

BENNY LINDELAUF

TORTOT

**THE COLD FISH
WHO LOST HIS WORLD
AND FOUND HIS HEART**

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*In which the kind-hearted
Tortot shows someone the way
and makes a friend for life*

In the days of the Great Wars, there was a field cook who travelled along with the army to all of the battles. People said Tortot had the heart of a fish at the bottom of the ocean: ice-cold and calculating. Those qualities served him well, as he lived in an age when friend and foe changed more frequently than hat fashions in Paris.

For Tortot, war was a good and generous employer. Where there was war, there were soldiers who needed to be fed. As far as he was concerned, the fighting could go on for ever.

One morning, a new company arrived at the camp where Tortot was working. They were young men, marching neatly in step behind the buglers and the drummers. The last in line was the youngest. His smooth complexion reminded Tortot of a blancmange, fresh from the mould. The boy halted. Tortot ignored him, but the boy waited patiently.

“What do you want?” asked Tortot.

“Have you seen my brothers by any chance, sir?”

“Your brothers?”

“I heard they’re serving in this army.”

“And how should I know if your brothers are here?”

“They look like me, sir.”

“So they’ve got two eyes, two ears and a nose, eh?” asked Tortot, who was plucking a partridge.



The boy looked at him in surprise. “Doesn’t everyone?”

“Not here!” Tortot cried triumphantly. “Men like that are a rarity around here. We have soldiers with one eye and a nose, and soldiers with one ear and two eyes. We’ve even got one with two noses, but that’s because the surgeon was drunk. Now that I come to think about it though...”

“Yes, sir?”

“Yes, I have seen your brothers.”

“Really?”

“Yes. On the Lounging Lawn.”

“The Lounging Lawn?”

“Yes, straight through the camp, left after the birch wood, right at the dead oak and then over the river.”

As Tortot told him to hurry, the boy called back over his shoulder, “Sir... you’ve made a friend for life. George is my name. George—don’t forget it, sir.” He dragged his feet a little as he walked. Only now did the field cook notice that the boy was wearing expensive boots that were too big for him.

Tortot plucked the partridge until it was as naked as a new-born baby.

“Cook!”

The camp sergeant came marching up to him. “Have you seen a soldier? I’m missing one from the new company.”

“Wet behind the ears? As daft as a brush?”

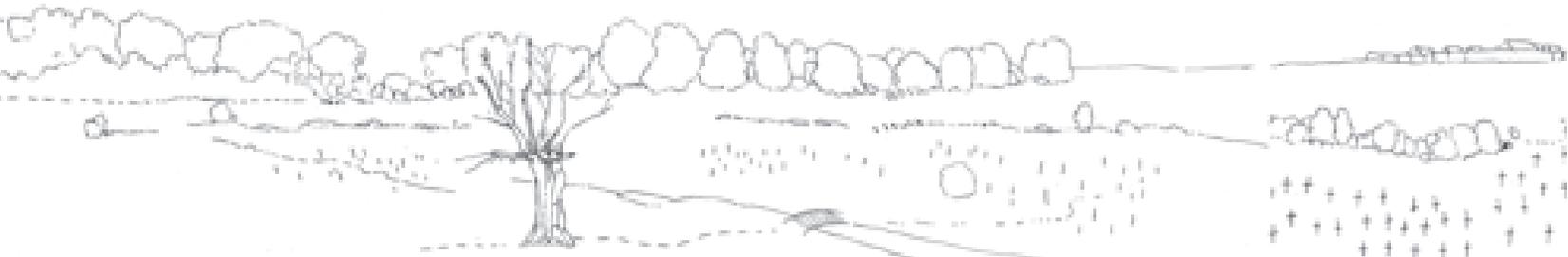
“Exactly.”

“He’s gone to the graveyard,” said Tortot without glancing up. “He’s looking for his brothers. Or what’s left of them.”

Left ear X
Right ear X
Left eye X
Right eye X
Nose X

Left ear X
Right ear X
Left eye X
Right eye X
Nose X

Left ear X
Right ear X
Left eye X
Right eye X
???





Left eye A
Right eye B
Left eye A
Right eye A
Nose A

Left eye A
Right eye B
Left eye A
Right eye A
Nose A

Left eye A
Right eye B
Left eye A
Right eye A
Nose A

Left eye A
Right eye B
Left eye A
Right eye A
Nose A

Left eye A
Right eye B
Left eye A
Right eye A
Nose A

CHAPTER 2***In which the steadfast field cook
proves his undying loyalty***

That week, a new battle was fought. In those days, the time and place were agreed well in advance. This was not simply a question of courtesy; war was an expensive business, and time was money. If both armies first had to find each other before they could attack...

Most of the men perished like mayflies, forgetting all of their orders and strategies as soon as they were on the battlefield, some of them dying with a grin on their faces. For anyone who still had legs to walk back with, there were mugs of beer and a feast like Christmas dinner waiting at the camp.

And while the surgeon sewed the soldiers together again, with parts that sometimes belonged to the victim and sometimes did not, the generals devised new strategies on their maps, which bristled with pins.

