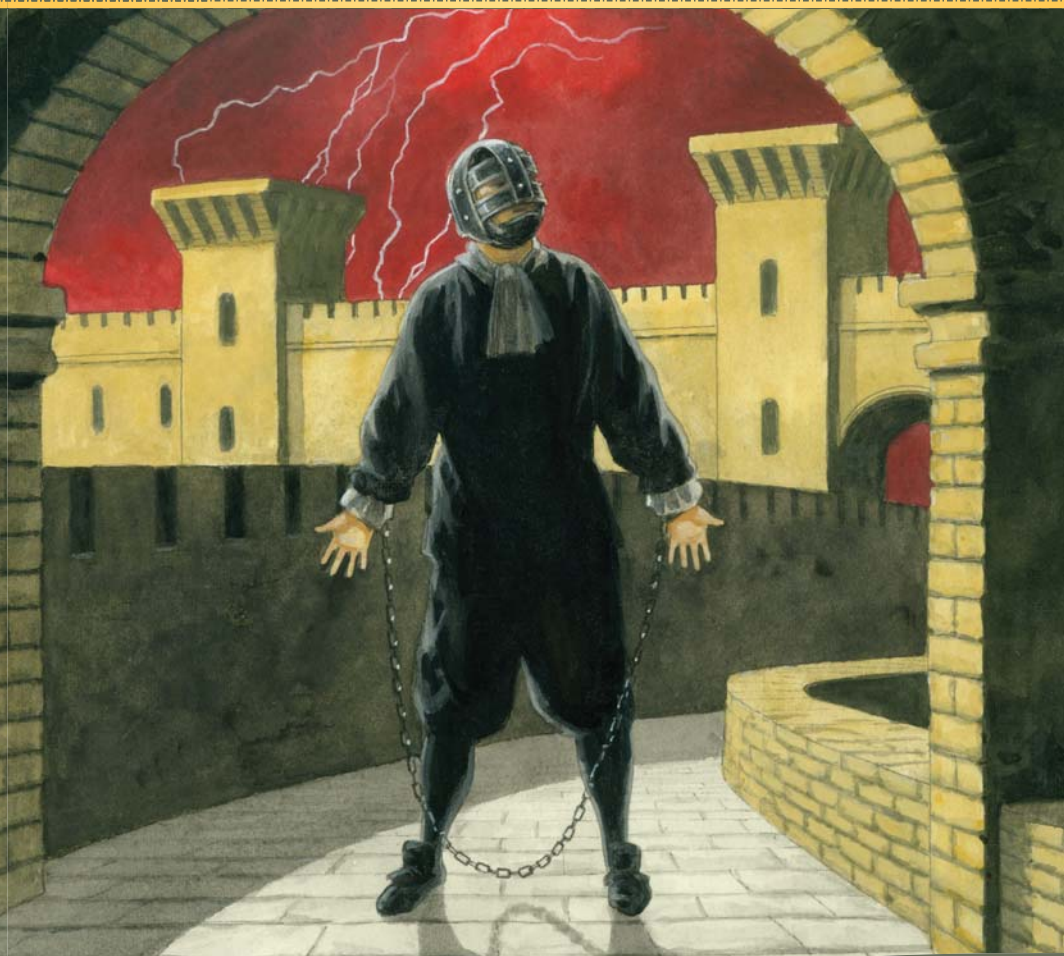


**CALICO ILLUSTRATED CLASSICS**  
*Alexandre Dumas's*

# The Man in the Iron Mask



**ADAPTED BY:**  
Karen Kelly

**ILLUSTRATED BY:**  
Mike Lacey







CALICO ILLUSTRATED CLASSICS  
*Alexandre Dumas's*

# The Man in the Iron Mask



ADAPTED BY: Karen Kelly  
ILLUSTRATED BY: Mike Lacey





visit us at [www.abdopublishing.com](http://www.abdopublishing.com)

Published by Magic Wagon, a division of the ABDO Group,  
8000 West 78th Street, Edina, Minnesota 55439. Copyright  
© 2011 by Abdo Consulting Group, Inc. International copyrights  
reserved in all countries. All rights reserved. No part of this  
book may be reproduced in any form without written permission  
from the publisher.

Calico Chapter Books™ is a trademark and logo of Magic Wagon.

Printed in the United States of America, Melrose Park, Illinois.

052010

092010



This book contains at least 10% recycled materials.

Original text by Alexandre Dumas

Adapted by Karen Kelly

Illustrated by Mike Lacey

Edited by Stephanie Hedlund and Rochelle Baltzer

Cover and interior design by Abbey Fitzgerald

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kelly, Karen, 1962-

Alexandre Dumas's The man in the iron mask / adapted by Karen  
Kelly ; illustrated by Mike Lacey.

p. cm. -- (Calico illustrated classics)

ISBN 978-1-60270-748-1

[1. Prisoners--Fiction. 2. Brothers--Fiction. 3. Twins--Fiction. 4.  
Adventure and adventurers--Fiction. 5. France--History--Louis XIV,  
1643-1715--Fiction.] I. Lacey, Mike, ill. II. Dumas, Alexandre, 1802-  
1870. Homme au masque de fer. English. III. Title. IV. Title: Man in  
the iron mask.

PZ7.K29632Alm 2010

[Fic]--dc22

2010003921



# Table of Contents



CHAPTER 1: The Prisoner . . . . .	4
CHAPTER 2: Monsieur Percerin . . . . .	11
CHAPTER 3: The Crown and the Tiara . . . . .	17
CHAPTER 4: The Château de Vaux . . . . .	26
CHAPTER 5: High Treason . . . . .	35
CHAPTER 6: The Morning . . . . .	42
CHAPTER 7: The False King . . . . .	52
CHAPTER 8: The Ride . . . . .	58
CHAPTER 9: The Silver Dish . . . . .	64
CHAPTER 10: The White Horse . . . . .	71
CHAPTER 11: Ideas of the King . . . . .	83
CHAPTER 12: The Grotto . . . . .	91
CHAPTER 13: King Louis XIV . . . . .	97
CHAPTER 14: Athos's Vision . . . . .	101
CHAPTER 15: The Angel of Death . . . . .	106





# The Prisoner



It was a beautiful, starry night. The steps of three men echoed off the terrace stones and the clinking of the jailer's keys was heard to the tops of the prison towers. On arriving at a door, the Bastille's governor, Baisemeaux, moved to enter the prisoner's chamber. Aramis stopped him on the threshold.

"The rules do not allow the governor to hear the prisoner's confession," said Aramis.

Baisemeaux bowed and made way for Aramis to take the lantern and enter. Aramis motioned for them to close the door behind him. He saw a young man stretched upon his bed with his face half concealed by his arms.



The young man raised his head and asked, "What is it?"

"Didn't you want a confessor because you are ill?" replied Aramis.

"I am better. I have no longer the same need of a confessor."

"Not even from the priest of which the note you found in your bread informed you? Not to hear an important revelation?" Aramis asked.

"If it be so, I am listening," said the young man.

"Do you remember seeing a gentleman and a lady in black silk with flame-colored ribbons in her hair in the village where you spent your early years?" asked Aramis.

"Yes," said the young man. "They told me he called himself Abbé d'Herblay. I was astonished that the abbé had such a warlike manner. They replied he was one of Louis XIII's Musketeers."

"That Musketeer and abbé is now bishop of Vannes and your confessor," Aramis said.



"I recognized you."

"I must add that if the king were to know of the presence of this bishop here," said Aramis, "that bishop would tomorrow see the executioner's ax glitter."

"My enemy must be powerful to be able to shut up in the Bastille a child such as I was then," said the young man.

"He is. You had a tutor in your early years. Do you know who was the son of King Henry IV?" asked Aramis.

"Louis XIII," answered the youth, slightly reddening.

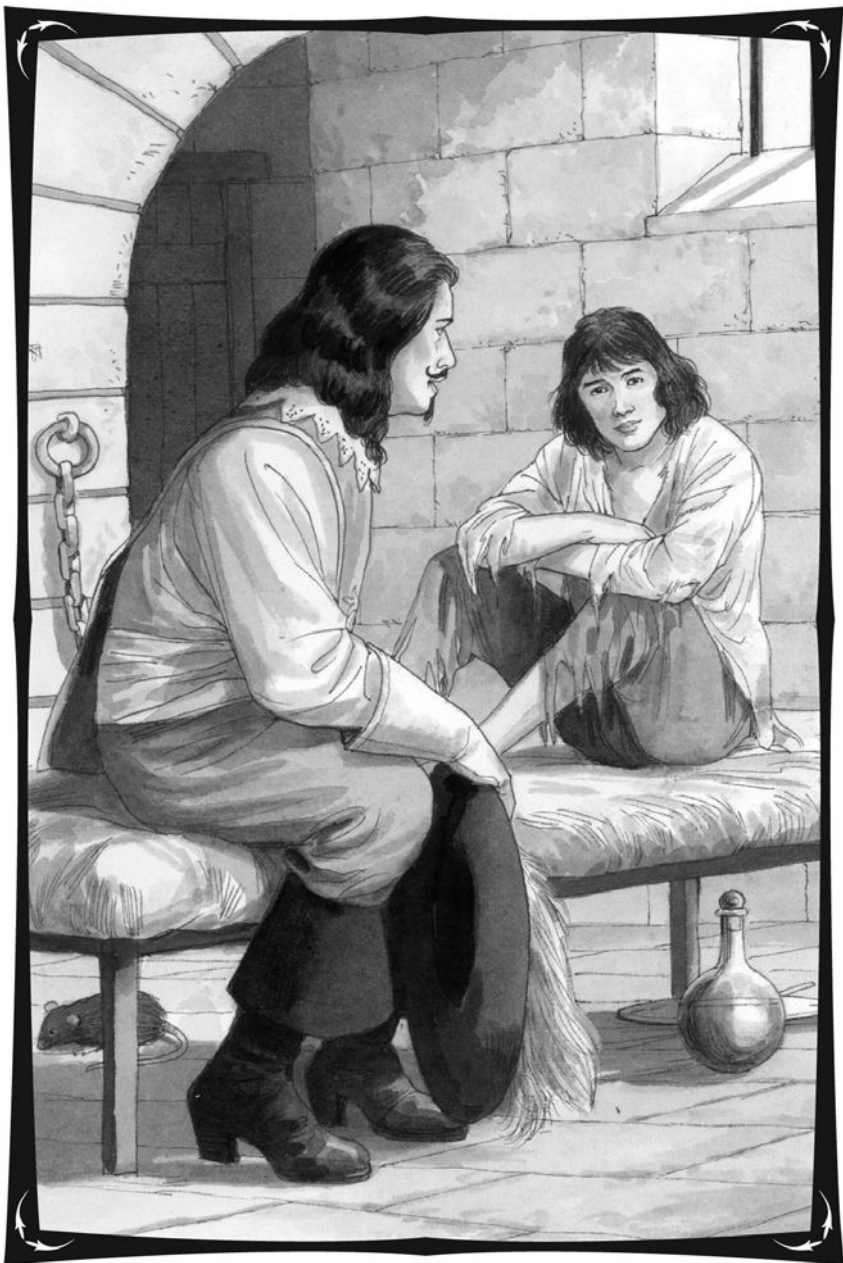
"Well, the king died young and unhappy."

"Did he die childless?" asked the young man.

"No, but he was without a child for a long time. He was in the depths of despair when his wife, Anne of Austria, announced an interesting event. There was great joy. On the fifth of September, 1638, she gave birth to a son."

Aramis looked at his companion and thought he observed him turning pink. He continued.







“You are about to hear a secret which they think is buried with the dead. While the court rejoiced and the king showed the newborn to his nobles, the queen gave birth to a second son. The king feared the second son might one day cause civil war.”

“Oh! I understand,” murmured the young man.

“This is why the second son, Philippe, has disappeared so completely that not a soul in France is aware of his existence, except his mother,” Aramis continued.

“And yourself?” asked the young man. “Do you possess about you a portrait of the king, Louis XIV?”

The bishop handed the prisoner a small portrait. The prisoner seized the portrait and gazed at it.

“And now, monseigneur, here is a mirror.”

The young man eagerly compared the likeness of Louis with his own image.



"I am lost," said the captive. "The king will never set me free."

"I wonder which of the two is truly the king," added the bishop.

"The king, Monsieur, is he who is on the throne and not in prison," replied Philippe.

"Monseigneur, the king will be he who, after leaving his dungeon, shall sit upon the throne on which his friends will place him." Aramis spoke with great respect. "I have the honor of offering myself to your royal highness."

"Free me from the Bastille. Let me breathe the fresh air. Give me spurs and a sword and then we shall begin to understand each other."

"It is precisely my goal to give you all this and more," said Aramis. "I wish you to be a king for the happiness of humanity."

"And my brother?"

"If I restore you to your place on your brother's throne, he shall take yours in prison. I will have the pleasure of seeing your highness



once again on the day my prince leaves these gloomy walls.”

“How will you give me notice of it?”

“By coming to get you.”

“If I raise myself to the very height of honor with your help, to you will I offer half my power and glory,” said Philippe.

“Monseigneur, the nobility of your heart fills me with joy and admiration,” replied Aramis.

The prince offered his hand to the bishop, who bent down upon his knee and kissed it. Aramis then rapped on the door. The jailer came to open it with Baisemeaux, who was devoured by fear.

“What a confession!” said the prison governor, forcing a laugh. “Who would have believed he could have committed so many sins and so long in the telling?”





## Monsieur Percerin



Porthos sat on his bed with his legs dangling over the side, staring at the garments scattered all over the floor. D'Artagnan, the captain of the King's Musketeers, watched him from the room's threshold.

"My friend, what in the world is the matter?" d'Artagnan asked.

"I have received an invitation for the festivities at Vaux," said Porthos gloomily.

"And you complain?" d'Artagnan asked. "The king has broken a hundred hearts among the nobles by refusing invitations. Are you ill?"

"It's not that. It's that I have no clothes."

"No clothes! I see at least fifty suits on the floor," d'Artagnan cried.



“But not one fits me,” Porthos moaned.

“Are you not measured when you give an order to have a suit made?”

“I hate letting anyone measure me! I had an idea, which was a good one, except for Mouston’s carelessness.” Porthos was speaking of his faithful servant of many years. “I was pleased at seeing Mouston getting fat and did all I could to make him stout. I hoped he would become equal to me in size and be measured in my place.”

“I see!” said d’Artagnan. “That spared you both the time and the embarrassment.”

“But he forgot to inform me that he had gotten stouter. In the two years I was away building Belle-Isle, he gained eighteen inches. And so my last dozen suits are all too large!”

“Come with me to the king’s tailor, Porthos.”

“I thought he would be too busy.”

“He will be, but he will do for me what he won’t do for another,” d’Artagnan said. “Only you must be measured.”



“Since the tailor measures the king, I think I may well allow him to measure me,” Porthos finally agreed.

Before their carriage could come near the house of Monsieur Percerin, the king’s tailor, d’Artagnan and Porthos found a long line of carriages in front of them.

“So many people! What are they all doing?” Porthos complained.

“They are waiting their turn to enter Monsieur Percerin’s house,” d’Artagnan replied.

“Are we going to wait too?”

“We shall be more clever and less proud than they.” D’Artagnan and Porthos climbed down from the carriage and made their way on foot. D’Artagnan pushed on Porthos and Porthos scattered groups of people right and left. So they succeeded in reaching the counter where apprentice tailors were doing their best to answer questions.

D’Artagnan merely said, “The king’s order” and was let in with his friend.



D'Artagnan hurried with Porthos behind him to Monsieur Percerin's room. The old man was folding a piece of gold brocade for one of the king's suits. He put the silk aside when he saw d'Artagnan.

"The captain of the Musketeers will excuse me, I am sure. I am very busy," he said.

"My dear Monsieur Percerin, I am bringing you a customer. Monsieur le Baron du Vallon is not only a friend of mine, but also a friend of Monsieur Fouquet."

"Ah! That is another thing," said the tailor.

"You will make a suit for the baron? It is I who ask you," d'Artagnan pleaded.

"To you I will not say no, Captain," Percerin replied.

"The suit is for the festivities at Vaux."

"That is impossible!" said the stubborn tailor.

"By no means, dear Monsieur Percerin, if I ask you," said a mild voice from the door.

It was Aramis. Aramis had even more influence than d'Artagnan and the tailor bowed





in agreement. He turned to Porthos.

“Go and get measured,” he said rudely. After Porthos blushed and left the room, Aramis addressed the tailor.

“Monsieur Percerin, I have brought with me Monsieur Le Brun, one of Monsieur Fouquet’s painters. Monsieur Fouquet wishes to give the king the surprise of finding his portrait on his arrival at Vaux. The portrait ought to be



dressed exactly as the king will be on the day it is shown.”

Percerin grumbled, but brought from a cabinet four magnificent suits. The painter set to work to draw and paint the suits. Aramis stopped him after some time.

“I think you have not quite got the colors right, my dear Le Brun.”

“But, Monsieur, the light is horrible here,” cried the vexed painter.

“What if we had a sample of the materials and proper light?” asked Aramis.

“Then the effect would be perfect.”

Percerin cut out the five samples and handed them to Aramis. D’Artagnan found Porthos in the next room. Aramis went to Porthos and offered him his hand, which was lost in the gigantic hand of his old friend. Then Porthos and d’Artagnan left the tailor’s house and returned to their carriage.





# The Crown and the Tiara



All the most honored followers of Epicurus in Paris were busy at St. Mande. They were producing the entertainment that Monsieur Fouquet wished to offer His Majesty Louis XIV during the fete at Vaux.

The Bishop of Vannes appeared and silence immediately reigned as everyone returned to his pen. Aramis handed each an invitation and thanked them for their work in the name of Monsieur Fouquet.

“Remember, gentlemen, we all leave tomorrow evening,” he said to the group. “I am going to Paris today after a brief visit with Monsieur Fouquet. I offer my carriage.”



"I accept it. I am in a hurry," said Monsieur Moliere.

"I shall dine here," said Monsieur Loret. "Monsieur de Gourville has promised me some crawfish."

"He has promised me some whittings. Find a rhyme for that, La Fontaine."

Aramis went out laughing and Moliere followed him. They were at the bottom of the stairs when La Fontaine opened the door and shouted:

*"He has promised us some whittings,  
In return for all our writings."*

The shouts of laughter reached the ears of Monsieur Fouquet at the moment Aramis opened the door of the study. Moliere went to the stables to order the horses.

"Oh, how they are laughing up there," said Fouquet with a sigh. "Where are you going?"

"To Paris, after you have given me a letter for Monsieur de Lyonne," Aramis answered.



“Do you want to put someone in the Bastille?” asked Fouquet.

“No, to let somebody out,” Aramis explained.

“Who?”

“A lad who has been Bastilled for ten years because of two Latin lines he wrote against the Jesuits,” Aramis explained.

“He has committed no other crime?” Fouquet asked.

“Beyond this, he is as innocent as you or I,” Aramis vowed.

Fouquet wrote a few lines to Lyonne. Aramis took the letter, kissed Fouquet’s hand, and went out quickly.



By nine o’clock that evening Baisemeaux had informed the prisoner of the order to set him free. The prisoner listened without a word or movement.

“Will you swear to never reveal anything you have seen or heard in the Bastille?” asked the governor, following prison rules.



The prisoner swore.

“And now, Monsieur, you are free. Where do you plan to go?” the governor asked.

Aramis came out of the shadow where he had been waiting. “I am here to offer the gentleman whatever service he may want,” he said.

The prisoner took Aramis’s arm and said to Baisemeaux, “God have you in His holy keeping.”

“Adieu, Baisemeaux,” said Aramis. The horses were waiting, shaking the carriage in their impatience. The two men climbed inside.

“Go on,” the bishop said to the driver. The carriage rattled over the pavement of the courtyard. An officer with a torch went before the horses and gave orders at every barrier to let them pass.

The last gate closed behind the carriage in the Rue St. Antoine. No more walls either on the right or left. Heaven everywhere, liberty everywhere, and life everywhere.



When the carriage reached the middle of the forest of Sinart, the horses came to a stop.

“What is the matter?” asked Philippe.

“It is necessary that your royal highness and I talk before going farther.” As Philippe and Aramis exited the carriage, Aramis made a sign to the deaf and mute driver of the carriage. The driver led the horses away from the carriage to nibble on young oak shoots.

“Monseigneur, you know the history of the government of France. The king has suffered and it frets his mind. He will avenge himself and be a bad king. He will devour whatever his people have because others have wronged him. You and I shall do such great deeds that ages hereafter shall long speak of them.”

“But there are great difficulties. My brother is married and I cannot take my brother’s wife,” said the prince.

“I will have Spain consent to a divorce. It will be in the interest of your new policy of human virtue,” replied Aramis.



“The imprisoned king will speak.”

“To whom will he speak, the walls? You will be great, Monseigneur. I sent to your highness a man I trust. He delivered some written notes to acquaint you with the different people who make up and will make up your court.”

“I read all the notes and know them by heart,” said the prince.

“We will begin with your family.”

“My mother, Anne of Austria, with all of her sorrows and painful illness. I know her! My second brother is a fine, dark young man with a pale face. He does not love his wife, Henriette, but I, Louis XIV, loved her a little. But she made me weep on the day she wanted to fire Mademoiselle de la Valliere.”

“You will have to be careful with Mademoiselle de la Valliere,” warned Aramis. “She is sincerely fond of the actual king. The eyes of a woman who loves are not easily fooled. Do you know your ministers?”





“Colbert is ugly with a large, full head of hair and the enemy of Monsieur Fouquet.”

“You will become very great. But you have an awkward pair of eyes to deal with,” replied Aramis.

“Yes, the captain of the Musketeers, your friend Monsieur d’Artagnan. Do you intend to ask me to exile him?”

“Never, sire. At a certain time I will reveal everything to him. But be on your guard with him. If he discovers our plot before it is



revealed to him, you or I will be killed or captured. He is a man of action. And we must not forget another friend of mine.”

“Monsieur du Vallon, the Hercules of France. As far as he is concerned, his fortune is safe,” suggested Philippe.

“No, I didn’t mean him.”

“The Comte de la Fere, then?”

“And his son. He is like a son to all four of us.” Aramis was speaking of himself, d’Artagnan, Porthos, and Athos, who was now Comte de la Fere.

“That poor boy who is dying of love for La Valliere, loves the king?” asked Philippe. “Tell me, can a man ever forgive a woman who has betrayed him?”

“He may forgive. But I do not know if Raoul will be able to forget, even as deeply as he loves Mademoiselle La Valliere.”

“I will see to that,” said Philippe. “Now for Monsieur Fouquet. What do you want me to do for him?”



"I beg you to let him continue as superintendent. He will not stay at the head of affairs for long, as he will soon grow old. We will spare him griefs because he is a noble-hearted man. When you have paid all of his debts and restored the finances, I shall become your prime minister. I shall have given you the throne of France and you will bestow on me the throne of St. Peter."

"And so, my dear brother will disappear?"

"We will remove him from his bed by means of a plank, which moves by the press of a finger. He will go to bed as the crowned king and wake up imprisoned. You will rule from that moment and can do nothing better than to keep me near you," said Aramis.

"I believe it. Be for me more than great, more than skillful. Be kind and be my father," said Philippe.

They took their seats again in the carriage and it sped along the road to Vaux.





## The Château de Vaux



The Château de Vaux was built by Fouquet in 1655, when there was a lack of money in France. Mazarin had taken all that there was, and Fouquet was spending the rest. This magnificent palace was ready for the reception of the greatest king of the time. The waterfalls poured forth water brighter than crystal over bronze nymphs. An army of servants was hurrying about the courtyard and corridors.

Fouquet was walking calmly all through the palace to give his last orders. De Gourville showed him the preparations that had been made for the fireworks. Moliere led him to the theater and then he visited the chapel, the salons, and the galleries.



Fouquet was going downstairs when he saw Aramis waving to him. Fouquet joined his friend and stood with him before a large picture that was not yet finished.

The painter, Le Brun, was covered with sweat and pale from fatigue. He was putting the finishing touches on the portrait of the king dressed in a suit Percerin had shown Aramis.

As Fouquet was showing Le Brun appreciation for his work, a signal was given from the top of the mansion. Without announcing his arrival with the blast of trumpets or Musketeers in front of him, the king appeared before the gates of Vaux.

Monsieur Fouquet held the stirrup of the king as he dismounted. The king bowed most graciously and held out his hand to Fouquet. The carriages brought the ladies to Vaux and Madame Fouquet welcomed them. Light as bright as day burst forth from all the trees and vases and marble statues.



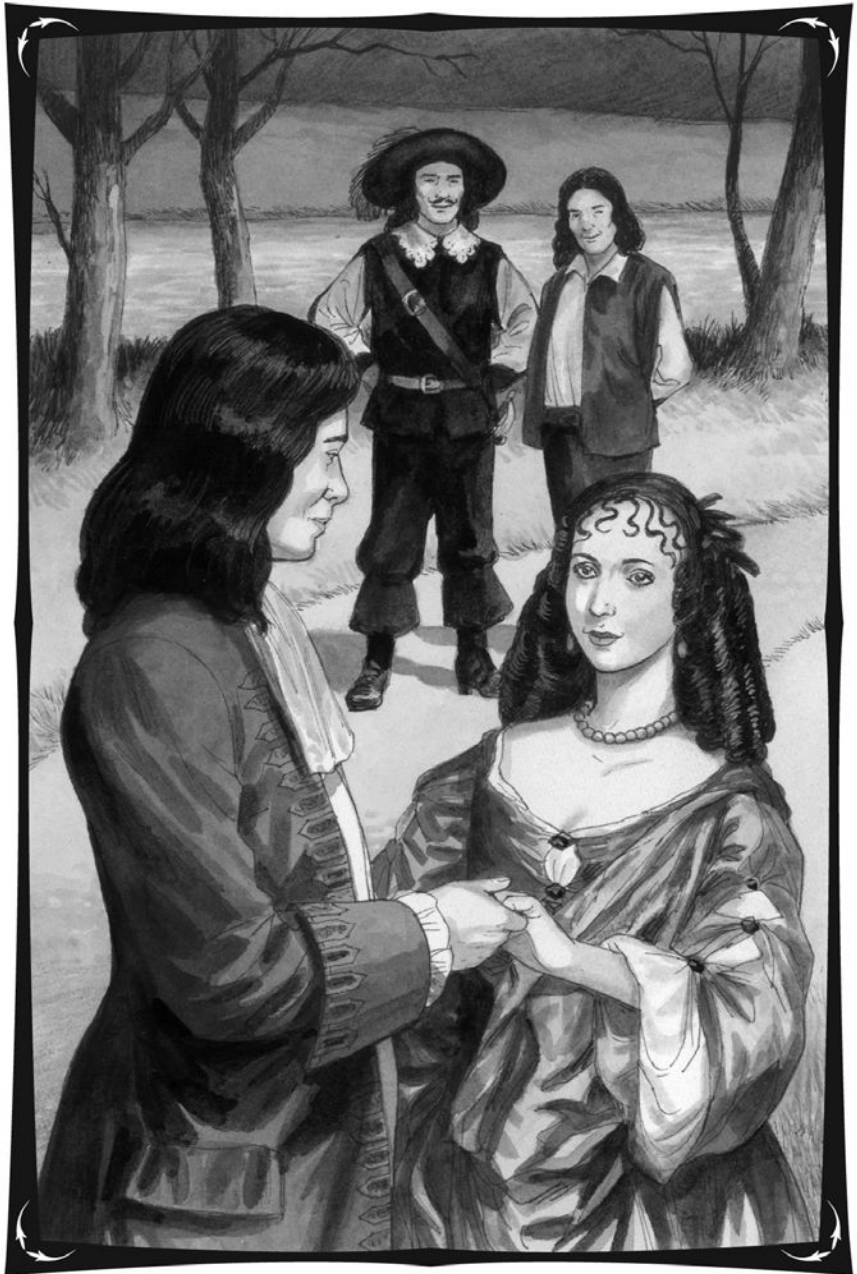
The king soon wore a gloomy expression. He remembered his own royal home and its inferior luxury when compared to Vaux. Anne of Austria treated everything handed to her during dinner with contempt. The young queen, who was kindhearted by nature, praised Fouquet and ate well. The dinner included everything the king liked and he ate some of everything.

“It is impossible, Monsieur le Superintendent, to dine better anywhere,” said the king.

D’Artagnan ate and drank a good deal without allowing it to be noticed. He made a great number of observations, which he used to his benefit.

When the dinner was finished, the king expressed the wish for an evening walk. The park was lit up and the moon silvered the trees and lake with her bright light. The king met Mademoiselle La Valliere in one of the winding paths in the woods and was able to take her by







the hand and say, "I love you." No one overheard except d'Artagnan and Fouquet. For the king the fete was now complete.

The king requested to be shown to his rooms and was led with great ceremony to the most handsome chamber in the palace. After watching his king enter his rooms, d'Artagnan went looking for Aramis. He found the Bishop of Vannes in a beautiful room draped in blue in the company of Porthos. Porthos was fast asleep in his armchair.

"Well, and so we have come to Vaux," said d'Artagnan.

"How do you like the place?"

"Very much. I like Monsieur Fouquet also. An idea came to me this evening that the true king of France is not Louis XIV."

"What!" said Aramis, looking the Musketeer full in the eyes.

"No, it is Monsieur Fouquet."

Aramis breathed again and smiled. "I would bet that it was Monsieur Colbert who came up



with that. That fellow will be your minister within four months and you will serve him blindly as you did Richelieu and Mazarin.”

“Why do you tell me Monsieur Colbert will be minister in four months? Will Fouquet be ruined?” asked d’Artagnan.

“Completely so. Have you not noticed that Monsieur Colbert is doing his best to drive the king to get rid of the superintendent?”

“One must be blind not to see it. Aramis, why did you take some samples of the king’s outfits at Percerin’s?” d’Artagnan asked.

“Ask poor Le Brun, who has been working with them for the last two days and two nights,” answered Aramis.

“Aramis, that may be the truth for everybody else, but not for me. Look at us, three out of the old four. You are deceiving me and Porthos is fast asleep. An admirable trio of friends, don’t you think so?”

“A friend’s word is truth itself. If I think of touching even with my finger the true king of



France and tomorrow is not the most glorious day my king ever enjoyed, may Heaven's lightning blast me where I stand."

The solemn oath gave the Musketeer complete satisfaction. He took Aramis's hands and shook them. D'Artagnan's trust made Aramis feel ashamed.

"Are you going?" he asked.

"Yes, my duty summons me. It seems I am to be lodged in the king's waiting room. Where does Porthos sleep?"

"Take him away with you, if you like. He snores like a cannon."

D'Artagnan touched Porthos on the shoulder. "Come," he said. Porthos responded with a huge yawn.

"D'Artagnan, my dear fellow, is that you?"

Aramis accompanied them to the door. "Good night, my friends."

As soon as the two men were outside, Aramis bolted the door and closed the windows. He called out, "Monseigneur!"



Philippe appeared in the alcove by pushing aside a sliding panel placed behind the bed.

“Monsieur d’Artagnan has great suspicion, it seems,” he said.

“As faithful as a dog, but he bites sometimes,” stated Aramis. “If d’Artagnan does not recognize you before the other has disappeared, you can rely on him to the end of the world.”

“What do we do now?”





“You will go to the observation post and watch the king’s retiring to rest. You must learn how the ceremony is performed.”

“Very good,” said Philippe. “Where shall I place myself?”

“Sit down on this folding chair. I am going to push aside a portion of the floor. Look through the opening. It matches one of the false windows made in the dome of the king’s apartment. Can you see?”

“Yes, I see the king.” Philippe quivered at the sight of an enemy.

“Learn, sire, and study well how you ought to go to bed.”





## High Treason



There was nothing but amusement and delight allowed throughout the following day at Vaux. There was a banquet, a comedy performed, games, and a walk.

But Monsieur Colbert had spoken privately with the king. He reported Monsieur Fouquet had stolen 13 million francs from public funds. He also secretly dropped a letter where the king would find it. The letter had been written in the past by Monsieur Fouquet and declared his love for Mademoiselle la Valliere. The anger of the king showed on his face. Monsieur Colbert noticed and inwardly rejoiced.

At the end of the evening it was time for the king to thank his host for the dazzling fete. But



all the king could find to say was, “Monsieur Fouquet, you shall hear from me. Be good enough to send for Monsieur d’Artagnan.”

Five minutes later, d’Artagnan entered Louis VIX’s bedroom. Aramis and Philippe were in their room, listening intently. The king ran forward to meet d’Artagnan.

“How many men have you here?” he asked.

“I have the Musketeers, twenty guards, and thirteen Swiss,” answered d’Artagnan.

“How many men will be required to arrest Monsieur Fouquet?”

D’Artagnan fell back a step. “To arrest Monsieur Fouquet!” he gasped.

“Are you going to tell me it is impossible?” the king asked with cold passion.

“I never say that anything is impossible.”

“Very well. Do it, then.”

“In order to carry out this arrest, I would like a written order,” said the Musketeer.

“Since when has the king’s word not been enough for you?”



“Sire, you have a man arrested when you are still under his roof. Anger alone is the cause of that. When your anger passes away, you will regret what you have done. Then, I want to be able to show you your signature.”

“The king is master, wherever he may be.”

“That is a flatterer’s remark and must have come from Monsieur Colbert,” d’Artagnan said softly. “Here is a man who is ruining himself to please you and you wish to have him arrested. But it is your wish and it shall be done.”

“Will he defend himself?” asked the king.

“The extreme harshness you are going to enforce will make him a martyr. He is not likely to defend himself.”

“Do not make his arrest public.”

“I hardly see how that can be done,” d’Artagnan replied.

“Take care of Monsieur Fouquet until I make up my mind tomorrow morning. Return in the morning for further instructions,” ordered the king.



D'Artagnan left the room. The king paced furiously like a wounded bull. He then threw himself on the bed, still dressed, to rest. After tossing back and forth for a few minutes, the exhausted king closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Terrible dreams ran together in his brain. The painted figure on the dome above him looked at him with human eyes. Then the dome seemed to be moving farther away. The bed dipped gently like a ship over the waves until it reached a layer of air that was black and cold.

Louis XIV thought, *Come! Wake up!* only to realize he was already awake and had his eyes open. He looked around. On his right and left stood armed men silently wrapped in huge cloaks and wearing masks. He asked the one on the right, "What is the meaning of this jest?"

"It is no jest," the masked figure answered.

"Do you belong to Monsieur Fouquet?"

The second masked person to whom the king had spoken was a large man. He held himself as motionless as a block of marble.



“Will you be good enough to follow us?” asked the man with the lamp.

“I shall not move from here,” cried the king.

The taller of the two spoke, “Then I will lift you and roll you in a cloak. If you are suffocated there, so much the worse for you.”

The king dreaded violence. He shook his head. “Move on, then.” With the king between the two men, they moved along a winding underground tunnel until they came to an iron door. The figure with the lamp unlocked the door with a key and led them to a carriage hidden among the trees.

The man with the lamp escorted the king inside the carriage and it set off immediately at a quick trot. The giant was driving the carriage and it entered Paris at three o’clock in the morning.

The driver called out to the sentinel, “By the king’s order!” and guided the horses into the circular enclosure of the Bastille.



“Go and wake the governor,” said the driver in a voice of thunder. Ten minutes later Monsieur de Baisemeaux appeared in his dressing gown.

“What is the matter now?” he asked.

The person who had ridden with the king in the carriage climbed down to speak with the governor.

“Monsieur d’Herblay!” said the governor.

“Hush!” warned Aramis. “I have brought Marchiali back to you.”

“But why?” cried the governor.

Aramis put his mouth close to Baisemeaux’s ear. “You know the resemblance between that fellow and the king? The first use he made of his freedom was to dress himself up in clothes like those of the king. Then he pretended he was the king himself!”

“What is to be done then?”

“Let no one talk with him. There is now a sentence of death against all who may allow



him to communicate with anyone but me or the king himself.”

Baisemeaux ordered the drums to be beaten and the bell rung as a warning for all the passages to be emptied. He then went to take the prisoner from the carriage. Porthos was still faithfully following Aramis’s directions and kept his rifle leveled at the prisoner’s chest.

“Is that you, miserable wretch?” said the governor as soon as he saw the king. He led the prisoner to the room in which Philippe had spent eight long years. The king entered the cell silently. Baisemeaux turned the key twice in the lock of the cell door and then said adieu to Aramis. Aramis returned to his friend.

“Now, Porthos, my good fellow, back to Vaux and as fast as possible.”

“A man is light enough when he has served his king. The horses will have nothing to pull,” answered Porthos. And the carriage passed across the drawbridge of the Bastille.





## The Morning



Monsieur Fouquet was preparing to retire for the night when d'Artagnan appeared at the entrance of his room.

"What! Monsieur d'Artagnan?" said Fouquet, who had already taken his right arm out of his doublet.

"At your service," replied the Musketeer.

"Come, admit at once that you are arresting me."

"I do not arrest you this evening, at least. Monseigneur, will you pledge me your word of honor that you will not leave this room? I am going to look for Monsieur d'Herblay," said d'Artagnan.



“Yes! I give you my word. Ah, you have saved me,” replied Fouquet with gratitude.

D’Artagnan spent fifteen minutes looking for Aramis. As soon as the door closed behind him, the superintendent seized letters, contracts, and various writings from secret compartments of some furniture. He heaped them in a pile on the marble hearth of the fireplace and burned them.

When the captain of the Musketeers returned, he found Fouquet in the same position. But now there was a faint smell of smoke in the air. He nodded with satisfaction.

“Monsieur d’Herblay must be fond of walks in the park by night. He is not in his room,” d’Artagnan informed Fouquet. “You are tired out and need to order your thoughts. I beg you to go to bed and I shall sleep in this armchair. But do not touch the key or the door, for I would awake with a start and that would rattle my nerves terribly.”



“Monsieur d’Artagnan, you are certainly the most witty and courageous man I ever met. I regret making your acquaintance so late,” said Fouquet.



The young prince had descended from Aramis’s room in the same way the king had descended to the tunnels. The dome slowly sank down and Philippe stood beside the royal bed, which had been raised from the underground. Philippe bent over the bed and noticed a handkerchief lying on it.

“This handkerchief, embroidered with the arms of France, belongs to me alone. Philippe, son of France, take back your coat of arms!” With these words Philippe threw himself on the royal bed where Louis XIV had lain.

Toward morning a shadow glided into the royal chamber. Philippe was expecting it.

“Well, Monsieur d’Herblay?” he said.

“Sire, all is done exactly as we expected.”





“But the prisoner will certainly explain himself.”

“Soon we will take the captive out of his prison and send him to a remote place of exile. Well, before you retired to bed last night you probably decided to do something this morning?” Aramis said.

“Yes, I told my captain of the Musketeers I would expect him. I hear a step in the hall,” replied the young man.



“It must be he. Be careful! If d’Artagnan is the first to come into this room this morning, he will be sure to detect that something has taken place.”

“How can I send him away, since I ordered his appearance?”

“I will take care of that,” replied the bishop.

D’Artagnan knocked. The door opened but, instead of his royal master, he saw the calm features of Aramis.

“Good morning, dear d’Artagnan,” said the bishop.

“You, here!” stammered the Musketeer.

“His majesty wants you to report that he is still sleeping after having been very tired during the whole night.”

“But his majesty gave me an order to meet with him this morning.” D’Artagnan was ready to explode with suspicion.

“Later, later,” said the king’s voice from the back of the room. The voice made the Musketeer shudder.



“My dear d’Artagnan, here is an order of his majesty. You will be good enough to attend to it right away, for it concerns Monsieur Fouquet.”

D’Artagnan took the order. “Free!” he murmured. “Ah.” This order explained Aramis’s presence with the king. He bowed and took a few steps to leave.

“I am going with you to Monsieur Fouquet,” said Aramis. “I wish to be a witness of his delight.”

“I will lead the way.” And d’Artagnan led Aramis to Fouquet’s apartment, still puzzled at the events of the last two days.

Fouquet was waiting with anxiety. He had already sent away many of his servants and friends who had come to visit him. When he saw d’Artagnan returning with the Bishop of Vannes, he could hardly restrain his delight.

“Well, Captain, you have brought Monsieur d’Herblay to me?” Fouquet said.

“And something better still—freedom,” answered d’Artagnan.



"I am free?"

"Yes, by the king's order."

Aramis turned toward Fouquet. "Monseigneur, the king wants me to inform you that he is more than ever your friend. Your beautiful fete has touched him to his very heart." Aramis then turned toward d'Artagnan.

"You will not forget, my friend, the king's order regarding whom he intends to receive this morning," Aramis said.

These words were clear enough. The Musketeer bowed to the two men and disappeared. Fouquet immediately closed the door and turned to Aramis.

"My dear d'Herblay, it is high time you explain to me what is happening. Why does the king set me free?"

"You ought to ask me what is his reason for having you arrested. Do you remember those receipts for 13 million that Monsieur de Mazarin managed to have stolen from you?"



“Yes, of course.”

“Well, you are called a public robber.”

“Good heavens! By what means have you succeeded in overcoming Louis XIV’s feelings, for I know he did not like you?”

Aramis told Fouquet the full story of the birth of two sons to Louis XIII and that the son who had been hidden in the Bastille was now lying on his brother’s bed.

“But the king?” stammered Fouquet, horrified at the news.

“Which king?” said Aramis in his most gentle tone. “The king who hates you or the king who likes you?”

“The king of yesterday.”

“He has taken the place in the Bastille, which his victim has occupied for too long.”

“You dethroned the king and imprisoned him? And such an act has been committed here at Vaux? You have dishonored me in committing such an act of treason upon my guest!”



“The man planned the ruin of your fortune and your life. Do you forget that?” Aramis stood up, trembling.

“You may have been acting on my behalf, but I do not accept your services. You will leave this house. I give you four hours to place yourself out of the king’s reach.”

“Four hours!” Aramis roared.

“It is more than you need to get on board a vessel and flee to Belle-Isle. I give it to you as a place of refuge. Go at once.” Both men darted out of the room. Fouquet went to order his best horses and Aramis went up the staircase to Porthos’s room.

“I will not let Porthos suffer. He will leave with me and follow my destiny,” Aramis said to himself. Porthos was already in a deep sleep. Aramis entered his room and grasped the giant’s shoulder.

“Come, Porthos, come!” he cried.

Porthos obeyed and rose from his bed, even before his mind seemed to be awake.



“We are going off on horseback and faster than we have ever gone in our lives! Get dressed, my friend,” said Aramis. He helped the giant get dressed and thrust his gold and diamonds into his pockets. A slight noise caught his attention and he saw d’Artagnan watching them through the half-open door.

“What the devil are you doing there?” said the Musketeer.

“We are going off on a mission,” said the bishop. “Come, Porthos. Are you ready?”

“I am quite ready, Aramis.” The two fugitives mounted their horses, as the captain of the Musketeers held Porthos’s stirrup for him. D’Artagnan stared at them until they were out of sight.

“On any other occasion I would say those gentlemen were escaping,” d’Artagnan muttered. “Let me attend to my own affairs. That is quite enough.”





## The False King



Philippe opened his folding doors and several persons entered silently. He did not stir while his valets dressed him. He played the king in such a manner that he awakened no suspicion.

Philippe was completely dressed in his hunting costume when he received his visitors. He smiled at seeing the faces of his brother and sister-in-law but trembled on recognizing his mother.

Philippe began conversation with his family but was concerned that Aramis had not yet arrived. Henriette, his sister-in-law, saw the king's eyes constantly turning toward the door.

"What is Your Majesty looking for?" she asked.



“My sister, I am expecting a most remarkable man whom I hope to present to you all. Ah, come in, d’Artagnan,” said the young man.

“What does Your Majesty wish?” said d’Artagnan, appearing through the door.

“Where is the Bishop of Vannes? Let him be called.”

The Musketeer remained stunned for an instant but decided the king wanted to keep Aramis’s mission secret. While Aramis was being sought, the new king quietly continued in conversation. His voice and manners were so like the king’s, but he felt disturbed that Aramis was not coming. Because he was preoccupied, Philippe forgot to dismiss his brother and sister-in-law and they were losing their patience.

Anne of Austria stooped near her son’s ear and spoke to him in Spanish. Philippe was completely ignorant of that language and grew pale.



“What is all that noise?” he asked. He turned toward the door of the second staircase.

A voice was heard, saying, “This way. A few more steps, sire!”

“The voice of Monsieur Fouquet,” said d’Artagnan. All eyes were turned toward the door where Fouquet was expected to enter. But it was not Fouquet who entered. A terrible cry echoed from all corners of the chamber.

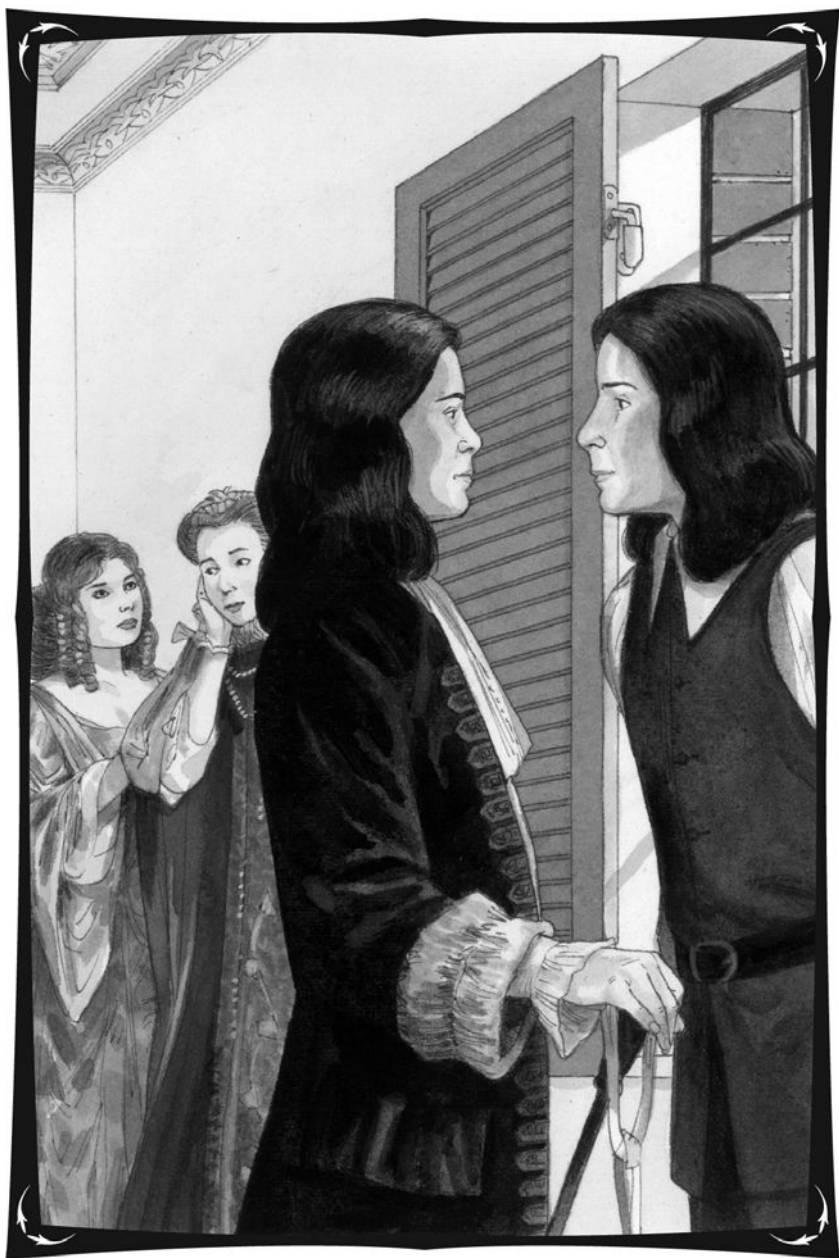
Louis XIV, dressed in a violet-colored outfit he had found at the Louvre on his way from the Bastille, ran to the windows and opened the shutters. A flood of bright light entered the chamber. He spoke to the queen, “Mother, do you not recognize your son, since everyone here has disowned his king?”

Anne of Austria shuddered and raised her hands silently toward heaven.

“My mother, do you not recognize your son?” said Philippe with calm voice.

“To me, Musketeer!” Louis cried. This cry stirred in d’Artagnan’s heart a fiber of







obedience. He walked straight up to Philippe and laid his hand on his shoulder. He said, "Monsieur, you are my prisoner!"

Philippe fixed his eyes on the king, shaming him with silence for all the second son had endured. Against this look the king felt he had no power. He cast down his eyes and hurried out of the room with his brother and sister.

Philippe approached Anne of Austria and said to her in a soft and noble voice, "If I were not your son, I should curse you for having made me so unhappy!"

D'Artagnan bowed respectfully to the young man and said, "Excuse me, monseigneur. I am but a soldier and my loyalty is to him who has just left the room."

"Thank you, Monsieur d'Artagnan. But what has become of Monsieur d'Herblay?"

"He is in safety, monseigneur. No one shall cause a hair to fall from his head while I live and am free," said a voice behind them.



“Monsieur Fouquet,” said the prince, smiling sadly.

“Pardon me, but the one who has just gone out was my guest,” said Fouquet as he kneeled.

“Here are brave friends and good hearts,” Philippe murmured with a sigh.

Just as the captain of the Musketeers was about to leave the room with his prisoner, Colbert appeared. He handed an order to d’Artagnan and left. D’Artagnan read the paper and then handed it to Philippe. The following words were written hastily by the hand of the king:

*“Monsieur d’Artagnan will take the prisoner to the Iles of Saint-Marguerite. He will cover his face with an iron mask. The prisoner cannot raise it without peril to his life.”*

“That is just,” Philippe said. “I am ready.”

“Aramis was right,” said Fouquet in a low voice. “This one is quite as much of a king as the other.”

“More!” replied d’Artagnan.





## The Ride



Aramis and Porthos did honor to the French cavalry by their speed. Porthos did not clearly understand for what kind of mission he was moving so fast. No one, even d'Artagnan, could overtake these enemies of the king.

They rode on until seven o'clock in the evening and needed only one more change of horses. But there were no horses waiting for them at the post, which alarmed Aramis. Then he remembered Athos lived nearby.

Athos was walking and talking with his son Raoul in a long alley of linden trees. They had reached the end of the alley when they found themselves in the presence of Aramis and Porthos.



Raoul affectionately embraced Porthos. As Aramis and Athos greeted one another, Aramis said, "My friend, we do not have a long time with you." He drew Athos aside.

"I have raised a plot against the king and it has failed. I am at this moment pursued without a doubt. I believed success was certain and drew Porthos into the plot. He has thrown himself into it with all his strength without knowing what he was doing. And now he is as completely ruined as I am."

"Good God!" Athos responded, turning to look at Porthos. Aramis told him the entire story.

"What are your plans?" Athos asked.

"I am taking Porthos away," Aramis answered. "The king would never believe he acted innocently, thinking he was serving the king."

"Where are you taking him?"

"To Belle-Isle at first. It is a secure place of refuge I fortified myself. Then I have the sea



and a vessel to cross over to England or Spain. Will you give us your two best horses? The postmaster had none to give us. He said it was because the Duc de Beaufort was traveling in the country,” said Aramis.

“You shall have the two best horses. Be careful, the king is cunning and strong. And take care of Porthos,” Athos bowed while pressing Aramis’s hand.

“Our brother Porthos will fare as I do.”

Athos turned to embrace Porthos. “I was born lucky, wasn’t I?” murmured the giant as he folded his cloak around him. Raoul had left to give the orders for the horses to be made ready. Athos watched his two friends mount their horses and disappear down the road.

Athos and Raoul had not yet returned to the house when a noise of horses and men attracted their attention. Torchbearers shook their torches merrily on the trees of the road. All the torches stopped at the entrance gate. A cry was





heard of “Monsieur le Duc de Beaufort!” and the duke got off his horse.

“Good evening, dear count,” said the prince. “Is it too late for a friend?”

“My dear prince, come in!” said Athos.

Raoul was preparing to go with the other officers into a nearby room to leave the prince alone with Athos.

“Is that the young man I have heard Monsieur le Prince speak so highly of?” asked Monsieur de Beaufort.



“It is, monseigneur.”

“Let him stay. Will you give him to me, if I ask you? The king is sending me to take victory among the Arabs in Africa. If he goes, Count, he shall be my aide-de-camp.”

“Monseigneur!” cried Athos, taking the hand of the duke. “Raoul shall do just as he likes.”

“The navy offers a superb future, my friend,” said the duke. “Count, I shall set off in two days for Toulon. Will you meet me in Paris in order that I may know of your decision?” The duke held out his hand to Athos.

“I will have the honor of thanking you for your kindness,” replied the count.

The duke’s horses were rested and set off with spirit through the beautiful night.

Athos devoted all his attention to preparing the proper equipment for Raoul. The day after the visit of Monsieur de Beaufort, he set off for Paris with his son. Athos and Raoul found the mansion of the duke in confusion. The duke



was distributing to his friends everything of value he had in his house.

“There is my aide-de-camp being brought to me!” he cried. “Come here, Count. Come here, Viscount.” He handed a glass of wine to Athos, who took it. “Here is your commission,” he said to Raoul. “You will go on before me as far as Antibes.”

“Yes, monseigneur.”

“Do you know anything of the sea?”

“Yes, I have traveled with Monsieur le Prince.”

“That is well. All these barges must be formed into an escort and carry my supplies. The army must be prepared to board in two weeks at the latest,” said the duke.

“Yes, Monsieur le Duc, that shall be done,” said Raoul.

“Go, then. And may good fortune be with you.”





## The Silver Dish



The journey went off fairly well, but Raoul was saddened at not meeting d'Artagnan during their travels. He longed to bid him farewell.

When Raoul began organizing the fleet, one of the fishermen told him his boat was being repaired from a trip he had made for a gentleman. The gentleman had asked the fisherman to land him and a carriage at Sainte-Marguerite's. Athos recognized the gentleman to be d'Artagnan.

"You see, Monsieur, my boat was seriously damaged," finished the fisherman.

"Very well, you are exempt from service," replied Raoul.



“We will go to Sainte-Marguerite’s, shall we?” said Athos as the man walked away.

That same day they set out for Sainte-Marguerite’s. The isle was full of flowers and fruits. It was uninhabited, except for the governor and eight men to guard the fortress. The fortress, encircled by a deep ditch, had three turrets like three heads.

Athos saw nothing human but one soldier on a terrace. He was carrying a basket of food on his head. He returned almost immediately to the sentry box without his basket. Athos heard someone call him and looked up to see something being waved forward and backward through the bars of a window. Then a noise was heard in the ditch.

Raoul ran to pick up a silver plate that was rolling along the dry sand. The hand that had thrown the plate gestured to the two men and disappeared inside the window. They discovered letters scratched on the bottom of it with a knife. They read: “I am the brother of



the king of France. A prisoner today. A madman tomorrow.”

The plate fell from Athos’s hand. At the same time, they heard a shout from the top of the dungeon. Quick as lightning, Raoul bent down his head and forced down his father’s. A bullet was flattened against a stone within six inches of the two gentlemen.

“Come down, cowards as you are!” shouted Athos.

“Yes, come down!” Raoul shook his fist at the castle.

An officer ordered the soldiers to “make ready.” Raoul was springing forward with Athos to fight when a well-known voice called out behind them.

“Athos! Raoul!”

“D’Artagnan!” replied the two gentlemen.

“Recover arms!” D’Artagnan shouted to the soldiers. “How fortunate I recognized you in time. I would not have missed.”



“Why did the governor shoot at us? What have we done to him?” said Athos.

“You received what the prisoner threw at you? Had he written something on it?” D’Artagnan seized the plate and read the words. “Good heavens! Here comes the governor.”

“Is it true, then?” asked Athos as the governor crossed the ditch on a plank bridge.





“You are Spaniards and do not understand a word of French,” the captain said in a low voice.

“Well, what is stopping us?” the governor said to d’Artagnan.

“I was right. These two gentlemen are Spanish captains I knew in Ypres last year. They don’t know a word of French.”

The governor accepted the explanation but he was suspicious. “Invite these gentlemen to come to the fortress,” he told d’Artagnan. D’Artagnan offered the invitation to Athos and Raoul in Spanish, which they accepted.

The governor never took his eyes from the visitors during the meal. Athos and Raoul saw that he often tried to embarrass them or catch them off their guard. They did not give him the least advantage.

“Ask these gentlemen what was their purpose in coming to Sainte-Marguerite’s,” he told d’Artagnan.

“They were told there was excellent hunting on the island,” replied the captain.



“That is at their disposal, as well as yours.”

D’Artagnan politely thanked him. The governor went to make his rounds and left them alone.

“Come, let us have a shot or two at the rabbits,” said d’Artagnan. He asked a soldier to bring guns for them. They left the fortress to walk the isle.

“And now, answer me the question asked by the governor,” said the Musketeer. “What did you come to do?”

“To bid you farewell,” said Athos as Raoul went off to sit on a mossy rock and look at the sea.

“What do you mean? Is Raoul going with Monsieur de Beaufort?”

“My dear friend, you always guess right.”

“From habit.” The two old friends discussed the broken engagement between Raoul and Mademoiselle La Valliere and how Athos feared for his son. After several hours together a violent storm came to shore.



“Let us go in, for it’s going to rain,” said d’Artagnan. As they were passing over the ramparts, the Musketeer gestured to Athos and Raoul to hide in an angle of the staircase.

“Look. The prisoner is returning from chapel.”

By the red flashes of lightning they saw a man clothed in black. He was masked by a visor of polished steel fused to a helmet of the same metal. The prisoner stopped for a moment in the middle of the gallery to breathe in the smell of the storm.

“Come, monsieur,” said the governor sharply.

“Say *monseigneur*!” cried Athos with a voice so terrible that the governor trembled.

“Who spoke?” he asked

“It was I,” replied d’Artagnan, showing himself. “You know that is the order.”

“Call me neither monsieur nor monseigneur,” said the prisoner. “Call me cursed!” He went on and the iron door creaked after him.





## CHAPTER 10

---

# The White Horse



D'Artagnan had just returned to his apartment with his two friends when he received a message from the king. Opening it, d'Artagnan read: *"You have executed my orders, I think. Return immediately to Paris and join me."*

"God be praised! I am no longer a jailer," cried the Musketeer. "Athos, take advantage of the boat that will take me back to Antibes. We will leave Sainte-Marguerite's together."

"We cannot be too soon away from this fort," agreed Athos.

The three friends left the little island. D'Artagnan parted from his friends that same night. Athos and Raoul returned to Toulon, which was filling with the noise of carriages,



weapons, and neighing horses.

The Duc de Beaufort was everywhere, hurrying the departure like a good captain. He complimented Raoul and gave him the last orders for sailing the next morning at daybreak.

Athos and Raoul kept to themselves that night. They ate their meal, and then Athos led Raoul to the rocks that overlooked the city.

“Raoul, your duties as aide-de-camp should not lead you into dangerous situations. You are known to be good under fire. Remember that this is a war of snares and ambushes,” said Athos.

“So they say. I am naturally cautious and very lucky,” answered Raoul. “In twenty combats, I have only received one scratch.”

“Promise me that if anything evil should happen to you, you will think of me at once.”

“Instantly.”

The moon began to be eclipsed by twilight. Athos threw his cloak over Raoul’s shoulders and led him back to the city. Everything was already in motion like a huge anthill. Athos,



forgetting his own dignity, opened his arms to his son.

“Adieu!” cried Raoul, as rowboats took the men to their ships. Athos replied only with a gesture. He saw his son climb the ladder of the admiral’s ship. The sea carried away ships and faces until the men were nothing but dots.



D’Artagnan rode fast for Paris. As soon as the king saw d’Artagnan, he cried, “Ah, Monsieur, you have been hardworking. I am pleased with you.” This was the highest expression of royal satisfaction. The Musketeer bowed.

“I want you to go and prepare my lodgings at Nantes,” the king said.

“Will your majesty travel as far as Nantes?”

“The provincial assembly is meeting there. I have two demands to make of them.”

“When shall I set out?” asked the captain, not showing his alarm. Nantes was not far from Belle-Isle.



“Between this evening and tomorrow, when you please,” replied the king.

As d’Artagnan prepared for departing, Monsieur Fouquet was dining with some friends. All the Epicureans, who were faithful friends, were there. The recent events had taken a toll on Fouquet’s health and he suffered from attacks of fever.

“Do not deceive yourselves, brothers,” Fouquet said. “This is a farewell dinner. I have no more money and no more credit. I have nothing but powerful enemies and powerless friends.”

“What money do we have left?” Pelisson asked.

“We have 700,000 pounds,” said Fouquet.

“With 700,000 pounds you can lay the foundation for another fortune,” said his brother, the Abbé Fouquet.

“If necessary, we will go and discover a new world,” added Fontaine, full of enthusiasm.



A knock at the door broke into this concert of hope. It was a messenger from the king, bringing a note written by his hand. It read: *"Dear and Well-Beloved Monsieur Fouquet, Give us the sum of 700,000 pounds, which we need to prepare for our departure. This letter is to serve as a receipt. Louis."*

A murmur of terror swept through the room. "We are ruined!" cried Madame Fouquet. Pelisson ran to have the horses harnessed to the carriages. Gourville gathered in his hat all the gold and silver the weeping friends could throw into it. The superintendent was carried from his apartments and enclosed in a carriage, for his friends feared he would be arrested.

Fouquet traveled quickly to Nantes. He arrived among a vast crowd of people who were boiling with the expectation of the assembly meeting. A report was spread during the night that the king was coming in a great hurry. The people, while waiting for the king, were



delighted to see the Musketeers arrive and lodge in the castle.

Fouquet went to stay at la Maison de Nantes. From his window he watched the king being led to the castle with great splendor. He saw him dismount and speak in the ear of d'Artagnan, who was holding his stirrup.

After the king passed into the castle, the Musketeer went to the house Fouquet was in. Fouquet opened the window to speak to him.

"Are you coming from the king, Monsieur?" he said.

"To beg you to have the kindness to come to the castle, if your health is not too bad," d'Artagnan replied.

Fouquet heaved a last sigh and went to the castle, escorted by d'Artagnan. Before he could enter the castle, a man went up to him and gave him a letter. Fouquet opened it and read. Instantly, terror appeared on the face of the prime minister. D'Artagnan left him on a terrace to announce his arrival to the king.



Fouquet read over his note, which said: *"Something is being plotted against you. The house is already surrounded by Musketeers. A white horse is waiting for you behind the avenue."*

Fouquet recognized the writing of Gourville. The superintendent tore the paper into a thousand pieces. D'Artagnan found him watching the flight of the last scraps of paper into space.

"Monsieur, the king is waiting for you," he said.

Fouquet raised his head and entered the king's apartment. The king nodded to him and said, "Well, how are you, Monsieur Fouquet?"

"I have a high fever, but I am at the king's service," replied the superintendent. "Did your majesty send for me for any business?"

"No, Monsieur Fouquet, but for some advice to give you. Rest, do not throw away your strength. The session of the assembly will be short."



Fouquet bowed and left the apartment. Once out of the castle he said, "I am saved!" He disappeared while d'Artagnan was with the king.

"Captain, you will follow Monsieur Fouquet to his home. You will arrest him in my name and shut him up in a carriage."

D'Artagnan bowed. "Where should I take him?"

"To the castle of Angers, first. Then we will see."

"Yes, sire." D'Artagnan bowed to the king and left the room. His eyes took in the view across the city as he crossed the terrace to reach the stairs. The Musketeer was attracted by a moving object on the road.

*What is that?* he wondered. *A runaway horse, no doubt. What a pace he is going at!*

Some bits of paper were scattered on the stairs. D'Artagnan picked a few up and also recognized Gourville's handwriting. He read



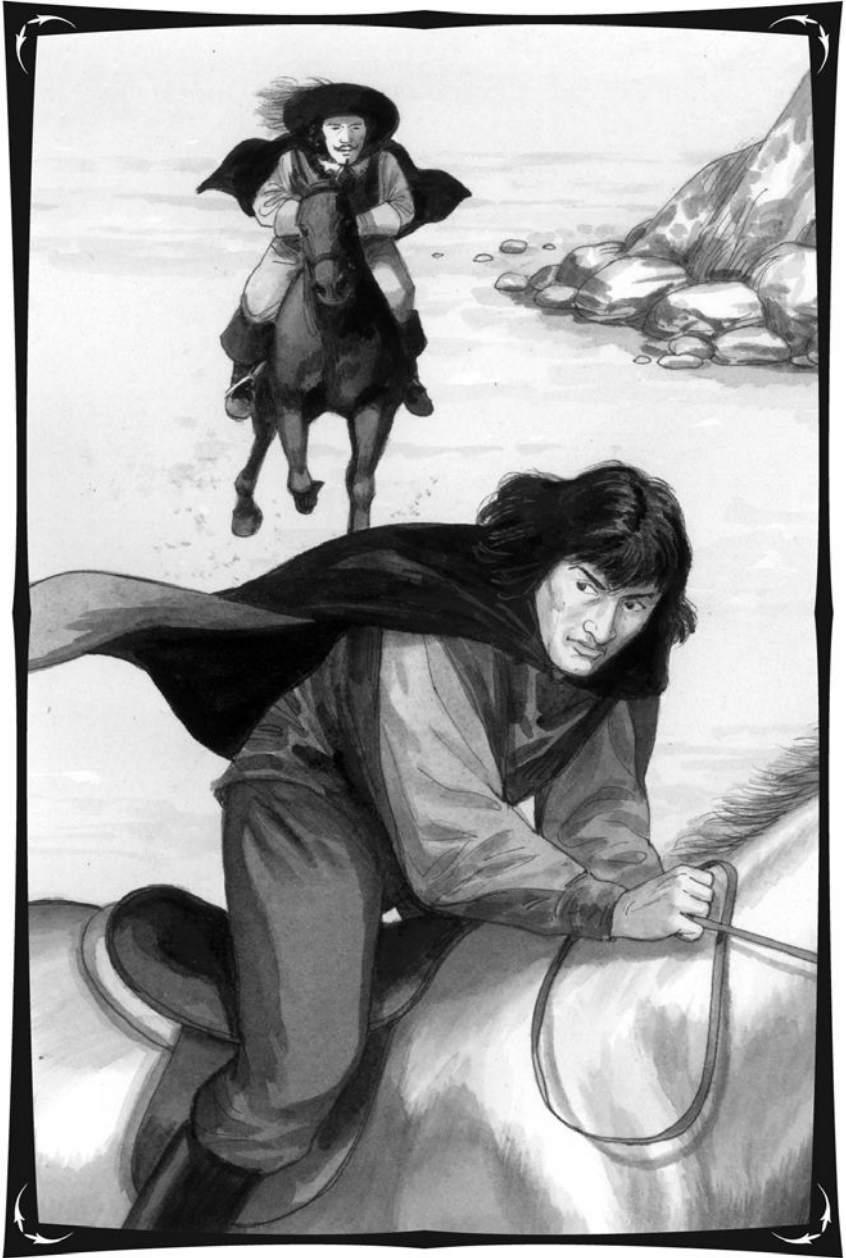
the word “horse” on one piece and “white” on another.

“A white horse!” D’Artagnan rapidly climbed back to the terrace. The white horse was still galloping in the direction of the Loire. “Only the lord of Belle-Isle would escape toward the sea while there are thick forests on land.”

The Musketeer gave orders for the carriage to be taken to a thicket outside the city. He selected his best horse and galloped along the bank of the Loire. He was certain he would gain ten minutes and catch the fugitive. For a long time he galloped without gaining sight of the white horse. Suddenly, at the end of an open field he saw a white form.

Fouquet turned toward the road, not yet seeing d’Artagnan. But coming out from under a cliff, the steps of the Musketeer’s horse echoed. Fouquet turned around and saw his enemy within a hundred paces. He loosened







his hand on the reins and the white horse put twenty more feet between his enemy and himself.

The black horse was beginning to gasp but gained ground step-by-step.

“In the king’s name, stop, or I will bring you down with a pistol shot!” d’Artagnan yelled.

“Do!” replied Fouquet without relaxing his speed.

D’Artagnan’s horse could go no farther. *I am dishonored!* thought the Musketeer. He dismounted his horse and ran after his enemy. The white horse sank to a staggering walk. D’Artagnan sprang toward Fouquet and seized him by the leg.

“I arrest you in the king’s name. Blow my brains out, if you like. We have both done our duty,” he said in a breathless voice.

“I am your prisoner, Monsieur,” said Fouquet. He hurled his pistols into the river and dismounted from his horse. “We will go on foot. Destiny wills it.” Fouquet passed his arm



through d'Artagnan's. They walked slowly the twelve miles to the place behind the wood where the carriage waited.

When Fouquet saw the carriage with its grated windows, he said to d'Artagnan, "This idea was not that of a good man, Captain d'Artagnan. It is not yours. What are these gratings for?"

D'Artagnan looked down as if ashamed of Louis XIV. "To prevent you from throwing out letters. But you can speak, if you cannot write."

"Can I speak to you? Will you say it to whomever I wish?"

"Well, certainly."

"St. Mande. For Madame Belliere or Monsieur Pelisson," Fouquet spoke in a low voice.

"It shall be done."

The carriage crossed the Nantes and took the road to Angers.





## Ideas of the King



It was two o'clock in the afternoon and the king was very impatient. When d'Artagnan entered the room, he was in a bad humor.

"D'Artagnan! Where is Monsieur Fouquet at this moment?" the king demanded.

"Sire, Fouquet is in the iron cage Colbert had prepared for him. He is going as fast as four strong horses can take him toward Angers."

"Give twenty of your Musketeers to Monsieur de St. Aignan to form a guard for Monsieur Fouquet. From Angers they will take the prisoner to the Bastille," ordered the king.

D'Artagnan prepared to leave but the king stopped him. "Monsieur, you will go immediately and take possession of Belle-Isle."



"Yes, sire. Alone?" asked the Musketeer.

"You will take a sufficient number of troops to prevent delay, in case the fortress holds out. Do not return without the keys to the fortress," the king answered.

Monsieur Colbert went up to d'Artagnan as he was leaving. "This is a mission that will be worth a marshal's baton for you, if you carry it out. It is difficult."

"In what respect?"

"You have friends in Belle-Isle. It is not an easy thing for men like you to walk over the bodies of their friends in order to succeed."

*Colbert was right, thought d'Artagnan. Only he forgets my friends are not more stupid than the birds. Poor Porthos! Poor Aramis! No, my fortune shall not cost your wings a feather.*

D'Artagnan assembled the royal army and set sail without wasting a moment.



The sun had just gone down into the vast sheet of the reddened ocean by Belle-Isle.



Porthos inhaled the salt air to fill his powerful chest.

"It is of no use, Aramis," Porthos said. "The disappearance of all the fishing boats that went out two days ago is not ordinary."

"You are right, Porthos. There is something strange in it."

"Have you noticed another thing? Not a single small boat has landed on the island. And yet no planks have washed ashore, if any of the boats have perished—"

"Porthos, what is that over there?" Aramis interrupted. He pointed to a black spot upon the water. "There are two! Three! Four!"

"Five! Six! Seven!" Porthos counted in turn. "Mon Dieu! It is a whole fleet!"

An old fisherman was going by. "Are those our boats over there?" Aramis asked him. The old man looked steadily into the horizon.

"No, monseigneur, the flag is for lighter boats in the king's service," he replied. "That sort of boat is generally used to transport troops."



"Porthos, sound the alarm," Aramis said.

"The alarm? Do you think of such a thing?"

"Yes! And let the cannoneers and artillerymen be at their places."

Porthos opened his eyes wide. He looked closely at his friend to convince himself Aramis was in his right mind. "I will go instantly," said Porthos, and he went to carry out the orders.

When every man was at his post, Porthos whispered in Aramis's ear, "Permit me to try to understand, Aramis. The fleet coming toward the port of Belle-Isle is a royal fleet. Is it not?"

"But there are two kings in France, Porthos. To which of these kings does this fleet belong?"

"Oh! You are opening my eyes," replied the giant.

One of the ships lowered a small boat. The boat landed at the foot of the fortress. The captain, named Jonathan, was one of the pilots of the island. He had been sent by his captors to deliver a letter to the Bishop of Vannes. Aramis eagerly read the following lines:



*“Order of the king to take Belle-Isle or put all men to the sword, if they resist. Order to make prisoners of all men of the fortress. Signed, D’ARTAGNAN, who arrested Monsieur Fouquet to send him to the Bastille.”*

Aramis turned pale and crushed the paper in his hands. “You will return to this captain’s vessel. Tell him we beg him to come into the island. Go, Jonathan, go!” Aramis turned to Porthos and began his explanation.

“I have deceived you, my worthy friend.”

“Was it for my good?” asked Porthos.

“I thought so. I was serving the usurper against whom Louis XIV is directing his efforts.”

“The usurper!” Porthos scratched his head. “I do not understand too well.”

“He is one of the two kings who is fighting for the crown of France.”

“Then you were serving the one who is not Louis XIV?”



“Yes. It results in us being rebels, my poor friend,” Aramis answered.

“Then, it seems I have quite fallen out with Louis XIV,” said Porthos, much disappointed.

“I will fix all that. I will take it upon myself alone. I called upon you and you came in remembrance of that ancient motto, ‘All for one and one for all.’ My crime was being selfish,” said Aramis, feeling very small.

“It is impossible for me to blame you. It is so natural,” said Porthos.

“Listen! I hear a hail for a landing.”

“It is d’Artagnan, no doubt,” Porthos predicted.

“Yes, it is,” replied the Musketeer. As soon as he came toward them, Porthos and Aramis saw an officer following him.

D’Artagnan turned to the officer and said, “Monsieur, we are no longer aboard the king’s fleet, where you spoke so arrogantly to me.”

“Monsieur, I simply obeyed what I had been ordered. I had been directed to follow you. So





I follow you. I am directed not to allow you to communicate with anyone without finding out what you are doing.”

“You are a good man,” replied d’Artagnan. “Permit me to talk to my friends without a witness.”

“Monsieur d’Artagnan, talk with your friends and do not despise me for doing this unworthy act.” The officer sat down on the damp, weed-covered steps and permitted d’Artagnan to climb closer to his friends.



The three friends embraced. “Your boats are all captured. The king wants you and he will capture you. My idea was to bring you on the ship. But now, who can say if there are not secret orders that will take my command from me?” d’Artagnan said.

“We must remain at Belle-Isle. I assure you, we will not surrender easily,” said Aramis. “Let us say adieu, then. My good Porthos, you should go with d’Artagnan.”

“No,” responded Porthos.

D’Artagnan left Belle-Isle with the companion Monsieur Colbert had given him. Back on the ship, the captain of the Musketeers found his suspicions were real. Every idea he proposed was overcome by secret written orders pulled from the pockets of his officers. Each one was signed by the king.

D’Artagnan was taken back to France, while the army opened fire on Belle-Isle.





## The Grotto



Midnight had struck at the fort. Porthos and Aramis were loaded with money and arms. They walked across the heath, listening to every noise and trying to avoid ambushes. They were heading for the cavern of Locmaria. Aramis had ordered a boat to be carried there and hidden.

At last, they reached the deep grottos. Aramis led Porthos and went inside the cavern, making a sound like the cry of an owl. A little sad cooing replied from the depths of the cave.

“Are you there, Yves?” asked the bishop.

“Yes, Monseigneur. Goenne is here and his son, too. All things are ready,” Yves answered.

Aramis examined the boat and found it well supplied with food, water, muskets, and powder.



The men were deciding the best way to get the boat out to the water unseen when they heard the yelping of dogs.

Aramis looked through a crack between two rocks and turned pale. Porthos put his eye to the slit. "The king's guards!" he said. The hounds rushed into the cave. Yves and Goenne sprang forward with knives and the howling was soon silenced.

"What is to be done with their masters?" asked Porthos.

"Wait for their arrival, hide ourselves, and kill them," said Aramis. "There are sixteen at least. It will take ten minutes. To work!" Aramis took up a musket and placed his hunting knife between his teeth.

"And poor Biscarrat?" Porthos asked, talking about a young man they had seen among the guards. He was the son of a brave man they had known many years before.

Aramis thought a moment. "Biscarrat first," he replied coolly. "He knows us."



Biscarrat entered alone and advanced in the darkness. Yves lifted his knife against the young man, but just as it was about to fall upon Biscarrat, Porthos stopped it.

“I will not have him killed!” Porthos growled.

Aramis placed a handkerchief over the young man’s mouth. “Monsieur Biscarrat, you would already be dead if we did not respect our long-time association with your father. Will you swear you will not tell your companions what you saw here?”

“I swear I will do everything in the world to prevent them from setting foot in this cavern,” said Biscarrat.

“Now go, we depend upon your loyalty.” Aramis let go of him. Biscarrat made every effort but it was useless. Fifteen men rushed into the cave, but only five returned alive.

A company of eighty guards arrived. The captain asked Biscarrat, “Who is making such a desperate defense and how many are there?”



“There are two and they have already killed ten of our men. They were Musketeers called Porthos and Aramis.” A murmur ran through the soldiers. Those two names, along with d’Artagnan and Athos, were honored among all who wore a sword.

“Forward, men!” ordered the captain.

“Captain, I beg to be allowed to march at the head of the first platoon,” said Biscarrat. He was overwhelmed with guilt about the death of his comrades.

“Fine. Take your sword, then.”

“I do not go to kill. I go to be killed.” Biscarrat placed himself at the head of the first platoon with his arms crossed. “Let us march, gentlemen!” he said.

While the soldiers were gathering outside, Porthos used all his strength to move a tremendous rock and open a way for the boat to be taken out. Yves, Goenne, and his son lifted the boat and rolled it on logs toward the sea.

Porthos then placed himself in the second



room of the cave, which was completely dark. The giant was holding a fifty-pound iron bar. Aramis slipped into the third room.

Biscarrat was walking toward them, telling his platoon, "Come on!" Porthos breathed a heavy sigh but the iron bar fell upon the head of Biscarrat.

The iron bar rose and fell ten times in ten seconds, making ten corpses. The first and second brigades were killed in the same manner. Amid the noise of the third brigade advancing, Porthos and Aramis slipped back to the next to last room.

Aramis showed Porthos a barrel of powder in a hollow of the granite wall. "My friend, after I light the fuse, will you throw this barrel amid our enemies? Can you do it?"

"Of course," Porthos said. He picked it up with one hand. "Light it!"

"Wait until they are all together. I will wait for you by the boat. Launch it strongly and run back to us."



“Light it!” The barrel was hurled thirty feet and fell amid a group of shrieking soldiers. The terrible explosion split rock like planks of pine under an ax.

Porthos had fled and was but six steps from reaching the sunshine. Suddenly his knees gave way. Aramis called through the opening, “In the name of Heaven, Porthos, make haste!”

Porthos grabbed the rocks and pulled himself up again. But just as he was escaping between a row of granite, it crashed on top of him.

“Porthos! Where are you?” Aramis cried.

“Patience,” Porthos murmured, weakening as he pushed against the masses of stone. The enormous rock sank down, pressed by two others, and swallowed up Porthos in a grave of broken stones.

Aramis trembled like a timid child. His three sailors surrounded him and carried him into the canoe. They took to their oars, rowing away from land until it was safe to raise the sail. The canoe headed bravely toward Spain.





## King Louis XIV



“Monsieur, what did I trust you to go and do at Belle-Isle?” the king asked, staring at his captain.

“Well, sire, I know nothing about it,” replied d’Artagnan. “You should ask that infinite number of officers to whom have been given an infinite number of orders of all kinds.”

The king was wounded and showed it by his reply. “Monsieur, orders have only been given to those who were judged faithful.”

“I was astonished that a captain like myself, who ranks with a marshal of France, found himself under the orders of many lieutenants and majors. I was coming to ask for an explanation of your majesty when I found the



door closed to me. That last insult has led me to quit your majesty's service."

"You see, monsieur, what your disobedience has forced me to do?"

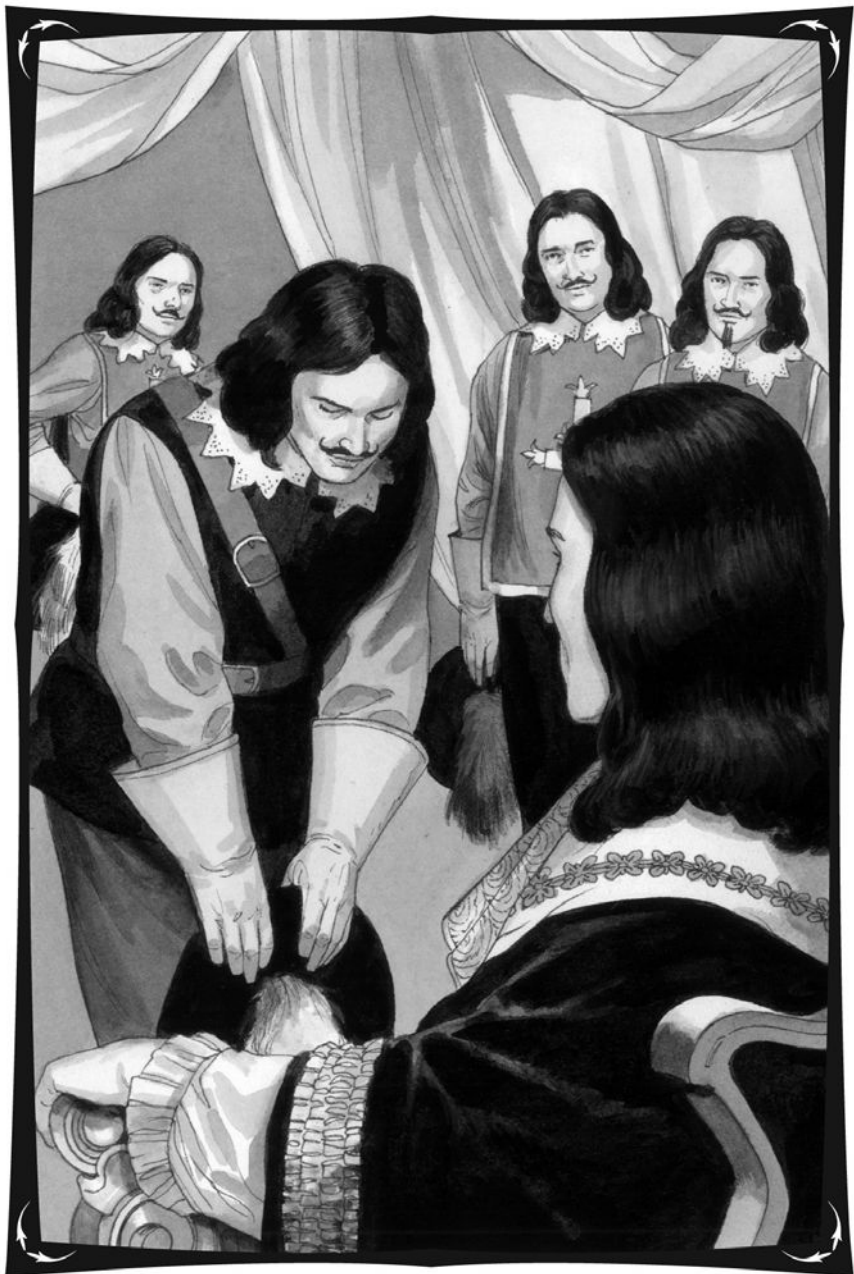
"My disobedience! It was a cruelty on your majesty's part to send me to capture my friends and lead them to your gallows," cried d'Artagnan.

"It was a test I had to make of those who ought to defend my person. The test has failed, Monsieur d'Artagnan. Tell me, who is the king of France?"

"Sire, I remember very well one morning in Vaux you asked that question to many people who did not answer. I did answer it. If I recognized my king when it was not easy, I think it useless to ask me now," the captain of the Musketeers said coldly.

At these words, Louis cast down his eyes for a moment. But then he responded, "Look around you. Lofty heads have bowed. Bow yours or choose the exile that will best suit you.







If you think about it, perhaps you will find that this king has a generous heart.”

D’Artagnan was bewildered for the first time in his life. He had just found an opponent worthy of him.

“I will remain because I have been accustomed for thirty years to go and take the word of the king. To have said to me, ‘Good evening, d’Artagnan,’ with a smile I did not beg for. Are you content, sire?” asked the Musketeer.

“Thank you, my faithful friend. It remains for me to send you to a foreign field to earn your marshal’s baton. Depend on me to find you an opportunity,” the king said.

“But what about those men at Belle-Isle?”

“Do you ask their pardon of me? Go and take it to them, if there is still time,” answered Louis.

With a heart swelling with joy, d’Artagnan rushed out of the castle.





## CHAPTER 14

---

# Athos's Vision



Athos had remained a young man up to his sixty-second year. He had become an old man in a week. Now that Raoul was no longer with him, he stopped doing all the exercises he had enjoyed through life.

For several days the count did not speak a single word. He refused to receive his visitors and during the night passed long hours writing or examining parchments.

The valet noticed that Athos shortened his walk every day. At last Athos refused to rise at all. He would take no food and his terrified people went in search of the physician. They placed the doctor in a closet connected to the room of the patient. He examined from his



hiding place the illness that devoured the man who had been so full of life.

Half a day had passed when the doctor made up his mind. He came out from his place of retreat and went to Athos.

“Monsieur le Comte, I beg your pardon,” said the doctor. He sat by the pillow of Athos.

“What is the matter, doctor?” Athos asked.

“Why, you are ill, Monsieur. Fever, consumption, weakness, wasting away.”

“I have the absence of my son, doctor. That is my illness. But as long as Raoul lives, I shall live,” Athos said with a sad smile.

The doctor left the château after ordering Athos’s servants not to leave him for a moment.

One night, Athos dreamed that Raoul was dressing in a tent. He was getting ready to go on an expedition led by Monsieur de Beaufort. Raoul was sad as he strapped on his sword.

“What is the matter?” asked Athos tenderly.

“The death of Porthos, our dear friend,” replied Raoul. “I suffer here of the grief you



will feel at home.” The vision disappeared with Athos’s sleep. At daybreak one of his servants entered his master’s apartment and gave him a letter from Aramis in Spain.

“Porthos is dead!” he cried after reading the first few lines. “Oh, Raoul, thank you! You kept your promise. You warned me!”

Athos wanted to travel to Belle-Isle to pay his friend Porthos a last visit, but he was too weak. As night came, his fever rose. It invaded his chest and reached his head. The fever dropped as midnight struck and the doctor declared the count was saved.

Then Athos’s mind turned toward Raoul. His imagination painted the fields of Africa. A pale moon rose and lit the hills. The gray rocks appeared to examine the field of battle. Athos saw the field was spread over with fallen bodies.

While his eye was wandering over the plain, he saw a white form appear. This figure was dressed as an officer and held in its hand a broken sword. In this silent and pale officer



Athos recognized Raoul. The count followed his son over bushes, stones, and ditches.

At last, Raoul reached the top of the hill. Athos stretched his hand to his beloved son. But the young man left the earth and was rising into the sky. Athos looked below him and saw the royal army and camp destroyed. Then raising his head, he saw his son inviting him to go with him.

Athos was at this part of his vision when the spell was broken by a great noise from outside. A horse was galloping over the hard gravel and noisy voices rose to the count's room. A heavy step came up the stairs and approached Athos's room. The door opened.

"It is a courier from Africa, is it not?" he cried in a weak voice.

"No, Monsieur le Comte," replied a voice that made Athos start upright in his bed.

"Grimaud!" he whispered. Athos quickly read the face of his faithful servant.

"Grimaud, Raoul is dead, isn't he?"



“Yes,” replied the old man with a hoarse, broken sigh.

Without uttering a cry, Athos raised his eyes toward heaven to see again that rising figure. After an hour, Athos softly raised his hands, smiling. He whispered, “Here I am!”

Grimaud could tell his master was no longer breathing. At this moment he heard someone coming up the stairs. A noise of spurs knocking against a sword stopped him from moving. A voice called out, “Athos! Where is he?”

It was d’Artagnan. Grimaud seized his arm and pointed. D’Artagnan tiptoed to the bed and placed his ear on Athos’s chest. He drew back to gaze at the smiling dead man.

The Musketeer had come to tell his friend of the death of Porthos. When he arrived, d’Artagnan heard about Raoul’s death in Africa. He whispered, “Now I believe them to be happy. They must be reunited.”





# The Angel of Death



Four years later the captain of the king's greyhounds and the governor of the falcons crossed Blois early to plan a bird hunt for the king. Behind them came the captain of the Musketeers, known by his richly embroidered uniform. His hair was gray and his beard graying. He was looking about him watchfully.

D'Artagnan met the officers with courtesy.

"Are you not tired with the long journey you just took, Monsieur le Comte?" asked the falconer. "And is he well?"

"No, Monsieur Fouquet frets terribly. He doesn't see how imprisonment can be a favor," replied d'Artagnan. He continued to advance into the plain. They could catch glimpses of



the huntsmen at the entrance of the woods. The king saw d'Artagnan as they came close.

"Ah, Count, you are back then!" he said. "You will dine with me today." A murmur of admiration surrounded d'Artagnan. The king took a few steps and d'Artagnan found himself in the midst of a new group with Colbert.

"Good day, Monsieur d'Artagnan. I heard the king invite you to his table for this evening. You will meet an old friend there," said the minister.

"An old friend of mine?" asked the captain. The past had swallowed up so many friendships and so many hatreds.

"Monsieur le Duc d'Almeda, who arrived this morning from Spain."

"The Duc d'Almeda?" D'Artagnan said.

"I!" said an old man, sitting bent in his carriage. He opened the door to meet the Musketeer.

"Aramis!" cried d'Artagnan. "You, the exile, the rebel, are again in France?"



That evening d'Artagnan was seated at the king's table near Monsieur Colbert and Aramis. The king was very cheerful. Conversation between Aramis, d'Artagnan, and Colbert turned upon many subjects.

D'Artagnan could not overcome his surprise at finding Colbert with so much sound knowledge and cheerful spirits. Colbert turned to Aramis.

"Monsieur, this is the moment for us to come to an understanding. If we undertake anything against the United Provinces, shall we have peace from Spain?" he asked.

"To sow strife between Europe and the United Provinces is our policy," replied Aramis. "You are aware that it would be a war on sea and France is not in a state to wage such a war."

"And what do you think of it, Monsieur d'Artagnan?" asked Colbert.

"I think to carry that war on successfully you must have a very large land army," d'Artagnan replied. "The king will be beaten by sea, if he



does not have the English with him. And when beaten at sea, he will soon be invaded by the Dutch in his ports.”

“Who told you, Monsieur d’Artagnan, the king had no navy?” said Colbert. He drew from his pocket a little book. “Before the end of the year the king will have fifty ships. We can fight with that, can’t we?”

“As to arming them, how is that to be done? In France there are neither forges nor military docks,” said d’Artagnan.

“Bah!” replied Colbert, beaming. “I figured all that out a year and a half ago. If the king wishes to quarrel with the United Provinces, he will have a pretty fleet.”

D’Artagnan and Aramis looked at each other, admiring the mysterious labors of Monsieur Colbert.

“Monsieur d’Artagnan, I would guess you would have an inclination to lead your Musketeers into Holland,” Colbert went on. “In this notebook is a plan of a campaign that the



king is putting under your command next spring.”

D’Artagnan took the book and the minister shook his hand. “I will do you justice, Monsieur.”

“Then I will have the fleur-de-lis for your marshal’s baton prepared immediately,” said Colbert.

The next day, Aramis set out for Madrid to do as Colbert had asked. Each kept his promise. Colbert had promised the king vessels, weapons, and victories. Aramis wrote Colbert, telling him, “His Catholic majesty assures Spain will remain peaceful in the event of a war between France and the United Provinces.” Aramis had performed more than he promised, for he also arranged for Portugal to help in the king’s war.

In the spring, the land army took the field. D’Artagnan set out commanding 12,000 men of cavalry and infantry. He was ordered to take the different fortresses of a network called La Frise. He followed the old habits of war to keep



his soldiers singing and his enemies weeping. The army commanded by this old Musketeer took twelve small fortresses within a month.

D'Artagnan had just sent a fresh column of soldiers to finish off the thirteenth fortress and was watching the terrified flight of the occupants. It was at this moment the general heard a voice behind him. "Monsieur, if you please. From Monsieur Colbert." He broke the seal of the letter, which contained these words:

*"Monsieur d'Artagnan, the king wants me to inform you that he has made you Marshal of France, as a reward for your good services. The chest is my own present. I am encouraging the peaceful arts to create rewards worthy of you. Colbert"*

D'Artagnan was reaching his hand to open the chest with gold decoration when a cannonball from the city crushed the chest in the arms of the officer holding it. It struck d'Artagnan full in the chest and knocked him down. The baton escaped from the broken



sides of the box and rolled under the powerless hand of the marshal.

His ears feebly caught the rolling of the drum which announced victory. He closed his fingers on the baton and cast his eyes down on its fleur-de-lis ornament.

“Athos, Porthos, farewell till we meet again! Aramis, adieu forever!”

Of the four valiant men whose history we have told, only one body was left. God had taken back three souls.