

CHAPTER 1

ON THE 24TH OF FEBRUARY, THE GREAT SHIP *PHARAOH* ARRIVED in Marseilles from Smyrna.

'Welcome back!' said Morrel, the proud owner, who had just got onto the ship.

'Ah, sir, something terrible has happened,' said the slim young man that rushed to greet him.

'What do you mean, Dantes?' asked Morrel, obviously worried about the cargo.

'Just off the coast of Civita Vecchia we lost our brave Captain Leclere to a very bad fever. The cargo, however, is safe and sound,' said Dantes.

'How terrible indeed,' said Morrel sadly. 'But we are all mortal, and the old must make way for the young.'

'I must leave you now, sir. I must anchor this ship. Monsieur Danglars, the cargo supervisor, is now coming this way. He will help you with all you may need.'

'Let go!' Dantes called out to the crew, and the anchor was instantly dropped.

'He is so young, yet arrogant enough to believe he can run this ship,' said Danglars to Monsieur Morrel.

'Well, a sailor does not need to be old to know his business,' replied Morrel. 'Edmond Dantes seems to know his very well. Why should he not be captain?'

Danglars stared at Edmond with eyes full of hate. 'Yes, he took command of the ship immediately after the captain's death, though we wasted a day and a half when he made us stop at the island of Elba.'

Morrel seemed surprised on hearing this.

'Dantes,' he called out, 'come this way!'

Danglars took two or three steps back.

'I would like to know why you stopped at the island of Elba,' asked Morrel.

Dantes immediately explained that this had been Leclere's last order. He told Morrel that he had no idea why the captain had

