

Penguin



Readers

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The Three Musketeers



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CHAPTER ONE

The journey to Paris

“Take this horse for your journey, my son,” said old Monsieur d’Artagnan to the young man standing beside him. In front of them was a very old, sick-looking yellow horse, with its head **hanging** down.

The young d’Artagnan looked unhappily at the old horse, but he said nothing.

“Except for this horse and fifteen **crowns**, I only have a few words of advice to give you,” his father continued. “Remember that the only way a man can succeed in the world today is to be brave. So if you see a good chance, take it without stopping to think or you may lose it forever. And you have two good reasons to be brave – first, you’re a Gascon, and second, you’re my son. You’re strong and I’ve taught you how to use a **sword** well. So live dangerously, but always be honest.”

Old Monsieur d’Artagnan then held out a letter.

“Take this letter to my dear friend Monsieur de Tréville, who’s a Gascon like us and a close friend of our good King Louis XIII. If you do what he tells you, perhaps one day you’ll be as rich and successful as he is. He’s never been afraid, and now he’s **Captain** of the King’s Musketeers – those brave and **fearless** soldiers who frighten even the Cardinal. And as we all know, the Cardinal isn’t easily frightened!”

Old Monsieur d'Artagnan then kissed his son on both cheeks. "Use these gifts well, my dear boy, and may your life be long and happy," he finished.

After saying goodbye to his mother, who gave less advice and cried a lot more, the young d'Artagnan started out on his journey to Paris. He arrived in the town of Meung on his old yellow horse, with the fifteen crowns and his father's letter to Monsieur de Tréville in his pocket.

Three men watched as he stopped at the inn and got off his horse. They saw a strong young man of eighteen, with intelligent eyes and a proud look about him that said, "I'm as good as you are!" They looked at his blue jacket, the feather in his Gascon hat and the sword hanging from his shoulder. Then they looked at his horse and laughed.



“I’ve seen plenty of yellow flowers,” the tallest man said to the other two, “but never a yellow horse,” and they all laughed again.

D’Artagnan stepped towards the tall man in the black cloak, his hand on his sword. “You, sir!” he said, angrily. “Tell me what you’re laughing at so that I can laugh, too.”

The tall stranger, who had dark eyes, **pale** skin and a **scar** on his cheek, stared calmly back at d’Artagnan. “I wasn’t talking to you, sir,” he replied, turning away.

“No, but I was talking to you, sir!” cried d’Artagnan. “Turn and face me, or you’ll feel my sword through your back!”

The stranger turned around quickly. “Are you mad?” he said. Then he said to himself, quietly, “It’s unfortunate that this young man can’t control himself. He’d make a fine musketeer.”

Hearing this, d’Artagnan ran at the stranger so **furiously** that the man **had to** jump out of the way. At that moment, the other two men ran forward and knocked d’Artagnan down to the ground. D’Artagnan fought back hard against them, but soon his head was covered in blood.

“We’ll see what Monsieur de Tréville thinks when he hears about this!” cried d’Artagnan. The next moment he **fainted**, and the innkeeper called for his **servants** to carry the young man inside.

The stranger followed them into the inn. “Who is the young troublemaker?” he asked the innkeeper, who came downstairs after putting d’Artagnan to bed.

"I don't know, sir. All he told me was that he's going to Paris with a letter to Monsieur de Tréville in his pocket."

"Monsieur de Tréville!" thought the stranger. "Has he sent the young Gascon after me?"

"Are all the young man's things upstairs with him?" asked the stranger.

"No, sir. His coat is still in the kitchen, where my wife cleaned his **wounds**," replied the innkeeper.

The stranger thought for a moment. "You should get that troublemaker out of here as soon as possible. I'm not staying, and he's going to scare your other guests away, too. Please get my bill ready and call my servant."

The innkeeper hurried away to do what he had been asked. "I'll ask the young man to get up and leave, too. If I keep him here, I might lose more business," he thought.

A short while later, d'Artagnan managed to get to his feet and went down to the kitchen to get his coat. The first thing he saw through the window was the tall stranger standing by a **carriage** and talking to a lady inside. She was about twenty-five and very beautiful, with large blue eyes, rose-red lips and golden hair which fell around her shoulders.

He could hear the stranger's words. "Milady, the Cardinal's orders are that you return to London immediately and let him know as soon as the Duke of Buckingham leaves England."

"And what about you?" asked the woman.

"I'm returning to Paris," he said.

The next moment, d'Artagnan was outside beside him.

“You won’t escape me this time!” he shouted.

“Be quick, Milady!” cried the stranger to the woman in the carriage. “You go your way, and I’ll go mine.” With that, he jumped on his horse and **galloped** off, while Milady’s carriage hurried away in the opposite direction.

D’Artagnan tried to run after the stranger, but the pain from his wounds made him faint again, and he fell down in the middle of the street. The innkeeper had him carried inside once more.

“I’ve lost one customer, but kept this one, and it will be several days until he’s better,” thought the innkeeper.

But just two days later, d’Artagnan was almost well again and ready to leave. He was taking his money out of his coat pocket to pay his bill when he discovered that the letter to Monsieur de Tréville had disappeared.

“Where’s my letter? How could it be lost?” he cried.

The innkeeper thought for a moment. “The letter’s not lost!” he said. “It was stolen from you by the gentleman who you argued with, I’m sure.”

“So that man is the thief! When Monsieur de Tréville hears about this, he’ll tell the King!” replied d’Artagnan.

Then he got on to his old yellow horse and, after a long and tiring ride, arrived in Paris at last. Here, he sold the horse and rented a room on the first floor of a house near the Luxembourg Palace. Finally, having learned that the great Monsieur de Tréville lived nearby, he went to bed full of hope for the future and fell into a long and peaceful sleep.

CHAPTER TWO

Athos, Porthos and Aramis

The next day, d'Artagnan went to Monsieur de Tréville's house. There was a noisy crowd of fifty or sixty musketeers around it, ready for orders from their captain. Seeing these strong and fearless soldiers made even a brave young man like d'Artagnan feel nervous. As he walked through them, holding his sword against his leg and trying to smile, they all turned to look at him. For the first time in his life, young d'Artagnan, who had always thought well of himself, began to feel silly.

A servant came to ask his name and took him to wait outside Monsieur de Tréville's office. At last, the door opened and d'Artagnan's name was called. But Monsieur de Tréville seemed angry and explained that there was something he had to do. Then he called out, loudly, "Athos! Porthos! Aramis!"

Two musketeers came into his office. One was a tall, very expensively dressed man in a long red cloak. The other was much younger, with dark, gentle eyes. Monsieur de Tréville looked at them both angrily.

"Last night, the Cardinal told the King that you started a fight outside an inn. You three were **recognized** by some of the Cardinal's **Guards**. You know that fighting in the street is against the law. But where's Athos?"

"He's very ill, sir," answered Aramis.