

A Revolution Without A Head Still Feeling the Aftershocks

Nobles & Priests:

Henri (*Noble*)
Jeannet DuBerry (*Noble*)
Male Noble
Bernard Dupont (*Priest 1*)
Priest 2
King Louis
Queen Marie Antoinette
Monsieur Necker (*Finance Minister*)
Royal Son
Royal Daughter

Male Commoners & Peasants:

Robespierre (*Lawyer*)
Robert (*Lawyer*)
Laurent (*Lawyer*)
Claude (*Cripple*)
Jaques
Luc (*Doctor*)
Andre
Martin (*Farmer*)

Female Commoners & Peasants:

Louise
Pauline
Claire
Odette
Adele

Additional Characters:

Messenger 1
Messenger 2
Guard 1
Guard 2
Executioner
Vendor
Camille Desmoulins
Lucille Desmoulins
Andre Chenier

Scene 1:

(Scene actors are scattered around outside of audience)

HENRI: *(cheery)* It is the best of times!

CLAUDE: *(angry)* It is the worst of times!

BERNARD: *(thoughtful)* The age of wisdom.

JAQUES: *(bitter)* The age of foolishness!

HENRI: *(warm)* The season of light.

LUC: *(contrary)* The season of darkness!

JEANNET: *(hopeful)* The Spring of Hope.

LOUISE: *(pessimistic)* The Winter of Despair!

BERNARD & HENRI & JEANNET: *(very positive)* We have everything before us!

ALL PEASANTS: *(very negative, shouting at the nobles)* We have *nothing* before us!

(NOBLES & PRIESTS begin to scurry behind stage)

PAULINE: There is no food in this land!

ANDRE: There are no jobs in the towns!

MARTIN: Even if I do farm, all of my money goes toward “tithing” to the church!

LUC: Even if I had patients at my medical practice, all my money goes to the state taxes.

CLAIRE: There’s the salt tax.

CLAUDE: There’s the road tax.

ODETTE: There’s the right to keep my rabbits tax.

ADELLE: There’s the right to keep my pigeons tax.

MARTIN: There’s the hunting tax.

ANDREW: There’s the bridge tax.

PAULINE: There’s the selling tax.

JAQUES: There’s the buying tax.

MARTIN: And we the people of France starve while the king and his court gorge themselves around their banquet table.

LUC: He's a failure of a king. France is a disgrace. We've been losing battles on every side and all he does is sit at home enamored with his useless locks and keys.

CLAIRE: And don't get me started on that Austrian woman of his. I mean, the queen of France has one job. They have been married for 7 years and she can't even produce an heir to the throne.

LOUISE: Of course she can't – she's too busy spending the state treasury on her gambling and outrageous outfits.

CLAUDE: But at least the king has chosen a sensible man like Monsieur Necker to be his finance minister. If we have any hope of help coming to us common folk, it is with Monsieur Necker.

(all mumble in agreement and go back to their work)

Scene 2

(king is sitting on stage on a chair with table beside him)

(Monsieur Necker enters with books)

NECKER: *(bowing)* Sire.

LOUIS: Monsieur Necker...please tell me it is good news that you bring.

NECKER: Well sir, I have gone over the nations financial reports. I know that you are well aware that things are in a horrible state. The 7 year war with England dealt us a harsh blow. We gained nothing from you financing the American war for independence from Britain...

LOUIS: *(interrupting)* Except to see our long-standing enemies – the British – humbled once again.

NECKER: Well unfortunately that does nothing to improve the treasury of France. *(sighing)* We would have managed to overcome all of that, but the last few years of poor harvests and rising food prices have left us without many options to recover.

(MA enters)

MA: Louis darling, what do you think of my newest purchase *(showing off dress)*.

LOUIS: *(feigning interest)* Beautiful my queen, just beautiful. *(to the side)* Probably cost me a small fortune.

MA: And so?? We are the king and queen of France. We rule in the name of *God* – we spend the wealth that is our due.

NECKER: *(hesitantly)* My queen I beg your pardon, but the people are very angry. There are many now who say that your life of luxury is a slap in the face to the French people.

MA: Outrageous! The people must accept their burdens without complaining. It is the will of God!

NECKER: Burden is one thing my queen – but the people are starving – there is scarcely a loaf of bread to be found.

MA: Well, the solution is simple. If there is no bread – let them eat cake!

(MA leaves)

LOUIS: A typical female’s response – sooo irrational. This is a man’s job. Monsieur Necker - what is it that *you* recommend? Should we raise the taxes?

NECKER: No sire, the taxes are too high already. You must *restructure* the taxation system of France. The nobility and the clergy *have* to do their part in paying taxes. It’s archaic that they pay nothing – that all of the tax money throughout France comes from the poorest of its people – from the Third Estate.

LOUIS: *(flustered)* Do you think I have not tried? Every time I try to overhaul the tax system, the First and Second Estate just refuse to accept that they must pay tax. I don’t know how to get them to see that they must be willing to give up some of their privileges in order to save the nation.

NECKER: Well sire, that leaves you with only one option then. If you have been unsuccessful in getting the nobility and the clergy to pay their share, you must call a meeting of all three Estates. Summon the representatives of the nobility, the clergy and the common people to vote on a change to the tax laws.

LOUIS: Call a meeting of the Estates General!? What would my grandfather say? No king of France has done that in over 175 years!

NECKER: Yes sire, but times are different now, and this is your only choice. You must call the common people to “come up here.”

LOUIS: if this is my only option...*(long pause)*...call the Estates General.

Scene 3

(Peasants all dispersed around the audience, calling to one another)

JAQUES *(Running in from side of stage)* Have you heard the news? The king has called a meeting of the Estates General!

ANDRE: And not only that, but we’ve been asked to compile a list of our complaints for the king to hear! Now is our chance!

ADELLE: Lower the taxes!

CLAUDE: Jobs in the military and church should be open to all men!

LOUISE: Madame Deficit has singlehandedly ruined the finances of the nation.

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MARTIN: Yes! Send the queen packing back to her own country.

ALL PEASANTS: (shout in agreement) Here here!

ROBESPIERRE: (*intelligently*) Social, political, and economic equality for all!

LUC: So basically, what we're looking for is nothing less than the systematic, simultaneous elimination of *all* existing French laws and customs! An enormous political earthquake if ever there was one!

ROBE: Religion, absolute monarchy, and inequality will all be required to give an account of themselves before the judgment seat of Reason. A grievous wound will indeed be dealt.

CLAUDE: Oh Robespierre, you and your speeches. Will you ever get a chance to do anything with them and speak for the people?

ROBE: Well, I shall have a chance to express all of this, as I was elected to represent our town at the Estates General.

ALL PEASANTS: (*congratulate Robespierre and disperse*)

(*ROBE & LUC walk onto stage and sit down*)

(*CLERGY and NOBILITY join them*)

(*2 more from 3rd Estate (ROBERT & LAURENT) join them*)

(*LOUIS enters*)

(*CLERGY and NOBILITY remove their hats and nod respectfully to LOUIS.*)

(*ROBE and LUC refuse to remove their hats. LOUIS removes his hat and nods to them, and they warm up to him and remove their hats and nod back.*)

LOUIS: As you all are aware, I have called this meeting of the 3 Estates to call a vote to change the laws of France – to raise the taxes for the clergy and nobility – in order to save our beloved nation. (*pause while 3 estates react*)

LOUIS: Those in favor of changing the law? (*3rd estate raise their hand excitedly*).

LOUIS: Those not in favor? (*Clergy and nobility raise their hand*).

LOUIS: (*dejected*) 2 votes to 1. The proposal has been defeated. (*slumps back into chair*)

ROBESPIERRE: (*outraged*) This is an appalling situation! A tiny minority of wealthy nobles and bishops have more votes than the rest of the nation put together!

LUC: (*to the members of the 3rd Estate, hushed*) Brothers, let us not forget the great achievements of our friends in America, who resisted tyranny and sent King George packing.

ROBERT: Indeed, where would they have been without our support? If we can help the Americans gain their freedom, we can help ourselves achieve the same.

LAURENT: (*triumphantly*) What is the 3rd Estate? *Everything*. What has it been until now in this political order? *Nothing*. What does it want to be? *Something*.

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ROBERT: *(rising)* I move that we form a national assembly, where the voice of the *people* can be heard.

LUC: *(rising)* Yes, and we must write a constitution!

ROBE: *(rising, motioning to 1st and 2nd Estates)* Clergymen & noble friends, we invite you to join us, but we intend to conduct the nation's affairs with or without you.

LAURENT: Come, let us go to the Common Room!

LOUIS: *(standing up, startled)* Gentleman, gentleman, I'm sorry but...but... that room is closed for floor cleaning.

LUC: Brothers, it's pouring rain outside – surely we can find a meeting place.

ROBERT: To the indoor tennis courts if we must!

(All members of 3rd Estate hurriedly exit stage down the stairs and meet in front of stage)

LAURENT: Countrymen, we hereby swear in this place that we will stand together united until we have given France a Constitution.

ALL 3rd ESTATE: *(shouting excitedly)* We swear!

ROBE: Gentleman, together we will change the course of history forever. The voice of the people will echo throughout the governments of Europe – and the *world* – and things will never be the same again.

(They exit backstage talking excitedly as they leave)

Scene 4

(LOUIS sitting depressed on stage)

(MESSENGER arrives)

MESSENGER 1: Sire, I've come to tell you that Paris is consumed in riots, chaos, and widespread looting. The mobs, with the support of the French guard, have set their eyes on the Bastille prison, and after several hours of fighting the prison has fallen.

MESSENGER 2: Your majesty, I have come to tell you that the National Assembly has just voted to remove all special privileges of the nobility, as well as the tithe to the church.

LOUIS: *(standing up and addressing audience)*. The nation is falling apart around me, but what is that to me? My young son, the next king of France, has just died.

(LOUIS sits back down and reads)

Scene 5

(MALE & FEMALE PEASANTS surrounding audience)

(MA enters stage and sits with LOUIS during following sequence)

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CLAIRE: What good is all this talk of a National Assembly?

PAULINE: What does a Constitution do to feed my children?

ADELLE: There is no bread!

ODETTE: My children starve while the nobles feast at Versailles.

LOUISE: Then to Versailles we go!

CLAIRE: We will demand food from the King's own table!

(All FEMALES PEASANTS pick up pitchforks and shovels, start walking around audience to stage)

PAULINE: Come on men, join us!

(MALE PEASANTS join in the march)

(ALL PEASANTS congregate at bottom of stage left, shouting)

MA: *(frightened)* My king, the crowd is so angry, and they're calling for our heads! Should we try to escape?

LOUIS: Certainly not. The guards will hold them back – they are mere peasant folk. We will be safe within these walls. Go to sleep now my dear. We will deal with them in the morning, if they are still here.

(LOUIS exits stage left)

(MA lies down)

(LOUISE, PAULINE & CLAIRE pull away from the rest of the crowd and sneak over to stairs.)

LOUISE: *(hushed)* I found an unattended gate.

CLAIRE: Let's go and get that Austrian witch! Unless she's already escaped.

(LOUISE, CLAIRE & PAULINE sneak up onto stage)

(MA wakes up to them coming in)

MA: Help, help! Guards!

(MA runs off stage left)

(FEMALE PEASANTS 1-3 rush to bed and start hitting bed with their tools, angry that they missed her. GUARDS enter and push the peasants back.)

GUARD 1: Halt! Who gave you permission to be here?

CLAIRE: We represent the people of France!

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(LOUIS and MA enter, behind guards, hesitantly)

LOUIS: And what is it that the people of France request?

LOUISE: Food, my king. Our children are starving.

LOUIS: Well then, the royal kitchens will be made available to you. They are at your free disposal. And is that all?

PAULINE: The people of France would like the king and queen to move to Paris, nearer to your subjects, to demonstrate your commitment to our well-being.

MA: *(whispering to LOUIS)* Louis, you can't agree to that – what about *our* well-being? It's not safe for us in Paris!

LOUIS: No my dear, it will be the only way to get rid of this mob. We *must* go to Paris.

(GUARD, MA and LOUIS exit stage left)

(FEMALE PEASANTS join crowd of MALE PEASANTS gathering at foot of stage)

Scene 6

(ROBESPIERRE, ROBERT and LAURENT enter stage via stairs)

(All PEASANTS gathered at foot of stage)

ROBE: Our constitution is finished, and we now have a chance to create the France that we have long envisioned. *(pause)* Our vision for France is to have a democracy for the people – who are intrinsically good at heart. A democracy in which poverty is honorable, power is innocuous, and the vulnerable are safe from oppression. A democracy that is majestic, and above all – good. *(pause)* We will have equality for all – rich or poor, male or female. All titles shall be done away with. From this moment on, all shall be called “citizen!”

ROBERT: As well, to ensure freedom to worship in whatsoever manner you choose, we now introduce the new French calendar – with a 10 day week. No longer will you be shackled to the keeping of weekly Mass or the remembrance of Saints' days.

LAURENT: Citizens of France, we must all be on alert. Even at this very moment, the enemies of the revolution seek to destroy all the liberties we have won! Austria and Prussia stand at the door ready to declare war. They fight us to put the king and queen back on the throne. Will you give up the liberties we have fought so valiantly for? I say – to WAR! To war to keep our freedoms!

ALL PEASANTS: *(cheering)* To war! To war against Austria!!

ROBE & LAWYERS: *(joining in as they exit stage right)* To war! To war we go!

(All PEASANTS exit stage right)

Scene 7

(LOUIS sitting on stage, reading in a chair)
(MA enters stage left in a hurry, holding a letter)

MA: Louis, I have heard from your brothers again. They continue to try to persuade us to leave France and escape to Austria. They say they can arrange an escape for us, but we must be willing to go quickly.

LOUIS: *(with force)* NO! I refuse to accept any course that would see us openly side with Austria against the nation! France is at WAR with Austria! Can you imagine the risk to our family if we were to be caught escaping to the enemy?

MA: What about the risk to our family if we stay here? Louis, I am Austria! The people hate me, and have been calling for my head for years. What about our children – our half-Austrian children? Do you think the people of France are really ever going to put a half-Austrian king on the throne? *(pausing)* It's not safe here. Your power is all but gone. Now is our chance.

LOUIS: *(debating inwardly)* You make a good point. From Austria we might have a chance to gather an army and reclaim the throne. For the safety of our family we must try to escape.

(LOUIS gathers books and papers and puts them into bag. MA goes off stage, gets children, and brings them back on stage. They all put traveling cloaks on. LOUIS leads family off stage right, around back of audience and up center aisle (from back) to front.)

LITTLE GIRL: Mama, we've traveled so long. How much further do we have to go?

MA: We are so close my darling – only 14 more kilometers until we reach the Austrian border. We will be safe there.

(GUARD 1 & 2 step out from left side of stage, blocking their way.)

GUARD 1: Halt! Border check – please may I see your identification papers, Citizen.

GUARD 2: These are dangerous times – you never know who is on the road.

(GUARD 1 shows GUARD 2 the papers and whispers to him. GUARD 2 pulls coin out of pocket, and guards compare image on coin to LOUIS's face while whispering.)

GUARD 2: I'm sorry Citizen, but your trip will be delayed. Please come inside for further inspection.

(MA sobs into LOUIS's shoulder while pulling the kids close as they follow guards to behind stage.)

Scene 8

(JAQUES enters from back right of stage while all peasants gather around audience)

JAQUES: *(very excitedly)* Have you heard the news?! The king and queen were caught trying to escape to Austria!

ANDRE: I knew they were in league with our enemies!

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LUC: This is the proof we need. Louis is in league with France's enemies – he is a traitor to the nation!

JAQUES: The king has been dethroned and all his titles have been stripped away too!

(PEASANTS all run to base of the stairs shouting...)

ALL PEASANTS: What is the news!? What is to be done to the king!?

(ROBE comes onto stage left, walks over nearer the peasants)

ROBE: France no longer has a king. Citizen Louis Capet, now dethroned, is only a threat to liberty and national peace.

CLAUDE: But what will be done with Citizen Capet?

ROBE: For a king dethroned in the bosom of a revolution – a king whose name attracts the scourge of war upon a troubled nation – neither prison nor exile is sufficient to ensure that we are able to maintain public happiness.

(pause)

ROBE: *(deliberately)* with regret I pronounce this fateful truth. Louis must die so that the nation may live.

ALL PEASANTS: *(gasp, whispering in fear and excitement)* The king is to be executed!?

(King Louis enters from left side of stage, walks in front of stage. He is bound but appears dignified. Walks up stairs to center stage.)

ROBE: Citizen Louis Capet – by order of the National Assembly you are condemned to death for conspiracy against public liberty and general safety.

LOUIS: I die innocent of all the crimes laid to my charge. I pardon those who have charged my death, and I pray to God that the blood you are going to shed may never be visited on France.

(drum roll as LOUIS led to execution by EXECUTIONER.)

(Louis is executed)

ALL PEASANTS: Long live the Nation! Long live France! Long live the Republic!

(Artillery salute)

(MA enters from left side of stage, walks in front of stage. She is bound and appears ragged and sickly.)

LOUISE: Here comes widow Capet!

MARTIN: En route to join her husband!

(PEASANTS throwing rotten food at her as she climbs the stairs to center stage)

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ROBE: Widow Capet – by order of the National Assembly you are condemned to death for treason.

(MA tries to speak to the peasants but they drown her out with their jeering)

ALL PEASANTS: *(ad lib)* Death to the Austrian! We have no queen! Get rid of her!

(drumroll)

(MA executed by EXECUTIONER)

Scene 9

ROBE: Fellow-citizens of France, we have no need of a corrupt monarchy to advance the public well-being of our beloved nation. You yourselves are capable of this – mankind is good – fundamentally good – and we are able of our own strength to stand our ground against the nations of Europe.

ALL PEASANTS: *(ad lib cheering)* Liberty! Equality! Fraternity! Long live France!

ROBE: *(walking along front of stage)* But the danger is not just outside our borders. The revolution is still in its infancy and in danger of being sabotaged. *(vehemently)* We must make terror the order of the day! Let us be in *revolution*, because all around us *counter-revolution* is being woven by our enemies. *(gesturing to the guillotine)* The blade of the law should hover all the guilty.

(ROBE exits stage right; EXECUTIONER comes out of the door stage left, and walks to center stage)

VENDOR: *(passing out programs to audience)* Programs! Get your daily program! Know in advance who has an appointment with the National Razor!

(PAULINE, CLAIRE & LOUISE walk to in front of stage left and sit down with their knitting, ad lib talking amongst themselves)

EXECUTIONER: Citizen Henri Rousseau – for crimes against the state.

(Henri Rousseau walks in front of stage, up stairs, across stage, out door)

CLAIRE: Are you nervous?

LOUISE: Well don't lose your head over it!

(FEMALE PEASANTS cackle among themselves...)

(Henri Rousseau walks across stage, out door)

EXECUTIONER: Citizen Bernard Dupont – for refusing to swear an oath of loyalty to the French Republic.

(Bernard Dupont walks in front of stage, up stairs, across stage, out door)

EXECUTIONER: Citizen Jeannet Du Barry – for her allegiance to the monarchy.

(Jeannet Du Barry walks in front of stage, up stairs, across stage)

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JEANNET DU BARRY: *(sobbing loudly in hysterics)* Please don't hurt me. Just one more moment I beg you.

(EXECUTIONER leads her through door, shaking his head)

ROBE: We know who our enemies are – they laugh at us, saying we can't prove their treason. Let's force *them* to prove their innocence. Guilty until proven innocent!

EXECUTIONER: Citizen Camille Desmoulins.

ROBE: This man is guilty of printing anti-revolutionary ideas.

(Camille walks in front of stage, up stairs)

CAMILLE: *(at center stage)* Oh Liberty! What crimes are committed in thy name!

(Camille walks out door)

EXECUTIONER: Citizen Lucille Desmoulins.

ROBE: This woman is guilty of conspiracy against the revolution

(Lucille clutches Robespierre as she approaches him...)

LUCILLE DESMOULINS: *(desperate)* Robespierre, my husband Camille was your closest friend! You are the godfather of our child!

(ROBE brushes her off and distances himself as executioner takes her through door)

EXECUTIONER: Citizen Andre Chenier.

(EXECUTIONER continues to call names from list while ROBE's speech continues...)

ROBE: We have to punish not only the *traitors* of the revolution, but even those who are *indifferent*. We have to punish those that are *passive* in the republic, and do nothing for it.

(ROBE exits stage right in a hurry and begins pulling people from the audience, calling out a reason for each one, and growing increasingly crazed)

ROBE: guilty of treason...guilty of hoarding food...guilty of evading the draft...guilty of hiding a priest...

ROBE: This woman showed remorse at the death of her guilty husband.

ROBE: This man was caught wearing white – they symbol of royalty.

ROBE: This woman refused to take an oath of loyalty to the republic.

(EXECUTIONER still calling names as well)

(After ROBE has dragged all remaining PEASANTS toward guillotine, he goes to front center stage)

ROBE: Citizen, bring me my festival gown. *(puts on white robe)* Thank you Citizen. *(talking to himself)* Today is *the* day that all of Paris will gather to celebrate the reestablishment of religion in France.

(rambling a bit, emphasizing himself) I will be giving the main address; I've been working on my speech for weeks. All will be gathered to hear me. I must go and prepare.

(ROBE exits stage left. PEASANTS & LAWYERS all gather in front of stage)

(ROBE enters stage left to center stage)

ROBE: My beloved Republic. Man needs to reach for something higher than himself. I have never waived in my belief that there is some great power watching over us – protecting the innocent, blessing the virtuous, condemning the wicked. People of France, what could we offer as a more worthy gift to our God than the vision of Paris this day?

JAQUES: *(mockingly)* He thinks he's the pope!

ANDREW: *(joining in)* ...or God!

ODETTE: *(sobbing)* Your religion is murder! *(FEMALE PEASANTS consoles her)*

ROBERT: *You've* executed more people in the last 2 months than in the last 2 years!

ROBE: Me?!?!?

LAURENT: *(strongly)* Yes, YOU! *Your* justice. *Your* law. *Your* "reason!"

LUC: *(angrily)* We would rather *die* than be under the leash of a tyrant!

ALL PEASANTS: Death to the tyrant! DEATH TO THE TYRANT!!!

(LAURENT & ROBERT run to him, grab him, and take him off stage left.)

(ROBESPIERRE executed)

Closing Narration

What was to become of this nation without a head? Within a few short years the social, political and religious orders of France had been turned upside down in what Revelation 11 calls "a great earthquake", and the people were left to lead themselves with their new-found liberties.

This spirit of freedom opened the door for every man to do that which was right in his own eyes. What started in France quickly spread throughout Europe, and today has spread to most of the *world*. Its effects paved the way for the European nations to *willingly* give their power over to the Beast, and the new democratic system that grew out of this era has empowered the nations of the world to unite together in opposition against Israel initially, and ultimately against the Lord Jesus Christ.

For disciples living in the last days, the frog-like spirits offer the freedom to say, think and do whatever our heart desires – to conform to nothing and accept everything. But we are called to freedom in Christ:

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freedom to be a slave, freedom to serve *him*. We must keep the frog-like spirits out of our homes, out of our ecclesias, and out of our hearts, and live our lives conforming to the image of our God.