

## Chapter One

### Marc and Jean-Claude

Marc glared at his squadron leader. Though he had always liked him before, he positively loathed him at this moment.

“Do you know what you are saying?”

His staccato inflections turned the question into an accusation.

“Jean-Claude is alive, and we are not going to do anything to save him.”

The major eyed him directly. He was a tall, vigorous man whose ruddy complexion gave him the appearance of excellent health. He did not permit himself to glare back or to give any other sign of his displeasure. There was in him as usual an understated self-command and a hardened demeanor. No more than five years older than he, Yvan Pelletier had been through it all. His three closest friends, who had been among the squadron’s best pilots, had recently died in air battles over Berlin, Stuttgart, and Dresden. Only a week earlier, his girlfriend—a feisty nurse assigned to a London hospital—had been killed during Nazi strafing raids.

Marc understood all these things. He was also aware that Pelletier refused to pity himself and that he refused to pity others.

When he answered him, Pelletier spoke matter-of-fact words that set before him once again the dilemma facing them.

“There is nothing we can do to save Jean-Claude. A commando raid against the Germans who captured him might have worked, if they hadn’t moved him to a new prison. We don’t know where the Germans have brought him. Believe me. We have done all that we can. There is no way to free Jean-Claude.”

His dispassionate words did not keep Simone from urging him to see their problem differently.

“Yvan, this is not like you. You have never before refused to help a pilot in your squadron. There has to be something more that we can do.”

On this January afternoon in 1942, they were sitting in a booth within a shadowy corner of the pub that stood a half mile away from Marc’s and Pelletier’s air base in Lincolnshire. On any other day, Major Pelletier would have perceived Marc and Simone as one of the many romantic couples in the room. Marc Roussillon was tall and dark-haired, and his big-boned physique and manly grace suggested that he was a well-trained athlete. Marc’s brown eyes met him directly and drew him into their steely regard. Pelletier well understood that an encounter with this twenty-two-year-old pilot involved quickened awareness and subtle calculations. If he were to ask him to describe his scanning impression of the place

where they were meeting, Marc would have offered an accurate location of entrances and exits, of the eight persons seated nearest those exits, and of the man and woman who were dining at the booth next to theirs.

If their meeting were less fraught with tension, Pelletier would have—even in this dark period of his life—allowed himself to admire more than an instant the poise and decorum of Simone, Marc’s wife. She also was twenty-two. She was, besides being very young, one of the two or three loveliest women he had ever seen. Her blond beauty and delicate bones lent an ethereal expression to her manner. But her warm spirit and her confident inflections told him that she was very much a woman of this world.

They had shared a torte filled with zucchini, eggplant, and tomatoes, as well as a few rounds of Glenmorangie scotch, pungent even with its caramel and vanilla textures. Called by Marc away from her father’s home in Sweden, Simone had made a special effort to join him here in England for this meeting with his squadron leader. Because Pelletier had always shown a soft spot for her, Marc hoped that her presence would draw Pelletier into a new plan for saving Jean-Claude.

In the distance, smoky vapors rose and coiled about the crowded bar and about the wider spaces of the pub. The tangy fragrances of food—beef stew, cider apple chicken, trout braised in Riesling wine, and lemon sponge cakes—floated languorously into the vaporous atmosphere. French and British pilots in blue Air Force

trousers and brown leather jackets were drinking whiskey, rum, and ale at the bar. Some of them were sitting at tables or in booths while eating lunch and making contact with old friends or new acquaintances. They were talking about the latest rugby matches or about hunting trips they had taken in South Africa or about the skiing they had enjoyed in the Swiss Alps before the war. Most of these men were partnered with pretty girls in colorful dresses who lived in the town and who liked the company of combat pilots. Caught within the cacophony of voices, Vera Lynn, Frank Sinatra, Betty Grable, and Edith Piaf were singing romantic ballads on jukebox recordings.

Marc and Simone perceived all of this reality of people and fragrances and sounds. But they were aware of it as merely an oblique reference point that reminded them where they were and why they had come here. The reality that was far more pressing belonged to themselves as they continued to negotiate with Pelletier about the fate of Jean-Claude.

When he heard Simone's words that urged him toward a workable escape plan for Jean-Claude, Pelletier reflected upon them for a moment. Then, while his cold brown eyes observed her with the courtly respect that he subtly anchored to his otherwise stoical manner, he told her once again the harsh truth of things.

"I know how much Jean-Claude means to you and to Marc. But, as valuable as he has proven himself to be, he is only one man among all the men and women who are fighting the Nazis. He is as

important as you and I, but no more than that. What has happened to him may happen to us. We knew that from the time we entered this thing. Our squadron won't help win this war if we send our pilots and commandos into a rescue attempt that is bound to fail."

Marc refused to accept these words.

"We've got to help him, Yvan," he said. "We can't let Jean-Claude die."

Pelletier answered him quickly. This time his voice carried a trace of bitterness. His curt intonations suggested that these would be his final words about the matter.

"Forget about Jean-Claude. When it's our turn to die, no pilots in our squadron will be thinking about us. They'll be thinking about staying alive and stealing whatever pleasures they can from a world that loves nobody."

Just as swiftly as he had spoken, he swallowed the remaining drops of his scotch, threw his napkin next to the lunch that he had barely eaten, and rose—tall, brown-haired and formidable—to his full height. Then, bowing to Simone and brusquely patting Marc on his shoulder, he hurried away.

Silence overtook Marc and Simone now, an austere presence that lingered as if watching them. Not even the raucous and hearty sounds around them dispelled this stillness that held them in its bond.

It was a few minutes before Simone chose words that meant to encourage Marc.

“We did our best,” she said. “Maybe, if he knew Jean-Claude as well as we know him, Yvan might have been willing to make a new rescue plan.”

Marc answered her with new determination.

“I’m not giving up. We’ve got to help Jean-Claude.”

“How?” Simone asked. “How can you make the impossible happen?”

“I’ll find a way. I’ll think of something.”

To arrive at the truth of Simone and him, Marc felt, a person needed first of all to know about their relationship with Jean-Claude Jourdan.

He and Jean-Claude became friends six years earlier at Le Rosey, a private school in Switzerland. There, on a manorial estate in Rolle and—during the winter—in the alpine ski resort of Gstaad, they excelled in rigorous academic programs as well as in a wide array of extracurricular activities. They boxed, fenced, played soccer and swam as members of the same teams. Tall, dark-haired and vigorous, they might have passed as each other’s fraternal twin. When they were at their homes in France or when they visited their homes in Argentina or England, they played polo. In the summer following their junior year, they studied architecture in a program for gifted students at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. Even at sixteen, both of them knew they wanted to design and build modern cities and comfortable homes for the needy as well as for the well-

to-do and the middle class. In their senior year at Le Rosey, they spent a week in the laboratory of a renowned bacteriologist. Under his guidance, they experimented with white mice to fathom the nature of a cancerous tumor.

During their winter and summer recess from school, they kayaked in Finland, trekked across the High Atlas Mountains in Morocco, and snorkeled in the Galápagos Islands.

One time, after breaking his leg in a ski accident on the rugged slopes of Gstaad, Marc struggled through a long and painful recovery. Even with the assistance of excellent physio-therapists, he found his convalescence a bitter experience. At first, he proved to be a difficult patient. Deprived of the agility which had always defined him, he spent too many hours brooding about his predicament. His sudden inability to participate in the world as a self-reliant individual made him feel inadequate and even destitute. Because his parents were absent from his life much of the time, busy with their careers in classical music, he had learned to cultivate a strong-minded independence. Thoughts of his mother's warm regard of him cheered him in those hours when, sometimes weary of the rules and the competition at his school, he looked to his life at home for solace. But his memory of his father's coolness toward him left him uneasy. The memory made him sad. He loved him no less. But his emerging belief that his father might not love him intensified his need to rely on his own powers to make his way in the world.

Now, because the ski accident had taken his freedom from

him, his suppressed need of his father rose up to goad his anger and his uncertainty. It was Jean-Claude who brought him back to the familiar self that he trusted. For two months, while he was bound to a wheel-chair and then to crutches, Jean-Claude guided him smoothly through the long halls of their school and into the spacious classrooms. On every one of those days, he joined him in his physiotherapy. There, with the surgeon's assistant, he accompanied him in the careful exercises which accelerated his recovery. He viewed Jean-Claude's presence as a validation not only of his loyalty, but also of their unbreakable bond to each other.

During these hard weeks, he would from time to time speak to Jean-Claude about his father, who was the renowned violinist Henri Roussillon. To remark upon the tense under-currents of his relationship with the father that he loved so much was an altogether new experience for him. Had he been in the best health, he would have refrained from any words that might cast a pall upon the image of his father. But his awareness that Jean-Claude enjoyed a successful relationship with his father persuaded him to open himself to this best of his many friends. That Jean-Claude was an only child might have explained Monsieur Jourdan's wise blend of sensible rules, consistent discipline, and genuine love. Above all, there was love, which Monsieur Jourdan conveyed through his open-hearted praise of Jean-Claude and through his generous gifts.

Yet, even though he himself was not an only child, Henri had—for the first ten years of his boyhood—never failed to express



his love for him openly. The love he offered him had been equal to his paternal love of his daughter Nicole. But then, and for no reason that he could fathom, his father grew distant and even cold. If he continued to involve himself in his son's life—in all the hills and valleys he journeyed through and in all the milestones and disappointments—their relationship had become nonetheless a simulated camaraderie. At that time, he did not know that, because of his father's infidelity, his father and his mother had grown estranged from each other. At sixteen years old, however, he still needed his father's encouragement.

“I love my father,” he told Jean-Claude on a rain-swept Sunday afternoon when, injured and brooding, he felt helpless and imprisoned in his convalescent bed. “But I no longer feel close to him. Even when he is there beside me, I feel he has turned away from me, and I don't know why.”

That time Jean-Claude fell silent, uncertain perhaps how to advise his friend about so personal a matter. But Marc's seeking his counsel nudged him forward to words which were far wiser than he imagined.

“Your father still loves you,” he said. “He's involved in so many of your activities. He attends your swim meets and your soccer games, he sails and horse-rides and hunts with you, he teaches you the violin and the piano, and he takes the time to converse with you in several languages so that you can feel comfortable with all of them.”

To his friend's words, Marc listened very carefully.

"Everything you say is true," he told him after a moment's reflection. "But something is missing. There should be something expressed openly. There should be affection offered unconditionally."

Jean-Claude, more confident now and just as serious, counseled his friend further.

"You mustn't dwell in these thoughts so much," he said. "They'll rob you of your realistic view of things. You're seeing mystery and indifference and coldness when you have no cause. Your father is probably one of the many fathers who do not care to express their love in any emotional or sentimental way."

He wanted to believe his friend's words. Ordinarily, the assurance and the intelligence behind those words might have convinced him that this uneasy subject of his father and himself required no further words. But the thought of Monsieur Jourdan's warm-hearted fellowship with Jean-Claude compelled him to say more.

"Your father is not embarrassed to let others know that you are very important to his happiness."

"Sometimes, I think he overdoes it," Jean-Claude said. "Believe me, there are days when I wish I had a father like yours. In his own way, whether he is joining you in one of your activities or corresponding with you from some far-away city on his concert tours, your father shows his affection. It exists as an unspoken pact

between the two of you.”

He allowed himself the hint of a smile. That day, when he had felt so miserable, Jean-Claude’s comradely words pleased him, even if they did not entirely convince him.

Noticing his new-found ease, Jean-Claude drew him into a light-hearted thought.

“Hey, buddy, let’s trade fathers.”

The surprise of the words roused him to genuine laughter. Jean-Claude laughed, too. Their laughter was as hearty as it was invigorating. For the rest of that week and for all the other hours when he recalled this dialogue between them, he realized all over again and even more profoundly that Jean-Claude was the essential presence in his life. He was a brother. He was a mentor. He was the one person on whom he could count.

That their friendship pleased Jean-Claude’s parents seemed like a further validation of believing they were brothers in spirit, if not by blood. Their having been born on the same day, though in different countries, persuaded even the Jourdans to regard their figurative brotherhood as a twinship. Their privileged backgrounds, their interest in architecture, and their aptitude for languages and science, as well as soccer, kayaking, and polo, made their friendship seem inevitable.

One time, while he was a guest of the Jourdans at their *estancia* in Buenos Aires (which was located about fifty miles from the Roussillons’ ranch there), Jean-Claude gave him a prized

Criollo. He had noticed how smoothly Marc rode him in a polo tournament in which, as team-mates of young and hardy gauchos, they proved their mettle. All during his visit to the Jourdans, Marc had spent time riding and caring for the Criollo. More than once, when he was in the stables feeding him or cleaning his stall or brushing his coat, he had commented on the sturdy and compact body of the horse. He had praised its strong, short limbs; the ampleness of its bones below the knees; and its exceptionally sound feet. Even before coming to Buenos Aires, he knew the history of the Criollos. Descended from Andalusian and Barb horses, they had adapted to the harsh environment of the pampas. There, the extremes of climate—intensely dry, hot summers and severe winters—proved intolerable to all but the most vigorous specimens. Even the coats they had developed were a form of self-preservation. Dun-colored with dark points and often with a dorsal stripe, the coats protected them from their enemies by rendering them inconspicuous against the dry pasturelands they inhabited.

“This Criollo knows how to survive,” Marc said. “He knows what to do when he is in a tough situation.”

Perhaps it was the capacity of the horse to endure hardship and danger that stirred his love of the animal. Possibly it was his easy compatibility with the horse’s movements or his awareness of how openly the Criollo returned his affection that inspired his respect and his devotion. Whatever it was, it drew to itself Jean-Claude’s attention and persuaded him to give the horse to him.

“You share an affinity with him,” Jean-Claude told him. “You belong together.”

That day, as a youth of sixteen, he beamed with a rare happiness that he had not known since his early boyhood. Quickly, he embraced Jean-Claude as the brother he believed he would have for a life-time.

Simone grew very fond of Jean-Claude, too, not as though he might become her lover, but as though she might become his sister. She had given her heart completely to Marc, but she perceived nonetheless that Jean-Claude was a very attractive young man. Tall, dark-haired, and rugged, he wore his handsomeness with a casual understatement that made every-thing he did appear extemporaneous and natural. More than a few times, Jean-Claude and his latest girlfriend joined Simone and him on romantic excursions. They canoed on the Seine, enjoyed a boating holiday in Brittany, and vacationed on the French Riviera, in the Azores and in Tahiti.

By the time Simone, Jean-Claude, and he had completed their studies at Le Rosey and their first two years at the École des Beaux-Arts (and in Simone’s case at the Sorbonne, as well), war was already flaring its violence across Europe. When the Nazis invaded France, the three of them offered their services to the Resistance—Simone in league with her father in Sweden and he and Jean-Claude as pilots in the Free French Air Force who were flying with the British. In these first months of the war, they made danger their friend and overcame their enemies.

Then something happened that changed everything for the three of them.

In September of 1941, Jean-Claude's Avro Lancaster was shot down during a successful British and French com-mando raid against the Nazis who had overtaken Norway. For a time, the Free French Air Force thought they had lost Jean-Claude Jourdan.

His comrades saw his plane shot down in Oslo and believed that he had died. But the Germans had dragged his wounded body from the plane before it exploded. He had broken both legs, had dislocated his shoulder, and had sustained a concussion. Traumatized by the shock of the crash and by his injuries, he would have died if the Germans had left him unattended. But they considered him an important source of information. They were also aware that his skill as a pilot had made him a hero in his country. More than a hero, he had become a symbol of French fighting power. Now he was their prisoner, and they were going to break him. They would turn him into an image-writ-large of the militant French who were being defeated by the Nazis.

Calling upon the services of their best surgeons, the Germans repaired his body and brought him back to vigorous health. Then, they brought him into one of their military prisons in Oslo and began to torture him. They wanted him to divulge information about the military plans of the Allies and about the identity of the French, Swedes, and Danes working for various Resistance movements.

During their first interrogations, they hung him from his

wrists with heavy weights tied to his legs. Even his firm shoulders and his strong biceps could not subdue the agonizing pain that made him imagine that his arms were being pulled from their sockets. Yet he told his enemies nothing.

Within that same week, the Nazis bound his naked body with chains. Then, as though they were making a tourniquet, they pressed the chains deep into his flesh. Not the jagged cuts or the purple welts that rose from his skin or the red blood spurting out of him could break his resolve.

Nor did the Nazis break his spirit when, after stripping him naked and hanging him from his feet, they beat his body with barbed wire sticks. That time, he passed out of consciousness. When he awoke, he was in his cell, cold and shivering and alone in the clammy pool his own blood had made.

For weeks sometimes, because he had fallen ill with dysentery or pneumonia or random infections and because they feared he might die before he had given them the information they needed, his captors left him alone. An aged physician, a well-trained nurse, and nutritious meals would rouse him to good health once more. Then, the Nazis would proceed to a new cycle of interrogation and of torture.

They forced him to run in circles while he was carrying heavy logs. On those days three big-boned guards would kick him while he was running and disarrange his careful balance. The logs would fall away from him and the guards would go on kicking him.

Then, because he had not cried out an appeal to them or screamed in pain, they would wait for him to gather the logs once more and heave them onto his shoulders. Only then would they leave the room to which they had brought him from his cell early that frigid morning. A young recruit, stationed at the threshold of the door, would stand watch over him and laugh if a log fell away from him and caused him to lose not only his balance, but also the pile of logs he had struggled to keep in place.

On other days, the Nazis burned his arms and his legs with lighted cigarettes, with the fire of wooden matches, and with hot candle wax. Again, they hung his nakedness from heavy wooden beams that spanned the width of the ceiling. This time they hung him from his ankles and beat his penis and his testicles with a heavy rope. The pain ripping through his groin threw him out of consciousness.

In spite of all these ways of torture, Jean-Claude was determined not to die. Tight-lipped and grimacing even in those hours when the Nazis left him alone in his cell, he knew he would stay alive as long as he withheld the information they were seeking. Only because the Nazis were determined to break him had they allowed him to go on living. He knew that they would go on alternating their savage use of him with periods of medical care and recovery. But there would come a day when they would realize that he would never betray his country or the countries of any of the Allies. On that day they would kill him.



At this time, about four months after the Germans captured him, the British discovered that Jean-Claude was alive. One of their double agents in Oslo (a Norwegian nurse) had been called to assist the German physician on an evening when he was caring for the injured French pilot who was being tortured in the building which the Nazis used as a military prison. Within hours after tending Jean-Claude, she transmitted a coded message to the British officer who was commanding the new Allied headquarters at South Vågsøy, about three hundred fifty miles from Oslo.

When he learned what had happened to his friend, Marc urged his squadron leader, Yvan Pelletier, to organize a raid into Oslo, so that their teams of pilots and commandos could rescue Jean-Claude. The British and the French were, in fact, willing to organize the raid. But no sooner did they learn of Jean-Claude's being alive, than the Nazis hurried him away to a location which remained unknown to the Allies.

For days, Marc brooded about the capture of his friend and soul-mate. A murderous rage was rising within him—a rage so fierce that he began to believe that he would run mad. Aware of his muted fury, Pelletier quickly assigned him to dangerous sorties. A pilot that angry will, he believed, make an unbeatable killer even in the most formidable battles.

Flying with the hunter squadron Alsace and alongside the City of Glasgow squadron, he logged sixty or seventy new hours in direct combat while at the controls of Spitfires and Hawker

Tempests. The dogfights and fighter sweeps and strafing raids over German ports and cities fed his wrath without appeasing it. That Jean-Claude was going to die at the hands of the Nazis was a bitter fact. That he could not help him continued to torment Marc. He felt that he was abandoning this best of all friends who had always rallied to his side during the most complicated episodes and in the darkest periods of his life.

Then, about a month after he learned that Jean-Claude was still alive, there came to him a plan so dangerous that it might have given him pause, had his need to save Jean- Claude not become an obsession. He would be drawing Simone, the wife whom he passionately loved, into the danger. He saw no other way. He saw, in fact, that Simone was absolutely essential to the success of his plan. The plan needed her because it involved a man over whom she had tremendous influence. That this man was in love with her made him indispensable. His name was Gerhard Hauptmann.