



## A Place near the Front

*William G. Herbert*

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## **A Place near the Front** William G. Herbert

William Herbert, known to everyone by his middle name, Gordon, grows up in Trinidad dreaming of bigger things, and he takes a job aboard the Ss Mariposa in January 1915.

He spends grueling nights shoveling coal in the boiler room, but takes pleasure in the work. The ship has electric lights, modern plumbing, radio, navigation devices, and comfortable passenger staterooms; it is a floating symbol of all that is modern in the twentieth century.

Craving this newness and the opportunity to make his mark on the world, he jumps ship in New York City even though he could be deported.

He slips into the streets of Harlem and ultimately makes his way to the trenches of World War I, where he becomes a second lieutenant with the Buffalo Soldiers as he seeks his rightful place in America.

Whether it's dealing with the mob that's chasing him through the dangerous streets of New York's Hell's Kitchen, battling German soldiers, or facing his most insidious enemy-his own military commanders who resent black officers-Gordon never stops reaching for his dreams in A Place near the Front.

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