

Dedicated to Sri

Remember the Roses

A sensational story during the Second World War

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Robert glanced skyward at the wide bands searchlight probing the London sky and then went up the steps into the sandbag shielded building in Whitehall. Colonel Peers was waiting in the underground room and turned from a large wall map of France as he entered.

“Ah, Captain Phillips, I didn't think you'd get here so soon. Sit down and I'll brief you.” He opened a file on his desk and handed Robert a photograph. “That's Paul Renard. He's head of Resistance in Normandy. Two days ago we heard he'd been taken by the Gestapo.” He paused and drew a breath. “Captain, in just one week from now the Allied forces will land in France.”

Robert, like everyone else in Britain, had been expecting an invasion but the statement still came as something of a shock. “A week?”

“Yes. I can't tell you just where the landings will take place but I can say this. We've gone to immense trouble to fool the enemy. Right now he's concentrating his defenses on a quite useless stretch of beach. Our actual landing point is known to only a few.”

“And Paul Renard is one of them,” Robert guessed.

“We knew it was a risk but we needed support from the Resistance. You know as well as I do the strongest men can break under the Gestapo. It isn't just a question of courage. Renard must be reached. Either rescued or...” He moved his hand in a helpless gesture, “Or silenced. It isn't pleasant. To have to kill an ally. But thousands of lives are at stake.”

Robert nodded. It wasn't the first time a Resistance worker had been eliminated because he knew too much. He knew now why the Brigadier had picked him. For him it wouldn't be a new experience.

“Where is he being held?”

Colonel Peers rose and tapped the wall map. “Here, in Rouen, the old prison near the market place. The local Resistance has a plan for getting him out but it calls for someone with fluent German and none of them could speak it.”

“When do I leave?”

"Tomorrow night. A car will take you to our airfield in Kent. You'll be briefed on your cover there and then kitted out. It's got to be a quick job. I don't want you in France for more than twenty-four hours." He held out his hand, his face suddenly older. "I hope you to succeed, Captain. If there is a leak it would be another Dieppe, only worse. Much worse."

"I'll do my best, sir." Robert shook the proffered hand and saluted, conscious, as he turned away, of a sickness in the pit of his stomach. Another drop, his fifth, and the odds of survival grew less each time. But worse than the thought of capture was the knowledge that he might have to kill an ally. Again, in cold blood. That was a particular kind of horror. Even his own memories of the slaughter at Dieppe failed to take away the sour taste in his mouth.

Robert knelt on the damp grass and bundled the billowing folds of his parachute into the hole. Around him the woods were quiet, he expected torch signal nowhere to be seen. There could be a hundred reasons why no one had come to meet him but the unexpected was still rather alarming. Of course, the Germans were expecting the second front. They'd be tightening up, making movement more difficult. Even so it wasn't like the French underground to let a man down.

He stood up, kicking leaves over the freshly dug earth, and headed eastwards towards the town.

Pierre Delon lived at number sixteen rue de Derriere and as second-in-command to Paul Renard he'd be his best contact. He kept to the fields, hugging the shadows of the hedges wherever possible and stopping at the slightest sound. His cover had been dreamed up in a hurry and wouldn't stand up to any close scrutiny. A farmhand from Balbec *en route* to a job in Evreux might pass as an answer if he was stopped, but under interrogation the story just wouldn't hold up. 3

The first outlying streets of Rouen closed around him and he slowed his pace, dodging into a doorway as the steady tramp booted feet passed close by. The rue de Derriere was in center of the town, close by the river, and it took forty minutes of unalleviated tension before he reached it.

Everything was quiet, the Street deserted, and he was conscious of his footsteps echoing on the cobbles. Number sixteen was in darkness and he lifted his hand to the knocker, raising the heavy iron. A cold tickle of fear ran through him, a presentiment of danger. Logic told him there was no reason for it. Everything was as it should be. But the feeling persisted, even instinct urging him to run. He lowered the knocker slowly and it squeaked and he removed his hand.

Inside the house something clicked and suddenly he knew his instincts had been right. It was the click of a bolt. A rifle bolt.

He was halfway down the Street, his running footsteps ringing hollowly on the cobbles, as the first burst of fire raked the wall beside him. He swung around the corner and heard a car engine roar into life. Moments later the headlights swept over him as the car turned the corner after him and another spray of bullets chipped some splinters from the wall above his head.

A dark alleyway offered refuge and he raced down it, emerging on a narrow wharf. High walls enclosed it on three sides and on the other ran the Seine.

He stopped and leant back against a wall, regaining his breath while he looked around for a way. Stone steps led down to the river and he started down them as heavy footsteps sounded in the alley. He could try to swim away. It was unlikely he'd get very far even if he eluded his immediate pursuers. A man in dripping wet clothes would stick out like a sore thumb.

The brackish water sopped against the green, slime-covered stone, and in the darkness a shadow moved against the faintly luminous water.

He pressed himself back against the stone embankment as the shadowy figure came up the steps.

"Come Out with your hands up."

The order came in guttural English from the wharf above. The slight figure paused beside him and he had a vague impression of pale blonde hair, cut short like a boy's, but the voice, heavily accented, was that of a girl.

"You are an Englishman?"

He nodded and she caught his arm. "This way, follow me."

She urged him on down the steps and he saw for the first time a gaping hole in the bank. Without hesitation she went in and he followed, grimacing in distaste as the stench of the sewer reached him. Shots sounded behind him and he quickened his pace, splashing through the stream of foul water that was dimly lit by moonlight glancing through the drains above.

The girl stopped and turned to him. "Now we go up." She pointed to an iron ladder set into the side of the sewer and, grateful to escape from the overpowering smell, he went up it, pushing open the manhole at the top.

Above was a large, lighted room and as he emerged and looked around he realized it was a crypt. Thick pillars rose to a vaulted roof and at one end stood a stone altar.

The girl climbed out behind him and he replaced the cover. For the first time he had a good look at her. She was dressed in the way most women in the Resistance dressed. Black trousers, dark woolen jumper worn under a leather jacket and a Sten gun hitched over one shoulder. She was attractive in a boyish sort of way. Her face was a little too strong and determined to be labelled beautiful and yet there was a magnetism about her that made him decide that, once seen, she would never be forgotten. She smiled at him with a touch of shyness.

"My English is not good?"

"I speak French, ma'mselle." He dropped into her language.

"I don't know how you managed to find me but I'm very grateful."

"You needed help. I knew you were coming."

"I was supposed to be met outside of the town. What happened?"

"The Resistance in this town is broken. They have all been arrested. Someone betrayed them...and you. As yet they are not aware of your reason for coming."

"You know why I'm here?"

She nodded. "To rescue Renard."

"With the Resistance out of action I don't know how I'll manage it." He realized suddenly that she hadn't told her name. By way of invitation he held out his hand. "'I'm Robert Phillips."

She smiled and took his hand in a surprisingly strong grip. "They call me Jehane. Jehane Lebrun."

"I don't suppose you know where they're keeping Renard?"

"In the old prison. In the room above the one I was in."

Robert stared at her. "You were a prisoner there?"

"A long time ago, yes"

"What happened? Did they release you?"

She shook her head. "No, I escaped."

"Escaped? Well, if you could get out so could Renard."

"Yes, but not my way."

"Why Not?"

She gave a small laugh and turned away. "It's too hard, Renard is good man but...no, my way is not for him." She turned back, still smiling. "But there is a way, in the dungeon beneath the room. I was in there as well. It was served by an underground river, but now the river has been turned into a sewer. The water was never good. They say in the olden days the kinggs' executioners threw the bodies of the condemned down it. The dungeon was used as a torture chamber, you see."

"And it's still there?" it seemed too good to be true. A well opening up right inside yje prison. Surely the Germans would have seen it and sealed it off.

“Yes, I can take you there. Through the sewers.” She unhitched her Sten gun, “Come, We can do it now.”

He laughed at her eagerness and glanced at his watch. “It’s too late. It’ll be dawn in an hour. Anyway, the pickup plane won’t be until tonight.”

She shrugged, “Very well, we will wait until tonight. I was always hasty. That’s how I was caught the last time. Dunois warned me, but I wouldn’t listen. ‘Jehane,’ he would say, ‘don’t play the fool. If they catch you I’ll not be able to help you.’”

“And did he?”

“No, poor Dunois. He would have tried if it had been up to him, but it wasn’t.”

“You say ‘poor Dunois’, was he killed?”

“I’m not sure. I lost track of him but he was a good soldier. And a good friend even if he was cautious.” She slung the gun back over her shoulder. “You must stay here today. It’s safe. The church above is not used now although the light still burns here.” She nodded upwards to the naked bulb which is hung from the stone roof. “When they took the priest away for helping British prisoners to escape the light was left on. No one came to turn it off. No one ever comes here now. Get some sleep. I will return tonight.”

“You’re going?” Robert felt reluctant to lose her company. She took his hand, turning his wrist so she could see his watch. “Yes, I must...Before Sunrise. When it’s dark I’ll come back. I’ll bring you some food.”

She moved away to where a flight of steps led upwards into darkness and turned with a half-salute. “*Adieu*, Robert, Sleep well.” (*Adieu*-goodbye)

“*Au revoir*.” (Till we meet again)

He watched her go swiftly and silently up the steps until the shadows had her from sight, and then turned back to the empty crypt.

“Robert, Wake up, it’s time.”

Jehane’s voice broke into his sleep and he opened one eye. She laughed and shook her head. “You look funny. Do you always open one eye first?”

He sat up, pushing a hand through his hair and yawning. “Always.”

“Look, Supper.” She held up a paper bag. “Bread and cheese. It’s not much but I had no money.”

"I suppose you pinched it." He was amused at the thought but she shook her head.

"Oh, no. A farmer gave it to me. I told him it was for France."

Robert laughed. "And he gave it to you?"

"He was a patriot." She seemed suddenly bitter. "Always it is the same. The men in power will sell France to her enemies. They are afraid of fight. Afraid they'll lose their houses, their easy lives. But the common people, the farmers and the soldiers, they will fight. They will give everything for France. They are France."

"I think you're right," Robert agreed. "But before you go into a tirade (discussion) over French politics I'd like to make a start on that bread and cheese. I'm famished."

"Oh, I'm sorry." She handed him the bag. "I talk too much. And I get angry too quickly. Dunois used to say to me, 'Jehane, you shout too much. You are no lady.'" And I would say "If I were a lady I would not be here with you, fighting for France. And he would laugh."

"This Dunois," Robert questioned. "He was in the Resistance?"

"We were comrades. We had some great days together." She stood up as he finished the bread and cheese, and retrieved her Sten gun from its resting place on the altar. "Come, we will go."

The sewers seemed endless but Jehane appeared to know the way, and after countless twists and turns she stopped beneath a shaft and pointed upwards. "This is it."

Robert shone his torch upwards and saw iron rungs set into the wall.

"I'd better go first just in case there's someone up there." She nodded and handed him her gun. "Take this."

He slipped it over his shoulder and started up. After what seemed an age the rungs ended and he hauled himself over the rim of the well into the impenetrable blackness beyond. The air smelt damp and foul, almost as bad as the sewers, and the beam of his torch illumined a small room whose walls were green and dripping with moisture.

The beam revealed a stone furnace in one corner, and beside it, on the wall, an array of branding-irons and manacles. Farther along stood a huge table like structure with massive rollers at each end.

He was conscious of Jehane standing beside him in the darkness. Her whispered words echoed hollowly around the room.

"I hate this place. They brought me here to frighten me; I thought was brave until then. I was never afraid when I was fighting, never. But this place..."

"She shivered and he put an arm around her shoulder reassuringly."

"It's quite a different thing, I know I'd be scared to death if they brought me here. It's like something Out of Edgar Allan Poe.

"I thought the Gestapo employed modern methods but the mere sight of this place is enough to put the fear of God into anyone." He nodded to the table-like structure. "Is that a rack?"

"Yes. It's a terrible thing. I've heard people screaming down here, I think it was on that. Can you imagine how it must feel? To have your body torn apart. Every bone, every muscle. Even the skin parts in time."

Robert felt himself shiver and laughed a little nervously. "Yes. Primitive it may be but still pretty effective. Now how do we get out of here?"

She reclaimed her gun and took his hand. "This way, but put out the light, they may see it."

He switched off the torch and allowed himself to be led forward in the pitch blackness.

"Be careful here. There are steps, Thirty-four."

"He stubbed his toe on the first but soon found he could judge the height. After thirty-four he found himself on level ground."

"A few more places and we will be in the new cell block. Close your eyes or the light will blind you."

Gradually he was conscious of the increasing brightness beyond his closed eyes and she released his hand.

"All-right, you may open them now but slowly."

He blinked as the glazing electric light dazzled him, but it passed and he saw a corridor stretching ahead, Eight solid iron doors ranged along it and Jehane moved to the nearest.

"In here."

The lock yielded to his probing wire and a few seconds later they were inside. Renard lay face downward on the stone floor, unconscious. His lips were caked with dried blood and his left hand and two broken fingers. A torn trouser leg revealed scorch marks and it seemed the Gestapo

did resort to modern on some occasions. Electric shocks were favourite of theirs especially after a man had been immersed in water. And Renard's clothes were soaking wet.

Robert's efforts to revive him were useless and Renard remained oblivious of the chance of escape. After five minutes he gave up, realizing that Renard wasn't going to come round for some hours yet and that when he did he'd be too weak to move. For a moment he considered carrying him but the descent down the well would be impossible and he had no rope with which he could lower him down.

He took what looked like a tobacco pouch from his pocket and removed the screening layer of tobacco. Beneath was the ready-filled hypodermic. He squirted a thin jet of the colourless fluid into the air and pulled back the ripped sleeve of Renard's shirt.

Jehane's hands caught his wrist in a grip of steel.

"That's murder."

Her voice was cold, as icy cold as her eyes, and he felt his fingers going numb.

"Let go before I drop it."

"No, I won't let you kill him."

He could have fought her but he didn't want to risk the noise of a struggle and she was too strong to be an easy opponent. "Listen to me," he whispered harshly. "He can't walk and I can't get him down that well. If I leave him he might talk. He'll certainly suffer a hell of a sight more before he dies. Do you think I enjoy doing it?"

"No, it sickens you."

"Yes, but it is necessary."

"Ah, yes, the old story. Always the same. Better sacrifice one life than many. That's what they tell you, isn't it?"

"And it's true."

"It's never true." There was a pitiless anger in her eyes and her voice was harsh with bitterness. "Every life is precious. War demands that we kill but in our defense, to save what god has given us. But this is murder. No. More than that. It is betrayal and you know it's wrong. In your heart you know."

"All right. So it's wrong, but I'm the one who has to live with it."

“As you’ve lived with the other memory? For six months? Hating yourself? Oh, I know,” she answered the startled question in his eyes.

“I know all about it. Then there was no one to help you, to show you what was right and what was wrong. You had your orders and thought you knew it was murder you could not bring yourself to ignore those orders. But this time it's different. This time I’m here and I’ll tell you now, destroy this man and you destroy yourself, your very soul. You know I speak the truth. You know how it was with you the last time. This time it will be worse, much worse.”

He gave up the flight, gave up lying to himself. She was right.

He couldn't live with another dead on his conscience. And he was tired, tired of pretending to be cold-blooded about killing, tired of the whole dirty game Intelligence forced him to play.

He closed his eyes and felt her grip on his wrist relax. “How did you know? Who told you?”

“It’s not important. I know and there's an end to it. Now you must decide. Will you destroy yourself or will you say ‘no’? Just this once. If you kill this man you are no better than them.” She jerked her head upwards. “They have no regard for life.”

He drew a breath, letting the syringe fall from his fingers.

“You're right, Jehane.” His voice was tired. “I can't live with it. What's more, I can't die with it either. Maybe it's old fashioned to hold to a religion but I do. And guilt's made a coward of me. I can't forgive myself so how can I expect God to?”

“He will.” She picked up the syringe and handed it to him. “Put it away.”

He obeyed her without question. Suddenly she had assumed a new stature, an air of authority. She was strong, much stronger than he was, and he would follow her lead.

“Take Renard on your back and follow me.”

He caught Renard's wrist and hoisted him over his shoulder, holding on to his legs. “Which way?”

She laughed suddenly, a bright reckless laugh. “We're leaving by the front door. We’re walking out of here right under their noses.”

It was sheer madness. She was proposing to walk past a dozen guards with* a valuable prisoner in tow. Every instinct told him it was suicide and yet M knew he'd do it, simply because she'd told him to. He caught her reckless mood and laughed with her. -7

“Okay, Lead on.”

He followed her quickly down the corridor and up a flight of concrete steps at the far end. At the top she paused and gestured for silence.

“Two guards, outside that door. See?”

He peered around the corner. A half-tiled corridor ran for about twenty yards and ended in an iron-barred gate. Halfway down two black-shirted men stood at attention outside a door.

“There's no cover. Those two will spot us the moment we move out.”

She gave him an odd look and smiled. “I think not. Stay here. Make no sound.”

Silently she edged around the corner and began walking slowly down the corridor. To his utter amazement neither of the two Nazis moved. They remained at attention, staring ahead of them, as she came up on one side. A blow from the butt of her gun sent the first guard sprawling and the other turned his face incredulous, just in time to receive similar treatment. She gestured for him to join her as she relieved the first guard of a bunch of keys.

“The reception area is beyond that gate,” She selected a key.

“This will open it.”

Robert edged forward and could see the large hallway. It seemed literally crawling with Nazi guards.

“They will shoot us down before we get ten feet.”

“Not if we're quick.” She moved to the gate. “Now, listen and do exactly as I tell you. When I open that gate run, and run fast. The main door is directly ahead of you. Beyond that is the market place.

Go straight across it and down the road opposite. It will bring you to the river, wait for me then.”

“And you?”

She tapped her gun. “I'll be right behind. Don't worry. And whatever you do, don't look back.” She unlocked the gate and swung it wide, “Now go!”

He ran, hearing behind him the startled shouts of the guards, the sharp click of the rifle bolts. The door opened as he reached it and he went through, cannoning into the Gestapo officer who stood on the threshold and sending him flying. A bullet chipped wood from the door and then he was down the steps racing across the darkened market place, Renard bumping on his shoulder, vaguely aware of pandemonium breaking out behind him.

The chatter of machine gun ripped open the night and he heard the bullets sing past him, expecting them to rip into his back at any moment, but he reached the street opposite unscathed and raced on down it.

He stopped, grasping for breath, on the embankment, and let Renard slide from his shoulder. Looking back the way he'd come he could see no sign of her. The street was deserted and sounds of pursuit came distantly. Sounds of car engine revving up and shouted orders.

A gnawing fear began inside him and he turned back, a wave of relief surging over him.

"Jehane. Thank God. I thought they'd caught you."

She shook her head smiling. "I've been through fire before. I wasn't so bad." She caught his arm and moved to the wall embankment. "There is boat moored below. They'll not look for you on the river. It's not far from the river's edge to the field where your plane will land. I think you can carry Renard that far."

"I'll make it. And you?"

"I Stay."

"You could come with me."

She shook her head. "No, my heart is here. I think in your heart you know I must stay."

He did know it. He wasn't sure how he knew.

"Then promise me you will take care."

She smiled slowly. "Another Robert said that to me a long time ago." A touch of sadness in her voice told him that this Robert had meant a lot to her.

"You loved him?"

"He was my dearest friend. He said he'd follow me to the gates of hell." She looked at the sky, clear and moonlit. "In a way he did. He died because of me. Because I wouldn't give in and let France die."

"I don't think he'd ever regretted it."

"No." She smiled a little sadly. "He wanted a free France too. How could either of us regret what we gave?" She took something from her trouser pocket and held it out. A small silver crucifix on a chain. "He gave me this. I should like you to have it. A keepsake, so you will not forget me."

He took it and held it for a moment. "I have nothing to give you in return."

"One day you will come back to Rouen. When France is free. Then you bring me some flowers perhaps. English Roses."

"I will bring the biggest bunch you ever saw. I promise. Where shall I find you?"

"In the market place. You'll find me there."

"*Au revoir*, Jenhane." He bent and kissed her cheek then lifted Renard onto his shoulder and started down the steps to the boat.

As he cast off her voice floated down him.

"*Adieu*, Robert. Remember the roses."

The current carried him swiftly downstream and, looking back, he could see only an empty embankment, cloaked in shadows.

Colonel Peers flung the typewriter report down on the desk and glared at Robert. "I don't know what the devil happened to you in Rouen, Captain, but I'd say you'd taken leave of your senses. This so-called report of yours is sheer nonsense."

His Adjutant hid a smile and shot Robert a sympathetic glance.

Robert looked blank. "I'm sorry, sir. I don't understand."

"All this business about dungeons and wells. It's a sheer poppycock. There aren't any dungeons in Rouen prison. And as for their supposed torture chamber, Renard himself says it was on the floor above him. And it certainly wasn't filled with a load of medieval junk like the place you described."

"But I saw it. We both did." Robert felt bewildered.

"And that's another thing. This girl. Jehane Leburn. There's no one in the Resistance by that name."

"Maybe it was an assumed name." Robert suggested.

"Maybe you were drunk, Captain. I'd prefer to believe that than assume you were suffering from hallucinations. The girl doesn't exist."

"But she does, Robert insisted. "And I wasn't drunk."

"You say she covered your retreat from prison."

"Yes."

"Rubbish! You were all alone. We have a witness. One of our own men who works as a cleaner. He saw the whole incident. You came through from the cell block with Renard on your back and went through so fast the guards were too surprised to shoot. When they did they seemed unable to shoot straight and put six bullets into their own officers."

"But, Jehane..."

"She wasn't there. Or if she was, she was invisible. Now listen, Phillips. The Brigadier is pleased with this operation. You might even get a promotion. But this report will give him apoplexy. Re-write it, ma. I want facts. Facts that make sense. And I want it by tonight."

He stormed out of the office and the Adjutant hitched himself on the edge of the desk.

"You have put your foot on it, my boy. The CO's not pleased."

"I don't understand. It's true. Every word of it."

The Adjutant frowned. "You know you sound convinced enough, I could almost believe you."

"Look." Robert turned to him impatiently. "I don't know what checking up you, did but I know what happened. I was there. There were dungeons, and Jehane does exist. Do I look like a lunatic?"

The Adjutant was silent for a moment, then he drew a breath. "No, No, you don't look like one. Maybe I'm sticking my neck out saying this but...well, there were dungeons below Rouen prison. They were sealed off when the old building was pulled down."

"Then they weren't sealed off properly."

"I'd say six feet of solid concrete was 'properly'. It's true, Phillips. That's the foundation of the present building, six feet of concrete. You see, I know French history. That was my job before the war. I'm in this department because I speak the lingo and know the country."

"All right. So I was dreaming up the well. Or dreaming I walked straight from it into the cell block, but what about Jehane? She wasn't a dream. And I can prove it." He fished in his breast pocket and took out the crucifix, handing it to the Adjutant. "She gave me this".

For a long while the man stared at it, turning it over his hand. His voice was oddly muted when he spoke.

“There is an inscription. Did you notice?”

“Yes, but it is too full of squiggles for me to make it out.”

The Adjutant nodded slowly. “Old French. Shall I translate?”

“Go Ahead.”

“To Jehane. My maid of Orleans, god be with you, Robert.” He paused. “There is a date too. Fourteen twenty-nine.”

For a moment Robert stared at him, half uncomprehending, half unwilling to accept what the inscription implied.

“Some called her Jehane le Burn...Joan the Brown,’ the Adjutant went on, in a low, almost reverent murmur. “in fourteen twenty-nine she took over from Captain Dunois and raised the siege of Orleans. In July of that year she was crowned the Dauphin king in Rheims. In fourteen thirty-one she was tried for heresy and burnt in Rouen market place. They say her heart wouldn’t burn so they threw into the river.” He paused, and added. “Some say she loved the knight...Sir Robert. I forget his last name.”

Robert has listened in silence, the words fitting piece by piece into the jigsaw. “Joan of Arc. Jehane? But she was real. I touched her.”

The Adjutant nodded slowly. “Maybe, I can’t tell you what’s real and what isn’t. I can’t tell you if Jehane...your Jehane...was a ghost or a living person. Only you can decide that. All I can tell you is this. If you entered the prison by the way of the old dungeon where Joan was kept, you did it through six feet solid concrete. And the only Jehane in Rouen is a statue in the market place.”

Robert turned away and stared at the wall map of France, his mind trying to believe the unbelievable. “That’s where she said she’d be.” Red flags marched like banners across the map of Normandy and he heard her voice echoing in his mind. “One day you will come back...”

He turned back to the Adjutant. “I’m putting in for a transfer.”

“You will lose your promotion. The Brigadier won’t like it.”

“To hell with what Brigadier likes. I’m a soldier not a blasted spy. I want to see action.”

“In France?”

“Maybe. It doesn’t matter. I’ll get to Rouen one day. In the mean time I’ll be doing things her way. In the open, not hiding in shadows.”

The Adjutant handed back the crucifix. “You know, this is a valuable trinket.”

Robert took it, smiling. "It's not for sale. It never will be. Will you get me the forms for transfer?"

He nodded, "And what about this report?"

"It stays the way it is," Robert grinned. "I'd rather like to see the Brigadier get apoplexy."

The market place was crowded. Banners fluttered from open windows and wine flowed freely.

"*Vive Churchill, Vive de Gaulle* (Lives Churchill, de Gaulle Lives)." A Frenchman, waving a bottle of Cognac, slapped Robert on the back, as he passed leaning heavily on a stick. "You are English. Colonel No.?"

"*Oui,*" Robert smiled. "*Je le suis.*"

The Frenchman pointed to Robert's leg, stiffened by the bullet wound gained at the Rhine, "*Un soldat brave, eh (Brave Soldier)?*"

Robert laughed and shook his head. "*Non. Un soldat trop lent.*"

"Too slow." The man roared with laughter. "*Oh, c'est bein. C'est tres bein.*"

Robert pushed on through the crowd of victory celebrators. The corner of the market place was oddly deserted. A small corner of quite in the noisy square. He laid the huge bunch of red roses at the stone feet and looked up the silent figure of the Maid.

"See Jehane.., I Remember the Roses."

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Some facts:

Joan of Arc, or **Jeanne d'Arc** in French, (c. 1412 – May 30, 1431) also known as "the Maid of Orleans", was a 15th century virgin saint and national heroine of France. A peasant girl born in Eastern France, Joan led the French army to several important victories during the [Hundred Years' War](#), claiming divine guidance, and was indirectly responsible for the coronation of King [Charles VII](#). She was captured by the English and tried by an [ecclesiastical](#) court led by Bishop Pierre Cauchon, an English partisan; the court convicted her of heresy and she was burned at the stake by the English when she was nineteen years old.

By the beginning of 1429, nearly all of northern France and some parts of the southwest were under foreign control. The English ruled Paris, while the Burgundians controlled [Reims](#). The latter city was important as the traditional site of French coronations and consecrations, especially since neither claimant to the throne of France had yet been crowned.

Joan of Arc has been a political symbol in France since the time of Napoleon.

By 1429 the English with the help of their Burgundian allies occupied Paris and all of France north of the Loire

At the battle of Orleans in May 1429, Joan led the troops to a miraculous victory over the English. She continued fighting the enemy in other locations

In 1430 she was captured by the Burgundians while defending Compiègne near Paris and was sold to the English. The English, in turn, handed her over to the ecclesiastical court at Rouen led by Pierre Cauchon, a pro-English Bishop of Beauvais, to be tried for witchcraft and heresy. Much was made of her insistence on wearing male clothing. She was told that for a woman to wear men's clothing was a crime against God. Her determination to continue wearing it (because her voices hadn't yet told her to change, as well as for protection from sexual abuse by her jailors) was seen as defiance and finally sealed her fate. Joan was convicted after a fourteen-month interrogation and on May 30, 1431 she was burned at the stake in the Rouen marketplace. She was nineteen years old. Charles VII made no attempt to come to her rescue.

http://archive.joan-of-arc.org/joanofarc_short_biography.html

ⁱ Remember The Roses
By Avery Taylor

Soft Copy prepared by: Vinitt Jaiswal.
Thanks to Yamini for sharing this story.
<http://frozenthoughtz.wordpress.com/2008/04/07/remembering-the-roses-and-its-yet-unanswered-question/#comment-280>