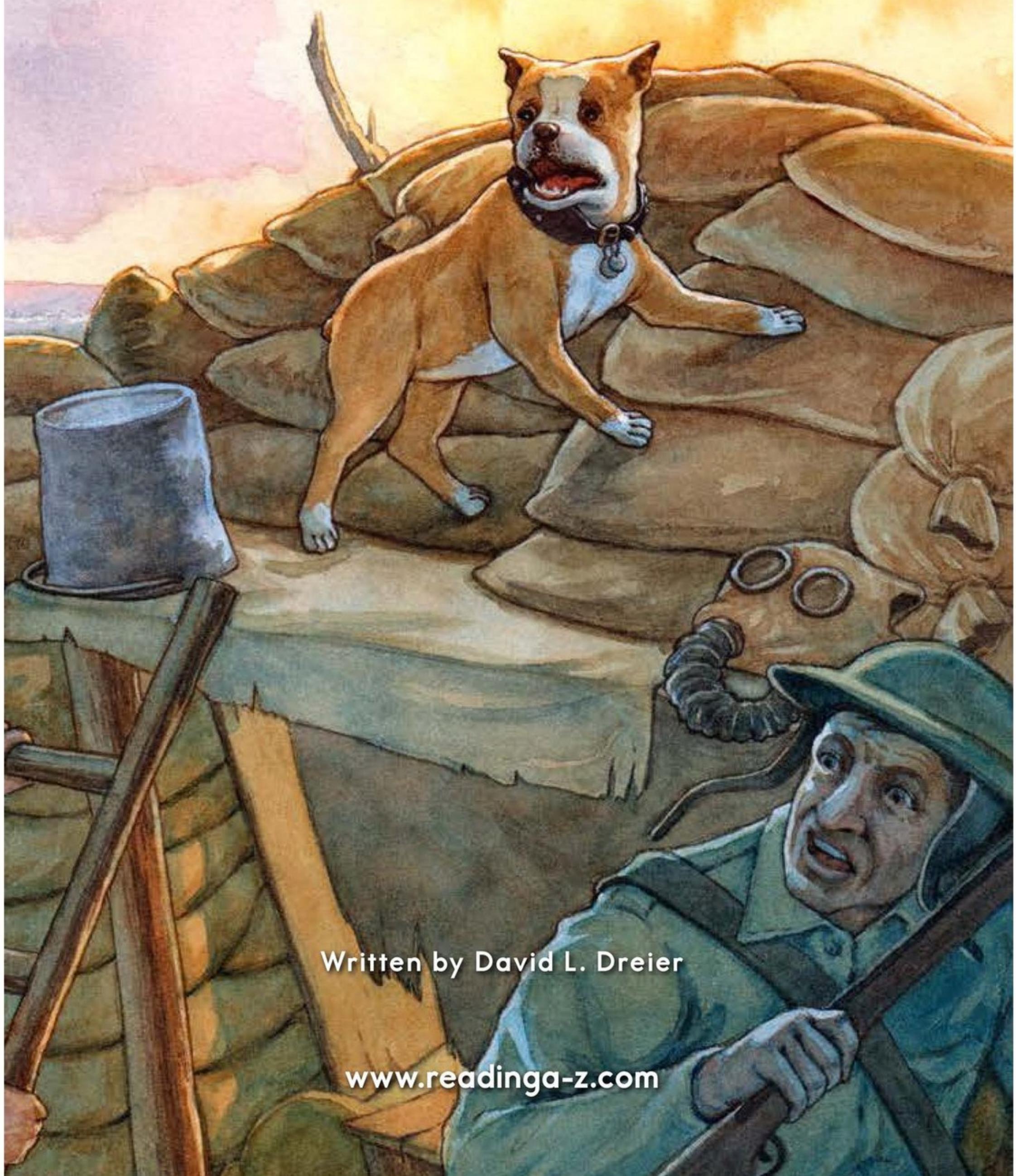


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# Sergeant Stubby



Written by David L. Dreier

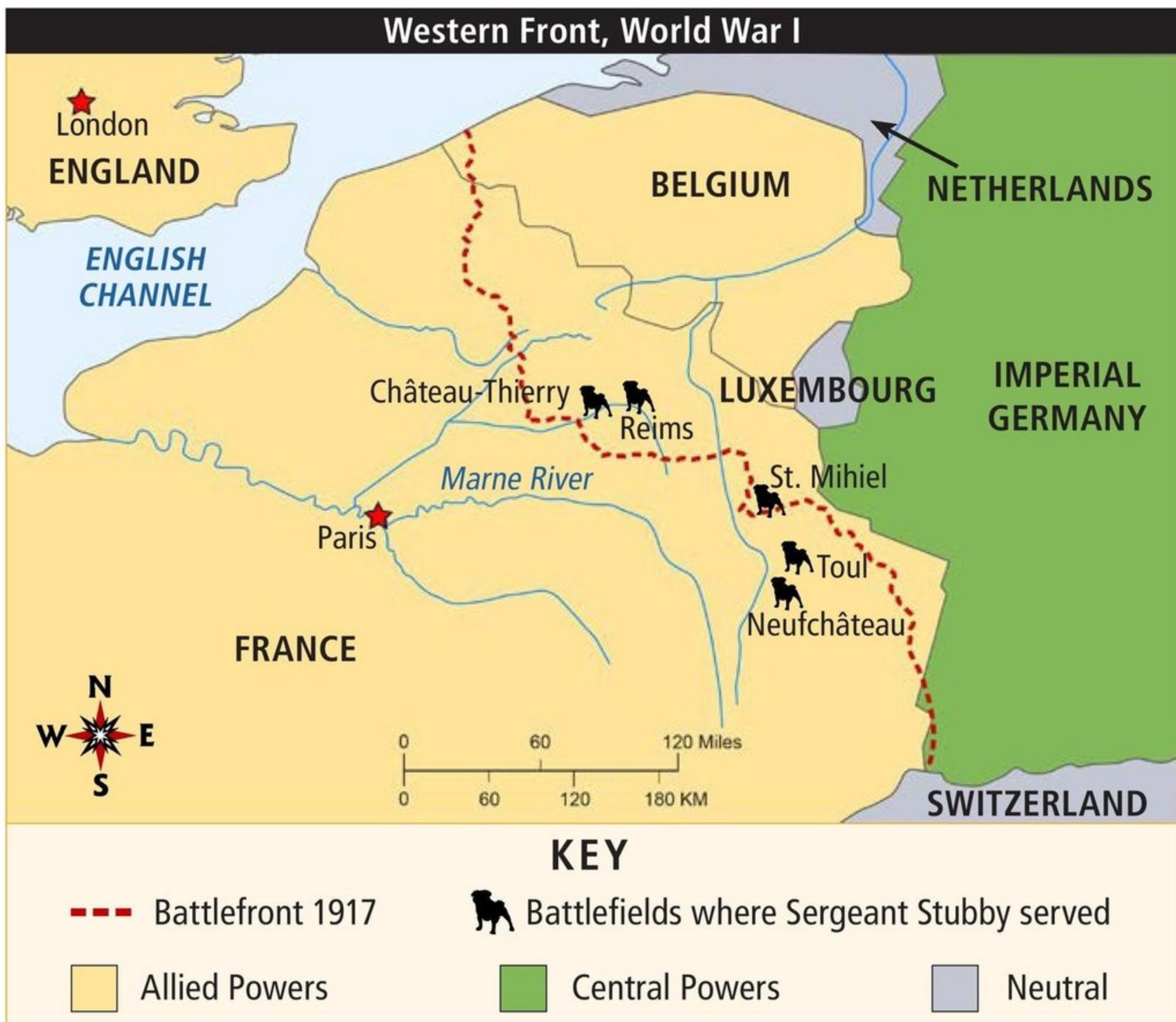
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For a small dog, Stubby was very strong.

### **Stubby the Stowaway**

It was the fall of 1917, and a young U.S. Army recruit faced a difficult problem. World War I was raging, and Private James Robert Conroy was about to ship off to Europe to join America's British and French allies. The problem was how to get his pet—a young bull terrier—onto the ship.

Conroy was a soldier in the 102nd Infantry **Regiment**, which was part of the Yankee Division, based in New England. During his basic training, he had noticed the dog hanging around the Yale University football stadium in New Haven, Connecticut. Conroy adopted the dog and named him Stubby, probably because of the dog's little stump of a tail.

Conroy soon discovered that Stubby was a natural-born soldier who easily learned the bugle calls and how to march with the men on the drill field. He even learned how to salute, sitting back on his hind legs and raising his right paw to his brow.

Stubby's military skills, however, wouldn't be enough to get him to France with Conroy. Pets were not allowed on troop ships.

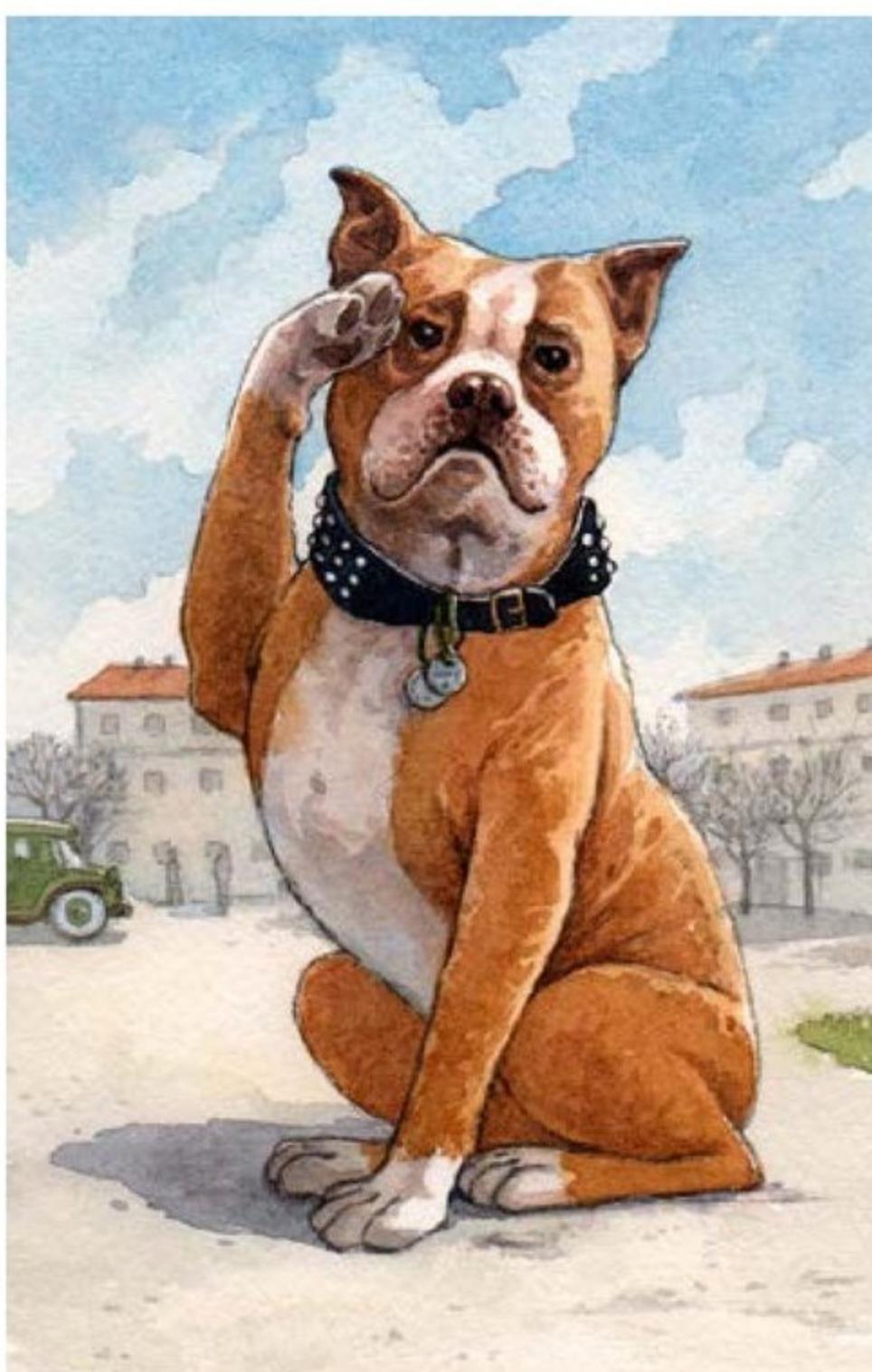
Conroy asked for help from a sailor aboard the *Minnesota*, the ship that would be carrying his regiment to the war. Before the ship left for France in September, the seaman hid Stubby in the coal bin of the engine room.

After the ship sailed, Conroy and Stubby were reunited and the dog enjoyed the voyage, which lasted nearly a month. According to a later account, Stubby's shipboard life "was one soup bone after another."

## Arrival in France

The 102nd Infantry Regiment landed in France in early October. Now Conroy had a new problem: how to get Stubby off the ship. While his friends distracted some nearby officers, Conroy hid Stubby in his army overcoat and walked casually down the ship's gangplank. Stubby made it ashore undetected.

By this time, Stubby had become the regiment's unofficial **mascot**. Some of Conroy's friends had even made Stubby a set of metal identity tags, known as "dog tags."



Stubby's ability to salute won him many fans.

Unfortunately, Stubby's presence in the regiment had still not been officially approved. When several stern-faced officers finally discovered Stubby, the soldiers feared that he would be taken away. Stubby saved the day, however, when he charmed the officers by saluting them.

Stubby's role as mascot was confirmed in early 1918 by the regiment's new commander, Colonel John H. Parker. The colonel issued an order that Stubby would remain with Conroy. The soldiers joked that Stubby was the only member of the regiment who could talk back to Parker and get away with it.

The way that Stubby went to war was unusual, but he was just one of thousands of dogs used by both sides in World War I. Some twenty thousand dogs served on the Allied side. They pulled machine-gun carriages, carried messages, stood guard, and killed rats in the filthy **trenches**. Dogs known as mercy dogs or ambulance dogs searched for wounded men on the battlefield.

With so many **canine** recruits, it was difficult for any one dog to **distinguish** itself. But Stubby would stand out from all the others.



Stubby was always happiest when he was at the side of James Robert Conroy.



The trenches of World War I were filthy and dangerous.

### In the “Great War”

By late 1917, the Great War—as it was called at the time—had been dragging on for three years. The loss of life and destruction on the battlefields in France was beyond belief. Although the causes of the war were complicated, it was clear that millions of soldiers were dying. Many people on both sides wanted the conflict to end, but no end was in sight.

The war had become a **stalemate**, with Germany leading one side and the Allies, including Britain and France, on the other. The Yankee Division was part of a large force that the United States was sending to Europe to aid the British and French.

Conroy and his fellow soldiers were sent to the Lorraine region of northeastern France. There, they underwent further training with experienced French troops to prepare for an expected German attack in the spring.

The German push began on March 21, 1918, with a poison-gas attack. Both sides in the war used poisonous gases, which caused terrible damage to exposed eyes, throats, and lungs. Soldiers wore gas masks to protect themselves. Stubby had his own mask, made by a French officer.

With his keen sense of smell, Stubby could detect the smallest hint of gas seeping into Allied lines. Whenever he smelled the deadly gas, he would run up and down the trenches, barking and nipping the men. Alerted by their faithful mascot, the soldiers would put on their protective masks.

Stubby learned that gas settled into low areas of land. One time, he found a soldier asleep in an underground bunker at the start of a gas attack. Realizing the danger the man was in, the alarmed mutt woke him up and barked until the soldier put on his mask.

Stubby's sharp hearing also saved lives. He could hear incoming **artillery** shells long before the men around him and would warn everyone to take cover. Likewise, he alerted dozing soldiers whenever he heard German soldiers sneaking out of their trenches to attack.

Stubby was active on the battlefield, running to any American who called for help. If the soldier could walk, Stubby led him back to the Allied lines. If the man was too badly wounded to stand, Stubby would stay by him and bark until medics arrived to carry him to safety.

In April 1918, Stubby himself was wounded. As he went out beyond the trench after an artillery barrage, another shell landed nearby and exploded. Conroy heard Stubby emit “a low howl of pain” as shell fragments tore into his chest and left foreleg.

Conroy carried Stubby in his arms to a first-aid station where he was put into an ambulance and sent to a field hospital. Stubby was so popular that there was no question he would be treated, even though the hospital was flooded with wounded men. The regiment’s spirits were lifted when word came that their beloved mascot would survive his wounds.

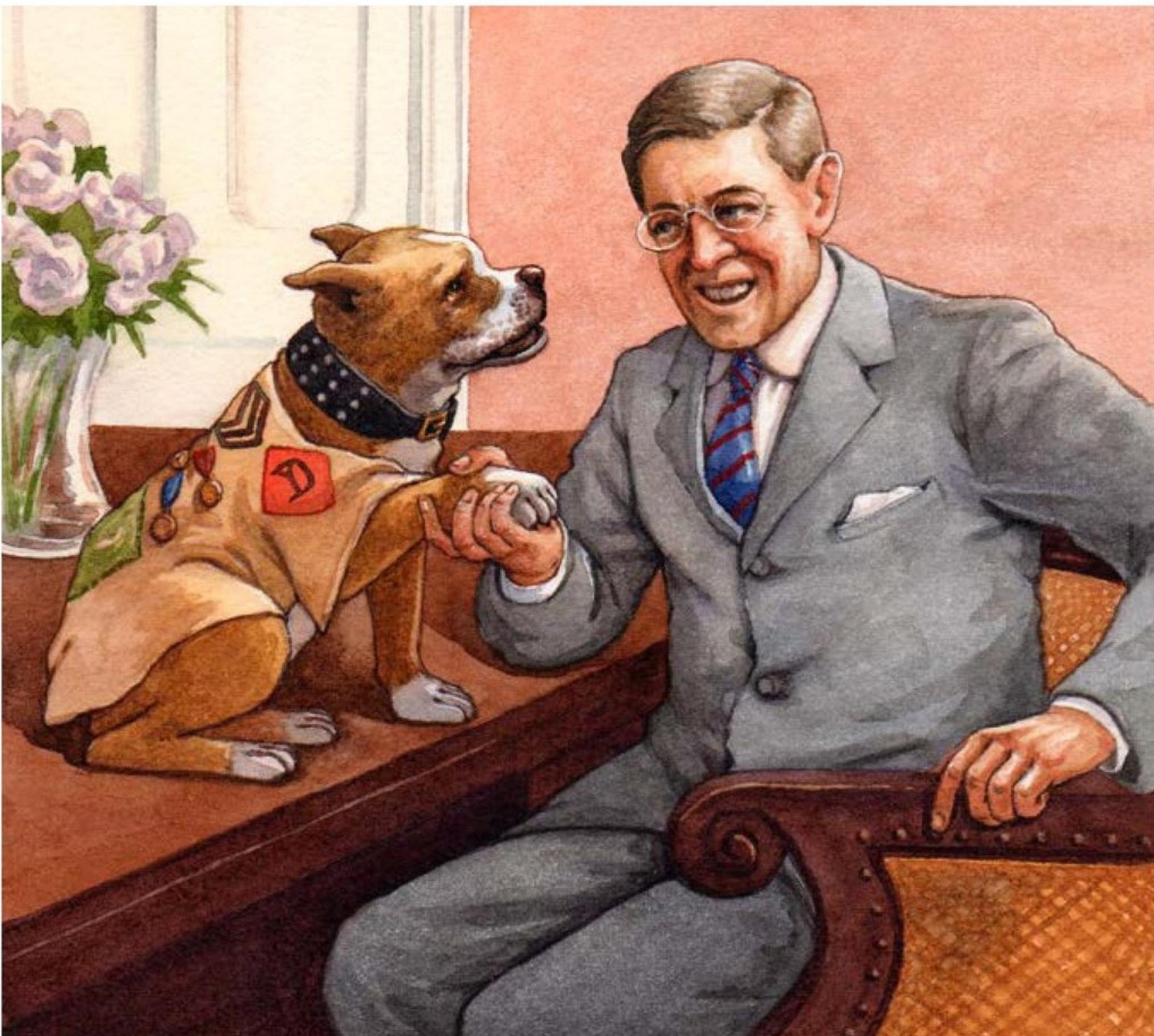
By June, Stubby was back in action. By this time, he was a hero to the regiment. The men of the 102nd made Stubby a military-type jacket and decorated it with his medals. Those awards included a Purple Heart for being wounded in action.

Stubby added to his accomplishments in September 1918 when he confronted a German soldier who may have been mapping the layout of the American trenches. The intruder tried desperately to quiet the barking dog with pleas of “Kamerad!” (comrade). When that didn’t work, the man dashed for his own lines. Stubby ran him down and sank his teeth into the soldier’s leg. The angry dog held on tight until the soldier was taken prisoner.

For his capture of the German soldier, Stubby was made an unofficial **sergeant**. He now outranked Conroy, who was just a corporal. As an added honor, the Iron Cross medal that the German had been wearing was pinned to Stubby’s army coat.

Stubby shows off his military jacket as he poses next to James Robert Conroy.





President Wilson was one of Stubby's many fans.

The terrible war finally ended in November 1918 with the surrender of Germany. By that time, Conroy and Stubby had served in four major military offensives and seventeen battles. The Yankee Division saw more fighting in the war than any other American division: 210 days in all.

While waiting to be sent back to America, Stubby met U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, and the two "shook hands." Wilson was the first of three presidents who would pay their respects to Stubby.



As a war hero, Stubby had a place of honor in many parades upon his return to the United States.

## Hero and Celebrity

Conroy and Stubby arrived back in the United States in April 1919. For the next few years, the newly famous dog was the center of attention, and he “lapped it up.”

Stubby was inducted into the American Legion, becoming a star at its parades and conventions. The YMCA also made Stubby a member, specifying that he was entitled to “three bones a day and a place to sleep” for the rest of his life.

In 1920, Stubby was an honored guest at the Republican National Convention, at which Warren G. Harding was nominated for president. After winning the presidency, Harding invited Stubby to the White House. Stubby also paid visits to Harding’s successor, Calvin Coolidge.



General John J. Pershing adds another medal to Stubby's collection on July 6, 1921.

Many establishments with no-pet rules made exceptions for Stubby. The *New York Times* reported that the city's exclusive Hotel Majestic had allowed Stubby to stay overnight with Conroy.

Perhaps the greatest **tribute** paid to Stubby took place on July 6, 1921, in Washington, D.C. The occasion was a ceremony honoring members of the 102nd Infantry Regiment. Presiding over the proceedings was General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, commander of U.S. forces in Europe during the war.

During Stubby's turn in the spotlight, Pershing praised him for "heroism of the highest caliber" and "bravery under fire." The general then pinned a solid-gold medal to Stubby's uniform. The *Times* observed that the happy hero "licked his chops and wagged his **diminutive** tail."



Stubby marches before a crowd during the 1922 American Legion parade in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Conroy and Stubby were never apart. When Conroy attended Georgetown University law school in 1921, Stubby went along and—in true Stubby manner—became the mascot of the Georgetown football team. At football games, he entertained crowds by butting the ball around the field with his nose.

By the mid-1920s, Stubby, now approaching old age for a dog, was winding down. He died in his sleep in 1926, cradled in Conroy's arms.

Stubby's final honor was recognition as a war hero by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. His preserved body stands in a display case as if on alert. Beside him is a mannequin of a World War I soldier representing the many men who owed their lives to this brave dog.

## Glossary

<b>allies</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people or groups that join with others for a common cause (p. 4)
<b>artillery</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	large guns that fire heavy shells over long distances (p. 9)
<b>canine</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to dogs (p. 7)
<b>diminutive</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	very small (p. 14)
<b>distinguish</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to become well known because of excellence (p. 7)
<b>mascot</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person, animal, or thing that is a symbol of an event or organization (p. 6)
<b>regiment</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a military unit that consists of two or more large groups of soldiers (p. 5)
<b>sergeant</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a rank in the military that is above corporal and below lieutenant; the highest noncommissioned officer rank (p. 11)
<b>stalemate</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a draw or deadlock; a situation in a contest in which neither side can gain an advantage or win (p. 8)
<b>trenches</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	long ditches dug to protect soldiers near the front lines from enemy fire (p. 7)
<b>tribute</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an act or statement that shows gratitude or respect (p. 14)
<b>World War I</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a war between the Allied Powers and the Central Powers (1914–1918) (p. 4)

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Title page: Sergeant Stubby wearing his military uniform and decorations

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