

## CHAPTER 43

### Villefort's Downfall

WHEN Andrea said this, there was an outcry from all sides.

'You are insulting the court by saying such a thing,' said the judge.

'I wouldn't dare to insult the court,' replied Andrea.

'I repeat, my father's name is Villefort and I am ready to prove it. On the night when I was born at No. 28, Rue de la Fontaine my father told my mother that I was dead. He then wrapped me in a cloth, and buried me in his garden. I can show you the piece of cloth to prove it. It is embroidered with the letters 'H and N'. Somebody, hiding in the garden, saw my father burying the bundle. He picked me up out of my grave, thinking that he had found some treasure. But when he unwrapped the bundle he found me inside and he saw that I was still living. He took me to his home in the south and he became a father to me. He tried to bring me up as a good boy, but it was no use. When I grew older I began to lie and steal and in the end I robbed him and ran away from his house.'

'Where are the proofs of all this?' said the judge.

Andrea laughed. 'If you want proofs,' he said, 'just look at Monsieur Villefort and then tell me whether you still need them.'

Everyone now looked at the State Prosecutor. His bowed head was in his hands. He dug his fingernails into his hair.

'Father!' said Andrea. 'I am asked for proofs. Shall I give them?'

'No, no' moaned Villefort, 'it is useless.'

'What is useless?' said the judge. 'What do you mean?'

'I mean that what he says is true,' whispered Villefort, staggering towards the door of the courtroom. He fled from the court as though he were running away from a nightmare.

'The trial is postponed,' said the judge. 'We shall look into the case again and there will be a new trial.'

Andrea was taken away by two policemen.

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Villefort reached his home. He was soon followed there by the Count of Monte Cristo.

'Why have you come here in my hour of shame?' said Villefort.

'To ask you to pray to God to forgive you, as I forgive you now,' replied Monte Cristo.

'You forgive me?' said Villefort. 'I've never done *you* any harm.'

'Yes, you have,' said the Count. 'Think back for about twenty-three years. You condemned me to a horrible, slow death. You caused my father to die. You took life, love and happiness away from me.'

'This isn't true! Who are you?'

'I'm the ghost of the wretch you buried in the Château d'If. When, at last, I came out of those dungeons, God gave me the title of the Count of Monte Cristo and covered me with riches, so that you wouldn't recognise me until today.'

'Ah! Now I recognise you,' cried Villefort. 'You are....'

'Yes, I am Edmond Dantès.'

With a shriek of terror, Villefort rushed from his house.

An hour later, when two policemen came to arrest him for having tried to kill his son, twenty-two years before, they found him wildly digging in the garden. He told them he was looking for his son.

They took him away to prison, to await his trial. But there could be no trial for Villefort. He had gone mad. He was released from prison and spent the rest of his days in a home for the insane.

## CHAPTER 44

### Danglars in Rome

BARON Danglars was alone. Nearly all his money had gone. There was no rich young man to marry his daughter. As a matter of fact, there was no daughter. When Andrea Cavalcanti was arrested, Madame Danglars and Eugénie decided they had had enough of the baron and they went away to live with friends. Now he was sitting alone in his office, looking at his accounts. Although he had lost all his own money, he still held money belonging to others because he was a banker. There were about five million francs in his safe, belonging to a hospital. The hospital would soon be drawing out all this money to build a big new building.

Danglars decided to steal the five million francs and flee to Italy. There, he would start a new life and with the stolen money, he would build up another business for himself. He would soon be rich again, he thought.

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A few days later, Danglars arrived in Italy. He travelled to Rome, and there he lodged in an hotel. He took a good room, ate a fine dinner and went to bed. He slept soundly, happy that he had plenty of money with him. Tomorrow, he would look around Rome and, the day after that, he would see about his new business.



The next day the sun was shining. It was a good day for sight seeing. The baron ordered a carriage. When it came, he put all his stolen money in his wallet, slipped it into a pocket inside his overcoat and stepped outside where the carriage was waiting for him. He spent the morning riding around Rome.

Although he could speak no Italian, Danglars managed fairly well. The only Italian words he knew were some terms of music which he made to fit into everything he wanted to say to the coachman. When the carriage was going slowly uphill and he wanted it to go a little faster, he would call out '*Allegro!*' If it was going too fast down-hill, he would cry '*Moderato! Moderato!*'

At midday he came back to the hotel, had another good meal, and went to sleep, carefully putting the wallet with the money in it under his pillow.

When he awoke, it was late in the afternoon. He dressed, put all his money in his pocket again, and went downstairs. At the door of his hotel, there was a guide who had seen him go out in the morning.

'Now that you have seen something of our city, your Excellency,' said the guide, 'you should see our famous ruins outside Rome.' Danglars, who had always been happy to be called 'Your Excellency' felt very flattered. He handed some coins to the man, who would have been quite ready to call him 'Your Highness' for a little more money.

'Yes, I think I'll see the ruins,' said Danglars, 'but first I must go to the bank. Is there a carriage?'

'Here is a coachman who will do anything you say, your Excellency. I can recommend him,' said the guide.

'Please step into my carriage, your Excellency,' said the coachman, who had been listening to what the guide was saying.

Danglars climbed into the carriage and told the man to drive to a bank. When they arrived there, he got out and went inside the bank, where he opened an account and left most of his money. The bank gave him a cheque book, so that he could draw out money when he wanted it.

Now Danglars was ready to go and see the ruins. The carriage drove away quickly. Soon, they had passed through the outskirts of Rome and were in the countryside. He noticed it was beginning to get dark. He must have slept at the hotel longer than he thought. He put his head out of the carriage window and asked the coachman how long it would take to reach the ruins.

'*Non capisco,*' said the coachman, who seemed now only able to speak Italian. After a while, the carriage stopped. It was getting very dark. Danglars thought he could see some ruins at the side of the road, so he opened the door to get out of the carriage. A strong hand pushed him back and the carriage began to move forward again. Danglars was quite surprised. 'Eh!' he said to the coachman, 'eh, *mio caro?*' This was another little piece of Italian Danglars had learned by listening to his daughter singing Italian duets with Andrea Cavalcanti.

'Eh, *mio caro?*' he repeated. But *mio caro* made no reply, so the baron looked carefully through the window. He saw a horseman galloping at the right hand side of the carriage. 'A policeman!' he exclaimed! 'Perhaps the French police have telegraphed to Italy, to have me arrested.' Danglars turned to the left. Another man on horseback was galloping on that side.

'Oh dear!' gasped Danglars, 'I am arrested. What will they do with me? Send me back to France?'



## CHAPTER 45

### Roman Bandits

DANGLARS sat back in the carriage and thought for a while. 'Suddenly, as he looked at the countryside, he realised that he was not being taken back to Rome. They were approaching some caves.

'Good heavens!' he said to himself. 'I have another idea. What if they should be . . . ?'

His hair stood on end. He remembered those interesting stories, that no one had believed in Paris, about the bandits of Rome who had captured young Albert Morcerf.

'Perhaps they are robbers,' he muttered.

Just then, the man riding on the right-hand side said something and the carriage stopped. At the same time, the door on the left-hand side was opened.

'*Scendi!*' said a voice. Danglars quickly descended. Although he did not yet speak Italian, he already seemed to understand it quite well.

The men now led him into the caves, and along many underground passages. The baron did not doubt it any longer. He was in the hands of bandits. After some time the narrow passage opened out into a big cave. A sentinel stopped them at the entrance, but let them pass through when he saw who they were.

Danglars was taken to the chief of the bandits, who was sitting down in the cave, reading a book.

'Is this the man?' asked the bandit chief.

'Yes, captain,' said one of the men who had brought Danglars.

'Let me see him!'

At this order, one of the guards, who was carrying a blazing torch, raised it to Danglars's face, so that his chief might see him better. Danglars jumped back hastily, to avoid having his eyebrows burned. He looked terrified as the light of the torch shone upon him.

'He looks tired,' said the bandit chief. 'Take him to his bed!'

'Oh! oh!' thought Danglars. 'They are going to kill me. My "bed" will be a grave, I am sure.'

He was taken away, along some more narrow passages, and up some steep steps. Then, a low door opened in front of him. Bending his head, he went into a small room cut out of the rock. He was very surprised to see that he was not going to be killed yet, for there was a bed, made of leaves and goatskins, in the corner and he could lie down on it. The small door was closed and a bolt grated. Danglars was a prisoner.

He remembered again the story that he had heard from Albert Morcerf, after his adventures in Rome, and he was sure that these were the same bandits. Albert's description of the bandit chief exactly described the man he had seen sitting in the big cave, reading a book.

Danglars felt happier. They were not going to kill him. He remembered that they had asked to be paid something like four thousand piastres to set Albert free. Even if they wanted twice that amount this time, eight thousand piastres was forty-eight thousand francs and he had about five million francs in the



bank. With all that money he could certainly manage to free himself. Feeling much better, he lay down on the rough bed and went to sleep.

## CHAPTER 46

### Danglars Orders a Meal

AFTER a good night's sleep, Danglars awoke. He did not realise at first where he was. Then he remembered.

'Yes, yes,' he murmured, 'I am in the hands of the same bandits who captured Albert Morcerf. They haven't killed or wounded me yet, but perhaps they've robbed me.' He put his hands in his pockets. The money he had with him was still there.

'What peculiar bandits!' he exclaimed. 'They have left me with my money and my watch. Still, I suppose they'll soon demand money to set me free.'

He looked at his watch and saw that it was six o'clock in the morning. He decided to wait and see what the bandits wanted.

At twelve o'clock, the guard outside his door went off duty and another one came and sat down there. Danglars could see him through a small hole in the door.

The man started eating some black bread, cheese, and onions. 'I don't know how he can eat such awful food,' said Danglars to himself.

But as he watched the man eating, Danglars also began to feel hungry.

'Come!' he called to the man, 'I think it's time somebody gave me something to eat also.'

The man outside the door took no notice of him.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, another guard came on duty. This man had brought with him some peas stewed with bacon,



a basket of grapes and a bottle of wine. Danglars's mouth began to water. He tapped on the door of his cell and the guard came to see what he wanted. Danglars noticed that he was the same man who had told him so rudely, the evening before, to put his head back inside the carriage. But he decided that this was not the time for a quarrel. So, with a pleasant smile, he said politely, 'Excuse me, but aren't they going to give me any dinner?'

'Does your Excellency happen to be hungry?' said the guard.

'Happen to be hungry! That's good, when I haven't eaten for twenty-four hours,' muttered Danglars, but he said aloud, 'Yes, I'm very hungry.'

'And your Excellency would like to eat?'

'Yes, and quickly, if that's possible.'

'Of course, your Excellency. Here you can have whatever you wish for as long as you pay for it. That's the custom among all honest people.'

'Of course!' said Danglars, 'although those who capture you and imprison you ought at least to feed their prisoners.'

'Ah, your Excellency,' replied the guard, 'that is not the custom here.'

'That's a poor reason,' said Danglars, 'but anyway bring me something to eat.'

'What would your Excellency like? Just give your orders!'

'Have you kitchens and cooks here, then?'

'Yes, very good ones.'

'Why, it's just like being in Paris,' murmured Danglars. Then he said to the guard, 'Very well, then, bring me a roast chicken.'

The guard turned around and called out, 'A roast chicken for his Excellency!'

In a minute, a young man appeared, carrying a roast chicken on a silver dish.



In a minute, a young man appeared, carrying a roast chicken on a silver dish.



'Here, your Excellency!' said the guard, taking the chicken and putting it on the table in the cell. Danglars asked for a knife and fork.

'Here, your Excellency!' said the guard, giving them to him.

Danglars took the knife in one hand and the fork in the other, and was about to cut up the chicken.

'Pardon me, your Excellency,' said the guard. 'People pay here before they eat. Otherwise, they might refuse to pay afterwards.'

'Ah!' thought Danglars. 'This is no longer like Paris. But I'll pay them well. Chickens can't cost much here.' He gave the guard one piastre, which he reckoned was enough to buy about a hundred chickens in Rome. The guard took the piastre and Danglars again prepared to cut up the chicken with his knife and fork.

'Just a moment, your Excellency,' said the guard, 'you still owe me something.'

'How do I owe you anything?' asked Danglars, surprised.

'Your Excellency has given me only one piastre.'

'Only one piastre for a chicken! Isn't that more than enough?'

'Oh no, your Excellency, you still owe me 16,666 piastres.'

Danglars opened his eyes wide when he heard this huge joke.

'Ah! very funny,' he murmured, 'very funny!' He got ready to cut the chicken again, but the guard seized his wrist with one hand and held out his other hand for the money. 'Come,' said he.

'Aren't you joking?' said Danglars.

'We never joke, your Excellency,' replied the guard.

## CHAPTER 47

### The Bill of Fare

Danglars looked up in surprise at the bandit who was still holding his wrist tightly.

'What! A hundred thousand francs for that chicken?' he said.

'Your Excellency, you can't imagine how difficult it is to raise chickens in these caves.'

'Come, come,' said Danglars, 'that's very funny—very amusing, I agree; but as I'm very hungry, please allow me to eat. Anyway, there's another piastre for you.'

'Now that leaves only 16,665 piastres you owe me,' said the guard calmly. 'I shall get them all in time.'

'Ah! if you think that,' shouted Danglars, now getting angry, 'then you don't know me. You'll never get all that money out of me.'

The guard made a sign, and the man who had brought the chicken hastily removed it. Danglars lay down on his bed in the corner and the guard began eating his food again. Danglars could smell the peas and bacon. He began to feel more and more hungry. He waited for half an hour, which seemed to him like a hundred years. Then he could stand it no more. He got up and went to the door.

'Come,' said he to the guard, 'don't keep me starving here any longer, but tell me what they want with me.'

'No, your Excellency! You must say what you want with us. Give us your orders, and we will carry them out.'

'Then give me something to eat, quickly. I want to eat—to eat; do you hear?'

'What would your Excellency like to eat?'

'A piece of dry bread, since the chickens are beyond all price in this dreadful place.'

'Very well,' said the guard. He called out, 'Some bread for his Excellency.'

When the bread came, Danglars asked how much it would cost him.

'Only, 16,665 piastres,' said the guard; 'you have already paid two piastres in advance.'

'What, a hundred thousand francs for a loaf?'

'One hundred thousand francs', said the guard.

'But you only asked a hundred thousand francs for a chicken!'

'We don't charge according to the bill of fare. We serve only at a fixed price. It makes no difference whether you eat a lot or a little, whether you have ten dishes or one; it's always the same price.'

'What! Still keeping up this silly joke? My dear fellow, it is stupid! You may as well tell me that you want me to die of starvation.'

'Oh no, your Excellency, we don't want you to do that. Pay and eat!'

'And what shall I pay with, fool? Do you think I carry a hundred thousand francs in my pocket?'

'Your Excellency, you have a cheque book in your pocket and five million francs in the bank. That's enough for fifty chickens at a hundred thousand francs each.'

Danglars now understood that this was no joke, but part of the ransom which the bandits were demanding for his release.

'If I pay you a hundred thousand francs,' he said, 'will you be satisfied and let me eat in peace?'

'Certainly,' said the guard.

Danglars decided to pay. He took out his cheque book and asked for a pen and ink. When it was brought to him, he wrote out a cheque for 16,665 piastres.

'Here you are,' he said, giving it to the guard.

'And here is your chicken,' said the guard.

Danglars sighed when he cut up the chicken. It looked very thin for the price it had cost him. As for the guard, he looked carefully at the cheque, put it in his pocket, and continued eating his peas and bacon.



## CHAPTER 48

### The Starving Man

By noon the next day, Danglars was hungry again. So that he would not have to spend more money that day, he had hidden half the chicken and a piece of bread in his cell. But as soon as he had eaten, he felt thirsty. He hadn't thought of that. He tried to hold out, but in the end he had to call the guard and ask for something to drink. The guard made him pay twenty-five thousand francs for a jug of water.

'Why don't you say now that you want to take all my money? If that's what you want, why not do it at once?' he said.

'It's possible that my master wants to take all your money. I don't know what he wants with you,' replied the guard.

'Who is your master?'

'The bandit chief whom you saw when you first came here.'

'Let me see him.'

'Certainly,' said the guard. Very soon afterwards the chief of the bandits appeared at Danglars's cell.

'How much do you want to set me free?' said Danglars.

'I want your five million francs.'

Danglars felt a pain in his heart. 'But that's all I have left in the world out of an immense fortune,' he said. 'If you take that, take my life also.'

'We are not allowed to kill you.'

'Who doesn't allow you?'

'Our chief.'

'But I thought you said you were the chief.'

'Yes, I am the chief of these men, but there is another over me.'

Danglars thought for a moment. Then he said, 'Why is your chief doing this to me?'

'I don't know.'

'He will take away everything I have.'

'Probably.'

'Come,' said Danglars, 'I'll give you a million.'

'No.'

'Two millions? Three? Four? Come, Four! I'll give you four million francs if you'll let me go.'

'Why do you offer me four millions for what is worth five millions? Why are you trying to bargain with me, banker?'

'Well then, I'll defy you. You can kill me if you like, but I won't sign another cheque.'

'Just as you please, your Excellency,' said the bandit chief, and with that he left the cell.

Danglars's resolve not to sign again lasted for two days. After that, he offered a million for some food. The bandits sent him a wonderful meal and took his million.

At the end of twelve days, Danglars reckoned his accounts and found he had only fifty thousand francs left. He could not bear to lose his last fifty thousand. Again he decided he wouldn't sign any cheques and he began to starve. He became delirious and sometimes he imagined he saw a poor old man, lying on a bed, dying of hunger.

He starved himself like this for five days. Then he began to beg the guard to give him some food. He offered him a thousand

francs for a mouthful of bread. But the guard took no notice of him. In the end, he asked to see the bandit chief once more.

When the chief came, Danglars fell to his knees.

'Take everything I have,' he moaned, 'only let me out of here. Just let me go free with no money at all.'

'You think you have suffered, but there are men who have suffered more than you,' said the chief.

'Oh, I don't think so.'

'Yes, there are those who have died of hunger.'

Danglars thought of the poor old man he had seen in his dreams the last few days.

'Yes, it's true,' he said, 'there have been some who have suffered more than I have.'

'Do you repent?' asked a deep voice, which caused Danglars's hair to stand on end.

'Indeed, I'm sorry for the evil I have done,' cried Danglars.

'Then I forgive you,' said the voice. The man who had spoken came up to the door of the cell and showed himself.

'The Count of Monte Cristo!' gasped Danglars.

'You are mistaken; I'm not the Count of Monte Cristo.'

'Then who are you?'

'I am he whom you betrayed and dishonoured; I am he whose betrothed you forced into marriage with another man; I am he on whom you trampled so that you could raise yourself to a better position; I am he whose father you caused to die of starvation. I am Edmond Dantès!'

Danglars cried out, and fell to the ground.

'Rise,' said the Count. 'I have forgiven you now. Keep the fifty thousand francs which you have left. The five million you

robbed have been given back to the hospital. You can now have a meal, and after that, you can go free.'

When Danglars was set free from the caves, he found that his hair had turned completely white.

Dantès's revenge was complete!



## CHAPTER 49

### The End of the Story

It will be remembered that, when Dantès found his fortune on the island of Monte Cristo, he went to Marseilles calling himself Lord Wilmore. There, he purchased the house in which his father had lived; for this house was part of his youth and part of that happy time when he and Mercédès were betrothed, the time before he knew the agonies of life in the Château d'If.

It was here that he took Mercédès and Albert after they had fled from the home of the Count of Morcerf. In this house, Mercédès and her son found peace and solitude, away from the distress which they had recently suffered.

Dantès came here to say farewell to Mercédès. He walked through the house and into the garden beyond. He paused for a moment and looked towards a tree covered with white jasmine flowers. Under the tree a figure was sitting. It was Mercédès. The tree and its white blossoms and the figure seated beneath it formed a picture which seemed to hold Dantès so that he was unable to move. Then Mercédès looked up and saw him. She rose and came to him with her arms outstretched.

'Edmond,' she said and in her voice was all the sadness of her life.

Dantès took her hands and looked into her eyes.

'I have come to say goodbye, Mercédès.'

'You are going away, Edmond?'

'Yes, I am going away. The task which I set myself is finished. The vengeance I swore to take on those who wronged me is complete.'

'You say your vengeance is complete,' said Mercédès. 'Yet, am I not the one who wronged you most? You have caused the death or destruction of those men who betrayed you. Yet you have spared me. But I do not wish to be spared. I live only because I cannot die.'

'Mercédès!' cried Edmond. 'You have every reason to hate me. I am the cause of all your misery. Yet you do not seem to hate me, you seem only to pity me.'

'No, Edmond, I do not hate you. You spared my son's life and for that I thank you. It is myself I hate; for I am the miserable creature who had neither the strength nor the courage, nor faith enough to hope that you might one day return.'

As she spoke the tears poured down her face. Edmond tried to console her, but she would not be comforted. At last he said, 'Just tell me this, Mercédès, that one day somewhere we shall meet again.'

Mercédès turned to him and then raised her eyes to the sky above.

'Yes, Edmond, we shall meet again—in heaven.'

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Dantès walked slowly from the house. His eyes were full of tears as he looked towards the golden madonna on the hill. Then he turned towards the harbour where his ship was waiting.

'Monte Cristo, I am coming back,' he murmured.

He walked slowly towards the quay side and gazed at his ship. As he looked, he saw the figure of a woman on the deck,

a woman in Eastern dress with a veil around her head. It was Haydée. He ran up the gangway and on to the ship. Haydée came towards him.

'You are leaving, my lord?' she asked.

'Yes, Haydée, I am leaving. And you will stay here in France and take your rightful place in the world. You will have money and possessions, and all the things which are yours by right. You will be treated as the princess which you are. You are young and beautiful and you have a life of great happiness before you.'

Haydée turned towards him, an expression of longing on her face.

'There is no happiness without you,' she said. 'If you leave me, I shall no longer wish to live. I shall die.'

Dantès looked at her in amazement.

'Then you want to come with me?' he asked.

'Yes, my lord, for I love you. I have loved you as a father and a brother, but I also love you as a husband and master. I love you as my own life.'

Edmond could hardly believe the words she spoke. He looked for a long time at the beautiful young girl before him. Then he sighed and took her hand.

'Then come with me! Come to Monte Cristo! Who knows, perhaps your love will make me forget all I do not wish to remember.'

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And so it happened that, about six o'clock the next evening, a fine yacht was seen gliding out of the harbour of Marseilles. As she sailed gracefully out to sea, the amber rays of the setting sun seemed to turn her into a ship of fire.

Standing on the deck and looking back at Marseilles, were a tall dark man and a beautiful woman. They gazed at the church of Notre Dame de la Garde. The gilded statue on the top of the church glowed a brilliant red-gold which exactly matched the flame colour of the yacht. Only these two objects, the statue standing on high and the yacht out at sea were touched by the rays of the sun as it began to sink behind the surrounding hills. The statue seemed to be saying farewell to the yacht whilst the rest of Marseilles was already shrouded in the approaching night. The Château d'If, half hidden in growing darkness, was only part of the evening shadow.

Edmond and Haydée now turned away their eyes from Marseilles and looked towards the east; towards the island of Monte Cristo.

THE END