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Inspired by Dumas

Fiction

Where was I? The last thing I remembered was that I had been reading *Twenty years later* (the second part of *The three musketeers*). But the book was no longer in my hands, neither was I lying on my bed. I felt as if I wasn't even in Argentina, lest in Buenos Aires. My sister's bed, the computer, my desk, weren't there any more. I had seen many movies, but I couldn't imagine how I had been able to travel in time or anything similar, and without a machine! But wait a minute, I had not only moved in time, I was also in another place. But what place was it?

I was standing in the middle of a long, wide road, a *dusty* road. There was a wood on the left, and a village nearby. To my surprise, all its houses were made of wood. Horses were standing in the street. Some men were arriving, also riding horses. There was no sign of any kind of vehicle. What year was I in? What century had I got to?

I heard two shots. My heart went to a halt. I was so scared I couldn't move. There seemed to be lots of people around, but I couldn't see them, they were hiding, who knew what from. Through the fog I could see two figures approaching me.

"Hide, cover yourself." And one of them put one of his arms on my back to protect me.

After some minutes, which seemed years to me, everything calmed down. Around fifty men began to appear from the wood, and one of them, who seemed to be a count, started a conversation with my two saviours. It was confusing for me, I didn't understand anything. Among all the names they pronounced, I heard Athos' and D'Artagnan's.

What? Had I got inside *Twenty Years Later*? How was that possible? Were these people my so much appreciated heroes, the ones I'd always wished to meet? My most important dream was coming true. I had to find an excuse to stay with them, spend more time by their side. I couldn't miss the opportunity. Besides, I knew nobody else in that place, they were my only hope of giving another step in that unknown new world for me. I told Athos I was the daughter of a friend of his, who had recently died, and I was travelling to Paris.

"How come you don't have a carriage or a horse?" I didn't know what to say. I had no idea about those things. I was speechless for some seconds, until I said somebody had stolen them from me, so I was alone and completely lost. He said he was heading for Paris too, so he would accompany me. My mother would have wanted it that way.

I felt awful about lying to my favourite character, but I had no choice if I wanted to get on. Suddenly, I remembered an episode of the third part of *The Three Musketeers*. Three of my favourite characters were going to die. I had to warn them, I had to tell them what was going to happen to them, they couldn't die. What should I do?

We started walking towards the village I had already seen some metres away. We were going to stay in an inn, on the outskirts of town. I was excited. My mind was a mess. That town was amazing, it looked like the place I'd always wanted to live. Inside the inn you could find all kinds of people. It was very difficult to describe. There were lots of tables, and rough men drinking beer and eating, I couldn't guess what.

There were so many details in that place. How was it possible that only one mind, my favourite author's, had created all that? He had imagined the whole place. I had always admired him for

that. It was the same with all his marvellous books—*The Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years Later*, *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, *The count of Monte Cristo*, *Georges*, and a lot more. He flew with his imagination and was able to make you do the same with his impressive detailed descriptions.

I came back from my deeply embedded feelings of admiration, somebody was calling my name. It was a voice I had never heard before. I turned round, a huge man was coming towards me. At first I was scared, but when he came closer, I could recognise another of my admired characters. It was Porthos! He looked exactly the way I had always imagined him.

D'Artagnan had already told him about me. But he said he still didn't understand the situation. I would have answered "me neither," but that would have confused him even more. That was my Porthos, so strong, but kind of foolish.

We started talking, and I asked him about his adventures. In a short time I realized they were something he was proud of, and that he exaggerated a bit.

Athos was by my side again. A young man was with him.

"This is my son Raoul. Raoul, this is Marahaina."

We greeted each other, and started talking. I couldn't tell him exactly what had happened to me, he would have thought I was crazy, so I had to lie again, only a bit. I repeated my story: my mother had been a good friend of Athos'. She had recently died, and I was going to Paris to live with my aunt and uncle. I had come across his father, and as he was also heading for the capital of France, I would be travelling with him. Raoul was surprised, but seemed happy.

I wished our talk didn't last long. I knew so little about politics or economy of that time that I kept avoiding that kind of matters, and continued the conversation, with myself as the central subject. That was easier, but at the same time I didn't want to sound arrogant.

My new friend asked me about my clothes. I can't imagine how red my face must have turned, because he immediately apologized and said he actually liked them. I hadn't realized yet, I was wearing a pair of jeans, sneakers, and a pink T-shirt! I was so embarrassed! *Now* I wanted to disappear. I answered I had made them myself. I had been inspired by some Arabian clothes I had seen the year before on my trip to the Middle East. I wished he had never been to that region, I didn't sound very convincing. He said I shouldn't give importance to what other people thought of me. If I liked my clothes, or anything else about myself, it was all right with him. I was so grateful for his words. All the same, I felt thousands of eyes on me, but it was my imagination. In that place everybody cared about their own business.

The conversation took a long time. Then I was shown to a bedroom and my mind had time to whirl about my situation. I had been so amazed and so extremely happy that I hadn't come to think of it: How on earth was I going to go back home? I didn't know how I had got there, lest did I know how to go back. I really enjoyed being in that place. I'd always dreamed of that situation. But, what about my family and friends? Out of that novel, I had a life, in which I sat to read, not the other way around. I couldn't *live* in a novel. Besides, what would my relatives and friends think about me? I had disappeared, I had vanished in thin air. They would believe I had run away or something similar. I really was in trouble.

On the other hand, it wasn't that bad. I would be enjoying my most admired and favourite character, Athos. And I had already met his good looking son. We had immediately taken to each other. Now I came to think of it, I really liked him. He was the kind of guy I'd always wanted: respectful, with good manners, nice way of talking. He was like the typical perfect boy in a movie. As everything seemed a movie to me at that time, I imagined we would end up together.

When I thought of this my stomach felt queer. It always happened to me on those occasions, I got nervous.

Recalling my conversation with Raoul and all I had seen about my new friends that day, I started thinking of something: characters are not only what the author makes of them, but a lot more. When you meet them (something not very common, by the way), you can see they are “people.” They have their own likes, dislikes, ideologies and ideas. They have their own personality. So, I reckoned, I couldn’t tell them they were going to die. They were to find it like everyone else does. It is something you can’t avoid. Besides, if my favourite author had set their deaths one way, I didn’t have the right to interfere in the story of such a great piece of writing. It was kind of a dilemma. They were themselves, but somebody had invented them. I was in two minds as to telling them their future or not. Another thing that was starting to worry me was that I didn’t know what I would do after our arrival in Paris. I didn’t actually have any relatives in France. My lie to my travel companions wouldn’t last long. I had to find a solution.

The following day we started on our way to Paris. Luckily, it was quite far, so Raoul and I had a plenty of time to get to know each other better. I liked him more every day. Even more, I thought I was falling in love with him. I wasn’t really sure. But when the moment came, I was. It was something I’d always dreamed of—the old-fashioned and formal words—“Would you marry me?” What do you think I answered? Don’t think it was easy for me. I didn’t know how on earth I had got there, or if one day, suddenly, I would be back home. But, deep in my heart, I knew he was the love of my life. Maybe that was why I had got into that book, I had to find him. He was my destiny, and, at last, I was sure. I was so happy, even now I can’t clearly describe it. (At this moment I suppose you must have guessed my answer was “yes.”)

Three weeks after the happiest moment in my life had gone by, we were finally arriving in Paris. I had never been there—I mean in my “real” life. It was something to admire. I could have stayed hours looking at those old buildings, those gardens and palaces. It was wonderful. Besides, they weren’t ruins in the seventeenth century, they had been recently built.¹

I was thinking of how marvellous everything was, when my head started aching, and I fainted.

When I came round, the scenery around me had changed completely, it was so impressive. It was very dark, and I could see a lake or a sea nearby, I couldn’t clearly tell. The air was more humid, there were lots of trees around me. I should have been scared or amused for what had happened, but after the episode with *Twenty Years Later*, everything was possible. Light came from the left, I could vaguely see a huge country house. It seemed a party was taking place, music and hubbub came to my ears. I walked towards the house. I was right, nine or ten people were talking, about to have dinner. Looking at their clothes I concluded I was around 1830 or so. But why had I changed in time like that? I believed no villager of that place would have an answer, so, once again, I put the thought aside.

That house, all those people. They reminded me of something. But what? My mind was searching for information. They were high-class people, exotic food was being served. I heard some names—Mrs. Danglars, Morrel. Where had I heard them before? I was confused. Then I realized: I had never heard them, I had *read* them. This was *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

It had happened again! Just when I had come to like my new life. I had found what I’d always wanted: I was in love, and I was loved in return. I had found the only person that would love me

¹ *The Three Musketeers* takes place in the seventeenth century, during Louis XIV’s reign.

just the way I was, and now I'd lost him? No, it couldn't be that way. Everything was going wrong lately. Why had the *change* taken place at that precise moment? I felt my heart sink, it was aching so badly. Would my life continue like that, going from one book to another, without being able to plan anything, to form a family? Every person I met, one day, I wouldn't see him/her anymore. I didn't like books any longer, not this way. I felt so impotent.

On the other hand, I would be able to meet every character I loved. But, still, I was sad. At least, I no longer had the dilemma of my heroes' future.

Suddenly, I heard my name again. How was that possible? I hadn't met anybody in that novel yet. I turned round. A tall, young man was standing there. Yes, I knew him, those eyes, that mouth, it was him!

"Raoul! Thank God you're here too."

"I'm also glad I'm with you. But, how did I get here?"

I smiled... I had no logical answer.

