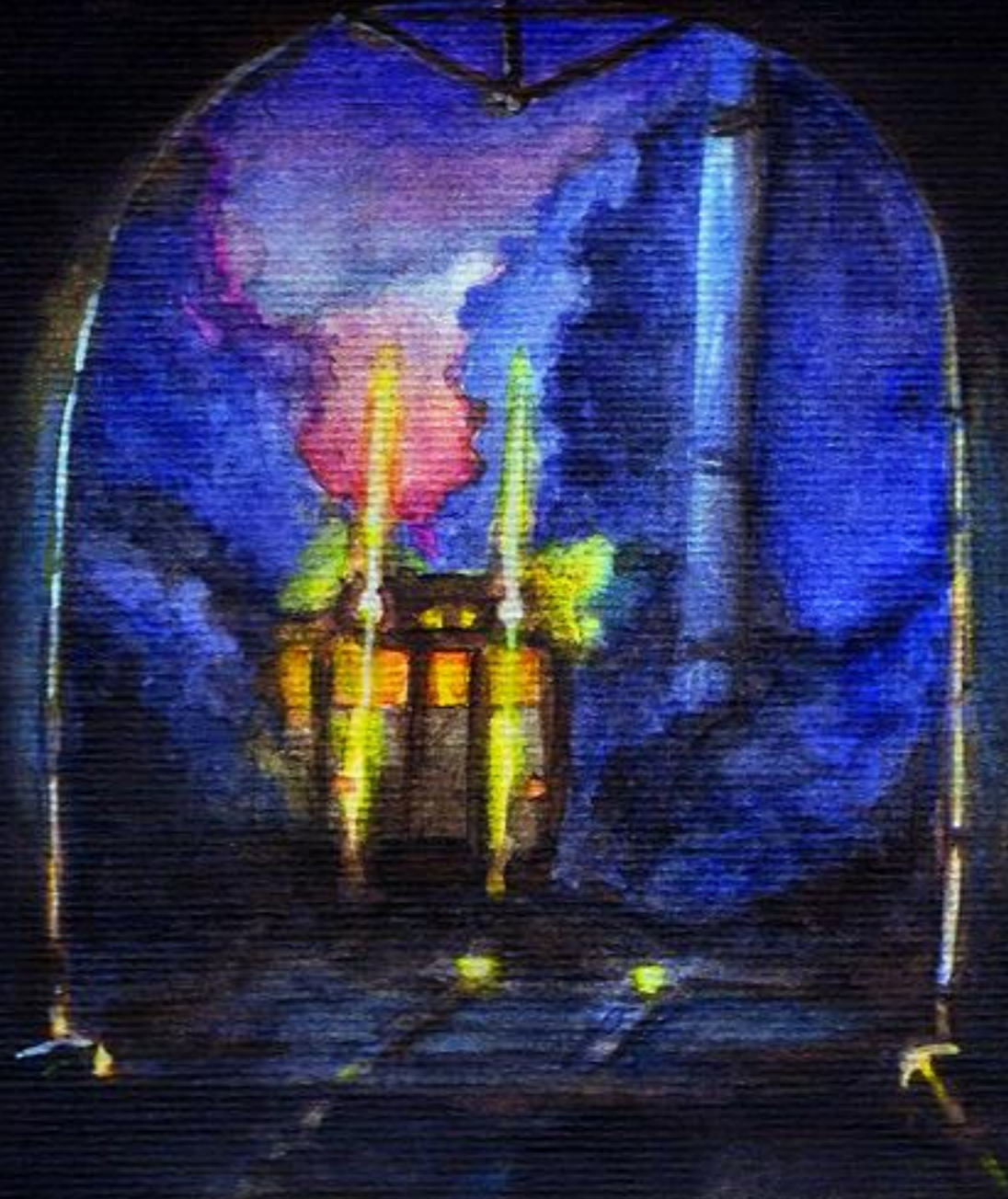
Oakridge Lynch village was nothing like the grimy London tenement block where Henry had spent his first ten years. Here, the valleys were a lush green: not a single street lamp and, at night, the darkness was full of owls, badgers digging for worms and foxes yelping. Every morning, Henry woke to the sound of a cockerel. At home, the streets had been packed with people rushing to work, cars and buses trundling by and the air was full of street cries. Here, chickens scratched in the backyard, rows of vegetables sprouted in gardens and only the odd cart and donkey passed the little cottage.



Most exciting of all was Gertie, the pig that Miss Hill kept in a small, stone shed by the garden gate. "We're fattening her up, you and I," proclaimed Miss Hill, as she poured potato peelings and scraps into the trough. Henry scratched Gertie's back and tried not to think what hidden fate awaited the pig.



That misty morning, the 15th July 1940, Miss Hill checked that Henry had his gas mask packed and walked him up the lane to the village school. There they sang a hymn, prayed for the country and Henry sat squeezed onto a bench at the back of the schoolroom, clutching his copybook. Later, at lunchtime, he deposited himself on the grass outside and ate his bread and dripping sandwich. Miss Hill had tucked in a slice of beetroot as a treat. Some of the boys munched on turnips that they had dug up on the way to school, washed in a puddle and dried on the tufted grass at the side of the road.



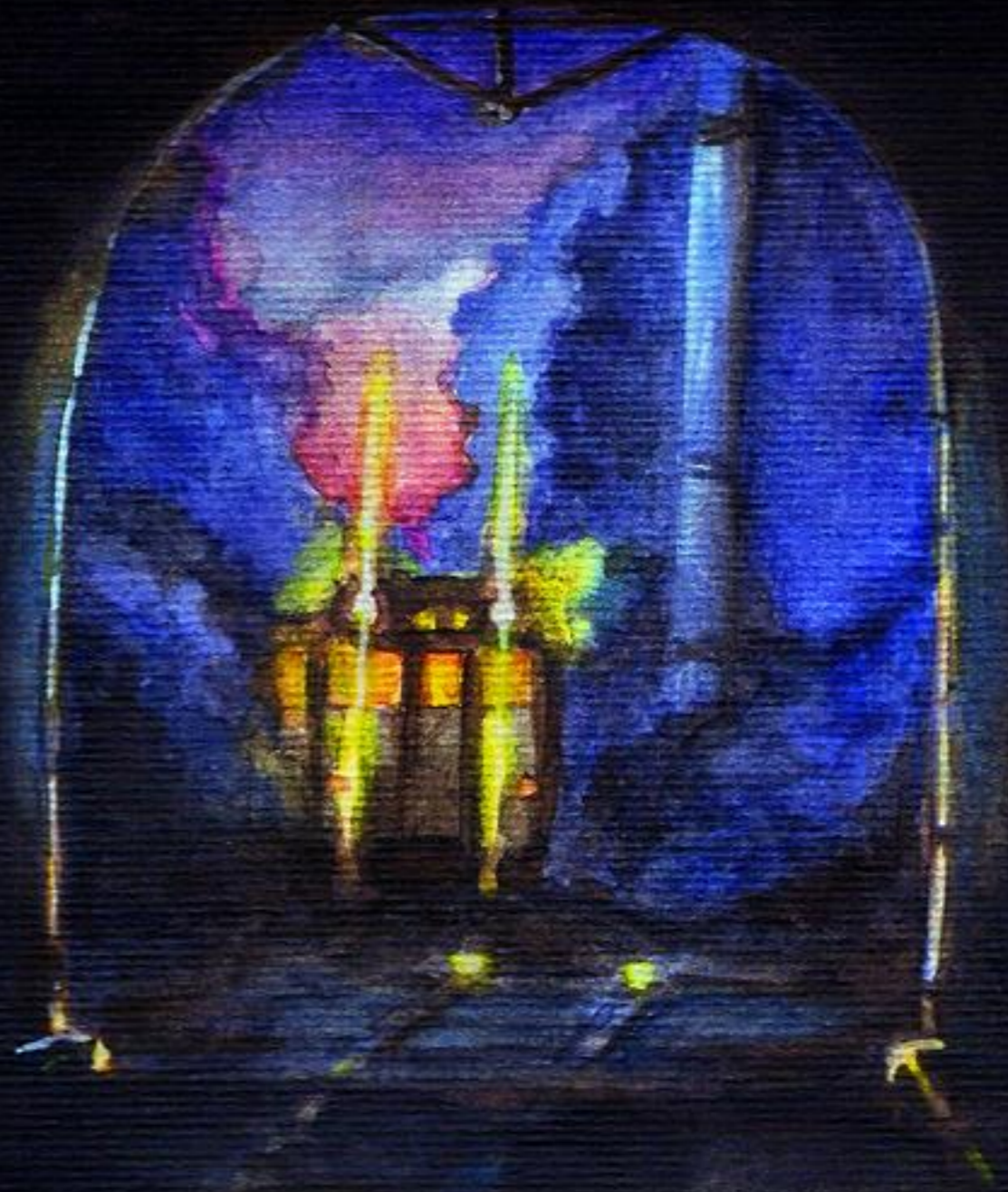
The afternoon stretched ahead; Henry's pen scratched as he tried his hand at copperplate. The schoolroom was silent as everyone worked. In the distance, they could hear planes and the sound grew closer until everyone stopped and looked up at the ceiling; the approaching engines roared and spluttered. Mr Weston yelled, "Under your desks!"



High above in the clouds, a Spitfire from Aston Down and a Hurricane from Kemble fought with a German bomber - a Junkers 88. Henry squeezed under a wooden desk next to Grace, closed his eyes and began to count. He had learned that trick in London when they sheltered in the underground. Counting backwards from a thousand kept your mind busy.

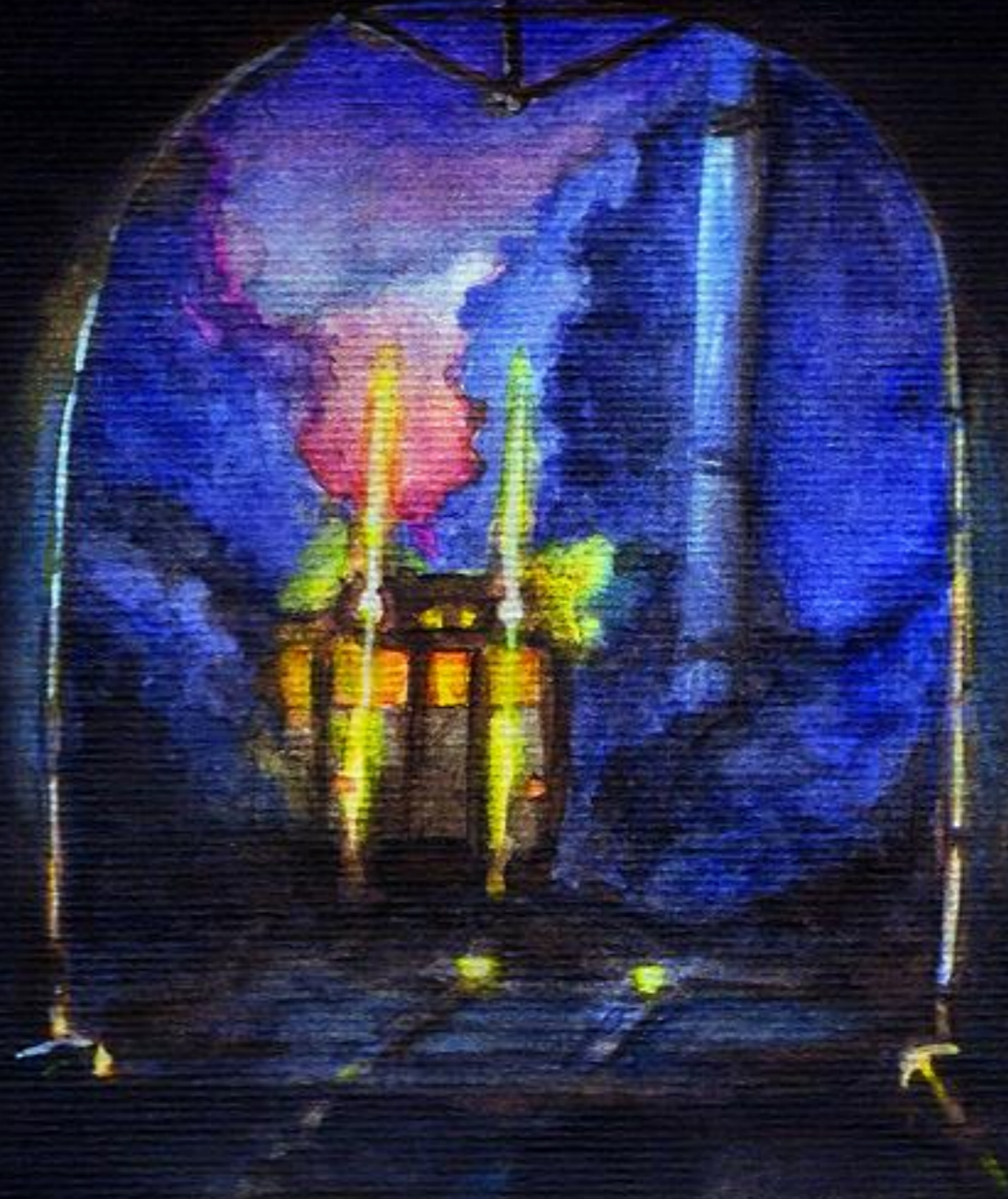


Over the next few weeks, what had been an obscure village became famous and people travelled for miles to see the wreckage. In London, bombings had been nightly but here in the sleepy valleys, dogfights were a rare sight. Mr Weston posted Henry at the gate to Strawberry Banks where the wreckage lay, to collect money for the troops. It was there, in early August, that Henry, full of longing and loneliness, decided to head for home, back to London.

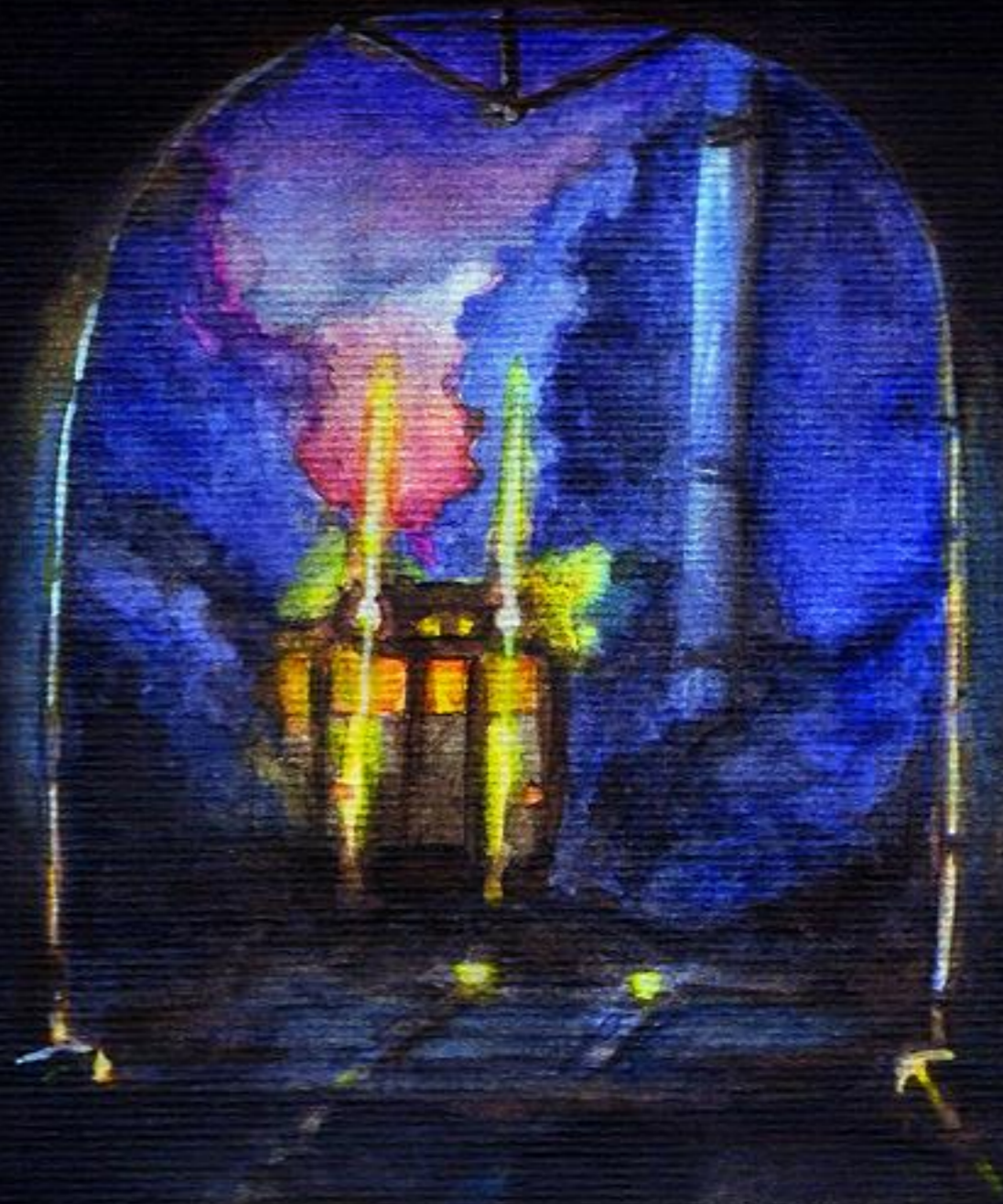




He had been standing by the gate all afternoon but no one had come to view the wreckage. A skylark fluttered up and a warm wind swept down the valley, ruffling the grass and calling to him. He daydreamed, remembering his Mum standing on Paddington station, her thin coat flapping as the train steamed out, carrying Henry and his gas mask away from everything he knew and loved.



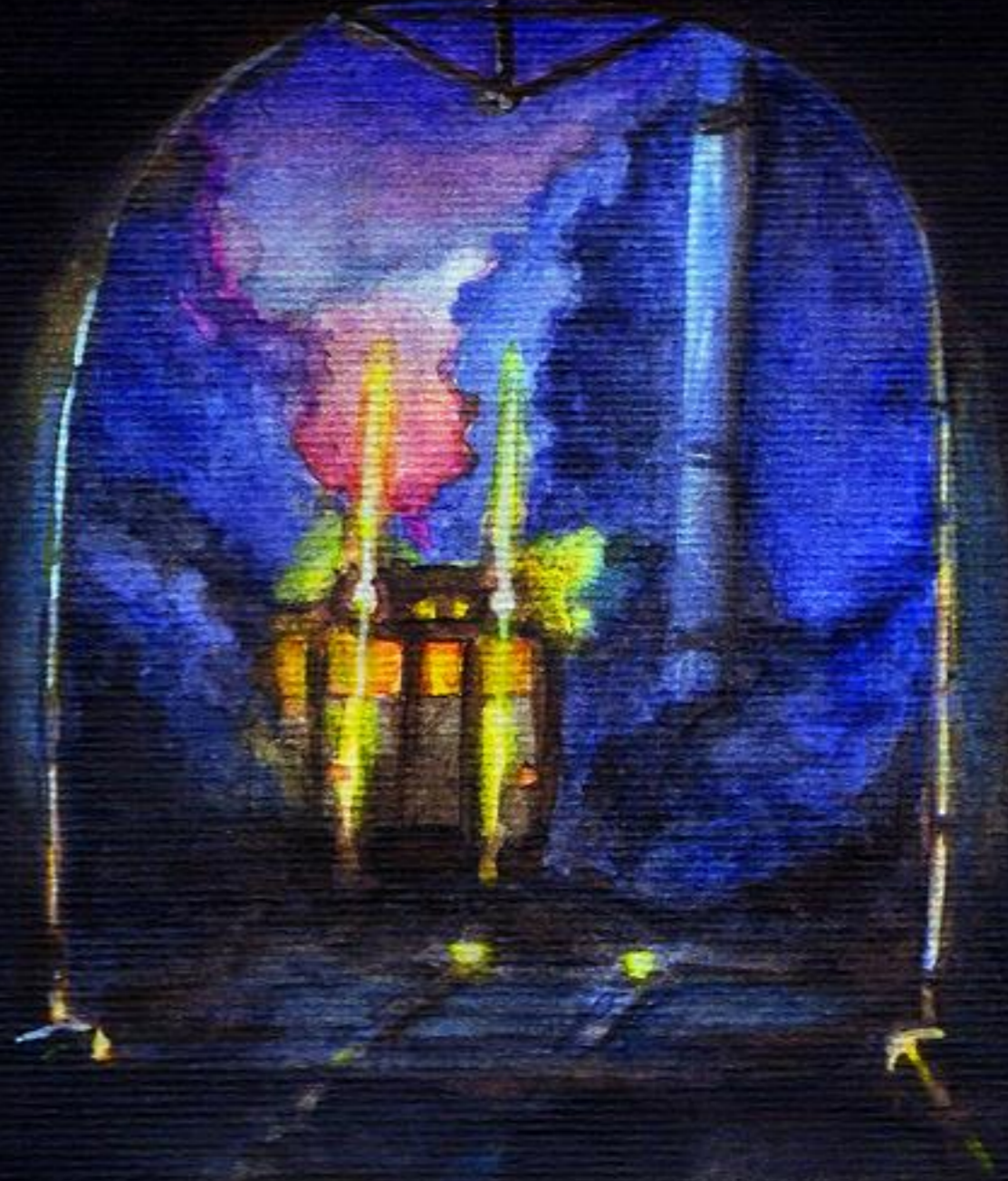
In the valley, below the village, ran the railway. Half an hour later, Henry walked along the tracks, his mind fixed on home. He could hear trains coming a long way off. The rails seemed to buzz a warning so that he could scramble up the bank and hide. The plan worked well enough until he came to Sapperton. Here, the train tracks disappeared into the dark mouth of the tunnel.



Henry stopped. To go back meant terrible trouble. School had ended a long time ago. Miss Hill would be fretting. At first, Henry didn't feel too bad. Behind him, he had the light from the tunnel's opening but, half way down, the tunnel curved: increasingly, the dark and cold closed round him like a poacher's steel trap. He pulled his piece of sacking cloth to him, stood and listened: his breathing echoed, his heart thumped and, somewhere ahead, water dripped and something scuttled. Suddenly it hit him, and it all seemed too much: the bomber screaming overhead, the school shuddering as it scraped the bell tower, the tangled, smoking wreckage and the strangeness of trees and green fields. He sat down and waited, rocking as he cried.



Thomas Restall, a railway ganger, found the little boy, crouched in the darkness. Henry had tried to walk home but his shoes, resoled with an old tyre, had worn thin and, besides, the darkness had held him fast in its shadows.



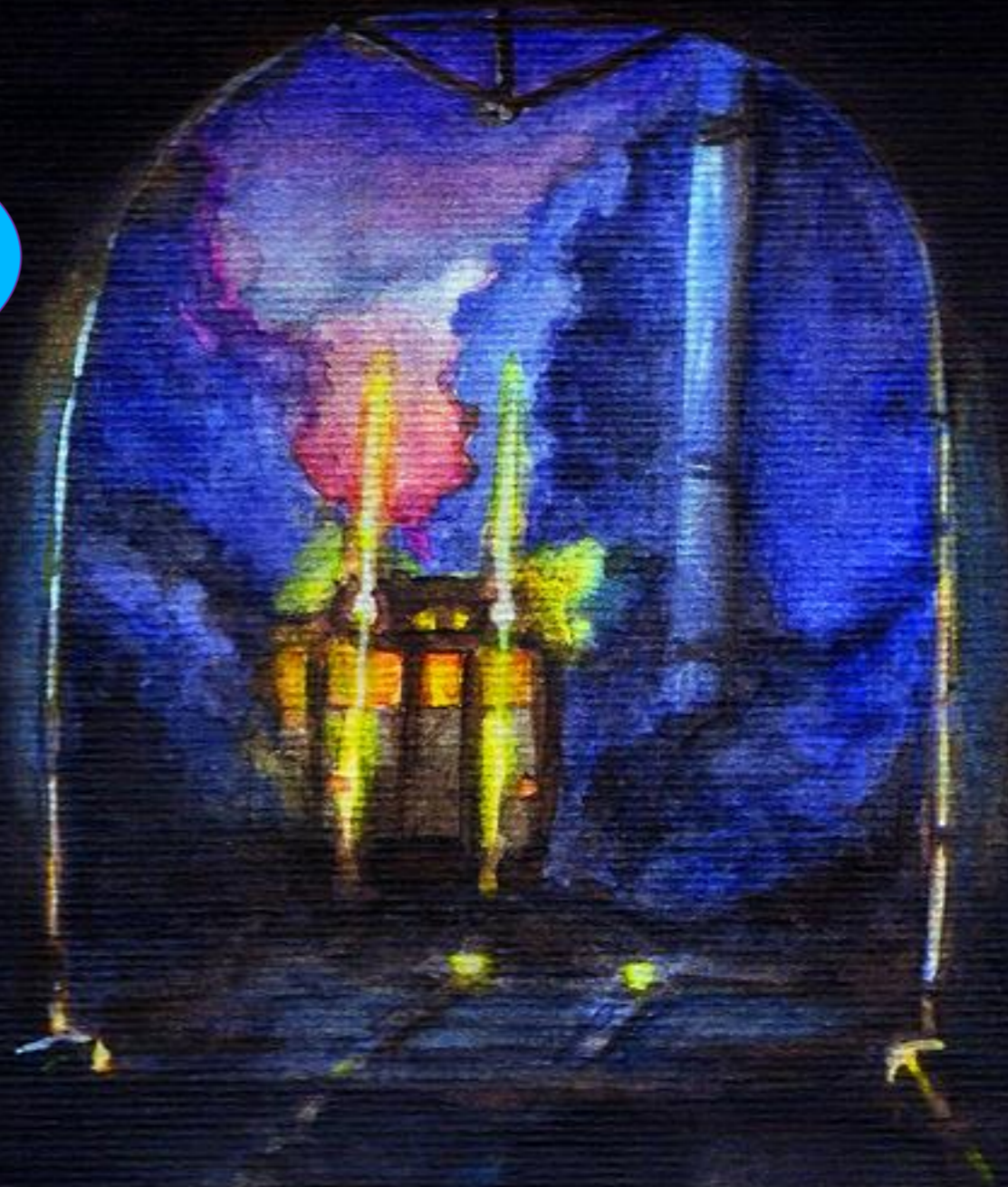
Early in the evening dusk,  
as the stars started to freckle the  
sky, Thomas brought Henry back  
to Winsley Cottage. To his  
surprise, Miss Hill drew him close  
and whispered, "Oh Henry," as  
she gently stroked his hair.  
Inside, the kitchen lamp glowed.



# Compound Words

What is a  
compound word?

A word made up of two  
or more pre-existing  
words.



At night, Miss Hill put up the blackout curtains.

Here, chickens scratched in the backyard, rows of vegetables sprouted in gardens and only the odd cart and donkey passed the little cottage.

There they sang a hymn, prayed for the country and Henry sat squeezed onto a bench at the back of the schoolroom, clutching his copybook. Later, at lunchtime, he deposited himself on the grass outside and ate his bread and dripping sandwich. Miss Hill had tucked in a slice of beetroot as a treat

The afternoon stretched ahead; Henry's pen scratched as he tried his hand at copperplate.

High above in the clouds, a Spitfire from Aston Down and a Hurricane from Kemble fought with a German bomber - a Junkers 88.



blackout  
black + out

backyard  
back + yard

schoolroom  
school + room

copybook  
copy + book

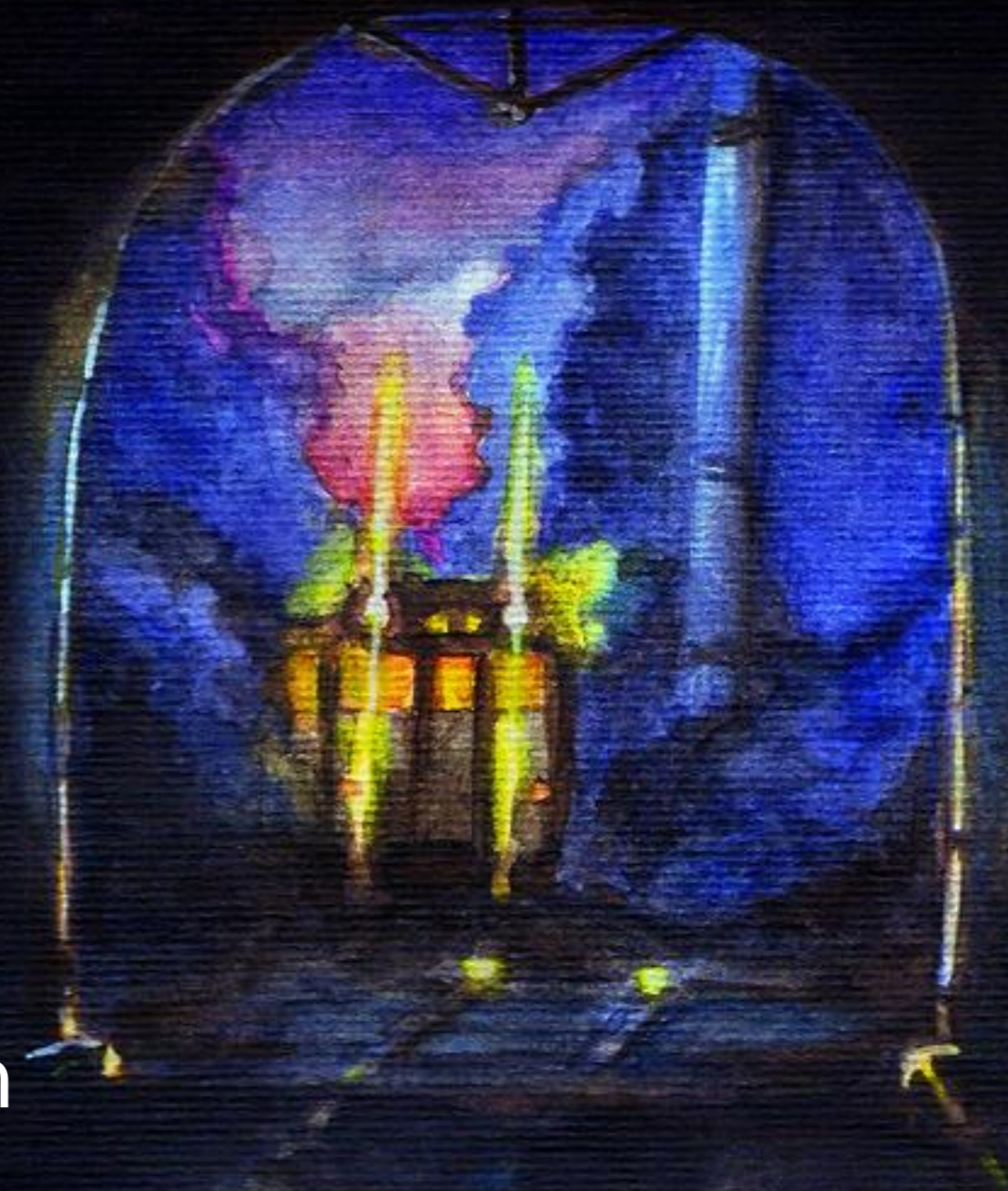
himself  
him + self

lunchtime  
lunch + time

outside  
out + side

afternoon  
after + noon

Spitfire  
spit + fire





# Activity – Guess the compound word

Read the sentences and fill in the missing compound word. You can write the missing words in your Home Learning Journey.

1. A small cake baked in a cup shape is a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A chair that moves on wheels is a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A person-shaped figure made out of snow is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The light from the moon is called \_\_\_\_\_.
5. An insect that hops in the grass is a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. A bean-shaped sweet with a soft jelly-like centre is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
7. A large container for bathing is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
8. An area where a river falls over a high place is a \_\_\_\_\_.
9. A figure that keeps hungry crows away from garden fruits and vegetables is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
10. A type of small, sweet berry that turns blue when ripe is a \_\_\_\_\_.

# Activity – Guess the compound word

Read the sentences and fill in the missing compound word. You can write the missing words in your Home Learning Journey.

1. A small cake baked in a cup shape is a cupcake.
2. A chair that moves on wheels is a wheelchair.
3. A person-shaped figure made out of snow is called a snowman.
4. The light from the moon is called moonlight.
5. An insect that hops in the grass is a grasshopper.
6. A bean-shaped sweet with a soft jelly-like centre is called a jellybean.
7. A large container for bathing is called a bath tub.
8. An area where a river falls over a high place is a waterfall.
9. A figure that keeps hungry crows away from garden fruits and vegetables is called a scarecrow.
10. A type of small, sweet berry that turns blue when ripe is a blueberry.

# Activity – Challenge!

Find 8 compound words, use a dictionary or use your surroundings, then create your very own Guess the compound word.

