

CHARACTERS

Edmond Dantès : the protagonist of the novel, later emerging as the Count of Monte Cristo.

Dantès was an honest and caring man who turned bitter and vengeful after being convicted of a crime he did not commit.

He set out as the Count of Monte Cristo to avenge those who wronged the hopeful sailor he once was and reward those who helped him.

He also adopted the personae of Father Busoni and Lord Wilmore to carry out anonymous acts and to win the trust of the people he wished to manipulate.

Mercédès : Dantès's beautiful fiancée, and later Countess Morcerf. Though she married another man while Dantès was in prison, she never stopped loving Dantès.

Monsieur Morrel : the kind, honest shipowner of the *Pharaon* and true friend to Dantès. Morrel did everything in his power to free Dantès from prison and save Dantès's father from death.

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- Fernand Mondego : later Count Morcerf. He was Dantès's rival for Mercédès's love. Mondego helped to frame Dantès for treason and married Mercédès when Dantès was in prison.
- Danglars : later Baron Danglars. Envious of Dantès, Danglars was the mastermind of the plot that framed Dantès.
- Caderousse : a greedy neighbour of Dantès. He was present when the plot to frame Dantès was hatched, but did not take an active part in it.
- de Villefort : the Assistant State Prosecutor. His blind ambition made him sentence Dantès for life in order to protect himself.
- Monsieur Noirtier : Villefort's father
- Renée : Villefort's bride
- The Abbé Faria : an old priest and brilliant thinker whom Dantès met in prison. He educated Dantès in the arts and the sciences and helped Dantès become wise to his enemies. Before he died, he left Dantès his vast hidden treasure.
- Jacopo : a sailor on the *Young Amelia*
- Albert Morcerf : son of Mondego and Mercédès. Unlike his father, Albert was brave, honest and kind.
- Franz Epinay : Albert Morcerf's friend

- Eugénie : Danglars' daughter
- Haydée : a princess, the daughter of Prince Ali Tebelin, the pacha of the Greek state of Janina who was sold into slavery. Dantès bought her freedom and eventually fell in love with her.
- Bertuccio : a smuggler, later a loyal steward to Dantès
- Benedetto : the illegitimate son of de Villefort, who also played the part of the suave and charming Andrea Cavalcanti in one of Dantès's revenge schemes.
- Ali : a deaf, mute servant to Dantès

PROLOGUE

It was the 24th February 1815. The sun shone softly on the blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea around the island of Elba. Napoleon Bonaparte, once the absolute master of France, was now king only of this small island. He who had ruled over one hundred and twenty million subjects now reigned over the six thousand inhabitants of Elba.

In France, the Bourbons had returned to the throne in the person of Louis XVIII, younger brother of the beheaded Louis XVI.

Friends in Paris were plotting to bring back Napoleon as ruler of France. Napoleon himself was also busy with plans for his glorious return.

CHAPTER 1

A Ship Arrives

ON the French Mediterranean coast at Marseilles, sunshine brightened the gilded figure of a Madonna. High above the harbour, from the top of the church of Notre Dame de la Garde, this golden Madonna looked down towards the sea. Seamen called her the 'Protector of the Sailors'.

At the entrance to the harbour stood the massive Fort St. Jean. Out to sea, on a barren rock, stood another Fortress, the Château d'If. This was a prison—a grey stone castle standing bleak against the sky. It had no windows, but only tiny slits let in the stonework. Its gateways were barred with rods of iron. No prisoner was ever known to escape from this grim place.

On this sunny day a three-masted sailing ship, the *Pharaon*, coming from Smyrna, Trieste and Naples, could be seen just beyond the Château d'If. Slowly the ship approached the harbour. Passing the Fort St. Jean, she sailed in towards the quay where many people were waiting. She dropped her anchor.

The first man to go aboard was her owner, Monsieur Morrel. He immediately approached a dark-haired good-looking young man of about twenty who appeared to be in command.

'Ah, it is you, Edmond Dantès!' said Monsieur Morrel. 'What has happened?'

'We have had a great misfortune,' replied the young man.

'Our good Captain Leclere died during the voyage. We buried him at sea.'

Then he explained to the owner how he, as chief officer, had taken over command of the ship after the captain died.

At that moment a customs officer came on board, and Dantès went to meet him.

Monsieur Morrel turned to his supercargo, Danglars, an ugly man about twenty-five years old, who was heartily disliked by the rest of the crew. Danglars, jealous of young Dantès, began to complain about the conduct of the voyage since the death of the captain. He said that a day and a half had been wasted by stopping at the island of Elba instead of coming straight to Marseilles.

Monsieur Morrel called to Dantès and asked him why the ship had stopped at the island of Elba. The young man explained that Captain Leclere, before he died, had given him a package to deliver to one of Napoleon's generals. He had sailed to Elba to deliver it. Whilst on the island, he had also seen Napoleon himself.

Monsieur Morrel turned to Danglars. 'You see,' he said, 'there was a good reason for going to Elba. Dantès was carrying out the last wish of a dying man. He has also brought my ship safely back to Marseilles with her cargo undamaged.'

Then he spoke to Dantès.

'Dantès,' he said, 'I shall appoint you captain of the *Pharaon* for her next voyage.'

Danglars scowled and went away, muttering to himself.

CHAPTER 2

Dantès Comes Home

NEAR the harbour of Marseilles lived a beautiful young girl. Her hair was black as jet and her eyes were dark and soft as velvet. Her name was Mercédès. She lived alone, for her father and mother had died some years ago. As the *Pharaon* was lying in the harbour, she sat at home talking to her cousin, Fernand Mondego, a young man of twenty.

Fernand was a soldier. He had asked Mercédès many times to marry him, but she had always refused because she was in love with Edmond Dantès. So Fernand the soldier hated Edmond the sailor.

While Fernand and Mercédès were talking together, Dantès was getting ready to leave his ship. He said goodbye to his shipmates and walked ashore. First he went to his father's house. His father looked old and weak, and there was neither food nor wine in the house.

'Father, what has happened?' cried Dantès. 'I gave you two hundred francs when I set out on my voyage.'

'Yes, Edmond,' said his father, 'but there was our neighbour, Caderousse. You owed him a hundred and forty francs. He threatened to go to Monsieur Morrel if I did not repay him.'

So the old man had paid Caderousse one hundred and forty francs and had lived for the past three months on only sixty francs. Dantès was very upset. He gave his father some money

and asked him to buy food and wine for himself as soon as possible.

'Don't worry, there will be plenty more money,' he said 'for I have been appointed captain of the *Pharaon* for her next voyage.'

As Dantès was speaking, Caderousse came into the room. He had heard what Dantès had said.

'Congratulations,' said Caderousse, 'on your good fortune.'

Dantès thanked him and tried not to show his dislike of the man. Then he said that he must see Mercédès. He wanted to arrange to marry her on the following day.

'You seem to be in a hurry,' said Caderousse.

'Yes,' replied Dantès. 'I must make a trip to Paris as soon as possible, and I wish to be married before I go.'

'Why must you go to Paris?' asked his father.

'To carry out the last request of poor Captain Leclere,' replied Dantès.

So saying, he hurried out of the house. When he had gone, Caderousse also went outside where Danglars, the supercargo, was waiting for him.

'Ah, there you are!' said Danglars. 'Did you see him? What did he say?'

'He already talks as though he were captain of the *Pharaon*,' replied Caderousse.

Danglars's face turned crimson with anger and his voice was wild. 'He shall not become captain if I can help it!' he cried.

CHAPTER 3

A Trap is Set

DANGLARS and Caderousse went towards the rocky seashore, to the Hotel La Réserve. As they were sitting, drinking wine on the terrace of the hotel, they saw Fernand Mondego coming in their direction. The young man looked very unhappy. Caderousse, who knew him, called to him to come and join them.

‘What’s the matter with you?’ asked Caderousse. ‘Has Mercédès sent you away? I hear that she and Dantès are to marry tomorrow.’

Fernand groaned. He had just left Mercédès with Dantès, and he was wild with jealousy.

‘And I hear,’ went on Caderousse, ‘that he is making a trip to Paris soon after the marriage.’

‘What’s that?’ asked Danglars. ‘A trip to Paris, did you say? No doubt to deliver the letter which was given to him on the island of Elba. This gives me an idea.’

Then he muttered to himself in a low voice, ‘Dantès, you are not yet captain of the *Pharaon*.’

Turning to Fernand with an artful look on his face, he said, ‘My friend, you are in love with Mercédès, aren’t you?’

‘I have loved her all my life,’ replied Fernand.

Danglars stared straight into his eyes. ‘You must remove Dantès,’ he said slowly, ‘then you can marry her.’

'If I were to kill Dantès,' answered Fernand, 'Mercédès has told me that she would take her own life.'

'Ah, but you would not have to kill him,' said Danglars craftily. 'There are other ways of removing people whom we do not like. We can get them sent to prison, for instance.'

'And how would I send Dantès to prison?' asked Fernand scornfully.

'It wouldn't be difficult,' said Danglars. 'I will show you. Waiter, bring me a pen and ink and paper.'

The waiter brought them.

'Just think,' said Caderousse, 'Here we have something which will kill a man more surely than if we waited in a wood to stab him with a knife. I have always been more afraid of a pen, a bottle of ink and a sheet of paper, than of a sword or a pistol.'

'Now then,' said Danglars, putting the paper before him, 'all we have to do is to dip the pen in the ink and write with the left hand so that the writing shall not be recognised.'

'But what shall we write?' asked Fernand.

'We shall write a letter to the State Prosecutor saying that Dantès is a Bonapartist agent.'

As he spoke, Danglars started to write with his left hand, in a backward slant which did not look a bit like his own handwriting.

'The State Prosecutor,' he wrote, 'is informed that one Edmond Dantès, mate of the ship *Pharaon* which arrived at Marseilles this morning after having touched the island of Elba, has been given a letter from Napoleon addressed to the Bonapartist Committee in Paris. If he is arrested, this letter will be found either on him or at his father's house, or in his cabin on the *Pharaon*.'

'But you cannot do that,' cried Caderousse. 'Dantès is not guilty.'

'Oh, I was only joking,' said Danglars, laughing. He crumpled up the letter and threw it away in the corner of the terrace.

Just then they looked towards the seashore and saw Dantès and Mercédès walking there together. The pair looked very happy. Caderousse waved to them and Dantès waved back. Fernand stood still, a scowl upon his face.

'Come,' said Danglars to Caderousse, 'let us go home. It is getting late. Will you come with us, Fernand?'

'No, I am going the other way,' the young man replied. So Danglars left La Réserve with Caderousse beside him. When they had gone a few yards, he looked back. He saw Fernand stoop down and pick up the crumpled piece of paper. Putting it into his pocket the young man hurried away.

'Now,' said Danglars to himself. 'Everything will go according to plan.'