

Ken Ludwig's

The Three Musketeers

Adapted from the novel
by Alexandre Dumas

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

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THE THREE MUSKETEERS (100%)
by KEN LUDWIG (75%)
Adapted from the novel by Alexandre Dumas (50%)

First performed by Bristol Old Vic, December 2006

THE THREE MUSKETEERS had its world premiere on December 6th, 2006 at the world famous Bristol Old Vic. The production was under the direction of Tim Sheader, assisted by Beckie Mills. The fight director was Richard Ryan, with music by Corin Buckeridge, design by Laura Hopkins, sound by Jason Barnes, lighting by Bruno Poet and choreography by Frances Newman. The Artistic Director of the theatre was Simon Reade. The Stage Manager was Claire Yapp with Deputy Stage Manager Linda Muirhead assisted by Laura Levis and Michelle Keeling. The cast was as follows:

PORTHOS	Paul Agar
KING LOUIS	Julien Ball
ROCHEFORT	Paul Benzing
ARAMIS	Vyelle Croom
QUEEN ANNE	Fiona Dunn
ATHOS	Gerald Kyd
D'ARTAGNAN	George Rainsford
SABINE	Samantha Robinson
MILADY	Laura Rogers
CARDINAL RICHELIEU	Robin Sebastian
CONSTANCE	Charity Wakefield
TREVILLE	Marcello Walton

CHARACTERS

Men (8 with doubling)

D'Artagnan

Athos

Porthos

Aramis

Cardinal Richelieu

Rochefort/Stanley

King Louis XIII / D'Artagnan's father / Basille / Fouquet / Fache

Treville / Duke of Buckingham / Ravanche / Ruffian / Inkeeper/ DeBris

Women (4 with doubling)

Sabine

Milady/Old Woman

Constance Bonacieux / Adèle / Sister at school

Queen Anne / D'Artagnan's mother / Elise / Mother Superior / Abbess

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act One

- Scene 1: Outside a farmhouse in Gascony, a spring day in 1625
- Scene 2: Outside the Cardinal's Palace, that night
- Scene 3: The village of Mauriac, the next day
- Scene 4: The house of M. de Treville, the next day
- Scene 5: The street below, immediately following
- Scene 6: A garden at the Royal Palace, a few minutes later
- Scene 7: Behind the Luxembourg Palace, that night
- Scene 8: A tavern, immediately following
- Scene 9: A room in the Cardinal's Palace, the next day
- Scene 10: The courtyard of the Cardinal's Palace, immediately following
- Scene 11: The Convent of the Sacred Heart, a few minutes later

Act Two

- Scene 1: A room in the Royal Palace, a few weeks later
- Scene 2: The Cardinal's Palace, an hour later
- Scene 3: Various locations on the way to London
- Scene 4: The Duke of Buckingham's Palace outside London, a few days later
- Scene 5: The ballroom at the Royal Palace, a few days later
- Scene 6: A terrace outside the ballroom, immediately following
- Scene 7: At the Siege of La Rochelle and a farmhouse nearby, a few weeks later
- Scene 8: The Carmelite Convent at Bethune, a few days later
- Scene 9: The garden at the Royal Palace, soon thereafter

Introduction to *The Three Musketeers*

This adaptation of *The Three Musketeers* was commissioned by the Bristol Old Vic in England. Originally, the Artistic Director of the theatre at the time, the brilliant Simon Reade, wanted to put on my adaptation of *Treasure Island*, which had premiered a few months earlier in the United States. However, a small theatre in the Bristol area had already scheduled a *Treasure Island* for the same season – and when Simon called me, time was running short for an announcement of the Old Vic’s Christmas show. Would I be willing to adapt another classic in a very short time? The offer was both tempting and daunting. I had enjoyed adapting *Treasure Island* for the stage and was therefore attracted to the idea of trying my hand at a second adaptation; but this time I would have just over two months to pick the classic and pen the play.

Simon suggested one of the tales from *The Arabian Nights*, but I wasn’t keen. We then bandied about Jane Austen, Mark Twain and Anthony Hope but nothing quite clicked. *A Tale of Two Cities*? A great work of art full of mayhem, sacrifice and tears, but a Christmas show? I wanted something rousing, and I seriously considered the Robin Hood legend – but there is no surtext and I was concerned about finding a strong enough through-line for the whole piece in the allotted time (without plagiarizing too much the astounding Errol Flynn movie of 1939).

Then I suggested *The Three Musketeers* and we both joined in a general huzzah, at least to extent you can by email. I remembered the story of *The Three Musketeers* with enormous affection, and I honestly thought it would be a bit of a walk in the park.

So I said yes, Simon made the announcement to the press and then I sat down and read the novel all the way through. Cut to playwright having heart attack.

When I adapted *Treasure Island* for the stage, I had luxuriated in Stevenson’s malleable prose; and it was the voice of Jim Hawkins that Stevenson had so indelibly created that allowed me to range far and wide in the story, knowing that I had that sensible, sturdy, literate voice to come back to.

What I hadn’t realized when I decided to adapt *The Three Musketeers* is that Dumas does not really have a literary “voice.” His novels aren’t journeys of the soul told through the minds of the participants who change deeply over the course of the book. Rather, his novels are the most marvelous confections – grand, lively, cartoon soap operas where people are noble or evil, gallant or conniving, and end up pretty much where they started in the grand scheme of things. Reading *The Three Musketeers* (all 750 pages of it, depending on the translation) is like reading the best and longest comic book in the world.

Dumas had genius all right, but it was a very different kind of genius than I had remembered. It's a gift that all writers long to possess: Dumas had an almost unique ability to create myths with a stroke of the pen. D'Artagnan, Athos, Aramis, Porthos, Cardinal Richelieu, Milady, Constance, Monsieur de Treville – these became instant legends. His novel, serialized in 1844-45 in the journal *Le Siècle*, was an overnight success throughout France and then the world. And it is abundantly clear why this was so: he tells one rousing adventure after another, with hardly a breath in between, and he peoples these adventures with the kinds of heroes and heroines we dare only dream about.

One of the problems for an adaptor of *The Three Musketeers* involves the story itself. In the novel, the Musketeers and their swashbuckling novitiate roam from one adventure to the next with almost illogical abandon. There is no single over-arching story except d'Artagnan's rise from villager to Musketeer. The diamond necklace story, which I rely on heavily (as did Richard Lester in his romping film of the 1970s) is completed about a third of the way into the book. And then there's the next 500 pages of adventures to go. What this meant for me was finding a way of portioning out the necklace tale, then cutting to the story involving Milady's final confrontation with Constance and then the Musketeers.

The need to find an over-arching storyline also led me to the invention of Sabine. For me she provided a way of making d'Artagnan's journey feel continuous and complete, from the beginning, as d'Artagnan bids farewell to his parents, through to the very end with d'Artagnan's elevation to Musketeer as Sabine looks on. She also humanized d'Artagnan for me. Anyone who has a sister like that who adores the ground he walks on has to be made of flesh and blood.

Writing this adaptation turned out to be a joyful adventure in itself. By the end I could see why Dumas wrote about these characters at such length: he couldn't bare saying good-bye to them. Indeed, he loved them so much that he wrote two sequels to *The Three Musketeers*: *Twenty Years After* and *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* (the latter being so long that it is usually split into three novels, *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, *Louise de la Valliere*, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*).

What I have tried to convey throughout is Dumas' devil-may-care sense of adventure, his love of wine, women and song, his wild love of Romance, and his touching sense of Honour. Most of all, I have tried to recreate for the stage the single greatest family of swashbuckling characters ever put into a single story.

Ken Ludwig
April 18, 2008

*For my dad,
the best of all fathers,*

and

*to Jim Davidson,
inestimable friend and fellow writer,
who has suffered through many a plot discussion
and has lived to tell about it.*

ACT I

Scene 1

(The stage is empty and the lights are up. Suddenly, with a loud cry, TWO MEN burst into view. They fight in the aisle of the theatre, then onto the stage, coming perilously close to maiming each other for life. This duel is in earnest. Indeed, we might even think that the men are two actors from our play who have gotten into an argument and grabbed two production swords.

However, as the two men fight, the set forms around them, and soon we're outside a farmhouse in Gascony in the spring of 1625. The men continue to fight furiously. One of the men is 18 years old, the other in his late 40s. Both are simply dressed, as yeomen. At first one has the advantage, then the other. They really go at it hammer and tongs, grunting, shouting and crying out, each trying desperately to kill the other with all his might. At last, the older man gets the advantage, disarms the youth, and holds the point of his sword at the young man's throat. The young man quails for a moment...then breaks into a smile.

His name is D'ARTAGNAN. He is Youth. He is Hope. He has all the traits you would expect of a young hero, and he's

rebellious enough to make them interesting.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Father, how do you do that?! It's like a magic trick.

FATHER. Misdirection, son. Get your opponent to lose his focus, then move like lightning. Hey! Snap! Ha! *(He's done it again.)* If you want to conquer worlds, concentrate. Draw your mind to the center, like a magnet. Couple that with common sense, a will to succeed and, above all, a kind heart, and you'll be a great man as I predict.

D'ARTAGNAN. Like my father.

(They embrace.)

FATHER. It's time you were going.

D'ARTAGNAN. Did you leave home at my age, sir?

FATHER. Yes, and for the same reason. To be a musketeer.

D'ARTAGNAN. I dream about it every night. Fighting duels, defending the King, standing up to the Cardinal and his –

FATHER. Stop.

D'ARTAGNAN. What?

FATHER. Never say that. You do not want Cardinal Richelieu as your enemy.

D'ARTAGNAN. But he opposes the King at every turn. They say he has spies everywhere! That his dungeon is filled with hundreds of (prisoners) –

FATHER. Just stay away from him! If, by the grace of God, you become a musketeer some day, your job is to defend the King and protect the Queen.

D'ARTAGNAN. But the Cardinal's their enemy.

FATHER. Not openly. He wouldn't dare. Just do your duty and never ever engage the Cardinal directly. Is that clear?

D'ARTAGNAN. Yes, sir. (*Grumbles*) Unless he starts it first...

(*FATHER shakes his head. Children...*)

FATHER. Here. Take my sword. You'll need it.

D'ARTAGNAN. (*Overwhelmed*) Father ...

FATHER. Use it well, to fight for justice. For justice, like mercy, is divine and deserves your courage. Always stand up for what you believe in. Never back down unless you're wrong. If a man insults you, turn the other cheek. If he insults you again, kill him. Make courage your watchword. But courage is more than arms and legs. It takes courage to be yourself, so do it. Above all things, live a life of honor. Honor the people you love, the ideals you cherish and the man inside you.

D'ARTAGNAN. I promise.

FATHER. Now a few parting gifts and you're on your way. Twenty-five crowns. Say nothing. I wish it were more. Second, a letter, recommending you to Monsieur de Treville.

D'ARTAGNAN. Your old friend.

FATHER. Now Captain of the Musketeers.

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh I know! They say that he's fought hundreds of duels in the King's service. They say the King relies on him for everything. They say –

FATHER. "They say, they say." He was my schoolmate. We were lads together. And he will help you thread the needle of Paris. Now keep this safe.

D'ARTAGNAN. Yes, father.

FATHER. Third, I want to give you...(*He gets tears in his eyes.*) I want you to have something that...(*He can hardly speak for the emotion.*) it's my beloved...

(Offstage: "Neigh!"')

D'ARTAGNAN. Buttercup?

FATHER. The finest animal that ever walked on four legs.

D'ARTAGNAN. Thank you, sir, but she's very wobbly and old. *(This angers his FATHER.)* I mean I-I wouldn't want anything to happen to her —!

FATHER. She'll serve you well, my son. As she has me for the past thirty years. And now your mother wants to say goodbye. Cecile!

(D'Artagnan's MOTHER bustles in, her apron to her mouth. She's so overcome with emotion that we can hardly understand her.)

MOTHER. Blubber, blubber don't want you to go! blubber, blubber, can't bear it! blubber, blubber, you're too young!

(BUTTERCUP neighs loudly.)

FATHER. *(To D'ARTAGNAN, who is holding his MOTHER in his arms.)* Promise me you'll never sell her. *(D'ARTAGNAN looks startled.)* I want to hear that she died standing on her feet, eating oats.

D'ARTAGNAN. *(Looking at his MOTHER, puzzled.)* If you say so, Father.

FATHER. And now your mother and I have a surprise for you. Sabine!

(SABINE ENTERS. Her name is pronounced "Sa-bean." She's

17, bright as a penny, wearing a simple dress, carrying a large valise.)

FATHER. Are you ready?

SABINE. To take on the world, father. My bags are packed, my affairs in order, and I look on life as my own small oyster.

D'ARTAGNAN. What's going on?

FATHER. Sabine is going with you to Paris.

D'ARTAGNAN. What?!

FATHER. I've arranged for her schooling. She's my daughter! I want her to read and write. And I want you to get her there and protect her on the way.

D'ARTAGNAN. But I-I'll look ridiculous, entering Paris with a little sister. And I'll have enough to worry about without playing nursemaid to some ...

SABINE. I trust, brother, that I shall be no burden to you, but rather do your bidding as you require.

(FATHER and MOTHER turn to D'ARTAGNAN as if to say "Do you see?" With her parents turned away, SABINE sticks her tongue out at D'ARTAGNAN and makes a face.)

D'ARTAGNAN. That's it, I'll kill her –

(D'ARTAGNAN chases SABINE until FATHER grabs him by the ear.)

FATHER. Do you do as I ask?! Or do you dishonor the ancient name "D'Artagnan"?

D'ARTAGNAN. As you wish, father.

FATHER. Fine then. Be off with you.

MOTHER. Blubber, blubber, blubber.

(Fond farewells are exchanged. As D'ARTAGNAN hugs his MOTHER, BUTTERCUP neighs again in the distance.)

FATHER. Her breath stinks and her hair's falling out, but she's a good old girl.

(D'ARTAGNAN, SABINE and MOTHER all look puzzled. Then, with a final wail, MOTHER runs back to the house and disappears, and FATHER follows her – leaving D'ARTAGNAN and SABINE alone.)

SABINE. Turn around.

D'ARTAGNAN. What?...What are you doing?!

(SABINE is pulling off her dress.)

SABINE. What does it look like I'm doing? It's dangerous between here and Paris. I can't very well go as a woman.

D'ARTAGNAN. But I'm protecting you. That's the point!

SABINE. You? Protecting me? *(She laughs uproariously.)*
May as well get Buttercup to join the Musketeers.

(Off: "Neigh!")

D'ARTAGNAN. I knew you'd be trouble as soon as he said it –

SABINE. *(Still changing.)* And why should you have all the fun? I'm as good a swordsman as you are any day of the week. Better if you ask me.

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh, please.

SABINE. "Oh, please." And they want me to go to a

convent school! You know being a girl in the 17th century is just not that much fun. There. (*SABINE is now dressed as a young man.*) Now call me – what’s a good name for a French servant?

D’ARTAGNAN. Brioche.

SABINE. What about Planchet? I heard it in a story once; it was all about honor and romance and musketeers. (*In a man’s voice, bowing:*) “Planchet. At your service, sir.”

D’ARTAGNAN. Oh, God ...

SABINE. Would you cheer up?! This is just the kind of adventure we dreamed about in the back garden, don’t you remember?! Fighting injustice. Hya! Hya! Defending the King and Queen. Hya! Hya! Hya! (*She hugs him, spins him around.*) Now hurry up! And bring my bag! I want to meet some real musketeers and fall in love with one of them!

(*SABINE runs off, and D’ARTAGNAN picks up her valise and follows her, shaking his head. As he goes, two musket shots ring out and we’re suddenly –*)

Scene 2

(*Outside the Cardinal’s Palace, at night. ATHOS, PORTHOS and ARAMIS, three of the King’s Musketeers, are revealed dramatically. We shall discuss each of them in turn, later. For now, let it be said that all three of them are heroes, but each as different from the others as night and day. Athos is full of shadows; Porthos of humor; Aramis of romance. Honor is their watchword; danger their milieu. They are the three finest swordsmen in all of France, and a boy*

from Gascony could do worse than to look up to any one of them. Thanks to the book by Alexander Dumas, they are no less than myths; and thanks to its plot, they are now in trouble. They run on, and we hear the voice of CARDINAL RICHELIEU screaming from offstage.)

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. (*Off*) Stop them! SOMEBODY STOP THOSE MUSKETEERS!

PORTHOS. Let's get out of here, quick!

ARAMIS. Athos, I don't think this was advisable.

PORTHOS. That's the understatement of the century.

ATHOS. It was symbolic.

ARAMIS. You call this symbolic?

PORTHOS. Stealing the Cardinal's nightcap?

(He holds it up.)

ATHOS. It's a reminder.

PORTHOS. A reminder of what? That his head is cold?

ATHOS. A reminder that he's not invulnerable.

ARAMIS. Athos –

ATHOS. That he isn't the only power in France.

ARAMIS. Athos –

ATHOS. That the King is the King and he has us to back him up.

ARAMIS. Athos!

ATHOS. What?

ARAMIS. We're surrounded.

ATHOS. ...Oh, bugger.

(Bang! Bang! Bang! Musket balls fly at them from every direction.)

ATHOS. This way! Follow me!

(As the MUSKETEERS run off, CARDINAL RICHELIEU appears in his sleeping robe – but without his nightcap. He's enraged. ROCHEFORT, his henchman, is with him.)

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Stop them you fool! You're the Captain of my Guard, for heaven's sake!

ROCHEFORT. We're trying, Your Eminence! They slipped away!

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Then track them down to where they live!

ROCHEFORT. We don't know where they live! That's the problem. The famous "Three Musketeers" and we can never find them.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Those reprobates, those interfering, overstuffed vermin! I WANT MY NIGHTCAP BACK!

ROCHEFORT. There's another issue, Sire. Turn around.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. What?

ROCHEFORT. Look.

(The CARDINAL turns around and we see that words have been painted on the back of his robe in large letters: "ALL FOR ONE!".)

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. ...I really hate them.

(The CARDINAL stalks off in high dudgeon, followed by ROCHEFORT – as we enter:)

Scene 3

(The town of Mauriac, the next morning. The town consists of one dirt road, a few dreary citizens, and an inn (ironically) called The Jolly Miller. As the set changes, D'ARTAGNAN and SABINE enter the town. D'Artagnan is leading Buttercup by a long rope – and Buttercup (alas) remains off stage.)

SABINE. We're almost to Paris, just a few more miles! I'll bet you're glad I came, aren't you. Thanks to me we didn't make one wrong turn, not a single one. And there's nobody else who can ride Buttercup. She just won't let them. It's a fact.

(At this moment, BUTTERCUP backs up and D'ARTAGNAN, holding tight to the rope, flies off stage. SABINE doesn't even notice. During the following, D'ARTAGNAN stumbles back on stage.)

SABINE. *(Reading a sign.)* "Town of Mauriac. Population: 47. New business welcome." Look! They have an inn! I'm starving. I'll be inside. You see to Buttercup.

D'ARTAGNAN. Hey, wait a second...you're the servant!

(Too late. She's gone. The moment she disappears we hear laughter. The two men laughing are ROCHEFORT and BASILLE. They're both standing in front of the inn. ROCHEFORT, who we met last night but can now see properly, is the Cardinal's Chief Henchman and Captain of the Cardinal's Guard. He has only one good eye, with

an eye-patch over the other one; he has a hideous scar down his right cheek; and he wears a plumed hat that he's very proud of. BASILLE, next to him, is a local man and an ostler, who thinks that holding horses and cleaning up after them is the best job in the world. They're laughing at BUTTERCUP.)

BASILLE. *(Laughing till it hurts.)* Mr. Rochefort...please ...you've got to stop!!

ROCHEFORT. But if it's a horse, why is it yellow?! *(Laughter)* I've seen yellow flowers, yellow gloves, and I hear there's some new fruit from the West Indies called a "banana" – *(Laughter)* but a yellow horse! When he dies –

BASILLE. Which won't be long by the look of him –

ROCHEFORT. When he dies...they can use him for a lady's hat!

(Uproarious laughter. This hasn't been lost on D'ARTAGNAN.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Hey! You there! What are you laughing at?

ROCHEFORT. Me, sir?

D'ARTAGNAN. When I see a man laughing, I like to be told the joke so that I can laugh too.

ROCHEFORT. I was not talking to you, sir.

D'ARTAGNAN. No, but I am talking to you, sir. Do you laugh at me, sir?

ROCHEFORT. I laugh at your horse, sir. Unless I'm mistaken and it's not a horse, but a big mangy yellow dog.

(Laughter. ROCHEFORT turns to go into the inn.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Turn and face me, sir! Turn and face me or I'll run you through the back!

ROCHEFORT. Run me through? Me? Are you mad?

D'ARTAGNAN. *(Sword thrust.)* Hya!

(ROCHEFORT pulls his sword and begins dueling with D'ARTAGNAN. After a moment, MILADY, THE COUNTESS DE WINTER, ENTERS behind d'Artagnan, picks up a bottle and hits him over the head. D'ARTAGNAN sinks to the ground unconscious.)

MILADY is the most dangerous woman in all of France. Her cunning is legendary. She's remarkably beautiful and wears strong, stunning clothes. She's in her mid-30s, red haired, and never utters an ill-chosen word.)

ROCHEFORT. Should I thank you for that?

MILADY. You should thank me for everything. Who is he? He looks a cut above the local dregs.

ROCHEFORT. I have no idea. Has a chip on his shoulder, I'll tell you that. What are you doing?

(MILADY is stooping next to D'ARTAGNAN, going through his pockets.)

MILADY. I like to know my enemies. Knowledge is power and power is life.

ROCHEFORT. Who said that?

MILADY. I did, you fool.

ROCHEFORT. He's just a country bumpkin.

MILADY. A bumpkin...oh, I see ... just a country bumpkin,

with a letter to Monsieur de Treville in his pocket.

ROCHEFORT. Treville?! Let me see that...!

(ROCHEFORT reaches for the letter, but in an instant, with a snap, a knife has appeared in MILADY'S hand, and she's ready to plunge it into ROCHEFORT'S outstretched fingers. The knife is a 17th Century switchblade of uncommon deadliness; and we shall see it again.)

MILADY. I'm not quite finished with it, am I?

ROCHEFORT. Why are you here, Milady?

MILADY. To give you a message from Cardinal Richelieu. Tomorrow at noon a young woman named Constance Bonacieux will be in the Rue Hachette carrying certain letters. The Cardinal wants them at any cost. You're to stop her and acquire the letters. Is that clear?

ROCHEFORT. Constance Bonacieux. The Queen's Lady in Waiting.

MILADY. Correct.

ROCHEFORT. That makes it dangerous.

MILADY. Life is dangerous. That's why it's fun. There. *(She's finished reading the letter and tosses it to the ground.)* Show it to the Cardinal. Perhaps he'll give you a promotion and you can eat at the grown-ups' table. Now let's go.

(ROCHEFORT snatches up the letter. Then he raises his sword and is about to kill D'ARTAGNAN.)

MILADY. No, you fool! This is no time to draw attention to yourself. You have work to do. Besides, he's very pretty. I may want him some day for a house pet.

(She kisses D'ARTAGNAN on the lips. As she does, D'ARTAGNAN starts to regain consciousness. He looks at MILADY, wide-eyed – and she hits him viciously on the side of the head with the butt of her dagger and knocks him out again. ROCHEFORT gapes.)

MILADY. Now close your mouth, and follow me.

(MILADY EXITS. ROCHEFORT looks at D'ARTAGNAN with hatred. Then he breaks D'ARTAGNAN'S sword in two (this is the sword his father gave him) and kicks D'ARTAGNAN hard in the ribs. As he leaves, SABINE comes out of the inn.)

SABINE. I got us some wine and sausage for the trip and I thought we could ... D'Arty? D'Arty what happened?! D'Arty say something!!

(D'ARTAGNAN groans.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh Sabine...she's so beautiful...

(Music plays, which takes us into:)

Scene 4

(The reception room of M. de Treville's house in Paris, the next day. The house is legendary as the training camp for the King's Musketeers. There isn't a boy in the world who

wouldn't give a year of his life to visit this place. Immediately we hear MONSIEUR DE TREVILLE, screaming out a window at the top of his lungs. He's a compact little man, with an eye cocked for trouble and a luxuriant moustache. He's the most impatient man in Paris.)

TREVILLE. Aramis! Aramis, get in here! And bring your two reprobate friends in with you!

(ARAMIS and PORTHOS join TREVILLE. We now have a moment to examine the Musketeers more closely. ARAMIS is strikingly handsome and has genuine hopes for a future in the church. Two things, however, stand in his way: he has a hot temper which can flare at any moment, and he loves to be around beautiful women. PORTHOS, meanwhile, is Bacchus brought to life, but with a good heart. He's extremely vain and quite a dandy, but since he's one of the three greatest swordsmen in all of France, he can afford to be.)

ARAMIS. Monsieur de Treville, let me explain.

TREVILLE. Explain?! Why you'd better explain!

PORTHOS. Aramis, let me explain.

ARAMIS. Porthos, I said I'll do it!

PORTHOS. Pish-posh, go ahead, go ahead.

TREVILLE. And it better be good!

ARAMIS. Well, sir, it happened like this –

TREVILLE. My three greatest musketeers, Athos, Porthos, Aramis, bested by those snivelers, the Cardinal's Guards ...

ARAMIS. That's not exactly –

TREVILLE. Do you understand the humiliation we all feel?

ARAMIS. Yes but –

TREVILLE. The shame the King himself is feeling?

ARAMIS. But if you'll –

TREVILLE. The sneers and backbiting he has had to endure from Cardinal Richelieu?!

ARAMIS. MAY I PLEASE SAY SOMETHING?!!

TREVILLE. ... Wait a moment. Where's Athos?

(PORTHOS and ARAMIS glance at each other.)

PORTHOS. Well, let's see, I think he's visiting his uncle –

ARAMIS. He's sick.

PORTHOS. His sick uncle. The poor old man has the plague –

ARAMIS. A cold.

PORTHOS. It's a form of the plague that starts out as a cold. You begin sneezing and suddenly you're lying there dead as a mackerel.

TREVILLE. What are you talking about?! Porthos, would you stop this tomfoolery? Now where's Athos?!

ATHOS. I'm right here.

(ATHOS walks in. He's gravely intelligent, with the courage of a lion, and more dangerous than the others. At the moment, however, he's wounded, and his right arm is soaked in blood.)

TREVILLE. ...My good man, you're hurt. Sit down, sit down. You poor fellow. Who did this to you?

ATHOS. It isn't serious, I assure you.

PORTHOS. Of course it's serious. The idiot almost bled to death. We had to carry him from the field.

TREVILLE. But tell me what happened!

ARAMIS. This morning we were set upon by four of the Cardinal's Guard.

TREVILLE. No!

PORTHOS. They tried to arrest us for dueling. Can you imagine the cheek?

ARAMIS. They were angry about a little trick we pulled last night...

(PORTHOS takes off his plumed hat and reveals that he's wearing the Cardinal's bright red nightcap underneath.)

PORTHOS. *(Imitating the Cardinal as though he's a whiny child.)* I want my nightcap back!

ATHOS. We had to fight them on the spot –

ARAMIS. And we would have won, I guarantee it –

PORTHOS. But the knaves called for help and two more of the devils showed up!

ARAMIS. Though we did get away. Eh? Ha?!

(ARAMIS makes his point by slapping ATHOS on the arm, forgetting that ATHOS is wounded.)

ATHOS. Ah!

ARAMIS. Oh, sorry.

TREVILLE. Fetch my doctor and get this wound properly dressed. Doctor! Go on, go on! But next time tell me the truth from the beginning.

ARAMIS. *(Crossing himself.)* Only God knows the truth but He keeps it a secret.

(As he shoos the musketeers out the door, we see D'ARTAGNAN, in the doorway, about to knock.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh, excuse me, sir. I-I have an appointment. They told me to come (right up).

TREVILLE. Come in, come in. And lads...you did very well. I'm proud of you.

PORTHOS. *(At the door.)* Is that an apology?

TREVILLE. Get out.

PORTHOS. It sounded surprisingly like an apology to me.

TREVILLE. I said get out.

PORTHOS. And yet I didn't hear those magic words "I'm sorry, Porthos" –

TREVILLE. Get out, get out, get out!

(ATHOS, PORTHOS and ARAMIS depart, closing the door behind them. TREVILLE wheels on D'ARTAGNAN.)

TREVILLE. Now what do you want?!

D'ARTAGNAN. I-I've come for an interview, sir. To be a musketeer. I'm good with a sword, I promise you that. Of course I realize you're called musket-teers, and I've never shot a musket myself, but I bet you I'd be good with one if I tried it. Which I haven't. But I would be. You'd be amazed.

TREVILLE. *(Amused at youth.)* You sound like you're from Gascony.

D'ARTAGNAN. I am, sir. I arrived today with my sister – my servant! I-I call him sister because we were...raised together and he sometimes...wears a dress. When he's alone.

So he tells me.

(He holds his head, amazed at his own stupidity.)

TREVILLE. And you want to be a musketeer?

D'ARTAGNAN. Yes sir. My father wrote me a letter of introduction. He's an old friend of yours. D'Artagnan de Beaugency.

TREVILLE. D'Artagnan?! Ha! Well what do you know. He's a fine fellow from top to bottom. How's the old boy doing?

D'ARTAGNAN. He's well, sir, and sends his regards.

TREVILLE. In this letter of yours. Let's see it.

D'ARTAGNAN. Well...I'm afraid I lost it. I mean it was taken from me. By a man with one eye and a scar from here to here. And then this red-haired goddess kissed me – at least I think she did – I was feeling dizzy at the time. And then the man with the scar must have kicked me because I was very sore – but I would have beaten him soundly in a fair fight, I promise you that. I have been a swordsman since I was six years old. Hya!

(He jumps into the “en garde” position and draws his sword – but it's the one that ROCHEFORT broke in Mauriac, so the blade is only three inches long. D'ARTAGNAN is embarrassed.)

TREVILLE. ... No letter. Broken sword. Manservant who wears a dress. Here's what I'll do. I'll offer you a commission in the King's Regiment. It's not the Musketeers, I grant you, but no one starts there anyway. You've got to work your way up to it. Prove yourself in some campaign or other. Show skill and

valor in the King's service AND ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?!!

(D'ARTAGNAN has seen something out the window.)

D'ARTAGNAN. That's him! Just walking there! The man who took my letter! I need a sword...May I borrow this? I'll return it, I promise. Thank you so much, you're very kind. I'll call again!

(To TREVILLE'S surprise, D'ARTAGNAN leaps out of the window and rushes after the man with the scar. We follow D'ARTAGNAN out of the chamber and into:)

Scene 5

(The street below. D'ARTAGNAN looks desperately in both directions to catch a glimpse of ROCHEFORT. He darts in one direction – and runs straight into ATHOS.)

ATHOS. *(His wound:)* Ah!

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh dear. Are you all right?

ATHOS. *(Through gritted teeth.)* Do I look all right?

D'ARTAGNAN. I'm awfully sorry, but I have to hurry.

ATHOS. You're "sorry?"

D'ARTAGNAN. Yes.

ATHOS. And that's all you have to say?

D'ARTAGNAN. What else can I say? It was an accident. I said I'm sorry. But honestly, I've got to run, there's this man with a scar and I've got to kill him.

(D'ARTAGNAN starts to hurry off. ATHOS turns away and murmurs to himself:)

ATHOS. Obviously from the country.

D'ARTAGNAN. *(Stopping short.)* What? What did you say?

ATHOS. I said you're from the country.

D'ARTAGNAN. So what if I am? Are you implying something?

ATHOS. I'm implying that you have country manners, boy. You're in Paris now, so try to improve them.

D'ARTAGNAN. My manners, sir, are as good as yours. And I'm very proud of where I come from, and perhaps that's saying more than you are.

(ATHOS eyes him dangerously.)

ATHOS. Was that an insult?

D'ARTAGNAN. It was certainly meant to be.

ATHOS. Shall we settle it now?

D'ARTAGNAN. I can't right now because I'm chasing someone. Name the time.

ATHOS. Ten this evening, behind the Luxembourg.

D'ARTAGNAN. Done.

(D'ARTAGNAN slaps ATHOS on the arm to seal the bargain, accidentally causing ATHOS pain from the wound.)

ATHOS. Ah!

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh sorry. Do you fight right-handed, by the way?

ATHOS. I do, but I'm even better with my left, so I suggest you book a church for the funeral.

(ATHOS EXITS. At the same moment, PORTHOS ENTERS from the other direction, showing off his newest cloak to a female admirer named ADELE. Meanwhile, D'ARTAGNAN is looking up and down the street for ROCHEFORT.)

PORTHOS. Silk! Pure silk from India. One of a kind. Ha ha!

ADELE. Really?

PORTHOS. Takes months and months to make a piece like this. Do you see it? Hmm? Feel it. Right here. Light as a feather, but strong as chain mail. Made from an ancient dye, you see. From the bark of puzzle trees and the petals of little spiced roses. Just look at the colors.

(He takes one end of the cloak and spins around, causing the cloak to billow out like a sail. As he does, D'ARTAGNAN cries out, thinking he's spotted ROCHEFORT in the distance.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Hey!

(He darts past PORTHOS, but accidentally gets caught up in the cloak. In fact, it covers him like a bed sheet and he can't see a thing. He gropes for light and tears the cloak off PORTHOS, ending up in a heap on the ground.)

PORTHOS. What —?

D'ARTAGNAN. Ah!

ADELE. Porthos!

PORTHOS. Stop it!

D'ARTAGNAN. Help!

PORTHOS. Stop it, you fool! Get up! Get up!

D'ARTAGNAN. (*Disentangling himself.*) I-I'm sorry! I was in a hurry!

PORTHOS. You crack-brained codfish! You-you-you pop-eyed little clam! Look what you've done!

D'ARTAGNAN. (*Still hoping to catch up with ROCHEFORT.*) I'll pay for it, sir. I swear. I-I have some money. But right now if I could just –

PORTHOS. Oh you will pay for it indeed, I promise you. It was brand new! And it looked stunning on me! Do you think that garments like this grow on trees?!

D'ARTAGNAN. Sir –

PORTHOS. Or perhaps they float by on the wind as a gift from the gods of fashion so that we can pluck them carelessly as they flutter by.

D'ARTAGNAN. Sir, I'm very –

PORTHOS. Forty crowns.

D'ARTAGNAN. What?

PORTHOS. Forty crowns. That's what you owe me.

D'ARTAGNAN. For this old thing?

PORTHOS. It's one of a kind. It comes from India.

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh come now, sir. I saw capes like this on the stalls by the river. They wanted one crown fifty and I said it was too much.

PORTHOS. I believe you're mistaken.

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh I don't think so. There was a whole pile of them. They looked identical.

(ADELE laughs and walks off.)

PORTHOS. Adele, wait! *(Following her.)* It's from the bark of puzzle trees...and the petals of little...spiced roses... *(She's gone; PORTHOS turns back to D'ARTAGNAN, furious.)* You are a puppy, sir. An imbecile. And I demand satisfaction.

D'ARTAGNAN. But I was only –

PORTHOS. Satisfaction, sir! Do you agree, or do you cower in fear?

D'ARTAGNAN. A “d’Artagnan” never cowers, sir. Name the time.

PORTHOS. Eleven o'clock. Behind the Luxembourg.

D'ARTAGNAN. I'll be there. *(PORTHOS EXITS. D'ARTAGNAN calls after him:)* And if you need a new cloak, try the stalls near the river! They're a crown fifty! *(PORTHOS is gone. D'ARTAGNAN is alone now.)* And thanks to you, I lost the man with the scar...*(He sneezes.)* Achoo! And now I've got a cold... And I'm going to die at ten o'clock tonight...Or eleven if I get lucky...

(We hear a silvery laugh, and ARAMIS ENTERS down the street with a beautiful girl on his arm. Her name is ELISE and they're both flirting like mad.)

ELISE. Aramis, stop it! You're making me blush! I thought you were taking holy orders.

ARAMIS. *(Looking deeply into her eyes.)* I am, my darling. The Church is my life. “And the sinful world that appears before us will perish into dust like a mirage of longing.” Isaiah, Chapter 45.

ELISE. Oh, Aramis ...

(She drops her handkerchief, quite deliberately, as a means of flirtation. D'ARTAGNAN, who is walking by, sneezes again -)

D'ARTAGNAN. Achoo!

(And without thinking, he picks up the handkerchief and blows his nose in it.)

ARAMIS. Sir!

D'ARTAGNAN. *(Unaware of what he's done.)* Yes?

ARAMIS. I believe that is the lady's handkerchief.

D'ARTAGNAN. It is? Oh. Right. I beg your pardon. I-I wasn't thinking. I just picked it up and I...Here.

(He tries to hand it back to ELISE.)

ELISE. Ah!

ARAMIS. Get back!

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh, sorry. Sorry! I-I could have it cleaned for you, how's that? And return it tomorrow. Or I could wash it in one of the fountains here.

ELISE. Aramis, do something!

ARAMIS. Sir, you have insulted the very name of womanhood.

D'ARTAGNAN. Did I? I thought I just blew my nose.

ARAMIS. Are you being funny?

D'ARTAGNAN. I didn't think so.

ARAMIS. I believe you're being funny, sir, and laughing

at me, and at this lady, AND I DON'T LIKE IT!! I DEMAND SATISFACTION!

D'ARTAGNAN. Don't tell me. Behind the Luxembourg at twelve o'clock.

ARAMIS. No, eleven.

D'ARTAGNAN. It'll have to be twelve, I'm booked at eleven.

ARAMIS. Fine! Twelve o'clock. And don't be late!

D'ARTAGNAN. Done!

ARAMIS. Done! "And he shall enter the land of darkness, and there shall he meet the shadow of death!" Job, Chapter 10.

D'ARTAGNAN. "And he shall pull down his trousers and then shall he stick out his backside." D'Artagnan, Chapter 12.

(ARAMIS stamps his foot in rage and EXITS with ELISE. D'ARTAGNAN is alone again.)

D'ARTAGNAN. ...God in heaven! I'm as good as dead. I mean, what are we put on this earth for? To live for eighteen years, then snuff it all out over a silly accident? There are some things worth dying for, and I would die for them in an instant, but...is this why I trained with my father all those years? Is this why he taught me everything he knows – about swordsmanship? About life? About honor? Is this what honor means? Dying because I blew my nose?!

(SABINE runs in.)

SABINE. D'Arty, there you are! Guess what, guess what?! I found us a room for less than a crown a night! It isn't much,

but it has a window. And wait'll you see Paris, d'Arty. It's wonderful! There's people everywhere, and taverns and brawling and ladies in these tight dresses and everything you could ever dream of!...Are you all right? Did you see Treville? Are you a musketeer yet?

(He gives a hollow laugh.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Not yet, dear sister. Some day, perhaps, if I live that long.

SABINE. "Live that long." What do you mean?

D'ARTAGNAN. Never mind. Come along. Let's get you to that school of yours.

SABINE. I don't want to go.

D'ARTAGNAN. Sabine –

SABINE. Not yet! I want to see more of Paris first. I want to see a play in a real theatre! I did see a puppet show, on the street, and there was this little man who got very angry and *(Man's voice.)* "beat his wife with a stick, that's the way to do it" and then *(Woman's voice.)* "she beat him back with another just like it. Whap whap whap!"

D'ARTAGNAN. Sabine, it's time for school!

SABINE. No! You'll have to catch me first!

(She darts one way, then another. He tries to catch her but he keeps missing her. She runs off down the street and he runs after her – and bumps straight into a beautiful young woman who's in distress and running for her life. Her name is CONSTANCE BONACIEUX.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh, I'm sorry! Are you all (right)?!

CONSTANCE. (*Genuine panic.*) Help me, sir! Please!
Two men are after me!

D'ARTAGNAN. Why? What's the matter?

CONSTANCE. I've done nothing wrong, I swear!

D'ARTAGNAN. You're shaking like a (leaf).

CONSTANCE. They want to kill me because I serve the
Queen!

D'ARTAGNAN. The Queen?!

CONSTANCE. Here's one of them coming! Oh God, oh
God, please help me!!

(*D'ARTAGNAN looks at her...and makes a decision.*)

D'ARTAGNAN. Stay behind me.

(*He draws his sword as a man named RAVANCHE runs in like
a madman. He's a tough, dangerous bully, unshaven, with
a guttural accent. His sword is drawn and he means to stop
CONSTANCE at any price.*)

RAVANCHE. You there. Stand aside.

D'ARTAGNAN. What do you want?

RAVANCHE. I want to speak with the young lady.

D'ARTAGNAN. But the young lady doesn't want to speak
with you.

RAVANCHE. Monsieur, if I was you, I wouldn't meddle in
this.

D'ARTAGNAN. And if I were you, I wouldn't tell me what
to do. (*RAVANCHE lunges. To CONSTANCE.*) Stay back!

CONSTANCE. Ah! Here comes the other one!

(ROCHEFORT ENTERS.)

D'ARTAGNAN. You!

ROCHEFORT. Oh my God, it's the puppy. I should have killed you yesterday.

D'ARTAGNAN. Perhaps you should have, because you'll die for it now.

(The three men cross swords and fight. It's hair-raising. D'ARTAGNAN holds them both off. Then, with a magnificent thrust, he pierces RAVANCHE straight through the heart. With a cry, RAVANCHE falls to the ground stone dead.)

Now it's D'ARTAGNAN versus ROCHEFORT. In the course of the fight, the two men circle each other – until ROCHEFORT manages to grab CONSTANCE. She screams and struggles to get away.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Let her go!

(ROCHEFORT keeps his hold on CONSTANCE – until she bites his hand as hard as she can and ROCHEFORT screams with agony. D'ARTAGNAN pursues the advantage like a demon. After several more seconds of desperate cut and thrust, D'ARTAGNAN runs ROCHEFORT through the side. ROCHEFORT cries out and staggers off.)

Instinctively, CONSTANCE runs to D'ARTAGNAN and clings to him for protection. D'ARTAGNAN is panting so hard that he can hardly breathe.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Are you all right?

CONSTANCE. Yes. Thank you. I must to the Queen at

once. She'll be sick with worry.

D'ARTAGNAN. What's your name?

CONSTANCE. Constance. Constance Bonacieux. What's yours?

D'ARTAGNAN. D'Artagnan.

CONSTANCE. Thank you...d'Artagnan. I'm in your debt.

D'ARTAGNAN. *(Shy)*... It was nothing.

(They stare into each other's eyes. They're both in love.)

CONSTANCE. I must go now.

D'ARTAGNAN. Will you be safe?

CONSTANCE. I haven't far to go.

D'ARTAGNAN. And this...item that you carry for the Queen. Is it valuable?

CONSTANCE. It is to her. It involves her heart. It's a letter from the one she loves.

D'ARTAGNAN. Then it's dangerous.

CONSTANCE. *(Simply)* All matters of the heart are dangerous. Because hearts can break. I must go.

D'ARTAGNAN. Wait! Will I see you again? I must. Please!

(She hesitates – then, impulsively, she kisses him.)

CONSTANCE. Tonight at one o'clock, behind the Luxembourg.

(She runs off. D'ARTAGNAN touches his lips in wonder. As he does, the scene changes to:)

SCENE 6

(A garden on the grounds of the Royal Palace, a few minutes later. As the lights come up, we see KING LOUIS XIII and QUEEN ANNE playing cards.)

ANNE is a handsome woman in her 30s with fine features. She is called Anne of Austria, but she comes originally from Spain. She combines the fine porcelain beauty of the Austrians and the sharp, clever temperament of the Spaniards. Her husband, THE KING, is also in his 30s. He is not unintelligent, but rather enthusiastic and a bit petulant. He's a man who tries very hard to live up to his title, but he generally feels beleaguered and is always trying to catch up with those around him. He lives a life of unbelievable splendor.

As the lights come up, the KING cries out:)

THE KING. What are you so distracted about?! I'm the King of France. You have to pay attention!

THE QUEEN. I'm sorry, Louis, I'm trying!

THE KING. It's not just a game, you know. It's-it's-it's complicated. You have to concentrate. Look. King. Queen. Bishop. Knight. It's all about us, you see — the King and the Queen: The Knight is the soldier, and the Bishop represents the church — though he should be called the Cardinal, shouldn't he? Cardinal Richelieu. But you notice that he's below you in the hierarchy, not above you, and you've got to remember that!

THE QUEEN. As do you.

THE KING. I know. I know. It's just that he makes it so

difficult sometimes. Always pretending he's smarter than I am. His guards beating my guards. I hate that.

(At this moment CARDINAL RICHELIEU walks in, wearing the deep red, flowing robes of a Cardinal in the Catholic Church. We have met him before, but now we have time to take his measure: He's a handsome man in his late 40s, of enormous personal charm. His bearing is impeccable and he moves with the easy grace of a natural leader. The impact he makes on entering a room is nothing short of breathtaking. But behind his façade of good humor is a mind that is clever, supple and extremely dangerous. This is a man you oppose at your peril.)

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. *(To THE QUEEN.)* Well, well, well. Your Majesty. How delightful to see you.

THE QUEEN. Cardinal Richelieu.

THE KING. Hello, Cardinal. Ignoring me today, are we?

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Not in the least, Sire. I'm doubly honored. You're looking well today.

THE KING. Am I? No thanks to you. I understand your guards took advantage of my musketeers this morning.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. "Took advantage?" Now what does that mean?

THE KING. Ganged up. Outnumbered. Then started brawling on some pretext or other.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Forgive me, Your Majesty, but it was my understanding that my guards were merely doing their duty, preventing a duel, which I do believe is against the law, is it not?

THE KING. Well, yes. But it's a technicality. You know it

is.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. I know that I love the law, Your Grace, if that's what you mean.

THE KING. That's not exactly what I mean, now is it?

(THE KING EXITS.)

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. The King is unhappy. I hope I haven't caused him distress.

THE QUEEN. He faces the strain of running the country. It's understandable.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Is it?

THE QUEEN. Of course it is.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. And yet he doesn't really run the country, now does he? He plays with his little toys. He builds fountains in gardens. He plans the menu, for heaven's sake.

THE KING. How dare you speak of the King this way!

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. "How dare I, how dare I." Yes, yes, yes, I've heard it all before. But look at you. You're a queen! You're magnificent! You need a consort! Someone better than that English Buckingham fellow.

(THE QUEEN turns pale.)

THE QUEEN. Buckingham?

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. The Duke of Buckingham. Your lover, I believe?

THE QUEEN. I-I don't know what you're talking about.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Oh, please. Don't insult me. I've had you under observation since the day you arrived here from Austria with your little...bags of sacher torten.

THE QUEEN. How dare you! I'm the Queen!

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Indeed you are. And yet you and Buckingham have been carrying on an affair for what is it? Six months now? Seven? But unfortunately you've been a trifle indiscreet. You've been writing to each other. Love letters. And exchanging them through your Lady in Waiting.

THE QUEEN. You're insane.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Am I? And am I insane to dream of what you and I could accomplish together? Just think, all that power. The people love you and they fear me. Could there be a more perfect combination?

(He strokes her cheek, and Whap! she slaps him hard across the face.)

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. ...Ouch. I shouldn't have done that if I were you.

THE QUEEN. I'll call the guard! I-I'll have you hanged!

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Fine. Go ahead. ...What are you waiting for? Your little friend Constance Bonancieux?

THE QUEEN. *(Frightened)* Constance?

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Loyal handmaid and conspicuous go-between. That's a very dangerous job, you know.

THE QUEEN. *(Calling out.)* Constance?!

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. If I were you I'd save your breath. About now she's probably lying in a gutter somewhere with a sword through her chest.

(With a cry of desperation, THE QUEEN runs to the opening in the hedge. The CARDINAL turns away with a smile.)

THE QUEEN. CONSTANCE!

(Just as THE QUEEN gets to the opening, CONSTANCE

ENTERS, poised and unruffled.)

CONSTANCE. Yes, my lady?

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. What?

(The CARDINAL turns, thunderstruck.)

THE QUEEN. Oh, Constance! Thank God! Are you all right?!

CONSTANCE. Of course, my lady.

THE QUEEN. I thought you were ...

CONSTANCE. I'm fine, I assure you. And the package we discussed – I have it right here.

THE QUEEN. Oh thank God...

(At which moment, we hear ROCHEFORT'S voice:)

ROCHEFORT. Your Eminence...Your Eminence!

*(ROCHEFORT ENTERS. His side is bandaged and bleeding.
When he sees THE QUEEN, he stops in surprise.)*

ROCHEFORT. Oh forgive me, Your Highness! I apologize!
They didn't tell me that you were...

(He bows deeply.)

THE QUEEN. Please. That's quite all right. Cardinal Richelieu is all yours. I wouldn't dream of keeping him.

*(This last with specific meaning. She EXITS. CONSTANCE
looks ROCHEFORT in the eye, then follows THE QUEEN
off.)*

ROCHEFORT. I'm sorry to interrupt, Your Grace, but I thought you should ARGHHHH!

(The CARDINAL has grabbed ROCHEFORT by the throat and is, quite literally, choking him to death.)

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. *(Enraged)* You fool! You incompetent bungler!

ROCHEFORT. *(Gurgling)* Your Grace...Please...

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Please what? Please stop choking you? No, I think I'll keep it up.
(He goes at it harder.)

ROCHEFORT. Argggghhh! *(Still gurgling, barely gasping the words out.)* It wasn't my fault...Some man came out of nowhere...He must have known in advance...

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. That's impossible!

ROCHEFORT. That's what I thought, but there he was!

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Liar!

ROCHEFORT. Argh!

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. What's his name?

ROCHEFORT. His name is d'Artagnan. I encountered him yesterday as it happens and he had this letter on him...

(He manages to pull out the letter from d'Artagnan's father. The CARDINAL releases his grasp and takes the letter. ROCHEFORT staggers back, gasping for air, as the CARDINAL reads the letter.)

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Bring him to me. Instantly.

ROCHEFORT. Yes, Your Grace. But I'm not sure I know

exactly where to –

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. BRING HIM TO ME OR I'LL HAVE YOUR HEAD!!

ROCHEFORT. Yes sir. Right away.

(ROCHEFORT begins to EXIT. He holds his side where he was wounded and he lets out a moan.)

ROCHEFORT. Ahhh ...

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Are you wounded?

ROCHEFORT. Yes, Your Grace.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU. Good.

(He walks away. As he goes, a bell begins tolling the hour of ten – and now we're at:)

Scene 7

(The Luxembourg Palace, that night. It's dark out and everything is in shadow. As the bell tolls, we see that we're on a vast terrace behind the famous palace, which looms up in the background. Statues dot the terrace. Sitting at the base of one of the statues is ATHOS, sharpening his sword. D'ARTAGNAN ENTERS. Both men are in shadow.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Who's there?

ATHOS. Athos. Who wants to know.

D'ARTAGNAN. D'Artagnan. The man you hope to kill.

ATHOS. I never hope to kill anyone. I'm just preventing them from killing me. Do you have seconds?

D'ARTAGNAN. *(Confused)* Well, yes. I have all the time

in the world.

ATHOS. (*Amused*) No, I meant do you have men to back you up. They're called seconds.

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh, I see! No, I'm afraid not. I don't know anyone in Paris yet, except Monsieur de Treville.

ATHOS. Treville? That's awkward. If I kill you, I'll look like a bit of an ogre, won't I.

D'ARTAGNAN. Not really. Not with that wound of yours. How is it, by the way? Because I was thinking, I have an excellent ointment that my mother gave me when I set off for Paris. (*He pulls it out.*) I suggest you try it. It's very soothing and almost miraculous in its powers, or so it seems to me. (*He holds it out, but ATHOS hesitates.*)

D'ARTAGNAN. Please.

ATHOS. You're a gentleman.

D'ARTAGNAN. Thank you. (*ATHOS begins to apply it.*) It will cure you in just three days, I'm sure of it. We could postpone till then, if you'd prefer. Which doesn't mean I'm not prepared to fight you. I'm not afraid. Well, I suppose I am, a little, but it's a matter of honor now that I've accepted your challenge, so I wouldn't dream of shirking it. I plan to give you a good run for your money.

ATHOS. "Run for your money." That's a Gascon expression.

D'ARTAGNAN. That's right. I'm from Hautefort.

ATHOS. Sarlat.

D'ARTAGNAN. Really? That's amazing! We're almost neighbors.

ATHOS. It's beautiful there. The countryside. Why waste your time in Paris?

D'ARTAGNAN. To be a musketeer! I want to be like y –
...

ATHOS. Like me? You can do better than that, young man,
I promise you.

D'ARTAGNAN. I don't think so.

(PORTHOS and ARAMIS ENTER.)

PORTHOS. Athos, my boy? Is that you?

ATHOS. It's about time. You're late. *(Aside to D'ARTAGNAN.)*
These are my seconds.

PORTHOS. I had to change for the occasion. I'm a slave to
fashion. Tyrannized by a pair of pumps, but there you are. I'm
fighting a duel myself in an hour, right here, against some little
upstart who got very cheeky with me this after... My God, it's
him! I'm fighting him at eleven.

ARAMIS. And I at twelve.

ATHOS. I've got him at ten.

PORTHOS. Is this a joke, young man?!

D'ARTAGNAN. No, sir. I'm very sorry. It just happened
by chance. And if this gentleman kills me, I'll have wasted your
time, so I do apologize.

ATHOS. He's very polite. *(To D'ARTAGNAN.)* Well. Let's
get to it, shall we?

D'ARTAGNAN. If you're ready.

*(ATHOS stands up and flexes his sword. D'ARTAGNAN draws
his sword and loosens up. Then the two men salute, cross
swords, and take a pass at each other. D'ARTAGNAN
parries beautifully, and ARAMIS and PORTHOS clap
appreciatively.)*

ARAMIS. Well done.

PORTHOS. Very nice, very nice.

ATHOS. Young man, if I don't kill you – and by some miracle my friends don't either – I'd be happy to make your further acquaintance. You have a good heart.

D'ARTAGNAN. Thank you, sir. It's a musketeer's heart, as I hope to prove some day.

(They begin dueling in earnest, when ROCHEFORT ENTERS with several of the Cardinal's Guards backing him up. ROCHEFORT, D'ARTAGNAN and the MUSKETEERS are in shadow because of the time of night, so no one can see each other very well.)

ROCHEFORT. Halt! What's going on?!

ATHOS. *(Urgently, to D'ARTAGNAN, whispering.)* Quick! Get out! Make a run for it!

D'ARTAGNAN. But why should I – ?

ATHOS. Quickly! Just do as I say!

(D'ARTAGNAN hurries away – but not far. He lurks nearby in the shadows.)

ROCHEFORT. Dueling, is it? And against the law.

ARAMIS. Not again.

PORTHOS. I don't believe it.

ROCHEFORT. I arrest you in the name of His Eminence Cardinal Richelieu. Lay down your swords.

ATHOS. Rochefort. It's Athos. If you turn and go, we'll do the same. There's no need for bloodshed.