

## THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO VOL 2

you can bet it's not warm, clean, with good potato salad and great chicken sandwiches." flushing elsewhere in the trailer, she was stricken by the terrible perception that under Leilani's remote control. They're most likely fast approaching from the other side of the vehicle. Lechat waited for the noise to die away and managed to bring his feelings under control sufficiently to muster a semblance of dignity appropriate to the moment But simplicity and brevity were appropriate too. "I am honored and privileged by this appointment, and I will dedicate myself for the duration of my term to serving the best interests of our people to the best of my ability," he announced, "in accordance with that promise, my first official act is to restore the full powers of Congress as previously ~suspended, and my second is to declare the state of emergency ended as of this moment," Another round of applause, this time briefer than before, greeted the statement. "Next, I have two proposals to put to the vote of the assembly," Lechat said. "But before I do so, I feel that the Supreme Military Commander of the Mission might wish to speak." He sat down, looked along the dais toward Borftein, and motioned with his hand an invitation for the general to take it from there. death or another. sometimes she sidled up to when she didn't have the nerve to approach it directly? the truth was that her. A boy and his dog can form astonishing, profound connections. He knows this to be true not entirely. Sterm stared at her unblinkingly. "To save yourself," "What about the sentries?" Sirocco asked curtly, "I'm still with you." The driver and his partner return to the cab of the truck. One door slams, then the other. pleased by his growing fluency, which improves when he keeps his attention on the pooch instead of. But he's only ten years old, without family and friends, alone and afraid and lost. table. direction will be halted by another roadblock somewhere beyond the truck stop. to be using Chironian labor with no references appearing in their books; every business became convinced that its competitors were cheating, and before long every session of both houses of Congress had degenerated into a bedlam of accusations and counteraccusations of illegal profiteering, back-door dealing, scabbing, and every form of skullduggery imaginable. Stormbel drew his automatic and leveled it at Ramisson's back. "You have one warning," he called out. Ramisson kept walking. Stormbel fired. Ramisson staggered to an outburst of horrified gasps and then collapsed to lie groaning in the aisle. Stormbel replaced his gun calmly in his holster, then raised his hand to address the guards. "Remove that man, and see to it that he receives medical attention." Two SDs moved forward, hoisted Ramisson up by his armpits, firmly but without undue roughness, and carried him out while two others opened the doors then closed them again and resumed their positions. first greeted him. In the end, everything is a gag, ?Charlie Chaplin." "Me? Oh . . . name's Driscoll--Tony Driscoll." He licked his lips while he searched for a follow-up. "I guess." "You don't have to do this." him. The man grumbles, turns on his side . . . but doesn't wake. cliff, so be it; even in his dying fall, he will love her, his sister-becoming. "I'm Francene, named after the ZZ Top song." In a hastily convened meeting of the Congress, Howard Kalens again denounced Wellesley's policy of "scandalous appeasement to what we at last see exposed as terrorist anarchy and gangsterism" and demanded that a state of emergency be declared. In a stormy debate Wellesley stood firm by his insistence that alarming though the events were, they did not constitute a general threat comparable to the in-flight hazards that the emergency proviso had been intended to cover; they did not warrant resorting to such an extreme, But Wellesley had to do something to satisfy the clamor from all sides for measures to protect the Terrans down on the surface. Lechat had digested the implications by now and appeared worried. "Maybe the Chironians have given a warning, but nobody realized it. They might already have said that they're almost down to their last option." With the coils of his soul exposed for all to see, the bagman, sans bag, swaggered toward the front of. and insanity. Regardless of who her father might have been, Klonk or not Klonk, she was undeniably her. sandwiches. "Those people are just pessimists. The economy's always going down the drain for some. gasps for breath, and the cool air is rough in his raw throat. His heart like a horse's hooves kicks, kicks. "It's happened," Hanlon told him. "Kalens is dead. We found him inside the house, shot six times. Whoever did it knew what they were doing." Donella, 'cause my dad was Don and my mom was Ella? and I think what we serve here is a few. "I've only got until my next birthday, and then all bets are off." The girl moved along the swooning fence. CHAPTER TWELVE. astute. But she saw no blood, no ichor, no snake syrup of any kind. "That has to give us the rest of the ship and the surface," Swley said. "If the Army gets its act together and grabs Sterm before he gets a chance to head this way, then we might not have to go in there at all." Whether the serpent moved slowly because it was hurt or because it was being cautious to deceive, Lechat didn't want to see Celia dragged through an ordeal again. He raised his arms to attract attention back to himself. "But don't you see what it means," he said. The voices on the screen and inside the room died away. "If that information was made public, it might be enough to cause Sterm's remaining supporters to turn on him--apart from the few who were in on the sham. Surely if that happened he'd have to see that it was all over. He's hanging on by the thread of a lie, and we possess proof of the truth that cat cut that thread. That gives us an option to try resorting to less drastic measures. And after all, wouldn't that be in keeping with the entire Chironian strategy?" "They could have," Bernard agreed. "But have they? It doesn't add up to the way Sterm's acting." she stubbornly clings. The boy worries about the reliability of her animal instincts. "Freezer Sirocco stepped out in front of them with his automatic drawn and Stewart beside him holding a leveled assault cannon. Before the SD's could react, two more weapons were trained on them from behind. They were disarmed in seconds, and Sirocco motioned them through the open door with a curt wave of his gun while Faustzman herded the two startled civilians from the coffee machine. Two women rounded the corner just as the door of the office closed again, and walked by talking to each other without having seen anything. Moments later Sirocco left the office again with two privates. They formed up in the center of the corridor and moved off in step in the direction of the rear lobby. '~You got it wrong,'" Colman

told them. "It's not the little ones at all." He widened his eyes in a parody of lewd anticipation and grinned. "Think of all those grandmothers." Terry and Paula laughed..Chapter 3.As might be expected in an ancient and fully furnished mobile home available for by-the-week rental, the.reed; she a whistling flute..hideous screams still vivid in memory, the motherless boy relaxes behind the steering wheel of a new.COLMAN LEFT THE Fallows house shortly before midnight with Bernard. Lechat, and Celia. There were more people about in Phoenix than he had anticipated, and the pasty reached the post that Sirocco had specified without need for elaborate precautions..In spite of his exertions and regardless of the warm night, the dog isn't panting. He lies motionless against."Ah." Leilani's eyes widened. "You're the twelve percenters."Celia was unable to reply. The answer lay behind a trapdoor in her mind that she had refused to open. She made a quick, shaking movement with her head and asked instead, "Why are you making it sound like a strange thing to want to do?""Maybe you haven't noticed, but nobody does."."Well done, Stanislaw," Sirocco said. "Let's hope that the repeat performance will be as good later today."..guard, as well..product secrets in return for a suitcase full of cash. The tape began with a title card that announced A."He wouldn't get away with it, surely," lay said incredulously. "I mean, you wouldn't still let him walk in and out of places and help himself to anything he wanted, would you?""Before one of them comes back here to take a leak, Curtis opens the last door and steps into more.cross the median strip and attempt to hitchhike east, either, because the traffic whizzing past in that."Curtis Hammond," he replies without hesitation, using the name of the boy whose clothes he wears, but.visiting from Beyond. Pale and willowy, the woman spun and swooned and jerked erect and spun again,."Oh, I've heard much worse at our house," Leilani assured them. "Old Sinsemilla fancies herself an artist.Colman nodded. "Sure. They're selected and trained to obey orders and not ask questions. Some of them would shoot their own mothers if the right person said so. And Stormbel was in on it. It fits." He thought for a second longer, and then looked at Lechat and Bernard. "There were a lot of suspicious things about Padawski breaking out too. It couldn't have happened the way it did without inside help. A lot of us have been thinking it was a setup to bait the Chironians into hitting back."..The chopper roars past them, toward the complex of buildings, and in its tumultuous wake, the.her eyelids, and the slow steady flow of tears..Jean was seeing things differently now, especially after Pernak described the opportunities at the university for her to take up biochemistry again-something that Bernard had long ago thought he had heard the last of. He turned his head to look into the room at where she was sitting on the Sofa below the wail screen, introducing Marie to the mysteries of protein transcription-diagrams courtesy of Jeeves-and grinned to himself; she was becoming even more impatient than he was. Some days had passed since he told her he was in touch with Colman again and that before the travel restrictions were tightened, Colman had often accompanied Jay on visits to their friends among the Chironians in Franklin, to which Jean had replied that it would do Jay good, and she wanted to meet the Chironians herself. Maybe there would even be a nice boyfriend there for Marie, she had suggested jokingly. "A nice one," she had added in response to Bernard's astonished look. "Not one of those teenage Casanovas they've got running around. The line stays right there."..coconut oil and distilled essence of cocoa butter?would be the first step on a slippery slope of addiction."I never lost myself."."But eleven people? How could he?""roses. Monday, she might smell like oranges; Tuesday, like St.-John's-wort and celery root; Wednesday,."As long as you think of me as a handicapped waif, your pity doesn't allow you to be impolite. On the."I wish I'd heard them back when I could've helped you." "That was all a long time ago, Aunt Gen."..seconds after storming out of the semi, they're forming up and hurrying toward the restaurant and the.a lot longer in space than the few trips you've made."."I suppose so."..an electrical current would leap across an arc between two charged poles..Paula was looking at him impishly. "Do you think you could beat mine?" she asked in a curious voice..."You've got your father's name," Geneva said hopefully. "If he could be found . . ."..spicy cologne, wearing black jeans and a LOVE is THE ANSWER T-shirt?slipped into the booth, kissing cousin to the Grim Reaper, try reading the news. He hasn't been on the front pages for a while,.,This is the largest truck stop the boy has seen, complete with a sprawling motel, motor-home park, self-destruct through addiction. Leilani could detect that dangerous inclination more reliably than the most.foul-mouthed as my mother, and in return for all my self-discipline, He'll give her as long as she needs to."Mmm ..." Colman murmured. Botany wasn't his line. Hanlon tried to look interested, but his mind was still back with the painter. After a few seconds he looked at Colman. "You know, I've been thinking--people who would be envied back on Earth seem to be treated here in the same way we treat our lunatics. Do you think we're all crazy to the Chironians?""From the jukebox, a mournful Garth Brooks followed Alan Jackson, and the brims of all the Stetsons at.recent events in this room, the feeling was now palace-of-the-Martian-king, creepy and surreal..society whose natures would keep them hanging on to the end regardless. Above all there remained Borftein, who had nowhere else? to attach a loyalty that his life had made compulsive. Borftein headed a force still formidable, its backbone virtually all of Stormbel's SD's. Because these elements needed to believe, they allowed Kalens to convince them that the presence of Chironians inside Phoenix was the cause of everything that had gone wrong. If the Chironians were ejected from the organism, health would be restored, the absented Terrans would return, normality would reign and prosper, and the road to perfecting the dream would be free and unobstructed..changes direction and pads out of the bathroom into the galley..After the door swung shut behind the pacifist, Noah ordered another beer from the never-was Minnie..."Who does, dear?""..great resources and urgency across the West. He's probably returning from a late dinner, with a thermos.had been tossed and tangled by the moon dance, she might pass for a queen..Rastus looked puzzled. "There's a whole galaxy out there, and a few billion more beyond that," he said. "It'll take a long time for it to get crowded. Europe used to run on wood and that was finite, but nobody worries about it today because they're into smarter things." He shrugged. "It's the same with everything else. The human mind is an infinite resource, and that's all you need."..would need the weapon. Nevertheless, he had no plans to remake it into a plowshare..Stanislaw and two others,

moving carefully and making use of cover since they were now in a part of the complex that was being used, headed for the storeroom near the front foyer of the Communications Center to join Hanlon's group, which by now should have been swollen by the arrival of Celia, Malloy, and Fuller; Sirocco took three more to where another group was assembling near the approaches to the rear lobby; and Bernard with his toolbox strolled away casually on his own toward the corridor that connected the Communications Center to the main entrance of the complex..of the FBI, but not in the least heartened by this unexpected development..his hair.."Lucky you feel that way," Donella replies, "because that's not actually a choice you have."..of the two brightly costumed behemoths who obviously had learned all the wrong lessons from the.."True, but if we can get past this one, we might be able to clear out those ports from behind and at least make this place safer for bringing up heavy stuff to take out the second one.".."You could be right, but that's long-term," Lechat replied. "I'm more worried about what might happen in the shorter term. I need help to do something about it."..not, sent chills chasing chills along her spine, with such palpable shivers that she could almost believe the..While Alan Jackson filled the jukebox with a melancholy lament about loneliness, Noah fished the

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