

ACT TWO

ONE.

*Olympe starts this scene in a rush,
writing in her study with furious inspiration...*

START

OLYMPE. OK, yeah, this is going to start moving really fast now. Marat's death has made things very bad, very quickly. The revolution has turned violent, anything done or said against the Republic is now treason and treason is punished by death. There are mobs in the streets, Marat's a martyr, Charlotte's on trial, and I've finally found something to write about—!

Marie reads over her shoulder.

MARIE. Marie! OhMyGod, is that *me* Marie? The *Queen* Marie? The Me Queen?!

OLYMPE. Yes, can you not yell *all* of your revelations as you have them.

MARIE. Gasp! Sigh! Retort! Oh that seems like *such* the right move.

OLYMPE. Well the declaration was a bust and you're really interesting.

MARIE. Right?

OLYMPE. Back to plays. Fiction I can fix. Reality is way too hard to write. At least drama has some structure. We're headed somewhere clear. And I have to admit that this play might be good. Like actually good.

MARIE. And it's really about me? That's hilarious!

OLYMPE. Actually, it's a very serious epic historical political drama with a few songs that will be a vindication for generations! Because it will last five hours.

MARIE. *Ugh*. But the title. Something cute, something that says "She's Innocent!" Perhaps, "*The Lovely Queen*" or maybe, "*Braveheart*."

OLYMPE. NO. It has to be sweeping and profound. Something like... "*France Preserved*"!

MARIE. Sounds delicious.

OLYMPE. (*A better title.*) OK maybe... "France Saved."

MARIE. Oh that's nice. I'm thinking "Ooh, is France an ingénue tied to a train track? And what are trains?"

OLYMPE. (*The extended title.*) "France Saved; or, A Tyrant Dethroned." There we go, that's it.

MARIE. De-WhatNow? Dethroned? Who's dethroned?

OLYMPE. I want a country that owns itself and I don't think we can do that with a monarchy so this play—

MARIE. *Silence.* No queen? That is not—no—wait. Do I die in the end?

OLYMPE. Well I haven't written the end.

MARIE. You said "we're headed somewhere clear, drama has structure." Well where the hell are we headed and why is it not a beach?

OLYMPE. Look—

MARIE. No *you* look. I'm the main character of this thing, right? So let's make me stay queen and not die, OK? *Let's do that.*

OLYMPE. Sometimes the story tells itself.

MARIE. THEN YOU BETTER TELL THIS DAMN STORY TO BEHAVE.

I have precious little time to force history to like me. *Now tell me what you're writing.*

OLYMPE. I don't have time to go back, I'm halfway through the story.

MARIE. *Aren't we all. Tell me.*

Pause.

OLYMPE. Setting: The queen's private chamber in the palace on the eve of the fall of the monarchy.

MARIE. That's a bad day to set a romantic comedy.

OLYMPE. It's not a romantic comedy.

Marie whines, Olympe pushes through it.

You're desperate. You're plotting any way to uphold the crumbling royal institution while the revolutionary forces are at your door.

MARIE. (*Like she's talking to a scary movie.*) Get away from the door Marie!

OLYMPE. Then a woman comes to you, to convince you to let go of the old ways and embrace the new, to compromise. Her name is Olympe.

MARIE. Hold the throne. You're writing about yourself now?

OLYMPE. It's a character.

MARIE. Named after you.

OLYMPE. Well yes but—

MARIE. Isn't that confusing? I'm confused. I hate when theatre confuses me.

OLYMPE. I call it "Meta Theatre." The point is to be a little confusing.

MARIE. I hate it. I already hate it.

OLYMPE. You don't hate it.

MARIE. The play is trash!

OLYMPE. *The play could save us both.*

Pause.

MARIE. *Comment? (French: "How?")*

OLYMPE. By showing *you* learning a goddamn lesson for starters. By showing people that revolutions needn't be so bloody. That they can be kind and creative. I'm telling you, Your Majesty, This play. Will be. Important.

MARIE. If it's not a romantic comedy nobody will come.

OLYMPE. I'll add a butler.

MARIE. Hilarious!

OLYMPE. Now, the first act ends with Olympe convincing the queen to work *with* the revolutionaries to create a Constitutional Monarchy that truly embraces Liberté, Egalité—

MARIE. Sororité.

OLYMPE. Yes. The country is saved by its women.

Beat.

MARIE. That I like. Keep writing. And if you want...the production may borrow my wigs.

OLYMPE. I'll make sure to thank you in the program.

Marie suddenly hugs Olympe like a child hugging a mother.

Olympe is shocked, then hugs her back.

MARIE. It's finality that scares me most.

OLYMPE. That's the hardest part. Writing the ending.

MARIE. *Oui. C'est vrai.* That was my fear as a child. Never seeing people again. Or dogs. How are you supposed to understand when you're so young? Never? What is "never"?

Never is now, Young Marie. Never might be now.

OLYMPE. I don't know, Your Majesty. Never might not come to you. You're a very compelling woman. I'm the one that should worry. My attempt at immortality is on paper, scripts in actors' pockets. It's not as glamorous as it looks.

MARIE. Oh, don't worry, it doesn't look very glamorous. But I like your stories. I'll remember them. And I'll tell my grandchildren and they'll tell their grandchildren, and their grandchildren will invent new ways to watch never-ending plays on ever-tinier stages. May I nap on you?

Marie fills her lap with the growing pile of ribbons that are now a pillow for Marie.

OLYMPE. A play that doesn't end. If I'm writing what I really want? That'd be it.

MARIE. Then tell me that story, and let's not have an ending, shall we? A cliffhanger will do. Something that makes you want to come back for more and more and...

*Olympe inhales to begin her a story but—
Marianne runs in.*

MARIANNE. They lied—there was no trial—Charlotte's headed to the scaffold. Right now.

Oh god. Blackout.

FINISH