

# The Legend of the Schuetzenprinzen

When the gods still roamed the world there was a German tribe of hunters called the Schuetzenprinzen. They lived in the Alps between what is now called St. Gallen and Reichenau. They survived by hunting for deer and wild boar.

The gods were benevolent and protected these hunters because they never seemed to take life in vain. When the Schuetzenprinzen discovered a powerful secret about nature the gods did nothing to hide it from them.

It is said that the secret they discovered allowed them to see the world as it really was and talk to the animals. No one knows how they found this special power. But the gods let them keep it.

The Schuetzenprinzen lived in peace with the world because they saw how everything had a role and purpose. In their hunting they never

took more than they needed. They used their special powers to talk to their prey before the kill.

One day a hunter called Ysenhuertli met a great grey wolf near the top of a hill. Ysenhuertli was afraid the wolf would attack their tribe. He wanted to kill it.

Ysenhuertli asked the wolf: “What is your role in this world?”

“It is the same as yours. I roam free in these mountains. I kill the weak and sick so others may live a better life”

Ysenhuertli thought about this a long time, and then asked:

“What will happen to you when you grow sick and old?”

“Then a hunter like you will come and kill me”

“What would happen if I killed you now?”

“My time has not come. It would disturb the balance in nature”

Ysenhuertli thought about this some more and then he had an idea. He went to the woods and talked to the trees.

He said: “Dear trees of the woods. I need a sacrifice. Who shall I take?”

A big old oak volunteered and Ysenhuertli chopped it down. He spent three days building a great wooden fence and lured the wolf inside.

He said to the wolf: “From now on you will live with us. You will protect our tribe. Don’t be afraid. We will feed you and treat you well”

Soon wolf turned into dog and became man’s best friend.

The gods were disappointed with what Ysenhuertli had done but they did not take revenge. For a while life seemed to continue as usual.

But soon the Schuetzenprinzen came to understand the price they had paid for their new protector and friend. They gradually lost the art of seeing nature as it was. The animals stopped talking back and they were now forced to hunt without consideration for the balance of nature.

Kill by kill they understood that the gods had abandoned them and to this day the art of seeing the true nature of the world is lost.

# 1. Day One

Let me tell you the story of a girl I met sitting cross-legged on the steps of Notre-Dame in Paris. She'd been there all afternoon furiously sketching the spires, gargoyles, statuettes, and other ornaments of this most majestic of all Cathedrals.

The way she sat there was blocking the churchgoers from getting in. No one complained though. She was obviously talented and no one dared to disturb her. Her charcoal drawings were vivid and life-like, full of exuberance and joy. They were for sale. One franc a piece. Sales had been modest that day.

Like most people I bumped into her on my way to church and stopped to watch the spectacle: such a gorgeous and energetic girl drawing as if a demon possessed her. I'd travelled the world and seen many artists making a living on the streets. But this girl was something different.

Her eyes were restless, darting all over the place. They were nearly impossible to peer into. They were a bright brown with a tinge of a color I would only catch a long time later. She had raven black long hair and could not have been older than twenty.

If I had to choose a single word to describe her I'd pick "fury". She worked at a breakneck pace. Roughly outlining features. Never pausing. She went on for hours and hours. Each time she'd finish a drawing she'd casually toss it on her "for sale" pile. And start the next one.

In front of that pile she'd put a porcelain cup and expected buyers to throw in their franc then take a drawing.

When the last ray of sunshine'd gone she gave out a great sigh, casually tossed aside her last sketch and stretched out. I could now see that she was taller than I'd expected. I saw a slender and tough body shaped by hard work.

She looked at her cup and I saw a grimace of disappointment come over her face. Sales had been slow. She sighed and started gathering up her things.

I asked her: "What's your name? Why are you in such a hurry?"

This startled the girl. No one ever talked to her. She felt as much part of the decor as the gargoyles on the church. And she liked it like that. She hated to be disturbed when she worked. But now work was finished and she looked at me. Hesitating. Sizing me up.

"Jolie" she said locking eyes and then she blurted out an annoyed:

"Who's asking?"

“Just a traveler. Your drawings are great”

With a tinge of skepticism on her face she pointed at her cup and said:

“They’re for sale, you know”

“You didn’t answer my question. Why such a hurry?”

For a split second I thought she’d just ignore me and move on. But then she sighed:

“Too much to draw. So much to learn still.”

With a touch of doubt in my voice: “So you think you will learn more by making fast and messy drawings like this?”

“Who cares? People don’t appreciate beauty. Look at my cup.”

True, her cup wasn’t exactly overflowing.

She said: “More sketches, more money”

“Well. You’re doing it all wrong, you know”

“THEN YOU DO IT” she snapped back.

I saw a frown of anger on her face just before she turned her back to me. She continued packing her stuff.

“Sick of guys like you. Always complaining. Never buying.”

“Hey, I’m sorry, OK? You are talented. But you are wasting your time”

She turned around with a gentle blush on her face. Smiling, she pointed at her cup.

I said “Not in that beggar’s cup” and smiled at her. “Here’s ten francs.”

I showed her the coins and said:

“I want one drawing. One. Your best”

She spread out her day’s work. Looked at them a long time. Hesitated. Then after a few minutes she said:

“Maybe. Just Maybe ... this ... nah” then a curt:

“I don’t like ANY of ‘em”

She gathered the whole pile, and put up a sign, saying, “3 francs. Take as many as you want.”

“You’re not very smart you know. You could have picked one and made my ten francs.”

“I have my pride. Those are bad drawings.”

“You know what? Let me buy you dinner tonight. Tomorrow I will come back with my ten francs.”

“You bastard! I can buy my own food!”

A dull darkness fell into her eyes. She knew this kind of man.

“You’re not interested in my paintings, you’re after me!”

“No. I want to talk. I can teach you how to make more money.”

“Sure. And what do you want in return?”

“Nothing. I’m just curious. Tomorrow you’ll make more money. I promise. Let me help.”

“And what’s YOUR name, Mr. money-maker?”

“Sorry. I didn’t introduce myself. I’m Arthur. I’m a travelling salesman. Kind of. I teach merchants how to sell”

“Merchants? Why me then?”

“Curiosity. You’re a merchant. Kind of. I want to see if my ideas about selling also work for art.”

“OK. Whatever. I’m hungry.”

She pointed to an old lady selling chicken broth. I ordered two big steaming cups and we sat down.

“Jolie’s a strange name. I don’t think it’s your real name”

“Wrong”

“Sorry, I thought it was an artist’s name. It fits. Jolie. Beautiful paintings made by a beautiful girl named Jolie”

For a second I thought she’d blush like other girls but then she simply answered:

“My father gave it to me in honour of my mother. She died when I was born. She was the beauty of my town.”

“Oh. Sorry. Which town?”

“I’m from Beaune. My father is a wine merchant there and ...”

She let out a quick gasp. Too early to reveal this much to a stranger.  
Not yet.

“So. Your turn. Tell me how to make more money.”

“Well. Simple. Draw less.”

“Less? I barely make any money now!”

“Yes. Tomorrow, you will draw less. Double your prices. You’ll make more than what you earned today. If not I’ll pay you ten francs for your best drawing. Simple“

She fell silent and seemed to focus on her chicken broth. She took a long time to finish it. I wanted to tell her more but she interrupted me.

“Shut up. Let me think”

We passed a few more minutes in silence

“I will do it. Maybe I’m crazy but I will. Leave me now and if you don’t come back tomorrow I’ll know the kind of bastard you really are. Good night.”

We shook hands and as we each turned our way I blurted out:

“Oh. Tomorrow. Get rid of that beggar’s cup. Ask people to pay you. Money in hand”

## 2. Day Two

Next day she set up shop early. She'd been thinking about what that strange man had told her. She had her doubts but doubled her prices & got rid of the beggar's cup. That was easy.

What was harder was slowing down her drawing. She wanted to draw something truly worth 10 francs. And the only way to do that was to slow down & pay attention to the details.

The really annoying part of this new scheme was that getting rid of the cup meant customers kept interrupting her work. Every time she'd get in the flow of drawing she'd be interrupted by some silly customer question like:

“Do you do colours too?”

“Can you make one like this but different?”

Each time she gave polite but curt answers. Even the tiniest bits of conversation seemed to please the clients. But she quickly learned to say “No” and “I need to get back to work”

By late afternoon her pace had completely changed. She was now drawing slowly and deliberately. She started to spend as much time looking at things as drawing them.

And for the cup that never turned out to be a problem. People were more than happy to give it to her directly. She just stuffed the money in her dress and continued work.

I'm a man of my word so near dusk I came to the square. I was genuinely looking forward to seeing what a 10 franc drawing would be like.

I said: “Hello Jolie. How are earnings today?”

She looked at me a little surprised.

“Oh. You're back”

She then smiled and said:

“Ummm. I don't know. I still need to count. Better than yesterday. For sure”

“Told you”

She took out her money & started to count. When she reached double of what she'd earned yesterday she paused for a second & said:

“Wow. Thanks”

She kept counting & when she'd finished she let out a sigh:

“Why?”

“Why what?”

“Why everything. Why does this work? Why did my drawing improve? Why did I make more money? Why are you doing this? Why? Why? Why?”

“You’re a smart girl. Think about it over dinner with me”

“You sure you’re not hitting on me?” she said with a naughty little smile on her face.

“Pretty sure ... I think”

“Ok. Same as yesterday then.”

She pointed to the woman selling chicken broth.

She sat in silence for a long time over her cup. Her brow furrowed.  
Thinking

I broke the ice: “So what are you thinking? Why does this work?”

“I don’t know yet”

“Give me your best”

“OK. When I make less drawings it makes them seem more special.  
I can probably even ask 3 francs instead of 2“

“Yes. Scarcity. If there’s less of something it becomes more desirable.  
I bet you can even ask 10 francs”

“No way”

“Way. I’ll still pay 10 for your best. Did you make any good ones today?”

“No. Not yet. I was too busy chatting with people”

“You know that’s an excuse”

She giggled: “Yes. yes it is”

I said “Tomorrow? I’ll double my offer. 20 francs”

“Ok. Less is more. I get it. But what about getting rid of my cup? How does that work?”

“It’s to give people a chance to talk to you”

“What’s that good for? I’m just selling drawings”

“That’s not what they are buying”

“Yes they are. You know. Charcoal on paper.”

“No. They’re buying an experience. They want to boast to their neighbours that they know you. It makes them feel special”

She thought about this for a while, then she said:

“OK. But why are you doing this?”

“It’s my job. I’m studying you. Maybe I’ll learn something.”

“Whatever. You are strange. Where are you from anyway?”

“I will tell you if you tell me why a rich girl like you is doing this.”

She answered with a dumbstruck: “How. How do you know?”

“I’m not stupid. That porcelain cup you used is worth something. You know how to draw. You’re educated. Education costs money.”

“I. I. I ran away ...”

She followed with a long silence, as if seizing me up like the first time we met:

“I was on my way to Venice with a priest. My father married me out to a rich merchant but I got rid of the priest & turned back North.”

“What did you do that for? It’s dangerous out here for a girl”

“I can take care of myself” she said and then she did something crazy right there in the middle of Notre Dame square. She hitched up her dress to reveal long muscular legs that ended in a massive dagger strapped to her thigh.

“OK. I get it. Big girl. Why the drawing?”

“Well, it’s the one thing I know how to do. I’m not like most girls. I’ve always been talented like this. I’ve always had this obsession for ...” she paused again, doubting.

“Obsession. And? For what?” I insisted

“I want to find true beauty.”

“That’s very noble. And a little naive.”

She threw her bowl of broth at me. Hit me square in the nose.

“I can be a beauty. Or an animal. Depends on how you treat me.” She looked me straight in the eyes then slowly said:

“Don’t call me naive. I don’t like this conversation anymore.”

She started to get up, ready to leave.

“I’m sorry. I will ask no more. I will double my deal. 20 for your best tomorrow. But ...”

She stood there, crossed her arms said:

“But what?”

“You can make just ONE drawing tomorrow. It will be your best ever. And I will buy it for 20 francs”

“If I spend all day on a single sketch I’ll starve”

“Maybe you’ll starve. Maybe you’ll find true beauty. Try it.”

She took a long time to answer & when she finally did it was a curt

“Ok”

“But I need to admit something I did today” I added sheepishly

“What?”

“You didn’t make all that money by yourself. I helped ...”

“What? How?”

“I went around town. Spread some rumors about you ...”

“You been talking behind my back? Bastard!”

She now took MY bowl & looked as if she wanted to punch me with  
it

“Yeah. Listen me out. I was helping you.”

“What kind of fucking rumors?”

“Oh. You’re doubling your prices because you will leave Paris soon. You know ...”

“Bastard! Liar! I’m not!”

“Strictly to help you. This kind of rumour helps with the scarcity thing.”

“OK. I don’t know if I like you anymore. But you’re smart. And you did help me today”

She dropped the bowl and said:

“I will make your fucking drawing tomorrow. But no more spreading rumors!”

“Ummm. Yeah. Ok. I’m sorry.”

“Apology accepted. But you better fucking turn up with that money tomorrow!”

# 3. Day Three

The next day she did as I had told. She put her best leftover drawings on display. A Sale. 5 Francs a piece.

Then she set out to make a single excellent drawing. She took her time. She actually took a stroll around Notre-Dame before beginning. Looking for that special feature she would draw today. Something exceptional that just might reveal true beauty.

Where to find true beauty? In the angels? The Saints maybe? Jesus himself? She dithered on this for a long time.

She finally settled on a motif near the main entrance. A small demon with scary eyes but a weird grimace on his face. It was hard to tell if he was smiling or angry.

“Maybe if I draw him I’ll find out if he is an angry or good demon” she thought.

She really took her time now. She actually started over several times. But that was fine. She had all day.

She felt something new. A kind of creative high. It made her whole body glow with happiness. It felt like falling in love. But with what? Her drawing? Was that even possible?

She felt so happy with her progress that she even drank a little wine over lunch. Near mid-afternoon she was already putting the finishing touches on the little demon's eyes.

Then something weird happened. From the corner of her eye she was sure she'd seen the slightest movement in the demon's tail.

"What?", she thought, "Must be the wine."

She continued work on the demon's head. But just a few seconds later she could see the little demon wag its tail again.

She now gasped & dropped her charcoal.

Clearly not the wine. That tail was moving! She took a long time picking up her charcoal and almost did not dare to look back at her drawing.

When she finally did she saw the demon wag its tail vigorously.

"Sit still so I can finish you" she thought. Then it hit her: "I must be going insane."

She saw the demon come to life. He first blinked his eyes. Then he stretched his limbs, like someone coming out of a deep slumber.

Then, without warning, he simply leapt off the paper & onto the street.

“Oh boy that feels good” he said with a giggle.

He next fluttered his wings and said: “Thanks!”

She was too confused to answer & let out a long “Errrrrrrrr ...”

“Um. Thank you. For bringing me to life & stuff you know.”

“Er. I? Uhh? Me?” she mumbled

“Yes. You. This doesn’t happen every day you know”

“What? err?”

“Well, you know, that we can get out. See the real world.”

“Er. me? I did this?”

“Oh. I see. This your first time?”

“I ... don’t ... what? how? me? really?” she stammered

“I’ll explain. Everything is alive. People have just forgotten how to look at things.”

“You mean every statue on the church?”

“No. A lot more. Ev-e-ry-thing.”

“But how? Am I the only one to see this?”

“Hey. Don’t flatter yourself too much. But yeah, it’s rare. Once every couple thousand years.”

“Why? Why me?”

“Why did you draw me?” said the demon

“To see if you were good or evil. To find pure beauty?”

“See? It’s that simple. Anyone with a pure soul who seeks out true beauty can learn to see the things as they really are. And bring them to life.”

A crowd of people had gathered around them now. They watched this curious girl mumble incoherently at the drawing she’d just finished.

Some were getting a little agitated. There was very little sympathy for the insane in this crowd. The most superstitious were prone to see witchcraft everywhere.

“Gotta go now. Getting a little agitated here. Put me back.” the demon said.

“Ummm ... Put you back? How?”

“You made me beautiful to bring me to life. Make me ugly again.”

For a while she did not understand and then it hit her. She took her charcoal & scribbled furiously all across the drawing. The demon leapt back into the paper. In an instant the spell was gone.

A man tapped on her shoulder. She stood up & faced him.

He said: “What did you do THAT for? Why did you destroy it?! So beautiful. I wanted to buy it”

He was fat & middle-aged. He looked important, wealthy and angry.

When he saw her face was pale like a ghost he changed his tone:  
“Sorry. Are you okay, girl?”

The man liked to be seen as someone who is in charge so he said in a loud voice for everyone to hear:

“Do you need help? I think you are suffering from the afternoon sun. Come here”

He moved her towards the shade.

“Why do you care?”

“I don’t. I just like that drawing. I want to buy it.”

Such bluntness! “Rich fat pig!” she thought.

She said: “It’s not for sale.”

“I’ll give you 50 francs”

50 francs was a lot of money but she insisted:

“I’m sorry. This one is not for sale. I’ll make you another one.”

“Fifty francs buys a lot more from girls like you, you know” he said.

She dared not answer. Then he said in a loud voice for everyone to hear:

“I will pay 50 francs for my portrait then”

“I don’t really do portraits”

“You will do mine for 100 francs!” he said, as much as the crowd as to her.

“50 now & will think about it.”

“Ok. You visit my home after dinner tonight. My servant will pay you. Just go to Place des Vosges and ask around for Louis the textile merchant. People will show you where I live.”

He left her. She was shaken. She was still pale white when I arrived at Notre-Dame & saw her a little later.

“You look terrible” I said

“I ... I ... incredible ... I ... where to start?”

“You’re mumbling. I’ll get you some food. Then you will explain.”

With a little food in her belly she seems to pick up spirits.

“It’s crazy. I made 50 francs today. For one painting.”

“But you promised ME your best!” I said. I was annoyed. Such a cheap girl!

“No. No. here is yours”

She showed me a painting of a demon.

“You still didn’t keep your promise. You made TWO paintings!”

“No. No. Someone made an err ... how do you call it? When someone gives you money for work to do later?”

“A commission. Wow.” I whistled.

“Yeah. 100 francs. 50 today. 50 tomorrow. Insane, no?”

“Wow. Look at this! Your drawing is amazing. I bet that devil could leap right off the page.” I said

She looked at me with her eyes wide open & said:

“When did you arrive today? What did you see?”

“It’s ok” I reassured her.

“You. You saw it too? What exactly?”

“I saw the scene you and your demon friend made.”

“So you know? You knew all along? About ... about ...” & then she whispered

“These living things?”

“Oh yeah, sure”, I chuckled trying to make it seem like less of a deal than it was.

“Yeah. I saw that cute demon do his little dance & sing”

“And this is normal for you?”

“Sure. Seen it before. Can’t completely explain it. I just saw it.” Boy was I faking it there!

“No one else saw?”

“Positive. But ... “

“What you are doing is dangerous. Not in a place like this. Leave Paris. Come with me.”

“Why? It’s so much money. 100 francs!”

“That’s just money. You nearly found pure beauty. You won’t learn anything from drawing that fat fuck!”

“Leave Paris? Where to?”

“Flanders. That’s where I am from. They call it the Venice of the North. You will learn from the best masters.”

I saw doubt in her eyes so I added:

“You can come with me & learn about true beauty. Or you can stay & draw the fat fuck. I don’t care. I’ll wait for you here tomorrow morning until eight”

# 4. On The Road

Next morning I waited in front of Notre-Dame. I was eager for Jolie to join me. What I'd said about not caring was no longer true.

On my travels I'd met many girls. What I had learned was there were two types of people: those who gave & those who took. Jolie was the kind who gives.

I'd come to see a girl full of energy & life. She had a clear purpose and pursued it relentlessly. Her love for life was contagious

& I felt she could make me a better man.

I went to market to buy some provisions for our 5-day trek to Amiens. Bread. Cheese. Wine. Sausage. All the good things from this wonderful country. I bought a freshly slaughtered chicken to make the chicken broth she so loved.

When she finally arrived, just before eight, I was a little disappointed she'd already bought her own food for the road. Whatever happened to gallantry?

When she saw me she said hi then burst out laughing:

“Don't tell me you bought all this crap for me!”

“Ummm. I. Er. Yeah. Food for both of us”

“I always travel light”

True. She just had a small pack, a gourd with light wine & a box with her drawing supplies.

“Hit the road? It's not getting earlier” I said trying to hide my embarrassment.

She saw my disappointment & said:

“It's sweet. Thanks. Very gallant and all. But I can take care of myself, ok?”

With that she lit. She headed for the city gates. She was surefooted & fast, darting forward among the crowd. I could barely keep up. My heavy pack didn't help of course. Five minutes in and I already felt like a total fool.

At the city gates I told her:

“Look. My old legs can't keep up with you like this. You lead. I'll follow. Will you wait for me from time to time?”

She smiled at me: “Sure”.

Then she winked and said: “Old Man”

Jolie turned out to be an excellent pathfinder but a terrible cook. She mostly just survived on dried fruit & bread. How one could live like this without savouring the joys of good food & wine was beyond me.

What she did have an insatiable appetite for was drawing. Each time she stopped to wait for me I found her sitting cross-legged in her usual drawing pose.

She'd let out a “Man. You are slow” with a tone of fake mockery. Most times I'd ignore her & ask:

“Drawing again? Getting any better?”

I knew the answer to that question of course. She was learning so quickly in those days.

She'd mostly draw birds, flowers, trees & pretty much anything she thought beautiful. I vividly remember the butterfly she drew on the second day of our roadtrip. She was all excited about that one.

I saw her working on the butterfly's wings & asked: “Is this one coming alive?”

“This is a good one. It might. Just be patient.”

I ate some cheese while I waited for her to finish. A few minutes later the butterfly leapt off the paper & sat on the edge of box with drawing supplies.

She said: “See. They only come to life when the drawing is just right.”

“Can you make anything come to life?”

“No. Some things are impossible”

“Like?”

“Yesterday, the most beautiful swallow. Just didn’t work.”

“Why is that you think?”

“I don’t know why. I just feel when something’s going to come alive or not.”

“Feel?”

“Yeah. When I draw something I can feel if it’s sad inside. If it is it won’t come to life. It’s like ...” she paused

“What?”

“It’s like some things are dead inside.”

“Dead? But what about that first demon? That thing was alive?”

“You don’t understand. Wait. Let me show you.”

She walked over to my pack & started rummaging through it.

“Hey! That’s my stuff!”

“Where’s the demon drawing?”

I got up & helped her find it.

“Sit back and watch. I’ve learned something new”

With a few nearly imperceptible strokes she brought the demon back to life

The demon said: “Whoa. Good to be back Jolie. Thanks. Who’s the sidekick?”

“He’s a good friend. He can see you too. You can trust him. He is experienced in these things”

That was stretching the truth a little bit. I did have a couple of years on her & had seen some strange things but this. Well ...

“You can” I said, a little perplexed at our collective hallucination and then I asked:

“Why do you speak and some others won’t?”

“Well, I’m her first. I’m a kind of guardian. I speak because I need to protect her. You know. Duty and all that”

“Protect her from what?”

“From herself. Her quest for pure beauty can be dangerous. It’s easy to lose your mind.”

“Or be accused of witchcraft” I added

“Thanks for all the protecting guys. But I think I can handle this” she said

“I learned how to summon you. I know how to put you back. I know how to lock you in. I’m quite in control. Thanks!”

“Lock it?” I asked

“Yeah. I just add an imperfection to the drawing. Only I know how to fix it.”

“That’s what she just did to bring me back.” the demon said.

“And there’s no danger in all of this?” I asked the demon

“I’m not allowed to tell” he said.

“HEY! I never asked for this skill. I just want to find true beauty.”

He said: “I’m sorry. It’s kind of a package I’m afraid.”

“Is there anything I’m not allowed to draw?” Jolie asked.

“You will know. Now you already feel if something is dead or alive. Soon you will also learn to see the true nature of things. Good and evil.”

“Then maybe you should only draw beautiful & kind creatures” I suggested.

The demon said to Jolie: “Your sidekick is naive but yeah. Good idea.”

And then to me: “The lady has to decide. This is not your quest.”

Finally to Jolie: “You can put me back now. You will be fine.”

Jolie locked the demon back into her drawing & got ready to start moving again. I had seen her change so much over the last few days. She was getting used to this magic business. I was not.

Three days later, when we approached Amiens she had mastered her skills to perfection. She had surrounded herself with a collection of hand-drawn creatures she could bring to life at will.

Before we entered the city I took her aside and said:

“Will you promise me not to draw these living things inside the city walls?”

# 5. Amiens

We arrived in Amiens near evening. I was looking forward to a bath & a shave after a whole week on the road!

As always Jolie arrived first. I think this time she may have had one hour on me. There was just no keeping up with her. But I knew where to find her. The Cathedral of course.

I worked my way through the crowds but soon I noticed something was wrong. A big crowd was clogging the streets and alleys leading up to Cathedral square

“Maybe there’s an execution today?” I thought. But then I heard hushed whispers of witchcraft & black magic. I saw people crossing themselves and running away from the Cathedral.

“No! She didn’t? No! Oh God!” I thought. Something was very very wrong.

When I finally caught eye the commotion on the square my worst fears were confirmed.

I saw Jolie on the steps of the Cathedral. She was gesticulating as if possessed. She was chasing something. Something inhuman. Something that defies description.

I'm going to try to describe as best as I can the horrors I saw that day in Amiens, but forgive me if my memory fails me.

The whole place was in turmoil. Jolie was chasing the animals she had been drawing all week long on our road trip. But these were no longer innocent creatures.

Some kind of black magic had turned her lovely birds into flying monsters with long black fangs. All her beloved creatures had become evil creatures that seemed to have crawled straight of our worst nightmares.

But the really terrifying thing was that I was not the only one to see them now. Everyone in the square saw. Some became catatonic. Others were screaming. Many were crying. Most were crossing themselves. The most pious had thrown themselves to the ground in prostration.

“God save us!”

Truly terrifying were the noises these creatures made. Shrieking. Growling. Inhuman sounds resonating from a place beyond reality.

All of the lovely animals had turned into grotesque monsters.

There was a sulphuric smell in the air of rotten eggs. As if hell had opened right under Amiens Cathedral. People were covering their mouths to fight the stench.

In all the tumult and screaming and people running around it was hard to tell exactly what was going on. It was chaos like a battlefield.

What I saw was that the creatures were attacking the Church. Jolie was frantically trying to stop them but she was powerless.

Then the crowd caught on. I heard a man scream:

“They’re attacking the church!”

I could see fear in Jolie’s eyes now. She watched the throbbing mad crowd. Almost catatonic. No emotion on her face.

Jolie just stood there. As if possessed. In rigor. Catatonic. Her eyes empty. That joyous smile gone from her face.

I don’t know how long it took, but I eventually made my way through the crowd to her. I shook her & asked:

“What happened? What did you do?”

She didn’t answer. I slapped her hard in the face. This seemed to wake her because she started to fight back. She was about to bite me hard when she recognised me.

“Oh. You!” and then she started crying:

“ONE. I. I. I just drew ONE. One little statue from that Church”

“And???”

“It. It. Oh God. I felt it was evil but I drew it anyway. I was so tired. Sorry. So. So. Sorry”

She started to sob uncontrollably now.

“God. It was so fast. It stole my bag with drawings. And then. Oh God. No!”

“And? What?”

“It climbed up the tower. It then brought all of my drawings to life.”

I looked up & she was right. I could see a scary demon sitting all the way up in the tower, directing the other creatures.

I said “He’s assembling an army. To attack the church.”

“Are you ok?” I asked

“For now. Yes. But they’re going to kill me.”

“Us! We’re going to be burned at the stake. Witches. That’s what we are!”

I could no longer suppress my anger and slapped her again in the face.

“Damnit Jolie. I told you. No drawing in the city!”

She looked at me hurt but she didn’t fight back. She said:

“Yeah. Fuck me. Now what?!”

I saw the crowd was gaining on us. They were surrounding us. And I could hear people shout “witchcraft”. There was blood in their eyes.

“Angels. You need to draw angels” it was the most random thing that came to my mind.

“Fight evil with good. Worth a try.” she said

She was getting really good now. Very fast. She drew an angel very quickly. She seemed to skip the details she deemed not important enough.

Soon enough a glorious angel came to life. It wanted to say something to Jolie but then it stopped and looked around. It seemed perplexed. Taking in all the turmoil around it.

The next moment I flinched. I’m not sure it is possible but what I saw on the angel’s face was pure anger. Very unlike an angel

“No. Not this one too” I thought, afraid It’d become evil too.

It let out a deep rumbling ear-deafening roar. Then leapt up high in the sky. All the way up to the top of the tower.

A blast of pure white light bathed everything. The angel was standing atop Amiens cathedral The stood in majestic silence. The crowd started to weep. As if paralysed. Even the guardians were in trance now.

The angels were silent as if they could not talk.

They were going round blessing people now.

One angel put his hand on her head. Another one did the same for the traveler. Right in the middle of the square. Just like everyone they’d knelt down. The angels gestured to stand up.

It told them to leave Amiens. The angel then knelt down in a gesture of prayer as if saying everyone should do the same.

Thus started the day of prayer. The whole city of Amiens stopped. Kneeled and prayed to the angel.

“Ummm ... Are we not supposed to pray?”

“I don’t think so”

“Whatever, I don’t intend to stick around until they wake up”

“Yeah. Let’s go”

“Rumour was spreading. People were moving towards the square” we were moving away. Curiosity what the commotion was all about.

I was on edge. We needed to get out of there fast. And I was most anxious about question “Would they remember us? Would they follow us?”