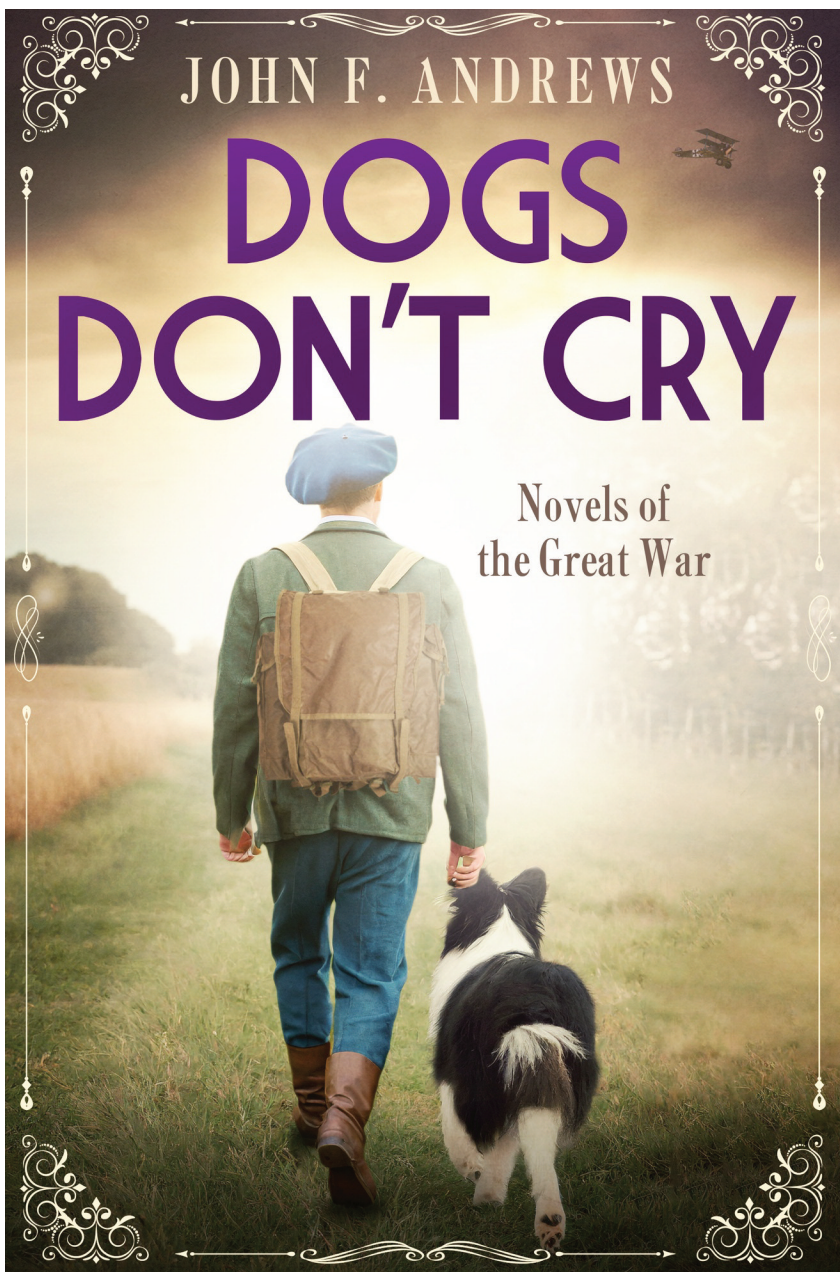


JOHN F. ANDREWS

DOGS DON'T CRY

Novels of
the Great War



June 1918.

The tidal wave of WWI is about to engulf the rural French village of Bouresches, forcing two teens and their border collie to embark on a harrowing journey to an uncertain future...

Abby is the Durand family dog. Her job is to be a companion for fifteen-year-old Marcel and his thirteen-year-old sister, Geneviève. She considers it herding. Marcel is plagued by doubts about his courage as he approaches military age. His sister has severe pneumonia. As their neighbors flee, the doctor warns their mother that the rigors of evacuation will kill Geneviève.

A disastrous escape leaves them orphaned and alone.

Marcel and Geneviève must find a distant relative, Cousin Henri, who lives near Paris. However, they have never met him, are not sure of his last name, and don't know his address. Abby is the key—Henri is her former owner, though she begs to differ on the “owner” concept. If anyone can find him, she can. The teens confront their worst fears while seeking refuge amid the chaos of war, armed only with their faith in Abby.

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AWARDS

2025 Colorado Authors' League Book Awards:

Winner: Young Adult Fiction

2025 Feathered Quill Award:

Bronze Third Place Winner in Animal-Adult Category

2024 CIPA EVVY Book Awards:

Bronze Third Place Winner in Animal/Pet Fiction

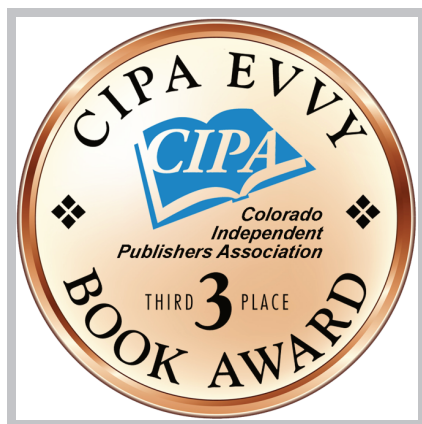
2024 International Book Awards:

Finalist in Young Adult Fiction

Finalist in Animal/Pet Fiction

2024 National Indie Excellence Awards:

Finalist in Animal/Pet Fiction





REVIEWS

This . . . is as emotionally affecting as it is historically authentic. A remarkably sensitive depiction of the teenage psyche under unthinkable pressure.

“GET IT” recommendation.

----*Kirkus Reviews*

An absolutely exemplary story . . . This story is a must-publish and must read.

-----Judge, 32nd Annual Writer’s Digest Self-Published Book Awards

Dogs Don’t Cry is a poignant and heartwarming novel about the plight of French refugee children during World War I . . . Andrews’ description of their journey and the hardships they face is powerful. I highly recommend this book.

---- **Editor’s Choice**

---- *Historical Novel Society Magazine* Review

Reader Reviews:

5.0 out of 5 stars Dogs Rule

This was undoubtedly the most heartwarming book I have read in The Great War/World War 2 genre. It was overall an uplifting book written with sensitivity. Oh, there was sadness which brought the tears & giggles/laughter throughout the book. I will not spill any beans, but trust me, once you read it, you'll thank me. If you are a dog lover, this is a must read book. At this time this was a perfect read for me.

5.0 out of 5 stars Wonderful

This book provides the perspective of two children and a dog during the first world war in France. The chapters are short and told in the voice of each of those characters. It is light and easy to read. I think it is a good introduction to this period for middle and high school readers as well as adults.

5.0 out of 5 stars a wonderful story of courage

I couldn't stop reading this book. Told thru the eyes of children and dogs. A wonderful way of sharing the tragedies and heroics. A must read

5.0 out of 5 stars Poignant & Inspiring Coming of Age during WW1, Great Dog character, too!

During World War One, two orphaned teen siblings and their border collie set out across France to find their only remaining relative. Unfortunately for them (fortunately for the reader!), the kids don't know his full name or exact whereabouts. First, they must get to Paris, then rely on the dog Abby to find their uncle. In this charming, touching story, the kids and the dog are brave, clever heroes. Adding to the fun, we get to see the adventure from the dog's Point of View. It's beautifully written by an author who's expert in the time and place. Highly recommended for teen and pre-teen readers, plus adults.

---Margaret Rodenberg, Author of *Finding Napoleon*

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, organizations, events, places, and incidents are either a product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Where real-life historical persons appear, the situations, incidents, and dialogue concerning those people are fictionalized and are not intended to depict the actual persons, events, or change the entirely fictional nature of this novel.

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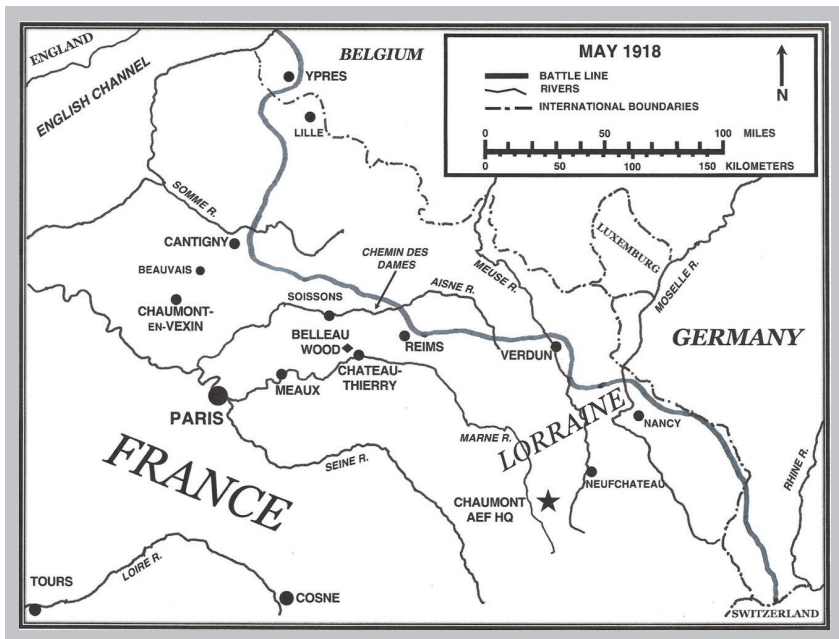
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*This novel is dedicated to the children of France and their dogs, and to
Abby Andrews, who taught me about border collies in return for my love,
and bacon.*

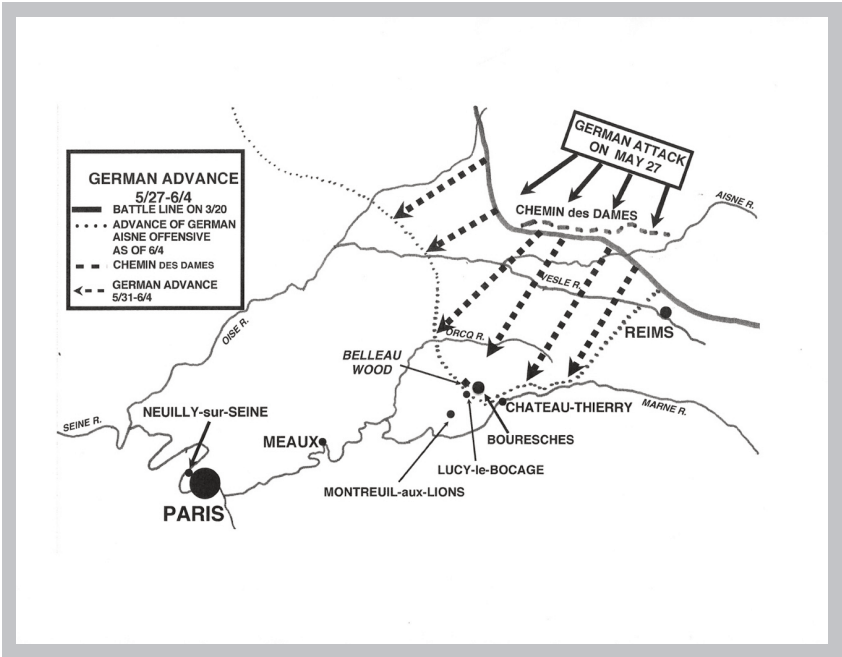
France is lucky that dogs don't cry,
for if we did,
she would drown in our tears:
tears of sorrow
tears of pain
tears of joy

Abby Durand

Map of France, May, 1918



Map of the region in France where the novel takes place



Dogs Don't Cry

Novels of the Great War

Chapter One

Abby

Bouresches, France

May 31, 1918

My Girl rubs one of the spots I can't get to with my paws. Her hand rests on my head—stroking between my eyes. I like it when she does that. Her breathing is noisy—a wheezy rattle. She smells different today, like the sick children at the orphanage where Sophie worked. The ones they didn't let me play with. Before they brought me here.

My Girl's mother, Madame Durand, often tells her, *Rub Abby's head for good luck.*

I don't know if other dogs like that, but Border Collies do. Well, this one does. I can't speak for all on this point.

Oh, from now on I'll call Madame Claire Durand by the name my Children use, and the way I think of her, Maman.

The doctor shoos me off the bed. I hop down and settle in a corner. I don't like this doctor much. I went to his office with my Girl and Maman before she got so sick. They wouldn't let me in, which was fine with me. The smell when they opened the door stung my nose. They tied me up to a post next to the office—right in front of one of my

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favorite places, the shop of good smells. Here they call it *la boucherie*, but in England, where I was born, it was called the butcher shop. I figure that puts his patients in a good mood—smelling smoking sausages and bacon. I could go on . . .

Back to the doctor. Bushes of hair grow in his nose. Enough to pet—does he? He smells like his office—sharp odors and sickness. No dog smells—he must not share his home with one.

Poor man.

But the smell of bacon on him makes me think he is not all sad. Who could be downhearted working next to the butcher shop?

He is so serious. Half-glasses pinch his nose. There is a string from them to the lapel of his black coat. He has a funny way of squinting that pops the glasses off his nose. When he does that they dangle from the string. I'll grab it one of these days, but not now. I need to be a Good Girl.

The doctor says, "Geneviève sit up. Now, take deep breaths." He puts a metal thing on her back connected to tubes hanging from his hairy ears.

Oh, I forgot to tell you—he has hairy ears, too. Not like mine, mind you. His are bare on the outside. Odd. Mine are bigger and furry all over. Human ears are so pitiful.

The doctor's face is somber as he pulls the things out of his ears. "You'll be just fine in a few days, my little princess." He turns to Maman. "Claire, do you have some tea?" And with that he walks out the door.

Princess? That's a matter we'll talk about later. I have a job here and cannot take the time right now to explain.

Maman casts a worried look at Geneviève and then follows the doctor. I walk to Geneviève and let her rub my head for good luck, then follow the adults downstairs.

Stairs.

I'm good at them now, especially after all the practice I had in Paris, when I lived with Henri and Sophie in their apartment. They are tricky when four legs are involved. Dry paw pads on polished stairs can be a disaster, let me tell you. In this house, though, the wood is worn and easy for me.

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I settle on the rug in the room of good smells where Maman makes tea for the doctor. She puts a teapot on the stove and then stares out a window, wringing her hands, restless. The doctor sits at our dining table and writes in his notebook.

Settling.

Something dogs do well.

I'd rather have a job, but when there isn't one, I settle.

And watch. And listen. I'm smarter than most people realize.

The doctor mumbles as he writes in his notebook, his glasses on his nose. He closes the book with a nod when Maman sets the teacup in front of him.

English tea.

I know the smell from where I was born. The Beaumont family drank this when I was a pup, back in England. My first Boy, Spencer, filled my bowl with it. Once. I couldn't settle after that, and they shooed me out of the house that afternoon. I went to the fields outside town and found a flock of sheep. Border Collies herd sheep. That's the job we're born to do. I didn't know how to do it right, though, and just ran them in circles until they were so tired they laid down and glared at me. They never gave me more than a taste of tea on a finger after that.

The doctor sniffs the tea and blows over the top. Steam rises between his puffs. Maman paces the floor. I stand and offer her the opportunity to rub my head, but she continues to pace and I settle back down.

"What do you think, Doctor?"

"Hmm." He sips his tea. "Pneumonia. Very serious."

Alarm narrows Maman's eyes. "Should I take her to the hospital?"

The doctor shakes his head. "That will just expose her more. As long as you can, care for her here. If her care exhausts you, then yes, consider it. They will do no more than you can here, though."

"One of the neighbors suggested mustard plasters."

"Madame Portet?"

"Yes. She says they always work."

The doctor sighs. "She speaks with great authority born of nothing but her own high opinion of herself. They will do no harm, but they will have no effect on the pneumonia itself." He reaches into his satchel

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and pulls out a bottle. "Use these sparingly. Half or quarter tablet every four hours if the fever is high. I have very few." He sighs. "The war. German aspirin is in short supply. It will keep the fever at bay, at least a bit."

"But my neighbors swear by them—the mustard."

The glasses pop off the doctor's nose and swing from the string. A sudden change in his smell—anger. His voice rises. "That is hogwash. I will not take the responsibility of caring for your child if you do as that . . . woman . . . suggests."

Panic rises in Maman's voice. "I didn't mean to offend, Doctor. I . . . Will she live?"

My ears perk up at the words. The same ones Spencer Beaumont used when a wagon hit one of my littermates. He died. I lay my head on the floor, my heart beating faster. My Girl. *Will she live?* That question means she may not. I want to run upstairs. I want to comfort her. Let her rub my head. But I better listen; there could be more. I rise and walk over to Maman. She needs to settle—if only I could tell her that. The best I can do is to offer myself for her to pet.

The doctor sips his tea. "That is in God's hands. She is young and was healthy before this, so perhaps. I cannot guarantee it."

"Some of my neighbors say we may need to evacuate, like in 1914. Will she survive that?" Maman crouches and her hand finds my ears.

"Another reason to not take her to the hospital in Château-Thierry. Once there, they will keep her even if the Boche break through." He pronounced the word Boche—the word the French use to refer to the Germans—as though spitting at the devil. "They are likely to attack there before they come here. Keep her here, and you will have more time."

"My friends tell me to leave right away."

"Do you own an automobile?"

"No. None of us here can afford one."

"Your daughter will die if you make her walk."

"But Doctor, you know what the Boche do to children. They will march her and my son to camps. She'll die. And what they'll do to me . . ."

Dogs Don't Cry

“You can’t think of yourself, Claire. You must stay. God gives you no choice.”

“But . . .”

The doctor rises and leaves without another word. Maman paces, tears streaking her cheeks. I wish my Boy, Marcel, was here to comfort her, but he is out playing war with his friends in the woods.

I rise, shake myself, and head upstairs to my Girl.

I jump on her bed and let her rub my head for good luck.

We’ll need it.

Chapter Two

Geneviève

I'm dying. I know it. Maman calls me *princess* a lot. That's one reason I know I'm dying. Before I was dying only Papa would call me that. Maman would either use my real name or call me Gen. She hugs me more, too—which I like but not because I'm dying. She puts my nurse doll, Suzette, on my bed next to me every night. She knows I plan to become a nurse when I grow up, but now she acts like that will never be, that I won't live long enough to become one. My brat brother, Marcel, hasn't called me *cootie* to my face since the last time the doctor was here. The doctor must have told them I'm dying. It would take something like me dying to get him to stop calling me cootie.

So that's how I know I'm dying. The question is when.

At least I have Abby here. She lies next to me on my bed, curled against my side. I stroke the little area between her eyes—she seems to like that. She spends a lot of time lying with me—even she seems to know that I'm dying.

I wish Papa could come home. Maman said he asked for leave, but his commander said no, he could not be spared. Maman frets so. I hear her pacing in the living room at times. She sings to herself when she works, and there is this one song—I don't know the name, just the tune and the words—she sings to comfort herself while she cooks. I can't

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even moan and she is in my room checking on me, taking my temperature, tucking me in, just so.

She pounds on my ribs three times a day to help me cough out the stuff that's making me sick. The doctor told her to do that, calling it chest percussion. *Three times a day for ten minutes using cupped hands. Gentle so as not to break the ribs but enough to vibrate the lungs*, he said. She has me lie on one side and pounds the other, then I roll over to the other side after five minutes.

Marcel won't come into my room, like he'll get sick from the sight of me. He sneaks and slinks around the house. Mostly he stays outdoors. The only thing I don't like about that is that he takes Abby with him on his walks. But she needs the walks, the chance to run. Will I ever run with her again?

When you're sick, you have nothing but time to think about how people treat the sick differently. When you're a kid, adults treat you as if you are half your age or less. Or like you're so stupid you don't know how to speak or listen. They raise their voices like you're a baby. The doctor sometimes speaks in front of me as though I'm not there or I only speak German. I remember seeing everyone around Grand-mère's bed back before the war and everyone talked loud and slow as if she were deaf. She whispered to me once that she was not hard of hearing but didn't want to upset the adults by asking them to speak normally. I liked her. But she died. Tuberculosis. Not a nice sickness. I hope that's not what I have. But she coughed up blood. Not me. Not so far.

My friends play outside on the street. I stand at my window and wave down to them. They're jumping rope. I know I can't do it now, but . . . I wish.

Anna shouts up at me and I smile. The others join in, shouting that they love me and to get better this minute. It makes me happy and sad at the same time. That is so confusing. I want to be with them. Marie, Odette, Anna, and Simone, my best friends. We all have one thing in common—stupid brothers who are fifteen, and they're all in Belleau Wood, playing war right now.

The thing that worries me: I see all the carts and wagons along the road. Everyone is packing to leave except us. Is that because I'm sick? Am I keeping Maman here? The doctor said I was too sick to move, but

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are we going to be the last to leave, if we leave at all? I've heard what the Boche do to captives. If they hurt Maman or Marcel, it will be all my fault.

This stupid sickness.

It started a week ago. My head hurt, my nose ran, and my throat was sore the first day. Then I ached all over and the fevers started. First, I'd shake like tree leaves in a storm, then pull the blankets up. As soon as I felt comfortable, then I'd burn up and all the covers would come off. Maman used a cool sponge to comfort me. It felt good but didn't bring the fever down very fast.

The days blur together, and I don't have a calendar.

The cough started three days ago. Nothing came up at first, but stuff started coming up yesterday. Maman left a cup for me to spit it into. She explained that the doctor told her I should not swallow it, that it is poison my body must get rid of. But I cannot spit it on the floor or in the street—it could spread the disease, he said. I remember the tuberculosis posters in Château-Thierry that said, *Don't spit*. And the doctor said, *Stay in bed. Don't move. Don't strain your heart. Always cough into a handkerchief or napkin or cup*.

The doctor came to our home to see me today. He took my temperature and said I had a high fever but didn't tell me the number. He probably thought I was too stupid to understand. What he does not know is that I'm going to be a nurse. I have studied things like fevers from the books Maman gets for me from the Château-Thierry library. He first called this *the grippe*. But that word means a lot of things, like a cold, influenza, pneumonia, even the start of tuberculosis.

I've read all about sicknesses like these, except tuberculosis—that book was too hard to read.

Lot of good it does me.

The doctor told Maman that I had influenza that turned into pneumonia. That's the reason the stuff I cough out is yellow and sticky and icky.

I'm stuck in my room. I hate chamber pots. Even with the cover, they make the room smell bad. And I smell bad, even though Maman bathes me every day. My breath is bad. It is like the poison oozes from

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me when the fever strikes. I don't like what I have become with this illness. I'm not a complainer, but it seems as if that is all I can do.

Maman brings meals up to me. She wears a scarf over her face when she is with me. I miss her smile. Her eyes are worried and her face tired. She stays up with me at night, cooks meals, washes my clothes and bedsheets each day.

It used to be fun to be sick and stay home from school. But now, they called school off for some reason. They won't tell us, but Maman says it is because the Germans are marching this way and they want everyone ready to evacuate. A lot of kids will play, like Marcel, and think being off school is fun. Not me. I like school. I get to see my friends. And I need to study hard to become a nurse. Maman told me that. And I'll have to get used the nasty smells like the ones coming from me.

I hear Maman coming up the stairs. Standing at my door, she pulls the scarf over her mouth. She is so pretty. Like me, she has straight light brown hair that goes below her shoulders and skin that is not as pale as some but not dark, either. Her nose has a slight curve and always seems a little crooked. She told me she was a mischievous girl, like me, and broke it when she fell out of a tree. I haven't broken anything yet. She and Papa are the same height, but she is so slim, while he is strong.

"How is my princess?" She doesn't wait for an answer as she shakes out the thermometer and slips it into my mouth. She feels my pulse like a nurse would. She tsks when she looks at the thermometer. "Fever still. When will it go away, little one?"

"I wish I knew." A coughing spell racks me. It feels like one of Papa's wire brushes is rubbing inside my ribs. Abby hops down to the floor. Maman has me lie on my left side and begins gently thumping on my right side. I hold the handkerchief to my face in case I cough—I don't want to give this to Maman. Five minutes later, she has me roll to the other side and she starts again.

After a minute that seems like a half hour, up comes some stuff—sputum, the doctor calls it. I spit it into the cup next to my bed. Maman gazes into the cup. "About the same. No blood, so that's a good thing." She sits in my small chair by the bed. She looks funny with her knees poking up under her skirt.

Abby climbs back onto my bed and settles against my side. I rub her

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ears, one then the other. Her furry ears. "Is Marcel out playing war with his friends?"

"Yes. They've been gone a while now."

"Don't we have enough war without them playing it?"

"I think all the boys look at it as a sort of preparation. I pray this will end before he and his friends have to fight in it. And I want your Papa home."

"The Germans are heading toward us, aren't they?"

"People are getting ready to leave. Some have already."

"How will we—"

"Don't worry, little one. I'll take care of everything." She pulls a small box out of her apron pocket and opens it. "I wanted to wait until your birthday next month. But if we have to evacuate, things might get mixed up. This is from Papa and me."

She hands me a silver heart-shaped locket on a sturdy necklace. On the back is my name, engraved with fancy script. Inside is a tiny picture of all of us, including Abby, taken the last time Papa came home on leave. We all went to Château-Thierry for the day. Maman loops it around my neck and clasps it in the back.

Maman gives me a long hug, then stands. "I'm going to lie down for a bit. In advance, happy thirteenth, birthday girl."

But will it be my last?

Chapter Three

Marcel

We creep through knee-high green wheat waving in a humid breeze. Blood-red poppies dot the field. The woods ahead loom dark despite the late morning sun. *Bois de Belleau*—our objective. The Belleau Wood. Germans—les Boche—lurk within. How many? Too many to care. The odor of schnitzel on their breath and sauerkraut oozing in their sweat gives them away. We five Chasseurs against them all. I'd pity them if I didn't hate them.

Chasseurs Alpains are the best—the elite. Alpine hunters. We train to fight in the Alps. Here, there are mere hills instead of lofty snow-covered peaks. Are we outnumbered? No matter. We laugh when surrounded and spit in the face of danger. The Boche tremble in fear of us.

I raise my right hand and motion my men to the ground. Then I crawl forward on my belly, clutching my rifle in my right hand. I don't need to look back—my men follow me without question. I am their corporal. Trust is absolute with us.

Sweat trickles down my face, my head hot under my blue beret. Who needs a helmet? Not the Chasseurs.

I form my squad at the forest edge. Robert, with his Chauchat automatic rifle. Victor, Edouard, and Antoine carry bolt-action Lebel rifles

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like mine. I whisper, “Fan out, three meters apart. We’ll work our way in. Silence.” I pat the knife in my belt for emphasis. “Use these if you must. No firing until we’re on our objective.”

My men spread out and infiltrate the thick forest—crouching, hands on knives, rifles in left hands. I spy the Boche ahead of us. Edouard pulls his knife and sneaks up behind one. He plunges his knife in, just above the collarbone. The filthy German slumps to the ground, crimson staining the neck of his green-gray uniform. Edouard winks at me.

Our pace is slow, silent, deliberate. Our objective comes into sight after fifteen minutes. It is a Boche machine gun nest in a cave about two meters above the base of Hill 181. I deploy my men with hand signals. Edouard on the extreme right, Victor next, Robert near the center where his automatic rifle will do the most good. I say a silent prayer that his Chauchat works. The damned things may be French, but they jam all the time. Fearsome when they work, but unreliable. Antoine is on the far left.

It seems like the Boche don’t know we’re here. On I move, setting each foot with care to make no sound.

Slowly now.

Slowly.

I stop.

There it is. Four meters ahead. I slip an F-1 grenade from my pocket, pull the pin, and pitch it into the cave with a shout. Robert’s Chauchat opens up.

I scramble up the rocks beside the cave and stop just outside the mouth. Robert’s gun goes silent. He fumbles for a magazine—in plain sight. Fool. “Robert, duck!” I shout. Exposed. Oh my God!

Edouard opens up with his Lebel, his hand a blur, working the bolt faster than a mere infantryman.

I toss another grenade into the cave.

Robert flings a grenade in at the same moment. My ears ring from the explosions. My face stings when rock fragments spew from the cave followed by smoke.

Then, nothing.

Dogs Don't Cry

My hearing is haywire. I stifle a sneeze as acrid, sulfurous smoke tingles in my nose.

The only noise is that of distant artillery fire and the ringing in my ears.

Edouard pokes his head from behind a tree trunk. Robert hugs the hillside below the cave, where the Boche can't see him. He snaps a fresh magazine into this Chauchat, racking a round into the chamber. Victor hustles up next to me. Across the way, Edouard and Antoine slip around trees and meet at the other side of the cave.

Silence.

Are the Boche laying low, waiting? Guns at the ready to blast us when we round the bend into the cave entrance.

I whisper to Victor, "Get a grenade ready, but don't pull the pin. Follow me."

I lean my rifle against a rock and draw my Ruby pistol. My back to the rocks, I make my way to the mouth of the cave.

One more rock.

One more turn.

I glance back—Victor is ready.

I look across—Edouard and Antoine both nod.

My heart is steady. A mere draftee's would hammer, but mine is barely faster than normal—the heart of a Chasseur Alpin.

I peek down—Robert's jaw is set, Chauchat at the ready.

Now or never.

Deep breath. Pistol in right hand. Finger on trigger. Safety off. Nine rounds in the magazine. One in the chamber.

Ready.

I jump into the mouth of the cave, screaming, pistol forward, front sight searching.

Nothing.

Four Boche lie motionless on the floor, two of them are draped over their machine gun.

A shout from deeper in the cave. Where?

I hold my breath. Eyes wide open. Sweeping my pistol side to side.

Movement—a mere shadow.

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I fire four shots, leading the shadow in the direction of his movement.

Stillness. The air is filled with smoke and death.

I sweep the front sight from side to side, finger ready on the trigger. A trickle of smoke rises from the muzzle. Where is he? Are there others?

Antoine is on my left, pistol in hand, ready.

I motion Antoine forward with a nod. We head toward the back of the cave.

There. On the floor. A Boche officer. A colonel! Facedown, his Luger just beyond his splayed fingertips. I rush over, front sight never swerving from the man's head. I snatch up his Luger with my left hand and tuck it in my belt. Antoine comes up and covers the man while I crouch down and feel his pulseless neck.

"Clear," I shout. The others rush into the cave, pistols at the ready.

I laugh as the others gather round the colonel's corpse. "Well done men. We got their colonel. Next, we scale the rocks. Bare hands, no ropes. Same formation. *Vite!*"

I jog to the cave entrance and grab my Lebel, racking open the action to make sure it's loaded, then shoulder it. We scale the rocky cliff—Chasseurs never take the easy road. My eyes sweep side to side, watching my men, ready for the Boche.

Edouard fires three times. He waves and gives the okay signal. Sweat trickles down my sides and back, but my breathing is steady.

A bird takes wing from a tree a hundred meters to my right. A clear giveaway.

I hug the rock next to me and slip my rifle from my shoulder. I squint. Where is he?

Where?

There. A Boche sniper in a tree. I raise my rifle at the speed of a snail so he won't see me. I close my left eye. Breathe. In. Out. Halfway out. Steady. Squeeze the trigger. Bang! The stock slams into my shoulder. I cycle the bolt and ready the next shot. The Boche topples from the tree, smashing limbs as he falls, then bounces once on the ground. Not moving. No need to waste another bullet.

After ten grueling minutes we crest the hill and take cover behind a boulder. I know we've cleared the Boche to our east but I cannot tell

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about the other directions. We break out canteens. "Well done, men," I say. "Objective reached. Hill 181 is ours, for the Glory of France."

A boulder behind us, we stand and heft our rifles above our heads shouting our national motto, "*Liberté! Egalité! Fraternité!*"

These are my brothers.

Chapter Four

Marcel

If only it were real. If only it were true. If only we were real soldiers against real Germans instead of a squad of fifteen-year-olds playing at what our fathers do in the real army.

Edouard says, “My maman says we’re leaving for Lyon if we have to evacuate. My aunt lives there. Everyone’s getting ready, it seems. How about you?”

“I don’t know. All my relatives are near Grenoble. Three hundred kilometers. There is no good way to get there. Maman’s sister lived near Soissons but evacuated to the south when the Germans attacked. Maman doesn’t get along with her. And the cootie is sick,” I say. Cootie. I like the English word; it is so much better than ours—*le toto*. She came down with a cold a few days ago but now can hardly raise her head from the pillow. “Maman is so fearful.”

“Cooties are all sick,” Robert says.

I chuckle, and Edouard laughs.

“Is your father’s unit there, in the Chemin?” Victor asks, pointing to the northeast.

“I think so. We haven’t heard from him in a month. Maman paces the floor at night and cries when we mention his name.” I’ll never admit it, but I’m terrified. Rumors spread through Bouresches like wildfire.

Dogs Don't Cry

Panic for those who remember 1914, when the Boche almost made it this far.

"He'll be fine. He's a Chasseur, after all. Best of the best," Victor says.

"Never to Be Taken Alive," Robert says.

"Without Fear and Beyond Reproach," Edouard says.

The Chasseur motto.

I smile. Good old Victor. His father was gassed at Ypres. In the hospital still. I wonder how his face will look when he heals. Robert's father died a hero in the Battle for the Marne, not far from here, in 1914. Edouard's died in the Battle of Verdun in 1916. I was at my friend's side when his maman told him about it. We took long walks in these woods, talking, thinking, hoping. Antoine's father went missing in the Somme in 1915. Missing there means dead and never to be found. My papa fought in other battles, but he could not give me details. A hero, awarded five Croix de Guerre. My friends and I stick together through it all, strong shoulders to support each other, sustained by our brotherhood.

Fraternité.

That is the word that means the most to my friends and me.

But I do worry. No word in a month. A battle to the east began yesterday with a barrage that sounded like the heavens opened God's fury. Sixty kilometers away in the Chemin des Dames area. How many cannons does it take to be heard over that distance? The artillery fire is less intense right now, but it's closer. How far? *Are you out there, Papa?*

This may seem like a game, but the real reason we're doing this today is practice. While we do not own real guns, we all know other boys our age who lied and enlisted. If the Boche break through, I am ready to pick up a rifle—anything, in fact—and fight. So are my brothers. Or so we'd like to believe. But the ones who got in the army all had beards, and none of us have so much as a hair on our chins. We'd never get away with it.

We make our way down the hill, sweating more than real Chasseurs. Wind ruffles the canopy of treetops. An aeroplane buzzes high above, hidden by the leaves. I move to my right in hopes of catching a sight, but I know, by the sound it is a German Fokker Triplane. The Red Baron

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died a month ago, but his fighter wing has been overflying the area the past few days.

Part of me wants to fly. Me, in a Nieuport 27. The greater honor would be to become a Chasseur Alpin. If only I were old enough. But I have my doubts. I have fears, many fears. Fears for Papa, fears for all of us if the Boche break through to our east, as rumors suggest. Can I ever measure up? I fear the answer.

I lead my friends on. The woods are rocky, with boulders as large as boxcars. Thick underbrush tugs at my pants. The trail meanders around saplings and rocks crowding the forest floor that make it impossible to walk in a straight line. I can see about ten meters in every direction. But we all know the way. We've played in these woods since we were little.

The Chasseur beret is so large it flops by my left ear when I walk. Unlike the ones Parisians wear, mine is big. Dark blue with the Chasseur clasp—a shiny brass hunting horn within a circle. Papa gave this to me when he came home on leave, telling me I had to be the man of the house when he is away. I took it to mean he had faith in me—to fight, if necessary, to protect our family.

Papa—his name is Pierre—was born in Grenoble, far from here, in the Alps. He joined the Chasseurs Alpains after he finished school. There, he learned to repair trucks. After his service he found a job in Château-Thierry repairing trucks and met Maman. They bought a small house in Bouresches to be near my grandmother. He took the train to and from work in Château-Thierry. We almost moved to Grenoble after my grandmother died, but then the war came, and here we are. I came along in 1903, and my sister, Geneviève, was born in 1905.

Here is a point of disagreement. My parents call her the little princess. I call her cootie. She's a pest—too cute and too quick to use tears to get her way. Spoiled princess, perhaps.

Cootie.

People tell me I look like my Papa. He is a hand under two meters, and I am already up to his nose. I have the same brown eyes and dark brown wavy hair, though mine is cut short right now. And he's strong—hands, shoulders, muscles. I am getting there but I still have a way to go. And our eyes are the same—he said they were acorns—tough, brown. The Cootie got the same cinnamon-colored eyes as Maman.

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Papa may have moved to the wheat fields of Bouresches, but his heart is in the mountains. We took the train there a couple of times before the war. I was only a kid, and there were so many uncles, aunts, and cousins I could not keep them straight.

There. The rumble of distant artillery again.

I am desperate to know what is happening.

Papa.

He is so brave. Maybe too brave.

I have to stand tall and not let anyone know I'm worried.

But I am.

Chapter Five

Abby

Have you ever wondered what dogs think while we lie on the rug, ears down, snout on the floor? I know what *I* think. I have no idea what other dogs think. One thing about being a dog is that your thoughts are your own. The penalty for being able to lick my nose is being unable to speak other than yowls and growls and barks. I try to make my yowls as expressive as I can, but that's not the same as speaking like people do.

I think about things like this when I lie on the floor. I call it the Canine Plight. The other one is our paws.

No thumbs. No fingers.

But we can do things with our ears people can't.

And we can lick ourselves in places you need your hands to reach.

Very handy if you have claws, which can be a little tricky in tender places.

Speaking of speaking, you need to understand we express ourselves in ways that are the same, whether you're from England, France, or Germany. Not like people. Believe me, that threw me for a loop when the English Beaumonts gave me to Henri. I couldn't figure out what Henri wanted me to do until he helped me by saying things in both

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English and French. After a while, I understood French as well. Henri told me the word for that is *translation*.

Not a dog word.

But then, I'm a genius. Did I tell you that?

My job is to herd my Boy, Marcel, and my Girl, Geneviève. That means to give them someone to play with, to watch them, keep them out of too much trouble—which is the hardest part of my job—and to let them pet my head. Well, other parts too. We live in a place called Bouresches, which would be a mouthful if I could speak words.

You may have caught it already, but if not, I answer to Abby. Not a French name—more on that later.

Un moment—

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

Aaahhh.

Left ear—much better.

Now, where was I?

Bouresches, France, is a little village, smaller than the one where I was born. The other villages nearby are small, but there are plenty of dogs, let me tell you. Lots of interesting smells. The big city near here is Château-Thierry, where Papa Durand used to work. He took me a few times to the shop where he fixes motorcars and trucks. The floor messed up my paws and left me smelling like his chemicals. We got there riding on a loud smoky-smelling thing they call a train—we had those in England, too.

My Boy went off with his friends today and left me at home. They carried their sticks, and I wanted to go. I hoped maybe they would throw them for me. But the sticks are too big for my mouth. Marcel wore his beret today, which means they are probably sneaking in silence, then running at caves shouting, *Bang bang*. He's so proud of that beret. It's like the one Papa wears. Marcel latched the door in my face when he left, and here I am, guarding Geneviève. She's sleeping now—I don't want to wake her. Maman is here in Geneviève's sleeping room, sitting in a chair, reading a book.

I'd like a walk, but I have to wait until Marcel gets home. Maman usually takes me and Geneviève to the garden together, but not since my Girl became sick.

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Let's go downstairs and look around. Maybe there's some food left out. A dog can always hope, *oui*?

Marcel is so serious now, especially when he plays his bang-bang game. He was more fun before his papa left for the war. The whole family was happier.

Then things changed. Things I hear and smell now.

I hear it off in the distance. Thunder. Not the type when it rains. It woke me up yesterday right as the sun rose. I think even the humans heard it.

Sniff, sniff, sniff.

There. Do you smell it? No? I can. My nose is bigger than a person's. How do people live with such short noses? What I smell now seems bad.

I suppose that's rude of me. Before I go on, let me propose an arrangement. I won't write the things I do, like sniff, yawn, scratch, lick myself—especially near my tail—and the things I do when they send me out for what they call *my duty*. Maybe I'll mention those now and then for dramatic reasons.

Here is one thing you need to understand—the attention span of a dog is rather short. Even a genius like *moi*. Makes my story harder to read. But don't misunderstand. My attention span is as long as the sunlight if I have to stare something down, like a ewe or my Green Ball.

Which reminds, me. Marcel put my ball away.

Where is it?

We can look for the ball while I show you my house, as long as you let me know if you see it.

The ball is my favorite toy. It squishes just right when I chew it, but it's not so hard or heavy that it hurts if it hits my snout when my Children play catch with me.

Where to start? Right now, we're in my barking place by the front door. Let's go into my nap room. The walls are light, what they call "plastered", with a wooden plank floor that I wee-weed on when Marcel forgot to let me out once. Monsieur Durand shouted at me for that, and I felt bad.

Tail between the legs bad.

And let me tell you, that's bad.

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Unless I'm playing *sorry* and don't mean it.

Which is not often, But well . . . sometimes.

Geneviève makes great big tears when someone scolds at her.

I don't cry.

Because, you see, dogs can't cry. If I could, I'd try to learn so people would feel bad when they scold me.

Life as a dog can be so complicated.

Now, don't misunderstand. The Durands are good people. When they yell for me, it is to tell me come home or get out of the road if a wagon is coming. I'm smart enough to stay away from the train.

There I go again with that short attention span.

I was showing you the house.

Don't forget my ball. I think Marcel put it in the heavenly smells room. We'll get there. Remember, we're in my nap room now.

There is the sofa I like to sun on in the afternoon when nobody is watching. I stay out of Monsieur Durand's chair, but I sneak into Maman's now and then. You know what? It'll be easier if I call him Papa like Marcel and Geneviève do. Or did I tell you that? The rug in front of the sofa is nice for napping when the sun shines on it.

Okay, let's go into my favorite room next.

The heavenly smells room, which they call the kitchen, has a table where Maman prepares the meals. When I can, I try to get a lick in. I'm tall enough to get my paws on the edge, and then . . .

Excuse me *un moment*. I have to get on my hind legs here and take a peek on the table.

No ball.

No food there now, but good smells remind me they cooked chicken last night. And my excellent nose tells me that Maman has more chicken smells cooking on the stove. I heard her say soup, which makes me sad because I almost never get soup. All the scraps from last night's chicken went into the pot that's cooking now. There is always hope she will remember her starving dog with a few tasty bits later.

Oops. That got away from me. I didn't mean to drool in front of company.

Mouthwatering smells distract me. I don't want Maman mad at me

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for slobbering on the floor. Smells so good, though. I'll just lick the slobber up. Give me *un moment*.

Where was I? Oh, there's my food bowl. It has my name on it—Abby.

Empty now. Not time for dinner yet.

Now, you might wonder, how did I come to have this name?

Abby is not a French name. I've never heard any other dog called that in Bouresches. Which, naturally, makes me even more special. Let's walk to the begging room. Maman calls it the dining room, but well, I beg to differ . . .

They gave me this name when I was a pup too young to remember much. I was born in a place called Armitage Bridge in England. By the time I can remember things, they called me Abby. Some called me *Runt*. My dame and sire, that's what the Beaumont family called them, herded sheep. My brothers and my sister went on to do that. But they thought I'd be too small. They gave me to a friend of theirs who lives in France—Henri.

Monsieur Henri and Madame Sophie Barton didn't have boys or girls for me to herd. They took me to Paris to live. It was hard to be a Good Dog there. They live in an apartment. Lots of stairs to go up and down. And no grass to, well, you know . . . Just the sidewalks and streets, and people who don't like dogs that . . .

And, well, all dogs need to relieve themselves. You might have heard about that.

Don't worry—I agreed to leave out that detail unless it's important.

Madame Barton took me with her to the orphanage where she worked. They never let me in the building, but there was a lawn with many interesting smells. The children there seemed sad, but I helped make them happy when they played with me outdoors. Some of them smelled like Geneviève does since she became sick. Matron, who ran the place, kicked me out when I tried to sneak in. She called me a Filthy Dog. And she yelled at me. I don't think tears would have helped with that one.

I did not tuck my tail between my legs when Matron called me Bad Dog.

Henri Barton gave me to Papa about three winters ago. Henri

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thought I'd be happier with some children to herd. He was right. They used the word cousins, but I usually think of that meaning people about the same age. Henri is much older than Papa. Distant cousins? I've heard those words. My Children never met Henri or Sophie Barton, though.

Whew. A Labrador would *never* keep that all straight. People like them, but they're not as smart as Collies. Better swimmers—I'll give them that.

Here's one thing you need to understand—dogs need jobs. Border Collies—well, all collies—herd. So do German Shepherds, but I don't like them. Even Papillons like Fifi down the street have jobs, sitting on laps and warning when anyone comes near their homes. Their jobs are not as noble or important as mine.

But I digress.

Wait.

I hear Marcel. His voice is far away.

I need to bark by the door to welcome him home.

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ABOUT JOHN F. ANDREWS

John F. Andrews is the award-winning author of the *Novels of the Great War Series*, including *Our Desperate Hour*, *An American Nurse in Paris*, and *Dogs Don't Cry*. He writes from the perspective of a service family member and critical care physician to craft unique stories based on real events. His characters struggle shoulder-to-shoulder with some of the real heroes of WWI as well as showing the plight of civilians caught in one of the most horrible conflicts in human history. His novels are stories of struggle, survival, hope, resilience, and love.



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