

First published 2020 by Macmillan Children's Books
an imprint of Pan Macmillan
20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR
Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 978-1-5290-0399-4

Text copyright © Anna Fargher 2020
Illustrations copyright © Sam Usher 2020

The right of Anna Fargher and Sam Usher to be identified as the
author and illustrator of this work has been asserted by them
in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

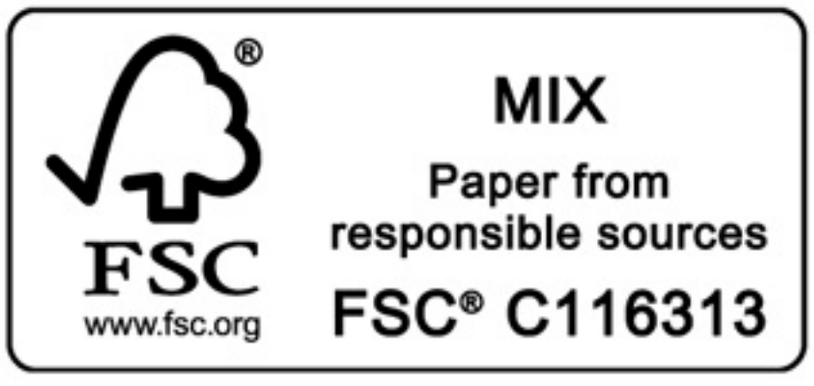
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means
(electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise),
without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Pan Macmillan does not have any control over, or any responsibility for,
any author or third-party websites referred to in or on this book.

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY



This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not,
by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out,
or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent
in any form of binding or cover other than that in which
it is published and without a similar condition including this
condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

CHAPTER ONE

FAREWELL TO THE FALLEN

A dense summer wind sighed across the forest in Normandy, rippling the oak leaves above Noah's Ark's hideout, which was now inside a rabbit warren buried deep beneath the trees, near the eastern border of the Normandy forest. Below a crimson sky crowding with tall slate clouds, Pip hung her head with the rest of Noah's Ark as they followed Madame Fourcade across the dusty, parched earth. A rumble of thunder rolled in the distance and the undergrowth rustled as if excited for the long-awaited rain to arrive.

The animals left the warren behind them, Madame Fourcade the hedgehog padding ahead with Rémi the swallow, waddling on his talons beside her. Pip had seen him visit Madame Fourcade once before, and, although Madame Fourcade never revealed what they spoke of, her energy made Pip sure Rémi had brought news of her

hoglets who had been in hiding since the start of the war. The swallow's slim, streamlined body had long, pointed wings, arcing elegantly behind him over a lean forked tail, and his iridescent feathers shimmered as he spoke to Madame Fourcade in furtive whispers. Reaching a place where a scarlet gloom swirled above a gap in the treetops, the hedgehog turned and thanked him with a smile, and the swallow bowed his inky head to his throat. He spread his wings and flashed his white underbelly as he leaped into the air and disappeared through the trees.

The animals came to a standstill, and Pip stared at the acorn she carried in her paws. Turning its cool, unremarkable shell, she watched its smooth surface gleam. Its hat was the same colour and texture as the ancient oak tree looming beside her. Its rugged trunk was twisted and gnarled with deep crevices, like wrinkles etched into the oldest skin.

'*Mes amis*, both new and old,' Madame Fourcade began, cradling two acorns of her own, and the animals looked up at her. 'Four weeks have passed since the battle at the Nacht und Nebel camp, and although our wounds are healing with each day that goes by our scars will never disappear. For each one changes us forever and tells a story we carry with us for the rest of our lives.'



Pip peered up at the hedgehog and saw that the scabs where barbed wire had scored her face had now been replaced with pearly lines. Shuddering with the memory of the night they had escaped, she looked away and her eyes travelled to the newest members of Noah's Ark, whose broken tails and ragged ears had also healed since their rescue.

'When we lose those we care for,' Madame Fourcade continued, 'our spirits suffer and mend over time like our skin. But we cannot see these scars; only grief reminds us of them. It's time for us to say farewell to our dear friends, Hans, Léon and GI Joe, and give our hearts the remedy to heal.'

Every day since their escape, Noah's Ark had watched the forest, hoping the rat, the eagle and the messenger pigeon would return. At first, every ear pricked at the distant flap of wings or shudder of ground ferns, but, as time wore on, the animals stopped turning their heads to the normal sounds of the forest. Even Pip, who had raced to investigate every snap of a twig or flutter of leaves had slowly lost faith, finding each fruitless search a disappointment more difficult to bear.

'*Great oaks from little acorns grow*,' Madame Fourcade said, smiling sadly. 'In this huge world so full of creatures big and small we may feel as tiny as these acorns, but with brave hearts we can become as mighty as these trees. We are never the same after we lose the ones we love, but the dead will never die if they are not forgotten.'

Pip nodded, feeling the sting of tears in her eyes as she remembered her Mama and Papa. Not a day had gone by that she hadn't thought of them and their last wish to take their family umbrella to the museum in Italy, where her mother had come from a long line of umbrella mice. Pip's father, like Pip, had grown up inside the umbrella shop in London. But war had taken them from her and now she hoped her parents would understand her decision to stay with Noah's Ark and fight until the conflict was over. They

were weaker without Léon, Hans and GI Joe. It was her fault they were gone and they needed her help.

'With these acorns,' the hedgehog continued, 'we remember their sacrifice: the greatest that war can possess. May their roots spread far so that their leaves graze the clouds, and forever mark their strength and courage.'

Pip and Madame Fourcade placed their acorns on the forest floor and the hedgehog burrowed into the ground beside them while the members of Noah's Ark watched with their whiskers drooping on their cheeks.

'For Léon, who saved my life and others in Noah's Ark.' Madame Fourcade's voice cracked as she placed his acorn inside the hole and buried it. 'He was the most gallant eagle that ever was and we shall never forget him.'

Silence descended as the animals hung their heads in remembrance of him. Fiercely protective with golden eyes and strong speckled wings that dwarfed her tiny frame, Pip had been so frightened of Léon at first. But his tenderness, wisdom and bravery soon outshone her fear and her heart weighed heavily as she remembered his last moments.

After a long pause, Madame Fourcade carried the next acorn a few paces and Noah's Ark watched solemnly as she dug the earth beside it.

'For our dear American ally, GI Joe, the fastest

messenger pigeon in Churchill's Secret Animal Army. You came to our aid in our darkest hour with a heart of gold and the gift of laughter when we had forgotten how to smile. We thank you for your unfaltering courage,' Madame Fourcade continued, placing the next acorn in its grave, and dragging soil into the hole. 'And we share your woe for your mate, Lucia, who took advantage not only of your kindness, but also of our need for help, and betrayed us all. She reminded us that a friend can be a traitor and we will never make the same mistake again.'

Lucia, the white messenger pigeon and secret Nazi spy, had sabotaged Noah's Ark from within. She had revealed her true nature when she attacked them all with the Goliath Rats and sentry owls in the escape from the Nacht und Nebel camp, and Pip felt ashamed that she had once admired her. Lucia was beautiful and daring, and Pip had been delighted when the pigeon had wanted to be her friend. She shivered, remembering the pigeon's cold, waxy talons closing around her when she'd tried to snatch Pip away.

'We bury this last acorn in memory of Hans, the German resister fighting with Churchill's Secret Animal Army for the better life of all,' the hedgehog went on, padding forward to a place that created an even triangle

between the three graves. 'We knew him only briefly yet he showed us a true, heroic nature and we are proud to have fought alongside him.'

Pip stepped forward and as Madame Fourcade met her gaze the hedgehog understood what stirred in Pip's heart. Passing the acorn to her, she joined the rest of Noah's Ark surrounding the little mouse, their brows creased with mourning.

Pip's eyes filled with tears as she thought of Hans. She'd first met him in London with Dickin the search-and-rescue dog just after she'd lost her parents and her beloved umbrella shop, all destroyed by a flying bomb. From that moment on, he'd never stopped protecting her and he'd promised to take her to the umbrella museum in Gignese before returning to Germany to fight the enemy from within.

Pip sank her paws into the cold earth and dug a hole in silence, but as she covered Hans's acorn with soil she was unable to stifle a whimper of sorrow, and together Noah's Ark cried softly all around her.

'We have waited for our friends who would never return.' Madame Fourcade sighed. 'Our scouts have had no word of their capture, and although we are still grieving we must continue to help the humans end this war. Yesterday,

I received word from London Headquarters, and, now that we have rested and hidden long enough after the escape from the camp, it is time for us to resume our work and move on.'

Pip and Noah's Ark nodded sadly, knowing the hedgehog was right.

'The human Allied armies are advancing from the north and west of France and many more soldiers are expected to invade the southern coast any day. This means they are pushing the enemy back east to Berlin from all sides and the Allied army is nearing Paris. Its liberation will symbolize the coming freedom for France! This is our chance to win our country back!'

The animals began muttering to one another and Pip's stomach stirred with both elation and melancholy. When she first came to France, she had intended to press on with her journey to Italy and she never imagined how important Madame Fourcade and her troop of animals would become. Not only had they saved her life, but they'd been the best friends she had ever known and the thought of saying goodbye to them at the end of the war made her heart ache.

'Bernard Booth has ordered us to help the civilian uprising in the city,' Madame Fourcade went on, and at once Henri the stag's ears flattened. 'To do so, we must find

the white mouse hiding beneath the human's feet inside the catacombs. She is another member of Churchill's Secret Animal Army and she is fighting with the Resistance there in Paris. Together, we'll rise up and weaken the enemy. Come, let us prepare for our journey to the City of Lights!'

Murmuring, Noah's Ark trod after Madame Fourcade towards the warren, but, as Pip turned to follow, the upper boughs of the trees to her right rustled. Instantly, the fur on the back of her neck stood on end, urging her to look over her shoulder.

Pip gasped. A black shape was hurtling through the trees towards them.