The Count of Monte Cristo

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Alexandre Dumas was born in Villers-Cotterets, France to a military family. His father, the illegitimate child of a French marquis and a Haitian slave, rose in the French army to the rank of general: the highest rank of any black soldier in a European army at that time. Dumas' father assumed the name "Dumas" (his Haitian mother's surname) during his military career, and he died when the young Dumas was a toddler, leaving the family to struggle. While Dumas did not attend university, his mother valued education and worked hard to make sure her son attended secondary school. As a young man, Dumas worked as a notary and scribe, but his passion was literature. He achieved notoriety in France in 1829 for his play *Henry III and His Court*. His plays *The Tower of Nesle* (1832) and *Kean* (1836) were also hits. While he cut his teeth writing plays, Dumas wrote in many different genres throughout his life, including essays, short stories, travelogues, and novels (the genre for which he is best known). His two monumental novels of love, adventure, vengeance, and exotic locales—*The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers*—are his most lasting works. Dumas' legacy is not strictly literary: his son, Alexandre Dumas ("fils," or Jr.) was also a prolific writer, and Dumas also had at least one other child out of wedlock, as he was known for having many affairs.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The French Revolution began in 1789, when representatives of France's middle classes (those with some wealth but without noble titles and inherited land) demanded a set of reforms to the French government that eventually included the abdication of the King, Louis XVI, and the creation of a government by common people. Many supporters of liberal representational democracy in France and across Europe and the world were initially hopeful that the French Revolution would establish a stable France ruled "by the people." But the Revolution did not take this route. After several years (and the execution King Louis XVI and his Queen, Marie Antoinette), the Revolution devolved into the Terror, in which competing factions jostled for control of the government and country. The Terror was finally quelled by the rise of an obscure Corsican named Napoleon Bonaparte who "exported" the Revolution to other countries in Europe, by way of military combat. Napoleon's rule, however, did not last very long. England, and other countries in Europe led by monarchies, joined forces with French troops loyal to the deposed king and queen (the Royalists). They eventually defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo, in 1815, causing him to be exiled to the island of Saint Helena. The French "Restoration" (of the royal family related to Louis XVI) lasted until 1830, and it is during this period that *The Count of Monte Cristo* is set. The Restoration was characterized by a moderate amount of political consensus and predictability in domestic matters, as men in power tried to appease both conservative, pro-monarchy factions and those who, in the first part of the 1800s, had been loyal to Napoleon and were now established in the bureaucracy and military. *The Count of Monte Cristo*'s political and historical events capture these tectonic shifts in France from the end of the 1700s until approximately the end of the Restoration period.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The Count of Monte Cristo is a classic example of the mid-nineteenth-century European serial adventure novel. These novels had large casts of characters, complex plots with numerous intertwined subplots, and central dramas involving love, revenge, and shifts in class or identity. Serial novels were published in segments (usually in chapters) over days, weeks, or months, before being collected in bound volumes for sale all at once. In England, Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837-9) and *Great Expectations* (1861) followed this template, as did Dumas's own *The Three Musketeers* (1844) in France. *The Count of Monte Cristo* can also be classified as a historical novel because it chronicles a mix of real and invented events in France in the early to mid-1800s. Similarly, Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) dramatizes, in fiction, the bloodshed of the French Revolution in Paris, and *Middlemarch* (1871-2) tracks shifts in English political, legal, and social life around the same time that *The Count of Monte Cristo* is set. *The Count* and *The Three Musketeers* stand apart for their gripping pace and their stacking of one tense event atop another. Even the most action-jammed of Charles Dickens's works (like *Oliver Twist* or *A Tale of Two Cities*) tend to pause for longer stretches of description, of a physical scene or person. But Dumas flings headlong into duels, balls, violence, and episodes of happiness and surprise.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Count of Monte Cristo*
- **When Written:** 1844-45
- **Where Written:** Paris, France
- **When Published:** 1844-45
- **Literary Period:** The high-point of the midcentury European novel
- **Genre:** literary adventure; revenge novel; episodic novel; historical novel; serial novel

- **Setting:** Marseille; Rome; Paris; Monte Cristo
- **Climax:** The Count ruins the lives of M. de Villefort, the Baron Danglars, Fernand de Morcerf, and Caderousse, through manipulation of their incomes, destruction of their reputations, or physical violence, as repayment for their scheme to falsely imprison him
- **Antagonist:** Villefort, Danglars, Morcerf, and Caderousse
- **Point of View:** Third-person

EXTRA CREDIT

Adaptations. Numerous film adaptations of *The Count of Monte Cristo* exist, including a 2002 version (dir. Kevin Reynolds), a 1998 miniseries (with Gerard Depardieu), a TV show (1964, on BBC 1), and a sequel, not derived from Dumas's work, called *The Son of Monte Cristo* (dir. Rowland Lee, 1940).

PLOT SUMMARY

Edmond Dantes is a nineteen year-old with a bright future. He is first mate on the ship *Pharaon*, which docks in Marseille in 1814. M. Morrel, who owns and operates the ship (and who is therefore Dantes' boss and mentor) promotes Dantes to captain, which upsets the ship's cargo manager, Danglars. The promotion also makes Dantes's father's neighbor, a tailor named Caderousse, jealous. Furthermore, Fernand, a fisherman in the city's Catalan district, is envious of Dantes's engagement to Fernand's cousin, the beautiful young woman Mercedes. Happenstance brings these three men together, and at Danglars's insistence, they hatch a plot to frame Dantes as being supportive of Napoleon Bonaparte, the deposed emperor of France.

Dantes is arrested for alleged treason while at his feast of betrothal to Mercedes. The deputy crown prosecutor M. de Villefort is initially sympathetic to the young man's plight, but when he realizes that Dantes has been carrying a message from Napoleon to Villefort's own father, Noirtier (who is himself a Bonapartist sympathizer), Villefort decides to allow Dantes to be framed for Bonapartist allegiances so that Noirtier's sympathies will not become public. Dantes, not understanding what he has done wrong, finds himself trapped in the dreaded Chateau D'If, a prison in the Mediterranean, where he suffers in near-silence for fourteen years.

In prison, Dantes is initially angry, then morose and withdrawn. Finally, after many years in solitary confinement in a squalid dungeon, he decides to kill himself by refusing all food. It's at this crucial moment, however, that Dantes hears scraping on the other side of his prison wall. After digging furiously in the direction of the sound, and noticing that his inmate-neighbor has also been digging, Dantes meets the Abbe Faria. The Abbe, a man of extreme erudition and great generosity of spirit, teaches Dantes everything he knows, from the languages and history of the world to science and philosophy. After planning for over a year, the two men try, and fail, to escape from Chateau D'If: the prison wardens, without learning of their plot, have fortified a weak point through which they might have been able to slip.

When the Abbe dies of a stroke, Dantes winds himself in the old man's death sheet and is thrown into the Mediterranean by guards. He escapes and swims to freedom, first joining up with a gang of sailors, then making his way to the island of **Monte Cristo**, on which, Abbe Faria insists, an enormous fortune was buried by Italian nobles in the sixteenth century. Through ingenious methods, and following the instructions the Abbe has asked him to commit to memory, Dantes finds this fortune and begins spending it with one goal in mind: to punish the four men who put him in prison in the first place (Villefort, Danglars, Fernand, and Caderousse). Dantes also wonders, with great urgency, what has become of his father and of Mercedes. But even those attachments of loving devotion pale when Dantes allows himself to consider the vengeance he will exact on those who have wronged him.

Dantes discovers, soon after finding the Monte Cristo fortune, that three of these four men have benefited from enormous good luck following the restoration of the French monarchy (the Royalists) in 1815. Danglars is now a wealthy banker in Paris, married to Hermine Danglars (who is having an affair with the much-younger diplomat Lucien Debray). Fernand came into his own wealth as a solider-for-hire in the wars following 1815, then married Mercedes, purchased a noble title ("Count"), and had a son, Albert, whom Dantes first meets in Rome. Villefort has ascended to the position of crown prosecutor in Paris, and has married for the second time, after his first wife died. He has two children, one from his first marriage, named Valentine, and a second with Mme de Villefort, named Edouard. Caderousse, with his unpleasant wife, La Carconte, is manager of a broken-down inn. Dantes, for his part, assumes many disguises, including the Count of Monte Cristo (an explorer and celebrity of great wealth, erudition, and power, and of indeterminate national origin), the Abbe Busoni (a supposed Italian priest), and Lord Wilmore (an English banker). The Count uses these disguises to gain information about the characters whose lives he sets out to ruin.

Before his trip to Paris, the "Abbe Busoni" (really Dantes) meets with Caderousse and La Carconte at their inn. Busoni asks Caderousse the extent to which he was involved in Dantes' false imprisonment, and when Busoni/Dantes realizes that Caderousse himself was not the prime mover of the plot, he forgives the innkeeper, giving him and his wife a diamond. After Busoni departs, La Carconte convinces Caderousse to hatch another plot to murder the jeweler to whom they have just sold the diamond. As a consequence of this bungled and bloody episode, which results in the murder of La Carconte and the jeweler, Caderousse goes on the lam, winding up in a prison

colony after he can no longer elude the charge of double homicide.

The second half of the novel depicts the Count's arrival in Paris, his insinuation into French high society, and his careful assembly of plans for revenge against his conspirators. Among his many activities there, the Count hires a Corsican named Bertuccio, who witnessed an affair between Villefort and Hermine Danglars. The affair produced a child, Benedetto, whom Bertuccio later adopts. As it turns out, Bertuccio was hiding in Caderousse's inn during the murder of the jeweler, and he recounts this story to Dantes. (In another coincidence, Benedetto is sentenced to work in the same prison colony as Caderousse, and Caderousse later extorts Benedetto in Paris when he realizes that the Count has helped fabricate an identity for him, as "Andrea Cavalcanti," an Italian noble.)

The Count sets up house on the Champs-Elysees with, among others, a black "slave" named Ali and a Greek "slave" named Haydee, whom he has purchased in Constantinople. The Count manipulates telegrams and financial markets to reverse Danglars's banking fortunes, and he gradually comes to make the acquaintance of Albert and his mother Mercedes, the first of whom becomes his friend, and the latter of whom, though recognizing her former fiance immediately, pretends for much of the book to have no idea who the Count of Monte Cristo really is. The Count soon realizes that Mme de Villefort is using **poison** to kill members of the Villefort family, so that Valentine's wealth, from her grandparents the Saint-Merans and grandfather Noirtier, will revert to her son.

These machinations—along with many ornate and festive balls, theatrical and operatic performances, duels and fights, and conversations about love, philosophy, religion, devotion, revenge, wealth, and family—lead to a series of climaxes and then to a denouement in the final chapters of the book. The Count allows Caderousse to be murdered by Benedetto after concluding that he has given Caderousse many opportunities to atone for his initial sins of cowardice and drunkenness, and his later sins of murder. The Count also drains Danglars's bank account through shrewd manipulation of financial markets, and, after convincing Eugenie to become engaged to Andrea, watches as Andrea's social fall further disgraces her family. The Count balks at dueling with Albert over a supposed rumor of Fernand's indiscretions, only for Albert to realize that his father stole his wealth from the Ali Pasha in the Middle East, and that he is no aristocrat at all, rather the son of a treacherous, untrustworthy, and cowardly fisherman of humble origin. These revelations result in Fernand's suicide, and in Albert's resolution that he will join the French army abroad. Meanwhile, his mother Mercedes makes peace with the Count after begging him to protect Albert and others in Paris from further vengeance. She vows to live alone, in a mournful peace, in Marseille.

Continuing in his adventures, the Count saves Valentine from the Villefort home, but not before revealing that Villefort has had a child out of wedlock with Hermine, thus ruining his social standing as crown prosecutor. It is at this moment, too, that the Count reaches the limits of his vengeance. For in his willingness to punish Villefort, he allows Villefort's second wife to poison the Saint-Merans, Valentine, and eventually Edouard, an innocent child. The Count recognizes, after these sorrowful events and his late conversation with Mercedes, that there must be more to his freedom than vengeance.

Soon thereafter, the Count understands that he must seek love, and must attempt to build for himself a structure of family and friends to replace those he has lost during his fourteen years in the Chateau D'If. Fortunately, all along the Count has developed a relationship of mutual goodwill with Maximilien Morrel, son of Old Morrel, the first man outside the Count's family who believed in him and in his career as a sailor. The Count saved the Morrel family from financial ruin months after coming into his fortune, and once the Count realizes that young Morrel wishes to marry Valentine, he does all he can to save her from her stepmother's predations and to spirit her away so that she and Morrel can live together.

The novel ends on the island of Monte Cristo, with the Count having left the French capital behind. He has successfully protected Valentine and Morrel from the social chaos his activities have caused in Paris, and has bequeathed them nearly his entire fortune, which is essentially limitless in its grandeur. Having toured Marseilles, the city in which he spent much of his youth, and the dungeon of the Chateau D'If where that youth was almost destroyed, the Count says his goodbyes to Albert and Mercedes, whom he considers innocent players in an otherwise upsetting drama. He also comes to recognize his love for Haydee, whom he has grown to love during their time together in the house on the Champs-Elysees, and with whom he can now imagine spending the rest of his life. The Count's quest for revenge has been replaced by feelings of love and mutual indebtedness to those close to him. Dantes and Haydee sail away from Valentine and Maximilien, their adopted family-members, and the Count insists that, one day, if they each "hope" and "wait," they might all be reunited.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor) – Edmond Dantes, the novel's protagonist, is a French sailor who is wrongfully imprisoned at age 19, escapes, and then spends his life getting meticulous revenge on the men who wronged him. He is fiercely loyal, and—as his elaborate plans show—quite capable and intelligent. At the novel's start, Dantes is poised for a glorious life as a future captain-at-sea and husband to the

beautiful Mercedes. But Dantes's life is changed entirely when a group of jealous men (Danglars, Fernand, Caderousse, and Villefort) hatch a plot to imprison him unjustly. Dantes lives in a dungeon for fourteen years, befriending the Abbe Faria (who provides an education to substitute his lack of formal schooling). When Dantes escapes, he recovers the Abbe's much-spoken-about fortune on the island of **Monte Cristo**. Dantes devotes his life after prison to vengeance against those who plotted against him, which marks a shift in his character: while he was openhearted and generous at the beginning of the novel, prison has embittered him, making him prioritize vengeance over love. Eventually, Dantes becomes so consumed by revenge that he can hardly distinguish between those who have wronged him and those who are innocent bystanders. After ruining the lives of his enemies and developing a chaste friendship with Mercedes, however, the Count undergoes another shift. Realizing that he is more fulfilled by love than vengeance, he becomes betrothed to his former "slave" Haydee and bequeaths his fortune to Maximilien Morrel, son of his former shipping boss, and to Valentine, the daughter of Villefort.

Mercedes (de Morcerf) – Initially Dantes's betrothed, Mercedes marries her cousin Fernand when she believes Dantes will never return from prison. Mercedes is utterly devoted to Dantes; she never wanted to be with Fernand, but she relents to his desires because she doesn't know what other option might exist for her. Mercedes and Fernand have a son, Albert, whom the Count befriends in Rome and who brings the Count back to Paris (in disguise), where he meets Mercedes again. Mercedes seems to know immediately that the Count is really her ancient love, Dantes, in disguise, but she does not address him as Edmond until very late in the novel—perhaps because she knows just how much Dantes has changed after his imprisonment. Although Mercedes and Dantes never reunite romantically, they reconcile in the closing chapters of the novel, after Dantes agrees not to harm Albert as part of his revenge on Fernand. Mercedes then pledges to live out her life quietly, as if she were a nun, in the city of her birth, Marseille.

Old Dantes / Dantes' Father – Old Dantes is Dantes' beloved father. After his son is thrown in prison for an indefinite amount of time, Old Dantes dies in poverty, despite Mercedes and Old Morrel trying to help. Old Dantes thinks only of his son, and he is a stoic figure who cannot eat when he knows his son is suffering, and who refuses all but the most meager of aid until the end of his life. Dantes vows to avenge his father's death once he escapes, and he eventually buys the apartment building in which his father died. He and Mercedes have their parting conversation in the room where his father once passed on in quiet agony.

Fernand (de Morcerf) – One of the plotters who places Dantes in prison, Fernand begins life as a lowly fisherman in the Catalan neighborhood of Marseille. He is Mercedes' cousin and he is desperately in love with her, all the more so because he recognizes that she is devoted to her intended, Dantes. Fernand is devastated by this, and he joins the imprisonment plot in order to foil their relationship so that he might have a chance with Mercedes, whom he goes on to marry. After their marriage, Fernand wins some renown in the French expeditionary armies of the post-Napoleonic era, and he steals money from the Ali Pasha in Turkey (for whom he was ostensibly fighting in the Greek wars) in order to boost his social status. Fernand uses this money to become a "Count," rendering Mercedes a "Countess," and his son Albert a Viscount. Fernand dies by his own hand after the Count exposes him as a perfidious fraud, and his wife and son leave Paris, with Albert joining the French army as an enlisted man, and Mercedes pledging herself to a life of pious solitude.

Albert (de Morcerf) – Fernand's and Mercedes's honorable son, Albert meets the Count of Monte Cristo in Rome and eventually befriends him, believing the Count to be one of the most interesting and mysterious men he has ever met. Albert invites the Count to visit him in Paris, not knowing that the Count was once betrothed to his mother, Mercedes, and that the Count has vowed revenge against Albert's father, Fernand. Albert becomes a great supporter of, and friend to, the Count in Paris. But when Albert believes that the Count is behind a supposed smear of his father's good name in the newspapers, he challenges the Count to a duel. Albert just as quickly retracts this challenge, however, refusing to fight the Count because he has learned that these smears against his father are true. Albert thus cultivates a nobility that his father lacks, and he vows to join the army to do what he can to bolster the family's name after his father's disgrace and suicide.

(Baron) Danglars – Another of the plotters, Danglars rises from the position of cargo manager on a ship to being an esteemed banker in Paris. He has made his fortune via financial speculation, and this is enough for him to gain renown across France and much of western Europe. Danglars considers himself to be on the same plane as the Rothschilds and other esteemed banking families, but when the Count comes to Paris, this lie unravels. By asking Danglars to give him "unlimited" credit (as the other famous banks have), the Count systematically begins a campaign to insinuate that Danglars's fortune is not so large as he claims—and, at the same time, to help erode that fortune by using various means to influence foreign markets and cause Danglars to lose his investments. By the end of the novel, the Count has entirely ruined Danglars and has thwarted Danglars' attempts to marry his daughter, Eugenie, to a wealthy family. Danglars is forced to barter away nearly all his money to escape the predations of Louis Vampa and his bandits.

M. de Villefort – The deputy crown prosecutor in Marseille at the start of the novel, Villefort condemns Dantes to prison after he realizes that Dantes could publicize Villefort's father's

relationship to Bonaparte. From the beginning, Villefort is ruthlessly devoted to his career, which is imperiled by his father's Bonapartist sympathies. His first marriage, to the Saint-Merans family, is designed to maximize Villefort's Royalist credentials (thereby counterbalancing his father's politics). When his first wife passes away, Villefort marries Heloise, believing that this, too, is a socially-prominent match. But as Villefort realizes that Heloise is **poisoning** members of the family so that their son Edouard will become sole heir to the family fortune (and when it is revealed that Villefort fathered a child with Hermine Danglars out of wedlock), he can no longer protect his family name. He is disgraced at court and falls into madness, just as Dantes wanted.

Caderousse – The most feckless of the conspirators, Caderousse is a jealous and cowardly man. He does not have the courage to stand up to the other plotters when Danglars initially condemns Dantes, nor is he willing to stand up to La Carconte, his wife, when she proposes that they swindle and murder the jeweler to whom they've sold a precious diamond. Caderousse later spends time in a penal colony, where he meets Benedetto/Andrea, whom he attempts to extort once he has escaped to Paris. The Count, disgusted at Caderousse's unwillingness to atone meaningfully for his mistakes, allows Bendetto to murder Caderousse after the two men attempt to rob the Count's home on the Champs-Elysees.

Abbe Faria – The Count's comrade in prison, Abbe Faria is extremely learned and wise, as he has worked for a noble family in Italy before being thrown into prison for supposed sympathy with the forces of independence in Italy. The Abbe has, for years, amused himself in prison by inventing useful objects, writing out his history of European politics, and dreaming up methods of escape, so that he might be able to access the fortune at **Monte Cristo**, which his Italian noble family bequeathed to him years ago. Faria finally meets Dantes and takes him under his wing, and when Abbe Faria dies, he advises Dantes to go to Monte Cristo and follow the Abbe's directions to find the fortune. Dantes only realizes at the end of the novel how thoroughly indebted he is to the Abbe's generosity of spirit and goodwill.

Old Morrel – The owner of the ship on which Dantes initially sails, and a father figure for Dantes, Old Morrel raises Dantes to captain of the vessel. Morrel cares for Dantes, and when the young man is thrown into prison, Morrel petitions Villefort to set him free (although Morrel does not know that Villefort, protecting his own interests, feels he must keep Dantes locked away). Old Morrel's firm later falls into near-bankruptcy, until it is saved by an agent, Lord Wilmore, from the firm of Thomson and French in Rome. Only later does the Count reveal that he himself posed as this Lord Wilmore as a means of repaying a debt of gratitude to the Morrel family for their supporting him as a young man.

Maximilien Morrel – Old Morrel's only son, Maximilien makes a career as a soldier, falls in love with Valentine de Villefort, and befriends the Count of Monte Cristo. Young Morrel is a man of great bravery and commitment: he vows, for example, to live with Valentine, even if it means giving up his career as a soldier and posing as a farmer, which he does on the semi-abandoned plot next to the Villefort's home. When the Count fakes Valentine's death so that Valentine might be saved from Mme de Villefort's cruel **poisonings**, young Morrel believes that his life is no longer worth living. But the Count asks him to persevere, eventually revealing to young Morrel that Valentine has been safely hidden on the island of **Monte Cristo**. The Count later bequeaths his fortune to the young couple.

Haydee – Haydee is the Count's "slave," whom he originally purchased in Constantinople because he knew she was the daughter of the Ali Pasha (who once knew Fernand). Haydee is devoted to the Count for saving her from imprisonment and torture. She lives a quiet life in the Count's home on the Champs-Elysées, and the Count allows her to get to know Albert, to whom she tells her sad story. Albert recognizes that his father, Fernand, has betrayed and murdered Haydee's father, the Ali Pasha, and this begins a chain of events leading to Fernand's suicide and the social ruin of the Morcerf family. Haydee and the Count later have a romantic relationship when the Count recognizes he has loved Haydee for years.

Julie Morrel and Emmanuel – Julie is Old Morrel's daughter and Emmanuel is his best, most devoted employee. Julie Morrel and Emmanuel marry and set up house in Paris, where the Count and Maximilien Morrel often visit them. Both are devoted to Lord Wilmore, agent of Thomson and French, whom they view as Old Morrel's savior after he sent along money that saved Morrel's firm from bankruptcy. Only much later in the novel do they realize that this "savior" was indeed their friend in Paris, the Count of Monte Cristo.

Baroness Hermine Danglars – Married to the Baron Danglars, Hermine Danglars once had an affair with Villefort that resulted in the birth of a child, Benedetto (now called Andrea Cavalcanti). Hermine, later, has an affair with the younger society lad, Lucien Debray, and leaves the Danglars home to live a life of quiet solitude that is a mirror of Mercedes' new, quiet life in Marseille.

Eugenie Danglars – Daughter of Hermine and the Baron Danglars, Eugenie is supposed to marry Albert de Morcerf, then Andrea Cavalcanti, but she winds up running away with her musician friend to live in a romantic relationship with her. Eugenie values her independence above all else, and she is a character who refuses some of the typical social expectations of marriage and children.

Mme Heloise de Villefort – The second wife of M. de Villefort, Heloise de Villefort is found guilty of **poisoning** members of the Villefort and Saint-Meran family in order to protect the interests of her son, Edouard. Heloise feels that Edouard will

not receive as much of an inheritance as her stepdaughter Valentine, and thus, tormented by this fact, she does all she can to eliminate family members who stand in her way. Heloise later kills Edouard and herself in a fit of despair after her husband uncovers her poisoning plot.

Valentine de Villefort – Daughter of M. de Villefort and his first wife, Valentine is the devoted companion of Maximilien Morrel, whom she later pledges to marry. Valentine is pledged again her wishes to Franz, a dashing nobleman of higher birth than young Morrel's. However, she pledges to follow her heart and remain steadfast to Maximilien.

M. de Noirtier-Villefort – Father of M. de Villefort, Noirtier-Villefort was a Bonapartist sympathizer now rendered mute by a stroke. He is a devoted grandfather to Valentine and does what he can to protect her from the predations of Heloise. Noirtier is also a supporter of young Morrel's petition to marry Valentine, and to this end, Noirtier reveals to Franz, her supposed suitor, that he (Noirtier) was responsible for the death of Franz's father.

Louis XVIII – The King of France at the start of the novel, "restored" to the throne after the French Revolution and the first reign of Napoleon Bonaparte. Louis XVII is portrayed in the text as an overeducated and distant ruler, who is not aware of Napoleon's return to France until it is too late to repel him at the border.

Major Cavalcanti – An elderly military man, of some social standing in Paris, who has believed for years that he has an unknown child out of wedlock. The Count arranges it so that Major Cavalcanti and "Andrea" Cavalcanti (really Benedetto, Bertuccio's son) sign a will together, making Andrea the Major's rightful son in legal terms. The Major and Andrea realize that this can't be true—that the Count has arranged these events for some obscure purpose—but because each is being paid under the arrangement, they assent to it anyway.

Boville – The former inspector of prisons in France, and now a leading charitable figure in the country. Danglars tries to swindle Boville when Danglars is nearly bankrupt, but the scheme fails, Danglars is caught by Luigi Vampa (with help from the Count), and Boville's money is restored to him and his charity.

Captain Leclere The captain of a ship on which, at the beginning of the novel, Dantes serves as first mate. Leclere dies of a fever while at sea, which many ways sets the plot of the novel in motion, in two ways. First, because his dying wish is for Dantes to deliver a letter to Elba (i.e. to the banished Napoleon). Second, because after Leclere's death it is Dantes who is named captain of the ship, and this excites the jealousy of those who eventually use the letter to frame and imprison Dantes.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Edouard de Villefort – Son of M. de Villefort and Heloise, Edouard is an insouciant young boy. He is eventually killed by his mother, who believes she is **poisoning** him to "protect him" from further danger.

Baron Franz D'Epinay – A young society man and friend of Albert's, Baron Franz D'Epinay meets the Count on the island of **Monte Cristo** and is later pledged to marry Valentine, although Noirtier-Villefort ends this engagement by revealing that he, long ago, killed Franz's father.

Ali – Another of the Count's "slaves," Ali is a silent and devoted follower of the Count's, greatly skilled in all manner of deeds, including horsemanship and adventuring.

Bertuccio – One of the Count's servants, Bertuccio, a Corsican, discovers Villefort's child, whom he has tried to bury. He later adopts the boy and raises him, naming him Benedetto.

Benedetto / Andrea Cavalcanti – The child born out of wedlock to Villefort and Hermine, Benedetto is raised by Bertuccio but turns ill, leading a life of crime until he passes in Parisian society as Andrea Cavalcanti—all this, before his real identity is revealed in court.

La Carconte – Wife to Caderousse, La Carconte plots with her husband to murder the jeweler who has appraised the diamond given to them by the Abbe Busoni.

Doctor D'Avrigny – Doctor to the Villefort household, D'Avrigny believes that there is a **poisoner** in the home, though initially he is unsure who it might be.

Renee Saint-Meran – Villefort's first wife, Renee Saint-Meran dies early in the novel, and M. de Villefort marries Heloise. Renee gives birth to Valentine, her only daughter.

The Saint-Meran Grandparents – The parents of Renee, they are ardent royalists, who support Louis XXVIII. They are beloved by Valentine. The Saint-Meran grandparents both die of strokes under suspicious circumstances, and Villefort later determines that Heloise has **poisoned** them.

Luigi Vampa – Originally a shepherd boy, Luigi Vampa becomes one of the most violent bandits in all of Italy, and he befriends the Count of Monte Cristo.

The Jeweler – Brought in to appraise the diamond the Abbe Busoni gives to Caderousse and La Carconte, the jeweler is later killed by the couple when he spends the night at their inn.

M. Pastrini – Host to Franz and Albert in the hotel in Rome, M. Pastrini later introduces the two men to the Count of Monte Cristo.

The Countess G – A society lady of Rome and Paris, the Countess G fears the Count of Monte Cristo, comparing him to ghoulish characters in the poems of Lord Byron.

Peppino – A lookout for Luigi Vampa, Peppino is saved from execution by the Count of Monte Cristo.

Chateau-Renaud – A society nobleman of Paris, Chateau-

Renaud is a friend of Albert de Morcerf's.

Beauchamp – A friend of Albert de Morcerf's, Beauchamp is a journalist, whose paper publishes a story decrying Fernand de Morcerf as a fraud and a cheat.

Lucien Debray – A friend of Albert de Morcerf's and a government employee, Lucien Debray is having a romantic affair with Hermine Danglars.

Napoleon Bonaparte – The former Emperor of France, who is in exile on the island of Elba when the novel begins, then returns to power for a "Hundred Days" of rule, and then is finally defeated at the Battle of Waterloo (while Dantes is imprisoned).

Jacopo – A sailor on the *Jeune-Amelie*, the boat that rescues Dantes after he has escaped from the Chateau D'If. Jacopo befriends Dantes because, although he does not know Dantes' true identity, he senses from the beginning that the young man has a "noble" air about him.

Captain Baldi – The captain of the *Jeune-Amelie*. Like Jacopo, Baldi also reveres Dantes, in part because Dantes is an extremely accomplished sailor. Baldi wonders if, in fact, Dantes has recently escaped from the Chateau D'If, but he says nothing to authorities, because Dantes is so valuable a worker on his vessel.

Cocles – A loyal employee of Old Morrel's. Cocles remains with the firm even after it suffers serious financial setbacks.

Gaetano – A guide and smuggler who works with the Count of Monte Cristo. Gaetano gives Franz a tour of the island of **Monte Cristo**, and arranges for Franz and the Count (who goes by the name of Sinbad the Sailor in this scene) to meet and dine together.

Teresa – The wife of Luigi Vampa, famed brigand of Rome. Teresa pretends to have fallen in love with Albert during Roman Carnival, thus luring Albert into Vampa's lair, where he is held for ransom (until being bailed out by the Count).

Cucumetto – A famed criminal in the Roman countryside when Luigi Vampa was a young man. Cucumetto kills his fellow criminal Carlini in a dispute over Carlini's mistress.

Carlini – A deputy in Cucumetto's band of criminals. Carlini kills his mistress after she is assaulted by Cucumetto, to "protect her honor." Carlini, in turn, is killed by Cucumetto for this deed.

Rita – Carlini's mistress. Cucumetto assaults Rita, and Carlini, despondent, kills Rita in what he considers an act of benevolence, since otherwise Rita would have been ostracized by her community.

Assunta – Wife to Bertuccio's deceased brother Benedetto. Assunta and Bertuccio later adopt the child Bertuccio finds buried in the garden at Auteuil, and they named this child Benedetto after Bertuccio's brother.

Olivia – The wife of Major Cavalcanti. Andrea pretends to believe that Olivia is in fact his biological mother in the scheme arranged by the Count, making the Major and Andrea legally father and son.

Baptistin – A loyal servant to the Count. Although the Count at one point tells Baptistin he knows that he steals from him on occasion, the Count considers this theft no more than the average amount for a Parisian servant. Baptistin, chastened, only increases his dutiful service to the Count.

The Notary – A Parisian official. Noirtier brings in the notary to amend his will, making it so that, if Valentine marries Franz, he will officially disinherit her. Valentine arranges this as the first step toward marrying Maximilien.

Barrois – A dutiful servant of the Villefort home. Barrois accidentally drinks from a pitcher that Mme de Villefort has poisoned, and dies, thus casting further suspicion on Mme de Villefort in the home.

Louise – The female companion to Eugenie Danglars. By the end of the novel, it is revealed that Eugenie and Louise are having a romantic relationship, and they wish to run off together to live outside France as a couple.

Penelon A loyal sailor of Morrel's.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

JUSTICE, REVENGE, AND GOD'S WILL

In *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Edmond Dantes finds himself imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, owing to the cowardice of four men: his jealous colleagues, Danglars, Fernand, and Caderousse, and the corrupt crown prosecutor Villefort, who falsifies Dantes' case to save his own career. Dantes' false imprisonment is devastating, because it steals from him all that he loves: his career success, his beloved fiancée, and even his kindness toward others, since he becomes vengeful in prison, vowing to ruin those who wronged him. However, while Dantes initially believes that his quest for vengeance is both just and aligned with God's will, he comes to realize—in some cases too late—that vengeance has unexpected consequences, including harming innocent people. Through following Dantes' complex revenge and the evolution of his thoughts on fate and morality, Dumas suggests that justice and revenge are not synonymous. A man who respects justice will not systematically seek retribution—instead, he will leave others to their fates, allowing

God to decide their punishment.

To exact his revenge, Dantes creates the character of the Count of Monte Cristo, whom numerous figures in the novel refer to as an "Avenging Angel" or as "Lord Ruthwen," a Dracula-like character. The avenging angel characterization suggests the righteous nature of his vengeance; Dantes' enemies committed an abhorrent sin against him and have, so far, lived unpunished. In this light, it seems justified that Dantes would seek retribution. Dantes himself justifies his revenge as simply taking "an eye for an eye" (ruining their lives as they've ruined his), which is a standard of justice found both in the Bible and in ancient Mesopotamian legal codes. Dantes' near-fatalistic assurance that he will achieve his goal of revenge imbues his vengeance with a sense of inevitability, as though he really were an "angel" carrying out a punishment that is divinely ordained.

However, describing Dantes as Dracula-like suggests the darker side of his quest for revenge, complicating the notion that revenge is synonymous with justice and that it can be considered God's will. While the Count is meticulous and effective in his revenge plots, leading him to successfully ruin his enemies' lives, he comes to realize that his vengeance has unintended consequences. For example, his plot to destroy the Villefort family leads Mme de Villefort to murder the innocent Edouard, ostensibly to protect her son from further harm. And Mercedes, his beloved fiancée from his youth, is hurt by the Count's revenge on her husband, Fernand, who was one of the men who sent the Count to prison. The Count, who believes that he must render "the shame of the father ... upon the son" (1018), intends to kill Fernand's son Albert as part of his vengeance, but Mercedes intervenes. When the Count realizes that, since Albert is also Mercedes' son, he would hurt the innocent Mercedes by killing Albert, the Count relents and leaves Albert to his own fate. Mercedes' intervention suggests that vengeance can never be tidy or just, because people are interconnected. Ruining any one man also devastates all those who love and depend on him, which only creates further wrongs to avenge.

Thus, the Count's attitude toward revenge and justice changes substantially by the close of the novel. At the beginning of chapter 113, "The Past," the narrator announces that, "since the death of little Edouard, a great change had overtaken Monte Cristo. Having reached the summit of his vengeance by the slow and tortuous route that he had followed, he had looked over the far side of the mountain and into the abyss of doubt." He remembers his love for Mercedes, the difficulties of his escape from prison, and all that he has worked for, and gained, via his wealth over the preceding ten years, including access to the world's cities and highest social strata. Later in that chapter, the Count returns to the prison at the Chateau D'If, where he was forced to live in the darkness of the dungeon for fourteen years, and there, having seen again evidence of some of the Abbe Faria's tools and ingenuity, he is reminded of that man's goodwill—the aid he provided young Dantes when he was on the verge of suicidal despair at the thought of his unjust imprisonment.

The Count therefore devotes the remainder of his life to two aims, believing that his desire for vengeance has run its course, and that instead he must do what he can to help those close to him to achieve their own fates, in accordance with the will of a God for whom, the Count realizes, he can no longer be an avenging angel. He tells young Morrel, son of his former boss (Old Morrel), that he will provide him with hope on the fifth of October—and on that day, he guarantees Morrel's fortune, making him inheritor of his enormous wealth, and reveals that he has spirited Valentine de Villefort away from her family and from her stepmother, who wished to **poison** and kill her. This, coupled with the Count's realization, in ch. 117, that he has for some time loved devotedly his former "slave" Haydee, produces a recalibration of his sense of justice, vengeance, and God's will. Here, what is just is not whatever squares the ledgers of the past. Instead, the Count, sailing off into the sunset with Haydee, looks to his own future happiness and to Morrel's happiness with Valentine. He has done what he can to insure both, in accordance with a will he hopes to be divine. But he recognizes that fate and justice will be served not by his human intervention, but by a future, ordered by God, which he cannot foretell.

CHANGES OF IDENTITY AND STATION

In *The Count of Monte Cristo*, people's identities often shift due to reversals of fortune and deliberate assumptions of disguises. Dantes' identity is the most in flux, as he is a master of disguise (living as the Count, the Abbe Busoni, Sinbad the Sailor, and Lord Wilmore) who also experiences two major reversals of fortune: his imprisonment, which steals his young life for fourteen years, and his finding the treasure of **Monte Cristo**, which makes him enormously wealthy. While Dantes' appearance changes as he assumes different identities and inhabits different social statuses, his core characteristics—a devotion to family and close friends, a love of learning about the cultures of the world, a physical skill and command of himself in difficult situations—remain the same. Therefore, Dumas uses Dantes' life to demonstrate two interdependent ideas about changing identity. First, that it *is* possible, in nineteenth-century Europe, to reinvent oneself through a combination of perseverance, hard work, luck, and intellectual application. And second, that despite changes in identity, people retain a core set of values—a sense of what is good and bad, what is morally acceptable and unacceptable—that tend not to change, even over the course of an adventurous, tumultuous life.

Like Dantes, many of the novel's primary characters undergo a change in identity, social status, or both. Mercedes becomes

the Countess de Morcerf, a wealthy Parisian; Benedetto the traitor assumes the guise of Andrea Cavalcanti, an Italian nobleman; and Danglars goes from a ship's cargo manager to one of the great bankers of Europe. That the characters' "social faces" and social statuses seem so malleable demonstrates that nineteenth-century France enabled surprising social mobility for those lucky and skilled enough to achieve it. The novel focuses on industries, such as banking, shipping, and manufacturing, which were newly available engines of middle-class wealth. Work in these industries fueled social mobility because it was accessible and potentially lucrative, allowing people who would once have been trapped in lower classes to "buy" titles and acquire vast estates, thereby changing a fundamental aspect of their identity: their social station.

Linked to this idea of changed social station is the idea that characters can put on various masks, or disguises, which can, for a time, allow them to trick others. Luigi Vampa, one of the most notorious crime leaders in all of Rome, is particularly adept at assuming disguises, as when he and his comrades trick Albert into giving them money during the Carnival sequence in Rome. Caderousse, for all his ineptitude at personal finance, is skilled at reinventing himself, first as an innkeeper, then as a petty criminal, then as a low-class workman, hiding out in Paris and blackmailing Benedetto. In perhaps the most daring "disguise" in the novel, the Count makes it seem as though Valentine de Villefort has died by slipping her a potion of opium and hashish, thus allowing him to spirit her away from the Villefort home, to insure she can marry young Morrel safely, once removed to Marseille and then to **Monte Cristo**. These disguises, more temporary and improvised than larger-scale changes of social station, nevertheless allow characters to achieve their goals and to work within the malleable systems of identity available to them in the France of the mid-1800s.

While many characters believe that their changes of social status and identity affect their whole being, the novel suggests that, underneath, the changed characters are the same people they always were. For example, Dantes gives Caderousse—the most reluctant of Dantes' betrayers—numerous opportunities to mend his ways, and prove himself morally superior than the scheme he participated in hatching. When, in the guise of the Abbe Busoni, Dantes visits Caderousse at his inn, he indeed gives him a very valuable diamond after speaking with him, believing that Caderousse, though too weak, ineffectual, and intoxicated to stop the plot created by Danglars and executed by Fernand, nonetheless feels guilt and shame over his past cowardice. But Caderousse cannot become the person that Dantes hopes, since his greed and envy are fundamental to his character.

Likewise, the Count goes to great pains to show, in uncovering the secrets of Fernand's past, that Fernand used his connections with the Ali Pasha in Greece to sell him to the Turks and make an enormous profit, thus launching him into titled Parisian society. Despite Fernand's great rise in Paris, he commits suicide rather than submit to the legal and social consequences of his previous lies and treachery. This proves that, despite his shifting appearances, he remains cowardly and weak-willed at heart. Similarly, Villefort, who out of cowardice keeps Dantes in prison to avoid the revelation of his own father's Bonapartism, cannot, despite his success as a prosecutor, overcome this fundamental weakness. This weakness, indeed, is revealed in Villefort's behavior toward Hermine Danglars and toward their child out of wedlock, later known to be Benedetto. Villefort would rather have the child die than see his own reputation ruined. Villefort's cowardice remains a constant, as even during the **poisonings** in his own home he is too nervous about the appearance of criminality to stop the woman, his second wife, who commits these crimes. And Villefort succumbs to madness out of a persistent, crippling cowardice, complicated by the revelation of his past misdeeds and the resultant societal shaming he undergoes, publicly, in the court.

Just as Dumas suggests that status-changes do not affect a person's fundamental character, he implies that they also cannot redeem the past. In other words, even good and rewarding changes in characters' circumstances or identity do not erase the truth of what they've been through, or what they most want. The Count, for example, receives a fine education while in prison and comes into fabulous wealth once he escapes, but this tremendous good fortune—which would never have happened had he not been falsely imprisoned—does not erase his grief over what his imprisonment took from him. Similarly, Mercedes, who is honorable and steadfast, makes one significant error in life—marrying Fernand—and yet she must pay for it eternally, as her marriage means that she can never have the happy life she imagined with Dantes, even when he returns. Thus, the book suggests that even the most advantageous changes of station and identity can neither change someone's personality nor rectify his or her past.

LOVE, DEVOTION, AND REDEMPTION

The Count of Monte Cristo is a story of revenge and redemption, but Dumas presents both revenge and redemption as being motivated by love. At the beginning of the novel, Dantes is about to marry his love, Mercedes, but the jealousy of those around him leads him to be falsely imprisoned on his betrothal day, which takes away his young life and thwarts his romantic fulfillment. Dantes is also a dutiful son to his loving father, Old Dantes, and Dantes recognizes, too, that his relationship to Old Morrel, the owner of the vessel on which he sails, is one of paternal and loving devotion. After escaping from the prison at the Chateau D'If, Dantes, as the Count of Monte Cristo, spends years exacting revenge on those who have betrayed him, but this does not return to him the happy life that was once in his grasp. Instead,

Dantes' life is only redeemed once he accepts romantic love from Haydee, a more platonic and friendly love for Mercedes, and a familial love with young Morrel and his intended, Valentine.

Dantes loses a great deal in being wrongfully imprisoned—his freedom of movement, his career—but most devastatingly, he also loses, for a time, the loving bonds that tie him to others. In this sense, Dumas understands Dantes' loving relationships to his father, Mercedes, and Old Morrel as standing in for all the happiness that might have been his, had he not had the misfortune to run afoul of the jealous and cowardly Danglars, Caderousse, Villefort, and Fernand. And love, Dumas's central indicator of happiness, is not exclusive to Dantes, either. It is Fernand's loving devotion to Mercedes that prompts him to go along with the treacherous plot that allows him to eventually marry her and move with her to Paris.

During his time in prison, Dantes convinces himself that his purpose should be to exact *revenge* on those who have wronged him. But this desire occludes Dantes', and then the Count's, loving devotion to Mercedes, Old Dantes, Old Morrel, and especially the Abbe Faria, whose help and teachings in prison save Dantes's life, allow him to learn the languages and philosophies of the world, and grant him access to the treasures of **Monte Cristo**. On his release from prison, Dantes, disguised as the Count and Sinbad the Sailor, is able to visit the room where his father lived, to find Mercedes in Paris, and to relieve a substantial banking debt of Old Morrel's. But these aims, motivated as they are by love and devotion to the most important people in his life prior to prison, are overshadowed by his desire to seek out Caderousse and test him, and to punish and publicly humiliate Danglars, Fernand, and Villefort, whom he views as his mortal enemies. Dantes' urge for revenge keeps him from seeing love as an avenue for personal redemption.

The Count's study of the world's mechanisms of revenge, which he explains to Albert de Morcerf and his friend Franz during their time together at Roman carnival, becomes more important to the Count than the forging of new relationships of love and care. But the Count, in his life as an "avenging angel," does indeed form these relationships. Although he initially purchases Haydee as his "slave" because she is the daughter of the Ali Pasha, and thus a source of information about Fernand's treacheries in the Greek wars, he comes to fall in love with Haydee, witnessing her devotion to him, and the joy and care with which she lives in his home. And although he is at first only fascinated by young Morrel's posititon in French society, and later by his betrothal to Valentine, Villefort's daughter, he comes to love and care for these two on their own terms, as people important to him in his new life. The Count believed, after his release from prison, that he could never love again—yet his burgeoning relationships with Haydee, young Morrel, and Valentine point to a new place for love and redemption in his changed, post-prison life.

After Fernand's suicide, and the Count's realization that his desire for pure vengeance has caused him to misunderstand the relationship between justice and God's will, the Count meets with Mercedes in Marseille, and realizes that he loves her now, but in a new way. Their relationship can no longer be the same: Mercedes did, after all, marry Fernand, owing to that man's treachery, and the possibility of their young life together was destroyed. But the Count, in his final conversation with Mercedes, recognizes that he is devoted to her as an emblem of goodness and care experienced in the past, and as a person who remembers *him* as Dantes, a man he can no longer be outwardly, but the man at the root of his moral identity today. This devotion, along with recollected love for Old Dantes and Old Morrel, joins with the Count's acceptance of new possibilities in love. Thus, in realizing his newly-forged love for Haydee, and in making young Morrel and Valentine the heirs to his vast fortune, the Count goes about re-creating, in love and care, the family that was taken from him so cruelly as a young man. And he does this through the continued recognition of, and reflection on, his platonic love for Mercedes, a figure devoted to the memory of their once-shared love. Although the Count cannot redeem his romantic love for Mercedes, he *can* express devotion to her in their changed, platonic circumstances; and he can redeem *himself*, through transferring that loving care to his new family—Haydee, Morrel, and Valentine.

DEBT AND GRATITUDE

Dumas plays on two senses of the word "debt" in the novel: the first is money owed, and the second is a debt of gratitude, or a sense that one's behavior follows from, or is informed by, the good graces of another. Financial debts in the novel offer opportunities for great gains in wealth, and also for ruin of one's reputation—but they are, in either case, debts that are easy to comprehend and straightforward to repay. Emotional debts, on the other hand, prove far more difficult in the novel, for, as the Count realizes, much has changed in his and others' lives in the twenty years since he was a young man. This means he cannot always repay directly the people to whom he was once emotionally indebted, and must go about creating new family structures of care and concern in which emotional debt—debts of gratitude—can be formed and nurtured.

Debt and financial speculation are important aspects of the novel's many subplots: the Count develops his income by placing it in various banking concerns, including the shadowy firm of Thomson and French; Danglars invests heavily in foreign interests and finds that, owing to the Count's machinations, his fortunes dwindle and debts rise; and Caderousse finds himself financially ruined owing to various debts, which, as an innkeeper, he cannot repay. These debts

form the economic under-layer of the novel. Debt, in this financial sense, is an indication of middle-class interests at the time—with the "middle class" signifying those who do not make money from land or inheritance, but rather create wealth from financial speculation, from gambling on the French and European stock and bond markets. This speculation, when it is successful, can allow middle class families like the Danglars to "purchase" a title, as Danglars "creates" himself Baron by buying this name from the French government. And financial speculation, when it goes poorly, can be ruinous for the middle class, because they do not, generally speaking, have the same land-stocks nobles do, which would allow their wealth to be passed down to future generations with more stability.

More powerful than these financial interests, however, are the *emotional* debts characters experience. The Count feels he is indebted to Old Morrel, who gave him his start as a sailor, and so the Count believes he should do all he can, when he leaves prison, to help Old Morrel, who finds himself saddled with outstanding financial debts. The Count pays off these debts as a way of making clear the perceived *emotional* debt he feels to Old Morrel. Yet the Count does not believe that this repayment can take the place of, or entirely make up for, the emotional debt he feels toward the man. Similarly, Haydee and Ali, saved from death by the Count overseas, are so personally indebted to him as to consider themselves his "slaves." Haydee, especially, feels that, because the Count enabled her to find a stable home after the death of her father, she owes her life to him, and this feeling, which begins as an economic arrangement of "purchase," turns into an emotional debt that becomes the springboard for romantic love between the two. And the Count, on his return to the Chateau D'If ten years after his release, understands that the Abbe Faria has given him, in a sense, two things, one far more valuable than the other: the map to the fortune at **Monte Cristo**, and the tools necessary to become an accomplished and learned man of the world. Although the Count uses this fortune to exact his revenge, and then bequeaths it to young Morrel and Valentine, he comes to realize how important Faria's teaching was for him—how this created an emotional debt the Count must somehow repay in life.

If Dumas demonstrates that emotional debts are more lasting than financial debts, he also shows that emotional debts are more difficult to repay. After all, the Count really can remove Old Morrel from financial difficulties by paying his debts; he really can give a diamond to Caderousse to help him settle with his creditors (only to realize, later, that Caderousse is a treacherous man, unworthy of this repayment). But emotional debts cannot be repaid in this way because people and circumstances change. The Count cannot return the care and worry his father has expended on his behalf, because his father has died during Dantes' imprisonment. The Count cannot repay the emotional debt of romantic love Mercedes felt for him, because Mercedes did in fact marry, and have a son with, Fernand. The Count cannot keep Old Morrel from dying, nor can he bring back the Ali Pasha, Haydee's father. These emotional disturbances cannot be set straight the same way that one's financial accounts can.

But the Count realizes that there is a solution to this problem of emotional debt. If he cannot repay it exactly as it used to stand because circumstances have changed, he can find a way to pay *forward* the care and aid he has received, to those around him. Thus he gives his fortune to young Morrel and to Valentine to create a new emotional bond, and to hearken back to all that Old Morrel once did for him. He can also educate young Morrel and Valentine, teaching them all he has learned of the world and its cultures, in emotional repayment of all that the Abbe Faria taught him. And he can establish a new, loving life with Haydee, even though he cannot bring her father back from the dead.

Thus, financial debts in the novel can be repaid, as in the case of Old Morrel, or they can be lasting and damaging, as when Danglars loses his entire fortune to financial speculation. In the case of Danglars, the financial debt incurred is a proxy for an unpayable emotional debt—for Danglars' treachery was so horrid, according to the structure of justice in the novel, that he would eventually be forced to answer for it. But debts of gratitude, emotional debts, are positive, constructive, and affirming—they create bonds of connectedness between characters and across generations. One need not "repay" an emotional debt, because it establishes a link between figures, and a ground on which love and happiness can be constructed. Thus there is no need for the Count to "settle up" his emotional debts with the Abbe Faria, or with Mercedes, or with his own father. Instead, he can create new, affirming relationships of emotional exchange with Haydee, young Morrel, and Valentine, the members of his chosen family.

THE DOMESTIC AND THE FOREIGN

European life in the nineteenth-century depended on global trade. As a result, the fabric of European culture and society was shaped by the goods and services, and the cultural and political systems, of other European nations and of foreign lands. The constant mixing of cultures both near and far is a fixture of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and its setting and characters are shown to be hybrids of different cultures simply by virtue of being European. The characters' relationships to the Near and Far East, and to more proximate "foreign" places like **Monte Cristo**, therefore demonstrate that otherness was a central part of European domestic life.

Dantes was born and raised in Marseille, a port city that, though French, reflects significant Spanish influence and has a constant influx of foreign cultures through the port. It's fitting,

then, that Dantes takes on a career as a sailor, broadening his exposure to the global influences with which he was brought up, before being imprisoned and taught languages, philosophy, and world history, which makes him even more cosmopolitan than he was before.

Dantes' sense, which he developed at a very young age, that Europe is simultaneously foreign and domestic is reflected in his disguise as the Count of Monte Cristo. In a time when foreign culture is the height of domestic fashion in Paris, and when foreign wealth is a primary source of domestic revenue in western Europe, Dantes becomes an indispensable part of Parisian society by proclaiming that he is the only nobleman of Monte Cristo, an unpeopled island in the middle of the Mediterranean, visited mostly by sailors and smugglers, men who pledge no allegiance to any one country or code. Therefore, the Count's disguise can be seen as an exaggerated way of fitting in—a reflection of European cultural hybridity that allows him to hide in plain sight.

Dantes' adopted home of Monte Cristo is also significant in that it evokes Napoleon, the great historical exemplar of the interconnectedness of "domestic" and "foreign" life. The island of Monte Cristo is near the island of Napoleon's birth, Corsica, and the island of his exile, Elba. That Dantes is seen by French society as being simultaneously European and foreign parallels the French view of Napoleon. Though Corsica is a French island, its distance from the mainland and its Italian-influenced culture made Napoleon seem not-quite-French to the French, though he still became the foremost example of the French imperial spirit in action abroad. Dantes' disguise as the Count is therefore indebted to this Napoleonic spirit, in which a culturally-hybrid European can rise to great power—after all, Monte Cristo is a place both close to Europe and, somehow, beyond the ken of European civilization, an island Dantes can credibly claim to rule as his own fiefdom.

In addition to the exoticism conferred on Dantes through his association with far-flung European lands, Dantes' disguise also has an Orientalist inflection, through his invocation of the languages and practices of, and in literary and religious allusions to, the Near and Far East. French society in the 1800s was familiar with life in the Near and Far East primarily through fictional accounts, such as the *1,001 Arabian Nights*, and through interaction with foreign cultures via trade. Thus the Count's adoption of the dress, manners, and decors of the East is a nod to both these cultural discourses. For the Count was, after all, a sailor in his young life, and the port of Marseille leads to the farthest-flung cities of the world, engaging with them through merchant trade of goods and services. And, as in the decoration of his cave at Monte Cristo, the Count can use the stories of the *1,001 Nights* as a cover—to render mysterious the source of his wealth, and to make visitors feel that they are not on a rocky island off the coast of Europe, but on foreign shores many thousands of miles away. After all, the *1,001 Nights* are as much a European as they are a Middle Eastern sensation—in their rendering of the lives, loves, and outrageous acts of peoples believed to be foreign, these tales, referenced by the Count in his persona of "Sinbad the Sailor," become, in the 1800s, central narratives of European art, literature, and culture. The Count thus uses the complexities of this persona as a means of making himself well-known in Parisian society: famous but unreachable, otherworldly but omnipresent, easy to encounter yet impossible to comprehend. And it is his knowledge of Parisian life, gained by virtue of the sensation his "foreignness" makes among the wealthy, that allows him to effect his revenge, to establish bonds of love and devotion, and to accept that the past is closed—that he must forge a new life and family for himself.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

MONTE CRISTO

The island of Monte Cristo (which is a real place: a small, rocky island in the Mediterranean) is the location of the hidden Italian fortune that makes Dantes wealthy. Dumas uses the island to represent shifting identities and the isolation from society that makes such transformations possible. Finding the treasure immediately confers status on Dantes—he fashions his own title, the "Count" of Monte Cristo, in response to his newfound wealth—but the island also represents a more complex transformation than simple class mobility. Dantes creates on the island an underground hideout loosely based on the legends of the *1,001 Arabian Nights*. This Orientalist inspiration informs Dantes' character of the Count, who professes to appreciate the culture of the Middle East, and its penchant for brutal, "eye-for-an-eye" revenge, more than he does the cultures of France and Italy, where he spends the majority of his time. Thus Monte Cristo becomes a place in the West that is removed from the West—"Eastern" in its influences, accoutrements, and signification. Just as it is for the smugglers who use it as a port, Monte Cristo becomes, for Dantes, a secret place close to France in which he can feel entirely apart from France.

POISON

Poison and the act of poisoning also feature in the novel, and when they do, they have a dual symbolic function. Poison in *The Count of Monte* Cristo can refer to a chemical used to harm another person, *and* it can refer to an *emotional* poisoning—when an idea, such as revenge, warps a character's personality and behaviors. In both cases, poisoning

is a complex phenomenon, for as Dumas presents it, any "poison," whether a chemical or an idea, can be *helpful* in certain smaller doses—insofar as it inoculates against future harm—and *dangerous* in larger doses. Poisons can steel characters for difficult circumstances—until those poisons overwhelm them and *become* the difficult circumstance that figure must withstand or overcome.

In prison, the Abbe Faria demonstrates to Dantes that a small red tincture, which he uses as medicine, can ward off instances of stroke, to which he is prone. This chemical, as Dantes later finds out during his travels in the East, is called "brucine," and it is a poison. In large doses, brucine can actually *cause* stroke. Thus brucine is a perfect example of a dangerous chemical that, in small-to-moderate amounts, allows a person to build up physical strength. But in large doses, brucine can shut down the body and cause death. Noirtier encourages Valentine to take small amounts of brucine when he finds out that Mme de Villefort is using that poison in large quantities to harm others in the house.

On the emotional side, the Count's life after prison is poisoned by the idea of revenge. In small "doses," this desire for revenge can seem righteous, and indeed the Count executes his vengeance against Villefort, Caderousse, Danglars, and Fernand with great vigor, believing as he does so that his sense of moral outrage is purifying and self-justifying. But this cleansing process, when taken to extremes, misaligns his ethical compass. For, as Mercedes warns him at the close of the novel, he has very nearly harmed people like Albert, or herself, in his attempts to damage the lives and reputations of people like Fernand. And in allowing Mme de Villefort to continue her campaign of poisoning in order to ruin the Villefort house, the Count discovers that she has also murdered her own son, Edouard, who was innocent of any wrongdoing. It is only through the countervailing power of love, for Maximilien, Valentine, and Haydee, that the Count is able to dismiss the more poisonous aspects of revenge, no matter how ethical and deserved. In rejecting vengeance and embracing love, the Count begins a new life in the novel's final chapter, free of the poisonous intoxications of violence.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin edition of *The Count of Monte Cristo* published in 2003.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ Come, now ... I have a better opinion than you of women in general, and Mercedes in particular, and I am persuaded that, whether I were a captain or not, she would remain faithful to me.

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor) (speaker), Mercedes (de Morcerf), Caderousse

Related Themes:

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

Dantes insists to Caderousse that, although it has been rumored that Mercedes has been spending a good deal of time with Fernand, Dantes is not worried about it – because Mercedes has told Dantes she is betrothed to him. Dantes therefore indicates that he trusts Mercedes, and that, in turn, he believes her to be faithful. At this stage of the novel, Dantes is not suspicious of anyone, especially those close to him, and instead chooses to see the good qualities in people. For example, he even has kind words to report to Morrel about Danglars, although Danglars is beginning to plot against Dantes out of jealousy.

This interaction is also rich with foreshadowing. As will be detailed later on in the plot, Mercedes does not in fact remain faithful to Dantes, but instead goes on to marry Fernand. Of course, there are other circumstances at play: Mercedes believes that Dantes has been thrown in prison forever, or even that he's no longer alive. But this statement sets Dantes up as someone who believes only goodness and happiness lies before him. Soon, however, he and the reader will discover just how many bad things can happen to one young man with crafty enemies.

Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ Come on, come on ... I think that the matter is properly under way now, and all we have to do is to let it take its course.

Related Characters: (Baron) Danglars (speaker), Caderousse

Related Themes:

Page Number: 39

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Danglars tells Caderousse that the letter he has drafted, indicating that Dantes is part of a plot to overthrow the French king, will have its effect. That effect, as Danglars initially described it to Caderousse and Fernand, is to make sure that Dantes winds up in prison. Caderousse has been a passive participant in this plot since its inception, as he's become very drunk on red wine.

Danglars is the brains behind the plot, but he is careful in this scene to entice Fernand into wanting to "steal" the letter, which Danglars appears to want to discard. Fernand, Danglars suspects, will then deliver the letter somehow to the authorities—this is the "course" of the note to which he refers.

This quotation is central to the narrative for several reasons. First, Danglars, as he demonstrates here, is the prime mover in the plot, and he uses Caderousse as a sounding-board and Fernand as an envoy as he attempts to put Dantes in prison. Second, Danglars points to an important theme in the novel: that events will work themselves out, and that there is a plan, ordained by God, that determines how events will go. Of course, Danglars only feels comfortable saying this because he has *orchestrated* events so that they appear to proceed as if by accident, or because they have been executed by other people (like Fernand). But there is nothing to mistake: Danglars is the master-plotter, and this is his idea. This relationship between "fate" and human activity will be later developed during Dantes's revenge plot, when he, too, arranges events with such complexity that he does not appear to be the revenge-seeker at all, but merely a passive observer.

Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ The king! I thought him enough of a philosopher to realize that there is no such thing as murder in politics. You know as well as I do, my dear boy, that in politics there are no people, only ideas; no feelings, only interests. In politics, you don't kill a man, you remove an obstacle, that's all.

Related Characters: M. de Noirtier-Villefort (speaker), Louis XVIII, M. de Villefort

Related Themes:

Page Number: 107

Explanation and Analysis

Noirtier explains to Villefort his view of political engagement. Noirtier is a Girondist—a former supporter of the French revolution, and Napoleon—and Villefort, his son, is loyal to the current Royalist government. But there are additional differences between these two men. Here, Noirtier seems to be saying that political principle is not so important as a person finding the particular end that he or she seeks, whatever the means. In other words, it is only idealistic—or even fanciful—to say that a political killing is murder, or that one is passionate about one's ruler, or that one respects the rule of law and the dignity of persons. More important to Noirtier is the stated outcome: that the *obstacle* be removed. This makes Noirtier a more practical figure, whereas in this example, Villefort seems to care most about the ideal of serving his king.

Interestingly, however, these positions will modify somewhat as the book continues. For Villefort finds that his political convictions—to the Royalist cause, in this case—are less important than the protection of his own power. He will do what he can throughout the rest of the novel to make sure that he remains crown prosecutor, no matter who's in power in Paris. Thus Villefort appears to take a page out of his father's book, and to value the removal of obstacles in his own career over any larger, more abstract or philosophical ideas about law and government. And Noirtier becomes fiercely attached and loyal to his granddaughter Valentine, going so far as to intercede on her behalf so she can marry the man she loves, Maximilien Morrel. In this sense, Noirtier comes to defend an ideal of romantic love over the more practical concerns of money and power that usually surround noble marriages. He becomes, in other words, a different sort of man than he was at the beginning of the novel.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ Finally, do you realize that I thought my labors were at an end, that I felt I had just enough strength to complete the task, and that God has now not only set back my goal but removed it, I know not where? Oh, let me tell you, and repeat it: I shall not take another step to try and regain my freedom, since God's will is for me to have lost it for ever.

Related Characters: Abbe Faria (speaker), Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 152

Explanation and Analysis

The Abbe has been working for many years to dig a tunnel out of his prison cell. He tells Dantes that he once believed this tunnel to go from his cell to the outer wall of the prison, thus enabling his search for freedom. But now he realizes that he has only tunneled into Dantes's cell, which has resulted in friendship with the young man, but has dashed his dreams of escape. The Abbe here describes in real time how he responds to this news. He seems to have settled on the idea that it is God's will that he remain in prison; that is,

it isn't worth trying to escape if that escape is not fated to happen. The Abbe indicates to Dantes that whatever God wants will, in the end, come to pass.

This passage foreshadows a great deal of the remainder of the novel, which will deal in the relationship between God's will and the events, accidents, and scandals of life in Paris. For the Abbe appears to be saying that, though he has made the choice to try to escape from prison and to do his best to find a way to freedom, there must be a higher power who either wants or does not want this to happen. While another man might call this luck or chance, the Abbe believes that God stands behind it. This will be mirrored, later in the text, by Dantes's attitude toward his own revenge: Dantes believes he is doing God's will by punishing those who plotted against him. This means that Dantes feels he is enacting something beyond himself, more powerful than himself, in bringing down misfortune on those who have harmed him previously.

Chapter 17 Quotes

❝ I regret having helped you in your investigation and said what I did to you ...

Why is that?

Because I have insinuated a feeling into your heart that was not previously there: the desire for revenge ...

Let us change the subject.

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor), Abbe Faria (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 168

Explanation and Analysis

The Abbe has helped Dantes to figure out that Danglars, Fernand, Villefort, and Caderousse were involved in the plot to place him in prison in the Chateau D'If. After hearing this, Dantes goes off into his cell for a while, before returning to begin his schooling with the Abbe. The Abbe is nervous that, in instilling in Dantes the desire for revenge, he will alter the course of Dantes's life, especially if Dantes is ever able to escape from prison. And Dantes, ominously in this section, does not admit to what is in his heart: that he is already beginning to plot the complex web of revenge that will come to dominate much of the rest of the novel. For now, those plans remain silent, but Dantes is beginning to change into a different type of character.

Revenge is, of course, one of the central themes and ideas of the novel. Revenge animates the rest of Dantes life after fourteen years in the dread Chateau D'If, and he will stop at very little to make sure that Danglars, et al, are punished for what they've done to him. Although Dantes, through his alter ego the Count of Monte Cristo, makes quite a stir in Paris, and demonstrates great wit, courage, and cunning among the social elite, all this he does to become closer with Danglars, Villefort, and Fernand, and to insure they are punished. In short, revenge takes over Dantes' life, as Mercedes will later explain, and causes him to harm innocent people, in a manner that the Abbe Faria never would have condoned. Although the Abbe will not live to see these effects of Dantes' revenge, he nevertheless appears to earnestly regret the process he has set in motion by helping Dantes to understand the secrets of the plot against him.

Chapter 20 Quotes

❝ Die! No, no! It was not worth living so long, and suffering so much, to die now. Death was welcome previously, when I made a resolution to meet it ... But now it would truly be conceding too much to my miserable fate. No, I want to live, I want to struggle to the end.

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 197

Explanation and Analysis

At this point in the novel, Dantes finds himself alone in prison once again. The Abbe Faria has succumbed to his third seizure, and Dantes is reminded of the time at the Chateau D'If before he knew the Abbe, when he thought all was lost, and suicide was the only option for him. In that previous case, Dantes heard the scratching on his prison wall and encountered the Abbe, thus resolving to live longer and to enjoy human companionship in prison. But in this situation, Dantes realizes that the Abbe can no longer help him, that he might in fact be alone for good.

With that said, however, Dantes remembers what he and the Abbe talked about: that, to escape from the Chateau, one would need a good plan and also a significant amount of luck. Dantes realizes that this is his opportunity to escape. Although it seems that his fate was to rot away in prison, he's now been offered what feels like a divine chance to slip

out unnoticed. And though it would be tempting to dismiss this plan as a fantasy, and to give in to despondency, Dantes instead decides he will take his chance, follow the guidance of the Abbe whom he loves, and try courageously to escape.

Chapter 24 Quotes

❝ Then he began to count his fortune. There were a thousand gold ingots, each of two or three pounds. Next to these, he piled 25,000 gold ecus, each worth perhaps twenty-four francs in today's money ... Finally, he measured ten times the capacity of his joined hands in pearls, precious stones and diamonds ...

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 235

Explanation and Analysis

This marks the beginning of Dantes' change of station, for he has finally found the Abbe Faria's long-rumored fortune, buried on the island of Monte Cristo. At first, Dantes makes sure he has counted everything accurately, and as the magnitude of the fortune sinks in for him, he begins to realize just what might be possible for him. He was once a promising young first mate on his way toward marriage and a promotion to captain. Then he was thrown in prison for a crime he did not commit. But now, after a combination of skill and good fortune, Dantes finds himself capable of crafting the life of his dreams – so long as he can protect the fortune he has just found.

As has already been hinted in the novel, and will become clear as it progresses, Dantes intends to use this money to establish long-running, complex plans for revenge. This revenge will be directed at those who have wronged him in the first place – those who pretended he was a criminal to ruin his life for their own personal ends. Although Villefort, Danglars, Caderousse, and Fernand do not yet know it, the discovery of this fortune, and the elation that Dantes experiences, will come to haunt them over the ensuing months. Dantes will use this money to craft a series of revenge plots so accomplished and complex that the characters in Dantes' sights will only understand that the plots have been hatched when they are already ensnared within them. Thus, Dantes's discovery of the fortune is a mixture of elation at his good luck and determined, vengeful resolve to punish those who have wronged him.

Chapter 27 Quotes

❝ Monsieur ... they had both made me drink until I was almost senseless. Everything was blurred. I protested as much as a man can in such a state, but they assured me it was a joke they were playing and that nothing would come of it.

Related Characters: Caderousse (speaker), Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 258

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Caderousse claims that he is not responsible for the crime that was committed against Dantes and plotted by Danglars and Fernand. Caderousse's excuse is that he was too drunk to be a meaningful part of this plot – instead, he merely looked on without doing anything to stop it. This last point is an important one. For Caderousse, in this section, admits that he did not have the courage to intercede on Dantes's behalf, to address the wrong he knew was about to be committed against him. But Caderousse insists that he was immediately regretful of the plot when he came to the next day, and that he has felt guilty about it since that moment. Caderousse also believes he has since been punished by fate for this lack of courage, and that this punishment includes the financial ruin that has befallen the inn he runs with La Carconte.

The Abbe Busoni, for his part, appears willing to entertain Caderousse's ideas of his own half-innocence. The Abbe, really Dantes in disguise, seems to accept that Caderousse, though guilty of not doing more, is also not as guilty as Danglars and Fernand, who actively participated in and crafted the plot to make sure Dantes wound up in prison. This demonstrates that, for Dantes, there are shades of gray between innocence and complete guilt. Even though Caderousse does not come out of this episode unstained with the crime, he is nevertheless guilty of a different kind of sin than are Danglars and Fernand.

Chapter 30 Quotes

❝ And now ... farewell, goodness, humanity, gratitude ... Farewell all those feelings that nourish and illuminate the heart! I have taken the place of Providence to reward the good; now let the avenging God make way for me to punish the wrongdoer!

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor) (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 300

Explanation and Analysis

Dantes remarks this aloud after making sure that, in the guise of Sinbad the Sailor, he has provided enough money and a new boat to Morrel, so that his company might continue to operate. Dantes has already given a jewel to Caderousse, believing that the innkeeper is seriously willing to amend his ways and contrite for his lack of courage during the plot against Dantes. And here, Dantes wants to bolster the good-standing of Old Morrel in and around Marseille, where he has long retained a reputation for scrupulous accounting.

It is important to note the many consequences of Dantes's actions here. First, he has allowed Morrel to continue in business, and thus to employ more sailors and the rest of his family. Second, he has saved the members of Morrel's family, including the young Maximilien Morrel, a soldier, from the ill-fame they would have garnered as children of a bankrupt man. And third, he has allowed Morrel to keep at the job he loves: funding mercantile expeditions around the world. Just as Dantes believes his own life and professional livelihood were taken away from him when Danglars and the others plotted to throw him in prison, Dantes wants to ensure that Morrel can keep the job he loves, and around which his life is constructed. The turning point of this passage is also arresting, as from this point forward, Dantes vows to train his sights on criminals and evil-doers – to go from being a generous to an avenging angel, carrying out what he believes to be divine orders of punishment.

Chapter 38 Quotes

❝ What country does the Count come from? What is his language? What are his means of support? Where does his huge fortune come from? What was the first half of this mysterious and unknown life, that it has cast over the second half such a dark and misanthropic shadow?

Related Characters: Baron Franz D'Epinay (speaker), Albert (de Morcerf)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 435

Explanation and Analysis

After Albert agrees to meet with the Count in Paris a few months later, and to show him around polite Parisian society, Franz pulls his friend aside and asks him these questions. Franz has been nervous from the start about the Count, after he has put together that the Count must be the same man as the mysterious Sinbad the Sailor, whom he met and took drugs with on the island of Monte Cristo. And Franz seems particularly upset by the Count's obsession with instruments of revenge, as demonstrated by the Count's avid watching of the execution that takes place just before the Roman Carnival. To Franz, these represent part of the mysterious backstory of the Count – and are therefore important for him and for Albert to understand if they are to continue to fraternize with the Count in Paris.

But for Albert, these details do not matter. Indeed, Albert believes that his friend is being nosy in inquiring into the Count's past, and he wonders later if it wouldn't be just as possible for someone to inquire into the past of Albert's family (which Albert believes to be of perfectly noble stock). Franz's unsettledness foreshadows a very real feature of the Count's backstory – that he is, of course, Dantes, seeking revenge on the plotters in Paris. And this passage also foreshadows the idea that Albert could, or should, have something to be nervous about regarding his own family's history. Although at this point Albert believes himself to be a nobleman through and through, someone who has achieved the highest and most comfortable station in the Paris social world of the mid-eighteenth century, the reality is that his father's title was purchased with money gained through treachery.

Chapter 43 Quotes

❝ Come away, Monsieur! Come away, I beg you. You are on the very spot!

What spot is that?

The spot where he fell.

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor), Bertuccio (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 489

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Count has brought his servant Bertuccio with him to a country home the Count has just purchased in the suburbs outside Paris. Bertuccio cannot believe what he sees, however, because, as he reveals slowly to the Count, this is the very house in which he once killed a man years ago. The Count appears shocked at this information, but the narrator makes clear to readers that the Count has purchased this exact home precisely because he knows that Bertuccio once attacked a man there, and that, as Bertuccio later tells it, that man was trying to bury the body of a child he'd fathered with an unnamed woman out of wedlock. In short, this is a place of scandal, and the Count has brought there a man with a dark past.

This is another example of just how all-encompassing the Count's network of revenge can be. As readers will later learn, the Count wants Bertuccio's information because he knows that the man his servant once attacked is none other than Villefort, the Crown Prosecutor. It is also striking that, as elsewhere in the novel, the Count is not the only character in search of revenge. Bertuccio tried to kill Villefort at the house in Auteuil long ago because Villefort had refused to help Bertuccio in his efforts to protect his brother during the French wars of revolution. Bertuccio laid an official vendetta, or Corsican curse, upon Villefort, vowing to avenge his brother's untimely death in battle by attacking the official Bertuccio believed to be responsible for it. Thus, for the Count to effect his own revenge, he relies in part on a tale of revenge committed by one of his own servants.

Chapter 48 Quotes

❝ But everything that you know, with respect to the French legal system, I know, not only with respect to that, but also to the laws of every country: the laws of the English, the Turks, the Japanese and the Hindus are as familiar to me as those of the French ... relative to all that I have done, you have very little to do, and relative to what I have learned, you still have very much to learn.

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 552

Explanation and Analysis

The Count has come to Villefort's home to meet with him, and to make an impression on him – to demonstrate he's not afraid of Villefort's authority. Although Villefort cuts quite an imposing figure throughout Paris, the Count tells him in this passage that he knows every bit as much as Villefort, and then some – that he does not shy away from Villefort's supposed knowledge of legal statutes. The Count has begun this study while in prison with the Abbe Faria, where he learned some of the languages and cultures of the world, and he has increased his knowledge of foreign lands in the ensuing years, after he came upon his island fortune, which allowed him to travel.

The Count's personality and temperament do seem to vary from scene to scene. In some cases, as when dealing with the Baroness Danglars, the Count can be kind and courteous to a fault, making lavish presents. To his servants, the Count can be either good-natured or cutting, seemingly depending on his mood. And to Villefort, the Count is haughty, vain, and proud. He wishes to demonstrate he is every bit as accomplished and intelligent as Villefort, indeed that Villefort cannot hold a candle to his intelligence, and he succeeds in grabbing Villefort's attention and rattling his normally imperturbable manner.

Chapter 52 Quotes

❝ A drop of that elixir sufficed to bring the child back to life when he was dying, but three drops would have driven the blood into his lungs in such a way as to give him palpitations of the heart. Six would have interrupted his breathing and caused him a much more serious fit than the one he was already suffering. Ten would have killed him.

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor) (speaker), Mme Heloise de Villefort

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 595

Explanation and Analysis

Here, the Count explains to Mme de Villefort the art of poisoning and medicine he has learned in his travels overseas. Specifically, the Count states that what appears to

be a poison can, in fact, be a life-saving treatment, if administered in small doses. But when a poison is allowed to suddenly overwhelm the system of a human subject, there is nothing the body can do to build up immunity to the chemical, and the person dies. Mme de Villefort, for her part, seems extremely interested in this information.

Poison is one of the most important symbols in the novel. Mme de Villefort will go on a poisoning spree of her own, which no one for many weeks is able to pin on her; and years prior, when he was in prison, Dantes learned from the Abbe the secrets of another "red vial" of poison, which, in small doses, appeared to cure the Abbe's initial seizures. This is the very same poison Mme de Villefort will use in large quantities to exact her own revenge on members of the Villefort house, and in this passage, the Madame begins her more intensive study of what will become an important chemical in her arsenal.

Chapter 62 Quotes

❝ You mean, I didn't kill him?

Come, come ...

But he isn't dead?

No, he isn't, as you can very well see. Instead of striking him between the sixth and seventh left rib, as your compatriots usually do, you must have struck higher or lower; and these lawyers, you know, are not easy to kill off.

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor), Bertuccio (speaker), M. de Villefort

Related Themes:

Page Number: 694

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Bertuccio is surprised to learn from the Count that Villefort is still alive. Bertuccio believed that he stabbed Villefort to death behind the house in Auteuil, as a means of satisfying the vendetta Bertuccio had placed on Villefort in remembrance of his brother. The Count, of course, has known all along that Villefort still lives. But he has enjoyed making Bertuccio wait to discover this fact, as he has assembled all the novel's primary character in the house in Auteuil as a way of demonstrating to Villefort and the Baroness that he is aware some kind of crime was committed in that home.

The Count does seem to derive a certain amount of enjoyment from playing with Bertuccio's emotions – the mixture of guilt, anguish, and pride he feels in what he believed to have been a murder of Villefort years before. But the Count also wants to introduce Bertuccio to the child of Villefort's he rescued from that back yard and raised, for years, as a son – Benedetto, or Andrea Cavalcanti. The Count can thus use Bertuccio's secret and his involvement with Villefort's crimes as leverage against Villefort, all while his slowly-unfolding plans for revenge continue to move forward.

Chapter 64 Quotes

❝ Alas, alas! ... One can never be completely happy in this world.

Related Characters: Benedetto / Andrea Cavalcanti (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 713

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Andrea has just run into Caderousse, who has left him in the street after blackmailing him into monthly payments. Caderousse has known Andrea since they were imprisoned together years before, and Caderousse is also aware that Andrea is receiving money from the Count. Andrea himself thinks that the Count might be his legitimate father, and Caderousse, always eager to make money without having to work, decides he can milk part of this income from Andrea, against the threat that he makes public Andrea's true identity as the criminal Benedetto.

Andrea, for his part, seems to take this in stride. Of course, his quotation here is a significant understatement: so much of Benedetto/Andrea's life has been lived in unpleasant, squalid, and immoral conditions. In Paris, with a little money in his pocket from the Count, he experiences something close to happiness for the first time. But he also realizes that with Caderousse always waiting in the wings, he will need to keep vigilant to make sure his true identity is not announced throughout the capital.

Chapter 71 Quotes

❝ How can you live like that, with nothing attaching you to life?

It is not my fault, Madame. In Malta I loved a girl and was going to marry her, when the war came and swept me away from her like a whirlwind. I thought that she loved me enough to wait for me, even to remain faithful to my tomb. When I came back, she was married.

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor), Mercedes (de Morcerf) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 772

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Mercedes wonders how the Count can live the life he lives, without friends or lovers or family, and with, it seems, a near-total understanding of the customs and activities of Parisian social life. In response, the Count describes to Mercedes what has actually happened to the two of them, and both characters indeed know this to be the case – although the Count continues to insist that he is not Dantes, and that the woman he loved actually lived in Malta. Mercedes is clearly affected deeply by this exchange, even though she too maintains the fantasy that she and the Count only recently met in Paris.

The Count behaves with some coldness and reserve to Mercedes, although he is not impolite to her. Of course Mercedes senses, and the reader knows, that the Count really is Edmond Dantes, and that it must be excruciatingly difficult to see Mercedes in Parisian society, with her young son and with her husband Fernand. But the Count and Mercedes maintain this fiction until very close to the end of the novel, when Mercedes finally asks Dantes specifically if he will spare Albert's life in a duel.

Chapter 77 Quotes

❝ I was taken to the bazaar. A rich Armenian bought me, educated me, gave me teachers and, when I was thirteen, sold me to Sultan Mahmoud.

And from him, I bought her, as I told you, Albert, for that stone equal to the one in which I keep my lozenges of hashish.

Oh, my lord, how good and great you are ... How fortunate I am to belong to you!

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor), Haydee (speaker), Albert (de Morcerf)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 861

Explanation and Analysis

Here, the Count wishes to demonstrate for Albert Haydee's life story. He also wants Albert to see how devoted Haydee is to him – that Haydee believes she owes her entire life to the Count, for saving her from continued bondage in the Middle East. Although perceptive readers have sensed for some time that Haydee's father, the Ali Pasha, was killed by Albert's father Fernand, Albert is not yet aware of this, and indeed is taken in by Haydee, her beauty, and her melancholy story of her young life overseas.

Haydee's affection for the Count, as described here, is total and absolute. She loves the Count, she says, as she has loved no one else in her life except for her father. But it will not be until the end of the novel that the Count understands this love less as a kind of devotion – indebtedness for saving Haydee's life – and more as a romantic attachment, a union between two people who have come to care for each other as equals.

Chapter 80 Quotes

❝ How odd it was! For all the confused feelings that he experienced on seeing [Valentine's] tears, he also managed to observe Mme de Villefort; and it seemed to him that a faint, dark smile passed briefly across her thin lips, like one of those sinister meteors that can be glimpsed as they fall between two clouds against a stormy day.

Related Characters: M. de Villefort, Mme Heloise de Villefort, Valentine de Villefort

Related Themes:

Page Number: 895

Explanation and Analysis

Villefort has learned from the doctor that all signs seem to point to Valentine as the potential poisoner in his home. But this simply doesn't sit well with Villefort, who adores his daughter, and appears incapable of thinking for more than an idle second that she could be capable of such cold-hearted malice. In this quotation, then, the narrator indicates the beginning of a feeling on Villefort's part that it is not Valentine, but his own wife who might be responsible

for the poisonings.

A reader could reasonably ask how it's possible that Villefort, a trained prosecutor, is unable to trace a set of crimes committed under his nose. But Villefort and the narrator demonstrate just how powerful one's sense of delusion can be. Villefort doesn't want to believe his wife is capable of this kind of cruelty, and so he simply chooses not to believe it. Because he is unwilling to cast suspicion on Valentine, too, Villefort must content himself with wondering, idly and stressfully, who might be committing the murders in the bedchambers of his own house.

Chapter 83 Quotes

❝ Oh, God. Oh, God, forgive me for denying You. You do indeed exist, You are the father of men in heaven and their judge on earth. Oh, my Lord, I have long mistaken You! My Lord God, forgive me! My god, my Lord, receive my soul!

Related Characters: Caderousse (speaker), Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 931-2

Explanation and Analysis

This is a scene of great dramatic tumult. Here, the Count finally tells Caderousse that he is in fact Edmond Dantes, and Caderousse, on the verge of death, tries to repent to God. Throughout the entirety of the novel, Caderousse has remained a troublesome character. In the early stages of Dantes's escape from prison, when he meets Caderousse at the inn in the disguise of the Abbe Busoni, it seems that the innkeeper might really be able to mend his ways. But Caderousse's fundamental passivity, his willingness to give in to the worst impulses of others, leads him astray, first with La Carconte his wife, who murders the jeweler, and later with Andrea Cavalcanti, with whom Caderousse forms a small-time criminal duo.

But till the end, Dantes appears willing to offer Caderousse another chance. Only in this scene, after Caderousse has tried to rob the Count's home, does the Count demonstrate who he is and all that he has accomplished since his time in prison. On hearing the truth, Caderousse appears to acknowledge the greatness of the man who holds him in his arms, and though Caderousse does not die a changed man, he does not quite die a sinner, either – rather, as someone who has always done a little less than try to become good.

Chapter 89 Quotes

❝ What would you say if you knew the extent of the sacrifice I am making for you? Suppose that the Lord God, after creating the world, after fertilizing the void, had stopped one-third of the way through His creation to spare an angel the tears that our crimes would one day bring to His immortal eyes. Suppose that ... God had extinguished the sun and with His foot dashed the world into eternal night ...

Related Characters: Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor) (speaker), Mercedes (de Morcerf)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 985-6

Explanation and Analysis

This quotation offers a piece of extremely grand language from the Count. Mercedes has asked that the Count forgo killing Albert in a duel, and the Count, saying that he will agree to this, feels he must give up the entire course of his revenge. For this revenge, as the Count sees it, has been planned for over 15 years, and to change even the smallest part of it now would be akin to destroying a beautiful creation, a world the Count has been building in his mind over the course of many nights in solitude, in the dungeon and then outside it.

But the Count, despite his protestations, is still willing to do this for Mercedes. This demonstrates that, though it is almost impossibly difficult for him, the Count is indeed able to give up vengeance on the request of the woman he loves. The Count has never fallen out of love with Mercedes, even as he acknowledges that she is married to his mortal enemy, and that the social life of Paris has made them appear to be nothing more than normal acquaintances, speaking together at the theater and dances. In this scene, however, with Dantes and Mercedes speaking frankly to one another, their long-lost passion comes once again to the fore.

Chapter 91 Quotes

❝ Yes, I share your hope: the wrath of heaven will not pursue us, you who are so pure and I so innocent. But since we are resolved, let us act promptly. Monsieur de Morcerf left the house around half an hour ago; so, as you see, we have a good opportunity to avoid scandal or explanations.

Related Characters: Albert (de Morcerf) (speaker), Fernand (de Morcerf), Mercedes (de Morcerf)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1003

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Albert tells his mother that he has a plan for both of them after Fernand's disgrace. Although this plan will not be easy to carry off, and it will involve their total loss of social prestige in Paris, at least they will be able to leave the city alive. And, as Albert notes, the two of them are innocent parties – they have not committed the same kinds of sins as Fernand, who has been revealed to the French public as a terrible sinner, a coward, and a liar.

Albert has already demonstrated gentlemanly devotion to his friend the Count, with whom he was going to duel. Upon learning the truth, Albert acknowledged that Fernand was indeed a treacherous coward, and the Count's provocations were therefore moot, since Albert could not fight to defend a man unworthy of any defense at all. And he shows to his mother here how committed he is to protecting her, as they travel together in search of a new life. The Count did not initially want to spare Albert, but at Mercedes' urging he relented. Now, Albert has been given the opportunity to demonstrate that he is a man of courage and valor, willing to work to establish a "new" name for himself in the army, now that his family name has crumbled to nothing in the public's esteem.

Chapter 96 Quotes

Who is this Andrea Cavalcanti, then?

A former convict who escaped from the penitentiary of Toulon.

Related Characters: (Baron) Danglars (speaker), Benedetto / Andrea Cavalcanti

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1050

Explanation and Analysis

The Baron Danglars always appears to be one step behind those around him, even though he prides himself on being a shrewd banker and manager of funds. Here, Danglars is one of the last to know that Andrea Cavalcanti, the man he wishes to marry to his daughter Eugenie, is a fraud. As the police officer announces, Andrea is no nobleman at all, and he has almost no money to his name. Instead, he is a criminal with a checkered past, and the economic disaster Danglars has experienced – brought on by the Count's manipulation of the markets – is now met with a social disgrace Danglars never thought possible.

Danglars's arc, therefore, is one of skilled plotting in the beginning of the text falling away into feckless confusion, as here. Danglars cannot alter the stock markets to suit his investments, and he's not even aware that the Count has been manipulating these funds behind the scenes. And now that the Baron has staked his family so publicly to the cause of Andrea Cavalcanti, he is bound to that man's reputation. In its undoing here, Danglars experiences the beginning of the end of his high social position in Paris.

Chapter 99 Quotes

But in the end, since I myself failed and was found wanting—more profoundly perhaps than other men; well, since that time I have shaken out their clothes to discover a blemish, and I have always found it; I will say more: I have found it with joy, this evidence of human weakness and perversity.

Related Characters: M. de Villefort (speaker), Baroness Hermine Danglars

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1077

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Villefort tries to explain how he deals with the guilt of the crimes he's committed. Of course, the Baroness believes Villefort is talking about their child out of wedlock, whom Villefort sought to kill. But what the Baroness does not know is Villefort's additional crime, of making sure that Dantes remained in prison, when Villefort had every means necessary to secure his release. This was, in a sense, Villefort's original sin in the text, and his other behaviors – his pomposity, his impatience with others, and of course his hiding of the affair with the Baroness – are only additional elements of his long immoral resume.

Strangely enough, however, as more and more bad things happen to Villefort and his family, more shades of nuance appear in his depiction in the novel. Even here, when the reader and narrator might be willing to see Villefort punished completely for his crimes, he describes to the reader how he is wracked with grief for the hard, cruel decisions he's made over the course of a lifetime. Although Villefort will not be granted an opportunity for complete redemption in the novel, he will also be spared death and detainment, as happens to Fernand and Danglars, respectively. He will go mad and lose his social station in

Paris, but will be permitted to live.

Chapter 103 Quotes

You see, the angel for whom you longed has left this earth. She no longer needs the adoration of men – she, who, at this moment, is adoring the Lord. So say your farewells, Monsieur, to these sad remains that she has left behind among us.

Related Characters: M. de Villefort (speaker), Valentine de Villefort, Maximilien Morrel

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1099

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Villefort explains to Maximilien that Valentine has died, and that all the two of them can do is weep together. Maximilien has, only seconds before, finally introduced himself to Villefort as the man in love with Valentine – Villefort had not yet met him. And though under different circumstances, Villefort would have done anything to keep Valentine from marrying the son of Old Morrel, here, with Valentine believed to be dead, he shows a more tender side of his personality. Villefort has been essentially destroyed by the Count – his family has fallen apart, and now is beloved daughter seems to be dead. The last wisps of his haughtiness have fallen away, and Villefort is able to speak to Maximilien as from a father to a son-in-law.

Maximilien, for his part, really believes that Valentine has died. Indeed, only Valentine and the Count are in on the secret, which is that she is merely in a deep, coma-like slumber, having been dosed by the Count with a mixture of opium and hashish. Valentine's perceived death will be the central dramatic element of the final chapters, with the Count trying to convince Maximilien to stay happy and alive without giving away that Valentine is alive herself, and safely waiting for him on the island of Monte Cristo.

Chapter 106 Quotes

Oh, yes, now. That's where the trying times will begin. You know what is agreed?

Have we agreed something?

Yes, it is agreed that you will live in Marseille and I shall leave for Africa. There, instead of the name I have given up, I shall make for myself the name I have adopted.

Related Characters: Mercedes (de Morcerf), Albert (de Morcerf) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1140

Explanation and Analysis

After the death of Fernand, Albert decides that his mother must leave for a nunnery, and he will make his fortunes abroad as a soldier. Although Albert does not say so explicitly, he indicates that, since his father was a disgraced soldier, a traitor, and a coward, Albert might make up for his father's shame by proving his own mettle with the French forces on foreign battlefields. Mercedes, in contrast to her son, wishes not to embrace life but to hide from it, to leave the social world of Paris behind and to spend time with her thoughts and memories, in solitude, in the city in which she was raised.

Although Albert and Mercedes really do appear innocent, as Albert has insisted to his mother before, they nevertheless suffer from the death and disgrace of Fernand. But the Count has made sure to watch over and provide for them, especially for Mercedes, to whom he has pledged his devotion as a longstanding friend. When the Count leaves Mercedes in Marseille, on the verge of entering the nunnery, he recognizes that he will not see her again in this life.

Chapter 117 Quotes

Yes, he is gone. Farewell, my friend! Farewell, my sister!

Who knows if we shall ever see them again?

My dearest ... has the Count not just told us that all human wisdom was contained in these two words – 'wait' and 'hope'?

Related Characters: Maximilien Morrel, Valentine de Villefort (speaker), Haydee, Edmond Dantes (The Count of Monte Cristo, the Abbe Busoni, the Envoy, Lord Wilmore, Sinbad the Sailor)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1243

Explanation and Analysis

These are the final words of the novel. All four of the characters in this final scene have had, in their own ways, to "hope" and "wait" for salvation. Haydee, in the Middle East, could only hope and wait for deliverance from her bondage;

this deliverance did indeed arrive, in the form of the Count, who whisked her to Paris. Valentine had to hope and wait, while in a drug-induced coma, that Maximilien would indeed arrive on the island to marry her. Maximilien had to hope and wait that the Count's urgings were genuine – that something great was in store for Maximilien, if only he would maintain the thought that he might see Valentine again. And, of course, the Count himself had to hope and wait for many years in the Chateau D'If to find his freedom.

Importantly, however, this urging is *not* to hope and wait for revenge. Instead, the Count has chosen to emphasize the positive events that come with biding one's time. The Count has fallen in love with Haydee, and Maximilien with Valentine. And though the revenge plot of the novel is completed, with the Count having ruined all those who harmed him, this is not the true emotional endpoint of the text. Rather, it is the idea that a better life might be found – that it is out there, waiting for someone patient and strong enough to achieve it – which is the book's lasting lesson.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1 – MARSEILLE – ARRIVAL

It is late February, 1814, and a three-masted ship called the *Pharaon* docks near the coastal port of Marseille. A pilot guides the ship toward its docking place with skill, and his first mate, a young man with "fine dark eyes" and dark hair, watches him. The owner of the ship, a man named Monsieur (M.) Morrel, rows up to the *Pharaon* in a small boat and senses that something has gone wrong during the voyage from Smyrna. The young man, who is identified as Dantes, announces that the captain of the ship, named Leclere, has died of a fever during the voyage. Dantes reports to the anxious Morrel that, in spite of this, the cargo has been saved. Morrel is relieved to hear it.

Although the death of the original captain of the ship is never mentioned again, it is Leclere's untimely demise that creates a vacancy within the hierarchy of the Pharaon, *allowing Dantes to ascend to the position of captain. This event, referred to only in passing for a few pages, introduces several elements that will recur in the novel: characters' demises, either by illness or violence; the power of mischance, fate, or ill-luck to influence events; and the notion that, in any life, people must choose how to respond to and make the best of events that are beyond their immediate control.*

Dantes welcomes Morrel aboard the ship and readies it for "mooring and mourning." Morrel meets with a man named Danglars, who, as the "supercargo" of the ship, is in charge of the precious cargo it carries. Danglars reports, like Dantes, that that cargo is safe. Morrel has learned from Danglars that the ship, on its way to Marseille, stopped off at Elba, and Morrel calls Dantes back over, asking Dantes to explain to him why he ordered for this additional port that was not called for in the ship's log. (Danglars, meanwhile, is out of earshot.) Dantes replies that it was Capt. Leclere's dying wish that a packet be given over at Elba to a man named Marshal Bertrand, a close associate of the deposed Emperor Napoleon, who is living at Elba in exile.

This passage introduces the presence of the Emperor Napoleon into the text. Napoleon was deposed from power in 1814, but was removed only to a small island, Elba, relatively close to the European mainland. Thus, in 1814 and 1815, Napoleon's presence on Elba created a feeling—especially among supporters of the Royalist faction on the continent—that Napoleon might return. This fear was corroborated by the presence of small societies of devoted Napoleonic sympathizers in Europe's capitals. It is revealed that Villefort's father Noirtier belongs to one of these.

Dantes also mentions to Morrel and Danglars that he caught sight of, and spoke to, Napoleon at Elba. Napoleon asked after the ship, and when Dantes said that he worked for a man named Morrel, Napoleon replied that he once served in the army with Morrel's uncle, which Morrel confirms. Morrel tells Dantes that this stop-off was therefore authorized and acceptable, although he warns Dantes that he might be "compromised" if authorities in France learned that he had communicated material to the deposed Emperor. Returning to the conversation after Dantes is excused, Danglars mentions that Dantes has also received a letter from Capt. Leclere to deliver to Morrel.

Although Dantes is a very young man when this interaction occurs, he gives no indication, to Morrel or anyone else, that he was overawed of or scared by the Emperor, still one of the most powerful and imposing presences in Europe. This indicates a quality that Dantes will possess going forward – a cool, steely resolve to do what he knows he must do, when he must do it. As the Count of Monte Cristo, Dantes will go on to rub shoulders with a great many famous and influential people in Paris, Rome, and elsewhere.

Morrel calls Dantes back over to finally discharge him of his present duties on the ship. Morrel asks if Dantes will join him for dinner that night, but Dantes politely declines, saying he must see to his father, about whom he's worried, and to his fiancée, a beautiful woman of Catalan descent named Mercedes. Morrel asks if Dantes has a letter from Leclere to give to him, and Dantes says that he does not—that Leclere was in fact in no state to write a letter at all. Dantes also reports, on Morrel's questioning, that Danglars is a well-qualified supercargo and that he would retain him in that role, although the two of them did get in a fight onboard, near an island called "**Monte Cristo**." Dantes requests two weeks' leave to marry Mercedes and to go to Paris, which Morrel grants. Morrel also names him provisional captain of the *Pharaon*, pending the approval of his partner. About this, Dantes is thrilled, and he departs for the shore quickly.

This scene introduces two important characteristics of two important, and in a sense diametrically opposed, characters. Upon his return to Marseille, Dantes' only thoughts are to check in on his father and on Mercedes, his betrothed. Danglars, for his part, immediately distrusts what he sees as Dantes' ability to move up the ranks, and Dantes' close relationship to Morrel, boss of the shipping company. Thus, even before Danglars launches his plot to place Dantes in prison, he has a sense that Dantes has become involved in sensitive business between the former ship's captain and Napoleon – and Danglars vows to use this knowledge to his advantage, and to Dantes' disadvantage, however he might be able.

CHAPTER 2 – FATHER AND SON

Dantes climbs up to his father's cramped, dilapidated apartment, to find him there tending to his flowers. His father is shocked and overjoyed to see him, and even more shocked when Dantes announces that Leclere has died during the voyage, that Dantes is to made captain in Leclere's stead, and that his salary will be 100 louis a year with a "share of the ship's profits." His father is overwhelmed by this additional news and seems weak. Dantes offers to bring him wine to calm his nerves, but his father says there is no wine—that there is nothing in the house. Though Dantes left him with 200 francs before his three-month voyage, Dantes' father paid a debt to a neighbor named Caderousse, which Dantes had owed. This debt was 140 francs, and so, to Dantes' terrible chagrin, he realizes his father has lived on mere scraps for months, barely eating enough to survive.

Dantes's father is perhaps the novel's most unselfish character. Indeed, his concern for his son is so overwhelming, he can barely survive without him. This scene, in which Old Dantes nearly forgoes all food in order to pay his son's debt, foreshadows later scenes—when, after Dantes's imprisonment, his father foregoes food altogether. And this, in turn, foreshadows Dantes's own behavior in prison—before he meets the Abbe Faria, Dantes very nearly commits suicide by refusing all food, out of despair at his current conditions of imprisonment and loneliness. This kind of extreme behavior clearly runs in the family.

At this, Caderousse enters the small apartment and pretends to be kind to Dantes' father and Dantes, as though his lending of money to them was a great favor. In fact, Caderousse seems to understand that, by forcing Dantes' father to repay Dantes' loan during Dantes' trip, he has left the old man in serious financial straits. Caderousse also appears to know already that Dantes will be made captain of the Pharaon, and he hints to both them, too, that Mercedes might be falling in love with an unnamed man who lives in her neighborhood. Caderousse also mentions that Dantes has skipped dinner with Morrel to see his father.

Caderousse's jealousy is similar to Danglars', in that it is revealed very early in the novel. What is perhaps stranger about Caderousse's variety, however, is the fact that the tailor has very little directly to gain, at least at this stage, from Dantes' downfall, whereas Danglars feels he might be able to wrangle the position of captain of the Pharaon *for himself if Dantes is put out of the picture. It seems that Caderousse is simply embittered by Dantes' youth, happiness, intelligence, and seeming good fortune.*

As an uneasy Dantes leaves to find Mercedes, Caderousse leaves Dantes' father and heads downstairs where Danglars has been waiting. It is revealed that the two are united in their hatred for Dantes: both are jealous of his rapid rise to captain, which would be a higher social rank than Caderousse's (he is a tailor) and Danglars', as supercargo. The two men vow to follow Dantes to Les Catalans, the Catalan neighborhood of Marseille, to see how his conversation with Mercedes goes and determine whether she has a secret Spanish lover.

In another instance of foreshadowing, Dantes worries that Mercedes might very well be in love with Fernand, her cousin and his rival for her affections. In the ensuing chapters Dantes is soon convinced that Mercedes loves only him, and considers Fernand a friend—until the betrayal of Dantes makes all his fears a reality.

CHAPTER 3 – LES CATALANS

The narrator explains briefly that Les Catalans is a part of Marseilles where Spanish settlers have lived for years, in "Moorish" houses. He sets a scene in which Mercedes, with long, black hair, is speaking to Fernand, her cousin. Mercedes tells Fernand, "for the hundredth time," that she will not marry him because she is engaged to someone else—Dantes. Mercedes is poor and must live on charity after the death of her parents, but Fernand tells Mercedes that this does not matter to him, that he wishes to be married to her and that he can "make his fortune" with her as his wife—he will give up being a fisherman, as he is now, to find another profession. When Fernand hints that, perhaps, Dantes will not come back from his voyage, Mercedes counters that, if Dantes dies, then "she will die too."

The area of Les Catalans is almost like a second, foreign country-community within the city of Marseille. There, Mercedes and Fernand live on very little money, speaking Spanish among one another, and feeling somewhat apart from the goings-on of the rest of the French-speaking community of the city. Thus, Dantes is not the only figure who, later in the novel (and in disguise), presents himself as a foreigner in the city of Paris – for Mercedes has a legitimate claim to foreignness being from Les Catalans, even though she is a stone's throw from the bustling center of Marseille's city life.

At this, Dantes comes upon Mercedes and Fernand. Not seeing Fernand at first, Dantes embraces Mercedes, and she, like his father, is overjoyed to see him again. Mercedes then introduces Dantes and Fernand, saying that Fernand, her cousin, will be Dantes' "best friend" when they are married. After only a few seconds in Dantes' presence, Fernand flees Mercedes' hut; outside, he runs into Caderousse and Danglars, two men he does not know. They invite Fernand to drink wine with them.

It's worth noting that in these scenes Danglars, Caderousse, and eventually Fernand move through Marseille as though they themselves are instruments of vengeance, hoping to punish a man against whom they have a grudge. This differs from the Count's eventual punishments, however, in that the Count feels he has a legitimate claim to want to harm Caderousse, Danglars, and Fernand, whereas these three men, the narrator strongly implies, have only their own pettiness and jealousy to blame for their unjust desire for "vengeance."

Visibly distraught, Fernand is barely able even to speak to Caderousse, who is noticeably intoxicated. Caderousse prods at Fernand the way he had prodded at Dantes just before, telling Fernand that Dantes will be named captain of the *Pharaon* soon and that he will marry Mercedes. At this, Dantes and Mercedes walk out happily past the tavern where the three men are sitting. Caderousse and Danglars speak to Dantes with false joy of his upcoming wedding and his visit to Paris, which Dantes says he will undertake immediately after the ceremony. As an aside, Danglars mutters to himself that Dantes is surely giving to someone the mysterious letter from Capt. Leclere, and that this letter can be used in a plot he will hatch against Dantes.

The narrator demonstrates that these three plotters have different ways of negotiating their relationship to their own jealousy. Danglars is the most naturally devious of the bunch, and from the beginning he has a sense that a letter or series of letters might be used to frame Dantes in a plot. At this stage Caderousse appears guided only by his unnamable jealousy of Dantes as a plucky upstart. And Fernand, the brooder of the group, is motivated by a concern of romance – that he feels Mercedes has spurned his affections for another man.

CHAPTER 4 – THE PLOT

Danglars does not immediately reveal to Fernand that he has a plan to punish Dantes and keep him away from the captaincy. Danglars instead pretends that he is going to leave the table, but Fernand begs Danglars to stay, since he has sensed that Danglars is jealous of Dantes and that perhaps they can band together against him.

The narrator hints at another level of Danglars' intuition. Danglars feels that he can use Fernand's passionate hatred of Dantes to his advantage – whereas he, Danglars, can rely on a cooler, more calculated cunning to frame a plot that will ensnare Dantes and send him away.

Caderousse, for his part, seems to want to get back at Dantes, too—ostensibly for his "pride" since he rose so quickly to captain. But in his drunkenness Caderousse also admits that Dantes has done nothing wrong and that they should not kill him. Danglars tells Fernand that, indeed, killing Dantes would be too severe, and that it would be far better to incriminate Dantes, keeping him in prison for a long time. Crucially, he would need to be kept away from his accusers, whom he must not be able to trace, in case he were ever to be released and seek revenge.

Caderousse is the first of the plotters to go back on the plot, even before they've really gotten started. The narrator hints that, compared to Danglars and Fernand, Caderousse is not even committed to his jealousy – that he has a kind of cowardly fear of the consequences of a real effort to discredit Dantes. Whether this cowardice is a good thing – a sign of conscience – or a bad thing – a sign of weakness – is to be determined later.

Danglars asks a waiter for pen, ink, and paper. He shows to Fernand, and to the half-asleep Caderousse, that he is drafting an anonymous indictment of Dantes, alleging that Dantes is carrying with him to Paris a letter from Napoleon in exile that urges rebellion against the current government in Paris. Danglars writes this letter "with his left hand" to disguise his penmanship.

This "writing with the left hand" has a literal meaning, of course, but also has symbolic power. Although the narrator never says so directly, "left-handedness" is designated in Latin by the root "sinister," which also connotes evil or misdeeds in Latin and English (further, in the Bible rightness is generally associated with good and leftness with evil). Thus, at the symbolic level Danglars not only disguises his handiwork, but renders it particularly cruel by doing the deed with the left, sinister hand.

After Danglars writes "To the Crown Prosecutor" on the letter, he starts to give it to Fernand. However, Caderousse, stumbling awake at the table for a moment, declares that Dantes is in fact his friend and that he wouldn't want anyone to harm Dantes and Mercedes. At this, Danglars pretends that the letter has been a joke and crumples it up, throwing it in a corner of the tavern. He and Caderousse leave. But looking back, Danglars sees that Fernand has picked up the letter and uncrumpled it, just as Danglars had hoped. Thus, in his craftiness, Danglars has made it seem that Fernand is really the party incriminating Dantes, and Caderousse, who does not see Fernand with the letter, believes that the idea of the trick has been abandoned.

This is another masterful idea by Danglars. By making it seem that he has abandoned the idea, but leaving it within the reach of Fernand, Danglars manages to make it appear that neither he nor Caderousse have anything directly to do with Dantes's imprisonment – that, instead, it was Fernand who took "a joke" and made it real by passing the letter to the French government. Of course, it is Fernand's blind romantic jealousy of which Danglars is aware, and he knows that this manoeuver will make it seem that Fernand, and not Danglars, is the true agent of the framing plot.

CHAPTER 5 – THE BETROTHAL

The next day, Dantes and Mercedes prepare for the feast of their betrothal. They walk to a banquet hall in a group that includes Morrel, the owner of the *Pharaon*, Fernand (whom Mercedes now refers to as her "brother," to his chagrin), Danglars, and Caderousse. The narrator notes that Caderousse only dimly remembers what happened the previous night at the tavern, but Danglars and Fernand, each in his way, seem to be brooding over a malevolent idea. Dantes, for his part, seems to be in a good mood, but calm and not outwardly merry. When Danglars asks why Dantes isn't more boisterous, Dantes replies that he worries a man isn't meant to be so happy all at once—to receive a job of his dreams and to become engaged to the person of his dreams within a few hours.

Dantes's anxiety, which he expresses to Danglars, is an instance of two literary features: foreshadowing and dramatic irony. Dantes foreshadows what will soon happen to him, as indeed his happiness will not last long, and soon he will be imprisoned in the Chateau D'If for fourteen years. The exchange with Danglars is also an example of dramatic irony, because both Danglars and the reader know that a plot has been hatched against Dantes, but Dantes himself is unaware of this plot, even as he senses vaguely that he might be "too happy" for his own good.

Caderousse tells Danglars, in an aside, that it's a "good thing" they didn't "trick" Dantes as they were drunkenly planning yesterday. Danglars pretends that he did nothing to further the scheme, and Fernand, quiet and on the other side of the couple, looks merely unnerved and afraid. Dantes reveals that the "betrothal" feast is essentially a feast in anticipation of their wedding, as he and Mercedes are to marry later that day. This upsets Danglars, who appears to worry whether his and Fernand's plan might not work in so short a space. But the betrothal feast is interrupted by a knock on the door—it's the police.

Although Danglars has gone to great pains to ensure that Dantes will be arrested, his plot is nearly foiled here, when Dantes announces that soon they will be a married couple, and Dantes will be leaving Marseille for a period of time. This builds tension as Dantes nearly escapes his doom, but of course fate is on Danglars' and not Dantes' side in this instance, and the police arrive soon enough to aid Danglars and thwart any possibility of Dantes' escaping arrest.

The police arrest Dantes, though they do not say for what crime. Caderousse turns to Danglars and, in an aside, wonders if the "trick" has been played after all. Danglars said that he ripped up the indicting letter, but Caderousse corrects him, saying that, despite his drunkenness, he saw that Danglars merely crumpled it and left it near Fernand. Although Danglars tries to speak to Dantes' father and Mercedes, saying it must be a small item with the customs bureau that's causing this trouble, Old Dantes and Mercedes are terrified. Morrel returns from the police station hours later to report that Dantes has been accused of being a Bonapartist sympathizer.

Danglars is not content to put Dantes away – he wants also to pretend that he had nothing to do with the plot, and that, indeed, the plot is so confusing and perplexing that it must surely be some kind of mistake. Although Danglars' actions seem obvious to the reader – since the reader is aware of the plot – they are convincing enough to the rest of the crowd assembled that Danglars is not believed to have been involved in Dantes' arrest in any way.

At this, Caderousse accuses Danglars, again in an aside, of playing the trick after all. Danglars does not admit to it explicitly, but he does not deny that Fernand could have picked up the paper and given it to the crown prosecutor. Morrel finds Danglars later that day and asks him if he believes Dantes to be a sympathizer with Bonaparte. Danglars lies and says that he has his suspicions about Dantes, but that if Dantes is in fact innocent, the law will release him. Morrel appears worried about Dantes, and, in the interim, puts his faith in Danglars, authorizing him to be temporary captain of the *Pharaon*. Caderousse speaks to Danglars again after Morrel leaves and says that this is a "vile trick" that will bring them punishment in the end. But Danglars brushes this off, saying that, if Dantes is innocent, he will be set free. He scares Caderousse into remaining silent about the plot by noting that, if Dantes is in fact guilty of a conspiracy against the government, anyone defending him publically will also be implicated. Caderousse leaves, distraught, but vows to say nothing. Danglars leaves, thinking that if Caderousse can stay quiet, Danglars might become the "permanent" captain of the *Pharaon*. And Fernand has slipped away from the feast entirely, both scared and pleased at the turn of events.

This is one of the more powerful and frighteningly rational instances of Danglars' intimidation and plotting. Danglars' argument to Caderousse essentially makes it clear that, whether or not Dantes is guilty before the law, he is believed *to be guilty, sand that's all that matters. In Royalist France at the time, even the merest hint that one is a Bonapartist would be enough to make one seem politically dangerous. Danglars thus intimidates Caderousse into silence by saying that, if there's even the slightest possibility that Dantes really is guilty, there's nothing they should do to stand in the way of the investigation, lest they become involved as suspects themselves. It is this logic – that Dantes might somehow in fact be guilty of the crime for which they've framed him – that convinces Caderousse to do nothing, and to let the law have its way with Dantes. For his part, Fernand seems only concerned with the possibility that Dantes is out of the picture, and that Mercedes is therefore "free" to be found and wooed in her small home in Les Catalans.*

CHAPTER 6 – THE DEPUTY CROWN PROSECUTOR

The narrator switches to a parallel scene, another betrothal feast, but this time of the "cream of Marseille's society." A man named Villefort, the deputy crown prosecutor, is to be married to Renee Saint-Meran, daughter of the Saint-Meran family. Her parents are a Marquis and Marquise, both of whom are ardent Royalists – supporters of Louis XVIII, who currently rules in Paris in 1815. They are also opponents of Bonaparte, who is currently in exile on Elba. Marquise Saint-Meran discusses politics briefly with de Villefort, and notes cuttingly that Villefort's father, Noirtier, was a Girondin—a moderate revolutionary believed to be sympathetic to Napoleon. But Villefort has disavowed his father, is now employed in a Royalist government, and is marrying into a high-society Royalist family.

Villefort's relationship with his father will be an ongoing source of torment for him throughout the novel. Villefort understands that, because his father is associated with the more radical elements of the French Revolution, which led to the rise of the Emperor Napoleon, Villefort must do all he can to paint himself as a staid, trustworthy follower of the Royal government. Later in the novel, Villefort's father will live with the Villefort family in Paris, but even when Villefort is in ostensible control of his father's life and livelihood, he still fears his father's interference, as when Noirtier decides that he will not support Valentine's marriage to Franz.

What follows is a long conversation on the state of current French politics and Villefort's place in them. Villefort assures Renee's parents—especially her insistent mother—that he is a committed Royalist who has renounced his father's Girondist actions. Furthermore, he claims that his father has renounced those actions, too, and has become a Royalist himself (though his location is not referenced, and he is not at the betrothal feast). Villefort assures the Saint-Merans and assembled guests that he will be firm and fair with anyone convicted of sympathizing with Bonaparte, and that this firmness and fairness might even extend to trying them for capital crimes, although he does not take much comfort in the idea and wishes he had less work of that kind to do.

The politics of the French Revolution and its aftermath are immensely complex, and the book relies, in part, on the idea of a shared cultural understanding – that readers reading the book near the time of its publication will be as aware of the different political factions in France as today's general reader might be of the Republicans and Democrats in the United States. Nevertheless, the narrator goes to some lengths to draw out important differences between the groups – stating, for example, that the Royalists are in power when Napoleon is exiled to Elba and, later, to Saint Helena.

As if on cue, a messenger arrives at the feast, interrupting the conversation, and hands Villefort a copy of the denunciation letter against Dantes. The messenger tells Villefort that, since the head crown prosecutor is away, Villefort is in charge of the investigation. The criminal in question, who is as yet unnamed, is waiting for Villefort at his house. Villefort, anxious to address the issue and to demonstrate his fealty to the Royalist cause and his toughness against conspirators with Bonaparte, leaves the feast in haste, but not without reminding Renee of his love for her. Renee reminds him to be fair and to look "with indulgence" on this supposed criminal he is to interrogate. Villefort promises to do so.

Just as Dantes's betrothal feast is interrupted, so too is Villefort's. But Villefort is not sent to prison – instead, he is given an opportunity to interrogate Dantes and then, shortly thereafter, make a name for himself in Paris by appearing before the Royal court. It is a testament to Villefort's commitment to his career that he is willing to interrupt the most important event in his private life for his public duties. And indeed, Villefort will go to great lengths throughout the book to conceal facts about his private life from his "official" life as crown prosecutor.

CHAPTER 7 – THE INTERROGATION

The narrator briefly describes Villefort as twenty-six, about to marry into a Royalist family, eager to advance in his role within the government, and even more eager to prove that he is a committed Royalist. Before he enters his drawing room to speak to Dantes, Villefort encounters Morrel, who has come to his house to defend Dantes. Villefort, however, is haughty with Morrel, whom he considers middle-class and vaguely linked, therefore, to "Bonapartist" ideas. Villefort tells Morrel he will be fair to Dantes, but that if Dantes is in fact a conspirator, then woe to Morrel, who could be implicated as his ally. Morrel leaves and Villefort heads into his office, where Dantes is brought in to meet him.

In this section, the narrator shows what a snob Villefort is – and explains why Villefort is afraid of the "middle-class" element of which he believes Morrel to be a part. Though he has aspirations within the Royalist faction, Villefort is still tied to a father who is himself middle-class and a supporter of Napoleon's, who also came from middle-class origins in Corsica. Thus, Villefort, who is marrying into the noble Saint-Meran family, does everything he can to separate himself from the bourgeois life in which he was raised.

Villefort is struck by Dantes' apparent intelligence, which he sees in the young man's eyes. Dantes identifies himself as being nineteen years old, and when Villefort asks him if he has political opinions in favor of Bonaparte, Dantes replies that, in a sense, he has no opinions at all, that he is ignorant of the plot against him. Dantes also tells Villefort that he was celebrating his betrothal at the time of his arrest, and Villefort is struck by the "coincidence" of that and his own betrothal feast. He imagines himself telling Renee this detail and he remembers her advice. This convinces him that Dantes is telling the truth, that the charges are false and he should be freed.

What is perhaps most striking about this interaction is Villefort's belief that Dantes really has done nothing wrong. Dantes, as the narrator remarks throughout the novel, has something powerful, intelligent, and convincing about his very behavior – people tend to trust him, to believe him, to want to do what he says. But Villefort is not swayed by these aspects of Dantes's personality, because he has his own considerations in mind. It is, in other words, more important for Villefort to protect his own career than to keep an innocent man out of prison.

Villefort, however, does not free Dantes right away, but instead asks him his version of the events on the ship. Dantes repeats that Leclere gave him an item before his death: a packet with a ring. Because it was Leclere's dying wish to bring the package to Elba, he did so, and Dantes received in return, as Leclere said he would, a letter from Napoleon, which is with him on the table, along with other documents related to his arrest. Villefort admits that Dantes is only guilty of "imprudence" in conveying a package to Napoleon and a letter from him, but since it was his commanding officer's "dying wish," this is excusable behavior. Villefort asks to whom the letter has been addressed, and Dantes notes that it is someone he does not know, but apparently someone close to Leclere: a man named M. Noirtier.

This is another important coincidence in the novel, as both Villefort and Dantes have been removed from their respective betrothal feasts to be present at this very meeting. This parallelism becomes all the more striking as Villefort's and Dantes' lives diverge from this point forward. Both men, in the narrator's presentation, are ruthless in their own way. The difference, as the narrator suggests, arrives in the comparative morality of their ruthlessness. Whereas Villefort is willing to let Dantes go to prison despite believing him to be innocent, Dantes only commits himself to vengeance once he realizes that Villefort is guilty of treachery regarding his own case.

Villefort is aghast at this revelation, as Noirtier is his own father, though Villefort says nothing of this to Dantes. Any letter from Napoleon to his father would link his father to the Bonapartist side and would ruin Villefort's career. Villefort asks if Dantes has read the letter, and Dantes swears he hasn't. Dantes is also the only person who knows if this letter's existence (so Dantes thinks, not knowing that Danglars might suspect it) and so, in an instant, Villefort develops a devious plan.

This coincidence – that Dantes's letter is addressed to Noirtier – is equaled by the convenient fact that no other interrogator or official has any knowledge of the letter – meaning that Villefort can conceal it and keep his own name from being associated with Napoleonic criminality. The novel is filled with these conveniences, which allow for its complex plot to continue functioning, from coincidence to coincidence.

After reading the letter, Villefort says that some serious evidence might be found within it against Dantes' case. And so Villefort throws the letter in the fire and tells Dantes that he is helping Dantes' cause by doing so. He tells Dantes not to mention the letter or its destruction to anyone, and that he, Villefort, will shepherd Dantes through the criminal system after another night in jail. Dantes is then escorted out by guards, and Villefort remarks to himself how lucky he is that the head crown prosecutor was out of town and that he was able to intercept this letter without damaging his career. He leaves his home to return to Renee's side.

Villefort is doubly cruel here. First, it is unjust for Villefort to send Dantes to prison for a crime he has not committed. But it is even more unjust that Villefort does this while reassuring Dantes that he is his friend and confidant, and that everything will be all right for Dantes after another night in jail. It is this false assurance of friendship that Dantes/the Count finds so troubling, too, in his eventual arrival in Parisian society, where individuals seem always to be scheming against one another while pretending to be each other's friends.

CHAPTER 8 – THE CHATEAU D'IF

Gendarmes move Dantes to a small jail on the mainland, where Dantes expects, per Villefort's word, that he will be released the next morning after the matter of his supposed "crimes" is cleared up. Late that night, however, gendarmes return and move Dantes out of the jail and to the port, then onto a small boat, which the gendarmes row. Dantes asks where they are going, but the gendarmes say they can tell Dantes nothing.

Dantes has no idea where he is to be taken, and neither does the reader. Dumas and his narrator present certain moments of dramatic irony in which the reader knows something that a main character does not know—but also other moments in which the characters and the reader are equally in the dark as to what's going on.

After they row out into the port's waters a fair distance, Dantes begs them to tell him what's going on, since he thought that he was going to be set free. The men admit that he is not being set free but, instead, taken to the dread Chateau D'If, an impregnable fortress prison on an island out in the far waters off Marseille. Hearing this, Dantes tries to leap out of the boat to escape, but the police subdue him and drag him inside.

Dantes realizes that he has been tricked by Villefort – that the prosecutor, promising he will be set free, instead has condemned him to a more horrid fate than Dantes could have previously imagined. This is one of the few instances in the novel in which Dantes loses control of himself, here almost drowning himself to avoid being sent to so fearsome a prison.

Dantes barely eats or sleeps for a night and a day, and when the prison warden comes in to ask if he needs anything (meaning a little more bread or water), Dantes asks, over and over, to speak with the Governor of the prison. The warden tells Dantes this is "impossible," and after Dantes threatens to hit him with his small stool, he is taken to the "dungeons" at the bottom of the prison, which are dark caves. Dantes hears, down there, about a "mad" prisoner who is his neighbor, a former abbe (or religious official) who has been incarcerated for years. The narrator says that Dantes himself is on the verge of madness after his days spent in the horrid conditions of the Chateau D'If, thinking only of Mercedes and his father.

The early events of the novel proceed at a rapid pace, and the narrator provides important details at each stage – as in the twenty-four hours after Dantes is thrown into jail and then into the prison of the Chateau D'If. But there are other parts of the novel in which months or even years pass in as little as a paragraph or two. This play with the nature of time allows Dumas to condense certain activities, to speed up others, and to focus on moments of keen interest to the characters and his readers – as when Dantes is first imprisoned, or when he is finally able to escape.

CHAPTER 9 – THE EVENING OF THE BETROTHAL

In this brief chapter, the narrator reviews the activities of the various characters on the night that Dantes is being shipped to the Chateau D'If. Villefort goes back to the Saint-Merans, where he meets privately with the Marquis and convinces him that he has "urgent news" for the king. He asks Saint-Meran to arrange for him to have a private audience with Louis XVIII "post-haste." This is a way, it is hinted, of demonstrating that Villefort has just snuffed out a possible rebellion by imprisoning Dantes.

Villefort is presented as a shrewd and manipulating person in these early stages of the novel. He is not content with having thrown Dantes in prison – he also wants others to believe that a revolution in France is really in the offing, and that Napoleon does indeed plan to return to France from his (first) exile at Elba. But of course, Villefort doesn't actually know this to be the case. Instead, he wants to make it seem this way so that his imprisoning Dantes becomes a necessary act to protect the French state.

Mercedes waits outside the door of Villefort's home, hoping to catch a glimpse of the man, but he brushes her aside, telling her that her beloved is a "traitor" to the country and that Dantes' case is out of his hands. In private, Villefort has a crisis of conscience: he wonders if he can really imprison an innocent man in order to hide his own father's real collusion with the Bonapartists. The narrator notes that, if Mercedes had returned to Villefort and asked again, he might have caved and released Dantes; but this does not occur, and Villefort finds his resolve and continues with his machinations.

Here, the narrator allows us access to Villefort's thoughts – and we learn that, deep down, he does indeed have a conscience and feel guilty for what he's done to Dantes and those who love Dantes, including Mercedes. At some points in the novel, the narrator is able to convey the innermost thoughts of certain characters, like Villefort here – this is known as "narratorial omniscience," and is demonstrated elsewhere in the text, most often with Dantes' thoughts.

Morrel, the narrator says, still believes that Dantes is innocent, but because the rumor is out that Dantes is a Bonapartist sympathizer, no one is willing to risk their own imprisonment to help him. Mercedes, the narrator remarks, is back in her hut with Fernand in a state of near-swoon, and Fernand is using this opportunity to tend to her, although Mercedes thinks only of Dantes. Caderousse drinks himself into a stupor at the thought that the plan, of which he was at least a partial member, has resulted in Dantes' imprisonment for high crimes. Danglars appears happy at the thought that he has "taken out" a rival for the captaincy of the *Pharaon*. And Old Dantes sits in his room, unable to eat or move, thinking of his son.

The narrator explains a fundamental difference between Danglars' and Caderousse's mental states, and their characters. Danglars appears not be haunted by what he's done – even though he has condemned an innocent man. This, whereas Caderousse is barely able to function, and must instead get drunk, knowing that he has harmed someone he had no reason harming. These responses to feelings of guilt will later become important when the Count comes to Paris to avenge those who have committed crimes against him.

CHAPTER 10 – THE LITTLE CABINET IN THE TUILERIES

The narrator describes Villefort's arrival at the Tuileries, where Louis XVIII has been half-heartedly reading Horace to himself and listening to his courtiers discuss the state of the French nation. The scene is broad comedy—the king is presented as a pedantic buffoon, as concerned (or more so) with who's marrying whom as he is with the country he rules. After some back and forth with his ministers, Louis XVIII hears that a young man, Villefort, has come to see him with urgent news. When one minister says Villefort comes from a rebellious family, Louis says this is no matter; Villefort, he is convinced, would cross his own father for the sake of his ambitions.

In this section the narrator appears to be poking fun at Louis XVIII, who seems more concerned with his own literary puns than he does with the state of France. But the king perks up when he hears from his messenger that Villefort has news of a supposed rebellion. This indicates that, for French rulers in the post-Napoleon period, there was a sense that Napoleonic sentiment could rise – or that the Emperor himself could return. Thus Louis and his retinue must remain on their guard to insure continued Royalist rule.

Villefort is brought in to speak to the king. He tells Louis, falsely, that the man he has recently arrested and imprisoned was part of a larger Bonapartist plot to wrest back power for Napoleon. Villefort makes it seem that, in putting Dantes in prison, he has helped to quell this plot. Louis seems delighted by this news, but as Villefort makes to leave, another man comes rushing in with news that is, he claims, also quite urgent.

Not only has Villefort made sure that Dantes is in prison, he has also convinced the king of France that Dantes is a dangerous part of a pro-Napoleon conspiracy, and that imprisonment was therefore the only option. This is before Villefort has any sense that historical events in France will, coincidentally, make a Napoleonic revolution seem more likely.

CHAPTER 11 – THE CORSICAN OGRE

Courtiers rush into the king's study, where he is still standing with Villefort, to say that Napoleon has in fact returned to France from Elba. A rebellion really is in the offing. Villefort is as thunderstruck as anyone, though for a different reason: his notion of a "plot" was designed only to protect himself, to keep the evidence of his father's communication with Bonaparte a secret via the imprisonment of the innocent Dantes. But Villefort, able and adroit, seizes on the moment and begins offering Louis XVIII military advice. Louis tells the courtiers, who are shocked at this young man's instant influence with the king, to listen to Villefort, as he, more than any of them, has "understood" this "plot" from the beginning (though of course that is only a coincidence).

Here, Villefort is surprised to learn that Napoleon really has returned from his exile. This is perhaps the most notable coincidence in the novel so far – even more far-fetched than the idea that Villefort and Dantes are both celebrating their betrothals in Marseille at the same time. Here, then, Dantes is shown to be the victim of absolutely wretched misfortune. For not only has Villefort felt it necessary to imprison Dantes to save his own career, but Villefort's very assurance that a Napoleonic plot was to be prevented – a fiction he created – is also borne out by actual events.

Louis is enraged that his ministers, including the Minister of Police, who is now present, were not able to learn of Bonaparte's planned rebellion or his arrival in France. Villefort skillfully handles himself in his audience with Louis, the Minister of Police, and other courtiers, accepting Louis's honors (including the cross of the Legion, a high rank) while also claiming that the other men present have done their best to serve the king. Thus, Villefort ingratiates himself with some of the disgraced courtiers who only now have delivered news of Bonaparte's arrival. But Villefort is horrified to learn that the police are looking for a man fitting his father's description on the Rue Saint-Jacques. Although Noirtier's name is not mentioned, Villefort is terrified that, despite his efforts at destroying the letter to his father, the crown might discover Noirtier's involvement in the plot to return Napoleon to the throne.

Villefort continues to maintain his cool, even as he realizes he has been dealt an extremely fortuitous hand. His behavior with the chastened official is just another example of Villefort's calm under pressure. Villefort realizes that, in French politics, there is no such thing as an un-useful friend. Villefort wants to be sure that everyone feels indebted to him, that everyone has the idea that they owe him something. Thus the agent the king chastises is welcomed, by Villefort, back into the fold – and Villefort therefore insures his good standing not only with the king, but with the man whom the king had sought to blame. It's a brilliant political maneuver.

Louis dismisses the men and sends Villefort back to Marseille, where he can be "of service" to the crown; the king tells Villefort to await his orders there. Villefort returns to his inn for a quick dinner before he is to ride home, but a servant interrupts the meal to say that a man is here to see him: it is Noirtier, his father, who is living in Paris, and whom Villefort did not wish to see.

Villefort will spend a good deal of the novel trying to avoid his father – but wherever Villefort goes, Noirtier is not far away. Noirtier's involvement with Napoleonic politics is the one possible problem on his record from which Villefort is never quite able – despite all his efforts – to escape.

CHAPTER 12 – FATHER AND SON

Noirtier speaks to his astonished son, who does not force him to leave. Noirtier seems to understand that Villefort has thrown in his lot with the Royalist cause, whereas Noirtier is convinced, as he tells it, that Napoleon's return from Elba will result in his return to the throne as Emperor. Noirtier tells his son that, in politics, there are no ethics, only rules—that, for example, the murder of a general (which crime has been attributed to the Bonapartist club centered at Noirtier's apartment near the Rue Saint-Jacques) was not really a murder, but the "removal of an obstacle" for that group, since they feared the general was returning to the Royalist side.

Noirtier's speech here is an important moment in the text. Noirtier appears to be saying that, although politics is often confused with moral behavior, it is, for him, simply a matter of power – of getting people to do things for one reason or another. Noirtier believes that politics is effective when "obstacles" are removed, regardless of whether this removal requires people to be injured or killed. Of course, although Villefort pretends to be offended by this principle, he himself has just engaged in ruthless behavior, insuring that an innocent man has been condemned to prison for life.

Villefort himself is torn between feelings of loyalty to his father and loyalty to his own career, which demands that he meet with his father only in secret and work with the police to hunt down the rebel cell of which his father is a part. Villefort tells Noirtier that, by burning the letter from Dantes, he has saved Noirtier's life. Noirtier, for his part, is convinced that Napoleon's return to power will force him to have to pardon Villefort for his Royalist sympathies. When Villefort tells his father that people are looking for a man with his clothing and whiskers, his father produces a change of clothes, shaves, and bids his son farewell, walking past the gendarmes who might otherwise have arrested him.

Noirtier's behavior is very similar to Villefort's, even though the two men are on opposite sides of the political spectrum. And Noirtier and Villefort both agree that these political factions are, essentially, teams in the greater game of politics. They do not, as Noirtier says above, necessarily line up with right and wrong. One group is in power, then another group is in power – and people must do what they can to protect themselves and whatever influence they have managed to collect.

Villefort is amazed at his father's smoothness, even as he worries about his own career, about the Saint-Merans, and about the chaos that is now engulfing France. Destroying or hiding his father's remaining clothing in the room, Villefort rides in his carriage swiftly back to Marseille, where he hears that Napoleon is making his way to Paris and that it seems his return is gaining momentum among the populace. Villefort keeps in mind the esteem and honor the king has accorded him only recently.

Villefort has more than a grudging respect for his father, even though he does everything he can to publicly separate himself from the man. For Noirtier is fearless – he moves smoothly outside in a change of costume, even though guards are nearby, and he is not concerned that he is supporting a violent uprising of a government that is, in essence, trying to kill him at every opportunity. But despite this respect, Villefort known he must continue to hide the fact that he even knows of his own father's whereabouts.

CHAPTER 13 – THE HUNDRED DAYS

The narrator summarizes the whirlwind of events taking place between Napoleon's return to the Tuileries and his eventual defeat at the Battle of Waterloo, known as the Hundred Days. When Napoleon ascends to the throne again, and after Louis XVIII has fled with his Royalists, Morrel believes that he can once again plead his case to Villefort. Morrel is emboldened because he himself has Bonapartist sympathies, though muted, and Villefort has somehow managed to hang on to his position in the government under Napoleon. Indeed, Villefort has adapted so well, he has become head crown prosecutor, since the prior head has been fired. Yet Villefort also senses that he should only *appear* to throw his support behind Napoleon, since he predicts, correctly, that Bonaparte will soon be defeated, finally, and that a Second Restoration will bring Louis XVIII back into power.

The narrator describes Villefort's position during the Hundred Days as a placeholder for the positions of many officials during this time. There is so much turmoil in French politics between the original Restoration, the Hundred Days, and the Second Restoration that many political figures believe the best thing to do is simply to sit tight and wait for events to settle. Villefort is cunning enough to remain in power even when Napoleon returns, and perhaps more cunning still to recognize that this final Hundred Days is nothing more than a blip in history – such that the country will return to Royalist stability soon enough.

Morrel meets with Villefort in his office, and Villefort pretends not to have remembered the imprisonment of the man named Dantes, even though Villefort knows all too well that Dantes is in the Chateau D'If, a dungeon from which there is no hope of return. No document links Dantes to that prison, and when Morrel asks to see any proof of where Dantes is, Villefort, pretending to be kind, says that prisoners get lost all the time; that Bonaparte cannot be expected to free all his sympathizers at once; and that he will write to the Minster of Justice, right then and there, to demand the Dantes case be reopened.

It is one more sign of Villefort's dastardly cunning that he pretends not to even know who Dantes is here. Of course, the idea of Dantes' imprisonment – because it is linked to his own father's radicalism – is all-too-present for Villefort, and Villefort has staked his entire career on making it seem that Dantes really was a violent radical. Thus, in another instance of dramatic irony, the reader knows what Morrel does not.

Morrel is overjoyed to hear this. Villefort does indeed write a letter before Morrel, saying that Dantes was one of Bonaparte's greatest and most influential supporters, and that, as a loyal subject to the Emperor, he should be looked for in any of France's prisons and freed immediately. Morrel leaves the office happy, but Villefort keeps this letter as "proof" that Dantes was a Bonapartist—this will be useful when, inevitably, Louis XVIII returns to power. Thus, his defeat of Dantes will be total and irrevocable.

In another cunning move, Villefort has now assembled a piece of paper that can pin Dantes explicitly to Bonaparte. It is important to note here that Dantes has never been part of any political faction whatsoever – that, indeed, Dantes had no politics at all when he was serving as a ship's mate. Dantes's only concern while a sailor was caring for his father and marrying Mercedes. Yet in Villefort's narrative he has constructed, Dantes is a central actor in the insurgency that brings about the Hundred Days.

And indeed, Bonaparte does fall—the narrator passes over Waterloo in a sentence. Villefort maintains his post in the Royalist government, professing that he only did what he had to do to keep the government moving during the horrors of Napoleon's return to rule. His marriage to Renee is allowed to commence, as the Saint-Merans, Royalists to the core, are allowed back into society. Danglars, afraid during the Hundred Days that Dantes would return, asks Morrel to be shipped to Spain. Fernand signs up for Napoleon's army at Waterloo, and when he leaves Mercedes, she tells him that he must not die, since she depends upon him for help—although their relationship is still friendly and not romantic. Once Louis XVIII is restored, Dantes' father, convinced there is no hope at all for Dantes, dies. Mercedes and Morrel take care of his funeral and final expenses.

One striking feature of this novel is the speed with which certain events come and go. Here, one of the most important battles in the history of Europe – Waterloo, where Napoleon is finally defeated – is given far, far less notice than even the most trivial social matters later on in the novel. The narrator and Dumas do not mean to suggest that Waterloo was not important, however; instead, they show how the narrative of the novel unfolds against a backdrop of important historical events – a primary drama foregrounded atop the drama of history.

CHAPTER 14 – THE RAVING PRISONER AND THE MAD ONE

The Governor of Prisons visits the Chateau D'If one year after the Second Restoration, about seventeen months after Dantes' initial imprisonment. On his tour of the building, this Governor asks, finally, to see the dungeons in the basement, and the wardens tell him that down there are only insane men. Two examples jump to mind: an old Abbe, named Faria, who is originally Italian and who busies himself by solving riddles and puzzles in his cell; and a younger man named Dantes who was violent when initially imprisoned and who has been asking after the Governor for a year and a half.

As a complement to the battle of Waterloo, described in a mere sentence, the narrator admits that a year and a half has passed within the walls of the Chateau D'If. This indicates just how malleable the idea of time can be – and indeed, for many characters in the novel, this is the case. For Dantes in particular, the fourteen years he spends in prison seem to last an eternity (but are a relatively brief section of the book), whereas the months he spends in Paris enacting his revenge take up the majority of the second half of the novel.

When the Governor meets with Dantes, he initially wants to ask only about the conditions of the prison. But Dantes insists that he has committed no crime and says that Villefort knows the truth of his case. The Governor asks whether, therefore, Villefort's notes on Dantes can be trusted, and because Dantes has no sense of Villefort's true perfidy, he says yes. The Governor agrees to review these notes after passing through D'If, and Dantes, though seemingly on the verge of madness and despair, marks the date—1816 —on the walls, as a way to better understand the passage of time in his cell.

One of the most disorienting features of the prison in the Chateau D'If is its complete separation from the activities of the outside world. Dantes does not even have a sense of how much time has passed, or even enough daylight to see whether one twenty-four-hour period has given over to the next. Dantes vows to keep better track of his time in prison, at least from this stage – though it is not clear why he wishes to know how the days pass, since there is little hope he will ever be allowed to leave.

When the Governor and the wardens visit the Abbe Faria, the Abbe tells them, as the wardens had said he would, about a treasure he supposedly controls, about 100 leagues from the prison. He offers the Governor up to 6 million francs from this treasure for his release, but the officials, none of whom seem even to remember why Faria was imprisoned, dismiss Faria as a madman and his treasure as entirely illusory. When the Governor returns upstairs, he sees Villefort's note that Dantes is an "extremely dangerous" Bonapartist sympathizer and thus decides to leave him in prison. When another Governor takes over, in 1817, he forgets Dantes' name; Dantes becomes known only as inmate no. 34.

For the first time in the reader's hearing, the Abbe importantly announces that he knows where they can find a large fortune. The guards do not believe the Abbe, and in fact think he's insane, but it is this fortune that will later transform Dantes into the Count. At the same time, Dantes undergoes the further humiliation of having his name replaced by a number. This is a first instance of changed identity for Dantes, who will go through several further identities as the novel progresses.

CHAPTER 15 – NUMBER 34 AND NUMBER 17

The narrator describes the various states into which Dantes falls during his time in D'If. He has periods where he is angry, where he prays to God and to men (including the unknown men who have done him harm). He paces around his cell, wracking his brain for things to think about, but as the narrator notes, Dantes was only nineteen when he was imprisoned, and he had very little by way of formal learning. In prison, he can only think of himself, Mercedes, his father, and Morrel, and they seem like ghosts to him. After a time, he resolves to let himself die, as he cannot bring himself to commit suicide by hanging. He renounces his food and throws it out a very tiny window whenever the guard leaves it for him. He begins to grow woefully thin.

Here, for the first time, the narrator introduces the idea of Dantes's lack of formal schooling. The narrator goes on to make the starling claim that Dantes has very little to think about in prison because he is not yet acquainted with the great ideas of the books, languages, and philosophies of the world. Dantes will soon glean these things from the Abbe Faria, his fellow prisoner – but his lack of intellectual nutrition in prison is nearly enough to drive him insane, and to cause him nearly to commit suicide.

After about seven years in the prison, when he is on the verge of death from self-inflicted starvation, Dantes hears a faint scratching sound coming from a wall in his cell. He wonders whether this is a neighboring prisoner or a workman repairing the prison itself. He knocks, figuring that a prisoner who was trying to escape would be afraid to keep scratching away, whereas a workman would continue. The scratching does indeed stop, and Dantes is overjoyed: he has, for the first time in seven years, seen evidence of another prisoner in the Chateau D'If.

In a short span of time, the reader has become so accustomed to Dantes's solitude that these scratches from the other side of the wall seem to be a godsend. And indeed, this is the first good fortune that has come Dantes' way since his initial imprisonment.

Dantes begins nursing himself back to health, first by eating the food that has been brought to him. He resolves, too, to begin scratching where he heard the sound. He does this with a broken shard of a pitcher, and, later, with an iron handle on a pot that he convinces a guard to let him keep. After scratching around the grout of a stone, he begins making real progress with the iron handle; eventually, working at night and covering up this work with his bed during the day, he pulls out many handfuls of stone and mortar until he reaches an exposed beam that blocks his way.

These sequences, in which both men gradually wear away at the walls of their prison, symbolize and make concrete the very slow, very small progress they make, day by day, toward gaining their freedom. The narrator indicates that this small hope – the slimmest possibility that they might escape – is enough to keep both men alive. Thus the ideas of patience, and of optimistic thinking, hoping, and longing, are sewn into the text in this early chapter.

On seeing the beam, Dantes shouts aloud to God, cursing that it should be placed in his path. He hears, in response, a voice on the other side of the wall—the prisoner who had been scratching away, and who identifies himself as no. 24. That prisoner, later revealed to be the "mad" Abbe Faria, has also been trying to escape, although he miscalculated and thought that Dantes' wall was actually the wall to the edge of the prison itself.

Of course, the Abbe's miscalculation only seems to be ill fortune for a time. For it is this miscalculation that causes him to dig into Dantes' cell, and prompts the two to become friends and confidants. Thus the narrator indicates that some acts that appear at first to be bad luck can actually be instances of good luck.

Faria is initially distrustful of Dantes, but Dantes tells him that he will be his friend, and even that he will be like a son to Faria. When Faria realizes that Dantes is only 26, and thus "too young" to be a traitor, Faria agrees to join forces with Dantes in an attempt to escape the Chateau D'If. After the jailer leaves the next day, Dantes goes back to the hole on his side. Putting his weight at the bottom of it, he finds that a large portion has caved away, linking to the hole the Abbe has dug on the other side. With the coast clear, the Abbe begins wriggling toward Dantes' cell.

It is perhaps natural, the narrator implies, for the Abbe to be fearful of Dantes, since neither man has had any contact with another man (other than the jailers) for many years. But the two men soon become inseparably dependent on one another. Thus the narrator, and Dumas, make the claim that the ties of brotherhood between people are strong enough to outweigh the potentially devastating effects of long imprisonment. In short: it is friendship with the Abbe that, quite literally, saves Dantes' life.

CHAPTER 16 – AN ITALIAN SCHOLAR

The Abbe speaks to Dantes, who for some time is so overwhelmed by the presence of another person in his cell that he can say very little. The Abbe describes himself: he was imprisoned in 1807, first in another prison, for attempting to unite Italy as one nation. Since his imprisonment, he has made tools, including a chisel and lever, to help him dig beneath the walls of his cell, including a fifty-foot tunnel leading not to the edge of the prison, as he'd hoped, but nearly to Dantes' wall, which he then passed beneath. Dantes is astonished by the man's vigor.

The Abbe Faria is an extraordinary character in book filled with such characters. What is most notable here—and more astonishing to Dantes—is the Abbe's patience. He has worked away at the walls of his prison for years, continuing his own scholarly projects as he does so, despite having no guarantee that the work will result in his freedom.

Dantes asks whether the Abbe wouldn't be willing to dig another tunnel together to the outside—then they could scale the walls and kill one of the guards to escape. The Abbe says he could never take another man's life—and he doesn't necessarily believe that Dantes would be able to commit this murder himself, even as Dantes argues that he would do it to gain his freedom. The Abbe argues that, for humans, killing is unnatural and only unnatural people can plot and carry out a murder. The Abbe describes other wonders in his cell: the pens and paper he's made from bird-bones and old linen shirts; the ink made from soot dissolved in wine. He tells Dantes of the languages he knows and of the many books he's memorized, including the Latin and Greek classics and works of more modern literature. Dantes is astonished to learn this, and asks to go with the Abbe into his cell to see for himself what the man has built over the years of his imprisonment.

The Abbe reveals himself to be a man of rules. He claims that their plan to escape can involve no harming of another individual, and though he will revise this rule slightly as he goes along, he believes more in the power of cunning than he does in brute force. This, too, helps Dantes to train himself in patience and forethought. Dantes' later commitment to exacting revenge will take many years, and will require him to plan many months, years, or decades in advance. Without the Abbe's example in prison, Dantes might not have lived long enough, nor have assembled the mental fortitude, to avenge his imprisonment so thoroughly.

CHAPTER 17 – THE ABBE'S CELL

The Abbe demonstrates for Dantes some of the wonders in his cell. These include a functioning sundial; his "great work" on the monarchy of Italy; pens and a penknife; melted fat from meat used to make candles; sulfur to make matches; and a ladder used to climb up to the barred window. Dantes asks how the Abbe was able to accomplish so much in his isolation, despite his limitations, and the Abbe replies that these limitations have allowed him to harness and focus his energies, which might otherwise have "dissipated" in the outside world. Dantes also tells the Abbe that the Abbe doesn't know anything about his (Dantes's) life. Dantes then recounts the story of his first-mateship aboard the *Pharaon*, his return, betrothal, and arrest.

The marvels in the Abbe's cell form an interesting complement to the wonders in Dantes's own "cabinet" – the cave at Monte Cristo, in which he entertains Franz some chapters later. The Abbe's cell and the cave at Monte Cristo are spaces in the novel that seem to follow their own rules. Each is a space controlled by a man of great intellect, and each seems to encourage creative and "impossible" thinking. Thus the Abbe shows Dantes the inventions he's been able to cobble together in prison, and Dantes later shows Franz the vast array of items he's collected from around the world.

After Dantes tells his tale, the Abbe wonders aloud who might have had a grudge against Dantes, for after all, he figures, a crime such as was committed against Dantes needs to have a cause. Together, the Abbe and Dantes go through his story again, focusing on the captaincy of the *Pharaon*, and the Abbe pieces together that Danglars must have caught sight of the letter from Napoleon to Noirtier and used this letter, its contents unknown, to begin manipulating Dantes. The Abbe demonstrates that all handwriting done with left hand looks the same, thus giving further evidence that Danglars was behind the plot: that the letter Dantes saw in Villefort's office was written by a man trying to conceal his hand. The Abbe helps Dantes also to see that Fernand and Caderousse were involved in the drafting of the false letter, by prompting in Dantes the memory of his conversation with the three men at the inn.

Interestingly enough, the Abbe is the first person to realize that Dantes' imprisonment is no accident – that it has not occurred because of, say, an honest clerical error. The Abbe instead detects that a man, or a group of men, have tried to put *Dantes in prison to "punish" him, although for what crime the two men must guess. Thus the Abbe is responsible for beginning Dantes's quest for revenge, as he shows to Dantes that there are men in the outside world who might be punished in order to somehow provide payment for his many years in the Chateau D'If. And Dantes listens patiently as the Abbe deduces exactly this state of affairs.*

The Abbe further unspools Noirtier and Villefort's relationship, for he knows that they are father and son, thus revealing for Dantes that Villefort, far from protecting him, actually condemned him to a life of imprisonment to hide his father's Girondin past. Devastated by these revelations, Dantes returns to his cell to be alone. When he recovers himself, he asks the Abbe to be his teacher. The Abbe agrees that he will instruct Dantes in languages, mathematics, geography, history, and the literature the Abbe has managed, more or less, to memorize. The Abbe says that these are the principles Dantes will need, and he implies that Dantes already has the capacity, via something called his "philosophy," to understand these matters. When the Abbe worries aloud that Dantes is plotting revenge against Villefort, Danglars, Fernand, and Caderousse, Dantes begs him to speak on the subject no more, and the Abbe agrees.

This is another very important moment in the novel. The reader does not see, and the narrator does not explicitly narrate, the moment in which Dantes initially processes the information Abbe Faria has deduced on his behalf. Instead, Dantes removes himself to his own cell and thinks on his own before returning to the Abbe with his resolution made. It is, in essence, this resolution, made without the intrusion of the reader or narrator, that will form the energetic core of the remainder of the novel. The unspeakability of this revenge is echoed in the unspeakable knowledge, possessed by Mercedes for many months, that the Count of Monte Cristo is really Dantes.

After one of their tutoring sessions, the Abbe reveals that he is still thinking of plans for escape, even though he's told Dantes that he would be unwilling to kill the sentry outside in order to make the leap into the sea. Dantes finally convinces the Abbe, with some persistence, that the killing of the sentry would be done "only as a last resort," and to this the Abbe agrees. At this the Abbe relays his most recent plan: the two men will dig under the sentry's parapet, which extends beyond both their walls, using the Abbe's tools. They will then have a tunnel, which they can loosen when the sentry is above it, stunning him into submission. They will subsequently use the Abbe's rope ladder to escape from the hole and leap into the sea, swimming to freedom.

Dantes's bond with the Abbe in prison is founded upon a mutual trust and care. But it is also born of both men's desire to be free of the horrible conditions of the Chateau D'If. Thus, without needing to mention it, the men continue stewing over this plan, until the Abbe acknowledges that he has found something suitable, and which will result in injury to a guard only if accident requires it. Dantes' and the Abbe's desire for freedom is as unquenchable as Dantes' desire to avenge himself against those who falsely imprisoned him.

Dantes is awed by the simplicity of the plan and he tells the Abbe he is committed to it. They work for over fifteen months, continuing their lessons as they go, and by the end of that time, the tunnel extends all the way under the parapet, entirely hidden from the jailers. But just as the two men are making their final preparations for escape, the Abbe falls ill with a paralytic shock, the effects of which he is half-able to narrate to Dantes as they occur. He tells Dantes that it is his second such stroke in his life, and that the third shall kill him, as a stroke killed his father and grandfather. He begs Dantes to administer a small tincture to him to ease his suffering, and Dantes vows to stay with the Abbe, who now cannot escape, until the final stroke takes him to heaven. The Abbe tells Dantes to seal the tunnel they've made in order to avoid suspicion from the guards who hear the hollowness of the floor, and then to return to him, for he (Faria) has another story he wants to tell Dantes.

The introduction of the Abbe's illness is an important moment in the narrative. Dantes realizes that the Abbe really is an old man, like his own father, and both these men are in frail health. The idea of a medicine, or tincture, that can save the Abbe will become important later during the Parisian episodes of the novel, as here the book takes up the idea of poison and its antidote as an important symbol. Here, the tincture that can stop symptoms of stroke can also, as is revealed later, cause *stroke and paralysis in larger doses. Thus medicine—a substance that can save a patient—and poison—a substance that can kill him—are closely related in the text.*

CHAPTER 18 – THE TREASURE

Dantes returns to the Abbe's cell the next day, and Faria begins to tell him of a treasure, the location of which only the Abbe knows, and which he wishes to give Dantes. Dantes, who has heard about this treasure, in jest, from the jailers and guards of the Chateau D'If, worries that Faria has truly lost his mind. For Dantes has never really believed these rumors to be true, and during their many months of working and conversation, the two have never talked about this money. The Abbe shows Dantes an indecipherable scrap of paper, which appears to have been torn in half. The Abbe argues that these are the directions to the treasure, but Dantes worries, inwardly, that Faria has completely lost his mind. Nonetheless Dantes agrees to return the next day to hear more about the Abbe's story of the treasure.

The Abbe has, in effect, two treasures he can give to Dantes. The first is the storehouse of his own knowledge, built up during years in Italy – and the Abbe has effectively shared this knowledge with Dantes while in prison. But the Abbe also possesses a different, and more literal, form of wealth. Dantes, for his part, has not wanted to believe the rumors of the Abbe and his supposed "treasure," because he, like the guards, thinks that such a treasure is impossible. But much like the endless riches of his own mind, the Abbe's treasures on Monte Cristo are quite real.

The Abbe tells Dantes a long story about the history of this treasure. As a younger man, the Abbe worked for a dispossessed nobleman by the name of Spada, whose family money, from the House of Spada, was legendary in all of Italy. In an annal the Abbe recites from memory, he tells of how, during the Italian Renaissance, the pope and his nephew, Cesare Borgia, plotted to steal away the enormous family wealth of the Spada family by hosting Spada and his heir for dinner and **poisoning** both. But the pope and Borgia realize, once they get their hands on Spada's will, that it has been written in some kind of code. Rather than leaving his money to his heir, Spada has bequeathed only his breviary, or religious text, and a few other documents.

This is one of several long digressions in the novel. Here, the narrator's voice appears to join with the voice of the Abbe – just as, later on, the narrator will tell a long tale about the life-history of the bandit Luigi Vampa. In these cases, it becomes especially pronounced that the narrator is a third-person omniscient one – meaning that he has access to the thoughts of all the major characters, and can move between their consciousnesses. The Abbe's story also sets an example of treachery that is paralleled by other characters later on.

The Abbe continues with his story, saying that he himself managed the affairs of the last remaining member of the Spada family, after whose death the Abbe was given control over the family's estate. This did not include wealth, but it did grant him access to archival records which, the Abbe believed, might lead to more information on the possible location of the Spada's wealth of centuries past, which the Abbe became convinced no one had managed to find.

Just as Dantes has learned an enormous amount about the world from the Abbe, the Abbe has learned much of this information from his interaction with the house of Spada. Thus the novel presents different examples of men who are "self-made" – who rise not because of family wealth but because of inherent virtues, like intelligence and a capability for hard work.

The Abbe finishes his story by noting that, as he was moving the last Count of Spada's items away from Rome, he by chance came upon the breviary again, and in disgust he ripped out a page and threw it into the fire. A miracle took place: the page revealed itself to have been written on with a kind of invisible ink. This is the page of which Abbe showed Dantes a fragment earlier in his cell. The Abbe notes that the fire had consumed some, but not all, the writing, and the Abbe, in his cleverness, was able to piece together the rest. The page of the breviary notes that the Spada family has hidden its treasure on the island of **Monte Cristo**, in the Mediterranean; that this treasure is of enormous size, over 13 million francs in modern French money; and the partial letter also provides directions, once on the island, for how to access the wealth.

This is perhaps the most notable image of a novel filled with memorable scenes – the idea of the vast buried treasure at Monte Cristo. Although The Count of Monte Cristo *is not the only novel to take a buried treasure as its central conceit, it is one of the most broadly recognizable (*Treasure Island *is perhaps its only peer in this regard). In the Abbe's telling, the treasure on Monte Cristo is available for the taking for anyone who possesses the knowledge and adventurous spirit necessary to travel there and follow the directions on the scrap of paper. The Abbe believes that Dantes is just the man for this job, and so he shares this information with him as he would with his own son, were he to have one.*

Dantes is flabbergasted by this news and begins to believe that the Abbe might in fact be telling the truth. The Abbe says that, if they had escaped before his second stroke, he would have led Dantes himself to **Monte Cristo** and they could have split the treasure. But now, since he has had no children and because Dantes is like a son to him, he makes Dantes his sole heir, meaning that the young man will inherit the entire fortune at Monte Cristo should he be able to escape the Chateau D'If. Overcome with excitement and emotion, Dantes embraces the Abbe as the chapter ends.

At every point in their interactions thus far, Dantes has trusted that the Abbe is a man of his word – that he does not lie or exaggerate, despite the wonders of his jail cell and the seemingly infinite wonders of the Abbe's mind. Yet Dantes here requires more convincing than in any other scene – in part because the Abbe's story is so fantastical, and in part because the presence of this fortune would allow Dantes to actually deliver the revenge he has begun to plan.

CHAPTER 19 – THE THIRD SEIZURE

As he is describing his fortune of 13 or 14 million francs to Dantes, the Abbe comes to believe that the young man could do enormous good with such wealth once he is freed. Dantes, however, secretly plots the revenge he will take on those who've wronged him. Dantes is familiar with **Monte Cristo**, a deserted island between Elba and Corsica, although the Abbe himself has never been there.

Dantes explicitly draws the link (in his mind) between the wealth he might gain and the revenge he plans to put into action. He knows that with the money hidden on Monte Cristo he would be able to arrange events and make plans that could result in the ruin of the men who harmed him – although he doesn't yet articulate what these plans might be.

Dantes and the Abbe continue to pass the time together, although the Abbe insists that in the next few months he will suffer a third seizure and die. Dantes, for his part, says he will continue nursing the Abbe, so the two discuss the treasure and keep at their lessons. Dantes is grateful to the Abbe for teaching him history, philosophy, and some of the languages of the world; this gratitude helps Dantes to feel contented, even when the guards of the Chateau D'If (still unaware of both men's half-completed plan for escape) reinforce the outer wall and fill in, with heavy stones, the shaft on which Dantes depended for his freedom. Dantes tries not to think of his past, nor of his future, but only of his present friendship with the Abbe.

Although Dantes and the Abbe have worked tirelessly for over a year to escape the Chateau D'If, they also know that their escape will depend on luck – on circumstances breaking their way. Here, they realize that an unlucky event has occurred. Yet they do what they can to maintain a positive attitude, despite the Abbe's understanding that his best and perhaps only shot at freedom seems to have been taken away – and not because the guards caught wind of their plan. Instead, by simple accident, the hole necessary for their escape has been filled in.

One morning, Dantes awakens to the Abbe's cries and realizes that he is undergoing his third seizure. He rushes in to help him, using the same passageway between their cells they've long depended upon, and sees that the Abbe is on the verge of death. He insists he can save the old man with the vial of the red potion given before, but the Abbe says this will only partially alleviate his symptoms; it cannot cure him.

The Abbe is not able to explain to Dantes why he knows that he will die after his third seizure. Dantes simply takes on faith the Abbe's pronouncement, and indeed the Abbe is correct. This is another instance of the Abbe's almost supernatural knowledge and self-possession – he seems to be his own best doctor.

The Abbe undergoes his third and final seizure, with Dantes by his side, and though Dantes does administer the potion, it does very little. After some hours, the Abbe dies, and Dantes sits by his side until he must return to his cell. Deeply moved, but also wondering what will become of the Abbe's body, he listens as the wardens and the governor of the prison, along with a doctor, enter Faria's cell on the other side of the wall and check that he is truly dead by branding his heel with a hot iron. The Abbe is indeed dead, and the officials say that he will be placed in a clean shroud before being sent off to the D'If's graveyard. When the officials leave Faria's cell and lock it, Dantes creeps in.

Although Dantes does not yet know it, his own father has already died in Marseille. In prison, Dantes witnesses the death of another father-figure of his – this time owing to a condition both men are powerless to stop. When the Abbe dies, Dantes realizes that he is completely alone in the Chateau D'If, as far as allies go. He must depend upon his own wiles and all that he's learned from the Abbe in life to attempt to escape the prison and exact his revenge.

CHAPTER 20 – THE GRAVEYARD OF THE CHATEAU D'IF

Dantes mourns his friend and worries that he will succumb to suicide, as he almost did before hearing Faria digging away at the cell wall, now many years in the past. Dantes recovers himself, however, and says that he has not suffered so much—and learned so much from Faria—only to take his own life. All at once, after pacing around Faria's cell several times, Dantes recalls what he'd long ago heard Faria say—that the only escapes possible in prison are those in which an inmate seizes upon a rare opportunity. This is that opportunity, and Dantes snaps into action, not wanting to squander it. He cuts Faria's body out of the cloth and drags it into his own cell, into his own bed, where he makes it look, as much as he can, like his own. Then he returns to the Abbe's cell and, stripping naked, puts himself inside the sack used for burial. He sews himself in it from the inside.

Dantes realizes, as the Abbe has warned him previously, that all things in life require a certain amount of luck. The pair experienced bad luck in watching their escape-shaft filled in by the guards, but here Dantes experiences good luck, realizing that, for once, something will be leaving *the prison – in this case, the presumed body of the Abbe. Dantes wastes little time in making his decision, demonstrating that he's also learned to act on an advantage once he finds it. This kind of decision-making – the bending of change to one's own ends – will serve Dantes well as he begins his journey of revenge.*

Dantes plans either to kills the guards (with a knife he's brought with him in the sack) on his way out of the cell, or to escape during the digging of the grave, as the wardens throw the soft earth atop his body. He hears, at seven o'clock, an official take his food into the other cell. No one notices the switch, and Dantes is relieved. Although he can feel his heart beating loudly in the sack, he wonders if it is audible to the wardens.

Dantes is not entirely knowledgeable of what will happen to him. Indeed, he believes that the Abbe really will be buried. But as Dantes is soon to find out, prisoners of the Chateau D'If are not treated so politely by the guards – and Dantes must make another quick decision from inside the Abbe's shroud.

The two gravediggers come in and carry Dantes out of the Abbe's cell in the shroud. Dantes wonders where they are headed, and he feels the night air of the outside world for the first time in years. They put him on the ground and tie a heavy weight to his feet. Then, before Dantes has time to realize what is happening, he feels his body being thrown over the wall of the Chateau D'If into the sea. He understands, in an instant, that no one is "buried" on the island—all prisoners, when they die, are simply tossed in the heaving waters of the Mediterranean.

This is one of the most exciting and jarring sequences in the novel. Dantes must rely on the skills he has acquired not just as the Abbe's student, but as a sailor working under Morrel. He knows only when it is too late that he will not be buried at all, and he must simply be patient enough, and hopeful enough, to escape from the shroud immediately after it strikes the water – and to shake himself free of the weight that has been tied to him.

CHAPTER 21 – THE ISLAND OF TIBOULEN

In a flash, in the water, Dantes manages to cut his way out of the sack with his knife, and then to cut the heavy cannonball from around his feet. He begins to swim away from the Chateau D'If, but it is dark and a storm is brewing, and he realizes it must be at least a league until he reaches the island of Tiboulen, which he knows to be deserted of people and therefore safe as a place of refuge in the storm. He continues swimming, pleased to see that he has kept up his strength in prison. After going against the wind for what seems like many hours, he bumps up against the rocky shores of Tiboulen.

This instance of almost superhuman strength seems, perhaps, too fantastical to be believed. And indeed the events of the novel at times do verge on the fantastic. But some of this "unbelievability" is built into the book by way of characters' reactions to the figure of the Count. That is, the Count himself seems larger than life – other characters wonder at where he's come from and whence his wealth derives. This, then, is an early instance of the kind of radical adventures that seem to follow the Count wherever he goes.

Dantes understands that he cannot stay on the island long, but he hides under a rock, drinks some rainwater, and watches as the storm calms. He knows that, after a couple hours, the wardens will see that he is gone and will send out search parties throughout the waters near Marseille to track him down. While he is turning over his options in his mind, he looks out and spies a ship setting out from Marseille. He realizes that he can pretend to be a shipwrecked man from the previous night (he watched a ship, far off, go under the waves during the height of the storm), and he finds a sailor's cap on the rocky shore of Tiboulen that allows him to play the part. He grabs onto a bit of flotsam and swims back out into the water, to hail the passing vessel.

Dantes' physical stamina in this passage is noteworthy. After years in prison, he wonders if he will be able to survive in the open ocean – if, for example, he can still swim as strongly as he was once able to. He can, but once again he is also saved by fortuitous circumstances – in this case, the presence of the flotsam on which he can rest his body and of the rescuing vessel that pulls him from the water. Without these interventions, Dantes probably would have drowned.

Although Dantes nearly drowns while back in the water, he manages to tread water on the flotsam long enough to be dragged onto the little sailing ship. The crew gives him rum and asks him who he is, and Dantes replies that he is a Maltese seaman wrecked in the previous night's storm. Although some of the sailors wonder at the length of Dantes' beard and hair, they believe him when they see he has experience on ships; he demonstrates his skill in steering the vessel enough for the captain to offer him a low-paying position on board. They head to the port of Leghorn.

Dantes does not have to work very hard to convince his fellow sailors that he knows how to operate a boat. What Dantes must do, however, is pretend that he is not Dantes, but another man – and he does this effectively, foreshadowing the later changes of identity and costumes that will come to characterize his time as the Count of Monte Cristo in Rome and Paris.

As they're sailing, the crew notices that a cannon has been fired from the Chateau D'If, indicating that a prisoner has escaped. The captain of the small ship looks again at Dantes, who maintains his cool perfectly. The captain thinks to himself that either Dantes really is a Maltese lost at sea, or he's the escaped prisoner—and still too valuable a man aboard the ship to hand over to the authorities. So Dantes stays on-board with nothing said between sailors. Dantes swears to himself that he will find his father and Mercedes, and seek revenge on Fernand, Danglars, Caderousse, and Villefort.

Having gained access to the captain's thoughts, the narrator tells that reader that, perhaps, the captain really did believe that Dantes was the escaped man, but that Dantes has proved himself so nimble on-board the ship that the captain cannot bear the thought of losing him. Thus the narrator indicates that things are not as fantastical as they might seem – Dantes has not so much tricked the captain as made himself an invaluable part of the ship's crew.

CHAPTER 22 – THE SMUGGLERS

Dantes keeps up his ruse on the small ship, which is called the *Jeune-Amelie*, and tells nothing of his background to the captain and the men, insisting that he really is a Maltese sailor. They put in at Leghorn, and Dantes goes immediately to a barber's shop and has his long hair and long beard shaved. He looks in a mirror for the first time in fourteen years—for it is now, he has learned, 1829—and sees that he is now a man with an intensity of gaze that seems to echo his strange and horrible circumstances of imprisonment.

Dantes, having been unable to see himself in any kind of reflection for years, has very little sense of how his body has changed, or of the self-regard that comes naturally from living in the modern world. It is no exaggeration to say that Dantes is reborn here – he is able to look at himself afresh, and to determine what kind of person he wants to be in this second life after prison.

Dantes realizes quickly that the *Jeune-Amelie* is a ship for smugglers, and after they leave Leghorn, full of semi-legal goods on which they've paid no tariffs or taxes, they head to other ports around the Mediterranean. In one, they get into a small skirmish with the Customs officers, who realize they are attempting to leave without paying the port's tax; a gunfight breaks out as the *Jeune-Amelie* makes its way for open waters, and Dantes is hit in the shoulder (though he sustains only a minor wound). Jacopo, a sailor who has befriend Dantes, tends to him, and Dantes notices that, when one Customs officer falls dead in the small battle, he (Dantes) "feels nothing." In his desire for treasure and vengeance, he has left prison a changed man, with a "heart of stone."

Dantes remarks to himself that the murder of another man does nothing to him – does not cause him pain or anguish. Dantes will use this hard-heartedness to fuel his path of revenge, which he is soon to begin. This is also another example of the extent to which prison has changed Dantes. It has rendered him a different person, with a rougher physical demeanor and a colder, more calculating mind. Although the men around Dantes don't notice this, Dantes certainly feels *that a change has occurred in himself.*

Dantes continues in his work for the captain of the *Jeune-Amelie* for three months. Back in a bar in Leghorn, this captain tells Dantes that a shipment they've just taken on of Turkish cloths is so valuable that they'll need to be extra-careful with it and stash it somewhere safe and away from prying eyes. The captain suggests the island of **Monte Cristo**, and Dantes' eyes light up—he realizes this is his chance to stop on the island and find out the path to the Abbe's treasure. Dantes nevertheless hides his emotions and agrees to the captain's plan. The next night, they head for Monte Cristo.

This is another instance of coincidence and good fortune, for Dantes of course wants to go to Monte Cristo, but also doesn't want to be too obvious about his desire for fear of eliciting suspicion from the other sailors. This gives the smugglers an opportunity to go to the island together, and Dantes can then peel off from the group and see if the Abbe's stories, so long in Dantes' mind, are indeed true.

CHAPTER 23 – THE ISLAND OF MONTE CRISTO

Dantes is so excited about the impending visit to **Monte Cristo** that he can't sleep the night before and has dreams that the entire fortune vanishes before his eyes as he attempts to secure it. The *Jeune-Amelie* rapidly approaches Monte Cristo, and Dantes takes the helm overnight, asking the rest of the crew for solitude in steering the vessel. The next day, Dantes' heart is nearly bursting with excitement, and he is shocked to learn from his fellow sailors that there are no caves on the island, since he had assumed the treasure would be hidden in one. But he nevertheless collects himself, takes a gun to go hunting on the island (to survey it), and is followed along by Jacopo, his trusty companion on board.

This passage gives a rare window into Dantes' psyche. We can presume that Dantes has greatly anticipated his visit to Monte Cristo, but his inability to sleep the night before his arrival on the island also provides an insight into his mind – into the enormous fear, anxiety, joy, and misgiving that now surround the name of Monte Cristo. For many chapters after this, the reader will have very little insight into the operation of Dantes' thoughts, but for this brief instance, the narrator is able to convey them to us.

Dantes shoots and kills a wild goat and tells Jacopo to take it back to the other men, now assembled on the shores of **Monte Cristo**, to cook it for later. Dantes then walks along the path into the center of the island, laid out with the faintest of scratches in rocks, and believes he is in fact coming close to the location of the treasure. But when he reaches the spot from which, he believes, he can begin following the Cardinal Spada's directions (which he has memorized from the Abbe's paper), he finds no clear entrance, only a very heavy rock sitting atop a base of stone and earth. Dantes decides to retrace his steps to make sure he has taken the correct route.

Dantes has long been aware that the treasure of the island of Monte Cristo will not be easily accessible, but he's not sure exactly how difficult it will be to retrieve, if indeed it's there at all. Here, he realizes that an enormous amount of care has been put into the physical preservation of the island and of the space in which the treasure is supposedly stored. Dantes wants to simply rip open the cave by whatever means necessary, but again marshals the patience necessary to conceal his actions.

The narrator shifts to the perspective of the **Monte Cristo** smugglers, who see Dantes jumping from rock to rock, headed back toward them. Dantes, from their perspective, falls off one of the rocks and appears to be gravely injured. Jacopo runs to him and carries him back, and Dantes claims he has hurt his leg and his head, that he cannot take any food, and that he worries that his condition will only become graver as time goes on. The sailors are terrified that their beloved friend might perish on Monte Cristo.

Because of this narrative trick, it is unclear for some time whether or not Dantes has actually injured himself. Certainly the smugglers seem convinced of his efforts, although it is hard for the reader to believe that, after all this preparation, Dantes might simply tumble off the face of the cliff before he is able to reach the treasure. The ambiguity remains for several paragraphs.

Dantes tells the sailors and the ship's captain, who is named Captain Baldi, that he wishes to remain alone on **Monte Cristo** to nurse his wounds. He argues that his wounds are too severe to allow him to be moved, and that the *Jeune-Amelie* can either return for him in a week, or, if it spots another vessel venturing toward Monte Cristo, it can divert it to help Dantes after a space of two or three days. Jacopo offers to give up his share of the smugglers' profit, on the Turkish rugs they've stored at Monte Cristo temporarily, in order to stay with Dantes and nurse him back to health. Dantes is moved that Jacopo would make this sacrifice for him, and he will remember it going forward, but he asks to be kept absolutely alone on the island. When the *Jeune-Amelie* departs, Dantes hops up—having only pretended that he had broken his back and leg—and sets off to find the Abbe's treasure.

As readers might have guessed, Dantes is not really hurt, and has instead orchestrated this fall so as to appear injured – and thus, unable to leave the island. Finally, Dantes has achieved what he's longed for – time alone on Monte Cristo, with sufficient space and daylight to put into effect the instructions the Abbe has given him. This is a small instance of Dantes' willingness to play the long game, to trick those around him after careful planning. Here, the trickery lasts only the space of a few hours. But by the time Dantes has become the Count of Monte Cristo, some of these ruses and disguises will be used for years on end.

CHAPTER 24 – DAZZLED

Dantes climbs back up to the circular, heavy rock he saw the previous day and notes that, on the far horizon, the *Jeune-Amelie* is only a pinprick, heading in the opposite direction. It is broad daylight, but no one else is around; no one on the neighboring islands, including Elba, can see him. He sets about his work, climbing up to another rock-ledge above the circular rock, and realizing he can use the ram's horn full of gunpowder, which Jacopo has left with him for hunting, to blow a small hole in the side of the base holding up the heavy circular rock. He does this, and then is able to lever the heavy rock down the hill and into the sea. He is amazed to find, beneath it, a ring that has been clearly installed by a person. He senses that the treasure is beneath this entryway.

The hidden cave on Monte Cristo appears to be a combination of natural and artificial formations. The Spada family, or whoever hid the treasure on the island, has used some features of the land itself, and wed them to features of technical ingenuity to make sure the treasure goes undetected. For Dantes, the technical, man-made elements of the cave are proof that something on this island was in fact put there by other people. This lends more evidence to the existence of the treasure, which Dantes still in part doubts.

Dantes pries open the lid and finds a staircase, but he notes that, despite this evidence of human presence, he must not get too carried away. He reassures himself by saying that, even if the staircase doesn't lead to the treasure—if, for example, the Borgia family reached the treasure first many centuries ago—he will still have participated in a grand adventure. Thus, telling himself not to depend on the presence of the 14 million francs, he begins the descent into the staircase and the cave that has been carved into the center of the island.

With each successive step, Dantes believes, more and more strongly that there really is a treasure hidden on the island. But he does not want to get too excited about this discovery, lest he be disappointed. Thus, even as it seems clear to the reader that there really is something in the cave put there by man, Dantes refuses to accept this idea wholly until he sees the treasure with his own eyes, and holds it in his hands.

Dantes continues his work. He peers into, and then enters, the first chamber of the cave and finds it empty. He tests the walls with his pickaxe, and, finding one that appears to have been done in plaster, he begins pulling it down: first the outer layer, and then the un-mortared rocks that lie beneath it. He finds another chamber, darker than the first, and begins to realize that the Abbe's treasure directions are true. He finds the darkest corner of that second room, digs in the earth, and uncovers a chest. After calming himself, he pries it open with his pickaxe, revealing an enormous quantity of gold ingots, gold coins, and precious stones. The Abbe's treasure is real, and Dantes has found it and secured it entirely for himself.

Dantes has managed to master himself for many hours, indeed for weeks and months – believing that it might be possible to find the treasure, but not committing himself entirely to the idea that it's there. He does this, perhaps, to keep his spirits high in case he's disappointed. But in this scene, Dantes's wariness turns to incredulity, surprise, disbelief, and then excitement. For he really has found the treasure, and his patience has paid off. The instructions the Abbe has given him, which after all were partially reconstructed and inferred by the two men, do point to a treasure in reality. The fantastical has become real.

Dantes runs about the island as the daylight falls, rejoicing, wondering if he is in fact dreaming or if this treasure is real. He considers killing a goat for dinner with his gun, but worries about making a sound and directing others to the small island. He returns, counts the treasure, and then climbs back out of the cave, drinking a little wine and eating some biscuit, which the other sailors have left behind for their supposedly wounded comrade. He sleeps, exhausted from what has been the most exciting day of his young life.

This day stands as a complement to the day in which Dantes was first imprisoned in the Chateau D'If. Then, he realized that his misfortune was as poor as any man's who'd ever lived: taken away from his betrothal feast and thrown in prison for no reason, with no hope of escape. But today, he has stumbled on an unclaimed buried treasure, enough to make his fortune and start his life anew. Both events are as unbelievable as they are hugely emotional.

CHAPTER 25 – THE STRANGER

Dantes wakes up the next morning with a set of plans in mind. He knows he cannot stay on the island forever, simply "counting his money," and must instead use that money to begin his longstanding plan for revenge. First, he fills his pockets with precious jewels—enough to make any man's lifetime fortune, in themselves—and covers all traces of his work in the center of the island, even replanting grasses and flowers to make it seem that no one was walked up the high paths for many years. He goes back down to the shore and waits for the *Jeune-Amelie*, which arrives after several days, and though he tells them he is feeling better, he still pretends to be nursing a serious injury.

Another man might behave rashly with the fortune Dantes has stumbled upon, or might dream of what he could now buy. But Dantes has trained himself too vigorously for that. He realizes that this fortune has made him, overnight, a target, as anyone who knows of its whereabouts will attempt to seize it by force. He thus puts into place a series of plans, some of which he appears to formulate on the spot, to protect his wealth and begin his longer-term project of revenge against those who betrayed him.

Dantes sails with the *Jeune-Amelie* to Leghorn, where he puts in, having now completed his three-month contract with Baldi and the ship. He sells four of the precious stones, without alerting the rest of the crew, to a banker in Leghorn, netting 20,000 francs. Then he turns to Jacopo and gives him money to buy and outfit his own vessel, to be sailed as part of Dantes' command. Although Jacopo is surprised to learn that Dantes has come into money so quickly, he has long thought that Dantes was of "superior" social stock to the rest of the smugglers. Dantes explains to him, and later to the captain, that he has learned at Leghorn that he has come into a very large inheritance from a distant relative, and the sailors, all remarking on Dantes' exceptional and noble nature, find this explanation completely plausible.

Just as the captain of the Jeune-Amelie *wondered if Dantes was actually the escaped prisoner from the Chateau D'If, Jacopo, too, wonders if Dantes is actually a nobleman in disguise. Both the captain and Jacopo are then perfectly willing to believe that Dantes is not who he says he is – that he has been wearing a disguise or mask with them, to pursue his own affairs. But Dantes' good nature and skill as a sailor more than make up for this ambiguity as to his exact identity, and both the captain and Jacopo are willing to put up with it out of loyalty to him.*

After he finds and outfits the boat and crew, Dantes dispatches Jacopo to sail to Marseille and report on the presence of his father and a woman named Mercedes, then to meet Dantes back on the island of **Monte Cristo**. Jacopo agrees to this and sets off. Dantes heads to Genoa, finds a boat being built for a rich Englishman, and buys it from the builders. As he sets sail out of Genoa, alone, those on the shore marvel at the wealthy man and where he might be setting sail for; no one guesses that it's to Monte Cristo.

The decision-making evident in these scenes will come to be identified with the behavior of the Count of Monte Cristo. That is, the Count is accustomed to buying whatever he sees, at whatever price, sometimes paying ostentatiously more for something than any other man would. Dantes wants a ship in this scene, and so he buys one being made for someone else, without fear of any possible consequences.

Dantes lands at **Monte Cristo** and, having anchored the vessel (in which the shipbuilders have constructed secret compartments), he loads, all alone, his treasure onto the ship over a period of many days. After about a week, Jacopo sails to him in his own ship, purchased with Dantes' initial investment, and tells him the sorry news: Old Dantes is no longer alive, and Mercedes has "vanished." Dantes conceals his response from Jacopo, going off into the center of the island alone for two hours. When he returns, he takes on some of the crew members, and the two ships make for Marseille.

Dantes' behavior in this scene exactly mirrors his behavior in the Chateau D'If, when, in conversation with the Abbe, the two men deduced the four plotters who placed Dantes unjustly in prison. Dantes does not show his emotions openly, and does not wish to betray to Jacopo his deep sadness at the thought of his father's death and Mercedes' absence. But these events become, like the identity of the plotters, the engines of his revenge.

As he approaches the port there, Dantes worries that he will be taken for the criminal Dantes and put back into the Chateau D'If. But he also knows that, having shaved his face and hair, he no longer resembles that criminal in the slightest, and the events of the past fourteen years have rendered him unrecognizable to anyone in Marseille who might have known him as a young man. When he alights at Marseille with his English passport (purchased at Leghorn), he breezes past the gendarmes and past a sailor he knew from his days on the *Pharaon*, Morrel's vessel. He gives that sailor a large tip for no reason other than charity, and continues on his way to his father's house.

Dantes goes to great lengths throughout the novel to conceal himself, to take on other names and costumes, even to affect foreign accents. But here he realizes that the events of his life in prison and the great excitement of the treasure have changed his face thoroughly. He can walk through the streets of Marseille without being noticed because he has become a different person in important physical ways, even though many of his skills, abilities, and passions remain the same.

Dantes mounts the stairs to his father's old two-room apartment, and he finds a surprised, poor couple inside. He recognizes nothing of his father's habitation of 15 years before, and when he leaves the apartment, he finds the landlord and buys the entire building, offering the couple from upstairs free lodgings anywhere else in the apartment complex except those top rooms, which Dantes (calling himself Lord Wilmore, the name on his English passport) reserves for himself.

This is another example of the "new" Dantes' quick decision-making. His father's apartment was once a site of happiness and love for him, and is now a place he associates with his father's demise. Although it is not clear for what purpose Dantes purchases the apartment and building, it is evident that in doing so, he has inaugurated the use of a new identity for financial matters: the English banker Lord Wilmore.

Dantes then heads to Les Catalans and asks after Fernand and Mercedes. No one has heard anything of those two either for about 15 years. Dantes, to thank the Catalans for their efforts, buys them some new sailing vessels and nets. But before the inhabitants can thank him or ask where he has come from and what his business is in Marseille, Dantes is off again, on horseback, toward a town called Beaucaire. There, he has learned from the landlord of his father's apartment, Caderousse has moved and become the manager of a small inn with his wife.

Les Catalans has always been a place of "foreignness" tucked away within the French city of Marseille. The residents of Les Catalans are Spanish, according to family history, and have generally lived separately from the rest of Marseillais society. Dantes realizes, too, that despite the close family ties of this region, no one has any idea what's become of Fernand and Mercedes, who appear to have moved away long ago.

CHAPTER 26 – AT THE SIGN OF THE PONT DU GARD

The narrator describes a small, shabby inn in Beaucaire, which is styled with a sign of the Pont du Gard (a bridge in Paris), and is run by a small, nervous man, revealed to be Caderousse, and his wife, known by the nickname La Carconte (the town in which she was born). Caderousse worries about the inn's finances and lack of guests, and La Carconte spends much of her time angry at Caderousse for the lack of guests at the inn. It is a cruel and unhappy marriage, and La Carconte is frequently ill with unnamed ailments.

There are perhaps no characters in the novel more bitter and abject than Caderousse and La Carconte. The inn they run has very little business, La Carconte is always sick, and Caderousse seems never to be able to catch a break in life. The two, in short, appear to suffer from a kind of fated bad luck. As will be revealed in this and the following chapter, this luck, Caderousse believes, seems to stem from mistakes he has made in his earlier life.

As Caderousse is waiting outside the door one day hoping a customer will stop by, he sees a horse and rider hurrying toward the inn. The rider is dressed richly as an Abbe (a man of the cloth with an official position in the government, like the former Abbe Faria), but his named is not provided. When the Abbe (Dantes) stops and speaks with Caderousse, he requests wine for refreshment, and the two begin a conversation in which the Abbe announces he has come to determine if Caderousse indeed used to live in the apartment next to Old Dantes.

It is worth noting that another of Dantes' disguises – the Abbe, later referred to as Busoni – takes the same religious title as the Abbe Faria, his devoted friend in the Chateau D'If. Although Dantes never remarks on the coincidence between this title and Faria's, it seems clear, at least implicitly, that the Abbe's rectitude and serenity are a form of homage to his departed friend.

The mysterious Abbe then asks Caderousse if he knew young Dantes, and the Abbe admits that he once, briefly, envied the younger Dantes for his "good fortune" in being named captain and marrying Mercedes, and that Dantes was placed in prison for a crime he did not commit. Caderousse, without prompting, insists that what has happened to Dantes was a miscarriage of justice, without a doubt, and that the people responsible for Dantes' imprisonment have not been punished. The Abbe, betraying no sign of recognition, tells Caderousse that he administered last rites to Dantes in prison and that he is bringing a message from Dantes. He insists that the young man died without ever knowing who placed the false charges against him or why.

Caderousse indicates that he has experienced a good deal of guilt and misgiving about his behavior toward Dantes many years before. Caderousse admits that he did not do enough to stop the plotters from carrying out their nefarious deeds, and even now he appears to carry with him the shame of this failure. The Abbe Busoni has come to the inn to determine the extent to which Caderousse deserves blame for his actions – thus beginning his "trial" and execution of revenge, which will span the remainder of the novel.

The Abbe says that he has a diamond from Dantes (which Dantes himself received in prison, from a fellow inmate, a rich Englishman) to be divided among Dantes' "last friends on earth." The Abbe claims these friends were: Caderousse, Danglars, Fernand, Mercedes, and Dantes' father. The Abbe notes that Dantes' father is dead, and that Mercedes can no longer be found, according to his sources. This leaves the three other men. On hearing this, Caderousse begins to seem flustered. When his wife, La Carconte, comes downstairs, she urges Caderousse to say nothing more and not to trust this mysterious Abbe who has come into their home.

This is another important instance of dramatic irony in the text, in which the reader knows information that another character (in this case, Caderousse) does not know. The Abbe is of course "trying" Caderousse, to see the extent to which the older man was responsible for the crimes committed against Dantes. But the Abbe does not do this directly; rather, he crafts a ruse in which he appears to believe that Caderousse, Villefort, Fernand, and Danglars are actually friends to Dantes.

But when the Abbe takes out the diamond, which is worth 50,000 francs, Caderousse realizes that he has much to gain in telling his story, since as he is about to report, Danglars and Fernand were really no friends at all to Dantes. La Carconte, still sitting on the steps and listening, is torn: on the one hand, she is immensely greedy, as her husband is, for the diamond. On the other hand, she wants to be protective of the strange story her husband seems increasingly willing to tell.

La Carconte's internal debate is striking. She is perhaps one of the least compassionate, least likeable characters in the novel, and here she cannot decide which would be worse: sharing the guilty details of one's life, or possibly forgoing a large sum of money. It will later be revealed the lengths to which La Carconte is willing to go to protect this money once she receives it.

Finally, however, Caderousse agrees to tell the Abbe the whole story of how Dantes landed in prison, convinced more by the idea of a full share of the 50,000-franc diamond than by the righteousness of describing the misdeeds done against Dantes. La Carconte, similarly swayed by Caderousse's reasoning, though still distrustful of the stranger, allows her husband to continue in his tale, which begins in the next chapter.

As is often the case with Caderousse and La Carconte, considerations of money will sway all others. This prompts Caderousse to tell his story from the beginning, and though La Carconte grumbles at this, she is delighted at the prospect of receiving an enormous jewel for their trouble.

CHAPTER 27 – CADEROUSSE'S STORY

Caderousse begins by begging the Abbe never to speak a word of Caderousse's story to anyone, and if he does, not to link the former tailor to the tale, since the men he describes are so "wealthy and powerful" they could destroy him and La Carconte. The Abbe agrees. Caderousse begins by describing what happened to Dantes' father: after Dantes' arrest, his father returned to his apartment and refused to leave it, wanting to be there in case Dantes were to return from jail. Old Dantes refused to eat, partially out of grief and partially to save money, and wound up pawning most of his goods. Mercedes came over many times to help him and offer to take care of him, and Morrel offered money. But Old Dantes insisted that he wanted to wait for Dantes on his own, until, at the very end, he allowed Mercedes to nurse him when he was in bed with gastroenteritis. Old Dantes died a week later, Caderousse reports, of starvation.

This beginning to the story reveals important information about the plotters and the relationship between Mercedes and Old Dantes. The plotters, as Caderousse asserts, have all become rich, famous, and influential – all, that is, except for Caderousse, who can barely make ends meet at the inn. The plotters seem to have succeeded in inverse proportion to the horrible deeds they've committed: the worse their actions, the more they've gained. Mercedes, on the other hand, demonstrated genuine devotion to and care of Old Dantes in his time of need, even though Old Dantes was unable to keep himself alive long enough to see his son return. Mercedes, for her part, is living a life as yet unknown to Dantes.

The story visibly affects the Abbe, who claims he is moved by it because it is, broadly speaking, moving and affecting. Caderousse goes on to describe the fortunes of Fernand and Danglars, who defrauded and imprisoned Dantes out of jealousy, for his fiancee and for his position as captain, respectively. The Abbe announces to himself that it's just as Faria told him—Danglars and Fernand were responsible for his false indictment. Caderousse wonders at this declaration, but the Abbe recovers himself, before blurting out again that Caderousse, too, was present at the signing of the false document with Danglars' left hand. Caderousse is amazed to hear that the Abbe knows this, and the Abbe again quickly recovers himself, saying that Caderousse could only know the story of the two other men if he had been there himself. Caderousse admits to everything. He says that he was present during this terrible plot, but that he was too drunk to do anything to stop it (which is true). Furthermore, the next day, when he wished to put an end to it, Danglars told him that anyone appearing to sympathize with a man accused of Bonapartism could himself be thrown in jail.

This will not be the first time in the novel that Dantes, having heard information pertinent to his own life, must hide his emotions as best he can. This is another of Dantes' great strengths – his power to control himself, to subordinate the needs and desires of a moment to a longer-range plan. In this case, Dantes knows he must suppress his emotions to maintain the pretense that he is, in fact, the Abbe Busoni. This is in stark contrast to the behavior of other characters in the novel, like Caderousse, who seem incapable of subordinating their desires of the moment to longer-range plans. Dantes' discipline, like the Abbe Faria's, is one of his most remarkable characteristics.

Thus, Caderousse admits to the Abbe to being a coward in the face of false accusations against Dantes—to standing "idly by," as the Abbe eventually puts it—but he claims that he has felt guilty for this cowardice for 15 years, and that he believes his current poverty, and his wife's persistent fever and illness, are heavenly repayment for this sin of not stopping cruelty. The Abbe appears to sense that Caderousse is serious in his self-pity and recrimination for this misdeed, and tells him that, though he behaved without honor in the past, he is not as guilty as Fernand and Danglars are.

This is an important moment in Dantes's development of a theory of justice. For, although he does not say it explicitly, he does seem to feel that Caderousse has paid sufficient penance for his misdeeds of fifteen years before—the financial agony Caderousse has endured has been genuine punishment. Thus the Abbe is willing to give Caderousse a jewel to offset some of this pain, and to allow the innkeeper to move on, having paid his debt for his crime.

The Abbe asks after Morrel, and Caderousse informs him that Morrel's business has been faltering, that he has lost in storms all his ships save for the *Pharaon*, and that he has a son and daughter, both of whose lives are on hold owing to the family's misfortunes. Morrel's son has gone into the army to seek money for the family, and his daughter's marriage is in jeopardy, because her fiancé's family worries she will not be able to provide a substantial enough dowry.

Speaking of debts, the introduction of this new plotline involving the financial fortunes of the Morrel family will become an important next stop for Dantes on his mission en route to Rome and Paris. Morrel was responsible for helping Dantes to achieve his first job as a sailor, and Dantes wants to help Morrel in any way he can, now that he has the financial means to do so.

Caderousse reports that Danglars went swiftly to Spain after Dantes' imprisonment, invested money in companies supplying the French army, and, through shrewd handling of those investments, made a giant fortune as a banker. He married a wealthy woman and then, after her death, another wealthy woman, and eventually installed himself, now elevated to the position of Baron, as one of the most influential bankers in Paris.

Danglars' career and personal life, as Caderousse narrates them, have been characterized by shrewd decision-making. As a banker, Danglars has seemed to know when to buy stocks and bonds and when to sell them. As a husband, he has seemed willing to marry for some combination of social status and wealth.

Fernand made a career as a soldier, first called into duty with Napoleon's army, and then, seeing that Napoleon was to lose at Waterloo, defecting to the English side, which enabled him to claim a higher position in the ensuing Royalist army after the Second Restoration. Being a Spaniard by blood, and able to speak the language, Fernand then fought for the French against the Spanish in a later war in 1823, only to meet up with Danglars, whose banking career in Spain was just beginning. After some shrewd investing, Fernand too made a small fortune, owing to his connections to Danglars.

Fernand's behavior during these wars will later become the subject of much intrigue in Parisian society, as the Count goes about systematically undermining his reputation. But at this point, Caderousse reports that Fernand has achieved a great deal of renown for his behavior during these same wars, and that this renown has led to an estimable position in French society, if less income than the wildly successful Danglars enjoys.

At this, Fernand found yet another fighting post, for the Ali Pasha in Greece, a man to whom Fernand ingratiated himself. When the Ali Pasha died, he left Fernand an enormous sum of money, which he used to return to Paris and establish himself, as Danglars did, in a giant home and with a royal title for himself: the Count de Morcerf.

The reference to the Ali Pasha seems at this point to be in passing, as it's not clear who this man is, or how he will factor into the narrative. This demonstrates just how important the plotting of the text is – how far in advance Dumas has seen and arranged some of the threads necessary to craft his complex tale.

Caderousse goes on to say that Mercedes was eventually won over by Fernand, who continually returned to her in Les Catalans. As his position grew in the Spanish and then foreign armies, he began wooing her all the more concertedly, telling her that Dantes was dead and never to return. After the death of Old Dantes, Mercedes finally did marry the now-Count de Morcerf, and he took her away from Marseille, installing her in a home in Spain and then eventually in Paris, with their son Albert. Caderousse says that Mercedes, now the Countess de Morcerf, has become one of the great educated and cultured ladies of Paris, having learned to draw and read and speak many languages, and that her son Albert, too, is a gentleman.

Mercedes' behavior and attitude are perhaps two of the more complex sub-narratives in the novel. Mercedes is clearly devoted to Dantes, and she only marries Fernand once she is convinced that Dantes is never going to return. But Mercedes' life with Fernand is far from a simple or quiet one – they are an extremely prominent couple in high-society Paris, and Mercedes grows devoted to her only son, Albert. Thus Mercedes has made a life for herself as best she can, and she appears comfortable with aspects of that life, even though it's founded on the great tragedy of her existence – her separation from her true love.

The Abbe closes his line of questioning by asking about Villefort, if Caderousse has any news of the man. Caderousse replies that he does not, that he and Villefort were never friends, but that he expects Villefort, like Danglars and Fernand, has found fortune from Dantes' misfortune. Having heard enough, the Abbe hands over the entire diamond to Caderousse, who can hardly believe his luck. The Abbe says that he is now going to "retire" from the world of men "who do so much harm to one another." Caderousse replies that the Abbe could simply have kept Dantes' diamond for himself, rather than carrying out the dying man's wishes. The Abbe mutters to himself that such cowardice is "exactly what the tailor would have done."

The Abbe's statement here must be interpreted ironically, for Dantes does something quite different from "retiring" from this world – instead, he goes about inserting himself into Parisian society as a way of impacting and changing this world, to make sure that those responsible for his imprisonment are punished. On another level, however, the Abbe's statement is not entirely misleading, as the Count really does "retire" at the end of the novel, sailing off into a new life and leaving a good deal of his money behind. Thus the Count's relationship to the society he at once conquers and scorns is a complex one throughout the text.

The Abbe leaves on his horse, and Caderousse reports to his wife, who has been half-eavesdropping, all that has transpired with the Abbe. La Carconte immediately distrusts the Abbe, wondering if the diamond is in fact real, and she goes off to find a jeweler at the fair who can appraise it for them. La Carconte seems already to be laying some evil plot, saying to herself that a 50,000-franc diamond is a large sum of money, but it is, as yet, "no fortune."

La Carconte seems incapable of accepting good fortune when it occurs. She is distrustful of the Abbe (as it turns out, with good reason), but she is also distrustful of the value of the diamond, which does indeed turn out to be real and worth an enormous amount of money. La Carconte's devotion only to herself – and her unwillingness to trust others – will lead to her demise later in the text.

CHAPTER 28 – THE PRISON REGISTER

A new character, an envoy from the English firm of Thomson and French, arrives in Marseille dressed as a banker, not long after the events of the previous chapter. This envoy comes first to the mayor of Marseille, asking after the financial situation of M. Morrel, in whose company, the envoy claims, Thomson and French has invested a good deal of money. The mayor replies that, although Morrel does seem indeed to be in financial straits, he is also a trustworthy man, as trustworthy as the mayor has ever seen—Thomson and French can count on him to pay whatever he can, and on time. The mayor also directs the envoy to the inspector of prisons in Marseille, who also has a good deal of money invested in Morrel's shipping firm.

This envoy from Thomson and French, though never named explicitly, appears to be essentially the same disguise as Lord Wilmore, the English banker. Thus Dantes' disguises, seen so far, seem to fall into schematically important professions in 1800s France. He is the Abbe, a religious official, when he wishes to determine certain things about men's fates and histories, as with Caderousse. He is Lord Wilmore when he wishes to engage in banking matters. He is Sinbad the Sailor, introduced in a few scenes, when he lives his extravagant, Eastern-inspired life on the high seas and in the cave of Monte Cristo. And he is the Count in Rome and Paris, when he begins exacting his revenge.

This inspector, a M. de Boville, meets with the envoy of Thomson and French later that day. As the envoy appears already to know, de Boville has invested 200,000 francs in the Morrel company, and fears that this debt will never be repaid, that the firm will go under before Morrel can return on his investments. With no prompting, the envoy says that, on behalf of his firm, he is willing to buy all 200,00 francs of this debt from de Boville, with no commission, no fees, and no strings attached. De Boville is shocked and agrees to this arrangement, although he assumes that the envoy will have a condition, which he does. The envoy asks, instead of money, for information on the Abbe Faria, who died six months before in the Chateau D'If.

Here, discussions of debt are seen from the side of bankers, whereas earlier in the text they were introduced on the part of debtors themselves, namely Old Morrel and Caderousse. For men like Boville and the agent of Thomson and French, debts are items like anything else – things that can be bought and sold and managed. For people like Caderousse and Old Morrel, however, debts are prison sentences, things that shackle them, force them to work, and cause them significant distress.

De Boville, it is revealed, was the very same inspector of prisons who visited Dantes and Faria in 1817 and who promised to look up Dantes' case, finding only Villefort's note that Dantes was a committed Bonapartist and a danger to the Second Restoration. De Boville, not knowing who this envoy might be, says that he will never forget Dantes' face (and at this the envoy smiles), and that Faria was a madman who happened to share a cell wall with this dangerous fellow.

Boville's rise in the novel from prison official to head bureaucrat in the Second Restoration mimics the rise of other characters within the governmental system of France, especially Villefort. Some men, Dumas seems to argue, are capable of playing the game of government posts, pledging allegiance to whomever seems poised to take over the reins of power. Villefort, and to a lesser extent Boville, are successful at convincing the government that they are loyal to its rulers – whoever they happen to be.

De Boville reports that, after Faria died, the dangerous Dantes must have had himself sewn into the man's shroud, as was discovered later by the jailers. But de Boville is convinced that, when the guards threw the "body" into the sea, the man inside the shroud must have drowned, as no one, de Boville believes, could have survived such a fall into the water with a weight tied around his feet. The envoy seems satisfied by this official response. In the register, Dantes is believed to be dead, and there is no mention of Faria's treasure, which is thought to be merely the ravings of a long-confined lunatic.

This is more dramatic irony, for of course Dantes is happy to hear that people like Boville – people in positions of power – believe it to have been impossible to escape from the death-shroud with a weight tied to one's feet. That Dantes did in fact escape in this way, against all odds, makes his life seem all the more fantastical. And indeed this idea will remain in the text: that somehow the normal rules of life or physics or economics don't apply to the Count of Monte Cristo, a figure drawn as if from a myth or a legend.

As part of his "payment" for buying the 200,000 francs of debt, the envoy is able, at de Boville's leave, to peruse the official prison registers for the Abbe Faria and (although de Boville doesn't notice this) for Dantes' case as well. The "envoy" thus sees the original note that Danglars wrote, with his left hand, along with Villefort's letter, written on Morrel's urging during the 100 Days, that Dantes really was an ardent supporter of Napoleon. Without de Boville noting anything, the envoy places Danglars' original false condemnation in his pocket, then goes over to de Boville, thanking him for his time and drawing up a check for 200,000 francs.

Dantes gains firsthand proof of what he's believed since his time in prison: that Danglars was the prime mover of a plot that grew to include Fernand, Caderousse, and Villefort. This letter, written with the left hand, is exactly as the Abbe Faria predicted, thus proving too how powerful the Abbe's intelligence and powers of deduction really were. Dantes has thus experienced two different examples of the Abbe's incredible foresight – the other, of course, being the reality of the treasure at Monte Cristo.

CHAPTER 29 – MORREL AND COMPANY

The narrator begins the chapter by describing the desolate mood in the house of Morrel and Co., where there is almost no money in the cashbox. Morrel has had to pawn off some of the family's silver to pay current debts, and only two employees remain: a one-eyed cashier of scrupulous accounting skills and great decency named Cocles, and a young man named Emmanuel, who has stayed in part because he wishes to marry Morrel's daughter. The envoy from Thomson and French, fresh from his time spent with the inspector of prisons, arrives at the company that same day and asks to speak with the old man Morrel.

The financial straits of Morrel are Co. are truly devastating. The narrator attributes this situation simply to misfortune, as Morrel's ships have tended to become lost at sea. There is no way of predicting or responding to this kind of luck – one can only send out more ships, and hope that future profits from trade will offset the sunk costs of the lost vessels. In this way, the good and bad luck of economics becomes a counterpoint to Dantes' own share of good and bad luck in his young life.

When he is brought into Morrel's study, the envoy doesn't seem to recognize Morrel; Morrel has aged greatly in 14 years due to serious financial difficulties and the strife caused in his family (and, presumably, due to the disappearance of Dantes). The envoy asks Morrel to list his debts, and Morrel says that he has lost all his ships but one, the *Pharaon*. The *Pharaon* is supposed to be en route to Marseille from a supposed run in India, but Morrel fears it has been lost in a storm. If the *Pharaon* is gone, he will be bankrupted. The envoy listens impassively to this news, only to be interrupted by the sound of Julie, Morrel's daughter, bursting into the office.

Just as Dantes's face is nearly unrecognizable after his stint in the Chateau D'If, so too is Morrel greatly changed by age. His face is careworn, shaped by the same ill luck that Dantes has experienced (though in severer form) in prison. Thus the narrator seems to state that misfortune enacts physical changes on those who experience it. Bad luck, in other words, can cause one to assume a new "mask," since it wreaks genuine deformation on the faces of people subjected to it.

Julie announces to her father, still in the presence of the envoy, that the *Pharaon* has been caught in a horrible storm. The contents of that ship have been lost, but the sailors, by a miracle, have survived and been picked up by another ship, which has lumbered into port at Marseille. An old sailor from that ship, a trusted man named Penelon, then enters the office and reports to the assembled crowd that, although the sailors tried, they could not save the cargo before abandoning the ship and hoping to be picked up.

Morrel has done nothing to deserve his bad luck. In fact, the narrator goes out of his way to explain that Morrel has always paid all debts, and that he has never written out a check he was not able to cash. But the loss of the Pharaon *will stretch Old Morrel's means to the absolute limit – causing him to face a moral quandary. Should Morrel write a check he's not able to cash, as a way of skimming along until a new ship can bring in profits? Or should Morrel announce that he is bankrupt?*

Morrel, deeply saddened at the thought that his last, best hope at financial solvency has been ruined, nevertheless thanks Penelon for his devotion and dismisses him, along with the other sailors, promising to pay their full salaries in installments as a further sign of his honor. Penelon thanks Morrel heartily on behalf of the other sailors, then departs, as does Julie, shaken by her father's misfortune.

Morrel is so scrupulous a boss that he vows to pay these sailors even though he has nothing to pay them with. For, as Morrel says here and elsewhere, a contract is a contract, an agreement an agreement. If Morrel is to leave his employees unpaid or pretend to have money he does not actually have, he has lost the most important thing he owns – his good reputation.

It is now only the envoy and Morrel again in his office. The envoy reveals to Morrel that Thomson and French has bought up a substantial portion of Morrel's debt, and that the firm is willing to extend Morrel's credit by three months, till September of the same year, in order to allow Morrel to find a way to pay his debts on time without compromising his good name as a businessman. Morrel thanks the envoy heartily for his care and as the envoy leaves, he tells Julie in the hallway that she will, in September, receive a letter from a man named Sinbad the Sailor, which she is to open. Julie agrees and says she will look for the letter and follow its instructions. The envoy then finds Penelon outside, saying he has another task for the hardened and loyal sailor.

Dantes puts into action another plot for good. As with his reward for Caderousse, this payment to Morrel is designed to repay *a debt, which Dantes believes he owes to Morrel for supporting him and his father both before and during his imprisonment. Dantes understands, too, that repaying Morrel's debts is only part of the problem, for he must also find a way to allow Morrel to continue making a living now that the* Pharaon *is declared lost. That latter task is left for later chapters, but in this scene, Dantes has at least planned to take care of the immediate danger of Morrel's bankruptcy.*

CHAPTER 30 – SEPTEMBER THE FIFTH

The narrator continues in his story of the financial dissolution of the firm of Morrel and Co. Although Thomson and French are owed about 300,000 francs by Morrel, he has outstanding debts with a number of other creditors who demand, over the course of the summer, that Morrel pay up the amounts he owes. That he is able to do this at all causes astonishment in Marseille, as nearly everyone believes that Morrel's firm must be bankrupt. But in fact, the stay of payment that the envoy allowed enables the firm to pay with borrowed money some of the other accumulated debts, allowing Morrel to save face until the final bills draw due in September.

Before telling Julie Morrel that a man named Sinbad the Sailor will deliver a message in September, the envoy Lord Wilmore agrees to allow Morrel to modify his repayment schedule, thus making life easier for him over the summer, before the remainder of the bill is due. What's most important in this section is the "face-saving" Morrel is allowed by this extension of his credit. For, as Morrel describes it, nothing is more essential in business than the maintenance of one's reputation.

The crew of the *Pharaon* has largely disappeared after collecting wages from Morrel, although no one seems to know exactly where they've gone to. Morrel spots Penelon around Marseille and wonders at his new sailors' gear. He assumes that Penelon, like the others, must have signed on with a new ship, although no one has any idea who the owner of this ship might be. And no one has heard, since June, from the envoy of Thomson and French, who has disappeared as quickly as he arrived in Marseille.

It slowly becomes clear that very little in Dantes' post-prison plotting happens by accident. Of course, some events seem to have no discernible cause, as when the sailors of the Pharaon *are suddenly nowhere to be found. But as will be revealed later on, Dantes has a plan in mind for these sailors, one that will aid them and Old Morrel, once the time is right.*

It occurs to Morrel to ask Danglars, whose fortune is so vast, to guarantee another set of loans for the firm to help it to pay its debts and finance new ships. But Morrel learns that this loan has been flatly refused by Danglars, and so Morrel, his daughter Julie, his wife, Cocles, and Emmanuel come to believe that the firm really is doomed. By Sept. the 5th, they think, Morrel will be forced to declare bankruptcy, the first time in his life he will not be able to pay the debts drawn up in his name. Julie writes to Maximilien, her brother who is serving in the army, to tell him to return home, since the family is in the direst financial straits they have ever seen.

Although Danglars once worked for Morrel in his capacity as the ship's cargo regulator, he now finds himself in a position of power as the manager of a significant bank in Paris. And it is notable that Danglars feels absolutely no loyalty to his former boss. Instead, Danglars considers Morrel a bad investment because others do not believe that Morrel can cover his debts in a timely fashion. Danglars' primarily loyalty is not to someone he once knew (and to whom he owed much), but to his own profits.

Maximilien rushes home, arriving just before the fifth of September. The family is terrified about their finances, and terrified, too, at the behavior of M. Morrel, who at this point seems entirely calm, cool, and detached. On Sept. 5th, Julie receives from a strange Roman emissary a letter from Sinbad the Sailor—just as the envoy of Thomson and French had told her she would. In this letter, Sinbad writes that Julie is to go to the apartment once occupied by Dantes' father, take from the mantle there a purse with money, and return with it to the house of Morrel that same day. Julie rushes off to do this, wondering all the while who this mysterious Sinbad could be.

There are two overlapping strands of foreshadowing here. Morrel's behavior scares his son, who worries that his father is planning some form of violence against himself. And Julie, not sure what this Sinbad the Sailor could have intended for her, seems to hold out some hope that, whatever it is, it will help her father. Thus the narrator (and Dumas) construct a kind of dramatic tension in the overlap of these desperate and exciting plotlines – until they soon converge at Morrel's office.

As Julie and Emmanuel go off to see after this letter, Maximilien goes into his father's study, where he hears from his father that, when the bills come due at 11 am that morning, the family will be forced to go into bankruptcy. Maximilien sees that, instead of doing this, his father will commit suicide as a means of preserving his honor. Maximilien is horrified, initially, at the thought, but Morrel convinces his son that his own death will preserve the family's honor and keep Morrel from having to admit to a bill he cannot pay. Furthermore, it will allow Maximilien to live and perhaps to regain the family's fortunes. Maximilien understands this, and he and his father hug bitterly.

It seems at first that the plot threads have resolved in bitter, rather than happy, fashion. Morrel believes that it is the right thing to do to kill himself if he is unable to satisfy his creditors. And his son, though deeply horrified by the thought of his father's death, nevertheless recognizes that this is customary, according to the business code of honor in practice at that time. What is perhaps most notable in this scene is the speed with which Maximilien agrees to his father's drastic decision, believing it to be for the ultimate good of the family.

Just before 11 am, however, Julie bursts into the office where Morrel has been waiting with his pistols. Julie announces that, in the apartment of Old Dantes, she has found (in the same bag Morrel once filled with some money to pay for Old Dantes' funeral) a bill paid for the entire sum Morrel owed to Thomson and French, thus cancelling the debt. There is also an enormous diamond in the pouch, with a note saying that this is for "Julie's dowry" to marry Emmanuel.

Morrel's unhappy resolution has been reached too quickly, and mercifully there is deliverance: Julie arrives with an enormous amount of money and a jewel from this very same Sinbad the Sailor. Thus, in more dramatic fashion than with Caderousse at the inn, Dantes arranges for the "rescue" and reward of Morrel and his family, whom he believes entirely deserving of wealth and good fortune. Dantes has given a gift to a deserving man.

The family is flabbergasted, and this is only compounded when Emmanuel, who has been separated from Julie, rushes into the room, where the Morrels and Cocles have all gathered, to say that reports are in from the port, that the *Pharaon* has returned with its customary crew. Morrel says that this cannot be possible, but the family goes out to the port to find the captain of the *Pharaon*, Penelon, and other crew members, all of whom survived the shipwreck of the previous vessel, manning in the port a new *Pharaon*, paid for with mysterious funds. Morrel can't believe his eyes, and nor can anyone else in the assembled scene – but he has been saved, his firm's debts all paid, and with a new ship to prompt further profits.

The mystery of the vanished sailors is now revealed and solved. The sailors have been chartered for a new vessel, a new Pharaon, *which will allow Morrel to continue his work. For, as above, it was not sufficient for Morrel's debts to be lifted; he also needed a different ship on which he could load goods and engage in trade. The presence of a new* Pharaon *does indeed make it seem that a miracle has occurred, that the prayers of the entire Morrel family have been answered by some kind of angel.*

At this, a mysterious figure—Sinbad the Sailor—calls to Jacopo, his first mate, and pulls silently out of the port at Marseille, saying that at least part of his mission is done; he has rewarded the "good," those who supported him in his times of utmost turmoil. Now, Sinbad says to himself, he will set out to punish the others who stole his life, his social position, his love, and fourteen years of happiness away from him. At this dramatic juncture, the chapter ends.

This is an important pivot in the novel. If the book were divided into sections, this would be the end of a significant one – for Dantes now sets his sights on those who have harmed him, rather than those who have helped him or (in Dantes' estimation) have at least some good in their hearts. As great as his gifts to Morrel have been, Dantes's punishments for Villefort, et al, will be terrifying, long-pondered, and devastating.

CHAPTER 31 – ITALY – SINBAD THE SAILOR

The narrative shifts substantially, to the year 1838 (some seven years after the events of the previous chapter) and to Italy, where two nobles are planning to celebrate the Roman festivities of Carnival. The men are Albert de Morcerf (briefly mentioned in an earlier chapter as the son of Fernand) and someone named Baron Franz d'Epinay. Franz has lived in Italy for some years, and Albert, a scion of the important Morcerf family in Paris, is on his first tour of the country, with Franz as his guide.

This is a jarring turn in the novel, and perhaps its most remarkable pivot. Franz and Albert initially seem worlds away from Dantes and his tale of anguish and revenge. Franz and Albert have a great deal of time on their hands; they are young, handsome, and wealthy; and they insist on having a good time together, wherever they go.

Albert and Franz book rooms in a choice location in Rome through a hotelier named Pastrini, and Albert then leaves Franz, for a brief time, to head to Naples in the few weeks before Carnival. Franz, for his part, becomes bored of Florence, where he is staying, and wishes to travel to parts of Italy he has not yet seen. He goes first to Elba, and then, hoping to hunt, spots an island that his guide, a man named Gaetano, tells him is called **Monte Cristo**. Gaetano says that he and his men can row Franz out to the island, but that it is an occasionally dangerous place, a port for smugglers looking to "cool off" for a few days and hide from the authorities. This piques Franz's interest, and he, Gaetano, and some of the other guides row out to Monte Cristo so that Franz might have a look around.

Franz is in search of an authentic-seeming adventure as he travels around outside France. He is, as the narrator describes, a perfect exemplar of a certain kind of French nobility. He is interested in adventuring for its own sake, and in associating with people he considers to be close to adventure. He also has a special interest in places that seem foreign, exciting, and new. Thus Monte Cristo is a perfect location for Franz to investigate – a place that, though close to western Europe, seems to be filled with shady and fascinating characters.

Gaetano and Franz approach the island warily, and Gaetano, when they are close by, reveals to Franz that there seem to be some smugglers by the fire on its coast, cooking a goat. Gaetano reveals that he himself is a "bit of a smuggler," and should be able to speak to the others on the island and to welcome Franz onshore, if he so wishes. Franz appears intrigued, and so Gaetano and Franz make their way ashore and speak politely with the smugglers, who, Gaetano notes, are traveling as part of the crew of a man named Sinbad the Sailor.

Gaetano has been hiding his own identity, in a mild and subtle way, from Franz. Gaetano mentions that he smuggles because, as he elaborates to Franz, he must do a little bit of everything to survive. This mentality of bendable rules and men who work at the margins of society will come to dominate this portion of the novel set in Italy – in which most characters appear to be engaged in some form or another of gray-market activity.

The sailors of Sinbad's crew ask Franz if, as a tourist, he might not be interested in some of the wonders that **Monte Cristo** has on display. Franz is indeed intrigued, and Gaetano seems to indicate that Franz can trust these men. Franz agrees to be led to a palace of wonders, below-ground, controlled by "His Excellency" Sinbad the Sailor, and the men of the Genoan boat blindfold Franz and lead him underground, until he is in a place that feels, from the carpet and its smells, as sumptuous as a palace. When the sailors pull off Franz's blindfold, he finds himself before Sinbad the Sailor, a man of great beauty and power of gaze, dressed as a Turkish sultan, and the "ruler" of this small underground palace-world of Monte Cristo.

This is the reader's first full view of the underground caves of Monte Cristo. Although nothing is made explicit here, the reader can surmise that these caves, and their master Sinbad, are the same caves Dantes visited earlier on. What's not immediately explained is where, for example, all the furnishings of the cave came from, or how Dantes was able to transport all this material to the spot without anyone noticing. But the island's status as a smuggler's cove, and the intervening years mentioned at the start of this chapter, appear sufficient to justify that Dantes has had ample time to outfit his home base on the island.

Franz cannot believe his eyes, and he and Sinbad have a sumptuous and delicious meal, which Franz repeatedly says must be taken from one of the tales of the 1001 Arabian Nights. They are served by a Tunisian man, Ali, who is unable to speak. Franz asks, perceptively, if Sinbad is a man who has "suffered much in life"—he notes that, in particular, his host seems to be someone who is bent on revenge. Although Sinbad says he travels all the time, as his namesake Sinbad the Sailor does in the Arabian Nights, he is not a tortured soul, but rather a soul whose every moment is delight and pleasure. He says, however, that Franz might be able to do him a favor one day, introducing him to Parisian society, playing host to him as Sinbad hosts Franz now on the mysterious island of **Monte Cristo**.

This is an important reference to a significant literary work. The 1,001 Arabian Nights are a set of Middle-Eastern tales organized around a central conceit: that the teller of these tales, a woman named Scheherazade, be allowed each night to survive the cruelty of the king if she can pick up her story the following night. This leads to an interlocking series of narratives whose focus is more on the unspooling of action, adventure, and romance than it is on closure – on the individual endings of particular stories. This idea of a long, continuing narrative is therefore reflected in the structure of The Count of Monte Cristo *itself, which unfolds to over 1200 pages.*

At the close of the meal, which has prompted Franz to remark with wonder at the furnishings around him and the delicacy of the food, Sinbad offers Franz a delicious "sweetmeat" which he reveals to be hashish, and which Sinbad takes in jellied form while reposing on a couch. Franz, initially wary of such a forbidden drug, takes some and has a reverie on a couch nearby, in which the women, carved in marble and adorning the room in the cave in which they sit, are tempting him and kissing him. This sexual dream goes on for some time, with the paintings and sculptures around the cave turning into human or godlike forms, until Franz can no longer stand it, and he falls into a kind of oblivion in which Sinbad and Ali, the servant, are no longer present.

This is the introduction of another important thread in the novel. This hashish jelly is both a pleasant potion and a drug with very specific, and frightening, effects. Franz loses control of himself, and though the visions surrounding him in the cave are fundamentally harmless, they are terrifying for as long as they last, and Franz has little to say about them – he must simply endure. Although the purpose of this potion is unclear at this point, it will appear again in the Valentine-Maximilien subplot, where the Count will use it for protective rather than mysterious effect.

CHAPTER 32 – AWAKENING

Franz wakes up on the cusp of the cave, feeling the warm air of the island of **Monte Cristo**. He remembers, slowly, the night before: his meeting with the mysterious Sinbad the Sailor; his sumptuous meal in the Sailor's cave, to which he was taken under cover of blindfold; and the dreams following from his consumption of hashish. But Franz is not sure whether these things happened, or are merely very powerful illusions conjured somehow by the magic of the island. He heads out to the beach, where he encounters Gaetano and some of the other smugglers. They insist that Sinbad is real, that he has left Monte Cristo to go about some business in Malaga, and that Sinbad wishes Franz the best and thanks him for his time spent on the island.

The aftermath of the night on Monte Cristo foreshadows some important elements that will crop up in the remainder of the novel. Franz is unsure whether his interactions with the Count have been real, and indeed other characters will wonder the same thing: if the Count is a real person, or some sort of mythic and legendary character, as though drawn from a work of fiction. Similarly, the Count escapes without Franz being aware of how he does so; this, too, the Count will perform again and again in France, when he seems able to slip into and out of scenes without other characters noticing.

Franz tries twice to find the entrance to Sinbad's magical cave, but he cannot. Gaetano tells Franz that he, too, tried to find this entrance before, but he has given up, as all the other smugglers and sailors who pass through the island have: the cave is impregnable. Franz hunts for another day on **Monte Cristo**, and then heads back to the mainland of Italy with Gaetano, wondering if he will see Sinbad again. He heads to Rome to meet back up with Albert de Morcerf.

It is telling that Franz wishes to return to the cave to confirm with his eyes what he believes he's experienced: a world of sumptuous, vaguely-Eastern wonders. But that world is closed to him, as Gaetano reports and Franz finds out for himself. The cave is only open to visitors when the Count/Sinbad is present – otherwise, it's not even visible to the outside world.

Franz is somewhat frustrated at the "swelling crowds" of Roman Carnival; as he and Albert get settled in their two rooms of the hotel, they realize that it will be exceedingly difficult to get a barouche (a carriage) for Carnival, as prices in the city have skyrocketed owing to the tourist traffic. Pastrini, the manager of the hotel, says he will do what he can to help them, but both Albert and Franz (and the narrator, too), treat Pastrini with a kind of knowing frustration; they believe that he is merely another Italian small-time businessman, attempting to make an extra lira or two off wealthy noblemen. As the chapter ends, Albert falls asleep dreaming of his adventures during Roman Carnival.

The narrator pulls a deft switch here from the fantasy world of Monte Cristo to the very real, but still carnival-suffused, world of Rome. On Monte Cristo, it's only Franz and Sinbad, engaged in a kind of mutual reverie; in Rome, everyone seems ready to partake of a mass party for the sake of that party, with costumes and decorations galore. The ensuing chapters, set during the Roman carnival, develop some of the ideas of the encounter in the Monte Cristo cave, including appearance's relationship to reality, and the different kinds of identities and stories one can assume and pass on.

CHAPTER 33 – ROMAN BANDITS

Franz and Albert rise the next morning, frustrated that they cannot order a carriage in Rome for the last three days of Carnival, the most important of the holiday. After a gentlemanly argument with Pastrini, they manage to secure a carriage for the next couple days (before the end of the festival), although the rate is very high, and Pastrini pockets the difference. Franz and Albert set off on a tour of St. Peter's and they return that evening, vowing to take in the Colosseum "by moonlight," the most romantic time in which to view it.

Franz and Albert's tour of the Coliseum is understood, by the two men and by Pastrini, to be an absolutely necessary part of any gentleman's time in Rome. As will be shown below, Pastrini objects not to the visit itself but to the timing of the visit, which, he feels, will mean no one can protect the two men from bandits. But it is banditry and adventure that Franz and Albert have come to Italy to find, and Albert in particular is not so worried about the possible presence of "exotic"-seeming Italian thieves.

At this, Pastrini snorts and says they cannot possibly view the Colosseum then, because the Roman bandits will be out at night, trying to rob them, especially one 22-year-old bandit—the most famous in the city—named Luigi Vampa. Albert says that he would try to fight Vampa if he could, but Pastrini warns him not to joke about a man so dangerous. He promises he will tell both men Vampa's life-story, if they will listen. At first Albert continues to joke, but Franz manages finally to quiet him, and both men listen to Pastrini.

This is another example of the story-within-a-story framing that crops up from time to time in the novel. The previous instance was Caderousse's tale of his own suffering, and before that, Abbe Faria's narration of the events surrounding the burial of the treasure on Monte Cristo. These narratives do strain the novel's structure of reality somewhat, as the reader is presumably meant to believe that the character's story more or less resembles the narrator's tone of the rest of the book.

First, Pastrini describes the education of the young Vampa, a shepherd in the countryside surrounding Rome. As a boy, Vampa develops talents for reading and writing, though he has only the occasional tutoring of a learned man in a village. He also becomes skilled at shooting and riding and hunting, which he practices on his own when he has time. Vampa is in love with a girl named Teresa, also a peasant and a shepherdess. Although they do not speak of this openly, they plan to spend their lives together and to raise themselves up out of poverty.

Vampa is a foil – a character who is similar, but contrasts in key ways – to the Count of Monte Cristo himself. Both are self-made men, and both achieve success relatively early in life through their advanced skill and intelligence, and their indomitable work ethic. If Dantes is a self-made character who tends to make positive, moral, and loyal decisions, however (especially in his younger life), Vampa is a character who tends toward the violent, the immoral, and eventually the criminal.

At this, Pastrini breaks the narrative of Vampa and introduces a new set of characters, brigands in the surrounding countryside, led by the master Cucumetto. Pastrini tells, by way of illustration, a story about Cucumetto, in which one of his band, a man named Carlini, discovers that the band has captured a woman, Rita, whom Carlini loves. Although Carlini begs that the woman be set free and not assaulted, Cucumetto assaults her and offers her to the rest of the band. But before they, too, can assault her, Carlini kills Rita, and when Rita's father comes to rescue his daughter (with a ransom), Carlini reveals to him that he killed Rita to protect her from the savagery of the other brigands.

This section is notable for its extreme violence, even beyond the standards already set for the novel. It's also a narration-within-a-narration-within-a-narration, as it's a story that sheds light on Vampa's own story, which Pastrini tells to Franz and Albert within the primary story of the unfolding novel. Again, it's difficult to believe that Pastrini would have enough access to Vampa's interiority to tell this story in such detail, but the reader might be expected to suspend their disbelief in order to be swept away by the exciting narrative of Vampa's rise within the criminal subculture of Italy.

Rita's father thanks Carlini for his "honor" in doing this, and, after burying his daughter in the woods, commits suicide. A few days later, Cucumetto kills Carlini during a battle and the fellow-brigands understand that Cucumetto has done this to keep Carlini, who has grown to hate Cucumetto, from killing him. Pastrini tells this story of the gang of Cucumetto to demonstrate the brutality of the bandits in the region where Vampa came of age.

Fundamentally, this story tells of loyalty vs. disloyalty – Carlini is devoted to the memory of Rita, and Rita's father understands that, according to the morals of that time and place, Carlini has done what he can to preserve Rita's honor. Cucumetto, however, has been doubly disloyal, first by engaging in criminal assault of Rita, and then in killing Carlini, whom he understands to want to kill him for his crime against Rita.

Several more important events take place in Pastrini's long story. Cucumetto, running from the authorities some time later, chances upon Vampa and Teresa in a field and asks them to hide him. They do so, and when he leaves he declares himself in their debt, though he continues to look back at Teresa as though he covets her. Later, as Pastrini explains, the Count who runs the land on which Vampa and Teresa work hosts a grand ball, and Vampa and Teresa request permission to go as house servants, dressed in costumes for the masque ball, as are the other attendants. Teresa is asked to dance by the beaux and belles of the ball, and Vampa, jealous, asks her if she wishes to have as many beautiful gowns as the daughter of the Count who has thrown the party.

The ball Vampa and Teresa attend is as lavish as the balls Franz, Albert, the Count, and other characters attend in Paris, when the Count moves there several months after the events unfolding (in the novel's "present tense") in Rome. It is Vampa's devotion to Teresa, but also his conviction that he too can be a rich and powerful man, that causes him to turn to violence and vengeance. Thus the ball is an important moment in Teresa and Vampa's relationship, as it changes their courtship from young love to a more shocking romance intertwined with Vampa's rise in the criminal underworld.

Teresa replies that she would indeed like those gowns. That night, there is a fire in the Count's mansion, and later, Vampa reveals that he has rescued the Count's daughter from the fire (started by mysterious circumstances), and he shows to Teresa that he has also taken a bandit's supply of gowns and jewels from the girl's room. Teresa, for her part, pretends not to know where the goods come from, and she puts them on lovingly. At the same time, Vampa sees a man asking for directions, on horseback—a man dressed resplendently, and whom Vampa seems immediately to respect.

It is interesting to compare Teresa's attitude of "not knowing" to the later attitude shown by Mercedes after she has married Fernand. Teresa must be aware of how Vampa has gained these goods, yet she takes them and seems unconcerned with Vampa's violence. In a much milder example, Mercedes appears to know that the Count is really Dantes, her beloved of olden days, yet she is willing to live for months without betraying any knowledge of this secret.

Vampa gives the man on horseback directions, while Teresa is still trying on her gowns. And when the man offers Vampa money for his pains, Vampa refuses, offering the man his hand-carved dagger instead. The man introduces himself as Sinbad the Sailor—at this, Franz, still listening to Pastrini's story, jumps up, for he remembers the name from his night on the island of **Monte Cristo** some days before. Franz also remembers that a rich man is holding the rooms next to the theirs, in the same hotel for Carnival, who goes by the name of the Count of Monte Cristo, although neither he nor Albert have seen the man next door.

This detail – the significance of which Pastrini is unaware – causes Franz to begin to put together his time on Monte Cristo with his time in Rome, and with the life of the outlaw Luigi Vampa. Franz already knows the Count to be connected to smugglers and to criminal elements. But it is not until hearing this story that Franz begins to realize just how significant those connections might be – especially if Vampa's power as a crime-lord is to be believed.

Pastrini continues in his story. When Vampa returns from having spoken to the man called Sinbad the Sailor, he sees that Teresa has been spirited away by Cucumetto, having returned to the spot where he first encountered her. Vampa, unafraid, takes out his gun and slays Cucumetto, missing Teresa and sparing her life. He fetches her, declares his love for her, and asks if she will follow him forever. To this she replies with an ecstatic yes, and after going back into his grotto to fetch further items he's stolen from the Count's house (clothes for himself), he takes Teresa into the woods to find the bandits of which Cucumetto used to be the head.

Cucumetto appears to be an example of the consequences of a certain kind of violence, especially in the world of Italian gangs. Just as Cucumetto was quick to kill Carlini, abduct Rita, and order around members of his gang, so, too, is he quick to die at the hands of Vampa. Vampa, for his part, seems unafraid of Cucumetto despite his reputation, and it is Vampa's pride and pronounced feeling of his own superiority that allows him to become the leader of the gang.

When Vampa and Teresa finally do encounter the band, Vampa declares that he wishes to be made their leader. The bandits laugh, wondering who this young shepherd could be who is asking for something so outlandish. But Vampa declares that he has killed their former leader Cucumetto, and that he burned down half the Count's house to get "a wedding dress" for his fiancée Teresa; at this, the other bandits recognize Vampa's power and authority and elect him their chief.

This part of the story might seem especially hard to believe, but in the world of these gangs, it's suggested, men tend to recognize the power and sovereignty of violence. Because Vampa has shown that he can be the most ruthless and violent of any of them, the gang members instinctively know that they ought to become his followers.

Pastrini thus concludes his story, and Franz and Albert respond with a mixture of astonishment and glee. The coachman enters the room to say that the cab is ready for their nine o'clock ride to the Colosseum, and though Pastrini is fearful, they embark—hoping to take in the sights of the city, and, perhaps, to catch a glimpse of the famed Vampa.

Although this story might have been intended as a warning to Albert and Franz, it appears to have had the opposite effect, instead encouraging them to go out in search of the man whose dramatic violence they have spent the past hour learning about.

CHAPTER 34 – AN APPARITION

Franz and Albert go to the Colosseum for their nighttime visit, and when Albert is whisked off through the edifice by a number of Italian guides, Franz walks alone. He overhears a conversation, in the shadows, between a man he later believes to be Sinbad the Sailor, and another he cannot identify. The two men discuss how they will bring about the escape and pardon of a man named Peppino, who is to be executed in two days. Sinbad says he will pay off the authorities to stay the execution and then help Peppino to escape; the other man was going to free him by violence, but he agrees to Sinbad's plan instead. Franz scurries off before being noticed, and he and Albert return to the hotel, where Franz has trouble falling asleep.

Up till this point, Franz believes Sinbad to be somehow related to the Count of Monte Cristo – perhaps in fact being the same person. And the reader, but not Franz, knows that Sinbad was also the man responsible for passing along the money necessary for the temporary saving of Morrel's business interests, and for the resurrection of the ship Pharaon. *It is becoming clear to more characters, then, that the influence of Sinbad extends vastly in all directions, and seems to be bound up in the otherworldly powers and wealth of the Count of Monte Cristo.*

Albert and Franz go to the theater the next day, and Albert complains he is having trouble finding a woman in Italy with whom to have an affair, despite being an eligible and wealthy young bachelor. In the theater, Franz and Albert catch the eyes of a woman named the Countess G, whom Franz knows from Paris, and who was rumored to have been Lord Byron's mistress. He and Albert go over to her and chat. During this time, Franz catches sight of a striking Albanian woman in Greek dress, and of a shadowy figure behind her, in an opposite box, whom Franz believes to be the Count of Monte Cristo. When he asks Countess G about the man, though, she replies that she is scared of him and she believes he is a vampire. Franz has a deepened sense of unease about the Count and his possible relationship to Sinbad the Sailor, and he accompanies Countess G back to her home.

The idea that the Count is a vampire – an undead character who feasts on the blood of the living – is a chilling one. It seems also, on an intuitive level, to link the Count to a figure of violence and revenge, one who cannot be killed because he does not live the way other men do. The Count's vampire-like qualities also link him, linguistically, to Luigi Vampa, the criminal lord who is indebted to Sinbad the Sailor, whom Franz believes to be the same person as the Count. The woman in Greek dress, introduced for the first time here, only adds to the Count's mystique in Roman and, later, in Parisian circles – as no one quite knows where she has come from, and what her relationship to the Count might be.

When Franz and Albert wake up the next day, they learn from Pastrini that the Count of Monte Cristo, rumored to be their neighbor in the hotel, would like to offer them use of a carriage during Carnival and also a place from which to view the festivities. Albert is very happy to learn this, and Franz is anxious to meet this Count and to get to the bottom of the series of mysteries of which he's been a part since his journey to **Monte Cristo** with Gaetano. The two men go over to the Count's apartments, and Franz discovers that this man really is the same as "Sinbad." Franz does not immediately let on that he's made this connection.

Just as Mercedes seems not to know the Count at first blush, and as Teresa seems unaware that Vampa is a violent criminal, so, too, is the Count seemingly unaware that he and Franz have spent time together on the island of Monte Cristo. This strange dynamic, in which one character seems not to acknowledge what they know of a given situation, contributes to the sense of tension and unease that run throughout the book – especially as the Count begins in earnest his quest of revenge.

CHAPTER 35 – LA MAZZOLATA

Albert and Franz have a pleasant conversation with the Count, in which he offers them more favors for Carnival, including seats at the execution and costumes to wear during the festivities that follow, when tourists and locals crowd the streets. Franz notices the Count paying extra attention to Albert, for a reason he cannot make out, but Albert later chalks this up to his own dress, which, he thinks, is too Parisian for the Count's tastes.

The reader might deduce that the Count cares about Albert because Albert is a Morcerf, and Caderousse mentioned fleetingly that Fernand de Morcerf has a son of that same name. Although at this point it hasn't been stated explicitly, then, the Count pays extra attention to Albert because he is the child of his nemesis and his former beloved.

After the Count takes the two men outside for a ride to see Rome and pick up the costumes, it is time for the execution, about which the Count seems excited. He tells the two younger men that he is a bit of a connoisseur of methods of revenge and punishment, and he advocates a style of punishment that is Biblical: an eye for an eye, he says, and a tooth for a tooth. Although the Count does not say explicitly that he has arranged the pardon for Peppino, he is not surprised when, looking on at the execution from a porch outside the Count's apartment, the pardon is delivered to that man, who is ecstatic at his new freedom, and is led away from the "mazzolata" or mandaia, the Roman equivalent of the guillotine.

This is the first mention of the Count's study of methods of revenge and torment. To a reader unfamiliar with the book, it might seem surprising that a figure like Dantes, who in the beginning of the novel is an almost cherubic young boy, might later become capable of a love of violence, torment, and destruction. But this is the narrator's and Dumas's way of showing just how difficult his many years in prison were – and how powerful his urge to vengeance became during that time. The change Dantes undergoes to become the Count is a change brought on by years of suffering and rage.

The Count asks Franz and Albert to pay attention as the other man, a bandit named Andreas, is to be executed. Andreas cries out that, if Peppino is pardoned, he himself should not be forced to die alone, and the Count notes how much Andreas's manner changed—from passive acceptance to outright rage—when he realized he was going to die without his comrade. The Count watches, like "an avenging angel," as the guillotine falls on Andreas's neck, killing him instantly. Franz falls back into the apartment in a swoon at the events and at the Count's hardness of manner toward them.

This section introduces the important phrase "avenging angel" to describe the Count. That he wishes for vengeance is by now beyond doubt, and his being described as an "angel" indicates that there is something otherworldly about him. And indeed, for his time in Rome and much of his time in Paris, it is hard to understand that the Count really is the same young man, once named Dantes, whom the reader met early on.

CHAPTER 36 – THE CARNIVAL IN ROME

The narrator describes Franz and Albert's trips through the Corso, the main boulevard in Rome, as part of Carnival. They spend their days in costume and in the Count's carriage—he claims to have to attend to business in another town during the Carnival—and during this interval, Albert begins to flirt with a beautiful woman in another carriage. Franz encourages this flirtation, and Albert arranges to meet with the woman on a side street, alone, on the last night of Carnival.

Albert believes that he should be able to have an affair in Rome, and that, indeed, it is to his discredit that he has not found a lover already. Thus Albert is excited by the seemingly-devoted attentions of the woman in the other carriage, and Franz, hoping to be a good friend, encourages Albert, although he appears to have mild misgivings about just who this woman might be.

Meanwhile, Franz sees Countess G at night in the theaters. Each time they meet, they discuss the Count of Monte Cristo; Countess G assures Franz that the Count has made his money from some mysterious means, and she believes that he is nothing but trouble, as though he were a hero from a Byronic narrative. The narrator describes the final night of Carnival, in which, for a third time, Albert and Franz take their carriage into the Corso. The week ends with the lighting of ceremonial fire-lamps, which burn in the streets and are then extinguished all at one moment. Franz watches this dramatic end to the holiday alone, as Albert has gone off to meet his "mysterious woman" by himself.

During the narrative and more generally in Rome, Carnival is a time that normal rules do not apply. Franz has already experienced one such time, when he was on the island of Monte Cristo with the Count and fell into a drug-induced stupor. Albert takes advantage of this "anything-goes" moment to have his love affair, or what he believes to be a love affair – and Franz takes the safer route, hoping to find likeminded companions at a party held at the house of a duke. This difference, between Franz's desire for safety and Albert's sense of adventure, will stay more or less constant throughout the novel.

CHAPTER 37 – THE CATACOMBS OF SAINT SEBASTIAN

Franz goes to a party hosted by a Duke that evening, at which Countess G and other Roman luminaries are present. There, some of the other guests become worried that no one has heard from Albert, and at this moment Franz is called outside by a messenger, who claims he has a note from Albert. The note is a ransom letter, with Albert asking for a large sum of money, and with an addendum signed in the hand of Luigi Vampa, saying that, if Albert's ransom is not brought that night, the young man will be shot the next morning.

It is perhaps no surprise that Vampa returns to the narrative, and that Albert, who seemed unafraid of him earlier, would be caught in his web. As is the case throughout the text, when characters are introduced and when violent or dangerous circumstances are hinted at, they often reappear later on. This structure of the foreshadowing of violence followed by actual violence crops up again and again in the text.

Terrified, Franz goes back to his apartment and finds that the two men between them do not have enough money to pay the ransom. Franz calls on the Count of Monte Cristo, who is home in his neighboring apartment, and who says he will pay the rest of the ransom. In addition, because Franz seems to know that the Count has a connection to Vampa and his men, the Count agrees to accompany Franz to Vampa and to plead their case in person. The messenger from earlier is brought up to the Count's apartments and is revealed to be Peppino, the man whom the Count ordered pardoned at the guillotine.

Franz begins to realize that the Count's connections to the underworld of Rome are more pronounced than they first seemed. The Count has arranged for the pardon of Peppino, and Peppino works for Vampa – thus it seems clear, knowing that Vampa and Sinbad once met, that the Count and Vampa have an intimate relationship. Franz seems both shocked by the information and, somehow, not entirely surprised when he thinks about it further. In the Count's presence, Franz has undergone strange and baffling experiences – as though the Count's reality is somehow more magical and adventurous and terrifying than others.

The Count, Peppino, and Franz head to the Catacombs of San Sebastian, where Albert is being kept by Vampa. The Count announces himself to the bandits, who treat him as a friend, and when Vampa himself comes out, putting down his copy of Caesar's *Commentaries* which he has been quietly reading, he apologizes many times over to the Count, as he did not know that Albert was a friend of the Count's, and Vampa has promised never to harm anyone in the Count's circle. It is revealed that the "mysterious woman" in the other carriage during Carnival was in fact Teresa, Vampa's mistress, and Albert was taken in by the bandits so that he might be swindled.

Teresa, who does not return in the narrative, plays a small role in "seducing" Albert, and thus in allowing for his capture and the eventual ransom. Albert has been tricked, perhaps because he was so willing to find love in Rome that he was less careful than he would have been in other circumstances – or less careful than Franz was. In this section, too, it is proved that the Count has a friendly and intimate relationship with Vampa and his gang – something that Franz has suspected, and causes him to fear the Count.

Franz finds Albert sleeping that evening, and apparently none too worried about his impending demise—he tells Franz he has been having a dream about dancing with the Countess G at the ball at the Duke's home. The Count arranges for Albert to be set free, with apologies, and Albert and Franz make it in time for the end of the Duke's ball, at which Albert really does dance with the Countess. Thanking the Count for saving his life, Albert offers the man his hand, and Franz notices that, when the Count shakes it, he does so with a bizarre and very noticeable shudder.

While Franz stays safe and is not captured by Vampa, he demonstrates to the reader that he is afraid of the Count, and afraid of the criminal underworld with which the Count associates. Albert, however, shows a marked sense of adventure – and he acquits himself with coolness and confidence when he is held by the bandits overnight, even though they threaten his life. Albert's coolness under pressure might be compared to Dantes' skills and abilities in young life – or perhaps Albert is used to his wealth and social status protecting him no matter the situation.

CHAPTER 38 – THE RENDEZ-VOUS

Albert and Franz go to the Count the next day, as Albert insists on thanking him again for his kindness of the previous night. When Albert asks the Count if there is anything he can do to thank him in kind, the Count says that, indeed, there is one thing—Albert can introduce the Count around in Parisian society. With Franz looking on, more or less silently, Albert and the Count agree to meet at 10:30 am on May 21 in Paris.

Franz, and not Albert, seems to be concerned by the Count's manner, and by his strangely punctual and detailed request of 10:30 am on May 21. Albert, for his part, is still in awe of the Count, and grateful to him for freeing him from Vampa. Thus Albert believes himself loyal to the Count – that he is repaying a debt he owes to the Count for helping him in a time of need. This seems to be the Count's endgame regarding the Vampa kidnapping—inserting the Count directly into Albert's life in Paris.

Afterward, Albert asks Franz in private why he seems not to like or to trust the Count. Franz, who has only hinted at his dislike before, tells his friend about the night at **Monte Cristo**, the hashish, and then of how strange it was to find that the Count knew Vampa and his brigands. Franz worries that no one knows the Count's true identity, and he wonders where his seemingly infinite wealth comes from.

Finally, Franz admits to his friend the connections he's been able to make between the Count's various identities – including that of Sinbad the Sailor, and his Dracula-like appearance, as remarked upon by the Countess G. Franz is suspicious of the Count because *of these shifts in identity; he believes that the Count is not to be trusted, because he appears not to stay the same person from one situation to the next.*

To this Albert replies that the Count never asked where *his* (Albert's, or Franz's) money and wealth have come from; he accepts that the Count simply wants to help the son of a family presumably unknown to him, the Morcerfs, and he's grateful for it. Albert makes plans to head back to Paris in the coming weeks, and Franz, after having warned his friend, tells him to be careful when he meets back up with the Count in May; Franz will stay in Italy, continuing to travel, for another year or two.

Albert remarks on his own parentage as though his nobility is a settled fact, but of course, the reader knows that his father, Fernand, is the same man Caderousse plotted with, and whom Caderousse identified as having purchased his title while fighting French wars abroad. But Albert, as of now, is unaware of his father's only recently "ennobled" heritage.

CHAPTER 39 – THE GUESTS

The chapter opens at the Morcerf home on the Rue de Helder, in Albert's sumptuous private accommodations in a bachelor's apartment behind the main house. Albert receives an invitation from a Mme Danglars, to which he is slow to respond. After describing Albert's rich habitation at length, the narrator turns to a group of Albert's friends. These friends are to visit Albert for breakfast that day, though they do not yet know that they will also be meeting the Count of Monte Cristo. Arriving in turn are Lucien Debray, a diplomat; M. Beauchamp, a journalist; M. Chateau-Renaud, a soldier; and M. Morrel, called Maximilien, who once saved Chateau-Renaud's life in a battle with the Turks. It is revealed, during the course of the men's jaunty and playful conversation, that M. Danglars—still an influential banker and a baron—is also a member of the lower house of parliament.

The narrator spends a great deal of time describing Albert's home, and indeed this shows just how pampered and insulated his life is. He lives on his parents' estate in a house separate from them, and is able to see them whenever he likes. He has no occupation, but is instead a man of leisure. The men he fraternizes with are also noblemen, people of French high society – but they have occupations, as listed in this section. In fact, it appears that Albert's role in the group is to be funny and witty, which he is in large measure, and to seek out a companion with whom to live. At this moment, he awaits the Count with great eagerness, having prepared for his arrival for weeks.

Albert says that Chateau-Renaud is not the only person whose life is indebted to someone else's. At this, he announces to the group that the Count of Monte Cristo, his friend from Rome, will be joining them for breakfast. Albert tells the story of being captured by Vampa and his bandits in Rome, and refers to Franz's story about the magical cave on **Monte Cristo**, an island about which M. Morrel claims to have heard. Albert also mentions that Countess G, among others, compares the Count to a vampire. His friends laugh at this collection of fantastical anecdotes about the Count, just as the Count himself arrives, almost exactly on time at 10:30 that morning, as promised.

This reference to indebtedness is an important one, for Albert genuinely believes – and has every reason to believe – that the Count has saved his life out of entirely charitable purposes. Albert was not willing to listen to Franz when Franz told his friend that he did not trust the Count's motivations. For Albert, the Count is a fascinating man, unlike any other he's ever seen – and he's a man who helped him out during a time of need. As demonstrated later, this loyalty will come in marked contrast, to Fernand's treachery while serving as a soldier overseas.

The Count recognizes M. Morrel but betrays only the slightest hint of blushing at the young man's name, and Morrel does not recognize him. After hearing Albert speak so glowingly of him in front of his other friends, the Count remarks aloud, strangely, that Albert is a "noble man," and "so much the better!" The group seems besotted with the Count's eastern-style dress and lack of acquaintance with French manners, and at this the whole group goes into a different part of Albert's house to have their breakfast together.

Two interesting points are made in this brief section. First, the Count's "foreignness" is described – his "eastern" manner of dressing, and his ways that do not always gibe with those of French high society. Second, it's confirmed that the Count's identity has been sufficiently concealed by his new manner of dress, and by the changes in his face that have rendered him unnoticeable to those who once knew him as Dantes.

CHAPTER 40 – BREAKFAST

The Count continues telling his fantastical tales, including that he takes self-prepared pills of hashish and opium when he is tired from a long journey—he goes so far as to show one of the pills to the young men, and also speaks to them of the valuable emerald that he had installed in the hilt of his sword. He also describes giving another such emerald to secure a man's freedom. Albert correctly guesses that this man was Peppino, in Rome, and the Count smiles. But Albert then wonders why the Count would help him, against Vampa and his men, without knowing him. To this, the Count replies, in front of the others, that Albert was indeed no stranger to him, and that he had already planned, for some time, that Albert was to introduce the Count around Paris.

The Count's comments at the end of this section can be interpreted in two ways. When the Count insists that Albert was not a stranger to him, Albert and the other take this to mean that the Count and Albert had become fast friends in Rome – that they were neighbors in the apartments controlled by Pastrini. But of course, the Count could also mean that he has spent some time studying the family of Fernand Morcerf, including his wife and son, so that he might better exact his revenge on Fernand.

Albert reveals that he is engaged to the daughter of the Baron Danglars, now one of the most prominent bankers in Paris, and says that her name is Eugenie. The Count seems both delighted and somewhat startled by this information, though he recovers himself and says only that he will be meeting with Danglars soon to open an account at the man's bank. The Count also mentions the name of the firm Thomson and French, claiming that it is his banking concern in Rome, and at this name M. Morrel starts, as he of course recognizes it as the firm that saved his father's life so many years ago. Morrel says as much to the Count, and asks that the Count might visit him, his sister Julie, and his brother-in-law Emmanuel some day soon in the city, to which the Count agrees.

The Count had not known that Albert was intertwined with the relative of another of his targets of revenge, and so views this connection as a means by which he (the Count) might come closer to Danglars, and perhaps also to Villefort, who is living in Paris as well. Importantly, Morrel notes that Thomson and French is the firm to which he and his family attribute their salvation, but Morrel is unable to recognize the Count as the envoy from that very same firm – as the Count's identity has been altered substantially enough to make the drawing of this connection impossible for the young man, who only saw the envoy for a short time many years ago.

Albert asks where the Count is staying in Paris, and he replies, to the group's astonishment, that his Nubian servant, Ali, whom Franz met on **Monte Cristo**, has been dispatched to Paris to find a place on the Champs-Elysees, the most exclusive address in the city. Albert wonders who else is serving the Count in Paris, to which he answers that Bertuccio, one of the smugglers whom the Count had serving him on Monte Cristo and who procured his apartment in Rome, is also taking on the role of servant in the city.

Atop all the fantastical stories that the Count has already told to the assembled company, they are most flabbergasted at the thought that the Count has already purchased, sight-unseen, a giant house in Paris, and that he has managed to staff it with servants in short order. Thus the young men begin to realize the kind of man they are dealing with – someone whose ways seem to them reminiscent of an Eastern emperor.

The other men take their leave of the group, one by one, going about their business for the day and floored by the Count's exotic stories, enormous wealth, and impulsive decision-making, as in a day he has established himself as a gentleman in Rome. Albert and the Count end the chapter alone at the breakfast table.

Although the Count has enjoyed meeting the other young men – and has had a hard time concealing his excitement at seeing the young Morrel again – he seems to be most inclined to spend time with Albert alone, and with Albert's parents, to whom he is shortly to be introduced.

CHAPTER 41 – THE INTRODUCTION

Albert shows the Count personally around his lodgings, including his many curios and fine paintings; he is surprised that the Count can identify each one by painter and year. They stop in front of a portrait of a young woman, whom the Count praises as Albert's mistress. But Albert corrects him, saying it's a portrait of his mother by a famous painter, looking beautiful but melancholic. Although Albert says that it is his favorite image of his mother, he begs the Count not to mention the work in front of M. de Morcerf, who does not like to speak of it.

This scene foreshadows the difficult life that Mercedes lives in her household with Fernand. Although Mercedes looks from the outside to be a lady of leisure and part of a wealthy, upper-class home, what is known to the painter who painted her image is known to the reader of the book – that she cannot really be happy in Paris, because she is married to the wrong man, and because she believes that Dantes is dead or languishing in prison.

They continue on their tour of the room, with the Count asking questions about the family's herald and about where the family has come from initially. Albert is convinced that the family's noble title has existed many generations in the past, and he also notes that the family's roots are in Catalonia and in Provence, near Marseille. At this the Count gives a knowing and ironical look but betrays no emotion. Very soon thereafter, the Count de Morcerf enters the room.

This is another piece of foreshadowing, and also of dramatic irony. The Count knows, and the reader knows, that the "Morcerf" family is really from the lower-class fisherman's section of Marseille, Les Catalans. And this scene tips ahead toward the later revelation that Fernand is not, in fact, of high birth originally – and thus Albert isn't, either.

Morcerf and Monte Cristo meet for the first time, with Monte Cristo asking more questions about Morcerf and his family. Since we have last heard of Fernand, he has risen highly in the ranks of the French army, to a commanding position with a sign of the Legion of Honor awarded to him—and has now given up a military life for a post in the upper house of the French Parliament. The narrator notes that, in the extravagance of his praise for Fernand's achievements, the Count would seem only to the most perceptive ear actually to be mocking his host.

Here, the narrator takes pains to make clear what the reader already knows, but what no one else in the scene could know. Albert does not understand the Count's relationship to his father, and indeed Fernand doesn't recognize the Count at all – he believes him simply to be a nobleman who saved his son from a bad scrape in Rome. But the Count is beginning to set his plan for vengeance in action.

The Countess de Morcerf soon enters. Of course, she is Mercedes, whom the Count has not seen for many years. And although Fernand seems to have no idea who the Count is, Mercedes is immediately struck, flushed, almost entirely pale. She thanks the Count of Monte Cristo for saving her son's life in Rome, and asks that he come back again to visit them. Fernand de Morcerf leaves to go for another meeting in parliament, and Monte Cristo takes his leave to attend to his new house on the Champs-Elysees. When Monte Cristo leaves, Mercedes warns her son about him and asks for smelling salts, wondering aloud whether Fernand has noticed how surprised and jolted Mercedes was when the Count set foot in the Morcerf home. Albert, not understanding his mother's distress, said his father seemed perfectly comfortable with the presence of Monte Cristo.

Even though the reader has been prepared, through various mentions in the previous forty chapters, that this woman is in fact Mercedes, it is nevertheless with a mixture of suspense and excitement that she is "introduced" to the Count here. It is then a powerful moment when Mercedes responds to the Count's presence with a look of strickenness, of feeling completely overwhelmed. What is perhaps most remarkable is the fact that Mercedes is then able to hold herself together, even on the deep suspicion that the man standing before her is none other than her long-lost beloved, Dantes.

CHAPTER 42 – MONSIEUR BERTUCCIO

After Monte Cristo arrives at his house on the Champs-Elysees—the first time he has set foot in it—he calls upon a notary, who is waiting for him, and for Bertuccio, his manservant. The notary is there to secure the signing and formalities for the Count's country house, on the outskirts of Paris, in Auteuil. He finalizes the documents with the notary and gives the man a substantial tip, sending him away.

This scene indicates just how quickly the Count is willing to make large decisions. He has perhaps learned this impatience from the time he's spent in the Chateau D'If, where, after fourteen years, he felt as though much of his life had been slipping away. He also now has the vast wealth necessary to pursue his every whim with little fear of significant financial damage.

The Count then goes into the other room to confirm, mysteriously, that this is indeed the exact house and location he wants. He appears not to notice how the mention of the town of Auteuil has shocked and horrified Bertuccio, whom the Count calls to go with him to check on the estate. It seems that, for reasons yet to be revealed, something from Bertuccio's past is hidden in Auteuil—and the Count knows this and wants very much to learn Bertuccio's secret.

It is not yet clear why the Count would be willing to purchase a place connected to Bertuccio, a man about whom the reader as yet knows very little. But it is evident from this chapter that the Count's plan for revenge is immensely complex. It involves the purchase of multiple properties, and the information provided by a great many people, all of whom he appears to have on a string, ready to move at his command.

CHAPTER 43 – THE HOUSE AT AUTEUIL

Bertuccio rides with Monte Cristo to the house at Auteuil, becoming more and more agitated along the way. After speaking to the steward of the house, who still lives there, the Count learns that the house used to be owned by the family of the Saint-Merans. Their only daughter was, at the beginning of the novel, to be married to Villefort. Monte Cristo pretends, in front of the steward, to be only dimly aware of these persons. But when the steward leaves, and he and Bertuccio walk around in the garden, it becomes clear that the place means a great deal to Monte Cristo's servant.

Bertuccio's agitation on approaching the house seems like a sign of guilt, as though Bertuccio once did something terrible there. Thus Bertuccio, whom we believe to have committed a crime, is similar to other characters in the novel, like Caderousse, who have done terrible deeds in their past – deeds they wish to conceal from others. Unfortunately for Bertuccio, however, the Count appears unwilling to let Bertuccio slide, and instead seems to want to force from him some kind of confession about whatever happened in Auteuil.

Monte Cristo finally asks what's wrong, and Bertuccio confesses that he once committed a murder at this very house, in this very garden, as an act of revenge against someone who had wronged him. Bertuccio insists that Villefort, married to the daughter of the Saint-Meran family, is a villain. Bertuccio explains that he was sent to the Count of Monte Cristo by an Abbe Busoni, who had previously heard part of his confession for murder, but who did not (apparently) tell this to the Count. The Count asks now for the entirety of Bertuccio's tale, of the murder committed in Auteuil, and the vendetta of which it is a part.

Bertuccio makes little effort to conceal from the Count what he has done. In fact, his crime is one of vengeance, one for which Bertuccio felt he was justified—but this does not make the crime, legally speaking, less of a crime. It is therefore important to place Bertuccio's act of revenge, once it is revealed fully, in conversation with the Count's revenge. The Count will take pains to make sure that the revenge he exacts does not merely involve committing a crime against those who harmed him. Instead, the Count will seek to insinuate himself into the lives of the plotters and destroy them from within, seemingly without the any violent intervention.

CHAPTER 44 – THE VENDETTA

Bertuccio begins his long and sordid tale. He notes that, after the end of the 100 Days, a lawlessness reigned in the south of France and his older brother was killed because he was a suspected Bonapartist. Seeking justice, Bertuccio went to speak to Villefort, who was at that point the crown prosecutor for that region. Expecting Villefort to help him avenge the murder of his brother by finding the guilty parties, Bertuccio is shocked by Villefort's indifference; he realizes that, as a Royalist, Villefort simply wants as many dead Corsican Bonapartists as possible.

Bertuccio begins another one of the embedded narratives in the text, in which a character replaces the narrator as a primary storyteller. In this instance, Bertuccio's story is somewhat plausible for him to remember, although it is very long – for after all, he was the person who witnessed and committed the acts he describes. It is not surprising to learn here that Villefort has done everything he can to protect his own job in the face of revolutionary upheaval.

At this moment, before leaving Villefort's office, Bertuccio swears a Corsican blood oath against him, saying that he will track Villefort down and kill him. Bertuccio leaves and lives a life in the gray-market economy, working as a smuggler and bringing home enough money to support Assunta, his dead brother's widow. Bertuccio also begins tracking Villefort, who has moved to a different post in Paris, and who is hiding out—because of fear of the vendetta—at the house of his father-in-law, the house in Auteuil.

Bertuccio claims that, because he is a Corsican, his oath of revenge is binding. Thus, he thinks he must kill Villefort by any means necessary, or otherwise the death of his brother will not be avenged. For Bertuccio, vengeance is a social contract he does not feel he himself has willingly entered into. Rather, revenge has been foisted upon him by the conventions of Corsican society.

Bertuccio tracks him there, and realizes that Villefort has been conducting an affair at the house—the woman, unnamed, is pregnant, and after several weeks she gives birth. Bertuccio sees a man he believes to be Villefort, cloaked in black, walk into the garden of the house at Auteuil and bury a small child in a casket. Bertuccio rushes at the man, "killing" him with a dagger, and he digs up the tiny casket. When he finds that the boy is still alive—he breathes life into his lungs—he drops him off at a nursery outside Paris and goes back to Assunta in Corsica.

It is perhaps hard for the reader to imagine that Villefort has engaged in this kind of villainy. And indeed, other features of this part of the story are also hard to believe – perhaps none more than the idea that Bertuccio was able to physically save a child who was buried alive. But despite all this, the pathos of the section is real. Bertuccio really does think that he has avenged his brother's death by enacting a vendetta on Villefort. And he believes he has saved a child in the process, one who was innocent of any wrongdoing.

After many months, Assunta goes to Paris and finds the boy, using a piece of the fancy shroud in which he was buried to verify his identity. Bertuccio is relieved that the child can live with them, because he feels that the child's life assuages the guilt Bertuccio feels in killing his father. They name the child (Villefort's illegitimate son with the unnamed woman) Benedetto, after Bertuccio's dead brother.

Although Bertuccio believes that his vendetta was justified, he still feels guilt for killing the father of a child now in his care. This is perhaps the novel's most complex explication of grief and guilt. On the one hand, revenge was necessary for Bertuccio to do his duty to his brother. On the other, Bertuccio is now responsible for a son who will grow up without a father.

Benedetto grows up with red hair, and he's a rogue—committed to a life of crime and malign intelligence. After years of putting up with Benedetto's antics, Bertuccio arranges for his adopted son to work as an apprentice on a sailing ship in the hopes of calming the child's hot blood. Then, during a smuggling mission in which the gendarmes are called in, Bertuccio finds safe harbor at an inn in Beaucaire. He hides out, with the permission of the innkeeper, in a small hutch. It turns out that this is the very same inn where the Abbe—revealed to be Abbe Busoni, also known as the Count of Monte Cristo—met with Caderousse (who is, of course, the inn's manager along with his wife, La Carconte).

Of all the coincidences in the novel, this is one of the hardest to believe. Bertuccio has somehow managed to place himself in prime position to have overseen the events that take place between Caderousse, La Carconte, and the jeweler who has come to appraise their diamond. If Bertuccio were not in the house, there would be no living character other than Caderousse who had witnessed these events. Thus Bertuccio's presence allows the reader access to the morbid scene at the hotel through the eyes of a character who is himself hiding there.

It turns out that Bertuccio hid in the hutch just after the Abbe Busoni left the house. He therefore recounts to Monte Cristo the scene just following the Abbe's departure, all the way back in 1829 (about 7 to 8 years before the current narration). According to Bertuccio, after Monte Cristo's departure, the jeweler offers Caderousse and La Carconte 45,000 francs for the diamond that the Abbe has given them. Initially the pair is reluctant to part with it for less than 50,000 francs, but the jeweler, a tough businessman, argues that, if they want to sell to someone else, the authorities might ask questions about this Abbe, or it might even turn out that the diamond is a fake. The jeweler has brought 45,000 francs with him, and the pair cannot turn down the sight of all that money. They take the jeweler's offer, though they are angry with him, and he leaves into a howling storm with the diamond in his pocket.

Bertuccio's story contains another narrative nested inside it, and the story of Caderousse's greed and his wife's immorality is still jarring in a novel filled with violence and intrigue. At this point, that drama is only hinted at, but the narrator does a masterful job increasing the suspense throughout the jeweler's visit, culminating in the man's exit into the howling storm. The reader is acquainted with Caderousse, of course, and does not trust that the man will do the right thing. Instead, it seems that Caderousse is always easily tempted to do precisely the wrong thing, the immoral and criminal thing, should the circumstances allow it – and should someone be present to convince him.

Before he is to go, however, Caderousse and La Carconte both insist that the jeweler stay in the inn for the night. Although their purposes are not stated plainly, it seems that, at least for La Carconte, the pair might be able to snatch back the diamond from the jeweler while he is asleep. At any rate, after a bit of time elapses, La Carconte's dreams come true—the jeweler returns with the diamond, saying the storm is too violent outside, and that he will need to stay overnight at the inn in Beaucaire.

La Carconte is one of the novel's more one-dimensionally immoral figures. She seems to care only about herself, and is greedy beyond measure. She is willing to harm other people to make sure the family maintains its wealth, or adds to it, and she is brutal to her husband, who, in this case, she works to convince to turn against the jeweler.

CHAPTER 45 – A SHOWER OF BLOOD

Bertuccio continues his story, saying that the jeweler retires to sleep that night, and Bertuccio notices, from his hutch beneath the stairs, that Caderousse and La Carconte are talking in low tones at the kitchen table. Bertuccio falls asleep, and is awoken by the sound of a pistol-shot—he also feels a pool of warm blood dripping onto him, from the floorboards above. He goes out into the hallway to see that Caderousse has escaped (with the diamond), having shot La Carconte through the throat, and that La Carconte has fatally stabbed the jeweler upstairs, causing the "shower of blood."

This is one of the more physically shocking and repulsive scenes in the novel. Bertuccio, who himself is hiding from the police, wakes up drenched in blood, and the reader thus finds out about the murders of La Carconte and the jeweler only indirectly, as Bertuccio does. One can say, then, that this scene is filtered through Bertuccio's consciousness – that the reader learns only what he does.

Bertuccio tries to run away, but he is caught by police who have been tracking him since his smuggling misadventure the previous night. Bertuccio realizes that the police will charge him with the double homicide, and that his only hope for an alibi is the Abbe Busoni—the man who, earlier in the day, gave the diamond to Caderousse. If Bertuccio can find Busoni, whom he requests as a material witness to the case, then the story of Caderousse's and La Carconte's guilt can be made plain.

This is another instance of coincidence in the novel, though of the bad sort. Bertuccio cannot find any fitting explanation for why he has left the house of a double homicide covered in blood. It is in fact natural that the police should believe he was associated with the crime of killing La Carconte and the jeweler, and indeed Bertuccio does feel guilty, although of a different crime: the supposed killing of Villefort.

By some miracle, Busoni does manage to turn up at Bertuccio's prison, where the interview takes place to which Bertuccio now refers: his confession of the supposed murder of Villefort, in the garden, and his insistence that he is not guilty of the double homicide at the inn. On Bertuccio's testimony, Caderousse is eventually caught and he confesses to the murders, which earns him a life sentence in prison. When Bertuccio is released, the Abbe Busoni recommends him into the service of the Count of Monte Cristo, for whom he is now a devoted servant.

This is one of the cleverest uses in the novel of Dantes's multiple identities. Here, as Abbe Busoni, he encourages Bertuccio to tell his life-story – then, again, as the Count of Monte Cristo, he has Bertuccio confirm this entire story, since Bertuccio does not understand that the Abbe and the Count are the same person. In short, the Count has insured that Bertuccio will be indebted to him and devoted to him with his life, since the Abbe and the Count are apparently close friends, and the Count has saved Bertuccio from time in prison.

Monte Cristo asks what has become of Assunta and Benedetto, and Bertuccio says it is a sad end to the story. Benedetto, along with a gang of Corsican hoodlums, tries to rob his own adoptive mother, and, in holding her feet to a cooking fire, he burns her to death and then escapes. Bertuccio tells Monte Cristo that he hopes Benedetto has died somewhere, but the Count insists, mysteriously, that Benedetto is still alive, ready to serve as God's instrument of vengeance. The Count says Bertuccio has behaved well except only for one mistake: that he didn't return the young child (now Benedetto) to his mother after the man attempted to bury him in the garden. Bertuccio admits that this is so, then thanks the Count for his forgiveness. The chapter ends with the Count returning to his mansion in Paris, where he welcomes the equally mysterious Haydee—the "Greek" or "Albanian" woman who was his partner in Rome—to live with him in her own rooms.

The Count thus renders judgment on Bertuccio, just as the Abbe Busoni listened to Bertuccio's confession and told him how he might achieve penance by going off to work for the Count. The Count believes that Bertuccio's attack on Villefort was indeed justified, based on the vendetta for his brother. But the Count argues that Bertuccio ought to have returned Benedetto to Villefort's mistress, something that Bertuccio acknowledges would have been the correct gesture. Bertuccio believes that he was selfish in trying to raise Benedetto as his own son. But this is a far cry from what might be considered the more significant crimes of this passage, especially the attempted murder of Villefort. This story thus shows the novel's complex understanding of human guilt and the circumstances surrounding it.

CHAPTER 46 – UNLIMITED CREDIT

The chapter opens with the Baron Danglars stopping by Monte Cristo's Paris home. He has found out that Monte Cristo has requested to open a line of unlimited credit at Danglars' bank, supported by a letter from the Roman firm of Thomson and French. The Count observes that the Baron Danglars, in his coupe, is driving beautiful horses—at least as beautiful as the others the Count has purchased for his private use. Danglars returns to his home, pulled by his beautiful horses. The Count then asks that Bertuccio buy the Baron's horses from him, for double the cost that the Baron is reported to have paid for them, and Bertuccio does this – the horses are transferred from Danglars's house to the Count's that day. The Count uses these horses to drive to Danglars' home the next day. On this visit, the Count insults him first by insinuating that Danglars' Baron title has been recently created, and that, perhaps, his bank does not have enough money to cover the kinds of withdrawals that the Count of Monte Cristo might require.

Not every part of the Count's strategy of revenge is grand and noble. In this case, the Count wants to point out a several things, and uses the occasion of the Baron Danglars' horses to do so. First, the Count wants to show that, despite his great wealth, Danglars can be understood to be cheap, always hoping to secure extra money. Thus the Count dupes Danglars into selling him his wife's own special horses. Then, the Count, in giving the horses back, shows just how much money he has, and how chivalrous he can be, doing a good turn for a woman who has just been "wronged" by her husband, since he sold her horses out from under her. The Count's vengeance, then, consists in large acts and small ones, something like social annoyances that remind proud, insecure characters like Danglars of their flaws and weaknesses.

The Count takes out letters demonstrating that two other banks, including the Rothschilds' firm, have also offered him unlimited lines of credit, at which point Danglars is so impressed he agrees to work with the Count. However, he wonders aloud how the Count could have acquired one of the largest fortunes in Europe without Danglars knowing it. The Count replies that the money was caught in a family trust for generations and was only recently made available for withdrawals. Danglars seems satisfied with this explanation. Danglars invites the Count to come into another room in the house to meet his wife, the Baroness Danglars.

Danglars's question is a perceptive one. It does seem hard to imagine that a man as wealthy as the Count, who can draw essentially infinitely on the great banks of Europe, could have that much money with so little being known about it. But despite these reservations, Danglars is willing to accept the Count as a customer. This is in part because Parisian banking of the time, and perhaps all banking, was and is based in part on trust and cultural prestige. Danglars wants to be known as a major banker in Paris, and so he must have as a client one of the wealthiest men in Europe.

CHAPTER 47 – THE DAPPLE-GREYS

Danglars introduces the Count to his wife, Madame Danglars (also known as Hermine), and to Lucien Debray, whom the Count already met at Albert de Morcerf's breakfast. Lucien has spoken very highly of the Count to everyone he's met, including the Danglars, and Hermine is charmed by the Count as well. Danglars, however, still treats the Count with some mixture of servitude and condescension. Danglars announces to Hermine that the Count intends to spend 6 million francs in his first year in Paris, and that his bank will begin by lending him half a million to get started.

Danglars's announcing of the Count's plans is, like all Danglars's actions, mixed with both anxiety and self-importance. Danglars wishes to make fun of the Count, showing that he is interested in blowing an enormous fortune in Paris despite the fact that he is a social unknown. But Danglars also fears the Count, fears the wealth he has accumulated, and is impressed by the man's ability to throw away as much money in a year as people spend many lifetimes trying to make.

Hermine reports that, that morning, she learned from her footman that someone had purchased her two most prized horses, the "dapple greys" that were the talk of Paris. Danglars admits, with embarrassment, that someone offered double for the horses that morning, and they were sold. Hermine is angry at this, and disparages Danglars for always wanting to turn a profit, no matter the costs. At this, Lucien realizes, looking out the window, that these very same dapple greys have been harnessed to the Count's barouche; he is the one who purchased them.

The Count's plot has succeeded in its first small and frustrating (for Danglars) way. The Count has shown to Hermine that the Baron is petty, willing always to turn a profit even if it inconveniences his wife. The Count also allows himself an opportunity to ingratiate himself further with Hermine, one of the most famous women in Paris. The Count's plans for revenge are off to a smooth start.

Danglars is once again embarrassed by the Count, who, since the morning, has taken every opportunity to imply that Danglars is nouveau riche, not a banker on the level of the Rothschilds, and otherwise a social newcomer. The Count takes his leave, having satisfied his desire to meet Danglars and his wife, and later that day he sends back the horses to Hermine, without charge, along with diamonds sewn into their harnesses—again embarrassing Danglars.

Danglars is a fascinating counterpoint to Caderousse, his former "partner" in the plot in Marseille. Caderousse believes himself to be a man of rotten luck, and does not feel he is capable of making money in French high society. Danglars, on the other hand, considers himself a canny and successful financial speculator. Thus the Count, as part of his revenge, wants to tear away this part of Danglars's reputation, demonstrating that Danglars makes foolish choices with money.

But the Count's plan is not finished. He heads to Auteuil with Ali and makes an additional arrangement: that Ali prepare to stop a carriage of wild, bolting horses that, for some reason, the Count understands will soon be approaching on the road outside his door. Within minutes, a young woman named Heloise de Villefort and her son Edouard cry out from the back of a barouche, driven by the very same dapple-grey horses of Hermine's. Ali, with his whip, manages to trip up the dapple greys without harming them, and the Count comes outside to find Heloise and Edouard, who had been borrowing Hermine's horses on hearing that the Count had bought them for a day.

The Count has somehow found out that Heloise de Villefort and her son Edouard will be using these famed dapple-grays. Although this scene appears strange as it unfolds, it allows the Count an opportunity to make the acquaintance of the family of Villefort. Thus, after only a few days in Paris, the Count has managed to ingratiate himself with men connected to the four plotters – Villefort, via his second wife; Danglars; Caderousse, via Bertuccio (and the Count, as the Abbe, has already met with Caderousse); and Fernand, via Albert.

Heloise says that they are indebted to the Count and to Ali for their help in saving them, and Heloise admits that she has heard a great deal about the Count from her close friend Hermine, who was dazzled by him. The Count replies that Ali was only doing what he is trained to do—Ali is the Count's slave and must therefore do whatever he says, even to the point of risking his life—because, as the Count insists, he owns Ali. Edouard, peevish and ungrateful, calls Ali ugly, and Heloise is embarrassed by her son's behavior. But she thanks the Count several more times and, the next day, her husband (Villefort) pays a visit of thanks to the Count's house on the Champs-Elysees in Paris.

Another debt is introduced into the text. The Count turns this indebtedness to complex ends: he says that he would do anything for a woman in distress, and that she need not thank Ali, who must do anything the Count says. Ali is the Count's slave, devoted to him with his entire life; and the Count is (supposedly) devoted to Villefort's wife, since she is a woman of nobility, and he, a gentleman, would do anything to protect her from harm. Of course, this latter indebtedness is really an excuse for the Count to get to know the Villefort family more closely.

CHAPTER 48 – IDEOLOGY

The Count has a philosophical discussion with Villefort, who pays a rare visit—as the narrator notes, Villefort maintains a haughtiness and reserve that are famous in Parisian society. Villefort expects the Count to receive Villefort's thanks for saving Heloise's and Edouard's life warmly. But the Count replies with cutting disdain, the same as he has used with Morcerf and Danglars. The Count insists that, while other men might be afraid of Villefort as an engine of the law, the Count has no country and knows the laws of all lands. The Count is also convinced, he says, that "an eye for an eye" is the best and most just punishment there can be.

For Villefort, the Count's aggression is hard to understand. Villefort is accustomed to other people kowtowing to his authority, respecting the position he has in Parisian society. But the Count appears not to respect Villefort at all. He thinks, in fact, that Villefort is uneducated, slow on the uptake, and less adroit in philosophical musings than he is. Although Villefort is offended by the Count's tone, he seems also to be fascinated by a man who would so baldly defy his authority.

Before Villefort leaves, the Count says that he believes everyone at court and everyone in Parisian society has something on his or her conscience that can be used against the person, when the time is right. Villefort seems to shudder at this implication, and the Count offers no further explanation for it, but when Villefort leaves, he is grateful to be out of the Count's house – and the Count says to himself that Villefort's visit has prompted in him the surge of a great deal of vengeful "**poison**."

This is another instance of dramatic irony, which has become one of the primary authorial tools Dumas uses at this point in the novel. Of course, the reader knows that Villefort is responsible for putting the Count in prison, and for burying a child he has fathered out of wedlock. But Villefort does not know that the Count knows this, thus creating an asymmetry of information in the novel.

CHAPTER 49 – HAYDEE

In this brief chapter, the Count meets with Haydee, whom he has introduced previously as his slave. The chapter does little to clear up the mystery of Haydee's living with the Count: for she, too, calls him master and herself his slave, and she says she wishes to meet no one in Paris, simply to go on living in the beautiful environs of the Count's houses in Paris and Auteuil. But the Count says that Haydee is free to leave whenever she likes. Haydee insists she has only loved two men in her life: her father and the Count. The Count asks that she not speak of her parents to anyone if she does in fact leave the home and mingle in society. At this, Haydee addresses the Count with her continued, if still mysterious, devotion, and then the Count takes his leave for a visit to Maximilien Morrel, and Julie and Emmanuel.

Haydee's behavior toward the Count becomes one of the central mysteries of the second part of the novel. For although the reader knows a great deal about the Count's life, we have not been let in on the secret of Haydee's role in the Count's household. It appears from this passage that she is deeply indebted to the Count, and was previously deeply indebted to her father—but beyond this the reader is in the dark. The plot involving the Count and Haydee will become more and more important as the novel continues, and as Haydee tells the reader more about her life's story.

CHAPTER 50 – THE MORRELS

In another brief chapter, the Count pays a visit to the small but loving home of Emmanuel and Julie, and of Maximilien, who is staying with them while he's posted in Paris for the military. The Count is surprised to learn that Emmanuel and Julie, though their income is "only" 25,000 francs per year, are able to enjoy such happiness and calm despite the absence of obvious luxury. The Count learns that Julie and Emmanuel closed their father's merchant business after his death, maintaining his scrupulous honesty and taking the firm's small profits as an annuity on which they might live, as Emmanuel continues his work in business on his own.

The home of Julie Morrel, Maximilien's sister, and Emmanuel, former employee to the Morrel firm, is a space of essentially perfect familial comfort. When the Count visits this home, he is reminded of what his own life might have been like – what it would have meant to him to have started a family with Mercedes. In these scenes we also see a counterpoint to the Count's restless striving for vengeance. In Julie's home, no one cares about vengeance – instead, it is a place of loving devotion between family members.

Julie and Maximilien mention the agent from Thomson and French—the man who left the bag of money in Old Dantes' home that paid off the family's debts—whom they believe to be the same man as Sinbad the Sailor. Julie and Maximilien tell the Count that, for years, the family has sought the agent of Thomson and French to find out what his real name is. The Count grows red in the face and tears form in his eyes as he hears these things, but he does not betray his secret.

The narrator returns to the story of Sinbad and the agent from Thomson and French, who at this point both remain unknown to Julie and Emmanuel. Again, they are unable to notice that the Count is that very same man – in part because the Count is so good as disguising his features from identity to identity. But the Count has also created such a persona for himself in Paris that no one would think he could be anyone other than the Count of Monte Cristo – a fantastical and foreign figure who appears to have stepped out of myth itself.

The Count is then startled by Julie's admission that Old Morrel believed the "real" agent of mercy to have been the ghost of Edmond Dantes himself, come back from the dead to help the family. The Count takes his leave, promising to find out the identity of the agent of Thomson and French, who he says has long lived under the pseudonym of Lord Wilmore. The Morrels tell the Count he is welcome back at their home any time.

The dramatic irony is powerful here, as Julie inadvertently puts her finger on exactly what has happened. The reader knows that the Count really is Dantes, and that it was the return of Dantes from prison that enabled Old Morrel to escape bankruptcy. But Julie believes that this story is legend or whimsy, when in fact the Count and reader understand it to be true.

CHAPTER 51 – PYRAMUS AND THISBE

The chapter begins with Maximilien Morrel, dressed as a gardener, paying court to Valentine de Villefort over the garden wall to her father's estate. Maximilien reveals in his conversation that Valentine was to be married to Franz D'Epinay of the earlier chapters, but that Valentine has resisted this marriage. Maximilien also reveals that he has purchased the fallow property next-door to the Villeforts, and that he plans to work there, in the alfalfa fields, having given up his military commission so he can be close to his beloved.

At this point the reader might have wondered what has become of Franz. Whereas Albert has remained central to the narrative, being the son of Fernand, Franz appears to have drifted into the shadows. He will return later, however, when it is revealed that Villefort's father once interacted with his own father. But at this point, the reader learns only that Franz is to be married to Valentine.

In the second part of their conversation, Valentine wonders aloud if there isn't some ancient hatred between their families, for when Maximilien's name once came up in the Villefort home, her father was deeply angered at the sound of it; but her grandfather, Noirtier, who can barely speak on account of a stroke, demonstrated that he was pleased that Maximilien had been awarded the Legion of Honor. Maximilien wonders if the rumor is true, that, despite Villefort's impeccable Royalist credentials, his father is in fact a longtime Bonapartist. At the sound of Valentine's stepmother, Heloise, Maximilien heads back over the wall to his side, the alfalfa field.

Villefort, of course, pretended long ago not to have remembered the details of Dantes imprisonment, when Old Morrel visited him to plead on Dantes' account. Villefort is therefore invested in rejecting any connection to Old Morrel, whom he believes to be too close to Dantes. And it is the memory of Dantes, along with the memory of his child out of wedlock, that most haunt sVillefort. Thus he wishes to ignore even the smallest mention of the name of any Morrel – and, of course, whatever his father might know on the subject cannot be interpreted readily, for Noirtier has been felled by a stroke.

CHAPTER 52 – TOXICOLOGY

The Count pays another visit to the Madame de Villefort, Heloise. After Edouard interrupts them for a time by spouting facts he's learned from his tutor, the Count announces that, in fact, he has met the two of them before two years ago in Perugia. At this, Heloise recalls that she did speak to a man there, who called himself a doctor, and who was acquainted with many of the chemicals of the far East—chemicals that, as the Count said then and reminds her now, can be either medicine or **poison**, depending on how they are administered.

This is an extremely important conversation, for thematic reasons. Poison in the novel works both ways – as something that can kill because it is toxic, and as something that can bolster one's immunity against further harm. Poison will be used in both ways in the text, and the Count is acquainted with both these methods. Although Heloise might wonder how the Count knows these things, the reader is not surprised, as we have seen how invested the Count is in methods of violent revenge.

Heloise seems enormously interested in this topic, and the Count notes that, in Eastern **poisonings** (as opposed to the theatrical poisonings of, say, the French opera), a man can seem perfectly healthy for some time, only to keel over dead after a month, appearing to have died not from poisoning at all, but rather from an apoplectic stroke. Heloise asks for a small amount of some of the poisons the Count describes to her, partially out of curiosity––because she has read a great deal about Eastern chemistry—and partly, it seems, because she has some unnamed use for those medicines, or poisons, in mind. The next day the Count remarks to himself that his discussion of "toxicology" seems not have fallen on "barren soil," but is instead a seed that will sprout and grow in Heloise's mind.

This is one of the more morally ambiguous sections of the text. It's not clear whether the Count really intends to encourage Heloise to perform poisonings in her own home, or whether the Count senses that Heloise already has this predilection. But of course, Heloise will go on to do this poisoning herself, and so she becomes a part of the Count's larger revenge plot. But, as will be related many chapters down the line, these poisonings will begin to claim innocent victims, and the Count will have to question the methods he has used: has he gone too far, and harmed too many innocent people, in his quest for a "just" vengeance?

CHAPTER 53 – ROBERT LE DIABLE

This chapter, a portrait of society gathering at a theatrical performance, is short on exposition of plot and long on dialogue. All the members of Parisian society so far described in the novel are present: Baroness Danglars, who is revealed to be having an affair with Lucien Debray; Hermine and the Baron's daughter, Eugenie, whom Albert has been considering marrying; Morcerf and the Countess G, who has returned to Paris from Italy; and, eventually, the Count of Monte Cristo and Haydee, who make a grand appearance much to the chattering of others in the house.

Sometimes the narrator will use the occasion of the theater to make sure that he's placed all his characters in the same room at the same time. The theater, then, is a convenience of fiction, like a party-scene – it allows characters to talk to, and plot against, one another. Of course, the theater was also an important part of the social life of upper-crust France during this time, and so inclusion of a theater scene helps develop the reality of the society Dumas describes.

Of note is the arrival of Fernand de Morcerf, who behaves toward the Count with his typical "icy" reserve. But when Haydee comes near and the Count introduces her—and mentions that Morcerf served under the Ali Pasha during the wars in Greece and Turkey—Haydee withdraws her hand and nearly falls faint, and the Count has to excuse her and pull her aside. Haydee reveals to the audience, although the Count surely was already aware, that her father is the Ali Pasha, the famed commander in Greece, and that Morcerf made his fortune through the "treacherous" betrayal of the Ali Pasha, using his own men to stage a coup. Haydee says that she cannot stay in the theater with Fernand, and the Count escorts her home before the play is finished.

This is an important development in the Haydee subplot, as she makes it explicit that it is Fernand who behaved treacherously against her father, resulting in his death. This sheds partial light on the Count's connection to Haydee. She is linked, through bonds of violence, to Fernand, which means that Haydee might be able to supply the kind of information that could destabilize and ultimately condemn one of the Count's enemies.

CHAPTER 54 – RISE AND FALL

The Count invites Albert to come over and speak with him, and Albert reveals that he does not wish to marry Eugenie Danglars because, for a reason he cannot figure out, his mother does not want him to do so. The Count wonders if Mercedes Morcerf believes that the Danglars family is "low-born," but Albert wonders if it isn't something stronger, and more mysterious, than that. The Count says that he is planning on having the Villeforts and the Danglars out to his country home in Auteuil, since they seem so keen on making his acquaintance in Paris.

The Count's plans for vengeance are moving more swiftly. Now that the Count has gotten to know the families of Fernand, Danglars, and Villefort, he can begin the long-term chess-match that will result in the revelation of their crimes. The house in Auteuil is an important setting for these revelations, since the Count now owns it, and Villefort and his mistress, as-yet unnamed, committed their crimes there.

Albert also reports that Franz, who is to marry Valentine de Villefort, is bored in Italy and will soon be returning to Paris. The Count's servant Baptistin arrives in the room to announce that a man named Cavalcanti, the descendent of an old and wealthy Italian family and a friend of the Count's from Italy, will soon be visiting Paris. Albert leaves, but not before asking the Count if he will dine with him and his mother. The Count does not agree, saying that he is busy with other matters, and Albert asks himself why the Count is so hesitant to make his mother's acquaintance more thoroughly.

This introduces another small but nagging feature of the text that will not be explained for many chapters. The Count refuses to eat in front of Mercedes, Albert, and Fernand. This refusal to eat seems another feature of his Dracula-like persona, as the Countess G describes it, and adds to the legend of the Count. But, as the reader will learn, the Count has a more principled reason, having to do with his revenge, for refusing to eat in Mercedes's presence.

CHAPTER 55 – MAJOR CAVALCANTI

Major Cavalcanti, an older and somewhat confused man, arrives at the Count's home and is brought inside by Baptistin the servant. Cavalcanti speaks to the Count but is not quite sure of what is going on—he says that, in Italy, he was put in touch with a man named Abbe Busoni who claimed to have knowledge of the Major's son, long believed to have been lost to him. This Abbe Busoni has sent the Major to the Count in Paris, so that the Count can put him in touch with his long-lost son.

This feature of the Count's plot has not yet been explained, and so the reader remains a bit confused as to who the Major is, and why he has been introduced at this stage of the novel. It is a feature of the text that, as soon as one part of the Count's plot seems to come into focus, another feature emerges. This demonstrates just how far in advance the Count has been planning his vengeance, and how complex this plan can be.

The Major admits that his wife, a woman named Olivia, is no longer alive, and that he mourns her every day. He says, too, that their marriage was not strictly legal, but that the Abbe Busoni has been able to find paperwork that, post facto, makes the marriage official, despite Olivia's death. This makes Andrea, the Major's son, no longer "illegitimate" and therefore able to inherit the family's fortune. The Count says that, while the Major takes a moment to compose himself, he will ask Baptistin to go into the next room and fetch Andrea so that the two might be reunited after so many years apart.

It becomes clear that the Count is willing to fudge the rules of parentage to make it seem that the Major's son, whom he has not seen in a very long time, is in fact his legitimate heir. Again, it is not clear why the Count would be so invested in something like this, but the reader must simply trust that the narrator is leading us along on another winding part of the Count's revenge plot – the importance of which will be revealed in due time.

CHAPTER 56 – ANDREA CAVALCANTI

The Count goes into the other room where he meets with a young man with blonde hair and a red beard who goes by the name of Andrea Cavalcanti. The Count repeats to this younger man what he's said to the father—that he is ready to introduce the two of them. Andrea replies that he is doing what the letter he was sent has said: this letter, sent by Lord Wilmore (also known as Sinbad the Sailor), offered to put Andrea into contact with the Major, and also promised documents proving they are father in son, so that both men can inherit the family money of which the Major is now sole heir: about 500,000 francs per year.

Here, the Count has arranged the presence of Andrea and the Major with such clockwork precision that it seems hard to imagine how he could be so detail-oriented and fastidious. But the reader can remember that there have been other moments in which the Count's attention to detail has been noted, including his visit, correct to the minute, to Albert's home in Paris, after the meeting was planned by the two men many months previously in Rome.

In the next room, Andrea and the Major meet, but it is not so warm a greeting as might be supposed. When the Count ducks out for a moment, Andrea and the Major indicate what they each know: that they have somehow been "set up," that they are not really father and son, though each has lost either a father or a son; and that someone, presumably the Count, wants them to appear as though they really are related. When the Count returns, he invites both to his house at Auteuil that weekend, to meet, among others, the Baron Danglars, who is to give them their newly-official inheritance. Both Cavalcantis agree to this date, and when they leave, the Count announces to himself that they are both "wretches," but they seem to be willing to pretend they are in fact father and son for the money he has promised them.

The "Cavalcantis" reveal that they both know they are a part of a plot. What's important is, they don't seem to care too much that the plot has been set in motion. Both the Major and Andrea believe they will benefit from whatever the Count is doing, and so they are willing to go along with what he says. This passivity in the face of other people's plotting might remind the reader of Caderousse, who was also willing to go along with Danglars, in part because he did not have the courage to stop what had already been put into motion. If the Count is a man of action, always creating plans, people like the Major, Andrea, and Caderousse are characters always reacting, passive to the desires and machinations of others.

CHAPTER 57 – THE ALFALFA FIELD

Maximilien returns to the wall by the alfalfa field to speak to Valentine, who has been visiting with Eugenie Danglars. Valentine reveals that Eugenie does not wish to marry Albert because she wants to remain a free woman, able to live her own life—she aspires to become a painter. Valentine has also spoken to Eugenie, she informs Maximilien, about how she does not wish to marry Franz, and that she is in love with another man. This causes Maximilien's heart to swoon.

The plot of the novel develops along two parallel lines here. Eugenie does not want Albert – because it will be revealed, later, that she does not wish to be connected to any man, but rather to a woman. And Valentine does not wish to marry Franz, one of the eligible bachelors to which the reader was introduced during the earlier chapters in Rome.

Valentine also reveals that her stepmother, Heloise, is opposed to the idea of Valentine marrying anyone, because Valentine stands to inherit a large sum of money from her deceased mother, and this money would revert to Heloise and Edouard if, for example, Valentine were to enter a convent, as she once considered doing. Maximilien wonders aloud if perhaps "a friend" he has recently made, the Count of Monte Cristo, might be able to persuade Heloise to let Valentine marry—but Valentine confesses that she is confused by, and perhaps a bit scared of, the Count, who seems to have such increasing sway in Paris, and indeed with her own stepmother. Valentine says that she is anxious to go into a convent because she loves Maximilien, and her grandfather, Noirtier, is still laid up with the aftereffects of a stroke.

Valentine introduces what will become one of the most important plot points of the latter half of the text. Valentine's romance with Maximilien is undercut by social and familial pressures encouraging her to marry Franz. Heloise, her stepmother, wants some of the money Valentine will gain when she is independent, and so within the Villefort family, as here described, there is the pressure of financial and social reward. Joined with the previously revealed information about Heloise's interest in poisoning, this will foreshadow some of the most central events of the closing chapters.

CHAPTER 58 – MONSIEUR NOIRTIER DE VILLEFORT

The narrator turns to a conversation between Villefort, Heloise, and the old man Noirtier, who is confined to a wheelchair inside their home. Villefort and his wife inform Villefort's father that Valentine, his beloved granddaughter, is to be married to Franz. Villefort acknowledges what the reader as yet does not know: that Franz's mother died during childbirth, and that his father was murdered in 1815. Noirtier seems to have a distinct issue with Valentine marrying Franz, though he is not able to articulate it to his son and daughter-in-law, because he cannot speak—he can only nod and blink to indicate his meaning.

In a novel filled with violence, the murder of Franz's father seems to be a rather unimportant, if tragic, piece of information. But as the novel continues, it will be revealed that Franz's father's demise is of great importance, and can actually be of use to Valentine in her suit to marry Maximilien instead of Franz. Thus Franz, for all his attachment to the idea of Valentine, might be undone by a family crime, just as the history of other family crimes has haunted other characters in the novel.

Valentine comes in, fresh from her conversation with Maximilien, and Villefort and Heloise leave the room. Valentine realizes that Noirtier is deeply upset at the thought of her marrying Franz, and she realizes that Noirtier wishes to express why. She figures out, through use of a dictionary, that Noirtier (pointing out the word with a nod) wants to consult a notary, and so Valentine dispatches Barrois, Noirtier's servant, to do just this, despite Villefort's opposition.

Although it is difficult to believe that Noirtier is capable of being understood using this dictionary method, it nevertheless establishes how close he is to Valentine, who often interprets for him. It also makes the nature of Noirtier's revelations all the more dramatic, because they take longer to convey to the reader.

CHAPTER 59 – THE WILL

The notary arrives, and wonders if he will be able to serve a man in Noirtier's condition, as he fears that Noirtier's disability is not only physical but mental, and that, therefore, he would not be in a position to make a change to his will and testament. But Valentine demonstrates that she is in fact capable of interpreting Noirtier's speech, and Noirtier himself shows that he is sound of mind by accurately accounting for the 900,000 francs that he has in government bonds—doing this by means of nodding and blinking to Valentine's and the notary's questions. The notary is therefore satisfied that Noirtier is in a position to draw up a new will.

The notary is a representative of official authority, and he insists on performing this addendum to Noirtier's will by the book. The novel has an interesting under-layer of institutional life, as depicted in Villefort's encounters with the French crown early on and in the Count's dealings with various bankers and real estate officials. Although oftentimes these officials lay down rules that other characters skirt around, here the notary insists on being scrupulous in his dealings.

Through more nodding, Noirtier expresses that he will disinherit everyone in his family, including Valentine, should Villefort proceed with his wish of marrying Valentine to Franz. Noirtier suggests that he objects to this marriage on principle, and that, should it be done, Noirtier will instead give all his money to the poor.

With this Noirtier mounts his defense of Valentine's right to marry whomever she pleases. It would be devastating for the family for Noirtier's money to go not to Valentine but to a charity, so Noirtier believes his son would never allow this to happen.

The notary draws up this will, and Villefort announces that, in his position as crown prosecutor, he is no position to contest his father's wishes and dispute money that is otherwise marked for the poor. Valentine is overjoyed that her grandfather is trying with all his might to stand in the way of her proposed marriage to Franz, although it is unclear whether Noirtier will convince her father, ultimately, of renouncing the match he seems to want so desperately.

Villefort leaves the door open that, although he will not contest his father's actions, he might nevertheless proceed with the match between Valentine and Franz because he believes it is to the social credit of the family for the two to marry. Villefort and his father, then, are locked in a kind of war over control of the family – and although Villefort appears to be more powerful in French society, his father is an admirable combatant within the home.

CHAPTER 60 – THE TELEGRAPH

The Count arrives, again paying a visit to Villefort and his wife. He finds them both dismayed at the idea that their daughter has been disinherited from 900,000 francs, but Villefort insists to his wife and the Count that the marriage between Valentine and Franz is to go on, and that to change it now would be to bring down rumor and scorn on Valentine's name. Heloise notes that Noirtier, a wealthy man, is giving away money that could go to Edouard, who carries on the family name. But Villefort insists that the right course here is to ensure that Valentine and Franz marry. The Count asks why Villefort cares so much about this wedding, and Heloise notes that the D'Epinay family, who are Royalists, have had a long-standing dispute with the Noirtiers, who are Bonapartists, and that he hopes to bury this dispute with the marriage.

It is revealed why Villefort cares so much about the wedding of Franz and Valentine – he hopes to move beyond the hatreds of Royalists and Bonapartists that have existed in his family for some time. And indeed, these hatreds have existed in France for at least two generations, as the novel has demonstrated in other contexts. What was in France a problem of two different governments and approaches to democracy, becomes here a problem between two different families, which Villefort hopes to reconcile via his daughter's marriage. Villefort has therefore taken one of the primary preoccupations of his professional life, and made it one of his personal and family life.

The Count agrees that this is the best course, then takes his leave from the Villeforts, saying that he is off to indulge a strange pastime of his—he is going to go observe a telegraph structure in Paris, a technology of which he is enamored. Before he leaves, he confirms that the Villeforts will be joining him that weekend in Auteuil, at the house of the former Saint-Merans family. Villefort expresses surprise and trepidation that the Count has bought this structure, as even his wife knows that Villefort never wanted anything to do with Auteuil. It seems clear that Villefort is somehow involved in the strange business of murder and mayhem recounted by Bertuccio some weeks ago to the Count. But Villefort swallows these objections and promises that he and his wife will be present that Saturday.

At various points in the novel, the Count will behave in a manner that leaves even the most perceptive and intuitive reader in the dust. It is difficult to determine why, exactly, the Count would suddenly need to go off and talk to a telegraph operator. But it is to the Count's credit that he has crafted a persona so mysterious that he can say something like this to Villefort, and Villefort, though perhaps confused, will take it in stride. It is no stranger for the Count to go to the telegraph than it is for him to do a great deal of the other outlandish things he does in Parisian society.

CHAPTER 61 – HOW TO RESCUE A GARDENER FROM DORMICE WHO ARE EATING HIS PEACHES

The Count does as he said he would do and goes on a trip to visit the telegraph operator nearby. First, he notices that the operator spends a great deal of time tending the garden at the foot of the telegraph tower. Then, when he observes the man working in the tower, he learns from the man that operators are paid very little, and that, if they make any mistakes in relaying information to the next post, they are docked a substantial amount of their next month's pay.

The Count is especially skilled at getting people to do what he wants, by convincing them that their interests align with his own. Here, the Count demonstrates what could potentially be a reason for the operator to mind his station at all times – that he is punished if he misses a message. Then, in the next scene, the Count will make an offer that would more than compensate for any penalty the operator might suffer in this scenario.

At this, the Count makes the operator an offer he cannot refuse. He tells the operator he will give him a many-acre garden, and enough money to live on in perpetuity, if he will transmit a code (which the operator, being illiterate, is unable to interpret). This code, the Count promises, will not cause anyone physical harm, and the operator finally agrees to do this. As the narrator relates at the close of the chapter, the code the Count has influenced the operator to send reports a fluctuation in the Spanish stock market, caused by a supposed political upheaval there. This upheaval causes Danglars, a cautious banker, to lose over 1 million francs—all at the Count's prompting, as he designed it.

The Count has now graduated to a different kind of influence into Danglars' affairs. Previously, the Count was content to make Danglars feel that his wealth was somehow inferior to that of the other great banks in Europe. Here, however, the Count actively causes fluctuation in European markets, which he knows will result in a loss for Danglars. The reader begins to realize that the Count will go after precisely what Danglars holds most dear: his money, and his belief that he is one of the shrewdest bankers in Europe.

CHAPTER 62 – GHOSTS

This chapter marks the beginning of the Count's grand dinner at Auteuil. Bertuccio has decked out the home in preparation, save for one room, which the Count will show his guests after the food has been served. The Count sees that Lucien Debray, Chateau-Renaud, the Baron Danglars (angry from his losses on the market), Hermine Danglars, Villefort and Heloise, and Major and Andrea Cavalcanti arrive.

As in the previous scene in the theater, the narrator (and the Count) have arranged things so that all the most important characters are present in the same place. Of course, the Count has also made sure that this is not just any location, but the house in which Villefort and the Baroness Danglars had their illicit tryst many years ago.

As he calls for Bertuccio, the Count reveals how these characters intertwine with the servant's story of a Corsican vendetta. Bertuccio, shocked, sees that Hermine Danglars, the Baron's wife, is in fact the woman with whom Villefort was having an affair, and who bore a child out of wedlock. Furthermore, Villefort is in fact still alive, which means that Bertuccio did not murder him when he stabbed him in the garden, and Andrea Cavalcanti is really Benedetto himself, Bertuccio's adopted son who caused so much mayhem in his home life. At this, however, the Count demands that Bertuccio silently serve the dinner, betraying nothing of what he's learned.

All these revelations are filtered through the consciousness of Bertuccio, who is one of the characters most directly affected by the Count's purchase of the house in Auteuil. Bertuccio realizes in one fell swoop that he could not have killed Villefort, who is still alive, and that the man called Andrea Cavalcanti is really Benedetto, Bertuccio's adopted son. The Count has therefore arranged his meal with maximum dramatic effect, hoping to prompt extreme responses from many of the guests assembled, including his own servant.

CHAPTER 63 – DINNER

The dinner is served, and everyone eats heartily, if somewhat suspiciously, the various delights the Count has assembled, including fish from as far away as Russia, carried to the table in specially-fitted water-carriages. After the meal, the Count takes the guests on a tour of the estate, and when he shows them a room in which, he avers, a crime has been committed, Madame Danglars swoons and Villefort rises to comfort her.

The Count demonstrates two things in this section. First, he shows that he is capable of bringing in some of the most extreme and expensive delights in all the known (European) world. And second, he makes clear to Villefort and Hermine that he is aware of some crime committed in the house, without explicitly stating that Villefort and Hermine are involved – thus causing them additional agony at the thought of being found out in front of some of the luminaries of French society.

Villefort and Debray (Madame Danglars' lover) wonder if maybe the Baroness has had too much wine with dinner, or if the Count's ominous tone for the evening has scared her. But the Count insists a crime really was committed in the house, and as others care for Madame Danglars, the Count asks Villefort to help him "take a statement" on this crime, in Villefort's capacity as the crown prosecutor. The Count claims, misleadingly, that in his renovations his men dug up the skeleton of a newborn child in the garden just beyond the walls of that "haunted" room.

In another instance of dramatic irony, the reader knows that the Count is fibbing here. The Count knows that the child who was to be buried in that garden was exhumed by Bertuccio, and that he grew into Andrea, who is also present. But the Count does not reveal all this information at once. Instead, it's as though he lowers a net over all the people assembled at his home, slowly ensnaring them in the revenge he has planned for years.

Though Villefort seems to be holding himself together as much as a he can, the Count notices, and the narrator relates, that he whispers into the Baroness's ear that he'd like to speak with her as soon as he can. The Baroness, awakened from her swoon, says she will do this as soon as they leave Auteuil.

The reader understands that Villefort wishes to clear the air with Hermine. The other guests assembled, though they understand that Hermine is upset, have not yet put together that Villefort and Hermine are two of the "criminals" to whom the Count refers in his discussions of the house.

CHAPTER 64 – THE BEGGAR

Andrea Cavalcanti leaves the party at Auteuil alone, as his "father," the Major, has his own cab and servants. On his way out the door with his own servant, however, Andrea is stopped by a man dressed as a beggar, revealed to the reader to be none other than Caderousse, who is on the run since murdering La Carconte many years before in the botched scheme with the jeweler. It is revealed that Andrea/Benedetto and Caderousse know each other from the past, in the south of France, when Caderousse was on the lam for his crime and Benedetto for starting the fire that led to his stepmother's death.

It has been unclear what has happened to Caderousse in the time since he was sentenced to hard labor in a prison colony for the murders of La Carconte and the jeweler. As it turns out, Benedetto/Andrea and Caderousse know each other from the colony, as will be described in detail later. This is another of the novel's many coincidences, for, of course, Bertuccio (unbeknownst to Caderousse) is the only witness to the murders in the inn so many years ago, when Bertuccio was drenched in the jeweler's blood.

Caderousse implies that he will out Benedetto unless the young man supplies him with some amount of his monthly income from the Count. Although Caderousse does not admit to knowing who the Count is exactly, he seems to be aware of the notion that Andrea and the Major are not really related, but that the Count is paying the two of them to pretend to be family. Caderousse promises to visit Andrea at the beginning of every month to exact his blackmail fee of 200 francs. The two men part just after Andrea drops him within the city gates of Paris.

By this point, Caderousse has turned from a mostly passive and diffident man to one more comfortable with active criminal behavior. He extorts Andrea because Caderousse knows that Andrea is enmeshed with one of the wealthiest men in Paris, the Count. And though Caderousse does not know the Count's true identity, he seems to understand that all of French high society has fallen under the Count's sway.

CHAPTER 65 – A DOMESTIC SCENE

The narrator turns to the Danglars' home, where Lucien Debray visits the Baroness, asking what is on her mind after the events at Auteuil earlier that day. The Baroness says that it was nothing, that she is simply feeling faint, but she asks that Debray stay with her and read to her in the night. At this, however, the Baron comes in and tells Lucien to leave—that the younger man will have plenty of time to discuss matters with the Baroness the next day. Hermine is surprised, because typically the Baron does not interfere in her affairs so directly and brusquely.

The affair between Lucien and Hermine has been referred to for some time in the novel, but has not been shown "on stage," as an event unfolding in the text itself. Here, however, their affair is again referenced only glancingly, when the Baron appears to acknowledge that he knows what has been going on, and that he wishes, contrary to normal procedures in the family, to spend some time alone with his wife.

The Baron then has a private conversation with Hermine in her chambers. He reveals that he has long known about her affair with Lucien, just as Hermine, surely, has known about his own affairs, and that they have decided to live "no longer as man and wife" for four years, only pretending to maintain a normalcy in marriage. Danglars says that this arrangement has been fine for him so long as he has not lost out financially. But the Baron strongly implies that Lucien, with his diplomatic connections in Paris, arranged the mix-up in the telegram that resulted in the Baron's enormous financial loss.

The Baron seems to understand that someone has been behind the malfeasance with the telegraph operator. Of course, the reader knows that this bungling was caused by the Count, not Lucien, and so we have another instance of dramatic irony. Nevertheless, the Baron seems to sense that his fortune is under attack in some way, and he wishes to do what he can to preserve the money upon which his reputation rests.

As a consequence, the Baron says that he will not allow Lucien to interfere with his financial matters, and that if this should continue, he will ask Lucien and the Baroness to pay him back whatever amount of his own money is lost—that, in other words, he will not pay out of his own pocket so that the Baroness can have her affairs. The Baron also implies that he is aware of the Baroness's earlier affair, when she was still married to her first husband. He seems to know, and not to care, that this affair was with Villefort, and that the Baroness had a child out of wedlock with him. Again, he simply doesn't want these matters to affect his own life, and he asks that the Baroness behave with discretion with Lucien going forward.

This is an important revelation, as it sheds light on the Baron's mind. The Baron seems not to be concerned that his wife has had an affair with another prominent society member, Villefort. This could be because the affair predates their own marriage – but by the standards of French society at the time, it would still be a blemish on both Hermine and the Baron for the romance to be revealed. In essence, then, the Baron tells his wife that, apart from whatever she might do with Lucien or previously have done with Villefort, he will allow nothing to stand in the way of his business, which he values above all else.

CHAPTER 66 – MARRIAGE PLANS

The Baron Danglars comes to the Count's home in Paris to meet with him about business matters regarding the Cavalcantis. The Count says that Abbe Busoni has just arrived in Paris, and that he has been meeting with him, excusing himself for being late for the Baron. The Baron complains that, in recent days, his fortune has taken a significant hit on the Spanish question, and the Count, mocking the Baron but pretending to sympathize with him, says that the Baron's is a "third-class fortune" because it can be affected by fluctuations in the stock or bond markets, or by changes in and garbled messages on the telegraph wires. The Baron insists that he has plenty of money to survive more stock turbulence, but the Count isn't so sure.

The Count uses his meeting with the Baron as another opportunity to bring Danglars down a peg. The Count's revenge on Danglars, as revealed here and in ensuing chapters, will involve the slow erosion of his wealth and status, and the mockery of that erosion as it occurs. Danglars seems not to be surprised that the Count knows of his misfortune, and still appears to suspect that it is Lucien and his wife, and not the Count, who are involved in his losses. The Count also uses this as a chance to indicate just how well-preserved and safe his own fortune is, compared to Danglars'.

They turn to the Cavalcantis, with the Count insisting that that family comes from ancient money, that the Major has a great deal of wealth to his name, and that the Baron would be in a good position if he were to do business with Andrea as a "sound investment." The Baron wonders, too, if a young lad like that might not be a good investment for his daughter, Eugenie, who does not want to marry Albert de Morcerf.

A second part of the Count's plan regarding Danglars is revealed. The Count knows that Eugenie, Danglars' daughter, does not wish to marry Albert, and the Count wants to do all he can to link Eugenie to an even more reprobate and unsatisfactory match than Albert – whose reputation he also plans to ruin, as he ruins Fernand's. Thus the Count plants the seed of a union between Andrea/Benedetto and Eugenie.

When the Count asks whether the name of Morcerf is an ancient heraldry, the Baron admits to him that the Morcerf family "bought" its name with wealth acquired through a shady dealing with the Ali Pasha during the Greek wars, and that Fernand, Albert's father, was nothing more than a fishmonger in Marseille. The Count says that this information about the Morcerf family could be of great use to the Baron, and he gives the Baron a name of a source in Greece to whom he can write in order to confirm this information about the Morcerfs' wealth, which the Baron can use to blackmail Morcerf. With luck, the Baron says, he can force his daughter into marrying Andrea, whom he believes to be a better match than Albert. The Count is delighted at this.

The Count is so devilishly cunning that he uses one of Danglars' old methods against him. As the reader might remember from the beginning of the novel, Danglars managed to convince Fernand to send the letter even as he pretended he wasn't involved – that the act was somehow Fernand's, and not Danglars', ultimate responsibility. Here, although the Count wishes very much that Andrea and Eugenie be betrothed, he encourages Danglars to believe that this plan is his own, thus making this turn of the revenge plot all the more satisfying for the Count.

CHAPTER 67 – THE CROWN PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Baroness Danglars visits Villefort at his offices, coming in incognito so as to avoid the attention of others. Villefort does not mince words: he tells her that someone seems to be onto both the details of their affair twenty years ago and the death of the child. Based on the dinner at Auteuil, Villefort believes that the Count must know all, although he's not sure how Monte Cristo could have found out, as neither Villefort nor Baroness Danglars has told anyone about their tryst.

Villefort demonstrates some of his abilities as a prosecutor, noting what the reader already knows: that the Count is aware of his and Hermine's past misdeeds. Villefort nevertheless really believes that their secret is still hidden – that no one alive could have knowledge of it. But it appears strange that Villefort does not think of the man who tried to kill him, who might still be alive.

Villefort reveals that, when Bertuccio stabbed him, he crawled inside to the Baroness, able to survive the wound. After his convalescence in the south, Villefort tells the Baroness, who was not aware before, how he dug in the garden to try to find the body of their illegitimate child, only to discover that Bertuccio had taken it. Villefort was able to track the child to a foundling hospital nearby, but he found no information on the family who adopted him. Villefort wonders if the child is still alive and, if so, where he is living—he also wonders how the Count could have figured out the sordid tale of Villefort's life, which, as he tells the Baroness mysteriously, is filled with other deeds of which he'd rather not speak.

What is striking is that Villefort was indeed nearly able to track down Bertuccio, but after Bertuccio's common-law wife Assunta adopted Benedetto, the trail went cold for Villefort. In these pages, Villefort emerges as a man haunted by the things he's done in the past, but also a man unwilling to atone for these misdeeds. Instead, he only wishes to continue covering them up, to do what he can to keep them from ruining his and Hermine's reputations in Paris.

CHAPTER 68 – A SUMMER BALL

Albert returns from his trip to the country with his mother, Mercedes, and visits with the Count to invite him to a ball he's planning on throwing in the next few days. For this, Albert has two reasons: first, because he wishes very much to arrange a marriage between Eugenie Danglars and Andrea Cavalcanti (which Baron Danglars also wants); and second, because Mercedes has mentioned she wants to speak more intimately with the Count. At this second piece of information, the Count shudders but tries to maintain his composure.

It is not exactly clear to the reader at this stage why the Count is unwilling to meet with Mercedes face-to-face. It can be intuited that the Count is simply avoiding Mercedes because the thought of their interaction is too great for his heart to bear. Or, it could be that the Count understands that his desire for revenge against Fernand will indirectly harm Mercedes and Albert, and there is nothing he can do about this.

Albert argues that Eugenie would make a wonderful mistress but a terrible wife, and so he feels that it's best if she does marry Andrea. The Count, after some cajoling, says that he will in fact go to the ball because Mercedes requests his attendance.

Albert feels that he has been freed of a social obligation to Eugenie, allowing Danglars to continue to push for Eugenie's marriage to Andrea.

CHAPTER 69 – INFORMATION

In this brief chapter, the crown prosecutor himself goes to interview (separately) the Abbe Busoni and Lord Wilmore, having learned from the former inspector of prisons that the Count of Monte Cristo has been known to associate with those two men, both of whom live in Paris. First, the Abbe Busoni argues that the Count is the son of a wealthy Maltese shipping magnate, and later Lord Wilmore—who swears he is the enemy of the Count, for obscure reasons—largely echoes this story. Both men state that the Count is simply an arriviste, whose connection to the house in Auteuil is rooted in an interest in converting that space into an asylum. Reassured via this misinformation that the Count has no special knowledge of his past, Villefort "sleeps soundly" that night.

The Count uses his skill in disguising his identity to throw the Crown Prosecutor off his trail. Villefort is a man trained in detective work, so the Count must use every tool at his disposal to keep him off-balance—even if it seems unlikely that Villefort would actually be fooled into thinking Wilmore, Busoni, and the Count are all different people after meeting them each in person. The plot relies on this conceit, however, as Dantes' alter-egos insist that the Count merely has a love of the macabre, and is not aware of the crime Hermine and Villefort have committed together. This is, therefore, another instance of dramatic irony, in which the reader knows some things that the character, here Villefort, does not.

CHAPTER 70 – THE BALL

The Morcerf ball is held on a hot July night, and many gather to celebrate, though they complain of the heat. Danglars learns from the Count, when he makes his much-anticipated arrival, that some of his German debtors have lost their fortunes too, meaning increasing losses for Danglars. But Danglars warns the Count not to speak of his fortune in front of Andrea Cavalcanti, whom Danglars hopes to marry to Eugenie.

It is revealed that the Count has continued to erode the Baron's fortunes through further manipulation of the foreign stock markets. Incredibly, the Count's machinations only make the Baron more willing to marry his daughter to Andrea, because the Baron believes that Andrea is worth a good deal of money and comes from a noble family.

The Count finally makes his way to Mercedes, who greats him kindly if formally. The Count offers to open the windows and doors and walk out together into the garden, to which Mercedes agrees. Previously, Mercedes had noted to her son that the Count has never eaten or drunk anything in anyone's presence in Paris, and she wonders aloud if there is some reason for this mystery. She vows to test it.

Once again, it's made clear that the Count never eats or drinks when he is before Mercedes. This mystery is now freshly in the reader's mind, as Mercedes prepares to have a conversation with the Count, but it is unclear why the Count would insist on so strange a scruple as this.

CHAPTER 71 – BREAD AND SALT

The Count and Mercedes walk outside together and into a greenhouse on the Morcerf property. There Mercedes asks the Count if he's suffered many "sorrows," and to this the Count assents, saying that he once loved a woman in Malta, that he went away to war and, when he returned, she was married to another—but that this is a "common story." Mercedes seems affected by this answer, but she says little. She also begs the Count to eat with her, some grapes from the greenhouse or other fruits, but he says no, that he cannot. Nevertheless, he says, they are and will remain friends.

Here, Mercedes really does put into practice her avowed test, and indeed the Count claims there is nothing he can do about it—he cannot eat in front of her—but he wishes that they remain civil to one another. In a strange double twist of dramatic irony, the reader intuits that both Mercedes and the Count know each others' true identities, but neither is willing to speak this truth aloud in the context of the ball, thus adding to the tension of the conversation.

At this Albert comes into the greenhouse saying that a disaster has occurred: Valentine de Villefort's grandfather has passed away. Mercedes goes back inside to calm the guests, and Albert asks if something has passed between his mother and the Count, but the Count says that they are good friends and have only had a little chat.

The drama unfolding in the Villefort family will become one of the primary preoccupations of the final quarter of the novel. Albert, for his part, seems to have sensed that something has passed between his mother and the Count, though he is unsure what that might be.

CHAPTER 72 – MADAME DE SAINT-MERAN

Villefort is at home when his family returns from the ball with the news that his former father in law, M. de Saint-Meran, has died of a stroke after taking his "normally prescribed" pills while en route to Paris with his wife. The couple had come to visit the Villeforts to bring about the marriage of Franz and Valentine, and Valentine, as ever, is as reluctant to carry out the wedding as Villefort is determined to make it final.

The reader might remember Mme de Villefort's demonstrated interest in poisons, which she discussed with the Count many chapters earlier. The death here is also reminiscent of Noirtier's stroke, which occurred many years previously under mysterious circumstances.

Mme de Saint Meran becomes ill with nervous exhaustion after delivering the news of her husband's demise, and the family sends for a doctor to care for her. Mme de Saint Meran tells Valentine that she must marry Franz immediately, since he is of high birth and a suitable companion for her, and that her own family money, and that of Saint Meran, will pass directly to Valentine after Mme de Saint Meran's death. In a swoon, Valentine goes outside into the garden, where she hears Maximilien Morrel behind his garden wall in the alfalfa field.

The idea that the Saint-Merans want to encourage Valentine to marry Franz, and as quickly as possible, is deeply upsetting to Valentine. This causes her to alert her beloved Maximilien, and it kicks into gear one of the most important plots of the end of the novel – the desperate attempt of Maximilien Morrel and Valentine de Villefort to elope together. As of right now, however, it seems that this dream might be impossible.

CHAPTER 73 – THE PROMISE

When the lovers speak, Valentine relays that, though there is nothing she can do to help it, she will be forced to sign a marriage contract with Franz as soon as he enters Paris, since it is the wish of her grandmother. Maximilien replies that Franz has just that day arrived in Paris, and so the contract will be signed as quickly as possible, then. He asks that Valentine elope with him, but she says she cannot go against her father's and grandmother's wishes; that she must do as the family demands. At this, Maximilien says that the only honorable course for him is to commit suicide.

Valentine loves Maximilien, but her loyalty to her father and family's wishes are also deeply important to her. In other words, she is being made to choose between these different devotions, and she is not sure to whom she should accord her utmost loyalty. It is striking that, as a response, Maximilien says exactly what his father said, many years ago – that, in order to avoid dishonor, he must take his own life.

At this, however, Valentine says that she will in fact elope with Maximilien—that she cannot be responsible for his death, and that she is struck by his honor. She plans to meet with him at 9 pm the next night, by the garden wall, and he will escort her away in a carriage where they can be wed outside Paris. They part without even a kiss, and Morrel goes about the next day worrying that the plan will not in fact take place.

Just as Old Morrel did not commit suicide and was saved from ruin, Maximilien is saved, too, this time by Valentine's kindness. Valentine believes that, though it will be terrible to disobey her father, it would be worse to force Maximilien to kill himself (although one might also argue that he is emotionally blackmailing her with his threat of suicide).

The next night, Maximilien waits outside the wall until 9:30 and then realizes that something must have gone wrong—he worries that the marriage contract has been signed with Franz after all. He climbs over the wall near the Villeforts' home, where he hears the crown prosecutor talking with the doctor who has been tending to Valentine's grandmother. The doctor reports that the grandmother is now dead, and that, though he announced in the room that she died of tetanus, the doctor tells the crown prosecutor that he fears **poisoning** is to blame. Villefort is shocked at this idea and wonders if a servant has perhaps raided some of the medicine from Noirtier's room, as this medicine can both treat strokes and, in large enough doses, cause them.

This is another reference to the twinned idea of poisoning, as the Count laid out to Mme de Villefort many chapters previously. For, as the Count noted then, poison can occasionally, in small and spaced-out doses, be used to inoculate someone against future attacks. Thus Villefort recognizes that it is probably someone within his own house who is committing these crimes, although he pins them on a servant and not on his wife, whom the reader is inclined to suspect. It is unclear whether Villefort has enough evidence to distrust his wife, however, and is simply unwilling to believe that she could be the culprit.

Villefort believes that everything in his family is falling apart. At this, he goes back inside and Maximilien, seizing his opportunity, climbs into the house and finds Valentine kneeling, praying, by the bed of her late grandmother. It is the first time Morrel has been in the home, this close to Valentine, and they go into Noirtier's room, both to escape Villefort's attention and so that her grandfather might sanction their romance and prevent Valentine's marriage to Franz.

Maximilien is in some ways a young stand-in for Dantes. The Count seems to recognize this, and increasingly to treat Young Morrel like a son, and try to give him the happiness that Dantes himself was denied. Here, Maximilien behaves as Dantes might have in his youth – he decides to take fate into his own hands.

The pair make their case to Noirtier, and then Maximilien asks to speak with him alone. Morrel asks what he can do—whether he should elope with Valentine, or perhaps fight Franz in a duel. But Noirtier, through his system of signs, indicates that neither of these options is acceptable. Morrel deduces that Noirtier wishes to stand in the way of the marriage by preventing the signing of the contract. Morrel cannot believe his good fortune—that Noirtier is willing to defend his love for Valentine—and he thanks Noirtier many times before promising he will neither interfere with the wedding plans nor fight Franz, but simply wait for Noirtier to intercede on his behalf. He leaves the house without running this change of plans by Valentine.

Although it is immensely difficult for Young Morrel to accept Noirtier's words, he, like Valentine, believes that he must respect the wishes of Valentine's family if he is to achieve the marriage he desires. He and Valentine both see their loyalties as divided ones – they each wish to respect family and their own love – even as they believe it is their love that is, finally, more important to them. Noirtier essentially asks Young Morrel to be patient and optimistic, thus mirroring and foreshadowing the advice the Count will give the young man at the close of the novel.

CHAPTER 74 – THE VILLEFORT FAMILY VAULT

The funeral service for M. and Mme de Saint Meran commences on a gloomy day in Paris. At the funeral Maximilien is introduced, via Morcerf and their other friends, to Franz. Franz has just returned to the capital, learned of the deaths of the grandparents of his intended, and also learned that he will be married to Valentine as soon as the papers can be drafted. Franz suspects nothing of Morrel's love for Valentine, and Morrel musters all the politeness he can to shake Franz's hand at the service.

This is another instance of dramatic irony. Morrel has grown to hate the idea of Franz, although Franz has never done anything to harm him. For his part, Franz is unaware that Morrel has been competing for the affections of the woman to whom he is engaged. The reader's knowledge of these events and Franz's lack of awareness of them only add to the tension that is building across various threads of the novel's plot.

Afterward, Villefort finds Franz and asks him to come to the Villefort residence very shortly, where he will be briefed on the situation with Valentine. When Franz does arrive there, Villefort tells him that Valentine has no objections to the match, that it was the dying wish of both Villefort grandparents that Franz be married to Valentine, and that the marriage can take place that day, as soon as Franz brings along as witnesses Albert and Chauteau-Renaud. Franz agrees to all this, returns with his witnesses in thirty minutes, and the notary stands before Franz, Valentine, and the Villefort family, ready to read out the contract to be signed. Villefort's wife, present in the corner of the room, looks especially pale during the proceedings.

Franz is ready to move forward in the marriage, and does not know that anything might be standing in his way. It is important to note that Franz and Valentine barely know one another, and that their "romance," therefore, has been almost entirely arranged, so as to benefit both families. Villefort is largely responsible for this. Such a marriage stands in sharp contrast to the genuine romance between Young Morrel and Valentine, and to the long-ago romance that Dantes and Mercedes once shared.

The notary states, so that Franz is aware, that Villefort's father Noirtier has put it in writing that if Valentine marries Franz, Noirtier will withdraw his will from his granddaughter. Villefort says that this will cannot be challenged in his own lifetime, even though it is technically illegal (in France, a man cannot entirely disinherit his family and give all monies to the poor)—but Franz argues that he is marrying Valentine for love, not for money, and that her noble rank is higher than his anyway.

It is striking to note that Franz believes *he is marrying Valentine out of love. This is a further dramatic irony, because the reader understands that, in fact, Valentine is in love with another man, and though she wishes no harm on Franz, she does not feel any sense of love or devotion to him. Nevertheless, Franz states for those assembled that this is a marriage predicated on emotion, and not on material concerns, perhaps because he feels he must do so as a gentleman.*

At this, Noirtier's servant bursts into the room, and says that Noirtier wishes to speak with Franz alone. Franz is perfectly happy to do this, although Villefort argues that his father is selfish, doddering, and unable to reason for himself. Valentine appears greatly relieved at whatever intervention her grandfather has planned on her behalf.

As at other times in the novel, just when it appears that a situation cannot be changed, someone bursts into the room and announces that there is a special message to be received. Noirtier has again done all he can to make sure that Valentine's wishes are fulfilled.

CHAPTER 75 – THE JUDICIAL INQUIRY

Noirtier is met in the room by Franz, Villefort, and Valentine. Noirtier urges Valentine towards a secret drawer where, with the help of the servant Barrois, she finds a copy of a manuscript. Noirtier indicates that he wants Franz to read it aloud. The document is a set of minutes from a Bonapartist club meeting and aftermath in 1815—a meeting referenced many chapters ago, when Villefort and his father met in Paris just after Villefort's successful audience with Louis XVIII.

The reader might recall that, in Chapter 12, Villefort and Noirtier met after Villefort had journeyed to Paris for an audience with the king. Noirtier then had told his son that, during a meeting at the Bonapartist club, something terrible had to happen to a man they believed to have been a spy. At the time, Villefort had no idea who this man was.

Franz reads aloud that his own father, a man of questioned sympathies who had been infiltrating Bonapartist events on the part of the crown, is revealed to be—or thought to be—a spy at one of these meetings. Franz's father nobly refuses to cave to the Bonapartist side and defends himself as a Royalist. He is followed after the meeting, stabbed, and then dumped into the Seine. After reading aloud these minutes, which shake him to the core, Franz asks who could have done such a thing to his father, at which point Noirtier indicates that he himself, a famed Bonapartist at the time, was the murderer. Franz is shocked, and Villefort leaps out of the room in anguish at this revelation.

Now Villefort recognizes that this man, this purported turncoat, was none other than Franz's father, the Baron d'Epinay, killed by Noirtier in defense of the Bonapartist cause. This demonstrates the shrewdness of Noirtier's mind, despite his current condition – and the iron-clad devotion he had to the Bonapartist cause, even to the extent of murdering those he thought had crossed him. Villefort understands that this information will be the end of any possible union between Franz and Valentine, and will be much to the family's public discredit.

CHAPTER 76 – THE PROGRESS OF THE YOUNGER CAVALCANTI

The Count pays a visit to the Danglars home, where he sees Andrea Cavalcanti singing at the piano with Eugenie and her friend Louise. Danglars and his wife have been encouraging the match, as Danglars has heard that Andrea is wealthy and of a good family (this information, of course, having been fictionalized by the Count). Danglars also announces that he has kept losing money of late, and he seems embarrassed at his recent financial setbacks. Mme Danglars tells the Count that Franz has broken off his engagement with Valentine, though Danglars does not give the specific reason why.

Danglars and his wife are proud to have stated that Andrea Cavalcanti is making good progress with Eugenie. The Count is more than happy to hear this as well, as it means that, once his plan is set fully in motion, the Danglars will be exposed in their colossal mistake. For now, however, the Count and the reader must remain content in the knowledge they possess, and that Danglars and his wife do not – that the family's comeuppance is on its way.

Albert de Morcerf enters, ostensibly to pay court to Eugenie, his fiancée, although the Danglars family is frustrated by Morcerf's haughtiness—Andrea, at the summer ball, paid far more attention to Eugenie than Albert did. Albert seems not to be jealous or perturbed that Andrea is flirting with his intended, and Danglars whispers to the Count that he has dug up some information on Fernand's conflict in Greece, about which he'd like to inform the Count. As the chapter concludes, it seems that Andrea has the "inside track" in perhaps marrying Eugenie, as the entire Danglars family is following the Count's lead and tilting his way, rejecting Albert for his "stuck up" sense of noble entitlement.

This chapter exists mostly to put the Count back in touch with Danglars, who has dispatched an agent to do research on Fernand's activities abroad while working with the Ali Pasha. Thus the Count has made sure that he's begun to sunk Danglars reputation, and that he can depend on Danglars to begin the ruin of Fernand's reputation. It is a special bit of cunning for a man whose vengeful strategies have already formed so much of the plot of the novel.

CHAPTER 77 – HAYDEE

Albert de Morcerf returns to the house of the Count of Monte Cristo, where, after some discussion, he says that he wishes to speak with Haydee, whose guzla-playing he hears in the other room. The Count warns Albert not to mention that his father, Fernand, served with Haydee's father, the Ali Pasha, in the Greek wars against the Turks—the Count intimates that this might cause Haydee to become upset. The Count repeats what he has told other characters throughout the novel to this point—that Haydee is his slave, and that he bought her to save her from another master in Constantinople after her father and mother died.

Of course, Count the knows full well that by introducing Haydee and Albert he is setting in motion another stage of his plot. Once Albert realizes what his father has allegedly done to Haydee's father, he will begin to be curious about his family's lineage. The Count depends upon Albert's, and other citizens', investigations into the crimes Fernand has committed as a way of outing him as a fraud among Parisian high society.

The Count and Albert find Haydee in her chambers, where she is smoking her pipe and drinking coffee. Albert asks her about her life in Paris, but the Count directs Albert to ask instead about her childhood in the East. Haydee tells a story about fleeing with her mother from operatives who were spying on her father. These men, working for the Turks, wound up stabbing the Ali Pasha dead in front of Haydee, and eventually Haydee's mother died of grief from the ill treatment her husband received.

This is another embedded narrative in the text. Here Haydee is the storyteller, and once again she supplies details of her life with which the characters in the room, and the reader, are not yet acquainted. Like Dantes, Haydee has suffered a great deal at a young age, and although the Count never states this directly, their misfortunes in youth are another bond linking these two figures together.

Haydee says that she is eternally grateful to the Count for saving her from whatever ill fate awaited her at the hands of the Turks in Constantinople. Albert apologizes for prompting so sad a tale as this, but the Count replies that Haydee likes to speak of her past, and that Albert, perhaps, has learned something about the Count's relationship to her. They finish their coffee and Albert departs.

Now the Count has made sure that Albert knows just what happened to Haydee's family. All that is missing is the key link between Fernand and Haydee – which, the Count believes, will be supplied in short enough order. The Count understands that his plot against the Morcerfs has come close to fruition.

CHAPTER 78 – A CORRESPONDENT WRITES FROM JANINA

The chapter opens with Fernand de Morcerf meeting Danglars at the latter's home. Morcerf is there, finally, to confirm what the two men have discussed between themselves for eight years: that Albert is to marry Eugenie. But Morcerf is shocked to find out from Danglars that the banker is asking for a pause on the betrothal; it seems that Danglars wishes to marry Eugenie to another man. Morcerf is flabbergasted by Danglars' claim and wonders if it has something to do with his daughter (the narrator notes that Morcerf does not consider it might have something to do with him). Morcerf agrees to a deferral of the engagement until Danglars is allowed time to think matters through.

Up until this point, Morcerf and Danglars have had an uneasy truce in Parisian society. It is hard to imagine that, many years ago, both these men were involved in a plot against Dantes, back when Danglars was just a ship's manager and Fernand a mere fisherman. Now, both men have their own reputations in Parisian society to protect. Like the Count, they have come very far from their humble origins—but both men realize that their individual reputations are at stake in a potential marriage between their kin, and Danglars wants to be sure he guarantees what he perceives to be a high position in society for his daughter.

In parallel, Albert finds the Count at a shooting range and asks him to be his second for a duel with Beauchamp, his former friend and a newspaper editor. The Count asks what is the matter, and Albert shows the Count a blind item from a recent edition saying that an officer named Fernand betrayed the Ali Pasha to the Turks, thus ensuring that the Greeks would lose decisively in their battle for independence. Albert declares that this item refers to his father, that it cannot be true, and that he therefore needs the Count to support him in dueling Beauchamp. The Count, however, advises caution, and says that Albert should first meet with Beauchamp and see if there is any truth to the accusation.

Albert has uncovered a piece of important information regarding his father. Albert believes it is his duty, out of an abundance of devotion to his father, to fight a duel on Fernand's behalf. But the Count demonstrates a shade of complexity in his plot – for he realizes that he does not want Albert to fight a duel under false pretenses. In other words, the Count doesn't want Albert to die defending the honor of a man whom the Count really does want to suffer. This is a wrinkle in the revenge plot, which the Count may or may not have intuited from the beginning, but which he attempts now to influence.

At the newspaper office, Albert finds Beauchamp and aggressively asks that he retract the item, which Beauchamp himself didn't write. The journalist asks for three weeks to check the facts: if the item is correct, Beauchamp will stand by the story and duel with Albert; and if it is incorrect, he will apologize to Albert and issue a full retraction. Albert leaves impatiently, and spots Maximilien on the street, walking very happily along.

Beauchamp is pulled in two directions, by divided loyalties. On the one hand, as a newspaper editor he believes he must be devoted to the truth at all costs, even if that truth puts a friend in a difficult position. On the other, Beauchamp is a good friend to Albert, and both men wish to preserve their social standing.

CHAPTER 79 – LEMONADE

Still in a good mood, Maximilien walks to the Villefort home, where he is scheduled to meet with Valentine (who is now free of her engagement to Franz) and Noirtier. Valentine interprets for her grandfather and says that, either when she reaches the age of eighteen or if her father consents, she and Noirtier will move out of the house and Noirtier will serve as her protector. In these new lodgings, with Valentine's independent means from Noirtier and her maternal grandparents, she will receive Morrel as her official suitor, and if their relationship progresses, they can marry. Morrel is overwhelmed at this news and he thanks Noirtier deeply and profusely.

Morrel believes he is one step closer to marrying Valentine. Morrel is frustrated that events do not move more quickly, but he is also motivated by conflicting desires. On the one hand, he loves and is devoted to Valentine because of her firmness of moral resolve; he does not want them to elope. On the other, he feels his love quite passionately, and worries that something might happen in the coming days that will make their marriage impossible – that other people might interfere with their happiness somehow.

Barrois, who is overheated from the summer's day, has a drink of the lemonade found in a jug in Noirtier's room. Suddenly, without warning, he falls over of a stroke, similar to that experienced by the Saint-Merans. The same doctor who warned Villefort of **poisoning** before happens to be in the house, tending to Edouard, and so he comes down to care for Barrois, but it is too late—he cannot be saved, and he dies of his seizure. The doctor confirms that the lemonade is poisoned by pouring it onto another chemical tincture, causing it to change color. At this incontrovertible proof, Villefort collapses into a chair, for there is "death in his house."

This is an instance of vengeance that has been misplaced. The poisoner in the home, of course, did not intend to harm the servant Barrois, but instead to kill off Noirtier, who stands in the way of Valentine's marriage and her relationship to the other characters in the Villefort home. Although the reader might suspect that Mme de Villefort is the culprit, since she has much to gain from all these poisonings, Villefort himself remains baffled by the events in his home.

CHAPTER 80 – THE ACCUSATION

In this brief chapter, the doctor continues in his reasoning with Villefort, saying that it must be the case that someone in the house has **poisoned** the Saint-Merans and Barrois, trying, in the latter case, to poison and finally kill Noirtier. The doctor says that the only logical killer is Valentine—that she apparently did not wish to be married, and was disinherited for a time by Noirtier, and so must have been protecting whatever money would be coming her way from both parties. But while Villefort is momentarily swayed by this, he concludes that Valentine cannot be responsible for these murders, for she is too pure a spirit. The doctor leaves, saying he cannot work in that house anymore, as it is a house of death.

A powerful instance of dramatic irony. While the reader may have guessed that Mme de Villefort is the culprit, the doctor seems to understand Valentine as the only logical answer. It is not clear why Valentine, who till this point has exhibited not a single negative emotion, could be a more plausible killer than Mme de Villefort, who seems devoted to her son's happiness above all else (including Valentine's wellbeing), but this is only to say that both the doctor and Villefort are blind to the events that are unfolding right in front of their eyes.

The servants, too, begin to leave, and Villefort wonders what will become of the family. He notes that Valentine is desperately sad at what has taken place, thus confirming that she was not in fact responsible for the death. But at the very close of the chapter, Villefort sees a "thin smile" curl across his wife's lips, and he begins to wonder if it is perhaps Heloise who has been orchestrating the **poisonings** that are ruining his household and threatening its inhabitants.

Finally, Villefort seems to recognize that his wife, and not his daughter, is a more plausible culprit for these crimes. What remains to be seen is how Villefort will deal with the situation. For as he has already demonstrated, Villefort is most devoted to his own reputation, and wishes to defend that first before any other considerations arise, including the wellbeing of those around him.

CHAPTER 81 – THE RETIRED BAKER'S ROOM

Andrea receives his monthly installment from his "father," via the Count, who is managing the income for him by drawing on Danglars' bank. Danglars is convinced that Andrea comes from not one but two rich families, maternal and paternal fortunes both, and so he is growing increasingly willing to marry Eugenie to Andrea. Although the Count appears to be in favor of this match for obscure reasons, he does not wish actually to broker it between Danglars and Andrea.

This is another important yet nearly unnoticeable feature of the Count's behavior during his revenge plot. He does not wish to be the active agent who causes the marriage between Danglars's daughter and Andrea. It's not immediately clear why this is, but as we have seen in the Count's behavior toward Mercedes, it must have something to do with his desire to appear as merely an observer rather than an agent in the vengeance that falls upon the plotters.

Andrea gets word back home that Caderousse has refused his monthly "stipend" of 200 francs. Andrea goes to visit him in his little hut, where he is living as a "retired baker." There, Caderousse says that he has known Danglars and Fernand for many years, although Andrea cannot believe this is true. He says that he wishes to leave Paris, and to do this he needs a nest egg. He asks Andrea to draw a plan of the Count's house for him, which he does—it seems Caderousse is resolved to rob the Count while the Count is at Auteuil. Before Andrea leaves, Caderousse also asks that his monthly allowance be raised to 500 francs, and Andrea grudgingly agrees.

Caderousse has turned from a passive participant in the villainy of others – as during the initial plot against Dantes – to an active plotter himself. He believes that the Count possesses enormous wealth, and he wants some of that wealth. He is willing to do anything he can to grab some of it, even if it means manipulating Andrea into being his accomplice. It seems that a life of crime suits Caderousse after all, and that in Paris he is willing to live out-and-out as a criminal.

CHAPTER 82 – BREAKING AND ENTERING

Monte Cristo does indeed go to Auteuil to try out some horses. There, however, Baptistin informs him that an anonymous letter has arrived saying that the Count's house in Paris is to be burgled that night. The Count wonders if this note isn't a trap designed to murder him instead. Despite this fear, he tells his servants he will be off in the woods, and goes to Paris straightaway that evening, meeting Ali at the door and then changing into the clothes of Abbe Busoni. Upstairs, he meets Caderousse, who with an accomplice waiting outside has tried his best to steal from his former "friend"—although he does not recognize the Count, but instead thinks it is the Abbe from ten years ago.

This is the first time have actually seen the Count transform into the Abbe Busoni. Previously, the novel has strongly implied that they are the same person, but it is with a certain coyness that the narrator shifts between the identities of the Count and the Abbe, as though leaving open the possibility that they might in fact be two separate people. Caderousse, of course, has met the Abbe before, receiving the diamond from him long ago at the inn, and the Count appears to be setting a particular kind of trap for the man he believes to be breaking into his home.

Under duress, Caderousse reveals to the Abbe Busoni that he was released from a work-prison several years ago, because a man named Lord Wilmore wanted to protect his friend in that prison, a boy named Benedetto. Caderousse goes on to say that he has been blackmailing the boy for money in Paris, where the boy now presents himself as Andrea Cavalcanti. He reveals to the "Abbe" that Andrea believes he is in fact the Count's illegitimate son, which is, of course, news to the Count, who has been orchestrating the "paternity" of Andrea and the Major for his own ends.

This is a twist in the plot the Count has set into motion. The Count really does want Andrea to believe that he is in fact the heir to the Major's fortune. But, as it turns out, if Andrea believes he is the heir to the Count's fortune, this would still cause Andrea to believe that he's a wealthy man. This belief would in turn cause Danglars to think that Eugenie is marrying someone of noble blood, if she is indeed to marry Andrea.

Caderousse then attempts to stab and kill the Abbe, but his blade is turned away by a shirt of mail the Count is wearing underneath. The Count then forces Caderousse to sign a letter to Danglars, saying that Andrea is in fact Benedetto, a criminal and no nobleman. The Abbe/Count then lets Caderousse escape, saying that, if Caderousse disappears to Belgium and is never heard from again, the Count will make sure he is provided for with a small salary for the rest of his life.

It is important to note that the Count gives Caderousse a final chance to escape. He does not kill Caderousse, and he even offers to provide for the man when he lives abroad – something between a prison sentence and a funded existence. Caderousse agrees to this, but as he scurries away, he does not account for who might be waiting in the bushes.

To this the coward Caderousse agrees, but as he is trying to escape outside, he is stabbed by his "accomplice," who then runs off into the night, thinking Caderousse dead. Ali and the other servants hear Caderousse outside, seriously injured, and go out to bring him back in.

Caderousse has finally received what readers might feel has been coming to him. But it is important to note that, even now, members of the Count's household attempt to take care of Caderousse, as he is on the verge of death.

CHAPTER 83 – THE HAND OF GOD

While Ali goes out in search of a doctor, the Abbe Busoni tends to the mortally wounded Caderousse. Caderousse asks why the Abbe didn't tell him he could see his accomplice outside, lying in wait to kill him. The Abbe replies that he was waiting for the will of God to be done, and though Caderousse denies that there is anything like God in the world, the Abbe insists that there is, and that it was the Hand of God that resulted in Caderousse's murder. Caderousse then signs another paper, saying he has been hurt by Benedetto while attempting to burgle the Count, and Caderousse says that this Benedetto would indeed have come to murder the Count if given the opportunity.

The Count, disguised here as the Abbe, learns that both Caderousse and Benedetto (or Andrea) had only blood and spoils on their minds. The Abbe makes sure here, as Dantes/the Count has done throughout the novel, to acquire written proof of a statement, which he can then use against the assailant at a later time. This proof helps the Count to build the moral justification for his revenge, which, he believes, carries out the divine will for vengeance against the aggressor, Caderousse.

Caderousse wonders who this mad Abbe can be who is more concerned with exacting revenge than with giving relief to a man on the verge of death. Caderousse wonders if he is really an Abbe at all, and in looking more closely at the Count, he realizes he is the same man as Lord Wilmore, whom he has seen from afar back in the days of the prison work-colony. The Count encourages him to go back still further, at which point, on the verge of death, Caderousse realizes it is in fact Edmond Dantes standing above him. And at this realization, Caderousse says that there is in fact a God, that his soul has been damned, and that he will now die—which he promptly does. Ali comes in to find the Abbe praying over the body of the dead man.

At the very moment of his death, Caderousse is the first character in the novel to recognize the Count for who he really is. Caderousse also understands that Dantes is the only man in the world who could be justified, he thinks, in allowing him to die. Thus, despite his years of criminality following the murders of La Carconte and the jeweler, at his dying moment Caderousse reverts to a more morally-aware state, as he was in the beginning of the novel. He knows now that he deserves the punishment that is being inflicted upon him.

CHAPTER 84 – BEAUCHAMP

Beauchamp visits Albert after their agreed-upon three weeks have passed, and reveals that he has spent these three weeks traveling out to Janina and back, to see whether there is any truth in the story touching on the reputation of his friend's family. Albert is anxious to hear the news, and Beauchamp breaks it as gently as he can, and as a friend: that it is in fact true that Fernand betrayed the Ali Pasha to the Turks for "two thousand purses" and took that money to buy his title in Paris and establish his initial fortune.

Beauchamp has done the work that is necessary to verify his information. He is a punctilious man, and not unlike the Count in this regard, although Beauchamp is motivated only by a desire for knowledge of the truth, and not for vengeance. Nevertheless, Beauchamp understands that this information will come as a great blow to Albert, who is proud of his father and his family name.

Albert is dumbstruck at this news and does what he can to control himself as he thinks of a next step. Beauchamp implies that perhaps the Danglars family has been involved in this, hoping to discredit the marriage between Albert and Eugenie, and Albert does in fact relay that Eugenie and Andrea appear to be more or less officially engaged. Beauchamp suggests that the two go for a walk and check in on the Count, who is so good, Beauchamp says, at raising the spirits of those who are in need of help.

It is to Albert's credit that he does not immediately lose his temper at Beauchamp, despite the latter being the bearer of truly horrible news. Both Beauchamp and Albert seem inherently to trust the Count, whom they believe to be a wise and fair judge of all things. Thus Albert, perhaps without even acknowledging it, believes the Count to be his ally in this affair.

CHAPTER 85 – THE JOURNEY

When the two men reach the Count, they do not tell him what has happened, although the Count can sense that Albert is out of sorts. At this, the Count suggests that Albert travel with him, this time to Normandy, where he has just bought a house and a boat. Bertuccio has previously arranged for post horses to be available all along the way so the Count can reach his home in eight hours. Albert thinks over this proposal for a while, and at the thought of spending time with his friend the Count by the seaside, he agrees.

To this end, Albert agrees to go away with the Count. Although very little of their time together is described, it is another of the moments when the Count disappears from the narrative for a while. This happened previously when Dantes first came upon the gold of Monte Cristo, and was moving about Marseille in a variety of disguises, paying visits to places he remembered from his youth.

The Count and Albert set off that night, while Beauchamp stays back in Paris to mind the newspaper for any further news about Fernand. For three days, Albert delights in the hunting and fishing of the Normandy home, and the Count believes that some good is indeed coming to Albert there. But on the third day, one of Mercedes' footmen reaches Albert at the Normandy home, saying that a piece has run in another newspaper, not run by Beauchamp, clarifying that the "Fernand" of the previous story of the Ali Pasha is indeed Albert's father. Albert asks the Count and Ali for post-horses right away so he might travel back to Paris and see to his distraught mother, about whom he is deeply worried.

It seems that Albert and Beauchamp cannot prevent the knowledge of Fernand's deceit from coming out. The preparations the Count has made for his travel are a somewhat curious development in the text. As far as the novel is concerned, this house in Normandy is no longer important, and it appears that the Count has purchased it solely as a retiring-place for Albert – as though the Count had expected precisely this public humiliation of the Morcerf family.

CHAPTER 86 – JUDGMENT IS PASSED

Albert heads directly to the office of Beauchamp, who has been in Paris the last three days and followed the events closely. First Beauchamp visited the competing newspaper that ran the story connecting Fernand de Morcerf to the Ali Pasha incident—they confirmed that they had documentation supporting the event. Then Beauchamp went to the Upper House of the Chamber of Deputies, where Morcerf was called upon to defend himself.

Although Morcerf's occupation was previously that of a soldier, at the present time he is a member of the political and ruling class in Paris, something of a gentleman-politician. For this reason, then, it is of the utmost importance that he publicly argues that he is not a treacherous and bloodthirsty individual, as these newspaper accounts claim.

Morcerf requests that a commission be set up to adjudicate these claims, and the commission quickly comes into power, gathering information that day and meeting again that night. Morcerf defends himself, as Beauchamp reports to Albert, but he cannot produce a witness to say he was indeed faithful to the Ali Pasha until the end. At this, a witness against Fernand is announced—Haydee herself, the daughter of the Ali Pasha, and the Count's slave.

Finally Haydee is granted an opportunity to tell her story publicly, just as she has told part of her story to Albert in the Count's home on the Champs-Elysees. Here, the crowd seems at rapt attention, waiting for this mysterious woman to speak. Since Haydee's debut in Paris society, she has only sat quietly beside the Count at public functions.

Haydee recounts for the Chamber of Deputies the story she told Albert several chapters before, in which she witnessed Fernand's treachery in selling over the Ali Pasha to the Turks to enrich himself. This story, which Haydee tells passionately and which accords with the independent and mysterious evidence the rival newspaper has received, prompts Fernand to flee the Chamber in anguish. The remaining members vote for him to be convicted of high treason, for going against the Greeks and consorting with the Turks, and Haydee walks very calmly out of the building, having exacted, as she says, revenge for the murder of her beloved father.

Haydee believes that she has fulfilled her own plot of vengeance – she has avenged her father's death, after having been granted an opportunity to plead her case at the Chamber of Deputies. This vengeance of Haydee's coincides, of course, with the vengeance of the Count, who also wishes for Fernand to be punished, although for a different crime – the crime of plotting against Dantes. This shared satisfaction in vengeance is yet another bond that unites the Count and Haydee.

CHAPTER 87 – PROVOCATION

Infuriated, Morcerf says that he must go to the man who set all these things in motion. He asks Beauchamp if he knows who could have planted the story at the rival paper, and Beauchamp says that during his trip to Janina, he heard that an emissary of Danglars' was there just two weeks previously. Albert is instantly convinced that Danglars is behind the attack on his father's name, and he goes to Danglars' house to confront him.

Albert finds himself angry at the man who once plotted, along with his own father Fernand, to put Dantes in prison. The Count, though not directly involved in any of this activity, has nevertheless made it so that the families of the plotters have turned against each other. Now, it seems, the Count's desire to stay out of active roles in these machinations makes more sense: he wants the other characters to avenge themselves on each other, as if he's entirely uninvolved.

In front of Andrea, who is standing in the main receiving room, Albert challenges Danglars to admit to his wrongdoing against Fernand. Danglars says that it was really nothing personal, that he was only checking up on the family of the man who wished to marry his only daughter—and that, at any rate, he was encouraged to take this investigative step by the Count. Albert immediately puts together the Count's role in this (living with Haydee, and ensuring that Albert and Haydee could meet and talk) and vows to Beauchamp to confront the Count before returning to Danglars.

In an intriguing turn, Danglars indicates that his investigation into Albert's family was not entirely of his own initiative, and that the Count really is involved in the machinations from which he's tried so hard to absent himself. Albert feels betrayed by a friend to whom he was devoted, and thus his dueling impulse has moved from Beauchamp, then to Danglars, and finally to the man to whom he's closest: the Count.

CHAPTER 88 – THE INSULT

Albert goes to the Count's home, but the Count is bathing and then napping before the opera. Albert quickly goes home to see his mother, who is devastated by Fernand's social reversals. Albert tells Mercedes he has realized that the Count never eats in the home of his sworn enemies, thus explaining why he took no food at the Morcerfs' July party, despite Mercedes' urging. At this, Albert tells his mother he is off to meet the Count at the opera to challenge him to a duel.

Finally, Albert has put together the fact that the Count is not exactly his friend. Instead, the Count believes that he has a blood-feud with the Morcerf family, and Albert recognizes that what he thought was a friendship was, in fact, a sham. This raises an interesting moral question: is it fair or "just" for the Count to have misled Albert in order to exact revenge on Albert's father?

At the opera, Albert and Beauchamp find the Count in his box. Albert challenges him to a duel, says that Beauchamp will be his second, and declares that they will meet the next morning before 10 am. The Count, sitting with Maximilien in the box, says that it is all a matter of "perfect indifference" to him, that he will win the duel regardless of the time or instrument. Beauchamp, shocked, conveys this information back to Albert, and Morrel asks the Count in private if he really believes that he is on the right side. The Count says that this is indeed the case, that they will absolutely win, and Morrel agrees to be his second. Morrel says he will also ask Emmanuel to join them the next morning at seven, before meeting Albert in the forest at eight.

The Count, as is characteristic of him, appears to have no concern whatsoever about his ability to win the duel. This faith in his abilities seems to be a more pronounced version of that same skill he demonstrated many years ago as the first mate on the Pharaon, *and then again in prison, under the tutelage of the Abbe Faria. Although the Count feels it would not necessarily be a good thing to wound or kill Albert, he, like Albert, knows that a gentleman must participate in a duel if he is called to do so.*

CHAPTER 89 – NIGHT

Mercedes visits the Count that evening, and all of a sudden, in a burst of emotion, she becomes the first character to announce that the Count is indeed Edmond Dantes. She calls him Edmond, announces that she still loves him, that she has dreamed of him for years, and that her life has been one of complete sorrow since the day of his imprisonment. She asks why Dantes wishes to bring vengeance on Albert, and the Count explains, through tears and anguish, that he vowed revenge on Fernand, and that this revenge will be visited "on the children as far as three or four generations."

This is one of the most dramatic scenes in the novel, and the emotional climax of the Count's time in Paris. Mercedes has finally admitted to what the reader has suspected all along: that she understands the Count to have been Dantes. The Count, for his part, is allowed the fullest description of his desire for revenge in this section, explaining just how emotionally resonant this revenge will be for him after his years in prison.

The Count goes on to tell Mercedes that Fernand is one of the men responsible for his false imprisonment, and he shows her the piece of paper he ripped out of the book of the inspector of prisons years ago, demonstrating the vile plot that landed him in Chateau D'If. Mercedes begs the Count to exact his revenge, but to do it on the right party—on Fernand, and on her even, for not being strong enough to wait for him. But she asks that he spare Albert. Although the Count is at first unwavering, he finally says that, out of love for Mercedes, he will spare Albert.

Mercedes raises an important point, one that begins to clarify for the Count the limits of his vengeance. For it is in fact true that Albert has done nothing but be friends with the Count. He has shown him around Paris, and has not sought to inquire about the Count's family, the origins of his money, or his reasons for wanting to come to the capital. The Count has been blind all along to the fact that Albert truly is an innocent party.

At this Mercedes thanks him, telling him that this act of grace reminds her of the Edmond Dantes she used to know. She leaves quickly, and the Count, for the first time in the novel, has been frustrated in the careful arrangement of his plans, his every move designed to result in punishment for those parties connected to his false imprisonment. He regrets that his love for Mercedes has gotten in the way of his desire to kill Albert, and he vows that instead *he* must die, since it would be his shame not to achieve revenge in the manner he'd intended.

This is an emotional turning-point for the Count. His desire for perfect vengeance has run up against his desire to protect the memory of his love for Mercedes, and the life of the woman Mercedes has become. He concedes that Mercedes is correct, that Albert truly is innocent, and that he would be wrong to harm an innocent person in order to wound his criminal father. Thus, as with Old and Young Morrel before him, the Count feels his only choice is to take his own life.

CHAPTER 90 – THE ENCOUNTER

The Count stays up the entire night, ruminating on his plan. He will fight the duel with Albert but allow Albert to kill him, thus preserving his honor while also doing what Mercedes asks—preserving the life of her son. That night he adds a codicil to his will, leaving large amounts of land to Haydee and his money at **Monte Cristo** to Maximilien Morrel. He then rides with Morrel to the dueling spot, where he meets Debray, Beauchamp, and, eventually, Albert in preparation for the duel.

In this way, the Count will not appear to have taken his own life, and will grant Albert the opportunity to prove his own honor in killing the Count. The Count also indicates that Haydee and Maximilien are to be his heirs. This is the first time in the novel he's done this officially, although it's been clear for some time that he considers Haydee and Maximilien to be like members of his family.

Albert, however, asks everyone to join together, and announces that there has been a change: he has learned that the Count is not only fighting the duel because of Albert's provocation of the previous night, but also because of Fernand's treachery of many years before, in which he stole Mercedes away from the Count. The Count can barely believe his ears, but he thanks Mercedes in his heart for telling Albert this ignoble fact about his father, thus saving the Count's and Albert's life and preventing the duel. The Count takes this as further affirmation of divine providence: that there is in fact a plan for him, that he is meant to be an "avenging angel" and to punish those who have wronged him, but not Albert, who is, in this grander scheme of the plot against Dantes, innocent of a crime.

Mercedes' work, it turns out, was not done. In tipping off Albert to the fact that he would have been fighting a duel under false pretenses, Mercedes has managed to preserve the Count's life and honor, and her son's life and honor. Although there are not many moments in the text in which Mercedes is allowed to take center stage, this is one of them. Without her involvement, it's clear that violence and death would have befallen at least one, and perhaps both, the proposed combatants in this duel. Her love for her son and for Dantes wins out over their misplaced desires for vengeance.

CHAPTER 91 – MOTHER AND SON

Albert returns to the Rue de Helder, where he prepares to leave France behind. His seconds recommend this course because they feel Albert's name will be linked with cowardice in Paris, for avoiding the duel; but his friends also don't know the extent to which his father's name has been publicly damaged. Albert takes stock of some of the items in his apartment he might need, then heads over to his mother's rooms, avoiding his father, and noting that Mercedes too is packing a few small items to take with her in flight.

Although Albert has been spared the dishonor of avoiding the duel, he still has his father's dishonor to deal with. The only acceptable method, he fears, is to leave Paris entirely. His mother, of course, feels the same way, and so they will not have to do this fleeing alone. Rather, they can join forces as they leave Fernand with his shame in Paris.

Albert says initially that he cannot bring his mother along with him, that his current course is his alone: but at this a carriage drives up, and Bertuccio hands Albert a letter from the Count, in which the Count asks that Albert look after his mother. For this purpose, the Count offers the money he initially had buried outside his father's apartment in Marseille, 150 francs from the initial voyage of the *Pharaon*. In a dramatic gesture, Mercedes accepts this money from the Count, telling Albert she will use it to "pay her dowry" and enter a convent, thus living a life of peace away from Paris.

Although Mercedes never admits it straightaway, she seems to acknowledge that she ought to have entered a convent when she thought Dantes was dead. Mercedes cannot forgive herself for what she believes was her weakness in marrying Fernand, even though this seems unfair to her: she really did believe that Dantes was dead or languishing in prison forever. But now, she feels she can make amends for a "mistake" of her youth.

CHAPTER 92 – SUICIDE

As Albert and Mercedes prepare to leave for another country, Fernand heads to the house of the Count of Monte Cristo. There he demands information as to why Albert did not duel with the Count. The Count replies that, of course, his fight is with Fernand, and that he knows all of Fernand's sins. Fernand demands to know the Count's true identity—not Lord Wilmore, nor Sinbad the Sailor—and the Count says he must punish Fernand for stealing his fiancée, Mercedes. Fernand screams out: Edmond Dantes! And then, taking a cab back to his home, he locks himself in his bedroom and commits suicide. Albert and Mercedes leave without so much as a word for him.

The Count has by now revealed his true identity to three people: Caderousse, Mercedes, and now Fernand. Fernand, like Caderousse, sees the Count as an instrument of divine vengeance, and believes that Dantes has every right to seek revenge after what the plotters have done to his life. Fernand's suicide thus acknowledges his own guilt and, according to the customs of the time, allows Fernand to "exit" French society with at least some modicum of honor intact. It would be more dishonorable for Fernand to continue to live in a society that has labeled him a traitor.

CHAPTER 93 – VALENTINE

Maximilien Morrel, fresh from the aborted duel, goes to visit Valentine at the Villefort home, where she announces that she has decided that finally she and Noirtier will move out together into their own quarters. Mme Danglars and Eugenie visit Mme de Villefort to announce that Eugenie will be marrying Andrea Cavalcanti, and though Eugenie says she does not wish to marry at all, she says it is at least better that she marry Andrea than a man disgraced.

This is another instance of dramatic irony, for the reader understands that Andrea himself is an imposter, and as previous events in the novel have indicated, it seems only a matter of time until Andrea's past is also brought to light. Eugenie is a fascinating character, one who attempts to make her own life in a society where this kind of independence for women is rarely possible.

Valentine has been feeling faint and unwell, and she tells Maximilien that Noirtier has prescribed to her the same potion that he drinks in large quantities, as a medicine for his own condition. This same potion is what the doctor formerly described as a **poison** which, in preparatory doses, can be used actually to *prevent* poisoning, if one builds up resistance to it slowly. Coming to pay respects to the Danglars, Valentine excuses herself, falls ill again, and collapses in another room near Noirtier and Morrel, who immediately call for help.

For many chapters the groundwork has seemingly been laid for Valentine's poisoning. Although it has not been stated explicitly that Mme de Villefort is the poisoner, it always seemed unlikely that Valentine was the culprit. Now that Valentine has fallen ill, this gives even more credence to the idea that it is Mme de Villefort who is to blame. The question now is the emergency of Valentine's condition, and whether she will be able to survive this sickness.

CHAPTER 94 – A CONFESSION

Villefort calls on the doctor who had warned him about the **poisoning** in his family, and after hearing that it is Valentine who has now fallen ill—Valentine whom the doctor initially suspected of the crime—he agrees to help Villefort in finding the true criminal. The doctor arrives at the Villefort home and questions Noirtier, who admits in his sign-language to having prepared Valentine by administering to her protective doses of brucine, the poison, in order to inoculate her against possible attack. The doctor thanks Noirtier for saving Valentine's life.

The doctor discovers practice the method that, long ago, the Count discussed with Mme de Villefort. Noirtier, in his wisdom, saw that Valentine was going to be a target of poisoning in the home, and so he used a small amount of poison to build up Valentine's tolerance, allowing her to suffer larger doses without immediately succumbing to them. The doctor recognizes how clever and compassionate Noirtier's care for Valentine has been.

In parallel, Maximilien runs to the house of the Count, begging him for help, since there is a murderer in the Villefort house. Morrel finally admits to the Count that he is in love with and wishes to marry Valentine. As devoted as the Count is to Morrel, this harms his plan, for the Count has sworn vengeance against Villefort and calls Valentine the child of a "dangerous breed." At this, however, the Count says he will ponder what best to do. After the doctor has finished checking up on Valentine and realizes that she will survive this **poisoning** attack, the narrator relates that the Abbe Busoni has purchased the house next to the Villeforts, the house whose garden Morrel has tended as a way of courting Valentine.

This is another complication to the Count's plan. The Count wants to elevate Young Morrel, to name him as his son and heir, as indicated in previous chapters. But if Maximilien is joined to the Villefort family, the Count finds himself in a conundrum, for he wants to destroy the Villeforts. With this said, however, the episode with Albert and Mercedes has helped him to separate the innocent from the guilty, even within a family. Thus, after much thought, he seems open to the possibility that he can disentangle helping Valentine from harming Villefort.

CHAPTER 95 – FATHER AND DAUGHTER

Eugenie requests a formal meeting with Danglars, in whom she confides that she no longer wishes to marry anyone, especially Andrea Cavalcanti, who seems fine enough to her but has no charm beyond his bare good looks. Danglars, for his part, says that he largely respects Eugenie's wishes, but says that he is ruined financially, and that he needs the capital Andrea can provide in order to guarantee his current loans and speculate on a railway with other investors. He asks Eugenie to go through the motions of signing the contract and marrying Andrea so that this loan and his good name can be secured.

This is the first acknowledgment Danglars makes about his financial situation. For many chapters, it has seemed that Danglars has sustained heavy losses on the markets, but he has not yet admitted that these losses are more than he can bear. The Count, then, has succeeded in eroding the Baron's fortunes, forcing the Baron to look for other avenues for wealth – including a marriage to Andrea, whom he believes to be a nobleman.

Eugenie agrees to this, although she insists that she has her own secret plan, which she will not divulge to her father and that will not, she insists, interrupt his plan for obtaining the loan from Andrea. Danglars seems to appreciate this negotiation on Eugenie's part, and they shake hands before Eugenie readies herself to visit the Villeforts with her mother.

Danglars seems to respect a certain kind of financial negotiation, as Eugenie has offered her father here. Eugenie seems to know this as well, and so has given herself some bargaining room as she figures out what to do with the idea of a potential marital match to Andrea.

CHAPTER 96 – THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT

Andrea presents himself at the house of the Count, where he announces, proudly, that he is officially to be married to Eugenie, and that he will have his own money invested in the railways on which Danglars seems to be betting enormously in the financial markets. Andrea thanks the Count for arranging his marriage to Eugenie, but at this the Count insists that he did nothing at all to arrange the match—that actually Andrea has done it all, as has Eugenie, of private accord, and that the Count has been merely a spectator. Although Andrea is surprised at this refusal by the Count, he nevertheless asks that the Count join the signing ceremony for the contract at the Danglars' in a few hours, to which the Count assents.

Once again the Count makes it clear that he feels he has done nothing to make this match, that he has only observed it as it has unfolded. Of course, the reader knows that this is not the case, as he has helped to build up Andrea's reputation in Paris by giving him the identity of a Cavalcanti. The Count has also helped to punish Danglars by manipulating the market and causing him enormous financial losses, thus putting him in a position to require a marriage to Andrea in the first place. But all this has occurred behind the scenes.

At the signing ceremony, Danglars proudly presents Eugenie, who has assented to the marriage and signed the contract. But the Count points out that he's just received word from a servant that a cloak was found at his house—the very same cloak that Andrea/Benedetto leant to Caderousse for use in the burglary at the Count's mansion. In this cloak is a letter addressed to Danglars, although only the salutation is readable.

Again, the Count has arranged matters so that the truth will come out at the worst possible moment. His revenge plot against Danglars has come to full fruition: Danglars is dependent upon the perceived wealth of Andrea in order to save his family, and at this moment Andrea will be revealed to in fact be the hardened criminal Benedetto.

At this, Andrea disappears from the room, only to be sought after by gendarmes who have visited the Danglars' home to arrest him. They charge him with the murder of Caderousse, assert that Andrea's real name is Benedetto, and allege that he and Caderousse met at a prison work colony years ago where they were both inmates. The Count can barely control his satisfaction as Danglars suffers ruinous humiliation, much like Fernand's, in front of the entire gathered party of Parisian society. Needless to say, the marriage to Eugenie is no longer to take place. Andrea has disappeared, and the gendarmes go outside to look for him and bring him to prison.

Like Fernand, Danglars realizes there is nothing he can do. He has been ruined on the market, and now his reputation is in tatters. The Count has achieved the third of his four revenges at this point, although Danglars's plot-threads will continue for some time, as Danglars attempts to flee his creditors and maintain some kind of name for himself in France. But the Count knows that in Parisian society, this kind of embarrassment is essentially a death sentence. There is nothing Danglars can do now to restore his good name in the community.

CHAPTER 97 – THE ROAD FOR BELGIUM

After the commotion has taken place, Danglars and his wife lock themselves in their separate chambers, and Eugenie, with her friend Louise, imagines what to do next. When Louise asks if Eugenie is okay, however, Eugenie replies that she has a plan—she has had a plan for some days, and it involves her and Louise escaping together as a pair. Eugenie shears her hair and says she will dress as a man and accompany Louise to Belgium with what money they can grab. They will live together as partners and musicians, thus earning money to survive.

Eugenie's relationship with Louise has, over the course of the novel, seemed like a particularly intense friendship. But here, according to the standards of the time in which the novel is set, Eugenie seems to declare that she seeks a romantic relationship with Louise, who is amenable to it. This is an additional change of identity in the novel, from the heterosexual marriage expected of a young woman to a different form of romantic partnership.

Louise is shocked at the plan but agrees, as she is devoted to her friend Eugenie and they both spurn the idea of marriage to men. They order a cart, make their way out of the house and down toward Fontainebleau, then go out on the main road to Belgium, from which time, the narrator asserts, Danglars "has a daughter no longer."

Danglars has not only lost his wealth and his good name, but he has physically lost the daughter on whom he hoped to stake his reputation, through a marriage to Andrea. Danglars will soon find himself completely alone in the novel, just as Fernand did.

CHAPTER 98 – THE INN OF THE BELL AND BOTTLE

Andrea heads away from Paris in a mail coach as fast as he can, and winds up at an inn called the Bell and Bottle. There, he orders a room in the dress of a common bourgeois and makes a plan for the following day: he will move out into the countryside, rent a small shack or room from a peasant, and avoid contact with people as much as is possible. He wakes early in the morning to head out into the countryside.

Andrea, a hunted criminal, does all he can to escape the authorities, although he seems to know that his days are numbered. If he can escape the prying eyes of society, he might be able to live on his own, and to assume yet another identity as a man of the countryside. But it is unlikely that such disappearance will be possible with the police on his trail.

But when he does this, he notices that the inn is swarming with gendarmes. Alarmed, Andrea climbs up onto the roof, then tumbles down and hides in a room of the inn. There, to his surprise, he finds Eugenie and Louise, with Eugenie traveling as a man. Andrea believes, much to the girls' laughter, that they have followed him to the inn because Eugenie is still in love with him. Out of a mixture of condescension and basic fellow-feeling, they tell him to run, but he steps outside and is caught by the gendarmes to be taken back to Paris and tried. This allows Louise and Eugenie to continue their escape to Belgium later that day, as the commotion of the arrest of Andrea has caused enough of a distraction for them to sneak away.

It is another of the novel's coincidences that Andrea and Eugenie wind up fleeing to the same inn. But Eugenie and Louise manage to maintain their low profile and to escape to Belgium, whereas Andrea, even though Eugenie tries to help him, will be caught by the authorities. This is an instance in the text where characters appear to receive their just desserts: Andrea, the criminal, will have trouble escaping the law, whereas Eugenie, who has only ever wanted her independence, is able to fight for it and gain it on her own terms.

CHAPTER 99 – THE LAW

The Baroness Danglars, unsure what to do with herself and believing that Eugenie and Danglars are both locked in their rooms, first goes to visit Debray. But she finds him out at the club, and so later that day she goes instead to the Villefort home, where she is greeted with suspicion by the servants before finally being allowed into Villefort's study. There, the two old friends and former lovers speak to each other about Benedetto, though they do not know the truth of that man's identity and relation to them.

Baroness Danglars and Villefort are still connected to one another, and indeed appear to care for one another, based on the events that befell them so many years ago. Here, however, they are unsure of what to do next, for it seems that the hands of fate are upon them, making it so that their perfectly-ordered lives are falling to pieces before their eyes.

Nevertheless, the Baroness pleads her case on behalf of Benedetto, saying that, if he is a murderer, he is also deserving of some mercy on behalf of the law. But Villefort says he can do no such thing, that he must try Benedetto for his crimes as an agent of the law, and that Benedetto must answer for what he has done wrong—that it is not for men to get in the way of divine, moral ruling. At this, a servant comes in saying that Benedetto/Andrea has been captured in an inn on the road to Belgium, and that he is being brought back to Paris to be put in jail, awaiting trial.

Villefort seems to believe that, despite the chaos in his own home, he must still attempt to carry out his job to the best of his ability. This means, of course, trying Benedetto, who is a criminal and who was posing under a false identity in order to win the hand of Eugenie Danglars. But both the Baroness and Villefort appear to sense that this trial could have disastrous consequences for them, even if they're not quite sure what those consequences might be.

CHAPTER 100 – THE APPARITION

The narrator moves to Valentine, who has been recuperating in her room at the Villefort home. One night, when Valentine is lying between sleep and wakefulness, the Count (who, as the Abbe, has recently purchased the land next door) comes out of the shadows in her room. He tells her not to fear, that he has been protecting her in the home for the sake of Maximilien Morrel.

In the case of Valentine, the Count has turned from an avenging angel to a protector. He sees Valentine as a part of Young Morrel's family, and so the Count has committed himself to making sure that she will suffer no more harm at the hands of the phantom poisoner.

At this Valentine is confused and afraid, for she believes she was naturally sickened by some disease and not **poisoned**. But the Count convinces her that she has fallen ill of the same ailment that killed her grandparents, and he reminds her that Noirtier had asked her to drink the same drink he himself had been prescribed by the doctor. The Count reveals he has been providing her with another draught of this red potion, designed to counteract any possible poison that might be put into her food or drink. When Valentine asks who in the house could be doing this harm, the Count retreats into the shadows and tells Valentine to pay attention, for the criminal is about to attempt once more act of violence against Valentine.

This is another instance of poison as a substance used to protect, rather than to harm. It is striking to think that Valentine really believes she is merely sick, and not that she has been poisoned as the other members of her family have. This points either to Valentine's goodness or to her naivete, for she is unwilling to accept that someone in her family actually wants to harm her. The Count allows Valentine to see that she is indeed the victim of a crime, and that the Count must therefore do all he can to whisk her away from the family home.

CHAPTER 101 – LOCUSTA

Valentine heeds the Count's advice and pretends to be asleep while the **poisoner** comes into her room that evening, ostensibly to give her more of a "healing draught" of medicine. It is Valentine's stepmother, Heloise, and she appears to be holding something else in her hand—perhaps a dagger, as the Count warned her, in case the poison doesn't "finish the job."

Finally, both the reader and Valentine receive visual evidence of the fact that Mme de Villefort is the poisoner. This is perhaps no surprise to anyone reading the novel, but it is still an immense surprise to Valentine, who has been unwilling to ascribe ill intent to her stepmother.

Valentine stays still and her stepmother leaves. Within minutes, the Count returns silently to the room and tells Valentine that she must follow his advice exactly so that she lives. Valentine agrees to this, and the Count says he will protect her because she means the world to Maximilien, and because the Count adores Morrel and Valentine as if they were his children. Although Valentine cannot believe that her stepmother would want to disinherit Valentine and kill her to provide for Edouard, the Count chalks this up to Valentine's innate goodness. He gives her a pill, one of his patented mixtures of hashish and opium, to help her sleep, and he asks for her total obedience and consent as he figures out a way to remove her safely from the Villefort home.

This begins perhaps one of the most unbelievable of the chain of events in the text. The Count, using the hashish-opium potion he introduced to Franz way back on the island of Monte Cristo, will in fact pretend that Valentine has died. He will make it seem that she is dead, when really she is only in what we would now call a medically-induced coma. Readers of today might find this plot outlandish, since surely people would know if Valentine were in a coma rather than dead. But medicine of the time was in its experimental and growing stages, and this kind of staged death is not so strange as it would be now.

CHAPTER 102 – VALENTINE

The drug the Count has given to Valentine makes it appear as though she is dead—she is so thoroughly sedated that her arm hangs over the counterpane of the bed and there is "blue at the base of her fingernails." That evening, Mme de Villefort peeks into Valentine's room to see that she is dead, and is convinced this is the case. The next day, when a servant cannot wake Valentine, Villefort calls for the doctor, who proclaims that Valentine is dead just as Maximilien arrives, worried about Valentine (although he has been reassured by the Count that she will be safe). The doctor takes away a phial containing some liquid into which, he believes, a new **poison**—not the typical brucine—has been poured.

The Count must spend the short remainder of the novel convincing Young Morrel that he must hope for the best. But Young Morrel, from his perspective, has watched his beloved die. And like other characters in the novel who have suffered unfathomable setbacks – Fernand, Danglars, even Dantes in prison – Young Morrel wishes to be able to commit suicide, rather than to live with the pain of Valentine's death. The Count must then find a way to keep Morrel alive long enough to see that Valentine's death is only a ruse. (The Count seems to be unwilling to make the obvious choice of simply telling *Morrel that Valentine's death is a ruse, however, as that would ruin his dramatic reveal.)*

CHAPTER 103 – MAXIMILIEN

Maximilien flies into a hysterical rage on hearing the news that his intended, Valentine, is dead. He does this in the presence of Villefort, the doctor, and Noirtier. When Villefort and the doctor ask who Morrel is, and why he has been admitted to the house in which the murder has taken place, Morrel asks Noirtier to confirm that he, Morrel, was engaged to Valentine before her death, and that he loved her dearly.

Young Morrel is finally able to reveal to Villefort that he has been in love with Valentine all along, and that the two were to be married. Although Young Morrel believes that Valentine has already died, this admission of their love feels like a victory for him, a confirmation that their love, while it lasted, was real.

Maximilien tells Villefort that he must find and prosecute the murderer to the fullest extent of the law. At first Villefort wonders if he will have the strength to do this—for this is the fourth person murdered by **poisoning** in his house over the last four months. But Morrel demands that he do so, for the sake of his daughter whom he loved, and Villefort agrees. At this, Noirtier indicates that Morrel and the doctor should leave the room, that Noirtier would like to tell Villefort who the murderer is. Villefort agrees, and after fifteen minutes he joins the other two outside, asking that he be permitted three days to deal with the murderer in a manner he sees fit. The men agree.

The reader understands at this point that Noirtier has told his son that his own wife is the supposed murderer of Valentine (for everyone in the book except for the Count and Valentine believes her to be dead). The reader then knows what Villefort knows, even though this has not been acknowledged openly, and what remains to be seen is the manner by which Villefort will address the criminal. Will he seek revenge against her? Will he try her publicly, in open court, and for all to see?

Villefort asks the doctor to fetch the closest abbe who can stand by and bless the body, and the doctor finds the next-door neighbor Abbe Busoni, who, when everyone else leaves, kneels down beside the bed of Valentine. Everyone else in the home, including the doctor, concludes that she is no longer living, although Abbe Busoni knows otherwise.

The identity of the Abbe Busoni is thus an immensely useful one for the Count, as it allows him to remain present at Valentine's side while others might take on different duties regarding the funeral. This identity has proved invaluable to the Count, as it has also encouraged characters to confess some of their innermost and darkest secrets.

CHAPTER 104 – THE SIGNATURE OF BARON DANGLARS

The funeral for Valentine commences, and the narrator shifts his attention to a commercial interaction between the Baron Danglars and the Count, who spots him outside his home. The Count says he would like to take up the balance of his initially-requested credit with the Baron, for a sum of 5 million francs, assuming that the Baron has it on hand. The Baron pretends that this is no issue, that he will be able to cash out the receipts the Count holds; but when the Count heads to the Bank of France with these receipts, the Baron is met by Boville, the former inspector of prisons, who is collecting money for a charity hospice.

The Count wishes to allow himself the joy of collecting a final amount of money from Danglars that Danglars himself is unable to pay out. This is a mirror and an opposite to the scene far earlier in the text, when the Count, as Lord Wilmore, offers Old Morrel sufficient money to remain open and in business. The Count seems to delight just as much, if not more, in viewing the financial ruin of one family as the financial security of another.

It turns out that this hospice also has 5 million francs drawn on the Baron. This rather complex set of banking conversations reduces to the simple fact that the Baron does not have enough money to cover his debts. He is, in fact, bankrupt. The Count of course knows this, but Boville does not yet, and so the Baron tries to maintain his composure with him during their conversation. He tells Boville, headed to the funeral, that he himself will not be going, that he must instead go back to the office. At home, Danglars takes his remaining funds (about 50,000 francs) and his passport and prepares to leave the country as his daughter Eugenie has just done, presumably to avoid financial ruin.

Fernand has committed suicide rather than accept public humiliation for the treachery he engaged in overseas. Caderousse has died, not being given the option to atone for his past crimes, after the Count determined that he was fundamentally beyond redemption. But Danglars tries to take his chances abroad, figuring that if he escapes Paris, he at least has a chance of speculating whatever money he retains in another market, with the hope of regaining some of what he's lost.

CHAPTER 105 – THE PERE LACHAISE CEMETERY

The Count heads to Pere Lachaise where the funeral is taking place, and finds Maximilien off to the side of the funeral ceremony itself, overcome with grief. The Count then follows Morrel back to the home of Julie and Emmanuel, and his fears are justified, for as he walks into Morrel's room unannounced, he finds the young soldier drafting a suicide note. The Count begs Morrel not to do this, but Morrel insists that without Valentine, life is no longer worth living.

The Count realizes the effect that his ruse with Valentine will have on Young Morrel. And though he wants to tell Morrel the plot he has concocted, he also wants to make sure this plot can succeed. Thus, to protect Maximilien, he asks only that the young man promise him to hold off on the thought of suicide for some time.

To stay his hand, the Count blurts out that he is Edmond Dantes, and that he is the man responsible for saving Old Morrel exactly ten years ago when that man was afraid he would become bankrupt. Julie and Emmanuel come upstairs, but the Count asks Morrel to reveal only that he is the benefactor, not that he is Edmond Dantes. His reasons for this discretion are unclear.

The Count has, by now, revealed his identity to Mercedes, Caderousse, and Fernand. He reveals it here to try to convince Morrel that he has a plan in place to help him – that he is not simply a man of society in Paris, but a person with a deep connection to the Morrel family, going back to their days in Marseille.

Although Maximilien is unwilling to hear it, the Count begs him to wait one more month for a vaguely-defined "miracle" to take place, for which Morrel will be grateful that he did not kill himself. Morrel is deeply opposed to this idea, as he worries about hoping for Valentine's return and then being disappointed when she remains gone. But the Count begs him to continue hoping, and he asks that Morrel move in with him on the Champs-Elysees, as Haydee has left the house as part of the Count's preparations for leaving France in one month.

The Count introduces what will become the guiding refrain of the final sections of the book: Hope and Wait. The Count cannot do anything other than ask Morrel to trust him, as a friend in Paris and as a friend of the Morrel family. And Morrel wants nothing more than to end his life now rather than to live with the idea of Valentine being gone forever. But of course, the reader knows she is not really gone, and thus hopes, along with the Count, that Morrel chooses to live a few more days.

CHAPTER 106 – THE SHARE-OUT

The narrator turns to two apartments in a quiet building in an outlying neighborhood of Paris. In one of the apartments, which Mme Danglars and Lucien Debray have used as a hideout, the two of them discuss the former Baroness's current financial situation. Lucien reveals that what the Baron had long suspected is in fact true: Lucien and the Baroness had been siphoning off a portion of his money and gambling it on the stock market. Lucien shows the Baroness that she has made an enormous sum of money, 800,000 francs, from these speculations. Debray gives the Baroness the money and recommends she travel abroad with it, leaving Paris for a time to restore her name. But the Baroness is distraught, for she loves Lucien and wants their affair to continue. Lucien, however, seems to indicate that their affair is over, for he has gotten what he wanted—the money with which he could make his name.

Lucien is revealed to have been a rather cynical lover after all, loyal only to himself in the final analysis. He and the Baroness have made money speculating on the financial markets, and Lucien can use this money to build an independent reputation in Paris. Lucien also recognizes that the Baroness's name, once so prominent, has now been tarnished by her husband's and Eugenie's scandals. Thus Lucien does what, he believes, any young and ambitious man in his situation would do: he takes what money he has, cuts ties with the woman to whom he was somewhat devoted, and moves along with his life. For the Baroness, however, this news is utterly devastating.

In an apartment above, Albert tells Mercedes of his plans for the future. Albert has pawned some of his objects, enough that the two can travel together to Marseille, and from there Albert will ship to France, for he has joined the foreign legion to make his living. Mercedes, for her part, will live in a convent or some other accommodation in Marseille. In leaving the apartment, Albert runs into Lucien, and Albert bids his former friend adieu, saying that, with his name now lost, he must remake himself elsewhere. Looking on from afar, the Count wonders what he might do to "bring happiness" to Albert and Mercedes, whose lives he has, indirectly, brought to ruin.

Lucien also seems unwilling to offer any help to his friend Albert. Of course, he seems to recognize that Albert must leave the country whether he wants to or not. But Lucien is revealed again to be a man more interested in his own concerns than the wellbeing of his friends and lovers. Thus the narrator, and Dumas, paint a scandalous portrait of French social life at the time – where people seem often to be more concerned with their own social progress than with the happiness and safety of those close to them.

CHAPTER 107 – THE LIONS' PIT

The scene shifts to the prison, called the Lion's Pit, where violent criminals are kept awaiting trial. This includes Andrea, who still insists to the other prisoners that he is of royal birth, although they make fun of him, harry him, and threaten him. Late one day, Bertuccio pays off the guards to visit his adoptive son, telling him he has information related to Benedetto's real father. Bertuccio promises to return with this information in due course, and Andrea says he awaits it with great eagerness.

This important interstitial chapter shows that Andrea is once again in prison, a place he's become accustomed to at this stage of the novel. It is not entirely clear to the reader what Bertuccio intends to do to his "son."

CHAPTER 108 – THE JUDGE

In this brief chapter, Villefort finally confronts his wife Heloise after many days spent going over evidence—evidence not only of the **poisonings** in his own home, but also in the case regarding Benedetto, now known publicly as the Benedetto Affair (because it involves the famous Count).

This affair has taken over Paris, and indeed every affair involving the Count seems to be of citywide, and indeed national, importance. In the space of only a few months, the Count has placed himself in the center of French social life.

Villefort abruptly asks Heloise if she still has the **poison** she has used on the Saint-Merans, Barrois, and Valentine. He says that he asks not because he will denounce her publically, but instead because he expects her to do the honorable thing and commit suicide at her earliest convenience. If she does not do this in the next day, he warns, he will send her to prison, which will result in her eventual execution.

Once again, the idea of suicide as a noble alternative arises. It is unclear whether Villefort wishes that his wife commit suicide to spare him shame, or whether he genuinely wishes that she be spared this shame herself. Nevertheless, he advocates for the same route that Fernand has taken.

CHAPTER 109 – THE ASSIZES

Chateau-Renaud, Debray, and Beauchamp are in court to see the beginning of the famous Benedetto Affair. They discuss the rumor that the murderer in the house of Villefort is young Edouard, who has become increasingly jealous of his stepsister and her grandparents. But others in the group dismiss this as nonsense and wait for the excitement of the case to begin, with Villefort drawing up evidence against the accused "Prince," Cavalcanti.

This is another attempt, however outlandish, to shift the blame onto another innocent party in the Villefort home. For whatever reason, other characters in the text have an extremely hard time understanding that Mme de Villefort could in fact be the killer. These rumor-mongers thus think it somehow more plausible that her young son could be to blame.

CHAPTER 110 – THE INDICTMENT

Villefort is called as the crown prosecutor before the court, and the judges similarly call Andrea to testify. He admits that he lived a life of petty crime before causing the murder of Caderousse, and when the court asks him for his identity, he pauses and says he does not really know his "actual" name, for he was abandoned as a very young infant by his father. When the court asks who this father might be, Andrea/Benedetto declares that it is the crown prosecutor himself, Villefort.

Villefort understands instantly that, from this point on, there is nothing he can do to protect his good name. Like Fernand and Danglars, he too will suffer in shame, and will need to determine some way to slide nobly off the public stage of French civic life. The crimes Villefort committed so many years ago have finally come back to light, causing the criminal to be punished.

Villefort becomes extremely pale and a cry goes up from the audience, where the Baroness Danglars has been watching the events unfold. The judges pause and ask if Benedetto can be serious, and Benedetto tells the story, as he has learned it from Bertuccio, of the night in question. This is the Corsican vendetta that Bertuccio told the Count about so many chapters ago in Auteuil. Villefort says that Benedetto's account is true. The judges say the case must be adjourned for a time to sort through this chaos, and in the courtroom three society gentlemen remark to one another that Villefort's public "death" is far worse even than Fernand's suicide or Danglars' escape from the country.

To Villefort's credit, he does not deny the charges against him. Villefort has engaged in a great many unscrupulous acts as prosecutor, designed to save and advance his career. But when called to account here, he says that he is indeed that criminal, that he cannot hide what he has done. In this sense, Villefort has dealt most nobly with his own condemnation, whereas Fernand immediately escaped it via suicide, and Danglars chose instead to ride out of town under cover of darkness.

CHAPTER 111 – EXPIATION

Villefort tumbles out of the judicial proceeding and heads homeward in a carriage, thinking that, since he himself has been blackened with guilt for many years, he was in no position to judge his wife. He intends to go home and tell Heloise that they should flee France together, along with their child Edouard.

Villefort nevertheless must figure out where to go now. At his own condemnation, he chooses to find his wife and ask that they flee together, despite knowing that his wife has tried to murder his own daughter.

But when Villefort reaches the home, he sees that his wife Heloise has **poisoned** herself and Edouard in a scene that is as macabre as it is unbelievable. In another room, Villefort finds the Abbe Busoni again with Noirtier, and Abbe Busoni reveals himself to be both the Count and Edmond Dantes. At this Villefort loses his mind, becoming wracked with madness and grief. When the Count realizes that he has brought on the death not only of Heloise, but also of the young child Edouard, he worries he has done too much in the name of vengeance, and he goes off to collect Maximilien Morrel and begin the flight from Paris, saying that they will "save" Villefort's other children in an effort to redeem what the Count fears is vengeance "gone too far."

This is one of the most horrific passages in the novel. Villefort realizes that his wife, in order to "protect" herself and her son, has killed them both. Thus, at this point in the text, Villefort believes he has no family at all, for he has been convinced that his daughter Valentine is also dead. The Count has brought down a perfect ruination on Villefort's head. But the Count's actions have also resulted in the death of an innocent boy, Edouard, who had no part in these crimes. The Count thus finds himself at a moral crossroads, as he has reached the limits of his own desire for vengeance and their impact on innocent people around him.

CHAPTER 112 – DEPARTURE

The Count picks up Maximilien, saying goodbye to Julie and Emmanuel, who thank the Count once again for his service to Julie's father so many years ago. The Count says that, although Morrel is now despondent over the death of Valentine, he will take him away traveling and return Morrel to his family in far greater spirits than his present state. They depart first for Marseille.

The Count has two reasons for wanting to leave Paris. First, he wishes to take Young Morrel's mind off the supposed loss of Valentine. Second, he still has a few more places he'd like to visit before he himself leaves behind the life of the Count of Monte Cristo.

In Marseille, they spot Albert heading out on a ship to Africa, where he will begin his career as a soldier. When Maximilien goes off to pray at his father's grave, the Count makes his way to his father's old apartment, where he finds Mercedes living in grief at the loss of her son. The two have a heartfelt conversation, in which Mercedes curses her decision not to have waited for Edmond, and Edmond wonders aloud if he has taken his vengeance "too far." They part, acknowledging the love they once shared for one another and all the misfortunes they have suffered in the ensuing two decades. The Count believes he will not see Mercedes ever again.

This is an extremely important emotional moment in the text. The Count acknowledges that he has allowed his vengeance to take over his life, and Mercedes acknowledges that she should have waited for Dantes, and should have hoped that he was going to return to her. Both characters have made mistakes over the years, and both see the love that they've shared, as complex and fraught as it's been, as an important part of their lives.

CHAPTER 113 – THE PAST

Leaving Mercedes, the Count takes his vessel and sails out into the harbor to the Chateau D'If, which no longer has prisoners, but is kept by some guards who protect the history of the place. Speaking with one of the former guards, the Count is shown to his old dungeon and to the Abbe Faria's, and the guard gives the Count a copy of the manuscript on with the Abbe had been working for so many years, found tucked into one of the walls.

The nostalgia of these scenes is powerful. The Count feels that he has in fact lived many lives since his escape from prison, and this is true: he's taken on a number of identities, and has exacted the revenge that has guided his life for years. What he realizes now, however, is that he must find a new principle around which to structure his life going forward.

The Count sails back to Marseille, wondering all along the way if he hasn't lost sight of the person he was, Edmond, the man imprisoned without cause. Finding Maxmilien, he cautions him to maintain hope and to be patient, and to meet the Count on **Monte Cristo** on October the Fifth. On that day, the Count promises, if Morrel is still so anguished by the death of Valentine that he wishes to die, the Count will help him. But the Count also promises good things for Morrel before setting sail for Italy for the intervening month. He bids Morrel a temporary farewell.

Once again, the Count has made a long-term plan to meet up with another character, as he once did with Albert in Paris. But in this case, the Count is no longer planning revenge, but is instead hoping to demonstrate to Young Morrel just how happy and full of hope life can be. He only hopes that Morrel will live long enough to see the fruits of his own patience. The Count hopes, in other words, that Morrel will believe him enough to trust him.

CHAPTER 114 – PEPPINO

The narrative turns to Danglars, who has fled to Rome and drawn on the credit of Thomson and French, where Peppino, friend of the Count's, works. Danglars believes he has tricked that bank into giving him 5 million francs. He takes a stagecoach out into the countryside and begins wondering how he will spend and invest this newfound wealth as a way of regaining his social position.

Amazingly, Danglars has made it as far as Rome, and has not yet abandoned hope that he might be able to make back at least some of the money he's lost. But this allows for the return of some of the most dread characters introduced in the novel to this point: the bandits of the Roman underworld.

But in the night, Danglars realizes that his coach has been overtaken and that Peppino has drawn him along back to Rome, to the underground fortress of a bandit Luigi Vampa. Danglars presumes that, because he only has banknotes on him and no gold, they will ransom him, which Danglars can pay in the morning and be off with most of the rest of his 5 million francs. He falls asleep in the Catacombs of Saint Sebastian with Vampa.

In another coincidence, Danglars winds up in the very same dungeon where Albert was once kept many months back. And although Albert was rescued by the Count before Vampa had his way with him, Danglars will not prove to be so lucky – he will not have the Count to intercede on his behalf.

CHAPTER 115 – LUIGI VAMPA'S BILL OF FARE

Peppino, the jailor in the catacombs, announces to Danglars the next day that, if the banker would like to eat, he must pay 100,000 francs for a chicken, or 100,000 francs for a loaf of bread. Peppino says he knows that Danglars is carrying over 5 million francs worth of banknotes on his person, and so he asks that, for each individual item, Danglars pay out 100,000 francs so that he might survive. Danglars realizes this is how his ransom is to be meted out, and he does in fact pay 100,000 francs for a chicken, which he considers rather "thin" as he eats it angrily in the cave.

This is a small, humorous episode in Danglars capture, allowing Vampa, Peppino, and their men to slowly peel away Danglars' money. It should be noted that this money has effectively been stolen from Boville, who was to use it for charitable ends. Thus, though Vampa is stealing it for himself, he is at least stealing from a thief, one who is doing all he can to maintain his social standing in the face of public shaming.

CHAPTER 116 – THE PARDON

Danglars continues bargaining his money, thousands by thousands, so that he might eat in the prison for five days. The Count of Monte Cristo finally appears with Vampa when Danglars is down to his last 50,000 francs, and the Count says that he is now pardoning Danglars—and that Villefort and Fernand were not so lucky, as the first is now mad with grief, and the second is dead by suicide. The Count announces that he is actually Edmond Dantes, and that Danglars' utter financial ruin is for the sake of punishment, but the Count allows Danglars to start his life anew somewhere else upon release by Vampa. He also states that the 5 million francs "paid out" to the bandits have been given to the hospice account of Boville, from which Danglars first drew them under criminal circumstances in Rome.

The Count does indeed return, though not so much to save Danglars as to make sure that his punishment reaches a non-lethal conclusion. The Count does want Danglars to lose all his money, and he wants to be sure that the money Vampa has taken is indeed used for charitable ends – it is returned to Boville. But the Count does not want Danglars to die, in part, the reader intuits, because he has had enough of death in the preceding days, weeks, and months. This shows that, though he could exact even more damning revenge on Danglars by killing him, the Count has chosen not to – he has placed a limit on his desire for vengeance.

CHAPTER 117 – OCTOBER THE FIFTH

Maximilien Morrel meets the Count on the island of **Monte Cristo**, where they had promised to rendezvous. The Count says that all his wealth, over 100 million francs, now belongs to Morrel, but the young man says that this is nothing compared to his love for Valentine, who is gone. At this, the Count says that he will in fact help Morrel die, and gives him some of the hashish he once gave to Franz so long ago. Morrel has a vision of Valentine and believes he is about to die.

The Count has saved his biggest revelations for the very end of the novel. Morrel cannot believe that his fantasy has come true, that his beloved really is alive. Nor can he believe that he is going to be a wealthy man. But the Count has made Morrel's wishes real, in part to compensate for all the lost wishes Dantes had to suffer, during the imprisonment of his youth.

Maximilien then wakes up, however, and realizes that Valentine is real—she did not die at all, but was whisked away with the help of Haydee, away from France and the prying eyes of her stepmother and mad father. Morrel and Valentine vow to spend their lives together, using the Count's money as well as they can now that it belongs to them (although they are not quite sure how to spend or even manage all of it).

Of course, for characters who are no longer motivated by revenge, it is difficult even to comprehend how the Count could spend the money he had. So much of that wealth was used to coordinate complex social circumstances on an enormous scale, allowing the Count to influence social life in Paris without being tied directly to the revenge plans that brought down the four plotters.

Watching this scene from afar, the Count turns to Haydee and says that he is going away, and that she is therefore free of her bond of enslavement to him. But Haydee says that she loves the Count, and that she knows he loves her. At this, the Count realizes what he has long thought, deep down, to be true—that he is still a man capable of love. The novel ends with a scene of Maximilien and Valentine, to be wed, heading toward the mainland of France to start their lives again together, and of the Count and Haydee heading off into the sunset, also to be wed and to live happily. When Morrel and Valentine wonder if they will ever see the Count again, they realize they must follow his final message to them: simply, to "hope and wait."

This is perhaps the single most important motto and message in the novel. Because Young Morrel has waited long enough, he has found a way to achieve true love. Because he was optimistic enough, he suffered what he thought was Valentine's death and witnessed her return to health. And, on the other side, because the Count has hoped and waited for long enough, he has found a way to structure his own life beyond his plot for revenge. He has found a true love, in Haydee, and they go off to begin that life together, as Morrel and Valentine begin theirs—finding the kind of youthful joy that was stolen from Dantes so long ago. Thus the novel ends on a profoundly positive, cheering note.

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