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## **THE THREE MUSKETEERS**

**Freely adapted by JOHN CHAMBERS from the novel by Alexandre Dumas**

### **PROLOGUE**

PLANCHET ENTERS.

PLANCHET: (IMPROVISE ON) Bonsoir mes amis... I am Planchet... But you can forget that because I am a nobody... a name not worth remembering... Now my friends, you and I, are to embark on a perilous journey. You must beware, the paths can be treacherous, so proceed with caution... France is beautiful - la belle France - don't bespoil it with your empty wine flaggons and bon bon wrappers. Oh yes - so that we can all enjoy the heroic deeds about to unfold - please don't block the view of les enfants - the little musketeers!

HE HEARS THE SOUND OF FIGHTING & HURRIES TO FIND A SAFE VANTAGE POINT - HE IS NO PART OF WHAT FOLLOWS.

THE CRASHING OF SWORDS AS A YOUNG MAN IS PURSUED BY AN OLDER ONE, WHO SEEMS INTENT ON KILLING HIM. THE YOUNG MAN DEFENDS HIMSELF, BUT THE ELDER NOW HAS HIS SWORD AT HIS THROAT. THIS IS D'ARTAGNAN WITH HIS FIERCE OLD DAD, MONSIEUR D'ARTAGNAN.

MONSIEUR D: Now then, you young whippersnapper - breathe your last!

D'ARTAGNAN: Dad!

MONSIEUR D: Sorry, lad - I got carried away...

D'ARTAGNAN: You were giving me some advice.

MONSIEUR D: Ah yes - off to Paris, to be a Musketeer... A dangerous city - and an even more dangerous occupation!

D'ARTAGNAN: Don't worry - I'll take care.

MONSIEUR D: Take care! Pah!! Take care!!! Are you not a Gascon! Are you not my son!! Are you not called d'Artagnan? Personal courage is the only way to get on nowadays. If you see an opportunity to prove yourself, don't dither - seize it. I'd sooner you lived dangerously. I've taught you how to handle a sword - you've got two strong legs, and a wrist of steel.

D'ARTAGNAN: They've made dueling illegal.

MONSIEUR D: Pah! Illegal!! Fight at the slightest provocation, boy - in season AND out. You'll get yourself noticed.

D'ARTAGNAN: I might get myself dead.

MONSIEUR D: Dead! Pah!! (FISHES IN HIS POCKET AND PRODUCES A TINY JAR) Take this. Your mother swears by it. A potion prepared by a gypsy that will repair all wounds...

D'ARTAGNAN: All wounds?

MONSIEUR D: Except wounds of the heart - but you won't have time for that sort of malarkey.

D'ARTAGNAN: What sort of thing?

MONSIEUR D: Never mind. Now, you've got the fifteen crowns I gave you.

D'ARTAGNAN PATS HIS POCKET & NODS.

MONSIEUR D: And the letter of introduction to de Treville - Captain of the King's Musketeers.

D'ARTAGNAN NODS & PATS HIS BREAST.

MONSIEUR D: And now son a special surprise - follow me.

MONSIEUR D WALKS WITH ESPECIALLY MANNERED ARROGANCE. HE SEES D'ARTAGNON DOES NOT.

MONSIEUR D: What d'you call that?

D'ARTAGNAN: What?

MONSIEUR D: You're shuffling.

D'ARTAGNAN: It's how I walk.

MONSIEUR D: You're a Gascon. Who will challenge such a scuffler! This is how a d'Artagnan perambulates. (DEMONSTRATES) Chest broad, head high, chin out, groin out. Swagger, son. Swagger. Strut. Stand proud.

D'ARTAGNAN DOES A FAIR IMPRESSION. THEY SWAGGER TO AN OBJECT COVERED BY A HORSE BLANKET.

MONSIEUR D: And now the final touch. Something no servant of the King, no would-be Musketeer would be without - his trusty mount.

HE REMOVES THE BLANKET. IT'S A CLAPPED OUT YELLOW BIKE WITH AN OLD CART ATTACHED.

MONSIEUR D: This golden stallion...

D'ARTAGNAN LOOKS.

D'ARTAGNAN: (ASIDE) The old boy's serious.

MONSIEUR D: This golden stallion was my father's. For that reason, treasure it. Let it live its normal span and die happy. (UNHITCHES CART) Now, mount the glorious steed.

D'ARTAGNAN GETS ON THE BIKE.

MONSIEUR D: Bon chance, my son. Be the greatest Musketeer whoever primed his musket.

D'ARTAGNAN GOES. HIS FATHER DRAGS OFF HIS CART.

MUSIC.

## **ACT ONE, SCENE ONE**

PARIS.

THE COMPANY (APART FROM D'ARTAGNAN & MONSIEUR D'ARTAGNAN) ENTER AND FORM A TABLEAU. AMONG THE CHARACTERS WE SEE AT THIS STAGE ARE ROCHEFORT (CLOAKED & MYSTERIOUS) WITH DE JUSSAC (CAPTAIN OF THE CARDINAL'S GUARD); PORTHOS, ARAMIS &

ATHOS - THEY WILL NOT YET WEAR THEIR MUSKETEERS TUNICS & HATS: CONSTANCE, APART: MILADY, ALOOF. PLANCHET IS AT THE FOOT OF THE STEPS - AN AWESTRUCK OBSERVER. PORTHOS, ARAMIS & ATHOS STAMP FORWARD. THEY STAND IN A LINE & STRIKE HEROIC POSES. BUT THERE IS A GAP - A GREATER SPACE BETWEEN ATHOS & THE OTHER TWO. PORTHOS HAS A FLAGON OF WINE, ARAMIS A BIBLE, ATHOS HIS SWORD.

MUSKETEERS: All for one, and one for all.

THEY FREEZE, AS PLANCHET MOVES ADMIRINGLY AROUND THEM, ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE.

PLANCHET: Ah, to be a Musketeer - what a life! To fight, to drink wine, to make love... No wonder the young d'Artagnan wants to join up... But not for you, Planchet. You're a flea, a nobody. But like most of us, I like to improve my appearance in the reflected brilliance of others... (ADMIRE MUSKETEERS AGAIN) The King's Musketeers!

PORTHOS & ARAMIS: One for all, and all for one.

THEY LOOK AT ATHOS.

ATHOS: There's something missing.

THEY LOOK TO THE GAP IN THE ROW, AND THEN DISMISS THE NOTION.

PORTHOS: You're too gloomy, Athos. We are famous. The King's Musketeers - revered and feared - especially by the Cardinal's men. (A NOD IN ROCHEFORT'S DIRECTION) What can possibly be missing - we drink the best wines, the women adore us - and we can always provoke a fight when things get dull.

ARAMIS: (DREAMILY) Ah... the women... (COLLECTS HIMSELF) We must fight temptation.

PORTHOS: You can fight it, Aramis - I'll fight everything and everybody else.

ARAMIS: Athos is right, there is something missing - but I believe it is to be found in the scriptures.

PORTHOS: All you'll find in there is dreariness.

ARAMIS: I'll pray for you, Porthos.

PORTHOS: (UNIMPRESSED) Thanks.

ATHOS: I've prayed long and hard for many years - I've found no peace.

PORTHOS: Sounds like a man with a guilty conscience to me!

ATHOS GLARES AT HIM.

PORTHOS: Only joking, Athos... You're too deep, my friend. (ASIDE TO ARAMIS) Terrifyingly deep!

ARAMIS: Ah well - time for my Bible class.

BEGINS TO LEAVE.

PORTHOS: What's her name?

ARAMIS, EMBARRASSED. PORTHOS OVER TO ATHOS, PATS HIS SHOULDER, AS THEY'RE ABOUT TO GO.

PORTHOS: You are - too deep.

ATHOS: The only thing I can be certain about is the job we have to do - our duty.

THE MUSKETEERS LEAVE, ROCHEFORT & DE JUSSAC COME DOWN THE STEPS, WATCHING THEM GO.

ROCHEFORT: If the King imagines he's safe, surrounding himself with those brawlers, he's even more stupid than I thought... The King's greatest enemy is in his own court.

DE JUSSAC: The Cardinal?

ROCHEFORT: Indeed, de Jussac! How could you suggest His Eminence, Cardinal Richelieu, would do anything to harm His Majesty.

DE JUSSAC: I didn't mean to...

ROCHEFORT: The Monarchy will destroy itself. Thank heavens the Cardinal is ready to take the tiller of state - supported by all loyal French men and women... (HE WANDERS OFF, AND LOOKS FOR AN EXPECTED ARRIVAL) Now, where is she?

DE JUSSAC: Who, Comte de Rochefort?

ROCHEFORT: One of the most dangerous people in Europe...

DE JUSSAC: Are we to arrest her?

ROCHEFORT: She's on our side!

DE JUSSAC: Who is it?

ROCHEFORT: (LOOKS ABOUT, QUIET) You only need know her as Milady...  
(LOOKS AGAIN) And she's late.

HIS GAZE FALLS ON THE UNSUSPECTING PLANCHET.

ROCHEFORT: Oy... you.

PLANCHET LOOKS.

ROCHEFORT: What are you doing lurking here?

PLANCHET: Forgive me, sir - it's in my nature to lurk.

ROCHEFORT: What's your name?

PLANCHET: P... P... P... Planchet - I'm a nobody... A flea.

ROCHEFORT: I can see that.

PLANCHET: Thank you, sir.

ROCHEFORT: Are you for the King or the Cardinal?

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) Oh, mon Dieu.

ROCHEFORT: Answer, man - the King or the Cardinal!

PLANCHET: (CRINGES) The K... K... Ki...

SEES ROCHEFORT'S FACE DARKEN.

PLANCHET: Cardinal!

ROCHEFORT: Good fellow.

THIS IS BROKEN UP BY THE ARRIVAL OF D'ARTAGNAN ON HIS BIKE. PLANCHET GRATEFULLY MOVES AWAY. ROCHEFORT RETURNS TO DE JUSSAC. THEY WATCH WITH AMUSEMENT AS D'ARTAGNAN RIDES IN STATELY CIRCLES, PLEASED WITH HIMSELF. HE TALKS LOUDLY TO HIS 'HORSE'.

D'ARTAGNAN: Almost in Paris, and no one has dared challenge us, my equine friend.

ROCHEFORT: Is the circus in town!

D'ARTAGNAN: (TO 'HORSE') And no one has dared mock us.

ROCHEFORT: A crank on a crank!

D'ARTAGNAN: (ANGRY, TO HORSE) No one would insult us, my magnificent beast. Not if they knew you and I are both Gascons, AND - to boot - I carry the name d'Artagnan.

ROCHEFORT: He should have stayed in Gascony - they're all nuts there.

THEY LAUGH.

D'ARTAGNAN: (CRACKING) Yes, a d'Artagnan, of dignified bearing and gentlemanly ways.

ROCHEFORT: What's his name - did he say, 'Monsieur d'arrogance'!

THEY LAUGH.

D'ARTAGNAN: (EXPLODING) And I can't stand people laughing at ME!

HE DISMOUNTS AND RUSHES TOWARDS ROCHEFORT, HALF DRAWING HIS SWORD.

D'ARTAGNAN: Hi there. Yes, you sir! What do you find so amusing!

ROCHEFORT: I was not talking to you, sir.

D'ARTAGNAN: But I am talking to you, sir. I'd like to know the joke so that I might laugh too.

ROCHEFORT: (ASIDE) He's riding it.

D'ARTAGNAN: Ha!

ROCHEFORT: What's the nag's name, young sir - Buttercup?

ROCHEFORT TURNS AWAY FROM D'ARTAGNAN, DISMISSIVE, BUT HE STIFFENS AS HE HEARS THE SCRAPE OF D'ARTAGNAN'S SWORD BEING DRAWN FROM ITS SCABBARD.

D'ARTAGNAN: Turn and face me, sir.

ROCHEFORT DOESN'T.

D'ARTAGNAN: Turn and face me, or I'll run you through the back!

ROCHEFORT: What a pity this is - the young hot head might have gone far.

D'ARTAGNAN: He mocks me more! Hot head indeed - Me! Moi! My blood boils!!!

D'ARTAGNAN LUNGES AT ROCHEFORT WHO DEFTLY STEPS OUT OF THE WAY, DRAWING HIS SWORD. D'ARTAGNAN AND ROCHEFORT FACE EACH OTHER AND BEGIN TO FIGHT. DE JUSSAC, WITH HIS MUSKET, MOVES BEHIND D'ARTAGNAN.

D'ARTAGNAN: Come on, you coward - fight...

DE JUSSAC CLOBBERS HIM.

DE JUSSAC: (TO ROCHEFORT) Forgive me for spoiling your sport, Comte.

ROCHEFORT: You did him a favour, de Jussac - I would have cut his ears off!

DE JUSSAC: (KNEELS OVER D'ARTAGNAN) He's not dead...

ROCHEFORT: It's of no concern to me.

AGAIN LOOKS TO SEE IF MILADY IS ARRIVING.

ROCHEFORT: The Cardinal will not be pleased if she fails us.

DE JUSSAC: (FINDS LETTER ON D'ARTAGNAN & READS ADDRESS)  
Monsieur de Treville...

ROCHEFORT: What did you say?

DE JUSSAC: The Gascon has a letter - "Monsieur de Treville - Captain of the King's Musketeers".

ROCHEFORT: I know who he is. (SNATCHES LETTER & POCKETS IT. ASIDE) de Treville must have sent this scamp to assassinate me.

AT THAT MOMENT, MILADY ENTERS. D'ARTAGNAN HALF STIRS & WATCHES HER.

D'ARTAGNAN: (ASIDE) What beauty...

ROCHEFORT: Milady...

MILADY: Comte de Rochefort...

ROCHEFORT: You've deigned to turn up.

MILADY: You'll find your wait worthwhile when I tell you my news.

ROCHEFORT: Well?

MILADY: (PRODS D'ARTAGNAN WITH HER FOOT) Who is this?

ROCHEFORT: It seems, the Royalists have sent this lunatic to do for me...

MILADY EXAMINES HIS FACE.

MILADY: A fine face. Pity he must die so young.

D'ARTAGNAN: (GROGGY) A fleur-de-lis on marble skin...

MILADY SLAMS HIS HEAD DOWN, STANDS, GATHERS HER CLOAK ROUND HER.

MILADY: (TO ROCHEFORT) Why don't you kill the traitor?

ROCHEFORT: There's time for that - now what is your news?

MILADY: That fine English nobleman, Lord Buckingham... (PAUSES FOR EFFECT)

ROCHEFORT: You've already tested my patience.

MILADY: (CONTS.) ...is here in Paris!

ROCHEFORT: Now! Surely the Queen wouldn't be foolish enough to meet him.

MILADY: Buckingham loves her, and she him.

ROCHEFORT: Anything's possible then...

GOES TO LEAVE.

MILADY: (RE D'ARTAGNAN) What about him?

ROCHEFORT: It's his lucky day - and ours. The Cardinal must know at once.

ROCHEFORT &, AFTER ANOTHER VENGEFUL GLANCE AT D'ARTAGNAN, MILADY, ARE LEAVING, AS PORTHOS, ARAMIS & ATHOS ENTER, NOW WEARING TUNICS AND HATS. THERE ARE CURSORY BOWS BETWEEN THE MUSKETEERS & ROCHEFORT. MILADY HIDES HER FACE. ATHOS STOPS WHEN HE SEES HER - THE FAINTEST FLICKER OF RECOGNITION, BUT MILADY IS GONE. DE JUSSAC RETURNS BUT KEEPS HIS DISTANCE.

PORTHOS: What's the matter now, Athos - someone stepped on your grave!

BEFORE ATHOS CAN RESPOND, D'ARTAGNAN LEAPS TO HIS FEET.

D'ARTAGNAN: (FINDS HIS SWORD) Where is that rogue who insulted me?  
(HE RUNS OVER & GRABS PLANCHET)

PLANCHET: Just left with a beautiful lady.

D'ARTAGNAN: I thought I dreamt her... Which way did they go?

PLANCHET POINTS.

D'ARTAGNAN: (CHARGING OFF) I'll settle his hash...

HE RUSHES IN THE DIRECTION PLANCHET POINTS, BUT CRASHES INTO THE MUSKETEERS.

D'ARTAGNAN: Out of my way.

PORTHOS: Slow down, young feller.

D'ARTAGNAN: Slow down! You will come to a dead stop, sir. Let me pass.

ARAMIS: What's your problem, friend?

D'ARTAGNAN: You! Move!!

ATHOS: Are you upset?

D'ARTAGNAN: Get out of my way, you clowns - I seek revenge.

HE DRAWS HIS SWORD.

PORTHOS: (DRAWING HIS SWORD) Oh good!

ARAMIS: Don't be too hard on the lad, Porthos.

D'ARTAGNAN: (TURNS ON ARAMIS) Did you call me a lad!

ATHOS DRAWS HIS SWORD TO DEFEND ARAMIS, SO  
D'ARTAGNAN TURNS ON HIM.

ARAMIS: Three against one isn't fair, Athos.

D'ARTAGNAN: Afraid, are you! Is Paris full of cowards? I challenge you all to a  
duel.

ATHOS: All at once?

D'ARTAGNAN: Why not - I am d'Artagnan.

PORTHOS: I'll deal with it.

DE JUSSAC COMES FORWARD.

DE JUSSAC: Halt, in the name of His Eminence the Cardinal. You are aware  
that dueling is illegal.

ATHOS: Is that so, de Jussac.

DE JUSSAC: You know full well, Athos. But then it's typical of you three -  
typical arrogance of the King's Musketeers.

D'ARTAGNAN: King's Musketeers!

ATHOS/PORTHOS/ARAMIS: (RAISE THEIR SWORDS) The King's Musketeers!

DE JUSSAC: (CALLS) Guards!

A GROUP OF MASKED, RED CLOAKED CARDINAL'S GUARDS ENTER (AS MANY AS POSSIBLE).

DE JUSSAC: You're all under arrest - including the youth.

D'ARTAGNAN: Did he call me a youth!

ARAMIS: I wouldn't start that again.

ATHOS: (TO DE JUSSAC) We weren't dueling - we were practicing.

DE JUSSAC: Explain that to the Cardinal. (TO GUARDS) Arrest them.

GUARDS MOVE FORWARD.

PORTHOS: You explain to the Cardinal - how your men were...

DE JUSSAC: Yes...

PORTHOS: Thrashed.

A FIGHT ENSUES, D'ARTAGNAN FIGHTING ALONGSIDE THE MUSKETEERS. ONE BY ONE THE GUARDS ARE DISPATCHED AND THEY HURRY OFF. THE LAST IS DE JUSSAC.

DE JUSSAC: You'll pay for this.

DE JUSSAC EXITS. THE MUSKETEERS LAUGH.

D'ARTAGNAN: (TURNS ON THEM) Right - who's first for the duel...

MUSKETEERS SHOCKED, THEN LAUGH.

ARAMIS: Wouldn't you rather be with us, my lad?

D'ARTAGNAN: Don't ridicule me.

PORTHOS: My, what a prickly Gascon.

D'ARTAGNAN: My name is d'Artagnan.

ATHOS: Listen, d'Artagnan - you've already upset the Cardinal's followers, it wouldn't do to make enemies of the King's men too, would it?

D'ARTAGNAN: (SHEATHS HIS SWORD) I need to find Monsieur de Treville...

ARAMIS: de Treville is our Captain.

PORTHOS: We'll take you to him.

ATHOS: Are you with us?

D'ARTAGNAN: (BEAT) Are you really King's Musketeers...

ATHOS: Of course.

3 MUSKETEERS: All for one...

ALL: And one for all!

IN GOOD HUMOUR, THEY MOVE AWAY, BUT REMAIN IN SIGHT. PLANCHET RETURNS HAVING WATCHED THIS, FULL OF ADMIRATION.

PLANCHET: I'm aglow with reflected glory...

ROYAL FANFARE.

PLANCHET: And even greater glory now approaches - King Louis the thirteenth of France and his gracious wife Queen Anne of Austria. Such humility overwhelms me, such humbleness consumes me - I fear my bowels will explode.

WITH GREAT POMP KING LOUIS XIII AND QUEEN ANNE ENTER. DE TREVILLE ATTENDS LOUIS AS CAPTAIN OF HIS MUSKETEERS. D'ARTAGNAN AND THE MUSKETEERS BOW, BUT REMAIN SOME WAY OFF FROM THE KING & QUEEN.

LOUIS: It won't do, de Treville... will it, dear?

ANNE'S NOT LISTENING.

LOUIS: Will it, dear?

ANNE: What, dear?

LOUIS: Really, beloved - sometimes it's as if you are a thousand miles away.

ANNE: (TO LOUIS) What won't do?

LOUIS: de Treville's blessed Musketeers - fighting and brawling - I just hope they don't give the Cardinal any more cause for complaint. What do you say to that, de Treville?

D'ARTAGNAN: (TO MUSKETEERS) Monsieur de Treville - I must deliver my letter.

ATHOS: Now isn't the best time.

D'ARTAGNAN: It's important.

DE TREVILLE: (TO LOUIS) I say, your Highnesss, that though the Cardinal is a great man - you are greater. You are sovereign.

LOUIS: (PLEASED) That's true. Isn't it, beloved?

BUT ANNE ISN'T LISTENING.

LOUIS: Well, I'll be damned - here I stand, King of France, and my Queen acts like a lovesick poodle.

ANNE: (COLLECTS HERSELF) Might it not be possible I am lovesick?

LOUIS: Well, I am damned!

ANNE: Lovesick for you... jealous that I share you with all of France.

LOUIS: (PLEASED) Ah yes - that's entirely possible. (TO DE TREVILLE) Why should I worry about Cardinal Richelieu... me - sovereign of all I survey... especially my beloved here... What's a Cardinal to me - a mere priest...

CARDINAL'S FANFARE - SOMETHING DARK, EVIL. LOUIS STOPS IN HIS TRACKS. CARDINAL RICHELIEU ENTERS. ALL BOW. HE CONSCIOUSLY TAKES IN THE SCENE.

CARDINAL: (BOWS) Your Majesty.

LOUIS: Your Eminence.

CARDINAL: (TO ANNE) Your Majesty.

ANNE NODS.

CARDINAL: What news of England, your Majesty?

ANNE: (EMBARRASSED) Why should I have news of England... (COY)  
I leave matters of international politics to you great men.

CARDINAL: There are great men in England too of course...

ANNE: Our enemies.

CARDINAL: Of course... our enemies.

LOUIS: No good discussing affairs of state with her, Richelieu - for all  
the notice she takes she might as well be in England.

CARDINAL: Might she...

LOUIS: So - what weighty business have you come to consult me on?

THE CARDINAL, LOUIS, FOLLOWED BY DE TREVILLE,  
WANDER OFF, HEADS DOWN, DEEP IN WEIGHTY  
BUSINESS.

CONSTANCE BONACIEUX, LADY IN WAITING, ENTERS.  
SHE WANTS TO SPEAK TO THE QUEEN PRIVATELY, BUT  
HAS TO PASS THE MUSKETEERS. ARAMIS BOWS WITH  
CHARM, ATHOS CORRECTLY, PORTHOS ATTEMPTS TO  
GOOSE HER. SHE ARRIVES AT D'ARTAGNAN. A MOMENT.

CONSTANCE: Excuse me, sir, I must speak to her Majesty.

D'ARTAGNAN: What's your name?

CONSTANCE: It is of no importance to you.

D'ARTAGNAN: I am d'Artagnan.

CONSTANCE: That is of no importance to me. Please let me pass.

D'ARTAGNAN DOESN'T MOVE.

CONSTANCE: Move you arrogant pig.

D'ARTAGNAN: Please tell me your name.

CONSTANCE: (IMPATIENT) Constance Bonacieux, now leave me alone.

D'ARTAGNAN: Constance Bonacieux...

SHE HURRIES TO THE QUEEN. D'ARTAGNAN WATCHES,  
SMITTEN.

CONSTANCE: (CONSPIRATORIALLY TO ANNE) I have a message from Lord  
Buckingham.

ANNE: He has sent a message from England?

CONSTANCE: No - he's here in Paris.

ANNE: It's not possible.

CONSTANCE: He begs to see you.

ANNE LOOKS TOWARDS LOUIS. LOUIS SEES HER  
LOOKING.

LOUIS: Very weighty business, dear - you go and entertain yourself as  
best you can.

CONSTANCE & ANNE HURRY OFF.

CARDINAL: (LOUD) They attacked my guard!

MUSKETEERS LOOK.

PORTHOS: O-oh.

LOUIS: Attacked your guard!

CARDINAL: Wounded my men - again!

LOUIS: They wounded the Cardinal's men, de Treville.

DE TREVILLE: (LOOKS TOWARDS THE MUSKETEERS) They wounded the  
Cardinal's men! I will see that they are punished.

LOUIS: See they are.

CARDINAL: Or I will!

STARTS TO LEAVE, LOUIS FOLLOWS, INGRATIATING.

LOUIS: So, Richelieu - what chance of a good old war with England?

CARDINAL: You are the King - you could start one at the drop of a hat.

LOUIS: (PLEASED) So I could. The drop of a crown so to speak...

CARDINAL UNAMUSED. THEY EXIT.  
DE TREVILLE GOES TO ROLLOCK THE MUSKETEERS.

DE TREVILLE: What have you got to say for yourselves...

ALL: Sorry, M. de Treville.

DE TREVILLE: How many did you wound?

ATHOS: All of them.

DE TREVILLE: All of them! That's very serious.

ALL: Yes, sir.

DE TREVILLE: Serious because I get it in the neck from King and Cardinal.

THEY LAUGH.

DE TREVILLE: All of them - not bad going.

D'ARTAGNAN: (STEPS FORWARD) That's why I want to be a Musketeer.

DE TREVILLE: If I'm not mistaken, you are the young Gascon who particularly irritated the Cardinal's guards.

D'ARTAGNAN: d'Artagnan at your service. (GOES TO POCKET FOR LETTER)  
This letter of introduction from my father who...  
(NO LETTER) It's gone! Some blackguard has stolen it!

DE TREVILLE: To be a Musketeer, d'Artagnan, you must prove yourself -  
being prey to pickpockets is not a good start!

HE GOES.

ATHOS: You've made an impression, d'Artagnan.

D'ARTAGNAN: He thinks I'm an idiot! That behatted braggart must have stolen  
my letter. If I ever see him again...

ARAMIS: There's little chance...

PORTHOS: (TO D'ARTAGNAN) Come on, lad - let's find you some lodgings...

THEY EXIT, INCLUDING PLANCHET.  
AS THEY GO ROCHEFORT ENTERS, HE'S SPYING ON SOMEONE. HE HIDES, BUT WE STILL SEE HIM.  
BUCKINGHAM ENTERS CAUTIOUSLY.

ROCHEFORT: (ASIDE) So, Milady's information was correct. It is George Villiers - Lord Buckingham himself - skulking like a mongrel on the scent...

ANNE ENTERS. SHE RUNS TO BUCKINGHAM. CONSTANCE IS A DISCREET LOOK OUT.

ANNE: My Lord...

BUCKINGHAM: Anne...

HE TAKES HER HAND.

ANNE: You know you're in grave danger...

BUCKINGHAM: What do I care - any threat is nothing against a moment in your presence.

ANNE: I too am in danger while you're here. The Cardinal has his spies everywhere - not to mention my husband! I implore you - please go now.

BUCKINGHAM: But I love you. I would die for you.

ANNE: You will if we're caught - we both will.

BUCKINGHAM: I would never see you harmed.

ANNE: Please leave.

BUCKINGHAM: I know I must... But give me something - a token to take... anything that has been close to you that I might keep close to me.

ANNE THINKS, THEN REMOVES A BROOCH WHICH HAS 12 DIAMOND TAGS.

ANNE: Take this brooch.

BUCKINGHAM: (HOLDS IT UP) Twelve diamond tags sparkling... Perfect.

ANNE: My husband must think so – he gave it to me.

BUCKINGHAM: What if the King asks where it is?

ANNE: I would tell him I had given it to the man I love.

BUCKINGHAM: He would have you killed.

ANNE: My love for you is worth more than life itself.

BUCKINGHAM: He'll never know...

ANNE: Good – our secret...

BUCKINGHAM: Yes...

THEY EMBRACE, THEN GO OFF SEPERATELY.  
CONSTANCE WATCHES, SHE DOES NOT SEE  
ROCHEFORT APPROACHING. HE PUTS A SACK OVER HER  
HEAD. TWO CARDINAL'S GUARDS COME TO HELP HIM.

ROCHEFORT: Take her away.

GUARDS REMOVE THE STRUGGLING CONSTANCE.

ROCHEFORT: (ASIDE) We'll soon find out what other little secrets the lady-in-waiting holds... And that brooch - those twelve diamond tags - they might have been intended as a love token - but they will surely be *A DEATH WARRANT!*

HE GOES. D'ARTAGNAN, GLOOMY, & PORTHOS, TRYING  
TO RAISE HIS SPIRITS, ENTER.

PORTHOS: You've already made your mark, d'Artagnan - upset the Cardinal, but impressed Monsieur de Treville.

D'ARTAGNAN: He's still not made me a Musketeer - and don't tell me I'll have to be patient. All that comes to he who waits is old age.

PORTHOS: I don't think that's a fate that waits for you.

D'ARTAGNAN: Good.

PORTHOS: You'll get the chance to prove yourself soon enough.

D'ARTAGNAN: I wonder if my chance will come with Constance Bonacieux...

PORTHOS: Who?

D'ARTAGNAN: The Queen's Lady-in-Waiting.

PORTHOS: Oh you'll have every chance - once you're a Musketeer.

D'ARTAGNAN: Thanks, Porthos - now I'm doubly disappointed.

PORTHOS: At least you've been noticed.

D'ARTAGNAN: Not by her.

PORTHOS: And you've got lodgings...

D'ARTAGNAN UNIMPRESSED.

PORTHOS: What you need now is a servant.

D'ARTAGNAN: Me - a servant?

PORTHOS: I'll soon find you one.

THEY LOOK ABOUT. ON CUE PLANCHET SAUNTERS ON,  
AND BUSIES HIMSELF SPITTING IN A PUDDLE. PORTHOS  
OVER TO HIM.

PORTHOS: Hi, you.

PLANCHET CARRIES ON SPITTING.

PORTHOS: (KICKS HIM) What do you think you're doing?

PLANCHET: (ASIDE, PROUD) The mighty Porthos kicked me up the arse!  
(TO PORTHOS) Spitting in a puddle, sir - did you know it makes  
little ripples that get bigger and bigger.

PORTHOS: This is your man, d'Artagnan. He's obviously a fellow with an  
orderly mind and of a sober nature.

D'ARTAGNAN: He's probably the best I can afford.

PLANCHET: Without a doubt, sir.

D'ARTAGNAN: Thank you, Porthos.

PORTHOS: I'll see you later - I have an appointment with a lawyer.

D'ARTAGNAN: A lawyer?

PORTHOS: Well, not exactly a lawyer - it's his wife. But it's his money I spend.

D'ARTAGNAN: Very considerate.

PORTHOS GOES.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) And that is how I became servant to a would-be Musketeer. Fate spat kindly on me. (TO D'ARTAGNAN) What should I do, sir?

D'ARTAGNAN: (THINKS) Clean my boots...

PLANCHET: Certainly, sir. (PLANCHET TAKES OFF HIS OWN SCARF & USES IT AS A DUSTER)

D'ARTAGNAN WALKS AROUND AS PLANCHET TRIES TO POLISH HIS SHOES.

D'ARTAGNAN: What's your name?

PLANCHET: Planchet.

D'ARTAGNAN: Porthos has a servant called Mousqueton - he was called Boniface, but Porthos thought that was namby pamby.

PLANCHET: Call me anything you like, sir.

D'ARTAGNAN: 'Planchet' will have to do.

PLANCHET: It's done me well enough, sir.

D'ARTAGNAN: And my name, d'Artagnan, will do me well too. (GRANDER & GRANDER) d'Artagnan... d'Artagnan... d'Artagnan...

PLANCHET: (JOINS IN) d'Artagnan... d'Artagnan... d'Artagnan...

AS D'ARTAGNAN'S LANDLORD, M. BONACIEUX, ENTERS IN HURRY.

BONACIEUX: d'Artagnan, Monsieur d'Artagnan.

D'ARTAGNAN LOOKS ABOUT, THEN SEES IT BONACIEUX.

D'ARTAGNAN: I don't know you, sir.

BONACIEUX: I'm your landlord!

D'ARTAGNAN: I still don't know you.

BONACIEUX: (HUMBLE) That's because Sir hasn't bothered paying any rent.

D'ARTAGNAN: Ha! Rent!!

PLANCHET: Ha! Rent!!

BONACIEUX: I'm not here to persecute you, Monsieur d'Artagnan.

D'ARTAGNAN: A good thing too.

BONACIEUX: I've come to ask for your help.

D'ARTAGNAN: A favour!

BONACIEUX: I'm desperate...

D'ARTAGNAN: Find yourself a priest.

BONACIEUX: My wife has been abducted.

D'ARTAGNAN: How do you know she's not run off with another man? (EYES UP BONACIEUX) It would be entirely understandable.

BONACIEUX: I think her disappearance is a political matter... she is, after all, a servant to the greatest women in the land.

D'ARTAGNAN/PLANCHET: (INTERESTED) Who?

BONACIEUX LOOKS ABOUT, THEN WHISPERS IN D'ARTAGNAN'S EAR.

D'ARTAGNAN: So who would plot against the gracious lady you named?

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) Who is it!

BONACIEUX: (SHRUGS) I know my wife has been followed recently - by a cloaked stranger, with a scar on his face. Here. (INDICATES)

D'ARTAGNAN: Here! (INDICATES)

BONACIEUX NODS.

D'ARTAGNAN: It's him - the rascal who laughed at my beast, the rogue who stole my letter...

BONACIEUX: You'll help me then?

D'ARTAGNAN CONSIDERS.

BONACIEUX: It goes without saying you would never have to pay another days rent...

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) That'd be novel.

BONACIEUX: (OFFERING BAG OF MONEY) And here's fifty pistoles for your troubles.

D'ARTAGNAN: How could a would-be Musketeer such as I refuse to help a woman in distress?

BONACIEUX: Thank you, fine sir.

D'ARTAGNAN: (WAVES HIM AWAY) Now clear off - I've work to do.

BONACIEUX GROVELLINGLY LEAVES.

D'ARTAGNAN FINDS SOMEWHERE COMFORTABLE TO SIT.

PLANCHET: (EXCITED) What's the plan, master? The master plan?

D'ARTAGNAN: This... (HE RECLINES)

PLANCHET: Oh, I see - take Bonacieux's money and do nothing. What a plan. I wish I'd thought of that.

D'ARTAGNAN: You boar's backside - it's a mouse trap...

PLANCHET BLANK.

D'ARTAGNAN: If agents of dark forces have the woman, they will want to trap her accomplices. They will use her as bait.

PLANCHET: Ha. (THEN PUZZLED) Could you repeat that?

D'ARTAGNAN: Ass!

THEY HEAR A COMMOTION. D'ARTAGNAN AND PLANCHET HIDE. CONSTANCE, BLINDFOLDED SO WE DON'T SEE HER FACE, IS BROUGHT TO THE HOUSE BY ROCHEFORT AND THREE CARDINAL'S GUARDS. D'ARTAGNAN IS NOT NEAR ENOUGH TO HEAR THIS EXCHANGE.

D'ARTAGNAN: (TO PLANCHET) It's him. The horse insulter. The note nabber.

CONSTANCE: Let me go.

ROCHEFORT: In due course.

CONSTANCE: Where am I?

ROCHEFORT: Don't worry - you'll soon be home.

GUARDS LAUGH.

ROCHEFORT: (TO GUARDS) Guard her well. Arrest anyone who approaches.

GUARDS: Yes, sir.

ROCHEFORT: (TO CONSTANCE) One last chance, Madame Bonacieux - tell me your Mistress's game.

CONSTANCE: I know of no games.

ROCHEFORT: You'll see things differently from inside the Bastille...

CONSTANCE: I am innocent.

ROCHEFORT: *NO ONE IS INNOCENT.*

ROCHEFORT GOES. D'ARTAGNAN ABOUT TO FOLLOW HIM. GUARDS START TO TIE UP CONSTANCE.

PLANCHET: What about the lady?

D'ARTAGNAN: What's a shabby landlord's dreary spouse to me - when revenge is there for the taking?

PLANCHET: You had an arrangement, sir.

D'ARTAGNAN: We have an arrangement, Planchet - I decide, you defer.

CONSTANCE: (CALLS) Help, someone please help me.

D'ARTAGNAN: That voice... can it be...

AND HE DRAWS HIS SWORD & MOVES QUICKLY TOWARDS THE GUARDS, TAKING THEM BY SURPRISE. A FIGHT ENSUES AND THE GUARDS RUN FOR IT.

1st GUARD: The Cardinal will hear about this...

D'ARTAGNAN STAMPS HIS FOOT AT THEM AND THEY'RE GONE. SLOWLY HE APPROACHES CONSTANCE, WHO'S STILL BLINDFOLDED AND FRIGHTENED. PLANCHET WATCHES AND D'ARTAGNAN BECOMES AWARE OF HIM.

D'ARTAGNAN: Make yourself useful, Planchet.

PLANCHET: Should I hold her for you, sir.

D'ARTAGNAN: Clear off - go and fetch Athos, Aramis and Porthos.

PLANCHET: (LEAVING. ASIDE) I wish such a dashing hero would rescue me.

HE GOES.

D'ARTAGNAN: Well, madame.

CONSTANCE: Torture me - I'll never break a confidence.

D'ARTAGNAN: (CLOSE) Why should I torture you?

CONSTANCE: Who are you?

D'ARTAGNAN: Just an arrogant pig...

BEAT.

CONSTANCE: You...

HE TAKES OFF HER BLINDFOLD / UNTIES HER.

D'ARTAGNAN: You...

CONSTANCE: It is you.

D'ARTAGNAN: It is you...

CONSTANCE: (MATTER OF FACT) Ah well, thanks for rescuing me. (STARTS TO LEAVE)

D'ARTAGNAN: Where are you going!

CONSTANCE: Important business.

D'ARTAGNAN: More important than love?

CONSTANCE: What!

D'ARTAGNAN: I love you.

CONSTANCE: You're mad.

D'ARTAGNAN: It's you who must be mad, madame - it's you who chooses to spend her life with that drab disaster you call husband.

CONSTANCE: (AGREEING) Ah, him...

D'ARTAGNAN: Him. (STRUTS) Why waste your love on that when you could lavish it on this!

CONSTANCE: Because I don't have time.

D'ARTAGNAN: What can be more pressing than allowing me to press myself upon you?

CONSTANCE: The safety of my mistress is more pressing.

D'ARTAGNAN: The Queen?

CONSTANCE: And the stability of France is more pressing.

D'ARTAGNAN: But you're just a girl.

CONSTANCE: And you are a fool.

MAKES TO LEAVE.

D'ARTAGNAN: I could help... let me...

CONSTANCE: I don't know you - how can I trust you?

D'ARTAGNAN: You know I've seen off the Cardinal's guards... You know I'm a loyal subject of the King...

CONSTANCE: (CUTS IN) That's the problem. (BEAT) Can I rely on you?

D'ARTAGNAN: I love you.

CONSTANCE: Stop going on about that.

D'ARTAGNAN: I'll do anything for you...

CONSTANCE: You're an odd fellow, d'Artagnan.

D'ARTAGNAN: I'll die for you.

CONSTANCE: You're my last hope, I suppose.

D'ARTAGNAN: Good.

CONSTANCE: You must not tell a soul - not even the Musketeers.

D'ARTAGNAN: Whatever you say. Now what do I have to do?

CONSTANCE: Go to England and find the Duke of Buckingham. Give him this letter.

SHE HANDS HIM A LETTER.

D'ARTAGNAN: (LOOKS AT LETTER) The Queen's seal.

CONSTANCE: He will give you something in return.

D'ARTAGNAN: Is that all?

CONSTANCE: You must be back in Paris by next Thursday.

D'ARTAGNAN: Why Thursday?

CONSTANCE: The Queen gave Lord Buckingham 12 diamond tags set in a brooch. The Cardinal knows - he's persuaded the King that the Queen should wear it at the Grand Ball...

D'ARTAGNAN: ...on Thursday.

CONSTANCE: And if she doesn't...

D'ARTAGNAN: I will see you on Thursday. And when I return...

CONSTANCE: We'll see...

SHE KISSES HIM LIGHTLY, THEN HURRIES OFF.

D'ARTAGNAN: (SHOUTS AFTER HER) I love you!

PORTHOS: (OFF) I love you too, d'Artagnan.

PORTHOS, ARAMIS, ATHOS & PLANCHET ARRIVE.

D'ARTAGNAN: We're off to England!

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) England!

ATHOS: Why?

D'ARTAGNAN: A secret mission of the heart.

ARAMIS: What better reason.

PORTHOS: You can tell us, d'Artagnan.

D'ARTAGNAN: I've given my word to a lady.

ATHOS: That's a dangerous thing to do, d'Artagnan.

D'ARTAGNAN: I love danger! Are you with me? All for one...

OTHERS: And one for all!

THEY LEAVE.

**END OF SCENE ONE**

## SCENE TWO

FOLLOWING THE DIAMONDS.  
THE INNS.

THIS SETTING REPRESENTS VARIOUS INNS. PERHAPS A BOARD / BANNER, CHANGING WITH INN NAMES / FLAGS CAN INDICATES CHANGING LOCATIONS. THIS SHOULD BE THEATRICAL - ACTORS CAN ALTER BOARDS / BANNER. [NB. THE SAME SETTING IS USED FOR ACT TWO, SCENE 1.]

BOARD READS: THE OLD NAG.

MUSIC.

LANDLADY & CUSTOMERS OCCUPY THE INN. WE MIGHT SEE MILADY HURRYING ON HER JOURNEY, AND ROCHEFORT CONFIDING WITH LANDLADY & THEN TAKING COVER, AS PLANCHET ENTERS & ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.

PLANCHET: (TO AUDIENCE) So d'Artagnan and the Musketeers boldly set off for England with their servants... And, well, as we servants are basically nobodies I will be all of them. There's Porthos' man, Mousqueton. (MIMICS A FOPPISH CHARACTER) Hello - My real name's Boniface - but Monsieur Porthos says it's a sappy name - I always thought it suited me! (AS HIMSELF) Then there's Bazin, who serves Aramis so loyally. (MIMICS PIOUS) "I will be so so glad when Aramis gives up his wild ways and joins the church as he promises." (AS HIMSELF) Agreed Monsieur Aramis does disappear to 'read the scriptures' on many an occasion - but why should that leave him exhausted and smelling of scent... (AS BAZIN, PIOUS) "My master simply worships God's creations with a little too much ardour". (AS HIMSELF) Aye - particularly if they come in the shape of a pretty young woman who smells of cologne... And then there's Grimaud - Athos' retainer. (IMITATES COWED, HUMBLE) Now I couldn't imitate Grimaud's speech, because he doesn't - speak. Athos - quite rightly in my opinion - thought servants should be seen and not heard. So he gave Grimaud a good thrashing, and now he's as loyal as the finest dog, and communicates by signals.

ATHOS: (FROM OFF, SHOUTS) Grimaud - who are you talking to?

PLANCHET (AS GRIMAUD) SIGNALS WITH ELABORATE SIGN LANGUAGE TO ATHOS.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) Get the idea?

ATHOS, ARAMIS, PORTHOS & D'ARTAGNAN ARRIVE.

PORTHOS: Mousqueton - hurry.

PLANCHET: (AS MOUSQUETON) Coming, master. (HE SKIPS SOME OF THE WAY)

ARAMIS: Bazin, the Lord is sending us on another mission to test our spirit.

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN. CLASPS HANDS) Thy will be done.

D'ARTAGNAN: Planchet! England awaits.

PLANCHET: I know I might be missing something obvious, sir - but where are the servants' mounts?

D'ARTAGNAN/MUSKETEERS: Ha!

ARAMIS: Didn't the good Lord provide you with legs, Planchet?

PLANCHET: He did, sir - and very grateful I am. Ah, I see - I'm to walk. Simple really. (ASIDE) How far's England?

AS THE MUSKETEERS ARE ABOUT TO DEPART ONE OF THE CUSTOMERS TURNS TO THEM WITH A GOBLET RAISED.

1st CUSTOMER: Gentlemen - before you embark on your journey, let me drink a toast with you.

PORTHOS: Well said, stranger.

1st CUSTOMER: Let us drink to the health of the Cardinal!

PORTHOS: Do my ears deceive me...

ALL CUSTOMERS: The Cardinal!

PORTHOS, RILED, GRABS THE GOBLET FROM THE 1st CUSTOMER.

PORTHOS: We only drink to the health of the King!

HE TIPS DRINK OVER THE 1st CUSTOMER'S HEAD.

ATHOS: Porthos!

1st CUSTOMER DRAWS HIS SWORD.

ARAMIS: Now look what you've done.

D'ARTAGNAN: We haven't time for sport, Porthos.

PORTHOS: (DRAWS HIS SWORD) You carry on - I'll deal with this traitor and catch you up. (TO CUSTOMER) Right, treacherous dog - fight!

THE CUSTOMER AND OTHERS FROM THE INN DRIVE PORTHOS OFF.

ATHOS: Brilliant - one down already.

THEY BEGIN TO MOVE OFF. PLANCHET COMES QUICKLY TO AUDIENCE.

PLANCHET: And we hadn't progressed much further when...

A HOODED BEGGAR STEPS INTO THE PATH. HE'S SUPPORTED BY A CRUTCH.

D'ARTAGNAN: Shift man...

THE BEGGAR STAYS WHERE HE IS.

ATHOS: Move...

THE BEGGAR DOESN'T.

ARAMIS: I'll make him move.

HE DRAWS HIS SWORD & APPROACHES THE BEGGAR, WHO SUDDENLY LIFTS HIS CRUTCH WHICH IS IN FACT A MUSKET. THE MUSKETEERS DIVE OUT OF THE WAY, PLANCHET INTO SOME BUSHES. BUT ARAMIS IS HIT IN THE SHOULDER. THE BEGGAR THEN FIRES A PISTOL. THERE'S A YELP FROM THE BUSHES. THE BEGGAR HURRIES OFF. PLANCHET EMERGES FROM BUSHES HOLDING HIS BACKSIDE.

PLANCHET: (MOUSQUETON VOICE, SHRIEKS) Oo, sir, I've been shot in me derriere! (AS HIMSELF, ASIDE, GRINS) It was Mousqueton.

ATHOS: Aramis, are you fit to continue?

ARAMIS, WITH HIS WOUNDED ARM, RAISES HIS SWORD WITH BRAVADO.

ARAMIS: Yes...

HE IMMEDIATELY DROPS IT IN AGONY.

ATHOS: You better find somewhere to recover. And you Mousqueton... Bazin can stay and take care of you.

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN) Halleluiah!

D'ARTAGNAN: (FINDS OINTMENT JAR, AND GIVES IT TO ARAMIS) This will heal your wounds.

PLANCHET: (AS MOUSQUETON) Oh, Monsieur d'Artagnan, you're a saint.

D'ARTAGNAN: It's too precious to waste on a servant's seat.

ARAMIS: I think I can spare you some, Mousqueton.

PLANCHET: (AS MOUSQUETON) I always knew you were a good 'un, Monsieur Aramis.

ARAMIS: Don't expect me to apply it! Now, let us find an Inn to recover (SEES THE INN. SIGN BECOMES 'THE NAG'S OTHER INN'. ARAMIS GOES IN & OFF.

PLANCHET: (AS HIMSELF, TO AUDIENCE) And so it was the four of us - well, d'Artagnan, Athos, and two nobodies - the silent Grimaud and moi who ventured on.

D'ARTAGNAN: Isn't this splendid - things going so well.

ATHOS & PLANCHET LOOK.

D'ARTAGNAN: In my wildest dreams I couldn't have anticipated such adventures. We are truly blessed.

ATHOS: I'm glad your spirits haven't been dampened.

D'ARTAGNAN: Why should they be?

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) There, what did I say. We mere mortals would think such a run of events - Porthos left to his fate, Aramis wounded, Mousqueton shot up the backside, was bad luck to say the least. Not a bit of it. Great men like my master see life as it really is.

ATHOS: Come on, d'Artagnan, let's refresh ourselves at this conveniently sited Inn before we have any more good fortune.

THEY GO TO THE INN. A NEW SIGN, 'THE DEJA VU TAVERN', APPEARS. THE LANDLADY GREETES & SERVES THEM. 4 UBIQUITOUS CUSTOMERS PRESENT. MEANWHILE, ROCHEFORT ENTERS UNSEEN...

ROCHEFORT: (ASIDE) "Luck", "Good fortune"... "Bon chance"... (LAUGHS) Their progress isn't a matter of chance or fortune. Every turn on the journey to England, every twist of fate... is dogged by my agents, and determined by me. They won't see England. They won't prop up the rotten Royals. They won't cheat the church of its rightful position. Two down... Two to go... Soon to be one...

HE INDICATES THE INN. ATHOS & D'ARTAGNAN GET UP TO GO.

LANDLADY: (SHOUTS AT ATHOS) You cheat. You twister.

ATHOS: I've settled the bill.

LANDLADY: Liar!

D'ARTAGNAN: He paid.

LANDLADY: With counterfeit money!

D'ARTAGNAN DRAWS HIS SWORD. THE CUSTOMERS LINE UP AGAINST THEM.

ATHOS: (STAYS HIM) I'll deal with it.

D'ARTAGNAN: She insulted you, she insulted us all.

ATHOS: (FIRM) I'll deal with it - you go on. I'll catch you up at the port.

D'ARTAGNAN HESITATES.

ATHOS: According to you the mission is vital.

D'ARTAGNAN: It is.

ATHOS: And as you haven't seen fit to share it with us, only you know what's to be done.

D'ARTAGNAN: All right - Planchet, Calais awaits.

D'ARTAGNAN AND PLANCHET LEAVE. ATHOS WATCHES THEM GO. HE DOESN'T SEE THE LANDLADY PICK UP A FLAGON OFF THE TABLE. SHE CRACKS HIM OVER THE HEAD WITH IT. THE CUSTOMERS DRAG HIM OFF. THE SIGN IS CHANGED TO 'LE MAL DE MER', CALAIS. THE CUSTOMERS WEAR NAUTICAL CAPS. DE WARDES ARRIVES. HIS SERVANT, LUBIN, ENTERS (FROM THE PORT GOVERNOR'S HOUSE) WITH TWO OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS.

DE WARDES: Right, Lubin, do you have the permits to sail to England?

LUBIN: Yes, Comte de Wardes... (HANDS THEM OVER)

DE WARDES: (SURVEYS PERMITS) We are honoured - only those on the Cardinal's business are allowed to leave the country... Let's embark.

D'ARTAGNAN & PLANCHET ENTER ON FOOT.

D'ARTAGNAN: (SHOUTS) Hi there. Yes, you, sir!

DE WARDES: Who is this impertinent scoundrel?

D'ARTAGNAN: Are you deaf?

DE WARDES: I would teach you a lesson, my lad, if my ship wasn't about to leave.

D'ARTAGNAN: What's that you've got? (POINTS TO THE PERMIT)

DE WARDES: Do you know who you are addressing?

D'ARTAGNAN: (IGNORES HIM) I believe that is a permit to sail, and I need it!  
So hand it over!! Now!!!

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) He's not one to beat about the bush.

D'ARTAGNAN: Planchet - your chance to make a name for yourself - take his  
servant.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) What an opportunity - the prospect of dying along side  
my master.

DE WARDES: Stand aside, monsieur - this is your final warning.

D'ARTAGNAN: Final warning! I have tried to be reasonable, but... en garde!

D'ARTAGNAN, FOLLOWED BY PLANCHET, DRAW THEIR  
SWORDS.

PLANCHET: (TO LUBIN) En garde!

THEY FIGHT. LUBIN & PLANCHET'S EFFORTS ARE  
CAREFULLY MUTED.

D'ARTAGNAN: (STRIKES DE WARDES THREE TIMES) That is for Porthos,  
that for Aramis, and that for Athos.

D'ARTAGNAN IS VICTORIOUS, DE WARDES WOUNDED.  
LUBIN GIVES UP. PLANCHET VICTORIOUS.

DE WARDES: You will answer to the Cardinal for this. What is your name?

D'ARTAGNAN: I am (READS PERMIT) Comte de Wardes, and this  
(PLANCHET) is Lubin - until we arrive at Dover.

DE WARDES: You are no gentleman.

D'ARTAGNAN: Ha! If I wasn't a gentleman I'd kill you, polish you off. But as  
you've kindly loaned me the permit I'll spare you. Now be off.

LUBIN HELPS DE WARDES OFF.

D'ARTAGNAN: Right, Planchet - England.

PLANCHET FOLLOWS, SHADOW FENCING AS THEY EXIT.

ENGLAND. INN SIGN CHANGES - 'YE DUKES WELL INN'

THE CROSS OF ST GEORGE FLUTTERS. MUSIC.  
LORD BUCKINGHAM & MILADY ENTER. SHE LINKS HIM.  
THEY ARE INTIMATE.

BUCKINGHAM: I don't know how I can thank you, Milady. To risk your life to bring me a message.

MILADY: I would gladly lay down my life for my Queen.

BUCKINGHAM: What did she say again?

MILADY: (CLOSE TO HIM) She said, I love you, my Lord Buckingham. She said, I can not wait until we're together, close together, for ever.

BUCKINGHAM: (CARRIED AWAY) Did she indeed. (COLLECTS HIMSELF) You must take a message back... Tell her we will be together... tell her she is ever close to my heart - as are her diamonds.

MILADY: Her diamonds, my Lord?

BUCKINGHAM OPENS HIS JACKET. HE WEARS ANNE'S BROOCH PINNED INSIDE.

BUCKINGHAM: Twelve sparkling diamonds...

MILADY: You are truly in love... (BEAT) Oh, she sent you something else. (SHE KISSES HIM)

BUCKINGHAM: Milady...

HE ALMOST RESPONDS, BUT SHE PULLS AWAY.

MILADY: I must return to her.

BUCKINGHAM: Of course - safe journey.

MILADY TURNS AWAY & STOPS, SHE HAS SOMETHING IN HER HAND.

MILADY: (ASIDE) A safe journey alright. I'll keep these safe. Two small diamond tags - enough to destroy a dynasty.

SHE GOES JUST AS D'ARTAGNAN ARRIVES. HE CATCHES A GLIMPSE OF HER. A MOMENT. SHE GOES.

PLANCHET: Do you know the lady, sir?

D'ARTAGNAN: (RUBS BACK OF HIS HEAD) She seems familiar...

PLANCHET: A would-be musketeer is familiar with many a lady, I dare say.

D'ARTAGNAN: I dare say...

BUCKINGHAM SEES THEM.

D'ARTAGNAN: My Lord Buckingham.

BUCKINGHAM: Who wishes to know?

D'ARTAGNAN: d'Artagnan - loyal servant to (LOOKS ABOUT) Queen Anne.

BUCKINGHAM: Can I be so blessed she's sent another messenger of love.

D'ARTAGNAN: I'm no messenger of love, your Lordship - I'm a fighting man.

BUCKINGHAM: Have you come to fight me?

D'ARTAGNAN: When France and England are at war, sir, I will do, and gladly. I can't wait... But for now - She sent this.

D'ARTAGNAN HANDS OVER LETTER FROM QUEEN.  
BUCKINGHAM SNIFFS IT.

D'ARTAGNAN: Could you read it, then sniff it, sir.

BUCKINGHAM DOES.

BUCKINGHAM: She needs the brooch back otherwise all will be revealed...  
Take it with all haste... (OPENS HIS JACKET & TAKES  
BROOCH OFF. HE LOOKS) There are two diamonds missing!

D'ARTAGNAN: What, sir?

BUCKINGHAM: Two diamond tags. They were there only now when I showed  
the brooch to Lady de Winter.

D'ARTAGNAN: Lady de Winter?

BUCKINGHAM: Milady...

D'ARTAGNAN: Milady...

BUCKINGHAM INDICATES THE DIRECTION SHE LEFT.  
D'ARTAGNAN FEELS THE BACK OF HIS HEAD.

D'ARTAGNAN: That's her! The woman who met the epistle pilferer, the cob criticiser, the d'Artagnan detractor.

BUCKINGHAM: What are you on about, man?

D'ARTAGNAN: If I'm not mistaken she's taking those tags to the Cardinal.

BUCKINGHAM: But she's loyal to the Queen.

D'ARTAGNAN: Ha!

PLANCHET: Ha!

D'ARTAGNAN: She's a traitor.

BUCKINGHAM: (LEAVING) So all is lost.... Dear oh dear oh dear.

D'ARTAGNAN FOLLOWS. PLANCHET HANGS BACK.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) Dear oh dear oh dear.  
I'm not very good at numbers, but twelve tags minus two tags equals (COUNTS ON HIS FINGERS) one Queen minus her...  
(DOES A CHOPPING MOTION TO HIS NECK)  
(AMBLES OFF) Dear oh dear oh dear.

## **END OF SCENE TWO**

## **SCENE THREE**

THE MASKED ROYAL BALL.

THE WHOLE COMPANY (APART FROM RICHELIEU & KING LOUIS) FORM THE CHORUS. THEY ARE MASKED & WILL BECOME GUESTS AT THE BALL. AT THIS STAGE WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY SOME OF THOSE PRESENT. AMONGST THE GUESTS ARE QUEEN ANNE, MILADY, CONSTANCE, ROCHEFORT, DE TREVILLE, D'ARTAGNAN, PLANCHET, BONACIEUX. SOME MASKS MIGHT BE ON

HANDLES, SO THE AUDIENCE CAN IDENTIFY CERTAIN CHARACTERS. D'ARTAGNAN & PLANCHET SHOULD REMAIN ANONYMOUS.

AS THE MUSIC ENDS 6 CHARACTERS - THE QUEEN, MILADY, CONSTANCE, ROCHEFORT, M. BONACIEUX, AND ONE OTHER, PERFORM A FORMAL DANCE. CHOREOGRAPHY ALLOWS THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGES TO TAKE PLACE. OTHER GUESTS (INCLUDING THE DISGUISED D'ARTAGNAN & PLANCHET) LOOK ON. THERE IS A SENSE OF CONSPIRACY, INTRIGUE, EXPECTANCY.

ROCHEFORT: (TO MILADY) How did England suit you, Lady de Winter?

MILADY: (TO ROCHEFORT) I think it will suit the Cardinal.

CONSTANCE: (TO QUEEN) I have failed you, your Highness. I promised to retrieve your brooch... I failed miserably.

ANNE: (TO CONSTANCE) No, Constance - I'm the failure. How can I reproach you. It is I who has betrayed my husband. And I am the one who has lived a lie, which will now be revealed.

CONSTANCE: (TO QUEEN) Surely, the lie would have been to deny your love of Lord Buckingham.

BONACIEUX: (HISSES TO CONSTANCE) What are you saying, wife?

CONSTANCE: (TO BONACIEUX) Nothing, husband dear.

BONACIEUX: (GRUMBLES) It didn't sound like nothing to me...

THEN HE'S GROVELLING, OBSEQUIOUS, AS HE NOW PARTNERS MILADY.

BONACIEUX: (TO MILADY) It is such an honour for I, Bonacieux, a humble tailor, to be in such company.

MILADY: Yes.

MILADY IS NOW LANDED WITH BONACIEUX AS...

ANNE: (TO CONSTANCE) From your tone, Constance, I suspect that you also are caught between living a lie and being loyal to your feelings.

CONSTANCE: (TO QUEEN) I don't know what my feelings are - I felt I could trust someone but his fine words have turned out to be nothing but hot air.

ANNE: (TO CONSTANCE) A lesson - men cannot be relied on. You will learn that from my bitter experience.

CONSTANCE: (TO QUEEN) d'Artagnan was so sure of himself - so confident.

ANNE: (TO CONSTANCE) Self-confidence is a hair's breadth from arrogance.

AS BONACIEUX COMES UP AGAIN...

BONACIEUX: (TO CONSTANCE) You're ignoring me, Madame. Be careful, or another might have me.

CONSTANCE: (LAUGHS) Who?

BONACIEUX INDICATES MILADY. HE FLAUNTS HIMSELF BUT SHE IGNORES HIM. CONSTANCE LAUGHS.

BONACIEUX: (ANGRY) Do not ignore me, that is all.

CONSTANCE: (TO BONACIEUX) It was not deliberate, dearest.

BONACIEUX: (TO CONSTANCE) Deliberate or not, I won't have it.

CONSTANCE: (TO BONACIEUX) My Mistress needs reassurance.

BONACIEUX: (TO CONSTANCE) Rumour has it, wife dear, that it isn't reassurance the Queen craves – it's the contents of an Englishman's breeches.

AND HE MOVES AWAY, SATISFIED HE'S MADE HIS POINT.  
ANNE: (TO CONSTANCE) Who is that dreadful little man?

CONSTANCE: (TO QUEEN) He is my husband.

ANNE: (TO CONSTANCE) Ah... I'm sorry.

CONSTANCE: So am I.

THEY LAUGH. BUT MONSIEUR BONACIEUX IS NEAR AGAIN.

BONACIEUX: (TO CONSTANCE) Let me in on the joke.

CONSTANCE: (TO BONACIEUX) You are.

BONACIEUX: (PLEASED) Good... splendid... Ha! What do you mean?

BUT CONSTANCE HAS MOVED AWAY.

ROCHEFORT: (TO BONACIEUX) What gives the Queen reason to laugh, Monsieur Bonacieux?

BONACIEUX: (TO ROCHEFORT, MIFFED) Who knows - she's Austrian!

ROCHEFORT: (TO BONACIEUX) Something tells me she won't be laughing for much longer... she may never laugh again...

BONACIEUX: (STILL PIQUED) It'll still be too soon for me - and the Cardinal, I dare say.

ROCHEFORT SHUSHES HIM, CONSPIRATORIAL, AS MILADY MOVES NEXT TO BONACIEUX.

BONACIEUX: (WAXING LYRICAL TO MILADY) Am I dreaming? Should I not be making or amending the backside of a fat man's pantaloons! No - I, Bonacieux, am here - at the Cardinal's request - gazing on... on an angel.

MILADY: Yes.

BONACIEUX: What is your name, my charismatic coquette?

MILADY: You awful, impudent little tradesman! How dare you pry into my life.

BONACIEUX: I only asked your name!

MILADY: My life is mine - past, present and future. If you value yours, you will not intrude.

BONACIEUX SPEECHLESS.

ROCHEFORT: (TO BONACIEUX) What's the matter?

BONACIEUX: (APOPLEPTIC) It is I... I think I... I think I... I think I said something... I think I shouldn't... I think...

MILADY: (TO ROCHEFORT) Can't you have him executed?

BONACIEUX: I knew I was out of my depth.

ROCHEFORT: (MAKING LIGHT. TO MILADY) Monsieur Bonacieux is a fine fellow.

BONACIEUX: Oh, I don't know.

ROCHEFORT: ...a friend to the Cardinal...

BONACIEUX: Oh, I wouldn't say that.

ROCHEFORT: ...he's also got a wonderful sense of humour.

BONACIEUX: Well, I do like a good joke nearly as well as the next man.

ROCHEFORT: (OVER HEARTY) Execute him... ha, ha, ha...

MILADY: (CATCHES ON) Chop his head off... send him to the Bastille... ha, ha, ha...

ROCHEFORT: (TO BONACIEUX) Milady too has a good sense of humour.

BONACIEUX: (SLOWLY, UNCERTAIN) Ah - I see - a joke... a jest... Ha, ha, ha. Chop off my head... (IMITATES BEING DECAPITATED) Behead me. Drain the blood from my brain. Chop, chop, chop... Stick it on a pike... Ho, ho, ho... Stick another pike up my... He, he, he. What a sense of humour – I can see you aren't Austrian.

HE REALISES ROCHEFORT & MILADY HAVE MOVED AWAY - PEOPLE LOOK AT HIM. HE'S EMBARRASSED & TRIES TO CATCH UP WITH THE DANCE.

ROCHEFORT: (TO MILADY) It will be the Queen, not the tailor, who is on nodding terms with the Executioner.

THEY LAUGH.

ROCHEFORT: You really do have a sense of humour.

MILADY: No.

A FAN FARE. THE DANCING STOPS. THE QUEEN IS FEARFUL. ONE OF THE ONLOOKING GUESTS FORMALLY

ANNOUNCES THE ARRIVAL OF KING LOUIS. THE KING ENTERS DURING...

GUEST: Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, His Majesty, King Louis the Thirteenth, ruler of France and all her Dominions.

THE GUESTS BOW / CURTSY, AND THEN APPLAUD. BUT THE KING NOTICES NONE OF THIS - HE'S A WORRIED MAN - HE HOLDS UP A WORRIED MASK TO HIS FACE & PACES.

LOUIS: Yes, yes, yes. (ASIDE) 'His Majesty'... 'ruler of France'! I don't even rule my own household.

ANNE: (ASIDE) This is the moment. The time anticipated. When the folly of snatched loving minutes, which seemed to be worth more than the rest of my life, grins smugly upon me. This is the cold waking sweat of the small hours. This is the dread. The hour when hope ends. My frailty is put on display. When a nation fractures.

CONSTANCE: (TO ANNE) Perhaps His Majesty won't notice you aren't wearing the diamond tags.

LOUIS: (LOOKS OVER, ASIDE) My God, she's not wearing the diamond tags!

ANNE: I'm sure the Cardinal will kindly point it out.

LOUIS: (ASIDE) The Cardinal warned me she wouldn't. I told her to. "Wear the brooch I gave you", I said. But is she wearing it? She is not! What's her game? What's his game? Humiliating me - that's what... (BEAT) Perhaps Richelieu won't come. Perhaps he's got more important matters - like torturing dissenters. Then I can forget the whole business. (RELAXES) Even now the Cardinal is probably in Rome, hobnobbing with the Pope.

THE CARDINAL'S THEME. EVERYONE STOPS.

GUEST: (ANNOUNCES) His Eminence Cardinal Richelieu.

HE ENTERS. HE DOESN'T WEAR A MASK. HE'S HAPPY.

ANNE: He smiles.

CONSTANCE: He grins.

LOUIS: He gloats.

ROCHEFORT: (DELIGHTED) He smiles.

BONACIEUX: (DELIGHTED) He grins.

MILADY: (DELIGHTED) He gloats.

MILADY QUICKLY MOVES TO CARDINAL.

CARDINAL: Milady.

MILADY: Your Grace...

CARDINAL: You have something for me?

MILADY: Just two diamond tags.

SHE HANDS THEM OVER.

CARDINAL: You have done well...

HE GOES TO KING.

CARDINAL: (LOUD) Her Majesty looks well, Your Highness.

LOUIS: She does. (RESIGNED) I suppose you think her brooch is particularly dazzling.

CARDINAL: (LOOKS ACROSS) She isn't wearing it - what a shame.

LOUIS: (ASIDE) It's obviously ruined his night.

CARDINAL: I wonder why... I wonder if it's because these two tags are missing. (HANDS THEM TO KING) Taken when it was in the possession of Lord Buckingham.

LOUIS: (EXPLODES) Stop this inquisition, sir - you're treating me like a protestant! (TO QUEEN) Why are you not wearing that damn brooch, Madame? Is it because you gave it to another? Come here.

SHE STANDS STILL.

LOUIS: Come here, I say. (TO TWO BYSTANDERS) Bring her here.

THE TWO MASKED BYSTANDERS TAKE AN ARM EACH.  
ONE IS D'ARTAGNAN, THE OTHER PLANCHET.

D'ARTAGNAN: (QUIET) Why don't you wear your brooch, Madame?

ANNE: Why you insolent...

HE PUTS IT IN HER HAND. SHE APPROACHES THE KING.  
THE CARDINAL GLOATS, MILADY, ROCHEFORT, &  
M.BONACIEUX BESIDE HIM.

LOUIS: So wife - where's the brooch?

ANNE: (INNOCENT) Which brooch?

LOUIS/CARDINAL ET AL: The brooch!

ANNE: Oh - this brooch. (SHE HOLDS IT ALOFT)

LOUIS: (TO CARDINAL) She has the brooch.

CARDINAL: But are there twelve diamonds...

LOUIS: (COUNTS) One, two...

ALL OTHERS JOIN IN THE COUNT.

...three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

CARDINAL, MILADY, ROCHEFORT, M.BONACIEUX TURN  
AWAY, TRIUMPHANT.

LOUIS: ...eleven, twelve. There are twelve tags.

CARDINAL ET AL: Twelve tags?

ANNE: Twelve tags!

LOUIS: (PRODUCE THE TWO TAGS CARDINAL GAVE HIM) Then  
what are these?

ANNE: For me! (TO THE COURT) My darling husband has bought me  
two extra tags! Ear-rings!

SHE KISSES HIM.

LOUIS: Let us dance and be merry.

MUSIC STARTS AGAIN (QUIETLY). HE HANDS HIS WORRIED MASK TO THE CARDINAL. THE KING WAITS FOR ANNE TO JOIN HIM.

CONSTANCE: (TO ANNE) How?

ANNE: (TO CONSTANCE) Your Gascon is quite remarkable.

CONSTANCE: (GLANCES AT MASKED D'ARTAGNAN) He did not let me down.

D'ARTAGNAN BOWS.

ANNE: He did not let me down!

LOUIS: (IMPATIENT) I stand poised to dance, Madame, poised to dance. Is it not time Paris saw you look adoringly into your Monarch's eyes...

ANNE: (SLIPS A RING INTO D'ARTAGNAN'S HAND) Take this ring - I can never thank you enough.

ANNE GOES TO KING. CONSTANCE TO D'ARTAGNAN. THE CARDINAL, WITH NERVOUS MILADY, ROCHEFORT IN TOW, COME FORWARD.

CARDINAL: (ANGRY) I am surrounded by incompetence...

MILADY: But I followed your orders to the letter. You saw the tags.

CARDINAL: The whole court saw me made a fool of. And as for you, Rochefort - my head of intelligence. Ha.

ROCHEFORT LOOKS TOWARDS D'ARTAGNAN & CONSTANCE.

CARDINAL: You aren't even listening, man.

D'ARTAGNAN & CONSTANCE, CLOSE TO EACH OTHER, REMOVE THEIR MASKS.

CONSTANCE: I thought you'd failed me.

D'ARTAGNAN: How could I.

BONACIEUX: (TO CARDINAL) That Gascon blackguard d'Artagnan - he's seducing my wife to boot! I'll double his rent.

CARDINAL: (TO BONACIEUX) You are under arrest.

BONACIEUX: Thank you, your Eminence... Me - what charge?

CARDINAL: Failing to control your wife.

STARTS TO GO.

CARDINAL: (TO ROCHEFORT & MILADY) If that peasant and the serving maid aren't brought to account you two will soon join this wretch in the Bastille.

ROCHEFORT: Something will be done, your Grace.

CARDINAL LEAVES WITH MISERABLE BONACIEUX.  
ROCHEFORT & MILADY WATCH CONSTANCE &  
D'ARTAGNAN FOR A MOMENT. CONSTANCE &  
D'ARTAGNAN REPLACE THEIR MASKS & HE TAKES HER  
HAND & LEADS HER OFF.

MILADY: (BITTER) Something will be done.

MILADY & ROCHEFORT GO.

PLANCHET: (REMOVES HIS MASK) Remarkable. And that is how I, Planchet, attended the Royal Ball. How did Monsieur d'Artagnan produce two extra tags - easy, he had two more made in London. They were fakes. A cynic might say they're all fakes - but not I. I don't even know what a cynic is... So our honoured guests are off to the banquet. You are welcome (BEAT) - to go to the servants quarters for your cakes and ale. See you soon. A bientot.

HE LEAVES.

**END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO, SCENE ONE**

THE REUNION  
THE INNS.  
(SETTING AS FOR ACT 1, SC 2)  
MUSIC.

A TABLEAU, SUGGESTING RUMOUR, WHISPERED  
CONVERSATIONS, OUTRAGE, SUSPICION.

PLANCHET ENTERS.

PLANCHET: There are more rumour mongers in Paris than fish mongers! Not that I listen to tittle tattle... When they say the Queen loves another - I say, 'ridiculous!' I cover my ears. (DOES SO) And when it's declared the Cardinal once loved her and is driven by jealousy - 'ludicrous!' I say. I find somewhere quiet, away from this nonsense - a tranquil lake to spit in. And when they say (FOR EFFECT) *AND WHEN THEY SAY* Cardinal Richelieu wants war with England to thwart Buckingham's designs on her Majesty - and Buckingham wants war with France to claim the Queen, I say - 'bizarre!' When they make these slanders against nobility, I... I... sing out loud to obliterate this dangerous talk... (SINGS OUT LOUD "FRERE JACQUES", HIS HAND STILL OVER HIS EARS)

D'ARTAGNAN & CONSTANCE ENTER.

D'ARTAGNAN: What are you doing, Planchet?

PLANCHET DOESN'T HEAR, CARRIES ON.

D'ARTAGNAN: (KICKS HIM UP THE BACKSIDE) You've heard the good news then.

PLANCHET: I don't listen to rumours.

D'ARTAGNAN: This is no rumour - we're at war!

PLANCHET: How terrible...

D'ARTAGNAN: Are you mad, man - or deaf! I said, we're at war. I say Hoo-rah!

PLANCHET: Oh yes, right - Hoo-rah! (BEAT) Who with?

D'ARTAGNAN: Does it matter?

PLANCHET: Not really.

D'ARTAGNAN: England, for what it's worth.

PLANCHET: Hoo-rah!

D'ARTAGNAN: We must find Porthos, Aramis and Athos. They won't want to miss the fun.

PLANCHET: Supposing they're dead, Monsieur d'Artagnan.

D'ARTAGNAN: That's treacherous talk!

PLANCHET: We haven't seen or heard from them since our journey to England.

D'ARTAGNAN: They're Musketeers, man, and there's a war to be fought. What kind of chap gets killed before the action starts?

PLANCHET: (ASIDE, IMPRESSED) The logic of a man born to greatness.

D'ARTAGNAN: Now - go and prepare for the journey.

PLANCHET: Yes, sir.

PLANCHET EXITS.

CONSTANCE: This is when I should weep, and wave a flag. I'll do neither - I'll wave a flag when you come back - I'll weep if you don't.

D'ARTAGNAN: I'll come back - I'm d'Artagnan.

CONSTANCE: That's why I know I can't stop you. You wouldn't be the one I...

D'ARTAGNAN: Love?

CONSTANCE: Love. (BEAT) I sometimes wish you were a tailor though - safe at home.

D'ARTAGNAN: You will not be safe at home... the Cardinal and Milady were humiliated.

CONSTANCE: Danger! Pah! Listen to me - I'm sounding more and more like a d'Artagnan.

D'ARTAGNAN: Perhaps you will be one day...

THEY KISS AS PLANCHET RETURNS WITH A SACK OF SUPPLIES AND ARM FULL OF WEAPONS.

PLANCHET: All ready and correct...

D'ARTAGNAN: Ironic, don't you think, Planchet.

PLANCHET: Very ironic. It's ironic alright. The most ironic thing... What's 'ironic'?

D'ARTAGNAN: It's ironic Lord Buckingham's mistress gave me a ring, which I have sold, to buy weapons to fight...

PLANCHET: The Duke's armies.

D'ARTAGNAN: Do you understand what ironic is now, Planchet?

PLANCHET BLANK.

D'ARTAGNAN: Fool.

PLANCHET: (LAUGHS) I was being ironic.

D'ARTAGNAN: You're still a fool.

CONSTANCE: It's ironic that now you and I have found each other, you must go away.

THEY KISS.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) A cruel irony indeed...

D'ARTAGNAN: (EXITING) Right - let's find Porthos and see what deeds of daring-do the mighty one has accomplished.

D'ARTAGNAN & PLANCHET LEAVE. CONSTANCE, SAD, GOES IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

INN BOARD: THE OLD NAGS INN.  
LANDLADY & CUSTOMERS OCCUPY THE INN.

LOUD GUNSHOT. PORTHOS APPEARS, BRANDISHING TWO PISTOLS. HE FIRES OFF THE SECOND. HE'S DRUNK. THE LANDLADY & CUSTOMERS TAKE COVER.

PORTHOS: How dare you impugn the integrity of a King's Musketeer.

LANDLADY: Be reasonable.

PORTHOS: Reasonable - pah - I'll show you reasonable - I'll blow your brains out - I'm a crack shot. (PORTHOS AIMS, PULLS TRIGGER, IT CLICKS)

LANDLADY: With respect - you haven't loaded it.

PORTHOS: Are you telling me, a Musketeer, about... er... Musketry?

LANDLADY: Er...

PORTHOS DROPS GUN, SLUMPS DOWN, FINDS A WINE BOTTLE, SWIGS. IT'S EMPTY.

LANDLADY: The bottle's empty too, sir.

PLANCHET: What kind of Landlady are you...

LANDLADY: Hard done to...

PORTHOS: Send me some wine...

LANDLADY: Give me some money.

PORTHOS: You insult me, madame.

LANDLADY: You bankrupt me, sir.

PORTHOS: (LOUD) Send me some wine!

LANDLADY: (LOUD) Give me some money!

PORTHOS HUMPHS, THEN FALLS ASLEEP. D'ARTAGANAN & PLANCHET ARRIVE. THEY DON'T YET SEE PORTHOS.

D'ARTAGNAN: Woman - bring us food and drink.

LANDLADY: I'd say a fellow with such a noble bearing...

D'ARTAGNAN POSES.

LANDLADY: ...would be a man who'd settle his account in full, on time, and was more than generous with the gratuities.

D'ARTAGNAN: (STRUTS) I don't know about that - I do know you know a gentleman when you see one. Now madame, some wine - your best, mind you.

LANDLADY: Ah... a problem.

D'ARTAGNAN: This is an Inn, isn't it!

LANDLADY: It was - until a troublesome guest arrived. Since then I have not received payment.

D'ARTAGNAN: I'll pay for my wine, damn you.

LANDLADY: Alas - my wine has been plundered.

D'ARTAGNAN: By this same vagabond?

LANDLADY: He claims to be awaiting the arrival of money from a... lady friend.

D'ARTAGNAN: (ANGRY) Is my throat to scorch while we all wait for this rogue's drab to send funds! Where is he?

LANDLADY INDICATES PORTHOS' ROOM.

D'ARTAGNAN: Hi there - you, sir!

NO RESPONSE.

D'ARTAGNAN: Are you deaf?

RATTLES A DOOR, OR THROWS SOMETHING. PORTHOS STIRS.

D'ARTAGNAN: Show yourself, you surly rascal.

PORTHOS: Surly rascal!

WITHOUT LOOKING HE FINDS A MUSKET & FIRES IT OFF.

PORTHOS: Now clear off, whoever you are. Hostess - more wine!

D'ARTAGNAN: Porthos...

PORTHOS: (PEERS) Is that the young Gascon?

D'ARTAGNAN: It is my friend.

PORTHOS: D'Artagnan!

PORTHOS HURRIES TO D'ARTAGNAN, THEY HUG.

D'ARTAGNAN: You're alive then...

PORTHOS: I'm a Musketeer! (BEAT) With a sore head...

LANDLADY: (TO PLANCHET) They're companions? I said some terrible things to your master of his friend.

PLANCHET: You did.

PORTHOS: (CALLS) Mousqueton!

NO RESPONSE.

PORTHOS: Mousqueton!

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) Oh yes... that's me. (BECOMES MOUSQUETON)  
Yes, master, here I am - loyal as the day is long.

PORTHOS: When you called on Madame Coquenard, did she give you the money I requested?

PLANCHET: (AS MOUSQUETON. GOSSIPY) Well, master, I told her you loved her with all your being - from the bottom of your boots to the very hilt of your sword... from the barrel of your musket, to the tickle of your plume...

PORTHOS: Yes, yes, yes - I sent my compliments - but did she send me cash?

PLANCHET: (AS MOUSQUETON) Er... mm...

PORTHOS: Tell me, man - or I'll tell this good landlady it was you who stole her wine.

PLANCHET: (AS MOUSQUETON) You drank it!

PORTHOS: Tell me - did she send the money?

PLANCHET: (AS MOUSQUETON) No.

PORTHOS: No?

PLANCHET: (AS MOUSQUETON) Not a bean, not a brass half pistole. She said her husband wouldn't give it her. He's a solicitor and mean as can be.

PORTHOS: There's gratitude - I put a smile on the pettyfogger's wife's face and that's all the thanks I get.

D'ARTAGNAN: I'll settle the bill.

PORTHOS: Wouldn't dream of it.

D'ARTAGNAN: There's a war to be fought.

PORTHOS: (CONCEDES. TO LANDLADY) Tell him how much I owe you, twister.

LANDLADY: 40 pistoles...

PORTHOS: Twister! And don't think I'll patronise this establishment again.

LANDLADY: I'm sorry if we displeased Monsieur.

PORTHOS: If. IF you displeased me. I was set upon by Cardinalists.

LANDLADY: They were simple poor folk, paid to drink the Cardinal's health.

PORTHOS: Paid, by God!

D'ARTAGNAN: Let me guess - their paymaster was a cloaked rascal...

LANDLADY: ...with a hat pulled down over his face.

D'ARTAGNAN: We must get to Aramis and Athos... (GOES TO LEAVE)

PORTHOS: Who's this, I espy - isn't it Aramis's wretchedly pious servant, Bazin?

D'ARTAGNAN, PLANCHET, & LANDLADY LOOK - BUT SEE NO ONE.

PORTHOS: Isn't it Aramis's wretchedly pious servant, Bazin?

PLANCHET: (REALISING HE'S TO BECOME BAZIN) Oh yes, so it is.  
HE RUNS TO THE SPOT WHERE BAZIN HAS SUPPOSEDLY ARRIVED & BECOMES HIM. HE'S FULL OF HOLY JOY.

PORTHOS: There's something wrong - he's smiling.

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN) Praise the Lord - Monsieur Aramis is in a state of grace.

D'ARTAGNAN: A-ha, Aramis is feeling better. The old dog must have a woman with him.

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN) Good gracious me, no, sir. A woman indeed. I should say not. He has been attended by the Superior of the Jesuits.

PORTHOS: A priest - is he dying!

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN) He's decided to take Holy Orders. He's going to enter the church.  
D'ARTAGNAN & PORTHOS LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

PORTHOS: Well, I'm damned.

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN) Probably, sir.

PORTHOS: So all those times Aramis disappeared to 'study his scriptures' - and I thought he was seeing a woman...

D'ARTAGNAN: He really was studying the scriptures...

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN. JOYFUL) The Lord works in mysterious ways.  
INN BOARD: THE OLD NAGS OTHER INN.  
ARAMIS EMERGES WEARING A BLACK CAP, READING A RELIGIOUS TOME. HE DOESN'T YET SEE THE OTHERS AND MUMBLES TO HIMSELF. JUST AS HE REACHES THEM HE STOPS, DEEP IN THOUGHT.

ARAMIS: (PONDERING TO THE SKY) 'Ultraque manus in benedicendo clericis inferioribus necessaria est...'

D'ARTAGNAN: Latin, if I'm not mistaken.

ARAMIS SEES THEM.

ARAMIS: d'Artagnan my dear friend... and Porthos.

PORTHOS: But can this really be Aramis?

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN) It can indeed - recovering from his moral crisis...

ARAMIS: ...the lost sheep returning to the fold. Set to follow my true vocation.

D'ARTAGNAN: (ENTHUSIASTIC) There's a war on.

ARAMIS: Ah... the folly of men.

PORTHOS: He's a lost cause.

D'ARTAGNAN: I wonder... (HE GOES TO HIS POCKET)

PORTHOS: I think he's got religion so bad even a purse of pistoles won't cure him.

D'ARTAGNAN: (PRODUCING A LETTER) This might.

ARAMIS: (RECITES, PIOUSLY) Waste not the hours in vain regret, for lovers departed and affections slain.

PORTHOS GROANS. DURING THE FOLLOWING D'ARTAGNAN WAFTS THE LETTER UNDER ARAMIS' NOSE. BY THE END OF THE VERSE HIS NOSE IS ALMOST ATTACHED TO IT.

ARAMIS: (CONTS.) Offer thy tears to God and pain  
Shall cease and thou shalt find  
Comfort yet  
Waste not the hours...

PORTHOS: He's like a fish on a line. A moth round a candle.

D'ARTAGNAN: You better read the letter, Aramis.

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN) No, sir! Get thee behind him, Satan!!

ARAMIS: It's her perfume...

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN) He's lost!

D'ARTAGNAN: Madame de Chevreuse asked me to give it to you - if you weren't dead.

PORTHOS: He's as good as!

ARAMIS HESITATES, THEN TAKES THE LETTER.

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN) It's a temptation.

ARAMIS: Yes... it truly is. (QUICKLY READS LETTER) She still loves me. Bazin.

PLANCHET: (AS BAZIN) Be strong, master, fight the temptation - remember Delilah. What's the touch of a woman compared to diligent study of the scriptures?

ARAMIS: How would you know, you gloomy old wretch, Bazin. Now my good fellows - where's the war! Let me at 'em!!

HE FINISHES HIS FALL FROM GRACE WITH A PELVIC THRUST! HE TAKES SOME OF THE WEAPONS PLANCHET HAS BROUGHT. PLANCHET RESUMES HIS OWN CHARACTER.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) And that is how Monsieur Aramis fell from grace - and Bazin was an even more gloomy old wretch. But not I - for we now go in search of Athos - that most solid, stable and noble of Musketeers...

THEY MOUNT THE TWO TANDEMS, AND CAN CIRCLE ROUND, OR EXIT AND RE ENTER.  
INN BOARD: THE DEJA VU TAVERN.

PORTHOS: And here we are!

LANDLADY AND TWO OR THREE (ARMED) CUSTOMERS OCCUPY THE INN. D'ARTAGNAN, PORTHOS, ARAMIS & PLANCHET APPROACH. D'ARTAGNAN QUICKLY DRAWS HIS SWORD & CHALLENGES THE LANDLADY & CUSTOMERS.

D'ARTAGNAN: (TO PORTHOS/ARAMIS) My fight - I left Athos here to fend for himself. It is my duty to avenge him.

D'ARTAGNAN QUICKLY DISARMS CUSTOMERS &  
THREATENS THE LANDLADY.

D'ARTAGNAN: You purveyor of horse's water - you accused my friend of being a cheat. No doubt you and your ruffians took him by surprise then slaughtered and robbed him.

LANDLADY: No, sir!

D'ARTAGNAN: No! Am I expected to believe you, you weasel.

LANDLADY: He's in the cellar.

D'ARTAGNAN: A prisoner! You'd keep that greatest of great Musketeers a prisoner!!

LANDLADY: Before you first arrived the authorities warned me some coiners, passing counterfeit money, were to pass. They gave your descriptions.

PORTHOS: What authorities?

D'ARTAGNAN: I think I know which authority.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) Who could be so wicked?

ARAMIS: This sounds like the Cardinal's ruse.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) His Holiness!

LANDLADY: That is why we attacked Monsieur Athos - and locked him in the cellar. But we soon realized he was no felon.

D'ARTAGNAN: Well, let him out.

LANDLADY: We tried.

PORTHOS: It must be very taxing - opening a cellar door.

LANDLADY: He won't come out! He's gone crazy.

D'ARTAGNAN/PORTHOS/ARAMIS: Crazy!

LANDLADY: With respect - as mad as a moonstruck March hare.

PLANCHET: As mad as a moonstruck March hare!

LANDLADY: He's eaten all the cheese and wine that I keep in there.

PORTHOS: He's not completely mad then.

LANDLADY: And he's incarcerated with his ghoulish servant.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) Grimaud! His company would drive anyone mad.

PORTHOS: (CALLS) Athos!

ATHOS: (FROM BEHIND TRAP) Leave me alone...

PORTHOS: Athos, come out.

ATHOS: Did you speak, Grimaud?

PORTHOS: It is I - Porthos. With Aramis. And the young Gascon.

ATHOS, DISHEVELLED & DEPRESSED, SLOWLY EMERGES.

ATHOS: d'Artagnan... Porthos... Aramis...

D'ARTAGNAN: (THROWS A BAG OF COINS TO LANDLADY) The debt's paid - you're lucky we don't put you in the cellar and brick it up.

LANDLADY GRABS THE MONEY & HURRIES OFF WITH HER FRIENDS.

ATHOS: It wasn't the Innkeeper that brought me to this. It was her...

D'ARTAGNAN: Who?

ATHOS: In the darkness she came, the fiend resided in my mind.

PORTHOS: (QUIET) Definitely barking - as a rabid dog.

ATHOS: My wife...

ARAMIS: You don't have a wife.

PORTHOS: (QUIET) Quite loony.

ATHOS: When I was in my youth and she was younger. Sixteen and as beautiful as the dawn. Charming - more than charming, enchanting... So young, yet with the mind of a poet. So pure... so pure...

PORTHOS: We all dream of things like that - especially locked in the dark, with a wine cellar to drink, all the cheese you could eat, and only Grimaud for company.

ATHOS: This was no dream. It was a living nightmare. Do you know what my enchanting poetess really was - my angel was a fiend; a thief; she'd steal from the communion plate. She was a criminal with a sordid past. She had deceived me. She had been branded.

D'ARTAGNAN/PORTHOS/ARAMIS: Branded.

ATHOS: A fleur-de-lis, here. (INDICATES SHOULDER)

D'ARTAGNAN: (ABSENTLY) A fleur-de-lis...

ARAMIS: What happened to her?

ATHOS: I hung her.

PORTHOS: What!

ATHOS: What else could I do?

PORTHOS: Seems a bit drastic... you actually hung her.

ATHOS: From a tree.

ARAMIS: She's dead?

ATHOS: (NODS) As I could not forgive her, she will never forgive me. I'm haunted... Adventure, drink, camaraderie... they won't banish her... I wait to die.

PORTHOS: (QUIET) He's a lost cause. I always knew he was deep – but stringing a woman up from a tree... well, I'm damned.

ATHOS: No - I am damned.

D'ARTAGNAN: She lives.

ATHOS: If it was that easy.

D'ARTAGNAN: She lives... the woman with the fleur de lis brand.

ATHOS DRAWS HIS SWORD & HOLDS IT UNDER  
D'ARTAGNAN'S CHIN.

ATHOS: Don't jest, or lie, d'Artagnan. A friend who plays mean tricks to raise my spirits is no friend.

D'ARTAGNAN: She does live - I have seen her!!

ATHOS: Can this be true?

D'ARTAGNAN: She stayed behind her mask at the Royal Ball - but her shawl slipped... for a moment... I saw the fleur-de-lis...

ATHOS: The Royal Ball? She was a simple peasant girl.

D'ARTAGNAN: And now she is an English aristocrat.

ATHOS: It can't be her.

D'ARTAGNAN: How many English nobles carry a brand?

ATHOS: Where is she now?

D'ARTAGNAN: I fear your wife seeks revenge on me. It's certain our paths will cross. The thing is, she lives - so you must.

THE SOUND OF THE CARDINAL WITH GUARDS  
APPROACHING. THEY ENTER.

CARDINAL: King's Musketeers...

HE SIGNALS HIS GUARDS TO HANG BACK. MUSKETEERS  
BOW.

CARDINAL: What mischief are you planning?

D'ARTAGNAN: Plenty, your Eminence!

CARDINAL: You brazen scoundrel.

PORTHOS: Plenty - for the English.

CARDINAL: Ah...

ARAMIS: We are bound for La Rochelle...

CARDINAL: Excellent.

ATHOS: In fact, we will escort your Eminence...

OTHERS SURPRISED.

ATHOS: (CONTS.) Unbelievably you have many enemies.

CARDINAL: Me! A man of the church?

ATHOS: But we will guard you well.

CARDINAL: I have guards.

ATHOS: Call that lot guards! I personally have wounded most of them.

CARDINAL: Yes, I suppose it would be safer with you. (TO HIS GUARDS)  
The Musketeers will escort me - if I don't arrive safe at La Rochelle, they are to be executed.

GUARD CPT: Yes, your Eminence.

GUARDS SALUTE & LEAVE.

CARDINAL: I feel quite safe now... First I have a meeting in this Inn... a visiting Bishop... wait over there. See no one comes near.

THE MUSKETEERS DUTIFULLY MOVE AWAY. RICHELIEU GOES TO THE INN.

PORTHOS: (TO ATHOS) Why did you say we'll escort the scarlet scourge - the blighter threatened to give us the chop for our troubles.

ATHOS: How better to know his plans? How better to obtain his good opinion?

ARAMIS: What plans?

ATHOS: There's only one way to find out.

THEY MOVE TO EAVESDROP. UNSEEN BY MUSKETEERS,  
A HOODED WOMAN ENTERS THE INN AREA. (IT IS  
MILADY.)

CARDINAL: Your mission is to return to London. You must convince Lord Buckingham that he should halt his plans to attack France.  
THE HIDDEN FIGURE TURNS & WE SEE IT IS MILADY.

MILADY: Buckingham will not trust me after the episode with the diamond tags.

ATHOS: (QUIET) It's her. The voice. It's her.

ATHOS STARTS TO APPROACH THE CARDINAL & MILADY.

D'ARTAGNAN: Grab him.

PORTHOS & ARAMIS RESTRAIN ATHOS.

D'ARTAGNAN: I told you she lived.

ATHOS: And I told you she was a fiend - she serves that devil Richelieu. I should have finished the job.

D'ARTAGNAN: There's more at stake.

CARDINAL: (TO MILADY) This time you go not as my spy, but as my ambassador. (HANDS HER A NOTE) This note informs Buckingham that I will reveal his every meeting and maneuver with our dear Queen if he does not call back his forces. He would not subject her to such a threat. And when he retreats, his dear Queen will see he is a coward...

MILADY: And turn to you...

CARDINAL: (THREATENING) How dare you. I am a man of God.

MILADY: I'm sorry.

CARDINAL: It is time you did something right...

MILADY: I won't fail.

CARDINAL: You daren't fail.

MILADY: Might I ask his Eminence one favour?

CARDINAL: You can ask.

MILADY: A death warrant.

CARDINAL: (LAUGHS) You really are a lady.

MILADY: It is for an enemy of yours as much as mine...

CARDINAL: Who has disfavoured us so badly?

MILADY: The Gascon - d'Artagnan...

D'ARTAGNAN: Me!

CARDINAL: I quite like him for his arrogance...

D'ARTAGNAN STRUTS.

CARDINAL: ...but he is a nuisance.

D'ARTAGNAN: A mere nuisance!

MILADY: More than a nuisance your Grace - he tricked us with the diamonds. Humiliated you at the Grand Ball.

CARDINAL: You've persuaded me... Here's the Warrant...

HE HANDS IT OVER TO MILADY.

CARDINAL: (CONTS.) I like to keep a few handy - just fill in his name. Now go - and remember, Milady, I have other Death Warrants.

SHE GETS READY TO LEAVE.

ATHOS: (TO OTHERS) You go with the Cardinal.

D'ARTAGNAN: Protect the man who's just authorized the chop for me?

ATHOS: Go with him.

ATHOS HIDES. CARDINAL EMERGES.

CARDINAL: Right, my Musketeers - you are of course now Cardinal's Musketeers.

PORTHOS: (ASIDE) A very temporary arrangement.

CARDINAL: Where's Athos?

ARAMIS: He's gone ahead to scout for danger.

CARDINAL: Very good. Right - to La Rochelle.

D'ARTAGNAN, PLANCHET, PORTHOS, ARAMIS LEAD OFF THE CARDINAL. THEY EXIT. AS MILADY EMERGES, ATHOS CONFRONTS HER.

MILADY: (DOES NOT RECOGNISE HIM) Out of my way - I'm on a mission of vital importance.

ATHOS: Is that any way to speak to your husband?

MILADY: (SHOCKED) Comte de le Fere - Athos?

ATHOS: What is this mission of vital importance that has brought you back from the dead? I thought I'd crushed you - either I was wrong or Hell's spat you out. And the Devil's made you rich.

HE PULLS OUT HIS PISTOL & AIMS AT HER.

MILADY: Please, no. Can't you find it in your heart to forgive me?

ATHOS: My heart feels nothing - thanks to you.

MILADY: I was young...

ATHOS: You've hardly improved with age...

MILADY: Why should I... Yes, I was born poor, and was branded for trying to improve my station. Yes, I was born beautiful, but my beauty belonged to any man. Now I have possession of it - it obeys me, it works for me. Yes, I loved you, but my past wounded your pride. Yes, I escaped the hanging tree - kill me now, if you have to.

ATHOS: (BEAT) No... You can't harm me now. But you can harm my friend - give me the Death Warrant.

MILADY: What death warrant?

ATHOS COCKS THE GUN. MILADY HANDS OVER THE DEATH WARRANT. AS ATHOS GLANCES AT IT, MILADY HURRIES AWAY. HE AIMS THE PISTOL AT HER, BUT CAN'T FIRE.

ATHOS: (BITTER, TO HIMSELF) You can't hurt me any more... (HE BREAKS DOWN) Nothing can. Regret, guilt, compassion. I feel none, and so I'm a perfect soldier. All I do is fight. That is why I must go to La Rochelle.  
HE EXITS.

## **END OF SCENE ONE**

## **SCENE TWO**

WAR, SEIGE & INCARCERATION.  
MUSIC.

ENGLAND LIES AT ONE END OF THIS SPACE, FRANCE AT THE OTHER. A HUGE PILE OF HORSE DROPPINGS REPRESENTS LA ROCHELLE. THE SEA IS MOVEABLE. THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM LOOKS OUT TOWARDS 'FRANCE', AS LOOKING TOWARDS HIM, OUT ACROSS 'THE SEA', ARE KING LOUIS & QUEEN ANNE. CONSTANCE ATTENDS THE QUEEN, BUT SHE IS PREOCCUPIED. THE KING'S HEROIC STANCE SOON EVAPORATES. HE'S ALREADY BORED & FIDGETS. THE QUEEN REMAINS LOOKING OUT ACROSS THE CHANNEL.

LOUIS: If you ask me, Madame, not that anyone asks me anything. After all, I'm *ONLY* the King - *ONLY* monarch of all I survey - and Monarch of all you survey, I dare say, one day. If you ask me, war's a bore. (PACES AROUND) Of course, the politics is all very complicated. But I understand it implicitly. Shall I explain the situation?

ANNE CONTINUES TO IGNORE HIM.

LOUIS: (MIFFED, MIMICS) 'Yes please, my Kingly spouse.'  
Well - this is France – over the sea lies our foe - England.

ANNE: Did you say 'England'?

LOUIS: What's the matter, my dear - worried they might invade you?

ANNE: (MUSING) Is that possible?

LOUIS: No - you have me to defend you. (WANDERS OVER TO PILE OF HORSE DUNG) Do you know what this is... You might well look distasteful - that is the port of La Rochelle.

ANNE: It looks like...

LOUIS: Merde. And so it should. It is a rebel town. French by its geography. But full of French protestants, allies of the British. It stinks! I'll get the Cardinal to sweep it away - he's not one to let Christianity get in the way when it comes to dealing with Huguenots. Yes, Richelieu can place his energies in that direction, rather than being a burr in my britches.

ANNE: Did you mention Cardinal Richelieu?

LOUIS: (GIVING UP) I'm not repeating my whole damn thesis, madame. I'm going a-hunting. With the war on there's nothing for me to do once I've inspected the troops and seen them off. (GOES TO LEAVE) I don't suppose even the stags will stand to attention for me.

ANNE: (ASIDE) Nothing else does.

KING EXITS. BUCKINGHAM GOES OFF.  
ANNE GOES TO CONSTANCE.

ANNE: We're a fine pair, Constance... my heart's in England, and yours is...

CONSTANCE: Wherever d'Artagnan is...

ANNE: I fear he has greater enemies here in France - all because he helped me.

CONSTANCE: He was doing his duty.

ANNE: So were you - and his enemies are yours.

CONSTANCE: I know, but what can I do? The Cardinalists are everywhere - no where is safe.

ANNE: There is a place.

CONSTANCE: There is no escape from the Cardinal's spies. Anyway, my place is by your side.

ANNE: I want you to be a friend for life - not simply until the Cardinal chooses to take his revenge. You must go away...

MUSIC / DRUMS HERALD THE APPROACH OF THE CARDINAL.

ANNE: Quick... There is a Carmelite convent at Bethune. The Abbess is loyal to me, she will offer you sanctuary...

CONSTANCE HESITATES. MUSIC / DRUMS LOUDER.

ANNE: Go... (REASSURES) I am safe for now - thanks to you. Go!

THEY KISS & CONSTANCE HURRIES AWAY. JUST AS THE CARDINAL, FLANKED BY D'ARTAGNAN, PORTHOS, ARAMIS & ATHOS, ARRIVES. PLANCHET BRINGS UP REAR.

CARDINAL: I am indebted...

D'ARTAGNAN: We serve the King. And we serve you, your Eminence as you are a servant of the King.

CARDINAL: I don't like your tone, Gascon...

ANNE: (CUTS IN) Your Eminence...

SHE OFFERS HER HAND WHICH THE CARDINAL TAKES.

ANNE: I'm afraid the King is away on important business.

CARDINAL: Of course - is it stags or boar he's pursuing?

ANNE: (LAUGHS) And what are you pursuing, your Grace?

A MOMENT BETWEEN THEM. THEN GUN SHOTS.

CARDINAL: Quick, Your Highness. (TO MUSKETEERS) Deal with those rebels!

CARDINAL GUIDES ANNE OFF. SHE LEAVES. HE WAITS.

THE MUSKETEERS & PLANCHET DUCK FOR COVER - BUT NOT D'ARTAGNAN. HE STANDS, AFFRONTED.

PLANCHET: Take cover, master.

D'ARTAGNAN: My name is d'Artagnan.

PORTHOS: It will be carved on a tomb stone.

ATHOS: (STANDING) We will challenge the La Rochellians. It will provide a perfect spot to discuss our plans, out of earshot of...

THEY ALL LOOK AND SEE THE CARDINAL IS HANGING BACK, TRYING TO LISTEN. THIS CLINCHES IT. ARAMIS & PORTHOS ALSO STAND.

ALL: All for one, and one for all!

PORTHOS: This is more like it - I smell blood!

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) I don't think it's blood I can smell!

CARDINAL: (BOWS, SARC) Do be careful.

ANOTHER VOLLEY OF SHOTS, & THE CARDINAL GOES.

PLANCHET: So – our heroes must defeat the Huguenot rebels in La Rochelle before venturing to England.

LX CHANGE.

THE BATTLE FOR LA ROCHELLE.

THE MUSKETEERS FIGHT ALL-COMERS IN HIGHLY STYLISED WAY – THEIR WORDS PUNCTUATED BY THE STABS & SLASHES OF THEIR SWORDS.

PORTHOS: (SLASHES UNSEEN FOE) Ah – the joy, as I see the warm wet blood trickle from the scared man's head. Wishing at the last moment he'd stayed at home with his warm wife...

ARAMIS: (STRIKES A FATAL BLOW) Die you cur... Die... Die in the name of righteousness, die in the name of God.

ATHOS: (RELISHING THE ACTION) Madness? Madness! You say that war is madness. Try being locked in a cellar, dark and dank. Wars are not madness, my friend – they are therapy. The waiting can drive you over the edge I concede. But once the

signal is given – one is alive – even if ones foes are no longer so by sunset.

D'ARTAGNAN: Born to be a warrior. No doubts. Instructed by every sneer, thrashing, joke at my expense. Every kick and cutting remark. You see my back is broad, my skin thick, my blood red, my opponents dead or soon to be. Where are the bullies now...

BEAT.

ALL MUSKETEERS: So let us – spear and spike and skewer and slash.

A PEASANT WOMAN ENTERS, LOOKING FOR HER SON, HORRIFIED BY THE CARNAGE.

PEASANT WOMAN: Stop... please... I'm looking for my son.

D'ARTAGNAN: Take your pick – there are sons aplenty strewn about – many incomplete I admit.

(PEASANT WOMAN WAILS)

ARAMIS: Come, madam,

ATHOS: We confess

PORTHOS: Your son is in a mess.

D'ARTAGNAN: The fertile mud  
Drinks his blood  
But look on the bright side –  
One day  
His younger brother may  
Reep the corn  
From his remains born.

ALL MUSKETEERS: So let us belt and bludgeon and batter and bash.

ARAMIS: Don't forget, after all  
You flag waved him to war.  
So if I might suggest  
You spare the beating breast  
And it might be best  
To put it down to fate – God's will

PORTHOS: And next time hesitate -  
before dispatching boy soldiers  
If you want to see them older.

ALL MUSKETEERS: So let us dismember and degrade and disembowel  
and dash.

ATHOS: He should have taken to the plough  
Or pen or anvil – but left the sword or side-arm uncast.  
Alas, too late – it and he are past.

THE WOMAN EXITS.

ALL MUSKETEERS: So let us neutralize and Gallicise and terrorise and  
orphanise.

PORTHOS: We are the fortunates

ARAMIS: Unburdened by conscience.

ATHOS: Whilst the rest suffer

ARAMIS: In their blind innocence.

ALL: All we do is end it.  
All we are is  
One for all.  
All we are is  
All for one.  
Mercenaries to the promise of glories and ideas.  
The battle of La Rochelle won...  
So let our leaders acclaim and acknowledge, accede and award  
medals.

PORTHOS: And cash.

ATHOS: Bravo.

ARAMIS: They'll return with reinforcements.

PORTHOS: I hope so - I've hardly broken into a sweat.

D'ARTAGNAN: Planchet - do your duty.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) This is where I come into my own. (HE PRODUCES A FLAGON OF WINE FROM UNDER HIS COAT & TAKES IT TO THEM.

D'ARTAGNAN: (DRINKS) This is warm.

PLANCHET: Sorry, master - it was the excitement.

PORTHOS: I could eat a chicken with its feathers on.

PLANCHET PRODUCES ONE FROM UNDER HIS COAT.  
THEY PASS ROUND THE FOOD & DRINK.

ATHOS: We'll miss you, Planchet.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) What's he saying?

D'ARTAGNAN: Whilst dispatching the Huguenot rebels we have been making plans.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) My admiration is beyond what is humanly possible. I struggle to keep a single thought in my head, yet these brave boys can wipe out a battalion and discuss philosophy at the same time.

D'ARTAGNAN: We intend thwarting Milady's designs...

PLANCHET: Bravo!

D'ARTAGNAN: And you, Planchet, are the one to do it.

PLANCHET: Bravo? I know Lady de Winter is an aristocrat and I wouldn't say a word against a blue blood...

PORTHOS: Don't you dare.

PLANCHET: But she is...

ATHOS: She is evil, wicked, vile, cruel...

PLANCHET: Just what I was going to say, sir.

PORTHOS: Don't be so disrespectful.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) Methinks I better move it on. (TO ATHOS) What are my orders?

ATHOS: (PRODUCES LETTER) Take this letter - which I wrote whilst skewering a rebel through his rib cage - to England.

PLANCHET: England!

D'ARTAGNAN: You know where England is, don't you?

PORTHOS: Follow your nose – you'll find it by discerning a lack of garlic.

ATHOS: You must reach Lord Buckingham before Milady does.

PLANCHET: Didn't she set off days ago?

ATHOS: (GRABS PLANCHET'S EAR. LEADS HIM) She sailed from the Bay of Biscay. (INDICATES ON FLOOR) You will cross La Manche - here, Calais. (INDICATES) You will reach there before her, Dover...

PLANCHET: (PLEASED WITH HIMSELF) That's in England, sir.

PORTHOS: Can you rely on this mutton head?

D'ARTAGNAN: I do believe we can.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) He has faith in me - a mere mutton head.

D'ARTAGNAN: Now, go with all speed. Only return when you've completed your task.

PLANCHET: Supposing I don't manage to complete it?

THEY MENACE HIM, SWORDS DRAWN.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) Ask a stupid question... (LOUD) I go - I succeed!

PORTHOS: Or you die!

D'ARTAGNAN: God speed.

PLANCHET HEADS FOR ENGLAND.  
THE MUSKETEERS RETURN TO DEFEND THE 'FRENCH'  
END. PLANCHET HOPS OVER THE CHANNEL.

PLANCHET: God speed! (TAKES A DEEP BREATH) This must be England... (DEEP BREATH) No garlic... poor souls...

Now - to find Lord Buckingham.

FELTON: (OFF) Who goes there?

PLANCHET: (NERVOUS) It is I, Planchet.

FELTON, AN ENGLISH NAVAL OFFICER, ENTERS  
POINTING PISTOL AT HIM.

FELTON: Are you French?

PLANCHET: (PROUD) I am, sir. As French as a French man could be.

FELTON: You're the enemy then.

PLANCHET: (PROUD) That I am, sir. (REALISES WHAT HE'S SAID)  
Nothing personal, though.

FELTON: I think I better shoot you.

PLANCHET: I can see you are a good and loyal man of the Officer class - I  
wouldn't expect anything less than your duty. It would be an  
honour for a humble servant such as I to... er... die in the cause  
of your duty.

FELTON COCKS GUN.

PLANCHET: (SUDDENLY) Oh my Lord, wait...

FELTON: Not so brave all of a sudden.

PLANCHET: I must see Lord Buckingham.

FELTON: You're an assassin.

PLANCHET: (PULLS OUT LETTER) I must deliver this letter to him in person  
- then sir, my duty done, you can execute me and toss me into  
the sea. We'll both have fulfilled our God-given tasks...

FELTON TAKES LETTER.

FELTON: Wait there.

FELTON EXITS. PLANCHET WAITS. HE HOPS FROM FOOT  
TO FOOT. AND WAITS... AND WAITS.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) I wonder if I should bolt? It's very difficult - being trained to obey my betters... He did say wait here... (WAITS AGAIN) But my master's orders were to return, my task completed... If I don't return, Porthos will think I've failed and... oh, blow this...

HE SCARPERS AS FELTON & BUCKINGHAM EMERGE WITH THE LETTER.

FELTON: (DISAPPOINTED) My prisoner's escaped...

BUCKINGHAM: Don't despair, Captain Felton - a bigger fish swims to our net if the letter is to be believed.

FELTON: Who is this Milady?

BUCKINGHAM: Lady Clarice de Winter... She breathes hatred, feeds on revenge, and craves power...

MILADY ARRIVES.

FELTON: Look at that sweet creature, my Lord...

BUCKINGHAM: (CHARMING, TO MILADY) My Lady de Winter.

FELTON: Her!

MILADY: Lord Buckingham. (OFFERS HAND TO BUCKINGHAM) My - George Villiers - you are more handsome than ever. (SEEING FELTON) And who is this fine looking naval officer?

BUCKINGHAM: This is Captain John Felton. One of the most trustworthy incorruptible men to wear the King's uniform.

MILADY: (OFFERS HAND) Pleased to meet you, John Felton.

BUCKINGHAM: Good. You will get to know him well...

MILADY: I look forward to it.

BUCKINGHAM: Because he will be your prison warder. Arrest her, Felton.

FELTON POINTS HIS PISTOL AT HER.

MILADY: What's the meaning of this?

BUCKINGHAM: You have a letter for me, I believe?

MILADY: How did you know?

BUCKINGHAM: Just as I know about your plans with the diamonds. Not everyone in France clings to the Red Duke's cassock.

MILADY: This is the work of those Musketeers and the Gascon.

BUCKINGHAM: (HOLDS HAND OUT) The letter, please.

SHE HANDS IT OVER.

BUCKINGHAM: Lock her up - she'll be deported to the colonies.

THEY EXIT.

FRANCE.

THE MUSKETEERS REST AFTER THE BATTLE – ARAMIS READING BIBLE; PORTHOS DRINKING; ATHOS METICULOUSLY CLEANING HIS SWORD; D'ARTAGNAN PACING. THE CARDINAL, KING & QUEEN ENTER.

LOUIS: Well done, my merry Musketeers.

CARDINAL: Well done indeed - I'm so glad we're on the same side. (ASIDE) I leave the foot soldiers to slog it out - my victory will be gained by my agent in England.

PLANCHET ENTERS BREATHLESS, HE BOWS TO KING, QUEEN & CARDINAL, THEN HURRIES TO D'ARTAGNAN & THE OTHERS.

D'ARTAGNAN: (SURPRISED) You survived, Planchet.

PLANCHET: Yes, sir.

ATHOS: You delivered the letter?

PLANCHET: Yes, sir.

PORTHOS: You wouldn't have a nice roast chicken on you would you by any chance?

PLANCHET: No, sir.

PORTHOS: You should get yourself a more reliable servant, d'Artagnan.

PLANCHET, EVER HUMBLE, PRODUCES TWO PHEASANTS FROM UNDER HIS COAT.

PLANCHET: I did bring these, sir - English, I'm afraid.

PORTHOS TAKES THEM & SNIFFS.

PORTHOS: Nice and gamey...

PLANCHET: I thought it would speed the process, keeping them under my armpits.

PORTHOS: I misjudged you - you're a good man - for a serf.

LOUIS: I will drink to the health of my Musketeers - and the Gascon.  
(RAISES A GOBLET)

ATHOS: (ASIDE) I will drink to the health of Milady, Clarice de Winter.  
May she live to suffer long.

ENGLAND.

FELTON ENTERS - WITH MILADY HIS PRISONER.

MILADY: You're a good Christian, John Felton.

FELTON: (ASIDE) I feel no goodness...

MILADY: At least you have allowed me to take the air. (BREATHES IN)

FELTON: (ASIDE) How can it be true what they say of her?

MILADY: You are truly good - honest, gentle, incorruptable.

FELTON: I endeavour to be.

MILADY: Lord Buckingham is lucky - to have a man in his company who blindly obeys.

FELTON: Blindly?

MILADY: And does the good Lord's bidding without question.

FELTON: I do my duty.

MILADY: I know...  
Of course, a man's first duty is to God - as is a woman's.

FELTON: I'm pleased to hear you say it.

MILADY: That is all I've ever done.

FELTON: Then why are you to be banished?

MILADY: For being God-fearing.

FELTON: (ASIDE) She does seem so good and pure.

MILADY: Because I tried to be good and pure...  
  
HE LOOKS.

MILADY: Even when I was young and a certain English gentleman...

FELTON: Who?

MILADY: I cannot say. When this so-called gentleman forced himself upon me...

FELTON: What!

MILADY: Drugged me, imprisoned me, made me deny my church...

FELTON: No gentleman would do such a thing.

MILADY: Blindly obeys...

FELTON: Lord Buckingham!

MILADY: My lips cannot speak his name. Besides, revenge is not in my heart - I pity him.

FELTON: You forgave him?

MILADY: I'm a Christian, sir - I had to forgive him.

FELTON: You are a saint, Milady.

MILADY: I'm just a poor girl who tried to be righteous - I failed.

FELTON: (KISSES HER HAND) You are righteous, Milady.

MILADY: I was not strong enough to fight him off.

FELTON: I'll avenge you!

MILADY: (SMILES, BUT HE DOESN'T SEE) You mustn't.

FELTON: I must. As a Christian I must.

FELTON LOOSENS HER CHAINS. SHE'S SEDUCTIVELY CLOSE. THEY HEAR BUCKINGHAM COMING.

BUCKINGHAM: (OFF) Mr. Felton - is the prisoner ready for transportation?

FELTON: (NERVOUS) Yes, sir.

BUCKINGHAM ENTERS. HE SEES MILADY'S FREE.

BUCKINGHAM: What are you doing, man!

FELTON: My duty - you devil. You would even use me to carry out your perverted wishes...

HE PULLS A KNIFE & STABS BUCKINGHAM, WHO DROPS, WOUNDED.

FELTON: (WILD EYED. TO MILADY) There. Nothing to fear now, my angel.

MILADY: (SMILES FOR A MOMENT. THEN SHOUTS) Guards. Guards. Quickly.

TWO GUARDS ENTER.

MILADY: Murder. This man has stabbed His Lordship.

FELTON HORRIFIED. HE STILL HOLDS THE KNIFE. THEY ALL LOOK TO BUCKINGHAM. HE TRIES TO SPEAK, BUT CANNOT. HE STAGGERS OFF, DYING. THE GUARDS CAPTURE FELTON. HE LOOKS TO MILADY, BUT SHE TURNS AWAY. FELTON IS REMOVED. SHE MAKES GOOD HER ESCAPE.

FRANCE.

LOUIS PACES, CENTRE STAGE.

LOUIS: Another fine victory, thanks to my great leadership...

CARDINAL: And your brave Musketeers.

LOUIS: Hand picked by myself.

CARDINAL: Of course.

LOUIS: And where's it got me? I'll tell you where - bored again.

CARDINAL: Why doesn't your Majesty return to Paris?

LOUIS: Trying to get rid of me, Richelieu - trying to steal my thunder, by thunder!

CARDINAL: It would take more than a mere Cardinal to detract from your Majesty's triumphs.

LOUIS: 'Tis true.

CARDINAL: Besides, it would be good for the morale of your citizens if you returned to the capital.

LOUIS: 'Tis doubly true.

ROCHEFORT ENTERS, KEEN TO SPEAK TO RICHELIEU. HE WHISPERS IN HIS EAR. (PLANCHET IS NEARBY.)  
D'ARTAGNAN SEES HIM.

D'ARTAGNAN: It's him! My chance... (DRAWS HIS SWORD)

BUT ATHOS IS QUICK TO STOP HIM.

ATHOS: No, d'Artagnan - he's an ally of the Cardinal - see, he has his ear.

D'ARTAGNAN: I'll have his ears, by God.

ATHOS: Not now.

CARDINAL SUDDENLY LAUGHS.

CARDINAL: You are the bearer of good news indeed, Rochefort. Give her my regards.

ROCHEFORT: Yes, your Grace.

ROCHEFORT GOES. D'ARTAGNAN PREVENTED FROM FOLLOWING BY THE MUSKETEERS.

CARDINAL: (GRAND) I have some information that will please you all...

HE CIRCLES ANNE, SEEKING A REACTION.

CARDINAL: My agent brings word from England.

ANNE STIFFENS.

CARDINAL: A cause for celebration.

LOUIS: Can't a cleric ever get to the point - you'll be telling us in Latin next, Richelieu.

CARDINAL: The point is - Lord Buckingham... (TO ANNE) you remember him, your Majesty...

ANNE LOOKS.

CARDINAL: Is dead...

ANNE ALMOST COLLAPSES.

CARDINAL: Killed, they say, by a religious fanatic.

LOUIS: Bravo! (TO ANNE) What do you say, my dear!

ANNE: Bravo...

SHE LOOKS TOWARDS ENGLAND. PLANCHET IDLY DRIFTS NEAR LOUIS & ANNE. ATHOS STEPS FORWARD.

ATHOS: You'll need an escort, your Majesty.

LOUIS: Makes yourselves ready.

ATHOS & OTHERS MOVE AWAY.

LOUIS: (TO ANNE) You look tired, wife. Where's that Lady-in-Waiting - she should be attending you.

ANNE: (ABSENTLY) She's in a convent.

LOUIS: She's no use there.

ANNE: At Bethune.

LOUIS: (NOT INTERESTED) Really... (GOING) Well, it serves her right - she'll miss my - our - triumphant return to Paris.

KING & CARDINAL EXIT. THE QUEEN FOLLOWS SLOWLY.

D'ARTAGNAN: (TO ATHOS) Why have you volunteered us to go Paris?

ATHOS: I believe Milady has returned to France.

PLANCHET: She has.

THEY LOOK.

PLANCHET: That's what the gentleman told the Cardinal.

D'ARTAGNAN: Oh, hang Milady!

PORTHOS: It's been tried!

D'ARTAGNAN: I must find Constance.

PLANCHET: She's in a convent at Bethune.

THEY LOOK.

PLANCHET: The Queen just told the King.

D'ARTAGNAN: Right - we go with the King to Paris, then on to Bethune.

ATHOS: Agreed.

THEY START TO MOVE.

PLANCHET: Which will allow you to kill two birds with one stone.

THEY LOOK.

PLANCHET: T'was whispered in the Cardinal's ear - the lady Monsieur Athos seeks - by a huge coincidence - is also heading for the Convent at Bethune.

ALL: What!

PLANCHET: (PEDANTIC) T'was whispered in the Cardinal's ear - the lady Monsieur Athos seeks - by a huge coincidence...

BUT THE MUSKETEERS ARE ALREADY HURRYING OFF. IT DAWNS ON PLANCHET THAT THEY'VE GONE.

PLANCHET: (ASIDE) They've gone! Which demonstrates quite well I'm a nobody with nothing to say. (GOES TO 'CHANNEL') I think I'll spit in the English Channel - it's a fair target.

D'ARTAGNAN: (OFF. SHOUTS) Planchet!

PLANCHET HURRIES OFF.

**END OF SCENE TWO**

### **SCENE THREE**

CONVENT & FERRY.

A BELL TOLLS. CONSTANCE ENTERS, ALONE & LONELY.

CONSTANCE: Sanctuary - from the court - affairs of state. But what of my state of affairs - my affair. My husband would say I received my just desserts - here alone, far from home. Still, I was lonely there until... until he came. Now I'm in love... I think... Love it must be. Nothing else could cause this ache inside. But how can it be? Strip away the excitement and danger... what was there? And now my wretchedness is compounded by the feeling that I won't ever know...

THE ABBESS ARRIVES WITH A CLOAKED NEWCOMER - IT IS MILADY. ABBESS GOES TO CONSTANCE.

ABBESS: Constance... we have a new guest... would you take care of her, be a friend?

CONSTANCE: Of course...

MILADY: (ASIDE) Constance! Can it be? No. Never. Fate raises my hopes cruelly. The tailor's wife will have been put safe out of harm's way.

ABBESS: Constance... this is Clarice.

MILADY: (MEEK) I'm so alone... (SHE SNIFFLES)

CONSTANCE HESITATES, THEN GOES TO COMFORT HER.

ABBESS: Whatever cruelties threaten you in the world outside, you have nothing to fear now. You are safe in the Lord's house - he has even provided you with companionship...

ABBESS GOES.

CONSTANCE: Don't cry... things will be better.

MILADY: I'm just a nuisance - imposing on your privacy.

CONSTANCE: You have already made my own situation seem less hopeless.

MILADY: A poor wretch like me?

CONSTANCE: The Sisters have been able to shut out the world by choice. I feel the world has shut me out.

MILADY: And me.

CONSTANCE: But your arrival lets me know that all is not lost. That I should not wallow in self-pity.

MILADY: We can be friends, can't we?

CONSTANCE SMILES.

MILADY: Tell me about yourself.

CONSTANCE: Where should I start?

MILADY: (LAUGHS) Any where - your name?

CONSTANCE: My name is Constance Bonacieux.

MILADY: (ASIDE) It is her!

CONSTANCE: I'm estranged from my husband.

MILADY: (ASIDE) The tailor.

CONSTANCE: He's a tailor. I was in the service of the Queen.

MILADY: (ASIDE) This is the traitor all right - the harlot's maid. (TO CONSTANCE) God bless her sweet Majesty.

CONSTANCE: God bless her.

MILADY: And you miss your husband, I dare say.

CONSTANCE: (SHAKES HER HEAD) No more than he misses me. I fear I treated him badly. I didn't mean to... (BEAT) I fell in love with another.

MILADY: (ASIDE) d'Artagnan. (PRYING) And you are waiting for him to come for you.

CONSTANCE: He doesn't know I'm here.

MILADY: How sad. (ASIDE) How sad he's not here to save your life. How tragic he's not come to count the cost of the trouble he's caused me. (TO CONSTANCE) I fear you are here to escape from the evil Red Duke...

CONSTANCE: How did you know I was a victim of Cardinal Richelieu?

MILADY: Because I too am one.

CONSTANCE: I knew it.

MILADY: You did?

CONSTANCE: His Eminence sees sin in virtue - and I can tell you are virtuous, Clarice.

THE ABBESS COMES.

ABBESS: There's a visitor.

CONSTANCE & MILADY STAND EXPECTANTLY.

ROCHEFORT ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY SOME CARDINAL'S GUARDS.

ROCHEFORT: (ADDRESSING MILADY) My lady...

MILADY: Comte de Rochefort.

CONSTANCE IS DISAPPOINTED, THEN WARY. MILADY PATS HER REASSURINGLY.

MILADY: Your suffering will soon be at an end.

CONSTANCE: You're too kind.

MILADY: Please excuse me.

THE ABBESS LEAVES. ROCHEFORT & MILADY MOVE AWAY TO TALK.

ROCHEFORT: I have arranged for you to take the ferry across the border.

MILADY: Leave France?

ROCHEFORT: You do have a knack of displeasing people.

MILADY: Me!

ROCHEFORT: And even the Cardinal might feel you know too much - that's why he's sent you here. To keep you out of the way.

MILADY: There's gratitude!!

ROCHEFORT: Make yourself ready to leave.

MILADY: I've only just arrived.

ROCHEFORT: Now - it's the Cardinal's orders!

MILADY: But this is *her* - d'Artagnan's lover, the Queen's protector.

ROCHEFORT LOOKS, THEN.

ROCHEFORT: She's out of harm's way and of no concern to me.

MILADY: She caused me to lose favour with the Cardinal!

ROCHEFORT: There is no time for petty revenge - now prepare to leave.

MILADY: (A MOMENT) Wait outside then.

ROCHEFORT JOINS HIS GUARDS & THEY WAIT SOME WAY OFF. SHE HESITATES, & CONTEMPLATES CONSTANCE.

CONSTANCE: Your visitor mentioned the Cardinal.

MILADY: Don't fear – he is my brother.

CONSTANCE: Your brother! But he's with Cardinal's guards.

MILADY: Don't be deceived by looks. My brother and his friends met some Cardinalists on the road - they were coming here to capture an enemy of the Cardinal - a young woman.

CONSTANCE: Me!

MILADY: Of course. They fought the guards and stole their uniforms.

CONSTANCE: They saved me. Oh Clarice, what would have happened if you hadn't come here.

MILADY: You are quite safe now - let us drink to our new friendship.

CONSTANCE: There is no wine - only water.

MILADY: Who needs wine - what can be sweeter than a new found friendship?

MILADY FETCHES TWO CUPS OF WATER, AS SHE DOES SHE TAKES A CAPSULE FROM A POCKET & TIPS SOME POWDER INTO ONE.

MILADY: Here we are... water sweet and pure.

SHE GIVES THE DRUGGED DRINK TO CONSTANCE.

MILADY: (RAISES GLASS) Friends as long as we live.

THEY DRINK. THE MUSKETEERS ARRIVE. THEY SEE ROCHEFORT & HIS GUARDS, WHO IMMEDIATELY DRAW THEIR SWORDS.

D'ARTAGNAN: At last - you, sir.

ROCHEFORT: The gascon - you should have turned about on your nag, boy, and returned to the country. You would have made a fine ploughman. Alas - you have interfered in the business of great men - you must pay the price for your presumptions.

D'ARTAGNAN: Is that so! Then you must pay the price for your insults, your theivery, your threats to my beloved.

CONSTANCE: (HEARS THIS) d'Artagnan... It's d'Artagnan. (CALLS) d'Artagnan...

D'ARTAGNAN: (CALLS) Constance. (TO ATHOS) She's alive.

MILADY: (TO CONSTANCE) Oh, to watch his face when he lays eyes on you.

CONSTANCE MOVES TOWARDS D'ARTAGNAN, BUT MILADY BLOCKS HER WAY. ROCHEFORT & THE GUARDS BLOCK THE MUSKETEERS WAY. CONSTANCE SUDDENLY DOUBLES UP IN AGONY. SHE CALLS OUT.

CONSTANCE: Help me, d'Artagnan... please...

ATHOS: Go to her, d'Artagnan - we will see off this lot.

ATHOS, PORTHOS & ARAMIS ATTACK ROCHEFORT & THE GUARDS. D'ARTAGNAN HAS TO DODGE ROUND THEM TO GET TO CONSTANCE WHO HAS NOW COLLAPSED. MILADY SLIPS AWAY. D'ARTAGNAN REACHES CONSTANCE, HE KNEELS OVER HER. THE FIGHT CONTINUES. D'ARTAGNAN SUDDENLY STANDS, THROWS HIS HEAD BACK & WAILS.

D'ARTAGNAN: No... No... She's dead.

THE FIGHTING STOPS.

ATHOS: (TO ROCHEFORT) Is this your doing, Rochefort?

ROCHEFORT: What do you take me for - I left her with...

ATHOS: With who!

ROCHEFORT/ATHOS: Milady.

PORTHOS, ARAMIS & PLANCHET GO TO D'ARTAGNAN WITH CONSTANCE. ROCHEFORT MOTIONS HIS MEN TO LEAVE & THEY EXIT. A MOMENT BETWEEN ROCHEFORT & ATHOS.

ROCHEFORT: She's heading for the ferry. (INDICATES DIRECTION)

ATHOS NODS. ROCHEFORT BOWS & LEAVES. ATHOS GOES TOWARDS THE FERRY & HIDES.

ARAMIS: (LEANS OVER CONSTANCE) She's been poisoned.

D'ARTAGNAN: I love her...

ARAMIS & PLANCHET PICK UP CONSTANCE & LIFT HER ONTO A TABLET. D'ARTAGNAN KISSES HER. PORTHOS COMFORTS HIM. MILADY HURRIES TO FERRY AREA. A HOODED FERRY MAN MEETS HER.

FERRYMAN: You wish to cross the border, Milady?

MILADY: Yes, and be quick about it.

MILADY: ATHOS STEPS OUT, SWORD DRAWN.  
You...

ATHOS PULLS PAPER FROM HIS POCKET.

MILADY: What's that?

ATHOS: The Death Warrant you kindly gave me - you'll see it's now complete with a name.

MILADY: (GLANCES) Lady Clarice de Winter... (LAUGHS) Do you think my powerful friends will stand idly by until I come to trial?

ATHOS: You have already been tried - by me. Your crimes witnessed - by me. A guilty verdict given - by me. The sentence passed - death. (WAVES WARRANT) Authorised by his Eminence Cardinal Richelieu. (INDICATES FERRYMAN) And here is your executioner.

FERRYMAN DROPS HIS HOOD - HE WEARS AN EXECUTIONER'S MASK, PICKS UP AN AXE CONCEALED NEAR BY.

ATHOS: (TO FERRYMAN) Take her away.

MILADY: You can't! Please...

ATHOS TURNS HIS BACK ON HER. A DRUM BEATS AS THE FERRYMAN LEADS HER SLOWLY AWAY. D'ARTAGNAN, PORTHOS, ARAMIS & PLANCHET TURN TO WATCH THEM GO. FERRY MAN & MILADY EXIT.

ATHOS: We have been avenged, d'Artagnan.

D'ARTAGNAN: The executioner can take me too...

ATHOS: No - you knew a love that life can never tarnish. So did Constance.

D'ARTAGNAN: But we didn't know it, Athos. We only knew what it was going to be. And now I'm left with cruel possibilities, that's all.

ATHOS: For a moment it was yours. When she called your name. And you hers. For that instant - for both of you - your love was. Your name was the last she spoke. Your words the last she heard.

THEY STAND HEADS BOWED. PLANCHET COMES TO AUDIENCE.

PLANCHET: And d'Artagnan will live, and I will serve him. But he left the sparkle in his eyes here at Bethune. (BEAT) Oh, he became a Musketeer...

MUSIC.

CARDINAL, ANNE & LOUIS ENTER. ANNE CARRIES A MUSKETEERS BELT/SASH, WHICH SHE GIVES TO D'ARTAGNAN. THE MUSKETEERS RAISE THEIR SWORDS. D'ARTAGNAN TAKES THE SASH, LAYS IT ACROSS CONSTANCE'S BODY.

D'ARTAGNAN: For one braver than I...

HE KNEELS AND KISSES HER HAND.  
ALL BOW THEIR HEADS.

**THE END.**

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