Praise for *Falcon in the Dive*

"With as many twists and turns as an eighteenth-century Parisian alley, *Falcon in the Dive* draws readers into the dark, beating heart of the French Revolution. From the dank mines below Nord-Pas-de-Calais and cellar hideouts crowded with ordinary Parisians to the exquisite palaces of the nobility, Leah Angstman tells the story of one remarkable woman whose courage and complexity changes—and saves—lives. There is no one writing today who can approach Angstman's ability to blend profound erudition with a rollicking plot and indelible characters. A compelling page-turner, *Falcon in the Dive* will challenge everything you thought you knew about the French Revolution."

—Ashley Shelby, author of *Muri*, *South Pole Station*, and *Red River Rising*

"Entrenched in historical detail, Leah Angstman's *Falcon in the Dive* is the kind of book most authors wish they had the stomach for. No one is lucky in Angstman's Paris, and the realism with which she crafts her tale will have readers white-knuckling the book, cringing and cheering on the same page. *Falcon*'s daredevil protagonist, Ani, is no exception to the rules of the world, and her losses are as tragic as her victories triumphant. Ani's courage is without bounds, and in her, Angstman has realized a heroine as vital to today's reader as she is to *Falcon*'s gritty, riotous France."

—Eric Shonkwiler, author of *Above All Men*, *8th Street Power & Light*, and *Moon Up, Past Full*

Also by Leah Angstman:
Out Front the Following Sea
Shoot the Horses First

Falcon in the Dive

A Novel of the French Revolution

Leah Angstman

Regal House Publishing

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A timeline of the major events of the French Revolution, a Dutch-language glossary, a breakdown of the major political and miliary factions involved, a glossary of terms used in this book, a conversion of 1792 French currency to 2019 (pre-pandemic) U.S. currency, and an extensive glossary of the real-life named individuals mentioned in the novel can be found on the author's website at https://leahangstman.com.

There are many real-life historical figures named in this book. Although some of their dialogue comes from their own verbal and epistolary words, the characterizations are fictional.

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For Lafayette, in sleep, and Mike, awake.

For Heidi, who never let the stairs slow her down.

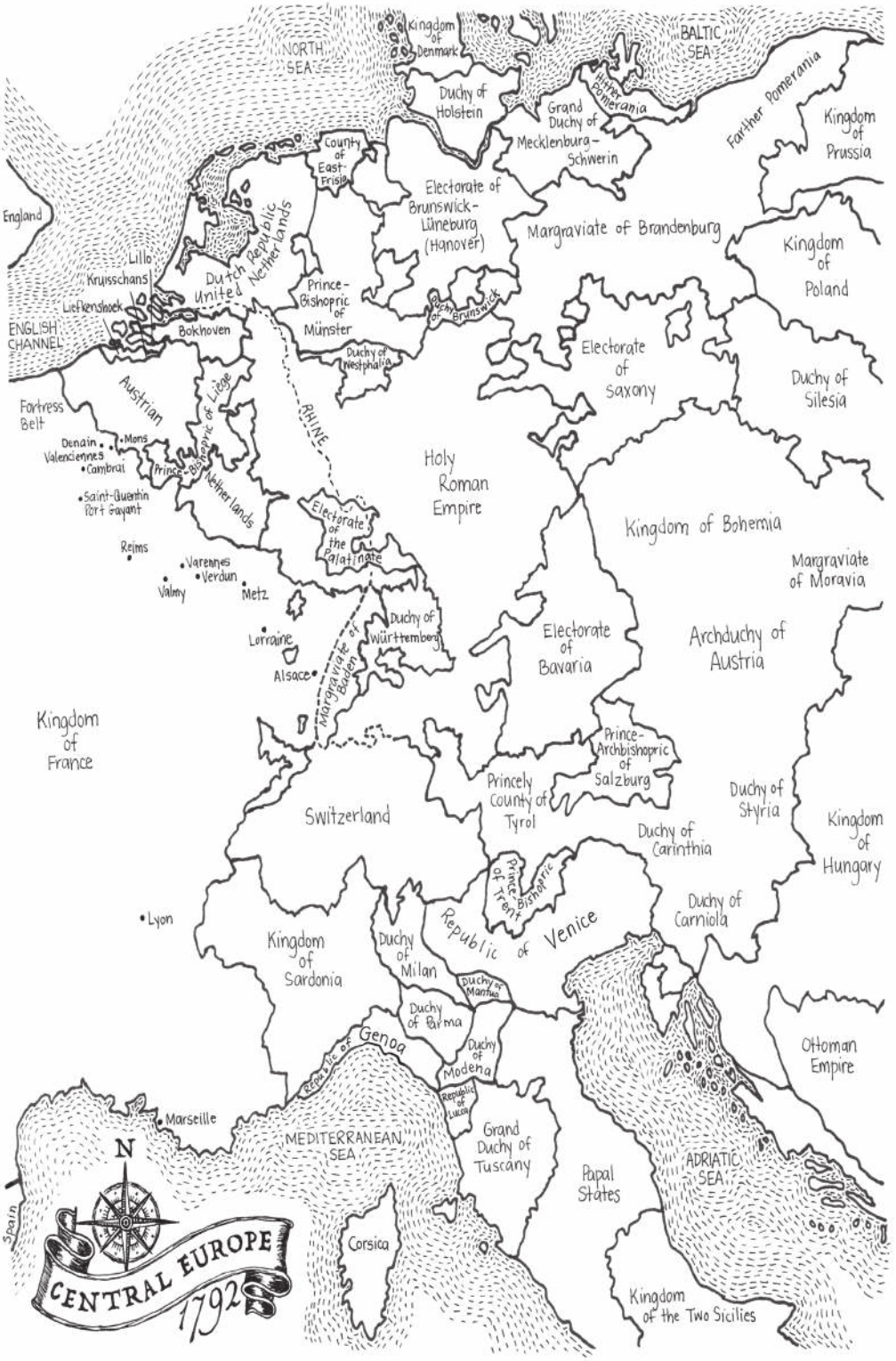
If God did not exist,
we should have to invent Him.
—Maximilien Robespierre, after Voltaire

When the government violates the people's rights,
insurrection is, for the people
and for each portion of the people,
the most sacred of the rights
and the most indispensable of duties.

—Marquis de Lafayette

The time has come that was foretold,
when people would ask for bread
and be given corpses.

—Madame Roland


NORTH SEA
Kingdom of Denmark
BALTIC SEA
Duchy of Holstein
Hinter Pomerania
Farther Pomerania
Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin
Kingdom of Prussia
County of East-Frisia
Electorate of Brunswick-Lüneburg (Hanover)
Margraviate of Brandenburg
Kingdom of Poland
England
Lille
Kruisschans
Liefkenshoek
ENGLISH CHANNEL
Dutch Republic United Netherlands
Prince-Bishopric of Münster
Duchy of Brunswick
Bokhoven
Duchy of Westphalia
Electorate of Saxony
Duchy of Silesia
Austrian Netherlands
Fortress Belt
Bishopric of Liège
RHINE
Denain
Valenciennes
Mons
Cambrai
Prince-Bishopric of Liège
Saint-Quentin
Port Sayant
Holy Roman Empire
Electorate of the Palatinate
Kingdom of Bohemia
Reims
Varennes
Verdun
Valmy
Metz
Margraviate of Moravia
Duchy of Württemberg
Lorraine
Alsace
Margraviate of Baden
Electorate of Bavaria
Archduchy of Austria
Kingdom of France
Prince-Archbishopric of Salzburg
Princely County of Tyrol
Duchy of Styria
Switzerland
Duchy of Carinthia
Kingdom of Hungary
Prince-Bishopric of Trent
Duchy of Carniola
Lyon
Kingdom of Sardonia
Duchy of Milan
Republic of Venice
Duchy of Mantua
Duchy of Parma
Duchy of Modena
Republic of Genoa
Ottoman Empire
Marseille
Republic of Lucca
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Grand Duchy of Tuscany
Papal States
ADRIATIC SEA
Spain
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Kingdom of the Two Sicilies
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Valenciennes
Denain
Cambrai
Saint-Quentin
Port-Gayant
Gaudry
RIVER SOMME
SEINE
Reims
Varennes
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Verdun
Metz
Lorraine
Alsace
Paris
Gentilly
Versailles
Rambouillet
Chartres
Orléans
Le Mans
Ronchamp
CHÉZINE
LOIRE
Beaugency
Angers
Layon
Nantes
Maine-et-Loire
Cholet
Bocage Vendéen
Thouet
Marais
The Vendée
Deux Sèvres
Moulins
Lay
Lyon
Marseille
Couserans
Foix

1 Grande Rue du Chaillot
2 Esplanade des Invalides
3 Place de la Révolution
4 Pont de la Révolution
5 Les Feuillants
6 Les Jacobins
7 Restaurants of Palais Royal, inc. Café de Foy
8 Grande Taverne de Londres
9 Boutique de l'aquatinte
10 Pont Royal
11 For-l'Évêque
12 Grand Châtelet
13 Carmelites
14 La Force
15 Hôtel de Ville
16 Pont au Change
17 Quai de l'Horloge
18 La Conciergerie
19 Pont Saint-Michel
20 Île du Palais Streets, inc. Rue de la Barillerie & Saint-Barthélemy
21 Notre-Dame
22 Théâtre de l'Odéon
23 l'Abbaye
24 Rue Sainte-Marguerite
25 Les Cordeliers
26 Jardin du Luxembourg
27 Lycée Louis-le-Grand
28 Sainte-Pélagie
29 Les Gobelins
30 Hôpital de la Salpêtrière
31 Église Saint-Médard
l'Étoile
Palais d'honneur de Collioure
Faubourg
Saint
Honoré
RUE DU FAUBOURG DE SAINT-HONORÉ
Chaillot
Champs
Élysées
Cours-de-la-Reine
Jardin des Tuileries
SEINE
Palais Bourbon
Hôtel des Invalides
Champ de Mars
Faubourg
Saint
Germain
RUE DU BAC
Carmes
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Montmartre
Faubourg
Saint
Denis
Faubourg
Saint-
Martin
RUE NEUVE SAINT-AUGUSTIN
RUE DE RICHELIEU
RUE NEUVE DES PETITS CHAMPS
RUE SAINTE ANNE
RUE MONTMARTRE
Palais Royal
Tuileries
Place du Carrousel
Louvre
RUE SAINT-DENIS
RUE SAINT-MARTIN
Temple
Faubourg du Temple
RUE PICARDIE
Le Marais
RUE SAINT-ANTOINE
Ile du Palais
RUE DU THÉATRE-FRANÇAIS
Bastille
Emilien Gagnon
VAUGIRARD
Luxembourg
RUE SAINT-VICTOR
Faubourg Saint Bernardins
Saint Antoine
Faubourg
Saint
Victor
Jardin du Roi
Michel
Carmelites
Faubourg
Saint
Jacques
Anis Cellar
RUE MOUFFETARD
Marché aux chevaux
Faubourg
Saint Marcel
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Part I

The Past Is
Fragments of

Chapter One

An introduction; or, an exposition

Your People, sir,
is nothing but a great beast.

—Alexander Hamilton

Now, Paris, mid-July 1792

The National Razor glittered above the roture like a jewel of monarchies past, a proud member of the Assembly, of the courtier, of Parlement, of the Bourbon. It was a veritable head of state, a baron, a marquis, a viscount, a bishop—as much an unelected supreme and autocratic ruler of divine right as any individual in the Versailles or Tuileries aristocratic noblesse, and well-oiled to lop any head into the arms of a regal Madame: the guillotine.

It was the year of Someone Else's Lord, Seventeen Ninety and Two. Six-hundred-thousand citizens from borel to baron crowded every livable corner of Paris in manufactured caste. Starving or highbrow, taillable or upper class, gabelled or bestowed with appointed seats. Those who held loftier societal positions would scarce confess it to a passing stranger wearing laces instead of buckles, pantlegs instead of culottes.

Ani could see the glistening metal of the blade from where she stood at the edge of the Seine. She'd once watched this very river freeze solid to the bottom. Three years prior, during the severest winter of the century, when epidemics of murrain ran rampant and deadly. When famine held true autocratic rule of the land. When financial heads collapsed banks in their wake as they were deposed one by one, and the country bankrupted itself. When nine-thousand famished citizens had rioted through the city, and guns came more abundant than bread. Between black and white were factions of gray in so many shades one daren't count them.

Devastation knew no class bias; rich and poor alike were swept into the anthem of those riots past, when mobs fled toward the fork that closed travel from the eastern mouth of Paris to the faubourg Saint-

Antoine, where had stood the medieval dungeon with a personality, a life, a birth and death all its own: the Bastille. A building steeped in legend, a symbol of oppression for the starving and overtaxed Third Estate—*the commoners*. Built as a fortress in the fourteenth century, it had since been used to imprison men arrested in accordance with the lettres de cachet, men who were not guilty of any offense that law could punish but who'd offended the king or his royal cabinet. The prison's destruction had meant the acquisition of countless barrels of gunpowder. The lower borel needed only munitions to propel its way upward; thus fell the Bastille and Hôtel national des Invalides, and thirty-thousand muskets therein were granted the common man through means of force. Paris now stood armed, but in the three years since, it had gained no bread.

Her father had been in that prison. That infamous Bastille. Her father—rotting away on a piss-covered mattress.

Thus, an aristocrat now swinging by his neck from a pont over the Seine shouldn't have given her pause. It was common enough these days. Yet, Ani found it hard to stomach sometimes—a man, a *life*, no matter what he'd done. But some things…some things that men did were unforgivable. She knew this too well.

Keener to the discomfort as she hurried, exposed and vulnerable, across the bridge, she lamented wearing a dress too elegant to be skirting the Palais Bourbon and the Jardin des Tuileries in this milieu. The color stood out, even under the dark cape that wrapped her. Her wooden shoes thumped each step mercilessly. She clutched her satchel, kept constant watch over both shoulders.

She wasn't used to a dress like this. Its cumbersome petticoats hindered her gait—a detriment if she had to run. Past the outer edges of faubourgs Saint-Germain and Saint-Honoré, a body might have to run. Footfalls behind her, crowds at the rear and off in some nearby courtyards. A cane clicked on the pont. Tallow lamps popped to life where a lamplighter lit the bridge's mouth from a torch. The sky lightened with the lamps. Too late in the morning for her to be out like this. Dressed like this. This silly pomp for a silverware accountant.

That's what she'd been hired as—a glorified butler, a counter of wall hangings, wine casks, and heirlooms. Well, some young *man* had been hired. She was simply going in the young man's place. *He's indisposed*, she was supposed to say, *quite likely the pox*.

Steps grew louder behind her, and she quickened her pace. Nearly off

the bridge, nearly off the bridge, nearly…standing over the dead body swinging below it. Her gut tightened. The decaying flesh stung the back of her throat, a scent so potent she could taste it. But she couldn't show an inkling of repulsion—not here, so nicely dressed—or she'd stand out even more. She knew many people in the city, but she certainly didn't know everyone. Falling into the wrong hands might mean she would join the swinging man on the bridge, even if she wasn't one of them, one of the *'crats*, one of the bourgeoisie, one of the gentry, one of the…

A woman in a cluster of women at the end of the bridge made eye contact with her, and Ani glanced down quickly, but it was too late. She heard the suspicions, saw stances shifting, foot to foot. She couldn't afford a confrontation. She wadded a piece of yellow paper she carried, a missive, and threw it into the Seine. The Tuileries palace loomed on the opposite bank, its hordes of red-clad Swiss Guard mercenaries like paintstrokes on the gray shore. Off to the north, throngs of mob and shopkeep and market women waited to pounce on anything that seemed out of place, and to the south, scouts and patrolmen, a herd of young men with dogs, walked across the bridge at her back. She squeezed by the women at the end of the pont, but the one who'd made eye contact knocked into Ani's shoulder. The woman opened her mouth to shout something, but Ani didn't wait around to hear it.

Ani bolted from the bridge toward Champs-Élysées, avoiding the puddles, her skirt hiked to her waist. Past the quay, she swore aloud at her wooden shoes and stopped to remove them and carry them beneath her arm. She'd always been better at running barefoot, or in shoes with soles so rotten that she might as well be barefoot. Crowds of people yelled, threw stones. Some pursued in chase. New menacing figures materialized from hedgerows and followed.

Ani kept running, her lungs heaving until they gave way to a wretched cough, and she tucked into an alleyway at Grande rue du Chaillot. Curse her weak lungs. She bent over, her hands on her knees, until the cough subsided. Catching her breath, she checked around the corner, but the mob had lost interest. They were fickle in chase and thankfully as fickle in giving up the chase.

She leaned her head against the wall. Lightheadedness momentarily overtook her, but she breathed, breathed. The danger of what she was doing came fully to her, but she pushed it away and stood upright, composed herself. Assessed. So she'd been mistaken for one of them, so be it. That had always been a gamble of the plan, and she knew the

risks. But sweat now coated her hairline, and mud stained the bottom trim of the dress that Dr. Breauchard had paid someone to clean and flounce the hems. Perhaps no one would notice. Oh, whom was she kidding, she groaned—of course they'd all notice. She closed her eyes, and when she next opened them, she faced the Chaillot—a district that did not belong to her kind.

Now, the Chaillot on the outskirts of Paris

Noon came and cast its heat onto Grande rue du Chaillot, running between the gardens of l'Étoile and the Champs-Élysées. Hunger tugged at Ani's insides, but she kept walking, her shoes rubbing painful blisters into her heels. The lightheadedness was gone, but the uncertainty remained. She took a deep breath and looked around her. Anchored her bearings. Counted the mansions. Saw the nameplates. Took a longer breath and steadied her racing nerves.

There were no alleyways now, no marketplace mobs. The upscale townhouses, chateaus, and small palaces were shelters of gentry. She was out from the center of the city toward the Chaillot, where the niceness of the properties ran contrary to the niceness of their proprietors. But one modest palace—if such a word could describe a palace—was the right one. *The right one.* A pit formed in her stomach. When she spotted guards lined inside the front gate, indicating the possibility of a fortified stone garrison, she hesitated, then walked toward them with all the confidence she could muster.

Palais d'honneur was pounded into an iron plate, capped with what she figured to be solid gold. Beneath it: *Beaumercy*. The words, the name, *that name*, sat like a cannonball in her stomach, but she moved forward through the weight. Of course his palace looked like this. Of course the plate was capped in solid gold. Bile rose in her throat. The neoclassical palace was marbled stone, smoothly faced in an enormous rectangle with four picture windows along the front ground level, five picture windows along the second story, and a third three-quarter-story along the roofline with four gabled windows protruding from it. A marbled Beaumercy coat of arms leaped from its own gabled centerpiece at the front roof. Orchards lined each side, ending at the street. Across the front, a stone-and-iron gate separated the property from the marshy, crowded lands of faubourg Saint-Honoré and northern Paris.

"Pardon me," Ani called, leaning against the wrought-iron gate.

"Please." She squeezed her hands through the bars and waved the guards down.

"Who enters here?" one of the red-coated soldiers said in a heavy Swiss accent. "Alert Mademoiselle Journeaux." The guard kept his musket drawn and moved toward Ani. "What business have you with the palace?"

Ani curtsied, but she was clumsy at it. "I am your clerk, your figurer for the palace accounts."

"Our clerk, scheiße." The man laughed. His eyes went to the mud on her dress hem. "The clerk is a boy."

"He's indisposed," she said as she'd rehearsed, "quite possibly the pox."

The soldier's face reflexively contorted, but he kept his musket on her.

"Please," she said, holding her satchel behind her back, "I have an appointment with his lordship the Marquis de Lourmarin, and as you can imagine, I've no desire to be late for my first day in his employ. I beg of you, kindly withdraw your weapon and grant me entrance."

"Lourmarin?"

"Yes, his lordship."

"The Lord Lourmarin's not—"

"Please, sir, I don't mean to be rude to such an honorable man as yourself," she stepped closer and whispered, "and might I add handsome," and she watched him fight a smile as he blushed to his collar, "but I cannot be late, please, sir."

He cocked his head at another guard, and two of the blue-and-white-coated soldiers ran through the front door. As the man unlocked the front gate, Ani counted the number of guards, the windows, gauged the distance between the fence and the front door, the outer walls and the inner, listened to how sound traveled the expanse.

Now

The soldiers' cries heralded down the interior hallway. "Marquis, my lord! There is a lady at your gate." The men yelled, tripped over one another to be the first to inform the nobleman.

"Ah, is there not always a lady at my gate?" the marquis said, walking down the hall toward the commotion. He hastened to the door to see his soldiers stepping cautiously toward the young woman with their bayonets drawn. "Has she a weapon?"

"None that I can see, my lord. She says she's your new clerk."

The marquis laughed heartily, then stopped when the soldier's face stayed blank. "Oh, you're serious." The marquis looked back at the woman. "My clerk is a gentleman, a scholar from Montreuil. Most certainly not a girl."

"She said he is indisposed with the pox," the second soldier said.

"The pox, huh. An unfortunate thing to be indisposed of." He studied her closer. Shapeless and petite, but shoulders straight, bearing solid. Her dress was fine enough, though clearly not even gentry, let alone noble, and the hem was splattered in mud, indicating that she didn't know how to walk with any grace. "Instruct them to lower their bayonets, Monsieur Porcher."

"Sir," Porcher said, "she might be—"

"—a lady," the marquis said. "She might be *a lady*."

"Sir—"

"Oh, come, a weak sneeze could bowl her over. Go into Paris, and fetch Monsieur d'Arcy, and he'll sort out this debacle of the clerk." The marquis fished in his pocket for his change purse, but when he held out a handful of coins, the soldier's face went pale.

"I'm not going into the city, sir. Have you seen the city?"

"You're not afraid of a few riots, are you?"

Porcher's eyebrows rose.

"Well, then, Monsieur Moulin," the marquis turned to the next soldier, "you go to the city, and tell Monsieur d'Ar—"

"General, no!" Moulin said and crossed himself.

"You'll do as you're told," the marquis said, but he couldn't keep a straight face. "I kid, I kid," he said, laughing. "Fine, fine, no one goes to the city. Such brave soldiers you are." He slapped their backs.

"Is it safe to bring her into the garrison?" Porcher asked.

"Heavens, no," the marquis said and crossed himself. "It's never safe to bring a woman inside anywhere. But I can't have her making a scene in my courtyard."

"We could deposit her in someone else's courtyard to make a scene," Moulin muttered.

"My friends, be kind!" the marquis said. "Imagine what the neighbors would think of all the mud on her skirt." He placed his hands on the shoulders of both guards. "Madame Balland would have the vapors for a week."

The two men exited, and the marquis watched as they ushered Ani

toward the palace yard, stopping her before the front steps. He stood across the open doorway, one extended arm leaning into the jamb, thinking through what ruin this woman could harbor. Her eyes were bright, fiery—striking as if blue textile dye had washed into them. It was not just her best feature; it was her only feature. The rest of her face was pointed or rounded without consistent pattern. Her crooked canines looked like primitive carrot peelers, and her top lip slightly snaggletoothed on one. Her eyebrows were light, barely there. A clerk was one trouble all his own, but *a woman* changed things. She curtsied frightfully, and he made a half bow and a gesture of lifting a hat he wasn't wearing, then much to his surprise, she took the steps up to his same level.

"My lord," she said and curtsied again. "I have been sent to be your—"

"—new reckoner. So I heard. And the gentleman—"

"Indisposed, sir," she said. "Quite likely th—"

"—the pox, yes, yes. A poor way to go for Monsieur Joubert."

Ani's eyes flicked to his. She hadn't imagined Lourmarin to be clever. "It's *Au*bert, sir."

"Right, right, Aubert. Traveling from Montpellier."

She didn't flinch. "Mont*reuil*, sir."

"Ah, yes. The scholar."

"A graduate of Faculté de droit," Ani said, meeting his challenge before he could say it, but akilter at his adeptness when she'd always assumed him an oaf.

She had to get inside—she had to step one foot inside his palace. This man's palace. This man who had everything. Her lip snarled involuntarily at his ruffles and flairs, too disgusted to let it sink in that he was in a military uniform. His eyes remained on her, then he transferred his gaze downward to the rows of brass buttons on the front of his overcoat, with which his fingers incessantly fidgeted, and she ducked beneath his arm outstretched across the doorway and found herself suddenly in the inside foyer. The marquis gasped, and the guards mounted the steps, but Ani waved her hand toward the hallway.

"Oh my, what lovely—" She stepped farther in, then stared wide-eyed into the elaborate ballroom. "You have the sculpture of *Abel Dying*," she said, walking into the room and toward an outstretched bronze man. *There* was all the lost fine art she'd been mourning to Dr. Breauchard only days ago. How unfair that one man should have all this.

Even more unfair that *this family* should have it, that they should get to have anything at all.

The bayonets of the armed guards were still trained toward her as the men scaled the stairs. The marquis held up a hand for them to stop. "Oh dear." He sighed. Should he send the men back to their places? Had he ought to think of his own safety—or should he at least have a bath drawn for her to clean the mud from her ankles, procure a dress that wasn't so sodden. He thought for a minute. Would he trouble? Did this warrant troubling? That wasn't too much to ask, was it? He flicked his wrist. "All right, men. Smartly to your posts." There were still two guards down the hall should he find necessity to shout for them. The men hesitated, and he waited until they were out the door before turning back to Ani, following her into the ballroom. "You can at least conduct mathematics, yes?"

"I wouldn't be here if I couldn't count, sir." Her attention remained fixed on the bronze statue.

"And how old are you, Mademoiselle—?"

"Ani," she said, and it wasn't a lie. "Seventeen." Not a lie.

"Have you a husband, any children?"

"No, my lord." Also not a lie.

"And credentials?" He held open his palm.

She drew forth some folded papers from her satchel. *Those* were a lie. "Yes, Marquis de Lourmarin."

"Lourmarin?" he said, squinted his eyes and thought to correct her, then closed his mouth and looked at the papers.

Out the corner of her eye, she watched him reading them, holding them to the light from the window. He even smelled the paper. She remained calm, kept her eyes on the artwork, on ledgers and stacks of parchment on the table; she took note of escape routes through the windows and alternative exits suggested by closed doors. Outside, past thick panes, she could see faubourg Saint-Honoré in the distance. She wouldn't be able to elbow her way through the window this time. Just as well, she thought—her elbow and forearm still throbbed from the last time she'd had to escape that way. When he looked back up at her, she was staring at the statue.

"You are familiar with Stouf?" the marquis said, pleasantly surprised.

"I've seen the work in the Louvre hall, right next to—"

"—Le Brun," they both said in unison, and Ani turned to him, her brows high, then creased with caution. He knew about art? She hadn't

imagined their conversation would go like this—art, the Louvre. She thought he'd be easier to despise immediately.

A lightness crept into him. "You have attended the Académie Royale?"

"Never attended, but I've—" she stopped abruptly before admitting she'd sneaked in through the sewage door, "—have, uh, looked through many a window."

"I see," he said. "What was your favorite piece?"

"*Leda and the Swan*."

"O-oh. Ah." He misstepped and reddened, then cleared his throat. "Wertmüller?" he attempted respectably, but his voice was an octave higher as he forced away the image of Leda's naked legs wrapped around the feathered body of a swan.

"Yes, and his painting of Lady Imbert, though she looks like—"

"—she has a turkey on her head," he finished for her.

"Yes!" she said, and she smiled unexpectedly, though it vanished so soon.

That sudden crooked smile flustered him. He'd never been flustered by women; he'd been taught to handle them at court before he was even breeched. But who was this one? Surely not who she said she was—the papers were false. "I thought I was the only person who saw the turkey," he said. "I revealed that to my brother, and he said I'd maddened like our uncle Denis." The marquis made a throwaway gesture. "Though I'm not at all certain he knows the piece in question. Most likely seeks *any* excuse to think I'm maddened."

"Your brother?"

"Yes." He looked her in the eye. "Lourmarin."

"Uh," she stammered and glanced away. She had the wrong brother? But he was certainly a Beaumercy—he looked just like them, like their father, had the Beaumercy nose. She caught herself. He was still a Beaumercy, likely still a marquis of something. How much had she already blundered? "It's definitely a turkey." She hoped her airiness didn't sound false. "Bet he swiped one from market to use as a model."

The marquis laughed. "Men of means don't swipe things from market. He surely had one brought in from the fields to place upon her head."

"You gentry think *artists* are men of means?"

"I'm not gentry. I'm landed nobility."

Ani remembered anew her surroundings, why she was there, standing

in a room of commissioned royal artwork that cost enough to feed everyone she'd ever known for a lifetime. She took a step back from him. Was this the right place? Was it even a garrison? Did the duke make his weekly visits here? "It doesn't matter now," she said quietly. "The artists are gone. They're relegated only to private salons these days."

"Yes, I heard. What…what is it now?"

"You don't go to the city?" she said, surprised.

"Oh, heavens no." He laughed and crossed himself. "I stayed far away from there even before they started hanging men I'd once dined with." His laugh petered out mirthlessly. "My concern is with the countryside, this unholy war with Austria." He crossed himself again.

War? Lourmarin wasn't an officer. She definitely had the wrong brother, but which one? There were seven of those blasted Beaumercy sons. She studied him closer. The very symbol of nobility, appropriately handsome, though with stubble around his mouth—what tedious business to be bothered with daily shaving. Dressed to the hilt in double-barreled pistols and a custom-made saber strapped across his waist. Ruffled and powdered with a willowy silk cravat tight about his neck and tucked into his double-breasted, gold-embroidered waistcoat and blue velvet cutaway coat with polished brass buttons down each breast. The outer pieces were tailored and laid perfectly over the top of a fitted linen stock shirt that was tucked with a buckle beneath white doeskin culottes attached at the knee with brooches to pristine white wool stockings, which were, themselves, stuffed into shiny-buckled, dark-brown, low-heeled leather shoes. He appeared the living embodiment of the Second Estate itself—and clearly a general. Why hadn't she noticed that at the entrance? Had she been so distracted?

She tamped down her confusion and focused on his question. "I believe they call it Musée Central des Arts now. Probably will add *Republic* at the end of it, like everything else."

"And they are filling it with…?"

"Art confiscated from the First Estate," she said, and the marquis nodded to the floor disappointedly. "The paintings that backed assignats."

He cocked his head. "You know about clergy bonds?"

"I'm here to do your figuring, am I not?"

"And you said *they*. You are a royalist, then?"

Ani's face blanked. "I—"

"I see," the marquis said. "Mine is not to judge," but he absently

crossed himself again and looked down at the papers he was still holding. "Baillairgé," he read from the top sheet. "I don't know that family name."

It wasn't hers. That was also a lie.

"Who is your father?"

Her face went pale. Her father? How could she explain to this man who her father was?

Before, a month prior, Paris, June twentieth, 1792

Ani Pardieu's fists clenched around the bleeding hearts of two rotten tomatoes and one disintegrating fish carcass as she stood shoulder to elbow in the packed square. The stench of man rose from gutters near the Place de la Révolution, and flailing crowds knocked off Ani's hat and mashed her feet. Hands struck the back of her head, followed by knitting needles from the sewing women who'd come for entertainment, to sew and watch, watch and sew. But Ani was rugged and sturdy and not easily shoved. Mistaken for a boy more often than not, she'd come to dress the part in her father's old clothes, too plain to be noticed, easily thrust about in the folds, invisible, yet she didn't lose her footing, and she shoved back every elbow that smacked her.

A line of men formed at the neck of the Razor. Ani coughed a hard, painful heave that sat deep in her chest, and she fought her way toward the platform in the corner of the confiscated land of Comte de Crillon. Little more than political prisoners and pettifoggers, the disposal of these men was the attempt of the Second Estate—*the nobility*—to make an example of the rioting and pamphleteering kindlers of a revolution's budding fire. But the crowd didn't care about the why or whom; they'd come to watch men die, come to feel immortal in themselves—their own hands untied, their own heads unbowed.

Ani frowned, scanned the line of men, and her mind always went back to the same place: Flickers of a jewel in her mother's hair, fresh lilies on the table. A long room filled with highbacked chairs, lit by glass chandeliers. Ani'd had dolls once, handmirrors and paintbrushes and a wooden horse, books that she read to Dr. Breauchard—before something had gone terribly wrong. She closed her eyes. The past was nothing more than disordered fragments. She'd had her mother and father, afternoons in parks and carriages, evenings in the marketplace watching puppets dance on sticks in children's theaters.

Then, there'd been famine. Volcanic ash had fallen from the sky and covered all of Europe. Mother, Father, the house, the toys—they left her one by one. But here she stood. She'd lived through it, all the failed crops and the depraved mounting violence. She'd been arrested for theft and vagrancy and repeatedly sent to forced labor in coalmines, and she'd lived through that, too—escaping time after time, lying her way out of most any situation in which she found herself. Hundreds lost their lives to riots and capital punishment for petty crimes. But still thousands upon thousands more stood to their feet, like Ani. They had witnessed the independence of the North American colonies across the ocean. Their millions of francs of levied taxes had gone to support the impossible achievement so that Louis XVI, like his infamous third-great grandfather before him, could see his longtime British enemies fall. The United States won France's bread, while Paris still hungered for it.

And now, *here* were the men who had been prisoners in the Bastille before its demise, joined by prisoners from the Temple, La Force and La Conciergerie, Grand Châtelet and Sainte-Pélagie. Paris had more prisons than food and more guns than bread. No onlooker knew the crimes these men had committed, but each was certain the deaths signified justice. One man's bloodshed was somehow synonymous with another man's liberty.

Unlike the women with their knitting needles, Ani didn't want to watch this. She recognized some of the chained men: a tax protestor, a bread thief. Men sent to the scaffold to clear out prison space. Her eyes fell on an older man half a dozen back in the processional, and her heart thumped at his appearance. Haggard. Steps sluggish, shoulders sloped. His weight shifted from foot to foot with the grace of a crippled leper. Five and a half years in the Bastille, followed by three in Grand Châtelet prison, had begotten white hair. A hollowness employed his eyes. His spirit was clearly broken, and she imagined he didn't even know who he was anymore.

Ani knew. When last she'd seen him, she was eight. She wondered if he'd respond if she called his name, or if prison had sequestered all memory from his memory, all life from his life. She pushed her way through the crowds nearer the scaffold, dipping beneath arms, ducking around blows and the city's garbage, both rotting and living, never taking her focus from the decrepit figure. She prayed she could reach the Razor before he did. Three men stood in line before him at the blade. Then two. Then one, faster than she'd imagined. A fragment, a blink.

"Papa! Papa!" She waved wildly toward the broken man at the block.

Now, Palais d'honneur, the Chaillot

"We shall get you rinsed, Mademoiselle Baillairgé," the marquis said, "find you something suitable to wear."

"Trousers would be fine if I might borrow some."

"*Borrow*?" He wrinkled his nose, then straightened and crossed himself. "Trousers? 'A woman shall not wear men's clothing.'"

She faced away from him, rolled her eyes, and muttered to herself, "What use have I for your deuterocanon?"

"A good deal of use for it, seems."

She hadn't expected him to hear her. She pointed at a statue. "Even your revered Joan of Arc wore men's clothing."

"And she burned in pyre for it, you might recall."

"They're burning her again. Torching her relics and banner at the Carrousel."

"They are?" He sounded more sad than mortified.

"Men's pantaloons being comfortable was not one of the miracles she was blessed for." She pointed to his culottes. "But I could assume those halflings."

"These?" He tugged on the skintight cloth at his thighs. "*Halflings*? This is a uniform." Ani shrugged, but the marquis held up a finger and pointed to the mud she'd dragged beneath the hem that she didn't properly lift as she walked. "Let us get you rinsed and into a clean *dress* before you get that mud all over the Chevalier de Non's engraved marble."

"Better that than on his *Point de lendemain*," she said. "Certainly you have a copy?"

He flushed red. He certainly did have one, but he wasn't going to own to reading erotic novels. Well, not yet. Though he had a suspicion that it might be rather enjoyable discourse. He let the question hang unanswered and called down the hall, "Josette!"

Ani jumped at the suddenness of it.

He motioned his head for Ani to follow and extended a hand toward the hallway. When they'd neared the end of it, he yelled down an adjoining hall, "Josephine!" The echoes bounced down both halls and through each hollow room like the call of a loon across a still lake.

A slim woman came forward, exquisitely clad in a silk and velvet dress of layered pinks and dusty rose bunched beneath the deepest reds,

petticoats aflutter, like that very loon taking off across the lake, wings flapping and water parting beneath her feet. Her hair sat in tall, twirled buns with carefully hanging curls. A clip the size of an apple adorned one side of her head. The woman wasn't plump enough to be the Marquise de Lourmarin—notoriously the butt of pamphlet jokes—so Ani figured the woman must be the marquise of whoever this marquis was and gave the lady a curtsy, while Josephine, a woman nearing twenty or just past, triumphed down the hallway as if trumpets should be exulting her entrance. She approached the pair and motioned for Ani to stop curtsying.

The marquis smirked with amusement. "I apologize for putting more work on you, Mademoiselle Journeaux, but there is this young woman," he motioned, "who shall be our reckoner for the fire insurance. She's sent from Compagnie d'assurance contre l'incendie directly and will be staying with us. She'll require—"

"I understand, my lord," Josephine said, her eyes already on the mud at Ani's hem, the splashes up the girl's ankles.

What Ani understood was that this beautiful woman was not the marquise, but such extravagance bestowed upon a servant?

Josephine ushered Ani through the hallway toward the washbasin in the nearest boudoir, and Ani emulated the woman's proud gait. When Ani glanced back down the hall to the spot where the cross hallway joined, there still stood the young marquis, watching intently with one hand cupping his chin, fingers splayed across his jawline in a pose befitting some ancient Greek scholar.