

LOVE COMES HOME

A Novel

ANN H. GABHART



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To the Hawkins sisters
whose wonderful stories and laughter
made my Rosey Corner stories come to life

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1

The news was good. The news was wonderful. Kate Tanner grabbed her notebook and headed out of the newspaper building to join the people spilling out onto the Lexington, Kentucky, streets. Tommy yelled that she could get a better view from the upstairs window, but she wasn't worried about the best view. This wasn't just the chance for another story. Her feet wanted to dance in the streets too.

The boys were coming home! Japan had surrendered. The bombs, the terrible bombs, had finished the fighting. The war was over.

The instant she stepped out on the sidewalk, a stranger grabbed her, lifted her off her feet, and spun her around. He was smiling. She was smiling. He said something when he turned her loose, but she had no idea what as church bells and horns drowned out his words. He laughed and slung his hat up in the air with no thought of retrieving it before he ran on up the street.

Everywhere people waved handkerchiefs and papers in the air. Kate joined in with her notebook. Sal from the restaurant

across the street grabbed her in a bear hug and knocked her notebook out of her hand. It didn't matter. She didn't need to take notes. Every second of this scene would be burned in her memory forever. The shouts and laughter. The boys shimmying up the lampposts who wouldn't have to go to war now. The girls sparkling at the thought of their sweethearts coming home. Sparkling like Kate.

She felt the crackle of Jay's last letter in her pocket. His words played through her mind. *I love you. I'll be coming home to Rosey Corner soon unless I have to ship out to the Pacific. Nobody's sure what's going to happen there.*

But now he could be sure. They could all be sure.

He was in Germany. Not fighting anymore. Blessedly not fighting since the Allied forces rolled through Berlin in May. Hitler was dead and the Germans defeated. The prison camps had been liberated. Mike, her sister's husband, was free after two years in a German stalag. Praise the Lord neither he nor Jay would have to go to the Pacific. The only place they had to come now was home. Home to Rosey Corner, Kentucky.

Kate wished one of the happy people pushing past her was Evie. Her sister would surely be dancing in the streets in Louisville where she worked. It would be even better if they were both in Rosey Corner with their other sisters. Lorena would be singing, her beautiful voice calling Jay and Mike home. Tori would be celebrating too, or trying to. She'd be happy for Evie and Kate. She would. Sincerely happy, but tears would be under her smile. Not all the boys would be coming home. Tori's Sammy would not.

Sadness stabbed through Kate. How many other wives and mothers watched the celebration with sorrow in their hearts? Those like Tori who had taken down their Service flag

to cover the blue star with a gold one, showing the terrible price of the war? She shook away the thought. This wasn't the time to weep for the dead. It was time to rejoice that the dying was over.

Two girls she knew from the dime store grabbed Kate's hands to pull her on up the street. Not to get anywhere, but just because if they didn't move, they might explode from the joy. The boys were coming home!