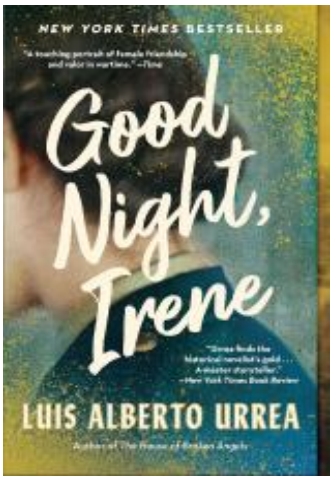
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Good Night, Irene

by Luis Alberto Urrea



About the Book

This *New York Times* bestselling novel tells an exhilarating World War II epic that chronicles an extraordinary young woman?s heroic frontline service in the Red Cross.

In 1943, Irene Woodward abandons an abusive fiancé in New York to enlist with the Red Cross and head to Europe. She makes fast friends in training with Dorothy Dunford, a towering Midwesterner with a ferocious wit. Together they are part of an elite group of women, nicknamed Donut Dollies, who command military vehicles called Clubmobiles at the front line, providing camaraderie and a taste of home that may be the only solace before troops head into battle.

After D-Day, these two intrepid friends join the Allied soldiers streaming into France. Their time in Europe will see them embroiled in danger, from the Battle of the Bulge to the liberation of Buchenwald. Through her friendship with Dorothy, and a love affair with a courageous American fighter pilot named Hans, Irene learns to trust again. Her most fervent hope, which becomes more precarious by the day, is for all three of them to survive the war intact.

Taking as inspiration his mother?s own Red Cross service, Luis Alberto Urrea has delivered an overlooked story of women?s heroism in World War II. With its affecting and uplifting portrait of friendship and valor in harrowing circumstances, GOOD NIGHT, IRENE powerfully demonstrates yet again that Urrea?s ?gifts as a storyteller are prodigious? (NPR).

Discussion Guide

1. Irene and Dorothy have very different reasons for joining the Clubmobile Corps. What do you think each of them hopes to get by joining, and do they find what they're looking for?

2. The Rapid City's commandments are: "Roll on down the road. Nothing means a thing. Don't look back. Don't

apologize. Don't concede. Don't let them see you cry. The Rapid City comes first. Never surrender.? How does each of these come across in the women's daily experiences? Does upholding the commandments change how they see their role in the war?

3. Dorothy comments that everyone loves Irene. Why does Irene cultivate this image of herself? How does it differ from Dorothy's own self-created image when speaking to the GIs? Do the versions of themselves they portray to the soldiers differ from who they are to each other?

4. Irene and Dorothy have a turning point in their experience of the war over one night in a small French town. How does the night change each of their views of the war, soldiers and officers?

5. How does going from the front lines to R&R in Cannes force the women to think about their time in the war so far? Would they have come to these realizations without the break? In what way does the break impact their return to the Rapid City and continued service?

6. Each meeting the women have with Zoot shows a different side of him, particularly in regard to how he views the deaths of combatants and non-combatants. What ways does he look at death, and how do his views shift throughout the war?

7. Irene, alone at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge, begins to lose track of herself, time and reality without her truckmates. How do the truckmates anchor her? How has her identity become tied to the truck and her companions?

8. Throughout the book, the Rapid City receives letters from soldiers they've encountered. What is the purpose of those letters? How do they impact the women?

Author Bio

A finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for his landmark work of nonfiction THE DEVIL'S HIGHWAY, now in its 34th paperback printing, Luis Alberto Urrea is the author of numerous other works of nonfiction, poetry and fiction, including the national bestsellers THE HUMMINGBIRD'S DAUGHTER, GOOD NIGHT, IRENE and THE HOUSE OF BROKEN ANGELS, a National Book Critics Circle Award finalist. A recipient of an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, among many other honors, he lives outside Chicago and teaches at the University of Illinois Chicago.

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