

HUGUENOT
Garden

DOUGLAS M. JONES III



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Friends and Enemies

The King's soldiers raced their heavy horses to the top of the hill. The group slowed for a moment and then stopped. Finally they could see the city. The soldiers stretched their necks and let their heavy arms rest by their sides. The commander spit into some grass and tried to wipe the dirt from his forehead. He smiled sharply at the city. After a moment, he slapped his horse, started down the hill, and led his soldiers quickly toward the city to do their damage.



A gentle sea-breeze cooled the faces of the twin sisters as they worked steadily in their gardens. They each wore thin, laced bonnets, as was common to little girls of long ago. The sun gently warmed their heads.

“Renée, watch out!” shouted Albret, pointing at her sister’s neck.

“What? What?” cried Renée.

“A . . . a . . . a . . . bee!” squealed Albret, as she ran away in circles, almost tripping over the long thick folds of her dress.

“Oh, Albret, Mother said we shouldn’t be afraid of bees. They just want to taste our flowers,” said Renée with a trembling voice. Finally, she too gave way and ran squealing from the bee.

The twins met up on the other side of the yard, tumbling over each other in their silliness and giggling uncontrollably. The twins used to cry hysterically when a lone bee, or even a confused fly, had so rudely intruded upon their world.

When they stopped giggling, they immediately looked for their mother—Madame Madelaine Martineau (martin-OWE)—who was watching them out of the corner of her eye as she worked in the cooking area. She was shaking her head slowly, trying to hide her smile.

Crunch. Crunch. Crunch. The girls strained their ears toward the sound coming from around the corner of the house. *Crunch. Crunch. Crunch.* They looked at each other with wide eyes, jumped up and ran toward the sound that they recognized all too well.

“Shoo, shoo,” they commanded as they ran toward the crunching. “No, no, no, no, Bouclé.”

Bouclé (boo-CLAY)—or Curly—was their small lamb that had quickly invaded the girls’ vegetable garden upon seeing it left unattended by its guardians.

“Get away, you sly one,” said Albret, as she picked him up, leaning back as far as she could with

his legs dangling above the ground as she carried him to his rope.

“These are our vegetables to tend,” she said softly into Bouclé’s ear.

Renée and Albret each had their own small garden plots, located on the sunny back side of the house. Last year they visited their aunt and uncle’s vineyard outside the city and learned to love working with the ground and tending fruits, flowers, and vegetables. Seeing this, their father—Monsieur Paul Martineau—cleared two areas for them and started them in their own special gardens. In their first season, the twins grew onions, turnips, and peas, with each plot completely surrounded by a colorful wall of orange and yellow poppies.

This year, their Uncle Philippe (fil-EEP), the grape farmer and winemaker, brought the girls several small grapevines and taught them how to care for them. The twins were delighted, and when they prayed for their gardens with their mother, they gave special thanks for their new vines. The sisters were learning that tending a garden takes great time and care.

When they finished tying up Bouclé, Mother stepped outside, wiping her hands on the apron that hung over her beautifully round middle; she was soon to have a baby.

“Girls, I want you to go to the market with your brother and pick up more bread flour for tonight.”

“Yes, Mamá,” the twins said excitedly.

“May we walk through the fish market on the way back?” asked Renée.

“Yes, if you hurry,” she smiled. The girls always loved the busy market with all its loud people and strange fish smells.

They moved quickly through the house on their way to the street in front. As they passed through, they each patted baby Guillaume (gee-YOME) on his head as he sat playing on the floor with some wooden toys. Like most children of this time, Guillaume, or “Gee Gee” as the children called him, wore a long, tan-colored robe with buttons all the way down the front.

“Dooooeeeh!” he shouted, pointing at them, as they walked by. For some unknown reason, he always made this sound when he was pleased with something. And, while shouting it, he would point firmly, frown, and then smile at whatever pleased him. When he didn’t like something or was scared, he would hold up both hands and say, “Hot!” even if the thing wasn’t hot at all. He used the same word—“hot”—to describe everything that he thought was bad, whether food, loud animals, or spankings.

The twins passed through the front doorway, then turned and pushed the thick front door closed behind them.

“Hurry along,” said Abraham, the eldest child in their family of five children, soon to be six. After Abraham in age was Mary, a good student and flute player, then Renée and Albret together, and finally Guillaume, the toddler.

Abraham was fifteen years old and usually spent this time of the day training with his father in the family’s fabric shop. He had short, straight, dark hair and high, suntanned cheekbones that made for a strong-looking face. Each twin gave him one hand, Abraham handed them empty flour buckets, and they all started off through the streets of their city, La Rochelle (la ro-SHELL).

Even then, La Rochelle was an old and graceful city, sitting at the end of a long bay on the coast of the country, France. The city was almost completely surrounded by tall, thick walls which, for a long time, protected the people in the city from all their enemies. From the sky, the fortress walls made the city look like a big star with many points. On the outside, the city was surrounded on one side by wide and low salt marshes and on the other side by delicious grape vineyards. Where the city touched the ocean, several stout, grey castle towers silently overlooked the city and the harbor like old, wise giants. For years, La Rochelle was home to thousands of Huguenots (HEW-ga-nots)—French Christians—like the Martineaus.

“Why did Mother send us with you?” Albret asked Abraham.

“Well, maybe she wants you to learn how to run errands,” Abraham said.

“Maybe when we’re older, but now we’re still too small to be out here alone,” said Renée as the three made their way through the narrow, crowded streets.

“Oh, I told Mother you were old enough to go out on your own,” teased Abraham. The girls looked at each other with big worried eyes. Then Abraham squeezed their hands and smiled. The buckets the girls were carrying seemed to be getting heavier. Turning down one last narrow street, the children passed more houses and shops all pressed up against one another.

“Abraham, why do you think that stars . . .” started Albret, but her question was cut off by a loud noise coming up the narrow road. It sounded almost like a giant wave; some people were shouting. Just as Abraham and the twins turned around to find out

what was happening, Renée was pushed to the ground by something big and brown flashing before her eyes. Albret felt the edge of a kick from something black, as the girls flew in different directions. Their buckets flew in different directions. Abraham frantically tried to pull them out of the way. Then it passed. The girls sat in the mud and grime along the side of the road, Renée on her knees and Albret on her bottom, looking confused. As they looked down the road, they saw eight or nine big horses racing down the road, carrying soldiers in armor.

“Those are . . . the King’s soldiers,” said Abraham in an angry tone, as he got up and helped his sisters.

“I cut my hand on something,” said Renée quietly, staring at it. Albret looked at it too.

“You’re not bleeding. You’ll be all right,” said Abraham, but his attention was still on the soldiers. The children tried to wipe off as much mud as possible, but their clothes were soaked through in some parts.

“Why are they here?” asked Renée.

“I don’t want to know,” said Abraham.

“Why not?” asked Albret.

“They only bring bad news when they come,” said Abraham, sighing deeply. “Let’s just finish our errand and get home.” The city bells rang slowly in the distance, almost moaning for the people to come and hear.

When they finally pulled open the door of the bakery and sniffed all sorts of wonderful bakery smells, everyone cheerfully greeted them and then, noticing the mud, asked the children what had happened. As Abraham explained and the baker filled the buckets with flour, the twins opened the door just a bit and

peered out where they could see the soldiers gathered in the public square with people all around them.

“What are they saying?” Renée whispered to Albret.

“I can’t hear,” she answered.

“Abraham,” asked Albret, “may we stand outside, just in front of the shop?”

“Yes. Go ahead, but just in front of the shop,” he said.

The girls held hands tightly, stepped outside quickly, and strained to hear what the soldiers were announcing. The one soldier speaking was dressed more colorfully than the others and spoke with an accent from another part of France. The girls stood listening for a long time. Finally, Abraham’s voice came from behind them.

“So, what are they announcing?” he asked.

“Listen,” said Renée. “You tell us. I don’t understand . . . something about . . . soldiers in houses.”

Abraham, with a very worried look, started walking closer to the crowd. Renée and Albret quickly followed, holding onto the buckets now full with flour. For a while they all stood at the edge of the crowd of people listening carefully. The twins were too short to see anything or hear much at all. Sometimes they heard the people around them happily cheering the speaker’s words.

Then suddenly, Abraham kneeled down, pulled the sisters together, and said, “We must go quickly. This is very bad. I must tell Father and Mother.”

“What did they say?” asked Renée.

“No time to talk now. We must hurry. I’ll tell you later.”

They ran all the way home, through the narrow streets and mud, holding tightly on to one another and the flour buckets.

“Mamá, Mamá,” shouted the girls as they neared the front door of their house.

“Mamá,” said Abraham, breathing heavily from the run.

“What is it? What are you so excited about? Why are you covered with mud?” Mother asked quickly.

The twins, with tired legs, plopped down on the floor by the door. Abraham, trying to control his breathing, started, “The King . . . is sending . . . soldiers . . . to . . . live . . . in our . . . houses . . . and . . . we must . . . take . . . care . . . of . . . them.”

“Oh, is that all?” said Mother waving it off with her hand. “We have heard such threats before, and even if the King does this, God’s people have faced much worse. We fear God, not man.”

“Hot, hot, hot,” shouted baby Guillaume, staring at Abraham.

“No hot, hot, hot. Everything is fine,” said Mother, stroking baby Guillaume’s head. “Children, start preparing for dinner. Father will be home soon. I’ve made some special pastries for after dinner.”

The children busied themselves with their preparations for the evening meal. Soon, they were all greeted with Father’s familiar, “Good evening, family.”

That night, Father asked Mary to give thanks for the meal. She stood up, brushing her long, brown hair behind her, and thanked the Lord for their meal, parents, house, and the King. For a short while, everyone was quiet, for the children did not speak at the table unless they were spoken to, but they all wanted to

hear more about what the King's soldiers had said. Knowing this, Father turned to Abraham and asked him a question.

"How did your errands for your mother go today, Abraham?"

"Very well, Father . . . The King's soldiers knocked us down in the road while we were going for flour, but we were not hurt."

Renée remembered the cut on her hand.

"Father," said Abraham, "did you see the King's soldiers? Many people were gathered in the public square, and the herald read the King's declaration, and the King is going to station his soldiers in our homes, and . . ."

Not looking up, Father said, "Yes, Abraham, I was there listening. I heard it all."

"Why is the King going to make soldiers live with us?" asked Albret quietly.

Father thought for a moment, rubbing his eyes. "That is a very good question, Albret." He reached for the heavy family Bible, which sat on its own stool beside his chair. He turned the soft pages carefully until he came to a certain passage and began to read.

He read the history of a certain King, who made a statue out of gold and ordered his people to worship it. This King's soldiers and princes and judges and counselors all gathered to honor and worship the golden statue. The King sent out his herald to declare the King's command. The children were listening, wide-eyed. The King's herald declared that, "Who-soever does not bow down and worship the golden statue shall be thrown into the midst of a fiery furnace to die."

Renée sat listening to Father read and thought of the herald she had seen that day. Albret wondered why people would sing to a statue. Guillaume squirmed in Mother's lap.

Father read of three young men from God's people, who refused to worship the statue, since they knew that the true God forbids such worship. When the King discovered that the three young men would not worship his statue, he threatened them to their faces.

Reading more slowly now, Father stressed the words of the young men as they answered the King, saying, "The God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O King. But if not . . ." continued Father, looking at all the big eyes staring at him, "if not, may you know, O King, that we will not worship the golden image which you have set up."

"Father, were they burned?" asked Renée.

"Listen to what happens," and he read on, describing how the evil King threw God's young men into the furnace and how God preserved them from harm and death.

When Father finished, there was a rush of questions and a long discussion.

"Remember, children, what we've learned before. After Adam's sin, God promised that there would be a long war between the people of the woman and the people of the serpent—between the people of God and the people of the enemy. There are only two kinds of people in the world—friends of God and enemies of God. Some enemies are very kind and decent on the outside, though they oppose God in their hearts. So, too, some people pretend on the outside to be friends

of God, but on the inside they do not love God's commandments. Only God knows, and we pray that the Lord will change enemies into friends and that He will clean our hearts and make us faithful for His own glory."

Father continued, "So, what you heard from the herald today was just one part of the long attempt by the enemies of God to fight against the friends of God. And our attitude must be the same as those young men we read of in Daniel. If our French King threatens us with death, we will fear God and not man. And even if God should increase our persecution, we will not bow down to the idols that the French King seeks to force on us."

The children were silent. You could almost hear their minds running.

After the meal, they cleaned up and gathered around the fireplace for what Renée and Albret thought was the best part of the day. For a while the family held hands and sang psalms in front of the fire. The children answered their catechism questions they had practiced with Mother earlier in the day. Sometimes Father would tell them amusing or strange stories about faraway lands and animals. After a while, Mary played her flute softly like a gentle sea breeze, and Mother handed out her special pastries. Soon, the fire died down and it was time for everyone to go to sleep.

Upstairs, Mother, Father, and baby Guillaume slept in one room, and the others slept in the other room. Renée and Albret shared a bed in the corner. Before they fell asleep, they always talked about what had happened that day. This time they had plenty to

discuss, and they whispered, back and forth, ever so quietly, so as not to disturb the others. They whispered about the soldiers and the mud and enemies and friends, and how they had forgotten to go by the fish market. They sometimes asked each other catechism questions, or planned their gardens, or told animal stories of their own. Soon, their eyes grew very heavy and tired, and they fell asleep in the middle of a whisper.