

Excerpt from Chapter 7 of *Flowers of Languedoc*

(Book 6 in the series)

The pair arrived back at the inn shortly after Philip and he beckoned them over to the table where he was sitting with Morgan, who had already returned from making his own enquiries.

“How did it look?” he asked them impatiently.

“Impressive,” Thomas said. “There are no signs of damage, although I could not see inside for all the windows are shuttered and the doors are locked.”

“So all was well?”

“Fine, apart from the fact that whilst I was inspecting the back of the house Luc ended up in a fight!”

“The man came at me with a sword,” Luc protested. “What was I supposed to do?”

“De Basville did warn me about our neighbours,” Philip admitted, “but I little thought they would be there waiting for you.”

“I don’t believe he was your neighbour, my Lord, for he said I was trespassing upon his land and asked me who I was,” Luc said.

“His land? What did you tell him?”

“That I was acting on behalf of Philip Devalle, the hero of the Rhine.” Philip glanced over at Thomas, who raised his eyes to heaven.

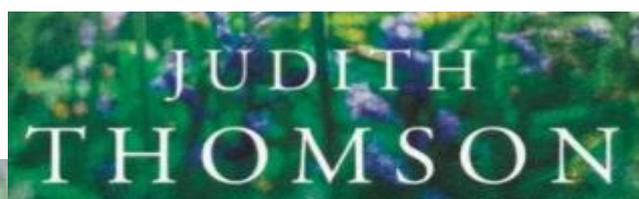
“And that was when he attacked you, when you told him that?”

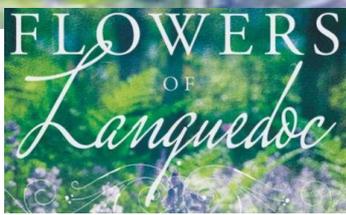
“Yes. I was doing well until Thomas appeared and ordered us to desist. The man ran off when he saw there were two of us.”

“He certainly was doing well,” Thomas admitted, “but I was not sure how running a man through with a sword would fit with your instructions not to annoy the locals!”

Philip was grateful that the dependable Thomas had been on hand to control the situation.

“Who the hell was he to accuse you of trespassing on his land?” he wondered.





“He didn’t say, my Lord, but he was obviously no admirer of yours,” Thomas said.

“Obviously! We will see if he reappears when we ride over there tomorrow, Morgan.”

“Perhaps we should come with you,” Thomas said. “He may not be alone next time.”

Philip looked over at Morgan, who was a pretty fearsome-looking individual to any who did not know him, with his shaggy black hair and swarthy looks. The fact that half of his right ear was missing seemed to add to his menacing appearance and armed, as he usually was, with his trusty knife he was not a person most would challenge lightly. “Oh, I think we’ll cope,” he decided. “Besides, I want you to explore Montpellier tomorrow, Thomas, and use your unerring talent for seeking out the lowest elements of every city! Search the taverns and the streets and discover what is really happening beneath the surface of this ‘respectable and law-abiding’ place.”

Thomas’ past as a thieving urchin of the streets had many times stood Philip in good stead when it was necessary to discover the seamier side of a city’s life. It existed in both London and Paris, and he doubted that Montpellier would prove to be much different, despite de Basville’s claims.

“I’ll go with him,” Luc offered.

“No, you won’t,” Philip said. “You’ll get into far too much trouble. This is something Thomas will be better doing alone. I have another job for you in any case.”

“What job is that?” Luc asked eagerly.

“One that only you out of the four of us could do,” Philip told him.

“There is quite another aspect to Montpellier, one which might pose even more of a problem to me, so I need someone who can observe it from the inside. Tomorrow is Sunday. You are a Catholic and I need you, Luc, to go to church!”

