poverished—that's a terrible lever. The scale of blood must not rise lest it become a lamppost for the Committee of Public Safety. It needs ballast, it needs a weighty head.

DANTON. I know that—the Revolution is like Saturn, it devours its own children. (After some thought.) But they won't dare.

LACROIX. Danton, you are a dead saint, but the Revolution is not interested in relics; it has thrown the bones of kings out into the street and all the statues out of the churches. Do you think they'd let you stand as a monument?

DANTON. My name! The people!

LACROIX. Your name! You are a moderate, I am one. Camille, Philippeau, Hérault. For the masses weakness and moderation are the same. They kill the stragglers. The tailors of the red-cap faction will feel all of Roman history in their needles if the Man of September appears as a moderate to them.

DANTON. Very true, and besides—the people are like children, they have to break everything open to see what's inside.

LACROIX. And besides, Danton, we are vice-ridden, as Robespierre says, that is, we enjoy ourselves; and the people are virtuous, that is, they don't enjoy themselves, because work deadens their organs of pleasure. They don't get drunk because they don't have any money, and they don't go to whorehouses because their breath stinks of cheese and herring and that disgusts the girls.

DANTON. They hate the pleasure seekers as a eunuch hates men.

LACROIX. They call us scoundrels, and (Leaning toward DANTON'S ear) between us, there's a grain of truth to that. Robespierre and the people will be virtuous, St. Just will write a novel, and Barère will tailor a carmagnole and hang a mantle of blood over the Convention and... I see it all.

DANTON. You're dreaming. They never had courage without me, they won't have any against me. The Revolution isn't over yet, they might still need me—they'll keep me in the arsenal.

LACROIX. We must act.

DANTON. We'll see.

LACROIX. You'll see when we're lost.

MARION. (To DANTON.) Your lips have grown cold, your words have stilled your kisses.

6. Danton.

DANTON'S DEATH

DANTON. (To MARION.) To have lost so much time! As if it were worth it! (To LACROIX.) Tomorrow I'll go to Robespierre—I'll provoke him, then he can't remain silent. Until tomorrow! Good night, my friends, good night, I thank you.

LACROIX. Out, my good friends, out! Good night, Danton, the thighs of that woman will guillotine you, the mons veneris will be your Tarpeian Rock. (Exit.)

6

A room.

ROBESPIERRE. DANTON. PARIS.

ROBESPIERRE. I tell you, whoever tries to stop me when I pull my sword is my enemy, his intention is of no concern. Whoever prevents me from defending myself kills me as surely as if he attacked me.

DANTON. Murder begins where self-defense stops; I see no reason to continue the executions.

ROBESPIERRE. The social revolution is not yet achieved; whoever carries out a revolution only halfway, digs his own grave. The privileged are not dead yet, the healthy strength of the people must replace this class, decadent in all respects. Vice must be punished, virtue must rule through terror.

DANTON. I don't understand the word "punishment."

You and your "virtue," Robespierre! You've never taken money, you've never been in debt, you've never slept with a woman, you've always worn a decent coat, and you've never gotten drunk. Robespierre, you are appallingly upright. I'd be ashamed to walk around between heaven and earth for thirty years with that righteous face just for the miserable pleasure of finding others worse than I.

Isn't there something in you that sometimes whispers secretly: you lie, you lie!

ROBESPIERRE. My conscience is clean.

DANTON. Conscience is a mirror before which an ape torments itself.
we preen ourselves as best we can, and we go looking for pleasure each in our own way. As if it were worth the trouble to get in each other’s hair. Everyone can defend himself when someone else spoils his fun. Do you have the right to make the guillotine a basket for other people’s dirty laundry and to make their decapitated heads into scrubbing balls for their dirty clothes, just because you always wear a cleanly brushed coat? Yes, you can defend yourself when they spit on it or tear holes in it, but what difference does it make to you as long as they leave you alone? If they don’t mind walking around as they do, do you have the right to lock them up in a grave? Are you the military policeman of heaven? And if you can’t stand the sight of it, as God can, then put a handkerchief over your eyes.

ROBESPIERRE. You deny virtue?

DANTON. And vice. There are only epicureans, either crude or refined, Christ was the most refined of all; that’s the only difference I can discern among human beings. Everyone acts according to his nature, that means he does what is good for him.

Isn’t it cruel, Mr. Incorruptible, to pull the rug out from under you like this?

ROBESPIERRE. Danton, at certain times vice can be high treason.

DANTON. You can’t outlaw it, for heaven’s sake—that would be ungrateful; you owe vice too much for providing a contrast to you.

By the way, in keeping with your terminology, our blows must serve the Republic: the innocent must not be struck down with the guilty.

ROBESPIERRE. Whoever said that an innocent person was struck down?

DANTON. Do you hear that, Fabricius? No innocent person was killed! (Leaving, to Paris.) We don’t have a moment to lose, we must show ourselves! (DANTON and PARIS exit.)

ROBESPIERRE. (Alone.) Go ahead! He wants to stop the horses of the Revolution at the whorehouse, like a coachman his trained nags; they’ll have enough strength to drag him to the Square of the Revolution.

“To pull the rug out from under me!” “In keeping with your terminology!” Wait! Wait! Is it really that? They will say his gigantic figure threw too much of a shadow on me, and for that I ordered him out of the sunlight.

Danton’s Death

And if they’re right?

Is it really that necessary? Yes, yes! The Republic! He must go.

It’s ridiculous how my thoughts watch over each other. He must go. Whoever stands still in a mass moving forward opposes it as much as if he were moving against it; he’ll be trampled.

We will not let the ship of the Revolution be stranded on the shallow calculations and the mudbanks of these people; we must cut off the hand that tries to stop it, and even if he seized it with his teeth!

Down with a society that took the clothes away from the dead aristocracy and inherited its leprosy!

“No virtue!” “Virtue: a rug under me!” “In keeping with my terminology!”

How that keeps coming back.

Why can’t I escape that thought? It’s always pointing there, there! with a bloody finger. No matter how many rags I wrap around it, the blood keeps seeping through. (After a pause.) I can’t tell what part of me is deceiving the other.

(He steps to the window.) Night snores over the earth and wallows in wild dreams. Thoughts, hardly perceived wishes, confused and formless, having crept shyly from daylight, now take shape and steal into the silent house of dreams. They open doors, they look out of windows, they become almost flesh, their limbs stretch out in sleep, their lips murmur.—And isn’t our waking a more lucid dream, aren’t we sleepwalkers, aren’t our actions dreamlike, only clearer, more precise, more complete? Who can reproach us for that? The mind accomplishes in one hour more acts of thought than the sluggish organism of our body can carry out in years. The sin is in our thoughts. Whether thought becomes action, whether the body carries it out—that is pure chance.

(ST. JUST enters.)

ROBESPIERRE. Hey—who’s there, in the dark? Hey—lights, lights!

ST. JUST. Do you know my voice?

ROBESPIERRE. Oh, it’s you, St. Just! (A maid brings a light.)

ST. JUST. Were you alone?

ROBESPIERRE. Danton just left.
St. Just. I met him on the way in the Palais Royal. He made his revolutionary face and spoke in epigrams; he spoke familiarly with the sansculottes, the grisettes were at his heels, and people were standing around whispering in each other's ears what he had said.

We will lose the advantage of the attack. How much longer are you going to hesitate? We will act without you. We are resolved.

_**Robespierre.** What do you want to do?

St. Just. We will call a formal session of the Committees of Legislation, General Security, and Public Safety.

_**Robespierre.** Quite a bother.

St. Just. We must bury the great corpse with proper decorum, like priests, not murderers. We dare not chop it up; all its limbs must fall with it.

_**Robespierre.** Speak more clearly.

St. Just. We must bury him in full armor and slaughter his horses and slaves on his burial mound: Lacroix . . .

_**Robespierre.** A confirmed scoundrel, formerly a law clerk, presently Lieutenant General of France. Go on.

St. Just. Hérault-Séchelles.

_**Robespierre.** A handsome head.

St. Just. He was the beautifully painted first letter of the Constitution; we have no further need of such ornaments, he will be erased. Philippeau, Camille . . .

_**Robespierre.** He too?

St. Just. (Hands him a piece of paper.) I thought so. Read that!

_**Robespierre.** Aha, _The Old Franciscan_, is that all? He's a child, he was laughing at you.

St. Just. Read it, here, here! (He points to a passage.)

_**Robespierre.** (Reads.)* "Robespierre, this Messiah of Blood on his Calvary between the two thieves Couthon and Collot, upon which he sacrifices and is not sacrificed. The worshipful Sisters of the Guillotine stand below like Mary and Magdalene. St. Just lies at his heart like St. John and reveals to the Convention the apocalyptic revelations of the Master. He carries his head like a monstrosity."

St. Just. I will make him carry his like St. Denis.

_**Robespierre.** (Reads on.) "Are we to believe that the clean shirt of the Messiah is the shroud of France and that his thin fingers, fidgeting on the tribune, are guillotine blades?"

And you, Barère, who said our coinage is being minted on the Square of the Revolution. Yet—I don't want to dig up that old sack again. He is a widow who had half a dozen husbands and helped bury them all. Who can help that? That is his talent: he sees a death's head on people half a year before they die. Who would want to sit with corpses and smell the stench?"

You too, then, Camille?

Away with them! Quickly! Only the deed do not return. Have you prepared the indictment?

St. Just. It will be easy. You made allusions to it at the Jacobins. _**Robespierre.** I wanted to scare them._

St. Just. I merely have to carry out your threats; the Forgers are the appetizer and the Foreigners the dessert. They will die from the meal, I promise you.

_**Robespierre.** Then quickly, tomorrow. No long death agony! I've become sensitive lately. Quickly!

(ST. JUST EXITS.)

_**Robespierre.** (Alone.)* That's true, Messiah of Blood who sacrifices and is not sacrificed—He redeemed them with His blood and I redeem them with their own. He allowed them to sin and I take the sin upon myself. He had the ecstasy of pain, and I the agony of the executioner.

Who renounced more, I or He?

And yet there is something foolish in that thought.

Why do we always look only toward Him? Truly the Son of Man is crucified in each of us, we all struggle in bloody sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane, but not one of us redeems the other with his wounds.—My Camille!—They're all leaving me—all is desolate and empty—I am alone.

7. A pun on Barère de Vieuze.
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