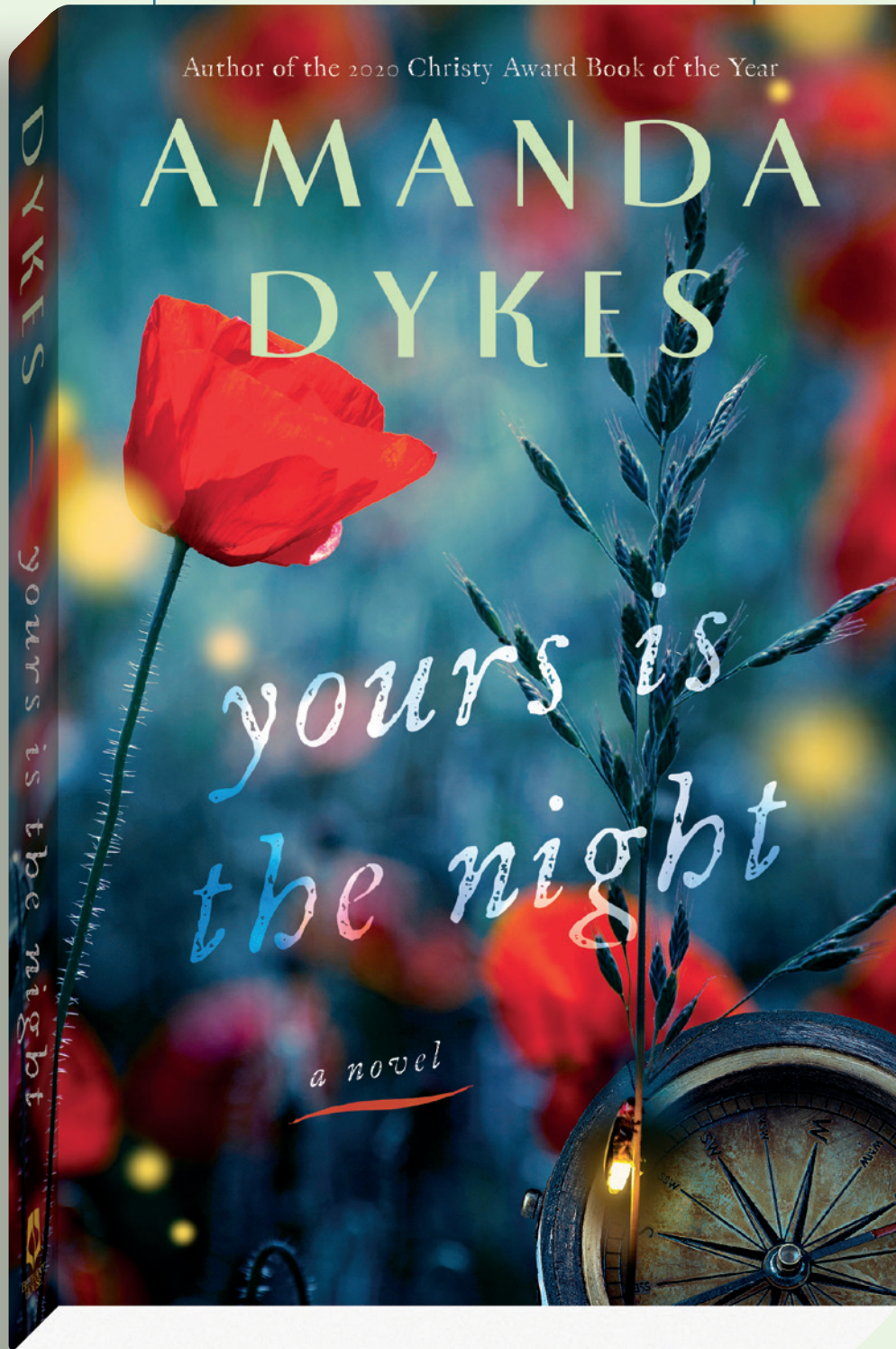


BOOK CLUB KIT



# DEAR BOOK CLUB LEADER,

Samwise and Frodo. David and Jonathan. Anne and Diana; Tolkien, Lewis and the Inklings; Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy . . . these are stories, both true and fictional, that hold a treasure in common: that of friendship. Brotherhood, sisterhood, fellowship. These are the stories that all my life have captivated my attention beckoned me to behold this gift, the beauty of it. Given to us for times of adversity, times of celebration, and shared fellowship in this journey of life. For so long, these themes of friendship and brotherhood travelled around inside of me, searching for a story.

*Yours Is the Night*, in many ways, is that story—and wouldn't you know, the manuscript's first draft deadline was June 1st of 2020. As we all remember well, that was a time when many of us sorely missed the gift of friendship, brotherhood, and fellowship, finding ourselves in the thick of various lockdowns and quarantines. Now, precisely a year later as I write this in the beginning of June 2021, our world is tiptoeing back into a place of mingling, and the gift of gathering with friends is one none of us take for granted.


I want to thank you for time and heart you give of yourself to make such a gift possible. Book clubs are a place to gather and discuss stories, yes—but perhaps more than that, they are a place where friendship and fellowship are born and fostered, and where hearts can flourish. As you'll see in this story, these are treasures I believe in greatly. As a tribute to that, we want to help make your gathering as special and easy on you as possible, and I hope that the resources included in this packet will do just that.

Inside, you'll find . . .

- a ready-to-send graphic (just snap a picture with your phone and text it to your book club with a text including your meeting's location/time),
- a paint-along video in which I discuss elements of the story, some behind-the-scenes facts, and paint along with you,
- story-inspired recipes and music to help set the scene for your gathering,
- behind-the-scenes trivia about the writing of the book,
- a discussion guide,
- a special challenge for you and your group to take on, if you so desire. (Hint: it has to do with tea and rubble . . . metaphorically, of course).

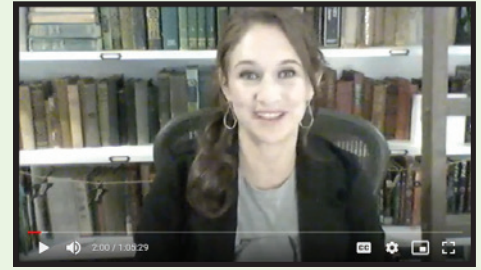
Thank you again for bringing *Yours Is the Night* into your circle. I hope the journey blesses you!

With joy,

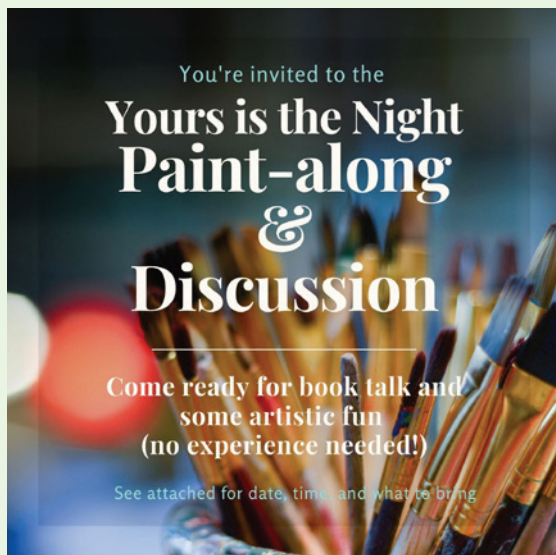
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A'.

# PAINT-ALONG

Would you like to change things up a little bit for your meeting? If so, here is a fun opportunity: a chance to paint one or two bookish scenes with Amanda, as she discusses the story on video and guides your group through the painting process.



Read on for a supply list and link to the video, but first, here is an image you can download or take a picture of to use as an invitation to your group. Just be sure to include in the wording of your text or email your date, time, and supplies needed (either each person bringing their own supplies, or perhaps contributing a \$5 to \$15 fee so that one person can purchase supplies for the whole group, since paint and a pad of paper can be shared).



With a few basic watercolor supplies available at any arts and crafts store, and a small bit of time, you and your club will be on your way to creating this charming scene of fireflies in the forest, as well as a poppy vignette, as you paint along with Amanda. **No experience is necessary!** While we paint, Amanda will also discuss some of the themes of the book and symbolism of the cover elements.

**TIME NEEDED:** 30 minutes to 1 hour  
(depending on whether you do one or both paintings)

**ACCESS VIDEO AT:** [www.AmandaDykes.com/paint](http://www.AmandaDykes.com/paint)

**SUPPLIES NEEDED** are listed below or can be found in a convenient Amazon shopping list at [tinyurl.com/3nz4s8ap](http://tinyurl.com/3nz4s8ap).\*

- 1 small tube of watercolor paint in each of these 4 colors: **Payne's Gray, Turquoise, Cadmium Red, and Cadmium Yellow**. 1 tube of each color will provide more than enough for your whole group to share. If those specific colors aren't available, just aim for a dark grey, a bright blue such as Cerulean or Cobalt, a red such as Alizarin Crimson or Light Red, and a bright primary yellow such as Lemon Yellow. Amanda is using the Winsor & Newton Cotman Watercolor series which she purchases at [cheapjoes.com](http://cheapjoes.com) (allow plenty of time for shipping) or at Michaels craft store.
- 2 small pieces of watercolor paper each (any size will do; size 4x5 is shown in video, which is an 8x10 piece of paper cut in half, giving each person two papers)
- tape such as Scotch tape, masking tape, or washi tape, to secure paper to a surface such as a table, placemat, clipboard, or piece of cardboard
- A cup of water for rinsing brush (one for each painter—plastic cups are fine, clear is fun in order to see the paint and water mingle)
- 2 paper towels or napkins for each person: one for blotting, and one for another purpose
- 1 paintbrush per person, ideally size 6 round (size 4 or 8 would do, too!)
- A plate for each person, for mixing paint. White ceramic works best for mixing and to easily see colors, but plastic will do, too, if you don't mind the water beading up a bit!

\* Please note that in most cases the majority of these items will be more cost-effective if purchased locally at your craft store or an art supply website (for the art-specific supplies such as paints) or dollar store/Walmart (for tape, cups, paper towels/napkins etc.)

# RECIPES



## RUSTIC FRENCH TART *Serves 6*

Warm your kitchen and spice the air with a rustic French tart! In the book, Mira hoped to make her father an apple tart if he returned, and Marie-Agnès used her scarce stores of sugar to make a fresh plum tart for the sojourners along their journey. You can create a simplified version of either one using the recipe below.

1 package frozen puff pastry  
1 pound plums, peaches, or apples  
1/3 cup sugar  
honey  
cinnamon  
fresh ground pepper  
Optional: whipped cream

Allow puff pastry to defrost, then cut it into six squares. Pierce with a fork, then top with sliced fruit in your desired arrangement. Sprinkle with sugar and a very light dusting of cinnamon and pepper. Bake at 425 degrees for 25 minutes, then top with a drizzle of honey. Finish with a dollop of whipped cream.



## GEORGE'S WELSH RAREBIT *Serves 6*

Golden-brown cheese with a savory blend of spices and cream, all broiled over a thick slice of country toast... no wonder George was a little bit obsessed with the "delicacy"!

6 thick slices bread of choice, such as sourdough  
2 to 3 teaspoons flavorful mustard powder such as Colman's  
2 to 3 cups sharp cheddar cheese (or mozzarella, for a milder taste)  
1 cup sour cream  
3 egg yolks  
Worcestershire sauce

Optional twists: caramelized onions, chopped chives and/or cooked, crumbled bacon to top, or chutney of your choice for underneath the cheese spread

Combine cheese, sour cream, yolks, and mustard powder. Toast the bread in broiler or toaster. In an oven-safe dish, top each slice of bread with the cheese mixture, then broil until golden-brown and bubbly. Plate each one for serving, then score the lightly-browned topping in a criss-cross fashion and drizzle with Worcestershire sauce. If you have a larger group, feel free to divide them into appetizer-sized bites.

As they say in France... *bon appétit!*

# TRIVIA

## DID YOU KNOW...

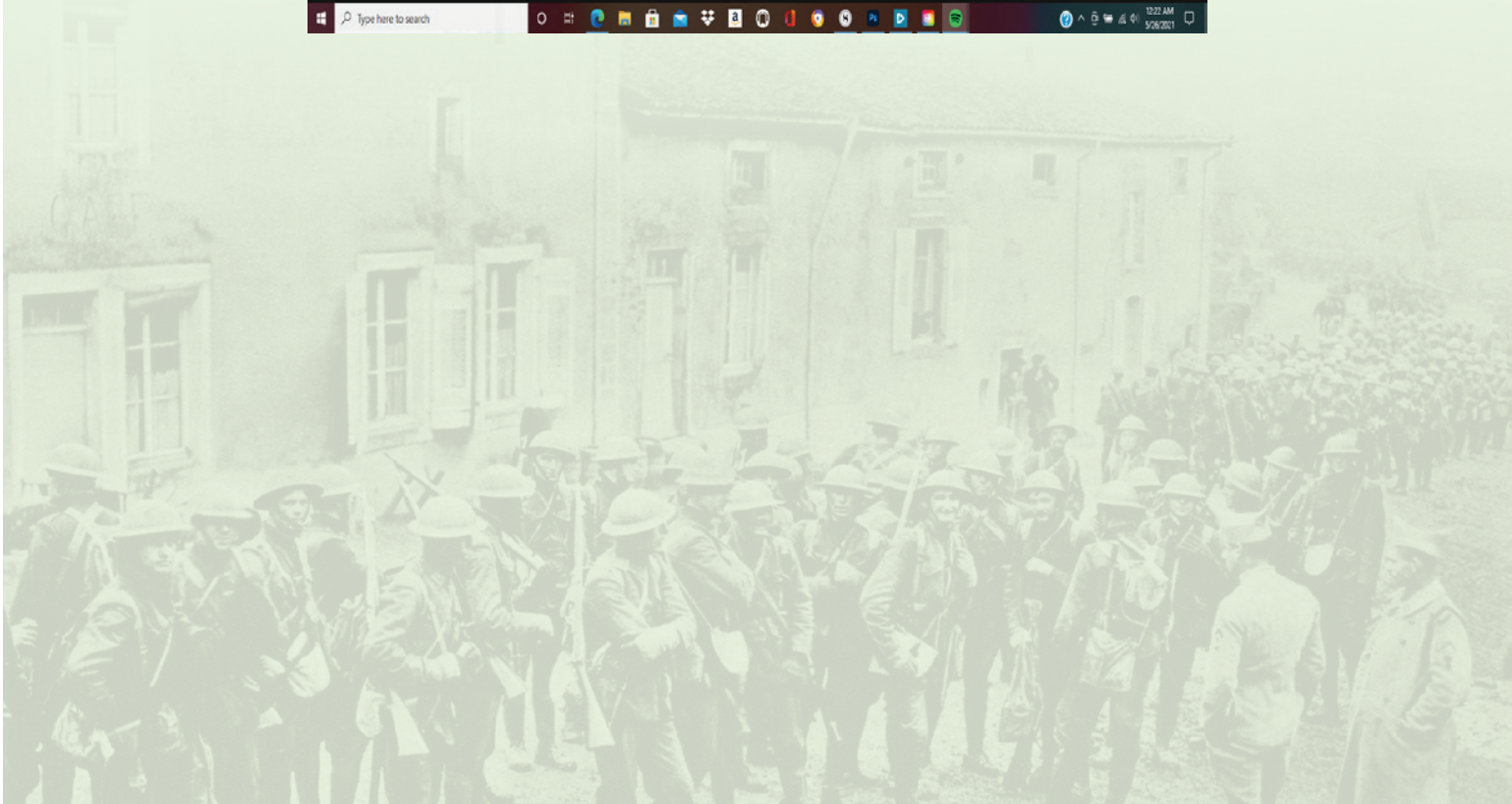
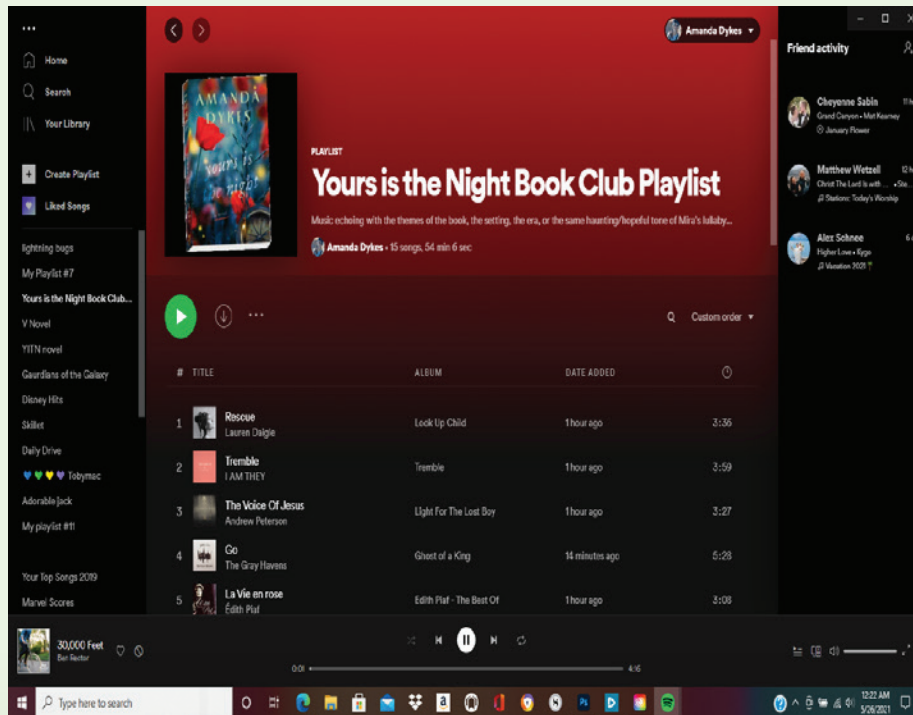
- **While Amanda was writing** *Yours Is the Night*, she and her family were invited to explore a church built in the 1800s. Tucked away in the bell tower of that little white chapel in the mountains, was a row of perfectly mis-matched tiny chairs. Watching her own kids try them out made her think of children who have occupied them over the decades... and the next thing you know, a tiny chair made an appearance in the room Mira sleeps in in the ruined chapel in Beaulieu-en-Coteau.
- **During WWI, J.R.R. Tolkien** was a signals officer. In recent years, a letter from Tolkien surfaced, which was written in 1956 and spoke of his experience, saying “My ‘Samwise’ is indeed (as you note) largely a reflexion of the English soldier—grafted on the village-boys of early days, the memory of the privates and my batmen that I knew in the 1914 War, and recognized as so far superior to myself.” (Batmen, briefly mentioned in *Yours Is the Night*, were soldiers who did battle, but also saw to the cooking and upkeep of an officer’s belongings).
- **After Amanda finished** the very last round of edits and had sent the manuscript away for the very last time, she found herself swimming in a sea of worry over the darker elements of the book. She was driving, and just then, a song came on the radio that she’d never heard before (even though it had been out for several years)—*Rescue* by Lauren Daigle. She couldn’t believe how much it echoed the heart of the book, and with a grateful heart thanked God for seeing her in that moment, and wrapping her in the same comfort that the characters of the book encounter. If you get a chance, look up the song and have a listen as a group! It’s the first song in the playlist referenced on the next page.
- **This year, 2021**, marks the 100th anniversary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. The choosing of the soldier did actually happen as depicted in the prologue. This year, several commemorative ceremonies, pilgrimages, and activities are planned to commemorate the centennial anniversary. Visit [tombguard.org/centennial](http://tombguard.org/centennial).
- **Trench art**, such as the matchstick box Matthew made, was (and is still) very abundant. Here is Amanda at an antique store, holding a vase created out of a spent shell (picture taken during COVID-19, hence the mask).



# SET THE SCENE

If you'd like to add some historical details from the WWI era to your meeting, set the sounds of your evening to this Spotify playlist, which includes songs from the era, as well as songs that tie into the story's themes or characters' journeys.

[tinyurl.com/2ccfax8s](https://tinyurl.com/2ccfax8s)



# DISCUSSION GUIDE

1) Mira promises to keep the lantern lit in the woods to bring her father home. Instead, it brings Matthew, and in doing so, leads to the rest of the matches being spent. And yet Matthew helps her return to the woods, and eventually see that promise kept and fulfilled, despite it appearing physically impossible. Have you ever encountered a situation where all reasonable hope seemed gone, only to witness that hope come about in an unlikely way?

2) The story is told from five different viewpoints: Matthew's, Mira's, Jasper's, George's, and Henry's. Which of their personalities or perspectives did you most connect with, and why?

3) Early on in the journey, Mira's longtime friend Aline says, "These are trying times, no? But as you see, the bread must be baked, and that is a gift. . . . The sun does not cease to shine just because there is a war. And neither do bellies stop growling at supper. So, we plant our seeds, and we bake our bread, and there is life in these things. It is good. Good to have something to set our hands to." Can you relate to this sentiment of "ordinary" things having the extraordinary power to give purpose and hope?

4) Nature plays a bit of a character in this book: stray birdsong in the forest when there had been none at the front, a symphony of crickets outside the window at Aline's bakery, and the glow worms/fireflies. Did you feel these elements added anything to the scenes, story, or undercurrents?

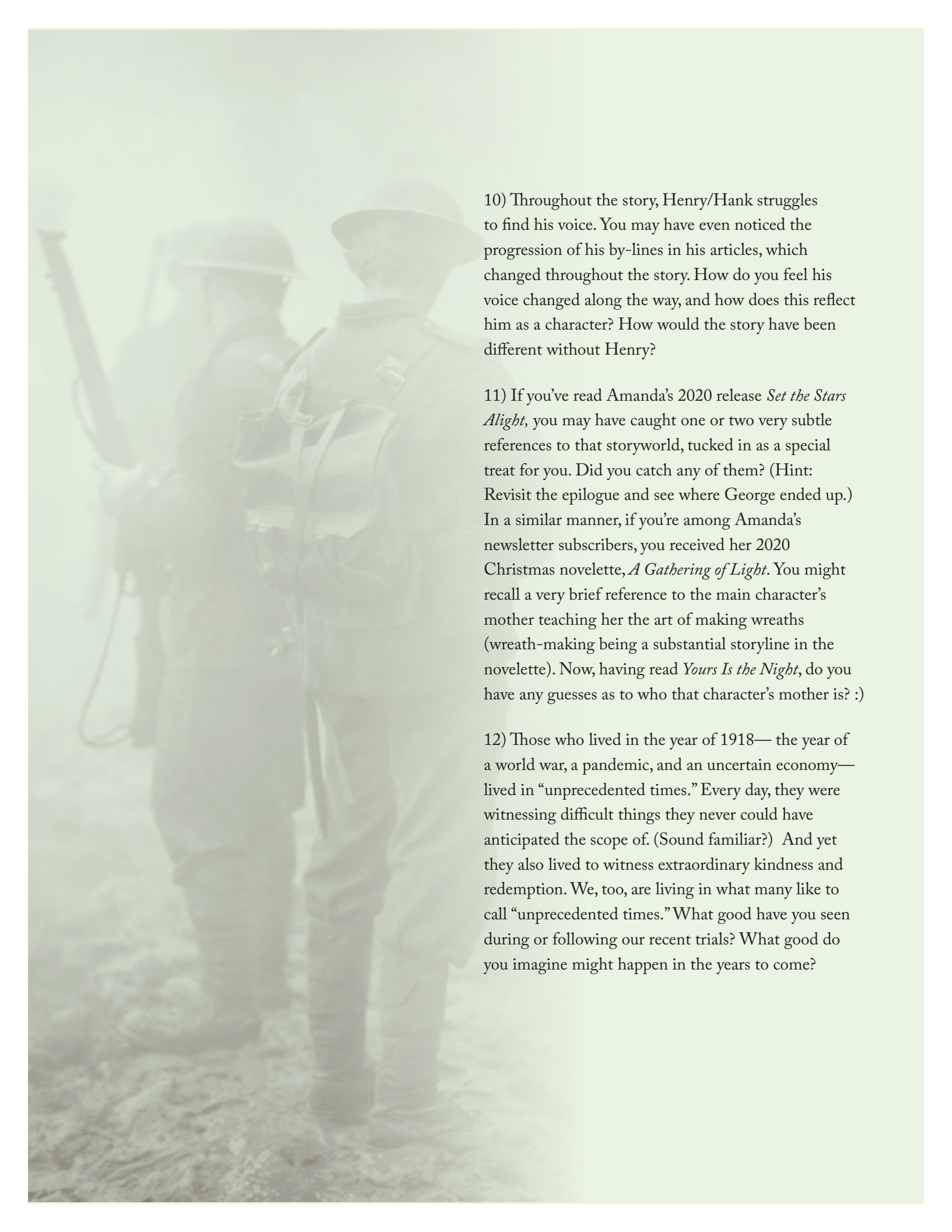
5) Jasper Truett has a complex history in the role of "father". Thinking of his relationships with Amelia, Matthew, and Mira, how does his journey as a father play out in unexpected ways?

6) Chester gives Matthew an empty artillery shell he pulled from the battlefield, and it is "as hollow as could be." In the end, the shell has been turned into something that holds light. Can you think of other things in the story that follow a similar transformation from battlefield to light?

7) Mira begins the story as a believer of fanciful fairy tales. Later, she finds herself in an understandably disillusioned state and yet she ultimately finds herself restored to a fabled chateau, an unlikely sister to a family of brothers, a bride with a river for a veil. In essence, some sense of her "fairy tale" ways were restored in unexpected and gritty ways. What did you make of this journey of hers?

8) The morning Aline welcomes the soldiers into her bakery, "growling stomachs and the miracle of steaming pastries . . . bridged any language obstacle." Have you ever experienced a time when food helped ease tension, build a bridge, or offer a chance for connection that would have been difficult to come by otherwise?

9) After the zeppelin incident, Henry describes George's discovery that he was "apparently, astoundingly, made for just such a situation. . . . What if what we believe to be our shortcomings, our oddities, are actually purposeful quirks that suit us for the moments we were made for?" Have you ever experienced a time like this, or observed it in others?



10) Throughout the story, Henry/Hank struggles to find his voice. You may have even noticed the progression of his by-lines in his articles, which changed throughout the story. How do you feel his voice changed along the way, and how does this reflect him as a character? How would the story have been different without Henry?

11) If you've read Amanda's 2020 release *Set the Stars Alight*, you may have caught one or two very subtle references to that storyworld, tucked in as a special treat for you. Did you catch any of them? (Hint: Revisit the epilogue and see where George ended up.) In a similar manner, if you're among Amanda's newsletter subscribers, you received her 2020 Christmas novelette, *A Gathering of Light*. You might recall a very brief reference to the main character's mother teaching her the art of making wreaths (wreath-making being a substantial storyline in the novelette). Now, having read *Yours Is the Night*, do you have any guesses as to who that character's mother is? :)

12) Those who lived in the year of 1918— the year of a world war, a pandemic, and an uncertain economy— lived in “unprecedented times.” Every day, they were witnessing difficult things they never could have anticipated the scope of. (Sound familiar?) And yet they also lived to witness extraordinary kindness and redemption. We, too, are living in what many like to call “unprecedented times.” What good have you seen during or following our recent trials? What good do you imagine might happen in the years to come?



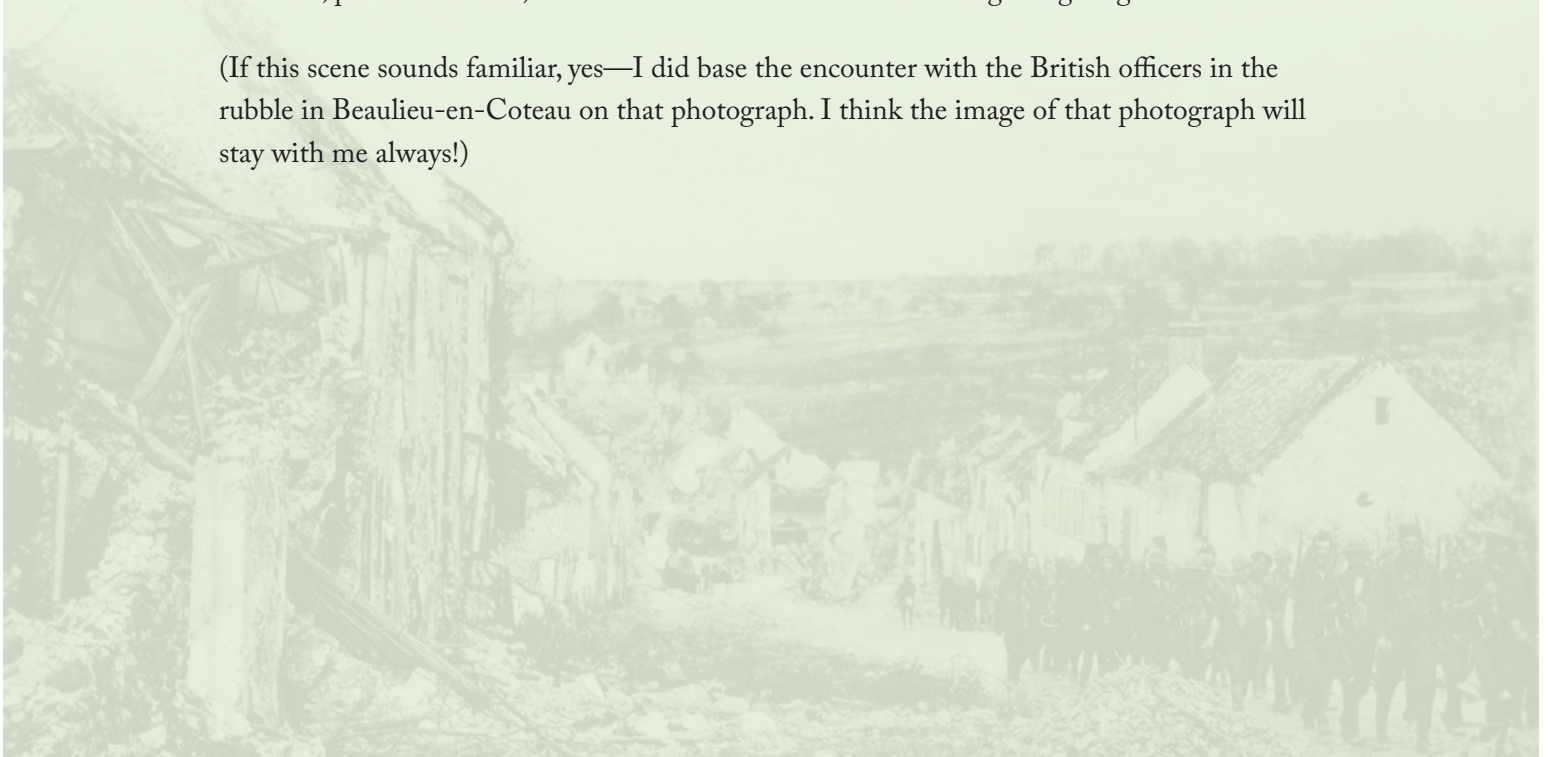
# “TEA IN THE RUBBLE” CHALLENGE

(and a closing note from Amanda)

As you close out the book club’s meeting, consider taking on this challenge. During research, I came across a photograph of officers taking tea in the middle of a wrecked city. Rubble all around, the remains of stone buildings jutting every which way—and these men fighting the darkness of their war by refusing to allow their tribulation to rob the ritual of tea and the gift of camaraderie from them, too. Looking at it at a glance, one might think: *How could they? How could they take tea at a time like this?* Or, one might look at it and think: *How could they not? They are soldiers. They are fighting the dark times by every means possible . . . including doing something life-giving. Taking the time to see the people around them, to hear them, to relate to them.*

I choose to think of the picture in the latter context. A defiance of darkness, by partaking in light. So, the “Tea in the Rubble” Challenge is simply this: Leave this gathering with a determination to find a time, between now and the next book club meeting, to have a “tea in the rubble” moment. A moment when you *could* choose to forego something—an opportunity to speak with someone, a chance to sit down and read a Psalm when things seem too busy, a hard day that seems bent on squeezing the beauty out of it—and instead of foregoing that something, carve out the time. Set your metaphorical table up in that rubble, wobbly as the legs might be, and have that tea. Reach out to that person, read that Psalm, pray that prayer, hunt for beauty in the midst of that hard day—not to ignore the trials, but to draw strength for them, pour into hearts, and—like those officers—do something life-giving.

(If this scene sounds familiar, yes—I did base the encounter with the British officers in the rubble in Beaulieu-en-Coteau on that photograph. I think the image of that photograph will stay with me always!)



# THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for the honor of spending this time together, in story and in discussion and fellowship! And thank you, once more, for the heart you pour into nurturing friendships through the gift of a book club. It matters so very much!

