

From Childhood's Hour

*From childhood's hour I have not been
As others were; I have not seen
As others saw; I could not bring
My passions from a common spring.*

Prologue: Two families, both alike in dignity . . .

There had always been two families on the spit of land between Marseille proper and the fishing village of Les Goudes. The first family had built the château hundreds of years earlier and watched it crumble as their fortunes faded. By the time the Revolution chased the women into exile and left the men without heads, the château was a mere pile of stones, the family having lived in town for generations, gambling away the produce of their lands. The second family had once depended on the first, but having acquired title to the lands they worked, they learned to expand their production and their holdings. When it seemed the family line would end in one beautiful daughter, she was carefully married off, not to the indebted aristocrats next door who would have welcomed the ability to reunite their lands, but to a young man who was making sizable profits in the Levant trade. The entrepreneur might not increase the land holdings, but he had the spirit the family required. Indeed, he sold off much of the land, using the proceeds to expand his business. The Levant trade was more profitable than landholding, though hardly so secure.

The revolution saw one family wiped out and the other ascendant. The son went to Paris and found a wealthy bride there, a young woman whose family had made connections with the men of imagination who so carefully manipulated the Convention and the Directory. They were married the very day Napoleon was declared Consul for life. The young bride was not well pleased to leave the glories of Paris to take up residence in Marseille, but the house her husband's family had built was large and airy, with wide gardens sloping down to the sea. It would do.

Her first child, a son, was born a bare month before the Emperor realized the first of his imperial ambitions, his coronation as King of Italy. While lying in childbed was hardly pleasant, the Mediterranean spring was more conducive to relaxation and recovery than the busy social round of Paris would have been.

But that autumn, she convinced her husband that they ought to decamp for Paris. He agreed – he needed connections to the government, to monitor the war from the centre while his men tried to slip the British blockade. Thus they became migrants, spending the summers on their estate and winters in the grand house in Paris.

When next they returned to Marseille, building was going on near where the ruined château had been. Someone from further north had acquired the lands during the Revolution, but nothing had been done. Now it appeared the owner wanted a house. A year later, there stood a mansion overlooking the sea, rather gaudy to a more refined taste, inhabited by a large man of middle age, his very young and beautiful blonde wife, and a baby boy. There was a new family on the point.

The men made visits; the women made visits. The boys were perhaps a year apart in age and too young to care for visiting. The Parisian woman found everything about her neighbours in the poorest taste – the nouveau riche in all their tacky splendor. The Lyonnaise woman found everything beautiful and the

countryside delightful but her neighbours terribly snobbish. The men did not mind that their wives did not get on; they were men of business, and the first order of business was a land swap each had been eyeing. The second order of business was to get the newcomer elected to one of the clubs in town. But autumn came, and after a winter in Paris, there seemed no real point to the acquaintance anymore. There was civility, of course, but no real feeling. The necessary sympathies were sent when the beautiful young woman died in childbirth, losing the child as well, but there was no friendship, no real contact after that tragedy. The business was done, and the mourning could never be complete.

So the families stayed, isolated but without rancor. Two families on the spit of land between Marseille and Les Goudes. Until ten years later, when the two boys had grown old enough to make their own plans.

Chapter 1: And all I loved, I loved alone

It was a perfectly hot June afternoon, and Julien was bored. His last tutor had been sent away that spring, when he had been ill, and the doctors had absolutely forbidden a replacement until autumn. He had spent too much time stressing his brain, it was no wonder the fever had attacked with such virulence, and he was to spend the summer recovering. To his fearful parents, that meant no tutors, no books, no paper, and no idea what to do with him. At twelve, it was ridiculous that they bring in another nurse. But with his illness, he could not possibly be around his baby brother. The discussion was carried out by letter: Cécile had taken Charles south with her the moment Julien became sick, leaving her husband in Paris to deal with the doctors and the funeral she feared was inevitable. Julien had always been a strange child, never quite sickly but never quite strong, and while everyone would certainly talk about how she had abandoned him, she would be damned if she permitted him to infect the baby it had taken so long to conceive. She had suspected Julien of mortality ever since, at the age of five, he expressed a strong desire to learn Latin immediately. He was simply too odd to live. A replacement was absolutely necessary, and it had taken six years and a miscarriage to get him. Charles was not about to be sacrificed to his elder brother's scarlet fever solely for fear of moral opprobrium. Even now that Julien was considered perfectly well, he was to stay away from his brother. He could not possibly be considered under the care of Charles' nurse. Since no one knew what to do with him, he was turned out of the house for much of the day and ordered to keep himself occupied.

The gardens were meticulously kept, and while the gardener had a couple of young assistants, neither spoke French and were not the sort of companions Julien would have preferred in any case. Instead, he spent every day in the woods or on the beach. Occasionally, he would walk as far as Les Goudes, but he did not like the careful attention the fishermen gave him. They knew who he was, and the women in particular would bow to him and try to feed him, chattering in Provençal what he was certain were comments about his health. He was sick of comments about his health. And he had no money with which to repay their overdone attentions. So he kept to the woods and the beach, staring out towards the sea while drifting off into a dream world gleaned from Caesar and Suetonius and Racine and Shakespeare. Sometimes he would swim in the warm Mediterranean, though often he would be scolded for coming home sticky with salt. With nothing better to do, he would play at being shipwrecked on a deserted island like Robinson Crusoe and spend an hour patiently trying to light a fire just with the friction of wood against wood, as it was said the Indians of America did. It worked, too, though anyone would have been surprised that a twelve-year-old boy would have the patience it would take to follow through on such a task.

Therefore, he was bored, on a hot June afternoon just like the many he had already spent alone. He sat in the sand, hat off (which he knew he was not supposed to do), trousers rolled to his knees, shirt sleeves rolled to his elbows, socks and shoes and waistcoat and cravat left in a pile under a tree. He stared out to sea and wondered for the millionth time why he was being punished for an illness he had not known how to avoid.

A rustling in the trees startled him, but he did not actually bother to turn around and look. It would prove a squirrel or something equally boring. Until it called out to him in French, "Who are you?"

He spun around, angered by the imperious tone of his accuser. "What should it matter to you?" The voice had come from a boy perhaps his own age, but fair and blond, not at all like the average population.

"Because this is my property. Shouldn't you go back the village where you belong?"

That must be the Enjolras boy, Julien reminded himself. As much as he would have liked to say something about not being a fisherman's boy to be spoken to in such a manner, he merely apologized for trespassing and collected his belongings. So much for spending the rest of the summer on the beach.

"Wait!" the blond boy called. "You don't have to go."

"Don't I? You asked me to return to the village. I don't come from the village, but I have been in the wrong and I'm trying to put it right. I won't come onto your property again."

He wasn't sure what the boy wanted to say, but it certainly was not, "You don't talk like everyone else."

"I spend most of my time in Paris. My tutors have all been northern or foreign."

"So have mine. My last one left last week without notice."

"I'm sorry."

"I'm not. He was boring. Are your tutors boring?"

"Not at all. My last one had pretensions to natural philosophy – he was very eager to come south with us."

"But he didn't?"

"Sacked."

"Did he get caught kissing one of the maids?"

"That's what happened to yours? No wonder you found him boring; he must have found you boring for not being a maid."

“Do you mean something by that?”

“Not at all. I’m sorry.” Julien shifted his armload of belongings and nervously tried to push his hair out of his face - except there was no hair in his face. One of the maids had panicked over how long the fever had lasted and had shaved his head. He tried to change the gesture to one of wiping the sweat from his forehead. “I should go. I’m sorry for having disturbed you.”

“You don’t have to!” the blond boy spluttered. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean that. My name is Henri. Enjolras.”

“Julien Combeferre.”

“You own the house on the hill.” Julien nodded. “Why haven’t we met before?”

“I mostly live in Paris. And if this summer were like all the other summers, I’d have a tutor and be busy enough that I would not daily be trespassing on your property out of sheer boredom.” He was not certain what had possessed him to say it, but there was a relief in telling another human being that life was not as it should be.

“You’re down here every day?”

“I’m sorry.”

“No, I mean that’s brilliant. My father doesn’t know what to do with me since my tutor left. I’ve been alone for a week. It’s been awful.”

“It has. No one to talk to. The outdoor staff don’t even speak French.”

“I know. And they have to work. And they’re all older than I am, anyway, and can’t figure out if they look down on me as a child or up to me as the employer.”

“I can’t even walk to Les Goudes because all the women can’t decide if they want to mother me or bow to me. Do I still look ill or are women just very sensitive to that sort of thing?”

Henri shrugged. “You look how you look. What do you do all day?”

“Nothing. I come down here and sit on the beach and think because that’s all I’m permitted,” Julien answered bitterly. “My parents locked up all my books and I’m not to have a new tutor until autumn. There had been talk of sending me to school, but that won’t happen this year. I come down here and stay out of the way. Sometimes I swim. Usually I just sit.”

“Why would your family want you to not study?”

“Because the doctors don’t know what they are doing. I was ill in the spring, and the doctors say it was from too much study. Which has to be ridiculous – reading does not cause a fever – but the doctors say it does, and therefore, I am not permitted to study until they are quite certain I have recovered. And I am to have outdoor exercise, but since my father thinks I would manage to persuade any tutor into

teaching me something rather than merely supervise me, I have no tutor and cannot do anything. I cannot take the horses out alone, and I cannot play games alone, and no one seems to care, so I just don't say anything or do anything. I stay out of the way because that's all they seem to want."

"I'm not allowed to do anything by myself, either. Maybe we could do nothing together?"

"Maybe."

"Put those down – I'm not chasing you away! I'm sorry if I scared you. I hadn't seen you before, and you looked so natural there I thought you must have come from the village and I don't know why I did that. Maybe we could be friends?"

Julien did not set his clothes down, but he made no further effort to go. "I've never had friends."

"I haven't either."

"It might be worth a try."

Henri sat down in the sand. "So. I guess we ought to get to know each other."

Something in his eagerness permitted Julien to set aside his doubts – there had to be a reason they had not been permitted to meet before – and his armload of clothing to sit down with him. "I guess we start from the beginning? I'm twelve. I have a baby brother." My mother thinks I'm unnatural, he considered adding but thought better of it.

"I was supposed to have a baby brother. But he died. So did my mother."

"I'm sorry."

"I don't remember her."

"I wouldn't mind not having a mother, I don't think."

"Really?"

"Mine doesn't like me very much. She left me in Paris when I was sick." He did not like his mother very much, either, but it had been distressing when he learned she had abandoned him, particularly as he learned it in roughly the same moment a maid let slip that everyone had been afraid he might die.

"That's awful."

"And every night at dinner, she spends half her time talking about me as if I weren't even there." It was a relief to say it to someone, perhaps most because it was a perfect stranger, someone who had never met the beautiful Cécile Combeferre and therefore might believe that for all her charm, she was not the ideal wife and mother.

They ended up talking for hours about everything and nothing. Julien talked himself hoarse – Henri

had of course been in constant conversation until his tutor was found in the pantry with a housemaid's legs wrapped around his waist, but Julien had spoken little in months. It was in large part because of this that he finally made excuses that he had to go in.

"Will you come tomorrow?" Henri asked eagerly.

"Do you want me to?" Julien asked warily.

"Of course! Do you swim?"

"Quite well."

"Then we can go swimming!"

Julien nodded his assent, but as Henri turned to go, he decided to take the bull by the horns rather than kick himself all night for being a coward. "Wait. Do you think you could, maybe, bring a book?"

"Sure. What do you want?"

"I don't care. It doesn't matter what subject or what language. Anything."

"You don't care if it's in Latin or French?" Henri asked incredulously.

"Or English. I haven't been permitted books in two months," he replied desperately.

"I'll find something."

Find something he did. When Julien made it out to the beach the following afternoon, Henri was already there, a wide-brimmed straw hat on his head this time. "Will this do?"

It was a battered copy of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*. Julien hugged it tightly, his eyes closed, until he realised he must look like a freak. "Thank you."

"It's nothing. I'm not using it at the moment. I wouldn't mind if you kept it, except I'd be in trouble for losing it."

"You don't like Caesar?"

"I don't like Latin."

"But it's Caesar! Sure, he was wrong about everything, but his descriptions of the Gauls are terribly interesting."

"Really?"

"Here, let me find the section." He sat down and started translating almost fluently once he found the appropriate page.

Henri stared, open mouthed, until he realised how rude he was being. "How long have you been studying Latin?"

"Ages. Since I was five or so, I guess?"

"When did you learn to read French?"

Julien shrugged. "I can't remember not being able to read." He was unconsciously fondling the book as they talked.

"And you read English, too?"

"Not so well as Latin but better than Greek."

"You're brilliant."

"Am I?"

Henri nodded. "That's why they think you study too much. Because you do."

"I do not!" he protested. But he added more quietly, "What else am I supposed to do? Tutors are hired to teach, and I have no friends, and the only cousin I know is eight years old, and my brother isn't even a year old yet. And all the books are amazing. Have you ever heard of Shakespeare? He is the English Racine, only he mixes comedy into his tragedies and he doesn't write in rhyme. His plays are wonderful. I don't understand half of any of them, but I understand enough to know I adore Hamlet. And I've read the parts of Catullus I'm not supposed to. That's why you have to learn Latin – you can read everything no one will point out to you."

"I never said I didn't want to learn Latin; I meant I was rubbish at it because it's hard."

"I suppose." Julien was about to drift back into reading the book when he realised what he was doing. "I'm sorry." He deliberately set the book aside. "You wanted to go swimming."

"You can keep the book for a couple days, at least."

Julien shook his head. "I'll get caught."

"Here." Henri wedged it into the crook of a tree. "It'll be there whenever you want it. I'll even bring another one next time, if you want."

"You would do that?"

"Why not? I said we'd be friends."

Julien smiled properly for the first time. "Thank you. Shall we race around the point?"

Henri stripped his shirt off quickly and nearly fell over in his hurried effort to get out of his trousers. "If you're last in the water, you're going to lose!"

Julien was last in the water, but he won, a victory for which he apologised and attributed to his greater height. But Henri was not at all a sore loser, and Julien was never so pleased in his life as he was splashing in the waves with Henri to no real purpose.

Chapter 2: Most eloquent of the descendants of Romulus

Henri was not an indifferent student, but he never seemed to advance as quickly as his tutors or his father would have liked. He questioned everything and did not trust why he was told to skip certain pages. Once Julien had told him that he had read the forbidden pages of Catullus, he left at the opportunity to discover what precisely had been hidden.

Thus the next time they met, Julien was surprised to discover that Henri had brought more books. Surprised, because Henri had seemed more interested in less academic explorations, but gratified by what he perceived as a desire to please someone else.

"Does this have the good parts?" Henri asked eagerly, passing him a copy of Catullus.

Julien flipped through, looking for the most egregiously erotic poems he was not supposed to read. "Do you know 51? *Ille mi par esse deo videtur.*"

"I know that one. It's all about love."

"Most of Catullus is all about love. Just about different forms of love. When he isn't angry, that is. What of poem 99? *Surripui tibi, dum ludis, mellite Iuventi, / suaviolum dulci dulcius ambrosia.*"

"I don't get it."

"In French, 'I stole from you, while you were playing, honey-sweet Juventius, / a kiss sweeter than sweet ambrosia'."

"I don't know that one."

Julien continued, translating fluently. "But I did not get away with it: for such a long hour

'I remember being crucified on the greatest cross,
'and then I apologized to you, but I was not able to relieve
'with any tears even a little of your ferocity.
'For at the same time it was done, you wiped clean
'your lips, damp from my kiss, with all your fingers,
'nor did anything remain received from my face,
'just as if it were the filthy saliva of a prostitute.
'Besides this, you did not hold back from making me miserable,
'troubled by love, and tormented in every way,
'so that to me that kiss changed from ambrosia
'to a thing more bitter than bitter hellebore.

'Because you put forth such a punishment for miserable love,
'never will I after this steal a kiss.'

Henri was wide-eyed. "What?" His brief experience with Catullus – two or three poems only – had been of the jealous lover of Lesbia, not the bitter man of wide-ranging experience that emerged in wider reading.

"Yes, he did kiss a man and was soundly rejected. But most of the poems are about women. Or, where is that really interesting invective? This isn't it, but it will do.

'Caelius, my Lesbia, that Lesbia,
'the same Lesbia, whom Catullus loved
'more than himself and more than all his own,
'now loiters at the cross-roads and in the backstreets
'peeling or stripping the grandsons of the brave Remus.' It's something fairly dirty but I can't quite get at the exact meaning."

"That's Catullus?" Henri asked in awe.

"Yes. You can pick it out yourself if you like. Not all of it is terribly difficult if you've already read the Sapphic poems."

"How did you know what to look for?"

"I didn't. You just read. If your Latin is strong enough, you can read anything. I have some English books on politics that one of my tutors left me. They're waiting until my English gets stronger because I want to fully understand what was so dangerous about some of them. A dictionary won't help with that so much."

"We have some English books in the house."

"Really?" Julien asked in excitement.

Henri passed him another book. "This is Shakespeare, right?"

"Macbeth," Julien read. "Yes. I've not read this one."

"You can keep it in the tree. Will you tell me about it when you're done?" he dared ask.

"Of course."

"Is he really more exciting than Racine?"

"I think so." He let it drop there, but later, when they were rather wedged high in one of the trees, a height he attained only with much direction from Henri, he started telling Henri the plot of Hamlet.

Henri was fascinated by the complexity of all the machinations, but when Julien had finished he asked, "So how was the line of succession supposed to work?"

Julien was a little surprised at the question. Yes, it was what he had wondered, why no one seemed to care that Hamlet was passed over before he had ever put on his antic disposition, but he had already learned in the few days of their acquaintance that Henri was normal, or at least less unnatural than he was. "Hamlet was out of the country. Claudius simply took over because it took Hamlet so long to get home, and he had Gertrude's help because she couldn't bear to be dowager rather than queen." Most of the explanation had been his tutor's answer, but Julien filled in the Gertrude part himself.

"But why did Polonius do nothing?"

"He must have been bought off by Claudius."

"But why did Hamlet not go to the barracks and rally the army around him? If the army was on his side, they could have chased Claudius away and been prepared for the Norwegian attack."

Having grown up in a house run by Cécile, Julien just shook his head. "My mother is Gertrude. If you grew up with her, you wouldn't know where to start to think about how to go against her wishes."

"Your mother would really marry a man who destroyed your father?"

"If it benefited her, I'm sure she would. We spend our time in Paris because she thinks she's too good for Marseille. She calls me 'unnatural' to my face, nothing I've ever done has pleased her, and sometimes I don't think she likes my father much better than she likes me."

"That's awful."

"Gertrude pretends to love Hamlet, but she married Claudius so she would still be queen, and she doesn't want to believe her son because what he says would destroy her reputation and make her doubt her own judgment. Her faith in herself is as important as what everyone else thinks of her. Gertrude married her husband's murderer and tried to ignore her son, who was thoughtful and thus weak in her eyes. I have a baby brother as a replacement for when I prove completely disappointing and do my mother the favour of dying."

"No wonder my father doesn't like your mother."

"She probably took one look at your mother and decided that she was either not good enough to be friends with or too good to be friends with. Too much competition, I mean to say. My mother and her friends all talk about each other behind their backs."

"I'd never do that to you."

"Yes, you would. You would tell your father everything. And I wouldn't hold it against you because you wouldn't do it to be mean but because he would ask and you would answer. I don't want to be something to be kept secret. It would be very shabby, to think me not worth being talked about." He was feeling very low about his own deceit in not telling at least his father where he had been going and with whom he had been spending his time. It was very like his mother to treat the neighbours as if they were below her notice.

"I wouldn't do that at all. I swear."

Julien promised himself he would tell his father when they went riding on Sunday. "And I won't do the same to you."

Chapter 3: *But when the heart is full of din / And doubt beside the portal waits . . .*

Julien had never really considered friendship. His family was small: his father was estranged from his sisters, and his mother had only a brother. This brother had an only child, a boy four years younger than Julien. Sunday afternoons in Paris were often spent with his mother's family, but he took no joy in a child who preferred to set his toy soldiers in single combat rather than arrange them properly to re-fight Austerlitz and Waterloo. By the time the weather cleared enough for battledore or boules or even a walk in the Luxembourg, the Combeferres were off to Marseille and the Vaillets to their country house in the Oise. Julien had, instead of compatriots, a succession of tutors. Not until preparations for his first communion did he meet other boys his own age, and he found them little different to his young cousin. He thought he knew much of the world, for he read as widely as his father's library allowed, and he had traveled, even if just between Paris and Marseille, but he had never really spent time with a boy of his own age until he met Henri.

Henri had not thought much about it, either. He had no family except his father, no companions except a succession of tutors, but he knew nothing else. His experience was only of his small family in their house on the outskirts of Marseille. The centre of the city was as far removed from his daily life as Paris itself. He knew what he read, and what his father and tutors told him, and what little else he could pick up from the servants. Julien had met other boys his own age, even if only for brief spells under the direction of the parish priest, but Henri had never spoken to a child of his own age. Friendship was something for the future, like university, and so when he saw the strange boy on the beach, of course that boy had to be sent away. But his clipped voice and fine clothes labeled him an equal, and the needs of the moment, the desperate loneliness of the past week, took precedence over concerns of social etiquette. Perhaps the future did not have to be so far off.

"What do you think school is like?" Henri asked one day as they sat naked on the beach, letting the sun dry them after a swim.

Julien shrugged. "I never really thought about it." Even during his confirmation classes, he had not really considered that he might attend school with such incurious clods.

"There will be lots of boys. I suppose that means lots of friends."

"I doubt it."

"Why wouldn't that be the case?"

"Perhaps no one will like you. Or me," he added.

"You're so gloomy." Henri threw a handful of sand at his friend. "Why wouldn't anyone like you? I like you."

“Other boys have brothers and sisters. They're probably very different to us.”

“Will you go to school in Paris or Marseille?”

“Paris. Probably next year, for fear I'll catch something else and die this winter.” Julien rolled his eyes at the thought. “Does your father want to board you?”

“I don't know. He doesn't talk about it. He doesn't talk about much of anything important to me, really.”

“Neither does mine.”

“He did ask me if I had any requirements when he was writing the advertisement for a new tutor, though.”

“Really?” Julien asked excitedly. “I wish my father would ask me. I'd ask for a natural philosopher who spoke German.”

“Because you don't know enough languages already? I'm joking!” Henri insisted in response to Julien's pout.

“So what did you say?”

“I said something about more history and less Latin, and he just pulled a face and said, 'Yes, that was to be expected'.”

“But he asked you at all – that's amazing!”

Henri shrugged. “I think he was more interested in talking than in asking. Does your tutor have dinner with your parents?”

“No. He's a servant.”

“Mine always did. We always dined with my father when my father was at home. They'd talk completely over my head, all night long.”

“Your father is eccentric.”

“You're eccentric.”

“I know,” Julien said sadly. That was why he was certain he did not look forward to school. There would be other boys, and though they would be his own age or older, unlike his cousin Jérôme, he feared they would have far more in common with Jérôme than with himself. Henri had more in common with Jérôme, Julien thought – seeing how high one could climb in a tree was a very Jérôme thing to attempt, completely lacking in all logic or sense. Except it was brilliant, sitting so far above the ground, completely in the arms of nature, the breeze off the sea stiffer the higher one went. But it

was not something one's mother would support or that a tutor would gladly teach. "You had toy soldiers, didn't you?" Julien asked carefully.

"Of course."

"Did you set them up in battalions or arrange single combat?"

Henri thought the question profoundly weird, but he had expected weird from Julien ever since he'd watched Julien embrace a book with more fervour than M. Duval had embraced the housemaid.

"Battalions take up so much time," he answered, trying not to show any opinion of the line of questioning. "And then you might as well be playing chess."

Disappointed, Julien nodded. "Single combat."

"No, more like squads of skirmishers. Why are you even asking?"

"I used to be encouraged to play with my cousin. He had no patience for battles and would just pick out two champions and set them at one another. He's younger than I am," Julien tried to explain, hoping Henri wouldn't laugh.

Henri had no intention of laughing, though there was amusement in his voice when he asked, "How many got bent?"

"My best general lost his arm from that! How did you know?"

"Mine have some missing arms, too. Sometimes there's no replacement for a good hand-to-hand battle. And it's rubbish they only make modern soldiers. You can't redo Marathon properly without losing a few arms."

"That's because lead is so soft. See, you do so like some of what you've had to read."

"That's Greek."

"You said Latin was hard!"

"But Herodotus is fantastic."

"You read Herodotus with pleasure but find Caesar boring?" Julien asked incredulously.

"You can take Caesar and Cicero."

"Have you read any of Thucydides on the Peloponnesian War?"

Henri shook his head. "Is it any good?"

"It's brilliant if you like Herodotus. How can you not have read any of Thucydides?"

“M. Duval never let me read much that was interesting. Herodotus was the best he could do.”

“I don't believe you.”

“Ok, so Herodotus was in translation,” Henri admitted. “But I can pick out words in the Greek. And that doesn't mean I don't like what he wrote, just because I had to read it in French.”

“We don't keep translations in the house. I've been through all the books. For the classics, it's Latin or Greek or nothing.”

Henri was incredulous. “All the books?”

“In both houses. I'm not saying I read them all! I'm just saying I've opened all of them and none of them are translations. I'd probably have read more if there were translations, and my Latin would be much worse. I'm losing it already from not using it in months. I'll be awful by the time they let me study again. I won't be able to compose a thing.”

“Compose?”

“You don't do composition exercises?”

“Not in Latin. I don't have enough to be able to say anything.”

“Oh. I'm sorry.”

“It's probably only because you're older than I am,” Henri tried to cover. He was unsure if he was behind or if Julien was a genius. He suspected the latter, but he feared the former. There was only one year difference between them – how much did it mean? “When is your first communion?”

“Had it before I got sick. It's really stupid.”

“Really?”

“Everyone in the parish at once, all the girls are wearing veils, they look completely ridiculous, and the wafer – you might as well just swallow a handful of flour.”

“The body of Christ?”

“Is dry and tasteless.”

“Should you be making puns on religion?”

“You brought up the body of Christ. Maybe ours were stale. And you don't get enough wine to choke it down.”

“Do you feel different after?”

“What do you mean?”

“I don't know. Older? Closer to God?”

“Your tongue's dry. That's it.”

Henri stuck out his tongue. “You're an unbeliever.”

“I wanted to feel different,” Julien insisted. “But it didn't happen.”

“I'm sorry.”

“I am, too,” he replied sadly. “Do you think disappointment comes because you want something too much, so whatever happens can never live up to what you've built in your head, or does it come from not wanting something enough, so you don't deserve to have it?”

Henri thought for a long time. He had never really considered it before, so he wanted to answer carefully. It would never do for Julien to think him common – Julien appeared to have a low opinion of boys he thought common, and Henri was not entirely certain he disagreed. “I think it comes from not knowing exactly what you want. Because if you get what you thought you wanted, and you don't like it, it's because you weren't careful enough in asking for it. When you like what you get, it's because you know it's what you wanted. If you don't like it, then it's not what you wanted, and you must have left out that one thing that would have made it perfect. It's not about how much you want something; it's about how well you know what you want.”

“So if one is easily pleased, it is because one wants very little so most things will fit that?”

“Yes, it must be.”

“Are you easily pleased?”

“Are you asking if I only like you because you're the only one here?”

“No,” Julien replied defensively. “Not exactly.”

“I like you because I like you. You know everything, and you're willing to tell me all about it without making me feel stupid. And you'll climb trees and go swimming with me. And you're brave as anything, going to the fishing village all by yourself. Even if there were a hundred other boys, why shouldn't I like you?”

“Because I'm only good with books.”

“You beat me every time we race.”

“Only because I'm taller and it really isn't fair.”

“If you weren't a good swimmer, you could be as tall as my father and still not beat me. I like you, and

you can't make me take it back.”

“Really?”

Henri gave him a grin and a good-natured shove. “Really.”

Chapter 4: *Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me / With stinted kindness*

“Papa?”

Jean-Pierre Enjolras held back a sigh and set aside his newspaper. “What is it, Henri?”

“What do you know about the family who own the house on the hill?”

“The Combeferres? Whatever prompted this line of questioning?”

“I was just curious.”

“I know very little. They spend much of their time in Paris. Bonapartists, I thought when we came here, but opportunists is rather more apt, I believe. They've not suffered these past few years so far as I know. We did some business, he introduced me to some people I might have met much later if not for his assistance, but we've nothing in common. Why do you ask?”

“I met the boy the other day.”

“Wherever have you been wandering to meet anyone?”

“He was on the beach.”

“The beach? I own the beach.”

“I know. I told him so.”

“Good. On the beach. Must take after his mother. M. Combeferre sold me that property right after we came here. It hasn't been his in more than ten years. But wouldn't that just be like her, to assert that even though she doesn't still own it, she still controls it. She would have hounded your mother to her grave if she were in Marseille more often.”

He continued in this vein for some time – Mme Combeferre had obviously made a very poor impression on him. Henri managed to slip away, his father still ranting about the ill effects of Parisian society. But when he met Julien the next day, he told him all his father had said, then felt awful when Julien began apologising profusely.

“I am so sorry. It is rather like my mother, isn't it? I never even thought about it. We still own the woods. I stayed in the woods for days, but no one ever came here, so I dared come all the way to the water, but that doesn't make it right. I am so sorry. I know the beach isn't ours. I should never have set foot on it. It is very like her to send me to put my footprint on your land. She didn't. I swear. I should

never have – I'm sorry.”

“There's nothing to be sorry about because if you hadn't done it, we wouldn't have met. It can't have been wholly wrong if good things come of it.”

Julien shook his head. “A good outcome does not make it right. The meaning is more important than the result in deciding if something is right or wrong, and the meaning of what I did was that my desire to go swimming meant more to me than your right to your property. That is horribly wrong.”

Henri pulled himself into the nearest tree. “I don't care. I'm glad I met you.”

“My mother says I'm unnatural,” Julien finally blurted out. It had been weighing on him for days, if he should just admit the truth and thus put an end to everything all at once, or if he should pretend otherwise so Henri would still like him. But it was so hard to be false with Henri, and it was only right that the whole truth should win out.

“You are,” Henri replied matter-of-factly. “Come on, if you get up here, I'll race you to the top!”

Chapter 5: At his call / Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all

“I'm taking Julien out for a ride.”

“Is that really wise today?”

“The boy needs exercise.”

“He's gone completely brown as it is.”

But for a ride they went, Richard Combeferre and his son. Once the house was hidden from sight down the road, Julien seemed to relax a bit, and so did Richard. He did not regret his marriage at all, but Cécile could be trying at times, never fully explaining her reasoning, though her reasoning was always sound if one pressed the argument. This time, he was certain that she meant that it had rained the night before and thus the grass was still wet and was that really the best thing when the boy was still recovering from his long illness? Punctuated by her annoyance that it could still be months before he looked normal.

“What have you been getting up to all day?” Richard asked kindly.

“Nothing,” Julien replied defensively.

“That's too bad. Bellan says you've not spent any time in the gardens.”

“I've tried to stay out of his way.”

“So where have you been?”

“In the woods. I've gone to the village from time to time,” he admitted.

“So that’s where you’ve been swimming. Good.” Julien did not correct him. “It’s too bad the fishermen barely speak French, otherwise you might find yourself some companions if they’re not all out on the boats.”

“They’re all out on the boats.”

“I’m sorry.” He was. Richard had always thought of his son as serious, had thought Cécile exaggerated when she called him gloomy and unnatural, but gloomy was perhaps the appropriate adjective of late. We should get out more, he thought. Julien used to sit his horse better. “I’ve decided that we’ll hire you a new tutor when we return to Paris. There will be more choice, better chance to find someone you will like. In the mean time, should you like a drawing master or a music teacher? I think those might be permitted.”

Julien did not dare get his hopes up. His father would write to the physician for advice, and the physician would merely shoot down the plan. “A drawing master might be nice.”

“I’ll see to it in the morning.”

They rode in silence for some time before Richard urged his horse on for a brief run down the hill. Julien’s hat flew off as he followed, and he pulled up, looking after it with an actual smile. Richard waited while he retrieved it, but he shook his head as Julien put it back on. “Don’t worry about it. I won’t tell your mother if you won’t.”

Julien grinned and took off at a gallop, thrilled at the permission to ride as fast as he might with the wind whipping through his hair. Cécile might have a mother’s panic, but the boy was going to be all right.

Indeed, once the horses were tired and they began to walk back to their own estate, Julien dared to talk. “Father, what do you know about the people who own the other house on the point?”

“M. Enjolras? Not much, I’m afraid. He owns the big sugar refinery in town, plus some lands inland. Came from Lyon about ten years back. Widower, one boy, never remarried. Your mother and his wife never really got on. He’s a good enough chap, a handshake and kind word if one meets him in the café, but we’ve never really done business.”

“He doesn’t get his sugar from you?”

“I’m not the only man with ships in Marseille. You know that. Why the questions?”

With his mother safely indoors, Julien decided it the best time to admit the truth. “I met the boy a few days ago.”

“Where on earth did you do that?”

“On the beach,” he admitted.

“The beach is theirs. You know that.”

“I know. It was very naughty of me. I’ve apologized for trespassing.”

“Have you apologized to M. Enjolras?”

“I asked Henri to tell his father I was sorry if he ever told his father about me.”

“You’ll write a letter when we get home,” Richard ordered, though hardly sternly. “What is the Enjolras boy like?”

Julien thought for a long while before answering. “He’s very nice. I wish I had met him sooner. We meet on the beach and we talk all afternoon and he’s already taught me how to climb trees.”

“I wish you’d met him sooner. You never climbed a tree before now?”

“Who would have taught me?”

Richard laughed. “Not everything in life is taught. I rather thought tree climbing was an instinct. You don’t have to repress everything, you know. If you take a fancy to something, do it. I will always love you, no matter how much trouble you get yourself into.”

“But Mother won’t.”

“That’s not true. She worries about you, because she a mother. Women worry. I think I’ve let her worry too much because she has me worried. Do what you want. Say what you feel. You’ll only get away with it when you’re young and when you’re old.” It was perhaps contrary to the advice a father should give his son, but Richard rather thought cultivating high spirits could do the boy no harm since he had not come by them naturally.

“I can say what I want right now?”

“Yes.”

“M. Enjolras asked Henri what he wanted in a new tutor. Henri’s tutor got sacked. So M. Enjolras asked Henri what he wanted.”

“How very enlightened.”

“I want a natural philosopher who speaks German,” Julien burst out in a flood.

“I will take it into consideration.”

“Really?”

“You may have to accept one or the other. That is how life works; we rarely get everything we want.”

“I understand.”

Richard wished Julien didn't understand, that it was a phrase of surrender rather than a sign of comprehension, but it had been a difficult year for them all. The baby, then the preparations for Julien's first communion, the heated conversations about schools, losing one tutor because the boy couldn't take the pressure of Julien's intense concentration anymore, then the illness, the fear, Cécile's unfortunate but necessary flight, and then having to explain to Julien why his mother had left him. And now the awkwardness of his recovery, not only in the physical sense, but of the family as well. Julien was too old and had too penetrating a mind to blindly accept words of love. Cécile would not have her actions questioned by her own son, especially when he was only twelve years old. She would not apologise. Richard had his own business worries and was not particularly keen on playing the womanly role of reconciliation within his own house. Everything would be easier if the doctors had been less strict, less worrying in their insinuations that the illness had been entirely preventable if Julien's nature had been different. They would have found a new tutor already, Julien would be back to his books, and he would almost certainly be happier. But if the doctors were correct, Richard could never forgive himself if his indulgence led to the death of his son. Little Charles was not a replacement in any sense.

They had approached the last hill before the house would come into view. “Put your hat on. Your mother doesn't need to know what we've been up to.”

Julien smiled as he obeyed. There was at least that benefit – his cropped hair was still so short the wind made no difference in how it lay. His mother would have no evidence of their misbehavior.

Chapter 6: Summer's lease hath all too short a date

“I believe I have found a suitable replacement for M. Duval,” Jean-Pierre told his son one evening. With some difficulty, Henri refrained from pulling a face. “His name is François, and he will arrive on Thursday. I have told him that your interests run more to history than to poetry,” Jean-Pierre added rather sardonically.

“Thank you, Father.”

Henri did not look at all forward to the end of his freedom, but he was grateful that he had been given a day of notice rather than be told the new tutor would arrive on the morrow.

It was a sad meeting with Julien when Henri finally made it to the beach. “I'll never see you again.”

“Don't say that,” Henri insisted. “I'm going to do my best. I'll sneak books down here as often as I can.”

“But it won't be the same. I should have known it was too good to last.”

“It won't be the same,” Henri agreed, “but come down here as often as you can. That way I can find you. It's my land, and I'm telling you can come down here whenever you want.” Julien nodded. “Come on, let's go swimming. I might not get a chance the rest of the summer.”

Splashing in the surf would have been more fun if not for the feeling that each had, despite Henri's

insistence, that it was the last time, not just for swimming, but for anything. A little month the acquaintance had lasted, and Julien was certain it would not be renewed. Henri had his doubts. When they parted at last, though each said only “au revoir”, they embraced with the fervour of an “adieu”.

M. François turned out to be younger than Henri had expected, and for the first week, at least, concentrated his Latin lessons on Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, not a line of verse in sight. He seemed to want Henri to like him, and his dinner conversation with Jean-Pierre was wide-ranging and agreeable once he understood that it was not a rare invitation to the master's table but a nightly requirement. M. François was also something of an artist, it seemed, for he asked Henri if he might care for lessons in drawing.

Henri did not much care for lessons in drawing, but he said yes in order to be agreeable. If M. François was trying so hard, he might as well be nice. But during the first lesson, in drawing a cube in three dimensions, he hit upon an idea. With such fine weather, it was surely ridiculous to draw cubes indoors when one might go outside, possibly even go down to the beach to conduct drawing lessons.

It was Henri's first attempt at intrigue. First, he expressed greater joy in drawing than he actually felt, then after another few lessons in cubes and cones, he carefully happened to praise the view of a very picturesque fishing village that one had from certain parts of the property. Of course, the geography of the point made it impossible to see Les Goudes from the part of the beach where he had met Julien, which is why Julien had chosen it as a hideout, but there was indeed a view if one went further on and rounded a strange outcropping. It was not actually a lie, even in intent – if they went on to where there was a view, they would have to pass the relevant section of beach. Well, perhaps it was a lie – Henri had no idea if the village was at all picturesque, merely that one could see it. M. François proved either very easily led or very curious about his new pupil because he followed Henri's lead without question. Henri had no chance to alert Julien, but he was very careful with his timing when M. François finally suggested they consider the rudiments of landscape sketching.

Julien was on the beach, buried in the final scene of *Macbeth*, when the rustling approach of multiple footsteps startled him out of Scotland. It was impossible to leave without being caught, especially as his stockings and shoes were in one direction and his hat and coat in another. Frozen in debate over what to leave and if it might just be best to ascend one of the trees, he was relieved to hear Henri's voice call, “There's a very fine view from over here!” Indeed, Henri called out precisely to alert Julien, though his voice was so loud as to make his intent patently obvious to M. François.

Henri grinned broadly on seeing his friend, well-pleased with the result of his intrigue. Julien shared a small smile but recovered his manners almost immediately. There was a stranger, an adult, after all, whose presence must be respected. He bowed very politely to M. François. “Good afternoon, monsieur. My name is Julien Combeferre.” He feared he looked rather ludicrous, half dressed in the summer heat, more like the fishermen's sons than the young gentleman he was. The only thing he could do was stand as straight as possible and be very particular about his manners.

“Can Julien join in the lesson?” Henri asked. It had seemed the perfect plan. Rather than sneak out books for his friend, why not sneak out the tutor?

“Where ought you to be?” M. François asked Julien, not unkindly, but with a certain bemusement. He was not entirely certain what he had expected, but a polite boy with a northern accent was not quite it.

“Henri has given me permission to use the beach whilst I endure my convalescence. The illness is several months gone, monsieur; there is no infection.”

“He's not supposed to be studying because of a brain fever, but drawing would not excite the brain too much, would it?”

“I'm not sure,” M. François said in confusion. “I am not a physician.”

“I brought an extra board,” Henri insisted brightly.

“I don't know. Your father might not approve.”

“We own the house on the hill. My father has done business with M. Enjolras,” Julien said more calmly than he felt. Every inclination was to apologise and go, but Henri had so obviously tried to put all this together, and he did not really want to go home at all. “And my father is looking into the possibility of hiring a drawing master for me himself.” He feared he was modeling his voice too much on his mother's tone, but she had so often told him how to insist without bragging – to brag is ill-bred – that he was fairly certain he had threaded that very delicate needle.

“Perhaps some botanical sketching, then,” M. François suggested. There was no view to speak of, and some studies of a few leaves and a couple of flowers would perhaps keep the boys occupied. The Combeferre boy was polite and well-spoken, after all, with a northern clip to his voice, self-assured in how he spoke of his family. François did not know the names of all the great families in Marseille, and he had briefly mistaken the house on the hill, a large house of some age, in a pleasant construction, for where he would be employed. Whatever business had been conducted between M. Enjolras and M. Combeferre, it was an affair of equals rather than a favour done by the lesser man for the benefit of his superior, François felt certain.

Henri was in high spirits, higher than François had seen in his brief tenure, and the Combeferre boy appeared to take real interest in not merely the drawing of leaves and flowers but what François knew of the leaves and flowers themselves. He seemed a bit shy at first, but by the end of the long afternoon, he lost all hesitation and asked pointed questions about the subject matter. When François finally insisted that they really must bring the lesson to an end, Julien thanked him profusely, grinning with a happiness Henri had not even seen and did not fully understand. Botany was boring. But then, maybe after so many months, it was a treat to learn anything, even botany. As he and Henri walked back to the house, François had the unsettling feeling that he had taught more to the interloper than to his own pupil.

Henri was too flushed with the success of his intrigue to remember to ask M. François to say nothing to his father. François had the sense not to embarrass his pupil, but he did manage to engineer a private meeting with Jean-Pierre after dinner.

“Forgive me, monsieur, but I have little knowledge of the city.” He had been hired out of Aix, after all. “Should I know the name Combeferre?”

“Ah, you have met our neighbour. I had rather thought that after that letter, his father would keep him

in.”

“In that case, monsieur, I fear I've done something very wrong.”

“Being hoodwinked by an eleven year old is very wrong.”

“I hope I was not hoodwinked,” François said defensively. “Your son expressed an interest in landscape drawing far greater than he has yet evinced for anything. I was curious, so I permitted him to string me along. Only so that I might most readily discover what was afoot without creating bad blood between us. A difficult atmosphere does not assist education.”

“And he strung you along to a secluded stretch of beach where you found another boy of approximately his own age.”

“Yes, monsieur, that appeared to be the plan. But the boy had such nice manners that I allowed it to go on. I permitted him to join us for a drawing lesson. That is what I fear was wrong.”

“I have no doubt his manners are good. His father made him write a letter of apology for trespassing on our land, and it was very prettily worded. Indeed, I've had men working for me who could not write such a letter. But I had thought that would be the end of it. I'll speak to Combeferre. And to my son. The strategy was very poor. Now you know where they go, so he must either make an ally of you, or forgo his long term aims.”

“My loyalty is of course with your aims, monsieur.”

“Stay a moment. What did you think of the Combeferre boy?”

“Very well mannered. Well-spoken in a northern sort of way. Of more serious demeanour than your son. He explained his unencumbered presence as the result of a prolonged convalescence, and indeed, he has the look of it. What else? Fascinated by botany.”

“Botany?” Jean-Pierre asked in surprise.

“I had been played false about the view, so we did a lesson in botanical drawing instead. I am no botanist, monsieur, but I know something of stamens and pistils, and he was very eager to learn all I could teach. He seems quite intelligent. His questions were always very good, and I fear had we any more time, he would have begun to exhaust my meager capabilities in the subject. But your son did not share his interest, and I fear the lesson was of more use to the other boy. Please forgive me.”

“Say nothing of it. I'll speak to Combeferre.”

Speak to Combeferre he did. When Richard Combeferre had appeared at his café and given him the letter, along with his own apology, they had chatted more than they had in ten years and got on rather well. It was only fair to return the visit, to find Combeferre's preferred café and buy him a drink and finish talking out what the hell was going on.

“It's not my place to tell you how to raise your son.”

“No, it is not, but I should like your advice, since you are determined to give it. I don't know what to do with him,” Combeferre admitted. “To hire a nurse would be ridiculous. His health is fine, and moreover, he is twelve years old, past his first communion, and until this illness, we were seriously considering sending him to school in the autumn. I cannot send him back to infancy. But the doctors are adamant that too great an excitation of the brain will bring the fever back. Outdoor exercise and no studies. If he were a girl, he'd be in the charge of his mother, but as it is, well, you know how it is. I have a business to run. I cannot merely take a couple months holiday to take the boy riding and play games, and if I hire someone, he'll end up in the library. I am sorry for how they met, but really, I'm damned grateful that he's finally attached himself to another human being for a reason other than book learning.”

“Perhaps we should have done something sooner. Forgive me, but your wife -”

“Has social prejudices I'd rather my sons not pick up too strongly. But it has been a very useful marriage in its time. We've both been rather unlucky, though. You grew up with siblings, didn't you?”

“Of course. A brother and two sisters.”

“I only had sisters. Scattered, now. And the inheritance law makes me glad I've only got the two boys. You won't have to worry about a split. But there's something to be said about family life, and how do you have family life with a single child? Sure, I've got two now, but it's too late for them to have anything to do with one another. I can't imagine what school will be like for him. He's keen enough on books, but I fear I've not prepared him well to be keen on other boys.”

“For Henri's sake, perhaps I should have remarried, but then, wouldn't a woman privilege her own children above a stepson? Especially since the estate will be split regardless of the mother? If it weren't for your wife, I'd be willing to allow quite a lot between the boys. But I don't think she'd approve.”

“Leave Cécile to me. Say, I've been thinking, if I brought in a drawing master or a music teacher a couple times a week, that would do something for the boy but keep him out of the library, wouldn't it?”

“I'd say drawing could be done wholly outside in fine weather and thus keep him well away from the library.”

“I don't suppose you'd know of anyone.”

“These manoeuvres are clumsy for a man of your reputation. Has Julien told you about their latest escapade or hasn't he?”

“There's a latest escapade?”

“Henri managed to trick his tutor into giving drawing lessons to your son.”

“I told him to stay off the beach without permission.”

"I got the whole story from the tutor. He might be interested in earning a few extra francs. Your son seems to have impressed him."

"Yes, that is Julien's forte," Combeferre replied tiredly. "Impressing tutors until they learn that such knowledge and concentration come at the price of rest. Really, it's a miracle it took twelve years before something like this happened."

"I am sorry. At least he has recovered."

"Thank god. It was touch and go for a while. Well, you know how that is. Are you offering your man's services?"

"If he is agreeable. Drawing lessons a couple of times a week couldn't hurt. Henri could use some time with another child before I send him to school. Catechism shouldn't be the first time he meets his peers."

"We'll be leaving town at the end of September, at usual."

"Perfect. By the time you come back, they'll have completely forgotten each other."

"He's not his mother's son, you know. Well, he's of his mother born, but there's no sympathy between them. We get on better behind Cécile's back. I know she was rather short with your wife."

"Henri isn't to go over there. I don't want him anywhere near her. No offense to you."

"No, it's understood."

"That's why I offer my man. My gardens. My house, even. If we limit it, we control it. There are two months remaining, roughly, correct? Twice a week, sixteen meetings."

"If left to their own devices, who knows what they might try after this success. Sixteen meetings. Thirty-two hours, let us say. Cécile stays out of it. Thirty-two hours, after what they've already done. And we'll know what they're getting up to. Agreed. If your man agrees."

"We've always been able to do business."

"We're reasonable men. My wife's social aspirations should never get in the way of that."

François proved willing, and thus on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, to the boys' great delight, Julien was permitted to walk over to the Enjolras estate and be tutored in drawing. Which quickly degenerated into games of battledore and shuttlecock and anything else they might find to do in the Enjolras gardens.

Sixteen meetings. Thirty-two hours, in theory, though in practice somewhat longer. Cécile complained to her husband, but he insisted that it was the best possible preparation. Yes, M. Enjolras was a parvenu, but one did have to learn the various sorts of people in the world, and he was a good man of business. It was one summer, and the relationship was safely under control. And, knowing Julien,

once he was permitted his books again, there would be no reason to worry that he might want to continue a friendship that was long over. Jean-Pierre was relieved when the Combeferres left – after all, by the time they returned, Henri would have moved on to other interests. François could be trusted not to put undo attention on the idea of what the Combeferre boy might be doing right now. By next summer, it would all blow over. There was no reason to extend the acquaintance when the boy might grow up like his mother rather than his father, after all. A potentially unfortunate conjunction of events turns to short-term benefit, fitting to the instincts of men of business.

No one expected that the boys might have a tenacity more mature than their years.

Chapter 7: This is the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face

They were sitting in the salon after dinner. Henri was supposed to be studying, but he had got hold of the Herodotus translation again. François had a volume of poetry, while Jean-Pierre was theoretically reading the newspaper. When François went outside for a smoke, lounging against the French doors with a pipe in his mouth, Jean-Pierre set aside his paper.

“Henri, have you a franc?”

Henri looked at his father in confusion. No one ever gave him money. “No,” he answered warily.

“Well, then I suppose this letter is mine, since I paid the delivery.”

“A letter?” he asked excitedly.

“From Paris. Who would you know in Paris?”

“Julien wrote me!”

“But you haven’t the postage.” He started to open it.

“Papa!”

“I shall read it when you’re done.”

“Fine,” Henri agreed, grabbing at his prize. Julien had promised he would write, and here was the proof.

Dear Henri,

I hope this letter finds you well. The trip took rather longer than planned, otherwise I would have written you sooner. We had rain in Lyon that bogged us down for days. It’s funny, but I actually rather like my mother when we are traveling. She knows the vagaries of travel and does not complain about the roads or the inns when things are less than perfect. Travel would not be so pleasant if my mother were her usual self. And travel also means I’m finally permitted to be anywhere near my baby brother. Not that Charles is in the least interesting, being only a year old, but I was even charged with holding him from time to time. It is very nice to be trusted again. Especially because I never did anything

wrong in the first place.

The best part, though, is that I'm allowed into the library again. And I was right, my Latin has gone sadly downhill. I had thought I might kill two birds with one stone and write you in Latin, because I need to study and you need to study, but I can't do it. I thank you again for the loan of the books. I'm afraid my reading would have sadly gone off, especially in English. I'm having a hard enough time getting back into Greek as it is. I wish I knew how to repay you, but I can't really send you anything at the moment. Get M. François to take you through Thucydides. You'll really like it, I promise. I'm so glad we have a library. My mother has already had some of her friends to visit, and I don't think I could bear if I had to see them every time I wanted a book or if I had to keep my books in my room to avoid seeing them. They dress very nicely, and some of them are still very pretty, but they are all horrid. I've missed our library here. It's above the grand salon, in the front of the house, so the tall windows let in the best light, and it's terribly comfortable in the winter to sit in front of the fire with a book when the grey midday light comes in. Some of our books are older than my grandparents, and I'm allowed to read them all. I don't like the ones about religion, but they're all so dusty that I don't think anyone in my family has opened them in longer than I've been alive. And the windows look out onto the square, so you can watch the neighbours and their guests come and go, which can be ever so interesting when someone is having a party.

My father says he'll start interviewing tutors as soon as his business allows. With any luck, everything will be back to normal by the beginning of November, because my mother is planning a dinner party for then and she'll want me safely occupied out of the way. And I've been promised that we'll go to the theatre soon. Not on one of the fashionable nights, of course, and in the stalls, not a box, but the theatre! I've only ever been to the theatre once before. I'm to have a new suit for it, too. I like that we go back and forth between Paris and Marseille because it would be horrid to have to swim in the Seine, and we only have the public gardens here, but in Marseille, we don't go to the theatre and sometimes I get to go on outings to the zoo and there are so many people to watch in the public gardens. My father says that when he was my age, Marseille was still completely within the old boundaries of the walls – how funny is that to think! He says that in ten more years, we'll be practically in town. It takes longer to get across Paris, within the barrières, than it does to get from our house to the docks in Marseille. And not just because of the traffic. It's actually farther.

My mother's whole family is coming to dinner on Sunday, including my grandparents. I don't look forward to it. They expect me to play with Jérôme, which is stupid, because he's 8. We might get to go for a drive if the weather holds, but I'd rather ride, except they don't keep a horse for me in Paris. My grandparents are old and my aunt and uncle are boring and Jérôme isn't any fun. I wish you could be there. It would be ever so much more amusing.

I miss you. I'll always think of you when I read Macbeth.

In friendship,

Julien Combeferre

Henri read it three times through before finally, reluctantly, handing it over to his father. "I get it back, don't I?"

“It’s not a billet doux, I should hope.” Jean-Pierre read quickly, commenting out loud. “His penmanship is very good – you could do to take lessons from him. What’s this about loaning books?”

Henri flushed bright red. “They’re all back on the shelves.”

“You should ask permission. Bring me what you took down there – someone needs to brush the sand out.”

“We didn’t get them all sandy!” But he collected all the books and brought them to his father.

“*Gallic Wars*. I stained this one myself, you needn’t worry. Catullus. You were studying? *Macbeth*. You don’t even read English.”

“But Julien does. He told me the whole story of *Macbeth* after he read it. And *Hamlet*, too.”

“He was supposed to be convalescing, not studying.”

“Reading stories isn’t studying, is it?”

“It is when they’re plays in English verse. Nothing in French?” Henri handed over the Molière. “I suppose it is light reading compared to the rest. Is that all?”

“That’s all.”

“Well, you’re right. Only Catullus is distinctly gritty. You can put the rest away.” He went back to the letter. “It is because of the traffic, you know. You can’t get anywhere in Paris in a hurry because of the traffic. If it is a greater distance across Paris than from here to the docks, it’s only because the streets curve all around and are wide enough to be stopped up with traffic.”

“You’ve been to Paris?” Henri asked in awe.

“Not since before the Revolution, but yes.”

“What’s it like?”

“Dark and gloomy. The sun isn’t the same that far north. Neither is the wind. The smoke of the city just sits there, doesn’t move on. Rains an awful lot more. Freezes in the winter. They get snow, which then melts and turns everything into a godawful muck. All the men are fortune hunters – not that there’s anything wrong with that as long as there are fortunes to get. And all the women are either, uhm, for the public or have the personality of Mme Combeferre.” It was perhaps a bit early for Henri to learn that Paris was full of whores and bitches, though that unvarnished truth had been Jean-Pierre’s experience in the capital. “I don’t miss it for an instant.”

“Did you go to the theatre?”

“Yes. The theatre here in Marseille is nearly as fine. In fact, it’s smaller than the fashionable Parisian theatres, so one gets better views if one cares what goes on on the stage, which is unusual in Paris.”

“Did you meet my mother in Paris?”

“How long ago do you think the Revolution was? I met her in Lyon, many years later. She was nothing like Mme Combeferre.”

“You like M. Combeferre don’t you? Why do you think he married someone you don’t like and Julien doesn’t like?”

“Not everyone marries for love. His wife has good connections in Paris, with the previous government, I believe. There are many ways to benefit from marriage. He chose to make a powerful alliance.”

“And you?”

“Fell in love. I made my own money; I didn’t need your mother’s. I made myself worthy of her attention.”

“Do you still miss her?”

“Every single day. But I am very glad I have you. Ah, François!” The tutor had just returned. “I would appreciate if you might work on Henri’s penmanship. His little friend shows him up considerably.”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“Can I write back?”

“At least now he asks for permission. I don’t know. Does Julien Combeferre have money with which to pay postage?”

“I don’t know.”

“Then you ought to ask his father, not me.” Henri’s face fell. He had no idea how to write to M. Combeferre to ask such a favour. “Write back. We’ll see what happens.”

“What happens if you don’t pay for a letter?”

“The post office takes it back and burns it.”

“That’s awful!”

“Well, you didn’t want it enough to pay for it.” Jean-Pierre handed the letter back to Henri. “I ought to make you write back in Latin, since he’s so keen on it.”

“My Latin isn’t good enough.”

“Is that my fault? Three sentences a day, shall we say?” he asked François.

"I think that can be done, monsieur."

"Fine," Henri sighed, though he clutched his letter as a girl clutches her first doll. He'd never had a letter before. And it was a very fine letter, too.

"Off to bed with you. I've some things to discuss with M. François."

"Goodnight, Papa."

"Don't you dare sleep with that under your pillow."

"I won't." He had to refrain from rolling his eyes. Under his pillow, indeed. He slept with it on the bedside table so he might read it again first thing in the morning. It would take a lot of doing to have as interesting a letter to write in response.

Chapter 8: Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems

"I'm not sure we really ought to be parading the boy in public," Cécile mused. "He looks barely recovered and he's turned himself completely brown over the summer." She went on in this vein, off and on, all through dinner. Neither she nor her husband addressed Julien directly, though he was the substance of most of her conversation, revolving around the trip to the theatre his father had promised, the trip delayed three weeks already.

Richard finally snapped, not just over her remarks tonight but because they had gone on for three weeks. "Just because you cannot see the forest for the trees does not mean everyone else is blind. No one is going to fixate on the exact shade of his skin, and you are the only person who remembers what his hair looked like before. It has grown back quite well. You only note it because you know what has happened." Martine had shaved off ringlets during the illness, but they had come back only as a mild wave, a permanent reminder of what had happened. Julien did not particularly care about his appearance, but his mother was not at all pleased.

When at last dinner was over, Cécile retreated to the drawing room, but Richard kept Julien back. "I've had a letter from M. Enjolras."

"I'm sorry," Julien apologized quickly, not looking at his father. "I should have asked permission. From you and from M. Enjolras."

"Your mother does not approve."

"I know. I'm sorry. If I might write just once more, to apologise. It would be terribly rude to just stop."

"Your mother and M. Enjolras do not get on."

"I know. Henri told me. Mother is Mother. She behaved the way she always does, probably. I don't

blame M. Enjolras at all.”

“You should really not go behind her back on this.”

“I know. Once I start school, I shall meet plenty of suitable boys, some of whom will have titles they will inherit and look down on us for being in trade,” he recited in an annoyed sing-song. “I know.”

“Tell me about Henri,” Richard asked kindly.

Julien shook his head. “There isn’t anything to say.”

“You like him enough to write to him behind our backs, but not enough to tell me about him?”

“He’s the most amazing person I’ve ever met. There aren’t the words in French.”

“But there are in other languages?”

“I know why Catullus wanted to kiss honey-sweet Juventius,” he burst out. “Except I don’t want to kiss Henri. But I know why Catullus wanted to.”

“Oh really? And who told you to read that particular poem?”

“No one. You let me read anything in the house.”

“I did not realize your Latin that good.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Catullus and Juventius. Why?”

“Juventius was all the world, golden and bright and shining like honey dripping from the comb. All the sunlight, all the flowers distilled into one bright shining stream, sweeter than anything because all the impurities are taken away.”

“But Juventius did not return Catullus’ affection.”

“That’s because Catullus should never have tried to kiss him. That was stupid. Men aren’t for kissing.”

“No, men aren’t for kissing,” Richard agreed. “Perhaps I should be more attentive to what you read.”

“I’ve been very bad,” Julien admitted.

“What do you mean?”

“Henri loaned me books.”

It was not unexpected: of course an eleven year old would be even more susceptible to Julien's pleas than a tutor. "We'll consider it an experiment."

"The doctors were wrong. I didn't get sick."

"You also did not spend all day and night reading."

"I didn't actually miss it."

"Because you were doing it."

"That's not what I mean. I mean—" He paused, took a deep breath, then tried to manage his words. "It was nice to have someone to talk to, who didn't care that I'm not like him. I wish I could be more like him. He finds it so easy to believe in the world, in people. In me. He's better at everything that's not in books. And I really liked doing not-book things with him. The drawing lessons mostly weren't drawing," Julien admitted. "We were playing games in the garden. And it was the best thing I've ever done," he added, his dark eyes shining with the joy he tried to keep out of his voice.

"Some people send their children away to school at the age of ten. Your mother and I thought you too delicate for that. Perhaps we were wrong."

"I don't think I'm going to like school."

"Why not?"

"Most boys are more like Jérôme than like me or Henri, aren't they?"

"There are all sorts of people in the world," Richard answered kindly. "You'll end up meeting them all someday."

"Are there other people who make you feel warm and happy like the southern sun just by standing next to you?"

"Yes. Are you sure you're not taking this a little too seriously?"

"I don't know."

"Honey-sweet Juventius?"

Julien pulled a face. "The idea of kissing him is disgusting. I just meant I know why Catullus would want to. Lesbia is beautiful and ought to be kissed, and she knows it, which is why she lets everyone else in town kiss her. Juventius is enthralling and makes the world seem better just because he exists in it. But if you lick the honeycomb, you might get stung, and you'll deserve it, too. But I'm sorry. I was wrong to make friends with him because Mother considers him unsuitable. She knows what I must do socially, and I should not contradict her. I'll write and apologize. To M. Enjolras, too, for my impertinence. If I may."

Richard did not want to be the cause of discord. He knew he ought to have that letter written and sent for his wife's sake, possibly even for his son's sake in future, but the warmth in Julien's voice, the half-smile with which he talked about his friend, were the sort of thing Richard had not seen from him since Mr O'Brien left nearly two years before. If O'Brien could just come back, everything would be ideal. He was the only one who had ever seemed to completely understand the boy. O'Brien would permit the friendship to go on. What's the harm in writing a few letters? he'd say. Even one more summer, what's the harm? He'll make his own choices of friends once he goes to university, and you'll have no choice but to stay out of it. So why worry so over something that'll end when he starts school? You respect the father; why not respect the son? Julien holds himself aloof from everyone. He's got plenty of instincts for self-preservation. Pounce on the cracks before they close up. How do you think I got so far with him?

Yes, but you think I don't know he slept with that book you gave him for a whole week after you left, Richard told the O'Brien of his imagination. We may keep his mother in the dark, but the staff tell me everything.

Julien was looking at the table, not daring to meet his father's eyes now. He was already beginning to compose his apology in his head because it would take some doing, finding the right words to inflict as little hurt as possible.

Richard looked again at the letter. Neatly folded, good quality paper, the handwriting distinctly childish. "I have something for you." Julien did not dare expect anything, even from such a statement. He looked up and was confused to see his father smile softly as he passed the letter to him. When he saw the childishly written address, his eyes widened.

"He wrote back?"

"Don't send your mail by Martine anymore. It was a nice try, but your mother is one annoyance from ordering the girl sacked. I don't know yet how we're going to keep this from her, but I'll see what can be done."

"Thank you, Father," Julien said solemnly, though a smile played across his lips when he looked down at his prize. He hid the letter carefully, however, and joined his mother in the salon.

"What did your father want with you?"

"Nothing important."

"Richard, what were you doing with the boy?"

"Discussing Catullus."

"Julien, if you're going to read, you could do it aloud." He had already managed to get a book open. "Something nice. It would be nice to pretend we are a family, wouldn't it?"

Thus he spent his evening reading Wordsworth aloud, his father idly correcting his pronunciation from time to time. Richard had been in England before the revolution, had been friends with Englishmen in

Paris, thus it was not a surprise when he had hired an Irish refugee to tutor his son or that he had manoeuvred the captains of the blockade very well when it appeared the Emperor would fall. Wordsworth may have been a gift from O'Brien, but it was not out of place in that household. Cécile was accustomed to poetry in languages she did not understand.

Richard read back over Jean-Pierre Enjolras' letter as Julien read and Cécile picked at her embroidery.

That boy of yours is determined, I'll give him that. Barely arrived back and he's writing to my son. If I had sense, I'd put a stop to it. But I can't bring myself to. Your son is odd, worryingly so. He actually said that he wanted to write his letter in Latin. That in itself was enough to make Henri go joyfully into the classroom to take up Latin composition, which he hates. And he is suddenly determined to learn enough Greek to read Thucydides. I assumed it a passing fling, something he would drop in a few days like every other enthusiasm that has ever taken him. It's been two weeks and he shows no sign of abating. He wants to live up to your son.

I haven't seen much of your boy by choice. I know you've not laid eyes on mine. I don't know anymore how strongly I want to put a stop to whatever it is they've got going, but I do know they can't keep it up behind our backs anymore. They literally cannot afford it now that money must change hands. I've enclosed a letter from my boy to yours. I'm inclined to permit a reasonable continuation, there seeming to be benefits on both sides, but the decision is yours. I just hope, for all our sakes, that your son takes after you rather than your wife.

It was not the first time Richard had wished he had married a more sympathetic woman, but those feelings had been coming more often of late, always in reference to their son. He wished he knew how to tell Julien that it was hardly appropriate that strangers recognize him as odd. He should not have to consider the advice of a complete stranger, or what a departed employee might say, when determining just how to raise his son. And he did not really want to hear that his twelve year old son had been reading those poems from Catullus and had understood them. But even watching him in the dim light as he read, Richard thought he could tell something was afoot. Julien did not let on through a glance or a touch just which pocket hid his letter, not once during the evening, but whenever he looked up at a correction his father made, his eyes shone with his contained excitement. But Richard was not certain how to tell his wife without bringing her concerns down on the boy.

It was rather late when Julien was sent to bed, though he did not mind. The delay had merely quickened his excitement. By the light of a single candle, he opened the wax seal and carefully unfolded the letter. At a quick glance, it was not so long as his had been, but there were a great many question marks. How like Henri, to have more questions than answers, he thought. He read it through once, then folded it again and slipped it inside one of his books so it would not disappear before he had a chance to reply. He slept soundly that night, better than he had slept since leaving Marseille.

Chapter 9: I feel now / The future in the instant

While Julien wanted to simply head next door the moment the carriage pulled into the great drive, he settled for sending a note with one of the staff. It was late enough, in any case, that the family intended only to bathe after the long, dusty journey and sup briefly before going to bed. Mr Parker had not handled the journey well – one would have thought an Englishman accustomed to travel now that he made his living in a foreign land, after all, but he claimed he had always been used to the sea. The dust

was what he could not abide. Unpacking could wait until the next day.

The note was delivered to Jean-Pierre, though Julien had deliberately addressed it to Henri. Jean-Pierre withheld it until he had a chance to speak with François alone to arrange how precisely they ought to manage what would be an immediate demand to see Julien. In response, Jean-Pierre sent a reply to Richard, stating that if he were agreeable, or inclined to permit a visit in any form, that it would have to be after two o'clock. François was fairly certain that he could get some teaching done in the morning if the visit were a bribe, and if Julien were not permitted to come, Henri had a tendency to waste his afternoons, anyway.

Neither of the boys were told the results of these negotiations until the next morning. Before Jean-Pierre left for town, he passed Julien's note to Henri. "Not until this afternoon. And M. François has veto power if you don't finish your work."

Julien received notice in writing from his father. "Since you are so inclined, I permit you to make a visit to the Enjolras house of no more than two hours no earlier than two o'clock. Parker has been told that you have permission. Go by the main road and the front door – it is unseemly to sneak onto other people's property, even when invited."

Julien had hoped to get away that morning, to avoid being pulled in to help Parker unpack the school things and collection cases, but at least permission was granted. His mother spent the morning directing the unpacking, worrying that certain trinkets be put away since Charles had developed a taste for climbing. "I don't know why that child must get into everything. You certainly never did," she told Julien as he had to pass by with an armload of books. The library in the Marseille house was larger than in Paris but also older: it had a greater supply of the sort of religious texts no one opened as well as a large supply of the novels his mother read. She did not read much in Paris, having more social duties to take up her time. There were only perhaps five or six other families in Marseille with whom she socialized, and even then, this was on account of her husband's business. Still, in Marseille, she took more notice of Charles even as Julien had a wider space in which to avoid her.

After the noon meal, Julien asked if he might go for a walk. This was the signal he had arranged with Parker – they would botanise for an hour or so before happening to turn up at the Enjolras estate. Indeed, the prospect of botanising along the Mediterranean was what had prompted Parker to accept the position, a position that was otherwise rather below a man of his age and education. Once out of sight of the house, and with Parker disappointed that spring had passed them by, Julien explained his whole history with Henri, mostly in English though lapsing into French when he could not think of a word or phrase and staying there once he realized Parker was not really listening. Parker half listened, managing to note the basics as his attention was taken up by the grasses on the verge of the road. He perked up when Julien said, "And his tutor, M. François, taught me botanical drawing."

"There is another botanist around?" he asked in his fine country English.

"Not really," Julien replied in the same language. "I think he only dabbles."

"Still, that's something."

"You'll have to remember to speak French because Henri doesn't know a word of English and I don't

think M. François does, either.”

“I do remember what country I’m in. Your accent has gotten much better – we’ll get the Irish out of you yet.”

Julien said nothing. Mr Parker was not Mr O’Brien, and Julien still held out hope that O’Brien would finish his family business in the Indies and come back to France. He had said he intended to, after all. Sure, he might be gone a couple of years, and that was nearly three years ago by now, but one could get delayed. He might still come back, sure, god willing.

They did find a couple of interesting grasses, though Julien found himself more interested in checking the time than in minutely examining the verge of the road. It was with difficulty that he kept himself from running off when Parker determined it was time to go to their appointment.

They were ushered in to one of the salons, which Julien had never seen – he had usually just walked through a gap in the hedge between the properties the previous summer and spent his time in the garden. While he had not been much about in Paris, he had of course seen his uncle’s house, and his grandparents’ house, and the homes of a couple of his mother’s friends. There was a distinct difference in the look of the Enjolras salon, one he could not quite put his finger on. It was not that there was too much gilt, or that all the furniture was of the style of Empire rather than anything older – these were not out of place. The whole thing was simply off key somehow. It must be the lack of a mother, he decided. A salon without a woman was not quite right in itself. French doors led out to the terrace, and instead of obviously looking around at the room, he and Parker took in the view of the gardens.

Henri’s approach was heard before it was seen – one could not mistake the rapid clumping of a boy running down the stairs. “You came!”

“As soon as I could.” The boys embraced fervently.

“Let’s go out in the garden!”

“I should be polite.” Julien introduced Henri to Mr Parker as he had been taught. M. François made it into the room by that point and was included in the introductions before the boys took off outside through the French doors.

“Stay in the garden!” François called after them.

The garden was well-manicured and sloped gently towards the sea, hidden behind a line of cedars planted generations ago as a windbreak for the long-gone château. There were no climbing trees within the confines of the garden, so the boys sat down together on a sunny patch of lawn. It was a beautiful May afternoon, full of southern sun but without the intense heat that characterized summer. Henri could tell that there was something different about Julien. Not so much that he had grown even taller, or that his thick black hair had grown long like a poet’s, tousled by the breeze off the sea, but that he had a half smile on his face, and he lounged in the grass with a casualness he had never managed to bring off the year before. Just as the letters had changed, grown longer and even more detailed as the winter and spring went on, eagerness to please had been replaced by comfort.

“How long did it take to get here?”

“Week and a half. It takes longer getting back to Paris because you have to go up the Rhône.”

“The mail doesn’t take that long.”

“That’s because the mail is carried by a light coach that takes few passengers and little luggage and they get to change horses every couple of hours. And they change drivers, too, so that they can run all through the night. We have our own coach and we stop every night.”

“What’s it like, traveling? I’ve never been anywhere.”

“That can’t be true.”

“I’ve been to the refinery. I’ve been to the receiving office down by the docks. Papa took me to the theatre this winter. I’ve been to mass at Majeure.”

“Town doesn’t count. Neither does riding around the countryside. I can see Marseille from my house. Have you never even been to Les Goudes?”

“Where is it?”

Julien refrained from sighing. “It’s the fishing village around the point.”

Henri shook his head. “I told you. I’ve never been anywhere.”

“You can walk there in an hour. I went with my mother when I was a child and she was doing charity work.”

“Your mother does charity work?”

“I know it’s hard to believe. She’s nicer to the poor villagers than she is to me. Probably because they’re strangers. Well, maybe I should use the past tense. I haven’t gone with her in years, since the war ended. It’s condescending, isn’t it, to give people your old stuff when they used to work for you and you could employ them properly so they could earn wages and buy new stuff instead.”

“Your father employed fishermen?”

“During the war. He needed people with small boats who knew the coast intimately so he could run everything in and out under the blockade. No need for that after the Emperor lost. It’s funny – my mother’s family was in very well with that government, but my father threw in with the English.”

“Does that make him a traitor?”

“I don’t know. The Emperor lost.” He also remembered some things Mr O’Brien had said about the Emperor not being the savior of Europe he could have been, namely “Emperor, my big toe”, but politics was not a subject for polite conversation. “It is better that the war is over. The borders are open

again, and that's all to the good."

"And no one is getting killed anymore. Did you ever see anything interesting during the war?"

"Not really. The same legless soldiers begging who do it today."

"No Grand Army on the march?"

"I didn't even get to see the Emperor's return."

"Have you seen the king?"

"No. We don't travel in aristocratic circles. We are people of commerce, not of blood."

"I mean have you seen his coach going by or anything?"

"Oh. Once. But that doesn't mean he was in it."

"Was it exciting?"

"It's a black coach with a coat of arms on the door. There's a hundred of them in Paris. It was not exciting – I didn't even realize until it had passed that it was the royal seal."

"It must be exciting in Paris, though."

Julien shrugged. "I like it better here."

"Really? It's so quiet here."

"It may be quiet, but at least here, I'm free. It's not safe to wander in Paris. I can do what I like here. And there are no strict schedules." Julien pushed his hair out of his face in a nervous gesture. "And you're here," he admitted.

"You may not have strict schedules, but I do. I'm so glad you're back. You have to tell me everything."

"Everything that happened was in the letters."

"Really? Nothing you wanted to hide from your parents?"

"My parents don't read my letters," Julien told him, somewhat suspiciously.

"What about your tutor? Wasn't he correcting your Latin?"

"No. Why would he need to?"

Henri looked back at the men on the terrace. François was definitely keeping an eye out while translating the gardener's heavier accent and occasional use of patois for Parker, who was enthralled by

the outdoor care of several plants that he had only ever seen cultivated under glass.

Julien's eyes followed Henri's. "You have your own personal secret police. Possibly your father alerts my father to anything worrisome. I know they write to each other."

"But he doesn't talk to you about it?"

"What is there to talk about?"

"You can't tell me you don't leave anything out. You barely mention your mother. You say more about your brother."

Julien looked away and ran a hand through his hair again. "To write something, to commit something to paper, requires that you spend time with it, spend sometimes more time in the memory than you did in the actual act. I don't want to dwell on things that are of no interest to anyone." He had seemed more natural, lighter, happier even in his deflections of Henri's questions about Paris, but this statement brought back all the habitual gloom of the previous summer.

Neither boy said anything for a long time. Julien knew he had broken the mood, and Henri was uncertain how to properly express his sympathy. Julien's letters had always been terribly interesting, but his family never played much of a role. Often, there would be some mention of plans, but no follow up report ever materialized. Mr Parker's appearance on the scene dominated nearly all personal news thereafter. But Henri had not fully noted it between Julien's descriptions of the places Parker took him and the books he read. He had once been granted a lengthy description of one of Mme Combeferre's grand parties – a description in which Mme Combeferre played no more personal role than any of the guests. An observation of events rather than the record of a participant. Henri realized now that there were messages between the lines, that what was not said might be more important than what was said.

He did not know what to say, but he squeezed Julien's shoulder and gave him a look of concern. Julien turned and smiled softly. "I'm glad to be home." But he seemed to realise the horrific sentimentality of the statement, so he tried to cover his emotion, make it more manly, by nudging Henri with his elbow. Which set off a nudging war, elbows flying, until Henri fell over laughing, Julien lying on his back with a grin on his face.

"So how are we going to make this work? You have a tutor now, and I don't want only two afternoons a week."

"I've been thinking about that. How would you like to learn English?"

"I don't know."

"You could read Shakespeare yourself instead of having me hand the plots down secondhand. And there are brilliant political men who only wrote in English. I've got the books, too."

"I don't know that I like the looks of M. Parker." He was middle aged and rather round and oddly excited about a potted plant, to Henri's mind.

“I’m not talking about Mr Parker teaching you. I’m saying I would. And no poetry except Shakespeare, I promise.”

“Really?”

“My father hired Mr Parker because he felt I was falling behind on my English. So, this way, I practice my English, and your father might approve because it’s something M. François can’t teach you, right? And you get something more useful than Greek.”

“I am so glad to hear you say Greek is useless.”

“I didn’t say useless. I said a living language is more useful.”

“But would your father and M. Parker agree?”

“I don’t see why not. They’ve no objections to me skiving off this afternoon.”

“But one afternoon.”

“Mr Parker only took this job so he could get paid to botanise around the Mediterranean. Everyone thinks I don’t know, but I overheard him say something to the staff in Paris when we were packing to leave, and it seems true. He cares more for Linnaeus than for Virgil. I think he’s going to manage to not come back to Paris with us in the autumn, and that’s fine with me. So why not leave him to it?”

“But I have to concentrate on my education.”

“Which is why I’m proposing education. Ask your father. Or I’ll ask him. I can write a very polite letter. ‘Dear M. Enjolras, it has come to my attention that Henri has no knowledge of modern languages whatever. I think this is a pity, for would not English be of use to him and you in your international trade? I would be glad to teach him myself this summer because I think he could make a good job of it. I know you have respect for English literature because Henri loaned me your copy of Macbeth last summer. Imagine how nice it would be if he could read it to you on some windy evening when winter comes!’”

“You’re getting flowery.”

“Ok, so cut that sentence. ‘It would give me great pleasure to share such literature with your son. And for the moment, I would have recourse to my own tutor, Mr Jonathan Parker, a native of Southampton, for any assistance.’”

“Southampton?”

“Or was it Plymouth? I’ll have to ask before I write it, of course. It’s one of the big shipping centers in the south of England. ‘I would not take up too much of Henri’s time, I hope – perhaps a couple afternoons in the week and a few evenings, especially as the light lasts so long in summer.’”

“A few evenings!”

“Am I daring too much?”

“I only hope he would agree to it!”

“I thank you for your consideration, and I hope that my proposal is pleasing to you. Sincerely and humbly, Julien Combeferre.’ Will that serve?”

“Would you really write it?”

Julien shrugged. “If I have to. Why not?”

“It’s so very grown up.”

“Is that an objection?”

“It’s a compliment.”

“Then I thank you.”

“I think you’d better write it. It looks better coming from you. Everything looks better coming from you. If I ask, it’ll look like I’m trying to skive off of Greek or something.”

“That’s why I suggest evenings. You can’t have lessons in the evenings.”

“No. Evenings are family time, when my father doesn’t have business or social arrangements in town.”

“Then I don’t see how he can refuse if he has business in town anyway.”

“Your Englishman is coming.”

Indeed, Parker was walking down to meet the boys. “I am sorry, but your father said no more than two hours.”

“And my mother will already be asking where we have been.” He scrambled up and brushed the grass from his coat and trousers. “I’ll send the letter tonight,” he told Henri.

“Brilliant.”

“Would you please consider putting on your hat?” Parker asked.

Julien sighed but did as he was told. “I’ll come back as soon as I can,” he told Henri.

Henri nodded. “It was nice to meet you, monsieur,” he said to Parker, remembering his manners for perhaps the first time in his life.

“We don’t have to go back through the house. I know a shortcut.” He waved goodbye to Henri from the

bottom of the garden before heading off to where he knew to cut through a break in the hedges that would take even Parker's ample adult frame.

Henri trudged back up to the house and François. Back to his Greek lesson. Thucydides was much more interesting in translation because he could read it fluently.

Chapter 10: *The spirit of enjoyment and desire / Went circling, like a multitude of sounds*

The letter was written and sent immediately upon Julien's return home, without even Parker's knowledge. In fact, it dominated discussion at the Enjolras dinner table that evening.

"Henri, what do you know about this letter?" Jean-Pierre asked firmly.

He was not angry, but Henri was uncertain just what his expression was. He reddened thought it best to say nothing. He didn't have to read the letter to know what it was.

"How old is Julien Combeferre? Thirteen?"

"Yes."

"And the two of you think he's capable of teaching a foreign language?"

"He reads it well enough to read Shakespeare!" Henri protested.

"Is this another of your brilliant schemes, like drawing lessons last summer?"

"It was Julien's idea."

"Do you even want to learn English?"

"Yes." Yesterday, if asked that question, Henri would probably have shrugged or asked if that meant he could give up Greek.

"François, what do you think of their scheme?"

"There will be little studying done, monsieur."

"That's what I thought."

"I'll study! I promise!"

"And has M. Combeferre approved this plot?"

"I don't know. But Julien gets to do whatever he wants."

"Oh, really."

“He gets to wander the countryside unchaperoned. And he says he doesn’t have to keep a strict schedule in the summer.”

“That is an issue for his parents to determine.”

“I’m as old as he was last summer, and I never get to go anywhere.”

“You get to go plenty of places. Just because you’ve never yet seen Paris does not mean you’ve been stuck in the house all your life.”

“Julien has gone to the fishing village by himself.”

“As I said, his parents can set whatever boundaries they like on his behavior. I would prefer you not go wandering about the countryside alone.”

“It’s not fair,” Henri muttered.

“It is perfectly fair. The Combeferres have another son, and doubtless they think of risks in a Parisian sense. Because there is less traffic and a lower concentration of bandits, they probably think this area safe. But I have only you. What would I do if I lost you?”

Henri decided it was not the time to ask if wandering the countryside in Julien’s company might be more acceptable. Jean-Pierre turned the conversation back to the original topic.

“If you want to learn English, we can certainly try that out. Bring someone in a couple of times a week to see how you like it.”

“I’d rather it be Julien.”

“If I may say something, monsieur?”

“Of course.

“Well,” François began, “there are two concerns, are there not? The first, what mischief we might expect over the course of these several months should the boys find themselves dissatisfied with the arrangements we make. The second, in what way any arrangements we make benefit Henri in the future. We must do our best for Henri while managing the ways in which he may harm himself.”

“I haven’t complained about Greek at all in months!” Henri protested.

“Not out loud,” his father said. “I know what you want,” he told his son. “You would most enjoy being left free to run around with your friend like a couple of wild Indians. But the noble savage gets nowhere in civilization. You must study. You must be ready for a good school placement. You must do well on your baccalauréat when the time comes. These are not just things that will make me happy but the things that will determine your future, how you will make your way in the world. I cannot afford for you to be uneducated. I cannot afford for you to learn idleness at any age. We all work for

our bread, even you. Your work right now is to become educated, to learn to discipline and organize your thoughts. To learn how to consider your choices and weigh your options and think about the short term and the long term.”

“Julien says languages train the mind.”

“That is true. It is also not a reason for me to think the two of you will actually train your minds in anything except idleness. Do you indeed wish to learn English?”

“Yes.”

“Then I will see what can be done.”

A couple days later, Jean-Pierre managed to find Richard in one of the cafés in town. “Have you seen this?”

Richard read through Julien’s letter. “That was certainly forward of him. I’d feared he was shy, but that seems not at all the case.”

“Yes, it was forward of him. What do you suggest we do?”

“Where did you grow up?”

“In a village not far from Lyon.”

“And what do you remember most about childhood summers?”

Jean-Pierre thought for a long moment. “Long evenings eating apricots until I thought I would be sick.” And then being scolded by his mother because some of those ought to have been dried for the winter. But the autumn was marked by the hard labour of assisting in the vendage, a secret labour that a family of his rank should not have had to perform on their own.

“For me, it was late summer figs. The blessed idleness in the heat of the day. The girls on the swing – until the tree was hit by lightning. The sense that summer was a never-ending joy. I don’t know how to teach my son those pleasures. He never wanted them until he met your boy.”

“Henri doesn’t need the help.”

“We can’t very well keep them separated, and we shouldn’t try. Have there been any ill effects from the relationship thus far?”

“None,” Jean-Pierre admitted. “But in the future –”

“Do you still see any of the boys you knew when you were their age? I grew up here and I only ever see a couple.”

“But our generation was ripped apart and scattered to the winds.”

Richard knew that well enough – he had not seen any of his sisters in years. “Julien will attend school in Paris. Not this autumn – the next. After that, I want him to spend some time on his own in Paris, probably attached to the law school. A sojourn in England at some point. I don’t envision him returning to Marseille for many years. It’s not so much that they will forget each other as that they will only think of each other in that rosy light of memory. I want him to have memories of climbing trees and eating figs until he’s sick and wandering the countryside until he drops. Just as I want him to know all the theatres in Paris and have a mistress or two before he finally settles down and marries. I want him to have the sort of life where he enjoys looking back and isn’t isolated and doesn’t relate every event to whatever book he was reading at the time. He never had an interest in it before, but I think he might now. At least in the necessities of childhood.”

“Not everyone is born to have such a youth.”

“No. But our boys are. Why deny it them?”

“They’re not still children barely out of skirts. “

“Are you convincing yourself at all with this? Because it’s not convincing me.”

“Henri would be grateful if I let him run wild. But I can’t do it. How did you permit your son to range as far as he wanted, alone, last summer?”

“Why shouldn’t I trust Julien? He’s terrified of putting a foot out of line, and I have no idea why, but it does mean he’ll never do anything I would disapprove of. His idea of mischief last summer was reading books from your house. The furthest he ever went was Les Goudes, where everyone knows who he is. My wife took him there constantly whenever she went on my behalf during the war. He wouldn’t dare go into town alone. The worst thing he’s ever done in his life was trespass onto your property, and it took no prodding from either me or his mother to get him to apologise. I may worry for Julien, but his self-preservation instinct is strong enough.”

“Two afternoons a week,” Jean-Pierre relented.

“That’s a schedule.”

“And every other Sunday.”

“And any evening after dinner if the boys wish, with no adults of any sort unless the boys choose otherwise.”

“You have your wife. You cannot expect me to give up my son for months.”

“If they wish, and not on days they’ve had the afternoon together. Or on Sundays.”

“I fear you’re making a very bad bargain with me, Combeferre. Everything for your benefit and I only get quiet for mine.”

“Would you prefer more afternoons?”

“I would prefer what I proposed.”

“I don’t think it will buy you quiet.”

“I hope you’re not right. All right, a counter offer: Tuesday and Friday afternoons, Monday and Wednesday evenings, and every other Sunday, afternoon or evening as they prefer. Yes, it is a schedule, but he needs to study, and I cannot be expected to give up all my time with him.”

“And no adults unless the boys ask for them.”

Jean-Pierre sighed. “Done.” They shook hands on the deal, though he was still uneasy. But Combeferre was right – just because one had worked at hidden labour through childhood in order for the family to scrape together enough to manage a law degree did not mean that one should condemn one's only son to a drudgery that could never really compare. If all labour now were for Henri, so that he might enjoy all the benefits of a wealthy upbringing, then idleness was one of those benefits. But it was a hard benefit to accept. “To commence on Monday. With the Sunday following being a family Sunday,” he insisted.

Nevertheless, he presented the deal to his son after dinner that night. “I have been thinking. I have also had an interesting conversation with M. Combeferre.” Henri perked up immediately, sensing good news. “I did not have an easy childhood. You have benefits I could not have dreamed of for myself. But I have perhaps been focused too much on the future, that there even is such a thing as too great a focus on the future. I don’t want you to look back and think of the classroom and nothing else. Your days will be regimented soon enough. Therefore, M. Combeferre and I have come to an understanding. You and Julien will be free to do whatever you like, together or separate, on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, Monday and Wednesday evenings, and every other Sunday. But you must earn this freedom. If you do not continue to make progress in your studies, I will have no choice but to restrict your schedule. Is that understood?”

“Yes!” Henri threw his arms around his father and hugged him tightly. “Thank you! I love you, Papa.”

“You should love me even when I don’t give you things.”

“I do!” Henri insisted, smiling. He looked even more like his mother when he smiled. “Does that mean I can see Julien tomorrow?”

“On Monday. If you study.”

“I will study, I promise.” It was amazing how things worked out when Julien asked for them.

Chapter 11: Is all that we see or seem / But a dream within a dream?

In their first days of freedom, they ventured little. It was an experiment, after all, and Julien suggested they would have greater success later if they were circumspect now. And, indeed, it was pleasant enough doing little, particularly in Julien's company.

Henri quickly discovered that Julien never went anywhere without a book in his pocket. He was also in the habit of leaving off his hat – and his cravat. Though he was always properly dressed when he left the house, within moments, his hat would be in his hand instead of on his head. Sometimes, he would stand on the beach, his eyes closed, and breathe deep of the wind off the sea as it ruffled his thick, wavy hair. Whenever Henri did not wear his hat, he paid for his audacity with a red face. Julien's olive complexion took in the sun the way his lungs took in the sea breeze – he was in training to be a Parisian gentleman, but nature had seemingly fitted him for the Mediterranean.

The sea in June was a bit too chill for swimming, the mistral pushing the warmer waters further out, but they still stripped off shoes and stockings to play chicken with the breakers. And though it had been an excuse at first, Henri began to learn scraps of English. They sometimes saw Parker, whose enthusiastic botanising amused Henri (mostly to see the rather portly middle aged man laden with specimens), and Julien usually spoke to his tutor in Parker's own language. It only seemed right to ask Julien how to be polite to the odd little man, so he learned “Good afternoon” and “How do you do?” and “I am very well, thank you, sir”. Then Julien started taking him through pieces of Hamlet, and he learned a bit more. It was not at all like Greek and Latin – people actually spoke it, and he could try his knowledge on Mr Parker. But most importantly, it was more a game than a lesson – how could it be education when it was conducted from tree branches and between the waves?

One cloudy afternoon, when the wind suddenly picked up the scent of rain, Julien told him, “No need to go home. My mother's gone visiting.” So Henri was granted his first glimpse of the Combeferre house. It was much older than his house – over a hundred years old, Julien said. It also did not look like his house. Some of the furniture was as old as the house; most of it had been acquired in the intervening years. Julien pointed out a couple portraits of his ancestors in the hall and in the grand salon when he could remember their names. One in particular, a gentleman of the Castelnau line, was terribly pale, his eyes seeming to bulge out of his very small head affixed to a very wide body. Later portraits, of Combeferres before the Revolution, in silk breeches and curled wigs, were much brighter, more accurately drawn, even on occasion beautiful. The whole effect, however, was oppressive. The house was no less light and airy than his own, but the sense of history was sobering. Henri knew nothing of his family history; had he been asked, he would have said there was none, that his father must have sprung fully formed, without a family of any sort, and his mother the same. “We never spend any time in the grand salon,” Julien said. “Just thought you might like to see the paintings.”

The petit salon was, in comparison, surprisingly homey. The french doors to the garden terrace were open, as the approaching storm had freshened the air, and a woman sat knitting in the darkening light while a small child knocked over a tower of blocks. “Juli!” Charles launched himself excitedly at his brother.

Julien picked him up, with a bigger grin on his face than Henri had yet seen. “You're getting too big for me to do this.” They shared a kiss, then Julien told him, “This is my friend Henri. Do you remember your manners? Give him your hand.”

Henri felt distinctly out of his element, but he could not let a two year old show him up. He took the little hand and made the usual pleasantries, rendered comic by the child's inability to respond. Charles wriggled down and pulled his brother over to play with his blocks.

"Oh, and this is Mrs Boland, Charles' nurse," Julien introduced the woman offhandedly. She merely smiled and nodded to Henri, not dropping a stitch in her knitting.

"Are all your servants English?" Henri asked, joining Julien on the floor.

"No, but there's a fashion for English nurses just now, and Mother wouldn't show her face in Paris if she hadn't been able to secure one. We just got lucky that Mr Parker was available. He's of no fashion whatever." Henri refrained from laughing at the truth of the comment – Parker was nowhere to be seen, but it would not do to call Mrs Boland's attention to their conversation. The crack might get back to Parker, and that would be cruel.

It proved an unusual afternoon. Mrs Boland was a silent presence but to Henri, she looked just as a mother should, all round and soft with a kind face under her white cap. And Charles proved a very odd experience. He was so very small and seemingly not quite formed, his dark eyes impossibly big but lacking the depth of Julien's, and his long straight hair so fine as to seem to belong to a fairy rather than a human child. He also had a tendency to chatter incomprehensibly in a childish babble that only occasionally had coherent elements of French. Despite, or perhaps because of, these shortcomings, he was the petty tyrant of the salon, and they built walls and towers to his specifications, only for him to knock down their works like a gleeful Nero when he no longer liked them.

Mrs Boland finally put a calm stop to the fun. "It is time for his nap," she told Julien, her French heavily accented.

"Of course." He spoke slowly to her, enunciating carefully as one does for a foreigner. "We will be in the library."

She hoisted Charles to her hip, ignoring his protests. "Will you say goodbye to our guest? Come, come, my dear." He did wave, and seemed to cheer a bit when Henri waved back. He at least allowed himself to be removed in silence after another kiss from his brother.

Julien closed the french doors and led Henri into the library. He apologised, saying he had really meant that they spend the afternoon in the library, but he couldn't well hide that he was practically beaming.

"You're so lucky," Henri told him wistfully, trying to stamp down his jealousy into a more constructive emotion.

Julien idly spun a globe to avoid looking at his friend. "He can't even say my name properly. By the time he's able to talk, I'll be in boarding school, and I'll barely see him." He stopped the globe. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to rub it in. I swear I didn't know they were down here."

"Rub what in?" Henri knew perfectly well what, but he wanted to hear Julien say it.

“But then, I guess it really isn't the same at all. Because if your mother and brother hadn't died, you were only Charles' age, so you wouldn't even remember him as a baby. It would have been the two of you, raised together.”

“And I probably wouldn't have met you at all. I don't want to play that kind of a what-if.”

The rain started at that moment, fat drops hitting the tall windows with a splash. Both boys turned to watch the first drops. Henri realised, as he watched the rain, that of course Mrs Boland looked like a mother because she was paid to look like a mother. He had been intensely jealous over an illusion, an expensive illusion, but not even a careful one. Of course he had had a nurse – his mother was dead – but Mme Combeferre was just out for an afternoon visit. She would return in the evening, and whatever happy balance he had witnessed that afternoon would be thrown out of joint. There was really nothing to be jealous of.

“I'm sorry,” Julien apologised again, his brow now creased in worry.

“There's nothing to be sorry for,” Henri told him. He finally took the chance to look around properly. “No, I take it back, you are lucky and I'm terribly jealous of you. For this.” His house had a library, of course, a similar sized room to the Combeferre library, and most of his lessons were conducted at the long wooden table in the centre. But the Combeferre library was particularly impressive. The table was ornately carved in green marble, a very heavy antique style unlike the light furniture of his own home. All the lower shelves were packed with books. On the upper shelves, where one expected to find trinkets in the gaps between books, a very fine collection of Chinese pottery alternated with stone carvings of greater antiquity than the table. The chairs near the fireplace were much newer and created a sense of coziness that would not seem out of place if the high shelves and fantastic collections were hidden in the dark of evening. “This is amazing.”

“We inherited most of it, but that one,” Julien pointed to a stone face with a wide headdress and missing nose, “came from the Emperor's campaign in Egypt. My father was contracted to bring back some of the antiquities, and we got to keep this one. He's probably a king, but we don't know which one he is. There are symbols on the back that might be his name, but we can't read their writing. No one can because the ancient Egyptians all died out. The people in Egypt now are Musulman invaders from Arabia.”

The other stone carvings had come from Italy on various family travels before the Revolution. The Chinese vases were among the first porcelain ever brought to France, Julien said, though he qualified it as a family story with no real proof. The table had been made for an Italian duke a century before the house was even built. “My father says it came when he was a boy. The workmen had a devil of a time getting it in here, and that's without the top. The top is new. Well, new when my father was younger than we are.” It was no wonder that Julien seemed to know everything – he had grown up with everything.

They ended up playing chess – even the chess set had a history to it – and watching the rain. Henri won two out of three games, the second after Julien realised he was playing for keeps and he would have to pay attention rather than watch the rain. But Julien was a cautious player, which enabled Henri to make a couple daring moves that caught him out.

After the rain stopped, they heard a carriage on the gravel drive. "Mother's home!" They made a dash into the garden and slid on the wet grass as they hurried to avoid catching sight of her. Mission successful, they walked more calmly back to the Enjolras house, where Julien bid Henri good evening.

"Have you been out in the wet?" Cécile asked when he returned home.

"I was with Henri Enjolras," Julien replied as evenly as he could.

She exhaled sharply in that particularly Parisian manner of showing annoyance, but she said nothing, to Julien's great relief.

Chapter 12: Whatever is done or said returns at last to me, / And whatever I do or say I also return

July brought the temperatures up, both air and sea, so that a cooling swim was no longer a frigid one. Julien was admonished for allowing himself to turn as brown as a peasant, but no one attempted to curtail his free afternoons. Henri had learned moderation after a particularly bad sunburn kept him stiff and sore for a week. But by the second week of the month, they had settled into a pattern of afternoon swims and evenings playing games or reading in the garden. Sometimes they even stayed out until nearly dark, helping Mr Parker capture moths.

Thus it was a surprise when one afternoon, sitting in a tree debating whether or not to leave the shade for a swim, Julien announced, "That's it. I'm taking you to Les Goudes."

"Really?"

"Why not? It's not that far. It's certainly something you've never seen."

"We're not going just so I can stare at them, right?"

"Don't be ridiculous. They're fishermen, not monkeys in the zoo. I haven't been over there in a year, and the old women like me, so I ought to make a visit, and why shouldn't you come with me?" If the Combeferras had kept all the Castelnau lands, and if the Castelnaux had been noble rather than otherwise, it was entirely possible that the village would have belonged to them, the fishermen the descendants of serfs. Julien had always felt a sense of noblesse in how his mother took him in the carriage in order to bring blankets and old clothes and confitures to the village. She went less often after the war ended, and he had quit going altogether until the boredom of the previous summer guided his steps back that way along the beach.

"Is your mother going to be there?"

"Almost certainly not."

"Then I'll go." It was not that Henri was afraid of Mme Combeferre, he would have insisted if asked; he was afraid of his father finding out if he ran into Mme Combeferre.

As they walked down the beach, Julien actually carrying his hat instead of leaving it behind with his

coat, his cravat, and his shoes, he pointed out several of the plants Parker had found interesting. Henri was more interested in the fishing boats dotting the sea and the way it seemed to take forever before the white houses of the village grew any closer.

But up close, the houses were not so white as they had appeared in the glare of the sun, their tile roofs faded and worn and the walls cracked. The women were dark and wrinkled from outdoor labour, the children active enough but busy at tasks in the dry yards or heading back to the vineyards and gardens on the hill above the bay. There was no school for the village, and no church, so conversation was conducted entirely in Provençal. The village itself was merely a half circle of low pale houses, stained by the rain and bleached by the sun, each having a door and a single window through which to let in the light and fresh air. The women worked at their gardens, their once-bright kerchiefs easily visible on the hill, or sat on rough stools outside, mending nets or clothing while shouting at their brown, dirty children. There was a low odor of fish, a constant reek that never quite hit the pitch of decay but never blew away, either. The only animals in sight were an old mongrel dog sleeping in the sun and the usual wild birds. There were not even the chickens one might expect to see pecking through the dust.

Julien made a great show of civility, greeting everyone with “*bonjorn*” rather than “*bonjour*”, wearing his hat so that he might show politeness by tipping it to the shabbily dressed women. He paid particular attention to an old man with white moustaches who spoke French. “*Paire Bournat* helped my father organize the men of the village during the war. *Paire Bournat*, may I present *Henri Enjolras*? His father owns the sugar refinery in *Marseille*.” Henri was surprised to hear that Julien moderated the northern tones to his voice when in this company. He could add syllables and drag out words just like a native, and it sounded perfectly natural in his mouth, despite his Parisian upbringing.

“Ah, the sugar man.” *Père Bournat* nodded in such a way that Henri was rather certain he was condemning his father in a terribly polite manner.

But that was quickly forgotten as Julien coaxed a story out of the old man, who had been in the navy in his youth before he retired with enough money to buy himself a fishing boat, Julien explained later. He had learned his French aboard ship and had traveled as far as the West Indies, which provided him with stories to spare in his old age and a role as translator in his home village, the only man who had been away long enough to be fluent in French and had come home.

The women only spoke Provençal, but they must have been certain that the boys could hardly understand them and so made their good intentions known by signs as much as through words. The boys had white wine pressed on them, which Julien kept insisting be kept to “*sonque un pauc*” despite his many thanks. Henri had spent his entire life here, but Julien seemed to have more of the language than he did. Julien's nurses must have come from Paris if they weren't foreign – local girls could not have ever been fashionable – and the only nurse Henri could remember had been brought down from Lyon. He ought to have had more of the patois than Julien did, and he was not certain if he were jealous or aggrieved or merely disappointed that Julien had bested him even in this. But the women were kind, and Julien seemed to make absolutely nothing of the fact that he had a smattering of their language, and Henri could at least manage to tell them “*mercès*” rather than “*merci*”. He could not tell how old the women might be except for those who were little more than girls – none seemed young and even the children looked old when he looked into their dark eyes. There were no boys of his own age, or young men – they were all aboard the fishing boats.

As Père Bornat talked, Henri stared into the open doorway of his house until he could make out the sparse and rough furnishings inside the dim single room. If there was a floor, it was covered in dust. Everything Père Bornat wore was heavily frayed and patched – even the kerchief tied around his neck was no longer the bright red it must have been when he had bought it many years ago. But soon enough, the story of the battle was too exciting to ignore, and Henri managed to forget the strangeness of the village surroundings and even the poverty of the storyteller as the cannon roared and the enemy would have boarded the ship had not a lucky shot caused them to yaw away. Père Bornat was the sort of storyteller who might as well have been an actor, who relished the images he could create as much as the plot of his tale. The sort of storyteller that Henri had little experience with, his life being arranged for education more than for amusement.

When the old man had finished, Julien took his hand and asked him very seriously, “Is there anything you need, Paire Bournat?”

“Not me, not me, my son.”

“Then who?”

“Touneto. Her husband died this spring.”

“I will tell my mother,” he vowed. “Who else?”

“Everyone. No one. It was better during the war.”

“Yes, when the English paid much gold for information along with their fish.”

“Your father paid more.”

“Perhaps the English will make our peace very difficult.”

“That would be nice.”

They made their goodbyes, though Julien endured being fussed over a bit more by several women to whom he could give nothing but a kiss of the hand. At last, they made their escape. When they were far enough away not to be easily seen, Julien removed his hat and ran his fingers through his hair in an encouragement to the sea breeze. He breathed deeply of the salt air, trying to get the fish out of his nose and the depression out of his heart. While he had originally stopped going not because the poverty depressed him but because he felt like a baby being dragged around by his mother, it was the sense of need that kept drawing him back all of last summer, even as the futility of his visits saddened him. He felt guilty over the delay this year, but it had been in some ways easier to live with that guilt than with the guilt he felt now for how meaningless such visits really were. Henri felt as if he had left his stomach somewhere else, oddly hollow, as if the cup of wine had drained him instead.

“People really live like that?” he asked softly, looking at the sand under his feet rather than at Julien.

“Yes. It isn’t right, is it, that they can look only to charity to improve their lot?”

“What can your mother do for that woman?”

“See that she is fed, see that her children are clothed. We shouldn’t have to kill the rest of France to create a way for one village to live better. Everything has gotten much worse in the past few years. The roofs were better patched when I was younger. They probably bought the tiles in the first place on the proceeds of the war.”

“It must be awful to have to take charity.”

“Père Bornat refuses it for himself.” Julien had dropped his Provençal inflections the moment they left the village, as if he had been addressing the fishermen in a foreign language. “We’ve told him that we’d pay for him to teach the children to speak proper French, that we could find employment for them if they had more than just the patois, but he won’t do it. We can’t support a real schoolmaster because who would watch him while we’re gone? And they’re all wedded to the sea. They don’t see that there are other ways to earn a living, ways that don’t involve drowning. A man, or even a woman, who speaks French can go anywhere; but if he only speaks his patois, he’ll never survive outside his village. And they aren’t surviving because the ones taken for the Navy never come back, except for Père Bornat, and the ones who stayed got used to higher prices during the war.”

“But they couldn’t have had better houses during the war.”

“They hardly spend any time inside most of the year.”

“Does Père Bornat even have a floor?”

“No. They’re all dirt.”

Henri kicked at the sand on the beach as they walked along. “It’s not right.”

“No, it’s not right. Do you know what today is?”

“Tuesday.”

“14 July. Twenty-nine years ago today, the mob overran the Bastille.” He pointed back toward the village. “That is why. They didn’t even know it, but that is why they did it. The poverty. The ignorance. The despair. They blamed the monarchy. But the republic was too concerned with destroying its enemies.”

“And the Emperor?” Henri asked.

“Saved France from itself and set it to destroying Europe instead. One village did better in the war, playing each side off the other and profiting from both. My father did, too. But what did it get anyone in the end? Bonaparte could have done so much, but look at us. Look at them. Nothing. In good times, they tiled the roofs of their hovels but now they have no money to repair them. The Revolution tried to destroy the church, and that lessens the number of people who must have fish every Friday. Bonaparte took the peasant into the army, taught him that there is such a thing as France, but then threw him back into his narrow little village with no hope of anything. And no one did anything for the

women, so many of whom were widowed in the wars.” Julien’s eyes were shining with excitement, his voice suddenly as mature as his ideas. “Our fathers look at their self interest, because they survived the war. But we know better, because we can look at all of France, we can see the work that was left undone. We can fix everything if only we are willing to try. They didn’t try before. It wasn’t that they failed, but that they didn’t try.”

“And we can?”

“Can’t we?” There was a hint of desperation in the question, as if Julien were not even entirely certain of what he thought he knew.

It suddenly dawned on Henri. “Politics. Liberals. Ultras. We have to join in, otherwise our fathers will keep running everything selfishly. But how can we start?”

“We start by learning. In America, everyone is permitted to vote. Anyone is permitted to be elected to the national parliament, no matter how much or how little land he owns.”

“But we tried that, and the revolution failed.”

“Because it was too busy eating itself. A single-minded fixation on destroying an unfair system.” Julien had obviously been reading some very interesting books, indeed, with what he had been repeating. He sounded to Henri just like M. Enjolras ranting about the newspapers, but with an excitement M. Enjolras had never had.

“And it’s for us to build the new one in its place, since no one else has,” Henri thought aloud. “What do you need me to read?” Julien couldn’t do it alone, therefore he would have to help. People had no floors and broken roofs, so it was not a choice of if he would help but rather in what way Julien needed him to help.

Julien listed off the authors he knew, the authors O’Brien had left for him and the men they had referenced. “I’ll give you a proper written list tomorrow.”

“No, I don’t need one. I’ll remember.” Henri did not quite want his father to know where he had been, what he had seen. The village was so close, but it had been kept hidden from him. Best to keep certain things hidden, at least for now, he thought. He was not quite certain, in any case, how to explain that what he had seen made him hollow but what Julien had said, the prospect of doing something for not just that village but every village like it in France, had filled him up again.

Chapter 13: Work he hath begun / Of fortitude, and piety, and love

“Mother?”

Cécile ignored Julien for some time, as he knew she would, before finally asking, “And what have you been doing with yourself?” Children were supposed to be seen and not heard.

“I walked over to Les Goudes today.”

“How nice.” She was looking at her embroidery, not at him.

“Père Bornat says Tonette's husband died in the spring.”

“Good riddance. He was probably drunk and fell overboard. Not that that will teach Antoinette Féal any better taste in husbands. I suppose he left her with another baby, too.”

“I don't think so. The littlest one I saw has to have been last years'.”

“It could have been worse, then.” She changed the subject, but she left early the next morning, in the carriage, heading east along the road that would take her to the village.

With both his parents out of the house, Julien had the library to himself. The constant back and forth meant that other than the schoolbooks, which went back and forth every year, the library somewhat fluctuated between Marseille and Paris. O'Brien had left from Marseille, of course, yet some of his books had migrated to Paris. Julien couldn't entirely remember what ended up where. And what had happened to any of the volumes of Rousseau? It would be easier for Henri to read rather than for Julien to have to translate. But *Second Treatise on Government* looked as good a place as any to start, so he pulled it and the dictionary to set aside for later.

Henri had gone home and was very quiet during dinner. The usual three courses, served on china and in crystal, seemed far too elaborate for just the three of them. Neither his father nor François paid him any attention, and though he wasn't hungry, he ate his dinner anyway. He had been in trouble for wasting food before, and it wasn't as if his dinner could be saved and given to the children who needed it. Which was sad, but he could think of no simple solution for it.

“Is something the matter?” his father finally asked after they retreated to the salon.

“No,” Henri replied reflexively.

“If you're going to be sulky, you might as well go to bed.”

So he did. It was better to sit by himself in his room and think rather than listen to his father worry about what might be wrong. To Henri, it seemed entirely possible that if he asked any questions that admitted where he had been that afternoon, he would be forbidden from seeing Julien again. They were not supposed to be running around the countryside alone. And if he asked François anything, it would get straight back to his father. But he had so many questions.

The next morning, during his Greek lesson, it seemed too pressing to continue to ignore, even if his father would find out. He would have to formulate his questions very carefully. “Monsieur, why are some people poor?”

“You should have grown out of questions like that years ago,” François said.

“I don't mean it like that. Of course people are poor because they don't have money. I'm not a baby. But why do some people have lots of money and some people can't feed their children? The real reason.”

François sighed. "I'm still trying to work that one out for myself. Back to work."

"If no one knows, then can it ever be fixed?"

"I am paid to teach you Latin and Greek and history and mathematics, not to contemplate the inequalities of society. Some things must be reserved for our leisure time. Come on, back to work."

He didn't sound angry, or even annoyed, really, so Henri pressed on. "You work for us, so does that mean you're poor?"

"Not in the sense I think you mean. I've never had to miss a meal, and I'm not sure your father can even say that. Your father and I both work for a living. The money he earns by careful attention to his enterprises pays my salary, and I am grateful for it. Soon enough he'll decide to send you to school, instead, and then his money, and the tuition paid for all the other pupils, will combine to pay the salaries of several other men. And I will find a new situation if I must. When you grow up, you will work to oversee your father's enterprises. It is merely how life is."

"And some people have very small enterprises?"

"Some people have no enterprises at all. They earn a salary, as I do."

"Will you ever have great enterprises like my father?"

"It is not what I seek in life. Not everyone wants the same things, therefore how can everyone be equally wealthy? Back to work."

There was a friendliness in his tone that led Henri to suspect that this time, his father might not hear about the conversation. That would be nice: he liked François better than his previous tutor anyway and would like him still more if he did not constantly play the spy.

A couple afternoons later, Parker heard Julien's rather ringing voice in the woods. "To understand political power right, and derive it from its original, we must consider what state all men are naturally in, and that is a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and person as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man." At last, he saw the boys sitting in a tree, each with a book in hand, Julien translating aloud.

"What on earth are you reading?" he called to his pupil in English.

"Good afternoon, sir!" Henri called down.

"*The Second Treatise on Government* of Mr Locke," Julien replied.

"You would do better to skip to chapter six."

So Julien did. "Of Paternal Power. The power, then, that parents have over their children arises from

that duty which is incumbent on them to take care of their offspring during the imperfect state of childhood.” He translated quickly for Henri, then replied, “Father lets me read all the books. I have not disobeyed his law.” Parker just shook his head and walked away.

“Should we not be reading this?” Henri asked.

“Mr Locke is as well known in England as M. Rousseau is here,” Julien explained. “And this isn't even one of the dangerous books. But we have to start at the beginning, in the state of nature, to see how we came to where we are.”

“But being English, won't M. Locke say how England came to where it is?”

“Political philosophy is supposed to be universal. It explains the German states, the primitive kingdoms of Africa, the Roman Empire, just as much as it explains what we are right now. And I can't find the Rousseau,” he admitted. “He talks about the same thing in a pamphlet called the *Social Contract*, but our copy must be in Paris. I know we have some Rousseau, but not here. So we can start with Locke instead.”

“Fine. Go on.”

“A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another: there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection, unless the lord and master of them all should by any manifest declaration of his will set one above another, and confer on him by an evident and clear appointment an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty.’ Can you look up ‘promiscuous’?”

“How do you spell it?”

“With a P.”

“Consisting of a number of dissimilar parts or elements mingled in a confused or indiscriminate manner,” Henri sounded out slowly and carefully. He had the English dictionary because he could climb a tree with it, not because he could do much more than sound out the definitions. “What does that mean?”

“Random, without deliberate selection,” Julien explained. “The sentence doesn't actually need it except that the reader is almost certainly used to discriminating among types of people. People cannot be separated in this because they are all born exactly the same.”

“If men are equal, by birth, then why are the fishermen little and dark and poor and we're not?”

“Charles looked just the same as their babies when he was born. Man comes out of the womb equal, capable of anything. It is after birth that the differences can be assigned, and those differences are not based on nature. That's all Mr Locke is saying.” He continued, “The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges everyone. And reason, which is law, teaches all mankind who will

but consult it that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.”

“Does that include the Africans? Or are they not men?”

Julien looked confused and started flipping pages. “Here, there's a whole chapter on slavery.” He was silent as he read to himself, until he found his answer. “As freedom of nature is to be under no other restraint but the law of nature. This freedom from absolute, arbitrary power is so necessary to, and closely joined with, a man's preservation, that he cannot part with it but by what forfeits his preservation and life together. For a man, not having the power of his own life, cannot, by compact or his own consent, enslave himself to anyone, nor put himself under the absolute, arbitrary power of another, to take away his life when he pleases.” He closed the book, looking pleased. “Since it is against nature for a man to take his own life, it is against nature for him to give his life wholly to another man. And if a man cannot put himself into slavery, then it is doubly wrong for him to be taken as a slave. He does mean the Africans.”

“Good. Did your family sell Africans?”

“We were in the Levant trade and then the China trade. We move things, goods, not people. I'm sure of it.” He was not entirely certain that the family had never made a slave run, since one of his aunts had moved to Louisiana after her marriage and they had sent ships back and forth to the Indies, but he had at least never been permitted to see a ship outfitted for slave runs, and he had seen several of the family's ships.

Henri wedged the dictionary into the crook of a branch and hung upside-down for a moment. “It's all very interesting, but when do we come out of the state of nature? Because we're in society now.”

“I don't want to accidentally skip something important.”

Henri pulled himself back up. “Fine. Keep going.”

They read somewhat further, through the state of war and the full chapter on slavery, before it seemed time to consider going home. Henri clambered down first, being the better climber, but he slipped and fell hard.

“Are you all right?” Julien called down.

“I'm fine,” Henri winced. That hadn't been fun at all. He took a step and cried out. His ankle really did not want any weight put on it.

Julien was at his side in a moment – he was ordinarily a careful climber and had never moved up or down a tree so quickly. “Is it broken?”

“I don't know.” Henri felt like an utter baby for the tears that were flowing, but it hurt, and he just couldn't seem to get the tears to stop. He wasn't crying, really – he would swear to that if he had to.

“Lean against the tree, and let me wrap up the books, and I'll leave them here.” They still had the piece

of oilcloth from last summer that had enabled the book swaps. Tightly wrapped, the books could easily sit out for several days at a time. "Alright, give me your arm. No, other arm, I think that'll be easier, since you'll have to hop. Around my neck. There, I've got you. Ready?"

"You must think I'm such an idiot."

"You lost your balance, that's all. If we can get you up to the house, or at least into the gardens, we can put you in the carriage home. Are you ready?"

"I guess." His ankle hurt so very badly. After a few hops, they changed sides again, as the first attempt had been rather clumsy. "This would be easier if you weren't so tall," Henri complained.

Julien tried to bend down still further. "Does this help at all?"

They did make it into the gardens, at least, where Henri could sit on a bench and rest. Julien brought the gardener to him, and it was rather nice that someone with strong arms could pick him up and carry him, no more painful hobbling at least for the moment. Julien even went with him in the carriage to help him into his own house.

Once the parlourmaid had them settled in the salon, she went tearing through the door. "I am going to be in so much trouble," Henri winced. Julien knelt on the floor next to the sofa, unwilling to leave until there was some sort of resolution.

François came running in. "What happened?"

"He slipped when coming down from a tree," Julien answered.

"The fact that you run around barefoot probably didn't help."

"I climb better when I can feel the tree," Henri complained, punctuated by a very loud "Ow!" as François rather expertly examined the injury.

"It's not broken. Is that your man with the carriage?" he asked Julien.

"Yes. Does he need to go for a doctor?"

"No, you can send him home. I can bandage a sprain easily enough."

Julien let the maid send the coachman home; he wanted to watch. And since he was going to watch, François let him help.

"I didn't know you were a doctor, monsieur."

"I'm not. My father was. Yes, I know it hurts, but the bandage has to be tight so you can't move and so it doesn't swell too much."

"I'd like to go to medical school, I think," Julien told him.

“Really? Pull this tight, and hold it. Will your father permit that?”

“I don't know. But being a doctor must be the best thing you can do with science. All this knowledge, and it saves people's lives.”

“It's mostly saving people's ankles.”

“Why aren't you a doctor?”

“Not all of us can afford it.” François pinned the bandage in place. “There. Your father's going to have my head when he gets home,” he told Henri.

“It's not your fault.”

“He can't very well punish your friend.”

“Julien didn't push me out of the tree!”

“What were you doing this afternoon?”

“Reading Mr. Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*,” Julien replied, ignoring a look from Henri. Henri had not necessarily wanted to admit that.

“You have the strangest ideas of mischief. Go on home,” François ordered kindly. “Henri needs to rest.”

“I do not!”

“Your ankle would prefer you rest.”

Julien bid him goodbye, and Henri sulked for several minutes before asking François, “Did you want to be a doctor?”

“I thought I did. We'll see how much I can save, then we'll see if I still want to be a doctor.”

“I'm sorry I asked if you were poor. I didn't know it was true.”

François busied himself with small, unimportant tasks outside of Henri's line of sight, but eventually, he started to speak. “My father died during my last term at school. A doctor will never become a rich man unless he marries a rich woman, and my mother was not rich. The fees were paid, so I sat my bac. And then we looked at what was left. My sister's half, and part of mine, became her dowry, and she promised to look after my mother. So here I am, trying to make my own fortune. You'll never have to worry about that.”

“I'm sorry.”

“Your father's a far better employer than the last two houses I was in. Perhaps I should stick to city industrialists from now on.”

“Julien says his tutor dines with the servants.”

“That is traditionally how it is done.”

“But you like it better here.”

“I like that your father respects me as a man of education rather than just a servant. It will be hard to move on. If you're not going to nap, I'll bring you a book.”

“I shouldn't have to study when I'm ill!” But François had already left.

He returned with a thin volume in hand. “Since your studies were interrupted.”

“Rousseau! Julien said he couldn't find his, that it must be in Paris.”

“You're not to take it out of the house. But if you're going to read political philosophy you can't possibly understand, you should at least do it properly and not rely on Englishmen.”

Henri thanked him excitedly and immediately turned to the first page. “My purpose is to consider if, in political society there can be any legitimate and sure principle of government, taking men as they are and laws as they might be. In this inquiry I shall try always to bring together what right permits with what interest prescribes so that justice and utility are in no way divided. I start without seeking to prove the importance of my subject. I may be asked whether I am a prince or a legislator that I should be writing about politics. I answer no: and indeed that is my reason for doing so. If I were a prince or a legislator I should not waste my time saying what ought to be done; I should do it or keep silent.” M. Rousseau was already much more to his liking than M. Locke.

Chapter 14: It is bound / Ere it has life: yea, all the chains are forged / Long ere its being

Henri was well into the *Social Contract* when he heard footsteps rapidly approaching. Quickly, he thought to hide the book under the pillow that supported his injured ankle, not considering this might disturb the already painful joint. Thus, when his father burst in, Henri looked quite as wretched as could be expected.

“What happened?”

“He fell out of a tree,” François explained calmly.

“I did not! I slipped when I was coming down, that's all.”

“Did you send for a doctor?”

“There's no need. It's just a sprain.”

“How do you know? Why did no one send for a doctor?”

“M. François bandaged it himself. He used to help his father.”

“A doctor is simply not necessary for such a slight injury. Any officer of health who barely passed his exam can identify and bandage a sprain.” François obviously had no good opinion of the health officers, but it was sort of injury that the peasants could treat themselves.

Jean-Pierre sat down on the arm of the sofa and Henri leaned back against his father's leg. “My poor boy. Does it hurt very much?” Henri nodded. “I shall call in the doctor to bring you something.”

“I have never known a doctor in the habit of handing out vials of laudanum for sprained ankles.”

“He is my son!” Jean-Pierre barked. “You serve at my pleasure for his benefit. Your situation is not to contradict me.”

“Papa, I'll be fine, really,” Henri protested. “M. François says it'll stop hurting in a couple of days.”

“And if it doesn't? Won't it be a bit late to call in a doctor then?”

“Monsieur, it is a sprain. If I am wrong, then of course I will resign my position and pay the doctor's bills myself. But it is a sprain. He should keep off it entirely for the next few days, but he will be walking almost normally in a week.”

“Papa, it feels better already,” Henri lied. Well, exaggerated. He had nearly forgotten about it while Rousseau described the effects of geography on people, but now that he was thinking about his ankle, it hurt terribly.

“My poor boy. I think we shall have to say no more tree climbing.”

“But Papa!”

“Aren't you getting a little old for it, in any case?”

“Julien's older than I am.”

“And you pulled him into your mischief rather than he pull you into his.”

“He doesn't get into mischief.”

“I would rather you didn't, either.”

“Is climbing trees really bad?”

“Falling out of them is worse. What should I do if it had been your neck rather than your ankle?”

"I didn't fall out! I slipped a little, that's all." But even with the pain in his ankle, it was rather nice to curl up against his father because his father was always so pleased with any attention Henri gave him. "You don't have to be angry at M. François," he murmured. "He's taking very good care of me."

Jean-Pierre did calm the moment Henri nuzzled against him. The boy should have been in his mother's arms, Felicité stroking his fair hair and kissing away his tears. Had there been tears? Of course there had been tears, tears he had not been able to soothe. It was a hard business, being father and mother. Jean-Pierre knew he ought to praise these signs of stoicism, but he wished Felicité were here to provide the love and comfort he could not bear to see withheld. "Very well, monsieur le docteur, what is your recommended treatment?"

"That he stay off it for a couple of days. He should be walking almost normally in a week, but there should be no running or tree climbing for at least a few weeks after that."

"A few weeks!" Henri protested.

"Or you can stay on the sofa for a month."

"You are certain of the diagnosis?"

"I would have called in a physician were I not certain. Children's bodies are resilient. They are designed to get hurt from too much exploration and heal quickly so they may do it all over again."

"Very well."

Rather than disturb the injury too much, Henri was permitted to dine informally in the salon, and his father carried him upstairs to bed that night, a babyish gesture, perhaps, but one Henri did not complain against. So rarely was it appropriate to cling to his father, so tall and strong and usually smelling slightly of burned sugar when he returned from the refinery. Soon enough, he would be too old, and too big, to look to other people for comfort.

In the morning, the servants helped Henri to rise and dress. François came to him only when he had been settled back in bed, his ankle elevated according to François' instructions. "The gardener has promised to have a crutch prepared for you sometime this morning. You'll come downstairs under your own power."

"Thank you, monsieur." Not that Henri wanted to have lessons, but he did not want to stay in bed all day, either.

Examining the injury, François told him, "It was very kind of you to stand up to your father on my behalf."

"But it was true. You said you were paid to look after me, and you looked after me."

"I am paid to implement your father's ideas of child rearing, not my own. I am not paid to show initiative that disagrees with his notions."

“Initiative?”

“I may not do as I think appropriate until I have permission from your father.”

“But you're right, aren't you?”

“It is better when he is right.”

“Do you think I have to learn Greek or does my father?” Henri asked suddenly.

François smiled. “The government thinks you ought to learn Greek. It comprises a substantial portion of the *baccalauréat*.”

“I wish you could show initiative there,” Henri muttered. Aloud, he added, “I won't tell Papa about Rousseau. That was initiative, wasn't it?”

“It was. Please forgive me.”

“Don't be sorry. The part I read last night was brilliant.”

“And how much could you really understand?”

“‘Man is born free, and he is everywhere in chains.’ It's true, isn't it? You're poor, so you can't do as you like, and I'm rich, so I can't do as I like. Why does Julien seem so free?”

François sat next to him on the bed. “We can't always see the chains that bind others – or even ourselves. They are too personal, too intimate, for others to understand. But Rousseau is speaking of something much simpler – the rights of man. The chains are the restrictions of society itself, not of economics or the ways in which we choose to make connections and honour duties. Rousseau means that you cannot steal from your neighbour no matter what he has and that you cannot murder him merely because you dislike him. Our associations, our thoughts, even our morality are dictated by our need to remain together in society for our mutual benefit and protection. In the state of nature, we could live separately and be eaten by wolves, or we could endure each other's company and fend them off. To endure each other's company is the chain Rousseau means. We leave the womb, and immediately we enter society. Our shackles, the need to consider others instead of merely ourselves, are applied the moment our mothers suggest that something they want is more important than our immediate desires, and those chains will grow until our final breath.”

“If everyone is chained the same way, then that's fair, right?”

“It is, and that is what makes society work.”

“But we aren't chained in the same way. There's nothing that harms anyone else in you wanting to be a doctor, and you're stopped from doing it. And that isn't fair.”

“Rousseau's chains are identical for all of us. The ones you want to talk about are the ones we, not society, forge for ourselves.”

Henri thought for a moment. "Do you really mean that you stop yourself from becoming a doctor?"

"I could not afford five years in Montpellier, but I could have done three years in Lyon. But even with Lyon's hospitals, that would have qualified me only to bind up broken legs and prescribe purgatives in the Loire. It is necessary for the peasants, but it is not what I want." It was the first time Henri had ever heard François speak with any sort of bitterness, and François seemed to realise it because he forced a smile and added, more hopefully, "But I have worked, and saved, and I hope soon to have funds enough to register in Montpellier." He handed Rousseau back to Henri and left.

It was strange to think of M. François having a life and dreams outside of the house, Henri thought. He wondered if the other servants, the real servants, had ideas of what they would do if they stopped working for the family. But he found his page again in Rousseau and ended up buried in systems of law and division of government power.

He was able to limp his way downstairs for a midday meal, and later in the afternoon, when he was puzzling out a Latin translation, François disappeared. Just as Henri noted that he had been left alone, free to daydream instead of work, François returned with Julien in tow.

"Are you going to be all right?" Julien asked, his eyes wide with concern.

Henri looked to François, seeking permission even though it was obvious that they were allowed this unscheduled meeting. When François nodded yes, Henri at last replied, "M. François says so."

"I was only bringing your shoes and everything else we had to leave yesterday." He was speaking rapidly in the tone Henri knew was leading up to an apology. "I tried to just leave them in the kitchen, but they insisted on M. François seeing me. I didn't mean to interrupt."

"Shall I bring over the chess set?" François asked.

Both boys looked at him in shock over the offer. "You mean Julien can stay, and I don't have to study?"

"You do have to study, but I think you've time for a game."

"What has come over him?" Julien asked in a rapid whisper when it proved they were to be left to their own devices.

"I don't know. My father was angry yesterday because M. François showed initiative in not calling for a doctor, and now he keeps helping me as if he hadn't been scolded at all."

"He doesn't care anymore if he gets sacked," Julien said with the certainty and wisdom of one who had seen the departure of many tutors in his life. "Which is rather nice. I mean, not that he's planning to leave, but because they all behave more like themselves once they intend to go. You see them as men rather than servants."

Henri had to agree that François was nicer as a man than a servant, but he did not at all like the idea

that it had all come about through a need to depart. François had been far more likable than his predecessor, possibly because he took no interest in the housemaids. And just as he was turning thoroughly nice after all, it was because he was going to leave. It did not seem at all fair to Henri.

Of course, for the moment, he could have Julien do his translation for him instead of having to puzzle it out entirely on his own, and he could lose a game of chess that ordinarily would not have taken place at all. Julien was less enthused by the idea of doing Henri's lesson than Henri was, but he did pick out the words that caused Henri the most trouble and told him what they meant before he had to go home. Nothing was said to M. Enjolras about what had passed that afternoon.

The next day, Julien was permitted to return so that they might spend the agreed-upon time together. Henri still was not moving around well enough on his rough crutch for them to even go out to the garden, so they sat in the library as before, M. François going in and out on his own errands. Julien had brought Locke, and Henri showed him the copy of Rousseau he had now finished, and they set to arguing and explaining if the Frenchman or the Englishman was more correct, though they were indeed very similar.

Henri finally explained what M. François had said Rousseau meant about chains. "Well, he's right," Julien replied. "That's the whole point. And once society exists widely enough to need government, the chains bind tighter on some people than on others. Not all restrictions are the fundamental ones that Rousseau is talking about here. He talks about other restrictions in other books, but here he just means what Locke means when he talks about things one gives up in order to enjoy the benefits of society. That's all."

"Why are you so much more free than I am?" Henri burst out.

Julien looked at him rather strangely. "What do you mean?"

"You do whatever you want, and you read whatever you want, and you don't have to hide things, and you can talk about wanting to be a doctor, and I can't do any of it."

Julien looked down. "Marseille is not Paris."

Henri was rather sorry he had brought it up, but he still wanted to know. "What does that mean?"

"My mother has certain ideas that are important in Paris but not in Marseille. And Mr Parker doesn't really care about anything except his botanising. I expect he'll sail out of Marseille than make the trip back to Paris. So it doesn't matter here what I do or don't do. No one cares."

"M. François said we can't always see the chains that bind other people." He meant it to be a comfort, an apology for having prised.

Julien looked him in the eye. "You wouldn't be friends with me in Paris. Not because my mother doesn't let me out of the house, but because you wouldn't like me."

"How can you be so different in Paris that I wouldn't like you?"

“My mother has certain ideas of our position. It is why my father married her. I must do my best to live up to those. And I don't think they include medical school,” he added sadly. “You do not fit in to those ideas of who we are. You've seen the portraits. The family line goes ever so far back. My mother's does, too, in a way. People are mixing like anything, now, and only a few of the old aristocracy doesn't want to be seen with men of business like my father. I must figure out how to be liked by people of my mother's set, to be an asset to our position in the world. Your father made his money himself and does not talk of his family or his past. You aren't the sort of boy I would be permitted to make friends with in Paris, and I'm not sure that I'd care enough in Paris to go against what my mother thinks best.”

“When you go to school, does that mean I'll never see you again?”

“I don't know. It's so hard to go against what is forbidden. I mean, so much is permitted that I don't know if there's any point to fighting the rules. I must live in society, and that means giving certain things up.”

“I don't want to never see you again, even if you say you are different in Paris. Because I don't believe you could ever not be nice,” Henri insisted.

“It isn't about being nice. One must always be nice, whether it be to servants or beggars or strangers. It is about doing more than waving hello to someone in the street. It is wanting to be known to enjoy the company of someone in a different set, about being willing to be thought different and possibly be unwelcome in the right set because of that. I talk so little about Paris because I don't like who we are in Paris,” Julien admitted. “It's all about who is appropriate and who is not and who knows whom and who we must now shun because of ill-advised connections. I love Paris itself, and I like our house and everything we have, but I don't like who we are or who I'm expected to be. I study all the time so I can avoid having to do anything else, but I don't know how much longer my mother will let me. I don't want to go to school at all, and I'll miss you so much, and I don't even know if I'll be permitted to write to you. It's going to be awful.” Julien had not spilled so much of his soul to anyone since O'Brien had left, and it came flooding out, not in tears or bitterness but in overwhelming sadness.

François had been right, that our neighbours' chains are too personal to be visible to us, Henri understood. “I'll never not be friends with you,” Henri promised. “Maybe things can get better in a year?”

“They've never been any different. And I am certain to be enrolled in a school where only suitable boys are to be found.”

“I won't stop being friends with you,” Henri insisted. “M. François may not be permitted to show initiative, but I can. I haven't been completely stopped from seeing you yet.”

Julien couldn't help smiling, even if he was shaking his head more like an adult. “We will break our chains however we must?”

“We have to, don't we? Otherwise we'll never have anything that we want, never do what we must to help everyone else, right?”

“Of course.”

Chapter 15: Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change / To these / All things are subject but eternal Love

“Sir, do you need help to pack the specimens?” Julien asked. His mother had announced the previous evening at dinner that they would leave in two weeks.

“No, no, I can do it myself.”

“They will need much care for the sea voyage, will they not?”

Parker's eyes narrowed. “What would you know about that?”

“It is simple. You took this position in order to botanise around the Mediterranean. I was grateful that you did because I could help you. Now you are done. And you have been paid. So why would you return to Paris with us? I do not hold it against you,” he added. “I have been left for much worse reasons before.”

“It is nothing to do with you,” Parker tried to explain nervously, “or with your parents.”

“Oh, I know,” Julien told him brightly. “We have each had what we want, so why should there be sorrow or easy lies to smooth the parting?”

“You are a very odd child.”

“I know. Do you need help? I would be glad to help. Should I not learn how to pack the specimens for a sea voyage, in case I should ever be so lucky as to go botanising in foreign lands?”

Parker permitted him to assist in the packing. Julien rather thought it was because it was easier than to send him away, but he did enjoy seeing the last of the fruits of their labours, and he did not at all mind Parker's impending departure. He had had something of what he wanted, but the whole experience was not quite as he had wished. He was not certain what he had wished for, but Parker was not it.

Henri was more surprised to hear about Parker's departure than Julien was. “You don't mind that he's just leaving you?”

Julien shrugged. “I've been left before. And I only really liked him for a couple of things, which I've had, so why should I be upset that he's going? He's not leaving because he doesn't like me, the way others have done.”

They were sitting in the garden, eating late summer figs. Henri's ankle had healed, just as François had said it would, but there was still to be no more tree climbing or swimming that summer, and summer was rapidly rushing on towards autumn. Locke and Rousseau had been thoroughly examined and now Paine and Machiavelli were on the syllabus. “We must know the worst of how men think,” Julien had explained of his excitement when Henri had found the Machiavelli. François hovered only when it seemed possible that M. Enjolras might return – their evenings were far more circumscribed than their

afternoons.

The weather continued hot, but the sunlight had developed the yellow tinge of autumn. The church bells had been rung across the department, announcing the grape harvest. Once the grapes were in, the olives would come in, and then the autumn would truly arrive. The Combeferres were to leave just as the first of the grapes would be pressed. "Are you sad that you'll miss the harvest again?" Henri asked.

Julien just shrugged. "We usually miss it. We haven't got vineyards of our own, and a few remaining olive trees don't really make for a proper harvest."

"I wish you could stay."

"So do I. But I'll see if I can send you anything from Paris."

"More books?" Henri asked excitedly, his sorrow gone for the moment.

"I'll try."

The last adventure of the summer was sneaking away to bid goodbye to Mr Parker. Julien thought it was only appropriate, under the circumstances, to see his tutor off, and Henri begged to go along just for the adventure of it. Parker was rather sneaking off – he had calculated the journey back to Paris as half of the one-month notice his contract dictated that he give, but Richard did not agree, particularly as Julien's habits made it so that at least some studying could be done whilst traveling. It was two weeks notice that Parker had given, which was not in the contract. With the sudden strain in relations, Parker was determined to make it even less than those two weeks, as he had found he could take ship for Gibraltar rather sooner. He had booked his passage anyway, packed his things, and intended to leave without taking his final week's pay and without formally bidding goodbye to the Combeferres. Julien thought he ought to go along, as if it would somehow make Parker's annoyance over the whole matter less rebellious if Julien were there in his father's place; it would at least justify the use of the carriage and driver. It was a rather daring thing to do, after all, since he would have to return alone – the driver hardly a chaperone of any sort. Henri did not tell M. François what they were determined to do, in case François' lenience suddenly dissipate when provoked with a real adventure. He merely hoped that he would not somehow run into his father. Julien did not even worry about that, though it was always possible that Richard be out on the docks – he had been to the docks before, and while it was definitely a stretch that he have taken the carriage alone, he was only going to be out of Parker's company for the few minutes between the unloading of Parker's baggage and his own departure.

They passed through the *octroi* barrier without question. Parker had to retrieve his passport from the hôtel de ville, a stop which afforded the boys their first proper look at the huge edifice of government. Henri had never spent any time at the docks, the refinery being higher on the hill above the port, and so he had seen the building only at a distance, just another of the red tiled roofs of the city. Julien had never accompanied his father when he had business there, and now that he had a chance to see the building up close, he was fascinated by the intricate carvings above the huge windows overlooking the port. Waiting with the driver, who would not permit Parker's baggage to be unloaded by any of the stevedores or *robeirols*, the unofficial men of all work, begging for the job until Parker returned, Julien tried to interest Henri in the architecture, while Henri was staring in awe at the port itself.

The Port of Marseille was always fascinating to watch – the sheer number of ships headed throughout the Mediterranean and on to Africa, China, and sometimes the Indies; the boxes and barrels and bales that were loaded and unloaded, the wagons waiting to take the huge variety of goods on into the city proper and from there send them throughout France; the way the sails dropped into place once the ships had passed the mole, as if they were birds spreading their wings to fly off to distant lands – but Henri had always known this view from above, and his father never permitted him to stare at it long. From the hôtel de ville, one was in the middle of all the bustle of the port. The stevedores and *robeirois* of all colours hurrying back and forth, weighed down by trunks and boxes and bales or merely standing about with their pipes in their mouths, the creak of the ships rolling slowly in the deep water, the shouts in Provençal and French and languages Henri had never heard before all formed a giant, noisy, beautiful, overwhelming scene under the brilliant blue Mediterranean sky. He had no idea what to watch – even the prostitutes lingering in the shade of the hôtel de ville, calling out to customers under the watchful eye of an older man, were fascinating, far more fascinating than some carved stone curlicues. Even Julien gave up on the architecture sooner rather than later to watch the activity of the bustling port.

He pointed out several of the ships to Henri. “That’s an American – see the flag with the stars and stripes? And that’s a Spaniard, yellow and red. And that one, with the really high masts, bigger than all the rest? That one’s ours.”

“French, you mean?”

“No, ours. My father owns her. She’s called the *Rainbow*, and she goes to China. See the chests they’re unloading? All those are full of tea.”

Parker returned before Henri could ask any further questions, and with his return, he gave permission to have his baggage unloaded. “I’m bound for the *Arrow*,” he told the driver, who immediately beckoned to a couple of *robeirois* with baskets on their backs.

Julien offered his hand in a manner that seemed far more mature than he ought to be. “Goodbye, sir. I hope your return home is pleasant.”

“Goodbye, sir!” Henri bid him in English, following Julien’s lead. “Safe journey!”

Parker shook Julien’s hand, though giving him an odd look. “You do not mind my going?”

“Not at all. I am happy that you can now afford to return home and do as you like.”

“Not quite do as I like.”

“But at home. It must be better for you, to be sure,” Julien insisted. “We will hire someone new in Paris. I enjoyed the botany very much. Now I must concentrate on other subjects.”

“Not to the exclusion of botany, I hope. I’d like to see your name in a publication of the Académie des Sciences one day.”

“That would give me great joy! Thank you, sir. Goodbye, sir.”

Parker bid him goodbye one last time and followed the *robeirols* with his baggage to join the queue boarding the *Arrow*.

“What was he saying to you?” Henri asked once Parker was safely out of earshot.

“He asked if I really didn't mind that he was leaving me, and I told him it was fine and that I had enjoyed the botany but need to work on other things. And he said that he hopes I don't give it up entirely because he'd like to see me publish something for the Academy of Sciences. That would be the most amazing thing, that I might make a discovery that could please M. Cuvier so much that it would be published by the Academy.” He added, in a far more mature tone than was perhaps called for, “Well, that's over. I am so tired of having to watch my accent. I speak perfectly fine, and he knows it, but he thinks there's a problem that I learned from an Irishman, and I can't help that I don't hear his cadences in my head. The Irish speak much more beautifully than the English, if Mr Parker is a good example of the latter.”

“You really don't mind that he's leaving?”

“I've been bored of him for a month. Now I have four whole days free before we leave. I think I'm falling behind on Greek again. He didn't concentrate as hard on Greek as he did on Latin. I should find Thucydides and we can do translations.”

Henri pulled a face. “Do I have to?”

“It's Thucydides! He's quite as good as Machiavelli. No one is as good as Paine, though.”

“M. Paine spent a great deal of time angry at M. Burke.”

“I think Mr Burke had much in common with Mr Parker. Quick, to your right,” he added in a whisper, pointing out an Asian sailor walking past.

Henri had never seen anyone who was not European, and he stared a bit at the man's slanting eyes and long plait, though the sailor was dressed no differently to all the other sailors that hurried past them. “I thought Chinamen were supposed to be yellow.” Like the rest, this sailor was tanned a deep brown from the sun.

“I've only seen a couple, but they've never been yellow, really. Maybe too much sun means we never see the real colour.”

The driver came up to them. “Shall we return home, monsieur?”

“Do we have to?” Henri asked.

Julien thought for a moment. It was his driver, after all. He was the master now, even though the driver was the adult. “You may do what you like for the time being,” he finally said. “We wish to walk around a bit. We will meet you here when the church bells toll the hour.” And then, before he could change his mind, since it was extremely naughty to go wandering around the docks, he took Henri's hand and they disappeared into the crowd.

They were hardly the only boys underfoot, but they were certainly the best dressed. Ragged urchins ran in and out of the crowd, picking pockets or making mischief, selling matches and occasionally themselves. Prostitutes in gaily coloured dresses stood at the fringes, calling out their wares. Small fishing boats pulled up to the North Bank, where men unloaded the glistening catch. The Fort Saint-Nicolas rose up, tall and white, above everything. If one looked up, the city climbed the hills behind the port, thousands of buildings bleached white in the sun, their red tiles fading to various shades of orange.

“Is that ship on fire?” Henri pointed to a small ship heading out towards the mole.

“It’s a steamer! See, the smoke comes out that black pipe. It doesn’t need the wind to move – it burns charcoal to boil water and the steam turns a wheel that pushes the ship forward.”

“Really?” Henri asked skeptically.

“I promise. It’s probably Italian, heading back to Genoa. That’s where all the steamers come from. They can’t go too far because they have to carry so much charcoal.”

“How do you even know this?”

“I listen to my father. You probably know all about sugar.”

Henri knew nothing about sugar, but then, he rarely listened to his father in the moments Jean-Pierre did discuss his business at the dinner table. Sugar seemed very boring in comparison to everything else. Still, he was not about to admit his ignorance on that subject to Julien.

The docks were easily the most fascinating place Julien had taken him, far more interesting than the fishing village. Julien waved to one of the fishermen he recognised, but apart from that one man, the hundreds of people Henri could see were complete strangers. For many of them, this would be their only trip to Marseille, scores of strangers who would remain strangers, a concept Henri was just beginning to comprehend.

Julien grabbed him by the hand and pulled him towards a dirty match seller. “What?”

Pretending to be bent over the match seller’s wares, Julien murmured, “One of my father’s managers is out. I don’t want to get caught.”

“How naughty are we being?”

“Very.” Julien looked around surreptitiously. “If we get caught, it’s all my fault. You couldn’t go home alone, after all. Well, actually, you could – you can follow the sea all the way home. But if we get caught, it’s all my fault,” Julien insisted, sounding not in the least worried about getting caught. He even managed to find a sou in his pocket to casually give to the poor match seller who had been an unintended help to them.

The bells of St Laurent began to toll the hour, however, and the boys had to navigate their way back to

the hôtel de ville, where they found a boy holding the carriage and no sign of the driver.

“Where is he?” Julien asked the boy, first in Marseille-accented French, then again in Provençal before the boy pointed to the low café from which the driver was now hurrying. Nothing more was said about the brief holiday, and they returned home in enough time that no one need know where they had been.

For Henri, it was hard to keep the secret even from François, whom he thought might be interested in what they had done. But it was not worth the risk of his father discovering how terribly they had misbehaved. They had been lucky not to be seen by M. Combeferre's manager.

For Julien, his four days of freedom were ended far more quickly than he would have preferred, and while he was anxious to return to Paris in order to return to his studies properly, it was awful to have to say goodbye to Henri. “I promise I'll send something.”

“Just keep writing,” Henri insisted. It was no easier on him, particularly with the thought that as much as Julien hated Paris, Paris could still turn Julien against everything. He carefully avoided noticing that Julien's eyes seemed very wet when they embraced for the last time, and there were no promises for the following summer.

It was also hard when, the next morning, knowing Julien was gone, François asked Henri if he would like to go for a walk rather than commence lessons immediately. They walked down the beach in silence, Henri uncertain just why the offer had been made, François looking out to sea rather than at his pupil. When they came to the rocky point immediately behind the Combeferre property, and François begged him to take a seat on the rocks, Henri knew it was not going to be a good conversation.

“I hate to bring it up now, when you have only lately lost your friend. But I must ask.”

Henri interrupted, muttering, “You're leaving.”

“That is up to you.”

He looked up in surprise at François, who was still looking out to sea rather than at him. “Up to me?”

“I had a letter from my sister yesterday. She thinks, and her husband agrees, that in two or three years, they could spare a few hundred francs. It is enough that, with my savings, I could enroll in the medical school this year.”

“Then why is it up to me?”

“I must tell your father tonight, to give proper notice, if I am to go to Montpellier at the beginning of November.”

“But if I said I didn't want you to go, you wouldn't go?”

“That is correct.”

“Did you say this to your other pupils?” Henri asked warily.

François turned to him with a wry smile. “No. You are special.”

“Why?”

“I’ve never worked in a house like this, and I cannot imagine ever finding its like again. Your father’s respect, your friend Julien, you – it will be hard to leave. I like you very much, particularly your notions of mischief.”

“I try to be good!” Henri protested. But François ruffled his hair, and it was nice to be pulled into a hug.

“For you, mischief and enlightenment are the same thing. How could I ever be pleased with another boy after this?”

“But you really wouldn’t go if I said I wanted you to stay?”

“I really wouldn’t go.”

Henri did not even have to stop to think. It was a very kind offer, but he could never live with himself if he asked for even one more year. “You have to go learn to be a doctor. You can’t put that off just because you feel sorry for me that Julien had to leave again.”

“It isn’t that I feel sorry for you. I will miss you.”

“Really?”

“If I had had a younger brother, I’d have wanted him to be just like you.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“I’ll miss you, too,” Henri admitted. He had never thought about François moving on, or even really thought about François as anything other than an arm of his father, until the past couple of months when, as Julien had said, he had started to see the man and not the servant. He was going to miss the man very much.

Chapter 16: With an eye made quiet by the power / Of harmony . . . We see into the life of things

“Faster!”

Julien laughed and tried to pick up the pace. “I haven’t figured out yet how to trot!”

Charles kicked his heels in his best mimicry of spurs. “Faster!”

“Hold on, General.” He made his best dash on hands and knees towards the far end of the salon, Charles perched on his back, laughing gleefully, Mrs Boland shaking her head and smiling.

“Julien!” At the sound of his mother's voice, sharp as the crack of a whip, all mirth ceased. He didn't dare look toward the door, where he knew she must be standing with her hands on her hips, glaring at him for having forgotten himself. “What are you doing?” she asked sharply, more surprised than angry. Even Charles knew enough to slide down from his brother's back so Julien could stand up to accept his chastisement.

“I'm sorry, Mother,” he murmured once he was on his feet.

“Crawling about the floor like a simpleton at your age? And in those trousers! I expected better of you. Where is your coat?”

“On the chair. I was trying to be careful.”

“Your knees will turn shiny, and what will be the point then of your coat still being good? Get dressed. And a cravat is not a plaything. I hope that mark goes away before your father gets home.” They had been using his cravat in place of bridle and reins, creating a red crease across his forehead from the pressure. Julien had sense enough not to take it between his teeth. “Where is M. Delarive?”

“Taking tea.”

“He is rather a long time at it if you have finished yours and had time for this nonsense.” While his instinct was to take his tutor's part, Julien decided it best to refrain from argument. “Must I catch you at this again?”

Cécile's voice was less sharp now, more confused than angry, really, even to Julien's ear, but Julien knew it was better not to push his luck. “No, Mother.” He knelt down to Charles' height. He desperately wanted to tousle his baby brother's hair, or hug him, or do something, anything more than solemnly vow he would visit again the next afternoon, but he dared do nothing else with his mother watching. One did not test Cécile's limits.

By the time Delarive returned from the kitchen, where he had been smoking and flirting with one of the maids, Julien had dressed and installed himself in a chair in the library window, a book on his lap and only the fading red mark on his forehead and the sad expression on his face testifying to the brief mischief. Delarive said nothing then – in his not yet two months in the house, he had not yet determined if the boy was unnatural from birth or if his parents kept him so. He had never had a pupil so studious; neither had he seen such a well-behaved boy chastised for what in other families would pass for ordinary spirits.

“Would you prefer we continue with Latin or move on to your German lesson?” he asked gently.

Julien swallowed his preferred answer, that he did not really care at the moment, and elected German. He feared he would not have Delarive for much longer – someone would have to pay for his afternoon's brief rebellion, and if it were not Delarive, he would soon go of his own accord anyway, like all the rest – so German it would have to be.

Delarive looked up partway into the lesson and saw Cécile watching from the doorway, a pensive look on her face. When she saw she had been noticed, she merely shook her head and walked away. Julien, concentrating on the conjugation of regular verbs, looked up only once she was gone.

“Is something the matter with your mother?” Delarive finally dared ask.

“I behaved poorly this afternoon, that's all.”

Julien had “behaved poorly” a few times in Delarive's brief term of employment, always in a manner Delarive could not believe was “poorly” at all, but it was the first time he had seen the boy's mother follow up. Whatever she had been thinking when she saw him at work, Delarive was fairly certain she was not angry. But it was easier to return to work than to parse the motives for Cécile Combeferre's behaviour. “Let us construct sentences using 'spielen'.”

Julien was quite pleased with Delarive. He did not quite know why his father had selected a much younger tutor than usual – his reasoning of “he has sat the bac more recently and will be able to better prepare you for school” had seemed rather strained – but it was a pleasant change. Delarive reminded him a bit of François – eager to be liked and reluctant to exert authority – but fair with a trace of a Norman accent rather than dark and Southern. It was easy to want to impress him, even though Julien rather feared that trying too hard to impress him would probably push him out entirely. He had already overheard a couple of the maids giggling over how handsome the new tutor was, and the example of Henri's sacked tutor was rather close for comfort. But Delarive seemed to actively like him, and to have actual sympathy, which engendered a hope that he would neither focus all his attention on the maids nor give notice precipitately. It was already understood that he would be free when Julien started school in the autumn.

The last letter from Henri had carried news of his new tutor: M. François had left to begin medical studies, an event which pleased Julien very much. He had rather feared that M. François had been telling stories to himself, not just to Henri, but here was the proof that there was some point in hoping for things after all. M. François had been replaced by a M. Cordillot, a gentleman who could continue with English grammar and far more Greek than Henri would have preferred, if Henri's letter was to be believed. “I do not yet know what I think of M. Cordillot,” Henri had written, “but M. François was particularly kind at the end, and I think I should miss him no matter how well I might come to like M. Cordillot.” Julien understood completely – no one had been at all the same as Mr O'Brien, though at least M. Delarive did not ask piercing questions about Julien's reading material.

Indeed, M. Delarive was delightfully complicit, suggesting outings to bookshops as frequently as anything else. In some ways, Paris was always preferable to Marseille because outings had been reasonably frequent with all the tutors, and now they were almost constant with Delarive, to the Jardin des Plantes and the Louvre, bookshops and subscription libraries and even churches. Parker had been a botanist almost exclusively, but Delarive had occasional artistic interests, to the point he would take Julien to a random church of an afternoon and point out the architecture, how everything was put together, even an idea of what statues and carvings and windows may have been destroyed in the Revolution and not replaced or repaired poorly. Yet as soon as one might think he thought this a pity, he would turn around and say something about art and progress and how if devotion to the Supreme Being had really caught on, there would be a whole new style of cathedrals. Richard even overheard a

discussion along this line, continued after they had returned home late, and added that in London, many of the great churches had been designed by one man in his ideal of what a church antithetical to “popery” should be, with huge clear windows instead of stained glass and whitewashed interiors with abstract decoration, almost like the Muslims in the Levant had, instead of statuary and murals, because the truth of God is found in the books for a literate population. Mr Wren had created the ideal churches for the Church of England, a direct contrast to the Church of Rome.

Richard had never spoken of art in Julien's presence, being so often much too busy and concerned with business, but he loved poetry, and it suddenly seemed to Julien that beauty of all sorts was not so far from his father's experience as he had thought. The poetry was not an aberration at all. Delarive dared ask more about the mosques of the Levant, and Richard told what he could remember from visits made when he was a young man. Muslims did not believe in portraits of holy men for decoration – it was a blasphemy – and so their holy buildings were decorated with text and design rather than pictures. They could write the attributes of God over everything, and incorporate the text into a pattern so that foreigners mostly saw the beautiful scribbles as being one and the same, but they could not draw a picture of any of the prophets or angels. “And you must remove your shoes and wash yourself before entering, which is a great nuisance, yet as ridiculous as their religion itself is, there's something to be said for people with that much respect for a thing they believe in. Backward, of course, but so are the Indians of America, and it's like looking back on what we've lost. A primitive beauty of the soul, if you will.”

“Still, modernity is a great thing. I wonder if the Protestants of Germany also favour clear windows for their churches.” Delarive's great hope was that he might one day see Germany, not necessarily to sit at the feet of Hegel in Berlin or Schelling in Munich, for that would be too much to hope, but merely to see the lands that were so fractured and yet had brought about the fascinating new philosophy.

“The clear light of God, someone once said.” Richard repeated it in English for Julien's benefit. “A nice phrase, don't you think?”

“It is. I should like to see it someday.” Perhaps God was in the clear light of the Protestants – Julien had certainly not found Him in the fractured stained glass of the Parisian churches. But if there were ways to make his father think of beauty, God could not be too far behind, could He?

After Delarive discovered that Julien would read anything put in front of him, and seek out what was missing if an edition were labeled “expurgated”, he even discussed with him all the tales in Ovid that were ordinarily avoided as being inappropriate for young minds. Julien's occasional comparison of the racier myths with several of the poems of Catullus he ought not to have known threw Delarive for a moment, but it soon proved merely an eagerness to connect the dots, to relate one thing to another, not to explore all the various methods of voluptuousness. The only trouble was that Julien's religious education had been lacking – he had been right when he had feared his Greek was falling behind under Parker's benign neglect – and the hardest work was puzzling through the New Testament in Greek. But he was permitted bits of Plato as a reward.

Poor Delarive had never had a pupil who felt that Plato was a reward for translating the Acts of the Apostles, but Julien was a terrifically easy pupil. His only mischief was in taking some time each day to play with or read to his brother; otherwise, he would do anything asked the moment it was asked and fall to reading when his work was done. It was a joy to take him out of the house a several times a

week because outside, he had questions and interests and desires that were not wholly calculated to please his exacting mother. And when Delarive soon discovered that the quickest key to Julien's nature was to express an understanding of political philosophy, it was not so much that the gates flew open as that they disappeared entirely. By Christmas, Julien looked at him differently, almost as if they shared a secret from Cécile.

Nothing was secret from Richard, however, for when Julien expressed his intention to send a book to his friend Henri as a New Year's present, permission had to be obtained.

"He may do what he likes," Richard said. "Keep it to ten francs or less, I'll pay what it costs and the postage. But do let me know what he selects, so I might warn the boy's father."

"If M. Enjolras has distinct opinions, should I not be prepared to direct Julien's preferences in that direction?"

"I'm more curious if the book will be sent back, myself. They've not attempted exchanging presents before. The consequences must be on Julien's head, otherwise how is he to learn? I can only prepare the way so much. Let him do as he likes."

Julien took the project very seriously, asking Delarive if it were possible that he knew of a bookshop that dealt in English books, then carefully going through books one at a time, peeking between the uncut pages at times to verify what, indeed, he would be buying when a title was unfamiliar. Delarive suggested that a copy of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* might not go amiss – after all, when he was at school, it was a set text for one year of the English classes, so M. Enjolras could hardly disapprove. Julien was sighing longingly over an edition of *Paradise Lost*. "I wish he liked poetry better. It would be so nice to talk about it with someone, and this one looks so interesting." But Milton was put back on the shelf. Instead, the bookshop dealing in secondhand as well as new volumes, a memoir of Thomas Jefferson was selected, it consisting only of the first volume, its pages sporadically cut.

Richard flipped through it, laughed, and handed it back to Delarive. "Well, they know what they want."

"I am not certain it was the best idea, monsieur."

"No one shall be losing heads over it – the man was president, after all, and governing will moderate any but the truest fanatic. If you wish to know why he bought it, read the last open page."

"'Declaration and Constitution of the American Society of United Irishmen'. What has this to do with Jefferson?"

"The author must have his reasons for its inclusion. I cannot imagine it has earned him additional sales from starry-eyed boys."

"This is Julien's interest in political philosophy?"

"It comes from one of your predecessors. Anyone leaving Ireland for France in those days was a believer, but he was not a fanatic. No one who brought his brand new copy of Wordsworth and

Coleridge with him into exile could have been in the least a fanatic. I suppose there were stories told. There were other books, too, and I should have seen this coming. Julien's of an age now where he can begin to understand what was left for him, so now he's reading it. And sharing it. Either he'll grow out of it, or he'll go in the Assembly, and I can't say either outcome would be the worst. Come to think of it, I'm not sure I'd mind him going into the Assembly, as long as our interests are properly understood. He's a good boy; odd interests should be the least of your worries."

"Speaking of odd interests, if I may, monsieur. He might appreciate an edition of *Paradise Lost* should it be a consideration at the holidays." Odd interests were the least of Delarive's worries for his pupil. Richard's occasional notice of his son – an always friendly and interested notice but never long-lasting – was typical of the families for which Delarive had worked, but Cécile appeared at times to fill the role of exacting father more than of mother. Chastisements and worry over appearances never came from Richard, who left social matters to his wife. Cécile concentrated all the necessary direction of their sons' lives with no room left for expressions of tenderness. Even little Charles received his affection from his English nurse rather than from his mother. Delarive hoped that some notice of the boy's wants might go very far in maintaining a good humour from him rather than the general acquiescence he mostly noted in Julien's interactions with his parents.

"*Paradise Lost*," Richard mused. "Thank you."

When Julien unwrapped the volumes on New Year's Day – books were always for the New Year in the Combeferre household – he was pleased all day in a way Delarive wished were more habitual for him. He was a delightful boy when he behaved more like a boy than a man.

Chapter 17: Delight and liberty, the simple creed / Of Childhood

Henri missed François. That was really all there was to it. It was not that Cordillot was unkind or unintelligent, but he was a lesser man than François, Henri felt, or at least a lesser servant. Henri could not recall having actively missed a tutor before. Even his nurse, who had come down with them from Lyon and stayed for six years, he did not recall having missed. She had been replaced with a male tutor when his father determined that Henri had moved beyond counting and his alphabet, and Henri could not remember the parting at all. He could imagine a parting with tears, and a parting without, and either seemed just as plausible, though he suspected that he had not cried. Surely he would remember if he had wept bitterly at the deprivation.

It was not that he had wept for François, either, but unlike with his other tutors (with the exception of M. Duval, who had been sacked without the opportunity to say goodbye), he had hugged M. François tightly and distinctly felt that he did not want him to go. Of course he said nothing of the sort, and there were no tears, but the loss seemed the greater than even when Julien had left. Julien would write – he had promised – but François was gone forever.

François had introduced them to Cordillot. They had been at school together. It had only seemed right when giving his notice that he suggest a replacement, and Cordillot was found to be available and satisfactory.

But satisfactory was all that could really be said. Cordillot was a bit older than François and accustomed to city dwelling and the servants' quarters, or at the very least, crowded suburbs and

permission to fend for himself. It was not that Henri disliked him – indeed, he found he was proceeding very quickly with English under Cordillot's direction – but Henri thought him not at all the sort of man to whom one could ask questions, not because they would be immediately repeated to his father but because they would not be answered at all if they were not strictly on topic.

Unlike François, very much like Duval, Cordillot guarded his time carefully. There were no looks at the maids at all, but within the first week, there was a clarification of duties that was something akin to an argument. Jean-Pierre suggested that they spend the evening in the salon; Cordillot believed himself off duty after dinner. Henri watched rather in awe as he had never seen such a polite argument. His father would snap at most of the tutors, but perhaps he felt it poor form to engage on such a level during the first week of a man's employment. Cordillot, as the servant, said very little, but he insisted darkly on the few commonly accepted rights of servants: namely, that they were permitted the time off that was agreed to at the beginning of employment. Nothing had been said about every evening when he accepted the position, merely every dinner.

“In polite houses, when an invitation for dinner is sent, it is understood to include a retreat to the salon for discussion or reading or other pleasant pursuits,” Jean-Pierre had said condescendingly.

“Forgive me, monsieur, for looking on my employment as employment, not an invitation,” Cordillot had responded. “Dinner was among the conditions, and in my situation, I cannot permit myself to see 'dinner' as anything more than a meal at a table in the evening. If you are to revise our agreement as you see fit, then I should warn you that I would require a higher price.”

“Or lose your situation?”

“Or lose my situation,” Cordillot insisted, impervious to the threat.

Jean-Pierre watched him for a moment, then laid out the deal. “You may have two free evenings a week.”

“Three.”

“A man of business knows better than to attempt to bargain when he cannot win.”

“I could have said four,” Cordillot said with a shrug. Henri was fascinated that anyone could flip between interest and indifference so quickly on such an important point.

“Two a week in addition to your fortnightly afternoon off, which may include the evening. Or you shall have to begin your negotiations with another employer.”

Cordillot bowed, thanked him, added, “I choose this as one of my evenings this week,” and retreated to his room.

“The nerve,” Jean-Pierre muttered. “If he had not been so highly recommended . . . Well, and how have you been getting on?” he asked Henri.

Henri thought the best idea was to pretend to have been doing much better with Greek than he had

been, because his father would appreciate that, while promising himself that he would actually work harder at Greek so that it was not a lie, just a bit early to have made such statements.

Jean-Pierre started having dinner in town twice a week, which disappointed Henri. He understood that his father was doing it in order to make a point to M. Cordillot that two nights a week off was the prerogative of the employer, but it did mean that he spent those evenings alone. He did not complain – it did give him the opportunity to read whatever he wanted without questions and write to Julien unobserved – but he was glad when, after a month, his father returned to dining at home every night. It had not been pleasant to watch a power struggle play out when M. Cordillot could simply be sacked as M. Duval had been.

Henri had to be more conscientious about his work for Cordillot, but it had been easier to work for François. Cordillot considered his task the preparation of boys for school, and as such, he kept to the curriculum and warned of how various martinet instructors might poke holes in one's work, though he was very kind about it, offering advice as well as correction. The external subject was English; François had been willing to consider all external subjects, from drawing to English with Julien to political philosophy, as equally important as the Latin and Greek and French and mathematics that the government deemed important. It was a great change, and not one Henri entirely liked.

When Julien's gift arrived a few days after the New Year, Jean-Pierre looked at Henri oddly before handing it over. "It may be a book, not a letter, but I still must see what it is."

Henri ripped the paper off and immediately opened to the first page. "Memoirs of the Hon. Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, Vice-President, and President of the United States of America; Containing a Concise History of Those States, From the Acknowledgement of Their Independence, with a View of the Rise and Progress of French Influence and French Principles in that Country." Julien's letter had been tucked inside.

"My Dear Friend,

"I fear this gift has reached you later than I had intended, but I wish you all happiness in the new year, and that you may find the book terribly interesting. Mr Jefferson was a great man – a supporter of the rights of man all over the world – and these memoirs may show what Britain and France combined may achieve in the mind of a great man. I am sorry it is only the first volume, but it looked so much more interesting than anything else in the bookshop that I took it even if it was used and not very well liked by its previous owner. I hope you like it better, at least enough to cut all the pages.

"I may also tell you that we will indeed come to Marseille this summer, though we shall not stay as long as usual. I believe we shall arrive in May. Only five months until I may see you again, and I hope they shall not seem as long as the past three months have been. I shall send a proper letter later, but I think this great news.

"In friendship,

Julien Combeferre"

"Julien's coming next summer like usual!" Henri announced to his father as he reluctantly handed over

the book and letter for Jean-Pierre to inspect.

“Jefferson,” Jean-Pierre muttered. He remembered that name, slightly – something about knocking about those damned pirates in the Mediterranean. Well, anyone who knocked about pirates was reasonable enough. The letter was a bit much, he thought – weren't they still too young to fall for phrases like “rights of man”? Surely a man only was attracted to “rights” between the age of leaving school and roughly the age of twenty-five, when life will have kicked him around enough that he begin to understand the difference between philosophy and reality. But perhaps if Henri started early, he would grow out of it more quickly. After all, was anyone's great interest at twelve years of age still their great interest when they became adults? Jean-Pierre rather wished someone had kicked it out of himself a bit earlier as it was. “Julien is helping your English along, is he?”

“As best he can from so far away.”

Jean-Pierre flipped through a few of the open pages. “They saw multitudes so utterly lost to all sensibility, moral feeling and shame,” he read silently, “as to make 'THE REVOLUTIONARY TRIBUNAL OF FRANCE,' and 'THE MOUNTAIN,' their favourite toasts, and to sport with humanity so far as to compose and sing in chorus songs of praise of the guillotine.” In that case, it was hardly a revolutionary book at all, even if “rise and progress of French principles” generally meant, in English, revolutionary principles, and the title page had seemed to speak of them so positively. He handed the book and letter back to Henri. “The rights of man” could have led to something much worse: even a president of America could not wholly be a radical demagogue if he had to govern that young, fragmented country and soundly knock about the Barbary pirates.

Henri refrained from hugging the book, knowing it would be inappropriate to show too much emotion. But he only ever had presents from his father, and it was such an interesting present, too. A book about America! He knew very little about America, but he did know that it was founded as a republic, and it still was a republic. It had been ruled by Britain, but it threw out its king earlier than France had done, and now it was ruled by elections alone. And Mr Jefferson had many titles, all of which he hoped M. Cordillot could explain. It was in English, therefore it was one of the approved subjects. While his father turned to the rest of the mail, he started to puzzle out the introduction. Yes, he would certainly need M. Cordillot's help with such an involved text.

Jean-Pierre let him read. He was more concerned with his own letter, from Richard, attempting to explain the gift.

“Let me present my case before you start to complain. They have to learn about the world at some point. Part of that is the generally accepted politeness of exchanging cards and gifts at New Year's. You are completely within your rights to send the book back. It is my opinion that Julien needs to take responsibility for any consequences of his actions, and the consequences are rather up to you. I have no desire to tell him what he can or cannot purchase for a friend when that purchase physically harms no one and is within the budget I have set. Let us be completely honest – the gift is crazy. My son has terribly odd interests, and I hope school will moderate some of that through lack of access. I am sorry he is dragging your boy into it. But he must learn the consequences himself, whether that mean Henri not be so keen on spending next summer sharing recent history texts or you exert your rights as a parent and do something other than let Henri have the book. I do not argue Julien's case, merely my own.

“We are returning to Marseille in May. I hope you don't hold Julien's bit of initiative against us. If life were very different, the boys would be sent out to work soon rather than to school, which I admit colours my view of the friendship. I feel that they are old enough to, in a sense, do as they like. That if a boy of their age is permitted in a smithy, they can surely be trusted as to the writing of letters and sending of gifts. I also beg that you not feel you must reciprocate the gift. If there is a concern for the etiquette, that is one thing, but you mustn't mind the cost. The experiment, to my mind, is worth the little I put into it.

“I think we're lucky enough to have good lads, that we've raised them so that they can't go wrong. If this passion for political philosophy does not pass, it will moderate with age and experience, and while we may prefer that our personal and family business needs be sustained first, I see no great tragedy, and have decided that there may be a great good, if such interests lead to political participation. I can think of much worse things than a son in the National Assembly. You, of course, will have your own needs and preferences, and I will respect those. But do consider that it isn't the end of the world if they have their own eccentric desires. Once they are old enough to have 'eccentric desires'.

“I congratulate you on the news that has reached me in Paris. Buying the salt concession off Bazin made the papers. That is a coup that if you did not already have a fortune, I would say would make you one. I always thought you were a brave man for buying that sugar refinery after the Saint Domingue affair, when all the sugar colonies were endangered by the English, but it certainly put you in place to build up rapidly. Good luck with whatever venture you've got up your sleeve that Bazin's salt concession is going to make happen.”

The salt concession had made the papers in Paris. Interesting. Well, of course it would, the whole point of the salt concession was that it was a royal contract. However, the acquisition meant more than the royal contract; there was of course a surplus that could be sold on the open market. Perhaps Combeferre was right, Jean-Pierre told himself. While it would be best to have Henri running everything – the refinery, the farms, the salt, and the soda mill he intended to set up to process the surplus salt as an entry to glassmaking – it would hardly be a tragedy should those business interests have personal support in the Chamber of Deputies someday. And the book was not so radical as Combeferre seemed to have thought. There could be benefits.

“You will tell me what you learn about M. Jefferson,” he told his son.

“Of course,” Henri answered absentmindedly. He thought he had understood much of the short introduction and was now moving on to the first chapter. M. Jefferson had better be worth the amount of work it would take to understand him.

Chapter 18: I hear you whispering there, O stars of heaven

It was nearly midnight, though the Mediterranean air was still rather warm. The excuse given to both fathers for the boys staying out so late had been a lesson in astronomy, for Delarive actually knew some astronomy, but after a few pointers, he sat smoking on the terrace with Cordillot while the boys lay on their backs in the garden. Cordillot did not seem to care much what was going on, but Delarive kept an ear out.

“You're laying on me.”

“Yes, I am.”

“That can't be comfortable.” Henri didn't answer. “What if I sat up?”

“Then I'd have to push you back down.”

“I'd like to see you try.” Which put in train a very inept session of wrestling, leading to a victory for Julien – he was bigger, after all – and both boys collapsing in laughter.

“Christ,” Delarive said to the other tutor. “I've been with them seven months, and I've never heard the boy laugh.” Cordillot said nothing. The return of the Combeferres had changed what had been a fairly regular schedule, and he was not quite certain he enjoyed midnight smokes with a complete stranger. It was one thing to get the news from Paris; it was another thing to get it from someone who was nearly as walled off as he was.

Down on the lawn, Henri asked, “Can you see the stars like this in Paris?”

Julien shook his head, then remembered that if he could barely see Henri, Henri could barely see him. “No. The air in Paris is too thick. And it's not nearly late enough for all the lights to be out.”

“It's later than I've ever stayed out.”

“But the parties are just getting started. People don't even arrive until eleven or think about leaving before three. The whole square in front of the house is lit up with the lamps of all the carriages arriving or leaving. Sometimes people don't return home until dawn.”

“Do you ever get to go?” The last round of letters had included even less information on Cécile's social round than usual, which might have meant that Julien had been dragged about more than he wanted to let on.

“Soirées aren't for children,” Julien sniffed. “Honestly, they're populated by my mother's friends and their acquaintances and my father's friends and their wives. I can't imagine anything more boring. We sometimes have at homes, though, and those are different. Not Mother's salon evenings, those are just her friends come after dinner instead of in the afternoon, but at homes.” Henri could hear all the points at which Julien was rolling his eyes. “Father's friends come more often to the at homes, and their wives are not all Mother's friends, and sometimes we have music instead of just talk or cards. And sometimes the men even talk about politics or business in ways that aren't boring. I'm required to present myself at the at homes, but I can sneak out if they're just going to play whist. The only good part about school is that I'll be boarding, which means I won't have to present myself to Mother's satisfaction for anything. I'll miss the music evenings, though.”

“I wish we had people here. I don't like M. Cordillot as well as M. François,” he added in a whisper.

“This is my last summer! Is he going to ruin it for us?”

“Oh, I doubt that. But he thinks me sadly behind in poetry.” Henri pulled a face, barely visible in the blue starlight but Julien laughed anyway. “He also was not entirely happy with book you gave me.”

“Mr Jefferson is not for small minds.”

“Shh, he might hear us,” Henri warned him with a nudge.

“But what does your father think?”

“He said it can't be wholly seditious if the man was president, therefore he's grateful I'm so eager to learn a language at all.” Henri pulled another face. “Just because I complain about Greek. And he thinks I'm behind on Latin because I haven't looked into Virgil at all. And I hate Racine.” François had never forced French drama on him, while Cordillot considered it his duty.

“I'll help you through meter if you want.”

“I want no poetry at all. It's pointless. Just say straight out what you want to say; who cares if it rhymes?”

“Shakespeare doesn't always rhyme, but his plays are mostly written in poetry. It's a way of imposing discipline on your thoughts. To bring structure to the metaphors.”

“Jefferson doesn't write poetry.”

“But he studied it. That's the point. You have to know how it's done, even if you don't wholly replicate it. It teaches structure, and that's all to the good. You know, I can imagine the horrid face you're making right now.”

“I'm not making any sort of face!” Henri protested, poking Julien in the ribs.

“That's it,” Cordillot said over the sound of laughter. “You may keep Paris hours, but I've been in the country too long. The country. God, it isn't even really the country, though you wouldn't know it from the hours this household keeps. You may breakfast at noon, but I'm too out of practice.”

“Of course. Forgive me. Julien!” Delarive called his pupil. “Time for bed.”

Julien sighed. Henri groaned loudly, which earned him an elbow from Julien. “If you complain too much, you won't be allowed out again.”

They walked back up to the house, arms around each other, heads bowed together laughing over an impolite comparison Julien had just quietly made between Cordillot and what Polonius must have been before marriage and children. A chink of light from the curtained windows and the dark lantern Delarive had just opened illuminated the boys in a perfect chiaroscuro, fair and dark in perfect contrast in the dim warm light. Jean-Pierre, ostensibly in bed but watching and listening from behind curtains rustling slightly from the half-open window, found it hard to complain that Henri looked so happy. Perhaps it was time to consider school if the arrival of one friend could do so much. Richard Combeferre made such damnably good points, that was the real trouble. “School can moderate many

things. They learn freedom, then they learn duty, and when they have freedom again as adults, they can balance themselves out," he had said when they met for a drink the other day. "I hope for Julien that in some way, Henri has taught him how to make friends, or at least to get along with other boys, and I am confident that some of Julien's eccentricities will be abandoned once they are no longer indulged. How much longer can he really be interested in 'everything'? He will have to choose one or two. It will make his own life easier in years to come." Jean-Pierre rather hoped that Henri had not learned too much of freedom, for duty would always have to be primary. But he did look so happy in Julien's company, and it was so pleasant to hear him laugh.

"Where is your hat?" Delarive asked. Julien looked around in a vague semblance of a search, but it was not on the terrace and it was too dark to see into the depths of the garden.

"The staff will find it in the morning," Cordillot told them. "Good night."

They bid him and Henri goodnight, then picked their way across the gardens to the gate at the main road, which seemed the most polite way home even though Julien could find the gaps between the two properties even in the dark. But Julien paused on the main road. He liked Delarive very much, but Marseille was not Paris, and he could not bear wondering if that meant the same thing to Delarive that it meant to him. "You won't tell Mother about tonight, will you?" he worried.

Delarive smiled calmly. "Your father is my employer."

"That's all right. He doesn't mind."

Delarive determined to do what he could to make friends with Cordillot. Julien did not need more time at his studies – indeed, Delarive rather feared what the outcome would be in the autumn once Julien had to be placed in a class because he was far too advanced for a boy of fourteen – but he sorely needed as much time as possible with his friend.

It was a pity that the Gemini were a winter constellation. Delarive was certain he had been seeing them all night.

Chapter 19: I see / The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee

They were sitting in the grass, open books strewn about in the August heat. Julien's hat was in the grass rather than on his head, a receptacle for the apricots they had picked earlier.

"Ille mi par esse deo videtur, / ille, si fas est, superare divos, / qui sedens adversus identidem te / spectat et audit. This is a Sapphic stanza – three lines of eleven syllables, plus an additional line of five." Julien tried to explain the metrical pattern in detail, but Henri was looking at a completely different book. "Henri, this is important."

"Why does everyone write poetry?" he complained.

"Because it's nice. Because it helps memory – the meter pushes it along, which is why all the epics are poetic. Because the metrical pattern can say as much as the words themselves. Because it makes a structure where there might not otherwise be one. Here, give me *Macbeth*." He flipped through and

began to read, "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly: if the assassination / Could trammel up the consequence, and catch / With his surcease success; that but this blow / Might be the be-all and the end-all here, / But here, upon this bank and shoal of time, / We'd jump the life to come.' Shakespeare writes in an unrhymed iambic pentameter – five sets of short-long. The sentence ends in the middle of a line."

"But I like Shakespeare because I don't hear it."

"Because he rarely rhymes unless he's ending a scene or making a point about other people's plays and no one has made you identify the feet before. If you can find the feet in Catullus, you can find them in Shakespeare, in Racine, in Wordsworth when he doesn't even rhyme. You listen for the rhyme you hate and you complain about the feet and you assume everything you like isn't poetry."

"This is what you call helping?"

"If you didn't want help, why did you accept the offer?"

Henri sighed. "I need help."

"Then let's pick out the feet in Shakespeare. Slowly." They picked through, then Julien turned a few pages and made Henri pick through a new passage on his own. Then they went back to Catullus, picking out which poems used Sapphic stanzas, eating apricots out of Julien's hat the whole time.

Jean-Pierre found them still in the garden when he returned home, Julien's fine English recitation carrying as far as the house. "I have lived long enough: my way of life / Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf; / And that which should accompany old age, / As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, / I must not look to have; but, in their stead, / Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath, / Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not." Jean-Pierre could not hide his approach, and he was rather sorry that his desire to listen more closely had set the boys scrambling to receive him.

Julien jumped to his feet. "Please forgive me, monsieur," he apologised. "I had not realised it had grown so late. I will go."

"I am before my time," Jean-Pierre explained. "So you are the Combeferre boy."

Julien's cravat was loose, his hat in the grass, and he had been given no warning that might permit him to better present himself, but he bowed deeply with all the courtesy his mother had taught him. "Yes, monsieur. Julien Combeferre. It is a pleasure to meet you, monsieur." Jean-Pierre was rather grateful to note that the boy took after his father and not his mother. He even had the same dark eyes, not so shrewd as Richard's but piercing enough all the same in his otherwise boyish face.

"You read English well."

"Thank you, monsieur." Julien was terribly nervous and doing his best not to let on. One wrong look and they would be forbidden from seeing each other again. He had not thought to have to make any sort of case in person to M. Enjolras.

“Shakespeare, wasn't it?”

“Macbeth.”

“Ah, yes. The forest come to Dunsinane.”

“Yes, monsieur.”

Henri tried to sneak the last bite of apricot in his hand. “What are you eating?” Jean-Pierre asked, perhaps snapping a bit.

“Apricots. Should you like one, monsieur?” Julien offered, taking one out of the hat.

“Where did you get them?”

“A tree in my garden. My mother doesn't mind.”

“She doesn't?”

“Oh, no, monsieur. She pays no attention to such things.”

The apricots were at the perfect ripeness, bright and velvety and just soft enough to pull apart without soaking one's hands. “Thank you. And thank your mother. Or perhaps I should say your gardener?”

Julien smiled. “I shall tell M. Bellan.”

“Where is M. Cordillot?” Jean-Pierre asked his son.

Henri looked around guiltily; Julien looked around in confusion. “I don't know,” Henri had to answer.

“He and M. Delarive were here when we started,” Julien said.

“And what were you doing before I interrupted?”

“Julien is helping me with poetry.”

“Really. You like poetry?” Jean-Pierre asked Julien.

“Very much so, monsieur.”

“Whom do you prefer?”

“I very much like the English because they are so keen to try new things.”

“Shakespeare.”

“For drama. For pure verse, I very much enjoy Mr Wordsworth.”

“New things, indeed. And are you making progress?” he asked Henri.

“Yes,” he insisted.

“Well, go on then. But don't spoil your dinner. And pick up all the pits.”

“Of course, Papa.”

Jean-Pierre retreated to watch from the house. The apricot was quite fine – perhaps the Combeferre's gardener would be interested in a new position. But Jean-Pierre pushed the thought aside as really too cruel to a neighbour. One ought not to steal the staff, after all.

“Why do adults always like you?” Henri asked Julien once his father had gone.

Julien shrugged. “I'm polite? I was so afraid I'd say something wrong, and I kept thinking, 'What would my mother do?' and then correcting myself because he hates my mother. I think it came out all right, but it's not as if all adults naturally like me. And I don't think anyone dislikes you at first sight.”

“That's not what I mean. I mean – you talk to him like – like your father must talk to him.”

“It's just like a salon evening. One is polite, one answers questions in a way that is hopefully not too controversial, and then eventually the adults move on. You're around adults all the time, too.”

“Not the way you are. No one ever comes.”

Julien was about to say something sympathetic, but Cordillot and Delarive were returning from the beach.

“Have you successfully replaced us?” Cordillot asked sardonically.

“Probably not,” Julien admitted. “You'll have to quiz him in the morning.”

“How much studying was actually done?”

“Lots!” Henri protested.

“Alexandrines, sapphic, and blank verse,” Julien explained. “Would you like the last two apricots?” When his hat was empty, he put it back on his head before starting to pick up the books strewn around. “We should be going, shouldn't we?”

“Your mother will want you to wash up before dinner, I think.”

Julien bid Henri good evening and followed Delarive through the cut between the properties. Henri followed Cordillot back to the house, where they ran straight into Jean-Pierre.

“You can take those to the library. I need to have a talk with M. Cordillot.”

Sensing the worst, Henri escaped. Cordillot was a very good teacher, even if Henri preferred to take some of his lessons from Julien, but it had always been obvious that he had not fit into the household at all the way François had done.

Jean-Pierre walked Cordillot to the bottom of the garden, where there would be no eavesdropping. "What is your opinion of Henri's progress in the time you have been with us?"

"He is making very good progress, monsieur. His Greek could stand to be stronger, and he knows he must put more effort into the poetry, but that is what he was working on this afternoon."

"Working on with the Combeferre boy."

"Yes, monsieur. He does better in the lessons he dislikes when he has the Combeferre boy to provide an example."

"Is this common, in your experience?"

"Very much so, particularly between brothers close in age. It is a competition where the younger wants to prove himself equal to the elder and the elder cannot bear to lose to the younger. It is the whole point of gathering boys together in school, monsieur. The example and competition push them in ways that solitary study will do for very few."

"Do you suggest Henri would be better off in school?" Jean-Pierre rather thought he sensed condescension in Cordillot's tone.

"My job, monsieur, is to prepare boys for school. Most boys ought to be in school. It is not, however, for me to declare to a boy's father what is best for him."

"If I were to consider the matter?"

"You'd have to decide soon. We agreed one month notice on either side."

"We did. And if I asked you to speak freely?"

"You'd not like what I might say, therefore I shall not accept the offer."

"The time to protect your situation, monsieur, was last year when you begged off your duties," Jean-Pierre snapped. "I should like to replace you at the beginning of October, school or no school. That is six weeks of notice, and I will hear what you have to say."

"Very well." Cordillot straightened his shoulders in a show of authority he had never displayed in Jean-Pierre's presence. "The boy should have been in school years ago. I know why the Combeferres have held off – their boy was considered sickly, and he would have to board, and it is a legitimate concern even if I think he should have started last year rather than this autumn. There are no such concerns with your son. You keep him isolated for I don't even know what purpose, but what has it really done for him? He learns better when he has encouragement and competition from his peers, and

the only peer you've permitted him is a neighbour who is not a neighbour half the year. He should have started as a day boy at the age of ten or eleven like everyone else. The boy almost never goes into town as it is, so how is he to understand half of what his life will have to be the moment you realise he is no longer a child and thrust him into the responsibilities of a man? We might as well be in the middle of the country instead of just outside the *octroi*. So far, you've raised him as you might a girl, and it's not to his benefit."

"Are you suggesting -"

"I'm suggesting that at thirteen years old, he knows half what the Combeferre boy knows at fourteen, and it is entirely due to your restrictions. You don't let me take him anywhere. You take him nowhere yourself. His entire horizon is a house, a garden, and a slice of the Mediterranean, and you expect him to do something with that. He has manners, yes, and intelligence, but you've never permitted him to hear a conversation of equals. He's been to the theatre twice in his life. You even managed to get him through his first communion through a course of private study when every other healthy child was enrolled in a class of his peers. I give my one month notice now. I can't stay the additional two weeks when I've said all this."

"You may dine in the kitchen and have this evening to yourself," Jean-Pierre ordered.

"Thank you, monsieur." Cordillot tipped his hat and stalked back up toward the house.

Ruining his own son. The nerve of the man to suggest it.

But Henri was interested in everything the Combeferre boy did, and perhaps if there were other boys, he would focus less on the Combeferre boy. But other boys would be always here, always in the way. They might be poor influences, unlike the studious Combeferre boy. One had to be on one's guard. And yet, Henri was so much happier in Julien's presence. And more productive. And better behaved. Surely not all the benefits had to be accompanied by a strange fixation on political philosophy?

At dinner, Jean-Pierre asked Henri what he had been doing with Julien. When a fairly fluid stream of explanations of poetic meter came out, Jean-Pierre had to admit that Cordillot, with his experience of other boys in other families, had a point. Henri did not ordinarily discuss these studies fluently or without pulling faces, but he seemed to grasp them tonight far better than he ever had done before.

"What would you think if I were to consider sending you to school in the autumn?"

Henri looked up, his eyes wide in eagerness. "Really?"

"Would you like it?"

"Yes, Papa."

"Why?"

"Julien shouldn't have to go through it alone."

“I mean here in Marseille.”

“I know. It wouldn't be as good as going to school with Julien. But I should like to try. M. Cordillot is being sacked, isn't he?”

“He has given his notice.”

“He's done his best, really,” Henri insisted.

“I should have let him go much earlier.”

“I'm sorry he's going, but I think I might like school. Julien doesn't look forward to it at all, but I think it might be nice to know some other boys, and he might hate it less if he knows I'm doing it, too.”

“Your future is not in Julien Combeferre's hands.”

“Of course. But I think I should be even more interested in meeting other boys if I didn't know Julien at all.”

“I have not made any decision. But I shall take your opinion under advisement.”

Henri thanked him, trying to hold back his excitement. It would not do to get excited only for his father to decide that another tutor might be best after all. But the possibility was suddenly there, and that was very good news, indeed.

Chapter 20: Long and strong then strike the lyre, / . . . Bid the fire of freedom blaze

Cordillot's departure provoked no tears. Indeed, it was a relief after the four weeks of tension, of Jean-Pierre making needling comments and then sending the man to the kitchen, of Cordillot suggesting to Henri that anything was better than staying where one was not respected and that he ought to be grateful that his father had at last decided to send him to school. Henri was grateful that he was at last to start school, and at the same time as Julien – he did not need to be reminded of it.

There was no point in filling the rest of September and October with additional studies at additional expense – Cordillot's outburst had bought Henri a full month of freedom. Julien received a fortnight of freedom as well. Delarive stated to him directly that so long as Henri had no studies, there was no reason they should not be together all day to enjoy the benefits of a true summer holiday. A vague attempt was made at presenting the idea that Delarive was somehow in charge, but that only meant that he would take a book down to the beach if they were swimming and ignore them until they started shouting too much.

“Are you sure you don't want to join us?” Julien asked him one day, as much to be polite as anything.

“I'm perfectly fine right here.”

Julien gave him one of his intensely penetrating looks and said, “You've been here all summer and never once gone in the water. You can't leave Marseille without at least wading in the Mediterranean.”

“Where I come from, the sea is too cold for it even at this time of year.”

“You're not in Normandy anymore. Come on!”

It was pleasant to give them their little victory, even if they soon stripped off the rest of their clothes and went attacking each other playfully in the waves. Delarive retreated to the beach and pretended to read while he watched and listened to them, their voices carrying across the water, as they fought and argued and splashed each other like the children they ought to be, even if their arguments carried more of Locke and Rousseau and Paine than was perhaps appropriate.

They walked up and down the road to Cassis, watching the mail coach speed on its way between the great towns, seeing the little farm hamlets and market gardens that composed what remained of the rural economy in the extreme south. Henri never told his father that he was at last wandering, but he felt safe doing it because Delarive was always following just far enough behind that they could ignore or include him as they wanted. And Delarive was so accommodating – so greatly did he think Julien needed his freedom – that if they promised not to go in the water and just keep the beach, he would even sit at the bottom of the Combeferre garden, leaving them entirely alone for as long as they liked.

The vendange had been rung for the day before the Combeferres were to leave, and it was Julien's idea that they spend their last day together assisting in the harvest at Les Goudes. They did not tell Delarive just what they intended, merely that they were going to the village, and off they went, penknives in their pockets.

Père Bornat permitted them to join in the cutting for a single row – hard work stooping under the hot sun, trying to keep up with the experienced men. The grapes were full and heavy, the vines had a tendency to snap back rather than slice neatly, and one had to keep the bunches from falling in the dust. The carrier baskets the strongest men slung over their backs weighed quite as much as the boys did once they were full, and each row could fill two of them. It was rather a relief when Père Bornat told them, “That's enough for now. You'll be much more help if you can supervise the children.”

The children were currently playing tag and welcomed the boys to join them. Julien suspected that he was rather too old be deriving so much enjoyment from being chased by children half his age, but he couldn't really help himself. He and Henri collapsed laughing more often than they perhaps ought, but he also kept enough of an eye out that he was first to run for the water barrel when a bucket needed refilling. The children were supposed to bring watered wine to the workers so they might cool themselves and quench their thirst, but Julien preferred to do as much as possible himself, letting the children have their fun. He had been granted two weeks of idleness; the least he could do was provide the younger ones with a few hours.

Père Bornat was too old to participate in the heavy work of cutting and carrying, but he supervised all the works of the village. During a break in the rowdy game, he explained, in response to Julien's questions, that there were two varieties of grapes: the dark syrah, for the red wine, and the pale clairette, for the white. They were picking the syrah first, it being more delicate. Once a good start had been made, the children would have to pull the grapes from the stems so they could be crushed that evening. The stems would make the wine bitter. The white wine kept the stems, however, as its stems were needed for the proper functioning the press, which had not yet been set up for the season. The

syrah had to come in first.

Indeed, they spent most of the day, once Père Bornat called everyone to order, stripping the grapes. It was still hot, repetitive work, pulling the grapes off the stems and throwing them into the huge vat where they would be crushed at the end of the day. It was tedious work, but the older children led the younger ones in songs and stories that Julien and Henri could only sometimes understand. Occasionally, Père Bornat would walk by and translate the gist of song, usually something comic about husbands and wives or something intensely romantic about a princess and her lover. "The romances are probably related to the songs of the troubadours," Julien told Henri, trying to sound as if he knew what he was talking about rather than presenting a theory.

There were ten or twelve children stripping grapes and occasionally running to refill the water buckets, but the pile of grapes was hardly diminished before one of the carriers would deposit another load. It seemed to Henri that there were more grapes than could possibly have grown on those few vines. He was desperately bored, but he kept going, trying to keep up with Julien, who had attained a reasonable efficiency by carefully observing and mimicking the oldest children. "We have to stay," he told Henri, as if he sensed that Henri was growing bored. "We have begun the job, and it is the least we can do, isn't it? To help relieve some of their labour, even if just for a day? How can we do anything for them in the future if we don't have the slightest understanding of what it is they actually do, from doing it with them instead of standing in the shade and watching them?"

Henri knew Julien was right, and the only thing to do was to keep up. If he did not keep up, if he did something wrong, it might ruin the whole batch, a whole year's worth of wine gone because of his failure. So he kept on, pulling grape after grape, until a rest was finally called for the midday meal.

They were invited to join everyone – after all, they were working just as hard as the children, to Père Bornat's astonishment. He had assumed a few hours of hard work would send them on their way, but there they were, doing as well as could be expected for boys who had never participated in a vendange before. There were pitchers of the strong red wine and loaves of rough brown bread, a platter of stewed octopus and roasted fish, jars of olives and garlic mashed into a spread, even a second great platter of roasted vegetables. Henri had never eaten brown bread before in his life, and he was surprised how dry bread could be. He had to be shown how to smear it with tapenade, to let the oil from the olives permeate the loaf so that one did not have to choke it down dry. The hard work had made him very hungry, but following Julien's example, he tried not to eat too much. They were guests, after all, and it would not do to seem in the least greedy nor yet ungrateful. The word spoken most often was *mercès*.

Though Henri felt terribly out of place, everyone was very kind, even if they were constantly conversing volubly in Provençal. One of the men was attempting to tell a story to Julien, while a woman kept trying to refill his plate so that he was distracted between the not entirely familiar language and the need to politely refuse too much hospitality. Père Bornat finally noticed and intervened. "Nourat is saying that your father is a great man and your mother is a great woman. And that you must not think this is because your mother is kind and brings things like other ladies have done in the past."

"In the war, she was brave," the man finally managed to say in French.

“In the war?” Julien asked skeptically. He was accustomed to people saying nice things about his mother when they did not know her at all, because she was beautiful and could be polite, and she brought charity to the village and probably never told Antoinette Féal that she had terrible taste in men. But that was his mother's public face, and she was no different to any other woman of her class if it came to carefully performed charity work.

“You do not know?” Père Bornat asked. “You were with her so many times, and you do not know?”

“She took me along when she brought things, medicine, blankets, I guess food. She has been very good to you, certainly, but brave?”

“The poor child, he does not know. You know your father paid us well for smuggling.”

“Of course. How else could he have survived the blockade for years on end?”

“He did not come to us. Your mother did. Sometimes we could see the English ships, they came in so close. They must have been watching. And she came to tell us the plans, no matter how close the English ships came.”

Nourat insisted on something else for Père Bornat to translate. “He wants you to know that she came many times in the rain, at night, when the plans had changed.”

Cécile never went out in the rain if she could help it. The image of his mother coming out in a downpour to warn smugglers that they might get caught was ludicrous. Yet everyone seemed to insist on it. Nourat and his wife were joined by other voices in praise of Mme Combeferre. It was too elaborate to be a joke; it was too ridiculous to be true. They had confused her with one of the servants, Julien was certain. The only thing to do was accept with grace the compliments they wished to bestow on her and, by extension, on him. But he was relieved when they were permitted to return to the work which, monotonous though it was, did not require him to think anything at all of his mother.

Henri was too fascinated by this turn of events to be completely quieted, however. “Your mother was a spy?”

Julien concentrated on the cluster of grapes in his hand. “Spy' is such an unfortunate word. That makes it sound as if she were on the side of the English, which she would never do. It was probably one of the servants, that's all. It had to be done, and it was one of the servants, and everyone was grateful for the work and for being protected from the customs authorities at the same time. It's nothing.”

But by late afternoon, what his mother might or might not have done in the war was forgotten in the pace of work, the songs to which he was learning to hum along and the flow of the carriers. The vat was nearly full at last, and with a final burst of effort, they finished the first batch. The cutters were called in from the vineyard, and one of the women, her feet and legs freshly washed, was carried over and placed in the vat for the honour of pressing the first of the year's wine. There were songs for the pressing, and a certain amount of flirtation on the part of the chosen presser was apparently traditional as she danced in the grapes, crushing them with her feet and occasionally splashing a little of the must towards the most forward of the men who taunted her. Julien and Henri clapped along with the singing

and when the dancing spread to the rest of the village, they were even pulled in by a couple of the young girls who sought the entertainment of partnering the young gentlemen who did not know where to put their feet. Henri was embarrassed trying to keep up; Julien was laughing too hard to care.

At last, they bid goodbye Père Bornat and walked back along the beach as quickly as their tired feet could carry them. They would probably already be scolded for returning so late.

“That was the best thing I've ever done in my life,” Henri insisted. “I wish you didn't have to go.”

“I don't want to go, but I don't have a choice. At least I finally got to see part of the harvest.” He took off his hat and ran a hand through his hair, lifting his face to the wind. “School is going to be awful.”

“It might not be so bad.”

“You won't be there.”

Henri didn't say anything. There wasn't anything to say, really. He wished they were going together, but they weren't, and there was nothing to be done about it. But school wasn't forever, and even if Julien could not come next summer, school would eventually be finished and they could work out then how to be together. He wasn't going to forget Julien, and he couldn't imagine that Julien would forget him. This much, at least, could be worked out, even if the entire future of France were yet to be decided.

They paused to rest under their favourite climbing tree. “Will you promise me something?” Julien asked.

“Anything.”

“Promise me you won't forget. That no matter what happens, how long it might be before we can see each other, how difficult the road might be, we stand together and give our lives to the restoration of the French republic.”

“I promise. We should seal it properly.”

“We should have a liberty tree.” He patted the old oak. “You'll have to do, even if you don't have a red bonnet.” The penknife in his pocket would serve. “Where's your handkerchief?”

“Blood oath?”

“You said properly. You don't want to have to find it after you're bleeding, do you?”

“Here it is.” Julien folded each handkerchief so it was ready to serve as a bandage. “What do we say?”

“In Ireland, they had a test. I only remember parts of it.”

“It'll still work, won't it?”

"I'm sure it will. It's a question and answer. 'Are you straight?' 'Straight as a rush.' 'What's in your hand?' 'A branch.' 'What is it from?' 'The tree of liberty.' 'Where was it planted?' 'America.' 'Where did it grow?' 'France.' And there's another question that I can't remember."

"That's all right. It was probably for Ireland. We have as much as we need."

Julien smiled. "You're right. 'Are you straight?'"

"Straight as a rush."

Julien looked at Henri's outstretched wrist. It had to be deep enough to draw real blood, not a mere scratch, but one had to be very careful, too – the veins looked so very blue under Henri's fair skin. "No, the other wrist. Otherwise I can't cut mine." The left wrist was no better. "Are you ready?"

"That's not one of the questions."

"It's one of mine."

"Go ahead." Julien bit his lip in concentration, stared at Henri's wrist, and made a fair slice with his penknife. Blood started up immediately, bright red and flowing. He had no time to think, to stop, to set his aim. He sliced at his own wrist, a crooked gash. Grabbing Henri's arm, they let the blood mingle and drip to the ground. "Our tree will grow here, where we have watered it. We go forward today as brothers in arms."

Henri was trying not to wince with pain – it was a deeply serious ceremony, and everything Julien did was deeply beautiful and poetic and full of meaning, and he was determined not to ruin it – but pain was set aside the moment he heard the word "brothers". "Really? Brothers in arms?"

Julien's arm was throbbing. "Can we say brothers, full stop? I wish you were my brother for real."

"Then we are," Henri insisted. "Brothers."

Julien let go at that point – he could not stand it any more. Handkerchief in hand, he started to apply pressure to his wrist, hoping that some of the pain might stop if the bleeding might stop. He hoped he had not cut too deep into the flesh. But he managed, with his teeth, to wrap his handkerchief around and tie it like a bandage and then had both hands free to do the same for Henri, who could not manage quite so much co-ordination. The late afternoon light had gone quite yellow – they could not delay for much longer.

"I'm going to miss you," Henri admitted.

"Write to me. Even if I don't get to write back. Just keep writing. We'll work out a way even if it takes months."

"I promise."

Julien threw his arms around Henri. The ceremony had made everything seem so final, and he was

hard pressed to keep tears from invading. "I love you."

Henri felt hollow and rather stiff in Julien's tight embrace. "My brother. I won't say 'adieu'. I can't. I don't care what might happen. I can't." It was strange to see Julien crying when Henri knew Julien would never permit it to be the end.

Julien finally let him go. Wiping at his eyes quickly, to prove they were merely a bit watery, that he was not crying, he said, "I must bid you au revoir, then." They clasped hands one last time, then Julien took off running through the woods. He couldn't bear to say goodbye.

Delarive found him at the bottom of the garden, his eyes wet with tears. Julien permitted himself to be hugged – indeed, there was something nice in clinging to a sympathetic adult, someone who would be with him the whole miserable trip back to Paris. Delarive stroked the boy's hair in silence. If Julien had been permitted a more natural life, he would not feel the parting so greatly, he thought. "Come," he said kindly, pulling out his handkerchief. "We mustn't let your mother see you like this." Julien dried his eyes, and only then did Delarive notice the bandage on his wrist. "We'll go in through the kitchen, so we can wrap that properly. I don't know that your parents are so keen on blood brother rituals."

Julien looked up at him with eyes rimmed in red. "How did you know?"

Delarive smiled. "I would have done the same."

Early the next morning, Julien watched from the carriage window as they passed the gate to the Enjolras property. He was grateful for Delarive's strong adult presence next to him as his arm seemed to throb with every heartbeat, each jolt of the carriage taking him further from childhood.

Notes

In general: I am using language to make some points. The modern language Occitan still maintains two major dialects: Provençal and Languedoc (Languedoc itself is often called simply Occitan). This is a simplification of what were many dialects of a language that falls somewhere between French and Catalan and which, by the late 18th century, were deemed "local patois" and not given the status of "language". I have used the term "Provençal" as the best approximation in narration to treat this language as what it was: the majority language of the region at the time. In dialogue, the unfortunate period-accurate locution "patois" has been used.

Marseille at this period has lately begun (in what is essentially the generation of Jean-Pierre Enjolras and Richard Combeferre) a transition away from being a purely Provençal city. Investors, industrialists, and traders came south starting roughly just before the Revolution, increasing the number of native French speakers at the top of the social ladder. In addition, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars pulled men from the Midi and mixed them with men from the rest of France, by necessity using French as the lingua franca and increasing the numbers of men who spoke some French. However, Provençal is still the language of home, of business, of the region for not just the working classes but for many in the middle classes. At sea, sailors in the Levant nearly all come from the Midi and are Provençal speaking. Bordeaux even falls within the Occitan belt, meaning much of the Atlantic seafaring population were Occitan speakers (Bordelais falls very close to Gascon in terms of dialects).

I have over-emphasised the split between 18th and 19th centuries, between the bourgeois newcomers and the working class. For perfect accuracy, the servants all speak Provençal and the masters should, too. As a work-around, I have had Henri's nurse brought from Lyon with the family when they moved south and perhaps a greater separation of master and servants than was entirely appropriate. On the Combeferre side, Julien's nurses and tutors have all been hired in Paris and Cécile Combeferre has picked up only a few basics – one could describe her as that person who insists Provençal is just a way of mispronouncing French. (which is not at all true – the grammar differs somewhat and vocabulary and pronunciation vary considerably at times.) In real life, it is entirely plausible that similar characters would have spent their lives speaking Provençal at home and at the market, possibly even with local friends, but would conduct their secondary and higher education in French. A significant amount of code switching has been lost through my simplification of the issues.

However, I think the point is important that the difference between working classes and middle classes is linguistic, the South remains far behind the North not from geographic isolation but from linguistic issues that are not resolved for decades after this, and Hugo wanted his characters to come from the South, the one region where conservative politics and the Catholic Church remained in power throughout the Restoration, for a reason. I've used these two characters to highlight the disconnect that the centralisation of government in Paris made crucial to the future of the Midi. Combeferre is certainly aware of the language issue, and the solution for him, education, requires the replacement of Provençal with French, even as he uses both in daily life. Enjolras has a distance from everything and his thinking on a national plane seems to me to require a preference for French.

In short, the language issues throughout this story are true, but they are more reflective of how the situation developed through the nineteenth century rather than the single point of 1817-1819 in which the story is set.

Prologue: Les Goudes sort of exists – it is a geographical location within the city of Marseille but outside the old octroi barrier. It was once a village, and like many suburbs was subsumed into the city as the city grew. There are beautiful pictures on French Wikipedia (http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Goudes). The actual geography is adjusted to my own purposes. The tag is obviously William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*; the overall title is Edgar Allan Poe, taken from a poem fragment he sent in a letter to a girl with whom he was much taken in his youth.

Chapter 1: Unlike the English upper and upper middle classes of the period (and later), the French generally did not segregate their children from the family. Thus it would be expected that children learn table manners and conversation with adults as soon as they are able to sit at the dinner table with everyone else. Moreover, divisions of the house are somewhat different as there is no nursery – babies and small children would play in the informal salon; older children's lessons might be held in the father's study or at the dining room table. The tag is Edgar Allan Poe, from the same poem as the title.

Chapter 2: The tag is Catullus, poem 49.

Chapter 3: The position of a tutor was an odd one. In *The Red and the Black*, Stendhal seems to see nothing wrong with, in a much more circumscribed social circle, a demand that the low-born tutor dine with the family. However, my intention here is that M. Enjolras could buy and sell M. de Rênal several times over. The implied house and household are larger, and the tutor should more appropriately be

judged one of the higher servants. But I would not doubt that various families had various solutions to the difficulty of bringing an educated man into the house as a servant who should have some authority over the children. The tag is Alfred Tennyson, from *In Memoriam*.

Chapter 4: The tag is William Wordsworth, “On the Influence of Natural Objects”.

Chapter 5: The tag is William Wordsworth, “Resolution and Independence”.

Chapter 6: Screwy geography! If one looks at Google maps, to the southeast of Marseille you can see the spit of land that is constantly mentioned here. It may be wider in fiction than in real life. The tag is William Shakespeare, Sonnet 18.

Chapter 7: The postage M. Enjolras requests is much too high – it's part of the whole tease. The tag is Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”.

Chapter 8: Without some way to keep him occupied, Julien would either have to attend the dinner party or be hidden from the dinner party, and Cécile would not like it to get around that she had her son eat in the kitchen with the servants. There were successive waves of Irish refugees around the turn of the nineteenth century. After the French Revolution, supporters of Irish independence looked to the French Republic for support, and when plots failed and organizations collapsed, men did their best to escape to France rather than face execution by the English. Some of them did very well through the Napoleonic period, married into French families, and so you see names like McPherson come up later in the century as their descendants get involved in politics or business. Others did less well. M. Combeferre's anglophilia is deliberately somewhat anachronistic (and thus an eccentricity) but has a vague basis in part on the character (and thus real personage) of Captain Christy-Pallièrre in Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin series of novels. The tag is Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”.

Chapter 9: I would love to cite my travel sources, but I cannot find all of them anymore. (I think one was a rail history whose title I lost ages ago.) It is quicker going south because, according to Marianna Starke, the woman who wrote the 1829 Galignani guide to France, Italy, and Switzerland, one could take a boat down the Rhône from Lyon to Avignon, which saved time over rather poor roads. The estimates are reasonable if using post horses, which can be done for a private carriage, both according to Mrs Starke and Victor Hugo. The distance to Les Goudes is based on Google maps. The tag is William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*.

Chapter 10: The tag is William Wordsworth, “It Was an April Morning, Fresh and Clear”.

Chapter 11: Families with enough room had both a “grand salon” for formal entertaining and a “petit salon” for daily use. In smaller houses, the dining table would be in the petit salon, and if necessary, people with pretensions to quality and absolutely no money would use the kitchen as the petit salon. The Combeferres obviously have money. The fashion for English nurses that Julien describes is a product of the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the reopening of the border. This was a long-lasting fashion, and like any fashion, there was no real reasoning other than English girls were “better”. Ordinarily, in a family of this class, Charles would have been put out to nurse in the country until he was weaned, possibly even left there until the age of five or so, then retrieved to the family home and put in the care of a nurse or governess until his education was advanced enough that a male tutor would be brought in. Putting a child out to nurse was a constant even among the lower classes in Paris, as

Hugo recognises by stating for the reader that Fantine had suckled her own child. Cécile prefers to keep her children close to her, which I hope is slightly in her favour. She is not a good mother, but she does love her children. The contrast in décor between the Enjolras and Combeferre homes is a product of the period. Having only new furniture was rather out of place among the settled bourgeois – it was expected that pieces would be added as pieces wore out and overall redecorating would be wallpaper, curtains, possibly upholstery, knick-knacks, but rarely the outfitting of a room in entirely new pieces. Even when a married couple moved into a new house, some pieces may be provided by family. However, the Napoleonic era saw certain material excesses with the rise of certain families and the creation of the new nobility so that it was not unheard of in 1806 to build a new house and furnish it entirely from scratch. It's not necessarily that Mme Enjolras had tacky taste; it's that to Mme Combeferre, to not have and use the inheritance of generations is tacky regardless of what has been put together. The tag is Edgar Allan Poe, "A Dream Within a Dream".

Chapter 12: More invented geography. One can see on Wikipedia that the hill behind what would have been the village is too sandy and salty to be good for anything, though two hundred years may change things. The Provençal is as accurate as poking through various teaching websites can make it. The spelling, however, probably fluctuates between classical and mistralien norms, and pronunciation is far from intuitive. "Paire" is rather like "PIE-ra", the "n" at the end of "bonjorn" is swallowed, as is the "o" at the end of "Touneto", "j" is a hard rather than soft sound, and anything else is more akin to Spanish than to French. Smuggling was of course endemic due to the blockades, as was slipping merchant and war ships out whenever the weather permitted (the Navy was at Toulon, however), and Patrick O'Brian mentions the ships on blockade buying fish and information from local fishermen. The tag is Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself".

Chapter 13: The tag is William Wordsworth, "The King of Sweden".

Chapter 14: "Health officer" is my chosen translation of "officier de santé", a category derived from the need to expand medical care into the country. One could attend a regional school for three years and qualify as a health officer and practice medicine, but not surgery, within the department of qualification, while a doctor attended one of three medical schools for four years plus produced a thesis and was qualified to practice medicine and surgery anywhere in the country. Charles Bovary, in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, is a health officer. (and his mangling of medicine comes in large part because he's attempting things he was never taught.) The tag is Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Queen Mab*.

Chapter 15: Descriptions of the port and hôtel de ville come from recent photographs of the Vieux Port, an 1820s painting uploaded to Wikimedia Commons, and various texts on business in France during this period. *Robeirols* are categorically different to dock workers and have various legal restrictions on the types of work they can perform and the ways in which they can look for work. The straw baskets on their backs are identifying markers as well as work aids that they are legally required to carry as a marker of their status – dock workers are, in essence, protected from the unfair competition of the *robeirols*. The first steamships in Marseille were Italian, arriving in 1818 or 1819, and were part of a regular run from Sicily to Naples to Genoa to Marseille. The tag is Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*.

Chapter 16: Christopher Wren must have seemed even more dominant in London before the Blitz knocked down several of the churches and postwar redevelopment led to skyscrapers all over the City. Churchgoing in Paris was already declining before the Revolution; the Revolution and various radical

attempts to remove the Church entirely merely accelerated an existing phenomenon, though actual destruction was a revolutionary act. Much of what was destroyed was not put back together until Hugo drew attention to the old meanings of the ancient churches with *Notre Dame de Paris* in 1832, but the ideas had certainly been circulating among small groups of interested parties well before. The book discussed is real – an 1809 publication actually written by Stephen Cullen Carpenter, giving it some time to turn up in France. The tag is William Wordsworth, “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey”.

Chapter 17: The Barbary pirates were based along the Mediterranean coast of Africa – ostensibly regional governors of the Ottoman Empire, they turned to piracy to aggrandize their positions and fortunes. Britain and France paid them a bounty on a regular basis to preserve their ships and crew; America refused, had several ships taken and their crews enslaved, and under Jefferson sent its first warships to force a truce. In the end, the US did pay, but less than Tripoli was asking, and did receive its citizens back. However, this was merely the First Barbary War – the second was after 1815 and involved the British and French going after a different governor. Piracy still did not stop and was a major excuse for the French invasion of Algeria some years later. It seems the most likely act of Jefferson's presidency to make an impression on Marseille during the Napoleonic Wars without getting into details of tariff policy.

Chapter 18: The tag is Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”.

Chapter 19: The Latin poem is Catullus 51. The tag is William Wordsworth, “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood”.

Chapter 20: All descriptions of the vendange and winemaking are derived from Wikipedia and a couple of modern texts. The “test” described was a real code used by the United Irishmen – the missing question/answer is “Where will you put it?” “In the crown of Great Britain.” The tag is from a lyric by Robert Emmet, a member of the United Irishmen.

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