

Joan and the Bells

Part One: Judgment

CAUCHON
AND CHORUS:

Joan the Maid, you are condemned,
You have done prodigies by witchcraft,
Beyond all temporal power, in men's clothes,
You have led armies and defeated armies,
And counseled heresies. You have heard our judgment.
Let it be entered.

JOAN:

I wore men's clothes and armor
And fought their fight.
God put a sword into my hand.

CHORUS:

She is blaspheming. Silence her.

CAUCHON:

You are mistaken. Satan armed you, child.
The sword was his. Repent, be healed, be saved.
Cast him away, and you will bless our judgment.
Receive God's grace and you will bless the flames,
Let God's grace shine in them and sing in them,
Let them drive out the husk, the dross, the slag,
Let them drive out that antichrist, the mortal world,
Let them refine, cleanse, cauterize,
Let them anneal, let them distill,
Let them make pure. Renounce your visions,
Know them aright. They are not your three saints.
You have confessed that these things are not saints
But Satan and his minions.

JOAN:

I thank the court. Your reverences
Are old and wise, the Church is God's true agent,
And I am perjured.
I was afraid, and was not true to them,
Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret, Saint Michael,
I did them evil,
Here in this room I called them frauds and specters,
But I have asked their pardon,
And must not wrong them more.
Your reverences have sentenced me most justly.
I am still wicked and afraid.
But reverences, I must not wrong them more,
And I will ask their pardon in the fire.

CHORUS:

Defiance! Blasphemy! Brothers, you are too patient.

CAUCHON: She is obdurate. We can do nothing.
Remove her. Pray for her. The trial is closed.
There was no fault in it. God help us now,
But, brothers, who can say we were not fair?
We were most circumspect. The pope absolves us.
The laity consent.

CHORUS: Thus far.
But there must be no bells.

CAUCHON: There will be none.
The Duke of Bedford stilled them.

CHORUS: They are her voices.

CAUCHON: He took their tongues.

CHORUS: Her visions come with them.

CAUCHON: The bells are mute. God help us, brothers,
But who can say we were not fair?

Part Two: Joan in Her Chamber

JOAN:

Saint Margaret, I ask your pardon first,
Because it was you I saw the first of all,
Running to church. Do you remember?
It was fall and cool and morning and beautiful;
I was running up where the path was highest,
Up where the bells came loudest, on the hillside,
In the forest by the spring,
Where I could see our roof and all the roofs,
But this time I was running not to be late,
And did not look.
Do you remember? All at once I saw you,
As plain as anyone, but beautiful and shining,
And I knew you were a saint.
Then I saw you, Saint Michael,
And you, Saint Catherine,
And now I ask your pardon too. I am ashamed,
For I have broken faith with you,
And made you angry,
And that is why you will not come to me.

But then you came, all three,
And Blessed Margaret, you said,
"Joan do you know us?" And I said,
"I do, Saint Margaret,
But I think you must have lost your way.
Not even the abbé comes to Domremy."
Saint Michael, then you said, "Joan,
Are you afraid of us?" And I said, "No, Saint Michael,"
And then, Saint Catherine, you said,
"It is good that you are not,
For you must ride a horse, and be a soldier,
And hold a sword." And I said, "Oh, Saint Catherine,
A soldier?" And you answered,
"If you are not afraid, and keep your word,
And do your very best,
Then you will be a soldier, and ride a horse,
And hold a sword, and crown a king,
And do brave things that will be told forever."
And I said, "Well, then, I will try,
But how can I do all of that?"
And then, Saint Michael, you said,
"You will know how, all by yourself,
And when you need us we will come to you."

Oh, blessed saints, it was the truth.
At Chinon castle you led me to the Dauphin

And made him trust me. At Orleans
Where we had fought all day without advantage,
And had fallen back to garrison as weak as death,
You came and said that we must try once more.
Somehow I made them do it, and we won.
So it was on the Loire,
At Meung, Jargeau, Patay, so many times,
Wherever we were nearly broken,
With fresh reserves against us, banners high,
Mocking at us, our ordnance driven back,
Dust-blind, our force encircled, then you came
In our great need, just as you said,
To give me courage, and the field was ours.
Even when I was taken at Compiègne,
And even here, you came to me each day,
But now I have been untruthful,
And that is why you will not speak to me.
Dear saints, I will do better,
There is only a little time, but I will try,
And then perhaps, you will not be so angry,
And you will come to me.

Part Three: The Square at Rouen

VARIOUS VOICES: They are building the fire too high.
The executioner will not be able to come near,
Once it is lit,
To do the act of mercy.

It is cruel.

CAUCHON (aside): Yes, it is cruel.

OTHER VOICES: It is justice. She is a witch.

She is a heretic relapsed.

She is young and beautiful.
I do not think she is a witch.

She is not afraid. She is very calm.

CAUCHON (aside): Her head is high.

OTHER VOICES: She is a witch. The court condemned her.

Now they will light the fire. It is lit.

The flames are terrible.

Listen! There are bells.
Yes! There are bells. I hear them.

There are no bells. Lord Bedford took their tongues.
Sometimes the bells can bring her visions to her.
That is why he made them mute.

They are not the bells of Rouen.

CAUCHON (aside): No, they are other bells. I heard them once,
When I was very young.

OTHER VOICES: They are other bells.

There are no bells. Lord Bedford stilled them.
She is looking at something up high. What is it?

She is watching the tower.

No, she is looking above it.

Her lips are moving.

She is praying. I cannot make out the words.
What does she say?

CAUCHON (aside): She is saying, "Jesu, Jesu, Jesu."

CHORUS (saints): Come child, come soldier,
The task is finished, finished and settled away,
It is all mended and folded away,
The battle is done with, over and gone,
And washed away with the morning.
You have won and rested. Listen! The bells!
See, you have won, child! Now rise up
In the cool of the morning, run to us,
Run up in the cool hills, run barefoot, feel the wind,
Feel the cool wind, run higher, higher,
Up to the mountaintops, higher!
Jump higher than the world! The bells are louder!
Here child! Faster! See, you are almost home!
Up here, child! Run up to the sky and past it,
Past clouds and moons and comets,
Up child! It is so blue and bright!
You can hardly see! Brighter and brighter!

Come running, riding; now you are riding, child!
Ride forward, faster, faster, higher, higher,
Up to the front, child!
See the battalions align, there are Dunois, LaHire,
In the cool of the morning, Zantrailles and his lancers,
The ground is resilient, quick to the charge,
See the horses, the riders, the ranks,
How they quiver and quicken, their eyes, they are ready,
All of them furious, dangerous, ready,
Spur child! Up to the gallop, apace, hear the war-shout,
The banner, aloft! Let it fly, let it carry them,
'Jesus Maria', they see it, they follow,
Attack child! Into the enemy, at them!
Into the cavalry, up to the cannon, the colors!
The bells are everywhere!
See, the gates open, child, the pennants fall, the captains
kneel!
Ride up, child, up to the battlements, up to the stars,
Ride up in the cool of the morning.

