

MACMILLAN READERS

PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

The Treasure of Monte Cristo

Retold by John Escott



MACMILLAN

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The Pharaon Comes Home

On the 24th February 1815, the ship, *Pharaon*, arrived at the port¹⁸ of Marseille. A large crowd was standing on the quay. The people had come down to the harbour to greet the ship. It was always exciting when a ship arrived in Marseille. And this ship had been built in the city, and the ship's owner lived there. The owner of the *Pharaon* was Monsieur Morrel. He did not wait for his ship to reach the harbour. He immediately jumped into a longboat and rowed¹⁹ towards the *Pharaon*.

A young man was standing on the deck of the *Pharaon*. When he saw Monsieur Morrel, he went to the starboard side of the ship. The young man was the first officer of the *Pharaon*. He was tall, between eighteen and twenty years old, and had thick black hair. His bright, dark eyes were calm and intelligent.

The young man turned round and gave an order to the crew. The sailors ran quickly to their places and waited. Some men stood on the decks. Other men climbed up the tall masts.

'Edmond – Edmond Dantès!' shouted Morrel from the longboat. 'Where is the captain? What's happened to Captain Leclère?'

'Something very sad, sir,' replied the first officer. 'When we were near Civita Vecchia we lost our brave captain.'

'And what has happened to the cargo?' the shipowner asked.

'It's all safe, sir. But poor Captain Leclère —'

'What happened to him?' asked Morrel. 'Did he fall into the sea?'

‘No, sir, he suddenly became ill and died,’ said Dantès. ‘He died of brain-fever²⁰. We buried him at sea²¹.’

‘Oh! Poor Captain Leclère! He was only thirty-nine years old,’ said Morrel. ‘But Edmond, we must all die one day. Did you say that the cargo is safe?’

‘Please, come aboard²², sir,’ said Dantès. ‘Here is Danglars, the cargomaster. You can ask him about our cargo. He’ll also tell you more about the captain’s death. I must give some orders to the crew.’

Dantès turned to the sailors on the deck. ‘Lower all the sails!’ he shouted.

Morrel climbed up the side of the *Pharaon* and greeted Danglars.

‘You’ve heard our sad news, Monsieur Morrel,’ said Danglars. The cargomaster was twenty-five or twenty-six years old, and he always had an angry expression²³ on his face. The crew of the *Pharaon* did not like him.

‘Yes, poor Captain Leclère,’ said Morrel. ‘He was a brave and honest²⁴ man.’

‘Yes. And he was an experienced *man* – not a boy,’ said Danglars. ‘He knew a lot about ships and the sea. He was the kind of captain that you need, sir.’

‘But a sailor does not need to be old to understand his work, Danglars,’ said Morrel. He watched Dantès give more orders to the crew. ‘Look at Edmond. He knows his work well.’

‘Yes,’ said Danglars. He looked at Dantès and his eyes were full of hate. ‘Dantès is young and confident²⁵. He began to give orders to the crew before the captain had died! But he also made us lose a day and a half on the voyage. We stopped at the island of Elba.’

‘Edmond is the first officer,’ said Morrel. ‘A first officer has to sail a ship when a captain cannot do his work. But Edmond was wrong to lose time at Elba.’

Morrel called to the young man. 'Edmond! Come here!'

'In a moment, sir,' replied Dantès. He shouted to the men who were standing by the heavy chain which was attached to the anchor. 'Drop the anchor!' he ordered.

Immediately, the sailors let the heavy anchor drop into the sea and the *Pharaon* stopped.

'Do you see?' said Danglars. 'Dantès is like a captain already.'

'He works well,' said Morrel. 'He'll be captain soon.'

This news did not please Danglars. When Dantès came towards Morrel, Danglars moved away.

'You wanted to speak to me, sir?' said Dantès.

'Yes,' said Morrel. 'Why did you stop the ship at Elba?'

'Captain Leclère ordered me to go there,' said Dantès. 'Before he died, he gave me a packet. He told me to take it to Marshall Bertrand on the island.'

Morrel moved closer to Dantès and spoke quietly. 'And did you see Marshall Bertrand?' he asked. 'Did you see Napoleon's adviser?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And did you speak to the emperor?' asked Morrel.

'He spoke to me,' said Dantès, smiling. 'Emperor Napoleon asked me questions about the *Pharaon*. I told him that the ship belonged to you, sir. Then Napoleon said, "There was a soldier called Policar Morrel in my army at Valence."'

'That's true!' said Morrel, happily. 'Policar Morrel was my uncle. You were right to stop at Elba, Edmond. But don't tell anyone that you spoke with Napoleon. It could bring you trouble.'

'Why?' said Dantès calmly. 'I didn't know what was in the packet. Napoleon only asked simple questions about the ship. He didn't talk about politics. Oh, excuse me, sir! The customs officers²⁶ are coming aboard.' And Dantès went to the side of the ship.

Danglars came and stood beside Morrel. 'Did Dantès tell you why he delayed the voyage?' he asked.

'He was obeying the last order from Captain Leclère,' replied Morrel.

'And did Dantès give you a letter from the captain?'

'A letter?' said Morrel. 'A letter for me?'

'The captain gave Dantès a letter, as well as the packet for Elba,' said Danglars.

'How do you know about the packet?' asked Morrel.

'I was going past the captain's cabin,' Danglars said. 'The door was open and I saw the captain give the packet and a letter to Dantès.'

'He said nothing to me about a letter,' said Morrel. 'But if there is a letter, Edmond will give it to me.'

'Perhaps I made a mistake. Please say nothing about it to Dantès,' said Danglars. The cargomaster walked away when Dantès returned to the shipowner.

'Edmond, will you come and have dinner with me this evening?' asked Morrel.

'Excuse me, sir. But I must visit my father tonight,' said the young man.

'Oh, yes,' said Morrel. 'I haven't seen your father for a few weeks, but I think that he's well. You're a good son, Edmond. Visit your father, then come and see me.'

'Please excuse me again,' said Dantès. 'There is another person that I must see.'

'Of course!' said Morrel. 'You'll want to see Mercédès. She visited me three times to ask about news of the *Pharaon*. Edmond, you have a very beautiful lover!'

'Mercédès isn't my lover – she is my fiancée,' said Dantès. 'She's the woman that I'm going to marry.'

'I wish you happiness and a long life,' said Morrel. 'But tell me, did Captain Leclère give you a letter for me before he died?'