

SCENE FIVE

Lights shift to Albert's apartment in Paris. The apartment contains a painting of a young MERCEDES, dressed as a fisher-woman, looking out at the sea. Albert enters with EUGENIE.

EUGENIE: And where does this mysterious Count come from?

ALBERT: Really, I don't know. We were in Rome when I met him three months ago. Who knows where he may have gone in that time.

EUGENIE: And he told you three months ago that he would meet you here, in your parlor, today, at precisely ten o'clock in the morning? Is anyone capable of being so exact?

ALBERT: I think him capable of anything.

EUGENIE: And where is the fabled Monte Cristo, of which this man is lord and master?

ALBERT: It is an island. A grain of sand in the middle of the Mediterranean. I'm told that smugglers use it, but honest sailors have no reason to land there unless they have a taste for goat.

EUGENIE: Goat?

ALBERT: Apparently that's all the island has to offer. Goats, and, somewhere, a cave filled with gold and jewels.

EUGENIE: Your Count keeps his fortune in a cave? How very Arabian Nights of him.

ALBERT: The cave, I admit, is a fantasy on my part. But everything else about the man is so exotic, I would almost be disappointed if he didn't have a cave full of treasure somewhere.

(The clock starts to chime.)

EUGENIE: Ten o'clock, Albert.

(Edmond enters on the tenth chime.)

EDMOND: Punctuality, I've heard it said, is the politeness of kings. I hope you will excuse my two or three seconds' tardiness; five hundred leagues are not to be accomplished without some trouble.

ALBERT: My dear Count! Eugenie, this is the very man I've been telling you about. Monsieur le Comte, I have the honor to present to you one of my oldest, dearest friends, Mademoiselle Eugenie Danglars.

EDMOND: Mademoiselle.

EUGENIE: Five hundred leagues, Monsieur? Do you often travel fifteen hundred miles just for a social visit?

EDMOND: It depends on who I'm visiting. But I delight in the exhilaration of speed, and my horses are bred to order.

ALBERT: You see? And he talks like that all the time!

EDMOND: But tell me, is not your father the Baron Danglars?

EUGENIE: He is, your Excellency. Do you know him?

EDMOND: I know of him, and I expect to make his acquaintance soon.

ALBERT: Really? Do you play the markets, Count?

EDMOND: When it suits me. But tell me: I recollect that when the viscount and I were in Rome there was some talk of a projected marriage. May I congratulate you?

ALBERT: Not yet. But my father is most anxious about it.

EDMOND: Well, I imagine it is the nature of parents to be anxious about such things.

(Edmond notices the painting.)

EDMOND: This is... impressive.

ALBERT: Do you like it?

EDMOND: Very much. Reminiscent of a young Leopold Robert, but not quite... My dear viscount, you don't strike me as a man of artistic aspirations.

ALBERT: And you would be correct. What you see there is an original work of one Eugenie Danglars.

EDMOND: Truly?

EUGENIE: Albert's mother asked me to paint it for her, as a gift to the Count de Morcerf.

EDMOND: It's one of the finest I've seen. I shall commission a painting of my own from you.

ALBERT: Count, that's not really--

EUGENIE: It would be my privilege, Count.

EDMOND: This really is extraordinary. No doubt your father treasures it, Albert.

ALBERT: Oddly enough, this portrait seems to displease him for some reason. But between ourselves, my father may be a respected peer and renowned general, but his understanding of art is mediocre at best. So, I keep it here. You will do me the favor, Count, of making no allusions to this picture when you meet my parents. It seems to have a malign influence. My mother rarely looks at it without weeping.

EDMOND: You may rely upon me.

(FERNAND enters.)

ALBERT: Ah! I have the honor of presenting the Count of Monte Cristo, the generous friend I was so fortunate to meet in Rome. My father, the Count de Morcerf.

FERNAND: You are most welcome, monsieur. My wife will be along shortly, to thank you herself, but allow me to say that you have rendered our house a service which insures you our eternal gratitude.

EDMOND: It is a great honor to me, on my first day in Paris, to meet a man whose merit equals his reputation, General. I have read with great interest all about your service to the late Pasha of Yanina.

FERNAND: Yes, well, I only wish those events concluded in a more favorable outcome.

EDMOND: Truly. The Pasha was a great man, by all accounts.

(Mercedes enters. She freezes in the doorway.)

ALBERT: And this is my mother, the Countess. Mother, this is the Count of Monte Cristo.

MERCEDES: I've been waiting to meet you for so long, monsieur. I owe my son's life to you, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to thank you. It is very fortunate for my son that he found such a friend.

(Edmond bows.)

MERCEDES: Forgive me, but you seem so familiar to me. Surely we've met somewhere before?

EDMOND: I don't see how, madame, as this is my first time in France.

FERNAND: Well, Count, my wife is hosting a ball next week, and you certainly must do us the honor of attending.

(Albert and Eugenie make sounds of agreement.)

EDMOND: You are most generous, but the hostess has not invited me.

ALBERT: But of course she would want you there. Tell him, mother.

MERCEDES: Yes, of course. Please come.

EDMOND: I look forward to it. Well, I am most grateful for your kindness, but I got out of my travelling carriage at your door this morning. I must go and see what sort of lodgings have been procured for me.

EUGENIE: You haven't seen your own house yet? Where is it?

EDMOND: I believe I have it... Here it is. Number 30, Champs Elysees.

ALBERT: Never before in Paris, and you have a house in the Champs Elysees? You obviously have some genie at your control.

EDMOND: Spread that idea. It will be worth something to me among the ladies. And I do hope you will indulge me in what I hope will be the first of many lengthy conversations about painting.

EUGENIE: I look forward to it.

EDMOND: Excellent. Good day.

(Edmond shakes hands with Fernand and exits.)

MERCEDES: Albert, what sort of name is Monte Cristo?

ALBERT: Just a title, I believe. The Count purchased an island, and named himself after it.

EUGENIE: His manners are perfect, at least as far as I could judge in the few minutes he was here.

MERCEDES: Do you think the Count is really what he appears to be?

ALBERT: Why? What does he appear to be?

MERCEDES: He seems... a man of distinction. And we have every reason to show him our gratitude. But Albert, be prudent.

(Mercedes and Fernand exit.)

ALBERT: Well, there you have it. I knew he would create a sensation here, and if mother is struck by him he must indeed be remarkable.

(Albert and Eugenie exit.)

SCENE SIX

Lights shift to the street outside the Danglars' home. Edmond and BENEDETTO enter. CADEROUSSE appears in the background, spying on them.

EDMOND: This is the place. Benedetto?

BENEDETTO: Yes, Count?

(Edmond hands a slip of paper to Benedetto.)

EDMOND: Here is the telegram. Be sure it arrives at precisely--

BENEDETTO: A quarter past. I know it.

EDMOND: Good. Meet me here when it's done.

Benedetto takes the telegram and exits.

(Lights shift to the office of Baron DANGLARS, who sits at his desk, writing in a ledger. He looks up as Edmond enters.)

EDMOND: Baron Danglars.

DANGLARS: Ah! So good of you to call. My daughter Eugenie could talk of nothing else last night but mysterious Count of Monte Cristo.

EDMOND: I had the opportunity to view one of your daughter's paintings. She is quite gifted.

DANGLARS: Yes, well, we all must have our little hobbies, no?

EDMOND: Indeed. Well, down to business, Baron. I believe by now you should have received a letter from my agent in Rome, allowing me to open up a line of credit with you in Paris.

DANGLARS: Yes, well, Monsieur-- That is to say--

EDMOND: I trust everything is correct? You did receive the letter?

DANGLARS: Oh, yes, but, ah... Well, the letter gives you unlimited credit.

EDMOND: Yes?

DANGLARS: The word "unlimited," in financial affairs, is extremely vague.

EDMOND: It is, in fact, unlimited.

DANGLARS: Could I have some indication of the amount you propose to draw?

EDMOND: I have no idea. If I knew I would not need unlimited credit, would I?

DANGLARS: Of course.

EDMOND: Listen sir, if you are unable to provide the funds I require, I have letters for some of the other banking houses here in Paris--

DANGLARS: No no! I am, of course, prepared to provide you with--

EDMOND: Good, fine. Be kind enough, then, to send me, oh, five hundred thousand francs in cash tomorrow. You may leave it with my steward if I'm not home. Good day, Baron.

DANGLARS: Count! Forgive me. I had thought I was acquainted with all the great fortunes in Europe, but this is the first I've heard of yours. May I presume to ask how long you have possessed it?

EDMOND: It has been in the family a long while, a sort of treasure expressly forbidden to be touched for a certain number of years. It only came available recently.

DANGLARS: I see.

EDMOND: I imagine I appear as something of an enigma to you, Baron. Don't worry; you will be better informed about me before long.

(HERMINE enters. She carries a telegram.)

HERMINE: Oh, excuse me. I didn't realize that my husband had business this morning.

DANGLARS: Ah. Yes. My dear, allow me to present the Count of Monte Cristo. He has been warmly recommended to me. Count this is my wife, the Baroness Hermine Danglars.

EDMOND: Madame.

HERMINE: Ah! Of course. My daughter Eugenie speaks quite highly of you. She says you have arrived just yesterday from the extreme end of the globe. Is this true?

EDMOND: Not this time. I have merely come from Cadiz.

HERMINE: You have selected a most unfavorable time for your first visit, I'm afraid. Paris is a horrible place in the summer. I do hope you found suitable lodgings.

EDMOND: Suitable enough for me. I am at Number 30, Champs Elysees.

HERMINE: Number... 30, was it?

DANGLARS: I say, I know that house. My dear, wasn't it in your family for a time?

HERMINE: It was. A long time ago.

EDMOND: Really? How extraordinary. You must do me the honor of paying a visit. I wonder if you will find the place much changed.

HERMINE: That sounds... lovely.

EDMOND: Well, if you will excuse me. Baron, this has been most satisfactory. Good day.
Madame.

(Edmond exits. Danglars returns to his business. Hermine stares off.)

DANGLARS: Yes? ... Hermine? ... Baroness?

HERMINE: Yes?

DANGLARS: Was there something you wished?

HERMINE: Oh. Yes. This telegram just arrived for you.

(Danglars takes the telegram and reads it.)

DANGLARS: Well. It appears I shall have to sell off the Spanish funds, and quickly. Are you alright?

HERMINE: What? Yes. I'm fine. Did you say you were selling the Spanish funds?

DANGLARS: Yes.

HERMINE: That can't be right.

DANGLARS: I pay good money for this information. It has never led me wrong before.
Are you sure you're alright?

HERMINE: Yes. I'm just going to lie down for a bit. Let me know what happens with this.

DANGLARS: Of course, dear.

(Hermine and Danglars exit separately.)

SCENE SEVEN

Lights shift to the street outside Danglars' office. Benedetto enters. Caderousse enters behind him.

CADEROUSSE: Pardon me if I disturb you, friend. May I speak with you?

BENEDETTO: Begone, sir. You have no right to beg here.

CADEROUSSE: I am not begging, my fine fellow. I only wish to say two or three words.

BENEDETTO: What do you want? Speak quickly.

CADEROUSSE: I want you to take me up in your fine carriage and carry me back to town,
Master Benedetto.

BENEDETTO: What did you call me?

CADEROUSSE: Please don't think I want the glory of riding in your fine carriage. It's only because I'm tired, and also because I have a little business to talk over with you.

BENEDETTO: Who are you?

CADEROUSSE: Don't remember me? You wound me, Benedetto. All the time we spent together at the Pont du Var, before the prison ship sailed. And then there I was, chained to an oar, and you were nowhere to be seen. What could have happened to my dear friend Benedetto? I wondered.

BENEDETTO: I warn you, Caderousse, that you are mistaken.

CADEROUSSE: Ah, and here I worried that you might not recognize me. And look at you, with a carriage, and fine new clothes. You must have discovered a mine, or else become a stockbroker.

BENEDETTO: What do you want?

CADEROUSSE: I want to know about all this. It is a blessing when good fortune happens to friends.

BENEDETTO: It's no business of yours. It's a... a family matter.

CADEROUSSE: That friend of yours, the one you were talking to just now. He looks rich.

BENEDETTO: You want money?

CADEROUSSE: Not much. Enough to live... comfortably. In exchange, I promise not to spoil whatever game you have going with this fellow.

BENEDETTO: Fine. Tell me where to find you.

CADEROUSSE: Ah, no. I know what happens to your friends when they get on your bad side. Why do you think I waited till you were out in public before approaching you? I'll find you. I think five hundred a month should be sufficient.

BENEDETTO: Fine. Now get out of sight.

CADEROUSSE: Until our next meeting, Benedetto.

(Caderousse exits. Edmond enters.)

EDMOND: Well done.

BENEDETTO: It arrived then? The telegram?

EDMOND: It did. You routed it properly?

BENEDETTO: Everything as you said. It should look just like it came from Spain.

EDMOND: Who was that?

BENEDETTO: Just some beggar. How did it go with the Baron?

EDMOND: Everything is on schedule. Fetch the carriage.

BENEDETTO: When do we see Villefort?

EDMOND: Fetch the carriage.

BENEDETTO: Yes, Count.

(Benedetto exits. Edmond watches him leave, then looks back toward where Caderousse exited.)

EDMOND: Right on schedule.

(Edmond exits.)

SCENE EIGHT

Lights shift to Haydee's chamber in Edmond's home. She is getting ready for the ball. There is a knock at the door.

EDMOND *(off)*: Haydee?

HAYDEE: Yes?

EDMOND *(off)*: May I enter?

HAYDEE: You may.

(Edmond enters.)

HAYDEE: Why do you always ask permission?

EDMOND: Haydee, you know that we are in France now.

HAYDEE: Of course.

EDMOND: You know that by law no person on French soil can be a slave. Here you are absolute mistress of your actions. You may go abroad or remain in your apartments, whatever seems most agreeable to you. You can go anywhere, see anyone. You are free.

HAYDEE: Free to do what?

EDMOND: Anything. Whatever you wish.

HAYDEE: You know what I wish.

EDMOND: I do.

HAYDEE: It's your wish too.

EDMOND: It is.

HAYDEE: Then why would I want to see anyone else?

EDMOND: It's almost time. Are you sure you want to do this?

HAYDEE: Will he be there?

EDMOND: Of course. It's his house.

HAYDEE: Then I'm sure. I have to know for certain. What of Benedetto?

EDMOND: What of him?

HAYDEE: You like to think of me as a daughter; doesn't that make him your son? We are a family of sorts. But he's still new to this. He needs a careful hand.

EDMOND: I will look after him as best I can.

(Haydee takes Edmond's hands.)

HAYDEE: And what of you? What do you need?

EDMOND: Haydee, I could be your father.

HAYDEE: You could be. You aren't. The love I have for you is very different from the love I had for my father.

EDMOND *(ignoring the question)*: Are you ready?

HAYDEE: I am.

(Edmond offers Haydee his arm, which she takes. They exit.)