

# *Tides of Honour*

by Genevieve Graham

## Letters to Audrey

*The time Audrey and Danny had together at first was brief, but they both felt a connection. They also suffered a sense of loss when they were apart. To help close the miles between them, they started up a correspondence, getting to know each other a little better with every letter. After only a few months, they had fallen madly in love, and most of that affection stemmed from the words they put on those pages. The letters also speak to the reader, sharing little known details of what was going on during this tumultuous time.*

April 2, 1915

Dear Audrey,

I hardly know how to start this letter. I really don't write much. Once in a while to the folks, but other than that, I don't think I've ever written to anybody. It's been raining a bit, so my hands are cold and it's hard to hold the pen proper. My hands are always cold out here. I remember that yours were warm.

I suppose I should tell you a bit about me, since we didn't get to talk much before I had to go. I live in Nova Scotia. I'm a fisherman, like my dad and his dad.

I just had my 19th birthday. The fellas found a candle and stuck it in my supper the other night. I have seven younger brothers and a dog named Cecil, but he's real old, so I don't know if he'll still be there when I get back. I hope so.

Anyway, like I said, I'm not real good at letter writing, but if you write to me, maybe I can answer some of your questions. Until I hear from you, I am

Yours affectionately, Danny

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**Letters to Audrey**

April 16, 1915

Dear Audrey

Very many thanks for your letter. Words can't express enough how great it was for you to send that dandy box of sweets. It got here about a week ago. The boys ate up everything in that box, and they all say thank you.

What I really want to thank you for is that picture you painted. I don't know how you did that, since you saw me for only a short time, but I'd say it's a pretty good likeness, with my funny ears and all. I was amazed when I unfolded that picture and saw what you'd done for me. I love it. Can you do a picture of you for me too?

You asked me in your letter what it was like out here. Well, I'll tell you, but I don't want you to be scared for me. I plan on living through this thing so I can come back and see you.

I came to the war back in February. I signed on with a couple of my buddies, but they both died a month ago. I know a lot of guys who have died or been hurt real bad. It's a lot worse out here than I figured it would be.

I'm writing this in the gun pit. Our dugout is a good one, about twelve feet deep, and it takes no more than a second for us to dive in when the enemy starts their dirty work. We spent about an hour huddled up in the dugout yesterday while Fritz (that's what we call the Germans – sometimes we call them Jerry. I guess it depends on your mood) dropped bombs within 50 yards of us. Nobody's been killed recently, but a lot of the boys are sick. It's easy to get sick here. The rain sits on the ground for weeks because there's no place for it to go and the mud goes up to our knees sometimes. I can't even recall what it feels like to be dry. Sometimes it gets so cold in the morning that our clothes freeze right onto us.

We only get a shower every two weeks, so you can imagine the stink around here. Everybody gets lice in the dug outs. The critters lay eggs in your clothes, so even if you pick them off, they come back even more. If you look down the line of us sitting around, we're probably all scratching away. I'm sure there were 300 on the shirt I took off last week. The showers are real quick. They give us 4 minutes under the water, about 5 men to a row. And believe me, you have to work some to get 2 weeks worth of dirt off in that short a time.

Also, we share the trench with a lot of rats, and some of them are the same size as cats. I don't mind them so

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much when they go after the frogs and roaches, but most of them are more particular about what they eat, and you don't want to know what it is that they like best.

When we're not shooting at Fritz, the army keeps us working, fixing up the gun pit and the latrine, hauling ammunition and stuff. Sometimes we just sit and write or play cards, like I am right now.

I probably shouldn't have told you all this, but if you want to know the truth, it's a perfectly awful place to be, out here on the line. But even so, I sure would give just about anything to have you here with me for just five minutes.

I'd like to know more about you, if you don't mind my asking. All I know is that you're a wonderful artist and you're the prettiest girl I've ever seen. Can you tell me more?

I'd best be going. I can hear the guns starting up their racket, so that means we'll be working again soon. I hope this letter finds you healthy and you know I'm

Affectionately yours, Danny

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**Letters to Audrey**

Dear Audrey,

Your parcel arrived yesterday, and boy oh boy, were we happy to dig into that! After we're done our weekly rations a fellow can get awfully hungry. I hear that men who are taken prisoner can actually starve without the parcels they get in the mail. So cake, cookies – anything is great. Do you make all those things yourself? Because they sure are delicious. Maybe someday you could bake some and we could eat them together, hot out of the oven. Doesn't that sound sweet as candy to you? It does to me.

Sometimes we get moved out for a few days to the wagon lines, near where they keep the horses. That's where they have canteens where we can spend some of our money. We get about 60 cents a day, which my friend Mick says is about 2 shillings. Last time I was back there I had ham and eggs nearly every evening. The meal cost my whole day's pay, but why worry? I haven't got anyplace else to spend it. Eggs are 13 cents each, which I suppose isn't too dear, but at home we have our own chickens, so I'm not used to having to buy eggs.

The weather has been beautiful lately which sure makes things easier. The mud under our feet gets a chance to dry a bit, and the boys like to take off their shirts or socks just to feel the sun on their skin. I hope the weather near you is just as pretty as you are, if that's possible. I remain

Yours affectionately, Danny

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**Letters to Audrey**

April 20, 1916

My dearest Audrey;

Just enough time to write you a quick note before it gets too dark to see what I'm doing. I've been thinking of you today, since I got that other package from you a couple of days ago. Thanks, by the way, for the socks. That was a super surprise, and one that made a lot of the boys jealous! It felt great to pull off those old ones and slide into something you'd knit just for me.

The new picture you sent is so beautiful. I know I told you the first one got wet, so I'm so glad to have this new one. Even so, I'd never forget how pretty you are.

The guns are certainly doing some tall barking tonight. I don't think any of us are going to get much sleep. But I am tired. I can just imagine my bed back home. That pillow will feel like the very best thing in the world. I think I should end this missive now, because I think I might start writing in my sleep.

Before I sign off, I want to tell you again how grateful I am for your letters and parcels. Every time I get a letter I feel like I know you a little bit better, and every time I swear that I'm going to win you over after this war is done. I'd be a proud man to have you on my arm. I'd feel like a king. Until then, I'm

Affectionately yours, Danny

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**Letters to Audrey**

May 30, 1916

My dearest Audrey;

Words can't express how sorry I was to hear about your grandmother's passing. I suppose people say it can be a blessing, but it's never a blessing for the folks left behind. I wish I was there to comfort you. I hope you know that I'm thinking of you, like I do all the time. What will you do now?

I never thought I'd ever go to France. My home in Nova Scotia is real small. Mostly my family and a few others live there. I don't think any of us would travel this far if it wasn't for the war. And now I'm wondering if I'd like to come back and see France after this is all done. People say it's so beautiful – or at least it used to be. Part of me thinks I'll never want to see these shores again. I think I'd remember too much stuff I'd rather forget. I guess it doesn't really matter what I think anyway, because it's going to take a long time for France to get fixed up again. All the buildings and roads are broken.

But I'll come back to France if it means seeing you.

I really am sorry to hear of your loss.

Affectionately yours, Danny

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**Letters to Audrey**

July 12, 1916

Dear Audrey

Thank you so very, very much for the sweater! I can't believe how quickly you knit that, and how it's exactly the right size for me. It's just dandy for the cool evenings, which is every night. And, as usual, the cookies and candies you sent were greatly appreciated by all the boys – and me. You are a great cook! And you sure are good at writing. I've saved up all your letters and they're a pretty tidy stack now.

Audrey, I have something I want to ask you, and I'm kind of afraid to ask. If I do, you might either be real angry at me being so forward, or you might love the idea. But the thing is, if I don't ask, I'll never forgive myself.

I hope it's not too selfish of me to say this, but I don't want you to stay here. I want you to come to Canada. I'm not sure if getting to know you through letters and all is the right way, but the thing is, I'm in love with you, Audrey. I want to marry you and have a family. I wish with all my heart that I could be on one knee in front of you, asking, but I can't. I promise to do it right when I see you again.

Please make me the happiest man in the world, Audrey. Come to Canada and be my wife. I remain

Yours most affectionately, Danny