

*The Better Angel Of The Revolution*

A Podcast Script by Kevin Valbonesi

Hi, I'm Kevin Valbonesi from the podcast "Voices From The Ages." On my show, we immerse you in stories from the pages of history to give you an idea of what those times were like for the people living in them. Today I'm going to drop you into the midst of the French Revolution to meet a femme fatale named Charlotte Corday.

Charlotte sat alone in her study, watching the rain slide down her window, a copy of Plutarch's "Lives" in her hands. She was beautiful, with fair, porcelain skin, and long, curly locks of dark hair. She was at peace.

There was a knock at the door. A young man stepped in, tears streaming down his face. Charlotte motioned for the young man to sit and then offered him a handkerchief.

Charlotte learned that many of the Girondins -a moderate Republican Party she supported- were put to death by the Jacobins. Charlotte did not even flinch. She set her book aside and rose. She stared out the window for a moment.

"Marat?" She asked. The young man nodded. "Would you be a dear and ready a carriage for me?"

"Where to, my lady?"

"Paris."

Charlotte arrived in Paris early in the month of July after a long carriage ride. She had spent many hours thinking of what she would do when she finally saw Marat. France had been brought to her knees by the extreme policies of this man, and to allow him to live would only doom France to further indignities.

Upon arrival, Charlotte took up residence in the Hotel de Providence. She sat with her quill pen in hand and wrote a letter to the French people. What she was about to do needed justification, she needed the people to see that sacrifice was necessary in

the name of their country. Most importantly, she wanted people to know that she had acted alone. She was not a Girondin assassin, just a woman who loved her country.

Over the next two days, she gathered information on Marat's whereabouts. She went to the theaters and the salons, eavesdropping on conversations. She learned that Marat was to make a public appearance on Bastille Day. There could be no better time to kill him.

Charlotte was on her way back to the hotel when she overheard a few aristocrats discussing Bastille Day. One of them complained that Marat was no longer attending, taking leave due to illness. In a moment, Charlotte's hopes were dashed. She wandered off, frustrated.

Charlotte put herself back together. She would kill Marat, his death, public or not, would send shockwaves through France. To prove her commitment, Charlotte bought a knife, a fine blade; sharp, but small enough to hide on her person.

Resourceful as she was, she learned where Marat was taking up residence. Word was he was confined to a tub, soaking in medicinal waters to sooth his irritated skin; a snake, she thought.

She tried to enter, claiming to have information, but she was turned away. So she waited. Eventually, the guards finished their shifts and handed their rifles over to their comrades.

Charlotte took notice of a delivery approaching the door, and she did not waste the opportunity. She pulled her bonnet over her head and clutched a letter she had written earlier, insisting that she be the one to give Marat the names of traitors.

Hearing the word "traitors," someone asked that she be let in. Charlotte entered the house and was lead into the bath chamber. She finally laid her eyes on Marat.

The man was withered, his skin putrid. He did not even look up at her, keeping himself busy scribbling a letter furiously.

“What of traitors, Madame?” She handed him a list, members of a conspiracy against the government. Marat read the list and placed it down. “I shall have them guillotined within the week.”

Charlotte smiled, and then she drew her knife. In a flash, she plunged the blade into Marat’s chest. He flailed like a fish out of water, splashing Charlotte with a mixture of blood and water until finally, he breathed his last.

Charlotte would not get to savor her victory. She was captured right after the murder and was convicted of murder beyond a shadow of a doubt.

On July 17th, she was led up to the guillotine. She knew what she had done, and this gave her peace. Faced with the guillotine, she did not flinch. She was locked in and took her last look out at the people; she could only hope they would profit by her sacrifice. Then, the blade fell...