

PART ONE ST. LAURENT MILITARY GRAVEYARD
JUNE 6, 1998

Chapter 1 A Family Visit

The pathway was lined with hedges high enough to block everything else from view. Grandpa walked quickly ahead of the others through the tunnel of green. Jimmy, the youngest of the two brothers and two sisters, could hardly stay with him. He couldn't believe that an old man like Grandpa could move so fast. Mom, Dad, and the rest of the family were almost running to keep up with him.

Suddenly Grandpa stopped. He fell to his knees.

"Dad!" Mom called from behind Jimmy, and her voice was full of concern.

But Jimmy knew now that Grandpa hadn't fallen; he was . . . kneeling. Praying.

Soon Jimmy knew why. When he came up beside his grandfather, who was staring at the landscape at the end of the path, Jimmy saw an amazing design. It had surely been created by both God and man: the green grass was God's work, and the sea of white crosses was man's.

Jimmy, who was seven, had seen only one other cemetery, and it was much smaller. This one looked like everybody on earth had died and been buried here. As far as he could see, there was only green, white, green, white, green, white.

Then Mom and Dad ran to Grandpa, put their arms around him, and held him tightly; Jimmy's brothers and sisters were coming, too, and finally his grandmother. There was an odd expression on her face; Jimmy couldn't tell whether she was happy or sad.

Grandpa's face had no expression at all. His eyes were open wide as he stared at the crosses. Those eyes must have seen a lot of things in all those years, Jimmy thought.

The boy wondered if Grandpa was thinking about people who were buried in this place—people who had been his friends. Dad said Grandpa had fought in the war here, but Jimmy didn't understand—not really. He had heard of that war in Vietnam. But this was France.

Maybe a war was fought here, once, too.