

JOHN F. ANDREWS

A
**DOG'S
GIFT**

Novels of
the Great War



A Dog's Gift

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John F. Andrews

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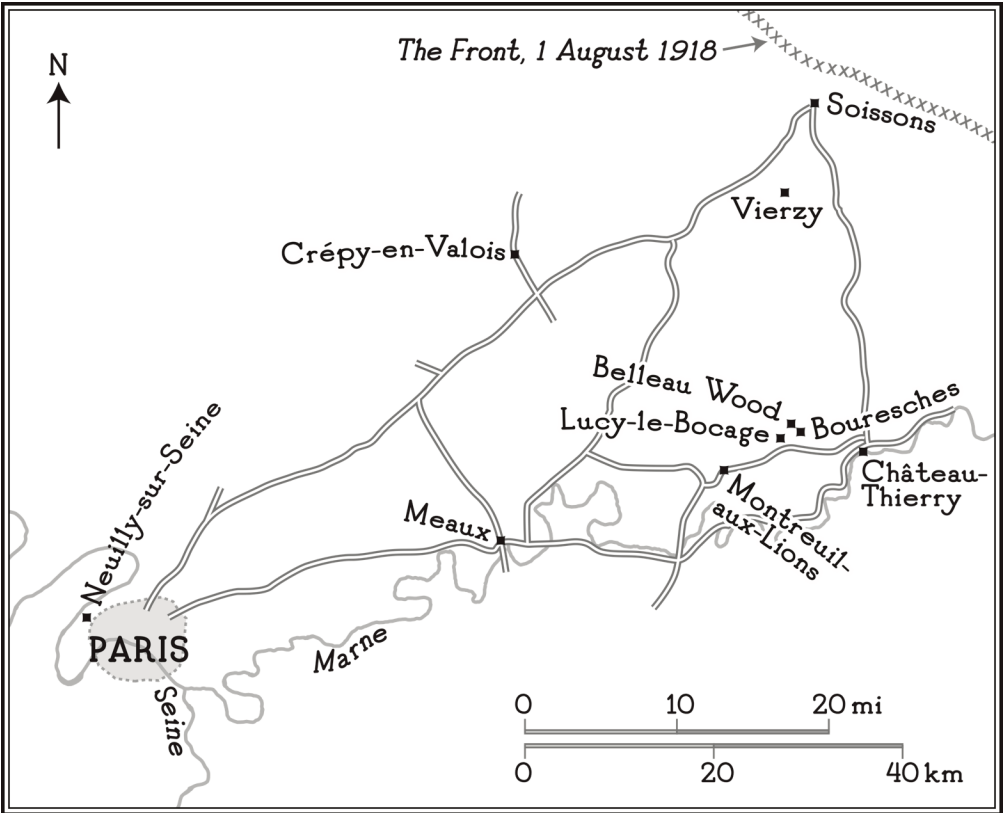
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*Dogs keep us from taking ourselves too seriously.
They also help us face our serious problems.*



Chapter One

Abby

Neuilly-sur-Seine, Suburb of Paris, France
Monday, August 26, 1918

Now, let me tell you something right from the start: Border Collies are the geniuses among dogs. Of that, there is no doubt—no debate, as my Henri would say. And I am one of the smartest. Well, I don't know all the Border Collies out there, and we don't have smartness competitions, but I'm pretty sure I am.

And among the most modest.

My world is troubled.

My people pretend to have happy faces, but I sense the strain under the smiles and cheery things they say. It all seems to have something to do with a word I don't understand—*guardianship*.

Stop.

I lower my nose and study the scent by this tree.

Two of my pack were here. Bruno was first, as German Shepherds like to be, followed by Hugo, who, as a Lab, doesn't seem to care. We met when my Boy and I walked here, and that was a long walk.

We dogs layer our messages. This one? Hmm. Recent, though as you'll learn, dogs aren't good at telling time. Days, weeks, day of the

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week? These aren't important to us, so we ignore them and let people stress themselves about time. The one we can tell is when it's mealtime. I could go on, but my Henri tugs on the dreaded leash.

I add a brief comment, and on we walk.

The smells of the hospital we're heading to grow stronger, and I get myself in order. There are these odors my Henri calls "carbolic" and "alcohol" along with the scents of sickness. This is what my Henri calls a "military hospital," filled with soldiers. They weren't going to let me in at first, saying things like "filthy dog" and "fleabag."

This dog would know if she had fleas, and I don't.

We near the hospital, and my Henri shortens the leash. If I could talk, I'd say, "Okay. I know the routine." When around hospitals and soldiers, Henri stands taller, gets serious, and this dog is the picture of discipline. My nose is next to Henri's leg, in stride, tail down, ears up, mouth closed, no slobber, the way a proper German Shepherd—not a rogue like Bruno, mind you—would march in perfect step with Henri.

We're inside the hospital now. Time to get to work. We go along hallways, passing men who say hello to my Henri. Some lean down to give me a head rub, which I like, and I give them little pants back to show my pleasure. No barking or yowls in the hospital. I did once, and a lady yelled at me.

My Henri and I walk into a large room where he meets with his men.

Now, let's make a couple of agreements. I'll stop calling him *my* Henri and will just call him *Henri* to keep it simple. Same with his wife, Sophie, who I'm sure we'll meet later. I reserve the right to call my Girl *my* Girl and the same with my Boy.

Henri sets his hat on a table and stands behind his seat. His Loyal Dog—*moi*—sits at attention next to him.

The man who's been with us longest walks in with crutches—he only has one leg. His name is George. He remains standing while the others come in, three with crutches and four in the rolling chairs pushed by soldiers. Those walking take seats in a circle of chairs with open spots for those in the rolling chairs.

Oh, by the way. I can count. To ten.

Two of my favorite people come in. Nurse Alice walks beside

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Hiram, who has a bad leg and uses a stick to help him walk. They're about the same height, him dressed in hospital pajamas and robe and her in her nursing clothes. Hiram must have a dog—he knows all the right spots to pet and scratch. Nurse Alice had a dog too. She looks into my eyes with the sadness of someone whose dog is no longer with her.

George and Henri stand next to each other while the others sit down. Nurse Alice and Hiram sit next to each other on the other side of the circle.

"Welcome, Private Morgan and Sergeant Warren," George says. He introduces the other men and then says, "Our leader is Colonel Barton." He motions his hand toward Henri and sits in a chair.

"Thank you, Sergeant," Henri says. Private Morgan's eyes widen. "I'm retired, so you don't need to call me 'colonel' or salute. I served in the French Chasseurs Alpins and finished my career in intelligence. My wife and I live nearby and own a small wine store. Work as a custodian here during the spring showed me the struggles of your comrades, like Private Hiram Stoops." Henri points at Hiram. "The men who recovered the fastest were those who talked about what they'd gone through. It brought back my service days and what my men and I did. So it occurred to me that it would be good for men like us to meet and talk about what we've gone through, our hopes, aspirations, and our futures. I added my little friend, Abby, when I realized how many here grew up with dogs. Many relax with her attention, and that seems to help some talk about the horrors we went through."

Henri unclips my leash while I sit at his side, panting to show that I'm ready.

"You can either call me Henri or, if that is not comfortable, Monsieur Barton. Some of you know Nurse Alice Simmons. She is here to help translate if there are any misunderstandings."

The men who have been in the group before take turns talking about themselves and what happened to them before they were hurt and came here. I go from man to man, and they pet me while they talk. Private Morgan's face frowns from time to time. His eyes lock on to mine, and here's an important point: I know dog boys when I look into their eyes. It gives me a warm feeling. He could become a friend—that sort of feeling. I want to make him feel it too, so I continue to look into

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his eyes—not with the blink-less stare I use on sheep, but a gentle one where I blink often enough that it isn't a challenge.

Now, let me tell you about something important. There are things I smell that fit with some of the words Henri uses, like fear, anxiety, sadness. And pain. There are two types of pain. There's the one you get when something makes you bleed. All the men in this room have the other type; Henri says it is the pain of loss. Every man in Henri's groups has lost something important. Like a leg, an arm, an eye, other parts of their bodies, or things that make them not able to be who they were before the loss. And I don't use just my nose. My eyes see things in faces, hands, and the way they sit. My ears hear the tones of their voices. Well, that's getting complicated. Before Henri started using these fancy words, I had a simple way of putting it: I know when people need me.

Hiram clears his throat. That's my signal. He and I have done this in every session. I sit on the side of his bad leg, between him and Nurse Alice. His hand drops to my ears. He knows where I like him to scratch.

"Well, um, so you see, I was shot in the leg almost right off the bat on June 6," Hiram says. "I was a litter bearer. Lieutenant Grant got shot. Me and my buddy run to him and rolled him on the stretcher, see. I got mine when we skedaddled with the lieutenant to the aid station. Ruined my leg." He points. "Lieutenant Grant stuck with me the whole way here. Wouldn't let 'em put me in the enlisted ward until he was sure the docs took care of me. That's when I met my guardian angel, Nurse Alice." Hiram smiles at her. "Anyways, I'm a farmer from north of St. Cloud, Minnesota." He points at his leg. "Ain't no way I'm goin' back to farmin'. I've had twenty-eight operations to save my leg, and they're shippin' me out to the navy hospital by Chicago next week."

"Waddya think you're gonna do?" Morgan asks.

"All's I knows is farmin' and runnin'." Hiram rubs between my eyes.

Now, let me tell you something. There are a few spots a dog can't get to, and this is one of them. We could try, but claws and eyes? Not good.

"Nurse Alice has worked on my writin' and readin', and Lieutenant Grant told me there's lots of jobs in Chicago, so I figger I'll settle there after they let me out of the hospital." Hiram looks into my eyes. "Learn me a trade is what I'm thinkin'."

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Nurse Alice gives me a rub on my back. I look into her eyes. They seem the same as my Girl and her mother.

The other new patient snarls like an angry Doberman. "That's a pile of . . ."

Okay, there are limits here. There are not-nice words. That one has something to do with cattle and the ground beneath them. I hear plenty of words like this and will not repeat them here for your tender ears. This man smells like one who uses them a lot, so I'll do my best to not offend.

I don't remember his name. Sergeant something-or-other. He has a hooked nose and narrow eyes, so I'll call him Sergeant Hook for now. He's missing a leg.

"Tell me more." Henri shifts in his chair to face Sergeant Hook.

"We're marines, not a bunch of whining ninnies at an afternoon tea party." He slaps the chair next to his missing leg. "My leg got blown off. So what? I'm not like that whiner over there." He points at another man with only one leg. "I'm gonna kick some ass with my good leg when I get outta here."

Does he mean a donkey? You know they kick back. I don't advise a one-legged man to try that. Though the thought of how that would look seems funny.

Now, let me tell you another important point. People use the same word for more than one thing. Like *ass*—do they mean a donkey or a part of the body or a person they don't like? This is a problem for this dog in her attempts to understand what people mean when they say certain words. I will refrain from remarking it about every time words with more than one meaning are said by people. Maybe I'll give a blink when this happens again rather than give you a lecture each time.

"Every man has his own story." Henri's voice is calm. "Each with our own experience and reaction to those experiences. Tell me about yours, Sergeant."

"This is a waste of my time."

"What else would you be doing with your time while here in the hospital?" Henri asks.

I do not go to Sergeant Hook but move over and sit at attention by Henri's side.

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"Joined the Marines in '14, long before these simps enlisted. Real men we were, not like these losers. I say suck it up, babies. Quit yer crying and carry on."

"What did you do in the Marine Corps before you came over here?"

"I was a DI. Not that that's any of your frigging business, Frenchie."

"You seem to hold a lot of anger inside." Henri rubs my ears.

"Yeah, but that's just cuz the Corps don't carry one-legged sergeants on their rolls."

"So what do you think you'll do?"

Sergeant Hook sits back and crosses his arms over his chest. "Politics. I'm a frigging hero. I'll have a chest full of medals. That'll get me votes. And I'm a great public speaker."

This genius will take issue with that.

"I'll kick their keisters and show 'em how it's done."

"Well, best of luck, Sergeant Warren," Henri says.

Okay, so that's his name, Sergeant Warren. I get it, not Sergeant Hook.

"I agree," Henri says. "This group is not for you. And you're right. Being a one-legged politician may fit you like a glove. Many politicians don't have a leg to stand on. At least you have one."

I'm pretty sure Henri is using something he calls "irony," but Sergeant Warren doesn't react. He may not be as smart as he thinks he is. A common problem I've observed in humans and some breeds of dogs. I could tell you about this bulldog I knew. No time now.

Sergeant Warren gathers his crutches and hobbles out of the room, muttering more cuss words I won't repeat. Unhappy man. Based on what Henri has told me, politicians are like a boy dog missing a hind leg trying to mark a tree.

As we go through what Henri calls "the session," each man takes his turn to talk about his worries while Henri and the others try to help him figure out what he can do after he goes home from the hospital. Nurse Simmons says little, but her eyes hold each talker as if absorbing their every thought and feeling. She takes care of these men in a place she calls her "ward."

We do this most days that don't begin with bacon. Oh, I didn't explain bacon days and no-bacon days. I'll tell you about them later.

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Oh, okay. If you insist. BACON days are my favorite. Well, bacon is my favorite food. Bacon days are the ones when my Children don't go to the orphanage for classes. The other days are what Sophie calls "scrap days" like today, when everyone is busy doing some sort of work.

Get it?

Remember this: I LOVE BACON.

But I digress.

Pardon.

I blink. Now there's a word that both the French and English use the same way. Did I mention I understand both? Growing up in England and living here will do that to a dog . . . if she's a humble genius like me.

The men leave after this session. Nurse Alice comes over while Henri stokes my head.

"How is the guardianship application going?" Nurse Alice asks.

"I'm worried."

Chapter Two

Marcel Durand

Peeling potatoes isn't my favorite job. Still, it's one of those skills that may be useful when I join the army. That is at least three or four years off, depending on what they do with the enlistment age in the meantime. Some my size try to enlist, but fifteen is fifteen, and they won't take me yet.

The kitchen of the orphanage is large, airy, with tall windows, a white-and-black tile floor, and white-tiled walls. I'm at a side table while the assistant cook, Joseph, cleans the stove. It's the sort of kitchen that fits with the size of the mansion-turned-orphanage, now with twenty-three residents ranging from four to sixteen in age. This was the first place my sister and I were sent after we arrived in Paris—our parents killed, seeking cousins we'd never met. It was through this kitchen that I first met my cousins, Sophie and Henri.

My sister worries me. She puts on a brave face, but she has deep inner pain. Maman died saving Geneviève's life. The guilt eats at her—I see it every day. This bathes me in memories of the nightmare we lived through in June, the worry, the confusion, the loss.

I wipe my eyes with the back of my hand and hope nobody saw that.

"Get a move on," says Joseph. "What's wrong with you?"

The knife slips, and I nick my thumb.

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That hurts. I grab a towel and press it against my thumb.

"Get a move on, slack boy! Faster, faster!"

"You made me cut my thumb," I say.

"I'll cut more than that if you don't get back to work," Joseph says.

Joseph has something against me. The army rejected him when he tried to join. The shame of that is part of his problem. The rest is unclear to me. It may be because I'm one of the lucky ones—only here for two weeks before moving to Henri and Sophie's apartment. Then I started work in the kitchen. When Sophie, the *chef de cuisine* here, isn't around, Joseph is on my back—work harder, work faster, *rapid, rapid, plus rapid!* He is always nice when Sophie's present because she's his boss.

Joseph slaps the back of my head.

I stand, clench a fist, and drive it into his soft middle.

He doubles over, gasping for breath.

My heart slams against my ribs. Muscles are coiled springs ready to release. My jaw is tight, neck tense, ready in case he returns my blow.

When he gets his breath back, he curses as he straightens up, hands in fists.

"Go ahead, Joseph. Try it."

His eyes are on fire as they stare into mine.

I'm ready, both hands open to counter anything he tries.

Seconds tick on the clock above the stove. My eyes are wide open, staring into his, daring him.

"*Merde!*" Joseph staggers out of the kitchen.

He's a coward at heart. Probably the reason he's here. All the able-bodied men his age, mid-twenties, are in the army. Rumor has it that the army rejected him for mental reasons, and his uncle found him the job here.

Now my face heats. Papa always said to be disciplined. Don't react in haste unless you have no choice. I didn't have to slug Joseph—though it felt good. He's been needling me, trying to provoke me all week. I should have spoken with my voice, not my fist. But part of me wanted to do damage. Break something—his nose, his arm. Something.

My heart is calming, and I slow my breathing.

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Matron comes into the kitchen. “Marcel, I’ll give you a chance to tell your side.”

I describe what happened. Her frown speaks of her disappointment in me. What next?

“Joseph said that when you cut your thumb, he told you to see the nurse and that you hit him.”

“Matron,” I say. “That’s a lie. He slapped the back of my head. That made me hit him.”

“Marcel, I expect more of you. You carry so much anger—I see it; the staff sees it. You need to control yourself. We can’t lose Joseph or you. Both of you owe apologies, and we’ll do that next.”

Joseph comes into the kitchen, a smirk on his face. “Well, boy, what do you have to say to me?”

Matron’s eyes don’t leave me.

My heart speeds, arms tense, neck tingling. “Don’t hit me again.”

“That’s not what we want,” Joseph says.

“You owe me an apology for hitting me,” I say.

The clock ticks while Joseph sneers.

“Joseph, Marcel is right. You first.”

“I apologize if I hurt your delicate feelings,” Joseph says.

“My feelings are not delicate.”

“Joseph, try it again, and mean it this time,” Matron says. “No conditions.”

Joseph sighs. “Okay, I’m sorry.”

I’m sure he isn’t.

“I apologize.” But I don’t mean it. Next time . . .

Chapter Three

Geneviève Durand

Marcel walks out of Matron's office as I stack my books on a side table in the orphanage's entry. Joseph follows him out. The frowns and the fire in Marcel's acorn-brown eyes tell me something's happened. Marcel is working his right fist open and closed like he's ready for a fight—and I suspect Joseph's taunting finally led to an explosion.

Joseph is older, but my brother shot up this summer and is taller than most grown men. I've had to look up to meet his eyes for the past year. And he's muscular from all the farmwork he did back home before we evacuated and ended up here at the orphanage.

"I swear," Marcel whispers, "I'll bust Joseph's nose next time." He picks up his math book from the table, and we go out the front door. He tells me about the incident when we reach the street.

"Let's go to the park." I start walking. "You need to calm down."

Marcel passes me, and I hurry to catch up, his gait full of anger. I struggle to keep up, lugging my load of books.

Unlike Marcel, my day went well. I worked with Nurse Girard and Doctor Favre in the respiratory isolation ward upstairs—the room I started in when I arrived here with pneumonia. They call me *la petite infirmière*—the little nurse. But I'm not a nurse. Not yet. They give me

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little tutorials that will help me with my plan to become a nurse. My job is to write notes and help the girls. I talk with them, give them friendship and a feeling of safety.

“Marcel, slow down.”

I trip.

A hand catches my left arm as books fly out of my right. I stop, gasping, heart pounding.

“Watch where you’re going!” Marcel bends down and picks up my books. He slaps them together and sighs as he stands up. “Clumsy idiot. Here, carry your biology book. I’ll take the rest since you can’t seem to handle them.”

“I’ll watch where I’m going if you’ll watch your temper.”

“What temper?” Anger flares in his eyes.

“That one, you silly idiot.” I smile.

That breaks his moment.

The park is two blocks from the orphanage. We weave along the sidewalk to our favorite bench—one off by itself near the woods where our friends, the Rascals, often bed down.

“Bruno! Hugo!” I shout.

Marcel calls them, clicking with his tongue. He needs a dose of dog, and the sillier the better. That would be Hugo, the black Labrador he and Abby took on as a stray when they made their long journey from Meaux in June.

This would be easier if we had treats. We continue to shout.

Marcel seems more relaxed, his face not so tight, eyes back to normal as he claps his hands.

A black nose pokes out of a nearby bush.

Then a brown snout with its pink tongue hanging out.

“Bruno, come!” I shout as I clap my hands.

Bruno inches out, ears on high alert as he glances to each side in case this is a trick. He walks toward us, wary, sniffing the air, glancing into my eyes for a moment as he looks from side to side. Then he’s with me. I rub his ears and then his chin. He gives the sort of high whine only German Shepherds can make without seeming to whimper.

Then three barks. A black streak barrels our way, hitting Marcel so hard that he staggers back. Hugo’s paws lean on Marcel’s chest while he

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licks Marcel's face. Where that wet tongue has been, I don't want to know. Marcel laughs. He nuzzles Hugo's face.

"He's not as stinky as usual." Marcel sits on the bench, his right hand never leaving Hugo's floppy ears.

I sit with Bruno on my right, his muzzle on my right leg.

It's a funny thing about dogs. When I'm with them, I relax. Rubbing their heads calms me, reminds me of the good things still worth living for. Of course, Abby is the master at this, but some of her talent has rubbed off on these two.

"I wish we could bring them home," I say.

"Then the pack would be complete." Marcel strokes the area between Hugo's eyes. "Almost."

"I don't think we could get Foofoo away from her new lady."

"And Sophie would never allow all of them in the apartment," Marcel says. "Henri's been working on her to accept these two."

Several minutes pass while we pet our friends. I think about what's ahead—what's been bothering us over the past three weeks. I imagine Marcel's thinking about the same.

"I'm frustrated with Henri," Marcel says. "Something's troubling him about our guardianship application, but he won't tell us what."

"I don't understand it, and Cousin Sophie changes the subject when I bring it up." I rub Bruno's neck. "I know you just had a bad time with Matron, but I bet she can help us understand what's ahead."

"Think she'll talk with us? After what I did?"

"No way to know unless we ask." I give Bruno a last head rub, hoping it brings me luck.

The Rascals bolt off into the woods, and I lead on the route back to the orphanage. Matron is in her office doing paperwork. She looks up and gives me a vague smile until Marcel enters. Her face turns to neutral as she motions us to sit in the chairs facing her desk. "Something's been bothering both of you. Is that what you're here to talk about?"

"Yes." I nod. "Cousin Henri is applying for temporary guardianship of us. It seems like there's a problem with it, but neither he nor Cousin Sophie will tell us what's going on."

"I am not privy to those matters, if that's what you're here for," Matron says.

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Matron is a stout, dour, gray-haired woman of uncertain age. She seems timeless, like I imagine anyone called “matron” would be. My guess is that she’s in her fifties, but she could be older. Her pale blue eyes seem to penetrate me as she waits for my answer. Her high-necked white shirt is buttoned to the top under a black shirtwaist and dark gray dress. She’s always treated me well but keeps Marcel on a short leash.

“We don’t understand the basics of how this works,” I say.

Matron sets down the document she was reading. “Monsieur Barton will likely have a lawyer petition a judge to hear the case and present an application for temporary guardianship. The Bartons need this to register you for school and to take care of any other legal matters for you since you are thirteen and Marcel is fifteen.”

“I’ve read about guardians and adoptions in books,” I say.

“There are no adoptions in France. The closest thing to that is guardianship.” Matron fiddles with her fountain pen. “Guardianship, or its temporary form, requires death certificates of both parents. Then a family council is set up with a justice of the peace or the magistrate responsible for the area where the family lives or lived. They try to have as many relatives as possible participate to find the best guardian and home.”

“How do we do that now?” I ask. “The army won’t let anyone into the area where we lived—they say it is uninhabitable.”

“And we don’t have any relatives nearby other than Henri,” Marcel says. “The rest live near Grenoble, and we don’t know them that well. I can’t imagine them traveling here.”

“In the absence of a normal family council, guardianship is temporary,” Matron says. “You’re sure there are no other living relatives nearby?”

“No,” I say.

Marcel is quiet, his eyes staring at the floor, fidgeting with his feet.

“Um, Gen, don’t you remember? Maman’s sister. I can’t remember her name.”

My face is hot with a flush. “You may be right.” I look at Matron. “We never met this person, and I don’t know if she’s even alive. There was something between them—accusations that nobody talked about with us.”

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The room is silent other than the tick of the clock on the wall. Voices of children in the classroom next door chatter in a French lesson. I look into Marcel's eyes. "I think her name might have been Eloise?"

Marcel shakes his head. "Ernestine?"

"No." I can't think of it. "It starts with *E*. Eleonore? Eulalie? Elodie? Elia?"

"None of those." Marcel's brow narrows. "Her husband is Bernard. I remember Papa saying it. I think it was Elisabeth."

"That's right. Elisabeth," I say.

"Where does this Elisabeth live?" Matron asks.

"I'm not sure." I narrow my eyes. "Somewhere around Vierzy, south of Soissons, I think."

"What if they apply?" Marcel asks.

"I believe that the closer the relative, the more likely a judge would award guardianship, but I'm not sure," Matron says.

"I wonder if that's what is troubling Cousin Henri," I say.

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DOGS DON'T CRY - NOVELS OF THE GREAT WAR

A dog's devotion, courage, and intelligence stand between two French teens and despair. Love and determination sustain the threesome as they flee the tidal wave of war. A story of hardship, peril, resilience, and hope.

This is the origin story of Marcel, Geneviève and Abby—the beginning of their quest for survival and family after becoming orphaned in June of 1918.

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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Alice's quest to become a war correspondent careens headlong into a wall of sexism and deceit after her arrival in Paris in 1918. The suave officer in charge of the American Army press office refuses to let Alice leave Paris while her male counterparts scramble to the Front during the German spring offensive. One

evening, his misogyny escalates to a drunken assault. Alice manages to fight back, but then her attacker begins a campaign of false accusations to cover his crime.

A nursing position in an American Red Cross military hospital is Alice's only hope to remain in France. It turns into the best scoop of her career. Wounded marines and soldiers from the Battle of Belleau Wood flood her ward. A tragic death amid the human wreckage of war unlocks Alice's compassion and her capacity to love, both long-buried after a childhood tragedy. Her patients' courage inspires Alice's fight to restore her honor and open her heart.

OUR DESPERATE HOUR - NOVELS OF THE GREAT WAR

A father's search for his estranged son plunges US Army Major Ab Johnson into the pivotal First World War Battle of Belleau Wood. The fate of Paris and the outcome of the war balance on a knife's edge. This is a story of honor, courage, commitment, a father's love for his son, and the bonds of combat.

Ab Johnson has one last chance to reconcile with his son, Jack, a marine second lieutenant who is heading into the worst conflict in human history. Second lieutenants don't last long in the killing fields of France. Ab's quest leads him from the backrooms of Paris, through command posts, and to the front lines during the Battle of Belleau Wood. He confronts French petulance and American inexperience as he struggles to help organize an army medical system swamped with casualties during his desperate search.

Ab's story intertwines with those of an arrogant surgeon who sees war as opportunity, a navy corpsman searching for his place in the world, and a marine private full of fighting spirit and patriotism. They confront their destinies in a grueling fight filled with chaos and heart-stopping fear. Each came for his own reasons—now all they hope for is to survive.