

## The Fox 71

### Chapter 71: The Vote (4)

Fouch was indeed a prominent figure in the history of France. From the French Revolution to the First Empire, during that time, there were only three unyielding political figures: Talleyrand, Carnot, and Fouch.

Like Talleyrand, Fouch came from a theological college. However, unlike Talleyrand, Fouch was of common birth, so naturally, he never rose to the position of dean, bishop, or archbishop. Moreover, Fouch wasn't a skilled speaker a significant weakness for a priest. So, he couldn't even secure the position of a parish priest. Until he left the church, he remained a novice priest.

However, his years at the theological college left a deep mark on him. The impression it left on Fouch was almost identical to the one Talleyrand had: a lack of faith and an utter disregard for means. Therefore, in the later course of history, he was often mentioned alongside Talleyrand as a chameleon.

He was once a close friend of Robespierre, so close that he nearly became Robespierre's brother-in-law. However, he chose to follow the more influential Lafayette. After Lafayette began to lose power, he became friends with Girondin leader Condorcet. On the night before the trial of Louis XVI, he publicly advocated for clemency towards the king. Yet, the next day when the vote came, he supported the death penalty, proclaiming, "To save France, we must cut off the tyrant's head!" During the Reign of Terror, he was even more radical than Robespierre, and more so than Danton. In Lyon, he ordered the beheading of thousands of individuals and proposed almost complete abolition of private property, advocating the equal distribution of all wealth.

However, Robespierre never forgot his past betrayals. After suppressing Danton, Robespierre intended to eliminate Fouch as well. But he considered Danet more dangerous, so he temporarily spared Fouch and focused on dealing with Danet. This gave Fouch time. After Danet's death, Fouch used people's fear and his extraordinary abilities to weave a web of rebellion. He finally defeated the great demon Robespierre in the Thermidorian Reaction. Many people, including Lazare Carnot and Napoleon's benefactor Barras, played significant roles in this conspiracy. However, all the threads ultimately led to Fouch; he was the mastermind.

But Robespierre's fall did not lead to Fouch's rise to prominence. People couldn't forget his actions in Lyon. While Fouch managed to keep his head (in contrast, Carnot came close to losing his), he lost all his positions.

Still, Fouch did not give up. Over the years, he secretly assisted Barras in investigating his political enemies' various secrets. Because of these services, he was eventually reinstated by Barras and appointed as head of the police department.

In Fructidor, he assisted Napoleon in overthrowing the Directory and continued as Minister of Police. He then helped Napoleon sideline Barras and retained his position as Minister of Police even after Napoleon's coronation as Emperor. After the restoration of Louis XVIII, he astonishingly retained this position until the "Law of the Regicides" finally ended his political career.

However, if one considers him just a chameleon or a clown due to these shifts, it would be underestimating him. In fact, whether Robespierre, Barras, or Napoleon, none of them trusted Fouch, but they had no choice but to rely on his unparalleled abilities. If Carnot was a military

logistics genius, then Fouch was a genius in covert operations and public security control. He established one of the most intricate surveillance networks in the world at the time, with even Josephine, the Queen, serving as one of his informants.

Every ruler, from Robespierre to Napoleon, doubted, feared, and were wary of Fouch, but they couldn't afford not to use him. Even Charles X, who loathed everyone remotely connected to the Revolution, is said to have exclaimed, "How I wish I had a Fouch." Of course, when he said this, he probably didn't realize that if he had a Fouch in his service, the cunning and greedy Fouch would have betrayed him long ago, with a little extra pocket change.

Fouch led the way, and more people followed. Joseph counted and saw that those standing with Lafayette far exceeded his vote count. After all, at this moment, Lafayette's influence far exceeded Robespierre's.

Lafayette's eyes turned to Joseph, who was still standing in place. Joseph knew he couldn't hesitate any longer.

He stepped forward, but instead of heading toward Lafayette, he walked towards the podium.

"May I say a few words?" Joseph asked, looking solemn, addressing the new club president, Robespierre.

"Of course, the club is a place for free expression," Robespierre replied.

Joseph nodded and ascended the podium, gripping its edges. He looked out at the audience, then began to speak, "Today, I'm truly astounded to witness such a shameful spectacle! Yes, a shameful spectacle! I noticed that in the recent vote, Lafayette received far fewer votes than the number of people now standing by his side. I have to ask, what made those who initially voted for Mr. Robespierre change their stance in such a short time? What changed your beliefs? Look at your feeble expressions, are you still people of morals? You should be ashamed!"

Joseph then turned to Lafayette, hesitated for a moment, and then spoke firmly, "Your Excellency Lafayette, my political stance has always been clear to you. But please forgive me for what I'm about to say. Today, Mr. Robespierre proposed an anonymous vote because he believed that some may fear your power and not express their true opinions. Unfortunately, this fear became a reality. However, your actions after the vote, even though I believe it wasn't your intention, are effectively using your power to coerce people. I believe your actions are hasty and improper. Furthermore, among the people standing by your side, there are some I despise. Therefore, please forgive me, I cannot stand by your side. I don't want to be associated with these people. I'm sorry!"

Having said this, Joseph bowed to Lafayette and then descended from the podium, returning to his previous position.

"Clap, clap, clap," Robespierre led the applause, and the others who had not joined Lafayette also began to applaud. Lafayette gave Joseph a glance and then left with those by his side. At that moment, someone began to whistle.

"Mr. Bonaparte, you spoke so well!" a voice said to Joseph as he stood by.

Joseph turned and saw Saint-Just standing beside him.

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After playing his part, Joseph didn't linger at the Jacobin Club. He quickly left, using the excuse of having many other matters to attend to, and returned to his residence.

"How did it go?" Napoleon asked.

"Lafayette left with most of the club members; the Jacobin Club has officially split," Joseph said. "Even though we had an anonymous vote, when Lafayette left, he directly said, 'Those who want to follow me, come to my side.' Damn it, I had to pick a side, even though I hate taking sides."

"Did you stand with Robespierre?" Napoleon asked. "Joseph, I don't understand why you're so... afraid of someone like Robespierre."

Napoleon seemed to struggle for the right words, and then continued, "You know, there are plenty of representatives like him. In terms of weight, he's nowhere near Lafayette. Why would you risk offending your superiors to stand with him?"

Joseph shook his head and said, "Napoleon, you don't understand. These two are different. Lafayette may have more weight now, but the future is with Robespierre."

At this point, he lowered his voice and continued, "I need to tell you something, and you have to remember it, but don't tell anyone."

"What is it? You're making a big deal out of this!" Napoleon pretended to be nonchalant, but he leaned in closer and lowered his voice as well.

"I have a strange feeling, Napoleon, my brother. I don't know if you can understand this; it may sound irrational. But Robespierre gives me this feeling. It's like a poisonous snake hidden in the bushes... no, that's not accurate. If he were just a snake, we could easily crush it, like the young Heracles did with the serpents near his cradle. But Robespierre isn't a snake; he's not that insignificant. He's... he's a lurking Nidhogg."

Napoleon laughed, "You're exaggerating, Joseph."

Joseph replied, "You'll see. There will come a day when he rises like Nidhogg, with wings laden with the dead and spewing the venomous flames of centuries of French resentment that have accumulated beneath the ground. He will sweep across all of France, bringing a true twilight of the gods. Most of the larger-than-life figures, god-like, will lose their heads in this feast, until the earth grows tired of this excess of blood, and he will plunge headfirst into the bottomless abyss, just as Nidhogg did when the world was born anew. Before that, we must stay out of his flames, and under no circumstances should we stand in opposition to him, at least not until the earth is sated, or even weary, of the blood of gods."

"In that case, Joseph, why stay in Asgard? Why not hide in a tree hollow in advance?" Napoleon asked.

Asgard is the location of Odin's temple in Norse mythology and the most intense and deadly battlefield during Ragnarok. It is said that after the end of Ragnarok, some people hid in a hollow of the World Tree, Yggdrasil, to escape death and rebuild the new world.

"My brother, the twilight of the gods is not a brief event. I must prepare enough reserves for the days in the hollow and for the new era. Besides Asgard, where else can you obtain them? Napoleon, if you only want to be a commoner in the new world, the requirements are simple. But if you want

to ascend to the Golden Palace and sit on Odin's vacant throne after the twilight is over, then now is not the time to hide."

"You sound like a fanatic, just like a priest," Napoleon said.

"What, you don't believe me?" Joseph asked.

"I believe you're quite the showman, that's what you are," Napoleon replied. Joseph knew that Napoleon probably believed at least some of what he had said. With his flair for classical and Norse mythology, Napoleon was prone to be attracted to the mysterious and fantastical "intuition."

## Chapter 72: The Royalist Support for Jacobins

The next morning, Joseph went to work as usual, pondering what Lafayette's reaction would be. Would he inform Joseph directly that his position had been canceled due to the changing circumstances? Or would he put a seal on Joseph's office door?

However, when Joseph arrived at work, he found that he had been overly concerned. His position remained intact, and all the tasks he needed to handle were waiting for him.

At lunchtime, Carnot from the neighboring office entered Joseph's workspace.

"Joseph," Carnot said, "I heard about what you did last night. You did an amazing job!"

"Lazar, I..." Joseph hadn't had a chance to say much when he heard Carnot continue enthusiastically:

"You know, Joseph, I used to think of you as a great logistics organizer and an excellent staff member, but not a great commander. You were sharp and detail-oriented, coming up with many good ideas, but lacked the courage to make tough decisions. Your brother, Napoleon, is the one with determination. He's a born leader."

"What's this? You come up with many good ideas but lack the courage to make decisions? Isn't that like saying I'm 'all talk and no action'? Wasn't that a joke by Prime Minister Cao?" Joseph thought but heard Carnot continue:

"But based on your decisiveness yesterday, my perception was entirely wrong. You do have perseverance and the ability to make tough decisions. You're cautious and meticulous in everyday matters, but when it's crucial, you're brave and resolute! Joseph, you have the potential to become an exceptional commander."

"But I still don't know how to face General Lafayette," Joseph said, feeling a bit uneasy.

"I haven't seen the General today either. But I believe he's a reasonable man," Carnot said. "You were right to do what you did yesterday. Even if the General has some thoughts about it, you had to act that way. But General Lafayette is a good man, and I've always respected him. I don't want to lose his friendship."

Joseph knew that Lafayette held Carnot in high regard, so he tried to use Carnot to help mend his relationship with Lafayette.

Carnot laughed heartily and said, "If General Lafayette puts the interests of France before his own, he won't hold yesterday against you. And to be honest, his actions yesterday were rather ungracious. If he puts personal grudges ahead of France's interests, do we need a friend like him? Don't worry

too much. Let's do our work with integrity, and as long as we can answer to our own conscience, that's enough. Why worry so much?"

"This is definitely a typical Carnot response. He wouldn't waste time explaining such things," Joseph thought.

At that moment, a messenger walked in and said to Carnot and Joseph, "The General requests both of you to come over."

Joseph, still a bit nervous, followed Carnot and the messenger to meet Lafayette. Carnot smiled at Joseph and said, "See, I told you the General wouldn't mind."

Joseph smiled back but thought, "Why is Carnot so straightforward? Lafayette not mentioning the incident yesterday probably means he cares a great deal about it."

Of course, if Lafayette had mentioned it and comforted Joseph, he would probably think Lafayette was being overly considerate.

"Can an ordinary man associate with a king in his service? Is it not a joy, having no uncertainty?' Confucius seems to be talking about me. This saying makes sense; Confucius is indeed wise. If Carnot knew what I was thinking, he'd probably say the same about me. But at least one thing is certain, Lafayette won't take any action against me in the short term," Joseph mused.

The following weeks remained relatively calm. Lafayette and his friends seemed to have the situation under control. The King swore allegiance to the constitution, and Lafayette, along with the pro-royalist "Black Party" and those who could afford the election deposit, formed an alliance, seemingly firmly in control.

The remaining democrats, the remnants of the dissolved Cordeliers, and marginalized left-wing figures in the government and parliament all joined Robespierre's Jacobin Club. While the right formed a grand alliance, the left quietly formed its own.

Lafayette and his friends aimed to consolidate their position. In Duperre, Barnave, and the Lameth brothers' proposal, they attempted to use their majority in the parliament to amend the constitution, granting the King more power, restoring certain noble privileges, establishing an upper house, and ensuring that only "respectable" citizens could participate in elections. They also allowed parliamentary re-election and dual mandates for members, securing long-term benefits for their supporters.

Although they had the numbers on their side in parliament, these proposals didn't pass any votes. Both Jacobins and a section of the "respectable" citizens, who leaned toward republicanism, were opposed. Even the entire Black Party rejected these ideas.

It was rumored that King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette believed Lafayette to be a more dangerous enemy than the Jacobins. After all, at that time, the Jacobins didn't wield much power, and their leader was just a commoner (in the eyes of the royal court, all commoners were ignorant fools). What influence could he possibly have? The Duke of Orleans, who had connections with them, had also lost much of his former power. During his absence from France for over a year, his influence had dwindled. Besides, he was a typical do-nothing playboy. If he were capable, Lafayette would not have been able to force him out of the country, and a commoner would not have become president. His last name is Bourbon? How is he even related to the Bourbons? Does he deserve that name?

King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette were right to think this way. The Jacobins had little power at that time. Their leader was just a commoner, and it was unlikely that they would create much trouble. They were just like those unruly mobs, with no significant difference. As for the Duke of Orleans, his influence had diminished over the years, and upon his return, most of his former supporters had scattered. Moreover, he was a typical incompetent. If he were truly capable, he wouldn't have been expelled from France by Lafayette, and a commoner wouldn't have assumed the presidency. Why should he even bear the name Bourbon?

The King and Queen held this view, but Count Artois (King Louis XVI's younger brother) played a significant role in the royalist camp. Count Artois was the first among the emigrés and the most fervent counter-revolutionary among the nobility. In a sense, he was one of those closest to them by blood who most eagerly desired their downfall. However, at this point, the King and Queen had no one to rely on, and they had never trusted Mirabeau.

Indeed, the Feuillants offered many benefits to the King and nobility. Still, from the perspective of the Black Party, these things were already rightfully theirs. The Feuillants simply returned a small portion of what had been taken from them. Like those unruly mobs, the Feuillants' folks were all damned rebels. Since they were all rebels, it was better to let these two rebellious groups fight each other and weaken themselves. Standing with the stronger side to let them eliminate the other was the best course of action. With France's size, a war wouldn't end quickly, and neighboring countries would divert their resources to this war. This would give Russia the opportunity to act freely in Eastern Europe.

This scheme couldn't escape Emperor Leopold II of Austria's notice. He was not enthusiastic about going to war against France because he knew that Empress Catherine II of Russia was very eager to intervene militarily in the French Revolution.

The European royal families were all related by blood. If you looked through their genealogies, any king could find distant or close blood relations with another. Catherine II, the Great Empress of Russia, could likely find some distant blood relation with Louis XVI. Still, her enthusiasm for intervening in the French Revolution was not about France itself, but about Poland.

At this time, the Grand Duchy of Poland was in a state of chaos. Gone were the glory days of vanquishing the Turks. Thanks to the bizarre elective monarchy and the nobility's veto power, the once-powerful Grand Duchy of Poland had become a lovable fat lamb, known and loved by everyone. However, there were more wolves circling around it, and a few wolves could only restrain each other, allowing the fat lamb to barely survive. Russia was one of the wolves yearning for this fat lamb. If there were a war in Europe due to the French Revolution, considering France's size, the war would not end quickly. The countries bordering France would get embroiled in it. Russia would then have a free hand in Eastern Europe.

Emperor Leopold II was well aware of this plan, and he did not want to wage war. He also believed that if a constitutional monarchy could be established, the situation in France would be entirely acceptable. He did not want to engage in a war that might result in mutual destruction, only to find out later that Poland had been divided up by the Russians and Prussians, leaving nothing for him.

For this reason, the royalists were determined to prevent the success of a constitutional monarchy.

Chapter 73: Promotion

General Lafayette was indeed a broad-minded man. Over the next few months, Joseph's work was largely unaffected. When payday arrived at the end of the month, Joseph and Napoleon received a bonus for their outstanding performance.

A few days later, Carnot approached Joseph with a question, "Joseph, if we were to transfer Napoleon to a combat unit as its commander, what are your thoughts?"

Joseph's heart skipped a beat, and he hurriedly inquired, "Lazare, isn't Napoleon doing well in the Red Army? Where do you plan to transfer him?"

Carnot glanced at Joseph, understanding his concerns about what had happened that day. He smiled and said, "It's not decided yet. Here's the situation: just yesterday, Emperor Leopold and King William II of Prussia issued a joint declaration in Pilnitz. In that declaration, they threatened to use force to 'assist France in restoring order.'"

Carnot then sneered, "Do these Habsburgs think their empire was built with swords and guns? And as for William II, who does he think he is? Does he think he's his father? If he were his father, it might be worth taking notice, but William II? Hah... Who have we French ever feared on land? Even if he were his father, had it not been for the treachery of the Russians, his father would have been defeated just the same!"

After expressing their disdain for Austria and Prussia, Carnot sighed, "But Joseph, you also know that our army is in a dire state. There are significant conflicts between the ranks, and there have been mutinies in several places recently. Generals had to take disciplinary measures against certain individuals, but those measures, while suppressing the conflicts temporarily, didn't truly resolve them. Joseph, you also know that a divided army, with mutual distrust and even animosity between the ranks, is a recipe for disaster on the battlefield."

What outcome could be expected from a divided army with such trust issues? It was clear. Back in the days, a mere coachman in a certain Eastern Empire, just because he didn't get a taste of lamb soup, delivered his general straight into the enemy's camp, where he was taken captive. Given the current state of the French army, mutinies and rebellions were not out of the question.

"Therefore, the general believes that, in terms of their attitude towards battle, the National Guard might be more reliable than the regular army. However, you also know that the National Guard's soldiers have mediocre training, and, more importantly, they lack qualified officers."

"Why not transfer some reliable officers from the regular army to the National Guard?" Joseph suggested. However, as soon as he spoke, he realized he had made a foolish statement.

"In that case, the general is concerned that problems will arise within the regular army," Carnot replied.

The concept of problems arising within the regular army was straightforward. Nowadays, the senior ranks of the army were mostly in favor of the king, while lower-ranking officers tended to lean towards the revolution. This created a natural balance, which was why the army had remained neutral and refrained from direct political interference. If these lower-ranking officers were transferred in large numbers to the National Guard, it would disrupt this balance, and sooner or later, the army, under the control of those aristocratic officers, might come out to "eliminate the rebels." Therefore, this approach was definitely not viable.

Furthermore, if National Guard officers were mostly those lower-ranking officers from the regular army inclined toward the revolution, it wouldn't necessarily be beneficial for Lafayette's control over the National Guard. These individuals could easily be influenced by the Jacobins, and one day, they might even rebel with them.

So, the approach of transferring a significant number of junior officers from the regular army to serve as officers in the National Guard was undoubtedly unworkable.

"Now, it seems that war may be imminent," Carnot said. "For this reason, the general has an idea to appoint Napoleon as the commander of the National Guard. Based on his performance during this period, the general believes he should be able to serve as a regimental staff officer, and the National Guard's rank requirements are relatively lower. So, he has this idea. But when he asked for my opinion, I opposed it. I think in his current position, you can elevate more officers, which would be more advantageous for France. However, I have also presented a new suggestion to the general, something I thought of on the spot and didn't have time to discuss with you, but it involves adjustments to your work."

"What is your suggestion?" Joseph asked.

"The general thinks that Napoleon is still too young to serve as the supreme commander of the Red Army, as it is a military force, not the National Guard. So, the general believes promoting him by one rank is sufficient. Furthermore, since most of the Red Army's affairs are already on the right track, and tactically, I believe Napoleon is stronger than you. He can handle all your current responsibilities in the Red Army. Of course, I have a personal motive. You see, since you've devoted most of your energy to the Red Army, my workload has increased significantly. If your brother can take care of those matters, it would ease my burden."

"What does General Lafayette want?" Joseph thought and then asked, "So, what does the general mean?"

"The general feels that promoting Napoleon to the rank of second lieutenant, to serve as the Red Army's operational staff, would be enough," Carnot explained. "Additionally, he plans to find a more experienced commander for the Red Army. Of course, Joseph, in the past period, you've excelled in organizing the Red Army, so the general also plans to promote your rank by one level, which would increase your salary significantly."

Joseph now seemed to understand Lafayette's intentions. Lafayette promoted his brothers, but removed them from the positions of military commanders.

"It seems Lafayette no longer trusts me. But to maintain a magnanimous appearance, he still wants to promote Napoleon and me. However, isn't this a favorable situation?" Joseph thought.

Joseph's idea of this being a favorable situation was not mere wishful thinking; he recognized that the Jacobin faction's rise to power was inevitable. Although it appeared that he had no actual military authority now, once the Jacobins took control, these powers would return to him.

Moreover, with the Jacobins in power, the war with the Coalition forces almost never ceased.

During those times, he and his brothers could command forces abroad while conveniently avoiding the terror that might descend upon Paris. In his current position as a pure technical officer, he could also avoid many troubles. And promotion with a raise in salary was certainly a good thing. Joseph decided that tonight, he would treat himself to a nice meal to celebrate.



"This consideration is very prudent and correct. And I'll earn more income as well. It's a great thing!" Joseph sincerely said to Carnot. "Thank you, Lazare. If you have time, how about coming to my place for dinner?"

"Haha, there's no reason for a bachelor to invite someone with a family to dinner. You don't even have a hostess, how would you entertain me?" Carnot replied, feeling at ease. "Besides, I'll be getting a promotion and a raise soon too. In any case, my income will still be higher than yours. If I hadn't been so busy lately, I would have invited you to my place long ago."

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"In general, do you plan to promote Joseph and his brothers?" Fouch asked in Lafayette's office.

"They are all capable, and it would be a waste not to promote them. The promotions are well-deserved," Lafayette replied indifferently, as if he had no other thoughts.

"But Joseph's speech at the Jacobin Club has had a very negative impact on us," Fouch pointed out.

This was not a lie. Lafayette had successfully convinced a significant portion of the Jacobin Club's members to leave, which dealt a significant blow to the club. People were quick to perceive those who remained as abandoned and disreputable. However, Joseph's words at the club meeting had elevated these individuals to the status of moral defenders. As a result, those who followed Lafayette became suspected traitors. Lafayette's own followers were seen as opportunists. This was a significant blow to Lafayette's reputation, which he valued greatly. But because he was so concerned with his reputation, he couldn't enact any obvious retaliation.

"Joseph is simply too honest. He has little interest in politics and doesn't quite understand the intricacies involved," Lafayette chuckled, as if he truly bore no ill feelings toward Joseph.

Fouch sighed inwardly; he knew Lafayette didn't entirely trust him. He was aware that before the club's vote, Robespierre had visited the Bonaparte brothers. But he felt that now was not the right time to reveal this information. This piece of news might fetch a high price someday, depending on the circumstances.

"You are truly magnanimous," Fouch flattered. "By the way, I've heard that Mr. Barnave has been getting close to the court recently. I also heard that the king intends to have Mr. Petion replace Mr. Bailly as the Mayor of Paris."

"What? This is... What is the king thinking?" Lafayette was both surprised and somewhat angry. Petion was known to have republican inclinations.

#### Chapter 74: The Carrot of Peace (1)

Over the next few months, Paris appeared calm and everything seemed to be falling into place. On October 1st, the new National Assembly elections concluded, and the results left Lafayette disappointed. His Feuillants club secured 264 seats, while Robespierre's Jacobins won 136 seats. The remaining half of the seats were divided among royalists and unaffiliated members. Lafayette's control of the seats didn't constitute a majority, and he had to find a way to maintain the unofficial alliance between Jacobins and royalists (a secret alliance both sides vehemently denied, often attacking each other with harsh words, yet they wished each other a swift demise). To do so, he needed to gather more support.

Robespierre, however, did not seek re-election this term. Although his proposal that members should not be allowed to serve consecutive terms didn't pass, he voluntarily abstained from this round of elections. Some praised his integrity, while others speculated that he might have struck a deal with the royalists and smaller moderate factions to support Ption's election as the Mayor of Paris in exchange for his decision not to run for re-election. Without the constraints of being a member of the Assembly, Robespierre increased his public visibility by frequently publishing articles in various newspapers.

However, these political developments did not directly impact Joseph and Napoleon's lives. Their days continued much as usual, with a slight decrease in their standard of living, despite their promotions and increased salaries. Recently, their salaries were paid in assignats, a situation affecting all, including Carnot, and even Lafayette. So, when Carnot had previously mentioned inviting them to his home, he now explained that due to economic difficulties, he needed to postpone the invitation.

Carnot, though financially comfortable, had many friends among the lower-ranking soldiers, who were struggling due to the assignat payments. He couldn't bear to see his friends suffer, which, in turn, affected his own finances.

Joseph and Napoleon did not have friends in need of financial assistance, but they still lowered their living standards to avoid drawing attention to themselves. This modest lifestyle enhanced their reputation for honesty.

Armand came to see Joseph, having become the editor of a democratic newspaper called "The Voice of Paris." Although it was a compact publication, it received support from the Jacobins. A significant portion of the newspaper's funding came from the Jacobin Club, and some articles were contributed by its members. Robespierre, however, believed that the paper was too "Jacobin" and suggested that Armand find contributors from outside the Jacobin Club to attract moderate factions.

Armand approached Joseph to write articles on scientific topics for the paper and also tried to persuade Lucien to contribute. Lucien was tempted but refrained from making a direct commitment, considering the timing to be inopportune. Joseph, aware of the risks involved at this juncture, cited his busy schedule as a reason for not being able to accept the request.

After Armand's departure, Joseph gathered his brothers for a meeting to analyze the current situation and determine the family's next course of action.

"Joseph, Napoleon, do you know where a political force like the royalists draws its strength?" Joseph asked his brothers.

This was a basic question, but Napoleon showed disdain, ignoring Joseph's query with a disdainful snort. However, Lucien dutifully responded, "The foundation of any political organization lies in its financial base. Finances are the mother of all politics. Without money, no political organization can function. The strength of an organization depends on its financial resources and how efficiently it uses them, all of which relate to its political goals."

Joseph nodded with satisfaction and continued, "Now, let's take the first political force in France, the royalists. Where does their money come from?"

Napoleon, showing interest in this question, replied, "Primarily, it comes from feudal rents, and some royalists are also involved in business. Some of the aristocracy has accumulated wealth."

Additionally, foreigners may provide them with some funds. But now, collecting rents is out of the question, as peasants won't pay. Except in the most remote and isolated areas, no noble can expect rent. As for business, if they were capable of it, we wouldn't be in this situation today. Their primary financial sources are accumulation and foreign aid. Both are unsustainable, so their strength is, in fact, quite weak. They must change the situation before they exhaust their resources, or they'll be out of the game."

Joseph then posed a hypothetical question, "So, my dear brother, if you were Louis XVI, what would you do?"

Napoleon pondered for a moment and replied, "Firstly, given the current circumstances, I would have lost trust from others. I would have no choice but to align with the royalists. As for fleeing, it would be much harder now, but not entirely hopeless. The palace guards can't be vigilant forever. This is not a prison. I'd wait for an opportunity to escape, ride out of Paris, and have someone ready with a light carriage on the outside to ensure a successful escape. Afterward, I'd head to Lyon and initiate a war that's the best option in my view."

Joseph then inquired, "What about the queen?"

Napoleon quipped, "Leave that Austrian lady in Paris. She won't get far on her own. Besides, if the Parisians killed her, it would definitely attract the intervention of other nations. Parisians aren't that foolish. So, what's there to worry about?"

Lucien raised a question, "Would the king do that?"

Napoleon responded, "He lacks the judgment and courage for it. Besides, he's not the leader of the royalists."

Joseph then asked, "And if you were the leader of the royalists, what would you do?"

Napoleon chuckled, "You mean, if I were the Count of Artois? God, how could I have such a foolish elder brother? Well, if I were the Count of Artois, I'd have to find a way to provoke war. Only through war could I have a chance of victory. Any other outcome would be slow suicide for the royalists."

Lucien chimed in, "No wonder I saw an article by Robespierre in Armand's newspaper a few days ago, where he advocated avoiding war as much as possible."

Joseph noted, "So, my brothers, analyze the situation and response of our superior, General Lafayette."

Napoleon said, "Lafayette and his associates have profited immensely from this revolution. They prefer the situation to remain stable. But by looking at the assignats, we know that this stability is unsustainable. He hasn't realized this yet and still harbors illusions. If he comprehends the situation, his only way out is to start a war."

Joseph asked for more details.

Napoleon elaborated, "If the king hadn't fled, if he had trusted Lafayette, the best course of action in that situation would be to form an alliance with Lafayette. However, Lafayette faces challenges since he cannot stabilize the situation internally, the royalists won't cooperate, and the king has lost the support of the people. His only option is to use the military and war to establish a military dictatorship similar to Caesar. However, our superior may lack Caesar's determination, courage, and

military talent. He even accepted the proposal to pay the military with assignats, a decision that baffles me. He's almost as bad as our king. He doesn't consider what he has left without the military."

Joseph then inquired about the Jacobins.

Napoleon commented, "The Jacobins have the most favorable position. As the opposition party, the worse the political situation becomes, the better for them. Although they have a small presence in the assembly, they control the Paris Commune. This means they can easily incite uprisings. If the current situation continues, the Parisians will eventually revolt again. So, for them, having enough parliamentary seats to disrupt proceedings is sufficient. If the present situation persists and there's no war, their chances of victory are the highest."

Lucien added, "That's why I saw Robespierre's article in Armand's newspaper a few days ago, in which he urged to avoid war as much as possible."

## Chapter 75: The Carrot of Peace (2)

Robespierre had recently published several articles vehemently opposing the war rhetoric of some hardliners in the parliament who were advocating a preemptive strike against Austria.

At any time, the parliament was filled with radicals. Generally, members of the parliament did not have to bear political responsibility for their words and actions, as they had no decision-making power. As a result, the parliamentarians could sometimes be like the imperial censors of the Eastern Empire, freely spouting nonsense without any restraint.

On the other hand, among a large group of parliamentarians, if someone wanted to stand out, become a leader among them, they needed a way to make their presence clear in the midst of the crowd and make their voices heard in the midst of the clamor.

To achieve this, the first method was to be like Mirabeau, towering a head taller than others, with a height of eight feet and a waist circumference of eight feet. Even when hiding in a crowd, they would stand out like a firefly in the dark night. With their natural booming voice, they could easily drown out others.

However, this method had high demands on innate conditions, and not every parliamentarian had the abilities of a Mirabeau. In fact, since Mirabeau had been defeated by illness, there had been no one like him in the French parliament. So, the remaining parliamentarians had to resort to the second method, which was to court popularity by raising sensational topics and shocking proposals to catch people's attention. After all, if parliamentarians didn't have to take responsibility, why not spout nonsense? Who wouldn't? The more irrational their arguments and the more audacious their actions, the more they could lead the trend.

Just like in the future United States, when a certain senator who later became a president proposed severing ties with the Eastern Empire and reestablishing diplomatic relations with Frog Island, but when he became the president, he completely forgot about these ideas, treating them as mere greenhouse gas emissions. Only our divine Emperor, when he says to withdraw, he withdraws, and when he says to build a wall, he builds a wall. He is truly one of the few sincere gentlemen in the history of the United States.

Given the situation in the parliament, irrational viewpoints naturally had the upper hand. In such times, from an institutional perspective, it required a king with a veto power to act as a brake.

However, the king had no intention of applying the brakes in this matter because he too desired war. In the eyes of the queen, if a war broke out, the divided France would be utterly defenseless. They could then rebuild the monarchy under the protection of Austrian bayonets. So, the king had no intention of applying the brakes. Moreover, since the incident of his escape, even though the parliament had confirmed that the king was held captive and restored all his powers, he had lost the trust of most parliamentarians. Going against the parliament would not be in his best interest.

According to Napoleon's analysis, those who truly loved peace and were sincere about it were the members of the Jacobin Club. However, the Jacobins had too few seats in the parliament. Previously, they had managed to obstruct the Feuillant's plans several times through an unspoken alliance with the Black Party. But even so, in the parliament, they could only achieve partial success and repeated failures. Now, on this issue, the Black Party would not support them, so relying solely on them meant they couldn't even achieve partial success.

To address this problem, Robespierre gathered a few of his close friends to discuss a strategy.

"You all know that a war at this time will only benefit a few," Robespierre said. "If the war fails, it's a given that all the gains of the revolution will be lost, and France will return to its former state. And if the war succeeds, some individuals can establish their military dictatorship under the guise of 'saving France as heroes.' So, our most crucial task now is to prevent the war as much as possible."

"Maximilien," Marat spoke, "I can write articles exposing the royal family and warning the people about the conspiracy for war. But I'm not sure how effective it will be. You see, my articles hardly influence the parliament."

Marat's newspaper, "The People's Friend," was well-known in Paris. Especially before the king's escape, he had repeatedly cautioned the people in his newspaper to be vigilant and guard against the king fleeing. At first, most people regarded his statements as baseless fears, and Marat was seen as a demagogue seeking popularity. However, history had proven his foresight, so now "The People's Friend" had gained much more influence in Paris. However, due to his political stance, this influence remained limited to the middle and lower classes of Paris. In the parliament, Marat did not have enough influence.

"Unless there is another revolution..." Saint-Just said.

"The timing isn't right," Robespierre shook his head.

"We can find ways to expedite the timing," Saint-Just continued.

"Tell me your ideas."

"We can propose a series of measures in the parliament that are beneficial to the people of Paris but are sure to be rejected by the parliament, such as limiting food prices, banning speculation, controlling the issuance of bonds, and preventing over-issuance. (Actually, when the Jacobins came to power later, they did not refrain from issuing bonds either)," Saint-Just said. "They will definitely reject these proposals, and with each rejection, the people will be educated, becoming more disappointed with the aristocrats in the parliament, and their anger will grow. Eventually, when they fully understand that the current parliament cannot represent France, they will launch another revolution."

"But, Louis, doing this may accelerate their march toward war," Robespierre said. "We should carry out these measures, but right now, we urgently need a way to delay the war, even if only for a while."

Lafayette is already giving bonds to his troops as pay. This has undoubtedly led to a series of complaints within the army and the National Guard. This will harm his influence over the military. If we can delay him for a bit, he won't be able to become a Caesar!"

"Joseph Bonaparte serves under Lafayette, and he is a very clever man. We can go talk to him. Maybe he has a solution," Saint-Just suggested.

"Contact him?" Robespierre furrowed his brow. "I think Mr. Bonaparte is not very eager to get involved in our affairs. Besides, he helped us a lot last time and suffered some losses as a result. Recently, Lafayette transferred him and his brother from crucial positions."

"Mr. Bonaparte won't mind that," Saint-Just said. "Mr. Bonaparte may not be very interested in getting deeply involved in politics. His interests lie more on the side of nature, which is natural considering his exceptional talents in those matters. But as you've seen from the last incident, Mr. Bonaparte is a man of morals and integrity. His loyalty to France and the revolution is unquestionable. I believe if we reach out to him, and if he's able to help, he will definitely assist us."

"Are you talking about that Corsican nobleman?" Marat asked, his tone dripping with sarcasm. "A nobleman, and you trust him?"

"Can Corsican nobles even be considered nobles?" Saint-Just responded. "Besides, not all nobles are untrustworthy, just as not all commoners are loyal to the revolution, for example..."

"All right, Louis, I know that even though you're not a noble, there's a 'de' in your name. But do you really think he has a solution? Is he some kind of wise Solomon? If he were that clever, he wouldn't be stumped by the 'four-color problem' (apparently, Marat was still sore about the setbacks he faced regarding the 'four-color problem'). The solution may not necessarily be with him; I have my own ideas!"

When Marat mentioned the 'de' in Saint-Just's name, Saint-Just was initially inclined to argue with him, but when Marat claimed to have a solution, he suppressed his anger and asked, "What's your idea?"

Marat rolled his eyes at Saint-Just but decided to speak. Marat was very ugly, and he knew it. Like many ugly people, he despised good-looking folks, especially Saint-Just, who was unnaturally handsome, making Marat even angrier just by looking at him.

"Mr. Robespierre," Marat began, "Lafayette is a hypocrite and a coward. If we expose his conspiracy directly, he won't dare to proceed..."

At this point, Marat chuckled like a night owl, "Hehehe, who knows, to clear his name, this hypocrite might even pretend to work with us to avoid war. Mr. Robespierre, doing this kind of thing, my newspaper has limited impact, so it's best if you personally publish some of these articles. Trust me, it will work. I'm best at dealing with these hypocrites."

...

After the meeting, Marat quickly left, and Saint-Just bid farewell to Robespierre. Robespierre noticed that Saint-Just's mood didn't seem to be very high and said to him, "Louis, Marat is like that, full of thorns. He can make anyone furious with his words. But don't take his attitude too personally. He has good abilities, and he is very loyal to the revolution, and he's upright and

disciplined. The more you get to know him, the more you'll see that Marat is actually a good person."

"Mr. Robespierre," Saint-Just said, "I don't have any particular thoughts about Marat because of his attitude. I'm just wondering if his method will really work."

### Chapter 76: The Carrot of Peace (3)

Following the planned strategy, Robespierre began publishing articles in numerous newspapers, vehemently attacking Lafayette for conspiring to start a war, undermine democracy, and become a dictator. He urged the people of Paris and all of France to open their eyes and thwart the ambitions of this schemer.

"If Lafayette's conspiracy succeeds, France will plunge into a more disastrous state than under past feudal monarchs. After all, Louis XVI was a legitimate king, but what is Lafayette? A pretender! So, are the lives sacrificed by the people in the Bastille and in the struggles that followed meant to serve this pretender? This is intolerable! Well, that Robespierre may be a rabble-rouser, but in this statement, he has been sharp in exposing Lafayette." Count Rodolphe looked at the article in his hand and smiled at a young man nearby. "Let's publish this article in 'Orthodox France.'"

"Count, publishing such a rebellious article in 'Orthodox France,' won't it harm our..." The young man hesitated.

"So, Phibs, I'll trouble you with this. Provide an editorial introduction to this article. Criticize the errors and transgressions within it and make people see the true face of these rebels. Even in the parts where they speak some truth, offer commentary. Can we not use one article to expose two types of rebels?" Count Rodolphe chuckled.

"You're right, Count," Phibs replied. "I hope that one day, we can hang all these rebels from lampposts!"

"There will be such a day, Phibs, don't worry. Believe me, there will be such a day. Everything will get better. There will be a day when Jacobins and Lafayette supporters are left hanging from lampposts, stinking up the place! But for that day to come, we must get to work immediately."

...

"The Austrians dare to threaten mighty France; this is absolutely an intolerable affront to France's majesty. These Austrians seem to have forgotten what the bayonets and military boots of France look like. I don't understand, with France being insulted like this, how can some cowards come out and call for peace..." Robespierre read this and couldn't help but laugh.

"Mr. Robespierre, others are tarnishing your reputation like this, and you're still laughing?" Saint Just complained.

"Reputation? Robespierre's reputation?" Marat, who was present, burst into laughter. "Does Robespierre even have a reputation left? Robespierre's reputation has long been that of a rebel and a bandit, hasn't it? I think the words used in that passage were quite gentle towards him. If I were to insult him, it wouldn't be just like this."

"Mr. Marat, this is not an article in a royalist newspaper, nor is it an article in the Lafayette Club's newspaper. It's an article from those moderate newspapers," Saint Just said.

"Those fence-sitters," Guesman chimed in. Guesman was a close associate of Marat, just as Saint Just was with Robespierre.

"Yes," Saint Just said, "but often, we need those fence-sitters on our side."

"Stop dreaming!" Marat said. "Let me guess, the name of the newspaper you have is 'Paris Business,' right? Its owner is Clavier, the banker, isn't it? How can a banker not like a war? Since Robespierre openly opposes the war, to be honest, they are being quite lenient with him. Besides, didn't you suggest that we propose measures to limit the price of food? If we do that, we'll be cursed even more."

"This is a necessary sacrifice, Louis," Robespierre calmly said. "The key now is how Lafayette plans to react."

...

How would Lafayette react? In fact, Lafayette had not reacted yet. He had too much on his plate, and he had not had the time to respond to this. Moreover, Lafayette had found that since Robespierre attacked him for conspiring to start a war, it seemed that many moderates were helping him counter Robespierre. So, he felt that he should pause and see how people would react before making a response.

So, Lafayette postponed for two more days. After these two days, he suddenly found that something was amiss. He discovered that many people were attacking Robespierre, but they were criticizing him for being too weak and for fearing the military threat from Austria, without realizing that France was the most formidable Catholic nation. They didn't know that France excelled at defeating Catholic nations. It was truly a disgrace for the French people!

And what Lafayette cared about the most, his intentions to avoid becoming a military dictator and undermining democracy, had not been mentioned at all. They not only refrained from mentioning it, but some even said that if it meant defeating foreign enemies, having a Caesar wouldn't be a bad idea.

But Lafayette knew that when they said "having a Caesar wouldn't be a bad idea," it was just a means to persuade themselves to support the war. If he really tried to become a Caesar, these same people who were now saying this would probably stab him in the back and deliver a eulogy at his corpse, shedding tears while giving a speech titled "I love Lafayette, but I love France more" no, it should be "I love Lafayette, but I love France more." Then they would turn France into a republic.

Moreover, Lafayette also knew that the current state of the army was not ideal, and it wasn't the right time for war. In a way, Lafayette did need a war, but unlike the Royalists, he needed a war that he could win, a war that was properly prepared for. If the debate became too heated, and the National Assembly immediately passed a declaration of war, it would be detrimental to him.

"We must stop this situation immediately," Lafayette knew the importance of public opinion because he had learned during his time in North America how crucial public opinion was to prepare and organize for a war.

So, Lafayette's controlled media went into action. They attacked Robespierre on one hand, but on the other hand, they propagated that while France never feared war, "we will not abandon peace until it is absolutely hopeless, and we will not lightly make sacrifices until the last moment." Furthermore, Lafayette had no desire to become a military dictator.



Although Lafayette's hatred for Robespierre grew stronger, in practice, at least in terms of delaying the war, Lafayette had become an ally of Robespierre.

This caused both Lafayette's and Robespierre's standing among the moderates to decrease significantly. This was normal, as the moderates, essentially the future Girondins, were mostly big businessmen and bankers. For them, war was an opportunity for great wealth. As long as the final outcome wasn't the destruction of the nation, war wasn't a bad thing for them. Therefore, those who openly opposed war as they were now were obstructing their path to wealth.

However, Lafayette also knew that war was inevitable. Even the members of the Feuillants Club, in their hearts, were anticipating war. Perhaps Lafayette truly did not want to become a military dictator, but many people in the Feuillants Club were following him because they hoped he would become a military dictator like Caesar. If Lafayette disappointed them too much, they might...

Banker Clavier was receiving a guest at his residence on Svres-Dauphine Street. This guest was named Joseph, but he went by Fouch.

"Thank you, Mr. Fouch," Clavier said. "The information you've provided me is of great importance. His Excellency Lafayette is truly..."

At this point, Clavier shook his head and didn't continue with his sentence.

"Lafayette is overly concerned about the bigger picture," Fouch said.

"But we don't need to maintain the current state of affairs. I need a change in the bigger picture. Mr. Fouch, I wonder if you can provide me with some assistance? Everyone knows I'm a man of ethics, and I've never mistreated anyone who's helped me." Clavier looked at Fouch and said slowly.

"Do you need a war?" Fouch asked.

"Yes," Clavier replied briefly.

"But I've heard that due to the possible war and the turmoil, there are difficulties in recovering some of your bank's loans related to agriculture, influenced by the uprisings in the provinces. So, it's quite possible that you won't be able to withdraw money from your bank meaning that even with your deposit slips, you can't get your money from there!" Fouch asked again.

"Oh, you've heard those rumors too?" Clavier chuckled. "That's why I need things to become even more turbulent as soon as possible."

"This is a bit challenging, but your operation doesn't require such great turbulence," Fouch said. "In addition, I can help you make a connection with another friend..."

...

One morning, Joseph went to work as usual and happened to run into a worried-looking Lazare on the way.

"What's the matter, Lazarus? You seem to have something on your mind?" Joseph asked.

"Joseph, where do you have your money in the bank?" Lazare asked in return.

"I have some in Clavier's bank and some in..." Joseph replied.

"Oh my!" Lazare said, "Have you heard? Clavier's bank has just announced that due to difficulties in recovering loans related to agriculture and the uprisings in the provinces, they have temporarily

suspended withdrawal operations in other words, even if you have deposit slips, you can't withdraw money from there!"

## Chapter 77: Unexpected Fortune

Joseph didn't panic upon hearing the news. He furrowed his brow in thought and said, "Carnot, it's not convenient to talk here. Let's go to my office."

Joseph and Carnot entered the office together.

Carnot sat at the table next to Joseph's desk, while Joseph closed the door and took a seat in front of Carnot.

"Carnot, has someone already bought the Clavierel Bank's certificates at a discounted price?" Joseph asked.

"Do you know about this? Yes, someone is buying the bank's certificates at a 30% discount. Joseph, should I sell some of mine? I don't want to incur a 30% loss, but I'm worried that the losses might grow if I don't act," Carnot said, frowning.

Joseph didn't answer directly. Instead, he asked, "Carnot, do you have any spare cash on hand?"

Carnot didn't quite follow Joseph's line of thought and assumed Joseph was offering financial assistance. He replied, "Not much, but I can manage for now. Joseph, I remember you have several siblings to support of course, Napoleon can help you to some extent now..."

Joseph chuckled, "Thank you for your concern, but I think you may have misunderstood me."

Joseph glanced around to ensure no one else was in the office, and then he lowered his voice and continued, "Carnot, what I mean is, if you have any extra funds beyond what you need for daily expenses, including money in other banks that you can access, withdraw it all and try to buy Clavierel Bank's certificates as much as possible."

"What?" Carnot widened his eyes and stared at Joseph. Finally, he reached out to touch Joseph's forehead as if checking for illness. "Joseph, are you feeling okay?"

"Don't worry, I'm perfectly fine," Joseph assured him. "Carnot, my point is, who knows better than us about which regions the uprisings are affecting the bank? Have the uprisings in various places grown significantly in the past few months?"

Carnot seemed to catch on. "The uprisings have increased somewhat in the last few months, but not significantly."

"Yes, and with uprisings happening everywhere for almost a year now, Mr. Clavierel should be quite familiar with the market situation," Joseph said. "While he might not be the Napoleon of the financial world, he's at least a respectable Viscount. If there was a sudden crisis due to common and foreseeable risks, leading to bankruptcy and the inability to honor deposits, Carnot, do you think it's likely?"

Carnot was taken aback, "So, you're saying all these rumors are false? Clavierel Bank isn't really in trouble? Then why is Mr. Clavierel doing this?"

"Because many of the people buying those certificates are Mr. Clavierel's own associates! Wait and see; it won't be long before certificate prices drop to 60% or even 10%. Mr. Clavierel will buy them

back at those low prices, and then the certificates can be redeemed as usual. And then do I need to explain further?" Joseph said.

"Is that even allowed?" Carnot trembled, clenching his fists. "Aren't they robbing the people? What about justice and the law?"

"Stay calm, Carnot. We... we won't be breaking any laws," Joseph reassured him.

"No, I can't stand idly by and watch such unscrupulous actions!" Carnot exclaimed. "Joseph, let's go find General; he should be able to stop this."

Joseph hesitated. He knew that going with Carnot would likely make General Lafayette suspicious, believing Joseph was instigating Carnot's involvement in military matters. Yet, he had already fallen out of favor with Lafayette, and another offense wouldn't matter much. In his mind, if further offending Lafayette meant gaining Carnot's friendship, it was worth it.

"Carnot, calm down," Joseph said. "Do you think the General is unaware of all these events happening throughout Paris? Do you think he'll interfere in such matters? Mr. Clavierel is a man of influence, and the General needs his support to control the current situation. If the General takes action against this, he'll stand against a significant number of people who support Mr. Clavierel, and it will come at a considerable political cost. The General cannot afford to do that."

Carnot paused, realizing the complexity of the situation. Finally, he said, "Joseph, what you're saying makes sense. But I can't just sit back without trying."

"Then I'll go with you," Joseph offered.

Carnot had already calmed down and said, "Joseph, you stay behind. There's already some misunderstanding between you and the General. Going now might only worsen it. I'll go alone."

Joseph sighed and sat back at his desk to resume his work.

About half an hour later, there was a knock at the door.

"The door's unlocked, come in," Joseph called out as he lifted his head from his paperwork. Carnot pushed the door open and entered.

Joseph stood to greet him and then closed the door behind Carnot.

"So, how did it go? What did the General say?" Joseph asked.

Carnot replied, "Just as you estimated. But his reason is that I lack evidence."

They both fell silent for a moment. Then Carnot said, "Joseph, you mentioned earlier that we could buy those certificates. Well, how much money can you put in?"

"Carnot, you?" Joseph questioned.

"Rather than letting those unscrupulous people take all the money, why don't we intercept a portion? With money in our hands, we can at least do some good. In Mr. Clavierel's hands, it can only harm more people," Carnot explained. "I used to read 'Friend of the People' in the past, and that man named Marat used to say we should hang all the bankers from lampposts. I thought he was too extreme at the time, but now it seems he may have had a point. Our government is too lenient with these people!"

Carnot wasn't an expert in financial matters, but he was exceptionally skilled in mathematics, so he quickly grasped the concept. In the end, he told Joseph, "Joseph, I can contribute around 4,000 livres. But I'm too busy to handle the logistics, so I'll leave that to you."

Joseph replied, "Carnot, are you saying that I'm not busy? Your workload is about half of what I used to manage when I led the Red Army. Back then, you had time to spare for writing research papers, and now you're saying you're too busy?"

"Maybe I'm pursuing a young lady," Joseph joked.

"Really? What kind of young lady?" Carnot inquired.

"No, no, I was just joking," Joseph quickly denied.

"I see. Well, maybe it's time for you to find a young lady. With your talents, hasn't any lady fallen for you yet?" Carnot asked. "Do you want me to introduce someone to you?"

Joseph declined, "Not for now. I think it's not the right time for romance until the political situation in France stabilizes."

From Carnot, Joseph obtained 4,000 livres. He also borrowed 6,000 livres from Lavasix the chemist, not his nephew. Adding his existing 5,000 livres, Joseph had a total of 15,000 livres to invest in the speculative activity.

The subsequent events unfolded just as Joseph had predicted. In the following two weeks, Clavierel Bank's certificates rapidly devalued in the market, dropping from 80% to 70%, 60%, and finally causing a panic, falling below 20%. At the lowest point, certificates were worth only about 14% of their face value.

Joseph seized the opportunity and invested his 15,000 livres when the certificates dropped to 20%, which would later become 14%. Days later, Mr. Clavierel announced that he had successfully navigated the crisis and could fully redeem all the certificates. Joseph's original 5,000-livre certificates had transformed into 75,000 livres. After deducting the 20,000 he gave to Carnot and the 6,000 he owed Lavasix (including interest), Joseph had quietly earned 44,000 livres.

"In times of chaos, making money is too easy," Joseph remarked. "No wonder people risked the guillotine for it."

## Chapter 78: Declaration of War (1)

While Robespierre and Lafayette were trying to slow down France's march towards war, the influence of the Girondins and the moderate factions pushed France closer to conflict.

Interestingly, it wasn't the original moderate members who started to unite on this issue. The one who rallied the moderates was not even originally part of their faction; it was Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville, a member of the Jacobin Club.

Brissot had started his career as a journalist and had followed the Duke of Orleans for a time. After the Duke's diplomatic mission to England, he briefly aligned with Lafayette. However, after King Louis XVI's flight, he shifted his support toward the Republic and clashed directly with Lafayette in the Jacobin Club. During the split in the Jacobin Club, he sided with Robespierre.

In the new elections, he became a representative of Paris in the National Assembly. It was there that he formed a friendship with someone who would be of great significance later Georges Danton.

The National Assembly was an unusual place where the more radical a representative was, the more attention they received, and the more "influential" they became. This environment led Brissot to radicalize his political views in two main aspects.

The first was his endorsement of the Republic. In the National Assembly, most of the moderates had lost their trust in the king, making it easy to applaud any attack on him. Brissot introduced the "Emigre Act," which targeted the nobles who had fled the country. He accused these nobles of plotting to kidnap the king, conspiring to incite rebellion, and declared them enemies of France. He proposed measures like ordering their return for trial (though it was highly unlikely they would return). If they didn't return, they could be tried in absentia, convicted, and face various penalties against their persons (which couldn't be enforced) and their property (which could).

Brissot made people believe that the "Emigre Act" would significantly alleviate or even resolve the crisis caused by the excessive issuance of assignats.

Assignats, initially backed by church property, would have been fine if the government had strictly controlled their issuance according to the quantity of church land available. However, once the printing presses started rolling, the temptation of unlimited money became too irresistible. Many governments, especially those living hand-to-mouth, couldn't resist the allure of unrestrained money printing. The exact amount of assignats in circulation was unknown, but rumors suggested it was enough to buy the church land several times over. This rapid inflation of assignats put immense pressure on the nation.

If the government could seize the land of emigrated nobles and use it as collateral for assignats, the crisis could be temporarily alleviated. Of course, if they kept printing assignats, it would eventually lead to a catastrophe, but who cared about the future?

This proposal easily passed in the Assembly. The Feuillants, of course, opposed it, and Lafayette didn't want to press too hard on the nobility. However, the moderates, along with the Jacobins, had the majority in the Assembly.

Then, as Brissot hoped, the king vetoed the bill. According to the constitution, the king had the power to veto laws passed by the Assembly. The king knew that vetoing such a bill would anger the Assembly, but with the Feuillants now his only reliable allies, he had no other option.

Interestingly, the veto increased Brissot's reputation. If this tactic worked, it could be used again. Brissot quickly introduced a bill to stop paying salaries to priests who refused to pledge allegiance to the Republic. Naturally, the king vetoed this bill as well.

Through a series of maneuvers, Brissot established his reputation in the Assembly. With the support of Danton and others, he united many moderates around him and earned Louis XVI the nickname "Mr. Veto," reinforcing the image of an unyielding monarch.

As for the second aspect of his radical direction, it was war.

With the support of Mr. Danton and his associates, Brissot had to speak for their interests. However, he couldn't express this externally. His slogan for promoting war was "Export the Revolution."

Lafayette had been emphasizing the issues within the French army and its lack of combat readiness, using it as a reason to delay war. Meanwhile, Robespierre continually attacked the possible "military dictators."

In response to Lafayette, Brissot argued that while the French army had its problems, other countries' armies had even more significant issues. He believed that the French Revolution had inspired all of Europe, with people in most European nations hoping for their own revolutions. They looked to the French revolutionary army with great anticipation. Once war broke out, the French army would be invincible, according to Brissot.

Regarding Robespierre's concerns, Brissot mockingly suggested that he actually believed in the goodwill of foreign feudal monarchs and underestimated the patriotic fervor of the French people.

Under Brissot's leadership, the moderate factions quickly gathered strength. A significant number of individuals, including Varennes and the Roland couple, rallied around Brissot. Once they united, war was just one step away.

On November 29th, the Assembly passed a resolution, demanding that the king immediately warn the Elector of Trier to disband the armies of French emigrant nobles in his territory. If he refused, France would use any means necessary, including force, to protect its security.

This time, "Mr. Veto" didn't veto the resolution. Instead, he approved it and sent the warning to the Elector of Trier.

The Elector of Trier was a member of the so-called "Holy Roman Empire." In theory, threatening to use force against him meant threatening to use force against Austria. Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette had previously hoped for the Emperor to invade France, but he had fled after some bluster and had never mentioned an invasion again. Thus, the Assembly's resolution was a pleasant surprise for the king and queen.

However, things took a turn that no one expected.

The feudal monarchs across the Rhine were terrified by France's warning. They were as afraid of the chaos within France as the French were of their internal divisions, and they were apprehensive of the French revolutionary ideas spreading to their own territories.

Moreover, it wasn't entirely baseless. In some of these countries, people had shamelessly violated France's intellectual property rights by forming their own "Friends of the Constitution" clubs. While it was unclear how many royalists there were in France (despite emigres' claims about the prevalence of royalist sentiment), there was no doubt that these neighboring states had their own royalist sympathizers.

Consequently, the Electors immediately backpedaled. They sent envoys to Vienna to ask for the Emperor's protection and dispatched representatives to France to clarify the misunderstanding.

In reality, if the Holy Roman Emperor had displayed some backbone and led the charge against France, they might have been able to intimidate the revolutionaries. However, the Emperor was constrained by the Eastern Roman Empress, who, although the most fervently anti-French ruler in the world, had assumed the role of protecting France in this particular instance.

Interestingly, it was the King of Spain who issued some words of warning. After all, he was a Bourbon, too. Yet, his protest was feeble, merely requesting that France respect other nations' sovereignty and avoid threatening them with force. This appeal did little more than display his own timidity.

The "Roman Emperor" had to urgently consult with the King of Prussia to devise a plan. They also dispatched envoys to England to seek assistance. However, England made it clear that it understood and respected the Emperor's position in this matter. It was willing to remain neutrally benevolent.

This was a reasonable stance for England. If it had joined the chorus against France, it might have indeed deterred the French from acting rashly. After all, the English were staunchly anti-Catholic. However, the English knew that the Holy Roman Emperor didn't want war with France. With this assurance, the French were emboldened, and war was now on the horizon.

In Europe, the French loved food and beautiful women, the Italians cherished art and beautiful women, but the English? The English had no other interests except witnessing the conflagration on the European continent.

Until the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia came to an agreement, Austria had to maintain restraint, which further encouraged France's bellicose elements.

#### Chapter 79: Declaration of War (2)

Emperor Leopold's actions were seen by the French, or at least most of them, as acts of fear towards France. This sudden show of confidence among the French had a significant impact. It cast both Robespierre, who opposed the war, and Lafayette, who advocated caution, in the light of cowardice.

After voluntarily withdrawing from the parliamentary elections, Robespierre's reputation took a hit. For someone without much personal power, the loss of reputation weighed heavily. After such a loss, Robespierre had little room for change and had to rely heavily on the support of the common people.

Similarly, Lafayette suffered significant damage. As a general, his power and prestige largely depended on his victories. Now, he was perceived as lacking courage, which was almost intolerable for a general. Consequently, Lafayette's influence was greatly reduced. The Paris Commune, controlled by the Republicans, took the opportunity to infiltrate the National Guard, which theoretically was under the jurisdiction of the Paris municipal government. This wasn't an issue when the Commune was in the hands of the loyalists, but the situation had changed.

With both anti-war figures weakened, the pace of war naturally accelerated.

On the other hand, Emperor Leopold did not remain idle. He engaged in bilateral negotiations with Prussia, seeking to form an alliance against France. The Prussians, aware of the Emperor's predicament, took advantage of the situation, and both sides continued to negotiate. However, the French's appetite for war was increasing.

To curb France's adventurous impulses, just after the New Year, Emperor Leopold issued another proclamation. He threatened France, claiming that if France didn't behave, they would be crushed. He also insisted that France must guarantee the king's legal status and remove the extreme Republicans from the assembly.

Naturally, this declaration had the opposite effect. In response, the French Assembly immediately proposed the formation of three armies for a war against Austria. The king and queen, who were eager for war, wouldn't veto such a decision, especially since it meant they could finally get rid of Lafayette, whom they loathed.

With Lafayette's status, he was naturally appointed as the commander of one of the three armies. A year ago, he would have undoubtedly been made the overall commander of the French forces. However, now he was only assigned to lead one of the three armies, which would march to the borders of France and Belgium. The crucial position of overall commander went to a newcomer, Dumouriez.

Dumouriez had earned merit in the Seven Years' War, earning a promotion to colonel. Later, he entered the diplomatic service and engaged in various diplomatic activities. In 1790, he joined the "Society of the Friends of the Constitution," and was a close friend of Mirabeau. Mirabeau had even recommended him to the king in their correspondence, praising his loyalty and courage, suggesting he could replace Lafayette.

On the night of the split in the "Society of the Friends of the Constitution," he stood firmly against Lafayette. But he did not side with Robespierre, and soon he became a close friend of Brissot.

So, at this moment, Dumouriez had support from almost all sides. He suddenly became a pivotal figure in the French political landscape.

Seeing that the French were getting serious, Emperor Leopold quickly made concessions to Prussia, and both countries reached an alliance to protect the Rhine region. According to this alliance, both nations would send fifty thousand troops each to resist a potential French invasion.

However, Emperor Leopold still hoped to avoid war with France, as the risks were enormous. He was trying to resolve the situation through diplomacy and hadn't yet issued a mobilization order.

It's said that the emperor asked his close advisors, "Have the French ever suffered in wars against Catholic countries?"

However, the emperor had never been in the best of health, and suddenly fell ill from all these efforts. Soon, he passed away, and his son succeeded him as Emperor Francis II. The new emperor had been quite dissatisfied with his father's hesitancy. Upon ascending the throne, he promptly issued a mobilization order.

Though the mobilization order was issued, it would take time for the armies to be truly mobilized. As soon as the French received news of Austria's mobilization, they passed a resolution to declare war on Austria.

This resolution was long-awaited by the king and queen, and they signed it without hesitation. On March 16th, Louis XVI addressed the Assembly and officially declared war on Austria.

At this point, Prussia hadn't had a chance to mobilize, and Austria was the only nation directly facing France. To protect themselves, Austria moved the fifty thousand troops initially designated for attacking France to Belgium to guard against a French invasion, and began mobilizing additional troops for an offensive into France.

Prussia immediately protested Austria's diversion of troops and declared that they wouldn't mobilize for war until Austria's fifty thousand troops arrived. After negotiations with Austria, Prussia lowered its demands and began military mobilization on May 4th. However, they wouldn't be ready until at least July. In this era, armies lacked the ability for "quick-start," "campus attack," and "rapid response."



On the other hand, Austria wanted to bring Sweden into the war as well. However, this time, it seemed that God favored France, as the King of Sweden was assassinated, plunging Sweden into chaos and halting any interference in French affairs.

All these events effectively gave the French three months to prepare militarily. However, during these three months, the French achieved very little of significance.

The French field army had significant shortages and low morale, while the National Guard faced different issues. It was composed of local militias who were reluctant to leave their hometowns to fight.

Now that France planned to launch a preemptive attack, the National Guard was less relevant. This left the French field army, with a total of over sixty thousand troops, to begin their invasion of Belgium. Although they outnumbered the Austrian garrison, the French forces were disorganized. They pinned their hopes for victory on the Belgians launching an uprising against the feudal system. As for the revolutionary elements in Belgium, they hoped to rely on the French army to defeat the Austrians and then incite their rebellion.

Everyone relied on each other, but the outcome was tragic. On April 29th, the French and Austrian armies met. As soon as they made contact, the French realized that the Belgian support they had expected had disappeared. The French noticed that the Austrian defenses were strong, leading them to believe that an attack was futile. The commanding officer ordered a retreat, but due to the confusion, it turned into a rout. The Austrians were left dumbfounded as the numerically superior French army suddenly disintegrated. The French troops were in disarray, littering the battlefield with weapons and the white fleur-de-lis flags of the Kingdom of France. The commander, also died mysteriously in the chaos.

When news arrived, General Charles Dumouriez immediately led his forces in retreat. Karl, another French general, retreated even earlier. Lafayette, with his exposed flank, had no choice but to withdraw as well.

This defeat was a humiliation for France, and the reputations of the commanders at the front were utterly destroyed. Lafayette, who was once remembered as a hero of the American Revolution, was now ridiculed as a coward who ran back like a shot rabbit without even seeing the Austrians.

In reality, Karl had retreated earlier than Lafayette, but Lafayette received more attention due to his greater fame.

To salvage the situation, the French government resorted to frantic money printing, resulting in staggering inflation. This inflation made life even more challenging for the urban citizens. By the way, Claviere took advantage of this opportunity to reuse the same tricks, and they miraculously succeeded again. It seemed that human memory was not fundamentally different from that of fish. Of course, Joseph and Carnot took the opportunity to catch a free ride on the train again.

Robespierre knew that his chance had come. Along with his friends, Danton (who returned after Brissot came to power and canceled the pursuit of him), and Marat, they began to create public opinion, claiming that the French army's defeat on the frontlines was the result of internal saboteurs, royalists, and enemies conspiring. They directly accused the king of being their leader and demanded his trial, transforming France into a republic.

Lafayette realized that the situation had become extremely dangerous and decided to make a desperate attempt. He dispatched an envoy to negotiate a truce with the Austrian commander, hoping to return to Paris with his troops and launch a military coup to rescue the king and save constitutional monarchy. However, one of Emperor Leopold's orders to the Austrian generals was to stall Lafayette. They knew that Lafayette was the last person the French king would trust, so his truce request was naturally ignored.

Lafayette abandoned his troops and secretly returned to Paris, attempting to mobilize the National Guard in the affluent western part of the city for a coup. However, the king opposed his actions, and without the palace's cooperation, he had no way to employ this military force. In the end, he had to leave disappointed.

At the same time, Dumouriez, knowing that the revolution was imminent, resigned from his position as Minister of War, left Paris, and personally took command of the northern frontlines. However, upon his departure, he made an unusual request:

"I want Joseph Bonaparte and his brother Napoleon Bonaparte, the former commanders of the Red Army, to join me in the north as my aides."

Is there anything specific you'd like to know or any part you'd like to focus on further?

#### Chapter 80: Valmy (1)

In addition to dealing a heavy blow to the Bonaparte brothers, Dumouriez had also taken the entire Red Army with him. Despite Carnot's furious protests (Carnot believed that sending Joseph to the front would severely hamper the efficiency of their rear war preparations and that sending the "Red Army" to the front was akin to killing the goose that lays the golden egg), Dumouriez knew that his political life hinged on the outcome of this battle. If he were to lose, what use would there be for others to keep the mother hen? So, Carnot's protests were naturally ignored.

Moreover, Joseph felt that leaving Paris was a good idea. Firstly, the situation in Paris was becoming increasingly unstable, and a revolution could erupt at any moment. He believed that if a revolution broke out this time, the danger it posed would be much greater than the last. There would likely be a situation where "the palace was reduced to ashes, and the streets were hung with the bones of nobles." Staying in Paris was too dangerous, even more so than being at the front lines. As they say, a wise man doesn't stand under a collapsing wall, and leaving Paris at this moment was a blessing for Joseph.

As for Lucien and Louis, Louis was manageable; he was young and obedient. But Lucien was showing signs of troublemaking potential. He was neither a child nor an adult, understanding some things and pretending to understand others. He had a bold spirit, in other words, he was in the phase of a troublesome teenager.

Unfortunately, to nurture him, Joseph had imparted a considerable amount of politically accurate knowledge, but his elder brother Napoleon hadn't been of much help. He had filled Lucien's head with a lot of romantic and rebellious thoughts. In summary, Lucien was a teenager with some newfound knowledge.

Teens with knowledge could be trouble. A teenager who hadn't learned chemistry might play with fireworks at home. But a teenager with knowledge of chemistry might be found concocting thermite

in their garage or trying to make their friends inflate like balloons by feeding them gas-producing pills. (Don't hide, Edison, we're talking about you!)

Lucien was precisely one of these knowledgeable troublemakers. Joseph thought that if they didn't keep an eye on him, who knew what kind of trouble he might stir up? Joseph could return from the front lines to find Lucien leading a group of people, waving flags in front of Doyel Castle and shouting, "Down with the feudal system, long live the Republic!"

So, they needed someone reliable to look after him.

Among the people Joseph knew, only one person was both reliable and trustworthy Lazare Carnot. So, he entrusted Lucien and Louis to Carnot with great solemnity. He spoke frankly to Carnot, saying, "Lazare, Lucien has made some active friends during his art studies. I'm not saying these people are bad. If they were, I would never allow Lucien to associate with them. But... you know, Lucien's friends are all hot-blooded youths, ready to lay down their lives for noble ideals, the kind of people who are willing to fight for their beliefs. They're good people, but... Lazare, you know that everyone has their own interests. I'm more than willing to sacrifice for France, and Napoleon is the same. But... Lucien is still too young, his thinking isn't mature yet, so I hope..."

Carnot interrupted him, saying, "I understand what you mean, Joseph. The situation in Paris is very unstable now, and who knows what might happen any day. The environment is harsh, people's behavior is unpredictable, some have joined the royalists, some are fighting, and some are waiting. Lucien is just a child; he should wait. Honestly, I'm not afraid to sacrifice for France either. But the reason we're willing to sacrifice for France is so that those children don't have to. I'll take care of them."

"Why does that sentence sound so familiar? Like I've heard it in a movie somewhere; it seems a bit ominous," Joseph's thoughts seemed to drift in an odd direction. "Maybe I should entrust Lucien and the others to someone else?"

However, although Joseph knew people who were morally upright, able to care for orphaned children, and trustworthy, like Armand, Saint-Just, or even Robespierre, he believed that they were the ones who needed to be isolated the most. If he entrusted Lucien to them, who knew what would happen? So, after some thought, he decided to trust Carnot.

"But Joseph, you know I'll be very busy during this time, especially after you leave," Carnot continued. "I suggest you have Lucien and Louis take a break from their studies and stay at my house. I'll have my wife look after them and keep them from going out."

"That's a good idea," Joseph agreed, nodding. "And they should have something to do. I've prepared some math problems for them. It'll not only exercise their minds but also consume some of their excess energy."

While saying this, Joseph took out a folder from his bag and handed it to Carnot. "But the orders came suddenly, and I didn't have time to prepare more questions for them. Lazare, if you have time, you can also come up with some questions for them."

"That's an interesting idea," Carnot nodded. "Don't worry; I'll check their homework every night."

And so, Lucien and Louis began their dark days.

Dumouriez left Paris, but he didn't immediately head north to command the counterattack. He had completely lost trust in the French army, so he decided to rely more on the volunteer army to defeat the enemy. Although the volunteers lacked training, their morale was high, and they wouldn't inexplicably collapse like the regular army. As the failures continued in the front, the National Guard also realized that France had to defend itself. Many patriots joined the volunteer army, providing Dumouriez with over ten thousand troops in the short term, just in the vicinity of Paris.

The morale of these volunteers was quite high, but their military skills were lacking. Therefore, Dumouriez had Joseph and Napoleon intensively train them while praying to God for the enemy's movements to slow down.

Perhaps it was France's longstanding piety that touched God. The enemy's movements did indeed slow down.

Until Austria and Prussia began their war mobilization and continuously shifted their troops toward France, the great Empress of the East Roman Empire, after scolding the French rebels and expressing moral support for Austria and Prussia's military actions, gently waved her hand, and a hundred thousand gray cattle surged across the border.

The Polish army rose to resist, and they were doing well, but while they were bravely fighting, King Stanisaw led the way to surrender. "We were ready for a life-or-death battle, Your Majesty, why did you surrender so soon?" Surrendering, while they fought valiantly, was demoralizing for the Polish army. By July, the whole of Poland was in the hands of the Empress.

The Empress's actions surprised Austria and Prussia. They thought she would consult with them on how to divide the Polish spoils, but the Empress simply grabbed the whole of Poland for herself and put it on her plate.

Austria and Prussia immediately proposed that all three parties sit down together to discuss how to divide Poland. But if you don't have troops, why would the Empress negotiate with you? So Prussia immediately halted the troops it was sending to France, hoping for a peaceful resolution. After all, even if they didn't send troops, they would still have limited repercussions as they didn't share a border with France.

Upon seeing Prussia's conciliatory stance, the Empress made a counter-proposal. She suggested separate negotiations with Prussia and Austria to discuss the division of Poland.

Her intention was clear; she wanted to divide and conquer. Prussia had sent troops, so they could get a share of the spoils, but what about Austria? Could you move your troops from the border with France? Could you dare?

Austria naturally couldn't, so why should the Empress share the spoils with them?

After much negotiation, the Empress had the meat, the King had the soup, and the Emperor, well, he could smell the meat.

And time passed as they haggled.

It wasn't until July 30th that the Austro-Prussian coalition crossed the border into France and encountered relentless heavy rain. In this era, almost all roads were dirt roads, and in heavy rain, they turned into mud pits. Carriages and cannons couldn't move an inch in these mud pits, which

gave Dumouriez more time to prepare. The coalition's supply lines became difficult to maintain, and a significant portion of their troops lagged behind.

Following Joseph's advice, Dumouriez had already relocated a significant number of French artillery units to the Sedan region in preparation to intercept the coalition here, allowing them to rest while the coalition suffered from endless negotiations and muddy roads. This further increased the number of troops under Dumouriez's command. Not long after, he had more than a hundred thousand troops. However, Lafayette, realizing the grim situation, failed to persuade the army to follow him back to Paris to support the king, so he left the army and attempted to reach North America. Unfortunately, he was captured by the Austrian army while on his way through Holland.

By August 19th, the Austro-Prussian coalition had crossed the border into France, but then they faced a continuous downpour. With most roads turned into mud, their vehicles and cannons struggled to move through the quagmire, giving the French the upper hand in both numbers and artillery.