

## ANGLAIS

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Commenter en anglais le texte suivant et le traduire de « He's in his uniform ... » jusqu'à « ... this homage. ».

*The narrator is Iris Chase, a woman who grew up in Southern Ontario, Canada.*

Last night I watched the weather channel, as is my habit. Elsewhere in the world there are floods: roiling brown water, bloated cows floating by, survivors huddled on rooftops. Thousands have drowned. Global warming is held accountable: people must stop burning things up, it is said. Gasoline, oil, whole forests. But they won't stop. Greed and hunger lash them on,  
5 as usual.

Where was I? I turn back the page: the war is still raging. *Raging* is what they used to say, for wars; still do, for all I know. But on this page, a fresh, clean page, I will cause the war to end – I alone, with a stroke of my black plastic pen. All I have to do is write: *1918. November 11. Armistice Day.*

10 There. It's over. The guns are silent. The men who are left alive look up at the sky, their faces grimed, their clothing sodden; they climb out of their foxholes and filthy burrows. Both sides feel they have lost. In the towns, in the countryside, here and across the ocean, the church bells all begin to ring. (I can remember that, the bells ringing. It's one of my first memories. It was so strange – the air was so full of sound, and at the same time so empty.  
15 Reenie took me outside to hear. There were tears running down her face. *Thank God*, she said. The day was chilly, there was frost on the fallen leaves, a skim of ice on the lily pond. I broke it with a stick. Where was Mother?)

Father had been wounded at the Somme, but he'd recovered from that and had been made a second lieutenant. He was wounded again at Vimy Ridge, though not severely, and was  
20 made a captain. He was wounded again at Bourlon Wood, this time worse. It was while he was recovering in England that the war ended.

He missed the jubilant welcome for the returning troops at Halifax, the victory parades and so forth, but there was a special reception in Port Ticonderoga just for him. The train stopped. Cheering broke out. Hands reached up to help him down, then hesitated. He emerged.  
25 He had one good eye and one good leg. His face was gaunt, seamed, fanatical.

Farewells can be shattering, but returns are surely worse. Solid flesh can never live up to the bright shadow cast by its absence. Time and distance blur the edges; then suddenly the beloved has arrived, and it's noon with its merciless light, and every spot and pore and wrinkle and bristle stands clear.

30           Thus my mother and my father. How could either of them atone to the other for having  
changed so much? For failing to be what was expected. How could there not be grudges?  
Grudges held silently and unjustly, because there was nobody to blame, or nobody you could  
put your finger on. The war was not a person. Why blame a hurricane?

35           There they stand, on the railway platform. The town band plays, brass mostly. He's in  
his uniform; his medals are like holes shot in the cloth, through which the dull gleam of his real,  
metal body can be seen. Beside him, invisible, are his brothers – the two lost boys, the ones he  
feels he has lost. My mother is there in her best dress, a belted affair with lapels, and a hat with  
a crisp ribbon. She smiles tremulously. Neither knows quite what to do. The newspaper camera  
40 catches them in its flash; they stare, as if surprised in crime. My father is wearing a black patch  
over his right eye. His left eye glares balefully. Underneath the patch, not yet revealed, is a web  
of scarred flesh, his missing eye the spider.

          “Chase Heir Hero Returns,” the paper will trumpet. That's another thing: my father is  
now the heir, which is to say he's fatherless as well as brotherless. The kingdom is in his hands.  
It feels like mud.

45           Did my mother cry? It's possible. They must have kissed awkwardly, as if at a box  
social, one for which he'd bought the wrong ticket. This wasn't what he'd remembered, this  
efficient, careworn woman, with a pince-nez like some maiden aunt's glinting on a silver chain  
around her neck. They were now strangers, and – it must have occurred to them – they always  
had been. How harsh the light was. How much older they'd become. There was no trace of the  
50 young man who'd once knelt so deferentially on the ice to lace up her skates, or of the young  
woman who'd sweetly accepted this homage.

          Something else materialized like a sword between them. Of course he'd had other  
women, the kind who hung around battlefields, taking advantage. Whores, not to mince a word  
my mother would never have pronounced. She must have been able to tell, the first time he laid  
55 a hand on her: the timidity, the reverence, would have been gone. Probably he'd held out against  
temptation through Bermuda, then through England, up to the time when Eddie and Percy were  
killed and he himself was wounded. After that he'd clutched at life, at whatever handfuls of it  
might come within his reach. How could she fail to understand his need for it, under the  
circumstances?

60           She did understand, or at least she understood that she was supposed to understand. She  
understood, and said nothing about it, and prayed for the power to forgive, and did forgive. But  
he can't have found living with her forgiveness all that easy. Breakfast in a haze of forgiveness:  
coffee with forgiveness, porridge with forgiveness, forgiveness on the buttered toast. He would  
have been helpless against it, for how can you repudiate something that is never spoken?

Margaret ATWOOD (1939-), *The Blind Assassin*, Anchor, 2001.