



From *The Chronicles of Froissart*, this image depicts a masked ball attended by nobility (including King Charles VI). Based on an actual event - called *Le Bal des Ardents* - things went particularly badly for some of the attendees.

The date for this disaster was January 28, 1393. Disguised as wild men, five young noblemen were dancing when their costumes were accidentally set on fire by the torch of the King's brother ([Louis, Duke of Orleans](#)). Four were burned alive.

The King, who was disguised as one of the dancers, survived (as did one other performer).

Public reaction to such noble frivolity was quick and negative. The purpose of the ball was to entertain the King who, the prior summer, had an attack of apparent insanity.

People wondered: Was the King fit to rule? On the other hand, could the people really question the actions of their King?

Contemporary chroniclers, in addition to Froissart, wrote about this masked ball. The image we see here depicts an illumination on parchment which is [maintained at the British Library](#).

The event depicted in this image may have been a *Charivari* (shivaree). It was a custom in France, during medieval times, to sometimes give a discordant performance for newlyweds. This illustration depicts an event which the Queen - Isabeau of Bavaria - gave in honor of her newly married lady-in-waiting.

Although Isabeau's husband (King Charles VI) survived, he was so badly burned that he nearly died.

Already afflicted with bouts of mental instability, Charles' ability to rule continued to deteriorate throughout his reign. After France lost the Battle of Agincourt to Henry V (King of England), Isabeau was present during the signing of a treaty which allowed her daughter (Princess Catherine) to marry the victor of Agincourt.

The Treaty of Troyes - signed on the 21st of May in 1420 - not only gave Henry V (of England) the right to marry Catherine, it gave him the right to be King of France. It also disinherited the King and Queen's son, the Dauphin Charles.

But ... the best-laid plans of men do not always work-out the way everyone expects. [Charles VI](#) and Henry V died within two months of each other (in 1422). Henry and Catherine's baby son - known as Henry VI - was too-young to rule either France or England. Regents would have to make decisions for the respective countries until Henry VI was old-enough to assume his royal duties.

France, however, would not wait for that to happen. With differing factions supporting differing potential rulers, battles erupted. Who should be the French King?

After much fighting between English and French forces - including battles led by Joan of Arc who supported French, not English, rule of her country - Charles VII (son of Isabeau and Charles VI) was crowned King of France on the 17th of July, 1429.

Isabeau lived long-enough to see her son reclaim the French throne, although his rule did not include the whole of France. English forces continued to occupy Paris where [the Queen died](#) - at the age of 64 or 65 - in 1435.

At a time when many children died in infancy, the sons and daughters of Isabeau and Charles VI held significant positions in their lifetimes:

Isabella - Queen of England

Joan - Duchess of Brittany
Marie - Prioress of Poissy
Michelle - Duchess of Burgundy
Louis - Dauphin of France
John - Dauphin of France
Catherine - Queen of England
Charles VII - King of France

Click on the image for a better view.

Credits:

Author: Jean Froissart
Title: *Chroniques*, Vol. IV, part 2
Origin: Netherlands, S. (Bruges)
Date: Between c. 1470 and 1472
Language: French
Script: Gothic cursive

Image of an illumination on parchment; online, courtesy the British Library via Wikimedia Commons.

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