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Story Title: Vive la République

My name is Juliette Bonheur. I live on Allée de Fleury, and I lived here my whole life. I am fifteen years old, and have no siblings, though I will soon. Mama is pregnant! She told me this morning, and I was so delighted! Papa has to work longer hours now, because mama no longer can. We struggled to pay our rent and buy food even when mama worked, so until the baby is born, it will certainly be an adventure. I pull on my worn, leather boots that I got last year for my birthday, and call to mama that I am leaving to go and collect Madame D`Aboville`s laundry, and will be right back. Picking up the weaved basket by the door, I hurry outside, my cotton dress only just covering my knees. I need a new one, but we can't afford it. Autumn has arrived, along with the brisk wind that snakes up my legs, making me shiver. How I wish I had a Robe en baulle. I heard Marie Antoinette gets a new one made every week!



Oh, I am always busy! My wig wobbles precariously on my head as I rush up the stairs leading to the ballroom where tonight's party is being held. My heels make it even harder as I have to take it step by step. Rose Bertin, I tell you, is the best dressmaker in the whole of France. She has made dresses for me for every occasion imaginable, each one more extravagant than the last. Wearing this dress makes me look like a queen as well as feel like one. It feels like I am wearing a mask, all the powder enveloping my face, keeping me presentable. I stop in front of the grand oak doors, stopping to catch my breath.

“Je suis prêt, ouvre les portes. (*I'm ready, open the doors.*)” I tell the guards. “Oui, votre Majesté. (*Yes, your Majesty.*)” they reply with a curt nod. I watch as they push the doors open, plastering a friendly smile on my face. Let the party start.



Across the street I see Estelle, who is the same age as me, and does laundry for a lady who lives near Madame D`Aboville, so usually we would walk together; but I know that I am already late, so I rush past, reminding myself I must call in and explain myself to her later. Now that I have reached the end of Allée de Fleury, I adjust the basket so that it is resting on my hip, then I turn left looking for number 5. Her house was easy to spot, and many people thought it was strange, but I think it's pretty, with the scarlet roses climbing up the pale pink walls and the golden gate glittering in the afternoon sun. I open the gate and stride up to her door, knocking a few times even though she expects me. Seconds later, Madame D`Aboville`s smiling face appears in the doorway. Beautiful jewelry adorns her hands and neck, showcasing her wealth. If only I

could just try a piece on... My daydream stops abruptly when a pile of laundry gets dropped into my basket. I sigh, knowing that I am being foolish.

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As my eyes adjust to the bright light, I see several women gasp at my dress ; I don't blame them, I had the same reaction when I first saw it. It was a rich indigo, a color very hard to get your hands on. The neckline was studded with jewels, and bows appeared on the sleeves, before the layers silk from my elbow downwards. A flowing, blue train was attached to the back of the dress, streaming behind me. I love having parties because I have been led to believe that many citizens of France dislike me, so having these festivities help me feel valued. A crowd of guests part, and I see what they had been marveling at. In front of me stands a glorious six-tier cake, pale yellow frosting piped in beautiful patterns across the surface. How I loved cake! I looked around for any familiar faces, and eventually find Rose Bertin, and I immediately rush over to her, and thank her for the phenomenal dress. We chat for a while, and discuss the design for my next dress. I tear up, knowing that usually Louis, my beloved husband, would be here too. A wave of anger hits me as I recall what they did to him. We go and get a slice of cake, and I forget the party going on around me and focus on the party in my mouth. I have to go back to get several more slices before I am fully satisfied. I don't understand why the people of France don't like me, why, let them eat cake !

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Tripping over the uneven cobblestones, I try to get home as fast as I can. I always worry that while i'm gone, mama will need me. Stumbling through the door, I place the basket of laundry on the floor and pull off my boots. I turn left and walk into our bedroom. Me, Mama, and Papa all share a bedroom because there is no space for me to have my own room. I don't mind, but it *is* a little cramped. I go over to the bedside and sit down next to mama. " How are you feeling? " I ask her. Her face was very pale and the bump under the blanket seemed to grow every day. The doctor said the baby could come any day now. " Same as usual, mon ange (*my angel*), just tired. " she replies. I go and fetch her a glass of water, hoping that will make her feel better. I leave the room and go into the "kitchen", if you can even call it that. I fetch the washing board and a pail of water, and start scrubbing.

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When I am finally finished, I go look out the window and see Estelle across the street. I slip out the house and stroll over to her. She spots me approaching and stops what she's doing. "Good afternoon Juliette! How is your mama?" she asks me. Estelle has four siblings, and is the oldest. "Good, thank you. I apologize for not walking with you today, I was very late." I mention.

“ No problem! I have to hang out the laundry now, see you tomorrow!”
“Bye Estelle!” Estelle is my best friend, as I have known her since I was born. I am two weeks older than her, so we are very close in age. I go back home, closing the door quietly as mama has fallen asleep and I shan’t wake her. I tiptoe into the bedroom, careful not to make any noise. The setting sun fills the room with golden light, making it glow. I know it must not be that late yet, but I was so tired, so I settled on my blanket and close my eyes, losing myself in another world.



Today was a special day, because today I was seeing my daughter Marie-Thérèse, for the first time in months. Making my way to one of the many lounges in the palace, my mind wanders to when me and Louis would stroll around the gardens together. No, I must not think about that. Why? Why did they kill him? He had done nothing wrong. I arrive at the lounge and take a seat on a chaise lounge. It was velvet, and by far my favorite place to sit in the palace. A few more minutes passed, and then Marie- Thérèse walked in, a fine gown she wore, pale yellow with many layers of silk flowing from the waist downwards.

“ Welcome daughter, it has been too long.” I remark.

“ I agree mother, how are you?” she questions, sitting down on an armchair opposite me. We talk for what seems like hours, when suddenly I hear footsteps from outside. It seems like a person, lots of people, are running towards this room. I get up and look outside to see what all the comotion is, but all I see is the empty corridor. I sit back down, but can still hear footsteps. Me and Marie- Thérèse carry on talking, but not for long.



I wake up with a start, hearing the door close. Pulling pack the thin, scratchy blanket, I fight the urge to close my eyes and go back to sleep. Hauling myself off the floor, I peer into the darkness, trying to make out any moving objects. A slither of pale moonlight illuminates a human figure that seems to be walking towards me. I suddenly click, and realize that it must be Papa. He turns around and I see his face clearly. He had soot smeared all over his face, and had big purple bags under his eyes. For all I know, he hasn't slept in days. He pulls me in for a hug, and I find comfort wrapped in his big, calloused hands. I am mostly by myself these days, mama in bed, and papa at work. Marie Antoinette, you selfish lady, you deprive families of food who need it more than you. You stay in your palace doing absolutely nothing. I will bring the people of France to justice. One day.



Twenty or so dirty, penurious men come bursting into the room, frantically looking for something. One of them locks eyes with me and I immediately know. They're looking for me. The man comes hurtling toward me and grabs my arm, threatening to break it. I have no choice but to go with him. I glance

over my shoulder hoping to see Marie- Thérèse one last time, but all I see is the grimy faces of hooligans looking back at me. They haul me down the staircase, not caring when I fall, just yanking me up again. On our way out I see two unconscious guards lying by the door staring into nothingness. We leave the palace, and at first I can't see anything because the sunlight is so bright. They throw me into the back of a wagon and lock the hatch. There's no way out. I'm trapped.

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I wake up the next morning, feeling wide awake straight away, remembering the events of last night. Papa is already gone, as usual, and mama is still sleeping. Marie Antoinette. She doesn't deserve to be called Queen. I hear commotion outside, and decide to poke my head out the window to listen in. Several people on my street are talking about something. Something important. I listen carefully, and after several minutes, I establish this: Marie Antoinette has been taken from her palace by angry French citizens and is now in prison. Yes! Finally, she's got what she deserves. I resist the urge to wake mama up to tell her the great news, but I don't. She needs to rest.

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The ride is horrible, every few seconds I fly up into the air as we go over yet another bump in the road. I am relieved when the wagon stops moving, and I stop bouncing into the air. They open the hatch and heave me out of the dark, musty space. I am happy to be out of there until I see where they are taking me. The Concierge Prison. As we get closer to the prison, it casts a looming shadow over us, chilling me to the bones. Once we are in the building. We go down steps for so long, we could be going to the centre of the earth for all I know! They finally stop and lead to a thin corridor lined with cells. Shoving me into one, they lock the door and leave. I hear one sneer, " Enjoy your execution, your Majesty." His voice is laced with sarcasm, much to my annoyance. I look around the dark, damp cell and take in my surroundings. Only a straw mat. That's it? Is that how they treat their Queen? How dare they, this is disgraceful! A constant dripping sound fills my head due to the thin stream of water trickling down a wall. I thought that it was cold outside, but down here... It's like winter. Sitting down, my back presses against the cold stone, making me shiver. I wait for the sound of the guard coming down to give my dinner, but no one comes. I am alone.

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I am extremely worried about mama. She has not got out of bed for three days. I bring her yet another glass for water, not that she drinks it, but I do it for my own piece of mind. I need to give Madame D'Aboville her laundry back, so I put my cotton dress on and get ready to go. I try to tug a comb through my knotted hair, but give up when not a single knot gets out, even after I am certain I have ripped half the hair out of my scalp. I pull on my boots and rush out the door, nearly forgetting to bring the basket of clothes with me. The

second I step out the door, a strong wind hits me, whipping through my hair. Bowing my head, I slowly move through the gale, the wind going against me. I huddle over the clothes, not wanting anything to fly away. The gate creaks as I open it, but the sound is barely audible above the wind howling past my ears. I knock on the door, return her laundry, and hurry home. Once I'm home, an anger fills me, knowing that Marie Antoinette, her clean laundry just appears. No work needed. I slave away every day scrubbing garments for hardly anything. I never thought I would feel hatred this strongly for somebody, let alone want them to die, but things change. I change. I am going to her execution.



It is my third day in this dreadful place, and it is driving me crazy. Anxiety suffocates me, as I know any day I could be executed. I get one meal a day, which consists of a cup of foul water and a bowl full of inedible gruel. I haven't touched a single meal, but I'm afraid I will have to if I stay here much longer. I look up when I hear footsteps, and I wonder why the guard is here now as I get my meal later. Maybe I'm going mad. I've lost track of time down here anyway. To my surprise, the guard approaches my cell and unlocks it. He opens the door and handcuffs me, pulling me out and up the stairs. I beg him to slow down, my legs feel like twigs after my lack of food. It seems surreal that only four days ago I was at a party, eating cake with no cares in the world. We finally reach the top of the stairs, and I very nearly collapse. He takes me to a room much bigger than my cell, but stripped bare of any furniture. The walls are made of stone, moss creeping in through the cracks. He tells me my execution is in two hours, and to enjoy my final moments. As he says this, his mouth turns into a hideous smirk. I'm going to die in two hours, why insult me now? Leaving the handcuffs on, he leaves the room, locking it behind him. I'm alone. I'm going to be executed in two hours. The worst part is, there's nothing I can do about it.



Word has spread that Marie Antoinette's execution will be today at midday. It's taking place in the town square that conveniently, is just down our street. No one in my family is going, but I asked Estelle and she feels the same about Marie Antoinette, so we are going together. Me and Estelle are playing outside and braiding each other's hair, hoping to pass the time. I envy her hair, it is a dark brown, and always looks flawless and smooth. My hair looks like a birds nest every day! Later on, the street starts getting unnaturally busy, and I am puzzled as to why at first, but then my puzzlement turns into excitement. The execution!



Too soon, the guard comes back and orders me to get up and follow him. I do what he says, because what's the point of trying to escape? Then they are just going to make death more painful. I spot the familiar wagon that the men

brought me here in , and my heart sinks. He throws me in, and then the ride starts. The ride is long and torturous, and I am relieved when the wagon stops. I look out the barred windows and all my relief disappears. I see a guillotine set up in the middle of a town square. Hundreds of people are already gathered, and I suspect more will come later. Next to the guillotine is the feared executioner in his black robe, face hidden. I am led up to the platform, and chained to the pillars of the guillotine. The blade is suspended menacingly above my head, ready to drop. In front of me is a wooden block which I am to rest my head, awaiting my fate. In front of the block there is a wicker basket which my head will fall into. My hands are shaking uncontrollably and fear consumes me. I try to compose myself and look strong for my people, and I improve a little. The shaking subsides a little, and replacing the fear is an odd calmness, knowing the end is near. I clear my throat, take a deep breath, and start.



The town square is packed with people, but luckily me and Estelle arrived early and got a front row view. Marie's eyes search the crowd, looking for anyone to help her. She looks at me with pleading eyes, begging me silently. In turn, I shout insults at her like many others around me. She deserves it. She composes herself and the crowd goes silent. Then she starts speaking.



"I was a queen, and you took away my crown; a wife, and you killed my husband; a mother, and you deprived me of my children. My blood alone remains: take it, but do not make me suffer long." My voice echoes across the silent courtyard, and my cheeks turn red when every villager turns to stare at me. The executioner motions for me to put my head on the block, so I obey him. I see him adjust the rope at the edge of my vision, and my whole body goes tense. I am about to die. I don't know what to feel. Scared? Oddly, I feel calm. It is like the whole world has stopped and only this moment exists. I close my eyes, waiting. I hear the sound of a blade cutting through air above me, then a sharp pain on my neck. Then, nothing...



Her speech echoes across the square, her voice unwavering. Just as the guillotine is coming down, I turn away, knowing I can't watch. I start pushing my way through the crowd, and as I do, a cheer that could wake the gods starts. The queen is dead. I tell myself she deserves it. She *does* deserve it. I reach the edge of the crowd and the woman near me whispers " Look, her head!" I can't stop myself from looking.

The executioner holds her head out to the crowd and everyone around me screams " Vive la Republique!" I am disgusted with myself and everybody around me, so I sprint home. I am shocked when I hear screams. Coming from *my* house. I push open the door and go straight to the source of the noise. Mama. The baby is coming! Oh gods, help me! What do I do? I take the

blanket off her and lift up her dress. I take her hand in mine and tell her she can do it. She *can*. All she had to do was push! Suddenly a wail pierces the air, silencing both mama and me. Lying on the bed is my baby sister, screaming with all her might. I pick her up with a towel near me and pass her to mama. She immediately stops crying and closes her eyes. I look at her resting face and smile. I have a sister. I ask Mama what her name is, and she replies,

“ Rosa, her name is Rosa Bonheur.”

I grin uncontrollably, not able to stop myself. Welcome to the world, Rosa.