

## The Fox 101

### Chapter 101: Headhunting and Blame-Shifting

Aurelio rode his horse, the first to leap over the enemy's trenches and breastworks, swiftly slashing down a terrified rebel. More cavalry soon joined, and chaos ensued among the enemy forces as they scattered in disarray.

Aurelio knew he had to seize this moment, launching a continuous assault to prevent the enemy from regrouping. Napoleon's orders were clear: "Keep a watchful eye on the battlefield. If you spot any signs of the enemy attempting to regroup, attack immediately, disperse them before they can reform!"

Aurelio surveyed the area from horseback, peering through the smoke. In the distance, he spotted a general in full uniform, riding away. He shouted, "The one with the tasseled hat up ahead is General Delacroix!"

The riders behind him heard and charged after the general in uniform. They didn't care about the distance and began firing wildly with their muskets.

Delacroix, upon hearing the shouts, looked back and heard phrases like, "The one with the tasseled hat is Delacroix; don't let him escape!" and "We must not let him get away at any cost!" He realized his tasseled hat made him too conspicuous, so he spurred his horse, tearing off his hat and throwing it on the ground.

Aurelio watched closely and was about to shout, "The one without the hat is Delacroix." But he quickly noticed that many riders ahead had lost their hats, and his words would hardly distinguish Delacroix. Fortunately, Delacroix, in a show of bravado, also wore a bright red cape. So Aurelio continued to shout, "The one in the big red cape is Delacroix!"

Delacroix heard this and immediately discarded his cape. Over time, he got rid of his wig, his sword, and more. Finally, he managed to shake off Aurelio's pursuit. However, because Aurelio was constantly on his heels, he never had the chance to regroup his forces. The rebel army collapsed entirely, from General Delacroix down to the stable handsall scattered in a frenzy.

Many years later, armed forces driven by ideals and beliefs would display an extraordinary trait: even if the units scattered, every soldier would know their objective and willingly continue to fight independently. Dispersed by the enemy's relentless onslaught, they would become guerrilla fighters, carrying on the fight behind the front lines. However, in this era, such armies did not exist. Most armies lost their cohesion and with it, their will to fight when their structure collapsed. In this state, even a child wearing the enemy's uniform and armed with a stick could capture several acres of the enemy's land (as demonstrated by a young warrior from a certain children's group in the East, following the Crossing of the River campaign). The rebel army found itself in this state.

For example, Aurelio, after losing a long-distance horse racing competition to General Delacroix (no surprise, as Delacroix, a nobleman, was an expert in fox hunting), met at least two hundred fleeing rebels alone on his way back to his unit (as he had left his comrades behind). With a whip as his weapon (as he had discarded his weapons while pursuing General Delacroix), he managed to capture all these fleeing rebels.

Bringing these two hundred captives back did not pose much of a challenge for Aurelio. In general, herding a group of people was much easier than herding sheep, not to mention pigs. Had these not been over two hundred people but over two hundred pigs, not even with three heads and six arms could he have managed to escort them all back.

However, Aurelio had chased too far, and bringing back this large number of captives took some time. When he finally returned, it was already evening.

Upon seeing Aurelio return with this multitude of captives, Napoleon was astonished to the point of nearly injuring his jaw with his own heel. He immediately bestowed upon Aurelio the nickname "the Shepherd."

After defeating the rebel army, Napoleon ordered his troops to chase down the enemy as much as possible. However, his own forces had also dispersed. Thus, he had to wait an entire day on the battlefield to regroup his troops. The troops that did return did not achieve the spectacular feat that Aurelio did, capturing over two hundred captives alone, but they brought back approximately three thousand captives in total. Napoleon believed that many more scattered rebels were nearby, although he didn't have the time to pursue and capture them as he had been preoccupied with Aurelio.

Victorious news spreads quickly, and Napoleon believed that other French forces in nearby cities would soon learn of the victory. If they were intelligent, they would realize that the rebel forces currently stationed in Angers must have retreated toward Le Mans. So, Napoleon decided not to waste any more time herding "pigs."

He handed these three thousand captives over to Joseph to handle, and he took his troops to rush to Angers.

Halfway there, Napoleon encountered Dauv, who had been sent to execute a raiding mission earlier. Dauv was returning with a cache of captured horses, accompanied by a group of young, spirited soldiers named Pch, George, and Bonna.

Napoleon didn't hesitate to hand over most of his troops to Dauv's command and mounted a horse with the cavalymen to head towards Angers.

Napoleon rode day and night, pushing his horse to its limits, eventually reaching Angers. However, Angers had turned into an empty city by then there were no enemies, no citizens, just ruins and unburied bodies.

On the morning after Napoleon "liberated" Angers, another French cavalry unit appeared in Napoleon's spyglass. Napoleon ordered his men to hoist the tricolor flag prepared on the town hall and, using the astronomical telescope set up on the town hall's third-floor window sill, smugly observed the reactions of his fellow soldiers who had lagged behind.

"General, why are you twisting your neck like that while looking?" a soldier asked.

"Oh, of course, it's because this damn spyglass is inverted!" Napoleon replied, squinting with one eye and twisting his neck.

Although the commander of that unit was indeed surprised and disappointed upon seeing the tricolor flag, he arrived at the town hall and graciously congratulated Napoleon on his remarkable victory.

The day after the victory, around noon, Davout arrived in Angers with the main force. He was accompanied by the Parisian special envoy, Joseph Fouch.

"Fouch, I didn't expect you to arrive so soon," Napoleon said, "They arrived quickly here. Have you dealt with those captives? Did you have them executed?"

Fouch seemed to sense Napoleon's concerns and smiled as he responded, "I believe there is much work to be done in the recently recovered cities here, so I expedited the process there and came here promptly."

Napoleon refrained from asking how he had expedited the process; it was within Fouch's authority.

"I've sent all the peasants among the rebels into the mines, making them labor to atone for their crimes. As for the nobles, these traitors to the country aren't worthy of living in this world. After their trial by the revolutionary court, they all met the guillotine," Fouch said with a cold expression.

Napoleon responded, "This land is now fully under the rule of our Republic. We should set an example so that all the people here know what they'll face if they betray us."

Upon hearing Fouch's words, Napoleon nodded. He then noticed the bag at Fouch's feet.

"What's in the bag?"

Fouch lifted the bag. "This is the head of Delacroix, the leader of the rebels."

Napoleon, who had been gazing at Fouch's bag absentmindedly, suddenly broke into laughter.

"What a sight that Delacroix must have been, fleeing with his head in a sack! Let me see that head!"

Fouch emptied the head onto the ground in front of Napoleon, who laughed even harder upon seeing it.

"How absurdly stiff his expression is! Fouch, you're really excellent at your work!"

Fouch was happy to have Napoleon's praise. "General, we have already purged the city of all rebels. We should clean up the city, restore order, and make sure the people are ready to accept our rule."

In the following days, the people of Angers suffered a great deal under Fouch and Davout's reign of terror, enduring unending executions, forced labor, and other forms of oppression. For the local people, the entry of the French troops didn't seem like a liberation at all.

However, the fact was that their actions managed to extinguish the remaining remnants of rebellion. While this did instill fear and animosity among the local population, it also succeeded in ensuring that they wouldn't resist the French forces again.

By this point, Napoleon had already received a letter from Joseph Bonaparte, who reported the rapid fall of Lyon and the resounding defeat of the rebels. He had expelled all the counter-revolutionary elements there and established a revolutionary administration in Lyon.

At the same time, Joseph Bonaparte mentioned that General Massna, who had been dispatched to Lyon, had detected the subtle movements of the main rebel forces in the country and was pursuing them.

Napoleon was glad to learn of Joseph's success. However, the question that was weighing most heavily on his mind was how the enemy forces had managed to amass in such a way.

At night, Napoleon was racking his brain, trying to figure out the answer. Then his thoughts wandered toward his meeting with General Delmas in Paris. Had the enemies not been backed by foreign powers and provided with money, materials, and weapons, he couldn't see how such a small number of rebels could have launched such a large-scale rebellion. This scheme had been deeply entrenched and well-prepared long before the rebellion was launched. Now, it seemed that only an intervention from foreign powers could have made all this possible. But how? And which foreign powers had supported the rebels?

Napoleon was suddenly struck with inspiration as the truth dawned on him. He decided to send a message to Joseph immediately.

"Joseph, I believe the rebels were supported by a foreign power. What if there were more foreign powers involved than we initially thought?"

Napoleon had sent a similar message earlier and received a reply from Joseph: "No one has come forward to help the rebels, except for the British."

Joseph's response only deepened Napoleon's suspicions. He didn't believe the British would be so daring as to intervene directly. Instead, Napoleon suspected that the British were using an intermediary to support the rebels, a neutral country or a group of mercenaries. The entire conspiracy was now coming together in his mind.

As Napoleon delved into his thoughts, he heard that Joseph's troops had also encountered the British in Lyon and that a British force had recently landed in Le Havre.

Napoleon was sure he had found a clue. There must be something in Le Havre that the British had prepared for the rebels. Napoleon now believed that to uncover the complete truth, he needed to send a message to General Massna, who was pursuing the rebels.

"Massna, the rebels who revolted in the provinces must have been backed by foreign powers. After crushing the rebels in the provinces, try to discover any signs of foreign intervention. See if you can find any relevant documents, secret communications, or any foreign spies. Then, determine which foreign powers were involved. Capture any British agents who may be involved. You have my full authority to take any actions necessary to expose this plot."

Although Napoleon was sure that the British were behind this plot, it was essential to obtain solid evidence. If the British were indeed involved, this would be an excellent opportunity to secure a diplomatic victory. He would use this situation to put pressure on Britain and potentially extract some concessions.

That night, Napoleon couldn't sleep. His thoughts raced as he contemplated this far-reaching conspiracy. Napoleon knew that solving this mystery would have significant implications not only for France but also for the future of Europe. He had to find answers to these questions and uncover the truth behind the rebellion's foreign support. The pieces of the puzzle were falling into place, and the picture they revealed was both complex and dangerous. Napoleon was determined to navigate this intricate web of intrigue and emerge victorious, whatever the cost.

## Chapter 102: Turmoil

Joseph shared his thoughts with Carnot. Carnot pondered for a moment and replied, "Joseph, we don't currently need someone like Napoleon in Italy. While the Kingdom of Sardinia has allied with Austria and joined the coalition against us, they're merely offering verbal support. The Alps separate

us, and the Italians won't easily cross them. They are not the Romans under Caesar. As for us, we can't spare forces for an Italian campaign at the moment. But I understand your point..."

Carnot chuckled and continued, "There won't be any heroic epics coming from Vende anytime soon. Although the region may not stabilize in the short term, the rebellions will be minor and lack glory. It's nothing but trouble. So, where do you think I should assign him? Perhaps it's best to bring him back to Paris for now? Give him command of the newly formed Fifth Legion. What do you think? This way, his promotion and responsibilities will be sorted out. Napoleon can also handpick some of his trusted subordinates for the new legion."

To be honest, Joseph wasn't too keen on having Napoleon return to Paris right now. It wasn't because Carnot's proposal for Napoleon's role wasn't suitable. Joseph knew that these newly formed legions, despite being mainly composed of recruits, were more politically reliable than the existing forces. These units were the core of the National Convention's military. Leading such a force would undoubtedly benefit Napoleon.

Joseph's hesitation stemmed from the unrest in Paris. The power struggle between the Jacobins and the Brissotins had escalated rapidly. The Jacobin Club had recently expelled Brissot, and their opponents were primarily Jacobins' splinter factions. The Brissotins, on the other hand, had launched several offensives against Jacobin members. For example, they had recently ousted Danton from the Committee of Public Safety.

However, this didn't mean that the Brissotins had an upper hand; in fact, they were at a disadvantage. Because they had pushed for the Committee of Public Safety's reformation and ousted the vulnerable Danton, they had unintentionally allowed Robespierre and Saint-Just to join. Danton was a skillful politician, known for being cautious, and willing to compromise when necessary. In contrast, Robespierre and Saint-Just were less likely to compromise.

Thus, from any perspective, the Brissotins had made a grave mistake.

Additionally, in their effort to support the expansion of the military, the revolutionary government had ramped up the printing of assignats, leading to confusion in the economy and further deterioration of the financial situation. Paris faced another food shortage, and Joseph knew that this was the most critical issue, one that could easily lead to a revolution. So, Joseph wasn't too thrilled about Napoleon's return to Paris at this time.

However, Joseph understood that rejecting Carnot's suggestion wouldn't be wise. Carnot had become closer to Robespierre and was widely seen as one of the core figures of the Jacobins. There might be political considerations behind Carnot's move to bring Napoleon back to Paris and put him in charge of a newly formed, loyal legion. Refusing such a request could create a rift between Joseph and Carnot.

"Regardless, even if there are unforeseen circumstances, the Jacobins will undoubtedly emerge as the victors," Joseph thought. "So, perhaps it's not such a bad idea to bring Napoleon to Paris. As long as he's controlled and doesn't create any trouble."

"Currently, Paris is in turmoil," Joseph cautiously replied, "But if you, Lazare, think it's fine, then I believe it's a good decision. However, you know, many people have their reservations about Napoleon, especially after the loss of Arras. And Napoleon, that man, is known for being audacious and acting on his own."

Carnot laughed heartily, "Many people have reservations about Napoleon? Are you referring to the Brissotins? They can say what they want, but everyone can see Napoleon's achievements. His actions are undeniable. As for Arras, it wasn't his fault. The records of the trials for the rebels in Vende and their leader, Dugast, prove that. In fact, some individuals closely linked to the Brissotins were ineffective during the Vende uprising. Furthermore, Fouch's report on the suppression of the Le Mans revolt also confirms this. So, you don't need to worry about your brother. Besides, Paris has me, and you think I'd let anyone bully Napoleon?"

With the conversation having reached this point, Joseph couldn't say much more. He expressed his satisfaction with Carnot's arrangement for Napoleon's future.

"Lazare, who will replace Napoleon?" Joseph inquired.

"General Cartaux will take over as the military commander," Carnot replied.

"Him? Is he capable enough?"

"He may not be on par with Napoleon, but many people support him. As long as he doesn't make too many waves, there shouldn't be a significant issue. He'll be responsible solely for military matters. Other affairs can be handled by Frron."

Carnot furrowed his brow slightly, revealing his dissatisfaction with this appointment. However, it seemed that even if Joseph had disagreed, Carnot would still have brought Napoleon back.

As Joseph had anticipated, Paris soon plunged into chaos. Just a week after Napoleon's return, another uprising broke out, led by Marat.

Marat's rebellion organization and preparations were far from meticulous. The National Convention and the Committee of Public Safety had been monitoring Marat's activities for a while. In fact, he had been arrested again two weeks earlier and swiftly sent to the Revolutionary Tribunal.

However, the Revolutionary Tribunal had many Jacobins as judges. So, they suddenly remembered the fundamental principle of "innocent until proven guilty" and, just as swiftly as they sentenced others to death, declared that the evidence against Marat was insufficient and the case unclear. Marat was acquitted and released within a day.

This turn of events emboldened Marat further, and he relentlessly accused some Brissotin-aligned deputies of collaborating with big merchants or being merchants themselves, holding them responsible for the country's economic difficulties.

"It's the greed of these enemies of the people that makes life so hard, and the Republic's future so dim. If we don't purge our internal enemies, we can't resist external threats!"

He reminded people not to forget that when the war had just begun, the enemy had occupied Verdun. But as soon as the French people arrested the traitors hiding in the palace, they saw a turning point and victory on the battlefield.

"So, as long as we apprehend those traitors hiding in the National Convention, the Republic will be saved!"

Of course, Marat was known for his fiery rhetoric. He had once proclaimed that to secure the Republic, we should cut off the heads of a hundred thousand profiteers.

However, two events quickly changed the situation. First, the revelation of arms dealer Espagne's involvement in producing subpar weapons, with close ties to many deputies. Second, some Brissotin deputies proposed a motion to cease the activities of the Paris Commune.

Both these events caused widespread anger. As for the second event, it made the entire Paris Commune feel threatened. Thus, an uprising erupted.

The National Guard of Paris wholeheartedly sided with the Paris Commune, while the army, led by Napoleon, would not support the Brissotins. Consequently, the National Convention found itself surrounded. The Paris Commune aimed its cannons at the Convention, threatening to bombard it. This was mostly a show of force because the Convention consisted mainly of Jacobin deputies.

In reality, the Convention had no military strength of its own, and the Paris Commune wouldn't need cannons to arrest its members. However, it was reported that, after discussions with Marat, Robespierre had suggested the Paris Commune provide a list of traitors and evidence and have the Convention vote on arresting them.

So, Marat provided the list and "evidence" and personally read out the accusations in the Convention. The Convention began voting on the charges.

Over twenty deputies, primarily key figures of the Brissotins, including Brissot himself and the Roland couple, were on the list. However, during the vote, several deputies who had previously supported the Brissotins switched sides and cast votes in favor of finding these deputies guilty. They had realized that their names were not on the list, and they feared that if they voted against the charges, their names might appear on the next list.

As a result, the Convention, under the threat of the cannons and bayonets of the Paris Commune, swiftly rendered a verdict. They found that Marat's charges against these deputies were clear and supported by sufficient evidence. Consequently, these over twenty deputies were handed over to the Revolutionary Tribunal. Just like that, they were condemned to death and swiftly executed, just as Marat had been acquitted.

Shortly afterward, Marat claimed that there were even more internal enemies in France.

"Only this many?" he remarked. "We haven't even reached a hundred thousand yet."

With this statement, many former Brissotin deputies started fearing for their lives, and they began to flee. The purge against the Brissotins continued. Previously, only the top leaders of the Brissotins had faced the guillotine, but now anyone who had supported the Brissotins could be accused of being a traitor and promptly sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal. The bloodshed around the Place de la Concorde, where the guillotine was set up, was so intense that residents nearby protested, saying that the smell of blood was affecting their sleep.

As Victor Hugo once said, "Downstairs, a man is dying, and next door, a family is listening to a phonograph; across the street, children are playing. Upstairs, two men are laughing and another is playing cards. On the river, a woman is crying for her deceased mother. The joy and sorrow of humanity are out of tune; I only feel that they are noisy."

The residents near the Place de la Concorde seemed to share a similar sentiment.

During the intense activity at the guillotine, the core countries of the anti-French coalition, led by the troublemakers from "Shit-stirrer Land," finally took action.

They took advantage of the infighting among the French republicans, including the conflict between the Brissotins and Jacobins. With the support of the British, they planned a series of betrayals.

This time, they set their sights on Toulon, the largest naval port in the Mediterranean, where they had contacts with royalist sympathizers. With British support, they quickly organized a rebellion, taking control of Toulon.

During this period, the French navy lost nearly half its fleet in the uprising. Toulon's fall was a significant blow to France since it was the country's most important naval base, fully equipped to support a large number of ships. With the resources of Toulon at their disposal, the coalition could now potentially launch an expeditionary force.

Moreover, the capture of Toulon meant the interruption of France's connection to North Africa. In the midst of economic hardships, this was a heavy blow to France.

### Chapter 103: Toulon 1

When the news of Toulon's fall reached Joseph, he immediately realized he was in trouble. Because once Toulon was lost, France's control over Corsica would be almost reduced to zero.

"Damn it, my family is still in Corsica!"

Compared to France, Corsica was, in some sense, safer. At least the holy relics of the improved Great Revolution hadn't been shipped to Corsica yet. But now, the brilliance around Napoleon was starting to emerge. Though not as dazzling as it would later become, it was at least... a firefly, right?

"Once Toulon falls, it's just a matter of time before Corsica ends up in British hands. Well, Paoli had close dealings with the British. He's not likely to let this opportunity slip. But Napoleon hasn't severed ties with Paoli completely, and Paoli is a bit smarter... Anyway, we need to get them out of Corsica. But the trouble is, France seems even more dangerous than Corsica right now."

With these thoughts in mind, he was suddenly interrupted by a song coming from outside the window: "Everything will be fine, everything will be fine, the profiteers are hanging from lampposts..."

Joseph furrowed his brows and turned to look outside, where a group of men with spears, dressed in rags, sang as they walked down the nearby street. At the front of the group, a head was impaled on the tip of a spear.

"I wonder who that unlucky soul is. Probably a flour shop owner," Joseph thought, and then realized that bringing his family to Paris might not be such a good idea after all.

"They haven't seen all of this before, and it's enough to terrify anyone. But leaving them in Corsica isn't a solution either. This is a headache! Maybe I should discuss this with Napoleon."

However, Napoleon had returned to Paris, but he wasn't staying in the city. His army couldn't be stationed in the heart of Paris. Napoleon's Fifth Corps was now stationed near the Montmartre Heights to the north of the city. In the years to come, this area would become one of the most charming in Paris, home to famous establishments like the Moulin Rouge. But for now, it was just an ordinary highland.



During lunch, Joseph told Carnot that he needed to go to Montmartre to meet with Napoleon. He entrusted his two younger brothers to Carnot's care temporarily. They had already gotten used to getting free meals at Carnot's place.

"Why are you going to see Napoleon at this time?" Carnot asked.

"Lazare, you know that our entire family, my mother, and several sisters are in Corsica. With Toulon in trouble, Corsica might face turmoil as well, so I'm worried."

"That is a problem," Carnot said. "You should take a leave and discuss it with Napoleon. Corsica will likely fall into the hands of the British for a while. Find a way to bring them to France, but both you and Napoleon shouldn't go there."

"I understand the stakes, Lazare," Joseph said. "If we go, it would only increase the danger for them."

"Alright, take my carriage then. I'll also send some guards with you. The roads aren't very safe these days."

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Napoleon also agreed to bring the entire family out of Corsica, but he believed they shouldn't come to Paris. They needed to find a safer place for them.

"Let Lucien go get them," Napoleon said. "He's old enough to do something useful. Once they arrive, we'll buy a secluded estate in the provinces and have them stay there for a while, with Lucien taking care of them."

"Lucien?" Joseph was still hesitant. "He's not the most reliable."

"Come on, Joseph," Napoleon shook his head. "You've always believed that no one is reliable except yourself. Lucien might not seem dependable, but it's because he thinks he has a safety net. If we entrust him with a real task, he'll handle it."

Joseph thought for a moment and realized that he had to involve Lucien in this. But he wanted to find a reliable companion for him. So he asked, "Do you have someone in your ranks who is particularly clever?"

"There are a few bright young officers, but most of them have become captains, even majors or colonels by now. To have them help us in our personal matters..."

"Don't worry," Joseph said. "We can use our connections to have one of them transferred to the south. They can take care of our affairs."

"I think Captain Chrysler would be a good choice. He's cautious and can complement Lucien's shortcomings. What do you think?"

"He's your subordinate, so you know him better than I do. All right, you decide and give me the list. I'll take care of the rest."

In the vicinity of Toulon, the French had only recently formed new units, and due to the recent chaos, these units were not even fully equipped. As a result, the French struggled to organize an effective counterattack.

At this moment, if the British could quickly assemble a substantial force and land in Toulon before marching north, it would pose a significant threat to France, considering the influence of the royalists in the south. However, the British Prime Minister, Pitt, had recently cut the army by a quarter to save expenses. Therefore, raising a large army wasn't an easy task. Furthermore, the British had little interest in French mainland territory. They were more focused on capturing French colonial territories.

Although the French had lost their colonial holdings in India to the British during the Seven Years' War, they still had significant colonies in North Africa and North America. Now that the British controlled Toulon, they effectively severed France's connection to North Africa. It was a strategic move that would provide significant benefits for the British. While the British had no intention of moving north and aiding the Austrians and Prussians in the fight against France, they were eager to secure the North African colonies.

In light of this, the British government and Pitt decided not to allocate significant additional troops to Toulon. However, under pressure from Austria and Prussia, they did make some efforts to persuade Spain and the Kingdom of Sardinia to send troops to Toulon.

Spain initially agreed to send 10,000 troops, but upon their arrival in Toulon, they found that British troops were disembarking and embarking simultaneously. The ones disembarking were combat troops, while those embarking were mostly hastily recruited engineering units. The Spanish realized that this was a sign that they could use the opportunity to shift their forces to North Africa to seize territory, especially since the British presence in Toulon cut off the French connection to North Africa. Consequently, the Spanish stopped their reinforcement efforts to Toulon.

The Kingdom of Sardinia had also initially agreed to send 5,000 troops, but by the time they were ready to embark, they noticed the unusual movements of both Spain and Britain. They realized that it would be unwise to engage the French on the mainland, as there was no chance of territorial gain. The French, on the other hand, held significant colonies in North Africa and North America. Therefore, the Sardinians decided not to send troops to Toulon and instead focused on the Mediterranean and island territories.

As a result, during a critical period, the number of foreign troops in Toulon not only didn't increase significantly but the truly effective foreign forces inexplicably decreased.

Of course, the three countries were playing their cards close to their chests to avoid alerting the Austrians and Prussians. They shared the roster of the troops sent to Toulon, but they conveniently omitted the fact that most of these troops were stationed on the Mediterranean side of France.

This strange time delay gave the French more time to react. Carnot first sent a corps under General Poup aimed at attacking Toulon and ordered Napoleon's Fifth Corps to prepare to move south to support the Toulon front.

Seizing this opportunity, Joseph proposed to Carnot that a "vanguard" should be dispatched to Toulon to assess the situation.

This request was quickly approved by Carnot, although he knew that both Joseph and Napoleon were using this opportunity to help their families still in Corsica.

The vanguard was dispatched, with Lucien serving as their "guide." Napoleon began preparations to lead his troops south, while Joseph suggested another plan to Carnot.

## Chapter 104: Toulon 2

"Joseph, would you like to be in charge of managing military production?" Carnot raised his head from the documents and looked at Joseph.

"Yes, Lazar." Joseph replied, "Right now, things are gradually getting back on track in other military aspects, but our military production is still in complete chaos. There are issues like cutting corners, poor quality, and various problems popping up one after another. It has seriously hindered our army. Although the Committee of Public Safety has dispatched some envoys to supervise military production, most of these envoys are ignorant of technology and production, and it's challenging for them to be of much help."

"More than just not being of much help? We should be thankful they don't make things worse. What can they do besides chasing after troublemakers and causing chaos?" Carnot remarked. He had a more straightforward and truthful character. Carnot's comment was grounded in recent events where a Committee of Public Safety envoy was sent to a munitions factory, and upon arrival, they started hunting down saboteurs, leading to the hanging of a significant portion of the factory's engineers. Before the envoy arrived, the factory's issues were limited to slow production and unstable quality. But after their intervention, the factory stopped production altogether. Of course, it wouldn't be fair to say the envoy accomplished nothing at least, after their visit, the factory never produced any subpar cannons.

"So, what are your thoughts on this matter?" Carnot asked.

"I propose establishing an organization like this." Joseph handed a document to Carnot. "This organization would consist of the 'Military Technology Laboratory' and the 'Military Technology Inspection Department.'"

Carnot accepted the document and began to read it carefully. Joseph found a chair and sat down, even signaling for Carnot's aide to pour him a cup of coffee.

Carnot was a fast reader, so by the time Joseph leisurely finished his coffee, Carnot raised his head from the document.

"This is a good idea," Carnot said, "Setting up a 'Military Technology Laboratory' for technical research and standard development and a 'Military Technology Inspection Department' with dedicated technical representatives stationed in military production enterprises to oversee the process. All products must be approved by the representatives of the inspection department before they can be sold to the army. This idea is excellent, much better than sending clueless envoys to military factories. But... Joseph, have you thought about the fact that we lack enough people in our military who can handle these responsibilities?"

"There is a solution," Joseph replied. "We can recruit and train individuals capable of this work. With so many students in Paris University, their level of knowledge, with a bit of training, will be sufficient for such tasks. The critical issue, however, is keeping these technical representatives in check. Lazar, I've heard that anyone with power will naturally try to expand their boundaries and is prone to abusing their authority. Judging product quality involves a significant exercise of power, with significant economic interests at stake. So, we need a way to supervise these technical representatives."

"They are military personnel. If the technical representatives fail to identify quality issues and the military discovers them, they can be dealt with through military law," Carnot explained. "Does the laboratory have enough researchers?"

"Not yet, but we can recruit more," Joseph replied. "You know, the Academy of Sciences has been dissolved, and some academicians are not in a good position anymore."

Carnot fixed his gaze on Joseph for a moment, then said, "Joseph, your intuition is quite keen. You've even noticed that Lavoisier's situation isn't looking good. He might not even be aware of it himself. I know Mr. Lavoisier is your friend, but there's an economic case involving him, and 'Le Pre Duchesne' is attacking him. You know the background of that newspaper..."

'Le Pre Duchesne' was a far-left, radical newspaper associated with Hbert, who took over from Marat after Marat's death. In this new role, Hbert replaced the previously popular 'Friend of the People' newspaper, becoming the most significant voice of the common people.

Compared to Marat, Hbert was less capable. Marat, despite his extreme and abrasive character, possessed profound insights and a keen political sense. Hbert, in these aspects, paled in comparison to Marat. So, while Marat claimed that saving the Republic required chopping off the heads of a hundred thousand merchants, Hbert insisted that the entire class of businessmen were parasites on the people and should be hung from lampposts. Marat argued that the proportion of malefactors among the educated class was high (as at the time, educated individuals were typically the wealthy); Hbert contended that the educated were all scoundrels, and the revolutionary France didn't need scientists.

This made Lavoisier a target, as he was well-known, and taking him down could bring significant attention. However, he also lacked much political influence, and due to his imprudent financial activities, he had left numerous vulnerabilities. It was said that, during Marat's time, many people encouraged him to go after Lavoisier. But, despite his personal grudges, Marat understood Lavoisier's value. Now, eager to inherit Marat's legacy, Hbert pointed his guns at Lavoisier.

"I'm doing this not only because Lavoisier is my friend. Lazar, you should know that Mr. Lavoisier used to be our political opponent. He was a Brissotin, and even among the Brissotins, he was considered relatively conservative. I also know that Mr. Lavoisier is quite greedy. In the chaotic market, he has engaged in some disruptive activities. But... but, Lazar, Mr. Lavoisier is the greatest scientist in all of France. A mind like his could be taken in a second, but to grow another one like it might take a hundred years. Mr. Lavoisier is invaluable! Think about it if his explosives can be further developed and loaded into artillery shells, all the feudal lords in Europe will tremble under our guns. Even now, if we calculate Mr. Lavoisier's contributions as positive and his wrongdoings as negative, I dare say the total would still be a vast positive number, much greater than most revolutionaries!"

"Joseph, don't get too excited. I understand your point, and I agree with your thoughts," Carnot said. "But do you really believe that hiding him in the 'Military Technology Laboratory' will save him? Do you think that, once the Committee of Public Safety issues an arrest warrant, the doors of the 'Military Technology Research Institute' can stop those people?"

"In that case, let Mr. Lavoisier die in a laboratory accident, without a trace," Joseph said. "After all, research related to explosives can easily lead to such results."

Carnot knew that when Joseph suggested Mr. Lavoisier's death in a laboratory accident, it wasn't a genuine wish to see him dead. Instead, it was a way to turn him into a nameless, faceless figure, thus offering him protection.

"Joseph, I understand your intentions. But you must know that anything you can think of, Hbert... Hbert probably can't think of. However, your actions won't be a complete surprise to him. When he figures it out, he will hate you with a passion," Carnot said in a hushed voice.

"Let him hate me! A man must have his enemies. If he has no one who hates him, he is a failure!" Joseph replied firmly.

Carnot stood up, his eyes fixed on Joseph, and the intensity of his gaze left Joseph wondering about his true intentions.

"Well said, Joseph. I'm too weak compared to you. A true warrior doesn't flaunt his bravery, like a fierce fighting dog, not barking everywhere just like Hbert! As long as I'm in this position, Hbert, the rabid dog, won't be able to infiltrate our military!" Carnot proclaimed.

In truth, Carnot overestimated Joseph because he was unfamiliar with the historical context of the previous world. Joseph feared Robespierre, Danton, and Marat but wasn't aware of Saint-Just (never heard of him before) and had no knowledge of Hbert (who are you?).

After saying this, Carnot took a few brisk steps in the room and then stopped, turning to Joseph. He said, "Find a suitable location for the laboratory, preferably far from Paris. And find an opportunity to arrange a secret meeting between Mr. Lavoisier and me. He probably doesn't even know he's become a target."

"Thank you, General. There are no words to express my gratitude to you," Joseph hastily saluted.

"Joseph, your gratitude is not necessary for others' affairs. You're a man of morality and trustworthiness!" Carnot thought to himself, but he said, "Joseph, I recall you've mentioned that your fondest wish is to stay in the laboratory. Now, your scheme has succeeded! You are a hypocrite who abuses your power for personal gain!"

"Hahaha, Lazar, you've seen through me! I just love seeing you envy me," Joseph laughed heartily.

### Chapter 105: Toulon 3

Ever since the downfall of the royal family, the Palace of Versailles had been all but abandoned. Carnot found a spot within the palace and repurposed it as the headquarters for the "Military Technology Laboratory" and the "Military Technology Inspection Department." With a location established, there was a heap of work to be done. Joseph was busy as a bee, and he often invited his younger brother Louis over to Carnot's place to share meals. The only difference was that in the past, they used to dine with Lucien, but now, Lucien had gone south.

Lucien, along with more than ten others, including Chrysler, headed south and quickly arrived near Toulon. They reported to General Popham and showed him the war department documents.

Popham glanced at the documents and smiled faintly, saying, "General Carnot is quite cautious. My soldiers and I are enough to retake Toulon. However, I welcome General Bonaparte to share in my glory, if he arrives in time. As for your reconnaissance of the enemy's situation, well, I've already prepared to launch attacks against the invaders and traitors recently, so your actions better not interfere with ours."

With that, Popham drew a circle on the map. "Hmm, for the time being, I suggest you avoid entering the area within this circle."

Chrysler lowered his head to study the map. Popham had essentially drawn a radius of at least 15 kilometers around Toulon. If their mission was indeed reconnaissance, avoiding this area would severely limit their options.

"Very well, General," Chrysler nodded.

After leaving Popham's presence, Chrysler and his team changed into civilian clothing and left the military camp, heading east towards the Riviera. Among the group was a young man named Lavenelli, who had been a member of the Marseille Volunteers before joining the Fifth Army. He was from a village on the Riviera. Before joining the army, he had been a fisherman. According to him, he could arrange for a fishing boat for their journey.

The Riviera, a popular tourist destination in the future, was currently a remote and impoverished place. Neither the British nor the French armies paid attention to this region. The group followed Lavenelli to a small fishing village and quickly acquired two boats.

However, both boats had only one mast, and they were more like small dinghies than proper vessels.

"Lavenelli, are you sure these boats can take us to Corsica? There isn't even a shelter on them," Chrysler hesitated.

"Oh, that's not a problem. You see, the Mediterranean is not like the Atlantic; it's as calm as a pond here. As long as it's a boat with a mast and a sail, with enough fresh water and food, we can even sail all the way to Algeria. As for a shelter, well, these boats originally had one, but since it's not winter yet, and we don't usually venture too far, they haven't been fitted," Lavenelli explained.

The Mediterranean climate and geography were different from other regions, and one of its defining features was the mismatch between rainfall and heat. The rainy season hadn't arrived yet.

"But how will you navigate on the sea? Do you know how to use a sextant?" Lucien asked, raising a more critical question.

"What's a sextant? We navigate by looking at the stars, the sun, and using a compass," Lavenelli replied.

"Well, never mind then," Lucien said. "As long as you can find Corsica at sea by looking at the stars and the sun."

"We'll first sail east along the coast to Nice, and then turn south to reach Corsica. We'll follow Corsica's coastline, and we're bound to find a suitable place to dock. Once we're on land..."

"As long as we make it to land, we'll be fine," Lucien said.

...

At the same time Lucien and his team were preparing to smuggle themselves in small fishing boats, Joseph welcomed an old friend at his end, Lavassic.

"This is unbelievable, truly unbelievable! Joseph, look at these people, what have they done to this country! Good Lord, Versailles has turned into this! I remember when I first became an academician

at the Academy of Sciences, I visited the palace. It was still... But look at it now, it's in shambles! It's like it's been ransacked by Mongols!"

Indeed, the once grand Palace of Versailles had almost turned into a ruin. Since the king had been taken to Paris, no one had taken care of it. Local farmers would often sneak in, rummaging for anything valuable or useful and then carting it away. Initially, they were taking metals and wooden items, but gradually, their plunder extended to bricks and stones, construction materials. If this continued, they'd probably repeat the feat of the medieval Romans, who had torn down half of the Colosseum.

"Mr. Lavassic, don't blame me for this," Joseph chuckled. "If we hadn't moved here, it would probably have been even more destroyed. Come on, Mr. Lavassic, let me show you to your place."

"Place? Isn't this your laboratory? Let's see the laboratory first!" Lavassic said. "Oh, by the way, Carnot promised me to pay my salary in silver coins, not assignats!"

Joseph smiled slightly but remained silent. These were minor matters, and Lavassic was mostly just venting his frustration.

"That Carnot, always exaggerating things, as if it's all true. But, I agree, Paris is just too noisy; there's no peace to conduct scientific research. Coming here isn't a bad idea. Recently, I had an idea, and I thought I could work on it here..." Lavassic continued grumbling.

Of course, Lavassic knew Carnot wasn't exaggerating. He wasn't a fool, and he understood the consequences of such allegations in today's climate. The guillotine on the Place de la Concorde was in constant operation!

But even after being rescued by Carnot, Lavassic wasn't thrilled. In his eyes, Carnot and the so-called savages were of the same ilk. He may have read many books, but fundamentally, he was a barbarian. Just look at the brawl he got into with other members of the Convention in the past. He was a mathematician, a brute!

So when Carnot asked him if he'd be willing to work at the "Military Technology Laboratory" and assured him that he could protect Lavassic and his family, Lavassic hesitated for a long second before reluctantly agreeing.

...

In the Committee of Public Safety, Robespierre was questioning Carnot. "General Carnot, I heard you recently established an institution called the 'Military Technology Laboratory' and sent some very conservative-minded people there. Is that correct?"

"Yes," Carnot did not deny it, and there was no denying it, but he provided a reason for his actions. "I believe it's a very appropriate course of action. It's similar to sending some of the rebel soldiers to quarries or mines."

"The people at the Committee of Public Safety have significant concerns about this. They believe that criminals, whoever they may be, should receive equal punishment, even if it means sentencing them to hard labor. They should first be judged by them," Robespierre continued.

Carnot had already discussed with Joseph how to address this question. He said, "Mr. Robespierre, you must realize that how to handle these people is not a legal issue but a political one. People like Lavassic are not criminals but enemies. He, along with the others in his group, are our enemies,

except they've been defeated and captured by us. These people are not protected by our laws, so we should treat them according to the principles of war. For captured barbarians, we can either execute them or turn them into slaves, send them to various places to work until they die. As for who we execute or sentence to hard labor, the only principle is what is favorable for France and beneficial to our military in defeating the enemy.

Furthermore, where did these enemies get their knowledge and skills? Of course, it was developed through the money they plundered from the people. So, their knowledge and skills are ill-gotten gains and also our spoils of war. I've never heard of catching a thief and, under the premise of being able to recover stolen property, not doing so. Nor have I ever heard of us having to destroy something that was originally the enemy's just because we captured it. I believe the people at the Committee of Public Safety lack political awareness; they're reaching too far."

"General Carnot, the Committee of Public Safety only wishes to follow due process," Couthon chimed in.

"Ha...," Carnot laughed, "these are captured barbarians, not protected by the law, so there's no due process to speak of. And all of their time belongs to us, we can't let the folks from the Committee of Public Safety waste it!"

Carnot's words were full of craftiness, but neither Robespierre nor Couthon wanted to dispute his logic. After all, this logic came from another important member of the Committee of Public Safety, who was currently absent - Saint-Just. In the past, Saint-Just had used this logic to deny the inviolability of the king's person under the law. So, who were they to object?

"Well, General Carnot," Robespierre said, "can we at least request to have people sent to monitor the labor of these captives at all times?"

Robespierre paused for a moment and added, "To monitor their work at all times?"

#### Chapter 106: Toulon 4

Robespierre and Couthon couldn't convince Carnot, but at least they managed to get him to agree to send observers to the research institute. (Carnot referred to the residential area of the institute as a "military prison.") As for the test area...

"I'm sorry, but many of the experiments conducted in the test area are strict military secrets that require strict confidentiality. I'm not doubting the loyalty of the observers, but the fewer people who know the details of some things, the better. In fact, even I only know the purpose of the research and the general progress. As for some technical details you know, I'm not incapable of understanding them, nor am I uninterested but I'll also try to avoid knowing too many technical details. Because these things, if I see them, I might unintentionally leak them, which could lead to significant losses for the army," Carnot said.

"Even you don't know some details, so there must be someone who understands the entire research relatively well," Robespierre asked.

"Joseph Bonaparte is responsible for the entire process. He's a very reliable soldier. For the sake of secrecy, he voluntarily put himself in a semi-imprisoned state. He can't leave the test area casually, and if he does, he must inform me of his whereabouts and have security personnel accompany him. If it weren't for his deep love for the homeland and belief in the revolution, no one could endure such conditions," Carnot replied.



"Joseph... That's really not easy," Robespierre sighed. In reality, Robespierre had a favorable impression of Joseph, at least better than Carnot. Sometimes he even thought that if Joseph could replace Carnot, that wouldn't be bad. But that was just a thought because Joseph Bonaparte had a brother who led troops into battle. So, in any case, he couldn't take Carnot's position.

Everyone admitted that besides Joseph, there was no one else who could replace Carnot's role, and even Joseph might not be able to do so. Therefore, Robespierre could only tolerate some of Carnot's offenses, as long as they weren't too outrageous. As for what would be considered too outrageous, Robespierre hadn't had time to think about it yet.

Today was the first day for Observer Charles to enter the heavily guarded "Military Technology Laboratory." He arrived at the War Department early in the morning. In a small room, he underwent strict measurements and records, including palm prints and other physical characteristics. An artist even painted a frontal portrait of him for some reason. Charles felt that the portrait made him look like a corpse.

"Because it emphasizes that the person in the portrait should not have any expression," the artist explained.

After the portrait was finished, it was already noon. Charles, accompanied by a group of cavalry, boarded a four-wheeled carriage headed for Versailles.

It took about four hours to travel from the War Department to Versailles. So when they arrived at the "Military Technology Laboratory," the sun was already setting.

The military had dug a deep trench in the area where the laboratory was located. Along the trench, guard towers were built at intervals. In some more remote places, there was even a four-meter high wall. So, from the outside, nothing inside could be seen it was a highly guarded appearance.

The carriage stopped in front of a drawbridge. An officer approached, checked their passes, and said to Charles inside the carriage, "According to the orders, only observers are allowed to enter. Others and the carriage cannot cross the trench. So, you must get off the carriage and enter the laboratory on foot."

Charles already knew this when he departed. So he nodded and said, "Please lead the way." He got off the carriage, and a soldier from inside followed, helping him with his luggage.

Charles followed the officer into the laboratory. As they walked, the officer said to him, "Mr. Observer, you are allowed to move in the employee living area and the prisoner living area. In the employee area, you have 24 hours of free movement. In the prisoner area, you must inform the guards of your activities in advance to avoid misunderstandings. You know, the security here is extremely tight, and any unauthorized activities that are unknown to the guards could result in gunfire without warning."

"I understand," Charles said. He already knew this rule, but in the current situation, seeing all the guard towers and heavily armed guards made him nervous.

"Boom!" A loud explosion was heard in the distance.

"What is that?" Charles couldn't help but ask.

"Mr. Observer, everything about the experiments is classified, and nothing about the test area should be questioned. Whatever you hear or see, you can't mention it to anyone," the officer replied, emphasizing the confidentiality once again.

At this point, a few people arrived at the gate, and when Charles looked inside from the entrance, all he saw was a narrow alley with high walls on both sides; nothing else was visible.

The officer and the gatekeepers exchanged a few words, and the gate opened. Then, a few people walked in, and the sound of the iron gate being closed and locked was heard.

A thought suddenly popped into Charles' head: "Who's in prison here?"

...

On the Toulon front, Popham was plunged into great anxiety. These days, he had launched attacks on Toulon, but the results were quite poor. The British, though not very interested in moving north, were very serious about holding the port of Toulon. As long as Toulon remained in their hands, the French navy had no foothold in the Mediterranean, giving them free rein in North Africa.

Therefore, the British quickly reinforced various defense works in Toulon, and they even dismantled the cannons from the captured French warships to bolster their defenses. Popham's soldiers were brave, but the crafty British hiding behind fortifications proved formidable. His initial attacks resulted in heavy casualties and no progress.

Incensed, Popham decided to concentrate his forces for a final assault to break into Toulon and show the invaders and traitors the might of France.

However, what they didn't anticipate was that the British had set up an ambush with artillery. They had predicted Popham's direction of attack and buried a large number of cannons in a manner reminiscent of Valmy. The difference was that they had more cannons and heavier firepower. What was even more deadly was that their cannons were not just in the front but also on the flanks, creating a crossfire.

They first baited the French into this predetermined battlefield with a tactical retreat. When Popham saw that he was making progress, he eagerly committed his main forces to the attack. The result? A torrent of artillery fire from the British, followed by a bayonet charge by the British and Spanish. The French were forced to retreat all the way back to their starting point. If the British hadn't been overly conservative, using too few troops for the counterattack, Popham might not have been able to hold his own camp.

After this disastrous failure, Popham tallied his losses. He found that in the past few days, he had suffered nearly three thousand casualties, and the morale of the entire army had hit rock bottom. He knew that with such a resounding failure, he was in danger of being labeled a traitor to his homeland.

However, at this point, he had no other options but to request "tactical guidance" from the higher-ups. (Tactical guidance is a term from the Japanese military, similar to reinforcements.)

...

At the same time, while Popham was writing a letter requesting "tactical guidance," Lucien and his group had finally landed on Corsica.

Their journey had gone relatively smoothly, as the weather in the Mediterranean had been good in recent days. However, upon landing, they realized that they had veered off course quite a bit. They hadn't landed near Calvi as planned but had ended up farther south in Galeria. It took them an extra day to reach Calvi.

Corsica was a relatively closed-off place, and the sudden arrival of outsiders could easily attract attention. Following Lucien's guidance, they sailed into a secluded harbor to hide. Most of the crew stayed on the ship, while only Chrysler and Lucien slipped into Calvi after dark.

Lucien hadn't returned to Calvi in several years, but that didn't cause him any problems. Compared to Paris, Calvi seemed frozen in time, unchanged since Lucien had left. In the dark, Lucien and Chrysler moved through the streets they knew so well, making their way to Lucien's home.

Knock, knock. Lucien gently rapped on the door, knowing that his mother likely hadn't gone to sleep yet.

Upon hearing the knock, the house first rang with a couple of aggressive barks from a dog, but quickly, the fierce barking turned into friendly, eager whimpers. Then, footsteps were heard, and a woman's voice asked, "Who is it?"

"Mom, it's me, I'm Lucien!" Lucien pressed his mouth against the door and spoke softly.

The door opened, and Letizia, who had aged a bit more, appeared with an oil lamp in hand.

#### Chapter 107: Toulon 5

After Popham's request for "tactical guidance," Carnot ordered Napoleon to lead the Fifth Army south. Napoleon had been well-prepared; he had studied the map of Toulon countless times. As soon as he received the order, he gave the command, and the entire Fifth Army immediately sprung into action. In just half a day, the Fifth Army left their encampment and began their march south.

However, just as the army had started its journey, a messenger caught up with Napoleon.

"General Bonaparte, General Carnot has new orders for you," the messenger said.

Napoleon took the orders and couldn't help but wonder, "What is Carnot up to? Why couldn't he have given these orders a bit earlier? The timing of this is suspicious..."

As he pondered this, Napoleon opened the envelope and examined the orders. He then put the message away and turned to his messenger, saying, "Go fetch Major D'Artois for me."

In no time, D'Artois appeared before Napoleon.

"General! Major D'Artois reporting for duty," D'Artois dismounted and saluted Napoleon.

"Louise, I've just received orders that require me to temporarily leave the army for a while. You will take command in my absence and continue with the original plan. If everything goes as expected, I should be back with the army early tomorrow morning. If I haven't returned by then, I will have a messenger bring new orders. Do you understand?" Napoleon asked.

"Understood!" D'Artois replied enthusiastically. It was evident that being entrusted with the command of the entire army, even if temporarily and just for half a day, excited him greatly.

Leaving the army temporarily in D'Artois's care, Napoleon set out to the west with a regiment of cavalry. At sunset, they arrived at their destination - the "Military Technology Laboratory."

After identifying himself, Joseph arrived with three heavy carriages, crossing the drawbridge and appearing before Napoleon.

"Is this little stuff so important that I had to make this long journey to collect it? And with a whole regiment of cavalry? Besides, Carnot's orders were so unclear; what exactly is this?" Napoleon inquired.

"It's Mr. Lavoisier's new toy," Joseph replied. "It has quite some power, and you should find it useful."

As he spoke, Joseph handed an envelope to Napoleon. "Here is the user manual for this thing. Once the trial is successful, we'll start mass production immediately. However, you should know that the lab's production capacity is limited, so there are only this many for now. You're heading into battle, so try it out and provide us with a feedback report once you're done."

"Damn, it's Lavoisier's creation!" Napoleon couldn't help but glance at the three carriages. "Is it safe? Won't it explode during transport?"

Knowing that one reason Lavoisier was brought into the lab was his work with explosives, Napoleon couldn't help but think that if this was "Lavoisier's new toy," it was likely explosive. Considering his experience with nitroglycerin, he preferred to keep a safe distance from the carriages.

"Don't worry; it's quite safe. You can even burn it in a fire without major issues," Joseph reassured him. "The specific instructions and usage are all in the manual. You can take a look at it later. Also, I've prepared an instructor for you on how to safely use this. This is Sergeant Clment, and he'll accompany you to the south and teach you how to handle this new device securely."

"General, Sergeant Clment reporting for duty," a tall soldier stepped forward, saluting Napoleon.

"Very well, Clment, you'll be with me for now," Napoleon said.

After this, Napoleon turned to Joseph and asked, "Is there anything else?"

"I've been in the lab for a while, and my information is limited. Do you have any news about Lucien?" Joseph inquired.

"How could there be news? Where they are now, they probably don't even know if they've reached Corsica yet. How could there be news at this point?" Napoleon replied. "You should use your own brain. If you can do some simple arithmetic, you'd realize that they still don't know if they've arrived in Corsica. How could there be news at this point?"

"Enough of your sarcasm. What I meant was, as you head south, if you hear anything, please inform me immediately," Joseph explained.

"Alright, it's needless to say, isn't it? Well, if there's nothing else, I'll be on my way," Napoleon said as he prepared to mount his horse. However, he turned back to Joseph and added, "I've heard that winters in Paris can be quite cold; make sure you don't catch a cold."

"Alright, alright, take care of yourself. I don't need your concern," Joseph replied with disdain, but he felt a tiny bit touched deep down.

...

Everyone at home gathered in the living room, with the curtains drawn tightly to prevent any light from escaping and attracting attention from outside.

"Mother, that's how it is. Joseph, Napoleon, and I all believe that it might be too risky for you to stay in Corsica any longer. So, I secretly returned to take you to France," Lucien explained.

"Go to France? That's wonderful; I've wanted to go to France for a long time," a young girl whispered with excitement. Her voice was hushed, but her enthusiasm couldn't be contained.

"Pauline, mind your manners; you're not a child anymore, and we have guests," Letizia admonished in a hushed tone.

The mischievous girl stuck out her tongue and then quickly lowered her head, feigning a ladylike demeanor. The candlelight illuminated a soft halo on her forehead where her bangs lay.

"Lucien, do you have to leave for good? We have so many things to take care of here..." Letizia voiced her concerns.

"Mother, don't worry about the things here. Joseph and Napoleon are doing well financially in France. Compared to that, the possessions in Corsica don't matter much. The crucial thing is your safety. You should know that both Joseph and Napoleon hold important positions now, and the English are known to be shameless and capable of anything," Lucien stated.

While he spoke, Lucien discreetly nudged Clment with his foot, hoping he would contribute to convincing Letizia to leave for France promptly.

However, Clment remained completely oblivious. Ever since Pauline appeared, his brain had entered a state of suspension. He never expected to encounter such an astonishingly beautiful woman in this remote place, and his entire cognitive capacity was now dedicated to appreciating her beauty. This resulted in all other cognitive threads being shut down to save processing power and storage space for the most important task - admiring the beauty.

As Clment was seated toward the back, and his face was shrouded in the shadow of the candlelight, the others didn't notice his mesmerized expression. Only Lucien was quietly fuming, "Why did Napoleon send this guy?"

Just a while ago, when Pauline descended the stairs and caught his eye, even Lucien had momentarily been taken aback. He tried to convince himself that the reason for his reaction was the vast difference in her appearance from what he remembered due to the years of separation.

Upon returning to Corsica, Lucien felt as if time here had frozen, and everything remained unchanged. Even in their home, everything was just as it had been when he left, except for the inevitable aging of his mother, Letizia. However, Pauline disrupted that image. His mother remained as he remembered, but his sister was no longer the same.

In front of him now stood an enchanting young woman, mature enough to be considered an adult but still possessed the innocence of a girl. Her long, beautiful chestnut hair was adorned with threads of gold, her forehead smooth as porcelain, her cheeks as rosy as roses, and her neck reminiscent of a nymph carved by Jean Goujon or the face of the Virgin Mary painted by Raphael.

Lucien had expected to see the playful little sister he remembered, but she had transformed into a captivating young lady. Such a transformation was a common occurrence. There comes a time when

young girls appear to bloom suddenly, much like roses. One day, they're overlooked as children, and the next, they capture hearts.

As Lucien contemplated this, he delivered a silent, firm kick to Clment.

The kick successfully brought Clment back to reality. He didn't cry out as seen in TV dramas but simply lowered his eyelids.

"Major Clment is Colonel Bonaparte's company commander. If you have any questions about this matter, you can ask him," Lucien explained.

"Oh, I see," Clment quickly added. "General Bonaparte believes that you are all in great danger, and any delay will only increase the risks. You must leave Corsica as soon as possible, the sooner, the better. Ideally, tonight."

"Tonight? How is that even possible? We still need to pack our belongings, gather our documents, change into clean clothes, and..."

"Just one person is enough," Lucien interrupted. "We'll leave quietly later, and our ship is where Napoleon used to hide it. Well, Mother doesn't know about it, but Pauline does. Once we're on the ship, we'll be safe. As for your belongings, we'll have everything in France. Joseph and Napoleon have already bought an estate for you there."

"Really, an estate? That's wonderful!" Pauline couldn't contain her excitement once more.

After her statement, she glanced at her mother and quickly lowered her head, resuming her ladylike demeanor.

"Very well, but I'd like to at least pack our luggage, bring our deeds, some clean clothes, and..."

"Mother, please don't worry about these things," Lucien reassured her. "Joseph and Napoleon are doing well financially in France. Compared to that, our possessions in Corsica don't matter much. The crucial thing is your safety. You should know that both Joseph and Napoleon hold important positions now, and the English are known to be shameless and capable of anything."

## Chapter 108: Toulon 6

General Popham had just lost his eldest son in a recent unsuccessful assault. It saddened him deeply, but it also relieved him in a way. No one could now accuse him of incompetence in his previous actions, or of any treachery.

So, after the loss of his son, General Popham immediately ceased most of his offensive operations and engaged in a standoff with the British. When Napoleon arrived with the Fifth Corps, both sides had been in a state of static warfare for some time.

Napoleon's progress wasn't particularly swift, as he had been training his troops along the way with the new toys Joseph provided him. However, once his army arrived, Napoleon swiftly set his plans in motion.

Napoleon first paid a visit to Popham to gather information about the enemy's dispositions he had acquired at the cost of his soldiers' lives in previous engagements. Popham provided the information readily, knowing that General Napoleon had influential connections. It wasn't the time to provoke anyone, even if it meant losing his eldest son and his second son.

After obtaining this intelligence, Napoleon politely bid farewell to Popham. But as he left the general's camp, he couldn't help but mutter to the guards accompanying him, "I really don't understand how he could launch such a poorly prepared frontal assault. How did he become a general?"

However, Popham couldn't be solely blamed for such tactics, as it was a widespread phenomenon. Most French generals during the Republican era lacked experience and skill, and the inadequately trained Republican soldiers struggled with complex tactics. They often resorted to reckless and impulsive actions in the face of uncertainty, a common trait among Republican-era French military leaders. What's more, they achieved several victories with this approach, reinforcing its legitimacy as the orthodox strategy for the French military.

Back in his own camp, Napoleon carefully studied the maps he had brought back and summoned leaders like D'Artois to assign reconnaissance tasks. After several days of scouting, he gathered his division and brigade commanders to discuss the upcoming assault.

Napoleon believed that capturing Fort Marguerite was key to the battle. If they could take the fort, they would have a direct line of fire to Toulon's harbor with the large cannons stationed there. Once Toulon's harbor was exposed to artillery fire, the British would be unable to maintain their supplies. Their only option would be to retreat.

"General Popham's previous actions may have seemed foolish, but even the most foolish actions have a purpose. He attempted a direct assault on Toulon's front, which was undoubtedly unwise. However, this foolishness prompted equally foolish responses from the British. According to the intelligence we've received, the British have concentrated their main force on the front of Toulon's harbor. Consequently, they have somewhat neglected the defense of Fort Marguerite. Look at this map, representing Toulon under our control, and this new one we've created through reconnaissance."

As Napoleon spoke, he unveiled a newer map beneath an outdated one laid out on the table.

"Since Toulon fell into British hands, the scale of Fort Marguerite has significantly expanded. With its current size, it could host over thirty large cannons. In addition, to defend it, the British have constructed smaller forts here and here, each complementing Fort Marguerite. If these forts are adequately garrisoned, taking them will require a significant sacrifice. However, the flags on these forts changed recently, replacing the British flag with the Spanish flag. This means the British have moved more of their combat forces to the front, assuming this is not our main focus."

"General, are you planning a feigned attack on the front?" Davout asked with a furrowed brow. "But the degree of feint attacks can be hard to control. Few troops won't attract the enemy, while too many will lead to heavy losses."

Napoleon grinned mischievously. "Do you think I'm that foolish? Let me tell you a method."

After breakfast, Lieutenant Herault, as usual, ascended the lookout post at the fort, facing the French side. Although the French had stopped their incessant charges, vigilance was still essential.

There seemed to be movement on the distant horizon. Herault quickly raised his spyglass to see what was happening.

"French! The French are back!" Herault shouted.

The French had returned, but they stopped outside the range of the cannons' fire. Herault saw the French soldiers wielding shovels and pickaxes, as if they were digging trenches.

Digging trenches around a fortified city to cut off its communication with the outside was common in Europe, but Toulon was a harbor. Could the French dig a trench in the sea?

Herault was perplexed, but he promptly reported this information to his superiors.

A group of officers soon arrived at the lookout tower. They raised their spyglasses to observe.

"What are the French doing?"

"They're digging trenches, but... it's not horizontal; it's vertical," one officer suddenly said. "They want to dig straight toward us!"

"A bunch of rats!" Another officer sneered. In an era where warfare was considered noble, this rat-like behavior was indeed looked down upon.

However, more thoughtful minds refrained from laughing. This rat-like approach made sense. It significantly reduced the effectiveness of the cannons, and if the French dug right up to them and suddenly charged with bayonets, it would be problematic. The British and Spanish forces were limited in number, whereas the French had a vast pool of manpower. In such a melee, Toulon could be in grave danger.

"They should need at least three or four more days to reach an attackable distance," an officer said.

"We must prepare for a fierce battle."

The speed of the French trench diggers exceeded the expectations of the British. Even at night, they continued their work, lighting torches and digging forward. The British fired a few shots, but hitting the trench was challenging, and the trench had bends that made it difficult to hit anyone. Seeing the ineffective artillery fire, the British decided to prepare for the impending melee. The French army was enthusiastic, and their performance in bayonet combat was commendable, but the British "lobsters" weren't to be trifled with.

Given the number of trenches dug by the French, their assault could involve over a thousand men. Therefore, the British concentrated all available forces on the front to face the French charge.

"General, we've observed that about two Spanish companies have left Fort Marguerite. They seem to have been reassigned to the front," an officer reported to Napoleon.

"Good. Davout, your forces should be within attacking distance by tomorrow morning, right?" Napoleon turned to ask.

"If we dig through the night tonight, we should reach attacking distance by early tomorrow," Davout replied.

"Very well, Davout, you'll lead your forces to their attack positions early tomorrow morning and make it look like you're ready to attack. Herault, we'll launch a full-scale assault on Fort Marguerite at first light. Davout, keep the appearance of an attack on the front to draw the British in and buy us time."

"Understood, General!" Davout and Herault responded in unison.



That night, the British and Spanish forces remained on high alert as the French trench diggers approached. In a more distant area, the French began constructing fortifications. The British and Spanish knew that tomorrow would be the decisive moment.

...

In the darkness, Lucien and Chrysler, along with the Bonaparte women, sneaked out, dressed in boys' clothes for ease of movement. They reached the seashore, where several fishing boats came into view.

"These boats, are they suitable?" Letizia asked.

"Don't worry, Mother! They should work just fine. We came over on similar boats," Lucien reassured her and then turned to Chrysler. "Mr. Chrysler, do you think my brother and the others have already engaged the British in Toulon? We're rushing there now, but I wonder if we'll get to see the battle."

"I'm not sure," Chrysler replied. "General Bonaparte is still in Paris for now. Even if he decides to head south, it shouldn't happen this quickly."

"I really hope we get to see a battle," Pauline chimed in.

#### Chapter 109: Toulon 7

Unlike their journey to this place, things took a troublesome turn for Lucien and his companions on their way back. Typically, the Mediterranean was as calm as a serene pond, where practically anything that could float could be used for navigation.

As far back as ancient Egypt, people could navigate the Mediterranean's nearshore waters using boats made of woven reeds. Later on, Greek galleys could roam freely throughout the Mediterranean. However, the Mediterranean was still a sea, not entirely devoid of winds and storms. There were historical records and legends of sea storms in the Mediterranean.

One of the oldest tales was the "Odyssey." When the Greeks successfully plundered Troy and returned with riches and slaves to Greece, they encountered a rare storm that nearly spelled the doom of their entire fleet. In the Bible, Apostle Paul also faced a storm in the Mediterranean while on his way to Rome. Lord Byron's Don Juan, too, was driven by a Mediterranean storm to meet Haidee. So, even in the Mediterranean, if luck wasn't on your side, you might find yourself facing the wrath of Poseidon.

When the two boats left Corsica, everything seemed normal. The sky was filled with countless stars, showing no sign of impending weather changes. However, at sunrise, everything changed.

The morning sun was unusually red, painting half the sky and half the sea crimson. While Lucien and Pauline were delighted by this beautiful sunrise, Lavalaineli expressed concern, "Maybe, just maybe, we should turn back. Seeing such a sunrise at sea is a sign of changing weather."

Lucien considered and asked, "What do you think are the chances of bad weather?"

"About fifty-fifty," Lavalaineli replied uncertainly.

"We shouldn't take unnecessary risks. Let's get closer to them and have Chrysler's boat follow us back to Corsica for shelter," Lucien decided.

Lavalaineli maneuvered the fishing boat closer to Chrysler's boat and shouted loudly, conveying his judgment to Chrysler.

Chrysler then told Letizia on his boat, "Madam, the weather might change, so we should temporarily return to seek refuge from potential storms."

Naturally, Letizia had no objections. So, both boats turned around and headed back to Corsica.

By noon, they spotted the coastline of Corsica again, but at that moment, a strong wind blew in from the east, catching both boats. They lost control, and the ships were carried westward by the wind.

The weather changed abruptly, and in the blink of an eye, the sky filled with sudden clouds. Heavy rain poured down.

Lucien, Pauline, and Alice were on one boat, while Letizia, Jerome, and Carolina were on the other. Both boats lost control quickly and disappeared from each other's view.

In the context of the open sea, the storm would be considered just a gust of wind. However, for a small fishing boat near the coast, it was undoubtedly a storm. This storm raged throughout the night and finally subsided at dawn the next day.

As the sun rose the next day, Lucien counted the passengers on his boat, and they were all accounted for. However, the boat's canvas and some other equipment had been blown into the sea. More critically, they had lost contact with the other boat, and they had no idea of their current location.

"Lucien, what do we do? Our mothers are gone; they might" Alice burst into tears.

"Mom will be fine, just like us. They will be fine," Pauline reassured her.

"Can we determine our current location?" Lucien asked Lavalaineli.

"No, I don't know where we are now," Lavalaineli replied.

Lucien considered their geographical knowledge and said, "Can the boat still be controlled? If so, let's head north."

The Mediterranean wasn't that vast, so whether they sailed south or north, they should reach land soon.

"Mast and sails are intact," Lavalaineli checked the boat's equipment and replied, "We can head north, and we should reach France."

With their exact location unknown, the small boat turned north.

The boat sailed on the sea for three days. During the late hours of the third day, Pauline, who had fallen into a drowsy sleep, heard Lucien's excited voice, "Land! There's land over there!"

...

In the early morning, a thick fog enveloped the sea. It started at sea and gradually covered the land.

"General, the fog has set in. Should we still attack?" asked Orozco.

"Of course, fog is an advantage. It allows us to get closer," Napoleon replied.

The fog made the British and Spanish soldiers equally nervous. They were afraid that the French might take advantage of the fog to approach. So, the fog simplified Davout's task. He ordered the drums to be beaten, and random shots were fired, leading the British and Spanish to fire blindly into the fog. The front line became chaotic.

Under the cover of fog, while the attention of the British and Spanish was drawn to the front line, Napoleon and Orozco led over three thousand men quietly approaching the fortress of Marguerite. Thanks to the fog, they reached a point just a hundred meters away from the fortress, and the Spanish defenders hadn't noticed them.

As the sun gradually rose, the fog started to dissipate, revealing Marguerite Fortress.

"Charge!" Napoleon ordered. Orozco led his men in a furious rush towards the fortress.

...

At dawn, Lucien's boat reached the shore. By this time, a fog had begun to form around them. They saw distant lights through the mist, so they headed in that direction to find someone who could tell them where they were. After walking for a while, the fog thickened, and their visibility dropped to around ten meters. Lucien knew they couldn't proceed further; they might get lost or separated from each other. He decided they should wait for the sun to rise and disperse the fog. They rested by a large stone, taking a break while waiting for the fog to clear.

The days of drifting at sea had left everyone feeling tense. Finally reaching the shore, they were now exhausted. Pauline leaned against the stone, resting her head on Alice's shoulder. Within moments, she fell asleep, and the others soon followed suit. Lucien drifted into a series of dreams, from one scenario to another.

He dreamt of Napoleon bringing news that their mothers' ship had sunk, and everyone had perished. Then, he dreamt that they had all safely arrived in Paris, joining Joseph as they dined at the Carnot family's home. Just as a plate of foie gras on bread was being brought to them, a loud noise jolted him awake.

"What's going on?" Lucien asked, opening his eyes. He saw the fog had dissipated somewhat, and the others had also woken up. But the thundering sounds continued from a distance. Lucien, having witnessed cannon fire with his brothers, quickly realized it was the sound of artillery!

"This is all wrong. It's the sound of cannons, and it's very close. We've walked into a battlefield!" Lavalaineli whispered urgently.

"What do we do?" a just-awoken Pauline asked.

"The cannon fire is coming from that direction," Lucien said. "Let's head this way and get as far away from the battlefield as possible."

Pauline looked toward the direction of the cannon fire, her eyes filled with excitement. She started to take a step that way, but Lucien grabbed her wrist and said, "Pauline, come with me this way."

Lucien led Pauline away in the opposite direction. Pauline occasionally turned back to look at the battlefield, but the fog had not entirely dissipated, making it challenging to see. However, the constant rumbling of artillery fire came from that direction.

At that moment, more footsteps became audible around them. Lucien stopped and looked around through the thinning fog, seeing soldiers in blue uniforms holding rifles with fixed bayonets, marching forward in a hurry. Due to the morning mist, he couldn't discern their numbers, but there were certainly many. They seemed to be charging into a battle.

"Something's amiss! These are soldiers heading into battle," Lucien exclaimed.

As the defenders on Marguerite Fortress noticed the approaching French, they began firing haphazardly in their direction. A cannonball landed near Pauline, startling both her and Lucien. She struggled free from his grasp, screamed, and ran in the opposite direction.

By now, the bugle sounded for a charge, and the soldiers began to rush forward. Lucien attempted to go after Pauline, but a charging soldier bumped into him, causing him to sit abruptly on the ground. By the time he got up, he couldn't find Pauline.

#### Chapter 110: Toulon 8

In the midst of the fog, Pauline dashed about, surrounded by the sounds of gunfire, artillery, and shouts. Initially, she felt terrified, but soon, after a series of intense explosions, she realized that the gunfire seemed to diminish. After a while, the cries of "Long live the Republic" echoed all around her.

At this point, the fog began to dissipate gradually. Pauline saw a group of soldiers in blue uniforms not far from her, celebrating. Obviously, they had won the recent battle.

An old bearded soldier noticed Pauline and walked over to her.

"Hey there, little one, what are you doing out here?" the soldier asked.

"My brother and I got separated. Our ship encountered a storm at sea, drifted for days, and ended up here on the shore, and then..." Pauline quickly explained, "Have you seen my brother?"

"Ah, you're quite unlucky to end up on the battlefield like this. I haven't seen your confused brother. How could he leave his little brother in a place like this? But I can have our men help you look for him," the old soldier said.

At this moment, Pauline was just a thirteen-year-old girl dressed in boy's clothes, her hat hiding her long hair. (If we were talking about a young Napoleon's clothing, it would fit her just fine.) Consequently, the old soldier mistook her for an unvoiced boy.

"Come with me, I'll ask around for you," the old soldier said, leading Pauline to the side of the fort and shouting to a soldier on the fort's wall with a tricolor flag, "Eugene, have you seen another civilian, a boy about this one's age, running onto the battlefield?"

"What are you saying?" Eugene asked. "I can't hear..."

Perhaps due to a lack of concentration, the tricolor flag in his hand slipped and fell from the fort. Everyone's faces changed because not being able to rehang the flag was an extremely bad omen. In general, the more dependent on luck a profession is, the more superstitions are associated with it. The military, in particular, was a place with a high concentration of superstitions. For instance, when the navy ate fish, they'd never flip the fish to eat the other side first because they dreaded the action of "flipping." As for the army, there were a host of superstitions about flags. Everyone believed that if a flag fell to the ground, it foretold setbacks for the army.

The tricolor flag slowly floated down in the morning breeze, and everyone ran to catch it in mid-air, trying to prevent it from touching the ground. Even the old soldier abandoned Pauline and joined the race.

"Catch it, catch it!" everyone shouted.

But for some reason, a sudden gust of wind shifted the falling tricolor flag in Pauline's direction, and she reached out and caught it.

"That kid, that kid caught the flag! Fantastic!" someone shouted.

"Truly fantastic!"

Similarly, based on superstition, if a flag fell due to the wind and someone caught it midway, that person had to personally hoist the flag back up, and the ill omen would pass, ushering in good fortune.

So the old soldier walked up to Pauline, bent halfway, and said, "Thank you, young lad, for catching the battle flag. Would you be willing to help us hoist this flag again?"

...

With Pauline gone, Lucien was terrified. He knew that if Napoleon found out about this, he'd get a severe beating, and maybe even his backside would be beaten into pieces. When he returned to Paris, Joseph wouldn't spare him either, to be precise, he wouldn't spare him or Napoleon. Joseph had long thought Lucien was unreliable, and it was only Napoleon's support that had saved him...

So Lucien was running around the battlefield like a headless fly. The soldiers were all cheering, and Lucien kept asking them, "Have you seen my sister? Have you seen my sister?" But no one paid him any attention.

At that moment, the soldiers suddenly began to cheer towards the fort. Lucien looked over, and he was stunned.

"What the devil! What am I seeing? That's... that's..."

It was Pauline, standing boldly at the highest point of the fort, hoisting a tricolor flag. The soldiers cheered loudly for her, and Pauline was caught up in the excitement. She had completely forgotten about finding her brother. She even imitated the soldiers below who were waving their hats, took off her hat, and waved it at them. Her long hair floated in the morning breeze alongside the tricolor flag.

A few years later, when the Bonaparte family had climbed to the heights of power, this story of Pauline was spread by various interested parties. The narrative evolved from Pauline getting lost, accidentally catching the flag, and leading French warriors to victory, defeating the English (the English argued that they were actually Spanish) and recapturing Toulon. Some even gave Pauline the title of "Joan of Toulon." Of course, Pauline responded, "What? People actually think I have any 'Joan' qualities?"

(Originally, in the historical timeline, Pauline had a very bold lifestyle, known as the "good-time girl" of her generation. It was said that when the sculptor Canova was sculpting her statue, he once considered portraying her as a hunting goddess. But Pauline said, "Let's go with the Venus look

instead because the hunting goddess is also a chaste goddess. Does anyone in all of Europe really believe that I have any chastity?")

However, at this moment, while the soldiers were cheering for her, they did not consider her any kind of "saint." At most, they saw her as a symbol of good luck. Meanwhile, Lucien desperately made his way towards the fort.

Near the fort, a few soldiers stopped him. "Who are you, and why are you running here? Are you an English spy?" one of them asked.

"I am General Napoleon Bonaparte's brother. My sister is inside the fort, and I need to see her!" Lucien hurriedly shouted. He knew that on the battlefield, mere suspicion could lead to death. But with this shout, whether they believed him or not, at least they wouldn't shoot him until they were sure.

"You're General Bonaparte's brother?" The soldiers clearly didn't believe him, but as Lucien had hoped, they wanted to verify first.

"If you're lying to us, you'll have a miserable death," one of the soldiers said.

At that moment, a cavalry unit approached. A soldier ran over and spoke to an officer on a horse, and the officer rode over.

"Lucien? What are you doing here?" he asked.

"Ah, Napoleon! Our ship was blown here by the wind... Pauline is inside the fort right now..."

...

Following this, the soldiers witnessed a comedic scene. Their general, brandishing his riding crop, was chasing his brother, and Lucien was running around Pauline.

"Lucien, be a man, don't hide behind a woman!" Napoleon said.

"A real man needs to have his own mind, how can you decide everything?" Lucien replied, catching his breath.

"Pauline, step aside and let me thrash this unreliable fool!"

"Napoleon, don't beat Lucien, this situation..."

Just then, Augereau arrived. "General, the English cavalry is coming!"

Napoleon stopped, glared at Lucien, and said, "We'll deal with you later!"

Then he threw down his riding crop and went with Augereau.

The English had sent only a small reconnaissance unit. This was quite normal because Front National had just withdrawn, and they wouldn't have been able to mobilize their forces immediately for a counterattack. But the presence of the English cavalry meant that a new battle was about to begin.

"The English must know the significance of this fort. If they lose it, they can't hold Toulon. They'll launch a counterattack immediately. Augereau, find a few people to take Pauline and that foolish boy to a safe place. Battle is imminent here," Napoleon said.

As Napoleon had predicted, the English quickly realized the situation. They quickly launched a massive attack on Fort Malgrve, even though their preparations were not entirely sufficient. The French defenses were also ill-prepared, without firing tables and not fully understanding the fort's details.

The English deployed nearly all their cards, sending about five to six thousand troops in a single massive assault. However, the fort's defensive bonuses were still formidable. Even without firing tables, which affected the effectiveness of their cannon fire, French artillery still inflicted significant damage on the approaching English. But the lobsterback soldiers pressed forward under the cannon fire.

"English! The fort of Malgrve is well fortified, but we're getting closer!" the English officers shouted.

The fort of Malgrve was a modern fort, and its walls, less than two meters high with a steep slope, were designed to withstand cannon fire. However, when enemy infantry reached the walls, they could charge up directly after a running start.

Napoleon's army had just captured Fort Malgrve, so they were not entirely familiar with the details of the fort, and they had no available firing tables. Hence, the English assault was somewhat unprepared, and so was the French defense.

The English threw everything into this attack, rushing nearly five or six thousand troops towards the fort. The French defense was unprepared, and it was a chaotic scene. Nevertheless, the fortified walls of the fort remained a significant advantage for the French.

At first, the French artillery's impact was significant, even without accurate firing tables. The English cavalry had suffered casualties while approaching the fort. The French forces on the walls had managed to hold their ground and inflict losses on the English. The battle was in full swing, and Fort Malgrve was under heavy pressure.

But with English reinforcements coming in, the battle was about to reach its climax, and the outcome remained uncertain.