

ALBERT ROTHENBERG

Madness & Glory

a Novel

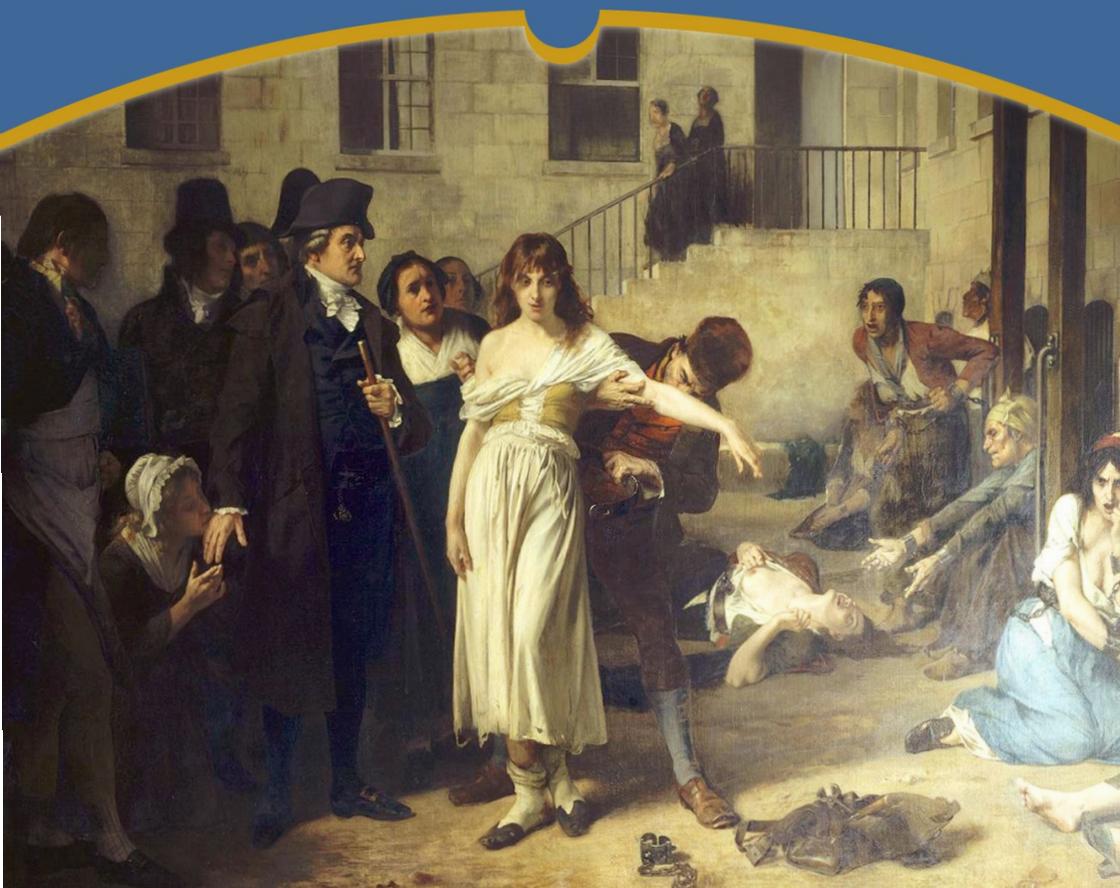


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MADNESS AND GLORY

Albert Rothenberg

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In loving memory of Rose

He sowed in a field of salt.

—Antiquity

Chapter 1

There was no one left in the courtyard. He stood watching the heavy door swing closed. They missed him, let him hide in this obvious place. His arms and legs were free. What would he do now in the narrow enclosure all by himself?

There was no other explanation, no other way to think about this, or any connection with these people, than to recognize the clear and unrelenting truth. They didn't care. Not the slightest bit of concern, notice, and surely no responsibility for people in their charge. All the lunatics like him. Standing there alone, hiding and escaping them completely, he knew he was nothing to them.

They said he was mad, but that did not explain any of his thoughts or the happenings of eminently evil design. Time and again, he could not lie on his bed because of the flames designed to burn and spread inside him. Down there, especially down there. He huddled in a corner, unsafe, because people lurking in the hallway would come in, find him unprotected. Nowhere to escape. They forced their way in, stood with their ghoulish faces at the door, or else, hovered behind him at the kitchen alcoves. They taunted him about his worthlessness, corruption, being cast aside. Other times, he felt nothing but trembling fear. Dread attached to nothing, coming from nowhere but thoroughly within him, filling every part, every open nook of his body and every cleft within his mind. Nothing he could do, or think, or say, would stop it, nowhere to go to make it change.

The man inspecting the asylum that day, he kept them all busy. That must be why they did not see him in the corner. No, wrong, they could not see him because they did not care. He knew the inspector – Jean-Lambert Tallien, champion of freedom. A man who wrote, and shouted, and claimed he helped bring freedom from the oppression of nobles, clergy, and king. Well he, Guillaume Lalladiere, once fought for freedom but now needed freedom from dreaded thoughts and imaginings.

He had to escape. Cramped in bed with others amidst darkness, dirt, and slime, the fear and fury rose in him. He screamed and screamed. In the other hospital, Hospice d'Humanité, the attendants kept him attached in chains to the wall in a black corridor away from the other inmates. The tight chains hurt

when he tried to move but they swaddled him, keeping his arms and hands from doing murderous and obscene things. When he cried out, danger lurks everywhere, while he was chained there, they took out beech wood rods and beat him. Sometimes he would fight them, shout even more. But the beating also made the fear go away. The pain in his shoulders and back made him feel calmer, made his body feel alive. For him to hurt was right. Right to be punished.

They changed the rules. At this asylum, Bicêtre, there would be no more chaining, no more beatings. That doctor, the new chief physician, clean-faced, quiet, walked slowly through the great hall, looked into each inmate's face, stared long and hard, spoke with all. Then, with a sweep of his arm, seeming to encircle most of the inmates in the room, he told the attendants to strike off their chains. What noise, what clangs, as collars, cuffs, and heavy iron links fell onto the hard floor! Were they all really to be human again? Now the other freed inmates came close by him. There still were evil thoughts, voices, and surrounding grime. He must scream and fight. When they let him and others out into the courtyard, he became even more frightened than before. Standing in an open courtyard, out in the open air, unchained with plaguing thoughts, what was he to do?

Pushed in tightly, he didn't want to leave his hiding-place enclosure because it felt – for that moment anyway – safe. The cold concrete walls pressing up against his arms were smooth and strong. If he stayed in place, they held and protected him. But he knew that someone – because it was the way of asylum things – would eventually notice an absence, a missing person, even a worthless one, among the regular inmate group. They would come to find him, surely try to hurt him. Because, they would say, despite the rules, that would teach him lessons. No, it would not. They would make the punishment so severe the fear would not be taken away or changed, but in the end injuring, probably maiming him. So he could not try ever to hide away and run again.

He reached up on the concrete wall on one side, and with both hands pushed himself backward hard so that the wall behind him firmly supported his back. He was in the crevice of acutely angling walls so that, exerting his considerable strength despite a lean, medium-height build, he was able to push with constant pressure backward with his hands while gradually scaling his feet upward on the opposing wall. At approximately a yard above the ground, he held both feet planted together and assumed a painful and precarious sitting position between the walls. For the smallest part of a moment, he paused

to look around the courtyard. There he was, suspended, higher than the ground. Then, thrusting his back securely against the wall, he slowly slid his feet one after the other up the wall, a minuscule distance each time.

He didn't have too far to go, ascending the angled walls that way, because one foot, the right one, soon came to an indented defect in the wall in which his toes could fit.

Climb quickly, idiot, they're after you.

For a split second, at the sudden sound of the rasping voice, he relaxed the pressure in his toes and almost slipped downward. But, fearful and summoning up his resolve, he pushed his right foot hard into the defect and was able to swing the left into a nearby crack several inches higher. With both feet stabilized, he began sliding his back gradually upward against the wall behind him while pushing downward with his legs. As his knees came into a partly bent position, he was able to reach his hand up to another defect he had seen on the right hand wall.

Quick, idiot, go quickly. They will all be back in a minute.

Frantic, he stretched his left hand up onto the top of the twelve-foot stone enclosure, yanked himself up quickly and swung over. Gaining the smooth top of the wall, he decided to stop for a moment, catch his breath and look over the courtyard to see whether the attendants were coming back. What was that? Over there. He thought he saw a shadow moving in a familiar way and, for a moment, considered returning to whoever was in the courtyard or just staying for an indefinite time on top of the wall. Instead, he turned, jerked his legs outward and jumped down the other side. As he did, the voice, out of thin air, rasped:

Break your legs, you bastard, break your legs.

No relief or celebration, only his own growled curses as he fell free. Landing hard, he flexed his knees, dropped to the ground then rolled over – the precaution against injury learned with past moving and carting of large loads of rock and stone – and laid on his back on the rough road surface outside the hospital. After several minutes, he lifted himself up, straightening his slightly bruised arms and legs,

shook off the dirt, and went quickly on the long road to Gentilly. In his mid-twenties, Lalladiere walked firmly and straight despite the devastation of grinding confinement and illness. He wore, though soiled and in many places fairly frayed, the same silk and linen clothing required by the work he did before becoming ill. His face was strong-boned and many women, one of whom he thought he loved, considered him to be good-looking. Now his face was, strangely enough considering the effort he just expended, expressionless. So much so it seemed to be holding down terrible secrets, memories of unbearable events, things beyond the mind to contemplate or absorb. Whatever unfastens thought sequences, prevents them from flowing hither and yon, making inner thoughts into outer commands. Perhaps, although he did not know it yet, could not possibly have imagined, he was now on a journey, an inner one, to bring dark secrets to the light of day.

Inside the asylum, the busy attendants noticed an absence, then realized that Lalladiere was gone. And they felt – if not the care he wished for – anguish, anger, and concern. Without knowing where and when he disappeared, they quickly organized themselves into a search party. One checked the sleeping room, another the narrow eating area, and a third went back out to the courtyard. They regrouped, stood huddled together, reporting excitedly to each other, strong hands gesturing and heavily muscled legs shifting from side to side. It was clear he had completely left the premises and all three raced up to the office of the governor of the asylum to determine what to do.

Overseer of the daily life of the asylum for almost ten years, a craggy-faced man of calmness and sharp intelligence, the one-time tanner Jean-Baptiste Pussin listened carefully to their report. After asking whether they had thoroughly checked the three patient lodgments, he anxiously dispatched Denis, an attendant he relied on thoroughly, to gather up a coterie of gendarmes and find the runaway.

Governor Pussin was more than usually concerned. The inmate Lalladiere had too often to be carried out of his sleeping room howling and screeching. He had muscles of iron, was smart and unpredictable – a patient who, out on the streets, could get himself or someone else into serious trouble. A terribly unfortunate soul, Lalladiere had changed from a successful government functionary – first assistant to the great minister hero of the people, Jacques Necker – and a street fighter as well, to a full-blown maniac. What a tragedy! When persons of consequence become insane, a mystery that defies understanding, they often reject all help and manage to do themselves great harm.

On top of the dangers of Lalladiere's escape, Pussin also worried about it occurring during the official visit of citizen Tallien, the man who had been supervisor of the prison section of the Bicêtre the previous year, the time of the killing of imprisoned clergy, young and old aristocrats. Though Tallien was there primarily to check on counterrevolutionary prisoners, not on insane former liberals, he was influential as well as barbarous, and the lapse would make a bad impression. It was now 1793, France was in the throes of the fourth year of the Revolution. The king was gone, beheaded early in the year, and Marat, the vituperative pamphleteer and revolutionary leader, had been assassinated during the summer. Several factions in the country were vying for influence. Some, in the National Convention, the ruling body of the government, were attempting to stabilize gains of the Revolution. Others were extending its effects, and many of both were attempting to consolidate personal power. Tallien, a Convention deputy, could well be identified with all three of these objectives.

Denis quickly arrived at the central gendarmerie.

"Faw, sergeant," he said to the officer on duty who knew him well from previous contacts. "One of our lunatics has escaped from the hospital. Could be violent."

"Surely, citizen, you can handle this by yourself." The sergeant's teasing was the beginning of a familiar ritual the two used to break both the monotony of the dispatcher's job and the attendant's anxiety about his assignment.

"Pouf," Denis sputtered again. "This one is a real problem. Screams bloody murder in the middle of night when everyone is sleeping. Kicks you hard in the balls. And he thinks nothing of biting a chunk out of your arm when you go to chain him up."

"Well, citizen, how did you let him get free? The chains, were they not strong enough to hold him?"

"Haven't you heard?"

"Heard what?"

"We've been taking off the chains from these people. Orders of the governor and Doctor Philippe Pinel, our recently appointed physician to the hospital."

“What? Are they madmen themselves?”

“It’s the new treatment, could be it comes down directly from the Mountain,” Denis puffed his lips and screwed his eyes upward as he spoke the popular term for the high-seated leadership of the ruling National Convention.

“Really from the Mountain?” The sergeant leaned forward and Denis realized he was becoming too interested in continuing the conversation. “Eh, then,” he said, “we must stop this and get going. This man Lalladiere will be halfway to the other side of Paris by the time we start after him.”

“Well, we are goddam busy nowadays. Not just with crime, you know, it’s the bringing in of all the traitors. But so, my friend, I guess we will be able to dispatch some men to go with you. Shit! All things change so rapidly now. You must come back after you catch the man and explain what this is all about”

“New treatment, maybe it fits the times. Who knows? Now will you go by the spirit of all holy and get some of your fancy-dressed gendarmes to help me?”

Three uniformed men joined Denis in the front room of the gendarmerie. An escaped mental patient was surely violent and dangerous, and the gendarmes armed themselves fully. Outside, Denis had them break up into pairs, he with one gendarme cutting diagonally across the region they thought Lalladiere had gone through, the other two starting a short distance back and proceeding in a straight line. In that way, he believed they would cover the greatest amount of territory. Should both pairs miss him, they would meet again fairly soon.

Right then, Lalladiere was running very fast through an open alleyway off the main thoroughfare. Not for fear of being caught, not precisely, but out of a sense of release. The running was like being in an empty church as a child, the long chute of the aisle open and free, a found special space to charge down with no one to stop him. In the protected corridor, he could be away from constant abuse by other boys, the searing sights and sounds in his home nearby. To overcome the devastation of those years, he had used an exceptional skill with numbers, learned during long periods of withdrawal and isolation, to become a prized government assistant. He turned a concern for all downtrodden like himself into revolutionary resolve and joined the storming of the Bastille fortress. He had loved, or tried to love. But

everything changed, his world, his redeemed world, became lost.

On and on he ran, until his breath came short, and he stopped to decide on a further route. It was late morning of *decadi*, the Revolution's non-religious day of rest. Most were in taverns and cafes rather than out walking, but he knew he had to keep himself out of sight. There was no longer any testing of whether people cared. He had to keep on. He had to succeed. Whoever cared, anyway? No one. No one ever cared. He would show them. He, a worm, would show them.

Worm, slimy worm.

The gruff voice, together with high-pitched sneering ones:

Slimy, dirty hands, low, crawling worm.

And a chorus of laughing children's voices:

Nyaa, nyaa, soil your pants. Nyaa, nyaa, You will stand around with dirty pants.

He must run and get away.

He entered an archway and pushed on the heavy wood door, but it didn't move. He stood still for a moment. If he waited, might the door open of its own accord? He longed for an open door. Again, he tried to push it open. No movement.

Several entryways away he pushed on another door, this time twice in quick succession and with greater force than before. No give also. Over clamorous noise from the taunting voices, he suddenly heard sounds made by people approaching an intersecting alleyway. He ran rapidly down the widely spaced row of doorways, pushing at each with his flattened palm as he went by. He moved quickly, the slight giving of one of the doors almost escaped him. He stopped, turned back to test again. No doubt about it, the door moved.

He pushed hard and the large wooden door opened fully. The color was very deep green, a color used, he was sure, purposely for him. So he quickly entered the short hallway and began to mount the

narrow stone stairway. He had four levels to go up to the roof, each level he passed had a low, closed, deep green door to a single apartment. Stone dust, thinly spread, covered most of the walls and stairs, and small bits of garbage and debris – loose fabric threads, bits of wood, the pits of olives, a portion of a rotting cabbage leaf – were littered on some of the narrow landings. Reaching the top level, he found a narrow entryway to a turret-covered doorway to the roof. He lifted himself by means of indented foot and hand holes leading to the doorway, a far more manageable stairway than his self-composed one of indented defects on the asylum walls.

He stepped out onto the steeply inclined roof, bright sunlight blasting his eyes so he immediately lost his footing and began to fall. Tilted slates rushed by. He felt his insides turn hollow. Quickly, he shifted one foot onto the upper incline of the roof, and turned it at the same time sideways to wedge it into the narrow slate ridges. His other foot he fixed as firmly as possible onto a flatter edge a short distance below. Steadying himself for several seconds, making sure he could turn in a direction away from the sun, he then edged his way across the dappled gray surface. Other inmates, he remembered, sometimes believed they could fly. Not he, he was weighted down by rock-hard thoughts. Despair.

Twenty feet across, another slip, a dizzy and perilous steadying with arms flailing, then sliding ten feet to the end of one roof and the beginning of another. This one was slightly lower down and less inclined. What to do now? He kicked off his shoes and stepped carefully downward. A portion of the street below was visible, and he heard noises rising as large numbers of people began to move about. So he stooped toward an edge to see and not be seen. I am strong now, he thought. Great up here above the ground. Fast, quick on the slope of the roofs. But which way is safe? No way for me.

In a nearby alleyway, a musket shot rang out. Startled, instantaneously sure that guns were aimed at him, he was again thrown slightly off balance, and moved away from the edge. At the moat around the Bastille, guns fired at him, but he knew his purpose and was unafraid.

“Over here, over here,” he heard a soldier shouting. “He’s angling away toward the church.”

A split second later, another voice rang out, loud but indistinct. Another musket shot.

A loud groan. A thud. Voices of both soldiers were now clear and triumphant.

“We got the deserter, the damn son of a whore,” said the shouter.

“We got him all right,” said the other. “These ones run to suck their women’s tits while we fight in the muck and manure.”

He scampered on quickly from house to house, somewhat like, he remembered, his clambering over the roofs at the back of the Bastille. Despite the fearful thoughts in his head, and the voices, he was still devoted to the glorious goals of the Revolution; but he recoiled at what he just heard. Wholesale killing was a horrible anathema. When, as before, his footing became less stable or he needed to stop briefly and rest, he grasped onto projecting gables or assembled chimneys. These stood side by side across the roofs like mute guardians, more beneficent soldiers. No more gunshots but noises came steadily from the street, noises of people, wheels on stone. Inside the din were the more distinct rasping voices he knew so well.

Move swiftly, fool. Escape. Move, fool. Move, fool. Move, fool. Move. Move. Fool. Fool.

“Shut up, damn you,” he shouted. Both voices and street noises got louder and louder. He thought he heard sounds of movement of large vehicles. To see whether he could tell what was going on below, he again moved to an edge and bent his head over. Was he chancing everything? There was an alarming bustle of people below: a man driving an oxcart over the narrow cobbled street, a coach and horses trying to push onward behind him, crêpe and waffle hawkers, two or three people each carrying cloth bundles, and a group of men and women hurriedly walking toward them from the opposite direction. No sign though of anyone from the asylum. Relief at first, then disappointment.

And a moment later, he saw them, just turning the corner of the long, narrow street below. Two men. Although they were still some distance from him, he could make out Denis’s familiar strong, stubby form. A sharp intake of breath. Who was that with him? A gendarme? Yes, a policeman come to catch him, torture him, and lock him up for good. What did they know that he had done? He must flee now, had to get very far away.

Clambering back up the inclined roof, he scraped his hands desperately grasping onto the rough-edged slate tiles. When he got near to the crest, he wiped oozing blood from the torn heels of his palms onto his shirt. Ignoring the pain, he bent his torso as low as possible so as not to be seen from the street. A

moment later he pulled himself awkwardly across the crest to reach an adjacent roof area. He jumped across a short breach, straightened up, and tried to run across what was now a flatter and smoother surface.

“This man is a strong one. Risky to deal with,” Denis said loudly to his gendarme companion.” Sometimes, when he fights us, it takes three, even four, to pin him. He yells and raves.” He discharged a stream of spittle to suggest mouth foaming and impress the civil policeman.

The gendarme tightened his hold on the musket he was carrying: “Why in hell do they keep these dangerous lunatics around here? Don’t they know we have our hands full taking care of the republic? Got to look out for traitors, damn royalist sympathizers, and aristocrats, all over the place. We have no time to come out like this to find such dregs. How you even stand working there, I never know.”

“Takes a lot of wine – strong, good wine. Come on, my guardsman, look smart. The maniac has a lead on us, but we should be able to find him somewhere in these streets.”

Chapter 2

Philippe Pinel walked down the stone steps past the dungeon cells. First physician appointed to Bicêtre, combined asylum and prison, he felt responsibility and excitement. Lunatics, his primary charge, always received very little medical treatment. Often they were used for the amusement of the populace, bundled into a cage on Sundays so families could come and poke at them with sticks and hurl abuses. The rest of the week, some were given purgative drugs, water treatments, or bloodletting. Mostly, they were controlled with chains and beatings.

Pinel was born and medically trained in the southwestern part of France. When he moved to Paris, he was at first denied any official medical positions because he had not received his training there. At the Belhomme private sanitarium, where he was finally able to work as a physician, Pinel found the abuse of the insane harmful and the treatments useless. He was glad that, at Bicêtre prior to his arrival, governor Pussin and his wife on their own had begun to unshackle inmates and make other changes. Sleeping quarters were no longer filthy and slimy, and inmates were no longer exposed as freaks on Sundays to a laughing populace. Pinel, on the basis of his own observations that the insane got markedly better without the humiliation and the iron fetters and bracelets of the violent and the damned, was determined to have every one released. Several of the few who already were freed had shown immediate relief, reduced hostility, and recovery of lucid speech. He saw one man crawl out of his cell and lift himself to a window opening while saying – clearly – that he hadn't seen the light of the sun for thirty years.

A slender, medium built man with deep-set noticeably blue eyes, Pinel continued into one of the stone arch-ceiling halls followed by the attendant Ajacis. Both sides of a narrow corridor were lined with flat straw sleeping litters of various sizes. On the nearest litter, a thin, emaciated man with his shoulders and elbows encircled by cuffs and chains sat breathing heavily and sighing with his head bowed onto his chest. Pinel stopped nearby and addressed him.

“Citizen, can you tell me why you are here?”

No answer. Only intensified sighing.

“What is it you feel? I can perhaps help you.”

“Oppression, fullness in my body, fear.”

The doctor kneeled down onto the stone floor, felt the man’s pulse, ran his hands over the man’s arms and legs, and stood up.

“Remove the man’s chains,” he said to Ajacis. “His pulse is weak, skin tight, extremities cold. He suffers from melancholia.”

He walked slowly on to the next litter. Carrying out cautiously his program of performing daily rounds and assessment, he was distracted by thoughts about the recent runaway. They had removed Lalladiere’s chains and in short order that inmate had climbed the walls and escaped. According to governor Pussin, the man could be violent, possibly harmful to himself or other people. Pinel’s mission, always in his mind, was to heal and avoid harm, whether done by others or himself. He was concerned, too, that such an untoward occurrence so early in his tenure might cause interference from the government health authorities. He shook his head, trying to focus on the man hunched over in front of him.

The man on the litter, not in chains, was corpulent and quite short. His nose was upturned and small, his face flat overall, his eyes narrow and slightly tilted at the sides. There was spittle at the edges of his mouth.

“And you, citizen, how do you feel today?”

The man looked up and giggled. “I am fine. Fine.”

“Tell me, if you have one sou and I give you five, how many will you have?”

“Two,” he said with high-pitched laughter.

“Are you sure?”

“Two sous, one of mine and five from you.”

Pinel spent some time examining this man, checking reactions and reflexes. Then he walked on. The man was clearly not insane but of the type idiot or imbecile. Unwanted souls were all thrown together in the wards: convicts, vagrants, epileptics, political prisoners, elderly poor, imbeciles, and lunatics. He planned to separate each type and provide whatever appropriate measures or treatments feasible, a task not carried out in any other hospices in France and many other countries as well.

What was that? Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the attendant Ajacis lift his arm, swing, and plunge his fist hard into the abdomen of the melancholic man. Pinel turned, moved quickly toward them as he saw the attendant pull back his other arm for another blow. He was barely able to reach him, grab the arm and stop him.

“What is this? What are you doing?” he demanded while pinning the attendant’s arm firmly to his side.

“Right after I took the cuffs off his arms,” Ajacis replied angrily. “He started pulling on my shirt. And he lifted his knee,”

“You must not, under any circumstances, hit the inmates.”

“But we have to teach them to behave.”

“Not, as you have already been told repeatedly, in that fashion,” Glaring at the attendant, Pinel released his arm.

“Hair of a dog. What should I do if the man is going to tear the shirt off my back and bruise me?”

“Restrain him. Put him in a restraining vest, the cloth straight-jacket. If you attempt to beat an inmate again, you will be sacked.”

Pinel turned away. No wonder, he thought, that inmates like Lalladiere escape the minute they are freed. Attendants like this one are a menace. They can’t stop themselves and get worse.

“Doctor, doctor, come see me now. I need to talk with you,” shouted an inmate further down the line. Pinel hesitated, it was seldom good practice to respond to pressurizing.

“Please, doctor,” the man repeated as he saw Pinel begin to move toward another man, “these chains are biting into my wrists and ankles, pressing on my neck so that I can hardly breathe. I have something to tell you.”

Pinel hated suffering, and if the man had recently been admitted his appeal was understandable. So he decided, not for the first time, to break a small precedent. He walked further down the center corridor.

“Yes, what is it you wanted to talk about?”

“Doctor, as I said when I came, I am very frightened by these chains. I am Genghis Kahn, the Great One. One of my enemies, some non-oriental person here, will come, I think, and kill me while I am shackled.”

“That cannot happen.”

“I have hurt many others before I came here. I am sure someone will kill me.”

Pinel didn't think that taking off the chains would help the patient's delusion, but the man seemed more pathetic than threatening, and dehumanizing chains served no purpose. He told Ajacis to remove them. The attendant, still stung by Pinel's rebuke, mumbled that there was a lot of iron on the man and he needed to go and get some help.

Pinel continued down the line as Ajacis left and shortly returned with the attendant Antoine. Portions of the man's several shackles were riveted and it was necessary to hold these extended and cut them with a hacksaw. The noise of sawing was loud and harsh, and Pinel began having difficulty hearing responses from the remaining inmates. He limited himself, therefore, to examining various significant physical features, and after a while decided to move on to another portion of the asylum and return there the next day.

By that time, the sawing had stopped and Pinel noticed that the delusional inmate, now freed from his shackles, had managed to walk awkwardly over to the kitchen area near the door, presumably to obtain some liquid or other refreshment after the ordeal. Pinel reached the door some moments later; and as he turned to walk through it, the inmate came out of the kitchen. Brandishing a sharp kitchen knife, he leaped at Pinel's back.

The stabbing would have been successful, even fatal, if Antoine had not had the presence of mind to follow the man to the kitchen area. Seeing him jump, with the knife flashing in the air, Antoine also jumped, and grasping the man's wrist, he pinned him to the ground. He held him motionless until Ajacis, who had stayed back, very likely purposely, joined them. Together, the attendants lifted the man, took him to his litter, and put him into a restraining vest.

Pinel, at first shaken, recovered, and thanked Antoine profusely.

"Well, my friends," he added, "it appears that the serving of liberty must be seasoned with a large dash of good judgment."

Chapter 3

Lalladiere knew he had to keep going. To be safe now his only chance was to get as far away from the asylum as possible. As he ran, breathless, he felt a stockinged foot slip and hang free. He teetered over the edge, righted himself with a sharp twist, and continued by tilting forward and pushing his feet tightly into the edges of the roof tiles. He thought of heading towards the place of his familiar old rooms on the other side of Paris. Maybe he could go, to her, go to Genevieve. No. Even if he could manage to get that far, they would certainly find him eventually and take him back. He just needed to get away. Away. His feet seemed more easily to catch the edges of the tiles.

You can run a lot faster, but you aren't trying.

He reached a roof several houses from where he first saw his pursuers and poked up his head sharply to check their whereabouts. He saw, but could not hear, Denis speaking to his companion.

"We must look in all doorways and alleyways. He could be hiding anywhere. Even up on the roofs. The man is not only strong, as I say, but he is wily. He could be running around up there to fool us."

"Shit, next he is an angel," the gendarme said gruffly, "flying around in the sky over our heads. Or maybe he becomes a whirling dervish on one of those flying tapestries. What a terrible job!"

Denis looked at him disdainfully. Working with the lunatics wasn't wonderful, but it was better than wild arresting of aristocrats. He was at least getting regular pay, unlike a lot of others these days. Also, he was good at what he was doing. Despite his stocky stature, he was one of the most rock-strong and agile of the attendants, able to stop the monstrous thrashing, hitting, kicking, biting, sometimes all by himself. Although the inmates were demented and degraded, he found that sometimes they were like people, real people. They talked about things like he did, seeing the sun outside, being thirsty or hungry, whether the food was bad or good. They talked about things from the past and about other people in the asylum. He knew they had bad brains, were totally abandoned by God, but sometimes – even with this wild man they were chasing – he wondered whether there were other reasons too.

“There’s something up there. I think I just saw something,” the gendarme said, pointing to a roof at the end of the street they entered. “Could have been a bird, or a smoke puff, maybe, but I thought I saw a head, or hair on a head, moving.”

At that moment, the two gendarmes who were searching the alternate route came through an adjacent passageway. Excitedly, their colleague pointed to his sighting, “The lunatic, I think he is on the roof up ahead.”

As if on a starting signal, all four men began running quickly forward in the street. They ran easily and rapidly, the gendarmes holding their muskets at their sides, good hunters with their heads and shoulders tilted forward and ready. All four were animated with the spirit of the chase.

Hearing, close by, rhythmic thuds of running boots amidst the noise below, Lalladiere wondered whether people were coming after him, but decided not to risk putting his head up again to check. Instead, he turned at a sharp angle onto a series of roofs bordering on another street. Not sure where he could find safety or escape, he moved instinctively toward a public building constructed entirely of stone, a good deal higher than the rest. He grabbed a flange of concrete protruding under the roof, pulled himself with grunting effort onto the top and, finding this roof less pitched, ran rapidly to the front of the building. The distance between this building and the edge of the next was too great for him to jump, and he could see no way to gain entry to the inside from the roof. He shivered. The warm sweat on his body had turned cold. He felt an old-time apprehension, not of abuse or torment, but detection. He feared he would be caught and the things he had done, terrible things, would be revealed.

Frantically, he bent and looked over the protruding flange. Extending down the face of the building from roof to ground, he was relieved to see, was a decorative double column of narrow and tightly spaced upturned rectangles. He swung himself instantly over the flange and hooked his toes into the narrow spaces while grasping the rims of the rectangles, using the column as a ladder of concrete which this time enabled an escaping descent. If he could get unnoticed to the street below, he could, he hoped, run fast and get away.

The concrete wall was cold but he felt strange sensations of warmth on his right arm and leg, and turning to that side he saw the tips of red flames coming from the windows of a building at the angle of

the alleyway. A small stone Roman church was, like many churches throughout the city, being put to the torch because the clergy were considered even more predatory than the aristocracy. As the flames extended further, the light partially illuminated him and he flattened himself against the wall, fearing being seen. In that moment, the light shining on his stolid unmoving features made him look, if anyone could possibly chance to see him, quite brave. Mixed together with his thwarted hopes and fear of feelings toward other people were his determination and physical fearlessness. He continued doggedly down the perilous surface of the building.

Below, two men in ragged straight-legged trousers, were coming out of the door of the church carrying silver vessels, plates, decorated caskets, book covers and crosses. Tucked under their arms were well-carved pieces of statuary. At the same time, a man and woman carrying large unfilled sacks pushed inward past them. None looked up, intent only on retrieving the bounty. Lalladiere tried to move down quickly, clutching at the infinitely narrow spaces between the rectangular stones with nails, fingers, and tips of toes. But on each of the four floor levels between roof and ground, he had to stop and rest, grasping the edges of nearby protruding window overhangs and flattening himself against the building to avoid being seen. Flames from the upper church windows now were shooting out. Spreading smoke began to choke him. No one, neither those still within the church nor someone coming through the alleyway, was there to stop the fire. A body length from the bottom, he jumped to the ground. A woman followed by two men turned the corner. Mistakenly thinking he was a church marauder, the woman shouted at him and, surprised, Lalladiere fell awkwardly and painfully to the ground. Behind her, one of the men, who had a few moments before been passed by the running pursuers, guessed at the truth. Lalladiere, the person jumping from the sheer wall of a building, must be a fugitive. So, the man moved quickly back into the adjoining street and – either out of the currently widespread civic devotion, simple love of chase, or both – he began running hard while shouting loudly to the pursuing officials a good distance beyond him.

Lalladiere, though bewildered from his fall, wheeled rod-like in the opposite direction on the neighboring street. He also started racing, a desperate flight now, causing him to stumble several times. There were numerous walkers on this thoroughfare and riders in the carts. As he attempted to force his way through them, they looked at him with anger, surprise, and suspicion. Somewhere behind him, he was sure he heard the sound of pounding, running feet. At the same time, there was an anxious sounding shrill voice coming from above the crowd:

Go, Go, Go, Go, Go, Go.

He turned a corner into a stone-bridged street entry but saw only low smooth-faced houses and no walls to climb. Despair. He darted back out again onto the larger street and thought he spied two people in the crowd advancing quickly toward him. The voice, right at his side, said:

They're coming for you. They're going to get you. They're coming. Going to get you.

Although he well knew that making noise was at that moment the worst thing he could do, involuntary shouted words came from him, "Help, they're coming for him. They're going to get him."

The two quick walkers in the crowd, a gaunt woman with her child, came up close enough to see and hear him clearly. The mother, frightened by the shout and his deadpan menacing appearance, grabbed her daughter's shoulders protectively and led her quickly away to the other side of the street.

Shortly beyond them, he saw a passage leading to a much larger street adjacent. He ran through it. Without realizing, he had returned to the thoroughfare leading back to the asylum. He looked behind him and saw, not more than two streets away, the outline of two gendarmes who had, on Denis's prudent say-so, fanned out to find him. Frenzied, he searched all doors and walls fronting on the street around him, looking for a way to escape. Nothing open, nothing could be entered or climbed. The gendarmes continued to approach. For the first time he saw at the base of two of the houses, at their point of junction with the street, small elliptical openings into something below.

Despite his earlier shout, local people on the noisy street had taken no note of him. Their going to-and-fro had also blocked him from the view of the tracking gendarmes. Quickly, as an oncoming coach obscured that section of the street, he threw himself upon the ground, brought his arms and legs tightly together while arching his back, and squeezed himself fully down into one of the narrow openings. Instead of the cellar, storeroom, or small apartment he had fleetingly envisioned, he found a solid concrete wall less than a foot ahead of him. Barely able to turn around in the closed-off former delivery entry, he was encased by a rock hard surround admitting light and air only at the opening through which he entered.

Chapter 4

He stood up ram straight in the enclosure. A few moments later, he saw the running boots of the two pursuing gendarmes. They could not see him.

The feet of ordinary walkers came shortly into view, and he heard loud movements of vehicles pounding on the stones. No one hesitated or stopped; he started to feel secure in the tight-encircled space. Approximately a quarter of an hour later, more footsteps. This time there were four of them.

Denis and his police companions were returning, headed in the opposite direction. The separated contingents came together further down the street, realized they had missed him, and retraced their steps. But again they didn't see him. Stretched rigidly upward to fit in the concrete lined tube, only the top of his tangled mat of dark hair poked up in the opening.

Flashing by were the long skirts of women carrying wash, hawking wares, leading children, hurrying to stand on line to get meager supplies of bread, salt, and vegetables, clandestinely attending church, coming or going from taverns. He glimpsed the bottoms of numerous *sans-culottes*, the protest straight-legged trouser style which had given its name to all common people revolutionaries. Men with these and more traditional stockinged legs were bustling about with bundles of wood, stone, or rags, going to meetings or covert worship with their wives, stopping or starting drinking, carrying out searches and seizures, setting fires. Sabots of women, men, and children clumped rhythmically, and sounds of bumping cart wheels, heavy pounding of large horses' hoofs resounded from the cobblestones. The noise, resonating through his cold concrete enclosure, along with his fear, kept him aroused. Once again the pounding legs of the hospital attendants and gendarmes came by. They slowed down as they approached his hiding place.

He held his breath, chest completely tight, then realized they weren't stopping, just slowing from their effort. They hadn't seen the top of his enclosure. Such openings, if noticed at all, are usually considered a place for drainage, delivery, storage, or an undesirable type of dwelling to be ignored. Even vigilant searchers miss them.

The men continued to walk, speaking noisily with each other. Lalladiere listened and, within the drone of their conversation, heard ominous, rasping words:

We are torture murderers, out to kill him.

Then, a familiar deep voice next to him: *Don't move or breathe, you slimy hands, you criminal, not a muscle or a breath.* Another voice, high-pitched, repeated the same warning. Not missing a beat, the deep one again boomed out: *Stay where you are. Not a single muscle, not a single breath, swine.*

He knew them, hated their drumming directives, the torturing accuracy of their epithets mixed with a false tone of guidance. But he had to comply. As the voices continued, fear-saturated sensations spread through his body, into his neck, his arms, his legs. Soon, he was devoid of will and unable to move any part. He could not control a single muscle, his chest moved minimally when he breathed.

Standing in the tomblike enclosure, hearing jumbling noises, bits of conversations, and sometimes threatening words passing above him, Lalladiere felt the advance within him of overwhelming terror and panic. Unbearable dread. His head was flying off and his arms and legs were disengaging. He tightened his body and the terror changed to rage, uncontrollable rage.

Must not move now. If he moved, put the slightest part in motion, everything would be destroyed. All. Whatever he hated or had no reason to hate. The smallest and the largest thing. The entire world. Stirring a finger, a toe, would destroy it all. The end, responsible for the end of the world. Must not move or stir. Must not, cannot. Still tight, his body became completely still, without any power to shift or act or twinge. His mind emptied and for long periods he thought of nothing, nothing at all.

He remained in that state all day. It was the same as in the hospital, many times totally motionless, empty of thought, unbearably fearful. Nothing people did dispelled the fear. Hours, whole days, of terror went by, ending only when, surrounded by attendants, he was put into a swirling waterbath. Or, sometimes, when the Bicêtre governor came and talked to him gently. When thought returned, he sometimes wondered what the barrier was between him and other people. It was like a myth out of old times, a struggle against giants.

Sounds came to him frequently of horses' and donkeys' hooves, the tumult and activity of the street, and sometimes the distinct words of nearby walkers. He, inside a tensely coiled spring, heard without moving.

"Please, citizen, will you give *asou* for a cripple to buy bread?" No answer, no sound of money in the cup.

"Good day, Charlotte, how goes it with you?"

"Oh, what a miserable time, Dionne."

"Yes, sure is."

"What can we do now with the price of bread? We have nothing, almost nothing at all to eat."

"I think God is forsaking us. There are hardly any places to clean anymore. People say they got no paper money to pay with. None. One told me – this is the limit – that the Revolution is cleaning out the dregs, the human vermin. We should not care about cleaning floors. Our souls should be content."

"My children are starving."

"My arms do nothing. Idle, the devil's advantage."

"What shall we do?"

"What can we do?"

The clumping wooden steps of each continue in opposite directions.

"Oh-yey, you, watch out. Can't you see the horse's hooves? They move quick. Real smart. They kick, you know. Kick hard. You'll get your eggshell head smashed in!"

"Sorry, monsieur, uh, citizen. I will watch, citizen."

"You better be sorry. Your mother would not like to see the top of that empty skull of yours crushed

in and blood running down your face." The cart man laughs. And the sound of his laughter continues as he goes by, loudly repeating the words "blood," and "blood running down your face," over and over.

"Please, good citizen, a *sou* for bread." The whine of the beggar circling through his accustomed route is penetrating over background noise into Lalladiere's tight encasement.

"Well, Maurice," booms a gruff voice, "the sun does not favor us with its good warmth these days,"

"No, the sun, as they say, was soiled in the hands of the king of the sun, Sun-King Louis," Maurice rejoinders sharply over his shoulder. "It has to be scoured with the thick blood of the nobles before it shines steadily on us again."

Again a mention of blood. Images of red gore flash through Lalladiere's mind. He blocks them, then thinks of nothing.

"Well," says the gruff voice, "that's something to look forward to. Hooray for the national razor, eh?"

In the next few hours, the searchers, persisting on the Bicêtre governor's orders, went twice by Lalladiere's enclosure, once on horseback as they tried to cover a wider area, again on foot as two gendarmes searched nearby houses. They mounted up on roofs to find whether he was hidden among the gables and chimneys.

"Gilbert," now says a voice at first sounding to Lalladiere like a searching attendant, "there seems to have been a lot of commotion on the streets around here today."

"Yes, Francois, I heard that a lunatic escaped from the Bicêtre." Clearly not an attendant. "They lost him somewhere near here. Very dangerous, could be a killer. But, my man, this is nowhere near the great excitement over at the Place de la Revolution. They say that thirty people have been guillotined today."

"The chains, do you know, are being taken off those lunatics at Bicêtre," Francois returns angrily. "Damn and perdition, this is where we live. Maniacs will be running all over. We must bar our doors, watch all the children, arm against them."

“Yes, right.”

“That guillotining on the Place you speak of. That’s quite fine. I spit on those who were against the elimination of the King. Everyone was really a royalist. And I heard there were some fat aristocrats too.”

Gradually, as night came, street sounds diminished around Lalladiere’s chance cubicle. Locked into a stillness though devoid of chains, empty of thought and constricted by inner clamps not the narrow dimensions of his enclosure, he stood erect. His eyes occasionally moved but, because of the immense persistent dread, they did not focus. Time passed, but at that point he had no currents of thought or sensation. Two men passed above him and stopped. They spoke softly, and in the quiet could be heard quite clearly. Their accents and speech differed a good deal from the rough laborers and shopkeepers who went by earlier.

“We can talk here. The street is empty at this hour,” one said, upwardly inflecting the last word in the sentence as though asking a question. “I arranged to inspect the asylum at Bicêtre this day so I could meet you here far from the center. Danton’s spies are everywhere.”

“A good choice, Tallien. I managed to work out some recruiting in this area for the Guard. No one must know of our meeting now,” the second man spoke in a clipped, officious, but nervous tone.

“At the prison today, I checked that several of those I used last year to identify the traitorous prisoners are still around, working here or living nearby. They will work for us again. I used them already to pick up some new traitors. The governor, strangely, seemed discomfited.”

“You are quite an eagle.”

“That, Barras, is how I got to where I am with our powerful colleagues. But let’s get down to it. Marat, although I threw in very actively with him, is gone. Danton struts around, booms out his patriotic slogans, and both the people and the Convention fall down before him. Still strong, still a damn leader of the Revolution. Claims he did all the planning for August 10 when we deposed the King. We must, as we agreed when we spoke briefly at the back of the Convention chamber before, do something about him. He is so very popular and powerful. Speaks, convinces everyone with that big voice of his. All go to do his

bidding. The Cordeliers. Members of the Committee of Public Safety. Paris and the rest of the country are still under his thumb." His singsong voicing of the final "thumb" contrasted oddly with the somber content of his pronouncement.

"We cannot directly eliminate this man," said Barras softly, authoritatively, but still anxiously. "That would be too dangerous. We have not enough persons to support us against him. Even if we did it, ah, secretly, or had someone do it for us, we are sure to be found out right now."

The men's words all came clearly into Lalladiere's cubicle, slowly penetrating his consciousness. He had known each of the men, and was immediately convinced he was hearing a plot against himself.

"Quite so, Barras. Well then, listen well." Tallien reduced his voice to a low monotone. "I have decided that the safest approach is to find a way to get rid of him which no one could connect with us. He is so entrenched, the hero of the people, we must make it seem either like he is giving up, or someone else is taking his place."

"Whatever do you mean, someone taking his place? What good would that do for us?" Then, in quick remembrance of his supposed duty and devotion, he corrected himself, "For the republic, I mean, of course."

"The republic?" repeated Tallien. "We will do well enough for the republic when we take the reins. Danton would have us incessantly fighting foreign wars. What good is that?" His voice grew louder again, the lilt increasing to produce the sound of a sinister anthem. "Who lives better then? We did not take off Louis's head, throw out the aristocrats, to end up squandering our resources. And at the country's borders, no less. No, we must justify blood that has been spilled, save the wealth. Save the wealth. We must take the power to ourselves."

"But how would we do that? Danton would never yield. Putting another in his place might give us someone more dangerous. Danton suspects nothing from us now."

"A flanking movement, my dear Barras, a flanking movement," Tallien replied, chorus-like and laughing. "We shall throw our support to someone who has no interest in personal gain but is devoted

solely to the Revolution, the goals of the Revolution. This one, unknowingly, shall work for us to bring Danton down." He paused, apparently checking the street for unwelcome eavesdroppers without for a moment thinking of looking near his feet.

"Despite Danton's high sounding words," he continued, "he cannot help himself. He is like us, a materialist—wants money, living well. A pure idealist is what we need against him. Then, when that pure, juicy fruit is ready for the picking, when the usurper we put in place is ready to be usurped himself, we bring him – help him – down. And... take over."

"Indeed? Well, that's a strategy, all right." Barras said, speaking now more calmly and appreciatively than before. "You are surely a master of the turnaround."

"Strategic, artistic, but best of all, effective. Do you see how it can work?"

"Yes, I do," said Barras brusquely, and with more confidence. "Suspicion of doing Danton in, then, can never fall on us. And the bothersome would-be hero of the Revolution will be gone. But who is the idealist you speak of, who can we get to do this without risk to ourselves?"

Still motionless, Lalladiere felt his head to be bursting. It was he. He. The idealist was himself.

"The incorruptible one. You know who it is. Friend of Danton, Marat before him, but really not the friend of anyone. Maximilien Robespierre. He believes only in the Revolution and in his own rectitude. He is already on the way and will be the one who will eventually destroy Danton. Also, he will help us even more, rid us of the others in the path. Brissot, the war advocate. And Hébert, demagogue of the people, the straight-pantleg revolutionaries – *sans-culottes*."

"Yes, the crafty, foul Hébert."

"Robespierre hides any jealousy, even to himself, of anyone with power to decide the time or tides. And he is deeply capable of acting with terrible retribution. That is our weapon."

"He speaks every night," Barras said, "at the Jacobin Club. Fiery well-composed speeches. And, yes," he added with growing eagerness, "I have heard him throw former friends aside if they seemed likely to

cross his purposes.”

“Danton has done some shady things,” Tallien’s uptone, drawn out, sounded vicious. “After we elevate Robespierre, we will make him aware of what Danton has already done. Then, we will plant several more – really bad things – on the bombastic Danton as well.”

“We must conceal that carefully.”

“Of course. He can become dangerous to us. But Robespierre will not do anything personally. He is, you know, strangely squeamish, actually stayed away from the overthrowing of the king last year, and after that the tyrant’s guillotining on the Place. In any case, we have Fouché, Collon d’Hérbois, and others who will help us, stand with us when this Robespierre, The Incorruptible, will inevitably do himself in.”

“All right, it is a remarkable idea, but may indeed be possible. Ah – I believe I hear people approaching from up the street – we must plan in detail how to do this. But you must remember, we first have the job of getting rid of the Austrian whore.”

“Yes, yes,” Tallien said quickly, “but in this case we can leave all that to Hébert. He has planned charges against her, I have heard, that will astound everyone. The court and everyone in it will be outraged. The young Louis, Hébert has talked with him in prison, and there have been vile, despicable acts. We meet in two night’s time at the back entrance of Salpêtrière, all right? I inspect again. Same time, eh?”

Barras nodded and started to turn away. Tallien looked toward the approaching people for a moment and then grabbed Barras’s sleeve, stopping him. “Do you hear it, Barras?”

“Do I hear what? We must go immediately.”

“It is the crackling sound of salt under our feet.”

“What?”

“The Revolution has become a field of salt, Barras, barren, depleted of its promise; but on the other

hand, full of the riches of old for those smart enough to mine it. We are the miners.”

“Salt miners? I’ll take gold. Eh? Till the night after tomorrow, then.”

Encased in the space beneath their feet, Lalladiere heard and registered everything. Words with references to the life he lived in the king’s government started up, remembered images and sounds soon drowned out by a drone of disembodied derogatory voices. They told him these men were plotting against him, planning to have him killed by guillotine. Just as hospital guards often threatened to do.

Silent and unmoving, a voluntary corpse in an uncustomary grave, he believed what the voices said. He was the object of the plot. Later, when all of the dialogue between the men, the stratagems and intrigue, came back to him remembered precisely word for word, he would change his mind.

Chapter 5

“What are you doing in there?” The voice of a ten-year-old boy, full of curiosity, was directed at the motionless Lalladiere. Getting no response, the boy, Jean-Luc, circled to the other side of the enclosure to get another look.

“Have you been there long?” Jean-Luc asked again. “Are you going to come out?”

The sight of this man standing bolt upright in the tiny space, after getting up close to the matted dirty hair that first caught his eye, did not frighten or disturb Jean-Luc as it might an ordinary older passerby. He was intrigued to see a person fitting like a rod-like tongue into a smoothly lined groove, wondered whether he were playing a game. Maybe, he thought, this was a revolutionary soldier standing secret guard underneath instead of on top of the ground. Anyway, it looked like a really good hiding place. He needed to know.

“Are you hiding in there?”

After a few moments, Jean-Luc realized the man wasn't going to answer, at least not right away. He kneeled down nearby and watched for any signs of movement or response. No one else, at that very early morning hour, was coming down the street; and if, rather than playing or doing guardwork, this person was hurt, he couldn't do much to help him. But seeing him close up now, he didn't look hurt. More like stuck and unprotected. He wasn't dead, that everyday troubling matter suddenly came to mind, and quickly passed away when he glimpsed soft, barely perceptible breathing.

Jean-Luc remained kneeling for several minutes, a long time it seemed, just watching in reactive silence. Then, he said out loud to himself, “Maybe it's not a real person,” and felt even more curious about this standing shape who, he still hoped, might or might not be a playmate hiding in a shell. The hair, he saw, was almost touching the sidewalk edge near his knee. So, gradually, tentatively, as if he were about to pet a dog who could at his touch turn aggressive, he extended his hand to place it on a separated tuft.

Nothing happened, no response. The hair was thick and tangled but human and real, and Jean-Luc

kept his hand in place for a little while, waiting to see if there would be any stir or change. No recognition passed across the portion of the man's face visible to him. So, he moved his hand further onto the dark brown hair and gently began to pull it.

Thoughts of danger never came into his mind. The man was no giant but pretty strong as far as he could tell, and what he was doing, or not doing, was very strange. Ordinarily, he would have known not to stay alone out there with a stranger, especially not now when, as he knew, people stop each other on the street and buckle one or another off to the guillotine to be killed. Just a few days earlier, he had gone with his father to see a beheading. People were laughing and shouting, then they suddenly got very quiet. Down like lightning came the blade and right away they were laughing and shouting again. It was exciting and scary, but he didn't feel scared now. The man's face was quiet and unmoving, his posture stiff and vigilant. Looking at him, he wondered if the man was the one who was afraid.

"Are you hiding there?" he tried again. And now, not waiting for an answer he knew would not come, he quickly added, "Are you scared? Is somebody scaring you?"

A barely perceptible movement, a slight stretching of the corners of Lalladiere's mouth, seemed a response to what he had asked. He pressed on, not letting go of the hair.

"It must be funny to be down there all alone. Have you been there a long time? Are you hungry?"

No response.

"If you're down there and want to play capture the aristocrat, I'll go over to the other side of the street and make believe I didn't see you. Then you can come out and I'll get scared. Real scared."

No movement. No response. He let go of the hair.

"I guess maybe you are really scared. You don't want to play and somebody really bad is after you."

Jean-Luc looked carefully at Lalladiere's taut, unshaven face, followed the line of his stiff shoulders and chest, then tried to see further down to his legs and feet. Realizing there was no indication at all of a reaction, he got up off his knees and started to leave. Then, the resourceful boy got an idea. His father,

who was a servant to an actor, liked to prance around the house showing off dramatic roles and teaching Jean-Luc how to adopt them. He decided to use that tack for one more try: play-act being this sentinel-like man, figure out his role, his viewpoint, what he was scared of. Putting his arms stiffly at his sides, he tried to stand tightly erect. After a moment in that position, he nodded to himself, then kneeled down once more at Lalladiere's side.

"You don't have to worry if you move or come out of there, you know," he said softly, then slowly added, "You won't hurt me. Everybody tells me I'm strong and wiry."

Although the change in tension in Lalladiere's body would not have been apparent to an observer, and Jean-Luc did not then recognize it, a gradual relaxation and loosening of his limbs, torso, and head began. No movement yet, except in the small muscles of his eyes, which focused almost imperceptibly on the boy and beyond him.

Jean-Luc noticed a flicker from the slight eye motion and stood watching without speaking. As the form before him very slowly and gradually began to shift, assuming a bodily posture that signaled a possibility of action, a coming out from the tight surroundings, Jean-Luc blanched. Clearly, the man was an active, living force. The boy, though more than a little brave, realized he could not know what would happen. And, more pleased than fearful because of getting a reaction, he decided to go a little further.

"Yes, you see you don't have to be afraid of me, of anything. There's no one else around here right now."

More movement.

"Don't be afraid."

Lalladiere, the terror-ridden guardian, was in fact relieved by the young boy's gentle reassurances, and gradually moved freely again. He looked around the enclosure to find a means of getting out. At the same time, Jean-Luc watched carefully for any threatening motions. Seeing none, he asked again:

"Why were you hiding here?"

“The men. They are trying to kill me.” He looked to both sides, “They are all around.” Lalladiere’s voice, which Jean-Luc was glad to hear, was well-toned though tremulous and apprehensive.

“I don’t see any men. How long have you been hiding here?”

“Days, many days. They are here.” Having actually no idea about the passage of time, Lalladiere turned his head slightly to try for answers beside him by the complaining commotion of voices.

“But you are wrong. There are no men here. I live right close by. There has been no one here since I came out this morning. When are you coming out of there?” He spoke earnestly, assertively, having no idea that Lalladiere’s attention was elsewhere.

A long period of silence. Jean-Luc watched Lalladiere curiously. He was surely right, the man was quite scared. But his face was stiff and expressionless. Tiring of waiting for him to speak, budge his features, or move anything further, Jean-Luc decided to leave.

As he turned away, Lalladiere said, “Go down to the ends of the street, both ends. If you see none coming, either way, come back and tell me.”

Glad finally to be addressed, although Lalladiere’s voice sounded strangely unemotional despite the urgency of his words, Jean-Luc did as he was asked. Running quickly to one corner of the curved alley-like street, he looked in all directions, then went a moderate distance to repeat surveillance at the other corner. Someone was coming from rue La Forge, the larger street on his left, a laborer Jean-Luc had seen many times when out for solitary morning play.

He returned to Lalladiere. “You can come out. There’s no one here. It’s very safe.”

Carefully, Lalladiere looked as far as he could toward either side of the enclosure. *He is no good. He is out to trap you. A vicious boy, out to trap you, murder you.*

Fervent warnings, compelling as always. But the boy’s voice was warm, reassuring, and he stood nearby, waiting. Lalladiere watched him. Seeing this continued reluctance, Jean-Luc repeated his report. And then, defying the voices, his plaguing furies, Lalladiere came out.

With the same agility he used to squeeze himself into the streetside space, he pulled himself upward, again digging his toes into small irregular clefts and protrusions. Then, fully lodged on the cobbled walk at the top, he immediately crouched into a vigilant position and looked to either side of the street. The laborer was turning the corner.

With a roar of anguish, he glared with hatred at the boy who had betrayed him. He turned to run away from where the man appeared. But before he took a second step, Jean-Luc had grasped his swinging hand. In a soft voice, imperceptible to the man down the street, he corrected his unintentional mistake.

“Don’t be afraid. That man didn’t see you come out. Walk with me. I’ll take you where it’s safe.” Jean-Luc wondered whether this man with him was an escapee, an aristocrat, a person like the ones he had seen beheaded. His curiosity changed to an excited sense of danger and conspiracy. He wanted to shield the man from haranguing powers although he hardly knew the nature and extent of what was needed.

Lalladiere had stopped his foot in mid-air, then put it slowly and firmly on the ground. But as he looked again at the man heading toward them from down the street, there was screeching in his ear. *He’s out to trap you. Out to trap you. Out to trap you.* He pulled his hand away and set out, walking very quickly.

Jean-Luc ran after him, caught up, and continued to walk beside him. Keeping up with Lalladiere’s pace, he turned sharply and smiled at the man coming down the street behind them. The laborer, who had noticed the unusual back and forth activity, was heartened by the familiar boy’s smile. He was glad he didn’t have to interfere. Everyone was expected these days to make a citizen’s arrest of suspicious people. He surely didn’t want any trouble, and the far-from-frail-looking man with the boy might be combative.

Lalladiere, seeing the laborer turn onto another street, kept on straight ahead, still fast with large open strides. Jean-Luc broke into a half-run to keep up.

“I live near here,” Jean-Luc said. “Come to the house with me. It’s all right, my mother’s there. I bet you’ve been down in that crack a lot... a lot of time. Haven’t talked to anybody or had anything to eat for days. My mother will feed you bread and coffee.”

Lalladiere looked down at the broadly smiling Jean-Luc. The boy might be really earnest, he would go. He would try the house despite increasingly loud and clamorous warnings. As they reached the end of the street, they came to a door which Jean-Luc easily pushed open. Lalladiere peered cautiously inside. At the end of a long corridor was a woman working in the kitchen.

Suzette Rochereau, Jean-Luc's mother, turned at hearing the door open and started to see her son with an adult companion. She had a sense of danger, remembering having seen and heard gendarmes running back and forth on their street the day before. Tumult, people running, shouting about mobilizing or going to a beheading occurred often in recent times. Neighbors, sometimes outsiders, came together and argued loudly outside about the government or a threatened arrest. But gendarmes combing the nearby street was not yet a usual matter. She should have known better than to allow Jean-Luc to go that day on his usual morning outing. She shuddered, wiped a sweat-moistened palm on her apron and put it on her son's shoulder.

"Maman," the boy said before she had a chance to question or object. "This man is –" He turned quickly to Lalladiere and whispered, "What is your name?"

"Uh, uh... Lalla – diere. Guillaume Lalladiere," he replied almost imperceptibly.

"The citizen Lalladiere. He has been outside on the street and is very, very hungry. I told him you would give him bread and coffee. That is so, Maman, is it not?"

"What, Lalladiere? Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you want with us?" Suzette Rochereau asked, taking her hand off Jean-Luc's shoulder and glaring. The boy looked down and she thought sympathetically that more than once he had brought home strays – always animals to be sure – from the street. Lalladiere paused, then answered, "There are people after me. He will tell you."

Like her son, Suzette was struck by his well-toned voice and the constricted way he said such alarming words, like a full-dampened screech from a trumpet. Her worry again arose. What did he mean? Was he someone the gendarmes chased the day before? An aristocrat trying to escape from the guillotine? He was very disheveled and looked dirty. A prisoner? Probably so. She would not wait for any more explanations. The man could not be allowed to stay.

"You must leave here right away." To make sure he was not one of the spies who came sometimes to check their neighborhood, she added, "We are loyal citizens of the republic."

"Maman, he is all alone and very hungry."

"He must go. We cannot have prisoners or aristocrats in our house. Do you want us all at the foot of the 'razor'?"

"He was hiding in a little hutch under the street. Wouldn't come out, wouldn't play, wouldn't even talk." Jean-Luc's words poured out. "I told him he didn't need to be afraid. He came up then, said for me to watch out on the street. But someone was right there before I could warn him. He's scared. He needs us."

"Who is after you?" Suzette asked, relenting slightly.

Lalladiere opened his mouth to speak, then paused, and the mother and son together waited for his reply. Cocking his head, he said without expression, "The two men. They are after the Great One."

"What great one? Who? King Louis is dead. You are dirty, your clothes are all disarrayed. What have you to do with great ones?"

He did not answer. The voices had blended all his oppressors together. Suzette asked again who the people were. When he continued his silence, eyes downward, standing there in front of her, she, like her son earlier, had a sense of his dread as well as his vulnerability. Perhaps he really was escaping from anti-revolutionists, perhaps he was holding back out of concern for Jean-Luc and herself. A sensitive man, at risk, he could believe that knowing everything would put them in danger. Even if this was the person gendarmes were chasing the day before, everyone knew gendarmes were not always on the people's side.

"You need not be afraid for us. Who is it? Is this great one a citizen? A man of the Revolution?"

"Yes," Lalladiere answered simply after a moment's pause.

She decided not to question him further. He came to her house for shelter. Surely, as Jean-Luc said,

he was hungry. And something was appealing about his shy withdrawal, despite his amply muscular look. She would feed him, and as soon as possible, send him on. Maybe, after he ate, he would, if it was safe, tell them more. And if he didn't, it was probably all right too. They might just be doing something good for the republic.

“Good, Maman,” Jean-Luc said as she put out the coffee and bread, “feed his belly, feed his mind.”

After eating, Lalladiere neither told them anything about the chasers nor did he leave. When Jean-Luc's father, Théo Rochereau, came home from work, he was still there. Suzette and Jean-Luc had shared their morning breakfast with Lalladiere, Jean-Luc asking him in detail what kinds of food he liked. Suzette, after listening to his muttered answers, bemoaned that there still was very little of anything available. Jean-Luc spoke proudly about going to a small school nearby, loving to learn, and his mother said she was glad she was soon going to help support his schooling by sewing torn theatre costumes her husband brought home. Lalladiere then slowly, in a seemingly distracted way, spoke about what he called his “travels” through Paris. The articles of clothing men and women wore as he passed. When Suzette asked whether his own leggings covered the straight-legged trousers of the *sans-culottes*, he answered that his pants were “Chopped, clotted, and cu-lotted.” More evidence, she thought, that he was very likely a fighting revolutionary. He was strange, perhaps, but distinctly not an aristocrat.

“Those words are for a butcher song, right?” Jean-Luc said, laughing. “Gameplaying talk, funny gameplaying talk, citizen Lalladiere. I thought you were a gameplayer when I saw you tucked up in that space. Will you come to play *tric-trac* with me now in my room before I leave for school? All right, Maman?”

Suzette agreed. Jean-Luc led Lalladiere by hand to his room. Sitting down on the floor in front of the board, he immediately fell asleep and remained there for the rest of the day.

“How could you let a man, an unknown man, into the house in times like this?” Théo Rochereau said loudly and fiercely to his wife shortly after his arrival home. “If this man is a traitor or an aristocrat, we could all be in the Place de la Révolution with our heads chopped off.” Flashing through his mind were the festivities he had taken his son to two days before with an image of himself lying flat on the board as the knife was falling.

"Just as bad," he went on, "I heard today that a lunatic is free. Gendarmes came right here on this street. If this is the one, he will kill us where we stand. Where is he now? What in damnation have you done?"

"He is asleep in Jean-Luc's room."

"What?"

"He is asleep in the child's room. Jean-Luc is not there."

"Why did you do this? Which of the devil's creatures is he?"

"I don't know." Suzette, agitated, spoke very rapidly, snapping her words. "Jean-Luc brought him. He was tired and hungry. *Sans-culotte*, I think he is *sans-culotte*. He said people on the Paris streets wore too much finery." She was elaborating Lalladiere's flat descriptions. But now she wondered why, despite her apprehension, she was drawn to this man and allowed him to stay.

Théo stomped quickly to Jean-Luc's room and burst in. Seeing the sleeping Lalladiere on the floor, he kneeled, shaking the inert man roughly by the shoulder. The shoulder, seemingly on its own volition, recoiled from his hand, and both bended knees retracted slowly inward toward the torso. Lalladiere's eyelids fluttered. Théo stopped the shaking, and removed his hand.

"Citizen, you must wake," he said to the now curled-up form. "Who are you? Tell me right now why you have come here."

No response.

"I tell you, you cannot just lie there. You cannot stay or take refuge here."

Again, no response.

"I shall report you. To the Section Leader, the gendarmes. They will come and drag you away."

There was no indication his words were registering. Lalladiere's eyes, partly open, had no

expression in them.

Théo's frustration engulfed him. "They will drag you to the razor, the damn guillotine, and cut off your stupid head."

Behind him, both his wife and Jean-Luc, who had just arrived home, stood at the door. He turned toward them with a murderous expression, shifted determinedly back to Lalladiere, and grabbed hold of his upper arm. The arm moved readily and loosely as he pulled, lacking the resistance needed to drag the rest of the body after it. Confused and disgusted, he let go, then reached to take hold of the nearby leg.

The released arm did not fall, remaining suspended in mid-air exactly where Théo's hand had left it. Théo stood up. He, Suzette, and Jean-Luc stared at what appeared as a wax statue of a giant bird with an extended, broken wing, lying on the floor in wait for death or deliverance.

Lalladiere stared. *Don't move. A slimy finger will destroy them all, a finger will destroy the world.*

Chapter 6

It took more than two hours. Théo went to the gendarmerie, was sent to Bicêtre to report the immobile man on the floor in his house, and waited until the attendants, Denis and Ajacis, were dispatched. Before that, Théo, Suzette, and a fascinated Jean-Luc exerted great effort attempting to lift Lalladiere up, rouse him, stir him in some way. And each time his head, arms, or legs remained compliantly where they were put. Théo, believing that Lalladiere was faking and putting on an elaborate act, grabbed several of his wife's milliner's pins and stuck them into various portions of the immobile body. No reaction, not even a grimace. Baffled, he realized, faking or not, this must be the escaped lunatic. They needed to get him out, taken back to the Bicêtre.

When the two attendants arrived at the house, they went immediately to the room to see the familiar, for them, recumbent wax statue. After a quick glance at Lalladiere's crooked arm motionless in space, Denis and Ajacis together set about the difficult task of lifting the dead-weighted body onto a wood-slatted litter. In the past, they would have immediately set into a lunatic in that condition with beatings and whippings, but things had markedly changed. Later, outside the house people who heard about the madman at the house of the Rochereaus felt no such constraint. When the attendants drove the litter back to Bicêtre, bystanders spit at the cart and hit at it with pikes.

Jean-Luc watched his new friend carried by Denis and Ajacis and followed them cheerlessly to the cart. His parents told him that lunatics were exposed to the evil eye and possessed by the Devil, but Jean-Luc knew something else about this man he found hiding in the enclosure by the side of the street. He had correctly recognized Lalladiere's fear, his paralyzing helplessness. He hoped this man, the lunatic, wouldn't be hurt when he got back to the Bicêtre. Hurt? The word reverberated in his mind. His father, he was sure, would now punish him badly for having brought Lalladiere home.

Theo determined first to go to the house of the local municipal Section Leader, a sans-culotte revolutionary, and complain about the Bicêtre escape.

"They've unchained the madmen. They are running all over Paris," he blurted as Section Leader

Henri Barchon came to the door.

“What? The devil, the living devil.”

“Yes. One of them just came to my house. By God, he bewitched my son. Attendants from the asylum, I called them, they had to pull and pull on him, almost had to use a crane to get him out. Got him away, finally, in a large litter.”

“Was he dangerous?”

“You have to know he was. Couldn’t rouse him, but I was sure the whole time he would come at me the minute I turned my back.”

“Who is responsible for this?”

“It’s the new head of the Bicêtre, I was told. He’s having all those lunatics unchained. And so they escape, move around the streets, come right to our houses. No one is safe.”

“Is this new head an aristocrat?”

“Name’s Pinel, doctor Pinel.”

“It must be an aristocrat plot,” Barchon said, spitting through his teeth. “They release the madmen into the streets. Cause holy mayhem. Distract us from hunger and the work to overthrow them.”

“What can we do?”

“I will report this to the leaders at the Commune.”

Denis also was thinking about punishment, the strict new rules against beating and chaining, and Lalladiere’s escape. He was relieved that the inmate was finally rounded up and soon back where he belonged. But Denis could never stand the taking on of that kind of paralysis. The strange condition which, experienced as he was, also appeared always like make-believe. He had come to agree with the new rules, but right then felt like beating Lalladiere into responding. This man was a real person, not a

mass of wax, or clay, or tar that could be shaped into any form you put it. Lying there in one place without moving, or resisting, or acting like a human being, he was infuriating. Denis felt sure it was done on purpose. If not, he couldn't understand what the lunacy was, what made Lalladiere crazy that way. He couldn't quite believe in ideas about lunatics being possessed. But if the ideas were right, if Lalladiere was possessed, Denis wanted to beat the damned burrowing spirit out of him. Ajacis, though quiet, had no doubts at all about causes, but he vowed to himself that he would find a way to do just that.

In the cart, Lalladiere's lashed-down body lurched from side to side as the hard wheels bounced over the cobbled street. Clear thoughts and even voices came rarely. He dimly knew that enemies were on every side carrying him away to tear him apart and kill him. He knew he had to continue motionless, lying tightly against the boards of the cart as though tied against them. Then, outside the cart, he heard a faint chorus of beautiful voices beckoning to him.

Come, Guillaume. Come to us. Stately, stately, soft and caring. Sweet serenity, the well of all compassion. Oh come to us, we are near to you, so near. Come.

These were sounds and voices he had never heard before. Lovely, ethereal sounding, and melodious. He thought to move toward them, but his body constrained him. His arms and legs were still bound by deeper convictions inside. The chorus also was out to trap him, bring him close, then tear him apart and kill him. As the cart moved onward, they did not leave, their harmonies grew more beautiful, their calls and offers became more persistent, wafting through the boards.

At Bicêtre, he was taken directly to a cell for solitary confinement. He stayed there into the night, motionless, still hearing the beckoning voices through the walls. They promised to love him, take care of him forever, if he would only stir himself, move, and come to them. Finally he fell asleep, awakening a short time later to raucous, more familiar voices. They told him what a low, unworthy, shit-eating person he was, and cautioned him never to respond to any commands but theirs. To them, he mumbled quietly over and over: "I know, I know."

The door of his cell opened and the attendant Ajacis entered. Without a word, the tall, burly, red-headed figure walked to where Lalladiere was lying, and with a long flat handled board in hand, began to beat the inert legs stretched out on the floor. Seeing that Lalladiere's legs did not move, even to avoid

the blows, he deftly shifted the board to his other hand and pummeled his upper body.

"I know you, you faking runaway. Devil, goddamned freak. You were the one at the Bastille who went through the garden of the arsenal, climbed up onto those roofs and got inside," Ajacis said as he continued to strike at arms, shoulders, and ribs.

"You were a great hero, eh? Ain't it so, freak?"

No moan, no sound from Lalladiere.

"Nobody even noticed what I did there." Still no sound despite the blows, only involuntary twitching.

"Who do you think grabbed the bastard governor de Launey outside the fortress and, in the middle of that muddled crowd, slit his throat?"

Quite skillful with the heavy board, as well as with any kind of beating, Ajacis smashed the flat face of it against Lalladiere's arm, moving his hand closer to his body.

"Well, now you know, hero-freak," Ajacis hissed as he took the board into both hands and hit at the groin, upper legs, and other portions of the ribs and arms, "I will get you to move again but not so you can ever run and escape. This will teach you not to do your climbing up on roofs and make attendants search for you again."

Lalladiere's silence, although at times his body shifted slightly in painful recoil from the blows, seemed to deprive Ajacis of full enjoyment of his punishment. He noticed, in the minimal light, that he had already raised great welts on the body and bleeding had begun in several places, providing a tell-tale account of the flogging. Warnings from both governor Pussin and Dr. Pinel were strong and persistent. Although this beating would not likely be traced to him – the freak says nothing or, if he lives, only crazy things – he had to be careful.

Despite excruciating pain, Lalladiere did not stir when Ajacis left the cell, nor did he change the stilted position he was left in.

Urine that passed out of him during the night stayed wet in his clothes.

Food quickly left at his door the next morning by an indifferent attendant, Georges, was not approached or touched. When Georges at midday brought food to the cell, he noticed the bread and full cup on the floor and entered to see the welts and oozing blood on Lalladiere's body. Not quite so indifferent but mostly afraid he would be blamed, Georges washed off much of the blood and covered some of the bruises and welts.

Late that afternoon, hospital governor Pussin came with attendant Antoine into Lalladiere's cell. For a moment, he stood in silence by Lalladiere's immobile body with arms extended bizarrely over the edges of the straw-matted cot. Despite his experience with this man and others, the sight also made him wonder momentarily whether the man was faking. He was immediately troubled, though, by the sight of the dressings, welts, and oozing blood. Pointing at them, he looked sternly at Antoine.

"Who did this?"

"I am sorry, governor Pussin, I don't know"

"Not you?"

"No."

"Whoever did this will be sorry. We do not tolerate beatings at Bicêtre anymore. The man will be fired. Clean him up, I will wait."

Pussin watched while Antoine tried to clean the remaining blood on the awkwardly placed limbs. Lalladiere did not shift or move. He would not, Pussin thought, speak about the beating. He went outside, brought in a stool, and sat down.

"This is governor Pussin, Lalladiere, I have come to see you."

Nothing.

"You ran away from us, Lalladiere. We have taken away your chains, allowed you to walk freely in

the yard. And now you run away. Do we shackle you again?"

Lalladiere, immobile and silent, heard again the beautiful voices. Pussin, also silent, watched his unrevealing face. Then:

"You will stay here in solitary now, you understand. You must not run away again." His words mixed with the singing.

Come, oh come to us. Sweet, oh sweet serenity.

Thinking about the need to inflict a strong noncorporal deterrent, Pussin waited. But first he needed to get Lalladiere to respond. He recognized the man was suffering, not simply from the beating. Often, in the past, he was able to elicit some reaction by getting himself on the inmate's side, consoling him in some way.

"I do not know who beat you, but we will not let it ever happen again. We do not want to hurt you, humiliate or torment you, Lalladiere. You are safe here. We will keep you safe."

No evidence of any effect, or even that the words were heard. Pussin, with a distinctly sincere tone, repeated his reassurance of safety. Was there now a slight movement, a shifting, in his left hand?

"You are not hopeless."

Although there was little change at first, Pussin, over and over at measured intervals and in a steady voice, repeated his assertions first of security and then of hope. Slowly, gradually, Lalladiere's body loosened. No limb movements yet or alterations of position, but governor Pussin knew he had touched a chord. They were few words, meager offers of care and promise, but they were conveyed by him, the caretaker, with steady conviction. That, together with the protection and assured restraint of the hospital cell's surrounding walls, might help Lalladiere to move again. Pussin did not know but vaguely guessed that close walls and care served to protect an inmate from his own fears of discharging his destructive impulses. He got up to leave the cell, walked to the door, and looking back, saw Lalladiere's arm bend a little in preparation for turning in the cot.

The next day, in his daily report to Dr. Pinel, governor Pussin brought up Lalladiere and his condition. He spoke concisely, descriptively, confident of the doctor's understanding. Pinel had, in the short time since assuming leadership of the asylum, become Pussin's hero. The cessation of inmate beatings and removal of chains, a policy which the governor had been attempting to introduce at Bicêtre for several years, was enthusiastically taken up by Pinel soon after he arrived. He recognized it was a breakthrough for medical treatment and a liberation from malfeasance and pain. It was, of course, a big change, a radically new one that had already had stirred up difficulties with the leaders in the Paris Commune. Pinel had recently received an official letter from them demanding he stop all runaways. But the doctor was determined to continue; he decided to keep records and address himself to the medical community. He began to document both the early successes and the failures in writing.

"Dr. Pinel," Pussin said, "the man has shown this negative state before and come out of it, slowly."

"A state of waxy flexibility, you mean."

"Yes, exactly. It was of course pointless, because of the lack of movement, to use a straightjacket with him. But Lalladiere has run away, and it is necessary still to show firmness." Pussin decided to handle the beating himself and not for the moment to tell Pinel about it.

"You do that well, Pussin. Consolation, reassurance, which you always temper with firmness. Has this patient been treated elsewhere?"

"Transferred here a few months ago from the Hospice d'Humanité. The usual treatment Cathartics, bloodletting, and baths. Before Lalladiere suddenly became insane, Dr. Pinel, he was a man of intelligence and influence, assistant to Minister Necker."

"Tell me what you have observed."

Pussin described Lalladiere's escape, the reports of his scaling stone walls, running over the roofs of buildings, impressive feats of vigor and agility. He went on then to recount Lalladiere's behavior since coming to the Bicêtre asylum. There were periods of extreme agitation, violent resistance when being restrained, vile and abusive language. These were often followed by long stretches of docility, only rarely

by descent into the waxy flexibility. Sometimes, he even was quite collaborative, helping attendants and other inmates.

The man surely heard non-existent things. He frequently moved his lips in a repetitive way with an undertone of conversation and other sounds. Both his agitation and immobile states responded better, Pussin noticed, to comments about his probable state of mind than to force. Not always, however. He was a difficult patient.

Observation. Pinel listened intently to the details of Pussin's account. Up to then, he knew little about Lalladiere. There were far too many inmates at Bicêtre for him to know or follow each. But beyond that, careful observation was, he believed, absolutely vital and he relied strongly on the reports of this canny, resourceful governor.

Pinel had been trained at the Montpellier medical school of southwestern France to derive all theory and practice from observation, and had gone eagerly beyond his teachers. Fascinated from an early age by the classics, he avidly studied Greek and Latin works pertaining to illness, both literary and historical, and devoured the writings of the early physicians Galen and Hippocrates. He found all of these contained important knowledge derived from observations about disease and treatment. When he later undertook the care of lunatics, he discovered careful documentations by the early physicians about such patients that were particularly useful. They were keener observers of the insane than the long procession of physicians who came after them, including some of his teachers. His father, a humble and devoted rural barber-surgeon, also read widely and encouraged him to learn as much as he could about the care of people. Reading classical medical works as well as philosophy in a grassy field near the school, he thought someday he might make an important contribution to medical knowledge and treatment.

At the Bicêtre, both Jean-Jacques Pussin and his collaborator wife Marguerite showed him sick inmates who had at one time been beaten in response to agitated ramblings and attacks and were chained as punishment or containment. These inmates, they reported, became even more vicious and resentful. At the smallest opportunity they had attacked attendants whose attention lapsed when they came to feed them, maiming and sometimes murdering them. Other shackled inmates, as Pinel

continually saw, remained in complete lassitude and torpor, lacking even any concern with their own filth. These he ordered freed and cleaned up immediately.

“Yes, Pussin, I agree with keeping him in solitary confinement. Without the chains, as we have seen, we must still be firm.”

“It is important that he knows, when he comes to move freely, as he surely will, that he cannot run away again.”

“Important for his sake, Pussin. But unfortunately we must also insure against those who are already attacking us for allowing such a man to be free.”

Pussin, narrow-eyed in a deeply creased face squinted his eyes further and nodded. “Then, when eventually he collaborates, as he has before, I shall try – I hope I can arrange it – to give him work to do in the institution. I have not been able to find something suitable up to now.”

“Fine, fine. We can then observe whether work is effective for him.”

“We have already had many improve as a result.”

“No other hospitals I know of do it, but the idea has a sound basis.”

“An antidote to insanity.”

“Indeed, but it comes from ancient wisdom.”

“What do you mean?”

“Observation, Pussin. Observation.” Pinel pointed with his index fingers to the edges of his eyes. “What we can clearly divine from the sequences, documented by the wisely observant ancients, about such a type as the great Greek hero, Herakles. First, he went mad and killed his children. Then, he was given a series of tasks to perform—far, far more difficult at any rate than any you could put forward here—but tasks that healed. As it is reported, he gradually regained his senses fully.”

"*Hercule*, the great strongman?" Pussin asked, frowning and giving the famous hero's name a French rather than Greek rendering. He was not accustomed to thinking in such grand analogies.

"I see you are troubled," Pinel said, smiling and with the flat of his hand tapping the air in front of him. "Did you not know that the great Herakles – *Hercule*, that is – went mad with fervor and violence?"

Then, as Pussin refrained from answering, Pinel added, his azure eyes twinkling, "So, it is not that, then. It is the Herakles. You are distressed that the great strongman was not a Frenchman, is it not so?"

As Pussin looked away and sputtered, Pinel said laughing, "Do not fret, Pussin, you have helped me greatly. I shall go to see Lalladiere this afternoon."

Chapter 7

Pinel entered Lalladiere's cell accompanied by Denis. Seeing the man lying motionless, he, like Pussin, also stood for several minutes watching silently. He had been told that Lalladiere had gotten up to use the slop bucket.

"I am Dr. Pinel, citizen Lalladiere, the physician in charge of the Bicêtre Asylum."

No motion in the cot. The doctor waited.

"I have come to help you."

Denis, staring nearby at the unresponsive Lalladiere, shook his head with an exasperated gesture.

"I know you are sick," Pinel continued, "and you must be helped. I am here to find out what I can do."

Silence. This, Pinel knew, was the kind of circumstance that led doctors at other hospitals to order physical punishment to teach such a patient to respond. The idea made him cringe, the young man lying before him was surely suffering. His dejected eyes in an otherwise expressionless face reminded Pinel of one of the first friends he made when he came to Paris, Gerard Le Blanc, a young lawyer who became insane and killed himself. He had cherished that man, but could do nothing to help him. The devastating and baffling course influenced Pinel greatly. That, and the challenge of treating mentally ill patients at the Belhomme Sanitarium, made him decide to devote himself to his current practice.

"You were, as I understand it," Pinel said, "an assistant to the minister Necker. A very important position."

No response. Or did he see a flickering crease across Lalladiere's forehead?

"You are surely an intelligent and highly knowledgeable person."

Nothing visible. A long wait. Pinel, observing Lalladiere's slightly curled motionless position, thought it must be connected with his having run away.

"You must have felt like a fugitive to run so far from here, to stay away so long. Are there people after you?"

Lalladiere stirred. Slowly, very slowly, he turned his head in the doctor's direction, and said dully, "Salt. Salt. 645 and 36. Salt fields. They are going to kill me."

Eyebrow arched, Pinel gazed at Denis, sharing his surprise and doubt. He returned to look to Lalladiere, determined to find out more.

"Who is it? Who wants to kill you?"

Despite the seeming beginning, a return to silence. Possibly, Pinel knew, he might end up learning nothing at all.

"Tell me, citizen," he tried again, "who is it that wants to kill you?" Both his persistence and tone of voice were kindly and earnest, reflecting a devotion to know and understand. That, it seemed, had an effect.

"They are after me. All around. They will torture me and kill me." With a rapid glance at Denis, Lalladiere turned around to face the doctor and raised himself onto an elbow.

"But why?" Pinel asked.

"But why?" Lalladiere flatly repeated.

Thrown off guard, Pinel fell silent. A few moments later, he resumed.

"Who are these vicious men? Those who want to torture and kill you?"

"They say I am corrupt. I do slimy, dirty things." Shoulders hunched, head down, Lalladiere slowly shifted into a sitting posture. There was no expression in his voice, but his eyes regularly wavered back

and forth.

“What things?”

“What things?” echoed Lalladiere again.

Pinel had encountered such bizarre repetition before, a classifiable symptom that always frustrated him.

“Tell me about these people who are after you. Are they aristocrats? Are they from the government?” Many people, Pinel knew, were being hunted during the upheaval and revolution. Perhaps, as sometimes happened, there might even be some truth to what the man was saying.

“They know I am the Anointed One.”

“What do you mean? What anointed one?”

“I am here to lead the people back to power and righteousness.”

Pinel noted the marked contrast, a complete contradiction really, of Lalladiere’s earlier assertion about being corrupt and doing dirty things. He decided for the moment not to argue.

“So, you are arrived to forward righteousness. What’s wrong with that? Why should people be after you to kill you?”

“They do not want me to save the Revolution.”

“You are out to save the Revolution, eh? A worthy undertaking, but can you not leave that to Danton and the other leaders? How do you know you are the Anointed One?” Although Pinel did not intend his questions to be disturbing, Lalladiere responded with an agitated torrent of words:

“I am off in the races. I have always been in races because I cannot creep or crawl. The others watch, they wait, but they do not see what I do. And they better find out soon because there are a lot of telescopes around. They are pure, pure you see. That’s why they call me corrupt.”

Slimy hands. Filthy hands. We see you. You soil everything you touch.

Baffled, Pinel grasped for intelligibility.

“Corrupt? Anointed One? Which shall it be, citizen? You cannot be both anointed and a corrupt one at the same time.”

Pinel could not then know nor even guess at the meanings of the word “corrupt” in Lalladiere’s life. Brought up in a house of constant vacillation and recrimination, the minimally expressed thoughts and feelings of one day contradicted in the next, accusations hurled day and night between parents, and constantly at him. Trained in worry, fear, and prohibition, Lalladiere escaped into a world of absolute good and bad. And he, because their words or actions told him so, was always bad, his wants and needs perverse and selfish. The wish for pleasure, succor, friendship outside the home was abomination and corruption. Most thoughts and actions were corrupt. From all appearances, he was a young boy like any other boy. But he knew he was unlike others, something in him, or about him, always was deficient. A deep and serious lack. He tried to play with other boys, running games, skittles, make-believe hunting and tracking in the streets, but he found very early that, even though strong and well developed from helping his father lift and cart stones, he couldn’t keep up, or they didn’t want him. In the end, it didn’t matter which it was, he was always left out. Only in school, where he could try to be completely good, did he excel. Fastidiously, he repeated the teacher’s dictation, the facts and homilies, did the classroom assignments with perfect exactness, and was outstanding on tests and examinations, especially those involving calculations and numbers. Unlike anyone he knew, numbers were reliable, they were his comfort and solace. But corruption, he believed, always hid in his thoughts and actions. Over and over, his mother did things that told him he must not look, hear, or feel. His father – he never could tell why – always condemned him. Real, or fabric of imagination, he was corrupt.

“You will see,” Lalladiere replied to Dr. Pinel, his conviction causing him to respond to the doctor’s challenge, “that they are planning to kill me. Murder outright. They have devised a plot to raise me up. Up. Up. High up. They will show the world who I am, then cut me off. My mother, they say, is a whore.” In the dreamlike answer to the doctor’s question, he again mixed in elements of the plot he had overheard.

“Who are these people? You can speak freely,” Pinel said, reassuringly. And, trying to bring

Lalladiere to clearer answers, he added forthrightly, "We are trustworthy."

Trustworthy? Lalladiere looked at Denis, the former pursuer. Two here against one. Trustworthiness of other human beings was not something to believe in. He should have had trust, been trusted, but he trusted no one now. There was danger here.

"The man," Lalladiere said slowly, "was full of authority, he could have been a doctor."

Doctors are powerful. They torture and kill.

Pinel took the statement as an answer to his question. But he did not realize that his reassurances had backfired. Lalladiere's derogation and distrust had shifted onto him.

"A doctor? Who is this doctor? Are you talking about the doctor who treated you at the Hospice d'Humanité?"

"The doctor is very powerful. He heals their legs. They walk freely."

"But this is helpful, is it not?" Pinel asked, misunderstanding. "If the doctor is healing their legs, how could he be trying to kill them. Or you?"

"He gets them to run away, be corrupted, caught, then beaten and killed."

"I do not know of a doctor who gets people to run away and has them beaten," Pinel said, unaware of the target of the veiled sardonic references. "But if you tell me about him, who he is, where he is located, I shall do what I can to stop such things. We have taken away chains on inmates here, and it is you who have run away. But we do not beat you, is that not so?"

"The posers," Lalladiere responded, "they are not friends, they beat and twist the body and the mind." He was agonized by Pinel's fully unproved claim to being trustworthy, the same as given by all the others who had seduced him into hope of care and solace, said they were looking out for him, then ganged up and betrayed him.

Pinel, not sure whether Lalladiere was telling a real story or a fake one, continued to ask for the

identity of the doctor. Getting no response, he noticed that Lalladiere's face and body were even more tight and shrunken and recognized he was pushing in the wrong direction. He laughed softly to himself at his own ineptitude. Then, he shifted to another connection.

"When you ran away from here, you were quite a hero, were you not?" he said with authentic appreciation. "A man who mightily leaps over the roofs."

The compliment, the break in tone, was briefly reassuring for Lalladiere. But it was too late.

You must not trust this doctor. Say nothing, the man is out to kill you. The voices had become stronger, more insistent.

As Lalladiere lapsed into complete silence, Pinel watched him for a long, seemingly unproductive time. Sitting there, he thought again of Gerard, his insane young lawyer friend, his feelings of helplessness as the man became increasingly unavailable to him. This man before him, like Gerard, like every human being, was full of promise. But there was nothing more he could do for him right then. He had taken off the chains, freed the man's arms and legs, but his mind was still closed, imprisoned. He sighed, looked sadly now at Denis, and motioned for them to leave.

Chapter 8

He always set aside time to carry out autopsies on recently deceased patients. This time, he had decided to invite and carry out an exploration with both Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis, director of Paris hospitals, and Michel-Augustin Thouret, dean of the new school of medicine. These men, members of the Paris Hospital Commission, had together been responsible for Pinel's appointment as the physician in charge of the Bicêtre. The three of them had first met at the famous salon of Madame Helvetius where Pinel, despite having been rebuffed by Paris bureaucrats because of his provincial background, was invited when he became editor of the Health Gazette Journal. He was popular with many there and especially with Cabanis and Thouret because he studied classics, mathematics, and philosophy both before and during his medical education, and he was able to participate eagerly and with considerable intellect in these men's scientific and philosophical discussions. He had finally obtained the position at the Belhomme Sanitarium but in short order came to hate it. Despite much success in treating the patients, the greedy contractor owner refused to discharge them. Gratefully, Cabanis and Thouret, who called themselves Ideologues, rescued him from that situation with their support for the prestigious position at Bicêtre. After that, the three of them had many discussions about the causes of insanity and mental illness.

"So, Pinel, you have a demonstration for us today," said Cabanis, entering the room followed by Thouret. He flung his coat on a wall-hook. Thouret, a tall, thin man, did so too, more carefully.

"Yes, I have proceeded with the autopsy so that we could all study the head and brain together. Join me."

Cabanis, a stocky man with thinning hair, seated himself at a stool by the slab and inspected the supine body. The work, he noted, had been carefully done – the large Y-shaped incision, the dissection of tissue, and removal of major organs. Clearly a skilled physician, Pinel constantly justified his confidence.

"Have you found anything of note in the body so far?" asked Thouret, concerned not to let any details slip by. He settled himself next to Cabanis and leaned forward.

"No, lung congestion and engorgement, the man died of pneumonia," Pinel answered, then added, "He was, unfortunately, very emaciated."

"And what was the mental syndrome?" Cabanis asked.

"Dementia with features of katatonus." Pinel used the Greek word for what later would come to be called 'catatonia'.

As they spoke, he proceeded to carry out the remainder of the autopsy involving the skull and brain. The doctors watched these operations in silence, interested to see whether anything appeared at first exposure. Both men appreciated Pinel's dexterous maneuvers, almost as though he were operating on a living person.

"I have another patient with the same diagnosis who is currently troubling me," Pinel said as he continued. "He has run away from the asylum, and we have managed to get him back."

"Troubling you? Why, because he ran away?" Thouret asked.

"Well, he seems to have been a very competent, intelligent man. He was previously the chief assistant to Minister Necker. Speaks now in riddles. I have no understanding of what has caused his illness."

"Is that a purpose of this autopsy?" Cabanis asked.

"As I have said, my friend, I did many of these before at Belhomme. But yes, I am interested in him while always also looking for answers to our questions. About the causes of the syndromes and any kind of information that might help with current treatment."

"We must gather together all our observations, no matter how great, no matter how small. Then we will have a basis for our conclusions," Cabanis said windily.

"Yes," Pinel said, smiling. "Observation."

He freed up the brain which, because it was slippery, nearly fell from his hands. He weighed it,

then placed it on a nearby panel. Slowly, he inspected all the coverings, removed them and looked at and felt the contours.

“No softening of the gray matter anywhere,” Pinel announced.

Thouret leaned further forward. Cabanis simultaneously pushed his stool closer to the slab and craned his neck to see better. All three men’s heads were close, almost touching. Pinel continued with a systematic separating and slicing of the tissue, pausing frequently and exposing each section for detailed examination.

“No softening in the white matter. Smooth and homogeneous,” Pinel said.

“Nothing unusual about this brain, size, shape or appendages,” Cabanis offered.

“Are the veins enlarged?” asked Thouret.

“Quite the usual,” Pinel said, adding, “No, it appears quite normal so far, as Cabanis says.”

“I see nothing abnormal in those cross-sections, no internal bleeding, no abnormalities in the structures,” Thouret volunteered, not to be outdone.

Pinel continued his careful work, stopping from time to time to look at some tissue more closely or run his fingers carefully over something grainy or hard. Each time, after such assessment, he showed the part to his attentive colleagues for validation or discussion. Both Cabanis and Thouret commented on the qualities, in every case not unusual or pathological, of the specimen offered.

“Well, gentlemen,” Pinel said, when he was finished. “We can all see there is nothing whatsoever abnormal about this brain. I shall, of course, take some samples to be looked at carefully with the microscope. But I very much doubt if we will find anything much different than what we have already observed.”

“Quite right,” Thouret said, flattening the end of his small moustache with his forefinger.

“The finding agrees with what I have seen in all the autopsies on lunatics I have done so far,” Pinel

said, smiling at Thouret. "Now, as you both requested, you have at least seen one yourselves."

"Yes, it is quite definite," Cabanis declared, nodding. He did not stand up. "Well, then, perhaps you would like to tell us more about your runaway patient. I should, I am sorry to say, let you know that the hospital commission on which I serve has received complaints about your allowing patients to be unfettered and escape. One member has called for your removal. He says that madmen will both be killing in the hospital and running through the streets. I know for one thing there was more likelihood of killings when the inmates were chained. I hope I shall be able to convince him and the others about your approach."

"I have heard of the complaint," Pinel said with a frown which, after a moment's thought, turned into a smile. "But then hasn't our canny Voltaire taught us that people are afraid of any changes in 'the best of all possible worlds?' Anything really new?"

"Quite right," Cabanis replied. "Fear should be overcome. Medical truth and effective treatment are what matters. What are the man's symptoms?"

Pinel filled them in on Lalladiere's story, the nature of his katatonus during the escape as reported to him by Pussin. He also described in detail the course of his own session, emphasizing the man's belief in being an anointed person and the object of a murderous plot.

"He certainly suffers from extreme passions, as we have discussed regarding these conditions," Cabanis said. "I believe that with this kind of paranoid thinking there is often uncontrolled hatred."

"Sometimes," Thouret volunteered, "such a person has suffered a severe disappointment, a great loss, or even a betrayal by a woman or a friend."

"Yes, I have wondered about arousal of passions like that also. None of us, of course, believes in the common ideas about becoming possessed. There are events in a person's life, social or moral, that may induce insanity."

"And what are your ideas about this man Lalladiere?" Cabanis asked.

"I really do not know. He is a mystery. I must observe him further, make a close study of his responses."

"Nothing at all so far?" Cabanis pressured.

"Well, he was an assistant to a very important minister. Perhaps, as some do, he suffers from thwarted ambition, hoped to rise high with financial matters in the government." Pinel was thinking about his insane young friend Gerard who was driven to succeed in the legal profession and failed. Did he consider, in some dim place in his mind, that his own high ambitions could possibly also do him ill someday?

"Insanity is due to lesions or defects in the imagination," Cabanis said, quoting his own often stated and written opinion. "Thwarted ambition, if strong enough, can surely engender lunatic passion." He pursed his lips and nodded, looking a bit too wise.

"Very interesting, but rather inexact," Thouret said. "Tell me, Pinel, were there any other speculations that came to you during your interview with this Lalladiere? I believe you have a special kind of sensitivity to this type of patient." Earnest as well as precise, Thouret was planning, although he had not told him yet, to procure a professorship for Pinel in the medical school.

"There is something I wonder about. This man, like other similar patients I have seen, speaks almost in a secret code."

"I too have seen that in lunatic patients as well," Thouret said, fingers now pressing down the other side of his moustache.

"It makes me question whether somewhere in these poor suffering people, deep down as we say," Pinel continued, his voice quietly intense, "there is an actual secret hidden. A terrible secret, one that breaks apart their minds, invades their sentences, devours their words, puts them into despair. Causes them to do wild, bizarre things and even makes them violent. A secret such as that could be eating away the insides of this former government functionary, breaking down his intellect and substituting aggrandized and extremely suspicious ideas."

“As we have seen with this examination just now with, as you say, a patient with similar symptoms,” Cabanis interrupted, face creased with a thoughtful frown and lips still pursed, “there is nothing in the features of the brain alone to account for the disorder. No secrets in the body at any rate.”

“There may,” Pinel continued, rapt in his thought, “be things that happen to human beings, things that are so debased they must be hidden, even eventually from a person’s own knowledge. Things that invade our souls, make all the good we were born with seem, or become, so evil that we turn away from the company of ordinary people, become paralyzed, or devoid of any shred of rational thought. This could be the root of it all Lalladiere’s insanity.”

“If such as you suggest there are, I surely hope you will find them,” Thouret said, smiling warmly.

“Your work here is excellent, Pinel. I shall, I repeat, do everything in my power to convince the hospital commission of that. I very much hope I shall be successful.”

“I hope for the same in the good wishes of you both,” Pinel said. His eyes twinkled and he smiled inwardly, not so much because of the encouragement but out of amusement at himself, his own tendencies to get so carried away. He suggested that they continue the discussion over dinner, indicating that his wife, good citizeness Jeanne Pinel, had prepared a splendid feast for them.

In a place distant from these proceedings, Lalladiere’s long hours of solitude were filled with dire commands, accusations, and repetitive warnings. The solid stone floor and walls surrounding him served for some reason to ward off his return to protective immobility. But fear, anxiety, and hopelessness evoked by the words of wild voices, invisible cellmates, remained with him.

New policies had not yet brought with them cleanliness in solitary cells. Lalladiere was at home with the mucky walls, slime, and dim animal forms. These scurried at the edges of the cell, sometimes brazenly explored closer to him, moved back when they found no food. Worthless and at the nadir of existence, this was for him an appropriate setting. He lay, face down on the cot, trying to obliterate consciousness with sleep. Sometimes, for hours at a time, he succeeded. Then, he roused from dreams containing words and images even more terrifying than those in his waking world. He moved aimlessly around the cell, flailed his arms, hit the walls.

Corrupt corrupt. You are disgusting and corrupt. They will destroy you. They are coming to raise you up, then kill you.

Stopping at a corner of the wall farthest from the cell door, he crouched and watched.

Here they are. They are here to get you. Everywhere. They are everywhere, coming through the cell gate. They are coming.

He tried to hunch himself into the narrow crevice formed by the wall corner and trembled with fright.

Next morning, when the attendant Antoine, responsible for feedings that day, came to bring him bread, Lalladiere was still crouching in the corner. Antoine put the bread on the floor, watched for some moments to see whether Lalladiere would pick it up to eat. Seeing no movement toward the food at all, he left. Later, he reported the matter to the governor. Pussin went to see Lalladiere himself and saw him crouching. He decided, after checking with Dr. Pinel, to order water treatments.

When they came, several hours later, to take Lalladiere out of the cell for the treatments, it proved very difficult. He would not willingly leave the corner.

More murderers are here. Watch, watch, they will pull you apart.

As they attempted forcibly to move him, he flailed out in violent rage. Struggling, he was sure, to protect his life, his arm muscles became steel-taut as he pushed his elbows into the bodies of his oppressors. He kicked, smashed his strong fists against their faces, then desperately bit them as they grasped his moving limbs. It was quite a while before they were able to clasp his arms and legs securely, firmly fix his head, then carry him to the baths.

Once there, the water gradually had its effect. His muscles loosened as they dumped bucket after bucket of very warm liquid over him. He began to feel something akin to relaxation. Not calm, but less frightened, less knotted up with vigilance.

Water – soft, clean water – had in time past been for him both balm and reparation. Once, on one of

his long walks alone outside of Paris, he discovered a pond, a small one, in the midst of the woods. After that, away from others, away from parents and schoolmates, he tried to go there and stay as long as he could. He swam very slowly, without clothes, turned up and for hours floated. The timeless, unobstructed arch of blue and white sky above him surrounded and seemed to cover him. His body felt delectably light, legs and arms loose and supple. His head, neck, and genitals buoyed and soothed. It was as though a hundred wounds from penetrating slights and tormenting words were washed by the glistening dark water on every side. The wounds slowly closing. The current water took away the stains of his pollution, defiling thoughts and acts he hated, knew were wrong, but repeated over and over.

Lifting his legs now in the water bath and floating, he felt again cleansed and soothed. His head fell back. Thoughts, real thoughts, returned. He began to think about the little boy he met, the woman who had fed him. Then, he clearly remembered two men speaking near him and their tumble of words. A plot, a dangerous plot. He remembered hearing the phrase, "Austrian whore." His body tensed but his mind was for the moment more ordered. He must get out. They will come after him, pin his arms and legs, restrain him, try to bring him back. But he must get out.

Chapter 9

Tallien sat in the Palais de Justice watching the trial of the former queen. Marie Antoinette had been taken there from her prison cell at the Conciergerie to be, as everyone knew, condemned to death. He smiled while watching, thinking to himself that his own plan to bring down Danton was progressing well. His compatriot Barras, a converted former noble and presumably zealous revolutionary, was effective in supporting the incorruptible Robespierre in the Jacobin Club. He lauded the man's high-minded ideals. Not yet known was the actuality that Barras himself had very few; he masterfully staged ovations by his military companions following Robespierre's inspiring speeches. Barras was secretly guilty of a spate of dishonest dealings, but he managed to assure young, devoted Club members that the great dedicated man would stop widespread corruption and the bleeding out of revolutionary resources. Tallien, on his side, had always been popular in the Parisian organized districts, the Sections, because of his revenge-inciting newspaper 'Friend of the Citizen' and his leadership in the Paris directorate, the Commune. He carefully inserted assurances of swift both current and future removal and destruction of counterrevolutionaries in all his discussions with the Section Leaders and at meetings attended by long suffering retribution seekers, notably large numbers of the *sans-culotte* revolutionaries. He was a member of the leading group of deputies called the 'Mountain', those seated high-up at the left of the hall of the National Convention. He joined with Robespierre and his devoted follower, Saint-Just, in all of their proposals for regulating the economy.

Robespierre became the leading member of the powerful Committee of Public Safety which, ironically, Danton had inaugurated several months before. More and more people were sent by this Committee to beheadings by the national 'razor' for the purpose of maintaining and preserving the Revolution. Robespierre, Tallien thought, barely suppressing a laugh, was actually sharpening a razor he had honed. This man, this incorruptible one, would one day cut the great Danton down. It was inevitable. The pure, devoted fanatic, ardent follower of Rousseau who placed ideas and ideals above personal relationships, would not be able to tolerate Georges-Jacques Danton, man of the people. They could not together lead the Revolution for very long. Danton, shrewd and sensual, was surely dedicated, but he was also interested in influence, recognition, and gain. Never was he above lining his own pockets when

he could. Robespierre actually believed in liberty and equality and hated corruption. In the end, he would not allow such an impure comrade and powerful rival to live.

In the *villette*, the box set for the guilty, the queen sat in anguished silence. No longer allowed to dress in full royal raiment, she wore a light well-made black gown and high-heeled plum colored shoes. She looked shrunken and aged but still possessed elegant, fine facial features and a vestige of her physical attractiveness. Witness after witness testified against her. Tallien listened distractedly as they went over the government charges: she had encouraged counterrevolution, produced famine, instigated massacres, and betrayed French plans to the enemies. He was waiting to hear the testimony of Hébert, editor of the fierce, vulgarism-belching newspaper *Le Père Duchesne*. A witness from the royal court named Manuel came to the stand, refused to give testimony against the queen, for which he was later guillotined, and then Hébert was sworn in.

He began with a description of the queen's early and continuing indoctrination of her son as a royal personage, a thoroughgoing enemy of the Revolution. She made sure, he said, the boy was treated as the monarch Louis XVII, toadied to, served first at all meals. A totem of the enemy royalist Vendéens, found among his possessions, was certainly bestowed on him by her. Then, with his usual obscene directness, Hébert came to the salacious accusations.

"This woman, the former queen, who we all know was profligate and licentious throughout her reign," Hébert began, slightly exposing his upper teeth, "also for a long time carried out unnatural acts with her son. She and her sister, the child's aunt, placed him between them on their bed where all three slept close together each night. In this circumstance, they got him aroused, and both looking on, they taught him to pull the head of the cock. Night after night, this boy, the young Louis, confessed they induced him to put his hands on his small little organ and pull and pull while the two smiling harpies watched."

There were audible intakes of breath, loud snorts, and angry curses among the listeners in the gallery. Hébert looked up, nodding snidely, then continued.

"Then, many times, the unnatural mother, Marie Capet, had her eight year old son go even further. She took his cock into her hand and put it into her passage, her woman's cleft, to commit an abominable

act of incest. She did things and carried out scurrilous acts that cry out against the conscience of all humanity, having him indulge in perverted acts that fulfilled her insatiable lust. Not satisfied with all her well-known adulterous acts with men and women of the court, the slut fucked with her own son.”

Both representatives and ordinary citizens in the gallery broke out into loud sounds of disgust and reprimand, shrill hisses, outraged protests. One judge frowned at Hébert, and the others looked troubled. Many in the assemblage, unlike the complacent Tallien sitting in their midst, had not had any inkling of the testimony to be given, and they remained shocked and silent. Soon, however, the audience exploded, giving vent through booming shouts, foot-stamping, standing on seats, to emotions of revulsion and fear. They feared both Hébert and the former queen, one having gone so far as to bring up such accusations, the other having actually done the things described. Their revulsion arose from a range of sources, from sincere, knowing repudiation to secret and unacknowledged prurient interest.

So, Tallien thought, it was to be both self-abuse and incest. He never could ally himself with Hébert's kind of excesses. Although it was absolutely necessary to make an end of the widow Capet, that could easily have been accomplished without manufacturing such charges. Having heard beforehand that Hébert would report damning things, Tallien felt he needed and wanted to be at the trial to learn them. But these accusations, even leveled at 'the Austrian whore', were too extreme to be believed. He had often taken the lead in denouncing her presumed sexual appetite for both men and women, affairs both with the perfidious Comte de Vaudreuil and the over-indulged Duchess de Polignac. Hébert, however, now was outrageous, telling of unspeakable acts. And his words brought to mind, made Tallien sitting there imagine a mother's watching and encouraging a young boy's pulling off. Terrifying.

As everyone knew, self-abuse brought insanity. Tallien worried, each time he had done it, because of that. He started young, the first time after waking from nights of rich exciting dreams to find his bedclothes soaked and sticky while feeling delightfully light-headed and relieved. He decided to make that happen himself. But even though he tried not to continue too much, he always knew it was wrong, always dangerous. The lunatic who walked through their village, picking up and storing dirty rags, and talking loudly to himself, became that way, they always said, because of pulling off. And Hébert talked about a young boy doing it for his own mother! And he says she made him fuck her, too! The man always goes too far, screams in his newspaper for violence, removal of all vestiges of counter-revolution, no

matter what or where – Jacobin Club, Convention, even the Committee of Public Safety. He is a revolutionary, but he could surely not be used to bring Danton down. Could not command a true following. Hates religion, claims only to follow REASON. Thinks of the idea in capitals but never about the reasonable, just the being reasonable. He works hard at bringing himself down, removing all vestiges of his own foul-mouthed, murderous presence from the revolutionary program. No, Tallien repeated to himself, Robespierre is still the right one. He leads in high purpose, wants to fire the people up with the ideals of the Revolution. Robespierre will necessarily do away with widow Capet, with this Hébert not long after, and when the time comes, with the flawed people's darling, Danton. Then, with the connections and plans advanced already by us – the influential military commander Barras, I the Jacobin hero, and the new comrade master of intelligence former priest Fouché as well, Robespierre will fall. That will not be very hard, idealists with high purpose always undo themselves.

Tallien watched the widow Capet as Hébert elaborated on the details of his alleged interview with the young Louis, specifying the times and places of the acts, the aunt's participation, absence of witnesses. Her face, which at first looked plaster-white with shock, gradually turned grey and blotched with expressions of sickness and disgust as she listened. A spasm of rage passed, and soon gave way to a grimace of despair. Her finely chiseled mouth was pulled downward and to one side as she groaned with a sound seeming to resonate from within the deepest portions of her body. Then, all expression vanished. She raised her chin, and stared resolutely at her accuser. As the high-pitched sounds of Hébert's voice piped out against the intermittent chorus of spectator calls and protests, she sat with shoulders stiffened, staring and listening. Was this, Tallien wondered, nobility's damnable loftiness and restraint he knew so well and bitterly hated. Or an indication that she did what she was accused of?

He studied her carefully. She looked so diminutive, no taller than he was. Despite her air of superiority, there was nothing about her body that went with her former power to command. Neither she nor the King, her dead husband, compared at all in height with his comrades, the coming new leaders – towering Barras, long, slender Fouché. What a sight the three of them will make as they walk together, him upright in front, the people hailing them as rulers. A splendid show, a beautiful beginning. After that, of course, he wouldn't have to consort and share decisions for very long with men he had to raise up his eyes to speak with. He would, in time, be commander alone.

He looked around the jam-packed gallery, momentarily interested in the irregular shapes and heights of men and women nearby and at some distance away. Unexpectedly, he noticed the well-known massive shape, Georges-Jacques Danton, sitting not too far-off. The big man was at that moment motioning to him to leave the hall and go outside. It was apparently a request for a meeting together, not such an unusual occurrence because, as deputies of the Mountain, they did confer from time to time about Convention policy. But Tallien, irritated, wondered what urgency required an interruption at that point, causing him to miss some of the important proceedings.

As he entered the corridor outside the large hall of the trial, Danton was waiting, and greeted him immediately.

“Ah, Tallien, Hébert is putting on quite an extraordinary but terrible performance. A vilifying attack. Hardly necessary when the poor woman is already condemned and the outcome a foregone conclusion.”

Tallien smiled. He had for some time been contributing to whispered suspicions that Danton was sympathetic to the former queen, was even possibly bribed by her to let the Austrians win the war so that she and the monarchy could be saved. Such opinions and sentiments of Danton, while typical and probably appropriate, would, when the big man expressed them openly to others beside himself, help in the end to undo him. Tallien was smiling because he was anticipating the undoing, not, as Danton might believe, agreeing with the sentiment.

“Yes, Hébert speaks well,” Tallien said, his upturned tone extended. “He deals out his charges with flourish and verve. But he needn’t have gone into so much detail. We all know that citizeness Capet is a whore and profligate.” His smile and the upswings made both Hébert and the profligate sound attractive.

Facing the broad shouldered imposing man whose crude but soft-cheeked face showed so much earnest straightforwardness that he looked slightly innocent, Tallien could not, despite himself, help feeling some liking for him. And, at the same time, he wondered whether this great leader, already slipping but with the people still supreme, might have any glimmer of suspicion about his own actively proceeding plans. Standing there before him with his collar unbuttoned, warm, relaxed, and confident, did Danton know they were working to have him unseated and killed?

“But he is so vicious,” Danton countered. “Why the need for such viciousness?” He paused and Tallien said nothing. “Pouf, Tallien. The reason I have called you out – in part, I confess because I could not stand to listen to that Hébert voice any more – was to give you good news.”

“And what is that?”

“You have been appointed as Proconsul to Bordeaux.”

“Good, I am glad.”

“There are so great troubles brewing among the people there.”

“Yes, I know.”

“We decided, as you did so well with the aristocrats – and all the others, eh? – in the Bicêtre prison last year, you are the one to keep things in check.”

“Many who were risks to the Revolution were weeded out.”

“Indeed. And now we need some... ah,” Danton became constrained. His voice was naturally so loud he had to work to soften it. “We need some judicious weeding out, even uprooting, of counterrevolutionaries and other troublemakers.” He put his hand amiably on Tallien’s arm.

Tallien was smiling broadly. Danton was the clandestine force behind the massacres of clergy and supposed aristocrats throughout the Paris prisons in September of the previous year. As supervisor of the prison portion of the Bicêtre, Tallien had, at Danton’s bidding, overseen the mass killing of incarcerated adolescent boys and others who had not sworn allegiance to the Revolution. Because he and Danton had shared such acts, adopted common strategies and causes in the Revolution, Tallien felt he knew the answer to his own question about suspicions. Danton would not dream he was plotting against him. The thought gave Tallien special pleasure, a savoring of his triumphant secret as he faced his prey. He was doubly glad this unsuspecting paragon had helped arrange for such a good assignment.

“It was, of course, unfortunate,” Tallien said. “but quite necessary to do away with those young

aristocrats at Bicêtre.”

“Sometimes, we must be ruthless for the Revolution.”

“Indeed. In that instance, though, it was the crowd that did the killings, not I. Since that time, we have all had serious difficulties holding down these counterrevolutionaries.”

“We must stop them from taking over,”

“Yes. I have heard that aristocrats and the royalist *émigrés*, who went to England and came back, were raising arms in the Bordeaux area. Don’t worry. I shall be single-minded in finding ways to root them out.”

“Good. By the way, about Bicêtre,” Danton inadvertently thundered. Several persons in the corridor turned curiously to look toward them. “Have you heard that the new doctor at the asylum, Philippe Pinel, has taken off the chains from the lunatics and is petitioning to have them removed in all the Paris hospitals?”

“Probably with the support of Robespierre,” Tallien quickly replied. “The man is always citing Rousseau’s dictum, ‘Men are born free, but are everywhere in chains.’ You better watch out, this may be a good time for you too to get out of Paris. Those lunatics will soon be coming out and murdering citizens in their beds.”

Danton laughed. “Sometimes lunatics are smarter than the rest of us. I have heard that George of England had crazy fits during which he allowed the American colonies to go free.”

“Ah, always the seer, a wise connoisseur when it comes to England, eh, Danton?”

“No, Tallien,” Danton boomed, again drawing attention, “giving the English credit does not mean I support them. It is the same contrariwise, is it not?” His eyes narrowed, the innocent expression gone. “Those who sometimes utter criticisms of Robespierre are not necessarily his enemies.”

“Surely not,” Tallien said, drawing himself up poker straight. “All of us – Robespierre, you, me – are

devoted to the goals of the Revolution. So, when do I start for Bordeaux?"

"The Council has decided you will leave tomorrow. Good luck."

As they turned away from each other to return to the trial, Tallien wondered whether he was right about Danton being unsuspecting. His remark about Robespierre suggested he knew of Tallien's supporting him, maybe even of the secret connivances. He was a formidable enemy. Perhaps he was purposely arranging to get Tallien out of Paris, away from the center of government.

Back in the gallery, Tallien watched the former queen as witness after witness testified against her. He searched the outline of her body under her dress, his eyes following barely visible still rounded contours. Had she done what Hébert said? It hardly mattered. Even if she did, he would never get access to her, test out her voluptuous charms. She was damned and condemned. She would very soon be killed on the guillotine. Too bad that now he would be leaving before the event took place. What a spectacle, the perverted queen without her head!

Chapter 10

Light-headed, half dozing, Lalladiere's tension built as images passed through his head. Views of women with dress skirts raised over their waists, buttocks and vaginas exposed. Dull scenes of men in corners of a room, bending over, thrashed by birch rods. He shifted from side to side on the mat. The men's bodies moved closer to him, welt marks visible, then the women pushed forward, genitals larger and larger as the men's forms diffused into the background. With his hand, vigorously, he found relief. The next instant, he tried not to think about what he had done. Wicked, evil. His thoughts and actions must not be repeated, never be revealed. Punishment would surely come. But the tension in his body had somewhat subsided, so that before the voices began their retribution, he fell asleep.

A tall figure noiselessly entered the cell. Walking the few steps to where Lalladiere lay on his mat, the man, it was the attendant Ajacis, delivered a sharp kick into his ribs.

"I was watching you. God-damned pervert. Giving yourself the juice, huh?"

Lalladiere, panicked, shifted his body away. The next moment he felt Ajacis's boot on his genitals.

"That's what you get for the evil you do. Next, I may cut them off."

Writhing in pain, Lalladiere tried to protect himself by turning around completely to face the wall. The next kick came into the middle of his back.

"Don't try to get away from me, you goose egg. Disgusting lunatic. I know how to stop you, see how good I am."

With that, he kneeled down and began pummeling Lalladiere's head, his back, and drove his fists into the back of the knees. Lalladiere screamed.

Ajacis arched his hand around to Lalladiere's face. Bending his wrist, he pushed the heel of his palm against the screaming man's jaw and held his mouth tightly closed.

“Don’t you make any more noise, freak, or I’ll brain you.”

He continued with his fisted free hand to pound at the back of the now silent Lalladiere until he heard a noise coming from the corridor behind him.

“Lucky you,” he said to Lalladiere’s unmoving form, “I have to give up now. But if you tell anyone I hit you, I will murder you.”

Ajacis pulled his hand away from Lalladiere’s face, leaped up, and quickly stole away into the corridor, going in the direction opposite the approaching noise.

Over the next several days while Lalladiere, mute and less obviously injured, remained in confinement, governor Pussin made regular short visits. Pinel, staying longer, came twice. Quietly he sat, together with Antoine, watching the inert man for indication of a reaction. Finding none, he began slowly, and at regular intervals, to state out loud various items of Lalladiere’s background information, meager though it was, supplied to him by Pussin. Such an approach had proved effective with insane katatonic patients before. As he went on, he carefully observed, watching for the slightest reactions in Lalladiere’s body and face. Believing in connections between passions and insanity, Pinel searched for movements or stirrings when referring to his dedicated work with the minister Necker, the excited life around the Faubourg Honoré in Paris, years of practice in finance, and revolutionary activities such as Lalladiere’s reported participation in the storming of the Bastille. A slight grimace appeared on Lalladiere’s face only at the mention of Necker, but he said nothing.

On the second visit, as Pinel patiently repeated the slow, regular recounting, and came again to a reference to the minister, Lalladiere’s mouth moved. Pinel paused, saying only that he noticed the reaction, and Lalladiere began to speak in a disconnected way about calculations in budgetary accounts. Although Pinel could not follow all the numerical details, he was impressed with Lalladiere’s quickness of mind and, lodged within the disjointed references, a seeming grasp of trade and economics.

It was a striking contrast – Lalladiere’s bizarre behavior and the evidence of his very good intelligence. Pinel continued to be puzzled. Perhaps, he wondered, the man was actually faking. For what reason? To avoid conscription into the army, another difficult service, escape responsibility? His

friend Gerard was like this, too. He, so very bright, had passed the bar, become devoted to more and better accomplishments. His knowledge, when he became devastatingly insane, still showed. Killed himself in the woods. He definitely was not faking.

Pinel continued his visits. When Lalladiere was silent, as was mostly the case, Pinel conducted his 'moral treatment', lecturing him about his passions. He told him, gently but firmly, that he needed to curb his wild ravings and violent actions towards the attendants. Pinel also said he believed that Lalladiere must have had disappointments when working for the minister, and referred consolingly to likely prospects for a better future. Pussin, in his routine checking circuit, was encouraging to Lalladiere too, giving him assurance that he would be able to come out of confinement once he engaged in regular conversation, coherent or not, and gave a promise not to fight with the attendants. Although what was said by both doctor and governor had no targeted effect, the well-meaning persistence, sincere interest, reliable constancy – new experiences in Lalladiere's life – produced a small modicum of change. He made the promise. Each day, he talked more with Dr. Pinel and governor Pussin about the items of food he ate, and his bowel movements.

Pussin decided, because Lalladiere was complying however minimally with his conditions, he could spend time out of the confinement cell. As Lalladiere continued to speak and refrained from fighting, Pussin arranged, as he did with every progressing inmate, for time in a program of work. Always tailoring such assignments to what he believed were an inmate's current level of skill, paying a paltry but nevertheless definite sum, he arranged for Lalladiere to begin with cleaning and arranging books and non-medical papers in his small library.

The focus on work together with continuing visits either from Pussin or Pinel proved to be of some help. There was no more waxy paralysis, no outbursts of rage and violence toward the attendants; and after a while, he was transferred out of confinement into relatively uncrowded sleeping quarters. A little more comfort, a little less terror, but did it matter very much? Still, he heard the shrill warnings against everyone around him, including the doctor and governor, and the proclamations of his own corruption, his need to suffer, his nothingness. He masturbated incessantly, had little energy, and stayed alone as much as possible. Within his mind were interspersed memories of pleasant and unpleasant talks with Necker, clouded details of government finance, disturbing images of a beheaded King Louis, and the

shadows and words of the men plotting near his streetside enclosure. From time to time, he was able to think of the young boy who had befriended him on the street. He experienced then a feeling that seemed unacceptable and strange – a feeling he distrusted and feared but, imagining the boy, he allowed it. It was a yearning. He wanted to see the boy. Be together with him.

It was not a bad thought. Not corrupt like those thoughts at the edges of his horrible fantasies. Just the wish for nearness, near, to feel Jean-Luc's joyousness, his fearlessness. To like him, to feel liking again. He decided to go to him. First chance he got.

"Why did you try to escape from here?" Dr. Pinel asked one day, unaware of Lalladiere's decision, but hopeful he was beginning to get answers to his questions.

"There are people who must be tested," Lalladiere replied slowly.

"What people? Who are these people who trouble you?" As before, the doctor missed a reference to himself, his care for Lalladiere needed to be tested. Present company, Pinel might one day realize, was always included.

Lalladiere was silent.

"What must we do to be sure you will not try to escape again? We want to continue to treat you humanely without shackles. We believe you can get well, but you must not give way to passion."

Pinel believed that Lalladiere was making progress. "Observation, zeal, sagacity, mild manner, and unaffected goodness of heart," and unchaining, which he would one day describe in writing as the moral treatment approach, was having some effect. In other hospitals, beatings and shackling of patients, copious use of bloodletting and strong medicaments, seemed only to make the insanity worse. Poor souls were condemned to chronic anguish and the darkness of a cell until the only final release. Their death. But it was a great challenge to carry the moral treatment program out. Escapes from the institution were particularly disruptive, jeopardizing the entire undertaking. If a runaway patient, a seemingly calmed-down one like Lalladiere, showed violence outside or hurt or killed someone, even enlightened leaders in the government would crack down, prohibiting the changes. But he did not grasp that Lalladiere

heard admonitions against escape as only in Pinel's self-interest, not his own.

They are all around. Test, test them...

Finally, Lalladiere spoke. "The people who must be tested are all around. You will hear them if you listen to the sounds in this room."

"What sounds? I hear nothing but our voices speaking." Pinel would have reason shortly to regret missing Lalladiere's meaning another time, the telltale reference to hallucinations.

"If the tests are failed," Lalladiere said, "the plotters will take over the country and hurt the little boy."

"I know nothing of a plot to take over the country. Who is this little boy?"

"Who is this little boy? There are gabels, gambols, and glides. Gendarmes go free, there is only joy, the play is knowing how to make it through. But it can work."

Pinel stood up and looked around the then empty room. Lalladiere had sunk into incoherency and frank lunacy, and there was nothing he could do. Pinel's misunderstandings had increased Lalladiere's distrust, instilling isolation and despair. Recognizing he may have done something wrong, Pinel all at once realized that Lalladiere had been referring to hearing voices immediately before. He turned with self-reproaching irritation to the attendant Denis, who had been standing nearby in the hallway.

"The patient is having hallucinations today. If they keep up, we may have to give him something."

"What shall you prescribe?"

"Endive with magnesium sulphate."

"Yes, I will see to it. Perhaps, Dr. Pinel, he should not go to work today. It might agitate him."

"That is up to the governor. This work, it may still be good for him. The governor will be the best judge."

That may be so, Denis thought as he turned down the hallway, but if the governor is wrong and Lalladiere escapes, it will be the Devil's own work to find him again. The little boy, they said, found him standing up in a tiny crevice under the street. A man with shoulders like his! And he must have sprung all around the roofs before getting there. We didn't see him at all. "These lunatics," he said, finishing the thought out loud to himself, "I swear they should be sent to the Belgium front. So strong and cagey, they'd win the war in a couple of days."

Lalladiere, alone, lay down on his bed. His body started to stiffen with dread.

They will torture you and beat you. Your thoughts are disgusting, your hands are full of dirt and sin. Dirt, slime and sin.

Over and over, the words assailed him. He tried to move, to turn his head flat against the straw mattress, to cover an ear, but the relentless sound came through, reverberating from the floor.

This doctor wants to do you in. Talks and cajoles you. Cajoles, nice. Oh, so nice. Oh so kind. But he has the tortures planned. He is a messenger. A messenger, distressenger. He is here to punish you for what you did.

The words continued in a steady flow, long and shorter clumps alternating and then repeating. He shifted to lie on his back and, though his body stiffened, he placed both hands palms up underneath his thighs.

You won't get away with it. You can't hide what you did. Soiled hands. 36 and 645. Your hands are full of smells and spiny growths. You are damned. You are found out. Damned. Found out.

He mumbled under his breath, quick pleading words attempting to counter the vilifying accusations in the air.

"He couldn't help it. It wasn't his fault now. It wasn't his fault before. They believed it. The minister was a god, strong and pure. He couldn't injure him."

No let up. The condemnations were repeated, louder and more persistent. They came from every part of the room, seeming to bounce from the walls. Lalladiere, who at that time could not use the word

"I," continued to protest the defense, but the rhythmic litany boomed out louder and more persistent than before.

"No more," Lalladiere finally screamed. "He will get out. Escape."

Nothing was changed. Further down the hallway, Denis, eyes on another inmate, heard the scream but could not make out the words. What, he thought, could be disturbing Lalladiere today? All of these people – all right for a while, even seem to manage to do work for the governor. But, what good is it? What is it about? In a minute, they go maniac, agitated, screaming, crying, and fighting.

Another scream came from Lalladiere's room. Denis went to see what was going on. As he walked, he thought about what the doctor said earlier about Lalladiere. To himself, he said emphatically, "This man should not be going to work today."

For Denis, the confronting of an upset lunatic posed very little difficulty. He was very skilled, strong enough to restrain one all alone if necessary. A helping factor was that the inmates knew him, trusted that, even in their wildest moments, he would try not to humiliate or hurt them. But still, as he approached this room, he felt a familiar slight tenseness about not knowing what he would find or what he would have to do.

He had, for ten years, worked as an attendant in the Paris hospitals. Brought up in the heart of the city, near the Châtelet, he knew constant hunger, even famine, and as a child followed his shopkeeper father, together with his washerwoman mother, into protests in the streets. Grown, he joined the uprisings that burgeoned into the full-fledged Revolution. The hoped-for changes and goals of this undertaking were, for him, inviolate. He would have, if he could, spent all his time following the Section Leaders, but he needed to support himself with a steady job. The work he got as prison guard, then hospital attendant was at first distasteful but as time went on he adjusted, learning to supervise routines of daily life and control disruptive behavior. Regularly, he and the other attendants chained the inmates to the walls of their cells during most of day and throughout the night. As procedure, he beat, sometimes whipped, those who screamed incessantly, disobeyed, or tried to hurt anyone. Those who hurt themselves, or someone else, prior to coming in were beaten as a precaution. But he never thought doing these things was right and did not like to see the pain and suffering they caused. What's more, he

thought they didn't do any good. He could count on one hand those inmates that did not get more desperate, more vicious, and revengeful.

Some of the attendants – Ajacis, Georges – were dead against the change, but he was glad and relieved about removing the chains and stopping the beatings. He liked the shrewd and evenhanded Pussins. The new medical director, Dr. Pinel, he was a radical one. He pushed for total unchaining, was meeting with patients, sitting and talking with them. He had not seen or heard before of doctors in the asylums doing that. His own beliefs and instincts were now justified. A number of patients were doing better. There was less violence. No marked, dramatic changes across the board yet. Just like the Revolution.

He was intrigued by the man he was going to see, Lalladiere. An educated man. Crafty. He sometimes had a deep look on his face, maybe he even had stories about himself to tell. Not that he ever would be responsive or talk while there, he had those paralytic fits and his face was unmoving and without expression like most of the insane. But there was something about him, a bright way of looking at you, an inner spirit maybe, a sense that sometime all at once he might just start speaking normally. The parents of that boy he met in the street said that Lalladiere played with him. Denis thought that, when he was taking him back to the asylum, he saw Lalladiere look at the boy with some actual kind of feeling. Affection, maybe. Also, he had worked. Was the first assistant to Necker, the man whose dismissal by the king sparked the march on the Bastille, the beginning of the glorious Revolution. Lalladiere was surely part of the Revolution. Why did he become insane?

They never told the attendants anything about insanity or, for that matter, anything about the inmates. Would that make any difference? Were there things to tell, something in a person's background that would give a clue to his spasms and lunacy? Could such things slip the lid off the pot, give the whole thing away?

He entered the doorway of the small room, looked at the enigmatic, anguished face of the man on the bed. His body was curled, arms and legs pulled tightly up against his torso. All at once sure of one thing about the insane man, Denis spoke loudly to the barren walls around them: "Lalladiere must not go to work today."

Chapter 11

Later, Lalladiere went to work. Denis had stood watching the curled-up man for several minutes, addressed him by name, and at that time gotten no response. There was no more screaming, so Denis left to give the governor a warning report. Pussin, uncertain, decided he would go to see Lalladiere himself. When he got to the cell later, Lalladiere was lying flat and seemingly no longer on the verge of agitation.

“Are you disturbed, Lalladiere?”

“Uh, huh.”

“Was there something particular that upset you?”

“No more.”

“Do you feel unable to go to work?”

“No, I will go.”

“Can you get up now and go to work?”

“Yes,” Lalladiere answered clearly, slowly rising up. Governor Pussin asked some further questions about what Lalladiere had done that day, what he was anticipating doing when at work. He received short, clear, and slightly elaborated answers. Seeing no overt agitation and hearing no bizarre speech, Pussin decided it would be all right to continue the work routine. He was quite accustomed to patients shifting quickly, for no apparent reason, from maniac behavior to responsible lucidity. He believed strongly in the benefits of work, especially for patients like Lalladiere who had worked successfully previously. Now that Lalladiere was lucid, the work, he thought, would preserve and continue his shift.

Lalladiere was calmed somewhat by Denis’s presence, despite its shortness, and by the attention of the governor in his cell. He was still plagued by the damning voices and, as Denis had previously reassuringly recognized aloud in his cell, he was not in condition to carry out work responsibilities. But

now, when Pussin questioned him about going to the freer environment where he worked, he realized other opportunities were presented. It was again a driving intention. Escape from what? From befouling dread, unbearable voices, undoable responsibility, lack of care. To go where? Nowhere. Anywhere. To the little boy. To his acceptance and friendship.

In the governor's quarters, he sat at the small table in the anteroom and started his assigned work. He had recently been advanced, after having shown a capacity to work carefully in the library, to the task of copying out daily reports – number of inmates, meals served, medicines dispensed, baths. Soon, as Pussin anticipated, the occupation calmed him, focusing and organizing his attention, giving him a miniscule but needed sense of competence. As he worked, he looked up frequently to see whether he could locate Marguerite Pussin, the governor's wife. She had been kind to him. But she, or any servant inmates working in the quarters might thwart his plan. She walked by once, glanced at him, and continued on.

His opportunity came when two woodcutters delivered a supply of heating logs. Although Marguerite Pussin first stood near the door, watching as the men brought the wood inside, she turned away at one point to lead them to a bin. In that flash of a moment, Lalladiere sprang up and was through the still narrowly opened doorway.

He ran quickly, seemingly having gained more purpose than with his escape before. He went the long route to Gentilly and, with the layout of the streets still clear in his mind, he remembered the way to the Rochereau's house. He got all the way to the first cross-street before pausing to see whether he was pursued. No one anywhere. Marguerite Pussin had apparently not been able to find attendants quickly enough.

Seeing an oxcart moving in the direction he was going, he ran up beside. Slowing to the cart's pace, he nodded at the indifferent driver and walked with his body slouched down so as not to be readily seen. When the cart arrived at the next intersecting street, Lalladiere peeled away into it. Quickening to a rapid walk, he stayed close to the fronts of the stone houses lining the street, looking steadily at the doorways as he passed. This time he might not need to scale the roofs, but he knew he needed to be sure accessways would be available.

Faster, you bastard, faster. You must not get caught. An insistent voice, not quite as penetrating and commanding as before.

He listened for other sounds of commotion or running on the streets behind him. His senses were sharp and intense. Despite the repetitious voice egging him on, he could hear small noises, distant oxcarts, even people shuffling around inside the houses he passed. The stone fronts of the houses were softly illuminated by the dwindling afternoon light of the sun.

It was a longer distance there than he thought. He had, running hard, covered much ground before, moved over many roofs, passed through several streets and passageways. As quickly as he could, he walked among the carts, the crowds of tradespeople and strollers. Passing numerous housefront crevices, he came to rue Elisée Recluse, the one he previously entered. Through his head flashed the immensity of his terror there, the voices of the conspirators, and then the emergence of Jean-Luc. He had heard a secret conspiracy. That weighed inside him like the other terrifying secrets in his life.

A few people walked close by. A woman was standing in a semi-open doorway. No Jean-Luc, no Rochereaus among them. He was afraid, though he remembered the location of their house, to go directly there. The father, possibly now the mother too, would immediately report him, have him sent back to the asylum. He looked around for a hidden place to wait.

Pursuers had still not appeared. No threatening forms came down the street nor, above the jangling insistent voices, were there tell-tale sounds of nearby pursuit. He entered a tall angled space between two buildings where he could squeeze back far enough to avoid being seen. Walkers nearby were streaming in both directions. The housefront crevice was not hard-to-see as before but still no one saw him push himself into the opening.

He lodged far enough back between the stone walls where, unseen, he had a good view of the street. The light there grew dimmer and he stood in almost complete darkness in the narrow space. Though he was once again pressed up tightly, almost painfully, against cold walls, he watched this time for a friend.

He is plotting against you, too. When you find him he will have you killed.

No, he didn't believe that. Jean-Luc's father surely wanted him dead, but the boy wanted to be his comrade. He was kind, understood him, wanted to play with him at his home. He would wait long enough and Jean-Luc would come by. And, like before, he would be alone. They could meet in the street and his father wouldn't be there.

Hours passed, night came, the light in the street and hiding place was completely dark. No pursuers and only a few inhabitants passed by. Wedged in, leaning against the stone-cold walls, Lalladiere drowsed upright into sleep.

In the morning, he was awakened by reflected sunlight and the suddenly raucous activity of the street. Bustling people, ever-present carts, large and small dogs went by his hiding place. No one turned toward it or glanced inside. Once, a gendarme, not searching but intent on reaching some nearby destination, came close but went right past. There was no sign of people from the asylum, Denis or others.

Across the narrow street, among a cluster of walkers, he saw his outline. Jean-Luc. Then he groaned, recognizing immediately that the boy was not alone. Despite the early hour of the morning, he was walking with the dreaded Théo Rochereau. Why? Lalladiere thought in anguish. He was free and alone before. Where was the boy going together with the man who would report him, hurt him, have him sent back again?

Jump now. Jump on the persecuting man and kill him.

Lalladiere struggled against the order. No, he would not kill, no matter how despicable and low he was. He only wanted to be with the boy.

Did Jean-Luc see him this time as he passed? The curious boy had not, as he hoped, looked around or turned. He began edging out of the crevice. In a few moments, he came to the opening and was able to see father and son walking briskly down the street. He watched until they turned into another street, then came fully out and began to follow.

Despite emerging from a seemingly inaccessible place, he was completely unobserved. He walked quickly keeping them in his view.

Run, bastard, run. Your life depends on the breath, the smiles of this boy. You must find him, be near him.

Run. Run.

Several people were strung out on the street before him. He went as fast as he could without attracting dangerous attention, reached the corner where they turned, and saw them halfway down a long block away. They were not walking close together. A short step behind his father, Jean-Luc looked unhappy, swinging his arms widely as he went.

They went on that way, clusters of other people going in their direction, tramping along with them for a long, tiring distance. They passed the strung-out houses and open fields southeast of Paris, through Barrière d'Italie, Clignancourt, and eventually into the meandering smelly streets near that part of the river Seine. Increasing numbers of walkers along the way entered and filled the route. Lalladiere kept his eyes on Jean-Luc. Hoping for what? To see him, talk with him, play. Once, noticing the boy's lean but muscular shape, he even wondered whether Jean-Luc was built like him, was actually his own son. It became harder to see him. Men, women, young children – younger than Jean-Luc – were now walking in front of, beside, and behind the pair. Several came up near Lalladiere, sometimes almost close enough to jostle his arms. A large crowd, all moving in the same direction, had formed. They crossed the bridge and headed toward the rue Honoré.

All were lively and engaged. Several talked zestfully as they went, smilingly greeting new people who joined the moving ranks. Some slowed, grasping an arm or vest, waving a hand for description and emphasis about their convictions, emotions, narrated actions.

"What a glorious day, eh Robert?" said a rugged carpenter who was taking time off from work.

"I walked more than a league to get here," Robert replied, tilting to show his mud-covered boot. "It's a glory for the guillotine," he added.

A number of older boys and girls moved more quickly than their parents. Getting ahead, they joined in two and threes with newly found companions. In the festive atmosphere, the ramblings, delays due to crowding and friendly sociability, all contributed to what appeared as a carelessly choreographed ceremonial progression. The varied rhythms of walking, strolling, and marching – clearly toward a goal –

were accompanied by rising and lowering pitches within a din of talk, and the clacking sound of shoes against cobblestones. In the midst, in single line, moved Jean-Luc and Théo. Although difficult to see them in the crowd, Lalladiere kept a short distance behind them.

They passed from rue Honoré to rue National and into the large clearing of the Place de la Revolution. Already half-filled with crowds having come from other directions, both the entrants and occupants circled forward to position themselves as closely as possible to the centerpiece of the expanse. The tall grey wood and metal structure, the guillotine.

Théo now kept a reluctant-looking Jean-Luc closely near him as they moved quickly forward with the others. Lalladiere entered the large open area close behind them, and seeing the guillotine, he cringed.

It's for you. They have lured you here to kill you.

He jerked around, starting back toward the accessway from the street. He brushed against a large, brawny man walking behind him. The man glowered at him. With a beckoning gesture to a small but tough looking companion, the man turned fully and moved toward him. Lalladiere broke away in a run.

He tried to keep away from people coming down the street; but, fearful and frenzied, he jostled against several.

Run, bastard, run. Keep going. They are coming after you. Go. Get away. Run.

These dislodged persons, fortunately, were all less attacking, responding only with grunts, curses, and angry looks. But he swayed far away from the last he bumped into, trying to get close to buildings ahead and avoid further mishap. He glanced over his shoulder, saw that the threatening men had not followed. He slowed to a quick walk.

He was not sure where he was going. He thought of turning back again to find Jean-Luc, but the scene at the Place de la Revolution and his continuing fear of the men, propelled him forward. Threading his way for what seemed an interminable time through the increased advancing throngs of people, he suddenly saw—

Watch out. Watch it.

Two familiar faces were there, approximately half a block away, projecting over people nearby. The peering face of Denis, and behind him the fearsome Ajacis, were both searching determinedly through the crowd.

Chapter 12

Denis tried, as he and Ajacis moved forward through advancing groups of excited people, to think about what was in Lalladiere's head. Attendants had been called immediately by the worried Marguerite Pussin the day before. But several inmates, with the uncanny intuition of the insane about disruption in their asylum, were disturbed that day. The entire staff was swamped by the need for restraining and other security measures. By the time any of them were free, dusk had fallen. A few attendants went into the darkness, attempting to find Lalladiere by torch and candlelight. But they were defeated by poor light, small alleys, and manifold possibilities for concealment.

The next morning, Denis and Ajacis were sent to get help for searching at the gendarmerie. No gendarmes, they found after considerable delay, were available. All were dispatched to the center of Paris for Marie Antoinette's execution.

At first, the two attendants retraced Lalladiere's previous path, believing he again would take to the roofs and remain up there to avoid pursuers. They looked for doors open or ajar as potential accessways to a roof and carefully scrutinized visible portions of eaves and protrusions. They searched thoroughly throughout the streets in the vicinity of the asylum.

Denis also remembered Jean-Luc's description of Lalladiere in a narrow enclosure. They retraced their paths, heads down, searching the meeting places between cobblestones and houses. Earlier, Denis had considered the possibility that Lalladiere had gone back to where Jean-Luc lived, but rejected the idea as highly unlikely. Even though, as Denis knew, Lalladiere was quite disturbed that day, he would still realize that he would first be looked for there. Denis wondered, rethinking the circumstances as he walked, was Jean-Luc actually the reason Lalladiere ran away again? The thought troubled him. His own assessment of Lalladiere's feelings could be mistaken; this could turn out to be a bizarre assault or the lust for a young boy, hateful business. On the other hand, the boy brought Lalladiere to that house, asking his mother to help him. Maybe, Denis considered and mentioned to Ajacis, just getting back to see him, for whatever reason, was the moving force. Ajacis snorted. Denis leading, they went quickly to the Rochereau house and established from Suzette that Lalladiere had not been there.

"Théo is not here either," she said. "He and Jean-Luc left a while ago,"

"Where did they go?" Ajacis asked.

"They went, you know, to the execution of the queen." Quickly, she corrected herself, "The former queen."

"Well then, Lalladiere may have followed them," Denis volunteered.

"Really?" she asked, concerned.

"We'll damn well go, too," Ajacis said.

"He isn't really dangerous, is he?"

"He's a maniac," Ajacis growled.

"He got along so well with Jean-Luc."

"We'll make sure everything's all right," Denis said as they moved to leave.

Outside the house, Ajacis said sneeringly to Denis, "We could make sure everything would be all right, you bet. Like we used to."

At the edge of the Place de la Revolution, Lalladiere had spotted the attendants arriving before he himself was seen. He turned quickly to hide within a nearby group of tipsy men and women. As they continued on toward the dense crowd near the guillotine, he reluctantly went in their midst back into the Place. A mounted, stiff-postured gendarme rode up alongside the group and, seeing a better shield, Lalladiere moved to the far side of the horse obstructing the view from the mouth of the street.

The murderer is here. He has come to get you. Hide, curl yourself into a worm.

The voice was insistent, commanding, and stood out against the cacophony of the crowd. He walked, head bent, at the side of the horse. Nearby, the pattern of movement was orderly. Horse and

people pressed forward in a sprightly, insistent throng. Behind him, a woman was speaking in a continuous, fervent stream. Lalladiere heard her say, "plotting against the Revolution." From the other side of the horse came a high-pitched, derisive, "Just watch the head come right off the shoulders." Right in front of him, a man said to his companion, "Danton, they say, isn't coming to see this. What is up? What is the matter with him?"

Lalladiere, alerted, was swarming with thoughts. The words of plotting, removal of a head, were referring, surely, to him. They mixed together with snatches of phrases he had overheard in the enclosure before. Danton's not coming was certainly a message. All was happening because he had heard the secret plans of the two men, the details of which were increasingly sharper in his memory.

Watch out. They're here. They are around you.

Denis and Ajacis, moving forward, peered searchingly through the thickening crowd. Seeing no sign of Lalladiere, Denis sent Ajacis to the outside of the large, curving boulevard where there was a broad overview while he moved forward into the increasingly packed and dense center. Taller than a number of people around him, he surveyed a wide area, trying to see if he could find Jean-Luc and Théo in the crowd. Their forms were less familiar to him than Lalladiere's, and the boy was hard to distinguish from the numerous young children in the central area. Then, spotting a man with Lalladiere's lithe, muscular build who looked like he was shifting hastily among nearby collections of people, Denis pushed quickly toward him. As he came up, the man looked at him with surprise and annoyance, and Denis saw his mistake. Despite the setback, he was feeling quite sure that Lalladiere had followed the boy and his father to the Place and was somewhere in the crowd. Denis couldn't really understand the reason he might be after the boy. Nor why he would come there and risk being caught.

Sometimes, he thought, they actually do seem to want to get caught. These runaways do obvious things, take no precautions. Maybe that was the case with Lalladiere, the minister's assistant gone crazy. They were all very puzzling, these lunatics, but at times he sensed things about Lalladiere, like his needing, for whatever reason, to follow the boy. He wished he knew more.

Peering around the side of the horse, Lalladiere glimpsed, not far away, the top of Denis's head periodically rising over the crowd. Where was the other one, the torturer Ajacis? He moved back, close

beside the horse and behind the busily occupied gendarme's mounted form. As they tread forward, he went too, into the midst of a phalanx of shuffling, shouting spectators. But he was then barely able to keep Jean-Luc and Théo in sight as they moved into the packed throng around the guillotine. Surrounding that imposing structure, Lalladiere could see a number of women moving through the crowd, loudly cheering on the execution. This grim advocacy, carried out by these hirelings, the *lécheuses de la guillotine*, of the Committee of General Security, was hardly necessary with such a boisterous crowd. A few yards back, out of Lalladiere's view, were attending representatives of the governing National Convention. Hébert had made sure to come, eager, excited, and relishing the outcome of his accusations. Also there were Robespierre's associate Saint-Just, the playwright and deputy Collot d'Herbois, Internal Affairs commissioner Couthon, military leader Barras, former President of the Convention Hérault de Séchelles, and a number of others, all of whom came to demonstrate the legitimacy of the proceedings and make sure everything went as planned. Robespierre, like Danton, did not come to view the execution.

Hunching near the horse and moving through the close-knit crowd had an unusual effect on Lalladiere. Instead of the terror ordinarily induced in him by closeness to people, walking within the group next to an unknowingly protective mounted gendarme, anonymous and totally unseen by his pursuers, gave him an unfamiliar feeling of security. He knew that Denis or worse, Ajacis, could still apprehend him, and there was little chance at that point of making contact with Jean-Luc in the massive crowd. But the voices were strangely silent, nothing came through the surrounding wall of noise as before. He strode carefully forward in concert with the jabbering, stirred-up people nearby.

Théo, together with Jean-Luc, had taken a place as close to the guillotine as the densely packed throng allowed. Laughingly intending to playact for Jean-Luc, Théo tilted his head to the side, then chopped with the heel of his hand at the side of his neck. A reluctant and captive companion, not amused by his father's performance, Jean-Luc grimaced. From within the family groupings pushed close together with them, the heads of other children bobbed up high as their eager parents lifted them to get a better view of the grim machine. Two drunken men bumped and swayed within the assembled groupings near the front, one of them loudly declaiming the former king and queen, and promising that the Capet woman – 'the widow slut' – would now get what was coming to her.

Keeping Jean-Luc in view and watching for signs of Ajacis, Denis, or other as-yet-unseen attendants, Lalladiere moved forward at the side of the large snorting horse to the gendarme's designated station angled several feet from the front of the guillotine. Not stopping, the gendarme suddenly turned his mount sharply sideways in order to police a large segment of the pressing crowd. Lalladiere, taken unaware, stood where he was in a momentarily opened space among the mass of people. Whether Ajacis, at that moment, could see him was not clear, but Lalladiere distinctly saw that attendant's large red head bobbing up and down at the edge of the crowd. Panicked, he jerked himself around toward the denser grouping nearer to the guillotine, and smashed into one of the *lecheuse* women standing there. He fell flat onto the ground, then jumped up, feeling dazed. He wheeled around and wildly pushed through the crowd until he was stopped by the cordon of assistants to the representatives of the National Convention standing near the guillotine.

He stood and stared. Except for two of them, the others present were all known to him. Each had met more than once in his presence with the Controller General, the people's minister Necker. The encounter must be a sign, an important portent. From where he stood, he saw the familiar and characteristically scowling Hébert, the crippled and expressionless Couthon, the distinguished former aristocrat de Séchelles as well as an unknown open-faced, young, and clearly confident man, Saint-Just. When, above all the rest, the handsome head of Barras came into view, Lalladiere's heart beat wildly.

He is here to arrest you, jail you, torture you.

"True, that's true," he mumbled. "That is why this dangerous man is here." He wheeled back toward the crowd behind him. But at the same time he heard the trumpeting of hazard in his ears, he clearly remembered specific conspiratorial phrases, "Do Danton in," and "The Incorruptible One... is dangerous." Here, in the midst of the milling crowd around him, he comprehended fully that the men he heard were secretly planning a seditious plot. Not only one he believed was against him. They were plotting to undo the Revolution. And, though he often felt his thoughts clouded, he deeply cared about that. The Revolution was for the people. He believed in it from the beginning, was there, and ardently vowed that it must work.

Energized, deciding on a new goal, he vigorously pushed past the assistants obstructing him. The

commanding voices were momentarily silent. Moving so quickly he could not be stopped again, he came up directly behind Robespierre's right hand man Saint-Just who was at that moment speaking in a directive tone to those around him. Thinking correctly that Saint-Just was the authoritative person in the group, he grabbed his arm, jerking the young man toward him. In an anxious but quiet voice, Lalladiere said, "They are plotting to destroy Danton. They are plotting to use and kill Robespierre."

"What? Who are you? What is this?" demanded Saint-Just, wide-eyed and amazed.

Hérault de Séchelles, standing next to Saint-Just, said, "I know this man, he was Necker's first assistant. "But what," he asked, addressing Lalladiere, "has happened to you? You look terrible."

"Yes, the man was very reliable," said Collot d'Hérbois. "But I heard it has been bad, very bad, for him."

"Danton undone, then Robespierre," Lalladiere, ignoring the comments, repeated to Saint-Just. One of the assistants came up to remove Lalladiere but Hérault de Séchelles motioned, with a tentative patting in the air, for him to stand back.

"What is this all about, citizen?" Saint-Just asked again. "Who is plotting to kill Danton and Robespierre? Why have you come here?"

Lalladiere tossed up his head to glance quickly toward Barras partly concealed by assistants and members of the crowd several feet away. Neither Saint-Just nor any of the others saw the gesture, but Barras, out of the corner of his eye, noticed the agitated interchange and turned toward the two men.

"A conspiracy. I heard them. Elevate Robespierre, then bring him to the guillotine." As Lalladiere said this, he pointed at the towering dread machine.

You too are going to be killed. You too must go to the guillotine. It's for you. You, You, too. Lalladiere turned his head toward the sound of the now returned voices and his face took on a distorted, painful look.

Saint-Just's eyes narrowed into slitted lines. Robespierre was the deliverer, for him the undisputed

hero of the Revolution. This bizarrely behaving man was part of the king's government and might himself be a conspirator. How could anyone elevate Robespierre and then have him killed? Robespierre, spearhead, organizer, increased his influence himself every day.

"What are you doing here? Who said you could come here, and talk to me this way? I shall have you arrested, Necker's assistant or not."

"Arrested. The times are festive. We are festive, and must take away the salt. Lots of people are involved and he will be very embarrassed, the most embarrassed person anyone knows." He focused his eyes, this time protractedly, at Barras as he said the last. Barras, seeing the look but not able to hear over the surrounding din, stared back suspiciously. Exasperated, searching around for some assistance, Saint-Just again ignored Lalladiere's telltale glance.

"What did you say?" Saint-Just asked loudly, at the same time raising his arm to get the attention of the nearby mounted gendarme. A few persons in the tightly-packed crowd moved closer to find out what was going on. At that moment, a commotion at the other end of the square distracted everyone. At the entry to the Place from the rue National, the open tumbrel cart bearing the former queen appeared.

The wheels of the tumbrel clattered loudly on the cobblestones as the anguished, frightened woman, sitting erect in a plain bonnet and white dress, was carried toward the guillotine. Those nearby the vehicle shouted epithets and curses: "traitor," "vampire mother," "pervert and witch," "shitty degenerate," and the catchphrase slogan "Austrian whore." The cart moved forward, the pounding wheels resounding over the shouts.

As Saint-Just and others nearby turned to stare in the direction of the moving cart, Lalladiere spun quickly around to escape into the crowd behind him. Deftly, he scrambled through, shifting his body from side to side through narrow openings among the people shuffling and craning to look toward the cart. In dramatic contrast with his defensive catatonic spells, he moved vigorously and was untouchable, like an athlete covered with a coat of grease. Within minutes he lost himself among the mass of spectators, fleeing rapidly, breathing hard enough to make his chest ache. Aiding him in his getaway, although he did not know it, the pursuer Denis was moving away from him. Peering widely over the crowd, Denis had noticed the altercation near the guillotine and, believing he had spied his man, was pushing directly

toward Lalladiere's previous location, now a fair distance from him.

Lalladiere turned in the direction away from the cart carrying the former queen, and unhappily away from where he had last seen Jean-Luc and Théo, but also away from Ajacis and Denis. As he reached the edge of the Place de Revolution, and started over the new bridge across the river Seine, he could no longer hear the clacking sound of cartwheels on stones, or the chorus of vilifying shouters.

Chapter 13

“Citizen, where did he go?” Denis asked Saint-Just urgently as he came up to the area where he had spotted Lalladiere. Saint-Just was angry and grimacing, looking toward the crowd behind them.

“Who? The man who was just here?”

“Yes, that one. I must find him.”

“Why was he here? Where does he come from?”

“I must get him. Which way did he go?”

“What has this man done?” Hérault interposed.

“He went into the crowd,” replied Saint-Just. “Moved away like lightning. I cannot see him anywhere at all now.”

“Where into the crowd?”

“What in damnation is this about? He spoke wildly, dangerously, of a plot against the Revolution. Against Robespierre.”

“He is from the Bicêtre Asylum, an inmate.” Denis felt he was wasting time responding to the official’s questions, but there was no sign of Lalladiere or of the path he had taken. The packed crowd near them closed immediately over any space that opened. All stood, a mass of irregular-neck-length cranes, peering toward the cart. Ignoring Denis, Saint-Just, and the previous altercation, eyes everywhere followed the slow entry of the hapless former queen, trying to catch glimpses of her tensed, constricted body, and her desperate face.

“Peuf. So that is what it was. He is an escaped lunatic. Of course, just as I thought, nothing to what he raved about. There are many enemies around. Of Robespierre, of myself as well. But none who

support him want him killed.”

“Citizen,” said Denis, still speaking to Saint-Just, “I know nothing of plots against the Revolution. The man often does speak of plots, but always against himself. Can you at least tell me toward which side he ran?”

At that moment, Barras, coming near, caught Denis’s reference to plots. Not having heard Lalladiere’s accusation, but worried always about the barest threat of an exposure, he jumped in quickly to answer the question himself.

“If you are looking for that man just now talking to the deputy here, I saw him go that way.” He pointed directly opposite to where Lalladiere had gone.

Denis turned quickly and pushed roughly into the thick crowd. Barras’s misdirection led him toward the path of the cart where there was an even heavier press of onlookers. As he crossed in front of the vehicle in order to move outward toward the perimeter, he thought – no, he was sure – the former queen was looking at him. What, he wondered then, and many times after that, was in that look? It seemed as though she had picked him out, knew him, and was appealing to him to save her. Well, perhaps she was right, he thought, perhaps he was the one to do it. Like everyone else, he hated the aristocracy, hated her and the oppression everyone said she caused. But she was going to be killed. On her face was an expression like his father’s, before he died of the fever. He looked so frightened, desperate, although not condemned to death on the guillotine he was still hoping for reprieve. What sin deserved death? It was the end of everything. He couldn’t save his father, but for a moment he wondered if he could run to the cart and save the wretched woman.

Turning his eyes away from her entreating look, he edged forward, stretching his head upward to try to see the fleeing Lalladiere. If not, he might spot Ajacis, signal to him that the runaway was probably moving in his direction toward the outside of the square. They needed to get him then and there. If they missed him in the crowd, no one could tell what would happen. The man was violent, chaotic. They were sure he was there. Maybe he would hurt the boy.

Lalladiere, on the bridge, ran quickly to the other side. There, the crowd was less heavy, but

everyone on the thoroughfare faced him, heading toward the Place in the opposite direction. A number of them, puzzled and annoyed, gave way reluctantly as he ran on.

They're after you. They're after you. Murderous. Vicious. They'll get you again, tear you to shreds, and kill you.

He mumbled over and over in response: "Yes, I know, I know. I'm going, going as fast as I can." But he neither knew where to go nor what to do. Dazedly, he ran until, seeing a smaller side street, he turned in. A horse and cart rumbled toward him. Several stragglers headed for the execution were walking quickly and, he believed, staring at him.

Despite his dazed uncertainty and the pressure of his flight, he realized that he was in a familiar area of the city. If he continued in the direction he was going, he eventually would return to the Bicêtre. He shuddered, disturbed by a sudden passing thought that he wanted to go back there. He walked slower, continuing his mumbling discourse, and trying to think about the boy. There was no possibility, he knew, of going back and finding him in the crowd.

The streets of Paris where he went were well known to him. He had lived near this area all his life. Passersby, noticing his conversations in the air, glared at him. He turned away, crouching down to be less noticeable and momentarily felt safer and more controlled. But then, as he vaguely knew, people seeing him in that posture were more aware and even wary of him. Some took a wide arc away from him as they walked. One man, whose discomfort turned into anger, came straight toward him, ready to push or hit him. As he approached and saw Lalladiere's expressionless face, the man was disconcerted and dropped his hands. He spit out a filthy epithet and moved on. Lalladiere hastened away, fearful of everyone around him, plagued by fresh warnings from the accompanying shrill voices.

He came to the Severin District streets and alleyways. Here, he toddled as a child, went to school, carted stone loads until the time his father left for good. He started into a half run. Not far away was the small attached house where his mother still lived.

"Ho citizen, where are you going?" an extremely tall young man, wearing the prototypic striped open-ended pants, black wig, and red cap of a revolutionary *sans-culotte*, held up his hand and

addressed him.

Lalladiere stopped but didn't answer. His lips moved in unison with the voices warning him about the intrusion.

"Did you hear me, citizen? Where are you going? The execution is the other way, everyone goes there. Why are you hurrying away?"

"He was afraid of the guillotine. The blood."

"What? Has the head been cut off already? Is she dead?"

Lalladiere said nothing.

"What's going on? Why don't you answer me? I am a leader of this Section. I've never seen you here before."

"Blew. Blood. Blue. The blood is on her hair."

"What is this? Are you a sympathizer with the Austrian whore? A counterrevolutionary?" the tall Leader asked, scowling harshly.

Silence.

"You are in danger, citizen," angry now, the leader raised his voice, attracting the attention of two men and a woman among the people passing. They stopped to watch.

"If you go from the execution for political reasons, it is treachery," the official said, glaring down at Lalladiere. "This will be an end for you," he added.

Lalladiere looked wild, frightened.

"Tell me, shithead, were you hatching something back there and they stopped you? Is there some scheme, a conspiracy?"

“Conspiracy. They are plotting. Against me. Against the leaders – Danton,” Lalladiere said.

“What? So there is a plot here. Against Danton, is that it? Come on, you come with me, I am taking you in,” he moved toward Lalladiere to grab his arm. Seeing his intention, the three onlookers moved forward to join in.

Lalladiere flailed his arms upward, kicked out toward the approaching man, pushed past the other three, and wheeled around to run. He raced in frenzy down the street behind them. No goal except escape. He continued to move his arms, jerking them sideways as he went. People coming toward him veered away in surprise. Not far behind him, the Section Leader and another man were running quickly after him. Rather than paralysis, the terrifying danger gave him exceptional speed.

He could find no refuge among the houses he passed, many of which were familiar. He turned the corner at the end of the street and passed several stone-fronted buildings. Then, an open entryway. He jumped in, and reflexly moved toward the roofs. As he passed the second floor, a woman coming out of a nearby door saw him and shouted. This spurred him even more quickly onward, leaping two, and sometimes three steps upward at a time. When he reached the opening to the roof, he heard sounds of commotion from the street below. Breathless, he hoped the pursuers had not guessed where he had gone. The shouting woman, in the short time elapsed, could not yet be down to the street.

More quickly than before, he moved over sloping metal, past protruding stone, smokestacks, and ledges. The droning shouts of *Run, bastard, fly, run, run*, sounded more distant, like an echo. He looked over the edge of the roofs, and saw parts of the streets and shapes of houses he knew well.

On the roofs his fear changed to confidence, then a feeling of supremacy. High up, he was above his city, above people crowding the streets, chasing him, above the same places where he was once tortuously mocked. A man of power, leaping with majestic ease across the angling shapes and barriers. He was on an elevated mount, his lands and subjects below him. Then:

The Revolution, worm. You are nothing. You must stop the plot, restore yourself, 645, save the glorious Revolution.

He would not forget. But the raucous voice's reference to restoration reminded him of those here who taunted him, excluded him from their games, pushed him out of line-ups at school. If they saw him leaping on their roofs, they would be amazed, fear him, regret what they did. They would admire and extol him.

Down on the street, the pursuers were continuing onward when another red-capped man stopped them to say he had seen a running man go in a nearby entryway. Several bystanders there came up and told that they also noticed him and the shouting woman emerged onto the street. But all, including the woman, were busy rushing – though doomed to the disappointment of late arrival by that time – to the place of execution. The Section Leader and his companion, determined to persist with their pressing duty to the Revolution, turned and raced quickly toward the open doorway. As she walked rapidly past them, the woman who had seen Lalladiere snorted that the man they wanted had gone to the roof. They entered, leaping up the long stairway to follow.

Reaching the top of the house, they scrambled out onto the sloping roof surfaces. They looked around in all directions, and could see no sign of the fugitive. Several houses away, Lalladiere had begun a slow but unseen descent back down to the street.

Chapter 14

Denis reached Ajacis at the edge of the Place, the western portion farthest from the location of the guillotine. He learned that, despite careful surveillance, his companion had seen no sign whatever of the evasive inmate. Ajacis cursed Lalladiere, complaining bitterly that the “fucking degenerate lunatic” was giving them the runaround for the second time. To make matters worse, the gendarmes were now too occupied to help them with their search. Denis decided they should go toward the bridge to the south of the Place. Despite the crowd, Lalladiere would not have been able to pass unseen through Ajacis’s broad vantage point.

As they rushed toward the end of the boulevard, Denis tried to make out what Lalladiere had just done, approaching deputies right there in the midst of the execution. One of them seemed to know him and Saint-Just, who didn’t, said Lalladiere spoke about a plot. Why do the lunatics talk always of plots? The world, God knows, is a dangerous place, a person always has to be on guard against being undermined, twirled like a moving top, by others. By cheaters, people stealing your money or the food off your table. But plots? Not only does this one, like all the rest, make up plots against himself but here he puts in revolutionary leaders too! As he pushed forward, turning his head from side to side on the lookout for Lalladiere, he wondered where the man was going, what he could be thinking. The beseeching face of the doomed former queen came into his mind. Did Lalladiere, like her, want somehow to be helped from a terrible fate? It was too late for her, was it also for him? Sometime later, he would find himself going into such matters further, wondering about possible outcomes as well as actual causes of Lalladiere’s insanity.

Reaching almost to the edge of the boulevard at the bridge, Denis and Ajacis heard a fast, staccato roll of the drum from the region of the guillotine. During a miniscule pause in the blare, the smirking Ajacis called Denis’s attention, with a chopping gesture of his hand, to the faint whishing sound of the falling blade. A great roar went up from the crowd, then a cheer. As they rushed past the spectators crowded near the bridge, the two men heard loud cries of jubilation: “She got what she deserved,” and “Live the Revolution,” and “Death to the harlot corrupter of children,” and “Blood given for blood taken,”

and “She was a degraded, evil woman, it is good to see the end of her.” Then, despite the distance from the guillotine location, a woman’s scream: “Do you see, they’re holding up her head? What a vicious treacherous expression on her face!”

They reached the bridge, crossed it, and several yards into the thoroughfare, they came to the winding, radiating streets on the left bank of the Seine. Denis decided they should divide up again and return to the same location when the sun was directly over their heads. They went in opposite directions, combing their respective areas. No one they stopped to ask had seen anything of Lalladiere. Finally, after much fruitless searching, they both gave up. At the meeting place, Denis lifted his palms upward and shrugged. Ajacis, winded from his running search, breathed a deep and guttural sigh of disgust.

“I hope,” Denis said, “he won’t get wild and hurt somebody. For that matter, I hope he don’t hurt himself either,”

“They’re worse when they get out. All pent up.”

“I’m not sure. Some maybe act better.”

“You’re a goddamn optimist. Shit, all of them are possessed. By the goddamn Devil. This is one of the worst. He won’t act better, or be better. Never, no matter what anyone does. You see it right here. Relax the rules, no more beatings, give them leeway, and they run. And we have to chase around the whole fucking city to find them.”

“I figured he would go after the little boy and his father. And I was right. We dogged him right to the Place itself.”

“That was the only piss-good thing to come out of this,” Ajacis said, spitting on the ground. “At least we got to be at the execution. What a day this is. A damned defeat for the enemies of the Revolution!”

Lalladiere descended from the roof onto a street well beyond the area searched by the two attendants. He moved further into the familiar neighborhood and entered a narrow, winding alley covered by an overpass. Walking quickly, he turned his head frequently to watch and listen for running sounds behind him. He felt lightheaded, in a kind of trance. He was heading for an unknown destination,

moving with some purpose other than escape. He emerged through the overpass at the end of the alleyway, turned and followed a long street on his right, came to another on the left hand side veering away at a sharp angle, and crossed to enter it. Now, he knew exactly where he was. Halfway down that street was the house where his widowed mother lived, the house he was born in. Deadening sound bombarded him.

Watch out! Watch out! They're coming after you. They will torture you, tear out your guts, cut off your cock, eat out your eyes. They will destroy you, you will never get away. Don't move. Don't dare go forward, don't go back. You are doomed.

He stood still. For a moment, total immobility again began to sweep through him. He shouted, pushed himself forward against the constraining sensations with flailing arms. Slowly, still mobile, with a bewildering feeling of need, he inched toward his mother's house.

Again, the invisible dissuaders assailed him. He understood nothing of why they spoke, why they said what they did, why sometimes they were excruciatingly forceful and other times less so. He knew only he had to obey them, could only seldom summon resolve strong enough to resist. He turned back, heeding their warnings, toward the street behind him. But just as he started to enter it, he saw a tall woman and boy walking toward him. The boy was carrying a heavy bundle but together they approached at a very fast pace. Close by on the narrow street was a bumping, rolling oxcart with a menacing-looking, hairy-armed driver, also tall. He gazed at Lalladiere and bared his teeth. Walking closely behind were two men, one with a very large head and the other broad-shouldered. Though deeply involved in conversation, they both stopped and stared with open spittle-filled mouths directly at him. Terrified that all were after him, the strong-looking men discussing their plans to devour him, he pushed himself up against a nearby building and stared at the oncoming band for what seemed like a long time. Then, he swept around into the street from which he came. Stumbling, unable to run as resolutely as before, he turned constantly to look back over his shoulder.

He forced himself to peer down the street ahead of him. Striding up the street he saw, a short distance past his mother's house, an officious-looking man and woman biting on what looked like hair. Further down, moving in the same direction, were large bobbing heads of several single walkers, open-

mouthed with seemingly sharply-honed teeth, and then a towering group of three, moving in coordination. Fearful both of the immense threatening people in front and those he left on the street behind, he decided he must now immediately take refuge in his mother's house.

Watch out. They're coming. Retribution. Torture. They're here. They're here.

He made as wide a circle as he could around the officious-looking couple, who began to watch him suspiciously. Head bowed, in turn peering fixedly at them out of the corner of his eye, he moved quickly and resolutely to the door of the house. On the stone upper sill were carved two large dog heads.

After several knocks, the door opened slowly and a man looked out. Lalladiere stepped back.

She's not alone. Danger. Danger. This man is dangerous.

"Yes, what is it?" The man was portly but the shoulders and arms outlined under his tight-fitting shirt indicated considerable strength. His voice was screechy but not unfriendly.

Lalladiere stood silently without moving.

"Yes, citizen, what do you want? Why did you knock?"

Still no answer. The man snorted and began to shut the door. Lalladiere looked anxiously from side to side at the people going on the street, then stepped slightly forward and spoke in a low, conspiratorial tone:

"His mother lives here."

"What do you mean? Whose mother lives here?" He looked carefully at Lalladiere's face, "Who are you?"

Another pause, but getting a glimpse of the familiar inside of the house, Lalladiere felt reassured. It was very hard for him to say his name, assert that he had a real human self, but he responded to the impatience in the man's voice.

“Guillaume. I am Guillaume Lalladiere.”

“What did you say? Guillaume. Oh, are you the son? The one they threw into the asylum?” Scowling now, he demanded, “What are you doing here?”

Some oncoming walkers passed behind Lalladiere as he stood there. The man at the door took no notice, but Lalladiere, glancing at them, became acutely fearful.

“There is danger. He must come in. It is his mother. The reign has ended on the Place. There are only dry salty locations left.”

“The Place? Did they let you out to see the Austrian whore’s execution?”

“Execution. Triexecution. Devacustation.”

“Argh, piss on it, I don’t know what the hell you are talking about. But if you really are the son, I got to let you in. She will say it.” A pause. “Got any money?”

As the man slowly opened the door wider, Lalladiere pushed past him and bolted inside. The sparsely furnished main room and two bedrooms beyond were immediately familiar, little had changed since he left more than ten years before. In one corner, sitting at the small dining table and fixedly watching him enter, was his mother, Manon, whose last name was now Roliot. She was a short woman wearing a round white bonnet edged by red curly hair unkemptly interspersed with black strands. She rose when Lalladiere entered, amazed.

“Eh, is it Guillaume? Is this an escape? Or are you a ghost?”

“They are after me. She knows. She will help me hide.” The prohibition against self-referral had turned around, and the voices, were for the moment absent.

“Yes, always there is someone after you,” Manon said with a growling tone. “What did you do now? Fight viciously with guards at the place they put you? Like always. Bicêtre – it was Bicêtre, right?”

Lalladiere nodded.

“And how did you come here? Fly like a bird?”

“I did,” Lalladiere replied softly. “Over all the roofs of Paris.”

“So now you are a great big flying bird, sweeping over roofs and chimneys, peeking, of course, in every window you could. How great and famous you must be.”

“He has been to the execution of the widow Capet,” Bertrand Roliot, Manon’s second husband, interjected as he closed the door.

“Pouf, so that is the answer. That is why you escaped from that asylum. You wanted to see the whore’s cut-off head. Your father, that pervert Victoire, always liked cutting and bleeding, too.” She turned her head slightly and lowered her voice, addressing herself. “Always wanted to go to the butcher’s himself – if we could afford meat – always wanted to see the blood.”

“The queen hated Jacques Necker,” Lalladiere said, speaking clearly and coherently to his mother. “She hounded King Louis to remove him. And he did it.”

“I remember. I remember. And they dropped you on your ass into the streets then, didn’t they?” Manon Roliot added, her harsh tone softening slightly, “Well then, you escape to the execution. And you see your revenge, is that not so?”

“What did she look like at the end?” Bertrand Roliot asked. “Did she cry? Beg for mercy? Or did she stand up, flaunt her body like always, and sneer at the people?”

Lalladiere stared at him but did not answer.

“What do we do with this son of yours, Manon?” Roliot asked. “You told me he turned maniac. In for life, you said, he would never bother us. He’s maniac, all right, I saw that right away. But he managed to escape from the damn asylum and came here.”

“You don’t know everything, Bertrand. That Bicêtre is a terrible place. Sure he ran away. You told me they killed all those young boys there last year, remember?” She turned toward her son, her growling

tone slightly softened, "I thought, one time, it was you too was one of them."

"We must report him," Roliot said.

"No, we won't. Not now," she said, forcefully. "He has come here – don't you know? – to see me. We must let him stay. Tell me, Guillaume, was it like I said, you escaped to see the queen's head lopped off, or, was it because they were torturing you, sliding needles, knives, and jagged hooks deep into you at that Bicêtre?"

Roliot, a tough man, grimaced. He stared at her but, used to such extremes from his wife, he turned away. "Why did you come here?" he asked Lalladiere.

"The plot. They are after me. They are after Danton. And the Incorruptible One. I heard them. I must tell. Tell them. Save the Revolution."

"What? A government nobody," Roliot said incredulously, "and now you hobnob with Danton and Robespierre? A lunatic like you is going to save the Revolution?" He wheeled around toward his wife. "Manon, he's not just degenerate, his rantings are dangerous. To us. To everybody. We must get him out of here."

"No, Bertrand. He's not much. God knows, not much. But he is my son. Didn't you hear him say people are after him?"

"I am going to the people in charge. He belongs back in the asylum."

"If you go to do that, Bertrand," she growled, "grab hard on your cock, because you sleep alone tonight"

Chapter 15

Lalladiere laid on improvised matting in a corner of the main room of the house. The small room which he and his brother, who died in childhood, had once shared was now filled with the apparatus for Roliot's limited, but life-sustaining, wooden toolmaking business. Lying there, Lalladiere was beset with images of being chased, of large bodies looming over him and rubbing against him, of sitting at a table eating salty gruel. Of staring eyes. Eventually, he fell asleep, waking a few hours later tensely aware of irregular sounds from the street. He tried, then, with vigorous strokes, to break his tension but, back again in that house, was unable to do so.

During the day, he ate quickly and voraciously the sparse amounts of food placed before him. Between meals he sat silently on a straight wooden chair at the table or curled up on the floor in a corner of the room, watching his mother move, without looking at him, about the house. The only voices he heard were those of his mother and her husband Roliot, frequently raised in loud arguing about his being there. Roliot complained about the strangeness of his behavior, his limited but outrageously insane words and beliefs and, above all, his consuming their small supplies of food. He said he even tried a few times to speak with Lalladiere again about being at the execution. Questioned him about how he got there, what he saw, but received nothing but infuriatingly vague replies about conspiracy. Manon alternately screamed and whimpered that her son was sick or, against his will, possessed. He needed to rest there, be safe. Sometimes, she added suspiciously that people or spirits were probably watching all of them, or hovering around the house to try to possess them too. Roliot thought she was going on one of her extremes, or being stirred up by her son.

On the fourth day after he came to the house, Lalladiere went out by himself in the morning. He didn't say where he was going, or whether he would come back. Standing near the door, they both watched him leave without a word. Manon's face was cold and expressionless. Despite her insistence on her sick or possessed son's need for safety, she saw him go and no longer pondered about what could happen.

Lalladiere walked slowly through the familiar streets, with fewer people moving through them

than on the day he came. He kept his head up, looking straight ahead, but glanced quickly sideways at each person he passed. Any one might be a pursuer, a torturer, a plotter against him. *Watch out, worm, thing of corruption and slime. They are coming to get you.* The unusual quiet in his mother's house, with no thunderous voices despite the tension, had ended.

He retraced his escape path back to the Place de la Revolution. Not desperately racing now, the distance seemed shorter. But at the Place, he felt uncomfortably exposed and alone in the wide expanse. The previously large crowd that surrounded him and allowed him to feel anonymous was replaced by noisy but spread out clumps of moving people. There were a few carts, a larger wagon, two men on horses, and some zigzag lines of walkers. The packed theatre of death was now an open, uncluttered space where free movement, burdensome freedom to choose course and direction, was possible.

He was unsure what to do. He stood motionless near the bridge and considered going to find Jean-Luc. Going back over the bridge, he could angle quickly through the alleys to the area where the boy lived. No, he thought, he had not come out that day to go to Jean-Luc. There was a secret weighing on his mind. A heavy pounding secret. He knew a lot about secrets, they had become deeply buried within him. He had seen secret things, done secret things, and hid them. But this secret was different, it was the reason he left the house that morning. He must continue on.

He entered the rue Nationale, then turned into rue Honoré, the route traversed by the cart of execution. The thought of the former queen's death had been wiped from his mind. Despite persistent ideas of being killed, sometimes of killing someone else, that filled his consciousness, he could not conjure up a person dead. Death was a torture, a punishment, not a reality. Passages of time, endings, were overwhelming; he could not think of them at all.

The house he headed for was on rue Honoré. Roliot had mentioned that house being on the cart route when trying to get him to talk about the execution. Hearing that, Lalladiere knew he had to go there. Had to warn the man inside.

Make up for what you do. Make up for what you did. This is your chance to make it up. Time, worm, to undo the harm, the vicious harm. Only you can save it. You must tell the secret, undo the harm. Be the savior. You are destined to be the true savior. The savior. Save. Savi. Savior.

He passed the windows of a haberdasher showing a few neatly stacked bolts of cloth, a bakery with shelves holding sparse loaves of bread, a general store displaying boxes of garlic and signs for wine and cognac, the glass front of a furniture maker's shop backed by an empty looking expanse of darkness. On the street were half-filled carts vending vegetables, licorice water, small oranges or salt. Not teeming as before, but still filled with activity, walkers and vehicles on this Paris street went resolutely to and fro. Intermixed with his plaguing and commanding voices, he heard sounds of vociferous conversation, intermittent shouting, and the bustle both of business and sociability.

He passed more shops until coming to the area near the Palais Royale, where people and motion became scarce. As he approached the huge enclosure, he was strangely almost completely alone on the street. From a nearby entrance, a woman came out with a leap. She turned, saw him, and without a moment's hesitation, headed directly toward him. Dressed in a tightfitting lavender front slit and petticoat-revealing dress, she was laughing, swaying, and slightly dazed. Immediately behind her another woman suddenly appeared, wearing clothing varying only in color but not in style. She too was bobbing and flauncy, skipping as she walked. Together, they quickly approached Lalladiere.

Another woman came out of the entrance, followed by two more. All were laughing, and one was shrieking. Obviously drugged, some moving their mouths in a chewing motion, they advanced in an uncoordinated dance. Forward, backward, one step sideways, then a little jump. Forward, forward, sideways, sideways, ending with a slide. Shake, sway, skip, skip. The lavender-dressed woman reached him first, swaying close by while the others moved to surround him. They continued to dance with mounting energy as they bobbed in and out of a loosely formed circle.

As she swayed, she moved seductively close to him, grabbed his hand, and placed a thin, brown fritter-like cake in his palm. Then, she took his other arm and started to lead him toward the entryway to the Palais Royale. He jerked himself backward, and feeling his movement, she clutched onto his arm. As he tried again to move away, she, with all of her might, pulled his arm outward. Lalladiere's pain was excruciating and intense. Despite her drugged, dazed state, the woman had extraordinary strength. A moment later, a red-dressed, swaying and dancing woman on the other side of him came near, pulled the cake from where it had been put in his hand, and shoved it into his mouth. Though he resisted, he could tell it was slightly juicy and tasted bittersweet.

Filled with the power of frenzied excitement, this woman also grabbed an arm hard, and having him now in a pinioned position, she used her knuckles to push the cake further in. Another woman came up in front of the other two and put both hands on his cheeks in a gesture of mock caress. Suddenly, she dug her fingers into the angles of his jaws and, putting both thumbs into his mouth, attempted to get him to swallow the cake. Two others, still laughing, swaying, and dazed, kneeled down at his sides and began pulling at his genitals.

He tried to resist the agonizing stroking of his crotch and the suffocating pressure in his mouth. He summoned all his strength, attempting to hit, shake, kick them, bite the woman's thumbs, but all continued clutching with determination greater than he had known. Even from asylum attendants.

He gave out a gurgled shriek, but no one came to stop them. He tried again, a back-throated wail, with no success. Then, as his mouth was stretched to the snapping point, arms agonizingly taut, genitals feeling shrunken with pain, the women suddenly stopped and let go. Still laughing and entranced, they turned away jumping and skipping. And all together went dancing back into the passageway from which they emerged. None looked back. In a flicker of time, they were gone.

As Lalladiere stood alone, shaking himself to restore energy and motion to his head and limbs, two separate walkers on the street looked at him curiously. Had they noticed what had happened? Were they used to seeing the prostitutes of the Palais Royale cavorting, and therefore what had transpired appeared as usual bawdy revelry? Each continued walking.

Lalladiere remained standing for some minutes and searched the empty street behind and in front of him.

More are coming. Watch out. Watch out. They put flames inside and kill you.

He was not sure whether to go on. The drugged women were seducing him. No, it couldn't be, they were warning him by inflicting pain. They had come from somewhere, some edge of the world, to be with him, worship and punish him, warn him. Still he was determined to give up the secret. He had begun again, had to keep going. Save Danton now, save everything, no matter what. He rubbed his arms and legs, shook himself, and walked unsteadily on. Despite the pain and fear he felt moments before, he was

not paralyzed and would go on to resist and fight. They might try to get him, but he would find a way.

It was a dark, cloudy day, there were no shadows or even glimmers of sunlight. With no glare, he was able to see clearly all around him. He continued on beyond the Palais Royale. *Look up. See, they're watching.* In the open window of a house above, he saw a woman looking down at him, the sharp outlines of a derisive smirk on her face. He cringed. Despite continuing aches from his encounter, he tried to walk more quickly. Further down the street he came to a cloth and fabric shop where, deep inside, both a dark-jacketed proprietor and a yellow-dressed woman, perhaps a customer, stood looking outward toward him.

He reached the next street, trembling. More people were going back and forth and in their midst he felt safer. But that might at any moment change. The staring, the threatening, the turning on him. As he walked, other people, busy with their own affairs, came into the street. No one paid him any attention. Taking that in, his anxiety changed to desolation and loneliness. Surrounded here by people, he realized he was cut off and alone. But that emptiness was better than being pursued by conspirators, or having dangerous attention from drugged women. Sometimes when he recognized his shrouded feelings of loneliness, let yearnings and even sadness come into his mind, there was less terror, less danger of erupting rage. And there was actual lessening of the din.

What was it, this loneliness he felt? One day, he would think about it more, trying to understand it. Was it being separate and alone, having his own countless thoughts, making all his own movements each day? Products and responsibilities of no one else, no other person? Being human, flawed and vulnerable while no other person feels his feelings, thinks his thoughts, and no one, even by dint of will, love, or purest intentions, can change ravages, fully remove hurts, or ward off personal extinction. When this aloneness – he would later learn could be a savoring enrichment, a pride in capacities – appears only as bitter, terrible reality, it turns to the rotting loneliness.

Loneliness goes with imperfection, desperation, failed strivings, pain. Better to avoid it, feel nothing, not be human. Pushing all away starts very, very early, even before safe thoughts begin. And someday there comes being incessantly on guard, seeing plotting at every turn, hearing voices of condemnation.

“Good citizen,” a person said, addressing Lalladiere, “can you give a sou to a blind man?”

Walking for safety close to the buildings on the street, Lalladiere had stumbled over the outstretched feet of the man who beseeched him. The begging man, who wore a large eyepatch over one eye, was huddled up against a wall near a corner. Not fully blind, he exaggerated his misfortune. Lalladiere regained his balance and stood for a moment looking down on the man.

“A sou, please, citizen. Only a sou.”

The man spoke with a mellow, friendly voice. Despite his huddled position, Lalladiere could see that he was broad shouldered and strong, wearing slightly frayed straight-leg pants and a loose cloth shirt.

“I can tell you are a good man of wealth. Can you spare me something, please?”

Lalladiere wore the knee breeches he had on when first entering the hospital. Though worn and torn in places from long use and climbing during runaways, this clothing was currently considered elitist. He looked for some minutes at the man. There was something reassuring about him, the amiable voice, the disabled large hulk curled up on the pavement. Reaching into his pocket for money he had carefully kept all the time with him, Lalladiere handed the beggar several coins.

“There is danger,” Lalladiere said. “I must get to the house. For a warning. The house is here where the Great One lives.”

“What great one, citizen? You are on the rue Honoré. Who do you look for?” the beggar said as he quickly pocketed the money.

“The In-co-rrupt-ible.” Lalladiere stated the widely known tag as though each syllable had special significance.

“Ah, the citizen Robespierre. Yes, he lives here, a couple of streets down. Over there.” As he pointed in the direction further away, he lifted himself up and stood closely facing Lalladiere. The man was extremely large, which had not been fully apparent when he was huddled up against the building. He

stood more than a foot taller than Lalladiere, and his muscular girth was so enormous he seemed to surround him.

With his uncovered eye, which bulged slightly, he rapidly scrutinized Lalladiere from top to toe. Extending a hand outward and snapping his head to one side, he indicated he would show Lalladiere the way.

“This street is a great one for spectacles.” he said affably. “The Austrian whore rolled by the other day. Yesterday, the carts carried twenty traitors. Where are you from, citizen? Not from Paris, of course. Did you come here today?”

“I come from Bicêtre.” For Lalladiere, the beggar, large as he was, seemed especially friendly and even protective as they walked.

“From the prison asylum? That would be some joyous thing. I bet they haven’t washed up all the blood yet from the killings last year. What happened, did you escape?”

“There were many wars there.”

“Yes, I’ll bet it was quite a struggle. I’ve heard they beat the prisoners once a day, whether they do anything or not. Keep them in line. But they killed off all the aristocrats at that place, how come you were still there?”

“Still there. Steal the cravat. Stavarat. Not an aristocrat.”

“So, you are a funny one, eh?” The beggar said, peering quizzically at Lalladiere with his uncovered eye. “You may not want to say it, but I can tell, even though your britches are a little frayed, that you are rich.”

Lalladiere said nothing, walking on expressionless.

“All right. Don’t get mad. But every Jacques and Francois around here don’t go to see deputy Robespierre. He’s getting to be very, very high up. A popular one, too, is he not? If you haven’t escaped

from the Bicêtre – you didn't give me no light at all about that – and you are going now to see Robespierre himself, you must be a pretty important person, too."

"Pretty important" – words Lalladiere had once heard about himself. That was, it seemed, an eternity before, with the minister. But such words were not ever to be applied to him again.

Worm. Worst than lowest of the low. There is no hope. Nothing. You can have no one's friendship.

"It's a short distance down from here. There's a little side way that turns in toward the house. I'll show you," the beggar said. He was walking close to Lalladiere, looking down at him, and concealing a vicious, avaricious smile.

Chapter 25

Denis walked through the corridor toward the large stone-pillared inmate's hall. At the doorway, he stopped and looked into the large enclosure, quickly sweeping a practiced gaze over each of the inmates lying or moving around in different postures and positions. A few lay stretched out on the floor or huddled onto portions of a bed, some paced through the room constantly moving their lips or talking loudly, one had tightly squeezed himself into a corner. A tall man wearing a strait jacket stared at Denis from the middle of the room, the corners of his mouth stretched awkwardly in a grimace. Near the doorway, a man was covering both sides of his face with his hands and pushing his head against the wall as though avoiding the light or, more likely, a terrifying sight.

Nothing special here, he thought. It seemed to be working out all right, no chains at all, using just strait jackets at times of violence. Not a single bad attack since quite a while back before the unchaining when that younger attendant forgot to look behind him and got bludgeoned to a bloody stump with chains. He couldn't help feeling a little bit wound up, though, still had to be watchful and on guard. Some inmate might still jump another one, become wild and furious, or else come at you out of the blue. Like that Rastillon – with the stand-up hair – did the week before. And they find every way anyone can imagine to hurt themselves badly, scraping themselves with whatever they could get hold of – stones, glass, buttons they hone for hours, forks. Banging their heads against the walls.

A short, muscular man who was baring his teeth spasmodically caught Denis's eye. The man walked toward him, beating his arms against his sides, stopped a few paces away, raised his hands to his head, pulled vigorously at clumps of his hair, and turned away.

Questions, recently recurring frequently as he worked, came into his mind. What makes this happen? What is wrong with these men? The people in this hall hadn't, as far as he knew, committed any crime, so – son of a dog that such a thought comes to me! – was there maybe a crime they wanted to commit? Then the fighting, maybe even the self-harm, stops their God-dam impulses to do greater harm. Most of these are not killers, taking the chains away shows that. Sure can tell real ones, real killers, they're all around, operating every day, plenty close at hand. He thought of being on the Place de la Revolution

when they executed the former queen, remembering again the way she looked at him. They recently cut off the heads of the Girondins, the ones who helped start the Revolution. Who does all this? The Revolution was his own cause from the first, he always was for stopping aristocrat privilege and plundering by priests. But who orders the killings of one kind of person, then another – queen, patriot, ugly women, good-looking ones, people who cry for the dead, men who make too much profit in their stores? No one is safe from slaughter. If the big-shot condemners went wild and beat their arms against their sides, would that stop them from calling for actual killings? He looked again at faces of the men in the large room. The one baring his teeth could just be that overblown deputy Saint-Just – even looked a little bit like him – who screamed when they were chasing Lalladiere at the Place.

Denis continued down the hallway. He realized his thoughts about the queen's execution came because he was on his way to attend Lalladiere, recently returned. Back at Bicêtre, what a challenge! There was still something about Lalladiere, that cleverness, the successful evasions when he escaped, the work as Necker's assistant before, and the keeping of the loyalty of proud Genevieve Raston. This lunatic was surely not, like people say, possessed of the devil, or filled with anything like bad humors. In a certain way, he was actually a little bit like Denis's father – smart, persistent, and in some ways strange, but always the center of his own and his mother's lives.

He reached Lalladiere's cell and roused him up to bring him to Dr. Pinel's examining room. As they walked together back up the hallway, Denis saw that Lalladiere was weaker, walking slowly with a tendency to drag one foot. Denis knew about the treatment at Humanité, Lalladiere had become worse than before.

They passed together by a small cell and then the bath treatment room. Inside this room, at an angle where Lalladiere could not see him, was the attendant Ajacis setting up for a bath to another inmate. Looking up from his work at the noise of their steps, Ajacis recognized the form of Lalladiere walking at the side of Denis, and was surprised. He did not know this inmate he despised had returned to Bicêtre. He had heard from Jean-Claude, whom he drank with from time to time at a tavern at the Palais Royale, that Lalladiere had been the same obnoxious and grandiose lunatic at the Hospice d'Humanité. Vehemently, Jean-Claude added, he would never get well. Ajacis had agreed, emphasizing that everyone gave too much attention to Lalladiere. He said that the rotten inmate needed to be beaten constantly even

though that didn't always prevent his disgusting tactics. But, as Jean-Claude knew, that was no longer allowed at Bicêtre.

Seeing Lalladiere walking past now, again within his jurisdiction, Ajacis vowed he would at the first opportunity physically put him straight, as he knew best to do. He had not up to then been caught and Lalladiere was, he knew, too afraid to report him. He would take the risk when he could. Beating would stop the lunacy and reduce Lalladiere's continual overbearing pride. Ajacis looked forward to using his skills for inducing memorable pain.

"You have come back to us, been through the streets of Paris, gone to Robespierre's dwelling, received the treatments of Hospice d'Humanité, and now perhaps you will tell us what causes your so passionate behavior," Dr. Pinel said after Lalladiere entered and sat down. Denis drew up a chair nearby.

Lalladiere was silent, head down, face without expression.

"Come now, my fellow, I have heard of your accusations against some of our leading republicans, and I am prepared to listen."

Lalladiere raised his head sideways and looked at Dr. Pinel out of the corner of his eye. He said nothing.

"I tell you," Pinel said, "I will listen to whatever you have to say. I am here to help you. I have seen that sometimes you become mute and paralyzed. A mentally-induced paralysis, that is. Other times you speak very strangely. But there are moments, I believe, when you want to be understood."

Lalladiere made small propelling motions with his head.

Do not trust him. He is trying to fool you.

Under his breath, he repeated what he just heard, "Do not trust him. He tries—"

"What is that? You say someone should not be trusted? Is that myself? But we treat you well here. No

bloodletting, no chains.”

Lalladiere, slightly reassured and not having seen Ajacis, started to speak.

You must be chained, prevented from moving.

The first words of acknowledgement became then choked in his throat, and he mumbled incoherently.

“You are, I think, trying to say something to me,” Pinel perceived a reaction, though miniscule.

“To me, the tell. They must save the salt. And also the corn and beans.”

“Yes, we are here to help you,” Pinel uncomprehending, intuitively persisted. “And so, Guillaume Lalladiere, what are these things you know about secret plotting in the government? I have heard of some dissatisfactions myself.”

Denis, at Lalladiere’s side, shifted uncomfortably in his chair. Often present at Pinel’s sessions with inmates, Denis had become impressed with the doctor’s receptive, humane approach. The madmen opened up to him, and Denis found out things he never knew. Pinel was, he realized, working hard to get Lalladiere to reveal himself and to learn about him, but Denis worried about the dangerous comment about dissatisfactions. No one in these times makes open criticisms of the government. The risk of slaughter. Just saying that any things were better in the past put people under the blade of the guillotine.

“What about the plots? It must be very difficult to feel constantly misunderstood,” Pinel volunteered.

“Danton, then Robespierre...” Lalladiere started, a knot clutching his belly. He broke off.

“Yes, yes. It is about these men? What can you tell us?”

Lalladiere looked directly at Dr. Pinel. Simply dressed in white cravat and dark jacket, compactly built, angular face with a straight slightly elongated nose, the doctor was not, even to a cowering lunatic, an imposing presence. But his clear blue eyes seemed to draw the small amount of light in the room, they

were shining and attentive. His slightly pursed mouth added assurance and thoughtfulness.

Lalladiere started again.

Don't trust –

Quickly, and with effort, he decided to defy the warning voice: "It's the Revolution. They're going to take over, destroy the Revolution."

"How will they do that?" Pinel asked in an even tone.

Don't, don't say –

"Use Robespierre, the Incorruptible," Lalladiere pushed out. He paused, looked down at his side, sighed deeply, then continued. "He will destroy Danton. Danton will appear as overly ambitious. Corrupt. They will cloak him in corruption."

Pinel, hearing Denis shift in his chair and knowing he was startled, avoided looking at him and leaned forward toward Lalladiere.

"But that has already happened. Danton and his followers have been guillotined!"

Lalladiere was also startled, and surprised.

Watch out. You're next. They are going to get you.

He refused then either to listen to the warning or think about the dying. Death was not real, only a type of punishment. But the plot, the terrifying plot, was progressing. Nevertheless, he felt reassured by Dr. Pinel's presence. The man was listening to him, someone was taking him seriously.

"Robespierre. He did it?" Lalladiere now broke his inner prohibition against asking questions.

"Yes, of course. The Committee of Public Safety condemned Danton, but Robespierre is the leader there."

“The Revolution, it must be saved,” Lalladiere said loudly. Then, clearly and succinctly: “Next, they will destroy this very important idealist Robespierre, find a way to bring him down.”

“How do you know about such a diabolical, far-reaching plot?” Pinel asked. “How could you find it out?”

Denis stared, unbelieving. Talking about Danton’s death? A plot to bring about Danton’s death? The accusation, the words themselves, were dangerously traitorous. This man is insane. Why does the doctor continue?

Acutely sensitive to any caretaker’s anxiety, Lalladiere peered sideways at Denis. He remembered the man’s voice when pursuing him in the street, remembered his own terror when hiding.

Seeing Lalladiere’s eyes shift to the attendant, Pinel noted the extreme suspiciousness. Despite the co-incidence of Danton’s death, the man had paranoid symptoms and the story would likely turn out to be delusional. On the other hand, passions, he believed, made people insane. He needed to know what this story was all about, what passions were involved whether it were true or not. A fear of speaking before an attendant, or even speaking to himself, about governmental plots was, in these perilous times, he realized, quite natural. Not itself a proof of insanity.

“You seem fearful of speaking,” he, now on target, said to Lalladiere, “it must be because you talk here of things that matter ardently to you.”

Slowly, gradually, Lalladiere’s words again came without interference. He eked out the story of the plot he overheard. At the doctor’s prompting, he described the voices of the men he heard, said they belonged to Jean-Lambert Tallien and Paul Barras, both of whom he had known when he was Necker’s assistant. With his long, slender hands, he gave a picture of the cubby hole space between the house and the street where, immobile and not being seen, he heard all they said. Pinel was impressed by the elaborate, detailed description. Denis, a reluctant audience, vaguely remembered the disagreeable deputy Tallien having inspected the asylum possibly at about the time of Lalladiere’s first escape. He was astounded by this claim of a chance encounter. Beyond that, he was unnerved by the doctor’s listening to the accusations and the open use of the Jacobin leaders’ names. He was actively encouraging Lalladiere to

spell it all out, and seemingly even believed it.

“You say it was Tallien that developed the plot? The butcher of Bordeaux?” Pinel asked.

Outside all limits, Denis thought, frowning and shifting in his seat. He heard rumors from other attendants that the doctor had government-condemned friends. Speaking in front of anybody this way, Dr. Pinel was risking disaster. Denis wished he weren't a witness sitting there, but at the same time he couldn't help being fascinated by what both men were saying.

“Yes, Tallien,” Lalladiere said, encouraged by Dr. Pinel's acceptance. “He also supervised the massacre of the prisoners. They were priests and young boys I saw it – here at Bicêtre.”

Pinel knew that history well, and the well-remembered day that Tallien re-visited the Bicêtre had been for him extremely difficult. He heard that Tallien was one of the men in the government who had early opposed both the unchainings and his attempts to separate the criminals from the insane. But he pushed those thoughts aside. Lalladiere, as he was very pleased to see, was becoming progressively more lucid, speaking of events and making clear connections. He pressed on.

“Well, how have these men worked to elevate Robespierre? He is surely in charge now, leads the Committee and the governing Mountain of the National Convention.”

Lalladiere leaned forward, his voice low and conspiratorial. “Tallien,” he said, speaking clearly and coherently, “I know it well, was a fervent revolutionary Jacobin. He organized the Fête de la Liberté, wrote pamphlets, posted notices on walls. The man is eloquent despite a speech inflection, and is very persuasive. His allegations of betrayal and corruption would be widely believed. Barras, I remember, was very upright, a military leader with lots of money.”

Lalladiere's tone and detailed knowledge led Pinel to wonder about the extent of his past government relationships. What had happened back then?

“Were these people hindrances to Consul Necker? Did they try to obstruct or betray him?”

Lalladiere stared at Pinel, saying nothing.

"Speaking of the past is burdensome to you, is that not so?" Pinel said, seeing Lalladiere's hesitation and sensing a retreat. "The painful intrigues and provocations in the government," he added, sympathetically.

Don't, Don't-

Lalladiere silently shook his head from side to side, fighting against the resurgence of an unbidden warning.

"It must seem dangerous, even now, to speak about betrayals around you," Pinel said, trying to guess at reasons for the apparent blocking.

Lalladiere sat silently, continuing the unseen, internal, battle. Then, with a sharp backward pitch of his head, as though throwing off an attacker, he said,

"I was the betrayer."

"What do you mean? Betrayer of whom? Betrayed what?" Pinel's words gushed out with surprise.

"I betrayed the minister. Brought him down," Lalladiere said, shaking as he looked fixedly over Pinel's shoulder at the blank wall behind him.

Denis jumped up, reflexly prepared to act. Pinel motioned him to sit down. Staring incredulously, he did so. This man spoke of betraying Necker, the hero of the people. Denis never forgot how he and his father, together with hordes of other Parisiens, carried images of Necker on poles as they marched through the streets starting the Revolution, 14 July, 1789, with the attack on the Bastille. That was the day their hero Necker was fired by the king. Was that what Lalladiere was talking about? What had the doctor uncovered? What terrible secrets were in this man's lunatic head?

Chapter 16

Saint-Just complained to the Committee of Internal Affairs about the escape, as he learned, of a Bicêtre inmate. Couthon, deputy in charge, notified Dr. Pinel and governor Pussin of institutional mismanagement and warned of official action. Policies of corporal punishment, chaining, heavy use of physical treatments, were standard in Paris hospitals and asylums. The government would allow rational advances to some degree, but they would not tolerate freely roving maniacs from Bicêtre.

Pinel was worried. Official action so high up in the government could cause their important treatment policy to be stopped, and bring back resentment, danger, and despair. But he also was concerned about his patient Lalladiere. He believed Lalladiere had begun to improve and feared the escape indicated he was suffering a setback, leading to suicide, hurtful actions, or permanent derangement. He urged the governor to exert all necessary effort to find Lalladiere and return him to the asylum. Attendants were dispatched twice to the Rochereau house, once during the day to question Jean-Luc and his mother Suzette, search the surrounding area including roofs and alleyways, and ask neighbors what they had seen. The second time, they went in the evening to confer, after his work day, with Théo Rochereau, and at the same time to explore whether Lalladiere had returned to the area under cover of darkness. There were no clues at any time to his whereabouts.

Denis and Georges, each of whom had been separately sent to the Rochereaus, were assigned now to go back to the Place de la Revolution. Without a scheduled execution, it was far less crowded than before. The two of them carefully searched surrounding outlets and passageways, building clefts and crevices, then moved down to the borders of the river Seine. Returning, they fanned out for considerable distances into the avenues radiating from the Place. On both sides of the river, they stopped at gendarmeries and inquired. No encounters with anyone looking like Lalladiere were reported.

Denis tried to put himself in Lalladiere's place, guess what he had done, where he might have gone. The man, despite the lunacy, was canny and resourceful. He found ways to move swiftly over roofs, and according to the report from the Rochereaus sequestered himself in an odd place like a sub-level cleft without comfort, even without food for days on end. He was strong and always fought hard when he had

to be restrained. But he was not without devoted feelings, apparently became attached to the boy who treated him kindly and later followed him all the way to the Place de la Revolution. Instead of making a ruckus there and grabbing on to the boy, he plowed incredibly through the heavy crowd to report to one of the important deputies. About what? Perhaps he suddenly got an idea of getting back his position in the government. This maniac had spunk, was a real challenge.

Denis decided to follow his hunch about re-connecting with the government, and motioned to Georges to follow him over to the former royal riding school where the National Convention met. They might, he thought, just find Lalladiere hanging around there to catch another deputy or maybe hiding out with someone he knew. But, after spending a good deal of time in surveillance of the area, questioning of guards, functionaries, even passersby, they had no success.

"There's no trace of him anywhere," Denis reported to governor Pussin, on their return.

"Nothing at all?"

"Vanished."

"Zout, I thought we were getting somewhere with this man. He worked, kept up the calculations. And he was a solid citizen, good patriot before. I did not expect him to run again. Not at all." He paused, then trusting Denis, he added, "The government is down on us about him."

"If it's really important, how about getting to any familiars we know about? Any family he may have gone to?"

"A mother, I believe," the governor said, nodding appreciatively at Denis's participation. "I didn't think of her because she has never come to visit him. Not once. But I shall look for her name in the records. On the other hand, she may live somewhere in the provinces rather than Paris."

"True enough."

"This Lalladiere is a cunning one. Capable of wild actions. Went all the way to the former queen's execution and got those government deputies really worked up. Who knows what he will do next?"

Pussin shook his head after Denis left the room. From long experience, he knew not to expect every inmate to respond well to his work program but he felt disappointment and anger at Lalladiere for the lapse, a betrayal of trust. More than that, he felt angry at himself for his misjudgment. Having first been treated himself many years before at Bicêtre for the tubercular disease scrofula, he had stayed to become an attendant, taught himself, and worked his way up to become the governor of the institution. He was proud that he and his wife Marguerite had learned so much over the years, knew how to be firm and caring, developed techniques together for managing and helping large numbers of the inmates. During their time, there had been a number of escapes but much less than other asylums. Most had been quickly rounded up and brought back. He was worried that this incident, after two other fairly recent escapes, might bring government interventions that would affect all parts of their program. This Bicêtre escapee working up the government deputies was trouble. The doctor was forwarding the work program, their humane treatment and the unchainings, but even such a good physician as Dr. Pinel, such a far-seeing, compassionate man as he, might, under the current pressure, pull back. They had to find Lalladiere and return him.

On the rue Honoré, Lalladiere continued to follow the genial one-eyed beggar. For the moment quite clear-headed, he questioned what he was trying to do. What purpose did this mission serve for anyone, for his or anyone's life, or even for the Revolution? He had heard, through a nothingness-filled state, the secret plot by Tallien and Barras. Up with Robespierre, down with Danton. Kill Danton, kill Robespierre. It was like the games the children all played on the walls. See who could climb, then hit him with stones. Watch him come down and run after them. He always was hit, never could avoid those extremely hard-thrown stones. And when he tried an awkward flight, they laughed and jeered.

And what good was anything now? No one listened to him, no one would ever believe him or care: "No," he said under his breath to himself, "it is our Revolution, he – I – will save it, give up the secret. Overcome. Make the unsuspecting Robespierre know. Rise up, rise up. Save the glorious leaders, man of the people Danton and champion of freedom Robespierre. Save it all."

His mind shifted, a fogging returned. It was pierced by a shriek.

Vile, vile. Filth and corruption. You will never save anything. Try to save yourself. He shook his head

lightly.

Never. Never. Never. He shook his head more vigorously. *Lowest of low. Vilest of vile. They will get you. They will get you. You won't do or say a thing.*

He trembled and thrust his head backward. The beggar, at his side, turned toward him, staring with his functioning eye. "Is there something I can do for you, good citizen? Are you suffering from the chills?"

From the chills, lowest of low, vilest of vile.

"Oh, worse luck. Well, we shall be there right soon. Yes, we come right up now to the sideway."

As the beggar moved with his enormous frame toward the narrow alley, he came close to Lalladiere, almost enveloping him. Instantly, Lalladiere whirled in the same direction to avoid being pushed.

"Just this way," the large man said, moving even closer.

They entered the alley, a narrow passageway between two grey stone buildings. The light was dim, little sunlight came into the constricted opening between high walls. A few more steps within and they could neither be seen nor see anything on the main street behind them. Lalladiere suddenly felt himself pushed sideways against one of the flat hard walls, his jaw jerked upward, his head pinned. The beggar was jamming his great upper body onto him, crushing him up against the cold stone. From the force of the thrust, Lalladiere lost his breath, gasping desperately for air as the man tore at the pockets of his breeches.

He tried, chest heaving, to free up a leg and kick. But the beggar perceived the beginning of the motion and pushed his knee up against Lalladiere's thigh. Another attempt to kick using the other leg. The beggar intercepted this with a thrust of his heavy, bulbous knee directly into Lalladiere's groin. Overwhelmed by pain, an excruciating feeling of hollowness starting between his legs and penetrating upward into his body, Lalladiere slumped toward the ground. The beggar moved back to let him fall, adroitly pushing on one shoulder to make sure he faced frontward.

While Lalladiere lay writhing, the beggar searched the pockets of his coat and found only a small

amount of coins and paper money. Grunting with disgust, he ripped the garment open to seek for more underneath. There was nothing in Lalladiere's vest or chemise, but when he ran his hand along the inside portion of the coat, he found a loosely sewed-over pocket with a bulk of paper inside. He tore open the threads, pulled the paper out, and to his amazement it was a document containing the seal and signature of the former king. In the dim light, he brought it close up to his single eye, searching to determine what it was, and whether it had value.

Lalladiere saw the beggar's distraction, and as quickly as he could he rolled himself from under the massive body. Pushing up against the nearby building as support, he came up painfully to his feet. The man immediately turned to grab him. Mind sharpened by danger, Lalladiere quickly realized that the only escape, with the beggar completely blocking the way back, was to go further into the passageway. He pulled away and began to run. The beggar, despite his great size, was remarkably quick on his feet. With a few leaping steps, he overtook Lalladiere, thrusting him again hard up against the wall. But this time, Lalladiere was able to keep his hands unpinned. He flung both palms under the beggar's jaw, pushed upward, and threw back the large head.

Furious, still clutching the paper document of his victim's former attainments, the man began pummeling the trapped body with his other hand. But Lalladiere held his grasp despite intense pain from the meaty clublike fist. He slid his fingers upward on the man's cheeks, digging them in slightly below the level of the eyes. The beggar growled and continued to pound into Lalladiere's belly and chest. At the same time, turning his thick waist sideways, he started bringing his knee upward for another blow to the groin.

Lalladiere saw the motion, and cringed with anticipation of disabling pain. He pushed both hands quickly toward the man's eyes. Two left hand fingers slipped under the eye patch, he felt soft, thin flesh covering the bone rimming the empty socket. Then, unable to avoid the knee thrusting into him, he drove the index fingernail of his right hand deep into the beggar's only eye.

The large man screamed with agony, fell back, and flailed his arms. Lalladiere, escaping the full force of the thrust knee, was now able to maneuver. He turned and ran further up the passageway. He went quickly, though weak from the pummeling, and shortly reached the end. There was no way out. A

large high mound of dirt and stones, placed there by men working on the gutters of the neighboring street, was totally blocking the opening.

He fell onto the mound, clawing desperately at the dirt on one side in order to make an outlet. It was hard-packed, damp, and heavy with mixed-in stones. Though he used all his strength, only small crumbled clumps fell away. Behind him, he heard the sound of the beggar who, raging with pain and unable to see, was beginning to follow down the passageway. Stumbling, the gigantic man headed resolutely toward where he heard Lalladiere's running steps, and roared out obscene curses and threats. Lalladiere, mobilized by certain danger, the advancing boom of the beggar's voice, shoved himself tightly against the alleyway stone building and started to edge his way back. Escape past the blinded man, a desperate try to get back out onto the main street, was his only choice.

He moved quickly but cautiously, alternately spread-eagling then drawing his legs together over and over as his hands guided him against the smooth stone. The beggar was also attempting to move rapidly, frenziedly searching with his arms. Several times he tripped over, but then immediately pulled himself up, grabbing at the solid sides for support and direction. Lalladiere could see, as the beggar came toward him, that one hand worked awkwardly. Doubled into a fist, it still clutched the paper with the seal of the King. He punched his fist uselessly for guidance at the wall, holding the paper tightly both in self-punishing outrage and conviction that he needed it. The scrap of parchment must have special value, yield riches and importance. It was also a tangible contact with a lost world of sight.

He wobbled forward, continuing to fill the alleyway with bellowing fury and agony. Keeping to the side where the large man less frequently contacted the wall, Lalladiere edged more closely, watching to avoid his searching and flailing arms. Blood was flowing down from the newly blinded eye. He was becoming weaker and began heavily swaying. With a cracked and tremulous voice, he shouted into the air:

"You shit. Aristocrat from hell. Who are you?"

Lalladiere cringed back and said nothing.

"Carrying the King's paper. Going to see Robespierre. Who in the name of all the plaguing demons

are you who did this to me?" As he came nearer, Lalladiere remained flat and quiet against the wall.

"Who are you?" the beggar rasped.

Lalladiere inched forward. The question would not, and could not be answered. It penetrated into every layer of his mind, lunatic and sane, and filled him with despair. Who are you? Even if the beggar were able to trick him into answering, the only possible answer he knew was: No one. Asked again and again, the answer would be: No one.

Pushed up firmly against the wall, biting his lower lip with determination, Lalladiere slid past the looming blind man. Without a sound, he continued steadily along the dark stone, as fast as he could, toward the open end of the alleyway.

Chapter 17

During his midday meal, governor Pussin thought more about possible leads, people or places where Lalladiere might go. The man's background was by and large obscure: employed in the government, trusted assistant of Necker, suddenly he became mad. Was he going to be dismissed, threatened with some kind of exposure? Did he squander all his earnings? Pussin had seen cases of lunacy starting from such things.

Time was running out. The longer Lalladiere was out of the asylum, the more difficulties he might have, or cause. A more urgent warning, Dr. Pinel told him, had come from the Committee of Internal Affairs. They alleged that dangerous mental patients had been spotted on the streets of Paris. The Committee was seriously considering issuing orders for re-chaining of Bicêtre inmates and Dr. Pinel's removal if the circumstance was not shortly improved. Increases in Paris lunatics in those times, Dr. Pinel quipped, was certainly not the doing of the Bicêtre asylum. True, an inmate had recently gotten out, been chased around a wide area, but was brought back. Unfortunately, Lalladiere, well-known and still at large, was putting the new treatments at risk.

From an obscure place in his memory, Pussin suddenly recalled hearing Lalladiere obscenely teased by another inmate, a former soldier. He and an attendant were, at the time of admission, escorting Lalladiere to his sleeping quarter when the inmate shouted, together with some gibberish phrases, "I know you, Lalladiere, you were fucking the daughter of Camille Raston. That gorgeous piece, Genevieve. Genevieve. Rasty Genevieve." Lalladiere became immediately upset and had to be restrained on the spot. A bad incident, but Pussin remembered that the soldier inmate had some contacts in the king's government and might be touching on something real. Camille Raston was a former government minister who was now a deputy and fervent revolutionary. It was a long shot to check there, but they needed a lead to find him. As Denis suggested, instead of just wandering around, the man may have gone to someone he knew in his past. If not to this woman, she might perhaps know about other people or places. They could not locate the mother but Raston's place would be easy to determine. Putting down his fork, Pussin turned to Marguerite.

“As soon as they can be spared to go out again, I will send attendants, Denis will be one, to see Genevieve Raston.”

“Why?”

“I have a hunch he may have gone there, one of the inmates mentioned her.”

“I certainly hope you find him. I should have eyes in the back of my head. I feel bad about how he got out.”

Later that day, Denis and Antoine arrived at the Camille Raston residence. Genevieve, they were told by the servant Rochelle, would not be able to see them right away. She had been ill for quite a long period, and continued to be sequestered for several hours each day. It was, Denis said, official business and their need to see her was pressing. Leaving them at the door, Rochelle went upstairs muttering to herself about the need nowadays to comply with everybody’s pressures. She came back to tell them to wait in the small parlor room.

After a long half hour, Genevieve came down. Appearing to be in her mid-twenties, she had blond shoulder-length hair falling in curly corkscrew clusters and topped with a black velvet ribbon and a rose. She wore an unadorned light-blue cotton gown, loose but in places thin and adherent enough to outline parts of her attractively rounded body as she moved. Her cheekbones were high and angular, and a slight hollowing of her cheeks gave her a spare, thoughtful expression. At the same time, the upward tilt of her head displayed spirit and vivacity. She was in fact considered vivacious and witty by most who knew her. She was well-liked and popular with her age-mates and the families of other government officials.

“I was told you are looking for Guillaume Lalladiere. Why do you come here? Is he free?”

Denis answered. “We have reason to believe, citizenness, that you knew him before he became insane. He has escaped from the Bicêtre asylum, and we must bring him back.”

“Is he violent?”

“Yes, definitely.”

“Did he speak about me?” she asked with a laughing sound of discomfort rather than pleasure. “There, in the asylum, did he talk of me? Is that how you know?”

“No, citizenness, we ourselves never heard him speak of you. Citizen Pussin, governor of the asylum, told us to come here, that you might know where Lalladiere has gone.”

“I have not seen Guillaume for a very long time. I knew he was at the Bicêtre. That he was sent there. But he has not been here. He would not come here. Not now. Never.”

Denis looked at Antoine, raising an eyebrow. “Oh, a bad story, is it?” he said, addressing Genevieve. “Perhaps, citizenness, you may know something about the places he goes, where he has spent time? Other connections, associates? Is he likely to be in Paris or gone to the provinces?”

“Have you tried the Palais Royale? Bois de Bologne? Have you tried his mother’s?”

“The governor says he has nothing to do with his mother. She has never visited him, or even tried to. Do you think, anyway, it is possible he went there?”

“Perhaps, I couldn’t tell. I don’t know anymore.” She hooked a curl in her hair with a finger. Her next thought made her shiver. “The Seine?” she asked. “Have you looked there?”

“Well, then, you think he might have drowned himself? Could be. We never saw him try to hurt himself, not even by refusing to eat like some of them do. Maybe he wandered around out of his mind and fell in. But the police would probably have found out about that and notified us by now. They watch, keep their eyes on the river a lot. Look for people jumping in, doing deals, trying to escape arrest or the guillotine. Anyway, we’ll go check there later, and the other places you mentioned, too.”

They asked for the mother’s address and she went to get it. Returning, she indicated she had nothing more to tell them. Denis, soon out on the street, wondered aloud to Antoine:

“So, she thinks he may have gone to the Palais Royale. To the prostitutes. Hard to think of Lalladiere doing that, he’s so tightened up. Anyway, those two must have had a rotten time together.”

Antoine shrugged. "He's a lunatic. Do you think he ever was anything else?"

"Sure, what's the trouble? You think he always walked around with some demon inside him? He once was high up in the government. I saw him at that execution trying to talk to big shot deputies. Maybe something happened to him, someone is maybe really out to get him."

"You think too much. He's no government official when he comes at you with the fists, knees, teeth. Do we go to his mother's to look for him?"

Denis didn't think so. He said that they should tell the governor what they had heard, and find out what he wanted them to do. Relatives of inmates, as both he and Antoine knew, were sometimes quite bothersome. Constant looks of dejection or despair or, worse, coldness and disapproval of everyone.

Genevieve, sitting alone in the parlor, was not, as Rochelle said, ill. Before, there had been a long period of anguish and weakness and now, for most of the day, she still remained usually in her room. It all began soon after the terrifying days when Guillaume changed. The man she loved, tenderly, dearly. Both brilliant and inspired, she knew, capable of understanding the finances of the entire country, holding masses of details in his head, full of ideas for betterment of the nation, from whom Necker himself took important advice. This man began to talk of plots against him, had fits of wild-eyed frenzy, gradually became bizarre and incoherent, and finally went, before her eyes, into a strange, stuporous state where he hardly moved at all. She could do nothing for him, believed she had lost him forever.

Nothing in her life helped her get over it. She felt confused, tired, and useless. Her mother insisted that she forget Guillaume, "the frightening, crazy man," and go out to cafés and parties as other ministers' daughters and sons did. Also, it was time for her to find a suitable, good, and stable husband. But Genevieve would not consider it. She was not interested in dressing up, going dancing, and chatting endlessly about insignificant details of life. She was distressingly aware of the widespread scarcity of food and shortages of goods. She and her family had the good fortune to be well provided for, but she could no more engage in frivolous, wasteful pastimes while so many suffered than she could believe in aristocratic privilege.

She decided to write, in the form of letters, an account of the Revolution. She knew much of the

history up to that point, from omnivorous study of newspapers, from her father, and from other government associates like Guillaume. She gained up-to-date information about everyday details and events aided by inside-sourced and colorful dinner table elaboration by her father, who had become as important as a revolutionary deputy as formerly he had been as a royal minister. Each day, she worked hard writing narrative accounts and deeply felt observations at a desk in her room. But, often, she was unsatisfied. At the end of each week, she read all the letters she created, and decided many were too maudlin, or overdramatic, or trite. She tore them up and the next week began all over again. It was a long, repetitious, but, in several ways, gratifying undertaking. For one thing, her mother, acknowledging her literary aspiration, reluctantly stopped insisting she go find someone else.

She wanted to write about the Revolution in a balanced way, showing the privations and goals of individuals, real people, but also the quandaries experienced by the King, the nobility, and the church. Noblesse oblige, devotion, maltreatment, suffering, human foibles, and hopes.

“King Louis is not a bad man,” she remembered Guillaume saying to her once with strong feeling in the days before his – what? His loss of sanity. “He believes he is acting to help the people and they don’t appreciate it. He agrees to the assemblages, follows advice, but nothing works out. He cannot see through all of the strategies and intrigues of the people around him, pushing him this way and that for their purposes. The queen, too. She’s pushed around by plotters because she wants her royal prerogatives. Her privileges, her family, and her family ties come first.”

“What do you think will happen, Guillaume?” she asked him then. She loved his thoughtful sensibility and his dedication.

“The people need relief. Necker is trying to bring in the money to help them. But they are starving, they pay and pay and get nothing. Things must change, probably severely.”

Her chain of thoughts were interrupted by her mother Veronique Raston’s entry into the parlor.

“Rochelle told me some men were here to see you. Why? What did they want?”

“They came to ask me about Guillaume. He has escaped from the Bicêtre asylum.”

"Oh, what a horror. Do they think he will come here?"

"No, Maman, they thought I would know where he has gone."

"He must not come here. Terrifying, absolutely terrifying. I shall never forget what happened to him, how he looked. That strange speech, those wild staring eyes."

She paused for a thought, then asked anxiously, "Were they right coming here to you? Do you know anything about where he actually is?" The fright in her eyes turned into stern accusation. "You have gone to see him, even though we warned you over and over never again to do it,"

"No, I have not. I have not even tried, not through the long time he has been in the asylum. But remember, Maman, it wasn't his fault that Necker resigned from the government. You thought once he was a devoted, attractive man. You even several times said he had a handsome face."

"He is a lunatic. He will never get well."

"Who among us is not lunatic, Maman? Why do we fight in the streets and search for traitors? Why give some people liberty and take off the heads of others? If we are in the right, as my good Papa and the leaders say, and we believe, why are so many – including people who were comrades – against us? And what about me? Have I been all right? Have I not been wild and grievously at fault?"

"What fault? What are you speaking of?"

"It was because of me that Guillaume became insane."

"My God, do you still hold onto that shameful idea of yours? Just because you stopped seeing him? This idea made you sick, you had to go to bed. We thought by now, with the time gone by, even with that work you do, you were cured of the obsession. But you are holding onto it to besmirch us, your Papa and me. You put it inside your head, defy us, what we say, in your mind. That man was definitely not for you. Consul General Necker made much of him and prized him, but he surely pulled back when the man went wild and crazy. How many times have I reminded you how he –"

“Stop that, Maman,” Genevieve interrupted. “You have reminded me of that over and over. Now he has gotten out of the asylum, he may again try an extreme sacrifice.” Her eyes, which up to then had looked pained, now became sad with a thought she had when talking with the attendants. “He may go to his mother.”

“His mother? What do you know of his mother? What has she to do with his lying motionless on the floor, letting people move his arms and legs like he was some soft putty. Until finally they got someone to come and say he was insane?”

“I must try to find him, Maman. He may hurt himself. I shall go to his mother’s house, try to talk with him before the men go there. They may frighten him into doing something bad.”

“What, you go out? And on such a dangerous, disgraceful undertaking? Why would he go to his mother’s, whoever she is?” Veronique glared at her daughter before commanding, “You must not leave.”

Genevieve stood up and walked past her mother toward the door of the parlor. “I am going to see Guillaume’s mother, Maman. He may not have gone there, but even if he didn’t, I must see her now, talk with her.”

Standing at the entranceway of the parlor, she turned to the chifferobe, took out and put on a shawl. She glanced quickly back at her mother’s face, now swollen with fury, and walked out the door.

Chapter 18

Lalladiere, out of the alleyway on the main street, began an undirected run, thinking only of escaping the roaring blinded beggar behind him. In his terror, he once again jostled people on his path. His wildly pumping arm knocked hard against the shoulder of a passing large, barrel-chested man, dislodging a heavy sack from the man's other shoulder. As he struggled to regain the sack, the man turned, cursed loudly and shook his fist. Lalladiere jumped away and tried to move forward as quickly as possible.

The man was threatening but he feared the beggar far more. The vile shout would likely help the beggar locate him. He shifted to the other side of the street. The way was now clearer but he soon saw that he was coming to a densely trafficked area. With few exceptions, most pedestrians were moving in his direction, many carrying loads, a number looking down or at some goal behind him, but several, he believed, looking directly at him. He breathed heavily, glanced back again and saw no sign of the beggar coming from behind. Sounds came from his side and in front of him.

eeeeiaaa.eeeiaaa.ssst.ssst.rauch.rauch. eeeeeiaaa.

No words, no warning this time, just high pitched piercing barks and shrieks. He angled himself sharply away from the dreaded sounds, and his foot landed on the edge of a deep street cistern. He looked down into it, shuddering at having barely missed the dirty swirling waters.

He shifted to a walk and went on threading his way from side to side safely amongst the crowd ahead of him. The beggar, he believed and hoped, was either still in the alleyway ministering to his wound, or else going back toward his original location. He thought about the beggar's eye, the feeling of his stabbing finger inside. He hated it, that sensation of thrusting into the slippery pulp, touching the lining of the socket. Also the excruciating wail of pain from the enormous man. Never, though he had broken bones, tore at skin with his teeth, had he destroyed an eye. But the peril was imminent, he had to do it. Feeling the large menacing body up against him, his mind was determined and clear. He had to do something to save himself from pain or death.

No, he didn't. The searing thought came as he moved through the crowded street: he should have let the man destroy him. He deserved destruction. The voices were right, all was his fault, all evil was his. Would going to Robespierre save anything? Save him? No, nothing would be saved. But, still, he had to do something about the secret. This, and other secrets he vaguely knew, were lodged within his head. He needed to get them out. This one was about the Revolution, important for its future. Tell Robespierre, save Danton. He believed he cared about the Revolution more than anything else now. Once, he knew, he cared about other things too. He could not bring them into his mind.

In front of him, people who were walking beside carts and horses in the center began, as if at a signal, to move to the sides of the street. Were they trying, because of his blinding the beggar, to avoid him? Those already at the sides slowed their own pace to make room for the others. And rather than staring at him, as he first suspected, almost all on the street were either looking, or turning to look, backwards toward something coming up behind them. Horses and carts, to clear the way, were moved quickly forward.

A cart with massively large metal-lined wooden wheels appeared in the formed opening. Drawn by a single powerful dray horse, its skeletal structure consisted of heavy wood posts bonded with four widely spaced crossbar rows exposing clearly the standing, huddled bodies of about twelve men and women. The wheels on the cobblestones made a sprightly throbbing sound contrasting markedly with the look on the faces of the passengers, drawn and bloodless with despair. The people at the sides of the street, no longer walking but noisily watching as the large cart came by, were joined by others coming up behind, forming tight double rows of high-spirited ogling spectators. They jeered shrilly and vilely at the occupants of the vehicle. They urged the driver onward. Traitors, royalists, and aristocrats, they chorused with epithets, go quickly to the guillotine!

Lalladiere was stopped, unable to get past the cart in the center of the street or the lined-up spectator crowd. The shouts penetrated through him, signaling that perhaps he would, or should, be thrown with the others into the moving cart. He pushed himself up against a building nearby, trembling as he watched the passing collection of human beings deemed by authoritative judgment to die. He recognized two or three as people he had known, but their faces were now like masks, each depicting solely a distinct distressing emotion.

Then, suddenly, all disappeared from within the cart except for one, a woman, who stood in the center alone. She wore no wig, had reddish hair, and looked sad but beautiful in a long white satin gown. She gazed directly at Lalladiere and began singing in a clear, bell-toned voice:

Glide through the air, skip on the rays of the sun.

Join with me here. This is your fate.

Here we await you. Here you will always belong.

La, la, la. La, la, la. No care forever,

Here you will always belong.

Her singing was beautiful, even more than the music he heard in his cell before. Ghostlike and exquisite, the vibrating tones left her mouth, wafted upward, then showered down, enveloping him on all sides. For an instant seemingly suspended in mid-air, the sound entered his ears and moved through his entire body in soothing, repeated waves.

He stood motionless watching the woman's mouth and face as the rhythms flowed inside him. She continued to sing, her bell-like, lovely tones becoming more commanding and insistent. And with a trill of her tongue, she included his name.

Lalla-diere. Lalla-diere. You must always be here.

Here I await you. Here you will always belong.

Join now with us here. La, la, la. La, la, la.

The time, Lalla-diere, has come.

He had to obey. He began to move forward toward the cart to mount onto it, but was immediately pushed back by one of the soldiers walking at the side.

“Here, you, get away from there.” The soldier shoved at Lalladiere with the butt of his musket.

Another soldier behind came quickly forward. “Yes, good citizen, stop, go no further. You mustn’t fumble with these traitors, or give them the business now, much as we all may want to. They are to be saved intact for the razor.” His tone was gruffly apologetic as he helped the other soldier push Lalladiere back into the crowd.

Several onlookers assented loudly. “Right, agreed,” a rough looking man boomed out over the din. “These have to be clean and neat today. They’re getting their heads shaved off.” Guffaws and laughter, both from the soldiers and several persons in the crowd.

Lalladiere, trying to get back to the cart, strongly resisted the soldiers’ pressing movements. Roughly then, they pushed him backward through the crowd all the way to the face of a nearby building, leaving him amidst a tight group of craning spectators. People quickly filled the forced-open paths of the soldiers as they went back to their guarding positions, and he was pinned by a throng of bodies against the granite wall. From where he stood, he could still see and hear the beckoning woman but could not go toward her. He tried to push through the cramped up crowd. He could see that even if those around him knew what he saw and heard, what beguiled his ears and eyes, they didn’t show it. They stood their ground, inattentive, neither stirring nor letting him move.

The cart passed, but everyone stayed in place, heads turned expectantly down the street where again a rhythmic sound of wheels arose. Then, dim outlines of the front of another cart appeared. That too was filled with persons headed for the guillotine. Lalladiere continued to look toward the first cart, and heard faint echoes of the woman’s beautiful voice, her summoning commands, wafting high over the street. He again tried to go to it. No success. Finally, after many tries, people nearby shifted momentarily, giving way slightly as they moved forward to peer better at the approaching second cart.

Sliding all the way through, he leaped into the street. The second cart, carrying a large group of occupants, was coming up close behind him. Inside, as he turned to look, most appeared desperate and frightened like the first, but he noticed two men and a woman, separated from the rest and leaning over the stout front rail, who were angry and defiant. One of the men was turning left and right shouting “Shit to you,” to people in the crowd who jeered them. The other had started spitting at the spectators they

passed, and a soldier was moving toward the cart to stop him. The woman, trying to look onlookers directly in the eye, shouted threats of retribution. Her shrill voice, for Lalladiere, drowned out the fading sound of singing from the moving cart ahead, but he continued forward while the soldiers became focused on the three defiant occupants.

As the second cart moved further up the street, the woman shifted and looked up at a shuttered window on the side of a house nearby. In a vehement voice, she shrieked, "Robespierre, villain. You will not escape. The time will come when you too will go this way." The men beside her raised their fists toward the closed window, one shouting "Yes, you too," and the other, "Death for the conniving Committee." Immediately, three soldiers lunged to the front of the cart, smashing the handles of their muskets into chests, abdomens, and faces, whatever could be reached.

The resisters, bodies bruised and bloodied, slumped backward in the cart. The other occupants, fearful of similar reprisal despite the coming certainty of oblivion, moved away, trying to repulse the bodies sliding near them. The soldiers moved to the sides of the cart, shoved ends of the muskets through the slats, butted the now-silenced people, and ordered them to stand up. Disruptions such as this, to these soldiers, were not unusual; Robespierre lived right there on the Rue Honoré, the path most traveled by the guillotine-directed carts.

Lalladiere, no longer hearing singing, watched the battering of the people in the cart behind him.

Robespierre. They know it all. They know you are going to him. They will beat you. Kill you if they can.

He was terrified that the soldiers would come after and throttle him mercilessly too. He moved quickly out of the center of the street back into the dense crowd at his side, pushing through and reaching the front of an abutting house. This time, he pinned himself, pushing himself down and hard into the wall. Overwhelming numbness, with a sensation of melting into the granite facade, gradually began. The second cart and soldiers passed, and the crowd, moving out into the street to follow it, began to move away from him. Slowly, then, his terror and the beginning paralytic state abated. But after most of the crowd had left, and only a few stragglers were walking nearby, he was still standing up against the building.

A few of the passersby noticed him alone and perched awkwardly there. They stared briefly and walked on, anxious to get to the cutting off of heads, feel congratulatory with the sense of revenge and awareness of their own justly sustained life and intactness. An insane person standing flattened up against a building, even if recognized as what he was, evoked little interest – fear, more likely, and repugnance – and they moved quickly past him.

As Lalladiere's own fear lessened somewhat, the woman's shrieking outburst came back to him. What she said might have been solely a warning to Robespierre, as though she had a knowledge of the secret plot he overheard in the darkened streets. And the haunting words of the beautiful singing woman might also have been a warning. To him. She tried to ensnare him, almost succeeded, but she might have been telling him something about his future, or else about his past. But whatever it all meant, he knew he still had to go to Robespierre, make sure the champion of freedom knew the secret, burdensome but vital, and now the shrieking woman had indicated exactly where Robespierre lived. He waited a while longer as some stragglers passed him. When the rue Honoré was virtually empty, free of possible interference, he began moving slowly back down the street.

In the distance, he heard a piercing cheer from a large assemblage followed by dimmer derisive shouts. The street crowd all arrived at the Place and the first of the beheadings occurred. He stopped, wondering for a moment whether the woman whose voice he heard was the victim, but closer then to his goal, he shook his head and moved on. Within a few minutes, as he went, more cheers and shouts resounded as the executioners were rapidly dispatching each political opponent, wealthy oppressor, protesting clergy, and – all believed – other undesirables. He searched the upper floors to locate the identified shuttered window. His eyes were always sharp, memory perfect for sights and sounds, and within a few minutes he found it. Tracing around the corner to the face of the building, he saw the entranceway. He was, he would learn soon, at the house of the Duplays, the people with whom Robespierre lived.

He stopped, looked vacantly for a few moments at the number 366 over the door. The last two numbers were the year of his birth! He had been drawn to this house, but did the number portend something good or bad? He looked up and down the street to see if anyone was watching him. Some people from remote parts of the city were strung out there, hurrying onward to attempt to catch some part

of the executions. Many looked banefully suspicious, staring directly at him.

They are trying to stop you. They don't want him to know. They will destroy you, kill you.

"I know it," he said into the air, speaking quickly and loudly, "but I cannot hide this one. Must tell this secret. It is my chance to be saved. I want to be saved." Again, he dimly heard sounds accompanying the executions and was reassured that the danger was far away. He looked carefully at the stores flanking each side of the entranceway, a small-windowed jewelry store and a yellow-bricked cook-shop for workers. The gate, at this time of day, was open, and he proceeded to enter into a small courtyard. Occupying the left corner were a number of workmen in a tin lean-to workshop next to a small vegetable garden surrounded with white lilies. Two of the workmen stopped as Lalladiere entered, and they watched him walk toward the large wooden door on the right clearly leading into rooms on the ground floor and apartments above. Lalladiere anxiously glanced at the workmen but moved quickly to the door. He stopped for a moment, then pounded three times with his closed fist. Eleanore, daughter of Maurice Duplay, after a few moments opened it.

Chapter 19

Through the Quartier Severin, Genevieve rode in the fiacre cab on her way to Manon Roliot's house. As was usual everywhere in Paris during the morning hours, the streets were filled with vehicles and people who, despite the as yet minimal gains of liberty and surfeit of hunger or want, were exuberant, active, and hopeful. A wagon carrying heavy stones bumped immediately ahead. Beside it, through the narrow span with an adjacent building, a laundress attempted to push her bin. A dustman behind her barely scraped both of her heels as he shoved forward a squeaking flatbed cart. Everywhere around was movement and noise. A vegetable hawker shouted, wheels of another fiacre approaching from behind clumped loudly on the cobblestones. Straining horses snorted and neighed. On the pavement just ahead, splashing water resounded from buckets emptied out of windows.

Uncertain about her self-imposed mission and unfamiliar with the neighborhood, Genevieve felt jarred by the noise and activity around her. She looked carefully out of the window of the cab, hoping to identify the boyhood house that Guillaume had described in detail, outside and in, when telling her about his early life. Only once had she met the mother, Manon. It was at the funeral of Guillaume's father, Victoire Lalladiere. She thought at the time the woman was odd, constantly pulling at stray long strands of her hair, face staring at the grave unmoved and cold. Guillaume too behaved strangely there. She knew he feared his father a great deal, he had told her so. But other times he spoke smilingly about him as a visionary and a stickler for morality and duty. At the graveside, Guillaume stood totally still, without expression, staring, devoid of tears. It was not, as she remembered, the face of her lover whose forehead became ridged with remorse when speaking about hungry, desperate French workingmen and peasants, whose cheeks were inflamed with hope when describing the rise of new movements for equality and liberty throughout the country. Whose eyes, as he told her of his need for her, lit up with piercing intensity. She did not understand what went on within him when his father died. She was certain that, at the very least, he needed and wanted comfort, but he gave no opportunity for her to comfort him.

At the entry of a house shortly in front of the cab, she saw two soldiers backing up a man against a closed door. The man's clothing was disheveled, and from her nearby vantage point, she could see a

terrified expression on his face. His barely audible voice sounded high-pitched and tremulous. His words, in response to the soldier's muffled questions, came to her in snatches: "army of the north," "given leave," "sick daughter." There was a loud gruff challenge from one of the soldiers: "Who did you say the officer was?" And from the other: "What kind of a shitty story are you trying to tell us?" She realized, with mixed revulsion and sympathy, that she was witnessing the ongoing army apprehension of deserters which, she had heard, was going on all over Paris. This man, doomed, was pushed down the street with muskets.

She thought of Guillaume's face looking desperately anguished. The terrible time when he was changing, periods of trembling and distress alternating with stiff, silent withdrawal. More than once, when she came at an agreed-on time to his apartment, she found him looking frozen, sitting at a table staring. She stayed, sat by him for quite a long time, but he said nothing, did not respond at all to her frequent, urgent questioning. What is it, Guillaume? What has happened? What is wrong?

As the cab moved on, she shivered and pushed her thoughts away from the painful scenes to an earlier, very happy remembrance, one that came back to her over and over throughout the past three years. It was of a time with her friends walking all together on the banks of the Seine near the gardens of the Tuilleries Palace. Just coming from their morning baths near Châtelet, they were feeling refreshed, chattering gaily as well as speaking thoughtfully about personal matters or topics of the day. She loved those times with these young women, their intimate, easy conversations, and she especially prized their morning walk all glistening with cleansed faces in the springtime sun along the Seine. During one such walk, she met – no, came upon – Guillaume for the first time. He was lying stretched out near their path on the low grassy bank of the river. As they approached, he raised up his head, groggy and confused, and she knew they had roused him from a deep and restful sleep.

He scrambled to his feet, surprised, then stood solidly erect to face them. He was well-built, and she remembered thinking right away that he was quite good looking. He was lightly dressed, chemise unbuttoned to the waist, breeches loosely clasped, no shoes on his stockinged feet. The exposed portion of his chest was covered with tightly curled black hair which reached to the inner edges of muscular, well-rounded shoulders. She, always more forthright and courageous than her friends, approached where he was with an apology for waking him with their loud talking. In response, he, with what to her

seemed a kind, soft voice for such a powerful looking man, spoke self-reprovingly of his appearance and lassitude at that hour of the day.

“But surely, monsieur,” she said, “it is the natural right of all of us poor mortal beings to rest while enjoying the sunshine along the river on such a lovely day, is it not?”

“Not if you are a mortal who assists an official of the realm, I am afraid. My duties this morning were overwhelming. Absolutely overwhelming. So, worse for me, I came out here when I found a moment to break away, ended up by sleeping soundly – drowning vital hours – here on the Seine.”

“As it happens, monsieur, my father is also an official, a minister. But I am sure he would not object to someone like yourself – a well-spoken, surely mindful assistant – taking time off to rest, especially after what you describe as an overwhelming morning. Who is this official you work for whose disapproval you so fear?”

“Jacques Necker. I have no fear of him. But I lose my bearings being here. I neglect the people’s pressing needs.”

“So, you are here a man of benevolence and principle,” she said with genuine appreciation. “In that case, I must introduce you to my father. He complains constantly that there are few in the government who care, really care, about the people. He will be happy to know one who does.”

Smiling broadly, he moved to join in with her and her friends as they turned to walk on toward the Tuilleries. He asked, while carefully and inconspicuously adjusting his clothing as they walked, about her father and his work. That led them into an avid discussion about political conditions in the cities and the provinces. The other women dropped several steps behind to allow the two of them to converse together, knowing she sincerely cared, and could talk incessantly, about governmental affairs. And before they walked on very far together, Genevieve became aware that these friends behind her were beginning to make whispered and laughing comments about her less-than-casual developing liaison. They were, of course, correct. She and Guillaume had begun such a liaison, and from that point on they met each other frequently, at first during visits to her father’s offices, and later he came regularly to her home.

Her reverie was interrupted by the arrival of the cab at the Roliot's house. Its dark green door and the rest of the facade looked exactly as Guillaume had described it. She got out, paid the cabbie, knocked at the door, and Bertrand Roliot appeared a few minutes later. Identifying herself quickly to this unknown man, she told him she was looking for the escaped Guillaume. Attendants from the asylum came to her house recently, and she told them he might be with his mother. Wasn't this her house? Roliot gruffly assented and informed her that they knew all about the escape, that no attendants had come as yet, and the son had been there for a few days but left and did not return.

"You say you knew him well, and was his friend?" he continued. "Well, he's a wild lunatic, that one. He, it is, who will save the Revolution. Probably over there trying to speak to the Convention if they haven't caught him and put him back in the bin."

"That's why I am here. I am afraid he is going to hurt himself."

"What?"

"Hurt himself, I said."

"Hurt himself? More likely, while he was here, he could have hurt Manon and me. I'm sure glad he got out. Was just about to report him if he stayed."

"Do you think he went to the Convention? They wouldn't let him in, the way he probably is now. He must be wandering around somewhere."

"I don't have the goddamn slightest idea where he went off to. Now you're here, maybe you should speak with his mother, calm her down. She don't have much to do with me recently."

He brought Genevieve into the small open kitchen. Manon was sitting at a wooden table chopping aimlessly at a rutabaga root. She did not look up but spoke immediately.

"I heard what you and Bertrand were talking about. You're here looking for my son."

"Yes, that's right."

"Why? Why did you come here?"

"I'm worried that –"

"That what? Why are you so concerned about him?"

The question seemed like an accusation. Why, Genevieve thought, was she so concerned again?

"Guillaume and I were lovers. At one time, we thought of getting married," she answered in a tentative tone.

"Guillaume married? That's a joke. Who would ever want to marry him? You must be a woman who is hard up. Right?"

"What?"

"Hard up, you heard me. Well, right now, you don't look so much like that – not ugly, or low-necked, or even poor."

Hard up? Not that, Genevieve thought. But it was my hardness that I could do nothing about. If only I had really been hard-up, I might have found a way to cling to him.

"Your son Guillaume is sick, out of his mind," she said, using as harsh a tone as she could muster. "Don't you realize he escaped from the asylum and may by now have killed himself?"

"That one kill himself? On what day of the week? That selfish squeezer would never kill himself. Me, it was me he damn near killed with all the stuff he did growing up. Just like all the rest, always wanting this, always wanting that. Holed himself up and did bad, dirty things."

"What are you talking about? He is a kind, inspired man. Devoted to helping people, doing good for others."

"What's that? Doing good? Well, what did he do so good for you? Shoved his hand right up under your nice blue dress, rubbed around, laid you on your pretty ass? That's why you've come here to accuse

me of letting him go away, right?"

Genevieve flushed. The crude sexual reference momentarily touched her, an image of Guillaume lying naked near her flashed through her mind. Anger immediately pushed the image away.

"Why did you let him go from here? You've never cared anything for him, have you? I've seen you, you know. At the funeral, face cold as ice. You've never cared for anybody."

Roliot, halfway listening to the conversation while working in the next room, now stormed into the kitchen area.

"What the hell is this all about? You came here to find the lunatic. He isn't here, right? Maybe he went out and saved all of us a lot of trouble by killing himself."

"Oh, no," Genevieve said, frightened.

"What are you saying to Manon, talking about funerals?" Roliot blurted angrily. "Was it her first husband? He's one who is better off dead and buried."

"Don't get all worked up, Bertrand," Manon said. "She's just a floozy trying to find that strong, meaty son of mine so he can give her some of it." She gestured obscenely. "He's probably been going after her for years, nosing around her toilet and her bedroom, trying to see her naked, trying to get into her you-know-what, just like he used to do with me. Only difference is, she gave in."

Genevieve turned to walk away from the kitchen area. Manon saw that Roliot, near the door, made a move to stop her.

"Let her go, Bertrand. We heard what Guillaume wants to do. She can go find and help the blabbermouth traitor."

"She's riled you up and upset you, Manon. I am going to make her take back what she said about you being cold and not caring," Bertrand Roliot said.

Genevieve felt her mind was being pulled apart. She knew she had to get by Roliot, go out of the

house as fast as possible. But, for a moment she hesitated. She felt somehow it was important, before she left, to reply to Manon's troubling last allegation.

"What do you mean, a traitor? Guillaume has cared always for the welfare of France, totally devoted to the people and the country. He would never do anything to damage or betray either one."

Manon emitted a cackling laugh. "So, you believe his claptrap stuff. You - hee, hee - think he is the one to save the Revolution."

Genevieve turned away from Manon, pushed past Roliot standing between her and the door, and ran out into the street.

Chapter 20

Tallien, in his large oak-walled government office in Bordeaux, was bothered about the long dock of judgments waiting for him. The reciting of charges, the protests of innocence, the whining appeals for clemency were all so tedious and, worse still, they could prevent him from getting to the Place Gambetta in time to see the executions. It was particularly important not to miss them because one of the rebel aristocrats scheduled that day to die on the guillotine was the Viscomte de Chatelle. Not of the same stripe as the many other rebels Tallien had dispassionately condemned since becoming Bordeaux Proconsul, this Viscomte had been a good friend of a man he hated, the Marquis de Bercy.

“This prisoner, Henri de Veilleurs,” announced a grizzled, old guarding soldier,” was apprehended on his way to a secret docking place on the coast. He was planning, citizen Proconsul, to join a group of aristocrats on their way to England.”

“Have you arrested the others?”

“Yes, citizen, we shall bring them before you shortly.”

“You were leaving for England, Baron de Veilleurs, in order to mobilize a force of reactionary sympathizers that would return and attempt to crush the Revolution.” Tallien said emphatically. He had been sent to Bordeaux precisely to break up such conspiracies.

“No, absolutely not. We were afraid for our lives, staying here. We learned that many innocent landowners were being executed.”

Tallien snorted. He despised these aristocrats. For years, his father had slaved for the grand man, the Marquis of Bercy, as the chief butler of the household. He saw his weak, dutiful father being made to behave like a nodding marionette, regularly humiliated, able only to put sparse food on the family's table while the marquis daily banqueted. His mother, with his father's full knowledge, was frequently forced to share the marquis's bed. Then, one day, this marquis supposedly decided that he, Jean-Lambert, was an intelligent and charming boy full of promise, and undertook to provide him with – as it turned out as

minimally as possible – an education. Torn from his mother whom he needed and loved, Tallien struggled faraway through an apprenticeship in the law. He never forgave the marquis, whom he knew was simply assuaging a bad conscience about the treatment of his parents, and who continued to live in privilege and luxury while he had no money either for sumptuous meals, good clothes, or the paid company of women.

“You are innocent of what?” Tallien growled at the baron.

“Of plotting against the Revolution.”

“Your lives are a plot against the Revolution. You have regularly exploited all who live on your land. You avoid paying taxes. You spit on the people you employ. And –”

“No, no. None of that is true.”

“And—” Tallien repeated.

“And what, Proconsul?”

“And you were most assuredly on your way to England to join a force against us.”

“My family. To protect my family.”

“They, too, are guilty. Take this man to prison now.”

The man’s trial, Tallien knew, would be short and surely culminate with a sentence to the guillotine. As he watched the baron leave, then waited the few minutes before another prisoner was brought before him, he mused about the good job he was doing as the head man at Bordeaux. He had at that point rooted out somewhere in the neighborhood of one hundred aristocrats, emigrés or royal emigrants, and rebel Girondists, making sure all ended on the guillotine. Looking forward, what’s more, to an extended stay, he was probably only a third finished. Whether or not he was forwarding revolutionary purposes was not at all certain, but his own reputation was already made and future government success assured. Equally important, the undertaking against Danton, despite his own

absence from Paris, was proceeding well. Robespierre had become a major leader in the Committee of Public Safety, helped in no small part by Tallien's barraging his colleagues in the Jacobin Club with letters touting the man's marvelous qualities, and by Barras and Fouché, now hero of a massacre at Lyons, working to the same effect behind the scenes with members of the Convention and military associates. Danton had elected to stay away from Paris at his country home for long periods at this point and his influence had become much diminished. Barras, among others, spread the idea that Danton cared more to spend time in the country with his new wife than he cared for the Revolution. Tallien let his Jacobin co-frères know that he was sure Danton was working there on quiet and probably illicit financial deals.

But a looming trouble, a possible fly in the smoothly spreading ointment, was Robespierre's character, the nature of what they thought was a flaw that would undo him. He had shown himself to be truly incorruptible, the only one among any of the deputies in the Convention, it seemed, who never did, or would, take a bribe or be influenced in his decisions by prospects of personal or monetary gain. Absolutely never. On top of that, this unlikely looking fighting revolutionary, with his finely honed, almost boyish features, wearing always silk coats and knee breeches with stockings, was sincerely devoted to the ideals of the Revolution. He believed literally in bringing about each one of the ballyhooed goals: liberty for all, equality of rich and poor, weak and strong, and fraternal bonds throughout the land. He would do away with famine and prejudice. He was the leading opponent of slavery practiced throughout the French colonies. Never was he without a quotation from Rousseau about all being born good and afterward enhanced or deformed solely by environment. And the worst of crimes, he believed, was lying before the law. He could turn out to be the real leader and hero of the Revolution. That would be, of course, if the purpose of this Revolution is to right wrongs inflicted on the people rather than to create chaos and bestow on a chosen few – preferably, he thought, myself alone – the power to rule, to command the multitude, and become very rich.

"Former deputy Robert Ducos, Proconsul," said a young soldier, interrupting Tallien's thoughts, "has finally been discovered hiding in the farmhouse of citizen Ruhlière on the outskirts of the city.

"I am glad you have been found, Ducos, you who have betrayed all of us deputies of the Convention." Tallien's upswing tone on the last word made the accusation sound paradoxically like a question.

"How, citizen?" Ducos asked seriously with his jaw set in defiance.

"How? How? Why you know you have supported the formation of a rebel army here in Bordeaux, which you traitorously call a 'federalist' army, to fight against the government in Paris."

"But how might I have done such a thing? I have no large resource of money."

"Paid for by the municipality filled with Girondins, the moderate turncoats."

"You seem to think you know a great deal."

"I do, Ducos. I make it my business to know about everything that could help or hinder the Revolution. Confess to what you have done."

Ducos's face fell. He remained silent for several minutes while Tallien drummed his fingers on the table before him. Then Ducos raised his head, his face grey and unrepentant.

"Yes, citizen Jean-Lambert Tallien, we did form the army. But it was against the men like you who have betrayed the ideals of the Revolution."

"I have betrayed the Revolution? How is that?" Tallien leaned forward in his chair.

"The killings you do here. And the Republic. You did not uphold the Republic, the constitution and the Republic."

"What? You say –"

"Yes, our beliefs, when we opposed –"

"Enough. No debating here." Tallien gestured to the soldier.

"It's for the men like you that we built the guillotine," He said, addressing Ducos's back as the soldier quickly led him out. The phrase, with his sing-song naming of the dreaded instrument, sounded like part of the refrain from one of the currently popular nationalistic songs.

Tallien leaned back in his chair. Like Ducos, the idealist Robespierre still would surely undo, or outdo himself. Moralists, believers in purity and goodness, true incorruptibles like these men always go too far. Always, they incite envy and fear. In their zeal, they antagonize or affront the very people – those flavoring delicious power with the bitter spicing of human foibles – they need the most. Always they are brought down, either by themselves, their own excesses, or through – Tallien smiled to himself – the jealous interventions or corrupt machinations of others. Robespierre does appear to be extraordinarily sincere, many find him judicious and wise. Why does he stay away from executions? They say he never asked for the death penalty when he was a lawyer in Arras. Is it possible we've mistakenly targeted a man who is at heart humane? He may be a harder nut to crack than seemed so at first. Tallien looked uneasily at a poster on his wall with an illustration of a garlanded saintly looking woman, symbol of the virtuous Revolution, wearing a red-brocaded white dress and holding her hand up in a gesture of hope. He decided, when he returned to Paris, that he, Barras, and Fouché would all work to hit away at Robespierre directly, force him into missteps and finally do him in. Advocates of virtue like Robespierre are always, in both small and large ways, vulnerable. Still alone, Tallien again smiled. He turned then to look at the large clock on the wall, becoming irritated that the slow pacing of the arrest hearings might make him miss the execution.

Two dusty-uniformed young soldiers escorted a young woman into the office. Tallien, irritation dispelled, looked at her and was amazed. She was absolutely the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Her hair, jet black, fell in large whorls around her head and onto her shoulders. She had fine, elegant features, nose small and straight, mouth softly bow shaped, eyes green and flashing. He noticed, too, that she had an unblemished faintly olive complexion. Her white dress, covering a very shapely form, was draped teasingly off her shoulders in large folds like the togas worn in ancient Greece. A slight dustiness covered her shoulders and clothing, giving her, he thought, an exotic, exciting look.

“Who is this?” he asked, initiating the hearing.

One of the soldiers, a young non-commissioned officer, stepped forward, and announced, “This woman was trying to leave the city, but she had none of the proper papers. She is thought to be the Marquise Thérèse Cabarrus de Fontenay.”

"Of course, that is who I am," Thérèse immediately broke in, addressing Tallien. "And why, citizen, do your soldiers drag me here the backway through the stables where the horses kick up dust that covers all of my gown and sorely irritates my skin?"

Tallien glared disapprovingly at the young soldier. "It was, citizen Tallien, the most direct way to come from the station," the soldier offered defensively.

"Citizenness de Fontenay, please accept my sincere apology for your mistreatment. We shall certainly take restorative steps immediately. Why were you planning to leave the city?"

"Thank you, citizen. My husband, the Marquis de Fontenay, has fled to Spain. I am without support and hoped therefore to get help from friends in Paris."

"That is it? Well, this offense..." he tilted his head slightly, looking at her from under his brow, "does not appear to be so serious. A woman of such beauty as you should not be detained for long."

"I beg your pardon, citizen Tallien," said the young soldier, straightening himself to attention, "this lady is the daughter of the Spanish banker Cabarrus, who has, we know, had financial dealings with enemies of the Revolution."

"Do the sins of fathers pass on to children forever?" Tallien asked, scowling. "I am sure you are loyal to the Revolution, is that not right, citizenness?"

"Deeply loyal, citizen." She smiled at Tallien, arching her brows so that her green eyes caught glints from the rays of sunlight in the room.

"We shall have to detain you until we clear up any connections with your husband's and father's activities," Tallien said, nodding at the young soldier. "I am sure, though, it will be very brief. I shall come myself to see you later on. Right now, we will attend to your discomfort." He instructed the soldiers to put her immediately under the care of a matron.

"What a woman!" Tallien said softly out loud as the old grizzly soldier at that moment reappeared pushing a young male prisoner, neatly dressed and with an arrogant scowl.

“A Girondin rebel,” the soldier announced.

“I have no more time, now. I must go to the Place for the execution of Challet. Detain him, and bring him to me tomorrow.”

Tallien got up and went quickly outside. He called the municipal carriage always at his disposal, and told the driver to rush to the central Place. The driver pushed the horses at a rapid canter through the connecting streets but on approaching the destination they were slowed by a large, disordered crowd. Several of these Bordeaux citizens, apparently drunk, staggered into the path of the horses or bumped up against the side of the carriage. Others, mostly exuberant, were moving around while shouting and singing. Some men threw their red caps into the air, distracting the horses or blocking their lines of sight.

Tallien, cursing the annoyance but trying to ally himself with the boisterously loyal crowd, got out of the carriage and started to walk amiably to the center of the square. There he had a view of the dual pillars of the looming guillotine and nearby a dim line of condemned prisoners. He pushed his way through the bobbing, raucous crowd, still trying to look affable as well as, despite his short stature, dignified and commanding. A soldier came up to escort him and after a good deal of musket-butt shoving of people aside, he finally reached the side of the execution platform. He was greeted by the mayor, the chief of the gendarmerie, and an army colonel, and was charmingly cordial in return, taking his place beside them and other local officials.

He was not too late. Challet was just mounting the stairs up to the platform. The former Marquis reached the top, greeted the executioner, handed him the traditional tip to ensure a speedy and painless procedure – no longer really necessary because of the efficiency of the guillotine – and then spoke briefly but earnestly about dying while innocent. The words were almost exactly the same as those spoken at the guillotine by King Louis.

At the executioner's direction, Challet, his face piteously distorted, laid himself slowly on the mounting beneath the guillotine. The blade was released, his head was sheared, and the executioner held it up for the crowd to see.

From his close position, Tallien stared into the dead eyes of the severed head.

“How does it feel now, Challet? You and my lord Bercy might just as well have cut off my own head when, in your unbounded beneficence, you colluded together to send me from home to learn the law.”

Chapter 21

Not knowing what to do or say, Lalladiere stood looking at Eleanore Duplay in the doorway of the house where Robespierre resided.

“Yes...?” she said questioningly, staring back at him. She wore, on her large body, a conventional high-bodice green dress. Short straight chestnut hair framed her plump and shining face.

“Yes, citizen, what is it?”

“Is it?” he repeated, frightened by the woman despite her seeming quite ordinary.

“Come now, what are you doing here? We have no time for jokes.” She began immediately to push closed the heavy door, and from somewhere within him, he summoned up resolve.

“Danger, grave danger.”

“What?”

“To Robespierre. A plot. They told me to tell him.”

“What is this? Who told you to tell him?” She paused, kept the door slightly ajar, and looked Lalladiere up and down. She saw that his clothes, though badly disarrayed, were of good quality. In some places, there were tears and hanging strips.

“Where have you come from?” she asked, wondering for a moment whether the man was on the up and up, undone by ambush or other mishap on the way to deliver an important message there. Plots against her beloved Robespierre, though commonly alleged, worried her, and always she took them seriously.

“Come from,” Lalladiere repeated, still frightened, but now he continued. “Come from. There are many coming, but I have not been in their way. I have tried to fly, 681 million, but there are many birds

with salt on their tails already. Necker had it right. Necker, the heir, had it going. There is a plot.”

“Ay-ee. Get away from here” sputtered Eleanore. “These are perilous times. We cannot listen to lunatics or jokesters.” She made a beckoning gesture to the watching workmen and shoved the door completely shut.

Lalladiere moved back, then stood in front of the closed door without moving. Not paralyzed but unable to leave, go either in one direction or the other, he stood staring at the carved slats of the dark wooden door. Two workmen began to walk slowly toward him, cautiously watching whether he would do something threatening. Lalladiere saw them and moved again toward the door, vaguely intending to knock or else throw himself against it. Every second counted.

You must tell him. Tell him of the danger. It's the only way to make it up, make up for what you have done. Tell him.

The door opened before he reached it. Eleanore’s father and owner of the house, Maurice Duplay, appeared, nodded immediately at the approaching workmen and stood guardedly in the minimally opened doorway.

“You there. Go, get out of here or I shall have these men call the gendarmerie.”

“The plot.”

“Eleanore told me of your crazy talk about a plot. Raving too about Necker. Get going.”

“Necker. The heir, Meinherr.”

Tell him, tell him, now. Last chance. Last before the end.

“There is, I swear it, danger to the Republic, to Robespierre. There is a conspiracy, a dangerous, threatening conspiracy. I overheard it. He must know, they are important men, leaders.”

“Listen, there are many conspiracies and plots around these days. Do you think you can just come here and tell us Robespierre is in danger?” Duplay paused. “Overheard it, you say?”

"Yes, in the street."

"Well, just maybe you know something, but I'll be damned if I think so. Most likely, you are a plotter yourself. A crazy one."

Lalladiere, although the workmen came up behind him, stayed fixed in place. Duplay started to close the door but something about Lalladiere's story, his unreactiveness to accusations, and also his battered appearance, momentarily stopped him.

"What was that about Necker? Where does he fit in to all this?" he asked. "And then, who the hell are you, anyway?"

Again, for Lalladiere, the question was unanswerable, and he remained silent. Duplay snorted, gestured briskly to his men and moved again to close the door. This time, it would surely not be re-opened.

Tell him, it is the name of a debased creature. Tell.

"Guillaume Lalladiere."

"Lalladiere? You are Lalladiere? Well, I do know of Lalladiere. Exceptional, the chief of Necker's assistants." The men behind, hearing this, both stopped. At the same time, Duplay stepped cautiously forward through the narrow opening, and looked at Lalladiere carefully. "Something is familiar. Yes, you do look a bit familiar but, citizen, what has happened to you? Your clothing is torn, you are down and out. And why do you speak so strangely?"

"The plot. Robespierre must know. Danton the leader, I knew him. He is a friend of the Revolution, Robespierre's friend. Robespierre, all, must stop them."

"Danton? What is that about? Of course, Robespierre must be informed if there really is a plot you know about. But what goes on here? The assistant Lalladiere, I heard, left the government together with Necker. That was a bad time, a real loss. Necker was our champion in the early days. But, if you really are Lalladiere, where in the world have you been? And why are you in such a sorry state now?"

“Raston. It’s with Raston.”

“Camille Raston, the deputy? He was a minister before. Have you been working with him? Well, he is now an active Jacobin, our compatriot. Why is he not here himself?”

“The man came at me and tried to kill me. He tried to stop me. I pushed my finger into his eye.” Lalladiere looked from side to side, then downward. “He is bloody, spurting blood all over.”

“What? You mean someone has been after you?” Duplay asked, attuned to the constant presence, both within the Revolution and without, of persecution and violence from enemies. Vigilant always to protect his very important tenant, he quickly followed up, “Is it to stop you from warning us?”

“Yes, everywhere. Ferocious women, brutal men, assassins.”

“Did Raston send you?”

Lalladiere hesitated.

Speak. Tell him. Spit it out.

“Yes, she did,” he answered slowly.

“What do you mean, she? Raston is a man.” Lalladiere did not answer, and Duplay suspiciously looked him carefully up and down. The man undoubtedly had been recently in a fight. Duplay saw traces of drying blood on his neck, his hands, and the shoulder seam of his jacket. After a long pause, he said warily, “There is something very strange about you but the names of Necker and Raston carry a lot of weight here. I will not let you anywhere near Robespierre but his brother is inside. Augustin will decide whether or not you are conveying something of consequence.”

Duplay waved away the called-up workmen and opened the door wider for Lalladiere to enter.

Watch out. This is a ruse. It is the younger brother. They are trying to hook you, ensnare you. Giving you a boy instead of a man.

The harsh voice was laughing. He stepped back slightly.

"Well?" asked Duplay, noting the movement. "Do you have something to say or not?"

Lalladiere stepped forward through the door, mumbling into the air, "I have to try, you said so." Duplay looked puzzled and frowned. Lalladiere turned away, his lips barely moving, saying imperceptibly, "I have to do the saving. Save the Republic, save myself."

He entered into a good-sized and dimly lit dining room containing stairs leading to bedrooms above. Duplay bid him sit on one of the straight wooden chairs, and knocked softly on the door of the adjacent living room.

Saint André, a member of the governing Committee of Public Safety, came to the door. Noise of discussion among several voices escaped behind him. "Tell Augustin," Duplay said, "I have someone here who claims to have information on a plot. Say that he needs only to come out for a moment. This is probably of no importance but there are, as we know, so many enemies around. As Augustin himself keeps saying, we have to be very, very, wary these days."

Saint André stepped back into the room. Through the door, the sounds of discussion were dissonant and profuse, like several musicians frequently tuning different types of instruments. Lalladiere, waiting with Duplay in the dining room, heard short and longer segments, many ardently emitted. Often, sharp words referring to religion and Hébert came through. Once he heard someone with a polished voice, who could have been Maximilien Robespierre himself, speak of a need for resistance. Danton was loudly cited, someone spoke insistently of a belief in the Deity, and a cracked voice mentioned executions in Bordeaux. Next, the voice referred to Tallien and Lalladiere jerked his head sharply. Duplay, noticing the reaction, glared at him suspiciously.

Watch out. It's coming now.

Lalladiere turned his head down and looked up sideways at Duplay as they sat.

He is one of them. Run. They want no saving. They want murder, mayhem. They do not believe you, worm, because of what you have done. All the things you have done. No one will ever believe you.

"Yes," Lalladiere said out loud. "He is one of them."

Run, run, run...

As he bolted himself upright to go, the door before them opened and Augustin appeared. Duplay, who stood up when Lalladiere did, remained beside him, stiffly motionless. In the dim light, Augustin could not clearly see Lalladiere, who had turned to face him.

"Yes, what is this all about? Who is this man, Maurice?" Without waiting for the answer, Augustin looked at Lalladiere. "Who are you, citizen?"

Despite his fear and impulse to leave, Lalladiere was momentarily calmed by the young man's direct and undistracted attention. Augustin Robespierre was not known to him, but he had known Maximilien, and the man resembled his older brother. He looked undeceptive. Perhaps he would believe.

Speaking rapidly and fiercely, his mind focused from zeal and determination, Lalladiere said, "I have overheard a plot against the Revolution. Two men plan to undo Danton, elevate Robespierre, then arrange for his destruction as—"

Augustin interrupted immediately. "What? What is this about? Saint-Just told us about this concoction, the same story. He said a wild lunatic accosted him with these accusations at the Place de la Revolution."

"It was," Lalladiere went on in an increasingly frenzied tone but fearful of directly saying names, "the one who was the inspector, a supervisor, of the Bicêtre. The other one, I remembered him, a leader in the national guard."

"A supervisor and a military leader. Unbelievable. Men such as that, with such positions, must be loyal Jacobins. What is this? You might as well be accusing our man in Bordeaux, Jean-Lambert Tallien, who does glorious work with conspirators. Like you yourself surely are. Tallien was in fact, as I remember, both supervisor and inspector before. A man like that? Do you think we are crazy?" Again, Augustin did not wait for the answer. "Look at this person, Maurice, he is in shambles, clothes dirty and

turn. He speaks like a conspirator, refers to Bicêtre. I think there is an insane look in his eyes.”

Against his will, Lalladiere burst into uncontrollable laughter. The shrill, mirthless sounds reverberated in the hallway, and Saint André quickly returned, deeply frowning, back to the doorway. Two other members of the group in the living room, curious and also bothered, came up behind him. Augustin had stepped back when the piercing sounds began, but seeing the others at the door, he moved aggressively forward.

“Why are we allowing this lunatic to stand here? Saint-Just told us that this same man escaped from Bicêtre. Call the gendarmerie at once.”

As he began to turn away, Lalladiere moved forward, shrieked, and grabbed his arm. “No, no, it is the last chance. Save the Revolution. You. Me. They will succeed in killing Danton, killing Robespierre, killing even you.

Save –”

“What? Now he makes a threat against me? Maurice, stop him. Take your hands off me, you maniac. Don’t you know we can have you guillotined, cut off your insane head? That will cure you once and for all. Maurice, do something, I say.”

Augustin pulled Lalladiere’s grasping hands from his arm, and Duplay, fists clenched, moved forward. Saint André and the others plunged into the dining room to assist their compatriots. Surrounded, Lalladiere, laughing uncontrollably with interrupting high pitched sighs, moved backwards toward a wall of the dining room closest to the stairs. He flailed his arms outward and the four men moved cautiously toward him. Flexing one leg backward, he prepared to kick the nearest one. From the midst of the group, he heard:

Die, despicable nothingness, die.

He slumped down on the wall, his body loose and heavy, his head and shoulders leaning toward the sharp edges of the steps in the open stairway. Duplay, seeing what he thought was a diversionary movement, leaped toward him to stop the fall. He pushed Lalladiere’s head away from the stairs and

pinioned his drooping body against the bottom of the wall. Augustin turned away, going quickly around to the back of the encircling group. Saint André moved forward into the opened-up space to help Duplay. He leaned over the silent sprawling Lalladiere and put his hands under the slumped shoulders, starting together with Duplay to lift him off the floor. But full inner terror had begun. Lalladiere's arms and body gave no resistance and they could not bring him up. As Duplay and Saint-André pulled fiercely at his limbs, they stayed compliantly wherever they were moved, suspended in mid-air.

Chapter 22

Lalladiere was confined at the Hospice d'Humanité. Considered to be a dangerous lunatic who was acutely deranged, he could not be returned to Bicêtre, where he had twice escaped within a short time span. He was taken by cart from the Duplay house, mute and unresponsive the entire way and was put directly into a seclusion cell. His body, after being dropped by the two accompanying attendants onto a mat on the floor, remained – though he felt the thudding pain, in the fallen arrangement: head back, arms and legs extended upward, wrists and ankles encircled with chains. One of the attendants who brought him, Jean-Claude, stood for a few moments staring down at the distorted sight. He kneeled down, slapped Lalladiere hard on the face.

“Put your God-damned arms down, you deformed maniac.” This new pain intensified Lalladiere’s certainty of a disaster, his memory of the Humanité attendants as similar to Ajacis at Bicêtre, but he could not permit himself the slightest movement or response.

“You’ve got to stop this right now,” said Hervé, the other attendant caretaker standing nearby. He thrust his leg sharply backward, and delivered a heavy kick into Lalladiere’s shoulder. Thrown sideways from the blow, back pushed into an arch, Lalladiere’s arms and legs remained extended upward where the attendants had held them when he was dropped.

Jean-Claude now pushed down hard on the protruding arms. They stiffly gave way as he slammed them down onto the mat. Sliding his hands, without pausing, to Lalladiere’s shoulders, he began shaking them vigorously.

“You’re not going to get away with this. We know how to stop you,” Jean-Claude said as he increased his movement force. Lalladiere’s head began flopping back and forth, making him dizzy and nauseous. The chains, shifting with the rocking motion, cut into his wrists and ankles, but he continued to contain his catastrophe inside.

Finally recognizing that the shaking was not provoking a response, Jean-Claude released the

slightly raised shoulders. Lalladiere's head dropped down. Now a living sculptured form, his shoulders curved backward and only the crown of his head touched the mat. His body hung in exactly the position it was left.

It was an ultimate act of defiance, which for Lalladiere was largely involuntary. Both Hervé and Jean-Claude were outraged, and together they fell upon Lalladiere's outstretched body, pummeling and kicking legs, chest, arms, and head. The suspended position collapsed, and his bruised, tortured body lay limp and incapable of any type of movement on the coarse mat on the floor. He was semi-conscious and the aching did little, as punishment sometimes did, to retard the glacial ebb and flow of inner convictions of immense failure or overwhelming destructive power.

The drubbing attendants left, and before a complete hour had passed, he regained full consciousness, mind swarming with images of crowds of people pushing tightly up to him, cutting off his breathing. At that moment, there were no sounds, no voices speaking in the dark cell. The quiet persisted and he fell into a deep sleep.

When he awoke some hours later, he immediately had an overwhelming sense of fear. Not a fear of moving, or of vulnerability, or his own destructive force, but a diffuse, stalking fear that gripped his body, tearing through his chest, his eyes, exploding in his head. Nothing known was frightening him nor was it anything he could try to know. Something from the vast well of the past, something about a world of terrifying people licked at the fringes of his mind. Chained, alone, he awaited a massive attack.

Later that morning, the medical director, Dr. Compeigne, came to his cell together with a nurse and another attendant, neither of whom Lalladiere had previously seen. He was still lying on the mat motionless, mute, eyes dulled, face without expression.

"So, Lalladiere, you have come back to us once more. Escaped from Bicêtre, captured and returned, and then escaped all over again. All the soft, easy treatment there ruined you, is it not so? Gave you the taste – no, an unrelenting drive – for more. What's the doctor's name? Dr. Philippe Pinel, right? Think of it, handles maniacs with kindness, medicaments used only sparingly. Look at what that gets them, more and worse insanity." Dr. Compeigne looked at his two assistants, then down at Lalladiere, shaking his head derisively.

“Are you going now to tell me what happened?” he asked. “Who is plotting against you this time? You dare to go to Robespierre himself with stories about conspiracies. Speak.”

Lalladiere did not respond.

He is here for murder, annihilation. He will tear your arms and legs from your body.

“You will not answer? Back again to your outrageous resistance. Well, then, we start the treatment.” Dr. Compeigne turned to the nurse-attendant. “For this one, half rations, and the ‘bath of surprise.’” He left the cell.

Some hours later, the attendants Hervé and Jean-Claude came, removed Lalladiere’s chains, and with rope tied his legs together and his arms tightly behind. They lifted his inert body and carried him to the door of a square cell-like room. A flat iron tub filled the room, leaving only a narrow space between its forward edge and the doorway. It was not to be the warm soothing bath he had at Bicêtre. The two attendants held his naked outstretched body firmly and swung him slightly outward at the doorway, then looped him quickly inward. At the top of the swing, they released him suddenly to plunge into ice cold water.

The freezing bath was shocking and intensely painful. Water immersed him over his head. Guided by reflexes stronger than will, he thrust his nose and mouth upward, gasping for breath. He was unable, because of the ropes on his arms and legs, to attain further buoyancy, and except for part of his face, he stayed covered by the frigid cold water. Recurrent chills racked his body, causing him to stretch himself into a stiff resistant rod, arms pressed tightly at his sides, legs extended to the rim of the tub. He started to lose consciousness, but then felt himself shifting, his body hyperaroused, his head automatically turning back and forth as though looking for escape.

Hervé lifted more ice blocks from a cart in the hallway and put them into the water. Lalladiere’s body convulsed and he shivered uncontrollably. His skin was bulbous, tinged with blue. If he could cry out, if his terror of sound and movement allowed it, he might have done so, but his teeth were clenched together, his jaws clamped.

Gradually, strangely, the painful sensations were blunted, and his body seemed to become encased in a protective wall. He felt then only the water's slight movement, touching and surrounding him smoothly. More ice was added, he felt no longer cold but slightly tepid, almost warm. The water around him now felt soothing, his muscles began to loosen and relax. Again, he lapsed into a semiconscious state. This time, there was no agitation or succeeding arousal.

Jean-Claude, seeing Lalladiere's released, enervated state, motioned to Hervé to leave. They then took turns returning to add small blocks of ice to the water and, according to a new rule of the superintendent-governor, a begrudging acknowledgement of the humane spirit of the times, they checked that Lalladiere's nose and mouth were not submerged under the water. In the past, sometimes by accident and sometimes by purposeful neglect, inmates taking the "bath" had drowned. Unaware of the attendants, unaware for the moment of fears of death or life, unaware of time, Lalladiere laid suspended and relaxed in the water.

For the next several days in his cell, he showed little change. The 'bath', frequently repeated, was followed by short intervals of abatement. Although he invariably became semiconscious and relaxed in the water, the simultaneously compliant and resistant waxy flexibility usually returned as the attendants were bringing him back to his cell or, on rare occasions, a few hours later. During intervals when he moved minimally on his own around the cell, the attendants often spied his lips repeating inaudible words or engaging in solitary conversation:

"They are fighting for something important. A real struggle, the fight is vital."

You are the traitor, you betrayed them.

"I know, I am a traitor. I betrayed them. Terrible power is in the tips of my fingers, the edges of my toes."

You must follow orders, kill when you see them. "

"Orders, follow orders. Ordures. Who must I kill? My nails are swords."

They are out to get you. Enemies are everywhere.

"I don't know how to stop them. They peer at me through walls. They attack me on the streets. They are everywhere."

Everyone is out to get you. Enemies are everywhere.

"They are everywhere, enemies are everywhere. Why am I so lost?"

Yaa, yaa, yaa, the Revolution. The Revolution. Yaa, yaa. It is a plot to bury you.

"I was chosen to save the Revolution, don't you see?" He shouted. Jean-Claude, passing, looked in at him, shook his head, and walked on. More softly then, Lalladiere said, "I must save the Revolution."

You must not move. Do not move anything. Your arms, your hands, or your feet. Your arms, your hands, your feet.

"I was chosen to save the Revolution."

Yaa, yaa, yaa. The conspirators will then destroy you. All are enemies. The Revolution is a plot to kill you.

"You don't know. No, no. You understand nothing. I must save Danton and Robespierre. They are in peril. Terrible peril. Terileril."

Robespierre is your enemy. He wants to kill you.

"Stop. I can't stand this."

The guillotining is good for the people. Killing is good for them. They kill them to save them.

"Stop it. Stop it. Stop it."

They are out to get you.

"Yes, I can't stand it."

Enemies are everywhere.

"I won't listen. I cover my ears."

Robespierre is your enemy. He wants revenge.

"No."

Vengeance.

"No."

Vengeance. Revenge. They are all your enemies. They are planning to kill you.

"Robespierre is my enemy. I won't move."

Jean-Claude reported that Lalladiere was not improved, possibly worse. Soon, therefore, he and Hervé were sent to bring him to initiate another type of treatment. They entered his cell, ordered him as usual to get up, but he did not move at all. They pulled him up from the mat and he stood on his feet motionless between them. As they dragged him to the door, his shoulders dropped forward, his shoe toes scraped across the floor. His mind was empty of thought, he knew only not to move on his own. Hervé dropped slightly behind him, and still holding a shoulder, drove his knee hard into Lalladiere's lower back. His body lurched forward from the force of the blow but, restrained by Jean-Claude's clutching hand on his arm, he did not fall. He was grotesquely tilted forward, with back arched, head on his chest, knees bent, and the tips of both shoes scraping along the floor behind him. With a vicious growl, Hervé grabbed up Lalladiere's legs and arms to carry him. Jean-Claude put his hand under a shoulder to pitch in. Grasping the shoulder firmly, he swung a hard punch with his other hand to the side of Lalladiere's face.

They brought him this time to a room with a heavy rectangular table in the center, walls lined with cabinets. Together, the two attendants pushed him down onto the table, drew up a heavy leather strap lying underneath, circled it tightly around his torso and elbows, and buckled it in the center. Hervé leaned down and brought up another strap to clasp his knees.

Torture. Evisceration. It's all over. This is the killing.

His heart was pounding rapidly, beating out hundreds of seconds which seemed to stretch into hours as he lay. Nothing happened. Jean-Claude and Hervé stood posted at either side, glaring down at him.

Despite the terror of the strapping, his body was compliant with whatever was done and he was unable to lurch, move any part, or resist. He lay listening to the sounds – a throbbing runaway metronome – of his heart. Dr. Compeigne came into the room and walked to the opposite side of the table where a small window let in a few wavering rays of light. The short, balding man pulled up a narrow chair crammed in between the cabinets, placed it near Lalladiere's head, and sat down.

Out of the corner of his eye, Lalladiere saw the doctor lean forward to stare at the side of his face and head. Concentrating attentively, Dr. Compeigne reached out after a few minutes to grasp his chin, pushed his head down sideward onto the table, and held it there as he minutely inspected hair, cheek, jaw, and neck. Lalladiere could see him motion to Jean-Claude to take over the awkward chin-holding as he turned, while sitting, toward the cabinets to pull out a small table holding metal objects and a bowl.

It was not something Lalladiere expected, or had ever known before. He felt a cold, sharp instrument, a blade, inserted into the side of his forehead. It went in slowly, sliding and wiggling slightly up and down as the penetrating pain spread into his scalp and the side of his face. He thought the point was moving toward the inside of his skull, and now with a desperate act of will he moved, trying to pull away. But his jaw was held firmly by Jean-Claude's hand.

The killing.

He screamed and felt Hervé come up close to him, pushing and holding down the top of his head. The sharp blade pierced further inward, then stopped suddenly, and the point felt fixed and jammed up against hardness, the pressure of the bone. At a signal from Dr. Compeigne, the two attendants together lifted his head and pushed it forward, knife still inserted, onto a circular metallic object. The cold edge jutted into his cheek, new pain momentarily distracted him from the panic about the knife blade in his scalp. Blood spurted from his head, and hearing pinging spatters, he realized his aching cheek was lying

on the rim of a collecting steel bowl. The sound of the dripping blood increased, pounding in his head with a roar.

Again, he tried to move away, pushing himself upward, backward, anywhere away from the knife and its ghastly penetration. But Jean-Claude and Hervé, the straps, and Dr. Compeigne holding both the instrument and the shallow bowl, kept him firmly rooted. He tried again to scream but with his head crammed toward the inside of the bowl, the sound was stifled into a rough gurgle. His entire body shivered.

The dripping of his blood into the filling steel vessel had become regular, its rhythmic sound made it seem to come from a source of its own. He felt the instrument hanging from the side of his head, the hard rim of the bowl pushing into his cheek, but there was no longer any pain. A slight cloudy feeling, a lightness, began in his head. He knew he was going to die, he couldn't escape. And an inner sense of final acquiescence, total relaxation, came over him.

After two bowls were filled up with his blood, he fainted. Dr. Compeigne pulled out the bloodletting lancet, applied compresses to the open vein, and bound them. They opened the straps. Jean-Claude took his shoulders, Hervé grabbed his knees, and they brought Lalladiere's unconscious body back to his cell.

Chapter 23

Augustin Robespierre, smarting with outrage and memories of fear about Lalladiere's maniac behavior, went to the Committee of Internal Affairs. There was enough disorder on the streets of Paris, he stridently insisted, without madmen coming out of asylums and running everywhere around. And this one – worst to tell – managed to take up the valuable time of those who were busily engaged in running the government. Maximilien himself knew of the terrible incident outside his door, and of Saint-Just's encounter before that, and immediately recommended corrective action regarding the obviously poor management of inmates at Bicêtre Asylum. Committee members listened with increased concern. After investigating further, they confirmed that more than one inmate had escaped from the asylum since the unchainings began, and Committee head Couthon was now ready to order a change of administration.

Standing at a summoned hearing before the Committee, Pinel defended his moral treatment. Couthon, who was crippled in both legs from a spinal infection, sat behind a table, and the two other Committee members flanked him stiffly, backs arched against their chairs as befitted the formal judicial proceeding. Couthon looked worried and serious, and the two others glared at Pinel unsympathetically.

"We are speaking of liberty, citizens. It is the same liberty that we have fought for in the Revolution," Pinel said. His voice, sincere and impassioned, was tinged slightly with the accent of his provincial upbringing.

"The treatment I provide to the sick, unfortunate inmates at the Bicêtre Asylum," he continued, "is a product of the same rational principles that have guided our uprisings, and our Convention as well. The great Rousseau incited us from the beginning, moved our hearts, by proclaiming we were all in chains despite our being freely born. And now, you see, I have ordered the removal of chains from the last of our freeborn countrymen who, after the Revolution, remained bound and subjugated. The lunatics, the mentally ill."

"Of course," Couthon began solemnly, "we are for liberty. Do we not proclaim this everywhere? But these people are defective, dangerous. They are not the same as others with real illnesses." With an

ostentatious gesture, he reached his hand down and pushed one of his lifeless legs sideways so he could sit straighter.

“No, they are temporarily deprived of reason.”

“Temporarily?”

“Yes, I have, on the basis of careful observation, categorized inmates into different types, separating the criminals, the mental defectives, and the insane. For the insane, who are truly sick and can recover, I have ordered the removal of chains, improved the squalor of their surroundings, allowed them to do productive work, and talked with them for the purpose of helping them curb the passions that caused their insanity. They suffer, as my colleague Cabanis, has described, from lesions or wounds of the imagination. These cannot be improved with chaining.” He paused, then added with emphasis, “Of course, when there is freedom, one must take on all the responsibilities and difficulties freedom entails.”

“None of your colleagues, not a single one in our other hospitals do as you do. You are unleashing dangerous maniacs upon the populace,” Couthon said, while the two associates at his sides nodded their heads vigorously. One of them, Rampier, a tall, thin man with hollowed-out cheeks, added with sneering intensity, “The ones who escaped from the Bicêtre are lucky not to have been guillotined.” The other associate, Valentin, a portly man with heavy eyebrows, grinned in assent.

Trying not to look bold-facedly at Rampier, Pinel said, “Citizens, the dangerous maniacs are not those who are known to be mad and are well-cared for inside of hospitals and asylums. Although some inmates may occasionally escape, they are far more dangerous, that is, they are far more likely to be dangerous, if they have previously been languishing in manacles and chains. Those we have unchained at Bicêtre now have the wish to be treated and get well.”

“Get well, you say. Get well?” Couthon said. “You insist they are sick but I understand you also do not approve of widely used treatment methods. Bloodletting, cupping, or blistering, for instance. And, on your treatment sheets, there is not a single incidence of your use of hellebore.”

“Hellebore? An outmoded, useless drug. Do you actually know of any physicians using the hellish

hellebore on the mentally ill today? It causes violent purging, obstinate vomiting, convulsions, and even death. Far less drastic purgatives and emetics are nowadays available. These, used carefully, are effective as well as safe. As for bloodletting –” Pinel paused, and slowly turned his gaze on each one of the Committee members to emphasize that he was speaking with authority. “I prescribe no bloodletting, or any of the other methods of drawing up blood you mention, except in very limited circumstances.”

“What circumstances?” Rampier asked. “When does this so learned doctor decide to employ the standard method?”

“When there is reason to believe the body may be overfull with blood.”

At that point, Pinel took the lead, describing in some detail cases which had improved under his care. One was a young man who became insane after he lost his parents and was treated with skillful consolation together with steps designed to restore his capacity for work. Another was a strong, violent man who occasionally needed restraint by strait-jacket, but not at all by chains. He was gradually given more and more freedom and responsibility as he showed signs of controlling his violent tendencies himself. A third man, who thought he was Mohammed, was found to have become a lunatic after being betrayed by one of his brothers. He also was cured by daily sessions of consolation and instruction, followed by return to work. Pinel concluded by stating that his treatment was moral and effective. Its morality, a vital aspect, consisted of the espousal of equality, the application of kindness, firmness, thoughtful discussion, and the direct imparting of morals where there were excessive passions before.

The Committee members listened, morose and silent. Then, with a burst, Rampier challenged him, and Valentin, when he saw a chance, joined in. Together they mocked Pinel as a dreamer, perhaps a charlatan, a person who deluded himself that those who were demented and incurable could actually become well. They would not accept his complacency about the inmates, but insisted that the people in his charge were brutes and killers, waiting to pounce on anyone they could get their hands on.

“That happened before I came,” Pinel replied quickly, dismissing the minor attack on him when he first arrived. “There have been no killings since I became the physician at Bicêtre. And those killings before – do you know how they occurred? They were done in each case by inmates in chains, desperate men who waited until they found a despised attendant or inmate alone. They brained them with the

heavy metal links.”

“Ha, it is only a matter of time,” interjected Rampier in a hissing voice, “before your inmates will kill more. We know they have corrupted brains, possessed by demons.”

“Well then,” Pinel started, his eyes flashing. “have we not come to the summit of enlightenment, eliminated tyrannical aristocracy and royalty, and the claims to divinely endowed power? But here, my esteemed friends, we have a man who still believes in demons. Green ones, perhaps?”

Rampier, outraged, started to rise.

“Stay where you are, please, good citizen,” Pinel continued, immediately serious. “I have carried out countless autopsies on the brains of lunatics. And I have found not one shred of evidence of any physical defect. Also, the idea of possession by demons and spirits must be considered totally unfounded. It is denied by detailed and repeated observation, my own and those of numerous other physicians. And please consider, wise gentlemen, that it is rendered totally implausible by my work of categorizing and recognizing different symptom complexes, different types of insanities and numerous other disorders.”

Couthon, listening, put his hand on the arm of the half standing red-faced Rampier and bid him sit down. Couthon had been impressed to some degree by Pinel’s account of improved patients, and his earlier antagonism was increasingly softened by Pinel’s providing, despite some audaciousness, seemingly reasonable explanations to all of the Committee’s challenges. Couthon also owed much gratitude and respect to the physician Cabanis who initially recommended Pinel for his post. Cabanis had served as an important consultant regarding the treatment of Couthon’s lameness, and by all accounts, that eminent man of medicine was continuing to support Pinel’s work at Bicêtre. But, most of all, Couthon was at that moment affected by Pinel’s renunciation of the idea of possession. This idea, which was in fact still fairly widely held by respectable others beside Rampier, even by some well-known physicians, was, for Couthon, too much like religion, something he abhorred. He was deeply opposed to clergy, religion, or anything that to him suggested otherworldliness or the supernatural. He decided that Pinel was right about possession, was a reasonable man, and a true proponent also of liberty. Perhaps, after all, his lunatics could be included within another cherished maxim, equality. Even fraternity. He would give the man another chance.

The three members of the Committee conferred in private a long time as they argued about Pinel's attitude, his treatment, and the reaction of the public and the Convention leaders if they did not remove him. Couthon's modulating and influential arguments, however, prevailed. They agreed to let Pinel off with the warning that if any more escapes occurred, if more lunatics from Bicêtre appeared at the houses and on the streets of Paris, he would be removed.

"Dismissed," added Rampier, hissing loudly.

A damnable outcome, Pinel thought as he walked out of the room. Impossible to prevent escapes from the asylum completely, his career, but worse than that, his treatment was at risk. And, devoted to the Revolution as he was, he worried whether, with such unseeing men in charge of things, the Revolution also was seriously at risk. He sighed as he came out onto the street. Looking quickly at his large pocket watch, he realized that the meeting had lasted the entire afternoon, and he would be late for his weekly visit to Madame Helvetius's salon. A highly prized affair, still bearing its pre-revolutionary name, he first met physicians Cabanis and Thouret there. Others such as physician Richerand, economist Say, and mathematician Condorcet had also met there regularly. As he stood hailing a hack to Auteil, which was at the rim of Paris, he thought also of the American emissary Benjamin Franklin at this salon. In earlier days, the brilliant Franklin, who also visited regularly, had several times tried to convince him to move to Franklin's newly developed country and put his ideas into practice there. Perhaps he should have done it.

As he entered and sat in a hack, he noticed a small group consisting of two men and three women who were standing behind him near the door of the building. They were all staring at him. When the vehicle moved forward two of them, a woman and a man, knelt down and picked up handfuls of gritty mud from the bordering ground area. With continuous almost graceful motions, both stepped forward and flung the ugly material at the side of the vehicle, some of it splashing in through the open window near where Pinel was sitting. The driver of the cab, startled and frightened, cursed at the entire group and spurred the horses to increase their speed. With mud in their hands, two others in the group started running behind them, and in the midst of heavy splatters, Pinel could hear garbled shouts of "Quack doctor," and "King of the lunatics." And then, "Killer of children."

The hack quickly outdistanced the runners but the episode was, for Pinel, worse than the outcome of the hearing. He knew that gossip and news, especially about investigations and punitive actions of the government, spread readily throughout Paris. But it pained him terribly that, in addition to the humiliation, the people of the city, whose fortunes he believed in, had little comprehension or sympathy about what he was doing. Indeed, the group seemed stirred up with hostility and fear. He would try to find ways to explain, but success might be the only key. If we are successful, it may dissipate the fear. As he thought this, doubts came on that he had felt before – after hearing negative reports from Pussin, or when waking without cause during the night. Perhaps he was wrong, perhaps he was courting failure, even danger.

When he arrived at the salon and entered, he felt immediately relieved. Seeing his conversing colleagues standing near the huge fireplace or sitting in soft settees around the living room was reassuring. They were, he knew, speaking of principles of science, government, mind, and finance as well as concerns for the nation and oppressed. Anne-Catherine Helvetius was standing near the door. Being late, he didn't stop to be greeted by her and walked directly over to where Thouret and Cabanis stood near a heavily draped window. Thouret was at that moment gesticulating in the air as he emphasized a point to his companion.

Cabanis immediately leaned and looked with concern at his latecomer colleague. "I understand, Pinel, that you are having continued troubles. Hearings pending with the Committee of Internal Affairs, harsh questions raised about the new approach."

"Yes," joined in Thouret, stopping his peroration, "Augustin Robespierre apparently got pretty wild about an escaped patient of yours."

"And Saint-Just before that," Pinel said, nodding. "I've just had the hearing. All these people, I am afraid, classify me as deranged, perhaps even dangerous." He thought with a wince of Rampier and the distressing mudslinging.

"More like a matter of the pot calling the kettle black, is that not so? On both counts," Cabanis said. "These people have such power nowadays, anyone who glances at them crosswise they send to the guillotine."

“Perhaps we must introduce a study of official optical malfunctions,” Pinel said, smiling. “I must say, I thought I saw their eyes staring at my neck throughout the proceeding.”

“Terrible,” Thouret said, unsmiling.

Pinel’s smile also faded, and he sighed. “I wonder, my friends, how it is that men who espouse the ideals of liberty would want innocent people chained up against the wall?”

“It is strange, more than that – unacceptable,” Cabanis said sadly. He fixed his lips grimly, “I am afraid you need to be wary. Resist them. I shall go to the top, speak myself both to Robespierre – Maximilien, that is – and Couthon. Robespierre is a very intelligent man, he will understand what you are doing. You must continue your work at Bicêtre, the advances in treatment, and of no little consequence, your observations pertaining to our explorations of connections between the physical and the mental, the study of man.”

“Of course, my friend, my colleague, I shall surely try to resist. But, you know, I myself do not like the idea of my inmates escaping and running all over Paris.”

“I am so glad to see you, Pinel. I have been looking forward to talking with you for several days now.” It was Anne-Catherine Helvetius, who walked over to join the grouping.

Widow of philosopher-statesman Claude, Anne-Catherine Helvetius was a stately, attractive woman with blonde hair arranged in long ringlets. She held closely under her arm, as she spoke, the cream-colored Angora cat named Ulysse. One of several, they were all christened, as an outgrowth of her classical training, with Greek and Roman names. The others, Achille, Virgil, Hercule, and Hector, all heroes in miniature, roamed throughout the area of her salon. They were famous attractions there, serving as comfortable divertissements for the otherwise absorbed guests, who sometimes perched an animal on a lap, carried one as she did under an arm, or simply leaned down and stroked one or two while drinking, conversing, or moving around. For Anne-Catherine Helvetius, these cats were not simply indulgences or decorations, but creatures whose eyes conveyed their own wisdom, a kind of understanding that they necessarily kept secret. She believed at the same time they would, for the guests, seem deep and even inspiring.

“Flattered, citizenness, I am so very flattered that I have been on your mind. May I ask if there was some special reason?” Pinel said. He, like the other salon participants, very much enjoyed his hostess. She was quick-witted, charming, and intensely interested in the discourse around her.

“A few nights ago, I attended the current play at the Theatre Français. It is the *Heracles* of Euripides. Exquisitely stimulating. Have any of you gone to see it?” she asked.

All three indicated they hadn't.

“It is a portrayal of the madness of, as we call him, Hercule. His brutal killing of his wife and children.”

“Yes, indeed,” Pinel said, “and, as I remember, it gives an excellent portrayal of how lunatic frenzy can occur. With the exception, of course, that it includes the idea that the illness is caused by the goddess Héra ordering a visitation to Heracles by a lesser deity with the name of Madness.”

“What about that?”

“Well, I think it is a figurative matter, really.”

“Surely so. I did wonder, as I watched, how you would view Euripides's presentation of lunacy. But I was also fascinated by the aftermath.”

“You mean how he changes?”

“Yes, the change. The blood-stained Hercule stands near the end of the play with a robe thrown over his head, and in comes the hero Thésée – the Greek Theseus – and commands, “I come to sympathize; uncover him.” From that point up to the close, Thésée is portrayed as continually understanding with Hercule, consoling him about the terrible tragedy. And, as we watch, Hercule regains his senses and recovers.”

She tilted her head, smiling at Pinel as she ran her hand slowly through Ulysse's fur. Pinel, in return, nodded smilingly in anticipation. “It reminded me,” she continued, “of that approach you have so

ardently described to us. What you call 'moral treatment.'"

"And so it should, my perceptive hostess. I thank you for this observation. I know the play but did not previously focus on those specifics. Magnificent."

"Ah, Pinel, another addition for your medical approaches, another ancient model for you to cite," Thouret said, laughing and smoothing his moustache.

"Yes," Pinel said, smiling at Thouret but serious in tone. "The ancient sources, including the myths, provide much that is medically true. Of course, with the myths, you must discount the actual presence of gods and goddesses."

"What do you mean? How does one do that?" asked Cabanis, also serious out of long respect for his friend's far-reaching insights.

"The accounts of visitations of the gods to humans. Probably a matter of the person hearing voices, a lunatic person, which he, or some storyteller, later elaborated into speaking with the gods. Other heroes beside Heracles – Hercule – I believe, were very likely mad, driven, while they performed great deeds." He nodded to Anne-Catherine Helvetius when using the French name.

"Quite so," Thouret said, involved now. "I have heard well-presented claims that the great Alexander was mad, that he heard voices."

"And more recently," Cabanis added, grasping the idea. "We have a French heroine of this type. Our own Jeanne – Jeanne d'Arc."

Pinel nodded, not surprised at Cabanis's assent, his willingness to subject any dogma, political or religious, to rigorous consideration. "I find," Pinel said earnestly, "that the stories of wonderful exploits by the mad help to understand the condition itself. And they may guide us in our remedies."

Used to engaging humorously with Pinel, Anne-Catherine Helvetius, brown eyes shining, said, "The stories show you, don't they, that, at the very least, you must pay special attention to important patients."

No levity this time, he cared too much. Bowing his head slightly, Pinel in a warm voice replied, "Every patient is important. Every single one."

"I am sorry," she said, immediately serious herself. "I was not suggesting you of all people might think anything else. But, now, this idea you have of mad heroes is quite intriguing. What do you think about the madness of women in the myths, the mother of Pentheus who cut off her son's head in a frenzy, for example? And what about the mother of Ulysse?" She glanced down at the cat she was petting under her arm, whose mouth was extended with contentment and added, "This inscrutable one's namesake."

"The mother, Madame, of the great Ulysse, the prototype Everyman?" interjected Cabanis. "You see," he said, turning to Pinel, "I have told you that women are the core of the Revolution. They look much further than we do."

She smiled warmly at Cabanis. "Ulysse, they say, was only feigning madness when he sowed his field with salt supposedly to avoid going to war. Who knows about him? But his mother, I really wonder about his mother. Remember when he went down to Hades? He met his mother's spirit there, was quite surprised to see her and immediately asked whether she had died of a disease. And she – isn't this so? – more or less said, 'No, it was just because you, my son, were away for a long time'. Can you imagine that? She actually pined away and died because her grown son had been away! Her grown hero son! It wasn't even fearing he was dead, she never said or implied that. Only the absence from her. What kind of a person was this woman? Was she insane or on the verge of it?"

"Marvelous point, citizenness," Thouret interjected, "about the mother. And the son? Can people really fake madness well without sometime having been, at least sometime, fully mad already? What do you think, Pinel?"

Pinel smiled appreciatively. Thouret was probably correct about Ulysse. At some time, if real, he was mad. All the ideas were intriguing, evoking remembrances of his experiences with patients. But as he began to discuss them, he and the others were distracted by the sound of commotion at the door. Several persons were gathered there, speaking excitedly and standing around a distraught-appearing man who had just entered. It was, Pinel realized instantaneously, his friend and frequent instructor, Marie Jean Condorcet. He turned sharply and walked to join the group at the door. Hostess Helvetius and the others

quickly followed.

Usually carefully dressed and stylish, Condorcet had right away attracted wide attention bursting through the door with his cravat askew, his waistcoat unbuttoned, despair in his eyes. He spoke rapidly to those around him, explaining that the trial of the Girondins was about to begin and that members of the militia had appeared some hours ago at the door of his house. Clearly, they were planning to arrest and imprison him, and he narrowly escaped before they entered. Several of the persons who gathered near him quickly on seeing his distressed entry already knew he was a man in danger. He had been accused of conspiracy by the Revolutionary Tribunal some weeks before and they were aware of his absence from the salon and other public places. Up to then, he had managed to escape seizure.

Pinel pushed through the group. "You shouldn't have come here, Condorcet," he said, as he grasped his friend's hand. "They know this is a favorite place for you. They will be on your heels."

"I am glad, Pinel, that you are here. But I must tell you I am very weary of this business. The hiding. The chase. I am ready to let them take me." Condorcet, born Marquis de Condorcet, had been an early torchbearer for the Revolution. He was the primary drafter of the first Constitution, and a significant instigator and supporter of the Republic. He had, until several months before, been the president of the Legislative Assembly. It was well known, however, that he stood alone in not voting for the death of the king, recommending a very severe penalty instead. As the revolutionary momentum progressed, his stand came to be considered a capital crime. Also, he wrote a criticism of the new Constitution, denounced the arrest of the moderate Girondins, and openly denounced members of the Committee of Public Safety.

"We have to do something, Pinel, to help Condorcet," earnestly volunteered Thouret who had come up close behind him.

"A sacrificial lamb," the economist Say declared, shaking his head. He had been first to see Condorcet at the door.

"This man standing here is a great thinker, mathematician, and patriot. He must be saved." burst out Riseau, a distinguished professor of ethical philosophy who was an ardent advocate of the Revolution.

Recovering some of his composure, Condorcet's face broke into a weak smile. "Thank you, my colleagues, my friends. But I came here only to see you all once more. These reversals of fate for reasonable men like myself come from desperate leaders who fear ultimate retribution for their murderous acts. There is nothing you can do."

"But what about your plan for public education? What of that?" forcefully asked citizeness Thouret, who had come from another side of the room to stand next to her husband. "What will become of it? You are the first ever to prescribe public education equally for both boys and girls. We cannot give up on you."

"A wonderful man," Anne-Catherine Helvetius said tearfully.

Pinel stood watching his friend Condorcet's face, nodding at each of the comments while plunged into searching thought. Finally, his own face brightened slightly, and he said quietly and firmly, "I do know of a place where he can be safe."

"Where?" asked Thouret and his wife simultaneously. Others looked at Pinel anxiously.

"It is the house of citizeness Vernet in the Latin Quarter. She is trustworthy woman, related to a family I knew in Toulouse. She has given refuge to others."

Several persons standing nearby vigorously assented. Two or three others wondered if it were safe, Say and his wife offered their house as a sanctuary, and Anne-Catherine Helvetius thought she knew of another possibility. After much back and forth discussion, including wholehearted urging of Condorcet to accept the help being offered, the inconspicuous house of Pinel's reliable citizeness Vernet was decided on. Condorcet weakly agreed. Thouret and two other men volunteered to go with Pinel to make arrangements.

As they left the salon to obtain transportation, Pinel thought of the meeting earlier that day, the Committee's severe admonition, the cloud he himself was under. His jaw trembled. Had he done a wise thing? Aiding this wanted man now was extremely risky, not only for him but for his precariously balanced treatment and those at Bicêtre in his care.

Chapter 24

Throughout his time at the asylum of Bicêtre, Lalladiere had never had a visitor. Now, through the haze of dizziness after bloodletting, he felt a surge of surprise at hearing that a woman had come to see him. The attendant Victor, standing at the door of his cell, spit out the announcement, adding that the inmate better move fast because she certainly wouldn't stay long. Lalladiere rose from his mat weakly, awkwardly, and with leg chains dragging, he slowly followed the impatient Victor to the Humanité governor's apartment. As he pushed himself forward, he shook his head from side to side.

Careful, on guard, the woman's out to get you.

The voice got louder, the warning recurring over and over. Again, he shook his head, trying to throw off the blasting noise.

They arrived at the small room in the apartment where visitors were allowed. Lalladiere jerked upward, shaking inside on seeing Genevieve sitting there. Placed in a row near her were two empty straight-backed wooden chairs and a third on which sat Marigaux, the superintendent-governor. He motioned Lalladiere toward one of the chairs and nodded to Victor, who also sat down.

"Lalladiere, this is a visit. This lady, the daughter of a deputy, has come to see you," Marigaux said. "She says she knows you well and is concerned about your welfare."

Lalladiere, face expressionless, stared at Genevieve in silence. The blasting noise had suddenly stopped. After a long pause during which Genevieve leaned forward and Marigaux shifted uncomfortably, Lalladiere said:

"He is the most unconfared person in the world."

"Guillaume," Genevieve said. "I have thought and thought about you since... since... all of it happened. That I have not come to see you before does not mean I have not worried constantly, thought of you, and –" Seeing him move his head backward, she paused, then added, "cared".

"Cared may be peared, salted, and scared," Lalladiere said.

Genevieve looked at Marigaux. "What is he saying?" she asked.

"He is a lunatic. It is wild garbage." Marigaux answered sharply.

"What do you say, Guillaume?" Genevieve persisted. "I cannot understand what has happened to you. So strong, so idealistic. Now this. How did you come to this?"

"Come to this. He cannot piss. The twisting man always prevents it. Out of the joint, time is out of the joint. Out of joy."

"Stop that. You must not use such words in the woman's presence," Marigaux said harshly.

Genevieve was silent. From the first, she kept her eyes on Guillaume's face watching his reactions to her or Marigaux. He was flatly without expression even when he spoke.

"Guillaume," she started again. "I cannot stand this. Tell me something, I must know. I must know how you are. I'm so sorry."

"Dossierlated, desolated. He was really desolated. Hid in the slot, the little one. And the bittle boy came later. But he really was alone. It was the conspirafactory. Lost his necker but he was there."

"Who was there, Guillaume?" Genevieve asked. There was desperation in her voice.

"Salt tax, the taile - yen. He knew him. The other was the bar - ber, barrabas."

Marigaux, very angry, broke in. "No more of this. What are you saying? You must go back to your cell." He looked at Victor, who stood up.

"No, please, let him go on. He at least is talking," Genevieve said sadly.

"No, no, no. In the slot, stalking," Lalladiere continued. "The barber was talking, but the tail did all the devisering. In his golden robes the king. They will do it, they will kill him."

Marigaux, whose concern to stay on the good side of Camille Raston's daughter had dissolved into rage, no longer could contain himself. "What is this? Who will be killed? You must stop this lunatic nonsense." He looked at Victor, "Take him back. Now."

As the attendant grabbed his shoulder, Lalladiere, charged with resolve again, leaned forward toward Genevieve.

"Support and elevate Robespierre. Danton next is destroyed," he said, clearly and resolutely. "The man undoes himself, or else –"

"What?" Genevieve asked.

"Or else – what else? – they will find a way to bring Robespierre down."

"What is this, Guillaume? What are saying?" Genevieve said, amazed and disturbed.

"Lunatic. Madman," Marigaux shouted at Lalladiere. "How dare you talk of the downfall of our leaders? If I report you, that insane head of yours will be sliced from your shoulders." He turned to Genevieve, addressing her firmly with as much modulation of tone as he could muster.

"Do not be disturbed, citizeness, I have heard that he has said wild, dangerous things before, went raving right up to citizen Robespierre's lodgings. That's when they brought him back here." To Victor, who had not moved, he said sternly, "Didn't I say to take him back?"

Victor, close to risking insubordination, had paused for some time because of his surprise at the insane man's suddenly politically charged references. He grabbed Lalladiere under his shoulders and pushed him toward the door. Stumbling side to side over the leg chains, Lalladiere turned his head toward Genevieve as he reached the opening, and with a wailing sound, said:

"They must be saved. Save them. The fate of the Revolution. Remember what I say."

Genevieve stood up and started toward the door but Marigaux stopped her. Victor expertly shifted his grip to encircle both of Lalladiere's arms at the elbows, and moved him completely out of the room,

pushing him rapidly down the hallway.

“These are the ravings of a deranged maniac, citizenness,” Marigaux said more calmly. “Visits disturb them. We see it all the time. They rave, tell everyone they are great people. Like this one here, saving everything, saving the world.”

Genevieve, feeling upset and confused, left the asylum. For several days afterward, she tried to make sense of what happened, of Lalladiere’s terrible insanity, the things he said. To see him still so changed, wild and incoherent, tore at her mind. She had felt unnerved in the visiting room, her hands icy cold, her entire body at times quivering. Each time she thought about the visit, coldness and quivering returned. But what about his coherent words at the end, his declaration of something sounding like a plot to get Danton and Robespierre, undo the Revolution? Could such a thing be true? Was it something he knew, even possibly going back a very long time? Maybe, she thought, that was what drove him out of his mind. “No,” she said out loud, catching herself up, sadly. “Of course not. The terrible thing happened before the king was deposed, before Danton and the others became important.” What could she be thinking? She knew why he became insane.

Marigaux advised against it, but Genevieve decided to attempt regular visits to the asylum. Lalladiere was several times too weak from the bloodletting to come meet with her, at other times he was reported to be in a motionless shell. Twice Marigaux forbade the visits outright without giving a reason, but she nevertheless managed, in the ensuing months, to see him five or six times. The sessions were short, often similar to the first where she could understand little of what he said. Occasionally, he broke out with clear references to the plot, or aspects of it, but when she attempted to ask questions, Marigaux prohibited further discussion. He could not easily keep anyone, especially an important person, from visiting, but Marigaux pre-arranged with accompanying attendants to take Lalladiere, when starting such outbursts, immediately back to his cell.

She had loved him deeply once. Troublesome as the visits were, she felt she had to go. During the time there and after, memories always crowded in, even more detailed than before. She envisioned the two of them walking together near the Seine, speaking of their lives and dreams. He was so intensely grateful for having become the assistant to the exalted and beneficent finance consul to the King. He

spoke fervently, uplifted about his own hopes for France. Someday, he believed, all the poor of the country would be fed, privilege would be abolished, the nobles and the clergy no longer would have the right to avoid taxes, give orders, live off the sweat and pain of those considered beneath them. Persons of merit, not heritage alone, would run the government. He talked of a time when people wanted to treat each other with kindness, children growing up to follow whatever were their inclinations and skills without fear of exclusion by law or custom, and without fear of poverty. She asked, and he tried to tell her, where his ideas may have started from. He couldn't figure out very much about his background but he remembered and described to her vivid, detailed pictures of himself as a boy walking alone both day and night through streets and fields. He knew then he was searching for something, a person or persons, or possibly a thing. He could never tell what it was. Other times he stayed home, still lonely despite his mother's presence. He read voluminously, most of the books he found were about misers, misanthropes, and charlatans. The stories made him – no, she thought he said, helped him – vow to devote his life to helping others.

His mother was a disciplinarian, he told her as the setting sun highlighted facial lines of pain, some would say a martinet. Always he heard her dictate rectitude, especially about what she believed – absolutely knew, she said – he felt or thought. And he always tried to think what she said she wanted him to think, feel what she wanted him to feel. Throughout long days and sometimes long nights alone together, she spoke of evil: about household chores, his father, the neighbors, even the food and weather. He strove mightily to avoid the pitfalls she described, and be absolutely moral. But still she told him often he too was damned and evil, and he couldn't understand why.

He kept away from other children, especially the boys who teased and degraded him. When she asked him, at times when his memory seemed clearest, why that happened, he couldn't give her reasons, saying only there was something about him they hated. Maybe, he answered once, it was because he started out small and weak. He couldn't play rough games, lift loads, win fights. But, she remembered him saying, while pounding his fist against his hard thigh, that he changed all that as he grew up, built up his body as strong as it could be. Maybe also, he offered, they hated him because he often sat by dreaming.

She told him too about her younger days, especially her abiding love and devotion for her father. She thought about saying, one morning as the sun sprinkled light and shadow on the bridge-fringing

earthbank they sat on, how sad she felt when her father left each day for work. How, many times, when she heard sounds of his nightly return, she jumped up happily and clapped her hands. On memorable occasions when he took her to the Justice palace where he worked, it was very exciting in those days to see, before they were known to be repugnant, courtly men and elaborately dressed women go by. She dreamed of someday being in the government herself, or writing about it, making wise observations like her father. Once, seeing the king pass outside in his carriage, she said with a laugh, she envisioned being in his palace standing or sitting near him, hearing him address her appreciatively about something she had written. She told Guillaume some of her other secrets, too: that she used to make up love and adventure stories and tell them to her friends. And she wondered, when sometimes these same friends made fun of the stories, whether that was really because they thought she was too clever. She felt she couldn't at all tell the stories to boys, and was, anyway, mostly not very popular with them. She had always longed for a boy who could be her friend. Turning then to look at him as they walked, she remembered that he gazed thoughtfully into her eyes.

Continuing her visits to Hospice d'Humanité, she felt increasingly distressed. Lalladiere, when she was able to see him, was so deranged, his moments of lucidity, always focused on the supposed plot, were few and far between, and Marigaux was outrageously overbearing and vicious. She decided something had to be done. Her father, several months before, had interspersed within his usual dinner news commentaries a description of a doctor who was supporting a new kind of treatment of lunatics. She listened carefully because the doctor was at Bicêtre, Guillaume's previous asylum. Her father didn't at the time know the exact details of the treatment but said it had excited controversy, even serious opposition. Inmates were allowed to walk around without chains, and some were given work in paying jobs for the governor. He heard that the doctor, Philippe Pinel, met with and talked with the inmates, and called his approach 'moral treatment', a very appealing name.

Genevieve believed she had to grasp at straws. Seeing Guillaume close at hand, she could definitely tell he was not getting better, and seemed to be much worse. The chains he always had on were horrifying to look at and often she noticed bruises on exposed portions of his body. She knew little about insanity or any treatments, but how could chains and beatings help? In any event, whatever they were doing at Hospice d'Humanité was not beneficial. He had, of course, escaped twice from Bicêtre so it might be intolerable for him at that asylum as well. But, then, she never did visit him while he was there. Not

that visits from her would have stopped him from running away – she couldn't blame herself for that – but with another new start at Bicêtre, she would plan to go regularly and might be able to keep up with what went on. They said that the second time he escaped he was intending to go see a young boy. That didn't sound so bad, not so insane. She couldn't tell what Dr. Pinel's "moral treatment" her father spoke of might be, but Guillaume, who was, she knew, extremely moral, might after a time possibly find it helpful. In any case, there were no chains and her father thought there were no beatings there. She would ask him to intervene and arrange with the authorities to have Guillaume transferred back to Bicêtre.

Raston knew of Pinel's appearance before the Committee of Internal Affairs and was therefore very reluctant to accede to his daughter's request. He was intrigued by the Bicêtre treatment, deeply believed in liberty for everyone, and was not afraid of disapproval by Committee head Couthon, a man he considered to be a toady of anyone in power. But he was unsure of getting involved in medical controversies or presenting himself as knowledgeable about Lalladiere's insanity. His wife Veronique also was volubly and consistently opposed to Genevieve's involvement with the man. She disapproved of their daughter's visits to him at Hospice d'Humanité and, when hearing the request, she raved to her husband that the open, less restrictive Bicêtre would allow even greater opportunities for contact between them.

Genevieve persisted, describing to both parents Lalladiere's terrible deterioration at the Hospice d'Humanité. She proclaimed, despite her mother's disapproval, Lalladiere's worthiness and her hopes for his improvement. Over and over, she described superintendent-governor Marigaux's unfeeling behavior with her, his cruelty to Lalladiere, the evidence of frequent beatings. Felice Raston relented, but not before extracting a promise that Genevieve would agree, at least occasionally, to see other men. Camille Raston, remembering Lalladiere's former competence and aware of his daughter's unmitigated feelings of self-reproach about his illness, finally decided to use his influence to effect the transfer back to Bicêtre.

Chapter 26

Betrayer. Fiend. You destroyed him. Betrayer. Fiend. You crushed him. Brought him down.

In the midst of the screeching voices, Lalladiere remembered Necker's face, bloated with anger and despair. Words and images of past events and people came also but nothing was coherent, or in order, only fragments.

Aieey. Traitor. Aieey. Aieey.

He tossed from side to side on the mat in his cell, unable either to stop memories or still the penetrating sound. Feelings of immense power and destructiveness then filled his mind and passed like a shudder through his body. All portions of him were filled with enormous energy and, without willing it, thought and movement ended. He could not move the smallest part of him.

Memories that assailed him, those kept away now by his paralysis of body and mind, all came from his time as assistant to the minister, his most important opportunity and, as it turned out, the worst experience of his life.

He assumed the post six years before at the time of Necker's appointment, his second, as the chief member of the King's Council. During Lalladiere's school years, isolated from his peers, he worked incessantly on all subjects and showed outstanding ability in anything to do with counting, calculation, and figures. Because of this capacity, he managed on finishing school to procure an excellent position with an accounting firm despite an inauspicious family background. There, he rose quickly over several years, becoming one of a large pool of candidates for the assistantship position with Necker. Passing through evaluation sessions because of his outstanding recommendations and mathematical agility, Necker personally chose him because he perceived him to be extremely meticulous, tightly organized, and very conscientious.

From his beginning in the government position, Lalladiere fulfilled his promise, working tirelessly to provide detailed information on tax collection, farm production, business profits and losses, and

currency values. He helped make detailed contractual relations with banks and kept the minister informed about borrowing opportunities from a wide range of financial sources, both in France and other countries. He was especially mindful of Necker's interests in his native Switzerland, and spent so much time working on Swiss banking and financial contacts that sometimes those canny financiers consulted him ahead of the minister on trends and opportunities. As his reliability was proven and prowess flowered, Necker gave him increasing responsibility, including the making of detailed calculations and preparations for the very important national budget.

Necker was considered, by himself and often by a large majority of the country as well, to be very practical about financial affairs, wise with advice to the king, and straightforward in his dealings with the public. He advocated many concessions for power to the people because he thought them necessary for running the government and the country's financial solvency. Never did thoughts about revolution, overthrowing the government, or deposing the king, come into his mind. Lalladiere was more radical but he was devoted to this rock solid, pragmatic leader because his policies were bringing about important changes. Lalladiere cherished the signs of increased equality for working business classes, new freedoms for everyone, and improvement of conditions for the poor. He had always felt deep sympathy with the deprived and downtrodden, avidly read the freethinking authors of the Enlightenment, and his strong morality fueled wishes to rise up against mindless authority. Things, for Lalladiere, were at this point going well. Nothing to regret, dedication to his work and convictions.

From the time he met Genevieve on the banks of the Seine, a new kind of feeling began for him. Warmth toward another person, friendliness – it was strange and frightening. Seldom before had he allowed thoughts of “That's good of her to say,” or “I'm glad of that,” or even “She seems really nice,” to touch his consciousness. He never could feel the comfort of trust in other human beings. Relying on someone, yearning for someone, seemed dangerous, both for him and the other person. Those kinds of feelings were very likely even worse – he had a dull sense of aching and terror – than hatred and jealousy that sometimes broke through for the boys, along with some girls, who had once excluded and tormented him.

But gradually, warm feelings for Genevieve came, stayed, and he was surprised to find, seemed to spread within him. He felt a flush sometimes at the edge of his face, a sensation of openness in his chest, a

surprising liveliness in his legs. As they talked together on their walks, he peeked sideways at her face, thought she looked pretty, and let pleasurable words come to his mind. Not love – he couldn't yet conceive of loving her. Or anyone. That might come, but later.

Months after, it did come, together with a rush of sexual desire. Genevieve was quite attractive, he had known that from the first. She had long, shapely legs, uplifted round breasts, and her curled hair fell loosely on her naturally red-cheeked face. She walked gracefully and her hands, as she talked, made playful gestures in the air when reflecting her frequent states of joy and pleasure. He enjoyed watching her regular capturing of a curl of her hair and twirling it when she was intensely involved in a conversation. About all subjects and events, she had her own opinions, and she expressed these in her smoothly timbred voice. She listened to him receptively, pondered both light and heavy matters, and was often optimistic in the face of difficulties and uncertainties. He often felt aroused in her presence, but never thought – actively prohibited any thoughts – of doing anything about such feelings. Then, as he believed he loved this woman, he allowed himself upsurging wishes for physical love. He was a man, he thought. It would be the first time, but he could surely bring that – something always dreamed of – about.

“I feel you, as you always are. Firm. Strong. I feel enclosed into you and encircled,” Genevieve said to him. They were in his small apartment, side by side in his bed.

“I dreamed it, being here with you. Your hair, being near your beautiful hair. Touching it, and at the same time, kissing you,” he said as he moved closer. He let his lips move lightly over hers; then, sensing the shape and softness of her mouth, he kept them quivering there. After a split second of joint excitement, he moved his mouth into warm and tighter contact.

Genevieve told him that she loved him and kissed him back. Unable to say more at that moment than “Yes,” he repeated the word several times. He kissed her, again sensitively, then more firmly.

Warmth, great warmth. Appreciation of her. So lovely, he thought, the silken ringlets of her hair lay loose by her face on the pillow. Her eyes, opening after the kiss, flicker and shine. How lustrously she smiles. Touching my chest, her breasts are soft and resilient. Stroke, caress each slowly, brushing nipples full with arousal. I think she is moist now, ready for me between her parted legs. Can I do it? The question is disturbing, push it away. Why do I have such thoughts? She is so beautiful, I admire her so. I must do it.

Must.

He started, but instead of firmness and penetration, he suddenly found himself rubbing without sensation against her. He felt tense and distracted. She laid still, eyes closed, and he tried again. Just rubbing. He summoned up a feeling of determination and force. No change. He was sweating front and back, and her face had become pale. He pushed himself against her. She began to tremble, opened her eyes, and looked at him with anguish. He stopped, jerked himself sideways, and fell back heavily on the bed beside her.

She burst into tears, lying motionless with her legs still parted. Then, she began to moan and her sobs grew loud, accompanied by deep breathing. In a pained, desperate sounding voice, she said between the sobbing, "Oh, Guillaume. Oh no, Guillaume."

Lying with his back turned toward her, body pushed stiffly into the surface of the bed, he said nothing. His chest was dripping with cold sweat and his face felt drained of blood. He was lost, helpless. Nothing he could do any more to change what happened. If, as he wished and imagined, he was outside his body, somehow able to manage his motionless hulk from without, he still would not be able to overcome the cramping shriveled feeling and the blocking. Pain radiated from his groin and he was rigid with tension. He tried to will himself to function. No response. He pulled his legs up and hunched his shoulders tightly inward and lay listening in despair to the staccato sounds of Genevieve's sobbing.

The next day, they tried again and it was much the same, except that Genevieve stifled her sobs and her entire body shook. One more try, another day. A start, a feeling of hope, recoil, shaking. After that, he became constantly distracted, his mind dimmed over with a cloud. At work, he could not concentrate on calculations, mixed up details of schedules he was arranging, and his voice trailed off often into a distant mumble in conversations with other assistants, sometimes with ministers and financiers as well. He began having difficulty waking up in the morning as well as falling asleep at night. A week later, Genevieve indicated she was willing and they tried. The same as before.

Following that, after an unblemished record of absolute punctuality from the time he started as assistant, he began arriving late to work. As time went on, he sometimes completely missed appointments. He and she met, as often as previously, but there was strain between them. They resumed their usual

conversations about their day's activities, began vigorous discussions about events in Paris and the rest of the country, laughed tentatively together about the doings of mutual friends, even touched on each other's past experiences and hopes for the future. Fluctuating throughout were unspoken feelings of irritation and sometimes overt misunderstanding. Genevieve picked up on any indecision on his part, either in action or in words, and urged him to be more forthright, make up his mind. She seemed also to expect, unaccountably either to him or herself, that he always take initiative in arranging times for them to meet, restaurants to bring them food, hailing a hack if they needed one, and even helping her over curbstones, matters that never concerned her before.

He was convinced he saw in her a previously unnoticed emotionality, a tendency to overact to trivial matters. Unlike before, she seemed often to be less clear about her own opinions – words coming out, he thought, in a jumbled way. Continually, aching, he worried about what might be happening to her. Unaccountably, the thought came that she might be going crazy. He began also to take note, through an increasingly consistent clouding sensation in his mind, of any references she made to other men. Regardless of how neutral or matter-of-fact they were, he became pre-occupied about each man, wondered how and when she knew him, whether there had been meetings, few or several, with him. Perhaps, he thought with anguish, she liked, even preferred, these other men. Jealous ideas spun round and round within him, occupying him when he was together with her and even more when he was alone. Sometimes, in an uncharacteristic agitated tone, he openly demanded detailed information about each man.

They went to his apartment a few times, trying still to express sexual love. Always, it turned out as in the beginning, he ending up with his back to her, rigidly arched, and she lying flat, face upward, racked with agonizing crying. Sometimes, with uncharacteristic anger, she interrupted her sobs. "What is wrong?" she demanded. "Why do you despise me so much?" Or else, "Why do you stir me up this way? Why torture me?" He never answered, lay quiet, dimly feeling he had experienced it all at some time before.

One day, feeling as though he were suffocating with desperation, he went to the Palais Royale district with the intention of finding relief, or reassurance, from a prostitute. He entered the hallway of a brothel there and stopped, unable to mount the stairs. He thought of holding his body against a woman

upstairs he didn't care about or know. In disgust and fear, he turned around and left.

He and Genevieve went to his apartment once more. It could not have been worse, the cycle of arousal, pushing, disappointment, cold sweating, crying, and unintentionally bitter reproaches. They stopped trying.

Chapter 27

In time, the springiness left his legs and he went ploddingly slow. The cloud within his mind persisted. But the minister – even though Lalladiere’s performance at work was deteriorating with his late arrivals, lack of attention, and even outright mistakes – hardly took notice. Given his extremely high level of competence, the changes had only minimal effects. He still managed, despite his inner turmoil, to produce financial reports, anticipate Necker’s special needs for meetings with members of the Finance Committee, the Assembly and the King, provide background information for myriad consultations and other duties. But he continued to slip, and could do little about it. He started to neglect the more complicated accounting not requiring immediate completion or presentation. Gradually, he postponed any long term planning, and for extended periods stared obliviously out of the little window in the finance office room.

It was the end of winter in the year 1790, a report on the deficit was due in the Assembly in March. Over several weeks, he slowly managed to bring together previously completed work having enough accuracy so that Necker could meet the deadline and provide an estimate for the following six months. In his sparse and irregular meetings with Genevieve, he found her increasingly irritable and distant. He worried constantly that she was very high strung and had the persistent thought, one he could not at all shake, that she was going insane. He felt sure she was seeing other men, and the dimness in his mind was pierced with the clear idea, repeated over and over, that he needed to do it, make it all right, in order to save and keep her. She was always oversensitive when they were together, took easy offense at things he said, eyes tearing or voice sounding shrill, then was quiet unless he spoke. He must succeed to save her from breakdown and disaster. To save himself.

Necker ordered a full and complete budget account to be prepared by the end of May. For chief assistant Lalladiere, this was his most important assignment. Necker’s reputation and popularity arose early from his management of the budget. He gained widespread national allegiance by his unprecedented step of making publicly available the official government budget, the *Compte Rendu* of 1781. Later, he elevated himself further in the popular esteem by recommending the re-assemblage of

the country's most broadly representative body, the Estates General, and then arranging doubling of the non-aristocratic, non-clerical representatives, the Third Estate. This made their numbers equal to the other two Estates, the clergy and the aristocracy, combined. Despite subsequent apparent failures of that early budget, he remained a hero and the revolutionary body of that period, the Assembly, was expecting him to save the country from deteriorating financial affairs. Lalladiere's meticulous accounting had long been invaluable to Necker, and busy with daily pressures from the Assembly and the king, Necker relied on him fully.

Lalladiere, summoning up a reserve of energy, tried to apply himself to the gathering of accurate reports of collections and expenditures. But soon his preoccupations overwhelmed him and it was excessively difficult to concentrate. He assembled tallies and documents brought to him by other assistants, piled them on his desk, then spent hours alternately staring at the pile or at the sky outside the window. He went out frequently, on the pretext that he was consulting with financial institutions throughout the city, but then walked aimlessly through the streets or along the Seine. Giddyheaded, he sometimes tried to look for Genevieve, whom he met with rarely during that time, in the places where they had spent time together near the river or in cafés. He saw the minister one time walking there with someone. He watched from a distance and was startled to see who it was. Feeling devastated and lost, he walked away and avoided them.

Weeks passed. He counted each day, aware of the approaching deadline, but felt he could do nothing. Managing to carry out small or routine daily activities and assignments, he glossed over details when asked, and assured the minister he was making progress. His appearance, previously impeccable, wretchedly declined. His face was poorly shaved, coat frequently unbuttoned, cravat ruffled, shoes dank and dulled. The other assistants and the minister, noticing the marked change, attributed it to his fervency on the task, a manifestation of his characteristic all-out focus on a crucial job. Often, he stayed all night in the offices, not knowing what else to do, and they believed he was working to get the estimate completed.

The end of May. The full accounting for the minister's estimate, due now the next day, had only the smatterings of receipts and expenditures completed. Lalladiere came to the office overwhelmed with dread. His arms and legs trembled, his chest was constricted, and it was extraordinarily hard for him to

breathe. So rapidly and loudly did his heart pound in his head, he thought others heard it, and he looked around anxiously. He was lost, surely about to burst apart, die – nothing he could do.

He stared at the undocumented tallies on his desk, at the partially filled columns in his ledger book. After what seemed a very long time, but was only minutes passing, he mechanically lifted his pen and, heart still pounding and head feeling caught in a viselike grip, started writing in figures for gross receipts. At the top of the page, under the section for farm taxes, on the line for tobacco taxes, he slowly penned out the figure 53. He waited a moment, looked around the room, then continued the entry with an additional 860,000 for a total amount of 53,860,000 *livres* (British pound equivalent). This was approximately twice the amount of the previous budget. Next, with vision slightly blurred, he painstakingly wrote large numbers for the tolls for entry into Paris, document taxes, and then sundries. Again, he hesitated. No one, he saw, was watching him, and with a shaking hand, he added the entire farm total up for the enormous sum of 195,162,930. Suddenly, he was panicked because he had, he thought, neglected to put in the controversial revenues from the salt tax (the *gabelle*), then with a sigh he remembered it had been abolished earlier in the year. When he came to the section on direct tax receipts, he began to feel slightly more composed. He pulled from his cramped memory some earlier estimates of taxes on wealth and property (*taille, vingtièmes*) and head of household (*capitation*), and the invention of a feasible total of 220,452,392 came to him more quickly. As he proceeded with each of the remaining categories his head became progressively clearer, and just as though he were adding actual sums from the neglected piles before him, he constructed amounts for post office services, road tolls, gunpowder, tithes on government salaries and pensions, casual revenue, general receipts from each of the provinces, and amounts due on loans to the United States of America. He no longer looked up to check for watchers, nor did he need to do so. Those nearby who noticed his constant activity grinned at the show of his usual diligence in the face of a deadline.

He finished, producing a figure which, if real, would attest to the glory of the revenue collecting of the government – a never previously equaled gross amount of 681,625,000 *livres*. Then, with a burst of energy and detailed attention to each and every category of expenses despite periodic return of blurred eyesight and squeezing constriction in his head, he calculated a total expenditure of 645,210,000. The budgetary surplus, according to these accountings, then came to 36,415,000. The amount was high with numbers that had no meaning or portent in themselves but, for Lalladiere, these numbers and types of

revenue would soon come to be imbued with stubborn eerie significance.

Necker went carefully over the budget the next morning. The estimate of receipts were a good deal higher than he expected but were in the same proportions as in previous accounts. He was troubled that the receipt total included payments of a large amount of what he considered to be unreliable revolutionary paper money. He spent time assessing the necessity of including such money and, while Lalladiere shook with anxiety, obtained a brief postponement of the deadline. Necker did not, at that point, question the receipt figure Lalladiere concocted because he relied fully on his proven chief assistant. He was sure of Lalladiere's exacting diligence in reporting and accounting, his previously successful calculation of projections. And so, after short consultation and assessment, he decided there was no way around the bothersome collection of paper money. He took the apparently expertly constructed budgetary estimate to the Assembly, where he was pleased to report the projection of a considerable surplus for the last eight months of 1790.

Lalladiere was completely dismayed. In the succeeding days, he found it impossible to sleep, tormented constantly by fears of being exposed. His mind, preoccupied with his misdeed and no longer Genevieve, shifted from taut cloudiness to an uncommon sharpness and hyperirritability. Ordinary sensations bothered him, the pressure of the bedclothes against uncovered portions of his body at night, his shirt's graze on his chest when dressing in the morning, sounds of people in the street outside his window throughout the day, and at meals the tastes of foods he had previously eaten with gusto and enjoyment. He thought of his falsifications over and over, sure they would be discovered. Frequently, he missed meals completely, tossed without finding a comfortable position in his bed at night, and took to loosening his regular clothing to the point of appearing slovenly. He was haggard and pale, and spoke very little to those he had contacts with.

Patrons at work, and the other assistants, noted these more marked changes, and they asked concerned questions. He thought them overly suspicious, enhancing his fears of imminent discovery. The minister, too, asked whether he was working too hard, was getting sick and needed rest. This solicitation pierced Lalladiere like a knife – it meant, he felt sure, that Necker guessed what he did and was preparing to send him away, so all in the ministry could without interference go over the budget calculations.

The financial reports of succeeding weeks did not immediately reveal marked discrepancies from Lalladiere's inventions. Collecting such information was arduous and complicated, depending on compilation of receipts from all the provinces, local and central recording of both indirect and direct taxes, co-operation of too-often lax or rebellious officials, as well as financial stability of the notably unstable paper money. Lalladiere, now hyperreactive and infused with energy, went over each credit and debit, collected organized and disorganized bits of information from government and private financiers, and was able to see all the signs – which he revealed to no one – of the building up of an enormous deficit. Together with his fear of discovery, still biting intense, he was aware of his responsibility and felt hateful with remorse. How could he possibly have done such a thing? It was totally the opposite of every precept and scruple he had held all his life. He was racked also with thoughts about the injury he inflicted on his idol Necker, the undermining of the government economy, and the shattering blow to the Revolution. He sat night after night at his desk, alone and filled with the energy of desperation, going over calculations again and again to see if he could find a way to make the finances come out right, dreading the quarterly accounting to come. Lower tobacco, take out the tolls, cut down property taxes. Put it back. Put it back. Put it back. He avoided people outside the government offices, made no attempt at all to contact or see Genevieve, ate sporadically, and went whole nights without sleeping. When sleep sometimes overcame him, he was routinely awakened by dreams of physical torment.

Then, in September, an account on the fate of the budget was compiled by the Assembly's Finance Committee. Rather than any surplus, the shortfall was calculated to be almost two billion *livres*, a massive amount. Necker was mocked and vilified. Members of the Assembly declared he was incompetent, angrily raking up charges that even his famous *Compte Rendu*, the publicly distributed budget in a blue binding, was wrong in many ways. In the sessions, these members revived an old shout of Necker's enemies: *Conte bleu, Conte bleu* (blue fairy book). Disgraced and thwarted because he was unwilling to resort to the only possible alternative, the printing of paper money to defray the excess expenditure, Necker resigned. It was the third time he had left office, but this time he would never return.

Lalladiere retreated, staying completely away from work and the government offices. He lay, hour after hour, staring at a wooden beam in the ceiling of his bedroom, absent, unguided eyes following the splinters and cracks along its length. When, at times, he became inadvertently aware of what he looked

at, only noticing damages and defects, he shuddered. He felt an immense load pressing down on his chest. The figures he had created danced in an imaginary sequence. He moaned as each full number passed. False. Fraudulent. Out of control.

A tumble of images passed before his shut eyes. Genevieve was lying naked in bed. Then she rose up and stared at him, looking insane. Her face was red and bloated, uncurled hair spiky and wild, saliva at the corner of her lips. He thought if he made believe that instead of her he was insane, that could satisfy them all. Did he, at the last minute put in a salt tax? He couldn't remember, but if he did they would think he had fallen apart and was crazy. There was, everyone knew, no salt tax any longer.

In the end, he knew he was weak and deceitful. He altered facts and figures, accounts he previously worked over and over to calculate properly until the pens wore out or broke in his hand. It was really Necker's fault, he paid no attention to what was going on, allowed him to falsify all. No, it was the fault of some perverted person. There was semen on one of the documents on his desk. Dark, dried semen. Whose?

No way out – it was he who destroyed Necker, the wisest and most stable man he ever knew. The government would be destroyed, too. He must go back and make believe he was a lunatic, put the salt tax into the budget. Put the budget into salt.

He pushed himself against the mattress, no cover or pillow. No sleep came.

A day passed, and then two more. No one attempted to contact him. No more chance for make believe, the choice of faking insanity was turning into actuality. He did not rise for bodily care, either elimination or eating. Finally, after several more days, weak from lack of sleep and nutriment, he shifted away from his soiling, pushed himself off the bed and onto the floor. He laid there for an hour, rose, and used the chamber pot. Then he sat at his small table and chewed on a crust of bread. His head felt tight and heavy, the earlier load on his chest had shifted there and excruciating pain radiated from front to back. He paced back and forth, shaking his head, trying to reduce the weight and agony. The room felt hot and close. It was difficult to breathe. Not stopping to put on a coat, he bolted outside.

The low September sun burst into his eyes. The rays, though cooler than in summer, were

extraordinarily bright. All around him he saw sparkling, bright light, and felt cold rather than warm. He walked quickly through the streets toward the river. People passing him in both directions wore clothing whose colors stood out, sharp and radiant. A stocking cap on the head of a old man lumbering along shone with an exquisite red. Fall flowers in the pots of window ledges he passed also displayed intense yellows, lustrous oranges, and vivid lavenders. They infused his nostrils with fragrances that became more pungent with every inhalation of breath. He hurried on.

The edges of houses were sharply angled. On their gray surfaces, oddly raised and distinctly outlined corrugations reflected flashing tints of blue and white. He reached the banks of the river and there he could see the outline of every individual blade of grass and foliage leaf. They shone with iridescent green. The water moved swiftly, glimmering gray ripples in exact arcs swirled across the dark black surface. He felt amazed, transported by his surroundings, and began to run toward the Tuilleries gardens. He came onto a dazzling spectrum of enhanced colors from the many flowers still in bloom. As he looked at each plant, he saw thin lines of shining green veins of the leaves, protruding yellow stamens inside the flowers. Breathing deeply with his running, pulsating intense aromas everywhere pervaded him. His head swam, feeling alternately light and heavy. In the trees and sky, he heard clear, shrill chirps and resonant trilling calls of birds.

He ran faster through the garden, wildly trying to take in all sights, sounds, and odors at once. The contours of each pebble, the dips and elevations in the surface of the path, were defined through the soles of his shoes. Noticing his excited movements, garden strollers in front of him moved aside to give him room. Behind them, a small child had separated a short way from his mother and was toddling forward. Lalladiere did not at first see him, and caught in the momentum of his run, he was heading toward trampling the little boy. Then, almost upon him, the small curious face turned upward, Lalladiere managed to wrench his body sideways and while continuing to hurtle forward made a circle around the child. He brushed lightly against the mother walking nearby and glancing at her saw a look both of hatred and anxiety.

He went onward, shaking both from the close encounter and all his augmented sensations. He wondered whether the boy had been put in front of him intentionally. Was this a test to expose him to humiliation for what he had done? Had he been found out? Was he insane, and being tested to confirm

that? In the midst of these frenzied questions, and the magnificently orchestrated performance of sights, sounds, and smells around him, he for the first time heard:

This is just the beginning, worm, betrayer. This world is not for you. You are the dirt, slime, scum of the universe.

He shuddered violently with terror as he ran.

Chapter 28

“The Danton matter is finally ended,” Barras said, “but now Robespierre has become stronger than we thought.” In the salon of Rose-Josephine Beauharnais, Barras’s current mistress, he and Tallien spoke of their accomplishments and plans. They used this meeting place frequently in recent months. The large salon chamber was elegantly furnished, high decorated ceiling, with paintings of historic French statesmen and military heroes on the upper portions of all the walls.

“Yes, Robespierre could become a threat to us,” replied Tallien, uptoning, as usual, at the sentence ending. “Or even actually finish us, before we bring him down.”

Both men were now at a peak of influence. Barras, having put down a royalist insurrection in Toulon, had become a great favorite with the powerful Jacobins. Tallien had triumphantly eliminated thousands of enemies of the republic (together with numerous innocents) in Bordeaux through systematic guillotining, and was now president of the influential Paris Commune. From the time of that first meeting near Bicêtre, they had continually conspired and worked together to build support for Robespierre over Danton. Tallien spoke and acted forcefully to further Robespierre’s purging of the clergy, Barras campaigned among his military colleagues, gaining strong sanction for Robespierre’s criticisms of the moderate Girondin faction’s conduct of foreign wars. Both lauded Robespierre’s virtues to the Jacobins and the radical Mountain faction as an incontestably incorruptible leader. And they provided Robespierre himself with information – both false and true – about irresolute and defectors for use in power-enhancing speeches and acts of condemnation. Tallien, in conjunction with the later enlisted conspirator, Joseph Fouché, was effective in keeping Robespierre in good odor with the leaders of the Paris Sections, those whose force and sentiments were crucial for most actions of members of the Convention. Strongly persuasive were the former priest Fouché’s paradoxical but knowledgeable and popular policies of de-christianization, his participation in putting down the counter-revolution in Lyons, and lawyer Tallien’s rough but authoritative legal and economic proclamations, his reputedly fervent revolutionary loyalty and leadership.

A delectable success for the conspirators, consistent with their goals, occurred when Robespierre

became the leading figure in the powerful government Committee of Public Safety, the position that had been vacated earlier by the original founder Danton. After that, through bribery, the construction of false documents, and the elaborate planting of doctored evidence, they set about convincing Robespierre, Saint-Just, and other leaders, that Danton had been engaged in a plethora of illegal and traitorous dealings. Through their efforts, he was accused of helping bring about the defection of a revolutionary general, consorting with royalists and wealthy friends in England, having sympathy for the former queen, embezzling the East India company and especially, carrying out underhanded financial dealings in Belgium. Tallien manufactured papers from Belgian banks showing Danton had fleeced the Belgian people. Robespierre was shocked and dismayed. In a masterpiece of deception, Tallien himself arranged for the two men to meet together, supposedly to bring about reconciliation. But, as Tallien well knew, the die was cast. After confronting Danton with the charges against him, then receiving the proud man's mocking dismissal, the outraged Robespierre stormed out of their meeting place. Barras also sewed up the artifice by sending his lieutenant Laignolot to Danton's apartment to carry out a purposely unsuccessful attempt at negotiation between the two leaders. Shortly afterward, Robespierre sorrowfully signed the order for Danton's arrest. His trial and death followed.

"Curious, is it not," Tallien said, glancing quickly around the heavily furnished Beauharnais salon to be certain they were alone, "that this Maximilien Robespierre, a man so very squeamish about blood and killings, is capable of condemning persons to death. But he does useful work for us, eh? Eliminates others beside Danton who could be dangerous."

"He has a sharp nose, I think," Barras offered, "for smelling out any with the aroma of large and possibly devious influence with the people. Like Hébert, who was able to mobilize hordes of *sans culottes*. And, of course, together with the stench of our evidence, Danton was first and foremost a great orator and influencer of mobs."

"We," Tallien said with emphasis, "have done quite well with our operations. Doing our work in the provinces, then back here looking always devoted and clean. And Fouché, too. He hates Robespierre, the man interferes with his very shrewd financial deals. He, my dear Barras, is able to maneuver even more swiftly and effectively than we."

“What do we do now? Press forward, of course. But it becomes more dangerous with this very strong Robespierre and the cunning Saint-Just. We need to protect ourselves.”

“We can never, of course, accuse Robespierre of any kind of corruption. So good and sanitized. We will capitalize on the fear he must produce.” Tallien’s uptoned last word made the ominous pronouncement sound, as usual, like a question.

“We have gone over many ways to do that. I think the best still is to work slowly on the Jacobins and the rest in the Mountain. Hint, insinuate, to one and another, that Robespierre did not like something they said or did. Then, later, a few weeks or so, bring direct reports of comments about them made by Robespierre at a meeting of the Committee of Public Safety.”

“Good. Fine. To some we also say that Saint-Just spoke, in Robespierre’s presence, of some questionable incident about them. Make it up, let it sound like something misconstrued. And we offer commiserations. Or, better still, base it on a true criticism or slightly disloyal comment. We are sure to find some. That would be delicious.” Tallien smilingly ran his tongue over his lips.

“Hair of the dog! We work persistently on the strong but susceptible ones such as Fréron, and Dumont. Make them fear they surely will be next in line for the guillotine. It is a good strategy. Fill them with gunpowder, they explode and retaliate.”

“Panis also, and weak Cambon, the crafty Billaud. And, of course, Vadier. He, too, hates Robespierre now. Step by step, one after the other.” With his hand, Tallien slowly sliced a stairway in the air.

“Then, when all are at the height of fear, ready to ditch Robespierre, ready to use a weapon, he is put under the same blade they believe he is preparing for them –”

“We move.” Tallien chopped the side of his hand into his other palm. “The entire Convention will get squarely behind us.”

Barras, whose dark good looks were always enhanced by smiling, now smiled broadly. But a thought intruded, and the smile turned to a frown.

"I wonder, Tallien. You have worked for a long time to get the solid support of the leaders of the Paris Sections. That will help a good deal, especially to mobilize strongly egalitarian deputies. But what about the rest, I mean, the people themselves? Robespierre is very powerful now, very likely we will need the people to be with us, along with the national guard, to bring him down even when the Convention turns against him."

"Yes, we will need all, as you say. What to do? It means you and I must work to gain the hearts of the *sans culottes*, even if it makes Robespierre wary or worse – threatening – toward us. In the end, they will serve to elevate us to power."

"But how? How may this be done?"

"I am sure we can find ways to bring them to us. For one thing, show them we can feed their insatiable desire for blood and retribution. Cry out 'aristocrat,' 'royalist,' 'traitor'. The words make them boil. Find people who fill the bill, or create them, then condemn these openly in the streets."

"Indeed, yes. We say also the food shortage is due to hoarding, Robespierre and the price maximum are to blame. And at the same time, we provide food, curb scarcities, give some of the street revolutionaries participation and power." Barras pounded his hand with his fist.

"Good, very go-od," Tallien rejoined. "We must carefully think out—"

He was stopped in mid-sentence by the entry into the room of Rose-Josephine together with his mistress and now soon-to-be-wife, Thérèse Cabarrus de Fontenay.

"How you two go on," said Rose-Josephine. "Sitting there together like sugar planters selling and buying land from each other."

"But of course, my dear Rose, we do our deals, but these concern matters far more important than such things as Caribbean sugar plantations," Tallien replied, referring teasingly to his hostess's Martiniquean background.

"I hope you do deals against that villain Robespierre," Thérèse said as, with a slight rotation of her

hips, she settled on a straight chair near Tallien. “The despicable man had me put in jail here in Paris. For what cause? Merely because I had been married to a nobleman, a man who left me.”

“Also, unfortunately because he learned that your eminent father was a banker who dealt with Spain,” Tallien put in.

“Yes, yes, a terrible thing,” said Rose-Josephine, sliding elegantly without excess movement into a nearby settee. “And your rescuer was –” with a flourished gesture, she made a mocking trumpet sound, “-ta-daaa, ta-daa, our great friend here, Jean-Lambert.”

“That is not broadly known,” Barras said seriously, discomfited by her levity. “But when the Incorruptible finds it out, he will surely again get after Thérèse. And possibly after Jean-Lambert as well.”

For the moment ignoring that disturbing idea, and resisting further seriousness or talk of politics, the four men and women sat amicably together drinking their mocha coffee. They gossiped, talked about the theatre, and laughingly brought up pleasant events on shared excursions. Gradually, other members of the Convention and several military officers, both with and without spouses or mistresses, entered the room for their regularly scheduled visit. At that point, the focus of discussion for all turned to the usual at this salon, the war and actions of the revolutionary government. Moving among the small developing groupings, Thérèse, characteristically alluring in a thin smoke-grey gown and wine-red tinted shoulder scarf, participated actively in conversation regarding recent actions of the Public Safety Committee. Rose-Josephine, equally attractive in white-trimmed pink satin, remained seated comfortably speaking with Tallien and Barras. When a young officer joined them, they began a lively discussion of troop movements and the war. Few persons who attended the salon that evening heard or overheard anything critical of members of the government. Tallien and Barras, particularly, were frequently laudatory, and each spoke in glowing terms about Robespierre’s accomplishments.

At the somber gray-walled Asylum de Bicêtre, Dr. Pinel, meeting again with Lalladiere, was wondering about a dangerous conspiracy, this man’s account of overhearing a secret plot against two very important government leaders. After seeing his friend Condorcet’s downfall and predicament, desperately needing refuge, Pinel was acutely aware of the government’s extreme reversals regarding former leaders and patriots. He knew, from his experience with insanity, that there could well be

elements – or even more – of truth in such a disturbed man’s story. But, beyond that, this insane man had touched a loved place in his own mind, a place partly scientific and partly artistic. Observing Lalladiere’s behavior as he spoke, listening to his exact words and thoughts, gave clues that his lunacy had a specific cause. Knowing such a cause, the root of this man’s lunacy, would provide rational understanding, possibly explain lunacy in anyone. Also, it would satisfy his sense of things fitting into place, filling distorted empty spaces with interlocking ideas and meanings. Like other patients he had been seeing in this setting, Lalladiere appeared to him to be caught up in some type of extreme passions. Whatever they were, they were passions of a human, not an inferior, being. When treated with humanity and understanding, the patients acted human in return. When freed, they were far from mollycoddled, but instead had to take on potentially limitless burdens of being independent.

“You seemed very upset about something that happened when you were assisting Minister Necker,” Pinel said, unaffectedly. “Perhaps you can tell me more about it.”

“It turned out to be a gable, a gambol, salt in hell. You cannot be sure where you will walk because you will stumble over it.” Lalladiere said, his previous lucidity faded.

“I do not understand you. You can say more when you are ready,” Pinel said, accepting but not retreating. He shifted: “What, then, about the conspiracy? Can you tell me more about that?”

Lalladiere said nothing but his eyes looked toward Denis seated beside him.

Pinel, more attuned than before to observing Lalladiere’s smallest reactions, noticed the direction of the gaze, and now guessed at a reason for the inhibition: “I understand you are reluctant to speak with two of us here, you are outnumbered.”

“He’s chased me. Up there on the roofs.” He turned his head fully to look at Denis. The doctor’s understanding was enough, it was not necessary for the attendant to leave.

“You were afraid for your life,” Pinel, back to the conspiracy, offered.

“Yes,” Lalladiere said slowly, “and afraid for Danton. They were going to kill Danton, the man devoted to the needs of the people.” He paused, the reassurance from Pinel’s comments dispelled by an

anxious realization: "They killed Danton," he said, stopping completely and distractedly looking around.

Robespierre will die. Robespierre will die. You will die.

"You stopped speaking just now. Were you interrupted?" Pinel said. Then, deciding, as a help, to risk putting on pressure, he asked, "Are you hearing voices?"

Lalladiere looked upward but did not answer.

"What are they saying?" Pinel said softly.

"Robespierre will die."

"How could that happen?"

"Tallien, he is brilliant, writing pamphlets, keeping records, taking people in. I know Barras too. He is rich and totally unscrupulous."

"Is this the reason you ran away from here the second time? To inform Robespierre of the danger?"

"To see the boy. To find him. I thought he could help me. But he couldn't and I went to my mother."

"Did she, did your mother help you?"

Lalladiere stopped speaking completely. He was beginning to feel something, the tip of immense remorse, moistness, long unfamiliar, forming at the edge of his eye. No restricting voices came, no immobility, but he was unable to answer the question. He could not respond to this doctor, who seemed to be trying to aid him, understand him. He could not allow more feelings to arise.

Chapter 29

“We have come to see my son. His name is Guillaume Lalladiere,” Manon said to Governor Jean-Baptiste Pussin, who sat hesitating. “We walked through half of Paris to get here and won’t be turned away.”

“Yes, citizenness, but this is not our ordinary time for visiting, the inmates are exercising themselves in the yard.”

“Well, he’ll want to see his mother, that’s for certain. We have important business for him. Damn well have to see him right away.”

“Oh, important business? You are here, perhaps, to help him save the Revolution, is that it?” Pussin, although not often given to sarcasm, was bothered by this mother who, now pressing hard, had not once come to see her son before.

Her husband, Bertrand Roliot, intervened. “Is he still going on, then, about a plot? We know about that, don’t believe it for a minute. Do you? Is this a place where the keepers are lunatics like the ones in the cells?”

Pussin did not respond to Roliot’s rejoinder. He knew he brought the matter up, and reminded himself that they, like all visitors, were edgy to be there. He decided to reconsider their request. Lalladiere, he knew, had gone to see his mother when he escaped. Even though she had not come before, she might, as happens sometimes with parents, still do him some good. It was not a big exception to the rules, he would let them visit in the inmate’s cell.

Denis, who was usually assigned to Lalladiere’s building, was summoned by Pussin to bring them inside. He responded quickly. As a result of earlier contacts when tracking Lalladiere, the new experience of listening in on those disturbing as well as riveting discussion sessions with Dr. Pinel, he felt embroiled more than usual with this inmate. He was curious to see Lalladiere’s mother, who kept him at her house during the second escape. The visit might not be a routine bothersome chore.

Lalladiere was lying on his mat with his back to the door when Denis brought the two visitors in.

"You gave us one terrible kind of scare," Manon, contradicting her previous statement to Genevieve, said on entering, "when you just up and left." Before he turned around, she added: "Never said goodbye."

"What?" he said, reflexly responding to his mother's voice. He twisted around and blinked in the dim light to make her out.

"It's your Maman, Guillaume. Me and your father have come to see you."

Lalladiere said nothing.

Maman, maman, a great madam-a, how does her garden grow? The voice in his ear sounded like that of a young child. He began then to mumble the same words under his breath.

"What is that you're saying, Guillaume? I can't hear you. You are glad you can see me, aren't you?"

"Glad you can, caprice can, then we could piss," Lalladiere said louder, moving to a sitting position.

"The devil, this is going to be a terrible visit," she said, turning to Bertrand.

"Damn it, Manon," Bertrand said, "let's get down to business. The longer we wait, the worse it will be."

"Guillaume, the wretched man who was your father is a long time dead," she said, rapidly. "So, you must sign this paper now for your mother's sake. And for this good Bertrand here, who is your father now."

Lalladiere stared.

There is no father. Insane. The bane. She was becoming insane. The bane is insane. Insane.

"Did you hear me, Guillaume? Right now. You must sign the paper now," Manon said.

“Lunatic that you are, you can still do what your mother says. Sign the paper,” Bertrand said, grabbing Lalladiere’s arm and thrusting a pen into his hand.

“One moment, citizeness Lalladiere,” Denis, who had been standing at the door, walked over toward her. “What is this paper you have? He must sign a paper? The governor, I am sure, will have to approve.”

“My name is not Lalladiere, it is Roliot, like folio,” Manon said. “And this paper here is like that, from a folio. It’s a good thing, a friend. Gives me what’s coming to me, for all my suffering with him. And, if you really want to know, it might even help for this one to be cared for here. For a very long time. A good long time, right?”

Although Denis knew little of French law and legal papers, when his own father died, he and his brothers had inherited the small estate equally with their mother. “So that’s it,” he said, “he signs his whole inheritance over to you.”

“Sure, what about it? He’ll be his whole life blathering in an asylum. You know that. We need the money.”

“This isn’t any of your business,” Bertrand said menacingly to Denis. “Keep out of it.”

Lalladiere reached up and shook off Bertrand’s grip on his arm. Bertrand turned toward Manon and pushed her forcefully down toward the mat. “Put the damn paper in his hands,” he said, “we’ll make him sign.”

She lost her balance, her body tilting forward. Lalladiere jerked his hand to her arm to steady her, and then for a moment left it there, protectively.

She immediately recoiled, pushing his hand away. “Don’t think you can get around me because your father’s passed,” she said with an agitated sneer. “You have to sign the paper.”

Denis wondered what was wrong with this woman, the strange things she said. The man was pretty much a roughneck, but he better watch out who he orders around.

Manon stood near Lalladiere, glaring and at that moment completely silent. But, in his ears, Lalladiere heard her shouting at him, in a younger sounding voice:

Remember, Maman's always right. Always do what Maman says. Maman's right.

He reached to take the paper. As Manon thrust it toward him, Denis moved between them, pulling the paper out of her hand and addressing Lalladiere: "No, you do not sign this." Planting himself where he was, he took the time, while Manon and Bertrand watched, to fold the paper carefully. Then, he barked at them angrily, "I told you, this or any other paper must be seen by the governor. An insane man cannot sign papers on his own."

"All right, all right," Bertrand said, glaring viciously at Denis. "That's the way we'll do it. We'll have him declared an idiot, Manon. Incompetent, totally blasted, that's even better. The law will have to give every bit of the money to us."

"Insane? Idiot? No, none of that. I know what's wrong with him." She turned to look Denis fully in the face. "Before he came here, this place only for the men, he couldn't keep that little cock of his inside his pants. That's the way it was, right? Every girl he saw, he tried to jump on her, isn't that so? I know about it all. And the only reason you talk to him now like he's a person who thinks even, or listens, maybe, is because he's been kept here with all the men. Only men. That's the only way to keep him from being the savage that he is."

Denis, repelled, did not respond. He declared only that the visit was finished and he would carry the paper to the governor. Looking at Bertrand angrily, his strong frame tensed and poised for any action, there was little chance the man would challenge him. Neither he, nor Manon, did. As the three of them walked back down the corridors of the asylum, Denis sifted over in his mind what had just happened. Gazing searchingly at Manon and Bertrand beside him, he wondered whether both were simply vicious or maybe one or the other was insane. "These people are demons," he said to himself. The word, 'demons', stuck in his mind. The day before, he remembered, the doctor commented in the hallway that Lalladiere wouldn't talk at all after he was asked about his mother. "Is she the devil?" he wondered. "The possession? Could lunatics actually be possessed by people?"

Lalladiere, when he met with Dr. Pinel later that day in his office, would not respond to questions about the visit. Nor would he go back over any events they talked about previously. Pinel was patient, mostly quietly attending through the periods of silence. These were long because the voices, although less strong and persistent each time he was in the doctor's presence, still warned Lalladiere against trusting this supposedly caring man.

Sensing Lalladiere's fear, Pinel broke the silence from time to time to comment on what he guessed were Lalladiere's feelings, or passions as he called them:

"Remorse, you must feel great remorse, about that betrayal – whatever it happened to be – of Minister Necker."

A long pause.

"You spend many dreary days, and countless nights, reproaching yourself painfully."

Another long pause.

"Such ideas may have made you run away from the asylum, and the people who were helping you."

With each comment, Pinel observed carefully, paying close attention to Lalladiere's face. Whenever he saw a flicker of change or interest there, he elaborated details of the effects of each passion together with an admonition: Do not dwell on remorse, fear, or self-reproach, suppress these, push them away.

Toward the end of the session, Pinel decided to return to the overhearing of the plot. Lalladiere, he guessed, must feel very important because of possessing such a secret. He must think himself to be a special person ordained to save the life of the head of state and save the country. The conspiracy, if there was one, was a significant matter. If determined to be true, something had to be done. But Lalladiere should not blow himself up about his overhearing it. Pride must be curtailed.

Denis, again sitting by, smiled to himself. The doctor had not just taken on Lalladiere's story, he was giving the man moral guidance. There was no reason that he, or anyone else, had to report Dr. Pinel for

treason. He had told some of the other attendants about the discussions of a plot and they advised him to keep out of it. One of them, Ajacis, said he thought the doctor could be dangerous and that Lalladiere needed to be gagged. Denis hated being involved in such topsy-turvy stuff, but more than that, he found what the doctor had been doing with Lalladiere to be a pick up. No one he had seen, even the governor, had taken such sustained interest in the life or talk of a lunatic.

Pinel ended the session and, sitting alone, he turned to writing his weekly summary. No change, he noted, in Lalladiere's delusions of grandeur or persecution, hearing voices, propensity to incoherence with letter and word repetition. Lacking, for several weeks, were episodes of katatonus. The diagnosis he put down was still, according to his classification, mania with delirium. He stopped writing. Lalladiere, he mused, was obsessed with a fixed idea – a conspiracy that eliminated the revolutionary leader Georges-Jacques Danton, and after that, assisted by deception and defamation, got the idealistic, incorruptible Maximilien Robespierre to bring himself down. A clever, diabolical plot, but who could tell whether it was true or not? One of the alleged conspirators, Tallien, had supervised the massacres of priests, criminals, and the mentally disordered at the asylum. Both Tallien and the other person Lalladiere specified, Barras, had denounced his beloved colleague Condorcet – the ardent patriot, framer of the spirit and principles of the republic. Both, Pinel was told, had spoken for the condemnation of Danton. The Revolution, the establishment of democratic government, needed to proceed, but there currently was so much duplicity around.

And even if Lalladiere were reporting the truth, Pinel thought with a sigh, he would not be believed. Except possibly by someone, like himself, who knew there could be elements of truth in delusions, or that lunatics were often lucid and could distinguish truth from falsehood. His primary goal, in any case, for pursuing the details of Lalladiere's fixation was to trace the cause of the insanity.

Lalladiere spoke of a betrayal. What did that have to do with his illness? Was it possible that the misgivings of a terrible disloyalty, falseness, or even treachery, could tear apart the fabric of the mind, make smart men speak gibberish, repeat other people's words, or lapse into mute paralysis and negativism? Overly intense feeling, too much passion, undermines sensibility, that he felt sure of. Even if the betrayal were unintentional, overwhelming regret and self-reproach, coming out of a powerful, upright conscience, the aching pain of watching an idol fall because of your own actions might possibly

push the mind into an abyss.

Betrayal was all around these days. The Revolution, which started well with a vital and hallowed purpose, has become bogged down in extremes and distortion, one leader turning against another, calling each other traitors, the builders of the Revolution turned into hunted criminals. These betrayals seem to arise from secret jealousy and hatred. What if that were true in Lalladiere's case? Things for him started well and then there were repeated slights, ill treatment, inflicted mental pain. Built-up hatred, feelings of jealousy, dark wishes for vengeance could lead to betrayal. Hatred was a devastating passion, it could destroy rationality and reason.

Pinel put his hand to his head, rubbing it with anguished remembrance. My friend Gerard, perhaps he hated someone before he committed suicide. Perhaps it was another friend, perhaps a woman he knew. Pinel became anxious, his train of thought broken. Looking up at the bare ceiling, the thought came to him: perhaps he secretly hated me.

Eyes still on the ceiling, Pinel began to wonder about himself. Why, he thought, was he so sure about what he was doing? Was it really right to remove the chains, spend time talking with the inmates? Why was he searching after their little secrets? What would he find, and if he did find something, what would he do? He thought of his conviction that insanity was not produced, as some believed, either by size, configuration, or deformation of the brain. Well, didn't his own intensive studies of the insane, together with the work of those in other countries, dispel the suppositions? He felt suddenly unsure. He sat, dejected, staring out his window he conjured up an image of the disturbed, wild face of his friend Gerard.

He once again reviewed the events of Gerard's deterioration. The young man was of a gentle but driving character. He had many clients, won many cases, and wanted to become the lawyer for some kind of business conglomerate. When he unaccountably lost a trumped-up larceny case for one of his poor clients against the large Glovers Guild, he began acting strangely. He went into solitude and took to eating only yellow vegetables because he thought the red meat of a cow dulled the brain. Then he began speaking incoherently and thinking people were coming to his apartment to kill him. The Glovers Guild made him a big offer after the case, the poor client went to prison. Perhaps that was the cause for him—a

betrayal. Why, he asked himself, didn't I consider that before? Gerard may have hated me, but I must doubt it. He, as Lalladiere seemed to be, was very moral and conscientious. Betrayal of his client for the Glovers, his burden of remorse, more likely broke him. It was something unthinkable and he came to see himself as something less than human.

Pinel sighed. Many believe, like the mad themselves, that they are less than human. But it is true for none of them. Madness didn't mean that Gerard, Lalladiere, or any of them were something vile, unfeeling, or beastly. Nor was the lunatic a criminal, or an idiot, unless he broke laws or also was devoid of intellect. Insane persons live on bitter salt. Each starves inside, but may be a wandering and questing warrior of everyday life, fighting to make sense of oppression, love, and loyalty. I must join them.

Chapter 30

“Is Robespierre really planning a return to religion?” asked Antoinette Venables, wife of deputy Maurice Venables.

“No, not religion, actually,” answered Camille Raston, sitting at the head of the table. It was a common practice for the Rastons to have dinners for deputies, republicans, and their spouses.

“What then?” asked young deputy Fourier, sitting nearby.

“Affirming the belief in a supreme being,” Raston said.

“What supreme being?” Antoinette Venables asked.

“God, I suppose. But he doesn’t want to use that word, just says ‘supreme being.’”

“The clergy will rejoice,” said Fourier.

“No, it is not to reinstate the clergy. Not the point. Robespierre believes the attacks on priests and church have gone too far, denying any deity.”

“Not far enough for me,” said Antoinette Venables, whose husband, listening a short distance down the table, nodded.

“Antoinette, my dear,” said Veronique Raston, at the other end of the table, “Have you had unfortunate experiences with the clergy?”

“Not just my own observing. You remember, don’t you, that our priests urged the people to spit on the Constitution and to abuse the uniforms of the National Guard.”

“But don’t you think the church may be stabilizing – I mean, has an important stabilizing effect on the country?” Veronique Raston asked. Having often insisted to Genevieve that her friend Lalladiere was

both weak and irreligious, she wiggled her eyebrows meaningfully at her daughter.

As part of her campaign to disrupt Genevieve's relationship with the inmate, she had taken care to seat her daughter between two young and attractive men, an army officer and a deputy. Within the dining room full of zestful, well-dressed people, the officer, Antoine Vaillier, distinctly stood out as dashing and quite handsome. The composition of his well-fitting blue uniform, gold braided epaulets, and perfectly aligned red sash heightened an impression of immaculate facial orderliness. Both his hair and carefully trimmed, narrow moustache were shining black and smooth. The deputy, Christiane Desrouches, was also good-looking but in a more rugged, casual appearing way. He wore a large, ballooning scarlet cravat, which in his case accented both the square lines of his jaw and the edges of his darkly outlined but shaven beard. His coat was loose, tailored with minimal care, and he wore long hemmed pants. Both men displayed special interest in impressing Genevieve.

"I hear Robespierre's planning to have a festival celebrating this new project," Vaillier said with a smile to Genevieve. "Wouldn't that be the thing, waltzing supremely before a supreme being?"

Before Genevieve could answer, Desrouches responded.

"Lieutenant, you jibe. But do you not believe we need something to inspire us further now, a sense of higher purpose?" He gazed briefly at Vaillier as he spoke, then turned sideways toward Genevieve. There was a glistening look in his eyes.

"Surely so, deputy," Vaillier answered, "but we are at war. This is no time for frivolous spectacles. Don't you agree, citizenness?"

Genevieve was at that moment distracted. The lieutenant's use of the word 'inspire', had put her in mind of a recent visit to Guillaume. Always before, he had been so inspired, and for a long time, so inspiring to her. Now, although he increasingly spoke more clearly during her visits, his eyes remained dull and spiritless. She took a labored breath and tried to shift her attention to the lieutenant's question.

"I believe that Robespierre is sincere in his belief in a deity," she said, well aware that both men were vying to gain her favor, and attempting to side with neither.

"Robespierre is a discerning leader," Desrouches said, displaying his own political acumen. "He thinks carefully about every step he takes."

"A leader, or anyone, engaging in a strategy may still, at every step of the way, be sincere. It is, for me, an issue as well," As she spoke, Genevieve thrust her head slightly backward while twisting a curl. Her face, enlivened by an awakening of interest, looked vivacious and pretty.

"Oh? How is that?" Vaillier asked.

"Why, I write every day. And at night when I read what I have done, I tear it all up and start again the next day."

"Oh, that seems a great pity, such a drain on time, pleasure, and future prospects. But I, of course, know very little of writing," Vaillier said, giving Genevieve a significant look when referring to future prospects.

"I suppose, citizenness, you are very careful," Desrouches said.

"As for the government leaders, my charming hostess," Vaillier put in, stiffening his already tightly upright back, "not one of them, I do believe, has been to the military academy at Autun. When leaders who do not have Autun use strategy, they should, at the very least, be sincere." He paused, then added with a sudden twinkle in his eye, "And autun-o-mous as well."

"Joking can, I imagine, be helpful these days for lightening the fear around us," Genevieve said, forcing herself to be gracious.

"Robespierre constantly has proclaimed," Desrouches said, distinctly serious, "that excessive privilege, church ownership of massive amounts of property, exclusion from paying revenue, justifiably set the people against the sacred orders from the start." Believing, with this, he had scored a hit with any strong republican, he looked now directly into her eyes.

"And now, of course, we are instead told," quickly interjected Vaillier, not to be outdone, "that ethics, social order, and virtue are under the guidance of a supreme being,"

"Yes, that's right. I am sure you yourself must believe that you have supreme guidance when you go into battle." As he made his point, Desrouches leaned forward toward Vaillier, tilting his shoulder and almost touching Genevieve.

"I believe – I think of my musket and my sword, the musket and swords of my men, and our capacity to use them."

"Really, lieutenant, you don't think also about the republic, the cause we're all fighting for?" Genevieve asked, unstirred by Vaillier's bravado.

"Without a doubt, citizenness, I think of little else. My sword in hand, my finger curled on the musket trigger, are for the glory and triumph of the republic."

"But not the grace of deity?"

"No, not for deity, supreme being, or whatever you choose to call it. Is this disturbing to you?"

"I have felt despair," Genevieve said sadly. "And I have hoped for help from a deity. Or from – I don't know, something inside myself, perhaps."

"Did help come?" Desrouches asked, his warm tone reflecting his pleasure that Genevieve challenged Vaillier, standing for the republic and supporting his own position.

"Possibly so." Genevieve said, thinking to herself that, despite his continued lack of spirit, Guillaume was being helped, becoming progressively less strange. He was getting regular treatment, she was told, from the chief physician who met with him frequently. Her godsend may be the transfer to Bicêtre which she pushed for.

"I am delighted it may be so," Vaillier said, "for a lovely woman such as you. You are a devoted patriot, a supporter of the Revolution, and I am certain you need no celebrations, no spectacles of devotion that really serve for the glory of a single person," Vaillier spoke earnestly, his suspicions of Robespierre's motives for this festival were shared, less openly, by many others, military and non-military, throughout the country.

“Such talk, lieutenant, could earn you quite a bit of discomfort nowadays,” Desrouches said, leaning again, this time letting his hand graze Genevieve’s on the table. Inconspicuously, she moved it away. “Robespierre,” he continued, “has forwarded the Revolution, and with the aid of Saint-Just, he has done more than anyone to protect the gains – alerting us to corrupters and traitors, helping us root them out. You cannot say Robespierre is for himself alone. His price controls have staved off famine and he has spearheaded the abolition of slavery. He has conducted the war –”

“Conducted the war, you say?” Vaillier, who had become increasingly irritated by Desrouches’s civilian arrogance together with his not-so-subtle advances toward Genevieve, now became irate.

A vigorous argument ensued. Vaillier, pounding the table, cited the large number of military losses in the North; Desrouches, hand still close to Genevieve, lauded the Safety Committee’s authorization of Lazare Carnot and minutely described this military engineer’s work on a broad plan of retaliation. The lieutenant, more softly then but with continued spirit, insisted that the politicians were unable to run a war, pointing out numerous current and historical examples. The deputy brought up what he described as brilliant political actions that led to the already great republican victory achieved at Lille. He shifted several times in his chair, showing his agitated dedication while causing his knee to contact Genevieve’s thinly covered one.

She tried to avoid his unwelcome touching by increasingly determined withdrawals. Also, as the conversation seemed staged and unreal, she again switched to thoughts of Guillaume, to her last visit when he spoke about their walks on the banks of the Seine. Not too many words, but she was moved when he made a connection between her having worn a striped white tunic over a red dress – a lovely one, he said – that was similar to the outfit she had on that day. Also, he spoke coherently about the Bicêtre, saying he was not sure about all of the attendants but was glad not to have bloodletting or the bath of surprise.

The noisy contest, the thrust and parrying of words wasted on the inattentive female prize, attracted the notice of others at the dinner table. Host Raston, though a staunch believer in open discussion, decided he should try, out of consideration for the comfort of his guests, to tone the overly vigorous contenders down. He addressed some questions to Desrouches, found that the discussion

involved Lieutenant Vaillier's criticisms of Robespierre and thought it best not to intervene further. Others at the table became quiet, turned toward the two men to stare and listen.

"Do you mean to say," Desrouches asked, turning back to Vaillier, "that you think our leaders are conducting the war in a slipshod manner?"

"Yes, decidedly so."

"That they pay no attention to advice of the commanders?"

"Almost never."

"And there is trouble in the military about this?"

"The politicians constantly countermand orders and undermine the morale of the soldiers."

"You embellish and overstate everything you say, monsieur." Desrouches, now distraught, had lapsed into a challenging use of the proscribed and unrevolutionary honorific title. He also forgot about his stroking pursuit of Genevieve.

"Our soldiers are nowadays punished with death. The strategist General Custine ended up guillotined, do you remember that travesty?"

"Indeed, any soldier who speaks treason can be subject to death," Desrouches, glaring, blurted angrily.

Vaillier jerked further upright at Desrouches's threatening remark. Realizing he was under scrutiny by the dinner assemblage, and concerned primarily about any slur on his patriotism, he suddenly stood up, lifted his wine glass in a toasting gesture toward his host Raston, and began, in a loud clear voice, to sing the words of the revolutionary song, *Ça Ira*. Surprised, Raston and all the dinner guests rose and slowly joined in. Genevieve also, roused from her detachment, stood up, barely managing to avoid tripping over Desrouches's outstretched foot.

Lalladiere, lying on his cot at Bicêtre, was feeling calmer. He was making progress in the meetings

with Dr. Pinel. Despite his hearing a continuing drone of voices and the ever-present fear of Ajacis and his threat, he could talk to the doctor more freely. The voices still warned him not to say too much, not to trust this doctor or his asylum, not to trust himself, especially not to consider himself anything but the lowest of the low. But Dr. Pinel's continuing interest, his reassuring acceptance of the possible reality of the conspiracy, his support and perception of the saner self, helped Lalladiere push forward and loosen some of their hold. He allowed outlines of his feelings to come through, even though he could not then know anything about them. He knew neither the contents of the feelings nor their names. He continued to try to find a way to speak of them because that seemed each time to make him feel better.

Pinel did not pursue close questioning about the conspiracy or touch on other charged topics. He was aware that Lalladiere was reluctant to talk about his mother, and also could not follow up on the confessed betrayal of Minister Necker, but he could not decide about the medical importance of these matters. In his morning discussion with Pussin regarding Lalladiere, he told the attentive governor he was interested but had never heard of direct connections of such factors with insanity.

"Why do you continue to pursue these long discussions? What do you hope to find?" Pussin asked. His way was to be brief, sympathetic, and consistent.

"We must observe, Pussin. Constantly observe. Types of symptoms, behavior. That will clarify the nature of the illness and eventually its causes."

"And the matter of betrayal of the minister and the reluctance to speak about the mother are observations?"

"Yes, he appears distinctly frightened, remorseful, regarding both. I am not sure what that is about."

"Perhaps it is simply wild imagining."

"Perhaps so."

"Are there other things you observe that are important?"

"I've noticed that he often moves his lips as though he is talking to someone else."

"Hearing voices."

"Yes, I think so. And I intend to find out more about that. The type and, if possible, the content."

"What about more medication, Dr. Pinel. Don't you think we could help Lalladiere control himself better that way?"

"Observation again, my worthy governor. I just wrote something about the use of medication in this journal of our activities here I told you about. Come, I'll show you."

Pinel retrieved the journal from his desk and read aloud: "In diseases of the mind, as well as in all other ailments, it is an art of no little importance to administer medicines properly: but, it is an art of much greater and difficult acquisition to know when to suspend or altogether to omit them." He tapped the corner of his eye, smiling. "That, Pussin, is based on my observations and documentation."

"My wife and I are enthusiastic about the things you've done here. And what you do."

"Fine. We'll all need steadfastness in these days."

Meeting in the afternoon with Lalladiere, Pinel brought the symptom up: "I have noticed that you sometimes seem to be talking with someone else while we sit here. What is it you hear?"

Don't tell him.

"The sound of your voice."

"No, I mean are there other voices you hear speaking to you?"

Hesitation, then, "Yes."

"What do they say?"

Lalladiere looked sideways. No attendant was in the room with them, Dr. Pinel having declared it unnecessary and safe, but Lalladiere was reluctant to disclose the fearsome condemnations, the just

verdicts.

"These voices are not your friends," Pinel said.

"They..." he started.

No. No.

He shrugged his shoulders forcefully, as if throwing off a burden. "They tell me I am the lowest of the low. A betrayer and a worm. Profane and obscene."

"But how could this be? What is the reason for that?"

"They tell me not to trust you, that you, like others, are out to kill me." Saying it out loud made Lalladiere again feel strangely better. Perhaps there could be change.

"Why would I want to kill you?" Pinel put the question firmly, his tone soft.

"Because I have done terrible things."

"What are these terrible things?" Pinel thought of the confession. Maybe he could trace some connections. "Something to do with Minister Necker?"

"The betrayal. Yes. And there is worse." Pinel noticed that, as Lalladiere said this, his eyes shifted anxiously from side to side. He stopped speaking.

"You seem to believe you are betraying someone right now by speaking with me," Pinel offered.

"She had to hide in the corner."

Pinel wanted to ask "who?" but decided to be silent and wait to see whether Lalladiere would continue.

"She stayed there all day, and it was all my fault," Lalladiere said, quickly. "I didn't mean it, but she came and saw me. Stood there and watched me. Stood there and knew. Watched."

“And then?” Pinel asked, unsure what to make of what he was hearing.

“She went into the corner of the kitchen. Shaking, crying, and huddled herself into the corner. All day, she stayed there. Nothing I could do would get her away.”

“What did she see? What were you doing?”

“I cannot say. You know what it was.”

“Who was she?”

“My mother.”

Chapter 31

Pinel decided to meet in a generally regular manner with Lalladiere in the following weeks. He had not previously done this with other patients, visiting them usually for extended periods at long intervals or sometimes more frequently at Pussin's request, but this man, whose stories were challengingly tangled, seemed now to want to talk with him. And, Pinel observed, Lalladiere's symptoms seemed to be getting less and less severe, he behaved better in the asylum as the time went on.

He took to very careful watching of all of Lalladiere's reactions as they spoke together. He never read or heard about doing this, either from his valued ancient sources or the work of current progressive mental hospital physicians in other countries. It was an extension of observation of symptoms, and Pinel noticed that the reactions seemed connected with particular passions or emotions. Things that might be joyful made Lalladiere's hands fidget, sad things made him turn his head from side to side, and speaking about responsibility brought a look of terror to his eyes. He sometimes became silent when talking about accusations from the decreasingly recurrent voices. To help Lalladiere engage in discussion and, Pinel thought, to counter the passions, he commented on the reactions he saw regarding certain topics. It was effective, Lalladiere spoke more meaningfully and freely. To Pinel's surprise, he frequently ended up talking about his parents.

His mother, Lalladiere related, behaved time and again in bizarre ways. Often, she would retreat to her bed for days at a time, or else go raging around the house screaming about something his father said. Or, she would sit at a table in the kitchen chopping at an onion over and over again. She was constantly accusatory, insisting to the young boy Lalladiere that his actions were painful and destructive to her. If he laughed about anything, he was making fun of her. Silent, he was resisting her. Playing, he was making too much noise; if he sat and did nothing, he was worthless and lazy. When he did well in school, he was trying to lord himself over her. She was sure that she could divine his thoughts, accusing him frequently of lewd or vicious intentions. At each of those times, she administered enemas to him in order to purge the intentions out of him. Throughout his childhood, he received at least one enema a day, sometimes three to four. In school, his pants were always soiled. He couldn't remember how it was for his brother

who died, but believed it was the same.

As active and intrusive as his mother was, his father was to the same degree inactive and avoidant of any contact. He never intervened when she hurled accusations at her son, nor did he respond when, as frequently happened, she instead stormed wildly at him. Sometimes after her outbursts, he disappeared for a day or two at a time, giving no account of where he had been. Seldom did he speak directly to his son, and when he did, he too was disapproving – not one bit of use around the house, did not take care of his mother when she took to her bed, and excelled in school surely by lying and cheating. A few times after one of his absences, he told Lalladiere that he would have stayed, not gone away, if he had been a better son. He never explained what he meant.

“Pussin, this man Lalladiere tells me terrible things about his parents, Pinel said one morning, “It is very troubling. I spent a good deal of time last night searching the literature – English, American, the ancients – and found no precedent for it. I believe it will be necessary to instruct him about his passions against them – anger, outrage, wishes for revenge. Parents must be honored and respected.”

“I met the mother when she came with her husband to visit. Never been here before and – pfft – they were demanding like a rabid Section Leader. But they weren’t too much worse than many of the families.”

“One thing I cannot be sure of is whether he makes it all up.”

“Yes, of course. But why?”

“We must listen and observe, Pussin. You heard me indicate to him my acceptance of his idea about a possible conspiracy. Perhaps, then, he tries to get me to believe things about his parents to shift blame for his insanity onto them.”

“It could be dangerous, Dr. Pinel, to accept his wild, possibly treasonous conspiracy talk.”

“Yes, and all of that could be delusion. His ideas about his parents could be, too.”

“Parents connected with insanity? This is not to be believed.”

“But we must consider, Pussin,” Pinel said, his face deeply thoughtful, “that the parents bring everyone into the world, eh? They care for us, train us. Only because of them do we become normal citizens, moral and responsible.”

“What are you saying, Dr. Pinel? Parents must be very strict to curb their children, is that not so? Surely that does not produce lunacy.”

Pinel nodded. “It can be so, Pussin. Best to be cautious here. Lalladiere must learn to respect, obey, and cherish his parents, just as sane people do.”

Leaving Pussin’s office, the parents of Gerard LeBlanc came into Pinel’s mind. They were not around when he watched Gerard first become eccentric, then raving and mad. Committing the young man to an asylum, to the Hotel Dieu, was all left to him. When the parents after a short time came to the asylum, they insisted that Gerard be released to their care. They took him to their country house and after a few weeks he one day went into the nearby woods and shot himself in the head. Thinking about the events, Pinel felt sad and irritable. Killed himself while living in his parents’ home? Was there actually some clue in that? Beyond the betrayal was there a link between the parents and Gerard’s choice to die?

Lalladiere, in his cell, felt his mind becoming clearer. He touched the walls around him, assuring himself of their solidity and reality. Telling of his life, plunging into the forbidden world while someone important attended, helped him identify the beginnings of pain. The doctor’s lectures about passions, his suggestions for substitute involvements, were not so helpful but, to Lalladiere, they indicated caring, a wish to make his spirit well and bring him back to sanity. Most important, Dr. Pinel was interested in seeing and knowing everything about him. He received Lalladiere’s stories as information, not to find fault or justify abandonment as others had. Only for helping both to understand. Sometimes, he expressed welcome sympathy, even consolation.

Lalladiere brushed his hand across his forehead. The voices, much less frequent, remained a dimly vicious chorus. But now, he allowed himself to think about, even mull over, troublesome events in the past, especially his injury to Necker. The man prized him, trusted him. In return, he brought about his downfall and his ruin. Lies. False use of calculations, numbers Lalladiere used and cherished always as though they were friends. Distorted projections with mechanical attention to each minute detail so that

the result, a fantastic construction, appeared substantial and correct. Did he know the misrepresented budget would damage the government? He remembered imagining, in his haze of disorientation and fear, Necker's slumping shoulders, his shocked and furious face. Cheating and lying, he never did either in his life before. Rules never broken, no matter what. Be hungry rather than cheat, blood running from bitten lips rather than lie. His mother said his father lied. His father, one time when he actually addressed him, said his mother was once pure and good, but she had, with false words, infected the air they breathed. Lying caused disaster.

Many in the government, he knew, from lowest to high, lied and cheated regularly. Especially about money. His absolute honesty was one reason Necker trusted him so completely. "Isn't that right, Dr. Pinel?" he asked aloud. In his own voice, in the empty cell, he asked loudly, "Isn't that why I am suffering now?"

An attendant, apparently hearing his voice, came to the doorway of his cell. Trembling with fear, Lalladiere saw it was Ajacis. The man, fists doubled, began to move towards him lying on the cot. Before Lalladiere could cry out, as this time he felt able to do, the attendant Antoine appeared at the doorway bringing the midday meal. Ajacis saw him, mumbled something about Lalladiere being a pervert, and walked out. Grateful for the deliverance but still watchful, Lalladiere slowly ate the meal.

Genevieve came into his mind more frequently. She was pert and pretty during her visits, despite sometimes looking worried, in her satiny cream-white bonnet, green, red or lavender dresses. Her eyes were soft, as before, her voice clear and gentle. She spoke often of events outside the asylum, of the nation's progress in helping both downtrodden and poor, a cause that one time mattered to him greatly. He remembered he used to tell her that he loved her. He tried to call up what that felt like. He shook inside.

"You seem to carry some heavy burden," Pinel said one afternoon, noting that Lalladiere often sat before him with head bowed, shoulders slumped. "Can you tell me what weighs on you, is it something you believe you have done?"

"I betrayed the minister."

"Yes, you have said that. What is this about? How did you betray him?"

"Falsified the national finances," Lalladiere said, glaring belligerently to cope with his own self-revulsion. "The budget. I gave him overblown projections, fake accounting and estimates."

"Yes, and –?"

"He submitted all of it officially to the Convention."

"What happened?"

"He resigned for good."

"I see."

"It was all completely false."

"Well, then, did he do no checking himself? Submitted it to no one else for general assessment?"

"Yes, he did both," Lalladiere said, softening. "But I was the expert at tallying collections and projecting expectations. I made them all think the figures were reliable and everyone trusted me."

Pinel hesitated, hating what he heard. But, wanting to know more, he continued.

"And what was the result of this?"

"They mocked him. Torture."

"I knew Consul Necker resigned some time ago. And he left the country. But I have heard nothing of torture. Where does that come in?"

"Torture," Lalladiere repeated, lapsing into incoherence.

"What kind of torture?"

“Torture.”

Still trying to follow despite his vexation, Pinel saw a tense look of anticipation on Lalladiere’s face.

“Do you expect,” he asked, struck by a flash of comprehension, “torture in here?”

Lalladiere nodded.

“That we here shall now torture you because of what you have done?”

“I committed an unspeakable crime.”

“The man is not dead. He has surely recovered. The government still stands.”

Lalladiere paused. He thought of his defect, his failed manhood. Words burst from him:

“I did it intentionally.”

“What did you do intentionally, make false, overinflated estimates?”

“I hurt the minister intentionally.”

“You hurt the minister intentionally,” Pinel repeated, trying to overcome his contempt and understand.

“Yes, No... Yes, I think so.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know.”

“You must have some reason for saying so. What did you think when you falsified the budget?”

Lalladiere became silent. Pinel, feeling less contempt and somewhat sympathetic, sat and waited patiently.

"I hated him."

"Hate? Why did you hate the man then?"

Face contorted, voice shaking, Lalladiere answered: "He ignored me while I suffered. Other things, too."

Pinel, feeling strangely sad, stopped questioning and turned his head away. When he turned back, he saw Lalladiere's lips moving in response to something unseen.

Kill. Kill. You must not live. You must be torn limb from limb. Corrupt, despicable creature.

Watching the pained twisting of Lalladiere's face, the strained, vigorous movements of his mouth, Pinel's feelings turned fully into sympathy. These human beings, he thought, suffer so intensely. What tragic ideas, what unbearable sentiments, what wounds of the imagination! Lalladiere is both perpetrator and executioner. Could what he says be true, an intentional hurt to the man he seemed to idolize? Feeling the hatred I have wondered about? How does a man like Lalladiere come to believe such evil things about himself, have such terrible passions? And how can I find ways to help him?

He talked later with the Pussins about what he called the aching in Lalladiere's soul, and in the weeks to follow, they all tried to devise ways of helping. The Pussins emphasized a need for rehabilitation. Because of Lalladiere's now openly intense remorse over the injury he inflicted, they decided to encourage him to apply himself to religious devotion, whether or not he practiced it before. Marguerite Pussin brought in a people's priest to hear Lalladiere's confession, instruct him in penance, and prescribe rigid adherence to ritual and doctrine. Although there were no longer, on the orders of the Committee of Internal Affairs, symbols of worship in the chapel, governor Pussin brought Lalladiere a bible and extolled the practices of religious penitence and fastidiousness. Pinel spent time, in his regular meetings with Lalladiere, focusing on the circumstances surrounding the falsification of the budget. He heard about the love affair with Genevieve, its ending, about the duress and Lalladiere's inability to work during the time before the budget was due. He learned in detail of Lalladiere's previous devotion to Consul Necker, his years of ardent, conscientious work.

"I worked late into the night, Dr. Pinel. Usually when there were deadlines, I stayed in the office until two or three in the morning."

"When did you eat?"

"I didn't. Skipped meals."

"What else?"

"I studied in detail every tax, every financial institution, every governmental collection procedure throughout the country."

"You did all this for the minister?"

"He was the champion of the people."

"Aha," Pinel said, smiling, "the man was a pinnacle. He had no faults."

Lalladiere hesitated. Was the doctor making fun of him? Yes – no, this doctor had joked with him, reducing pain, before.

"I was dazed. All the time. Didn't know what was going on."

"What are you talking about?" Pinel now had confidence he could get an answer to a direct question.

"He was not coming to the offices, always away at Versailles. I needed him. One day when I did see him he said he was planning to resign if the Assembly continued to use paper money to meet debts and deficits."

"That upset you."

"I thought he didn't care, was going to leave."

"So, the minister you extolled, idolized, for whom you worked so hard, was pulling back, possibly

running out?"

"I saw them when I walked."

"What do you mean? What, whom, did you see?"

Lalladiere turned his head away and did not speak.

"Was this something terrible to look at?" Pinel asked, seeing the movement.

"He was with her."

"Her? Who was she?"

"Genevieve," he blurted.

"What?" Pinel paused. "Oh, so you thought you were betrayed."

"Both of them, two I loved, together."

"Were you certain it was Genevieve?"

"Hatred for them both, I was racked with hatred," Lalladiere said, ignoring Pinel's question.

"One minute, hatred, then the next minute, love. Hate, then love. Love, then hate. I tried not to believe it. It all stopped, then I believed it again. Night after night, teeming with hatred, then intense tormenting love. Love the minister, love Genevieve, love both together. I couldn't stand it I hated them, the two of them."

Listening, amazed at what he was hearing, Pinel began to wonder if, this time, Lalladiere had completely misperceived. The young devoted woman would not likely consort with the aging minister. He thought of another possible connection in Lalladiere's head:

"Did you think they came together out of love for you? To take care of you?"

Lalladiere said nothing, but a tear came into his eye.

"I thought," he said after a long pause, "that she was going after other men. But, with Necker, she also wanted him to help me."

"Hate then love, eh? Love then hate. Which was worse?"

"Love, always the love."

"Always?"

"Genevieve needed my protection."

"She needed your protection? Why?"

"I didn't know, I thought she was going out of her head."

Lalladiere stopped and neither he nor Pinel spoke. Pinel watched alternating pain and relief cross Lalladiere's previously expressionless face.

"What is it?" Pinel asked.

"It wasn't Genevieve I saw."

"Who was it?" asked Pinel, intrigued.

"Lying in my room later, fever-hot, my mind in chaos, a picture came to me of the woman as reddish-blond with very long straight hair. It wasn't Genevieve."

"No? Who, then?"

"I don't know. It was not his wife."

"What of that? Rage? More hatred?"

“Both. I was sure then he was running out, abandoning everything.”

At that moment, Pinel realized something new about hatred:

“And falsifying the budget would make the minister furious with you.”

Lalladiere grunted. Neither assent nor denial.

“Being furious, then hating you.”

Another grunt.

“And his hatred would bind him to you.”

They went on with the matter over the next several days. Slowly, Lalladiere elaborated his fears of losing the minister, the turning to other interests when he needed him so much. He alluded also to some of Necker’s failings, the idol’s clay feet, such as his having actually overblown a previous budget, the famous *Compte Rendu*, to show a surplus. He was abandoning the nation, again ignoring important financial details while engaged in a clandestine affair.

Lalladiere was beginning to feel relief from the cobweb of guilt, hatred, and love. He was gaining some perspective, and the rehabilitation appeared to be working. His behavior in the asylum continued to improve. Pussin registered this and decided again to assign Lalladiere work in the institution. Advised by Pinel to avoid accounting tasks at that point, Pussin arranged for paid labor at the extensive Bicêtre farm behind the asylum buildings. In view of Lalladiere’s lightening of symptoms, Pussin thought it unlikely he would again try to run away. They would, in any case, be firm, expecting Lalladiere to carry out all work assigned and stay within specified areas.

“I would like, Pussin, to talk with some of the attendants who have had regular contact with Lalladiere,” Pinel said in their regular morning conference.

“But that is so very unusual. Do you believe I am doing something wrong?”

“Ah, surely no. I learn from your good work. But we must, as I say, observe. From the smallest to the

largest thing. And for such information I now follow the practice of the wily old physician, Galen. A very astute student of insanity, Galen wrote that he routinely obtained important observations about such patients from the reports of closely associated persons – servants, relatives, and others.”

Chapter 32

Robespierre put on a Festival of the Supreme Being. It was a grand affair, vaunting the singing of hymns, a brass band, floral displays, a crowd of thousands, and atop a massive specially constructed mountain of plaster and cardboard, a statue of the Greek *Hercule*. At an appointed moment, the band and singing went silent as Robespierre, wearing a green velvet coat, descended from the mountain brandishing a sheaf of wheat. There was thunderous applause. With his usual eloquence, he dedicated the day to the “Being of Beings,” who was responsible, not for any privileged religious institutions, but for the creation of all things.

Despite such outward display of rectitude and political strength, Robespierre’s support had begun to fade. There were serious economic problems throughout the country, foreign wars were progressing erratically, and his high moral and political attacks on several of the deputies – both direct, and by innuendo – had turned many against him. The active undermining and over-elaboration in recent months by Tallien and Barras, together with skillful building up of debts by Fouché, served to deepen each wound Robespierre inflicted, both real and imagined, and keep them open and festering.

Tallien made visits to the meetings of the official Sections of Paris whenever he could free himself from his duties as the Secretary to the Convention. He always was welcomed eagerly, a distinguished member of the Mountain who spoke the language of the people. Often, he would give flamboyant reports of activities of the Convention in the form of a burlesque, playing all roles and imitating the voices of various deputies. These performances were very well received, often with uproarious laughter when, tuning down his own inflection, he deftly captured the characteristic intonations and affectations of well known members like Couthon, Collot d’Herbois, Saint-Just and – *coup de grâce* – Robespierre. This paramount leader, now Tallien’s prime target, had come to be feared by members of Section assemblages at the same time as he was followed and admired. Tallien’s satirical representations, interspersed with biting innuendo about Robespierre’s tyrannical intentions and cockeyed economic policies, produced smiles, guffaws, and even nodding heads. Following these presentations, Tallien would usually give serious stirring speeches, fists clenched and arms flailing to give emphasis to words extolling the

purposes of the Revolution. These speeches also contained many references to how he personally forwarded each and every purpose.

He also used the visits as opportunities to collect information on persons who might or might not be amenable to his secretly planned takeover. He let it be known at the meetings that he would listen attentively to any allegations of opposition or treason, whether stated during the meeting openly, or in lowered whispers while the group dispersed. If he heard an allegation that might favor Robespierre, he gave assurances he would look into it and usually neglected to do so. Unfavorable or weakening accusations, or those that otherwise suited his purposes, he reported immediately to the Committee of Public Safety. A few he let ripen, tucking them away for useful windfalls in the future.

On a visit to the Gentilly Section, near where the Bicêtre was located, he gave his usual burlesque performance and threw in some imitations of dying priests and aristocrats massacred there under his supervision. At the end, he put out his usual invitation to receive accusatory reports. As he walked off the podium, he felt a tug on his sleeve from the Bicêtre attendant Ajacis. Looking cautiously over his shoulder to make sure no one from the asylum saw him, Ajacis spoke softly, indicating he had a story to tell. He identified himself as an asylum attendant, and asked to speak to Tallien alone. Tallien nodded, gesturing toward a corridor away from others in the room.

“Are you familiar, citizen Tallien, with the new medical director of the Bicêtre?”

“Yes, I have met him. He has, I know, changed the treatment methods there. Forbids beatings, and the use of chains.”

“The governor did some of that, on a mild Jean or a quiet Jacques, before. We didn’t like the mollycoddling then but put up with it to keep our jobs. But now that this Dr. Pinel is there, all the lunatics can walk free around. He don’t do purging, bleeding, hardly anything at all. And we see him sitting with them. He actually sits down and talks with them.”

“This is a rational approach, is it not?” Tallien said cautiously. “He is a believer in equality, a good revolutionary.”

"I don't know about rational but, citizen Tallien. I know he is not a good revolutionary at all. He has been talking with an inmate about some kind of conspiracy."

"Indeed, what kind of conspiracy?"

Ajasis wet his lips. Again, he looked around nervously, then leaned forward toward Tallien.

"That's my point. I don't know exactly what it was, this conspiring. But it was who it was said were ones doing it. In fact, two great patriots."

"Patriots? Who? Which patriots?"

"Commander Barras. And you."

Tallien's face became drawn, suddenly drained of blood. His eyes narrowed.

"Who was this? Who did you say?"

"You, citizen. And Commander Barras."

"Barras? Me? What conspiracy is this?"

"I am not sure. Another attendant told me he heard them discuss the details. There was something in it about Robespierre. I couldn't really tell whether it was for him, or against him."

"I see." Tallien said, momentarily encouraged by Ajasis's uncertainty. "I do remember, a long time back, Saint-Just told me that a Bicêtre lunatic was at the widow Capet's execution ranting about a plot. Yes, he even stared at Barras, Saint-Just said. But you don't mean to say that this lunatic is still alive, at Bicêtre, and the doctor, Pinel, talks about such things with him seriously?"

"He does. From what I hear, you wouldn't believe what things this doctor listens to," Ajasis sighed, rolled his eyes, and shook his head.

Tallien, awkwardly bringing his mouth up into his crooked smile, complimented Ajasis on his

loyalty and diligence. He assured him there could not be any such plot, and Ajacis heartily agreed, saying it was inconceivable to have such a thing by two who were the legs and heart of the Revolution like Commander Barras and himself. Tallien put his hand on Ajacis's shoulder, asserting that he, as an excellent Bicêtre attendant, knew all about maniacs and their wild ravings. Monstrous and totally unreliable. The inmate – “what was his name?” – was obviously deranged. But there was real concern that this Dr. Pinel was paying attention to seditious babble, and Tallien would quickly look into the matter. The inmate, Ajacis confirmed – “his name is Lalladiere” – was the same ranting lunatic who was at the queen's execution. He and another attendant chased Lalladiere when he escaped from the asylum, and they followed him to the Place that day. Ajacis volunteered that he was glad that Tallien – “A great, I repeat, great revolutionary hero, far away as possible from suspicion of being a traitor, not the slightest bit of doubt in any patriot's mind” – was going to pursue things further.

A few days later, Tallien, feeling the need to counter or suppress quickly emergence of any further damaging Bicêtre disclosures, called for another meeting of the Gently Section. He made no reference at all to the asylum, but spoke of the need for *sans-culottes* to find their voices and strengths, to continue to enhance their powerful place in the glorious Revolution.

When the meeting began, he walked immediately to the front of the room. There was a swagger to his walk, an air of confidence that imbued him, despite his stubby legs, with authority. As was his custom for these occasions, he was dressed roughly, quite unlike his grand attire at the Paris salons, in a somewhat worn, slightly ill-fitting coat, unbuttoned shirt, and the *sans-culotte* straight pants of many in his audience. Before he started speaking, he peered slowly around the room, not at any one in particular, but with a look of broad acknowledgement that encompassed, and drew in, everyone in the group.

“I have come here to ask you,” he began, “what leadership do you want to have? You, all of you here, what kind of a leader do you want?”

“Hear, hear,” shouted a young butcher close to the front of the room, raising an immaculately clean hand. “That's it, citizen,” bellowed a nearby older and black-coated rag dealer, a common pursuit in that neighborhood. He pounded on the bench beside him. Further back, a wide-faced milliner wearing a white cloth bonnet that circled her face, chimed in with a loud, high-pitched voice, “We're with you,

citizen.”

“Yes,” Tallien continued, for the moment apparently ignoring the spontaneous affirmation, “you must decide what you want. What kind of leadership? The kind of leaders you want us to be.”

“Strong...” a middle-aged but already seamy-faced fishmonger started to say but Tallien did not pause to let her finish. “All of you, look to either side of you. One of those you sit next to may be a traitor. We are beset with traitors everywhere, and they may be close or lurking any place in the room. People who seem to be your friends, neighbors living near you, may be waiting for the moment they can undo the Revolution, or betray you, to get themselves extra food, luxuries, or positions in a – blast the word – monarchy they hope will come. These are in sympathy with all the corrupt, deceiving priests. The despicable aristocrats. And then, also, look to the people you don’t know too well, or those who have recently just moved into the neighborhood, they could be aristocrats in disguise.”

Now, Tallien paused and again surveyed the assemblage. There was some scuffling of feet, and rows of irregular undulations and swayings where some looked either sideways or backwards. Many remained motionless or, with anticipation, were leaning slightly forward. All were cautiously quiet until, from the back of the room a tall greengrocer with puffy cheeks looking like smoothly rounded urns, called out:

“What should we do?”

“Consider. Decide.”

Tallien’s inflection served here as a special emphasis. “You must, you shall, decide the kind of leadership you want. Not, I’m sure, traitors. Watch carefully for those among us who show signs of weakening resolve, do not hail the Revolution, make false accusations against our deputies, and those more subtle ones who simply carp and criticize. They are out to do us in, divide us, and bring oppression back upon our heads.”

Over and over, Tallien repeated variations of his casting out of verbal hooks baited with lures of participation and partnership followed by reeling in with denuncements and commands. When he

stopped again to receive a response from the group, a stocky young mason wearing gray striped pants and a red cockade cap stood up and asked him to tell them who the traitors were. The mason straightened his chest and nodded his head at the people sitting at both sides of him. An old wrinkle-faced woman, her lean, aggressive-looking son, and a square-shouldered stone-carrier all nodded back at him while assenting loudly to his question.

“Ah, that is what we must determine together,” Tallien answered, upbeating and prolonging “together”. “Some of them look like simple people, dressed regular and plain like you and me. They disguise themselves as shopkeepers, stone carriers, clothes washers, and ordinary tradespeople. Others are easier to make out, they look prosperous and well-fed. You find them in offices and churches. And they are also salesman and engineers. Some are even bankers and doctors.”

Several people now cried out from different places in the assembly room: “Who are these people?” and “Tell us, Tallien,” and “Names, give us names.”

“I know of some,” Tallien answered. “I shall work to find out about more. And all of you must, too.”

“Tell us what you know,” the young mason demanded.

“What are their names?” shouted an insistent voice at the edge of the group.

“They use the Revolution,” Tallien, looking aroused, said loudly, “to forward their own ends.”

“Yes, yes.”

“They claim to be on the side of equality, of fraternity. But they try to instill confusion and discontent.”

Impassioned shouts of “Yes, who are they?” “Tell us.” “We shall root them out.” rose from numerous portions of the group. The room was alive with the sounds of shifting feet, people jumping up, sitting back down, loud conversations.

“I know of one, a baker who lives here, Cantonelle,” Tallien said in a modulated tone strong enough

to be heard over most of the noise. He was indicating a man who, it happened, had once inflicted a personal grievance on him. "This man claims," he continued, "he has little grain and sells as much bread as possible. But he hoards his supplies and looks to find other places in Paris where he can get higher prices."

A resounding, almost unanimous roar filled the room. Tallien's eyes shone.

"And, yes, there is another, a shoemaker in this neighborhood. Her name is Rastinac. She makes shoes for citizen Robespierre." He now referred to a woman hated by his mistress, Thérèse, for a slighting remark made at a wardrobe fitting. "I have heard," he said with a put-on tone of vehemence, "that when Robespierre, the very eminence of our Revolution, sent a pair back to her recently with the message that the soles were poorly made, she complained that he was wrong. She went around and told her friends and neighbors he had no right to say such a thing because..." he paused for a moment, looking around. "Because," he resumed, "she had once made shoes for the queen! Imagine, she boasted of outfitting the contemptible widow Capet!"

Another roar, punctuated with shouts of disbelief, curses at the shoemaker, and explosive bursts of derisive epithets from every side about the dead queen.

"And one other," Tallien said, sternly and with emphasis, when the clamor subsided, "is the doctor in charge of the Bicêtre. He lets madmen go free."

"That's true. They come among us," vigorously affirmed the fishmonger interrupted by Tallien earlier. "These free lunatics escape and are on the streets," she added.

"It's not safe to be out at night," the black-coated rag dealer said.

"They are wild, bizarre, and come right into your own house. I know firsthand," sounded the sharp distinct voice of Théo Rochereau, Jean-Luc's father. He, a regular attendee at meetings of the Gently Section, had heard all but not spoken up to that point. Several people called for quiet to hear him. "One of them," he continued, "followed my son to our home. I was terrified, you can be sure of that. Barely managed to get word to the asylum to take him back before he could hurt one of us."

"That is right," Tallien interjected, "the man Pinel, medical director of Bicêtre, lets the maniacs go wild. They walk around freely, without fetters or chains. He talks to them, too, riles them up. Can you feature that, talking with a lunatic? He is one of the disguised ones. Says he is enlightened, a patriot, but –" Tallien paused before his next revelation, having made sure beforehand to consult informants and find as much as he could about this dangerous doctor. Pounding his fists, he continued slowly and firmly: "He helped to hide the traitor, Condorcet, who was condemned to the guillotine."

"Let's go and take all of them," the urn-cheeked greengrocer boomed out. From every side came proclamations of assent.

"This doctor is a monarchist," Tallien said, shouting now over the growing din. And making sure there was little room for equivocation, he again pounded his fists and proceeded further: "Be quiet and listen everyone. I have here words he wrote after seeing the execution of the king." With a flourish, he pulled out a copy of a personal letter written by Pinel which had been secretly obtained by his mistress Thérèse. He brandished the paper above his head, and as the room became quiet, he began: "I greatly regret," says this Dr. Philippe Pinel, 'that I was obliged to attend the execution of the king bearing arms with the other citizens of the Section and I write to you now with my heart filled with grief.'"

"Do you hear that?" Tallien snarled. "The man says his 'heart', the core of his soul was, on watching Louis's execution, 'filled with grief.' Then, he goes on like this: 'and my whole being was stunned by the shock of this dreadful experience.' Stunned, he says. Grief-filled heart, whole being, and stunned – he put it all down in a letter – about the death of the greatest traitor, the despicable Louis Capet."

The quiet was broken with shrill calls. It was now unanimous. From all sides came: "To the razor. To the guillotine." The young butcher pushed to the front of the room and, standing at Tallien's side, he shouted to the group, "Divide up, and we go to get all of them. Come patriots, some for each place."

Chapter 33

Work on the farm for Lalladiere was beneficial. He was glad for the routines of feeding the chickens and other animals, and carried them out with scrupulous care. The kernels he held in his hands, prior to spreading before the fowl, were tangible and real, not the products of fantastic experiences. They were eaten ravenously, without hesitation or reproof, and he was providing sustenance and care-giving to solid, living things. The oat buckets he prepared for the horses were readily filled with the same measured quantity of food each day. They were not heavy, nor were they light either, so regular carrying to the stables gave him a sense of fair work accomplished.

He was especially drawn to duties involving the large Percheron dray horses. After showing, over a short period, diligence and responsibility for their basic sustenance, he was assigned to carry out more and more of their care. He learned to pick off the chiggers and mites that clung to their hides. He sponged them down and fastidiously cleaned their stalls. When governor Pussin, together with the farm supervisors, judged he had become reliably occupied, settled down, and was not again likely to run away, he was given tasks with more leeway. He was assigned to driving a grain-filled cart led by the horses from the farm to the main section of the asylum. They were admirable horses, broadbacked and heavily muscular, gray with tan mane and forelocks. The cart, unusually well built for a farm vehicle, was not ribbed but covered all around with large horizontal panels of polished yellow ash. It felt like a special job.

The labor of pitching hay in the barn, done under supervision, also suited him. He relished the strong, regular motion, the clean smell of grain as he breathed. Moving a certain portion of hay each time, steadily reducing the pile before him, was another palpable achievement. At times, while working as well as thinking later on his mat, he had a small returning sense, often vanishing quickly, of capability.

He thought often too of Dr. Pinel. The doctor's belief regarding the plot had worked to separate out truth from the chaos in his mind. He continued to come, sit with him, trying to heed and understand, even when what came out were unnamed and unnamable fears, horrible thoughts, or bitter memories. Even then, the doctor's blue eyes, focused and bright, showed constant interest, relieving forbearance.

Sometimes they were clouded by puzzlement and doubt, and sometimes when Lalladiere became strongly suspicious or lapsed from fear momentarily into incoherent speech, they showed anguish. But intermixed were sparkles of knowing. His gentle voice was free of artifice or guile. Many times, he laughed. He asked questions but did not press them hard, especially when seeing Lalladiere could not answer. Nor did he introduce diatribe after diatribe as other doctors had, pushing so sharply, he thought with a shudder, their words penetrating like the bloodletting blades under the skin. He wanted to talk to this doctor, try hard to make progress, understand. There was little condemnation of any kind to fear. Neither did Dr. Pinel seem shocked nor even dismayed when he heard about falsifying the budget, betraying Necker, fantasizing an errant Genevieve. He did not blanch at terrifying thoughts and memories regarding people, even Manon and Victoire, his mother and father. The doctor genuinely understood, it seemed, that there might be something human in him, accepting even what Lalladiere fully believed was unacceptable – his bad, fearsome feelings. He and Dr. Pinel were wrestling tigers together. In the world of humans, he was no longer so much alone. Not, anyway, alone with the torment of his waking phantasmagoria.

Often, lying in his cell now, he heard nothing but silence. It was a strange absence of what, he dimly realized, he was accustomed to, sometimes actually missing the fiendish but familiar commanding voices. But at the same time there was easing, great relief, and returning coherence of thought. He did still need to be careful. There were unknown people, he believed, who continued to want to hurt him, destroy him. Help from Dr. Pinel was so important, appeared so large, for both body and mind. He always seemed to know what to do, how someone should live. This man could save him from fury that kept pushing up within him, from being excluded by people, and from – what was that? – a passing thing or things he yet was unable to think, far from say. Something about love, perhaps. Maybe the doctor would help him with feeling love. He remembered needing his parents, needing Genevieve. He remembered feeling he loved Genevieve. He so much wanted, struggling against fright, to have that feeling of love again.

On the farm, and in the eating room, he talked a little with the other inmates. It was difficult to do so, despite understanding from his own having gone through their kinds of problems with communicating. Several simply mumbled or were largely quiet while others ranged from saying unconnected monosyllables, obscure half-rhymes and echoes like his own had been, to a continuing, garbled stream. They spewed out words regarding things and people in the past interspersed with

references to produce or food, its sparceness, odor, repulsiveness or allure, or else eating utensils and tools, their shapes and functions, and the weight or hardness of any objects near them. Unexpectedly, both the silent and garrulous broke often into highly menacing threats to those around them. Some grimaced grotesquely or moved suddenly a distance away, pacing around in circles for several minutes before returning. But gradually he found others who were easier companions. They were those who, like himself, seemed to be improving while in the asylum. He listened to one, a soldier, who related that, in his early months, he constantly tore everything to shreds he could get his hands on. Freed from chains at Dr. Pinel's direction, he talked with the doctor regularly, stopped the tearing, and became able to sit and converse with inmates and attendants quietly. Another, a clockmaker, had come to the asylum, as Lalladiere remembered, believing his head had been decapitated by the guillotine and replaced with an ugly one. He had been given a small workshop in the antechamber of his cell, fixed broken clocks, and his work was reviewed and assessed each day. He related that he slowly came to feel a return of his capacities and was less convinced about the head and the transformation. As Lalladiere continued to allow himself interchanges with the other inmates, he was interested to meet a young ardent republican who had participated in the storming of the Tuilleries castle. Proudly the man proclaimed that he helped coerce the king into wearing a red cockade revolutionaries' cap. He believed himself at that time to be Christ the savior. Gladly however, he said, he was helped with this belief by governor Pussin's arranging to have him put together with several other inmates all sharing the same conviction of being Jesus. There, the governor invited any one of them to perform a miracle and, of course, that never happened. Rational enough to understand the point, the exercise strongly shook the young republican's grandiose belief. Following this, he met several times with Dr. Pinel and they surprisingly talked at length about his long-standing feelings of deficiency. The doctor both consoled him and gave him hope, which served to lessen the belief further.

One warm evening, as the sun was setting, Lalladiere was driving the large closed cart filled with produce around the periphery of the asylum buildings. When he reached the mid-point on the narrow roadway, he was surprised to see a group of men and women carrying pikes and rapidly approaching the main entrance. Although he was at some distance from them and the light was dimming, he could tell there were about ten to fifteen and that most of them were *sans-culottes*. Clumped together, heads leaning forward, they looked resolute and menacing. Groups of people rarely descended upon the

asylum except at that time of the disastrous massacre in September two years before. He felt a sudden surge of fear. For a moment, his body twinged, but nothing further because he now felt truly freer, able to take action. He slapped the reins to move the two large horses more rapidly forward.

By the time his cart reached the pillars at the entranceway, the group of *sans-culottes* had moved into the large front central courtyard area of the asylum. He saw the lead persons stop to talk with one of two attendants supervising an exercise period of inmates. After an animated discussion a dismayed-looking attendant stood with both arms flailing outward, and the group moved toward the building containing Dr. Pinel's apartment. Lalladiere stopped the horses and sat in the cart before the entranceway, confused, not sure what to think or do. The armed assemblage continued to advance, and on arriving at the building, two members stepped forward and began shouting demands for entry to the doctor's dwelling. Puzzled by the onslaught on such a respected person, his benefactor, Lalladiere at first thought they were making a mistake, it was he they actually came for. His detailed telling of the Tallien and Barras conspiracy – did the doctor, who seemed to believe him, turn around and inform about it to this group? On the other side, if they really came for the doctor, not him, was it to enlist him to organize a mission to undo the conspirators?

No, Lalladiere recognized, the group was too insistent and hostile. Was it that the conspirators got word that the doctor knew of them and arranged to send this militant crowd to destroy him? First, the doctor, after that, himself? Listening to the belligerent shouting of the leaders, he decided with anguish that this was the correct explanation. Immediately, he stirred the horses forward, moving into the entranceway, angling sharply sideways and stopping. The cart and horses filled the space, blocking it completely. He got out and walked quickly toward the location of the attendants and the previously exercising inmates. As he came close, he saw that one of the attendants was Denis, the other Georges, and the inmate group was all from his own building. Denis, seeing him, moved anxiously toward him.

“You’d better stay with us. These people have come to get Dr. Pinel. To arrest him.”

“Why is that? What is the reason for such a thing?”

“They didn’t say. But I’m guessing it may be because of you. The doctor swallowed your damn conspiracy story, didn’t he? Members of the Mountain, you named them, said they were plotting to

overthrow Robespierre.”

“It is the truth.”

“True or not, your story probably has done him in.”

Lalladiere, anxious, but thinking clearly in the face of danger, looked carefully at his fellow inmates. Among them were some who had been helped by the doctor. He knew that most, whether or not they were improved, were in some way grateful for the absence of chains and beatings. As for the attendants, he was not sure about Georges who was friendly with Ajacis, but Denis, he knew, was both a backer of the doctor and reliable.

“We can stop them,” he said to Denis.

“What are you saying? They are armed and very angry.”

“I have left the cart and horses blocking the entranceway. We can all get inside, making space around the produce. When they try to take the doctor away, we jump out and stop them.”

“You may be a little bit better, Lalladiere, but you still are mad. Those people will not let us stop them.”

Lalladiere was energetic and determined. He would not let the doctor be taken.

“We will take them off guard. When they stop we will talk with them, convince them that Dr. Pinel is unquestionably a patriot, devoted to the Revolution as all of us are.”

Denis hesitated. Georges, who listened but said nothing up to then, dismissed the plan completely. He immediately insisted to Denis that they better get all the inmates inside right away and let the people do what they came there to do. One of the inmates standing by, the former soldier André Bartolon, spoke up. His recent relinquishment of violent outbursts, largely because of Dr. Pinel’s interventions, had made a big impression on Denis as well as others there.

“It is very good strategy to surprise a loosely organized group like this. If you approach them

directly, they will see you as hostile and attack. Also, they will right away see that your numbers are smaller than theirs. Surprise will keep them from getting quickly organized.”

“No, no,” Georges said.

“Why is it no?” asked Denis.

“Surprise will do the opposite, stir them up and make it worse. They will go against us. Anyway, they are most likely in the right.”

“I do not think so.”

“You don’t?”

“To come here and arrest Dr. Pinel? No, I can’t believe he is a traitor.”

“If they are taken off guard,” Bartolon interjected eagerly, “they will at first think they are surrounded, not notice how many are here. And Lalladiere only wants to talk, get them to listen, not fight them.”

Despite his rejoinder to Georges, Denis paused, still uncertain about what, if anything, to do. Could he follow a plan proposed by a lunatic? Georges, deciding not to wait, gestured with a wave of his hand to several inmates to start walking toward their building a short distance away. They moved to follow him as Denis’s thoughts sped quickly over the apparent circumstances of this arrest. He had over time gained much respect for Dr. Pinel, and strangely enough, also a bit for Lalladiere as well. Despite the risky things the doctor did, he had helped the inmates and improved the asylum. And Lalladiere was smart, resourceful, struggling to improve. He persisted in the story of his unique knowledge of a conspiracy which the honest, devoted doctor seemed to believe. Denis had been afraid that would bring on his arrest, and here it was, an avenging group in the courtyard. But how did they find out about it? Was someone inside or out, or both, responsible for the group coming here?

The *sans-culottes*, having forced their way into Dr. Pinel’s apartment, suddenly began to re-emerge through the open doorway. Denis could dimly see the outline of the doctor’s downturned head behind

them. Without further hesitation, he leaped toward the cart in the entranceway, beckoning Lalladiere and the inmates who had not gone with Georges to follow him.

Quickly, Denis, together with Lalladiere, the former soldier, and two other inmates, entered the closed portion of the cart, providing room for themselves by pushing aside and re-arranging the sheaves and piles of harvested produce. Three other inmates, who were either bewildered by the events or simply slower than the rest, could not manage to get in, and they remained at the back outside. Denis, near the entry, motioned them to hide themselves on the side of the cart away from the emerging group of *sans-culottes*. Because of the dim light, neither the quick concealment within nor outside of the cart was seen.

As they pushed forward through the courtyard the pale doctor encircled within their midst, the men and women were laughing, shouting, and singing bits of revolutionary songs. Coming to the entranceway of the asylum, the frontmost members of the bobbing collection of forms stopped, startled to see the driverless cart and horses completely blocking and interrupting their onward pressing movement. One of them sprung toward the horses and another started pushing at the back of the cart. But a third jerked himself back to view the entire conveyance. The shining polished ash wood panels caught his eye, and the large horses looked smoothly muscular and powerful.

“Son of a dog,” he exclaimed to several roisterous comrades around him. “The thing is blocking us. But, fellows, have you ever seen such a wonderful looking outfit, with snow mountains of horses leading it?”

Those at his sides paused. They, together with several others back of them, moved forward to look more closely. One, a gendarme accompanying the group, walked over next to the horse-admiring man who was now trying to get one of the animals to move. With a knowing hand, the result of much farm experience with horses prior to becoming a policeman, he patted the horse’s smooth, sleek rump and continued along its back.

“Yes, a really beautiful animal,” the gendarme said as he circled around the closer horse’s head toward the second. “I say this other one is too.”

“How about having a horse like that to work for you? Five feet at the withers at least,” said another man, a stone carver, who moved closer.

“What a cart! Such a finely made wagon cart!” a cooperman said, smiling broadly.

“I haven’t seen as good a cart as that transporting valuable props to the theatre,” said Théo Rochereau, standing nearby.

“Ho, comrades, look at the prize we have here,” a rough looking artisan shouted to the remainder of the group.

Several surrounding the doctor moved forward to join those near the horses, others went to the sides of the cart, inspecting the wheels and running their hands down the smooth, well-constructed wooden panels. No one could see the inmates crouched behind the cart or divine its secret inhabitants. Held firmly by two strong *sans-culottes*, Dr. Pinel, bewildered and unsure how it happened, watched the diversion to the wood and animal form.

“Let’s move it out of the way, get on, and take the whole damn thing with us,” the stone carver, near the driver’s seat, said. A number of agreeing voices rang out.

“Sure, we’ve earned it after the works we’ve done this night.”

“This place belongs to us anyways. Don’t these ones live off our revenues?”

“And the director is a royalist traitor.”

“That’s sure a gorgeous cart and horses. We can use it in the Section for hauling and transporting.”

“Yes,” a deep voice said, laughing loudly, “and for doing government work.”

“Taking the doctor to the guillotine.”

Several persons laughed uproariously at the bitter jibes. The man who, from the time he saw and admired them was pushing at the horses, finally succeeded in getting them to start moving away. At that

moment, Lalladiere and Denis dropped the rear gate of the cart and jumped down before the group.

The onlookers standing near and the man moving the horses lurched backward. They were in the quarters of lunatics, and their discomfort from the first exploded into fear with the sudden appearance of these hidden occupants of the cart. They continued to back away as the other inmates, from inside and at the side of the cart, came to stand behind Lalladiere and Denis.

“What’s going on?” asked the butcher leader of the *sans-culottes*, brandishing his pike as he pushed through the group of frightened onlookers. When he reached the place where Denis and the inmates were standing, he shouted agitatedly into the air: “Are these ghosts? A bunch of damn lunatics?” Looking directly at them, he demanded, “Who the hell are you? What is going on?”

Lalladiere began to speak. His voice was clear, his sentences fully coherent and well-constructed. His tone was ardent, his exhortation totally sincere.

Chapter 34

When, prior to the courtyard confrontation, the *sans-culottes* entered Dr. Pinel's apartment, he and his wife Jeanne had been eating dinner. Pushing their way past the amazed woman who came to the door, a large portion of the group crowded into the small dining room and surrounded the doctor in his chair. He knew about this people's army mode of arrest – no warning, no statement of authorization, or of charge – but was thoroughly taken aback by their presence in his house. A firm supporter of the Revolution, he had done nothing against the people. Far from it, he was devoted to freedom and human rights.

"What are you doing here?" he asked the men and women standing around him, bolting up from the table while searching for their spokesman.

"We have come to arrest you, citizen. You are an enemy of the people," said the red-capped young butcher, pushing himself to the head of the tightly packed band.

"That cannot be," Pinel said. "I am a municipal officer of Paris. I have done everything I can to support and advance the republic."

Jeanne Pinel, standing behind a man in the doorway, addressed the entire group in a desperate tone, "Please, citizens, my husband Dr. Pinel is Physician of this asylum. You must know he is vital to the institution, to France. He takes care of all the people here."

"Yes, he frees the lunatics and they come walking into our houses," a round-faced woman, wearing the apron of a vegetable seller, said.

"No, those here are sick people," Pinel said. Clinging to his belief in reason, he tried to explain: "Equal, as all of us are, and also like us, they are needful of liberty. They are not possessed but people gone out of their minds because they are ill. With the treatment here, they are getting well."

"You are an aristocrat and a monarchist," the butcher said.

"I am no aristocrat. I come from St. Andrew d'Alayrec in the Languedoc, my father was a barber-surgeon as was his father before him."

"We are wasting time here," a thin, pock-faced man, also red-capped, said. He spit out Tallien's charges about Pinel's helping to hide a condemned man, repeated words from the letter expressing sympathy for the executed king.

Pinel shivered. He had indeed shielded Condorcet, the constitutionist, paragon of reason, wrongly accused of disloyalty and treason. His revulsion about the execution of the king was stamped in his memory, but he wondered how his private letter had been revealed. What madness was surrounding him now, that he should be arrested for defending and protecting a man who was a pillar of the Revolution and for abhorring, privately or in public, the bloody vengeance and murder of a king? A king who was highly injudicious and overwhelmed by circumstance, but a largely devoted and well-meaning human being.

The thin, pock-faced man came up behind Pinel and started pushing him toward the door. Turning his head around, Pinel peered directly into the man's eyes, and said:

"I have, from the beginning, supported the Revolution and the republic with all my heart. I believe in the equality and worth, right here and throughout the country, of every person, no matter who."

"No," said the greengrocer, grimacing and puffing out his urn-shaped cheeks, "you put each lunatic above the rest of us, above what we want and need. You put yourself up there, too. You are not for the people. For the republic."

Pinel shifted to look at the greengrocer. He saw hatred in the man's ugly but intelligent face, and the press of the surrounding group had become overwhelming. He said nothing.

"Come on, let's go," the butcher said, "the man is accused. The Tribunal will decide." Three in the group pushed forward and prodded the doctor out the doorway, down the stairs, and into the courtyard.

There, several minutes later, Lalladiere, Denis, and the other inmates, emerged and stood facing the entire group. Pinel, like those around him, was astonished. He stared, and for a brief moment, he and

Lalladiere looked into each other's eyes. The usually calm, searching eyes were filled, Lalladiere saw, with surprise and apprehension. Pinel now expected the worst, but after Lalladiere began speaking to the group directly and with complete coherence, the alarm building within him changed into fascination.

"You, good citizens, must stop what you are doing," Lalladiere said. "You must not take away this good man, the director of this asylum, the citizen doctor Philippe Pinel."

The pock-faced red-hatted man, who at first was speechless with astonishment, found his voice with a blast, "Who the hell are you to block us this way?" He lowered his pike and pointed it menacingly.

"My name is Guillaume Lalladiere. I, an inmate here, was the first assistant to Consul General Jacques Necker. You remember our great, beloved Minister Necker? Do you not remember him?"

"Shit yes, so what?" the butcher, standing next to the thin man, angrily called out.

"Minister Necker was the start of it all, that is what. Do you not remember?" Lalladiere continued, words and thoughts coming clearly and rapidly to his mind, "Because of him we, the people, all *sans-culottes*, fought at the water's edge, the drawbridges, and the turrets of the dreary Bastille fortress at the height of the blazing, hot summer. I was there and climbed inside over the garden rooftops. Because of Minister Necker who doubled the representatives of the Third Estate, we started the Revolution. We started our Revolution, the beginning of liberty, fraternity, and equality, on the day the named Consul General Necker was fired by the king. We rose up that day, that glorious day, and started the overthrow of the privileged classes."

"What, you damn lunatic," the still angry butcher retorted, "has that to do with this doctor?"

Others around him, recovered from surprise, now muttered challenging and derisive epithets. Standing further back, Théo Rochereau, the only man in the group who had seen Lalladiere before, did not, in this animated state, recognize him as the previously inert man in his house.

"Dr. Pinel has helped me. Has been making me well. I have been a lunatic. That's right, insane. And I was driven to that state when..." Lalladiere paused, became momentarily anxious, then with a squaring of his shoulders, he continued, "when the minister left, that great hero went out of the country, never to

return. I became then the lowest of the low, living in chains and filth, out of my mind. Now, because of this doctor, I am better. The incomparable Dr. Pinel. He is no traitor, not in any way. He, like me, like Minister Necker, like Necker's assistant – myself – is devoted to the people, to all of us. He is a patriot.”

The group became quiet. André Bartolon, the soldier, moved forward to stand at Lalladiere's side. “Comrades, you see here a soldier of the nation. I have fought in Valmy, I have fought in the low countries, all for our glorious republic. My head was burst with the sound of guns and I was interned here at Bicêtre. And at first I was chained for month after month against a wall in a dank, dark dungeon cell. Dr. Pinel said to remove my chains and I am free.”

“You are a lunatic now, regardless of what you were before,” the greengrocer snorted. He looked around, nodded at a short, rotund woman behind him, and with a gesture of appeal to several men standing behind her, including Rochereau, he declaimed, “You should not be free to hurt our wives and children.”

“Do you not see I am all right? I would not hurt anyone except, as a soldier, in the line of duty. And soon, very soon, I expect to return to fight faithfully again for our country.”

Two more inmates came forward from behind the cart. They insisted the *sans-culottes* listen to them also, and they spoke coherently and with strong feeling, as surprising to themselves as it was effective with their listeners. This doctor, they said, put no lancets into their heads for bleeding, and did not have their insides continually purged, as done in other asylums. They were both poor but he listened to them, spoke kindly, gave them freedom, and both of them were better. They were sure he must be a great humanitarian, and could never be a traitor. What was more, he was vitally needed by all in the asylum. The assembled group of *sans-culottes*, which had been murmuring up to that point, now seemed entirely to be listening. The clockmaker with the decapitation delusion, came out from inside the cart and earnestly proclaimed, without going into the strange details, that Dr. Pinel had saved him, as a devoted *sans-culotte* himself, from the guillotine.

“Are we going to believe a shitload of lunatics?” the butcher, standing in front of the group, asked loudly. Then, he addressed Lalladiere:

“Take this damn cart out of the way. We are going to bring this treasonous monarchist in. Necker, eh? You and Necker? Well, all of you are just plain raving, degenerate maniacs.” As he spoke, close to Lalladiere’s face, he shoved him and caused him to stumble.

Denis, seeing the shove, moved forward to prevent further contact or violence. Up to that point he had stood by, not sure what to do. This was not because of lingering concerns about Dr. Pinel’s loyalty, he was convinced that the doctor’s competence outweighed any other considerations. Also, he was suspicious about who was behind the arrest. But, moved and amazed by the testimonies and organized behavior of the inmates, he had momentarily forgotten he was there both to control and protect.

Lalladiere gained his balance, gesturing to Denis that he was all right. “A raving maniac?” he said, loud enough to be heard by the butcher and those behind. “We have indeed all been out of our heads at one time or another. That is why we have come. But still you must see, you must know, we are human. Like yourselves, our minds contain ordinary human thoughts. With no food we ache with hunger, when it is cold we shiver, from warmth we are soothed. We all have felt – whatever that means to us now – sorrow, loyalty, hope, even love. And we know fear – much, much fear. Now, because of this doctor, Dr. Pinel, we can reason, know for ourselves that we are fully human, not degenerate worms. And we reason well enough to know that Dr. Pinel is dedicated to the Revolution and the republic, to liberty, equality, and fraternity.”

“Were you really assistant to Necker? You do speak pretty high-faluting.” asked the pock-faced man. He turned to the men standing behind him as Lalladiere nodded forcefully. “You know, Necker stood up for us against those other conniving ministers, over the queen, even the king. If he was here now, we’d all have bread, and there’d be no price control. This fellow says he once worked for Necker, is on the people’s side. Maybe he’s all right. Maybe, anyway, we should get out of this place, the doctor is probably all right, too.”

“Do you think this doctor is crying over the death of Louis Capet?” the stone carver, still standing near the horses, asked Lalladiere loudly.

“No,” Lalladiere answered, “no more than being sorry for any small person’s death.”

Lalladiere's reply was partly drowned out by the other inmates who, after the pock-faced man's concession, began openly assenting, laughing and nodding, raising up a hand or arm. One got down on his knees in supplication to the group. Those who spoke before repeated vivid parts of what they said on the doctor's behalf, an inmate shouted that Dr. Pinel was no monarchist but an ardent patriot. The *sans-culottes* began to shuffle back and forth, tilt down their spikes, and mumble to each other with uncertainty. Still standing, restrained, in the midst of the group, Pinel dropped his head toward his chest. He knew he cared for the inmates as human beings, was very moved to hear what the suffering men said. What's more, they had spoken sounding clear and sane, Lalladiere especially, to a defiant mob. He felt proud of his work. He raised his head and looked over at the cart and the large horses which had disgorged the inmates. Chariot of gods. Conveyance of deliverance.

"Well, I have to admit," the butcher said, "they've been saying this big shot doctor stopped that damn bloodletting. It may surprise you all but I never could understand it, pushing out blood, losing blood from the head. That can't help a person. Could be he actually is doing some kind of good here."

"A man who thinks like this doctor does is probably an aristocrat," the greengrocer snapped. He then looked thoughtful, and followed with: "But, anyway who knows, if I became a lunatic, maybe I would want the likes of him to be my doctor."

"You better hire him up, because you're not too far from being a loony now," said the round-faced vegetable seller familiarly.

Several members of the group laughed with relief. Then, through some continuing sounds of shuffling and uncertainty, one person called out, "The soldier fought for us in the war. He swears the man is not a traitor." Another person in the group, noticing that Denis, the asylum attendant, was silent, moved toward him to ask whether the lunatics could be saying something true.

"The medical director," Denis replied earnestly and without hesitation, "is an upstanding man in his profession, a kind, virtuous doctor who would never commit treason."

From the midst of the group, Rochereau, who had been staring at Lalladiere for some time, broke out into a loud exclamation of surprise. He suddenly realized who this man was who spoke so long and well.

“He’s the Goddamned same man. This one saying about being human and all that is the very same escaped maniac I told all of you about. The one my son brought to my house. God in heaven, he’s actually all right. Not a bit crazy anymore.”

At Rochereau’s side, a man who was a reluctant follower and hanger-on from the first, was convinced. He walked brusquely away from the group and started to leave the courtyard.

“Let’s get the hell out of here,” he said loudly and several others started to go with him, murmuring about other cleanup work to do that day.

“What about that Condorcet fellow? Didn’t this doctor salt him away?” asked the greengrocer.

Pinel’s strong feelings for his friend stirred him to open and dangerous defiance. “Falsely accused,” he shouted.

Others, for whom the name Condorcet was unknown, began to walk out, citing the spookiness of the asylum, the fact that Pinel was, after all, a doctor, and that possibly he was doing something for poor inmates, whether or not they could tell what it was. But it didn’t seem like he could be doing treason. The butcher, responding to the general mood, acknowledged that Tallien might, just this time, be wrong.

As the first of those departing, the reluctant hanger-on approached the entranceway and grabbed one horse’s halter. He turned the gray and tan dray, moved it to a spot partly outside and shouted, “Did anyone, lunatic or saint, ever see such big, beautiful horses?”

Everyone, the previously worked-up men, sturdy and devoted women, and their leaders slowly began to go out, leaving the relieved Pinel, proud Denis, and the triumphant inmates in the courtyard. Some of the *sans-culottes* group were disappointed, some found themselves surprisingly glad at not for once having to enforce bloody rectitude and vengeance. Others felt confused, following the rest but not quite sure what had occurred. The broad-shouldered stone carver grasped the halters of the still partly obstructing horses, and though at first reluctant to respond to the unfamiliar hand, the animals followed him out of the entranceway. As the departing group walked past where he parked the cart, each person stopped for several moments to look and admire the snorting, sleek, and powerful Percheron horses.

Chapter 35

A month later, in the hottest part of the summer, during the time on the revolutionary calendar called Thermidor, the conspiracy against Robespierre was realized. Tallien, ever skillful, played a dramatic part in the final scenario. Later, he was known as a Thermidorean hero.

After the Festival of the Supreme Being, where Robespierre's power had peaked, he steadily lost influence in both the Committee of Public Safety and the Convention at large. Government issued paper money sank to 36 per cent of its face value, there were severe food shortages, and bread prices reached an all-time high. Robespierre's continuing pursuit of virtue in all parts of the government was, as Tallien predicted, wearing thin, grieving and frightening many of his influential but flawed, sometimes outright dishonest, colleagues.

Early in the summer, allegedly for reasons of health, Robespierre absented himself from governmental meetings. Many suspected he was using the time to build a case for more arrests and guillotining. He, on the other hand, spoke with visitors, deputies and associates, about moderating the terror, leading the country primarily by exhortation to sacrifice, and with even more constancy and intensity than before, the presentation of high principles and incorruptibility.

Robespierre's absence and ambiguous rumors about intensification or change of his policies were exploited to the full by Tallien, Barras, and Fouché. Behind the scenes, and sometimes through implication on the floor of the Convention itself, each in his own way made sure that deputies with reservations about any facet of the administration believed they had become marked men. Robespierre, together with Saint-Just, was surely working diligently on extensive cases against them. To an equally large number of those, otherwise, who feared Robespierre's rumored plans for moderation of the terror because in that case they would lose their influence, the three conspirators emphasized imminent realization of their worst anxieties. Dissenters and traitors would soon no longer be brought to swift and total justice, and the current government, including these hard liners in particular, would be completely undermined.

When Robespierre finally came to the Convention and made a speech seeming to embrace both positions, he played right into the intrigue. He alluded to the corruption of a number of deputies, refusing, for the moment, to give specific names, and spoke at length of accomplishments and of his absolute devotion to high principle and great sacrifices he made for the safety of the Revolution. Then, for the first time in Robespierre's tenure with the Convention, the speech was not routinely referred – later believed by many to be the work of conspirators – to be printed for the records and for wide distribution. It was therefore downgraded in importance and could not be studied or re-assessed. The next day, when Robespierre was prepared to speak again, "He will denounce you," was whispered from deputy to deputy. And he was prevented from doing so.

Saint-Just spoke first. When Robespierre came to the rostrum, Tallien immediately moved forward and raised a point of order, denouncing his leadership. Robespierre tried to reply, but the president of the Convention, Collot d'Herbois, as previously arranged in cahoots with the plotters, began ringing a signal bell that drowned him out. Tallien then took out a silver handled knife, which had been provided to him for the occasion by Thérèse, and held it threateningly over Robespierre's head. A moment of shocked silence followed in the meeting hall, and he thrust it, with a sneer and a flourish, toward his own chest. Holding the knife point perilously close, he shouted to the entire assemblage that he would rather die than be led by a tyrant. Much noise from every side. Wide confusion. Robespierre again tried to speak and the bell again obscured his words. One of the deputies in the rear of the hall shrilly called out that Robespierre should be arrested. Another stood up, demanded attention – no bell sounded – and he harshly ridiculed Robespierre's claims of purity and self-sacrifice. Loud denunciations rang out throughout the hall, one deputy poignantly reminding everyone of the death of Danton and accusing Robespierre of betraying him. Robespierre turned for help from his former supporters but, by then, all had abandoned him.

The arrest and guillotining followed swiftly. After Robespierre and some cohorts were taken from the Convention hall, an attempt was at first made to save them by the still loyal National Guard. A special military force, however, was dispatched by the Convention – Barras judiciously arranged to get himself appointed as the commander—to take Robespierre into custody. That night, at 2 A.M., Barras boldly led his soldiers to assault the city hall where Robespierre and his close supporters – Saint-Just, Couthon, Augustin Robespierre, among others – had taken refuge. Within a few hours, they were all taken by cart

past the tightly shuttered windows of Robespierre's own dwelling on the rue Honoré to the Place de la Republic, to be beheaded.

Lalladiere heard the story of Robespierre's death from Genevieve during one of her visits. Although they now talked regularly and without strain about all current matters, he, with a sharp intake of breath, suddenly stopped the conversation completely. He sat motionless, mute for several minutes, and Genevieve began to worry about what might happen. He was not, she knew, completely well yet. He still referred at times to people talking about him. And she never did fully understand his conviction about a plot against Danton and Robespierre. But he was trying, struggling to emerge from his morass. For so long, she had felt pity and remorse for him, and now she had recovered her early intense feelings of love. She thought constantly about the visits, before and after, couldn't wait to see him, and would have come daily if the asylum rules permitted. His rich, full-bodied voice, once more ranging expressively from high to low, thrilled her. He talked again of real emotions, loyalties, and perceptions, and she felt glad, warmed inside. She knew him always to be reflective, but he seemed now even wiser than before. He commented with striking knowledge and perception on the news she brought him, regularly relayed to her by her father, of inside government doings. When she went home to write her account of the Revolution and the times, she imagined herself to be somehow putting down his history also, to be tracing, on better days, a turn upward from madness. Like a butterfly, she thought, he was emerging from a long enclosure in a hard chrysalis, beautiful but delicately made and subject to capricious damage.

The news of Robespierre's death did not undo him. After the silent minutes while Genevieve fretted, he brought himself to speak of a discussion he had with Denis about the distressing recent attempt to arrest Dr. Pinel. Both, in the courtyard, had seen the look of worry on the doctor's face, that momentary lapse of courage. Lalladiere told Denis his own summoning up of courage, facing down of the group of *sans-culottes*, had come to him from Dr. Pinel – the doctor's courageous strikes against the commonplace, the standing up and forwarding, against significant opposition, medical and governmental, of which all there were aware, of freedom and humane treatment at the asylum. And relating this to Genevieve, he added seriously, from the courage required by Dr. Pinel to stick with a lunatic like him.

Lalladiere's report of the conversation was spotty, as the death of Robespierre kept pushing at the

edges of his mind. He was glad though that he was able to convey the essence of what he said to Denis about the doctor's courage. Doing that brought back to him some courage to face the plight of the nation. Later, alone in his cell, he realized he was angry. Not vehement, overwhelming rage, but anger, a feeling he had not allowed himself for a long, long time. And as he turned over in his mind the condition of the country and the sequences of events leading to Robespierre's demise, his anger became sharp and focused. The conspirators he overheard, Tallien and Barras, were victorious. They managed – how, he couldn't tell, except that dedicated guile and hypocrisy often had far-reaching effects – to elevate Robespierre, induce him, in a twisted series of events, to eliminate Danton, and then undo himself. As they predicted, Robespierre very likely had set himself up for some of his undoing, and they pushed it, enlarged it, and brought it to a finish.

He heard a whispered voice. *Degenerate reptile*. No, he said out loud firmly. "Not this time. This time I was not at fault. I tried over and over to tell about the conspiracy but no one would listen. Because of my insanity." Then, quietly to himself: damn it all, insane or not – back then I couldn't tell – none of them wanted to know anything about it. Only Dr. Pinel seemed to believe me. He didn't do anything, though. Didn't report the conspirators or stop them. The doctor did nothing. The anger grew greater, included Dr. Pinel, and it began to torture him. He couldn't stand feeling angry at the man of courage, the one who really helped him. Once again, he spoke aloud, "I was not responsible for this thing, for the victory of the conspirators." The whispering voice was troubling him no longer, but anger at the doctor tore at him. He lay down on his mat, tried to sleep. Disturbing dreams beset him throughout the night.

Pinel, after his arrest and deliverance in the courtyard, could not bring himself to visit the inmates who had spoken in his behalf. It was not because he wasn't grateful. His life, he knew, had been at stake in that ominous intrusion and arrest. On the contrary, he felt overwhelmed by the debt he owed his patients. It was he this time who had been so needy, desperately needy. He could express appreciation, and soon after he did so without fanfare. But he felt now he could not do enough for them, live up to their needs, fix them right away. He must make sure to do everything right, save every single one. Challenged, and flooded with feelings, he decided, for the time being, to retreat.

He continued to supervise all inmates' treatment. And he put into practice his unique plan to spend time regularly with the attendants, together with governor Pussin, to get as much information as possible.

Despite embarrassment about his current reticence, he repeated to all his usual exhortation to observe, "Observe carefully, observe well." At first he learned little that was helpful. From Ajacis, who had never been found out, mostly the reverse. He at length described each inmate's more disgusting habits, frequent challenging encounters and threatening behavior, making thinly-veiled protestations that all must again be chained. He tilted his head, looked leeringly at Dr. Pinel, and when the doctor did not look either impressed or distressed, he piled on further exasperating details. Other attendants, less rancorous, brought in bits of useful information about an inmate speaking constantly about financial reverses, another having episodes of mania only in the evenings, or one fearing to go into the mess hall because of seeing ghosts at the door. For Denis, these reporting sessions were welcome. He was especially glad to have an opportunity to present observations from the disturbing visit of Lalladiere's mother and stepfather. That episode continued to puzzle him, and he recounted it to governor Pussin and Dr. Pinel as though he were revealing a humiliating secret. He reproduced it for them word for word.

"Very disturbing. Terrible," Pinel said immediately. "Have you seen the like, Pussin?"

"Visitors are odd at times, but these people seem much worse."

"Relentlessly coarse and brutal, I think."

"It was like there were two animals," Denis volunteered. "Mad dogs or rats tearing the man apart."

"The mother may herself be insane, or close to it," Pinel declared.

"Not to presume, doctor, but I myself thought that. I said to myself, 'maybe I should put her into one of the cells. She sure is doing nothing good for this inmate, if she ever did.'"

"We cannot let them visit anymore," governor Pussin said, shaking his head.

Pinel nodded silently, wrapped in thoughts about the mother's behavior.

"I can't think in this case," Pussin went on, "of things to do to help the inmate with this." Pursing his lips, a jagged furrow lining his already craggy face, he added, "What is this, doctor? Is the craziness in the blood?"

Pinel roused from his musings with a laugh. "In the blood, Pussin? What blood is this you speak of? Blood sucked out from the scalp to cure the lunatics, or that which flows from the severed necks on the guillotine supposedly to cure the ills of our nation? The blood of the wounded and dying which stains the ground of the battlefields? Or is it perhaps blue blood, the kind recently alleged by the *sans-culottes* to be flowing through my own veins?"

"No, doctor, nothing like that. And we don't make light of your ordeal. A terrible event. My wife and I watched, not knowing what to do, but were very concerned."

"I understand," Pinel said warmly. Then, still smiling as he turned to Denis, "Do you recall how my not-so-long arms and legs were likely to be torn apart, pikes all around me and the captors pulling me every which way?"

"I certainly do, doctor. I tried to intervene, tell them of your patriotism."

"Now, don't worry a flyspeck, both of you. I have learned much from my close call. I understand that I cannot become self-satisfied with good intentions. That all can be taken away for reasons having little to do with what you are and what you have accomplished. And I have had the wondrous opportunity to see our patients improved, rising above themselves to help another." Pinel bowed his head, and eyes still twinkling, he addressed Pussin:

"But, then, good governor, I do not know the answer to your question."

Leaving the meeting soon afterward, Pinel felt better. His joking about the dangerous event and the responses relieved some pressure from his own fears and resentments. He thought of Lalladiere's appeal in the courtyard, his moving affirmation of himself and the other inmates as human beings. Living, breathing, sensing human beings. He felt admiration for the man, and encouragement. As for the mystery of a connection, of Lalladiere's parents' effects on him, Pinel knew that the great Rousseau, for many the wellspring of the Revolution, convincingly affirmed that all children were born with a clean slate, *tabula rasa*. If, therefore, insanity were produced by effects in the environment, by actions of human beings upon each other, then he was on the right track. Insanity could also be reversed by human action. He resolved to overcome his vanity and sensibility about meeting with the inmates. He would learn more,

arrange to see and talk with them, especially Lalladiere, again.

Chapter 36

Face to face with Dr. Pinel, Lalladiere managed to tell him about his angry feelings. To his surprise, there was no punishment or retribution and the doctor continued to see him. One or two times a day, for short periods, they met and talked. And he continued to improve. It was not clear what part the meetings played, but he was becoming increasingly attached to Dr. Pinel, able to talk about his thoughts without great difficulty. The man was warm and giving, interested in observing only and thereby understanding and guiding. Lalladiere realized that together they were finding answers to never-before-conceived-of questions. He applied himself and more and more gained glimmers of comprehension. Above all, regardless of what he said, regardless of the thoughts or incidents he related, Dr. Pinel did not despise him. Another person, a living, breathing person, did not despise him.

He also got much pleasure and assurance from his work on the farm. Outside of the asylum for long periods, there was also little danger from Ajacis. Genevieve's visits encouraged him. His appreciation of her statuesque allure and personal qualities jumbled together with his fear of love were beginning to separate out so he could face them. He told Dr. Pinel that he had been terrified, at the time he first became ill, that Genevieve would fall apart, become crazy herself. Not knowing the meaning or importance of that crisis or the reasons for Lalladiere's fear of loving, Dr. Pinel simply reassured him that Genevieve surely had remained intact and sane. Often, then, he spoke at length about their conversations during her visits. Dr. Pinel, applying his principles of substituting beneficial passions for disordered ones, encouraged him, saying that Genevieve could be helpful for his sickness.

As he talked more and more about her, he began to allow himself to feel, despite constant fear about devastating consequences, more and more warmth and love. When they were together, he studied the contours of her face, listened carefully to her ideas and well-told stories, felt a long-too-unfamiliar thrill when he saw the smiling look in her eyes. He wanted to do things for her, and increasingly believed himself able to accomplish that, an exhilarating feeling. He had, above all, a sense of trusting her. Not completely, not possible yet. But the feeling of trust was growing more as talking and visiting days went by.

Genevieve watched his sensitive mouth as he talked. He somehow seemed enriched and made wiser by his descent into a world of unreality and alienation. She remembered the touch of his long, well-shaped fingers and again admired them as he rested his hands loosely on his lap. She looked now, wished, for his return, leaving the asylum and living in the world. A time when they could be together. She was, when the tragedy struck, about to be his wife, feeling virtually already wedded. Perhaps they could go back to something close to that.

She still could not fathom why his breakdown happened, harbored yet the sense of being at fault. But she was more her own woman now. In her writings, she had become more confident, putting down sharp opinions, risking trouble when they appeared currently in print. She was disturbed about the death of Robespierre, believing that, despite the crazy excesses of the reign of terror, he had forwarded the glorious liberty and equality brought by the Revolution. As for the five man Directory that came to power after Robespierre's execution, she documented the details of its formation and raised questions about, even criticized, the members.

She got herself, as her feelings for Lalladiere strengthened, into a situation she believed she could not tell him about. The two men, Christiane Desrouches and Antoine Vaillier, who at the dinner party flirted with her relentlessly, continued to increase their attentions to her. According to her mother, both were eminently eligible, far better than the crazy man she visited. And she, despite her increasing independence, and the re-igniting of her first love, had without protest allowed each one to visit. It wasn't because of interest in either one, though both were attractive, intelligent, and in their own ways ardently devoted to the Revolution. Nor was she intimidated by her mother who constantly insisted that she see them. It was the sting of culpability. She could not shake her feeling of blame for what happened to Lalladiere before. Despite her fervent wish to be with him, she feared she might be bad, even dangerous for him.

Lalladiere, on his side, was attending to a person unknown to Genevieve. He had never stopped doing so, but this was neither a prospective lover nor a revolutionary champion. Instead, it was the boy who had befriended him in the midst of his world of fear.

"I've been thinking about Jean-Luc," he said one day to Dr. Pinel.

“Who is that person?”

“He is a boy who lives near here, in Gentilly. I met him when I ran away.”

“Yes, I remember now.”

“You do? What is it you remember?”

“Governor Pussin told me about you and that boy. Denis, the attendant, too.”

“What did they say?”

“You also followed him when you ran away the second time, went behind him all the way to the Place de la Republic where the queen was being executed.”

“I couldn’t watch that execution. A willful woman, enemy of Necker. She hated to lose royal prerogatives, any of them. But she didn’t have to die.”

“What about the boy?”

“He was happy, wonderful, full of spirit. When I was hiding in the street, he made me less afraid. And he took me home, right into his home to meet his mother and father. Where also I could rest and sleep.”

“Is this a joyous feeling, passion, toward this boy?”

“I feel,” Lalladiere hesitated – why was it still hard to say? He started again. “I feel – more than that, I believe, though he is a child, he has special discernment, that he knows more about me than I know about myself.”

“There is a bond, an exceptional bond between you?”

“I would like to have a son like him.”

“Do you want to see him?”

“I want very much to do that.”

Pinel later requested that Pussin contact Théo and Suzette Rochereau to arrange for a visit from Lalladiere. In his free comings and goings on the farm, Lalladiere had proved his reliability. Pussin told this to the Rochereaus, saying that Lalladiere was much better. When meeting their son on the street before, he explained, Lalladiere became attached to Jean-Luc, and such attachments were considered beneficial for the sick person’s recovery. Théo acknowledged that, when seeing Lalladiere in the asylum courtyard, he was surprisingly different. But he never heard of such things as beneficial visits. Everyone knew that lunatics were possessed, there was no cure, and he did not want someone like Lalladiere again in his house. Suzette intervened, insisting the idea was really quite all right. Jean-Luc liked Lalladiere from the first, saw goodness in him, and the poor man then and now clearly needed help. Finally, after Pussin remarked that Dr. Pinel himself strongly approved and actually initiated the idea, Théo relented. He felt respect for the doctor, who was cleared of the charges, and who stood there honorably in the courtyard while the group was holding him.

Several days later, Lalladiere appeared alone at an appointed time at the Rochereau’s door. Standing beside his mother in the doorway, Jean-Luc greeted the familiar man with a whoop and grabbed his arm to lead him inside. Suzette prepared cups of chocolate for three, Théo being away at work, and signaled them to the kitchen area to sit at the heavy oak table. Jean-Luc, his curiosity sharpened over time, asked questions about the asylum. How many inmates were there? Where did they eat? Did they sleep on mattresses or straw? Lalladiere answered he didn’t know how many because there were several buildings. They ate, now that all were out of chains, in a large hall together, and they slept on straw. Suzette uncomfortably tried to make conversation about the poor food conditions in Paris, the heavy increase in trafficking vehicles on their street, and also about the weather. Lalladiere responded amicably and, in each case, briefly. When they finished their chocolate, he requested, even more amicably, permission to take Jean-Luc to hear a street musician play near the center of Paris.

“Do you know your way in the center?” Suzette asked.

“I was born near there. My mother lives there still. But we shall not walk. I have money from my work to pay for a hackney cab.”

"Your mother lives there?" Her tone conveyed a sudden realization. Despite sympathy with her son's friend, she had not quite thought of him as having a mother.

"You told me, Maman, that Guillaume had lots of trouble before, but look how he is so fine now," Jean-Luc said. "I want very much to go hear the street musician."

"I also would like to take Jean-Luc to meet my consort," Lalladiere said.

"Your consort? You mean you have gotten married?" Suzette now sounded incredulous. No one indicated any connections with friends or family when he was taken away from there before.

"No, not exactly. Almost. I intend to be."

"When I first saw him hiding, I knew he was lonely," Jean-Luc said, nodding at Suzette. "So everything is good now, right?" he said to Lalladiere, smiling.

"I suppose it will be all right," Suzette said. "The people at the asylum told us you were much improved and could be trusted. Théo did tell me you spoke good in the asylum courtyard. But you must both be back before nightfall."

"Thank you, citizenness. Maybe –" Lalladiere started, as he turned to give a delayed response to Jean-Luc. "Maybe it is all good, and maybe it isn't. We shall see."

Suzette hesitated, puzzled by Lalladiere's response. But she knew Jean-Luc cared well for himself on his own, and he already had moved halfway out the door. As Lalladiere stood up to follow him, she put her hand on his arm, asked the exact location of the street musician, the name and address of the consort. When he got to giving Genevieve's full name, she, looking impressed, asked whether it was the well-known government deputy's family. Lalladiere confirmed it was. She nodded and walked the two of them to the door, waving goodbye to her son when they got out into the street.

The street musician, who was entertaining a fairly large crowd when Lalladiere and Jean-Luc arrived, was singing and accompanying himself on the violin. He stood on a light wooden platform in front of a large tapestry showing pictures of storied personages of his songs. He sang about heroes of the

Revolution, amorous liaisons, and the marvels as well as antics of ancient gods and goddesses. Nothing remotely liturgical was included. It was a lively performance, and many of the listeners, well-dressed bourgeois as well as humbly clothed Parisians, made rhythmic movements and chanted harmonically or, without embarrassment, unharmonically along with the musician. Lalladiere recognized many of the representations, including those of gods and goddesses, painted on the tapestry, and he provided background and explanations to an excited and appreciative Jean-Luc.

The boy became quite animated with the music. The skillful violinist accompanied one of the pieces, the story of the god Pan and Syrinx, with a lively gigue imitating the rhythm and pitch of Pan's playing of pipes. Jean-Luc, entranced, began dancing vigorously on the surrounding cobblestones. Giving himself room as he rotated about with abandon, he jumped back a short distance from Lalladiere and all the others standing there. While breathlessly kicking out his feet, he suddenly found he had gone too far. Right at his side, bearing down on him, was a large carriage led by two galloping horses.

The driver, seeing Jean-Luc immediately ahead of the horses, attempted mightily to rein them in. But it was too late, the momentum of their very fast gait plunged them toward where the boy was dancing. Lalladiere, head already turned to follow Jean-Luc's movements, instantaneously took in the situation. He dove reflexly without a moment's hesitation toward the prized boy, and with an unbroken swooping motion encircled him in his arms. They rolled together, forming a large ball with Lalladiere cushioning Jean-Luc's body until they landed at the side of the horses' path.

The horses continued past the spot of Jean-Luc's misreckoned dancing and then stopped. The driver got off to check on whether boy and man were all right. Both were lying on the pavement, breathing very hard, bodies jerking with fright and beginning relief. Jean-Luc, who recovered first, turned toward Lalladiere and put his hand on his shoulder.

"Jesus, what a turnaround! You now are my rescuer. Saved me from getting crippled, or maybe even killed."

"Yes, I am so very, very glad. Are you hurt?"

"No, not a bit." Jean-Luc said, standing up and brushing off his clothes.

"I liked watching you dance." Lalladiere said with a small smile, also getting rid of dirt as he got up. "That was a gigue to shake the grapes off the vines of Pan himself. But you must be more careful."

"These are dangerous times, my father keeps telling me," the quick-witted boy joined in. "Who in the world would think it could be dangerous to dance in the street?"

"It's probably because you forgot," Lalladiere said, still smiling more broadly, "to honor the Revolution by singing the new song *La Marseillaise*." A return of humor was one of the best rewards of increasing sanity. "Come on. Let's go see Genevieve Raston."

As they walked on together – it was only a short distance to the Raston's rue d'Anjou house, no betrayal of Suzette's trust regarding mode of transport – Jean-Luc asked about Genevieve. He wanted to know who she was, and with the openness, yet unhampered, of youth, he asked about Lalladiere's feelings about her. Lalladiere attempted to answer in kind, telling his young friend that she visited him regularly at the asylum, he had loved her deeply before, and he believed he loved her now. Because he was officially allowed to go out that day, he wanted, although he had not told her in advance, to see her at her home, show her his improvement. Jean-Luc said he was glad to see Lalladiere's change.

"Why," he asked, "were you so frightened when I first saw you hiding in the street?"

"I don't really know. But I always thought I did bad things and had to pay for them."

"Son of a dog," Jean-Luc said, laughing, "if I had to pay for all the bad things I did, I'd be very, very poor. Far poorer even than I am."

Lalladiere laughed too.

He remembered well the exact appearance and location of the Raston house. Coming to the door, he knocked briskly. Rochelle soon opened it, and was immediately taken aback to see him. She knew Genevieve regularly visited him at the asylum but was not at all prepared to see him at the house that day together with – even more surprising – an unknown young boy. More disconcerting, she had come to the door from the parlor room where the two men, Desrouches and Vaillier, were sitting by the fire, drinking mocha coffee with Genevieve.

Chapter 37

“Guillaume, what a surprise to see you,” Genevieve said, rising as they entered. She was pleased despite the awkwardness of the situation. Seeing the unknown Jean-Luc beside Lalladiere, she exclaimed with the natural hospitality she always felt toward children, “And you have brought a special young man with you.” Her warm smile heartened Jean-Luc who, never having been in a well-furnished, middle class Paris dwelling, looked around curiously. Lalladiere introduced him.

The two men were sitting uncomfortably in the parlor. Up to that moment, they had been at each side of Genevieve, leaning toward her to narrow the distance from their satin brocaded chairs, one with body held straight like a tilted lance and the other crouched with his left shoulder pushed insinuatingly forward, assiduously carrying out the time-honored rivalrous pursuit of the desirable female. Both were openly bothered by Genevieve’s very familiar greeting to the visitors. They rose in unaccustomed unison, the deputy quickly brushing some pastry crumbs from his coat, the lieutenant brisk and immaculate. When Genevieve introduced each one, the lieutenant bowed his head and sat down, and the deputy lackadaisically offered a hand first to Lalladiere, then leaning down slightly, to Jean-Luc. Not a firm handshake, he simply proffered all five fingers into their extended hands. He managed, when he again sat down, to move his chair closer to where Genevieve was located on the settee. The lieutenant had perched himself further forward in a tense position on his chair.

“Have you both been in an accident?” Genevieve asked. She right away noticed street dust on their clothing which they hadn’t fully disposed of.

“He saved me. I was about to be trampled by a coach and horses in the street.” Jean-Luc volunteered, smiling proudly at Lalladiere. Although not yet adjusted to his surroundings, the boy, a product of the revolutionary times, was used to being with collections of adults.

“That’s terrifying. How did it happen? Are you quite all right?” Genevieve asked.

Jean-Luc, eyes glistening, launched into a detailed description of the circumstances of his narrow

escape. He was quite charming and theatrical, humming little bits of the musician's tunes, swaying his shoulders to suggest the movements of his dancing, and then showing, with a flourish, how Lalladiere took him with an embrace out of the onrushing horses' path. The lieutenant stared balefully as the story of street heroics unfolded. The deputy nervously brushed more crumbs off his lap. Lalladiere, nodding intermittently during the boy's account, was distracted by the presence of the two men in Genevieve's parlor. Feelings of jealousy could turn around within him to become severe. Though each day persecutory ideas were less intense, they still were ready to boil up and take over. Genevieve cared for him, he knew that. Was this an onslaught he had to overcome?

Genevieve expressed sympathy to the boy and – a reassurance for Lalladiere – she turned to him with profuse compliments, pointedly adding this to his past accomplishments which she carefully spelled out. The lieutenant, waiting irritated until she finished, said the episode reminded him of the time he himself got wounded saving someone's life. He then elaborately described leaping in front of a disarmed fellow officer during a close bayonet combat. It was an account of outstanding bravery, but it plunged the group into silence. Jean-Luc, well beyond his years, seemed to have an appreciation of the cross-currents in the situation, and he giggled loudly. That vexed Desrouches, who recognized clearly that the intruding friend and attractive boy loomed up as greater rivals than the contentious lieutenant, and he threw in unexpected support.

“That's a very laudatory account, Vaillier. If all our soldiers performed even just a little like that, we would wipe up those Austrians in no time.”

Genevieve was troubled by the thrust and parrying, both the lieutenant's diversion and Desrouches's sham collaboration. The presence of Guillaume in her house, a sure indication of his unimpeded improvement, increased her distress and embarrassment about having allowed these men to pursue her. She shifted the conversation to a topic on which Guillaume, she knew, would shine.

“We were talking before about the fall of Robespierre and the many changes that will be taking place in the government.”

“Unfortunate, Robespierre, so virtuous, strong in his time,” Desrouches said, taking her up immediately. “But as I said before, he showed himself to be a tyrant. Surely, now, with the appointment of

the Directory, we will be headed by a dedicated group of republicans.”

“I don’t know how republican or dedicated they are,” Vaillier countered, “but at least one of them, Barras, is a military man. That might help with the conduct of the war.”

Lalladiere shifted sharply backward in his chair. What? Barras in power? The conspiracy had completely succeeded. What could be done now? He began to speak but was interrupted by Jean-Luc.

“Robespierre. He is a hero,” the boy said confidently, echoing words of loyalty to the fallen leader repeatedly heard expressed at home.

“What? Who is this boy?” the lieutenant exploded, moving further forward to the tip of his seat. “The man was the pinnacle of arrogance and vanity, disloyal to his friends, brought the government to ruin with his policies and denunciations.” He looked directly at Jean-Luc. “What do you know of this?”

“Robespierre is a hero,” he repeated, and looking toward Lalladiere for affirmation of what he saw as filial loyalty, he added, “like my father.”

Vaillier saw the look. Still rankled by Genevieve’s admiration of Lalladiere’s heroism, and suspicious of the boy’s impertinent insistence, he asked again, irritably addressing Lalladiere, “Who is this boy? Is he your son?”

Lalladiere ignored Vaillier’s question. “This Barras in the Directory was a—” he started to say, but was immediately interrupted by the increasingly angry lieutenant who, burning for an answer, turned to Jean-Luc.

“Tell me, boy, is this man your father?”

“It’s a wise son,” Jean-Luc retorted, with a saying he had read in an actor’s text at home, “who knows his own father.” His eyes twinkled, and he looked this time at Genevieve. He liked sounding clever, and divined that Lalladiere, just like Robespierre a moment before, needed increased reinforcement within the openly combative assemblage.

Again Vaillier noted the direction of the boy's look. "What does this mean?" he demanded of Genevieve. "Is this some farce the three of you are playing out here, a planned attack on our credulity?"

"I don't understand, lieutenant," Genevieve replied. "What are you suggesting?"

"Citizenness, I shall not remain here to be insulted in the presence of—" he paused as he stood up.

"In the presence of what?"

"A family," he blurted, storming out of the parlor and the house.

The group remaining sat in silence for some moments while Jean-Luc beamed at Lalladiere, waiting for an approving look. Desrouches, now fully preferring alliance with Vaillier to what he perceived as an onslaught from the new visitors, felt defenseless with the lieutenant's departure and disturbed about the inferences he left behind. Genevieve was intrigued and slightly amused.

"Jean-Luc is a fine boy," Lalladiere said, breaking the silence. "He is not my son, you see, but I wish he could be."

"Such a tumult just occurred. Whatever did you mean by your remark, Jean-Luc?" Genevieve asked in a kindly tone.

Desrouches, before Jean-Luc could respond, thought it better to take attention away from the cagey boy. He shifted the conversation to a test of the self-evident adult rival, Lalladiere, who might or might not be his equal.

"Were you starting to say something about Barras? He was the worthy commander of the militia that brought Robespierre in. As you probably know, now one of our five leaders in the governing Directory. Do you know of him personally?"

"I do. I knew him when I was assistant to Minister Necker."

"Indeed? An honorable position, I suppose. But I am afraid Necker is no longer the hero of the Revolution he was once."

Lalladiere thought of his confrontation with the *sans-culottes* in the courtyard of the Bicêtre; they remembered Necker and still prized him as a champion of the people. His own betrayal of the minister no longer plagued him so strongly as before, but he felt a continued need to make up for it. And more than that, a pressing need to help the people of his country. Knowing that Barras was in power meant that he must again proclaim the abominable conspiracy. Nothing had been done by anyone and it was, more than ever, important.

“Paul Barras, together with Jean-Lambert Tallien, conspired to overthrow both Danton and Robespierre. And they have succeeded.”

“What is this? A plot by Tallien and Barras, the Thermidorean heroes?” Desrouches said, incredulous.

“Exactly.”

“What are you saying? How could they conspire to overthrow our leaders, the great Danton along with Robespierre?”

“They worked to elevate Robespierre, knowing he would despise Danton’s real or trumped up corruption, and would in the end do him in. Then, as they planned, they turned to undermining Robespierre, using the man’s unstinting morality and incorruptibility against him. I do not know the details of how they accomplished these things, but I know they plotted it all long in advance.”

“Impossible. How would you know such a matter?” Desrouches’s amazement was tinged with some anxiety. The Terror supposedly was ending but it was still far from safe to make open charges, or discuss conspiracy.

“I overheard them, almost a year ago, scheming together on a dark street where they thought they were completely safe.”

“You overheard them? What is this bizarre story you are telling us? How could you have overheard them on a dark street? What dark street?”

"I was hiding." It was true, although he was hiding from the dread inside himself, not them.

"That was where we first met, Guillaume and I," Jean-Luc interjected. He was excited by the charged interchange between the two men.

Desrouches believed himself to be beset from two sides. The story, filled with treacherous allegations, was also fantastic. The boy seemed attuned to come in on cue and make it real. He insisted that both man and boy explain what they were talking about. Lalladiere complied, describing in some detail the circumstances connected with his elopement from Bicêtre. Jean-Luc laughingly chimed in about seeing Guillaume hiding and thinking he was playing a game, then bringing him to his house to meet his parents. Genevieve, who up to that point had not taken Guillaume's story seriously, thinking always it arose from illness, now understood he had described a real event. She had previously heard about a boy in the street who took Guillaume to his home. Here he was, the boy, telling all about that and the hiding in the street. Guillaume, much better now, clearly described the elaborate working of a conspiracy, including names and circumstances. It must all be true. It must all be true. The conditions of both Danton's and Robespierre's falls certainly could bear out the horrible skullduggery. Robespierre had rapidly and somewhat inexplicably become elevated over his compatriot Danton, later he bitterly condemned Danton's corruption, and then both Tallien and Barras played key roles in Robespierre's denunciation and arrest.

"We must reveal what these conspirators have done," she said heatedly. "I should have listened to you before, Guillaume." Lalladiere smiled warmly at her, overcoming more each day the emotion-denying tautness of fear.

Desrouches was shocked, but unlike Vaillier earlier, he remained in his chair frozen and immobilized. The man sitting across from him, an inmate from an insane asylum, was actually claiming that, in an attempt at escaping, he had overheard a plot of enormous proportions concocted, he said, by two devoted and now powerful republican leaders. And Genevieve, the daughter of a deputy and the woman he was courting, believed him. What's more, she wanted to do something about it, expose everyone in that room to mortal danger.

"Yes, yes, let's tailor down the Tall-i-en, and bar up that old Barr-asien," Jean-Luc sang out, then

finished with: "And we'll make the country free."

Horrified now, Desrouches felt pressed, as a last ditch effort, to alert his hostess, the woman he still hoped to capture, to her enemy.

"Citizenness, I feel I must warn you that you are exposing yourself to great risk. You have allowed into your house a lunatic who may be capable of outrage, violence at any moment. Worse still, you have believed this person's allegations about very significant leaders who, if they heard the charges, would not hesitate to take steps. Nor will anyone who colludes with such accusations be safe."

"You are one who will be in danger, as all of us will, if nothing is done about allowing those corrupt men to run the government," Lalladiere said to Desrouches.

"The man you call a lunatic, citizen Desrouches," said Genevieve, "is the sanest of us all." She turned to Jean-Luc. "Never fear, young man, you are right. We shall have our liberty."

Now Desrouches stood up, shaking his head. "Goodbye, citizenness Raston, I am totally dismayed. Totally, irretrievably, dismayed." Without a glance at either Lalladiere or Jean-Luc, who was again starting the first words of his refrain – "Let's tailor –" Desrouches wheeled around, and walked out.

Chapter 38

He could be with her again. Riding the rough road from the farm to the asylum buildings, he thought about seeing her at home. More than once in a week, he went there, waited in the parlor room until she entered, moving with fluid strides toward him. He liked watching the springiness of her hair, her curls bouncing slightly side to side when she asserted a point, or fluttering backward with a denial, still twirled by her when thoughtful. Sometimes, as they talked, he felt treated to the sight of changing highlights on her hair when the sun's rays flickered through the window behind her chair or when she stood up and walked in pursuing light about the room. Her mouth, arched cleanly at the top and corners, danced vivaciously as she spoke of her thoughts and hopes for him, for herself, laughed about Jean-Luc, discussed the increasing establishment of true liberty, bright spots in the social scene. It tightened and turned down slightly as she talked of distressing governmental events and the never-ending war. He thought about watching her upright carriage and the easy flowing movement of her well-curved hips whenever she rose and left the room to get their mocha. It was all for looking, delightful looking, not for kissing or caressing. Not yet, he was not ready for that yet.

"My father says he has not been able to do anything about the conspirators so far because of their power, Guillaume. But things for the moment appear better here in Paris. I don't know whether it will last, but people seem to walk straighter in the streets, look more confident. The banks of the Seine are still green. And I am going to teach in one of the free government schools."

Her pleasure and naturalness made him feel more natural, too. He noticed and appreciated things he for so long had ignored, like the greenery and life on the banks of the Seine. New things, previously undetected, came to his eyes and ears. Not the frighteningly intense sensations of his breakdown, but awareness as he passed of the sway of wildflowers blowing in the fields, the busy staccato call of a small bird, a resonant summons of a larger one. Molded shapes of the Bicêtre buildings, curves, crevices, and edges he had missed before, looked bluntly honed or balanced or invitingly smooth or strongly wedged. When he talked with Denis, as much as was possible now, he noted his broad expressiveness. His face showed, by turns, suspiciousness, curiosity, outrage, amusement, and sometimes even frank sympathy.

He visited Jean-Luc, too, helped with his many household chores, went with him on walks, played games of *tric-trac*, sticks and marbles. A few times, Genevieve came with him, and on a warm weekend day, Suzette Rochereau agreed to their taking the boy to the Bois for a picnic.

“Shall we go into the deeper woods?” Jean-Luc asked the two of them as he wiped crumbs of a creamy nougat cake off his mouth. “They look crackly and cool to walk in, I’ll bet they have plenty of secrets.”

“I don’t know about secrets,” Genevieve said, “but they are lovely and do look cooling. Let’s clean up and we can go. Do you agree, Guillaume?”

“Yes, of course.”

As they proceeded to pick up the remains of their picnic, two men passed on ambling chestnut horses along one of the natural byways through the park. Jean-Luc noticed them immediately.

“Oh, can we go riding instead? I am good on horses.”

Not since the time before Guillaume got sick had he and Genevieve ridden for pleasure together, and the idea was immediately appealing. They found out, however, that Jean-Luc only had ridden a few times bareback on cart horses when his father needed help with loads of costumes and theatrical materials. He would do fine, he swore up and down, riding horses like those chestnuts.

It was a day in late August and soft hushed tones came from a breeze through the leaves of the tall trees around them. They walked through the woods a short distance to a stable on the edge of the Bois where, for a small amount of money, they were readily provided with three fine animals. Jean-Luc’s horse was as tall and spirited as the other two, and he proudly demonstrated his quick-study ability to handle it. Several times, when he pulled a little too sharply on the reins, the horse turned its head to look at him with moist, shining black eyes. Jean-Luc thought the horse was very smart, reminded him of a wise old man named Jacques Chiron he used to visit in his neighborhood.

“Guillaume,” Jean-Luc asked as they rode three abreast slowly through a darkly shadowed portion of the woods, “what is it like to be insane?”

Genevieve started. Guillaume remained silent for several minutes as they continued to ride. "I have been insane," he said, finally, "but I didn't know that while it was happening."

"Funny not to know you're insane when you are. I always know when I am doing something wild."

"It's not like that. It's not just doing wild things. That can be part, a very small part. There's torture in your head, you see. And in your body there's unbearable terror. You cannot think, and there are—" He looked up at the fluttering leaves, shook his head. "And there are hideous sounds."

Genevieve reached over and brushed her hand over his closest one on the reins. Jean-Luc, a learner, pushed onward.

"What does that feel like, the torture in your head and body? Is it like fire?"

"Sometimes..." Again Lalladiere was silent before continuing, "It's like being in a field of salt. Your throat is parched and nothing around you grows. The salt grains, when they touch you, and they do all the time, burn your skin, your insides, your mind. Or they freeze you, pelting your face like hailstones and clinging there. If you lie down in the field, as you must because it is so difficult to stand and resist, the salt enters every opening—your nose, your mouth, your behind. It clouds your thoughts, makes breathing difficult, and feels like it is shriveling your bowels. You lie dying in a field amidst the remains of an army of men. Does the salt also savor? I suppose it might, in ways I have not been aware of. Sometimes, it seems the salt is cleansing, but it perfuses and clings, inside and out, and..." He stopped again, gazing at Genevieve. Her face, as she rode, showed both sympathy and distress.

"And," he went on, his face deeply frowning, "you do degenerate things. Worst of all, if you try to plow this field of salt, if you try alone to do something about the devastation you feel around you, it rises up in a massive cloud mass and buries you."

Jean-Luc now was quiet. He pulled brusquely on the reins and again his horse looked back at him, reproachful and protecting.

"One more question. Why don't animals become insane?"

This time, Genevieve answered, "I am not sure they never do. But the question is well put, Jean-Luc. It appears it's something primarily humans do, don't you think, Guillaume? A sickness of the human mind."

Jean-Luc's own mind was now full of troubling thoughts, perhaps he heard more secrets than he counted on.

"Let's all of us canter through the woods," he said. "I can do it."

Guillaume and Genevieve agreed, and the three of them spurred their horses to a faster pace. Erect in their saddles, gaits rolling evenly together on smooth and shiny chestnut horses, they could be seen going deeper into the wooded trail, a rhythmic, perfect looking band.

Later, Lalladiere said: "I can never do it right, Dr. Pinel, never accomplish anything." They were talking about his activities on the farm. "To complete something is not in my power, in work or with people."

"We have not seen that. They tell me you work well on the farm, do everything on time, controlled and orderly."

"They never tell me. Nobody says." He looked embarrassed, then serious.

"Always I want too much," he said slowly.

"What do you mean? How, too much?"

"I expect too much from other people."

"Here, too? Do you expect much more from me?" Pinel had learned to recognize indirect accusations, his accepting understanding helping to move the discussion to an often more poignant, meaningful plane. It happened.

"My mother," Lalladiere said.

“Yes, what about your mother? You talked of her before.”

“My mother said that I sucked her dry. Hung onto her nipples just for my pleasure. Perverse, disgusting pleasure. Can you see? I was born evil, even as an infant I wanted perverse pleasure.”

Pinel was silent. What is this? he thought. The mother again. Disturbing disclosure, but does it have anything to do with Lalladiere’s insanity? He thought of his friend Gerard who killed himself when going to live with his parents.

Lalladiere went on. “Curious, too curious. Always I was trying to get or see something I shouldn’t have. Always, when I got older, climbing up her legs, she said. She had to push me away.”

Pinel blanched. Perverse from infancy, and later as well? He remembered Denis saying Lalladiere’s mother made that accusation during her visit. No, not likely at all. The mother, probably bordering or worse on insanity herself, might have been the perverse one. And she blamed an innocent child.

“It may not have been the way your mother said. She may have distorted the circumstances.”

“My mother loved me,” Lalladiere said, trembling. “She cared for me.”

When the meeting was over, Lalladiere was still trembling and upset. Dr. Pinel had made an aspersion on his mother, a forbidden aspersion, and one he had evoked. He needed his mother, a need she told him was love. But later, as he pondered its truth in his cell, he found he felt much better. It had been important for him to tell Dr. Pinel what his mother said to him, or suggested by her actions, not just at particular periods but as part of her never-ending litany about his evil-doing, her cold pushing him away, not accepting his need or what she erratically called love. The doctor’s introduction of doubt, although not an absolute rebuttal, was reassuring. It coincided with his recent glimmerings of belief in worthiness, a possibility that he was, after all, not the lowest of the low.

At dinner at the Rastons the next day, he was quite animated. He spoke at length – Camille Raston assenting frequently between mouthfuls – about how it appeared that the Revolution, despite its faults and excesses, had removed the degradation of the people. The current war was, he insisted, brutal and unnecessary. He wondered why a country as glorious as France seemed to be prolonging death and

destruction, fighting beyond the need for survival. Genevieve and Veronique Raston also criticized the national involvement in warfare. Camille, agreeing, offered sadly that wars often functioned to preserve national unity. Lalladiere pointed out they also allowed for profiteering, and proceeded to spell out some of the many loopholes in government financing where corruption could enter in. Camille Raston, not familiar with those details, listened with concentrated attention. Veronique, easily distracted from eating, noted her husband's and also her daughter's interest, and listened attentively herself. Lalladiere's knowledge and clarity impressed her. She knew before that he was quite smart and allowed herself the thought, constricted but edging to expand, that Genevieve may not have been wholly wrong to continue to see something in him. "He actually is a little like Camille," she thought, "and he maybe even will recover. But we must take great care." To her surprise, she couldn't help smiling slightly when she saw Lalladiere, turning toward Genevieve to compliment her about something she said, at the same time placed his hand on hers.

Holding Genevieve's hand on the table top, Lalladiere felt warm and protective. But, after a few moments that feeling unaccountably troubled him. He thought of the talk with Dr. Pinel, trying to recapture that reassuring loosening of the lifelong hold of his mother's savage recriminations. Something else was pulling at darkened edges of his mind. He couldn't tell what it was, but as they all talked, he began studying Genevieve's father. A straightforward, dedicated father. Perhaps it was something about his own father, Victoire Lalladiere.

Pinel, after the meeting with Lalladiere, pondered what he had heard. The mother constantly blamed her son, accused him of perversity. Although Pinel still felt troubled about looking for clues about parents related to illness, an idea all of society abhorred, there was little doubt that Lalladiere's words were true. He showed intense pain speaking of what his mother had done. Could such actions, repeated over and over, be a factor causing the fury, the violence, the extreme joy, the inconsolable despair?

He searched his mind for medical explanations, precedents. Nothing he had heard, seen, or read connected parents with insanity. It was a strange mystery. Then he remembered Anne-Catherine Helvetius's question regarding the possible madness of Ulysses's, or Odysseus's mother Anticlea. Were the mad passions of Anticlea the cause of Odysseus's supposedly faked but at some point palpably real insanity? His plowing of a field of salt? A flood of ideas from his storehouse of knowledge, his conviction

about the meaningful lessons from antiquity, came to him. "Here it is," he said to himself. "Herakles, the great strongman, his madness induced by a mother goddess, the god queen, Hera. That ecstatic and dramatic god, Dionysus, went mad and wandered all over India. He was brought up, mothered, by the mad Ino who, I remember, was also made insane by mother Hera. Three times, counting Odysseus, the venerable Greeks linked a mother or mother god to madness. What about that? Did the stories point to a noteworthy intuitive understanding? Maybe so. Perhaps a mother, whether she were aware of it or not, could have something to do with insanity."

The next time meeting with Lalladiere, Pinel thought to test his newly acquired hunches but he found him, as he was some time before, completely silent. Lalladiere, though better, had retreated from his feeling of closeness to the doctor. Shadows of his father, of something unknown, flitted through his overly busy, now coherent, mental world. He needed to remember something, he believed, but trying when in Dr. Pinel's presence filled him with great anxiety. A trampling herd of horses would, it seemed, be released within him if he so much as gently touched the enclosure gate inside. Pinel attempted to get him to speak. Sensing it was better for the moment not to push the topic of his mother, Pinel asked about work on the farm, the recent dinner at the Rastons. But at that time, and for several days following, Lalladiere felt unable to express more than opening and closing salutations.

"I have observed," Pinel said, after a week had passed, "that you have remained largely silent since you told me things your mother said to you."

Lalladiere nodded slowly. "Is that because," Pinel continued, risking the re-opening of a sore, "you were upset speaking to me about disturbances in your family?"

It was simple but powerful connecting, the tying of observed ends together, as Pinel practiced often. Almost miraculously, that produced a desirable effect. The trusted doctor's understanding, correct and non-judgmental, of a reason for his blocking fear gave Lalladiere courage and the memory came in a rush:

"My father came into the room with a light-haired woman. I was sleeping. He laid her on the bed right next to me, got on top of her. Started pumping up and down."

Pinel was transfixed, suddenly saddened. He said nothing. What kind of disturbing story was this? Was it true? He was hearing more about untoward parents than he could possibly have expected. Or believed.

"When did this happen?" he asked, recovering.

"I don't know how old I was. Very, very young, I think."

"Who was the light-haired woman?"

"I didn't know her. It wasn't my mother."

"Did you know what was happening?"

"I don't think so. No. Help me, I have an image of them in my mind right now."

"Tell me what that is."

"Groans, there were groans. I thought he was killing her. They were fighting." His body stiffened, a look of pain crossed his face.

"Fighting?"

"Yes," his voice softened, becoming almost imperceptible, "they were right next to me. I turned away. I felt arms grasping each other, saw legs thrashing above my back."

"This was not fighting. They were, I am sure, not fighting."

"Yes," Lalladiere said sadly, "I know." Saying it all out loud, describing it, and the doctor's matter-of-factness reassured him. "I finally began to understand that much later."

"Finally? How often did it happen?"

"Constantly. They never looked at me. It went on for years."

"Where was your mother?"

"She was always drunk, sleeping in the other room. I tried to tell her after."

"Yes, and what did she say?"

"She didn't believe me. She scratched and bit me, put bleach on my mouth for telling lies about my father."

"Bleach, a poison?"

"Scorched my lips."

"It must have been hard for you to think straight"

"Yes. And there was another thing," Lalladiere said with tears in his eyes.

"Another thing? What was that?"

"When I watched them, I felt more."

"More? What did you feel? You said you turned away."

"Sometimes I looked. And I had feelings, sensations, all through my body. Hot, tingling. I didn't know what they were. Stirred up, tight pressure. Later, I was bursting, aroused. It was overwhelming. And there was nothing I could do to stop it."

Pinel stayed talking with Lalladiere for some time that afternoon. Mind-bursting actions, he thought, from both mother and father – the father even more severe. Never having done such a thing before, but not knowing what else to do, he went over with Lalladiere all of the details of the story about his father, its repetitive occurrences, and Lalladiere's viewpoints and reactions, both as a child and a grown man. That had a calming effect.

Chapter 39

It was a group of four, two gendarmes and two soldiers. They entered the governor's office on a cold fall day and announced they had come to arrest Guillaume Lalladiere.

"What does this mean? What has he done?" Pussin demanded.

"He has accused leaders of the government of conspiring to commit treason," a thick mustached corporal said.

"Who has ordered this arrest? Lalladiere is an inmate here."

"Jean-Lambert Tallien."

Pussin knew Tallien's intransigence and cruelty but, at risk to himself, he resisted. "The man is under our care. You cannot just take him out."

"Citizen Tallien is a member of our Committee of Public Safety. The orders were countersigned by Director Paul Barras, they are exact and unchangeable," the corporal said as the other soldier stiffened into a position of rigid attention. The gendarmes stood beside them, stern and menacing.

"I must call the Physician-in-Chief. He is in charge of all the inmates at Bicêtre."

"Have Lalladiere brought here immediately or we go and get him ourselves," the corporal said.

Pussin summoned attendants and sent them to get both the doctor and Lalladiere. Pinel, deeply troubled when he heard the reason he was called, came slowly to the governor's office, considering what he could do. It was, he knew, because of Lalladiere's accusation of conspiracy. Word must have reached the conspirators themselves. But Lalladiere was getting better, on his way to being cured, a model for the new treatment approach. Could that be used as an argument to keep him at the asylum? Lalladiere, it can be said, is a confirmed patriot. He spoke up powerfully for the ideals of the Revolution when the group of *sans-culottes* came to the Bicêtre courtyard. Would they consider that in his defense? I must, he thought,

do everything I can to save him. He helped save me. Those allegations of his against Tallien and Barras I came to believe – the arrest now surely means they were the truth. But what, can I do? When Condorcet, my beloved friend and colleague, left the hiding place a few months ago, they took him to prison, where he died. I could do nothing, nothing at all, to stop that.

“This patient is under my care. He is receiving treatment for his sickness here at Bicêtre,” he said to the corporal who had officiously and belligerently repeated the orders to him. Firmly, he added, “You cannot remove him from the asylum.”

“We can, and we will.”

“I shall appeal this to the authorities.”

“The authorities?” spoke up one of the gendarmes who, unrecognized by Pinel, was there previously with the *sans-culottes*. “You must recall, citizen doctor, you were accused and only barely escaped arrest yourself a short while ago.”

Pinel stepped back. The Terror continued. People once considered guilty were never exonerated.

“The charges are very serious,” the corporal said. “This man has made accusations against government leaders, Jean-Lambert Tallien and Paul Barras.”

Pinel looked at Lalladiere standing in custody, face sad and tense, at the other side of the room. A fleeting remembrance came to him of Lalladiere’s ardent expression while speaking to the *sans-culottes*, rescuing him in the Bicêtre courtyard. He decided, biting deeply on his lip, that he must sacrifice his own strongly upheld ethics, even risk affront, to save Lalladiere’s life.

“But you cannot believe this man, corporal. No one can. He is a lunatic.”

Lalladiere, hearing, jerked backward in surprise. Then, in a gesture of despair, he turned his face downward and his shoulders slumped.

“Not by a long shot, doctor,” the gendarme said, spitting out the term of address contemptuously. “I

was right here in the courtyard when this man gave a whole speech about you. Saved your hide. He spoke clear as me." Looking at the corporal, he added, "The man's as sane as we are."

Lalladiere was taken away to the Conciergerie prison. There, he was arraigned briefly before the Tribunal and condemned to die. Pinel came, attempting to appear together with influential doctors Cabanis and Thouret and effect a release. They were denied a hearing. Barras and Tallien were fully in power.

In his prison cell, Lalladiere felt surprisingly calm. No longer did he deny death's reality, and he was aware of feelings of fear, or more accurately, remorse about facing the end of everything for him. Death was not that previously dreaded retribution, the apt punishment for corruptions and sins. He had now committed no crime, real or imagined. Knowing that prevented the pain of ruminations and reproaches. Also, Genevieve came to be with him.

"Guillaume, I cannot believe this. What, who, has done this to you? It must have been the vermin Desrouches, the time at my house. He did this, told those villains Tallien and Barras what you said. Is that not so?"

"Perhaps. I don't know. The attendant Ajacis hated me. He could have done it. Heard about it maybe from someone."

"How horrible."

"Whatever happened, they apparently have caught up with me. I never have been able to stop them."

"Guillaume, my love. Oh, my love." Her voice cracked. "This must not be."

"Genevieve. Dear."

"We are back together, discovered each other again."

"Yes, I know it. And I prize it beyond imagining."

"My father has petitioned the Directory, he has spoken in the Convention, he will have you freed."

"I hope so. He may be at risk himself for doing that. These are vicious, conniving men."

"You are so much better, Guillaume. We must be together. I know you for what you are and always will be."

"I am able to love," he said, then looked directly into her eyes. "And I do, again."

Genevieve looked intently back at him. She traced the creases in his cheeks, followed the sharp angle of his jaw, his thin, sensitive mouth, the slightly downcast lids of his eyes. It was, she suddenly realized, as though she were searching his face for a clue to a question, an unformed question, in her mind. Completely unintentionally, too, she had been fixing each of his features in her memory. Filled immediately with self-reproach at this terrifying premonition, her desperate question came bursting out.

"Was it my fault? Back then?"

"Your fault? What could be your fault?"

"Did I force you into that terrible abyss you lived in?"

"I don't know what did it. But it was certainly not you." After a moment, he said, "Necker's downfall."

"What about Necker's downfall?"

"I caused it."

"What do you mean? How did you cause it?"

"I made up a completely false, deceitful budget."

"Oh."

"He resigned."

“That was a misdeed,” Genevieve said hesitantly, “perhaps even a crime. But was such a thing the devastation that broke your mind?”

He didn’t answer. She looked at his eyes, they were clear and intense. “Well, perhaps it could. You have always been heroically idealistic, extraordinarily conscientious. Moral and beautifully devoted. But what a price to pay.”

She paused to grasp a thought, then said, “The budget wasn’t all of it, was it? My father – he was in the Assembly then – told me about Necker. He said the budget projections weren’t so much the problem, they looked reasonable when Necker first posed them. But Necker made a lot of mistakes during that time, serious ones. He was going downhill, opposed the paper money. You must have known that.”

“They looked reasonable? No, I knew about the paper money, not the rest.”

“But the budget wasn’t that bad.”

“Well, anyway, I didn’t know. And it wouldn’t really have mattered.”

“You mean it was his leaving, the fact that you told lies? Just that? Oh, this is a misery.”

“I can’t tell. Don’t know. I saw you everywhere. You were torturing yourself, miserable, changing. I thought you were falling apart. I felt lost, terrified beyond hope, a terror deep inside, connected with something. I was panicked that your mind was tearing to pieces.”

Genevieve, crying, disregarded a forewarned jail prohibition and moved forward to embrace Lalladiere. The watching jailor started toward them, but they remained clasped together. He kissed her eyelids, her wetted cheeks, and the corners of her mouth where tears were pooling. She grasped his shoulders with all her strength and kissed his mouth. In the split second before the jailor reached them, tender and aroused, he returned her kiss.

The jailor pushed them apart, shouting an obscene curse. He ordered Lalladiere to lean against the wall and searched his body. He moved then toward Genevieve to do the same with her but she scowled and moved vigorously away.

“Well, you sweet lovers won’t be together much longer,” he said, deciding not to press a deputy’s daughter. Then, as he reassumed his former position, “He won’t be so pretty when his head is separated from his shoulders.”

Genevieve’s face showed mixed fury and despair. She attempted, summoning up resolve both for Guillaume and herself, to blot out the jailor’s remark.

“Remember, Guillaume, our walks on the banks of the Seine. The sun was bright in the summer days and the light – can you recall it? – glinted off the tops of the bulrushes, leaving shadows deep within the clumps, glowingly lucent all around the ground. And along the way were edging rows of hardy violets, hyacinth – purple and yellow, white jonquils, pink cyclamen. We talked so much of our lives together, the house we would live in, what kind and where, my time spent writing, your plans for ways to bring hungry people food, sustenance with self-respect to the poor. We were always wise enough to walk northward, weren’t we, knowing to avoid those terrible odors blown over from the south of the city.” She jerked her shoulder toward the jailor, looked baleful, and laughed.

“Indeed, we did,” Lalladiere said, laughing also. “And we took boatrikes in the river, darting back and forth between the fisherman. Watching them. They were very skillful, we could tell, maneuvering their poles or nets. And we just floated, thought and dreamed. We touched hands.”

“At night we went eating, telling stories, arguing with our friends,” Genevieve said, reassured by Lalladiere’s laughter and warmth, but still terrified by what the jailor said. “You always knew about such grand adventures, wars, great exploits.”

“How about the great exploit we carried out more recently, Jean-Luc and myself, at your house? Didn’t we shock the peacock lieutenant grandly and get him to run? The deputy, too, he scooted quickly believing he was going to be executed on the spot for listening to us.”

Genevieve started, and Lalladiere realized he touched the wrong note. She still was thinking of her suspicions about Desrouches and the arrest. A chill of sadness passed between them.

“Will you see that things go all right with Jean-Luc?” he asked.

"Of course I will. But by no means can you think you will not get out of here."

"I am a danger to them."

"My father will get you out, I know. Shall I go also to Dr. Pinel? He will testify for you."

"He has already tried. He, too, has difficulty with being believed."

"What do you mean?"

"He thought I would understand."

"Understand what?"

"He went against everything, against his ethics and conscience I am sure, to say I was insane and my accusations should not be taken seriously."

"And?"

"They didn't believe him."

"But not that alone. I don't just mean that. In the asylum, they say he is not believed by all of the doctors in France."

"In all of France? What of Dr. Pinel do they not believe?"

"He removed all the chains, and he helped sick ones – me and many others – get better without beating, bloodletting, opium, or purgatives. None believe it."

"But you will change that. You will tell your story."

"I don't think so. You write it, Genevieve."

"I write it now. I describe what you have done, how you have stuck with it."

“All right, but go on and let people know that affinity, understanding, can move minds. Undo fear. Will you?”

“Every word, every detail,” she said, lowering her head to hide the tears that came to her eyes, the clutching grief inside.

They moved to sit side by side despite the menacing looks of the jailor. Again, he came to separate them. Genevieve’s threat to report him to her father, mentioning also other deputies’ names, stopped him. She talked then to Lalladiere of the future, of the future they would share together. Of their happiness.

Chapter 40

For several months before his arrest, Lalladiere had been having ordinary dreams. Unlike the waking dreams that plagued him, the terrible unseen voices and non-existent visions, these dreams of sleep came because of his improvement, a returning ability to tolerate the contents of his inner world. During the night after Genevieve left, he slept, despite bleak forebodings, fairly well. But he had many disconnected dreams.

He was in an open field in a park. Children were playing nearby, a girl spinning a hoop with a rod, two small boys playing sticks and marbles. An older boy was trying to fly a kite. Although he watched them all carefully, no one paid him any attention. Then, out of the surrounding woods came a light-haired young woman together with a short, stocky but muscular young man. He could see neither of their faces, but knew the woman was beautiful and the man had distorted shoulders and hands. Trying to move toward them, he slipped on the grass which he abruptly realized was quite wet with a substance that was not water. He couldn't tell what it was but when he got up and tried to walk, it became sticky and rubbed off in cream-colored little lumps. The man and woman saw him trying to approach them and, in unison, they turned and returned into the woods.

He continued to try to reach them, moving slowly because his feet were still covered with the sticky substance, and leaves lying where he walked became attached. Unaccountably, clusters of leaves began moving upward and clinging to his calves and thighs as he went onward, so by the time he came to a small clearing in the woods he was weighed down, laden with a foliage skirt. Though at first quite dark, the clearing quickly became perfused with sunlight, and in the center he saw the man and woman. The woman's hair was in disarray and stood out from her head in spikes. She was shouting at the man who sat with his back to her, nonchalantly smoking a small pipe. Lalladiere started to move toward them, the restricting leaves fell away, and he suddenly awoke.

He lay on the mat in his cell as part images from the dream continued to pass across his half-closed eyes. He couldn't tell who the man and woman might have been although both seemed quite familiar. As he started to fall back asleep, he tried not to go back to the park in his mind, but to think of city scenes.

He was in the central room of a stone city house. In the corner of the room, he sat by himself facing the wall as he worked on stacking rags for the paper mill into separate piles for his father. His mother, he knew, was somewhere behind him, sitting and peeling potatoes. A small bug, probably a cockroach, scampered across the floor near him and he stopped work for a moment to follow its path, sensing it might hurt his mother. The bug lurched in her direction, growing larger as it did so. He turned in his chair to watch it, at the same time seeing his mother place the sharp side of the potato paring knife on her inner forearm. As she began a slashing motion, he jumped up from his stool, and with a single leap was at her side firmly grasping the hand that held the terrible knife. She looked at him with hatred in her eyes. From another room, he heard, but could not see, his father laughing.

He woke again. Looking around at his cell's grey stone walls, not very different from those usually surrounding him at Bicêtre, he thought of the dream knife in his mother's hand and shook his head forcefully. Soon, the next day perhaps, he too would face a terrible knife. The guillotine. He shuddered and lay for several minutes frightened. Then he tried again to go back to sleep. The dreaming, although disturbing, seemed an accounting of his life.

This time, he was a child walking through hallways of a familiar looking building. He recognized that it was an asylum but not one he had been in. It was very large, larger than Bicêtre, and when he peered curiously through the doorways that he passed, he saw that the inmates were all women and most were chained. Dimly, he guessed it to be the asylum of Salpêtrière he knew about, where madwomen, prostitutes, and female criminals were all kept together. He looked into each room, searching to see if he could identify a prostitute. In one alcove, he saw a chained woman wearing a thin, brocaded dress and shivering. He approached her, and coming close he recognized the face of the former Queen Marie Antoinette looking as on the day she was guillotined. He felt terrified and ran out of the room, entering into a maze of endless corridors. He ran and ran until, for no accountable reason, he was stopped by a man who looked quite familiar. The man, whose face gradually became that of his father, pointed to a woman seated by herself at a table. All these were now together in the same stone city house he had dreamed of before. Although the rooms seemed overly large, he recognized he was in his childhood home. He knew, though her face was distorted, that the woman was his mother. Her head was lumpy and large, her hair disheveled, and this time she was sitting at the table speaking in a loud voice to the empty air around her. There was spittle at the corner of her mouth, and when he looked at her

eyes, he saw they were glazed. He watched her, and as the dream continued, the clear thought came to him, "If I don't do something right away, she will lose her mind."

He touched the side of the table, salt had been spilled all over it. He put his finger in his mouth and found the salty taste at first quite pleasant, but soon it became bitter and burning in his mouth. Then, he changed. He saw himself crouching down on the floor of the house, unable to move his limbs. He began, in the dream, to hear echoes all around him of the same voices that plagued him before. He saw snatches of himself in the cells of the Hospice d'Humanité, then climbing over roofs and running clumsily but frantically through the alleyways of Paris. His mother, whose face remained at the edges of the dream, was now smiling, her head smooth and her hair neat. As she got up from the table, he knew she had stopped talking to the air. She walked over to the shadowy man in the corridor, put her arm under his, and together they left the stone building, which now resembled an asylum for the insane. Still frozen on the floor, Lalladiere watched them leave. His mother turned around to look at him and her face was that of Genevieve.

He woke, but this time more slowly than before. The events of the dream were vivid in his mind. Saved from lunacy. She never fell through, never went, as he did, all the way insane. It was either one or the other. He always knew, she always made him feel, told him, it was his to do. He gave her bad feelings, put thoughts in her head, could save her or make her insane. And he thought then of the two of them together, he a child, and his mother holding and rocking him, her long chestnut hair falling softly on his shoulder.

A man entered his cell and woke him. It was hard at first to break out of the dream, especially the end part. The man looked like a barber, short-jacketed, striped pants, strip of linen in his hand. The jailer, standing behind the man, ordered Lalladiere to sit on the stool in his cell.

"He cuts, for today's event, the hair off the back of your head," the jailer explained derisively. "Nothing must slow the swift falling of the blade."

So, it will happen today. He knew it now, today is the end. He sat quietly, listening to the clicking of the scissors behind his head. There was a clutching panic in his chest, then grief for himself verging on tears, and then a hollow sense of resignation. Sitting alone afterward, he tried to imagine what death

would be like, wondered if there really could be bliss, as they said. How did it feel, what did bliss contain? Love? Ecstasy? Satiety? Understanding? He then considered extinction, total extinction, and thought about nothingness, no consciousness. He remembered, though it was now hard to do so, the absolute nothingness in his mind he had known before.

An hour later, the tumbrel came to the front of the Conciergerie and he, together with another man and a woman, were pushed by three soldiers inside. The man, older than Lalladiere, looked like a petty official and the woman, also older, looked fairly prosperous wearing a satin dress and shawl. The ribbed cart bounced roughly over the cobblestones of the rue Honoré, going on the same route that previously led him to the queen's execution, passing the site of his hopeless cause at Robespierre's house. He noticed fewer spectators, or even stragglers, standing or walking along the street, and wondered whether commerce had been dropping off or perhaps executions were not quite the high sport as before.

Lalladiere looked carefully at the faces of people they passed, the tight brows and jutting jaws of those who were scornful and angry, drawn cheeks and staring eyes of the wistful, puffed up cheeks and quivering mouths of the eager and excited. Several belligerently met his searching eyes and shouted epithets – "Traitor," "Degenerate," "Schemer," "Shitface aristocrat" – at him, but many turned away, glancing from side to side or else quickly downward.

Still seeing anew the unnoticed world around, he followed the windows of the storefronts they were passing. He saw carefully rolled bolts of fabric in one, a cobbler tapping a single shoe in dim light inside another, a dressmaker energetically sewing the thin hem of a dress, and cooling rows untended of lined-up crisp crusted loaves of bread. When they came abreast of number 366 where Robespierre lived, he looked up at the shuttered second floor window, and shook his head both with anger and regret. Robespierre and the others had also died in vain. He glanced at his companions in the tumbrel, the petty official was pale, sweating despite the coolness of the day, and the well-dressed woman rocked in a corner, sobbing.

As they came closer to the Place de la République, where the crowd had thickened, he tried to see if he could find Genevieve. Not far from the entryway, inside the large expanse, he thought he saw her curls and bonnet. But as the tumbrel moved nearer he realized he was mistaken. When they came to the

scaffold of the guillotine, he saw in a nearby grouping the lean figure of Dr. Pinel turned slightly aside and speaking vigorously with a man standing next to him. The man, it appeared, was a government official although Lalladiere did not recognize him. He's working to get me off, Lalladiere thought, right to the very end. The tumbrel stopped. Pinel abruptly discontinued his entreaties and turned toward it. The doctor's face, in Lalladiere's presence usually calm or sympathetic or noncommittal, was now drawn and cracked with anguish.

Then he saw Genevieve. She was standing together with her father amidst the crowd a short distance behind Dr. Pinel. Her face was bloated with crying, her mouth set in a grimace of unbearable pain. Lalladiere thought he could see, despite the distance, a look of enormous fear in her eyes. She saw him. And realizing he was looking at her, her expression changed, her eyes glistened – he could see them – with a feeling of love. She was forming words with her mouth, the same, he was sure, as what she showed in her eyes. But he could neither hear nor actually know.

As he fearfully mounted the scaffold, he thought about his dreams of the night before. "It was love for her," he said to himself, "love, despite all, throughout my life. It came from love, protecting her from the salt field, the abyss, lunacy. She or me, it was she or me, the – my – giving up of heart and mind." A feeling of calmness replaced his fear.

The executioner strapped him to the flat board and slid him face down between the supports of the guillotine. "I am free," he thought. He heard a high-pitched swish above him. Then, no sight, no sound, no feeling, no thought. Absence.

Postscript

Guillaume, I think of you every day, your voice, hands, and gentle eyes. Your bravery. I think of how we met, our happiness together, how I lost you once, regained you, and now have lost you forever. Yet, I long to be with you. I write daily, for you and to you, of the events and people of our times.

As I promised, I have told your story using every word and every detail I could remember. Those who have read it – there have been many – have been astonished and deeply moved. Some have been incited to action, consulting with officials of the government, the Committee of Internal Affairs, Hospital Commission, and other doctors in France. Almost everyone has become interested and several are energetic proponents of Dr. Pinel's work. I so much miss your wisdom and your commentary, I so much wish you could know all of these effects.

Quite separate, though, from my own endeavors, Dr. Pinel has been getting salutary recognition from the Internal Affairs Committee formed after Couthon's execution. Drs. Cabanis and Thouret, and newer doctors at the other Paris hospitals, constantly lauded Dr. Pinel's competence as physician, administrator and, above all, medical groundbreaker. He has been made a Professor of Medicine, the first ever devoted to mental illness, at the new Paris medical school. Under the changing government structure, even the terrible Tallien and Barras or any other traitorous or jealous persons who might have continued to hold him back, even to disparage him, no longer held direct authority over hospital appointments. Many of the really devoted revolutionaries in the Convention began to recognize, as you always did, that his work was truly enlightened and humanitarian, justly representing the bywords of the Revolution for all human beings. And so the happy news is that, in 1795, he was appointed Physician to the very large and important Salpêtrière Hôpital for women. There, just as at Bicêtre with men, he quite soon had the chains struck off every one of the mentally ill women, introduced personal contact and what he calls 'moral treatment.'

When he first moved to Salpêtrière there occurred an incident which, although not at all his doing, brought on some bad publicity. The Hospital Commission, anticipating a need for a larger number of attendants to enforce Dr. Pinel's policies there, transferred three experienced ones – without giving the

doctor a choice – from Bicêtre and another hospital. In the beginning, this went well but after a few months one of the transferred attendants named Ajacis – you said he was treacherous – raped one of the women inmates in a dark corridor of the hospital.

I was told that this was a generally concealed, but—can you imagine? – a not completely unusual occurrence. In this case, however, three women inmates, strong defiant ones, found out about it. They decided to wait for Ajacis to be alone, also in a dark corridor, and to attack and kill him. From that point, the story is murky. He did die, but it was not clear whether the women succeeded in strangling him as they intended or whether he got away, and overcome by humiliation at having been subdued by women, he committed suicide. No matter, it was a brief episode, the man clearly got what he deserved. Dr. Pinel has gone on to institute all his groundbreaking treatments at the hospital. His reputation glows brighter each day.

He has written an important, widely read book entitled *A Treatise on Insanity* which outlines his experiences at the Bicêtre asylum, details the nature of his treatment, and describes its effects. You would be pleased to know, as you often told me about the doctor's generous and accepting nature, that he gives credit in this book to the Pussins for initiating and carrying out some of the procedures. You spoke to me about the Pussins frequently yourself. How, as I write this, is it possible for me to think of being here without you?

And so then, because of his book and the reports of his achievements, Dr. Pinel has, I understand, become known throughout the world. Both Samuel Tuke of the York Retreat in England, and Dr. Benjamin Rush of the Pennsylvania Hospital in the United States, had already been adopting their own humanitarian types of treatment, and they have hailed Dr. Pinel as a leader. Physicians in France have come to the Salpêtrière to study with and assist him. Other hospitals throughout the country have started to follow his approaches. He is celebrated now, and I am sure will be for a very long time in the future, as a medical pioneer, the glorious initiator of a new approach to mental aberration and illness.

Oh, Guillaume, I miss you so terribly. I think of our love together, the breaking of that love out of – what? – enormous, immeasurable fear? Out of insatiable need, ironclad morality, endless regret, reckless sacrifice? I think of your courage trying to make yourself well, your ability to devote yourself to what you

were given – Dr. Pinel’s treatment. Yes, that was an immense part of it and you were too. Each and every moment since I was with you last, I have missed your delicate, sincere feelings, your ideals, your perception of the leaping progress and twisting tumbles of the times, your proposals for their adjustment, your devotion to those who suffered.

Jean-Luc, these days, has been fine. In fact, extra fine. You know how smart and resourceful he is. Quite kind too. Well, he convinced the Rochereaus that he needed better schooling and the family went ahead and managed to get him transferred into the school I teach in. It’s an excellent school, the first for boys and girls together, and the curriculum is broad and demanding. No special privileges, but a good deal of learning and enlightenment goes on. Mathematics, History, Revolutionary History, Economics, Literature, Classical Languages, Philosophy. I am not his teacher, but I hear about his work. He is considered one of the best students on his level. I see him quite a lot, we sometimes go riding, the two of us together in the Bois. We talk of you, we talk about ourselves, our own goals and wishes. He tells me he wants to become someone in the government, an assistant to a deputy or possibly a deputy himself.

We still have not been able to do anything at all about the conspiracy. No one has been able to bring forward any evidence of Tallien and Barras’s intrigues and stragems. Joseph Fouché, the man who led the massacre at Lyons, is in the police administration, and we find him blocking any of our efforts to gain information and proofs. We suspect, my father and I as well as several others searching with us, that he was in cahoots with the other two. He once was engaged to Robespierre’s sister and it is rumored that Robespierre, correctly to be sure, interfered. More than that he hated Robespierre, we learned, for blocking his financial exploits. But now – worse for the nation, a pox on all of them – my father might be forced out as a deputy because of his efforts to denounce them. Barras has become the prime leader of the Directory, the current executive body of the government. We have not succeeded in weakening or discrediting him, although it is now quite widely known that he is highly corrupt, both in dealing with finances and allocating political favor. It is even rumored that he arranges, for pay, for various defeats of our armies. Despite all this, he wields great power. Tallien also is very strong in his position on the Committee of Public Safety. The two of them seem unstoppable.

I see your face, Guillaume, sad and full of disappointment. They are enormous dangers to the nation, I know, and we are determined to do everything, risk everything, to root them out. But I so much

want you here, to help and guide us if you could but above all to hold me as you did, and love me, as in the very core of you, you can.

There is more to tell. A new leader has recently appeared on the scene. He is Corsican and a soldier. You probably heard of him when, as the captain of artillery at the siege of Toulon, he led his forces to drive the British Navy away. He was quite young but at the time he was promoted all at once to Brigadier General. Then, late in 1795 while he was on duty in Paris, there was a reactionary uprising in Paris opposing the Convention. He was called upon, by Barras they say, to quell the rioting and he and his troops mass-marched to the hall of the Convention. Mounting his artillery in front, they fired, quickly dispelling and defeating the mob. It is reported he said, and many have repeated the boast, that he did it "with a whiff of grapeshot." He went on, after that, to engage in a number of successful military campaigns, has now become a stalwart of the Directory and popular with the people as well. Many talk about him as a hero of the Revolution and a deliverer.

No one can, at this point, tell how this man, Napoleon Bonaparte, will work out. What he will do. But, oh, my beloved, my most dedicated, well-intentioned Guillaume, cruelly murdered, I must relate with my heart ripping apart that, on March 9, 1796, the 19th of Ventose, Bonaparte married Rose-Josephine Beauharnais, the woman who had been the mistress of Paul Barras. The two witnesses to the ceremony were Barras himself, and Tallien. Jean-Lambert Tallien.

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