

Chapter 15 Number 34 and 27

- As you might expect, the whole rotting in prison thing weighs heavily upon Edmond. He asks for any and every kind of change: to be thrust deeper into darkness, to be given fresh air and exercise; he asks for a cellmate, even if he's the crazy abbé. Deprived of real human contact, he talks to his jailer, despite the fact that his jailer won't talk back.
- Eventually, he turns to God, praying fervently and furiously every day, but his prayers aren't answered. He becomes obsessed with the idea that his life, so promising, was destroyed by fate.
- He begins to curse his jailer. He throws himself against the walls of his cell.
- He decides, at one point, that human hatred, not divine vengeance, must be responsible for his plight; he decides, too, that proper retribution requires a punishment crueler than death.
- His thoughts turn to suicide, and the simple thought that he could end his life, the knowledge that he retains some power over his fate, eases his pain. He decides there are two ways for him to go: hanging and starvation.
- Four years into his imprisonment, he decides to starve himself. He throws away his food each day until he becomes so weak that he cannot even summon the strength to do that.
- That evening, he hears a strange scratching, unlike the noise of vermin that he has become accustomed to. He writes it off as a hallucination.
- He hears the same noise, louder now, a few hours later. Edmond is intrigued. When the jailer comes in with his lunch, he makes sure to talk loudly, in order that he might cover up the noise – he's sure that a fellow prisoner, a fellow human being is responsible for it.
- Still, he can't be sure, at least not yet. Driven on by hope, he begins eating again, then sets about finding a way to test his hypothesis about the noise.
- He decides to knock on the wall: if the work resumes quickly thereafter, he'll know it's being done by a workman; if it ceases until the evening, he'll know it's a prisoner.
- The noise does not resume that evening, nor the next day, nor the day after that. It's only three days later that he hears even the faintest scratching.
- Encouraged, he begins to look for some tool he can use to work at the cement between the stones in the wall.
- He decides to break his water pitcher and sharpen the end of its handle into a point. He works all night, making little progress, but he's happy nonetheless.
- The next day, the jailer doesn't seem too concerned about the broken pitcher; he merely finds Edmond a new one.

RECAP: Edmond Dantes' Time in Jail

- Edmond realizes that, had he spent the last few years working like this, he could have been out, or at least been *closer* to escaping; though he's disheartened, he doesn't give up, and in three day's time he's managed to loosen a stone.
- Unfortunately, he can't seem to move the stone any further, at least not with his current tools.
- To make a long story short, he comes up with a way to get a hold of the metal handle on the tin soup pot the jailer brings every day.
- Using the handle, he's able to dig deeper, but he runs into an obstacle: a large beam in the wall.
- He cries out in despair only to hear a voice from below answer his cry.
- The two voices get to talking. Edmond introduces himself and, when asked, describes the location of his cell.
- The other voice/person is distressed. He was under the impression that he'd been digging toward an exterior wall and would soon open up a tunnel to the sea, from which he could escape.
- The voice then introduces himself as Number 27. He tells Edmond to close up his hole, conceal everything and wait for his signal.
- Edmond, afraid of never hearing from 27 again, pleads with him to return soon.
- Number 27, reassured by Edmond's youth, promises to return soon.
- After sealing up the hole, Edmond is overcome with joy.
- Number 27 calls the next day, soon after the jailer leaves Edmond's cell. They decide that the coast is clear and, like that, a man, a *whole man* emerges from the hole.

Chapter 16 An Italian Scholar

- Edmond hugs his new friend. The man is short, with thick eyebrows and a thick black beard. His clothes are in tatters. He appears to be around 65 years old.
- Before they do anything else, the man sets about cleaning up the cell.
- He picks up the stone Edmond removed and asks why it was cut so crudely; he's surprised that he doesn't have any tools. Edmond is surprised to find that the man does have tools – and what tools he has: a well-crafted file, chisel, pliers, and level.
- He's used the file, he tells Edmond, to dig fifty feet. Still, he's not encouraged by what he sees in Edmond's cell: his only window looks out over a courtyard patrolled by soldiers; he fears that all is lost.
- Edmond asks Number 27 to introduce himself.
- Abbé Faria tells him that he has been imprisoned since 1808 for plotting to unite Italy – the particulars are insanely complicated, so don't worry about them.

RECAP: Edmond Dantes' Time in Jail

- All of Faria's talk of Italy and popes and plots begins to make Edmond think that maybe the abbé is insane after all. He asks the abbé if he has really, after all this planning, abandoned the idea of escaping.
- The abbé tells Edmond that he simply can't go on – not after reaching what he thought was the end of his journey, only to find a whole new challenge.
- Seeing that the abbé had put his heart into his escape attempt, Edmond is inspired: if this man, he thinks, could devote himself to such a task, surely I could too.
- Edmond has an idea. Why don't they dig another tunnel leading under the path in the courtyard, kill the guard, and escape from there?
- The abbé reminds him that such an act would make him guilty of a crime, whereas now he is innocent; Edmond can't argue with this reasoning. Why else hadn't he simply killed his jailer? They must be more patient, he continues, if they want to succeed.
- Edmond asks the abbé how he could have waited so long and so patiently. "I wrote or I studied," he tells Edmond (16.85). Edmond is amazed. Where, he wonders, could you have gotten pens, paper, and ink?
- The abbé tells him that he's made them, and he promises to show them – along with his *Treatise on the Prospects for a General Monarchy in Italy* – to Edmond when they visit the abbé's cell.
- The abbé goes on to tell him that he once owned thousands of books, that he speaks five living languages, and that he is teaching himself modern Greek using his knowledge of Ancient Greek.
- Edmond is eager to see the abbé's work as soon as possible and, so, they leave immediately for his cell.

Chapter 17 The Abbé's Cell

- You can think of this chapter as a sort of twisted, nineteenth-century take on MTV Cribs; this is Abbé Faria's chance to shine, to show off all the cool stuff he's made since he got thrown in prison. Such cool stuff includes:
 - An extremely accurate sundial drawn on the wall.
 - In one secret compartment:
 - His masterwork (*Treatise on the Prospects...*)
 - The pens he used to write his work.
 - His penknife. (Yes, penknives were actually once used to sharpen the ends of pens.)
 - His ink.
 - His lamp, which is fueled by the fat from the meat he is given to eat every day.
 - His flint, which he uses to light the lamp.

RECAP: Edmond Dantes' Time in Jail

- Once Edmond has seen all this, the abbé opens up another secret compartment containing:
- 25-30 feet of rope ladder, made from bedsheets.
- A sewing needle.
- Edmond is amazed by all of this; he becomes aware of the depths of his ignorance.
- Before he learns anything, however, he wants to tell Faria his life story.
- He gets right to the point and starts discussing the circumstances of his arrest almost immediately.
- Faria, like Villefort before him, quickly concludes that there is only one explanation for his imprisonment: someone was jealous of Edmond and sought to ruin him. "If you wish to find the guilty party," he says, "first discover whose interests the crime serves! Whose interests might be served by your disappearance?" (17.57).
- Edmond can come up with no answers, and so Faria interrogates him. After much questioning, Dantès finally sees the light: Danglars and Fernand were behind it! One wanted his job, the other his lover.
- Still, Edmond can't understand why the crown prosecutor, who seemed so kind, didn't help him. As it happens, Faria remembers the name Noirtier and, despite knowing little more than Edmond, can make the connection: Noirtier, the former revolutionary, was Villefort's father; Villefort destroyed the letter to protect himself.
- We already know all this, but it's news to Edmond. He runs back to his cell and laments his terrible fate.
- After the jailer makes his dinner rounds, Faria comes back and invites Edmond to dinner. Being mad – and entertainingly mad at that – Faria receives some special treatment, including wine for Sunday dinner, so he and Edmond make a good time of their meal.
- Faria apologizes to Edmond: he realizes that he's probably planted the desire for revenge in his heart. Edmond only smiles ominously in return and asks him to change the subject.
- And so Faria talks on and on about all sorts of interesting stuff.
- When Edmond asks him if he could teach him some of what he knows, the abbé tells him he could learn it all in only two years' time.
- Faria draws up a syllabus that night. Edmond's education begins the next day, and he proves to be a quick study. He no longer talks of escape, and in a year he finds himself greatly changed.
- The abbé, however, is plagued with bouts of depression.
- At one point, the abbé admits that he has become obsessed with the thought of escaping. Edmond proposes, again, that they could kill the guard and escape, but he'll have nothing of it.

RECAP: Edmond Dantes' Time in Jail

- A few months pass.
- The abbé asks Edmond if he's ready to go forward with the escape plan, provided that they only kill the sentry as a last resort. Edmond says yes.
- The abbé takes out a detailed drawing of his escape plans; Edmond is overjoyed.
- They spend more than a year working tirelessly on their plan; in fifteen months it's completed. In that time, Edmond learns to adopt the abbé's aristocratic bearing and manners.
- One night, he hears the abbé cry out. He finds him standing in the middle of his – Edmond's – cell, pale and scared.
- Faria tells Edmond that he is about to have a seizure, and that, in order to save him, he must run and get a bottle of red liquid from one of the secret compartments. When Edmond comes back with the bottle, Faria tells him that, once he goes into a fit and then seems to relax, he – Edmond – must pour eight to ten drops in his mouth.
- Edmond does as he's told, and over an hour later the abbé shows signs of life.
- Once he recovers, Faria tells Edmond that he must undertake the escape alone, as he will have another, much stronger fit soon, a fit that will almost certainly kill him. He has been told as much by the doctor who originally treated him and concocted the potion.
- Edmond tells him that he simply will not try to escape without the abbé. As such, Faria tells him he must cover up the passage they've carved as best he can. Edmond sets to work immediately.

Chapter 18 The Treasure

- The next day, Edmond returns to Faria's cell. He finds the abbé sitting up in bed, clutching a piece of paper.
- The paper, he tells Edmond, is his treasure, and his treasure is now to be split with Edmond.
- Edmond is still a little skeptical of Faria's claim – he thinks, maybe, that the sickness has driven him closer to madness.
- Faria allows Edmond to read the paper, which represents half of a note
- Edmond doesn't know what to make of this, and their discussion is interrupted by the arrival of the jailer. Edmond is a little weirded out by the whole thing, so he puts off visiting Faria.
- Faria apparently can't wait, as he climbs through the tunnel; he has a story to tell Edmond, a story that he learned from his former patron, Cardinal Spada.
- The particulars of the story aren't so important. Let it suffice to say that, a few centuries earlier, an ancestor of Spada was invited to dine with Cesare Borgia, the son of Pope Alexander VI; Spada died under mysterious circumstances; the Pope and Cesare set

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about looking for Spada's large inheritance, but could find nothing. From then on the Spada family lived relatively modestly – no sign of their great fortune appeared. After Faria's patron died, Faria got to looking through his papers. Just about a month before he was arrested in 1807, something big happened. While lighting a candle with a stray piece of paper, Faria realized that it contained a very important message written in...wait for it...invisible ink.

- To make a long story short, he now had his hands on some valuable fragments of paper
- Edmond is blown away. He can't believe Faria was able to figure all of this out.
- Faria explains that he was arrested before he could get the treasure. If we get out of prison, he tells Edmond, half of it is yours, and if I should die, you can take it all.
- Edmond asks if there's someone else out there who deserves the treasure more. Faria assures him there's not. The only reason I kept the secret from you so long, says Faria, was to test you and to surprise you.
- Edmond, still incredulous, tries to reject Faria's offer; he's not his son, and so he doesn't feel he should be his heir.
- Faria tells him that he's wrong, that he *is* like a son to him. Overcome, Edmond lays his head on Faria's chest and begins to weep.

Chapter 19 The Third Seizure

- As it turns out, Edmond already knows the isle of Monte Cristo from his sailor days.
- Faria talks constantly about the treasure, and forces Edmond to memorize the entire letter.
- Times passes.
- One night, he hears a cry come from Faria's cell. Edmond heads over and finds Faria in the throes of his third seizure. The abbé tells Edmond that there's nothing he can do, but Edmond tries to revive him with the red potion nonetheless.
- He fails. The abbé's last words are: "Monte Cristo! Do not forget Monte Cristo!" (19.35).
- Soon enough, the jailer discovers Faria's body. Since he's a churchman, they decide that he deserves to be buried in a sack. Before they can get to burying him, the governor insists they make sure he's dead by poking him with a hot iron.
- He's definitely dead.
- The governor and jailers leave Faria in the cell, covered in the sack; they will bury him in the morning.