*The Count of Monte Cristo*

Excerpt

This excerpt is found in *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which tells the tale of a man who is betrayed by his enemies and put in the notorious Château D'if. The novel tells of the betrayal, imprisonment, escape, and his carefully planned revenge.

The following excerpt is from chapter ten when Edmund has learned that his imprisonment was planned by his enemies. Once he learns the truth of his imprisonment, Edmund is faced with a life-changing decision - what will he do with the information?

*Dantès told him what he called the story of his life, which was limited to a voyage to India and two or three voyages to the Near East. Finally he came to his last voyage and told of the death of Captain Leclère, the package the latter gave him to deliver to the Isle of Elba, the letter which the marshal there gave him to deliver to Monsieur Noirtier in Paris, his arrival in Marseilles, his visit to his father his love for Mercédès, the betrothal feast, his arrest, his questioning, his temporary imprisonment in the Palace of Justice, and finally his transfer to the Château d'If. From then on Dantès knew nothing more, not even how long he had been a prisoner.*

*When he had finished, Faria remained silent, lost in thought. After a time he said, "There is a maximum of jurisprudence which says, 'If you wish to discover the guilty person, first find out to whom the crime might be useful.' To whom might your disappearance be useful?"*

*"To no one!" cried Dantès. "I wasn't important enough."*

*Don't say that; everything is relative. You were about to be made captain of the Pharaon, weren't you?"*

*"Yes."*

*"And you were about to marry a beautiful young girl?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Now, first of all, was it to anyone's interest that you should not become captain of the Pharaon?"*

*"No, the crew all liked me. In fact, if they'd been able to elect their own captain I'm sure they'd have elected me. There was only one man who had any reason to dislike me: I once had a quarrel with him and proposed to settle it by a duel, which he refused to do."*

*"Aha! What was that man's name?"*

*"Danglars. He was the purser."*

*"If you had become captain, would you have kept him on the ship?"*

*"Not if I'd had the choice; I thought I'd noticed some inaccuracies in his accounts."*

*"Good. Now, was anyone present during your last conversation with Captain Leclère?"*

*"No, we were alone."*

*"Could anyone have overheard you?"*

*"I suppose so; the door was open. In fact...Wait a minute...Yes! Danglars passed by just as Captain Leclère gave me the package."*

*"Good," said the priest. "We're on the right track. Did you take anyone ashore with you when you landed at the Isle of Elba?"*

*"No one."*

*"What did you do with the letter you received there?"*

*"I put it into my portfolio."*

*"Did you have your portfolio with you?"*

*"No, it was on the ship. I didn't put the letter into the portfolio until I was back on board."*

*"What did you do with it between the time you left the island and the time you put it in your portfolio?"*

*"I carried it in my hand."*

*"Therefore, when you came back on board, everyone could see that you were carrying a letter, is that right?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Including Danglars?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Now," said Faria, "listen to me and try to remember as clearly as you can. Can you tell me how the denunciation was worded?"*

*"Oh, yes! I read it three times, and every word is engraved in my memory." And he repeated the anonymous letter word for word.*

*The priest shrugged his shoulders. "It's as clear as daylight, " he said, "You must have a very innocent heart not to have guessed it immediately. What kind of handwriting did Danglars have?"*

*"He wrote a good, round hand."*

*"How was the anonymous letter written?"*

*"With a backward slant."*

*Faria smiled and said, "The handwriting was disguised, wasn't it?"*

*"It was too bold for that."*

*"Wait," said Faria. He took one of his pens and wrote a few lines with his left hand on a piece of his specially prepared cloth. Dantès shrank back and looked at him almost in terror. "It's amazing," he exclaimed," how much that other writing looked like this."*

*"That means the denunciation was written with the left hand. I've observed that almost all handwritings done with the left hand are similar. Now let's proceed to the second question: was it to anyone's interest that you should not marry Mercédès?"*

*"Yes! There was a young man who loved her, a Catalan named Fernand."*

*"Do you think he was capable of writing the letter?"*

*"No, although he was quite capable of stabbing me. Besides, he didn't know of any of the things that were in the letter. I didn't tell anyone about it, not even Mercedes."*

*"Did Fernand know Danglars?"*

*"No...Yes! I remember now: I saw the them sitting together in the arbor of a tavern two days before my marriage was to take place. Danglars was friendly and mocking, Fernand was pale and agitated. They were with a tailor named Caderousse whom I knew very well, but he was dead drunk."*

*"What we've deduced about your two friends so far has been child's play," said Faria, "but now I want you to give me some very precise details."*

*"Question me, then, for you seem to see my life more clearly than I do myself."*

*"Who examined you after your arrest?"*

*"The deputy public prosecutor."*

*"How did he treat you?"*

*"Very kindly."*

*"Did you tell him everything?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Did his attitude change at any time during the examination?"*

*"Yes: when he read the letter I received on the Isle of Elba he seemed to be greatly upset by my misfortune."*

*"Are you sure it was your misfortune that upset him?"*

*"Well, he gave me one great proof of his sympathy: he burned the letter before my eyes and said 'That was the only evidence against you and, as you see, I've destroyed it.'"*

*"That action was too sublime to be natural."*

*"Do you think so?"*

*"I'm sure of it. To whom was the letter addressed?"*

*"To Monsieur Noirtier, 13 Rue Coq-Héron, Paris."*

*"Do you think it's possible that the deputy may have had some reason for wanting that letter to disappear?"*

*"Perhaps; he made me promise two or three times, in my own interest, he said, not to speak about the letter to anyone, and he made me swear never to utter the name of the man to whom it was addressed."*

*"Noirtier...Noirtier..." repeated Faria thoughtfully.*

*"I once knew a Noirtier at the court of the Queen of Etruria, a Noirtier who had been in Girondin during the revolution. ...What was the name of the deputy who questioned you?"*

*"Villefort."*

*Faria burst out laughing. "Poor young man!" he exclaimed."That deputy was kind to you?"*

*"Yes."*

*"He burned the letter before your eyes and made you swear never to utter the name of Noirtier?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Do you know who Monsieur Noirtier was? He was the deputy's father."*

*"His father! His father!" cried Dantés, standing up and clutching his head between his hands as though to prevent it from bursting.*

*A dazzling light seemed to flash through Dantès brain and things which had until then remained dark and obscure now became crystal-clear to him. Villefort's change of attitude during the examination, the letter he had destroyed, the oath he had demanded, his almost supplicating voice, which, instead of threatening, seemed imploring-all this came back to Dantes' memory at once. He uttered a cry and reeled like a drunken man for a moment, then he rushed to the passage leading back to his own cell, crying out as he left, "Oh! I must be alone to think over all this!"*

later...

*"I regret having helped you clarify your past and having told you what I did."*

*"Why?"*

*"Because I've instilled in your hear a feeling that wasn't there before: vengeance."*