

**EXT. PARIS. TOWN SQUARE. DAY**

ATHOS and ARAMIS, with other MUSKETEERS and RED GUARDS clear a path through a bustling CROWD. Excitement is in the air.

CONSTANCE is amongst the CROWD, accompanied by FLEUR BAUDIN and her friend THERESE DUBOIS.

ARAMIS

Stand back.

They jostle for a good position to see whatever is coming next.

THERESE

Please, let me through!

Meanwhile FATHER LUCA SESTINI leads his horse away from the CROWD, unknown that he is being followed by three THIEVES.

**EXT. PARIS. STREET. DAY**

SESTINI pauses to tie up his horse and rest, then starts to take down his luggage from the saddle.

Seeing their opportunity the THREE THIEVES push him roughly aside and try to grab the bags from him.

SESTINI

Help! Please help! Help!

He turns and calls into the CROWD.

SESTINI (cont'd)

Thieves! Thieves!

ATHOS and ARAMIS hear his cries as they ride through the CROWD. They glance at each other and nod.

ATHOS

Make way!!

They push their way through the CROWD, climb down off their horses and launch into a sword fight with the THIEVES.

**EXT. PARIS. STREET. DAY**

The Royal Carriage continues on its journey through the cheering CROWD with TREVILLE and PORTHOS at the head.

(CONTINUED)

**CONTINUED:**

The CROWD cheer from either side of the street as the carriage hurries through.

MAN  
God bless you, Your Majesty!

**EXT. PARIS. STREET. DAY**

The sword fight between ARAMIS, ATHOS and the three THIEVES continues, even SESTINI has drawn his dagger and fights.

One of the THIEVES picks up one of SESTINI's bags and starts to run off with it.

SESTINI  
My bag! My bag!

ATHOS and ARAMIS turn and run after him, but the THIEF disappears around the corner.

SESTINI (cont'd)  
Let it go!

**EXT. ROYAL CARRIAGE. DAY**

LOUIS waves to the cheering CROWD as the coach passes by.

**EXT. PARIS. TOWN SQUARE. DAY**

As the carriage rolls into the square, the CROWD cheer and wave.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
God bless Your Majesty!

CONSTANCE and FLEUR smile and wave.

FLEUR (O.S.)  
Here they come!

THERESE, however, looks on with concern as she reaches for something hidden in the pocket of her dress. She looks strained and anxious.

The Royal Carriage makes its way through the square, ANNE smiles out at the cheering CROWD.

THERESE reaches deep into her pocket, then closes her eyes and runs forward towards the oncoming coach.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

FLEUR turns to CONSTANCE.

FLEUR  
What's she doing?

THERESE rushes up to the coach and manages to jump on to the side step and look in through the open window.

THERESE  
Your Majesty...

ANNE, LOUIS and The CARDINAL look shocked as THERESE falls backwards and the coach thumps as it rolls over her.

THERESE's body rolls out under the coach as CONSTANCE and FLEUR watch in horror. There is screaming from the CROWD, the Royal Procession comes to a halt.

CONSTANCE (O.S.)  
Therese!

But THERESE lies in a crumpled heap on the ground.

TREVILLE and D'ARTAGNAN at the head of the procession, turn on their horses and gallop over.

CONSTANCE tries to push her way through the CROWD.

CONSTANCE  
Therese?

QUEEN ANNE opens the carriage door, but TREVILLE urges her back inside.

TREVILLE  
Stay there your Majesty, it's not safe. Ride on now, go!

The carriage rattles on, with ANNE staring back in shock.

CONSTANCE tries to get through the shocked CROWD.

CONSTANCE (O.S.)  
Please let me through!

TREVILLE, D'ARTAGNAN and PORTHOS are first to the scene. PORTHOS turns THERESE over.

CONSTANCE (O.S.) (cont'd)  
Let me through please!

TREVILLE  
Was she armed?

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

CONSTANCE and FLEUR have made their way through to the front of the CROWD but a RED GUARD bars their way.

PORTHOS sees a small rolled document in THERESE's hand.

PORTHOS  
Only with this.

CONSTANCE pleads with the RED GUARD.

CONSTANCE  
Let us through, I know her!

TREVILLE nods to the GUARD and CONSTANCE falls to her knees at THERESE's side.

TREVILLE  
What's her name?

CONSTANCE  
Therese Dubois.

In the background FLEUR stands on the edge of the CROWD staring at the scene in shock.

D'ARTAGNAN looks at her with concern.

D'ARTAGNAN  
What was she doing?

CONSTANCE looks at him in shock and shrugs.

CONSTANCE  
I don't know ...

Then turns and looks at the mud-spattered document now opened in PORTHOS hands.

GUARD 1  
Back!

FLEUR turns and hurries away from the CROWD.

CONSTANCE tries to make sense of the document.

CONSTANCE  
Fleur, what does this mean?

She looks up but suddenly realise FLEUR has vanished into the milling CROWD. She leaps to her feet.

CONSTANCE (cont'd)  
Fleur?

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

GUARD 1  
All of you back!

GUARD 2  
Move back! Move back!

CONSTANCE  
Fleur! Fleur?

But she is nowhere to be seen.

TITLES

**EXT. NINON'S HOUSE. DAY**

Establishing shot.

**INT. NINON'S SALON. DAY**

COMTESSE NINON DE LARROQUE stands holding court amongst a ring of attentive YOUNG WOMEN. She lights up the room with her energy and passion.

NINON  
This is an age of glorious discovery. Galileo observes the moons of Jupiter. Jupiter, ladies! And for the first time in the history of mankind we understand the motions of the celestial bodies as well as of our own; the pump of the heart, the circular flush of the blood.

The YOUNG WOMEN sit in awe of her.

NINON (cont'd)  
But what is the role of women in this age of wonder? Your menfolk will tell you that an education is a danger to your fragile mind.

She smiles knowingly, provoking laughter.

NINON (cont'd)  
My Women of Paris, seek your own enlightenment. God gave you life, not man. It is your Christian duty to live this life to its fullest.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

A SERVANT comes in and whispers in NINON's ear. She turns pale as she listens.

                                LOUIS (V.O.)  
Was it an attempt ...

**INT. LOUVRE PALACE. GRAND LIBRARY. DAY**

LOUIS looks anxiously at the CARDINAL. QUEEN ANNE and TREVILLE are also in attendance, with SERVANTS and COURTIERS.

                                LOUIS  
... on my life?

                                TREVILLE  
The young woman merely wanted to present this petition to the Queen.

                                ANNE  
To me? Why?

                                TREVILLE  
She was an orphan from a humble background. It has something to do with a plea for women's education.

TREVILLE hands the muddy document to ANNE but the CARDINAL intercepts and scans it quickly.

                                CARDINAL  
If she was an illiterate orphan she could not have written this. It is misguided but not unintelligent.

                                ANNE  
You don't favour women's education?

                                CARDINAL  
I admire learning wherever it is to be found. But this amounts to an attack on the authority of Church and state.

The doors suddenly burst open and NINON marches in, trailed by anxious GUARDS.

                                NINON  
Stay out of my way. I will address the King!

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

LOUIS  
Comtesse de Larroque. To what do I  
owe the honour?

NINON  
Your Majesty.

She curtsies.

NINON (cont'd)  
I want to know why this tragedy  
happened.

CARDINAL  
You knew this lunatic?

She looks at him with transparent distaste.

NINON  
She was as sane as you or me. Well  
me, anyway. She was the daughter of  
a servant of mine. She had wits and  
ability. I decided to give her an  
education.

The CARDINAL looks shocked.

LOUIS  
A servant girl? An education?  
Sorry, I don't follow.

CARDINAL  
It seems you educated her too well.  
She wrote this and then was killed  
trying to give it to the Queen.

NINON  
She didn't write it, I did!

She looks at him with disdain.

TREVILLE  
Did you tell this young girl to  
give her petition to the Queen?

NINON  
I merely told her that the Queen is  
a woman of wisdom and kindness who  
might sympathise with our cause.

ANNE  
I shall read it.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

NINON nods to ANNE.

LOUIS smiles flirtatiously at NINON.

LOUIS  
Walk with me in the garden, Ninon.  
I've often found your company so  
stimulating.

NINON  
Another time, Your Majesty. I am  
too distressed at present.

NINON bows briefly and walks out. LOUIS looks perplexed.

LOUIS  
Did she just refuse my company?

ANNE  
I believe she did, Sire.

LOUIS  
Is that allowed?

CARDINAL  
Apparently the Comtesse de Larroque  
believes herself above the normal  
laws and conventions of society.

**INT. LOUVRE PALACE. SALA TERRENA. DAY**

Through the open doors The CARDINAL can be seen walking with MILADY.

CARDINAL  
The treasury is bankrupt and the  
country needs a new navy. Ninon has  
the wealth to provide it. Does she  
trust you?

MILADY  
She knows me only as the wealthy  
widow Madame de la Chapelle. I am  
famous for my good works.

CARDINAL  
Your job is to find something I can  
use against her. These girls she  
encourages. Is her interest in them  
... healthy?

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

MILADY

How like a man to think of that. I have no evidence to suggest otherwise.

CARDINAL

Then find some! Ninon must pay up or face destruction. I want every last penny from her!

He turns and walks off.

**EXT. BONACIEUX HOUSE. DAY**

Establishing shot.

CONSTANCE (V.O.)

I can't bear the thought of Fleur alone ...

**INT. BONACIEUX HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY**

D'ARTAGNAN and PORTHOS with the frantic CONSTANCE.

CONSTANCE

... lost in Paris.

D'ARTAGNAN

We'll find her. I promise.

CONSTANCE

Oh, what am I going to tell her father? He's my husband's cousin.

They all sit.

PORTHOS

How long have you known her friend Therese?

CONSTANCE

A month or so. There is one thing that might help. Comtesse de Larroque had taken an interest in her. She was teaching her to read and write.

D'ARTAGNAN

Many enlightened nobles show kindness to their servants.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

CONSTANCE

This was more than that. Therese knew Greek and Latin and had even studied the stars. Fleur attended some of her lessons too. They ... went in secret.

**INT. LOUVRE PALACE. GREAT HALL. DAY**

LOUIS, ANNE, TREVILLE, ATHOS and ARAMIS in attendance as the CARDINAL greets the Vatican emissary SESTINI.

CARDINAL

Luca, I'm delighted to see you. Why didn't Rome inform us you were coming?

SESTINI

It is an informal visit, Your Eminence.

The CARDINAL takes SESTINI over to LOUIS.

CARDINAL

Your Majesty, Father Luca Sestini.

SESTINI bows.

CARDINAL (cont'd)

Luca and I are old friends. We were at the seminary together.

LOUIS

Sestini? Aren't you that Jesuit priest who wrote that terrible pamphlet? What did it say?

The CARDINAL smiles, watching SESTINI for his reaction.

CARDINAL

Well if I remember correctly, it was an argument for the Pope's absolute authority over national rulers in all matters both spiritual and temporal. Any leader who defied him could be legally overthrown and even killed, with the Papal blessing.

SESTINI looks embarrassed.

LOUIS walks over to him.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

LOUIS

That's the one. It's just as well my people can't read, or they might get ideas.

SESTINI

My apologies for any offence.

LOUIS

I trust your time in Paris will be pleasant, however brief it may be.

LOUIS turns to go, but TREVILLE intervenes.

TREVILLE

Your Majesty, a young woman - Fleur Baudin - has gone missing, a friend of the girl who died this morning. We have reason to believe the Comtesse de Larroque may know something of her whereabouts.

ANNE

What makes you say so?

TREVILLE

She regularly attended the Comtesse's Salon and seems enthralled by her.

CARDINAL

That's very, very shocking. We can't have the Comtesse abducting young women and spiriting them away to her boudoir.

ANNE

Whatever are you implying, Cardinal?

CARDINAL

There have been ugly rumours, Your Majesty. It's all scurrilous nonsense I'm sure.

SESTINI looks intrigued.

LOUIS

And Ninon is so very pretty, I could listen to her nonsense all day.

He turns to TREVILLE.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

LOUIS (cont'd)  
Handle the matter discreetly. The Comtesse is from a very distinguished family. I don't want her upset unduly.

CARDINAL  
You are too generous, Your Majesty.

LOUIS  
Yes, I know. It is a weakness.

**INT. NINON'S SALON. DAY**

A SERVANT leads ATHOS, ARAMIS, PORTHOS and D'ARTAGNAN through.

A group of WOMEN are dotted around the room reading, painting, talking and writing.

ATHOS  
Does anyone here know the whereabouts of Mademoiselle Fleur Baudin?

The WOMEN stare back at him, wide-eyed. Reading in a corner is MILADY, surprised to see ATHOS and swiftly retreats behind a pillar by the book shelves.

NINON (O.S.)  
If you have questions, Monsieur, address them to me.

NINON enters.

ATHOS  
Comtesse de Larroque. I am here on behalf of the King. My name is -

NINON  
I know who you are. I've often seen you at Court and thought how handsome you are.

MILADY peers out from behind the pillar and listens.

NINON (cont'd)  
There is a melancholy aspect to your looks that I find intriguing. But it's probably only mental vacancy.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

PORTHOS smiles smugly.

ATHOS

I hope not. Forgive our intrusion -

NINON

I will not forgive it. This is a place of scholarship where women can enjoy each other's company without the crude attentions of men. What is it that you want?

ATHOS

Hmm, ah, we are looking for Fleur Baudin. She has run away from her family and they are anxious.

NINON

Anxious to marry her into a life of domestic slavery, no doubt? She's not here. You can go now.

ATHOS smiles calmly. PORTHOS notices NINON's brooch - A gold bird in flight.

PORTHOS

Your brooch. What does it mean?

NINON

It is a wren. A bird that cannot be caged. A symbol of hope and freedom.

ARAMIS

A symbol of your own dreams and ambitions, I would imagine?

NINON

Ah, we have a romantic in our midst.

The WOMEN giggle.

ARAMIS

I accept the description.

NINON

Your charm won't work here. We are quite immune.

**(CONTINUED)**

CONTINUED:

ATHOS

We're not here to discuss your beliefs, we're looking for Fleur Baudin.

NINON

And I have already told you she's not here.

ATHOS

Then you won't mind if we search your house?

NINON

On the contrary. I mind very much.

ATHOS

I could insist.

NINON

Or you could take my word. Am I right? Is there an inner sadness that informs the beauty of your features? Answer me honestly and I shall allow you to search my house.

ATHOS

We all have our deep secrets and hidden emotions, Comtesse. Allow me to keep mine to myself.

NINON

A barely adequate answer, but I have been feeling indulgent. Follow me.

NINON leaves, followed by ATHOS.

CARDINAL (V.O.)

Why are you really here?

**INT. LOUVRE PALACE. CARDINAL'S OFFICE. DAY**

The CARDINAL offers SESTINI a glass of wine, which he politely declines. The CARDINAL pours himself one and sits while SESTINI pours himself a glass of water.

CARDINAL

Pope Urban does not send his envoys without good reason.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SESTINI

His Holiness is concerned about the direction of French foreign policy.

CARDINAL

Well the Pope is Spain's performing monkey. I speak with the greatest of respect for his Holy office, of course.

SESTINI

Of course. Need I remind you, that you are a Cardinal, one of the highest officers within the Catholic church?

CARDINAL

I'm also First Minister of France. In matters of religion I defer to Rome, in all else I am my country's servant.

SESTINI

France's alliance with Sweden is both unnatural and undesirable.

CARDINAL

Now we come to it.

SESTINI

Protestants are the enemies of the true faith.

CARDINAL

Sweden is an important strategic ally. The treaty is indispensable.

SESTINI

There are those who fear for King Louis's immortal soul if it is ratified.

CARDINAL

Oh that's so Mediaeval -

SESTINI

Mediaeval? You think to have faith is Mediaeval?

CARDINAL

We're not in the Seminary now Luca. This is not the time or the place  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

**CONTINUED:**

CARDINAL (cont'd)  
for sophistry. Tell the Pope that  
France will not break with Sweden.

SESTINI  
Is that your final word on the  
subject?

CARDINAL  
It is.

SESTINI  
Well, now that our business is  
concluded I have gifts for you,  
from the Holy Father. He has always  
been fond of you.

CARDINAL  
He hates me. But let it pass.

SESTINI reaches into his saddlebags, emerging with a small  
package in a wooden box.

SESTINI  
The knee bone of St Anthony of  
Padua. One of Rome's most precious  
relics.

The CARDINAL looks inside the box at the dirty looking piece  
of bone and fossilised gristle. Then looks back up at  
SESTINI who merely smiles.

SESTINI (cont'd)  
I had other gifts for you but sadly  
they were stolen on my arrival.

CARDINAL  
Now, if you'll excuse me I -

SESTINI sits back down.

SESTINI  
There is just one other small  
thing.

**INT. NINON'S SALON. PRIVATE CHAMBER. DAY**

ATHOS follows NINON in.

NINON  
There. You have searched every room  
in my house.

**(CONTINUED)**

CONTINUED:

ATHOS

I would have taken your word. It was you who insisted on the search.

NINON

Fleur Baudin is not here. I don't know where she is. Do you know how many husbands, fathers, lovers, brothers come here looking for their 'lost' girls? It can never be that these women choose to leave of their own free will. It must always be that: 'Ninon de Larroque has corrupted them.'

ATHOS

Therese and Fleur were far below you in status. They were not in a position to make decisions of their own freewill.

NINON

I view all women as equals, no matter what the circumstances of their birth.

ATHOS

You have the money and position to indulge such whims. Look outside your window and tell me everyone is equal.

NINON

You accuse me of hypocrisy?

ATHOS only smiles.

ATHOS

Thank you for your help.

NINON

May I see you again?

ATHOS

Why?

She steps forward and kisses him, softly at first then more passionately. He responds. She breaks away and looks at him.

NINON

That's why. Come back this evening and dine with me.

**INT. LOUVRE PALACE. CARDINAL'S OFFICE. DAY**

The CARDINAL and SESTINI sit across from each other.

SESTINI

The Holy Father has been ill. Thoughts naturally turn to the succession. There are many, who consider you the outstanding candidate.

The CARDINAL stares at him, taken by surprise.

SESTINI (cont'd)

You must choose what to do next. This woman, the Comtesse de Larroque. Deal with her firmly. The Church likes it when heresy is rooted out.

CARDINAL

I am deeply humbled. I will consider my options.

SESTINI stands.

SESTINI

Perhaps you can pray to Saint Anthony for guidance.

He turns and exits.

**INT. NINON'S SALON. PRIVATE CHAMBER. NIGHT**

MILADY ties a pretty diamond choker around NINON's neck.

MILADY

I'm sure his face was a picture when you kissed him.

NINON

Why shouldn't I make the first approach to a man I desire?

MILADY blushes with a convincing facsimile of shock.

MILADY

I could never be so bold.

NINON

You'd be amazed at what can happen when a woman takes the initiative.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

MILADY  
I'm sure I would.

NINON smiles. MILADY looks at her.

MILADY (cont'd)  
Be careful. I know this man. He  
will seek to trap you and still  
your voice.

NINON  
You know him? How?

MILADY  
It's only a passing acquaintance.  
Between ourselves; Fleur Baudin is  
she here?

NINON smiles in a teasing way. MILADY stares at her; her  
smile fading into a private look of contempt.

**EXT. NINON'S HOUSE. NIGHT**

Establishing shot.

**INT. NINON'S SALON. NIGHT**

ATHOS admires the hundreds of books on display on the book  
shelves. NINON walks over.

NINON  
Don't look so worried. I won't kiss  
you again if you don't desire it.

ATHOS  
I am better prepared to fight you  
off this time.

NINON  
Shall we dine?

ATHOS  
There's something I need to show  
you first.

**INT. MORGUE. NIGHT**

ATHOS pulls back a blanket revealing the naked body of  
THERESE. NINON looks shocked. Tears spring to her eyes.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

NINON

Why are you showing me this?

ATHOS

Don't you feel responsible?

NINON

I gave her an education, clothing and food. Is that a crime?

ATHOS

It is if you encouraged the reckless act that cost her life.

NINON

I did no such thing. I was so fond of her. I feel pity and sorrow but not guilt.

ATHOS

I didn't mean to upset you.

NINON

Yes, you did.

NINON inspects THERESE's body sadly.

NINON (cont'd)

This is the way we all must end, our foolish hearts stopped, souls utterly departed. She was too young.

She looks back at Poupart.

NINON (cont'd)

Please, cover her face.

POUPART pulls the sheet back over THERESE's face.

ATHOS notices something at the other side of the room and walks over to another body lying on a slab.

SESTINI's bag has been placed by the body.

NINON (cont'd)

Do you know him?

ATHOS

A thief. He escaped from me this morning. How did he die?

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

POUPART

No idea. I've had a dozen fresh cadavers already. He'll have to wait his turn.

ATHOS smiles, then indicates the Vatican bag.

ATHOS

Look after this bag. I'll send for it in the morning.

He and NINON exit.

**EXT. PARIS. STREET. NIGHT**

NINON and ATHOS walk together.

ATHOS

May I ask, do you dislike men?

NINON

I have had many suitors, some really quite acceptable. But I believe marriage to be a curse. I will not submit to it.

ATHOS

As it happens I agree. But why?

NINON

I am a wealthy woman, but on my wedding day everything that I own becomes the property of my husband. Including my body. I will not be owned by anyone.

ATHOS

So what they say is true. You are a rebellious woman.

NINON

Does that frighten you?

ATHOS

No. But I was married once and now I'm done with romance.

NINON

It ended badly?

ATHOS

You could say that.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

NINON  
I am sorry for it. I want equality  
between the sexes, not hate.

They turn at the sound of shouting and a RED GUARD propelled head first into the street from NINON's house. ARAMIS stands in the doorway, then turns to look over at ATHOS.

ARAMIS  
Get out! Trouble.

ATHOS looks down at NINON.

ATHOS  
These are the Cardinal's men - I  
knew nothing of this.

He runs over to the house.

**INT. NINON'S SALON. NIGHT**

A RED GUARD rushes at ARAMIS, but ARAMIS grabs him and throws him aside.

More RED GUARDS tear down bookshelves and paintings. They smash a telescope. The WOMEN of the salon scream as they try to stop them but they are roughly shoved aside.

ATHOS enters, NINON runs in behind him, they both take in the scene, both surprised.

The WOMEN cower in the corner as the RED GUARDS ransack the room.

RED GUARDS tear up and throw books from the balcony above.

NINON  
My books, stop! No!

ATHOS  
Stay back!

One of the RED GUARDS cowers from ARAMIS' blows whilst another drags a WOMAN out by her hair.

ATHOS stands in his way.

ATHOS (cont'd)  
Where is your authority for this?

RED GUARD gives him a sneering look and ATHOS grabs him.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

NINON helps her WOMEN run for cover, whilst ARAMIS and ATHOS fight against the remaining RED GUARDS.

A RED GUARD heads for ARAMIS.

ATHOS (cont'd)

Aramis!

He throws ARAMIS a book, ARAMIS catches it and uses it as a shield against the RED GUARD's sword, trapping the blade inside the book and knocking the RED GUARD backwards.

ATHOS and ARAMIS fight back to back with extraordinary dexterity and skill.

ARAMIS then uses the book to crack the man over the head, then turns and uses it as a weapon against another.

Suddenly, four YOUNG WOMEN are dragged out in their nightwear, FLEUR is amongst them.

RED GUARD

We found them sleeping in a hidden chamber.

The fight dies and silence settles over the salon but for the screaming of the girls.

The RED GUARD turns to NINON.

RED GUARD (cont'd)

Comtesse de Larroque, on the orders of the Cardinal you are under arrest for the abduction of Fleur Baudin and others.

ATHOS

You said she wasn't here.

NINON

She begged me not to tell anyone!

The RED GUARDS drag her and the YOUNG GIRLS out.

NINON (cont'd)

Please, make them stop.

ATHOS

I'm sorry. I can't.

INT. LOUVRE PALACE. PICTURE GALLERY. DAY

LOUIS, ANNE, TREVILLE, the CARDINAL and SESTINI are present.

CARDINAL

Four young women, in their nightwear. We can only speculate as to the horrors they have endured.

TREVILLE

The girls claim they were not coerced.

CARDINAL

Then why lock them in a secret chamber?

ANNE looks at him with freezing distaste.

ANNE

What will happen to these poor children?

CARDINAL

They will be returned to their families as soon as possible.

LOUIS

And the Comtesse?

CARDINAL

She will be held at the Monastery of the Holy Cross awaiting trial.

SESTINI

I detect the foul stench of witchcraft in all this.

LOUIS

The Comtesse de Larroque? A witch! How marvellous! Can she fly on a broomstick, make love potions?

SESTINI

Your Majesty is joking, but Satan is real and his female familiars are everywhere amongst us. Evil must be extinguished wherever it is detected. Rome will be following these events with great interest.

He looks meaningfully at the CARDINAL, then bows to LOUIS and walks out. LOUIS waits for a moment.

(CONTINUED)



**CONTINUED:**

ARAMIS (cont'd)

For what it's worth, Madame, this trial is a mockery of religion. The God I believe in stands for love, not cruelty.

NINON

You are a contradiction, Monsieur Aramis. A soldier who preaches love and a famous libertine who cherishes women.

ARAMIS

We all search for truth in different ways.

Impulsively he loosens the Queen's crucifix from around his neck and offers it to her.

ARAMIS (cont'd)

If you have faith in your heart, take this.

He places it in her hand.

ARAMIS (cont'd)

Please, take it. My God will not abandon you.

She looks moved as she takes the crucifix and is then escorted away by the RED GUARD.

ARAMIS watches her go.

**INT. BONACIEUX HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY**

The tearful FLEUR lies with her head in CONSTANCE's lap. D'ARTAGNAN watches them protectively.

CONSTANCE

It's not so easy when you don't have money. We all have to accept our fate in life.

FLEUR pulls away from her, tearful and angry.

FLEUR

Why? So we can end up like you, married to a man you hate?

CONSTANCE looks stunned at this unexpected assault.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

CONSTANCE  
I don't hate Bonacieux. I'm only  
trying to be realistic.

BAUDIN marches in and over to FLEUR.

BAUDIN  
Do you know the shame you've  
brought on my name?!

He grabs her by the wrist and pulls her to her feet, then  
raises his hand to her but D'ARTAGNAN stops him.

D'ARTAGNAN  
Hey! There's no need for that.

BAUDIN  
This is family business. You stay  
out of it.

He turns bitterly on CONSTANCE.

BAUDIN (cont'd)  
I trusted you to look after her.  
You knew she was meeting that woman  
and you lied to cover for her.

CONSTANCE  
She only wanted an education.

BAUDIN  
What does she need education for?  
She'll be a seamstress until she's  
married and then she'll be a  
dutiful wife and mother. That's  
all.

He drags the struggling FLEUR roughly towards the door.

FLEUR  
Constance, help me please!

D'ARTAGNAN stands in the doorway.

BAUDIN  
Out of my way!

D'ARTAGNAN  
If you hurt her, I'll know.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

BAUDIN

I'm not going to hurt her. I love her. But why won't she do as she's told?

He drags FLEUR out.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY**

ROBERT BAUDIN stands humbly before the icy and forbidding CARDINAL.

CARDINAL

Does your daughter understand her duty?

BAUDIN

She is young. If there's any way Your Eminence could spare her this ordeal. I hope to make a good marriage for her as soon as the trial is over.

CARDINAL

An excellent plan. A husband will calm her down.

BAUDIN hovers anxiously. The CARDINAL looks up impatiently.

CARDINAL (cont'd)

Just make sure she speaks the truth. God will be watching.

A trembling BAUDIN exits.

The CARDINAL mutters under his breath.

CARDINAL (cont'd)

And so will I.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. GRAND HALL. DAY**

NINON is knelt before the COUNCIL which consist of The CARDINAL, three PRIESTS and SESTINI.

CARDINAL

Comtesse Ninon de Larroque. Confess your offences now and spare your victims the ordeal of giving testimony.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

NINON

I cannot confess to imaginary crimes.

CARDINAL

Do you deny you believe in Satan's magic? Now I advise you to consider your answers seriously.

NINON

And I advise you not to ask ridiculous questions.

The MONKS are gathered at the back of the room, stood just in front are ATHOS, PORTHOS, ARAMIS and TREVILLE.

The CARDINAL stares at her.

CARDINAL

Fleur Baudin, come forward.

FLEUR is stood at the back of the room with her father. She looks at him, he places a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

BAUDIN

Just do the right thing, alright?

She nods and steps forward.

CARDINAL

All will be well if you tell the truth, child. What happened to you at the Comtesse's Salon?

FLEUR

May I have a drink of water?

THE CARDINAL picks up his own glass and offers it to FLEUR. She drinks then hands the glass back.

CARDINAL

Answer my question.

FLEUR

The Comtesse taught us things.

CARDINAL

What things? Many of our young women are educated. It isn't something we're ashamed of.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

FLEUR

Not just embroidery and sewing;  
Natural philosophy, the movement of  
the Cosmos, the secrets of our  
bodies.

CARDINAL

'Your bodies'? So she took you and  
locked you in a secret room and  
showed you intimate things?

FLEUR looks at NINON.

NINON

You twist every word that comes out  
of her mouth.

CARDINAL

Be quiet, or you'll be gagged.

NINON

I was gagged the day I was born a  
woman.

CARDINAL

Cheap sentiment from the decadent  
romance novels your acolytes waste  
their time in reading.

The CARDINAL turns back to FLEUR.

CARDINAL (cont'd)

There's no need to be ashamed  
child. If this woman has used you  
for her foul appetites, you cannot  
be blamed.

FLEUR

You're making her work sound  
corrupt. You will suffer for this.  
You are the one who will be judged!

The CARDINAL gestures angrily to a MONK.

CARDINAL

Take her away!

The MONK drags FLEUR out roughly but ATHOS intervenes to  
help.

CARDINAL (cont'd)

The Court will hear the testimony  
of Madame de la Chapelle.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

He takes a sip from his glass of water.

ATHOS is preoccupied as he watches FLEUR being escorted away and doesn't see MILADY slide past him and towards the COURT.

She stands in front of the CARDINAL.

CARDINAL (cont'd)  
Madame de la Chapelle. Tell us of  
your experiences at the Comtesse's  
salon.

She turns to NINON, who nods and smiles at her.

MILADY  
Ninon did to me what I saw her do  
to other women. She gave me wine  
and a bitter potion of some kind.

A look of disbelief comes over ATHOS as he turns to see MILADY standing before the Court.

NINON starts to look confused and scared.

MILADY (cont'd)  
I felt unsteady - as though in a  
reverie. I awoke in her private  
chamber.

ATHOS steps forward, extreme shock covers his face.

MILADY (cont'd)  
My clothes had been removed. I  
remember spells and ritual  
incantations. I felt a deep and  
terrible shame.

NINON looks at her in utter horror.

NINON  
Why are you saying these things?

ATHOS points furiously at MILADY and screams.

ATHOS  
This woman is a liar! She is not  
even who she claims to be! She is a  
convicted criminal and deceiver.

The RED GUARDS rush over and hold ATHOS back.

MILADY glances up at the CARDINAL, wide-eyed.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

MILADY

Why does this man accuse me? Is he  
a friend of Ninon's?

CARDINAL

Restrain him immediately!

ATHOS

She is not to be trusted!

PORTHOS, ARAMIS and TREVILLE hold the struggling ATHOS back.

ARAMIS

Athos! Calm!

CARDINAL

The court has heard enough from  
this witness. You are excused.

MILADY turns and hurries out of the court, glancing over at  
ATHOS as she exits.

PORTHOS

Who was that?

ATHOS composes himself and walks out. ARAMIS and PORTHOS  
both worried.

NINON looks up at the CARDINAL as he makes his judgement.

CARDINAL

Comtesse Ninon de Larroque, it has  
been proven in the sight of God  
that you are a practising witch who  
has consorted with the devil. The  
court finds you guilty on all  
counts.

ARAMIS and TREVILLE look on in shock and sadness.

NINON

But, this is madness. I, I am not a  
witch. They do not exist.

SESTINI

More blasphemy. Stop her mouth.

A MONK moves forward but the CARDINAL waves him away.

CARDINAL

Wait! At a time to be determined  
you will be taken to a place of  
(MORE)

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

CARDINAL (cont'd)  
execution. Your body will be burned  
to ashes.

Suddenly the doors open and QUEEN ANNE walks in. There is a startled silence and everyone stands.

CARDINAL (cont'd)  
Your Majesty.

ANNE  
It is the King's wish that unless  
the Comtesse de Larroque confesses  
her crimes freely and without  
torture, she be spared the death  
sentence.

PORTHOS smiles.

The CARDINAL stares at her in consternation. ANNE offers NINON her hand to lift her from her kneeling position. NINON looks at the CARDINAL.

NINON  
I have never consorted with the  
devil until this moment. I am  
looking at him.

CARDINAL  
Condemned from her own mouth. Such  
language amounts to a confe ...  
amounts to a ... to, to ...

He stops suddenly. His breathing becomes laboured. He pales and collapses to his knees struggling to breath, eyes bulging.

He tries to steady himself but then abruptly topples over, spilling the glass, which shatters on the floor. Pandemonium.

PORTHOS and ARAMIS rush towards him with TREVILLE. NINON stares in shock as the CARDINAL convulses and clutches at his throat. ARAMIS loosens his shirt quickly.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY**

The CARDINAL thrashes in agony as he is lowered onto the bed by ARAMIS and TREVILLE. ARAMIS puts his hand over the CARDINAL's mouth. The CARDINAL's eyes bulge in fear.

But ARAMIS pulls his hand away and smells the spittle on his palm, then calls out to the MONKS.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

ARAMIS  
Where's the castor oil and mustard.  
He needs an emetic.

The MONK dashes out. The CARDINAL writhes in pain, his eyes bulging.

ARAMIS turns to PORTHOS.

ARAMIS (cont'd)  
Help me loosen his robes.  
Definitely poison.

LOUIS rushes over to them.

LOUIS  
What if he is called to God's right  
hand? What will I do?

ARAMIS  
All will be well, I'm sure. The  
Cardinal is made of granite.

LOUIS grabs the CARDINAL, crying plaintively whilst he continues to writhe in pain.

LOUIS  
Please don't die, please don't die!

TREVILLE manages to pull LOUIS away. ARAMIS yells to a MONK.

ARAMIS  
The emetic!

The MONK rushes over and hands him a large jug.

TREVILLE helps to hold the CARDINAL still while ARAMIS tilts the CARDINAL's head and pours the yellow liquid in his mouth, then gags him with a handkerchief forcing the CARDINAL to swallow the vile mixture.

LOUIS  
Whoever did this, I want them  
found!

He bends down and starts to pray as ARAMIS pours more of the liquid down the CARDINAL's throat and gags him again as he starts to spit it out, still writhing in agony.

**EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. DAY**

Establishing shot.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

SFX: The CARDINAL screaming.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. CORRIDOR. DAY**

ANNE walks around the corner and sees ARAMIS as he rushes back into the chamber.

ANNE  
The Cardinal, will he live?

ARAMIS looks at her and shrugs.

ANNE (cont'd)  
He has been no friend to the  
Musketeers.

ARAMIS  
We're all servants of France, Your  
Majesty.

The QUEEN nods her acknowledgement but lingers a second, giving him a haughty look.

ANNE  
I did not expect to find my gift to  
you around the Comtesse's neck.

ARAMIS looks uncomfortable.

ANNE (cont'd)  
Is Ninon your lover? She is  
beautiful.

ARAMIS  
She is a good woman facing a  
hideous death. I, I only wanted to  
comfort her.

ANNE looks discomfited. She blushes and hesitates.

ANNE  
Forgive me. Your compassion does  
you credit.

She smiles at ARAMIS, he smiles back and then she walks away.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. GRAND HALL. DAY**

PORTHOS picks up the jug of water left on the table and looks at it, he sniffs the water.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

ARAMIS marches in to find ATHOS and PORTHOS already there.

ATHOS stares into space, deep in thought.

ARAMIS  
Where's the Comtesse?

PORTHOS  
They took her back to her cell. The  
Cardinal?

ARAMIS  
Still alive. Just.

PORTHOS  
Who has a reason to poison him?

ARAMIS  
Who hasn't?

They turn to ATHOS, who hasn't moved.

PORTHOS  
Athos?

ATHOS turns to him.

PORTHOS (cont'd)  
That woman, Madame de la Chapelle,  
who is she?

ARAMIS  
How do you know her? How do you  
know she was lying?

ATHOS  
Her whole life is a lie.

ARAMIS turns to PORTHOS.

PORTHOS  
Whoever she is, she can wait. Right  
now our job is to find out who  
tried to kill the Cardinal.

SESTINI (O.S.)  
It was clearly the witch.

They look up to see SESTINI enter.

SESTINI  
You all heard her curse him.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

PORTHOS

He was poisoned, not bewitched.

SESTINI

Satan turned his blood into acid at her command.

PORTHOS

We'll add Satan to the list of suspects.

SESTINI looks irritated but controls himself.

ARAMIS sniggers.

SESTINI

And I shall pray for the Cardinal's life. Because when men such as he are helpless against the powers of evil, then none of us are safe. I leave for Rome in the morning. Paris is no place for pious men.

ATHOS nods.

ATHOS

Your bag, Father. It was found in the morgue, with the body of the man who stole it. I'll see it's returned to you before you leave.

SESTINI nods and goes out. They watch him with distaste.

PORTHOS

We need to speak to Fleur Baudin.

**EXT. MUSKETEERS GARRISON. COURTYARD. DAY**

FLEUR sits with CONSTANCE at her side, questioned gently by ATHOS and ARAMIS, while D'ARTAGNAN watches.

FLEUR

You think I poisoned him?

CONSTANCE

That's the most stupid thing I've ever heard, even by Musketeers' standards.

D'ARTAGNAN

Let her talk. Please.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

PORTHOS

Tell us the truth.

FLEUR

I didn't hurt him. I didn't do anything! I swear it. I have to go. My father is waiting.

She looks at CONSTANCE, her spirit utterly broken.

FLEUR (cont'd)

You know I'm to be married? He's a 40 year old widower with a butcher's stall in Montmartre. I'm told he's a very good catch.

She walks away.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY**

The CARDINAL slowly wakes and turns his head. Someone raises a glass of water to his lips and he drinks.

Then looks up to see it is MILADY standing over him and smiling.

CARDINAL

Was it you?

MILADY

That's your first question? I'm touched.

CARDINAL

Am I dying?

MILADY

Half the doctors say you are doomed, the other half claim you'll make a full recovery. There's a lot of professional pride at stake.

CARDINAL

I'm glad you find this amusing.

He studies her for a moment, his mind unimpaired.

CARDINAL (cont'd)

Where's Athos? What is he to you?

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

MILADY

Let's not speak of it now. You must concentrate on your health.

CARDINAL

Whatever happens to me, I want you to extract this confession from Ninon. If she admits she is a witch, her entire estate will be forfeit to the Crown.

He gestures to the relic on the table. She picks up the wooden box and looks inside then gives it to him.

MILADY

How disgusting. What is it?

CARDINAL

The knee bone of St. Anthony. I shall pray for his intercession.

MILADY

Why not? He'll be as much use as the doctors.

She leaves as the CARDINAL touches the bone, kisses his fingers then crosses himself.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. NINON'S CELL. NIGHT**

NINON is alone in her cell, kneeling in prayer, holding onto the crucifix given to her by ARAMIS.

She looks up in bewildered disgust as MILADY appears.

NINON

Have you come here to gloat?

MILADY

I wouldn't waste my energy.

NINON

There is nothing worse than a woman who betrays her own sex.

MILADY

I can think of a few things. But let's not argue.

NINON

Why do you hate me? How have I ever hurt you?

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

MILADY

You didn't. You are simply a victim of circumstance. Now sadly you must die.

NINON

Not unless I admit to the charges. And I shall never do that.

MILADY

If you don't confess, the women of your Salon will burn in your place. Surely you wish to save the lives of your accomplices in Satan?

NINON goes white with shock.

NINON

You would do this? You would kill them even though you know they are innocent?

MILADY

Admit you poisoned the Cardinal as well. We might as well be thorough.

She smiles and walks off, leaving NINON alone and scared.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. NIGHT**

The CARDINAL glances at MILADY as he reads the scrawled confession with NINON's signature at the bottom.

CARDINAL

Order them to make the pyre. She will die at first light.

MILADY

The Queen won't like it. Nor will the King.

CARDINAL

She is irrelevant, a new Navy will soothe his dismay.

He puts the confession aside, looking weary and ill.

CARDINAL (cont'd)

Do you ever wonder what is to come after this life?

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

MILADY  
Our only life is here.

CARDINAL  
Pure heresy.

MILADY  
Well why don't you burn me?

CARDINAL  
I won't. But be careful. One day  
someone else might.

His voice suddenly falters.

CARDINAL (cont'd)  
I have done terrible things. My  
account with God is not yet  
balanced. I am afraid, that if I  
die, I shall go to Hell.

MILADY  
We're already in Hell. Don't you  
recognise it?

**INT. MORGUE. DAY**

ATHOS, ARAMIS, PORTHOS and D'ARTAGNAN talk as they enter.

POUPART is examining one of the bodies.

PORTHOS  
Well if it wasn't Fleur, who was  
it?

D'ARTAGNAN  
Ninon?

PORTHOS  
Nah. She was nowhere near him.

ATHOS looks at POUPART.

ATHOS  
Where's the bag?

POUPART points it out.

D'ARTAGNAN  
One of her followers, then? We  
should look at everyone that went  
(MORE)

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

D'ARTAGNAN (cont'd)  
to her Salon. Perhaps one of them  
met with the Cardinal.

ATHOS picks up SESTINI's bag and glances briefly at the  
THIEF'S body.

ATHOS  
Did you ever find out how he died?

POUPART  
Some form of apoplexy. He was  
having a drink at an inn nearby.  
One moment he was laughing and  
joking and then next he convulsed  
and fell down dead on the spot.

ATHOS turns to the others.

ARAMIS  
Just like the Cardinal.

ATHOS  
Sestini ...

ATHOS hurriedly opens the bag and rifles through its  
contents with D'ARTAGNAN, while ARAMIS and PORTHOS inspect  
the CORPSE.

ARAMIS  
Open his mouth.

PORTHOS  
You open his mouth!

ARAMIS gives him a look, then opens the CORPSE's mouth and  
leans close to his face. Immediately flinches away  
violently.

ARAMIS  
He stinks.

PORTHOS  
Well he's dead!

ARAMIS  
Not like that, he's ... there's  
something bitter on his tongue.

PORTHOS sniffs him cautiously, then pulls away and coughs.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

PORTHOS

Either this man had disgusting eating habits or something's badly wrong.

ARAMIS

I know that smell. It was on the Cardinal's breath.

ATHOS pulls out papers from the bag. D'ARTAGNAN picks up a prayer book. He flicks through it, then looks at his hands.

D'ARTAGNAN

The pages are damp.

ATHOS

Poison. Wash your hands, everything is soaked in it.

ATHOS finds an empty bottle in the bag. He sniffs it.

ATHOS (cont'd)

This is where it came from.

D'ARTAGNAN quickly goes to a bucket and rinses his hands.

PORTHOS

He must have drunk half the bottle before he realised it wasn't alcohol. The rest spilled in the bag.

D'ARTAGNAN

Sestini's still at the Abbey.

ATHOS

The Cardinal is still alive.

They run out and up the stairs. As they go, PORTHOS glances at ARAMIS.

PORTHOS

This is the Cardinal we're talking about. Why are we running?

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. NINON'S CELL. DAY**

NINON looks up at the sound of footsteps.

A NUN hands her a sackcloth dress and walks back out.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY**

The CARDINAL lies in bed, still very weak as he reaches over and opens the lid of the box lying on the bedside table.

**EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY**

RED GUARDS prepare a great pyre of kindling around a wooden stake.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. NINON'S CELL. DAY**

NINON, now dressed in the sackcloth, stands.

**EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY**

RED GUARDS pile on more kindling.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. NINON'S CELL. DAY**

A RED GUARD ties NINON's hands behind her back and walks her out.

**EXT. ROAD. DAY**

The MUSKETEERS ride hard along the road towards the Abbey.

**EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. DAY**

The MUSKETEERS ride along the bridge towards the Abbey.

**EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY**

ATHOS, D'ARTAGNAN, PORTHOS and ARAMIS ride into the courtyard and leap off their horses, pausing in surprise at the sight of the pyre.

ATHOS

What's this? The death sentence was commuted.

RED GUARD

The Comtesse confessed.

ATHOS and the others race off up the steps.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. CORRIDOR. DAY**

Now disguised in a plain Monk's habit, his face buried under his cowl, SESTINI quietly joins a group of MONKS as they walk to prayer. No one takes any notice of him. He glances up as he hears shouting and sees the MUSKETEERS burst in.

ARAMIS grabs one of the MONKS.

ARAMIS  
Where's Father Sestini?

The MONK shrugs.

MONK  
I don't know.

ARAMIS looks over at the balcony on the other side of the courtyard and sees SESTINI glancing back at him.

ARAMIS  
He's over there!

The MUSKETEERS rush after him.

ATHOS, PORTHOS, D'ARTAGNAN and ARAMIS see MONKS walking in various different directions. ARAMIS grabs a MONK and rips off his cowl, only to see a stranger's startled face. PORTHOS does the same with ANOTHER.

Unseen by them, SESTINI hurries off in the other direction.

ATHOS turns PORTHOS, ARAMIS and D'ARTAGNAN.

ATHOS  
To the Cardinal's room.

They hurry off.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. OUTSIDE MONK'S CELL. DAY**

SESTINI stabs the RED GUARD outside the door, killing him instantly.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY**

The CARDINAL lies in bed, his eyes closed.

SESTINI enters with the bloody dagger in his hand.

INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. CORRIDOR. DAY

The MUSKETEERS rush down the hall.

INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY

SESTINI approaches the CARDINAL, still lying still in the bed, eyes closed.

INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. CORRIDOR. DAY

The MUSKETEERS charge with full speed down the hall, ATHOS at the lead, draws his pistol.

INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY

SESTINI leans close to the unmoving CARDINAL and raises his dagger, but the CARDINAL suddenly opens his eyes and grabs hold of SESTINI's arm, as he pulls a fork from under his pillow and thrusts it into SESTINI's chest.

SESTINI eyes widen but he still has the strength to continue his attack and in the same second the MUSKETEERS pour through the door

ATHOS

Sestini!!!

SESTINI turns and ATHOS fires, hitting SESTINI in the chest with the bullet.

SESTINI falls to the ground.

ATHOS runs over.

The CARDINAL manages to pull himself up.

CARDINAL

You're late!

EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY

A RED GUARD steers NINON roughly towards the pyre. She looks up at the flickering brazier and the RED GUARDS standing by with unlit torches.

INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY

ATHOS  
We're glad to find you well, Your  
Eminence.

CARDINAL  
I doubt that. But thank you for the  
sentiment.

He struggles out of the bed.

EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY

NINON walks up to the stake.

ATHOS (V.O.)  
You know ...

INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY

ATHOS  
... it was Sestini who tried to  
poison you?

The CARDINAL removes the cloth covering the bone relic in  
the box by his bed.

CARDINAL  
A sacred relic soaked with poison.  
An old Papal trick ...

EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY

Establishing shot of the fire burning in the brazier.

CARDINAL (V.O.)  
... I should have guessed earlier.

NINON has been tied to the stake, the RED GUARDS now stand  
with lit torches, waiting for their order.

INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY

ARAMIS runs in.

ARAMIS  
We're running out of time!

**EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY**

A RED GUARD kneels down by the base of the pyre and lights it with his torch.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY**

ATHOS gets to his knees in front of the CARDINAL and pleads.

ATHOS  
You don't need to kill her. Please  
...

The CARDINAL looks at him.

**EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY**

The smoke starts to rise around NINON tied to the stake.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY**

ATHOS  
You can have everything you want  
and still let her go free.

The CARDINAL turns to look at him.

**EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY**

NINON looks to the sky as tears start to roll down her cheeks.

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY**

CARDINAL  
This is all very Dark Ages, isn't  
it?

D'ARTAGNAN, ARAMIS and PORTHOS roll their eyes in frustration.

CARDINAL (cont'd)  
A glimpse of your own mortality, it  
does make one rather less eager to  
hurry others to their doom.

He glances down without irony at SESTINI's body.

**EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY**

ANOTHER RED GUARD sets his torch against the pyre.

NINON keeps her eyes closed as the smoke billows around her head.

CARDINAL (V.O.)  
I'm not a cruel man ...

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY**

CARDINAL  
... just a practical one.

He turns back to ATHOS.

CARDINAL (cont'd)  
What do you propose?

**EXT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. COURTYARD. DAY**

NINON's head drops forward.

Suddenly ATHOS and the other MUSKETEERS burst into the Courtyard.

ATHOS  
Stop!! The sentence is commuted!

PORTHOS  
The Cardinal's orders!

They run over to the pyre and start cutting the ropes and pulling the burning wood away.

ATHOS  
The sentence is commuted!

They free NINON from the stake.

NINON  
I will not die today?

PORTHOS  
Not today, Madame.

ATHOS helps her down.

She sees ARAMIS and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

**CONTINUED:**

NINON

Your God did not abandon me after all.

ATHOS guides her away from the pyre.

PORTHOS climbs down and takes an exhausted breath.  
D'ARTAGNAN looks at him.

PORTHOS

How come God gets all the credit?

**INT. ABBEY OF SAINT MARK. MONK'S CELL. DAY**

The CARDINAL walks over to NINON, he is still quite weak, she is subdued.

CARDINAL

As far as the world is concerned Comtesse Ninon de Larroque died on that pyre today. Your lands, your property and your money will all be forfeit to the State.

ATHOS, PORTHOS, ARAMIS and D'ARTAGNAN all stand in silence.

CARDINAL (cont'd)

But, I will allow you a small income to live a quiet life somewhere outside Paris. If you try to tell the truth of these events, your original sentence will be reinstated. Do you accept my terms?

NINON

My voice will never be silenced, but I promise you will never hear it.

ARAMIS

What about the Monks? They'll know.

CARDINAL

It's a closed order. Gossip is not encouraged. We'll need a body to make this look convincing. Luckily one has just become available.

He glances over at SESTINI's body laid out on his bed, then he turns and looks out of the window, totally restored.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

CARDINAL (cont'd)  
 Today I find my vision clearer than  
 ever. No person, no nation, no God  
 will stand in my way.

NINON turns to go, then places the crucifix in ARAMIS' hand.

NINON  
 Take this, Monsieur. May it bring  
 you as much luck as it did me.

She leaves.

**INT. LOUVRE PALACE. CARDINAL'S OFFICE. DAY**

The CARDINAL pours a handful of grey ashes into the wooden  
 box, slams the lid shut, then hands it to a young SERVANT.  
 MILADY watches.

CARDINAL  
 See they are delivered to Rome. Say  
 "Cardinal Richelieu sends his  
 compliments and promises His  
 Holiness that if he wishes to send  
 any more envoys, they will be  
 returned in the same condition".

MILADY smiles.

MILADY  
 You do realise you'll never be  
 Pope?

CARDINAL  
 I never really cared for the idea.  
 It's an Italian club and largely a  
 clerical position. I prefer  
 something with a little more  
 influence.

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. DAY**

NINON and ATHOS stand together in a pretty, green lane. A  
 horse and carriage wait patiently nearby.

ATHOS  
 What will you do now?

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

NINON

I was thinking of opening a school  
for the daughters of the poor. I  
shall enjoy being a teacher.

ATHOS looks at her, hesitating uneasily.

ATHOS

Madame de la Chapelle. Did she ever  
tell you anything about herself?

NINON

Now that I think of it, very  
little. So you did know her, after  
all?

ATHOS

In another time. In another life.

NINON reaches out and strokes his cheek.

NINON

Be careful Athos. She has the  
Cardinal's protection. A blow  
against her is a blow against him.  
And he won't take it lightly.

He nods. They kiss.

NINON (cont'd)

I could have loved a man like you.

ATHOS

It's a pity neither of us is the  
marrying kind.

He helps her board the cart and watches as she rides off up  
the road.

CART DRIVER

Here, walk on.

She turns briefly to look at him.

He stands alone and filled with sadness.

**INT. BONACIEUX HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY**

FLEUR runs in, over excited.

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

FLEUR

Constance! You won't believe what's happened!?

She runs over to CONSTANCE and hugs her.

FLEUR (cont'd)

My father has changed his mind. I don't have to marry yet. He's even letting me continue my education.

CONSTANCE smiles with delight.

CONSTANCE

I wonder what happened?

FLEUR

It's strange. He said a woman persuaded him. I'm sure it was Ninon.

CONSTANCE looks startled but FLEUR doesn't notice.

FLEUR (cont'd)

She was so beautiful and inspiring, her example made even my father see sense! I'll pray for her every night.

CONSTANCE smiles.

CONSTANCE

I'm happy for you.

She embraces FLEUR and looks over at D'ARTAGNAN smiling at them.

CONSTANCE's face falls as FLEUR goes out. There is a moment of silence, then she hurries over to the window.

CONSTANCE (cont'd)

Well, I must get on.

D'ARTAGNAN

It was you who went to Baudin, wasn't it? You pleaded for Fleur.

CONSTANCE

Don't be silly.

D'ARTAGNAN

You are the finest woman I have ever met. I don't believe there's a  
(MORE)

**(CONTINUED)**

**CONTINUED:**

D'ARTAGNAN (cont'd)  
more generous soul in all of  
France.

CONSTANCE rushes over and puts a finger on his mouth.

CONSTANCE  
Stop that. You're embarrassing me.

He removes her finger gently but doesn't let go of it.

D'ARTAGNAN  
What if I want to embarrass you?  
Why shouldn't I list all the  
reasons I love you?

They stare at each other, stunned. He blushes and stammers.

D'ARTAGNAN (cont'd)  
Of course, when I say that I mean,  
admire, respect.

CONSTANCE  
Say it again.

D'ARTAGNAN  
I admire and respect you.

CONSTANCE  
Not that part, you idiot.

He stares at her for a long second.

D'ARTAGNAN  
I love you.

She stares at him. He stares back. A beat, then suddenly they hurl themselves at each other, weeks and months of pent up longing finally released in an unstoppable physical passion.

TO BLACK