



The Dead

JULIE CHIBBARO

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JEAN-MARC SUPERVILLE SOVAK

*Atheneum Books for Young Readers
New York London Toronto Sydney*

ATHENEUM BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

An imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10020

This book is a work of fiction. Any references to historical events, real people, or real locales are used fictitiously. Other names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Text copyright © 2011 by Julie Chibbaro

Illustrations copyright © 2011 by Jean-Marc Superville Sovak

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

ATHENEUM BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS is a registered trademark of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Simon & Schuster Special Sales at 1-866-506-1949 or business@simonandschuster.com.

The Simon & Schuster Speakers Bureau can bring authors to your live event. For more information or to book an event, contact the Simon & Schuster Speakers Bureau at 1-866-248-3049 or visit our website at www.simonspeakers.com.

Book design by Sonia Chaghatzbanian

The text for this book is set in Goudy Old Style.

The illustrations for this book are rendered in ink.

Manufactured in the United States of America

First Edition

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Chibbaro, Julie.

Deadly / Julie Chibbaro; illustrated by Jean-Marc Superville Sovak. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

Summary: In the early nineteen-hundreds, sixteen-year-old Prudence Galewski leaves school to take a job assisting the head epidemiologist at New York's Department of Health and Sanitation, investigating the intriguing case of "Typhoid Mary," a seemingly healthy woman who is infecting others with typhoid fever. Includes a historical note by the author.

ISBN 978-0-689-85738-6 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-1-4424-2041-0 (eBook)

[1. Typhoid fever—Fiction. 2. Typhoid Mary, d. 1938—Fiction. 3. Sex role—Fiction.

4. Epidemiology—Fiction. 5. Interpersonal relations—Fiction.

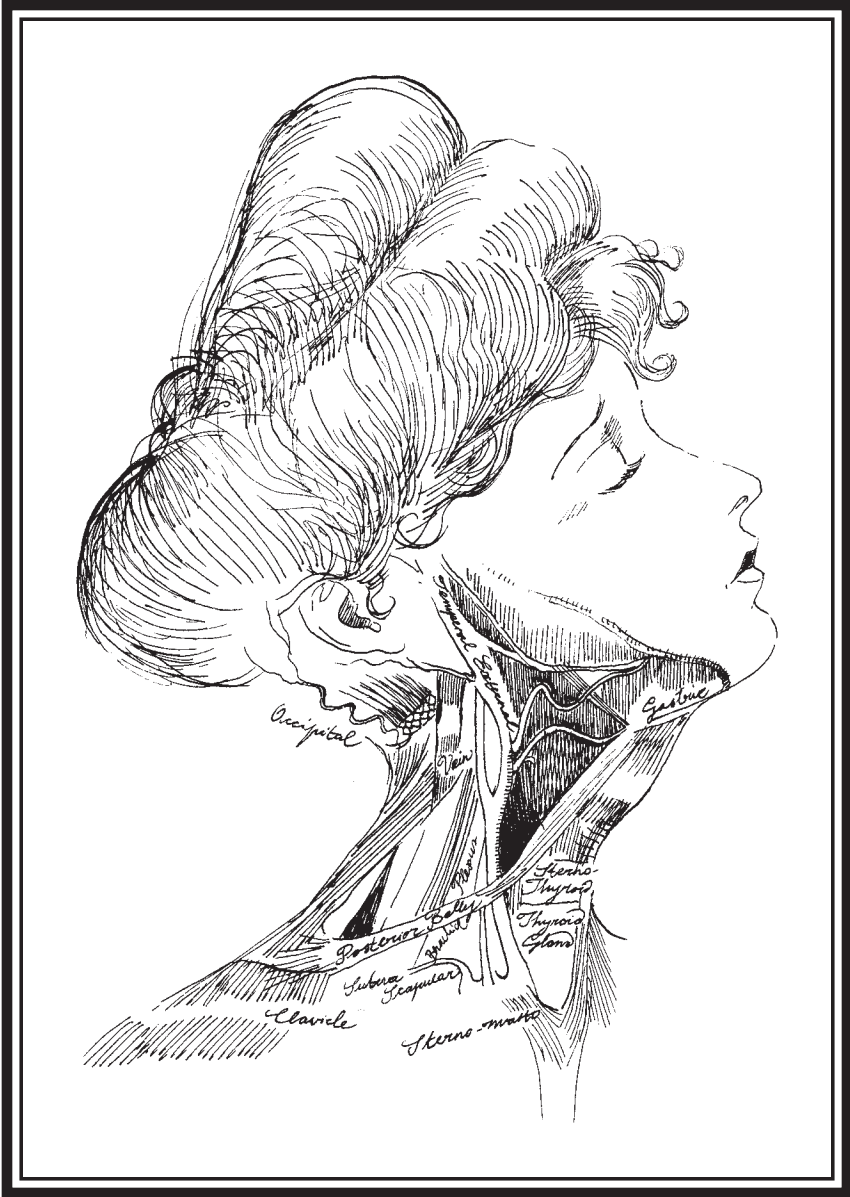
6. New York (N.Y.)—History—1898–1951—Fiction. 7. Diaries—Fiction.]

I. Superville Sovak, Jean-Marc, ill. II. Title.

PZ7.C4323De 2011

[Fic]—dc22 2010002291

Illustration of Mary Mallon on page 247 is from the *New York American*, June 20, 1909.



September 7, 1906

I know that one day I won't be on this earth anymore. A world without the physical me—what will that look like? I'll seep down into the soil, become a plant, a tree; I'll be falling leaves, yellow, crunching under a child's feet until I am dust. Nothing. Gone.

Every September, the shivers come over me, thoughts of my brother's terrifying death, and the questions—why did his short life end? Why do people have to die?

I write here, trying to explain, each word a stepping stone. These words illuminate my past; they bring me forward, to the future. They help me remember.

Without my writing, I would suffer an emptiness worse than I feel now.

Today there are great holes in me. I feel like a secret observer, separate from everything that goes on around me.

Deadly.

Peering from my window just above the storefronts of this creaky building on Ludlow Street where I've lived since the morning of my birth, I watch Mrs. Zanberger at the vegetable cart below. She argues with Miss Lara over the price of onions the way she does every Sunday. Behind her, Kat Radlikov drags her heavy skirt through the mud, her belly swollen, her husband hiding in the shadows of their rooms. In front of the grocer's, Ruth Schmidt smiles under her patched parasol at Izzy Moscovitz, who works too hard to notice her. I see the Feldman sisters from upstairs chasing each other through puddles like boys, with finally a morning free from the factory. Under the butcher's canopy, their mother talks with other mothers from the neighborhood, their faces dark with worry.

I know them, these girls and women, I've seen their families grow, they've seen mine get smaller. When I'm in their company, I listen to them trade recipes and sewing tips, I smile at their gossip about each other, yet I can't find a word to add. My eyes get stuck on the sadness in their mouths, or their red, chapped hands, and suddenly I'm imagining their lives—what they dream about when no one is looking, or what they might be like with fewer children. The women talk around and over me; somehow I feel like I'll always be looking at them through a distant window.

Even at school, I feel this. When classes started this week, I had in my mind the birth I'd attended with Marm the night before—Sophie Gersh came due around midnight and her mother pounded at our door, her fear thrusting us from our beds. Marm and I rushed after the frightened woman, running full gallop the two blocks to her daughter's apartment, where the girl's husband stood outside wringing his hands, and she lay keening in the bedroom like a poor abandoned child. I took my place at the head of the bed, where I held Sophie's hand and wiped the sweat from her teary eyes and assured her the birth would be good, that all would come out as we planned. Below, Marm did her magic; Sophie's water broke, she was ready. Working together, the three of us encouraged her baby to come forth into this world. His birth happened easily, a miracle, one of those rare times when Marm and I can clean up the infant and hand him to his mother and happily return to our own beds. We napped an hour before rising to face the day, which was my first day of school.

My schoolmates kissed—we don't see each other through the summer months; the girls had matured, their faces and bodies grown longer or fatter. I smiled at Josephine, who had become impossibly taller and thinner and prettier, and Fanny,

Deadly

whose round face had finally found its cheekbones. I brushed their cheeks with my lips. I searched their eyes for the start to a conversation; I wanted to tell them about the birth, or Benny, but Josephine started talking about her new job at the perfume counter at Macy's. She described the glamorous ladies who bought the most expensive ounces, the delicate fabrics they wore, their jewels and dogs. She didn't stop until Mrs. Browning came in with stout Miss Ruben, our teacher for the year. My heart dropped when I saw it was her. Miss Ruben's eyes swept the room imperiously and settled on me.

She said, "Girls, I see that some of you are still lacking in the most basic charms. We must correct that situation now. This is your last year before you are released into the world. There is no time left to waste!"

I turned my eyes away from hers and concentrated on the smoke I could see puffing from the stack of the building next door. My stomach soured at the thought of spending my last year with her. Miss Ruben hasn't liked me since third grade.

At afternoon lunch, I sat in the common room nibbling on my potato knish, listening to Jo and Fanny, feeling as if my insides were made of India rubber and all their words bounced around without touching me. I again attempted

to tell them about the beautiful boy whose birth I had witnessed that very morning, but Josephine's exuberant chatter drowned out my words before I could form them.

"Oh, Fanny," she said, "goodness, I forgot to tell you I thought you looked simply darling at the cocoon tea! Where did you buy that sweet dress?"

"Feinstein's had a special sale," Fanny explained. "I saw Dora there, and she convinced me to buy it. Did you hear her father caught her and Mr. Goldwaite holding hands in the back of his carriage? That man is too old for her!"

"He should pair with a dumpling like Miss Ruben, not a girl Dora's age!" Josephine said. "Have you noticed the way our teacher looks this year? That lip coloring is simply awful on her, don't you think? And doesn't she know gray jackets with heavy braids are out of fashion?"

"The way she looks at us," Fanny said, "you'd think she was the Queen of England!"

The girls laughed, and I shook my head. I longed to be somewhere else, with someone else. I felt inside me that sore place of missing Anushka, and that silly flash of anger—why has she left me alone? Every morning we'd walk to school together, talking about everything under the sun. She'd ask me what I dreamt and thought about. No one does that

Deadly.

now. I wish she hadn't moved away last spring. In her letters from the farm, she writes about someone named Ida. I get a pang of fear when she writes of this girl. I hope Ida has not replaced me. Anushka said speaking to Ida was profound, like walking into a lake and suddenly discovering a drop-off into deeper water.

Oh, I simply ache to have a profound talk with another girl! I'd tell her about Papa and Benny, how our life used to be.

I've been sneaking into the temple to read notices on the B'nai community board, those that are not in Hebrew. For our last year of school, we are allowed to work afternoons, but I can't imagine myself arranging flowers like Sara does at McLean's Fancy Florist, or using my feminine charms like Josephine to draw in customers at Macy's perfumery. Mrs. Browning says these sorts of jobs bring us closer to the class of people we strive to be someday, but I want serious employ. Not just for the money, though Marm and I do need it, but for the challenge to my mind. I want to be able to go somewhere and do something important and return home in the evening with soft bills in hand. Is it foolish to want a different type of job than Mrs. Browning trains us for, something more, something bigger than myself?

Truthfully, I hunger for a job that's meaningful.

September 9, 1906

Can a girl get work fighting death? I feel strange writing that—but it's the question that always comes to me, even in my dreams. I've seen so much death. I find it's better not to talk about it, to push those pictures out of my mind. But in here, with the alchemy of pen to paper, something happens to me, and these terrible thoughts emerge full-blown. Here, I can confess that I see sickness like a violent weed growing everywhere, in the rubbish bins that puff out ash clouds, in the dirty puddles that ooze in the streets, in the breath of the gin ladies who hang about the sidewalk, in the dead cats, the hungry mice that gnaw at the walls, when I go walking in the park and see packs of stray dogs making garbage of the city.

I see death whenever I pass a brown horse.

What are these entities that weaken us and make us

Deadly

die? How is it that death is here on earth? How does it enter people's bodies and sicken them, kill them?

If we knew how to fight death, could we have saved Benny's life?

I can't help thinking of my big brother at this time, the start of the new school term. He was nearly the same age I am now, a high school boy. We were walking home from temple when that brown horse came from nowhere and trampled right over him, that man charging down the street in such a hurry, he didn't stop, he never stopped to see what he had done to Benny. I can still feel the wind of the horse, its closeness to my face as it sped by. We were talking together, none of us saw it. Marm cried out and Papa scooped Benny up and ran home with him.

I'll never forget the terror on Marm's face when she brought Dr. Barnes, and Benny's cries when the doctor straightened his leg bones and bandaged the bloodied skin. In the next weeks, the unhealed sores turned green and spread over my brother's battered legs. How useless were Dr. Barnes's visits, with his Blood Cure and his Cooling Glass and his Silver Mend. He couldn't make those sores go away.

Benny got so much worse, and Papa stayed with him, never left his side. He sat with him all day long, feeding him

and washing up after him. He changed his bandages, releasing the sour, infected smell of poor Benny's wounds. Every night in this front room, I slept beside my brother. I curled my head into his back and listened to his low moans until that final night, when the sounds ended.

I'll always think there was some way we could've helped him, if only we knew how.

September 11, 1906

I spend my free nights assisting Marm, delivering life, watching young mothers struggle, and I feel somehow that I'm not really helping, that I don't understand how to lessen the pain these new mothers endure. The Radlikov birthing last night was particularly hard on poor Kat, who pushed and moaned from that place of isolation where all birth-giving women seem to go. I spread warm cloths over her forehead and rubbed her from shoulder to waist and squeezed her hands as if I could squeeze out the child myself. Marm positioned her properly and told her happy stories of good births. For hours she cried and rested and cried until, at last, a boy came out. But the afterbirth didn't follow; instead, the waves continued. Marm boiled water and cleaned her tools. I tried my best to soothe Kat by pressing warm towels into her lower back.

Marm felt the girl's belly; she helped Kat push again. Out came a second little surprise! We all gasped when we saw that inside poor Kat were two tiny boys each no bigger than my shoe! It was my first twin birth—I never imagined what it might look like, a woman birthing two separate creatures the way animals litter two, three, and four. We laughed and wept with Kat, we bathed the newborns for her and her husband, and we went home.

I spent the day in school exhausted.

I feel, when I am holding a birthing woman for hours on end, like I'm trying to physically absorb her pain with my own body, to take her burden from her through my hands and mind so it won't hurt so much, so she won't scream and cry, so she will just think of the baby who is coming. Afterwards, if all went well, I feel empty, tired deep down in my bones.

September 12, 1906

The army check came; it always comes just as we begin to reach into the kettle where we keep our rainy-day pennies. Even though we've been receiving the check every month for years now, it stirs up feelings for us, especially for Marm, ones she can't talk about, and she sends me to cash it at the grocer's as quickly as I can. I put the stub with the others inside the beautiful book Papa gave me just before he left for war. That book is the most precious thing I own. I hope one day I can understand even a few of all these mysterious subjects:

**Year Book of Facts in Science and Arts,
for 1897, Exhibiting the Most Important
Improvements in Mechanics, Useful
and Natural Philosophy, Chemistry,**

**Astronomy, Zoology, Botany, Mineralogy,
Meteorology, and Geology, Along with
Obituaries of Eminent Scientific Men**

The brown ink of the inscription has faded, his only writing to me that I have:

*Darling Prudent One—
May this book make the world
more transparent to you.
Your papa, 1898*

I study his elegant penmanship, and wonder how he learned it, since he was a machinist in Nolan's Ball Bearing Factory, and before that a newsie on the street. I must ask him about his interest in scientific matters when he returns, for I don't know how it began, and Marm won't say, even though she gave me my first tablet and got me started on drawing and writing, copying from Papa's book.

I remember watching the clock, seeing the moment it went from 1899 to 1900, the thrill of that instant, that shift in time. All the bells in town rang; our neighbors banged on the walls and filled the streets with noisemakers and hollered

Deadly

about the new century. Marm handed me that tablet, the one with the red silk cover. She said, Prudence, you need to start keeping a record. You must write events like these down. Time passes in a steady march, nothing ever gets in its way, and you must remember things.

I knew she meant that I must write for Papa. And I did that, for years.

I don't know when I stopped writing for him, and started simply writing.

Remember. I must remember him. He has dark, curly hair, and his features are small and sharp in his perfectly oval face. He is taller than Marm by a few inches, but not as tall as Benny. He's a serious man, but he laughs with his whole face. His hands smell of metal and gefilte fish, which he makes sometimes himself in the meat grinder. He calls me Oh Prudent One, and says he named me for the sensible look on my face when I was born.

I wonder, every day I wonder, where I could write him a letter. Missing in the Field—how can one address a letter to a person who is missing?

Better not to wonder such things at all.

Marm always tells me how my father's father fought in the Civil War for his adopted Northern city; he cut off his

long black beard and died somewhere in the South a hero, defending a hill. I don't know if he ever told anyone he was a Jewish soldier; I imagine he couldn't yet speak English. Marm has never had patience for the religious; when we sat shivah for Benny after he died, she didn't accept Mrs. Zanberger's gifts of food or Rabbi Samsfield's spiritual help. Papa wanted to continue the prayers, I think, but she asked our neighbors to leave and ended the shivah two days early, which began an argument with my father, who went to the Spanish War shortly after, and has not returned.

I still hear bits of words from the arguments Papa and Marm had after Benny's death, words like "gone" or "God" or "go," though I can't remember whole sentences, or meanings. I have to wonder if their arguing was what caused him to leave us.

I think Marm couldn't endure her thoughts about Benny anymore and my father didn't understand that. Every day, until I was eight years old, Benny and Papa sat with us here in this very room where I sit. Benny's long legs and arms took up the space beside our stove, the way he settled himself, all angles, nearly a man. Under the window I slept beside him, his head at my feet, which he would tickle to wake me in the morning before he went off to work with Papa in the factory.

Deadly

At night they brought us fresh rye bread and chopped chicken livers to eat and served them when Marm was too tired to cook. Their laughter filled our lives, and now they are both gone. A quiet has grown over us like a heavy fungus, every year another inch of thick white matter, covering us.

Neither Marm nor I can bear to speak of them.

She wrote so many letters to the government looking for my father after the war ended. Their return notice claimed soldier 3040, Gregory Galewski, Missing in the Field. His body has not been found, they said. He will come home someday; I store in my heart that hope. I am grateful the government began to send us my father's pay after they declared him missing; they send pay to Mrs. Finkel's family too. We all so very much need the money. I must get a job, and soon.