I thought you were dead.

And I you.

What are you doing here? What do you want?

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

(ATHOS stops her.)

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

You forgot to bind my hands.

You were unconscious.

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

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.

By all reports, you were dead.

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

Because I hurt you... You loved me that much. I loved you, too.
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.)
How do you know about that?

ATHOS

MILADY

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.

(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.
The Church is my mistress now.

She is a better mistress than most.

How would you know, Athos? By your own admission, you have never had a mistress.

What?! You have never been in love, Athos? Not even once?

No.

How can that be?

Love is a lottery in which the prize is death. I choose to live.

I don't believe that.

Then I shall tell you a tale. A cautionary tale of love gone wrong — but it must be understood that the events I am about to relate did not happen to me, but to a friend...

Oh, a friend...

(PORTHOS winks at D'ARTAGNAN.)

This friend was a nobleman from my native province. The Comte de la Fere. At twenty-five, this count fell in love...

(Special comes up on MYSTERY WOMAN. We cannot see her face. ATHOS stares at her during the following, but never crosses into the memory.)

Fell in love with a breathtakingly beautiful girl of sixteen — a girl with a passionate nature and the mind of a poet. She was intoxicating...
(He drains his glass then holds it out. PORTHOS pour him more.)

ATHOS
She came to live in a nearby village. My friend was the local lord – as such, he had the right to seduce her or even take her by force. Instead, he did the honorable thing and married her... that fool!

(Again he drains his glass and holds it out. PORTHOS refills it.)

D’ARTAGNAN
Why was he a fool? He loved her, didn’t he?

ATHOS
Yes, he loved her. So he married her and took her home to his castle, where he made love to her but always in the dark, for she was a modest maiden and insisted on this privacy. An easy accommodation for a man so in love.

(He drains his glass, then grabs the bottle from PORTHOS.)

One day she went out hunting with her husband. She was thrown from her horse and knocked unconscious. Checking for other injuries, my friend cut away her sleeve. That’s when he discovered the mark – here, near her left shoulder.

(He indicates a spot on his upper arm.)

PORTHOS
What sort of mark?

ATHOS
She had been branded with the fleur-de-lis.

PORTHOS
Mon Dieu.

D’ARTAGNAN
A murderer?

ATHOS
Yes. She had been convicted of poisoning a wealthy merchant, but had escaped execution. The brand on her skin was the reason she insisted on darkness during our most intimate moments.

D’ARTAGNAN
Still, she may have loved you.
ATHOS
Don’t be a fool. She married me to gain access to my title, my lands, my money... then, when enough time had passed, she would poison me... That lying, cheating, greedy little...

(He drains the bottle.)

D’ARTAGNAN

Athos – what happened to her?

ATHOS
Justice, my boy... justice. As lord of the manor, I was obliged to carry out the law of land. She was branded for execution, so I hanged her from the closest tree.

(Special out on MYSTERY WOMAN.)

ARAMIS

Dear God...

(ARAMIS makes the sign of the cross.)

ATHOS
I left that very day. Turned my back on everything I once held dear. Now the Comte de la Fere is no more – all that’s left of him is Athos, the musketeer who drinks too much and wishes he was dead... I loved her so much.

PORTHOS

Come now, Athos...

ATHOS
I loved her so much...

(He passes out, slumping against PORTHOS. Beat.)

ARAMIS

Gentlemen, let us put our friend to bed. D’Artagnan, take his feet.

(We hear a bell begin to chime ten. ARAMIS crosses to help PORTHOS. D’ARTAGNAN doesn’t move.)

D’Artagnan...?

D’ARTAGNAN
I’m afraid I must leave you, friends. It is ten o’clock and I have a rendezvous with the most beautiful, the most wonderful...