



# Providence

*Chapter I - To the King's Attorney*

based on  
"The Count of Monte Cristo"  
by Alexander Dumas & Auguste Maquet

written by  
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# SAMPLE

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**EXT. COAST, ISLE OF ELBA - DAY**

CHYRON: *Porto-Ferraio, Isle of Elba*

CLOSE ON: a DEAD FISH floats among the reeds at the waters edge.

PAN UP to reveal **NAPOLEON BONAPARTE** (45) standing meditatively, skipping stones with mechanical grace.

Beside him **MARSHAL HENRI GATIEU BERTRAND** (41) lowers his spyglass having observed an incoming ship.

**BERTRAND**

The Pharaon, sire.

Napoleon's expression is unreadable.

He skips another stone into the water.

**EXT. DOCKS, PORTO-FERRAJO - LATER**

The Pharaon rocks gently at anchor.

Edmond disembarks, eyes scanning the eerily silent port, as he advances cautiously towards the looming VILLA DEI MULINI.

**DANGLARS**

(*re: worried crew*)

A fine welcome indeed!

**INT. OUTER COURTYARD, VILLA DEI MULINI - CONTINUOUS**

Alert, Edmond steps into the open courtyard, disquieted by the monasterial-like stillness.

**EDMOND**

Ahoy there?

Suddenly guards appear from behind with their carbines leveled at Edmond's head, as the villa's grand door swings open, and Bertrand strides assertively over to him.

**BERTRAND**

Hold, sir! By what name are you known, and what affair brings you to this place?

**EDMOND**

I - I am Edmond Dantès, Mate of the Pharaon of Messrs Morrel & Son, Marseille. I come at the behest of Captain LeClere.

**BERTRAND**

Pray tell me, why he did not come himself but dispatch you in his stead?

**EDMOND**

The captain has been dead nigh on two days, sir. I served as his first mate and now inherit his command. I present myself here at his express instruction.

Edmond bows formally.

**BERTRAND**

How am I to accept the verity of your words, young man?

Slowly Edmond reaches into his coat - the guards tighten their grip - producing LeClere's RING, offering it to Bertrand, whose demeanour changes instantly.

**BERTRAND**

Follow me.

**EXT. DECK, THE PHARAON - SAME TIME**

The crew lounge on the deck - some resting, others playing cards.

Danglars stands at the bow eyes locked on the Villa.

Penelon paces restlessly.

**ETIENNE**

*(to Penelon)*

What troubles you, fellow? Sit yourself down - there's nothing doing just now.

**LUCIEN**

Why such a delay? The ladies at La Rue Bouterie surely are missing me by now.

**PENELON**

*(trying to relax)*

They miss your month's coin, Lucien.

They all share a laugh.

**NIKOLAS**

You think he'll be long, Danglars?

**DANGLARS**

Tis difficult to say with certainty. It appears to be customary for newly appointed captains to select their own ports of call whenever they see fit.

**GAUMAUD**

It was the final command of Captain LeClere that we make anchor here.

**DANGLARS**

All very well to say it, but tell me truly how many among us would hazard such a visit here, without a clearance from the customs-house, without orders from M. Morrel? A trifling call at a little island, mark you one lately home to imperial remnants; would the port authorities at Marseille, keen as they now are for royal service, look kindly on such an errand, think ye?

Murmurs of doubt run through the crew.

**DANGLARS (CONT'D)**

Should it come to light that we have anchored here, with the Captain newly carried off, who can say what may follow? The ship - her hold, her very timbers - might be ransacked for contraband, our wages withheld for an age, and every one of us clapped in irons at the mercy of the authorities. A man must weigh the winds of fortune, and these blow heavy against us.

**LUCIEN**

You think Edmond... Captain Dantès means to endanger us?

**DANGLARS**

Tell me, what is a captain if he is not the father of the ship? Would not a good father look after the welfare of his children?

The questions hang in the air.

**GAUMAUD**

The Captain placed his trust in Dantès. Wasn't our place to question LeClere in life, why now in death?

**DANGLARS**

I would not presume to question the late Captain's character. I simply note that we have invested much faith in the decisions of one whose years scarce match his responsibilities.

**GAUMAUD**

Who gave you leave to speak thus, Danglars? You tend the cargo, the ship's course is not your concern.

A few of the crew chuckle under their breath. Danglars stiffens.

**DANGLARS**

I only wished to observe that, considering our own affairs, we ought to be cautious. No fault lies in preparing for what may follow.

**GAUMAUD**

Then turn your mind to Marseille, where we shall all attest before M. Morrel that Edmond discharged his captain's sacred trust - whilst you, sheltered on deck with your calculations, enacted only as the prophet of misfortune.

Danglars opens his mouth to retort -

**GAUMAUD (CONT'D)**

Enough talk, Danglars.

Danglars turns on his heels, descending below deck.

**INT. CORRIDORS, VILLA DEI MULINI - LATER**

Footsteps echo through the stone halls as Edmond is escorted by Bertrand alone.

They pass an open study. Edmond's eyes catch a MAP OF EUROPE on the wall, tacked with thread and pins, most of which cluster over Belgium.

**INT. NAPOLEON'S OFFICE, VILLA DEI MULINI - CONTINUOUS**

Edmond is ushered in, and there behind a grand walnut desk, Napoleon sits writing.

Bertrand gestures to a precise spot on the carpet where Edmond should stand. He silently obeys.

Napoleon finishes and seals his letter with his GRAND SANHEDRIN. Bertrand lays the packet from Edmond beside him. He opens it, scans the contents briefly, and nods in affirmation.

Only then does Napoleon look up at Edmond, who stands to attention -

**NAPOLEON**

Tea.

**EDMOND**

Sorry, sir?

**NAPOLEON**

The Arabs have a most curious relationship with tea. They will sup upon the hot draught even when the sun burns fiercest. I cannot abide it myself, so I take coffee instead. Would you be so good as to join me?

**EDMOND**

Delightedly, sir.

Napoleon nods towards Bertrand who calls for a maid.

Napoleon rises and slowly rounds the desk to face Edmond, studying him in a manner in which he studies the battlefield.

**NAPOLEON**

Tell me, young man, how does one find himself in charge of such an experienced vessel?

**EDMOND**

An unfortunate happenstance with poor Captain LeClere, we lost him to fever of the brain on the journey hitherto.

(MORE)

EDMOND (CONT'D)

I merely act in his stead, a poor rendition might I add, for one cannot simply replace the experience of such a captain buoyed by the confidence of M. Morrel.

NAPOLEON

Morrel you say? Ah, yes, the Morrels have been shipowners from father to son; and there was a Morrel - Policar I believe - who served in the same regiment with me when I was in garrison at Valence.

BERTRAND

A fine soldier, sire, who you later made a Captain.

EDMOND

I cannot attest to that gentleman, sir, as I am in the employ of M. Pierre for the sole aim of keeping the Pharaon afloat.

Napoleon smiles. A maid enters carrying a silver tray bearing a pot and two fine porcelain cups filled with coffee.

Napoleon takes one and offers the other to Edmond, standing.

NAPOLEON

And what of your ambition, monsieur Dantès?

EDMOND

My ambition? Alas I have none, all I am is steadfast to those dear to my heart, and shall not fail those who have given me their trust.

NAPOLEON

Trust is currency young man, and loyalty can make even a pauper rich as Croesus, more so in these tempestuous days.

EDMOND

Then to some minds, sir, I might be thought the richest man alive.

**NAPOLEON**

Bravo! Upon my faith, I am sure  
 Captain LeClere noticed your  
 dignified reserve. Aye, a man needs  
 even a touch of austere severity,  
 if he would wield authority over  
 those whose years exceed his own.

**EDMOND**

I confess to moments of doubt, sir,  
 yet I place the utmost confidence  
 in Captain LeClere's discernment.  
 If he saw fit to entrust me with  
 such responsibility, then surely  
 there must be virtue in his choice.  
 I am honour bound to M. Morrel, and  
 by sacred duty to the late  
 captain's final wishes.

Napoleon looks to Betrand, who nods imperceptibly.

**NAPOLEON**

Good, then his orders extend beyond  
 the grave.

Napoleon sits his cup down on his desk. Napoleon retrieves  
 the SEALED LETTER he finished earlier handing it to Edmond.

**NAPOLEON (CONT'D)**

Neither the sea nor the motivations  
 of man are predictable, all we can  
 truly know is oneself whilst facing  
 the tempest and rise to the  
 challenge. A map may show a man  
 only where he should go, but it is  
 his own compass which directs him  
 truly. Our roads may converge again  
 soon...

(beat)

Captain Dantès.

Edmond looks between the letter and Napoleon.

INSERT LETTER: "NOIRTIER, RUE SAINT JACQUES, PARIS".

**EXT. PHARAON - DUSK**

The crew gathers, watching Edmond as he returns, the sky  
 tinged with the last hues of dusk.

Dantès reaches up, hand outstretched to board.

Danglars, closest to the gangway, hesitates, his eyes locked on the LETTER clutched in Edmond's hand.

Lucien steps in front of Danglars and aids Edmond onboard.

**LUCIEN**

Good to see you again, Captain.

Edmond acknowledges him with a nod.

**INT. EDMOND'S CABIN - LATER**

Edmond sits alone, scrutinising the letter in his hand with deep thought. The wax seal glows in the candlelight.

He rises and opens a small cabinet tucked in the corner. He places the letter inside beside pouches of tobacco and tins of coffee, and latches it shut.