

L'Americaine

by Anna Nash
part of the [Anna Nash series](#)

Prologue

I'm an American.

My name is Anna Nash but you can call me Anna. I prefer that.

Things you should know about me: I'm twelve. I like running. I run every day. Last year I decided to spend a year in France. I took French starting in fifth grade and I've always wanted to come here. I'm still in France now.

By the end of this book you'll see why I'm still here.

Also, this book doesn't have any vampires in it or wizards or anything.

There are plenty of books like that, and I like to read some of them, but this isn't one of those books. I wanted to tell you before you went any further so you're not surprised.

First I'm going to tell you about my apartment. I live by myself in Paris. My parents pay for my apartment so I don't have to work.

They're rich, basically.

That's all you need to know about them, except that both my parents are deaf.

Which was interesting growing up. The phones in our house have blinking lights on them. Of course I know sign language. But I can hear fine. It's interesting growing up with parents who are both deaf. But actually it's mostly the same as having hearing parents. We do the same things as everyone else. Except my parents live in a nice neighborhood and we have two Jaguars.

My dad thinks it's corny to drive a Lexus. They drive Jaguars. I'm not trying to brag but it's true, they're rich.

You might want to know why they'd let me live in Paris by myself. It's not that they don't care about me. But they're in Paris all the time so I do see them. They come to visit about once a month. But when they stay in Paris they stay at l'Hôtel Plaza Athénée. I think it's a bit gauche. That's their business though.

They wouldn't be caught dead in my apartment. My mom came over once and she screamed as soon as she opened the door. I keep it a bit messy.

This story is about my life in France. It's not all cherries and roses. But it's all true.

Chapter 1

Regulations

I don't go to school. That's not what this story is about so I'm not going to tell you about that. But I finished school early, in America. When I came to France I was eleven and a half. By then I was done with school. There's too much padding in the grades in America.

Have you been to America? If you have, you know what I'm talking about. It's kind of pointless.

When I decided to go to France it was summer. That was two years ago. A lot has happened since then and I'm going to try to fill you in with the important details.

I've liked to travel since I was little. We used to live in Atlanta, and we'd go on long trips to my grandparents' house in Clarksdale. That's Clarksdale, Mississippi.

Later we had a neighbor in California named Clark. And he had a dog named Clark. Clark the human being was five years old. Clark the dog...I don't know how old he was, but he and Clark were perfect for each other. When I was around nine I started to babysit for them. Out of convenience I addressed the pair of them as "Clarks". "Clarks, get your butts in here." "Clarks! Time for dinner." They were inseparable. As much as a human being and a dog can be in love, I think the Clarks were.

When Clarks' parents would leave, I would sit on the couch with them and we'd pick books from their bookshelf and read. They had a built-in bookshelf that covered an entire wall. Larger books were on the bottom shelf, where the shelves were taller. Clark liked books about tanks, and books with maps.

The other Clark liked any book he could get his mouth around. Me and the other other Clark let him put his mouth on the books we read. That was dog-Clark's way of reading and we didn't want to leave him out.

I liked the books with pictures of other countries. Clarks' parents had a lot of interior decorating books that showed rich people's houses in Morocco, or Brazil, or France.

I liked the one about France. It was called New Paris Interiors. I liked the graffiti in France better than the graffiti in America. You can tell a lot by a place's graffiti, I think. France had good graffiti. I liked the short little cars. There weren't any Smart cars in America, not that I had seen. Why wouldn't you want your cars to be Smart? I was only fifteen but the driving age in France might be lower. I wasn't sure at the time. I imagined myself driving a Smart car around some traffic circle in Paris. That would be the life.

When Clarks' parents came home I asked them if I could borrow

their Paris book. They agreed.

I took the book straight to my dad and asked him. You know how it goes, with one parent being more open to new ideas than the other. In our family that's my dad.

I'm an only child by the way. I should have mentioned that earlier. My dad stopped typing when I asked him. He signed to me. What he said was: "I think it's fine. I think you'll have a good time."

My mom was in the hot tub reading. I signed to her that Dad had said it was ok for me to go to France. I didn't tell her I was going there to live, just that I was going on a trip.

Mom got out of the hot tub and went dripping into Dad's office. She does it to try to annoy him but he doesn't care if the carpet gets wet. With her body language she said, "What!?" Then she signed, "She can't go France. I'm married to a psychopath."

There's not an exact word in sign language for psychopath. But my mother signs poetically. I'm doing my best to interpret. My dad signed back, "She'll be fine." He turned his head sideways to read the title of my mom's novel. He signed, "What are you reading?"

My mom turned and traipsed back to the hot tub. I pulled a chair up to my dad's desk and we bought the ticket together. The day we bought the ticket was July 19. The plane departed from Burbank on July 24.

I never fly out of LAX if I don't have to.

I changed planes in New York and it was a long wait. I sat in a Starbucks in the terminal and flipped through *New Paris Interiors* and a copy of *French Vogue*. When I got to Paris I would mail Clarks' parents book back to them.

On the plane I practiced French in my mind. By that point I had taken five years of French in school, and I had only been able to try it out on my copies of *L'Etranger* and *Candide*, and of course in French class.

I had tried ordering in French at *Café Bizou* in Sherman Oaks, but the waiter hadn't appreciated it. I was there with my parents, so after the waiter had to deal with them ordering by pointing at their menu items, he had to deal with me. I said I'd take a *bouillabaisse* and *du pain*. He brought it but I caught him rolling his eyes. It's got to be hard, it's a busy night and he's got two deaf people and an American ordering in French. How else can I practice though? The food was good but *Café Bizou* suffers from an excess of hype.

So on the plane I read *French Vogue* about five times. Some article boasting *Fifty Shocking Ways to Apply Makeup*. There was a lot of

repetition. #30 and #46 were the same. #16 and #41 were the same. The man sitting next to me was reading a thick book in English. It had tiny type and thin paper, it looked very old, like a Bible, but it wasn't. The movie was The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants. The meal was sliced ham. The man next to me drank wine. I drank club soda. We were both drinking out of the same plastic cups.

When we flew over Paris I tried to see the buildings as we passed but all I saw was sky. We landed an hour after dawn.

Going up the ramp into Charles de Gaulle it felt cool. I was a little nervous. I thought of my dad in his office, imagined myself signing to him, "I miss you." In my mind, in my imagination, he signed back, "Have fun sweetie. We're right around the corner." My dad is always there for me. Both him and my mom. They have been since I was born.

The first thing I did in Paris was get set up. I rented an apartment in the 4^{ème} arrondissement, le Marais, above Chez Marianne on la Rue des Rosiers.

...fz...

[She gets kicked off a girls soccer team because she's not French.]
[Assertion of independence.]

Chapter 2
Real Men of Genius

[She joins a boys team that lets her play even though she's not American.]
[the name of their team is ``Real Men of Genius"]

Chapter 3

Championship Game

[they walk by dress windows and pick out dresses, guys and girls helping with the decision]

[They lose the game.]

[She loses her leg in a [car accident driving wild..drinking] with the boys' team.]

[[Wild] night out, crazy kids, self-centeredness.]

Chapter 4

Legs

[She sneaks out of the hospital and goes back to France to recover.]

[A French doctor fits her with an experimental runner's leg.]

[M. LeFèvre]

Chapter 5
The Intervener

[She discovers that it's running, not soccer, that she likes.]

[She gets a job as an xx-er for db c's.]

I found myself nibbling something and didn't know what it was. I
swallowed it.

[?? eh...translate]

Chapter 6

L'Americaine

[...]

[She wins the Paris Marathon. Her parents aren't there to see her but her friends from the boys soccer team are.]

[At the end she kisses a boy from Real Men of Genius...on the cheek. =)

Or maybe on the knee. Like his knee is hurting and that's the kiss!]

“La [winner est] l'Americaine.”

Epilogue

That's my story.

I told you not all of it was cherries and roses.

But it turned out well in the end.

And I'm still only twelve, so I have some life ahead of me.

I like living in Paris. The people here are nice. I like the people in America too. They're ok.

I think before we go to war we should have an exchange program where soldiers and politicians from both countries spend a weekend with the family of the soldier from the other side. Like my dad would spend a weekend with the kids of some guy from Iraq, and the guy from Iraq would spend some time with me. We'd just do normal stuff, like walk around, or eat, or clean the house. In my case the guy from Iraq would be visiting me in Paris, as I'm showing no signs of leaving here.

As long as countries let people from rich families move freely from place to place, I think I'll be in Paris.

Next time I'll tell you a story about what it's like to have two deaf parents.

Or maybe I'll tell you about the time I went to New Orleans.

I like to travel.

I've never been to Asia. Unless you count Australia. Do you count Australia as being in Asia?

Anyway I think my next trip will be to Asia. Maybe to Thailand...Bangkok.

When I get back I'll tell you all about it.