

## CHAPTER 6

**D**'ARTAGNAN WAS TROUBLED BY THE KING'S DECISION TO ARREST Fouquet, but he was obliged to follow orders, so he decided to pay Fouquet a visit. The treasurer was just about to go to bed, when he heard a knock at the door.

"D'Artagnan!" said Fouquet when he opened his bedroom door. "How can I help you?"

"I've come to discuss a very serious matter with you," replied the Captain. "May I come in?"

"Of course," said Fouquet. "What's the problem?"

"Sir..." D'Artagnan began, "I'm not sure how to tell you this, but the King has asked me to place you under arrest."

Fouquet was shocked. "What?" he exclaimed. "But... Why?"

"I'm afraid Colbert gave the King receipts which prove that you stole money from the State..."

Fouquet sat down on the edge of his bed and buried his face in his hands. "I... I didn't steal the money... I borrowed it. Ask Aramis, he'll back me up."

D'Artagnan frowned. "Aramis? Did he tell you to 'borrow' the money?"

"No. He told me he'd give me the money to pay for the party. But he wasn't able to raise the money in time, so I borrowed money from the State. It was foolish, I know, but I had every intention of paying it back, I swear!"

"I see," said D'Artagnan. The Captain thought for a moment. Then he said:



"Monsieur Fouquet, I'm going to go to Aramis's room to confirm that what you have said is the truth. Please, don't leave your room until I come back."

"I promise I'll stay right here," said the treasurer.

D'Artagnan left Fouquet's room and walked quickly to the Blue Room. He knocked on the door several times, but there was no response. The Captain sighed and quickly returned to Fouquet's room.

"Did you speak to him?" asked the treasurer.

"He's not in his room. Either that or he's decided not to answer the door," said D'Artagnan.

"What?" said Fouquet. "Where can he be?"

D'Artagnan shrugged. "I don't know sir, but I'm afraid that I'll have to stand guard outside your room tonight and arrest you in the morning, once the King has given me the official order."

Fouquet nodded. "I understand," he murmured.

The treasurer looked so upset that D'Artagnan actually began to feel sorry for him.

"I'll be outside, sir," said D'Artagnan, as he made his way to the door.

In another part of the house, Philippe was lying in his brother's bed, trying to get some sleep. The new King had entered the room through a secret door in the ceiling which Aramis had installed when he was overseeing the renovations. Aramis had also designed the mechanism which allowed the bed to automatically move up once the King had been lowered into the underground passageway.

Philippe tossed and turned, but he couldn't fall asleep. He felt anxious about taking his brother's place and was terrified that someone would realise that he was an impostor.

"I am now face to face with my destiny," said Philippe to himself. "There's no turning back... I must be strong."

It was almost dawn by the time Aramis and Porthos returned to Vaux. Porthos immediately went to his room to get some sleep, while Aramis quietly let himself into the King's bedroom.

"Well, how did it go?" asked Philippe as he sat up in his bed.

"Just as we planned."

"Did he resist?"



"Not really."

"Did the governor suspect anything?"

"Not a thing."

"Good," said Philippe.

Suddenly, the two men heard footsteps in the corridor.

"That must be D'Artagnan," said Aramis. "He's coming to see you about Fouquet."

"What will I say?" asked Philippe.

"Let me take care of it," said the Bishop. "It is too soon for D'Artagnan to see you. He knows the King better than anyone and he might suspect something if he talks to you now."

A minute later, there was a knock at the door.

"Sire, it is I, D'Artagnan."

Philippe gave Aramis a worried look and the Bishop motioned to him to be quiet. Then, he opened the door slowly.

"Aramis!" exclaimed D'Artagnan when he saw his friend. "What are you doing here?"

"Good morning, D'Artagnan," said Aramis. "I'm afraid you won't be able to see the King now. His Majesty had trouble sleeping last night and is very tired. He has asked not to be disturbed."

D'Artagnan looked surprised. "But we had an appointment for this morning..."

"Yes," said Aramis as he handed D'Artagnan a piece of paper. "The King has asked me to give you this order regarding Monsieur Fouquet."

D'Artagnan took the paper from Aramis and read it. "Set free?" he exclaimed. "The King wants Fouquet to be set free?"

"Apparently so," said the Bishop.

"So that's why you're here," said D'Artagnan. "You persuaded the King to pardon Fouquet, is that it?"

"It was entirely the King's decision," said Aramis. "Anyway, I'd like to accompany you to Fouquet's room, to tell him the good news."

D'Artagnan looked at Aramis suspiciously. "All right," he said. "Let's go."

The two men made their way to the treasurer's room, where Fouquet was waiting anxiously to hear his fate.





## CHAPTER 7

**F**OUQUET FELT RELIEVED WHEN HE SAW ARAMIS STANDING NEXT TO D'Artagnan in the corridor. "Ah, D'Artagnan, I see you have found the Bishop," said the treasurer.

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan, "and I have good news. The King has ordered me to set you free."

Fouquet's eyes widened in surprise. "What? That's such wonderful news! Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

"No need to thank me," said D'Artagnan, "Aramis is the one who persuaded the King to pardon you."

"Oh, my lord Bishop! I am forever in your debt!" said Fouquet.

Aramis smiled and bowed his head slightly. He then turned to D'Artagnan and said: "If you don't mind D'Artagnan, there's something I need to discuss with Monsieur Fouquet in private."

D'Artagnan nodded. "Fine," he said. "I'll be in my room."

The Captain walked away quickly and Aramis entered Fouquet's room. He closed the door and Fouquet invited him to sit down.

"So what did you say to the King to make him change his mind?" asked the treasurer.



"Nicolas," Aramis began, "the King believed that you were guilty of stealing money from the State. Do you really think that anything I had to say would make him change his mind about arresting you?"

"I don't understand..." said Fouquet. "You said that the King pardoned me..."

"The King did pardon you," said Aramis.

"But you still haven't told me why," said Fouquet.

Aramis stood up and walked over to the window. "I will have to start at the beginning," he said. "Do you remember the birth of Louis XIV?"

"Yes, like it was yesterday."

"Well, there is a secret surrounding the birth of the King that very few people know," Aramis continued.

"What secret?" asked Fouquet.

"On the day that the King was born, the Queen gave birth to not one son, but two. Identical twins, to be precise..."

"Identical twins?" exclaimed Fouquet. "What happened to the other prince? Did he die?"

"No, the other prince is very much alive," Aramis replied. "You see, the King was worried that having two heirs to the throne would lead to civil war. So, one of the princes was sent to live in the country with his tutor and a nanny. Later on, he was imprisoned in the Bastille and given a false name, Marchiali. His only crime was that he was the King's identical twin."

Fouquet was in horror. "But that is terrible! How could the Queen allow something like that?"

Aramis shrugged. "She felt it was better to send one son to jail than risk someone discovering the secret."

"But how do you know all this?" asked Fouquet.

"I have been the Queen Mother's close friend and adviser for years," said Aramis.

"And the King? Does the King know about his brother?" asked Fouquet.

"No," Aramis replied. "He doesn't know a thing. And the worst part is that the poor young man in the Bastille is much nobler and wiser than his brother, Louis, will ever be."







Aramis paused for a moment. "A great injustice has been done, Nicolas, and it is our duty to set things right. Don't you agree?"

"Well, yes... but what can we do?"

"I have already taken the matter into my own hands," said Aramis mysteriously.

"What did you do?" asked Fouquet.

"Last night, Porthos and I switched the two brothers: Louis is now a prisoner in the Bastille, and his brother Philippe is asleep in the King's room as we speak."

Fouquet was shocked to hear this and his face turned white. "What?" he shouted. "You kidnapped the King and took him to the Bastille and all this happened under my roof?"

Aramis looked surprised. "Well, yes. Now France has a true and noble king and you no longer have to go to jail."

Fouquet looked stunned. "Have you gone mad?" he exclaimed. "You have dishonoured me, Aramis! You have just committed treason in my house!"

"But I did it for France and for you, Nicolas..." said Aramis.

"You have committed a terrible crime, Aramis. I realise you were trying to help me, but that does not excuse your behaviour. You must leave this house immediately, and take Porthos with you!"

Aramis was shocked. "What? What are you saying, Nicolas?"

"You have been a good friend to me, Aramis, so I will give you four hours before I tell the King what you've done. Four hours is enough time to travel to Belle Isle - I have a house on the island. You can hide there."

The Bishop could hardly believe his ears. "Don't you see that France is better off now, Nicolas? Don't you see that you are better off now?"

Fouquet's cheeks burned with anger. "I am going to the Bastille to rescue the King. I expect you to be gone when I get back," he said coldly.

Fouquet rushed out of the room, while Aramis stood there speechless. His plan had gone horribly wrong. Now he and Porthos were both in grave danger. The Bishop ran to Porthos's room and woke him up. He explained what had happened with Fouquet, and told him that they had to leave immediately. Within minutes, the two men were galloping away from







Vaux, while D'Artagnan watched from his bedroom window.

"Strange," he murmured to himself. "They look like they're running away from something. What on earth is going on?"

Meanwhile, Fouquet was making his way to the Bastille. He arrived at the prison in record time and demanded to see the prisoner that the Bishop had brought in earlier. The governor was puzzled. "But Aramis said that Marchiali was not to have any visitors..." said Baisemeaux.

"Never mind what Aramis said!" said Fouquet. "I am in charge of Marchiali now. Take me to him!"

The governor led Fouquet to Louis's cell, where the prisoner was shouting and banging on the iron bars.

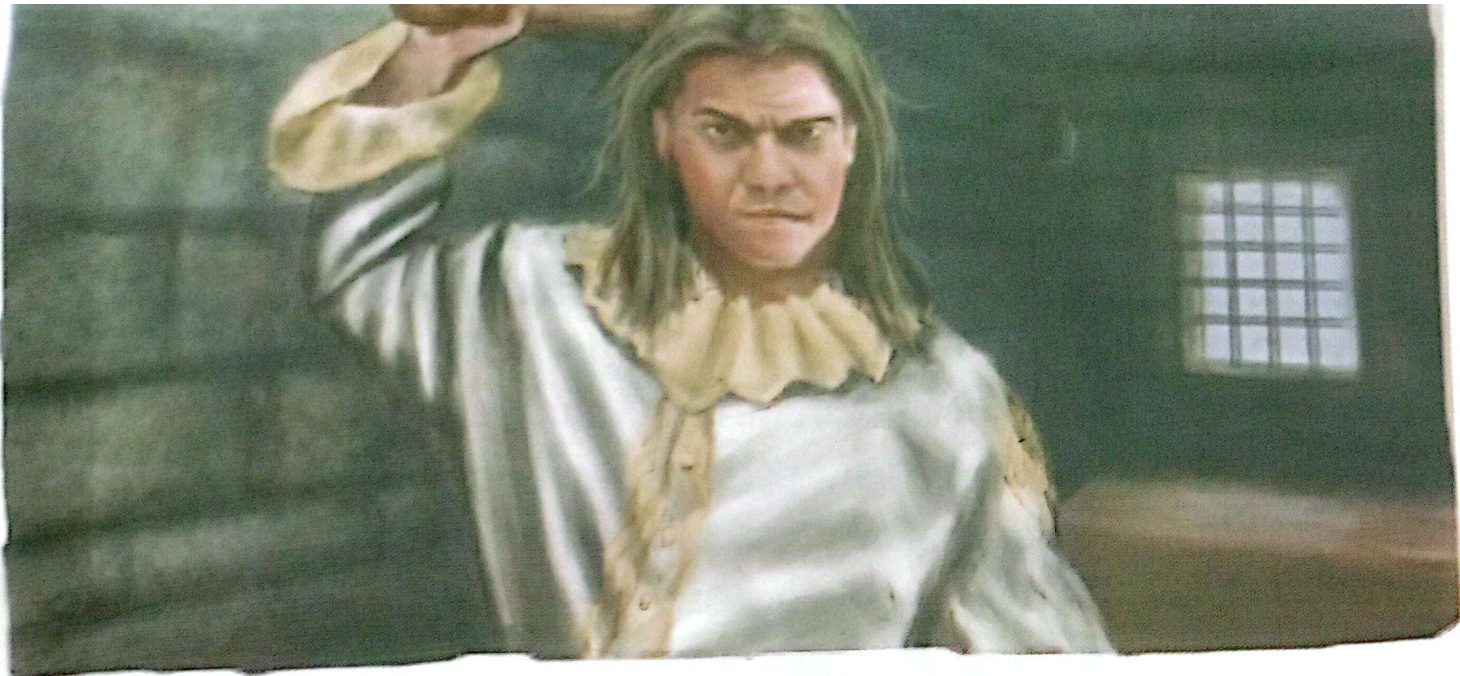
"Help! Help!" he cried. "I am the King of France, let me out! Fouquet put me in here, help me, please!"

The governor opened the cell door and a moment later Fouquet and the King were face to face with each other.

"You!" exclaimed the King. "You traitor!"







## CHAPTER 8

**“G**ET AWAY FROM ME!” yelled the King, as he grabbed a piece of wood to defend himself against Fouquet. “Sire, please, I am your friend and loyal servant,” said the treasurer, “I only want what’s good for you.”

“Liar!” shouted the King. “You’re the one who put me here!”

“No, no!” Fouquet protested. “I had nothing to do with this! It was Aramis! He did it all!”

“Aramis, eh? I knew he was involved somehow!” said the King.

“Sire, I have something very important to tell you,” Fouquet continued. “This may come as a great shock to you, but I have just found out that you have a twin brother named Philippe who has spent the past few years in this exact jail cell. Aramis and Porthos switched you with your brother and he has taken your place as the King!”

The King narrowed his eyes and glared at Fouquet. “What are you talking about? I don’t have a brother!”

“Sire, according to Aramis, you do. And he is your identical twin!” said Fouquet.

“And where is this supposed brother of mine?” asked the King.



"He's at Vaux, sire," replied the treasurer.

"With Aramis?"

"Erm, no..." said Fouquet. "Sire, Aramis has been a good friend to me for many years and even though he has committed this terrible crime against you, I felt the need to protect him... So I told him to leave Vaux with Porthos and seek refuge at my house on Belle Isle, just off the coast of France. Your soldiers have no authority to arrest anyone there, sire."

"We'll see about that!" said the King. "Anyway, I'll deal with Aramis and Porthos later. Right now, I must return to Vaux."

"Yes, sire!" said Fouquet. "But perhaps we should stop at the palace on the way, so that you can change your clothes."

"Good idea," said the King. "Now get me out of here!"

"Baisemeaux!" shouted Fouquet. A moment later, the two men heard heavy footsteps and the governor appeared.

"I want this prisoner released immediately," said the treasurer.





Baisemeaux shook his head. "I cannot release this man to you unless I have an order signed by the King."

"Fine," said Fouquet impatiently. The treasurer handed the King a piece of paper and the governor watched as he wrote a few lines on it.

The King handed the paper to Baisemeaux and he and Fouquet hurried past him and out of the jail.

"But..." said Baisemeaux as he unfolded the paper. It was an order of release, and it was signed "Louis XIV of France". The governor gasped. "Louis XIV of France? It couldn't be? Could it?" he asked himself.

In the meantime, the new King was preparing to appear in public for the first time in one of the reception rooms at Vaux. It did not take Philippe long to learn all his brother's habits, and no one suspected a thing when he entered the room and smiled at the sea of unfamiliar faces.

Noblemen and ministers bowed before him as Philippe nervously made his way to the throne.





A moment later, Philippe's mother entered the room and sat down next to her son. Philippe almost gasped when he saw her. She looked old and weak, and although she was responsible for his many years of suffering, he could not help but feel happy to see her again.

"Well, my son," said the Queen Mother, "have you decided what you will do with Monsieur Fouquet?"

"I am not worried about Fouquet, Mother," Philippe replied. "He is not a bad man. I am more concerned about truly dishonest people, like Madame de Chevreuse, for example."

"Madame de Chevreuse!" exclaimed the Queen Mother. "Why do you mention her?"

"Aramis said that she paid you a visit the other day," Philippe replied. "He also said that she asked you for money to keep a terrible secret..."

The Queen Mother's face turned pale. "Secret? What are you talking about, my son?"

"Never mind," said Philippe. "That is a matter which we will discuss another time."

Philippe turned to call D'Artagnan.

"Good morning, sire," said the Captain.

"Good morning," said Philippe. "I was wondering, D'Artagnan, do you know where Aramis is? I've been looking for him the whole morning."

"He's gone, your Majesty," D'Artagnan replied. "He left early this morning with Porthos. I don't know where they went."

Philippe was horrified. "Gone? What do you mean, gone?"

Just then, there was a big fuss in the corridor.

"What's all that noise?" asked Philippe.

"I think I hear Fouquet's voice," said D'Artagnan.

"Good," said Philippe. "Then Aramis cannot be far behind."

But Philippe couldn't have been more wrong. The doors burst open and in came Louis XIV, followed closely by Fouquet.

The entire court gasped in surprise. The Queen Mother screamed when she saw both her sons in the same room, and Philippe's face turned as white as a sheet. D'Artagnan stood to one side, shaking his head in disbelief.

Then, Louis walked slowly towards his brother and carefully examined





his face. Philippe began to tremble and he grasped the arms of the throne nervously.

Louis turned to look at his mother. "Mother! Tell them that I am Louis, King of France!"

"No!" said Philippe. "I am Louis, King of France!"

The Queen Mother began to cry hysterically, and Louis turned to D'Artagnan.

"Captain!" he said. "Look at both our faces. One of us has been in jail for the past few years and is much paler than the other. Can you tell who the impostor is?"

Without hesitation, D'Artagnan walked up to Philippe and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Monsieur," he said, "you are my prisoner."

Once again, the court gasped.

Philippe turned to face his mother. "If I were not your son, I would have cursed you for all the unhappiness you have caused me," he said.



The Queen Mother cried out and Madame de Motteville rushed to her aid. D'Artagnan was just about to take his prisoner away, when Fouquet handed him a note signed by the King.

"What does it say?" asked Philippe.

"Read it," said D'Artagnan.

Philippe read the note. It said:

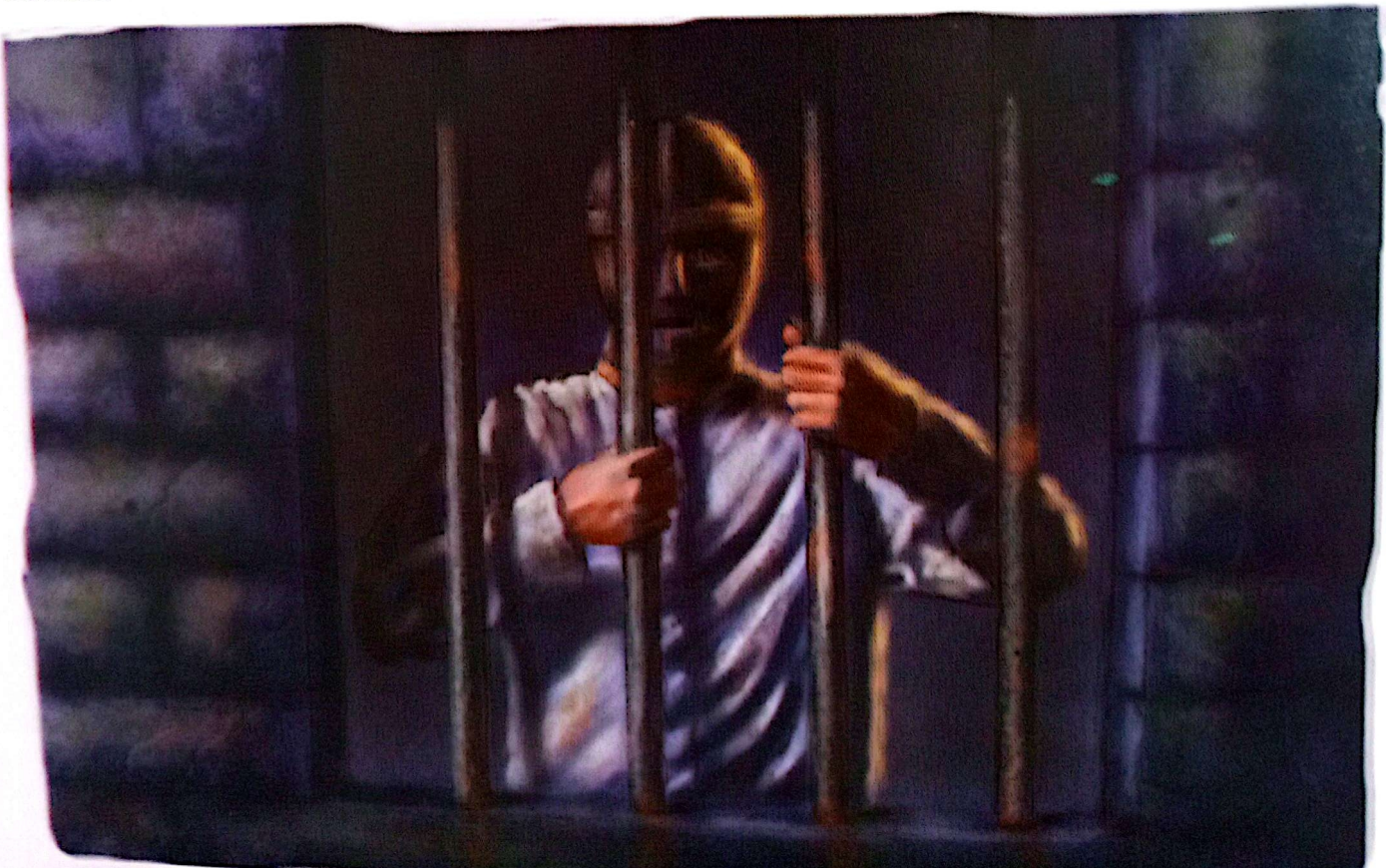
*Monsieur D'Artagnan will take the impostor to a prison on the island of Sainte Marguerite. The prisoner will be made to wear an iron mask to hide his face. If he dares remove the mask, he will be killed.*

Louis XIV

"It is the right thing to do," said Philippe with a sigh. "I committed a crime and I must pay for it. I am ready to go now, Monsieur D'Artagnan."

"Aramis was right," Fouquet whispered to D'Artagnan. "He is nobler than his brother."

"Indeed," replied D'Artagnan as he accompanied his prisoner out of the room.





## CHAPTER 9

**A**RAMIS AND PORTHOS DID NOT TRAVEL TO BELLE ISLE IMMEDIATELY. They decided to pay a visit to Athos first, to say goodbye to him. The two men arrived at Athos's house in the country later that evening. Of course, Athos was delighted to see his old friends again and he invited them in for supper.

"So gentlemen," said Athos as they sat down at the dinner table. "What brings you both here tonight?"

Aramis explained the story to Athos while they ate, pausing only to take bites of the delicious meal Athos had prepared.

"Well, that wasn't exactly the outcome you were hoping for," said Athos once Aramis had finished talking. "It was a great idea, Aramis, but also a great mistake. What will you do now?"

"We are going to go to Fouquet's house on Belle Isle," Aramis replied. "The King's soldiers are not permitted to set foot on the island, so we should be safe there for a while. Then, we will make our way to Spain."

Athos nodded. "I suppose that's your only option. But I am sad to see you go; I fear that we may never see each other again."

"You may be right," said Aramis with a sigh.

"Remember, my friends," said Athos, "the King is a cunning man. You say that he is not legally permitted to send troops to Belle Isle, but the law has never stopped him before. Will you leave in the morning?"

"No," Porthos replied. "I think we should leave as soon as we've eaten."

"All right," said Athos. "I'll give you two of my best horses and some provisions. If you leave soon, you can be at the harbour by dawn. I have a friend named Grimaud who owns a small fishing boat. I'll arrange for him to take you to Belle Isle."

"Thank you, Athos," said Aramis.

"All for one and one for all!" said Porthos, raising his glass. "Just like the old days!"

The following morning, while Aramis and Porthos were settling in at Fouquet's house on Belle Isle, the King summoned D'Artagnan to his chambers.





"So, D'Artagnan, you are no doubt aware that your friends, Aramis and Porthos, were responsible for putting me in prison?"

"Yes, sire," said D'Artagnan.

"And I'm sure you've heard that they plan to take refuge at Belle Isle?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well, I want you to go to Belle Isle to capture them."



"But, sire," said D'Artagnan, "we are not allowed to go to Belle Isle, the treaty you signed..."

"I don't care about treaties!" the King interrupted. "Aramis and Porthos committed treason, and it is your duty to bring them back dead or alive, understand?"

D'Artagnan sighed deeply. "Yes sire, of course."

The Captain left the King's chambers with a heavy heart. He didn't know whether he should be loyal to his friends or to the King. But, D'Artagnan had to follow orders, and a couple of hours later, he and a group of officers set sail for Belle Isle.

They arrived on the island at lunchtime, and D'Artagnan and a fellow officer disembarked and made their way to Fouquet's residence on foot. Aramis and Porthos had seen the ship arrive from one of the balconies, so they were not surprised to see their friend standing at the front door.

"D'Artagnan!" said Aramis. "It is good to see you, even under these circumstances."

"Gentlemen," said D'Artagnan. "This is a very difficult situation for all of us. I'm here to convince you to surrender; otherwise we have been instructed to take you back by force."

"We will never surrender," said Aramis. "And by sending you here, the King is breaking the treaty he signed with the people of Belle Isle."

D'Artagnan felt his cheeks burn with anger. "Don't be so stubborn, Aramis! Don't you see I'm trying to save your lives?"

"So that we can live out the rest of our days in the Bastille? No thank you!" said Aramis.

D'Artagnan turned to the officer who had accompanied him to the house and instructed him to wait outside. The officer nodded and did as he was told.

"I knew you would never surrender," said D'Artagnan. "What's your plan, Aramis?"

"Well, some of the locals have agreed to help us. They've hidden a boat in a nearby cave; our plan was to set sail for Spain this afternoon..."

"But we might have to come up with a new plan now," said Porthos. D'Artagnan thought for a moment. "Right. I have an idea that might



give you enough time to get away..."

D'Artagnan lowered his voice and explained his plan to his friends. Then, he wished them well and left.

"But, what about the prisoners?" said the officer when D'Artagnan reappeared alone.

"We'll come back for them. Let's go to the ship," D'Artagnan replied.

Once they were back on board, D'Artagnan called a meeting with his fellow officers.

"Gentlemen," D'Artagnan began, "I tried to negotiate with Aramis and Porthos, but the negotiations failed. So, I have decided that I can no longer be the leader of this mission. I am therefore resigning my position as Captain of the Musketeers."

The officers gasped in amazement and D'Artagnan felt quite pleased with himself. He knew that the mission to capture Aramis and Porthos could not go ahead without a captain and he knew that they would have to return to France to appoint a new leader. In the meantime, Aramis and Porthos would have enough time to escape from Belle Isle.

But D'Artagnan had underestimated the King. A moment later, one of the officers showed D'Artagnan an order which read as follows:

*If D'Artagnan resigns his position as Captain of the Musketeers, he is to be treated as a prisoner and must be returned to France immediately with the officer who presented the order to him.*

Louis XIV

D'Artagnan's face turned pale. The officer escorted him to a small boat which had been lowered into the sea. Then, the two men set sail. In the distance, D'Artagnan could hear the sound of gunfire - the King's soldiers were attacking Belle Isle. Aramis and Porthos had no hope of escape now.







## CHAPTER 10

**“W**HAT WAS THAT?” asked Porthos, as he rushed out to join Aramis who was standing on the balcony. “Gunfire!” Aramis cried. “The soldiers are coming for us!”

“But what about D'Artagnan's plan?”

“It must have failed. Quick Porthos, we have to go to the cave immediately!”

The two men raced down the stairs of Fouquet's house and dashed out the front door. They ran along the beachfront in the direction of the Locmaria cave, where two locals, Yves and Goenne, had hidden the boat that would take them to safety.

Suddenly, Aramis heard Porthos cry out in pain. He turned around and, to his horror, saw his friend stumble and fall onto the soft sand.

“Porthos!” cried Aramis.

“I've been shot!” said Porthos. “Aramis, run for your life!”

“No!” said Aramis. “I won't leave you here!”

In the distance, the Bishop could see a group of soldiers racing towards them.

“The soldiers are chasing us!” Aramis shouted to the young men who were waiting for them.

Yves helped Aramis carry Porthos towards the cave, while Goenne pulled out his gun and started shooting at the soldiers.

“You don't have much time!” shouted Goenne.

Aramis and Yves laid Porthos on the ground and examined the bullet wound in his back.

“It's bad,” said Yves. “You won't be able to take him with you.”

Aramis's eyes filled with tears. “Oh, Porthos!” he exclaimed. “I'm so sorry! I wish I'd never involved you in all of this!”

“Aramis,” Porthos said. “You must go, you must save yourself.”

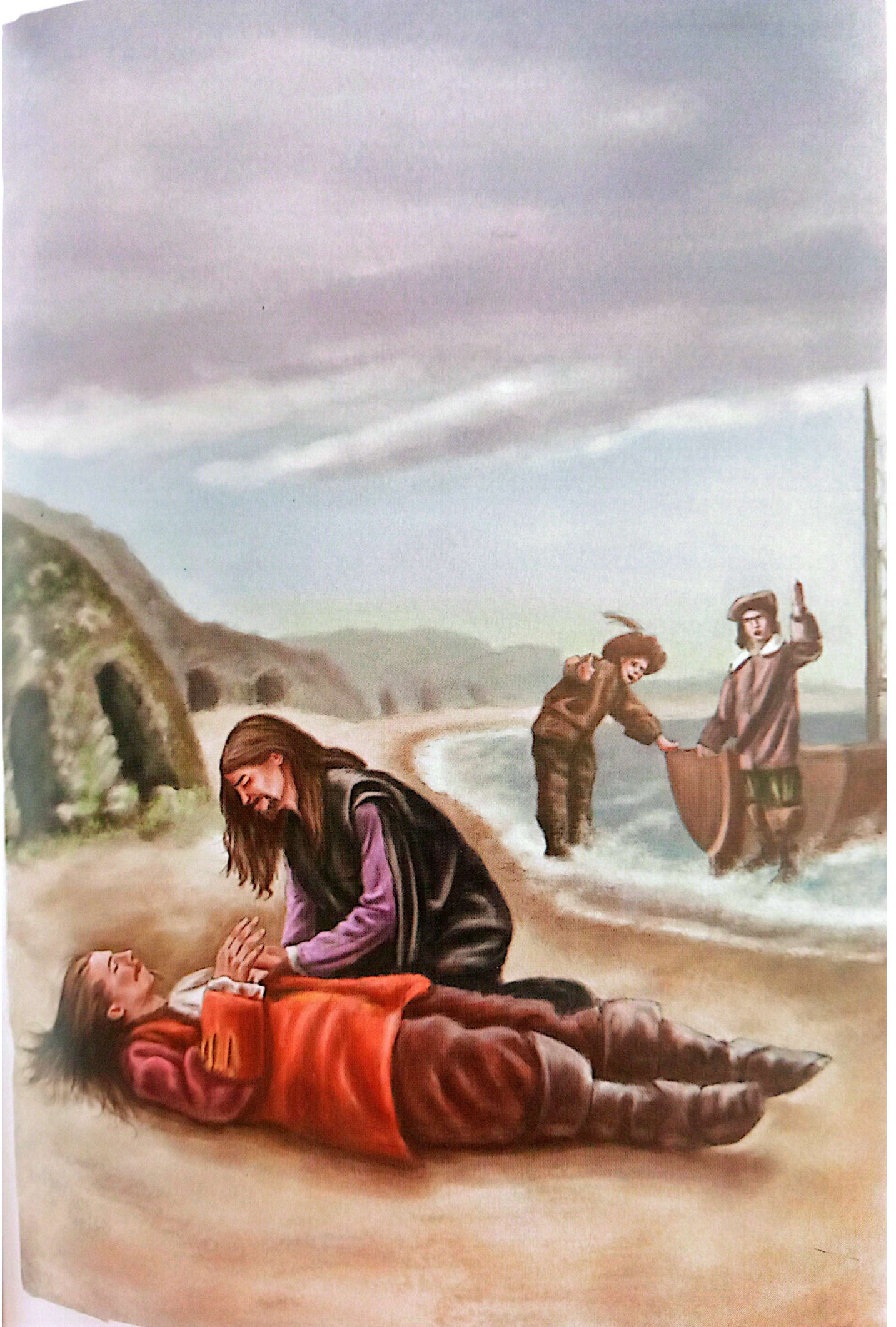
“But...”

“Go!” whispered Porthos.

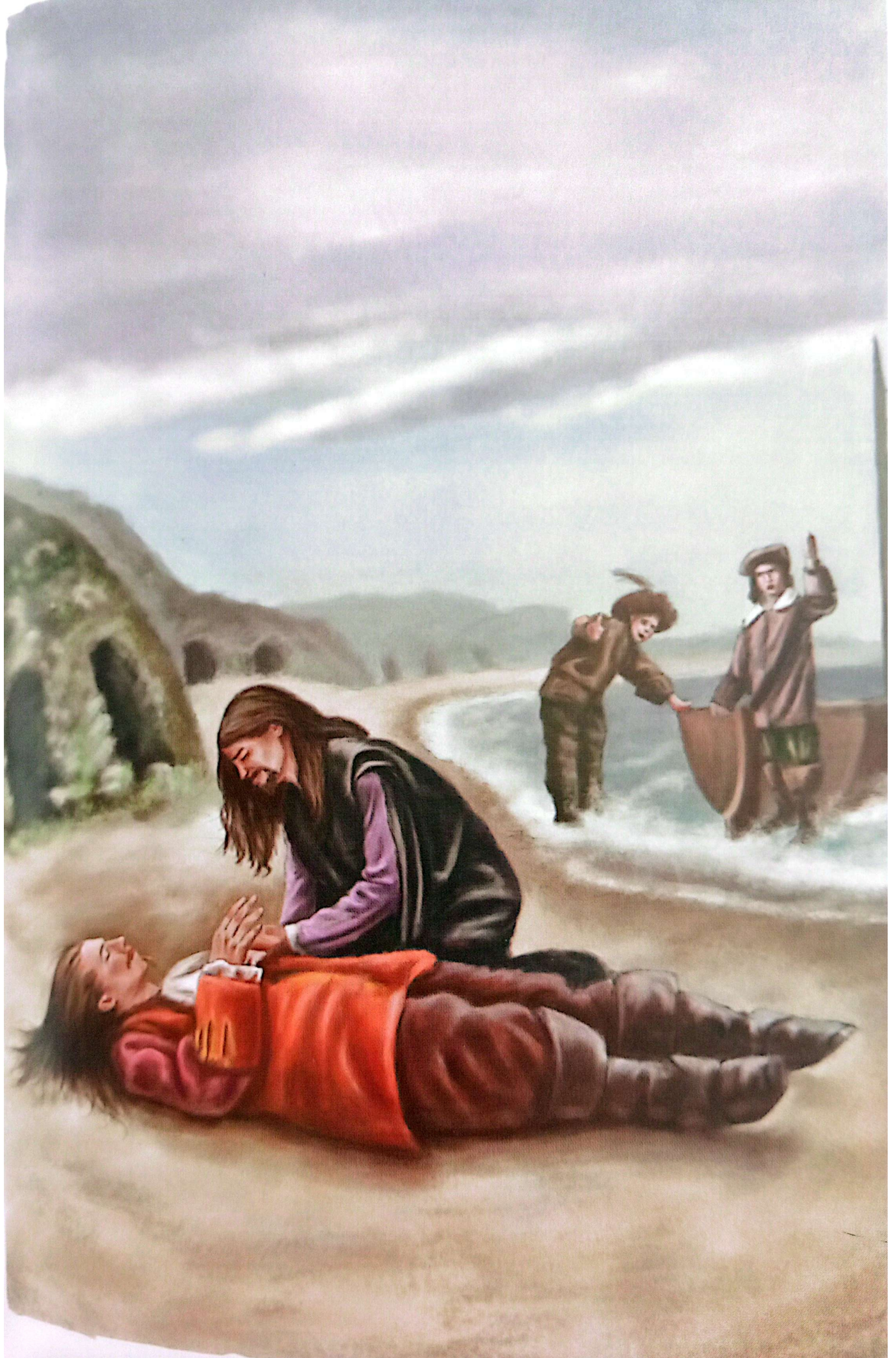
“He's right,” said Yves. “They'll shoot you too if you stay.”

Yves helped the reluctant Aramis into the boat and pushed it out to sea.

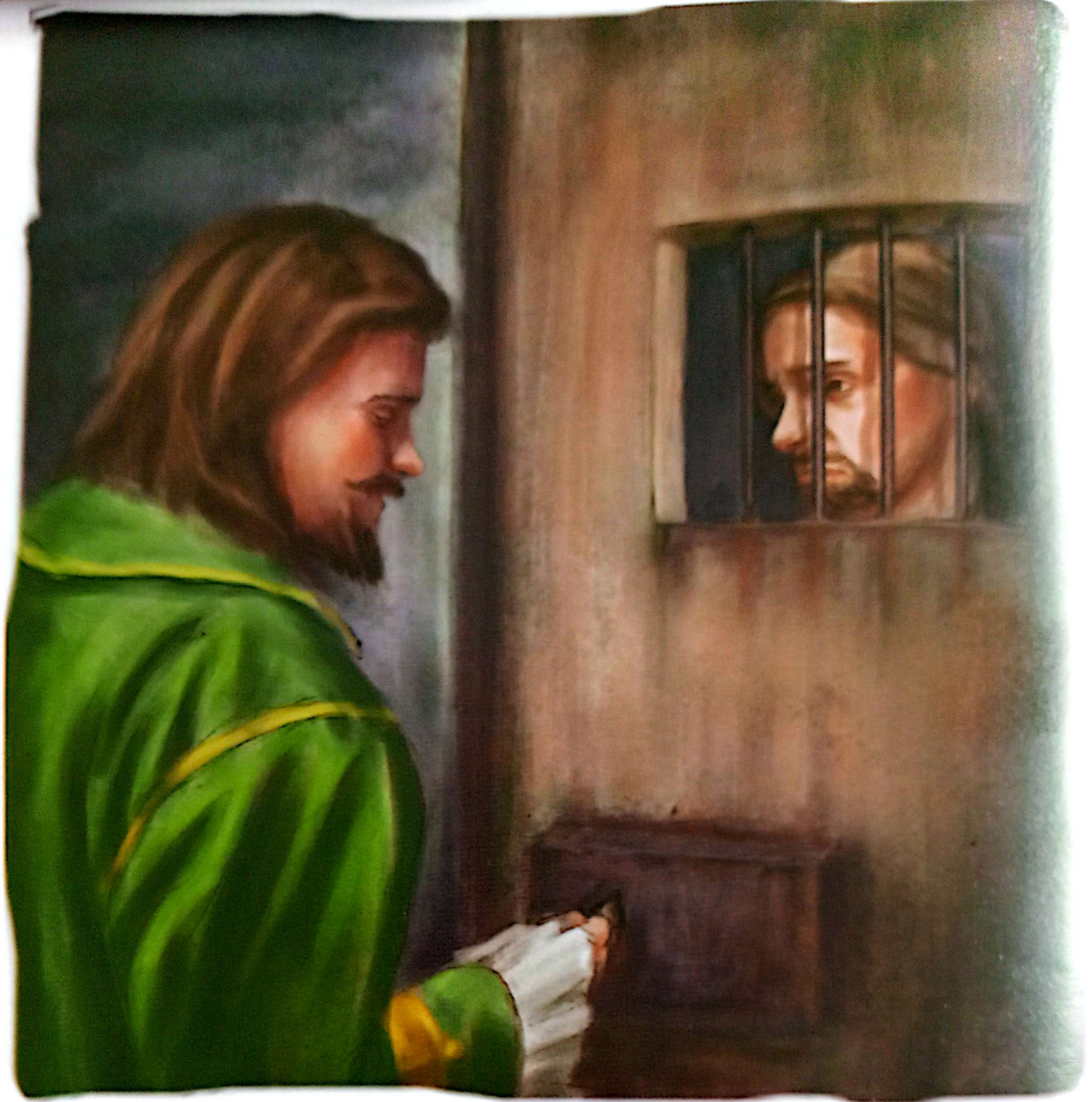












“Old friend,” he said to the Bishop as he locked him in his cell. “It pains me to do this to you.”

“It pains me even more!” said Aramis.

The Bishop sat down on a wooden chair and sighed. He deeply regretted everything that had happened and was particularly saddened by the death of Porthos. All he could do now was accept his fate with dignity.

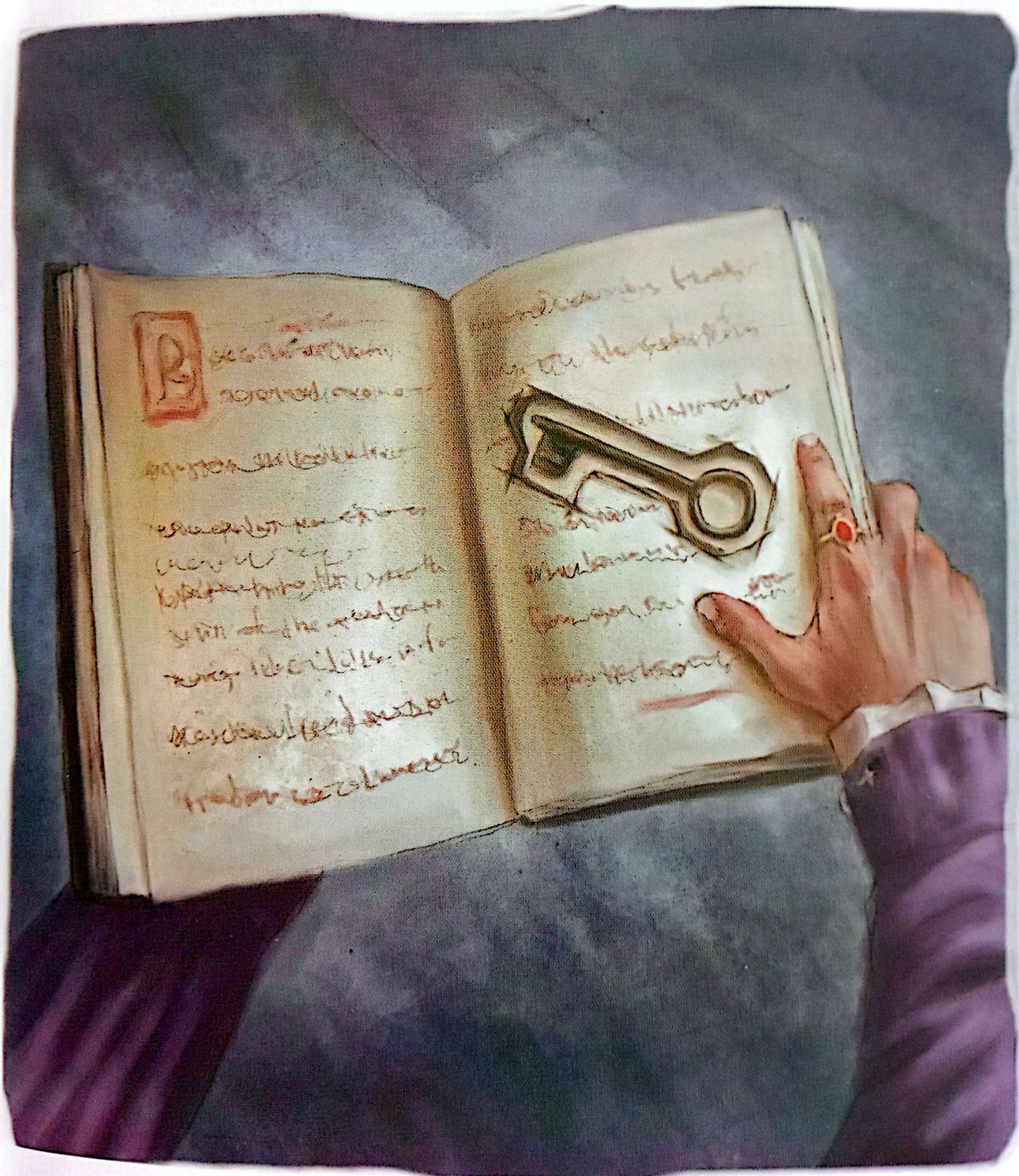
On the evening before Aramis's execution, a priest wearing a cloak which covered his face, came to the Bastille to listen to Aramis's confession. The priest's voice was rough and low, but Aramis was sure it sounded familiar. Once Aramis had confessed, the priest handed him a Bible.



"The solution to your problem is in here," said the priest.

Aramis thanked him for the Bible and the priest left in a hurry. The Bishop decided to read a few pages from the Bible before he went to sleep, so he lit a candle and settled down on the bed. When he opened the book, he gasped in surprise. There was a key inside the book - a key to his jail cell!

Aramis jumped off the bed and danced around his cell with joy. "D'Artagnan!" he whispered to himself. "I knew it was you!"





Aramis waited until he was sure the other prisoners were asleep. Then, he quietly unlocked his cell and carefully walked down the dark passageway. He was familiar with the guards' routes, so he knew that he had a few minutes to make his escape. By the time Aramis reached the courtyard, the guards outside had fallen asleep, and no one saw him climb over the gates and disappear into the surrounding forest. Moments later, Aramis saw a horse tied to a tree.

"He thought of everything!" Aramis exclaimed. He mounted the horse and found a note attached to the saddle. The note read:

*It was the right thing to do. All for one and one for all!  
Good luck, old friend!*

*D'Artagnan*

Aramis smiled and put the letter into his pocket. Then, he galloped away from the Bastille as quickly as he could. The former musketeer knew exactly where he was going: to the island of Sainte Marguerite to free the man in the iron mask; a man whose only crime was that he was the brother of the King. It was, after all, the right thing to do.

