

Chapter 4

HOW MADAME DE ST. LUC HAD PASSED THE NIGHT.

Louis de Clermont, commonly called Bussy d'Amboise, was a perfect gentleman, and a very handsome man. Kings and princes had sought for his friendship; queens and princesses had lavished on him their sweetest smiles. He had succeeded La Mole in the affections of Queen Marguerite, who had committed for him so many follies, that even her husband, insensible so long, was moved at them; and the Duke François would never have pardoned him, had it not gained over Bussy to his interests, and once again he sacrificed all to his ambition. But in the midst of all his successes of war, ambition, and intrigue, he had remained insensible; and he who had never known fear, had never either known love.

When the servants of M. de St. Luc saw Bussy enter, they ran to tell M. de Brissac.

"Is M. de St. Luc at home?" asked Bussy.

"No, monsieur."

"Where shall I find him?"

"I do not know, monsieur. We are all very anxious about him, for he has not returned since yesterday."

"Nonsense."

"It is true, monsieur."

"But Madame de St. Luc?"

"Oh, she is here."

"Tell her I shall be charmed if she will allow me to pay my respects to her."

Five minutes after, the messenger returned, saying Madame de St. Luc would be glad to see M. de Bussy.

When Bussy entered the room, Jeanne ran to meet him. She was very pale, and her jet black hair made her look more so; her eyes were red from her sleepless night, and there were traces of tears on her cheeks.

"You are welcome, M. de Bussy," said she, "in spite of the fears your presence awakens."

"What do you mean, madame? how can I cause you fear?"

"Ah! there was a meeting last night between you and M. de St. Luc? confess it."

"Between me and St. Luc!"

"Yes, he sent me away to speak to you; you belong to the Duc d'Anjou, he to the king. You have quarrelled--do not hide it from me. You must understand my anxiety. He went with the king, it is true--but afterwards?"

"Madame, this is marvelous. I expected you to ask after my wound----"

"He wounded you; he did fight, then?"

"No, madame; not with me at least; it was not he who wounded me. Indeed, he did all he could to save me. Did he not tell you so?"

"How could he tell me? I have not seen him."

"You have not seen him? Then your porter spoke the truth."

"I have not seen him since eleven last night."

"But where can he be?"

"I should rather ask you."

"Oh, pardieu, tell me about it, it is very droll."

The poor woman looked at him with astonishment.

"No, it is very sad, I mean. I have lost much blood, and scarcely know what I am saying. Tell me this lamentable story, madame."

Jeanne told all she knew; how the king had carried him off, the shutting of the doors of the Louvre, and the message of the guards.

"Ah! very well, I understand," said Bussy.

"How! you understand."

"Yes; his majesty took him to the Louvre and once there he could not come out again."

"And why not?"

"Ah! that is a state secret."

"But my father went to the Louvre, and I also, and the guards said they did not know what we meant."

"All the more reason that he should be there."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it, and if you wish to be so also----"

"How?"

"By seeing."

"Can I?"

"Certainly."

"But if I go there, they will send me away, as they did before."

"Would you like to go in?"

"But if he is not there?"

"I tell you he is there. Come; but they will not let in the wife of St. Luc."

"You laugh at me, and it is very cruel in my distress."

"No, dear lady, listen. You are young, you are tall, and have black eyes; you are like my youngest page, who looked so well in the cloth of gold yesterday."

"Ah I what folly, M. Bussy," cried Jeanne, blushing.

"I have no other method but this. If you wish to see St. Luc----"

"Oh! I would give all the world to see him."

"Well, I promise that you shall without giving anything."

"Oh, but----"

"I told you how."

"Well, I will do it; shall I send for the dress?"

"No, I will send you a new one I have at home; then you must join me this evening at the Rue St. Honoré. and we will go together to the Louvre."
Jeanne began to laugh, and gave her hand to Bussy.

"Pardon my suspicions," said she.

"Willingly," and taking leave he went home to prepare.

Bussy and Madame de St. Luc met at the appointed time; Jeanne looked beautiful in her disguise. At the end of the Rue St. Germain-l'Auxerrois they met a large party in which Bussy recognized the Duc d'Anjou and his train.

"Ah," said he, "we will make a triumphal entry into the Louvre."

"Eh! monseigneur," cried he to the duke.

The prince turned. "You, Bussy!" cried he joyfully, "I heard you were badly wounded, and I was going to your hotel."

"Ma foi, monseigneur, if I am not dead, it is thanks to no one but myself. You get me into nice situations; that ball at St. Luc's was a regular snare, and they have nearly drained all the blood out of my body."

"They shall pay for it, Bussy; they shall pay dearly."

"Yes, you say so," said Bussy, with his usual liberty, "and you will smile on the first you meet."

"Well! accompany me to the Louvre, and you shall see."

"What shall I see, monseigneur?"

"How I will speak to my brother."

"You promise me reparation?"

"I promise you shall be content. You hesitate still, I believe."

"Monseigneur, I know you so well."

"Come, I tell you."

"This is good for you," whispered Bussy to Jeanne. "There will be a quarrel between the brothers, and meanwhile you can find St. Luc."

"Well," said he to the prince, "I follow you; if I am insulted, at least I can always revenge myself."

And he took his place near the duke, while his page kept close to him.

"Revenge yourself; no, Bussy," said the prince, "I charge myself with it. I know your assassins," added he, in a low tone.

"What I your highness has taken the trouble to inquire?"

"I saw them."

"How so?" cried Bussy, astonished.

"Oh! I had business myself at the Porte St. Antoine. They barely missed killing me in your place. Ah! I did not know it was you they were waiting for, or else----"

"Well?"

"Had you this new page with you?" asked the prince, without finishing his sentence.

"No, I was alone, and you?"

"I had Aurilly with me; and why were you alone?"

"Because I wish to preserve my name of the brave Bussy."

"And they wounded you?"

"I do not wish to give them the pleasure of knowing it, but I had a severe wound in the side."

"Ah! the wretches; Aurilly said he was sure they were bent on mischief."

"How! you saw the ambush, you were with Aurilly, who uses his sword as well as his lute, you thought they had bad intentions, and you did not watch to give aid?"

"I did not know who they were waiting for."

"Mort diable! when you saw the king's friends, you might have known it was against some friends of yours. Now, as there is hardly any one but myself who has courage to be your friend, you might have guessed that it was I."

"Oh! perhaps you are right, my dear Bussy, but I did not think of all that."

When they entered, "Remember your promise," said Bussy, "I have some one to speak to."

"You leave me, Bussy?"

"Yes, I must, but if I hear a great noise I will come to you, so speak loud."

Then Bussy, followed by Jeanne, took a secret staircase, traversed two or three corridors, and arrived at an antechamber.

"Wait here for me," said he to Jeanne.

"Ah, mon Dieu! you leave me alone."

"I must, to provide for your entrance."