

Another boring day, another desperate escape into the library. My mom had confiscated my iPhone (seriously, was I twelve?), and my room felt like a prison. The library was my only refuge. As I trudged through the aisles, my gaze fell on the history section. Dusty tomes stared back, their dry titles a cure for insomnia. Yet, something caught my eye - a glint of gold amidst the dullness. A book unlike any other, adorned with jewels, no barcode in sight. It seemed to hum with an otherworldly energy.

Curiosity piqued, and I reached out. The jeweled spine thrummed beneath my fingers, and the library blurred. The musty air turned sweet with pastries and coffee. I blinked, disoriented. "I don't think I'm reading the book anymore," I murmured, panic creeping in.

A boy appeared beside me. "Ça va? Tu as l'air perdu." French. My mom had taught me, but hearing it spoken was different. "Je m'appelle Sofia," I stammered, "Où suis-je? Je parle principalement anglais."

The boy smiled. "Don't worry, I speak English. We learn it in school. My name is Andre. You are in the Municipal Library." His accent was thick but charming. "Wasn't the library destroyed?" I asked, a chill running down my spine. He laughed. "Sofia, you have a sense of humor!"

My eyes landed on a calendar - August 19, 1944. The day the library was bombed. Sirens wailed, and I clutched the golden book. Chaos erupted, shelves splintering. Andre yanked me to safety just as a bomb hit where I'd stood. His blue eyes locked on mine, and I felt myself falling into them...

Another blast shook me back to reality. "Come on, Sofia, we go now," Andre yelled, pulling me away from the crumbling library. We sprinted into the street, but there was no safety. Bombs rained down, each explosion a punch to the gut. I stumbled, and Andre threw himself against me, shielding me as debris rained down. His weight vanished, and I rolled over to see him staring up at me, his eyes frozen in pain.

A voice pierced the ringing in my ears. "Sofia, wake up!" It was Andre, his accent thick with worry. I struggled up, my body screaming in protest. Another blast flung me against a wall. Through the haze, I spotted the golden book, its gems glinting. Without thinking, I scrambled for it, my fingers closing around its familiar shape.

"Goodbye, Andre. Au revoir."

The world seemed to spin, and I felt myself being pulled back...

I opened my eyes to the scent of old books. The library stood intact, the history section silent and still. The golden book lay open in my lap, its jewels dull. I frantically searched for a calendar and found one. It read September 18, 2024. I breathed a sigh of relief before immediately feeling a pang of loss. Andre. Had he...? But I was alone. I clutched the book tighter, the memory of his blue eyes burning in my mind. I had to get home and process this...this thing that had happened. When I got home, I searched for the name. Andre Leroy. What popped up was a death list of people who died in that terrible bombing. I scrolled and I scrolled astonished by how many names were there. Suddenly I saw it.

"Andre Leroy." He was described as a hero. He saved 4 people but died going back for more. I felt like breaking down and crying. As I regained my composure I thought about how I wasn't the same girl who'd wandered into the library out of boredom. I had traveled through time, survived a bombing, and lost a boy who had saved my life. One question still lingered in my mind, who was I? Well, I knew who I was but was I teleported there as me, or was I some other girl the book talked about? As I embraced the book, the faint echo of sirens lingered in the air, and a single question irked me—had the past truly let go of me, or was there more to the story waiting to unfold?