

Prologue - June 1918

“Eleanor? It’s time to wake up, sweetie. We’re almost there.”

For a moment, Eleanor Blizzard thought about pretending she couldn’t hear her father’s voice. She was still tired from her family’s long journey, and she was comfortably nestled in her bunk. She had never slept on a ship before, and the motion of the waves had been surprisingly soothing. Besides, even with her eyes closed, she could tell that it was barely light outside. What did her father want at such an early hour?

That was when Eleanor finally woke up enough to remember. She didn’t want to be asleep after that. She snapped her eyes open and looked out at her father’s face through the straw-colored locks of her hair.

“You’re sure?” Eleanor asked. “We haven’t missed it?”

“I looked out the porthole just before I woke you,” her father answered. “The sun’s just coming up, and we’re right where the steward said we’d be.”

Eleanor threw her covers aside and hopped out of the bunk. The trip had already been full of new sights and experiences. On the train ride from Indianapolis to Newport News, Virginia, she had seen coal mines, mountains and many new towns before getting her first look at the Atlantic Ocean. From Newport News, they had embarked on her first journey aboard a ship, as they steamed up the

Chesapeake Bay. But even after all she had seen and done, the most exciting part was still to come. This was the day they reached their journey's end, and by a stroke of good luck, the route their ship was taking would set just the right mood for the occasion.

Eleanor's mother was already at the porthole. Faint glimmers of orange light were just beginning to shine on her face. She smiled as Eleanor scampered across the stateroom and joined her. "You're just in time," she said. "Look!"

Her parents had already placed a chair under the porthole for her to stand on. She climbed up and peered out at the early morning. The sky was still quite dark, but orange light was glinting off the water as the sun rose behind them on the other side of the ship. Eleanor wasn't looking at the bay, though. Her gaze went past the water and up to the shoreline, where she saw a series of long, low walls stretching across the landscape, with the tops of a few buildings poking up above them. Standing taller than anything else around was an enormous flagpole, almost exactly in the center of the structure. A huge American flag was flying from it.

Eleanor could hear the words of *The Star Spangled Banner* in her head as the first rays of the sun shone on the red, white and blue. "Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light..."

It was a different flag now, of course, with forty-eight stars on it instead of fifteen, but it was flying above the same Fort McHenry that Francis Scott Key had seen, more than one hundred years earlier. Eleanor was filled with a sense of awe. A spirit of patriotic zeal had been in the air for more than a year, ever since the United States joined the Great War against Germany, but to Eleanor it seemed stronger than ever now that she was in sight of such a landmark.

It wasn't until the fort was almost past the porthole that Eleanor realized she hadn't let her parents have a good look. Her father had already made this trip before, but it was as new an experience for her mother as it was for her. She quickly pulled away from the porthole and looked over to where her mother was still standing.

"Did you want to look some more, Mama?" Eleanor asked.

"I'm fine, dear," her mother replied. "I'm sure we'll have plenty of other chances."

Reassured, Eleanor turned back to see what might come into view next. They were well beyond the fort now, but the sights were almost as breathtaking. Fishing boats, tugboats, steamships, ocean liners and other craft Eleanor couldn't identify were either churning their way through the water or were docked at the many piers. The ship had arrived in Baltimore harbor. Their journey was almost over.

The view was even more impressive once the Blizzard family went up to the deck. Their ship was slipping into its berth, right next to a much larger vessel. The other ship was flying a different red, white and blue flag, the one belonging to France, where most of the fighting in the war was going on. Foreign flags were flying on many of the other ships in the harbor as well. Eleanor felt like the entire world - or at least the part that supported the Allies - was trying to pay the city a visit.

“Are any of your ships here, Daddy?” Eleanor asked.

“I’m not sure,” her father replied. “Most of them are still in the shipyard, getting ready for the big launching on the Fourth of July, but there could be one or two in the harbor. We don’t hear much in the Accounting Department about where the ships go after they’re launched.”

Eleanor nodded understandingly, but as they disembarked she kept looking around the harbor just the same. She had missed her father terribly during the months after he had gone to Baltimore, but she had always been proud of him and the work he had gone to do. Just the name of the place where he worked, the Emergency Fleet Corporation, made her feel like he was playing an important part in winning the war.

It wasn’t long before they made their way through the crowd gathered at the dock. Eleanor’s father hailed a taxi, and soon they were riding through the city.

Eleanor was mesmerized by the sights. Baltimore was completely unlike Indianapolis, so even the most common things looked new and different. The streets were much narrower, and many in the older parts of town were made of cobblestones. A wide sidewalk was all that separated the houses from the street. There was no sign of the large grassy lawns that Eleanor was used to playing on with her friends. The houses themselves were crowded together, with no space between them, and between the main streets were even narrower streets, with rows of older, smaller houses.

The streets held another surprise, a huge number of men in uniform. Eleanor thought she had seen plenty of soldiers on the streets of Indianapolis, but that was nothing compared to the troops the cab was passing. Army and navy men were everywhere, in the harbor, the streets, stores and markets. Eleanor had heard patriotic speakers boast about how large the American war effort was, but seeing so many troops in one place made it seem much more real than before.

“Is this your first time in the city?” asked the cab driver. Eleanor wondered if he had looked back at her and noticed the way she had been staring out of the cab.

“I’ve been here since February,” Eleanor’s father explained, “but my wife and daughter waited until the school year was over to join me.”

“Are you moving here to stay?” asked the cab driver.

“Just as long as the war goes on,” said Eleanor’s father. “That’s why we came.”

“Daddy builds ships, so we can send things over to the Allies,” Eleanor added.

“Is that right?” said the cab driver.

Eleanor’s father chuckled. “Well, I don’t actually build the ships myself,” he said. “I just help keep the books.”

“Hey, everybody’s gotta do his bit,” said the cab driver. “We all kick in, and Fritzie’ll be heading back to Berlin in no time. I just read in the paper that the doughboys are stickin’ it to ‘em in someplace called... uh, Boys-Dee-Bellow, I think it is. Something like that.”

“I believe the French pronounce it *Bois de Belleau*,” said Eleanor’s father. “Belleau Wood to you and me. I saw that in the paper myself.”

“However you say it, I’ll bet Fritzie wishes our boys weren’t there,” said the cab driver. “Maybe it won’t be too long before the war’s over.”

“Let’s hope so,” said Eleanor’s mother.

“So where are y’all coming from?” the cab driver asked.

“Indiana,” Eleanor’s mother replied.

“Really?” said the cab driver. “I’ve never met anyone from there before.”

“You haven’t?” Eleanor exclaimed. She could hardly believe it. But then again, until the day before she had never met anyone from Maryland, either.

The cab driver glanced back at her for a moment. “That’s right, sweetheart,” he replied. “You’re my first.” He turned his eyes back to the street but kept talking. “So how do you like Baltimore so far?”

Eleanor smiled shyly. “It’s so busy,” she replied. “And there are so many soldiers around.”

“Yeah, lots of doughboys come through here on their way to France,” said the cab driver. He glanced back at her again and smiled as he added, “Could be pretty nice for you if this war does keep going on. You could have doughboys lining up to court you someday.”

Eleanor blushed and quickly looked away - which, she figured, was probably the reaction the cab driver had been aiming for. At only eleven years old, she was hardly ready for anyone to be courting her, let alone someone in the army. She hoped there weren’t too many more people in the city who thought it was amusing to make little girls feel awkward.

Fortunately, the cab ride didn’t last much longer, sparing Eleanor more chances for embarrassment. They turned one last corner and pulled up in front of a three-story red brick house. Eleanor’s father had brought them photographs of the building and their second-floor apartment inside it, but the actual house was a far more impressive sight. It was probably older than any building in the entire city of

Indianapolis, but it had a stately appearance that defied the passage of time. It even had an open space to one side of it, unlike all the other houses which were crammed together, and through the gap Eleanor caught a glimpse of a high board fence surrounding what she hoped was a back yard. But the most striking features were a set of gleaming white marble steps and a shiny brass rail that led up to the front door.

A well-dressed woman who looked a few years older than Eleanor's parents came out to meet them. "Welcome back, Mr. Blizzard!" she called. "I hope your trip went well."

"Everything went fine, Mrs. Palmer," Eleanor's father replied cheerfully. "Allow me to introduce my family. This is my wife Alma, and our daughter Eleanor."

"How delightful to meet you at last!" said Mrs. Palmer. She walked down the white marble steps to join them on the sidewalk.

"It's good to meet you, too, Mrs. Palmer," said Eleanor's mother. "Charles speaks very highly of you and your husband. We're glad he found such a wonderful place for us to stay."

"Please, call me Lucy," said Mrs. Palmer. She spoke with the same kind of Southern accent as the other people Eleanor had met in recent days, but her voice

had a more genteel quality to it. "Mr. Blizzard has talked about you so much, I feel like we're friends already." Turning to Eleanor, she added, "And you, sugar, are simply adorable. It's going to be quite a change, having a child around here."

Eleanor smiled. "Pleased to meet you, ma'am," she replied.

"Well now, why don't y'all come in?" said Mrs. Palmer. She turned and started back toward the door. "Your rooms are all ready, so I'll let you get settled."

"Is Mr. Palmer around?" Eleanor's father asked. "We should probably say hello to him as well."

"I'm afraid he's asleep right now," Mrs. Palmer replied. She turned to Eleanor's mother and explained, "My husband is a bartender over at the Belvedere Hotel. He works nights mostly, so he sleeps during much of the day."

"In that case, we'll be happy to meet him later," Eleanor's mother replied.

"He should be up by the middle of the afternoon," said Mrs. Palmer. "We were planning on going to Pimlico later on. Do y'all follow the racing news much?"

"My favorite driver is Jules Goux," said Eleanor. She was trying to keep up with all the new and different things around her, hoping there might be something she could relate to.

Unfortunately, Eleanor's remark only made Mrs. Palmer look puzzled.

"Jules... who?" she asked.

Eleanor's father smiled. "I'm afraid we've followed a different kind of racing in Indianapolis, Mrs. Palmer," he said. "Jules Goux was the winner of our five hundred mile automobile race a few years ago."

"Oh!" laughed Mrs. Palmer. "No, sugar, I meant the horse races," she told Eleanor. "Mr. Palmer and I go all the time. We'd love to tell you all about it."

Eleanor simply nodded, deciding it might be better not to say anything more for the moment. It was as if they had come to a completely new world, with different surroundings and different people. A completely different life. It was exciting, but if the morning was any indication, it could be a challenge as well. There was no telling what she might have to face next.