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IMPERIAL VENUS

A Novel of Napoleon's Favorite Sister



By EDGAR MAASS

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Book One

A FAMILY'S FORTUNES, BAD AND GOOD

I

The Green Palace

FOR A MOMENT Paoletta was so deeply offended that she did not know what to do. Her light brown eyes looked in anxiety and question at the three boys who had so suddenly stopped her on her way home through the narrow streets. Twilight was yielding fast to darkness, to the soft shadows of the southern night.

The three young assailants barred the way with stones in their dirty hands. Paoletta knew only one of them, a certain Giacomo. They were street urchins, ragamuffins without shoes, scantily dressed, with black hair falling disheveled over narrow foreheads into eyes that gleamed like the eyes of dangerous, treacherous animals. None of them was more than twelve years old. Each was tough and agile, with sinewy arms and legs. They reminded Paoletta of the fierce mountain cat that had devoured dozens of her pigeons in Milelli, until Marianna Casamarte caught the striped beast in a trap and clubbed it to death. That was a business which took a good long time. The cat just would not stop breathing. It clung desperately to life. Its yellow eyes gleamed aggressively. It raised its broad paws again and again, until at last it stretched out, still hissing, the tension went slowly from its limbs and its body became only a loose bag of cat's fur.

"I'll club you to death!" Paoletta shrilled, in a voice at once threatening and plaintive, something like the cry of an angry sea gull.

Her voice astonished the boys. It had some remote, primitive quality that one would not expect from this girl. Even in the fast-falling shadows of the night, hazy as were their ideas of beauty, the gamins knew their adversary was beautiful. They still could see the short black curls that fell carelessly over her soft cheeks. Her whole body was boldly developed, already adolescent. The thin dress caressed the curves of the taut, sweet frame, emphasizing its stirring promise. It clung to the fine shoulders, encircled the pure throat, rose and fell with the budding breasts. In the semidarkness, standing erect in her little flat-heeled shoes, her light eyes disdainful and full of hate, she

looked like some visionary being, like one of the younger goddesses who, in times long gone, would appear suddenly out of nowhere before lonely travelers in the mountains and bring them wretchedness. But the ragamuffins did not think of that. Her high, sharp voice just gave them shivers.

The threat of being clubbed to death made little impression on them. They could not see any club in her slender hands. They wavered undecided, until suddenly, as if by silent agreement, they started cursing her again, calling her more names. So they resumed the altercation that to them, as to the heroes of yore, was the necessary preliminary to battle. It made their blood run hot, made them angry, forgetful of the danger that looms in any fight.

"Traitor!" one of them screamed. "Vile daughter of the vile family that stabbed our father Paoli in the back! Bootlicker of French murderers!"

"Jacobin!" taunted the second. "Sans-culotte! Traitor to Corsica!"

The third, Giacomo, stammered to find the most cutting words. Then he yelled, "The Borgos will get you and whip you for hours!"

Paoletta gave a shrill laugh, not quite convincing. "There'll be no more Borgos," she cried, "when my brothers get through with them. Their corpses will stink in the streets. And I spit at them now, the evil ones!" She stuck out her lips and spat with force, her body trembling with excitement.

"Do you see what she's doing?" cried the second boy, quite taken aback. "She's spitting on our honor!"

"She shall whine over her deed," the first one shouted. "She shall crawl on her belly like the bitch she is, when I stone her."

"Come on!" Paoletta growled. "Fight me, you coward!"

The boy measured her for a quick moment in the dark with his shifty eyes. Then he decided to stay where he was. It was safer. True, she was only a girl, but she was a bit older than he and well built, and her eyes still gleamed with hate.

Giacomo thought hard for something apt to say in this critical minute. Sweat dampened his hair. He looked like a pimp, notwithstanding his youth. Then he broke out: "Look at her stringy hair! Look at her cabbage head! Look at her pig eyes! She's the ugliest girl in Corsica. Men shudder when they see her."

There the young gallant made a mistake, not so much because his compliments were obviously untrue, as because they changed Paoletta

into a fury. The dart had struck home. She felt the blood rush into her head and flood her brain. Casting aside any fear and screaming like a madwoman, she rushed to battle, her dark curls flying, her teeth bared.

The boys were flabbergasted. The attack was so sudden their peasant wits refused to work. They forgot the stones clutched in their grimy hands. Two of them sought safety, running away as fast as their legs could carry them. Only Giacomo, whether because he had more courage or for some other reason, tarried—and he tarried to his regret. Paoletta fell on him with both hands. Her nails scratched his cheeks and clawed at his eyes, so that he thought for a moment she had blinded him. Helpless, he opened his hand. His stone dropped into the street. "Ow!" he screamed. "I give up."

"Too late!" Her hands grasped his matted hair.

"Don't, Paoletta! Sweet Paoletta, please don't!" he moaned.

She pushed him against the wall of a house. Three times she bumped his head with full force against the stone. "Take that and that and that," she screamed triumphantly. Each time it sounded as if a green melon had been thrown at the house.

But Corsican skulls are hard. The boy did not lose consciousness. This embittered his fair enemy. She kicked his shinbone, so that he danced around and about like a howling dervish. She stretched out her leg suddenly and he stumbled over it and fell flat. He knew what was coming. "Mercy, Paoletta!" he moaned. "Paoletta, I love you."

"I won't be loved by a beggar!" Paoletta cried. She kicked his mouth so hard his teeth cracked.

Then there was silence, broken only by the boy's groans of self-pity. Paoletta stood over him, watching him closely, a curious glint in her eyes, her small breasts heaving under the scant cover of her thin, worn dress.

"That will teach you," she said, quieting down, but still breathing heavily, "not to annoy a lady when she's out walking—least of all a lady of the house of Buonaparte. Do you hear me, Giacomo?"

"I hear," he said painfully. He sat up and spat blood.

"You might at least apologize," she said sternly.

"It was so sudden. Please let me get my breath, sweet Paoletta."

"You said you loved me." Paoletta was full of curiosity. "What made you go after me then?"

"Love," he said.

"Really?"

"Honest truth, so help me God!" He dared to give her an inquiring look.

She was obviously flattered. Then her eyes grew doubtful. "But what did you expect to gain by it, Giacomo?" she asked.

"I thought I might—" he stammered—"I thought, while the other two held you, I might get a kiss."

"Oh, you beast!" She laughed, not without a certain satisfaction. "But why, then, did you call me ugly?"

"Out of the bitterness of my heart. From my long suffering."

"You're a sly one, Giacomo. Do you really find me beautiful?"

"Oh, how beautiful!" he cried softly. "How I love your wonderful curls, your long eyelashes, your soft cheeks! Oh, how I adore you! Paoletta, let me kiss you . . . please . . . please!"

"It doesn't please me at all," she said contemptuously. "You may, however, kiss my hand as servants do."

He grasped the offered hand and covered it with kisses. Then he began kissing her arm. "Thanks," he mumbled, "a thousand thanks!"

"That's quite enough," she said suddenly, and wiped her hand on her dress. "Don't forget your station."

"Whatever you say, sweet Paoletta," the boy murmured humbly. He started to rise.

It was very dark now. The darkness had some soft velvety quality in it. "Jesus, Mary and Joseph!" the girl cried in her curious bird voice. "I forgot all about the Signora. What will she say? It's all your fault, you little rat. Follow me, ten steps behind."

Paoletta ran, her head high, her shoes hardly touching the rough cobblestones of the white street. It was as if she floated, without effort, without noise, mysteriously through the night. The boy obeyed her command. He panted. His naked feet patted the stones. His eyes had the look of a dog severely beaten by its master, stupid, cowardly and finally docile.

It was hot in the small white room, for the shutters of the windows were closed. A single guttering candle lighted the sparsely furnished space. The Signora sat in silence, immobile, carved from stone. Her dark abundant hair was neatly parted and fastened simply in a long knot at the nape of her neck. In the fitful candlelight her

chiseled features brought to mind one of those antique sculptures that are not so much the representation of an actual person as the incorporation, in female form, of a great idea. The beauty of her youth still lingered about her. Under bold brows her eyes still shone with vitality, and happily the folds and wrinkles about them did not show in that feeble light. The wide, strong mouth, careworn but not embittered, made a fine curve.

The Signora awoke from her reverie. "I wish the girl would come," she said quietly. There was no anxiety in her voice.

Back and forth before her a stout, middle-aged, little man paced with anxious steps. The Signora watched him narrowly. His coat sleeves were much too short, and when she noticed this amusement flickered over her stern face.

"I tell you again, my dear sister," he said with great emphasis, "that all your children are getting out of hand. Paoletta should have been home hours ago. What is she doing out alone half the night? After all, she's a girl and should be watched."

"I trust her," the Signora said proudly.

The little man shook his head with disgust and scratched his chin noisily. "And that good-for-nothing son of yours, Lucien—do you trust him too? Do you approve this speechmaking of his in Toulon? I ask you in all seriousness what right he's got to be sending inflammatory letters to Paris? And of all things, letters about Signor Pasquale Paoli who is rated a hero in these parts! And at the very time when this hero holds the whip hand! Tell me, sister, what is this sop-eared troublemaker of yours thinking of, anyway! Eighteen years old! Fantastic!"

"He's ambitious."

"A fine ambition to get the lot of us six feet under ground!" answered the Signora's brother. "A fine ambition to ruin his family! This Lucien of yours! You know, he might bear in mind that his uncle is a priest. Just look at this!" He lifted his arms and his sleeves slipped up almost to his elbows. "Rags and hand-me-downs for a man of God—nice, aren't they? A fine kettle of fish! Here I sit dressed like a clown and try to figure out whether it'll be the sans-culottes or the Corsicans who'll cut my throat."

"The times are troubled, my dear brother," the Signora said gently.

"That's putting it mildly. But why—pray enlighten me—why does he deliberately get tangled up with these murderers, these Jacobins?

Why does he go out of his way to pick the worst rascals of the lot? What's he getting at anyway, sister? Even now there are a few decent men left in this world."

"Don't get so upset, brother," said the Signora. "What choice is there today? Aren't the Jacobins on top? What do you expect of an ambitious boy? These ruffians are the enemies of our enemies—which makes them our friends."

The little man cast a despairing look at the wall and held his tongue.

A young girl sat at a small round mahogany table, taking all this in. In a way she resembled the Signora, at least enough to be easily recognized as her daughter. But with her the mother's splendidly severe features had suffered decline into asperity and sullenness. At sixteen she was not a pretty thing at all, and that because of no single striking departure into ugliness. Imperceptible changes here and there made all the difference. The nose was just a little too long and straight, the eyebrows were too pronounced, the forehead was too high, the hair too coarse. The girl felt her own uncomeliness and showed her consciousness of it in a habitual look of injured pride.

She had listened in attentive silence to the exchange between her mother and her uncle. Now she turned truculently to the Signora. "Uncle is right," she said: "Lucien is an idiot. I think so, anyway. He has perfectly horrible manners. He bites his fingernails. All those Jacobins have shocking manners. You have to be educated in Saint-Cyr, like me, to understand just how much that means."

"Hold your tongue, Elisa!" said the Signora. Elisa's expression became more cloudy than ever.

There was a light knock at the door. The Signora rose, calm and still slim for her years, smoothed the wrinkles from her dress, then took the candle and went over to the door and opened it.

Paoletta stood in the doorway. Her entrance seemed to change the atmosphere. When the Signora put down the candle, before she could utter a word of reproach Paoletta had her arms around her neck and was whispering into her ear, "Oh, Mother, how I love you!"

The Signora tried to keep her stern look but, against her will, affection was in her eyes when she said, "You're late, Paoletta—and on this night of all nights! Your uncle was worried. What happened?"

"Nothing that I know of, dearest Mother," the girl lied. "I lost my way and forgot the time."

"Oh, she forgot the time!" Elisa mocked in her harsh voice. "That's why the side of her dress is torn. She even has blood on her arm. Don't you see, Mother?"

"Paoletta, you've been fighting again," the Signora said.

The girl laughed and kissed her mother on the cheek. "I had to, Mother. Three boys stopped me. I won. I knocked Giacomo's head three times against the wall. The other two boys ran. Oh, it was fun!"

"Fun!" Elisa muttered. "That's what she calls fun—beating up rowdies and being beaten by them. A nice ladylike pastime, I call it."

"You don't understand, Elisa," Paoletta said. "They insulted the family and called us traitors and sans-culottes."

"Indeed! Did they?" the uncle said, and he added with unreasonable satisfaction, "There you see, sister, we're hated by everyone, even by the youngsters. And all because of your precious son, the splendid orator."

Paoletta yawned and stretched. She threw herself on a couch. She bedded her right hand under her head, pressing the dark curls; the left hand she rested on her shapely, round knee. In the dim candlelight all her child-woman allure was thrown into relief, the smooth calves, the soft thighs. Yet there was nothing shameless about her early ripeness, for she was completely natural. Nature was strong in the childish body, the rich flesh eager to mature. Paoletta, too, looked like her mother. But while in Elisa's case the Signora's features were caricatured in sullen defiance, in Paoletta they were refined into exquisite charm, and the mother's severity and dignity were rounded into classic loveliness. It was no spiritual, inward perfection, but rather the dangerous and visible beauty of a goddess, a beauty that breathed not only in the face, but in the limbs and torso as well.

"Ah, and now she's going to sleep, I see," said Elisa in an offended tone.

"Let her sleep, then," said the Signora. "We probably have a long trip ahead of us."

"Well, as far as I'm concerned," said Elisa, "I don't see how anybody in a fix like ours can sleep. Why, all our trouble doesn't mean a thing to her. A lot she cares!"

"There are many things you will never understand, poor Elisa," the mother said, shrugging her shoulders.

Elisa's face darkened at this rebuff. She would have begun to shed

tears, well knowing the Signora detested them, had there not, at this moment, come a light but imperative knocking at the window.

"It's Costa," said the Signora, opening the shutter wide. They all saw a man wrapped in a long cloak and wearing a cap with a long peak falling rakishly to one side. "Signora," he said hoarsely, "I've got the horses. And I've got some people from Bastelica and Bocognano we can trust. But we've got to be moving. There isn't much time."

"How many men have you rounded up, Costa?" asked the Signora.

"About three hundred. But you know that Borgo has over a thousand in town. They've got plenty of muskets, too. Most of us have nothing but knives."

"I understand. Where do you plan to take us?"

"To Milelli," said Costa. "But I doubt that the Signora will be safe there long."

"Then where do we go?"

"After that there's nothing left but to head for the forest."

"Very well," the Signora said after thinking it over. "There was a time when the forest protected me from the French. Now it will hide me from the Corsicans. Of course," she added, smiling to herself, "I was much younger then, very much."

"The Signora does not grow old," said Costa gallantly.

The Signora left her lieutenant and went over to the couch. "Paoletta, get up."

The child opened her eyes, and at once she was wide-awake again, as if she had just been feigning sleep. "Mother," she asked, "are we going to Milelli?" Her voice was bright and quick. "Will I have a horse? I'd like a white one. I've always dreamed of having one. Will you let me?" She drew her legs up under her, all animation as before. "Mother," she said, "do you think my pigeons are all right? Sometimes I think that Marianna Casamarte would like to eat them up. The way she looks at them! Those great big yellow teeth of hers!"

"But my dear child," said the Signora, tenderness struggling with impatience, "don't you realize it's almost midnight? We can't be bothered with such nonsense right now. Get your bundle and come along. Hurry up, now, hurry!"

"I'm coming," said Paoletta. Nimbly she sprang from the couch. "Coming, coming right away."

With a deep sigh, the Signora set about gathering her things together. She knotted her bundle and took a parting look about the white-walled room. Paoletta was already outside. They could hear her laughter, fluting high over the men's.

"How stupid that girl is!" said Elisa. "She's stupid and common. What manners! Idiot!"

Outdoors it was pitch-dark, the sky black silk. The moonless night was stirred by a soft breeze, a gentle exhalation from the mountain earth, laden with a sharp, spicy fragrance from a thousand plants and herbs. It was the breath of the woods, of the heath land and wilderness. Paoletta sucked the fine night air into her lungs as she stood in the warm darkness. She had done this countless times before, and yet it still made her tingle with a light excitement and a prescience of something pleasurable.

There were a great many men waiting around the house. Some were resting on the cobbles of the strada Malerba. Others idled about, talking softly to their mates. In spite of the warmth of the night the men wore long dark cloaks. Some few of them were mounted, and waited on their shaggy little horses, whose rough heads hung resignedly between their knees. There was a powerful tension in the air. It seemed as if the men could feel the ill-defined threat hovering all about them in the dark, and actively enjoyed their foreknowledge of danger, looked forward to it as to some gratifying event. Eyes glittered evilly under their black headgear. Now and then a short laugh rang grimly in the night. All the men were armed. Here a youth grinned wolfishly as he tested the edge of his knife. Delicately he ran a callused forefinger over the shining blade. There an old-timer sat shaking his head and fondling his unwieldy blunderbuss, a bellmouthed weapon with the kick of a cannon. They were all peasants of Bastelica and Bocognano, only too happy to escape their endless and backbreaking toil in field and vineyard, to take leave of wife and children, in order to spend some time in the much more absorbing business of fighting. In their eyes it was a more honorable way of passing the time, and might be more lucrative. The ancient Corsican lust for blood, battle and risk burned like vitriol in their veins, an inclination toward violence, treachery and outright murder.

All the men gathered at the Signora's house were followers of the family of Buonaparte. They were well aware that elsewhere in the

town of Ajaccio at this very moment other armed men like themselves were assembling under the same moonless night, partisans of the Borgo family.

Paoletta walked among the men and called out in her night bird's voice, "Where's my white horse? Where is he?"

Without a word a peasant led forward a sorry animal. Paoletta's face fell. "That's no white horse," she complained. "You don't think a Buonaparte is going to ride an old nag like that!"

A boy of fifteen came quietly over to Paoletta and reproached her with big, melancholy, brown eyes. "Of course it's a good horse," he said sadly. "Get up, now, Paoletta." He offered her a hand up. She swung up onto the horse's back, and it shook itself. Then up behind her clambered the boy. "Let's have the reins," he said mildly.

"No, I won't," said Paoletta. "And you can hold still, Louis. Don't be jiggling around that way. After all, I am a lady."

"It's Elisa who's the lady," said Louis, always in the same melancholy tone.

"Elisa is a goat, that's what," said Paoletta.

Meanwhile the rest of the family had gathered their things together and were out in the street. They greeted the waiting company calmly and were answered by a deep murmur of voices. Then the column got under way. There were the muffled hoofbeats of the horses, their laboring breath, an oddly boiling sound, the shuffle and scuffle of the men afoot, and from time to time a soft metallic clash of side arms. The way out of town led between white houses that looked like stage scenery, so blank and lightless were the windows in the night. Gradually the houses became smaller, clumps of trees and gardens more frequent. Wide-branched chestnut trees, densely leaved and shivering gently in the night wind, arched together from both sides of the road. The road suddenly left the dwellings behind and began to climb up toward the hills.

Then, steeply ascending, it swung back on itself in such fashion that the little town lay beneath it in a shallow trough, dark, silent, unmoving. Farther beyond stretched the beautiful curve of the bay. Then came the open sea, more felt than seen under the feeble light of the stars. The column halted at this switchback in the road. The peasants drank from their flasks of sour red Corsican wine and sank shining teeth into the coarse bread they carried with them. Here the

Signora dismounted. With Elisa and Paoletta she went to the edge of the steep cliff below which lay her home in Ajaccio.

Then the profound stillness of the Corsican night was broken by an eerie, far-off uproar. Like a muted chorus of the damned it ascended from the depths. Raptly the Signora and her two daughters listened. A shot rang out, clear and loud, and apparently close by. The echo bounced back from the heights. The shot signaled the appearance of fires below, and the light of torches. Smoky red flames licked upward, and suddenly the broadly felt landscape drew together in a smaller circle.

The Signora stood motionless, tall and straight in silhouette, her features impassive. The flames spread and brightened as she watched, and more shots cracked like whips. The light waxed stronger, became yellow, then almost white. Now the Signora could make out clearly crackling, separate fires, billowing up into clouds of smoke. White houses flared stark and clear in the strange illumination; trees stood out sharply. It was a violent travail. The long-awaited had happened at last. The dark sea and the dim peaks looked on indifferently.

Costa came up to the Signora. "My lady," he said hoarsely, "the Buonaparte house is burning. The Borgos have set it on fire."

It was morbidly fascinating. The Signora could not tear her eyes away. There, below, was dissolving in flame the plain three-story house in the strada Malerba, the house where she had borne her sons and daughters. There, with endless worry and work, she had reared her children, after the early death of her husband. Along with beams and stones the fire was destroying the plans, hopes and fears of a decade. Her heart contracted in her breast. But not a word of complaint crossed her lips, nor was there a single tear to blur the eyes that stared grim and thoughtful at the spectacle.

Elisa wept openly, and following her lead Paoletta began to snivel. Even Louis, who had hastened to them when he heard Elisa's sobbing, bit his lips and could hardly hold back his tears. Elisa took her handkerchief and wiped her eyes. "In Saint-Cyr," she gulped, "I was always with nice people, nice-looking people who were rich and had connections, fine French girls. They used to say to me, 'You Corsican, what are you doing here with all your wildness and murdering, what are you thinking of to be here among us ladies?' And they were right, they were right."

"That's just silly talk," said the Signora, more to herself than to

Elisa. "What do those empty-headed little fools know about Corsica? What do they know about life?"

Elisa dabbed at her eyes and again burst into a storm of tears. "This is the end of the Buonapartes," she moaned.

Then the Signora smacked her weeping daughter across the mouth. "This is where the Buonapartes begin," she said fiercely. "Here's where our luck begins, not ends. Do you hear me?"

Elisa was so taken aback by the blow that her wild sobbing stopped as if a gag had been stuffed into her mouth. She caressed her cheek, her nostrils still quivering. Paoletta rushed to her mother, stood on tiptoe, kissed the stern, resolute lips. Costa lurked behind, seeing all. His face was furrowed deeply by wind and weather. He blinked amazed, his black eyes at once simple and cunning. "So be it, so be it, Signora!" he said sententiously.

The private tragedy of the Buonapartes, the burning of their home, the peasant war in Corsica, were only fragments, small components in a great play of historical forces that had its center in the Palais des Tuileries in Paris. The Convention held sway in this old seat of sovereignty. It was an extraordinary mixture of dry-as-dust lawyers, burning idealists, hair-splitting moralists, fops, poets, money-grubbers. It was the most unpredictable parliament ever assembled.

In the Place de la Révolution in Paris stood the remarkable invention of Dr. Guillotin, a tall framework with a diagonal blade that severed heads smoothly and painlessly, quite according to humanitarian principles. The guillotine accommodated any sort of neck. The "national razor," as the instrument was called, worked quite as well with the lowly as with the mighty of France. It snipped off the coiffured head of a duchess and the humble noddle of a serving girl with equal readiness. Of the same equable disposition was the public prosecutor, Monsieur Fouquier-Tinville, who made his public pronouncements of the death penalty while chewing a chunk of bread. So, too, was Monsieur Samson, in whose family the office of executioner of Paris had rested proudly for over two hundred years.

Royalists and liberal Girondists who still survived were in a state of chronic agitation. They could all expect to have their worthy bodies eventually thrown into the cemetery of the Madeleine, or under the walls of the Parc Monceau, where they would be rapidly dissolved by quicklime. The chilling prospect stimulated them to

ceaseless activity. Outside France lurked the enemies of the Republic —Austria, Prussia, Spain and England. All manner of secret propositions were exchanged between foreign powers and dissidents within the nation. There was continuous unrest in the outlying provinces. Brittany and the Vendée were scenes of rebellious risings.

Among the areas of rebellion that strove against the new regime was the island of Corsica, which had not been long under French rule. Old men of the island still had a lively memory of the rule of Genoa, and of a year of revolt against the French under the leadership of the popular hero, Pasquale Paoli.

Paoli himself wavered between casting in his lot with England and joining with France. His mind was made up for him when he was denounced before the Convention and tagged there as a traitor. With misgivings he sought the aid of conservative England. Among his most prominent supporters was the family of Borgo, and among his most confirmed opponents the family of Buonaparte. Although the Signora and her late husband, Signor Carlo, had once been counted most enthusiastic advocates of the movement for Corsican independence and, indeed, at great risk to life and limb had supported Paoli's campaigns in the island's forests and mountains, gradually they had fallen away. Ancient jealousies and enmities were at work, and they preferred to gamble on a greater future for themselves under the tricolor. The Signora's two oldest sons and her daughter Elisa had been educated in France at the expense of the royal treasury. Year by year, connections with the adopted homeland had been established, and places found for the boys. Their careers, at least, appeared secure.

It was also the sons' opinion—and it was they who took over the leadership of the clan after the father's death—that the revolutionary chaos seething in France offered altogether superior, if more difficult, opportunities than the slow, aloof English milieu. The mass commotion of the Revolution had an adventurous promise which drew them as surely as a magnet draws iron filings. And yet they were not altogether opportunist and calculating. The gamble was the main thing. It appealed to their Corsican make-up. Their deepest motives centered in a profound desire to further the interests of the clan. It was the smallest of all social units, the family, that engrossed them, not the best form for the state, a question so endlessly discussed in Paris and with such formidable consequences. The Buonapartes were real-

istic, self-absorbed people who simply observed that France was near, England far away. Even the English squadron under Admiral Hood, which at this time made the waters between Cap Corse and the French coast highly uninviting, did not deter the brothers once they had committed themselves.

At the same time the family had endeavored not to make the break with Paoli irrevocable. It was perfectly obvious that Paoli was now actually stronger than the French on the island, even leaving Hood's forces out of account. The final rupture was precipitated by the family hothead and black sheep, eighteen-year-old Lucien. He was a tall, thin, rather round-shouldered youth with a stubborn, angular forehead and unruly hair. A born idealist, he was ever the victim of a tendency to rush pell-mell after his own notions, without bothering to consider that ideals and reality more often than not cannot be made to jibe. Moreover, like so many idealists, he enjoyed hearing himself talk. He had ample opportunity for that in the little Jacobin club in Ajaccio. But at last it came to him that this rostrum was altogether too obscure for such rare forensic talents. Accordingly he betook himself to the mainland and made himself known in Toulon, a city which, like Corsica, blew hot and cold on the brink of the Revolution.

Here, in a much larger Jacobin club, Lucien delivered eloquent discourses, thrashing his arms about, rumpling his mop of hair and generally behaving like an excited cock. In a tremulous voice close to tears, in thunderously menacing harangue, he described the sad state of affairs in Corsica. He told about Paoli's plan of betrayal and the sufferings of loyal Corsican patriots at Paoli's hands. He even went to the point of publicly demanding that the distant Convention be informed of these malefactions, summon the rebels and give them the guillotine's kiss they merited. Spellbound by Lucien's exhortations, the Jacobin citizenry heartily agreed. Letters of accusation were sent off to Paris, and the Convention was not hesitant in responding to the wishes of the Toulon faithful.

News of Lucien's oratorical triumphs traveled not only north, but south as well, to Corsica. Here they were received in an altogether different spirit from that of the Tuileries. Lucien had betrayed his fatherland—that was the way the simple Corsicans saw it. And unfortunately the Corsicans, in their barbarously simple fashion, were not content with verbal reprisal. Partisans of Borgo moved toward

Ajaccio bent on vengeance. Thereupon the Buonaparte family rallied their own followers, drawing them from the little town and its environs. Only a few answered the summons and any sort of organized resistance proved out of the question. The two oldest sons rushed to the northern coast of the island to call for help from the Frenchmen who had landed at Calvi. But the French forces were only one battalion strong and had all they could do to hold their own in Calvi and Bastia against thousands of Corsicans. At any time Hood's squadron might intervene with disastrous results.

For a while, then, everything seemed lost. To save one's own skin looked the very best that could be expected. From long experience the Signora knew very well that no mercy might be anticipated from a mob of enraged Corsicans. Her two youngest children, little blonde Annunziata and fat, chubby-cheeked Jerome, she left in her mother's safekeeping, for they were not equal to the rigors of a flight through the mountainous countryside. Her beloved Paoletta, her Elisa and Louis she decided to take with her, along with her stepbrother, the Abbé Fesch, who would surely be lost without her energetic presence.

The plan was that for the time being the Signora should retire to her family property at Milelli, which lay in the foothills not very far from Ajaccio. Perhaps there she would be unmolested, though the chance was slim. And, as Costa said, after Milelli there was nowhere to go but into the wilderness. It was planned also that, in case the two oldest brothers should be able to secure a ship's services to carry the family northward to safety within the French lines at Calvi, they should all meet at an old Genoese watchtower looking out from a height over the sea.

In Toulon, meanwhile, the stripling Lucien ranted from his podium, oblivious of the fact that he had plunged his family into mortal hazard. So strong was the Buonaparte clannishness that not a word of criticism was uttered against him, either by his mother or by his brothers. Only Elisa complained, more out of temperament than considered rancor. No one attached importance to her strictures; they were only a sour note in music, a slip of the tongue in speech.

Paoletta had not the faintest notion of the deeper import of what was going on about her. She had heard, to be sure, of the Convention and the Revolution. But she had no clear idea what these words meant, other than that they represented mysterious powers which

were on her side, like her Uncle Fesch's angels, who guided and protected without ever being seen. Paoletta's interests were limited to the immediate phenomena of her world, the things she could hold in her hands, stroke, smell, taste.

She awoke in her bed in Milelli, looked at Elisa, still asleep and frowning, threw off her nightgown and for a moment admired her own pert little breasts. Then she slipped into her flowered dress, the only one she had to her name, pulled on her worn shoes and ran out of the room. She carelessly ordered her black curls with her hands as she skipped along. The morning sun smiled on her. Great joy, a pure *joie de vivre*, streamed through the half-grown girl. She stretched out her hands to the sun and said aloud, in her strange, off-key voice, "Oh, you bright and lovely, lovely sun!"

In the weed-rank garden it was breathlessly still. Only a few fowl scratched busily in the grass. A butterfly tumbled and fluttered down the grassy path. On a gentle slope stood some mulberry trees, badly in need of pruning and overgrown with vines run wild. Everywhere the grass was tall.

Already it was warm, though now and then a cool breath of wind from the mountains swept through the garden. The breeze was fragrant with thyme, lavender and rosemary, intermingled with the tang of resinous evergreens and sun-scorched broom. It was the pure breath of the wilderness and it brought Paoletta to a halt, charmed by the exciting perfume. She wondered why, in the light of day, it was so full of promise, whereas during the night it had seemed heavy, indifferent, dreamy.

Pensively the child looked down, her eyes bright with thought. Then suddenly she dashed off. She ran with her head held high, with the mysterious grace of a wild thing that seems to fly rather than to run, her feet scarcely touching the ground. The morning wind whipped back her thin dress and outlined her supple figure. The wind tossed the crowns of the mulberry trees and turned up the silvery sides of the olive leaves. A dappled light played over the garden.

It was the earth smiling a dryad smile. Like a nymph Paoletta sped, light-footed, lightly clad, bright-eyed, feeling the soft grass under her, drinking in the pleasure of the morning. In her young splendor she was one with the murmuring trees, the sweet-smelling flowers, the mountain air, the wind from the distant sea.

In her flight she cried out like a gull. She ran under the tall trees

to a tumble-down hut, the roof of which sagged perilously. Hearing her cry, a gray-haired old woman appeared on the threshold, saw Paoletta and rushed forward to meet the child. She wore coarse woolens and over her head a black kerchief in the Corsican style. Her teeth were as large as an animal's and filled her big mouth to overflowing. Paoletta rushed headlong into her arms, and was violently caressed, devoured with affection.

"Paoletta, *mi'* Paoletta!" the woman shrieked. "My beloved child, my own! Why, how sweet you've become, you soft sweet fruit!"

She pushed the girl back the better to look at her, and stared as absorbed as a sculptor examining his finished work. Her eyes filled with tears, and she wiped them away with her gnarled hand. Her voice broke with genuine emotion.

"It's my own milk that did it," she went on; "it's my own rich milk that's made you so pretty. You were the greediest glutton that ever laid mouth to my teats. How well I remember it! My breasts were tight as two snare drums until you began to get at them. Every night my man was good to me. The heat of it filled my bubbies to bursting. But you, you darling pig, sucked me dry as a gourd. My poor, poor Tomaso had to get along as best he could. Bad luck for him to have to suck after a milk sister like you, Paoletta *mi'!*"

Paoletta laughed merrily at this tirade, and the old woman laughed with her, refusing to let her go, clutching and kissing her again and again. But even in the midst of her laughing the child became grave and suspicious. "Marianna Casamarte," she said solemnly, "have you been eating my pigeons again?"

Marianna shrugged her shoulders and looked away. "Good God," she said, "what do a few pigeons matter where there's so much love!"

"I knew it, I knew it!" squealed Paoletta. She stamped her foot and her eyes blazed with anger. "You're just a witch, you cold-blooded pigeon-eater."

"Don't get all worked up like that, my sweet little one; you'll be the death of me!" begged Marianna. "One of the pigeons broke his leg. Would you want him to suffer, poor dear? Then his mate pined for him. Should I keep her in misery? Of course not! I wrung their necks, poor things."

"I don't believe it," said Paoletta, yet she was not sure.

"Come, love, it's the living truth, so help me Christ," said Marianna. "Look at me! Where would I get the courage to kill off a

healthy pigeon? And how would a foolish old woman like me dare to betray her Paoletta? Come with me and see how the pigeons are doing, sugar-sweet."

The dovecots were at the far end of the garden. Paoletta cooed at the birds, lured them with grain dug out of a pocket in Marianna's skirt. The pigeons fluttered out, wings whirring, and came to rest on the ground with fat thuds. Busily they swarmed about Paoletta, their heads ceaselessly nodding and bobbing. Their feathers were a blue-gray. Looking here and there and here and there with gold-rimmed pupils, they went prudently about the business of stuffing their crops. The pleasant commotion moved Paoletta to cry out in delight. She put grain on her shoulders so that the pigeons would perch on her. Cooing and gripping with their curved toes they clung to Paoletta's shoulders and climbed onto her head, entangling their feet in her hair. Jealous of her attention they whirled about, showing fans of tail feathers as they hung in mid-air.

Marianna Casamarte stood off to one side, unable to stop feasting her eyes on Paoletta. "Maybe you'll have a man for yourself pretty soon," she said abruptly.

"What are you talking about, Marianna Casamarte!" A blush stained Paoletta's throat. "I'm only thirteen years old. I'm not old enough yet to be slipping into bed with a man. Don't you think so?"

"We'll see about that, we'll see," said Marianna. "You've drunk plenty of my milk. And I know that my own blood was hot as fire when I was much younger than you are."

"You're a witch, Marianna Casamarte," said Paoletta. "Elisa says so, and she's right."

"Elisa just talks to blow the bits from the cracks in her teeth," said Marianna. "Who has to be a witch to see you're going to lose your maidenhead! Why, my dear pussy love, it's written all over your face."

"On my face!" Paoletta was horrified. She rubbed her hand over her mouth so roughly that the pigeons were frightened away.

"Come on now, my little dove," said the beldam. She grinned widely at Paoletta's discomfiture. "Let's go into my place and see if we can read the future in the fire. How about it?"

It was dark in the hut and smelled of the dried onions hanging down in long strings from the blackened beams. Under a rusty kettle a fire glowed feebly on the hearth. The old woman dragged up a

stool. "Sit down here," she commanded. "Try not to think a single thought. Think of nothing and just dream as you look into the fire. Then he will appear."

Paoletta sat down, the old nurse standing behind her. Her thoughts raced this way and that, slowed down and dissolved. Then a strange weakness possessed her and left her in a state between sleeping and waking, bereft of will. Her eyes followed the lazy glowing and pulse of red within the heart of the fire. At first it was not a human face at all that appeared to her. She seemed to see a salamander, some unearthly creature spawned by the flame. Erratically the nameless thing darted from side to side like a shuttle through the warp.

Paoletta opened her mouth to speak. But she could not. She felt exhausted, her limbs heavy as lead.

Then suddenly, as if floating into view from a great distance, a face was vaguely defined, shapeless at first, the features changing momentarily but gradually growing clearer. She saw a small, round hat, and hair hanging down, a high forehead. The image became sharper and more solid. Paoletta saw the sealed mouth, the round chin. Only the eyes were not truly discernible.

"Napolione," she whispered, half dreaming. "Aren't you in Calvi, in Bastia?"

"Napolione!" The old woman muttered to herself. "So it's him she loves most of all. What a mistake I made, for sure! She's only a child, perhaps. Only a child after all. Her brother's still hanging over her. She's not ripe for the plucking yet."

The girl slept now, stupefied by the fire. The old woman bedded the curly head in her lap and thought about the past. One scene rose clearly before her mind's eye. It had happened about six years before when Napolione, the Signora's second son, returned home on furlough after a long absence. His father, the careless, good-looking Carlo, had died in France, suddenly, victim of cancer of the stomach. The family was in straitened circumstances. Where enough money was to be found to nourish, clothe and shelter so many children no one had any good idea. The little lieutenant, Napolione, had the smallest of incomes from his army post. Joseph, the oldest boy, earned very little. The children's great-uncle, the archdeacon, might have helped, but he was extremely avaricious, and devoted the bulk of his time to guarding against anyone foolhardy enough to dip into his riches. It was a bad time for the Buonapartes.

The Signora had lined up the younger children in the best room of the house. Chubby, curly-headed Jerome, little Annunziata, close-mouthed Louis, bean-pole Lucien and her favorite Paoletta, then only seven years, were all in a row. Marianna herself had been witness to all this. She watched from the background, troubled and observant, her hands folded under her apron. Then the Signora came in with her lieutenant son Napolione. The young man looked badly in need of proper food, especially when dressed, as now, in his dark uniform, which emphasized the hollows in his cheeks. So long it had been since he had laid eyes on them that he could not even pick out his brothers and sisters by name.

There was an awkward silence, but it was broken when Paoletta left ranks, ran into her brother's arms and kissed him passionately. The spell was shattered. Thereupon they all hovered about the newcomer, inspecting the ornamental dagger that he wore at his side, the buttons of his uniform. And never would Marianna Casamarte forget the mother's look as she gazed at her two favorites, Paoletta and Napolione. She was the picture of pride and confidence. She even smiled, the first time since her husband's death, Marianna Casamarte saw. Perhaps Napolione and Paoletta are closer than most brothers and sisters, the old woman had thought, more like twins.

And so, remembering that day, the crone stroked the child's hair until she wakened. "Where am I? What happened?" Paoletta gaped. "Oh, it's only you! Are you satisfied now? All I saw was my own brother."

"We'll have better luck next time," Marianna assured her.

Someone hallooed for Paoletta, and presently Costa stuck his tousled head into the hut. "Hurry up, hurry up," he ordered. "Those Borgos are on the march again. We've got to head for the woods."

"I'm going, too," said Marianna. "You're not going to leave me behind if I know it." She hurriedly stripped down a few strings of onions. "It's been a time since I've been out in the *palazzo verde*," she said.

Along the way the dark green holly grew thick and clumpy. The sun streamed and danced on the path, all but overgrown. From afar bare granite slopes gleamed redly, a redness flecked with the black of syenite. Dwarf evergreen oaks clung to the heights, and among the

rich ground cover glittered wild strawberry leaves with the perfection of costly ornaments.

This was the *palazzo verde*, the green palace which then covered some six-sevenths of the island. It was a dense, low, thicket growth, almost impenetrable and broken by stands of larger trees. Into this maze only the initiated dared enter. In places the scrub woods opened out into upland heath. Here grew a profusion of hardy plants. The broom was heavy with flowers as yellow as butter. The turf glistened. The smell of wild asparagus was in the air. At the heath's edge woodbine, laden with white, twined about the small tree trunks. Gray granite cliffs, the ruins of an ancient mountain range, a tumbled, mossy waste of stone, were all about. Over them darted lively newts, playthings of the sun-god who alone could heat their cold saurian blood. In places the ridge rose up in steep naked slopes directly out of the holly. Wind-torn pines clung precariously to the stone. Here and there dark cypress torches shot up, seemingly to mark the entrance to a subterranean world.

This wilderness was the cradle of the Corsican spirit. It gave refuge to the banished. It swallowed up murderers who, according to the vendetta code of an eye for an eye, had fulfilled their clannish obligations. For thousands of years these mountain fastnesses had left their imprint on the island's inhabitants. Even though most Corsicans had settled down peacefully in little white villages scattered along the coast, in extremity they sought the mountains. They became savages again with an ease unknown to their equally hot-blooded kinsmen, the Italians of the mainland. They had in them a quality which set them apart, a memory of wooded mountains, always waiting should they need to flee the law.

Costa led the way as the Buonaparte family filed off into exile. After him came the Signora and Elisa. Marianna Casamarte with Paoletta and Louis brought up the rear. The path was narrow, and the deeper they penetrated into the uplands the more obscure and overgrown the trail became. Again and again it threatened to straggle out into nothing. Now and then Costa took time out to get his bearings.

At last they arrived at a great evergreen oak that spread its twisted limbs far out over the low bushes. Costa nodded his satisfaction and guided them off the path directly into the eye of the sinking sun. Now they moved through the undergrowth without benefit of a trail.

Spiny vines clutched at the dresses of the womenfolk, and often they were forced to stop to free their clothes. Fallen branches littered the ground. Relics of storms long past, they were thickly padded with moss. Breathing heavily, covered with sweat, the party struggled after Costa. Louis was on the point of bursting into sobs from sheer fatigue and Elisa was complaining mightily when at last they emerged from the woods. A wall of green stood behind them. Quite out of wind the children dropped to the ground. They had come to a halt in a little clearing, now growing dark under the last rays of the sun. Somewhere off among the trees a wild dove cooed. Then all was still again.

"This is the place," said Costa with pride. "Nobody will ever find us here. And there's water, too, a spring coming out of the rocks."

"Good enough," the Signora said, looking grimly about her.

They camped for the night in a broad hollow of rock, worn away by the erosion of centuries. All around them, in this open country, enormous granite boulders were piled. In the melancholy evening light they looked like crouching giants. The rocky hollow was dry and soft with moss. With practiced hands Marianna and Costa quickly made a shelter of leafy boughs, and the Signora lighted a fire. The spicy smoke rose up blue and straight from their glade, biting to the nostrils.

During the night Paoletta wakened. She was at once completely alert, according to her habit. She heard her mother and the rest breathing heavily as they slept. Through the holes in the leafy roof she could make out the night sky, a great, dark sky filled with wandering stars. She lay still and listened. She heard the heavy, almost soundless flight of a night bird. A sudden animal cry rang through the shrouded woods. She listened with body taut, the sounds thrilling through her whole being. She had the sensation of hearing, above the breathing of those near her, the fainter breath of forest things. She imagined she heard, infinitely faint, the flight of the stars, plying their courses at unimaginable distances through the summer night. She heard the quiet gurgling and dripping of the rocky spring at which she had slaked her thirst before she had lain down. She sensed all around her the warmth of the sun soaked up during the day and still radiated by the rocks. She had intimations of the gigantic forces that had piled up the mountain range, slowly, soundlessly molding titanic forms out of granite and lava.

This intuition filled the girl's senses, flowed through her body. Her heart was warmed by the feeling that she, too, was a part of this mighty living flux. Her small, firm body, instinct with coming womanhood, seemed a focal point in the shifting stream of sensation that was the night. And at this moment, to her, idly dreaming, the white house in Ajaccio, the close rooms, the furniture, the clothes left behind, even the familiar faces, the doings of the people she had known, their endless worries, sluggish joys and maundering sorrows —all seemed no more than a mirage. For a few moments, and yet, having once made the step, forever, the child had moved beyond the threshold of mortal everyday. She had now entered a greater world, known by her heart as a clear, bright realm behind the soft curtain of the night.

Wondering and thoughtful, she felt that this incommunicable and precious world was in her, within her body, as well as out there in the night. Smiling secretly to herself, she bent over immeasurable life, like a wood sprite looking into a crystal pool. Sighing a deep sigh of requitement the child let her dark curls fall back onto the moss and leaves. The hand that she had clenched in her excitement opened and went limp. Paoletta breathed peacefully, and slept without dreaming.

For more than two weeks the Signora remained with her children in the clearing. From time to time Costa disappeared, to return with bread and other victuals. Once he shot a mountain sheep, the flesh of which was very gamy. Another time he brought in a pheasant. The gay plumage made Paoletta gasp in pleasure, and Elisa looked on with an ironical smile as her sister admired it so extravagantly. Under Marianna's tutelage Paoletta and Louis learned to pick edible berries, nourishing roots and juicy weeds that could be boiled for a meal. It was not too hard a living. They did not really go hungry, and one sunny day swiftly followed another.

The time finally arrived when they had to leave for the coast to make their rendezvous. There they were to wait for the ship that would bear the whole family northward. This day of leave-taking from the glade dawned warm. The sun was oppressively hot as it beat down on the heath. The perfume of the broom was almost overpowering. The cliffs became so hot that one could scarcely bear to touch the stone. In the afternoon the sky grayed over and a threaten-

ing light struck slantwise out of the sky. The trees began to moan, their crowns like a herd of horses tossing their heads.

"It's the *libeccio*," said Costa, meaning the southwest wind, and shook his head doubtfully. He advised the Signora to tarry for a while.

"No," was her decision. "I can't have my son wait a single hour longer than necessary," she said. "The longer we wait, the more dangerous it will be for all of us."

Once again they set out on the march through the woods. The whole landscape suddenly altered and was scarcely recognizable. The light in the sky was balefully yellow as if some demon were swinging great torches of sulphur there. Inky clouds fled across the heavens and cast ominous shadows. Above the sighing of the forest came a distant whistling, howling and rumbling.

Night fell like the stroke of an ax, and then the rain. When they moved through woods the foliage protected them to some degree from the onslaught of rain, but each time that they emerged into a clearing the downpour struck them at a sharp angle. The cutting sheets seemed to be trying to drive the interlopers from the midst of the forest. Paoletta could hardly see her hand before her face. Her clothes clung sopping to her body. The wind tore at her. Paoletta was frightened, but Marianna dragged her on. Lightning illuminated for full seconds at a time the wild sea of treetops. The thunderclaps made the earth tremble as if great blocks of granite were being dropped from a height.

"There's Bocognano," Costa gasped at last. The wind almost tore the words from his mouth.

Paoletta had just about used up the last of her strength. She felt she would have to lie down and sleep where she fell in the rain. But suddenly the storm seemed to abate. They had found the protection of a wall. Paoletta heard a door creak open, and the warmth from within, as she pressed forward, struck her chilled flesh. She closed her eyes and slid to the ground. And when she opened them again she thought at first she was in a nightmare.

Not far from her, stretched out on a table, was a young man, waxen-faced, his eyes closed. His arms were folded across his breast, as immovable as stone. It was the first corpse that Paoletta had ever seen. She would have cried aloud in horror, but was too far spent to open her mouth. Instead she stared at the dead man's face, a face stamped

with exalted indifference. He did not look asleep at all, as she had commonly heard said of corpses. Rather the features were stony rigid. He gave the impression of having fled from the world, beyond all following. Rude candles burned at his head and feet. Outside the wind was still howling in enormous gusts, and a draft repeatedly came near blowing out the weak flames. The light, sucked fine and flickering by the draft, flared and illumined the dead face, and then a dark shadow would fall over it as the candles guttered and almost failed. During this play of chiaroscuro the cheeks and brow seemed to light up from within, and then sink back again into a sadness too deep for words.

About the table were women dressed in black. All wore black kerchiefs over their long hair. In the daytime they would have struck Paoletta as simple peasants, and no more. But now their loss, or the night, had lent them a formidable nobility. They looked like harpies, eager to bathe in spilled blood, lusting for more blood, more misery. Their noses were sharp and sickle-curved, their foreheads low. The harsh lips were cruel and set, never trembling with grief. The black eyes glittered tearless in the candlelight like the cold eyes of snakes.

At first glance it seemed as if they were all of an age—timeless creatures, embodied shades of immortal gloom. But on closer inspection Paoletta saw that this was not so. Two of them were old, and one was very young, not much older than Paoletta herself. When the candlelight rested momentarily on her countenance before dissolving into shadow, the features appeared as they were, fresh and unlined, even pretty. But her eyes were clouded with hatred and anger, and her face was hard.

Paoletta's voice trembled as she whispered to Marianna Casamarte, whom she had beckoned to her side. "Who are they, Marianna?" she wanted to know. "Whose house are we in now?"

Looking fixedly as the rest at the dead man, Marianna whispered back: "That's Giacominetta Vasari. She's just lost her brother. He was the last man left in her house, too. The Borgos had killed off the rest of them."

The young woman called Giacominetta stood by the head of the dead man, her wide *pelone* over her shoulders like a pilgrim in black. She had pushed her kerchief back on her head, and in so doing had partly loosened black curls that hung over her white brow like tangled serpents. She spread out her hands over the face of the corpse as if

to bless him and chanted, very slowly and simply, having difficulty forcing the words from her tongue:

"O Giovanni, Giovanni, O my brother, my bright falcon, this is the last time I shall speak to you. Here are the remnants of the Vasari, women only, your aunts and your sister Giacominetta. In long hours we have never lifted our eyes from the ground, for what is a house without a man in it? Now, even if we are merely women, you will have your meed. We shall follow your murderer until we overtake him. Nothing will stop us. Nothing will hide him. I promise it. We are not afraid of his treachery, or of his courage. We shall never rest until his mouth is filled with earth."

She made this vow while the older women broke into groans and wails so stirring that Costa and Marianna were moved to join in. The Signora too approached the bier, dark and tall against the others. Her lips barely moved as she said, "The Borgos will know our revenge, Giovanni. I knew you in better days. I shall not forget you now."

A heavy pair of shears was brought to Giacominetta. She tore off her kerchief and let her hair fall fully down, rich, dark hair reaching almost to her hips. Grasping masses of it, she hacked it off with the shears. Then she spread her offering over the corpse's waxen hands. Some of it slithered off, but much rested there.

Paoletta watched this performance with mouth hanging open. It moved her more deeply than anything she had ever seen before in her whole life. The vows of revenge made by a girl so near her own age etched themselves on her mind. The fearful need of retaliation, the only Corsican law, Paoletta recognized in all its murderous urgency. She was touched to the quick by the sister's gift of her hair to the dead brother. Nothing could be more fitting as a symbol of heroic love reaching beyond the grave.

With the coming of dawn the mighty gray reaches of the bay were revealed, and the silvery gray heights hemmed it in like an amphitheater. The Buonapartes had come to a very lonely place. There was no sound but the crashing of the waves on the rocks below, for the sea was still uneasy after the storm. As the day passed, however, gradually the sea leveled off into huge rollers that traveled swiftly in moving hillocks toward the cliffs, and there reached in long tongues to search out the clefts. Having spent their force the waves retreated

in a smother of bubbles and great glassy streaks of streaming water. On a lonely height commanding a breath-taking view of this scene stood an ancient lookout, built years ago by the Genoese, that still stared out over the bay on the watch for corsair and Saracen.

The Saracens' might had long since vanished and their fast, slender galleys no longer menaced Corsican waters. Pirates from Algiers no longer ventured so far north. And so, as times grew less perilous, the tower had been left to fall into ruins. But now once again there was activity on the sea. High-sided men-o'-war tacked back and forth across the Ligurian Sea, heavy ten-pounders groaning against their lashings in long rows on the decks. Sometimes it was the tricolor of the Revolution that snapped at the masthead, and sometimes the less spectacular union jack. Once more the Ligurian Sea had become a scene of battle and struggle, reviving memories of the days when its dark blue waters had been plowed by the keels of Etruscan, Phoenician and Greek craft.

It was to the tower on the bluff that Costa had guided the Buonaparte family. He went aloft at once to scan the bay from the broken parapet. But not a sail was in sight, nothing but a solitary gull and waves smashing in slow breakers. On the far horizon the sea was running so high that its peaks gave the illusion of high country on a distant shore. Near by Costa saw gray granite cliffs, tufted in places with tough grasses and fig cactus. Some way off was a clump of stunted pines on a rocky height, creeping down to the precipitous edge. The pines riveted Costa's attention. He stared at them for several minutes. Suddenly he ducked and climbed down hastily, the rickety ladder giving under him.

"Signora, we've got to get out of here right away," he said. "I just saw four or five men up there among the pines."

The Signora nodded assent and Marianna at once began to collect the bundles. Elisa burst into tears. "I'm so awfully tired, Mother," she said. "I'd rather die than move another step." And yet she managed to force herself to her feet. Paoletta and Louis stood by, wide-eyed with apprehension.

Costa led them down a steep declivity to the sea. The footing was bad. Stones loosened by their steps clattered far down into the shallows. Paoletta felt the sharp rocks strike through the worn-out soles of her shoes. The path ended in the water. Costa stepped forward and went in up to his knees.

Elisa was pale and in horror put her hands to her cheeks. "No, no, I won't," she wailed. "I can't go into the water. I'm scared to death of it. I may go in over my head and I can't swim." But her Uncle Fesch supported her and together they managed to follow the rest.

For some two hundred paces they proceeded under the cliffs' overhang. The water was fairly shallow, but now and then a swelling wave buoyed them up, so that their footing grew precarious and the children were in some danger of being carried away by the undertow. Yet each time the wave receded, whispering and foaming, without causing catastrophe. The children clung desperately to Marianna and the Signora whenever the water welled up about them.

At last another path appeared and they worked their way up to where it led into a roomy cavern, worn into the rock by the flooding seas of long ago. It was comfortably warm inside, almost cozy after the open woods of the back country. The salt wind did not reach far into the dry hollow. Toward the land side there was a split in the rocky wall through which streamed the warm sun.

"Here we'll be dry and safe," said Costa, satisfied at last. "Nobody who values his life will ever try to force his way into this place."

He took his rifle from his shoulder and laid it in a handy place. The children huddled down on the rocky floor and were soon asleep.

Only Paoletta stayed awake. The excitement of the night before, the terrifying scene with the dead man, seethed in her blood. She looked over Costa's shoulder out through the natural embrasure in the cave wall. They could see the quiet, sunny cliffs above them. As they watched they heard stones fall and a man's curse.

"I was right," Costa whispered to the girl. "There they are, the wolves."

Through the cleft they could make out five men slowly creeping toward the watchtower, five men who from this vantage stood out sharply in the bright light reflected from the water.

Now the men were at the tower. Cautiously they entered, found nothing, came out and stood about talking to one another. From the cave they offered an excellent target. The sunlight was so bright that even their rough features were discernible. Their long cloaks fluttered in the breeze, and they talked on.

Costa's eyes glittered like a cat's ready to pounce on the prey. Slowly his hand reached for his rifle, but he thought better of it and

let it stay where it was. "I won't do that," he mumbled to himself. "The captain gave strict orders not to."

Captain! It delighted and amused Paoletta to think that her own brother should have such influence on his men, even on half-wild Costa, when he was not there to lend presence to his orders. As they continued to spy on the men above, there came a heavy crack, as clear and heavy as the snap of a bull whip in the crystal atmosphere. Driven by the impact of the bullet, one of the men leaped backward. Paoletta giggled with hysterical laughter. She saw him tumble, his mouth wide agape, and fall. The body landed on the rocks, caught halfway down, and stayed there, a dark, shapeless spot.

"Look at that!" Costa was wildly excited. "That got him in the heart. A dead shot!" He rubbed his hands with pleasure and craned his neck around to see how Paoletta was taking it.

There was another shot, and the shriek of a wounded man. One of the bewildered group near the tower separated from his companions and crept on all fours like an animal.

"Not so good that time," said Costa. "It must have got him in the belly or in the spleen. He'll probably get over it. Those Borgos are tough. But he won't be doing any harm for a month or two, I'll wager my neck on that."

Now the marauders threw themselves flat on their faces. The trio who still remained whole of limb began rapidly to crawl back toward the shelter of the pines, and after them crept the wounded man, holding his middle with one hand and hugging the ground. Then they were gone, and once more the landscape was empty and serene, a sunny, timeless place freshened by the wind from the salt sea. Everywhere was the sound of the sea, restless, washing against the unyielding cliffs. Nevertheless Costa did not abandon his lookout, and Paoletta stayed at his side. The sun slanted pink on the rocks. An hour passed, two.

"There, there!" Costa pointed through the embrasure. "That's the one who did the shooting. Look!"

A young woman had suddenly appeared high up on the very summit of the range of bluff. The wind spread her dark skirt into wings. She carried her rifle in her right hand, hanging loose, and looked out into the sun. She seemed an angel of death. Having fulfilled her murderous mission she was ready to soar back to a homeland of great seas and rocks.

"It's Giacominetta Vasari," said Costa. His voice was full of respect. "What a woman! It didn't take that girl long to even things up. Wonderful! I've never seen it done so quickly. You'd hardly believe it if you hadn't seen." He shook his head, quite unable to get over his amazement. "You know, Paoletta Buonaparte," he confided, "if I weren't so old and didn't have my own old woman and children, I'd be courting Giacominetta Vasari. What a proud man I'd be to have her! There's not a better woman on the whole island of Corsica than Giacominetta Vasari."

Paoletta nodded her head in full agreement, but almost at once her eyes clouded with doubt. "I know," she said thoughtfully. "But do you think she knows how to be nice to a man? She couldn't be very loving, could she?"

"Loving!" Costa was taken aback. "What's that got to do with it! She's loving enough. She couldn't do much more than kill her brother's murderer, could she? Hasn't she avenged Giovanni's *mala morte*? She's got back her brother's honor for him. His name will be good now among the living and the dead. Hasn't she washed it clean again in fresh blood?"

Paoletta sought confirmation from her mother's eyes. She was listening to the conversation, holding Louis' head in her lap. The Signora smiled quizzically and nodded assent to what Costa had said.

"What stupid questions you ask, Paoletta!" said Elisa roughly. "Of course Giacominetta is all right. She did the right thing, didn't she? Nobody in her senses would think differently."

"I suppose you're right," said Paoletta humbly. "But it seems wrong to mix up love and killing."

"You're stupid," said Elisa. In sheer boredom she closed her eyes.

"She's gone now," said Costa, reporting from his post at the cleft in the rocks. Once again, as they all took turns looking, they saw nothing more than the craggy landscape, empty and bare. The gulls screamed as they wheeled and dived for fish. The black splotch caught on the jutting ledge beneath the tower never moved.

Costa crept out of the hole. He returned almost immediately, much excited. "A ship!" he said. "It's a French corvette. It must be the captain."

They all went outside to see and clattered in a rush down the path. It was only a small ship, just now reefing its sails. The tricolor of the Republic fluttered astern. Very slowly the corvette edged into the

bay to avoid hidden rocks. Gradually figures aboard her became visible. Paoletta, standing up to her ankles in water in her eagerness, took off her kerchief and waved it wildly. The corvette headed into the wind and lay anchored while a jolly boat was lowered. Slowly it moved toward the shore.

A small dark figure of a man stood in the bow of the jolly boat, a young fellow of twenty-five or thereabouts. He was hatless and his stringy black hair fell about his face almost to the shoulders. His cheekbones jutted out strongly above hollow cheeks. A long, aristocratic nose curved toward the finely projecting lips. The most arresting feature was his eyes—gray, forbidding eyes.

"It's the captain!" Costa shouted. "I knew it was. Right on time!"

Paoletta was so beside herself that she danced with joy. They saw the boat creep closer and closer to shore, first lifted high by the swell, then dropped behind the flowing mounds of sea. At last they could get a clear look at the young man at the bow.

Everything about him bespoke impatience and tension. Tension was evident in the shrugging of his shoulders, in the abrupt gestures of his hands as he directed the oarsmen on their course, in the almost imperceptible quiver of his lips. His thin face brought to mind a scrawny and still unfledged bird of prey. Whether it lay in the glitter of the eyes, the curved nose or the scanty, coarse hair, his look gave this impression of a vicious nestling. It was arresting to see that great beauty lurked behind the unfinished aspect. The round, marble-white forehead was pensive, the chin extremely willful. It was the faces of the Signora, of Paoletta and even of Elisa intermingled, the unmistakable Buonaparte visage.

The young captain's impatience was so great that he could not wait until the jolly boat had grounded, but leaped into water up to his hips and waded ashore.

"Napolione, Napolione!" shrieked Paoletta.

The Signora opened her arms and embraced her favorite son. There were tears of gratitude in her eyes but she said stiffly, "I'll never forget this, never, Napolione."

"What would you expect me to do, Signora?" said Napolione. Seeing Costa, his manner changed. Costa, the while, had stood respectfully off to one side, musket under his arm. Napolione took the older man's ear between thin yellowish fingers and tugged it affectionately. "Costa, you're a villain," he said amiably. "You pulled

them through. I'll remember this." Marianna Casamarte, watching the performance, could not hide her quick jealousy. Napolione understood at once. "How is it with you, old friend?" he said, transferring his attentions.

He inquired about Elisa, his uncle, his brother Louis, his little kitten Paoletta, and all the rest. "You all look half starved," he told them. "Never mind. There are plenty of provisions aboard the corvette."

Thereupon, without further delay, they crowded into the jolly boat. The captain bore his mother through the water and Uncle Fesch kept Elisa's feet dry. The rest waded and clambered without aid over the gunwales.

"It's a good thing you waded," said Napolione to Paoletta. "If I'd been carrying you I'd certainly have dropped you in where the water was deepest."

"Napolione!" Paoletta pressed her curls against his shoulder.

"What a silly girl you are!" said Napolione. He stroked her head affectionately, not without embarrassment at so much devotion. "Back to the *Belette*," he told the men at the oars.

The name *Belette* was painted in fancy gold lettering on the sloping stern board of the corvette. It was a pretty thing to see, but Paoletta, unfortunately, could not enjoy the small marvel of it. No one had ever gone to the trouble of teaching her how to read.

The small seacoast town of Calvi was only a stopover along the Buonapartes' line of flight. It was filled to overflowing with Corsican partisans of the French cause who had streamed there from all sections of the island. Bread was scarce and meat was not to be had at all. The French commandant was in despair. "If the English come," he told his intimates, "I'll just have to leave all these Corsicans in the lurch. How in the devil am I to tell which of them are on our side and which are just waiting for a chance to ram knives in our backs!"

"And I?" said Captain Buonaparte. "How do you think I stand?"

"Let's not make a joke of it, Captain," said the commandant irritably. "My advice is to get your people out of this rock hole as fast as you can."

The Signora's oldest son had joined them from Bastia. "You're the head of the family now, Joseph," the Signora reminded him. "What plans have you made for us?"

Actually Joseph had too soft a character to have plans of any description. He was strongly inclined to pass the time doing nothing at all, in the famous Corsican style. His happiest hours had always been spent lolling on a sofa in the house at Ajaccio. He was usually "occupied with literary matters," as he put it. Amid constant alarums and the clatter and cry of soldiery he was utterly helpless. The hubbub affected his nerves most shockingly. To hear a cannon trundling and rumbling by ruined the entire day for him. In peaceful, settled times Joseph was ready enough to assume the easy responsibilities—and enjoy the prerogatives—of the family head. Now he gladly relinquished the honor in favor of his brother Napolione.

"I'm a civilian through and through," he liked to explain. "Some plants grow only in the shade, and I'm one of them. We're lucky to have a soldier among us. It's for you to say, Napolione. Where shall we strike for?"

"Toulon," said Napolione.

"Shall it be Toulon then?" Joseph turned to the Signora.

"That satisfies me."

"Early tomorrow Giuseppi Rastelli is leaving for Toulon," said Napolione.

"So soon?" Joseph naturally detested snap decisions.

"It may be our last chance to get to the mainland," said Napolione. "Hood's squadron has raised the blockade of Genoa. My brother, I advise you to get to Paris as soon as you can and seek support for us from the Convention. We've stuck to the principles of the Republic, and it's brought us into this situation. It's for the Convention to get us out of it. My income doesn't amount to much, you know. But I'll do everything that I can to carry all of us along. Without my family I'd have nothing to live for. I live for all of us."

This pronouncement Napolione blurted out in his typically blunt fashion. It was said with warm sincerity, and respect for the dignity of the older brother. Napolione could never forget that, after all, Joseph was the first-born, and therefore, according to ancient Corsican custom, the most important voice among the children.

Joseph was not unaware of this covert flattery. "You're quite right," he agreed heartily. "I'll go to Paris as soon as we land. What a pity, though! What a pity we can't follow our normal bent. Your history of Corsica would be a work of art."

"Abbé Raynal spoke very encouragingly of the undertaking," said Napolione.

"I'm glad to hear that," Joseph said. "You know, I've been toying with the idea of a political-philosophical work in the manner of Montesquieu."

"An excellent project," said Napolione. "We need clarity in these chaotic times. We need enduring formulations, iron principles, irrevocably defined. We need simplicity and distinctness, the things that Plutarch and Corneille knew. Nothing do I despise more than this fog of confusion. These big, empty, spongy phrases about equality and fraternity turn my stomach. Even while they're being dinned into our ears, someone's snatching the bread from our mouths, stepping all over us, kicking us into the mud."

"You've said it in a nutshell," said Joseph. "Just to scrape together a few sous I have to break my neck running all the way to Paris. And you have to strut with your guns. This damnable money business! If Father hadn't made such a mess of it with those mulberry trees in Milelli! What did they amount to? In the end the goats ate them all up, and there we were without a sou to our names."

The Signora had been following the discussion with pride in her sons written all over her. But when they fell onto the delicate subject of the mulberry trees she half turned away, unable to conceal her hurt.

Noticing this, Napolione made haste to say, "I haven't given up hope of being reimbursed one of these days by the French administration. After all, those experiments were made for the benefit of France as much as for us. All Corsica would have profited if they'd turned out well." And after a thoughtful pause he added: "The way it looks now, though, there's not much chance of redress. The Convention has plenty of far more important matters on its hands. There's the little business of treason among its own members. There's revolt in the Vendée. There's not enough food in Paris, or in any of the other big cities for that matter. You'll find discontent in every corner. And all around us are enemies."

Joseph was in sober and complete agreement. "Nevertheless, we simply must plan for the future," he said. "Our sisters are getting older all the while. They'll have to have dowries. Where the money's going to come from I don't know."

"Nor do I," said Napolione. Nervously he ran his small yellow

hand over his brow. "But right now is not the time to be discussing the future. We've got to live through next month. That's all I can plan for at the moment."

He jumped to his feet and began pacing back and forth, eyes on the floor and hands behind his back. He looked like a caged beast.

Paoletta, of course, had little clear idea of all the clan councils, nor did she realize the desperate straits into which the Buonaparte family had fallen. She did, however, have some intimation that it was experiencing an extremely serious crisis, the rock-bottom of a decline that had suddenly set in with the death of her father and, soon afterward, the death of her rich great-uncle. But the crisis had lasted so long that for her it was now a normal thing. Besides, she had absolute confidence that her brothers and her mother would eventually set the family fortunes to rights.

The matter that really troubled her was the immediate need of a new dress and a sound pair of shoes. Her flowery dress was old, threadbare and faded with many washings. The wanderings through the Corsican forest had not improved its looks, and Corsican granite had torn her shoes to shreds. All this was very uncomfortable, but by no means shattering. She turned trustfully to Joseph, who bought her some cheap material in Calvi. That night Marianna Casamarte turned it into a pretty dress. For Paoletta had so neat a figure that had Marianna cut neck-hole and armholes in a sack and thrown it over the girl's head, the result would have been novel and fetching. As for a new pair of shoes, these she begged from Napolione, who had them for her before evening.

Impressed by the ease with which her personal needs were met, Paoletta concluded that the family crisis was nothing to worry about. She felt herself free to enjoy the new impressions teeming all about her. Frenchmen interested her particularly. For hours she leaned out a window and watched the corporals drilling their men. After a time the soldiers began to take notice of the pretty girl, and did what they could to attract her attention by ribald flirtation. Frenchmen, Paoletta decided, blushing with vanity and excitement, were infinitely more gallant than the dour Corsicans, who paid no attention to sweet young things.

It was the same way when they finally sailed aboard Rastelli's ship. On the way to the mainland Paoletta made new friends quickly. The

ship had no discipline to speak of, Joseph announced gloomily. The devil with discipline, was Paoletta's thought, so long as there's fun! She was greatly taken by the young sailor boys in their flapping trousers and peaked red caps. They rolled about the deck barefoot, chewing tobacco and spraying the brown juice over the railing to leeward. One of them—he surely must have been an officer—called her "Little Galatea," and pursed his lips so drolly over the words that Paoletta laughed gaily, sure that he was saying something indecent to her.

This same young man invited Paoletta to come up with him to the lookout. The sea was calm. Silvery, sun-shot fog shrouds were drifting across the glassy surface. A light warm wind moved the ship slowly on its course. Before long, however, the wind all but died, the vapors thickened and blotted out the sun. The sea darkened ominously. Paoletta's curls became sticky with the salt wet. She pressed closer to her companion.

"You're afraid?" he asked her.

"No," she said, "I'm not really afraid. Only everything seems so strange."

Then suddenly the sailor stiffened. "There it is again," he whispered. He was quite upset as he pointed toward a pale rift of sunlight in the fog.

"What is it? I don't see anything," said Paoletta anxiously.

"There, that way," he directed her. And then she saw. It was a big ship of the line. Only its outlines were visible through the eerie murk. In the smoky, wavering light it appeared much larger than it really was. The masts thrust up like slender pinnacles into the fog, supporting immense yards from which the sails flapped all dripping.

For a moment, as the fog moved aside, the ship seemed bearing down on top of them. It looked as though the shadowy bulk were headed straight at their own small craft. Now the decks could be seen, the long rows of cannon ports, the slender line of the bowsprit and the powerful bulk of the afterdeck.

Paoletta listened with every nerve, her heart thick in her throat, but she heard nothing except the fine drizzle of the fog as it fell in a steady drip from mast and rigging. Then the ship was gone. The hull vanished first, leaving the masts moving unsupported through the grayness. Suddenly they, too, faded from sight.

"It was a ghost ship, wasn't it?" Paoletta said shakily.

"No, no," her companion answered, laughing with relief. "That was the *Agamemnon.*"

"*Agamemnon?*"

"Yes, that's what they call her." The sailor had himself well in hand again, and was as cocky as ever. "Actually she was a great distance off. Otherwise we'd have had a bad time of it. We saw only an image of her in the fog. That's why she looked so ghostly and made no sound. She's the most dangerous man-o'-war the English have in these waters."

"The English!" said Paoletta, horrified.

"That's right, puss—the rum-running Englishmen. The captain of the *Agamemnon* is a pirate, a criminal and an enemy of the Revolution. In other words, he's a royalist and a raper of the first order. He's called Nelson—or something like that."

"I'll tell my brother Napolione on him," whispered Paoletta. "He'll take care of him."

"Maybe your brother is quite a man," said the sailor, "but just the same it wouldn't be so simple as that. You see, this Nelson has sailed all the oceans. Our ships, the *Melpomene* and the *Minerva,* have been chasing him for months. But he always strikes where they aren't! When they sail up, he's pulled out. Just as if the sea had swallowed him. Right now he has it easy, for our ships have sailed into Toulon to have their captains guillotined. You'll see them when we get there."

II

The Tribunal

IT WAS EVENING when they docked in the harbor of Toulon. A sloping, red sun ruddied the gray houses of the city, setting on fire their walls and roofs so that it seemed a conflagration was raging on the shore. And the people were added to the impression, for they behaved as if the city was in imminent danger of final catastrophe. Men and women alike seemed consumed with an inner excitement that impelled them to run about, to gesticulate, to shout, to expend their energies. On the quay some horribly dirty-nosed little girls were playing with a miniature guillotine, imitating the example of their elders by chopping off their dolls' heads. Over the cobblestones came rumbling a rudely made two-wheeled wagon with two torpid oxen driven by a man in a blue blouse. He forced his animals on by sticking them in the ribs with an iron-pointed goad. Unwashed women leaned over window sills, they and their bearded men, shouting obscenities in the guttural dialect of the city. Above this confusion hung a stinking cloud of dust, strongly compounded of boiling cabbage, rotten fish and human urine.

The Signora led the two youngest children, Jerome and Annunziata, who had been reunited with the family in Calvi. Now they clung to her black skirts with frightened, fat little hands. Marianna Casamarte, Joseph and Louis were burdened down with the family's bundles and boxes. Nobody took the trouble to keep Paoletta in charge, and so she stared at the crowd openmouthed, her eyes blazing with interest and astonishment. The disturbance increased when sailors and marines began to file down the gangplank onto the quay from the two French warships—the *Melpomene* and *Minerva* as the young sailor had promised. Trumpets blared, bos'ns' whistles piped and broke, and beneath these stirring sounds someone was busy rolling his sticks on a drum. The ships towered over the crowd, menacing and indifferent. The tall masts were powerfully raked, the decks black with dirt, the rigging in great disorder.

Suddenly the crowd on the quayside began to move forward to the rhythm of trumpet and drum, a barely heard beat in the welter of cries. The seamen swung their arms wide as they marched. On their heads they wore the Phrygian liberty caps, long-peaked and firecracker-red. They showed yellow teeth as they chanted a marching song. Only the refrain, repeated over and over at short intervals, could be clearly made out. It went: "The sovereign people are on the march."

Paoletta was so overcome that she remained rooted to the curb, her legs like lead, her ears deafened by the crowd's roar. Before she knew what was happening she found herself drawn into the passing ranks and mechanically she marched along, as devoid of will as a puppet. Abreast of her strode a giant sailor. He had a great lion's head and a thick black beard that reached down to his chest. His blouse was in tatters and apparently had never been washed since the day he had first put it on. The big man looked down at Paoletta cordially enough, but the mere sight of him frightened her out of her wits. "*Vive la liberté!*" he bellowed.

"*Vive la liberté!*" Paoletta parroted back in a dry squeak.

The giant talked to her in a thunderous rumble as he marched. To Paoletta it made no more sense than a storm at sea, for she was completely unused to the patois spoken in the south of France. At home she had always spoken Italian and only now and then the French of polite society, the kind of French her sister Elisa had brought back with her from Saint-Cyr. But the sailor did not seem to mind that she was unable to respond intelligently to his sallies. He reached into his pocket, drew forth another red bonnet like the one he wore, and clapped it on Paoletta's curls.

Now she attracted everybody's attention, and all manner of gibberish was shouted at her. She found herself tugged and pushed forward to the front ranks. Someone threw a red, white and blue sash over her shoulders. Another tied a cutlass about her waist, so long that the leather sheath dangled between her legs. Now she was at the head of the parade, directly behind the musicians and the man who carried the tricolor on a staff. The flag was large and it whipped about Paoletta's face. She marched on in a trance.

Along the way, cheering on the procession, were stout women holding tight to their filthy brats. More and more housewives, baggy-breasted creatures wearing foul bodices, swam by Paoletta's moving

field of vision. It was a bad dream. They clapped their hands at her and screamed: "*Vive la République! Vive la République!*" They exchanged broad jests, mystifying Paoletta who could not follow them. There were not so many men among the bystanders, but those who were there looked at her in a speculative way, nodding their heads in warm appreciation. Once she thought she saw the grim-faced Signora float past, with Jerome and Annunziata crying their heads off as they pressed close to her, ready to hide their faces in her skirts. She fancied that she passed her brother Joseph also, just as he was letting his bundles slip to the cobbles, but of this she was not sure. Everything was a dream, highly improbable.

The sun went down suddenly. It was soon dark but torches were lighted, and the procession moved on through the narrow streets wreathed in the fitful illumination. Paoletta marched on, the smoke of the torches strong in her nostrils. She felt her calves become firmer, and the nipples of her breasts were pleasantly tickled by the stuff of her dress as it chafed them. The girl felt herself a woman, full-grown, equal to whatever might come. A wonderful sense of superiority lifted her heart, a sense of power. The crowd's excitement, the hot blood pumping hard in a thousand veins around her, the heavy night air, the smoky red light, the lustful eyes of the men and the envy in the pig eyes of the thick-waisted women struck her nerve ends and had their effect. She strode on through the streets of Toulon not unlike a young goddess of Ephesus leading her crowd of orgiastic adepts.

Without knowing rightly what she was doing she tore her red bonnet from her head, threw it into the air, caught it as it fell and shrilled, "*Vive la République! Vive la République!*" Her own voice frightened her. It was more like the scream of a sea mew than a human voice. She shuddered pleasantly as her cry was taken up and echoed in a vast roar. All around were shrieks, curses, boiling commotion.

Then they arrived at a public hall, a wide, deep place but still too small to accommodate the crush of people trying to get in. The air was so thick with sweat, tobacco and the effluvium of excited human bodies that the miserable little oil lamps on the walls could hardly breathe and looked as if they might flicker out any time. On a platform four men in their shirt sleeves sat behind a long table. One of them rang for order with a bell that gave out only a leaden tinkle. "Order! Order!" he shouted, but in vain. Another, next to him, was

absorbed in the task of prying something loose from the interior of his nose. A third, as unprepossessing as his mates, belched indifferently as he looked over the crowd. His eyes were heavily bloodshot. The fourth slept, his head on his arms.

On one corner of the platform a fat man was shaving with an unusually long razor. Thick folds of flesh were the only indication of his neck. He shaved himself clean with long, sure strokes, then smoothed the flesh with his fingers, well satisfied with what he had done. Still smiling with self-pleasure, he wheeled about, waved his razor and bellowed, "Patience, down there! Take it easy, citizens! We'll have the court assembled in no time. Just let me spruce myself up a little before we get down to business. Justice can wait for a minute or two."

He struggled into a long blue coat with silver buttons as big as thalers, set his peruke straight, adjusted the snowy cuffs on his shirt. He glanced angrily at the drunkard with the bloodshot eyes, shrugged at the sleeper and sat himself down. "Bring on your complaints!" he cried.

This was the signal releasing a terrible outburst. Arms waved in the air, women screamed.

"One at a time, one at a time now," cautioned the fat man, as loudly as he could.

"We've all got the same complaint," someone in the mob shouted so as to be heard above the uproar. "We're all plaintiffs in this case."

"Then choose a spokesman," the fat man told them.

The crowd pushed forward the giant seaman. He was the biggest man in the lot of them. He protested, but the hands were too many, and he was thrust forward, beard and all.

"Speak up, speak up, my son!" ordered the fat man. "Don't hold up the trial, if you please."

The big fellow burned brick-red with embarrassment. "I found worms in my peas," he finally managed to say.

"And what did you expect to find?" asked the fat man, leaning forward. "Roast chicken, maybe?"

The mob rocked with laughter, and the big man retired, driven out of countenance.

A thin little fellow, sharp-nosed and having a set-upon look, now took up the cudgels. "I charge the captains of the *Melpomene* and the *Minerva* with high treason," he said solemnly. "I charge them

with high treason against the sovereign people. The food aboard ship——"

"Ships are provisioned by the Admiralty, my son," the fat man cut in. "Take your troubles to them, if you please. And don't you consider it highly unpatriotic to quibble over such nonsense? You don't look starved to me, my friend."

The thin man swallowed hard and whined, "But that ain't all. Captain Bourlon had Seamen Philibert, Jean and Marcel whipped nearly to death for absolutely nothing—just because he felt like it."

"So? And what had they done to merit it? Absolutely nothing, you say?"

"That's right, nothing at all," roared out the big man with the beard. "All me and my friends did was to get a little under the weather. What's wrong with that?"

"In the court's opinion you got off very lightly," said the fat man. He balled his fist and gave the table a solid whack. "We're at war, citizens. Do you know what that means? Do you think being in the navy's a picnic, my friends? Why, if I'd been there I'd have strung you to the yardarm." A deep murmur rippled through the crowd.

"But wait a minute, now, hear me out." The little man was dancing with impatience. "Both Captain Bourlon and the other one, that Bastuot, refused to attack the *Agamemnon*. And there she was, in plain sight, right within gunshot."

"What!" The fat man leaned forward again, interested at last. "Go on, citizen! What's your story?"

The discussion began to turn on questions of nautical strategy and Paoletta was beyond her depth. She realized then how tired she was, and looked around to find some way out of the hall. Here she was, hemmed in and completely lost in a strange city among strange people. It was not easy to hold back her tears.

"It sounds very suspicious, I grant you that," she heard the judge announce. He toyed with his wrist frills. "But you can't expect me to pass judgment on the captains until I've heard their side of the story. And I can't question them, because I don't have the authority to ask their arrest. You must get it through your heads, citizens, that we're in the midst of a war. The *Melpomene* and the *Minerva* are scheduled to sail tonight, and sail they must."

"We demand the heads of the captains!" shouted the thin man.

"Kill them! Kill them!" chanted the crowd.

"Either cut their heads off, or the ships don't sail tonight," said the thin man. "Not a one of us will lift a hand if you don't."

"You're talking mutiny, you fool," said the judge. He got to his feet, ready to challenge the mob below.

"To the guillotine with them!" a woman shrieked, and once more everyone took up the wild cry. But at this point the man who had been apparently asleep at the table raised his head from his arms. He was a tall young man with a narrow brow. He got to his feet, lifted a warning hand and at once began to quiet the excited mass milling before the platform.

"Citizens of France," he cried, "forget your own troubles and try to fix your minds on the troubles that beset the Republic. I scorn those who cry out for individual justice when the Republic is suffering the birth pangs of liberty. On your evidence I should be only too glad to hand over the captains to the guillotine. I'd much rather run the risk of sacrificing an occasional innocent than let a single guilty man escape. That was the spirit of Cato, and it is my spirit. But in this critical hour we must bow to necessity, and let justice for once go by the board. We need these captains, citizens. We cannot dispense for the moment with these slaves of the tyrant Louis Capet. Yet do not despair. They shall be dogged by our justice. It will find them just as surely as our tyrants were brought to heel in the Place de la Révolution and their foul carcasses thrown into the lime pits of the Madeleine."

There was a familiar ring in the young man's voice which at last penetrated Paoletta's confused wits. She stood up on tiptoe. "Lucien, Lucien, is that you?" She shouted and tried to wave her hands. "Lucien, I'm down here. It's me, Paoletta."

"Who's that?" said Lucien to the crowd. "Who's that calling my name?"

"Your sister. It's me, Paoletta!"

Men forced a passage for her and she came forward to the platform. There she stood before Lucien, decked out in her revolutionary bonnet, her red, white and blue sash, a small personification of liberty. She did not imagine herself in the least heroic. Rather she was so tired and bewildered she could hardly hold herself upright.

"My God, my God!" Lucien struck his forehead with his hand. "It's my sister, honorable Judge, just thirteen years old!"

"Thirteen?" The fat judge sniffed. "If she is, she's about the

best developed child of that age I've ever seen," he said. "You haven't got any more sisters like this one, have you, Lucien?"

The crowd followed the dramatic family reunion with profound interest. They broke into unruly laughter at Paoletta's revolutionary outfit. And so their disappointment was dissipated at getting nowhere in the case of the captains. Paoletta stood mute on the platform in full view of all, beautiful, simple, obviously exhausted, and decked out in the symbols of the Republic. By her was her slender brother, the idealist of Demos. Both brother and sister were plainly embarrassed by the extraordinary meeting. They tried to force a smile at each other, and grasped hands. The spectacle touched the crowd, ever ready for sentimental diversion. To them it seemed as if the youth of France were standing personified before their eyes, two young citizens, male and female, ready to build a bright future for the beloved land of freedom.

"Let's take Paoletta and Lucien home," cried out the fat judge, wishing to be done at any cost with the irksome case of the captains.

"But what about the captains?" objected the thin man. "Aren't you going to do anything about them, mate?"

"Long live Lucien and Paoletta, two patriots!" shouted the judge, overriding his heckler.

"Long live the patriots Lucien and Paoletta!" shouted the crowd.

Now they had the show they wanted. It could hardly compare with the execution of two naval captains, but it was better than nothing at all. Dragging Lucien and Paoletta with them, they all began to flood through the door. While the torches were being rekindled, a battery came crashing down the street, the iron-shod wheels striking fire from the cobblestones. In order to pass through the mob outside the hall, the battery slowed down. On the gun carriage bringing up the rear sat a young corporal eating an apple.

"Hey, Corporal," shouted one of the sailors, "how about letting this little citizen ride with you?" He had noticed that Paoletta was swaying with fatigue.

"Nothing doing," said the corporal importantly. "I've got no room for women here. Suppose she falls under the wheels and brings the whole battery bad luck?" But he reined in the horses, and took a better look at Paoletta. "Well now, mate," he said, hitching over to make room, "that's something else, if you know what I mean. Why not? Lift her up here."

Paoletta was lifted up onto the gun carriage and they moved off. The youthful corporal put a muscular arm around her shoulders. "Don't get excited," he roared into her ear. "I'm just doing this so you won't fall off. This lousy street is full of holes. My backside is black and blue from being bounced around so much." He fumbled inside his tunic and pulled out another apple. "Go ahead, eat it, little chicken."

"Thank you, thank you," Paoletta said weakly. She bit into the apple, her mouth watering with hunger.

"My name's Andoche," volunteered the corporal and smirked bashfully.

"Mine's Paoletta." She felt better at once, having some place to sit and something to eat.

"That's a nice name," said the corporal. He was doing his very best to be gallant, Paoletta observed. "My last name is Junot."

"Mine's Buonaparte. I come from a very good family."

"Oh, an Italian family," said the corporal, chewing busily.

"I should say not," demurred Paoletta. "I'm a Corsican."

"Is that so?" said the corporal. "I didn't realize they grew such pretty girls way out in the backwoods."

This both flattered and affronted her. "You Frenchmen are so conceited," she said briskly. "You think everything's got to come from France or it isn't any good."

But Junot was not impressed, she could see. "Where did you get tangled up with all this riffraff?" he asked her. "And who's that skinny fellow, the one with his hair hanging down in strings? He's always looking at you. Is he your lover maybe?"

Paoletta let her eyes rest on Junot's own short, curly hair as they bounced along. She giggled at the tinge of jealousy in his voice. "Why, Corporal," she said, "all these people are my friends. And that skinny fellow is my brother."

Their conversation proceeded in fragments as they swayed over the cobbled streets of Toulon to the Golden Casket, where the Signora was to spend the night. With profuse thanks Lucien and Paoletta took leave of their escort and particularly of Paoletta's gallant who had given her such a fine ride. They heard his iron-clanging caisson crash off around a corner. But somewhere out of sight he must have changed his mind in order to come back and take more sentimental

leave of Paoletta. He was back on the run and grasped her hand, pressing it so hard that it hurt.

"I hope I can see you soon again, Paoletta," he said, bold and shy at the same time.

Paoletta looked into his clear eyes. He delighted her, this dashing corporal. She could not resist the temptation to run her fingers through his soft hair. "How pretty you are, Corporal Junot!" she said artlessly.

He stood staring down at his shoes. "You tease," he mumbled to himself. "When you look at me, little chicken, I don't know which way I'm going." He shrugged his shoulders, and suddenly darted off to catch up with his gun. They could hear it around the corner, groaning as the horses got it into motion again.

The midsummer sun glowed white-hot over the sadly wasted landscape of southern France. The dark olive leaves, hanging listless from gnarled and knotted branches, were limp in the great heat, and thickly sprayed with dust. The ruts in the roads ran white with dust, little brooks of it that flowed up and over the passing wheels. Near and far there was no sign of green, nothing but a gray drought, the color of the slaggy crust which forms on molten lead. The low houses cowered under the pitiless, dancing heat. Not a single breath of wind stirred the tall poplars, which seemed to stand in the ground as stiff and steady as candles.

But even more glowing and consuming than the sun itself was the sun of the Terror shining this summer on the people of France. Very quickly the Buonaparte family realized that they were no more secure in Toulon than they had been in Ajaccio. In Toulon they sat on a powder keg. Almost daily there were clashes between the sans-culottes—the partisans of the Terror—and the liberals. These latter by an inevitable process of inner logic felt themselves shifting to the right, ever closer to the hated royalist elements, and even to the enemies of their country which, in the Midi, meant the English.

The Buonaparte family wandered from place to place in the neighborhood of Toulon. With the Signora went the two little ones and Elisa, growing more plaintive every day, and for once with undeniably sound reason. The ever-loyal Marianna Casamarte accompanied the family into exile. She had long since abandoned hope of receiving her promised pay of a franc a month, and often went hungry and

without a bed. With the Signora, too, went Uncle Fesch and, of course, Paoletta, still mooning over her Corporal Junot. Sometimes when they found temporary shelter in a farmhouse they were joined by brother Lucien, for he fled Toulon whenever he deemed it too hot for him.

It was a very bad period all around. Captain Buonaparte's income —he was the only wage earner in the family at this time—simply could not be stretched to cover all their needs. The Signora and Marianna Casamarte did the family washing in order to save money. Often they were to be seen at the village bent over the stone trough. It was Elisa's and Paoletta's job to carry away the baskets of wet clothes when they had been scrubbed and beaten white. The Signora was as proud and austerely reticent as ever. Manual labor, if anything, augmented her distinction. Like the queens of antiquity sung by Homer she cared for her family and her matronly virtue lent dignity to the humble tasks. And Paoletta was a kind of Nausicaä, radiant with youth, as she bore off the basket of clothes on her head, swaying beneath the load and very erect as she smiled a greeting to her peasant neighbors.

It was quite different with Elisa. She could not forget that she had been trained at Saint-Cyr to be a lady. Unimaginable for one of Queen Marie Antoinette's courtly ladies ever to plod through a village lane with washing perched on her head! It was all very well to play the shepherdess in the park of Le Petit Trianon, to go about in a wide-brimmed straw hat, a white dress bodiced tightly so the white breasts peeped out, and silken hose, a beribboned crook in hand, tending soft, woolly, white sheep thoroughly washed for the occasion. That was all very well, mere make-believe, a bucolic relief from the severity of Versailles manners and formalities, from the splendor of the great palace where the spirit of the Sun King still reigned. But here, in the drab outskirts of Toulon, the game was in bitter earnest. The Rousseau dream descended with a horrid crash into everyday. No more sweetly relaxing tears in milady's chamber.

The strange part of it was that actually Elisa's years at Saint-Cyr had not been happy at all. Not only had she suffered from the disadvantage of being unattractive, but her companions shunned her because of her stubborn, insular Corsican temperament. Besides this, she had been penniless, lacking even the means to buy herself and her schoolfellows a handful of sweets to relieve the monotony of the

plain diet. Nor could she buy herself, as so many had done, a silk garter to wear out of sight under the drab gray uniform of the academy, a bauble that might delude its wearer into feeling herself an exciting feminine creature who dared to step out of bounds. Elisa never forgot the time when she had flung her arms about Napolione's neck and wept. He had come to visit her at the school and found that she did not even have the three francs needed to take part in a dance that someone had planned. At that time Napolione himself was attending the military school in Paris. Tears welled into his eyes as he listened to Elisa's bitter complaint. They had frightened her, for the thin little soldier, so defiant in bearing, had always before accepted reverses with stoic calm.

For once, however, he openly sobbed with her. It was not only on Elisa's account, though he liked her well enough at the time, if not so much as Paoletta. He sobbed because suddenly he was overcome by the knowledge of his own unremitting poverty. His sister's humiliation brought only too vividly to mind his homesick years in Brienne, his hard years in Paris. Like Elisa it did not trouble him too much that he had to renounce many of the comforts and pleasures his comrades took for granted. It was the social humiliation that bit into him, to have it assumed that he came from a humbler social level where each sou was looked at twice and then again before being parted with—providing, of course, there was a sou to spare. Napolione's lack of means was constantly high-lighted by his peculiarities as a person. They alone would have sufficed to separate him from his fellows. He spoke French with a heavy foreign accent. He was morose and prepared to carry on his back the world sorrows of a Werther. He had a savage temper. In many respects the cadet Napolione was a very difficult young man.

In the garden of Saint-Cyr the brother and sister, still tearful, had run into kindly Madame Permon, one of the Signora's old friends. Quickly she found a louis d'or in her silk purse and pressed it into Elisa's hand. Shortly afterward the little soldier had flown into one of his rages, and had ranted so much that Madame Permon felt constrained to give him a dressing-down. His anger was something to see. Even the Signora could never control it. This time Napolione had sunk his fingernails into his hollow cheeks and raked at the flesh until the blood ran. He stamped his feet, threatened with his fists. His eyes nearly started from his head, and altogether he was a

fine image of Corsican barbarity. When his voice returned he had burst forth into a harangue against the King.

"What sort of King is he, anyway?" he had cried. "Why is everything so muddled? Look at the wonderful reception halls! Look at the gold cornices on the walls! Look at the flagged walks! And what comes of it? Nothing, nothing." On and on he ranted.

"What sort of regime is it, I'd like to know?" he said. "What's the idea of allowing pupils to be humiliated and spat on? Why should this girl have to put up with it? And so far from home. Think of me! I've sworn to give my life in the service of France. Why do I merit the same treatment she's getting? What a miserable cesspool! Injustice—that's exactly what it is! Innocence and service to be mocked by a crowd of tittering chicken brains. Think of it, a man like me an object of contempt! Merely somebody to amuse them! Why? Because they're flush. Their parents are puffed up with what they've stolen from the people. Of course my father is nothing but a Corsican and a patriot. All that he has ever done is squander his family's money to improve the condition of France. That's of no account, of course! They don't want any new ways to earn a living. That's the answer."

This last, however, was not quite true. The father of the Buonapartes actually had been an aimless deviser of wild schemes who repeatedly lost all he had in projects beyond his scope. Much later the same son Napolione admitted as much himself. But it was quite different during that trying scene at Saint-Cyr.

"We're living in miserable times, I tell you," he yelled at Madame Permon. "We're ruled by weaklings, by an inferior breed. How I wish I had lived in the great days of Rome! How I should like to owe allegiance to such men as Scipio, Cato or the Gracchi! True greatness of soul was rewarded then as it should be. There was something else that counted besides unearned wealth and influential connections. No effete nobility such as you see riding high in our times."

Like his whole generation Napolione was forever quoting Plutarch's version of the Roman Republic—an ideal blending of wisdom and courage, not the ironclad oligarchy it really was.

"I tell you," Napolione wound up, "just let me get power, and you'll see change in a hurry. I can assure you of that, Madame Permon."

All this while Madame Permon was looking over her shoulder to

make certain no one overheard Napolione's treasonable argument. Having failed to hush him, she accused him of gross ingratitude to the King. Was he not ensuring for Napolione and Elisa an elaborate education at state expense for a period of years? Little Laurette, Madame Permon's black-eyed daughter, was very frightened. She took one look at that wildly gesticulating, haggard young fellow and hid her face in her mother's skirts. Horrible cousin from Corsica! His uniform was very old and though neat enough shone at the seams. His eyes blazed fire and when he looked at her his glance went right through her. An unsympathetic, ugly nestling—that was how Madame Permon summed him up. She saw him master himself by a great effort.

"I'd rather drive a mangy donkey in Corsica," he ended, "than be a lickspittle courtier for His Most Christian Majesty, the King of France."

Indeed, with one thing and another Elisa's stay at Saint-Cyr had been by no means an idyl. Yet for all the unpleasantness of the days spent at the finishing school, now that the Convention had ordered the place closed, deeming it a waste to continue the production of aristocratic young ladies, it hovered golden in Elisa's memory. In retrospect it seemed a veritable paradise crowded with beauty, amity and refinement. Looking backward she thought her companions dears. Jibes and prejudices were forgotten. The teachers, once so colorless and pedantic, were remembered as models of feminine insight, exemplary in all respects.

It had become Elisa's habit to paint a glowing picture of this lost paradise, complete to the last tiresome detail, for the benefit of her sister Paoletta—that is, whenever they happened to be together and on good terms for an hour or two. These lengthy descriptions made an impression on the younger sister and she, too, got the idea she would like to be refined and educated. Since a formal education was out of the question, it became Louis' task to teach her the ABC's. For the purpose he adopted as text the Chevalier Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's romance *Paul and Virginia*.

It was from this charming fable that Paoletta learned how to read and write a little. The book itself she did not like, even though it concerned the adventures of two children on a far-off tropical isle. It had had an enormous success throughout all France, and the country teemed with little Pauls and small Virginias. But in contrast to the rest of her family, Paoletta, neither as child nor as adult, ever

took the slightest interest in any form of literature. Later, to be sure, the literati themselves tickled her curiosity enough for her to leaf through a novel, or scan a poem, with a great deal of yawning and long pauses. Louis, on the other hand, at this early age found *Paul and Virginia* quite entrancing. He even dared to write a long letter to the Chevalier, begging him to reveal which adventures in the book had really taken place, and which were the poetic creations of the author. This was typical of Louis, for he was not inclined, as he took pains to declare in his letter, to waste his sympathies on pure fictions.

Sometimes Lucien dropped in on the family. There came a day when he arrived in great agitation. The populace of Toulon, he announced, had so far lost their heads as to open the port to the English and even to make a formal alliance with these archenemies of the Republic. It was now autumn. Since a hard winter, according to peasant theory, would surely follow a hot summer, it became a prime necessity to find suitable winter quarters, for they could hardly return to Toulon with the English there. In family council it was decided that it would be much better to remove to some solid city house in Marseilles than drag through the cold months in a country farmhouse. The plan was approved by the two older brothers, Joseph and Napolione.

As a parting gift to his family, Lucien gallicized the name Buonaparte, dropping out the Italian "u." He caused little Annunziata to be rechristened Caroline, Elisa was changed to Elise, and Paoletta became Pauline. The Signora had great difficulty accustoming herself to these new names, and compromised by calling her favorite daughter "Paolina." However, she fully appreciated the expediency of this name-changing, and did not object to calling her second son Napoleon, as in fact he had long been called by his French acquaintances.

Having made this heroic contribution, Lucien took leave of his family. He kissed the girls, even finicky Elise, who turned her cheek half away so that his lips struck her prominent nose. He favored his brother with a long parting discourse on the duties of a true patriot. He kissed the Signora's hand, gave Marianna Casamarte a clip on the buttocks and was viciously scolded for his familiarity. Then he moved away across the flat, drought-stricken countryside, a long, lean figure, waving as he went, reminding them by signs that they were now Bonapartes without the "u," and promising to forward

them some money as soon as he got his hands on it. The Republic had recently appointed him keeper of stores in the commissary department for the village of St. Maximin.

The first official act of Lucien, as a bureaucrat, was to alter the name of his new field of operations. St. Maximin became Marathon. His next move was to drop his own name of Lucien Bonaparte, even though it did not reek of clericalism like the village name. From now on he would be known simply as "Brutus." His third and last step, and by far the most consequential, was to requisition for private use of the new commissary of Marathon the pretty seventeen year-old daughter of the village's only innkeeper. Her name was Christine Boyer and, according to wide report, she was a nicely made addition to the hierarchy of the Republic.

III

Wards of the Republic

WHEN THE FAMILY arrived in Marseilles the mother of the Bonaparte brood was greatly struck by the peacefulness of the town. It stretched out like a vast cemetery, the houses so many tombstones, a city of the dead. There was an astounding difference between Marseilles and Toulon, where the uproar was so great that at times it was hard to make oneself heard in the streets. It was a question which was less inviting, the noise of Toulon or the graveyard quiet of Marseilles. But the Signora had little time and less inclination to ponder the answer. She made directly for the City Hall and put in her request, as a Corsican refugee and patriot, for a place to shelter the family.

The official in charge was a rumpled little man with flashing eyeglasses. He took out his book, a long thick register, and began to run his finger down names and addresses. After each name he looked up at the Signora and said, "Guillotined" or "In custody" or "Emigrated." The Signora was interested only in a house abandoned by some émigré. It went against the grain, though she was not particularly superstitious, to occupy the home of someone who lay headless in the grave. As for those in custody, there was no telling whether the tribunal would set them free to return to their possessions, or have them wiped out—and that would automatically remove them to the first undesirable category. Accordingly the Bonaparte family moved into the "*hôtel*" of a Monsieur de Cipières, a once-successful lawyer who had saved his neck by moving to the more congenial and royalist climate of Genoa.

The house of Monsieur de Cipières stood in the rue Lafont. Someone had pasted a red-white-and-blue expropriation sticker on the outside wall, reading "Property of the Nation," and warning off any casual passer-by who might take it in his head to move in. It appeared, however, that this injunction had been belatedly applied, as the Signora discovered the moment she stepped inside the door. The rooms looked as if they had been struck by a cyclone. Chairs stood on bare

tables. Upholstery was ripped apart. The silken draperies had been cut to shreds, the jalousies torn awry. Cooking utensils lay scattered about. There were a great many dirty cups on floor and table, filled with stale coffee grounds, as if someone had had an orgy of coffee-drinking. Worst of all was the library. Here someone had tried to light a fire in the porcelain stove with the *Corpus Juris* and other legal tomes. The stove was stuffed with the charred remains of calf-bound volumes. Whether ignorance or a desire for revenge on royalist jurisprudence had dictated this vandalism no one could tell. Or perhaps some wit had experimented with the amusing notion of trying to extract a little warmth from the law.

In any event, it was a disheartening spectacle that greeted the Signora in the house of Monsieur de Cipières. She was speechless before such chaos. Like her son Napoleon she had an innate Latin love of order. Nothing was more distasteful to her than senseless dirt and destruction. The bespectacled official who had accompanied them to the rue Lafont regarded the domestic devastation, quite unmoved, his hands folded on his stomach. Once again he asked the Signora her name and circumstances. He shrugged his shoulders when she tried to impress him by letting him know that once she had been a landowner in Corsica. "The Devil forgets the absent," he reminded her, smiling thinly. He filled out a form, setting down the Signora's name, the names of Uncle Fesch and the children. Department: Corsica. Occupation: None. Finances: Destitute. He informed the Signora that this notice would have to be publicly displayed on the house door, without a trace of irony wished her good luck, and left the Bonaparte family to its own Corsican devices.

Meanwhile the children were racing about the house from one room to another. From upstairs Pauline screamed: "Mother, Mother, I've found a wonderful picture!"

The whole family assembled before the painting. It hung crooked over a bed, the mattress of which had been torn apart so that the horsehair stuffing stuck out in thick tufts. The picture was a too brilliantly colored copy of an Italian picture. The young goddess stood in her lovely shell, a vernal creature, brown-haired, her forehead round and white, eyes dreamily abstracted, her temples and cheeks almost consumptively luminous. The early-morning wind was stirring her delicate garment, a diaphanous star-strewn thing, so that the fine limbs beneath showed through in their roundness. In the back-

ground sea-gods raised heavy heads above the water, holding spiraled shells to their broad mouths as dolphins sported around them. The sea was calm and broad, and the morning light played aqueously over all.

"That's Venus," said Louis pedantically, in his morose way. "She's the goddess of love. She had an affair with Mars. But it's not true, of course. It's only a story."

"But it *is* true," said Pauline. She could not resist running her fingers over the picture. "Can't you see how alive and breathing she is? Of course it must be true."

"No, it's not," said Louis.

"She is too alive," said Pauline. "Mother, see how lovely she is. Isn't it wonderful how she lives?"

Uncle Fesch cleared his throat. "Just a minute, my child," he said reprovingly. "You mustn't forget you're a Christian. She's not real. It's nothing but a picture."

"What a numskull!" said Elise. "Pauline can't get anything through her head. In Saint-Cyr we learned all the names of the gods by heart. We could recite them from A to Z. Nobody thought anything of it."

At this concerted opposition Pauline threw herself into the Signora's arms. She cried bitterly, clinging hard to her mother. "What's the matter with me?" she sobbed. "My heart is beating so fast, and my legs are shaking."

"How silly!" muttered Elise.

The Signora stroked Pauline's head. "Calm yourself, child. Be still, Paolina. After all, it's only a picture you're making such a fuss about."

"But she is alive, she is, she is!" whispered Pauline.

"You're no longer a child, Paolina," said the Signora, kind and evasive. "Marianna Casamarte and I will make you a long dress when your brother Napoleon sends you the money for it."

"Will you? That will be nice. You're the nicest mother that anyone ever had." Pauline stood on tiptoe to kiss her. Now her eyes were dry and her forehead smooth again, as if she had never cried at all.

"It's always her, always Paoletta," said Elise. "She and Napoleon! The rest of us don't count beside those two prodigies."

"That's enough, Elise," said the Signora. "Get your broom and start sweeping the house out. We've got to clean up this place."

"That's the way it goes," said Elise hotly. "Go to Saint-Cyr, be a lady. Off to the kitchen, grab a mop." Having relieved herself of this bitter thought she stalked away, Marianna Casamarte after her, all out of sorts and quite perplexed.

When Pauline had gone Uncle Fesch turned anxiously to his stepsister. "Pauline worries me," he said. "She's so uncontrolled, so easily carried away." He looked suspiciously, with intense dislike, at the picture hanging crooked on the wall, but the goddess continued to smile mysteriously to herself.

"I've always known that," said the Signora, not without pride.

"The best thing to do is to get her properly married," grumbled Uncle Fesch.

"But my dear brother," said the Signora, "the child is only thirteen years old." The issue was closed for the time being.

During the next weeks the family, so far as was possible with the meager furnishings at their disposal, settled down in the second story of the house. It was not long before they realized why it was so very quiet in Marseilles. The Convention's wrath hung over the inhabitants like a pall. Robespierre's revenge against the enemies of the Republic had taken effect. Many innocent heads had fallen, along with the heads of genuine transgressors. Whoever owned property and had money was suspected as a matter of course. The learned, whose sympathies and livelihood had normally depended on attachment to the moneyed class, were also under a cloud. But even the poor were not exempt. The fisher's son, the vegetable woman, the porter were also in danger of their lives if they dared to criticize the lack of bread in the town, or the preference given by the butchers to those who sat in the tribunal or on some commission.

Many secret police—"*moutons*" they were called—mingled with the crowd. Often they dragged innocents to trial merely because of some old spite, or simply because they did not like their looks. It was not the severity of justice that was the bane of Marseilles, but a peculiar state in which mob injustice was rampant. From Paris the Convention had dispatched one of its members to take charge of the city. This deputy was the Proconsul Stanislas Fréron. Patriot Fréron had instructed the courts that it was not so much their duty to pry into the right and wrong of a case at great length and

then give labored judgment, but rather to visit swift punishment on the suspected as a matter of state policy. The idea was to get rid of all potential anti-Republicans. At the same time Fréron himself was given to overlooking doubtful behavior and even downright felonies, provided that his palm was heavily greased. For Stanislas Fréron, now nearly forty years old, was a notable figure of a man, and he needed substance to keep himself prime.

His clothes were of the finest, his diamond ring was the largest in the city, his perfumes, of which he was inordinately fond, were of the highest price. His table was greatly renowned and groaned under the load of roasts, wines, liqueurs and tasty delicacies that were piled upon it daily. But beyond all this, both in Paris and in Marseilles Fréron supported a stable of whores, actresses and demireps. Very naturally this high living cost him a fantastically pretty penny. Money, of course, was available from those who had occasion to ponder the intimate relation between their heads and their shoulders.

However jumpy Marseilles might be, the Bonaparte family could themselves sleep easily of nights. They were refugee patriots, they were poor, one of the sons was a captain in the army, another a commissary of the Republic. From Fréron's standpoint the family had a spotless reputation. However, could he have read the Signora's thoughts, very likely he would have been incensed. She was an ardent Catholic. Her family's poverty and ceaseless insecurity had strengthened her childhood faith, if anything, even though she had by no means arrived at the stage of being a priest-ridden matron of the shabby genteel sort. The disorderly behavior of the revolutionists, their hostility toward clerics, their contempt for the Mass and other sacraments of the Church in favor of what the Signora considered a hopelessly nebulous "Supreme Being" were all impieties to her. She was not unwise enough to open her mouth about these Republican derelictions. But when the tumbrel came rattling down the street behind two bony horses, its wheels squealing as it bore off another heavy consignment of condemned through the rue Lafont, the Signora collected her children in a back room. There she had them kneel down, fold their hands and say a prayer for the souls of those with whom she secretly sympathized.

Pauline chanced to see one of these sad processions. The condemned sat across boards that straddled the carts. There were men and women among them, even young people, some sad, others

gloomy, some in despair, others defiant to the last. One woman was crying. The tears streamed down her worn cheeks, and having her hands bound behind her back she could not wipe them away. Yet Pauline was not touched. Indeed, she merely felt glad that it was they and not she who were perched in the tumbrel. Her clear eyes lingered only for a moment on the prisoners, then turned eagerly toward a knot of Jacobin officials following behind. Fréron in all his splendor led the way.

She recognized him at once as the Proconsul. She observed the red feather in his hat, the blue frock coat, the yellow leather breeches, the fine black high-heeled shoes and, above all, the red-white-and-blue sash. Fréron carried a gold-headed cane, which he elegantly maneuvered this way and that as he strode along. His chin was embedded in a vast white cravat, his long brown hair carefully curled.

At the sight of so much manly beauty and worldly elegance thirteen-year-old Pauline's heart sprang into her throat. So this was the famous Fréron, the leader of the Parisian *jeunesse dorée*, the great lover! She was woefully abashed. She felt herself just a small girl from the hills of Corsica in a cotton dress. It was not only the outward Fréron that drew her to him magically, but the pride of his bearing and the flash of his eye, his sang-froid as he strolled thus through the streets of Marseilles behind a line of death carts.

At this moment Pauline felt that she now understood the true expression of power. Its shattering reality was only underscored by the stricken faces of the condemned and the ominous rumble of their conveyance. Like most women who are deficient in imagination, and on that account less charitable than men, however otherwise sentimental, Pauline was deeply drawn by a display of pure power. It did not matter to her that Fréron's authority had fallen to him by mere chance, and not by virtuous exercise of a superior mind and personality. That closely Pauline could not pursue the problem, and so contented herself with the outer show. The insuperable instinct of woman to attach herself to strength worked hard within her.

The splendid Monsieur Fréron did not follow the tumbrels every day of the week. He had other more important business to attend to, much more serious than gaping at the guillotine at work. But on this particular day it so happened that the victims were all nabobs of Marseilles, some forty of them, a bumper crop even for a city the size of

Paris, and certainly for Marseilles. Accordingly Stanislas Fréron had seen fit to lend his memorable presence to the occasion.

The Proconsul did not miss the excitement of the pretty young girl watching him pass. It would have been impossible to overlook it, for Pauline ran alongside the official party, her eyes shining, her cheeks rosy-red and her lips parted. The Proconsul was not unaware of her budding attractions, though he reminded himself that she was still a trifle immature. That might very possibly cause difficulties, though there was no need to worry too much. For did not Parisian mothers sell their twelve-year-old daughters into prostitution at the Palais Royal? Nobody felt any concern over that. On the other hand there was no telling what the "Incorruptible," Maximilien Robespierre, might do or say should he find out about such a peccadillo. The "Incorruptible" deemed it very close to treason if a man slept with anyone but his lawful wife, even if she were well of age. Hands off, the Proconsul told himself.

He could not, however, refrain from throwing a kiss to the enchanting creature. He did it with a nicely crooked forefinger and thumb pressed to his lips. It was received, he saw, with exquisite coyness. The child then vanished from sight and soon from mind. Fréron nodded to the executioner to get on with the job at hand. Awaiting him at home was a great dinner for two hundred persons, in which oysters, the first of the season, would play an important part.

Pauline ran straight home as fast as her slender legs could carry her. Without telling her mother or her sisters anything about her wonderful experience, she threw herself on the bed under the picture of the Venus. She lay there, carried away by wonderful, tender daydreams. She spun marvelous, too marvelous, things from the one airy kiss.

The fortunes of the Bonaparte family now changed for the better. Brother Joseph returned from Paris with the encouraging news that the Convention had decided to help the Corsican refugees. Each month the adults of the family were to receive seventy-five francs, and all the children under fifteen years, forty-five. At first sight these concessions did not amount to much, yet over the period of a year they added up to a comfortable sum. However, the prices of food and clothing were rising by leaps and bounds. In spite of the fixed prices officially decreed, and known as the "maximum," day by day

it became less possible to manage without turning to the undercover profiteers. These scavengers of the Revolution charged the highest prices for their wares, most of which were rifled from the magazines and warehouses of the state. Fine words and flattery—indeed, physical favors if the buyers were good-looking women—were the order of the day with these shady characters.

And so, even though the Bonaparte family lived rent-free and enjoyed means provided by the Republic, still they had to squeeze pennies to make both ends meet. The girls could now attend the small balls and parties given by the neighbors, Elise always with the thought in the back of her mind of finding someone to marry her. But their dresses were still made by tireless Marianna Casamarte, durable garments and horribly provincial. The old Corsican had no sense of current modes, which were inspired by the costumes of antiquity—loose robes falling loosely from a high waist, décolleté necks showing the tightly bodiced breasts, short puffed sleeves. Straight lines were beyond Marianna's understanding. To the sisters' mortification she produced bell-shaped skirts, bodices that hugged the throat, wrist-length sleeves.

Pauline and Elise owned only one hat between them. It was a sort of turban with imitation heron feathers. The milliner had assured them it was a jewel of a hat, "*le dernier cri du monde modiste*," and it had cost them all of fifty francs. This hat, obtained for communal use, very soon became the source of a continuous private warfare in the mansion of the departed Monsieur de Cipières. Never did two queens more bitterly dispute a crown than the two sisters this beloved hat. Elise battled for her rights with cunning and tenacity. Pauline, on the other hand, like her brother Napoleon was given to sudden assaults. She would storm through the rooms with her face all twisted out of shape by transports of anger. Catching Elise off guard, she would fling her to the floor, pin her down, kick and scratch her. And yet Elise was no mean contestant in these domestic bouts, and very apt to forget all about her Saint-Cyr upbringing under the pressure of her Corsican temper.

Feeling ran so high that at last the Signora had to put her foot down. Unless they composed their differences, she threatened, she would give the hat away. Restraint merely moved the battle to another dimension. Henceforth the sisters made faces at each other. With the baseness, mendacity and animal cunning of young girls

who, behind angel faces, conceal the disposition of tigers, the two fell on each other in vocal attack. They slandered each other, they dissembled, they lured each other into giveaway confidences. Their eyes looked daggers when they kissed. They made innuendoes about each other that in erotic terms would have done credit to a woman of the Paris streets. And still they were innocent, so far as physical experience of sex went. Certainly not, however, in spirit. At least the feud served the purpose of assuring the sisters mutual chaperonage. Should one of them sneak off to an empty room for a private word with a young man, to steal a kiss, to hold hands, the other was sure to turn up like Banquo's ghost.

At the beginning of the new year, in January—it was called "Nivôse," the snow month—the Bonapartes received good news. Taking three grades at a single leap, Napoleon had been elevated to the rank of brigadier general, reward from a grateful Republic for his services as artillerist and strategist in the siege of Toulon whereby the city was recovered from the English and the royalists. Since victories over foreign enemies of the Republic were very few, and since the Convention saw much in the fact that Napoleon had set a fine warning for other cities where there might lurk a glimmer of revolt, the services of the Corsican captain were unduly extolled and rewarded.

The sisters had no clear idea what "brigadier general" meant, and so at first they were not greatly stirred by the news. It was different, however, when the Signora read Napoleon's letter aloud, and they found out that with the rank of brigadier general went such perquisites as fifteen thousand francs a year, rations for five and the use of two horses. Their joy knew no bounds. They knew that everything their brother had or would have would accrue also to the family's benefit. His own needs were very few, they remembered. He hardly noticed what he ate. At the most he needed a new uniform now and then. It was certain that the greatest part of his income would be forwarded to Marseilles, and doubly certain when they discovered that a slip of green paper which had accompanied his letter —a neighbor was consulted for enlightenment—was a draft on a Marseilles bank for fifteen hundred francs.

After this the quarrelsome sisters reconciled their differences. Even saturnine Louis began to smile. The little ones danced around the table. There was a pandemonium of happiness. All the neighbors

were called in, and wine was fetched for all. Soon tables and chairs were pushed back to make a proper place for dancing. The precious hat was entirely forgotten, and the fame of the young General Bonaparte swept through Marseilles.

Soon everybody knew the saga of the hero of Toulon, and how he had been painfully, though not seriously, wounded by a bayonet while assisting in the storming of a battery behind L'Eguillette, a promontory commanding the inner harbor of the city. The sensation found its way among other places into a house in the rue des Phocéens occupied by the family of the silk merchant Clary. Tragedy hung over the house, for the father was not long dead and one of the sons had committed suicide. The suspicion of Stanislas Fréron had fallen on the family, because they had enjoyed several generations of prosperity. It was a rule-of-thumb principle with the Proconsul that solid families could not produce patriots.

Both daughters in this Clary family—Julie, who was small and limped a little, and the prettier and younger Désirée—were slightly acquainted with the Bonaparte girls, having met them at a children's dance. They had not formed a very good impression of them. Neither Elise's dark hauteur nor Pauline's endless nonsense and flippancy were any too pleasing to the wellborn Clarys. And yet Pauline's striking beauty could not be taken casually. In any event, the Clary sisters made up their minds to pay their respects to the Bonapartes, in order to congratulate them on their brother's success. Their own family was in a ticklish position and a general, even a Republican general, must surely be a man of power, equal to commanding the respect of Proconsul Fréron.

Julie and Désirée were cordially received by Elise and Pauline. They were shown the Bonaparte girls' new clothes, the veils as thin as vapor, the two new hats and all the other things into which the wonderful bit of green paper had been quickly transformed. Brother Joseph, who remained with the Signora, came in to see what was going on. And then the Clary sisters were quite moved by this tall young man with the dark wavy hair, by the ease with which he raised their hands to his lips and breathed a kiss on them. His elegant dark clothes they found agreeable. They liked his finely modulated voice and his acquaintance with literary matters, a knowledge that almost instantly he took occasion to unfold.

Very shortly Julie found herself in earnest conversation with the

well-read Bonaparte. They discussed the philosophy of her beloved Savoyard vicar, Rousseau. Delicate little Julie, perhaps on account of her physical defect, was something of a bookworm. She cherished in her own room at home her copies of Rousseau, Volney, Raynal, Saint-Pierre, Richardson and Goethe, bound in half-leather and decorated with gold. Her tenderest emotions were aroused when Joseph pursued the topic of the sorrows of Clarissa, a story which she knew in five octavo volumes. Joseph offered an intricate analysis of the infamous, yet charming, seducer, Lovelace. Up to this moment Julie had been very shy with men. Now she fell head over heels in love with the brother of the incredible Bonaparte girls. All the more did she feel one with him when he entrusted to her the secret that he himself was engaged in a literary project. He told her this in the manner of one confessing a heavy sin that burdens the soul. He let her know that he could pursue his task only at intervals, and that most of his time was taken up by the responsible post of field commissary with the Ligurian Army.

Julie, soft, yielding, little Julie, made up her mind she would marry Joseph. She decided it with the finality of a shy girl who believes she has at last found the lifelong happiness she has been waiting for. Joseph, of course, did not have the slightest inkling that his future already might lie planned behind Julie's maidenly forehead. He did take notice of the warmth of her brown eyes, and basked in it. He was encouraged to more and more confidences. Joseph felt himself understood at last, admired, perhaps even loved.

Julie was by no means a dunce. Like many women she had the capacity of thinking the crassest thoughts in moments of high feeling, an attribute particularly confounding to the male of the species. Even while regarding Joseph so winningly she was able to reason that, quite apart from the happy circumstance that she liked him, the marriage would be extremely worth while for him on purely material grounds. She was rich and would bring her husband a dowry of a hundred and fifty thousand livres. This was a gigantic sum in comparison with the income of the Bonapartes, all of whom had to live on the earnings of the one successful son as augmented by the charity of the Republic. Napoleon's salary as an officer and the family pension, Julie was well aware, offered no security. The political constellation might change any day. Besides, without flattering herself at all, Julie knew that she was socially acceptable and well connected in

Marseilles and Genoa. Even if the general continued on his meteoric career, Joseph would never have cause to be ashamed of her. Still, she was a little skeptical and apprehensive of the absent sans-culotte hero.

Again, she assured herself, how very good it would be for the Clarys to link up with this Corsican family. At least, she reasoned, the Bonapartes are neither Jacobins nor sans-culottes, not they themselves. It needed only one look at the Signora to verify this. Her earnestness, her breeding, her piety distinguished her from Fréron, Barras, Collot d'Herbois and the rest. All members of the Bonaparte family seemed to take pride in their origin and in the not insignificant role that the clan had played in Corsican history. Very plainly, Julie judged, they were not common people. No stupidities about brotherly love and equality were ever heard in their house. They looked out for themselves, these Bonapartes, much like the Clarys. They took no sadistic pleasure in the bloody process of equalization by guillotine.

While all these cogitations were spinning through Julie's charming head, the younger Clary girl—happy, blonde Désirée Eugénie—was busy trying on Pauline's new hat. As Julie watched she could not suppress a pang of envy at the sight of Pauline's beauty. She marveled despite herself at the marble forehead, the deep dimples in the cheeks, the round chin, the large luminous eyes under boldly curved brows. Here, indeed, was something better than the fragility of Rousseau's and Richardson's heroines. It was the bold, naked and dangerous beauty of a goddess creature. It was possible, Julie thought, to imagine Pauline in nudity, all radiant, alight with the shimmer of her own flesh, gliding among temple columns.

It is a dangerous beauty, Julie said to herself, dangerous both for anyone coming within its orbit and for the one graced with it. Then she asked herself whether behind that pure forehead there was enough insight, and within the breast enough feeling, to warrant the handling of such a demonic power, and she could not believe that there was. She turned to her sister Désirée, who also was considered very good-looking. But how different, really, how very different! With her it was mostly the charm of youth, a tender, cultivated beauty, a prettiness such as many women achieve by constant care of their looks. Seen beside Pauline she looked pale and insignificant, as carefully nurtured talent pales before true genius. Still, Julie re-

marked, Pauline was unaware of her advantage. She coquetted unceasingly, she let her bright eyes fall lovingly here and there as they wandered, she drew to her everything about her. But this she did with no purpose aforethought, out of the joy of life bubbling within her. It was like watching a young panther at play, seemingly comic and helpless as he practices with claw and swoop, unconscious that eventually a real prey will groan under his onslaught.

Some months later Julie was formally betrothed to Joseph and they were married in another six months at Crèges, the country estate of the Clary family. The mayor of the village, Jean Monfray, signed the marriage contract. With a ham of a fist he slammed down the seal of the Republic on the paper, and the demands of the state were met. But both the Signora, as a Corsican Catholic, and the mother of the Clarys insisted that the marriage should be solemnized by a church wedding. So it came about, oddly enough, that Joseph Bonaparte, field commissary of the Ligurian Army, was bound in wedlock by a priest to Julie Clary, wealthy daughter of the deceased patrician and silk merchant of Marseilles, François Clary. They were married in the little church of St. Jean-de-Désert, the church of John the Baptist who wandered about the wilderness eating locusts and wild honey. Pauline and Elise were entranced, for it was their first wedding.

The ceremony took place at night, in order to avoid unpleasantness. The Catholic Church and the Republic were still at loggerheads. The priest employed to unite the two young people was truly devout, and consequently, he had suffered official banishment at the hands of the Convention, like so many of his kind who refused to traffic with anticlericals. All this, of course, was distressing for Joseph, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. The priest, a shabby old fellow, was greatly moved. Seldom these days did he enjoy the opportunity of performing the holy sacrament of matrimony.

When it was all safely over Joseph heaved a sigh of relief and at once began to consider himself fortunate. Now in literal truth he was the best-fixed among the Bonaparte brothers. His position as the oldest son and chief of the clan was an assured, demonstrable fact. His brother Napoleon might have golden oak leaves worked in as facing on his tunic and carry the golden torch of freedom on his epaulets. On the other hand, he, Joseph, could gloat over his coffers of solid, shining gold, tall piles of genuine gold pieces stamped with the fleshy countenance of the dead Bourbon King, coins much more

highly prized by even the most ardent patriots than the gaily colored, rumpled bits of paper issued by the Republic, complete with fasces and an engraving of Freedom. There was a popular tendency to overlook political and patriotic considerations when it came to the ownership of good, solid cash. Joseph was one of the backsliders, and only the disgruntled, of course, would ever begrudge him such a human weakness.

Never did he revel more in his newly won worth as a moneyed man than when Elise and Pauline and even little Caroline hung about his neck to beg a golden favor. Soon he learned how to let his forefinger and thumb slip gracefully into his waistcoat pocket. Now he could yawn comfortably and decide to leave his office at the commissary earlier than usual, if he had a mind, in order to devote himself to private affairs. Among the avocations he found time to pursue were the literary works vaguely outlined to his brother Napoleon in Calvi. These projects were comfortably in evidence in his study when, after a third cup of coffee—coffee was hard to come by because of the miserable English—he looked about him before stretching out for a few winks on the sofa. Joseph had done his part for the clan. Little, warm-eyed Julie pleased him very much indeed. He grew as used to her as to any soft, warm cushion in the house. As with any decent married man, the fact that she was no raving beauty made little difference to him. So much the less chance of flirtation and cuckolding!

Joseph, then, was a good man, intent to please. He thought of his brother Napoleon, and concluded it was high time to confer a favor on him. Napoleon, he judged with his older brother's gravity, was becoming something of a trial. What was he driving at, this fulminating, unstable, sulphurous character? What did all his unrest amount to, his will ever to drive forward? And what was the point in so much haste, even in eating? Was there any sense in tearing mouthfuls out of chicken legs while he bent over his maps? A real general never would think of such unseemly manners. Joseph himself would sit peacefully, munching slowly, taking deliberate swallows of good red wine. Rush and pother were very unhealthy. They bespoke an inner sickness of the spirit.

Consider Napoleon's letters, sheer scribbles, so many hen scratches on paper. And, when they were deciphered, how disturbing were their contents! First would be a string of harsh commands, then melancholy observations on humankind, and then raging denunciations.

Napoleon was obviously in need of something. And Joseph, like the penetrating student of behavior that he fancied himself to be, recognized at once what was lacking—a woman, a woman like his own Julie. Think how he, Joseph, had dashed about like a madman before he was married, from Autun to Ajaccio, from Bastia to Paris, from Paris to Marseilles. How changed everything was now! How calm, settled, staid and entirely happy he was, all on account of Julie and her hundred and fifty thousand livres!

Désirée Eugénie—there was the wife for Napoleon. Blonde, pretty, well mannered and bringing with her a dowry like Julie's. A double marriage with the Clarys. The thought of it pleased Joseph. Like any true Corsican he wanted not merely to relate the families, but to fuse them into one clan. Letters, therefore, began to speed from his hand to Paris, to Nice. Joseph took Julie into his confidence in order to further the scheme, and finally Désirée herself. Neither she nor Napoleon reacted with much enthusiasm. However, on the whole they appeared ready to lend themselves to the oldest brother's ingenious proposal. They sent each other polite letters. Among the family in the house of Cipières the plan was wholeheartedly supported. The Signora gave her approval. Elise and Pauline began to look on Désirée as a sister. The prospective addition to the Bonapartes was accepted as one of their own. How fond they became of Désirée, blonde, demure, likable—and worth every sou of a hundred and fifty thousand livres!

IV

Summertime

WITH THE ADVENT of early summer and the passage of Floréal, the blossom month of May, into Prairial, the hay month of June, the Bonapartes received another astounding letter from the general. It was the occasion for a terrific outburst of activity. Was it possible? Brother Napoleon had done it again. He had leased a castle, a bona fide castle, as summer quarters for the family. There it was in black and white, written down in his familiar scrawl, the Château Sallé. The location was Antibes, not far from Nice and high above the sea. Clothes had to be brought into order, hats newly decorated, underclothing ornamented with fine needlework. For the general warned them that his comrades and subordinates were often with him in the château. Elise gave a happy sigh. Already she pictured herself as the wife of some fine officer, perhaps a dashing captain of the dragoons, perhaps even a general. Her long, ever-sullen face lighted up and became almost attractive. Pauline, too, fancied herself flirting with any number of resplendent uniforms. What chances, what unlimited opportunities for gay conversation, for tête-à-tête, for stolen kiss, for holding hands under the table! It was simply overwhelming.

And so the baskets were packed with Bonaparte belongings and bundles made fast. Marianna Casamarte, always grumbling, had hardly time to set her hand to one task before she was called to another. Hurry, hurry, was the cry for days. The best part of it was that the family was to ride to Antibes in their own coach, requisitioned on orders from the general. He had written that he would send his adjutant and some dragoons for an escort, as the lovely countryside of France was currently swarming with highwaymen, brigands and thieves, homeless peasants, men dispossessed of family and substance, and all the flotsam of the Revolution.

Excitement reached a peak when the conveyance actually arrived in front of the house on a fine, warm morning. It was drawn by four horses, like a field gun. Riders sat on the shaft horse and the leader.

The coach itself resembled a sort of large, round cradle. It was a vehicle then known as a "punch bowl." At the back of it was a small door through which passengers climbed in to take seats on a round bench, where all sat facing one another in a circle. The early-morning light lay slanting and silver on the houses. Neighbors hung out of the windows, the pallor of sleep still on them and their frowzy nightcaps over their ears, to observe the details of departure. They watched the dragoons feed the animals, and saw a tall young officer walk up to the Bonaparte's front door, spurs jingling.

Elise and Pauline ran to the door to answer the bell. They were still only half dressed and held their clothes over their breasts. And there was the officer in his long white leather breeches, his high polished boots and blue frock coat, shako in hand. His hair was short and curly. The tempestuous welcome seemed to put him quite off balance.

"Andoche Junot!" It was Pauline, of course, who recognized him. She almost threw her arms about his neck.

"Paoletta!" The officer came near dropping his magnificent hat in astonishment. "Damn my soul if it isn't the little sans-culotte from Toulon! That is to say—I beg your pardon . . . a great honor, Mademoiselle Bonaparte!"

"You know each other!" said Elise.

Pauline took the young officer's wrist and pulled him toward the Signora. "Here he is," she called, "our protector and our guide, Lieutenant Junot."

Junot kissed the Signora's hand. "A great pleasure, Madame," he murmured, still badly confused.

"Please sit down, Lieutenant Junot," said the Signora. "Elise, Paolina, get the young man a cup of coffee."

"If you please, Madame, don't go to any trouble," said Junot, and could not take his eyes from Pauline.

"Trouble?" The Signora smiled. "My son's friends are naturally welcome here at any time. They're our friends, too."

"My friends," said Pauline archly, and let her bright eyes rest on the blushing lieutenant.

"Indeed," said Junot. His glance was fettered by Pauline's. "The general is expecting you. He is very anxious to see you all."

"How nice!" mocked Pauline.

"I beg pardon," stammered Junot.

"Come now, Junot," said Pauline. "How do you like my new dress? How do you like me?"

"You're more beautiful than ever, Pauline," said Junot, and bowed as Pauline giggled in his face.

At last they were all assembled in the "punch bowl." Junot had the dragoons store away the luggage in the long compartment under the seat. This was done with military dispatch. The ladies were offered a hand up, the children were lifted up, and bulky Marianna Casamarte squeezed in through the door. An early-summer perfection bathed the old city of Marseilles. The sky was a sheet of light blue silk. The brightness filtered into every alley, lay softly on the crumbling walls of the dun old houses. It was reflected in the small windowpanes, in the dark surfaces of well water, in people's faces. The morning smelled spicily of the sea and fish and warm tar.

Outside in the country beyond the city gate it was even more lovely. The crowns of the poplars swayed with a ceaseless flutter and whisper. Shadows and flecks of sunlight played on the passengers' faces as they rode along. The coach, artfully suspended on excellent springs, began to pitch and rock gently, to the children's great joy, when Junot had the horses speeded up to a trot. Little white farms looked down on them from knolls. In the distance church towers began to appear as they drew toward previously unexplored villages. Along the way the wind rippled through silver-green wheat fields. On steep slopes grew gardens of olive trees and apple orchards.

But the finest thing of all—at least in the girls' opinion—was the way Junot rode alongside the coach, one hand on his hip, giving them a splendid chance to flirt with him. Whenever there was sandy going and the horses slowed down to a walk, he came close and held to the handrail of the coach. And when he thought that the Signora was not looking he made bold to play gently with Pauline's black curls. A gallant fellow, this Junot. A fetching young man. The Signora did not miss what was going on under her nose. But she feigned sleep. Her heart was so happy that for once she did not begrudge the harmless flirtation of the adjutant and her little Paolina.

Junot told them about the fighting at Toulon. He told them how Napoleon was dictating a letter to him when an English shell, exploding near by, had covered them with dust. Thereupon Junot had said, "All the better; now we won't have to use sand to dry the ink." From that time on Napoleon, still a captain, had kept Junot by his

side. They had slept together near the battery, wrapped in long mantles, with saddles for pillows and a tent of stars overhead. Junot told them about the nights that they had passed playing vingt-et-un, nights of cutting December cold. The general always stayed up with them, wide-awake, even though he took little interest in cards. He would still be awake when his comrades had sunk into the sleep of exhaustion, snoring loudly, their limbs sprawled this way and that.

One night, Junot said, he too had fallen asleep at last, only to awaken in the gray of early morning half frozen, his teeth chattering in his head. There, still awake, was the indestructible one, his collar pulled up high against his white cheeks. The day was ushered in by broadsides from the ships below. At this point the general had swept the cards from the table. "Come, Junot, now we shall take Toulon," he had said.

As Junot talked on he gradually lost the bubbling freshness of his youth. An undertone of dread, of deep respect, crept into his words. The Signora knew the phenomenon well. Costa and the peasants of Bastelica talked the same way about her son. She knew that the young lieutenant was attached to her general-son by ties of life and death, that he was a partisan of the house of Bonaparte, bound by something far more profound than the allegiance laid upon him by his oath as a soldier of the Republic.

They ate their midday lunch on a hilltop under the wide branches of a walnut tree. The lieutenant, with Pauline's aid, cooled the wine in a near-by spring. They bent down together over the cold bubbling flow of water, Junot's short light curls mingling with Pauline's. When they raised their heads their lips met, still running with cool, sweet, earth-tasting water. They kissed each other like two creatures risen from the depths of the spring, sweet water still trickling from the corners of their mouths. Then they stood facing each other, overcome by a tremulous amazement at what they had done. The ripple of the spring was in their ears, their hair was rumpled, and their cheeks were warm from the chase to reach the water. The silver beards of wheat tossed and sprang back and dipped again, a field of wavering silver-green behind them.

They rode on through the long sunny hours of the afternoon, on into the evening freshness. They passed by cattle wending their way home, and saw their great liquid eyes looking up at the coach. The bushes by the way hid the song of the thrush, the *oiseau des ténèbres*,

as the unhappy Chénier had called the bird. The first star of evening appeared. They saw a wraith of smoke rising from a village. It smelled of roast potatoes, manure and wet leather.

The children fell asleep and the girls suddenly felt tired in every bone. The hoofbeats faltered and grew labored, the coach axles groaned, the wheel spokes creaked in a medley of complaint. Junot was now a shadowy figure on his horse. Lightly he hummed verses of a popular song of the day, one written by Fabre d'Eglantine, a great man with the ladies.

"I've lost my love with hair of jet,
I've lost my dearest treasure,
I've lost for aye my gay Paulette . . .
And I'm ready for new pleasure."

Pauline awoke from her drowsiness and smiled to herself as she heard Junot. In the darkness her hand sought the rider's.

"Do you love me, Junot?" she whispered.

"I love you, Pauline," he whispered back.

Pauline looked up at the stars through the shifting shadows of the trees. She held fast to Junot's hand, a warm hand in which she could feel the motion of the horse under him. It was like holding a centaur's hand. She breathed in the damply sweet night air. Happiness flooded through her heart.

Late in the evening they found shelter at a farm. Pauline enjoyed it all, every bit of it. She liked the smell of cattle, the whitewashed walls, the peasants in long blue blouses and roughly fashioned wooden shoes. She liked the lantern lights in the stalls and the pallets of hay to sleep on. She slept undisturbed by dreams. The cock's cry awoke her to drink fresh milk out of a bluish-white pitcher brought by Marianna Casamarte. The milk was still warm from the cow.

Then presently everyone was in the coach again, somewhat the worse for not enough sleep. The landscape had changed. The low hills had become much steeper and higher. At the left they could see the real mountains, masses of silver-gray stone sloping sharply to the sea. From the heights they looked down on the light gray-blue of the Mediterranean. Now and then they saw a solitary fisherman's boat, with the lateen sail cutting a sharp brown triangle out of the blue.

They continued in this fashion all day and the next, past Brignoles,

Le Luc, Vidauban and Fréjus, always deeper into the Riviera, the improbably beautiful strip of coast at the feet of the Ligurian Alps. A longing for the journey to end soon hung over the travelers, a keen desire to be at rest within the wonders of the château. Junot, too, was not quite the same fellow. Gradually his manner became more formal and he was riding at the head of the equipage when the gray citadel of Antibes suddenly hove into view.

They turned safely into the little courtyard of the castle. The Château Sallé was a one-story structure with two wings that gave it a horseshoe shape. Napoleon was awaiting them on the doorstep, a small dark figure. He made his family welcome, played the master of the castle. All talking and laughing at once, they strayed through the rooms, admiring this and that, and very thankful to have the journey done with. Abruptly the brother parceled out the rooms, and explained the typical day's program. He himself, he said with regret, could never know when he was going to spend some time with his family. They must live as if he were not there at all. But this solution was obviously impossible, as it turned out. His presence was intensely felt throughout the house, even by the small children, and they all preferred to keep dinner waiting a full hour than sit down to it without him.

The house was badly furnished. The tables and beds were old, the chairs rickety and poorly upholstered. Nevertheless they liked it, for everywhere through the floor-length windows they saw the summer flooding in. The green of the garden threw a golden-cool shadow on the big white flagstones of the garden walks. The neglected garden had become a wilderness of roses. Rose vines covered its walls, climbed into the apple trees and covered the stone rim of the well. Everywhere was the dark, close perfume of crimson roses, the delicate fragrance of pink roses, the spicy sweetness of yellow roses. In the morning they could smell the mossy, woodsy perfume of wild ramblers that flourished all about the château. Beyond this fragrant wilderness grew stiff cypresses, overrun by dark ivy leaves, against a background of glistening, naked mountain.

The only large room in the house was the dining room. Here the family gathered to eat and to amuse themselves. Around the white walls of the room ran a marble frieze in bas-relief depicting the adventures of Psyche as she roamed about seeking, according to the golden tale of Apuleius, her lost lover god. Pauline could not make

found herself in the garden of the Hesperides where grew the golden apples of life, or in the garden of the Babylonian hero where fruits were made of precious stones. Her eyes roamed around greedily. She tore off a currant branch laden with berries, she stripped some peas from their sun-warmed pods, she tested the green figs and found them still too hard to eat. But the soft, fleshy leaves of the artichokes she thought completely irresistible. She let out a little cry and fell on them, pulling one, two, three and more, wrenching the stubborn things from the earth. Then she turned to go.

At the last minute she changed her mind. A bolder thought possessed her. She would go under the grape arbor and take a good look at Père Baliste, the old fellow, who was lying there asleep. He would never know about it, and it would be great sport. She would gloat over the innocence of the man she had robbed. In the spirit of a murderer haunting the scene of the crime, Pauline crept closer to the bench, impelled by pride in her thievery.

It was cool and dampish under the grape arbor. All curiosity, Pauline stood stock-still and looked down at the old man. His little cap had fallen away from his head. He snored softly, the epitome of sleeping innocence. Pauline smiled to herself, almost giggled aloud.

Then the unexpected and horrible happened. Two quarreling birds thrashed in the leaves, twittering madly. They were directly over the old man's head. He opened his small black eyes and yawned. Then his face froze as he slowly comprehended who it was standing over him. Pauline, too, was overcome. She remained as paralyzed as Lot's wife before Gomorrah. Then Père Baliste saw the stolen artichokes that Pauline clutched against her. A profound realization of injury and trespass brought the old gardener to his feet like a shot. Pauline had struck his dearest, pocketbook nerve. "*Diable!*" he yelled. "*Fille du diable!*" He sprang up from the bench with astonishing elasticity for a man of his years.

Unquestionably it would have gone hard with Pauline had not Père Baliste got tangled in his flowered smock, so that he stumbled and gave the little thief time to flee. She was off like a deer, crashing madly through the precious gooseberry bushes without feeling their cruel prickles. She crushed onions and carrots underfoot. In no time she was at the peach tree. Up she swung into the branches and dropped over the wall into the safety of the rose garden.

On the other side she listened, breathing hard. She heard Père

to pure sensual indolence. She liked to lie stripped on her bed, to feel the sun prickling in her skin, glowing all through her. Then sometimes she would start up from the bed with a bound, fling on her clothes and run out into the garden. Up the pear tree she would scramble as quick as a cat and peer through the branches into the neighboring garden. And one time, doing this, she nearly came to grief.

The next-door garden, unlike their own, was very well cared for. Carrots, onions and cabbages grew there in neat beds; beans and peas climbed circumspectly up sticks provided for them. Masses of grape leaves formed a pretty bower, and against the south wall of the garden grew fig trees, their seeking branches prying into the stones. There were also meticulously trimmed gooseberry and currant bushes.

The garden belonged to Père Baliste. The products of it he sold in the market at Nice, where they enjoyed a high reputation and quick sale among epicures of the town. All day long Père Baliste worked in his garden. He hoed, weeded, dug, pruned. He gave his thirsty plants water with the aid of a long-spouted watering can. Over his iron-gray hair he wore a little round black cap, and a long pipe always dangled from his lips. A smock of flowery flannel and shoes of patent leather with red soles rounded out his striking air of solidity, faithfulness and calculating readiness to serve, an impression well known among the citizenry of Antibes. He even awed Pauline a little, though she did find him ridiculous, too. As for Père Baliste, who feared damage to his garden, he kept an Argus-eyed watch on the curious nymph who popped up to stare at him over the garden wall.

This time, however, Pauline saw that the old fellow had granted himself time out for a nap in the shade of his grapevine. She could just make him out in the leafy shadow, stretched full length on a bench. Soundlessly she swung down from her pear tree onto the wall, ran along to the peach tree and made her way down into the vegetable paradise of Père Baliste. Before she let herself out of the tree, she tested every branch to make sure of a way out should she suddenly have to bolt back to safety. This done, she stood on the soft garden earth, her eyes wide as she spied out the situation. Her heart thumped in her chest, and she felt the fine excitement of adventure into forbidden territory.

How amazingly different from her own was this garden! She could not have been more overwhelmed with curiosity had she suddenly

found herself in the garden of the Hesperides where grew the golden apples of life, or in the garden of the Babylonian hero where fruits were made of precious stones. Her eyes roamed around greedily. She tore off a currant branch laden with berries, she stripped some peas from their sun-warmed pods, she tested the green figs and found them still too hard to eat. But the soft, fleshy leaves of the artichokes she thought completely irresistible. She let out a little cry and fell on them, pulling one, two, three and more, wrenching the stubborn things from the earth. Then she turned to go.

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Baliste cursing aloud. "My artichokes," he was saying to himself, "my best artichokes ruined, ruined! And my onions trampled down! God have mercy on me! God preserve me from that she-devil!"

Pauline found Andoche Junot sitting on a bench among the roses. She flung herself into his arms, frightened to death. "Protect me, Junot," she whispered. He saw the artichokes, he laughed away the old man's threats. He took Pauline's brown arms and tenderly examined the bloody scratches made by the gooseberry bushes, and kissed them well up to the shoulder. Her arm burned from the sun and tasted salty.

Pauline trembled. "People are so mean to me, Junot," she said. "They just don't want me to do anything. But you're so good. You're the one I like best of all."

Then they remembered the artichokes and decided there was no sense in wasting them. They broke apart the leaves and chewed eagerly on the juicy hearts.

Père Baliste complained to the Signora about Pauline's stealing, and the mother would very likely have visited severe punishment on her daughter had not the arrival of a letter that evening diverted the family's attention. It was brother Lucien who had written this time, young Brutus in Marathon. He succeeded in shocking all of them with his news. In St. Maximin he had been giving more and more of his time to his landlord's daughter, little Christine Boyer. She was the same girl, of course, who had taken his eye the very first evening when he arrived in the village. According to Lucien's letter, in Christine he had discovered a purity of soul almost lost since antiquity. He likened her most enthusiastically to a Cornelia or a Lucretia in peasant dress. In any case, he had married her, now considered himself very happy and hoped for the family's blessing. What Lucien had not written, since in his opinion it was not his family's business, was that Christine had proved an only too loving diversion in the slow backwater of Marathon. During the long winter nights she had kept Lucien's back as warm as toast, and in the course of so doing had got her belly full of child. As a man of honor Lucien felt himself obliged to make an honest woman of her. He had done this without bothering to secure his family's consent.

Though he had carefully concealed the background of his wedding, both his mother and Napoleon at once suspected it. The Signora was quite touched with a grandmotherly longing to have her first

grandchild in her arms, and was prepared to forgive all. Not so the general. He was seated at the dinner table when the news was broken to him. He took his knife, and hurled it at the door, where it stuck with an ominous twang like a tuning fork. "The man must be mad!" he shrieked. "He must be out of his mind! Does he think he's going to bring some block of a country girl to this house, stinking of cow dung and with straw sticking out of her ears? Keep them away from me, both of them! The wedding will have to be annulled at once. He owes that much to me."

"Perhaps she's not quite so bad as that," said the Signora, who was genuinely sorry for the girl.

"But, Mother, why do you say that?" said Elise. Her eyes already were red from weeping over this family humiliation. "What do you think we can do with an innkeeper's daughter? Just imagine how she must have behaved with the other guests before Lucien came along! Why, she hasn't any upbringing at all."

"That's enough, Elise," said the Signora. "Kindly hold your tongue."

"Maybe she's pretty and nice," said Pauline, and butter would not have melted in her mouth.

"I don't care whether she's as beautiful as Helen of Troy," said the general, frowning stormily. "She shall never become part of this family. A Jacobin! Scum of the Revolution! After all, Lucien is my brother. I'll forgive him the insult as soon as he gets a divorce, and not before."

With this pronouncement the general left the room. The contretemps was left in abeyance, but it flared up again and again in the ensuing days. In fact, for several weeks the family went about with long faces. Pauline did not mind nearly so much as the rest. She liked the idea, secretly, of having a simple country girl for a sister-in-law. Why not? There would be no competition from her. And one day Pauline walked into the Signora's room without bothering to knock. Her mother's dark head was bent over some small clothes. Busily her fingers flew.

"What are you making, Mother?" Pauline asked. The clothes were small enough for a doll.

"Nothing," the Signora said darkly. "Go on outside and play." She sewed on.

V

Satyr of Marseilles

HAVING BEEN DRIVEN OUT of Corsica after supporting the wrong party in the island's civil war, almost overnight the Bonapartes took new root in the soil of France. At once each member of the family, in his own way, sought to promote himself, to extend his and the family's influence as a matter of course, to find a permanent security within a wholly novel set of life forms. Not even Napoleon appreciated exactly how unstable was the political future of France. The Convention, through the intervention of Robespierre and the Corsican-born delegate Salicetti, had launched him on a richly promising career. In consequence, like anyone else in similar circumstances, Napoleon tended to look on the Republic of his day as an established institution.

But the rule of the Convention under the leadership of Robespierre had long since become untenable. In ever-increasing tempo the drift of the times was to repudiate the "Incorruptible." In his egocentric stubbornness Robespierre had burned every last bridge behind him. Reconciliation among factions and splinters of opinion was simply impossible.

The previous summer the Girondist party had collapsed, following the stabbing of Marat by Charlotte Corday. Their eclipse was succeeded by the eclipse of the radicals, the Hébertistes.

Then, in the spring that followed, Danton had fallen, he of the big head and the earthy manners, along with his fiery friend, Camille Desmoulins, and the frivolous Fabre d'Eglantine.

After Danton's death Robespierre stood alone in the rarefied atmosphere of his own idealism. With each passing day all France was becoming more satiated with his puritanism, and found it more objectionable than the excesses of the Terror. For Robespierre appeared insensible to the change of political climate. He raved on about the one will which must rule. He could not see that this one will was merely a projection of himself. In the Year II by Re-

publican reckoning the populace was experiencing a revulsion against any further heaping up of victims on the Barrière du Trône Renversé.

In good time, as foreordained, Maximilien Robespierre came to the end of his tether. It happened on the 9th Thermidor in the Year II. His downfall surprised his enemies as much as himself. He did not fall in battle, in any last-ditch fight with his enemies, but as a god falls when his feet of clay are smashed from under him. There was a clash between him and Fouché. Quickly Robespierre was spirited to the guillotine, and the trick was done. Paris cheered when it had recovered from its surprise. Now the Terror was finished, and there came to the fore the reaction which always dogs the heels of revolutionary zeal. Rapidly there evolved a down-to-earth period of life pursued materially, a back-to-normal, business-as-usual time. In practice this meant the rise of speculators, a scramble for bureaucratic sinecures, lip service to the government as a means of concealing vulgar connivance.

The events of the 9th Thermidor shook all France. The reverberations were strongly felt by the Bonaparte family in distant Antibes. Salicetti, the friend of Robespierre's brother, desiring to remove himself as far as possible from the orbit of reprisal, denounced his protégé, Napoleon. He drew attention to a trip that Napoleon had made to Genoa, and cited it as proof of his plotting with the foreign enemies of France. Besides this he maintained that Napoleon was a Jacobin of the purest stripe. Napoleon was held under military arrest in the citadel of Antibes. His friends, with good reason, feared the worst. Junot, always loyal, advised flight and arranged to have a boat carry them to Genoa. The general, however, kept his head and told his adjutant that it behooved him as a soldier to hold his tongue and remain aloof from renegade slander.

Napoleon's family were stricken dumb by the rapid drop in their prospects. The Signora went about in dour silence, and anxiously the girls tried to read the moods written on the face of the excitable Junot. The little children cried themselves to sleep without really knowing why, merely to be miserable like everybody else.

The interlude did not last long, but for a time it was ticklish enough. The general was very fortunate in belonging to the army. At least he was protected from the counterrevolution, which for some months now held sway in southern France. In the village of Beau-

caire, for example, hundreds of Jacobins—men, women and children —were massacred, thrown off a cliff into a river, where their carcasses were left to bloat in the water. But revolutionary or reactionary, the Republic needed military men. After only twenty-four hours of actual imprisonment the general was set free. Nevertheless, his name was returned to the first reserve list and he was removed from his post of artillery chief with the Ligurian Army. His career was lopped off short. Crushed by this reverse, he went to Paris to see if he could not wangle back his rank and make a coterie of new friends, perhaps look around for fresh opportunities for advancement.

At this time Napoleon was barely twenty-five years old, and yet already the Revolution had raised him high only to drop him as quickly. Junot, his close friend, and some other officers, among them a rowdy, fearless artilleryman, Murat, went along with him to Paris. For no completely valid reason they felt themselves drawn in the little general's wake. The other Bonapartes returned from Antibes to Marseilles, and it was a sad, fatiguing journey. Pauline could hardly keep from crying all the way. There was no Junot this time to ride by her side, singing so nicely, talking so well, holding hands so excitingly.

On the second day of the trip the weather turned bad. The landscape through which they dragged one weary mile after the other was gray and fog-shrouded. Finally it began to rain, fine sheets of rain that penetrated everything. Icy drops fell in Pauline's hair and rolled down the back of her neck as she sat huddled under the canvas of the coach. Her bright eyes were for once disconsolate. They arrived at Marseilles soaked to the skin, with the horses nearly galled, and were thankful to be installed within the shelter of the Hôtel Cipières. At least there they could be warm and dry and temporarily hidden from the endless vicissitudes of life.

The catastrophe did not affect Pauline for very long. The innate frivolity and high spirits of a fourteen-year-old girl soon triumphed over depression. However silent her mother might be, however irritable Elise, Pauline did not consider herself obliged to turn a long face to the world. After all, how interesting life was! How very attractive the young men, how exciting to wear new clothes, how great the allure of conversations, popular songs, parties! It was awkward, to be sure, not to have so much money as before,

for the general's salary had been reduced to a minimum. Just the same, brother Joseph was always good for an assignat or a few silver coins should a silk ribbon or a new veil become a matter of burning necessity. To tell the truth, however, it could not be denied that brother Joseph was gradually becoming tightfisted, at least extremely careful of his funds, a failing of so many men of means.

In Vendémiaire, the harvest month of September, the city of Marseilles held a feast to distract the people from gloomy premonitions of a shortage of foodstuffs. Bread, these days, was largely sawdust. Now the drums rolled, horns blew clear and loud. Behind the music rattled two-wheeled carts, perhaps the same ones that Pauline had seen in the procession of the condemned. Today they were garlanded with grape leaves. Vinedressers crowded about them, the men wearing their liberty caps, the women brilliant red kerchiefs. They carried rich bunches of frosty-blue grapes in their hands. In the last cart rode the soap boiler, Jean Billon.

Billon was a short, thick man with popeyes, a big-bellied fellow, ruddy of cheek. He had been decked out in a long robe and given a staff entwined with vine leaves. Already he was well on the way to getting drunk, and was a fitting Dionysos of Marseilles. He dipped into a huge basket of grapes and tossed bunches to the grinning, gaping crowd. The cart passed very close to Pauline, brushing her dress. Dionysos bent down and blew his vinous breath into her face. "You're a sweet little girl," he grunted amiably, and Pauline recoiled.

"What a man!" whispered the women to one another, overcome with awe. "Whoever goes to bed with him must pass some merry nights!" Some of them turned their backs on him and audaciously flicked up their skirts.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" said Dionysos. "Look at the backsides on them, fit for a colonel!"

Pauline was overpowered by so much masculinity. Now, there's a man of the world, she thought, for it was obvious that anyone who could stir the fishwives of Marseilles must have certain fundamental qualities. She blushed and bit her lip, hardly seeing the girls in their festive white robes, wearing flowers in their hair and carrying baskets of fruit as they wound slowly along behind the cart of Dionysos. Actually these girls were a fine spectacle. The Revolution, it is true, had exposed all the hidden evil, vulgarity and debasement of the masses. At the same time it had brought to light much hidden beauty, es-

pecially among the women of France. Nobility and pride of bearing had become a commonplace. Never before in history had France had such fine womenfolk, such powerfully limbed creatures, erect and freely striding, oval-faced, dark-eyed. The sweetly feminine types of the *ancien régime* had been swallowed up. The Revolution had revealed another and superior breed, a generation of geniuses and amazons, sensual yet chaste, wise without pedantry, loving life and yet not clinging to it.

But Pauline was more delighted with the young men in the uniform of the National Guard who followed the women, oak branches in hand. She had no time for the women.

The spell was not broken until the fishermen's floats came along, carts covered with nets and laden with oysters, mussels and fish. Amid these decorations sat the fishers and their wives, and there was a special cart for Neptune and his trident. But Pauline was not nearly so interested in the maritime display.

In the afternoon the feast was held, the "*repas libre*," to which each family made contribution according to his means. All took places on the wooden settles drawn up to the tables that had been set in the middle of the rue Lafont. Women had decorated the tables with vine leaves, fruits and flowers. The walls of the houses were hung with white draperies covered with bunting that showed the tricolor red, white and blue. Propaganda placards of the Republic were also prominently displayed. "Our motto is virtue," they announced. "Our happiness is in nature." "Where is there greater happiness than in the bosom of the family?"

One wag had printed on his banner, "*Hôtel de la Frugalité.*" Indeed, the meal was scanty, the wine thin. In spite of that a festive spirit reigned. Neighbors who had not spoken to one another for years ate side by side and were moved to exchange amenities. One man praised another's wine, one woman another's cooking. A great noise buzzed about the tables, a hum of talk, laughter, jokes, shot through with the bright voices of children and the crying of babies. Young men were pleasantly surprised to find that the girl they passed every day on the street was a very good-looking wench. Young girls whispered steadily to one another, comparing impressions. Housewives betrayed their very best recipes and unsuspected peculiarities of their husbands. Mothers found a great deal to confide about weaning, teething, bed-wetting and children's affairs in general. Men

boasted about being hell-rakers with the ladies, and completely avoided the dangerous ground of politics. Unity reigned in the rue Lafont.

The Bonaparte family were more or less isolated in this feast of good will, rather down in the mouth and withdrawn. Much was being said that they could not understand, and the others had trouble understanding them. Perhaps they would have liked to join in wholeheartedly, but their Corsican origin, their stiff-necked pride and their atrocious French, a hodgepodge which invariably caused French listeners to raise their brows and then struggle to hold back laughter, prevented them from mingling with the common herd of Frenchmen.

Toward evening the tables were cleared away. Lamps were lighted in the windows and all was made ready for street dancing. The Bonapartes at this point retired to their home, all except Pauline, who hesitated on the threshold. As she took a parting look at the fun, the soap boiler, Jean Billon, approached her. He had laid aside his Dionysian apparel and ivy crown. In his round flat hat and rusty frock coat he was like any other burgher, that is, except for a certain fullness of cheek and lip, and for a certain seeking and greed in his voluptuary's eyes. He was a Silenus in bourgeois dress, this Monsieur Jean Billon.

Grinning slyly all the time, he dodged his way to Pauline, bowed, and said politely, "Citizeness, strew the flowers of beauty in my path, if you will be so kind."

Pauline felt safe enough, for she could always dart to security behind the door which she was now pressing with her back. "Citizen," she said, one foot on the doorsill, "I don't even know your name."

"We can soon fix that," said the soap boiler. "Everybody in Marseilles knows Jean Billon. I'm the maker of the soap you've all heard of. All week I'm singing and boiling soap in my kettles. In fact, I make the best soap in the whole south of France. Ten men are working for me, my pretty. And now what is your name, please, your family, income and so forth, honored Mademoiselle?"

Pauline was somewhat flustered by Billon's easy flow of language. She promptly told him her name and could not keep back the fact that her brother Joseph was married to one of the Clarys.

"Is that so?" said Billon. "I see I'm dealing with someone way up in the world. I see you're a personality, Mademoiselle. How would

it be, little dove, if you and I took a fling at dancing? Do you hear the fiddles? We're only young once, as the fellow says!"

They danced and Pauline marveled at the lightness of Silenus, for all he was burdened with a ton of carcass. They were not dancing the wild carmagnole of the Revolution, but a simple country round. This jog-about Billon ornamented with many novel hops and pirouettes. He jigged like a young goat, let out wild cries, bowed deep, took desperate chances but never lost his footing; wiped the sweat dripping from his brow with a fine flourish of his soft round hat. Then he whirled Pauline round and round until her brains nearly gave way. Never had she seen such a dancer! The neighbors were of the same opinion—Jean Billon was unique. Everyone gathered round to stare at the intricate capers.

Then Silenus clapped his hands, even while twirling, and shouted, "Come on, everybody! On with the dance! Lift a leg, citizens, the night's young. Everybody for himself. Come on!"

They danced until far into the night. Pauline was in terrible confusion. She no longer knew whether she still loved her curly-haired, fiery Junot, her young centaur, or the aging Silenus with such nimble feet. As the evening wore on the scales tipped more and more in favor of Billon. Everything about him bespoke great experience in dark matters, the way he took hold of her about the waist, the way he pressed her to him and kissed her naked arms. When it came time to leave he kissed her full on the mouth with his thick, winy lips. He groaned to himself with lust and so alarmed Pauline that she struggled out of his arms.

"Are you angry with me, Pauline?" he whispered huskily. Then the incredible happened. Silenus got down on his knees in the street, reached for her hand, covered it with kisses and said, "Pauline, you're all the world to me. Don't think for a single minute that I've anything nasty in the back of my mind. Your reputation, beloved, is more important to me than my own soap. Tomorrow I'll ask for your hand in the right way, so help me God, if you'll only say the word."

Pauline laughed wantonly. How comical he was, looking up at her out of bleary, tearful eyes!

"You're making fun of me now," he moaned.

"No, I don't mean to do that," said Pauline. "Ask my mother if you want to, Monsieur Billon." It had slipped out half against her

will. She bent down, playfully tugged Silenus' ear, so hard that he let out a faint cry, and then she darted off, her dress swishing in his face.

Silenus sprang up, and stood in the middle of the street imploring her with open hands. "You lovely little goddess!" he said in drunken ecstasy. "You sugarplum!"

Safe in bed under the Venus on the wall Pauline could not sleep. Spasms of wild smothered laughter overcame her. He loves me, she whispered to herself, he really wants me badly. I send him out of his mind. Not like Junot. How he kissed me! How lustful his lips were! What a hot man! The chills went up and down my spine when he did it. I felt so funny inside. Wonderful! Simply wonderful!

She folded her hands under her head and stretched out her legs hard until the joints cracked softly. She felt herself all over. Then, a forefinger toying idly with her curls, she said to herself: Good God, what will the Signora say now!

The Signora accepted the soap boiler's bid for her daughter's hand with calm courtesy, exactly as she accepted two large bars of the finest "rose soap" which the supplicant had the foresight to bring along with him. She reminded Billon that Pauline was still very young, and that in any case everything hinged on the decision of the two oldest brothers, Joseph and Napoleon. Jean Billon protested valiantly that with him it had been love at first sight. As far as his personal circumstances went, it was true that soap did not enjoy the same social regard as silk or sword, but in any event, as he wittily put it, "I'm certainly not tied up in any dirty business!" It was his hope and plan, he revealed to the Signora, to remove shortly to Paris and there set up a soap factory. In Paris, he said, he would like to make a little love nest for Pauline, "his blessedly lovely Pauline."

The Signora at once began to make inquiries about Jean Billon. What she turned up was not of the best. In a small shed in the outskirts of the city Billon had an establishment where he and two young apprentices boiled beef and mutton tallow into soft soap. Billon was chronically in debt, though times were better than ever for his business. The trouble was simply that he had no control over himself when it came to the temptations of wine and women. He was always either drunk or in love, though seldom both at once, since he usually had enough sense to know that Venus and Bacchus make

bad company. Billon, in short, neglected his business and could not be depended on.

The family came to a decision at once. A three-line refusal arrived from Napoleon in Paris. Brother Joseph merely laughed and shook his head. Only Elise became worked up over the episode of the gallant soap boiler. She railed about the "dishonor" he was bringing on the family, and spoke a piece of her mind, to the effect that Pauline should be kept under lock and key where men could not possibly get at her. There was no other way to avoid eventual debauchery, as she tactlessly put it.

Pauline thought it all a huge joke. She did not mind in the least that her Silenus had vanished forever, that her sister nagged her constantly, and all the rest of the inconveniences which her escapade entailed. She told Elise that if a man like Billon were running after her, her mouth would water for him. She pointed out truthfully that perhaps she was only fourteen years old, but at least already she had had one serious suitor, which was more than Elise could boast, though she was a dodderer of seventeen. And that night before she fell asleep she resorted to her habit of thinking about Junot and how they had kissed at the spring near the wind-rippled field of wheat.

VI

Junot's Proposal

Poor Pauline! She was very much upset as the weeks crawled by and no letter came from Junot. Could he really be as busy as all that? Was he still in Paris? Had he gone to his parents' home in Bussy-le-Grand to tell them about the girl he was going to marry?

Actually Junot was still in Paris with his general. He felt himself compelled to remain by his mentor's side. The general was in a black mood, dissatisfied to the verge of despair. The War Ministry wanted to assign him to the Vendée. There he was supposed to join the infantry and take part in the endless peasant war, skirmishing behind hedgerows and stone walls, making little sorties on villages and farms. But Napoleon wanted no part of a peasant war, or of the infantry. He gave notice that he was sick, and indeed this was accurate enough. His cheeks were waxen hollows, his skin had turned yellow, on his hands had broken out anew the skin disease he had contracted during the siege of Toulon. At this time he was living in the Cadeau Bleu, a third-rate hotel in the rue de la Huchette, on the fifth floor. For breakfast he drank one cup of coffee. He bought his meals at a street stall, and to hide them from public sight wrapped in a piece of paper the copper coins which he used to pay for his humble fare.

Was he really as poor as all that? Could he not have favored himself with better quarters, better food? Could he not at least have polished his mud-encrusted boots? Madame Permon was shocked when he carelessly stuck them up on the grate of her fireplace when he visited her drawing room. Did he not continue to send assignats to his family, with the assurances that he was devoting his life to them alone?

What, really, was wrong with the young man? Was he wandering in the wilderness, testing himself? Perhaps that was it, for there are no better places for self-examination than great cities, where cold silence lurks behind the roar of the streets, loneliness in all faces, death in the windows. He looked indifferently at the menus in the

windows of the expensive cafés which already reflected the swift growth of the spirit of luxury. He observed Paris, the fops, the fine ladies, the carriages, the countless beggars. He passed through brilliant salons like a sleep-walker. The polite phrases he heard went in at one ear and out at the other. Once in a while someone was struck by his peculiar manner and looked around at him. Who was that fellow, anyhow?

On one occasion in the Palais Royal he fell into conversation with a young whore, a girl hardly more than a child. They talked with animation. Showing a real interest, he inquired about her home town, her parents, her lovers, the proceeds of her day's work, how she fixed up her room for the clientele. Then he fished a franc from his pocket and gave it to her. With a rude "*Bon soir*" he made off, the little baggage looking after him in surprise.

At night the general had his visions. He would lie on his bed staring at the ceiling; he could not sleep. The wan city light shone on the coverlet. The rafters snapped as the heat of the day left the wood. Or the gutters outside the window gushed rain water, splashing and gurgling. Often, on such nights, the ceiling would be transformed into a map before his eyes. On it he would trace out the Ligurian Alps. The broad Valley of the Po, the Plain of Lombardy would take shape. He would see the Adige and the Tagliamento as they plunged down from the High Alps, South Tyrol, the Dolomites. In his mind's eye he would see the slopes and valleys and passes of the steep landscape, animated by the long lines and regimental squares of white-clad soldiers, against which were storming long columns of blue-uniformed men. He imagined with intense precision squadrons of cavalry, batteries rumbling forward into position, long trains of supply wagons crawling forward under the quartermaster's command. It all unrolled magically before him—cities, fortresses, streets, roads, bridges. His was not a mystic's vision, hazy and formless. Rather it was literal and vivid. That was the astonishing part—the order, reason and mathematic perfection of it.

The height of the mountains, the width of the rivers, the distances that had to be covered in each march, the number of regiments needed for such and such an objective, the number of cannon, the range and caliber of the guns, the population of each town—all these factors, one after the other, were clear to him. He had no difficulty imagining even the movements of every soldier as he set one

foot in front of the other while trotting toward his assigned position. It was no fantasy, Napoleon's dreaming, but a superior reality.

The plan. His plan! That was it. The lonely man would mull over it again and again as sleep refused to come. In Antibes he had formulated it. Then in Nice. A grandiose thought, to make the hitherto unimportant mountain area the decisive theater of this endless war! He could save the Republic without shedding a drop of French blood on French soil. A Golgotha for the enemies of France. What an awesome concept, to force the enemy to pour army after army over the enormous wall of the Alps, just to be trapped in the narrow valleys to the south and to be cut into ribbons, when their lifeline to Vienna had stretched to the breaking point, that one and only miserable road over the Brenner Pass which could provide the struggling armies of Austria with badly needed provisions, munitions, horses and reinforcements.

It was a symphony of war that Napoleon dreamed of, a masterpiece of correlated battles. Yet the great plan was merely gathering dust in the files of the defense committee of the Republic, while he, the author of the plan, was to be banished to the infantry, doomed to hunt down unhappy farmers in Brittany. The injustice of it!

Perhaps the early morning was the hardest of all to endure. It was always a dun time. Every morning the same, when he arose into a gray world. He felt himself taut and somber, as on the morning of a battle. From out in the streets would float up to him the cries of the fish dealers, the vegetable women, repeating in monotone their long-drawn-out words. No escaping the fact that this day would pass precisely like the day before. No release from the grinding inner tension. Perhaps it would be best to leap in front of a carriage. A man was quite as well off dead and buried.

In the evenings things would look up. Napoleon then felt more alive, composed, sure of himself. Sometimes he went to the Feydeau, a theater where he had come to be known as a habitué. There he was always given the same box, Number 11. He was soothed by the hum of the crowd, the overtures scratched out by the orchestra, the little songs. Smiling absently he would stare down at the stage, noting the names of the actresses as they appeared behind a dingy row of lamps to reel off brassy songs, salacious gags and then wriggle their bodies for the jaded crowd. But his attention to the performance was actually not rapt. It was an oddity of his to continue to peer at the

stage even after the curtain had dropped and the show was over for the night. He would leap to his feet with a start when someone jogged his shoulder to remind him where he was.

Now and then, too, he attended the Comédie Française, though not often, for the admission price was high. There he had to sit in a regular seat along with many others and suffer their jostlings. This annoyed him beyond measure. He could not bear being touched by strangers, nor could he tolerate being drawn into casual conversation. He was interested only in seeing the plays of Corneille, all of which he knew practically by heart. The majestically simple alexandrines, the pomp of a heroic age, the fusion of heroic characters with clear thinking pleased him to the core. He was stirred to the roots by the magic of Corneille's language, the resonance of the verse, the veritable reveille of great thoughts, the deep insight into the tragedy of towering personalities. He was freed by it; the catharsis allowed him to soar on eagle wings away from his swamp of despair and ignominy. His eyes would gleam with joy, and his hand would tremble as he clutched the red-upholstered arm of his seat.

Another favorite haunt of his during the evening was the neglected Jardin des Plantes. Here he could meditate freely. Here even the company of his adjutants Muiron and Junot ceased to be distasteful. It was actually pleasing to listen to their simple ideas, to hear them chatter on about their relatives, their homes, their experiences in the army. It soothed him, that and the respect in their eyes, the willingness to submit to him. Here, at least, he was the chief, the general—and the poor unknown of the rue de la Huchette was forgotten.

In the garden they would stumble over lovers locked together on the ground, and cause them to scramble off under the bushes in a frenzy of embarrassment. There were all kinds of human driftwood here, the sort of derelicts with brutalized faces spewed up by a city as large as Paris. But the haughty young officers hardly noticed these beings from a lower world. In the west the dome of the Invalides and the great, square towers of Notre-Dame would be dark masses against the red of the dying sun. Beyond the Seine, across the Tuileries and the Palais Royal, they could see the distant heights of Montmartre, and to the south, over a sea of rooftops, thinly settled Montparnasse.

All this would lie shimmering in the soft spring air, without a single strong line to disturb its delicacy, blurred together in the misty,

golden-smoky spring twilight. Sometimes fresh breezes blew toward them from the Seine, smelling of meadows and river water. Muffled by the distance, the noise of the city was barely audible, a fused rumbling of carts, of separate shouting, dim intimations of the polyphonic sound of the city of Paris. Here, in the quiet garden, the sound seemed to swell and fall rhythmically, like the beat of a heart or the sea.

On one such evening Junot and the general, both in long gray cloaks, walked along very rapidly, stimulated by the cool air on their cheeks. Junot was talking about his home, his people, his experiences at the University where he had hoped to become a lawyer. He reminisced about the Rhine campaign, where he had received a head wound that still bothered him, especially in the spring. The general listened attentively. Everything Junot said interested him. He had a real fondness for this French youth who was so different from himself. Without interrupting Junot, he would at times bend down quickly to learn the name of some plant from its little explanatory sign stuck on a stick beside it. Junot told Napoleon that each month his father sent him a regular stipend of two hundred francs from Burgundy.

"Good for him, good for Papa Junot!" said Napoleon.

"Should you be in need of funds, sir," said Junot, "I should consider it a pleasure . . ."

"Thank you very much, my dear Junot," said the general. "I make a point of keeping out of debt."

"I assure you, sir, I should be an easy creditor."

"I know that." The general smiled to himself. "Unfortunately I should be a very bad debtor."

Junot laughed with him, then became grave. He struggled visibly with his thought, looked dubiously at his companion.

"What is it?" said Napoleon, amused. "What have you been up to now? Have you stabbed your landlord? Ruined a servant girl?"

"No, nothing like that," Junot said uncomfortably.

"Out with it. Whatever it is, you can count on me."

"I've been telling you, General, all about myself and my family for a very definite reason," Junot explained hesitantly.

"And what is the reason?"

"I'm in love with a girl."

"Naturally!"

"Sir, it's your sister that I'm in love with," Junot stammered.

"Pauline?" The general stopped in the middle of the path. "Are you asking for her hand in marriage, Junot?"

"Yes, I am." Junot emitted a shuddering sigh of relief. "I've thought it over very carefully. Pauline loves me. I feel sure of her sentiments."

The general took Junot by the arm and pulled him forward at a brisk pace, in time with his thoughts. The twilight was gathering fast, and lights were coming on in Montmartre.

"Junot," the general began, then paused to think. "You know that I like you," he went on. "I haven't any objection to you at all, my friend. Your wish really honors me. But, my dear boy, you're as poor as a church mouse. All you have are your lieutenant's shoulder straps. And Pauline doesn't even have those. Poverty on both sides of the fence hardly makes for a suitable marriage."

"The best ground for a marriage is love on both sides, surely," insisted Junot glumly.

"Well, my friend, that's what they say. But it's not true. Not in France, at any rate."

"I know, but my family has money enough," said Junot earnestly. "I can surely reckon on an inheritance of forty thousand francs, quite apart from what the houses and farms are worth."

"That may be, but your father is a healthy man," the general reminded him. "He can expect to live at least another twenty years."

Junot was abashed, ashamed of his pretension, and the general rallied him by softly pinching his ear. "You mustn't worry, Junot," he said. "Wait a couple of years. Both of you are very young. Get ahead in the world. Then see how you like each other."

Junot was crushed, but not for long. The general crooked his arm in the young man's and forthwith began to talk enthusiastically about his military plans. Never before had he given so many confidences to his adjutant. His excitement was contagious. Although he was by no means a strategist, Junot caught the drift of Napoleon's grand plan, and was delighted by the rapidity of the development.

Youth's sense of well-being was again in Junot's breast. Like all young men of action he was ready to give everything to the poet, the thinker, the statesman who could express in ringing words the struggle and the dimly sensed greatness locked within his own breast. Everything about the general's plan, the impetuosity of it, the risk,

the quick tempo, the surprise, appealed to this typical French youth of the period, on whom the opportunism of the Revolution had left an indelible mark. The young men had experienced the Revolution not as an ideological struggle. It was the marching, the regimented, street-fighting Revolution that appealed to their ignorance and immaturity. For them the Revolution was not expressed in newspaper articles, slogans, programs, party struggles, but in batteries, regiments, cannon deployed with the purpose of killing an enemy. Their goal was not freedom, but power.

Poor Pauline! In the face of such bloody enticements the image of her beauty faded. Ever more breathless, more dedicated, Junot felt as he listened to the general's low rough voice. Horizon after horizon of accomplishment spread out before him as Napoleon's magic took hold. It was like climbing a mountain. Ever grander vistas were revealed. And so Junot was absorbed into the demonic world of the master, the world of war, as so often happens with youth. Love and loves may change by the week. But always the young turn back to what they instinctively know is theirs—action in the future.

VII

The Splendid One

STANISLAS FRÉRON, quondam Proconsul and watchdog of the Convention in Marseilles, was a somewhat superannuated young man. He was rather the worse for wear with love. During his checkered career he had enjoyed countless fleeting affairs. Besides this for years he had kept a mistress, a Mademoiselle Masson of the Italian Theater. This actress, who had borne him a brace of children, considered Fréron the Splendid her hard-won private property. She had finally succeeded in getting him to move in with her in a regular ménage.

All in all Fréron was in anything but a good humor these days. It was not only because his Masson and her bawling children pestered the life out of him. It was more than his dismay at finding that the hair at his temples was rapidly graying and now needed the application of dyes twice a week. These domestic irritations were mere pinpricks in comparison with the ominous fact that his political position was tottering. There was no telling when he would be driven out of the government altogether. Then what? How then engineer clandestine sources of income, how then secure bribes, sell government-owned provisions under cover—in short, keep alive all the delightful enterprises that heretofore had enabled him to live on the fat of the land? Hunger stared him in the face, and even worse.

For Fréron had howled all too loudly with the wolves. Unfortunately he had not contented himself with a modest bellowing in tune. His innate inclination for the Terror had vented itself in bloody deeds that inspired street songs in Toulon and Marseilles. He had played recklessly with pitch, and he was wholly defiled. However, he made a quick about-face toward the majority trend when the hue and cry against Robespierre began. In a very moving speech he had even demanded the death of Fouquier-Tinville, the public prosecutor of Paris. Fouquier-Tinville currently languished in a very dirty cell in the Conciergerie. There he penned tearful letters to his wife who had just presented him most inopportunely with twins. Rather feebly

he prepared to fall in line with the countless victims he had directed to the guillotine. But in spite of Fréron's arduous struggle to land on his feet, the glaring fact still remained that he was unquestionably one of the most prominent figures carrying over from the Jacobin ascendancy. In better times, indeed, he had been called "*le grand seigneur de la culotterie.*"

Having measured the situation, Stanislas Fréron decided it might be a good thing to get out of Paris for a time so that his political past might be better forgotten in the absence of his person. The new government—the Directoire—decided once again to send a representative to Marseilles. This time the emissary's function was not to punish, but to gain the confidence of the city. Fréron cautiously sued for the post and, against all expectation, got it.

Now his melancholy vanished in a single great sigh. This was a wonderful chance. Behind him his unfortunate record would fast dissolve into thin air. Behind him, too, he would leave his tiresome actress-love, the children's screams, the small, dirty apartment. Before him glittered striking possibilities. More and subtler bribes would be offered him. The Directoire had placed a fund of two million francs at his diplomatic disposal, and this afforded incalculable opportunities for grand-scale embezzlement. There would be more young ladies, as yet delightfully unknown, more fine meals, more festivities, more mighty gestures.

In the same coach with him on the way south sat his co-ordinator and assistant, a tall young man with an amazing gift of gab and legs no bigger than pipestems. He was, of course, Lucien Bonaparte, alias Brutus. However, Lucien no longer stressed the Brutus role. After the 9th Thermidor it would hardly do to dramatize himself as Caesar's murderer. He, like Fréron, had skated on thin ice for a time after the downfall of the Robespierre clique. In St. Maximin—for the town one day got its old name back—he had actually pined in jail, not at all certain of even saving his neck. He finally got out through the tireless intervention of his brother Joseph. Then he went at once to Paris where, after several months of stagnation, he finally secured the post of assistant to Fréron through the good offices of his brother, the brigadier general.

What these two Jacobin luminaries confided to each other en route to Marseilles will never be known. It will forever be a mystery exactly how far Fréron revealed his extensive financial plans to young

Lucien. But without golden promise the journey was an extremely interesting one. Fréron was a past master in *savoir-vivre*. At the inns along the way many a bottle of Richebourg, Mâcon or Graves had its neck grandly knocked off, many a goose's neck was wrung, many a trout fished from a pool. They finally drew into Marseilles on a fine summer evening, linking arms in most brotherly fashion, calling each other "thou" in the intimate French way. Their first stop was at the home of the former Monsieur de Cipières.

The arrival of these dignitaries naturally produced a festive spirit among the Bonapartes. Children and adults vied to be the first to embrace Lucien and to receive his presents, for, despite the slimness of his purse, he had not neglected to bring along a few surprises for each one, according to established custom. And the general, too, had forwarded a bolt of the finest muslin. Stanislas Fréron stood to one side apart from the hubbub of reunion. He smiled to himself, the gold knob of his cane pressed to his lips, his round chin sunk in a giant cravat. At last his turn came, and the family crowded tumultuously about him, if not quite so freely as with the brother. He was drawn down into a chair, showered with attentions. It was Citizen Fréron this and Citizen Fréron that. Indeed, the press of Corsican friendship would have been unpleasantly overwhelming had he not noticed at once that one of his new colleague's sisters was a girl of astonishing beauty. He even half recalled having seen her somewhere before.

What particularly pleased Fréron, leaving out the classical perfection of her face and body, was the charming mixture of innocence and unrestrained desire, the blending of naïveté and as yet half-unconscious coquetry. He had seen and enjoyed many women, but almost to the last one they had been thoroughly seasoned ladies—actresses, dancers, demireps, street whores, and occasionally a politically interested woman whom he chanced to find attractive. Ordinarily politics and love were two strictly separate categories with Fréron. He had little taste for being catechized in the midst of transports.

It did not take him many minutes to discover that he was making a tremendous impression on Pauline. She blushed without cause, laughed nervously at whatever he said and watched him furtively when she imagined that he was not looking. Accordingly, Fréron was quick to parade all his worldly attractions, like a peacock spreading his tail to bemuse the peahen. Inimitably blasé, for her benefit

he mentioned all the world-famous women of the Revolution. He talked casually of fiery Madame Tallien, of delicate and youthful Madame Récamier, who resembled a cameo, and whom he called "the goddess of platonic love." He alluded to Madame de Sainte-Amaranthe, the one-time mistress of the Prince de Conti; unfortunately, he said, at the very last of it she had become another sacrifice to the Terror. He told Pauline about Suzanne de Morancy, who had followed her lover to Paris dressed like a boy; about Madame de la Bouchardie, who had fallen in love with the unlucky Chénier and then always quarreled with him; about Jeanne Coigneaud, a paragon of her sex. He reeled off anecdotes about a hundred others of whom the Bonaparte family had never heard. He mentioned these women's names with a light, knowing smile, an indiscreet discretion, as if he had fondled bevies of them on his lap. He expressed succinct opinions on the modes of the day, on David's portraits, on the journals, on the *Almanaque des Honnêtes Femmes*, on the theater, styles of equipage, horses, clubs, cafés and salons.

Pauline had no clearer idea of these matters than any other fifteen-year-old girl from the provinces. She now learned for the first time that a salon was not only an elegantly furnished room in which the chairs and sofas were upholstered in silk or corded rep, but a mysterious cell, in which a circle of devotees, friends and acquaintances collected about one woman, as planets and their moons about a mild sun. This quintessentially French arrangement, a social form which played an ever greater role after the Revolution, though it had existed under King and court, bewildered and attracted Pauline. She asked Fréron whether these women were indeed so terribly clever. Could they really know about everything—politics for instance? she anxiously inquired.

Fréron smiled at this. "No, no, my dear young friend," he assured her. "To know so much would be rather disheartening. The hostess must understand how to recline gracefully on her chaise longue, how to arrange the folds of her dress prettily. Her feet must be small, her legs slim—like yours, my dear. Her throat must be swanlike, her coiffure well arranged. She must have a genius for listening. This above all. For she is the inspiration of the assemblage. Her beauty, her elegance, the grace of her carriage, her smile, these are her weapons. Now and then she makes some provocative comment. Her guests are moved by it to quick thoughts, to a free ex-

pression of their views, to all manner of wordplay. The company takes sides in the sport. Meanwhile she herself, a goddess who both fires and soothes, who may even be the silver prize in this conversational combat, remains apart and quite nonpartisan.

"Is this not the real métier of beautiful women, my dear young friend? Why should beauty mingle in the struggle, expose herself to the danger of being talked down? Or, even worse, run the risk of uttering stupidities with lips fashioned for an entirely different purpose? Is it not true, if we may credit the poet, that Venus was so upset by the clash of arms at Troy that she fled weeping back to the skies? It would be just as much out of place for beauty to engage in a battle of wits. And if a woman lacks beauty and elegance—though, mind you, she may be more fascinating if she isn't pretty in the usual sense—I mean, if she doesn't have true femininity, well, so far as I'm concerned she can throw herself in front of the next runaway horse. She has my sympathy. My interest—no!"

Pauline clapped her hands. "That's wonderful!" she cried. "I never thought that there was anything like that. Why do I have to stick here in Marseilles when a girl has such opportunities in the big city!"

"Indeed," said Fréron, smiling at Pauline's excitement. "But I forgot to mention that our goddess must be married."

"Why?" said Pauline, amazed. "Why should she be married?"

"That is a question," said Fréron. He elevated his shoulders. "Such is the custom, you know. Is it possible, really, to imagine a Venus without erotic prowess? Inexperienced? If that were so, she would be no Venus at all. Not the slightest. You see, my dear, women are quite different from men. They do not flower out into the full pride of body until they have enjoyed the experiences of marriage. Furthermore, the social position of an unmarried woman, however excellent her family background, is not secure. The circle that forms in a salon is not built up overnight. It takes many years before it is closed by intimate friends and the friends of friends."

"Does the husband have much to do with it?" Pauline asked. "Is he always there when his wife is entertaining?"

"My God, no!" said Fréron. "That would be disgusting. While the goddess holds sway he is sweating somewhere at his smithy in the underworld. He is busy with his affairs, a Vulcan of parts, of course. He unobtrusively creates the wherewithal for the salon's

maintenance. He sees to it that there is the proper status to begin with, something to work on. Then he supplies the furniture, the clothes, the shoes, the food. His wines, it goes without saying, must be something to talk about. On special occasions—say on a birthday —he is allowed to appear at the side of the goddess, where he shines like a pale noontide moon against the sun."

This account pleased Pauline beyond all measure, and even Elise's suspicious eyes began to shine. The Signora listened quizzically, holding back a smile, while Lucien pridefully regarded his new-won friend. But actually Fréron needed no encouragement to go on with his revelations, for he was now as completely in his element as a duck in water.

He described the numerous pleasure resorts of the capital. He mentioned Garchy, the *limonadier-glacier*, who had just opened his newest pavilion in the rue de la Loi. "What elegant toilettes!" he said ecstatically. "What charming things are to be seen, my young friends, during the early hours of the afternoon! It's like looking at a meadow pied with spring flowers. What a variety of lovely faces! There you see the darkly passionate Italian, the cool, blonde Swede. You see everything from the lively little Parisienne to the tall women from Normandy and Artois. There they sit, delicately sipping lemonade, spooning up their ices, nibbling on a wafer. One's eyes are forever discovering new beauties. Thoughts teem with exquisite possibilities. Violins sob sweetly. There are the promising whispers of rustling dresses, the *tip-tap* of little shoes, the soft conversation and sweet women's laughter. The high-ceilinged hall is vibrant with the bird twitter of their voices. Is it not better than anything known to the Grand Vizier? For all this colorful harem can be enjoyed without spending a single sou."

At this Lucien and his sisters laughed eagerly.

"And consider Sunday mornings in the Bois," Stanislas Fréron went on tirelessly. "Think how lovely it is under the oaks in Le Ranelagh. How nice it is to drink milk still warm from the cow! All around are peacefully grazing sheep and the bright sound of youthful voices. At last one bestirs oneself and summons energy to play a game of battledore and shuttlecock. Looking on are fresh, curly-framed, joyous faces. As a poor, stupid mortal naturally one loses the game to the opposing goddesses. One has other things on one's mind, to be sure, than watching a flying ball. The bills one pays willingly,

remembering that the lovely maids will press one's hands in gratitude.

"Then, finally, think of evenings at the Hôtel Thélusson in the rue de Provence. Now the easy nymphs of the sunlit day have become majestic in the long folds of severe white gowns. They wear veils that flutter over their beautiful arms and breasts. In the light of a myriad candles their flesh gleams like marble, marble that lives and breathes. How the merry circle forms in the dance, hand seeking hand, seeking, finding and releasing! How profoundly one is aware of the senses secreted within the body's movements! What exquisite things there are to observe as one discusses this and that with a little friend! My dear, without delay you must remove to Paris. You must not cut yourself off forever from the great world."

As so very often happens, Stanislas Fréron was as much carried away by his words as his audience. He was suffering from a pang of homesickness. Momentarily he forgot his dreary apartment, the crying of his children, the dismal furnishings. He forgot even the threatening hints that he had had to endure from his governmental colleagues. Indeed, he imagined himself almost as one banished from paradise.

His feeling infected Pauline. She, too, felt that real life was passing her by, that an evil destiny had cast her roughly into a forgotten corner of Marseilles. Suddenly the shabby furniture of the house of Cipières, a feature she had never paid much attention to before, was intolerable to live with. Her simple dress was revolting. Her own movements seemed gangly and awkward. She even doubted her beauty. The tears sprang uncalled to her eyes as she pitied herself profoundly.

And there, just across from her, sat this mighty, worldly and superlatively groomed Fréron, with diamond rings on his fingers—he had just got them back from the pawnbroker—with a lorgnette that now and then he deigned to raise to his eyes. By rights he should be her mentor, her guide into that richer life, the Elysium of Paris. How alluringly it glittered in her imagination! She was completely taken in. She had no slightest notion of the sterility of this curious world of cafés, fashions, ballrooms, salons, *Incroyables*, compared with which even her existence in the wilds of Corsica and the back streets of Marseilles was preferable.

So it came about that Pauline fell in love with Stanislas Fréron, or rather, not so much in love with him as with the picture of enticing

places that he painted for her. Junot was now quickly forgotten. She had thought longingly about him from time to time, but that had now passed forever. What was the little lieutenant beside this man of the world? Like so many young girls she fancied that in the older man she had found not only the best lover, the most knowing, but also the instrument to provide fulfillment of her dreams of social and public acclaim.

The Signora noted her daughter's increasing inclination to Fréron, whom she did not consider an altogether savory character. She warned, she counseled, but at the same time even she was impressed to some degree, so that her opposition dwindled to the perfunctory. For her part Pauline blamed her mother's lack of enthusiasm on her Corsican inability to understand the ways of modern youth in France.

Fréron was flattered by the young girl's infatuation. In recent months his amatory triumphs had become less and less frequent. Always superficial, he belonged to the breed of men who find it cruelly hard to grow old. Was it possible that he would gain a second youth through the stimulus of Pauline's young body? He felt long-forgotten emotions arising in him when her starry eyes looked up into his, when he listened to the incredibly naïve questions she was always posing in her strangely moving, discordant voice.

Sometimes he invited the whole family to picnics in the country on the outskirts of Marseilles. Gradually he became a frequent visitor at the home of his assistant Lucien, and found occasion to reveal more and more of his experience of society and fashion. One evening, being alone with Pauline, he read her some of Petrarch's sonnets, though these lofty outpourings hardly fitted one of his sensualist temperament. But he wavered in temptation and could not make up his mind. He needed money, a woman with an income. Pauline was poor. On the horizon loomed his neglected common-law wife, *la* Masson, and tugging at her skirts were the children she had dedicated to his virility.

This mood of indecision would have lasted indefinitely had not an event occurred which Fréron felt justified in interpreting as fatefully auspicious. He believed he heard an encouraging voice. The future spread out gaily before his eyes.

It was Vendémiaire again. The air was sunny and already it was cool with autumn. On this particular day a messenger, very heavily

laden, arrived one afternoon at the mansion of the vanished Monsieur de Cipières. He threw several rolls of material on the table, packages of veils, hatboxes. If he had been the jinni of Aladdin's lamp the womenfolk could not have been more pleased and astonished. He had made his appearance out of the blue, and yet he acted as if this were a mere matter of course. "The general sent this," he told them arrogantly, and from his inside pocket drew forth an improbably thick letter. A flood of assignats, bills of exchange and paper money poured from the envelope when the red seal had been carefully broken. The girls' hands trembled with eagerness as they counted up the sum of forty thousand francs! They looked at their mother in amazement. What could have brought about such a windfall? Had their brother robbed a bank and sent home the booty? Where had he ever got his hands on such a colossal amount?

The scrawl sent along with the fortune threw little light on its origin. The general spoke vaguely of an uprising, of cannon. He let them know that he was in the best of health, even though he had had a horse shot from under him. The women looked at one another with fright in their eyes. Just at this point Stanislas Fréron was announced, and was able to clear up the whole matter to their satisfaction. He, too, had just received his Paris mail. It contained advices of such a nature that he had betaken himself to the Bonapartes like a shot out of a gun.

He found it was not altogether an easy matter to clarify the swift events of the Vendémiaire to his audience of provincial women, since they were hardly acquainted with the shifting political background. Fréron mustered his wits.

"I congratulate you," he said warmly. "I congratulate you all from the bottom of my heart. The general quelled the mob that rose up against the administration. He acted like a hero, never thinking of his own life. It was something of a bloody encounter, I'd say. But the general had cannon on his side. Just imagine what a surprise the crowd got when the canister began to cut them into mincemeat! It must have been quite dispiriting, for they had nothing but pikes and sabers on their side. The Republic is saved. And I see that the Republic is not entirely ungrateful." Fréron nodded at the presents on the table. "The general has been made commander of the Army of the Interior," he explained further. "A high post, a position of immense influence."

Fréron was quite bowled over when no more questions were asked. The Signora seemed quite content to rest without further particulars. Her eyes were fixed on the floor and she was thinking God knows what mysterious thoughts. Meanwhile the girls were spreading out the bolts of cloth, and with the help of Marianna Casamarte were already planning new dresses. These Corsicans are certainly a queer lot, Fréron thought privately. You might suppose the general had just shipped them a cupcake. Why, even that old harridan of a Marianna didn't seem a bit agitated! Fréron asked himself what his Masson would have done had he suddenly sent her word that he had been made a Directeur of the Republic.

Then the girls asked his approval of the list of things to buy that they had immediately drawn up. Fréron obliged readily. Yes, he promised, the very next day, early in the morning, he would accompany them to the milliners to buy a whole medley of new hats. Laughing, he recited for their amusement:

"Nothing's nicer than a bonnet,
Thinks any lady, goodwife, jade,
And any bouncy, flouncy maid,
Oh, quite worthy of a sonnet.
If aught, my dears, is true, it's that
A woman's pretty in a pretty hat."

To the great delight of the Bonaparte girls, Fréron showed up at the scheduled time in a hired cabriolet with bright red wheels. The three sat pressed closely together on the red plush seat. It was impossible to imagine a more stirring spectacle than Fréron handling the reins. His gloves were of mignonette green. Lightly he flicked the whip and the horse was off at a smart trot. Passers-by gaped after the conveyance.

For hours the sisters pirouetted before the mirrors as they chose their hats. Always undecided, they turned to Fréron for advice again and again, and had dozens of models brought out to try on. Fréron bore up with angelic patience. When they were all safely back in the cabriolet, he gave each of them a little package. They opened their presents on the spot and discovered little pouches of green velours ornamented with golden laurel leaves.

"What are these?" Pauline asked.

"My dear young friend," said Fréron triumphantly, "these are

handbags, 'reticules,' as they call them. I allowed myself the liberty of getting them for you."

"How very elegant!" said Pauline. "But what do we carry in them?" She looked rather mistrustfully at the velours bag.

For explanation Fréron said gaily:

"Reticules—there's nothing better
For pocketbook and memo pad.
They'll hold the fattest business letter,
Your purse and portraits. They're a fad."

"How charming!" said Pauline, for she could think of nothing more apt. "But I always thought that the pockets in our dresses were to carry those things, Stanislas."

"They have done so for years, my dear," said Fréron, shrugging his shoulders. "But lately the ladies' gowns have such straight lines and are so gossamer that pockets have been more or less dispensed with. No lady likes to be seen with two kangaroo pouches sagging from her waist. Not really! Besides, the reticule is for something else as well. If you'll permit me:

"To attract him, toss it there—
On a sofa or a chair—
Then, to your lover, quickly think
To give a signal, say a wink.
This taken for a cue to praise
It, he elocutes in wild amaze,
While deftly sliding in its pocket
A billet-doux, a ring or locket."

Cautiously Pauline opened her little bag and peered within. At the bottom she espied a little portrait of Fréron and a tiny note rimmed about by a circle of rosy-red doves billing and cooing. As soon as she got home she sped to her room and read the note.

My goddess, it ran: *My fate was sealed the moment I set eyes on you. Now only one overpowering emotion is alive in me—my love for you. Only one thought—to possess you, to call you mine forever. Words sound old and tawdry. I simply cannot describe what your glance, the merest pressure of your hand, means to me. Let me know whether I may hope for a favorable hearing, or whether I am doomed for aye to wander among the damned. Your happily unhappy Stanislas.*

"He loves me!" Pauline shivered with triumph. She ran to her mother and sister. "He's mine. I've got him!" she yelled. Her eyes shone, her movements were ecstatic, her thick hair had fallen over her eyes.

"My dear child," the Signora said in alarm, "whatever's happened to you now?"

"She's just got gnats in her brain again," said Elise.

"He's mine!" said Pauline and threw herself on her knees, burying her head in her mother's lap. "I'm going to have him, for he's mine."

The Signora stroked her daughter's hair into order. "Calm yourself," she said. "I'll write to your brother. He's the one to give you permission."

"I'll have him, though," said Pauline monotonously. "I want to go to Paris."

Elise shrugged her shoulders and meditated. After a long pause she ventured to announce: "She has all the luck. All men are caught by her. I'd like to know what they really see in her, anyway."

Marseilles was now diverted by the spectacle of a betrothal in which the principals were a forty-year-old roué and a fifteen-year-old beauty decidedly overdeveloped for her years. Brother Joseph and the general were noncommittal, and refused to give a definite yes or no. In the family's interest they made inquiries about Fréron. The results were none too promising. Fréron was not a wealthy man, and his position in the regime was insecure. Nevertheless, he had connections, he had shown enough adroitness to survive the worst storms of the Revolution, and might be reasonably expected to climb to a post of influence. When this happened Pauline would be turned over to him. Meanwhile he would have to bide his time.

Pauline could see no sense in her brothers' reservations. So far as she could make out, her Stanislas seemed rich and powerful enough to suit anybody. In Marseilles and far from Paris she had never seen her beloved as anything but the Proconsul of the Year II, and as such the most eligible man in town. Currently he was dipping freely into his diplomatic fund of two million francs. His wardrobe was more dashing than ever, his presents to Pauline came oftener and were extremely expensive. Pauline could see only one hitch to her proposed marriage, and that was Fréron's liaison with the actress Masson. He had ruefully admitted his plight to Pauline, with the expla-

nation that Masson was a youthful mistake, that he no longer loved her and would eventually buy her off. This was good enough for Pauline.

The winter passed slowly. Ventôse, the dry, windy month of March, arrived. Washing fluttered and snapped on the lines, the first bird songs were heard, the first violets were offered for sale on the streets. Hope was in the air. The poor began to breathe more easily. Winters in a time of revolution were barren, intolerably long, fraught with fear. Bread was still scarce. Light and fuel were prohibitively costly. The Republic was still ringed in by enemies. But at least the weather was fine, and the populace of Marseilles was taking heart as once again the earth came to life.

About this time another letter from the general arrived from Paris. Although it contained news that would have caused great rejoicing in many families, it was a crushing blow for the Bonapartes. The general had got himself married! He had given his name to someone they had never heard of, without asking the Signora's permission, or the older brother's, indeed without confiding in them at all before taking this most momentous of steps.

The whole family gathered in the living room of the Cipières' house. Brother Joseph, Lucien, Elise, Pauline, Caroline and fat little Jérôme were all mustered. And the Signora, of course, was present, shadowed by Marianna Casamarte in a faded blue apron. Only Louis was absent.

This day the clan was one, facing what for them was a highly serious emergency—the revolt of a member against the authority of the Signora and Joseph.

"It's Paris, it's the miserable, corrupted atmosphere of the place," said Joseph. "The unbridled license of the capital! That's what's done it. I ask you, Signora, how am I going to look now to my own Julie and to Désirée? The girl's as good as engaged to Napoleon." The Signora agreed with a gloomy nod. "He must get a divorce," said Joseph. "He'll have to divorce this woman immediately."

But the Signora was dubious. "He has always had a mind of his own, and we'll have to go easy with him," she pointed out.

"Easy!" Elise was contemptuous. "Why?"

"Kindly be still, Elise," her mother warned.

"I won't, I won't be still!" said Elise. "I had a right to get married before he did, and he has just ignored it. I'm a girl, and it's my

ight. What business has he to throw his money away on a woman? He owes us something. Don't you remember how angry he was with Lucien that time in Antibes? But he goes ahead and does exactly as he pleases. Furthermore, the girl that Lucien married is different. Christine is a nice little woman. A lot better, I'd say, than any miserable widow." She made a sound of contempt. "She's a deep one, all right. She saw a dupe and she nabbed him."

"It's possible that he fell in love with her," said Lucien.

"In love with her?" Now Pauline got her oar in. "How could he love a woman older than he is!" She was so jealous that tears stood in her eyes. "I don't see how he dared humiliate me so," she moaned. "I love him, and I'm his sister. She only wants his money."

"There you go," Elise turned on her. "You're the center of it again. You think he married this Parisienne just to spite you. Don't be ridiculous. He never even gave you a thought. I can see what will happen now. She'll whisper behind our backs about our clothes, our manners, the way we talk. Maybe she'll turn over some hand-me-downs to us. Maybe we can sleep with her discarded lovers. When we need advice, she'll be right there, knowing it all."

"We're not getting anywhere talking this way," said Joseph in despair. He buried his head in his hands. "We've got to come to some sensible decision."

"In my opinion the best thing to do is to give in and send the couple our best wishes," said Lucien dryly.

"Never! Not me!" said Pauline dramatically. "I'll never, never do that."

"Nor will I," said Elise. "What a cynical thing to do! I might have expected it from you, Lucien."

"We don't even know this Beauharnais woman," said Lucien, bored with so much pother. "Who can tell? She may be a prize."

Pauline began to weep again. Joseph said, "That's true enough, Lucien. We don't know anything about her. Where do you imagine we could find out a little about what she's like?"

"Stanislas Fréron would know," said Lucien. "He knows everybody."

At once it was agreed that the best thing to do was to call on Fréron. He appeared in short order, and was as astonished as they by the general's marriage.

"Joséphine Beauharnais?" he said. "She's a friend of Madame Tallien. She's a Creole."

"A Negress!" wailed Elise. "How horrible!"

"No, not that," said the family friend. "She has white parents but she was born in the West Indies. She's about thirty-three years old. But very pretty still, very charming indeed, if I may say so."

"Why, she's an old woman," said Pauline. "She's old enough to be my mother."

"I'd hardly say that," Fréron objected. "However, she does have a seven-year-old son—Eugène, or something like that. And there's a twelve-year-old daughter Hortense. She has a very pleasant white house in the rue Chantereine. She owns a carriage with two Hungarian horses from the King's stables, and a cross little poodle. They call him Fortuné, and he sleeps with her nights."

"But Stanislas," said Pauline, "I don't see that this is anything to joke about. Please be serious."

"I? Not serious?" Stanislas was astonished. "I beg your pardon!"

"Does she have lovers?" This time it was Elise.

"My dear young friend," said Stanislas, rather taken aback, "you know how people talk in Paris, and especially about pretty young widows. Men are so desperately frivolous, as you may have observed, and loose of tongue. People have wondered, I'll admit, exactly how she could support herself so well."

"What do they say?" asked Elise.

"Gossip, nothing but gossip, believe me," said Stanislas. "I've heard rumors about General Hoche, Directeur Barras. And others. I think it's just so much fabrication."

"Does she have means?" Joseph wanted to know.

"Not to my knowledge," said Fréron. "General Beauharnais was a great spender."

"And servants. Does she have servants?" asked Pauline.

"Naturally," said Stanislas. He was beginning to be inwardly amused by this family inquisition, but he gave no sign. "She has a coachman, a house steward, a cook, maids. How could she have her soirees otherwise?"

"Soirees!" Pauline's eyes filled again. "Mother, did you hear what Stanislas said? She has horses and a carriage, while we go around in rags!"

"Come now, Pauline, it's not that bad," said her betrothed. He moved over to stroke her arm.

"Of course it's true," said Elise, for once heartily in agreement with her younger sister. "Who pays for all these things, Stanislas?"

"That I don't know. That's Madame's private affair."

"You don't want to know," said Elise angrily. "But I'll tell you who foots the bills. General Hoche and Directeur Barras pay for all the luxuries. Now it looks as if Barras had got rid of her. She was too expensive. And so now it's ——"

"— Napoleon! He does it now, pays for everything!" Pauline said.

"We're all ruined," said Elise.

The family's distress was acute, but in the end they forced themselves to bow to the accomplished fact. They all realized that the general would not dream of getting divorced on the clan's account. No real decision on policy was made. Only Joseph muttered something about having a serious word with his brother. And then, not long after his message of woe, the newly married Napoleon arrived in person. He came unheralded, and threw everyone so off balance that none thought to express official disapproval of his latest maneuver. He was on his way to the Army of Italy, to which he had been appointed commander some ten days before.

The plan for an Italian campaign which Napoleon had described to Junot in the Jardin des Plantes had at last come to the attention of the war minister, Carnot.

The general was nervous. Nearly all the time he could be heard pacing back and forth in his room, his hands folded behind his back according to habit. Sometimes he scratched his cheeks as he meditated. Pauline thought her favorite brother looked better than ever. His face had filled out, and the expression in his gray eyes was not so tormented and sullen. His full general's uniform was becoming. It made him look as if he had grown taller. But it was painful to observe that often he did not hear what his brothers and sisters were saying to him. Suddenly he would ask, very brusquely, "What was that?" Sometimes he spoke incoherently. Obviously his spirit was not within the family circle, but somewhere far away. Could it be that he was thinking of Italy? Or, as Pauline suspected with a jealous pang, could he be dreaming of the terrible Beauharnais woman?

The general brought his adjutants, Junot and Muiron, along with him. Pauline was hurt to the quick when Junot paid her little atten-

tion and instead constantly hovered about the general, performing small services which she thought should have come her way. Had Junot quite forgotten Antibes? Seemingly not, for once he bent down, when they were alone, and quickly whispered to her:

"Lost for aye my gay Paulette,
My keenest pleasure."

Yet the way he said it was a humiliation, Pauline thought. Just look how casually he shook the hand of Stanislas Fréron, and there he was, again, congratulating him on his betrothal, as if he were almost glad to be rid of her.

Stanislas made the most of Napoleon's visit to further his suit for Pauline's hand. He could get no final word from the general. It was always "Perhaps," "If possible," "Certainly," and the evasions often came at the wrong time and in the wrong context. At the same time Stanislas had the feeling that the general was not altogether unfriendly toward him.

After a visit from Fréron the general went to his room, to write a short letter, as he explained. A message arrived, and Junot asked Pauline to call the general. Pauline did as she was bade. Napoleon threw aside his pen and let his letter lie on the desk. When he had hurried out, Pauline read his scribbled words. Her heart beat hard. The letter read: *Each moment takes me farther from you, darling. Each moment I find I have less will to remain away from you. You are constantly in my thoughts. My mind is exhausted, trying to imagine what you are doing. I have not spent a single day without loving you, or a single night without holding you in my arms. I have not drunk a cup of tea without cursing the ambition and pride which keep me away from my life's soul. In the midst of business it is my adorable Joséphine who fills my heart, my mind, my thoughts . . .*

At this point Pauline looked up, startled, to see her brother framed in the doorway. His gray eyes were murderous with anger and his lips trembled.

"How dare you!" he said.

He snatched up the sheet of paper, took Pauline by the shoulder and hurled her aside. Pauline put her hands to her face and began to cry. Between her sobs she managed to say, "I hate her. I hate her. She took you away. I hate her."

"What are you talking about?" said the general. "Don't be a fool."

Pauline cried all the more, the tears running in rivers down her cheeks.

"This is a fine stupid mess," said the general. He slammed his fist on the table. "You are to love your sister-in-law, and respect her, you hear me!"

"No, no," sobbed Pauline.

"You will. I order it. Do you hear?" The general shrilled his command and it struck Pauline to the marrow. In the very midst of his transport, however, he got hold of himself. His face darkened with thought. He took Pauline's hands from her face, quite gently. "What's really the trouble?" he asked. "Have the others bothered you?"

"No, they haven't," said Pauline, wiping her eyes. "Nobody's bothered me. It's just between you and me."

Napoleon shrugged his shoulders and looked at her curiously. Mildly he stroked her hair. "Don't be so childish, Paoletta," he said to her. "Joséphine has taken nothing that belongs to you."

"Just the same," Pauline said stubbornly, "I love you. And she has no right to."

"Ridiculous! What has she got to do with you and your love?"

"But why did you have to go and get married?" she said, perplexed.

"Fréron has asked to marry you," said Napoleon. "Are you fond of this man?"

"Yes, I want to marry him," said Pauline. "But that's something else."

"Something else!" Napoleon raised his brows. "How do you make that out?"

"I don't know, but it is," she insisted.

Again the general shrugged his shoulders impatiently. Pauline left the room without a word. He sealed his letter. "The Devil himself couldn't make these women out," he mumbled.

It was a few weeks later that Napoleon's show began. The three hammer blows of Millesimo, Montenotte and Dego introduced the symphony of annihilation. One blow followed another quickly and furiously, so many lightning bolts flashing above the somber political horizon of the Continent. Something new had appeared in the world, something beyond comprehension. In a single week two enemies of the Republic, Piedmont and Austria, were brought to bay

and their armies shattered. The door of the Plain of Lombardy yawned wide. Piedmont sued for peace.

Who could grasp it? Who could understand? The enemies' generals, the good old-fashioned soldiers Colli and Beaulieu, felt that they had been overwhelmed by some natural catastrophe, an earthquake, a flood. The French troops, badly clothed and shod, marched up and down the Alps in mid-April like madmen. Some were without shoes, some had no cloaks. Their horses were poor. They were short of ammunition. But nothing could stop them.

Each battle was really decided before the first musket shot. It began to look as if Napoleon's army had only to march onto the battlefield to assure itself of the capture of thousands of prisoners, innumerable cannon and supply wagons. His own soldiers cursed the thin young man in command. "The fellow's out of his mind," they murmured to themselves; "he's possessed by the Devil." And yet it was strange, strange. Before each battle they gathered in the mountain defiles in terrifying swarms. Then always they were swiftly off again.

At first the French generals, Masséna and Augereau, shook their heads doubtfully. They considered the plan of campaign fantastic, the marches impossible and their commander, to tell the truth, rather silly with his newlywed lovesickness. As for Napoleon, he was all confidence. At last there was an opportunity to measure his ideas with reality. He discovered that he had a genius for war. His inner world, his strategic plan, the shifting images in his brain were reality itself. It seemed as if the actual clashes were more or less a denouement, a reality of the second order.

The once loosely organized French army changed completely under the impact of his personality, particularly after tasting the elixir of victory. Before, it had consisted of a rowdy mob of vagabonds and street thieves. Now like magic it became a single organism, a true instrument of war. The improbable, the impossible were demanded of this instrument, and were accomplished without a murmur. Even the most stupid among the troops could see that the terrific forced marches, which often ended no place in particular only to be retraced to the starting point, threw the enemy off balance, sapped his courage, bewildered him. It was bloodcurdling for him to see the same division pop up at two different places on the same day, places separated by what was normally a three-day march.

The young commander was not only the ingenious planner, the

supremely rational head. He was also a passionate gambler, a good psychologist. At unexpected moments he improvised all sorts of modulations in his martial composition, foolhardy chances, striking intermezzi. No mere general could have done so much. It was precisely these strategically unnecessary interpolations which proved the finest means of self-expression for the French army, and the deeds achieving the greatest acclaim in France. For they were tailored to fit the temperament of the people and the spirit of the Revolution.

The attack on the bridge over the Adda River at Lodi, carried out during the spring twilight, was quite superfluous. The Austrians were in full flight and had already decided to abandon the bridge. A few hours later the French could have crossed in pursuit without suffering a single casualty. Nevertheless Napoleon ordered the attack. The gamble completed the rout of a panic-stricken enemy. The Austrians were aghast at the ferocity of this impulse to annihilation. It was a feat that redounded to the fame of the Republic. The battle at Lodi impressed no one more than Napoleon himself. The power of masses of men released like projectiles intoxicated him, the tricolor flying as Lannes bore it forward, and the hundredfold deaths in the lovely spring evening. He had willed it all. He recognized this so deeply that he shuddered, believing his will and Destiny to be one. Many years later he remembered it keenly enough to write: "At Lodi a great ambition was born."

The family in Marseilles had frequent news of the general. He never failed to remember them, even in the flush of victory. Drafts and currency arrived more often than ever, for the Italian campaign brought riches as well as fame. Whereas the French were wise enough to let the common people off lightly, the rich were forced to pay high tribute. Journals in special editions announced the army's progress in large type. Messengers, couriers and the general's adjutants visited the Bonapartes in Marseilles on their way to Paris. The family had become one of the most highly placed in the city.

The luster that had fallen so suddenly on her children and herself left the Signora unmoved. She accepted her callers' homage with a blunt matter-of-factness, and because of this attitude they departed so much the more awed. There was nothing parvenue about the Signora. She was consistently modest, reserved, proud. The mother's behavior set the tone for the household. The daughters indeed did not appreciate how great their brother's triumphs really were. The

visitors imagined that they were dealing with a severely Republican family. The straightforward dignity of the mother, the classic beauty of the younger sister, the simplicity of the appointments in the Bonapartes' home brought to mind a family circle of republican Rome.

The sisters would have dearly liked to live in greater luxury, to have a finer house, countless servants and closets full of new clothes. But the Signora gripped the booty from Italy with an iron hand. She raised Marianna Casamarte's wages to five francs a month and paid the loudly protesting Corsican retainer for all the time she had worked for nothing. She gave the sisters some new clothes, hats and other apparel, and a minimum of pocket money. She allowed three new armchairs to be bought for the salon. The dinner menu now wound up with a sweet, and was further enlivened by a half bottle of watery red wine for each guest. With this her prodigality was exhausted. She instructed the sisters, who harbored notions of rebellion against her policy of niggardliness, that the money belonged to no one of them in particular, but to the family as a whole, and could be squandered only with general approval.

Despite this glittering upturn in clan prosperity, Pauline deemed herself grossly put upon. She was exceedingly envious of her brother's successes. More and more often curious observations appeared in his letters these days. *Fortune is a woman,* he once wrote. *The more she does for me, the more I shall extract from her.* And another time he announced: *In our times no one has thought of anything great. It is for me to set the example.*

Well, then, Pauline mused, why should not I, too, try to make a bid for a more important, vital and glamorous existence? Why not struggle for greatness like my brother?

The worst of it was, she was a girl. She imagined Fortune as a man, who would have to be won over by cunning, and by cunning forced to do her will. Her notions of grandeur were quite different from her brother's. She was much too much a woman for one instant to make the mistake of imagining that her greatness could ever be won in the field of politics. In that rarefied region Pauline was quite lost. Indeed, she was an ignorant girl generally and had learned to read and write only with the most painful efforts. With sure instinct she turned toward her proper métier, her only path. Actually it was not worldly greatness that she wanted, but beauty, and beauty's due. The beauty itself was already there. She needed only look into

the mirror to know it. At barely sixteen she was quite ravishing. In the eyes of visitors to her household, in the eyes of passers-by on the street, she could read the affirmation of her power, even more distinctly and pleasurably than in the mirror.

What this beauty lacked was adequate background, the right stage setting, the fitting chorus of admiration from men of power and success. She often dreamed about the Parisian salons that Fréron had described so glowingly. Paris, she told herself—I need Paris. Then I would outstrip all these Récamiers, Talliens, or whatever they're called. I'm more attractive than any of them. Thinking so, she became more deeply attached to Stanislas Fréron. She needed him, she was sure; she needed him as an experienced lover, a counselor, friend and open-sesame to the world of the salon. His words, his letters, his caresses provided her with badly needed self-confidence.

Unfortunately Stanislas left Marseilles. He had to leave in some haste for Paris, to answer complaints piling up there about his underhand dealings, his incessant peculations. Enemies worked steadily to bring about his downfall. Pauline wrote touching letters to him in her big, bold child's hand. While she composed these missives with a great deal of gnawing on the quill pen, she dreamed about her future triumphs in the capital. These self-generated illusions filled her with gratitude toward the absent Fréron and lent piquancy to her infatuation. She forgot her French and wrote in her own language: *Addio, anima mia, ti amo sempre, mia vita*—"Farewell, my soul, I'll love you always, my life." And another time, no doubt remembering Junot's little song, she ended: *Non respiro se non per te*, or "I breathe only through you." She fondled and kissed a lock of her lover's hair as she lay idling under the painting of the Venus.

In the end, however, Fréron the Splendid met his well-merited fate. All his subterfuges, his evasions and his fawning availed him nothing. Red and stammering with apprehension, he faced the prosecutors Isnard, Caudroy and Chambon. Long lists of his victims were laid before him, unequivocal evidence of his betrayals. In vain he muttered objections, shouted charges of deception, lies, treachery. At last he fell as a scapegoat, principal sacrifice in a public demonstration that the Republic was no longer amenable to the practice of self-aggrandizement at the general expense.

Pauline was not acquainted with all the involutions of Fréron's collapse. She took sides with her "unlucky" friend against his hated

oppressors. Napoleon, however, had no difficulty in understanding the decline of the Jacobin *grand seigneur* and was glad to see it. Henceforth he would hardly have to stress that it was impossible to welcome a condemned thief and corrupt politico into the bosom of his family. His orders to Pauline, to the Signora and his brother Joseph were brief and unmistakable: Stop the affair at once!

Pauline was now in despair. All her dreams had crashed pell-mell about her head. Napoleon had ruined her life. He had blocked the way to the salons of Paris, he had cut her off from exhibiting her beauty within the setting it deserved. She wept, grew thin, and her clear eyes were clouded with misery. She stubbornly insisted that she still loved Fréron and wanted him. If she could not have him, she announced, she would never get married at all. Never, never! She would spend her whole life as a spinster, devoted to Stanislas Fréron, thinking about him every day, mourning him. *Although I am young,* she wrote Napoleon, *I have a strong character.* This conceit she actually believed. She ended one letter to her brother in this fashion: *Be happy, and in the midst of your victories and all your happiness remember sometimes my own life of bitterness, and the sad tears shed by——P.B.*

The victor of Lodi smiled when he read these extravagances. He knew Pauline well enough to place little stock in her "strong character," and was amused by her determination to remove herself from a world bereft of Fréron. Nevertheless he was somewhat concerned. She had bent to his will. It was for him to show his magnanimity.

VIII

Marriage

NAPOLEON INVITED THE FAMILY to visit him in Italy. It was Brumaire, the month of fogs, the end of October. In Italy, however, the weather was still fine and clear. Only in the morning were the mountain peaks wreathed in mist. The nights were getting rather sharp. During the trip to Italy Pauline made the amazing discovery that she could laugh again. Everything attracted her attention—the landscape, the horses, peasants at work, officers cantering by. Her role of broken-hearted lover, at her age a very trying one, at last became virtually impossible to act out. A new crack appeared in the mask with every turn of the coach wheels. She was enchanted when the green valley of the Po appeared. The white church towers of the little villages beckoned her on. She was so filled with feverish expectation that she could hardly sit still on the seat. From afar she saw through a long vista of poplars the pinnacled sugar-icing of the Cathedral of Milan and let out a squeal of delight.

Milan was pulsing with activity. The people were still celebrating their miraculous release from the centuries-old rule of the Austrians. The aristocracy and well-to-do elements, it is true, were less enthusiastic about the quickly improvised Cisalpine Republic than their less affluent fellows. Many of them had retired in bitter anger to their country estates, there to await unmolested what they believed was the inevitable return of the white uniforms of yore. Yet enough representatives of the privileged class remained to fill the boxes of La Scala. The gowns of elegant Italian ladies clustered in the horseshoe provided brilliant relief for the men's bright uniforms banking the opera house from pit to gallery.

Pauline fell madly in love with the opera. The mélange of masked faces, of tender duets and ballet puppetry delighted her beyond measure. She was easily caught up, as soon as violins soared and flutes rippled in the overture. From that moment she was intent on the great red curtain, mysteriously illuminated from the wings. When

it rose and revealed a fabulous world of high passion, tragedy and eternal love played out against a background of magnificent castle rooms, highly ornamental gardens and improbably perfect woodland dells, she was beside herself with gratification.

Before this splendor even the salons of her dreams lost their attraction, paled to nothing. And, as the salon image faded away, with it disappeared Stanislas Fréron. Pauline was enchanted, too, by the deep hum of the audience during intermission. She liked to hear the soft tinkle of spurs, the muffled clank of officers' sabers, the whispering in the near-by boxes. She liked the smell of warm perfume and the rustle of heavy silken gowns. The music and action on the stage seemed to flood out over the audience, fusing the whole with magic, in such manner that the women appeared lovelier, the men more manly, and all things worth while.

Pauline reveled in the ineffable atmosphere of fine feeling, gallant pursuit and eroticism. The best part of it was that now she herself was a player—in the larger social opera. The whole theater, really, was a stage. The deliberately emphasized theatricality of the stage proper was complemented by another drama, a drama hardly less impassioned, but much more discreet, subtle and basically more fascinating than its professional counterpart.

The head of the French army in Italy occupied the box formerly reserved for the Austrian governor of Lombardy. It was the central point in the larger drama of La Scala. The general himself seldom attended the opera, but his wife often used the official box. She came accompanied by her lady friends, some of them Parisiennes on a visit to Milan, others socially prominent Milanese, Genoese, Venetians. Joséphine frequented the opera on the strict orders of the general who, however much he might be bored by social life, placed great value on its political influence. His box, he declared, must be consistently occupied, and if not by nobility, at least by beauty.

The first time she attended the opera Pauline did not altogether comprehend the secondary drama of which she was a part. Her heart almost stood still in her breast as the bee hum of the packed house was cut short by her entrance in the company of her detested sister-in-law. Joséphine leaned slightly forward toward the crowd in the pit. Pauline looked down on many smiling faces. She noticed that all manner of uniformed men were bowing in their direction. Dozens of lorgnettes were being raised. Even among the boxes people were star-

ing. She heard whispers of "*Sorella*"—"sister." A wonderful tingle of pleasure ran over her naked shoulders.

Later, during the intermission, the box was crowded with people who came to pay their respects to the commander in chief's wife. Two of these in particular impressed Pauline. Augereau, despite his general's uniform, looked like a butcher. His mouth was brutal, his nose a Bavarian sausage; his fists were like hams. Captain Charles, hussar, was another matter, a blond, trim, dashing young man redolent of patchouli.

Augereau pressed her hand until it hurt. Loudly he observed, "You look ravishing, Pauline, my dear. I see you have those dear little things—" his heavy mouth tightened in a grin—"sticking out in just the right places." Then he guffawed at his own wit, his laughter booming like a small thunderstorm. People looked up to see what was happening.

The captain behaved quite differently. He laid his beringed and manicured hand against the galloon trimming on the left side of his tunic and whispered, "Never did I think a poor mortal would feast his eyes on such incomparable beauty."

Pauline's sister-in-law kept a sharp eye on Captain Charles. During the next act he stood behind Joséphine's chair like a servant. Pauline saw him bend over Joséphine's immaculate coiffure. Whether he was whispering something in her ear or kissing her hair it was hard to tell.

Napoleon set up his headquarters in the small castle of a nobleman who had fled from Milan. Here there were guests from one day to the next. Pauline saw a good deal of the curly-headed Junot. She got to know Bourrienne, the general's confidential secretary, severe Berthier, the peacock Murat, Duroc, Masséna, Rapp, the friendly poet Arnault, and many, many others, hundreds of them. Soldiers, diplomats, scholars, artists such as the impassioned and boorish sculptor Ceracchi, passed through the castle portals. Soldiers and more soldiers came and went. The castle functioned partly as army headquarters, partly as the court of a *prince arriviste*, a latter-day Maecenas. The military, however, set the pattern. Most of the generals, colonels and captains were extremely youthful. There were many ironic comments on the fact that the commander in chief, at twenty-seven, was not only the highest ranking but the oldest officer in his army.

The ebullience of youth reigned in the castle's halls, and was nicely set off by the baroque plaster cherubs and garlands decorating walls and ceilings. Coquettish interchange, games, dances, musicales passed the time away. Behind the festivities lurked death in battle, adding piquancy, furnishing what appeared a heroic background to gaiety. Hearts had never been so filled to overflowing with hope. Surely the unbridled spate of Revolution had now found its way into a deep and placid bed bordered on either side with flowering meadows.

Pauline was carried away by so much youth and vivid attention. Overnight she forgot her life in Marseilles. There was but a single drawback. This was the undeniable fact that her sister-in-law was the center of attraction. The Widow Beauharnais, as Pauline privately dubbed her, stole the show. She was constrained to admit that Joséphine played the role of hostess well. Her easy movements, her languid grace, her slow, thoughtful smile were well suited for the great world. And she had to admit, too, that Joséphine was by no means bad-looking. Her eyes were dark, her skin like ivory, her limbs slender. She knew how to wear clothes. All these patent superiorities embittered Pauline so much the more. She might have forgiven Napoleon the heresy of marrying without her approval had her rival been small, ugly and gauche.

Joséphine was quite aware of Pauline's dislike, only poorly concealed as it was in glance, smile and crude remark. Even the guests noticed that the pretty Corsican was ill-behaved toward her older sister-in-law. It is possible that Joséphine could have won the girl over. But for her part she was amused by what she called Pauline's "senseless jealousy." She was pleased to feel her power over Pauline. On the other hand she was too indifferent, too much concerned with her own affairs to waste the time needed to wheedle Pauline into her camp. In short, Joséphine underestimated the tenacity of her young opponent, behind whom stood the entire Bonaparte family.

Reared in the colonial tropics where family ties had less meaning than on Corsica, Joséphine lacked the slightest idea of what it means to be a member of a clan. She committed herself to the folly of antagonizing all the Bonapartes. On all sides they spied on her, ever ready to prick and heckle. Whenever the commander in chief appeared as his wife's escort—and this was seldom—he demanded that all pay her meticulous respect. More than once he brought Pauline up short, threatening to clap her into a boarding school unless she

improved her manners. Her hatred of Joséphine, though now more carefully hidden, became the more consuming as it was repressed.

In late winter the second part of the plan of the rue de la Huchette was realized. The battles of Castiglione, Arcole and Rivoli brought about the progressive annihilation of the Austrian forces. Mantua capitulated. Overcome with anxiety about the fate of Trieste and her Dalmatian territories, Austria relinquished all Lombardy and sued for peace.

The incredible, then, had actually happened. The Republic was a recognized and powerful voice in European affairs. Its enemies crept away, their tails between their legs—except the English, who retained their grip on the toe of the Italian peninsula and from this base blockaded French ports on the Mediterranean. But in the rejoicing, tough, maritime England was overlooked. There was peace at last. And this peace indubitably had been engineered through the magic of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Morale in the ranks was excellent. The troops had shoes, new uniforms, enough bread and wine. The thrifty even managed to put a few francs aside. Spring was in the air. Forced marches and battles were forgotten. And Pauline became the living symbol of this epoch of high spirits. She was now in Bologna with the army. She was known not only to the higher officers, but to scores of lieutenants, the common soldiery, the officials and populations of conquered cities. Everyone knew her little coach with the fast trotter.

As bodyguard for his sister Napoleon assigned a soldier, Hercules by name. He went everywhere with her on her frequent excursions. Hercules was the mulatto trumpeter who, at Arcole, had signaled the opening of the assault on the bridge with his brazen instrument. Now he stayed behind Pauline, still armed with his trumpet and commissioned to tootle postilion-wise on proper occasions. The oddly assorted pair, Pauline with her veil flying and broad-backed Hercules, occasioned a great deal of popular interest and amusement. The army began to hum a new song:

"Peoples, see your masters two,
To the dust depress your crowns:
Yield your hearts as Paulette's due,
While Bony storms your towns."

Later the whole family gathered together in Mombello Castle. This was a princely property located in the country outside Milan, a huge structure with columns and towers dating back to the Renaissance. The most beautiful feature of Mombello was the garden, something of a miracle with many fine terraces, arcades and flights of stairs. Wells, springs and fountains filled the long bowered walks with the murmur and rush of running water, the greatest luxury of an Italian garden. Statues of sandstone representing Roman gods and legendary heroes were placed at each side of the steps and peered from afar over shrubbery and hedges trimmed by topiary art. Occasionally, especially before rain, the Alps were visible at the northern horizon, a thick mass of mountains. They bore the aspect of protecting the whole flourishing valley region, like so many watchful giants.

Napoleon made Mombello his new headquarters. It was like the summer court of a prince of the blood. Not only did officers, diplomats and politicians crowd there, but business people, bankers, artists, learned men, actors—anybody who had an ax to grind. They all came trooping in, seeking protection and patronage. In this period the general was easily accessible. Seldom a day passed but that the table was set for a hundred at the noon meal. The conversation was always stimulated by the presence of charming young women. Bons mots flew back and forth. The general himself often took part in the conversation. He was interested in everything, but preferred to listen and question rather than take the lead.

The Bonaparte family present included even Lucien and his Christine, for the general had more or less condoned the *mésalliance*. Louis was gloomier than ever. At an exclusive victory party in Bologna he had contracted a very uncomfortable and protracted ailment from a pretty but woefully unclean Italian maid. His blunder upset him horribly and thereafter he developed into something of a misogynist. But if Louis was down in the mouth, so much brighter by contrast Pauline and Elise. At this time Elise married an old family friend from Corsica, Captain Bacciocchi.

Poor Bacciocchi pulled a very, very hot chestnut from the clan fire. He was a dark, hairy fellow, who slouched awkwardly as he minced about, and generally exhibited a curiously diffident nature. Elise ruled him like a queen, treated him little better than a servant. Bacciocchi was unlucky enough to have neither the disposition nor the status to put his wife in her place when, as often happened, she

stormed at him before guests. She threw the charge in his face that he lacked the wit to be a general like Augereau or Masséna, that he was dismally wanting in the aggressiveness of Junot or Murat. Her sister-in-law's *cicisbeo*, Captain Charles, Elise shrilled, was infinitely more elegant than His Hairiness.

All these complaints it was Bacciocchi's angelic habit to endure in silence. At the first chance he would slip away into the castle park and there forget his troubles by playing on his violin. He was passionately fond of the instrument. Elise had forbidden him to play in the house, since in her opinion it was beneath his dignity to be interested, like any mountebank, in music. Once Elise petitioned the general to raise her husband to the rank of colonel, but with considerable irritation the plea was turned down. So once more she renewed her attack on Bacciocchi, took him in hand and demanded that he do something "big"—like winning a battle or signing a peace treaty. Her spouse's answer to these proposals was a helpless shrug of his shoulders. He knew his limitations. Elise raged.

And yet in a sense she was happily mated. Finally she had a man. Again, he was just the kind of man she had always secretly wanted —one she could order about to her heart's content. Sometimes she was even kindly disposed toward Bacciocchi. A certain satisfaction could be detected by sharp ears under her scolding and shrewishness. Her body was satisfied, her face fuller, and her nose did not seem quite so desperately long. Her marriage invested her with undeniable authority within the circle of the clan. Even the Signora now heard her out. The prospect of having Elise bear her grandchildren warmed the Corsican mother's heart. A new member for the clan in which her own blood stream ran was more important to the Signora than all her son's victories.

Elise did not spare anyone her new importance. Pauline she handled with condescension. As a result Pauline became violently jealous of her. The struggle to the death for the best position within the family continued unabated. In Marseilles it had been a hat that divided them. Now it was social prestige.

Being by this time a little over sixteen years old, Pauline thought constantly of married bliss. It was all she could talk about. Both the Signora and the general were worried over the growth of Pauline's ardent desires. The girl could not be fenced off forever. Only the

mother's presence and the aura of authority about the general held off compromising affairs far worse than the skirmish with Fréron.

One lovely day early in spring the commander in chief appeared in the castle garden accompanied by a blond young man in general's uniform. The newcomer he presented to the guests as Brigadier General Emmanuel Leclerc. Pauline at once guessed Napoleon's purpose. Turning to her with a smile, he said, "The general is my friend, Pauline. He has done a great deal for me. I should like to have him in good hands."

Leclerc was accepted by the family. He spoke softly, in an agreeable, almost delicate tone. His small figure, his thin, knowing face, his roundly energetic chin all contributed to his amazing likeness to Napoleon. Even his way of walking, his rapid stride, his gestures, his gently ironic, good-natured smile were Napoleon's. Only in his blue eyes and light thick hair was he markedly different, as if nature, in a prank, had decided to create a "blond Napoleon." In fact, he was known by this nickname in the army. It was Leclerc's likeness to her brother that drew Pauline to him at once. When Leclerc performed some small service for her, when he kissed her hand, put his arms about her waist while dancing, when he talked with her while strolling in the park, she had an irresistible feeling of having known him always. She could tell what he was going to say before the words left his lips.

In a mildly pleasant fashion Pauline came to love her General Leclerc. She never let herself go with him while he was courting her, as she had once with Junot at the spring in the wheat field. Nor did she stand in awe of him as once with Fréron. But she loved him as a thoughtful friend who could be trusted with revelations of all the facets of her personality without fear of offense or of misunderstanding. The mild temperature of the relationship, the mutual trust, the simple affection, an affection rather lacking in sensuality, Pauline felt were sufficient foundation on which to build a successful marriage. Furthermore, Leclerc had a good position in the army and enjoyed means. The scion of a family of some wealth in Pontoise, Leclerc had the good sense to increase his affluence while in Italy. One way he did this was by confiscating the valuable contents of the Milan pawnshops and the tills of the moneylenders. From these sources he appropriated all jewels and *objets d'art*. In cold fact it was unvarnished theft. But so thoroughly were the moneylenders hated by the

populace that no one raised a protest. In fact, the Italians gave the Frenchman credit for behaving like a shrewd businessman.

It was Elise's marriage, however, that sealed Pauline's determination to marry Leclerc. Once married she would be not only equal but superior to her rival. Bacciocchi was just a captain of sorts, whereas her Leclerc was a full-fledged general. Elise took her impending eclipse so hard that she withdrew to Corsica, whither the Signora accompanied her, taking along the younger children.

Before Elise's departure there was a family meeting at which the entire means of the clan were added up and parceled out. Their resources now amounted to three hundred and twenty thousand livres. This fortune was divided equally among the Signora's eight children. Pauline and Elise each received the standard share, some forty thousand livres. The Signora and the older brothers, Joseph and Napoleon, could not suppress a certain satisfaction when they made known this result to Bacciocchi and Leclerc. The activities of the two oldest sons combined with the Signora's careful management had set the Bonapartes solidly on their feet within three years after they had started from scratch as wards of the Republic.

Pauline married her Emmanuel in June. Guests came all the way from Paris and Pontoise. The couple were joined in wedlock in the small chapel of Mombello Castle. A sumptuous wedding feast followed. The tinkle of glass and of laughter filled the big dining room. The majority of the women wore white gowns, very décolleté. Most of the men were in uniform, though there were a few civilians. Even the servants who bore in the platters of food and the wines were soldiers of the Army of Italy. The musicians were recruited from a regiment of dragoons and wore the dress of their branch of the service.

Pauline basked in the soul-warming experience of sharing the attention, for once, with her brother. Elise was away, and Joséphine, at least for this one day, was willing to play a minor part. Everything pleased Pauline. The music, though too blaring and military for a wedding, pleased her uncritical ears. She liked the military small talk. She liked Murat's and Junot's magnificent uniforms, her brother's severe blue jacket. The table glittered with crystal and heavy silver cutlery. The meal was served on the finest Meissen and Sèvres china, the table decorated with roses and orange blossoms. Within ready memory all these amenities, as well as the fine wines and the castle

itself, had belonged first to Italian and then to Austrian owners. Now the officers of the conquering army used them at will.

The conqueror himself, the dark, long-haired Corsican genius who had made all this possible, sat at the head of the table. The bridal couple were stationed midway along one side. Although a comradely tone prevailed, it was far from a Republican assembly. One person and one will held the gathering. When the commander in chief raised his voice, the hall fell silent. Whomever he addressed felt honored and was duly envied by the rest.

The emissaries from Paris, to their discomfort, felt this very clearly. But what could they say? What was there, precisely, to complain about? Everything was proceeding according to strict military conventions. Yet in the fervent zeal of the adjutants, in Napoleon's epigrammatic brevity, in the sumptuous uniforms of general and colonel, the women's subtle smiles and all the rest, the sensitive onlooker guessed the possibility of a new state and a new hierarchy of power.

The young couple retired to bed before midnight. The great brother himself escorted them up the broad sweep of marble stairs. Junot carried the silver candelabrum. Behind them came Augereau and Murat, laughing as they talked softly to each other, seemingly about the conjugal duties that Leclerc would soon be pleased to perform.

Pauline climbed the stairs in a dream. She could feel the chill of the marble through her thin-soled slippers. She saw her own shadow, oversize, moving along the wall, and the shadow of her veil. The light, sweet perfume of orange blossoms mingled with the honeyed odor of burning wax. Augereau, who lagged behind, belched politely, showing himself slightly tipsy. Over Pauline came the sensation of being accompanied not only by her brother and her brother's friends, but by unseen ceremonial beings. Once, when Junot's spurs clanked, she started nervously.

Pauline, the lovely heathen, the *paganetta*, felt the presence of those universal overtones which a Christianized humanity has largely suppressed, but which the more tolerant pagans personified concretely as minor gods. They called them the "penates," whose office it was to see that cupboard was filled, that bread, salt, olive oil were at hand. They called them, too, the "lares," the spirits of the ancestors, whose masks decorated the family's private chapel and who hovered about protectively. And so, on this eventful evening, these modest and yet

vitally important spirits of the everyday flitted along behind the bride, concealing themselves in the folds of her dress, in the foam of her veil. They were beside her when at last the young couple were alone in their bedchamber.

The little gods were well disposed toward the young couple. There were no tears or disappointment. Pauline and Leclerc fitted each other and were mutually pleasing. The happiness of the one increased that of the other. Before, when Fréron had kissed her, Pauline had felt her virginity take fire. Shivers of excitment had played down her spine, the strength left her muscles. But only under the caresses of her husband did Pauline discover her peculiar realm and come fully into her own. She wondered at her sensation without limit, at the duration of her release, the savagery of the passion which, overriding any last scruples she might have had, shook her like a tree in a storm. She felt embedded in happiness, and was proud of the splendor of this body of hers which could arouse and experience passion at such length. The idea of sexual reserve was completely foreign to Pauline. What she had to offer she laid out freely, untroubled by any shadowing consciousness of sin. She had, indeed, no concept of sin, no intuition of it. She was, as her brother so often said, a heathen.

She did not love Leclerc deeply; that is, she was not infatuated with him. But he suited her well enough. His style of making love was neither brutal nor overfinicky. She was pleased by the matter-of-fact way that he fondled and caressed and then went on to possess and satisfy her. Like all women she liked drama and show in courtship, but directness in intercourse.

"The young couple must have a wedding trip," the commander in chief said the next morning. "Make ready for a day at Lake Como."

This command might have been given to a colony of ants, so busy were the goings and comings in the castle of Mombello. Horses were saddled and harnessed to coaches, fodder bags filled, boxes packed and stowed away, baskets piled with delicacies and wine bottles. Maids, servingmen, soldiers, braid-resplendent officers, ladies with half-curled hair ran about pell-mell, got in one another's way, all talking and commanding at once. It added up to an impression of complete disorder, and yet within an hour the coaches and their passengers were ready to set forth. The horses pulled with a will, and off they rattled into the fine June morning. Pauline sat in the first coach

dressed in a simple gown of rose-colored tulle. Beside her was her uniformed husband. Leaning back against the red upholstery they held each other's hands. Near by was the clatter of hoofs, for they were escorted by a detachment of dragoons.

"How do you feel this morning, Pauline?" the young husband inquired.

"*Mon Dieu,* I'm famished again already," said Pauline. "I had no idea that love made you so hungry."

Leclerc laughed at this and kissed her palm. She tried to draw her hand away. "You mustn't do that," she said. "That makes me go all strange inside, Emmanuel."

"What does it do?"

"Now stop," said Pauline. "It's broad daylight. It makes me bad."

"I don't follow that," smiled Leclerc. "Why is it so bad in the daytime and so good at night?"

"Everything in the right place, Emmanuel," said Pauline. "Now give me something to eat, if you please."

"Prosaic girl," said her husband of a night, and began to dig into the basket at their feet. From it he drew forth a chicken leg and this he offered her.

Pauline ate eagerly. Suddenly she stopped, the chicken leg still touching her lips, and looked at her husband. "Supposing something comes of it," she said.

"Comes of it? What should come of it?" Leclerc did not understand at first. "I see, I see," he said, comprehending. "Why, that would be fine!"

"But not so fine for me," said Pauline.

"Your mother would be pleased, and the general too," her husband reminded her.

"I know that," said Pauline. "Especially if it were a boy. It would be the first man-child in the third generation of the Bonapartes."

"You mean of the Leclercs?" he suggested.

"Naturally. The Leclercs too," she agreed amiably.

"You always think about the Bonapartes and never about me," her husband complained.

"Don't be silly, Emmanuel," said Pauline, and struck him lightly on the hand. "It would be simply wonderful, wouldn't it? Elise would be green as grass with envy. And Joséphine, she'd be greener

still, especially if Napoleon made me a big present of money, which he certainly would. I know him."

"You're so terribly materialistic," Leclerc admonished her. "Other mothers love their children for their own sake."

"Well, I'm not a mother yet," she snapped back. "How do you know? Maybe I'd love him, too. But you can't expect me to love anything that isn't even there."

"Other women do," he insisted darkly.

"They're just pretending," said Pauline. "They do it because it's expected of them. Their men are so sentimental—that's why they do it. They think they can squeeze so much more out of their husbands by it. Love, respect, affection, new clothes. And money, of course. But I'm different."

"You're an astonishing girl, my dear," Leclerc murmured.

"Simply disgusting," said Pauline, stroking her husband's hand. "The main thing is to have a boy. You've simply got to make a boy for me."

"But, my dear Pauline, it doesn't depend on me," Leclerc objected. "That's up to nature."

"I'll speak to Marianna Casamarte about it," said Pauline, after some rumination.

"Please don't do that," said Leclerc earnestly. "For God's sake, you mustn't drag Marianna into our private affairs. You'll have her cooking me some filthy Corsican brew or going through some awful mumbo jumbo. The whole army will be laughing at me, Pauline, if they ever get wind of anything like that."

"Marianna can keep her mouth shut," said Pauline. "I tell her everything."

With this sort of conversation to pass the time they rode on through the summer day. Now and then they came to villages where barefooted children, bright-eyed, threw flowers into their coach and shouted, "Long live the Republic!" At last Lake Como gleamed at their left, and the mountains looked down on them from across the water. They rolled through a narrow village street, between tumble-down houses. Then they saw their goal, a castle behind tall cypresses.

Pauline liked the place. She was delighted by all Napoleon's lavish arrangements for the day. She liked the round dining room with its black marble columns and high windows through which came a warm summer wind off the lake, smelling of flowers and gardens. She liked

the richly appointed table, the string music, the servants with silk stockings and gold-ornamented livery. The castle showed throughout the impress of a highly developed culture. It had belonged to an Italian nobleman. His portrait still hung in the dining room. In court dress, his hair powdered and a mildly ironic smile on his effeminate face, he peered out from the wall at the strange French guests. It seemed as if he could hardly believe his eyes. Steadily he watched the parvenus as they drank his wine and soiled the upholstery on his chairs. In a thin, nervous hand he held a one-lensed lorgnette. As she glanced up at him, Pauline had the queer feeling that he was on the verge of bringing his lorgnette up to his eye to have a better look at her.

"Who is that?" inquired Napoleon, turning to the chief steward of the castle.

"That's His Highness the Prince Borghese, Your Excellency," said the steward. He bowed to the general and the picture at the same time.

"Why isn't he here?"

"The Prince has departed this life," the steward replied reverently. "He didn't come here very often."

"Does he have children?"

"Two sons, Your Excellency. They live with the Princess in Rome. Two charming young gentlemen. Especially the older one. Quite like the father, he is."

"Is the family rich? Are they anti-French?" the commander in chief inquired bluntly.

"Begging your pardon, Your Excellency," stammered the steward, "the family is extremely fond of France. The deceased Prince was often in Paris and was close friends with the houses of Polignac and Orléans. The young Prince is a well-traveled man, and would certainly go to Paris if—that is . . . if . . ."

"I understand," said Napoleon. "It's no offense to me."

The house steward, more confident now, presumed to stand a little more at ease. "Our family is very rich," he boasted. "Besides the town castle in Rome we own forty-eight castles in the Papal State, in Tuscany, the Campagna and Lombardy. We enjoy the favor of the Pope, Your Excellency." At this he made another painfully low bow. "As soon as I learned about Your Excellency's intention to

honor us with a visit I took the liberty of having a wedding cake baked."

Gravely he clapped his fat hands. The folding doors swung apart and lackeys carried in an immense cake covered with pink and white frosting. It was so large that a sort of litter was needed to support it. The violins played a delicate air by Cimarosa, and children in the background sang a love song.

"Bravo, bravo!" Napoleon was very well pleased with this artful attention. The guests stood up to applaud.

"With the best wishes of the House of Borghese," said the steward, and bowed to the bridal couple.

"Thank you, thank you very much," Pauline said. "Kindly write to the Prince and tell him his hospitality is incomparable, and lacking only his presence."

"That will be done," the steward said quietly. Then he went up to a green hanging. "This is the castle's most precious possession," he announced. "The late Prince was a connoisseur of these things, like so many members of his family. He never tired of looking at this work of art."

Gracefully he drew aside the hanging. A piece of antique sculpture shimmered in the sunlight which poured in through the glass roof over the niche. The work represented Mars on the couch of Venus. The round limbs, the little breasts, the sloping shoulders, the fine thighs, ankles and feet of the young goddess had been carved in striking contrast to the powerful muscles of the god. And yet it was plain that in the contest of love the god had succumbed to the goddess. A faint smile of triumph played about her small mouth. Her delicate right hand rested fondly and carelessly on the god's shoulders. It appeared as if, having just achieved release, he was again about to court her favor and once more flare into passion. Meanwhile, coy rather than actually reluctant, the goddess held him off, hesitating to slake his need.

Pauline's breath came unevenly as she looked at this wanton sculptured loveliness. Her body shook under the light tulle dress. "There she is," she whispered ecstatically. "She's even more beautiful, more seductive."

Leclerc drew Pauline closer to him, felt her trembling. "Are you cold?" he inquired anxiously.

"She's more beautiful than I am," said Pauline, looking at her husband for confirmation.

"Silly!" he said. "She's only marble."

In the general excitement and interest in the sculpture none of the guests noticed Pauline's extravagant reaction. But her brother caught it and turned an uneasy eye on her. Then he stared at the statue.

Later they all explored the park and afterward there was a boating party on the lake. Twilight had come before they again got into the coaches. The mountain peaks were gilded in the last light. Pauline leaned against her husband's shoulder, and he fixed a covering about her. Half asleep, she was comfortably lulled by the easy motion of the carriage and the hollow *clop-clop* of the horses' hoofs. The night was clear and mild. When Pauline awoke she saw that there were thousands of fireflies in the meadows along the road. This way and that the little airy lights darted, describing thin scrolls of flame against the blackness of the night. Thoughtfully she watched the unwearied play of the tiny creatures.

In the fall of the year Pauline knew that she was with child. Her pregnancy brought her little discomfort, but she felt it only fitting that she should sham the semi-invalid a little. And so the whole day through she stayed propped up in bed among soft cushions. Over her curls she wore a pretty cap, and she wrapped herself in a morning gown trimmed with fine, yellowish lace that revealed how already her breasts were filling out. So she lolled, laughing and smiling and chattering, a porcelain chocolate cup poised in her hand. Around her, on chairs and footstools drawn up about the bed, guests paid her homage. Ladies and officers attended her the day through. Marianna Casamarte strode in and out of the room disapprovingly and startled everyone except Pauline with her crudities and interruptions.

Captain Charles called, in his wonderful hussar's uniform. As he lowered his singed and perfumed curls to kiss her hand, Pauline thought it would be amusing to take him away from Joséphine. So she paid him flattering attention and showed him the little diamond ring that her husband had recently sent her and of which she was very proud. While he was praising the ring's workmanship and complimenting Pauline on her excellent health, her clear eyes looked into his, faintly desirous, a glimmer in their depths. Pauline even contrived a little sigh, smiling as she sighed, and handed the captain a

cup of chocolate. This sign did not escape the dashing hussar. As he left the house he thought to himself, What a fool I am! I could have had her then and there! He made up his mind to say nothing to his friend Joséphine about his visit.

When Pauline was alone again with Marianna Casamarte, she doubled over with laughter and kicked her feet about, so that the old servant had to admonish her and smooth out the bedcovers.

"A general's wife shouldn't act like that, Paoletta," scolded Marianna.

"I know it," said Pauline. "But I can't help laughing. Just think of my sister-in-law! How she'd boil with jealousy! Anyway, the captain's a very nice man."

"He's a fool," said Marianna.

All the time she was in this "interesting condition," Pauline kept close tab on the changes that stole over her body. For hours at a time she examined herself in the mirror. She was quite captivated by the subtle transformations in her physique. Nothing escaped her. She saw the vague, empty look in her eyes, an oddly impersonal look. She saw the delicate browning of nipple and areola. Her physical state meant nothing particular to her. She merely lived through it intensively. She hardly thought about the coming child and was not especially moved at the idea of bringing life into the world. When the baby kicked within her she felt neither hope nor fear.

The life and the unfolding of her own body were the most important matters for her. She admitted to herself that the swelling of her limbs was somewhat alarming, and yet she thought it brought with it a new beauty. Her shoulders, arms and legs had always been slim, but now they assumed fuller, more seductive forms. Her hips, which had had the flatness of youth, were now solid and boldly rounded. The clear morning light in the room seemed to sheathe her body in silver. New and softer lights and shadows were reflected back to her by the mirror. The girl, in brief, became a woman. It was at this time that she began to understand Fréron's remark that a Venus without experience of love and its consequences is no Venus at all. Now she had to smile at her previous simplicity. How could one conceive the weight and force of the vital process beforehand? It was quite impossible.

The child was born suddenly. He was a boy, sound of limb. Pauline lay exhausted in bed. A new pride lifted her heart. She felt this

pride particularly with respect to her young husband, who, like so many youthful fathers, was ill at ease and altogether helpless in the midst of his new dignity and responsibility. Now condescendingly she called Emmanuel "my little one."

At the beginning the child struck her as utterly alien. With the objectivity commoner among young mothers than their enthusiastic cooing might indicate, she actually considered him revolting. His virtually hairless skull, his helpless, irritable, old-man's face made him precisely that. Still, she found it amusing to look at him, the weird and wizened gnome. Often she tormented him by suddenly pulling her full breast from his sucking mouth. Her dwarflet would seek for the lost joy with watery, dim eyes. His pumping, toothless mouth, his wrinkled hands would try vainly to fetter the rich, milk-spilling organ. Failing, he would wail like a lost soul. Marianna was shocked out of speech by such levity and threatened to tell the Signora about the way Pauline carried on.

But the child—Napoleon-Dermide was the name the young couple had bestowed on him—rapidly developed into a most presentable infant. Like his father he was blue-eyed and blond, and very early learned how to smile, in spite of all his young mother's teasing. Once again Pauline received guests at her bedside, this time with young Napoleon keeping her company. She was always pleased to the quick when her son was praised. Since everybody could in all honesty compliment his appearance, in the end she was convinced that she, and she alone in history, had borne another Cupid.

It might have been assumed that the couple were completely happy as things go. Curiously enough, an obscure estrangement kept them apart. Leclerc was very jealous of his son. The birth of the child had practically destroyed Pauline's former appetite. She now slept alone, the cradle near by, and would not give herself to her husband. Their intimacies, once so ardent and indispensable, now seemed not to interest her at all. At last she could not keep him off altogether, but she gave in without heat.

"Sweet God Almighty!" Leclerc told her. "You're as lively as a piece of wood!"

"I'm so dreadfully tired, my love," said Pauline vaguely. Then she turned over on her side and in a trice was fast asleep.

Leclerc had no good idea what was back of his wife's coldness. He thought, of course, that she might have got herself a lover. He had

a fleeting suspicion of Captain Charles, who at this time was actually making arrangements to follow Joséphine to Paris. But Pauline's indifference had other grounds. She longed to go to Paris herself. Often she thought of Fréron's descriptions of life in the capital. Vanity and ambition were strong in her. She wanted to be in the middle of things, to be somebody in the center of European society. She had filled her obligations as wife and mother. Now, she thought, the time has come to afford myself a little consideration. Neither Leclerc nor small Napoleon-Dermide completed her life, separately or together. Suddenly she conceived a deep dislike for Milan, even hated it, for all Mombello Castle, La Scala and her social acclaim.

Brother Napoleon was in Paris. A great swarm of politicians, men of substance and men who speculated, had followed him there, providing a tail for the meteor. Pauline told herself that life, real living, was possible only under Napoleon's shadow. Existence in Milan was by comparison nothing else than vegetation, undeserved exile. On the other hand she was well aware that Napoleon would never let her abandon husband and child to follow him according to her whim. When he himself was taking leave of Milan he had warned her, in his tender-stern way, that she was not to make a fool of herself by running wild with other men.

That's the way it is, she thought, the disillusion becoming more intolerable by the minute. My life is this little Leclerc fellow. Her disappointment at being tied down in Milan she blamed on her husband. It was he who kept her away from Paris and fulfillment and universal admiration. Her coldness was bred of these selfish convictions.

Since she was unable to leave Italy, she journeyed to Florence. It was no Paris, certainly, but at least it provided a change of scene. Pauline created quite a stir in the sleepy old Tuscan town. But Florentine society was anything but stimulating. There seemed to be nothing but old men in circulation—and hosts of refined, faded old ladies, wearing hoop skirts and layers of heavy powder, who once a week would gather in one of the many huge Renaissance places. These old, crumbling structures made a gloomy impression on Pauline. The conversation always turned on the doings of mutual acquaintances, on family affairs, on people and things long dead and generally forgotten. This highly civilized mandarin-society gossip bored Pauline as much as the gallantries tendered her by the silk-

stockinged old bucks who hovered around. Whenever she opened her mouth about France or Milan, or about her brother, they lowered their eyes and smiled pained, dry little smiles. It was a *faux pas* of the first order to mention anything that had the remotest connection with the Revolution.

Now and then Pauline heard the names mentioned of the Prince Borghese and his brother Prince Aldobrandini. The society of Florence had a somewhat tenuous connection with that of Rome. People shook their heads when they spoke of the brothers, almost as if they were sans-culottes themselves. Pauline regretted that they were not there.

The society of Florence did not take unkindly to Pauline. She was forgiven for her rather daring clothes, her open coach, her excessive animation and her lack of social graces. Even her relationship with that terrible man, Napoleon, was pretty much overlooked. She spoke a fluent, if very rough, Italian, and could sing this or that song by Cimarosa passably, if the listeners were not too fastidious. She did not have a single idea in her head, was ignorant of politics and literature, but after all she attended Mass with more or less regularity. Her mother had advised this, and Napoleon agreed it would do no particular harm. Looking at her in the round, the decrepit Florentine upper world regarded her as a sort of Mary Magdalene who had found haven from the sinfulness of the Revolution in the conservative piety of Italy. She aroused considerable secret affection, and perhaps her extreme good looks had something to do with this. Some thought, too, it might not be a bad idea to have such a charming intermediary should it ever become necessary—God forbid!—to deal with Napoleon. By and large she was accepted amiably enough as a prodigal daughter.

Italian society never altered this altitude toward Pauline. "*È mia figlia*," the Pope had occasion to remark later, and this after having put up with grievous treatment from her brother.

Currently these nuances interested Pauline not a bit. The fact of the matter was, the city was dead as a doornail. Michelangelo's enormous David was positively bored to tears as he looked out from his loggia onto the market place where vegetables, crockery, fruit and flowers were retailed with a deal of Latin clamor. Cellini's little bronze Perseus, next to David, held fast to the bloody head of his mortal enemy as if in a minute, out of sheer disgust, he would hurl it

at the noisy peasants below. The shops on the Ponte Vecchio were much as they had been in the time of Dante, except perhaps for being a little shabbier, and much the same wares were hawked—linen, woolens, cheap jewelry, mugs and twine.

To honor Pauline the social leaders of Florence invited her to the Palazzo Vecchio to watch the traditional horse racing from the vantage of its windows. The custom had been handed down from time immemorial, when the Italian cities were independent states, alive with pride, party strife and internecine envy. In the early days riders were drawn not only from different social levels of the city, but from Pisa, Lucca and Bologna as well. They still wore medieval costume, and the heralds still displayed the escutcheons of class and town. But now it was an empty masquerade acted out by a people long since squeezed dry of spirit by an endless succession of predatory princes. The riders made up with loud shrieking and much whipping for a shocking lack of equestrian skill. The mounts were either overthin or grossly fat. Yet somehow Pauline enjoyed the show—the crowd's wild excitement, the heavy betting, the cries of encouragement to the horses, the losers' gestures of despair.

And there was one thing in Florence that she could honestly say she was fond of. This was the landscape of the region, the little hills beyond the Arno, with the Apennines for background. She liked to journey to Fiesole, although the road was frightfully poor, and more than once en route the coach hung perilously at the edge of giddy heights. Often she stopped at the Villa Medici. There orange trees bloomed in huge wooden tubs, and the laurel grew high. Giant magnolias, centuries old, intertwined their branches in a great thicket. Mimosa, fine-leaved, smiled in the sun. Single tall pines spread wide boughs over the thin grass, dropping pretty cones all about. In the garden were half-sunken sarcophagi filled with flowers. Through the curly lattice-work of the laurel trembled flecks of sun, green-toned, dappling ruins of marble amazons, centaurs and muscular Lapithae. This languishing battle of heroic women, men-animals and giants was a sort of counterpart of the ceaseless strife of nature itself. It paralleled the struggle of the magnolia trees, revealed their black-entangled limbs, as they fought silently and timelessly for light, air, earth and water.

There was always a balmy breeze in the garden, and the smell of the sun-warmed black earth. Out of this ecstatic earth grew all the

driving, upward-creeping, outward-reaching life, the expression of the earth womb's inexhaustible urge to produce. And in this same earth all things were buried in due time. The smell of leaf mold and rotten wood was strong in the garden. To some extent the gardeners had tried to prune down too-luxuriant growth, to prop up leaning trees, to free the crushed stone paths of weeds. But on the whole it looked as if, finally exhausted, they had put away spade, shears and rake and given up the unpromising fight against a tireless nature, preferring simply to live in tune, snoring away in some shadowy nook, drifting *dolce far niente.*

Whenever Pauline was in this garden, she wanted it for her own. She often thought of that when she had purposely lost herself in the little green wilderness. Sometimes she looked down on the valley of the Arno where the city lay, a huddle of narrow houses clustered about Brunelleschi's great dome like chicks about a hen. The prospect she would have liked to know as hers to come back to at will. She imagined how fine it would be with the walks and shrubbery properly cared for, the statues and fountains restored.

When Pauline returned to Milan she found her "little Leclerc" in a fine state of furor. He took her into his own room, ordering the maid away. His eyes were glassy with expectation. He backed Pauline into a chair and said, "Your brother is making important moves."

"What's the matter?" Pauline asked. Her husband's manner confused and alarmed her. "What has he done now?"

"It's a military secret," he said. "You're not to tell a soul. Napoleon's going to Egypt."

"To America!" Pauline let out a squeal of amazement.

"No, damn it all," said Leclerc. "To Egypt. Didn't you hear me?"

"Well, Egypt's in America, isn't it?" she objected.

"Unless it has changed overnight it's in Africa, my dear little blockhead," said Leclerc. He kissed her like the tender husband he was. "You don't mind if I contradict you, do you, sweetheart? It's just a fact of geography. He's going to Egypt to strike at the English."

"No, I don't understand a thing," said Pauline and put her pretty hands to her head.

"You're not very clever today, my dear," said Leclerc. "But to tell the truth, I myself don't thoroughly understand what he's up to. He certainly knows what he's doing, though. And in all frankness, I

have an idea the Directoire will be glad to have him off their hands."

"Why, that's not right!" said Pauline.

"I know, but everybody's looking out for himself," said Leclerc. "Don't forget that the Directeurs are human beings like the rest of us."

"And here I've been in Florence not knowing a thing about it all the time," Pauline grumbled.

"I heard about it only yesterday myself," said Leclerc. "I've been working like a madman getting everything in order and my finances straightened out. See to it, will you, sweet, that your things are packed right away? We're leaving tomorrow."

"Are we going to Egypt?" Pauline asked, taken aback.

"Don't be a goose," said her husband. "We're heading for Paris."

"Did you say Paris?" Pauline whispered it. She felt her heart turn over in her breast.

"Yes, I did," Leclerc assured her. "The whole family is there already."

"Paris!" shrieked Pauline. She threw her arms about her husband. She flung open the door and screamed down the stairwell, "Paris!" Over and over she shouted, "Paris! Marianna, we're going to Paris!" She was quite out of her wits with joy, and was tempted to slide down the banister. Then she bethought herself. After all, she was already eighteen years old, a general's wife, and had a small son. Indeed, she was a woman of weighty responsibilities.

IX

Paris at Last

PARIS WAS the central city of the world, the kingpin. London, St. Petersburg, Vienna and Rome were overshadowed by the French metropolis, as were Madrid, Brussels, Berlin, Dresden and Copenhagen. The attention of all governments and all peoples was focused on Paris. Would the Republic last? This was the question that the anxious, hopeful masses of Europe asked themselves. Will the Republic fall and bury all innovation in its ruins? If the seed of revolution spreads, how are the uprisings to be crushed? These were questions of interest to adherents of the monarchic regimes of Europe.

Bonaparte's victories resulting in the peace of Campo Formio could only be an interlude between wars. The contradiction of outlook between the Republic and the rest of Europe was too taut, too deep, too vital to permit any lasting reconciliation. England fought on without a letup, supporting royalist dissidents in Brittany.

Paris itself lived high. The city was drunk with life. Many of the difficulties of the Revolution, of hunger endured, of uprisings in the provinces, had eased off to considerable degree. The battles had moved far from the soil of France over the Mediterranean to North Africa. Their tumult did no more than illuminate the distant horizon with mysterious flares, so heightening the almost macabre sense of gaiety in the metropolis.

Everyone wanted to enjoy life, to make the most of it. Pleasure-seekers massed in hordes along the arcades of the Palais Royal. The Champs Elysées were crowded with elegant carriages. So crowded were balls at the Hôtel Thélusson and the Hôtel Richelieu that dancing was out of the question. The couples were packed together in a perspiring mob or, if seated, pressed like sardines against the wall. Cafés, theaters, summer resorts in the Bois de Boulogne did a larruping business. Prices were high, unheard-of luxuries for sale. The newly rich burned to spend bags of money. Many émigrés returned

from England and the far side of the Rhine. In the long run the enjoyment of life had proved far more important to them than loyalty to the outmoded principles of monarchy.

Women's attire was more daring than ever. Great beauties made lavish display of their charms. Ball dresses were slit up the side to the hips to reveal enticing glimpses of the wearer's legs. These garments were called antique, though the Romans would have goggled in amazement at the sight of them. A street song of the day went:

"If Fashion decrees
That nothing be hidden,
I hope I'll be bidden
Where nothing is hidden."

Paris pulsed with a magnificent immorality. There flourished, for instance, a gigantic number of whores. They did business in broad daylight, and to scuttle with a customer under a convenient bush meant no more to one of them than blowing her nose. A contemporary set their numbers at some sixty thousand souls. Beyond love for a sou, the dividing line between the professional prostitute and the women of a very dubiously mixed society was by no means clearly drawn. Womankind was generally on the loose, and the spirit was clearly portrayed in dress and bold behavior.

But between the highest and the lowest ranks the bourgeois forged steadily to the fore, making painful industry and close reckoning pay off. Soon they held the whip hand in a France revolutionary in name only. It appeared that the profiteers, the speculators, politicians and military men held the center of the stage, but in truth it was the lower middle class that was on the march, the generation of César Birotteau, the future heroes of Daumier.

Crime increased steadily in Paris during these lush years. Murder, assault and theft were the commonest occurrences in the streets. The weak regime and a corrupt police were unable to cope with the growing threat to public security. The wealthy employed a host of servants, hoping to find personal safety in numbers.

The Bonaparte family played a glittering role in this scene. Brother Joseph now occupied a splendid house in the rue Saint-Roch. He owned also an imposing summer property surrounded by a large park in the Mortefontaine district on the outskirts of the city proper. The place had once belonged to a banker guillotined in the Terror. Lu-

cien, too, was in Paris, serving as a representative of the nation in the Council of Five Hundred. He had succeeded in making himself speaker of this lower legislative body and gave signs of abandoning the impetuous notions of his youth. Like Joseph, Lucien had a country residence—at Plessis. For Napoleon's use Joséphine had bought the small château of Malmaison.

Pauline adjusted herself rapidly to her new surroundings. Paris, however, did not quite correspond to her expectations. She was intensely bored by the long dinners at Joseph's house. They began with a cup of tea and ended three hours later with cognac. The guests' conversation turned largely on dull business and money matters. Usually they ended by playing cards in a room off the dining salon. Then she would be alone with the Signora and Elise. It was not essentially different from Marseilles, except that she now wore far better clothes. But then, her clothes went unnoticed.

At last, however, an opportunity turned up for Pauline to cut a figure in high society. A ball was to be given by Madame Permon, the Signora's old friend, the same one who had been kind to Elise when she was pining at Saint-Cyr. Immediately Pauline visited Charbonnier, a popular *couturier*, in whose establishment she was already known as a first-class customer.

"Madame General Leclerc, how may I serve the wife and sister of two heroes?" The self-termed "creator of modes" bowed to the floor. "My whole establishment is at your service. And my genius, Madame. It is a hat, perhaps? I have several brand-new ones to show you, all inspired by your brother's exploits. I have a *turban à la caravane*, a *chapeau turc*, a *turban terre d'Égypte*. This last one is embroidered with gold palm leaves and sphinx heads. It's my masterpiece. I'll never be able to improve on it, if I may be so positive."

"No, it's a dress I want," said Pauline. "A ball gown."

"A gown then!" Charbonnier softly rubbed his hands, pleased with the prospect of a better sale. "How would a robe *à la Psyché* do? Something thin as air, high-waisted, very décolleté, decorated with silver flambeaux. You'd wear silver shoes with it, of course. Or a soft white gown *à l'Indienne*. And while you're at it, you'd like something for the country too, perhaps. Or for street wear. Something *à la Bostonienne* would be nice. You know, puritanical simplicity and severity."

"No, it's a ball gown that I want, and something different," said

Pauline. "Something special and altogether unique. Don't forget that I won't keep your name a secret if the gown is successful."

The couturier looked at Pauline speculatively. "Could I ask you to show me a little more of your figure, Madame?" he asked tentatively. "The maker of dresses, please bear in mind, is as discreet as Madame's doctor. You can trust him completely. Without studying your figure it is impossible to be inspired to create perfection."

He nodded to a maid and very shortly Pauline was undressed to her shift. Charbonnier examined the classic proportions of her body which, since Napoleon-Dermide's birth, had become fuller and richer. He observed the regularity of the features, the purity of which was now somewhat softened by anxious expectation. He saw the large, clear eyes under finely arched brows, the rich tangle of black curls, the neatly turned hands and feet. Charbonnier was something of an artist and forgot that he was only in a business deal. He sighed, thinking of the bodies offered him to decorate by so many of his patrons. This Pauline he would be glad to clothe for nothing. She charmed him, challenged his inventiveness. With complete objectivity he measured the lines of her body.

"I have it!" he cried, and clapped his hands. "I'll make you immortal, Madame. Come, bacchante, with the sound of flutes and wild Phrygian music!"

Pauline stared back at him wide-eyed.

"A bacchante," he repeated. "Do you understand, Madame? I'll make you the finest gown ever seen in Paris."

Pauline looked at herself in the tall mirror on the wall. "I'll be a bacchante, then," she said. And indeed she was one.

The rooms of Madame Permon's house in the rue Sainte-Croix were crowded with guests. The sound of violins drifted from the dining room, which had been converted into a small auxiliary ballroom. The crowd was so large that it had overflowed onto the stairs and up into the bedrooms. On the lowest step, under the bronze sphinxes which served as candelabra, sat General Moreau. His coat was heavily overlaid with gold. At the moment he was busy drinking sherry. Already he was a trifle under the weather and regretted that he had come to the party at all, for he considered himself grossly neglected. Colonel Macdonald, hovering over his superior, tried to smooth his ruffled feelings.

"I just don't fit into this place," said Moreau. "It's nothing more than an imitation Versailles. A damned royalistic mob, pure and simple." Turning to a liveried servant, he commanded: "Hey, you, let's have some more sherry, will you?" The servant offered him a glass, bending low.

"Her sherry is excellent, anyhow," Macdonald said, smiling.

"The sherry comes from England," the servant informed them.

"Just think of that, Macdonald!" said Moreau, making a wry face. "Barefaced treason! Of course, there's no denying that English sherry isn't half bad." Quizzically he raised his glass to his lips. Moreau was a slender, blond man, not unlike Bonaparte in appearance. But his manner was much less erratic, his eyes calmer. Influential circles of the Republic, including such spokesmen of the people as Directeur Barras, considered him the best field general in France, even more talented than Bonaparte, Joubert or Kléber.

Suddenly the door was flung open, and there entered a woman in a flowing cape, followed by a gigantic Negro. Moreau jumped to his feet to make way for her. "Thank you, General," she whispered, and threw him a coquettish look. He saw the limpid eyes. Then the newcomer was ascending the stairs. Moreau looked after her in amazement, his gaze fettered by the display of two exquisitely naked legs. The charming lady's feet were bound in golden sandals, strapped high over the ankles. "God save us!" he said. "Did you see that? Who was it, anyway?"

"I think it was General Leclerc's wife," said Macdonald.

"Then he's got better taste than I ever credited him with," said Moreau, half to himself.

The salon was teeming with people. They were nearly all ex-émigrés newly back in Paris. Good Madame Permon, from a family of obscure nobility, prided herself on descent from the imperial Byzantine family of Commenius. Whenever possible she moved "among her own kind, if you know what I mean." The gathering did not, however, focus about Madame Permon herself, who was an ugly little woman with strongly marked Corsican features, but rather about Madame de Contades. This lady was the daughter and sister of the Bouillés, father and son, who had stuck by their doomed king to the bitter end. Madame de Contades was a blonde, a tall, slender creature. She had a fine, thin nose, a high, cool forehead and other aristocratic features. Her indolent movements, her impeccably correct

gown enhanced her almost alarming aspect of superiority. Whenever she chanced to find herself next to some unmistakable Republican her gray eyes showed deep offense and her mouth drew down. Moreau, for example, had rubbed her the wrong way.

"That sans-culotte!" she had whispered to Madame Permon. "Why, the boor is so drunk he almost fell off his chair." But the women of the new France displeased her even more than the men. "What stupidity!" she observed. "What gross manners! They throw themselves on the men without shame. It's really quite unbearable."

A coterie of young fellows had gathered around this choice lady. They marveled at her conversational skill. She had a collection of bons mots, carefully picked out of La Rochefoucauld and Chamfort. She was a mistress of paradoxes. Somehow, coming from her finely modeled lips, they never rang hollow. The young men liked the pallor of her skin, her thick blonde hair, the elegance of her appearance. In grim truth Madame de Contades was no beauty. Her nose was too long, her mouth too wide, her body too thin. But these deficiencies were elevated by sheer cultural adroitness into something like witchery.

"Precisely why everybody thinks so much of this Bonaparte," she remarked, "is beyond my comprehension. He's had luck, true, but nothing more than luck. In Vienna expert strategists assured me that he owes his victories more to his ignorance of the arts of war than to his knowledge of them. No, gentlemen, Saxe, Condé and Turenne are still the true marshals of France. So far as his popularity goes, I think that I, a weak woman, could very well dispense with his charm . . . indefinitely."

"*Sssshh*," said Madame Permon, and laid a warning hand on Madame de Contades' wrist. "There's Bonaparte's sister."

"Speak of the devil!" Madame de Contades turned to look.

Pauline had just entered the room. Madame de Contades paled, feeling herself beaten at first sight. She saw it in the eager eyes that the young men turned on Pauline, in the older persons' admiring exclamations as they huddled their heads together like Homer's ancients. Before her had appeared a creature of overwhelming beauty, a bacchante with bright, sparkling, laughing eyes, a creature who might have stepped down from the frieze of a Greek temple. Soft little ribbons of tiger skin were worked into her curls, and she wore a crown of golden grape leaves. A transparent gown of the finest India

muslin covered her seductive body. It was ornamented with grape leaves and simulated bunches of grapes and had a border of bright gold. The dress, split down the back to show smooth flesh between the shoulder blades, was held up by two lapis lazuli brooches. To the broad girdle worn just under the breasts the newcomer had attached a round cameo, exquisitely cut, showing a snaky Medusa head. Her white arms were quite bare, except for wide gold bracelets set with lustrous semiprecious blue stones arranged in antique style.

"What is this!" said Madame de Contades, overwhelmed. "Does she think it's a masquerade!"

But no one heard her. She was consumed by bitterness. She felt herself eclipsed, shoved aside, outshone. And by whom? By a Bonaparte, worse luck, and an eighteen-year-old Bonaparte at that, whom, in other years, she would not even have considered employing as a slavey. By the sister, indeed, of the very man who had scattered and destroyed the Austrian army in which her own brother had served, scattered it as easily as a thresher scatters chaff with his flail. Madame de Contades was close to tears, yet she fought them back. Her eyes were grim with injured pride and jealousy. Then and there she made up her mind that she would have revenge.

How could she crush this naked angel—"*ce bel ange nu*," as she contemptuously labeled Pauline for Madame Permon's benefit? How humiliate her? Already a crowd of admirers had clustered about Pauline. Among them was General Moreau, Madame de Contades noted. He had followed the beauty across the salon and suddenly revealed himself as a gallant of no mean address. His face was all smiles and attention. Madame de Contades thought it over. Perhaps she could draw Pauline into a conversation and so hold her ignorance up to ridicule, for she suspected, with hate-clear intuition, that the young woman was anything but burdened with brains. Yet that would not do, for Pauline's devotees would only rush to her support, even the aristocratic males. And certainly Moreau would not hesitate to ward off Madame de Contades with crushing vulgarities. Just now he looked quite capable of seizing her by her willowy legs and standing her on her head, should he suddenly take the unfortunate notion. That, of course, would be a prize contretemps. Besides, though she was hard put to admit it to herself, she dreaded Pauline's proximity. Inevitably it would mean comparisons from which she

would emerge the loser. Her gown, she felt, looked frightfully dreary against Pauline's brilliant raiment.

She saw Pauline go up to Madame Permon and whisper that the crowd was too much for her. The dancers packing the floor made her head whirl. Could she sit down, perhaps? She went into the boudoir and lay back on a chaise longue. Her fascinating legs were now more in evidence than out in the salon. The boudoir was brightly lighted by a profusion of candles. Moreau sat talking at Pauline's feet.

It was now that Madame de Contades saw her opportunity. Taking the arm of an older man, she said, "Would you kindly escort me, sir?" She moved into the boudoir as if by accident. "What a lovely creature!" she exclaimed, making sure that her voice carried. "What a charming coiffure, what a pretty dress!" She went into detail praising Charbonnier's creation. Then suddenly she changed her tone, and feigned shock. "But look!" she whispered, too loudly. "What a pity! Such a shame! How awful for such a fetching woman to be disfigured! A shame, really!"

Her escort pressed her arm, cautioning her not to make her remarks so public. But to no end. Madame de Contades was determined to have her way.

"Don't you see what I mean?" she said. "Just look at her ears, will you? They completely disfigure her head. If mine were as large, I do believe I should have to cut them off. I'll have to tell Madame Leclerc to do that. You must admit that any woman would be better off without ears, anyhow!"

All eyes turned on Pauline, not to gape at her in wonder as before, merely to inspect her donkey ears. The truth of the matter was that Pauline's ears were not extra-large—in fact, no larger than the average. But they were rather poorly formed and did contrast sharply with the lovely cut of her face. Pauline had reclined on the couch because, all to herself, she had remembered the scenes Fréron had painted so vividly for her and Elise. She remembered how he had said that the mistress of a conversational situation must have the "genius for listening." And now, just when everything was going along swimmingly, she found herself under attack. She blushed, her eyes filled with tears. In vain she sought words to turn the tables on her assailant. She was inexperienced, helpless.

She looked at General Moreau. "I'd like to go home," she said. "I don't feel so well, General."

"Please let me go with you," said the general grimly.

As they were taking formal leave of Madame Permon the general suddenly began to talk very loudly himself, indeed in a trumpet voice more suitable for laying down the law to a regiment than for a salon.

"I want to thank you for your hospitality, Madame Permon," he boomed. "I must say it would have been perfect except for the revolting presence of that Versailles bean pole. I find her shrewish remarks about your guests extremely disagreeable. In fact, for public retribution, if she were a man I would knock her head from her skinny shoulders. With this disturbing exception, Madame Permon, permit me to thank you for a perfectly delightful evening."

Madame Permon flushed beet-red, gaped like a dying fish. Her guests stared in astonishment, or laughed up their sleeves, depending on their sympathies. Madame de Contades trembled with the shock, but no one had sufficient courage to stand up for her. Moreau had the reputation of being a dead shot and only too willing to square off with anyone at the drop of a hat.

"You're simply wonderful, General," said Pauline when they were out of hearing. "You've been terribly gallant."

"Now that we're safely away from them," said the general, smiling widely, "let's drop the whole incident. Shall we?"

"Those scabby aristocrats!" said Pauline. "Why didn't they guillotine the whole bunch of them and have done with it?"

Moreau shrugged his shoulders. "Let's take my phaeton and have a spin," he suggested. "It's still very early."

It was a warm summer night. People were out sitting on the doorsteps of the rue Saint-Honoré, and so many children were romping and racing in the street that Moreau had to drive very slowly. But the Bois was almost empty. Gay lanterns swung a little forlorn on the garden pavilion of Le Ranelagh. Scattered couples were holding hands on the park benches.

Moreau started his horse into a trot with a light slap of the reins. The air under the oak trees here was fresher. Pauline shivered and Moreau threw his cloak over her shoulders. Doing so, he drew her to him. He could feel the cool firmness of her young flesh under the thin dress. She offered him her mouth, half-opened. Moreau let the

reins fall. The horse slowed to a stop and began to nibble grass with the carriage canted across the road.

"Darling," mumbled Pauline. "Kiss my ears." She pushed up her hair with her fingers. "How do you like them?" she inquired in a whisper.

"They're delightful," said the general, his voice becoming noticeably hoarser. "Everything's lovely about you, bacchante."

Pauline was silent in his arms. She sighed when he began to unclasp the brooches at her shoulders in order to fondle her breasts with greater ease. "No, not now," she whispered, stroking his hair. "Come tomorrow to Mortefontaine. I'll be alone."

"You drive me crazy," said the general, vibrantly honest.

Pauline laughed softly and looked at him with great eyes which now, in the night, were two woodland pools, dark and deep. "I love you, I love you," she said. Then she thought it over and said, "You make me feel just the way I want to."

Later when she was in her own carriage and on the way back to Mortefontaine, she was so happy that she could have sung aloud. All at once she felt quite at home in Paris. The dark houses, the mysterious rustle of the poplars lining the suburban road, the peaceful cows lying down for the night in the fields moved her. She thought to herself: At last I've got a lover as any decent married woman should have.

Through Moreau Pauline conquered a new dimension of experience. The effect was visible on her face. It was in her eyes, which now seemed to slant more, almost like an Asiatic's, lending her an expression of drowsy reluctance. The same quality was reflected in her gestures and speech. Pauline's new air of somnolent slyness enhanced her beauty, giving her features a new subtlety and life, whereas before they had been almost too clear and empty.

She continued to write affectionate letters to Leclerc. The Directoire had dispatched him to Rennes to pacify the Vendée, which for many a year had been periodically upset by rebellion. In this task he was no more successful than his predecessors. Pauline's love for her husband was not diminished by her affair with Moreau. Indeed, to her it seemed that she loved him more than ever. She thought of him often, particularly when she was looking at her small son. She was grateful to him for having provided the needed financial background for her release.

Now her life appeared to have divided itself into two—the prosaic, bourgeois Leclerc half, and the pagan, exciting Moreau half. She was constantly occupied keeping these two halves in balance. So, having something to take up every minute of her time, she was content. Moral considerations did not disturb her. In a roundabout way she had learned that Leclerc had made a pleasant little connection for himself in Rennes. Therefore she could have her own friend in Paris. Such a division of interest was so common in Pauline's circle that she would have been considered stupid if she had not had a lover. Her relation with Moreau added to her social stature, rather than degraded her. The women were envious, the men talked about "the lucky general!" In public Pauline kept him at arm's length, never addressing him with the familiar "tu." But in small ways their intimacy was obvious.

Elise, however, was completely upset when she first heard of her pretty sister's lover. For her part she had yet to endure any outsider's advances. "You owe it to me and my family," she informed her long-suffering husband, "to put this General Moreau in his place."

"You know perfectly well he'd just laugh at me," said Bacciocchi dryly.

"Then challenge him to a duel and blow his brains out," said Elise hotly.

"I'd as soon face a cannon, my dear. And anyway, it's very clearly none of my business—nor yours, either."

"You're a coward, Bacciocchi. I don't believe you would raise a hand if he were to attack me."

"Quite right. If that happened, I'd pack up and go back to Corsica."

"What a worm of a husband! What a wretch I've picked out!" yelled Elise. "I believe you'd stand by fiddling on that disgusting scratch-box of yours while he was tearing the clothes from my body. Wouldn't you? A lot you'd care what agonies he caused me, you beast!"

"Pauline doesn't look as if she were suffering." Bacciocchi grinned at his virtuous wife.

"Don't you dare insult my sister, you monster," shouted Elise, quite blanched with Corsican temper. "Keep your foul hands off the honor of the Bonapartes!"

"With pleasure," Bacciocchi said as soothingly as he knew how.

Then he shrugged his shoulders. As always, he was flabbergasted by the shattering absence of logic in what Elise proposed. Like all married men Bacciocchi had been forced to the conclusion that the feminine intelligence, if it functions at all, functions otherwise than the masculine. With this fact staring him point-blank in the face, he abandoned the field.

Joseph and Lucien discussed Pauline's liaison—they called it "*son affaire*"—with much gravity. Because they were so deeply concerned from day to day with matters of political and financial import, her brothers thought her choice most remarkably apt. By tying in with Moreau she held, obviously, a key position in a complicated situation.

"I'd never have expected it of her," said Joseph thoughtfully. "She always seemed so simple to me. And now, out of the blue, she has political ambitions."

"We can always misjudge," said Lucien. "It's the Parisian climate, you know. Anyway, politics runs in our blood."

"In any case, it's going to mean a lot," said Joseph. "Napoleon's position would be almost impregnable with Moreau covering his rear."

"Excellent," said Lucien. "Nothing short of excellent." Lightly smacking his lips, he poured more Bordeaux into a very thin glass.

In actual fact Pauline was no more conscious of politics than she ever had been. She knew that Moreau was a famous general, but she had not taken up with him for any political abilities he might have; simply because he pleased her as a man. She had no nose for the changes that were in the air. She did not know that the mass of the French people were either indifferent, or violently opposed, to their parliamentary bodies, the Council of Ancients and the Council of Five Hundred. Chaotic internal conditions, financial stress, the never-ending civil war, the chronic lawlessness of the land, the stupendous defeats inflicted by foreign enemies—Austria had recently reconquered northern Italy—all these calamities the common man blamed on his faulty government. The French nation, like any nation faced with crisis, longed for decisive, clear-cut action. Instead of this their parliament offered them patriotic speeches, evasions and an incredibly involved snarl of legislation. Dictatorship, in short, was around the corner.

In ancient Rome, in accordance with the greater political gifts of the Romans who had some talent for foreseeing crises of this sort,

the shift to a dictatorial regime had evolved constitutionally. In the modern world the change apparently had to occur either as the result of intrigue or of force, or usually some combination of both.

In this case who would play the dictator? Seemingly one of the five Directeurs, in whose hands lay the bulk of executive power. Indeed, three of the five were already experimenting with the project of a *coup d'état*. The only drawback to the idea was that the Directoire was in as bad odor as the legislative branch. The rural districts, quite justly, blamed their poverty and misrule more on the executives of the nation than on their lawmakers. Who, then, could be popular in France? Politicians, elected representatives, moneyed people, entrepreneurs were all out of the question. A conquering general with a series of victories to his credit would best fill the bill, someone without a political past. The Directeurs were perfectly well aware of this. Directeur Barras was willing to back young General Joubert and talked about the necessity of ensuring "both hand and head," meaning that he himself would be the brains of the duumvirate. But Joubert suddenly died. Bonaparte was off in Egypt. Only Moreau remained as a possible candidate. Already Directeur Roger Ducos was offering to mediate for the general in working toward a shift of authority.

Pauline was ignorant of this complex. And yet she now was busier with intrigue, albeit small-scale intrigue, than with satisfying her languorous person. It appears that the human heart needs to hate more than it does to love, at least the Corsican heart. A Corsican has a long memory for personal injury.

The Bonapartes had by no means reconciled themselves to Joséphine's intrusion into their jealous midst. They might eventually have forgiven her, as they had forgiven Lucien's Christine, if she had made any serious attempt to truckle to them. If Joséphine had even bowed her head properly to the Signora and Joseph, things would gradually have been smoothed out. But she was too careless, too busy with herself and her social doings to make any substantial effort that way. She was, simply, too French to grasp the remarkable clannishness of the Corsicans. Among her own friends she made disparaging remarks about the Signora's provincial appearance, about the social ineptitude of Elise and Pauline. These slurs, of course, were blown up out of proportion and duly found their way to the principals' embittered ears.

Joséphine made a costly mistake in singling out the female Bonapartes as targets for her wit. She was very obviously flouting her own relentless sex, daring their infinite capacity for rancor. She should have known that they would gladly spend the rest of their lives trying to line up the Bonaparte brothers against her in a common front.

At the same time she pursued her affair with Captain Charles with an alarming lack of discretion. The young man spent entire nights and days in the house in the rue Chantereine and made no bones about it. And this even after the very street's name had been changed, on Napoleon's account, to the rue des Victoires! He was Joséphine's constant escort at balls and social gatherings. He could be seen mornings taking her poodle, Fortuné, out for an airing along the street. He behaved, indeed, more like an uxorious husband than a lover. In his vanity he could not refrain from describing to fellow club members all the rather overripe charms of his mistress. He amused his comrades with piquant vignettes of her breakfasts in bed with him, of their taking baths together, and other such intimacies. Charles never seemed to have heard of the excellent advice offered by a certain rococo poet:

> "Should a young blade get his work in,
> Let him be mute as a butter firkin."

He walked headlong, and as blithely as the scatterbrain that he was, into the snare that the Bonapartes in general, and Pauline in particular, had laid for him. He confided his successes to General Moreau. He was unwise enough not to take count of Joséphine's servants, neither holding his tongue nor restraining his fervor in their vigilant presence, and had no inkling that coachman and maids were in the Bonapartes' pay. His folly was so complete that he told Pauline he felt himself a member of the family.

Day by day Joséphine's list of sins lengthened. Not a single detail was overlooked by Elise and Pauline. The sisters labored to spread vile rumors of her misconduct wherever they went—in Madame Permon's salon, at parties in Mortefontaine and even at the Hôtel Thélusson balls. It was not long before Paris buzzed with gossip about this interesting affair. The market women talked about it, the aristocratic ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain rolled it over their tongues. Soldiers in the barracks whiled away dull hours with unprintable speculations. The Directoire mulled it over. In vain Di-

recteur Barras warned his old friend that she had better watch her step and keep her private life out of the public eye. It was too late. The scandal was known everywhere and could not be concealed.

To further this consummation Elise and Pauline had tortured their ingenuity. The scandal, they reasoned, must become so malodorous that their brother would have to get divorced to be able to hold up his head. The brother's fortune, genius, riches all belonged to the family, they felt in their inmost hearts, and not to any French interloper. It never once occurred to the sisters that their machinations might be making him unhappy. They little suspected that cuckoldry might drive him in the direction of loving his fading wife more than ever.

Moreau, the soldier, who had a pretty good idea of the working of male emotions, considered this, however, and even broached the subject to Pauline.

"Love her!" Pauline was bewildered. "What an idea! My dear Moreau! Why, Joséphine's teeth are falling out. There are nothing but black stumps left. Her mouth stinks like a cesspool. My darling, she lisps like an old woman. Good God, Moreau!"

Moureau laughed uneasily at Pauline's excess. "You women are cruel as cats," he observed mildly.

"We may be cruel," said Pauline, "but try to get along without us!"

General Bonaparte had landed in Fréjus without warning. Everyone thought he was in Egypt, carrying on his business of slaughtering the English, harmlessly remote. Now here he was, back in France, like a clap of thunder. The Directeurs foamed with rage. One of them proposed that Bonaparte be court-martialed for deserting his post in wartime. But it soon became evident that a court-martial was out of the question. The general's trip to Paris was a triumphal procession. People lined the road to watch him pass. Crowds gathered in the street where he stayed. In the cities the crowds were so dense that his coach could not get through until he got up on the driver's seat, exhibiting himself to tens of thousands.

Bonaparte was surprised, contemplative. He had expected arguments and cool censure, not these outbursts of cheering by immense mobs of followers who struggled to be near him as if he were a god. He was thin and browned by the adventurous journey over the sea.

About him was a new aura of magic. Now he was not only the conqueror of Lodi and Arcole; he was the new Alexander, whose army had borne the banner of the Republic into the Orient. So far as actual results went the expedition had not been much to cause excitement, in either a political or a military sense. But who bothered about niceties!

Indeed, it was the senseless, romantic aspect of the expedition, the fact that it spent itself in great distances that captured the people's imagination. For does not every man at the bottom yearn for the romantic, for the long chance? Who really cares about commonplace, material things that are with us six days of every week? To the crowds that milled around him the general seemed the personification, the living symbol, of all their hopes and dreams. About him seemed to hover the enchantment of old Arabian tales, the glamorous atmosphere of the pyramids, the desert, the Sphinx, the strange Egyptian past.

Hearts swelled at sight of him. His admirers fancied themselves participating vicariously in a world of superhuman events. The mob looked at him and shuddered with delight. They revered him, felt for him a consuming affection. Women were more devoted than the men. Fascinated, they saw the curved sword with diamond-studded hilt that he carried slung from his sash. They were provoked by his presence to imagine wind-swayed palms, oases under the sun, veiled women, battles on the Nile. The general had conquered the imagination of the French mob. Suddenly there was no one but him.

The Directoire made haste to bow to the inevitable. This time, they realized, it was no pliant instrument of a man who was bearing down on Paris. He would be both head and hand, if he were anything at all. He needed no directorial assistance. The dictator quality he had shown in Campo Formio. He had shown his capability, too, in leaving the Army of the Nile in the hands of Kléber.

Directeur Barras had General Moreau brought to him. He sounded him out, offered innuendoes and vaguely defined proposals. Moreau seemingly could not, or would not, grasp the resounding future planned for him. Throughout the interview he remained cool and detached. Finally the Directeur had to come out in the open. "General, we need a strong man," he said. "We need someone the nation respects, someone willing to rule without benefit of the legislative houses."

"I've taken an oath to support the constitution," Moreau objected.

"But there are situations, you must realize," Barras insisted, "in which decisive action is more important than constitutional quibbling." When Moreau said nothing to this, he continued: "The greatest patriotism is often shown in overriding constitutional forms. The nation is more than its legislative representatives. Furthermore, the majority of the Directeurs, including myself, would naturally support you."

"I'm not your man," said Moreau, rising to his feet.

"You don't understand, General," said Barras. He almost pleaded. "There isn't an hour to lose. General Bonaparte is only about a half-day's ride from Paris."

Moreau, who had already started to leave, turned and looked back. He smiled sardonically, thinking of his young mistress. Barras tried to fathom him. Didn't this boneheaded soldier know that everything was at stake? Apparently not. But suddenly Moreau blurted out, "General Bonaparte is your man," and with that he quitted the room.

Barras was aquiver with chagrin but, being a political gambler by trade, quickly mastered his feelings. Mulling it over, he decided to shift to an entirely different tack. At once he began to plan out how he would make the same proposal to Bonaparte. The main thing, he clearly saw, was to keep well out in the swift midstream of events. Very shortly, having turned the matter over in his mind, he had pretty well reconciled himself to the inevitable. He rubbed his hands. It was a repellent business, having to deal with "the little spaghetti-bender," to knuckle under and pretend to bow down when Bonaparte rattled off those rude dicta that sounded so very much like a platoon sergeant's commands. No one enjoyed having Bonaparte's restless eyes sizing him up, reading his inmost thoughts. Moreau would have been a far better choice. But even with Bonaparte the game was not entirely lost. Even if he had to kiss all hope of power good-by, Barras assured himself, at least there would be a rake-off somewhere along the line.

The evening after that fateful conversation, General Bonaparte arrived home in the rue des Victoires. The house was in darkness. A sleepy servant girl opened the door and stared horrified at the general, who strode past her without opening his mouth. Bonaparte was boiling with rage. The scandal whirling about his home had already reached his ears. It was natural that he should believe Joséphine had

fled to escape his husbandly anger. It so happened, however, that Joséphine had sallied forth to meet him, to make terms and fend off retribution. But she had missed him since, according to his custom, the general had taken the shortest way home, using all manner of back roads through which his carriage had labored up to the hubs in mud. And so he found himself alone in a disorderly, deserted house. Outdoors an autumn fog was drifting dismally about the street lanterns.

After a time a coach rattled up to the door and stopped. His family had arrived. Pauline stormed wildly up the stairs and after her, more sedately, followed Joseph and Julie, the Signora and Elise.

Once the flurry of reunion had died down the general asked for the whole story of Joséphine's peccadilloes. Pauline did not dare say a word, for there was something about her brother that frightened her. She held back, would not give details and revealed no names. The general demanded to know everything, as if he wanted to soak in more and more poison for the inverted pleasure of the pain. He became ghostly pale under his tan, his face stiffened, and back and forth he paced nervously, from one end of the room to the other, like a sentry on post. There was silence except for his tread and the Signora's rough voice. Everyone was breathlessly still and sat like a statue. The candles burned straight and bright.

"Divorce—that's the only way out," said the Signora, laying bare the issue which, to her thinking, justified all this disclosure.

Her son, however, would not commit himself to this suggestion. Pauline watched him anxiously. She saw that her brother was suffering enormous anguish, controlling himself only by superhuman effort. It was altogether different from what she had expected. There was no outburst of rage at being humiliated and cuckolded, no flaming desire for revenge in the usual Corsican style. All that she could discern was the pain of a deep love and a terrible fear of losing the cherished object.

At this moment Pauline realized with finality that all was lost. The bond that fettered him to the archenemy was simply too strong for her. In vain had been her spying, her gossip mongering, in vain the scandal and the poison that she had deliberately injected into her brother's veins. All in vain. Her brother would crawl on his knees, if necessary, to beg his wife out of the lowest brothel, to pick her up if she were smeared with dung. He would love her when her teeth

were gone, when every last hair had fallen from her sinful head. So much Pauline conjectured.

The Signora, having spoken for the clan, said no more. Her son stood before the empty fireplace. Once again he heard carriages draw up to the door. Murat arrived, dressed like a peacock, and after him Leclerc. Then Moreau. Uniforms filled the room. The place swarmed with laughing, eager, excited faces. The minister of police arrived, Fouché, a gray wraith of a man, who kept diffidently in the background. His little roving eyes did not miss a single person in the gathering. His flap ears appeared to absorb not only spoken sounds but whatever dangerous thoughts were current. Barras came, pompous and deferential at once. And Roger Ducos, measuring his chances. With him came Directeur Sieyès, the indefatigable planner of constitutions.

Pauline was again surprised by her brother's sudden change of face, for in a trice he had put his misery out of sight. It was as if he had written it all down on a piece of paper, folded the chit and stuck it away in a drawer. Having done this, so it appeared, he drew out another slip, unfolded it and discovered in it a formula that made him smile and smile. There was no doubt that for the moment he had completely forgotten his faithless wife. He talked about Egypt, about the war with England. He quizzed his guests about domestic conditions, about the state of the armies. His questions and answers were cool and sharp, his observations intelligent, calm, straight to the point. There might never have been a Joséphine, to judge from outward show.

When Joséphine arrived the next morning she found the door of her husband's room locked. She tried to wheedle him into opening it. She wept, she begged. She knelt down before the barred door. No answer. Not a word. The servants tiptoed about the house; the maids had red eyes. Then Joséphine tried to use her children as a lever. Eugène, the boy with the sharp, handsome face, and his sister Hortense were summoned to the door to implore their stepfather not to deny them his protection. Joséphine opportunely collapsed on the steps. She was overcome by horrid visions of a lonely, penniless old age. For, though only thirty-seven, she had lived through the Revolution, a lifetime in itself, and still remained a kind of helpless, thoughtless child.

At last the general relented, unlocked the door and embraced his

stepchildren. They led him to Joséphine, who cowered in a semi-swoon on the floor. He drew her to her feet, gave her a conjugal embrace. In this fashion the couple were reunited. Despite all that had happened he felt that he could not dispense with his frivolous mate. The shock of near disaster had taught Joséphine a lesson. From this hour on she developed into a quiet wife, almost humble and self-effacing. Only fleetingly henceforth did she dare raise her dark eyes and look into a man's face in the old, flirtatious way. Always the ghost of divorce peered over her shoulder.

To compensate for the diversions she now wisely denied herself, she began to spend vast sums of her husband's money on her wardrobe. She loved to buy pendant, clinging things—shawls, scarfs and the like. All these objects Napoleon detested. Once, before everybody, he ripped a shawl from her back and hurled it into the fire. Then she bought herself another one.

In the days immediately following his arrival the general lived with bourgeois reserve, avoiding any manner of show. To the people of Paris he seemed another Cincinnatus who had retired, not to the plow, but to the task of tending his wife's rouge-pot. When he went out on the street he wore civilian clothing and his general's cap. But behind this deceptively quiet front, an attitude that completely duped the masses, he was steadily preparing the overthrow of the government. The hour had come. Now or never was the time to tame the tiger.

A constant stream of guests flowed in and out of his home. Many of them came at odd nocturnal hours, their coat collars turned up and their hats down over their eyes. Officers, statesmen, bankers and officials in droves were among his supporters. The banker Collot advanced the funds necessary to finance the *coup d'état*. Moreau, Leclerc, Murat knew their tasks and were ready for the signal to act. Smooth, lame Talleyrand, minister of foreign affairs, whose speech sparkled with clever observations, and the omniscient sleuth Fouché, were won over. Deals had been made to ensure the reasonable support of the Council of Ancients and the Council of Five Hundred.

The plan was very simply a *coup d'état* in the age-old style. First of all the myth would be spread that the Jacobins were plotting against the state. Then, to suppress this chimerical threat to public security, a genuinely treasonable pre-emption of the government would occur. The excuse would be that the whole course of action

was in the interest of the commonweal. There would be the usual eyewash of devotion to freedom and brotherly love.

The Signora, Pauline and Elise were unacquainted with the refinements of the plan. They did know, however, that a day of decision was impending. Tomorrow they would all have climbed to the highest possible position in France, or they would be exiles, a family without means, home or future. These were ticklish hours, but Pauline managed to while them away trying on one new hat after another before her mirror. The mother sat silent, solemn as an owl. Elise bit her nails industriously.

The metropolis of Paris lay about them, waiting. A light mist floated through the black, naked branches of the shade trees along the streets and soaked limp the last yellowing leaves. Brumaire, the November month of fogs, was laying to rest the last days of the sad autumnal season. Sometimes a pallid, watery sun broke through the mist, but it did not endure; it was like an uncertain smile that puckers a tearful face. A fire had been laid in the little salon, but so heavy was the air and so feeble the draft that it barely smoldered. Sometimes smoke wafted into the room, and the fire threatened to smother itself, as if out of sheer indecision it had decided to give up the ghost.

Then Madame Permon was announced and came in with her young daughter Laurette. She was itching with curiosity but dared not quiz her old friend the Signora. The severity of her face forbade idle questioning. Laurette sat on a sofa bolt upright and looked wonderingly at Pauline who waved her white arms and swayed her hips, though there were no men to titillate. Laurette thought of her cat, how, slyly, carefully, delicately moving head and limbs, he would dip his small mouth in his saucer of milk.

Suddenly the Signora began to talk. She expressed no worry over her son, who was busy somewhere out in the fog of Paris. Rigidly erect, her dark, somber eyes staring off into the distance, she began to list past cares, denials and domestic crises. Her family's destiny unrolled before her inner eye, as past life is said to do with the drowning. She saw Corsica, her children as youngsters, her husband, his friend Pasquale Paoli, the commotion of Toulon, the stink of Marseilles, the glitter of Antibes looking down on the sea, the splendors of Milan. Always her sons, always her daughters, and always the woes of a mother's heart.

The Signora spoke like a sibyl, a mother of heroes. Her voice was

harsh, her sentences were short. But the more simply she bore herself, the more impressive she was. Pauline let her fancy hat fall to one side, and Elise stared fascinated at her mother. Madame Permon was quite speechless, and Laurette ready to burst into tears.

What the Signora brought to their attention was not the physical landscape of the past, the cities they had lived in, the people and events of the outer reality they had known. It was the landscape of her heart that she painted for them in earthy colors. It rose up like another Corsica, gray, stony, bathed by a sea of blood, misted by a miasma of anxiety, premonition and love. Within this landscape moved her eight children, with their wives, husbands, children. Over them flitted the shadows of children who had died young, admonishing the living, the ghosts of the cancer-ridden father, of the doddering uncle and all the rest of their departed.

And as suddenly as she had begun, she stopped, in the middle of a sentence. Down crashed the curtain, and the spectacle of the Signora's inner world, her islet of matriarchy, was cut off from view. Everyone sat quiet.

The Signora looked at Pauline, who hesitantly had started once again to fiddle with a hat. Sighing softly, her mother said, "Tonight we can go to the theater."

"You're so good, Mother," said Pauline.

Then everyone began to talk. They discussed common acquaintances, relatives, the latest styles. It was a fine release after the Signora's terrible earnestness. Yet behind the light words, the insubstantial odds and ends of thought and the facile smiles lurked fear, the ghost of Brumaire. It followed the women that evening into the Feydeau Theater. A comedy was being presented, called *L'auteur dans son ménage—The Author at Home.* The women could not follow the involved farcical situations. The witty words struck deaf ears. Indeed, even the audience in pit and gallery was oddly subdued this evening. There was occasional laughter, but it rang hollow, like a guffaw in church, and the actors in turn were dampened by the heaviness of the spectators' mood. Gradually ensued unfortunate gaps in dialogue. The timing fell off, the pantomime became unconvincing. Something overpoweringly real bore down the thin illusion behind the footlights. Fate itself had taken over the boards. It was at work everywhere in Paris. It blanketed the misty countryside of all France.

The uneasiness of the night found sudden tongue. Toward the end of the second act the actor playing the lead role of author rushed wildly out of the wings. He was only partially made up. He held his wig in his hand and had neglected to remove a short red flannel dressing gown. He raised a hand to command silence. People got up from their seats. There were loud exclamations of dread. What's wrong? What's up? The comedian's knees knocked with excitement. "General Bonaparte was wounded in Saint-Cloud by a thug while addressing the Council of Five Hundred," he announced in his professionally comic squeak.

Confusion broke out, shouts, sobs. And a single hair-raising cry pierced the soft roar of alarm. It was Pauline. Her shriek was chilling, mindless, like the cry of a wounded animal. Her eyes stared into space, and her hair had become disarranged. An avenging deity might have given such a bloodcurdling wail. Her face, not distorted by the spasm, still seemed carved from stone. And yet the cry kept ripping out of her mouth, an eerie wild-beast sound.

The Pauline of fashion-mad, overrefined Paris had given way to Pauline the sister, the daughter of the clan, a Corsican. A knife had struck home into the depths of her heart, into that region where, deeper than husband or lover, resided her brother, an adored object beyond all ordinary concupiscence and sensuality, always shrouded, dark, silent, large, the idol of the clan. Someone had tried to draw blood from the symbol of the common blood stream of the Bonapartes.

The audience looked up in horror at the box where Pauline was having her seizure. They turned to one another and whispered rapidly. They looked and could not fully comprehend.

Elise sobbed, her head resting on the parapet. Madame Permon did not know what to do, and glanced around distractedly. Only the Signora kept her wits. Her hands trembled, but she managed to rally Pauline to her senses by severe words. She had a glass of water fetched by the box attendant. Pauline gulped the water, spilling half of it on her clothes.

At this crucial moment the general's secretary and adjutant, Bourrienne, arrived at the theater. He was quite staggered by so much to-do. "It's nothing at all," he assured them. "Everything is in hand."

They clung to the bringer of good tidings. Pauline took hold of

Bourrienne, flung her arms about his neck. He stammered some feeble protests, but these only served further to addle the brains of the aroused Bonapartes.

The real news was quite different from the first rumors. The Council of Ancients had fallen in with Napoleon's project to seize dictatorial power. The two Jacobin Directeurs from whom opposition had been most feared had sought protection under Moreau's wing. The Guards regiments followed the directions of their superiors. Leclerc occupied the streets of Paris in the direction of Saint-Cloud and held back the crowds. The main thing was to prevent the people from ganging. This tactic had been skillfully managed from the start. Anything but allow the people of Paris to get out of hand and make the final decision themselves, as they had in the bloody September of 1792 and on the 9th Thermidor of the revolutionary Year II.

So then everything had gone off by schedule until the general appeared to speak to the Council of Five Hundred. There he was disconcerted when hecklers demanded names and particulars of the tyrannic plot.

Napoleon had tried to bellow back such timely phrases as "The god of war is with us," but the stratagem had not worked on his aroused and unmilitary audience. The familiar hue and cry of "outside the law" and "proscribe him" had broken loose. In wild disorder the representatives of the people had swarmed about the general, ringing him round. He had turned pale as a sheet. His supporters thought it wiser to sneak off while the sneaking was good.

In the midst of this hurly-burly a grenadier had the sleeve torn from his coat. Quickly it was bruited about that the accident had been caused by a Jacobin dagger thrust meant for the general's vitals. The lie was opportunely spread among soldiers and civilians milling in the streets. It made an excellent impression. Up to this point the people had been supporting their legislators. Now they swung over to the side of the coming dictator.

Finally brother Lucien got to work. Ceremoniously, with a show of deep injury, he resigned from his post as speaker of the Council, wriggled firmly out of his toga, laid his feathered hat on the tribune. While an attempt was made to prevent him from leaving, Murat arrived with a handful of grenadiers. "Clear the hall!" he ordered. "Out with the hoodlums!" Thinking they were about to be murdered, the representatives gave way to panic. They leaped from win-

dows, threw off their robes of office, and hotfooted it to safety through the park of Saint-Cloud to the city.

This was the end of the government of the Directoire. The new Consulate, planned by the ingenious Sieyès, took its place. The three Consuls were to be Bonaparte, Sieyès and Ducos. But the towering and definitive personage in the triumvirate was the Corsican.

When Bourrienne had finished his story, Pauline shrieked, "Where's my brother?"

"He's in the Palais Luxembourg."

"Take us to him at once," the Signora commanded.

The carriage swayed over the cobblestones darkly gleaming in the light of the street lanterns. It was drizzling heavily. Pauline shivered in the penetrating damp. The streets were virtually deserted. Paris was suddenly quiet again. Here, once more, the conspirators had been lucky. Such a dismal night discouraged gatherings, alarmist speeches, retaliation. The gutters ran gently with rain water, but no blood. Tomorrow? Tomorrow everything would be forgiven and forgotten. The memory of Paris was short.

The carriage turned into the gardens of the Luxembourg and the passengers got out. The doors were flanked by grenadiers drinking coffee and playing cards. Bourrienne bowed them all in. Their steps echoed on the empty, massive stairs. On the walls over their heads hung dim paintings of lovers in flowery boats journeying to Cythera, the island of love and cherubs, an island permeated by sweet frivolity. They proceeded through a whole series of rooms. The castle was horribly neglected and, indeed, for a time had been used as a prison. It was from this spot that Danton had begun his trip to the guillotine.

They came on the general in the former Queen's bedchamber. The big bed itself had been moved out, but the baldachin remained sheltering an empty quadrangle of floor, and above it was the royal crown. The mirrors were dull, covered with flyspecks. Silk draperies on the walls were decorated with the Bourbon fleur-de-lis wreathed round with laurel. Someone had put dust covers over the crystal chandeliers. They looked like long, shapeless heads peering down curiously at what went on below.

Bonaparte was sprawled in a chair, legs out. His high riding boots were covered with mud, his spurs dull. He had thrown his hat carelessly on the fine round table before him, a spindly, curved-legged

piece with gold-inlaid drawers. His stringy hair fell about his face. His eyes were black-ringed with fatigue. Three candles in a porcelain holder burned on the table. They threw a strong shadow of the general on the wall. There was his profile, the silhouette of lank hair, straight nose, round, jutting chin against the light spot on the wall where the Queen's bed had been.

To one side, in an ornamental easy chair, sat Leclerc, his head in his hands and apparently ready to doze off. Murat, who had not bothered to take off his immense shako, leaned against the wall and yawned, mouth gaping like a cavern.

"Now we start shoveling away the debris," the general said.

Pauline, who had outstripped the others, came running in. She leaped on her brother and kissed him. Then she stepped back and took in the wonders of the room with a dreamy little smile. The general observed her pensively from one side. He drew her to him quickly and pinched her ear. "We've done it, Pauline!" he said, in high good humor.

Book Two

IMPERIAL VENUS

I

Tropical Island

A SULTRY NIGHT. The moon hung in the sky like a great yellow lamp and bathed the tropical landscape of Cap François in magic light. The palms and broad-leaved banana trees were motionless. To the north were mountain ridges; in the foreground, rising up to meet the heights, were low, rounded hills covered with bushy growth. Beyond the mountains was the sea, black, smooth and illuminated by the moon like an enormous mahogany table shining in candlelight. Toward the south, away from the mountains, stretched the long depression of the Plaine du Nord, the rich, black-soiled valley which was one of Haiti's greatest sources of wealth and, consequently, the breeding ground of tragedy.

The settlement of Cap François had been destroyed. Empty, ruined walls, torn palm-leaf roofs, burned-out joists were all that was left of the place. Rubbish and debris filled the dirty little streets. Everywhere great bats flitted in the moonlight and added a sinister note to the spectacle of desolation. On the outskirts of the settlement were latticed gates of iron still swinging ajar on their hinges. The broad paths that they were intended to bar led only into deserted gardens. The homes of white planters that had once stood behind the gates, the high, finely ornamentated rooms that had echoed with music and laughter, had vanished. Only some of the broad-roofed slavepens remained to fix the past. Beyond, on the valley floor, could still be seen the giant wheels that had formerly been used to crush sugar cane. The kettles for distilling rum still lay about. But everything was quiet and unused, a great litter, as if a hurricane had struck the island. The fields that had once flourished with rich plantings of cane were now growing wild. The watchtowers still stood but there were no more overseers to whistle a shrill warning at the Negro slaves when they paused in their labors to straighten their backs.

Here, too, thousands of miles from the center of the storm, the

Revolution had done its work. The inevitable and terrible work of retribution had run its course.

Now, however, the tamer of the Revolution had taken over in the capital of the homeland, Bonaparte, First Consul. It was his intent once again to link the rich colony of Haiti to France, for its colonial products were well worth the effort of pacification. Order, form and law, Bonaparte had decreed, must again be forced down black Haitian throats. Once the English had made peace with France and the seas were open for transport, Bonaparte sent his brother-in-law Leclerc on the mission. With Leclerc came twenty-five thousand veteran troops, the best soldiers of France. With him, too, came his wife Pauline. To no avail she had wept and thrown herself at her brother's feet in protest against this incredible journey to the West Indies. Adamantly the Consul held to his thesis that as his own sister and a Bonaparte she could not absent herself from the expedition.

Two young people, this bright moonlit night, crept through the ruins of the town. Only now and then did they make a sound when a tile or loose board moved under their feet. Then they would stop and look all around to make sure no one had heard. Finally they were out in the open before an ornamental iron gate. Now the soft moonlight was full on their dark Haitian faces. They were very young, a boy and a girl. The boy was powerfully muscled. The flesh of his torso shone with a soft bronze sheen. The girl wore nothing but a cotton dress. Her dark face, framed in curls, was strikingly pretty and cameolike. She turned her big eyes to her companion and whispered in broken Haitian French, "I'm afraid, Mazimbo. Let's turn back."

"We've promised to help, Laona," the boy replied. "We're already where we want to go."

He took hold of the girl's hand. Together they entered the big gate. The thick foliage of ancient trees threw heavy shadows across the path. Streamers of moss hung down from the branches. They halted before one of the slavepens. Fearfully they crept inside.

"Who is it?" said a tired, cracked voice.

"It's us, Mazimbo and Laona," they answered, the girl hugging close to her lover.

"What you want?" the voice asked, almost threateningly.

"We want your help, Mamaloi. Our mistress is sick. The white doctors can't help her."

"The white people are fools," the voice croaked.

Then there was a long, taut silence. Sparks flared and Laona shrank back. Resinous wood burst into smoky flame. Ominously an old woman, skeleton-thin, her kinky hair white and peppercorn, stood before the young couple. Her eyes were lively and wicked.

They had entered a slave hut just like all the rest. But on the wall was painted a long, undulating, white snake, its mouth gaping and a double-forked tongue projecting. Laona knew whose picture this was. It was Damballa, the snake demon, also called Simbi à deux eaux, a frightful Haitian god who took many forms and who, with the help of his servant A-Gouoe-To-Ro-Ou, determined the course of the waters of life and the hour of death. Then Laona's frightened glance fell on a low bench. Here lay oddly shaped stones, carved by nature into rudely expressive likenesses of the male and female sexual organs. Between them lay an old French dagger, pitted with rust.

The old Mamaloi moodily followed Laona's stare. "Damballa has put hate between them," she muttered.

"And love," said Laona shyly.

"What you call love is only the highest point of hate," the old witch said sardonically. "He thinks he can conquer. But she strangles him, and it is she who wins. That is the way a woman is built. Out of the seeds that are put into her she breeds new haters. So goes the world. Damballa does not want the world to die out. . . . But you're wanting something, aren't you? Have you got any money?"

Mazimbo laid a silver piece on the bench.

"That's good," said the Mamaloi. "The demons are cold if they don't have money. Do you want me to help the white people?"

"Our mistress," both answered at once.

"Don't you know that I hate the whites?" said the witch. "Don't you know I was Caradeux's slave, the man who had my father strangled and who sold off my mother? Don't you know how I had to hold my sides from laughing when I saw Dessalines have Caradeux impaled? He died through a whole night and another half-day besides. That was good. Don't you know that the whites have lured our father, Toussaint L'Ouverture, on board a ship so they can take him across the sea and throw him into prison? Isn't your mistress' husband the sworn enemy of Dessalines and Henri Christophe?

Doesn't he want to enslave us again and make us die working in the cane?"

"Our mistress has nothing to do with it," said Laona. "She's good to us. She gives us clothes. And plenty to eat. She wants Mazimbo to marry me."

They listened to the roll of cannon off in the night. Then it was still again.

"*Pays mon li la*," mumbled the Mamaloi in Haitian. "My home is there. Your mistress is beautiful?"

"She is as beautiful as the morning over the sea," said Laona.

The Mamaloi thought it over and at last grinned ironically. "I'll help her," she said. "But I need something that belongs to her. A dress, a handkerchief, or a piece of her fingernail. That would be better."

"Here," said Laona and laid a dark lock of hair on the bench.

"That will do," said the Mamaloi, snatching at the tress. "You're sure that it's her hair?"

"I cut it off myself while she was asleep."

"Good!" said the old crone triumphantly. "You're a bright child. A true servant. Don't say any more now. Keep still."

Laona and Mazimbo sat on their haunches and watched. The old woman went to work at once. She placed the lock of hair on the dagger blade. She got a mortar and put it on the bench. Then she put some green leaves in the mortar and crushed them with a stone pestle. A sweet almond odor filled the hut. The old woman ground away with an energy seemingly impossible for one with such thin, bony arms. Now and then she spat on the leaves. A definite rhythm was visible in the steady motion of her arms, a beat that finally possessed her hips and shoulders until her whole body was in serpentine movement. Now her face appeared to change, to become more youthful, less ugly, and at the same time more lifeless and masklike. Her eyes, the pupils distended, were fixed on the lock of Pauline's hair. She began to mutter softly.

"I am here. I have come," she said. Her voice, too, had changed and grown younger.

Laona knew who it was that had come and was speaking. It was no longer the old Mamaloi, but Damballa, the demon. The two young people dared not budge an inch. They hung their heads and folded their arms.

"I will help the stranger," said the voice from the mask. "She will live. The strange men shall die. This land is my land. These mountains are mine, and these rivers. These fields will nourish my children. I live in the sea, in the forest, among the reeds of the lake. Papa Agoua's boat will take her across the sea. In her heart will live Grande Mambo Batala, the woman who always plays, longs, gives herself and yet is never satisfied. The woman . . ."

The voice was whispering now. Finally it dropped down into an unintelligible hissing. Then it was gone.

The Mamaloi, after this exhibition, sat with her head sagging on her chest. Her face was older than ever, her eyes closed. The pestle fell from her hands and she seemed dead. Finally, however, she opened her eyes and pointed wearily to the mortar. "Take it and rub some on your mistress' temples," she told her visitors.

Laona took the kerchief from her head and dumped the magic mixture into it. The two young people left the hut on tiptoe. The Mamaloi had fallen sideways and was snoring.

Pauline could not sleep. She lay on her bed with eyes swollen from endless crying. The night was warm and close. The moonlight welling in through the window, the heavy moldy odor of tropical earth, the fragrance of nameless night flowers disturbed her terribly. Something was hammering and stabbing behind her temples, and at times, in pulsations, the pain spread throughout her whole body, into her straining toes, her finger tips, the roots of her hair. Languidly she got out of bed, slipped out of her nightgown and once more lay down to try to sleep.

For a little while she felt cooler. Then she began to cry again, for she was thinking of Paris, of mornings in the Bois de Boulogne, evenings at the theater and in the salons. She thought of Junot, who had come to pay her a parting visit with his wife, little Laurette Permon, before her departure for Haiti. How the pair of them had tried to console her! How Junot had managed to press her hand while Laurette was remarking that she had heard they wore bright kerchiefs about their heads in Haiti! And how she and Laurette had tried on dozens of shawls and kerchiefs, and Junot had marveled at her! But not one of the men had intervened on her behalf, neither Junot, whom she had known as a boy, nor Moreau, her lover, nor Leclerc, her husband. Even the Signora and her brothers had not

lifted a finger. It seemed that she had been abandoned by everybody. She felt the migraine coming over her again. Outside there was the reassuring scrape of the sentry's feet as he paced back and forth. Occasionally the silence was split by cannon roar or the wild throbbing of a drum. Suddenly she heard someone slipping into the room.

"It's I, mistress," whispered Laona. "I've got some medicine for your headache."

"It smells nice," said Pauline wearily. "Like almonds. But it won't help me any."

"Oh, yes, it will help," the maid contradicted. She knelt at the bedside and rubbed the mixture on Pauline's temples.

"It's wonderfully cool," said Pauline and stretched herself. "It feels so good. You're an awfully good girl, Laona. Here, kiss me."

Laona kissed Pauline's hand.

"You're a sweet child, Laona," said Pauline wearily. "Sleep here with me. At the foot of my bed. Take your clothes off, Laona. Don't you know that in France where the knights are buried in the churches there's often a little lion sleeping at their feet on the sarcophagus. Just like a poodle. But how nice you are, Laona! You're so smooth, smooth as an egg, and so cool and nice. My little lion!" She ran the soles of her feet over Laona's body.

"That tickles," said Laona and giggled.

"Tell me, Laona," said Pauline, stretching and yawning: "Has Mazimbo had any fun with you yet?"

"Oh, no!" Laona was shocked. "Not yet!"

"You're a virgin?" Pauline laughed. "It's astonishing to be a virgin. A miserable thing—neither fish nor flesh. A couple of years ago I was a virgin myself. I can hardly remember what it was like then. Too dismal even to think about it."

"I love Mazimbo," said Laona in a whisper.

"You'll have him, my dear," yawned Pauline. "My Leclerc will give you a hut and a piece of land."

"Thank you, mistress, thank you!" whispered Laona. Suddenly she sat upright. "Is it true, mistress," she asked, "that men and women hate each other when they love each other most?"

"What's that!" said Pauline. "Did you figure that out by yourself? It's nonsense, of course. Still, when you think about it, there's a kernel of truth in it. Sometimes I hate all men. I was hating them when you came in. They're so smug in their world. Wars, battles,

expeditions, business. Funny that you should bring it up. You have to have experience, you have to have a mean streak in you, too, to understand the hate and cruelty in love. But I can't tell you any more about it now. I'm tired. I want to sleep. Be still, Laona!"

Pauline pressed her cheek to the pillow and soon was asleep. Slipping deeper into sleep she still clearly smelled the fragrance of almonds. A dream image of a whole landscape of blooming almond trees rose before her eyes.

She dreamed she was far away from Haiti on a sun-dry island in the Mediterranean. As once in Antibes she heard the waves retreat with a heavy sobbing, and the wind as it rushed through the palm fronds. Home, her heart whispered, home. But now she was no longer lolling, as she had lolled as a young girl, all naked on the cliffs. She sat on a throne, wearing a bacchante costume, in the small throne room of a temple. She could look out through high, severe Doric columns over the sea. The cliffs glittered in the sun, the dolphins sported, and up rose shaggy sea-gods, tridents in their hands. Their dark, damp, dangling beards were shining with wet, their bodies dripping. Up from the sea, too, rose sea-maids with green hair, flat foreheads and popping blue fisheyes.

Where is the home for me,
O Cyprus, set in the sea?
Cypris's home in the soft sea-foam,
Would I could wend to thee,
Where the wings of the Loves are furled,
And faint is the heart of the world!

Pauline saw herself, and at the same time the faint shadow of herself, in the light marble of wall and floor. She saw her own golden shoes, laced high up her fine legs, her round knees under her filmy dress, the delicate shoulders that had infatuated Moreau, the proud throat surmounted by the curly head. She saw her pearls, her old diadem with blue stones. Or was it the wooden, gilded crown that she saw, the dust-covered one over the baldachin in the Luxembourg?

Hercules appeared, the big mulatto, now a courtier in a frogged coat with gold lace, still wearing his trumpet slung over his shoulder. Three times he struck his staff on the floor. Junot appeared, Moreau, Colonel Macdonald, little Beurnonville and a hundred other men, friends and strangers. All made obeisance to her. In-

cense burned at her feet and the fumes were sweet and spicy in her nostrils.

Then, still on the throne, she sank down and down into an enormous cave alive with trapped winds and the drip of subterranean streams. Her heart was heavy with fear. She felt the touch of bats' wings on her soft cheeks and saw that two glowing eyes were looking into hers.

"Fool!" said the stranger. "If you can play my part up above, let's see you do it down here below."

From outside somewhere, brightening and fading, came a ray of light, green from shining through sea water. In this curious light, which was like that of a conflagration seen at night through a piece of green glass, she recognized her dark interlocutor. It was herself, she saw, but now no longer the bright personage reflected by the temple marble. Now her image was menacing, severe, archaic, and the figure held a pomegranate in her hand.

This version of herself was also beautiful, beautiful as Medusa. Her white cheeks were faintly hollowed and wasted by sickness. Her eyes were fevered, distraught and full of suffering. The wrists were almost too delicate. A wry twist, of pain rather than malice, caught at the corners of her mouth, but was soon lost in beauty.

"Suffer!" said the goddess. "Suffer! Forget your frolicking in the sun and be like me! For I am not only the lewd pleasure of the embrace, the lovers' ecstasy; I am the scream of parturition, the tearing pain that spews life forth; I am the rattle of the dying."

"No, I will not," cried the other Pauline, the bright one. "You are too cruel." She stretched out her hand to fend off her likeness.

"You are a coward," the goddess threatened. Her eyes were almond-shaped above the high cheekbones. "You must taste this," she said and held out the pomegranate to the other self from above, who then cowered away.

"No, I will not do it, I will not," cried the bright one. "I hate you, old heathen."

"You think more of your soft new god, I see, when you're faced with reality," the goddess said, mocking Pauline. Her laughter echoed wildly in the rocky hollow. "But anyone who loves as you can, really belongs to the old gods. You have fallen into my hands."

"No," wept Pauline.

"Take this, little Pauline," said the goddess, swiftly caressing her

body and her hair. "Be insatiable and full of pain. Think about me sometimes. Think of me living with bats for doves. Some may have an idea that I arise smiling out of a sea shell, as in the picture over your bed. Or that I lie with the god of war, my slender white arms entwined about his strong, brown shoulders. But that is childishness. Only you know, only you have seen me as I really am. For I think a great deal of you."

The slanting eyes looked strangely at Pauline. She could not bear the terrible, veiled and yet tender look, and turned to flee.

"Coward, coward!" she heard the goddess call after her. "You will never escape me."

Pauline struggled to unfetter herself from the dream. She knew all the while that she was dreaming. But this fuddled knowledge in no wise diminished the terror of her dream persecutor. Shot through the dream that had begun so auspiciously was a strange, empty paranoia, a feeling of unreality, of being nothing, a horrible sensation of the weight of the past. A weight as vast as cliffy masses bore down on Pauline's body, pressed her temples together in a vise and made her heart beat slowly and heavily.

With a last, despairing effort she freed herself from sleep. She sat up in bed bathed in sweat, her hands shaking. Her head ached fiercely. The gray, thin light of predawn came through the open windows. The damp morning air sent shivers through her limbs. Then someone hammered on the door. Pauline threw a covering over her shoulders. Without disturbing Laona, who lay stripped at the foot of the bed, an innocent smile playing over her dark and virginal face, Pauline opened the door. Outside stood the little blond lieutenant, Lespinasses, one of her husband's adjutants. Several times he bowed to cover his embarrassment, and finally stammered, "I beg your pardon, Madame Leclerc, but there's not a moment to lose."

"What's the matter?" Pauline asked stupidly. She put her hands to her temples. Her head ached and throbbed.

"Dessalines has broken through our lines," the lieutenant said abruptly.

"Broken through?" She had the curious sensation of having already lived in this present.

"Through the French lines," Lespinasses repeated. "Fort Picolet is in very grave danger. The general wants you and your women, Madame, to get aboard ship at once. There's no time to lose, I re-

peat." The lieutenant looked at Pauline apprehensively, out of blue child's eyes.

"Come up here on the veranda, Lespinasses," said Pauline. It was cool there. A cloud hung over the cape, and from the thick forest cover heavy morning vapors were billowing upward over the foothills. The sound of cannon was clearly audible to the south, clearer than during the night. At times there were long salvos. The road winding through the valley was filled with refugees and wounded, with supply wagons and all manner of people fleeing on horseback. The exodus was toward the ruined town of Cap François.

"I'm a coward, Lespinasses," said Pauline. She stared at him.

"But this isn't an ordinary war, Madame," the lieutenant politely objected.

"Are there ordinary wars?" asked Pauline, and laughed nervously.

"I've served under Bonaparte . . . begging your pardon, Madame, under the First Consul, your own brother, Madame," said the lieutenant, extricating himself from the tangle of titles. "We didn't rape any women, or kill any wounded, or torture anybody. And I'll give the Austrians credit. They didn't do any of those things, either. But here it's different. We're running wild on both sides, doing everything to each other. I wish the whole island would sink under the sea. I never want to see another palm tree or another swamp. I hate the whole damnable fever hole."

"You say you've served under Napoleon?" Pauline inquired.

"I have, Madame," said the lieutenant, never taking his eyes from her face. "My family emigrated," he confessed, "and I felt that I had to make up for it. I came into the army as a volunteer. Bonaparte—I beg your pardon—the First Consul aroused my admiration, Madame, although my family . . . That's another story."

"Why did you like Napoleon?" Pauline asked.

"Why? I really can't tell you, Madame." The young man smiled in his confusion. "He has something in him, Madame. Defeats turn into victories in his hands."

"I'm going to stay here," Pauline announced. "I may be a coward, but I'm going to stay." She looked thoughtfully at the boy.

"I can't allow it," the lieutenant remonstrated. "The general wishes you to leave."

"Tell my husband that I'm staying here, in Cap François, my dear Lespinasses," said Pauline. "Tell him that I have faith in the veterans

who served under my brother. I'm sure that Dessalines will regret his audacity."

The firing at the front grew in volume. Lespinasses listened with concern written large on his face. "I have to get back at once," he said and left Pauline.

The wounded arrived. The surgeons had them laid under trees in the grassy space before the house. Some lay motionless, staring into the sky. Some whimpered. One young fellow with a splintered leg was weeping. Big tears rolled down his grimy young face. Piercing cries and groans issued from the dining room. There the doctors were binding up wounds and amputating arms and legs which, as they were detached, were thrown into a waiting basket. The lawn was fouled by blood and sweaty uniforms. Occasionally the stink would be wafted away by a cool mountain wind, fragrant with flowers. Pauline stood helpless among the wounded. Laona crouched near her and wept.

"Do something!" Pauline said. Then it occurred to her, after she had shaken Laona's shoulder, that it might be fitting to do something herself. "Bring water!" she commanded. The girl got to her feet and scuttled off.

Pauline now wandered from one wounded man to the next, offering him water. She covered them with their tunics, fixed their heads more comfortably on their knapsacks. The soldiers looked at her in amazement. Some Frenchwomen, soldiers' wives and sutler women, made shift to aid her. She forgot danger and the passage of time in her activity. The sun was overhead in the noon sky when a hollow feeling in her stomach reminded her that she had not eaten all day. That afternoon Lespinasses came again. He was covered with dust and sweat, and bleeding from a head wound. "The general wants you to move aboard ship at once," he told Pauline.

"I'm staying here," said Pauline.

Lespinasses shrugged his shoulders. "I've been ordered to take you aboard ship by force if necessary," he told her.

"Will you carry out the order?" Pauline asked him.

"Orders are orders, Madame," said Lespinasses.

"Let me tell you something, Lespinasses," said Pauline and hooked her arm through his. "There were two soldiers' wives here. Both of them lost their husbands. One was so full of grief that she cut her wrists and died. The other was in despair, too. But she found a man

among the wounded that she liked and consoled herself with him. Which woman do you think I'm like, Lespinasses?"

"But, Madame!" stuttered the lieutenant.

"I'm terribly light-minded today," said Pauline. "But today, too, yes, even during the night, something happened to me. I don't know just how to describe it. But it seems as if I'm much more than I was, as if I'd suddenly found myself and were filled with riches. Let me stay here."

Lespinasses was beginning to grow pale from his wound and the fruitless argument. "I beg your pardon," he said as politely as he could and sat down on the ground.

"Lie down," said Pauline. "Stretch out."

"No, no, I don't want to," he murmured, but Pauline pressed him down on the ground. Half smiling, he let himself be forced.

At this moment an officer rode up at full gallop. He whirled his horse about Pauline, so that the animal flicked green foam onto her dress from his dripping mouth and kicked up a cloud of dust. The newcomer wore the green uniform of the chasseurs, a uniform that Pauline recognized, since it was Napoleon's favorite. The officer leaped hurriedly from his mount. He had a big hooknose and lively gray eyes. "Word from the general," he said. "Dessalines' men have retreated."

"I knew they would," said Pauline. "I thank you, Captain."

"Canouville de Raffelot is my name," the officer told her.

"Captain Canouville," said Pauline, "you're the bearer of very welcome news indeed. You deserve a reward. What would you like?"

"Something to eat. And even more, something to drink," said Canouville. He looked at her, a significant smile playing about his mouth. He sighed. "What I'd really like to have, I can't, of course."

Pauline looked again at Canouville and flushed with pleasure. "You're a hard man to please, Captain."

"I do the best I can for myself," said Canouville.

"I really ought to be offended," said Pauline.

"But what have I said?" Canouville laughed in her face.

"You have a very expressive look," Pauline reminded him, laughing with him as she said it.

"Thank you," said Canouville. "My face has got me into plenty of trouble before this. Plenty of husbands, I regret to say, have found my nose objectionable."

"And why?" said Pauline.

"On account of its size," said Canouville promptly. "It's far too large, you see, and too curved. I've heard it said that it gets into too many places it shouldn't." Humorously he wriggled his shoulders. "But what can a man do? I've got only one nose and no prospects of ever having another. As a matter of fact it was because of my mountainous beak that General Lannes had me banished to this lovely isle. I'm the only chasseur among the lot of us."

"I've heard about it," cried Pauline. "I remember now. You played too openly with Madame Lannes."

"That's going a little too far, I think," said Canouville, smiling to himself.

"Do you think Madame Lannes is very pretty?" Pauline asked.

"I have considered her the most beautiful of women," said Canouville. "However, at the moment I'm inclined to relegate her to second place."

"You're quite priceless," said Pauline. "Give me your arm, sir, if you will. You can eat with me if you like."

After they had finished eating Pauline and Canouville loitered a long time at the table. It was spread with white napery, and there was a silver candelabrum between them. The sudden tropical night had fallen. The wounded had been carried out to the vessels anchored in the bay. Canouville spoke in his easy, ironic way of Paris, of his friends at home. Pauline listened, seldom interrupting. She liked Canouville. His conversation acted on her like a tonic. The darkness and doom that had hovered behind her seemed to fade away.

"Well, that's all, Madame," said Canouville. He gulped down another draught of red wine. "That was my life over there. I can't look back on it without some disillusionment, although I managed to amuse myself well enough. Or maybe it's disappointing on that very account. But I'm a lucky fellow. I certainly deserved to be banished. And look what my banishment turns out to be!"

"Can you never be serious, Canouville?"

"Indeed I can. On the trip here I was serious enough. I lost a thousand francs at vingt-et-un. Thinking about the source of my unhappiness, I jotted down some moral observations and the like in my diary." He drew a little notebook bound in red leather from his pocket. "Listen to this one:

"If you love in high places a lady of breeding,
Rescue from trouble you'll find yourself needing."

"Did you make that up yourself?" said Pauline, impressed by Canouville's aptness.

"I should say not," Canouville protested. "That's by Ronsard. The old duck was right, too."

"And what conclusion do you draw from it?" Pauline asked.

"None at all, no precepts," said Canouville. "How can a man live and love if he's going to be twittery every time he hits a few rough spots?"

"True," echoed Pauline. "How can one?"

Canouville got to his feet, slowly circled the table and posted himself behind Pauline's chair. He lifted up her chin, looked down into her light eyes and bent to kiss her mouth. Just as he was about to complete his maneuver, someone rapped on the door. Little towheaded Dermide, Pauline's son, scampered into the room. He was still so young that he could not rightly manage his legs. He was followed by a colored nurse. Canouville remained where he was behind Pauline's chair. The child greeted his mother, caressed her, then offered Canouville his small chubby hand. "How do you do?" piped Dermide.

Canouville was overcome by embarrassment, the uncomfortable feeling that steals over a man suddenly confronted by his mistress' children. He had the sensation that the child was already aware of the yet-to-be-unfolded intimacy between him and his mother. Indeed, it struck him at once that Dermide was jealous. For he turned again to his mother and began to kiss and fondle her extravagantly. Like the naif soldier that he was, Canouville decided on the spot that Dermide had a prior right to his mother's affections. He felt like a thief confronted by the robbed.

Every now and then Dermide looked suspiciously at his mama's visitor. He did this when Pauline told him it was time to go to bed. With a great show of possession he climbed up onto Pauline's lap to bid her good night, laid his head against her breast, kissed her cheeks vigorously. At last he left, dragged off reluctantly by his nurse. He turned once before finally quitting the room, offered Canouville his hand and said, with much significance for one so infantile, "Good

night, soldier." As he did this he smiled a parting smile at the chasseur.

There was silence in the room when the child had disappeared. Canouville looked at the candles, at Pauline's dark hair, and said, "It's time I was leaving. The general will be wondering what I'm up to."

Pauline mused. She half turned in her chair and looked up at Canouville. "It's better this way, I think," she told him.

"He's a delightful little fellow, your Dermide," said Canouville.

"Rather nice," said Pauline. "I'll have to stand by my two little Leclercs. At least out here in Haiti."

"I understand," said Canouville.

He knelt down and kissed her knees, feeling out with his lips their shape under the soft tulle covering them.

"Don't do that, Jules," she said. She stroked his hair. Under her palm it felt coarse and curly like an animal's hairy head.

"It's all over between us before it began," said Canouville. "But I'll still love you. I'll always want you, Pauline."

"You'll always love me?" Pauline sat motionless. She felt the dark goddess' brooding dolor creeping over her again. "Jules," she whispered, "give me your little red book. Give me that verse by Ronsard to remember you by."

"Here it is," he said.

"Jules, we don't know what's in store for us," she said. "Maybe you'll marry a rich woman. Perhaps you'll own property and have lots of children."

"You're joking, Pauline," he said gloomily.

"No, I'm not," said Pauline, equally morose. "Perhaps I'll be rich myself sometime, if Leclerc does well. Whenever I'm bored, whenever my life is empty, I'll think of you. Perhaps I'll send you back your red book."

"Will that mean you want me to come to you?" Canouville asked.

"That's what it will mean," she said. She lifted his head and kissed his forehead.

Then he left. She stood at the window, listening after the drumming of his horse's hoofs until they were swallowed up in the warm velvety night. The moon rose high over Cap François.

Out of the damp tropic earth and stagnant swamps, out of the dark, gloomy forest and the ruins of the town, rose another enemy,

a quiet enemy even more terrible than the blacks, for the French to combat. The yellow fever! What Dessalines' cruelty and bravery could not accomplish, what was beyond Henry Christophe's power to achieve, now came about silently, secretly, without cannon thunder or the war cries of the former slaves. From day to day it became clearer that the French army was disintegrating. A wave of death was spreading over Haiti. Both armies were stricken. Outposts faced each other without firing a shot or even attempting to skirmish. A searching debility overpowered the resolution of both sides. Men died like flies. They tossed about burning with pain. They crawled shivering, worn down to the bone, among the ruins of Cap François, and perished there like animals. Many among them committed suicide. Others tried to desert, taking to small boats. The majority, however, stuck to their posts until the unseen enemy had felled them, and they came to rest in the black Haitian earth.

Leclerc sent his wife to Tortuga, the sea-turtle island off Haiti that had once been the haunt of pirates of the Spanish Main. Life there in a planter's villa was comfortable enough, though fear of succumbing to the fever haunted the woman's spirits. For days at a time Pauline lay on the veranda and stared out over the unmoving sea. Slowly, irrevocably she felt her life seeping into a void. Homesickness worked in her with oppressive, sucking tentacles.

The day came when a French warship tacked into the harbor. It brought a wonderful mitigation—Pauline's brother Jérôme, whom the First Consul had entrusted to the care of old Admiral Villeneuve in the hope of making a seaman of him. Pauline had never had much to do with him or with her sister Caroline. These two youngest children she hardly connected with the family's trials during their rising days in France and Italy. But now when she laid eyes on Jérôme, who still had a babyish look about him, a chubby, curly aspect, she began to weep and folded the big boy in her arms. Jérôme had a soft heart. He, too, burst into tears and could no more hold back than his sister. He sniffed heavily and wiped his eyes with fat, ringed fingers.

Jérôme wore a dazzling hussar's uniform, for he thought the simple blue coat of a marine officer was hardly fine enough for the First Consul's cadet brother. The old admiral was disgracefully easy-going with his charge. He had not even protested when Jérôme, against all sense and law, had stopped an English naval vessel in the

Caribbean. The highhanded behavior of Bonaparte the younger might easily have led to disastrous results had there been a sea fight. But the English captain chanced to have a sense of humor rare among his dour kind. He had Jérôme piped aboard his frigate and presented to his officers. Then Jérôme inspected the ship and was later shown into the large cabin used on English ships only on ceremonial occasions. Here the captain had champagne bottles opened, and the assemblage drank the health of the head of the French Republic and to the young guest. Jérôme managed to put up with the inconvenience of drinking warm champagne, and bethought himself to drink the health of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent of Britain. Then he left the English frigate, and the captain made a return call to Jérôme's craft, where more champagne was drunk, more toasts were given.

Jérôme was very proud of this friendly encounter with the English, quite as much so as if he had beaten them in battle. He described the meeting to Pauline down to the smallest detail and praised the tact and dignity of the English. He also praised himself for having the diplomatic ingenuity to better relationships with France's traditional enemy. He showed his sister his sword, a simple weapon without ornamentation. It was kept in a black leather sheath.

"This is the sword Napoleon wore at Marengo," he explained, drawing it forth. "I asked him to give it to me for a birthday present. He laughed and pulled my hair, but just the same I'll bet he's thinking of making me one of his field generals."

Pauline nodded and drew her brother down into a chair. She had a thousand questions to ask him. She wanted to know everything that had happened to the family. She asked about the Signora's health, and whether she was as thrifty as ever. She inquired about Joseph's wealth, about Lucien's collection of Spanish paintings, about Louis who still wandered moodily hither and yon over Europe. She wanted to know about Désirée Clary, who had married General Bernadotte. On and on she chattered, and the hours sped by. She asked about Napoleon, her brother's stepchildren. Finally she got around to Joséphine herself.

"Isn't it frightful?" moaned Pauline. "I have to fritter away my time here, miles and miles away from you and my friends, while that Creole, who really belongs here, has a wonderful time of it in Paris."

"She has lost the rest of her teeth, you know," Jérôme reported

happily. "And she hasn't got any more lovers. She's very cool toward all of us. She even treats the Signora like a servant."

"Will Napoleon never, never get a divorce?" cried Pauline. A horrible suspicion came to her. She jumped up with the excitement of it. "Do you think it's possible, Jérôme," she said, "that I've been exiled on her account? Do you think she's behind it all?"

"Well, I suppose she might be," said Jérôme obligingly.

"I was blind, utterly blind!" shrieked Pauline. "I see it plainly now. So that's her revenge because all her lovers in Milan and Paris couldn't take their eyes off me! She wants me to die."

Jérôme moved uneasily in his chair, unready to go quite so far.

"Yes, she does. It's just like her," said Pauline. "How she would have laughed if the blacks had cut my throat! Or if I'd got fever and perished! But I'm going to live, Jérôme. I'm young yet, and I'm going to live."

During the next few days Pauline showed her brother around the island. Unfortunately there was not a great deal to see on Tortuga. There were springs from which pirates had once drunk, and caves where Captain Morgan had reputedly buried treasure. Together the brother and sister climbed to the highest point on the island and looked across to Haiti. It stretched out as far as the eye could see, mountainous heights, densely forested, above the water. The tropic hell of slavery, cruelty, sickness and death seen from this distant point was idyllic enough, an island paradise afloat on sunny waters.

A ball was given in the planter's house and some few days afterward a party aboard Admiral Villeneuve's flagship. But during the festivities Pauline remained aloof. For all her brave words to Jérôme, she was possessed by the conviction that she was going to die in the West Indies. That, she judged, was the portent of her dream. Ravaged by such bleak notions, her face lost some of its girlishness. The oval of her cheeks lengthened, her eyes darkened, her skin yellowed. Those around her were of the opinion that Madame Leclerc was becoming more attractive. That was the curious thing about Pauline. No matter what the nature of her experience, good or bad, it served to underscore her natural charms. The artist might have his canvas on which to pour out his vital being, the thinker his philosophical system, but in Pauline's case her own body was the prime instrument of her life.

In this body were stored away the results of her experience, and it

reflected them unconsciously. The sweep of her brows, the motions of her shoulders and of her hands were Pauline's counterparts of thought. Whereas her mind remained undeveloped, her body changed expressively. She herself was not unaware of this. For hours she could stand before the mirror and look at her body, this supreme treasure and treasure house of her existence. She enjoyed her own beauty. Like a talented sculptor she traced out the lines of her thighs and hips. She took delight in the lightness of her movements, the supple play of muscle when she swayed back and forth before the glass, strained upward on tiptoe, undulantly lifting her hands to her hair. She was enchanted by the tenderness of her shoulders and ribs.

Never did she tire of watching the play of light and shadow over her body. There were certain poses for which she had a particular preference. She liked to throw her head backward and sideways, letting her mouth fall open a little. Then she would toss her head quickly forward, so that her curls tumbled down over her eyes, giving her face a wantonly ecstatic look. Or she would pull her hair tightly about her face on either side, in such fashion that the maenad of the previous moment appeared an excitingly innocent Eve, in whose eyes lurked a sweet, hot glimmer of as yet untasted paradisiac sin. Then the dark curls made a miraculously contrasting frame of darkness over against the whiteness of her face and the whiteness of her breasts, beneath the flesh of which blue veins shimmered.

Gradually Pauline came to know the rich plastic properties of the female body. She found that it was a much more versatile instrument than its male equivalent, capable of expressing a whole variety of mood and thought according to her will.

Ever-new images of experience were disclosed in Pauline's pliant body. She was a mirror of femininity. That was her talent and her métier. She was like a dark woodland pool, glassy-surfaced, in which the progress of the seasons is beautifully reflected, the snow-glistening winter boughs, the first tender buds of spring, the profound hush of summer noon, the sadness of autumn. And the same pool reflects the daily cycle—the bright sobriety of early day, the gold of evening, the flooding silver of the moonlit night. All the moods, the passing sensations, the dreams and sudden explosive events of the landscape are caught in the pool's surface in a rhythmic progression. The dance

of Nature is shadowed in the pool. So it was with Pauline, unconsciously mirroring the dance of life.

The awkward thing was that this blooming, heathen splendor, the beauty that swallowed up Pauline's small personality, should be condemned to remain unappreciated and unprized on the little island of Tortuga off the northern coast of Haiti. Perhaps it would end in one of the common graves where the victims of yellow fever were thrown to rot. Most of the French army had already come to this sad end. Pauline was desperately afraid. She cried half the night through. Her eyes became circled with black. The light, golden-brown pupils stood out in her wasted face and mirrored her new-found sadness and fear.

It was very hard for Pauline to have to say good-by to her brother Jérôme. He sailed on an American merchantman to pay a visit to the new republic to the north. At first he, too, was pensive and miserable at being separated from his sister. Haiti and Pauline's misery had got on his nerves. But after a few days at sea his low spirits faded away. By the time he arrived at Baltimore, he was again the unimpressionable, elegant and rather ridiculous young blade, a careless and superficial stripling.

The yellow-fever epidemic on Haiti grew more serious from day to day. Because it struck impartially into both camps, military action between the French and the rebellious blacks slowed practically to a standstill. The war tapered off into indeterminate patrol-skirmishing and small raids. Medical knowledge was quite unable to cope with the enemy. It looked as if the Negroes, because of their superior knowledge of the terrain and climate and their superior physical strength and capacity for adaptation, might very well come out on top in this guerrilla warfare. Slowly and imperceptibly the position of the expeditionary force grew worse. General Leclerc was ever more depressed by the critical impasse into which he saw his army drawn. He worked night and day. Suddenly he was overcome by fever. In forty-eight hours he lay dead.

On receiving the news Pauline returned at once to Cap François. Leclerc's fellow officers would not let her look at the body, and so she was spared the sight of death and decomposition. She sat in her room and listened to the rain, the never-ending rain of Haiti. She was in despair. And yet this night she did not cry as she had so many nights before. A numbness had come over her. Her face was stony,

devoid of feeling. She looked down at her little son, who slept on uncaring. She thought about home, and the past flashed before her eyes. She got up and sat down before a mirror. She took her scissors and cut off her long hair, dropping the tresses in her lap. The curls, gleaming in the candlelight, seemed almost like little live serpents against the white stuff of her nightgown. She thought of Moreau, her lover. What was he to her now? She thought about Canouville, who had pleased her so much a few months before. Now he meant nothing to her at all. She thought of the dead husband. A soft shudder shook her shoulders. Spirits of the night hovered about her, the heathen one. She listened closely to the sobbing and sighing, the inexorable trickling of the rain, the groaning of the trees outside her window. The fear that had lurked in her heart disappeared, for she was afraid only so long as she hoped. Now she hoped no more.

In the midst of this stony pain she looked into the mirror. The image that came back to her was wonderfully unfamiliar. With her hair cut short she looked like a victim of typhus. She might have been a woman behind bars in a Paris prison. Indifferently she observed that the last trace of girlishness had been erased from her features. Now there were boldness, knowledge and naked immodesty in the finely chiseled cheekbones and the rounded, unwrinkled forehead. This face was naked, shamelessly naked, especially with the big ears exposed, the ears that Madame de Contades had once ridiculed. It was a hard, hopeless face stamped with finality.

She rose wearily to her feet, carefully holding her shorn hair in her hand. Then she lay down on the bed beside her son. She fell asleep at once, and slept as if made of lead. The next morning she arose feeling exhausted. She sent for Lieutenant Lespinasses to come and lay her hair over the general's face.

The lieutenant looked at her aghast. "Shall I send for a priest?" he asked uneasily.

"No, no priests," she said. "Only my hair on his face." When Lespinasses cleared his throat as if about to object, Pauline cut him off. "The show is over," she said. "We live once. Once is quite enough." Lespinasses left without comment.

That afternoon the coffin was brought aboard the man-o'-war *Swiftsure*. It was draped with the tricolor and the general's hat and sword were bound to the top. When the coffin was lowered to the deck it was honored by a salute of fifteen salvos. Blue smoke belched

from the cannons' mouths and drifted slowly about the masts. The rolling echo came back hollowly from the mountains. Slowly the marines drawn up on deck ruffled the drums.

When evening fell the Haitian mountains showed faintly on the horizon. Pauline looked back from the quarter-deck. She was dressed in black and wore a black veil to hide her cropped hair. The sun had set but still lighted up the western sea. In the strange afterglow the mountains seemed unreal, Haiti an improbable land. Other mountains of cloud towered over the vessel, their thick masses still gleaming with last shafts of light. Little batfish swooped over the darkling sea.

Now I'm traveling through the night, thought Pauline. Through the night that never ends.

It occurred to her, then, that her brother was awaiting her at the end of her voyage across the sea. She imagined him vividly, remembering him as he was in the past. She saw him in Malmaison, wearing the long green velvet coat, heavily embroidered, that had been a present from the city of Lyons. His hair was short and rough, his eyes gray and questioning, there was a tremor of irony about the corners of his finely cut mouth, and his small round hands were folded behind his back. When the damp, warm evening breeze stirred her widow's veil, for a moment Pauline had the notion that Napoleon had reached out to touch her gently.

Then she began to weep, crying as easily as a child. Tears flowed down her cheeks, unrestrained, so effortlessly that she did not grimace. She leaned against the railing and saw the masts and sails of the *Swiftsure* waver through her flood of tears. Under her she felt the quietly trembling body of the ship. She heard the soft hiss and rush of the bow plowing through the sea.

Lespinasses came. "Madame Leclerc," he said, "please try to control yourself!"

Pauline threw back her veil. The wet sea wind played with her hair. "I'm alive," she said, still weeping. "I'm alive again."

II

Camillo

CAVALIERE ANGIOLINI blew his nose. This was not actually necessary. It was simply that during a long diplomatic career he had learned that while he was blowing his nose—a prominent feature of the Cavaliere—he had time to arrange his thoughts. Today he had a very important mission to perform, one requiring an inordinate amount of tact. It was his task to convince a certain young worldling of the advisability of marrying a certain pretty young widow. The immediate *raison d'être* of the marriage was that the Cavaliere needed money badly, and money would certainly come his way if his mediation was successful.

The Cavaliere tucked his silk handkerchief back in his pocket, fingered the last gold piece lurking there and said, "Prince, I pray you grant me your undivided attention."

The young man was a good-looking fellow, almost too handsome, really, for a man. His curls were brown, his round face showed signs of lavish care, his hips were rather womanly. He was looking out of a high window in the Hôtel d'Oigny down into the wide rue de la Grande Batelière. He did not seem to hear a word the Cavaliere was saying. "My God," he exclaimed, "there's that nasty Prince Demidof with his four trotters from Turkestan! He thinks he's going to put me in the shade with them! Could you do anything about picking me up some horses like those, Angiolini?"

"We're not talking about horses, Prince, not today," said the Cavaliere, and sighed with annoyance. "Today, if it pleases Your Highness, we're discussing women, not horses."

"Well, Angiolini," said the Prince, smiling amiably, "you don't have to make such a long face about it. Horses, women and champagne always brace me up, my dear fellow."

"Our relations with women can have a serious side too, you know," the Cavaliere reminded him pedantically.

"I regret to say you're quite right," said the Prince and laughed again.

"Kindly remember, Camillo, that you belong to a very old family, and as part of the Roman aristocracy you do, after all, have very definite responsibilities."

"You rattle on precisely like my dear mother. She talks that way when I run up a little gambling debt, or if I sleep with someone she happens to find a little trying."

"You're incorrigible, my boy," Angiolini said. "Can't you be serious for at least a half-hour at a time?"

"I can try," said the Prince. "For heaven's sake, don't make such a grim face, Angiolini! I must tell you frankly that responsibilities bore me to death. You know very well that's just another name for all sorts of horrid unpleasantness."

"Life isn't always pleasant," said the Cavaliere with much feeling, for he thought of his own debts. "But in this case, my dear fellow, responsibility happens to chime with the happiest thing in your life. How do you like General Leclerc's widow?"

"Pauline? Why, she's charming, delightful. She's the prettiest woman in Paris. But why do you ask me that? I'm after her every day of the week. It's common gossip, isn't it? The birds on the roofs are chirping about it."

"That's quite all right. But has it not occurred to you that a widow has a certain reputation to maintain? And has it not entered your head, my dear fellow, that this particular widow is the sister of the First Consul?"

"Is her brother upset about it? And by the way, Angiolini, in the future would you be so kind as to refrain from calling Pauline a widow? The very word gives me the horrors. I'm very fond of the girl and I don't like to hear her called a widow every other breath."

"The First Consul isn't angry," said Angiolini. "And if you don't like the word 'widow,' why don't you do something about it?"

"What!" said the Prince. "You don't mean . . ."

"I certainly do, Camillo," said Angiolini. "Why don't you marry her?" He breathed heavily with relief, mopping his forehead.

"But don't you see, Angiolini, very plainly nobody's going to marry a woman he's really fond of?" objected the Prince. "A man gets married for practical reasons. After all, I'm not a bourgeois to make an ass of myself out of mere feeling."

"Quite true. Nevertheless, the fact seems to have eluded you that in this case feeling and practicality run parallel. Or am I boring you, Camillo?"

"Not at all. In fact, you interest me for the first time in a very long while. After this business we can have a snack of caviar together, if you wouldn't find it objectionable. But tell me, how in the name of God can I really marry this little Frenchwoman?"

"She's not just any little Frenchwoman," the Cavaliere said. "She's the First Consul's sister, my dear man."

"So she is," said the Prince thoughtfully. "But really! Suppose he loses his political job! What then?"

Angiolini laughed dryly at this. "I beg your pardon, Camillo, but there's no chance of the First Consul losing his job, as you call it. He's the job himself. He's really the King of France."

"I suppose so. But after all, the family comes from some obscure landed gentry, doesn't it?"

"Noblemen are not only born; they are created by action. Someone has to lay the foundation for great families. Must I remind you that the house of Borghese took rank with the houses of Colonna, Orsini and Aldobrandini only after the elevation of Pope Paul V to the throne of St. Peter?"

"Really! And is there a house of Bonaparte?" asked the Prince in genuine amazement.

"There's a Bonaparte dynasty," said the Cavaliere. "Our Holy Father in Rome, Pope Pius VII, has set his heart on having the ties between this dynasty and the Papal State as intimate and strong as possible."

"I scarcely understand that," Camillo murmured. "After all, this Bonaparte is a revolutionary. I don't have to read *Candide* to know that."

"So you say," said Angiolini and shrugged his shoulders. "Our Holy Mother, the Roman Catholic Church, must live, my dear Prince. She must even suffer revolutionists, if revolution happens to be the order of the day. Furthermore, you must remember that the First Consul restored the Catholic faith in France when he signed the Concordat with the Vatican."

"All this is your own theory."

"Cardinals Consalvi and Caprara hold the same opinions, my dear Camillo," Angiolini corrected him. "Not only they, but His Holiness

as well. His Holiness would like to see the house of Borghese march down a new road to greatness. Finally, Joseph and Lucien Bonaparte also favor the marriage. Indeed, the First Consul himself would unquestionably like to see you married to his sister."

"It's a plot," said the Prince. "A plot by Rome and Paris to hang chains on me."

"But what a pleasing plot!" The Cavaliere grinned. "Do you find the prospect so distressing, Your Highness?"

"No, not at all," the Prince admitted. He was really flattered to find himself the central figure in an international cabal. "But what does dear Pauline say to all this?"

"We're going to sound out Pauline as soon as we have your approval, Prince."

The Prince mulled it over, staring down into the rue de la Grande Batelière. In his mind's eye he saw Pauline very clearly, her short dark hair, her light eyes, her finely modeled arms and shoulders dead-white against her mourning clothes. He thought about the Palazzo Borghese in Rome, the immense columned chambers in seventeenth-century baroque, the many suites. There, eventually, he would have to return.

He wheeled about to face Angiolini and said, "I'll speak to Pauline myself."

"So much the better," said Angiolini. He bowed, smiling with satisfaction.

Pauline was very busy. A short while before she had bought the Hôtel Charost from the heirs of the late Duke of Béthune-Charost. It was a large house in the rue du Faubourg de Saint-Honoré. Two lodges guarded the courtyard entrance with its finely wrought iron gate. Set back from the street, the house was a simple, dignified structure, its façade having a portico of eight Doric columns. Behind, there was a long garden, the back gates of which opened into the Champs Elysées.

This beautiful home had cost Pauline some four hundred thousand francs out of her husband's bequest of nearly three million. She had had everything done over. The silken hangings in the style of the past century, the delicately curved furniture, the crystal candelabra and the flowered carpets had vanished. The house had become much simpler. Straight lines had replaced rococo curves. The walls were

now monochrome. The wide, dark doors were decorated with bronze laurel wreaths, and at the bottom of the main staircase slept two sphinxes.

The establishment was now more like a temple than a home. The floors of the main hall were covered with black marble tile which darkly reflected the lights placed on heavy bronze standards. Here in the hall was stationed the giant mulatto, Hercules, dressed in gold-braided livery, a turban about his head and a staff in his hand. His dress had been suggested partly by the costume of Napoleon's mameluke, Rustan.

Women's laughter issued from the upper floor. There was a sweet, delicate fragrance in the air, vaguely like the odor of church incense. The goddess of the temple was stretched on a chaise longue in the boudoir. She had thrown a light mantle over her shoulders. Little Dermide sat at her feet and was playing with a Siamese cat. Now and then Pauline leaned down to stroke the cat with her finger tips. Her sisters, Elise and young Caroline, sat in red upholstered chairs.

Caroline had recently married General Murat. This young Bonaparte was blonde, like Jérôme. Her interesting head, strikingly like Napoleon's, was rather too large and heavy for her slender body. She lacked Pauline's unusual beauty, but she was attractive, nevertheless, and bright with youth. Caroline was easily the most intelligent and ambitious of the three Bonaparte girls.

At the moment Pauline was much taken up with the business of trying on some dresses brought for her inspection by the *couturiers* Charbonnier and Leroy.

"What are they saying about my marriage in Paris?" she asked Charbonnier, who was folding some garments and putting them away.

Charbonnier flushed and murmured, "They say that the Prince has an income of two million francs a year."

"That's typical of Paris, isn't it, to say something like that?" said Pauline, smiling. "But what do they say about my becoming a princess?"

Elise poked Caroline in the ribs and sniggered to herself.

"The ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain can't quite get used to it, Your Highness," said Leroy. "Everyone wanted the Prince for herself, you know."

"I'd like to show you something, Messieurs," said Pauline. She rummaged under the cushions and drew out an old leather case with

the mark of two golden keys impressed in the cover. Inside, a large tear-shaped pearl on a fine gold chain lay on blue velvet. Slowly Pauline drew forth the pearl, admiring it. She dipped her head almost reverently as she put it about her throat. The pearl rested in the soft depression between her breasts. Her mantle had fallen away from her shoulders.

"It's unique," said Charbonnier. "We should make a gown to fit the pearl . . . something severely simple that would be a suitable background for it."

Leroy was quite speechless and stood nodding. Elise paled with envy, and Caroline moved nervously about on her chair.

"It's the Borghese pearl," said Pauline. She swerved about to look at herself in the mirror. "Philip IV of Spain gave it to the Pope, who in turn gave it to Prince Antonio, the first of the Borghese. But none of the Borghese princesses has ever worn it."

"And why not?" inquired Caroline.

"Oh, just on account of an old story," said Pauline.

"A story?"

"An old legend," said Pauline absently. "It seems that Cortez stole the pearl from a Mexican emperor and presented it to the King of Spain. Several Queens wore it and treasured it as their finest possession. But my Camillo says that they all died young. There's a curse on the jewel, the story says. When King Philip IV's wife died, he remembered the legend and presented the pearl to the Pope, thinking he could exorcise the evil spirit."

"They say that pearls mean tears," muttered Leroy. "But everything depends on who's wearing them, I'd think."

"The pearl suits me," said Pauline. There was an undertone of defiance in her words. "I'm going to wear it, anyway."

Outside the late summer rain thrashed in the thick crowns of the trees in the park of Malmaison. The swans in the little pond hid their heads under their wings and floated motionless like white boats. In the salon of Napoleon's country estate Joséphine was filling her husband's coffee cup. She sweetened it with two teaspoonfuls of sugar, stirred and handed it to him. The First Consul gulped it down red-hot. His cheeks glowed and he turned with animation to Pauline, who was standing before him.

"Madame, I'm completely satisfied with your conduct," he an-

nounced. "On Haiti you proved that you had character and knew how to show yourself worthy of me and the Republic in a foreign land. As you know, I deeply regret the loss of General Leclerc. He was my right hand. And now that you're going to Rome, I want you to try to win the city over. See to it that you are not amused in public by any of the unfamiliar customs, no matter how odd they may strike you. Don't make invidious comparisons with Paris. And above all, try to ingratiate yourself with the Pope. He's a fine man. I'm fond of him."

The Consul placed his cup on the table. Then he turned to lecture the Prince, who was standing beside Pauline. "Be assured, brother, that I'll do what I can for you and your family. I have a military career in view for you. Just now, of course, it's too early to come to any decision in the matter. There are great changes brewing in France."

He glanced quickly at Madame de Rémusat, his wife's reader, and caught her in the act of pricking up her ears. She hastily averted her head. Pauline shivered. It made her miserable to think that she had to leave Paris.

"You won't have to stay there too long, Pauline," Napoleon continued, correctly reading her face. "But right now you must go to Rome. Forget the past. Remember that you are growing older and must find your happiness in marriage."

Pauline choked and stared at her brother. He looked into her eyes and saw that they were filled with tears. He hated to see women weep, even while he often gave way to a sadistic weakness for plaguing them.

"You're still a good-looking woman, Pauline," he said bluntly, measuring her from top to toe. "I forbid you to have any affairs. Especially in Rome. By the way, who is Captain Canouville?"

"Canouville!" Pauline blushed.

"Don't forget," said Napoleon, examining her critically, "that I have a minister of police at my disposal."

"Fouché is a monster!" said Pauline angrily.

"That's an excellent definition," Napoleon retorted. "An indispensable monster. But kiss me now, Pauline. The carriage is waiting. *Au 'voir*, Pauline." He kissed her quickly and gave the Prince his hand.

The young couple journeyed to Italy. Rain pelted against the curtains. The leather upholstery of the old coach was damp and cold. It was like riding along with a total stranger, being with Prince Camillo. He talked constantly of his relatives, of aunts and uncles that interested Pauline not the slightest. She answered in monosyllables and finally he interpreted her indifference as fatigue. Solicitously he put a pillow under her head and a plaid blanket over her knees. She pretended to sleep. After a time she cautiously opened one eye and, seeing it was safe to do so, began to look sadly at the landscape through which they were rolling. The leather girths squeaked, and the horses' breath labored as they jogged on. Up on the driver's seat the coachmen conversed in Italian. They were moving through long lines of wind-tossed poplars. Drizzling clouds drifted over the little fields. The cows stood motionless and downcast in the endless gray and wet, their flanks black and dripping with rain.

On his side of the seat the Prince had fallen fast asleep. His mouth, very full-lipped, hung wide open. His hat had slipped and so released his rebellious curls. There was something faunlike about his full cheeks, his fat chest, his fleshy shoulders.

At first Pauline had been rather attracted to the peculiar physical charms of the Prince, his curls, his sensual lips, his fleshiness. What a difference between him and the sharp-featured, hard-boiled men she had known! At the beginning Pauline had thought Camillo's fullness and softness a mark of aristocracy. She had found his lassitude and yielding rather interesting. This quality, she noticed, showed not only in the shape of his body, but in all his gestures and in all his manner of speech.

Then she had made the awful discovery that the Prince's lassitude was of such acute form as to render him, in cold fact, impotent. The Prince had not seized her like Leclerc or Moreau, the way soldiers storm a fortress. To her astonishment she found that it was she who now had to take the amatory initiative. At first she attributed this reversal of form to his delicacy of feeling. But her beauty, she found, simply was not enough to set him adequately on fire. This she took as a personal insult. She was horribly let down. Disagreeable scenes followed. Camillo had almost burst into tears. His full round face had become comically long and distressed. Finally he had run out of the room in sheer confusion.

Now Pauline bent over Camillo and scrutinized him carefully. My

God, she thought, I've gone and married a eunuch! She felt herself betrayed.

Evidently the vindictive little Laurette Permon had been right when she had said, "Giving yourself to Prince Borghese is about the same as sitting on a cold stove." This witticism of sorts Caroline had brought to Pauline's notice. But where did Laurette ever find out that the Prince was not a man? Then Pauline remembered that it was not so long ago that Laurette had married her onetime sweetheart, Junot, and he was the one, no doubt, who had been talking out of school. Perhaps he had even told Laurette how they had sported years ago, and made fun of it.

Pauline felt the hot blood rush to her cheeks and tickle the roots of her hair. Everybody must know about her laughable situation—Junot, Murat, Rapp, Duroc, Berthier. And, of course, her brother Napoleon. That was why he had spoken so severely to her, knowing perfectly well that the provocation to step over the traces would be well nigh beyond quelling. The women must all know it, too. Joséphine, for instance, and that miserable Madame de Rémusat with her greedy little eyes. It must be the talk of Paris. No doubt Talleyrand was making bons mots out of it for salon society. Fouché would have duly added the item of impotence to the Prince's already amusing dossier. Even he, that disgusting Jacobin relic, would be tittering at her plight. And that was why he had been looking up Canouville, knowing very well that she might fall by the wayside. Everybody took it for granted.

And they're right, thought Pauline grimly; they haven't missed by a hair. She leaned back against the cold leather. The cushion was uncomfortably mussed under her head. An image of Canouville came to her mind. She saw his big hooknose, his lively gray eyes. "There's the man for me," she mumbled to herself, "not this eunuch they've bedded me with."

Again she sized up the Prince. He was sleeping so peacefully that Pauline was enraged. He slept while she suffered! Savagely she shook him by the shoulder. His curly head waggled on its fat stem like the stuffed head of a punchinello.

"What is it? What is it?" The Prince awoke in a fuddle of horror. He looked at Pauline with disbelieving eyes.

"Talk to me, amuse me," she commanded. She stamped her foot.

"You sleep all night like a log and are good for exactly nothing. Do you have to sleep daytimes, too?"

"My dear little Pauline," said the Prince apprehensively.

"Don't be an ass!" said his wife. "I'm not your Pauline and never will be." She was in a real temper and her light eyes glowed hot.

"Please, now, please don't be angry," the Prince begged. The coachmen above had suddenly stopped their chatter and were taking it all in.

"You've shamed me," Pauline muttered. "You've made me the laughingstock of Paris. Everybody thinks I'm a grand joke. Not to mention you, of course."

"But why, angel, why?" The Prince turned red as a beet. "It's not my fault," he sulked.

"Then why did you have to marry me?" said Pauline harshly.

"Angiolini said that we would just suit each other," the Prince told her abjectly.

"Good God, don't you have any mind of your own at all? Do you mean to say you married me just because my brothers and Angiolini put you up to it!"

"No, it wasn't that," he said. "I loved you."

"Loved? Then you've stopped already?"

"I love you more than ever," he said and kissed her hand, which unwillingly enough she let him hang onto like a drowning man.

"Then love me like a man. Love me the way Leclerc did."

The Prince quivered. "When we're in Rome, it may be different," he said wretchedly. "Everything will be so much better there. There's not so much excitement. In our own house we'll have peace and quiet. Besides, I'll have some sulphur water sent down from the Campagna."

"Sulphur water!" Pauline snorted. "If Canouville ever heard that one he'd burst a blood vessel laughing. Let me tell you a little something, Camillo. I know plenty of men who don't need any sulphur water."

"What's that you say, little kitten?" inquired the Prince foolishly.

"Never mind. Tell me about the Palazzo Borghese and the Villa Borghese," she said.

The Prince straightened up and began eagerly to tell her all about his house in Rome. Pauline was half appeased. She imagined herself

parading through the magnificent suite she planned to make all her own.

For a while it seemed as if the marriage would actually improve in Rome. Pauline was much impressed by the enormous size of the Palazzo Borghese. The many stories, packed with rooms, abashed her. She was awed by the centuries-long accumulation of treasures, the cool marble statues, the Renaissance and baroque paintings, the mosaics, tapestries, countless bronzes. Everything about the immense establishment had a subdued and ancient tone. The innumerable clocks struck the hours with a particular buzzing, whirring hollowness, echoing old, old days. The servants in their gold-trimmed uniforms moved about on tiptoe, or stood rigid against the walls during mealtimes, like so many statues.

And all about was the Holy City itself. It was now in actuality a city of the soul, as Lord Byron was to call it a decade later. Pauline appreciated it from the start. She loved to look down on it from the Monte Pincio. Spread out below her were the tall poplars of the Piazza del Popolo, with the slender obelisk and the four pensive sphinxes at the column's foot. Beyond, on the other side of the Tiber, was the cupola of St. Peter's. Far over to the left rose Capitoline Hill, topped by the Palace of the Senate.

A walk through the city brought endless surprises. There was the double stairway, beautifully curved, over the Piazza di Spagna, where peasants from the outskirts offered fruits and vegetables for sale. There, again, was the slowly sinking Pantheon, with its magnificently contrived inner space, the powerful circle of the Flavian Amphitheater, all overgrown with vines and ivy. And everywhere were huge palaces, virtual fortresses, reached mostly by narrow alleyways. They were built of large blocks of tufa and granite, the lower-story windows artistically latticed. Everywhere, too, were fountains and the rush and plash of flowing water, the living element of the monumental city. The Forum was a wilderness of bushes and weeds growing out of ruins of column and tier. From it could be seen the Palatine Hill, dominated by a single, giant pine that looked somberly off at the neighboring Aventine, where, in the past, enemy campfires had so often glowed fearsomely by night.

Above this sprawling city there lay characteristically a white, motionless overcast, which itself seemed to be fashioned of dull stone.

It hung over the sea of houses, over ruins and medieval walls, over heavy arches beneath which huddled a poverty-stricken people. It stretched far over the waste of the Campagna, through which the swift Tiber ran, over stiff cemetery cypresses, gray viaducts, vast structures of antiquity now cracked asunder. And at the very rim of its great gray dome the sky melted into bluish mountain peaks. Their half-circle formed a second outer wall hemming in the city.

Such was Rome, city of the past, as yet undisturbed by the commotion of a modern metropolis. It was the city of the Catholic Church and the Pope. On arrival Pauline's first important step was to visit the Vatican. She found it a high-ceilinged palace, surprisingly uniform seen from the outside, but a maze within. Pauline liked the Pope. He looked rather careworn. His features were finely cut, though not very strongly pronounced; his narrow head was youthful, almost a boy's head. Under abrupt, dark brows his gaze was melancholy, sensitive. He spoke to Pauline with soft diffidence, making shy gestures. The Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Consalvi, stood guard beside the Pope's chair. His wise black eyes clung thoughtfully to Pauline. Everything about his manner suggested strength and energy under the control of a steel will.

In confusion Pauline knelt and bowed over the delicate ringed hand that the Pope offered her to kiss. "Welcome, my daughter," he said, "welcome to Rome!" His words had the ring of more than ordinary greeting. Pauline felt in them a promise that the Pope had a place for her in his heart. She was not mistaken. He returned her liking from the start. Her beauty was more striking than ever as she stood humbly before him, head bent, wearing a plain dress and a severe black lace veil over her curls. She looked more attractive than in her fashionable Parisian clothes. She pleased the Pope especially because, like so many of his predecessors on the throne of St. Peter, he was a connoisseur of classical art. To him it seemed as if one of the innumerable statues that decorated the corridors of his palace had suddenly appeared in the flesh before him—but one with a Catholic Christian soul, as he saw Pauline.

Cardinal Consalvi could not keep a smile from crossing his lips. He was touched by the humanity and naïveté of the Pope, by his Christian simplicity when he presented the beautiful newcomer to Rome with a rosary and a costly cameo. Consalvi was a man of the world and knew his fellows well. As an experienced diplomat he was

more readily inclined to see the weaknesses of human nature than its strong points. He at once discerned the heathen and the sensual in Pauline. He was not deceived by her assumed humility. She reminded him strongly of her brother, the First Consul, with whom he had made terms legalizing the re-establishment of the Catholic confession in France. He observed a similar tension in Pauline's face, a torment of impatience behind the eyes. He recalled reports about her from his agents in Paris. Borghese's impotence was well known to him. Yes, he thought to himself, here we have a volcano of a woman. Sooner or later she will break loose. It's a good thing her Uncle Fesch is on hand to keep her on the right path. But on the whole Consalvi behaved very prettily toward Pauline. He gave her to understand that he accepted her as unofficial representative of France.

The dignity forced on her by Consalvi and Napoleon, a status that she saw reflected in the deference of all those with whom she came in contact, the peculiarly muffled reserve of papal Rome and, finally, the many new impressions flooding in on her, all combined to reconcile her with her husband Camillo. That is, for a time. Spring had come again, the best season in Rome. The tenderness of this time of new birth, the rude earthiness of the air, the still luminescence of the atmosphere were qualities that worked poignantly to counteract grave palaces and ancient ruins and the stiff forms of pine and cypress.

Pauline was drawn at once to the garden of the Villa Borghese on Monte Pincio. There she discovered the first violets, following shortly after narcissus. Then the oleander buds burst open. And suddenly, after an April rain, the garden changed magically into a wilderness of the most delicate green, greenest at the shore of the pond where nightingales sang in the long slow twilights. Pauline, her little son beside her, would have the carriage stopped so she might listen to the soft stirrings of the oncoming night. There would be a murmur of foliage, the faint whir of a bird's flight, a tiny splashing in the pond. Then she would shiver and draw her child closer to her. She had been told that the place was not entirely safe at night—under a faint, unholy spell, so it was said. Not far away was the grave of Nero, antichrist, and in this very garden the Empress Messalina had been put to death by the Praetorian Guard at her husband's command.

After such excursions Pauline was happy to be home safe and sound within four walls. But here in the Palazzo Borghese, she felt

uneasy once the novelty had worn off. Everything was built on too large a scale for her tastes. The palace was alien to her through and through. She was dwarfed by the dining room with its richly painted ceiling and dull gold border. The candles were never numerous enough to brighten it into cheerfulness. From the walls imposing prelates, harsh of face, great gentlemen in perukes, highborn ladies in elaborate costumes looked down at her. Their gaze, it seemed to the new Princess Borghese, bespoke discreet astonishment and rebuke. When she spoke, her words rang too loudly, and if she ventured a laugh, so strange it sounded that it died away in her throat. The pictures on the walls seemed impatient to be relieved of her presence, so they could converse with one another in their proper antique style.

Camillo, too, was visibly affected by the palace atmosphere. Overnight the young worldling grew reticent and very much on his good behavior. The old Princess, Pauline's mother-in-law, usually sat mute as a stone through the long dinners. Now and then, however, she would condescend to break her silence to talk about long-forgotten relatives and friends. In a soft quaver she would ramble on about the lovely Princess Massimi, and about Marie-Antoinette, Queen of France, as if they were still alive.

"I'll have to write to her," she would say, each word the thin tinkle of a little bell. "I'll have to find out whether she likes Le Petit Trianon. She's such a charming elegant creature." But suddenly she would break off, sigh, look closely at Pauline—and then be lost in the maunderings of dotage.

Pauline was most comfortable when alone in her bedroom, which she had decorated according to her own taste. The furniture was imported from Paris, made from highly polished cherry wood inlaid with gold laurel leaves. The chairs and the chaise longue were upholstered in red rep. On the walls she hung pictures of her brothers done by the artist David. In subject and execution they were strikingly different from the images in the dining room, of another breed and mentality altogether. Napoleon, stormy, hair swept back, chin jutting, his eyes warm and gray, had no counterpart among the Borgheses. Nor did Joseph—a pleasant-looking, soft, gentlemanly sort of fellow with a nose too long for critical standards—fit in any better, and even less Lucien of the high forehead. All three were pulsing with

life, obviously part and parcel of the times, unposed, in strong contrast to the stuffed marionettes downstairs in the dining room.

I'll never, never get used to this place, Pauline assured herself more than once. She gazed into the many mirrors of the room. She was able to convince herself that a trait peculiar to papal princes of the Borghese family had become noticeable in her own face, a sort of detachment, a chill and inborn consciousness of prerogative derived less from individual achievement than from the aggregate of a dynasty.

Pauline's heart beat hard as she saw herself mirrored. I need life, she whispered, and I don't know where or how to find it.

As once on the island of Tortuga, now in the great treasure chest of the Palazzo Borghese it seemed as if her life were wasting quietly away. Like the whole city of Rome, the palace seemed filled with things of the past, with empty dreams and vague faces vaguely remembered. It was like a gigantic tomb, a mausoleum, in which the living were trapped and had best die. She imagined she could hear the unceasing trickle of time's sands, the mysterious, inexorably continuous flow of time, the mute succession of unlived and unfruitful moments, each one costly, each one never to be regained, and in their totality making up her life. Slowly, steadily, it seemed, her sands were running out. And no one cared. Straining every nerve, she would listen. Nothing but a dead weight of silence. Not even a ghost tiptoed through this Roman home, not a beam cracked, not a stair creaked. An ultimate silence, heavy as lead, filled the building. Once they, whoever they were, had been. Now they were gone, every last whisper and echo of them.

The candles burned straight and bright, quite without flicker. Pauline thrust the heavy window draperies aside and opened the window. Outside, in the mildness of the early spring night, the city lay vast about her. A thin moon hung in the sky. She saw the heavy black columns of the palace, in the mute fixity of that which is historically fulfilled and done. A foul odor from the Tiber was borne to her on the night breeze. Over there, rising sharply, was the monument of an emperor. Farther, like a shadow in the weak light, was the dim curve of St. Peter's. Everything was dumb. No laughter in the streets, no conversation, no singing. Not even the tread of a lonely man.

A heart-rending desire for Paris came over Pauline. She was sick in soul from the need of laughter, sweet whisperings, caressing words.

To quench her pain, to do something, no matter what, she ripped open a drawer. The first object to meet her eyes was a diary bound in red leather. A portent, surely. She sat down and wrote. The pen scratched noisily on the paper. Sometimes she stopped and looked into emptiness, seeing there Canouville, his great bow of nose and his lively, bold, gray eyes.

My Jules, she wrote, *where are you now? Are you still in Haiti? I don't know. I don't even know where to address this letter. I know only that I need you and would rest in your arms. I have married the Prince Borghese. He is a good man, but he bores me to tears. It is only you I love. I am in Rome. You will find me in the Palazzo Borghese. Wherever you are, my love, come to me at once. Save me. I am yours. . . . Pauline.*

She straightened up suddenly from her letter. Camillo stood in the door. He wore a long dressing gown with birds of paradise interwoven into the cloth. He stood looking at his wife, a man all black curls, fleshy cheeks, full red lips.

"I'd like to have your company this evening, my dear," he said.

"Why?" Pauline asked.

Camillo flushed. "You're still my wife," he stammered.

She stared back at him. Impatiently she got up, then threw herself into another chair. "Perhaps I am," she said, "but no one would ever believe it."

"Very well, Pauline," he said. Nervously he ran his hand through his curls. "Please don't make any scenes." In his indecision his eye fell on his wife's letter. He picked it up idly.

"I forbid you to read that, Camillo," said Pauline breathlessly.

"No, you don't."

Pauline shrugged her shoulders. "Do as you want," she said harshly. "I only want to spare you more unpleasantness."

Pinching his brows together Camillo read the letter through. He read with overconcentration, like a child who has barely learned the alphabet. His full face grew tearful. Pauline watched him narrowly.

"Adulteress!" he said at last. "Who is this Jules?"

"I need a man," Pauline retorted. She looked at Camillo with profound contempt.

"You have me," he said.

She laughed. "Let's drop the subject," she said. "It's humiliating for you and painful for me."

"What am I going to do!" Camillo groaned. "Complain to the Rota about you? But that's impossible. I'm caught, I'm stuck. You're bad—you're rotten to the core!"

"I'm not bad; I'm not good," she said. "I just want to live. I hate this palace and your ancestors on the walls. It's like a tomb. I hate the way your mother drools and drones on about things that don't interest me. The whole lot of you bore me. I want to live. Do you understand that?"

"Is that what you call living?" he said.

"Perhaps it's not all of life," said Pauline. "But it's necessary to me."

"Then why did you ever marry me?" he asked, hiding his face in his hands.

"How was I to know you were crippled?" she said. "But now I'll tell you the truth. I'd rather be the widow of General Leclerc with an income of twenty thousand livres than the Princess Borghese. You knew what I was like. You knew that I live on love and must give myself to somebody I love. The question really is, Why did you marry me?"

"Because I loved you," Camillo rejoined thickly.

"Camillo, don't be an ass," Pauline objected. "You married me on my brother's account—to patch up friendly relations between the Pope and France. Am I right?"

"Angiolino convinced me. And besides, Cardinal Consalvi was delighted with the idea. The Pope himself favored it. But I loved you too."

"You loved me too!" Pauline mimicked in a squeak. "You and your 'toos' are priceless. He loves me too, he says! Look here, Camillo. This Jules you think so little of would marry me if I were the castoff mistress of a brother officer. He'd marry me if I were earning my bread whoring at the Palais Royal. My dear Camillo, he loves me."

With an effort Pauline's husband gathered himself together to go. "I forbid you to talk about 'your Jules,' as you call him," he said. "And I forbid you to use the word 'whore' in my house."

"Get on, man, get out with you," said Pauline. "I'm no whore. When I've given my body I've never had a sou to show for it. That is, I never had before I met you. Then what did I get for my pains? This palace, for one thing. I got a crown, didn't I? I got the Bor-

ghese jewels and the pearl of Cortez. Now, don't you find my drabbing a rather expensive business, Camillo? Speak up! Why, the prettiest whore in Paris wouldn't cost you more than two hundred francs at the outside. So my Moreau told me. If anyone knows, he does."

"You're vile," he whispered, actually shocked for once. "You're evil."

"Evil?" Pauline was now shouting at her husband in full voice. "Do you mean by that that I refuse to demean myself by listening to your moral bleatings? You sheep, look at me!"

"No, no, I won't listen," Camillo said, strangled. "You're beautiful. I see it. I admit it. But you're bad. You're corrupt to the marrow of your bones. You're an atheist."

"Yes, yes, of course I'm a heathen," said Pauline ecstatically. Her pupils, ringed round with light, glittered as she bit off her words. "I'm just that, Camillo my husband, and it pleases me. I've sat for hours before this mirror and just looked at myself. I know just how my body is, my shoulders, my arms. I know the way my hair falls over my shoulders. Everything about me is heathen. I am that. And nothing else. I never shall be anything else."

"What are you raving about?" Camillo was afraid. "You must be out of your mind."

"Not out of my mind. You don't seem able to grasp a thing, Camillo, you poor fellow. Here you are, embedded in this Catholic city, suckled in the arms of the Pope. You're a Christian, if you like. But there's another kind of people. Surely you must know. Their traces are all around you. The stones from their ruins have gone into this very palace. You Romans, who aren't really Romans at all, what do you know! Who are you to judge, you capons with your squeaking and tweaking and ferreting around? But I don't come from your breed, sir. Not I nor my brothers. We're of a different kind from yours. How can I be anything in this miserable, Christ-ridden world!"

"That's blasphemy," said Camillo. He was genuinely frightened, pale with fear of retribution from on high. Helplessly he looked over his shoulder. The room was pregnant with silence. The walls listened, the pictures of the Bonapartes, the furniture, the broad bed. The old house listened. Heavily Camillo reached for the doorknob.

He was like an old man when he said, "We're all done, Pauline. Tomorrow I'm leaving for Naples."

She twisted her face into a smile. "You're worried about your soul," she said quietly. "Is that it?"

"I'm worried about my position, my reputation, my family," he said. "And I'm worried about my soul too."

"There it goes again," she said. "That dreadful 'too.' Do you mean that everything is up between us?"

"I'm not giving you up," said Camillo. Then he made a strange move. He kneeled down and kissed her bare knees. His voice quivered with tears. "Pauline, Pauline," he whispered, "you're so lovely. Why are you so lovely even when you're saying such terrible things?"

She let him have his way, as lifelessly as the temple image allows the kisses of its devotees. Her eyes looked over his bowed head into nothing; her small hand played with his thick curls. Softly she said, "Poor fellow! There's no sense in making you miserable."

"Good night, Pauline. I'm not giving up all hope."

"Good night, Camillo."

The door closed behind him. She heard his steps retreat and die away, dragging steps. She slid into bed and drew the covers over her. The heavy silk crackled, the linen was cool. She shivered and thought of Canouville. She sighed, moaned, burrowed her curly head into the pillow and fell asleep.

All alone, down the dark, lofty staircase the Prince wandered toward his own apartment. A single lamp, upheld by a bronze dolphin, cast a dim light on the tapestries. Their faded colors portrayed images from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Despite his heavy heart the Prince paused to examine them. He had known and loved them since childhood. There were Philemon and Baucis, goodwife and goodman. There was Daphne in flight and already half changed into laurel, and the youth Phaeton in his careening sun car. If I could only change myself! the Prince thought. For a time he was lost in reverie. Wearily he sighed, shrugged his shoulders, and disappeared into his bedroom.

The Prince was in Naples and Pauline was glad to be rid of him. The depressing quarrels which never came to anything decisive were beginning to affect her nerves. Now that she was alone her life altered radically. She took her meals in her own room, on the pretext of not being well. The old Princess felt mildly injured, but hence-

forth, like it or not, she sat alone in her massive dining room, a fine, gray-haired, old woman. In the candlelight she directed her monologues on Marie-Antoinette to her steward, who constantly bowed his silent assent to the familiar words.

A new figure now entered Pauline's life, Canova, foremost sculptor in Rome. He was a slender, elegant man, rather aging, gray, fine-featured. Unless he was seen at work it was impossible to believe that such a slight man could produce his impressive monuments and statues. But when he was face to face with his model and had chisel in hand his elegant manner fell away and was replaced by the look of a peasant, hard, willful, measuring. Like almost all the great artists of the period, Canova did not stem from the aristocracy, but from a low bourgeois level. Yet his struggle for fame had not been difficult. His genius was too obvious and his work accorded too closely, in a particularly happy and dignified way, with the ruling spirit of the times.

Canova loved antiquity and learned from it. He was interested less in Greek originals, however, than in their Hellenistic and Roman copies. This was fortunate, if not for the immortality of his work, at least for the development of his limited personality. Implacable severity and simplicity were far beyond the capacity of Canova and his restless contemporaries. The qualities that appealed were the imperial gesture, a late Grecian delicacy of limb, a softness of body and face, the superficial, the easily comprehended, the playful, the outer aspect of an idealized butter-smooth existence. The later epochs of antiquity provided an abundance of this genial inspiration.

Making excellent use of his sources, Canova invested his subjects' naked limbs with sweet sentiment, tender melancholy, an evanescent sensuality. One has only to look at his "Genius of Death" in St. Peter's to understand his appeal. The splendid young man representing death has a body that is feather-light. His shoulders are round and smooth, his wings gently folded, his lovely face merely shaded by grief. It was this lack of finality, the factor most potent in the work of the ancient masters, that endeared Canova to his contemporaries and ensured him a stream of commissions from the princes of the world and of the Church.

And yet Canova was artist enough to entertain a hidden bitterness. He did not direct it against the times. Rather it was himself whom he blamed for his weakness. He deeply regretted not having a full-

ness of spirit to translate into stone. That sunny afternoon when the Princess Borghese first walked into his atelier on the strada San Giacomo he felt his frustration more keenly than usual. Pauline felt very much at home in Canova's workshop. It was a high, roomy place. Antique reliefs hung on the walls and there, too, was Dante's mask, a grim face with a great nose and curled lips. Students and assistants were busily at work on the master's statue of Luna. They stole curious glances at Canova and Pauline.

In the middle of the studio was a heavy round table with claw feet. The master took a carafe of cut glass and poured himself and his guest a drink of dark wine, almost as thick as oil. Pauline held her drink up to the light. It was a deep ruby red.

"To beauty, Princess!" said Canova and raised his glass.

"A heavy wine, isn't it?" she said.

"It's Monte Vesuvio," said Canova, smiling. "The grapes are grown on the slopes of a volcano."

"You have some wonderful things here, Master Canova," said Pauline. She indicated the "Luna" and a group called "The Three Graces." "How beautiful they are!"

Canova looked carefully at the Princess. He measured the curve of her forehead, firmly modeled and yet tender. He noted the full oval of her cheeks, the round chin, the masterful arch of the brows. Under her thin dress he saw her body, revealed by the folds and drapery of her garments. He drew in a deep breath. "Yes, they are beautiful," he said thoughtfully. "And yet I have never done what I hoped for."

"What is it you want to do?"

"I make half-gods," he said wryly. "I deal in Graces and Muses and the like. But never the great gods. No Jupiter. No Venus."

Pauline smiled brightly. "Why not?" she asked.

"I haven't the courage. Perhaps it is because I lack the inspiration. I have no model to work from. By the way, are you acquainted with the Vatican collection, Princess?"

"No," she admitted. "But I would like to see it."

"Allow me to show it to you."

The next day he escorted Pauline through the endless corridors of the Vatican. The vaulted ceilings of the arcades were covered with the time-faded frescoes of Raphael, Giulio Romano and Pellegrino da Modena. They represented the Scriptures, each episode of the

great Christian story from the creation of light by God with finger uplifted to the Last Supper. All the magic events at work in the Christian soul, events hopelessly remote in these Napoleonic times, were depicted. And beneath the frescoes images of stone were arranged, clear, oversize portrayals from another world and another belief.

Near the wall in the semidarkness Dionysos smiled, broad-lipped, almost womanly, his great wine-fevered head crowned with a wreath of ivy. They saw the Zeus of Otricoli, long curls framing the face. They saw the sun-god Apollo. They saw, too, the head of Pallas, pensive and reserved, alight with inner repose, fashioned with the mysterious sense of form that vanished with the ancients. There were also gods and heroes, images of Roman emperors and empresses, of tyrants, hetaerae and amorini. Fauns and satyrs crowded together, bowed caryatids, gladiators with wild faces and flared nostrils, slim charioteers in straight togas.

Pauline was bewildered by so much art. Here the body was everything, expressed everything there was to say. The dimples in the shimmering marble limbs of Hera were more meaningful than the expression of the clear cold face.

Not until they came to the sculpture of the Romans did Pauline sense a faint relationship with her own world. At least these men and women were human beings. Life had carved folds into the corners of the mouths that the sculptor faithfully reproduced. Experience had drained the faces of belief, curled the lips into cynicism. It seemed strange that the emperors had not objected to such realistic portraiture. There was no trace of flattery. And this iron verity of image gave the figures a quality of true art.

It was unthinkable, however, that Canova could ever hope to carve, out of marble, faces of this stern fidelity. He was too conciliatory for that, too malleable of spirit. And the people of his time were immature, whether in a good or evil sense.

Pauline halted before the statue of the dying Gaul. She had felt it necessary to say something, and now found her chance. "This one needs a good washing," she said. "His body is covered with spots. The poor fellow looks as if he had a skin disease."

Canova laughed indulgently. Pauline's nonsense broke the oppressive spell cast over the onlookers by the world of spirits cased in stone.

Canova cleared his throat. "Princess, I had an ulterior motive in

asking you to come here with me. I'd like to do a figure of you in marble."

She took his hand, pressed it and said, "How would you like to have me pose, Canova?"

"As Diana, walking with a hound and lightly dressed."

Pauline thought it over in silence, disappointment gathering in her face. "No," she said at last, "I'm no Diana. That would never do. I'm too easygoing. Quite different from Diana. How would it be to do me as Venus? That's it, Canova. Make it Venus."

"Have you ever thought, Princess," Canova asked hesitantly, "that Venus is usually portrayed naked?"

Pauline smiled at him. "Of course I have," she said. "That's just why I should prefer to be a Venus."

A few days later Canova began the work in his atelier. A couch was brought over from the Palazzo Borghese and Pauline lay down on it, naked except for a bit of gauze. All the business of sculpture excited her deepest interest and she followed Canova's every move intently. She found it a form of dedication, this revealing of her body in order to preserve it for posterity.

It was not long before Canova had his preliminary sketches ready for her examination. She cried out softly, "Is that really me?"

"There's little I can do to improve on your body," said Canova.

"Coming from you, Master, that's the finest compliment ever paid me."

"Not at all, Princess," Canova insisted. "The simple truth."

The sculptor had a long block of marble brought from the Carrara quarries. He asked Pauline to inspect it. She was engrossed in each detail of what he had to say about the fine grain of the marble, and its refractive qualities. The stone had a delicate blue shimmer. The refracted light splintered in the crystals of stone and came out as a blue diffusion. Pauline stroked the convex surfaces reverently.

She was not subjected to the fatigue of too many sittings. Often Canova worked alone. She loved to watch him set chisel to marble. Gravely she followed each hammer stroke as he chipped and nibbled out the form. It seemed to her as if now, for the first time, she was being born. During the days of Fréron she had dreamed of a salon and a commanding position in Parisian society. How modest her girlish ambitions seemed now! Under the stimulus of Canova she

imagined herself in a milieu governed by ideals and symbols and peopled by gods. The sculpture laboriously taking shape under the artist's hands was more to her than a simple portrait of herself. There was something great slumbering within her that Canova introduced into the lifeless stone. It was her hope that Canova would portray her soul, her inmost reality. And as she watched she came to believe he had done so.

She ignored the threat hovering behind the lovely forehead, was deaf to the curse on the tender lips. She saw only the beauty of limb, the splendor of shoulder, the conquering look, only the graceful motion as the goddess held aloft the apple of discord cupped in her hand. I am Venus, she thought. The marble image as a symbol lay heavily on her life, at glaring odds with the limitations of everyday.

Her cult of herself was a habit that isolated Pauline from ordinary human interests, reinforcing an inclination to be different. To begin with she had been a stranger, a refugee in her adopted country of France. It was the same in Italy. The clan had served her as a partial substitute for a homeland. But now its members were scattered over all Europe. Her stay in Haiti, the death of Leclerc and the marriage with Borghese all contributed to her spiritual separation and loneliness.

During the past winter news had arrived from Paris of a widespread plot against Pauline's brother, the First Consul. Jacobins, royalists and Clericalists had banded together to do away with the common enemy. Only by a miracle Napoleon survived. It so happened that his coachman, being drunk, drove him at full gallop through the streets of Paris. So unexpectedly fast did Napoleon move that the time bomb in the rue Saint-Nicaise exploded long after the carriage had thundered by. Later Fouché found out that Pauline's old friend Moreau was hand in glove with the conspirators. Eventually he was forced into exile in America.

Then, in early spring, came the unhappy affair of the Duc d'Enghien. The wretched young man was shot by order of the First Consul. Actually he had had nothing to do with the traitors. His only real crime was that he belonged to the French royal family and had Bourbon blood in his veins. The Consulate was in bad odor for some time after this gross misapplication of force.

Pauline understood little or nothing of the background of these

matters, though her Uncle Fesch regretted Napoleon's savage flurry of reprisal. When she went out into Roman society she unexpectedly encountered a distinct chill, antagonism under the surface, stubborn mistrust. She could not put her finger on it directly, but it definitely lurked in the coolly smiling faces of Roman aristocracy wherever she turned. This subtle ostracism had its effect. Gradually Pauline avoided all invitations. Yet even in her own home she read the same stare of reproof on her mother-in-law's face.

She was relieved, therefore, when summer finally set in. Nobody who could afford it spent the summer months in Rome. The miasma from the Tiber, the valley mugginess caught between the heights, the chill of Roman shadow in contrast to the searing heat of open places made for intense discomfort. The swamps outside toward Ostia bred fevers and lingering intestinal ailments.

Pauline made plans to meet the Signora in Lucca, the largest Italian health resort. There gathered the idlers of Europe to escape boredom by taking the waters and going to an endless round of parties. At Lucca could be seen the Russian prince who owned twenty thousand souls, the Swedish baron whose nerves had given way to loneliness in his white and columned castle among low wooded hills. Here thronged rich merchants from Hamburg and Amsterdam, desirous of forgetting for a time the dull rigors of the counfinghouse. Here was a bewigged German duke, with his mistress and a string of liveried servants. Here also came a count from Hungary, piercing of eye, damply pendent of beard, bringing with him his private choir, some thirty voices strong.

Ladies of high society and of the demimonde mingled freely with the men. Lucca was an El Dorado for ambitious women without too much conscience to clog their wits. All sorts of amatory opportunities were opened to the little Parisienne, the gay maid from Vienna, the dark Sevillian beauty, the blonde from Copenhagen. At Lucca women sold themselves high. The cheapest cost gold and jewels. The dearer ones, those who really knew their worth and behaved accordingly, held out for social position, titles and ironclad marriage contracts.

To Pauline, needless to say, this sham of a free life, this comedy of glittering ne'er-do-wells beckoned with warm enchantment. Lucca would be an ideal stage for a princess of beauty. There was only one flaw—her little son, Napoleon-Dermide, a noticing little boy who

saw a great deal for his six years. He had an uncomfortable way of slowly sizing up his mother's friends. Solemnly he listened to what they were saying to her as he sat on his little stool by her feet.

Pauline decided not to take him with her to Lucca but to leave him at Frascati. At this lovely site the Borghese family owned a country home, the Villa Mondragone, another of Pope Paul's sumptuous gifts to his nephew. The villa was a delightful summer spot. It had a fine garden with many fountains and a grotto. Near it were the overgrown ruins of an old Roman theater. Little Dermide was all eyes and wonder when the steward guided him and his mother about the grounds. The carefully groomed horses of Prince Borghese stamped in their freshly limed stalls. There were all sorts of conveyances in the stable, many of them outmoded vehicles with broad wheels and much gilt on the spokes. Their roofs were immense and artfully inlaid. Surely riding in such carriages would be like sailing on the sea.

But once he set foot in the house itself Dermide was repelled. The rooms were cool and dark, and smelled damply of lime, mortar and old stone walls. The house steward threw open the windows and the sun flooded large and warm into the closeness. And still the little boy could not get over his uneasiness. The statues were so large and staring and cold, the tapestries on the walls so heavy and faded. Abandonment and loneliness brooded in the old walls, faint echoes of weeping over things long, long forgotten. The youngster reacted strongly to these sad whisperings of the past. His piping voice and small presence could never alone make the place friendly and livable. It was a house for cardinals and princes, for famous courtesans with dyed hair, not for little boys.

"Mama," said Dermide, clinging hard to his mother, "take me to Grandmama at Lucca. I'm afraid here. I don't like it, Mama."

"But, my dear," said Pauline, "just think how pretty it is here." She stroked his hair to calm him. "You'll have dogs and horses. Won't that be fun? And you can play all day with the peasant children. You'll have the whole garden to play in."

Dermide looked out through the open window at the garden. Immense cypresses thrust up into the pale summer sky. Grape leaves grew thick, springs bubbled, the cicadas hummed their vibrant song of the Italian summer.

"It is nice here, isn't it?" he said gravely. "But it's sort of strange, Mama."

"No, it isn't. Look, dear. Just think what fun you'll have playing in the old theater. When I was a child I didn't have any garden at all. I'd have loved it if somebody had given me one."

"Oh, yes, Mama, but you had brothers and sisters to play with," Dermide objected sagely. "And I haven't any. Besides, your mama was always with you, wasn't she?"

Pauline flushed dark as this truth struck home. "It was different then," she said. "Then we were just an ordinary family like any other. The Signora could be home all the time."

"I wish we were just an ordinary family, Mama," said Dermide. "Don't you? Just you and I."

"Yes, Dermide, I do," she said slowly, looking at him. "I do sometimes. But things did n't turn out that way. It wasn't our fate to be that way."

"Fate?" said Dermide. "What's that, Mama?" His eyes were very blue and clear as he peered upward into hers.

"Nobody knows that," said Pauline. Involuntarily she shuddered. "Nobody's ever seen it. And yet it brings all things."

"Then it must be God," said the little boy, wisely. "Uncle Fesch says that God does that, too."

Pauline looked away from her knowing little son into the garden, to the sunny iron-gray slopes of treeless hills beyond. In her pagan ears the boy's words rang strange, pitifully hollow, oddly sacrilegious. In her Corsican mind the divine power that determines individual destiny ranked far above all other gods. How strange he is, my dear son! she thought, and was instantly ashamed of her disloyalty. A real Leclerc. Not an ounce of Bonaparte in him. Then, coming to herself, she folded him in her arms and kissed him passionately, murmuring love. "You silly little boy!" she assured him. "Why should there be anything bad in the garden when God is everywhere looking over us?"

The child smiled, delighted with his mother's caresses, yet still a little serious with disbelief. At this moment he strongly resembled his father as Pauline had seen him for the last time in the West Indies. He put his thin arms about Pauline's neck and held close to her, pressing his cheek against hers. "I'd rather have you than anything, Mama," he confided.

"Tell me," she whispered: "why?"

"Because I love you," the boy whispered back.

"You darling!" She rocked him back and forth, holding him tight to her breast. "You love me more than anyone, don't you, Dermide, my dearest?" For a second she was sorely tempted to take the child with her to Lucca. But she did not give way to sentiment. "It's only for the summer," she told him. "In the fall I'll come and get you. Then you and I will go to Paris. There it will be different from Rome, you'll see. There you'll see your uncle's soldiers on parade in the Tuileries, the same soldiers that your own father commanded, Dermide. Won't that be wonderful? And we'll be at home, too, really at home. It will be so much nicer there than at Lucca."

All but mollified by these grand promises Dermide escorted his mother to her carriage. Once more they embraced and the little boy burst into tears. Pauline, too, wept. Finally she set the boy on the ground and gave the coachman the order to be off. The man climbed up on the driver's seat and the horses bent to their task. Dermide ran as far as he could after the coach. "Come back soon, Mama," he piped. "Come back soon and take me to France. You promised you would! You promised, Mama!"

Pauline waved and waved and looked back at him. There he stood, her mite of a son, very blond in the bright sunlight, waving his hand at her. Then the coach turned from the villa grounds onto the high-road and they were off into the Campagna. The hills about the Holy City glittered like glass.

Pauline rode on, sunk in thought. She protected herself from the blaze with a little parasol, and rested her feet on the opposite seat. The Campagna stretched out all around her, transfixed by the sun. There was a strong odor of heath and resin in the air. The road was sandy and frequently the horses had to slow down. The wheels groaned and creaked. Pauline slept.

When she awoke it was already almost night. Beyond the lonely cupola of St. Peter's the sun was sinking in a swollen ball of fire. The rolling terrain under the reddish light looked like a fiery sea. On a hill lay the gray ruins of a Roman villa, glimpsed through bushy undergrowth and slender pines. Now and then they passed watch-towers, black dots in the empty landscape. In the Middle Ages they had served as reconnaissance points for the followers of the Orsini and the Colonna in the business of waylaying travelers or spying out

enemies. Now they were inhabited only by owls and foxes, though occasionally lawbreakers in flight from the Holy Father's police sought refuge in them. Along the road could also be seen the ancient, half-obliterated milestones with their Roman numbers. The Tiber ran invisible through reeds and strips of lush meadow, taking its short course from the evergreen oaks of the Sabine Mountains to the sea. From the river rose the violet twilight and spread out over the land, bringing dark night in its wake.

Pauline, creature of the day, felt the portentous waiting, the timelessness, the eternal duration of the night, under whose blind eyes the life of suns, planets and moons vanishes into nothing, as quietly as the indifferent sand grains of the hourglass trickle away. And the night, it seemed just then, was indifferent to man and his cities, to his history and his confusions and his loves, as if it were mere tragicomic chance that humankind was there at all, having no real place among the primeval powers.

Close by the road cattle grazed in the waning twilight. She could hear their rough snuffing and tearing as they ripped the scant fodder from the earth, and the grinding of their jaws as they chewed. She saw the wide sweep of their horns over the dark blotches of their heads. Just then they looked like half-gods, fabulous, dumbly wise beasts from the underworld. The sight of the herdsman, silhouetted against the lowering sky in his rags, his round hat outlined in the eerie light, increased the sense of ancient Myth settling over the emptiness of the Campagna. Standing there with his face ever toward Rome, he might have been a guide waiting to take souls into the underworld. And just then, from the direction of the city, shone a last reflection of the dying day, like ashen lightning, streaking the land. So illuminated, the earth's meager face stood out in every lineament, as if lighted from within by the same halo that had once glowed about the gods of the fallen Latin people.

Darkly Pauline was conscious that fate was abroad this night. Nervously she speculated on the mystery sensed but not grasped. It was almost like a dream in which images come again and again, mutely urgent, vainly summoning the spirit of the sleeper to struggle forward into release. But the night told her nothing. A warm puff of wind came from somewhere, caressed the rough heath and ruffled the foliage like a blind man turning the pages of an old book.

Suddenly the carriage wheels made another sound. Now they

were rattling over cobblestones. The city was drawing near. Just outside the walls was a wooded district. Here were the cemeteries of Rome, thick with cypresses. Their tall tops could be barely discerned in the gathering night. Rome, city of the past and of memory, is also a city of the dead. About its walls, under its floors, in catacombs, churches and mausoleums lies a gigantic metropolis of graves, the dwelling place of departed hosts, whose ranks far outnumber the ranks of the living. Perhaps it is this nearness of death, more than the remains of antiquity, the many ancient churches and palaces, that lends Rome its special atmosphere of consecration.

At this hour little flares and candles burned on the graves, very quiet and small in the warm night. Like the campfires of an invisible army, thousands and thousands of lights glowed under the cypresses. The sight of them evoked in Pauline a feeling of unnamable woe. But the curious magic of the night vanished as soon as the carriage turned into the Via Fontanella and came to a stop before the Palazzo Borghese. By the time Pauline had lightly ascended the stairs to her room, behind a servant holding a candle, she had forgotten her child and the lonely Campagna. In spirit she was already busied with preparations for her journey. Only in the nethermost depths of her heart did there linger a vague aftersense of nocturnal portent.

III

The Last Tie

PAULINE MET the Signora in Lucca. Her son's enormous successes had not altered the clan mother. She was still mistrusting, cautious, silent, quite her old self. Although by now she was a woman of wealth, she reckoned her accounts to the last sou. Every bill passed through her hands. Indeed, baker, butcher, tailor and cobbler registered complaints with the municipal authorities of Lucca, for the Signora was in the habit of deliberately revising their bills downward by the simple process of striking out items willy-nilly whenever she had the least suspicion of being cheated. The city fathers agreed to pay the plaintiffs out of municipal funds, since it was impossible to demand restitution from the First Consul's mother.

The Signora loved to wander among the villages, talking to the peasants along the way, indulging in long haggling over the price of fruit and vegetables before committing herself to a purchase. She loved to dicker for its own sake.

Her avarice for a time infected Pauline, who took it on herself to do the buying for the household. The Signora claimed that thereby Pauline would save herself some twenty thousand francs a year. But Pauline, unfortunately, was not methodical like her mother. She forgot to register the items she had bought, or entered them haphazard out of a faulty memory. The result was domestic chaos. Pauline lost herself in her scribbled account books. There was nothing to eat in the house, dirty linen collected, clothes were never delivered, the horses went hungry in their stalls. In the end Pauline was relieved to turn over all her orders, errands, payments and bills to the house steward. Even when he deliberately cheated her, and it was obvious that this was his habit, in the long run it was cheaper and very much easier.

The Signora was full of trouble. Her cares always turned on her children. For example, there was the unfortunate rift between Napoleon and Lucien. She could not get it out of her mind. After the

death of his Christine, Lucien had again stumbled into a *mésalliance*, this time with a Parisian widow of no social standing, albeit she was a decent and sensible woman. As before in Antibes, Napoleon demanded instant divorce. And, as before, Lucien defied his brother. But the Napoleon of the year 1804 was no longer the brigadier general of the Republican Year II. His will could be translated into a virtually imperial command. Lucien's refusal to obey resulted in his being banished from France.

Fundamentally, however, the widow Jauberthon was only another exacerbation in the long-smoldering clash of temperament between the two brothers. Although Lucien had aided his brother to achieve dictatorial power in the critical days of Brumaire, by conviction he remained what he always claimed to be, a Republican. In vain Lucien now lamented for his beloved Republic.

However, it was not just the disaffection of two of her sons that worried the Signora. Most of all it was Napoleon's steadily increasing authority and dignity, his astounding luck. He was building himself up, the Signora felt in her bones, for a terrible fall. Deep in her mother's heart worked the old fear of the revengeful gods, the Nemesis of Attic tragedy, retribution, swollen ambition ending in a debacle of repudiation. Often she expressed her dread that they were flying in the face of Providence. In her poor French she would mutter, "*Pourvu que cela dure*"—"If it only keeps up."

But there was much more to cause her anxiety. Louis' marriage to Hortense Beauharnais, Napoleon's stepdaughter, was unhappy. He would not let his wife alone. He was so jealous that he followed her about wherever she went. Sometimes he would not speak to her for weeks, though he made it an iron rule that she should sleep in the same room with him, even when his body was covered with scabs. Little Jérôme had committed the unbelievable folly of marrying Miss Patterson of Baltimore. Napoleon sent his mother angry letters warning her to cut herself off completely from this particularly ungrateful brother. And Elise, as always, wrote her in bad temper. She considered that she was deliberately pushed into the family background. She had found no lover, whereas Caroline, the blonde curlyhead, had all sorts of affairs—and her husband, Murat, complained about that. Even Joseph complained. Rarely now could he dally in idyllic Mortefontaine. More and more he had to devote

himself to advancing his brother's affairs. He was wearied of the giddy sensation of being tied to a comet's tail.

And now, to top all perversity, Pauline came to the Signora to whine and groan about her marriage to the faun Camillo, who was no good under the marriage sheets!

As mother and grandmother, the Signora had to bear up under a dozen variations of naughtiness among her brood.

When the Signora, escorted by Pauline, went to a ball in Lucca, always more for her daughter's pleasure than her own, her pessimism was kept strictly from public view. People listened attentively to her curt pronouncements and were impressed. Her black garb was a sobering influence on the motley of fine party dresses and gay uniforms. Behind her back she was laughed at for her stinginess. Face to face with her, however, nobody dared snicker. The silliest fop, the giddiest sparrow-brain, was silenced by the simple human weight of the woman. Pauline would have liked to see her more elegantly dressed. But the Signora, twenty years after her husband's death, lived and dressed like a widow, in full widow's weeds, in close accord with her nature. In this she was much like her son, who always looked somewhat comic in rich clothes.

It was at a ball given by the Prince Pignatelli that the omen of the Roman night found its mark. Pauline had been enjoying herself. The orchestra was good. She had not sat out a single dance. A knot of male admirers kept a close eye on her. Now it was long past midnight. The servants were bringing in ices and cool drinks. The doors giving out on the garden had been opened, and the soft night air flooded coolly over the heated faces of the dancers who sat about in a wide circle talking. The conversation turned on the occult. There was random discussion of presentiment and the ability to see things happen at impossible distances. Count von Schonen told about Swedenborg, his father's friend. In these aristocratic circles the visions and auguries of the pious Swedenborg were not given much serious consideration. A few of the women paid close heed, however, when the Count admitted that he, for one, believed in signs and portents. In his opinion Swedenborg had been a thoroughly honest man, and intelligent as well as truthful; there was nothing of the charlatan about him, nothing of Cagliostro's quackery.

"My dear Princess," said Pignatelli finally, turning to Pauline, "how would it be if we played out the last act of the Count's mystery?"

He gave the musicians a sign. The fiddles scraped thinly. Pauline was as pale as chalk. The salon, though painted white, seemed only dimly illuminated by the dozens of candles, and the white flesh of the women had a bluish shimmer. Just then it seemed to Pauline as if the company were so many puppets. Their gracious smiles were wooden; their movements were directed, it could be imagined, by fine wires held in the fist of some giant out in the night. The long yellow draperies at the French doors billowed gently in the night wind. Their motion seemed the only real thing in the room, and all the rest illusion.

It was at this poignant moment that a man suddenly rushed in through one of those doors opening on the garden. His boots were dusty and over his shoulders he wore a travel-stained cloak of black. His face, all dust-caked, was drawn with fatigue. Over the breast of his cloak he wore the crossed golden keys of the Borghese coat of arms. He walked a few steps into the room and shook his head blindly as he tried to accustom his pupils to the light.

"What is it?" said Pignatelli, annoyed at the interruption.

"Is this the house of Prince Pignatelli?" the man inquired humbly.

"It is," said the Prince. "And why do you come in through the garden like a thief in the night?"

"The main gate was closed. I rang the bell for at least half an hour, but nobody would come to open it."

The dancers stood still, holding one another's hands and staring at the interloper. The light, thin music played on, a flow of sound and beat that seemed senseless when one was not dancing to it, just so many tones lost in emptiness.

"I'm looking for the Princess Borghese, Your Excellency," the man said. "It's very urgent." Then he caught sight of Pauline. She gazed at him, her lips parted. The man tried to speak, could not, hung his head.

"Speak up!" said the Prince. "Are you tongue-tied?"

"Giuseppi!" Suddenly Pauline recognized the man. "You're Giuseppi, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am, Princess."

"Something's happened," Pauline cried. "Has something gone wrong at Mondragone?"

"Your son, Princess," the man said slowly. "He's sick. Very sick.

Fever." He looked helplessly at Prince Pignatelli, whose face was filled with consternation.

"Don't keep anything back, Giuseppi," said Pauline. Her lips shook, her eyes implored the messenger. "My son is dead—isn't he?" She approached the messenger like a sleepwalker.

"Yes, he's dead," the man said. "He died yesterday of fever." Then he was reminded to add: "His last wish was to see the Princess. He had a terrible fever. Burning up."

"Horrible!" murmured Pauline. Holding herself erect, head up, she went to the door. The music wavered to a stop, except for one violin. At last this, too, stopped, and the musician looked around guiltily to see whether he had offended. The guests were turned to stone. The illusion had vanished. Reality flooded ice-cold into the room. The grimacing and bowing ceased.

Prince Pignatelli followed after Pauline and stood by her side. "My very deepest sympathy," he said in a low voice. "And my guests' sympathy. If we can be of any help . . ."

"Nobody can really help anybody else," said Pauline. "We're all alone."

She had almost reached the door when she stopped. "He was all alone, too, wasn't he?" she said aloud to herself. Before Pignatelli could rush to support her she crumpled sideways to the floor. Her head thudded hollow as it struck the parquet floor. The men cried out in pity. Women's weeping filled the salon.

IV

Unfinished Venus

THE LONG LINE of carriages moved slowly from the Tuileries. The whole night through it had snowed, and now the sun had crept out from behind banked clouds. Masses of snow fell with heavy clumps from sloping roofs. Icicles dripping from the gutters shone with rainbow colors. The magnificent carriages, richly gilded, doors ornamented with the Napoleonic bees, labored heavily through the snow, like great turtles. Each was drawn by eight horses, that had all they could do to drag it through the deep slush clogging the Paris streets. The coachmen were impatient on this day of days. They cursed under their breath when grenadiers had to clear away a snowbank so the procession could get under way again.

The alien Corsican, Napoleon Bonaparte, sat next to his consort Joséphine in the leading carriage. They sat on rich green silk embroidered with gold bees. David, painter of portraits and glorifier of the Revolution, had designed a fantastic silk costume for Napoleon's coronation. Joséphine wore a similar robe, of more feminine design.

Napoleon had closed his eyes. In contrast to his usual impatience he bore the slow journey with equanimity. Now and then he raised his lids to glance at the grenadiers guarding the route at regular intervals on either side. Sometimes he looked aloft at the coachman grandly seated on a box fringed with silk. It was the same coachman who, by the chance of drunkenness, had saved his life in the rue Saint-Nicaise. Today he was unquestionably sober.

Joséphine would have liked to talk to her husband to relieve her inner tension. Under the silk her fine shoulders trembled with December cold and nervousness. She was very proud to be one of the principals in this unique coronation ceremony. And yet she sensed, woman-wise, that the title of Empress of France would lay her wide open to attacks from all quarters. No longer would she be able to take shelter in her semibourgeois status as wife of the First Consul.

And the question of the succession to a crown was far more imperative than any succession to the First Consulate. Unfortunately Louis would not agree to Napoleon's suggestion that he adopt Louis' little son, named after himself.

A long parade of Joséphine's sworn enemies followed the imperial equipage—her husband's relatives, the Bonaparte clan. Pauline and her husband were in one of the coaches behind. Bereavement had made her face look thinner, and she appeared to be convalescent from a long illness. When the procession stopped she gazed at Napoleon's carriage. Her eyes lingered thoughtfully on the great gilded crown, upborne by four eagles, that decorated its roof. She thought of the November evening in the Palais Luxembourg, and the dusty wooden crown on the baldachin. Then she looked at herself in the coach mirror and examined the diadem on her dark hair. Her curls were still short, for, as after Leclerc's passing, she had sacrificed her hair in memory of her dead son.

Even in the midst of admiring herself she shuddered. The image of the Leclerc family vault in Pontoise formed before her inner eye. She saw the light slant gloomily through a small window into the dusty space close filled with coffins that were decayed and covered with yellowed wreaths. Her son's little coffin was laid next to the heavy lead one which contained his father's body.

She smiled bitterly to herself, thinking how much better it would have been had death not taken them. At this very hour they would have been beside her in the carriage, Leclerc soldierly and straight but smiling with good humor, and Dermide, excited over the impending ceremony, wriggling close to her. Instead, she was riding with Camillo Borghese!

Camillo's thoughts were correspondingly glum. His position in the new imperial court was difficult enough. He was neither diplomat, government administrator nor soldier. What would he be after this? How should he conduct himself? Pauline's estrangement was irrevocable. Indifferent to each other, aloof, they rode along. Now and then Pauline amused herself by twitting her husband. It was very easy to give way to this temptation since she had become an "Imperial Highness" while he remained simply the Prince Borghese. Camillo habitually tried to fend off with ironic parries the impact of the brand-new status of his wife's family. But he was not altogether successful. At bottom he was impressed by the new hierarchy.

Gladly he would have accepted its highest distinctions. It was uncomfortable for him to sit mutely next to this wife of his, a frozen smile on his lips. He was relieved when the carriage drew up before the cathedral and a servant, bowing deeply, opened the door for them.

And now they were about to enter the tall nave of Notre-Dame. Unlike almost all the ecclesiastic architecture of the Middle Ages, the cathedral is cold and reserved. Indeed, it might be a post office. That at the height of the Revolution Robespierre's rational deity should have been briefly honored there was not altogether unfitting. Today the huge enclosure was jammed with people, ranged in virtual military formation on both sides of the nave. The Senate was there, the *Corps Législatif*, representatives of the army and of foreign powers. Behind these uniformed persons ordinary civilians were ranked, members of Parisian and provincial society who had rushed posthaste to the cathedral to take part in the historic event. Most of them had been waiting since early morning, and it was well into the afternoon when Napoleon and his entourage entered.

The crowd began to whisper wildly, rising on tiptoe, as this or that great personage was recognized. They craned necks to see the newly created marshals—severe Berthier, curly-headed Murat, now governor of Paris, and Davout, who looked unmilitary in his spectacles. The ambitious Bernadotte, lionlike Ney, rough Lannes, Mortier, Bessières, and two famous military figures dating from the earliest days of the Revolution, Masséna and Augereau—all were there on this greatest of days. Among the Senators, lined up behind Cambacérès, High Chancellor of the Empire, were Generals Lefebvre and Kellermann. They were distinctly ill at ease in their unaccustomed splendor, particularly Lefebvre. Repeatedly he tugged at his green silk collar and looked angrily across at the group of marshals.

Behind his back onlookers gossiped about the general's curious marriage. He had wed himself to a love of his youth, a Parisian laundress. Her clacking tongue and free behavior had caused him many a pang. Yet there she was now, Madame Lefebvre, "Madame Sans-Gêne," neat as a pin and quivering in a transport of interest. She stood between Madame Junot and Madame Bernadotte—the little Désirée Eugénie Clary of other years who, had Joseph had his way, would once have been Napoleon's bride. Everyone was amused at the way Madame Lefebvre encouraged her husband with vigorous

nods and winks, the while he as busily pretended to ignore her, all flustered and flushing.

Foreign representatives were impressed by the fact that, unlike similar gatherings at the courts of other great powers, the majority of the women were young and, for the most part, extremely good to look at.

Those in the audience acquainted with French affairs found fascinating personalities to scan. There was the minister of foreign affairs, Talleyrand, elegant as always, leaning lightly on his cane. There was Maret, secretary of state, and Savary, head of the special gendarmerie, who had played so sinister a part in the killing of the Duc d'Enghien. And there, standing apart from this knot of omnipotents, was the subtlest of the lot, Fouché, the indispensable, in his black frock coat. In his knowledge of the idiosyncrasies, weaknesses and crimes of those present he easily outstripped them all.

It was interesting, with Fouché in full view, to tally off those absent from the glittering assembly. Where, for example, was Carnot, republican and organizer of the French army? He had discovered Napoleon's military genius and given him his first decisive chance in the campaign of the Ligurian Alps. Where was General Moreau, hero of Hohenlinden and onetime intimate of Pauline? Where was young Desaix, the real victor at Marengo? Where was Lucien Bonaparte, who had done so much to help his brother seize a dictator's power during Brumaire? Where was Muiron, the swift and tireless adjutant who had carried orders on the battlefields of Upper Italy? Where was Kléber, who had borne the brunt of command in Egypt on Napoleon's return to France? Where was Lord Wentworth, the English ambassador? Not one of these was there. Banished to Italy, to the United States, dead in battle, murdered by enemies, openly disaffected—each had his good reason for staying away.

On the throne before the high altar sat Pope Pius VII in his snowy robe, crowned with the papal tiara. Cardinals and other high churchmen assisted him. Their presence subdued the crowd, many of whom were admitted atheists, many guilty of the Revolution's worst excesses. Now they had tacked full about and were prepared to bow and scrape not only before the imperial, but the papal crown as well. The Revolution had run its course. The visible and impressive symbol of the cycle's end was the presence of the Pope.

The bells of Notre-Dame were ringing as the Emperor and Em-

press entered the nave. The whole structure gradually began to tremble faintly in sympathy with the enormously vibrant waves of sound. A sigh of release rose from the crowd, jaded with waiting. Those in the front rows straightened their backs and composed their features into ceremonial gravity. Some thrust half-eaten sandwiches hastily into their pockets, for the wait had driven them to appease their hunger.

Elise, Pauline, Caroline and Hortense, the princesses of the imperial house, carried the Empress' long train. Among the great mass of onlookers two young men in particular were absorbed by this spectacle. Both were in civilian clothes. One of them was a tall, broad-shouldered fellow with regular features framed by brown hair. His coat, of fashionable cut, just missed being too tight about the waist. Quite carried away by the royal sight, he said, "How beautiful she is!" to the man directly ahead of him—the painter David. Laying his hand across his mouth David whispered back, "No wonder, my dear Jacques! I took enough pains with her costume. She almost made me into a tailor. But you're right. The Empress does walk gracefully, doesn't she?"

"But I don't mean the Empress. I mean Pauline."

"I see! The Princess Borghese. It didn't require much art to dress her up. You haven't discovered anything new, my boy. She was always attractive."

"It's really astonishing. She's always different. Always fresh and lovely. Yesterday in a light negligee, today this old-fashioned fancy costume."

"Speaking for myself," said David, "I've never had the pleasure of seeing the Princess in a negligee."

"Neither have I, for that matter," said the young man quickly. "I was just thinking." And what he thought made him flush.

"In any case, a nice idea, my boy," said David. "Canova told me that her body is full and smooth. He turned her into a Venus, he said, without altering a single line."

"Is the statue finished?"

"No, not yet. Canova has been having difficulties with the Prince. He can hardly get to his own work to finish it. If he wants to show it off to visitors, he has to bring them in on the quiet after bribing the servants. Curious thing: the Prince isn't at all jealous of his wife; he's jealous of the statue!"

"He's a fool," murmured the young man, whose name was Jacques de Forbin. David had him for a pupil, and for years he had been daubing away at an immense historical canvas called "The Death of Pliny," an acre of dry color and faulty perspective.

The second spectator especially attracted by the women in the imperial train, so attracted that he used his single-lensed lorgnette to get a better view, was another young man—young enough, indeed, to have been mistaken for a schoolboy. His curly blond hair, boyishly small head, almost effeminate figure and lively light blue eyes supported the impression of freshness and youth. Klemens von Metternich sometimes was vexed with his own youthfulness. He would powder his hair to make it look gray. But mostly he had no cause to regret his lack of years. It permitted him to say things ill becoming an older man. Besides, it was a key to pleasant relations with women, and women played an important role in Metternich's life.

From his mother he had inherited his good looks, his amazing plasticity and his personal grace. His wife, a granddaughter of Kaunitz, the Austrian statesman who had been an important figure in the days of Maria Theresa and her son Joseph, had provided the opening for his diplomatic career in Austria, even though he was an alien Rhinelander. Great opportunities loomed before him, and women were involved in them. In Dresden, London and Vienna he had carefully gauged the feminine influence on the courts. He had learned the obvious lesson that to a man who would be powerful the easiest way is generally through his women.

He had, of course, heard a great deal about the prevailing revolutionary and military spirit of the new France. He had been humorously reminded, before going there, that the rule of the old regime would not apply to this newborn imperial array. He had merely shaken his head at these admonitions. The introduction of a Republican calendar, he believed, or of a synthetic hierarchy, did not affect human nature. But Metternich had seen clearly, too, that the way to Napoleon's inner chamber would not be an easy one. There was no official mistress here on whom to practice insinuation. It was well known that the great man did not give political confidences to his wife and certainly did not consult her before coming to political decisions.

It would have been understandable, in this case, if Metternich had faltered in his belief in the universal efficacy of *cherchez la femme.*

But if he ever had been inclined to hesitate, his resolution came back when he saw the three Bonaparte sisters. Napoleon's stepdaughter Hortense, of humble, sad, resentful countenance, who looked much older than her years, he dismissed at once. Inwardly he yawned as he imagined the sickening boredom of gaining ascendancy over such a blatantly virtuous creature. Women were not only a means in the Metternich approach, but an end in themselves. As the true hunter does not go on the chase just to bag himself a roast, but rather to outwit the quarry, so Metternich with women. He used them because he liked them. He needed them to feel himself.

Caroline and Pauline alone fixed his attention. He looked Elise over very carefully and mentally jotted down a note on the ambition evident in her face. Why take a dull back road, he told himself, when pretty paths lead to the same goal? Caroline, blonde and young, attracted him more than Pauline. Even in her heavy coronation costume Caroline looked like a schoolgirl. He judged Pauline to be better-looking, perhaps, in her way. But she had an air about her he did not particularly like, an Italian look. Caroline, on the other hand, reminded him of girls in the Rhineland and Vienna.

He was delighted to observe that the three sisters were in an ill humor. For years he had had occasion to perfect himself in the art of detecting vanity in the great. He was familiar with every nuance of the struggle for social pre-eminence in the courts of Europe. At once he saw that the sisters were nettled by something, felt themselves eclipsed. He saw, too, against whom they directed their spite. It was not, curiously, against the true author of their diminution—the Emperor—but against the sister-in-law, Napoleon's Empress. He watched their manifest reluctance to carry Joséphine's train; they held it as if it were something vile. Their gait lagged behind the graceful and eager progress of the Empress. He noted the glances of hate that Elise and Pauline deliberately let fly at Joséphine, and Caroline's chilly contempt.

"Blondes are always intrigantes," he whispered to Herr von Cobenzl, the Austrian ambassador.

Cobenzl made a gesture of urgent warning. "Good Lord," he murmured, "that's the Princess Murat!"

Metternich shrugged. He listened to the music and to the Pope's contribution to the ceremony. To his astonishment he saw that the Emperor, instead of allowing the Pope to take charge, himself picked

up the crown—to that moment he had worn a simple laurel wreath—and set it on his own head. But Metternich always kept one eye on the women.

The moment had come for Joséphine to ascend to the throne beside her husband. She had to tug to free her train. The Bonaparte sisters would not budge. It looked as if, at the last moment, they were daring to use physical force to keep the Empress from becoming their superior. Joséphine looked over her shoulder nervously, frowned. Smiling maliciously, the sisters suddenly released their hold, and Joséphine lightly mounted the steps to the throne.

Metternich was greatly interested in this minor display of cross purposes. In it he discerned diplomatic and political possibilities. Like any other mortal, the newly crowned Emperor had his Achilles heel. He had, in short, a family—and in this family there was an open rift to be exploited. The women, to all appearances, were ambitious, resentful, given to intrigue, and they openly begrudged their sister-in-law her success. To weaken the Emperor a wedge could be delicately thrust into this small crack. Metternich sighed. It would be a long and intricate task. But at least it had the advantage of involving women. Two of them were good-looking. There would be compensations for playing the ticklish game.

During the following days he began to put out feelers in the French court, dealing mostly with women. He flirted with little, dark-haired Madame Junot. He carried on sprightly conversations with jolly Madame de la Rochefoucauld, the new Empress' first lady in waiting, and sent her into gales of laughter with spicy anecdotes of the Vienna court. He talked with the serious-minded, clever, rather blunt Madame de Rémusat on the subject of human vanity. All the ladies found this fair young fellow highly sympathetic. Discreetly they passed on tidbits about the imperial family, for Bonaparte doings occupied their minds night and day. Village gossip was mere twittering in comparison with the court's. Compelled by ennui, or pique, or self-interest, the courtiers never tired of analyzing the characters, moods and shortcomings of the princes and their wives. To the last grain they weighed the relationships between individual stars of the galaxy, and each according to his own profit was ready to make something of what he knew, or thought he knew.

Metternich was impressed by what he heard, after sifting the bits of fact from the abundant chaff of half-truth, malice and downright

lying. The chief thing he gleaned was the insecurity of the Empress' position. For a long time it had been debated whether Joséphine should be crowned at all. Only a few months before the coronation it seemed certain that, under family pressure, Napoleon would force through a divorce. But his old inclination had finally conquered, though Joséphine long since had become just so much furniture in his sentimental life. Superstition had played a part in it, the belief that his luck and Joséphine in some mystic fashion were inseparable. Like any man of success in the world of great affairs, Napoleon had learned to appreciate the caprice of fate. He had an inordinate respect for the irrational elements of experience and, by corollary, a good deal of "belief in his star." But why this star should shine on him only with Joséphine at his side was a riddle. Was it possible that a man of such cold conviction, a man who conceived catastrophe and triumph in war and politics as mathematical interplay, should carry within his heart the same presentiments as any ignorant goatherd on the rocks of Corsica? It was indeed quite possible, thought Metternich. He, too, had his dark intuitions. And the central one among them was that the French Revolution and its legatee, Napoleon, were sounding the death knell of Europe. It is quite possible, Metternich concluded, quite possible. He decided that the sense of being bound by destiny to a wife was by no means the least sympathetic trait in Napoleon's make-up. He saw it as a form of family devotion.

All that Metternich patiently guessed together into a pattern came close to the truth. Napoleon and Joséphine, after a period of doubt, had fallen tearfully into each other's arms. For a long time the threat of divorce vanished and the Bonaparte clan had to bite their nails in silence. Joseph and Louis, Elise and Caroline had done everything in their power to destroy "the Widow Beauharnais." But Joséphine had not only survived their assaults, she had emerged as Empress of France, and had carried her own son Eugène along with her over the heads of the Bonapartes. Late in the evening after the coronation Napoleon summoned his wife to him in the palace of Saint-Cloud. The building had been freshly painted and renovated throughout. Pointing to the bed of the executed king, he said: "Come, little Creole, get into the bed of your masters."

But the Bonapartes did not give up hope of ridding themselves of the Creole. The women were much less forgiving than their brothers,

much more vicious. Shamelessly they used all the feminine weapons in their arsenal. They complained about the Signora's not yet having a title of her own. As usual she herself hung off stage, darkly silent. But in contrast to their mother, the sisters swarmed about their brother in his little study at Saint-Cloud. They shed tears, they offered reckless criticisms, they made bold claims to kingdoms and regal wealth. These naughty girls, who as children were glad to have one simple chemise apiece, who had been brought up pretty much by the hair of the head and who certainly could not boast more than average brains, now prattled about nations and principalities. They wrangled over Italian and German duchies as if they were hamlets. Often they had no idea where these were located, knew only their names. They measured titles and income against their brother's august state and considered that they had come off very second-best.

In this ceaseless struggle Elise and Caroline were more aggressive than Pauline. Pretty little Caroline, a blonde wasp of a woman, would make a frightfully angry face and yell, "What about the succession to the crown? I demand that my little Achille be given preference over that dreadful Beauharnais."

"I'm the oldest," Elise would shriek. "I want Bacciocchi to be made a prince."

"Bacciocchi's a blockhead," Napoleon would reply.

"My Murat," came Caroline's cry—"is he a blockhead, too?"

"Murat does very well riding at the head of a cavalry division. But as a civilian—and I might remind you as a husband—he's hopeless."

"That's all the thanks he gets for his loyalty," Caroline would come back. Then she would throw herself in a chair and burst into a savage storm of tears. "Just because he loves me more than he loves the Emperor. That's what he gets. See!"

At first Napoleon accepted his sisters' chagrin as amusing. Gradually, however, he sickened of their recriminations. During one of these family quarrels, he turned to Pauline and said, "You, Madame, I suppose you imagine I should make a king out of your capon. King of England, perhaps. How would that be? Do you think that task would occupy his powers?"

"All I ask, Sire, is that you give the man something to do," Pauline said quickly. "Couldn't you send him to Turkey as ambassador?"

"You just want to be rid of him, Madame."

"His presence wears on my nerves, Sire."

"I'll consider it."

"And this Guastalla, Sire," Pauline continued—"the place I'm duchess of—is it a large city? Is it a prosperous district?"

"My dear Madame, it is an Italian village," said the Emperor dryly. "It is so minute that you'll have trouble finding it on the map."

"So that's it," said Pauline, her face long. "I expected to have a real duchy like Elise or Caroline."

"Madame," said the Emperor, "you would have difficulty governing a molehill. Your talents lie in another direction." The Emperor stared at her coldly, whereupon Pauline blushed and started to sniffle.

"Tears and powder and paint and bosoms," the Emperor observed gloomily. "The same old dance." Irritably he rang a little bell on his writing table.

Soundless as a jinni, the Emperor's mameluke Rustan appeared in the door. He wore a turban and from his silk belt dangled a naked Turkish scimitar. This Oriental apparition invariably sobered the Bonaparte sisters. Palace rumor had it that once he had to be restrained from lopping off Joséphine's head when she blundered inadvertently on a tête-à-tête between the Emperor and a pretty actress. Rustan was generally known at Saint-Cloud as "the Wretch." He had the alarming faculty of always being on the spot when least suspected. During the night he lay like a dog across the threshold of the Emperor's bedroom. His shiny teeth were like a dog's when he ripped at chicken legs given him from Napoleon's table.

"Rustan," the Emperor now suggested, "open the door. Their Imperial Highnesses wish to leave. Good evening, Mesdames."

Quite upset, the sisters curtsied quickly and swished by Rustan to get safely out of the imperial study.

"These revolting women!" said the Emperor to their departing backs. "They would steal pennies from dead men's eyes. They act as if our father had been a king and we were dividing his heritage." To this Rustan, perfect mameluke, replied not a word.

The Emperor sat down at his writing table. Carelessly he swept papers, letters and dispatches to the floor. From a drawer he got out a map and spread it before him, arranged the five-branched candelabrum so he could see it better. Head in hand, fingers digging into his cheeks, he lost himself in the map. Sometimes his thin lips moved as he calculated. The room was still. The mask of imperial hauteur, of arrogance shot through with wry bonhomie, fell away.

The face, intent, grew thinner and much younger, not unlike the face of the young Napoleon of the rue de la Huchette.

After a time he no longer needed the map for reference. Its details were indelibly impressed on his memory, the course of the Main, the Neckar and the Danube, the heights of the Jura Mountains, the bastion of Bohemia, the northern Alps. The cities of Stuttgart, Ulm, Donauwörth, Augsburg, Passau, Vienna lived within his mind's eye. A little gilded clock stood on the mantel, ornamented on each side with reclining figures. It struck successive quarter-hours, making a fine silver sound. The Emperor paid no attention. For him time stood still.

Metternich would have been shocked if he had been able to look over Napoleon's shoulder at the map and so find a clue to the military plans taking shape behind the white forehead. Quickly he would have caught the drift of the Emperor's intentions, had he overheard the great man's mumblings as he talked to himself. "Bavaria and Württemberg are in my hands"; "Prussia must be held off"; "Russia is still a mystery." At this juncture everyone took it for granted that French military preparations, particularly the army encamped at Boulogne, were pointed toward the invasion of England. This fantastic notion the Emperor himself had abetted by ordering maneuvers along the Channel, by personally inspecting the garrison there, by ordering the construction of barges, by writing irascibly urgent letters to his admirals. Actually he entertained no serious idea of risking a Channel crossing. But the feint had deceived his most dangerous enemies. At the same time it had served to train a huge army.

This night, as Rustan guarded his study, the Emperor was not working on the problems of propaganda and of maritime England. He was aware that England was a negligible quantity in the array of powers—that is, providing she was not allied with a strong Continental power at his rear. His attention was riveted on the real enemies of the Revolution—Austria, Prussia and Russia. From them he expected imminent coalition. If these ancient states could not endure the Revolution in France proper, where it was distinctly none of their business, still less could they come to terms with the subsequent "Revolution on horseback." The focal point of the later phase was plainly the man who had caused himself to be crowned emperor. On his head glittered the crown of medieval emperors, symbolizing a claim to the sovereignty of a united Europe. It might be that this

crown did not really pretend to establish the absolute rule of the Emperor himself. But it did affirm a powerful idea that had crystallized out of the chaos of mob rule and the war of words. This idea was the equality of all citizens before the law, and the precise formulation of the law in the French civil code.

Pauline's disappointment over the smallness of her Guastalla duchy did not last long. In fact, by the time she had left her brother and reached her carriage the matter had slipped her mind. She joined her sisters' concert of complaint more out of family habit than personal need. She did not have to be told that she would never be qualified to rule or satisfied with crowns and titles. To feel strong and requited it was not a courtly background she wanted, but the lust of men.

She looked out of the frosted panes of her carriage into the snowy park of Saint-Cloud. The moon was up and the park was ghostly. Its flat stretches gleamed palely. Fir trees huddled mute. The snow squeaked and gave under the hurrying wheels. Madame de Mathis, her young lady in waiting, sat beside her.

"Come, Mathis, warm yourself against me," said Pauline and drew the girl inside her fur cloak. "How cold you are! Your shoulders are like ice."

The lady in waiting shivered. "Was Your Highness' audience with His Majesty a success?" she asked tentatively, just for something to say.

"Audiences with my brother are always a success—for him!" said Pauline. "He's pleasant enough with ladies in bed, I believe, but in the salon he's a frightful boor."

"Really!" Mathis had not yet got used to Pauline's candor.

"Oh, I don't think the worse of him on that account," said Pauline. "I'm just like him with the men. What do you think of my latest acquisition, Forbin? My very accomplished secretary!"

"He looks nice," said Mathis cautiously. "His manners are excellent, I think."

"He's excellent all around," said Pauline. "That fellow can read my thoughts in the dark. He's a frightful pussycat. But for hours he bores me with his 'Marriage of Semiramis' and that horrible 'Death of Pliny.' It's terrible."

"What is?" said Mathis, startled. "What are they?"

"They're pictures he paints, Mathis. But really he's a decent fellow. So ambitious, the dear." Pauline laughed throatily.

She yawned and stretched. She laid her feet on the cushion of the opposite seat and closed her eyes. Mathis stole a look at her mistress thus relaxed. She marveled at her seductiveness. Pauline's slender legs showed through her thin satin dress where her cloak fell away. Mathis leaned over her mistress, noted the sweetness of her full, soft lips, smelled the fragrance of her hair. Pauline opened her eyes. "Am I good to look at, Mathis?"

"You're wonderful . . . too bewitchingly wonderful," the lady in waiting murmured. "But I'm afraid for you. I'll pray for you, Madame."

"What nonsense!" said Pauline, smiling. "Why? Do you really think I'm bewitched?"

"No, no," said Mathis hastily. "I didn't mean that. Bewitching, not bewitched. . . . But you have a dark power, Madame, dangerous to yourself. It makes me tremble for you."

When Pauline climbed the carpeted stairs to her rooms in the Hôtel Charost, Madame de Champbeaudoin, her first lady in waiting, was in the boudoir ready to receive her, but Pauline told her that her services would not be needed. Champbeaudoin curtsied and quietly shut the door behind her. She looked rather like a Spaniard. Her hair, blue-black like a starling's feathers, was smoothed down and parted in the middle to show a fine line of ivory skin. Her nose was delicately curved. The nostrils, flaring a little, gave the face a piquancy heightened by the dark liquid eyes.

Soundlessly in her white silk shoes Madame de Champbeaudoin tiptoed a few steps away from the door. Then she stopped, listened, smiled to herself and slowly crept back to the knob. She put her face close to the keyhole and listened. Meanwhile Pauline had opened a door in her inner room leading to back stairs and the garden. Out of the darkness emerged a tall figure wrapped in a white cloak. It was Jacques de Forbin. Immediately he dropped on one knee and kissed Pauline's hand avidly.

"My darling!" Pauline sighed. She played with his hair. "I had to wait such a long time for you today."

"I was so happy, though," Forbin ventured to say.

"But it must have been terribly cold in the garden."

"It wasn't too unbearably cold," said Forbin, ridding himself of his cloak. "The uncomfortable part of it was that I didn't dare move around. There was a light burning in the Prince's room. He must have come home early."

"I see," said Pauline. A cloud of revulsion darkened her face. "We'll have to get rid of the fellow somehow. Having him around annoys me. If I were a peasant girl, I'd have you kill him for me and get it over with."

"You forget that he's the Emperor's brother-in-law," Forbin said.

"There are other ways of getting him out of the way," said Pauline. "I'll speak to my brother again. . . . But let's forget him now. Of all the terrible bores, he's the worst." She lay down on the divan before the open fire. "Blow out the candles, will you, Jacques?"

It was warm and comfortable in the room. Pauline lay on the couch and looked into the fire. Her secretary sat before her on the rug. The fire crackled and spurted, eating up fine spruce logs. A spicy, resinous odor billowed from the fireplace. Now and then the fire flared up in uneasy orange flames. A wavering dark filled the room, lightening and then sinking. Shadows played on the bright carpets, and in the mirrors were dancing goblin shapes.

"Give me your hand, Jacques," Pauline ordered. Having loosened her bodice, she took his hand and laid it on her breast. "Do you like me all through the day, Jacques?"

He felt her breast, firm and smoothly resilient. He leaned over to kiss it. "You're driving me out of my mind, Pauline," he said hoarsely. But she held him where he was.

"Wait a minute, Jacques," she said. "Don't be so impatient. We have the whole night." Then slowly, lazily, with practiced movements she slipped out of her clothes. As he watched her Forbin remembered what his teacher, David, had said: "*Enfin, c'est une femme-femme.*" "She's double-distilled woman."

Then, reclining in the posture of Canova's "Conquering Venus," she let his mouth and hands have their way. Her flesh shimmered rosily in the firelight, her face was severe with absorption in sensation. No storm of feeling, no unbridled passion clouded her brow.

Yet, despite her blankness of expression, Pauline was intensely enjoying her experience of power. The violent need of the man lying on the floor beside the divan flowed from him almost tangibly. He could not have his fill of looking at her. Her diadem sparkled, half

buried in her hair, and her gold bracelets shone and faded in the wavering firelight. She wore the long pearl, the tear of Montezuma. Held by a fine Venetian gold chain it fell between her breasts.

"My lovely one!" said Forbin passionately. "My goddess!" His eyes filled with tears.

"You're crying."

"I don't know what's the matter with me." Forbin had trouble getting his breath and his voice was muffled by little sobs. "My feelings are all mixed," he continued. "You're such a mystery, Pauline. When I'm closest to you I seem farthest away. There's a barrier in you I can't pass. No one can really possess you."

"Not possess me!" said Pauline indulgently. "My friends can always make love to me if I like them well enough. I give everything I have, my dear."

"Oh, yes, I know that," said Forbin bitterly. "I can have your breasts, your thighs, your mouth. Everything. But not you. Not yourself. You never melt, you never really give way. And when I leave your side there's bitterness in my heart."

"You poor boy! she consoled him. "You have everything I can give you."

"But yourself, Pauline," he insisted.

"Myself?" Her voice was empty.

Each was trapped in his own thoughts. They listened to the crackling of the logs. The shadows came and went.

"Perhaps it's because I'm a Bonaparte," Pauline announced suddenly. "Perhaps it's a curse." Then she got herself in hand. Her voice brightened, like a listless child suddenly caught up by play. "How stupid we are with our wishes and wants!" she scolded. "And time is flying by, darling." She bent down to him, put her arms around him and helped him to the couch beside her.

Noiselessly Madame de Champbeaudoin moved away from the keyhole. He really is her lover, she thought; there can be no doubt of it. I wonder what Fouché will say when I tell him. As she walked downstairs a wave of longing to be loved herself came over her.

When Madame de Mathis told Pauline on the night ride back from Saint-Cloud that she would pray for her, she had hit some obscure mark squarely. It would not leave Pauline's mind. Even in the soundest people are buried seeds of mental illness. But as with

physical ailments, mental aberrations develop fully only under favoring conditions. As a young girl and on into womanhood Pauline had been to all outward appearances uncommonly vigorous, the picture of bodily health. Yet, with the passage of time, it became increasingly evident that the growth of her mind was stunted. The mind is like a magic circle protecting us from evil powers and inclinations within and outside ourselves. If the spiritual life is not properly unfolded, sooner or later there are dangerous repercussions.

Pauline was a Roman Catholic. But her practice of religion—quite apart from her lack of inner conviction—was so superficial that only a Pope Pius could detect any trace of the Christian in her character. Flung into the hurly-burly of the Revolution, living in poverty in a foreign country, she had been robbed of the chance to take root within the traditions of French culture. The only controlling influence that Pauline had ever known was the rude tradition of her clan. It might well have been that, as to so many women, marriage and motherhood would have opened up to her new avenues of development. But she had blindly stumbled past them, however deeply she may have felt their pull. Then, fate had taken away husband and son and now bound her to a man who was no man.

In the struggle upward to power the narrow bonds of the clan burst apart. Each member of the Bonaparte family, the mother excepted, eventually strove only to further his own ends. The iron will of a Napoleon was required to hold them in line at all. And generally he had not the time to disentangle his sisters' personal difficulties. But his sharp eyes had discovered that all was not well with Pauline. He saw that some obscure mental illness was breeding within her. The prospect discouraged him from forcing a crown on her head. The pseudo sovereignty of Guastalla meant nothing. For the same reason he had Fouché keep a close watch on her visitors. This official took up his task with considerable relish. He much preferred fishing in the troubled waters of high society to handling dull run-of-the-mill crimes. Through Madame de Champbeaudoin, over whom he had a hold because of her émigré relatives in England, he kept himself informed on doings in the Hôtel Charost. He knew all the details of the Prince's impotence, of his strained relations with his wife, and he knew about Jacques de Forbin.

But Fouché was clever enough not to pass on all he knew to the Emperor. He had an idea that he could serve himself better by

keeping a backlog of information for use on a rainy day. He attacked the problem of holding Pauline in hand by first spreading rumors of her affair through Parisian society. Sooner or later they were bound to reach Napoleon's ears. By this roundabout method, Fouché concluded, he could raise the price of his detective services, should he be asked to track the scent he himself had started. Since the coronation Napoleon was as jealous as a duenna of his sisters' moral reputation. To him they had ceased to be private persons. They were destined to play out their lives in public, in a theater with all Europe for audience. This fact, despite their inordinate ambitions, the sisters were too stupid to grasp. Fouché argued to himself that he would also have a hold over Pauline. He might always manipulate the threat of banishment, should the need arise. Meanwhile, in order to report something substantial to the Emperor, he spoke earnestly of the bad relations between husband and wife and suggested it might be best to send the Prince out of Paris for a while; absence might make the heart grow fonder.

Pauline's affair with Jacques de Forbin, charming and inconsequential man, gave Fouché something to do, but it gave her neither happiness nor health of spirit. Forbin was not able to provide what she lacked for the good reason he did not have it himself. Gradually he became physically indispensable to Pauline, but with that the relationship ended. In the field of painting Forbin was a dilettante. His technical knowledge was hardly better than that of an art student in the *lycée*. He had no true painting sense, despite his apprenticeship to David. Paralleling his artistic mediocrity was a general dishonesty of temperament, which expressed itself in a posed melancholy. This sort of thing was very shortly to become a fad in England and from there to spread over all Europe.

Superficially Forbin rather resembled Chateaubriand, protagonist of the French romantic movement. Like Chateaubriand he had education, was good to look at, tall, with brown wavy hair and large brown eyes, in which a delicate melancholy served to veil an oxlike emptiness. Forbin's *Weltschmerz*, however, was justified by no painful insight into man's lot. His gloom was rooted in personal disillusion. His "art" was not acclaimed. He had no career and little money, just enough to hold up his head as a sad young man in the whirl of Napoleonic society. Being down in the mouth was a mood

that fitted him like a glove. The attitude supplied background, an aura of mystery.

He was like this when Pauline came across him. She made him her secretary, showed him off to her friends, whom he struck as eminently agreeable, and finally took him on as lover. Naïvely she judged that anybody attractive to so many women must have something to him. In some respects she was not disappointed. Forbin was an accomplished lover. From the first, not unnaturally, he was flattered by Pauline's favor. He was swept off his feet by her physical beauty, and became a plaything in her hands. Yet his slavish love did not blind him to the fact that Pauline never completely yielded to him. At the very peak of their transports he would be conscious of a gulf he could not cross, strain as he would. He suffered, in his trifling way, cursed himself and was forever hounded by the fear of losing this incomparable woman. His affected sorrow turned into real pain. In the end he interpreted the ineradicable distance between him and his loved one as a condition of Pauline's lofty position. It was too great, he imagined, this gulf that separated him, an unknown painter, from the sister of the Emperor of France.

In this Forbin grossly deceived himself. It was a feeling deeper than pride that would make Pauline turn away jaded in his arms, that changed the very timbre of her voice and drew an impalpable yet prohibitive circle about her. This feeling was anxiety—not anxiety from moral scruples or sense of moral guilt, but real anxiety, fear without concrete object. This fear had no logical meaning, no adequate cause, no direction, no point of reference. It was different from fear in the usual sense, for the thing that she feared, not being understood, could not be warded off. Anxiety spread like a fog over her spirit, a shapeless vapor arising from nowhere. Everything imaginable offered a threat. Every event cast an ominous gray shadow. This profound anxiety, most insubstantial of sensations, penetrated into every fiber of her being. It never left her, night or day. Pauline attended dances, went on journeys, went to bed with Forbin, trembled at his caressing words, lived in his arms, yet was not content.

If for Pauline herself this fear was without object, in reality it had a concrete basis. She simply did not have the capacity to recognize what was wrong with her. In self-knowledge she was as blind as a newt buried in a wall. Yet even the blindest animal senses the sun as it feels warmth on its back. So, too, in Pauline's deepest soul there

was an intimation of the clear life of the mind and of a love totally different from Forbin's. This intimation of something profoundly missed expressed itself in the distorted form of intense anxiety.

Love cannot be lifted by the purely sexual. Unless the mind participates it becomes its own caricature. Sexual union must be the way to a fuller life. Should the door to this be shut and women used for carnal ends alone, the pith of their being deteriorates and is defiled. Once having made the final despairing step, women so injured become the source of widespread psychic, as well as physical, unhealth. They seduce men to convince happier women of the unworthiness of the hated male. At the same time they discover the expedient of holding their lives together by a sensation of power—a poor substitute for spiritual growth.

A mental sickness of this order gripped Pauline. She did not transfer the blame onto her lover. She felt her lack keenly but was ignorant of its true nature. Her illness took the form of pervading fatigue. The incessant struggle to find release was too much for her and finally she was exhausted by it. For days on end she lay abed, gloomy, ailing, compresses on her head. She complained of nagging pains, of a pressure at her temples. One day it would be a tugging sensation in her limbs, the next a cramp. The doctors could find no organic grounds for her aches and pains. They saw plainly that the sufferings of their high-placed patient belonged to that group of diseases then known as "hysterical," ailments which they thought were obscurely connected with the female organs. They made no mention of their diagnosis to the patient herself. It was not that sparing her the knowledge would hasten her recovery. It was because hysteria was considered a shameful, socially tabu weakness that would never do for an Imperial Highness. And so they prescribed pills and potions, recommended visits to the warm springs at Aix-la-Chapelle and to the southern Alps.

All day long, then, Pauline lay flat on her back. Her eyes were ringed with black, her cheeks pale. She felt so ill that she did not even want to see her ladies in waiting. From where she lay she could hear the subdued laughter of Madame de Champbeaudoin, scraps of conversation. Since she had become Duchess of Guastalla her entourage had increased considerably. Besides the Spanish-looking Champbeaudoin and the blonde little Madame de Mathis, she was attended by Madame de Barral, Madame de Bréthan and Madame

d'Arjuzon, as well as by Mademoiselle de Crécy and Mademoiselle de Mondreville. Pauline did not have enough to do to keep all these women busy, and accordingly they whiled away their idleness in chatter, embroidery and card games. Sometimes her house steward, a Frenchman from the Midi who looked Italian, would take one glance through the door, sigh and make off with a shrug of despair. His periodic interruptions had no effect on the ladies' behavior. He was not permitted to enter Pauline's room.

Important guests, marshals of France, high civil officers and their wives who came to pay their respects marveled at Pauline's topsy-turvy little court. When guests arrived, the ladies in waiting squealed, whispered, giggled and ran around brainlessly. Within the bedchamber itself they discovered the Duchess reclining in a filmy negligee, a lacy cap over her ringlets. The Negro Paul, whom she had brought back with her from Haiti, was the only male of the household who passed freely back and forth into her boudoir. Soon he would appear with cups of chocolate for everybody. Sometimes he brought in a new dress or hat for his mistress to inspect. Sometimes he would gravely rummage under the bed and finally capture his object—a chamberpot rimmed with solid gold. Holding this on high, he would march out of the room, leaving Pauline's visitors speechless.

One day Junot called with his wife Laurette. Laurette suffered tortures. She could not help seeing that her Andoche was drawn to his hostess by something more than mere sympathy. He had to force himself to listen to his wife when she sought to distract him with apt questions. That infamous creature, Laurette thought; she's trying to get my man away from me right under my nose.

Pauline reminisced about her days in Marseilles and Antibes with Junot. "Heavens, Junot," she said, "how much I loved you then! Remember how I stole the vegetables from Père Baliste's garden and gave you some? Remember?"

"Indeed I do," he said merrily. "Those were happy days!"

"The artichokes were good and sweet," Pauline cried and half rose, so that a round knee came into provocative view.

"The kisses were much sweeter," said Junot.

"Yes, wonderful, sweet as honey." Pauline sighed and laid a slim hand on Junot's shoulder.

Tears sprang into Laurette's eyes as she watched this intimacy. She felt herself shut out of the past that the other two found so

dear. She recalled gossip that her husband had once been Pauline's lover. Sharp words sprang to her tongue, but she dared not utter them. Junot was angling for Murat's post as governor of Paris, and Pauline, after all, was the sister of the man who had the position to bestow.

And then Pauline herself noticed Laurette's jealousy. "Why, Laurette!" she said. "I'll have to show you my new secretary. I'm sure you'll find him congenial." She nodded to Paul and had him fetch Forbin.

Forbin kissed the ladies' hands and bowed to Junot, who could not conceal his annoyance. They talked about the theater. Forbin stood at Pauline's bedside, apparently nothing more than a well-mannered secretary. The conversation drifted to a famous actress.

"She's wonderful as Phèdre." Laurette waxed enthusiastic. "What passion! What beauty!"

"She is beautiful, no doubt," said Forbin, "but her beauty lacks something."

"And what might that be?" inquired Junot, as if his private honor were at stake.

"I can't say precisely," Forbin answered. "Beauty cannot really be analyzed, nor the absence of it. Perhaps she lacks the naïveté, the serenity, the artlessness of real beauty."

Pauline looked at him and quickly he turned to her and looked back into her eyes. The exchange of glances lasted scarcely a second, but it was long enough for Laurette to read into it the whole relationship between Pauline and her lover. Suddenly she was gay and good-humored. She felt a weight drop away from her heart. Junot was flabbergasted by his wife's swift change of mood.

Pouring out her good will like water, Laurette began to praise Pauline's appearance. "You look better than I've ever seen you, Pauline," she lied cheerfully. "Don't you think so, Junot?"

"Naturally," he said, taken aback. "Of course, Madame."

"Has Canova finished his statue yet?" Laurette inquired sweetly. "Junot and I are dying to compare it with the original."

"No," Pauline said. "The master is allowing himself plenty of time."

"Wasn't it unpleasant, sitting before a man with so few clothes on?" Laurette wanted to know.

"Not at all," said Pauline simply. "The room was well heated."

Junot and Forbin laughed heartily. Again Laurette detected Forbin's love for Pauline in his swift glances. Why is it, she wondered sourly, that men are so drawn to her, even by her stupid remarks? Laurette herself was far better educated. Laboriously she had fashioned for herself what she called her "philosophy of life." She had found out, however, that men, even her own husband, were not much interested in this philosophy. Certainly they never caressed her with their eyes. Pauline, on the other hand, could prattle nonsense and create a sensation. There was no justice.

Once again the Negro Paul appeared in the door. "The bath is drawn, Your Highness," he announced.

"Thank you, Paul," said his mistress. She turned to her guests. "What a pity! I'd have liked to talk to you longer."

The Negro bent down to Pauline and lifted her in his arms. He bore her away from the bedroom to the bath. She nodded good-by over his shoulder.

Madame de Champbeaudoin came out of the vestibule to join the procession. "How is our patient today?" she asked heartily.

"Not so well," said Pauline. "I've had such a very pleasant hour. I hope I don't have to pay for it now."

The Negro, Pauline and Champbeaudoin disappeared. Forbin bowed himself out. Junot sat where he was, goggling. "Good God," he mumbled to his wife, "does that colored fellow bathe her, too?"

"How interested you are, my dear, in all she does!" Laurette whispered acidly.

"She's the most beautiful woman in Paris," said Junot hardily. "Why shouldn't I be interested?"

"Such a compliment!" said his wife. "A thousand thanks, sir."

Junot looked at Laurette and smiled. "She's a friend of my youth," he reminded her. "And she is the Emperor's sister, you know. She deserves a little sympathy anyway. She's so helpless."

"Hypocrite!" said Laurette. "How easy you find it to be sympathetic, my love."

"Easy?" objected Junot. "No, not at all."

"But when I ask you to play cards with some of my friends, it's another story, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is. There is no Pauline among them, my darling."

"You men! You nauseate me," said Laurette.

"Ah, you women!" Junot laughed and linked his arm in hers to leave.

Visits like Junot's, bringing sweet nostalgia, were infrequent. Mostly Pauline was alone, with too much time for brooding. She looked back over her life, and it seemed strange to her that she had never had unalloyed happiness. She had everything that a woman could wish for. Her life ran almost like a fairy tale—beauty, youth, riches, a duchy, castles, a fine lover. Yet she was miserable. Something was missing somewhere. What could it be?

Unfortunately Pauline had never learned how to think. The rigors of self-examination were beyond her scope. Her mind generated idle fancies, wandered off after vague longings, flitted among random memories. Round and round it went in a depressing circle, never coming to grips with itself, as when one tries to fix a train of thought while half awake. Certain feelings and images repeated themselves, always making the same circuit, imprisoning her restive spirit.

In this whirligig of memory was centered the statue that Canova had made of her. The sculpture was left just as Pauline had last seen it, the fine limbs still embedded in the marble block. This gave the figure a primitive grandeur, like a Cadmean creature being born from dragon seed and still struggling from the Theban earth. It was this emergence from the marble, the unfinished aspect of the figure, that constantly strayed into Pauline's thoughts. It seemed as if, like herself, the statue were waiting to be brought to life by some clarion summons from the living. Then it would heave itself forth from the rock, throw off the dead weight of marble and step light-footed into the world, veins running rich with blood. Even more clearly Pauline realized that the unfinished Venus was a rebuke, a prayer she made no move to answer, a challenge that drove her along. Yet she did not come to this revelation by virtue of clear insight. Her muddy knowledge was heavy with impulse, transient emotion, dream fogs, all shot through with fear.

And so she was often disturbed by fear of losing her beauty. Ever since Haiti she had not been altogether free from the horror of decay and death. She no longer thought of death as in her early youth, detached from her, striking down other people—Fréron's victims in the death carts of Marseilles, for instance. Death was now a power at work within herself, an intimate force slowly overcoming her

supremely valuable person. And against this consciousness of inexorable decline she could pose no Christian hope of redemption. Nothing, again, but the pride of beauty.

Many a time she would jump out of bed in the middle of the night, light all the candles and look herself over in the mirror. She would sit for long hours, just looking at herself, fearfully searching out the most minute signs of age. But her body, gleaming in its maturity, seemed to endure lovely and cold as always. The image mirrored in the pool of silvered glass was flawless. Yet irretrievably the seconds were running out, the minutes, the hours. She thought of them as great heavy drops, plumping smoothly into dark still water.

No wonder, then, that Pauline's body was her comforter of comforters. Out of her mental weakness, her arrested spiritual development, her inability to unriddle the mystery of her being, out of her failure to relate her individual existence to a larger order arose two psychic maladies—narcissism and nymphomania. These two ailments were in reality two aspects of the same thing—unceasing flight from doubt of self. The flight from a hostile world brought her into the arms of the ancient goddess of love. There she sought shelter.

V

Phantoms

SUDDENLY PAULINE was repelled by the Hôtel Charost, which once she had been so proud to own. She conceived a phobia for the two sphinxes that had guarded the main staircase since the period of the Consulate. Something evil emanated from the two beasts. There they crouched in Egyptian headdress, with breasts of black syenite, claws projecting from their feet, eyes great slits, a mute question on their lips. Pauline came to imagine that they blocked joy from the house. She had them removed. But hardly had two Sèvres vases, painted bright with flowers, been substituted for the sphinxes than she discovered that a mirror was bewitched. When she walked through the room she fancied dark shadows flitted over its surface. She had the mirror covered with a cloth. But the magic persisted —behind the hanging. Accordingly the mirror, a precious piece from the age of Louis XIV, was replaced by a brand-new one with gilt columns on either side. Perhaps it was the mirror's newness, but whatever it may have been the wraith vanished.

Yet scarcely had it been taken away than the ghost popped up again in the rafters, and the window draperies rustled ominously. During the night chilling sounds would come from an old clothes-press. Of course, these noises were just the creaks and groans of an old building. Pauline admitted as much and tried to laugh off her perturbation. Yet again and again they would wake her up, her heart pounding like mad. She would have to fight back the piercing shrieks that gathered in her throat. Or she would awake in a sweat, conscious that intense quiet reigned all about her. A strange, deep stillness, an agonizing air of expectation would be vibrant in every room. This was almost worse than the mysterious sounds in the clothespress.

Pauline visited her brother Joseph in Mortefontaine. Here there was plenty of gaiety and life. Casual visitors and more familiar guests thronged the house. Children played on the steps and made the garden ring with their shouts. It was the height of the summer sea-

son. They sat through long evenings on the terrace and talked until mists began to form over the meadows. For a whole week Pauline was composed and happy. Her sickness of spirit seemed on the wane. Then, early one morning, she had a shocking experience. Long before the rest of the house, she awoke, taut. The curtains billowed in the cool breeze. She got up to look out into a silvery-gray morning. A thin veil separated the pale sky from the earth, a fine-spun opalescence. The grass was cobwebbed with dew, and thrushes sang their matins in a little copse.

Pauline all but fainted. On the wide lawn before the house a man stood looking directly at her. No mistake about it—he had his eye on her. He was a tall, thin fellow, in the long blue blouse of the French peasant, rough black trousers and sabots. On his head perched a decrepit straw hat, the kind peasants put over their horses' ears to ward off summer flies and prevent sunstroke. In his right hand he gripped a long scythe. Immobile, the man stared at Pauline. And yet she was not absolutely sure that he really saw her. Like the goatherd in the Campagna twilight he simply stood, an apparition from another world. Pauline stumbled away from the window and pulled desperately at the bell cord. Endless seconds later Mathis rushed into the room. She was only partly dressed and quite upset by Pauline's imperative summons.

"I'm being watched," Pauline whispered. She dragged the astonished lady in waiting over to the window. The man was gone. The earth must have swallowed him up. The meadows stretched out empty in the morning light, the thrushes sang on. "But I did see someone, I really did," Pauline insisted. She was near tears. "He must have been standing there all night. I know he was."

"That's impossible, Madame," said Mathis.

"No, no, it's not!" Pauline shrieked. "He was there. Do you mean to tell me I'm out of my mind?"

"Maybe it was one of the stable hands cutting hay for the horses."

"If he wanted hay, why wasn't he cutting it?"

"Maybe the grass was too wet. Maybe he was waiting for it to dry a little."

"It was simply awful," Pauline groaned. "I could see his cheeks. He needed a shave and his cheekbones stuck out. He had a horrible mouth. Brutal! Filled with big horse teeth."

Later in the day inquiries were made of the head stableman of the

estate. He assured them that none of the hands had been out that morning. Brother Joseph laughed off the incident. "It was just some peasant from the village out stealing a little hay," he assured Pauline. "You caught him in the act. No wonder he looked at you that way."

"No, he was somebody else," said Pauline, rubbing her hands together nervously. "He wasn't a peasant at all. I swear he wasn't."

"Maybe he was one of Fouché's secret-service men," suggested Champbeaudoin, and then blushed at her indiscretion.

Followed an embarrassed silence. Joseph cleared his throat. "It's not worth while, Mesdames, to bother about the fellow, whoever he was. I'll have the park guarded. How about a game of tennis on the lawn?" Talking and turning to query one another the guests sallied forth.

After this upset Pauline was not at ease in Mortefontaine. She went with her company to the château of Neuilly on the Seine, which Napoleon had given his sister Caroline. And to Neuilly there came, on Caroline's invitation, a troupe of Italian comedians. They put on their show in the summer theater in the park. Tall evergreen trees formed the background. At each side of the stage mossy stone masks of Comedy and Tragedy looked down, wide-mouthed and grimacing, at the audience seated on the gentle slope of turf.

The troupe presented one of the thousand variations of the traditional Italian drama, a frivolous thing with many improvised jokes, erotic in tone and quite amoral. All the familiar figures of the commedia dell' arte glided, danced, jumped and strutted about in the bright summer afternoon. There was the learned doctor, always tripping over his own erudition. There was the militant Scaramouche, who could lie the hands off a clock, and charming Columbine, witty, quick, alive with feminine cunning, a black-eyed piece with a pert nose and legs twinkling under a short frock. And, of course, Harlequin, citizen of Bergamo, was in the thick of things. Over his nose rested a black mask, like someone from a picture of Longhello. He was a dangerous fellow with the ladies, a servant slippery as an eel. At the same time he was highly sympathetic toward lovers in trouble. To their aid he brought his slyness, his tongue-in-cheek gaffs and his clownish capers. In the end the doctor and Scaramouche, against all expectation, lost out, and lovely Isabella sighed a great sigh as she fell into the arms of Ottavio, the colorless young man she had loved all along.

Caroline's guests were enchanted by the masque. Breathlessly they followed the interplay of the universal types. Even the lackeys and the serving girls hurrying back and forth with ices and chilled wines forgot their duties to stare and laugh with delight. Harlequin was too comic for words. His quips had a whip's sting in them. Sometimes out of his world of fantasy little satirical lightnings would hit persons in the audience. There was nought to do but accept the raillery in good humor, though some, to be sure, were not spirited enough to enjoy a laugh at their own expense.

Pauline's ladies in waiting laughed themselves weak. Harlequin made many unmistakable references to Talleyrand's unfortunate marriage to a pretty but abominably stupid girl. He also had something pointed to say about Fouché's ubiquitous spying and Junot's squandermania. He carefully avoided the slightest allusion to the Emperor and the imperial family, though both offered lively subjects for his wit. Harlequin knew an actor's limitations.

Pauline watched the clown's movements with an almost morbid attention. His jerks and hops, his little dance steps to underscore a phrase or mood, his knowing laughter, his sudden silences, the black mask hiding his features yet revealing crafty, roving eyes, all these things made a weird impression on Pauline. He seemed to her a figure out of the world of dreams and the hidden clefts of the soul as he pirouetted on the stage. She was horribly disturbed and nearly wept when the black-masked Harlequin drew near Columbine, letting the audience know by his lewd gestures what he meant to do.

Pauline's uneasy glance strayed to the stone mask of Tragedy that flanked the stage. Its mouth gaped in a cry of agony. It dawned on her fleetingly that the fooleries played on the stage were but a translation of the crushing pathos of existence. Columbine, airy butterfly in the garden sunlight—was she not all womankind? Was it not feminine to the core, the way she laughed, joked, flirted and displayed her grace to the learned Philistine and the boastful soldier so as to divert them from their siege of Isabella? And at the curtain she, too, fell into the embrace of the black-masked demon. For the play ended with Columbine and Harlequin kissing in the center of the stage. The rest of the cast danced about them and sang:

"Columbine, so young and vain,
Attired in the style of Spain,
Is just wild about her gallant,
Black, mayhap, but love's his talent.

Harlequin has got a way,
Kisses, hugs her all the day.
Eyes that hunger, eyes that flame
Quite consume his darling dame."

That evening, in honor of the guests, the marvelous fountains in the park of the château of Neuilly were turned on. Forbin came and Pauline went with him through the gardens to watch the play of waters. The moon hung full and sad just over the tips of black tree masses. The paths were deeply shadowed. The water spilled forth in columns of living silver. Softly buffeted by the night wind, the spray was shaken away in great showers. As they splattered down the drops darkened the stone rim of the fountain basins, and the earth all about.

Pauline did not tarry long in Neuilly. The park frightened her, and so did the empty theater with the stone masks by the stage. She asked her ladies who it was that played Harlequin that afternoon. She discovered that he was a well-known actor, much in public demand at Milan and Turin. Just at the moment he was in hot water for his too-clever sallies. Talleyrand accused him of being in Fouché's pay, whereas Fouché accused him of working for Talleyrand and of taking bribes to make scurrilous remarks about the police system. It wound up in common complaints to the Emperor. Napoleon had the actor brought to him, and talked with him for about ten minutes. Harlequin departed from his distinguished audience richer by a thousand livres.

Pauline decided to move to Le Petit Trianon. In her childhood she had often heard long stories from Elise about the carefree life of Queen Marie-Antoinette and her friends in that little château. Elise, in her turn, had heard them from an old teacher at Saint-Cyr. In her retelling Elise had made it seem as if the Queen's days were an idyl, a fairy tale in a magic twilight. And so now, in her malaise, Pauline remembered many pleasant details, found herself desirous of recapturing them firsthand and so concluded that a shift to Le Petit Trianon was indispensable for her well-being. Everything will be all right again, she thought, as soon as I come under the protective aura of the dead queen. She asked Napoleon's permission. For a moment he hesitated, then consented.

Pauline's house steward was at his wit's end. The constant moving about from one residence to another put a severe strain on his ingenuity. Hardly had he set up a household at Neuilly, installed the

cooks, arranged daily schedules for the servants, than they were to be off again. In despair he begged Pauline not to change her mind, but she just shrugged him off. Trifles were not her concern, she said.

Once in Le Petit Trianon and having looked the place over, she discovered she had deceived herself. It was as unlike a fairy palace as anything imaginable, simply a country house badly in need of repair and a thorough cleaning. The Gobelins had been torn down from the walls of the Queen's boudoir to be used for potato sacks and for clothes to keep out bitter revolutionary winters. The stables, the farm, the little village where once aristocratic ladies had played the country maid were now in an advanced stage of ruin, all tumble-down and grayed by weather. It might have been a carnival the morning after, just before time to pack up and move on.

Indeed, Le Petit Trianon was such a complete disappointment that Pauline went to bed and stayed there. Outdoors the summer was dying. Rain wept on the grimy windowpanes, and the room was damp. Madame de Mathis brought in a pan filled with glowing charcoal to warm Pauline's feet. There was not so much as a fireplace to cheer her bedroom.

"You're spoiling me, Mathis darling," said Pauline.

Just then they heard a commotion outside the door, the hum and bustle of excited voices. Suddenly the door was flung open and Champbeaudoin bolted into the room. "The Emperor, Madame!" she said, quite breathlessly. "The Emperor has arrived!"

[redacted]

over his forehead. His gray eyes were dark with displeasure.

"Why are you in bed, Madame?" he said.

"I am ill, Sire," said Pauline.

"Get up," said Napoleon.

"But I don't feel well," Pauline said stubbornly.

"Get on your legs, slut," Napoleon shouted in his regimental voice. The veins in his pale temples swelled. Fearfully the ladies crowded against the wall. Pauline rose with amazing alacrity. She fished under the bed for her slippers and the attendants rushed over to assist her.

"This is a disgusting pigsty," said Napoleon. "Why isn't the floor polished? Why aren't the windows washed? You, there, Madame," he said to Mathis, "get me the house steward."

Mathis ran out of the door as if pursued by someone with a pitchfork. The Emperor was as suddenly calm again. It was hard to imagine that only a moment before he had lost his temper. "What's her name?" he asked. "Who is she?"

"Who?" said Pauline.

"That little blonde."

"Madame de Mathis, Sire."

"Well," said Napoleon, "she's a neat little thing . . . seems to have manners."

"What is there unusual in that!" said Pauline. She was now hooking up her dress with Madame de Champbeaudoin's help.

"I want to see more of her in Saint-Cloud," Napoleon ordered.

"At your service, Sire," said Pauline. Miraculously her voice was vibrant with health; her weariness had vanished under the impact of Napoleon's presence.

The house steward appeared and held himself bowed forward. Napoleon looked him over as if he were a horse. "Are you an Italian?" he said abruptly.

"No, I'm not, Sire." The steward refused to budge from his bowed posture. "I do not have the honor, Sire."

"You're a blockhead," said the Emperor. "Get out of here." The steward scuttled backward out of the room. Napoleon turned on Madame de Champbeaudoin. "What's your name, Madame, if you please?" he asked. She whispered it to him. "Champbeaudoin?" he said quizzically. "Perhaps you have connections in England?"

"Oh, no, Sire, none," she protested.

"Come, come, Madame," said Napoleon. "You're sending letters to my enemies, aren't you? Do you have anything to do these days with the good folk of Saint-Germain?"

"No, Sire, I don't," said Madame de Champbeaudoin. She was ready to weep.

"Very well, then," said Napoleon. "Leave the room."

"Now you, Madame," he said to Pauline when they were alone, "why are you sick?"

"I really don't know," said Pauline. "I'm so tired all the time."

"Are you dissatisfied with your income?"

"I could possibly use fifty thousand more livres," she said quickly.

"I see," said Napoleon and smiled coolly. "You must attend to your duties as a princess of my house. You must show yourself in public. You're no longer a private person and you've got to put an end to this shiftless knocking about from pillar to post. By the way, where's your husband these days?"

"The Prince is at the Hôtel Charost."

"And why isn't he here?"

"He bores me."

"Unquestionably," said Napoleon. "But his absence breeds rumors. We must give him something to do. I'll think it over. Have you heard from Lucien lately? What does he write you?"

"He's homesick. He wants to see the family."

"Write him in my name that he must get a divorce. I need him."

"He loves his wife," said Pauline.

"What stupidity!" Napoleon's face again clouded over. "Cataracts of sentiment! It's sickening."

"Maybe he's happier doing it," said Pauline slyly.

"Happy!" Napoleon snorted. "Happiness is only a prejudice, Madame."

"Yes," said Pauline. "But long ago when I was a young girl and we didn't have a sou . . ."

"I know," Napoleon broke in. "Then it was different. Yes, yes, I know. But life means no more than a leaf falling to the ground."

"Suppose one revolts against it," Pauline murmured. "Like Lucien!"

"Revolt, you say?" Napoleon looked Pauline over from head to toe. "Try it. Then take the consequences."

"Consequences?"

"Yes," said her brother. "Live an empty life in a strange country. Live in sickness and want. What you will. Or worse than that, if need be." He waited a few seconds for his warning to sink in. Then he added: "I'll take care of Borghese."

With this he left. The Empress was waiting for him outside Pauline's door. Someone had found a wicker chair for her. She had an injured look and very patently did not enjoy such offhand treatment. As she sat in silence ladies in waiting and adjutants hovered about her. The house steward cowered in a corner, his head still inclined, like a clockwise figure that has run down.

"Come, Madame," Napoleon said to his wife. "The Duchess cannot receive you today. She is ill."

"Really ill?" the Empress inquired.

"She's going through some sort of crisis," said Napoleon curtly.

Escorted by her ladies, the Empress followed Napoleon. "It's always like that," she said to her confidante, Madame de Rémusat. "He overlooks everything she does. Every breach of morality and common courtesy. Oh, that precious, beautiful Pauline!"

Bitterness hardened the Empress' face. Under her make-up, below the artful bangs on her forehead lurked the features of a woman forty-five years old who has lived through too much. Of all the Bonapartes she hated none more viciously than Pauline. Pauline was not only a member of the clan who attacked the Widow Beauharnais at every opportunity like so many snarling dogs; she was also the beauty of the lot, the pretty young woman of five and twenty. Even in Saint-Cloud, Joséphine's own stronghold, she captured attention which rightfully belonged to the Empress. Joséphine would have rejoiced to see her enemy sicken, grow pale and lose her mind.

VI

Heroic Interlude

SOME DAYS LATER Prince Camillo Borghese, by express order of the Emperor, was made squadron chief in the Grenadier Horse Guards. The Prince was delighted. He paid Napoleon a thank-you visit at Saint-Cloud. He was all togged out in a brand-new Guards' uniform of light blue. His big shako was set off with a red plume and at his side he sported a large sword in a battle scabbard. Rapp and Duroc had to hide their smiles when they conducted him into the Emperor's study. Napoleon gave the newborn warrior a hearty welcome and, whatever he privately felt, showed no mirth over the loud-clinking spurs. But poor Camillo was in for a horrifying revelation. His brother-in-law lost no time in letting him know that his new military rank was no stay-at-home sinecure. He was expected to join his regiment, betake himself at once to participate in the march from Boulogne to the region of Mainz. The Emperor assured the Prince that the present war with Russia and Austria was a heaven-sent chance to distinguish himself and lay the foundation for a military career; he would surely add luster to the famous name of Borghese.

At first the Prince was shocked to the marrow at the prospect of killing and being killed. Yet however ticklish the undertaking, he managed to assure himself, it had its good side. At least it would allow him to get away from Paris and Pauline. Her neurotics were contagious. He felt himself slipping into a similar ailment. He had the same reason for welcoming military diversions as millions of family men through the ages. The cannon's roar, the whistle of grenades, the uproar of battle would seem sweet music in contrast to the wife's rancor.

So it came about that the Prince found himself jogging along through autumnal rain in a cabriolet amid the baggage train of the Imperial Army. En route to the Rhine he had ridden himself raw, and was now forced to resort to this unmartial style of transport all the way through Bavaria. The Austrian border had already been

crossed, and the going grew harder by the mile. The region was rocky and wooded. Occasionally far-off cannon could be heard, but the thunder did not last for long at a time. Sometimes they passed a dead soldier by the roadside. If he had had boots, someone in the van of the baggage train would have stripped him of them. So now, before Camillo's eyes, he would be lying in peace, stinking up the woods and waiting to be eaten by wild dogs or wolves.

War from the rear was beginning to bore Camillo. It was the same old story every day. Hunt for quarters and stables and forage. Sleep in lice-ridden beds of foul straw at night. All day long the squeak of wheels, the groan of overladen carts, the crack of whips, drivers cursing at the mud. The villages would be deserted whenever the army arrived, except for old people, children and a few girls, peasant trulls who offered their venereal services to the soldiers for a pittance.

Camillo found no heroic strain in this sordid business. It was nothing like the scenes pictured in Ariosto. He failed to see how this dreary rear-echelon activity was going to contribute to his military experience and honor. But he had a lively memory of the way his bloody pants had stuck to the saddle, how each step the horse took was a torment, each stumble a small death. So, honor or not, he preferred to stick close to his cabriolet. There he sat, in a very bad temper, his face long, and his heart heavy with self-reproach. He longed desperately to be home with his mother in the big palace in Rome. He cursed the folly that had tricked him into bed with Pauline, a fate that had culminated by plumping him down under a driving rain in one of Napoleon's baggage trains.

Finally Camillo arrived at Vienna, which had been abandoned to the French by the retreating Austrians. He secured quarters in the palace of Schönbrunn, where he hoped to recover from the fatigues of his first military expedition. He would have been content enough except for the annoying presence of other officers. They were windy fellows, never done with repetitious talk about night patrols, battles *à outrance*, storming lonely castles. Each of these devotees of Mars had inevitably drunk the finest wines and seduced the prettiest women. Poor Camillo! He had nothing to boast of. He felt himself the victim of scurvy neglect, scandalously mocked by upstart Frenchmen whose fathers had been shoemakers, pettifogging lawyers, small farmers. He, the Prince Borghese! Once he was foolish enough to

add to the general fund of anecdote by mentioning his bleeding seat. He earned jeers for his trouble, jeers that undoubtedly would have been far more scurrilous had he not been the Emperor's brother-in-law.

When the army was again set in motion in pursuit of the Austrians, who had backed into Bohemia to combine forces with the Russians, Camillo made up his mind to show these "plebeians," as he called his comrades-in-arms, how an embattled Roman prince behaves. To demonstrate this change of temper, praiseworthy enough, Camillo picked the unhappiest possible moment—the battle of Austerlitz and the point in it when the Russian Kutuzov ordered his cavalry to fall on the French lines between Mount Santon and the heights of Pratzen. Camillo, of course, had not the slightest inkling what was in the wind. His backside splendidly sound again, he sat like a rock on a large horse at the head of his cavalry squadron and gazed at Mount Santon. There, barely visible from this distance, the Emperor and his staff had set up their headquarters. Camillo saw the tiny gray figure clearly through the brilliant winter morning air. He saw him raise his spyglass to his eye, turn and say something to an aide who dashed off. From both flanks, from the hill and from the fishponds of the low land at its foot, issued a brisk cannon and small-arms fire.

Suddenly the heavy crack of cannon came from the rear of Camillo's position. The Prince turned questioningly to his adjutant, who looked upset and could only shake his head. Neither suspected that the outburst came from reserves under Davout, who were trying to turn the Russians' left flank, to drive the enemy back over the Goldbach River and so into the ponds, and then to ram into the Allied center. On the other side, however, old Kutuzov knew the game. Realizing that the decisive moment of the battle had arrived, he turned his fleshy body in the saddle and roared for the Cossacks to charge.

Up on the height of Mount Santon, the Emperor observed the mass of Russian cavalry balled solid and already moving into action. He brought out his gold snuffbox, took a pinch of snuff, sucked it up his nose, sneezed, thought things over. By the time he had slipped the box back into his pocket he had his answer to Kutuzov. He nodded to a chasseur, scribbled a couple of lines, said, "Take this to Marshal Murat. On the double!" Afterward, smiling wryly, he said to Rapp, who was nervously chewing the end of his mustache, "You

know, there's a good chance Kutuzov will break up my maneuver." With his spyglass he followed the chasseur as he galloped full tilt toward the Grenadiers poised below. Rapp sent out more messengers on the heels of the chasseur. At last the Emperor eased back on his horse and softly hummed the popular song "*Malbrouck s'en va-t'-en guerre.*" Rapp watched him out of the corner of his eye. He breathed more quietly.

At this juncture, on the flat below the hill, the adjutant was saying to Camillo, "Prince, would you be so good as to ride to headquarters at the rear of the regiment?"

"Why?" said Camillo. "Everything's quiet out ahead. Not a thing stirring as far as I can see."

"As you wish, Prince," said the other.

"I'm staying where I am," said the Prince shortly. "I'm going to be in this battle if we are used."

"What's that?" The adjutant forgot Camillo. An aide came racing by, giving a sign as he sped past the waiting lines of cavalry. Now, out forward, there was a deep muffled rumbling from afar. Camillo grew aware that the earth was drumming and trembling under his horse. The adjutant's voice broke with tension as he yelled to his men, "Low-er lances! Attack! For-ward, hup!"

In a transport of horror Camillo looked around to see what, precisely, was going on. All the way behind him as far as he could see the lines were in motion. The lances seemed directed at the middle of his fat back. There was nothing to do but dig spurs into his horse to avoid being ridden down. Slowly, heavily the lines gathered speed. Sweet God, Camillo thought, this is a very, very bad joke! His horse cantered forward uneasily, tossing his head. He spurted, almost throwing his rider. They were off at the gallop. Under Camillo the frozen earth was furrowed and pitted with holes. If the horse stumbles, Camillo told himself in panic, Murat's cavalry will ride over my corpse. He clamped his knees against the big animal's ribs and was tempted to take a good grip on the mane. Not daring to venture a look, he could hear and feel the thunder of the wave of attack in which a tumult of horses, men, lances and sabers were inextricably mingled. Then he let out a shriek of pure dismay. He had reached the plateau of Pratzen. Coming toward him across the level land was another identical wave of men and horses.

"Our Father which art in heaven," squeaked Camillo, "give us this

day our daily bread." He got no further. The thought struck cold into his consciousness that praying for bread at this critical moment was senseless. Never, indeed, had his wits been so clear. As best he could, he fumbled at his belt and managed to draw out his saber. Now, at his back, the onrolling chaos of mounted men gave out one unbroken yell. Before him the opposing wave did likewise, though louder, it seemed. When we meet it will be all over for me, Camillo told himself.

His horse had speeded into a terrific gallop and was laboring so hard that his belly heaved and clots of foam flew from his mouth back into Camillo's face. But, curiously enough, they did not seem to draw appreciably closer to the splintering collision that was bound to come. It seemed as if time had altered in nature, was suspended. Reality was suddenly out of joint. It was a profoundly disagreeable sensation. Under his impressive shako Camillo's well-oiled hair all but stood on end.

This is eternity, he thought, the thing they speak of in the Vatican. And now he was not so much frightened of the Russians—their rough horses, their horrendous whiskers, their brandywine faces and rakish fur caps—as he was of this looming eternity. Everything was so bright and transfixed. The clear winter sun shone on brown earth, all cracked with frost. Each detail, each furrow, each grain of sand, each hair on his horse's flattened ears stood out with unbelievable clarity, had a meaning of its own.

After this Camillo did not rightly know what happened to him. He often tried to piece together what took place, but was never successful. All he could recall was that the wind blew ice-cold through his hair as he plummeted forward, that he smelled sweaty horse hide and blood, that his arm hurt sharply. When he came to his senses again he was piping, "*Vive l'Empereur!*" He had to force himself to stop shouting, for the impulse to let out sound, no matter what the sense, was irresistible. His sleeve was slit up to the shoulder and he had a wound in the arm. The blade of his saber was wet with blood. His horse bled from surface wounds. All about lay dead Cossacks, their sightless eyes wide open and staring into the unyielding orb of sun. Not far away the adjutant lay sprawled on the icy earth. "Water! For Christ's sake, water!" he groaned. The man's horse, severely wounded, thrashed and snorted as he struggled vainly to rise onto four legs. Some considerable distance ahead was a great cloud

of dust, in which, now and then, the forms of horses and men would for a moment take clear shape.

Camillo clumsily dismounted, went over to his adjutant and tried to console him. But the man could not hear a word. He kept on babbling, faster and faster and more disjointedly, about a little house on the Somme and a woman called Julie. In the middle of a sentence he cut himself short, spewed out thick bright blood, turned wearily on his side, and was dead.

Camillo dragged himself back to his horse, leaned against the beast's rhythmically breathing side, burst into tears. Why he wept he could not have told. Later he felt it was not so much for the dead comrade, or for himself, as because of the bright winter sun that streamed so beautifully over the frozen waste of the battlefield.

He came to himself at the approach of a little group of riders, headed by the Emperor. Napoleon drew rein and did not conceal his amazement when he saw Camillo's ripped uniform and his sweaty, dirt-stained face. "Prince," he said sternly, "what are you doing here?"

"The charge, Sire," Camillo replied with difficulty.

The Emperor's astonishment melted into a smile. "I'm making you colonel of your regiment, Prince," he said. "But I'll thank you not to lead any more charges. Kindly leave that sort of thing to Murat."

"As you will, Sire," said Camillo. Suddenly he felt very important and military.

"Follow me," the Emperor commanded. The horsemen filed off, Camillo trailing dutifully at the rear.

Reaching the south slope of the heights of Pratzen they saw an astounding sight. Davout had cut deeply into the Russians' left flank. Under the pressure of his fresh troops they were in full flight, no longer an army but a mass of men beset by panic. Their cries split the crystal air. Some were trying to cross the thinly frozen ponds, but the ice gave way beneath them and they disappeared into black water. Grenades burst on the ice and threw up geysers of water. Russian cannon lay scattered about like forgotten toys. Horses, wagons and men in great groups moved helter-skelter toward the little village of Austerlitz, where the church tower was burning like a torch. Shot burst repeatedly among the retreating masses of men.

Farther on, toward the east and the southeast on the road to Olmütz and Hungary, long columns of the beaten army moved away

laboriously from the scene of disaster. Heavy and blue, the early twilight of December set in from the east. In the west the sun was rapidly sinking. Its last rays speared in flame halfway up the firmament. Snow was in the air, presentiment of the heavy fall that on the morrow would cover the battlefield like an immense blanket, all but burying the torn earth and its debris of horses, men and matériel. Camillo, shaking with the evening chill, sat huddled in the saddle.

"It's all over now," said the Emperor, almost sadly, and pushed his telescope together. Carefully he packed it away in the saddle case. "Rapp," he said to his adjutant, "will you look after the Prince?" He meditated on the battle-worn nobleman. Borghese is a decent fellow, he said to himself. I'm almost beginning to like the capon.

At the start of the war with Austria and Russia, Pauline was depressed, not on her husband's account, but rather because she feared her brother's luck was running out. Her anxiety was reinforced by her mother's chronic doubt. These days Madame Mère, as the Signora was now officially titled, sat morose before the fireplace of her salon and dwelt on times past. In vain her ladies in waiting, among them dark-eyed Laurette Junot, sought to lighten her spirits. She was as difficult to amuse as her famous son. She showed interest only when the conversation turned on money and business. Then her eyes would sparkle. She talked about stocks, dividends, interest and profits as avidly as the manager of the Bank of Torlonia himself, to whom she had entrusted her financial affairs.

She had chosen this foreign banking house for the good reason that it was Italian, highly conservative and had close connections with the Vatican. In her opinion French bankers were perhaps passably honest, yet so hopelessly flighty that it was out of the question to patronize them. Over and over in her inner solitude she marveled at the peculiarities of the French nation. She simply could not understand the Gallic spirit, nor follow it as it leaped erratically from one interest to another without ever tiring. She believed she saw in this lust for change the principal weakness of her son's position, over and above the threat of foreign enemies. More acutely than he, she observed that sooner or later France would be sated with glory and authority. The honeymoon cannot go on forever, she assured herself gloomily.

Taking advantage of her mother's old friendship with Madame

Mère, Laurette Junot once permitted herself ironic comment on the old lady's greed. Madame looked sharply at her lady in waiting. Then she smiled and said, "My child, I'm not collecting wealth for my own use. As long as I have my house in Ajaccio and two meals a day I'll be satisfied. But I've got children. And I can see that someday all these kings and duchesses and whatnot are going to come crawling to me for a piece of bread."

Laurette was chilled by her prophecy. She considered it an insult to the Emperor. She was just twenty years old and had grown up under his regime. It was beyond her capacity to imagine that someday his conqueror's hold might weaken, just as no one could have made her believe that her slender body would one day be shapeless and old.

It was the Signora alone who had a keen foresense of danger, the ancients' fear of Nemesis. Perhaps there was one other exception to the general rule—the Emperor himself. It is likely that on this account he avoided his mother, in order not to read corroboration in her piercing eyes. Thoughts of the end often came to him when he sat, exhausted by his titanic labors, alone in his tent or in his study at Saint-Cloud. Not long after peace had been made with Austria, war with Prussia broke out. Before leaving for the front Napoleon fell into a fit of sobbing.

Yet if he had a presentiment of evil, in a few weeks it was dissipated. In the dual battles of Jena and Auerstädt the army feared since the days of Frederick the Great was annihilated. Under a withering artillery fire and harassment by shock brigades the Prussian squares melted like snow in April sun. They became screaming hordes, who threw away their heavy helmets and weapons as they ran. Shortly the Emperor was in Berlin. Now there were the Russians to reckon with, with whom the remnants of the Prussian army had made contact in the hope of establishing a new eastern front.

Throughout these exciting months Pauline continued to live a sluggish life. The passion that she had conceived for young Forbin began to cool, like any other attachment grounded in lust. Sometimes she found strength to write Forbin a titillative letter or two, but she yawned as she composed them, inserting the same ornamental Italian phrases she had used with Fréron.

On her physician's advice Pauline went to live in a small Alpine village. At first—as always with a new environment—there was a tonic

for her in the place, its loneliness, the resinous smell of the spruces, the clear, thin air. She forgot her pains. She liked the mountain meadows, the tangy weeds, the blue and gold gentians. It reminded her of Corsica and the days of the flight from Ajaccio. In the burning sun she sat on some monster glacial boulder, when even the thin goats and their young sought shelter in cliff shadow. Thousands of cicadas sang in the bright heat. Pauline was burned dark from the sun. Sometimes a breath of clean, cold air blew down. One day she tried to bathe, but retreated with a cry after testing the bitter cold waters of the mountain brook.

But the days slipped by too slowly. The mountain world seemed always the same. Hour after hour Pauline would lie in the grass, her eyes protected by a broad-brimmed straw hat. She watched the white clouds gather about the peaks to dissolve in mist. She saw chamois climbing up steep walls, and eagles barely visible in the airy sky. She listened to the incessant rush and murmur of water, the dull, heavy sound of distant avalanches, the wild rattle of tumbling stones, and the never-ending rush of the wind through wiry grasses. But the great world of nature, the play of cosmic forces, found no echo in her heart and did not soothe her. For some reason she was shut out. The cliffs did not really sing to her; the hot sun did not caress her; it did her no good for the lovely gentians to nod their heads. The Parisienne, the Duchess, the Imperial Highness had conquered. The doors of nature were slammed in her face.

It seemed a good thing at first when Forbin finally arrived to amuse her. But Forbin fitted into Alpine scenes even less than she. His gentle melancholy was farcical amid the everlasting work of rock, water, sun and ice. His historical paintings, forced characterizations, dry colors, spaceless vistas meant nothing in this enormous outdoors reality. He could not hope to paint what he saw, and he had little new to tell Pauline. Constantly he chattered about Paris, social gatherings, local events, acquaintances of his own ambitious stripe. But Paris was so far away. Forbin's conversations rang hollow against the great background.

It is true that Pauline heard the voices of universal forces more clearly than Forbin. But the more insistently they whispered in her ears, the more demands she made on Forbin to blot them out. He did what he could, but it was not enough. In the end he avoided her. He would roam the mountains at night sick at heart with longing for

Paris. Pauline felt neglected, and, what was far worse, she was beginning to be bored by him. Soon there were lively squabbles. The bickering rose to a point where Pauline hurled a book at her lover's head in the presence of Madame de Champbeaudoin. The book was Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse*, a rather heavy volume. Good Jean Jacques had never intended it, but Pauline habitually used these love letters of an ideal young couple as a source for fine phrases. Now she converted them to an even more unintended use—as a brickbat. Forbin survived the scuffle with a sizable lump over his right eye. His nerves were twittery after that.

He chose discretion, and fled. A herdboy carried his bulky portmanteau, which Pauline, at the height of their romance, had decorated with forget-me-nots. When Forbin arrived at the rim of the range and saw below him the valley of the Rhone in the blue twilight, village lights already twinkling and Paris beckoning, he was of a mind to fall on his knees and thank God he was well out of it. He was more than satiated by his mistress' eternal petulance. Under his amiable exterior lay a growing fear of imperial reprisal. The mountain tryst had been quite too obviously clandestine. There had been times when he felt like a sneak thief in danger of being caught in the act on a parade ground.

Forbin took out his purse and gave the herdboy a few sous. Then, swinging the wallet by its strings, he went down the steep path. His thoughts, escaping from the mountain covert, took heart, ran ahead of him to the next village and the next inn, where a roast fowl would await him, and on by post chaise to Paris and his mansard rooms with the still unfinished "Death of Pliny" on the easel.

VII

The Music Master

NOT LONG BEFORE a certain Giuseppe Maria Felice Blangini had turned up in Paris, an Italian with dark eyes, white skin and abundant black curls that fell about his shoulders. This newcomer with the fulsome name could play the violin and the piano. Overnight he achieved a musical reputation. But it was not precisely his musical talent that attracted ladies of high society. His appearance and the dash of his style had a great deal to do with his success. Actually his music was an accompaniment to a wondrous dramatization of himself. A deaf person could read the music from the rolling of his eyes and the movement of his body. If he played something of a serious nature, he would wrinkle his forehead alarmingly and throw out tragic glances. Melancholy bits he improved by shedding real tears. Playing love songs called for a puckering of his lips to receive imaginary kisses. And when he made dance music he jigged and drummed with his feet. His mimetic powers were extraordinary. His musical gift was on the par with a first-rate organ-grinder's. He concentrated entirely on light music, the light and sentimental. Mozart, Haydn and Gluck he was wise enough not to attempt.

Signor Blangini, then, was something of a sensation, above all among the Parisiennes. He was a fraud, with the gall to stand before a crowd and make an ass of himself. His false gestures and his caterwauling proved attractive to the feminine world, young and old. They were carried away and began to love the clown. It was rumored, too, that Blangini fiddled and banged in order to support an aged mother and two younger sisters, who lived in a clean little tenement in far-off Milan. A great deal of their leisure was spent, the story had it, in praying for the continued success of the most precious of the Blanginis. By virtue of this pious hoax a halo of sentiment settled about his glossy curls. The same women who could ignore wounded veterans begging in the streets were breathless lest Blangini's violin should break a string and so endanger the security of his mythical

family. The "maestro," as his admirers called him, often played out of tune, particularly on the violin, a notoriously fractious instrument. But his most hideous discords stirred audiences to a delirium of gratitude.

It now happened that the court of the Duchess of Guastalla was in immediate need of a music master's services. Pauline chose the great Blangini. The offer was promptly accepted. The steady income promised to be more attractive in the long run than spectacular earnings on occasion. Besides, Blangini was rather tiring of the adulation of Paris. Perhaps Paris was ready to tire of him; in the rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré a fortuneteller had appeared who seemed to have an equal charm for the credulous.

Blangini was no fool and knew where to draw the line. Once away from the crowd and its greed for sensation, he behaved like any sensible man. He had his hair cut to normal length, bore himself modestly, and within his musical capacities did the best he could to carry out the obligations of his job. Pauline was somewhat disappointed with the new Blangini, the mild sheep who had crept forth from wolf's clothing. He was not half so interesting as before, though admittedly he played much better. He accompanied Pauline on the piano without striking a single sour note. He set about training her voice. With his little orchestra he played for dinner and gave concerts in the château of Neuilly and in the Hôtel Charost. The Emperor himself came to these functions. Blangini was terrified of the short fellow who strolled so easily among the ladies of the court, who pinched his sisters' ears, who loudly hummed along with Pauline when she sang songs that he liked and who generally acted more as if he were in an army tent than in a salon. Blangini's hands would tremble, his breast contract with emotion, and still he could not tear his gaze from the Emperor. He was at the same time attracted and repelled by the man's vulgarity, as a bird is by a serpent.

Blangini's trepidation was not without reason. He had fallen head over heels in love with Princess Pauline, and naturally he thought that a passion which could rob him of many a night's sleep must be written large on his face for all the world—and especially for Pauline's omnipotent brother—to see.

During her practice sessions and conversations with Blangini Pauline behaved as usual, that is, without restraint. While he sat at the piano bathed in a sweat of desire and apprehension she would walk

about, singing away, wearing scarcely a handful of clothes. He had to use his last ounce of will to keep his eyes on the notes rather than on Pauline's only too manifest charms. His dilemma did not escape her notice, for, like the rest of her sex, she registered and classified as a matter of course the symptoms of the lovelorn male. She was not the least offended by her music master's failing, though socially Blangini was beneath her notice, hardly more than a well-paid servant. It amused her to sharpen his agonies. Sometimes she would deliberately walk up to the piano, put her hand on Blangini's shoulder, let her breast press against his arm, all on the excuse of seeing whether a note was sharp or flat. During this maneuver poor Blangini would alternately pale and flush and let his hand flutter weakly over the keyboard.

"You're not in good form today, maestro," she said once.

"It's much too hot in the room, Your Highness." He patted his forehead with a handkerchief.

"Tomorrow will be better," teased Pauline. "If you promise to play well I'll come to my lesson in the ball gown I'm going to wear at Neuilly. It's frightfully daring, Blangini."

He sighed deeply. Suddenly he said, "Your Highness is so beautiful."

"You think so? Do you really?"

"I think so with all my heart," Blangini vowed. And his hand went to his heart instinctively.

"Well, I'm afraid musicians aren't to be trusted. They're so easily carried away."

"It is my deepest conviction, Your Highness," said Blangini in a graveyard voice.

"Come, maestro." Pauline was tiring of the game. "You're altogether too gallant. I'll see you tomorrow, sir."

After she had left Blangini sat for some time pensive on his bench. At last he raised his eyes and caught sight of a volume of Rousseau on the piano top. Idly he took the book, leafed through it and read. There's true love for you, he murmured to himself. I believe that if I could express myself like this damn Saint-Preux I could have Pauline. The more he read, the more entranced he became. Spreading out the fingers of his right hand he struck appropriate chords as he followed the flow of feeling. In the book he discovered his own situation touchingly recorded.

If I could only say things like that! he told himself. Then it came to him. Quick as light he rippled off a becoming arpeggio and ended it in thunderous bass chords. Even if they execute me, even if that brother of hers makes the most of it, I'll do it just the same, he vowed out loud. It's my right as a man. For a time he stared out the window across the wintry garden to the Champs Elysées. After that he sat down at a secretary and wrote:

Most Exquisite Mistress—

I was running through La nouvelle Héloise *and read this: "A hundred times a day I feel the urge to throw myself at your feet and bathe them in my tears, to find there either forgiveness or death. But each time a deathly fear saps my courage; my knees tremble and refuse to bend; words freeze on my lips; my soul cannot find refuge from the dread of angering you.*

"Could anyone in the whole world be worse off than I? My heart is aware of its guilt, and yet it does not know how to escape this guilt. My transgressions, my pangs of conscience give me no rest. I do not know what my fate will be, and so I wander amid intolerable doubts, between the hope of forgiveness and the fear of punishment. But no, I have not the right to hope."

These words moved me greatly, for they describe my own condition to the letter. I suffer when I see you, when I look into your eyes, when I behold the proud sweep of your brows, when I watch the flight of your rosy fingernails over the keys, when I smell the fragrance of your hair and of your breath. This agony fills all my days. And yet if I am not in your presence, my life is a desert waste. As restless as the damned, I long for the hell of my own making, a hell that like Dante's is at once icy deluge, sheet of flame and stormy buffeting. And I long, too, for Paradise, as I pray and lose all consciousness of self within the matchless orbit of my Heavenly Queen.

O beautiful mistress, I beg never to be banished from your dear nearness.

Your happy, most unhappy, servant,
Blangini

Blangini read his letter over several times, nodding approval. Here and there he dotted i's and crossed t's. Then he laid the missive on the volume of Rousseau and put it on Pauline's desk.

It was early February and snow was falling. Pauline, unaware of Blangini's activities, sat in her apartment in a deep chair with her feet on a stool. From her comfortable position she looked out into the blank sky. The first flakes slowly drifted down, in a quiet way presaging a heavy storm. Already the snow muffled the city's sounds. Carriages rolled almost silently through the Champs Elysées, and the horses' hoofs seemed covered with wadding.

Pauline was tired and soon fell asleep. She dreamed. It was also snowing in her dream landscape. But the snow was thicker and grayer by far. An immense field spread out grayly under invisible skies. There was a small village, a huddle of straw-roofed huts. A little white church, not much larger than the huts, was in the center of the scene, and about the church white crosses leaned feebly in the snow. In one corner of the cemetery the ground rose into a low hillock. A solitary rider was posed on this eminence.

Pauline could not make out his face. Whoever it was, he looked straight ahead of him into the melancholy whiteness of the plain. Pauline felt at once who it must be—her brother Napoleon. Anxiously she watched him and saw what he was looking at. Great lines of men were standing in the whiteness, weighted down with snow, their beards and eyelids crusted with frost. Blue-wheeled cannon were half buried in snow. It was eerie, this quiet and the muffled whiteness.

Then the men, she saw, were moving slowly forward, silently, sadly, purposefully. Pauline was sick with worry for her brother as he slumped immobile in the saddle, his shoulders hunched together. The men in their long cloaks and rough shoes plodded forward. Nothing can hold them back, Pauline thought. Then suddenly, far off to the right, she saw riders approaching in large numbers over the flat fields. These newcomers, too, moved soundlessly, although clouds of snow dust rose under the bellies of their chargers and foam and steam flew from the horses' mouths. The riders fell on the men on foot, slashing with naked swords. Their faces, like their opponents', were indistinct, the eyes vacantly staring. The men on foot looked sad, yet they did not seem to feel the saber cuts. They pressed on slowly, ineluctably, toward the rider poised on the rise in the cemetery among the tilted crosses in the snow.

At this point, midway between waking and dream, Pauline realized the truth. The riders and the foot soldiers were all dead. Even the horses were dead. Looking closer she saw bloody holes in the pale

foreheads, and mouths that had been hacked away so that the teeth lay bare. She saw that some of the men were without hands or feet or legs. Their long cloaks were blackened by powder burns. Some had lost the whole brainpan, some had empty eye sockets. They were disfigured, crippled, torn apart in every way imaginable. The face might be nothing more than a mass of raw flesh out of which peered two implacably sad eyes. Others were jerky grotesques of men, disorganized by shock and behaving like madmen in a seizure.

It was a battle of the dead, Pauline knew; a battle without sound, without feeling, with no partisan shouting. Ghosts in the snow, only that. Consumed with fear and curiosity she stared at the back of the solitary rider. Perhaps it was not Napoleon after all. Under his snowy green coat he was all bones and angles. He seemed to become aware of Pauline's scrutiny. Slowly he turned about. Then she saw that his eyeholes were empty. His little hat was perched jauntily on a bald skull. It was Death himself, Death dressed up in the white leather vest and green battle tunic of the chasseurs, booted and spurred on a dead horse. His teeth rattled loose in his gaping jaws. Between them insecurely he held a long-stemmed red rose. Carefully he took the rose from between his teeth, hardly able to hold it in his hand of bones. Grinning he flung the rose to Pauline.

She tried to run away, but could not, and had to stand and watch as if rooted to the spot. She looked at the little church and saw that the windows had been blown out. Splinters of glass stuck in the lead frames. The broken windows exposed the wrecked altar and the debris of saints' statues. The statues' limbs, broken off, could not hold the covering of robes in place. This, to Pauline, was the most terrible feature of all.

She was so frightened that she groaned and awoke. Perspiring and trembling, she forced herself upright in her chair and looked around. Outside the snow was still falling, more thickly than before. She imagined she smelled roses. It was twilight in the warm room. Then she saw that next to her on a table were some long-stemmed red roses in a Sèvres vase. She was exhausted, miserable. The air lay heavy in the room.

Pauline's distress would have been even more acute had she been able, this same evening, to look on the actual battlefield of Eylau. Everything she had seen was there: the church, the cemetery, the tilted crosses, the hillock providing an outlook for Napoleon. But

instead of moving to attack, the dead lay still like any dead, almost snowed over, and paid no heed to the falling twilight. Everywhere were dark flecks of men and horses in the snow, many of them piled in thick heaps. Here, only a few hours before, Bennigsen's and Augereau's infantry had clashed. Useless cannon lay on their sides, held up by one wheel. The Emperor rode darkly through the dead, his coat collar high about his face. Silently he dismounted to inspect a mound of casualties. His eyes filled with tears he had no strength to wipe away. "This is not war," he muttered. "This is sheer murder." Leading his horse, he walked slowly to meet Ney, who had arrived too late in the west with his weary battalions.

Pauline went down into the music room. Desperately she wanted diversion, anything to erase the dream and to fix herself safely back in the world of everyday. Her dream was of the kind which leaves enduring aftereffects of menace, poses unanswerable questions, breeds anxiety, releases voices from the depths that echo long after the image itself has dimmed. In this mood she came on Blangini sitting at the piano. She slid onto a chair before the secretary. There lay Blangini's letter. It bore the salutation: *To Her Imperial Highness, the Duchess of Guastalla, Princess Pauline Borghese.* She looked in surprise at the musician, took the letter, opened it and read. While she read she felt the warm, joyful lifeblood again flow in her veins, driving out panic. She threw off her dream.

"Blangini, have you the impudence to say you love me?" She laughed.

"Yes, I love you," cried Blangini. He fell on his knees by the piano. "Have me executed. Tell them to kill me. I still won't stop loving you, Princess."

"My dear boy, what do you take me for?" said Pauline. "Do you imagine I have a heart of stone?"

"You could not have," said Blangini, as fluently as his posture allowed. "For in that case out of sheer despair Paris would be depopulated of its young men."

"You think so!" said Pauline. "What a shameless little *italianino* you are, Blanginino *mi.*' Do you say this sort of thing to every woman you take a fancy to?"

"I beg you not to trifle with me, Princess," said the music master with considerable feeling. "This heart beats for you alone, Princess."

"How interesting! And for all the women who make eyes at you while you're fiddling away? I know how they send you love letters and ask for just one little lock of your hair. Didn't somebody want your silhouette? You're a dreadful fraud, Blangini."

"Ah, but they mean nothing to me any more," he swore. "In comparison with you, Princess, the whole lot of them look like rag dolls."

"A fraud and an ungrateful fraud! Admit it. Aren't you?"

"Whatever you wish, Princess." The maestro's knees were paining him. "Would you be so gracious," he said, "as to relieve me from this awkward position?"

"Oh, no! I wouldn't think of it!" Pauline sat on the divan, her feet up and arms about her knees. "You got yourself into it, didn't you?" she asked. "I really must let you stay that way."

"I can't kneel here forever," Blangini wheedled. "I beg you . . ."

"Well, you would be a curious piece of furniture. Come, then, get up and kiss my hand. You're forgiven, sir, though you don't deserve it."

"A thousand thanks, lovely lady," Blangini cried. He scrambled to his feet, glided to Pauline and industriously planted kisses up her bare arm from hand to shoulder.

"For heaven's sake, Blangini!" said Pauline. "Enough, enough! Can't we have a bit of music or something?"

Blangini, face wreathed with triumphant smiles, returned to his piano bench and set to with a will. Pauline sang her favorite song, Rosina's aria from Cimarosa's *Barber of Seville*. His ears pricked up. Never had Pauline sung so well. Could it be his doing? Joy! Pauline herself was surprised at her facility. She had a notion that the sweet melody was exorcising the last trace of her dream.

VIII

The Man Behind the Scenes

THIS SUMMER of the year 1807 Pauline journeyed to the south of France. Since everything in her own little court circle was colored by her moods, and since her moods changed almost hourly, the trip was something of an adventure. Several times no one had a clear idea where they were to spend the night. Sometimes the party wandered about in the dark trying to find a house, or a village that offered something to eat. So long as the weather held fair these small explorations were rather amusing than otherwise. The owner of a château or some good citizen was sure to avail himself of the honor of entertaining the Emperor's sister. It was a very warm, dry summer. Cloudless starry nights followed one after another. Pauline liked best to travel in a sort of sedan chair that had been specially constructed for her. She claimed that the joggling of the ordinary carriage increased her chronic agonies. Her chair resembled a very large divan. On it Pauline in a sheer white dress would stretch out in Canovaesque poses.

Many a good peasant was frightened out of his wits on first seeing the spectacle of Pauline traveling and would hastily make the sign of the cross. Her fantastic chair followed behind coaches packed with giggling young ladies, protected by outriders. Baggage carts brought up the rear. One of them was devoted to the transport of Pauline's bathtub, an object of outlandish interest among the country gawks along the way. Sometimes strains of music would be wafted from the caravan. Blangini's services, musical and amatory, were in frequent demand. The arrival of the imperial train at some lonely country villa, often occupied only by women whose men were off to the wars, was almost always a sensation. Pauline's satellites immediately commandeered the place, claimed every bed, rummaged at will through drawers and closets. The exhausted hosts would be glad to see the imperial swarm move on to other victims of their gaiety.

In this haphazard fashion Pauline finally arrived at Antibes. She

was delighted, genuinely delighted for once, to be again in a place that once had meant so much to her. She was near weeping as they approached the Château Sallé. The wilderness of roses had not changed, nor the sea. As ever the gray cliff rose up sheer, and there were the ledges where she had sunned herself. There, too, were the same twisted pines, flinging out arms as if in ecstasy. Inside the château itself little had changed from the old days. The adventures of Psyche were still depicted on the dining-room wall, and in Pauline's bedchamber the summer light bathed the white bedcovers in cool green.

She was so excited by her nostalgia that she took the trouble to show her ladies in waiting about the place. She showed them her own room, the Signora's and Elise's, the table where Napoleon once had sat. Though all was much the same, the château did seem much smaller. She was amazed, indeed, by the smallness of the rooms and of the garden. Then she realized that it was she, of course, who had changed. Sadness overcame her as she struggled to recapture an image of the fourteen-year-old girl, half wild and without a care, who had fallen in love with Junot. It was sobering, to think what she had been and what she was now. She asked herself with a shudder what she would be like fourteen years hence. It's true enough, she admitted to herself, that I have more than I ever expected. But yet how curiously without meaning, how trivial her grandiose present compared with the dreams of her childhood! Her life lacked something. She wracked her brains to discover what it might be. Questioning and wondering, she retraced the bright terrain of the past. But in vain.

Impatiently cutting short her reverie, she asked, "I wonder whether Père Baliste is still alive?"

Inquiry revealed that the hardy gardener of vegetables was still tending his plants. He was summoned at once. His hair had whitened, his shoulders were more bent. Père Baliste no longer wore his fancy cap, flowered smock and felt shoes. Now he covered his creaky limbs with an old-fashioned frock coat. In his hand dangled a basket of juicy artichokes. He stood before Pauline at a loss.

"The wonderful artichokes!" she said. Greedily she snatched one from the basket, tore out the leaves and sank her teeth into the succulent flesh. The ladies in waiting looked at one another with knowing glances.

"They're better than ever this year," Père Baliste murmured. "We had a lot of spring rain and plenty of sun afterward."

"Père Baliste," said Pauline, "I still owe you for the artichokes I picked in your garden years ago."

"Yes, yes, so you do," the old fellow mumbled. "And for the onions you trampled down, if it please Your Highness."

Pauline laughed merrily and had three hundred francs counted out into the gardener's shaky hand. "That ought to cover all damages. But tell these ladies and gentlemen what you used to call me in those days."

"That was all a mistake, Your Highness."

"The devil's daughter is what he called me." Pauline was enjoying the old man's discomfiture. "What do you say to that, Blangini?"

"If he had called Your Highness the devil's own beauty," said Blangini, "he would have come nearer the mark."

Père Baliste was not listening to these pleasantries. Slyly he looked up at Pauline. "Would it be possible, Your Highness," he asked hoarsely, "to give me a recommendation as your purveyor?"

"Of course," said Pauline, "I'll do that for you."

Père Baliste made quite a stir the next day in the Nice market place. He had put up a new sign on his cart: "Père Baliste, Chief Purveyor to Her Imperial Highness, the Duchess of Guastalla." His wares were sold in no time, though he had raised the price of artichokes ten sous a dozen. And in this way a reflected ray of Napoleon's glory caused a flurry in the vegetable markets of the Midi.

From Antibes Pauline moved to Hyères. She felt well in this sunny land of rock, sea and palms. For hours on end she shut herself up in her room with Blangini and would admit no one else. Once Cardinal Spina, the Archbishop of Genoa, sought an audience, and she kept the silver-haired dignitary waiting for more than an hour. Champbeaudoin reminded her mistress that such behavior came close to being an insult to the office of cardinal. Pauline laughed and said, "I grant you that, Madame. But what could I do? Blangini and I were just at the most interesting point of a duet." She pinched Champbeaudoin's arm wantonly. That afternoon Champbeaudoin wrote a long letter to Paris.

The happy days in Hyères did not last long, for without warning Camillo Borghese appeared on the scene. At first Pauline refused to receive him. She wept and retreated to bed. The entire household

was in an uproar. Conjecture buzzed. Ladies and gentlemen ran around like ants in an anthill. The house steward scuttled about quite distracted. "What are we going to do about dinner today?" he asked. "Is the Prince dining with the rest? Will he be placed next to Her Imperial Highness? Where will Blangini sit?"

The ladies only laughed at him. "That's your affair, my good man. You're the steward and that's the job you're paid for."

"Sweet God on high!" said the house steward. "This will surely be the death of me."

"Don't look as if you were going to be hanged," said blonde Mathis. "You won't die from a few pinpricks, silly."

"That's what you say, Madame," protested the steward. He was ready to weep with exasperation and nervousness. "Maybe it would be better if I jumped off a cliff. If the Emperor hears of this he'll have me shot. And I hate to be shot, I hate it."

"Nonsense," said Mathis. "The Emperor is far away. Besides, he's not half so bad as he's painted. He has often talked to me at Saint-Cloud. Even pulled my ear, sir. So there!"

"Yes, but that's a horse of a different color," the steward insisted. "I'm no pretty little blonde."

"Tra-la-la," hummed Mathis and did a few dance steps.

"Merciful Mother of Jesus!" said the steward. "How little the world cares."

But despite his forebodings everything straightened itself out. Camillo had brought a letter from the Emperor which served to let Pauline know that her husband had been made governor general of Piedmont. *In consideration of his excellent services at Austerlitz,* the Emperor wrote, *and because he did not hesitate to risk his life, I have decided to relieve him from the fatigues of a military career. He is better suited to civilian pursuits. Therefore I desire you most urgently, Madame, to stand at his side and share duties and honors with him. I am convinced that you can represent France and my person as charmingly and profitably in Turin as you did in Haiti and Rome.* The message was signed: *Your deeply affectionate brother, Napoleon.*

Pauline sighed in the realization that this time there was no escape. And after all she did feel rather flattered. Her brother seemed to think a good deal of her, their differences notwithstanding. So she appeared at table more ravishing than ever in green silk, allowed her-

self to be kissed by Camillo and generally behaved with discretion and warmth. A heavy load fell from the shoulders of all present, particularly from Camillo and the harassed house steward. Only once did she look around to inquire, "Where's Blangini? Why isn't he playing this evening?"

"He had to leave suddenly for Paris," Champbeaudoin explained in a whisper. Pauline raised her brows, shrugged and promptly forgot her music master.

In fact Blangini had received a note from the secretariat of the lord chancellor, advising him to repair with all haste to Paris, where his presence was urgently needed. Blangini was dumfounded. He carried out the order with utmost speed. Titles, high positions, rich perquisites danced before his eyes. From each post station he wrote a tender note to Pauline, kissing the missive before he sealed it.

Arrived in Paris, however, he found there had been a curious mistake. Actually it was Fouché, minister of police, who wanted a word with him. Blangini broke out into a cold sweat and his knees shook. With enormous reluctance he forced himself to report on time. He was obliged to wait a good two hours in an anteroom. Poor, duped Blangini found his anxious waiting something of a martyrdom as he sat in the airless, cheerless little room. Finally called before Fouché, he was torn between the urge to heap abuse on the minister's head and the fantastic impulse to admit to all sorts of crimes, none of which he had ever dreamed of, that he might be free of his examiner as soon as possible. But he did neither. He just stared at Fouché like a sick sheep. There sat the dreaded minister of police behind a broad desk, a big-headed man with iron gray hair, dressed in a plain brown suit.

"Kindly be seated, Monsieur Blangini," said Fouché and pointed to a chair covered with police documents. "Just throw those papers on the floor. The charwoman will pick them up."

Carefully Blangini did as he was told, handling the papers as if they were a lighted fuse. Carefully he sat himself down on the edge of the chair.

"It's frightfully warm today, isn't it?" Fouché sighed. "How I should love to be out in the country with my children! But here I must labor. Is everything in good shape down below, Monsieur Blangini?"

Blangini looked fixedly at his own shoes, in a stupor.

"I mean down at Hyères, with Her Imperial Highness the Princess Pauline," Fouché explained. "I take a particular interest in the Princess. Such a charming lady, I think."

"The Princess is enjoying the best of health, I believe," said Blangini and wiped away copious perspiration.

"Fine, splendid, glad to hear it," said Fouché. "Between you and me, my dear Blangini, the Princess' health is one of the police department's most vexing cares. You must realize that her welfare is constantly in jeopardy. France is alive with all sorts of maggots—charlatans, rascals, traitors—you know what I mean. No end of vile specimens. It's hard to believe it, but they will try to worm their way into the Princess' confidence. We have to guard her from danger ever more assiduously since the Peace at Tilsit. All Europe is jealous of us, of course."

"I can understand that," gulped Blangini. "To be sure, sir."

"You don't know the names of any such monsters who might be bothering the Princess, do you, Blangini?" said Fouché. He picked at his teeth with a folded scrap of paper. "We should be grateful for any information you might place at our disposal. Madame de Champbeaudoin tells us you enjoy the highest favor of the Princess Pauline. She says, in fact, that for many hours at a time you are fortunate enough to be alone with her. Talking, of course, in her boudoir. You must be pretty well up on everything that's going on. Aren't you?"

"I? Why, I don't know a thing," protested Blangini. "All that we ever talk about is music."

"Such an interesting theme! I do wish my duties allowed me more spare time. We people from the lower classes love music, you know. My colleague Robespierre played the flute more than passably well. He loved country tunes. I'm very much like him in that respect, sir." Fouché smiled indulgently at himself, then looked up squarely at Blangini. "You don't know anybody who has been molesting the Princess, do you?"

Blangini swallowed a large lump. "Indeed I don't, sir," he stuttered. "I don't know a soul."

"Such a pity! We have reason to believe there's someone doing just that. You can imagine how we should like to catch him red-handed. Providing, of course, there really is such a person. You know, I'm beginning to doubt it a little after what you tell me."

Suddenly his eyes hardened and he spoke in his Jacobin voice. "Let us assume," he growled distinctly, "the existence of this criminal. Let us assume some degenerate is taking advantage of the Emperor's sick sister. Let us assume, for our purposes, that this man is a musician. Music, you know, Blangini, is an excellent means of holding the interest of high-placed women, is it not?"

"No. . . . I don't know. Really . . ." said Blangini. "That is . . . well . . . I really could not say, sir."

"Well, never mind. Let's pursue our hypothesis," said Fouché. "What do you imagine, Blangini, that we should do with our assumed criminal if he fell into our hands?"

"Would you have him shot?" Blangini suggested weakly. Sweat was raining down his forehead and his knuckles had turned white.

"Oh, that would never do. You simplify matters far too much. We have the civil code and the public prosecutors to take into account. We couldn't very well deny their authority, could we? And we couldn't bring public charges, for that would defame the lady's honor. You see, Blangini?"

"I do," said Blangini honestly. "What . . ."

"Well, there are so many possibilities. There's no end to them. Let me sketch you a few. For example, when the musician we're assuming left some house or other, say this building we're in right now, quite unexpectedly some tiles might slide down on top of his head from the roof. The carelessness of drunken workmen, of course. You know how they are. Perhaps a carriage might run him down in the streets while he was out for a walk. Maybe footpads would dispose of him some night. The police can't keep tab on every criminal in Paris, Blangini. You know that as well as I. As a matter of fact, the ways of removing our supposed musician are numberless. He could be smothered under his bedclothes, having been drugged. He could commit suicide in the Seine. He could be trapped in a burning barn. Anything. However—" Fouché raised his eyes to the smoke-blackened ceiling—"come to think it over, all these forms of retribution aren't quite to my taste. Such an ambitious man has earned a better death, more heroic in style."

"You think so?" said Blangini feebly. "Why . . . why . . . what's that?"

"I'm fairly sure the best thing would be to award our musician a lieutenant's commission. Then send him off to the front. In point

of fact, I have one right here in my drawer ready for just such a purpose. Would you like to examine it?"

"No, no, don't bother, please," Blangini assured him hastily.

"Well, anyway," said Fouché, "once he had his commission our friend would naturally report to the army. He would march and march until he got to the front. There he would have a rare chance to learn a new kind of music, the rumble of cannon, the whistle of shot, the trill of flanking fire. All that sort of thing, you know. Sooner or later he would die listening to this fugue. Why? Because no sooner had he led his men safely back from one patrol than he would be accorded the honor of another even more dangerous mission. After that, what boredom! Eternal rest in Poland. Could anything be more tiresome? Or in Russia. Perhaps Spain. Anything less interesting is hard to conceive, Blangini. Of course, his mother and sisters—let us assume they live in Milan—would shed a few tears for him, have a few Masses sung and so forth."

Blangini jumped to his feet and worked his mouth hard to force out strangled words. "I . . . I . . ." he stammered, "I haven't done a thing, sir."

For a full minute Fouché sized up his victim. Then his expression changed, became even friendly. "Please sit down again, my dear Blangini," he said, and opened a desk drawer. "Here I have some letters that somehow landed at the wrong address. Oddly enough they were delivered to me instead of to the Princess Pauline. How could anybody confuse us! But the post-office department might be blamed for even worse stupidities. Now, we haven't presumed to read your mail. You can see the seals haven't been broken. Why not? We know what's in them without reading. We know perfectly well that they merely express your proper adoration, the love that any honest man owes to the Emperor's sister. Here they are, Blangini, my friend. Your letters."

Blangini thrust his letters into his coat pocket.

"And now, sir," said Fouché, "you'll have to excuse me. I'm a busy man, too busy. But it has been such a pleasure chatting with you for a half-hour. You're an intelligent man. I feel we understand each other."

Blangini jumped to his feet as if his shoes had springs of finest steel in them. He bowed low.

"One last thing," said Fouché. "Are you staying in Paris? If you

are I suppose you'll be giving more public concerts. In that case it would be very kind of you to send my wife a couple of tickets. She likes your playing tremendously."

"Yes, I think I shall remain in Paris," said Blangini, breathing heavily. "Free-lance concerts are much better, I think, than being tied down to a music master's position."

"How correct you are, sir. I see that we share many an idea. I'll see you again, my dear Blangini."

"Au 'voir, Your Excellency," said Blangini fervently and left the room. For a few minutes after his departure Fouché sat and looked idly at the desk, smiling broadly to himself. Then he tinkled a little bell and said to the clerk, "Blangini doesn't need to be watched from now on. Write Madame de Champbeaudoin and tell her we are well satisfied with her work, and that we advise her aunt to return to France via Sweden, if she cares to do so. Now let me have the papers of Major de Septeuil."

"Very well, Your Excellency," said the clerk. He vanished and was back shortly with the papers, which he laid deferentially before Fouché.

Alone the minister of police plunged into deep thought. "I don't like it, I don't like it," he said softly. "There's something going on between this Metternich and Caroline Murat. Then that Elise Bacciocchi is busy with the Marchese de Lucchesini, who may be a Prussian spy. And no doubt the Austrian isn't playing with Caroline for the mere pleasure of it. God help us if Pauline falls into Russian hands! Then we'll have a triple alliance to deal with."

Fouché looked out the window. A bright day beckoned through the dirty panes. It's about time, he thought, that I gave some time to my children. He was a devoted parent and husband. His daughters were uncommonly thin and ugly broom handles, their faces very, very long, yet in his eyes they were the loveliest, sweetest creatures that had ever tripped the soil of France.

As her brother anticipated, Pauline made a great hit in Turin. The stout governor general was thrown into the shade whenever he appeared with his wife. The entire upper society of the sleepy city streamed into the Carignan Theater, where a welcoming ball was held. Before it began Pauline talked with Madame de Cavour, her

Piedmontese reception mistress. "What do people here like to dance best?" she asked.

"The *monferrina*, Your Highness," said the other. "The national dance, you know."

The orchestra leader raised his baton to summon forth the first bars of a polonaise. At this point Pauline raised her hand, stopped the music, waved her shawl to command attention. The huge crowd murmured its surprise. "No, not that," Pauline cried. "Not a polonaise, if you please. Play a *monferrina*." A ripple of pleasure flowed through the crowd; there were handclaps of approval. By such simple tricks Pauline snared the popular fancy of Turin, where the French were generally disliked. "*Como è bella*," the young people said. "How pretty she is!"

The "Conquering Venus" by Canova was first exhibited publicly in the vestibule of the Chablais Palace. It became the custom among young men to leave a rose at the foot of it before they ascended to the second story where the model received in her usual position on a couch. Now, for the first time in her life, Pauline had her much longed-for salon. There was peace on the Continent, and men of affairs from all corners of Europe thronged to see the Emperor's fabulously attractive sister. The young men and women of Turin grew the more jealous when they discovered that Pauline lavished her charms with a free hand. Today the golden apple would fall into the lap of a young Prussian lieutenant, tomorrow some middle-aged nobleman from Milan would be the lucky one, and the day after the scion of a bourgeois family here at home. Pauline did not stand on rank or ceremony or even on age.

Many of her lovers were repelled by her wantonness and sought to reform her. Pauline yawned in their faces. She simply could not endure intellectual, scientific or literary conversation. If one of her devotees forgot himself and departed from accepted topics—fashions, scandal, society—she would announce she had a headache and leave immediately.

The vicious insistence on everything superficial drove Pauline and her entourage from one lust to another, from debauch to debauch. Pauline was badly infected by the familiar disease of the Roman emperors, incapacity to be tranquil and satisfied, fear of the power of sadness and of death. Her physical sufferings sprang from the same source. And yet from day to day she obdurately clung to her symbol

of the heathen goddess of love, mimicked her as best she knew how, and so undermined the strongest props of her life.

But she was no longer the Venus of Canova. There was nothing she could do to stop suffering from making its home with her, and suffering took its toll. She had gradually grown thinner, and this made her seem taller. Her temples were very delicate now, rather hollowed and blue-veined. Her hands were no longer full and round, her lips were thinner, and her lovely breasts looked more like a young girl's than a mature woman's. The sparkle of her eye had faded.

Only during the evening when the candles of the Chablais Palace were blazing, only after the first glass of wine had been drunk and the violins had begun to sob, only when she was once again surrounded by young men who pressed close to see and admire and touch her did she regain her old vitality. Then, in a cloud of excitement, of perfume and soft powdered shoulders her eyes would glisten as brilliantly as of old. And there is, perhaps, nothing more charming than glimpsing the freshness of youth through a chronic turmoil of the spirit. Small wonder, then, that her guests were still powerfully attracted. They believed they could detect in Pauline, at such high moments, the Emperor's own vibrant energy and vivacity. It was the more touching to find them in a woman.

Among Pauline's lovers of this Turin period two were more prominent than the rest. One was a Cossack, Colonel Kablonkov, the other a French dragoon major, Septeuil. Dmitri Pavlovitch Kablonkov was a giant of a man, blue-eyed, blond, strong as a bear. He was an astonishingly good-humored sort. Yet without warning it was his weakness to give in at times to fits of temper, as violent as they were groundless. He spoke French perfectly, but in a rage he would lapse into Russian, so that no one understood a word and the mystery of his conduct was enhanced. The rumor was that this Pavlovitch was the illegitimate son of the mad Czar Paul, now assassinated. If the story was true, Kablonkov certainly contrasted greatly with his half brother, the Czar Alexander. The Czar was dark-haired, with a white skin and effeminate features. In character, too, he was feminine. At the River Nieman, amazed by his pretty appearance, Napoleon had paid him the dubious compliment of saying "Were you a woman, brother, I'd make you my mistress."

Kablonkov suffered from jealousy. He did not so much fume over Pauline's countless lovers of a night—to them he paid no more at-

tention than to her little lapdog—as over Septeuil. The major was a man of middle height, rather haggard, always on the move, altogether amusing. Pauline nearly split her sides at the thought of Septeuil's being the object of a gigantic jealousy. She loved to see the rivals, so disparate in looks and make-up, at each other's throats.

The Russian brought Pauline roses. Everything he did, he did in a large way. So now with the roses. He presented her with a whole flower shop.

"Why, you've brought enough flowers to decorate the ballroom for several months, Colonel," Septeuil observed. Kablonkov gave him an evil look, then dropped to one knee and kissed Pauline's hand with abject tenderness.

"My darling bear," Pauline sighed.

Kablonkov got ponderously to his feet and looked about to see that everybody, like himself, was enraptured with appreciation. "I love you today," he announced like a foghorn. "I love everybody. Today I embrace the entire universe. Yes, even you, Septeuil."

"Delighted," said Septeuil. "You're a good fellow, Kablonkov."

"That's right," said Kablonkov. "I am good, and I'm good because I'm happy." There was overpowering decision in his words. "And I want everybody else to be happy. I shall give the universe a kiss of brotherhood."

"A vodka kiss," muttered Septeuil. Aloud he said, "Is it really true, Colonel, that Cossacks like to chew candles rather than candy?"

"That's a damned lie. I've never eaten a candle in my life. I like caviar—four or five pounds of it, right off the ice!"

"You do!" said Pauline. "Aren't four or five pounds a lot? My honey bear, you make my mouth water."

"You're fond of caviar, too, my dovelet?" said Kablonkov.

"I'm mad about it," said Pauline. "What a shame we can't get it here! Once in a while Véry has it in Paris."

"Ah, I knew we were affinities," said Kablonkov. He rushed in great strides to the window, threw it open with a crash and bellowed something in Russian.

"What in God's name are you up to now, Kablonkov?" asked Pauline.

"I've just sent my coachman back to Russia to fetch some caviar." The giant beamed through a forest of whiskers.

Everybody laughed. "How fantastic you are, dear!" said Pauline.

"But isn't that something of a jog?" Septeuil asked. There was more laughter.

"I don't haggle over a few hundred miles when Pauline is concerned," Kablonkov declared.

"The poor coachman," said Mathis.

"Yes," said Pauline. "Do call him back, Kablonkov. That's not fair."

Kablonkov strode to the window again and again roared something in Russian. Then he turned angrily to Septeuil. "You've deliberately spoiled everything. You're jealous, my friend. You're rotten jealous."

At the table Pauline sat between them. Kablonkov gulped down three glasses of champagne. "You have a thirst, sir," said Septeuil.

"I'm perishing of thirst," said Kablonkov. "My heart is on fire and that makes me thirsty. I could drink buckets of champagne this very minute."

As the company rose from the table Septeuil breathed a kiss on Pauline's ear. Nobody saw him but Kablonkov. The Russian's eyes popped out of his head. He grabbed his glass and raised it to throw. The cords in his hands were like ropes. He set the glass back on the table, opened his hand. The stem was crushed and his palm was covered with blood.

"Why, you've cut yourself, clumsy," said Pauline. "However did you do that?"

"It's nothing, nothing at all," said Kablonkov thickly.

"Aren't you coming into the salon with us?" Pauline asked. She held onto Septeuil's arm. "I'm going to sing the Rosina aria, Colonel."

"I should love to," said Kablonkov. "Perfect! The Rosina aria! But I don't dare."

"You don't what!"

"I have murder in my heart, Princess," said Kablonkov. "If I hear you sing I'll be so upset I'll kill a certain evil man among us. I can feel it coming on."

"Don't be an ass," said Septeuil. "You exaggerate, my boy."

"I exaggerate nothing," said Kablonkov. "And I forbid you to make any more remarks about my feelings." Septeuil only shrugged his shoulders.

"Good night, then, my dear Cossack." Again Pauline proffered her

hand, and he covered the back of it with a barrage of kisses. His eyes filled with tears. "My strange, nice friend," she said quietly.

"Holy Mother of Kazan, protect me!" mumbled Kablonkov as he walked down the stairs. He stood stock-still before Pauline's statue, looking at it bemused. "It isn't good to have her and the Madonna in my heart at the same time," he told himself aloud. "I ought to go back to Russia. But I just can't, I can't."

He went into the park and wandered about conversing busily with himself in Russian, unaware of the servant trailing behind. "I am insulted," he said. "They've made a fool of me. I'm full of hate. Night, give me peace! You sleeping birds and flowers, how I envy your innocence! But I shall not suffer these passions for nothing. I want revenge, and I shall have it. I shall now commit murder."

He stood before a fountain. He bent down and let a torrent of water play on the back of his head. Standing erect, all dripping, he shouted, "Nothing helps, nothing helps. My head is burning up. I'm the slave of antichrist." He wept. His servant heard his soliloquy unmoved, without even scratching his whiskers.

That evening when Septeuil returned to his rooms about midnight he was surprised to find there Prince Demidov, a slight acquaintance. Demidov announced that he was acting for Kablonkov, who demanded satisfaction.

"Satisfaction for what?" said Septeuil. "That's sheer madness. Shall we carve ourselves to ribbons over a joke or two?"

"He says you've been too familiar with the Duchess," said Demidov uncertainly.

"My dear Prince, I half kissed her ear. Do you consider that gross familiarity?"

"Hardly," said the Prince and shook his head, smiling. "But Kablonkov is insulted, damn it all."

"Kablonkov and his sensitive soul can roast in hell, my good fellow." Septeuil was sharp. "The fool acts as if I had seduced his sixteen-year-old sister."

"Well, sir, how about it?" asked the Prince. "Are you going through with the duel or not?"

"It's too stupid," said Septeuil. "Frankly, I decline."

"Well then—I dislike to have to tell you this—Kablonkov has asked me to say that if you don't fight him he'll box your ears tomorrow in public on the promenade."

"He will! The man's out of his mind. In that case he can have his way. When I get through with that log he'll look like a sieve."

"Wait a minute. No pistols, you know. He insists on sabers. He claims he has the right as the injured party."

"What consummate gall!" said Septeuil. "Never mind. Sabers, pistols, cannon—it's all the same to me. I'll cut that hulk into pie meat."

It was agreed that the duel should take place the next morning in the garden at the Stupinigi hunting lodge. After Demidov had left, Septeuil thought over his peculiar situation for some time. Finally he went hurriedly to the Chablais Palace and had Madame de Champbeaudoin roused from her bed. "I'd like to tell her something about a certain Monsieur F. in Paris," was his excuse. It took him only a few minutes to gain admission to Champbeaudoin's apartment. They talked for more than an hour.

The next morning at Stupinigi the seconds had great difficulty getting the duel under way. They could not settle on how it should be fought—whether, for instance, with the tunic on, or the torso exposed.

"I prefer to fight naked," shouted Kablonkov. "I shall fight without pants or shirt or drawers. After all, this is to the death."

"I'm damned if I'll give in to a Muscovite maniac," said Septeuil. "I don't pretend to be a gladiator. If I fight, I fight like a gentleman, with my clothes on. Or not at all."

The seconds wrangled interminably. Meanwhile a carriage drew near. In it sat the governor general, accompanied by Pauline and Madame de Champbeaudoin. The dueling party was thrown into confusion.

"What's going on here?" Camillo demanded. Lightly for a man of his weight he leaped from the coach and stared with disapproval at Kablonkov's naked sword, which was large enough to sever an oxhead at a single stroke. "Are you presuming, Colonel, to disturb the Emperor's peace," he said, "or are you out early to cut firewood?" Kablonkov could not meet Camillo's outraged glance. "Let me tell you something, Kablonkov," Camillo continued smoothly: "I was in the battle of Austerlitz. I had firsthand experience with the Cossack cavalry. I know Russian courage and respect it. But here, in Piedmont, really . . . don't you think it's out of place? Not decent at all of

you, my dear man. And you, Septeuil! How dare you fight my Russian guest!"

"It's all my fault," said Kablonkov. "I was the insulted party and I asked for satisfaction."

"How did Septeuil insult you, Colonel?" Camillo wanted to know. Blushing and deeply embarrassed, Kablonkov stared at the ground. Then Camillo flushed as understanding dawned. Quickly he glanced at Pauline, who smiled quizzically. "I see, I see," said Camillo, clearing his throat. "Never mind the cause of the duel. I demand that it be stopped immediately. I forbid it now and hereafter."

"With all my heart I obey," cried Kablonkov. "Septeuil, from this hour on you will be my dearest friend. I forgive you everything. I even forgive you for nearly making me a murderer. I bow my neck to you, Major, and admit that I'm a sinner. I am a criminal, a lump of Russian dung."

"Good God, Kablonkov!" protested Septeuil. "How can you say such things?" He allowed himself to be embraced. "You're not at all like that. Admit it. You're a child!"

Kablonkov looked at his adversary in puzzlement. Then he threw back his hairy head and spread out two massive arms to the morning. "He speaks the truth," Kablonkov intoned. "He speaks the gospel truth, this unique and wonderful man. I swear it by my immortal soul, I swear it by the rising sun. When I'm an old man and living in some Russian birch grove my grandchildren will ask me, 'What did you use to do, Grandpa?' I shall call them all close to me and whisper, 'On my bended knees I adored the Princess Borghese, most beautiful among women, and for a friend I had Septeuil, wisest of men.' Now, brothers, let's go and have a good breakfast of salt herring and cucumbers. The day is too fine for argument. We're young. Let's eat and be merry."

Some weeks later a direct command from the Czar ordered Kablonkov to return. Septeuil remained at his post. In Paris Fouché rubbed his hands. Kablonkov might have done real damage, Fouché thought; then the fat would have been in the fire. It was a good thing that Caulaincourt went right to the Czar as I suggested. Septeuil is doing a fine job. All discretion. Excellent. I'll see he gets a Legion of Honor. He deserves every bit of it.

IX

Toast of the Empire

PAULINE COULD NOT stick it out for long in Turin. Without asking permission of the Emperor she left her husband. Fat Camillo was not much disturbed. He was having an interesting affair with the pretty Duchess of Lantes. This delicate, indulgent young woman, who looked like a Fra Angelico angel, felt at home in platonic love. Her sensitive white body was as ill-suited for sexual love as Camillo's fat one.

Pauline crossed the French border by a lonely mountain route in a heavy storm. She was prostrated by the journey and listened fearfully to the splintering crashes of thunder, echoing with violence from peak to peak. The defile was roaring with sound, the rush of a swollen mountain brook and of driving rain. Pale blue flashes lighted up the cavernous scene. Giants shook the fir trees like so many matchsticks. Branches split off in the wind. In places the way was impassable from the floodwaters that tore at the boulders of the stream's bed. At times the weary, frightened coach horses stopped dead in their tracks and had to be lashed forward.

The party was greatly relieved to arrive at a small settlement. Pauline shook with cold. She wanted a bath in warm milk, she said. "I'm going to die unless I can bathe in warm milk." She wept with self-pity, her face chalky, her hair hanging in limp curls about her cheeks. The house steward ran from hut to hut. No milk was to be found. The cows were high up on the mountain slopes for the summer grazing. Septeuil, with the coachman, climbed up the mountain. For more than an hour they wandered through rain and wind, stumbling over slippery rock. Septeuil had a close shave when he nearly skidded over a cliff. The coachman fell up to his neck in a brook. Finally they came upon some cows and milk.

Back at the inn Septeuil was greeted by Pauline with smiling eyes. "Here's the milk, Your Highness," said Septeuil.

"Oh, the milk, he says," Pauline laughed. "Give it to the peasants and forgive my idiocy. I'm a brainless woman, Major."

And to this Septeuil added an unspoken but fervent amen.

The next day they set out again. The Emperor was extremely annoyed when word came to him of Pauline's flight from Turin. But Joseph and Madame Mère intervened. "I'd like to see my own child," she said.

"Pauline is sick," said Joseph. "Her health isn't equal to political responsibilities." He sighed, thinking how he himself missed the carefree life in Mortefontaine since Napoleon had made him King of Naples.

"As you wish, Madame," said the Emperor to his mother. "The last thing I want to be is a family tyrant. And I agree that something is radically wrong with the woman. I'll send her to Neuilly. She can amuse the Parisians for me."

The Empress was anything but pleased to hear of Pauline's imminent arrival. "The whole clan is gathering like a pack of thieves," she observed to Madame de Rémusat. "Pauline detests me. I'm so much more elegantly dressed."

Joséphine learned that Pauline was coming to pay her respects dressed in green. Out of spite she had the reception room hung with blue silk, to spoil the effect for her loathed sister-in-law. But Pauline, hearing a rumor of it, appeared in white. Afterward the gossips said that the bluish light greatly improved her looks. Her hair seemed more blue-black, and her somewhat sallow skin marble-white.

"My sister is a remarkable woman," the Emperor said. "In her inmost heart she is really good."

But to the superficial observer at least, such sentiments rang false. Pauline had hardly settled down in Neuilly when a hundred stories of her loves and adventures circulated through Paris. Naturally a goodly number of them were fabrications, originating partly among envious women, partly among Napoleon's political enemies. Yet even when the fictitious were sifted out, the scandalously true were numerous enough.

Pauline's chronic ill-health, her rudeness, her naïve, vulgar behavior gave rise to endless commentary. Perhaps the beauty would have been forgiven her lovers had she, like any ordinary woman, pursued her affairs on the quiet. It was a salient feature of her erotic life that she liked to exhibit it to the world at large. And so it was not only

the court who talked about her. The gardener had a piquant word to say, the steward, the soldier in his barracks, the merchant, the vegetable woman. And, of course, high society kept close account of her peccadilloes.

In her unique way Pauline unwittingly fulfilled the duty the Emperor had imposed on her: she amused Paris. She turned the popular mind from political questions and threat of war to a world of froth. Her parties at Neuilly rapidly achieved notoriety. For months there was talk about the quadrille of chess figures that she arranged. It was the topic of the day in every little hole-in-the-wall *bistro*, in every salon. It served materially to distract popular interest from the trouble in Spain and Portugal. A display of fireworks was another smashing success. The first time it was given to invited guests, among whom was the Emperor himself, and the next night the park was thrown open to the general public so that they, too, might see Pauline's marvels.

The crowd was packed. The great fountains played. There were deep murmurs of wonder when the rockets burst far up in the night sky and showered down in lovely stars of blue, red and green, lighting the upturned faces. Who then thought about the bloody battle on the roofs of Saragossa? Who gave a moment to remember the struggle of the Tyrolean peasants, to the immense battles of Aspern and Wagram, already throwing their foreshadows over France? Not a soul in that mob. And yet only a few months had to pass before many a young man among the onlookers would find a shallow grave on the sad island of Lobau in the Danube. Many a woman would be a widow in black, crying for a crust of bread. Many a laughing child and crowing infant would be orphans.

Pauline was watching the fireworks from the château terrace, accompanied by Septeuil and the ladies. She noticed a man who kept apart from the rest of the crowd. Something about him, the build of him, even though seen in the bad light, made her heart beat faster. She saw that, whoever he was, he was an officer. It looked, too, as if the collar of his tunic were of green material of a familiar style. "Septeuil," she said with some agitation, "please go down into the garden and tell that chasseur he has my permission to come up on the terrace." Reluctantly Septeuil carried out her order. Shortly he was back, the man by his side.

"Captain de Canouville wishes to express his gratitude to Her Imperial Highness," said Septeuil.

The captain presented himself to Pauline, kissed her hand. "Jules," she whispered, "can it be possible! What a coincidence!"

"No coincidence, Madame," said Canouville. "I've been sitting around this park for many a night."

"You're not joking for once?" said Pauline. "But why didn't you come and see me?"

Canouville looked at her closely. "I was waiting to be invited by the red diary. Do you remember? Now I see I was a fool. I could kick myself, Madame."

"You look exactly the same, Jules," said Pauline. "I'm not going to let you get away from me again."

"No fear of that, Madame," said Canouville. "You may rest assured."

Pauline was happy at last with Jules de Canouville. Her sickness of spirit seemed to abate. She wondered at this herself and tried to unravel the mystery of his attraction for her. Actually he was not nearly so good-looking as Forbin or Blangini. He had nothing of Kablonkov's giant presence; he was no aristocrat like Septeuil. In fact, Canouville was a little fellow with a cavalryman's ramrod back. His huge nose gave his face a permanently comical look. Everything he did he did casually, and nothing seemed to impress him. Wearing his simple green tunic, he would stroll calmly among princes and marshals. He did not spend freely, for his salary did not permit it. But Pauline had all she could do to make him accept the gift of a gold medallion. In the end he took it because it contained Pauline's picture and a lock of her hair.

Canouville was indifferent to the formalities of Pauline's little court. He made no bones about intruding into Her Imperial Highness' bedroom and so he upset the servants constantly. When Pauline bathed, he would sit on a footstool in the bathroom and talk to her, as if this familiarity were the most ordinary thing imaginable. At first the ladies and gentlemen of Pauline's entourage were jealous of Canouville, but they soon learned that he was one who would never interfere with their ambitions. Shortly, therefore, he enjoyed favor on all sides. He had a weakness for biting remarks, but most often he was himself the target of his wit. "I'm still a captain," he would say, "and apparently I'm going to stay one as long as I live.

As a matter of fact I couldn't afford to buy any more gold braid."

At a ball in the Tuileries, the Viceroy of Italy, Eugène Beauharnais, told the orchestra conductor to play a quadrille. "No," Canouville broke in, "I'd rather hear a waltz. It's got more swing to it, you know."

"A quadrille," the Viceroy commanded.

"A waltz," said Canouville, mimicking authority.

The embarrassed conductor stood sweating on the podium, baton in hand, looking from one to the other.

"Come, now, hurry up!" said the Viceroy.

"Get on with it, man!" said Canouville.

The orchestra leader was nonplused. He could not raise his stick in the air. Finally he gave the preliminary taps on his music stand. The orchestra played a waltz.

"The little fool," said the Viceroy to his officers. "He's going to pay through that big nose of his for being so clever."

"You see!" an officer whispered, indicating with a flutter of his lids how Canouville was now bending over Pauline's arm.

"So that's the way it is," said Eugène bitterly. "The clan still has it in for me and the Empress."

The evening of this little scuffle Pauline said to Canouville, "Jules, I don't know why it wasn't you that I married."

"Your brother would never have allowed it."

"I might have been able to carry it through. But at the time—can you imagine it!—I was wild about Camillo."

"It's too late to cry over spilled milk," said Canouville.

"I have an idea. We'll pretend all the time you really are my husband."

"That smacks of bigamy, don't you think?" Canouville objected.

"But the fat lump is my husband in name only. You're the real one."

From this day on Canouville was spoken of in Neuilly as the "illustrious consort" of the Duchess of Guastalla. The bearer of this impressive tag knew himself to be anything but illustrious. It was simply a case of his caring too much for Pauline to balk at her whimsey.

At times Canouville astonished the guests who were not familiar with his position in Pauline's household. Sober Meunier, the dentist, to the end of his life never forgot how, being summoned once to the

bedchamber of the gorgeous Princess Pauline, he found himself confronted there by Canouville. The energetic captain buttonholed him. "My good man, take good care with this little mouth, I beg you. Each of these teeth is worth a king's ransom to me." Then the little fellow planted himself at the doctor's shoulder and watched every move of his hands, every poke and pry of the instruments until the unpleasant job was done.

One morning Canouville showed up accompanied by a most extraordinary personage. He was an old Jew with a great yellowish-white beard, the well-oiled locks of the orthodox, a long caftan and a nose fully as prominent as Canouville's, if not more so.

"Meet Isaac Abramovitch," Canouville announced to Pauline. "Take a good look at this woman, Isaac. She's the Emperor's sister. Don't you think she's ravishing?"

Abramovitch waggled his head back and forth in a spasm of dubiety. He had folded his hands across his caftan. "She is beautiful, she is beautiful," he said in curiously singsong French. "But, Panye, no one should worship physical beauty."

"Well, now, what do you think of that!" said Canouville. "Isn't he priceless!" Pauline, meanwhile, was becoming more than a little annoyed. "This fellow has seen plenty of the world, my dear," he went on. Then, turning again to Abramovitch, he asked, "What should be my attitude toward beauty? Tell me, speak up, if you're so wise."

"Her beauty," said the old Jew, "is only a reflection of God's thought. Therefore, when looking at such a lovely woman, do not concentrate on her, but on the unspeakable perfection of God. You must see the Master's hand in the curve of her brow and her forehead. Then you must worship her Creator with renewed zeal."

"What an odd man!" said Pauline aside to Canouville. "He gives me the chills."

"He's harmless; a good man—a saint of a sort, really. He's around collecting money for his synagogue. That's why he's here in Paris and visiting me."

Pauline went to her strongbox, got out some gold pieces and handed them over to the Jew. He hesitated before taking them, looking up intently into her face. "I thank you, dear Princess, I thank you," he said, bowing humbly. "I thank you in the name of the sick, the troubled, the poor, the persecuted. I thank you," he went

on in his singsong voice, "in the name of God, for He comes often in the guise of sickness, trouble, poverty and persecution. Beautiful Princess, do not flee from God. Do not run away from Him. In the end He will find you and hold you fast." Saying this, he jingled the money in his pouch, bowed low once more and turned to the door.

Canouville and Pauline were silent and abashed for a time after the old Jew had departed. Finally Pauline said, "I wish you hadn't brought him here, Jules."

"But really," said Canouville, "you must admit he's harmless."

"Not at all," insisted Pauline. "He's not nearly so harmless as you think."

But the old man's admonitions were quickly forgotten in the steady succession of parties and journeys. Every week when the Emperor was in Paris there was a parade before the Tuileries which Canouville felt he must attend. He rode behind the Emperor—a long way behind, among those who brought up the rear of the procession. For quite a time no one thought to question the chasseur's presence. It was assumed that he took part, like all the rest, under imperial orders. In actual truth Canouville was there not because he enjoyed martial show, but because, with the passage of time, he had begun to take seriously Pauline's idea that he was a *de facto* husband. He had slowly come to fancy himself related to the imperial family, a sort of illegitimate sprout perhaps, yet nevertheless a sprout with the duty of supporting his imperial betters at all public functions.

Napoleon paid no attention to him, nor did his aides Duroc and Rapp. A day came when a regiment of dragoons was drawn up for review by the imperial party. Canouville had a low opinion of the regiment, not merely because he was of the chasseurs, whom he considered the best of all mounted units, but also because Major Septeuil happened to be the dragoons' commander.

According to his custom the Emperor rode slowly along the foremost rank of the regiment, its men and horses fused at rigid attention. Here he stopped to chat a moment with an officer; farther along he had a few words with a sergeant major, whose name Duroc had looked up beforehand. "How are your wounds?" Napoleon inquired solicitously. "That was a hard time for all of us at Austerlitz." This custom of his made an excellent impression. The dragoons actually believed the Emperor knew each one of them by name

and was concerned for their individual welfare. He made Canouville think so, who was as loyal to him as to his mistress.

As Napoleon moved along in a taut silence, Canouville, at the rear of the inspecting party, could not resist remarking in full voice, "My God, how these dragoons sit their horses! Potato sacks! Rear-echelon stuff, if I ever saw it! They should be turned over to the quartermaster corps."

The Emperor drew rein and slowly twisted around in his saddle. His features darkened with displeasure. Canouville, too late, held his tongue. The damage had been done. "Who is that loudmouthed chasseur?" Napoleon inquired harshly of Rapp.

"I don't know him," Rapp said.

"Get his name."

Rapp trotted back to Canouville. It was a tense moment, with all eyes watching. "Your name, Captain," he said coldly.

"Captain Canouville de Raffelot, at your service, sir," Canouville growled, the true cavalryman.

"What business have you riding in the imperial party?" snapped Napoleon's aide.

"I am here at the command of Her Imperial Highness the Princess Pauline," intoned Canouville.

"I see." Rapp wheeled his horse's head about and cantered off.

"You do not see, you block," muttered Canouville under his breath.

The next day he was ordered before Marshal Berthier. A circle of officers grouped in Berthier's office eyed the newcomer curiously. Berthier himself, a gray-haired man with an ascetic, schoolmasterish face, wasted no time. "We have important dispatches to be taken to Madrid. They are to be delivered to the King of Spain and to General Dupont, Captain Canouville."

"And where do I come in?" the captain pertly inquired.

"Well, I've decided to send them by a picked officer, someone I can trust," said Berthier. His voice was very light and matter-of-fact. "I've chosen you for the mission, Captain."

"Very well, sir," Canouville replied. "What part of the relay am I to have?"

"There won't be any relay, I regret to say," Berthier told him. "You'll have to deliver the messages in Madrid yourself. You'll have to ride alone. It's a strictly secret commission."

That's my death sentence, Canouville thought. He managed to keep a straight face. Smiling a little, he said, "It will be very hard on the horses, don't you think, sir?"

"Undoubtedly," said Berthier. "I see you understand. Here are the dispatches. You leave at once. Good day, sir." He shook Canouville's hand. The other officers crowded around to wish him Godspeed.

"Lover's luck, Captain Canouville!" said a young grenadier colonel.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Canouville. "I'm going to need luck and plenty of it—*sacré nom de Dieu*, a great deal of it!"

Canouville's ride to Madrid became famous as one of the bravura episodes in an epoch specializing in dash. His route carried him through the heart of hostile Spain. Several times he narrowly escaped falling into the hands of guerrillas. At night he would snatch a few hours' sleep under a tree, or in the yard of a deserted farm, once in a church. For that escapade the Spaniards would most certainly have hanged him, particularly since he brought his horse into the church to take shelter with him. He hungered, he suffered from thirst. At midday he thought he would surely perish of sunstroke; at night, when his feet filled the stirrups like lumps of clay, he was certain of freezing to death. But in the end he made his goal.

It took him exactly two weeks to ride from Paris to Madrid and back again. He arrived in Paris all skin and bone, covered with lice and bearded beyond recognition. His first stop was at Pauline's. Paul, her Negro body servant, was startled by the spectacle of Canouville as dispatch rider. He tried to bar his entrance to Pauline's boudoir, but Canouville pushed him aside and boldly opened the door. There was Septeuil, making hay while the sun shone. He sat in a chair watching Pauline at her mirror fix her hair for the night.

"Good evening, friends," said Canouville as heartily as he could. He threw himself on a couch and peered up at the ceiling in a semidaze.

"My God, it's the captain!" said Pauline. "Whoever thought he could do it! Why, Jules!"

She sat down beside him on the couch. Canouville talked on and on. Brilliant, disjointed pictures floated through his brain, one crowding out another.

"There was a tree, you know," he mumbled, yawning, "and four men and two women were strung up to the branches. They were

stark naked. Their tongues hung out and their necks were stretched. They had already begun to stink. Somehow I can't forget that tree. Then there was the statue of Mary Magdalene in the church where I stopped. She was dressed in brocade. I borrowed her robe to put over me for the night. Terribly cold, that night—you have no idea. I gave it back to her the next morning, but you should have seen the look that statue gave me. And then I ruined my stomach with eating so much goat's cheese and drinking wine every day. Cold as death, the wine, and sour. In a little place outside Saragossa I ran into a monk. He went to shake my hand and a dagger fell out of his sleeve. Those Spaniards—" he yawned widely—"they're too incredibly fanatical. They don't know anything about the blessings of French civilization, and they don't care. The priests, the women—they're all alike . . . hopeless . . . cutthroats. . . ." Canouville's eyes snapped shut and at once he began to snore violently.

"What shall we do with him?" asked Septeuil. "Shall I ring for Paul?"

"Let him sleep," said Pauline. She pulled a coverlet over her man. "Poor Jules has earned it."

Septeuil made a wry face and left. And it was only a few weeks later that he, in turn, was ordered to proceed with his regiment to Spain. He was severely wounded in a skirmish, so badly that his right leg had to be amputated above the knee.

"I'm terribly sorry about Septeuil," said Pauline when she heard the news. "He was a heavenly dancer. I'm going to miss him, poor dear."

Canouville looked at her. "With the best will in the world, Pauline, nobody could ever say you're overburdened with sentiment."

She looked at him blankly. "But it's my bad luck," she sighed, "to love only one man. And that man, it seems, doesn't value it very much."

"What a delightful little liar you are, Pauline!" said Canouville, and grinned broadly.

Pauline's health had improved greatly. Her attacks of migraine and depression came infrequently now. Her life was adequately filled, not just by her relation with Canouville, but by a project, an intricate cabal, that more and more took up her mind from day to day.

The Bonaparte clan was exulting in triumph. At last, after a dec-

ade of their intrigue and vilification, Napoleon was veering around to a decision that divorce from Joséphine was unavoidable. He had built up an empire, a tremendous complex of power, a virtually united Europe. The empire of Charlemagne, the medieval dream, now appeared well within the possibility of realization.

It was principally Joséphine who barred the way to a dynasty, for she was unable to bear her husband a child. An aging woman now, she faced Napoleon as a reminder of his own obscure origins. Notwithstanding her naïveté, her passion for spending money, her court ladies, her showy jewels, she was still a creature of the Revolution in whose prisons she had served time. But a dynasty obviously required another background, a woman from a family which, by the so-called "grace of God," had reigned for a suitable number of centuries in public view on a bona fide throne. No one attributed Joséphine's position as Empress to "the grace of God," least of all herself.

Yet, beneath all his other impulses, Napoleon still loved the woman. He no longer loved her passionately as a revelation of delight, but he loved her at least as a trusted comrade. There were still times when, in a fit of temper, he would rip one of her inevitable shawls from her back and hurl it into the open fire. But every afternoon she still served him coffee the way he liked it, strongly sweetened and very hot. He would gulp down several cups like any family man and intersperse them with good-humored and usually tactless comments to his wife's guests.

Joséphine was the only human being with whom he could be perfectly natural and off guard. Such was her thankless role, a role familiar to many a wife of long standing. At times she suffered cruelly from Napoleon's explosive outbursts, particularly when he was having some little affair, say with Pauline's Mathis. Then she would break down and cry, quite unlike an empress, and Napoleon would react in his stereotyped fashion. "Tears and face powder, woman's most dangerous weapons!" he would proclaim, for, in an adolescent way, out of his ignorance of women he liked to treat them with apparent roughness and contempt. Actually he relished their company and delighted in nothing more than exploration of the feminine soul. Gradually, too, the women of the court, once they had accustomed themselves to Napoleon's brusqueries, found no difficulty taking them in stride. Some, indeed, went so far as to pretend that they found his sallies amusing and witty, for this was an open path to his preference.

Napoleon's dynastic penchant was abetted by all manner of parasites—by titled men of affairs desirous of ensuring their own succession, by his own family out of enduring hatred of Joséphine. It is said that hate has clear eyes, but in this case there was an exception. The Bonapartes hated with no definite reason, simply because it was in their nature to hate. Exactly as the Bonapartes on Corsica had once hated the Borgo clan without justification, so now they refused to see any trace of good in the Beauharnais family. It was the primitive instinct of the Corsican that was at work, the ancient cleavage between Italian clans, which has so richly strewn the history of the peninsula with murders, ambuscades, banishments and bloody feuds between villages and cities. It is a sensation of chronic mistrust, a cramping jealousy, a burning hatred lurking at the bottommost recesses of the Italian heart. It is the same feeling that made the men of the Renaissance so vital, observant, tense and amoral. It appears rooted in the pagan sense of family that belongs to the Italian race, the obverse of its marvelous sense of form and formal virtue.

And among all the haters of the clan, none hated more violently than Pauline. Despite her frivolous existence she, more than any of them, had the keenest impress of Italo-Corsican origin, and in her physical appearance and behavior it was most strikingly expressed. The same amazing capacity for hatred had once set the Bonapartes on the road to ascendancy, for it had made them shift to French allegiance. It was a delicious stroke of irony that hatred likewise should lead the family into destruction, or at least speed their debacle. But this hatred possessed by the Bonapartes and possessing them, this prime emotion of just another family among the millions of Europe, would have spent itself futilely had it not been supported by powers of an altogether different dimension. In Corsica the Bonapartes had ridden high on the Revolution. Now it was Tradition that was to bear them up and down on the dizzy swing to ignominy.

The Revolution had many faces, raddled, fanatic, angry, vulgar human faces—Robespierre, Danton, Fouquier-Tinville, Samson, Fréron. Tradition, too, had its typical faces, haggard, wooden, ingrown, empty—the Emperor Francis, Frederick William of Prussia, Alexander the Byzantine.

It was Metternich who most sharply felt his coming hour within the ranks of reaction. The Rhenish nobleman began his great gamble with the fate of Napoleon and of Europe. There was no time to

lose. Austria was at the end of her tether. There would never be another chance.

Metternich, an eighteenth-century product, played a subtle game. It was a long time since he had first confronted his adversary as ambassador. Napoleon had been astonished to see a curly-headed boy entrusted with so much responsibility.

"Aren't you rather young," he had asked, "to be representing the oldest monarchy in Europe?"

"Just as old as Your Majesty was at Austerlitz," was Metternich's quick rejoinder. It was an answer in the Napoleonic style, breathing self-confidence, close to flippancy, yet respectful enough to pass muster.

Napoleon took a quasi-humorous interest in the career of this quick-witted young man. One day he said to Talleyrand, "That Metternich is going to make a good diplomat. He lies very well already."

Apparently Napoleon was aware that Metternich had got himself involved in a love affair with the youngest sister of the clan, Caroline.

It was through Caroline that Metternich familiarized himself with all the particulars of the clan's deep-seated hostility toward Joséphine. Then he rounded out his information by getting to know Pauline and quizzing her on the rich subject. Gradually he developed a plan of action and now, after the Peace of Schönbrunn, he set about putting it into effect. The plan was simple enough. It proposed Napoleon's divorce from Joséphine and his union with a daughter of the house of Hapsburg. It was a stratagem in the Hapsburg tradition.

To Metternich, when he sat at his writing table surrounded by miniatures and silhouettes of lovely women—he called them his inspiration—it seemed that there was a decided elegance, as well as a decided utility, in the idea of retrieving one Hapsburg marriage to a Frenchman by another. It struck him as endlessly amusing, the notion of blunting the genius of the Revolution by the soft weapon of a marriage. Clearly Metternich perceived the enormous triumph of his plan, should a near relative of the murdered Hapsburg Princess Marie-Antoinette once again mount the throne in the Tuileries. The more he ruminated it, the more he was captivated. In such a marriage, as he saw it, lay a metaphysical quality, an irony of epic scope. Best of all there was nothing coarse in the idea, nothing compulsive, obvious, forced, above all nothing pedantic, nothing savoring of rules, regulations, clauses, protocols. It was a masterpiece of an idea, a

chef-d'oeuvre of the old school, a gallant gesture, fittingly like its author, light and pleasing yet fraught with powerful implications. In short, it was a plan that a Richelieu, a Mazarin, a Kaunitz would certainly have been proud to sponsor.

With languid finger tips Metternich took a sweet from the porcelain *bonbonnière* which stood among his portraits. Thoughtfully he waited until the sugar melted on his tongue. He was aware of the innumerable obstacles that blocked success, of pitfalls that might cost him his position overnight. Nevertheless he made up his mind to press forward boldly. On the glassy parquet floor of diplomacy he felt certain he could outdance Napoleon. The Emperor might try to override him by vulgarities, fits of rage, blunt importunacy. Metternich would conquer through tact.

When he presented himself to his Austrian monarch in the buckled shoes, silken hose and close-fitting coat required by his new post as secretary of state, he immediately disclosed his plan. Francis was taken by surprise. Anxiously he surveyed his new counselor, deferential before him with a feathered hat tucked under his arm. Could the man be out of his mind? Yet, while Metternich droned on as easily as if he were discussing the weather, deeply respectful yet ready to respond to any sign of enthusiasm, the Emperor began to see the light. Words flowed like a stream of pearls from Metternich's inspired lips. His ideas marched along, pretty as a picture. Such tender, artful thoughts Francis never before had heard.

"In the end, if you recall, even Hercules laid his lion skin aside," Metternich reminded the Emperor, "so he could be with his Omphale, you know."

"Your metaphor limps," said the Emperor smilingly. "My little Marie-Louise is no Omphale by any stretch of imagination."

"Her Imperial Highness is a very fine young woman," Metternich answered. "She has the sense of form appropriate to an empress—in a remarkable degree, I'd say. And she has something that is very rare indeed in Napoleonic circles."

"What might that be?"

"Innocence," said Metternich.

The Emperor meditated on the proposition. Before his inner eye arose an image of Bonaparte as he had seen him after the disaster of Austerlitz, during the conference in Brünn. Only too clearly he remembered the sharply cut features, the abrupt movements of arms

and hands. They reminded Emperor Francis of the lively gestures of a certain Savoyard dealer in mousetraps, whom he had seen on the Vienna streets. He imagined this unprepossessing son-in-law alongside his daughter, blonde, blue-eyed, slender, her arms and shoulders sweetly rounded—altogether a pleasing and insignificant little thing.

Metternich broke into the Emperor's thoughts with a faint shrug of his shoulders. "It's impossible, of course," he said quietly, "to guarantee the happiness of any marriage. Yet there's a good chance Her Imperial Highness will be happy. Emperor Napoleon is a family man, like most Italians."

"You seem to have a very high opinion of Bonaparte," said the Emperor coolly.

"I despise him as a politician," said Metternich, "but I value him greatly as a personality."

The audience was successful. Hesitating somewhat, the Emperor finally declared that he saw eye to eye with Metternich. When the Empress heard of it, she was horrified beyond speech. For days on end she went about with red eyes. Whenever she came across Metternich, she flounced by him angrily, averting her head. Marie-Louise herself wavered between terror and feverish expectation. From childhood the little Archduchess had been trained to think that, were Napoleon supplied with hoofs and tail, he would assuredly be the Devil himself. Twice in her young memory her family had had to flee Schönbrunn in breakneck haste to escape the monster's clutches. On their return to the castle she had seen traces of French occupation. The servants had shown the child the very room where the French devil had slept, the bare field cot on which he had snatched brief periods of rest. Shaking in her small shoes she had seen the threshold where that dreadful Rustan, the mameluke, had lain, Mephisto to his adored Lucifer. The child had accepted these horrific impressions in wide-eyed innocence. It took little exercise of imagination for her to sniff the odor of sulphur burning in the air. Horrid Napoleon! Wicked man! Naturally the room had never been used again, and the Emperor Francis often spoke of having it permanently walled off.

The prospect of marrying such a demon had a certain charm, even though it sent chills of pure terror coursing up Marie-Louise's virginal spine. She was enough of a woman, albeit totally inexperienced, to appreciate the exceptional among men. There were times when she fancied herself as the candle-white virgin about to be sacrificed to the

scaly dragon in his cavern. Yet she inwardly thrilled to the power of the dragon and to the glittering throne of imperial France. Indeed, she was curious about the fell dragon himself. Surely, in some fundamental respects, a dragon would not disappoint.

Meanwhile Metternich had not been idle. He sent off many perfumed notes to Paris, assuring the Princesses Caroline and Pauline of his continued love and esteem, keeping them informed on the progress of what they fondly believed was their mutual plan. It was also his strategy to look up French visitors to Vienna. Under pledge of secrecy he gave them to understand that only a close alliance between France and Austria could ensure the security of Europe. In due time Paris hummed with rumor. In Neuilly and Mortefontaine the coming union of France and Austria was the chief topic of conversation. The sisters took senators into their confidence. They cultivated emissaries of other powers and the aristocracy of the Faubourg Saint-Germain who did not rightly know whether to laugh or weep over the comedy, for if the proposed marriage uniting the houses of Hapsburg and Napoleon indicated an about-face to Tradition, at the same time it might wipe out any hope of Bourbon restoration.

It took Napoleon a long time to make up his mind. He would have preferred to marry into the Russian imperial family, but the Czar refused to entertain the overtures of the upstart.

Every afternoon at the same hour, when the Emperor was not in the field, the Empress served that coffee in her Saint-Cloud apartment. And always she poured the Emperor's cup first, and sweetened it for him. The day came when he hesitated as he reached for it. He put it to his lips, then set it down abruptly without drinking a drop. Not saying a word, he stalked from the room. Joséphine broke down and wept. She understood perfectly Napoleon's symbolic repudiation. The ladies in waiting fluttered about at a loss. Madame de Rémusat's bit of lace handkerchief was a damp ball.

Paris as a whole had no inkling of this private drama. Everyone skated happily over life's smooth and brittle surface. Well-meaning citizens briefly deplored Joséphine's bad luck and let it go at that. The Empress had agreed to submit to a divorce, ostensibly in the interest of her country. And the same sympathetic citizens realized that France might profit economically from the merger of power. Everyone was amused by Napoleon's eagerness. He rode to Compiègne to meet his bride. There he clambered wildly into her coach,

quite upsetting the etiquette of the occasion. That night he slept with Marie-Louise, even though the church ceremony had not been performed. In the morning he strutted about telling all his friends, "Sirs, get yourself a German wench to bed with. They're as fresh as a May morning, take my word."

Marie-Louise never publicly revealed her first reactions to her impetuous middle-aged husband, but it can be safely assumed that she was more than a little disappointed. She had anticipated a rendezvous with none other than the Devil, and instead she found herself with a fattish little fellow, rather undependable in ardor, an Italian organ-grinder sort of man with oafish manners.

On the other hand Marie-Louise was not disappointed by the position she now held. There was one celebration after another. The splendor of the court, the heaps of jewels, the cries of the Paris mob exceeded her most sanguine expectations.

She met her husband's relatives. There were the two pretty sisters, Pauline and Caroline, and the other one, Elise, with the long nose. There was the Signora, more alien to Marie-Louise than to Joséphine before her. Louis, the King of Holland, was presented to her and she watched him curiously as he struggled to twist his misanthropic features into a smile. She talked with Jérôme, King of Westphalia, a tubby chap with blond ringlets and thick red lips. The nicest was the oldest brother Joseph, King of Spain, a tolerant, easygoing fellow.

Pauline was enormously pleased when her plan worked—that is, what she imagined as her plan. At last the Widow Beauharnais had been thrust aside, banished from the clan's sight as she richly deserved. Yet it was only a short while before Pauline's triumph cooled down into thoughtfulness. It happened almost as soon as she met Marie-Louise in person. It was true that Joséphine had often behaved arrogantly. Yet at the bottom there was equality between them, even if it were inimical. They had fought each other as persons of equal birth and equal rights. Quite different now with Marie-Louise! She showed Pauline no dislike at all. It was out of the question for Pauline to hate such a modest little person, so milky-white and with a nose so absurdly retroussé. Casually friendly words fell from Marie-Louise's narrow lips, while the eyes of forget-me-not blue would wander. Pauline was impressed by the gulf that separated her from her new sister-in-law. Where before there had been open hostility, coolness now reigned. There was something in Marie-Louise's manner that vaguely

reminded Pauline of the Borghese family in Rome, though the perspective of the new Empress' background was much deeper and much more richly developed than that of any papal house.

Before Pauline, then, Marie-Louise came to appear the embodiment of the medieval notion of feudalism and fixed station. This innocuous girl had been schooled in the Spanish tradition. The severity of a centuries-old discipline had left its mark on perfectly ordinary human material and stamped it indelibly with meaning. At times the empty girlish face was illuminated by energy, pride, strength, conviction. Indeed, there would be even wisdom in the features. It seemed as though long-forgotten shades were finding renewed expression in her commonplace visage.

Pauline was not overwhelmed by the aura of power about her sister-in-law, but she was irritated to the core by it. In competition with Marie-Louise it was impossible for Pauline to play any part whatever in the game of rank, not even that of enemy. The delicate blue eyes put her in her place as a matter of course. The Empress' innate station was so far above Pauline's by common acceptance that the most favored of the Bonaparte women was lost in the crowd. As for Marie-Louise herself, her husband's family meant absolutely nothing to her. They were plebeians, and nothing could change the facts of birth.

Pauline chafed at this cold and inevitable fact. She too was an Imperial Highness, a Duchess of Guastalla. But she took her title no more seriously than any other of the thousands created by the Napoleonic regime. In her view Junot was still Corporal Junot of Toulon, not the Duke of Abrantès; Murat was still the dashing cavalry officer, not the King of Naples; and even Napoleon was not Emperor of France, but brother Napoleon. At bottom Pauline had remained the youngster of the rue Lafont. The whole imperial galaxy was nothing but a fairy tale. But with Marie-Louise it was different. She actually believed with inflexible consistency that there were God-given differences separating mankind into recognized levels. She, of course, moved on the upmost plateau, among the clouds about God's throne. And so, for the first time in her life, Pauline felt the mordant sensations of the Revolution.

Camillo Borghese had come from Turin to attend the wedding celebration. Pauline's accumulated anger and frustration, since it was out of the question to vent it on its proper object, were directed at her long-suffering spouse. Only after much grumbling did she allow

him to come and live with her at Neuilly. She demanded and got payment to the last sou for oats and hay used by his horses. He and his party were pointedly not asked to sit at her table. This was an especially grievous affront since Paris was teeming with visitors from all countries. So great were demands on the services of the caterer Véry that the Prince and his friends had difficulty at times getting themselves properly fed.

Camillo burned with resentment. He thought of speaking to Napoleon, who would probably have done something to remedy things. But he refrained, from fear of appearing an ass. He eased his sense of wrong in long letters to his mistress—if one may call her that—the Duchess of Lantes. Bitterly he complained of the quirk of fate that had brought him among the tigerish Bonapartes. He was up to his neck in troubles that no gentleman like him could hope to solve. The dear little Duchess read his letters with tears in her eyes. She kissed the notepaper and dropped it between two small, exquisitely firm breasts.

Before the actual wedding in Notre-Dame there was a rehearsal in Saint-Cloud. Once again the three Bonaparte sisters and Queen Hortense were assigned the duty of carrying the Empress' long train. Boiling with Corsican pique, Pauline did her part carelessly. Marie-Louise turned her head, stared coldly at Pauline and said, "Well, Madame!" Pauline turned red as a beet. She had to bite her tongue to hold back scurrility, but she stuck it out at Marie-Louise as soon as she was busy adjusting the folds of her gown. Pauline's sisters were amused, but Hortense turned white.

The Emperor, only apparently engrossed in conversation with some other men, caught Pauline in the act. He had seen her reflection in a large mirror. That evening he summoned her to his study and loosed his wrath on her. "I refuse to put up with such sluttish vulgarity," he told her. "I'm going to ban you from Paris for six months. What have you to say to that, Madame?"

"Nothing, Sire," said Pauline, and would have left on the spot.

"Halt!" Napoleon shouted in his military voice. "Respect your elder brother!"

"You were my brother," said Pauline.

"And what am I now?" Napoleon inquired roughly.

"Now you are the Emperor," said Pauline. "And you are the husband of an Emperor's daughter, Sire."

Napoleon bore down on her, thrusting his face forward. "I forbid you to criticize my marriage," he said. "Do you hear?"

"I am not criticizing," she insisted. "I am merely stating facts."

"Another word out of you," he told her violently, "and I'll send you back to Rome where you belong."

Pauline's lips began to tremble with hurt. Brother and sister confronted each other threateningly, not saying a word. Napoleon's brows were twisted in anger, and Pauline had to fight back the calumnies that struggled for utterance. Suddenly she wheeled about, hastened from the room and softly closed the door behind her. Rustan looked after her with interest. She broke into a run, on the toes of her silver shoes. She ran with her head held high and her body strained back, like a young girl. Her eyes were wet and tears dribbled down her cheeks. Finally she flung herself into a chair in the corridor and wept bitterly, sobbing with her whole body, her dark head bedded in her arms. She hated Marie-Louise. She hated her because she was proud, because she was the daughter of an old family, because she was blonde and uppish and insipid.

Marie-Louise bore Napoleon a son and heir. On the day of his birth the infant was made King of Rome by the ecstatically happy father. Like any other parent, Napoleon had worried through the accouchement. A dozen times he had instructed the doctors: "Whatever you do, save the mother."

Now the worst was over. The child was a delicate thing, with thin fine hair and blue eyes like his mother's. He cried imperiously for nourishment like any other suckling. The squealing rang like sweet music in the ears of the forty-two-year-old father. It was better than any aria by Cimarosa. Back and forth Napoleon paced, taking decisive little steps, two fingers of his right hand playing with a button on his white waistcoat. Rapp stayed beside him as he strode up and down through the confusion of nurses, servants and ladies in waiting who swarmed in the Empress' antechamber. The whispering, chattering and quarreling among the women made a dull roar like surf. If the Emperor Francis could have seen his son-in-law at this particular moment he would have marveled at Metternich's foresight. Hercules seemed to have laid aside his club to rock his child on his knee.

Yet all was not precisely what it seemed. The longed-for son

worked on Napoleon not as a soporific but like a bag of powder put behind a shell. Young Napoleon—for, of course, he was named after the father—seemed to redouble the Emperor's energies. The elusive object of dynastic lordship over Europe, hitherto a wonderful dream, must now be realized at any cost.

On the evening of the baptismal day, in February of 1812, a glittering assembly filled the big ballroom of the Tuileries. Every member of the Bonaparte clan was present, even brother Lucien, who for this grand occasion had been granted reprieve from the banishment under which he still languished because he clung to his widow Jauberthon. Surrounding the clan, who sat on small green cushions in front of the Emperor, were princes and ambassadors from all Europe. Kings were there, archdukes, royal princes, heirs apparent with their wives. Fantastically uniformed marshals, brilliant as cockatoos, mingled their colors with the ladies' brightly hued gowns—white silk and green. The white uniforms of Russian Guards' officers, not unlike those worn by the Austrians, vied with the light blue outfits of the Bavarians, the dark blue of the Prussians, the bright red of the Saxons. There were Circassian tunics, white Persian robes, the dress coats of the diplomats, embroidered with gold thread. The candlelight flared on hammered silver breastplates ornamented with the double eagle and was caught and splintered by jeweled rings, tiaras and bracelets.

Representatives of all Continental Europe were there, even from the far regions where the steppes merge into Asia. There were youth, beauty, martial courage, the elegance of statesmen, and dignity and age as well. Here and there flashed a cardinal's red, and the beards of elder statesmen gleamed snowy-white. But it was youth that dominated the scene. It was almost like the victory celebration in the Mombello Castle in Milan, when all had come to pay homage to the demigod. And yet there was a difference. The women were still beautiful, the men still gallant. Close observation, however, revealed a certain satiety, a settled self-satisfaction derived from riches and titles. The fire of the Revolution had spent itself and was in ashes. The young Hapsburg Empress fitted easily, only too easily, into the gathering. And then, too, there were no savants, artists, entrepreneurs, bankers, such as had clamored about the long table in Mombello.

A movement rippled through the gathering, a sensation of drawing a deep breath. Cardinals, bishops and other ecclesiastics were

taking their leave of the imperial couple, who acknowledged their departure with courteous nods. This meant that the official part of the evening, the gratulatory phase, was over. Hardly had the last cleric left the ballroom than the orchestra conductor, none other than Signor Blangini, rapped for attention. In honor of the Empress he called first for a melody by Salieri. Then followed a quadrille got up by Caroline Murat and her ladies in waiting, supposed to represent a ballet of the hours. It was curious to see how completely all taint of Revolution had disappeared from the young women's slender figures, from the wave of fine white hands, from movements of feet and legs, from sway of hip and toss of intricately coiffured heads.

These women were good to look at. Watteau and Lancret would have admired their carefully tended bodies and instinctively chosen to paint them. And yet in the Year II of the Republic they would have had all they could do to escape a last ride in the tumbrels. Now they bowed and turned and danced dainty steps, delicately forked out their fingers in feminine gestures, swayed along with easy rhythm, smiled sweetly, their reddened lips promising distraction. Like puppets of a comedy they danced out the hours, lightly, complaisantly, miming insubstantial moments in a rococo day.

The quadrille was generally admired. Only rough Augereau, Augereau who looked like a butcher and spoke like a braying ass, was perverse enough to say, "Can you tell me when this spring-heel business will be over with? Eh?"

His wife poked him in the ribs. She was overcome by shame when people turned to stare at the author of such boorishness. "My dear Augereau," she protested, "this is art, you know!"

"To hell with art!" said Augereau, not to be restrained. He impatiently retreated a few steps and engaged a general in conversation. "Do you know what this hopping reminds me of, comrade?" he inquired. "I'll tell you. It reminds me of the first Italian campaign. In Genoa I had the good luck to be billeted in a whorehouse. Wonderful place! Pure luck, you know. I had the girls do a dance. Naked as an egg, of course. It cost me twenty francs a head to get them to do it. Well, the point is, I never dreamed I was a patron of the arts. But, damn it all, man, I must have been! By God, sir, did you ever think the Emperor would enjoy these things!"

"Times have changed, Marshal," the general said, hiding a smile.

"You understate, sir," said Augereau. "It wouldn't surprise me if

this petticoat hocus-pocus carried us all right straight to hell and gone in a wooden bucket."

The quadrille was over. The Empress politely clapped her hands. Caroline Murat bowed, deeply gratified, in divers directions.

Once more Blangini raised his baton. Now it was an Italian melody that he played, an old song like those sung by the herdsmen of the Campagna. It contrasted sharply with the gracious fairy gambol that had immediately preceded. It was somber, stately music, shot through with portent, earthen, heavy. The guests craned their necks to see.

A woman appeared alone on the marble steps. It was Pauline. On her head was a heavy round helmet, decorated with a miniature turreted wall. Her dark hair fell loose about her shoulders. She carried the leather shield of a Roman legionary, decorated in gold with a wolf suckling two plump children. The wolf stood erect on the shield, chops opened wide and teeth bared. The teeth, made of precious stones, glittered. About her hips Pauline had slung a short Roman sword, and in her right hand she held the emblem of the legions—an eagle, wings outstretched, above the inscription SPQR.

Slowly she came across the marble landing. Then as slowly she descended the steps, between white columns and rows of officers who acted as her guard of honor. The music faded out. There was a hush.

As this vision approached the imperial throne, the guests were gripped by an illusion of witnessing a stirring and beneficent symbol. For a moment the dark-haired woman actually seemed to be Roma, Rome the conqueror, the world empire, the Roman peace, the daughter of Venus.

Pauline's gesture might have passed as an interesting episode of masquerade. Yet such was the temper of the audience that it was taken seriously. She was seen as a vital sign, the personification of a Europe united under the Napoleonic eagle, the same bird that once had flaunted his wings on the standards of Rome. Was there not slumbering somewhere in this very palace an infant in whom were centered even greater hopes than those placed, long ago, in the twins descended from Aeneas and found among the rushes of the Tiber? Even before the Empress could nod permission, acclaim broke out on all sides. Men and women crowded about Pauline. Many cried aloud, others laughed and wept with excitement. Pauline's show had let loose a tremendous wave of feeling. On this wave, regardless of dif-

ferences of station and of nationality, the guests were borne pell-mell to the Emperor's feet. There were shouts of "Long live the King of Rome!" The crystals of the chandeliers shook and the candles flickered.

Napoleon, with the vigor of a young man, sprang to his feet. Marie-Louise, at his side, looked at him amazed. Urgently she whispered, "Qu'est-ce que cela? . . . What's up? What is it?"

Napoleon did not hear her. Greedily he looked at the magic Latin inscription on Pauline's standard and felt the massive glories of the past. He could not see. His eyes had dimmed with tears of excitement. He could only make out the eagle clearly. To him, momentarily, it seemed to float freely in the air, ready to raise itself on golden wings into the illimitable.

Book Three

BROTHER AND SISTER

I

Defeat

PAULINE WAS IN Aix during the late summer of 1812. She lived in a small white house on the shores of the Lac du Bourget. It had a red tile roof and green shutters and was altogether an idyllic retreat. There was a long garden behind the house, filled with fruit trees and beds of medicinal herbs, planted by the apothecary of Aix who owned the place. Under an old pear tree on the lake shore was a bench where Pauline passed a great part of the day. This year the summer was very hot, but a breeze always blew across the lake from the mountains, stirring the leaves of the willows. Under them two blue skiffs were moored, graciously lent to Her Imperial Highness by the apothecary.

One day Pauline was wearing a white flowered dress, a big straw hat and a white silk scarf draped over her arm as she lolled on the bench. Madame de Mathis and Madame de Champbeaudoin sat with her, rustically attired like their mistress. These two ladies were her only house companions. The rest of the swarm were housed separately. Two men sat on the grass before the ladies. One, a line officer in an infantry regiment, was a Major Duchand. The other was a civilian, dressed simply in brown, the world-famous actor Talma. He held a book in his hand. His eyes did not follow the text as he recited, but rather remained fixed on the brim of Pauline's charming hat. Movingly the actor intoned:

"Nought so keen as ardors sweet
Which impose a single beat
On hearts that long together.
Happy none without desire:
Banish love and quench the fire,
You'll meet with rainy weather."

Blonde Mathis sighed. "How very true!" she said feelingly. "If only everyone were back safe and sound from that terrible Russian campaign!"

"How true!" said Champbeaudoin.

For a brief moment Pauline thought about Canouville and his latest letter from Smolensk. In it he had promised her that the war would soon be over. Oddly enough she did not believe a word of it. Nor did she find anything funny in his jokes about the Russian roads, which he described as rivers of sand meandering over the steppes, or in his witticisms inspired by Muscovite lice, more rapacious than any Cossack. Nervously she closed her eyes. In the fluttering darkness she saw another picture, as Canouville had painted it for her. It was her brother's tent at night. A stable lantern hung at the tent fly. The earth was black, right up to the mild stain of light cast by the lantern, and the sky was filled with enormous, slowly wandering stars.

With a shudder she opened her eyes again, took hold of herself and said, "It's not quite fair, ladies, to be so indifferent to our friends when they want to entertain us."

Talma shut the book and asked, in his consciously resonant voice, "How would it be, Mesdames, if we forgot Molière for a time?"

"Let's," said Pauline quickly. "I'd like it if you would swing me for a while. The air's so heavy today I can hardly breathe."

Talma jumped up and offered his arm with excessive courtliness, as if on the stage. When the two had gone, Champbeaudoin said, "The Duchess herself is the image of one of Molière's characters."

"Which one?" inquired Duchand.

"*Le malade imaginaire*," said Champbeaudoin, laughing dryly.

"But she's not a hypochondriac," said Mathis with indignation. "Last night she actually couldn't breathe. I had to open her negligee. She sat at the open window and looked out for hours."

"But the doctors can't find anything wrong with her," said Champbeaudoin. "Her lungs are sound enough."

"It's her nerves," said Mathis. "She's depressed and restless. Something's bothering her, like that time at Le Petit Trianon."

"What could it be?" said Champbeaudoin dubiously. "Do you suppose she's worried about Canouville?"

To this Mathis had no reply but a shrug of her shoulders.

"Maybe she's worried about her brother," Duchand suggested.

"Her brother!" the women chorused. "What makes you think that?"

"Because of the war with Russia, of course," said the major.

"But I fail to see the connection," said Champbeaudoin. "There's

no question who is going to win. France has always won. Anyway, our Princess doesn't trouble her head about military matters."

"Perhaps her head isn't troubled," said Duchand. "It may be her heart, Mesdames."

Pauline and Talma went through the garden. Pauline stopped to examine the beds of herbs. Over the quiet blue of the foxgloves, butterflies tumbled. There was a strong perfume of camomile and thyme. "It's just like Corsica," said Pauline. "I wish these herbs could give me relief."

Standing off, Talma watched Pauline with intense pleasure as she bent lightly forward and picked some of the daisylike bloom from the camomile. She crushed the flowers between her palms and buried her nose in their aromatic fragrance. Afterward they moved along to the swing, which was hung to a pear tree. Talma set Pauline lightly in motion.

"Higher!" she called, her face radiant. "Oh, much higher, Talma!"

Talma did as he was bidden. Pauline's white dress flew and billowed. Her lacy petticoat showed and her legs in white silk stockings. She kicked off one of her slippers and it arched away into the bushes. "Now you'll have to find it for me, Talma," she commanded. "And if you get it, I'll let you have one wish—if it isn't too much of a wish, you know."

Talma looked for the errant shoe. He was a good fifty years old. Although he was well preserved and a solidly built man, Pauline's little jokes often took his wind. He scrabbled among the bushes. Gooseberry prickles tore his cheeks and the back of his hands. At last he found the shoe. Smiling to himself he came back to Pauline.

"Your wish, Talma!" she said. "I'm prepared for the worst, sir."

He laughed at her mock fears. "I'm asking you only for this slipper," he said, as he knelt to slip it back on her foot.

"Such a naughty thing to wish!" said Pauline. "But so nice, too. And what will you do with my slipper?"

"I'll keep it as a souvenir," he told her. "I promise you that during my next appearance in Paris I shall carry it as a talisman under my coat."

"Your wish is granted," said Pauline. Suddenly she lay back in his arms. "Carry me to the house, Talma," she ordered. "Then you can have the shoe."

When Talma left Pauline's cottage he thought to himself: It's dev-

ilish charming, making love to her, but what a lot it takes out of me! He wiped cold sweat from his brow.

And indeed it was a strenuous affair, keeping Pauline amused. That evening Talma served as boatman and undertook to row Pauline over the lake. There was a full moon that lighted up the mountains so that they shone silver-gray, at hazy distances. The moon played on the black water, trembled in silvery tongues on the little waves which the boat stirred up as they slid across the smooth surface. The oars grated softly in the tholes. Talma let the boat drift. It was breathlessly still. Every quarter-hour the bell in the church tower in Aix chimed across the lake, cutting neat segments of time from the eternity of night. Now and then a silver-scaled fish broke from the water, shone and fell back with a splash. Afterward it was even quieter. The lake smelled slightly stale, of reeds and grasses all water-soaked. Sometimes a little puff of warm wind came from the land that breathed the lingering rock warmth of the day.

Pauline sang. She sang a little Italian song, a child's tune that she had heard once in Lucca, a song without much sense, without many words even, just a few harmonious syllables. Her voice was not pure. But to Talma it seemed that never had such melodious sound poured from human lips. How rare it was for voice, melody and syllable to fit perfectly into a background of moonlit night and melting mood! And, as Pauline finished, Talma thought of a sonnet by Gaspara Stampa. He murmured, "*Ed io ringrazio Amor che destinato m'abbia a tal foco. . . .*" "I humbly thank Amor, who has destined me for such fire. . . ."

Pauline let her hand trail in the water. It was warmer than the air. "It would be wonderful to bathe now," she said suddenly.

Talma abruptly cut off his recitation. "I beg you, Madame," he said, "to consider your health."

"But I don't want to think about my health," Pauline demurred. "Turn around, Talma."

Quickly she slipped out of her clothes, drawing her dress over her head, stripping off her stockings. Then she perched on the gunwale, white as marble, testing the temperature of the water. "It's lovely," she said, "just right."

She slid into the black and silvery lake. She sighed with pleasure to feel the water caress her body. Yielding, warm, the liquid night flowed about her breasts and limbs. "Heavenly!" she cried to Talma.

"You ought to try it." Then she let out a squeal, for a chill current had touched her. Yet this, too, was delightful. The dark waters seemed to dissolve all her past, all her love affairs, all the sins of the flesh and of the soul. Momentarily she felt a young girl again. She sensed the quiet undulation of power in the waves, in the moonlight's trembling, in the light breath of mountain breeze over the lake.

Talma sat watching like a man turned to stone. He had loved many women and was a man who knew his way around, a court favorite among highborn Parisiennes, an expert in frivolity. Now, however, he experienced revelation. For the first time he really loved. The fifty-year-old actually found himself loving like a boy, shyly, adoringly. He loved Pauline the ever-pleasing, in spite of knowing the long chronicle of scandal that attached to her. This love came over him irresistibly as he watched her swim. The magic glitter of the night was on her breast and shoulder. A deeply satisfied laugh welled from her throat. None of her adventures, none of her titles and luxuries, had penetrated, it was clear, beneath the surface. She was the woman soul, the feminine prototype, at home in lakes, rivers, seas and all flowing, varying places. He was awed by her inviolable smoothness.

After Pauline had dressed, Talma rowed slowly back to the garden shore. There the ladies and Major Duchand were waiting. "Here come our truants!" said Champbeaudoin, smiling bitterly in the darkness. She was strongly attracted to the actor. Sometimes she cried herself to sleep over him. He seemed impervious to her Spanish beauty and her silent longing.

And so the days and nights in Aix flowed comfortably on undisturbed. At last Talma had to leave. Every day he wrote to Pauline describing his feelings, trying desperately to hold fast to the mood and memory of the moonlit night. *You have again given my existence meaning and content,* he said. *I cannot imagine you out of my life without quailing before the desert prospect.*

These letters made no more impression on her than on a graven image. The written word simply carried no weight for her. She needed the man's physical presence, the eye's glance, the lover's manifold service, in order to appreciate him and confer her favors. Not once did she bother to answer Talma's letters, and so she gave real distress to the smitten actor of fifty.

Far from this idyllic lake in southern France fate was working itself out in grand-scale war.

Pauline was not incapable, as Mathis had suggested, of some degree of foresight. Her nature did not fulfill itself in playing with dolls. In the depths of her being she was still a Corsican and, like her mother and her brother Napoleon, rooted in an older, harsher world. She was able to feel the threat of coming debacle.

When she sat by the window at night, she could not suppress a sensation of what was foreordained. It seemed then that events had already been determined long before they appeared in her time, that an ineluctable destiny underlay the immediate confusion. Hers was an old primeval belief. Perhaps in Pauline it was a response to origins even behind the Corsican clan; to the Etrurian stock from which she ultimately stemmed. It may have been this heritage that forced her to rise from her bed to watch the play of moonlight and black shadows, in order to discover fateful signs in them. Her superstitions were like those of some long-forgotten diviner, the haruspex, seeking clear meaning for hazy premonition in the smoking entrails of the sacrificial animal.

In the light of day, when the ladies were twittering like birds, when the smell of coffee was in the air and the men were ready to resume their round of gallantries, such vague intimations seemed not only improbable but ridiculous. Then Pauline sloughed off her night thoughts. Stubbornly she played at being the easily accessible beauty, a little mad with too much love, as was expected by all around her. Gradually, however, the game became more difficult.

The shadows of disaster crept closer to her—a stranger dressed in black, lurking behind a tree with God knows what evil. She needed to be alone only for a moment, or to shut her eyes only for a few seconds, and her waking nightmare would flood through her.

Pauline's vague anxieties suddenly grew concrete. It came about on a lovely September day. Out of the light veils of morning mist the landscape revealed itself in autumnal perfection. An azure sky arched over the earth. It was warm, but there was a freshness and a promise of cooler weather in the air. The asters nodded prettily and sadly in their beds. One by one pears fell from the old tree to lie hidden in the tall grass. Pauline sat on the swing and listened to the thud of the falling fruit. "There's one," she murmured, "and there's another."

In the great smoky quiet of the afternoon the pears seemed to be falling into a deep well.

Major Duchand came to her from the house. He carried several letters in his hand and was very excited. "It has turned out all right," he announced joyfully. "We might have saved ourselves a great deal of worry. The Emperor is in Moscow and the enemy is beaten. There's nothing for Russia to do now but make peace as quickly as possible."

"Everything has gone well, you say!" Pauline sprang from the swing. She examined the addresses on her letters. "But I don't see any from Canouville, do you?" she complained. "Wait a minute. Here's one from Russia—from Captain Lespinasses. Who is Lespinasses anyway? Why doesn't Canouville write himself?"

She unsealed the smudgy letter. Her hands shook as she read, and the letter shook with them. She stepped a few paces sideways. Her eyes raced over the scribbled lines and comprehended nothing. "My God!" she exclaimed. "Look! Borodino! Moscow! What names! Why does he write me all this rubbish?" Finally she controlled herself and began to read carefully.

Major Duchand watched her closely. Before his eyes Pauline became as white as chalk. The major was struck of a sudden by Pauline's remarkable resemblance to her brother. Then he saw her turn mechanically, as if her legs were compelled by a separate will of their own. "So that's the way it is," she said heavily to Duchand. The letter fluttered out of her hand into the grass. Suddenly she broke into a run and disappeared into the house without shutting the door behind her.

Duchand shook his head in astonishment. He bent down and picked up the letter. Impatiently, like Pauline, he scanned the politely hesitant amenities introducing the substance. Then he sat down in the swing and read:

This night the Emperor suffered from fever. A lighted candle burned on his table. He stared gloomily into space, his head propped on his hands. Grenadiers guarded the entrance to the tent at either side. It was my duty, as officer of the day, to see that the guard was relieved at proper intervals. This particular night—it was late Sunday—was very dark and still. There was none of the laughter and conversation of the ordinary bivouac. Even the horses were quiet.

Russian campfires gleamed fitfully and very soon were blacked out. Toward morning a wind sprang up. It sighed like some big animal and the clouds were swept from the sky. The stars had come out by this time, pale stars. Then the Emperor went to bed.

He was up early, according to his custom. He was so hoarse that he could scarcely speak. All told, he had not slept much more than an hour. He had his spyglass brought to him, opened it up, waited until there was enough light, then scanned the Russian lines.

Later the Emperor went from battery to battery. He spoke to the cannoneers. Here and there he altered a cannon's position. The artillery was not so strong as we had hoped. We had about a hundred pieces left. The Russians answered our barrage. They held to the heights, behind earthworks, especially to a heavy fortification to the right of their center.

The outcome of the whole engagement depended on the storming of this entrenchment. The Russians stood their ground. The wind had become a gale. The air was so clear that the battle was visible in great detail. It was plain that our side was getting nowhere. The Emperor sent in the cavalry, among them the chasseurs.

We saw that our cavalry succeeded in penetrating the Russians' strong point. But the defenders, reinforced by new regiments, counterattacked. It was a savage affair without definite result. About two in the afternoon I was sent with a message to General Auguste Caulaincourt. The general had been killed, and so I delivered the order to his successor. On the way back my horse stumbled and began to limp. I led him by the bridle. Now I realized that there were great numbers of casualties that before I had failed to notice. Our cavalry's short-lived success had cost dearly. Many men were begging for water. Some even asked me to shoot them. There was not much I could do. I promised to send help.

By merest chance I stumbled on the body of a dead chasseur whose features looked familiar to me. It was Captain Jules Canouville de Raffelot, who took part with me in the Haitian expedition, and whom I knew casually during that period. Death must have come to him instantly. His uniform was torn and I noticed that he wore a golden medallion on a chain about his neck. I removed it, fearing that otherwise it would be taken by looters. Opening the locket I discovered Your Imperial Highness' miniature and a lock of dark hair. From these signs I assumed that he must have been closely acquainted with

Your Imperial Highness, and so took it on myself to write you these few lines. The locket is now in my possession. Because of the uncertainty of the mails I did not think it wise to send it at once to Your Highness.

We took our long chance at three o'clock in the afternoon. The Emperor, against common expectation, did not use the Guards. The Russians withdrew in good order. Their losses were heavy, ours but little lighter.

Carefully Major Duchand folded the letter. He looked off into the lovely autumn afternoon, at the pretty asters, at the rich yellow pears on the old tree. Poor devil, he thought, to be cut off so young! Gravely he examined the back of his hands, the veins through which hot living blood was steadily flowing. He yawned, and then leaned comfortably against one of the swing's supports.

Borodino, the burning of Moscow, Napoleon's fateful vacillation in the Kremlin, the frightful retreat over icy steppes and wooded lands presaged the end for the imperial dream. No one fully realized this as yet. France was still strong. From the Berezina Napoleon rushed by sleigh to Paris, to recruit new legions for the coming decision.

The news of the dissolution of the Grand Army came slowly to western Europe and slowly spread through Paris. Many found it simply incredible. Everyone was so accustomed to victories when the Emperor took the field that they had come to be accepted as natural phenomena, like the floods which follow heavy rains. Now Paris and France were confronted with the unimaginable fact that the Grand Army, the biggest France had ever mustered, had not merely been defeated, but literally destroyed. This squandering of a half-million men with all their wagons, horses and cannon was impossible to conceive. France's enemies found it almost as hard to appreciate what had happened as Frenchmen themselves. The extent of the catastrophe dawned very gradually on Russians, Austrians and Prussians.

The Russians had fought with great bravery. Nevertheless, they had lost consistently and been steadily pushed back. It was out of the question to talk about a Russian plan of campaign, or even of Russian military cunning, in explaining why the French had penetrated so deeply into the wastes of Russia. A whole series of coinci-

dences actually accounted for the disaster. The attack had been launched too late in the year, for one thing; the roads were bad; there had been long periods of waiting that sapped the morale of the Grand Army. Then a winter of unprecedented severity closed in on the invaders. It was not until November, when seemingly everything was all over, that a plan began to take shape in Kutuzov's slow-working mind. And yet even then he never brought himself to make mass attacks on the retreating French. He contented himself with harassing them by ceaseless skirmishes, using his Cossacks for the purpose. He was fully aware that it was foolhardy business to come to direct grips with the dying lion. In the end it was the elements that conquered.

But even in this aspect of the debacle, which many erroneously conceived to be the working of pure chance, there was an immanent logic. It was Napoleon's altered personality that drew misfortune like a powerful magnet. His Russian campaign was not, like those in Italy and Austria, planned through to last detail. The particularities of the terrain, the roads, cities, marches, the character of the enemy —at Eylau he should certainly have learned the Russians' shattering tenacity—were hazy in Napoleon's mind. He depended, to his sorrow, on sheer weight of arms, and when the unknown loomed before him he was confounded.

Borodino was by no means another Austerlitz or Friedland. Rather it was a senseless frontal assault on well-fortified positions. This resulted in a bloody butchery that led to no clear-cut decision. Both sides suffered horrible losses. But Kutuzov, with the mass of Russian peasantry to draw on for replacements, could much better afford losses than Napoleon, whose army was melting away hundreds of leagues from the source of his man power.

The indecisive stay amid Moscow's charred ruins was the final straw. From that point on the initiative fell into Kutuzov's hands, though it must be said that he showed no sign of being able to exploit it masterfully. But he could well afford to hesitate, since he was operating in home territory that offered him quarters and fresh supplies of men and beasts and sustenance for both.

What was it that had so drastically changed the Napoleonic personality? Was it simply that he was getting older—he was forty-three now—and was consequently not so resilient of body and mind? Was it satiety, a repleteness of action and triumph that had crept over him

imperceptibly with the passage of the years, a difficulty of rapid response, the intellectual equivalent of the fat that disfigured his body?

What lured him to his downfall was, essentially, Napoleon's false sense of security, an unwarranted confidence in the potency of his star. Often he talked of this star symbol, not realizing that it was a word meaningless without the capacity for intense exertion and instant action. Power alone supports no one. There must be concrete participation in the processes of power. In fact, a conservative, defensive outlook had taken hold of Napoleon, a tendency to build on power, position and the *status quo*. This attitude, highly suitable for the governance of an old state, was almost perfectly inappropriate for such a speculative venture as military assault on Russia. The entire campaign was nothing but an irresponsible adventure, unreal, hanging in mid-air. It bore a great resemblance to the equally fruitless excursion into Egypt.

Basically it was the same state of mind that had caused the Emperor to divorce Joséphine and enter into marriage with a youthful daughter of the Hapsburgs. Marie-Louise was not the cause of Napoleon's decline. Nevertheless, she was the living proof of the betrayal of the Revolution and, in the final assay, of himself. These days he lulled his fears in the fixed idea of the Empire, ornamented by a self-created dynasty and dynastic tradition. What Metternich had foreseen—satiety and dependence on tradition—came to pass. But there was one feature that Metternich did not foresee. He had not expected that the old revolutionary impetus would flare up again and express itself, perverted as it now was, in the familiar channels of war. Nor had he foreseen that Napoleon was heading toward an upheaval more disruptive, perhaps, than the initial revolt of the masses by virtue of which he had risen to power.

Over and beyond Russian resistance, the people of Europe were showing signs of disaffection with the entire Napoleonic dynasty. No longer was there a climate of common consent to support a revolution that had long since ceased to yield reform. Prussia went over to the Russian side. With some hesitation Austria followed this lead, against Napoleon's expectation that his marriage would prevent drastic action. After that came Sweden, and this in spite of the presence of Marshal Bernadotte, husband of Désirée Clary, and heir to the Swedish throne thanks to Napoleon's intercession. In due order Saxony joined the coalition during the Battle of Leipzig. Like a great

flood the peoples of Europe flowed against the straining Napoleonic ranks. This was the awesome thing about the coalition—it pointed myriad weapons not against the Revolution and France, but against a single man, Napoleon.

Pauline was in Hyères. Only gradually did she appreciate the crushing effects of the Russian affair. She was sick. On the night table by her bed lay the gold locket with her picture and the lock of her hair which Canouville had worn to his death at Borodino. Lespinasses had forwarded it to her from Vilna when he arrived there with the remnants of the Grand Army. Since Vilna Pauline had heard no more of him.

She often thought of her dead, especially at night when the house was quiet. They were Fréron, Leclerc, her little son Dermide, Canouville and now Moreau, killed at Dresden. Pauline had just turned thirty-three, but in her fullness of experience she felt much older. Time carried her along tumultuously. She felt that somehow her heart had been crumbled, gnawed at, drained of blood by the flood of destiny whirling about her constantly. Often she imagined that she really belonged to the dead, who seemed to be waiting for her near at hand, shut off only by a thin black curtain. She had the sensation of belonging to a forgotten generation, as if she were an old woman.

Finally Pauline gathered herself together. The worse the news, the more thoroughly was she shocked out of her sickness of spirit, and at last she managed to cast it aside like a somber garment. As in other years Corcisan women had taken up arms or tended the fields while their men were at war, so Pauline awoke into an activity she had not known since childhood. She assumed responsibility for herself and extended this responsibility to include her brother. When the Allied armies threatened France after pushing across the Rhine, she offered him her pearl necklace, pointing out that it was worth two hundred thousand livres. Napoleon declined the offer.

Pauline was busy in other ways. In a series of long letters she superintended the liquidation of her jewelry by Devoix, who kept an exclusive shop on the quai des Orfèvres in Paris. When he failed to offer her an adequate price she brought his competitors Friese and Picot into the transaction. She also set about selling her Hôtel Charost estate. She was not quite certain what she should do with Château Neuilly. Was it state property? Did it belong to her? Napoleon

had given it to her. But she soon discovered that no one cared to buy the place.

Pauline was as thrifty in the disposition of her goods and real estate as the Signora herself would have been. But she was equally ready to throw all the cash she could salvage into the fight to recoup her brother's position. Her eagerness to help distinguished her from the other brothers and sisters. They either faced catastrophe with their hands hanging helplessly at their sides, or connived to desert the sinking ship, as in the case of Caroline and her Murat, who was Naples' King by the grace of Napoleon.

Having found a suitable course of action in which to vent her energies, Pauline really began to enjoy life again. She shook off the dead. As always during crises, she took a new lover. This time she chose Major Duchand, a sensible fellow with considerable business sense. In all the difficulties that now beset her he stood faithfully by. He was not an attractive man at all. He had a peasant's features, a rather low forehead and a strikingly big mouth. Yet he did have fine brown eyes. In them Pauline read the absolute devotion found in the eyes of large flap-eared hounds.

And Pauline was sorely in need of Duchand's loyalty. As bad news came more and more often from the capital, and the invading Allied armies drew nearer, her entourage more carelessly gloated over her discomfiture. Madame de Champbeaudoin asked to be released from her post. On the day she quit Hyères, Pauline remarked that her first lady in waiting wore a white rose pinned unobtrusively to the shoulder of her dress—the emblem of the Bourbons. The servants, cooks and coachmen, whom Pauline had never deigned to notice, stuck by her more faithfully than the fine ladies and gentlemen of her intimate group. This was more disconcerting to her than the ingratitude of high-placed friends. It confirmed her knowledge of coming humiliation and gave her no sense of moral superiority to compensate.

On a minor scale, then, Pauline went through much the same experiences as her brother in Fontainebleau. The creatures that he had drawn up into his orbit refused him loyalty. Berthier, for example, stole quietly off into the Bourbon camp. For a time Napoleon was so overwhelmed by the completeness of his reverses that he contemplated suicide. He tried to poison himself, but the attempt failed. He

pulled himself together, even while the cramps were still on him, and said, "I am condemned to live."

Pauline, however, did not yield to despair. The loss of money, castles and position did not unnerve her. Indeed, she felt an inverted sort of satisfaction when all her extraneous titles, dignities and imperial prerogatives fell away. It was like taking off a heavy silk dress with a long train and donning in its place some light thing she had worn as a child. She managed to convince herself that, rightly viewed, her losses were not so great. Twenty years before during the flight from Corsica after the loss of the Bonaparte homestead, there had been good reason to worry over food and shelter, and yet no one had grown panicky. In the end everything the family needed had fallen into its lap. Today there was even less ground for apprehension. At a minimum there remained some jewels, money, houses and even a genuine title, the Princess Borghese.

Duchand, the man of common sense, was dumfounded when his mistress accepted one setback after another in good humor. He would dolefully wait for her to give way, but this never happened. Instead it often turned out that it would be she who comforted him, calling him her soul's treasure, "*cher trésor de mon ame.*" When he thought it over, he would shake his head and murmur, "A damned peculiar family!"

Only one concern really struck home with Pauline—her brother. She saw clearly that he alone among them was in danger of being permanently crushed. The rest of them were merely caught near the skirts of disaster. So she was on the alert day after day for news from Paris.

Napoleon's Corsican traits, like Pauline's, finally dominated. The serenity of the family in face of fortune or misfortune rose to the top. For a thousand years the Corsican clans had warred and schemed for influence on the island and in Italy. Their cabals had been pursued with typical savagery, with guile, with family alliances, with murder and all manner of brutality. Often the object of this excessive effort had been a scrap of land, a miserable house, a shed, a couple of fruit trees, one lone cow. Possessions had been won, possessions lost. The outcome depended on the caprice of fate. If the gamble failed, perhaps next time it would succeed.

With Napoleon the stakes were infinitely higher—crowns of nations, overlordship of Europe, perhaps of the whole world. Yet in

the end the gambler was not playing for the gain alone, but for the game itself. And Europe was still shaky from this tremendous Corsican gamble. Win or lose, the Corsican had shown the world he was a man of kidney. Not only the field marshal and the statesman had felt Napoleon's power, but the merchant in his counting room, the manufacturer, the shipowner, the writer, the inventor in his workshop, the small businessman in his shop. To all these types Napoleon had opened opportunities that were limited only by individual ability, industry and temperament. Whether or not Emperor Napoleon sat on the throne of France, the personality of the man had prevailed and would endure.

Fundamentally he took his stand on this unalterable fact. He knew that he was the future. And so a most astonishing thing happened. He alone among his contemporaries seemed to scale new heights during defeat, to exhibit unparalleled dignity. His features acquired a stoic cast that lent them a formidable beauty, and the sly, greedy look was less often seen in his eyes. This tranquillity of spirit was visible when he took formal leave of the Guards. The red silk standard of the regiment was dipped toward him, and thoughtfully he kissed the tattered, shot-torn folds. The same imperviousness to defeat showed when, traveling in a heavy coach, he read all he could find on the island of Elba where he had been consigned by the Allied authorities. His behavior surprised his old friends, Count Bertrand and Count Drouot, who had decided to go along in his service. It was even more surprising to the Allied representatives who conducted him on his trip south, the English Colonel Campbell and the Prussian General Truchsess-Waldburg.

As he went through Provence the people showed hostility. In one village while the horses were being changed a crowd gathered about the coach. There were cries of "Death to tyranny!" and "Murderer!" Gray-haired women shouted, "Give us back our sons, you fiend!" Colonel Campbell tried to pacify the mob, but in vain. They pressed threateningly close, stones and clubs in their hands. It took the dragoon guard to disperse them with a show of force.

The incident threw Napoleon off balance. He was as helpless before the menace of the village crowd as when once he faced the Council of Five Hundred and was rescued only by the grenadiers' intervention. On Colonel Campbell's advice he changed his costume. The rest of the trip he wore a white Austrian uniform instead of

his famous green chasseur's tunic with the red trimmings. He was dressed like this when he arrived at Hyères. He was confused, dismayed, shabby. His hair hung lankly over his pale brow.

As Pauline rushed to meet him she was shocked by his pallor. She stopped short. "I can't embrace you in that uniform, brother," she whispered. He threw off his tunic and handed it to Bertrand, and then Pauline put her arms about him.

The next afternoon at the Sign of the Red Hat in Fréjus it was decided that Pauline should follow Napoleon to Elba. Madame Mère had promised that she too would eventually share her son's exile. Napoleon's spirits had miraculously revived. He was charming, for the moment, and chatted freely with Captain Ussher of the *Undaunted*, much to the dour seaman's embarrassment. It was the *Undaunted* that was to take him to Elba.

The Sign of the Red Hat was a very comfortable inn. It had a big table scoured white, and fresh sawdust covered the tile floor. A fine spring rain clouded the windows. Pauline, sitting on a wooden bench, amused herself as best she could. Both Captain Ussher, a long fellow with sharp gray eyes, and Colonel Campbell, who could not compose his round, merry face into severity, were unable to keep their eyes off Pauline. So, she thought, these are our enemies the English! She actually liked them much better than the Russians, Prussians or Austrians. She laughed to herself at the impression she made on them. When she rose Colonel Campbell rushed to assist her. Captain Ussher watched, crestfallen, out of the corner of his eye. He could not move, for he was engaged in animated conversation with Napoleon who, according to habit, held him fast by a finger through the fold of his vest.

"I shall look forward to seeing you on Elba, Colonel Campbell," said Pauline.

"That will be a great pleasure, Madame," stammered the Colonel. He had flushed dark red and looked about in naïf triumph. His look was not lost on the Emperor, who promptly pigeonholed it in his copious memory.

II

Home-Coming

PAULINE AWOKE to find flecks of sunshine playing over her face. It was this little sun dance that had aroused her. She was quite a while shaking off the drunkenness of sleep. Outside in the garden she heard her brother giving directions to the gardener.

She stretched and looked the room over. It was a simple room with whitewashed walls, like the old place in Ajaccio and the Antibes house. There were two windows, draped with white-flowered curtains. They billowed like sails in the breeze. The smell of home came in through the open windows, a smell of sea and thyme and sun-softened pine. Her dress lay where she had carelessly discarded it the evening before, on a chair upholstered in green with the gold Napoleon eagle on the back.

Now she was on Elba, in the *palazzetto* of the Mulini, which had been assigned her brother as residence. When she closed her eyes she saw a clear picture of Porto Ferrajo, where she had docked yesterday at dusk. She had stepped off the boat onto the quay and Count Bertrand was waiting to meet her. Through the medieval Porta del Mare they had emerged into the narrow main street of the little town, which had many steps and branching alleys. Along the narrow thoroughfare were white, low-roofed houses, with barred windows and doors left ajar during the day. The smell of frying fish came from inside the houses. There were children's laughter, women's incessant prattle. As in a scene from a romantic opera the houses were built hard against one another, leaning crazily as their ranks rose up the slope. Here and there in the alleyways latticed lanterns gave out a mild yellow light. Grapevines, fig boughs and clematis covered the walls. Pauline had been enchanted with this. It was as if, like a travel-stained Ulysses, she had suddenly found the city of the Phaeacians in the mild twilight.

Unexpectedly they had stumbled across a beggar in the square before the little cathedral. He was a tall, white-haired man. All smiles,

a decrepit Hermes, he had stretched out his seeking brown hand, not saying a word. On the spur of the moment Pauline had opened her purse and given him a piece of silver. Carefully he had felt it and weighed it in his palm. Then he had said, "*E troppo, Signora* . . . you've given me too much." The "too much" had gone round and round in her head all through the night. There had, indeed, always been "too much" in her life, too much wealth, acclaim, beauty, too much love. But now, tremulous at the prospect of true happiness, she believed that on this little island she would at last find long-sought harmony and peace. Softly, she spoke the magic word. How easily it rolled from her tongue—Elba, Elba. It was like oil. She would pour it on the stormy sea. For her brother, too.

She thought things over. A room like hers induced thoughtfulness. For once she was free of ladies in waiting, of obstinate lovers, of beggars for her favor. At the closed door of one of the houses in Porto Ferrajo's narrow street she had noticed a string of onions hanging. She remembered what the sign meant, though it had slipped her mind since childhood. It meant tears. It meant that some girl had been jilted by her lover. That can never happen to me, she told herself contentedly.

She jumped out of bed and put on her clothes for the day. Then she went out into the garden. Her brother stood by the little wall that cut off the garden from the sea. He was looking through his telescope. The sea was peaceful, glassy with light, as gentle as a lake in the morning sun. The bay was almost completely hemmed in by the deep hook of a peninsula.

Without taking the glass from his eye, Napoleon said, "Good morning, Pauline. I hope your first night was a good one."

"Excellent, Sire," she replied. "I see there are many ships in the harbor."

"Not so many," he said. A shadow of regret played over his face as he pressed his telescope together. "There's only the brig I came over on and the *Inconstant*. Then there's the frigate *Grasshopper*, which runs between here and Leghorn, and the *Curaçao*, the one you sailed on."

"You haven't had any word yet from the Empress?" she inquired. "Or from the King of Rome?"

"Not a word," said Napoleon. He meditated for a while. "How did you find Caroline and Murat when you were in Naples?"

"They feel insecure. There's no guarantee that they can hold the throne. The Bourbons——"

"I understand," he broke in. "Murat is a fool. He had no right to leave the army in Russia. I should have had him shot as a deserter. Well, now I've forgiven him his betrayal. I know, as a matter of fact, that Caroline was back of it. He's wax in his wife's hands."

"One's as bad as the other," said Pauline quietly. "But if you ever decide, Sire—that is, if you find you have to make war again—you'll find Murat behind you with all he has to give."

Napoleon looked with unfeigned interest at his sister. He shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "Murat should have thought of that a little earlier. It's too late now. I haven't the slightest idea of burdening myself with new enterprises. I'm going to give all my time here to my wife and child. I'm going to make this island into a model place. I like the people here. They're simple and honest. Really I haven't lost much. I'll write an account of my campaigns. I promised some of the old-timers I would. My life is filled to the brim as you see, Madame, planned to the letter."

"I only wish it could be like that."

He looked at her wide-eyed and said sharply, "What do you mean by that, Pauline? Do you question my word?"

"Not at all, Sire," she said in embarrassment. "But circumstances may arise. I'm afraid——"

"Circumstances can always arise," said Napoleon abruptly. "We'll not discuss that. It's painful to me." Pauline flushed at the rebuke. Then her brother brightened. Tension and gloom vanished from his face as suddenly as they had come. Impulsively he seized her by the arm. "Come now, let's go and look at the horses!"

"The horses?"

"Why not?" said Napoleon impatiently. "Horses are better company than most people. They keep their mouths shut."

The horses in whitewashed stalls were freshly currycombed. Their bodies shone with brushing and they stood hock-deep in new straw spread over the flags. The name of each horse was on its stall. Napoleon smiled with honest pleasure. He pulled a lump of sugar from his vest pocket and reached it over on the flat of his hand to nibbling lips. "This for you, my cousin," he said, pointing to the Arabian Vagrame, his favorite mount. He had ridden the beautiful animal during the last campaign. Next to Vagrame was the Walachian

Roitelet, who had thrown him at Bautzen. Then came the Norman Coco, a broad-barreled, fabulous beast almost as much honored by the Old Guard as Napoleon was himself. Coco had no nerves. Under cannon fire he would not move a muscle, and now, in his stall, he was just as composed. Beyond him was the Andalusian Emir, the fastest horse in the stable, but the Emperor, not the world's best rider, did not like to use him. Emir was inclined to be skittish, chewed his bit and had been known to lash out with his hoofs. He jittered and danced in his stall. Under his silky hide the great jugular vein pulsed with blood. Tethered close to the manger, he tried in vain to nip his neighbor, the good Coco. But Coco, knowing it could not be done, simply ignored his pettishness. Pensively Coco scrabbled in his oats with big floppy lips, then ground the grain between two rows of yellow teeth as between mill wheels. Now and then he blew out air in a blast of satisfaction, showering oats into the stall. All told there were fifteen horses, among them the big white fellow, Gonzalve, whom the Emperor had ridden on parades, and gentle Cordone, a lamb in spirit, whom he had bought for Marie-Louise to ride as soon as she arrived.

"I'm not so poor," said Napoleon with a real pride. "I've got the cream of Saint-Cloud here with me. Judging by his figure—have you ever seen his picture?—my successor won't have much use for them." Pauline laughed, for the new King of France was as fat as a tub. "I've become a country squire," Napoleon continued. "Horses, cows and fields. You'll see how things go, Pauline, if you stay here long enough." Pauline looked incredulously at her brother.

During the afternoon they rode to Rio Alto to inspect the iron mines. Their carriage moved laboriously over the narrow road. They passed peasants astride asses, seated comfortably in saddles built like chairs. By custom the peasant women walked some five paces or so behind their lords and masters, carrying loads almost as heavy as those borne by the asses. Often one of them was encumbered also by a child clinging to her hand, or by an infant slung to her back. On the approach of Napoleon's carriage the peasants gave way on either side. The men bowed majestically and the women curtsied low, their wide, bright-colored dresses spreading out about their feet. The children goggled at the famous strangers. The asses alone kept a lofty disinterest; they used the breathing spell to nibble thistles serenely by the roadside.

Occasionally Napoleon had the carriage stopped so he might get out and talk to the peasants. He asked in detail about the extent of their holdings, the yield of the land, the state of the crops, the size of their families. The peasants invariably answered calmly, thinking over each word, quite without embarrassment, sometimes even with a flicker of humor. Pauline was surprised. Her brother seemed actually to enjoy these down-to-soil conversations.

Coming to Rio Alto they found the earth red with iron. The road, the low houses, the grass, the trees and even the peoples' faces were deeply stained. The ore was taken from the mines in heavy, two-wheeled oxcarts to be loaded onto barges at Rio Elba. From the landings it was then transported to Tuscan ports. The Emperor was interested in every item of the mining. He talked at length with the overseer of the works. He learned that the ore was of excellent quality, fifty percent pure iron. The mines had been worked for more than three thousand years. He asked about the workers' wages. They got twenty centimes a day.

"That certainly isn't very much," the Emperor commented.

"That's right," said the overseer. "But each of them has his own house and a piece of land to keep him in food."

"It's a good thing," the Emperor agreed, "when a man can have a little land to call his own. It gives him confidence. That way good citizens can develop."

Keeping at a respectful distance, a knot of red-stained workmen gathered about Napoleon. They wore wooden clogs and held their caps in their hands, along with shovels and pickaxes. The Emperor pulled out some of his own gold Napoleons and handed them to the overseer. "Divide these among the men," he ordered.

The workmen laughed and threw their reddened caps up into the air. "*Viva Napoleone!*" they shouted. "*Il nostro sovrano!*"

The Emperor lowered his head thoughtfully as he left. "I should have paid much more attention to these matters," he said, to himself rather than to Pauline. "At the bottom it is the people who are important. I should have taken more trouble with them. It would have prevented an enormous amount of misfortune."

He sat down on the rim of a well. A white well house had been built to arch over six clay pipes, out of which gushed thick streams of water as pure as molten silver. The coachman handed the Emperor

a beaker. He filled it and drank. "Strange," he said, "there's no taste of iron at all."

A little boy was standing by watching the performance, a barefooted, sunburned little fellow with heavy black hair who kept his eye fixed on the Emperor, as on the strong man at a fair.

"Come here to me, son," said Napoleon. "Tell me where this water comes from."

"Why, everybody knows that," said the boy proudly. He was amused by such stupidity among grownups. "It comes from Corsica, of course!"

"How is it brought over the sea?"

"It isn't," said the boy importantly. "It comes under it."

"But Corsica is far away."

"Not so far," the boy corrected him. "You can see it from Monte Giove."

"I'd like to see it," said Napoleon. "Take us there."

The boy ran ahead. The Emperor and Pauline followed, and behind them came the coachman and the footman. The road rose steeply. At first the vegetation was semitropical. Prickly pears grew out of the stony earth, and agaves with candelabra of blue blossom. Soon there were olive trees run wild and occasional pines. Finally appeared mountain firs, creeping low and thick over the ground. Up from the sea blew a cold mist. Suddenly they were shut in completely by fog. Washed by mist, the conformation of the cliffs wavered, was lost and then seen again.

"We'll never see Corsica in this pea-soup fog," the Emperor ventured to remind the boy.

"But it gets clear toward evening."

They were up on the highest point of the island. Giant mountain masses lay on all sides, the debris of a titan battle. Black sheep grazed among the barren rocks, busily ripping up weeds. Through the drift they could see ancient temple steps, darkened by the rain, and the ruins of fallen columns.

"That was the house of the Father of Sin," the boy said. "There are ghosts around here at night sometimes."

"It's the Temple of Jupiter," the Emperor explained to his sister. "This lost race has forgotten its gods. What do you say, Pauline? Don't you think there might be specters about right now?"

Pauline, wrapping herself closer in her cloak, peered through the

murk uneasily. There were whisperings in the grayness, the wind sighed down in the depths and occasionally the mist wreaths dissolved in showers, chilling her cheeks and wetting the back of her hands.

"What a sinister place this is!" she whispered to Napoleon.

Suddenly the mist became more translucent. The view of sea and cliff widened. Beads of water on the rough grasses began to glitter. First the sky opened up, and then the sea was visible through swimming clouds. The clouds jostled one another and broke apart. Rough heights and rolling mountains now took form in the distance. It was Corsica, across the sea. They could make out a little white town hanging precariously to the steep shore. Now the vista was so clear they were able to distinguish separate houses, so many small white cubes. Pauline believed she could see the sun reflected on windowpanes. It was preternaturally bright.

Brother and sister stood side by side, looking across the wide water. Silently they watched their homeland, floating on the sea. Then they turned and ancient Etruria lay at their feet. A flat coast marked the Italian mainland, with hills rising beyond and, beyond the hills, violet mountains. The nearer the twilight hour, the clearer the air. Monte Cristo, Pianosa lifted themselves out of the sea, and the towers of Leghorn. Bays curving in breathless beauty pleased their eyes, tongues of land, cliffs and the undulating lines of mountains against the calm sea.

"How beautiful the earth is!" said Pauline.

Her brother was silent. Perhaps he was carried away by the supreme orderliness of the landscape. Perhaps he was just painfully aware of the smallness of his asylum in contrast with the greatness of the earth. So recently he had reached out his hands to grasp the whole globe! His sunken face was rapt. It was hard for Pauline to tell what was passing in his mind.

She found it like that throughout their stay on Elba. As for herself, she was in the best of spirits and, indeed, would not have objected to spending the rest of her days on the island. To all outward appearances Napoleon, too, seemed happy enough. He was busy all the time. He took charge of the community life of his Lilliputian empire with as much energy as he had expended on the affairs of France and Europe, if not more. He concerned himself with minute details and took active pleasure in regulating the smallest matters. He

was like one of the great masters of the past who, attempting the most ambitious art subjects—the Creation, say, or the Last Judgment, or the history of mankind—nevertheless did not overlook the tiniest plant, the most humble strawberry bloom, the tools used in the building of Noah's ark. Perhaps this quality is the most valid hallmark of genius, the quality of being able to visualize totality without neglect of the particular, at times only by using the particular.

The Emperor's activities were laughable to the princes and statesmen of the Continent. He was widely caricatured in English and French newspapers. Pauline, however, did not find him ridiculous, though he wearied her to the bone. His inexhaustible energy, concentrated on the little island of Elba, swept her along from one thing to another. And Pauline, unfortunately, was used to long hours of sleep. She forced herself out of bed when the first birds had hardly begun their matins, and then roved over the island, clambering up mountain peaks, through vineyards, around salt ponds. Until late at night she tried hard to stick at it and get things done. There were times when she groaned under this ceaseless commotion of projects. It was the same, in fact, with the easygoing folk of Elba: the Emperor was a great honor to them, but they found him dreadfully tiring.

Pauline no longer thought about being sick. She simply had no time to feel bad. Her flesh grew firmer, more muscular. Her spirit, always on the *qui vive*, lost its habit of self-pity. At night she no longer dreamed. She lost weight and gained spirit in her movements. In the opinion of the Englishman, Colonel Campbell, she became more attractive with each passing day. The colonel would accompany the Emperor on his rounds far beyond the call of duty.

He could often be seen carrying for her a shawl or a parasol to ward off the sun. His military superiors would have been gravely disturbed if they could have read his thoughts. Not only was he devoted to Pauline, he admired the Emperor himself, and so did many simple English sailors and soldiers who came into contact with the vital Corsican.

The Emperor's party often took a trip to the little country house of San Martino, which lay white and pretty under the thick foliage of Spanish chestnut and holly. Here it was cool in the heat of the day. From the high windows of the front room was a splendid view of the sea, seen through long, leafy vineyard alleys sloping down. This living room was called the Egyptian room. Napoleon had had the

walls decorated with hieroglyphs and paintings of Egyptian columns and sphinxes. The signs of the zodiac were painted on the ceiling. Pauline and Campbell both felt odd in this room with the Emperor, for it had a temple atmosphere. The light streaming in was green from passing through foliage. The decorative zodiac completed the sense of separation from the warm summer world outside. When the Emperor said anything in this room, his words seemed to acquire layers of meaning.

Napoleon himself appeared conscious of this. He was more taciturn and introspective than ordinary, less inclined to his typical small ironies. One day he looked up at the celestial signs and muttered harshly, "All done now, all done." He got hold of himself when he realized he was frightening Pauline and arousing Campbell's suspicions. The next time they visited San Martino Napoleon led them with an air of mystery into the green room and pointed to the ceiling. In the middle of the zodiac was now a Latin inscription: *Ubicumque felix Napoleon*—Napoleon is happy everywhere. This quieted their uneasiness.

But was Napoleon really happy? Had he actually reconciled himself to the limitations forced on him? Campbell was convinced that the Emperor had abandoned all plans of regaining power. How interested he seemed in the new roads under construction on Elba! The military highways through France were overshadowed by the road from Porto Ferrajo to San Martino. The guardsmen who had been put to work moving earth and quarrying rock for it were mortally resentful over their demotion from drilling to digging. Nevertheless, when the Emperor was around they toiled zealously in the hot sun, though their very brains sizzled. They pushed the wheelbarrows with a will and whacked away with pick and shovel like men.

Water mains were laid down. Work on the long-idle marble quarries was resumed. Olive and chestnut trees were planted on Elban slopes. Napoleon busied himself reading books on vine culture in order to produce a better quality of grape. Almost all the grain used on Elba came from Tuscany; Napoleon conceived a plan to make his little kingdom independent. Elba was stony, yet not far off was the flat and quite neglected islet of Pianosa. And so Pianosa was taken over by a regular expedition. The land was measured off, divided up, and the bushes and weeds uprooted. Engineers estimated the available water supply, testing all the springs. Pumps were installed,

worked by oxen harnessed to a wheel. Pauline and her devoted Campbell stood apart with all this hustle and bustle around them. Hundreds of men rushed here and there. The Emperor, as if directing a battle, took his stand on a flat hillock, and from there dispatched orders and received messages. He had taken off his little black hat and wore one made of straw, which made him look like an Italian peasant.

The second breakfast, the *bocchino*, was eaten while they sat on ruins. Like all islands of the region, little Pianosa had its Roman remains. Gray foundations, relics of what were once the palace, bath and theater of Agrippa Posthumus, still survived. Agrippa Posthumus had suffered banishment to the island, and there had continued to lead a life of enervated luxury, until he was strangled by order of Tiberius. Napoleon sat down on the outer wall of what had once been a theater, and held out his silver cup to be filled with cold wine poured from a flask bound in woven straw. He ate greedily and chewed eagerly. When he had stripped the flesh from the bones of his roast chicken he pitched them carelessly aside. He tore off chunks of bread and crammed them into his mouth, snatched a handful of olives and expertly ejected the pits in a steady stream. Campbell had yet to accustom himself to the Emperor's table manners. Napoleon simply would not let himself waste time satisfying appetite. The only good thing about the excursion, from Campbell's point of view, was the presence of the Emperor's sister. Even while he licked his lips, the Emperor jumped to his feet like a boy and was off kicking through the dust, on the way back to his command post on the hillock.

The twenty-seventh of June was a feast day for Elba. By old custom the date marked the beginning of the tuna-fishing season. Tuna was one of the main sources of food supply. In the predawn silver light the whole population moved by pony, by ass or on foot to Porto Ferrajo. The nets were first blessed in the cathedral. The doors were flung wide open. A thousand little candles burned before the statues of Simon called Peter, Andrew and the two sons of Zebedee, because they had been fishermen beloved of the Lord. Never were prayers so fervent, never hymns more zealously sung than on this day of days of blessed utility.

After the ceremony the populace streamed out of the cathedral, rejoicing, laughing, singing. From the gray building some carried

gold-embroidered banners bearing pictures of the apostles. Others carried the big nets. Napoleon followed the main body of the procession under a baldachin, with Pauline beside him. On ahead were priests in full regalia, their stoles over their shoulders, leading the way for long-haired little boys who swung censers of burning incense. The men were barefooted and looked like so many murderers temporarily on good behavior. The women were full of life, dark, big-bosomed southern women. Napoleon's aides Bertrand and Drouot, the English attaché Campbell and other officers and their ladies brought up the rear. They were half deafened, all of them, by the cries and clangor. In this way the procession arrived at the sea, which in the morning light looked like rich green meadows about the island.

The boats were shoved down the sandy shore into the water so enthusiastically that the keels smoked. Hairy-armed men and supple boys leaped over the gunwales to participate in the fun. They laid to the heavy oars with good heart. The crowd on shore watched every move in the pageant. Anxiety over the outcome of this first casting of the nets lay on the watchers' faces. The Emperor shared the general concern. Then, of a sudden, a cry of joy issued from all throats. The leading boat had unfurled the banner of the apostles. This was the signal that God had sent the tuna to them. It meant food and money, fat flesh and plenty of oil.

There must have been a big school, for the boats soon began to careen deeply toward the nets. And in time the laden craft crawled slowly toward shore and the waiting crowd, towing the full nets with them. The big fish thrashed about with their tails and the water foamed. Everybody could see the plump, silver-scaled bodies. Now the crowd turned their eyes on the Emperor, impatient for him to perform his symbolic duty. In his high riding boots he strode into the sea and took hold of the cork float at the end of a rope that a fisherman handed him. He began to pull, grasping the cork firmly. He strained so hard his face turned red. But the net would not budge. Bertrand and Drouot rushed to the Emperor's aid. So did Colonel Campbell, muttering to himself as he tugged, "God damn it, God damn it!" Still the net would not move. Then everybody took a hand. Old men, women, children in long rows picked up the edge of the net, pulled it up on their shoulders and struggled shoreward. The huge load moved reluctantly. Now the tuna seemed to sense their coming end, for they wallowed furiously, springing clear out of the

water. The crowd attacked them with clubs and boat hooks, and the shallow water was colored wine-red with tuna blood.

When the net was half on dry land the crowd began to carry the fish safely up on shore. Women who looked like avenging furies, their hair falling around their faces, dashed about with long knives dripping fish blood. The boys stoned the catch, and even toddling infants tossed pebbles. Many of these tots fell into the water face-down and had to be retrieved by their busy mothers, who gave them a solid box on the ear for their pains. The lust to kill had nerved the arms of all, and none was content until the last fish lay gleaming and gutted on the beach. The Emperor went back and forth inspecting the catch as if it were a division of his army. The whole day through the little town was filled with laughter and song. Families picnicked at home, in the garden, in the street. Everywhere was a strong smell of hot oil and cooking fish. There was fish to eat in the Palazzetto dei Mulini, and in the evening the *moresca* was danced in the cathedral square. The night was warm and soft. Torches smeared with pitch lighted the carnival. The peasant men wore short embroidered jackets, white baggy trousers, heavy buckled shoes and gay kerchiefs bound turban-wise about their heads. At their sides hung curved swords.

The dancers moved in a staccato rhythm to the music of flutes and cymbals. The dance represented a mock battle. Swords crossed, lightly clattering. It took a great deal of skill. The curved sabers whirred dangerously close to the dancers' heads. The music became more impassioned. The men sprang high at each other, and the swords clashed louder. The turning hub of the whirling circle was a thickset man with enormous gold earrings. In ecstasy he rolled his eyes up so that only the whites showed.

Suddenly the men threw their swords onto the cobblestones and turned to the young women who were waiting their turn. With the wonderful grace of the South, the girls began to dance, holding themselves proudly erect, their heads thrown back, waving off their suitors with hands raised high. Their bracelets clinked and rattled, their black eyes glittered in the wavering torchlight, and their bodies seemed slimmer than usual yet bursting with a mysterious plenitude of strength in every curve of breast and thigh. One of the dancers let out a bloodcurdling cry. Pauline felt the hair rise on the back of her neck. She and her brother stood together, watching the dance. It

was the primitive shriek of a woman who is pursued and who wants to be caught.

At this point Pauline was carried away. Some irresistible power gripped her and she found herself in the middle of the circle. Though hampered by her tight silk dress, she whirled through the old folk dance as well as any fisher or peasant girl. The dance merged into an affair of slow-moving couples. Then a new rhythm took over, something like a lively march. The partners embraced. The onlookers kept time by clapping hands and stamping feet. A wild, exultant harmony had arisen out of struggle and strife.

The fear of Algerian pirates had not altogether disappeared from Elba. The population was worried when Napoleon's brig, the *Inconstant*, used her sixteen cannon to protect a ship from Naples that was being pursued by a pirate. We shouldn't worry about Neapolitans, was the general opinion of Porto Ferrajo. That's their business, being chased by a pirate. It has nothing to do with us. It was different when a Tunisian ship showed up in the bay of Porto Longone. Excitement was widespread, since it seemed the day of its own reckoning had arrived for Elba. But it soon became known that the Barbary people had the best of intentions; they had come only to pay their respects and offer gifts to the new ruler of the island.

The ship's captain was brought before Napoleon. The man fell flat on his face, as if struck down by lightning. Servants assisted him to his feet. He stared at the Emperor as fearfully as if he were an idol, and addressed him as "earth-god." Then he had presents spread out for display—rugs, narghiles with stems of ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Napoleon was much affected. His hands shook. He bent eagerly forward to catch the unintelligible Arabic before the interpreter had a chance to translate. Was it memories of Egypt that stirred the Emperor? Or was it the old feeling of unlimited power that the abject homage of the Barbary visitors evoked?

Pauline did not take part in this audience, for it would have been an insult to the Arabs to have a woman present. Napoleon controlled himself quickly enough and, with an imperial gesture copied from the great actor Talma, gave the infidel captain permission to provision his ship. As return gifts he presented them with his own portrait and several swords. These were received with appropriate cries of pleas-

ure, and after that the captain and his party withdrew, backing from the room.

Napoleon's life seemed full. Only early in the day and late in the evening were there empty hours. Mornings he spent in his library, dictating letters and reading. But there were times when in the midst of a sentence he would turn away from his secretary with a gesture of weariness. There were also times when the book slipped from his hands. He would stare into space moodily for a while, and then put a period to his bout of melancholy by jumping to his feet, rushing into the garden and staggering the gardener with a dozen new horticultural ideas.

Napoleon needed men. They were his chosen instrument, the fiddle on which he played like an incomparable virtuoso. It mattered little whether the instrument was well or rudely fashioned, he could still play an impressive measure. The visiting English merchant, over from Leghorn, to his surprise found himself in a profound discussion of mercantile principles. Napoleon did not hesitate to improve the visiting playwright's dramas. Nonplused ecclesiastics were quizzed on whether sun-worship is not, after all, the natural religion of mankind. Napoleon was intensely interested in all these matters. But he derived the greatest satisfaction from talks with simple, realistic people, the peasants, fishermen and craftsmen. "I have a terrific hunger for facts," he used to say. "There's no use bringing me ideas and principles. I've enough ideas myself to keep everybody on the stir for the next two hundred years."

Evenings in the Palazzetto dei Mulini were inclined to drag. Pauline did what she could to enliven them. She arranged masquerades; she played in amateur theatricals on a miniature stage. Her brother amused himself by offering sharp criticisms. Once he spoke so cuttingly that little Countess Bertrand burst into tears of chagrin. But Pauline was praised by all, particularly in the role of the peasant girl Procida, in Lamartine's *Graziella*.

"I like Procida much better than the Duchess of Guastalla," was Napoleon's loud verdict. "That's the true Pauline for you."

Often the Emperor played cards with Pauline and the Signora, who had finally come over to Elba. Since he was a poor player he tried to hold his own by cheating. When Colonel Campbell first noticed this peculiar habit, he could hardly believe his eyes. It was simply unthinkable for a gentleman to cheat at cards. With chills of horror

crawling up his spine, Campbell imagined how Napoleon would have been booted out of any reputable London club. But here in Elba such peccadilloes as cheating at cards were accepted with nonchalance.

"Pay up your debts, ladies!" the Emperor would say, delighted with himself when his trickery prevailed. He would double over with silent laughter when the Signora had to dig into her purse. Glowering like an old bulldog, she could scarcely bring herself to plunk the few coins down on the table. Campbell considered it particularly shocking that the Emperor, after having won by sheer guile, should then deliberately pocket his winnings, humming merrily as he did so. It upset him more than a little to discover that his idol had feet of such coarse clay.

Campbell was driven to admit that not only when playing cards but in many other ways the Emperor was woefully lacking in gentlemanly instincts. There was, of course, the business of eating, the frightful stuffing of salad, meat and dessert, of vegetables and fruit. Then Napoleon's manner with the ladies was, to say the least, on the dubious side. Once Countess Bertrand had appeared in a black evening gown from Paris, a garment that admirably set off her blondeness. But the Emperor was not impressed. Bluntly he had said, "Take off that monstrosity, Countess. Do you think you're at a masquerade?" And Pauline, who wore a white dress, had received the same short shrift. "I forbid you," said the Emperor, "to wear a shroud in my presence, Pauline. White clothes are dismal." For a moment Campbell had felt impelled to protest on Pauline's behalf, though she herself showed no sign of injury. But a closer look at Napoleon, who sat drumming the table top, his brow deeply furrowed, made him think better of it.

It was quite unthinkable, Campbell often told himself, that the Prince Regent of England should behave so abominably. And yet Campbell felt sure that the Prince Regent and Napoleon, after a half-hour's conversation, would arrive on a plane of mutual understanding. He could imagine the pair of them strolling arm in arm through Hyde Park. There was no denying that a magic charm more than compensated for Napoleon's contempt for the amenities of civilized behavior.

This charm had nothing to do with the aura of great deeds, of once exalted position, that clung about the person of the Emperor. It

emanated from the man himself, especially in those moments when a certain native naïveté and honesty became noticeable. One morning in the garden behind the Palazzetto, for example, Napoleon was taking a pinch of snuff. Inadvertently he let the snuffbox slip from his fingers. Before Campbell could bend down to pick it up for him the Emperor himself had recovered it. He brushed it off carefully and examined it closely. Campbell then realized that the miniature of a small blond child, the King of Rome, was painted on the porcelain. The Emperor kissed the portrait before he thrust the snuffbox back into his pocket. Campbell could not conceal his emotion. The Emperor rallied him, taking him by the arm. He said seriously, "There's a good deal of paternal sentiment in me, Campbell. I'm not ashamed of it. I could never count on the loyalty of a man who did not love his children."

The continued absence of wife and son was the cruelest thorn in Napoleon's side. In the room that he had reserved for the Empress in San Martino he ordered two doves to be painted, bearing a garland in their bills. It was a symbol of faithful marriage. But he awaited Marie-Louise in vain. He had no idea that over on the Italian mainland his wife lay in the arms of the one-eyed Count Neipperg, a cavalier of the old school whom the Emperor Francis had sent along to help his daughter forget her impossible husband and the brevity of her life as Empress. Yet there was no telling. Napoleon may have sensed his cuckoldry, even as he must have foreseen his boy's unfortunate position at the Vienna court. The stupidity of his enemies, in fact, was colossal. Instead of contenting themselves with his fall, they persisted in humiliating him with vulgarities and pinpricks. The fat idiot on the throne of France, Louis XVIII, who had the Allies to thank for his puppet authority, hesitated to pay Napoleon the income due him by official compact. The English newspapers proposed that Napoleon be deported either to St. Helena or St. Lucia and everlastingly held up the tethered warrior to scorn.

It is quite possible that Napoleon might have adjusted himself to living out his life on the island. His enemies themselves spoiled any such mild denouement of his career. They whipped up his Corsican family feeling; they dragged his name in the dirt. So shortsighted was their attitude that they imagined their fiat had made the onetime Emperor an ordinary man, to live securely on a little island protected by the tiny forts of Falcone and Stella, by a single brig and a thousand

soldiers, the majority of whom were Elbanese without the slightest military experience. What could this one man and his shabby remnants avail against their forts, fleets and armies! Apparently they could not appreciate that his power derived from the fact that in France and Italy millions of common people longed for his return and the revival of his rule.

When autumn came Pauline noticed that her brother was up to something. He was surly at times, abstracted, and paid no further attention to things on Elba. Mornings, lying sleepless in her bed, she could hear him pacing back and forth in the library. He sounded for all the world like a caged animal. His restlessness depressed her. She realized that sooner or later her island paradise would fade away, and with it all hope of a common future with Napoleon. The rain drummed sadly on the shutters. The autumnal sea was gray, the mountains were blotted out, and rain water sobbed in the gutters.

As the weeks passed, however, the gloom left her brother's face. His features tightened and he was on the alert. He walked with a springy step, gave up playing cards and sometimes read the whole night through in his library. Strange guests arrived and departed. Seamen came and went who did not look like seamen at all with their quick talk and rings on their fingers. Country girls showed up whose faces were remarkably white and who had traces of powder in their hair. Pauline was aware which way the wind was blowing. The Corsican weakness for intrigue, cabal and betrayal had got the upper hand. She shrugged her shoulders and resolved to take a hand in the game. But how? Her brother did not admit her to his confidence, no matter how appealingly she turned her eyes his way. At last she saw the obvious approach—good-natured Colonel Campbell.

The easygoing colonel now embarked on the greatest adventure of his life. The Roman princess, the beautiful woman discussed at such length over glasses of whisky in the London clubs, appeared to fall like a ripe plum into his hands. Pauline sought his companionship at every chance. She even seemed to be jealous of him, begrudged his talking with other women. God be thanked, Campbell told himself, that it's winter and cool weather! He remembered how perspiringly he had followed after the agile Emperor in the summer. And a sweaty lover would never, never do. Pauline visited all parts of the island in Campbell's company. Only a servant went with them

when they climbed Monte Capanne or sat for hours on end on an old stone bench in front of the tiny church of St. Leonard.

Pauline gently quizzed her fond and foolish admirer. She asked him how Lord Nelson had looked, what kind of man the Duke of Wellington was, and who were the nabobs of English society. She learned to know Lord and Lady Holland by hearsay, and George Fortescue. She committed to memory their peculiarities—Lord Holland's passion for antiquities, Lady Holland's unlimited hospitality to leaders in the arts, sciences and politics. For her benefit Campbell described Fortescue's famous elegance of dress and manner. This chatter Pauline liked immensely. Without trying too hard she showed Campbell an eager interest; she laughed; she inquired about the love affairs of Albion's great. Who was Lady Hamilton? Had she really been so beautiful? Was it true, the story that every now and then she actually sold herself to the highest bidder in a house of ill fame? Campbell reddened and dodged such questions. Never before had a woman talked to him so frankly. He stammered, grew incoherent. Whenever he fell into such embarrassment Pauline laughingly helped him out with a touch of her hand on his.

She would ask him too about his own background, his family, his career. Campbell was expressive enough in this mild field of anecdote. He told her a great deal about Scotland, the hills and moors near Edinburgh. Pauline learned to know pretty much what his puritan mother looked like—Campbell nervously stroked his short beard when he talked about her—and how she punished herself every day to atone for small sins of the flesh. He told her about India, where he had served a tour of duty—about the Parsees, the rajahs, the elephants, the Thugs. Pauline was quite enchanted by his tiger-hunting adventures. Elbows on table she would listen to eloquent descriptions of jungles, shipwrecks, battles with the warlike Sikhs. Sometimes she would look into the honest, bearded face and say to herself that Campbell might very well be another Canouville. I could really fall in love with him, she thought, but I simply don't dare.

On his side Campbell often suffered pangs of conscience. He was patently neglecting his duty and his obligations to the Emperor. Pauline soothed his remorse by saying, "My brother is just reading in the library. He doesn't like winter weather, that's all." And it chanced that more than once, when he looked into it, Campbell

found that Napoleon actually did stay among his books for hours on end.

"Pauline is a clever woman," was Napoleon's comment to the Signora.

"She's doing her best," the Signora replied cryptically.

"Poor Campbell!" said Napoleon, and stalked out of the room.

Plans began to take form. Napoleon had thought a great deal about Italy. The Italian mainland was only five miles from Porto Ferrajo. The Italian people had lost whatever freedom they enjoyed. Hatred of Austria was keener than ever. Men of all stations longed for independence and for Italy to be a united nation. Bands of rebels and of banditti sought a leader. There was a Bonapartist faction in every Italian city. Would not the Corsican, now languishing so close at hand, be the ideal spokesman and military chief?

Napoleon thought it over carefully. There were many things in the Italian situation to attract him. From a military standpoint the terrain was excellent. He had a vivid image of the remote mountain regions, of the villages and small towns, the back roads, the bridges, the innumerable opportunities for sudden attack and strategic retreat. Like Corsica, Italy was an ideal country for guerrilla warfare. Murat was still in Naples, more rueful of his conduct by the day, perhaps ready to make concrete amends. Napoleon himself had a band of only a thousand men to count on, but with Murat and the bandit elements he felt he could increase this strength twentyfold. And were not the youth of Elba ready to a man to serve under his colors? Had not some of them wept when he had been forced to reject their offer to enlist?

And so Napoleon's messages sped in all directions—to Naples, Calabria, Sicily, to Lucca, Pisa, Ravenna and even as far as Mantua and Milan. This bold intrigue flourished under the very noses of the Austrian authorities. Women as well as men were in the Emperor's employ—among them his former mistress, Countess Walewska, with whom he had spent a recent night in the Elban hermitage of Marciana Alta. This tryst, like another famous one near Warsaw, had been devoted more to political discussion than love-making. A searching tension, an impatient atmosphere, lurked everywhere throughout Italy. Dissent was rife, busily plotted in lonely farmhouses, in caves and cellars by revolutionaries who could talk whole nights away.

The "Prince" described by Machiavelli seemed to be at hand, ready to use the cause of freedom as a lever. So, *evviva Italia!*

But Austria, the old police state, was not altogether to be caught napping. Rumors trickled through. Unfortunates without passports were imprisoned and hanged. And there were traitors—but among the Austrian police there were traitors too. They soon managed to attach themselves to Napoleon, and he found out from them just how much Austria knew about him. He might be poor at cards, but at this game he was a master.

The Emperor did not put all his eggs in one basket. The lines of his conspiracy went out all over France as well as all over Italy. Practically every day word of general dissatisfaction with the regime of the fat, incompetent Louis came to him. He was visited by delegates of restless Jacobins, as well as by Bonapartists, asking his aid to get rid of the Bourbons. Napoleon could not easily believe them sincere. "You always had a low opinion of me," he reminded one of these emissaries. "How is it you want to have me back when it's too late?"

"It is never too late, Sire," the Jacobin replied. "France waits. The army is waiting to move forward again under the eagle."

"But you have sworn loyalty to the Bourbons."

"That may be," the other said. "All the same we want the eagle, not the lily."

Napoleon laughed cynically at this, looking the man up and down.

"There's no time to waste, Sire," the Jacobin prompted.

"I need an up-to-date account of the distribution of troops, their equipment, the number of their weapons, the names of their commanders," said Napoleon curtly.

"Very well, Sire."

Three weeks later a certain Fleury de Chaboulon came with the desired data. Napoleon seized them greedily. He said to Chaboulon, who was disguised as a sailor, "Now we have something to work on. We shall see."

"It would be better if you could give us some definite promise," objected Chaboulon.

"There can be no certainty in these matters," Napoleon said icily.

"I understand," said Chaboulon.

Napoleon had come to a final decision. His information revealed that the south of France was all but bare of troops. Provence, the great military road of the Rhone Valley, would have to be avoided.

Everything depended on the first regiment met with. That would be in Grenoble, or somewhere in the outskirts of the town.

He dismissed Chaboulon. For the last time he weighed the Italian alternative, and for the last time gave it up. It would mean war of at least a year's duration. Furthermore, he was not attracted by the prospect of guerrilla fighting, the splitting up of a campaign into a thousand small actions that would be difficult to control and co-ordinate. Indeed, as a rationalist in strategy, diffuse attack had little appeal for him. His Latin sense of order could not stomach haphazard division. He realized, quite justifiably, that his own person was worth more than an army corps, so long, that is, as he held the actual reins of battle. But if guerrilla methods were used, he could not do this. And how could he expect to make his way through the Plain of Lombardy so as to come to grips with the main body of the enemy and secure northern Italy if he had to employ scattered detachments under jealously individual leaders? No. Better to place the bets on a single card—on the possibility that the French army would come over to his side. After that, large-scale battle; a single gigantic action, ordered, thought out beforehand, with every thread of it in his hands, a battle of total annihilation, sure to bring the most decisive of results, for better or worse; in short, another Jena, or an Austerlitz.

Once the titanic concept was clear in his mind, Napoleon felt enormously well. He was like an artist who, after long struggle to put his finger on the right form for his ideas, at last sees each detail fall into place to make the perfect vision. But he did not tarry to enjoy the sensation of mastery. Immediately he began to devote his attention to the details of stores, munitions, the preparation of marine transport, the readying of his little private army as pieced out by recruits from Elba.

He had Pauline called. Nervously he was humming the opening lines of his favorite tune—*Malbrouck s'en va-t'-en guerre*—when she arrived. Hearing him she was distraught and her hands trembled.

"You will get Colonel Campbell out of the way," he told her.

"Colonel Campbell?" she echoed tonelessly.

"That's right," he said. "I don't like the idea of having the man shot."

"Shall I get him to go to France?" she asked.

"No, not there," he said. "Send him to Florence. There are plenty of Englishmen there."

"When shall I do it?"

"At once," he said. "Today."

He left her standing where she was, and went out into the garden to be alone. Here he ran into the Signora. The air was mild, for it was the late winter of the South, and the smell of violets was in it. The sky was bright blue and little woolly white clouds hung overhead. The buds were already thick and sticky. Sharply pointed and bright green, the new herbage sprouted through the loam. Expectation was in the season. Napoleon came to a stop near a fig tree. "Madame," he said, "you see, don't you, that I can't stay on Elba?"

"I've known it for a long time," the Signora answered, nodding her head.

"I've decided to face things out," he informed her.

"It's quite true, my son," she said thoughtfully. "You cannot stay here."

"I should be glad to have your advice, Madame."

"I know so little about these political matters," said the Signora. "Personally I was happy here. Pauline seemed to be content. We would have stayed with you indefinitely. But now I see all that is out of the question."

Briefly he rushed on to disclose his plans. The Signora let him talk without interruption, not listening too closely, but rather watching intently. His whole manner changed. Behind his earnestness was a pleased smile, a naïve hope. Waves of power radiated from him and beat against the mother. Perversely he only made her think about other, long-forgotten days. She thought of her husband's death, of the days of poverty when she had patched and saved and bread was precious. She thought of the days of flight and of the family's wandering to Toulon, and of their anonymous existence in Marseilles. This son had lifted up his family to the heights of success. He was the head of the clan, and unthinking loyalty was his due, even though her every nerve rebelled against the idea of taking the long chance. In any case, she said to herself, we're not all like Elise, Caroline, Louis. We're not all traitors and crawlers, whipped dogs squirming for scraps thrown from the master's table.

No, the Signora concluded, I must follow my two favorites, Napolione and Paoletta. These two alone had justified the trials of childbirth and rearing, the one male, the other female, strength and beauty. As for the other children, the semifailures, the near-slaves,

the basically unintelligent, to the end of their lives they would have to be cared for, given the wherewithal to live and the counsel needed to carry them through. But love belonged to the superior two.

Napoleon finished his outline and looked for his mother's approval. The old woman's eyes glittered as she laid her hand on her son's arm. "There's only one way, my son," she said. "Do as you see fit." He took her hand and kissed it.

Getting Campbell out of the way was simplified by the colonel's asking for leave to visit the mainland. This was granted him. Pauline had given him a long list of things she needed—lace, veils, cloth, shoes, china. The weather was fine, the sea smooth. Europe seemed to be slumbering. All day long the Emperor sat in his library, apparently busy writing the history of his campaigns. How could Campbell, the thorough gentleman, deny his lovely Corsican friend? She was aflutter with impatience. He must hurry and do her errands for her, he must! How could he suspect stratagem when she said she needed desperately to replenish her wardrobe and accessories, when she told him to come back as soon as possible, she would miss him so—all while her clear eyes looked longingly into his? There were times when Campbell thought his heart would break.

Behind the innocent Campbell's back the island of Elba pulsed with activity. From the deck of his vessel as it pulled out of the harbor the colonel looked back with lovesick eyes. There were many things he did not see. No sooner was he safely out of the way than the Emperor's horses were led out of their stalls. Officers dashed about on the gallop. An order was issued that no ships could enter or leave any of the island's harbors, not even fishing smacks. Creaking and swaying, heavily loaded *barocinos* began to file through the Porta della Terra down to the quayside, where the whole population of Porto Ferrajo was busy. Sacks of bread and dried fish, baskets of olives, casks of wine were brought aboard the brig *Inconstant* and the small luggers that supplemented the transport. Young islanders in the imperial uniform, carrying muskets wherever they went, waited impatiently to do or die. The fishermen were in the thick of things, wearing red stocking caps and knives in their belts. Womenfolk carried beautifully curved jugs of water, wine and oil to the dock, swaying as they walked. Children laughed and screamed, agog with the general excitement. Infants, fat as butter, crawled over the terraced streets of the town. Everyone was in excellent humor, most of all the

men. Here it was at last, what everybody had expected of Napoleon —the supreme adventure.

The February evening closed in early over Porto Ferrajo, obscuring the sea and the battlements of the old forts. All grew still. The preliminary work was done. It was somewhat after eight o'clock when the Emperor arrived. He came with the Signora on one arm, Pauline on the other. Behind them were Bertrand and Drouot, then three hundred men of the Old Guard with their eagle banner. After these tramped eight hundred Elbanese volunteers, flying their white standard decorated with a diagonal of red and three golden bees. The crowd was thick at the quayside. Inhabitants of every village on Elba were there to see the sight of a lifetime. Some saw their departing sons and husbands coming home as generals, as marshals even, as dukes! Some dreamed of crowns. The military spectacle, the heavy tread of the guards in the dark, the purposeful movement of armed men robbed many spectators of their last vestige of sense. They shared in the fanfare of power, became drunk on it. In a proud silence they bared their heads, and the women lowered their eyes.

The Emperor walked onto the quay, turned and said loudly, "People of Elba, friends, today I must leave you. I thank you for your hospitality. I thank you for your love."

"Long live the ruler of Elba!" they shouted in concert.

The Emperor kissed his mother. Her face was hard and expressionless. "Go, now, my son," she said. He kissed Pauline. She laid her head against his breast and sobbed. She could smell the sharp perfume of eau de cologne. Napoleon was forever sprinkling it too generously over himself. A rending heartsickness seized her. She wept bitterly.

"Paoletta," he said into her ear, "do you hear this? I love you and no other woman."

"Napolione," she sobbed, "take my pearls." Blindly she fumbled at her throat.

"I'll take them," he said. "Give them to Marchand." With this he pulled loose, turned and stepped down into the waiting dinghy. He was swallowed up in the darkness, a small figure.

Pauline balled the pearls in her hand and gave them to Marchand. He was the Emperor's old valet. "Marchand," she said thickly, "you'll take care of my brother, won't you? Look out for him."

"I'll do my best, Madame," Marchand assured her primly.

They all stood a long time on the quay, the ones left behind, looking out over the dark sea. Pauline imagined she could make out the spars of the *Inconstant*. There were intermittent cries from night-flying gulls. At half past ten a light breeze blew up. The vessels pulled anchor and stood out to sea.

It was a moonless, starless night. Darkness lowered watchfully over the flat waters. The little fleet had almost drifted into the entrance to Leghorn harbor when a fresh wind came up from the southeast. The gods once more had intervened. Toward morning when the first glimmer of daylight began to illuminate the Italian shore, the convoy ran into a French warship, the *Zéphir*. The guardsmen lay down on the deck of the *Inconstant* to hide their telltale bearskin shakos. The warship hailed the *Inconstant*.

"Who are you?" came floating across the water.

"The brig *Inconstant* from Porto Ferrajo for Genoa."

"Your cargo?"

"Wine and olive oil."

"Resume your course," the bored voice said through the semi-darkness. "How goes it with the Emperor?"

"All right. He never felt better!" the *Inconstant's* captain yelled back through the trumpet. Then the ships moved apart.

It was Sunday evening when the expedition sailed from Porto Ferrajo. On Wednesday, about one o'clock in the afternoon, the gray foothills of Antibes hove into view, dead on. Through his telescope Napoleon could clearly see the Citadel where he had been imprisoned after Thermidor. Down lower to the right he saw a white fleck among trees, the Château Sallé, where his mother and sisters had passed the summer with him. Once again he approached the same bit of earth and rock from which he had sallied forth to conquer France. He closed his spyglass. Out of habit he looked over his shoulder for his grenadiers.

The same day that Napoleon left Elba, Pauline packed her trunks, helped by her maids Antonia and Lucia. An oppressive emptiness was now in the house. The doors of rooms and cupboards were swung wide open. The beds were unmade, a tumble of sheets and covers. The maids ran back and forth with bundles of clothes over their arms and lights in their hands. The furniture, pushed awry, threw unfamiliar shadows on the walls, which moved as the light

moved and looked like faces with long comical noses. They might well have been the spirits of the house, watching Pauline's leave-taking with a detached irony.

The same emptiness and disorder reigned in Pauline's heart. The excitement of departure had ebbed away and left behind a strand littered with the ugly debris of emotion. It was so hard trying to take up life again—a life without her brother. The strength that had driven her into a spurt of activity and self-forgetfulness was now suddenly withdrawn. For the first time in her life Pauline thought seriously about her relationship with her brother. Looking back, she saw her life's course sharp and clear, unobscured by the facile feelings of the day-by-day passage. Her fate was the same as her brother's. They were bound together, not as brother and sister, but in some more mysterious, primal, heathen way. Christians would condemn this relationship as sinful. They were of one flesh, and his heart's blood was hers. His thinking and his planning might escape her. The intellectual Napoleon she could not grasp. But she understood the foundations of the intellect, the sensations, feelings, premonitions and the will, for they were much the same as her own.

This sudden revelation in the dark, deserted house moved her so strongly that she let her nerveless body slump onto the bed. There she sat staring, her hands locked in her lap. Sitting like this she had a painful vision of truth. Her own past behavior became intelligible to her. She understood her senseless jealousy of Joséphine, of Marie-Louise, of all those women whom her brother took seriously, women she had not introduced to him in condescending generosity. She began to appreciate the compulsion that drove her to bed with all those men who never deeply stirred her. Clear-sighted at last, she began to understand her periods of psychic malaise. She understood, too, the symbol of the love-squandering Venus that had possessed her for so long, the symbol which Canova had hewn out for her in marble. Everything had been an escape; her life had been a throwing up of walls of sensation about her cringing self; her gods had been false gods by deliberate choice. Always it had been a flight from a love she dared not face, a flight from a rooted sinfulness and from her knowledge of this sinfulness.

Her new self-knowledge made her knees tremble and flushed her cheeks. Why, she lamented, had she seen the light now in spite of her practiced evasions! She had never desired the gift of insight, a

thing cruelly sharp at best. Her spirit had broken loose during the pain and excitement of seeing her brother off. Now, in emptiness and chaos, it had moved in and dominated her mind, having slipped through a door left stupidly ajar.

And then, out of the typical curiosity of womankind who love to pry among primitive feelings even though it risks fouling their hands, she asked of herself: What does he know? She turned it over in her mind, almost eagerly, the tip of her fingernail on her tongue. He had seen to it that she married young. He had sent her to Haiti, to Rome and to virtual banishment in Turin. Time and time again he had repudiated her, packing her off with many words of admonition. Could it be that he wanted to have her away from him? Surely it was that.

On the other hand he had always been amazingly tolerant of her passive disobedience and her scandalous love affairs. He had even forgiven her jealousy of Joséphine and Marie-Louise after brief explosions of choler. She knew at the moment that he considered her the most beautiful of women and, though this was hard to believe, at bottom the most moral. He was not blind. He knew something about everything. It dawned on her that almost certainly he knew her secret and willingly shared it. For otherwise why should he, in his hour of extremity, have come to her in Hyères? Simply because the town happened to lie on the way to Elba? Why had he taken it for granted she should accompany him into exile?

And then there was the actual leave-taking, in which the dark side of human existence had been illuminated. Past, present and future stood fused and revealed. Her spirit, deeply grieved, peered into the depths of the past. Yet more was involved than looking backward. The solid pillars of space and time, supporting a shrouded figure that ordinarily only death can uncover, for some precious moment seemed to disappear. The inner gaze saw infinite extension. For a passing moment Pauline became acutely conscious of what she was in reality.

Revelation of the structure of self came to Pauline unexpectedly in the midst of her habitual maunderings and futile questionings. She was shaken to the roots by it, as a tree is shaken by the storm. She fell on her knees beside the bed and folded her hands. She knew that some monstrous force was whirling and buffeting her along like a withered leaf. She ground her teeth as she fought back against the assault on the crumbling structure of her private world. She clung

to the Pauline-self, the false public self, as a drowning man clings to a rock though the sea rises steadily about it.

Suddenly she knew what it was that she found so hard to face. Her separation from Napoleon was not a question of tomorrow or the next day. Neither was it a matter of months, or of years. It was a separation forever. Only because of this fact had he spoken so frankly to her, exposing for a second the emotions hidden in him. Merely thinking about it made the scent of eau de cologne become strong in the room, as strong as if he were actually there.

Then she was alone again, beside the rumpled bed. She thought tenderly of the old Pauline who had slept here, as one thinks of oneself as a child. How innocent she had been, even yesterday, no more than a girl! But now that intelligence had burst its bonds innocence was impossible. It was, indeed, a parting forever, not only from Napoleon, but from her old self as well.

She rose from the bedside shakily. "I shall never see him again," she groaned, then sank back and wept. Little black-haired Antonia of the thoughtful eyes came and asked whether Pauline were ill, whether she should call a doctor.

"Doctors can't help me," said Pauline wearily. By merest chance, looking back mechanically over her stay on Elba, she saw herself as she was just on arriving. The warm early summer evening, the soft lines of the landscape, smiling Count Bertrand, the tall beggar at the cathedral, the onion wreath on the unknown maiden's door—they had all been warnings, signposts of fate. She had passed them by unknowing.

"I thought it never, never could happen to me," she said out of her tears, remembering that silly onion wreath.

Yet no one lives long on an exalted plane. One does not sit down to table with demons, or sleep side by side with ghosts. Rapidly Pauline moved back into her three-dimensional world, into the indecisive medium called everyday. Whoever saw her the next morning dressed in her light gray traveling costume, and wearing a coquettish silk bonnet with broad ribbons tied gaily under her firm Bonaparte chin, certainly took her to be nothing more than another charming woman, the eternal feminine. She kissed the Signora, who was as reserved as ever; she kissed Countess Bertrand, who of course wept. She shook hands with Claude Holland, her brother's gardener, and with his wife. She tipped the servants and then, accompanied by her

two pertly dressed maids, she tripped down the quay steps into the waiting boat.

She exchanged a joke with the brown-armed boatmen, and was invited to the poop deck by the bearded captain of the little sailing ship that was to carry her to Leghorn. The captain treated her as if she were an expensive figurine of the finest porcelain. He led her to a chair protected by a canvas awning, kicking rope-ends, cork and bits of wood out of her way. He gave the crew orders in a muffled roar and looked solicitously at Pauline all the while out of the corner of his eye. Then he took over the helm.

"How do you find your way over the sea, Captain?" Pauline asked.

"That's simple, Signora. We can see the towers of Leghorn and the islands. Sometimes we can see Cap Corse."

"But how do you do it at night?"

"Nights we sail by the stars."

"I see," she said, surprised, and paused to think it over. "But what do you do when it's foggy and there are no stars to go by?"

"Then I sail by feel, Signora."

"By feel?"

"I know the currents, Signora. I listen to the sea birds. When I get near land, I listen for surf. The surf sounds one way when it breaks on rock, another on flat beach. There are a thousand things to go by, Signora. You have to have the sea in your blood to know them all."

"It's much like life itself, Captain, sailing a ship, isn't it?" she commented. "It's not very often we see a clear course ahead. Most of the time we sail in darkness and fog. And most of us don't have the feel of life, any more than we can distinguish between surf on rock and surf on sand. We sail along and ignore the gulls. Most of us are terrible seamen. No wonder we founder along the route."

"Oh, no, Signora," said the captain, smiling. "There's another thing that the seaman depends on, you know."

"And what is that?"

"God and His saints," the captain said piously.

Pauline meditated this axiom. "But God is far off, very far off," she reminded him softly.

"Yet I've seen His hand at work often enough," the captain said.

He did not expatiate, but simply looked out over the quiet sea, now dancing with little silver waves under the sun. Pauline followed

his glance. The distances, the freshness of the open air, the salt smell lifted up her heart. The islands stood out fixedly leagues away, lying not fortuitously but as a matter of course in the midst of the sea, trusting to an ancient law, depending on an ancient physical order for the security of their white villages, their hanging vineyards, their heights from which woods ran down to the beach, their cliffs where night dew still clung like the sheen on the faces of angelic guardians.

Pauline looked toward the mainland, a long dim coast line with mountains barely brushed in beyond it. The idea came to her that over there people had just awakened to the business of the day out of the death of sleep. She thought how women were now standing at the wells or at the flickering hearth fires; how the children were playing and shouting as they washed themselves; how the men were busy in the stalls with the warm cows, putting hay into the cribs, picking up fresh dung with their three-pronged forks, and how the milk was foaming into the pails; how the farm laborers, moving heavily, hands dangling at their sides, were climbing up the vineyard terraces or clumping across the dewy grass into the olive groves. And even the criminal, seated at his lonely fire among the rocks, was looking content into the face of the morning. Now the sick child, from his bed of straw, was gazing wide-eyed through the open window into the village street and was comforted by the green leaves alight with sunshine.

What was it that they all counted on and trusted? Who gave them the confidence to accept, the desire to labor, the sheer need to be? Who helped men bear up under life in the great cities? Men in close workshops whose world was a monotony of sawdust and scrap iron? Work-worn women in swarming tenements, with hosts of bedbugs crawling through the walls? Little girls, too early matured, who decked out their poor bodies in cheap finery, mocking childhood?

Who held up the mountains and would not let them crumble? The trees, grasses, wild beasts, birds, cattle—who guaranteed their being? The brooks, the rivers—who held them in their courses? And the primeval sea, the angel of creation, who kept it within bounds?

Was not this earth and all that lived on it built over a breathless abyss? What was she, Pauline, but an abyss, a mystery? Was not God's handiwork as mysterious as He Himself? And how strange that no one troubled his head about this fact! How odd that everyone went his way secure, depending on the morrow, forever striking

out along the tortuous path between birth and death! Why? Because everyone was inwardly convinced that some all-pervasive power, greater than the power of the sea and the avalanche, held the earth in place. Yes, they were all convinced. And death? It was surely a little pause, a drawing in of breath.

Pauline knew very well, although she had never examined them, that there were many explanations, and answers to her questions, some wise, some cunning, some manifestly stupid. But she had a vague notion that all of them ended in a cul-de-sac of mystery. At a certain point the most learned doctor clapped his book together and said to his sleepy students: That's all there is to it, gentlemen. Then they went home satisfied, but not really wiser than before. They told their parents what they had learned, and were marveled at for their knowledge of the world. So it always had been and likely always would be.

After this unusual flight of hard thinking Pauline stretched comfortably in her deck chair. It was strange. Yesterday evening her spirit—or whatever it might be called—had behaved wretchedly. Without by-your-leave it had thrown a nasty piece of self-knowledge into her face. It had brought her to her knees and whispered omens of an evil future. Today it was on its good behavior. If always imperious—since apparently that was its nature—at least it was not prodding her headlong into misery. Once more Pauline looked back at her old self, the one without understanding. This time she felt no emotion of regret, only pity. To the captain, quietly holding his ship up to the wind, she said, "You're a lucky man, aren't you?"

III

The Hundred Days

PAULINE AND HER MAIDS arrived at Leghorn without incident. The city was crowded with English men and women. Pauline was surprised by the lack of taste in the women's clothes, by the children's fine manners and the great dignity of the men as they paraded the streets. On all sides she could see their carriages, with black leather tops glinting. Pauline got herself rooms in a pension and registered under the name of Countess Frascati. Here many of the guests were English. She met them in the lobby and on the stairs. They sat in the dining room without saying a word and read newspapers and books. They were, indeed, an astonishing people. From the hostess she learned that they were all "lords" and extremely wealthy at that.

Pauline soon noticed that she made much the same impression on the "lords" as she had on Campbell. They stole glances at her from behind their journals. Some of them jumped to their feet when she came to sit down at the table d'hôte, and resumed their places only when she was quite settled. This was a novelty to Pauline, who was anything but used to formal treatment. She imagined she had suddenly become the idol of these fantastic foreigners. What a tongue-tied lot they were! Not a whit like Corsicans or Italians or Frenchmen. Apparently they opened their mouths only to insert food. At the table d'hôte the atmosphere was like a tomb. If one of the lords wanted something, he whispered to the waiter in the furtive tone of an obscene story. Pauline was used to loud laughter, exuberant discussions and barrages of compliments while she ate. Nothing of the sort here. She had to look twice to believe her eyes. She noticed that lords did not look too bad—that is, barring their silly side whiskers.

She turned to one experimentally, begged for the loan of a spoon and began to ask questions. At first his replies were muffled in embarrassment, but after a time, just like Campbell, he thawed out. Presently a general conversation sprang up. Now only the ladies sat

proudly mute, their sharp noses high, while their bony hands bore liquids to their mouths with mechanical delicacy. Pauline warmed them up by talking about clothes. She asked the price of cashmere shawls, and dishonestly praised a certain hat that, in truth, made its wearer look like a shade fresh from purgatory. Finally the ice was broken all around. Even the ladies had something pertinent to say, in very broken French.

For the rest of her stay in Leghorn, Pauline was known as "that charming Countess Frascati." Coaches, horses, servants, shawls and umbrellas were placed at her disposal. She felt certain that, if necessary, she could have touched more than one milord's pocketbook for a fat amount. That flattered her vanity. She had conquered England. Then, in a rented coach, she moved from Leghorn to Compignano. Here she ran up against an Austrian customs office and had to stop for examination of her luggage.

"Your passport, Madame," said the official in charge.

"I haven't any," said Pauline.

"What's that!" At once the official was grave.

"I've never had a passport in my life," Pauline informed him. "Everybody knows me. I'm the Princess Borghese."

"I beg your pardon, Madame, but the coachman said you are the Countess Frascati."

"Frascati is one of my husband's possessions," Pauline retorted.

The official looked interrogatively at the gendarme, standing by haughtily under the shelter of a tree. From his shoulder was slung a white bandolier, and in a shiny leather sheath he carried an ornamental dagger. The gendarme proudly stroked his official beard. The customs officer said to him, "Madame says she is the Princess Borghese."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the gendarme. He emerged from his coma of superiority as if bitten by a tarantula. "The Princess Borghese! Madame, I shall have to arrest you for treason."

"Treason?" said Pauline coolly. "Treason to whom?"

"His Majesty the Emperor of Austria," the gendarme announced ceremoniously. He clicked his heels to underscore the dreadful name.

"His Imperial Majesty doesn't mean anything to me," said Pauline flippantly. "I'm a subject of the Pope."

"But you're traveling in His Majesty's territories."

"Unless I'm mistaken, I'm traveling in Italy."

"But Italy is only a geographical term," the gendarme smoothly informed her.

"Don't bore me with your hairsplitting," said Pauline. "Take me to your superiors at once."

In the castle of Compignano a second lieutenant was in charge. "The governor is sleeping," he said to Pauline, as he sized her up from behind his desk. "I shall conduct the hearing. We must have a complete understanding."

"You'll conduct nothing, you pompous little ass," said Pauline. "Are you unaware that a gentleman gets up in a lady's presence and offers her a chair?"

The subaltern bit his tongue. "A family of wolves!" he grumbled to himself. Before he could get his bearings, the governor himself rushed into the room. He was a thickset man, his face red with high blood pressure. He had just powdered his hair, was still buttoning his tunic. "My God," he said, "to think that this should happen to me! Are you really the Princess Borghese, Madame?"

"None other," said Pauline.

"Please don't get upset, Princess," the governor begged. "Sit right down, Your Highness. I trust you are not too displeased with us. We want to do what we can to protect you and your brother from the mob."

"Neither my brother nor I have asked for your protection," said Pauline.

"Mm," said the governor. "A perfectly nasty situation, isn't it? I'm afraid you don't quite understand me." He turned on his lieutenant and shrieked, "Get out of here! And take those other idiots along with you!"

Alone with Pauline the governor sank into his chair, making it creak ominously. "Gracious Princess," he said as sweet as honey, "I am only a simple man. Please forgive me if I inadvertently trespass beyond the bounds of formality. But it is a fact that your brother, should he ever land in Italy, can look forward to harsh treatment from the people. It is our plain duty to protect him. After all, he is a member of the imperial family. In order to help him we must know his intentions. Did he talk to you about Naples?"

"We often talked of Naples."

"You don't follow me, Your Highness. Did he ever say he meant to land at Naples?"

"The Emperor is not in the habit of making me his political confidante. And you may be assured, sir, that if he ever did, you would never get anything out of me."

"Princess, consider your situation," said the governor, blowing like a porpoise. "You are involved in a conspiracy against the peace of Europe."

"You don't say so!"

"You knew that the Emperor intended to leave Elba, did you not?" the governor urged.

"Of course I knew it," said Pauline.

"You approved it?"

"I did. I helped him in every way I could."

"Don't you see that you could be shot for that?"

"Why make so much talk about it?" Pauline said. "Why don't you do it, my dear fellow?"

For a while after that the governor was stumped. "In any case," he said testily when he had got his wind, "I'm not going to let you go. You may consider yourself a political prisoner."

Pauline shrugged her shoulders. "I'm in no particular hurry, Governor. But I want to tell you this much. If my maids are annoyed in any way, you can depend on it that both Metternich and the Pope are going to hear about it."

"The secretary of state!" The governor was genuinely taken aback. "We are placing the best rooms in the castle at your disposal, Your Highness," he hurriedly added. "You will have servants and all you need to eat. Your maids can come to you immediately. It is altogether a matter of form, Your Highness."

"We're beginning to understand each other," said Pauline. "Would you see to it that my luggage is brought to me at once? And I'd like a bathroom with a southern exposure."

The governor flushed beet-red at this effrontery. Nevertheless he got up, rang the bell and gave the servants the requested directions. Meanwhile a high Austrian officer had come into the room without bothering to knock. He bowed to Pauline and then, turning to the governor, said excitedly, "We've just got word that Emperor Napoleon landed some three days ago from the Gulf of Juan. The Grenoble garrison went over to his side yesterday."

The dumpy governor jumped from his chair. "What a relief!" he

cried. "How lucky that he landed in France and not in Italy! Now it has nothing to do with us. It's out of our hands entirely."

"At least for the time being," the officer corrected.

"But you don't think anything will come of it, do you?" the governor asked. He was still interested, but no longer afire with need to know.

"You want my personal opinion?" said the officer. "I think the Emperor will be in Paris within a week."

"Good God!" exclaimed the governor. "And the King? Won't he put up a fight?"

"He!" The officer smiled at the governor, and the governor smiled back, almost against his will. Suddenly both remembered that they were talking before Pauline. They composed their faces to sternness. Then the governor announced, making a courtly bow, "Gracious Princess, Your Highness is naturally free to go, or free to stay. But since there's no inn in these parts that has a real bathtub, would you do me the honor of making Castle Compignano your residence so long as Your Highness cares to stay?"

Pauline spent the night in Compignano. The next morning she left for Lucca. Here little had changed during her considerable absence. As always a cosmopolitan throng went every morning to the hot springs to take the waters, while the evenings were busy with the rumble of carriage wheels and the enticement of dance music. The Lucca kind of people never change. But Pauline, to whom the Luccans were prepared to give a handsome welcome, was not the Pauline of yore. She was intensely concerned over her own and her brother's future. Her finances were in a frightful state. It took herculean efforts by the bankers Senn and Gebhard in Leghorn, assisted by the house of Torlonia in Rome, to straighten out her accounts. Through the sale of her house in Paris, the country place inherited from Leclerc, the furniture of Neuilly, a gold dinner service and other superfluous possessions, the bankers were able to raise the tidy sum of a half-million livres. Pauline nevertheless considered herself poor. During the Empire she had thrown away a hundred thousand livres a year.

Once again she was sick and depressed. Then she made up her mind to show herself as the familiar woman of the world. Every evening she filled her home, the little Villa Fatinelli, with a crowd of guests. To call on the Princess Borghese was very soon the thing to

do in Lucca. Her gadabout sort of life at least served to distract the attention of the Austrian authorities. From the political viewpoint it appeared quite harmless.

Austria was terribly worried over Napoleon's overnight resurgence. The Emperor was again in Paris. In forced marches reminiscent of the Italian campaign he had crossed France, his army gathering numbers and weight with the rapidity of an avalanche. Resistance was out of the question. At last he found himself back in the Tuileries, dead tired, eyes closed and burning. He was carried up the stairs by a wildly shouting mob.

The Allies were in a ridiculous position, and mutual name-calling began. The concert of powers, which in truth had been none too harmonious at the gay Congress of Vienna, now collapsed into outright dissonance. Austria blamed England for letting the prisoner get away. England blamed Russia. Prussia blamed Austria. Talleyrand rubbed his hands. He now had a thousand and one choice opportunities to fish in troubled waters. But Metternich stuck to his idea of a Holy Alliance, with or without England. Like a pack of hounds ready to tear one another to bits yet uniting for attack when the wolf appears, the opposing European powers lined up to demolish the big little man who had fooled them all.

Pauline was kept closely in touch with her brother's restoration. English, French and Austrian visitors to Lucca showed her letters and repeated all the news. The English were the most unpredictable. They simply baffled Pauline. She found it hard to believe that these lords and ladies were not on her brother's side, though she had supposed them his most tenacious enemies. When they greeted her their frozen faces melted into warm smiles. This was quite different from the typical attitude of Continentals, who were apt to be offish, sometimes condescending, as if to remind her that the Bonapartes, when all was said and done, were people of second or third rank. Pauline could read good news in the worried eyes of Austrian officials. Daily their uneasiness increased. She felt herself, meanwhile, hemmed in by an invisible cordon. The pleasure in her discomfiture, the comic touch of Compignano had vanished. Austria was afraid and grim.

Then came the day, that horrible morning when Governor Werckheim had himself announced. Pauline had just bathed and was doing her hair. "What do you suppose he wants of me, that Werckheim?"

she said to her maid Antonia. "He never thought it necessary to pay me a call before."

"He seems terribly excited about something," Antonia warned her.

"Ask him in," said Pauline, putting the finishing touches to her coiffure. Suddenly, standing before the mirror, she felt herself go pale and weak. For no reason she had remembered the last night in Porto Ferrajo. Her hands shook so that she had to give up trying to fix her hair.

Werckheim came brusquely into the room. "Madame," he said, not troubling to bow, "I have the honor to inform you that your brother, General Bonaparte, has boarded an English ship which will carry him to St. Helena."

"What do you mean?" said Pauline. "How dare you call my brother 'General'? When you speak of him in my presence, you will call him 'Emperor.' "

Werckheim laughed through his nose. "That sort of thing is all over, Madame," he said. "On Elba, if you recall, he was Emperor only because of Allied consideration. Now he's forfeited even that privilege. In fact, he has thrown everything away."

"Get out of here!" said Pauline. "I'll have my servants throw you out of the house."

"Then you don't want to know what happened?" the governor said, taken aback.

Pauline replied by ringing the servants' bell. "Show him out, Antonia," she said. "After that kindly open the window."

Slowly she left the room and wandered up the stairs. On the halfway landing she sat down. She looked out through a little window into the garden. The trees were swimming in a drift of rain. Suddenly she let out a moan and a cry. Everything went black. She slid down a few steps. The servants came running. They found her hanging down head-first, her hair over her eyes. They took her to bed. She opened her eyes again as they were laying her down, and then she smiled wearily. Without further complaint she lay on the bed, staring out into the rain.

The summer of 1815 was rainy. It rained without ceasing, week after week. Over Lucca, over the wide plain of the Po, over all northern Italy, over all France the rain came slanting down. It fell in long fine threads over Flanders. There, near Brussels, hard by the

farmstead of Hougomont, it rained down on fields churned black by roughshod feet. Deep wheel ruts cut through the wet meadows, and there were the prints of innumerable hoofs. The young grain lay crushed. The bodies of bloated horses sprawled everywhere, defiling the cool rainy air with the smell of death. Dead men lay about in rows, men in green, blue, red and white uniforms. They were Frenchmen, Englishmen, Prussians—their shirts crusted with brown blood, faces waxy, limbs rudely torn asunder. There was, too, a great debris of inanimate objects, of calfskin knapsacks, rusty bayonets, broken rifles, smashed drums, bearskin shakos caked with mud, pointed helmets, wagons with their canvas tops flapping idly in each stir of wind, one-wheeled cannon helplessly tipped on their sides.

This wreckage was strewn also about the farm called Belle Alliance, which lay in the very center of destruction, roofless, a shell of blackened walls. Some of the poplars lining the road had been shot down, others had lost their foliage and showed the white gashes of broken branches gleaming through the downpour.

A long deep trench had been dug along the wall of the barn. Peasants in clogs and long blue blouses drove oxcarts up to this common grave. These carts were loaded with bodies stiff as boards. They were dumped without ceremony into the pit. In spite of the overpowering smell, particularly heavy because of the rain, the peasants were in a jolly mood. They laughed and joked with one another, breathing gusts of schnapps into one another's faces. In their pockets they had dirty gold coins, rings, watches, lockets, letter cases, all plundered from the dead. By the common grave was piled a growing heap of shirts, trousers and tunics, enough to last them all for many a year.

Great swarms of crows swept through the drizzle. It seemed as if all the crows of Europe had gathered at Belle Alliance. They croaked argumentatively as they alighted on the ground. When roused up into flight by the peasants, the heavy, reluctant flutter of their wings could be heard at some distance.

Wide, flat, stolid under the rain, a landscape of death, of the end. Heavy, fruitful earth from which, the next summer, richly fertilized grain would grow higher than grain had ever grown there.

An epoch was being buried at Belle Alliance. A great dream, the dream of a united Europe, here had found its grave. From this time on there would be no more Europeans, but many nationals—quarrel-

some, stupid, greedy, rapacious, carrion-hungry—many Prussians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians, Russians, Poles. Many names, all with the same futile ring, denoting a European humanity progressing toward the last stages of weakness.

This was the site of Waterloo.

IV

City of the Soul

ON THE SAME DAY that the *Northumberland* arrived at St. Helena with Napoleon aboard, Pauline came to Rome, where many members of her family had found refuge. Her thoughts were hardly less gloomy than those of the prisoner. On the *Northumberland* the captain had issued a standing order that all marines and sailors not on duty should remain in their quarters between decks. The captain feared that should they look too long on the man who wore on his hat the tricolor of Revolution, rebellion would be bred by it. The men in the service of His Christian Majesty the King of Great Britain were handled by flogging and compulsion.

Napoleon stood on the high afterdeck, with his loyal handful behind him. These included the relatively young but irritable General Gourgaud, decisive Count Bertrand, the pompous Montholon and, a little to one side, the valet Marchand, who held his master's gray overcoat ready over his arm. Through the glass the Emperor looked across at the island. In the bay he picked out several warships and some Indiamen. There were a few houses on the shore, glimmering white. Behind them a mountain rose, sheer and cold gray. With the eye of the strategist he saw that this remote rock in mid-ocean was hopelessly inaccessible. Here came none but whalers, ships heading to and from the Indies or South America by way of the Horn. Here, going or coming, they took on water, learned the news, picked up orders. A handful of artillerists could defend the spot against a fleet.

The Emperor saw clearly that the speck of land was a nerve center in an immense military-political system which reached its cells over the face of the earth. At this moment, spyglass raised, for the first time Napoleon fully realized the nature of his most dangerous and indefatigable enemy. Against his will he was awed, so carried away, indeed, that he forgot his plight.

Thoughtfully he put his glass away and folded his arms behind his back. At last he recognized the vulnerable point of the far-flung

system. The major weakness, evidently was its heart, England itself, London, the narrowness of the Channel, the threatening nearness of the Continent. How clearly and how belatedly he saw that England feared less his person than his idea of a united Europe! With the persistence of a sleepwalker, though committing a thousand mistakes, England had nevertheless harried him to the bitter end and revealed herself in staying power equal to the strongest nation on the Continent. Because, in a contest with a united Europe, there was no choice but to fight or die, England had hung on.

Two orders stood facing each other across the water, essentially opposed. There was the tight, almost geometrical concept of political order native to the Continent, a concept normal to landsmen, to descendants of the Romans. And then the contrary order: diffuse, spreading tenuous lines of power throughout the world, dependent on the unruly pathways of the sea from island to island. It followed courses running by windy mountain shores, into strange harbors. England's was a maritime concept entirely.

The Emperor turned to look out over the ocean. Grayly it swept into the far distance, toward a horizon hung with low clouds. It was alien to him, inhuman, the true open sea. How profoundly different it was from the small inland waters of his childhood! A grave mistake, not to know the watery reaches of the world!

At the same hour Pauline was riding through the Piazza del Popolo by the obelisk with the four sphinxes at their feet. She was not consciously thinking of her brother, but of herself. Yet in everything that she thought he was present, as well as the sense of his absence, his exile. He was an underlying current in everything she thought or did. She felt him as lead in her heart. She bore him about with her as an invalid carries his illness with him even when he is not aware of it.

But her conscious thoughts centered on her husband Camillo Borghese, whom she had ignored for years. On her brother's fall Camillo had discovered that he was really a royalist at heart. He no longer wore the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, spoke no more of his heroic exploits at Austerlitz, which for so long had served to prove him a man. Instead he wrote long, gracious letters to aristocratic families in Paris, Vienna, Rome, celebrating the Allied victory. He emphasized how much he had had to put up with while subject

to Napoleonic arrogance. Every morning now he had his hair carefully powdered, and in general greeted reactionary times with reactionary gestures. He conceived the bold idea of cutting himself off entirely from the Bonaparte clan. His marriage to Pauline, the marriage that was no marriage at all, would have to be annulled. He wrote Pauline harsh letters, forbidding her to set foot in the Palazzo Borghese.

For her part, she had no slightest desire to set foot in the Borgheses' mausoleum, especially since the muddleheaded old King of Spain, deposed not long ago by Napoleon, was living in the palace. Grinning foolishly to himself, he spent the days wandering about the long corridors, amid faded paintings, chilly busts and expensive chairs that no one could sit on.

Pauline went to live in the Palazzo Falconieri with the Signora. Here, too, the atmosphere was anything but cordial. After Napoleon's final debacle the Signora and Uncle Fesch, who lived on the second floor, had suddenly become obsessed with Christian mysticism. All day they talked of spirits, angels, revelations, dream signs. They debated the particulars of the Last Judgment, of Paradise and Life Eternal.

Pauline could not make head or tail of it. She understood that retreat into religion was the only thing that made life bearable for her mother. The Signora was an old woman, full of hope now only for the future life. Rome, crowded with bishops, monsignori, churches, altars, graves and saints' statues—this cautious, reticent, almost noiseless city of priests—had swallowed up the Signora.

Another spirit reigned at the house of brother Lucien. He had ceased to be the hotheaded Jacobin of other years. His hair was no longer unkempt, and he would not dream of having his family kicked about for the sake of his old ideals. Now he composed long epics, was looked upon kindly by the Pope himself, and at his table the conversation turned on the excavation of Roman villas, on fragments of ancient murals, on the superiority of Plautus, Seneca and the eloquent Cicero to modern writers. The Brutus of the Republican Year II still had a genuine interest in antiquity, but today it was watered down. Lucien's romantic urge to poke about in the graves of the dead was quite as foreign to Pauline as her mother's mystic Christianity. But at least at Lucien's she could talk to his wife and the two slim, dark-eyed daughters from the first marriage.

Then there was brother Louis. A peevish, senile hypochondriac, Louis sulked in the Villa Salviati, tended by his wife Hortense, who worried over him constantly. From noon to night she spooned out medicines to her husband. Sometimes she laid compresses on his aching head. All the time she was the unhappy butt of his querulousness, his sole audience, for the rest of the world thumbed its nose at Louis and his aches and pains. Yet even in this house there was one redeeming feature—Hortense's son, Louis Napoleon, a slender youth, hardly more than a boy, full of energy and action. Pauline, who was reminded of the young Napoleon, took her nephew under her wing.

Hortense also pleased her. After one of Louis' periodic blowups in which he had denounced his wife for imaginary infidelities, saying she was only waiting for him to die to marry her secret lover, Pauline kissed her warmly. The shy, worn creature hardly knew what to say. She suspected it was Napoleon's bad luck that had softened Pauline. The thought moved Hortense, for it happened that she, too, missed Napoleon. He had always treated her with great kindness. She missed him almost as much as she missed her own mother. With her husband, however, Hortense kept these sentiments strictly to herself. Otherwise he would have seized the occasion to redouble his foolish charges.

Camillo's divorce action finally reached consideration by the Rota, the secret papal court. It was a bad interlude for Pauline. Fortunately a sympathetic Pope stood behind the cardinals and monsignori. The final decision rested with Pius VII. Pius was bent with age and the veins were thick on his hands, but his eyes peered out good-humoredly from under bushy brows that were still dark. His expression had grown timid with time. He enjoyed himself greatly when Lucien came to get his advice on some newly excavated coin or cameo, some fragment of a relief or a statue. He loved to hold these objects in his hands, to examine them at length and then pronounce a measured opinion on their age.

Lucien brought him a little bas-relief from a cornice found in the Villa of Hadrian, in the neighborhood of Tivoli. It was a simple thing, clusters of laurel leaves intermingled with pine cones, cut out of marble. Pius was charmed. He looked at it so long that Lucien became nervous and blurted out his fears over the divorce suit and Pauline's future. The Pope heard him out, listening with head cocked and eyes continually seeking the relic in his hand.

"Order," the Pope broke in suddenly, "order is everything." His voice was urgent yet gentle. "Where does the piece come from? What do you think, my dear Prince? It seems to be Greek. It might be connected with the theater. But it might also come from a domestic altar. Laurel and pine. Fame and death. How sweetly the laurel hangs among the pine cones! How simple, how real and true! There's nothing more hateful to me than disorder. I believe that everything is ordered under God. When I see a man's face, it gives me joy to think that, come what may, he will reach his goal. I had that feeling when I looked into your brother's face, even during those awkward hours in Notre-Dame and Fontainebleau. He is a great man. I hold nothing against him. I am thankful for what he did for the Church and for France.

"And I believe I understand your sister Pauline. Her marriage is unhappy, to be sure. There are faults on both sides. But every marriage, happy or otherwise, is a sacrament. Borghese should know that. He certainly should not burden the Rota with his complaints just when his wife is so sad and anxious. For I believe—indeed, I'm quite sure—that the Princess is close to her brother. She must have taken his exile very hard. She is much closer to him, I think, than most suspect."

Lucien was surprised. As an idealist he had never noticed this community of spirit. Privately he thought the Pope mistaken. But at any rate a great load of worry dropped from his shoulders. Pauline would evidently escape the ordeal of divorce proceedings.

As it came out, the Rota restored Pauline's full rights as the Princess Borghese. It was decreed that a suitable apartment in the Palazzo Borghese must stand at her disposal, another in the Villa Mondragone, and she should be assured an adequate yearly income.

Camillo was beside himself with rage. In protest against this hair-raising injustice, as he saw it, he would have cast Pauline's innumerable infidelities before the Rota. He was persuaded not to take this step by the Duchess of Lantes. She was afraid of herself being defiled, should Camillo recklessly dabble with pitch. Her own position was ticklish. She was not only Camillo's mistress, but his cousin as well. The Duchess saw clearly that it was wiser to play along with the cardinals. In any issue they were, after all, the masters of Rome and could lay hands at any time on Camillo's sources of income. He could not get it through his head that priestly robes, and not the

military tunic and breeches, were the uniform of the day now that Napoleon had foundered; but he held his peace.

Although Pauline had won a clear title to dwell in the Palazzo Borghese, she could not bring herself to stomach that great casket of a place. She bought the Palazzo Sciarra near the Porta Pia against the advice of the Signora. Despite her religious vagaries, the Signora continued to know the value of a florin. She was, in fact, stingier than ever, and hardly spent enough to keep a decent rag on her back. Pauline was well pleased with her new home. It was small, small enough to be taken in at a single glance, and had a portico of lovely columns. The rooms were high and finished in white. Even on the hottest days they were cool. Behind, in the courtyard, ran the pillars and arches of an old aqueduct. From the front there was a fine view of the Corso, where each afternoon a bright crowd promenaded and the rich of the city cantered by in coach and four. Pauline occasionally went for drives along the Corso with an outrider, and two lackeys standing behind her on the running board. On other days she liked to sit at the window to receive greetings from passers-by, the gentlemen's bows and the ladies' nods. She was well known in Rome. Her social repute was less with the worldly aristocrats of the city, whom she avoided, than with visitors and high-ranking ecclesiastics.

Every evening her salon was filled with guests, some of them English. Since Waterloo hosts of English people had fled abroad to escape the solid ennui of home. Most of them had not visited the Continent for twenty years or so, and they were all ready to be amused. It was difficult for these excursionists to gain access to the homes of the old Roman families. The aristocracy moldered in near-poverty, sitting like moles in their damp *palazzi*, mute with pride in their ancient names, stupefied by their own prestige. They looked on the English as Protestant heretics, which of course they were. In Roman eyes they were worthy only of being fleeced by their betters. They were allowed to rent crumbling tombs to live in and forced to pay through the nose for the privilege of venerable discomfort. Then the Romans calmly shut their doors in their tenants' faces. Disgustedly rich and parvenu—so they contemned the English.

At the Palazzo Sciarra, on the other hand, they were heartily welcomed. And conversely, the Princess Borghese, who after all was the sister of Beelzebub himself, was much more attractive to the English

colony than any number of Aldobrandini, Massimi, Sciarra and Colonna. And why not? She was pleasing to look at, she knew how to dress ravishingly, she could joke and flirt beyond compare. The halo of her legendary love affairs shone about her.

Lord and Lady Holland often came to call, Lord Gower and even the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. The dashing George Fortescue became a familiar in her household, with his long white silk scarf about his throat and his well-curled brown locks nicely perfumed. In some ways he reminded Pauline of Fréron, especially when, toying with his locket, he reminisced of old loves or told her about Beau Brummel, whom he disliked since the Beau, and not George Fortescue, was famed as the best-dressed man in England. But she was also amused to see how different he was from Fréron in other respects. It was impossible, for example, to imagine him addressing men in a National Convention of the stature of Robespierre or Danton; impossible, too, to imagine him ordering an execution, still less witnessing one—not because he lacked the nerve, but because such antics were beneath his dignity as a gentleman.

The group was once discussing Lord Byron who caused comment in good society with his hounds, horses and mistresses. His poetic gifts were pretty much left out of account in Roman circles. Why did the good-looking lord behave so extravagantly? Why was he so scandalously inclined, so wasteful of money and talent and so erratic in all ways? And why was he so gloomy, not enjoying his escapades at all? Such a proud fellow, so tight-lipped and so soft inside! Was he a Werther run amuck? Or did he shock the world only to advertise his poetry?

"It's all these together," Lord Holland undertook to explain. "For those who are not English I suppose he's bound to be an enigma. For one thing he's a terrific snob, the kind of person that can reach full growth only in England, like certain sorts of trees. The process is imitated by other nationalities, of course, but they never achieve the perfect snob, you know. And then there's a weariness, a sort of vacuum, in England. You will find it all through Europe, too. It always comes after great wars. During the fighting the people promise themselves eternal peace and a nobler breed of men on earth. Finally they discover that none of their problems has been solved by warfare. They're exactly where they were before, with the added disadvantage of having depleted their material wealth and their numbers. Sensitive

men like Lord Byron cannot adjust themselves to this letdown, this atmosphere of hopelessness. They seek adventure, they escape into the romantic, they behave unsocially, overbearingly, or what you will. Anything for the illusion of effect. They do it all to emphasize their blanket disapproval of the times. I often think my own interest in antiquity is a variety of the same disorder, a flight from the leveling tendencies of our days. So you see, Princess, you may consider me a Byron on a small scale, a Byron sans genius."

Pauline considered this and concluded she did not understand. "I thought," she said in perplexity, "I thought it was just his foot."

"You're delightful, Pauline," said Fortescue. He laughed to himself. "You know, I almost envy Byron his infirmity. I'm sure you would never make a fuss over your humble servant's perfectly good foot. A crippled foot seems enough to turn the whole man into a Mephistopheles. It so happens, though, that Lord Byron's unhappiness lies deeper than that. It's not his foot but his heart, my dear Pauline."

"How's that?"

"He loves where he has no right to love," said Fortescue. "Pauline, there's no use pretending you don't know."

"But I really don't know!"

"Not a very savory subject," Fortescue warned her.

"Don't joke with me, George," said Pauline. "None of your evasions."

"Very well, then. Lord Byron loves his own sister. Surely you must have heard the story."

"What!" Pauline jumped up from the couch in agitation. She looked fixedly at two large porcelain vases. Pastoral scenes were painted on them. She stared foolishly at Lady Holland, who kept her eyes averted. The Duchess of Devonshire fanned her face with her ivory fan.

"That's quite true, I think," said Lady Holland. "She's only Byron's stepsister, of course."

"How strange!" said Pauline, coming down to earth. "How strange people are! I must say, though, that I understand Lord Byron much better now. There's nothing so peculiar about him once you know that."

Lady Holland looked almost solicitously at her hostess. "George shouldn't tell you such disgusting anecdotes."

"Oh, but I'm grateful to him," said Pauline. "I've often wondered . . ."

Later, sitting in her carriage on the way home, with the wheels rumbling softly over the tufa flagstones, Lady Holland remarked to her husband, "Didn't you think it odd, the way the Princess behaved today?"

For some time Holland did not reply. He looked through the carriage window at the houses flowing past, their façades bathed in moonlight. "What strange things must have happened in these houses!" he said at last, with seeming irrelevance. "Think of it! Receptions for foreign ambassadors, masked balls, birthings, poisonings, arsenic poured from a capsule hidden in a ring; lovers trysting under the staircase; the pathos of a dying father saying farewell to his son. Everything must have happened in them at some time or other. Over there Raphael might have lingered with the baker's daughter, whom he preferred to any princess. And here you can imagine Michelangelo, thinking about death as he writes his sonnets. You can see Cesare Borgia holding Lucrezia by the hand as they dance together. How peaceful these houses look tonight with the moon on them! And it's just the same with people, my dear. Every face is a mask. Against our better judgment we believe only in masks."

"What has that got to do with the Princess Borghese?" asked Lady Holland.

"Nothing in particular," he said. "But her heart, too, has its hidden story. This evening we happened to stumble on it. No human being is what the surface shows, you know."

"No, I suppose not." She sighed. "I like our dear Princess much better when she talks in simple friendliness. In my opinion she's just putting on when she doesn't. Since we've been in Rome she has changed greatly, don't you think?"

Thoughtfully he nodded assent, and kept on looking at the façades of the old houses bathed in moonlight.

Lord Kensington, another devoted antiquarian, often came to Pauline's soirees. But her most intimate friends in the English colony were Lord Jersey and the enormously rich Marquess of Douglas and Anglesea. Lord Jersey was a stocky, well-preserved old fellow with rosy cheeks. He had an engrossing interest in wine, dogs and horses. He was jealous of any man whom Pauline noticed. Once he challenged her house doctor to a duel because, so he thought, the doctor

held her hand longer than taking her pulse called for. Pauline had to intervene.

There was only one man in the world that Lord Jersey trusted, and that was his friend the Marquess. Douglas was reputed the richest man in England. Bitten by current fads and the national craving for travel, he had come to Rome, where he was nearly as bored as he was at home. He was not interested in statues, churches or Renaissance palaces. The Apollo Belvedere made him yawn. Dutifully he laid himself down full length on the floor of the Sistine Chapel to look up at Michelangelo's murals, and would have fallen asleep, the story went, had not his servant tugged at his shoulder. He was taken to the Lateran and St. Paul's and complained bitterly that there were no benches to sit on in the churches of Rome. There appeared no way to amuse the Marquess, for a thoroughly unamusable man he was —that is, he was until he met Pauline. And she did not arouse him physically, but aesthetically. Unimpressed by the greatest masterpieces, in Pauline he at last found something that tickled his curiosity and loosened his tongue.

He loved to spend long mornings sitting near her chair and fondling her naked foot in his lap. His curious devotion flattered Pauline. The rich Marquess was welcome at any hour. She would receive him in her bedroom, in her bath, in her boudoir. He was a comforting person to have around. He gave his advice generously. He interested himself in her clothes. Like a personal maid he rummaged about through drawers for her underwear, her dresses, shoes and stockings, choosing for color and style. He offered suggestions for her coiffure. He brought flowers and selected ornaments for her to wear. He handed her the garments she asked for while she was dressing, and when at last she stepped fully clothed from behind the screen he would always be speechless with delight.

In short, it was a purely artistic need in the Marquess that Pauline satisfied. To her surprise she discovered that his taste was impeccable. There were times when she rebelled, but in the end he always won. Under his tutelage, she became the best-dressed woman in Rome. His devotion was so plainly objective that no one dreamed of his becoming her lover, not even he himself, or Pauline.

It was unavoidable that Napoleon should be mentioned during the evenings at the Palazzo Sciarra. It was not the Emperor, the military leader, the politician, who was discussed, but the man, the Princess'

brother. Since Pauline's circle were very fond of her, it was natural that their liking should carry over to her brother. When she told some anecdote in which he figured, some story about her first love affair, her first hat, her first marriage, the guests felt Napoleon's invisible presence. So powerful was the magic of his name that they fancied him in their midst. They could all but hear his quick steps and hear his staccato phrases. The Napoleon pictured by his own sister was a strikingly different person from the one lampooned and caricatured in the English newspapers.

After a time the impalpable guest became Pauline's principal attraction. Mention of him came to be waited for, as a séance waits for the medium to evoke the spirit. They would use little tricks to get Pauline started talking about her brother. Then, when the conversation was properly directed, they would all settle back comfortably in their chairs to hear what the great man had to say for himself in ironical observation, or brusquerie, or by odd gesture. The English ladies and gentlemen were rapt, charmed by the ineffable personality known at one remove.

So it came about that the most zealous and influential of Napoleon's friends were not his old comrades, but members of a foreign circle that had hated him all their lives. In the Palazzo Sciarra, in the candlelight behind the long gold-brown window curtains, he launched a second career by proxy, a career as the prototype superman. His exile on a lonely rock, his Promethean fate, established his relation to mythical realms.

Pauline was quite conscious of the steady growth of her brother's stature. She could read it in her guests' eyes, in their attentively bowed heads, in their fingers stretched taut over the arms of their chairs. She read there reverence, devotion, sympathy, love for the unknown person—or rather, for the person known to her alone. But she did not know that it was Myth at work, as Myth had worked when she tried to impress herself on the world as a new Venus. In Napoleon's case the legend took shape of its own accord. Like a dark flood it suddenly broke through the dam of fact and anecdote and filled the hearts of that small circle of devotees with unsettling, infinitely attractive intimations of power.

News from St. Helena came seldom. The Signora, Pauline, Lucien all wrote long letters, but no answers came back. Through her English friends Pauline learned that no passenger from the East

Indiamen calling at the island was permitted to go ashore. It was impossible to see the Emperor. Her advices about the English governor, a certain Sir Hudson Lowe, were alarming. He was a narrow-minded politician, a jailer, a brute of the worst sort. Rumor had it that he did everything in his power to make Napoleon miserable. Yet all this, after all, was mere gossip brought back by pilots, soldiers and the like. Nobody knew exactly. Even the London government, to which Lord Holland and the Marquess had access, did not know in detail, and apparently did not want to know. St. Helena was far away. It was much more comfortable to forget the lonely rock and the distasteful task they had undertaken in an overly enthusiastic moment. The governor alone was responsible, the ministry replied to inquiries made by Pauline's important friends. The governor was a simple, dutiful soldier, so they said. His task was not an easy one. England's security and the peace of Europe depended on his watchfulness; London had no right to interfere with Governor Lowe. He could judge best on the spot. Good-natured fellows like Colonel Campbell were no longer to be trusted after the recent bitter experiences. There would not be another Elba, another Waterloo—especially because English exports had risen and the manufacturers were busy after long years of European blockade and belt-tightening at home.

Lord Holland and the Marquess considered it wiser not to press their case too hard. They might be men of humanity and admirers of the Emperor, but they were Englishmen first. They did what they could to calm Pauline. They portrayed Lord Castlereagh, the English prime minister, as a man without blemish. Pauline had little choice except to believe them. Yet behind her ease there lurked a vague restlessness, a sense that all was not well. She felt no pain, only a light anxiety, an anxiety which she did not realize was centered in her brother.

Then Las Cases returned to Rome from St. Helena, her brother's gentleman in waiting. A high-strung man, he talked freely. According to him Hudson Lowe was a sadist, a torturer, a murderer. But everyone sensed the exaggeration in his story and from his tone deduced the rage which had overcome him in bitter argument with the governor. For his quarrelsomeness he had been sent away from the island. The Bonapartes did not really believe him when he pictured the miseries of Longwood, the closeness of the quarters, the frightful

climate, the thousand small annoyances, Napoleon's chronic melancholy, his feeble health. A poor reporter, Las Cases constantly colored every yarn with his personal feeling. Finally his presence became a burden to the Bonapartes. Was not this Las Cases a living rebuke, a condemnation of their inactivity, their indifference, their own smooth lives?

Pauline hesitated. Las Cases made her feel exceedingly small. She tried to excuse herself by stressing her ill-health, for once more she was not feeling well. At last, still dissatisfied with her shortcomings, she went to the Palazzo Rinuccini in the Piazza Venezia to which the Signora and Uncle Fesch had moved not long before.

"We must do something for him," she told the Signora, who sat opposite her, hunched forward in a great armchair. "We must send some sort of petition to the English government. The climate on St. Helena is killing the Emperor. Maybe we can send a secret messenger to him. We shall have to find out the truth. Sometimes I believe that Las Cases is not exaggerating."

"Las Cases is a liar," the Signora said wearily and turned her eyes to her stepbrother. "We know that everything is quite different."

Pauline jumped to her feet. "Then you've had news," she said tensely, "and you didn't think to pass it on to me!"

"Calm yourself, my child," the Signora said, looking down at her hands, which she kept folded in her lap.

Uncle Fesch cleared his throat and stood up. Gravely he paced back and forth in the big room. It was cool in its twilight. The windows of the old palace were small and heavily latticed, like a prison's. "Paoletta," he began, "as it happens we got our news from a special source. I'm not sure we have the right to speak to you about it."

"Not to me?" said Pauline. "Not to his own sister?"

Uncle Fesch sighed, took off his red skullcap and twisted it nervously in his hands. "We received our news by supernatural means," he said softly. "Through God's grace, in fact."

Pauline looked in amazement at her mother. She nodded back lugubriously and whispered, "It's true. That's right."

"We can't give you particulars," said Uncle Fesch. "But the angels do not lie."

"The angels!"

"We know a pious woman, your mother and I," said Uncle Fesch. "She is able to speak with the angels in her dreams. She tells us that

the Emperor is well. He is not persecuted. He is, however, very often in a bad frame of mind."

Hearing this, Pauline burst into tears. She wept uncontrollably like a child. Then she mastered herself. "Mother!" she cried out. "Uncle! You won't believe Las Cases and yet you trust this barefaced charlatan. How can you?"

The Signora's eyes narrowed. A look of absolute opposition came over her, sucking in her already fallen cheeks and furrowing deeper wrinkles about the corners of her lips and eyes. She looked exactly like what she was—a stubborn old woman. "The angels do not lie," she said harshly. "And I know that our good friend is not lying. She has told me things that only the angels and I could possibly know."

Pauline turned her despairing gaze on Uncle Fesch. But his glance would not meet hers. Pathetically it clung to his aged sister. Pauline saw how much alike they were, almost like an old married couple. Suddenly she remembered the story that the Signora had repeated so often it had become stereotyped. It was about the day of Napoleon's birth. The Signora had been stricken suddenly in church. In the agony of her labor pains she had writhed like a wounded animal until her stepbrother had gently taken her hand and, stroking it tenderly, led her out of the church. He had stayed with his big sister until the boy was born, and the Signora was propped up on the old blue chaise longue in the Ajaccio home. It was a bright summer day and the little town had dozed quietly. Now, Pauline saw clearly, her mother was still the center of Uncle Fesch's interest. Even now he stood by her, as he had then, anxious, confused, offering his inept aid.

Quickly Pauline kissed her mother, pressed Uncle Fesch's hand and ran out of the house. A secret lived in the old building, in its mildewed corners, in silent corridors, behind tightly locked doors. But it was not angels who lurked there. It was the perplexity of mankind full face to life. Pauline breathed more freely when she came to the sun-drenched plaza where her carriage waited. She looked about at the great palaces, standing utterly immobile, immensely rectangular and heavy in the sun, which was silvering the gray stone with peculiar intensity. She responded eagerly to the hardness, the sheer durability, the matter-of-factness of the stone masses. They were earth-bound, material, Roman. She looked up at the slope of the Capitol. A cloud of doves whirled about the slender tower of Santa Maria in Campi-

telli. At certain angles the doves dissolved into swift-moving rays of light.

In her carriage Pauline thought things over. Las Cases had said to her that the Emperor did not object to her English friends. He did not expect much to come from them, yet he had commented, smiling to himself, "At least I'll have that many fewer enemies." Pauline made up her mind to repeat to Lord Holland and the Marquess everything Las Cases had told her.

One evening Lady Holland said to Pauline, "Mr. James Stewart is in Rome. He'd like to make Your Highness' acquaintance. But naturally I didn't encourage him."

"Why?"

"Well, you see, he's Lord Castlereagh's nephew," replied Lady Holland. "And you know what Lord Holland has come to think of Castlereagh. He has responded so coldly to all our efforts on your brother's behalf."

"I don't think we should condemn the nephew on the uncle's account," said Pauline—"at least without even meeting him. I'd like to know him."

"Whatever you say," Lady Holland answered doubtfully.

James Stewart was a good-looking young man, fresh from Oxford. His trip to Rome was his first venture into the outer world. He was soon appearing regularly at Pauline's evenings. He talked very little. He always stood behind Lady Holland's chair. Broad-shouldered, gloomy-eyed, habitually dressed in dark clothes, straps holding his trousers tight about his ankles, to Pauline he was the epitome of a younger, an incomprehensible generation. Why was he so sardonic and reticent? She watched the faintest of ironical smiles play about the corners of his mouth when Lord Gower or Lord Jersey made some remark. But then she was not sure that she was right about his inner derision. The young man seemed so very well bred. She noticed that like the others he waited for her to talk about her brother. And when she talked, his eyes became less melancholy, and rested tensely on her face.

At first she thought his reverent interest was directed to Napoleon. Then she saw she could evoke it no matter what she talked about. Stewart's features were remarkably white and fine under the frame of thick black hair. When he was in the room with her she spoke more fluently and tellingly. Metaphors came of themselves. A sort of

strength seemed to emanate from his silence, warming her being. She did not even need to look up at him, so long as she knew he was there, gazing at her with solemn, youthful eyes. She began to miss him keenly whenever he could not come.

Pauline asked Lady Holland about Stewart's circumstances, his family, his plans for the future. Lady Holland knew the family intimately. But she knew relatively little about James Stewart in particular. The new generation was an enigma to this good lady. She mentioned Christ Church College, where he had received the usual upper-class education. Apparently he had no mistress. He was a fresh page, still to have a word written on it.

At night, according to Lady Holland, it was his habit to wander about the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla or of the Palatine. By day he was often to be found with a volume of Byron in his hand, sitting in the company of long-haired English and German painters near the pyramid of Cestius or on Monte Pincio. As for his future, his uncle would undoubtedly take care of that. Someday he would marry a rich and amiable girl, live on a country estate with oaks in the park and interest himself in playing cricket and hunting foxes.

What Lady Holland described was the average young Englishman of means in the romantic period, and the decline of his noble sentiments into laziness and philistinism. Pauline made no comment. She had the feeling that there was something different about Stewart.

One evening Lord Jersey began to talk about Lord Castlereagh. "Nobody can accuse me of being a radical," he said, "but this Castlereagh is surely one of England's great misfortunes. At the root of his politics is the idea of waging incessant war on the poor in the interest of the rich."

The Marquess of Douglas sighed. "It is depressing, isn't it? I often ask myself if we fought the Revolution for twenty years just to breed it in our own country. Really, I don't see that Castlereagh has much choice. And you can't blame the unemployment on him."

"But a statesman with any vision at all," Lord Holland responded quickly, "should certainly take another course. You'll never remedy the situation by throwing hungry people into jail or shooting them when they protest. You'll not appease the dissatisfied by denying their right to assemble, by searching their homes for weapons, or by raising the price of newspapers beyond their reach. It's really fan-

tastic to imagine a cry for revolution in every criticism, to condemn every new idea simply because it's new!"

"But they can be handled if the means of rebellion are taken away from them," said the Marquess. "Are you going to stand by while your factories and machinery are burned to the ground? Are you going to take it calmly if the mob gets together to threaten the well-to-do who are the backbone of England? Naturally suppression is unjust in many details. In fact, that's one of the reasons why I'm here out of the country, for I have a squeamish stomach. But I do think it would be folly to be too sentimental. We must admit that God has made two kinds of people—the rich and the poor. And the poor are ordained to serve the rich."

Pauline had lent only one ear to her guests' discussion. Political arguments were as fatiguing to her as ever. Her glance was fixed on young Stewart. While the Marquess was in the midst of his defense of Castlereagh, Stewart had come quietly into the room, bowed silently to Pauline and, as usual, taken his place behind Lady Holland's chair. Now, having caught the drift of the Marquess' harangue, his face clouded darker than ever with disapproval, and the corners of his mouth twitched bitterly.

Everyone looked up at him in surprise when he said suddenly, "It seems to have escaped Your Lordship that the poor are more numerous than the rich."

"Naturally they are," the Marquess said sourly. "The goods of the earth are limited. What has that to do with my statement?"

"A great deal, sir," said Stewart, not trying to conceal his asperity. "The philosophers say, I believe, that the goal of the state and of any reasonable political policy is the greatest happiness for the greatest number."

"Poppycock! Theory!" said the Marquess. "That's the opinion of bookworms who never handled people in their lives. It may sound very nice, sir, when you hear it expounded in Christ Church College. But in practice it's ridiculous. What do you have to say to this, young man? It's the nature of the poor to be happiest when they're serving the rich."

"Even when they're hungry?"

"They're not always hungry," the Marquess retorted.

"No, you're right. They're hungry only part of the time," said Stewart. Involuntarily he pointed a finger at the Marquess for em-

phasis. "And I'm telling you, my dear man, that the days of oppression are numbered. It's wrong to imagine that the goods of the earth are limited. Sound heads and busy hands can create new values that are potent. This will be done. Night has fallen over Europe just now, I realize. Everywhere, here on the Continent and in England, are spies, watchers, *agents provocateurs* and all that sort ready to clap hands on the first man who dares to look into the future. All young people are suspect as a matter of course. The old and decayed are at a premium—whoever earned an invidious reputation long ago. The Greeks are hated because they strike out against the Turkish tyrants. The workers are hated because they want to live. Writers are hated because they picture the world as it really is. Life is hated. Death is loved. But in the long run no army of soldiers or battalion of spies can stop life, and no police files either. In the end the earth belongs to those who march forward. We are the men of the future, sir. This century belongs to us."

"You talk like that and are Castlereagh's nephew!" said the Marquess.

"What has it got to do with my uncle?" Stewart asked, flushing a little.

"He is the subject of this conversation."

"Very well, then. My opinion is the same."

After this he held his tongue, obviously embarrassed. He ran his finger uneasily about his stiff collar, shook his heavy mane of black hair. Then he went over to Pauline. "Forgive me, Princess," he said hoarsely, "for having let myself go in your salon. But these views irritate me so."

Pauline smiled at him. What he had said reminded her forcibly of her brother Lucien's long-forgotten tirades to the Jacobins and the sans-culottes. The resemblance endeared Stewart all the more to her. A maternal tenderness softened her eyes. "Nothing out of the way has happened, Mr. Stewart," she said. "I'm really thankful to you for speaking out."

He bent over her hand and departed. The general opinion was that Castlereagh's nephew was an odd lot.

Abbé Buonavita came to Rome in the summer of 1821. He had left St. Helena in April and brought fresh news of the Emperor. The Signora and Cardinal Fesch gave him a cold reception. Buonavita

peror on St. Helena. She had been thinking of this for a long time, and now her resolve crystallized.

Her eyes fell on Buonavita. She saw how old and tired he was. She rang for her servants. A meal was prepared for him. Then he was taken away in a carriage to rest in the Villa Mondragone at Frascati.

Pauline composed a series of letters. She wrote to the English government, to Lord Castlereagh, to Lady Holland and to the Duke of Hamilton. She made her plan known to Lord Jersey and the Marquess. The banker Torlonia was asked to give her a precise accounting of her finances. She made inquiries about passage to London. In a week, she learned, a Neapolitan ship would sail from the Civita Vecchia. In London it was her intention to press her brother's cause. Trunks were packed in the Palazzo Sciarra and the place hummed with bustle and excitement.

Pauline had a terrible quarrel with her mother and Cardinal-Uncle Fesch. No amount of persuasion could shake the Signora's answer: He is no longer on St. Helena. Uncle Fesch simply stood by, helplessly wringing his hands. "But we know, Paoletta!" he protested. "The angels do not lie!"

Exhausted by rage, tears in her eyes, Pauline left the Signora's apartment. She stepped outdoors into a Roman night. The buildings were huge blocks of blackness, lighted here and there by the feeble yellow gleam of oil lamps from behind grated windows. Fountains murmured all about. These things she hardly noticed. Now I'm fighting for my life, she thought.

As it turned out, curiously enough the angels had not lied. Emperor Napoleon was indeed no longer on St. Helena. He was dead. His body lay in a double coffin, an inner one of mahogany and an outer one of lead. He had been buried in a little valley under a willow tree. There his loyal followers had deposited his remains. Antommarchi made a death mask of him; the features were in deep repose, the face was astonishingly beautiful.

When Abbé Buonavita had come belatedly to Rome the news of Napoleon's death had already spread through England. The government drew advantage from the event. The new capitalistic world took another step forward. Everyone was in a hopeful mood. The upheaval of the masses that had begun so long ago with the fall of the Bastille now appeared to have run its course. The old estate of nobles and churchmen, though still strong in high society, was now

he had come to the one person who would understand what he had to say. It grieved him to think he could not give her cheer.

All the things he had kept so long to himself now poured out. Pauline showed none of the Signora's stubborn resistance to fact. Movingly he described the Emperor's fatal disease. He told about life in the unhappy quarters of Longwood, how the Emperor lay abed, pale, his cheeks sunken, talking slowly and laboriously, often breaking off to turn his eyes to the bust of his son that stood at the foot of the bed. Outside there was damp tropic heat, the rush of interminable rain beating down mercilessly on the exposed rock.

The Abbé spoke as eloquently as a poet. His black eyes, peering out of his wrinkled old man's face, held Pauline fast. She saw, she felt in her bones, that Buonavita was speaking the truth. Her brother seemed actually present in this cosy, feminine room, with its silk-covered chairs, its fine chests of drawers, its porcelain vases, its miniatures and lace curtains, in this neat little world of organized self-love where, only a short time before, they had all been talking about Castlereagh and England's social complex. It seemed to her as if Napoleon's gigantic will was at work about her, even in the words of Buonavita.

Pauline sensed that the Abbé believed her brother's life would be cut off in a sudden collapse. He implied this with each word and gesture. He implied it by avoiding the explicit mention of death.

She read oncoming death too in Montholon's letters which Buonavita delivered to her. Montholon, a formalist to the point of pedantry, wrote with great caution, coolly, at a hopeless distance, just as Pauline had expected. But toward the end an admission of Napoleon's imminent death emerged out of the dry sentences. *Several attacks of the illness have come one after the other. He is extremely weak. He has scarcely strength to get up for a half-hour to walk a little or take a drive. He cannot move about his room without support. The Emperor counts on Your Highness to make his true situation known to influential Englishmen. Without help he will die on this terrible rock. His pain is horrible.*

Pauline had the sensation that her life was ebbing with her brother's. She felt death chill her heart; she felt the insoluble mystery as she once had on Haiti. But today, as then, she managed to brace herself into activity. It was as if all of a sudden she were possessed by some pitilessly driving force. She made up her mind to visit the Em-

peror on St. Helena. She had been thinking of this for a long time, and now her resolve crystallized.

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Pauline composed a series of letters. She wrote to the English government, to Lord Castlereagh, to Lady Holland and to the Duke of Hamilton. She made her plan known to Lord Jersey and the Marquess. The banker Torlonia was asked to give her a precise accounting of her finances. She made inquiries about passage to London. In a week, she learned, a Neapolitan ship would sail from the Civita Vecchia. In London it was her intention to press her brother's cause. Trunks were packed in the Palazzo Sciarra and the place hummed with bustle and excitement.

Pauline had a terrible quarrel with her mother and Cardinal-Uncle Fesch. No amount of persuasion could shake the Signora's answer: He is no longer on St. Helena. Uncle Fesch simply stood by, helplessly wringing his hands. "But we know, Paoletta!" he protested. "The angels do not lie!"

Exhausted by rage, tears in her eyes, Pauline left the Signora's apartment. She stepped outdoors into a Roman night. The buildings were huge blocks of blackness, lighted here and there by the feeble yellow gleam of oil lamps from behind grated windows. Fountains murmured all about. These things she hardly noticed. Now I'm fighting for my life, she thought.

As it turned out, curiously enough the angels had not lied. Emperor Napoleon was indeed no longer on St. Helena. He was dead. His body lay in a double coffin, an inner one of mahogany and an outer one of lead. He had been buried in a little valley under a willow tree. There his loyal followers had deposited his remains. Antommarchi made a death mask of him; the features were in deep repose, the face was astonishingly beautiful.

When Abbé Buonavita had come belatedly to Rome the news of Napoleon's death had already spread through England. The government drew advantage from the event. The new capitalistic world took another step forward. Everyone was in a hopeful mood. The upheaval of the masses that had begun so long ago with the fall of the Bastille now appeared to have run its course. The old estate of nobles and churchmen, though still strong in high society, was now

increasingly dominated by the new estate of the commoner rich. If the workers had nothing to do, if they lived in sties, if their children died of tuberculosis, prime disease of the new century, so much the better! By God's infinite grace the danger of overpopulation was thereby countered. The inestimable Castlereagh was all for law and order, backed up by his ubiquitous police and the involved hypocrisies concocted by certain members of the Church of England.

Many were not content with the way the wind was blowing. There was no particular rejoicing in Lord and Lady Holland's circle.

The English government had not taken the trouble to inform the dead man's family of his death. They finally read of it in the newspapers. Pauline broke down. It was a terrible moment in the Palazzo Sciarra when Madame d'Hautmesnil brought her word of what had happened. And as so often happens in the experience of finality, she mourned less for the dead than for herself. Her whole life unrolled before her, like something wound backward off a reel. As in a dying vision she saw herself moving in the mists of childhood. For a moment she was once more in Corsica watching the ritual sacrifice of hair that symbolized the undying bond between the Corsican girl and her dead brother. Again, she saw herself overpowered by feeling when, a young girl, she fell heedlessly into the arms of her sublieutenant brother in his black, threadbare uniform.

In all instances Napoleon had been the strong member, the partner with will and energy, the male who complemented her femininity. Through all her ups and downs he had hovered mysteriously behind her, the one completely trusted, the most intimate. She had sensed him looking over the shoulder of all her lovers. In moments when her grip on life faltered he had always come to her aid. After Fréron's decline, after Haiti, during her long sickness, it had consistently been like that. And now at the very last the vague image of his sufferings had roused her from uselessness into activity.

What remained? Nothing but the memory of a great life, a life where her position had been closest to the central pole. But this did not satisfy Pauline. She was not old, only forty-one. She now looked more Italian than she had as a young woman. With the years her racial origin had become more marked. Her well-shaped nose was more prominent, her forehead seemed narrower, her cheeks looked more hollowed out, her lips had thinned, her chin had a more energetic thrust. She resembled the Signora more every day. She was still

good to look at, but nobody would think of calling her the most beautiful among women.

The Italian part of her nature had also come to dominate her within. These days she seldom thought of France. She often said to her English guests, "France has behaved very badly toward us." She felt herself Italian. She enjoyed living in Rome. "I love Rome to distraction," she said more than once. With this growth of the Italian in her character, the indefinable feeling of belonging to an old race, there arose—a bare intimation at first, then ever more clearly and at last with overpowering urgency—the desire for revenge, the resolve to carry out the old law of an eye for an eye.

But who was the guilty one? Who, precisely, was the murderer? At first all England seemed the assassin—not mythical Albion, but Englishmen collectively. "I will no longer have them in my house," she told Madame d'Hautmesnil. "Every last one of them is an executioner."

Then better sense prevailed. Lord and Lady Holland, who wrote her long letters of sympathy, were hardly murderers. Stout Lord Jersey, Lord Gower, the Duke of Hamilton—who sent her flowers every day and tried his best to console her—had nothing murderous in them. Elegant George Fortescue and the rich Marquess were too comic, really, to stand as the villains she longed to dispose of. They were all simply people, no more than that, people no different from herself. She meditated, became unsure and felt the need slip from her to kill somebody in retribution.

One morning her silent admirer, James Stewart, was announced. Can I see Castlereagh's nephew? Pauline asked herself. She trembled.

"Shall I tell him that Your Highness doesn't feel well?" Madame d'Hautmesnil inquired sympathetically.

"No, wait a minute. I've got to see him. By all means." She threw herself into a chair and thought things over. No doubt about it. Castlereagh, who had been pictured to her as the murderer of the English workingman, was also her brother's murderer. She wondered how she could have missed what now seemed obvious. He was the responsible head of the English government, she reasoned. It was he who had put the seal on her brother's exile. This Castlereagh had ignored her letters and the Signora's, begging that Napoleon be removed to a better climate. The murderer, Pauline said to herself, has clung to his malignity. All that she had heard about Castlereagh,

about his hatred for the younger generation, his reactionary outlook, his deceptively soft exterior, his inability to express himself clearly in Parliament—all these attributes enforced her prejudice. As the murk of indecision parted, the murderer stood out in bold relief.

When young Stewart came into the room Pauline marveled at his dark handsomeness, his pallor, the melancholy light in his eyes. He seemed dearer to her, and nearer, than ever before. He appeared somehow to share her secret. He, too, knew the murderer.

"Tomorrow I'm leaving for England," he said. "But I didn't want to leave Rome without saying good-by to Your Highness. I hesitated for quite a while."

"Why was that?" she asked tensely, knowing the real cause of his embarrassment.

"I didn't dare to come," he said, "because of your brother's death. And then . . . of course, I'm related, you know, to . . ."

"As for my brother," said Pauline, "I've asked all my friends not to talk about him. It's very distressing to me. But I don't mind talking about him with you, Mr. Stewart. I feel the need of it. We have just received his will. He remembered each one of us. He listed everything so carefully. Everyone got something. He gave me his little house, San Martino, the one on Elba. But I doubt that I shall ever set foot in it. There's one room I'd never have the heart to enter. I mean the one with the zodiac painted on the ceiling. In the middle there's that inscription, you know—'*ubicumque felix Napoleon*,' Napoleon is happy everywhere."

"*Ubicumque felix*," murmured the young man solemnly. "Of course."

"But we, you know," she said, and wondered why she had said "we" rather than "I," "are not really happy anywhere."

"I certainly am not," said Stewart. "Hate follows me everywhere I go. I feel fingers pointed at me. I see no end to it. But you, Madame, you at least have pleasant memories."

"I've lost everything," said Pauline. "I don't really live any more." But in spite of this dramatic statement, she felt the familiar lightness and tension peculiar to Stewart's presence. She realized she could love this young man. Suddenly she said, "Mr. Stewart, could you take a ride with me this evening? I hear you know your way about Rome."

He looked at her in surprise, then readily promised to meet her.

It was a warm summer evening. They sat silently beside each other in the carriage. The city was quiet. The flower sellers at the Scala di Spagna had taken their bright wares away. The big sun umbrellas stood folded against empty tables. Two clerics in long robes and shovel hats came slowly out of Santa Trinitá del Monte. Below in the piazza the horses had been unhitched from the heavy English stage-coaches, which now rested in front of the hotels with their shafts tipped high. They came to the Fontana di Trevi. The carriage stopped. They looked at the Tritons, blowing their shell horns, at the bearded Neptune and the silver-clear water gushing from the artfully arranged rocks. Couples sat on the fountain rim or strolled through the little square, talking earnestly. A young peasant girl in red skirt and richly embroidered blouse, with a bright kerchief over her severely combed hair, looked wide-eyed at the stone monsters. She leaned against her lover, whose dark eyes fed greedily on the tender oval of her brown face. A vendor of roast chestnuts at his little brazier merrily cracked jokes as he shouted his wares.

"You must drink from the fountain," said Pauline. The liveried servant handed Stewart a small silver cup. The water was cool and sweet on the tongue. It came through conduits from the Monti Albani. "Now you have been conquered by Rome," said Pauline. "The legend is that one drink from the fountain will always bring you back home here."

"I needed no water for that," said Stewart and looked at Pauline intently.

How curious he is, how young! she thought. She suppressed her desire for him. She could not let it go free. She had a task to perform.

It was already getting dark when they came out on the Via Labicana, where the gray, sinister oval of the Flavian Theater lay before them. "I'd like to see it from the inside," said Pauline.

"Now?"

"Yes."

They stood close together in the silent arena of the Caesars. The ruins were a shapeless pile. Vines grew thick over the long banks of stone steps. Shattered columns were covered with ivy. Little trees sprouted from the stone walls. The arena proper was a wilderness of knee-high grass, briars and bushes. Bats fluttered velvet-soft out of

the caves which once had housed the wild beasts. Pauline pressed hard against Stewart. "It's eerie, isn't it?" she said.

"It is," he said. "How quiet! There have been times when I've been here all alone when the moon was rising. I could almost see the people sitting up there. It was easy then to imagine what it was all like in the old days."

Pauline said nothing for a while. She looked at the boy. "Stewart," she said suddenly in the harsh voice of her girlhood, "why do you belong among my enemies?"

"I love you, Pauline," he whispered. He bent on one knee and pressed kisses on her hand.

Pauline looked at him hungrily. The gray sheen of the stones, the last wavering twilight fell on his young face. "My friend," she said, "we belong in opposite camps. I am the Emperor's sister. You are a close relative of the man who murdered him."

Stewart let her hand fall and got to his feet. He looked empty-eyed at the toppled ruins, which were fast disappearing into darkness.

"I didn't want to express myself about that," he said. "The man has taken good care of me. But I hate all he stands for. His stupid devotion to aristocratic forms, his forced charm, his hostility toward everyone and everything not on his social level—I detest it all. He is the murderer. You're right, Pauline. Byron is right. My friend Shelley is right. This is what he says:

> " 'I met Murder on my way——
> He had a mask like Castlereagh——
> Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
> Seven blood-hounds followed him.' "

Pauline listened raptly. She did not understand his English verse but got its drift. Her heart swelled with warmth. She took Stewart's head in her two hands. She felt out the cheekbones under the smooth skin and kissed him on the mouth. "Come back to Rome," she said. "Come back to me. And when you're in England, fight for us. Spread the truth. Say that the murderer of the English people is also my brother's murderer. We must have justice. You, Stewart, belong to me, to us, to all of this." She made a sweeping gesture to include the ruins and what lay beyond—the Palatine, the Capitoline, the Quirinal, the whole mighty city of ruins, palaces and churches over which hung the sickle moon. She laughed hoarsely. "This is the

city of Venus, Stewart," she said loudly, senselessly, almost hysterically.

When James Stewart left Rome the next morning in a swaying coach and watched the Porta del Popolo fade behind him as he clattered through the desolate landscape toward Civita Vecchia, before his inner eye was the romantic image of the great amphitheater at night, and of himself standing amid the ruins with the beautiful Princess. It seemed to him that his empty life had suddenly acquired meaning.

Over a year had slipped by since the news of the Emperor's death had come. Everything followed its usual course in the Palazzo Sciarra. As ever the ladies nodded from their carriages during the boulevard hour on the Corso, and from her window Pauline nodded back at them. As before, guests came in the evening to her salon—English people mostly, but now and then some Frenchmen and Italians of artistic bent. Among the last was the dark-eyed Sicilian Giovanni Pacini, the composer. His fondness for the Princess Borghese was the talk of Roman musical circles. Sometimes clerics called on Pauline, even severe Cardinal Consalvi, the papal foreign minister.

Madame Junot came from France. She and Pauline, who had never been friends, now held long sentimental post-mortems over the Emperor and Junot. During the days when the Empire crashed, Junot had committed suicide in a fit of despair. Madame Junot recalled details of Napoleon's Parisian years when he was still an unknown little officer with stringy hair. Pauline told about the young Junot, the mutiny in Toulon, the journey to Antibes. She said nothing, wisely, about the kiss at the spring.

Pauline lived more and more in the past. During the long forenoon she sat half-clothed in a chair before the window and thought of her former lovers, the costumes she had worn, the balls she had attended. The early world, the free, poor life on Corsica, the wild excitement of the Revolution seemed in retrospect the best segment of her life. Nervously yawning, she surveyed her long series of clean rooms, decorated with net curtains, her Gobelins on the walls, the silk-upholstered furniture, the muscular demigods of plaster apparently holding up the ceiling from their posts in each corner. In the hush of memory the whitewashed, ever cool rooms in Ajaccio, even the disorderly apartment in the rue Lafont seemed far more desirable than her pres-

ent habitation. There all she had had to do to find adven
throw open the door. Outside awaited the great world, popu
officers, bandits, revolutionaries, Jacobins, enticing girls of eas
Here in the Palazzo Sciarra she could not even open a door for
self. Should she lift her hand to the knob a lackey would rush
ward to earn his lackey's pay. And outside were more lackeys, not
mention coachmen, well-groomed horses, a carriage in which to
on soft green-leather cushions and yawn at a world of clerics a
Englishmen traveling about from here to there. Pauline felt sorry
the young people—her nephew Louis Napoleon, for instance. Lif
Rome was not meant for young people. It oozed respectability
ennui. There were not even drunkards on the streets of Rome.
much less were there fiery speechmakers, or soldiers and their wo
seeking to ease their needs with one another.

Beneath her melancholy still smoldered a deep craving for rev
When anyone mentioned her brother's name, when the wages o
gardener at San Martino had to be paid, when some detail from
past evoked Napoleon's memory, she felt always a sharp pang.
avenged he slept on St. Helena. The clan had left its duty und

One evening she noticed that her English guests were not th
usual suave selves. The Marquess was depressed and sat rigid with
saying a word. Lord and Lady Holland, who had returned to Ro
moved about nervously and cast significant glances at each oth
Even Lord Jersey had trouble finding something passably pleasant
say and laughed hollowly at his own feeble jokes.

At last Pauline could stand it no longer. "Whatever has ha
pened?" she asked.

"You don't know, Madame?" said George Fortescue.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Lady Holland. "She doesn't know!"

"I know nothing," said Pauline, smiling. "Is it such a great secre

"Secret?" said Lord Jersey. "Not at all, my dear lady. All the
papers are full of it. We simply didn't want to talk about it befor
you. Frightfully tactless, you know."

Pauline looked helplessly from one to the other.

Fortescue cleared his throat. "Since I'm pretty well tagged as th
enfant terrible of this circle, I might as well out with it. Our excel
lent prime minister, Castlereagh of blessed memory, has just cut h
throat."

Pauline blanched. She looked at Fortescue with her mouth hang

Suddenly, as if in response to a signal, all the guests began once. Pauline listened breathlessly.

ıslike your tone, Fortescue, I really do," said the Marquess. clereagh was a Bayard of political knightliness. He was a states- . without fear or reproach. Who is going to hold the masses in now? Who will combat the spirit of revolution?"

Don't take it too tragically, my dear Marquess," said Fortescue. ɛtternich is still living. We have the Duke of Wellington. Don't ,et him. There's no dearth of reactionaries, I'd say."

Wellington is a soldier," objected the Marquess.

Yes, I know," said Fortescue. "Good soldiers make poor states- ı. Therefore it follows that Wellington can substitute very nicely Castlereagh. Always after great wars the people get used to au- tıty and imagine that difficulties can be solved by tyranny. So , elect a soldier to lead them, and in due course he becomes the ·egoat for failing. . . . There are exceptions, of course," he added ıly, with one eye on Pauline. But she was too absorbed to be ated.

ıIow did it happen?" she asked heavily.

He had his troubles," said Lord Holland, whose habit it was to some good in everybody—"unemployment, the constant uproar nst him. And then there was the scandal of Queen Caroline. He d to keep her out of England to preserve the dignity of the royal ıily, but he failed."

'ortescue grimaced and recited:

> "Gracious Queen, we thee implore,
> Go away and sin no more;
> Should the effort be too great,
> Go away, at any rate."

That's quite uncalled for, George," said Lady Holland indignantly.

Lord Holland glared angrily at Fortescue and continued his apol- (,y. "In short," he went on, "Castlereagh, unhappily enough, was lik.e a man trying to save a sinking vessel singlehanded. He ran madly from one leak to another trying to plug them all. He did everything ɔne; he mistrusted everybody. He didn't have the faintest idea that - sensible thing to do was to set all hands manning the pumps."

"In fact, he didn't see," Lord Jersey amplified, "that the thing to do was to beach the old tub. It needed overhauling from keel to

trucks. He didn't understand that a new age has dawned, a period of trade, of manufacturing by machinery. Let's say it openly—a middle-class period. He failed to see that the old political forms and freedoms were inadequate. In the war with France he stuck to his guns. So he was a great man. But he remained as stubborn in pea resisting the trend of the times. It was his undoing."

"That may be, Lord Jersey," said Lord Holland, somewhat fended. "But it was more than that, too. It was his gigantic an fruitless labors. It was the hatred of the mob, the contempt and ridicule showered on his head. No wonder he weakened mentally and took his own life."

"What Lord Byron said about him really oversteps the bounds of good taste and common humanity," said Lady Holland, interested despite herself. The intellectual world of the day, whether it liked him or not, hung on the words of that extraordinary man, Byron.

"I got it directly from him," said Fortescue proudly, and quickly unfolded a piece of paper. He read:

> "Oh, Castlereagh! Thou art a patriot now;
> Cato died for his country, so did'st thou;
> He perish'd rather than see Rome enslaved,
> Thou cutt'st thy throat that Britain may be saved!"

"Terrible, isn't it, Princess?" said Lady Holland tearfully. "This hatred! You should read Lady Castlereagh's letters about her husband's death. She saw it coming, you know, and refused to let him have the keys to his pistol case. She even had his razors taken away from him. But she overlooked a little knife that he used to sharpen pen nibs. The poor man! I don't suppose you heard about the awful thing his nephew did—that James Stewart?"

"Stewart!"

"Yes, his nephew," said Lady Holland. "And he seemed such a nice young man. He always stood behind my chair as if I were his own mother. Do you recall? It's true that he had rather exaggerated views, of course—like all young people. His uncle had done everything for him—sent him to Oxford, got him into the best clubs, introduced him to all sorts of influential people. He smoothed his path to becoming a conservative statesman. Some days before Castlereagh's death he asked his nephew to come to him. Apparently in his last moments he wanted at least one person there who really cared for

him and trusted him. But instead of going to see him Stewart sent a letter. It was a terrible indictment, worse than anything his worst enemy had ever said, more crushing than Byron's verses. It came, you see, from one he sincerely loved. The story's quite true. I got it from Lady Castlereagh herself. She thinks it quite possible that this last betrayal was what really made her husband take his life. His nephew literally forced the knife into his hand. What do you say to that, my dear Princess?"

"That was the killing shot," said Pauline darkly, in Italian.

"I didn't get that," said Lady Holland. "The what?"

"The *coup de grâce*," said Pauline.

"Of course," said Lady Holland. "That's one way of saying it, isn't it?"

"Please excuse me, Lady Holland," said Pauline and got up slowly. "Forgive me, gentlemen .. I really don't feel very well."

Slowly she left the salon. Her guests were taken aback. Lord Jersey offered her his arm. "Thank you," she said. "I should prefer to go alone." Slowly she climbed the stairs to the second story, pausing frequently with her hand on the rail. From below floated up the stage whispers of her English guests. Her face was thoughtful. She had always imagined that the moment of revenge would be sweet. But actually she felt little satisfaction, only a monstrous emptiness, as if all purpose had vanished from her life now that Castlereagh was gone.

She went into her room and lay down on the bed. The jalousies were drawn. It was dark in the room. Shafts of light slanted through the slats and dust motes danced in them. Outside, muffled by the curtains, she heard the departing carriages. Then everything was still and she was alone. She closed her eyes but could not find sleep.

She was haunted by the remembered image of the Corsican girl on the sunny cliff, with her musket dangling carelessly. She even remembered the girl's name, Giacominetta Vasari. The best and the most loving among women, they had called her. The Princess envied the girl, even in distant memory. Then she laughed aloud, with relish, holding her hands under her head. But into her reveling over the bitter death of the hated enemy, who had actually never been to her an individual but only a symbol, there intruded a chilling realization. It was not she, after all, but fate that had engineered

the clan's revenge. And she felt the same dark fate hovering over her. It was dancing all about her in the darkened room.

Fate had bent over her. She felt the end coming. A world had fallen and was no more. And she belonged to that world. She felt no longer rooted in reality.

Outwardly her life exhibited the same tenor as always. Her salon was celebrated as one of the most amusing in Rome. This, of course, meant little, for the city was drowsy under too much priestly influence and, like Pauline, dreamed of times past. Only through visitors, the English people of wealth, the traveling German painters, the French savants and literati, did a little worldly life come to Rome. But Pauline knew nothing about the cool, dark, vaulted inns where artists, poets and scholars sat at scoured tables over wineglasses as they talked of Raphael's murals in the Vatican, of the *Attic Nights* of Aulus Gellius, of the political views of Pompey and Caesar, of the world of tombs and catacombs, the mysterious, subterranean hive of intellectual honey that ringed the city round. And even if she had been acquainted with these more vital people, who were mostly poor and lived like owls in dilapidated houses or dirty garrets, still she would not have understood or appreciated them. More to her liking would have been the obvious rebels, the youngsters who, despairing of old Europe, left home to help the Greeks wrest independence from the Turks and so contrived to find an early end far away. Her own nephew was among these, and James Stewart. She thought at times how this new generation lacked men of her brother's dictator stripe, adequate, ordering, pushing fellows. The whole generation, it seemed to her, was confused, aimless even in warfare.

Although she was now but forty-four years old, Pauline lived almost entirely with things of the past. She felt in the depths of her being the soundless rush of the shadowy river, the proximity, the working, the fabric of the past. She felt it in all ordinary things, as she lay on the chaise longue and chose a new hat or shawl, as she rode in her open carriage and greeted passing acquaintances from under her parasol. She was aware of it when the candles were lighted in her salon and her guests had begun to arrive.

Even when she went to bed with her friend Pacini—out of custom, these days, rather than call of the flesh—the past was with her. She believed that any woman of spirit should have at least one lover, even

at her age, someone to give herself to at well-spaced intervals just to keep her spirit. But when she did this the ghosts of other lovers swarmed about to disturb her.

Pacini, a hot-blooded Southerner, was discomfited to find her so indifferent. In the midst of caresses she would suddenly begin to chatter about the most intimate details of her affairs with Moreau or Blangini. At such times Pacini felt as if someone had poured a bucket of ice water down his fevered back. This disconcerting way of hers caused bitter quarreling.

Finally Pauline so repelled him that he fled to Trieste, where he promptly got himself married. Pauline shrugged her shoulders and made no complaint. She sat down and wrote a long letter to Camillo, asking him to have her statue by Canova veiled and never shown to anyone. It was a symbolic request. With Pacini's departure her erotic career came to an end.

But she could not prevent some of the sparkle of other times from shining in her eyes. It was evoked by whatever pleased her, men and women, animals and plants, but now it shone without admixture of desire and coquetry. Some time before, in the year that Napoleon died, the young poet Keats had been frightened by Pauline's predatory look. In spite of the lively protest of his friend Severn, Keats gave up his customary walk on Monte Pincio, fearing that he might run into the Princess again. Now this gifted young man had lain for some years under the violet-strewn earth of the Protestant Cemetery near the pyramid of Cestius. She would frighten him no more.

Pauline liked best to spend the long summers in the Villa Arnolfini on Monte San Quirico, near Lucca. This recently acquired country place she dedicated to the past. Everywhere, on doors, windows and mirrors, perched the golden eagle of the Empire. The green silk upholstery was ornamented with golden bees. The letter "N" was all about, wreathed round with laurel.

Pauline would lie in her room on her large bed, the *letto matrimoniale*, which stood on tiger feet and had eagles carved on its posts. She would rest her head on her arms. Her loosened hair would fall about her cheeks and over her shoulders. Buried within the dark cloud her face looked very small. Like this she dreamed away whole days, vaguely hearing what went on outside through the open doors into the garden. She heard the long rhythms of summer rain striking hard against the shiny leaves of oleander. She saw the afternoo[illegible]

the peaceful stillness of the garden world accentuated by the endless murmuring of the fountains. With a shudder she felt the onset of evening as it crept into the house down sandy walks and from behind dark thickets and sightless statues. Then night would come and the stars were high in the sky. Sometimes there was mild moonlight and the smell of fresh-cut grass would come from the lawns into her bedroom, flooding over her like the waves of a spirit sea. A great wonder would fill her then, a breathless awe before the mystery of the earth, the garden, the house, the moon.

This mood of contemplation shut her off from the real world. How simple everything had once been, how matter of course, without secrets! What one did, one was, in those days. But now things had become transparent and enormous perspectives stretched before her gaze. All things were mysterious, as they had been when she was a child. Now the inexplicable again whispered teasingly in her ears. She felt the living nearness of the vast ocean in which the world and all life on it are but the smallest island.

Is this God, Pauline asked herself—this nearness, this inarticulate strength that I feel all about and within me?

And thinking this, she smiled roguishly to herself. She thought how at times she had heard Mass while taking her bath, because she felt more soulful in tepid water. The too tolerant priest who had said Mass for her in this unorthodox style had been summoned to Rome for a reprimand by the Pope. Her old friend Pius VII, now dead and buried, he of the heavy black eyebrows, had done the thundering. Even today the incident struck Pauline as amusing. It seemed to her that God surely must be beyond all empty ceremony. Surely he must prefer to declare himself in human hearts at opportune moments—in bed, say, or while one is out walking, or in the garden, or while one eats dinner.

During these long summer days, stretched across her *letto matrimoniale*, Pauline took stock of herself and harvested what there was to reap. In spirit once again she set her whole life to rights, not only the broad features of it, but the small details as well, the commonly unnoticed, the repressed, hidden things. The taste of newly baked rye bread, the flight of a firefly at night, a drink of water, the fold of a dress, the movement of a dance, the spray of a skyrocket at Neuilly, old Jew's words, the curves and colors of a porcelain vase, the odor of these silk, a cypress standing sentinel by the sea, the mildewed believe- riage leather, smiles on the lips of her ladies in waiting, the