

BACKGROUND:

Germany had declared the seas around the United Kingdom a war zone, and the German embassy in the United States had placed a newspaper advertisement warning people of the dangers of sailing on the *Lusitania*. On the afternoon of 7 May, *RMS Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German U-Boat, 11 mi (18 km) off the southern coast of Ireland and inside the declared "zone of war". Although the ship was carrying war munitions, the sinking caused a storm of protest in

the United States, as 128 Americans were among the dead. The ship's sinking helped shift public opinion in the United States against Germany and influenced America's eventual declaration of war two years later, in 1917.

The Shell Crisis of 1915 was a shortage of artillery shells on the front lines that led to a political crisis in Britain. The solution was increased munitions manufacture, with David Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions.

(Fred Grimsley comes in to deliver the post)

WILLIAM: Hello Fred, there's more news on the Lusitania sinking.

GRIMSLEY: Terrible business that Bill. 7th May 1915 is a date that will be remembered forever.

WILLIAM: Indeed it will. There's a chap from Balsall Heath among the missing – a John Lewis Harris, A second butcher, aged 28, it says here.

(Rose Mullis enters)

ROSE MULLIS: Hello. Just come in for my usual...

GRIMSLEY: Hello Miss Mullis. You are looking as lovely as ever I must say.

MULLIS: Oh Mr Grimsley you flatterer. Why you make me blush.

WILLIAM: Don't pay any attention to him Rose you know he's always got his head in the stars.

MULLIS: Have you had it out lately Mr Grimsley?

WILLIAM: She means your telescope Fred...

GRIMSLEY: I er... yes... last night. The constellation of Cassiopeia, a particularly lovely sight.

MULLIS: Nothing here on earth takes your fancy then Mr Grimsley?

(Mrs Edwards enters)

MRS EDWARDS: Bill, I just popped in to ask if you could spare a cup of sugar. *(speaking to Rose)* Oh you're here are you. If you've bought what you want get moving. There's others in a rush.

MULLIS: I'm going. Just having a bit of fun. A good clean living person I am. You only have to see my doorstep to know that. Not a speck of dirt on it... Not like some people's, Mrs Edwards. Just the newspaper Bill thanks. Am off to Lengs – you know the Brush Factory on Sherbourne Road - to take up a position. *(she leaves regally)*

MRS EDWARDS: That woman is a disgrace. She thinks she's better than us. Well, she'll get a shock when she gets to Lengs. I've just been taken on as a Forewoman.

GRIMSLEY: I find her charming Mrs Edwards. Always takes an interest in my hobby. Here where's your Elizabeth, Bill? I thought it was quiet in here today.

WILLIAM: She's gone down to Lengs too, looking for work to help the war effort. Rosie Mullis put her up to it.

MRS EDWARDS: I thought it was shells we were short of not brushes. That's what the papers said – a shell shortage because we've been firing more than we thought.

WILLIAM: Elizabeth reckoned brushes were safer.

GRIMSLEY: That IS true. You can't do much harm with a brush can you?