

LA FRANCE SAUVÉE OU LE TYRAN DÉTRÔNÉ.¹

France Saved or the Tyrant Dethroned.

CHARACTERS.²

LOUIS XVI, King of France.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE, Queen of France and Louis XVI's wife.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE, Marie-Antoinette's aide.

1 On 10 August 1792 the Tuileries palace was ransacked by an organised mob spurred on by fury at the monarch's refusal to abstain from using his royal veto, his amassing of troops near Paris, and insecurity caused by Prussian advances on France. The King and Queen were forced to seek refuge in the nearby Manège building that housed the Legislative Assembly. The monarchs were never to be free again. From the Manège the royal family were taken to the Temple (an old Knights Templar building whose tower was used to imprison them until their eventual deaths, or freedom (only one family member survived, Marie-Thérèse, the King and Queen's eldest child, who was released in December 1795 aged 17). Begun in August or September 1792 de Gouges's play dramatises the events of that moment, beginning on the night of 9 August. Never finished it was found in manuscript form when de Gouges's lodgings were searched by the authorities following her arrest in June 1793. Her accusers deliberately used the words she had given Marie-Antoinette as proof of the playwright's own political views. When de Gouges stated that the speeches she had written accurately depicted the monarch's ideas, rather than her own, she was derided. Her defence failed, her life ended at the guillotine. Only one among the contemporary figures in this play survived the effects of the Terror which some historians date as starting on the night this play is set.

The manuscript has large crosses marked against certain passages which I think correlate to passages noted by her accusers for use against her during her trial. I will point out the passages as they arise. And every page of the manuscript has 'para' written in pale brown ink as though a legal clerk was noting that each one had been read and marked (called *parafer* in French) to avoid alterations or substitutions.

In December 1792 Olympe de Gouges wrote *Compte moral rendu* (see www.olympedegouges.eu) in which she describes her actual experiences with the Queen's household that led to the creation of this play. Having been accused, by a Jacobin, of being pro-royalist she made public, for the first time, her correspondence with the royal household and her refusal to accept a royal pension from Marie-Antoinette.

2 The characters in the play are all contemporary figures. For non-specialists here are their potted biographies –

Louis XVI (1754 - guillotined in January 1793) was crowned King of France following the death of his grandfather, Louis XV, in 1774. He had married, in 1770, the Austrian princess Marie-Antoinette.

Marie-Antoinette (1755 - guillotined in October 1793) was the daughter of Francis I and the empress Maria Theresa of Austria.

Madame Elizabeth (1764 - guillotined May 1794) was Louis XVI's younger sister.

The Princess of Lamballe, Marie-Thérèse de Savoie-Carignan (1749 - 1792) was Marie-Antoinette's confidante and oversaw her household. She left Paris when the royal couple fled but returned to serve the Queen. She was initially incarcerated with the Queen, but then separated and placed in la Force prison where she was massacred on 10 August along with other prisoners. Her head was placed on a pike and held aloft under the Queen's prison window, her mutilated body was dragged through the streets.

The Princess of Tarente, Louise-Emmanuelle de Chatillon, (1763 - 1814) lady-in-waiting to Marie-Antoinette, refused to leave the royal family after 1789. Arrested in August 1792, she escaped prison during the September massacres of that year and reached England. She moved to St. Petersburg, becoming lady-in-waiting to the Empress, and died in Russia, having revisited France only once.

Laporte, Arnault de (1737 - guillotined 1793) emigrated at the start of the Revolution but returned in 1791 when the King asked him to become secretary of state in charge of the civil list. He is alleged to have sent funds abroad and burnt many documents before his arrest.

Pétion, Jérôme (1756 - 1794) a lawyer, friend of Robespierre, was sent to bring back the royal family following their attempt to flee. Elected mayor of Paris in 1791, success went to his head. A constitutional monarchist, he presided over the Convention and the Jacobins, but lost the support of Robespierre when he pleaded against the King's death sentence. He fled Paris when denounced by his erstwhile friend and committed suicide in order to avoid arrest.

Barnave, Antoine Pierre Joseph Marie (1761 - guillotined 1793) was a lawyer and a Jacobin. A gifted public speaker, he alienated some by supporting the colonists against the slaves. He sought to regain favour by becoming more revolutionary, then moderating his views enough to be sent, with Pétion, to escort the royal family back from Varennes, whereupon, having allegedly fallen madly in love with the Queen, he became a

LA PORTE [sic], Intendant of the Civil List.

PÉTION, Mayor of Paris.

A DEPUTATION FROM THE COMMISSAIRES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

THE DAUPHIN.

THE QUEEN'S LADIES-IN-WAITING.

PAGES.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE DAGGER.

NATIONAL GUARDS.

SWISS [Guards.].

(MADAME ELIZABETH, MADAME ROYALE, BARNAVE, OLYMPE DE GOUGES, CLERMON TONNERRE, and BACMAN appear but are missing from the list of characters.)

The action takes place in a richly decorated bedroom. On one side of the stage there is a fortepiano, on the other an elaborate desk.³ At the back of the stage are portraits of the Emperor, the Queen's brother, and the Empress, the Queen's mother.

FIRST ACT.

FIRST SCENE.

BARNAVE, MADAME ELIZABETH.

MADAME ELIZABETH, *eagerly*.

monarchist overnight. Certainly he and Marie-Antoinette corresponded and were mutually involved in political schemes to support the failing monarchy. Their exchanges also suggest a growing mutual regard. Barnave had effectively signed his own death warrant as these letters were used to justify his execution. For dramatic purposes de Gouges makes Madame Elizabeth the object of his affections.

The Dauphin (1785 - 1795?) was the King and Queen's second son, their first son having died in 1789, aged seven. Louis-Charles was imprisoned with his parents in August 1792 and is assumed to have died of ill-treatment in 1795. Legends abound, the child could have been removed, a substitute found etc., but nothing has come of the numerous claims made to his title.

Clermont-Tonnerre, Stanislas (1757 – 1792) – spelt Clermon Tonnerre throughout the play – a gentleman soldier turned politician of liberal views he favoured an English style constitutional monarchy and religious freedom for Jews and Protestants. Overcome by the events of 1789 he attempted to limit the effectiveness of the Jacobins through his own club but, denounced by Barnave, it was destroyed by a mob and achieved nothing. Accused by Robespierre and others of being an enemy of the people, arrested then released, he was recognised and murdered by rioters on 10 August 1792.

Bachmann, Karl Joseph von, (1734 - 1792) a Swiss aristocrat and soldier who followed family tradition and served the French crown in the Swiss Guards. Due to his commanding officer being indisposed he commanded the guards on the 10 August when revolutionaries attacked the Tuileries palace. He escorted the royal family to the National Assembly where they sought refuge and returned to defend the palace. The King had given written orders not to shoot civilians. The crowd was armed, shots were exchanged in the melee, and the Guards were massacred since most had downed arms following the King's orders. Bachmann was arrested, accused of treason for shooting at the people, and sent to the guillotine by the revolutionary Tribunal;

Knights of the dagger (Chevaliers du poignard) was the name given to several hundred nobles who, in 1791, on hearing that the King was in danger, ran to defend him armed with pistols and daggers.

The Swiss Guards were a military force from Switzerland used by foreign courts both for defence and as ceremonial bodyguards (the Vatican is the only place where they still operate). Employed by the French crown since Francis I used them as mercenaries in the sixteenth century, the practice was outlawed by Switzerland in 1848.

3 A square pianoforte made for Marie-Antoinette in the late 1780s by the famous French instrument maker Sébastien Érard (1752 - 1831) can be seen in the Cobbe Collection at Hatchlands Park, East Clandon, U.K.; Érard fled to England after 1789 and purchased the piano when it was sold off along with other royal artefacts after the fall of the monarchy.

Barnave! is that you?

BARNAVE.

The very same, Madame.

MADAME ELIZABETH.

I thought you had left for Coblenz. You must go and join my brothers, you have taken leave of the King and Queen, I fear that this delay could harm the interest that you were able to inspire in them.

BARNAVE.

Alas....

MADAME ELIZABETH.

You sigh. Do you fear being arrested?

BARNAVE.

May it please the Gods that I need only fear arrest: a power stronger than that of the State detains me in Paris despite myself. I wish to flee but at every turn I find a precipice.

MADAME ELIZABETH.

It is true that we are quite unhappy, and that we are more so because our friends are lost on our behalf. You, Barnave, especially, since your unexpected return saved us from the scaffold to which the factious members of the National Assembly wished to send us.

BARNAVE.

Fatal trip to Varenne [sic]⁴ I saw you Madame, and I lost sight of my Nation's cause.

MADAME ELIZABETH.

Even in betrayal you are serving it. Barnave, do not regret attaching yourself to the King's cause. I congratulate myself on innocently making it happen and far from being offended by an illegal love, I accept and appreciate the homage.

BARNAVE, *throwing himself at her feet.*

4 In 1791 the King wished to spend Easter at Saint-Cloud, a chateau near Paris that he had acquired from his Orléans cousins to offer to Marie-Antoinette. There he hoped to attend a mass but, rumours abounded that he was seeking to escape the country so an angry crowd prevented him leaving. Allegedly at this time, a prisoner in his own capital, the King decided to flee to Belgium and join his émigré brother, the comte d'Artois. On the night of 20 June 1791 a disguised royal family left Paris in a heavily laden coach. The King was recognised in Sainte-Menehould by a post master who alerted the authorities. The fugitives were arrested in Varennes and returned to Paris in disgrace. The King's other brother, the comte de Provence, successfully fled France that same night, strengthening the émigré's counter-revolutionary movement based in Coblenz. Many constitutional monarchists, including Olympe de Gouges, began to lose faith in the King's ability to lead the country following his return.

Oh divine Princess! What? Could I flatter myself that I have aroused your interest and that the immense distance that separates us will not be a barrier to my feelings?

MADAME ELIZABETH, *raising him up.*

Barnave, stand up! If we were seen....I can no longer deny it. I love you: but, after this pledge, do not expect me in any way to fail in my duty. I can only be joined to a king. You may lay claim to my heart in silence, citizen, but you will never be my husband.

BARNAVE, *vexed.*

What? A barbarous prejudice, a tyrannical law, would oppose our happiness. Consider, Madame, that a representative of the people, a Barnave, is worth the Kings that you mention. I only differ from them in this vein of politics, of betrayal. I have imitated them to gain you. What more do I need to be worthy of you?

MADAME ELIZABETH.

Royal blood.

BARNAVE.

Consider that I have redeemed this blood through the one I have spilt, America is still steaming with the blood that you find unacceptable. Cruel one, when maybe I alone have saved the throne for your brother, you disapprove of my birth! Can you have forgotten that perhaps it was dependent on me alone to abolish the monarchy in France. Can you have forgotten your brother's and the Queen's supplications at my knees, can you have forgotten your prayers? Barnave, you said with that sweet heavenly voice of yours, be our tutelary God, save us. Then I could have laid claim to your hand. Do you find me less worthy today! And the revision in the Constitution, is that not my work? And the endless agitations in France and America, do they not give me the right to claim you?

MADAME ELIZABETH, *aside.*

Such noble courage enchants me and is worthy of me. Ah! Barnave, why has fate placed you in such obscurity....but, someone is coming. I was supposed to instruct you on what is being prepared and I have only spoken of myself. I blush at my own weakness. Farewell, I leave you. I see the Queen, avoid her presence, our love does not serve her interests....
(*She exits.*)

BARNAVE, *following her.*

I will not leave you, I must claim you, oh my Princess. Ambition and love belong to all men.

He follows her.

SECOND SCENE.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE, *hair loose, wearing a day dress.*

Uncertainty is too dreadful! Death or victory, there is my last word. The storm is formed,

the tempest is above me, so be it, the alternative that I am reduced to does not give me enough time to push the explosion further off. (*She reflects.*)...The crisis will be appalling....(*Walking around.*) ...Let me cast away all pity from my bosom. My husband, my children, cast yourselves from my eyes to save yourselves. I endanger my days but of what use is a life ceaselessly threatened, of what use is a reign exposed to the common people! And you, anxious King, the most pusillanimous of men, see the fruit of this cowardice that you call virtue! Already there is talk of deferring your power; soon you will be dethroned. What am I saying! A horrible prison, perhaps the scaffold, will be the just reward for a king who did not know how to reign. But I will not be your spouse in vain; the daughter of Maria Theresa will not have mounted the throne of France in vain in order to descend from it a vile slave. Now, the strongest person's crime is the one that must win the day. I will drag down with me both the false and the credulous citizens. (*She turns away and consults her watch.*)

They are late in coming....it's only six of the clock...may he who calculates his fortune by the speed of a few hours suffer centuries of troubles....what are our forces...Ten thousand National Guardsmen, about fifteen hundred artillerymen....two thousand Swiss guards.... Those will be worth at least four thousand. Ten thousand Knights of the Dagger. I'm not counting on them too much, they are cowards and might betray me, but they'll make up the numbers. Oh, if only the Faubourgs could have been won on my behalf. I was promised it by that writer of tuppenny sheets. But, to count on those sorts of promises....Those pamphlet writers and all those scribblers on paper are not worth a Marat or a Robespierre. Using the specious language of patriotism they throw everything over in the name of the people, they appear to be in the service of propaganda yet never have leaders of factions better served the cause of Kings. Rushing towards the same goal, they lead two parties simultaneously. I like these enterprising men, they possess the difficult art of profoundly misleading feeble people. They understood from the start that in order to serve me they must beat a path in the opposite direction. Calonne, congratulate yourself, this is your work, and your reward will be proportional to your efforts.⁵

THIRD SCENE.

A FOOTMAN, THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE, MARIE-ANTOINETTE.

THE FOOTMAN.

Madame the Princess of Lamballe.

THE QUEEN, *running forwards.*

⁵ This paragraph is marked with an 'x' in the margin. Unusually Marie-Antoinette uses 'tu' when apostrophizing Calonne, no doubt reflecting the Queen's disdain for the character.

Calonne, Charles Alexandre de (1734 – 1802) a lawyer and statesman who became Controller General of Finance in November 1783, and attempted for a few years to rescue France from bankruptcy by trying to reform taxation and impose a levy on the nobility and the church (a form of land tax not dissimilar to those suggested previously by Turgot and Necker). The project failed, undermined by his own weaknesses and by powerful political and landed opponents. Calonne had made public the kingdom's deficit, and probably unfairly reaped much of the blame for it. Disliked by a court that had hailed him, and discredited by others, his downfall was inevitable. A talented orator, a good administrator, he did not, in the end, gain the support he needed from the King. Dismissed by Louis XVI in 1787 he left France for England from where he used his considerable talents to support the émigrés and the counterrevolution. Calonne is alleged to have helped the comtesse de La Motte, of the Diamond Necklace affair, publish her polemic against Marie-Antoinette in 1789 in London. The Queen was portrayed in La Motte's memoir's as a calculating, bisexual, intriguer who sought to hand over France to her Austrian brother.

Oh, my most loyal friend. I was about to send for you. Have you seen the Princess of Tarente this morning? What did she tell you, what did she do? Can I truly count on the National Guard, are you not both fooling each other?

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

You should have more faith in those who have only your interests at heart. Opinions are divided, the King's cause will prevail over that of the people.

THE QUEEN.

You think so?

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

I am convinced of it. (*She takes out a letter.*) Read this.

THE QUEEN, *taking the letter and putting her hand on her heart.*

Let me see....(*She reads.*) Madame, the time has come at last for their majesties to leave the distressing situation in which they have found themselves for the last four years. The affair that is planned for the ninth to the tenth (tonight) is known to the combined armies.... (*She continues.*)....The inhabitants of the border towns and the Kingdom's interior capitals yearn to open their doors to the foreigner. The Jacobins destroyed, we would be masters of the Nation. At midnight tonight, Marat and Robespierre will incite their faction, the faubourgs will rise up and descend, fully armed, on the chateau. The rallying point of the Royalists is decided, the numbers are formidable, I can count on at least fifty thousand well armed men, furnished with munitions to shoot all the Jacobins in the universe. Madame, the Queen must be warned and she must be told once again to frighten the King, to persuade him to send for the Mayor of Paris to attend him at ten of the clock tonight. The tocsin will ring from the chateau at midnight. I have ordered the entire public force for this night, blood will run. By tomorrow the rebels and the philosophers will be no more. I will not sign my letter, you know me. (*End of the letter.*)
....At last I can breathe again! For the first time since this odious revolution.....Come, we must renew our courage.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

Oh! What could you still fear? Everything is serving your purpose, even hatred. The French are in such a confused state of mind, that they cannot push beyond the recklessness of this supposed liberty, they are actually outdone by it, and only too happy to bend to the power of their erstwhile master, you will soon see them at your feet praising you as before, blessing your virtues and your courage.

THE QUEEN.

Let them do their duty, that is what I demand of them. What do I care for their frivolous love and capricious devotion? Peoples are made for irons. Kings for the benefit of the world. Nonetheless I will not hide from you my anxieties, it can be with kings as with peoples, often playthings that fate enjoys persecuting. With good reason I fear that fortune is bored. I am not blind. I know my rights, they are only as extensive as the errors of

mankind. It is only by propagating them that thrones strengthen themselves. Instruction undermines them, philosophy destroys them and this seductive doctrine fills me with fear.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

I can no longer see, Antoinette, the woman who rivets an astonished universe with her constancy and wit. Is the naturally frivolous character of the French so unknown to her that she despairs of their repentance?

THE QUEEN.

You have said it, I despair of everything and yet I flatter myself....but see, the Princess of Tarente.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

Gaiety shines from her eyes.

THE QUEEN, *aside*.

If I relied on the looks my courtiers adopted I would never need wish for anything more.

FOURTH SCENE.

THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE, THE QUEEN, THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE.

All is going well, Madame, you can no longer doubt the attachment and fidelity of your subjects: you will reign once more. Other times, other customs. Previously it was thanks to a respectful love! Today it is through fear and terror: timid citizens, that we name tremblers, who dread the abusive power that a perturbing faction has abrogated. The Jacobins' propaganda commands despotically, spreading terror and discord. It serves your interests well.

THE QUEEN.

I know: but do you not realise that in this perverse society one finds proud, rigorous philosophers, insolent citizens who despise kings and lean towards a Republic? And if they win there will be no more monarchy, no more hope.

THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE, *interrupting*.

They will be the first to be assassinated. Within the sect there are several parties. The brigands dominate the philosophers. Those that they name, amongst themselves, good citizens have no rallying point.

THE QUEEN.

One can be formed in the eye of the storm. I have all to fear, I know the reversals of kings.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

Would you fear the fate of the Tarquins?

THE QUEEN.

Yes, since it must be spoken. They will be strong enough to chase us out. What shame!

THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE.

Oh! Do not imagine they are so generous, if the brigands carry the day the King is finished, he will perish on the scaffold like Charles I.

THE QUEEN.

Oh! If at least I could deny them my son's head! If only before my death, and that of his unfortunate father, I could entrust him to a safe pair of hands who could take him to the bosom of my family. The Tarquins left no descendants. The sons of Charles I troubled England for centuries. What am I saying? They propagated a love of monarchy, each one defended his King: And, you can even witness, among these republicans, that the Robespierres, the Panises, the Marats sense the need for absolute power. The throne or the scaffold, that is where the hope of the ambitious resides.⁶

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

Why bolster yourself with sinister foreboding? Everything points to a change of heart. You can see that even the partisans of the Revolution have abandoned their parties and all have taken up the defence of the Monarchy.

THE QUEEN.

Say rather of the Constitution: is that what you call love of monarchy?

THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE.

The Queen is right. These men are more redoubtable than the factious! From the Constitution to the Republic is but one step. (*To the Princess of Lamballe.*) Is this not the sad experience that you yourself have observed? You have seen this woman at your home: through her writings she pursues the factious and kings, and faces all daggers with a stoic courage. Have you not heard her speak to you in the audacious language of a republican? All true constitutionalists are the same, they want an executive power but they want it to be arbitrary, always submitted to the law and the sovereignty of the nation.⁷

THE QUEEN.

Regarding this woman.... is it therefore impossible for us to bring her over to our side? I had charged you to find out....

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE, *stopping her.*

⁶ This section is marked with a large 'x' in the margin. De Gouges is clearly referring to herself.

⁷ This section is marked with a large 'x' in the margin.

What can you expect from a fanatical heedless scatter-brain, who pays no attention to anyone's advice, who says anything, prints anything and on whom one cannot count in any way?

THE QUEEN, *thoughtfully*.

Oh! I do not hate.... these minds, they serve us better than you imagine. See how her national pact agrees with us wholeheartedly, it generates reconciliation, and if this reconciliation had been maintained for two weeks alone, that would have been the end of the Jacobins and the supposed philosophers. These benign spirits, believe me, serve the cause of kings better than the public good they think they are defending. I'm not sure.... but I would have liked to meet this woman.⁸

FIFTH SCENE.

A VALET, THE SAME.

THE VALET, *to the Queen*.

Madame, forgive me, but circumstances, and my zeal, oblige me to make known to you what is happening in the chateau. A woman who exhibits neither the attitude nor the language of a rebel asks to speak to you. She assures that she only wants to speak to you because she has your interests at heart. Her discourse is full of wisdom. She draws the attention of the assistants, and if I may repeat, Madame, what is being said in the gallery, you should hear her.

THE QUEEN, *looking at the Princesses of Lamballe and Tarente*.

What do you advise? Can I receive this woman? (*To the Valet.*) Were you given her name?

THE VALET.

No, Madame, it is merely said that she is a good patriot.

THE QUEEN.

What can she have to say to me. Meanwhile, each of you, give me your advice.

THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE.

Madame, you are the Queen, and you know that etiquette forbids all interviews with commoners. The assassins' plan, their endeavours, all impose a duty on you not to receive this unknown woman; meanwhile she must be heard so I will go, if you order it....

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

No, I will take charge of receiving her, I suspect that she is this individual. The same woman that we were discussing, and whom you have wished to meet for so long.

⁸ This section is marked with a large 'x' in the margin.

THE QUEEN, *eagerly*.

Show her in.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

Stop.... (*To the Queen.*) Forgive me, you cannot see, or hear her, without compromising your honour, deign, I beg you, to hide in this cabinet; there you will easily overhear our conversation.

THE QUEEN.

I bow to your opinion.

SIXTH SCENE.

THE QUEEN ENTERS THE CABINET WITH THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE, *the Valet leaves.*

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE, *alone.*

If I am not mistaken, this woman is the same one who presented herself to me at the festival for the Mayor of Etampes. I hope that the Queen will be punished for her curiosity. Her principles are so different to her maxims!.... (*Looking at the cabinet.*) But you wished for this, you are going to be satisfied.

SEVENTH SCENE.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE, OLYMPE DE GOUGES.

THE PRINCESS, *aside.*

There she is, the audacious woman. Let us humiliate her pride: let us sit down.

OLYMPE, *surprised, disdainfully approaches the Princess, looking at her with air of pity, shrugs her shoulders and smiles.*

Let us sit down as well. (*She takes a seat, sits down and leans her elbow on the fortepiano.*)

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE, *getting up angrily.*

What audacity. (*To Olympe.*) Have you forgotten that you are in the Queen's apartments, and that this lack of respect could cost you dear?

OLYMPE, *laughing openly stays seated.*

What a great adventure I wouldn't swap it for an empire, it will be worthy of a comic scene that will attract all of Paris.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

Again....

OLYMPE.

Why not, you endlessly amuse me and I will frankly admit, given that my heart is incensed by the public calamities resulting from the Court's endless depravations, I had not thought to laugh so heartily with one of its heroines. Really, Madame, in all seriousness, do you chastise me for sitting down when you led the way?

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

My rank, my birth....

OLYMPE.

Vain fantasy; rank and birth never gave you, at any time, the right to offend anyone with impunity. When, great God, did you allow yourself this excess, this superstition, this madness, this extravagance? (*Standing up.*) But let us stop there, I have not come wishing to take your fantasies away from you, that would be to attempt the impossible, and I certainly do not feel I have the courage to even try. But you are the Queen's friend; for a long while you have been leading her to the precipitous edge that is opening up at her feet. Such perfidy; you are ruining her and you will create crimes of a type never before seen on earth. I know that the Court is hatching a plot, at least that is what is suspected.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

And you believe it?

OLYMPE.

I believe you capable of anything, there is nothing you would not do, you courtiers, to satisfy your blind ambition. All your efforts will be impotent, the mass of good citizens want liberty and equality. You will all perish; no force, no authority, will be able to alter your resolve. Reason, justice, nature, belong to the national sovereignty; you are nothing now, nothing I tell you.... Meanwhile it still depends on you, vile courtiers, to save this bloody throne, this spectral monarchy imposing centuries of ignorance, censor of the people, and oppressor of the most beautiful rights of man! In the end there is still time to prevent this awful massacre. You are not listening to me..... Heaven..... It is true then: the language of virtue is not the one of courtiers! But do not think that timidity or fear have made me behave this way. I pursue rebels scrupulously. I abhor tyrants but I do not want assassins' weapons used in order to destroy them. I do not want my nation to be sullied by the blood, even of the guilty. I know that the Court is heading for the same end as these assassins, who under the mask of patriotism cheat good citizens. I want to enlighten my Nation and the monarch, if it is possible that he be worthy of being King of the French: this is the point of such an approach.

EIGHTH SCENE.

THE SAME.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE, *to her Valet.*

Show Madame the way out.

OLYMPE.

To the Queen's apartments. For the first time she will hear the truth. I see too clearly the reason for it being kept from her ears.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE, *aside, biting her fingertips.*

What a nightmare!...but let me pretend. (*Aloud.*) The Queen, Madame, cannot be seen. I will not fail to share with her your approach, rest assured, she will be informed.

OLYMPE.

Will you repeat my conversation to her accurately, Madame?

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

Yes, Madame, it will be as though she heard it herself.

OLYMPE.

That will please me, Madame.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

You can count on it, Madame.

OLYMPE.

Would you be so kind, Madame, as to give her this placard, which should have been posted these days past but has yet to be put up, such is the credit given to those with evil intent at the moment.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE, *jeering.*

The Queen does not accept anything, Madame, but I am surprised at your aversion to the factious! Your language, your writings justify them enough.

OLYMPE.

Say it more clearly! I unmask them and that is why you are desperate. I know that these last loathe me as much as the courtiers but what do I care for their hatred, or yours. I do everything for my motherland, I risk my life, I know, but how beautiful it is to lose it for such a fine cause. If either of us perish by the hand of assassins, posterity will approve or revenge our death. That is the only difference that I can find between us. May the fate that threatens us both strike me alone and remind you of a dissenter such as I...Farewell. (*She exits with pride*)

THE VALET, *surprised*.

What audacity!

OLYMPE, *with contempt*.

Lower your eyes, servile valet to a slave.

NINTH SCENE.

THE QUEEN *and* THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE, *coming out of the cabinet*, THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

THE QUEEN.

What a woman! All my blood froze in my veins!

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

What, Madame, you seem moved. You, so unafraid of any peril, have been affected by the words of a fanatical woman. Oh! I pray, do not allow yourself to be beaten down at a time when you need all your strength.

THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE.

A fanatical patriot, a scatter-brain who puts herself forward wanting to teach us a lesson! I admire the Princess of Lamballe's patience. If I had been in her position I would have had her restrained by my servants for her impertinence.

THE QUEEN, *troubled*.

This scatter-brain, this fanatic, this audacious woman is perhaps right.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

Do you think so?

THE QUEEN.

I do not know; but if I were in her place I would perhaps think the same and I will admit to you that I view her quite differently than you do. No doubt if she had served my interests, she would have defended them to the death.

The Princess of Lamballe and the Princess of Tarente pull faces.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE.

What! Abase ourselves?

THE QUEEN, *interrupting her*.

Yes! Caress her folly, flatter her civic duty, her philosophy. These supposed philosophers are so stupid: you see, their patriotism is so strange, so subject to change. Do you think that it cost me any less to flatter, to encourage, everyone who surrounded me? Did you see those proud followers of the Parisian guard spew up insults against me from a distance? Barely had they approached me, than they became pliable, submissive, and then you could hear them praising me, sympathizing with me and taking my defence. In the end this happy return to a majority was thanks to me for however much gold and silver was spread around, nothing prevailed upon hearts as much as my benevolence. My friends, allow me to tell you that for Court minds you lack the art of seducing feeble humans. When one faces adversity one must know how to bow to the rigour of fate in order to triumph over it one day.

THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE.

No doubt when dealing with those who are making a mark on the revolution. But a woman, a wayward one, whose only ambition is to create trouble in all parties, and who is detested by all.

THE QUEEN.

That is why I fear her more. Her austere philosophy kills our own interests and may lead to the state no longer wanting a monarchy; it takes skill to change hearts and minds. I know that these can only be seduced by exciting their pity. No doubt it is a great misfortune to have to humiliate oneself to this degree but one must know how to control pride, immolate one's own amour propre and sacrifice it all to one's ambition.

TENTH SCENE.

THE SAME, THE PRINCE ROYAL, MADAME ROYALE, MADAME ELIZABETH.⁹

THE PRINCE ROYAL, *jumping*.

'Three cheers for the Nation! Three cheers for the Nation!' Sister, why don't you shout like me, 'Three cheers for the Nation'? Mama, isn't it true that we must shout 'Three cheers for the Nation'?

THE QUEEN, *with a forced smile*.

Yes, son, we must always shout, three cheers for the nation. (*In a whisper*.) Let us not alter his innocence, he amuses the people with his cries; it takes a child to deceive the common herd.

MADAME ROYALE.

But Mother, he shatters my ears all day long!

THE PRINCE ROYAL, *angrily*.

⁹ The Prince Royal was the Dauphin and Madame Royale was the title given to the King and Queen's daughter, Marie-Thérèse.

Sister, you are an aristocrat, I know, and I have been told that I am a patriot, so to make you really furious I will sing 'Ça ira' and 'La Carmagnole', also, the people's hymn from Marseilles, that will kill all the tyrants on the earth. It is brand new, that one, Mama, no one knows it yet.... A grenadier has just whispered it to me. I will sing it to you, Mama, and then I will sing it to Papa King.¹⁰

THE QUEEN, *dissimulating*.

Really, son. (*Aside.*) Let us pretend, then we will know more about this song!

THE PRINCE ROYAL.

I don't know it all. But the tune is like this.

MADAME ROYALE.

Do it anyway!

The Prince Royal sings the first couplet of the people's hymn from Marseilles.

THE QUEEN.

That's enough, son. That's enough!

ELEVENTH SCENE.

THE SAME, THE KING, SEVERAL PAGES, A FOOTMAN.

[THE FOOTMAN?]

The King!

THE PRINCE ROYAL, *running towards the King*.

Ah, Papa, did you hear me? It's pretty that one, isn't it? It's as lovely as 'La Carmagnole'.

THE KING, *touching his hand*.

What is it? (*To the others.*) What does he mean?

THE PRINCE ROYAL.

The people's hymn from Marseilles, don't you know it yet? It will please you, I promise.

¹⁰ *Ça ira* (all will be well) was a popular revolutionary song dating from May or June 1790 when its lyrics were innocent of its later call to hang aristocrats and clergy from lampposts; the incendiary lyrics were probably added in the summer of 1792. The 'carmagnole' was a popular song named after the Piedmontese citadel of Carmagnola taken by the French army of the South in September 1792 and adapted with crudely anti-monarchist lyrics. *La Marseillaise* was composed in April 1792 by Rouget de Lisle, while in the army. It was originally known as the battle song of the army of the Rhine and was first heard in Strasbourg, sung by the composer. It spread through the army and volunteers, those from Marseille singing it as they marched to Paris in August of that year, hence its new name. It became the French national anthem on 14 July 1795. Like many other symbols of that revolutionary time its usage went in and out of fashion until being decisively reinstated in 1879.

You're not a tyrant, not you. But beware of my sister, and all women, they are all aristocrats, they will have our heads chopped off. You are a good king though, and I, I am not wicked, you know that.... You're crying.... But I haven't done anything, will I be killed too? I love the Nation. Oh, I am so pleased with my National Guard uniform. Here, look at me, Papa King. See how I do my drill for you.

THE KING.

My son, my dear son, your gladness breaks my heart. He is happy and I, too unhappy Father, am an even unhappier King. (*With sorrow.*) My wife, my daughter, my sister, my son! How can I save you?

THE PRINCE ROYAL.

Goodness, what is the matter with you? You make me sad.

THE QUEEN, *firmly*.

Look at yourself! You are making us all miserable.

THE KING, *reassuring himself*.

It's nothing, my son, kiss me. Go to your rooms, and I will join you and we will play together.

THE PRINCE ROYAL.

No, I don't want to leave you; if they came to take you away, you would be hurt and if I am with you that won't happen. Everyone knows that I am a patriot and only patriots are popular, you know that.

THE KING.

Alas!....

THE QUEEN.

Go, my son, go to your rooms. (*To the footman.*) Take Monsieur le Dauphin away. Follow him, daughter.

MADAME ROYALE.

Mama.

THE QUEEN.

Do as you are told.

THE PRINCE ROYAL.

I'd rather go alone, she enrages me too much. And you always send me away. I neither know what you are saying, nor what you are doing. But I know well enough that you don't

love the Nation as I do, and I have been assured that you will be the reason I will never be King. Yet it is so nice to be King when one is a good Citizen. Oh, I know it well, I...Oh my goodness, what a face you're all pulling at me! I'm leaving, quick. (*He exits with Madame Royale.*)

TWELFTH SCENE.

THE SAME, THE KING, [CLERMON TONNERRE], SEVERAL PAGES, A FOOTMAN.

THE FOOTMAN.

Monsieur de Clermon Tonnerre!

THE KING.

What has he come to tell us?

CLERMON TONNERRE, *audaciously*.

Sire, the moment of vengeance approaches, you will once again sit on the throne of your ancestors.

THE KING, *troubled*.

This throne will cost me dear.....

THE QUEEN.

What are you saying? Is this how you encourage your faithful subjects? King of the most ancient of empires, when will you cease putting down the sceptre that is still in your hands? And why am I not in your place! My friends, you see him, you hear him, at the moment of triumph he digs his own abyss!

CLERMON TONNERRE.

Sire, now is not the time to draw back, the faubourgs are rising up. Tonight, they will come to your palace, tonight they will come to assassinate you. Half the armed force is on your side. The officers are all totally devoted to you. Ten thousand nobles are already in the castle, they await your signal. You must conquer or die, Sire, today that is the motto for everyone. Would you be less resolute than your enemies? You hesitate!.... A dark cloud passes over your features....(*Throwing himself at his feet.*) Oh my King, open your eyes to the chasm that is ready to engulf you. Strengthen your throne that is about to crumble! Save your wife, your children! I expiate my sin at your feet. I repair my wrongs by betraying a perfidious Nation for my King!

THE QUEEN, *with tenderness*.

Do you hear him? Can you believe him? (*She throws herself at his feet.*) Oh, my husband, my friend, save your son, his crown and sacrifice me alone.

THE KING, *with tenderness*.

You! My wife!

MADAME ELIZABETH, *throwing herself at his feet.*

My brother, my dear brother, let yourself be guided by those who only wish you well.

THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE, *kneeling.*

Oh, my King, I will die for you.

THE PRINCESS OF TARENTE.

I will confront all dangers to defend my King!

THE KING, *in the deepest despair.*

Very well, I consent to it all!

CLERMON TONNERRE, *getting up quickly.*

Knights of the most ancient nobility, come and surround your King.

THIRTEENTH SCENE.

THE SAME, *a considerable number of* KNIGHTS OF THE DAGGER.

THE KING, *in distress.*

God, I will be the instrument and the accomplice of the worst assassinations! No, I cannot resolve myself to do it. You are all deceiving me; my heart never deceives me. (*To his wife.*) I always give in to your entreaties, and it has done me no good.

THE QUEEN, *in a fury.*

It is too late to retract, and I am beside myself at your conduct and its mishaps! Your character, as fickle, as incomprehensible, as the Revolution leads us from one reef to the next, and while our friends risk themselves to open up a favourable path for us, your weakness, or to put it better, your poltroonery, blocks us with its terrifying barrier. Cruel father and perfidious husband, all that is left is for you to deliver up yourself, your wife, your children, into the hands of your executioners. (*Pretending to leave.*) Order them to open the doors, I will myself....

THE KING, *stopping her.*

Madame, stop, you will have no cause to complain of me, if I die, if you drive me to destroy myself, your interests, and mine at least I will have obeyed you, there is my defence, what more do you want?

THE QUEEN, *dissimulating.*

I can feel all the weight of your sacrifices, but you must believe that I only want what is best for you, for our children, and glory for this illustrious nobility that lays down its fortune and its life to fly to our defence.

THE KING, *with greater strength.*

Their zeal delights me, but what can they do to defend us? They are not armed.

All together they draw a dagger and a pistol from their belts.

God save the King and our Queen.

The King, afraid, moves back against the Queen and turns his head.

CLERMON TONNERRE.

Take courage, Sire, they are not your assassins!

THE KING, *somewhat emotional.*

I was not expecting it, I admit...and the surprise caused my alarm....But among these conspirators is that not Barnave that I see?

BARNAVE, *coming out of the ranks.*

Yes Sire, it is I. Just as I was leaving to join my brothers, I heard that your Majesty and your august family were surrounded by assassins. And that tonight the chateau is to be besieged and torched. I ran, I flew, to be near my King! Oh, what an agreeable surprise! I see him surrounded by his most faithful subjects. I am admitted to this bellicose nobility. If an illustrious blood does not circulate in my veins, at least my ancestors transmitted courage and a love of our kings. Mandatary of a great people, premier orator of the world, faithful subject of my King, I have perhaps merited a recompense worthy of the cause I serve today.

THE KING.

Barnave, I will remember the services that you have given me.

THE QUEEN.

Do you believe that honours, rewards.....

BARNAVE, *interrupting her by looking tenderly at Madame Elizabeth.*

I ask for only one, she is dear to my heart.

MADAME ELIZABETH, *aside, blushing.*

I tremble....

THE QUEEN, *considering Madame Elizabeth.*

My sister, ah, what shame!

CLERMON TONNERRE, *whispering to the Queen.*

Madame, remember that the Mayor of Paris must be called to the King tonight at ten!

THE QUEEN, *quietly.*

I will take charge of it!

CLERMON TONNERRE.

I will answer for the rest.

THE QUEEN, *considering Madame Elizabeth and noticing that her interests are of more value to the King than a sister's shame.*

Sire, accompany me to my apartment, I need to speak to you.... (*To the Knights of the Dagger*) I leave you, Gentlemen, for a moment, please believe that, forever, you will be present in my thoughts. (*To Clermon Tonnerre.*) And you, faithful friend, always serve your King, you know how grateful he is. (*She exits giving Barnave a withering look.*)

CLERMON TONNERRE, *to the Knights.*

Sole supporters of the monarchy, friends of the King, follow me, let us go and prepare to do battle.

FOURTEENTH SCENE.

BARNAVE, MADAME ELIZABETH.

BARNAVE, *stopping Madame Elizabeth.*

You are abandoning me, cruel one, without a word of our plan!

MADAME ELIZABETH.

Ah, Barnave, what have you done, the Queen knows all.

BARNAVE, *surprised.*

What are you saying, who could have told her?

MADAME ELIZABETH.

You.

BARNAVE.

Me!

MADAME ELIZABETH.

I'm telling you, you and you alone.

BARNAVE, *surprised*.

How?

MADAME ELIZABETH.

Your look, your language, what more does the most skilful woman of her sex need. Did you not notice the look of utter contempt she gave you as she left?

BARNAVE.

I had eyes for you alone, what do we care of her opinion, since I may only win you by your own accord. If my princess, taking advantage of tonight's disturbance, consents to follow me, then I would be the happiest of mortals. Far from the court, and far from any factions, the two of us would lead a peaceful life together.

MADAME ELIZABETH.

Oh, Barnave! I fear that our joy is a mere vision, a deceptive dream, and that on awakening it will all be but a terrible outlook! Never mind, I am pleased by its charm, and however much pride courses through my blood thanks to my birth, I have experienced love, I have met my conqueror. I must succumb to your rapture. I obey my feelings, I will follow my spouse!

BARNAVE, *enraptured*.

Oh, my princess! Tell me the time and the place.....

MADAME ELIZABETH, *stopping him*.

When the brass resounds through the air, here, at midnight, at the very heart of the unrest, I will open up a path and follow you!

BARNAVE.

Daughter of our kings! I would follow you were you engulfed by flames. At midnight precisely, surrounded by my friends, I will carry off my princess!

MADAME ELIZABETH.

Farewell, may this disturbance that I fear serve my brother's vengeance and our love!

BARNAVE, *proudly*.

Never doubt it, you will be fulfilled.

FIFTEENTH SCENE.

BARNAVE.

Fortunate Barnave! Fortunate trip to Varenne! Finally I have arrived where I belong; I will walk alongside kings, Louis XVI on the throne of despotism will not be able to act towards me with the rigour of a particular prejudice. I have saved his crown, in recompense I will marry his sister. I will marry her clandestinely, it is true, but circumstances oblige me to, and when recalled to his court I will be able, in my turn to punish my enemies. Let us not lose time, let us prepare for such a grand enterprise.

End of the first Act.

ACT II.

The stage represents the night.

FIRST SCENE.

CLERMON TONNERRE, LA PORTE, THE DIVISION COMMANDER, CHARTON,
[BACMAN] A MAJOR IN THE SWISS GUARDS.

LA PORTE.

It gives me great pleasure, Gentlemen, to see you gathered in the palace of our kings in order to defend the most virtuous of monarchs. But your courage alone will not suffice. Are you sure of your men?

BACMAN, A MAJOR IN THE SWISS GUARDS.

Monsieur de la Porte, silver and brandy double a soldier's courage! I can answer for my Swiss Guards.

LA PORTE, *to the Division Commander.*

And you Monsieur?

THE DIVISION COMMANDER.

The National Guard is not won over in this way. The majority believe they are defending the motherland by supporting the King's Constitution. That language was the only one I could use to persuade the Citizens. Three divisions will come to the castle tonight.

CHARTON.

And the other three will stay put.

LA PORTE.

It is as if they were serving us.

CLERMON TONNERRE.

The neutrality of a major force is most favourable to us in these circumstances. We will win, the entire chateau is armed to the teeth!

LA PORTE.

Thanks to my efforts.

CLERMON TONNERRE.

Monsieur de La Porte, say 'Thanks to the Constituent Assembly'. What would you have done without the civil list? Revolutions and counter-revolutions are made with gold.

LA PORTE, *genially*.

Nothing, you are right! (*To the Major.*) Mr Bacman, I have ordered twelve hundred beds to be made up for the Swiss guards, and the counterfeit Swiss guards, who did not sleep last night. I have ordered supper to be prepared for your ten thousand men.

CHARTON.

Be sparing with the wine, but when things erupt, do not forget the brandy and the gunpowder.

CLERMON TONNERRE.

The Queen is late in coming.....but here she is.

SECOND SCENE.

THE SAME, THE PRINCESS OF LAMBALLE, THE QUEEN.

THE QUEEN, *giving a letter she is holding to a footman.*

Fly to the Mayor of Paris and do not leave him until he has obeyed the King's orders. (*Coming downstage.*) He will come and we will find out by what right he would cast aside the decrees of a Constitution of which he claims to be the apostle. As for the rest, let him throw it over if he can and destroy his own work, I will not criminalize him for it, but if we are to perish, he must perish with us! He will come, presumably?

THE DIVISION COMMANDER.

If he thinks himself beyond reproach, he will will not hesitate.

THE QUEEN.

Do you think he is beyond reproach? Do you think he serves the Nation with purity and impartiality? His ambition is not commonplace. If he defies us, it will not be because he disdains dignities, but because of his love for the highest rank! That he seeks to despoil us in order to step into our shoes proves it without a doubt. Leader of a party, can he be unambitious?....I know him! His nature has not escaped me! He is a hypocrite pretending to be sensitive and patriotic. He will come, he will appear to pity the King. He will even try

and give him new advice on the danger that threatens him; then he will leave to go and arm the assassins with his own fair hand. Thus, I share the opinion of Monsieur Clermon Tonnerre: once we have him in the chateau, we must prevent him from leaving; should his populace be stronger than us, it will not dare attempt a murderous act while we hold its magistrate, so on all counts, this man is as useful to us as the armed forces!

THIRD SCENE.

THE SAME, A DOORMAN.

THE QUEEN.

So soon?

THE DOORMAN.

Madame, the Mayor was arriving at the chateau just as I was leaving to go and find him. Once he had read the King's letter he said that he was delighted to have anticipated the wishes of his Majesty, and that he would not abandon him until calm was reestablished. He is with a Division Commander, and if your Majesty could hear him....

THE QUEEN, *interrupting him.*

That's enough. Heavens, could I have been mistaken? Could I be unlucky enough that this rebel be an honest man? No, he is incapable of being so on our behalf. As for the rest, of what use is his virtue or his subterfuge! Knights of France, my faith is in you alone, we must pull ourselves out of the cruel position we are in, this awful choice is a hundred times crueller than death.

THE KNIGHTS, *all together.*

On our oath.

CLERMON TONNERRE.

Madame, leave it to us. The star that lights the day will barely have touched the earth with its first rays that we will be no more, or you will have triumphed, and the star of monarchy will stretch out its arms that were almost lost.

THE QUEEN, *considering the Knights of the Dagger with delight.*

The glory of serving Kings belongs to the nobility alone. Throughout time, they have shed their blood for the majesty of the throne. No more throne, no nobility! No more King, no nobility! A common interest binds us today, one to the other, more than ever. The die is cast! The counterrevolution or death! I am going in.....I wish to hear the Mayor of Paris's conversation. Monsieur de La Porte, follow me.

FOURTH SCENE.

CLERMON TONNERRE, THE LEGION COMMANDER, THE MAJOR OF THE SWISS

GUARDS, A CROWD OF KNIGHTS OF THE DAGGER, GRENADIERS (*All come in from the opposite side of the Queen's exit.*)

A KNIGHT OF THE DAGGER, *to Clermon Tonnerre, the Major of the Swiss guards and the Legion Commander.*

Gentlemen, here is the Mayor of Paris! (*Pulling out his dagger.*) Must we strike him? We are all ready.

CLERMON TONNERRE.

It is not time for that yet, when I come from seeing the King I will tell you what to do.

A GRENADIER, *aside.*

What do I see, what do I hear? I have been deceived, I have been deceived.

A SECOND GRENADIER, *noticing his difficulty, whispering.*

Comrade, I have also been deceived. We are in a cavern, and must find a means to escape. We must save the magistrate of the people at whatever cost! Pretend to be ill, you already look different. (*Aloud, to the Legion Commander, pretending to be drunk, himself.*) Sir, my comrade here has let our good King's wine go to his head. He needs a few hours rest, and I'll accompany him, if you'll give the orders.

THE LEGION COMMANDER.

Go. Gentlemen, you really should have guarded against getting into such a state.

THE SECOND GRENADIER, *pretending to be slightly tipsy.*

You are right, Sir, but our good King and our good Queen have provided us with such good wine that we couldn't resist, you see. And we, in gratitude, are going to enable ourselves to better serve their Majesties, and your plans.

They exit holding each other up, swaying this way and that, like drunks; they stand aside, at the back of the Stage, to allow the Mayor of Paris to go past. They lift their hands up to the sky on seeing him, and makes signs to him that he finds surprising. They threaten the others as they leave.

THE MAYOR, *from the back of the Stage, watching the Grenadiers go away.*

What do those two Grenadiers mean by that sign? (*Considering the Knights of the Dagger.*) What is the meaning of this movement that reigns in the castle? I had been warned, but I did not want to believe it..... Most of these people are unknown to me..... Let me go to the King! (*He goes further towards the rear of the Stage.*)

CLERMON TONNERRE, *stopping him.*

My old colleague and people's magistrate, you owe us some explanation for these popular gatherings.

THE MAYOR, *severely*.

Monsieur, I rather think I need to ask the same of all of you.

THE MAJOR OF THE SWISS GUARDS.

That's taking imposture a bit far.

THE MAYOR, *surprised*.

Are those words being addressed to me?

THE MAJOR OF THE SWISS GUARDS.

To you, yourself!

THE MAYOR.

In answer to all that, suffice it to say that my conduct gives the lie to this calumny.

THE MAJOR OF THE SWISS GUARDS.

Why Monsieur, have you not prevented this popular rally that is prejudicial to the King's person?

THE MAYOR.

The one who never did harm has difficulty seeing it in others; meanwhile, I begin to notice how easy it is to lead astray those who are the most confident and clear-sighted.

THE MAJOR OF THE SWISS GUARDS.

You have only taken that into consideration today! And the invasion of the castle on the twentieth of June, that did not alert you to your duty?

THE MAYOR.

I could dispense with answering you, Major, but I am happy to explain myself openly. I know all the duties that my position imposes upon me. I understand that the task is terrible and hard to fulfil. A people who could break its irons no longer wants to be subjected to the yoke of tyrants. This people is moved by divine sensations. The love of liberty makes it fall into the traps laid by the Court's conspirators; some vile citizens, more ambitious than helpful, have the same aim as the Court, yes I say again, of the Court; for the last time, I have come to instruct the King! If there is still time, I will pull him back from the precipice where you have driven him, or I will die with him. There is your work and my conduct.

THE LEGION COMMANDER.

We will bid you to do so, Monsieur, and I can tell you that the National Guard has sworn to uphold the Constitution, to defend the King and to implement the law.

THE MAYOR.

I came to authorise you to do so but I will declare to you that I will give you no order to fire on the people unless it comes from the National Assembly and the King! The day of the twentieth that you reproach me for is a sure guarantee that gentleness does more good than rigour!

CLERMON TONNERRE.

What! If the people arrived at the chateau, in the night, fully armed?....

THE MAYOR, *interrupting him.*

In that desperate case, we would repulse force with force, but I flatter myself that my voice will prevail upon the mass of good Citizens, and that they would not slaughter their brothers, their friends, without knowing why or wherefore.

A KNIGHT OF THE DAGGER.

Empty evasion; do you believe that we are duped by all your subterfuge? You will not leave the castle as you came in! You must die at your post beside the King, like us, to defend him.

THE MAYOR.

I am prepared for it, but, should the people present themselves to the gates tonight, do not think that I will make of this castle a frightful butchery. I will harangue them, and hope to win them back, but if you fire on them, I will pull off my sash and place myself at their head.

THE KNIGHT OF THE DAGGER.

What audacity! (*They all make a move to draw their daggers.*)

CLERMON TONNERRE, *to Pétion.*

I am angry on your behalf that you are Mayor of Paris and that you continue to support a cause that honest people abandoned a long time ago. What have you to hope for, but the bitterest ingratitude. From the Capitol to the Tarpeian Rock there is but one step, as you know. There is your reward from the people!

THE MAYOR.

God willing that treatment will be the least of my concerns! But the Court Daggers may not allow me to hope in such a glorious end.

CLERMON TONNERRE.

Do you fear that you are amongst your enemies? We are all good Citizens and I think....

[This is where the unfinished play ends. Someone involved in de Gouges's prosecution has written 'Derniere [sic]' (last), and signed their name.]