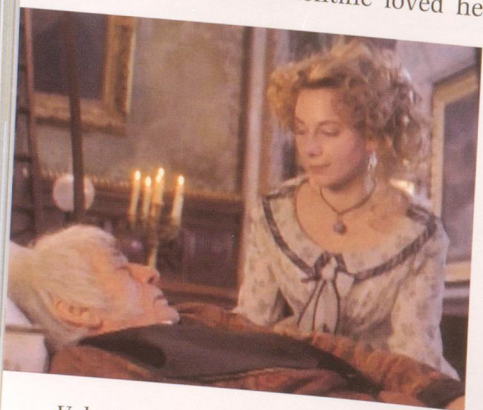


## Love and money

Monsieur Villefort's wife, Renée Saint-Méran, had died young, leaving him a daughter, Valentine. He married again, and, with his second wife, had a son, Edouard. They all lived in Villefort's large house in Paris, with his father, Monsieur Noirtier, who was **paralysed** after an illness. Valentine loved her grandfather dearly, and she spent many hours taking care of him.



Valentine loved her grandfather.

Behind the house was a large flower garden, and then a high stone wall. On the other side of the wall were fields, where poor people grew their vegetables. One evening that spring, a young man disguised in workman's clothes walked up to the wall. He took a stone away from the wall and called softly through the hole, 'Valentine!'

'I'm here, Maximilien!' replied a girl in a white dress, running through the garden to the hole on her side of the wall.

'Do you still love me?' asked the young man.

'You know I do, Maximilien. But what can I do? My **stepmother** hates me because I have more money than her son, and my father wants me to marry Baron Franz d'Epinaï.'

'Valentine, I'll die before I see you married to another man! We'll have to run away together and have a secret wedding!'

'I think you're right— Oh, go away! Someone's coming!'

Maximilien left the wall and quickly started digging. He heard a servant saying to Valentine, 'Your stepmother is asking for you, **Mademoiselle**. The Count of Monte Cristo has arrived.'

At that moment the count was in Madame Villefort's sitting

room. He had come, he said at the door, as a new neighbour to visit the family. But he really wanted to learn more about Villefort's home life as part of his plan to take revenge on the crown prosecutor. So he talked about anything and everything, and Madame Villefort, who loved the sound of her own voice, sat and talked openly and freely with him. He had already discovered that she had no time to take care of the paralysed Monsieur Noirtier, that she loved her little son more than anyone else, and that she thought Valentine's money should belong to Edouard. Now they were talking about **poisons**, which greatly interested the prosecutor's wife. When Valentine entered, Madame Villefort introduced her to the count and then sent her away a few minutes later. She closed the door carefully after the girl.

'Now, Count, let's continue our conversation,' she said. 'You were telling me how a person can **protect** himself against poison.'

'It's easy, Madame. You take a few drops of the poison every day, a little more each time. Then after a month you and another person could drink poison from the same glass. The person who had drunk it with you would die, while you'd just feel a little unwell.'

'How interesting!'

'I've studied medicines and poisons during my travels round the world. I've made a most useful medicine – one drop makes you feel fresh and alive, but five or six would kill you. And you can't taste it!'

'I wonder – could you possibly let me have some? I so often feel tired – I'm sure it would help me.'

The count promised to send the medicine to her the next day, and left the house, delighted with a successful visit.

That evening, Albert and his friend Château-Renaud went to the theatre. They saw Madame Danglars, sitting with her lover

**paralysed** unable to move your arms or legs

**stepmother** the wife of your father but who is not your mother

**Mademoiselle** /,mædmwə'zel/ the French word for 'Miss'

**poison** something that kills people when they eat or drink it

**protect** to save someone from danger or something unpleasant



Lucien Debray and her daughter Eugénie.

'Eugénie's a beautiful girl,' said Château-Renaud.

'I'd prefer someone gentler,' said Albert. 'But, look at the **box** over there!'

All eyes in the theatre were turned towards the box. A man in black, between thirty-five and forty years old, had just entered with a beautiful young woman in a long white dress, covered with jewels.

'It's Monte Cristo and his Greek **slave**, Haydée!' said Albert.

'A slave?!' repeated Château-Renaud.

'That's what he calls her. I think he bought her, somewhere in the East, to protect her from some terrible danger.'

Just then Albert's father came into the theatre. When Haydée saw Fernand de Morcerf, she gave a little scream.

'My lord,' she whispered to the count, 'who is that man?' 'Monsieur de Morcerf, who fought in Greece under your famous father, and was well paid for it, I understand.'

'It was this man who sold my poor father, Ali Pasha, to the enemy! We thought he was our friend, but when the enemy offered him money, he helped them to kill my father! I hate him!'

'Come, child, you're getting too excited. We'll go home.'

Albert, Château-Renaud, and the other people in the theatre could not hear this conversation. They thought the Greek girl was unwell, as they watched the count taking her out of the box.

The next day, a young man in Italian clothes was shown into the count's sitting room.

'Ah, it's Andrea Cavalcanti, isn't it?' said the count, remembering the new name and the false life story that he had given to Villefort's son Benedetto.

'Er – yes, Count,' replied the young man, trying to remember what he had learnt. 'I come from a good old Italian family.'

When I was a child, I was – er – kidnapped by bandits, so it's some years since I last saw my – er – dear old father. Your friend Sinbad the Sailor seemed to think you could help me.'

'Of course, my dear Cavalcanti,' said the count. The young man clearly had no idea that Monte Cristo and Sinbad were one and the same man. Then the count called to his servant, 'Bring in **Major** Bartolomeo Cavalcanti at once!'

An old man in uniform entered. 'Excellency, is this the man who – I mean, is this my son?' he asked the count, trying to forget his criminal past and remember his new name and life story, too. 'Lord Wilmore told me I'd find him here.'

'That's right, Major,' smiled the count. The old man clearly hadn't seen through his different disguises either. 'And now that you've found each other again, let me give you some money to help you live for a while in this expensive city. I think 50,000 francs each will do to start with.'

The young man and the old man looked at each other, their mouths open. It was more money than they had ever dreamed of.

'On Saturday I'd like to introduce you to some of my friends,' the count went on. 'So come to my house in Auteuil at five o'clock.'

After they had left, the count sent an unsigned message to Lucien Debray, saying that he should sell any Spanish **bonds** that he owned, because the Queen of Spain was in danger from her enemy Don Carlos. He knew what would happen – at once Debray told Madame Danglars, who told her husband. Danglars sold all his Spanish bonds. But the next day he realized the news was not true. He had lost a million francs.

The count's plans for revenge were going well.

At five o'clock on Saturday, carriages began to arrive at the count's house in Auteuil. First came Baron Danglars and his wife, with Lucien Debray and Maximilien Morrel, and then

**box** an expensive seat in a small room at the theatre

**slave** a person who must work for no money

**major** an officer in the army

**bond** money put into a company which is protected by the government



**commit** to do a crime

Villefort and his wife. The count smiled secretly as he noticed that both Villefort and Madame Danglars looked around fearfully as they entered the house.

Just then he found Bertuccio at his shoulder. 'Excellency,' said the steward, 'The woman over there—'

'You mean Madame Danglars?'

'I don't know her name. But that's her, the woman who was Villefort's mistress and lived in this house! And, my God!' He turned white as he saw Andrea Cavalcanti, 'Benedetto!' he whispered.

'Stay silent and go back to your work,' said the count.

After dinner, the count offered to show his guests round the house. Danglars chose to stay downstairs, talking about business with the Cavalcantis; he liked them because he felt sure they were very rich.

'I must show you one of the bedrooms,' said the count.

'I think someone **committed** a crime there. Follow me!' And he took the rest of his guests into a small dark bedroom on the first floor. 'You see? It's painted red. Think of the blood that surely fell here!'

Villefort looked white, and Madame Danglars fell into a chair.

'And here are some secret stairs that go down to the garden!' cried the count, throwing open a small door. 'I feel sure that the criminal

went this way, taking a dead body out of the house, to hide it in the garden!'

'I need some air!' cried Madame Danglars.

'And in fact,' continued the count, 'I know a crime was committed, because when my men were digging in the garden,



'Be strong!' said Villefort to Madame Danglars.

they found a box with a dead baby's body in it!

'That's serious,' said Debray. And as the guests left the room and went downstairs, Villefort took the chance to whisper in Madame Danglars' ear, 'The count knows our secret. I'll find out what he's planning. Be strong! Say nothing to anyone!'

Villefort did indeed try to find out more about the count, but in the next few days his own family began to give him more to worry about. Madame Saint-Méran, Villefort's old **mother-in-law**, came to stay at the Villeforts' house. She wanted to see her granddaughter Valentine married as soon as possible, so the **signing** of the **contract** to marry Franz d'Epinau was fixed for nine o'clock in the evening of that same day.

Maximilien was wild with worry that he would lose his Valentine, and they agreed they would run away together that evening. But he waited and waited at the hole in the wall, and Valentine did not come. Later he discovered that her grandmother had died suddenly, and that the doctor thought she had died from poison. The person who would get all her money was Valentine, and no one else seemed to have any reason to poison the old lady. Behind closed doors people began to say that perhaps Valentine was a poisoner, and the servants began to leave the Villeforts' house one by one.

Maximilien was now very unhappy. He did not believe all the stories, but he knew that his plans to marry Valentine would have to wait. He was ready to kill Franz d'Epinau if necessary, to protect Valentine from a husband whom she did not love.



Maximilien was now very unhappy.

**mother-in-law** the mother of your wife or husband

**sign** to write your name

**contract** the paper that everyone signs to show that they all agree to something



## READING CHECK

Complete these sentences with the correct names.

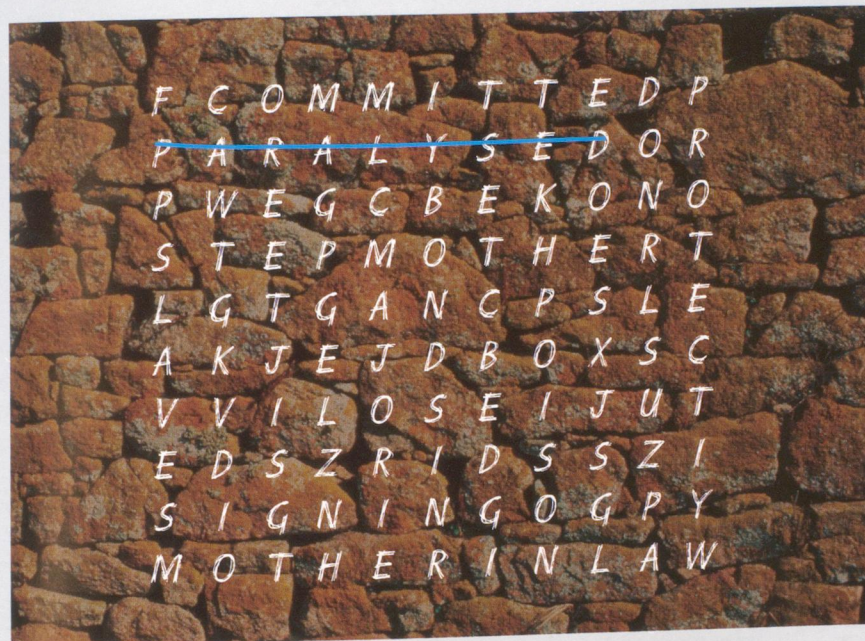
Andrea Cavalcanti     ~~Maximilien Morrel~~  
 Baron Danglars     the Count of Monte Cristo  
 Edouard Villefort     Fernand de Morcerf  
 Madame Danglars     Madame Villefort     Valentine Villefort

- a Valentine loves Maximilien Morrel .....
- b Madame Villefort hates .....
- c She thinks Valentine's money should belong to .....
- d The count says that he will send some medicine to .....
- e Albert sees ..... at the theatre with a Greek woman called Haydée.
- f .....
- g ..... sold Haydée's father to the enemy.
- h Bertuccio recognizes ..... loses a million francs when he sells lots of bonds.
- i Bertuccio recognizes ..... as Villefort's mistress.
- j People think that ..... is Villefort's lost son, Benedetto.
- k ..... killed Madame Saint-Méran for her money.

## WORD WORK

Find the words in the wall on page 55 to complete the sentences.

- a Villefort looks after his father, Monsieur Noirtier, who is paralysed .....
- b Madame Villefort is Valentine's .....
- c Madame Villefort talks about ..... with the Count of Monte Cristo.
- d The count calls Haydée his 'Greek' .....
- e The count and Haydée sit in a ..... at the theatre.
- f Baron Danglars sells all his Spanish .....



- g ..... Cavalcanti says that he is Andrea's father.
- h The Count of Monte Cristo wants to show the people visiting his house in Auteuil that someone ..... a crime there.
- i Madame Saint-Méran, Villefort's ....., wants to see the ..... of her granddaughter's wedding contract.
- j Maximilien Morrel wants to ..... Valentine from marrying someone that she doesn't love.

## GUESS WHAT

Match the first and second parts of these sentences to find out what happens in the next chapter.

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| a Villefort wants ...          | 1 to hear that his father helped to kill Haydée's father. |
| b Villefort's father wants ... | 2 Baron d'Epinay to marry Valentine.                      |
| c Albert doesn't want ...      | 3 to speak to Franz.                                      |
| d Albert wants ...             | 4 the count to fight with Albert.                         |
| e Mercedes doesn't want ...    | 5 to fight the Count of Monte Cristo.                     |