

Marianne & Olympe

MARIANNE. I'm just saying that nobody wants to be *told* what to feel.

OLYMPE. I'm not *telling* them what to feel, I'm *forcing* them.

MARIANNE. That's what pamphlets do! Look. Most people don't have time for the grand dramas, it's the intimate ones that matter. So write your political theatre but remember that for most people it's not about being righteous, it's about being real. So find the heart. Not the...art.

OLYMPE. Why are you better at this than me? I've been trying to come up with a cute couplet like that for days, but I keep dreaming of guillotines and resorting to puppets. I have to write something! This is a revolution! Everyone is making history without me!

MARIANNE. Listen—

OLYMPE. I can't listen when I'm whining.

MARIANNE. You're just blocked. Writers get blocked. It's not a tragedy. Being ripped from your country, stuffed in the belly of a ship, carted across the world, and forced to break your back to make sugar for French pastries is a tragedy. The French are fighting a revolution for *freedom* while running a *slave colony* in the West. That's why I need you writing pamphlets so we can expose the immoral and hypocritical actions that—

OLYMPE. *Oh my god I can write about you!*

MARIANNE. —was not the point I was going for.

OLYMPE. Yes! You're gorgeous, and empowered, and seem to have a very clear character motivation.

MARIANNE. We're not gonna stay friends if you write a play about me.

OLYMPE. (*Narrator voice.*) Marianne Angelle: Activist for freedom from slavery in the Caribbean, lover of cheeses and universal human rights, strong yet sardonically sympathetic.

MARIANNE. No, she said, sardonically. *Pamphlets.*

OLYMPE. I am! I will! It will be great research for the play. What you're doing is bold and important. You're a goddamn spy for freedom! That's box office gold! Come on. You make me believe that a better world is possible. If people listen to you. And a lot of me.

MARIANNE. OK they say write what you know, right? But what if you write what you *want*. That's what we're really fighting for isn't it? Women's agency over their own lives.

OLYMPE. Yes.

MARIANNE. The abolition of slavery across the planet.

OLYMPE. Yes.

MARIANNE. Maybe you don't need to dress your ideas in drama. You can write a monologue? Why don't you write a manifesto.

OLYMPE. Or...a declaration?

MARIANNE. Sure, yeah. Like the Americans.

OLYMPE. Like the Americans! "We hold these truths and-the-fact-that-women-are-people to be self-evident."

MARIANNE. That sounds pretty revolutionary to me. Also no risk of puppets. Everybody wins.

Pause. Olympe likes this. Then she thinks. Seriously.

OLYMPE. Marianne. Do you dream of guillotines? Every night?

MARIANNE. No. Chains.

Charlotte & Marianne

CHARLOTTE. And after all the shoving and the yelling, they get me to the prison. And I'm exhausted right? And then they had to check my *virginity*, of course. And they were like "She's a virgin!" And I was like "not after you checked, I'm not." And it wasn't the intimate violation of it that bugged me—though I swear to god some guy hit on me *on the way to prison*—It was that they were *sure* there was a man involved. "She wouldn't have avenged her people on her own, she must have been fucked into it." I mean Jesus Christ a girl can't even assassinate someone without judgment. I'm joining Olympe's group.

MARIANNE. What's Olympe's group?

CHARLOTTE. I heard that she declared something at the Assembly. Some big women's group? For girls to go scouting or something?

MARIANNE. I don't think that's what she was—

CHARLOTTE. Oh yeah, that's what they were saying in my virginity check.

MARIANNE. No, it was a Declaration for all Women. *Egalité* means equality for everyone, that's her point.

CHARLOTTE. Exactly what I'm saying! Who checks the boys' virginity when they go to prison for murder, huh? *No one*. That'd be equality, that'd be...something...good.

MARIANNE. You OK?

CHARLOTTE. Me? Fine. Good. I mean... I did the deed. Stabby-stab, he's dead, what I wanted. So...yeah.

MARIANNE. You know, they're calling you the Angel of Assassins.

CHARLOTTE. Oooh. Really? That's not bad.

MARIANNE. Yeah, kind of a girl-next-door-meets-Joan-of-Arc vibe.

CHARLOTTE. Nice. Wait. They think I'm crazy?

MARIANNE. No.

CHARLOTTE. Because Joan of Arc was kinda crazy. I'm not crazy, I'm fed up, I *had* to kill him, it was a civic duty...that felt fucking awesome. I mean the *feel* of it? Of righteous vengeance is just...floral, like a blooming of power and rightness and—goddammit it's what sex must feel like.

MARIANNE. I mean...

CHARLOTTE. The way that man looked at me with my knife in his chest. I was this close to him, his breath on my lips, leaning into him, and I said—I actually said this—"You. Die. Now." But that's not crazy that's...just very literal.

MARIANNE. I mean...

CHARLOTTE. Did I tell you some guy's painting my portrait? That's kinda cool. Wait till Jacques sees that. Fucker. And people are reading my letter? The last line might have been a bit much but I didn't have Olympe's help.

MARIANNE. Yes it's circulating in a pamphlet. Widely. But...

CHARLOTTE. What.

MARIANNE. There's also some...celebration...of Marat.

CHARLOTTE. *Wait what?*

MARIANNE. Now this was bound to happen, but some idiots are trying to turn him into a martyr.

CHARLOTTE. Some? I mean...not *many*, not *some*. A faction. A small but vocal faction? Right?

MARIANNE. ...right.

Hard pause.

CHARLOTTE. Well. Sometimes history judges slowly.

Marie & Marianne

MARIE. And...you're, like, *not* a queen?

MARIANNE. No. Revolutionary. And a mom.

MARIE. A mom, me too! I forget about that sometimes, but I am. How old are your kids?

MARIANNE. Well Annabelle is ten.

MARIE. Awww. Lots of bows?

MARIANNE. She loves bows. On everything—the cat, the teacups.

MARIE. Me too! Teacup bows are the best!

MARIANNE. And Vincent is eight. He's named after his dad.

MARIE. So are mine. Isn't it funny when they start talking alike—father and son? I just think it's so funny. They sneeze the same. They say "spoon" the same. Hilarious. And now sad.

MARIANNE. The world found it just despicable. No nation, no matter how revolutionary, should kill a king that way.

MARIE. Aw, thanks. I mean. He was a lumpy man, but he had good moments. I didn't dislike him. In fact I liked him, when he would just stand there looking serious. He was best when he was just...standing.

MARIANNE. How did you meet?

MARIE. On our wedding day. I wasn't supposed to marry him, you know. But all the rest of my sisters had smallpox so it fell to me. Which was fine. I mean the finery was exquisite. Everything else was a bit strained. You know we didn't consummate the damn thing for *three goddamned years*? Can you imagine? *The tension*? And the whole country blames me! And I'm like "nuh uh! I'm totally down! He's the one who—" Turns out? He had to have an operation on his Little Prince before he could—Yeah. So that was anti-hilarious. Then finally little Marie-Thérèse came along, then little Louis-Joseph, then little Louis-Charles, then little Sophie poor dear. Then they killed him. In the square that used to be named after his grandfather. The rest is... I talk too much. What about your husband?

MARIANNE. Oh. We don't have to...

MARIE. No please tell me. It's so nice to pretend nothing is wrong in the world. Is yours a love story? I love love stories.

MARIANNE. It is a love story.

MARIE. Brava, then. *Allons-y*.

MARIANNE. Well. Vincent is a catch. He's strong, and tall, with these eyes that just make you tell him every little thing.

MARIE. Ooh.

MARIANNE. And he doesn't walk. Oh no. Vincent *strides*. Long legs and swinging arms, you know.

MARIE. (*Getting a little too excited.*) Uh-huh.

MARIANNE. And when that man wears a suit? Just give up, just don't even try to look away. But when he takes it *off*?

MARIE. TELL ME EVERYTHING.

MARIANNE. He courted me for months, but the truth is I thought he was too handsome.

MARIE. Too handsome is not a thing.

MARIANNE. Well, you don't want them *that* dashing, it'd make me worry.

MARIE. Not me—Dash Dash! OK, Vincent is a dream, he swings his arms, when is le smooch?

MARIANNE. Well I kept thinking "yes, he's very nice" and "yes he's from a good family." But I just wasn't sure I *really knew* him. Until. He let loose this *laugh*. We were talking about—I don't know—and out comes this rumbly, and loud, and big-old-stupid laugh.

Might we hear this laugh?

And that's when I agreed to marry him.

MARIE. That is literally hilarious!

MARIANNE. They're perfect when they're just a little flawed. You know?

MARIE. I do *not* know, but that sounds so fun!

MARIANNE. I miss him. And our kids, they're with my mom. Revolutions aren't for children.

MARIE. Work-life balance, I get it.

Olympe & Marie

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

Marie reads over her shoulder.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OLYMPE. Well I haven't written the end.

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

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

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

OLYMPE. It's not a romantic comedy.

Marie whines, Olympe pushes through it.

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

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

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

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

OLYMPE. It's a character.

MARIE. Named after you.

OLYMPE. Well yes but—

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

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

MARIE. I hate it. I already hate it.

OLYMPE. You don't hate it.

MARIE. The play is trash!

OLYMPE. *The play could save us both.*

Pause.

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

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

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

OLYMPE. I'll add a butler.

MARIE. Hilarious!