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were persuading the Queen not to attempt so dangerous an excursion.

Cardillac tapped on the window and stepped inside. Marie de Médicis at once announced that the project must be abandoned, but Cardillac merely laughed. The carriage was waiting, he said, on the other side of the river, and three hundred horsemen were on their way from Loches to Montrichard, who would be ready in the morning to escort her into safety.

He made jocular remarks to those who wept, and soon changed the atmosphere of desolation into something almost approaching hilarity. The Queen's courage revived, but when she walked to the window and looked down the dark chasm, she shuddered and declared she could not venture.

Cardillac encouraged and cajoled without effect, until Thérèse, without a word, stepped across the sill and disappeared down the wall. Then the Queen gathered her skirts about her and tremblingly followed to the terrace. One after the other, all reached the platform high above the street.

Here was safety at last, but another difficulty arose. Marie flatly refused to descend the second ladder. She maintained that one such experience was enough. Thus they all stood huddled on the top of a steep embankment at two