

than any other in London—the familiar rooflines of Whitehall’s buildings, the street that led to Charing Cross Hospital with its banner demanding *Silence for the Wounded*. A twenty-minute walk would lead her to her flat, and another twenty would take her to where her brother Lukas lived with his wife and their little daughter. A short tube ride and she’d be in Hammersmith, where said wife’s extended family always welcomed her, any time of day or night.

She leaned into the window frame and touched the tips of her fingers to the glass, still cool from the night. Sometimes it was hard to remember that this hadn’t always been her world. Even harder to contemplate was that it wouldn’t *always* be her world.

Not once this war was over. The war she spent her entire focus on trying to end.

She let her fingers fall from the glass. It *had* to end. The Central Powers must be stopped. And with the United States now fighting on the side of the Allies, with their fresh soldiers and virtually limitless resources, surely it would happen soon. The war would be over. And then . . .

And then . . .

What? Maman would want to go back to Belgium. The longer they were here, the more wistful she became about the house in Brussels that was no doubt currently occupied by some faceless German officer. Lukas and Willa had already decided to split their time between London, Brussels, and whatever cities wanted to host the two renowned violinists on tour.

But Margot? She drew in a long breath and held it while her mind churned out a prayer. *Nine, eighteen, twenty-seven, thirty-six, forty-five, fifty-four* . . . What would be left for her in Belgium? There was her childhood friend Claudette—assuming they would even still like each other, after living such different lives since the De Wildes sought refuge in England. Would a university welcome her there? As a student—or as a professor, eventually? Or would the world expect her to be a typical girl, too busy thinking about needlepoint and knitting and finding a husband to care about academic degrees?

The numbers came to a screeching halt in her head, as they always did when she contemplated a future like that. No, domestic “bliss” would be torture. She’d be a dunce of a housewife. What she needed was something intellectually stimulating with which to fill her days after the war was over. Something in academia, most likely. In mathematics.

*Here*. In London, if they would let her stay after the war was over. Here, where she’d first tasted the freedom of being who she was.

Muffled voices came from the hallway. One male, one female. Margot tilted her head to better hear them. Lady Hambro and DID? No, it wasn’t Hall’s voice that said, “Just *knock*, Dot.”

Nor, for that matter, was the head of the secretaries called *Dot*. And she certainly never sounded as uncertain as the voice that replied, “But the sign says to ring the bell. . . .”