

## La Robe Verte

'The green dress' she thought 'Why did I wear the green dress?'

Taking the dress from the wardrobe the night before, Isabelle had hung it from the picture rail. She'd hardly slept, seeing the silhouette against the wall and remembering the last time she had worn the velvet frock. Should she wear something more suitable tomorrow? Was it an interview, was it a reprimand or maybe something else? She'd received the orders at Bletchley Park in the afternoon, report to an address in Whitehall at 10.00am the following morning.

Memories of making the dress with her sister Emeline replayed throughout the night. Both so excited at the cast-off pub curtains, using photos in magazines to style the latest fashion. They created puff sleeves with pointed cuffs, a round neck and the ruched middle. "Très chic!" they laughed, reverting to their mother's language. The dress drew a lot of compliments at the American Air Base dance.

Isabelle arrived promptly in Whitehall the next morning. A middle-aged woman, wearing a tweed skirt and brown laced shoes, had shown her into this sparse room.

"Commander Jones will be with you shortly." said the woman, shutting the door.

Isabelle sat on the wooden chair next to the window. 'The green dress was a mistake' she thought again.

She glanced at the red nail polish at the end of her fingertips, doing a dance all of their own, she tried to steady her hands. Spinning the green band on her finger, she remembered his words as he gave her the ring,

"A perfect match to your dress sweetheart. You will have something more beautiful when I return."

The wall clock ticking was the only thing breaking the silence, she'd been waiting almost twenty minutes now. There was activity in the rooms above her, distant doors opening and closing. But nobody came. 'The jinxed green dress' the old feelings started again. Something awful was going to happen. Her palms were clammy, she smoothed down the front of her dress, regaining her composure. Her hazel eyes set with an empty look, not giving away any of her sadness.

The apple coloured curtains, lifted by a gust as the door opened, billowed out and distorted her view.

"Miss Johnson? Miss Isabelle Johnson? I'm Commander Jones of the American Military."

Standing, Isabelle nodded, not trusting her legs to hold her.

"Thank you for coming here today Ma'am. Please sit down Miss, you look so pale."

Isabelle sank to the chair.

“I understand you are carrying out important work to assist in the war effort. I also believe you were, or rather, are engaged to Corporal Swain and have been made aware that he was reported missing in action?”

Isabelle nodded, fighting back the tears.

“You speak fluent French?”

“Yes” she whispered.

“We have received intelligence that Swain may be alive and in hiding. Would you be willing to work undercover to assist us in attempting to locate Corporal Swain?”

Isabelle’s eyes lit up, “Mais oui. L’operation robe verte.”