

Diamonds and Gold

It was April 1625. Queen Anne of France was in her bedroom with her maid, Constance. The Queen was very unhappy. The King wanted her to wear some diamonds at a dance. The diamonds were a present to the Queen from the King. The dance was in two weeks' time.

'I cannot wear the diamonds. I gave them to the Duke of Buckingham,' Anne told Constance. 'But now the Duke is in England. The King will be very angry.'

The Queen started to cry. Constance knew the Queen was right. The diamonds were a big problem.

Then Constance had an idea. 'Madam,' she said. 'I know someone who can help you.'

'Really? Who?' asked the Queen.

'I have a friend,' Constance replied. 'His name is D'Artagnan. He is the bravest man in France.'

'Oh Constance! Go and ask him now,' the Queen said. 'I hope he can do it. I will give him a lot of money. But tell him it must be a secret.'

'I will, Madam,' Constance said. She left the palace and ran to D'Artagnan's home. She knocked on the door.

'Hello?' D'Artagnan shouted. 'Who is it?'

'It's me, Constance,' she replied. D'Artagnan opened the door. D'Artagnan was a young man who wanted to be a musketeer in the King's army. He was brave and handsome. He was in love with Constance.

'My darling!' D'Artagnan said. He tried to kiss Constance, but she stopped him. Constance was very pretty and she loved D'Artagnan. But the Queen was in danger. The diamonds were the most important thing now.

'Not now D'Artagnan,' Constance said. 'Please ... you must help me.'

'How can I help you my darling?' D'Artagnan asked. 'You know I will do anything for you.'

'You must keep it a secret,' Constance said.

'Of course I'll keep it a secret, my love,' replied D'Artagnan. 'Please tell me what it is.'

'You must go to England, D'Artagnan.'

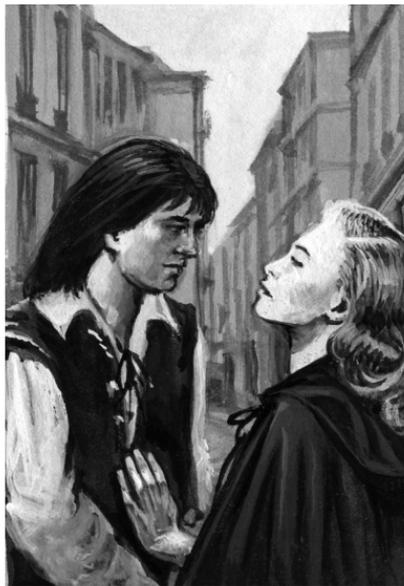
'To England?'

'Yes,' Constance replied. 'You must find the Duke of Buckingham. Ask him for the Queen's diamonds. She needs them back.'

'But how can I go to England?' D'Artagnan asked. 'I haven't got any money.'

'Here, take this,' Constance said. She gave him a small bag. The bag was full of gold.

'But remember,' Constance said. 'This is a secret. Don't tell anyone. The King must not know about the diamonds.'



'I promise my darling,' D'Artagnan said.

'You must be careful,' Constance said. 'There are many people who don't like the Queen or Buckingham. They will try to stop you. Please come back alive, my love.'

Constance kissed him quickly, and then she left. D'Artagnan was very happy. Constance loved him and the Queen wanted him to do something important. He had to go to England immediately. But first he had to visit his friends, the three musketeers. Their names were Porthos, Aramis and Athos.

2

The Journey to Calais

Aramis and Porthos were at Athos's house. They were very bored. There were no wars. They did not have much money because there was no fighting.

Then D'Artagnan arrived with his servant, Planchet. He was very excited.

'Hello!' the three men said. 'Why are you so excited?'

'I can't tell you,' D'Artagnan said. 'It's a secret. I've come to say goodbye.'

'Goodbye? Where are you going?' Athos asked.

'I'm going to England,' D'Artagnan replied. 'Someone needs my help. I must get to Calais tonight. But it will be dangerous. There are people who will try to stop me.'

'We must come with you,' Aramis said.

'But I can't tell you the secret,' D'Artagnan said.