

put some gold coins in his pockets and a handful of precious stones. And right after that, he went to work covering the cave entrance.

Two days later, the smugglers returned for him. And it was not long before their dealings took the ship to Marseilles, where Dantes bade his companions farewell.

In the fourteen years he had been away, Dantes had understood, with the help of the Abbe Faria, that Fernand, Danglars and Villefort were behind all his suffering. He now wondered what had become of his poor father and his beloved Mercedes, and he set off to find out.

Disguised as a priest, Dantes visited Caderousse, who owned a small inn in the south.

'Hello, stranger. What brings you to my inn?' Caderousse said.

'A man called Dantes left something for you. It was his last wish,' said the priest.

'Dantes was my friend. Is he dead?' exclaimed Caderousse.

'Yes... He asked me to give you this... but I need something in exchange,' said the priest as he took a large diamond out of his pocket. Caderousse could not believe his eyes.

'Do you know what became of his father after Dantes was arrested?' the priest asked.

'The poor old man died of starvation,' Caderousse said in a sorrowful voice.

Dantes was in shock, but he tried very hard to hide it.

'Monsieur Morrel and the young Mercedes visited him every day, taking food to him, but he refused to eat anything. He did not want to live without his son,' continued the man.

'And Mercedes?' the priest asked in a low voice.

'She waited for Dantes to return, but that never happened,' came the answer.

'Where is she now?' asked the priest again.

'She married Fernand. They have a son,' said Caderousse.

'Fernand?' the priest asked, trying to hide his anger.

'Yes, they live a wealthy life in Paris,' Caderousse said.

'But how could a poor Catalan man become so rich?' the priest asked.

'No one really knows, but they say he has a strange secret.'

