

## ATHOS SIDES

98.

MILADY

What time does the next ship sail for England?

INNKEEPER

The tide goes out in less than an hour, madame.

MILADY

Excellent. Bring me food and drink.

INNKEEPER

My wife is – at this very moment – preparing a fine stew, made with roasted lamb and potatoes...

MILADY

Yes, yes – that's fine. Just go.

INNKEEPER

*(Bowing)*

Oui, Madame.

*(He starts to exit.)*

And no one is to enter this room – do you understand? No one.

INNKEEPER

*(Bowing)*

Oui, Madame.

*(MILADY turns downstage and removes her gloves. The INNKEEPER exits, closing the door behind him, revealing ATHOS, who has been hiding behind the door.)*

## START

ATHOS

The last time I saw you, wife, you were swinging from a tree.

*(She turns to him as if seeing a ghost.)*

MILADY

Oh my God... my God, it can't be...

ATHOS

And yet it is. The Count de la Fere, at your service.

*(He bows.)*

MILADY

I thought you were dead.

ATHOS

And I you.

MILADY

What are you doing here? What do you want?

ATHOS

First things first. How did you manage to survive the hanging? Or did the devil resurrect you for his own purposes?

*(MILADY runs for the door. ATHOS stops her.)*

We'll have none of that. Answer the question. Answer me!

MILADY

You forgot to bind my hands.

ATHOS

You were unconscious.

MILADY

I woke up. I was able to reach my hunting knife...

ATHOS

And you cut yourself down. Tsk, tsk – how clumsy of me. Next time I'll know better.

~~*(He pushes her away then turns and bolts the door.)*~~

And then you swam to England and married the Baron de Winter – even though you were still married to me.

MILADY

By all reports, you were dead.

ATHOS

No, not dead. Just disappeared. I wanted to leave the past behind me.

MILADY

Because I hurt you... You loved me that much. I loved you, too.

ATHOS

How dare you say that to me?

MILADY

I dare because it's true!

ATHOS

And I am to believe you? A liar? A *murderer*!

MILADY

An innocent falsely accused...

ATHOS

You were convicted! You were branded with the fleur-de-lis!

MILADY

They were mistaken! You are a man of the world. Surely you understand that mistakes sometimes happen?

ATHOS

I married you, didn't I?

*(She remains silent. Beat.)*

If you were truly innocent, why didn't you tell me?

MILADY

I was afraid you wouldn't believe me. And I was right... wasn't I?

ATHOS

So this was all one big misunderstanding.

MILADY

Yes.

*(She approaches him slowly.)*

ATHOS

And the diamonds you stole from the Duke of Buckingham? Was that a misunderstanding as well?

*(She stops.)*

MILADY

How do you know about that?

ATHOS

Answer the question!

MILADY

Yes, I stole those diamonds. And I would do it again.

ATHOS

I see.

MILADY

Are you faulting my loyalty to the King?

ATHOS

To the King or to the Cardinal?

MILADY

Is there a difference?

ATHOS

And how will His Eminence react when he learns you poisoned a young woman? Or does the Church now sanction murder?

MILADY

My, my – it seems nothing I do is secret for long.

ATHOS

That poor woman was an innocent pawn...

MILADY

That woman was the Queen's lackey and therefore a traitor to the King! And as for the Cardinal...

*(She pulls Richelieu's note from her pocket and reads aloud.)*

"It is by my order and for the benefit of the State that the bearer of this note has done what has been done." Signed by Richelieu himself.

*(She puts the note back in her pocket.)*

So you see, husband, my actions were completely within the law.

ATHOS

You amaze me.

MILADY

I did what I had to do to survive.

*(She takes a step closer to him.)*

But I never meant to hurt you. I'm sorry for that.

*(Another step closer. They are face to face.)*

So, so, sorry...

~~*(She leans in and kisses him softly. At the same time she reaches into the pocket of her cloak and pulls out her knife. As the kiss deepens she raises the knife, preparing to plunge it into him. ATHOS's hand suddenly reaches up and grips her wrist. He breaks the kiss and watches her. As his grip tightens she is forced to drop the knife. ATHOS places a hand on either side of her head and looks deeply into her eyes.)*~~

ATHOS

You are so beautiful. I would have loved you forever. **END**

~~*(He twists her head suddenly. We hear a loud snap as her neck breaks. She falls to the floor, dead. ATHOS crouches next to her body, and removes the note from her pocket. There is a knock on the door.)*~~

INNKEEPER (O.S.)

Madame? Madame, it is I, the Innkeeper.

~~*(ATHOS crosses to the door, unbolts it and opens it. The INNKEEPER steps into the room, carrying a tray.)*~~

INNKEEPER

I have brought you food and drink...

~~*(He looks at ATHOS, surprised, then spies MILADY on the floor.)*~~

ATHOS

~~She's not hungry.~~