

4. Volume I: Lieutenant to Emperor

<p>По синим волнам океана, Лишь звезды блеснут в небесах, Корабль одинокий несется, Несется на всех парусах.</p> <p>Есть остров на том океане — Пустынный и мрачный гранит. На острове том есть могила, А в ней император зарыт.</p> <p>И в час его грустной кончины, В полночь, как свершается год, К высокому берегу тихо Воздушный корабль пристает.</p> <p>Из гроба тогда император, Очнувшись, является вдруг, — На нем треугольная шляпа И серый походный сюртук.</p>	<p>Across the blue waves, Only stars twinkle in the skies, A lonely ship speeds Speeds at full sail.</p> <p>There is an island in the ocean, Of desolate and gloomy granite. On the island there is a tomb, And in it, an emperor is buried.</p> <p>And at the time of his sad death, At midnight, every year, To the high bank quietly The ghost ship makes port.</p> <p>From the tomb the emperor then Awakens, appears suddenly, He wears his tricorn hat, And grey camp frock coat.</p>
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This was written in 1840, nearly 20 years after Napoleon's death and thirty years after his army was destroyed. The Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov sees Napoleon as a hero, a hero and a martyr, and empathizes with him.

<p>Несется он к Франции милой, Где славу оставил и трон. Оставил наследника-сына И старую гвардию он...</p>	<p>He rushes to dear France, Where he left his fame and throne. He left his son, his inheritor, And he left his old guard.</p>
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Napoleon was exiled to the island St. Helena in 1815 and died there on the fifth of May, 1821. But throughout the nineteenth century he continued to preoccupy the minds and souls of youth throughout Europe. We recognize these young people from characters in literature: It's the Frenchman Julien Sorel from Stendhal's novel, *The Red and the Black*, and the Russian landowner Onegin (from Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*) in whose cabinet stood

the iron figure on the table,
 the hat, the scowling brow,
 the chest where folded arms are tightly pressed.
 (*Eugene Onegin*, chapter 7, verse XIX. Johnston translation.)⁵²

And much later, the impoverished student Rodion Raskolnikov, from Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*, who built his harsh philosophy on Napoleon's example. Many, many real and fictional people admired and emulated Napoleon and dreamed of reenacting the heroic acts that he performed.

There's nothing surprising that in 1805, during Napoleon's rise and eventual victory, the twenty-year-old Pierre is quick to defend Napoleon from people who call him a usurper or pretender, Antichrist, an upstart, a murderer, an evildoer. Even the reserved Prince Andrei Bolkonsky speaks highly of Napoleon during the society soiree.

Let's try to make sense of what the guests at Anna Pavlovna Scherer might have known about Napoleon in the summer of 1805. Why would the clever Old Prince Bolkonsky have greeted his son by exclaiming "Ah! here's the warrior! Wants to vanquish Buonaparte?"⁵³ And why would the naive Count Rostov have said about his son and his peers, "This Buonaparte has turned all their heads; they all think of how he rose from an ensign and became Emperor" (I, 12)⁵⁴

How did Bonaparte manage to capture the imagination of so many young people?

When the French Revolution began in 1793, Napoleon Bonaparte was twenty years old and serving as a lieutenant in a French a battalion. His real last name is Italian, *Buonaparte*: "bwonapárteh." That's how it was pronounced in Napoleon's birthplace, on the island of Corsica. Later people began pronouncing his last name in the French manner, *Bonaparte*, "bunapart", until it was replaced by yet another name, Emperor Napoleon.

Napoleon had his first battlefield victory in 1793 in the battle of Toulon, a port city on the Mediterranean, where a counterrevolutionary uprising, supported by the English Navy, took place. The French Revolutionary Army lay ground siege against Toulon, but it was unable to break the city until an unknown Captain Bonaparte appeared. He told everyone his plan to attack the city, and then carried it out: Toulon was taken and the British Navy was chased out to sea.

Perhaps Napoleon's main victory consisted of convincing the leadership of the army to trust him. But whatever the case, the victory of Toulon made the twenty-four-year-old Napoleon a general, and hundreds of young people began to dream of "their own Toulon," in other words, the moment when they could demonstrate their true potential.

Fate would not always favor Napoleon. Before Toulon, he served eight years in the army as an undistinguished sub-lieutenant, then a lieutenant, and a captain. He had barely been made a general when he had a fall from grace: The brother of Robespierre, who supported Napoleon, was executed, and General Bonaparte spent two years hanging out in Paris with nothing to do and nothing to eat, like when he was a lowly lieutenant. But in 1795, during the reactionary uprising against the National Convention, the assembly that governed France from 1792 to 1795, people suddenly recalled General Bonaparte. He was summoned, a gloomy, gaunt young man, and with no moral reservations, he opened fire from a canon on a huge crowd of Royalist forces gathered in the middle of Paris. The uprising was successfully suppressed. (It is this act of cruelty by Napoleon that Vicomte Mortemar, who had fled France and sought refuge in Russia, recalls in Scherer's soiree.)

General Bonaparte was never again forgotten. In 1796, he led the French army while it was in Italy. Along with his troops, he travelled the dangerous pass through the Alps and in six days defeated the Italian Army. Afterwards, he clobbered the crack Austrian troops who were led by their best generals.

At the end of 1796, the Battle of Arcole took place. The French tried three times to take the Arcole Bridge, but could not. Then the head general, Bonaparte, rushed to the bridge himself, flag in hand. Behind him rushed the rest of the troops, and the bridge was taken.

I should add that Napoleon had done the same thing half a year earlier, during the battle for the bridge in Lodi, but for some reason it's the taking of the Arcole bridge, and Napoleon's small, dry figure, holding the regimental flag, that made it into the history books.

In 1797, returning to Paris from Italy, General Bonaparte was met by an enormous crowd: He was already a hero in France, feared by the entirety of Europe, and the only leader, feared even by the great Russian general, Suvorov. Suvorov said of Napoleon: "He's gone too far. It's time to stop the brave fellow."

But Suvorov had only three years left to live. In Napoleon's absence, Suvorov had managed to take from France what Napoleon had conquered in Italy. But they were not meant to meet on the field of battle. In the meantime, Napoleon had achieved his greatest victory: Over his own army. The soldiers adored him.

After the Italian campaign, he set off to Egypt and Syria, in order to fight France's main enemy, the British, on the territory of her colonies. Here, in the most difficult war, he was extraordinarily cruel: For example, having taken 4000 Turkish soldiers hostage, Napoleon decided, albeit it after three days of hesitation, to execute them all. He had neither food nor transportation for the captives.

But the French soldiers and officers idolized him. When the French army succumbed to the plague, Napoleon fearlessly visited his soldiers in the plague-stricken hospital in Jaffe. He did rounds of the sick and shook their hands. When the number of wounded and sick became too many, he ordered everyone to travel by foot and give the horses to the sick. They held aside a horse for him, but Napoleon, gesturing with his whip, cried, "Everyone travels by foot, and me first! Did you not hear the order? Let's go!"

While Napoleon was fighting in Egypt and Syria, the situation in France was deteriorating. The Directory (le Directoire), leading the country, was unable to hold onto Napoleon's victories, and the Russian general Suvorov chased the French out of Italy. The French people were starving. The bourgeoisie was nostalgic for the firm hand of authority. Bonaparte returned from Egypt at exactly the right moment to seize power.

France greeted him ecstatically. And yet Napoleon did not find it easy to turn back the the accomplishments of the French Revolution, destroy the elected assembly that the Revolution had created, and become a dictator. Entering the Council of Five Hundred (Conseil de Cinq-Cents), which he was planning to dismiss, Napoleon told the general who accompanied him: "Do you remember Arcole?" Perhaps it was easier for him to run onto the bridge, flag in hand, than to take the Council of Five Hundred by storm. But Napoleon was victorious here, too. In 1799, on the 18/19 of Brumaire (9-10 of November), he became the ruler of France. For five years he called himself the First Consul (Premier Consul) of France. But in 1804, he became emperor.

For his coronation in Paris, Pope Pius VII was invited. Though the pope had long been frightened by Napoleon, Napoleon needed the pope at the coronation:

Napoleon's acceptance as emperor in the Catholic world depended on the pope's presence at the ceremony. Still, Napoleon, snatching the crown from the hands of the pontiff during the ceremony, put it on his own head. This act was symbolic. No other hands than his own could crown him emperor.

Not long before the coronation, he committed another act of cruelty. He assassinated the Duke of Enghien, who belonged to the French royal House of the Bourbon. He was condemned for this assassination in Scherer's salon: "After the murder of the duc even the most partial ceased to regard him as a hero" (I, 5)⁵⁵ said the Viscount Motremare. And Pierre, once again,

broke into the conversation, and Anna Pávlovna [...] was unable to stop him.

'The execution of the Duc d'Enghien,' declared Monsieur Pierre, 'was a political necessity, and it seems to me that Napoleon showed greatness of soul by not fearing to take on himself the whole responsibility of that deed.' (I, 5)⁵⁶

Here, in this salon, they discuss everything about Bonaparte: "And the prisoners he killed in Africa? That was horrible!" said the little princess, shrugging her shoulders."⁵⁷

And then:

'One must admit,' continued Prince Andrew, 'that Napoleon as a man was great on the bridge of Arcola, and in the hospital at Jaffa where he gave his hand to the plague-stricken; but... but there are other acts which it is difficult to justify.' (I, 5)⁵⁸

This is how all of Europe is talking about Napoleon, discussing and judging every detail. His name resounds everywhere: He is a man who was elevated by the Revolution, and who also destroyed its achievements. In the meantime, he prepares for a new war with his main enemy, England.

England, too, is preparing. William Pitt the Younger, who has become the leader of the British government, tries to organize Napoleon's assassination. When the attempt fails, he begins negotiations with Russia and Austria, agreeing to finance their war against Napoleon, trying to prevent at all costs Napoleon's aggressions against England.

Pitt managed to prevent the the French from landing in England: The Russian and Austrian troops, allied, moved westward, and Napoleon had no option but to meet them halfway.

It was this war with Napoleon that Prince Andrei rushed to join, along with Nikolai Rostov and Boris Drubetskoy. And it is this approaching war that was discussed in Scherer's salon:

‘Our good and wonderful sovereign has to perform the noblest role on earth, and he is so virtuous and noble that God will not forsake him. He will fulfill his vocation and crush the hydra of revolution, which has become more terrible than ever in the person of this murderer and villain!’ (I, 1)⁵⁹

For Fraulein Scherer, Napoleon is the embodiment of the French Revolution, and thus evil. The young, excited Pierre does not understand that, having become emperor, Napoleon had betrayed the revolution. Pierre defends equally both the Revolution and Napoleon. The more sober and experienced Prince Andrei, on the other hand, also acknowledges Napoleon's ruthlessness and despotism. And Andrei's father, the Old Prince, bemoans that Suvorov is no longer alive to show the arriviste genius what it means to fight. But they all can think of nothing but Napoleon, they're all obsessed with him, each in his own way. In the life of each of them And the ominous and great figure of the small man in a gray waistcoat and tricornered hat occupies an important place of each of their lives.

5. Volume I: Two Young Men

Two months have passed since the soiree at Scherer's. It's already the end of summer, August 26 according to the Russian calendar; September 8 according to the Western calendar, the one we go by today. In seven years this day would go down in Russia's history as the day of the Battle of Borodino. But at this point, the day is nothing special, and as any other day, it's someone's name day, when Russians celebrate the saint associated with one's given name.

Tolstoy transports us to Moscow, to the home of the Rostovs'. Since both the mother and daughter are named Natalia, they both are celebrating their name day. The Rostovs have been receiving guests all day, preparing for the celebratory dinner. And in another Moscow house, Pierre's father, Count Bezukhov is on his deathbed.

Pierre, exiled from St. Petersburg for the scandal with the bear, passes his days in solitude in his dying father's house, prevented from seeing the dying man. Pierre is now the talk of the town in Moscow. Everyone is concerned about the disposition of the old man's will.