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Two Americans in Nazi-Occupied Paris—a Bookstore Unites Them but a War Divides Them

“Sundin is a must-buy for any fiction collection, and her latest World War II tale positively crackles with tension.”

—*Library Journal*, Starred review for *When Twilight Breaks*



Ada, Mi.—In a recent review, *Booklist* stated that Sarah Sundin’s “novels set the gold standard for historical war romance.” Her thorough research interspersed with a perfect blend of romance have made Sundin a favorite among historical fiction readers. Based upon real-life events, Sundin’s newest novel, *Until Leaves Fall in Paris*, immerses readers into the midst of World War II where the cost of resistance is high and danger lurks at every turn.

American ballerina Lucie Girard loves performing with the Paris Opera Ballet. But when the Nazis invade France in 1940, Lucie finds she must focus on a different career path. She purchases her favorite English-language bookstore, Green Leaf Books, to allow the Jewish owners to escape. She also joins the French resistance and is able to aid their efforts by passing messages hidden between the pages of her books.

Recent widower Paul Aubrey is determined to leave France and return to the states with his daughter, Josie. But the US Army convinces him to keep his factory running and obtain military information from his German customers. However, accepting this role also means that he will be viewed as a collaborator.

Lucie and Paul’s paths cross when he brings his daughter to Green Leaf Books. Although both are intrigued by each other, Lucie rejects him when she discovers that he is selling to the Germans. Paul longs to tell her the truth, but to win her trust would mean betraying his duty. Can Paul and Lucie work together for the higher good? Or will it cost them everything they love?

Until Leaves Fall in Paris

by Sarah Sundin

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Sarah Sundin is the bestselling author of *When Twilight Breaks* and several popular WWII series, including *Sunrise at Normandy*, *Waves of Freedom*, *Wings of the Nightingale*, and *Wings of Glory*. Her novels have received starred reviews from *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*, as well as the Carol Award, the FHL Reader’s Choice Award, and multiple appearances on *Booklist*’s “101 Best Romance Novels of the Last 10 Years.” Sarah lives in Northern California. Visit www.sarahsundin.com for more information.

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Suggested Interview Questions ***Until Leaves Fall in Paris* by Sarah Sundin**

Can you please provide a brief description of your new novel, *Until Leaves Fall in Paris*?

The novel follows two Americans living in Nazi-occupied Paris in 1941. Former ballerina Lucie Girard is an artsy Left Bank bookstore owner who aids the resistance, while practical Right Bank businessman Paul Aubrey passes information on the Germans to the US Army and uses his automobile factory to hide escaping RAF airmen. Although Paul is intrigued by Lucie, to gain her trust and affection would mean revealing his secrets—and that would put them both in danger.

***Until Leaves Fall in Paris* is based upon real life events? Can you please provide a little more information on the backstory behind your new novel?**

When I learned that thousands of American citizens remained in Paris after the Nazis conquered France, I was fascinated. Why would anyone from a neutral nation like the USA remain when they had the ability to leave? The answers are as varied as the people who stayed—business, artistic, and family concerns topped the list, along with the sense that Paris was their true home.

Paul Aubrey is typical of the many American businessmen who remained—America was neutral, so they could still conduct business. Lucie and Green Leaf Books are loosely based on Sylvia Beach and her famous bookstore, Shakespeare and Company, which served as a center for the American expatriate community in the 1920s. What amazed me was how Miss Beach chose to remain in Paris as the Nazis bore down and how she kept her bookstore open until December 1941! That kind of plucky courage was just what I wanted in my novel's heroine.

In order to aid the US in the war efforts, the main protagonist, Paul Aubrey, is viewed as a collaborator. What does this mean and what did this entail?

A collaborator was a man or woman who worked closely with the German occupiers, whether in business or in personal relationships. The story of France in World War II is complex and nuanced, with a spectrum of behavior from active resistance to passive resistance to quiet accommodation to active collaboration—and that spectrum was seen among the American expatriates as well. In general, collaborators were despised or at least distrusted by many. Since Paul Aubrey's factory sells delivery trucks to the Germans, he is seen as an active collaborator. He allows others to think the worst of him in order to secretly aid his country—but it comes at a high personal cost.

In the 1940s when Germany first conquered France, Americans were treated well. But this all changed on December 11, 1941. Can you please relay the circumstances that took place on this day?

On December 11, 1941, four days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Germany declared war on the United States. The US reciprocated. That same day, all American citizens in occupied France were required to register with their local German commander, and 340 men were ordered to report for internment on December 17. Starting on September 24, 1942, a further 1400 US citizens, men and women ages 16-65, were interned. They were imprisoned in hotels or military-type camps in unpleasant conditions—but nowhere near the brutality and deprivation seen in German concentration camps.

How does this event tie into your story?

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This event provides a major thread of tension in the story. Since British citizens were interned, Americans knew they would probably also be interned if America entered the war. And everything that happened in 1941 hurtled America closer and closer to war. With Paul and Lucie deeply involved in resistance activities, they can't afford to be interned.

What type of research was required to learn about the French resistance and the many unique ways that both the French and American expats participated in this resistance?

Researching a new aspect of the war always energizes me. While I had a good deal of general knowledge of France in the war, I had a lot to learn—and I found a lot of amazing resources. I read quite a few books about occupied Paris to come at the subject from different angles, plus books about Americans in Paris, the French resistance, cultural life under the occupation, and more. Sadly, my research trip was canceled due to COVID, but I've been privileged to visit Paris in the past, so I was able to draw on memories.

World War II affected so many countries. Why did you choose to set your novel in France?

Paris, as one of the most beautiful and romantic cities in the world, is a perennially popular setting for novels. Also, the shock of the City of Light coming under darkness and the courage of those who dared to fight back against the darkness is a story that continues to resonate with readers. I wanted a fresh angle, and found it by focusing on two Americans from very different backgrounds.

What do you hope readers will experience when reading *Until Leaves Fall in Paris*?

First, I hope they experience an exciting and romantic tale in a glorious setting. But I also hope the story helps readers think about when to speak up, when to act, and when to take risks. In addition, I hope they enjoy Paul and Lucie's discussions about arts and creativity versus business and science—and how they learn from each other.

What are you working on next?

I'm very excited about my next novel, set in Copenhagen, Denmark. When the Nazis occupy Denmark, Baron Henrik Ahlefeldt is ashamed of his dissolute life. Inspired by Copenhagen's Little Mermaid statue, he exchanges his voice for legs. He assumes the identity of Hemming Andersen, takes a job in a shipyard, and rows messages across the Øresund to Sweden for the resistance. American Else Jensen is determined to continue her studies with famous Danish physicist Niels Bohr—work that means more to her than freedom. In 1943 she begins using university equipment to print resistance newspapers and hears stories of the movement's legendary *Havmand*—the merman. Living in the same boardinghouse, Else suspects there's more to Hemming, but his silence is impenetrable. When the Nazis crack down on the Danes, will there be more power in Henrik's silence or Else's speech?

How can readers connect with you?

I love to hear from readers! Please visit my website at www.sarahsundin.com. There you can send me a message or sign up for my email newsletter. I'm also active on Facebook (SarahSundinAuthor), Twitter (@sarahsundin), Instagram (@sarahsundinauthor), and Pinterest (Sarah Sundin).

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