

Off the Shelf

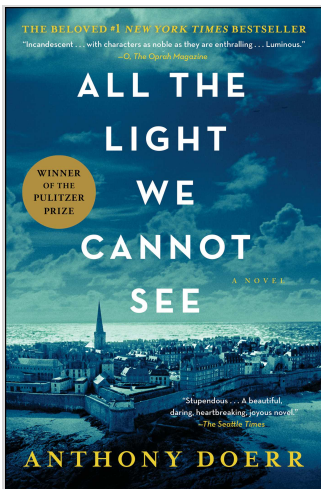
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How *All the Light We Cannot See* Came to Be Written



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BY ANTHONY DOERR



*Today, we're happy to bring you something written by Anthony Doerr which you'll find at the newly-launched Scribner Magazine. Mr. Doerr is also the author of *Memory Wall* and *Four Seasons in Rome*.*

I first saw Saint-Malo while I was on book tour in France. It's a

ghostly, imperious walled city in Brittany, surrounded by emerald green sea on all four sides. It was night, and after dinner I went for a stroll on top of the ramparts, peering into the third-floor windows of houses, the low-tide beaches glimmering in moonlight, the town glowing. I felt as if I was walking through a city plucked from the imagination of Italo Calvino, a place that was part fairy-tale castle, part M. C. Escher drawing, part mist and ocean wind and lamplight. You walk its cobbled lanes, you smell the tides, you hear the echoes of your footsteps, and you think: this city has survived for well over a thousand years. But Saint-Malo was almost entirely destroyed by American artillery in 1944, in the final months of World War II, and was painstakingly put back together, block by granite block, in the late 1940s