

Girls Who Grew Up to Change the World



Joan of Arc

(Born 1412-1432)



Joan grew up in the middle of The Hundred Years War, a long and bloody fight between the English and the French for the control of France.



Her family owned a farm, where Joan worked tending animals and sewing clothes.



At thirteen, while playing in the garden, Joan claimed to have visions. She said she saw saints who urged her to rise up, drive the English out of France, and crown Charles VII king in a place called Reims.

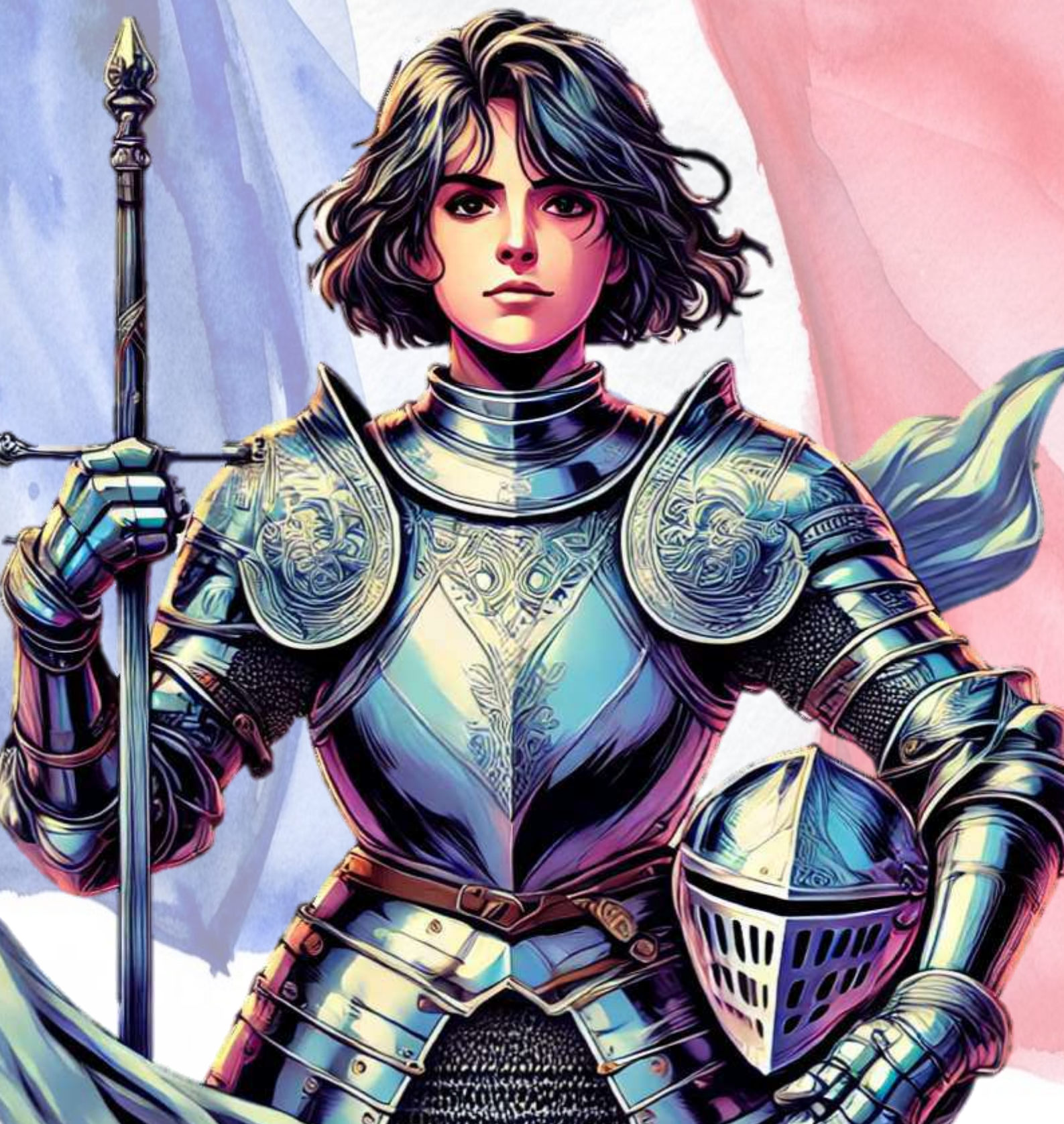


Joan travelled with a family friend to a town called Vaucouleurs and presented herself to a garrison commanders who was a supporter of Charles.



‘I’ve been having visions,’ she explained. ‘And I think I should lead the French army.’

‘Of course you do,’ the commander said, laughing.



But the people of the town supported her. They put pressure on the commander until he had no choice but to send Joan, along with an armed escort, to see the king. To keep from attracting attention, she cut her hair off and wore men's clothes.



Charles was intrigued by the peasant girl who arrived at his court, asking to lead the French army into battle.

No one knows why, but he gave her control of some men.



Spirits among the French forces were low. They often lost battles, even if they outnumbered the English fighting against them. This was exactly what was happening at Orleans, a French city that was under heavy attack from the English.



When Joan rode in, everything changed. The people cheered. They raised their swords and gladly charged when she ordered them to attack. The city was saved.



At Joan's insistence, Charles went to Reims and was crowned king.



A year later, Joan was captured. The English paid a huge amount of money for her because they knew how important she was to the French. They burned her at the stake. Some say her heart survived the fire.



On May 16th 1920, Joan was officially made a saint.





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