

## Chapter 1

Dark clouds hung heavily over Paris, once the most celebrated city in Europe. The gray, stone buildings smelled dank, as faint sunlight brought a thin layer of warmth to the early morning. News of Napoleon's setbacks in Russia trickled into the city from the wounded and bedraggled soldiers who had deserted their unit weeks before, when defeat was obvious.

It was the end of a common dream for Napoleon, his soldiers, and the people of France. The *Grande Armee* of 600,000 soldiers had marched and fought its way into the heart of Russia. It arrived at Borodino low on ammunition, supplies, and morale.

Jean Marc Moreau had been a foot soldier in the *Grande Armee* since the Italian Campaign, fourteen years before. He was tall, powerfully built, and ruggedly handsome. Due to his courage and skill, he rose steadily through the ranks and was now a sergeant leading a platoon on this pivotal march to Moscow.

He was on the side of resting the troops but when the order came down from above, he prepared as best he could. As he walked about his soldiers, he observed that many were sick, exhausted and half starved by the endless marches that had outstripped the supply convoy. When he gave the order to march onward, they rose to their feet listlessly. He urged them to ration what little water remained, and when they exhausted their supply, he encouraged them to drink horse urine to quench their thirst. But soon that supply was exhausted as most of the horses died of starvation. He bolstered their morale not by his words but by sharing their hardships. He was assigned to the lead unit, and as they approached Borodino, he observed the Russian army heavily entrenched on the edge of the village. He halted the column and sent word back to the commander. As he awaited his orders, he observed the open farmland that led to the village, broken up by streams and ravines, and beyond thousands of soldiers in fortified bunkers, and redoubts, and hundreds of cannons all aimed at the open field. He surmised that they would attempt a flanking movement and avoid a direct assault, which would be suicidal.

When the order to assault was not given that day, he told his men to rest and sent a few soldiers into the night to fetch water from the streams. It was two days before the order to assault was received.

"What fool would order a direct assault?" Jean Marc asked when he received the order from his commander.

"Napoleon himself," the commander responded. "Your unit is being held in reserve until the tide turns in our favor."

Jean Marc watched the slow progress of the assault over the open ground. "The Russians outnumber us but we have superior leadership," he mumbled to himself. He looked for Napoleon, usually in front of his army exhorting and inspiring his men. He was nowhere to be found.

The field of battle looked chaotic, but the assault was gaining ground on the right flank; yard by yard they kept moving forward. But the rest of the assault was stalled. "Look to the middle of the field," he ordered his men. "The large redoubt is stalling our movement. The army is bogged down. That is where the reserves will be sent. Observe the terrain... take advantage of the ravines and the slopes for cover... move from cover the cover... don't get pinned down," he said as he looked around and saw fear on the faces of the soldiers. "Prepare yourselves; the time is near!"

At around noon, a massive shelling of the redoubt by the French cannons started and lasted for over an hour. "Be ready," Jean Marc hollered to his men, over the loud booms of the guns. As soon as the cannon fire ceased, the reserve units, except for the cavalry, joined in the charge. Jean

Marc directed his men from one ravine to the next, alternating his units to provide cover for the unit on the move. It was a fearful three hundred yards, and as they approached the redoubt, the cannon fire from the Russian side fell like hail and ripped into the oncoming army. The smoke was so thick they could hardly make out the redoubt. The murderous battle went on for hours, until the French troops were forced to retreat, over the fallen bodies of their comrades.

Jean Marc pointed to the right flank and saw that the French troops had penetrated the village and were making a turning movement to assault the redoubt from the side. At the same time, the French cavalry charge began. "Check your weapons," Jean Marc ordered. "We will follow the cavalry into the fight."

The horses started at a slow pace, then to a brisk trot, and when the redoubt was close, they charged toward the enemy line. "Follow me," Jean Marc ordered, "and follow the cavalry into the fight." At the head of his platoon, he led the charge into the heart of the enemy force. After a second great battle, the Russian line broke and retreated to the village.

The French line was halted, to the dismay of Jean Marc. "We can finish this battle now... we must pursue the bastards, they are on the run," Jean Marc hollered, waiting for the order which never came.

During the lull, Jean Marc trained his field glasses on the ground around him, and what he saw sickened him. On the once tranquil pasture, the dead and wounded bodies formed a braided rug covering the ground completely. "Thousands are dead, and thousands more are wounded," he grieved. "Luc, care for the wounded," he ordered his medic. He watched as the young medic moved from body to body, applying bandages and tourniquets. "They will all be dead by morning," he murmured to himself.

The field of battle had become a field of the dead and the dying, and it beckoned him. Seeing the open eyes on a young soldier's face, he felt for a pulse, then closed his eyes with his fingers. A few of the wounded gasped for air. "Luc, come here quickly," he called.

"I can't sergeant; there are too many calling for help here."

"Go help the medic," a voice from behind him said. "I will console the dying."

He recognized the voice of the chaplain and without looking back, he rose and walked toward Luc and beyond. "My God, how many brave soldiers have died here today?" he asked himself as his eyes scanned the field toward the village of Borodino. There was scarcely an area not covered by a corpse. He was hardened to the casualties of war, but today he was horrified by the slaughter. Wounded men screamed out in pain begging for help — or for an end to their suffering. As he walked over the bodies toward the village, his eyes swelled with tears. He ignored Luc's pleas to return and seemed oblivious to the dangers ahead. He entered the village and saw bodies, twisted and dismembered, littering the muddy roads — the carnage running throughout the village — the wounded pleading for help. The extreme horror suddenly unbearable, he sat in the blood-soaked mud beside the mangled bodies of Russian soldiers, their faces contorted and twisted in the throes of death, and he did not stir until Luc arrived, urging him to return to his unit.

He stared into the distance and said weakly, "The Russians have abandoned the village and are retreating to Moscow... that is where we will face our final bloodbath."

The next day, without burying the dead and leaving thousands of wounded soldiers to die, Napoleon pursued and drove his army toward its objective, which he believed would be the final battle of the war. When at dusk on the seventh day, the army arrived within sight of the cupolas and the onion domes of Moscow, Jean Marc turned to his men and said, "Napoleon has brought

us to Moscow, and it is our destiny to capture the city and bring glory to France.” Exhausted, most of them fell asleep not grasping the significance of his words.

Before dawn the next morning, as his soldiers awakened, Jean Marc rallied his men, “Moscow will be ours soon, and our reward is close at hand.” The stakes were high, and he knew they had to be inspired to dig deep within their soul to summons the strength to fight what he surmised would be a bloody battle. He knew they would follow him in the assault, but he felt that a hint of booty would provide added incentive.

The battle at Borodino, a few days earlier, had been the bloodiest of the war with the slaughter of eighty thousand men; but due to Sergeant Moreau’s skillful leadership, few in his unit suffered casualties. “The Russians lost thousands of soldiers in the last battle. But do not be foolish enough to think that they are beaten. They will fight fanatically tomorrow for they are fighting for their homeland. Follow my orders, and I will get you through the day!” Jean Marc said as they marched toward Moscow.

Sergeant Moreau was good at bolstering the morale of his men, but the gods seemed to conspire against him. The morning’s foul weather and pelting rain only aggravated what the soldiers had seen a few days ago when they walked into the charred, ruined village of Borodino with its gruesome piles of dead and dying, causing even the most hardened soldiers to turn aside and vomit.

But the horror of Borodino was not to be repeated in Moscow, during the night the Russians retreated but not to a second line of defense. The army retreated beyond Moscow leaving behind arsonists and saboteurs who set fires and planted explosives throughout the city. Independent fires were started simultaneously, and soon a great fire engulfed the city and raged unchecked for three days. The French soldiers watched from a distance as the heavy smoke rose toward the heavens, their booty, safety and glory evaporating like an early morning mist. Jean Marc was disappointed, not for the loss of booty but for the victory that had been snatched from their grasp.

The *Grande Armee* no longer had the resources to pursue the Russians. Its soldiers were sick, exhausted and starved. The supply lines were broken. The city that was to be their salvation was now their deathtrap.

As the French army entered the city, the soldiers took their revenge on the few inhabitants who remained and the few buildings not destroyed. But Jean Marc ordered his men to maintain discipline and not partake in ravaging the city for they would need whatever strength remained for the long and arduous retreat out of Russia.

“We fought bravely ... let us not dishonor France,” he cautioned his men. Most heeded his command.

Napoleon remained confident that Alexander would still seek peace, but as the emperor waited in Moscow, the czar reinforced his troops and created two new armies. As the Russian numbers increased, the French numbers dwindled. The czar waited patiently for the emperor to start his retreat. Napoleon’s generals, realizing that the army lacked the resources to stay in Russia, urged the emperor to begin the withdrawal. Napoleon vacillated for over a month, wasting precious time, then, when hope was lost, ordered the hazardous trek back to France.

Jean Marc ordered his men to travel lightly. “The Cossack cavalry will harass us constantly, and we must move swiftly if we are to survive.”

They soon outdistanced the overburdened units but were ordered by their commander to slow their pace. As the retreat stalled, the harsh winter swept in early and brought bitter cold. Many

of the exhausted soldiers simply gave up, fell asleep, and died in the snow. The mobile Cossacks harried the survivors, and the infantry pursued them relentlessly. The constant assaults further debilitated the French soldiers, as many were killed, wounded, captured or deserted.

It was this news that trickled into Paris in the winter of 1812.

## Chapter 2

When she opened her eyes, she saw only darkness. It was too early to awaken the children and too late to return to slumber. She remained still, lying on the floor in a bed of straw. Her children lay next to her, breathing softly. The room was crowded, but it was all she could afford. She was thirty years old now with three children and a missing husband. She stared into the dark, trying not to think of what frightened her most — how to provide for her children. The dreams of the farm, the vineyard, and the lovemaking were gone, not likely to be replaced. Many of the young men in Paris had been killed, crippled, or emotionally scarred by the wars of the past decade — Napoleon had seen to that. She was penniless, with little food in the cupboard and nowhere to turn. Her prayers brought some solace, but little else.

As the day's light crept into the room, she was reminded of the squalor of the neighborhood, the rank air, and the danger to her children. Her hand moved gently to her side, groping for the feel of her husband, finding only emptiness. She sat up and gazed at her children huddled for warmth. All three were sleeping, and their calm breathing consoled her. At eight, Jean was the oldest. He would grow up tall and strong like his father. Next to him was Marc, who was seven. He was precocious and his intelligence would keep him out of harm's way. And there was Angeline, a year younger than Marc and blessed with fine features. She would become a beautiful young woman. Or maybe these were the thoughts of all young mothers, that their children would grow up to be strong, intelligent, and attractive.

People in the neighborhood were starting to move outside to stretch and relieve themselves. She could hear them talking, lighting smoking pipes, and shuffling about. Hundreds of shacks had sprung up almost overnight as the families of soldiers were left without funds. The shanties were so close they seemed to support each other. The streets were rutted and muddy. No sanitation measures had been taken and disease was rampant. It was Sunday morning, and Madeleine had saved a few *sous*. She would take the children to mass at Notre Dame followed by a *petit déjeuner*. It brought hope to her soul and would take them away from the drudgery of this hovel, at least, for a few hours.

"Come on children, it is time for church, and we must not be late!" she urged. When they arrived, she stopped and admired the glorious façade of the cathedral, decorated with statuary, its towers rising towards the heavens, its imposing doors open to its parishioners, with the chant of the choir drifting to her ears. The Gothic cathedral had been completed in the fourteenth century and was the pride of Paris.

As the young family crossed the threshold from the brightness of the sunlight to the darkness of the candlelit cathedral, the children hesitated. Madeleine, sensing their fear, held the hand of Angeline and Marc, while Jean led them down the aisle. As Madeleine's eyes adjusted to the darkness, she realized that Jean had gone beyond the section of the commoners and had entered the area reserved for the elite of Paris. Embarrassment fell upon her as she contrasted the haute couture of the bourgeoisie with the rags of her children.

"*Ici, ici ...*" the kindly voice of an elderly lady enjoined as she gestured for them to come into her pew.

"*Merci, Madame,*" Jean responded as if the pew had been reserved for them. From this vantage point, Madeleine was able to observe the splendor of the high mass and the opulence of the altar. The children, too small to see above the adults, seemed content with the warmth of their surroundings until the booming voice of the preacher broke their seclusion. Marc and Angeline slid toward their mother while Jean slid toward his newfound friend. As the preacher droned on,

in a fire and brimstone manner, not about faith, hope, or charity but about the sinful ways of the congregation while intimating how redemption could be found through generous tithing. How Madeleine wanted to be back with the commoners, who rarely tithed for they had no money. But now, in the company of the bourgeoisie that surrounded her, it would be embarrassing if she did not. When the tithing basket arrived, the kind lady took money from her purse and motioned to the collector that it was for those in her pew.

*Love of God and love of neighbor, that is the message of Jesus...not tithing*, Madeleine thought. The kind stranger had done more in that instant to reflect the message of love than the preacher had in his drawn out and tiresome sermon.

As mass ended, the lady handed Madeleine a note, which she put in her pocket, and with her head held high she left the church. Madeleine and her family followed closely, her eyes catching the beauty of the spectacular stained-glass rose window to the rear of the church, the sunlight bringing it to the pinnacle of its beauty.

Outside many formed a queue to compliment the Monsignor on his wonderful sermon. Madeleine caught his eye, and it was cold and lustful. Shivering, she moved the children along rapidly until they reached le Petit Pont crossing the River Seine. And as they reached la Rue St Jacques, her thoughts turned to food as they passed the *fromageries*, the *creperies*, and the open markets. She bought a baguette, a slice of ham, and a bit of cheese. The family settled in at Place St Michel, overlooking the river, for a picnic and play.

As she watched the children having fun, her mind wandered to better times, growing up in southern France. Her father, with the help of a rich relative in Paris, had purchased land in the area and was cultivating a vineyard. She and her brothers learned the trade by working in the fields in spring and summer and the winery and cellars in the fall and winter. When time permitted, they attended parochial school, where they learned to read and write. The family enjoyed good fortune, and their wines soon became a local favorite. She enjoyed every aspect of winemaking, and her father never limited her curiosity.

“Mama, mama, we have made friends!” Jean shouted as he ran by, interrupting her daydream. She looked at the dozen or so children, all in rags, briefly oblivious to the hardships of the times. Her mind wandered back to her younger days. The French Revolution had had little impact on their wine producing, but Napoleon’s rise to power did. One by one, the men of the area were conscripted into Napoleon’s army, until very few remained to harvest the vineyards, produce the wine, and tend to the cellars. The larger vineyards had the capacity to pay higher wages to the available laborers, but the smaller vineyards did not. Their vines withered, production lapsed, and the wine soured.

“Mama, mama come play with us,” Angeline’s sweet voice called. She rose from the comfort of the shade to join in the excitement of her children and their newfound friends.

The day came to end too quickly, and as the family trekked back to their shabby quarters, the fears of tomorrow came rushing back to Madeleine. She hoped to get home before nightfall, for the streets were most dangerous at night. She needed to find work, but even if she did, who would care for the children? The preacher had earlier spoken of damnation, but that did not scare her, starvation did.

There was nothing left for them to eat but broth and a few stale biscuits. They would hunger for days unless she caught a pigeon, squirrel, or rat for the pot. She had seen women steal in the open market, but when caught, they were imprisoned, leaving their children to fend for themselves. And, others resorted to prostitution, also with bad consequences.

As they arrived at the slum where they lived, fires had been lit, which cast an eerie red

glow. Many were huddled around the fire for warmth and none paid attention to them as they walked by. *They are consumed by their own feelings of suffering and hopelessness*, she thought, just as the church bells of Notre Dame tolled in the distance, bringing no solace to the wretched crowd. “Madeleine,” a voice called from behind. As she turned, she noticed it was Henri, her neighbor, and he seemed agitated.

“What is it?”

“I have a message for you, Madeleine!”

“Is it about my husband?”

“No. It is from Notre Dame.”

“Notre Dame?” she asked.

“Yes. It is from the Monsignor. He said for you to meet with him after mass on Sunday.

“Why me?”

“I don’t know, Madeleine,” he said as he turned to walk away, then stopped suddenly. “Oh, and he said to be sure to bring the children.”

### Chapter 3

The French Revolution had dealt a severe blow to the Catholic Church, but when Napoleon ascended to power, he restored much of the Church's authority and prestige, not for religious reasons but to maintain the widespread support of the peasantry. Once securely ensconced as the Emperor of France, he dealt more resolutely with the Church and the papacy. When Pope Pius VII refused to implement one of his directives, Napoleon ordered his troops to capture the papal palace and arrest the pope. Thus, the clergy silently rejoiced at Napoleon's defeat in Russia and covertly supported the alliance that had been formed by England, Russia, and Prussia in its holy war to rid Europe of Napoleon.

The clergy in Paris became particularly assertive, feeling its newfound strength. The Monsignor, following suit, became fixated with both his status and Madeleine Moreau.

Father Martin, a recently ordained priest, had been assigned to the parish of Notre Dame as an assistant to the Monsignor. As Martin engaged in his morning prayers, the Monsignor burst into his room. "The woman I mentioned to you the other day, Madeleine ... Madeleine Moreau, she is a witch!"

"But, Monsignor, she is but a poor woman struggling to provide for her children. It is our responsibility to help the poor, not to condemn them," he said tepidly.

"She haunts me, and if she influences me in that manner, imagine the spell she casts on weaker men."

"What would you have me do Monsignor?"

"I will let you know Sunday. I have requested that she join me following the Sunday services. I shall order that she place her children in the orphanage, where they will be properly cared for by the nuns."

"And if she refuses?"

"Then, I will inform her that I have witnesses who will testify to her odd behavior."

"The witnesses will testify before whom, Monsignor?"

"Before a Dominican Inquisitor, of course," he said in an annoyed tone of voice. "And, in the next few days, research for me, from all of these books you have been reading, the proper procedure to present an accusation to the Grand Inquisition," he said, as he abruptly left the room.

The young priest, shocked by this behavior, wondered anxiously what would happen to Madeleine Moreau. *Her husband is away and cannot help. She is determined, but there is no work...and the children are precocious, but too young to be of assistance,* Father Martin thought.

He stood up from behind his desk, went to the bookshelf, and took down a text on the Inquisition. What he discovered was helpful. The popes had appointed inquisitors since the thirteenth century. The Inquisition was established to preserve orthodox religious beliefs from the attacks of heretics. Unfortunately, many inquisitors, through intimidation and torture, used their position to limit religious beliefs, intellectual freedom, and political liberty. All the Inquisitorial Courts in Europe were abolished by the start of the nineteenth century, but Rome still had the capacity to convene a tribunal within the Papal States.

He had never seen the Monsignor in this frenzied state of mind before — obsessed and vindictive. He hoped that by delaying the appointment of an inquisitor, he could dissuade him from his course of action. However, he knew better than to take issue with his superior while he was in a foul mood. He returned to his research, intent on making the process as long and tedious as possible, time would be his ally.

He soon learned that the history of the Inquisition was replete with examples of religious

intolerance and the excessive use of force in matters of heresy. The entire process lay in the hands of a single inquisitor — from investigation and accusation to conviction. The actions were directed not only at heretics but also at the practitioners of magic and witchcraft. Punishment ranged from public humiliation, mutilation, imprisonment, and death.

The procedure was initiated by a person of good reputation reporting the heresy to Rome without having to support the accusation with evidence. The pope would then appoint an inquisitor to ascertain whether heresy had occurred. Eyewitness testimony was taken and, if none, the inquisitor would receive partial evidence, which could lead to a confession. The inquisitor was allowed to use torture to extract a confession. A confession made during or after torture had to be freely repeated the next day without torture or would be considered invalid.

Father Martin rose early the next day curious about why witchcraft was considered heretical. He entered the library and went to the area reserved for the clergy. Many books, banned by the Church, were available only to the clergy. Martin found them enlightening, but he often wondered why the Church was so restrictive. Within a few minutes, he had gathered a number of books on the subject and had settled in to do his research.

The Third Lateran Council of 1179, which was viewed by many as the start of the Inquisition, produced several canons condemning heretics. In 1199 Pope Innocent III issued a decretal, which constituted a major step in the formalization of the prosecution of heretics. The goods of heretics were confiscated, and their children castigated for the sins of their parents.

With the spread of heresy in Europe, the severity of the laws against heretics increased. During the thirteenth century, the inquisitorial procedure became the standard form of prosecution throughout Europe. The popes believed they were responsible to protect Christians from heretics and, in the year 1220, they founded the Dominican Order to teach doctrine and combat heresy. They were well trained and reported directly to the Papacy. A few years later, Pope Gregory IX directed the Dominicans to broaden the scope of the Inquisition to suppress the spread of heresy, which he linked to Satan.

The Council of Tarragon of 1242 instituted directives that shaped the authority and procedure of the Inquisition. The mission of the inquisitors was to save the souls of heretics while protecting the orthodoxy of the Church. The inquisitors determined whether the heresy occurred and whether it was punishable. They soon broadened their purview to include the practitioners of magic and witchcraft.

Throughout the following centuries, thousands of women were accused of sexual relations with the devil, subsequently inflaming an uncontrollable sexual desire in men. Women's sexuality and eroticism seduced both men and women away from God. The basis for this rationale was founded in Augustine's philosophy.

*Saint Augustine was lauded as a Father of the Church, a distinction of the highest order,* Father Martin mused. He reasoned that men and women were created in the image of God, and they possessed a rational soul. But this soul had two elements, a masculine element capable of contemplating God, which he referred to as *rationality*, and a feminine element oriented toward bodily life, which he referred to as *sexuality*. And, as sexuality became viewed as demonic, a new concept of woman evolved — the medieval witch.

Father Martin pushed the books to the far side of the reading table. *My God,* he thought, *Madeleine Moreau is in real danger.*