The Citizen Montfaucon

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The Citizen Montfaucon

by IACyper9

Summary

Before there was the Vicomte, there was the Citizen, and before all of that, there was just Adrien.

At thirteen, Adrien-Henri de Montfaucon should have been in lessons, or causing mischief with others his age. It might have been better, if he had. But fate, destiny, or whatever you may call it had other plans, and instead, Adrien enters his formative years in a nation divided by Revolution.

And that is the tragedy of it all, isn't it? The Citizen's end was always written before the boy himself knew there was a story to be told at all.

A Prequel to "The Vicomte Montfaucon" and "The Libertine Montfaucon", Part 1 of The Tale of Two Artists

Notes

This fic has some pretty extreme time jumps and age jumps, so I'll include the year/Adrien's age in each chapter. Chapter 1, Adrien is 12 in scene 1 (1789), and scene two is later in 1789, Adrien is 13.

Chapter 1: In Which the Stage is Set

Adrien-Henri de Montfaucon was twelve years old when the destruction of the French Monarchy piqued his interest, although the monarchy itself likely would have been surprised to learn of any threat from a boy not yet old enough to imbibe in the benefits of complete governmental overthrow. Thirteen in two weeks time. This, naturally, was the perfect age to begin his political career.

Whether it was a smart decision, well, that remained to be seen.

His parents, his tutors, even to some extent the other staff of the Paris Montfaucon Estate had warned him afterwards of his curiosity. Nothing good would befall that mob. Nothing good at all. If Adrien had any sense, he would forget the whole situation and pay attention to his lessons, rather than continue to draw the Bastille falling from memory.

Such a shame, then, that Adrien was nothing if not the perfect example of a teenager.

Escaping the watchful eyes of butlers and servants and waitstaff was far easier than it should have been, especially given the civil unrest of the recent weeks. And, to the credit of the servants charged with watching Adrien, they did well enough for the first few months.

That changed in late October.

Adrien found himself standing outside of, and then through some mix of the right phrasing and sheer luck, found himself tucked away in some shadowed corner of The Society of Friends of the Constitution, sketchbook out, charcoal in hand, scratching away at the paper. Adrien always found it easier to remember, and understand, things that he had captured on the page, rather than simply watching proceedings unfold.

He was here to observe, to watch history unfold. As it turns out, that suitably dramatic declaration, complete with the high-pitched honesty that all children exude to a degree, was apparently enough to get him in the door. After that, well, Adrien has always had a knack for melting into the sidelines.

Which brings us to now. Sketchbook flipped open, expression screwed up in what Amelie had always referred to as the expression of an irate ferret, or whatever small woodland creature she had thought of that day. The lighting from his viewpoint wasn’t perfect, but the angle offered a near perfect view of the men taking charge of the conversations.

The man holding the floor was not, Adrien decided, a particularly imposing man, but it seemed that was not a requirement when it came to commanding a room. His face was narrow, graced with fine features. His hair, neat, tidy, arranged with considerably more care than Adrien’s own, which had been subject to a losing battle with the wind on the way over. He was slender and neatly dressed, and, in any other circumstances, might have passed for

completely unremarkable. No doubt, history would make much of this man. Adrien, on the other hand, was more focused on getting the expression correct.

Adrien was entirely focused on the scene before him, that both the thrum of voices, and the ever-gentle disappearing of the light, faded to the back of his mind. People filed out, the crowd trickling down until the comfortable anonymity of Adrien's Corner dissipated. And still, Adrien focused on his page. Shading now, though the initial lightsource had long since changed.

That was why, initially, Adrien paid no mind when a shadow fell across his paper. He paid no heed, until the shadow spoke.

"Might I ask what you are doing?" The tone is steady, though a mite perplexed. The question itself almost passes over Adrien, before the presence above him registers.

Without looking up from the shading, the center was proving more troublesome than intended, "Drawing, monsieur." Ah, the entirely too literal response of the youth.

"Indeed. And what, precisely, are you drawing?"

Finally, Adrien looked up. The man before him, the same man he was fighting to shade properly on the page. Adrien hummed slightly before responding, "You." It was, in fairness, a proper answer.
Though perhaps, had Adrien been a little older, he would have not been quite so blunt. Oh, the joys of children.

A pause, "May I see it?"

Adrien's hand, which had been darkening a corner on its own accord by this point, having abandoned the center of the page, stills. A moment's hesitation, before the manners drilled in by his etiquette teachers kicks in, and Adrien turns the sketchbook towards the man, letting him see the visage of himself, captured by charcoal.

There's a moment of silence, a stilling of the air. Then, "This is well done." The compliment is reserved, the voice speaking it clipped, before, "Your name?"

"Adrien-Henri de Montfaucon, monsieur." Is the answer given, as Adrien turns the sketchbook back towards himself, glancing back down at it, rather than the man's face, as he had been previously.

Had Adrien kept doing so, he would have seen the briefest moment of the man raising an eyebrow, filing away his identity. "Montfaucon? As in-" the man cuts himself off, instead addressing the most pressing question, "And your parents know you are here?"

"I should certainly hope not." The answer is instant, a spark of teenage defiance.

"Perhaps you should head home soon." And with that, the man departs.

Adrien followed soon after, taking a meandering pace, the kind that one who has no desire to reach their destination takes. His mind, elsewhere. He had not been admonished, or told to not return, and the ambiance of the establishment has proven conducive to creativity. And, with no explicit command to stay away, well, that was just as good as an invitation back, in Adrien's eyes. What Adrien didn't know, of course, was that his conversation with one Maximilien Robespierre would be the start of a very interesting era of his life, and indeed marked the birth of the Citizen Montfaucon.

Chapter 2: In Which A Series of Fortunate Meetings Occur

Chapter Notes

Year is late 1789, Adrien is 13.

By the third time Adrien had mysteriously found himself tucked away in a corner, observing history in the making, the questions regarding why a child was present had significantly diminished. Frankly, short of someone picking him up by the collar and tossing him into the Parisian streets, the chances of Adrien actively making the decision to not show were practically none. Here, he could listen, he could observe, he could draw without interruption. Mostly.

He was left alone for the most part, an oddity amongst oddities, though there had been a few notable meetings. First and foremost of those of course being continued conversations with one Robespierre, which had, after the first few times, changed from questioning Adrien's presence to what appeared to be quiet acceptance that the boy was going to be present whether or not he was technically supposed to be.

The next of those notable meetings occurred late in the evening, just as before. And just as before, the subject, or rather, subjects, of Adrien's art took notice.

The first was broad-built, sturdy, and sporting a face of almost rugged features. Older, with a gaze that Adrien found himself glad to not be the recipient of. That honor belonged to the second of the pair. The younger of the pair, by Adrien's guess, with a frame more akin to that of Robespierre. More slight in build, more youthful than his compatriot, though not by much, with an almost boyish face. Dark eyes, expressive.

And unfortunately, in the process of landing directly on the intrepid young artist.

At least, in this case, Adrien saw, noted, and processed this in the time it took for the man to stand, excuse himself from the group he had been speaking with, including his broader friend, though at the time Adrien did not yet know the validity of that label, and began to approach.

"Are your drawings for posterity's sake, or perhaps so you can identify the traitors in the room at a later date?"

Adrien stills his hand, thinking the comment over for a moment, "I should think that depends on whom one is betraying, Monsieur." he settles on as an answer. The correct answer, it seems.

The man flashes a genuine grin at the response, tilting his head, eyes lingering on the scene Adrien had been putting to paper, before responding, “And whom, precisely, do you think these gathered gentlemen would be betraying?” He's testing the waters.

Adrien hums, this being the first time he’d been genuinely questioned regarding his presence, and what he thought of the whole matter. His humming pauses, “Well, I would hardly consider the betterment of society a betrayal of one’s country, so I suppose it would be towards the king.” A pause, “Though, that brings to the table the question of which deserves one’s loyalty more, man or nation.”

“And have you an answer to that?”

Adrien shifted, feeling slightly less certain in his response. Not, perhaps, because he did not have an answer, which was partially the case, but rather because to answer required longer than a few moments of introspection. Well, there is no foul in admitting when one doesn’t know something, and so, after a short hum, “I have not thought about it enough to say, Monsieur-?” Adrien, fishing for a name to put to the person speaking to him.

“Camille Desmoulins, at your service.” The grin lingers a beat longer at the corner of his lips, “And to whom do I have the pleasure of being immortalized?”

Adrien, who had taken half a second to scratch out the drawing’s title in the corner, ‘*Desmoulins and Company*’, returns his gaze and response, “Adrien-Henri de Montfaucon, Monsieur.”

“Montfaucon,” Desmoulins repeated, a flicker of interest flashing through the eyes, before his gaze returned to the paper, “I hope, then, that you have drawn me favourably?”

“I have drawn you accurately,” Adrien tilted the book so the drawing was visible, title included, “whether that is a favorable portrayal or not would depend entirely on the audience.”

Camille took in the drawing bearing his name, letting a small chuckle escape, “It would appear we have a record-keeper amongst us then. Very well, consider my curiosity satisfied for the time being, Montfaucon.” And with that, he departed, returning to his broader companion.

Adrien, ears primed for the other's voice after their brief conversation, could pick up what was said. “Well,” Camille starts, “he is certainly more interesting than I expected.”

The other cocks an eyebrow, tone almost flat, “You expected a child to be interesting?”

“I expected a child to be a child, Danton. This one, however, seems to have mistaken Revolution for an extracurricular activity.” A pause before the two stood, and Adrien lost their voices in the thrum of the crowd.

The third of these fortunate meetings was once more with one Robespierre, and took place that same night Adrien had met Camille, well after most of the room’s occupants had long

since gone home.
Adrien himself was preparing to leave, not wanting his absence, though expected in some capacity, from the Montfaucon Estate to become cause for concern.

“Monsieur de Montfaucon.”

Adrien, looking up from where he had been tucking away his sketchbook, "Monsieur Robespierre, what can I do for you?”

Robespierre, stopping beside the boy, takes a moment before asking the question on his mind, “What do you intend to do with all of your drawings?” the tone implied there would be follow-ups, depending on what answer Adrien gave.

Adrien shrugged, “Keep them. I find having the physical image of something makes it easier to remember, and, given the scale of what is going on here, I would be a fool not to have those records.” A moment’s pause, “These are curious times, and I suspect they will only continue to get curiouser.”

It seemed that answer was acceptable, as the older man nodded before continuing, “You’ve listened in on a number of sessions by this point, heard arguments from differing opinions, but what I want to know is, what is *your* view on the matter?”

“Of… revolution?” Adrien waits for confirmation, and upon getting a nod, adopting the look of a particularly focused mink, hums and answers, “I can’t pretend that I know word for word a suitable answer, but I find the idea of some people being better than others solely because they bear a noble name a little… ridiculous."

Robespierre cocks an eyebrow, noting the contradiction before him, “You yourself bear one of those names, so I would like to hear your reasoning behind the sentiment.”

Adrien scratched the back of his neck, a little awkward at the attention, “I do. I suppose…” he hums, trying to find the words to put his thoughts to speech, “It doesn’t quite make sense to me. If one group is higher than the other, shouldn’t it be swapped? The farmers, the shopkeeps, the laborers, they do all the stuff that makes society function. So why would they be held at a lower standard than somebody who happened to be born into the aristocracy? And, maybe one could make the point that, in the past, those of noble stock did something akin to that, but if that continues on now, I am not privy to it.”

Of course, it should be noted that Adrien is still very much a child, and has not quite been introduced to what ‘the grown-ups’ of his class did, beyond the general introduction to the duties required of an only heir. He knew he would one day manage the Montfaucon’s Estates, knew his father, the Vicomte de Montfaucon, wanted him to follow in his footsteps as part of the Officer Corps, knew a convenient and proper upper-class marriage awaited him, but the specifics, well, that all happened behind closed doors.

“You draw well, and the questions you are asking show that you’ve a mind for asking the right things.” A moment, “Have you considered using that artistic talent to shed some light on those injustices?”

Adrien blinked, “... I had not thought of that, no.”

Robespierre hummed, “Perhaps you should give the idea some thought, if for no other reason than to give you something more to do then lurk in the corner?” and with a pat on the shoulder, “Have a good evening, Monsieur.”, the man turned and left the room.

Adrien blinked, “And you-” but Robespierre was already gone, and had left the boy with far more to think on than a compliment.

Chapter 3: The Future Mrs. Montfaucon

Chapter Notes

The year is 1790 (early), Adrien is 13.

Before we continue any further, we must look backwards on Adrien's interpersonal relationships, to one Amelie de Montreuil.

Adrien had known Amelie de Montreuil longer than he could remember. First meeting? Lost to the cosmic sands of time. If you asked Adrien what his first memory of Amelie was, the best possible answer would have been a shrug and a 'She showed up and never left'. If you asked their parents, the answer would have certainly been more concrete. The pair had been inseparable since the start, and that inseparable quality had proven both fortuitous for them, and troublesome for quite literally anyone else.

Amelie was, appearance-wise, the polar opposite of Adrien. Whereas he stuck out like a beacon, with his oxblood hair and gangly proportions, lanky in the way of youth not yet grown into, Amelie had the appearance of one who could easily slip into a crowd. Light brown hair, a fair complexion, the kind of smile that appears prim and proper, but hides a mischievous other. Her eyes, however, a light hazel, are her one Achilles Heel. If caught in the right light, well, the mastermind behind what fresh trouble has been caused is brought to light.

This friendship, deep and uncompromising, was partially what led to the Montfaucon and Montreuil heads next decision, one which the pair had learned about the year prior, that being the arrangement of the pair's marriage, upon reaching a more suitable age.

Adrien will be the first to swear up and down that he did not audibly gag at the thought, thank you very much.

Oh no, what actually happened was arguably worse. Upon the pair being informed of their future matrimonial duties, Amelie, normally so poised and prim and proper, adopted the sort of expression one would have upon being served a decomposing rat and told it was a gourmet meal. Adrien, who had been standing next to the girl, had made an aggressive sound in the back of his throat, before turning away in a coughing fit brought on by inhaling air improperly. At least, that was the excuse given later. Most definitely not a gag.

Regardless, this announcement changed little in their friendship, beyond giving the pair something more to complain about in the drawing rooms of their respective family estates. Which brings us to the present. Adrien, brush in hand, focused on a painting, face scrunched up in concentration, while Amelie sat on the couch, watching him from over the book in her

hands, occasionally offering unwanted advice, mostly in the form of correcting his creative liberties taken when painting himself. Nearby, every once in a while, one of the servants occasionally walked by, keeping a chaperoning eye on the pair.

Not, as was common of the time, necessarily to preserve the virtue of two young aristocrats, though that would certainly be the reasonable answer, but rather because this particular pair of young aristocrats had a habit of, if you, dear reader, will pardon a dip into modernity, some complete bullshit situations to go down, and neither the Montreuil nor Montfaucon families wanted to deal with whatever Bonnie-and-Clydeesque shenanigans the pair, left unsupervised, would get up to.

Which brings us back to now.

“Your face is not that symmetrical, Adrien.” Amelie, peering over her copy of ‘*Paul et Virginie’*, “It hasn’t been that symmetrical since your acquaintanceship with the ground in ‘87.”

Adrien, huffing, though arguably moreso at his work, seeing as this kind of commentary was par for the course, “And nobody besides you can tell, Amelie. Besides, self-portraiture is never fully accurate. Regular portraiture certainly isn’t.”

“Regular portraiture isn’t accurate because you wouldn’t pay someone for an accurate painting if your face is subpar. By being crooked, for example.”

Adrien turns ever so slightly, “My face is not crooked.”

“It has been crooked for three years, Adrien.”

“And yet you have continued to look at it for those three years, one might begin to wonder which of us has the poorer judgement.” He turns back to his painting, both children sporting small grins behind their respective activities.

The painting in question was something Adrien had been working on for the better part of the week. ‘*The Little Jacobin*’ featured Adrien himself, as is the way of self-portraits. Painting-Adrien facing a group of men, their backs turned towards him, hunched over a table, clearly deep in discussion on some topic of import. Painting-Adrien, watching the group from a distance, seated on a chair, sketchbook in hand.

The epithet itself had come from a handful of pamphleteers, but hadn’t yet caught on as much as certain titles would in the coming years. The pamphlets themselves glossed over Adrien’s current political contributions, most of which boiled down to unedited charcoal drawings of the commoner and the laborer, with the occasional satirical illustration for *Révolutions de France et de Brabant* engravers to adapt to print, and instead focused on the absurdity of the situation. Adrien, being a teenager and a menace to polite society, absolutely adored the title, even if he did still point out that, technically, he was not officially a member, having not sworn any oath or been given any official certificates showing membership. But, to be fair, the actual story, in any century, is oft less interesting than the embellished versions of the press.

Whilst Adrien continued to all but physically fight his canvas, Amelie flipped through her book, expression one of clear displeasure after reading a particularly frustrating paragraph. That face one makes when they've read too far to justify putting the book down, and now it's just a case of getting through the rest of the book.

Adrien, sensing his companion's growing ire towards whatever she had just read, turns, observes the scene, and asks "Who died?"

The response given was a muted *hrumph,* followed by the more understandable explanation of, "Nobody yet, but the great-aunt needs to, and Virginie is about to if she continues to abide by society's rules." a pause, broken only by the sound of the page turning, "And now Virginie is drowned." Amelie snaps the book shut and sighs, slinking down the back of the couch into a slouch, literary despair clear on her face.

Adrien, fighting back a smile, offers up a simple, "Good book, then?"

Amelie levels her stare at him, unamused.

Going back to his work, "Right, point taken." Adrien chuckles quietly, and, hearing the other let the book fall open, starting down the treacherous path of finishing a story that has taken a turn the reader does not agree with.

And so the afternoon continued, with one young aristocrat at war with a canvas, another at war with a novel, and their respective families blissfully unaware that these were, by far, the least troublesome wars either would fight.

Chapter 4: The Citizen Saint-Just

Chapter Notes

Year is late 1790, Adrien is 14.

The day had started out just like any other, with Adrien showing up bright and early at the Jacobin Club, holding a handful of conversations, and ultimately finding himself tucked away in his corner, Camille present, Adrien peering over his shoulder at the pages in front of the Journalist, sketching out his visualization of the contents of the page. Little did he, nor anyone else present, know that history was about to be made. Not, perhaps, the sort of history that would find its way into the official records of the Republic, but history nonetheless, for Adrien-Henri de Montfaucon was about to meet a man who would make an absolute catastrophe of his heart for the next twenty years.

Godspeed.

To be fair, the whole scene leading up to this made sense to Adrien. He was to read what Camille wrote, take an artist's hand to the prose, and come out with a suitably satirical illustration that can be adapted into an engraving. Really, it only makes sense to be hovering aggressively over the man's shoulder in an attempt to get an idea for exactly what he should be illustrating.

At least, it would, if said article was more than halfway penned and what was written wasn't in a constant state of revision and rewriting. In that case, it would have been more logical to wait for the completed product. But Adrien's never been one to subscribe to such niceties as logic and reason when something interesting is happening. Otherwise, he wouldn't be at the Club to begin with.

"I will not write any faster with you hovering like a parrot over my shoulder, Adrien. Perhaps you should sit?" The tone is light enough to convey the amusement in Camille's voice, but also holds a genuine suggestion behind the humor dripping out.

Adrien, ever the poet, just hums a response before, "I can read from here. I need to know what you're writing if I am to accurately portray it on paper."

"And you also need the full story before that happens, which will decidedly *not* happen with you lurking as you are."

Conceding that particular point, Adrien sat down in the chair opposite Camille with a thump, though this just changed the parrot-hovering from behind to before the older man. And also made it so that what writing was on the page was upside down for Adrien, which tends not to

be conducive to reading, but I digress.

Adrien sat quietly for all of thirty seconds, went to open his mouth, and then the door opened.

Any commentary that Adrien was going to put forth subsequently vanishes the moment he turns around to see the new arrival. A man, visibly younger than the majority of the club's current occupants, save for Adrien himself. A face framed by chestnut locks, full and free of the weathering of time. A presence that demanded attention, but not in the boisterous way Adrien had come to know from his peers. Rather, it was as if a Seraphim had come down from on high, taken human form. Pale skin contrasted with his dark blue coat, his cravat a perfect bow, restrained, tied snugly against his throat.
Needless to say, the sound that came out of Adrien's mouth was less words, and moreso an aggressive cough or choke. Perhaps a wheeze.

Adrien turned back to Camille, clearing his throat, and pointedly not mentioning his immediate respiratory troubles. He also, notably, ignored the *look* the older man was giving him. And things would have continued on mostly as normal, had luck, God, or whatever omniscient being was charting his fate, been kind. Fate, however, was not kind.

"Montfaucon! There's someone I'd like you to meet." Robespierre's voice broke through the chatter, and upon standing to go to the man, it took all the sense and propriety in Adrien *not* to plant his head firmly upon the table in mild, teenage horror.

That Seraphim-made-flesh just so happened to be the man Robespierre intended to introduce. Truly, fate was a malicious mistress.

Upon taking the six or so strides over, very aware of himself for once, Adrien came to a stop before the pair. Being closer to the man was decidedly not helpful, and Adrien was pretty sure the tips of his ears were close enough to the color of his hair, if the heat was anything to go by. At least his hair was shaggy enough to hide that. Small mercies.

"Monsieur de Montfaucon, allow me to introduce Monsieur Saint-Just." The introduction is completely normal, so why on earth did it feel like Adrien had just swallowed a field of cotton, or perhaps a frog. Maybe both.

Forcing his brain to function, Adrien offers a scratchy, "The honor is mine, Monsieur." Work, brain, work. Betrayal. Why so formal? Why so- Anyways.

"The pleasure is mine, Monsieur de Montfaucon." is the response. Perfectly polite, correct in the situation. So why on earth did it feel like a swarm of bees had started to stir in the back of his mind.
Questions for another time.

Though this entire interaction took maybe a total of two minutes at most, if that, it felt much, much longer. Adrien, caught up in saying the right words at the right time and notably nothing else, missed the slightly cocked eyebrow from Robespierre, who looked between the two. He also missed Camille's amused expression.

As if taking pity on the poor lad, Robespierre interjected, “I believe you are missed.” He glances over at the chair Adrien had vacated, giving him an out. A blessing very much not in disguise. Adrien made a strangled hum of agreement, stiffly turned on his heel, and returned, thumping down into the chair in front of Camille.

For once, the journalist didn’t have a quip in the wings, or at least had the decency not to lambast the poor boy. Yet. He just gave Adrien a knowing look, and went back to his writing.

Somewhere, miles away from the Jacobin Club, Amelie de Montreuil felt a shift in the weather. Not literally, of course. But internally, she absolutely knew that her technically fiance was back on his bullshit. If only it were that simple.

Chapter 5: A Most Unusual Education

Chapter Notes

Summer 1791, Adrien is 15.

Adrien was most certainly not avoiding returning to the Montfaucon Estate. The paper tucked in his pocket felt hot, though that may very well have been the late summer sun beating down. The stone embankment underneath him was a cool contrast, though not by much. Adrien sat, knees pulled up to his chest, arms resting on them, watching the current of the Seine flow by.

He wasn't sulking, per se, but there was no doubt that the usual grin that graced his face was missing.

Strictly speaking, today of all days should have been a happy one. The weather was fine. Jullien had been admitted as a full member. Adrien really should have no reason to be so…. Somber. The reason, however, was currently in his pocket, heavy, despite being a few sheets of paper folded up and tucked away.

Adrien had no doubt that, eventually, given his visibility among the men whose company he spends his time with, that those rallying against them would eventually turn their eyes, and pens, against him. And, for the most part, Adrien was relegated to a footnote. A line or two mentioning his presence, but not the focus. The Little Jacobin, forever plodding at the heels of his master, like the cur to the rover.

The epithet was something he had never had issue with, had actually come to enjoy, in the way of youth when coming upon supposedly insulting titles, until now. Now, with Jullien having taken the steps to be granted the title of affiliation, and Adrien himself being the main focus, well, the heat, so to speak, was a little turned up. 'The Little Jacobin', while Adrien appreciated that it put him in the same circle of men he respected, admired, wasn't necessarily… Adrien.

And that is the root of the problem this fine, fair-weathered day.

"You are sulking." A voice floats down, interrupting the pleasant hum of water flowing.

Adrien, letting out a long hum as a response, simply pulls out the pamphlet, still folded, and proceeds to bend and pick at the paper even more.

"You shouldn't let them get to you. If anything, take it as a compliment." the owner of the voice comes closer into view. Marc-Antoine Jullien, newest member of the Jacobins, and

likely the only one who could be truly of the same mind as Adrien. At least, in the sense of age.

Adrien hummed again, “But it's not true. At least, it’s putting a persona that doesn’t…. Fit yet.” He huffs, “I’m not… upset or something. But there’s a difference between reporting on the truth, lighting corners of society that are seldom seen, and printing falsehoods just to get the paper out.” He picked up a stone, flipping it in his hand for a moment, before skipping it across the water. One. Two. Three skips.

Jullien watched the stone sink, before sitting down next to Adrien, shifting, “Not upset, sure, whatever you tell yourself.” He sighs, “It’s clearly bothering you. But look at it this way, there’s always going to be slander and libel, whether or not you associate with us or not. And besides, if it's the truth that’s bothering you, or lack thereof, why not make it true after the fact?”

Letting himself fall back into the dirt, sun shining down into his eyes, Adrien huffed, “I’ve thought about it. It’d be the smartest course of action, yes. Just… The time doesn’t feel right.”

“Doesn’t feel right?” Jullien cocked an eyebrow at the sentence.

Adrien hums, “I can’t explain it.” Then a pause, and his mood seemingly does a 180, “Besides, I should wait a year or two. Leave you as the youngest official member, or something.” His tone is teasing, in the way youth tend to sound around their friends.

Jullien, frankly, is more pleased that Adrien’s melancholic attitude appears, at least for the moment, to have gone away, replaced by the boy he’s familiar with. He tilts his head, “One must let me have something, Montfaucon.” He responds in kind to the jest, before standing, “Don’t let the press bother you too much. See you later.”

Adrien watches him leave before standing and gathering his jacket and bag from the pile next to him, and heads back to the road, playing the conversation in his mind over and over. Had Adrien known how little he would care for the truth of such accusations in the years to come, he might have been less troubled by the present pamphlet. But then, he was fifteen, and still possessed the rather charming conviction that a man's reputation ought to bear some resemblance to his character. It was, as reputations went, a comparatively harmless one. Adrien would have ample opportunity to discover this down the line.

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Perhaps staying out later would have been the correct choice, or simply stayed the night at the Montreuil Estate, which was not an unusual occurrence. When that happened, a messenger would simply be sent over, letting the Vicomte de Montfaucon know that their wayward heir was not missing, and rather indulging in the age-old way of youthful rebellion, that, compared to the events of this story, are minor at most in severity. But, rather than make this choice, our dear protagonist chooses to return home, despite the pit in his stomach, a gut feeling that heralded this night would be one that would prove quite the fork in the road for the young revolutionary.

This became apparent the moment Adrien crossed the threshold into the Montfaucon Estate, directed towards a nearby drawing room by his mother, with nothing beyond a ‘Your father is looking for you’ and a disapproving look.

Adrien, figuring whatever fresh disappointment awaited him was par for the course, took his time making his way there. Though, perhaps he should have been more timely, once in the room.

The Vicomte de Montfaucon was not a particularly imposing man. Average height, finely kept hair, beard trimmed to an acceptable length. The same oxblood as Adrien’s, but prim and proper, as opposed to Adrien’s wild shagginess. The same steel eyes, but whereas Adrien’s were alight with the fires of youth, his were tempered by the years of duty and obligation. And those restrained eyes were locked onto a piece of paper, fresh from the printer, clutched in his hand.

“A Puppy in the Pack: The Most Unusual Education of the Young Montfaucon” The Vicomte read, “One wonders what manner of education the young Vicomte received in the salons of his family, that he now finds himself so perfectly at ease among the most licentious elements of the capital.”

At an age when other young gentlemen are occupied with their tutors, their estates, and the proper cultivation of their manners, this particular scion of nobility appears to have discovered rather more agreeable company in the assembly rooms of those who would see the very foundations of France overturned. It is enough that one might almost suspect that the boy has mistaken rebellion for refinement.

Simply being present is egregious enough, but it seems that is not all the young Montfaucon is content to do. The Montfaucon heir has apparently taken to lending his talents to the printed provocations of Monsieur Desmoulins, whose pen has already done considerable service to the cause of disorder. Sketches and illustrations, we are told, are supplied by the young man himself. It is a peculiar occupation for one born to a name and inheritance, to spend his afternoons furnishing the enemies of the Crown with pictures by which to adorn their little declarations of virtue.

One must also wonder whether the young gentleman has entirely forgotten the obligations which accompany his station. His betrothed is seldom seen upon his arm, and the usual attentions expected of a gentleman of his rank appear to occupy remarkably little of his time. Instead, he is frequently observed in the company of certain gentlemen of the Jacobin persuasion, to whom he seems to afford an attentiveness quite disproportionate to his years. Whether this is youthful admiration, political devotion, or some other peculiarity of temperament, we shall leave to the reader's imagination.

And so we find the heir of Montfaucon, not in the company of his intended bride, nor in the pursuit of those accomplishments befitting his birth, but trailing after the self-appointed instructors of the nation. A little cur among the hounds, eager to imitate their cries, though perhaps not yet old enough to understand what it is they hunt. It is a curious spectacle, and one which ought surely to occasion some concern in the household that has permitted it.

France has no shortage of young men eager to play at revolution. It remains to be seen whether the young Vicomte shall ever remember that he was born to something more.

The Vicomte let the final sentence trail off, lowering the paper and finally looking upon his son, “I should hope that you are quite pleased with yourself, Adrien. Whether intentionally or not, you’ve shamed not only yourself, but this family, and Amelie.” He tacks Amelie’s name on, almost like an afterthought.

Adrien stops where he stands a few feet away, aware that this was perhaps not the time for commentary, but feeling the need to defend himself, responded indignantly, “It’s gossip. Nothing more.”

“Gossip? That would be acceptable. Something to amuse oneself over morning tea. But this isn’t gossip, Adrien-Henri, and it calls into question your willingness to uphold the standards of your name.”
The Vicomte honestly seems more irate at the implications of sloth, rather than the insinuations at the company his son keeps.

Adrien huffed, “Standar- Nothing I’ve done has implied I don’t care about the family name, or France, or whoever it is that allegedly deserves so much of our loyalty.”

“If you put half as much effort into your tutors and the obligations of your station as you do playing an apprentice propagandist to Monsieur Desmoulins, then this conversation wouldn’t have to happen.” The Vicomte, whose tone had become heated, takes a breath as if to calm himself, having realized that raised voices very likely wouldn’t help, “You are a Montfaucon, Adrien. Whether you want to admit it or not, that leaves you a narrow path to walk.”

“What path is that, then? The Officer Corps? A farcical marriage? Children so the whole damned chain can happen again? It seems to me that you are guilty of the same thing as the pamphleteers, no? ‘Little Jacobin’ in one circle, ‘Dutiful Heir’ in the Aristocratic circle-”

“A life in the Aristocracy is a life of service. To the Crown. To France. To the people you are responsible for. It doesn’t matter what you want, Adrien, your lot has been cast, and you need to start taking that seriously.” The Vicomte's tone peters off throughout the monologue, and he ends it sounding more tired than angry. He rubs his face, looking back at the pamphlet.

Adrien, who probably would have taken the lesson straight had he been anybody else, stayed silent for a moment, “Fine.” He grinds out, “I understand. Am I dismissed?”

The Vicomte, silent, waves a hand, and Adrien takes that as a sign to leave.

Service is all well and good, and the Vicomte had been particularly clear in where that service should be directed, but Adrien still had Jullien’s insight bouncing around in his mind at the time of said lecture. Perhaps, in Adrien’s mind at least, he could serve something greater, as generations of Montfaucons had done before. However, he thought with a slight chuckle, he would be the first Montfaucon to serve a Republic.

Chapter 6: A Libertine at Sixteen

Chapter Notes

Takes place a little after Jul 28, 1792. Adrien is 16.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Over the course of the next year, Adrien, much to the displeasure of his parents, took Jullien's suggestion to heart. Society was going to talk, may as well give society a reason. Unfortunately, that decision also came with probably very unearned confidence and the appearance to back it up.

And now, with Summer turning to fall, leaves starting to brown, and the wind turning chill, we come to the present.

Adrien and Amelie, technically arm-in-arm, walking together through a public garden, trailed after at a distance by a chaperone. The perfect picture of a young couple, at a glance. Upon closer inspection, that would be proven far from the case, though not necessarily in a bad way.

The pair stopped at a mostly secluded area, Adrien all but thumping down in the grass, flipping open a sketchbook, rolling onto his stomach, and putting charcoal to paper. His muse today? Amelie, frowning rather dramatically at her copy of '*Les Liaisons Dangereuses*'. Admittedly, the frown had come from Adrien jokingly asking if he should be worried, regarding her choice of reading material, but, to him, it felt like a completely understandable concern.

Adrien had shucked off his jacket, using it as a makeshift blanket, like one might do during a picnic, and had rolled his sleeves to his elbows. This had quickly become part of his everyday appearance, which frankly did not help in not feeding the columns. Exposed wrists, the horror. Reaching up, he loosened his cravat ever so slightly, picked his charcoal back up, and squinted at his betrothed.

Adrien and Amelie hadn't spent time together like this for a while. Not Amelie's fault, of course. Adrien would be the first to insist on that. He had just been so caught up in his work that time such as this had fallen to the wayside. Of course, Amelie had brushed off his apologies and assured him that she did not mind. She didn't really mind, even if polite society demanded she should.

"So, my dear Amelie, my oldest and greatest friend-" Adrien props himself up on his elbows, "how soon should I begin to worry about your fascination with that particular novel?" He shot her a toothy grin. Really, Adrien had no room to poke, seeing as he was the one to

acquire said novel for her. Not that Adrien knew much about it beyond reputation, seeing as he was generally too busy to sit and read for leisure.

Amelie, smiling slightly at the other, “You shouldn’t worry yourself. Much.” She peers over the top of the book to where her ‘beloved’ lay, putting her image to paper, “Besides, I should think that this is something you would find quite interesting, perhaps even educational, all things considered.”

Adrien raised an eyebrow, hand slowing slightly, “I assure you, I have no need for lessons in seduction.”

“No? I would have thought you’d developed an interest in the subject, given the fact that I find it harder and harder to drag you away from the company of the striking gentlemen you keep.” Here, she gives Adrien a look, mischief reigning supreme, “Does a certain Citizen know how much you admire him?”

Adrien’s charcoal stopped moving, “I beg your pardon?” His voice is flat, not defensive as one who has been hit with false accusations, but rather the tone of someone who was sure they had been subtle and had just been informed that a neon sign had been planted on the freeway spewing all his personal business. “I assure you, I have been perfectly discreet in my admiration of politically intelligent fellows, which is completely innocent in nature-”

Amelie’s small grin turns into that of a full blown smile, fully aware she’s hit the proverbial nail on the head, “If you say so, though anyone with eyes might beg to differ.” A pause, perhaps consideration of if she should continue, given that Adrien’s face was swiftly turning the color of his waistcoat, an ever so slightly brighter red than his hair, and missing context might give the chaperone in the distance the wrong idea (though, perhaps that scandal would detract from the current scandal regarding the man, which could only have been a net positive). Well, Adrien would survive, she forges on, “And if I asked you to show me the previous sketchings in that book of yours, the majority wouldn’t be a particular-”

“Amelie! Some mercy, please!” Adrien let his forehead hit the ground, but before his expression was hidden from view, Amelie could catch the grin flashed, “You are more devious than any pamphleteer, perhaps you should pen my next paper.” He chuckles, rubbing his face and shaking his head abruptly, like a wet dog fished from a stream, as if to shake off the embarrassment.

Amelie’s smile drops abruptly, and Adrien catches it, “About those-” she starts, “You really should be more careful with how… obvious your attachment is. For your own safety.”

Adrien huffs, “Let people talk. There’s always going to be some identity that the gossip columns and scandal-seekers will impose because it makes for interesting reading, and any pushback will be seen as an admission of guilt. Besides-” Adrien pauses, looking up at her fully, “I don’t particularly care about what they say of me anymore. If anything, it makes it a fun game to see how much I can play into their speculations by just… being me. Nothing will happen, Amelie.” He clearly intends this to be comforting.

Amelie, clearly, is not comforted.

She sighs, “I hope your certainty is well-placed. I’ve known you forever, and I’d hate to see you hurt for being you.”

Adrien shoots her what is supposed to be a calming smile, “Everything is going to turn out fine, Amelie. Don’t you worry a bit.”

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Everything did not, in fact, turn out fine. As a matter of fact, not a week after that fateful garden conversation, Adrien found in his hands what can only be described as a bad joke made physical.

He was, as per usual, inhabiting a corner of the Jacobin Club, though not drawing or joking with the others currently present, as he would generally be doing. No, instead, he was tucked away, brows furrowed, reading the latest slander penned against him. One leg crossed over the other’s knee, chin resting against a clenched fist, in the other hand, held a short distance from his face, the offending paper, ink practically still damp off the press. The problem wasn’t that *he* was offended, as a matter of fact, if he was the sole target, such sordid speculations might be downright funny, but rather that others were now involved, targeted, that was the problem. The offending paragraphs stared back up at him.

The Favorite of the Republic: The Libertine Montfaucon

There are, among the many curious spectacles afforded us by the present order of things, few more remarkable than the continued presence of Citizen Montfaucon in the company of those who now presume to guide the Republic. The young aristocratic scribbler, who has so readily abandoned the duties of his station in favor of consorting with the most radical elements of our political assemblies, has apparently found himself quite at home among men whose principles he professes to share. Yet one might reasonably ask by what merit a youth of such tender years has secured so privileged a place in their confidence. His writings? His political understanding? Or perhaps some other, rather more personal, qualification?

The young Montfaucon is rarely seen far from Citizen Saint-Just, whose interest in the young aristocrat appears to extend beyond politics. Indeed, Citizen Montfaucon is reputed to be rather too fond of the company of his own sex, and his attachment to the more prominent gentlemen of the Republic has not escaped notice. It is a curious thing, is it not, that a young man so recently arrived at political life should find himself so frequently in the confidence of those whose influence extends throughout the nation? One might almost suspect that his advancement owes less to the force of his arguments than to the particular affections of those who hear them.

There are whispers, moreover, that the young citizen has not confined his attentions to a single patron. If the more persistent accounts are to be believed, he has shared the rooms of, and perhaps beyond, every man whose hand guided the Republic, and perhaps a few whose hands would be better occupied elsewhere. Whether these reports possess any foundation is, of course, a matter for the reader to judge. Yet it is difficult not to observe how conveniently

the young Montfaucon's fortunes have risen alongside the favor of certain influential gentlemen. A young man may possess considerable ambition, but one wonders how much talent is required when so many doors are already opened for him.

And what, finally, are we to make of this curious little aristocrat who has exchanged the privileges of his birth for the company of those who claim to have abolished privilege itself? Does Citizen Montfaucon truly serve the Republic, or has he merely discovered that the old distinctions of rank may be exchanged for newer and considerably more intimate forms of patronage? The people deserve representatives whose place is earned through merit and devotion, not young favorites whose influence appears to rest upon the goodwill of powerful men. Perhaps, before the Republic entrusts him with any further responsibility, Citizen Montfaucon might first explain precisely what service he has rendered to deserve it.

Adrien huffed, crumpling the paper into a ball, “Apparently I’m sleeping with half of Paris. I should like to know where I’m allegedly finding the time, given that I have three pamphlets due and an apparently already overflowing social calendar.” The outburst, unlike his usual laid back and jesting self, draws some attention from those surrounding him.

Camille, closest to Adrien, both figuratively and literally, is the first to recognize that, beneath the caustic jesting tone the young man has picked, there is genuine anger. And so, knowing that outward concern would be particularly unwelcome in this moment, he approaches the situation in the same way as Adrien. He leans slightly before responding, “Half of Paris? My dear boy, I would hope you would have the good sense to be more selective in your conquests.” He matches that jesting tone.

Adrien chortles abruptly, before finding an answer, “I can always rely on you for practical advice, Camille. Such a shame that I, apparently, cannot take that advice to heart. I would hate to disappoint my admirers.” He puts emphasis on the word ‘admirers’. He tosses the ball of crumpled pamphlet towards the center of the table.

“I expect they shall survive that disappointment.” Camille let the corners of his mouth dip slightly, not quite a frown, but not a happy expression, “I am being serious, Adrien. They aren’t merely making sport of you.”

Exhaling slightly, “I know, but I can barely court the woman who is quite literally contracted to marry me. I’d love to know where this idea that I’m to become Paris’s greatest seducer of men took root.
Or at least what interaction spawned the idea. Perhaps-” He cuts himself off, sighing, and leaning back in the chair.

In the time this particular monologue took place, Danton, who had been seated nearby, having been working with Camille on… something Adrien was not involved with enough to know the specifications of, leaned forward and snagged the pamphlet, unfolding it and skimming the slander. “If these gentlemen devoted half as much attention to governing France as they do to determining who is in whose bed, perhaps we'd have fewer problems.” He pauses before continuing, “They aren’t interested in who you share a bed with, boy. They're interested in making people believe you have no business sitting at this table.”

Well, talk about killing the mood, no?

Adrien hums, “Now that’s simply asking too much of them.” The sound he makes is somewhere between a genuine laugh and the huffing exhale which has become so familiar in recent times, “Not that it would improve the quality of their publications, even if they did.” He ran a hand through his already unkempt hair, “I suppose the only blessing is that they have not attempted to dispute a single argument I have made. It saves me the trouble of mounting a defense.”

“Or, perhaps, they’ve chosen not to engage with your writings because they intend to paint you as a dependent follower, incapable of independent thought, or the merit which grants you a seat at the table.”

Enter the voice of reason, though perhaps not exactly the presence that Adrien would appreciate in the current moment. A realization in hindsight to look back on, for certain. In the present however,
Adrien did not find the arrival of Robespierre and Saint-Just something to appreciate. Perhaps in the future. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.

Adrien responds to that particular comment from Robespierre with a drawn out hum, masking a flash of wide-eyed panic as Saint-Just snags the paper, skimming the portion explicitly naming him, expression flattening ever so slightly. Adrien could deal with Camille and Danton knowing the specifics, but the perhaps mite of childish pride side of him did not look forward to those whose opinion mattered most to the boy being made fully aware of the allegations thrown against him. Oh, the ego of the young.

Frankly, if you, dear reader, will approve this quick aside, if a comrade’s view of one can be changed by such clearly biased writings, then perhaps those are not the comrades one should surround themselves with. A good one will not turn tail at the first sign of libel. Of course, for one so new, in the span of experience, to such depravity, this lesson might not be yet known.

The silence, which was only a few seconds, no longer than a minute, felt unending. Adrien was quite aware that he was watching Saint-Just for a reaction rather closely. He forced himself to break that stare, swapping to something a little more natural.

Saint-Just finally, after what felt like eternity to the young man, spoke, “They mistake proximity for influence.” Adrien’s shoulders, tense, lower slightly at that. Of course the man would address the political implications first, as he should. “Your work is your own, Montfaucon. You need not answer for the inventions of men who cannot dispute it.” He lets the paper float back to the table, turning to his companion, and taking his leave.

Adrien watched the retreating backs of Robespierre and Saint-Just, playing the statement over and over in his head, before letting his head thunk against the wood of the table, “I am so done for.” He lets the table muffle his declaration. He also very much ignored the laughter coming from the right of him.

A hand claps his shoulder, “You shall survive it, mon ami.” Camille says, the remnants of laughter in his words, “And if nothing else, you shall learn from it, I would wager, before this

particular story has ended.”

Oh Camille, how prophetic those words shall prove.

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"You are perfectly entitled to make a spectacle of yourself, if you insist. But you are not entitled to forget that you are engaged to be married. Amelie is not some convenient ornament to be displayed when society demands it. Whatever private amusements you may pursue, you will eventually be expected to fulfill the obligations of a husband."

Adrien slouches in the chair he’d found himself all but shoved into upon arriving home fashionably late. Really, Adrien didn’t see the point in rehashing old lectures that, quite frankly, had run their course months ago. Trust in tradition to be the mistress of misfortune, at least in the eyes of the young.

This latest tirade was finally winding down, the Vicomte looking particularly done with his wayward son, and the Vicomtess watching on with an expression that can only be described as disappointment mixed with the look of someone who had seen this very sight coming before any others. To put it plainly, the Vicomtess de Montfaucon did not appear surprised, by the allegations or by her husband’s frustration.

Adrien noted none of this, and simply kept his gaze dead ahead, staring at the wall, as the lecture finally came to a close. He took a breath, fashioning a response, “I have never once suggested that Amelie is an ornament, Father, nor do I intend to treat her as one. I should hope she knows me better than that. I would also have hoped that you would know me better than that.” One hand runs through his hair, mussing it further, while the other clenches in his lap, “But I fail to see how either of us would benefit from pretending to be something we are not.”

“It’s not how *you* benefit that matters. It’s how both of our families benefit from the match. It doesn’t matter, Adrien, that the law no longer recognizes your dalliances as the affront they are, what matters is that you fulfil the obligations set before you-”

“Henri, peace.” The Vicomtess interrupts her husband’s tirade. Perhaps smartly, he ceases, ceding the floor to his wife. A moment to cool off, before something irrecoverable is said. She stands, walking over and taking a seat before her son. Taking his hands in hers, with only slight resistance from the boy at first, though he lets her without too much struggle, “Adrien, what your father means to say, in his own way, is that he, and I, are worried that these scandals today, tomorrow, will affect you long down the line.” Her expression shifts minutely, “Change comes, change goes, and it’s always the young, like yourself, at the forefront. That’s a given. But you need to be aware that what you do and say today could have lasting consequences for those you care about. We just want you and Amelie to be safe, that is all.”

Adrien sighs, it’s so easy to remain irritable at his father, but he can never stay so rebellious at his mother. He squeezes her hands, “I am as safe as anyone could be. I am safer than I would be if I stayed out of the fight. France is changing, mother, and she is changing for the

better.” He pauses, aware that an impromptu speech on the glory of the Republic might not land with the current audience. Instead, he heaves a sigh, “I will be careful, if it will ease your mind. But I will not change who I fundamentally am to make the nobility happy.”

The Vicomtess smiles, but it does not reach her eyes. No doubt this was the answer she expected, and while it was not the one she wanted, it was the one she expected. She glances down at their hands, “That is all we can ask.” She lets his hands go, stands, and Adrien is left alone in the dining room.

Chapter End Notes

Poor man is so down bad for the attractive revolutionary.

... Honestly fair.

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