

D A N T O N

A Play for Radio

by

O. D. Erickson

ANNOUNCER France, in the year 1789.

MUSIC BEGINNING WITH RURAL LIGHTNESS, THE MUSIC MOVES INTO A GRACEFUL COURT AIR, BEHIND WHICH, HOWEVER, ARE POWERFUL RYTHMS WHICH INCREASINGLY INTERRUPT, AND GROW MORE DISTURBING. AT THE MOMENT WHEN THIS MUSIC OF REALITY IS ABOUT TO BECOME OVERPOWERING, THE LAST BARS TINKLE AND BREAK OFF.

THE FOLLOWING MONTAGE OF SCENES, AT FIRST UNREAL AND DISTANT, GROWS IN AGITATION AND VIVIDNESS.

A LADY What is this talk about the Third Estate, Paul?
What is that?

PAUL The Third Estate? It's like a parliament, really.
I'm not sure.....they say it's very ancient...

THE LADY You never know anything, Paul.

PAUL But I'm not supposed to, my dear. I belong to the Nobility.

(THEY LAUGH)

MUSIC BEGINNING TO SURGE

A WOMAN Are you going to Paris, then, husband?

LAWYER When the week's up we'll all go.

WOMAN What's it about?

LAWYER The King lacks money. He expects the people to find it for him.

WOMAN Then you will be home soon...?

LAWYER When we've done our business, which is not to
 give it to him.

MUSIC UP

A VOICE The people are going to see the King.

VOICE 2 They'd better find some bloody bread.

VOICE 3 What good's a King if his people beg?

VOICE 2 They'd better find some bread!

MUSIC UP

MARIE
ANTOINETTE You are far to apologetic, my dear.

KING LOUIS Well, what should I say?

MARIE You are King.....In your speech say that you expect
 them to find some money -- and quickly too.

LOUIS The Minister, Necker, told me he knew no way...

MARIE Get someone else. Dear Conte D'Artois would have
 found a way.

LOUIS There is none.

MARIE Find some....

LOUIS Oh, Marie.....

MUSIC UP

SOUND MURMUR OF A GREAT CROWD

THE CROWD (CHANTING) We want bread! We want bread!

ORATOR They ask us for money! They ask us for money!
 While the people starves and the country begs, they
 ask us for money --- money to tinkle in their silken
 purses -- money to buy their carriages and clothes!
 We will give them no money while the people starve.
 We will give them our curses instead!!!

THE CROWD We want bread! We want bread!!

MUSIC EXCITED

LOUIS What am I going to do?

MARIE What do you mean!

THE DRUM IS DROWNED OUT BY THE SHOUT OF THE CROWD,
ROAR OF ARTILLERY, RATTLE OF MUSKETRY, SCREAMS OF
HATE, RAGE, AGONY -- VERY GRADUALLY FADING INTO

MUSIC

TOWERING, MARTIAL, THAT ENDS ON THE MARCHING
BEAT OF A DRUM. HOLD BG AND FADE INTO....

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

The representatives of the French people, organized
as a National Assembly, considering that ignorance,
neglect or contempt of the rights of man are the sole
causes of public misfortunes and of the corruption
of governments, have resolved to set forth in a solemn
declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred
rights of man in order that this declaration, being
ever before all members of society, may constantly
remind them of their rights and of their duties.....

SLOW FADE TO

MUSIC

BEGINNING WITH HIGH RESOLUTION IT BECOMES CONFUSED;
VAGUE, STARTS AFRESH, AND THEN GRADUALLY BREAKS DOWN
TO BECOME AMUSING, LIGHT, WANDERING.

FADE.

SOUND

FADE IN LAUGHTER OF DANTON'S FRIENDS IN THE CAFE
CHARPENTIER.

DELACROIX

Remember when he swam beneath the walls of the Bastille
---two years ago it was ---

CAMBON

....Belly up in the Seine, spouting great streams of
water at the sun...

DELACR

The guards were not sure what to make of it...

FABRE

D'EGLANTINE

He's a devil of a man....

HERAULT DE
SECHELLES

Gentlemen, gentlemenBut do you remember when he
proposed ~~333~~ to the grand lady of St. Germaine

(LAUGHTER)

HERAULT Down on one knee -- Please marry me, Madame, your beauty is too extravagant, your extravagance is too beautiful.....
(LAUGHTER)

CAMBON Who was she?

HERAULT And then he took the astonished woman's hand and promised everlasting concern...

FABRE (TRYING TO CONTROL HIS LAUGHTER) A devil of a man ... a devil of a man.....

CAMBON Who was she? Who was she?

HERAULT None other than the Marquess d'Ouvert...
(A SHOUT OF LAUGHTER)

FABRE That fat pig -- my God !

HERAULT She was unable to speak for some moments...

DELACROIX Perhaps she delighted secretly.

HERAULT You wouldn't think so from the way she squealed for help.
(LAUGHTER)

DELACROIX Yet, he's changed from those days.

CAMBON Yes.

FABRE Not really ... never really. He will be the despair of Hell when he gets there.

CAMILLE
DESMOULINS I think we ^forget the purpose of our meeting, gentlemen.
(THEY FALL SILENT) It is not to discuss Danton's history, but to persuade him to lead our district at the coming meeting of the commune. ~~Surely,~~ this is of utmost importance to us. Danton is the one commanding figure we have. ~~You must admit it.~~

DELACROIX It's true, you must do.....

CAMBON Sssh, he's just come in....

FABRE Over here, Danton...!!

DELACROIX (WHISPERING) ...You must do the talking, Camille.

CAMBON Sh....

DELACROIX Ah, Danton, we've been waiting...

DANTON Hello there, Herault...Fabre...and our friend Camille, eh?
Gentlemen, hello...

It's a cold night...where's the wine? Come now!

CAMILLE Danton, we have been talking about you. We have come
to a decision.

DANTON (INDIFFERENTLY) Really?

CAMILLE Listen, Danton, you know very well what it's about.
All along you've ignored our summons to lead this
district at the meeting of the Paris commune. We
wonder how, being a Frenchman, you can do so...
seeing the plight France is in.

DANTON I have ignored nothing.

(A PAUSE)

CAMILLE You have heard the reports -- the revolution hardly
begun and the Queen plotting to bring in the foreigner,
the King torn between his love of the people and the
devilish murmur of Antoinette, the people hungry still
and raving mad, and cold with winter -- France ringed
round with enemies and the pompous, ineffectual
Lafayette commanding the National Guard.....France
in chaos, angry, uncertain, weak...

DANTON France is not weak.

CAMILLE What is your word for it, then? Listen, Danton, the
taking of the Bastille -- that was the beginning --
the people rising out of the mud and going running
with staves in their hands to destroy the thing that was
bearing them down, suffocating them under its huge,
dead weight....

So, they beat it down....with their bare hands they
destroyed it....

But that was not all they wanted --- they wanted
light and air, they wanted food and water, they wanted

strength, and they wanted to know who they were and where they were going.

They wanted pride and knowledge, purpose and possession....

DANTON Camille, you don't have to spit.

(A SNICKER FROM SOMEONE)

CAMILLE My God, Danton!

HERAULT He's right, Danton, though you mock him. France has destroyed its castle, and now does not know what to build.

DANTON ~~As you think I am not aware of my position, indeed?~~

These are strollings in the wind, these speeches --
And But why do you direct them at me? I am one of you, a lawyer, a good fellow, I enjoy life even if it falls around me, I like people even when they spit their eloquence at me.

My God -- I have ordinary ambitions, quite ordinary -- I love my wife and I want a good living and I find my work both dull and interesting.

Who can suggest that I do not love France -- I am French -- though I have never thought much about it.

If you want me to lead you, I shall do so, certainly, God save you, but do not expect anything of me that any of you could not do better.

Now, where's the wine?

(CHEERING)

(FADE)

DANTON (LAUGHING SOFTLY) So.... we all got drunk, Angel, and cheered the life out of poor old France. (HE YAWNS)
There must be many districts in Paris, like ours, choosing some blushing man among the wine glasses to save their France -- Damn these shows -- my one

trouble, these silly feet.

MME DANTON
"ANGEL"

You've been walking the streets again. I've warned you often enough.

DANTON They have to carry so large a bulk.

ANGEL Where will the commune meet?

DANTON If there's hot water, Angel, I'll drown these monsters.The Hotel de Ville. We have walked by it many times....Ah, Angel, better...better..... The Hotel de Ville-- God help it.

I stand here and I wonder, Angel....

ANGEL You are sitting, now.

DANTONwonder how it is possible ... and yet, I suppose these things must be.

ANGEL I can see you : you will stick your chin far out and try to scare people.

DANTON With my face it should be easy.

ANGEL With your face, Jacques, you may lead France.

DANTON That is very doubtful.....But, do you know, Camille Desmoulins said something interesting...

ANGEL What was it?

DANTON I can't remember. But the words were partly true. You see, France does not know where to go. She has done something, and now begins to regret it.

Ho! Ho!

Like a woman. Old woman France. Eh, Angel...?

ANGEL Jacques, sometimes you are indecent...

DANTON And so is she! An indecent old woman, with a bad breath indigestion, and rotten teeth.

ANGEL I will not listen.

DANTON Isn't it so? And a bitter tongue, at times, and a dumpy frame, and a bunched way of walking.

ANGEL Ah! Danton.

DANTON But what sharp wit, cherie! -- and a sharp, shrewd mind, and a humour as bent and powerful as her back, and wiry, hard arms that know how to work -- and a voice, Angel, a voice that sings through the market.

But then Camille said France is starving, raving, & weak -- and he was wrong. Starving, yes. Raving, as usual. But weak -- No, no, not France -- not that old wench.

ANGEL It is you, Jacques, who are weak tonight -- weak in the head.

DANTON ...But I lie here wondering nonetheless, Angel....

ANGEL Sitting, you ox.

DANTON ...Wondering what she is up to. I think I know and then I don't know and I am no stupendous thinker, as you know -- Not in words, but with a mind that feels... that is why I know this France, this old wench, as you say. And I am very glad to know her indeed for she is liable to be dangerous...

ANGEL The words jump out of your mouth like rabbits.

DANTON ...Liable to be doubly dangerous, having kicked her old master in the stomach, for at last she is fed up with his debaucheries, eh, and his opinion of himself.

But what now, Angel? It has been so long -- her life with this charlatan -- this hand scrubbing-- and though maybe she has found, in her pinched age, a new religion, she does not know what to do with it, nor where to go with it....

ANGEL (RESIGNED) Ah, well....

DANTON (HE YAWNS) She may wander until she dies ...unless she meets some fecund male, for she is not as old as she seems, and hatches a monster.

Aaahhh. So she will..... so she will.....

indecent....old....wench.....

ANGEL

Asleep in an instant... with his feet in the water, too.

Ah, well, I can handle him, alright -- and love him too.

Eh, Jacques?

MUSIC

GROWING OUT OF THE SOUND OF HIS HEAVY BREATHING,

AND BECOMING BUSINESSLIKE.

FADE IN

MONSARD

Here is the painter, David.

DUMONT

Let's speak with him.

MONSARD

David ! How goes it, my man?

DAVID

I am going it very well, thank you, alone.

MONSARD

What is your impression of the gathering?

DAVID

A mixture of dignity and noise, thank you, determination,
indignation, and interruption.

MONSARD

If you paint that way it will not please anybody.

DAVID

I never paint the way I feel, thank you, there is my
art.

MONSARD

A monstrous art, if I may say so, that does not speak
as it feels.

DAVID

You would go out of your way to say so. Yet, while I am
regarded well, you, I know, are not regarded at all.
Good day.

MONSARD

A vile little man, without ethics, intellect, or real
talent.

~~MONSARD~~
DUMONT

I would say so.

(THE MURMURING OF CROWD BG DROPS AS A VOICE IS RAISED
IN THE DISTANCE)

MONSARD

(SPEAKING WITH REVERENCE) Vergniaud -- the architect
of our hopes....

(VOICE CONTINUES RYTHMICALLY)

MONSARD (SPEAKING WITH REVERENCE) What eloquence the man has !

DUMONT What is he saying?

MONSARD It's truly wonderful. We live in a great age, Dumont.

DUMONT Is he talking about the King?

MONSARD One cannot help but be excited, listening to him.

DUMONT But I wish I could hear him.

MONSARD Does it matter what he says? It is the poise, the equilibrium, the sentiment.

DUMONT Just the same....

MONSARD Now he reaches for his final words. Listen,.;. even the air waits....

(A FEW WORDS EG. AND THEN A ROAR OF APPLAUSE)

DUMONT Who is this standing, now?

MONSARD Robespierre.

DUMONT I have heard of him.

MONSARD Sssh.

(ROBESPIERRE'S THIN VOICE THROUGH THE SILENCE/)

ROBESPIERRE The establishment of the civil constitution is the establishment of virtue and peace.....

DUMONT The man is boring.

MONSARD He speaks like this always -- the same phrases -- without beauty...

DUMONT Sssh.

ROBESPIERREThe thought of liberty cannot and shall not tolerate the thought of war....

DUMONT How will Vergniaud and the Girondin party like this?

MONSARD Not at all -- nor do I blame them. Do we sit quietly while our enemies surround us? His voice drones on and on... There is no love in it.

DUMONT Tell me, Monsard, who is that sitting near the front... that huge man, with the ugly face....?

MONSARD A mobster^{out} of the Cordeliers....one called Danton.

DUMONT He has a commanding appearance.

MONSARD But with nothing to command. Pay no attention to him,

friend. I have never heard him speak here, and I hope I shall never have to. Frankly, I don't like these 'men of the people'.

(UP WITH LAST PART OF ROBESPIERRE'S SPEECH.)

SOUND (DEEP, MUFFLED SOUND OF A BELL TELLING THE TIME.)

VOICE 1 (WHISPERING) 'Ello, friend.

VOICE 2 Friend of what?

VOICE 1 Of the Revolution.

VOICE 2 That friend is dead.

VOICE 1 Not while I live.

VOICE 2 What's happened to it then?

VOICE 1 Lawyers and merchants run the revolution now, friend.

VOICE 2 We almost had our hands on the bread.

VOICE 1 But they snatched it from us.

VOICE 2 Was ever a worse winter?

VOICE 1 They're friends of the King.

VOICE 2 Not of the people, sure.

VOICE 1 While that Austrian bitch, Antoinette, plots.

VOICE 2 And they make fine speeches.

VOICE 1 Ssst. Here's another....Did you hear us, friend?

VOICE 3 I heard....All Paris thinks as you.

VOICE 1 We had pikes in our hands once.

VOICE 2 We can carry them again.

VOICE 3 Where's the bread they promised us?

VOICE 1 What's happened to the Revolution?

VOICE 2 It's gone into a bloody document.

VOICE 3 They'll hear us, yet.

VOICE 1 We'll meet again.

VOICE 2 With pikes and ready hands, friends.

MUSIC QUICK AND OUT.

CAMILLE Something must be done !

HERAULT It's true, Danton, we must act.

CAMBON The Revolution is growing old and we have lost it.

CAMILLE No, you're wrong, it's just begun.

CAMBON What is this?....It's like some fatal disease that has
 crept over us.

CAMILLE No, we'll create new cause for it, build a fire beneath
 it.

HERAULT I analyse it thus: when a limb is spoiled, diseased, to
 prevent the illness spreading, you cut it off. Then
 the body has a chance to heal, grow strong again.

DANTON What do you mean?

CAMILLE Well, isn't it so?

DANTON I suppose you mean this palsied Assembly -- these new
 Romans -- who are so attached to their stalwart of ideals,
 that they have forgotten to act.

CAMILLE They have lost the power of action.

CAMBON The revolution falters.

DANTON What a group of comic caricatures we are !sitting
 here in high dudgeon like a priest beside a bawling child...

 Do you think, tell me, that we have anything to do with
the revolution?

 The Revolution is not in this room, gentlemen, nor in
the club of the Jacobins, nor in the National Assembly,
nor in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, nor anywhere
but in the eyes of those scarecrows we passed in the
street just now. Do you think that that look will water
away with words?

 Those lawyers in the Assembly, with their fine hands
and fervourous tears -- do you think for one moment that
they have control of this revolution? They have none
and know it. There is no control. The Revolution is
in the hunger of the mob who have grown so hungry that it
is now more than hunger of the belly; it is hunger of the
mind, too. Until that hunger is satisfied there is no

stopping the revolution, or controlling it,
or developing it. It is out of our hands
altogether --- it is in no one's hands.

CAMILLE Then it must come into our hands !

DANTON How can you treat with hunger except with food ?
Tell me, Camille.

no, the thing that will happen will be long and
bitter It will be hateful.

FABRE What has all this to do with the revolution ?

We've still got a king and a court and god knows
what else of the old regime left, and it seems to
me that that's not good enough.

CAMILLE And an Assembly who's main motive seems to be its own
protection.

DANTON Of course ! Let them bray. One day the weapons will
be taken up again and the streets will be filled
with hungry men.

Then there'll be blood to water the Boulogne.

CAMILLE Somehow, it's got to be directed, this frenzy, or we
shall all die shamefully.

DANTON Have you heard of the floods of Holland ? They put
up dikes to stop them, but once in awhile the sea
decides to rise and then there's no stopping it
by dikes of any mans' design.

If we attempt to hinder this revolution, you'll be
right, Camille, and we shall all be swept away ---
along with the Assembly.

HERAULT The Assembly still has the National Guard behind it.

DANTON Some dike, that !

(A PAUSE)

CAMILLE When life itself is in despair, what can one man do ?

DANTON One thing : the tide moves, we move with it : we clear
its way : we knock down the dikes that hope to bar it :

we make the destruction complete. We roar with
the mob -- make widows, France ! -- make waifs !
Kill ! Kill ! We are inexorable !

(PAUSE)

FABRE This is melodramatic to say the least.

CAMILLE Danton, it is terrible ...

HERAULT It is as dangerous to join a mob as to move against it.

DANTON My God, I have dreamt about it, and thought about it,
and walked miles with beating heart to escape it :
but there is no escape, no refuge, no quiet anywhere.
The revolution will swell up and overpower the world.
It has us gripped and its fist is bloody.

There is only one way : not backward : and to stand
still is death -- but forward, forward with the tide.
Look, the # sweat is on our brows at the thought of
what is awakened in us. Look at me. You are with me.
You desire it too. You cannot help but come with me.
Look what we might discover after the unrest of ages.
The wind startles the hills, so this dismays our
intelligence.

But to be wise about a revolution is to deny it ---
only to be of it -- to help shape its passion --
out of the clay -- with fire..... That is what we
must do.

(PAUSE)

HERAULT I always knew you were corrupt, Danton, I did not think
bloodthirsty.

DANTON I don't desire blood !

CAMILLE It is a cry out of darkness : how can we condone it ?

DANTON Then go your way, Camille : condone the wind and the
moon : this is ugly -- a purge of blood --- But it's
here do you see, and you are part of it whether you

wish it or not. Cannot condone it !

Does it care ?

But there is one thing -- one thing through the bitterness of tears that even we might condone ...

HERAULT Go on.

DANTON A nation. We want that, don't we a nation ?

(PAUSE)

FABRE Danton I will write that in my new play ... somewhere ...
" a nation."

DANTON You will get your head chopped off, Fabre, and write no more plays.

FABRE How cruel.

DANTON Spring is cruel for breaking the ice.

FABRE Did you hear that ? He thinks I am ice !

HERAULT I think you're a man, Danton, but what else, God knows.

CAMILLE Half man, half beast, perhaps.

DANTON I think that fits us all very well.

CAMILLE Goodnight, Danton. I'll say this much -- we shall have no more easy dreams.

DANTON Soak them in brandy, Camille, and they'll serve.

FABRE (LAUGHING) Danton, you are impossible. Impossible !
Coming, Herault ? We'll soak a few tonight, eh ?
Coming ? This Danton, a regular lion sometimes. Will make widows, I think. The very devil~~s~~ in him.
Come, come ... a song, Herault ? I'll show you
listen

(FABRE SINGS A RIBALD SONG THAT FADES IN THE DISTANCE)

DANTON No more ~~easy~~ dreams but drums ^{to} ~~of~~ death.

MUSIC EXCITED.

SOUND KNOCKING.

VOICE Danton ! Danton !

DANTON Stop shaking the house, I hear you.

VOICE The King has left the country.

DANTON Eh.

VOICE To the Austrians.

DANTON Will we catch him ?

VOICE I don't know. The crowds are gathering.

ANGEL Jacques.

DANTON Yes, yes, Angel.

ANGEL Be careful, the crowd is dangerous.

DANTON Was ever crowd I was afraid of. ?

MUSIC BRIDGE

CROWD MURMURING.

HERAULT You're here, Danton ! It's alright. It's all over.
Word has come through. They caught him on the road
to Germany. There'll be trouble now -- for King Louis.

DANTON Near the mocking murmur, eh ? Well, it's begun.
The king could no longer keep his face both ways ...
towards democracy and monarchy, I mean. No great
villain, perhaps, but a man who liked his hunting ...
he should have had a country house that bread stout
wine and wives and many children.
How strange to his nature, it must have been, this
nightmare ride beside the murmur of his wife into the
mist.
I remember seeing him up there before the # Assembly,
once when he swore to be a good king, and I remember
at Versailles when the mob stormed in and he put the
red hat on -- there was a passing happiness in him.
As if, for once, he felt he might belong.
But if he was simple he was weak too, and there's his
treachery. We'll knock him from his throne for that.

HERAULT !

HERAULT Here, Danton .

DANTON It's time to strike. Tell # Camille. Tell him we

will gather in the Champ de Mars and there proclaim a republic. Give him those words. Cry it out to the throng. Raise his voice to the clouds. We begin now.

MUSIC DRUMS GROWING IN VOLUME. DOWN TO BG. OUT.

AN OFFICER Marquis de Lafayette, sir, the mob is pouring into the Champ de Mars.

LAFAYETTE Is it indeed? --And what does it seem to desire?

OFFICER The deposition of the king. The proclamation of Republic. Rule by the people.

LAFAYETTE The people rule now, they forget -- they have their Assembly.

OFFICER It does not suit them.

LAFAYETTE What will suit them? What can please them, pray? Stuff their mouths with crumbs and they will still shout: we want!

OFFICER It's so, certainly.

LAFAYETTE A dirty mob, a ragged, filthy, vulgar mob that would chew your guts out if they could.

OFFICER It's true. A ragged, filthy mob.

LAFAYETTE I am no king-lover, mind you. The precious man has lost his stirrups and who's there to hold him ...?

OFFICER Unlikely -- indeed, sir.

LAFAYETTE But by God I will not be spat at by that mob. No mob will spit at me.

OFFICER We'll prevent it.

LAFAYETTE It's all very well to hate the monarchy when the monarchy's lost hold. But to spit at authority -- that's another matter, by God.

OFFICER Indeed, we'll spit them all.

LAFAYETTE Gutter born, illiterate, rat filth....

OFFICER Shall I give the order, sir?

LAFAYETTE Eh?

OFFICER A bit of cannon shot, sir ?

LAFAYETTE I would not wish it said that I gave the order....

OFFICER No, sir. I understand, sir.

LAFAYETTE But order must be maintained, Captain ! And it is your duty to maintain it. Is that clear.

OFFICER Perfectly, sir. Immediately, sir.
(CLICKS HIS HEELS AND MARCHES QUICKLY OUT.)

LAFAYETTE Cannon shot let them chew on that !

CROWD CHEERING.

ORATORthat we shall let no man downtrod the will of the French nation.....

CROWD CHEERS.

A VOICE Sign it. Let's sign the proclamation !

CROWD Long live the French nation. Vive la Republique !!

VOICE Sign it --- everybody sign. The proclamation of Republic. The end of the Monarchy !

CROWD Hurray !!

CROWD EG.

HERAULT It goes well.

DANTON Now the Assembly will tremble, and France get action.

HERAULT It's dangerous, Danton.

DANTON Everything's dangerous, man, which you begin and there's the flavour !
Look ? See these people -- merely a holiday crowd, you would say. Look. There goes a stooped old man who must have seen the old King crowned. Now, his papery cheeks aflame, he signs his name. Look. A young woman steps forward. Can she write ? Of course not, but digs a right angled cross in the paper -- the only mark she knows. And now the child at her side stands on his toes and scrawls a childish sign ---- These, Herault, these are the French -- this is the French nation

SOUND DRUMS.

CROWD The soldiers !

HERAULT It's the national Guard...

DANTON Surely they would not ... !

CROWD Their bayonets are fixed !! They march against us !

VOICE Help ! Run ! Run !

DANTON No ! No ! Keep back ! Keep back !

VOICE They're raising their muskets !

SOUND A SCREAM CUT BY VOLLEY OF MUSKET FIRE IN TURN DROWNED
OUT BY SCREAMS THROUGH WHICH WE HEAR DANTON'S HUGE
YELL :

DANTON They would not!!! .. They would not !!!

MUSIC SWEEPING DOWN LIKE A GREAT WAVE, THEN PEELING OFF
TO A LONG CHORD, SOFTLY HELD FOR A LONG INTERVAL. OUT.

ANGEL Danton ?

DANTON Yes, Angel.

ANGEL Where are you going ?

DANTON To the village, Angel.

ANGEL Do you...(COUGHING)... want me to come with you ?

DANTON ~~But~~ No, I shall go alone.

ANGEL Are you sure you will ?

DANTON Yes you rest awhile.

ANGEL Ah, well, it's so peaceful here in the country. I
could sleep forever.

DANTON Yes, go to sleep -- I shall be back soon.

ANGEL Of course -- Goodbye, Jacques ----

MUSIC JUST A TOUCH

DANTON No, but I shall go to the river.

 When I was a boy --

 I caught fish there --

 It always seemed to me that it was #

 A river that had no end,

 That it had to go on forever --

 Though I had heard of the ocean --

I could only see the river --
Wherever it went it was our country,
In sun or moonlight --
Young and old in turn --
Boisterous and lovely as a dawn
Tripping past the town --
And then in the calm of an evening
Like an old woman muttering
An endless song ---
It's our river.

MUSIC

JUST A TOUCH

DANTON

Then I stand here in the wind on its bank.
There are speckled trout down there,
Oh I know them !
And brown girls passing by,
And young men half fishing, half
watching their reflections in the stream.

~~Our river !~~ Our river !

France ! Our river !

And then a miracle would happen,

And it would change,

It would rain --

And blow hard up between the banks,

And the river grew angry

And cold and tore at the wet banks,

And wept and clawed like a prisoner

At the gates. -- *Our river !*

~~And then a miracle would happen,~~

~~River ! River ! You are our river !~~

But, when the storm died down

it grew calm and huge, and swelled

In pride and simple magesty,

Like one who knew his way.

Our river -- France -- ~~our river~~

MUSIC

A LONGISH INTERLUDE ENDING BRISKLY.

CAMILLE

What are you going to do, Danton ?

DANTON

Do? What the devil do you think ? Go to Paris
and raise a storm.

HERAULT

You will get killed for your pains, Danton. The
The Girondins -- these Molands -- this Lafayette --
hold power now.

DANTON

So they believe, but the reins are never looser than
when they are too tightly held. The horse bucks and
where's the rider ?

FABRE

Well, you seem in a good mood after all.

DANTON

It's the oil of the lamp that lights me.

(THEY LAUGH EASILY)

FABRE

We'll all dip our wicks in your fire then, Danton.
We have little spark of our own.

DANTON

Look ! Don't you know what the Girondins did by that
fiasco on the Champ de Mars ?

CAMILLE

Killed a lot of helpless people.

HERAULT

A holiday crowd...

DANTON

And doing so.....eh?

CAMILLE

We hear you.

DANTON

They might as well have shot those balls into their
own mouths for they admitted to the nation that they
were not delegates of the people.

HERAULT

Perhaps, but what power have the people ?

DANTON

You see, herault, when the revolution occurred, it
was a revolution of the people --- Who stormed the
bastille? -- Who clapped the red cap of revolution on

the head of the king? -- It was the people.
Others took advantage and put on robes of
authority but it was not they who created the
revolution. It was the people.

FABRE

Yes, yes, but what does Lafayette care now ?

DANTON

He not only cares, he trembles. ~~because~~ there is
a difference between the old and the new power --
now -- the people know ^{this} ~~these~~ country ~~these~~ -- they
know that real power lies in themselves.

(PAUSE)

FABRE

Well, good, Danton, but, I would point out this, and
mark my words -- what good will that ~~power~~ knowledge
do them ?

DANTON

That knowledge ? What good will it do them ? Why,
indeed, I don't know. But it will overcome the world !
(THEY ALL LAUGH AND CHEER.)

MUSIC

HOLD BG.

MONSARD

And then the damned fool got up and suggested that
they proclaim a republic.

DUMONT

Who said ~~this~~ ?

MONSARD

Danton .

DUMONT

But he has no power.

MONSARD

He has with the mob.

DUMONT

The mob ! They are lost sheep.

MONSARD

To think they have brought this Danton into the
ministry.

DUMONT

Maybe they're afraid of him.

MUSIC

BRIDGE

DANTON

Angel !

ANGEL

Ah, Jacques you're away so much these days.

DANTON

We're so busy....

ANGEL How are your feet ... do they bother you ?

DANTON They haven't bothered me in months. It's strange.

Angel My Danton... you look worried !

DANTON I hope not in public.

ANGEL Heavens ! No one else would know. I can read every line in your forehead.

DANTON Yet -- they say I'm inscrutable -- the fools -- have developed a real horror of me -- call me corrupt...

(PAUSE)

ANGEL What is it, Jacques ?

(PAUSE)

DANTON Soon it will happen.

ANGEL Yes...

DANTON It will happen like spring floods. All it awaits is -- something. It's not perfect, yet, not quite perfect...but then you will see it come -- maybe for a moment afar off -- and then,,,,,in a flash.

ANGEL Jacques....

DANTON Yes, my love ?

ANGEL You won't let it swallow us.

DANTON We will come out..... bless me..I need a nightcap.

ANGEL I put new wine in the cupboard.

DANTON Then, we're well, eh ?

ANGEL Yes, we're well.

MUSIC VERY LOW AT FIRST. UP SHARP TO

DANTON The revolution is like a river, merault. It's got to go on ~~to~~ to the very end, to the sand flats and the ocean, it can't stop anywhere; if you try to stop it it cuts a new gorge and rages on its way. You can't stop the river. It's like birth, too. You can't stop that. It's got to happen. In the end maybe it will

*Cher
W. G. S.
1950*

*Let the first person
up to announce the*

be different than the fury it seemed at the time,
but it's got to happen. There's got to be the beginning.
whatever happens to us -- we know that much -- we
were there at the beginning, we saw it happen.

Now, the people are gathering from all France.
people are waiting. The storm comes and bends the rocks.
soon, we act.

MUSIC ONE CHORD.

A VOICE When ?

DANTON I will give the signal.

VOICE What will it be ?

DANTON The great bell, i will ring it.

VOICE Give the signal, now.

DANTON Not yet -- wait !

MUSIC OF THE COURT OF KING LOUIS

COUNT OF
LODOVIC Your royal Highness.

A SERVANT The King !

KING LOUIS Never mind, that, never mind. ~~Well~~, ^Sir, what have
you to report ?

COUNT Good news, my liege.

ANTOINETTE Ah.....we have waited for it.

COUNT The Prince of Brunswick intends to march to your succour.

MARIE Good Prince Brunswick.

LOUIS When does he...intend ?

COUNT Within the fortnight.

LOUIS Ahhhh.

MARIE Indeed, sir, I had begun to think that it would never
come to pass. I had begun to believe that we were
abandoned at last --- All our friends...

COUNT They never forgot you, Royal Madam --

MARIE Oh, it is time...time. You do not realise how vile
these people are --

LOUIS More quietly, Marie.

MARIE

You see, we cannot speak even in our accustomed Terms. You are most welcome, sir, together with your news. Believe me, if the civilized world allows such barbarism to continue, it might just as well let the leopards loose ~~and revert to savagery~~ altogether.

COUNT

If I may venture my opinion^d, Your Highness, ~~you need have little cause to fear.~~ I know how frightful your experience must have been.

but now the monarchies of Europe move in concert, their banners high, in one dread force, with one impulse, to stamp this frolic out and end your misery.

^{Now}
~~Nothing can stop us.~~ You will see these ragged men scatter like leaves before our musket wind, lie down beneath our swords' bright honour ---
--This is the will of ~~all the Kings of Europe.~~

SOUND

PRECISION DRUMS TO MARCHING. HOLD BG.

BRUNSWICK'S
VOICE

BRUTAL, ARROGANT PRUSSIAN ARISTOCRAT.

Convinced...that the majority of the inhabitants of France await with impatience the moment of succour to declare themselves openly against the acts of their oppressors, their majesties the Emperor and King of Prussia invite them to return without delay to the path of duty, reason, order and peace.

The generals, officers, under-officers, and soldiers of the French line, are called upon to return to their former allegiance, and submit immediately to the King, their legitimate sovereign.

The inhabitants of all cities, towns, and villages who shall dare to defend themselves against the

troops of their imperial and royal majesties -- shall be immediately subject to all the rigours of martial law, and their houses shall be burnt or otherwise destroyed.

VOICE 1 Peste !

VOICE 2 So they say they are going to take France.

VOICE 3 What shall we do ? What shall we do ?

VOICE 4 We must fight them.....

BRUNSWICKThe city of Paris, and all its inhabitants, are called upon to submit immediately to their King, to restore him and all the royal personages to perfect liberty, and pay them that respect, which by the right of nature and nations, are due from subjects to their sovereign.....

VOICE 1 Give us the signal, Danton ! The signal !

DANTON First, I must hear a signal myself.

VOICE 2 How can we fight them ?

SOUND DRUMS AND MARCHING LOUDER. INEXORABLE.

BRUNSWICK and that if their safety, security and liberty is not immediately provided for, the Emperor and King of Prussia, will take an exemplary and ever memorable vengeance on the city of Paris.....

VOICE 1 Where is the spirit of the revolution ?

BRUNSWICKby delivering it over to military massacre and total subversion.

DRUMS OVERPOWERING AND OUT.

VOICE 1 Why do we tremble ?

VOICE 2 What are we going to do ?

VOICE 3 Where are the French people ?

SOUND A VAGUE SOUND. VERY DISTANT FIRST BAR OF LES MARSEILLAISE

DANTON Wait !

SOUND AGAIN. LIKE A BREATH OF WIND. TWO OR THREE BARS.

DANTON Here it is -- here it comes.
Here is your answer !

SOUND VOICES DISTANTLY SINGING LES MARSELLAISES

DANTON The men of France are gathering.
FLESH AND bone of these fields.

SOUND SINGING LOUDER.

DANTON Coming together. It took a miracle to bring them.
The threat of planets crashing, and death

SOUND SINGING LOUDER, SWELLING TO
AUX ARMES, LES CITOYENS !
AUX ARMES!!!!
MARCHONS, MARCHONS.....(ETC)

DANTON It took the threat of death to bring them, to
create this life ---- this new nation.

SOUND MARCHONS ETC. DISTANT NOW.

DANTON (TO HIMSELF) Now, you will see the beginning of
the moon. Now, you will see things that have not
been done before. The stars wait. The ocean shapes
itself in rims. ^{a shape} The fields ripen. _{of levelling scythed.}

Now, you will see an exultation and a terror
such as you have never seen. The swelling sea
rolls over and kicks the rocks. The air breathes,
stretching its giant limbs. ~~The roots, gripping~~
~~the marble floor, force the fissures of the~~
~~earth to open~~ and down come all the waters
of heaven tearing at the muzzle of this silent
century.

God help us.

I would have left it alone, but I am of it.
It will come, as Spring comes, as flooding dawn,
~~and down~~

MUSIC

AN INTERLUDE TO END PART 1

HERAULT

Now that you have such power, Danton, what are you going to do with it ?

DANTON

The struggle has only begun, Herault. The enemy has suffered a humiliation. He will return again. In the meantime, there are the enemies at home -- these would be aristocrats, these so-called lovers of humanity, sick with learning. They would wreck all given the chance.

HERAULT

I know who you mean -- the Girondins.

DANTON

Not so much the Girondins. They are patriots and men -- stuffed with nonsense from Rousseau, it is true -- but men. No. I mean the fanatics. The Jacobins.

HERAULT

Robespierre !

DANTON

A man of continual speeches -- but not a great danger.

HERAULT

Because he says the same things over and over, people begin to believe him.

DANTON

....It is a split between these two parties, Jacobins and Girondins, that would wreck what unity we have. It is to prevent that.....

HERAULT

Yes, but the people are still wild -- and the Girondins think of you only as their opponent -- an opportunist and a demagogue -- a politician flushed with pleasure.

DANTON

The fools !

HERAULT

It is a strange thing that you, one of the best scholars in Europe, should be regarded by them as nothing but a leader of mobs.

DANTON

Yet....somehow I must string them to our purpose.

HERAULT

Mmmmm.

DANTON

Camille Desmoulins might help with his journal.

HERAULT Camille has subsided with his beautiful wife.

DANTON
~~HERAULT~~

The young Lucille -- One can hardly blame him .

HERAULT

Well, I shall speak to him.

DANTON

Tell him that whatever I have done to hurt his feelings, was done rashly, and is ~~grahly~~ regretted deeply by his old friend, Danton.

(SIGHS) I am afraid I have hurt many people with my tongue, Herault.

HERAULT

None, more than yourself.

DANTON

Then, I must learn to speak smoothly like Vergniaud.

.... Herault, tell me, you have talked with Camille. Is he with us at heart ?

HERAULT

He does not know himself where his heart lies, but it's a good heart. He told me himself that he chooses to remain outside the storm, for awhile. He says he has found happiness at home and regrets the decision that drove him into the streets. He asserts that the reward for public life is private vanity. There is no truth in it. He thinks of you as the apotheosis of the herd instinct.

DANTON

Poor Camille. Were those his words ? --Apotheosis of whatever it is ?

HERAULT

His words.

DANTON

Fine words. One could spit on those words.

HERAULT

He will repeat them in various companies : when he wearies of them he will return to you. ^{Danton - ...} He

~~struggles against you, but he cannot resist you.~~

DANTON

I never thought that my face would attract anyone.

HERAULT

It is not, especially, your face.

DANTON

The creaking of my jawbones, I suppose.....

Let him come when he will. You have a question in your face.

HERAULT Something I have told you before, Danton.
The people are going to break into the jails
and massacre our political prisoners, unless
we stop them.

DANTON Could you tell me how we can stop them ?

HERAULT You are the only man who has the power to stop
them -- you know that .

DANTON This madness. The people see a royalist behind
every frock coat. New rumours every day. Now
it is that someone will open the jails and let the
prisoners out. What nonsense !

HERAULT It is your decision, Danton. If you wish this
massacre.....

DANTON I do not wish it.

HERAULT Well, then....

 (PAUSE)

DANTON I do not wish it.... but I cannot prevent it.

HERAULT Strange words.

DANTON Herault, you know where my power lies -- in the people.

HERAULT The Girondins use another word -- the mob.

DANTON If I once show weakness -- and pity is weakness these
fiery days -- I am finished.

HERAULT There will be no more Danton !

DANTON There will be no more unity in France.

HERAULT Are you going to protect the prisoners ?

DANTON The fury of the people has outlived August 10.
It must be satisfied. It must see something
palpable.

HERAULT Like blood on the green grocer's hands.

DANTON I told you it would be like this, Herault. I
told you it would be bloody and awful. I told

you it would be hateful to us. And yet

that it must be. --Are you afraid ?

HERAULT It's not I, Danton, who will be skinned ~~alive~~ and set burning on a pike to light the happy faces # of the mob.

DANTON At heart you are an aristocrat.

HERAULT If disgust at savagery is aristocracy.

(PAUSE)

DANTON Where will we get with this talk ? If you don't like it you can leave it. I'm going to see this thing through. -- Do you hear, Herault ? --
-- right through the muck and the blood to the end. I'm not going to turn back. I'm going to go it to the end.

HERAULT What end, Danton, what end ?

DANTON A French nation, Herault, such as the world has not seen.

(PAUSE)

HERAULT It may be the wrong way.

DANTON Is there any other ? -- Tell me if there is and I will follow it !

(PAUSE)

HERAULT None that one can see.

DANTON Are you with me, Herault ?

(PAUSE)

HERAULT We are in the dark, Danton, both of us ... and we grope for a handle, anything that will let in the light and air. So, we find it. Are we going to twist it though we know a murderer hides behind the door ?

DANTON We must.

HERAULT You have my hand, Danton .

MUSIC BRIDGE TO
SOUND CLICK OF A DOOR. WOMEN'S VOICES.
DANTON Am I interrupting something ?
ANGEL No, Jacques, Madame Desmoulins is just leaving.
DANTON Good evening, ~~Madame~~ Madame.
LUCILLE Good evening, Monsieur Danton. To tell you the truth I was hoping that you would arrive before I left. It is not every day that I can meet my chief rival.
DANTON Rival ? Why, what do you mean, Madame ?
LUCILLE You know well what I mean, Monsieur.
I suppose every woman has her rival. There is her man's work possibly -- if he is a captain, his ship -- if he is a musician, his music. Or it may be another woman. I have you. Camille is, as you well know, fascinated by you.
DANTON I cannot understand why, Madame. As you can see, I am not fascinating.
LUCILLE On the contrary, you are. Though not handsome, I have heard you speak and you have primitive power.
DANTON What do you think of that, Angel ? She calls me primitive .
ANGEL She's right -- indeed she is.
LUCILLE But make no mistake, Monsieur. I shall do all that is in my power to keep Camille away from you.
DANTON I am not poisonous, Madame.
LUCILLE I am afraid you will lead him into some horrible disaster. Camille is a man who must follow a cause. He has picked you. And I am afraid of you.
DANTON For a man who is fascinated he shows little interest in me.
LUCILLE I am very glad to hear it, Monsieur. A woman has her powers too.

DANTON By all means, keep him, Madame. With all my heart I agree with his choice.

LUCILLE Monsieur, we wish to have a family.

DANTON Believe me, that is a good thing to have.

 (PAUSE)

LUCILLE Will you turn him away , Monsieur ?

DANTON Madame -- if Camille, who is evidently happy with his way of life, continues to estrange us, well and good. I would not interfere for the world.

LUCILLE I see.....well, goodnight, Monsieur. Thank you, Madame, for a pleasant visit.

DANTON Lucille I..I mean....

LUCILLE Yes ? Speak, Monsieur. I cannot imagine you tongue tied.

DANTON Madame, these are difficult times. It is hard to find the way to personal happiness in them. So much that is natural and good -- shoved aside. I regret it.

LUCILLE It is good to hear you say so, Monsieur. Goodnight.

SOUND THE DOOR CLOSES.

DANTON I hate these sentimental scenes.

 (PAUSE)

 Why do they come running to me ?

 (PAUSE)

 These are milk fed men, these revolutionaries.

 (PAUSE)

 You too! I can see it in your eyes -- the same recrimination.

ANGEL Coming here through the crowds, Lucille heard talk.

DANTON What about ? Well, what about ? The price of bread, no doubt ?

ANGEL About a plot to invade the jails and massacre the prisoners. Is it true ?

(PAUSE)

DANTON You know about it, Danton. You must stop it.
(AT THE HEIGHT OF PASSION) How can I stop it
when it has not begun !!?

ANGEL You must stop it before it begins. (PAUSE)
Double the guard ! Post a regiment nearby !
You must, Danton !

DANTON I can't --- I can do nothing.

ANGEL You can do anything ! You are a man with a great
love, Jacques. --You can do anything.

DANTON I cannot.

ANGEL Do not allow this to happen, Jacques, it is wrong.
Don't you understand, Jacques ? It is evil.

(PAUSE)

So often on nights when we were young we used to
walk ^{below} among the stars, and you would tell me your beliefs.
Sometimes, they stumbled, your words, came out heavily,
haltingly, unsure, but to me they soared like wings,
so wonderful they were, not for what they said...
but for what they revealed. Oh, you were a man !
No matter # how you scorned and ranted I always knew
you -- the massive goodness in you -- ~~so~~ simple,
so unwilling, and so profound.

DANTON This madness !!

ANGEL Even in your little pomposities, your swaggering.....

DANTON I would stop these people if I could. I would give
my bleeding heart to ~~hell~~ hell. I would do anything
to stop this agony believe me but I cannot. I can
no more change direction now than the sun can stop
burning, ~~for God's sake~~

For God's sake, Angelique, do not abandon me now.

ANGEL So much is destroyed by this....Danton....so much
more than you would believe....possible....

MUSIC LEADING TO

HERAULT Well, I am glad you have come so that you will see this night.

DANTON I wanted to stay home.

HERAULT You might better have done so.

AN OFFICER Monsieur.....Monsieur Danton ! I await your orders, sir.

DANTON Why what orders ?

AN OFFICER The crowds have been gathering for two hours, Monsieur. They threaten to break into the prison and sieze some victims.

DANTON They are the people, sir, and the people are sovereign.

SOUND THE MURMUR OF CROWD BREAKS INTO A ROAR.

HERAULT Look ! They are moving towards the prison !

CAMILLE Danton ! Danton !

DANTON Yes, Camille.

CAMILLE What are you going to do ? The mob has gone mad.

DANTON Well ?

CAMILLE Danton....you cannot. Stop them, in God's name, Danton. Only you can stop them. Quickly !

DANTON I will not stop them.

CAMILLE Danton, thousands will be slaughtered ---ror the love of ~~333~~ God --- in the name of all belief -- stop them.

DANTON Get off your knees, you fool.

CAMILLE I swore that I would never see you again. But when I saw the look in the eyes of people moving towards the prisons. They were naked those looks ---lusting -----lusting. That was the horrible thing ---lusting to kill.

I said surely you were not allied with that.

DANTON I told you. Didn't you believe me ?

SOUND UP

HERAULT Look --- they're pouring into the prison.

SOUND A FEW SHOTS.

CAMILLE Oh, God !!

SOUND SCREAMS. SHOUTS OF RAGE. HIDEOUS LAUGHTER.

HERAULT Do not look out, Camille.

SOUND SOBBING. A MUTTERED PRAYER.

HERAULT Is there any forgiveness for this, Danton, except
in Hell?

DANTON Marat wanted a guillotine to spray blood on the people,
And I said alright - put it up -
But we will be chary with victims.
He looked at me as if I were a traitor, a royal fool,
The people want blood, he said. Must have it.
This was Marat, Marat with a cloth dipped in
Vinegar wrapped around his head.
No, not blood, I said, bread.
The blood is over. They want bread.
He clucked between his teeth and smiled impishly,
You are a long way off my friend.
I knew I was. So be it. Blood, then,
Blood, blood....
Let it bubble in the square,
Let it blush on the public buildings,
If the people want blood they shall have it.
Remember those drums , those muskets lifting on the
Champ de Mars ?
I thought they would not, dare not.
Then I saw the child who had clutched the pen,
And the woman with the country face
Crawling over her spilt yesterdays,
Trying to comfort the child who was already dead.
Others saw it, too. Saw the happiness on the faces

Of the Hussars as they jabbed and jabbed.
Then that blood ran away down the gutters of Paris
Like lighted oil and inflamed the capitol,
And the cry was not, bread, anymore, we want bread,
But, give us these traitors' blood -- blood for our blood --
Well, they shall have it ! They shall have it !!!

MUSIC THE FULL TRAGIC SIGNIFICANCE.

THEN BECOMES LAUGHING, GAY.

FABRE Ho, Desmoulins -- Come over here !
Join a couple of friends exchanging mutual discomforts.

...You know the painter, David, eh ?

CAMILLE I know him. Where is Danton ?

FABRE He knows you, David. David paints, you know, in
the classical manner.

DAVID And Fabre writes Racinian tragedies.

FABRE Ah, Racine, how far beyond our mean grasps you
practice your fine art. Do not use that name
casually, David. David has no finer feelings,
Camille, but simply copies art.

DAVID And you copy Racine.

FABRE Be careful, David, you trample sacred ground. --
No, I do not copy Racine, I worship him. This is
far from copying. But I have seen you, David, sit
down beside a Raphael and emulate that master's
brush stroke to perfection. And I have seen you
sell that painting as an original -- original
David, of course -- and blush with modesty to
hear the beholder declare ---- How like the
master, Raphael !
Is this art -- or catching the rainbow's shadow ?

DAVID This man is bitter because his Racinian tragedy was hooted off the stage the other night, and justly so.

CAMILLE It was performed then ?

FABRE Performed ? I do not know whether you would call it performed, Camille, in truth. Whether, in playing it was performed or deformed I could not rightly say. If by performed we mean with resounding wit, and exquisite pomp, then, yes, it was performed. But, I have great respect for this word -- I believe it should be held in peculiar, profound respect.

CAMILLE What's all this ?

DAVID The leading lady forgot her lines at climax when the hunter-lover, dying, found her feet. The prompter, with good perception, was asleep. The lady then fled and left the poor man gasping passionate monosyllables to the air -- at which the curtain fell and the audience fled. Indeed, it was well done. The best farce in Paris.

CAMILLE Is this the play that has involved so many years in the making, Fabre. ?

FABRE This is not an age for tragedy ! When prostitution is the theme of plays and heroes rage about their clothes, beauty has at last given into the beast, I say, and we'd all best give up the theatre and go back to the streets.

^{David}
~~Fabre~~ hates me because I wrote his character into the play.

FABRE DAVID The most enjoyable moment of your play was when it ended.

FABRE I shall write a tragi-comedy called the Pimp of Paris. You will be the hero, David.

CAMILLE How do you expect, Fabre, any other result?
Racine wrote his sweet and tender plays for the
courtiers of the great King, Louis XIV, to the
sound of their weeping. His theme was love unrequited
--a tragedy they understood well, having so many
mistress^{es} to lose. Now, the noble audience is
gone, the tears have turned to blood, and there's
a different mood in the pit. You should heed its
wishes.

.....NOW, where is Danton? Have you seen him?

FABRE We've seen him, although he's tried not to see us.
At this very moment he hides beyond the pillar
yonder, drunk like us, but not like us, gay.

CAMILLE Eh? Oh....I see him. Thank you.

(FADE)

FABRE We were not to see him, I suppose, David.
(LAUGHING) He is as hidden as an elephant behind
its trunk.

DAVID And blows like a whale while thinking.

FABRE I hope his soul's related to his size, or we shall
all go to Hell.

DAVID Danton worshippers!

FABRE Not so -- not so, David. He has given me good
protection.

DAVID I hope when you're in the cart, sizing up the knife,
he will.

FABRE Ah well, we all get killed by the cart, don't we?
In it, or under it.

(FADE)

CAMILLE Danton.

DANTON Yes, yes, Camille. --Sit down.

CAMILLE I went to your house. Your wife had not seen you
for three days. She is ill, Danton.

DANTON Ill? Yes -- I know. But why don't you sit down?

CAMILLE I'm not visiting.

DANTON I've always found it difficult not to mock you, Camille. You're such a strange, serious man. A wisp of a man with a wasp of an idea. Troubled by a thought. Ankle deep in mud but with an umbrella to keep off the rain. A mind that claws its air for words that, when they come, only motivate a wind.

CAMILLE What brings this on ?

DANTON Sit down. How is your Lucille ?

CAMILLE You're clawing your own vitals, Danton. Don't expect pity from me.

DANTON Pity ! Good God. As if it were pity I needed. Good God. Go back to your Lucille, man. Lie trembling in her lap - lie safely - humbly - reverently. Was it you who talked about the need of France ? -- The need for men of action ? Was it you ? And I listened ? Good God, man, leave me. Leave me.

CAMILLE Danton, I have

DANTON What have you : a need of me, too ? Indeed, I know it -- because you are soft within -- because you have a soft heart and soft eyes that are apt for weeping for these bestial days, this devil night of monstrous, bloody Danton.

CAMILLE Danton, you've suffered enough. Go home now. Your wife needs you. I'll tell you what I must tomorrow.

DANTON Spit it out, Camille, what it is you have to tell me. Night has a long shadow. It won't tremble.

CAMILLE Go home to your wife,. She wants you.

DANTON Angel ? She does not want me. What she wants is the fat Danton who used to sip wine with his feet

in a tub of hot water. And that fellow has ~~gone~~
-- ~~he~~ wandered off ~~into the night~~. The streets have
got him. He washes his feet in gutter blood.

CAMILLE Danton, it was not your fault -- we know that --
Your wife knows that now.

(PAUSE)

DANTON What was it you were going to say ?

CAMILLE I came to tell you that your wire is gravely ill.
Also to warn you. There's a plot against you.

DANTON Who's plot ?

CAMILLE Robespierre's. I heard it from a friend.

DANTON The shrill fox, Robespierre, eh ? Parson-
Robespierre. Rousseau-Robespierre. He's up
night's plotting. Good.

CAMILLE This three days absence has given him fuel.

DANTON Good. So the ~~fox~~ fox comes out of his ~~hole~~
and sniffs the night.

CAMILLE He has become powerful, Danton.

DANTON Powerful among Jacobins. The streets are on our
side.

CAMILLE I would walk them warily.

DANTON Would he be so open ?

CAMILLE It is through Hebert, the hatchet man of that night
that he will attack you. Some still call this Hebert
a Dantonist.

DANTON I have foul friends.

CAMILLE I would waste no time.

DANTON I am glad to see this changing of the moon.
It brings the snouts up sniffing.

(PAUSE)

Well, now, Angelique, dear wire, I return, but only
to say good-bye again

CAMILLE Hurry to her, Danton, she needs you.

DANTON Yes, yes. You're not a bad chap after all, Camille.

SOUND OF CAFE CROWD UP.

DAVID So, Camille, our friend, Danton, has rushed off.

CAMILLE Oh -- David. Where's Fabre ?

DAVID Under the table where he is natural.

CAMILLE I suppose you got what you wanted from him before
 he went under.

DAVID I shall see you suffer, Desmoulins. The guillotine
 is sharp, Lucille so soft.

CAMILLE Out of my way.

DAVID Hahahaha!!!

 (FADE)

SOUND HEAVY BREATHING. HURRYING FOOTSTEPS.

DANTON Angel, Angel, forgive me my love, my only love.
 I am sorry. I am so stupid. I know it. But you
 understand. Do you not, Angel, do you not ?

 My key, forgive....

SOUND CREAK OF A DOOR.

DANTON (HAPPILY) Angel ! Angel !

SOUND FAINT FOOTSTEPS

DANTON (ALARMED) Angel !!

SOUND FOOTSTEPS CLOSE.

DANTON Where is Madame Danton, Joseph ? Is she not in the
 house ? Where ~~is she~~ has she gone ? Is she alright ?
 Joseph !

JOSEPH Monsieur....Madame Danton....is dead.

DANTON Ahhhhhhhhhh !!!!!!!

MUSIC TERRIBLE. TEEN SOFTLY HELD ON ONE NOTE.

DANTON (SUBBING) Angel, forgive me, my love ...oh forgive
 this bruised Danton.....

MUSIC

A HUGE CHORD

DANTON

This is the night
When all men are changed
And tribes desert ^hteir country
For the desert room and captains
Die at night in twisting storms,
When all men forsake their loves,
Give up their homes, that best part of them,
And go out on strange commands.
This is the hell of which we read about
In texts, the hell of living
On an earth diseased by living men --
These are the twists of fate
That twist the shuddering heart
Into a shameful vessel only gilt with red.
We never know where our next step will fall;
Perhaps the tomb expects it,
Perhaps the tower, that fetid,
winding stair to the anyway posthumous.
And yet we go on ~~in~~ in the blind,
Blood driven quest for darkness ,

~~as if the idea of going on, anyway, were good....~~

CAMILLE

Danton, I'm sorry.

DANTON

She's better gone, Camille,
And out of it.
It's a hell-sump of a world, believe me.
You get only sore feet walking it,
And another penitent parade when it's all over....
It's self-importance must seem strange out there
Among the riddle of stars, don't you think ?
Where other minds revolve on other thoughts,
And other eyes stare limpid into other nights,
It must seem bloody strange

To the poor trapped fools out there, don't you think,
To see this upstart pimple in the universe,
To think, perhaps there are others like them
Turning round and round in the nowhere,
being born and dying like them.....?

CAMILLE Come away, Danton .
DANTON She can't look up.
CAMILLE Come away, Danton come away
MUSIC INTERLUDE TO END PART II OF PLAY

PART III

HERAULT Is he mad ?
CAMILLE I don't know, Herault -- but he has left Paris.
HERAULT Meantime, our enemies grow in power.
 with the King dead, Danton loses followers.
 it's our lives, too, in this.
 (PAUSE)
 By God, he will return, he must return.
 He's done these sort of wild things before.
? CAMILLE Is he mad ?
HERAULT I don't believe it. But his sanity is on another
 level. I followed him because I felt it in him.
 As if he had his finger on the pulse of France
 and felt it in his heart.
CAMILLE If he's lost the pulse ?
HERAULT Well, we are on the tight rope, all of us, aren't
 we ?
CAMILLE Yes.
HERAULT Then, we must trust his judgement.
CAMILLE But where in God's name is he ?
MUSIC BRIDGE TO

ROBESPIERRE I think the time for attack is drawing near, St. Just.

ST. JUST Danton falters.

ROBESP He left Paris on the pretext that he was going to the Army in Belgium.

ST. JUST The man has a demoralizing influence.

ROBESP No sense of the virtue of his conflict. A man without virtue is nothing.

ST. JUST Can we be so sure of him ?

ROBESP He has no party behind him. Having created the central committee, his one instrument of power, he resigns, as if he were weary of revolutions. Since the King's death and the destruction of the Girondins, power lay with us, the Jacobin party, but he refused to submit to us. He preferred, on the weak pretext that he was acting for the unity of France, to make strange proclamations on his own.

ST. JUST At one time he swept all before him. His followers were insufferable.

ROBESP Then, the armies were victorious -- now, we cannot be so sure. Already, the Austrians march towards France. And, among ourselves, the royalists grow noisy. Every day we hear more of their plots. They would destroy the revolution, St. Just.

ST. JUST We must take power.

ROBESP When Danton returns, he dare not fumble. One word of mercy will be his folly.

ROBESP *sf, Just* This is not the time for mercy.

ROBESP It is a time for virtue, St. Just. But virtue is not achieved by indulgence. It is achieved by terror, St. Just, terror.

MUSIC SHRILL. BECOMING EXCITED. POWERFUL.

SOUND A GREAT CROWD MURMURING.

 SUDDENLY, A BLOODTHIRSTY YELL:

CROWD Danton ! Danton ! We want Danton !

 He's the man who will give us action !

 Danton ! Danton ! Danton !

 (FADE SLOWLY INTO ECHO)

 Danton ! Danton ! Danton.....(FADE)

MUSIC A TUNE OF RURAL FRANCE.

JEAN: AN OLD
PEASANT Eh, Monsieur Danton ?

DANTON Nothing. A tune came into my head.

JEAN Since you left to go to Paris you have changed.

DANTON Yes -- the old ways -- I shed them, Jean. Life
 there is -- different.

JEAN I remember your father going to Paris town once. He
 came back without his beard, and pale -- I said to
 him, what do you think of it, eh, this Paris,
 Monsieur, is she good or no ?

 And he looked at me and put his hand to his chin to
 stroke his beard which was not there, you see, and
 his hand came away with surprise.

 Paris ? he said, as if he could not remember --

 Paris ? -- Best stay out of it, good man. And
 he walked into his house and grew ~~g~~ his beard again.

DANTON He was like that ?

JEAN I asked him many times about it. A commerce for
 the devil, was all he would say. And do you know,
 I do believe it, young Danton, I do believe he saw
 the devil there.

DANTON It is possible.

JEAN A good man, your father. Simple as the hills.

we used to laugh at him sometimes -- for who does not have his bit of fun on the side, eh ?

DANTON I never knew him.

JEAN We used to tell him that he should not let his son, that was you Monsieur, run wild that way. Let him grow like the fields, he would say, later I will cut him to proper size.

But he died before he could do any cutting and you went away.

DANTON Yes : I went away.

JEAN ~~PABIS~~ Paris. Hmm. I asked him if in point of fact he had seen the devil there.

It is a place for devils, he said, a place to twist the good ways, the good heart, into corruption.

We know about that, too, I told him. Here, too, we do bad things sometimes.

but there you do not know it, he said -- Yes, and he put his hand on the beard that once he had cut off.

Haha ! I remembered....I remembered.....

(FADE)

DANTON'S
VOICE

The first time when I went to Paris

The sun filled up the street

which sang in echo to the shouts of men

The roofs of the houses were sharp against the sun,

All shining with old rain,

And a woman of peculiar seventy asked me for a penny.

I turned a corner to the left

And felt the surge of a shouldering crowd,

I saw the hardness in the working eyes,

The dirt between the muscles of the jaws,

The rags, the long hair, the mutilated hands

A shuffling, herding, stinking crowd

singing God and filthy curses to the dripping eaves..

I thought :

Was this France ? these Frenchmen ?

Perhaps, it was the suddenness of the sun,
The rain water running in the gutter,
The way the roofs shone,
And the voices sounded all at once
Like a million leaves rippling together,
A thousand waves against the weather --
Because I ~~saw~~^{heard} one voice, saw one set of eyes,
One pair of hands, and of the dirty crowd,
The ragged, rank, and motley crowd
An army as invincible as death,
Yet charging death, sniffing and shuffling, and
herding death.

And all the stupid, silver chanticles,
The mirrored vistas, and the ~~marble~~^(marble) lawns,
The talk of Kings and Queens
And privilege of things,
Seemed a tinkling and ridiculous dream.

This was France !!

These were the French !!

An army as invincible as death.

A river as inexorable as the dawn.

O people people.

Understand me. I am most emotional in some things,
most foolish hearted. I know you understand me being
that way yourselves. How we live ! Is it not true ?
A man on the rack of his conscience -- how he
suffers. You all know it. You all have felt it
pricking at your own flesh /-- the yearning, the
terror of disaster.

For I need all our strength. Though I have giant
limbs, I need all our love which is bigger than our
lives. With this I can meet the terror and disaster,
only with this, the lion in the heart.

Paris ! I come.

SOUND

DRUMS.

CROWD

Danton ! Danton ! Danton !

He comes ! He comes !

He will destroy the foreigner !

He will kill the King-lovers !

Danton comes ! Our Danton !

He has come to save us from disaster !

Danton ! Danton ! Danton !

Sssh -- give him room -- give him room to speak.

Sssssssh.

(A PAUSE)

DANTON

I have come for one reason and for one reason only will I remain : to curb your frenzied appetites and stop this slaughter. Who will win by this ? What victory can you claim by this ? None but the satisfaction of seeing one enemy -- whoever looks sideways -- destroyed and scattered hellspent to the wind. It is wrong. You are wrong to think so. I have seen too many good men go down. I have seen the shadow of the knife rise too often on men whose only crime was loyalty to their beliefs. Where can this lead but to the most foul disaster -- which is in your flesh -- yes, your flesh -- this death that must end in self-destruction. Then cast this whim of hate away and let us build a France that is worthy. The mistreatment you suggest I will not condone, the punishment you demand I will not execute. I will not punish the unpunishable. Because they are not guilty.

CROWD

MURMURING

A VOICE

Is this Danton ?

DANTON Yes, Danton, who cries out to you over the fields of the dead and the shrieks of the dying, to have belief in your cause, not hatred of the other. Hate is the fear, I say, good people, that plucks the weapon from our hand and turns it inwards.

CROWD MURMURING

DANTON I was there that night of September when thousands were killed. I witnessed it. I said then it was ~~an~~ necessity. Those words were false. Those deaths were needless. That night was evil. It was too much -- and now guilt has bred desire for revenge in you.

Go home now ! Leave this square ! Remember your loved ones. Go home and build a France that is worthy^{of} them.

CROWD MURMURING GROWS LOUDER.

HERAULT Danton, come down from there, you fool. This crowd is dangerous.

DANTON I have seen too much killing, Herault.

HERAULT So you said -- Quickly. Into this tavern here. We can get out the back way.

SOUND CROWD OUT AS THEY ENTER CAFE. QUICK WALKING.

HERAULT Out the back way.

SOUND DOOR SHUTS. THEY WALK ON OUTSIDE AGAIN.

HERAULT Well, you've made a proper mess of it. They were expecting a lion, and got a lamb.

DANTON I'm not afraid of them.

HERAULT Do you forget your friends ? We have families, too, and throats we'd rather keep uncut. This will feed Robespierre's plan perfectly.

DANTON Robespierre ! We will crush him. We will appeal to the people. They are weary of it, too -- they will turn to us.

HERAULT You think so ? Did you see the sullen eyes, hear the whispering ? --And that shrimp, David, absolutely trembling with delight ? --He will go straight to his Robespierre.

DANTON Let him. Then we will flush the fox and all his ~~griety~~ retinue.

MUSIC QUICK, JUMPING.

ROBESPIERRE So, David. We will bring him to trial carefully.

ST. JUST It should not be difficult.

ROBESP He is still much loved and has great power of tongue. But he has no following, beyond his friends. We are the power in France, now -- the Jacobins. People understand us because our aims are simple. They no longer understand Danton. He has made too many foolish speeches on the theme of mercy. But mercy is not for this time --- and in any case, who will believe him, with his record?

DAVID But how will you attack ?

ROBESP I will make it clear that there can be but one leader in France, not two, and they must choose -- whether to follow Danton's policy of hazy amnesty in violent, dangerous times or accept the clearer, more forcible one for which I stand.

 St. Just, you will speak after me. You will be explicit. You will condemn Danton and cast him and his friends out of favour forever.

ST. JUST And when I am finished, I will make a signal with my hand, thus, when our party will rise and shout against him. Then -- I will demand a vote.

DAVID Good, good.

ROBESPIERRE There will be no obstacle before us, then.

MUSIC RIDING TO

SOUND MURMUR OF A GREAT CROWD.

ROBESPIERRE I arise on a dreadful occasion -- gentlemen of this
convention -- I must appeal to you as Frenchmen who.
.....(FADE)

MUSIC QUICK AND TERRIBLE. OUT.

HERAULT Danton, it has happened ! Even now they denounce
you. The arrests will follow.

DANTON Yes.

HERAULT Yet you sit here at home !
Danton, we've got to act.
There are other lives besides yours in this, Danton.

DANTON I cannot help any of you ~~this time~~, Flee. -- tell
Camille to get his Lucille and leave France at once.
I am afraid what is beginning now will not soon be
over.
(A PAUSE)

HERAULT So. -- And you ?

DANTON I must remain. A man cannot carry his country away
on the soles of his ^{shoes} boots. Away with you. Tell
Camille, and the others.

HERAULT Good God, Danton -- whatever possessed you ?

DANTON Quickly.

HERAULT I'll tell them.

SOUND THE DOOR SHUTS.

DANTON The tales that must be told on the other side of heaven
By the ghosts of men,
Of a man's great cunning, and how it works against him,
Of his one good deed, and how he does not know he did it.
How all our achievements are shallow and grave digging
Except plain truth,
Which is the beggar we shun, the sun we never see.

SOUND KNOCKING

DANTON I hope Herault found Camille in time
And told him.
Good God ! I am young yet !
It happened so suddenly.
How easily the coin is flipped
And there's another face in the metal.
Come in !

SOUND THE DOOR IS THROWN OPEN.

AN OFFICER Jacques Danton, you are under arrest.

DANTON I know. Well, let me put my shoes on, and then,
I am ready.

MUSIC HEIGHTENED AND POWERFUL DOWN TO
SOUND GHOSTLY WHISPERS. OCCASIONAL CLANK OF A CHAIN.
MURMURS. SOMEONE CRIES FOR WATER. CURSING OF
A GUARD. ALL BG.
WE HEAR CLOSER FOOTSTEPS. A MUFFLED SOB.

DANTON I would not have believed that a prison could
bring together so many old friends.
Camille, so they caught you -- and Herault. Even
our dramatist, Fabre d'Eglantine.
How is your new play, Fabre.

FABRE I finished it at any rate.

DANTON I'm sure it will be successful.

FABRE It is the greatest thing I have ever done.

DANTON I have no doubt. Camille, take your face out of
your hands. Herault ! Gentlemen !
Listen. There's time yet, and there's hope. The
trial begins tomorrow -- and I think we will make
these judges look foolish. Eh ?
(PAUSE)

HERAULT Well, Danton, we hope so.

DANTON I know them. They are men of small cunning
and great fear. The ~~333~~ people will fill the room,
the windows and the plaza outside. We will sway
them, never fear.
When was Danton ever unable to do so ?
We will sway them our way. When, you will see.

FABRE The mob !

HERAULT You forget one thing, Danton.
When you were part of the mob you could sway it.
But tomorrow, you will be in court, and the
mob outside.

DANTON We shall see. Guard ! Is there a bit of bread ?

MUSIC QUICK BRIDGE TO

SOUND A RUSTLE OF PAPERS.

JUDGE (CLEARS HIS THROAT.) Are the prisoners all present
and accounted for ?

OFFICER They are, Monsieur le President.

BB JUDGE Very well. The prisoners so named are accused
of conspiracy and treason against the Republic
of France by reason.....(THE READING CONTINUES
FADING TO BG.)

DANTON Stop moaning, Camille, I want to hear this stupid
speech.

CAMILLE Was I moaning ? Pardon me.

JUDGE And now the Public Prosecutor will proceed to
question the accused.

PROSECUTOR I call on the prisoner, Camille Desmoulins, to rise.
(A PAUSE)
You have heard the charge against you. There can
be no doubt of its validity. It only remains for
the prisoner to attempt refutation. But can he,
I ask him, refute his open support of the policy
of amnesty and forgiveness to the enemies of the

Republic ? He cannot. The words are written in his own hand -- Rather die by the guillotine than guillotine another. --- I am afraid his rather has become his must !

DANTON Answer him, Camille. Tell him you are worthy of the revolution. Remind him of July 14th.

CAMILLE (CHOKED WITH EMOTION, ADDRESSING THE COURT)
Who was it who scaled the walls of the Bastille on the day when the Revolution dawned ? Where were you, Prosecutor ? How dare you accuse me of conspiring to overthrow the Revolution when it was I who first step foot on that stronghold of tyranny ? What man of you can call himself a revolutionary beside me ? Is there one ?
No. I stand on July 14, 1789. There....

PROSECUTOR We do not deny your work of 1789, Monsieur Desmoulins, we accuse you for your work of 1792.

JUDGE Keep to the point, prisoner.

PROSECUTOR And it is in keeping with the point, prisoner, that you declared yourself an enemy of the Republic by your open desire to free its enemies and let chaos in among us. I have here in my hand the journal in which the prisoner wrote.....

(FADE)

DANTON So he appeals to the crowd, eh ? We will see who can win at this game. We shall see.

(FADE)

PROSECUTORand with this I close the questioning of the prisoner, Desmoulins.

(PAUSE)

DESMOULINS SITS DOWN SOBBING WITH EMOTION.

CAMILLE How can they ? How can they ?

DANTON Steady, Camille. I am the principle prisoner here. It's me they want to get rid of. If I can win the crowd over, the jury will support ~~us~~ all of us.

JUDGE call the prisoner, Jacques Danton !

OFFICER Will the prisoner, Danton, rise and face the jury.

PROSECUTOR Jacques Danton, you have heard the charge ?

DANTON Yes, I am Danton, known among revolutionaries and now threatened with death. You know me. It was ~~me~~^I who led the people on August 10, 1792. It was ~~me~~^I who organized the armies of the Republic which threw the foreign enemy from our soil. It was ~~me~~^I who, as your leader, brought order and meaning out of the chaos that was France. You know me. Danton...who now stands accused before you. Yes, I heard the charge. -- That I was accused of conspiracy against this revolution and this France to which I have dedicated my life. Conspiracy ! Disloyalty ! Which of you can seriously consider the charge ? -- I, who need no defence, whose defence is my name -- I, Danton, a conspirator ? Look at me.....look at me, and accuse me of conspiracy. Do the people believe it ? Do the jurors believe it ? Cambon, you were my friend once, and knew me. Do you believe that I am a conspirator ? What ? Eh ? ---He smiles ! I, a conspirator, disloyal to the cause for which I gave my life ? What nonsense ! Jurors -- I ask you to note the smile of your fellow, Cambon.

JUDGE (RINGING THE BELL) You will answer the questions !

DANTON None have been put to me yet .

CROWD LAUGHTER.

PROSECUTOR Prisoner Danton did you or did you not
favour a policy of amnesty and mercy towards
the enemies of the state ?

DANTON I believed, and do believe, that the enemies of the
state were those who came with armies to conquer
France. I believed and do believe that it was they
and not these dissidents among us with whom we
must be primarily concerned. I did not and never
will condone any enemy of the state. I say and
have always said : death to our enemies !
But I believed that we should get on with the job
of defeating our true enemies -- the foreign armies
that would destroy us, rather than become involved
in needless slaughter among ourselves.

CROWD A MILD SENSATION

JUDGE (RINGING BELL) That will do.

PROSECUTOR How much money have you taken from these same
foreigners in the shape of bribes ?

DANTON If I could tell you what happened to the monies
that came into my possession you would declare your-
self a criminal to make the accusation. A man like
myself is above venality.
What I spent went to the French armies at the front.
Would you give the jingle in your pockets as
easily ?

CROWD LAUGHTER

JUDGE (RINGING BELL) Prisoner Danton, you must defend
yourself with proofs not rhetoric.

DANTON I have always been vehement in the public good --
I will be vehement now -- seeing that my accusation
is an abomination of justice !

CROWD SENSATION

DANTON Members of the jury, I stand here accused of

conspiracy against my government, but to what can the prosecution point which will do other than to turn the accusation back upon the authors of it. He knows -- as you know -- as the people know best of all -- that this ~~39233~~ trial is a farce (SENSATION) , that I am no conspirator except against the enemies of us all. He knows as the people know how I hav served my country -- that I will serve it again -- that I would embrace my own worst enemy for the sake of my country -- that I would sacrifice my life for my country if my country wanted it.

CROWD

APPLAUSE BEGINNING TO GROW

DANTON

I stand here accused of conspiracy -- I do not accept it -- but turn upon these accusers and accuse them of making a mockery of justice, of perverting the instrument of justice not for the public but for their private ends. And I say : Deny it if you can

(WE DRAW AWAY FROM HIS VOICE, HEARING IT BG)

JUDGE

What can we do with this man ?

PROSECUTOR

We may have time --- he will exhaust himself . Write a note to St. Just quickly and tell him what has happened. This madman will have the crowds in at the ~~91000~~ windows !

JUDGE

CONTINUES TO RING HIS BELL

DANTON

.....when the law is forgotten the people will suffer. When the constitution of the rights of man are used for any other ends but for the rights of men, the people will suffer. You are the people ! And I, Danton, am one of you. I hold no other claim to distinction.....

(FADE) TO BG.

JUDGE This is terrible.

PROSECUTOR He commands the court.

DANTON (FADE IN) Hear me, people, because it may be for the last time. If you are sovereign you must be sovereign in your perception of right and wrong. There can be no other court, nor any other trial, than that which takes place in your consciences. Hear me, people. You are sovereign. There can be no nation of free and equal persons unless political justice and knowledge is in your possession.... for you are the nation and the nation resides in your hands, Here, is the foundation of the revolution, and of the Republic of Man. It can have no other.

(FADE TO BG).

JUDGE At last --- the note.

SOUND RUSTLE OF PAPER.

PROSECUTOR Quickly --- Give it to me.

JUDGE What does it read ?

PROSECUTOR It says to close the proceedings and get on with the conviction.

JUDGE Well....

PROSECUTOR It must be done. I will signal the Sergeant to have his troops ready if there is trouble. And you ... declare the trial over.

DANTON (FADING IN) ...which should we do here, today, people...

SOUND THE RAP OF THE GAVEL

JUDGE The prisoner will come to order.The prisoner will come to order...

DANTONlaugh or cry....

JUDGEthe prisoner will come to order...

DANTON ...at this mockery of justice which holds itself....

JUDGE The prisoner will come to order !

DANTON ...which..which yet holds itself out....

SOUND RAP RAP RAP OF GAVEL.

JUDGE I declare the proceedings closed.

DANTON ...forsake the people on the eve of....

JUDGE I declare the proceedings closed !

A VOICE Closed ? How can they be ?

DANTON Eh ?

A VOICE The proceedings have hardly begun !

VOICES Shame ! Shame !

PRESIDENT Sergeant, remove the prisoners from this court !

 Sergeant !

SERGEANT Alright now --- come along.

A VOICE This is an outrage of justice.

DANTON People ! Remember this !! Remember this !! --

SERGEANT Alright you !

DANTON But where are the witnesses against us ? What is the
evidence ? Question : have the proceedings begun.
(PAUSE. THEN DANTON'S VOICE FADING)
They are afraid, people ! Afraid of our proceedings
against them !!!
(SILENCE)

JUDGE The jurors will now leave the court to ~~be~~ consider
their verdict. Guilty or not guilty. ..Do your
duty, jurors.

SOUND SHUFFLING AND MUTTERING WHICH FADES.

JUDGE (A DEEP SIGH) Thank God it's nearly over.

PROSECUTOR Thank God rather that the jurors are all Robespierre's
friends or our chins would be fitting the blade.

JUDGE Yesthank God.

PROSECUTOR We will ^{not} have long to wait.

JUDGE I hope not.

PROSECUTOR I told the jurors when we appointed them that this
was not a trial in the legal sense, but a choice of

leaders. Either Danton or Robespierre. And they all depend upon Robespierre.

JUDGE It was no trial certainly.

PROSECUTOR You do not like the work, Monsieur le President ?

JUDGE I'm not afraid of you, Tinville.

PROSECUTOR I hope, Monsieur, you shall have no cause.

SOUND A DOOR OPENS AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM AND THE JURORS RETURN TO THEIR SEATS.

PROSECUTOR Ah, the jury returns.

JUDGE I hope with the right answer#. (PAUSE)

Call in the prisoners !

SOUND FEET MARCHING. A DOOR OPENS.

VOICE (DISTANTLY) Call forth the prisoners !

SOUND THE PRISONERS ENTER. WE COME CLOSE TO THEIR MUTTERING.

JUDGE (NOW DISTANT) The prisoners will face the jury.

SERGEANT Get to your feet there !

DANTON Steady, Camille, steady.

(SILENCE)

JUDGE Are the prisoners all present and accounted for ?

OFFICER They are, Monsieur le President .

JUDGE Then how does the jury find. Guilty or not guilty ?

FOREMAN OF THE JURY Guilty !

SOUND A CLAMOUR. A MOAN OF TERROR FROM SOMEONE.

DANTON What else could they find -- these Robespierrists !!!

JUDGE Silence ---- Silence !

(SEEING THAT HIS WORDS HAVE NO EFFECT AND THAT THE CLAMOUR CONTINUES HE SPEAKS HASTILY)

The prisoners will be taken on a time set within twenty-four hours to the Place de la Revolution and will there be executed by decapitation. May God have mercy on their souls .

MUSIC TERRIFYING. SHADING OFF TO

SOUND THE ANIMAL SOUNDS OF THE PRISON. A MUFFLED SOBBING.
SOMEONE PRAYING QUIETLY. CLANK OF A CHAIN.
THE LOW MURMUR OF A VOICE..... WE MOVE TOWARDS IT
AND FIND THAT IT IS DANTON'S....

DANTON My mistake was ever to trust this Robespierre.
And yet I felt him necessary. The coward !
He will hide within his house, never daring to
show himself until after we are executed. He has
a viper's blood. Written on the parchment of his
skin it does not show.

HERAULT Your one mistake, Danton, was coming home and
pleading mercy for the helpless. These days the
helpless are condemned.
(PAUSE)

DANTON Look at Hérault, Camille, so proud and lofty --
and so bitter that he must die. While you and I,
Camille, think death a tragedy, he thinks of it only
as a dirty ~~30833~~ trick.

HERAULT The revolution is a flood, you said. We cannot
stand in its way. If they must kill, they must kill,
you said. It will be dirty, and urged us anyway to
follow it, and now, reversing all you said, you let
us die for it.

DANTON I forced no one, Hérault. You did not have to
follow me. You made a hell of a mistake in picking
sides, that was all, and now you die for it.
So. What do a few more years mean to you or me.
Our stakes are up.

HERAULT You lie ! You lie cunningly. Who more than you
wants to live ? It is so precious to you, this
life, that you would.....

DANTON Enough !!!!

CAMILLE Oh, God, stop it.

DANTON Camille, you're shivering. Here, take my coat.

CAMILLE How much longer have we ?

DANTON Perhaps an hour. I can smell the evening coming on.

CAMILLE An hour of life....Good God, Good God
How can I face the other side of it ?

HERAULT You'll have to face it, man, whether you want to
or not.

SOUND FEET M OVIN G TOWARDS THEM

FABRE I've been looking through the grating. They've
just brought the carts in.

HERAULT Oh, did you see one with our name on it ?

FABRE Ha ha. Well, I hope we get the lead one. It's
more fitting.

DANTON Have you heard about your play, Fabre ?

FABRE I'm worried about it. I gave it to David. He
wanted to read it first.

HERAULT Oh oh.

FABRE That's what I'm beginning to think, too. I didn't
mean to give it to him until he showed such interest.

HERAULT His interest is that of the hyena -- purely in the
kill.

FABRE What a fool I am ! That devil David. It was the
best I've ever done.Let me tell you the plot.

HERAULT I don't want to hear it, thank you.

FABRE But you must. It's so suitable.
You see, a young man is hunting in the woods. He is
dressed in buskin so that we don't know that he is a
prince. By a lake, he comes upon the heroine, an
ordinary country girl.....
(FADET TO BG.)

DANTON Alright, Camille, sit up, now.

CAMILLE I do not mean to be a coward, Danton.
It's just that it's all so pitiful dirty.

DANTON The dirtiness of living.

CAMILLE Why did you come back to Paris -- preaching mercy ?
It was that did it, Danton.

DANTON Would you have had me coming back to preach death,
~~CAMILLE~~ Camille ?
(SILENCE)

DANTON France was suffering. The revolution did not know
where to turn. It was like a madman -- who cuts
at his own vitals.
I had done the first part. I had cut out the cancer --
but that nightremember, you pleaded on your
knees,.....and I did not listen.... that night I
saw part of the living tissue, the breath and life
and future of France, come off on the knife. It
was too much I couldn't stand it. I came
back to Paris to stop it.....

A VOICE They're bringing the carts in !!!!

A SECOND VOICE HOWLS WITH TERROR.

CAMILLE Danton, Danton --- I can't -- I can't.....

DANTON Steady, Camille ----- You must.
(UNCONTROLLABLE SOBBING FROM CAMILLE)
Stop it ! stop it, you fool !
(PAUSE)
Look, Camille, it's summer. So we should die --
when the orchards are cherry red. And a warm wind
comes out of the south, yes, with the smell of those
dusky faces which I loved and the warmth of
those handslike the earth.
Let us smile at death, Camille, for he can't do

anything to the fact that we have lived.

CAMILLE I loved too well, that was the trouble!

DANTON What did we love that was not a dream....

CAMILLE Danton ! I can't stand it. Do you know that
Lucille, my wife....

DANTON I think of death, Camille, as another country ---
long and shallow with rain and wind before dawn ---
like the country where I was born.
I think that we take our places in that country
when we die, observing the passing of long
clouds and green meadows under dawn, and the birds
all aiming towards the Spring.
I think that death is not a loneliness -- not an
ending -- but only means we can come together
on fresh ground, we can begin again.

SOUND IN THE MEANTIME, THE CLAMOUR HAS BEEN GROWING:
SHOUTS OF CROWDS, AND NOW THE GUARDS ENTER.

A GUARD Alright now ! Alright! When I shout your name --
come forward !

Quiet ! Quiet !

Jacques Danton !

HERAULT There's your name, Danton.

DANTON I was ^{never} called by any other.

GUARD Camille Desmoulins !

DANTON Come along, Camille. There's yours.

CAMILLE How I curse my patriotic frenzy !

DANTON It never seems that you are meant to die when you
are bound and taken to the temple.

OFFICER Get on, there!

DANTON No need to be rough, lad.
Well, gentlemen, what a fine crowd we make.
All the intellectuals of the Cafe Charpentier.

Remember the speeches we used to make, eh ?
Be assured -- they will not be remembered.

OFFICER Get in the carts ! Get in the carts, there !

DANTON Yes...yes.

CAMILLE No ! No ! No !.....

OFFICER Grab him. Throw him in with the rest.

CAMILLE Please -- please --- please.....

HERAULT Stop making such a rabbit-noise !

CAMILLE Oh no ----- (SHUDDERING SOBS)

SOUND THE CARTS STARTING OUT. HOLD BG.

DANTON The drums....hear them ?

 Beckoning us to the shrine -- priests lining the way
 with their pale, long faces. And Robespierre, the
 high priest, peering from behind his ~~333~~ curtains.
 See -- we pass his house ! But he will follow us.
 To the altar, then.

SOUND CROWD IS GENERALLY QUIET, ALTHOUGH WE HEAR THEIR
 MURMURING.

DANTON Do they speak to us, these people ? No -- they're
 afraid to.

A WOMAN'S
VOICE Hoh, Danton ! You are the first true man to die !
 I will remember you !.

DANTON (SHOUTING BACK) Yes, my pretty, thank you for that
 word ! Be good to your lover -- don't let him out
 on the streets !

 I was wrong, you see. There's always someone
 who is not afraid.

SOUND DRUMS CLOSER AS THE CHARIOT PROCEEDS.

DANTON Ohoh ! I should have drunk my way to death twenty
 years ago --- I should have died on the sweet breath
 of her who shouted. All we want is a kissing death.
 Instead, we die at the hands of these meagre

scholars, one time philosophers, would be kings.
And get a merry ride to the widow !

SOUND THE DRUMS IN OUR EARS. BACK OF CART LET DOWN.

OFFICER Step down, now --- get down, prisoners.

DANTON Ahhh, look at her, Madame la Guillotine, with an altar, and wearing her crucifix, too. Well, let us kneel.

SOUND THE DRUMS ARE SILENT.

VOICE The prisoner -- Hérault de Séchelles.

DANTON Go on, Hérault -- the widow waits.

HERAULT I see her.

DANTON Wait. Let us embrace.

HERAULT Goodbye, Danton. -- Camille. -- Fabre.

EXECUTIONER None of that, now -- hurry it up !

DANTON Executioner, you will not prevent our heads from kissing in the basket !

Have you ever seen such an apathy of faces, Fabre ?

It bodes ill for the Republic.

FABRE ONLY GROANS.

DANTON Not you, too.

FABRE It's my play. I should never have left it with David. He will mistreat it, I know.

DRUMS ROLLTHEY STOP.

SOUND CLUNK OF BLADE LANDING.

DANTON You were saying...

FABRE It is beautiful, Danton. I know it would have been a great success. If only I could have got it into the right hands.

VOICE Fabre D'Eglantine !

DANTON Go on, now. Dream of its success.

FABRE Good-bye, Danton.

DANTON Camille ... ready yourself.

SOUND THE DRUMS ROLL

CAMILLE I am alright now, Danton.

DANTON What's that in your hand ?

CAMILLE Lucille gave it to me. It's a lock of her hair.

SOUND THE DRUMS STOP. SWISH AND CLUNK OF THE BLADE.

CAMILLE Danton, do you know, we struggle not to become great, but to die in someone's arms. All the rest -- a narrow whim.

VOICE Camille Desmoulins !

DANTON Good-bye -- dear friend. You are brave.

SOUND ROLL OF DRUMS AND CLUNK OF BLADE.

DANTON And now....Danton.

VOICE Jacques Danton !

SOUND A SLIGHT MURMUR IN THE CROWD. HIS FOOTSTEPS.

DANTON Executioner, you're a good fellow. Hold my head up for the crowd, will you. It's worth the trouble.

EXECUTIONER Eh ! Get down there. Get down !

WE ARE VERY CLOSE TO DANTON. THE DRUMME ROLL SOUNDS DISTANT....

DANTON ...When I was a child
I was a foolish child....
They said, you can never grow
Into a man by playing
King Louis in the sand....
I threw away the child,
I stood and walked like a man,
I looked into the sun and smiled.
Now, the river has flowed on,
And I do not understand.

....There's no use crying.

The dead don't shriek, Danton,
But breathe beneath the heavy hills.....
Sing, in your murmuring river, old man;

Explain how Fabre died well, and Desmoulins.....

That day we saw the dawn....

...No weakness, Danton...no weakness.

They would not understand.

THE KNIFE FALLS. DRUMS AND MUSIC

TO END.
