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Leonie and the last Napoleon

by Tony Boullemier

Excerpts from the book

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As Christmas approached, Paris tightened its belt. The last horses were now being slaughtered and butchers were turning their attentions to cats, dogs and zoo animals.

Monique came home crying with the news that Castor and Pollox, two elephants in the zoo, had been slaughtered to help feed the city. 'They couldn't even do that properly,' she wept. 'They used dum-dum bullets that exploded inside them and it took them ages to die. They were so lovely, so gentle and trusting. I used to feed buns to them.'

Their own cocker spaniel had lost weight in the siege because she wouldn't eat horsemeat. And a lot of people were now stroking dogs and cats with a new interest, searching for the plumpness that would indicate a good meal. In mid-December there had been panic in the household when the front door was momentarily left open and Diana trotted off up the Rue de la Paix. Georges ran after her and by the time he spotted her, two scrawny labourers were leading her eastwards.

'Thank you mes amis, I will have my dog back,' he told them.

'Our families are starving,' said one of the men, defiantly holding onto Diana's collar. 'We must have food.'

Slowly and deliberately Georges drew his sword. 'You will have food,' he told them. 'But not my dog. Come with me.'