

Another enemy

Monsieur Villefort was another man who was planning to marry his fiancée soon. As the crown prosecutor, he wanted a wife who would help him become an important person in Marseille. Now that Napoleon was **banished**, people who had helped him become Emperor, like Villefort's own father, were losing their jobs, homes, money and friends. Villefort hoped that no one would remember his father's interest in Napoleon, and he was clever enough to see that, from now on, only **allies** of the King would have **power** and make money. So he had chosen as his fiancée Renée Saint-Méran, who was beautiful and rich, and whose parents loved the King.

He was at a dinner party at their large house in the most expensive part of Marseille, when a letter was brought to him. He opened it at once and read it.

'Aha!' he said. 'This is serious. It seems there are still people who want to bring back the banished Emperor Napoleon!'

'Can that be possible?' said several people in **horror**.

'Yes. This letter tells me that a man called Edmond Dantès has visited the Emperor on Elba and has a letter for Napoleon's allies in Paris. The police have arrested him, and I must go to question him.'

'Poor young man!' cried Renée. 'Don't be too hard on him!'

'I must do what is necessary, dear Renée. But I'll return soon.'

And Renée gave him her sweetest smile as he went out. When he arrived at his office, he ordered the police to bring in their prisoner. As he questioned Dantès, he watched the young man's open, honest face and confident smile. 'He can't be a criminal!' he thought. 'Renée will be happy when she hears that I've **released** him!'

He smiled kindly at Dantès. 'You'll be free very soon, my

friend,' he said. 'I'll just look at the letter that you were carrying.'

'Thank you, Monsieur! Here it is.'

Villefort looked down at the **envelope**, and went white with horror. It was addressed to Monsieur Noirtier, his father! He fell back in his chair.

'Monsieur, are you ill?' cried Dantès.

'I'm asking the questions, not you,' said Villefort, trying to think fast. 'Does anyone else know of this letter? Anyone at all?'

'No, Monsieur! But – what's the matter? Can I go now?'

'I'm afraid I must keep you a little longer. But first I'm going to destroy this letter. Then no one can say you're the King's enemy!' He threw the letter on the fire, where it burned brightly for a few seconds.

'Monsieur, you're a very good friend to me!'

envelope a paper cover that you put a letter in

Villefort looked down at the envelope.



banish to punish someone by sending them away somewhere

ally a person that is on your side and helps you in a fight

power the feeling of being able to make other people do what you want

horror the feeling of being badly surprised and afraid

release to set free

'Now remember, Dantès, if anyone asks about that letter, say you know nothing about it. Don't forget – it's important!'

'I won't forget, Monsieur. Thank you!'

Villefort called a police officer to the room, and whispered an order to him. 'Follow this officer,' he told Dantès, who smiled gratefully at Villefort as he went out.

When he was alone, Villefort put his head in his shaking hands. 'The letter is gone now but Dantès read the name and address on the envelope. If anyone learns that my father is still one of Napoleon's allies, I'll lose my job at once!' he thought. 'They could even put me to death! But perhaps nobody will find out now.'

Dantès was taken to a police **cell**, where he waited for several hours. Then, to his great surprise, he was taken to the port by four large policemen carrying guns. They pushed him into a small boat, which they started **rowing** out to sea.

'What's happening?' asked Dantès. 'Monsieur Villefort promised he would release me!'

'We don't know anything about that,' said one of the men.

'We're just obeying our orders.'

'But where are you taking me? Tell me!'

'Haven't you guessed? Look around you!'

Dantès lifted his eyes, and suddenly saw a frightening black shape right in front of the boat. It was the **Château d'If**, a castle on a small rocky island, and it was well known to everybody in Marseille as a prison. No prisoner ever left it alive. He cried out in horror, 'My **God!** The Château d'If! Why are we going there?'

The policemen just smiled, and continued rowing.

'But that's a prison for the worst criminals, enemies of France!'

You can't take me there! I've done nothing wrong!'

Just then the boat touched the rock, and the policemen carried Dantès, who was fighting and shouting wildly, into the castle. Soon he found himself alone in a dark, silent underground cell.

He could not understand what had happened, and he felt that he was going **mad**.

As Villefort was returning to the Saint-Mérans' dinner party, he was stopped in the street by a beautiful dark-haired girl.

'Please tell me where Edmond Dantès is, Monsieur,' she said, her voice breaking with sadness.

'I can't tell you that – he's a criminal,' replied Villefort coldly, pushing Mercedes to one side. For a moment he felt worried about Dantès – to keep himself safe he had sent an honest young man to prison for life and destroyed any hope of happiness for Edmond and his fiancée. He knew that he had the power to put matters right. But the moment passed, and he did nothing.

The next day, Villefort travelled to Paris to tell the King that Napoleon was planning to escape from Elba. He hoped the King would be grateful for this information and **reward** him richly, but he was unlucky. While he was at the palace, news of the Emperor's escape was brought to the King, and the King was too busy worrying about his own future to think about rewarding the crown prosecutor.

In the next two weeks, many Frenchmen hurried to join Napoleon's army as it moved northwards, and finally the King had to leave Paris for a safer country. Napoleon became Emperor again.

Now Villefort had to be careful if he wanted to keep his job – people knew that he had spoken against the Emperor. Renée Saint-Méran was no longer the right wife for him and his plans for a wedding were soon forgotten. And when Monsieur Morrel, the owner of the *Pharaon*, asked him repeatedly about Dantès, he always pretended to be warmly interested in Edmond, but, sadly, unable to help. He hoped that no one would ever find out about the terrible thing that he had done.

cell a small room in a prison or police station

row to move a boat through water using long pieces of wood with flat ends

château /ʃæ'təʊ/ the French word for 'castle'

God an important being who never dies, and who decides what happens in the world

mad crazy

reward to give money to someone for their help

READING CHECK

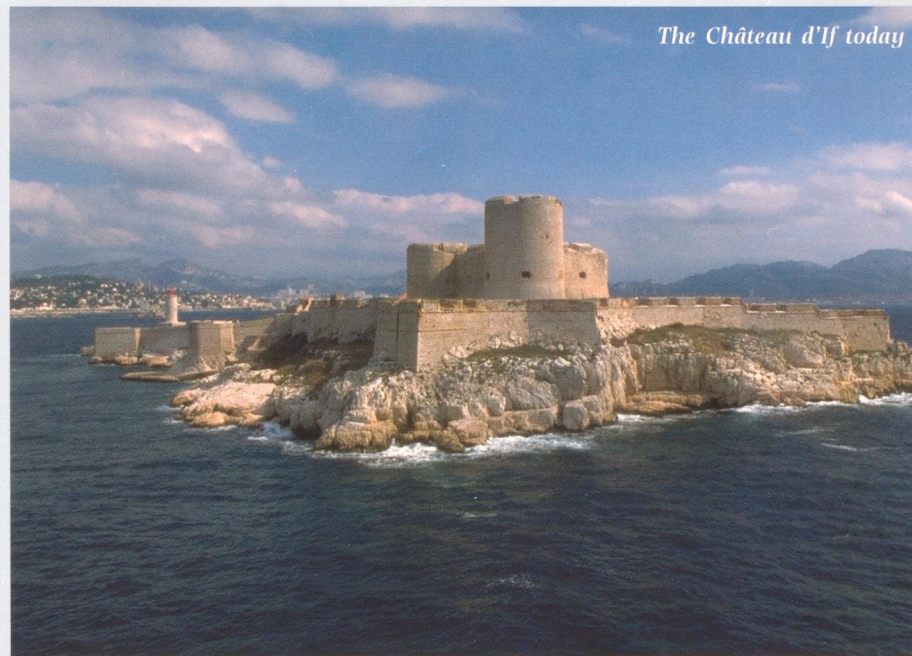
Put these sentences in the correct order. Number them 1–9.

- a Morrel comes many times to ask Villefort about Edmond.
- b Villefort sees that Edmond is a good man and decides that he can go free.
- c 1 Villefort is at a dinner party with the family of his fiancée.
- d Villefort quickly burns the letter.
- e Villefort goes to question Edmond about a letter from Napoleon.
- f Villefort sees that the letter from Napoleon is to his father.
- g Villefort secretly sends Edmond to prison.
- h Napoleon becomes Emperor again and Villefort decides not to marry.
- i Mercedes comes to ask Villefort about Edmond.

WORD WORK

Use words from Chapter 2 in the correct form to complete the sentences.

- a The English and Germans were *allies* fighting against the French at the Battle of Waterloo.
- b At the beginning of the story Napoleon was on the island of Elba.
- c Villefort sees his father's name on the of a letter from Napoleon.
- d Villefort's face goes white with when he thinks of the danger that he is in.
- e Villefort decides that he cannot Dantès.
- f Villefort has the to send men to the Château d'If.
- g Some policemen a small boat out to the island prison.
- h Dantès must live in one of the small there.
- i When Dantès arrives at the prison he nearly goes
- j He calls out to to help him.
- k Villefort hopes that the king will him for information about Napoleon's plan to return to France.



The Château d'If today

GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens in the next chapter? Match the people with the sentences.

Edmond

Danglars

Fernand

Villefort

Napoleon

- a ... is sent away to the island of Saint Helena.
- b ... stays in prison for many years.
- c ... marries Renée de Saint-Méran.
- d ... joins the French army.
- e ... leaves Marseille and goes to live in Spain.