

Title: Jérôme Sautier & Joaquín Navarro

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Fandom: Original, Historical

Summary: Nobleman Jérôme Sautier meets Joaquín Navarro who is on a deadly mission. They fall for each other. Joaquín gives up his plan to kill his sister's murderer. He needs an excuse for his family since he made a vow to them. Jérôme and his friend Madame Constance act quickly at a sudden turn of events. The three of them make up a plan and put this plan into action. Can their love survive? Paris. Early 19th century setting.

Disclaimer: The following story is fiction.

Written in 2007

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Chapter 1: Une vie française. (My Life in Paris)

I did not answer immediately when Madame Constance asked me what I felt addicted to in life, what I felt addicted to in Paris. My life in Paris appeared to be the very usual life of a very usual nobleman. What did I feel addicted to? No suitable answer came to my mind. My life had never been in any way a common life. And never had I been a common nobleman.

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I had come to Paris in 1807, without hope and expectations for the future. My life had been a failure, a tragic misguided waste. I hardly noticed the beauty of this splendid town. For years I had longed to see this place. Paris. When I had spoken of Paris, I had spoken of liberty and independence, of progress and improvement. Of an open mind. Of a new age. Now I had finally realized that I had been mistaken. Bold thoughts. Enthusiastic thoughts. Immature. Thoughts of a madman.

I winced at these thoughts. Madame Constance watched me curiously. "A slight headache," I said lightly and gave her a smile. My thoughts went back to a time when I had felt perfectly happy. Genuine truth or mere self-deception? Who would ever understand the pain I was still feeling...

I looked at Madame Constance with darkened eyes. "Well, first, I think Paris is a good place to forget about worries." And leave behind your life, I added to myself. Constance raised an eyebrow.

This city, by no means, was a place of progress and advancement. It was a place of folly and silly amusements. At one of these parties I had met Madame Constance, a noble woman with an almost fatal addiction to curiosity and inquisitiveness. Soon I was her favourite and finally she became a very good friend of mine.

Again I met her eyes. She smiled encouragingly.

Well, what was I addicted to in Paris? The social gatherings that took place in Paris every day and night? No, I did not take interest in these places of exalted gossip and idle talk and their constant visitors. In the beginning I had merely felt bothered by their questions. Later I felt bored. Now I amused myself with their pride and vanity. It was a game with rules, and I stuck to them. Etiquette. I did not want to jeopardize my new and pleasant life. But everything had changed the day I had met Joaquín. Joaquín. I assume that only Constance had an idea to what

an extent my whole life had changed. That very day, rather irrevocable decision than fateful coincidence, I crossed the borderline forever.

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I had met him in a Paris nobleman's house. Joaquín had only recently arrived in Paris. He looked different, his manners were different, and he spoke French with a hard accent. Where had this guy come from? Later I found out that he had come from abroad. New Spain. I greeted him politely. He did not say a word, yet looked me straight into the eyes and returned a smile, divulging and challenging, disturbing and appealing at the same time. And wherever I moved, his dark and fiery eyes followed me.

Ever since Joaquín had been my constant companion, my lover and my friend.

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With another kind nod Madame Constance encouraged me to answer her question. I thought of Joaquín, the smell of his skin and the fire in his eyes. His hands and his lips on my body. His longing and his desire and my devotion and my lust.

A smile played on my lips when I finally looked into Constance's eyes. "Madame, you want to know what I'm addicted to in life? I suggest you call it Passionate Devotion, ma chère." "Alors, une vie française, n'est-ce pas ?" she responded with a knowing and perfect charming smile.

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## Chapter 2: Heartache

My life was a pleasant life, others would say. I myself was never content with it. The only son of a wealthy family I got everything I wanted: money, excellent education, a caring family and friends. I had enough time for amusements of any kind. And I travelled the world. I had been at court for a long time and I had quickly advanced in my position, now I was the sovereign's attaché in Paris. I had turned my attention to work and I was very successful with it. I mused on my life and my thoughts turned to Frederic. Again I tried to figure out what had gone wrong between us.

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We had met at university. We had attended the same classes. Philosophy. Attending university to me was an opportunity to learn and widen my horizon and to meet people from all over the world. The world was a growing world then. It was expanding. The colonies steadily won influence and Europe ceased to be the centre of cultural life. Former ideals had become obsolete. The world was turning. And I felt I was a part of it. I became acquainted with the ideas of the ancient world during classes. I discussed new ideas and concepts of life with my friends. I sorted out. I combined. I developed my own thoughts and opinions and I changed my view of the world. I formed a solid basis. And I wanted to transform the world and change society.

While I was brilliant in establishing a social network of friends with a mutual aim, Frederic stayed away from them, remained critical. While I turned to neglecting my studies, he was

excellent and perfectly met every philosophical challenge. While I thought our different opinions were complementing, Frederic, I realized many years later, thought they were separating us. However, at that time we felt attached to each other. Although, I also realized this later, this bond was mainly based on a physical attraction. With the months we had become very close. One day Frederic left the town without announcing it. This was the first cut. We should have gone our own ways. But we were young, enthusiastic and immature.

We exchanged letters. Meanwhile I had returned home and had started to work. Our letters were exalted. We glorified the past and ardently cherished hopes for the future. We cherished illusions. I invited Frederic to stay with me for a while. He accepted and he moved to my town. Yet he refused to stay in my house. I reluctantly agreed to it. But I understood we had to start anew. We often met and I felt perfectly happy. I had not yet realized that I had deceived myself. Much of my time was occupied with the duties at court. And I entirely trusted my friend. Now and then he denied my invitations, yet I had no feelings of distrust. I became suspicious when he refused to meet me in town. I found out he concealed our relationship. I finally realized that he withdrew from me yet was unable to break up entirely. And finally he confessed to me that he had fallen in love with a woman and that he was dating her regularly, that he had already asked her to marry him and that she had happily agreed.

Within a few minutes my life went to pieces and the sun went down in the blink of an eye. I could have accepted it maybe, had he spoken to me earlier. What hurt me most was that he had left the door open. He freely admitted that he would have returned, had his plans with the girl failed. I sent him away. I was not able to speak to him any longer. I wanted him to get out of my sight. I wanted him to get out of my life. I felt deceived, offended, hurt and betrayed. My heart was broken and my life turned upside down. I plunged into work to reassure myself. I pushed aside every thought of him. And finally I had restored my life.

Soon after this final cut I was sent to Paris as the sovereign's attaché. For years I had longed to see this place. Paris. When I had spoken of Paris, I had spoken of liberty and independence, of progress and improvement. Again I felt disappointed. This city, by no means, was the centre of revolution. It was a place of folly and silly amusements.

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I had based my life on enthusiastic ideals. My efforts had resulted in betrayal and disappointment. Had I failed entirely? With a sudden clearness of mind I realized that everything had changed the day I had met Joaquín. The darkness had gone. My past had no meaning to me any longer. And like I was able to overcome my past, so was he. I had suffered from a broken heart. But my heartache was nothing compared to the pain and guilt Joaquín carried in his heart. He had come from abroad, New Spain. And he had been sent to Paris for only one reason. He was after a man who, when Joaquín had found him, would never return. When I met him, his task was nearly completed.

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### Chapter 3: Broken Vows

We stood by the window and he had captured my lips for another kiss. Now he looked into my eyes and I glanced back, looked back into his dark and fiery eyes. He looked at me a long time.

“I have not yet told you why I am here, why I came here all the way from abroad. I crossed an ocean for only one reason. You don’t want to hear it. But you need to know the truth.” He measured me. I returned his look.

“Very soon I will kill a man and then I will go back, leave this place and disappear without a trace as if I had never been here. You will never see me again. Can you live with this?” He narrowed his eyes, and his look was cold and determined. I just looked back, not surprised, not stirred, calm, and free of emotion. He continued.

“His name is Guillermo José Jiménez Valera. He killed my sister, slaughtered her, a 14 year-old girl. I should have been around when it happened. But I wasn’t. I left her alone and followed my own naughty and unimportant affairs. And that’s why I am here. They chose me to take his life for the one he took. I carry my father’s amulet, my mother’s wedding ring and my sister’s locket with a piece of paper in it signed by all male members of my family and sealed with my blood.” He briefly raised his arm and showed me the scar on his wrist. “These things I will return together with the silver earring Jiménez wears and a curl of his hair.”

He turned his head away for a moment, and then looked back into my eyes, his dark hair falling into his face, his eyes ardent, glowing with ferocity. “I found him,” he said, his voice husky and heated, his lips curling into a pleased and contented smile. “Tomorrow night my mission will be completed.”

I met his gaze and searched in his eyes. In the depths of his eyes I saw another emotion. I saw regret. A deep regret that he had already chosen another path, had already betrayed what he had sworn upon. He would not kill Jiménez Valera and he would never see his family again. In the eyes of his family he would be dead, the only way to not violate their honour. His eyes darkened and I saw the pain in them. Pain and the feeling of guilt. He struggled for words and didn’t find the right ones.

Finally he stretched, took the gold ring off his finger and closed his fist around it. “My mother gave it to me, her eyes filled with tears, her heart broken, and her life eternal grief. “I cannot wear her ring any longer. It would be a disgrace.” He was about to fling it across the room. I placed my hand on his. “Don’t,” I said, “Don’t.”

He turned abruptly, sat down and leaned back in a chair, his eyes closed. He opened his fist and the ring dropped to the floor. “You have no idea, Jérôme, no idea of what this means to me.” I walked over to him, picked up the ring and stood behind him. “I have. I am here and there is nothing I would not do for you. Trust in me.”

After a while he opened his eyes, looked up, glanced at me and nodded in silent consent. I reached out my hand and handed back the ring. He took it and put it back on his finger. For a long time we remained in silence.

In the following weeks our lives changed considerably, and forever, and I have never felt any regret.

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Chapter 4: The Tide Has Turned

Two weeks had passed since Joaquín had abandoned the plan to kill Guillermo José Jiménez Valera. We had spent most of the time in my house, both of us in a depressed and gloomy mood. We didn't know how to carry on. I knew Joaquín suffered. He would stick to his decision, but he was not yet able to cope with it. I watched him silently.

Everything changed on a Friday night. Perhaps it was sheer coincidence. Perhaps it was a favour that fate sometimes bestows on us when we do not expect it. Perhaps it was just luck. Whatever it was. We had to act quickly.

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I had been invited to an official dinner. As the representative of my country I could not miss it. As always people had gathered in small groups. As usual the latest events and rumours were discussed at length. I joined one of the groups, smiling, my attention not really focused on their idle talk until a name was mentioned that hit me like a blow. At once I turned my eyes to the speaker, a conceited and arrogant young man, I unfortunately had the bad luck to meet on every occasion. "What did you say, Monsieur Robert?" I asked, my voice shallow and light. He turned to me and repeated the story, excited and delighted to be the focus of everybody's attention. I struggled hard to keep calm and keep my face motionless.

He told us, his face blushed and his voice pleased, that Comtesse Marie Charlotte de Vichery had managed to finally ruin her reputation. As was known to everybody the lady had a preference for wealthy and generous gentlemen. He winked at his audience and flashed us a smile. I nodded slowly and took a sip of champagne.

He continued. Thursday night Vichery's carriage had been attacked. She had been on her way back to Paris in company of some dubious and shady fellow who, unfortunately, had been killed by a stray bullet, while Vichery had been able to escape her attacker. Robert paused, raised a finger and looked from one to the other, until he was sure our attention was focused on him entirely.

The carriage driver had escaped with the carriage and one hour later had returned with the Gendarme. They had found Vichery hiding in a corn field with only her undergarments on. He clapped his hands and laughed exaltingly.

Vichery had retired to her country residence on Friday morning early, no one expected her to come back to Paris before autumn that year, while the body of the unlucky guy who had accompanied her, a certain Guillermo José Jiménez Valera, a destitute and stranded Spaniard from abroad, had been taken to the Paris morgue at the Quai du Marché on the Ile-de-la-Cité. My heart stopped for a second or two and my glass almost dropped to the floor.

Robert continued babbling, but mentioned nothing of interest anymore and soon he changed the subject. I turned away with a polite nod and paced the room, my thoughts running wild. I looked at the clock in the hall. Around eight. I would not have returned to my house before 10 o'clock. Time passed slowly. I turned to polite and harmless conversation. As soon as it was possible and adequate I took my leave.

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