

Later, I light a candle in St Jude's Church.

The smell of burning wax and the fragrance of old incense, the odours of forgiveness, fill the church. I remember the days I served as an altar boy for Father Balthazar and the Latin responses I had trouble memorizing.

I kneel at the communion rail and say my prayers.

I pray for Enrico and hope that he will finally go home and adjust to his condition although those are terrible words: adjust and condition. Enrico is now without legs and is also missing his left arm. 'Thank Christ I'm right-handed,' he said, but I don't think he was really thanking Christ.

I also pray for the souls of my mother and father. When I was six my mother died giving birth to my brother Raymond, who lived only five and a half hours. My father died five years ago of a heart attack in the **Rub Room** of the Monument Comb **Shop** although I always felt he really died with my mother all those years ago. I offer up prayers, too, for my Uncle Louis who gave me a place to live until I joined the army.

I pray, of course, for Nicole Renard, wherever she may be.

And, finally, I pray for Larry LaSalle.

It's hard for me to pray for him and I always hesitate before I can bring myself to say that prayer. Then I think again of what Sister Gertrude taught us in the **third grade**, words she said came from the mouth of Jesus. Pray for your enemies, for those who have done you harm. It is easy to pray for those you love, she said. But it counts more to pray for those who don't love you, that you don't love.

So I offer up an '**Our Father**' and '**Hail Mary**' and '**Glory Be**' for Larry LaSalle. Then I am filled with guilt and shame, knowing that I just prayed for the man I am going to kill.

Polishing
factory

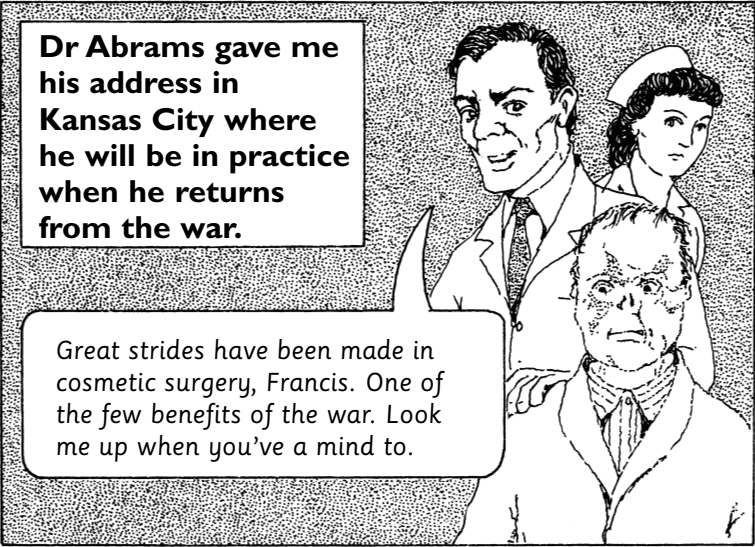
Year 3 (aged 7–8)

prayers – the Hail Mary is a
Roman Catholic prayer



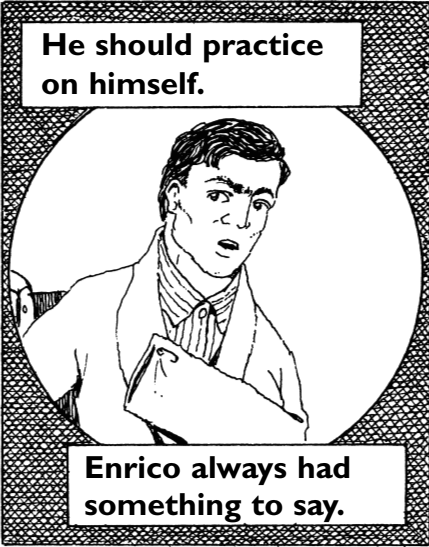
- Look again at pages 3 and 4. What is Francis's attitude to his appearance?
- Why are 'adjust' and 'condition' terrible words to Francis?

- What are the reasons for Francis covering his face?
- Francis has a strong Catholic background, so what is so shocking about the final sentence in this extract?



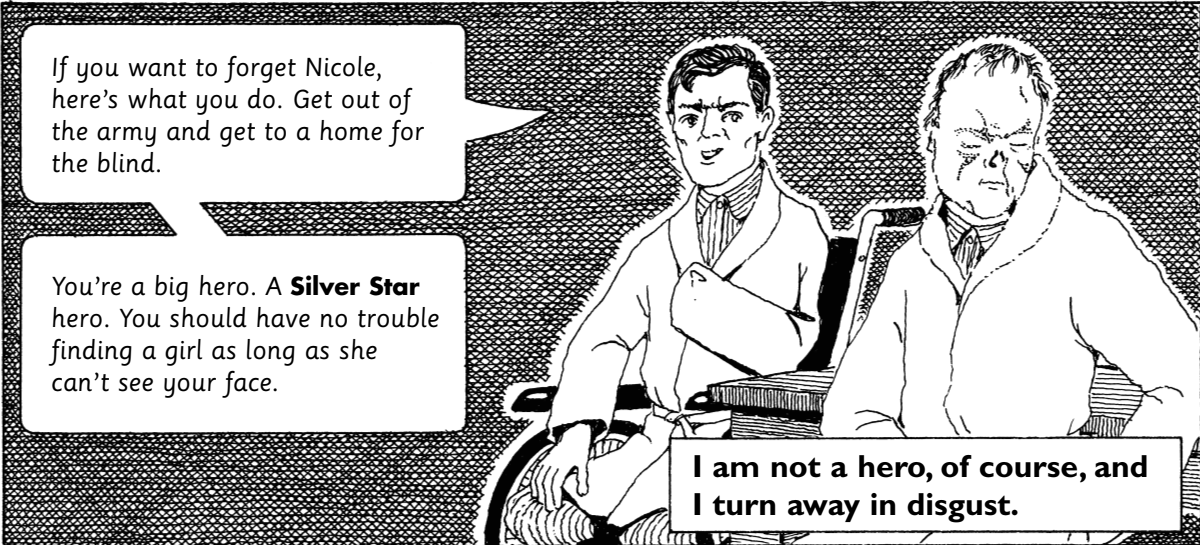
Dr Abrams gave me his address in Kansas City where he will be in practice when he returns from the war.

Great strides have been made in cosmetic surgery, Francis. One of the few benefits of the war. Look me up when you've a mind to.



He should practice on himself.

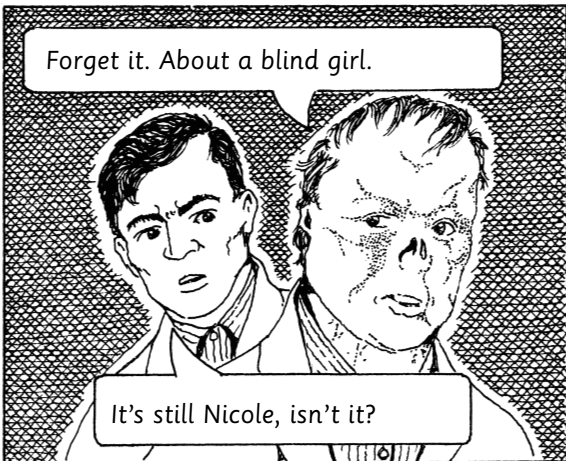
Enrico always had something to say.



If you want to forget Nicole, here's what you do. Get out of the army and get to a home for the blind.

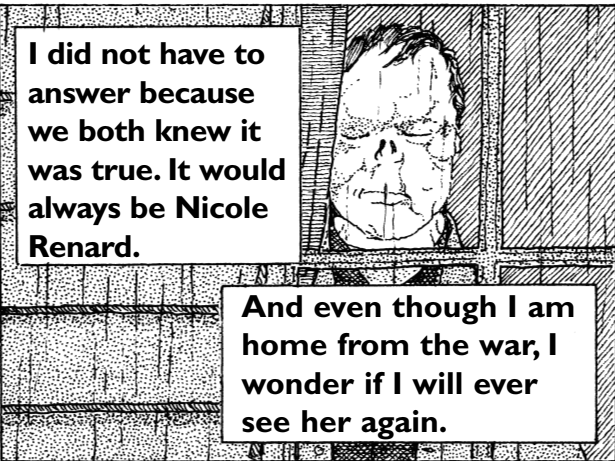
You're a big hero. A **Silver Star** hero. You should have no trouble finding a girl as long as she can't see your face.

I am not a hero, of course, and I turn away in disgust.



Forget it. About a blind girl.

It's still Nicole, isn't it?



I did not have to answer because we both knew it was true. It would always be Nicole Renard.

And even though I am home from the war, I wonder if I will ever see her again.

Silver Star – a medal awarded for bravery in war

• Both Dr Abrams and Enrico make jokes about serious injuries. Do they do this for the same reasons?