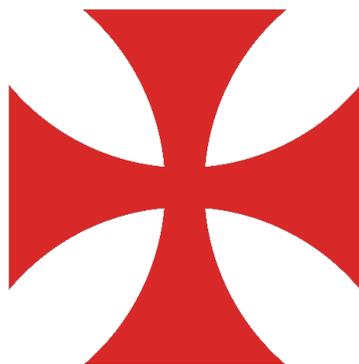


Oana
Amăricăi



The treasure of the Temple and

The BEZUBANQ

Collection l'Autre Création



Brace yourself.

You are about to read a story that you already know partly, that you will find hallucinating at times and that goes back through the centuries to the source of an adventure which you are part of and which cannot end unless you become aware of it.

This story starts in 1118.

It was the year when, in the aftermath of the first Crusade, Hugues de Payens created in Palestine the Order of the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon. It was an order of monk-soldiers whose declared mission was to protect the pilgrims on their way to the Holy Sepulchre.

We know them as the Knights Templar. Having the blessing of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the most influential theologian of his age, the Order quickly became very popular and its dazzling ascension began. Over the 12th and 13th centuries, the Order suffered an incredible expansion, in all of Western and Central Europe, where it controlled the land routes, which, back then as today, represented an inexhaustible source of power and wealth. Moreover, the Temple received enormous donations from all those who wanted to contribute to the noble cause of the Crusades and to the defence of the Holy Land. As for potential recruits, the reserves were also virtually inexhaustible

According to the tradition of the Early Middle Ages, in a noble family which produced several surviving sons, the first born was the heir, the second born was prepared for an ecclesiastic career, while the third born, if there was one, was endowed with a good horse, an armour and weapons and he devoted himself to the ideals of chivalry.

One must keep in mind that, in Western Europe, the beginning of the second millennium marked an age of relative peace, stability and demographic increase – as a combined effect of two factors: the end of barbarian migrations and what we would now deem a climate warming, which gave richer crops. Thus, after the year 1000, in Western and Central Europe, there were a great many unemployed noble knights, who consumed their belligerent pulsations in tavern fights.

The appearance of the orders of monk-soldiers, such as the Knights Hospitaller, the Teutonic Knights and especially the Knights Templar, solved the problem, by giving a structure, a sense of purpose and a mission to these men who lived ever more marginally. Their devotion to the orders that had welcomed them and restored their dignity was guaranteed, almost fanatical. Such was the case with the Templars, the knights in the white mantle of purity, who were at the same time a monastic order, bound by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but who in fact were not at all poor and who

owed their obedience to none other but the pope. Still, a trans-continental power that only submitted to the Prince of the Church could not sit well with the princes of the Earth. Especially with the less pious and more ambitious kinds, like France's Philip the Fair.

As such, on October 13, 1307, after several failed attempts at bringing the order under his authority, King Philip ordered that all the Knights Templar in France be arrested. The move had been prepared long before. Without today's means of instantaneous communication, it took about a month for the written order to arrive and be opened – simultaneously – in all corners of the country where there was a Templar implantation.

The knights knew it but they never tried to save themselves or run away. A bizarre attitude, one might think. Not really, if we consider that the Knights Templar were not really obliged to “account for themselves” before the king and that Philip had no jurisdiction over the affairs of the Order. Only the pope could decide on the Temple's fate. In fact, the shrewd Philip justified his action by pretending that all he had done was to put the Knights Templar under guard, so that the pope can judge them for the grave crimes – especially crimes of faith – that were imputed to them. Perhaps the Knights Templar were convinced that it was nothing but another failed attempt by the king to bring them to their knees and that the matter would be settled between the jurists of the king and those of the papacy.



Or perhaps they expected quite simply that the pope acquit them. After all, they were in the pope's service, they were almost his private army and they had never wavered in their loyalty to the Vatican. They couldn't have anticipated the ingenious and surprising manoeuvre of pope Clement V, who, without ever publicly judging or condemning the Knights Templar, simply disbanded the order and handed over the individuals that composed it to the justice of the king.

Seven centuries passed since the dissolution of the order that had been one of the greatest powers of 13th century Western and Central Europe. Seven centuries since their never solved mysteries excite imaginations. Among these, the most fascinating remains the mystery of the Treasure of the Knights Templar, which was never uncovered.

But has there actually been a Treasure of the Knights Templar? The searches that were done upon their arrest, in 1307, did not reveal anything exceptional on that subject. No treasure had been found. Or had it? The searches had been conducted by the agents of the king. The goods of the Knights rightfully belonged to the papacy. If the king had discovered the treasure, he couldn't have kept it. Unless he declared that he hadn't found anything and secretly gained possession of the treasure.

But this is a false lead. They actually did not find anything.

The treasure had already left the forbidding, sombre edifice of the Paris Commandery. As attested by several sources, on the eve of the arrest of the Knights Templar, a mysterious cart discretely came out of the gates of the Temple of Paris and headed towards Gisors. The Gisors castle, with its octagonal donjon, wrongfully believed to be a typically Templar structure, was very well guarded and reinforced, as it was the most important fortification on the river Epte, the natural border between France and the Anglo-Norman kingdom. Moreover, its proximity to Paris recommended the castle as the perfect shelter for the Treasure of the Knights Templar.

There is but one problem with this hypothesis. The Gisors castle was indeed very well guarded by... the king's soldiers. Is it really reasonable to think that the Templars would have brought their treasure, which they wanted to safeguard from the king, into a royal fortress, thus handing it over to the king himself?

No, it is out of the question. But then, the story about the cart that left the Paris Commandery at night-time, loaded with chests and heading for the castle of Gisors, is that nothing but a fabrication? Well, no, it is true.

At this point, you might begin to feel a bit lost in the labyrinth. Well, let's start over. It is well known that, among their other activities, the Templars had laid the bases for a, let's say,

proto-banking system. They gave loans, they issued letters of credit, and they even accepted deposits which they kept in their well-guarded commanderies. And in the Paris Commandery, they actually kept the treasure of the king. The chests of Philip the Fair were deposited with the Templars.

There it is, a simple explanation. On the eve of the date that had been settled for the arrest – not sooner, so as not to alarm the Templars – Philip the Fair sent his agents to the Commandery, in order for them to withdraw the Crown's gold and to transport it to the fortress of Gisors. Naturally, it had to be done discretely, even if it was a completely legitimate mission: the times were not safe and bandits were a threat even to the soldiers of the king.

Nowadays, we know perfectly well that the Order of the Temple was a great multinational organisation, which, somewhat like modern multinationals, functioned like a state in itself. Within the Templar state, in fact, even the typically Medieval tripartite structure of society was respected. For, as we well know, the order comprised the knights, which is to say the warriors, the chaplains, namely the clergy, and the lay brothers and sisters, who worked for the Temple, that is the commoners. And, just like the other states, there were also the secret structures, the existence of which was only known to the innermost circles of power. Among these structures, there was a genuine espionage



service, composed by people whose Templar affiliation was not admitted publicly and who were recruited from or placed into the entourage or the command devices of European royal powers. In fact, in the small elite commando that had been sent to the Commandery of Paris to retrieve the king's chests and transport them to Gisors, there were two Templar agents, a certain Jean Lord of Bezu-le-Long and one Luc La Mothe de Trois-Palis, a descendant of one of the first crusaders who had fought under Godefroy de Bouillon in Jerusalem.

Once between the walls of the Commandery, Jean of Bezu-le-Long uttered the code words that had been agreed upon in advance, should such an occasion present itself. Having understood the message hidden in the apparently banal words of Jean of Bezu-le-Long, the grand-master of the Order, Jacques de Molay, handed over to the small troupe the king's chests and, with them, two more chests, apparently identical to the others, but which hid the treasure of the Order. If it seems like not much, keep in mind that the treasure of the Templars was not made of gold or silver, but of something more precious. We will return to that later on.

Thus, the treasure of the Templars made the journey to the Gisors castle in the same cart as the king's gold. Once arrived at the castle, the small commando stored the chests in the "vault" that had been prepared for a very long time,

in case such a situation ever occurred: the underground Chapel Sainte Catherine, built halfway between the castle and the church Saint Gervais et Saint Protais in Gisors.

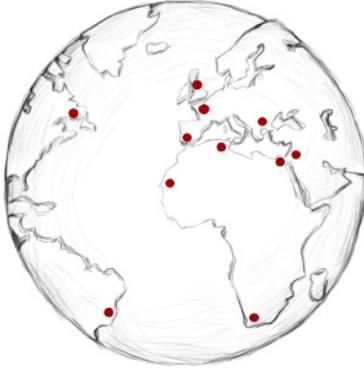
The highly complex system of undergrounds that pierce the earth of Gisors, going in all directions, has been known for quite some time now and it has been accidentally revealed several times: during World War II, when the town was heavily bombarded, during public works, like those that, in 1950, brought to light a Merovingian crypt near the North entry of the church, then when the people who live in the ancient houses on Rue Vienne wanted to expand their cellars or in 1970, when the workers that were digging in order to build an intersection found not only the undergrounds, but also a treasure of 11.359 coins from the 12th century.

Some among you might still remember the scandal in the beginning of the Sixties, when Roger Lhomoy, an old guard and gardener at the castle of Gisors, who had worked there for 15 years, pretended to have found during some clandestine digs, an underground Romanesque chapel, in which there were nineteen tombs and thirty enormous trunks. The ministry of cultural affairs, run at that time by André Malraux, ordered a dig that hasn't officially resulted in anything and after which the castle was weakened to such an extent that it needed to be reinforced by pouring concrete into the galleries.

But let us return to 1307. The small troupe that had accompanied the royal treasure to Gisors remained there for several days, in order to make sure that the security measures were sufficient. During the second night, the two Templars under cover used the hours of their round in order to transfer the contents of the two chests that belonged to the Order, through the same system of underground passages, to nowadays Bezu St. Eloi, where the order owned a small grange, which also served as a pit-stop on the way to Rouen. The ancient grange, situated not too far from the church built by the Templars, no longer exists. The church itself doesn't exist any more. Its place was taken by a more recent construction, which has been closed to the public because the floor has sunk in november 2010, precisely as it was built on top of the underground galleries that crossed Bezu and arrived at the ancient castle, now disappeared, of Neaufles-Saint-Martin, another highly important fortification on the Franco – Norman border. But, with few exceptions, the lines above do not offer any great revelations. The true revelation follows.

The treasure of the Templars was recovered, it still exists and its keepers now know that the only way to protect it is to share it, to make it available to everyone.

The treasure of the Templars could be transported in only two chests because, as mentioned earlier, it wasn't made of gold or silver. It was far more ingenious than that.



In fact, it was an invention of the Templars themselves, later made famous by the Florentine: the banknote. The Templar banknotes had a double value: the financial value inscribed on the paper (which the Templars had discovered in the Holy Land), that could be changed into gold at any commandery of the Order's in the world, but especially the informational value. There are no two banknotes alike. Each is marked differently, covered by more or less intricate, more or less colourful designs. They all codify the great knowledge, the initiatory secrets of the Knights Templar.

The pecuniary value of the banknotes no longer exists. It was reduced to ashes on the same stake as Jacques de Molay. But the immeasurable value of the information hidden in the drawings of the banknotes still exists and it must be protected at all costs. What allowed for this ancient body of knowledge, discovered by the Templars in Jerusalem, to survive intact until our days, is the puzzle-nature of the mystery.

The messages codified by the banknotes can only be deciphered if they are all reunited. That is why, twenty years after the fateful night when they hid the treasure in the undergrounds of Bezu, Jean de Bezu-le-Long and Luc de La Mothe de Trois-Palis have decided to keep half of the banknotes in Bezu and send the other half, note by note, to all the corners of the Earth where the ex-Templars had sought refuge.

The two guardians entrusted each of the chosen ones with the task of safekeeping the note that they received, at the price of their own lives and to pass them down, from father to son and from mother to daughter, until the distant day when the keepers in Bezu would launch the call for the treasure to be reunited.

Then, as the call would reach farther and farther, year after year, filling up the horizon, the notes would start to reunite, to converge to Bezu.

The call has been launched. Already, banknotes have arrived from all over France, from Belgium, Italy, Spain, Argentina, Turkey, Russia, Canada... Others are on their way from the United States, Romania, China, Australia.

The wait will be long, years must still pass before the great revelation. Some of the descendants are no longer aware of the fact that they are the guardians of a great secret. Their foregoers have told them the story leaning over their cradles, but they need to remember, to regain the conscience of it. Every day, a new piece of the puzzle falls into place and the BezuBanq grows.

**Look into your heart, search through your oldest memories.
Are you one of the keepers of the treasure of the Temple?**

www.bezubanq.com

This text is a historical fiction; obviously, some of the characters do not have a counterpart in reality.