The sun was shining brightly on the morning of the big day, but the ground was still white with snow and the air was very cold.

Outside the gates of Wonka's factory, enormous crowds of people had gathered to watch the five lucky ticket holders going in. The excitement was tremendous. It was just before ten o'clock. The crowds were pushing and shouting, and policemen with arms linked were trying to hold them back from the gates.

Right beside the gates, in a small group that was carefully shielded from the crowds by the police, stood the five famous children, together with the grown-ups who had come with them. The tall bony figure of Grandpa Joe could be seen standing quietly among them, and beside him, holding tightly on to his hand, was little Charlie Bucket himself. All the children, except Charlie, had both their mothers and fathers with them, and it was a good thing that they had, otherwise the whole party might have got out of hand. They were so eager to get going that their parents were having to hold them back by force to prevent them from climbing over the gates.

'Be patient!' cried the fathers. 'Be still! It's not time yet! It's not ten o'clock!'

Behind him, Charlie Bucket could hear the shouts of the people in the crowd as they pushed and fought to get a glimpse of the famous children.

'There's Violet Beauregarde!' he heard someone shouting. 'That's her all right! I can remember her face from the newspapers!'

'And you know what?' somebody else shouted back. 'She's still chewing that dreadful old piece of gum she's had for three months! You look at her jaws! They're still working on it!'

'Who's the big fat boy?' 'That's Augustus Gloop!'

'So it is!'

'Enormous, isn't he!'

'Fantastic!'

'Who's the kid with a picture of The Lone Ranger stencilled on his wind-cheater?'

'That's Mike Teavee! He's the television fiend!'

'He must be crazy! Look at all those toy pistols he's got hanging all over him!'

'The one I want to see is Veruca Salt!' shouted another voice in the crowd. 'She's the girl whose father bought up half a million chocolate bars and then made the workers in his peanut factory unwrap every one of them until they found a Golden Ticket! He gives her anything she wants! Absolutely anything! She only has to start screaming for it and she gets it!'

'Dreadful, isn't it?'

'Shocking, I call it!'

'Which do you think is her?'

'That one! Over there on the left! The little girl in the silver mink coat!'

'Which one is Charlie Bucket?'

'Charlie Bucket? He must be that skinny little shrimp standing beside the old fellow who looks like a skeleton. Very close to us. Just there! See him?'

'Why hasn't he got a coat on in this cold weather?'

'Don't ask me. Maybe he can't afford to buy one.'

'Goodness me! He must be freezing!'

Charlie, standing only a few paces away from the speaker, gave Grandpa Joe's hand a squeeze, and the old man looked down at Charlie and smiled.

Somewhere in the distance, a church clock began striking ten. Very slowly, with a loud creaking of rusty hinges, the great iron gates of the factory began to swing open. The crowd became suddenly silent. The children stopped jumping about. All eyes were fixed upon the gates.

'There he is!' somebody shouted, 'That's him!' And so it was!

Mr Wonka was standing all alone just inside the open gates of the factory. And what an extraordinary little man he was! He had a black top hat on his head. He wore a tail coat made of a beautiful plum-coloured velvet. His trousers were bottle green. His gloves were pearly grey. And in one hand he carried a fine gold-topped walking cane. Covering his chin, there was a small, neat, pointed black beard -- a goatee. And his eyes -- his eyes were most marvellously bright. They seemed to be sparkling and twinkling at you all the time. The whole face, in fact, was alight with fun and laughter. And oh, how clever he looked! How quick and sharp and full of life! He kept making quick jerky little movements with his head, cocking it this way and that, and taking everything in with those bright twinkling eyes. He was like a squirrel in the quickness of his movements, like a quick clever old squirrel from the park.

Suddenly, he did a funny little skipping dance in the snow, and he spread his arms wide, and he smiled at the five children who were clustered near the gates, and he called out, 'Welcome, my little friends! Welcome to the factory!' His voice was high and flutey.

'Will you come forward one at a time, please,' he called out, 'and bring your parents. Then show me your Golden Ticket and give me your name. Who's first?'

The big fat boy stepped up. 'I'm Augustus Gloop,' he said.

'Augustus!' cried Mr Wonka, seizing his hand and pumping it up and down with terrific force. 'My dear boy, how good to see you! Delighted! Charmed! Overjoyed to have you with us! And these are your parents? How nice! Come in! Come in! That's right! Step through the gates!'

Mr Wonka was clearly just as excited as everybody else.

'My name,' said the next child to go forward, 'is Veruca Salt.'

'My dear Veruca! How do you do? What a pleasure this is! You do have an interesting name, don't you? I always thought that a veruca was a sort of wart that you got on the sole of your foot! But I must be wrong, mustn't I? How pretty you look in that lovely mink coat! I'm so glad you could come! Dear me, this is going to be such an exciting day! I do hope you enjoy it! I'm sure you will! I know you will! Your father? How are you, Mr Salt? And Mrs Salt? Overjoyed to see you! Yes, the ticket is quite in order! Please go in!'

The next two children, Violet Beauregarde and Mike Teavee, came forward to have their tickets examined and then to have their arms practically pumped off their shoulders by the energetic Mr Wonka.

And last of all, a small nervous voice whispered, 'Charlie Bucket.'

'Charlie!' cried Mr Wonka. 'Well, well, well! So there you are! You're the one who found your ticket only yesterday, aren't you? Yes, yes. I read all about it in this morning's papers! Just in time, my dear boy! I'm so glad! So happy for you! And this? Your grandfather? Delighted to meet you, sir! Overjoyed! Enraptured! Enchanted! All right! Excellent! Is everybody in now? Five children? Yes! Good! Now will you please follow me! Our tour is about to begin! But do keep together! Please don't wander off by yourselves! I shouldn't like to lose any of you at this stage of the proceedings! Oh, dear me, no!'

Charlie glanced back over his shoulder and saw the great iron entrance gates slowly closing behind him. The crowds on the outside were still pushing and shouting. Charlie took a last look at them. Then, as the gates closed with a clang, all sight of the outside world disappeared.

'Here we are!' cried Mr Wonka, trotting along in front of the group. 'Through this big red door, please! That's right! It's nice and warm inside! I have to keep it warm inside the factory because of the workers! My workers are used to an extremely hot climate! They can't stand the cold! They'd perish if they went outdoors in this weather! They'd freeze to death!'

'But who are these workers?' asked Augustus Gloop.

'All in good time, my dear boy!' said Mr Wonka, smiling at Augustus. 'Be patient! You shall see everything as we go along! Are all of you inside? Good! Would you mind closing the door? Thank you!'

Charlie Bucket found himself standing in a long corridor that stretched away in front of him as far as he could see. The corridor was so wide that a car could easily have been driven along it. The walls were pale pink, the lighting was soft and pleasant. 'How lovely and warm!' whispered Charlie.

'I know. And what a marvellous smell!' answered Grandpa Joe, taking a long deep sniff.

All the most wonderful smells in the world seemed to be mixed up in the air around them -- the smell of roasting coffee and burnt sugar and melting chocolate and mint and violets and crushed hazelnuts and apple blossom and caramel and lemon peel . . . And far away in the distance, from the heart of the great factory, came a muffled roar of energy as though some monstrous gigantic machine were spinning its wheels at breakneck speed.