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# The Folding Doors

# Marjorie Bowen

A young man was coming slowly down the wide staircase of a palace in the Rue de Vaugirard. It was, by the new reckoning, the 13th of Brumaire; evening, and cold, moonlit, and clear; these things being the same by any reckoning, as the young man thought, pausing by the tall window on the landing-place that looked out on to the blue-shadowed, silent street.

There was a ball overhead in the great state rooms, and he could hear the music, violins, flutes and harpsichord, distinctly, though he had closed the door behind him. He was one of the guests, and had the watchful, furtive air of one who has stolen away unperceived, and fears that he may be discovered. He seemed now to have stopped with an idea of ascertaining if anyone was abroad, for he leant over the smooth gilt banisters and listened. The great staircase was empty, and empty the vast hall below.

Opposite the landing window was a long mirror, with three branched candles before it. The young man turned to this quickly and noiselessly, and pulled from the pocket of his coat a strip of gilt-edged paper, folded tightly. He unrolled this and read the message it contained, written in a light pencil.

"At half-past ten knock four times on the folding doors. *Do not be late; every moment is one of terror. I am afraid of HIM.*"

The last two sentences were underlined, the last word twice.

The young man looked up and down the stairs, twisted the paper up, and was about to thrust it into the flame of one of the candles, when he caught sight of himself in the tall mirror, and stood staring at the image with the paper held out in his hand.

He saw a figure that to his thinking was that of a mountebank, for it had once been that of the Due de Jaurès--Citizen Jaurès now--courtier of his one-time Christian Majesty Louis XVI., beheaded recently as Louis Capet in the great square now called by the people the Place de la Revolution.

The People had altered everything, even the person of M. de Jaurès, who wore the classic mode beloved of liberty--the fashion of this year one of freedom, hair *à la Titus* and a black stock swathing the chin. His face was without colour, the black, hollow eyes and black hair accentuating this pallor; his countenance, though sombre in expression, was beautiful by reason of the exquisite lines of the mouth and nostrils, and something elevated and noble in the turn of the head. As he stared at himself a slow flush of terrible shame overspread his paleness; with something like a suppressed shudder, he gave the paper to the flame, and scattered the ashes down the stairs.

Then he pulled out the watch hanging from the black watered-silk fob.

It wanted ten minutes to half-past ten. The dance music ceased overhead; in its place came laughter, loud talking, and presently a woman singing in a rapt and excited fashion.

Monsieur de Jaurès paced to and fro on the landing. He loathed these people he mixed with, so like him in dress and appearance, but *bourgeois* and *canaille* all of them; some butchers of the Terror, some smug deputies, some one-time servants, some soldiers, some dancers from the opera, some provincials and their wives--all, by the grace of the People, free and equal.

The Citizen de Jaurès, aristocrat by virtue of birth, tradition, temper, and qualities, bit his under-lip fiercely to hear these people rioting in

this house. The late owner, his once dear friend, had been massacred in the prison of La Force a month ago, and the house now belonged to a deputy from Lyons, married to the daughter of a nobleman long since sent to the guillotine.

The note that M. de Jaurès had burnt was from this lady. They had known each other before the rule of chaos, and when the revolution brought him out of the prison, where he had been consigned for a political offence by the late King's ministers, and he had found her, terror-subdued, mistress of a revolutionary salon, the similarity between their positions, the common memories of another world, the sense of kinship amidst a society so alien, so monstrous, so hideous, had grown into a sad but strong love.

She was spared because she had married one of the tyrants, and pretended to forget her father's murder; he, because he had been a prisoner of the King, and affected to subscribe to the new rule of the people. Both had tasted of shame, and together they sought to redeem themselves.

Fired by their mutual sympathy, the horror of what they daily saw round them, the desire to redeem their acquiescence in the overthrow of their order, to redeem, at the risk of death, the lives they should never have consented to save, they had been the instigators of one of the many desperate plots against the Government, the object of which was to rescue the Austrian Queen from the Temple and the ultimate guillotine.

To-night the intrigue, evolved with skill and secrecy, and materially helped by the knowledge Hortense was enabled to obtain through her husband's position, was to be put into execution, and they were either to fly across the frontier with the rescued Queen, or to give up life together, as aristocrats, upon the scaffold.

M. de Jaurès, on the threshold of this hazard, felt that chill suspension of all the faculties which fills that waiting pause before the plunge into great actions. He was conscious of neither exaltation nor despair, but of a strange sense that time had stopped, or had never been, and that all the events which so oppressed his brain were but pictures, that would clear away and reveal at last—reality.

The dance music began again; the noisy music of the People, with its distinct rise and fall. He and Hortense had been present at the opera the night they had played *Richard Coeur de Lion* and the audience had risen in a frenzy of devotion at the strains of "O *Richard, O mon roi.*"

He recalled the Queen with her children, worshipped and very stately, and Hortense with powdered hair and a hoop festooned with roses; then he thought of the wretched captive in the Temple, and the haggard woman in a Greek gown with a fillet through her flowing hair, waiting for him downstairs behind the folding doors.

Pacing to and fro, facing now the cold street and bitter night, now his own reflection in the glass, the inner agony of suspense, regret, remorse, broke through the dazed control of his overwrought passions. He gave a little sound, caught into the whirl of the dance music unheard, and stepped back sideways against the gleaming white wall, his hand instinctively to his heart.

The next second he was master of himself, and wondering wildly what had caused him that sudden utter pang of terror, a terror beyond fear of death or any definition, awful, hideous. He listened, as men will in great dread, and heard what seemed a curious short cry, like the echo of his own, that rose above the dance-beat. He thought it came from the street, and softly opened the window.

Everything was still, but in the distance, where the moonlight fell

between two houses, three of the Republican soldiers were dragging a man along, and a girl in a blue gown was following, wringing her hands.

A second, and the little group had passed out of sight. M. de Jaurès closed the window, feeling strangely relieved that his emotion had been caused by such a common thing as the cry of a poor creature following a suspect to the Abbaye. He must, unconsciously, have heard her cry before, and this had given him that sensation of terror.

The dance music fell to a softer measure; a clock struck the half-hour, and Camille de Jaurès descended to the salon on the next floor.

He entered softly, yet confident of being neither interrupted nor observed.

The room was large, with great windows looking on to the street. It had once been painted with flowers, and shepherds asleep with their flocks, and nymphs seated beside fountains, but had lately been painted white from floor to ceiling by a Republican who detested these remnants of aristocracy. White, with stiff wreaths of classic laurel, candles in plain sconces shaded with dead-hued silk, straight grey curtains before the windows, and very little furniture to cumber the polished floor and that little, simple, bare-legged, and comprising a couch of Grecian shape, covered with striped brocade, such as ladies, dressed in the fashions of the year one of liberty, loved to recline on.

A cold, bare room, with a glimmer from the shaded light like the moon-glow, and with no colour, nor gleam, nor brightness. The wall that faced the window was almost entirely occupied by high, white folding doors with crystal knobs. M. de Jaurès' glance fell at once on these; they led to the private apartments of Hortense, and through



them, by the back way across the garden, they were to escape to-night. He advanced, and was about to knock, when one leaf was opened sharply in his face, and a man stepped out.

It was Citizen Durosoy, husband of Hortense. M. de Jaurès stepped back; he saw that the room beyond the folding doors was dark, but close where the light penetrated he noticed a fold of soft satin with a pearl border, and an empty white shoe softly rounded to the shape of a foot, lying sideways, as if it had just been taken off. Hortense was there, then, he knew, waiting for him. He straightened himself to meet the unlooked-for interruption.

He was quite composed as Durosoy closed the doors.

"Your room upstairs is very close," he said, "and I suppose I am not in a festival mood--it is pleasantly cool here."

"Cool!" echoed the Deputy of Lyons. "It seems to me cold," he laughed. "Perhaps it is the singing of La Marguerite, which is so bad for the nerves, for my wife has a headache, and must lie down in the dark."

M. de Jaurès smiled. He felt such a contempt for this man that it put him absolutely at his ease. The Deputy had been a poor provincial lawyer, to whom the late de Jaurès had been kind. He affected to remember this now, and was warmly friendly, even patronising, to his old patron's son. The aristocrat hated him doubly for it, scorned him that no echo of this hatred seemed ever to awake in his mind; for the Deputy was almost familiar in his manner to M. de Jaurès. He was quiet and modest with everybody.

"I hope my wife is not delicate," he said with an air of anxiety. "I have thought lately that she was in ill-health."

"I have not noticed it," answered the other.

He seated himself on the striped couch, and looked carelessly at the grate, where a pale fire burnt. The Deputy crossed to the hearth, and stood looking at his guest with an amiable smile. He was a slight man, brown-haired and well looking, but of a common appearance. He wore a grey cloth coat, with a black sash up under his armpits, and white breeches. This dress, and the stiff, long straggling locks that fell on to his bullion-stitched collar, gave him an appearance of anarchy and wildness not in keeping with his pleasant countenance.

He stood so long smiling at M. de Jaurès, that a feeling of impatience came over the nobleman. He glanced at the pendule clock on the mantelpiece, and wondered how long the fool would stay.

"It is unfortunate that you and the Gitizeness should both be absent at once," he remarked. He had still the tone of an aristocrat when speaking to Durosoy.

The Deputy held out his right hand.

"I cut my finger with a fruit knife," he answered, "and came down to Hortense to tie it up; but she seemed so to wish to be alone I did not like to press her; her head hurt so, she said."

A handkerchief was twisted about his hand, and he began to unwind it as he spoke. "Now you are here," he added, "perhaps you could help me tie it up; it really is bleeding damnably."

M. de Jaurès rose slowly. He let his glance rest for a moment on the folding doors. It was as if he could see Hortense standing at the other side in the dark, listening, waiting for her husband to go.

Durosoy held up his bare hand. There was a deep cut on the

forefinger, and the blood was running down the palm and staining the close frill of muslin at his wrist.

"A severe wound for a silver knife," remarked M. de Jaurès, taking him by the wrist.

"A steel knife," said the Deputy--"steel as sharp as La Guillotine--you see, *mon ami*," and he smiled, "what comes of trying to cut a peach with a steel knife."

M. de Jaurès slowly tore his own handkerchief into strips and carefully bound up the wound. He was wondering the while if Hortense had been delayed by the unexpected visit of her husband; if she was venturing to change her clothes before he finally returned to their guests. By the white shoe he had seen through the folding doors, he thought she had done so.

"Thank you, Camille," said the Deputy. He had a trick of using Christian names, odious to M. de Jaurès. "It is astonishing how faint the loss of a little blood makes one."

"This from our modern Brutus!" exclaimed M. de Jaurès. That term had been given once, in the Convention, to the Deputy, and the man whose dupe he was dared to quote it ironically, knowing the stupidity of the provincial. As he had expected, the Deputy seemed pleased; he shrugged modestly.

"Oh, one's own blood, you know, not that of other people. I can endure the loss of *that* with great equanimity." He smiled, as if he had made a joke, and the aristocrat smiled too, for other reasons. "Will you drink with me--down here? It is, as you say, very close upstairs."

"I fear to detain you, Citizen."

Durosoy rang the bell, then seated himself by the fire.

"No, I am tired of their chatter. I would rather talk with a sensible man like yourself, my dear Camille."

M. de Jaurès did not move from his easy attitude on the brocade couch.

"But we shall disturb the Citizeness," he said. His idea was that if he could make Durosoy leave with him, he could, more or less easily, get rid of him upstairs and return.

The Deputy smiled. "Hortense is not so ill. Besides, the doors are thick enough."

M. de Jaurès wondered—how thick? Could she hear their talk? Would she understand the delay? His straining ears could catch no sound of her movements.

The Deputy continued in a kind of fatuous self-satisfaction.

"I hope she will be well enough to return soon to the ball. When one has a beautiful wife one likes to show her off."

He paused, put his head on one side, and added:

"You do think her beautiful, do you not, Camille?"

M. de Jaurès looked at him coldly. He felt he could afford to despise this man, since in a few moments he and she would be riding away from his house for ever.

"Naturally, Citizen."

A citizen servant entered, and the Deputy ordered wine.

"I must not stay," said M. de Jaurès. He raised his voice a little that she might hear. "One glass, and I will go back to make my *adieux*."

Durosoy appeared mildly surprised.

"So early! You cannot have any business this time of night."

The wine was brought in and placed on a thin-legged table by the hearth. M. de Jaurès glanced at the clock. The hand was creeping on towards eleven. His contempt of the Deputy was beginning to change to an impatient hatred of the creature's very presence.

"A matter of mood, not of time," he answered. "I am in no merry-making vein to-night."

The Deputy, pouring out wine, looked at him critically.

"You are too lazy, my friend. You do nothing from one day's end to another--naturally you are wearied. And it is dangerous, too."

M. de Jaurès took the glass offered him. "How dangerous?"

Durosoy lifted his common brown eyes. "Those who will not serve the Republic are apt to be considered her enemies."

The young noble smiled.

"Oh, as to that, I am a very good friend to France, but I lack the qualities to be of any use."

He sipped his wine, and looked indifferently past the Deputy at the folding doors. His thoughts were: 'The time is getting on. How long will a carriage take from here to the *rue du Temple*? Half an hour, allowing for the pace we must go and the crowd coming out of the

opera.'

"No use!" exclaimed the Deputy. "Why, you are a soldier, are you not?"

"Once--that seems a long time ago."

Durosoy laughed and poured out more wine. The tinkling of the glass on the silver stand had the same thin quality as his voice.

"There is always Toulon," he said. "The Royalists there are giving us a good deal of trouble."

"I do not fancy going there to be hewn down by a lot of rascals. I leave that to braver men," smiled de Jaurès lazily; but his blood leapt with the desire to be with these same Royalists in Toulon, with his sword drawn against such as this Deputy, whose wine seemed to scorch and choke to-night. When would the man go? The carriage that was waiting at the back might be noticed. The servant in the plot would begin to wonder at the delay; and she, could she hear? She must be undergoing torture--as he was.

"Then there is the revolt in Caen," said the Deputy; "we want good men there."

"I've no fancy to go soldiering."

"You are dull to-night, Citizen. Does the business of the Widow Capet interest you? It is to come on this month."

"Ah! The trial?"

"Yes."

"I heard something of it. No, I am not interested."

When would this babbling cease? Ten minutes past eleven, and the rendezvous in the *rue du Temple* at twelve.

"Not interested?" echoed the Deputy. "Now if I might hazard a guess, my friend, I should say that you were rather too interested."

M. de Jaurès looked at him steadily.

"How--too interested?" he asked in accents painfully calm.

"I do not think you would like the Widow Capet to take the same journey to the Place de la Révolution as her husband did."

"Why should I trouble?" answered M. de Jaurès, who for one instant had thought himself suspected. He drew his breath a little unevenly; the delay, the suspense, were beginning to tell on him, were becoming serious, too. He remembered that the hour had been altered at the last moment from one to twelve, and that he had had no opportunity of telling Hortense so. They had to be so careful, there had been so few chances for them to meet at all. Hortense would think they had an hour longer than was the case.

The Deputy was taking his third glass; he seemed to be settled comfortably in his chair. It appeared as if he might mander on with his idle talk for another hour; and the delay of another hour would be fatal to M. de Jaurès.

"It must seem very strange to you," said the Deputy reflectively, "this year one of liberty."

M. de Jaurès sat forward on the couch. Durosoy had never taken this tone of gravity with him before.

"No stranger to me than to you," he answered. He finished the wine,

and set the glass back on the table.

"Well, then, strange to me and to you."

M. de Jaurès laughed; he could not control himself.

"What makes you say that?" he asked. The Deputy shrugged.

"The thought will occur--sitting here in this palace that I used to pass with awe--talking to you whom I used to regard with awe--married to Hortense! Yes, you are right, it is strange to me."

The noble's mouth tightened; a black shame overwhelmed him that he was sitting here listening to this man.

"You," continued the Deputy, "used to know the former owner of this house, did you not?"

M. de Jaurès rose.

"I knew him."

"He was killed at La Force, was he not?"

"I believe so; why do you recall him?" M. de Jaurès leant against the mantelpiece. The cold, white room, the inane Deputy, were fast becoming intolerable. He began to be hideously conscious of two things: the clock whose hands were coming round slowly to the half-hour, and the folding doors behind which Hortense waited. The interruption, of which he had thought nothing at first, was like to prove fatal. Could he do it in less than half an hour? Merciful God! it was not possible! Some of them were already at the rendezvous--the Queen was ready.

"Let us go back upstairs," he said. "It is, after all, rather doleful here."



"On the contrary, I am very comfortable," smiled the Deputy, crossing his legs.

"You will be missed," said M. de Jaurès. His thoughts were racing furiously. How could he convey to Hortense that the time had been altered--that he could not wait?

The Deputy nodded towards the high ceiling. "Missed? You hear the music? I think they are enjoying themselves."

To abandon her, or to miss the appointment in the *rue du Temple*; to break faith with his friends or with her, to lose all chance of redemption, to jeopardise the Queen's escape, or to forsake Hortense (for success meant that he must be across the frontier, and failure meant death; either way he was useless to her)--it was fast narrowing to these terrible decisions.

He looked at his face in the large mirror above the mantelpiece, and was almost startled to see how white it was above the close cravat and blue striped waistcoat. Surely Durosoy must notice!

The Deputy sat looking into the fire. M. de Jaurès, glancing at him out of furtive eyes, observed that he, too, was pale.

A pause of silence was broken by the shrill chimes of the gilt clock striking the half-hour.

M. de Jaurès could not restrain a start. He must go. He could come back for her if alive; his honour (Heaven help him! he still thought of that) was the pledge to them, his affection to her--she would understand. Perhaps by the servant waiting with the carriage at the back entrance he could convey a message, telling her of the changed time.

"You will forgive me," he said with that ease with which breed enabled him to cover his agony, "but I am due at my chambers"--he raised his voice for her to hear--"the truth is I have business--important business to-night. Good-evening, Durosoy."

He went towards the door; it would be quick running to make the *rue du Temple* in time. Heaven enlighten her as to the cause of his desertion.

"Business?" said the Deputy good-humouredly. "There is no business nowadays but politics or plots. I hope you axe not engaged in the latter, my dear Camille."

M. de Jaurès had his hand on the door-knob. "This is private business," he answered, "about my property. I am trying to save some of it."

The Deputy turned in his chair.

"Why, I did not know that your estates were confiscated. Why did not you tell me? I might have helped you."

M. de Jaurès opened the door.

"You are such a busy man, Durosoy. I think I shall manage the affair satisfactorily."

"Monseigneur le Duc."

At that title he turned sharply, and saw the Deputy standing before the fire looking at him.

"Why do you say that?" he asked, and his nostrils widened.

"Forgive me, the expression slipped out. I still think of you as

Monseigneur le Duc. It is an astonishing thing, but I believe I am still in awe of you, as I used to be in my little office in Lyons." He smiled fatuously, lowered his eyes to the floor and shook his head.

"Why did you call me?"

"Well, I wanted to speak to you. Take another glass of wine; it is still early."

"Indeed, it is impossible for me to stay. I have an appointment."

"Bah! Make him wait."

"It is a rendezvous that I would rather keep."

"A strange hour for a business appointment. Are you sure it is not a lady that you are so anxious to see?"

"Say a lady, then," said M. de Jaurès; "but, believe me that I must go." He was leaving on that, when the Deputy called after him.

"I entreat you to stay. It is also a lady of whom I wish to speak."

M. de Jaurès turned slowly and closed the door.

"Come," smiled the Deputy, "another glass."

"What have you to say to me, Durosoy?" He felt as if the hand of fate were on his shoulder, dragging him back into the room; yet every moment--nay, every second--was precious, fast becoming doubly precious.

The Deputy was pouring out the wine. His grey and black figure was illumined by the increasing glow of the fire. He moved bottles and glasses clumsily by reason of the bandaged forefinger of his right

hand; behind him the clock showed twenty minutes to twelve.

M. de Jaurès crossed the long room to the hearth.

"What did you wish to say?" he asked, "nay"—he put the glass aside—"of what was it that you wished to speak?"

"My wife."

The noble's first thought was—"This man is not a fool"; his second, 'He suspects'—accompanied with a sense of stupor and confusion.

"You," continued Durosoy, "have known her longer than I have; she was very much admired, was she not, when she was at the Court?"

"She was admired, naturally. A strange question! I never knew her well," answered M. de Jaurès. He was sure the fellow suspected, not the plot but the elopement. He desperately readjusted his plans. He could not leave her now; he must forsake his friends sooner. Had she not said, "I am afraid of *him*."

"Well, that is all," said the Deputy. "Go and keep your appointment, my friend"—his eyes suddenly gleamed—"and I will finish my wine and presently go and fetch Hortense back to the ballroom."

M. de Jaurès answered his look. "No, I will stay," he said with a kind of cold calm.

"Ah! Now why have you changed your mind?"

"Because you," was the grim reply, "are so amusing."

He was wondering in his anguish why she did not come out. Surely she might have made some diversion with her presence. Yet she had probably changed her gown. Could she hear—could she

understand?

The man was playing with him; he might even know of the plot. He must suspect, else why did he remain here, and why did the guests not notice his or her absence, if they had not been prepared? It was too late to get to the *rue du Temple* now. The governor of the prison was to be abroad for an hour, from twelve to one, and in that time they were to make their attempt. They would make it without him. He could not leave Hortense now. It was certain death ahead of him; he would be denounced to-morrow, and dishonoured, for he had forsaken his friends.

So raced the thoughts of M. de Jaurès, keeping time to the music of the quadrille coming from the room overhead, while he stood impassive by the head of the brocade sofa, and gazed at the Deputy, who sipped his wine and blinked into the fire.

Two men went by shouting in the street. When their voices had sunk into the distance the Deputy spoke:

"You are rather imprudent, Citizen."

M. de Jaurès was silent; if he had but some manner of weapon he would kill this man--perhaps with his bare hands even--he came a step nearer.

"I see," continued the Deputy, still looking into the fire, "that you have a coronet on this handkerchief. Now, do not you think that very imprudent?"

M. de Jaurès stood arrested. Was this creature, after all, only a fool? He would, in any case, have killed him; but the days were gone when noblemen wore swords. Besides, the Deputy sat very near the bell, and was a strong man. Traditions, too, were a clog on the young

man's passions. He could not use his hands.

"My dear Camille," exclaimed the Deputy, suddenly glancing up, "you look very pale."

The aristocrat, with the instinct of his breed, was silent under agony. He gazed at the Deputy straightly.

"Are you going to keep this on your linen?" asked Durosoy, pointing to the coronet on the blood-stained bandage.

"Are you," answered M. de Jaurès, "going to denounce me?"

The Deputy smiled.

"Because of this? Why, no, how absurd!" he laughed. "As if you, of all men, had not given proof of your love for the people by becoming plain Citizen Jaurès. Not so many aristocrats did that."

M. de Jaurès fixed his eyes on the folding doors. It was the one thing that gave him courage to endure, thinking of her waiting there, thinking that he would share the inevitable end with her; thinking she would know he had waited.

The quadrille music took on another measure. The clock gave a little whirr and struck twelve. The aristocrat shuddered, but held himself erect. Durosoy suddenly grinned up at him.

"What about your appointment?" he asked.

"I am keeping a more important one," said M. de Jaurès through cold lips.

The Deputy rose.

"Do you not think that I act very well?" he said in a changed tone.

M. de Jaurès smiled superbly.

"My opinion of you is unchanged, Monsieur."

He had now no longer anything to gain or lose by adopting the manner of the people. The two men took a step towards the middle of the room, still facing each other.

"Your appointment," repeated Durosoy. "Why did you not keep it?"

M. de Jaurès raised his right hand to his heart and retreated a pace backwards. He hardly heard the words; the speaker's presence offended him indescribably; he lowered his eyes in instinctive disgust, withdrawn into his own soul. The attempt in the *rue du Temple* had failed or succeeded without him; he had lost the glory of rescuing the Queen, or the glory of being with the aristocrats in La Force. They would justly despise him as a coward and a man of broken faith, but the thing that had induced him to act thus was the thing that rewarded him--the thought of Hortense. Waiting behind the folding doors, she must have heard his and her fate. She knew perhaps before he came that Durosoy suspected and their chance was over; she knew now that he had preferred her even to his word, his pledged honour, for surely that was gone unless it would be some honour for them to die together--he hoped it would be the guillotine, not butchery in the prison yard--as befell, good God--as befell Charles de Maury, with whom he had once eaten and drunk in this very room----

He steadied his reeling senses with a jerking shudder and caught the back of the chair near him. That brute Durosoy was watching him, waiting for him to betray himself, being, no doubt, very sure of both of them, the man before him and the woman behind the folding doors.

M. de Jaurès smiled.

"What are you and I looking at each other like this for, eh?" he asked.

A soldier went past singing *Ça ira*; it mingled with the monotonous repeated music of the quadrille; the coals fell together with a little crash; the Deputy stood in a slack attitude surveying his victim.

M. de Jaurès laughed.

"We will see," said Durosoy slowly, "if Hortense is recovered from her headache."

He turned towards the folding doors. M. de Jaurès longed for them to open; at least he would have that moment when she came forth and walked straight to him, all disguises over.

The Deputy turned the crystal handle and opened the door a little way; he looked over his shoulder and said one word:

"Aristocrat!"

"Yes," answered M. de Jaurès. "She and I--both aristocrats."

Durosoy pushed the door a little wider open; his dull, foolish manner was changing to a deep breathing ferocity.

"The Widow Capet is still in the Temple, aristocrat," he said, "and your friends are in La Force by now."

M. de Jaurès kept his head high.

"So you knew," he said softly. "You are a cunning rat, Citizen Durosoy."



The Deputy's eyes were suddenly flushed with blood.

"Hortense must thank you, aristocrat, for breaking your appointment for her sake."

M. de Jaurès came nearer. There was darkness beyond the folding doors--the white shoe in the same position and the fold of pearl-braided satin.

The Deputy suddenly flung the other leaf wide.

"I am a cunning rat, am I not?" he said with a sob of hate. "My wife! My wife!" he cried, pointing to her.

She sat just inside the doors, facing them. There was a long red streak down the bosom of her white bodice, her eyes were fixed and her jaw dropped; across her knee was a knife stained with marks like rust.

The Deputy stood looking at M. de Jaurès.

"You see, I have been cutting peaches with a steel knife...."

THE END

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