

Bleed Fleur-de-Lys

A short story by R.M.J.Patry

PAGE ONE (six panels)

<translated from French>

Panel 1: The tip of a fountain pen spreads ink on a sheet of paper.

1 CHARLES (OFF PANEL): "<Long live Montreal...>"

Panel 2: A pair of old eyes squint, causing crow's feet to crack.

2 CHARLES (OFF PANEL): "<Long live Quebec"...>

3 CHARLES (OFF PANEL): <No...>

Panel 3: The fountain pen is held in a wrinkled hand that puts an exclamation mark at the end of the final word on a speech written in cursive. That word is, "*LIBRE!*"

4 CHARLES (OFF PANEL): "<Long live *free* Quebec!>"

Panel 4: An old, thin pair of lips smirk over a double chin.

5 PAULINE (OFF PANEL): <Charles?>

Panel 5: The old eyes and double chin belong to a balding, jowly man in a smoking jacket and silk pajamas, the 18th PRESIDENT OF FRANCE, CHARLES DE GAULLE (70s), who sits at a large dark oak desk, his attention pulled over his shoulder by his wife, PAULINE (70s), who enters his Presidential office.

6 CAPTION: JULY 15th, 1967 - PARIS, FRANCE.

7 PAULINE: <Charles, where are your bags? Our flight to Ottawa leaves in an hour!>

Panel 6: Having stood up from his desk, de Gaulle slides the folded speech into the breast pocket of his smoking jacket as he faces Pauline, who holds her purse while her ASSISTANT (female, 30s) struggles with the First Lady's many bags of luggage.

8 CHARLES: <We're not flying to Ottawa, Pauline.>

9 PAULINE: <How else will we get to the World's Fair?>

PAGE TWO (five panels)

Panel 1: Wide shot of the French Naval Cruiser Colbert C611 sailing across the Atlantic Ocean.

1 VOICE OVER (CHARLES): "<By boat.>"

2 VOICE OVER (PAULINE): "<The Rideau Canal is too small to accommodate a naval cruiser! De plus, The Prime Minister is expecting us at the airport in mere hours. It'll take *days* to sail to Ottawa!>"

3 VOICE OVER (CHARLES): "<I told you, we're not going to Ottawa. The World's Fair is in Montreal, so that's where we're sailing to: the heart of French Canada.>"

Panel 2: Mr. & Mrs. President de Gaulle--he now wearing a grey suit, royal blue tie and navy blue overcoat, and she a woolen shall and a frown of disapproval--stand on the Colbert's deck.

4 PAULINE: <The leaders of the free world contributing to L'Exposition '67 are all meeting in Canada's *capitol* to dine with Prime Minister Pearson before moving on to Montreal for the fair. I'm assuming you don't care about any of that?>

5 CHARLES: <I don't.>

6 PAULINE: <No, of course you don't. You care nothing for civil diplomacy these days--only your selfish dreams of isolationism and bigotry.>

Panel 3: Charles ignites a pipe with a match and Pauline heads for the edge of the panel.

7 PAULINE: <Well, I've already had enough for one day, and there's bound to be more on this trip. I'll be in our quarters.>

8 CHARLES: Pauline--

Panel 4: Charles continues to smoke his pipe while GENERAL ALAIN DE BOISSIEU (early 50s) enters the panel.

9 CHARLES: <Hmf. My dreams are fueled not by bigotry nor isolationism, but by visions of a bright future for the French people of the world.>

10 GENERAL DE BOISSIEU: <No--showing this event will be the third slighting of English-speaking Canadian leaders this year-->

Panel 5: General de Boissieu lights a cigarette as he glances over at Charles, who blows an O into the crisp and cold ocean air.

11 GENERAL DE BOISSIEU: <--and the grandest stage of disrespect yet. It may have serious political implications, Mr. President.>

12 CHARLES: <I'm counting on it, General.>

PAGE THREE (six panels)

Panel 1: Charles holds his pipe in one hand and raises the other as he waxes philosophically.

1 CHARLES: <They're going to hear me over there. When I speak, it's going to make waves.>

2 GENERAL DE BOISSIEU: <With all due respect, sir, Expo '67 is about mankind's vision for a unified future. Should making political waves be the point of this trip?>

3 CHARLES: <This is our last chance to make up for our ancestors cowardice--to show the world it is wrong about France.>

Panel 2: General de Boissieu flicks his cigarette into the ocean.

4 GENERAL DE BOISSIEU: <Very good, Mr. President. See you at 0-600 tomorrow.>

Panel 3: Charles blows another O into the air.

5 CHARLES: <"Should making waves be the point"...">

Panel 4: Charles smiles as he stares at the smoke O.

6 CHARLES: <When those waves benefit the prosperity of the French people, of course it should!>

Panel 5: The smoke O has frozen in mid-air, in front of a confused Charles, who raises an eyebrow.

7 CHARLES: <Eh? What's happening?>

Panel 6: Angle up on Charles looking over the railing, down at the waves that have stopped moving, frozen as they crashed up against the Colbert's hull.

8 CHARLES: <It's as if the air and ocean are...standing still?>

9 VOICE (OFF PANEL): <You should listen to your wife and son-in-law, Charles.>

PAGE FOUR (four panels)

Panel 1: Charles has turned away from the deck's railing to face:
1 CHARLES: <Who said that?!? Show yourself!>

Panel 2: A teenaged French girl dressed in 17th century attire, a FILLE-DU-ROI (14) with a pale and transparent hue, stands amid fog on the ship's deck. But she doesn't stand at all...she hovers. She's a ghost.

2 FILLE-DU-ROI: <They care not only for your well-being, but that of two nations--and the city caught between them.>

3 CHARLES: <Who are you?>

Panel 3: Charles gazes with confusion at the Fille-du-Roi, who reaches a hand out to him.

4 CHARLES: <What are you?>

5 FILLE-DU-ROI: <I am the Ghost of the Past-->

Panel 4: Charles' confusion turns to shock when he & the Fille-du-Roi are standing atop a mountain overlooking a valley. There is a large river in the distance beyond the trees.

6 FILLE-DU-ROI: <--a past you seek to correct and claim to know intimately yet ultimately, you do not understand.>

7 CHARLES: <What...? Where...?>

PAGE FIVE (six panels)

Panel 1: Some of the trees have disappeared, replaced by dirt roads and log cabins. A large cabin sits by the river, where boats dock in its bay.

1 VOICE OVER (FILLE-DU-ROI): "<This is Hochelaga. Ville-Marie. Mount Royal. Montreal before it became what it is today: a city perpetually at war with itself. At the moment-->"

Panel 2: Repeat the previous panel, but the landscape is peppered with battle flags and warring factions--the local Natives, French colonists, and English Imperialists.

2 VOICE OVER (FILLE-DU-ROI): "<--it is the blood-soaked battlefield for yet another war between bitter foes from the Old World, this one on the shores of a new land with indigenous natives caught in the crossfire.>"

Panel 3: Blue coated soldiers fire muskets at red coats, who respond in kind.

Panel 4: A red coat stabs a blue coat with his bayonet.

Panel 5: Blood splashes on the dirt road.

Panel 6: The bloody dirt road has been washed away by cobblestone.
VOICE OVER (FILLE-DU-ROI): "<Finally, after seven years of bloodshed-->"

PAGE SIX (five panels)

Panel 1: The Fille-du-Roi & Charles walk along the cobblestone street of Montreal of the past. French & English settlers live side-by-side.

1 FILLE-DU-ROI: <--the fighting stopped. Though the feud between French & English persisted-->

Panel 2: Charles frowns.

2 FILLE-DU-ROI (OFF PANEL): <--the city was allowed to grow and prosper under their collaboration. Soon, clans flying other flags journeyed to the New World to build new lives in a new city.>

Panel 3: Charles' frown has intensified as he shouts.

3 VOICE OVER (FILLE-DU-ROI): <It didn't take long for the island to be filled with people of all walks of life, all working together regardless of language, race or creed-->

4 CHARLES: <ENOUGH!>

Panel 4: Charles shouts at the Fille-du-Roi.

5 CHARLES: <I don't need a history lesson from the likes of you! I've bled for my people and its history--whether that be in France or abroad! How *dare* you talk down to me! Take me back to my ship!>

6 FILLE-DU-ROI: <I seek only to enlighten-->

7 CHARLES: <Back, I say!>

Panel 5: Charles points off panel while frowning furiously at the Fille-du-Roi.

8 FILLE-DU-ROI: <Ignoring my advice is-->

9 CHARLES: <BACK!>

10 FILLE-DU-ROI: <Very well.>

PAGE SEVEN (six panels)

Panel 1: Charles finds himself once again on the deck of the Colbert. His smoke O loses its shape in the ocean air.

1 FILLE-DU-ROI (OFF PANEL): <Know this, Charles de Gaulle: It is the stubborn conviction that he possesses the absolute truth which makes a civilized man barbarous.>

2 CHARLES: <Barbarous...?>

Panel 2: With his pipe clenched in his teeth and his eyes wide with dread, Charles reaches into his breast pocket.

Panel 3: Still consumed by dread, Charles holds his speech out over the railing on the ship's deck, causing the page to flutter in the wind.

Panel 4: Charles' dread has faded into a frown while he still allows his speech to flutter in the wind.

Panel 5: Charles puffs smoke out of the side of his mouth as he slides the speech back into his breast pocket.

3 CHARLES: Hmf.

Panel 6: Charles has turned his back to the reader, descending the stairs to the Colbert's lower decks beneath moonlight.

PAGE EIGHT (four panels)

Panel 1: The sun shines down on the stairwell to the Colbert's lower decks.

1 PAULINE (OFF PANEL): Charles?

Panel 2: Charles has climbed the stairwell, getting to the top with his coat slung over his arm.

2 PAULINE (OFF PANEL): <Charles! We're here!>

3 CHARLES: <I'm coming, I'm coming.>

Panel 3: Pauline stands next to General de Boissieu, her smile radiating like the sun that shines down on them.

4 PAULINE: <Hurry!>

5 CHARLES (OFF PANEL): <What's the rush?>

6 PAULINE: <Get your head out of the clouds and take a look-->

Panel 4: Wide shot of the Colbert sailing down the St. Lawrence River and approaching Montreal. A bridge connects the island to a smaller, newly man-made one, the site of Expo '67.

7 PAULINE (ON THE COLBERT): <--at this.>

PAGE NINE (five panels)

Panel 1: Charles stands with Pauline & General de Boissieu. The latter two smile fondly at their destination off panel, while the former smirks confidently.

1 GENERAL DE BOISSIEU: <It really is beautiful, isn't it?>

2 PAULINE: <L'Expo is going to be wonderful. I'm so excited.>

3 CHARLES: <I as well.>

Panel 2: A black convertible drives up a street toward Montreal's City Hall flanked by hundreds of cheering French Canadians.

4 MONTREALER 1: Le voila! Charles de Gaulle!

5 MONTREALER 2: Salut, Monsieur Le President!

6 MONTREALER 3: <You're my President, Monsieur de Gaulle!>

7 MONTREALER 4: Vivre la France!

Panel 3: Charles grins wide and waves triumphantly from the back of the convertible. Pauline's wave is more diplomatic and subdued.

8 CHARLES: <Listen to them. They love me. They adore me.>

9 PAULINE: <Don't let them give you any ideas.>

10 CHARLES: <People don't influence me, I influence them.>

Panel 4: Charles frowns, confused.

11 VOICE (OFF PANEL): <Therein lies the danger.>

12 CHARLES: Ey...?

Panel 5: Charles turns to his wife but a young, bespectacled UNIVERSITY STUDENT (21) sits in her place. Like the Fille-du-Roi, her complexion is a pale, semi-transparent white.

13 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <Charles de Gaulle, outspoken soldier, bureaucrat and political leader. Your words carry much weight in your native France--as well as in other French speaking lands, like this one.>

PAGE TEN (five panels)

Panel 1: Charles points a finger at The Student, who places a hand on his shoulder.

1 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <You create descent among the people of my land based purely on the language they speak.>

2 CHARLES: <I defend the pride of the French language and the French culture across the planet! If I don't, who will?!?>

3 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <Defend them from what?>

Panel 2: Charles & The University Student stand on a busy street in downtown Montreal.

4 CHARLES: <The threat of the English assimilating my people!>

5 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <That language is of no threat to yours--certainly not here.>

6 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <Francophones and anglophones live side-by-side with little incident, building Montreal into a thriving modern marvel of culture, commerce, couture and academia. People from all over the world flock here for business, pleasure, and education. Some even call it a sliver of Europe in North America.>

Panel 3: The University Student raises her palms and her face to the golden sun in the bright blue sky. Charles frowns and points at something off panel.

7 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <It truly is an international city. The English speakers of Montreal pose no threat to the French language or Quebecois way of life, certainly not during this Golden Age.>

8 CHARLES: <No? Then what's this?>

Panel 4: Charles points furiously at a delicatessen.

9 CHARLES (OFF PANEL): "Shwartz's Deli"? "Molson's Brewery"? "Hudson's Bay"?

10 CHARLES (OFF PANEL): <And it's not just storefront signage!>

Panel 5: Charles points at a street sign at the corner of an intersection.

11 CHARLES (OFF PANEL): "Amherst"? "Park Avenue"? "University"?

12 CHARLES (OFF PANEL): <Why is there so much English in this town?!?>

13 UNIVERSITY STUDENT (OFF PANEL): <Montreal is an international tourist city in a country with two official languages.>

PAGE ELEVEN (four panels)

Panel 1: Charles points a finger up in the air as he shouts in the University Student's face.

1 CHARLES: <Quebec has ONE language! Quebec belongs to the French!>

2 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <What about the hundreds of thousands of citizens who were born here, whose family histories go back generations, who also happen to speak English as their mother tongue? This island is as much their home as it is their francophone neighbors'.>

3 CHARLES: <What about them?!?>

Panel 2: Charles spits through clenched teeth, outrage.

4 CHARLES: <The anglo interlopers are squatting on French grounds! They have an entire country that stretches from the Atlantic to the Arctic to the Pacific to call home! Leave La Belle Province to Les Quebecois!>

5 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <It sounds as if you had things your way, you'd enforce linguistic segregation in Canada.>

Panel 3: Charles continues to shout, pointing a finger at the reader.

6 CHARLES: <If I had things my way, France never would've abandoned New France or surrendered to the British! Quebec would be free! A proud and powerful pillar of the French empire!>

7 CHARLES: <Anyone worthy of living in this precious land would adopt the French language, a French name and the French way of life!>

8 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <That's all I needed to hear.>

Panel 4: Unimpressed, the University Student frowns at Charles clenching his teeth at her.

9 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <Charles de Gaulle: 18th President of the Republic of France. Statesman. Soldier. Leader of the French resistance during World War II who fought for his nation's liberation from the Nazi regime and reestablishment of democracy. You have become the very thing you spent a lifetime fighting.>

10 UNIVERSITY STUDENT: <You are lost. I see no reason to convince you of your errors or rescue you from your hubris.>

11 CHARLES: <Then get out of here! And leave me to my business!>

PAGE TWELVE (three panels)

Panel 1: In the back of the convertible, Charles stares confused at Pauline.

1 CHARLES: <Leave--!>

2 PAULINE: <Charles? What's the matter? Who are you yelling at?>

3 CHARLES: <What? I, uh...>

4 CHARLES: <Nobody, cherie. Nobody.>

5 CHARLES: <Driver...how much longer until we arrive at City Hall?>

Panel 2: A wide shot of Charles' & Pauline's car driving up the street--flanked by hundreds of cheering francophones--to Montreal's City Hall.

6 VOICE OVER (DRIVER): "<Only a couple more minutes, Mr. President.>"

Panel 3: Inside Montreal City Hall, Charles walks past a man in glasses, QUEBEC PREMIERE DANIEL JOHNSON--and shakes hands with a bald, bespectacled man, MAYOR JEAN DRAPEAU (early 50s).

7 PREMIERE JOHNSON: President de Gaulle, welcome-->

8 CHARLES: <Mayor Drapeau, it's a pleasure to meet you.>

9 MAYOR DRAPEAU: <The pleasure is all mine, Mr. President. Please, call me Jean.>

PAGE THIRTEEN (five panels)

Panel 1: Charles & Mayor Drapeau walk shoulder to shoulder.

1 MAYOR DRAPEAU: <How was your trip?>

2 CHARLES: <Smooth sailing, for the most part. Taking The Colbert rather than a jet gave me more time to think about my feelings for my fellow Frenchmen.>

3 MAYOR DRAPEAU: <I'm interested to hear your thoughts-->

Panel 2: Focus on Charles' ponderous face.

4 MAYOR DRAPEAU (OFF PANEL): <--as are the people. Have you thought about speaking?>

5 CHARLES: <I hadn't planned on it, but...>

Panel 3: Charles reaches into his breast pocket as he steps out onto a large balcony that overlooks the masses of francophones chanting his name.

6 CROWD: DE GAULLE! DE GAULLE! DE GAULLE!

Panel 4: Charles peers over his shoulder at:

7 VOICE (OFF PANEL): <These sheep sure do love you-->

Panel 5: A hovering, semi-transparent woman with a red letter "A" pinned to her shabby jean vest--AN ANGLOPHONE PARIAH (30)--with a sign made out of torn cardboard that reads, "NEED HELP EI CHEQUE IS 12 MONTHS LATE" in one hand and a paper bagged 40oz bottle of beer in the other. She is surrounded by a pack of flea-ridden mongrel dogs and a cigarette that desperately needs to be ashed hangs from her bottom lip.

8 PARIAH: <--don't they? They love you so much, they'll forsake everything else to live by your words and fight for your cause, even if it means damning their city.>

9 CHARLES: <What are you talking about?>

PAGE FOURTEEN (three panels)

Panel 1: The Pariah sits on the balcony's railing while her flea ridden mongrels sniff and lick Charles, who looks down at them in disgust.

1 PARIAH: <The past, present, and future of Montreal, Quebec, Canada, Charlie Boy, and the indelible mark you stained it with.>

2 PARIAH: <This-->

Panel 2: Suddenly, Charles & The Pariah stand on the pothole ravaged road of St. Laurent boulevard. Contrary to its Las Vegas-like appearance when The French President visited it with the University Student in the present day, it is dark, grungy, rundown and barren, the strip of buildings behind them boarded up and vacant.

3 PARIAH: --is the future. The one you sowed.

4 PARIAH: After your speech on July 24th, 1967, the political and social landscape of Montreal was consumed by separatist sentiment and language-based policies.

5 PARIAH: <Slowly but surely, the Canadian headquarters of major corporations trickled out of the city, off the island and down Highway 401 to Toronto, choosing not to deal with the growing divide between the French and the English nor increasing costs of doing business.>

Panel 3: Charles & The Pariah continue down the pothole ravaged road, now observing St. Catherine's Street with many abandoned buildings and graffiti over English signage. There is a brawl in front of a dilapidated strip club.

6 PARIAH: <Like their industrial counterparts, the federal politicians of Canada abandoned anglophone Quebecers, allowing them to fall victim to Bill 101, which effectively banned English--and every other language--in Quebec. Montreal--the once thriving international tourist city--was hit especially hard.>

7 PARIAH: <Businesses packed up shop and families pulled up their roots while the federal government continued to turn a blind eye, forcing anglophones to face the threat of two referendums in the late 20th century.>

PAGE FIFTEEN (five panels)

Panel 1: Four men kick the shit out of two others who have red A's on their jackets.

1 PARIAH: <Though unity prevailed on those two occasions, the province was forever fractured. Quebecers became even more resented by Quebecois and tensions reached a fever pitch.>

2 PARIAH: <By the mid-to-late 21st Century, anglophones were leaving the province in larger and larger numbers. Those who chose to stay were alienated by municipal and provincial public servants, ignored by federal leaders and speakers of house, and targeted by their francophone neighbors.>

3 PARIAH: <Soon-->

Panel 2: Close up of the red letter A on one of the victims' blue jean jackets'.

4 PARIAH: <--the English language was completely outlawed and anglophones were branded with a scarlet letter, making them clearly identifiable to law enforcement officers, customer service agents, potential employers, landlords, and anyone looking to throw stones.>

Panel 3: Close up of the dark red blood against the blue jean jacket.

5 PARIAH: <It wasn't enough for your neighbor to bleed when injured.>

Panel 4: Close up of a blue rectangle.

6 PARIAH: <Now, they had to bleed the fleur-de-lys.>

Panel 5: Zoom out on the previous panel to show the blue rectangle is one of four on the Quebec flag.

7 PARIAH: <Like the ones on le drapeau nationale.>

PAGE SIXTEEN (three panels)

Panel 1: Charles & The Pariah cross a crumbling bridge.

1 PARIAH: <With the population completely invested in and distracted by language-based prejudice and politics, the government became more and more corrupt and lackadaisical--especially with construction and roadwork contracts.>

2 PARIAH: <Politicians and contractors skimmed off the top, lining their pockets with taxpayers hard-earned dollars-->

Panel 2: The bridge crumbles behind the French President & The Pariah as the former makes a run for the other side.

3 PARIAH: <--resulting in potholed ridden routes, crumbling bridges and collapsing overpasses.>

4 PARIAH: <Once again, citizens paid the price--and not just the second class anglophones.>

Panel 3: Down on his hands and knees, a sweating Charles stares up at:

5 PARIAH: <Les Quebecois--forever proud, artistic, and avant-garde-->

PAGE SEVENTEEN (four panels)

Panel 1: A sign that reads, "BIENVENUE A L'EXPOSITION 67!", the letters of which are weather worn. The "SITION" portion hangs by a screw. Next to the sign are three flagpoles--Montreal, Quebec & Canada--which fly at half staff. They are ripped and ragged, especially the Canadian one.

1 PARIAH: <--they had compromised their values and turned their backs on their identity in an ill-advised effort to preserve it.>

Panel 2: Zoom in on the ragged, dirty flags of Montreal, Quebec & Canada.

3 PARIAH: <You twisted the multiculturalism that created this island city, Charlie Boy, you twisted it into the segregation, ignorance, and intolerance that consumed European nations for centuries, dooming it to the same fate-->

Panel 3: The Pariah nonchalantly swigs from her 40oz beer while Charles frowns.

4 PARIAH: <--one of financial destitution, social upheaval and cultural stagnation. Is it any coincidence that Montreal's future mirrors Paris'??>

5 CHARLES: <What are you implying?!? That there's something wrong with French pride?!? With ensuring that the French culture doesn't only survive, it thrives?!?>

6 CHARLES: <Take your anti-francophone propaganda and be gone, I say!>

Panel 4: Charles continues to frown, searching his surroundings for The Pariah, who has disappeared.

7 CHARLES: <Be gah--!>

8 VOICE: Charles...?

PAGE EIGHTEEN (five panels)

Panel 1: Charles raises an eyebrow, peering over his shoulder at Mayor Jean Drapeau.

1 MAYOR DRAPEAU: <Are you alright?>

2 CHARLES: <...>

Panel 2: From Charles' POV: the adoring francophones stare up at The French President with adulation and baited breath.

3 MAYOR DRAPEAU (OFF PANEL): <Will you honor your adoring audience with a few words?>

Panel 3: Focus on Charles ponderous face.

MAYOR DRAPEAU (OFF PANEL): <Charles...?>

Panel 4: From Charles' POV as he looks down at his creased speech in wrinkled hands.

Panel 5: Close up of the last words scrawled on the page, "VIVRE LE QUEBEC LIBRE!".

FIN.