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.”

–

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.

–

"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.

Chapter 7: The Citizen's Birth

Chapter Notes

Scene 1 is early July 1793, Adrien is 16. Scene 2 and on are late July 1793, Adrien is 17.

“I swear to live free or to die, to remain faithful to the principles of the constitution, to obey the laws, to enforce them, to contribute with all my power to their perfection, to conform to the customs and regulations of society."

Speaking those words, Adrien felt like he was floating. Euphoric, that was the only way to describe it. He had long haunted the space of the Jacobin Club, and now, with a modest fee, an oath sworn, and his comrades present, he had taken the step from specter to official member. The Little Jacobin indeed. Now, the epithet was true, in all senses.

Adrien was on cloud nine.

The immediate proceedings were a haze, which is to be expected. Events high in emotion tend to blur when one tries to remember them. He remembers speaking to several of his friends, his comrades. The one clear image burned into his mind, a smile, not even a smile really, but a slight upturning of the lips, from Saint-Just. That stayed in his mind, clear as day. No fade on that, no sir.
Eventually, the meetings and conversations and such came to a close, and Adrien, not entirely ready to make his way back to the Montfaucon Estate, found himself on the stony embankment of the Seine that he had brooded upon over a year prior. That same embankment he had sat upon at 15, tossing stones into the water, taking Jullien’s advice to heart.

Speak of the Devil and he shall appear, a shadow falls over Adrien’s view, a pair of legs coming into Adrien’s peripherals, and then thumping down next to him.

“Little Jacobin no more, Citizen Montfaucon has a ring to it, wouldn’t you agree?” Jullien gently shoves Adrien’s shoulder.

“Indeed it does, Antoine.” He grins back, “Mark this as the one time I’ll ever say it, you were right.”

“I have died. That can be the only explanation for Adrien-Henri de Montfaucon to have admitted another was right over him.” The teasing is good natured fun between two friends, close in age,
“Perhaps I should get that in writing. Frame it for posterity’s sake.”

Adrien hums a light hum, “Would you like a particularly scathing cartoon with that?”

“I think I’ll pass on that, I must be off soon, but-” Jullien spoke as he stood, clapping Adrien once more on the shoulder, squeezing ever so slightly, “you should be proud, Adrien. Very proud.”
Adrien smiled, first to Jullien, then directed out at the Seine as the other man left, footsteps fading away. Adrien couldn’t confidently say that he’d always made the right decision, but there was no doubt about it now.

Here’s to the future, may she come swiftly, and may she be kind.

–

Amelie had been awfully quiet the duration of the walk. Adrien, at first, hadn’t thought much of it. He often got lost in his own head, Amelie was similar, though the topics of warranting such immense pondering oft differed between the pair.

Every so often, he would glance in her direction. Sometimes, her gaze would be on the distant horizon, sometimes straight ahead, and more recently, the last few checks, she had been staring at him, unblinking, and unspeaking. It was starting to make Adrien a mite nervous. Clearly something was on her mind, and it was apparently something that bothered her enough that she did not want to address it with him.

Finally, after a moment or two more, Adrien broke the silence, “Have I done something to offend you?”

She doesn’t respond immediately, instead coming to a stop before a patch of flowers, aromatic and fluttering slightly, stems bending in the gentle breeze. Their yellow and purple and pale-pink faces smiling up at the pair. Adrien stops beside her, a step or so behind. His expression is downturned.

“You seem happy.” She finally starts, hands crossing together in front of her, “I’m glad.”

Adrien came up beside her, one eyebrow raising slightly, “And?” a pause, “What has that got to do with this… cold shoulder?”

“I am worried, Adrien.”

Adrien’s downturned expression morphed into a full frown, “Worried? Why?”

“This changing regime. You, publicly choosing a side. The growing unrest among… everyone.” Amelie broke off her explanation.

Now, Adrien had always been outspoken, ever since that evening in ‘89. Amelie knew this, you, my dear readers, know this. Adrien knows this. But Amelie, always looking ahead, had the good sense to not say anything that could be taken as subtly royalist or republican. She kept to her books, to her time with Adrien, to her social calendar. Now, with her betrothed actively aligning himself with the republican cause, well, even staying silent on the matter

may be taken as support, or disapproval, depending on what story one wants to tell.

Adrien, realizing all of this, hums, “Nothing’s changed, Amelie. I’m still me.” He shakes a hand out, wiping against his coat, before he takes Amelie’s hands, turning her towards him. “Just because I’m officially a Jacobin doesn’t change anything.” A pause, “If anything, it solidifies our standing.”

“Solidifies? Adrien, the Monarchy has been around for centuries, and only six months ago, the king, *our* king, was executed and the rest of the royal family imprisoned. The monarchy has been abolished. If something so integral to France can be torn down in a matter of years, what certainty do we have that your affiliations will last?” There’s an emotion in her voice that Adrien hadn’t heard before. She sounds…. Angry?

“Amelie-” Adrien starts, exhaling harshly, “the world is changing. France is changing with it. We, *I*, am on the right side of history. You, by extension, are on the right side of history. That rightness, that righteousness-”

Amelie interrupted, “I care little for the practiced speeches and rhetoric that fills your head, Adrien. What I care more about is that the virtue you preach remains… virtuous. If something so fundamental can change, like our government, then what promise is there that the ideals the new government upholds won’t also change?”

Adrien runs a hand through his hair, mussing it while finding the right response. Finally, he comes to an answer, “Amelie… We are on the side of righteousness incarnate. We are entering a new age, of liberty, of equality, there’s no way that could fail. Have faith, everything will turn out fine.”

Oh, the optimism of youth, blind to the inner machinations of those considered infallible. Those considered…. Incorruptible, even.

–

Truly, Adrien hadn’t meant to start an argument. Frankly, he was still a little off-kilter from Amelie’s concern a few days prior. He just…. Couldn’t see the situation from Amelie’s point of view. Bias, of course, gives the wearer a tinted perspective.

He’d been walking down the hall, head elsewhere, when he’d passed by his father’s study, door open, the man himself hunched over stationery. Really, Adrien could have continued on, should have continued on, but curiosity, as always, reigns supreme.

Adrien crossed the threshold, rapping on the open door to announce his presence, “Father.” His eyes skimmed over the desk.

“Yes, Adrien?” The Vicomte, well, former Vicomte now, given the abolishment of aristocratic titles, raised his eyes slightly, taking in his eldest and only leaning in the doorframe, “Is there something you needed?”

Adrien, in a tone that betrayed his distraction, distraction caused by the names on a handful of the letters covering said desk, responded “Nothing in particular, I was just passing by. Am I interrupting?”

“Only if you intend to keep me from finishing this letter.” A faint smile tugged at the Vicomte’s lips, “Charles appears to find England pleasant, now that he and his kin have settled in.”

Adrien’s expression crinkled slightly, "Monsieur de Villeroy? You keep correspondence with him still?”

The Vicomte’s smile, small as it was to start, slips away, “I do. With Villeroy, and many others whom I served with. It is only proper to keep contact with old friends.”

Adrien doesn’t answer immediately, hovering, clearly is stuck between addressing the root of the issue, and keeping the peace. Eventually though, it seems the former wins out. “Monsieur de Villeroy joined the emigre’s because he holds Royalist sympathies. You should be careful keeping in touch with such men, lest your own loyalty be brought into question.” Adrien’s brows are furrowed.

The Vicomte, clearly, is not amused by this turn of conversation, “They are good men, loyal men, who have given years of sacrifice to France and the Crown. I will not abandon them simply because a handful of upstarts think they know better. To do so would be to embrace dishonour.” It should be noted that his son was very much among those upstarts, but that was not a thought that crossed the Vicomte’s mind at the moment.

Adrien frowned, “Your years of service are admirable, and no doubt the bonds forged in those years are tight, but that does not make up for the fact that they are disloyal.”

“Disloyal to whom?”

“The Republic which governs France. The people which the Republic serves. Take your pick.”

The Vicomte puts his quill down, steel clear in his tone. It’s obvious that the conversation has derailed, but neither man nor boy are willing to end without the last word. An inherited stubbornness that has been the cause of much strife in the Montfaucon household, though the Vicomtess would be the first to point out that it simply shows that Adrien is indeed his father’s son.

The Vicomte straightens his expression, “These men have served France long before any Republic was conceived of, dutifully and without question. That is more than can be said for yourself. They did not cease to be French simply because the government has changed-”

Adrien interrupts, “Then they should have no issues proving they are still loyal to her.”

The Vicomte ignores his son, continuing on, “and their years of service cannot be ignored or discounted because they would rather leave than accept a new regime. It is not that simple,

the world is not black and white, as you seem to wish it were, Adrien."

Adrien huffs, "I am not asking you to judge your friends by their conduct over decades, I am asking you to be careful and make decisions based on their political affiliations."

"You are asking me to betray my comrades." The Vicomte pauses, "That's like asking you to denounce your Jacobin friends, it will never happen."

Adrien growls, "Fine. It be on your head then." and turned, storming out of the office, ignoring the call from his father.

Oh how final that declaration might prove.

Adrien probably shouldn't have stormed off like that, but nobody had ever accused him of having the coolest head. Something he inherited from the Vicomte, no doubt. Whatever, if the fool wanted to continue communication with Royalists and men of questionable loyalty, it was not Adrien's problem. He tried, and that's what matters.

His feet carried him down familiar streets to the place that had begun to feel more like home than the Montfaucon Estate. He stepped through the doors, nodding his greeting to the man just inside.

"Welcome back, Citizen Montfaucon."

Chapter 8: The Last Montfaucon

Chapter Notes

Scene 1/2 Late September 1793, Scene 3/4 mid-late October 1793. Adrien is 17.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The day started with aggressive banging on the door. It was early, the sun peaking over the horizon like a shy critter. Earlier than any respectable caller should be arriving. And the banging did not stop or go away.

Adrien jerked awake with a start at the sound of loud voices, aggressive and stern. He could make out his father's voice, though the others were unknown. He'd fallen asleep at his desk, still half-dressed, the night before. It did not take long to become semi-respectable. Straightening his shirt, tying the laces at the collar. Running a hand haphazardly through his hair, not that it helped the mussed situation it was in. Oh well, who has time for respectability when the voices downstairs are getting louder and more heated by the minute?

Buttoning his waistcoat as he left his room, Adrien paused to take in the scene before him.

An official looking man, holding a writ of some sort, surrounded by a posse of armed National Guardsmen. The household staff, being gathered in one of the nearby sitting rooms. The Vicomte de Montfaucon, looking like he'd just eaten a ghost pepper, or several, to the point that Adrien was mildly surprised steam was not radiating off of the man. The Vicomtess stood a little ways behind, watching her husband and the official.

Adrien took this as his cue, seeing the cockade upon the man's collar, "What's going on?" He asks, brain still buffering from sleep as he makes his way down the stairs.

The Vicomte turned, as if just realizing his son's presence, as if to say something, or perhaps tell him to leave the immediate premises, as if he could talk his way out of what was happening. Anything he was bound to say was interrupted and lost as the official stepped forward.

"Citizen Montfaucon, how good of you to join us. I am Citizen Étienne Moreau, I am here as an agent of the Committee of Surveillance." Moreau extends a hand to Adrien, his tone rapidly changing from the stern, borderline hostile one used with the Vicomte to a respectful, level one as he addressed the younger Montfaucon.

Adrien, blinking slightly, takes it briefly, "A pleasure." a pause, "I ask again, what's going on here?"

Moreau handed the writ to Adrien, who took it and broke the seal, eyes skimming the contents, “It’s all here, but to put it briefly, under the Law of Suspects, the Montfaucon family, barring yourself, is to be detained under suspicion of counterrevolutionary leanings, as well as sustained contact with those of royalist leanings.” he explains, perfectly professional.

Adrien hums, “Barring myself?”

“You have proven yourself devoted to the Republic and her people time and time again, you have nothing to fear.” Moreau says it like it’s the most perfectly normal thing. Which, to him, it likely is.

Adrien hums again, folding the writ and handing it back, “Very well. I will not stand in your way. What do you require of me?”

Moreau smiles, pleased that this early morning raid appears to be going well, “Do you have know of what correspondence your father kept?”

Adrien nods, “I do.”

“If you’ll show me to where that was kept, we’ll need to confiscate that, and whatever else may be used for the investigation, you understand? Standard procedure.”

Adrien nods, brain finally spooling up to semi-functioning capacity, “Of cour-”

“You’ll do no such thing.” The Vicomte finally breaks into the conversation, “I am still the head of this house, and Adrien, no matter how involved in your party, is still a child. He cannot-”

Adrien, realizing that his father, who while currently in a precarious situation was still on relatively sturdy ground, could very well damn himself before getting the chance to defend himself, breaks in, “If there’s nothing damning, then there should be no issues? It might be smart to stay quiet, lest what you say be misconstrued, no?”

Moreau, who’d been watching the interaction with what can only be described as the expression of a cat who’d cornered the mouse, adds on, “Citizen Montfaucon is perfectly capable of handling this.” He turns, “After you, Citizen.”

Adrien nods, turning to lead Moreau and a pair of the Guardsmen down the hall. As this happened, he witnessed the remainder collecting his parents, leading them away. A dutiful son should have felt bothered. Adrien, however, felt nothing of the sort.

Reaching the study, Adrien stops, “Here.” a pause, “What can be expected of this… investigation?”

Moreau, keeping his pleasant demeanor, answers “Currently, your family is simply accused. There’ll be evidence compiled, a trial, and if all goes well, they will be released.” he waits a beat, “After all, it’s like you said. If there’s nothing damning, there should be no reason to

worry, right?”

Adrien nods, “Right.”

“Wonderful. Then I must ask you to remain out here as we search the area, you understand?”

Adrien nods a final time, a sinking feeling in his gut making him wonder exactly how innocent those letters his father kept were.

–

Adrien’s charcoal hadn’t moved in a good half-hour. That was the first sign that something was wrong. The second was that he was still as the stone gargoyles perched atop cathedrals. It wasn’t a ‘I read something so outlandish and now my brain is buffering’ kind of still, nor a ‘Replaying a conversation for the fifth time over and thinking about alternate routes it could’ve taken’ kind of stillness. No, this was the stillness of uncertainty, of a lapse in belief. And that was, to Adrien, almost as disconcerting as the morning's events.

His stillness eventually attracted Robespierre’s attention, and this time Adrien welcomed it. If there was anyone to sooth his racing mind, he was most definitely the one most able.

“Something is on your mind, Montfaucon. What weighs on you?” the lawyer-turned-politician sits down next to the younger man, head tilting slightly.

“Just… turning over the past few hours.” Adrien finally responds, though his tone puts him as very much not fully in the here-and-now, “I suspect…. Well, I suspect that whatever this investigation turns up, it’ll be a mite more incriminating than I have been led to believe.”

Robespierre lets the admission set for a few moments, “Then so be it. Let the systems put in place to handle situations like this do their jobs.” a pause before a slightly more reassuring statement, “Suspicion is not conviction, do not become so convinced of one possible verdict that you ignore the chance of another.”

Adrien hummed, having moved his hand holding his charcoal progressively closer to his face, to the point where one looking on might start to worry the boy is one bad notice away from eating his art supplies. It’s not quite out of the realm of possibility, given the amount of teeth marks one would find on some of his more commonly used brushes back at the Montfaucon Estate.

Adrien finally answers, “And my mother?” The root of the problem has been given words. Adrien was not particularly worried for the Vicomte. Their relationship had always been strained, the two were much too similar in temperament and behavior, and it had reached a breaking point in the last few months. Especially after Adrien had so clearly chosen his side, and it was not the side of the family. But Adrien, while not being particularly close to her, did not want the same fate for his mother.

Unfortunately, if evidence is brought against the former Vicomte, then no doubt there will be

damning evidence on the former Vicomtess as well.

Robespierre's expression softens ever so slightly, "Your mother must answer for her own actions, not merely those of her husband's. If she has committed no offense, then there is nothing to fear."
He watches Adrien's expression. "Whether that is the case or not, it too must be established. We cannot afford to make exceptions for those we love, Adrien."

Adrien finally looked up from his page, "Of course… Otherwise we would be trading one form of injustice for another."

Robespierre reaches over, giving Adrien a comforting squeeze on the shoulder, "Take heart. You have done nothing wrong by allowing the investigation to proceed. Do not burden yourself with its conclusion before it has even begun."

Adrien watched the man stand, before muttering a quiet, "Of course."

–

The weeks that followed were occupied by inquiries, examinations, and proceedings from which Adrien was not required to concern himself. The matter, he was assured, was in capable hands. The Republic, having taken the Vicomte and Vicomtess into its custody, was not inclined to return them in a hurry.

He had kept his mind elsewhere, didn't react when the news that the letters that he had turned over included what had been described as 'conspiracy against the Republic', had thrown himself headfirst into his work. Trust the Republic. Trust that the laws and statutes put in place would do what they were made to do. The conviction had been swift, and now the people who raised Adrien, his parents, even when they fought, which was often, were facing the scaffold, alongside probably a dozen others, all similarly convicted.

It didn't bother Adrien, at least, that's what he told himself. And with that same mantra repeating in his head, Adrien made the choice, on the eve of their deaths, to make one last visit.

Which was how he found himself outside of, and then quickly inside of, the prison they had resided in for the last few weeks. A dingy, dirt-floored place. A stench of what could only be described as living death. Squalor incarnate. Completely unbefitting of the Aristocracy, which, Adrien thought, was probably why they were here.

The cell was not large, though apparently that did not stop the Vicomte from pretending his son were not present. Adrien instead went to the bars before his mother, sinking to his knees to be at eye level with the woman who had borne him. Who still, despite all that had transpired, had the love in her body to turn and address him when his own words failed him.

"Oh, my sweet boy," the Vicomtess turned, "You've grown." One hand cupped the side of his face.

Suddenly feeling a lump in his throat, Adrien swallowed, fighting the urge to turn away, to avert his eyes, “Not really. It’s… It’s only been a few weeks. Not much change can happen in that time.”

His mother smiled softly, “No. Maybe not physically, but you’ve changed.” she pauses, letting her hand carresse his cheek, “I hope, with that change, comes the strength to survive the coming years.”

At that, Adrien leaned his forehead against the bars and took a shaky breath, “Fair winds, Mother.”

“Fair winds, my little falcon.”

–

All things considered, it was a beautiful day. There was an Autumn chill in the air, the sun was out, not a cloud in the sky. The air had the crisp scent of coming cold. It was a beautiful day.

Such a shame that something so unbeautiful as death was present to tarnish it.

Adrien stood at the foot of the scaffold, Amelie, the dutiful betrothed, on his arm. Adrien, who had stood through several days of mass execution by this point with nothing but a bored expression.
Amelie, who had stood with him for a number of those, lest she or her family be the next to face detainment, accusations, conviction. Amelie, who loved the man next to her, but was not so sure she loved how far he had proven he could go.

That uncertainty would soon prove uncertain no more.

Adrien stared up, unblinking at the scaffold before them. They were close enough that the blood, the mud, the evidence of what horror transpired, had seeped far enough to stain the soles of his shoes. Of his, and the mass of bodies surrounding them, all pressing in to see what traitors would meet their ends that day. In the hand of the arm that Amelie was not on, Adrien held a little brown notebook. In it, dates, names, lists, last words. Records of everyone he had watched go to the guillotine, recorded for… posterity? Remembrance? Because he could? He didn’t have an answer for why he did it, he just did.

And today, two names that were as familiar as his own would be added to that little brown notebook.

Amelie’s eyes lingered longer and longer on Adrien, as the line grew shorter, as the bodies piled further. As fresh, sanguine blood was added to the pond already forming. Today was different.
Today, Adrien wore a smile.

A smile reminiscent of the one a person would wear in the presence of their best friend, large and real and directed quite clearly at the people above them.

A smile that grew as the Vicomte de Montfaucon was marched up the steps, fastened in, and swiftly removed of his head.

The Vicomtess was next, and Amelie half expected Adrien's expression to change upon seeing the silent, tearstained face of his mother. Nothing. Not even a flicker of compassion. No sadness, or grief, or… anything.

Adrien just scratched out his parents names, the date, their ages. Like his whole world hadn't changed that day. Like it didn't mark the point that would prove a pivotal moment for all of them.

Amelie was suddenly very sure, she did not love the man Adrien had become.

Chapter End Notes

Well, this marks a drastic change for our dear Mr. Montfaucon.

Chapter 9: Men Who Know Better

Chapter Notes

Mid December 1793, Adrien is 17

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The first thing Adrien noticed upon entering the club was how… empty it was. Yes, there were people there, but not the people Adrien had been hoping to catch. He ran names and locations through his head. Saint-Just had departed a few days prior with Le Bas for the Army of the Rhine. Robespierre, likely arguing with the Convention or the Committee of Public Safety about something. Danton, who knows. Off being Danton. Jullien, also off on a mission. Which left Camille. Where to place one Camille Desmoulins.

Apparently, writing for a completely different paper then *Révolutions de France et de Brabant.* Well, time, then, to make a social call.

–

Adrien flipped his collar up as he made his way to the Desmoulins household. The wind chill bit his exposed skin. He hadn't been outside very long, but the wind, mixed with the frigid temperature, made the journey rather frosty. His ears and nose had numbed rather quickly. Perhaps Adrien should look into getting a scarf. He probably has one already, somewhere, but that would require spending excess time at the Montfaucon Estate, and he'd been avoiding it as much as possible in recent weeks.

Finally, with a final turn down the street, his destination appears. Stopping at the door, Adrien pauses, wiping the toebox and vamp of his shoes, leather clearly in need of a shine, on the back of his trousers below the knee. Cleaning off the majority of the water, slush, and mud that had caked them. Finally, he knocks on the door, three loud raps with a closed fist, before popping his collar again and hunching into his coat.

The wait feels longer than it is, of course. Time always moves slowly when the situation is most inconvenient. But, thankfully, he was not the human equivalent of an iceberg when the door opened, revealing Camille, who took one look at the minorly frozen ex-Aristocrat on his doorstep, blinked, and pulled him inside, letting the door close behind the pair.

"Adrien! Inside, inside. Go stand by the fire, Lucile and I were just setting down to dinner." Camille pushes the younger man further in, away from the outside chill. Adrien did feel a little bad about intruding, though to be fair, the older had not turned him away.

Adrien, familiar with the route, lets himself be led and deposited in front of the hearth, “Much obliged.” He might not be aristocratic anymore, but that doesn’t mean he’s forgotten his manners.
Camille waves off the response, far more focused on Adrien in front of him, “Not that I’m opposed to you dropping in at random, but if you plan on doing so, I’d ask that you dress for the weather.”

“I was coming from the club, it was perfectly warm there.” Adrien peels his gloves off. Tucking them into his pocket, he unpops his collar, smoothing it down, “I haven’t seen you there for a while, and seeing as I practically live there at this point, I started to get concerned.”

Camille frowned, “Robespierre and I are in the-” he pauses, as if looking for the right word or phrase to give Adrien, though it’s clear Camille has a term he’d like to use, “midst of a disagreement right now.” he finishes. Adrien catches the hesitation. Clearly, Camille is choosing to not be fully honest. A problem to unpack for another time, or, as Adrien would soon realize, a problem to unpack and then leave strewn about on the floor very soon.

Adrien hums, but is stopped from responding by Lucile entering the room and practically smothering the poor lad in the mother henning he’s missed since October, not that he’d admit it of course.

“Lucile, a pleasure. Apologies for dropping in so suddenly, but I had to make sure your husband hadn’t gotten lost in ink again, or something equally as… Camille.” Adrien offers alongside a pleasant smile.

“He does tend to do that.” She responds, ignoring the brief flash of mock offense on that journalist’s face, though it is done in good humor, “And you, you haven’t come around recently, how are you faring after-” a slight hesitation, “everything?” she finishes, eyes skimming over Adrien’s jacket and overall appearance of discombobulation.

Admittedly, Adrien had stopped attempting to keep the perfect appearance a while ago, this much we knew. But now that had fallen from purposeful disarray to involuntary. His jacket was likely the most obvious of these signs. It had already seen a few years by this point, and in normal circumstances, he would have replaced it by now. The sleeves were fraying, and just a little too short to fit his arms. The red of the wool was stained rust at the bottom, and several buttons had clearly been resewn by amateurs hand. Looking past that, the tell-tale lightness of use on the knees of his trousers, the lack of shine on his shoes, the haggard appearance of one who hasn’t slept well in weeks.

Adrien takes a moment to formulate a response, “It’s quieter, at the Estate, but we manage.” A small sigh, “Most of the staff is gone, save for the bare necessities. Estate Manager is keeping everything running smoothly, as far as I am aware, given my age.” He shrugs, tone light as if talking about the weather, “Given the circumstances, I would consider my situation better than most.”

Lucile frowns ever so slightly, “There’s that, at least.” She looks at the worn coat again, “Here, let me do at least a little repairs on that for you.” Her offer, veiled as a request, holds

the underlying tone of an order.

Adrien goes to refuse, but catches Camille's eyes, and relents, "Very well, much appreciated-" as he shucks off the jacket, folding it and passing it over to waiting hands.

"Smart decision." Camille jests, "And no, I've not gotten lost in rhetoric and inkwells this time." He turns, picking a page off the mantel, shaking it out, and handing it to Adrien, "I've been working on a number of new writings, must have lost track of time."

Adrien takes the paper, "*Le Vieux Cordelier*." He mutters the name to himself, "Fitting choice." he skims the article, eyes catching on the contents, he looks up sharply, "You're calling for clemency?" His tone, while not intentionally accusatory or hostile, is sharp with surprise.

Camille, seemingly having expected this turn, answers calmly, "I am."

"Why?" The question is cautious, guarded almost. Not an emotion anyone present liked to hear in what should be the company of friends.

"Our Republic has to prove that it is capable of justice, not solely punishment. It cannot continue executing people just because it finds them politically inconvenient, or associated with the wrong people, or because they've been accused of something. To not do so would run the risk of becoming a tyranny in disguise." The explanation is calm.

Adrien frowned, "Mercy runs the risk of letting… unwelcome elements slip through the cracks. Besides, last I was made aware, you don't go to the scaffold without a conviction, and suspicion, hell, even being accused of something, that's not a conviction. There's a process these things go through before a verdict is given." Adrien's response seems…. Rehearsed. Like it's something he'd gone over in his mind, over and over and over again. Like he needs to keep making the case or else he might not believe it.

Camille, familiar with Adrien's behavior at this point, cocks an eyebrow, "Is that genuine? Because, given all that's happened, I would have assumed you of all people would agree?"

Adrien purses his lips, not liking the direction this conversation has taken, and getting a sinking feeling that this new development was what that 'disagreement' mentioned before was. A development that Adrien, unfortunately, could not agree with. He takes a breath before responding, "We cannot afford to make exceptions for those we love, Camille. Otherwise we run the risk of leaving fairness and objectivity by the wayside."

Camille, looking a mite disappointed, but not entirely unsurprised, "Those are not your words, Adrien."

"Of course they are."

"No." He shakes his head, "Those are Robespierre's words." A pause, "Spoken with such conviction, I wonder-"

“Wonder what?” Adrien’s response is sharper than he intends, and a flash of remorse glances across his face, but he does not apologize.

“I wonder, is that conviction because you truly believe it, because you have to believe it, or because you think believing it will bring forth the admiration of those who hold them?”

Adrien hummed, a long, monotone sound, accompanied by a blank, unhappy stare, “That-”

“That’s enough, Camille.” Lucile breaks in, having watched the back and forth, realizing that, while neither man wanted to hurt or insult the other, both men were cut from the same cloth, and were barreling towards the same schism that Camille and Robespierre had suffered, “Adrien, here’s your jacket.” A pause, “I do hope you’ll stay for dinner, with any work talk left here?” Lucile sent a pointed look towards the pair.

Adrien, regaining his wits, answers with a polite smile, “I would love to, if it’s not to much hassle.”

“Never, come on. You too, Camille.”

The pair of Jacobins shared a look, earlier tension still present, but drastically receded, and followed.

–

Adrien tossed a stone out into the water, watching the resulting ripples against the current as it sunk to the riverbank. How fitting an image for what troubles ran amok through his mind now.

After he had made his exit from the Desmoulins residence, his feet, apparently uncaring of the chill, had taken him to the now familiar embankment of the Siene, a short distance from the Jacobin Club. Except, where it had once brought comfort and warmth and belonging and rightness, Adrien just felt cold and so very alone.

There was no Jullien to tease, no Amelie to ask pointed questions, no sun to cast warming rays. That was covered by blank, grey clouds.

Adrien supposed he could go home. Should go home. But where home really was, well, that was the question. Really, the answer was simple, or it should have been. The Montfaucon Estate. Where he had been born, where he had grown, where all of his memories were tied to. But, dear reader, it never is as easy as that.

The Montfaucon Estate had been, following the Vicomte’s conviction, and the subsequent execution, confiscated, and in what can only be described as structural limbo. The staff had been let go, only a barebones skeleton crew remaining. An Estate Manager held control, given that Adrien had not yet reached his age of majority yet. Rooms that once contained life, hallways that once echoed with the sound of distant conversation, hearths that once burned bright and warm with the fires of life. Empty. Silent. Extinguished.

It didn’t feel like home was supposed to feel.

So Adrien had started spending more and more time at the Jacobin Club. Arriving early, leaving late into the night, sometimes not at all. That had begun to feel like home. But, like everything, that feeling had begun to hollow in recent months. The unit he had built there, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Camille, Danton, Jullien. Spread out and distant, like ashes thrown into a breeze. Jullien and
Saint-Just were oft away on missions, Robespierre with the Committee and Convention, now Danton and Camille having gone their own way. Still fighting for France, but not in the way that kept the group, Adrien’s group, together.

The Montreuil Estate? No. Of the few, petering times that he had visited, stayed, things had felt… off. The Montreuil heads were kind and courteous and never turned him away, but that was it.
Amelie, on the other hand, was a different story. In the time since October, they had shared maybe a handful of greetings. The distance there was no crack, but rather a gaping canyon. Something had changed, since his parents deaths, and Adrien didn’t know how to fix it. His closest friend, his confidant, his person, was no longer present.

Of course, with the hindsight and knowledge of the future, and the eye-view that you, dear readers, have, the answer may be obvious. But for Adrien, all but physically trudging through the present, awareness was a luxury he could no longer afford.

Chapter End Notes

Well... from here on out, things become a whole lot darker for our dear Mr. Montfaucon.

Chapter 10: Friends of the Republic

Chapter Notes

> The dates range from 31 March 1794 to 13 April 1794. Adrien is 17. Scene 1: March 31st 1794, Scene 2: April 4th 1794, Scene 3: April 5th 1794, Scene 4: April 7th 1794, Scene 5: April 13th 1794

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Really, Adrien should have learned not to trust nice weathered days. They always turned sour before the sun had set, in some form or fashion. Today proved no different.

Adrien was seated in the public galleries, surrounded by other curious citizens, men and women interested in observing the going-ons of their government. Adrien, though he was a very common sight perched somewhere amongst the benches, rarely actively sat listening nowadays. More often than not, he picked a deputy, a scene, a piece of the building itself, and drew. Yes, he kept one ear listening, just in case something particularly interesting was said. At first, he attended maybe once or twice a week. After the events of October, however, it had become practically a daily occurrence.

Saint-Just was speaking, and wasn't that the perfect opportunity to add yet another sketch of the man to the already rapidly filling sketchbook. If Amelie were on speaking terms with Adrien, she would be the first to point out that he's really not doing much to keep his critics at bay. Oh well, it was an open secret at this point, and it's not like Amelie was talking to him to make that point.

Adrien had one knee pulled up to his chest, locked into place by the bench he sat on. His other leg crossed underneath (and having lost circulation sometime around the thirty minute mark).
Sketchbook on the crossed leg. He'd been working on the same quadrant of drawing for the better part of the session. Something about the lighting of everything wasn't behaving. Adrien pursed his lips, putting charcoal to paper, when some part of his brain that was focusing on the speeches and reports before him flashed red.

Adrien looked up. Saint-Just was still speaking, Adrien could see his mouth moving, could take in the hand gestures, but his ears were still focused on what had just been said. Camille. Danton.
Arrested. Imprisoned. Dates set for Tribunal.

Adrien hummed, a long, quiet, monotone note. Well, that was going to prove a problem.

–

Securing permission to the Conciergerie took time, some careful conversation and negotiation, and not an indecent amount of luck.

Once inside, the animal part of Adrien's brain immediately demanded he rear-march himself back out of the situation. Fortunately, the animal-brain was not in control, for if he had listened to that, well, I suspect that it would be something Adrien would come to regret immensely. Small mercies, then, that he kept his nerve.

He made his way down stone halls, past crowded cells in the paille, to a still dimly lit but less overcrowded portion. Very little sun shone, only entering through the occasional barred window, making the corridors dimly lit give off an…. Eerie feel. Fitting, given the majority of those imprisoned here were awaiting trial, which very likely would end in conviction, or had already been convicted and were simply waiting their turn at the scaffold. Adrien supposed, if despair had a scent, this would be it. Mildew and sweat and grime and fear, all mixing together into a potpourri of human suffering. It reeked, and it sank into the wool of his clothing, clinging. The selfish part of Adrien was glad that he did not have to stay here for long.

Arriving among a row of 'nicer' cells, nicer in that, it appeared, they were single residents and contained small, narrow beds as opposed to the dirty straw on the floor of those in the paille. Adrien stopped in front of one of these cells, and felt his nerve, or what was left of it, waver.

Camille was hunched in the corner of his cell, his expression so very unlike the Camille of Adrien's memories. He was distraught, disheveled, perhaps… grieving? That would make sense. Adrien had heard, down the grapevine, that Lucile had been arrested. No doubt facing the same fate as Camille. No doubt Camille had heard of his wife's situation. Adrien stood silently for a minute, almost wondering if it would be easier to leave before Camille noticed his presence.

Before he could turn coward, Adrien cleared his throat, "Cam- Desmoulins." He keeps a steady, level tone. That's the only defense he can muster.

Camille looks up, his face morphing into one of… an emotion that Adrien couldn't quite identify, though whether it be due to poor lighting or Adrien's own refusal to handle the… uncomfortable emotions. Regardless, Camille does not look pleased.

He stands abruptly, coming to the bars directly before Adrien, "You shouldn't be here, Adrien. You aren't safe here."

Adrien shook his head exactly once, an abrupt and jarring motion that seemed moreso to shake away any doubts than respond to Camille's statement. He took a breath, "Nobody is safe, now." A pause, "If it's a matter of safety, then I'm safer here, talking to you, surrounded by stone walls, then I am anywhere else." Adrien hums, cutting himself off from rambling.

Camille frowned, clearly not convinced by the argument, not necessarily because it was

unsound, “You shouldn’t be here. You put yourself at risk by associating-”

Adrien interrupts, “I had to come by, before-”

“Adrien….” Camille looked pained, “I don’t want you here.” At that, Adrien’s face fell, and Camille forged on, “I don’t want you to see… tomorrow.” He doesn’t say the word ‘execution’, but it looms over the conversation.

“The Republic will make corpses of us all.” The statement is… awfully final for someone not yet in their second decade. Flat. Perhaps even a tad dissociated.

Adrien, eyes locked onto Camille, but not seeing, at least not in the sense of someone fully present, still misses the flash of alarm on the man’s face. Alarm schooled into seriousness almost as fast. “It needn’t, unless you allow it to.” A pause, “You are not obliged to follow us to the grave.”

There’s a minute or two of silence following that declaration. The air is heavy. Adrien's face is twisted before straightening out. A hum.

“I came to say goodbye, Camille.” The whiplash in his tone is jarring. Minutes before he had been shaky. Frightened. Borderline verge of tears. Now? Well, the flatness isn’t normal or natural, but it’s better than before. He’s almost too composed. “Goodbye and… I’ll be there for her. For Lucile.” A hum, “I had to see you before-”

“Adrien…” Camille sounds, somewhere between sad and something else. Eventually, “Thank you.” He closes his eyes a moment before opening them and looking at the man, boy, really, before him. “Don’t come tomorrow. You’ve seen enough.”

Adrien frowned, attention snapped back to the present, “I can’t… I can’t make that promise.”

Camille sighed, “Very well.” A pause, “Then I suppose I shall see you tomorrow, in your usual place.”

“I suppose you shall.” Adrien paused, “Goodbye, Camille.” He bowed his head slightly, exhaling softly, “Until then.” And then he turned, and quietly padded away.

–

The Place de la Revolution was busy. Crowded, warm in the damp uncomfortable way of mass gatherings, loud somehow, despite there being very few sidebar conversations actively happening around him. Adrien did his best to ignore his surroundings from his place at the foot of the scaffold. The air buzzed, electric with the justice that Adrien had so faithfully put his support behind.
Justice that now has turned on those who once so ardently supported it.

Adrien had watched, stock still, as the wagons bearing the men he’d grown to consider his family be brought like livestock to the slaughter. Watched them dismount, be lined up, neat and orderly, watched a scene he’d watched a hundred times before, only this time, he held a

personal stake in the whole situation.

All things considered, the blank, unregistering stare and the flat expression that painted his face were likely the most composed Adrien was going to be, on a day like this.

Adrien kept his eyes forward. His hands kept busy by the little brown notebook of names and dates and words. Given that sound around him had a muted quality, well, the chance of hearing any final words seemed unlikely. The other hand drifted down to his pocket, where a single white rose was tucked away, pruned from the Montfaucon gardens that morning.

Really, Adrien needed to stop trusting fair-weathered days.

Camille was first. The buzzing in the air continued, even as the crowd stayed silent. Well, appeared to stay silent. Adrien was wholly unaware of the people surrounding him. His attention was well and truly focused solely on the scaffold before him. The hand by his pocket drifted inside, clenching around the stem of the rose, letting the thorns bring some aspect of feeling to his complete and utter numbness.

The journalist before him was distraught, but not audibly so. A faltered step, the barest visible sign of a body involuntarily trying to stop the inevitable. It did not. Adrien blinked. He blinked again.
It was, if you'll pardon the anachronism very briefly, as if the quality of a video had suddenly dropped to 144p with nary a buffer to warn you. Adrien was watching, yes, but somewhere between the sight before him and the processors of his brain, there was a hitch, and while he could clearly see what was before him, the details did not register. As such, he did not register when the man's gaze, just for a moment, landed upon him.

Restrained, made horizontal. Then a sound, high and sharp and horrid, perhaps a word was included, not that Adrien could tell. The buzzing in his ears increased. A swish. A drop. A thunk. The sound of metal rendering flesh.

Adrien watched them carry the body away. His hand clenched hard, thorns bringing blood to the surface.

Danton came next, the polar opposite of the man before. He looked up, eyeing the guillotine's blade. Walked up the steps unencouraged. Adrien saw this clearly. Apparently, his eyes decided to work, at least for now. Perhaps it would have been better had they not. His grip tightened on the notebook. Softly, ever so softly, Adrien hummed.

Restrained, made horizontal. Except there was no high and sharp sound. Just a switch pulled, the sound of air being displaced, the thunk of metal hitting wood, unhindered by the meat and bone and tendon between them. A head raised to the crowd. The footsteps of the next soul damned. And so the Indulgents met their fate.

At least, Adrien would think when his mind remembered that day, it was fast.

Afterwards, with the crowd dispersing, Adrien stayed where he was. For a time. Awareness, voluntary awareness, had taken a leave of absence. In its place, Adrien's feet took over,

carrying their master around the scaffold, through the gaggle of civil servants washing away blood, piling the dead, preparing to move them to their final resting place.

Adrien found himself stopped in front of one of these carts, hand still tucked in his pocket. The men filling said cart paid no mind to him, and Adrien paid them no mind in turn. It wasn't hard to identify Camille. Small mercies that the upper portion of his torso and above were covered by another corpse. Still, even without seeing the cut, it was a sight that would burn itself into Adrien's memory.

Adrien drew the rose from his pocket. White and pure and undamaged. The difference was stark. Adrien moved closer on instinct alone. Reached in, finding Camille's hands, and tucked the rose into his cooling grasp. Then, as if struck by the weight of the day, Adrien turned and beat a hasty retreat.

After all, we can't make exceptions for those we love, now can we?

–

For the next few days, Adrien kept to himself. Alone, in the dark of the Montfaucon Estates, he composed himself. He did not cry, or scream, or rage, or do anything that one would generally associate with grief. Rather, he sat, he justified, he compartmentalized. What was done was done. But, it wasn't fully done yet, now was it?

That was how he found himself, just as he did three days prior, visiting the condemned. Really, this was becoming something of a concerning habit.

Lucile Desmoulins was on her feet before him before Adrien had even processed that he'd arrived. Frankly, he couldn't quite remember the walk over at all. He blinked, and he was there, in another forsaken prison, visiting another person he cared so deeply about.

"Lucile…" He paused, was that really what he sounded like? So flat and monotone and uncaring? God, part of him wondered what he looked like, if that was the voice that escaped him. Pushing on,
"I'm… My condolences… for what it's worth." It didn't feel like it was worth much.

The answer came slowly, after Lucile had looked the boy her husband had been so fond of up and down, cataloging the bedraggled appearance. Like a cat that had been pulled from a stream and left on the bank. "Thank you, Adrien." then, "You've changed."

This, unlike the same comment made months earlier, is referring to physical changes, as opposed to anything else. Gone was the red coat, bright and bold and a little boisterous, given the wearer, replaced with a coal black coat and vest and trousers, cravat pure white, like freshly fallen snow. Mourning attire. The only thing Adrien could do, given the situation.

"Lucile…" Adrien swallowed, feeling a lump in his throat. He swallows again, trying to force the feeling away. Trying to force some reaction that wasn't this blank, unending apathy. But, dear reader, that apathy was not due to a lack of caring, but rather the response to caring too much. Should that apathy go away, well, it would be akin to cutting every third stitch in

clothing. A slow shedding of functionality. And so, the apathy stayed.

“You needn’t apologize, Adrien.”

“I feel I must. Either through words, or actions, or-” He’s beginning to ramble, beginning to become unfocused.

“Camille would not ask you to destroy yourself. You must continue, my dear. I think he would have wanted that. And-” she pauses just a fraction of a moment, “I should like to think you might find some happiness yet. Somewhere down the road.”

Adrien sniffed, just once. The most emotion he would allow. Then, “I wish I were as certain as you.”

Lucile smiled sadly, “Certainty comes when the end is nearing. I suspect that I shall be with my husband soon.”

Adrien dipped his head, voice catching in his throat, “I shall be there.” A breath, steadying, “I made a promise, and I intend to keep it.”

“I would expect nothing less, my dear.”

And so, once again, Adrien left a prison having been comforted by someone who had every reason to need comforting themselves. Adrien had made a promise to Camille, and he intended to keep it. He would be there for Lucile, just as he had been there for her husband. Some promises, after all, were easier to make than to survive.

–

Adrien’s feet carried him home that day. His little brown notebook tucked in his jacket, the same one Lucile had repaired for him that past December. Worn for just one day, a beacon in the crowd, to one of those damned that day. He felt…. exhausted. He didn’t even greet the footman at the door of the Montfaucon Estate. Didn’t answer the questioning tones.

His feet led him upstairs, put him in front of his desk. Hands that he didn’t remember moving scrabbled for paper, a quill, ink. His vision blurred, his eyes felt hot, the paper felt damp.

Dear Camille,

I’m sorry. I hope Lucile is with you. I hope you are safe. I hope-

He let his head hit the desk, and cried.

Chapter End Notes

Phew.... So that hurt to write. I might need a few days to get over this. Gotta love getting attached to characters doomed by history. Someone get this boy a blanket and a friend group that isn't actively trying to kill each other.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!