



CHAPTER I

Marseilles—The Arrival

As the sailing ship Pharaon pulls into port, Edmond Dantes, the captain's mate, tells the ship's owner, Pierre Morrel, that a tragedy has occurred during the voyage.

On February 24, 1815, during the reign of King Louis XVIII, the lookout at the port of Marseilles, France, signaled the appearance of the sailing ship named the *Pharaon*, arriving after a long voyage. Spectators immediately rushed to the docks to watch the ship come into port.

One of the spectators, 36-year old Pierre Morrel, the ship's owner, did not wait for the ship to reach the dock. Instead, he jumped into a small rowboat and ordered it alongside the *Pharaon*.

"Ah, is it you, Edmond Dantes?" Morrel called out to the *Pharaon*. "What's the matter? Why does everyone look so sad?"

"We lost our brave Captain Leclere," Edmond replied. He was a fine, tall, slim young fellow of eighteen or twenty, with black eyes and hair as dark as a raven's wing. He had the calm and resolute appearance often found in men who contend with danger.

“And the cargo?” inquired the owner, eagerly.

“The cargo is all safe, M. Morrel. You need not worry. But poor Captain Leclere—”

“What happened to him?” asked the owner.

“He died of brain-fever in dreadful agony.” Turning to the crew, he said, “Bear a hand there! Take in sail!”

Eight or ten seamen sprang to their stations. The young sailor gave a look to see that his orders were carried out and then turned again to the owner.

“If you will come on board, M. Morrel,” said Edmond, “your cargo officer, M. Danglars, will give you every detail. I must look after the anchoring and dress the ship in mourning.”

The owner seized a rope which Edmond flung to him and climbed up the side of the ship. The young man left the conversation to Danglars, who now came toward the owner. He was the sort of man who is overly polite to his superiors but insulting to men under him.

“Well, M. Morrel,” said Danglars, “you have heard of our misfortune?”

“Yes, poor Captain Leclere! He was a brave and honest man.”

“And a first-rate seaman, one with many years of honorable service,” replied Danglars.

“But,” replied the owner, watching Edmond direct the anchoring of his vessel, “it seems to me that a sailor does not need to be so old to be an expert. Our friend Edmond seems to understand his business thoroughly.”

“Yes,” said Danglars, glancing at Edmond with hatred. “He is young, and youth is always self-confident. The breath had barely left the captain’s body when Edmond Dantes took command, without consulting anyone. Worse, he caused us to lose a day at the island of Elba, instead of heading directly for Marseilles.”

“As to taking command,” replied Morrel, “that was his duty as captain’s mate. But as to losing a day off Elba, that was wrong, unless the vessel needed repairs.”

“The vessel was in as good condition as I, and as I hope you are, sir. That day was lost because of his own pleasure and nothing else.”

“Edmond,” said the ship owner, turning toward the young man, “come this way!”

“I’ll be with you in a moment, sir,” answered Edmond. Then calling to the crew, he said—“Let go!”

The anchor was instantly dropped, and the chain rattled across the deck. He added, “Put the flag at half-mast.”

“You see,” said Danglars, “he acts as though he is captain already.”

“And so he is,” said the owner.

“But he has not yet gotten your signature on his documents, M. Morrel.”

“He will have it soon enough,” said the owner. “True, he is young, but he seems a thorough seaman, and well experienced.”

A cloud passed over Danglars’ forehead.

“Pardon me, M. Morrel,” said Edmond,

approaching. "The vessel is anchored, and I am at your service."

"Edmond, why did you stop at the island of Elba?"

"I do not know, sir. It was the last wish of Captain Leclere. As he lay dying, he gave me a packet for Marshal Bertrand there."

"Did you see the marshal, Edmond?"

"Yes."

Morrel drew Edmond to one side, asking in a voice barely above a whisper, "And how is former Emperor Napoleon?"

"Very well, as far as I could judge."

"You actually saw the emperor, then?"

"He entered the marshal's apartment while I was there."

"And you spoke to him?"

"Why, it was he who spoke to me, sir," said Edmond, with a smile.

"And what did he say to you?"

"He asked me questions about the vessel: when she left Marseilles, the course she had taken, and her cargo. But I told him I was only the captain's mate, and that she belonged to the firm of Morrel & Son. 'Ah, yes,' he said, 'I know them. The Morrels have been ship owners from father to son; a Morrel served with me when I was at Valence.'"

"By God, that is true!" cried the owner, delighted. "That was Policar Morrel, my uncle. Edmond, you must tell my uncle that the emperor remembered him, and you will see it will bring tears into the old soldier's eyes. Come, come,"

he continued, patting Edmond's shoulder kindly, "you did right to stop at Elba. However, if people discovered that you had taken a packet to the marshal, and had talked with the emperor, it might bring you trouble."

"How could that bring me trouble, sir?" asked Edmond. "I did not know what I was carrying, and the emperor only asked questions as he would of any visitor." And the young man went to the gangway.

As he departed, Danglars approached Morrel and said, "Well, has he given you satisfactory reasons for his landing at Elba?"

"Yes, most satisfactory, my dear Danglars."

"Good," he replied, "for it is not pleasant to think that a comrade has not done his duty."

"It was Captain Leclere who gave orders for this delay," replied the owner.

"Talking of Captain Leclere, hasn't Edmond Dantes given you a letter from him?"

"To me? No. Was there one?"

"I believe that, besides the packet, Captain Leclere entrusted a letter to his care."

"Of what packet are you speaking, Danglars?"

"Why, the one Dantes left at Elba."

"How do you know he had a packet to leave at Elba?"

Danglars turned very red.

"I was passing close to the half open door of the captain's cabin, and I saw him give both to Dantes."

"He did not speak to me of it," replied the ship owner, "but if there is any letter he will give it to me."

Danglars thought for a moment. "Then please don't mention it to Dantes. I may have been mistaken."

At this moment Edmond returned, and Danglars walked away.

"Well, my dear Edmond, are you free to dine with me tonight?" inquired the owner.

"I am greatly honored, M. Morrel, but I must decline. I must see my father."

"Quite right, Edmond. You are a good son."

Edmond smiled. "My father is proud, sir. If he was starving, I doubt he would ask anything from anyone but Heaven."

"Well, then, after this we shall expect you."

"I must again excuse myself, M. Morrel, for after this visit I have another I am anxious to pay."

"True, Edmond. I forgot the young lady waiting for you at least as impatiently as your father—your lovely sweetheart, Mercedes."

Edmond blushed. "She is not just my sweetheart. We are engaged."

"Well, dear Edmond," continued the owner, "don't let me delay you. You have managed my affairs so well that I ought to give you all the time you require for your own. Do you need any money?"

"No, sir. I have saved nearly three months' wages."

"You are a careful fellow, Edmond."

"I have a poor father, sir."

"Yes, yes. I have a son too, and I would be very angry with anyone who kept him from me after a three months' voyage. Captain Leclere did not,

before he died, give you a letter for me?"

"He was too weak to write, sir. But that reminds me that I must ask for a leave of absence for some days."

"To get married?"

"Yes, and then to go to Paris."

"Take what time you require, Edmond. It will take weeks to unload the cargo. But be back in three months, for the *Pharaon*," added the owner, patting the young sailor on the back, "cannot sail without her captain."

"Without her captain!" cried Edmond, his eyes sparkling with joy. "You intend to make me captain of the *Pharaon*?"

"If I were sole owner we'd shake hands on it now and call it settled. But, I have a partner, and I must gain his consent. Rely on me; I will do my best."

"M. Morrel, I thank you on behalf of my father and my fiancée, Mercedes."

"That's all right, Edmond. Heaven watches over the deserving. Go to your father, to Mercedes, and afterward come to me. I shall look over the accounts with Danglars. Have you been satisfied with him this voyage?"

"Do you mean is he a good comrade? No, for I think he has disliked me since the day when I was silly enough, after a quarrel, to propose that we stop at the island of Monte Cristo to settle the dispute. But if you are asking if he is a responsible officer, there is nothing to say against him."

"That's right, Edmond. I see you are a

thoroughly good fellow, and I will detain you no longer.”

“Then, M. Morrel, a thousand thanks!”

“I hope to see you soon, my dear Edmond. Good luck to you.”

The ship owner, smiling, watched him until he saw him spring out on the dock and disappear into the crowd. On turning round, the owner saw Danglars behind him, also watching the young sailor. There was a great difference in the expression of the two men.