

# SCENE 1

*The Man In the Iron Mask by Alexandre Dumas*

Narrator 1: A man stands in a filthy jail cell. A hideous iron mask hides his face. Twice a day, his keeper bangs on the bars of his cell.

Keeper: You dead yet?

Phillipe: No, Keeper.

Narrator 2: The keeper shoves a tray of food at him and walks away.

The prisoner is King Louis XIV's identical twin brother, Philippe.

He has been locked in this cell for six years, ever since his brother became king. The iron mask is locked in place to make sure nobody knows who he is.

Narrator 1: Meanwhile, in the lavish royal palace, King Louis XIV is dressing for a party.

Louis: Which sash should I wear?

Narrator 2: An ongoing war, combined with Louis's selfishness, has left most of France's people starving.

Advisor: Your Majesty, there are riots in Paris.

Louis: Riots? Why should my people feel anything but contentment?

Advisor: I'm sure they are content, Your Highness, except that, well, they are starving.

Louis: We have stocks of food on the shelves right now. We could distribute that, couldn't we?

Advisor: It is spoiled, Sire. That's why it was not shipped to the army.

Louis: Then hurry and distribute it.

Advisor: The rotting food, Sire?

Louis: That's what I said!

# SCENE 2

Narrator 1: The Musketeers are the king's elite bodyguards. A generation ago, four of them became national heroes: Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan. By now, three of those four legendary Musketeers have retired.

Narrator 2: Today, Aramis is in his apartment. He is a priest now, thin and quiet. He is praying when Porthos comes to visit.

Porthos: Aramis! Stop praying, and

party with me!

Narrator 1: Porthos is the opposite of Aramis in every way. He is fat, loud, and rich. He still loves to party and fight.

Aramis: Be quiet. I'm praying.

Porthos: Come on! I need some fun. I haven't been in a fight in weeks!

Aramis: Oh, I can help you with that!

Narrator 2: The priest backhands his huge friend across the face. Soon, the two are brawling, kicking, punching, breaking chairs over each other.

Narrator 1: Meanwhile, across town,

Athos, the third legendary Musketeer, watches his son, Raoul, get ready for a date. Raoul is a soldier in the French army.

Athos: Relax, Raoul. You're my son.

How could any woman resist you?

Narrator 2: Raoul smiles. He is nervous. Today, he is going to ask his girlfriend, Christine, to marry him.

Athos: When will you ask her?

Raoul: When we get to the party. Or maybe as we leave. I'm confused.

Narrator 1: Athos smiles.

# SCENE 3

Narrator 2: The king's party begins. Men in brilliant uniforms stroll the royal grounds with women in beautiful gowns.

Narrator 1: Raoul and Christine arrive. The king is struck by her beauty.

# CHARACTERS

\*Narrator 1

\*Narrator 2

\*Louis XIV, King of France

\*Phillipe, his identical twin brother

\*Athos

\*Porthos

\*Aramis

\*D'Artagnan (dar-TAN-yun), the

"fourth Musketeer," and captain of the king's guards

Raoul, son of Athos

Christine, Raoul's girlfriend

Advisor

Keeper, a jailer

Guard 1

Guard 2

Lieutenant

\*Starred characters are major roles.

Louis: Who is that beautiful woman?

Advisor: Her name is Christine.

Narrator 2: Raoul and Christine stroll until Raoul recognizes someone.

Raoul: It's D'Artagnan. My father's best friend.

Narrator 1: D'Artagnan, the fourth legendary Musketeer, is now the king's personal bodyguard and the captain of the king's guards.

D'Artagnan's fighting skill and gallantry are legendary.

Raoul: May I present Christine Bellefort.

Narrator 2: D'Artagnan kisses her hand with a flourish.

Raoul: I am honored that you have granted my request for a commission in the king's guards.

D'Artagnan: The honor is mine.

Narrator 1: They salute, and offer the traditional Musketeer greeting.

Raoul: One for all!

D'Artagnan: All for one!

Narrator 2: D'Artagnan leaves. Now is Raoul's chance to pop the question.

Raoul: Christine, I love you. Christine: And I love you, Raoul.

Narrator 1: Suddenly, they are interrupted by a big commotion. A party game has begun. Crowds of people run by. Raoul is swept away with them. Christine finds herself alone with the king. He has been waiting for this.

S: Christine, isn't it?

Rator 2: She is tongue-tied.

Louis: You're even more beautiful than I thought.

Christine: Sire, thank you — I'm...

Louis: You blush. Do you not wish to be beautiful to your king?

Christine: No, Sire. I mean yes, Sire. I

— I mean, thank you...

Louis: How would you like to live in the palace?

Narrator 1: D'Arragnan watches in secret from behind a hedge.

Christine: His Majesty is very kind, but

I am engaged to Raoul. Or I will be, when he manages to ask me.

Louis: You would choose a soldier above a king?

Christine: I can only be faithful to my heart.

Narrator 2: Louis is insulted, but captivated by Christine. He tries to kiss her, but she runs away.

Louis: Wait! Christine!

## SCENE 4

Narrator 1: After the royal party,

D'Arragnan visits Athos. Raoul arrives with bad news.

Raoul: I've been recalled to my regiment on the front lines.

Athos: You've already served at the front. This makes no sense.

Narrator 2: D'Arragnan looks away.

Raoul: I think the king's eye has fallen on Christine.

D'Arragnan: We are not sure that this has anything to do with that.

Athos: Of course it does! The king is a dog and a coward.

Raoul: But I am neither, and so I go.

Athos: You will not go! You will not serve this king. He has no honor.

Raoul: It's not his honor that I serve, Father. It's mine.

Narrator 1: Raoul leaves the room.

Athos looks at D'Arragnan.

Athos: You knew about this?

D'Arragnan: I will speak to the king personally.

Aramis: Why do you trust his character when nobody else does?

D'Arragnan: I still have hope that he will become a good king.

Athos: D'Arragnan, I have never loved a friend more than you. But if any king takes what my son loves most, then that king becomes my enemy. And so does any man who stands between me and that enemy.

D'Arragnan: Then I must hurry, for I treasure Raoul as I treasure you.

## SCENE 5

Narrator 2: D'Arragnan finds the king at the palace.

D'Arragnan: Your Majesty, have you recently met a woman named

Christine?

Louis: I fear that you watch me too closely, D'Arragnan.

D'Arragnan: Did you send Raoul to war so that you would be free to pursue her?

Louis: Absolutely not. I have instructed that Raoul be brought home immediately.

D'Arragnan: Thank you, Your Majesty. Louis: D'Arragnan, I am a young king.

But I am king.

D'Arragnan: Then be a good one — Your Majesty.

Narrator 1: D'Arragnan leaves.

Louis (*to himself*): Why do I let him talk to me that way?

Narrator 2: But Louis lied! He does not bring Raoul back. Within

days, Raoul is killed in the war.

Narrator 1: Athos tries to fight his way into the palace to kill the king.

But D'Arragnan persuades him to go home. That night, the four Musketeers talk in secret.

Aramis: When we were young and we saw injustice, we fought it.

D'Arragnan: But now we know that some problems cannot be settled with a sword.

Athos: And some problems cannot be settled *without* one.

Aramis: I have a plan. We'll replace the king.

Porthos: It cannot be done.

Aramis: It can. I know a way. I will need you all. All for one. One for all.

D'Arragnan: I cannot betray my king.

Athos: Why do you fight for him? We fought for something greater than king, or rank, or reward. What do you fight for now?

D'Arragnan: I fight for the idea that all men, even Louis, can be better.

Athos: King Louis killed my son! Count me in, whatever the plan.

## SCENE 6

Narrator 2: The next night, Athos and Porthos find themselves rowing a small boat across a stormy, moonlit sea. Aramis sits in the boat, dressed as a very fat priest.

Athos: We row into the most terrible prison in France with you dressed like this. And still, you will not tell us your plan?

Aramis: There are many lives at stake. Just keep quiet.

Narrator 1: At the prison, two guards approach their boat. Aramis hands one a letter. He reads it, then speaks to the other guard.

Guard 1: It says this priest has come to hear the prisoner's monthly confession. The regular priest died.

Maybe the plague. Guard 2: Plague? Let's just get this over with.

Narrator 2: They lead the enormous Aramis into the prison and lock him in a cell with Philippe. Then they leave.

Philippe: Who are you?

Aramis: I am a friend. I'm here to help you escape to freedom.

Philippe: Freedom?

Narrator 1: Aramis removes his cloak. Underneath, he has a dead man hanging around his neck. The corpse wears an iron mask, just like Philippe's.

Philippe: Who is he?

Aramis: He is you.

Narrator 2: Aramis exchanges the corpse for Phillippe. Once Phillippe is hidden under Aramis's huge cloak, Aramis yells for the guard. Aramis: The prisoner is dead! He keeled over! Maybe it's the plague! Guard 1: You brought the plague in here? Get out! Now!

Narrator 1: Aramis gets in the tiny boat, and Porthos and Athos row away. Phillippe is hanging from Aramis's neck under his cloak.

## SCENE 7

Narrator 2: They take Phillippe to a farmhouse in the country. Aramis breaks open his mask. Phillippe's face is hideous, caked with years of beard, food, and dirt.

Narrator 1: After Phillippe is clean and shaved, Athos and Porthos are amazed by what they see.

Porthos (*cubsperring, to Athos*): It's like I'm looking at the king.

Phillippe: I've always wanted to ask:

Why was I imprisoned?

Aramis: What do you remember? Phillippe: I was brought up and educated by an old woman on a farm.

Then, six years ago, a man in black came and took me to that prison. I couldn't see his face. He put that iron mask on me. I asked him why, but he wouldn't say.

Aramis: It is because you are the twin brother of King Louis. I was there when the queen gave birth to twins. I took you, the younger one, away to a farm.

Phillippe: But why?

Aramis: Because suddenly the old king had two heirs. He had seen too many kingdoms torn apart by feuding brothers. So he decided, for the sake of peace, to make one of them disappear. You were that one, Phillippe. But now we will restore to you what is yours.

Phillippe: Restore what?

Aramis: We will replace Louis with Phillippe.

Athos: That's your plan? It's idiotic!

Aramis: I have it all worked out. What did you think we were up to? Porthos: Revolution! Open warfare.

Athos: Listen, Phillippe looks like Louis. But he doesn't have the king's arrogance. He'll never fool the king's advisors.

Aramis: We'll teach him. Athos: It's not just our lives you're risking. It's Phillippe's as well.

Aramis: Yes, and like us all, he has a choice. Well, Phillippe? Were all those years of suffering for nothing? Or have they given you reserves of strength unlike ordinary men? You have the chance to be king. Do you have the heart to take that chance?

Narrator 2: They all look at Phillippe. Phillippe: I'll do it.

Aramis: Good. We'll start your training right away. The king is giving a costume ball three weeks from today. We'll switch kings then. We can slip in unnoticed, wearing masks like everyone else.

Narrator 1: Athos becomes Phillippe's tutor. He teaches him how to talk, act, and fight like an arrogant king.

## SCENE 8

Narrator 2: The day of the party arrives. On the way, Athos and Aramis give Phillippe final pointers. Aramis: Just get through the party.

Then tomorrow, order Athos, Porthos, and me brought to the palace as your advisors.

Athos: We'll help you from there.

Narrator 1: At the ball, Aramis and Porthos wear disguises. Louis walks in and joins the dance.

D'Artagnan follows behind him. Phillippe: It's my brother!

Athos: The man behind him is D'Artagnan. Be very careful of him. He watches the king with eagle eyes. He is our old friend, but he is very loyal to the king.

Narrator 2: Porthos and Aramis both wear party masks. Under those masks, they wear replicas of Phillippe's iron mask.

Narrator 1: Each time they pass the king, they flash their iron masks at him. When he looks back at them, their party masks are on. Louis thinks he's sick, and seeing things. Louis: I don't feel well. I must rest.

Narrator 2: Eventually, he goes to his bedroom to lie down.

Athos: Now is our chance, Phillippe.

Narrator 1: They enter Louis's room through a back door. Louis is asleep on the bed. Porthos puts his big hand over the king's mouth.

Aramis: It's judgment day.

Narrator 2: He knocks Louis out.

When Louis wakes up, he is wearing Phillippe's clothes, and Phillippe is dressed in his. Athos puts his hand on Phillippe's shoulder.

Athos: Come, Your Highness. It is time to return to your party.

Narrator 1: Phillippe goes back to the party as the king. Porthos puts a hood over Louis's head as they lead him down a back corridor. Ten minutes later, they reach an underground dock where the river runs under the palace. But a rude surprise awaits them there.

Narrator 2: A troop of the king's guards, led by D'Artagnan, is waiting for them with Phillippe.

D'Artagnan: Did you really think you could fool me with this impostor?

Porthos: How did you get here first? D'Artagnan: I know every inch and secret passage of this palace.

Athos: Give Phillippe back to us, or we will kill Louis.

D'Artagnan: You wouldn't dare.

Athos: Try me, old friend.

Narrator 1: They are at a standoff. Each group has the other's king. Carefully, they exchange prisoners. D'Artagnan now has Louis beside him, and Athos receives Phillippe. Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and Phillippe leap into a boat, and take off down the river.

Louis: Stop them!

Narrator 2: The king's guards take off after the boat. D'Artagnan stays on the dock.

Louis: Aren't you going to lead your troops?

D'Artagnan: There's a gate a few hundred yards down. They can't escape. Sire, did you know of the existence of this impostor?

Louis: Of course, he's my brother.

D'Artagnan: Your brother! I thought he only *looked* like you.

Louis: He's my twin. A fact which, until now, has kept him alive.

Narrator 1: Louis turns to look at D'Artagnan, but he is gone.

## SCENE 9

Narrator 2: The three Musketeers and Philippe row down the river passage under the palace. Ahead, a huge gate rolls down across the water, trapping them in the palace.

Narrator 1: They see the king's guards approaching them.

Athos: They're here! It looks like this might be our final battle, friends.

Narrator 2: Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and Philippe get out of the boat. Suddenly, a door opens in the wall, and a familiar face pokes out.

D'Artagnan: This way! Hurry!

Aramis: It's a trap. Don't do it.

Athos: We have no choice. We have to trust him.

Narrator 1: They follow. D'Artagnan down a narrow passage within the walls. Seeing the king and his guards, they duck around a corner.

Louis (*whispering*): D'Artagnan, give me Philippe, and I will not punish you.

D'Artagnan: No. I could never do that.

Even if I could give up my king, I could never give up my son.

Narrator 2: Louis and Philippe are D'Artagnan's sons. The news hits like a ton of bricks. Finally, it is clear why D'Artagnan has stayed loyal to Louis.

D'Artagnan (*to Philippe*): I love your mother, and I always have. Her husband, the king, never knew. I never knew you existed. And I never knew pride as a father.

Aramis: D'Artagnan, we are heroes to those young guards. It's an advantage for us. Let's charge them.

D'Artagnan: Those are good men. They will fight bravely. But if we are to die, let it be this way.

Narrator 1: They give Philippe a sword. Then they all charge down the corridor. There is wild, frenzied battle. Swords clash. Pistols ring. The air fills with smoke.

Narrator 2: Finally, the lieutenant of the king's guards halts his troops. He cannot go on fighting the brave old veterans.

Louis: Kill them!

Narrator 1: Louis leaps toward Philippe with his long dagger.

D'Artagnan: No!

Narrator 2: D'Artagnan knocks Louis to the wall, then spins toward Philippe to make sure he is not hurt. Louis recovers, and lunges at D'Artagnan, stabbing him.

Philippe: Louis, you vicious, evil—

Narrator 1: Philippe grabs Louis and begins to strangle him.

D'Artagnan (*weakly*): No. He is your brother.

Lieutenant: Brothers? All king's guards, go outside.

Narrator 2: The soldiers all exit. Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and Philippe cradle D'Artagnan as he dies.

D'Artagnan: All my life I've wanted to die this way. All for one...

## SCENE 10

Narrator 1: Minutes later, they all emerge from the corridor to rejoin the king's guards.

Lieutenant: We have recaptured the prisoner. He will require a new iron mask.

Narrator 2: This time, Philippe is dressed as the king. Louis has a hood over his head, and is being dragged by the lieutenant.

Louis: No! No! I am your king!

Lieutenant: Put this madman where no one can hear his cries.

Narrator 1: A king's guard points to Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

King's guard: And what about them?

King Philippe: They're my loyal servants.

Narrator 2: They all watch as Louis is dragged away. ♦