

The Count Of Monte Cristo

Screenplay

By

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(Based on the classic novel of Alexander Dumas)

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FADE IN:

EXT.- LONG SHOT - THE ISLAND OF ELBA - NIGHT

Lit by the MOONLIGHT and the PHOSPHORESCENCE of the waves crashing against it. OVER this the FOLLOWING SCROLLS PAST:

IN THE YEAR 1814, THE FRENCH
EMPEROR, NAPOLEON BONAPARTE,
WAS DEFEATED BY THE ALLIED
ARMIES AND EXILED TO THE TINY
ISLAND OF ELBA.

THOUGH HE HAD THE FREEDOM OF
THE ISLAND, NAPOLEON WAS
CLOSELY GUARDED BY THE
BRITISH, WHO, GREATLY FEARING
A RESCUE ATTEMPT, STOOD READY
TO SHOOT ANYONE WHO CAME
ASHORE....

SCROLL ENDS

and we SEE a LONGBOAT glide from BEHIND CAMERA TOWARD the
ISLAND.

REVERSE - THE LONGBOAT

THREE OARSMAN on either side; the prostrate form of a MAN,
lying UNCONSCIOUS toward the stern...and two YOUNG MEN at the
stern itself...one sitting on the stern slat, the other
STANDING at the tiller...

THE CAMERA PUSHES IN on the young man STANDING at the tiller,
EDMUND DANTES, nineteen, handsome in the way people are, who
have no idea they are...But young as he is, he is clearly in
charge as, jaw set, he prepares to bring the longboat through
the surf.

As soon as the LONGBOAT runs up onto the beach, Edmund and
the other young man, his boyhood friend, FERNAND MONDEGO,
darkly handsome himself, vault out of the boat.

EDMUND

(to one of the oarsmen who now
moves to the tiller)

It's best if you remain beyond the reef,
until we obtain permission from the
Authorities to come ashore.

CONTINUED:

Edmund and Fernand PUT THEIR SHOULDERS to the BOW of the longboat, and push it off into the water. They turn and start WALKING inland.

FERNAND

I tell you again, Edmund, as M. Morell's representative on this voyage...

EDMUND

(laughing out loud)

Spare me, Fernand. We both know that M. Morell gave you that job because your father wanted to keep you out of the taverns. Rather ironic when one realizes that all you've done on the ship is drink.

FERNAND

What else was I supposed to do on that blasted boat? Work? I'm the son of a Count for God's sake!

EDMUND

The second son.

FERNAND

(ruefully)

You needn't remind me.

EDMUND

Calm yourself, Fernand, everything will turn out alright.

FERNAND

You know, under normal circumstances, I find your chronic optimism merely nauseating...but in this case, it could get us both shot. Supposing the British decide we're trying to rescue the Emperor!

Edmund STOPS for a moment, and purposefully affects his most pleasant SMILE.

EDMUND

Fernand...use your eyes. Do I look like an "Emperor Rescuer"?

FERNAND

(indicating to Edmund something behind him)

Evidently they think so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Edmund TURNS and SEES in the distance, lit by the moon, a company of mounted DRAGOONS, GALLOPING toward them. Fernand, HEARING a faint SHOUT behind his own back, causes him to TURN and SEE yet another TROOP OF DRAGOONS GALLOPING TOWARD THEM from the OPPOSITE DIRECTION! Fernand's HAND reflexively goes for his SWORD, but Edmund RESTRAINS HIM.

EDMUND

Easy, Fernand...They're just doing their job.

FERNAND

(laying it out as if his friend were an idiot)

Edmund...Their job is to kill us!

EDMUND

Nonsense. When I tell them about...

He is interrupted by the SOUND of a GUNSHOT, and a PISTOL BALL WHIZZING past his EAR...They LOOK at each other silently, for a beat...and then

EDMUND (cont'd)

(with a short bow)

...I put myself entirely in your hands.

FERNAND

(looking quickly around for a safe haven)

Thank you.

He INDICATES a FORMATION of LARGE BOULDERS, at the base of a CLIFF, some hundred yards inland.

FERNAND (cont'd)

...Those rocks, quickly!

Both of them BOLT for the rocks, as the DRAGOON companies race down the beach toward each other, finally BLENDING and THUNDERING INLAND TOGETHER.

Meanwhile Fernand and Edmund desperately SCRAMBLE OVER, AROUND, AND THROUGH THE ROCKS, finally SQUEEZING, one at a time, BETWEEN TWO BOULDERS that allows entrance to a CLEARING at the FOOT OF THE CLIFF.

Both hastily GLANCE at a possible escape route: the BOULDERS on either side that STEP UP TO THE TOP OF THE CLIFF, but before they can attempt to climb them, the SOUND of a SCABBARD clinking against a rock, bids them TURN to witness the arrival of the first DRAGOON, SQUEEZING through the TWO

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BOULDERS! Fernand DRAWS a double-barreled PISTOL and TOSSES it to Edmund.

FERNAND (cont'd)
(drawing his sword)
I'll take this one. You fire each of the two barrels and then get out of the way!

EDMUND
(insulted, as he cocks both hammers)
I do not have to get out of the way! I still have my sword!

FERNAND
(as he engages the first dragoon)
Please. In your hand, a mutton leg would be more dangerous.

Edmund is considering a come-back, but his attention is drawn to a SECOND DRAGOON, EMERGING from the GAP, at whom Edmund promptly FIRES...and MISSES!

Luckily, Fernand has DISPOSED of the FIRST DRAGOON, and so can engage Edmund's former target, the SECOND DRAGOON, which he does.

A THIRD DRAGOON now squeezes through. Edmund takes CAREFUL AIM this time...and FIRES...and STILL MISSES! Fernand THROWS him a QUICK LOOK of DISGUST, right before KILLING the SECOND DRAGOON, and TURNS just quickly enough to PARRY the onslaught of the THIRD DRAGOON

Edmund now goes for his sword in preparation for new arrivals, but stops himself, knowing he is no master swordsman. Instead, he desperately casts about for some way to help...and HITS UPON IT!

OUTSIDE THE CLEARING - ON A BUNCH OF DRAGOONS

coming up on THE TWO BOULDERS, the GAP now CLOSED by a COMRADE who FACES THEM and POINTS to the RIGHT.

THE FIRST DRAGOON (EDMUND'S VOICE)
Nothing here! They went off to the right.

The DRAGOONS veer RIGHT.

BACK TO EDMUND

standing BEHIND the BODY of the FIRST DRAGOON, propping him up, and operating his arm. Having RUN-THROUGH the THIRD DRAGOON, Fernand joins him.

FERNAND (cont'd)

Very clever. But how long do you think it's going to take, before they realize they were listening to a dead man.

EDMUND

(smiling)

Who knows? They're British.

SUDDENLY, the propped-up CORPSE FLIES BACKWARD, KNOCKING Edmund on his BACK. A LIVE DRAGOON with a PISTOL, steps through the GAP and AIMS it at Fernand.

Edmund, still on his BACK, manages to KICK the pistol out of the Dragoon's hand, forcing the SHOT to go wild, and allowing Fernand to SKEWER him...

FERNAND (cont'd)

(gesturing for Edmund to run past him so he can watch their rear)

C'mon...up the cliff!

Edmund starts SCRAMBLING up the ROCKS on the right side of the clearing. Fernand, a number of yards, behind him, just begins to mount the rocks, when the DRAGOONS start SQUEEZING through in earnest, taking shots at both men!

EDMUND

on ALL FOURS, crawling from the ROCKS onto the CLIFF. He LOOKS to his LEFT along the CLIFF.

EDMUND'S POV - SEVERAL COMPANIES OF RED-COATED FOOT SOLDIERS in the DISTANCE, running toward them.

BACK TO EDMUND

who, still on all fours, LOOKS back on Fernand, to tell him what he SEES and is ASTOUNDED to find

FERNAND KNEELING

his head DOWN. Bullets PUFFING around him.

BACK TO EDMUND

EDMUND
(mistakenly)
Fernand, what are you doing?? This is no
time for prayers!!

He TURNS to start CRAWLING again but STOPS SHORT when his
FACE comes against the TOE of a BOOT. He LOOKS UP the rest of
the MAN standing before him...and into the EYES of NAPOLEON
BONAPARTE.

Napoleon LOOKS DOWN impassively on Edmund, and eyes still
fixed on him, RAISES HIS ARM to halt the FIRING.

NAPOLEON
(yelling down to the dragoons)
Lt. Graypool!...If your thirst for gore
demands the death of these poor fools,
then by all means shoot them...But do so
with the knowledge that they are no
Agents of mine!

ON LT. GRAYPOOL

an arrogant young officer of twenty-five, standing in the
CLEARING, looking up at the Emperor.

LT. GRAYPOOL
And the proof of that, sir...would be
what?

NAPOLEON (cont'd)
(under his breath, to Edmund)
He has a point. Who are you two, anyway?

In a mild STATE OF SHOCK, Edmund starts to reply while still
on his HANDS AND KNEES, but Napoleon gestures him up,
INDICATING that Fernand may get off his KNEE as well.

EDMUND
I am Edmund Dantes, Your Majesty, First
Mate of the Merchant Ship, "Pharaon" on
our way home to Marseilles....
(indicating Fernand)
...And this is the Shipowner's
Representative, M. Fernand Mondego, son
of the Count Mondego.

Fernand BOWS.

CONTINUED:

EDMUND (cont'd)

Our Captain has contracted Brain Fever, and lies unconscious in a longboat off-shore! We were in sore need of medical help...and assuming there must be a physician attending Your Majesty, we put in here.

NAPOLEON

I see...

(yelling again to Graypool)

...They are sailors whose Captain has come down with Brain Fever and lies in a state of coma!

LT. GRAYPOOL

(ya can't fool him)

So they say!

NAPOLEON

(confiding once again to

Edmund, referring to Graypool)

The brain of a Plum Pudding...Tell me, if we let that officer scratch the arm of your Captain with a dagger, would your Captain move in any way?

EDMUND

(with all his heart)

I'd give my life, if he would.

NAPOLEON

(very serious)

I assure you, if he does, you will.

INT. NAPOLEON'S COTTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Napoleon, Lt. Graypool, Edmund and Fernand and a handful of aides and dragoons are assembled around the UNCONSCIOUS CAPTAIN who lies upon a SOFA. Napoleon now GESTURES to Graypool to test his suspicions.

Edmund tenderly ROLLS UP the sleeve of his Captain, as Graypool draws his DAGGER.

EDMUND

(to Graypool)

Remember, just a scratch.

Graypool LOOKS at Edmund without expression and then puts the DAGGER completely THROUGH THE CAPTAINS ARM!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Edmund is STUNNED at the unnecessary cruelty and LURCHES FORWARD, but Fernand HOLDS HIM BACK. Graypool draws out his knife, sheathes it and contemplates the MOTIONLESS CAPTAIN. Finally he turns to the still RESTRAINED Edmund.

LT. GRAYPOOL

That was for the three men who lie back
in the rocks.

And with a short bow to Napoleon, Graypool turns on his heel and LEAVES. Fernand arches an enquiring eyebrow at Edmund who indicates that his temper is in control, allowing Fernand to RELEASE him.

EDMUND

(just managing to compose
himself)

...I am greatly in your debt, Your
Majesty...And now if you would be kind
enough to call your physician...

NAPOLEON

He should be here by sunrise. In the
meantime, I recommend a nap. We have all
had an eventful evening.

INT. NAPOLEON'S COTTAGE - A HALF HOUR LATER

THE LIGHTS ARE OUT. Fernand is ASLEEP on a CHAISE, the
Captain still lies on the SOFA, but in the ARMCHAIR, Edmund
sits upright and ALERT.

NAPOLEON (O.S.)

(a whisper)

As long as you are still awake, M.
Dantes...

Edmund SEES Napoleon's form outlined against the light of a
doorway.

NAPOLEON (cont'd)

...I wonder if you'd accompany me on a
little stroll

Edmund is a little CONFUSED, but nonetheless rises from the
chair.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON NAPOLEON AND EDMUND

as they walk together in SILENCE. Edmund steals a GLANCE at Napoleon in his famous cloak and hat...and he literally SHAKES HIS HEAD in DISBELIEF to be side by side with the GREATEST MAN IN HISTORY. Finally...

NAPOLEON

I couldn't help but be moved by how protective you were of your Captain.

EDMUND

He is more than a Captain to me, Your Majesty. Since the day I signed on as a Cabin Boy, Capt. LeClerc has been a rare and loyal friend.

NAPOLEON

Loyal friends are rare indeed. In fact it is of one them I wish to speak...I have written a rather sentimental letter to an old comrade in Marseilles. It is a side of me I prefer the British not see, and since they have a habit of opening my mail, I wonder if you would deliver it for me.

Edmund HESITATES for a moment, causing Napoleon to speak plainly.

NAPOLEON

It is totally innocent, I assure you...But more important, it is the price I demand for the use of my physician.

EDMUND

(after a beat)

Then I, of course, agree.

NAPOLEON

Nor do I wish this letter's existence to be known to anyone else...not even your boon companion back there. I have left France a Vision of Me that will sustain her in the difficult times ahead. There are many who would pay much to turn that Vision into one of a man blubbing in his cups, crying to his cronies of What Might Have Been. You understand?

EDMUND

I do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAPOLEON

And you will deliver this letter,
regardless of whether my doctor can save
your captain or not?

EDMUND

I am a man of my word, Your Majesty.

For a beat, Napoleon LOOKS DEEP into Edmund's EYES, and
then...

NAPOLEON

Yes....I believe you are.

CLOSE ON EDMUND - AROUND DAWN

as he SLEEPS in an armchair. Suddenly, Napoleon's MARSHAL'S
BATON is jabbed into Edmund's chest, waking him.

NAPOLEON

Your Captain has been dead for half-an-
hour...Its time you were on your way!

Edmund looks across the room at his captain, lying on the
sofa, and then turns back to Napoleon.

EDMUND

How can you be sure? Did you listen for
his heart?

NAPOLEON

(dryly)

When you've walked upon as many
battlefields as I, you FEEL the dead.

Edmund gets up from his chair, rubbing his eyes. Napoleon,
taking a quick, cautionary, look around, and unsatisfied with
the privacy situation, BECKONS Edmund to step OUTSIDE with
him.

The SOUND of the door CLOSING, AWAKENS Fernand, who gets up,
arches the creaks out of his back, and happens to turn to the
WINDOW, where, outside, he SEES Napoleon HAND Edmund a
LETTER, and then CLASP his SHOULDER. SEEING Edmund now
RETURNING to the HOUSE, Fernand quickly re-seats himself on
the Chaise, pretending that he has just risen.

Edmund ENTERS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FERNAND
(pretending to wipe the sleep
from his eyes)
Where have you been?

EDMUND
I awoke to find that our Captain had died
in the night...
(indicating the outside, and
lying)
I...I wanted to be by myself.

A beat while Fernand searches Edmund's facing trying to
figure out what this is all about...Finally, he decides to
put it all aside for now.

FERNAND
Well...our Captain has gone to a happier
place.

EDMUND
(smiling sadly)
As will we...Home, Fernand...to
Marseilles.

CUT TO:

EXT.- LONG SHOT - THE LONG BOAT - DAY

carrying Edmund, Fernand and the six seaman, pulling for the
Pharaon.

CLOSE ON NAPOLEON IN PROFILE

standing on a CLIFF, watching the LONG BOAT.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

A SILLHOUETTE OF NAPOLEON'S HEAD

We WIDEN TO SEE that it is cast ON THE WALL by the carved
BRASS HANDLE of a WALKING-STICK...held aloft by M.VILLEFORT,
Marseilles' PREFECT OF POLICE, thirty. He STANDS behind his
desk in his STUDY, REVILING the OLD GENTLEMAN who is before
him, his father, COLONEL VILLEFORT, who despite his sixty-
five years, is MORE YOUTHFUL than his son.

VILLEFORT
(referring to the walking-
stick)
Things like this cannot continue!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL VILLEFORT
(enjoying getting his son's
goat))
And yet they do. Perhaps its a Scientific
Phenomenon.

VILLEFORT
(through gritted teeth))
You listen to me! I'm the Prefect Of
Police, an Official of the New Regime!...
And I cannot afford to have my own father
mixed up in treasonous affairs!

He BANGS the WALKING-STICK on the edge of his DESK for
emphasis...and leaves it on the desk-top...The Colonel
retrieves it, EXAMINING it for damage as he speaks.

COLONEL VILLEFORT
(contemptuously)
You know, it continues to amaze me that
someone like me, in concert with as
vivacious a woman as your late mother,
should have produced such a thin-blooded
flounder as you.

VILLEFORT
(for all his pomposity, a
little hurt)
I'm sorry I disappoint you.

COLONEL VILLEFORT
(ruefully)
You're sorry!...
(remembering his excitement)
You say you heard that M .Morell's ship
stopped at Elba?...Did they see the
Emperor? Is he well?...Did they speak
to...?

A WOMAN (O.S.)
STOP IT, YOU OLD RUIN!

Both men WHIP their HEADS around to the doorway, to see, in
RIDING CLOTHES, Villefort's beautiful wife, VALENTINA, twenty-
nine. She STRIDES up to the OLD MAN.

VALENTINA
Napoleon Bonaparte is no longer Emperor
of Anything...and if you publicly refer
to him as Emperor, you run an excellent
chance of being arrested and ruining our
entire family... all because of your
IDIOTIC sympathies!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COLONEL VILLEFORT

(with contempt)

At least I HAVE sympathies...as opposed to you both who are only driven by ambition!

VILLEFORT

Please, both of you! We are a family for God's sake! Look, Father, all Valentina is saying is that as a family our fates are intertwined and that an indiscretion by one member can cause a scandal for all. Surely, you can see that!

COLONEL VILLEFORT

I am an Old Ruin...I don't see as well as I used to.

(bowing stiffly to Valentina)

You will excuse me.

He LEAVES, closing the door behind him. Valentina LOOKS DAGGERS after him.

VALENTINA

That man is a danger to all of us! Imagine what would happen if Napoleon escaped and the King, in his fear, ordered the arrest of every known Bonapartist in the country. Not only would your father be thrown in jail, but we would be lucky not to be thrown into the cell with him!

Villefort, in his exasperation, runs his hands through his hair and begins to PACE.

VILLEFORT

I know...and I am at my wit's end thinking of what to do about it...I continually receive reports of his weekly meetings with his lunatic cronies... Secret Handshakes...Code Names!...

(with mock fright)

...Oh, yes, Valentina, beware... that withered old spectre you think is simply your father-in-law, fancies himself the mysterious M. Clarion...The Right Arm Of The Emperor!!

VALENTINA

As if Napoleon even knew he existed! I tell you, if he keeps this up, we could all wind up in the Chateau D'If!...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VILLEFORT
(throwing up his hands)
...But what can I do!!

VALENTINA
(interrupting in a voice of
cold steel)
Find another way to deal with
him...before he destroys us both!

Villefort LOOKS at his wife in UNEASY PUZZLEMENT...AND OFF
HIS REACTION

CUT TO:

EXT. A STREET - AT THE SAME TIME - DAY

Edmund, and Fernand, the former carrying a PARCEL, make their way through the crowded street to a prosperous-looking storefront bearing the sign, MORELL AND CO. They are about to enter when a FIVE YEAR OLD GIRL, M. Morell's granddaughter, JULIANNE, DASHES through the door and flies into Edmund's ARMS.

JULIANNE
Oh, Edmund! I missed you so much!

EDMUND
(laughing)
And I missed you. We would've been back sooner...but our ship was attacked by Pirates.

Fernand ROLLS HIS EYES.

JULIANNE
(flabbergasted)
You were? Did you run them through?

FERNAND
(derisively)
Hah!

Edmund gives Fernand a DIRTY LOOK.

EDMUND
Only ten or twelve...I would've killed the Pirate Captain as well but he gave me something to spare his life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIANNE

What?

Edmund puts her down, and rips open the PARCEL.

EDMUND

This!

He places a beautiful, tiny, SPANISH MANTILLA, over her head and shoulders. She fairly SWOONS with delight.

All three enter the office and are immediately greeted by M. Morell, a man of about sixty, who rushes to them.

M. MORELL

(embracing Edmund)

Edmund, my boy!

(turning to shake Fernand's hand)

...And Fernand, how are you?

EXT. ON A RADIANT YOUNG WOMAN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Eighteen and just NATURALLY EXQUISITE, she is making her way through the crowd when she SEES Fernand step out of the Office and off the sidewalk.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

(shouting)

Fernand!

FERNAND

(seeing her and shouting)

Mercedes!

They RUN toward each other and EMBRACE.

MERCEDES

You look wonderful! Like a real sailor.

FERNAND

(sarcastically)

How delightful.

(drinking her in)

You look wonderful too.

MERCEDES

Where's Edmund?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FERNAND

He and M. Morell had the accounts to go over...so I was delighted to be dismissed.

Mercedes FACE FALLS.

FERNAND

(consoling her)

Now, Mercedes, you waited months, you can wait a few minutes longer...

(reaching for her hand)

Come...Edmund said we should wait for him on our Hillside.

EXT. A HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING MARSEILLES - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Fernand and Mercedes have just sat down on the grass, she still spreading and smoothing her skirt...he, laying back on one elbow, a twig in his mouth, appreciating her.

FERNAND

So...what did you do all time we were away?

MERCEDES

Think about Edmund mostly...and our wedding day.

FERNAND

(a weary sigh)

Of course...

(shaking his head in wonderment)

I must say, you amaze me.

MERCEDES

(a little indignant)

Why?

FERNAND

Because you can nourish yourself now by dreaming of a day that we both know must lie far, far into the future. After all, Edmund already supports an invalid father on a First Mate's pay, How long must you wait til he can also afford a wife?

MERCEDES

(happily)

Two years' time! That's all! By then, Edmund will have his Master's

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES (cont'd)

Papers...and so, with his Captain's share-of-the-profits...!

FERNAND

(again shaking his head in wonderment)

Now there you have it, the difference between us: You and Edmund look at two years and see only a "moment"....I look at a moment and see an "eternity"...I couldn't wait two years for anything...let alone a bride like you.

Mercedes is a little surprised at the flirtation...but she is flattered nonetheless.

MERCEDES

(after a beat)

Why, Fernand! I'll need some time to examine it, of course, but I believe you've given me a compliment.

Fernand NODS GALLANTLY. As she TURNS her profile to him, he REGARDS her for a moment, with an appreciation that is more than PLATONIC. He decides to ask a CRUCIAL QUESTION, in the guise of HUMOR, to protect his retreat.

FERNAND

(a mock sigh)

Indeed, I don't think I'll ever understand why a woman like you should settle for a man whose highest soaring hope is to be the Master Of A Small Merchantman. A man whose very living depends on his absence from you...Why that, when you can marry...me?

Mercedes LOOKS at Fernand for the barest beat, until she REALIZES(ERRONEOUSLY) that he is KIDDING. A SMILE spreads over her face and she dissolves in GOOD-NATURED LAUGHTER.

FERNAND (cont'd)

(pretending to laugh with her)

Wait a moment...it's not that wrong-headed a notion!

MERCEDES

(still laughing)

Yes it is, and you know it!

(finally catching her breath)

...Can you imagine the two of us!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FERNAND

(keeping the smile going)
I thought that might amuse you...
(grateful to catch sight of
Edmund climbing the hill)
...Look, there's Edmund!

She jumps up and rushes down into his arms, while Fernand
SMILES SADLY.

Edmund and Mercedes join Fernand who now stands up.

FERNAND

So, what did the Old Man want with you?

Edmund LOOKS from Fernand to Mercedes and back again...and
then

EDMUND

You are looking at the new Captain of the
Pharaon!

Mercedes jumps into his arms and KISSES Edmund wildly. Their
pre-occupation with each other allows Fernand's FACE to
DARKEN undetected for a few seconds, before managing a BROAD
SMILE and CLAPPING EDMOND several times upon the BACK..

DISSOLVE TO:

EDMUND AND MERCEDES ON THE HILLSIDE - LATER IN THE DAY

as they sit, WATCHING Fernand turn and wave one last time,
before he continues down the hill. Mercedes NOTICES that
Edmund is playing with the back of HIS HAIR, CURLING IT
AROUND HIS FINGER.

MERCEDES

What are you thinking so hard about?

EDMUND

What makes you think I'm thinking at all.

MERCEDES

Ever since we were children, you've
played with the back of your hair when
something was on your mind.

EDMUND (cont'd)

(smiling at her knowledge of
him)

...Well...since you ask, I'm feeling
badly about Fernand. He seemed a little
sad today, and I believe I know why.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES

(just adoring him for caring so
much about a friend)

Why?

EDMUND

I think he looks at us and how we have
everything, and he wonders when will that
happen to him?

MERCEDES

(absolutely consumed by love)
Only you would have a heart great enough
to pity the son of a Count.

EDMUND

I pity anyone who doesn't have you.

MERCEDES

(pretending to be sarcastic,
but very pleased with that
response)

My, we're being gallant today.

EDMUND

(smiling but then getting
serious, as he plays with her
hair)

I feel badly about you too...
You know, I won't actually receive my
Captain's Share until after the Pharaon's
next voyage...And here you are without
even an engagement ring.

MERCEDES

Poor me...
(laughing)
Watch!

She PULLS his KNIFE from the sheath at his side and with it
expertly FLICKS a thin STRIP of SILK from the Mariner's
NECKERCHIEF he WEARS.

EDMUND

What are you doing??

In one motion, she TWISTS the STRIP into a delicate tight
BRAID, KNOTS it, and SLIPS it around her FINGER.

MERCEDES

Here is my engagement ring! And no matter
how rich we become, you will never see it
off my finger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He LOOKS at her, CHARMED beyond words.

EDMUND

I'll never see it at all...if it means
taking my eyes from your face.

MERCEDES

(a pause, and then with passion
beginning to thicken her
voice)

Now you've done it.

EDMUND

(with a voice similarly
effected)

That was my intention.

And he DRAWS her to him, and lays her down on the grass.

INT. A DRESSMAKER'S SHOP - TWO WEEKS LATER - DAY

Mercedes MODELS her BRIDAL GOWN in front of her girlfriends,
as the SEAMSTRESS works on the HEM.

Edmund and Fernand attempt TO ENTER the shop, but raise their
hands in surrender when several of the girls DASH for the
door.

MERCEDES

(yelling to her girlfriends)

Tell Edmund, he should keep away from my
Dress Fitting, unless he wants me at his
Bachelor Party tonight!

After being repulsed at the shop, the boys turn back to the
street, just as Fernand NOTICES a YOUNG MAN in the uniform of
a courier, running out of the Police Prefecture, and
MOUNTING a HORSE.

FERNAND

I wonder what's got that laggard, Etienne
in such a hurry?...Let's see if I can find
out.

Fernand RUNS into the street and SIEZES the reins of
Etienne's horse.

ETIENNE

Out of my way, M. Mondego! I am on the
King's Business!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FERNAND

...And what IS the King's Business exactly?

ETIENNE

What the whole world will know in a few hours...The Devil is loose!

FERNAND

What Devil?

ETIENNE

There is only one Devil...and his name is Bonaparte!

Fernand is STUNNED and lets the reins drop. As Etienne gallops away, Fernand slowly turns to LOOK at Edmund, who is back at the BRIDAL SHOP WINDOW, playfully threatening to re-enter the Shop...And as we look at Fernand's face, we can see a terrible PLAN BEGIN TO FORM.

CUT TO:

INT. A TAVERN - CLOSE ON EDMUND - THAT NIGHT

as he LAYS on the FLOOR, PASSED-OUT! THE CAMERA now TILTS UP to Fernand, who is SITTING on a chair, just a few inches from Edmund's head, alone in the tavern, amidst the debris of a thoroughly ill-spent evening. Fernand BITES OFF the cork of a new WINE BOTTLE, and SPITS it out...It BOUNCES off of Edmund's CHIN, causing his EYES TO POP OPEN.

EDMUND

(from the floor, without moving an inch)

My God, what a party!

After a few beats, Edmund slowly GETS TO HIS FEET, peering at Fernand through one open eye.

EDMUND

And now...I'm going home.

He starts to STAGGER to the DOOR.

FERNAND

(shouting in desperation)

Edmund!

Edmund turns and SMILES DRUNKENLY at Fernand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FERNAND
(a beat, and then rather
wistfully)
We've had some high times
together...haven't we?

EDMUND
(drunkenly poking the air with
his finger)
...And will again!

Edmund turns and walks out the door, while Fernand stares
vacantly at the place where Edmund just stood.

FERNAND
(trance-like)
I doubt it.

EXT. A DARK STREET - NIGHT

Edmund STAGGERS alone, slowly up the street. After a few
steps a PUZZLED expression crosses his face, as he thinks he
HEARS a SOUND...He TURNS and SEES, just a few feet from him,
a CHARGING, MOUNTED HUSSAR...BEARING DOWN on him with a
RAISED SABRE!...And then, as the SABRE FALLS...BLACKNESS!

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE PREFECTURE/VILLEFORT'S OFFICE - CLOSE ON THE
UNCONSCIOUS EDMUND - A HALF HOUR LATER

as he is DASHED with a BUCKET OF WATER. We WIDEN to SEE that
he is seated in a chair, TWO GUARDS flanking him, his hands
tied behind. Villefort is seated at his desk opposite,
RUBBING his eyes in weariness.

Edmund raises his head as he COMES TO.

EDMUND
M. Villefort!

At the sound of his name, Villefort takes his hands from his
eyes and peers intently at Edmund's face for the first time.

VILLEFORT
Who are you? I've seen you somewhere
before.

EDMUND
Of course you have! I'm Edmund Dantes,
First Mate of M. Morell's Ship, Pharaon.
I've brought ship's documents here for
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDMUND (cont'd)
your signature many times. Surely, you
remember!

VILLEFORT
(somewhat troubled that Edmund
sounds so innocent)
I do remember, yes...

Villefort gets up from his chair and begins to PACE.

VILLEFORT
I confess, Dantes that you do not have
the look of a Traitor...

EDMUND
(interrupting in shock)
Traitor? Me?
(attempting to correct what is
obviously a clerical error)
...I am Edmund Dantes, Monsieur..If you
would check...

VILLEFORT (cont'd)
(imperiously)
I assure you, I have checked. You are
indeed the Dantes we want...
(back to business)
...Now, as I was saying, I confess you do
not have the look of a Traitor...but
then, if all Traitors looked like
Traitors, there would be no such thing as
successful Treason.

EDMUND
Bu...But Monsieur, I have committed no
Treason! I have no knowledge of
Politics...Ask anyone!...

VILLEFORT
Yes..well, we shall see...Now, attend me
well, Dantes, for your life may depend on
it...I want you to tell me exactly what
happened when you put in at Elba. Leave
nothing out.

EDMUND
Yes, of course. Our Captain had come down
with Brain Fever...Elba, being the
nearest place that would have a
physician, we came ashore there at night,
with the Captain, myself, a few seaman
and Count Mondego's son, Fernand...Do you
know him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VILLEFORT

He is a recent acquaintance.

EDMUND

Upon landing we were engaged by a coastal patrol of dragoons, when Bonaparte, himself, interceded on our behalf, and took us to his cottage.

VILLEFORT

So you actually SAW Bonaparte?

EDMUND

Yes...

(genuinely curious)

...Is that considered Treason?

VILLEFORT

That depends...Go on.

EDMUND

He said he would be happy to provide a doctor for the captain, if I delivered a letter of his to an old comrade in Marseilles.

VILLEFORT

Did you agree to take the letter?

EDMUND

Yes.

VILLEFORT

So you admit that you agreed to take a letter from Napoleon to a confederate!

EDMUND

Not a confederate...an old comrade...It seemed a harmless request made by, what was now, a harmless man.

VILLEFORT

(dryly)

That "harmless man" you speak of will be shortly marching across Europe, unless Wellington and the Prussians can stop him...I give you a piece of advice, something the Allies should have known: EXECUTE AN ENEMY, AND ONE NIGHT HE MAY APPEAR IN YOUR DREAMS...BUT ONLY EXILE HIM...AND ONE NIGHT HE MAY APPEAR IN YOUR HOUSE!...Did you deliver the letter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EDMUND

No sir. I could not find him here in Marseilles. I even went to the City Clerk's office to look up the name, but to no avail...I still have the letter on me.

VILLEFORT

Give it here.

Edmund takes the LETTER from his BOOT and hands it to Villefort. VILLEFORT EXAMINES the outside and then unseals it, READING its contents silently.

VILLEFORT

Do you realize that this is a letter to Bonaparte's supporters telling them the time and date of when he intended to break out of Elba?

EDMUND

(stunned)

I swear on my mother's grave, I had no idea.

VILLEFORT

(a pregnant beat, and then)

Of course not. If you had, you never would've given me the letter. You would've made up a story about having destroyed it in some way.

Villefort TOSSES the LETTER onto his desk.

VILLEFORT

You are a naive, young fool, Dantes...and God knows how you will survive in this world...but you are no Traitor...You are free to go.

(to the one of the guards
flanking Edmund)

Release his bonds.

One of the guards does so and Villefort dismisses them.

EDMUND

(rubbing his wrists)

Oh, thank you, Monsieur!

Edmund WALKS to the DOOR.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

VILLEFORT

Oh, by the way, Dantes...the man who was to receive the letter...What name was that?

EDMUND

Clarion....The name was M. Clarion.

Villefort STRUGGLES to fight back his SHOCK! CLARION, he knows very well, is the Code Name his own FATHER uses! Napoleon was trying to reach Colonel Villefort himself. In an instant, Villefort realizes what carnage could be wreaked on his own CAREER, not to mention his very LIFE, if this should come out.

VILLEFORT

(managing to keep his voice calm)

You did say...Clarion?

EDMUND

Yes.

VILLEFORT

(nodding)

Thank you...Um...You know, Dantes, its very late, and you've had a rather stressful time...

(gesturing to a side door)

...If you go out this door, my carriage is there to take you home.

EDMUND

Thank you, M. Villefort...I am a little tired.

He crosses to the SIDE DOOR and STEPS OUTSIDE.

EDMUND'S POV - THE CARRIAGE

as it stands, ten yards down the street...Except its not a carriage, its a POLICE PADDY WAGON!

ON EDMUND

whose face barely has time to register his CONFUSION, before he is SEIZED AT EITHER ARM by TWO GUARDS. They PROPEL him toward the PADDY WAGON.

EDMUND

Wait! What are you doing? I'm not under arrest! I've been released! I'm allowed to go home!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIRST GUARD

And so you shall...except from now on
your home is in the Chateau D'If!

At the mention of that famous PRISON, Edmund DIGS IN HIS
HEELS, requiring the assistance of two other guards who are
of a mind to PROPEL him to the REAR DOOR of the wagon.

EDMUND

This is a mistake I tell you! Ask M.
Villefort!

(shouting)

M. VILLEFORT!...M. VILLE...

He manages to twist around, and SEES Villefort STANDING in
the DOORWAY...RELIEF flies across his FACE.

EDMUND

M. VILLEFORT! TELL THESE...

Villefort WALKS BACK into his office, and SHUTS the door
slowly behind him...Edmund is THUNDERSTRUCK.

Edmund has now stopped struggling, obviously resigned to his
fate. However, just as the group comes parallel to the HEADS
OF THE HORSES, Edmund, his hands pinned behind him, uses the
only weapon available to him, and SPITS IN ONE HORSE'S EYE!

The HORSE REARS! For an instant, the guards RELEASE THEIR
GRIP, and Edmund LEAPS ATOP the PADDY WAGON, and into the
seat, SIEZES the REINS and is OFF...unaware, however, that
ONE GUARD has managed to LEAP at the REAR of the WAGON and
GRAB HOLD just as it is leaving!

ON EDMUND

furiously DRIVING THE TEAM through the town. As he does so,
we SEE behind him, the GUARD LIFTING HIMSELF, onto the TOP of
the WAGON, and then POUNCING on Edmund from BEHIND, PULLING
him out of his SEAT.

The REINS DROPPED, the WAGON now goes CAREENING through the
narrow streets, as Edmund and the Guard are locked in a
MORTAL STRUGGLE. Finally, Edmund sends the Guard FLYING off
the WAGON!

EXT. BACK AT THE POLICE PREFECTURE

A DOZEN MOUNTED GUARDS have assembled, and now go GALLOPING
after Edmund.

THE PADDY WAGON

FLYING through the OUTSKIRTS of the city, Edmund, once more in control. The WAGON rattles over a NARROW, HUMPED-BACK, STONE BRIDGE, and STOPS on the FAR SIDE.

Edmund jumps off the WAGON and then leads the horses so that the WAGON is now placed ACROSS the far side of the bridge as an OBSTACLE. He quickly UN-HARNESSES the horses, SLAPS one to send it galloping off to the right, LEAPS upon the other, and GALLOPS off to the left.

ON THE GUARDS

as they START across the BRIDGE at BREAKNECK speed

THE GUARD'S POV - THE PADDY WAGON

as it RISES into VIEW, over the HUMP.

BACK TO THE GUARDS

HORRIFIED...PULLING on their REINS in vain!

CRASH!!!!

CUT TO:

INT. MONDEGO VILLA/LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

as Edmund PACES up and down, A DOOR BANGS open, and Fernand enters, having just been awakened and still STUFFING his SHIRT into his breeches.

FERNAND

My God, Edmund, what's wrong?

EDMUND

Fernand! Where is your father? I need his help!

FERNAND

He's in Paris helping evacuate the Government before Napoleon gets there...Now, just calm down and tell me what happened.

EDMUND

(still breathless)

Right!...Right...

(finally taking a deep breath)

I never told you this, but when we were

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDMUND (cont'd)
on Elba, Napoleon gave me a letter to
deliver to an old comrade...

FERNAND
He did?

EDMUND
Yes, but the letter turned out to be
Treasonous, which of course, I didn't
know...Anyway, M. Villefort somehow found
out about it, and placed me under arrest,
...I've just escaped!

FERNAND
(stroking his chin)
You have? Well done in that at least.
(and then swinging into action)
How far are they behind you?

EDMUND
Perhaps only minutes.

FERNAND
Alright. You leave immediately for Paris.
In the meantime, I'll tell Mercedes what
happened and join you either on the road,
or in Paris itself...Do you have any
money?

Edmund SHAKES his head. Fernand moves behind his father's
DESK, and pulls a PURSE from the drawer. He throws it to
Edmund, who SMILES at his friend's generosity.

FERNAND
Do you have a pistol?

EDMUND
(an embarrassed smile)
I'm afraid not.

Fernand TURNS to the CROSSED SWORDS on the WALL behind him,
and TAKES ONE. He puts its POINT at Edmund's HEART.

FERNAND
Good.

EDMUND
(confused)
What are you doing?

Fernand, still keeping his sword-point at Edmund's heart,
steps around from behind the desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FERNAND

(not unkindly)

You've known me all my life, and I've never pretended to be anything but selfish. Nonetheless, I would give much for us not to be standing here this way.

EDMUND

What are you talking about?

FERNAND

Mercedes. You see, I've always gotten everything I wanted...and suddenly I wanted her. I would've preferred other means, but it became clear that I had no choice but to tell Villefort about the letter I saw Napoleon give you, to get you out of the way.

EDMUND

YOU? It was you who told Villefort about the letter?

FERNAND

Once Napoleon escaped from Elba, I knew you were carrying a flame in your pocket that could consume you...although whether you still actually had the letter or not, I had no idea. Not that it mattered, because I knew I could count on you to freely admit to Villefort that Napoleon had given it to you.

EDMUND

She will never abandon me.

FERNAND

I quite agree...But it is you who will abandon her. Tomorrow, I will tell Mercedes that you were arrested for carrying a Treasonable letter from Napoleon...and that you will certainly be imprisoned for life...if not shot.

EDMUND

...And you intend to hold me here for the Police...
Will you not at least allow me to fight for my life?

FERNAND

No, Edmund. You have no skill with a sword, and I am an expert swordsman. My
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FERNAND (cont'd)

soul will weigh heavy enough with what I
have done to you, I don't want you to die
at my hands as well.

EDMUND

(attempting to goad him)

I suppose that's one way of avoiding a
fight...Can I tempt you with a weapon
you're more comfortable with?...Say, the
Knife-In-The-Back.

FERNAND

(feeling the hit to his
honour, he says softly)

Well done.

Fernand goes to the WALL and plucks the other SWORD off,
THROWING it to Edmund. They begin to FENCE, and as they do,
it is clear that Edmund, despite his courage, is indeed
OUTMATCHED by Fernand who is remarkable.

They move out through the LIBRARY DOOR and into and out of
several rooms in the Villa, Fernand always on the ATTACK,
Edmund always on the DEFENSIVE.

FERNAND

(after a few moments of
fencing)

By now, you must realize that I could
kill you virtually anytime I wish...

Lunge, parry, lunge

FERNAND

Don't feel too badly. Its simply an Issue
Of Blood.

A FLICK of Fernand's BLADE, traces a line of BLOOD
dangerously close to Edmund's JUGULAR.

FERNAND

Oh, I don't mean all that stuff we
aristocrats maintain about Noble Blood
being superior to Common...It is, but
that's not the...

Fernand, having gotten through Edmund's defense, puts the
POINT of his sword, right at Edmund's HEART..

FERNAND

...point.

(smiling, he swings his point
away, and the fight continues)

...Its just that Blood has an effect
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FERNAND (cont'd)

Occupationally...namely you were forced to have one, and I was not. So, while you, the son of a civil servant, were busy serving at sea as a Cabin Boy, I was growing up with nothing to do except Dance, Hunt...and of course...THIS!

In a particularly flourishing move, Fernand DISARMS Edmund, sending his sword FLYING. At that moment, Villefort's GUARDS BURST IN and immediately tie Edmund's hands behind him.

EDMUND

(shouting at Fernand defiantly)
God will not desert me, nor will Justice...I will be back...for Mercedes...and for you!

FERNAND

You poor fool! The day you manage to come back from where you're going...I'll give Mercedes to you.

Edmund is HAULED away...and off Fernand's REACTION

CUT TO:

THE CHATEAU D'IF - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A SMALL FORTRESS, on a ROCKY ISLAND.

THE ROCKY BEACH - ON EDMUND

as he is removed, in WRIST SHACKLES, from a SAILBOAT, and is forced to WADE ashore between TWO GUARDS.

UP ON THE BATTLEMENTS

where a thin, pale MAN PEERS DOWN through a LORGNETTE at Edmund's approach, barely containing his EXCITEMENT. He is ARMAND DORLEAC, the Warden of the Chateau D'If, forty, androgenous, and if his jerky, BIRD-LIKE movements are any indication, CRAZY.

INT. A BARE, STONE ROOM

except for a simple DESK and CHAIR. Edmund stands, off to the side of the DOORWAY, flanked by the TWO GUARDS. He is, of course, unshaven, his eyes bloodshot, and there is some crusted BLOOD, at the corner of his mouth.

Two incredibly skanky characters now ENTER, CLAUDE, the TURNKEY, a FAT, hideously unkempt individual, and MAURICE, a GUARD, thinner but not cleaner. They take up positions on either side of the desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dorleac now ENTERS, unable to resist putting his LORGNETTE up to his eyes to look at Edmund, even as he strides to his Desk and SITS DOWN. Edmund is now brought to stand before him.

DORLEAC
(pleased as punch)
So welcome, M. Dantes!
Welcome!...Welcome!

Edmund doesn't quite know how to react to this man who treats him as a banker would, his largest depositor.

DORLEAC (cont'd)
I am Armand Dorleac, the Warden of the Chateau D'If. May I introduce your Turnkey, Claude, and your Guard, Maurice. They do not speak much to prisoners, but I assure you their Welcome is as warm as mine...As to myself, I admit, prisoners fascinate me...They do...They do...
(putting the lorgnette to his eyes once more, to peer at Edmund, and then removing it)
...You do.

EDMUND
(in a hoarse, barely audible voice)
I know...you...must hear...this...

DORLEAC
(joyfully cocking his ear toward Edmund)
Hear?...Hear what?...
(throwing a wink at Claude, whose jumping stomach signals a silent laugh)
...What can you be saying?

EDMUND
(struggling to speak louder)
I...know...you must...hear this a great deal...but I assure you...that I am...innocent!

DORLEAC
(ecstatic)
Oh, Joy! There it is!
(to Maurice and Claude)
...They never disappoint, do they?

Both men SHAKE their heads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDMUND

(a sad, resigned smile)

Everyone...must...say that, I know...But
I truly am...

DORLEAC

(nodding his head fervently)

Innocent...I know...

(sincerely)

...I really do know.

Edmund stands in SILENCE for a beat, squinting at Dorleac,
trying to figure if he's being made fun of...or does someone
at last believe him?

EDMUND

...You...mock me...Monsieur?

DORLEAC

(wide-eyed, shaking his head)

I do not mock you, my dear Dantes. I know
perfectly well that you are innocent. Why
else would you be here? If you were
guilty, there are a hundred prisons in
France where they could sock you away...

(leaning across the desk to
mock-whisper to Edmund as if
he were confiding in him)

...But the Chateau D'If is where they put
the ones they're ashamed about...

(no fun in his voice now)

...A fortress, strong, lonely...and deep.
And the more innocent you are...the
deeper you must go...

Edmund is SHOCKED. This is a NIGHTMARE UPON A NIGHTMARE. They
don't imprison people who are known to be innocent...Not in
France!

DORLEAC (cont'd)

(rhapsodizing to Claude and
Maurice)

Look at him! God, I love the Innocent...

...They're all so
marvelously...bewildered!

(changing tone)

...Well, this has certainly been a
pleasure, but much more awaits. Allow me
to show you to your quarters.

LONG SHOT - A GREAT STONE STAIRCASE

On its RIGHT, a WALL...On its LEFT, not even a rail...nothing but black VOID. The GROUP, consisting of Claude, Dorleac, Maurice, Edmund and two guards DESCEND into the DARKNESS.

A CORRIDOR

off which there are CELL DOORS. We now see the GROUP as it turns down the corridor TOWARD CAMERA.

CLAUDE

(yelling to nobody we see)

Pascal, bring a blanket for the prisoner!

The GROUP passes by, but the CAMERA HOLDS on the empty corridor...until a LITTLE BLONDE BOY of ten, PASCAL, the Turnkey's son, slips out of the shadows, and skampers up the passageway in the opposite direction.

INT. - AN EMPTY CELL

The cell door opens, and the GROUP ENTERS. Edmund looks around at his meager surroundings: stone walls; a stone SLAB for a BED; and a particularly SINISTER feature, TWO CHAINS hanging through TWO RINGS in the CEILING. He also SEES A SMALL TABLE, covered with WHITE LINEN, and an endless amount of SLASH MARKS scratched into the wall. Dorleac follows Edmund's glance to the latter.

DORLEAC

(a mock sigh)

I know...people are always wanting to keep calenders...but then, they lose interest or they die, and all I'm left with is an unsightly wall.

He slips out of his coat and hands it delicately to Maurice.

DORLEAC (cont'd)

But then I conceived of another way to help our prisoners keep track of dates. So every year, on the anniversary of their imprisonment...we...we hurt them. Its usually just a beating or a flogging...

He slips out of his waistcoat and hands that too, to Maurice.

DORLEAC (cont'd)

...Although on the first day they're here...in your case, today...we usually do something rather special.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He NODS to Maurice and Claude who now fix each of the CHAINS hanging from the CEILING, to each of Edmund's WRIST SHACKLES.

DORLEAC (cont'd)

...And if you're thinking just now, "Why, God, me?", the answer is...

He gives an EMPHATIC NOD once again, and Maurice and Claude each PULL on the free end of an ARM-CHAIN, STRETCHING Edmund's ARMS above his head, and HOISTING him till he's standing on his TOES. Dorleac now steps behind the TABLE and FACES Edmund.

DORLEAC (cont'd)

...God has nothing to do with it...

He WHIPS OFF the CLOTH revealing a horrible assortment of instruments of TORTURE...and SELECTS a long, HIDEOUS PAIR OF TONGS. He ADVANCES on Edmund..

DORLEAC (cont'd)

...The truth is, God's never in France this time of year.

A SERIES OF SHOTS OF THE INTERIOR OF THE FORTRESS

OVER which we HEAR Edmund's ONE LONG EXCRUCIATING SCREAM!

- the LONG STAIRCASE
- A WALL OF CELL DOORS
- THE CORRIDOR

THE SCREAM ENDS!

ON EDMUND

lying bare-chested, unconscious, and bloody on the floor of his otherwise empty cell. His eyes begin to OPEN and he SEES something at the entrance to his cell.

EDMUND'S POV - A BLURRY IMAGE OF A BLONDE BOY

Pascal approaches Edmund, and as he does, Edmund's VISION CLEARS and he SEES that the boy is carrying a shredded, moth-eaten hank of wool, that is probably a BLANKET.

PASCAL AND EDMUND

Pascal LOOKS solemnly down on Edmund. Edmund attempts to arrange his bloody lips into a slight SMILE. Pascal regards

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

him for a beat longer, then KICKS HIM IN THE RIBS, drops the BLANKET, and LEAVES, locking the door behind him.

On the floor Edmund CRAWLS to the BED and using it as leverage painfully LIFTS HIMSELF. He NOTICES a small pile of CRUSHED ROCK in the corner of the cell and STAGGERS over to it, choosing a SHARP PIECE. He then returns to his BED, standing before the WALL at its foot...and with his TEARS flowing into the BLOOD on his face, DECLARES ALOUD his absolute conviction:

EDMUND

God is here!...

(and now using the sharp rock
to scratch upon the wall)

...And GOD...WILL...GIVE...ME...JUSTICE!

INT. VILLEFORT'S OFFICE - AT THE SAME TIME

Mercedes, Fernand and M. Morell stand before Villefort, having come to plead Edmund's case. Fernand is in the midst of a remarkably fervent(if insincere) performance.

FERNAND

..I tell you M. Villefort, I have known Edmund Dantes all my life. He is my best friend...and I would lay down my life if it would assure you that whatever he is accused of, he must be innocent!

Fernand's SPEECH has the desired effect on MERCEDES, whose APPRECIATION of Fernand's COURAGE AND LOYALTY, we can read on her FACE.

VILLEFORT

(unimpressed)

The Charge is Treason...Are you still his best friend?

FERNAND

(stalwartly)

I am.

Mercedes is even more GRATEFUL, reaching over and SQUEEZING Fernand's HAND.

VILLEFORT

(playing this to the hilt)

You are a courageous man, Monsieur! There are not too many people who would stand beside a man accused of Treason...Still, what if I tell you that Dantes is also Charged with Murder!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They all GASP, although Fernand's surprise is caused not by the possibility that Edmund has committed such a crime (he knows he has not) but that Villefort should be fabricating it.

MERCEDES

Edmund could never commit Murder!

VILLEFORT

(dryly)

Then, Mademoiselle, kindly explain to the little son of the late Corporal Dupres, why he awoke this morning without a father.

Fernand is even more IMPRESSED with Villefort's CREATIVITY.

M. MORELL

What was the nature of these crimes?

VILLEFORT

He carried a letter from Napoleon to one of his agents. We found out about it, arrested him, and in attempting to escape, he killed one of my guards. Will there be anything else?

M. MORELL

Yes...Do you have proof of his Treason?

VILLEFORT

(giving Morell an imperious look)

Of course.

M. MORELL

May I ask what is the nature of this proof?

VILLEFORT

(very annoyed)

You may not!

MERCEDES

Can you tell us where they have taken him?

VILLEFORT

I cannot...His was a crime against the State, and he was given over to the King's men...and I must tell you, that in times like these, matters of this kind..

(implying that Edmund is

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VILLEFORT (cont'd)
probably already dead)
...um...shall we say...are resolved
quickly...

Mercedes EYES fill with TEARS

VILLEFORT
(softening his tone)
My advice is that you all should forget
Edmund Dantes...particularly you,
Mademoiselle, for it is clear that you
have already found the support and
friendship of this fine, loyal young man
over here...
(gesturing to Fernand)
Rely on him, and perhaps something good
may yet come from this unhappy
business...And now. if you will forgive
me, I must attend to other matters.

As Morell, Mercedes and Fernand begin to FILE OUT, Fernand
lingers.

FERNAND
You two continue on...I have to talk to
the Prefect for a moment regarding my
father's holdings.

They LEAVE and now Villefort and Fernand are ALONE.

FERNAND
I wanted, first of all, to congratulate
you on your embroidery of Dantes'
crimes...You and I had discussed
Treason...but Murder...

VILLEFORT
He came near enough. He put three of my
men in the hospital.

FERNAND
(a little surprised himself)
Indeed.
(moving on)
...I also wanted to thank you for your
endorsement of my character to the young
lady...Forgive me, I don't mean to sound
ungrateful...But why?

VILLEFORT
Its very simple, really. When you first
came to me to report on Dantes receiving
the letter, I didn't quite understand why
you were betraying your friend.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VILLEFORT (cont'd)

However, once I saw the exquisite
Mademoiselle Herrera, I understood...and
decided to give Cupid an extra shove...

FERNAND

(with the suspicion of one Cad
to another)

...Even to the point of sending an
innocent man to prison? With all due
respect, you do not strike me as being
particularly sentimental. No...there's
another reason why you're being so
accommodating. After all, I've never done
you a service that I can remember.

VILLEFORT

(a meaningful beat...and then)

Not yet anyway. Have a seat, won't you.

Fernand sits down.

VILLEFORT

Actually, since you know that I have it
in my power to undo all your plans by
simply releasing Dantes from the Chateau
D'If tomorrow morning...I find I can
afford to be perfectly frank with you.

FERNAND

Please be so.

VILLEFORT

You see, Mondego, I am an ambitious
man...who also possesses that most
ambiguous of assets, an ambitious
wife...all of which explains why I have
been so diligent in scooping up
Bonapartists. My efforts have not gone
unnoticed in Paris, and I have good
reason to believe that once Napoleon has
been defeated for good, I may be in line
for a high position in the King's Secret
Police.

Fernand arches an eyebrow in APPRECIATION.

VILLEFORT

...But I have a Thorn in my side...At
first it was merely an irritation, but
daily, it becomes more inflamed. As it
happens, the problem is such that I,
myself, cannot attend to it...so...

(turning away, knowing this is
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

VILLEFORT (cont'd)
his last chance to stop.
Finally, he turns back)
...So I have a proposition to make to
you...

FERNAND
(smiling, pleased to have his
cynicism vindicated)
Of course.

A MARSEILLES ALLEY - NIGHT - A WEEK LATER

A DRUNK sleeps it off in the depths of the ALLEY. A SOUND awakens him and he SEES FERNAND placing himself in HIDING, in the shadows.

We now HEAR the SOUND of several MEN emerging from a tavern. Fernand retreats further into the darkness, as we HEAR FAREWELLS being exchanged. Finally, TWO OLD MEN enter the alley.

As they are about to pass, Fernand LEAPS from the shadows and drives a DAGGER into the CHEST of one of the men. The other FUMBLES to unsheathe the sword hidden in his WALKING-STICK, but Fernand GRABS it out of his feeble grasp and FLINGS it behind him, deeper into the ALLEY.

CLOSE ON THE DISTINCTIVE WALKING-STICK

of COLONEL VILLEFORT, as it lies at the feet of the DRUNK. The DRUNK picks it up, and then COWERS deeper in the shadows.

BACK TO FERNAND

as he puts a small PISTOL to the chest of VILLEFORT'S FATHER.

COLONEL VILLEFORT
(totally bewildered)
Young Mondego!...Why?

FERNAND
Because your son lacked the courage...and
needed mine!

Fernand PRESSES THE TRIGGER!

CUT TO:

BOOM!

A battery of CANNON ROAR on one side of the FRAME, as a battery of CANNON on the other side ROARS its reply.

MATTE: "WATERLOO" OVER

A MONTAGE OF

-CHARGING MEN

-BEATING DRUMS

-FALLING FRENCH IMPERIAL FLAGS

DISSOLVE TO:

PEELING CHURCH-BELLS

We think perhaps they are in celebration of Wellington's victory over Napoleon, but then The CAMERA TILTS DOWN the STEEPLE to the CHURCH STEPS, where we see Mercedes and Fernand come through the church doors, in FULL WEDDING REGALIA, followed by their guests...as MAN AND WIFE.

CUT TO:

THE CHATEAU D'IF - ESTABLISHING - DAY

MATTE: SIX YEARS LATER

INT.ON THE INSCRIPTION GOD WILL GIVE ME JUSTICE!

all but FADED on the WALL in Edmund's CELL. We WIDEN to SEE Edmund lying on his SLAB. He is DRAWN and HAGGARD, in the RAGGED CLOTHES he was arrested in. He wears a scraggly three inch BEARD.

Edmund HEARS a metallic CHINK!...and assumes correctly that it is his pitiful MEAL being slid through the compartment at the bottom of his cell door. He amuses himself by carrying on a LOUD CONVERSATION, pretending to be dining in a FANCY RESTAURANT, and playing the part of both HIMSELF AND AN OBSEQUIOUS WAITER.

EDMUND

I ordered the Sole, yet you bring me the Beef!

AS THE WAITER

I am mortified, Monsieur!

EDMUND

Mortified, you say! Yet if you are already mortified, what emotion will you have left, when you discover, as I have, this chip on the lip of my goblet!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AS THE WAITER
I am dumbfounded, Monsieur!

EDMUND
Now dumbfounded! In your case, I believe
that word to be long by two
syllables...Take it all away!

Another metallic CHINK! is HEARD. Edmund whirls around to
LOOK at the DOOR, thinking, for a crazy instant, that his
phantom waiter...or someone else is responding to his request
and has withdrawn the meal...But the meal is still there!

Once again, a CHINK!...And for the first time Edmund realizes
that the SOUND is NOT COMING FROM THE DOOR!

TWO CHINKS! And now he knows its coming from the OPPOSITE
WALL from where he lies! Slowly, Edmund rises and WALKS TO
THE WALL...and hears NOTHING. He SIGHS. Perhaps he's finally
losing his mind at last!

Another CHINK! Edmund DROPS to his knees.

CHINK!...CHINK!...CHINK!...Only this time, the mortar around
a particular STONE, begins to CRUMBLE a little. Frantically,
Edmund grabs a stone from the little corner ROCK PILE, and
desperately begins to CLAW at the STONE from his side.

Moments later, Edmund REMOVES the STONE...and SEES staring at
him through the opening, a MAN, seemingly decades older than
he, hauntingly thin, with a GRAY BEARD down to his CHEST.

EDMUND
(gasping)
Who are you?

THE MAN
I am to you, what you are to
me...Salvation!

EDMUND'S CELL - A SHORT TIME LATER

Edmund SITS on the floor, studying the BACK of The MAN, who,
in turn, is standing, studying Edmund's INSCRIPTION on the
WALL..

EDMUND
How did you know anyone was here?

THE MAN
(turning to Edmund)
I didn't. But about six months ago, I had
simply reached a point in my plans where
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE MAN (cont'd)

I required another person's help, so I had nothing to lose by exploring.

EDMUND

I assume you will acquaint me with those plans when it suits you.

THE MAN

(smiling)

Momentarily...Anyway, where was I?

EDMUND

You had been a Soldier Of Fortune whose great skill in weaponry, earned you advancement in Napoleon's Army.

The man crosses to Edmund, and sits beside him, with his back propped against the wall.

THE MAN

We had such dreams then. Napoleon was going to forge a United States Of Europe. One language, one country...Peace...But it became clear that it was not Peace Napoleon sought, but Power... Finally, one night, my regiment ran down a band of guerillas who fled into a church for sanctuary, and I was ordered to burn it down with them inside.

EDMUND

Did you?

THE MAN

To my everlasting shame, I did...and in repentance, deserted the next morning, to enter the first seminary I could find, so that I could devote the rest of my life to God.

EDMUND

So that is how you became...What is your name again?

THE MAN

The Abbe Faria.

EDMUND

But how did you come to be put in prison?

The CAMERA SLOWLY PUSHES IN on the Abbe's face, as we see in FLASHBACK M.O.S.

INT. A MAGNIFICENT LIBRARY

wherein the YOUNG ABBE in his CLERICAL ROBES, labors at an imposing DESK.

ABBE FARIA (V.O.)

After leaving the seminary, I went to work as Private Secretary to the enormously wealthy Count Enrique Spada...

We SEE an ELDERLY MAN, (SPADA) expensively dressed ENTER the Library, and approach the Abbe's desk.

ABBE FARIA (V.O.,)

Spada was a righteous man who spent all of his time dispensing his legendary wealth in the service of whatever Worthy Cause could be found...

The Abbe SHOWS Spada a LIST, and POINTS to a NAME. Spada NODS, SMILES and CLAPS the Abbe on the BACK.

ABBE FARIA (V.O.)

...Part of my duties was to seek out such Causes and make recommendations to Spada. ...Unfortunately, a couple of years later, Spada died, amidst rumors that he had somehow hidden his limitless fortune...It was only a few weeks afterward, that some of Napoleon's men came and took me away...

A DANK, DARK, CHAMBER

The Abbe, his face bearing the marks of BEATINGS AND TORTURE, sits in the center of the room, as a CIVILIAN interrogates him. The Abbe keeps SHAKING HIS HEAD, drawing a SLAP in the FACE from the CIVILIAN.

ABBE FARIA

They wanted to know the whereabouts of Spada's treasure, and were less than happy when I told them I had no idea. So they threw me in here.

BACK TO SCENE

EDMUND

DID you know?

ABBE FARIA

Absolutely not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Count Of Monte Cristo - 46.

EDMUND

Why weren't you released when Napoleon was defeated and sent to Elba?

ABBE FARIA

Because the agents of the New Regime wanted the same information. So here I stayed, with only God for company...until He sent me you...And now, tell me your story.

EDMUND

Gladly, but I must warn you, since you are a priest, that there'll be no talk of God in my chronicle.

ABBE FARIA

(gesturing to the inscription)
That is not what the inscription says.

EDMUND

The inscription is faded...as God has faded from my heart.

ABBE FARIA

But you have not faded from His. Tell me, Dantes, if He is gone from your heart, what has replaced him?

EDMUND

Revenge.

ABBE FARIA

It may be that your thoughts of Revenge are serving His Purpose...the Purpose of keeping you alive.

EDMUND

(skeptically)
To what end?

ABBE FARIA

So that you can escape.

EDMUND

Escape? Hah! No one has ever escaped from here!

ABBE FARIA

(smiling)
Even so...Follow me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Abbe moves to the wall through which he came and CRAWLS through the OPENING. Edmund follows and finds himself in an EMPTY CELL. The Abbe REPLACES the STONE, and WALKS across the cell to the opposite wall, easily REMOVING another STONE, and crawling through it. Edmund does the same, finding himself, once again in an EMPTY CELL. After REPLACING the STONE the Abbe, yet again, walks across the cell to the far wall, and again REMOVES a STONE.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE ABBE'S CELL

as Edmund CRAWLS through and gets to his feet. He is STUNNED to SEE that the cell is as crammed full of OBJECTS as his is bare. The objects take the form of SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS, BOOKS, ASTRONOMICAL AND ASTROLOGICAL CHARTS etc.

EDMUND

How...How did you come to have all this?

ABBE FARIA

(laughing)

A prison guard whose moral code was refined enough to respect a Priest...and flexible enough to accept a bribe. Before he died, he provided me with enough tools to complete my calculations.

EDMUND

What calculations?

ABBE FARIA

Those that make me believe that we could dig a tunnel through the floor of this cell, that will eventually take us through to the sea...And with two of us working, we could do it in as little as eight years.

EDMUND

Eight years! That's an eternity!

ABBE FARIA

Oh, absolutely...

(and now launching a canny arrow)

...And yet, small good your dreams of revenge will ever do you, locked in here...

(fire in his eyes)

Listen to me, Dantes! These are the plans of which I spoke, but I cannot do this

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBE FARIA (cont'd)

alone! I won't last that long...I need your strength, and with it, God willing, I'll live long enough to take a few swallows of free air before I die!

The Abbe can SEE from Edmund's skeptical expression that he does not have a partner yet.

ABBE FARIA (cont'd)

Of course, I don't expect you to help me without giving you something in return... so I offer you something priceless...

EDMUND

(impatiently)

Yes, yes, my Freedom...unless, of course, we come up in the Guards' Quarters.

ABBE FARIA

No...Freedom can be taken away...I offer you something more precious than even Freedom...I offer you Knowledge! Everything I've learned in my life, I will teach you: Economics, Languages, Philosophy, the Sciences, Weaponry...

EDMUND

Weaponry?...The Sword?

ABBE FARIA

Certainly the Sword. The Sword...the Dagger...We'll only have sticks of course...

He SEES that Edmund is off on a Reverie of Revenge.

ABBE FARIA (cont'd)

(pointedly)

...But I promise you will know all you need to know for your Vengeance...and for a comfortable life beyond it.

EDMUND

(dismissing his dreams and lashing out)

You don't even know if those calculations are correct!... It could all be for nothing!

ABBE FARIA

Does something else demand your time? Do you have some vital appointment in your cell, that escaping might cause you to miss?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDMUND

(grimly)

I have only one appointment...and it is
not in the Chateau D'If.

ABBE FARIA

Then its time you went about the business
of keeping it.

The Abbe OFFERS his HAND.

EDMUND

(a beat, and then nodding)

Indeed.

He CLASPS the Abbe's HAND.

A SERIES OF SHOTS - M.O.S.

- The Abbe drills Edmund in Latin
- They fence with sticks, Edmund, with the skills of a child, the Abbe, a Grand Master.
- On their hands and knees, they scoop dirt in their TUNNEL. A VERTICAL SHAFT OF LIGHT close behind them, telling us that they are just beginning.
- Shorter sticks this time, and KNIFE-FIGHTING is the lesson.
- They continue to dig their tunnel, the vertical SHAFT OF LIGHT, a good deal further BEHIND them, telling us they've made some progress. Edmund's BEARD is longer and even has a touch of GRAY.
- They fence again. This time Edmund has IMPROVED A LITTLE.
- The Abbe SLEEPS ON HIS SLAB, as Edmund sits on the floor beside him, studying an ECONOMICS BOOK(Adam Smith's "AN INQUIREY INTO THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF THE WEALTH OF NATIONS")
- More fencing. Edmund has become VERY GOOD, indeed.
- More digging. We can NO LONGER SEE the vertical shaft of light.
- The Abbe performs a physics experiment. With his FINGER he PROPELS A SMALL WOODEN DISC, SLIDING across the floor into a COLLISION with a SECOND WOODEN DISC, sending IT sliding across the floor...as SOUND RETURNS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBE FARIA

You see, Edmund. That is an application, imperfect as it may be, of Newton's Third Law: "FOR EVERY ACTION THERE IS AN EQUAL AND OPPOSITE REACTION".

EDMUND

(bored to distraction)

Oh, I see right enough. However what I fail to see is how this has any relevance in my life.

ABBE FARIA

(mildly amused)

Ah, but I believe it does...Listen to me for a moment: We know that Fernand Mondego betrayed you, but as you know, I've always been troubled by the part M. Villefort played in your downfall as well.

EDMUND

(wearily)

Villefort played no part in my downfall. I told him my story and he didn't believe me. He was only doing his duty.

ABBE FARIA

So you've often said. Still, I continue to think about how Dorleac welcomed you to the Chateau D'If...that business about him "knowing you were innocent, because this is where they bring the ones they're ashamed about".

EDMUND

What of it?

ABBE FARIA

Well, since it was Villefort who sent you to the Chateau D'If in the first place, it suggests that Villefort, himself, knew you were innocent.

EDMUND

But that makes no sense. Why would he knowingly imprison an innocent man who he had nothing against?

ABBE FARIA

Yes, why indeed?...That's always been my problem...but as I was busy preparing to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ABBE FARIA (cont'd)

show you Sir Isaac's Third Law just now, it suggested to me another way to approach this mystery: You told me once that you were shocked when Villefort had you re-arrested...when in fact, he had just said you were free to go?

EDMUND

Yes, that's true.

ABBE FARIA

Then it follows that something must have happened between the point that he believed you...and the point he had you re-arrested, to make him change his mind about releasing you.. Tell me, if you can, precisely what occurred between those two points.

EDMUND

Not very much...No!...Wait! He asked me to tell him to whom I was supposed to deliver the letter...and I told him a "M. Clarion"

ABBE FARIA

Alright then...So returning to Newton's Third Law, the ACTION in this case, was telling Villefort the NAME of the person that Napoleon was trying so desperately to contact...

EDMUND

(pensively)

And the RE-ACTION was to have me re-arrested.

ABBE FARIA

But why? That's the Great Question.

The Abbe PEERS narrowly at Edmund, waiting for him to use his own analytical powers.

For a beat, Edmund struggles. And then, his voice rising in EXCITEMENT:

EDMUND

Perhaps this mysterious M. Clarion was a friend of Villefort's, and he wanted to protect him. Perhaps Villefort was worried that I might tell someone else about this M. Clarion!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ABBE FARIA

Excellent! Except maybe he was really worried about protecting himself.

EDMUND

What do you mean?

ABBE FARIA

Well, what if it came out that Villefort, the man charged with arresting all of Napoleon's sympathizers in Marseilles, had a friend whose job it was to raise troops for Napoleon in Marseilles. Villefort would be ruined...totally!

(feigning puzzlement)

..And yet, a man like Villefort would've long ago, rid himself of such dangerous friends...

EDMUND

(really into the chase now)

Yes...which means that M. Clarion was someone Villefort couldn't easily rid himself of...A RELATIVE! A close relative whose politics would taint him and bring him down!

ABBE FARIA

Well done, Edmund! Well done, indeed! Now, just a little more. A son would be too young, and even a brother would never be old enough to have earned Napoleon's confidence...No, M. Clarion must be older still...

EDMUND

His FATHER! Villefort had an old father!!

ABBE FARIA

(smiling)

NOW, you have it!...And see how it all began with Newton's Third Law.

The Abbe crosses over to the wall and grabs their two FENCING STICKS that are leaning up against it.

ABBE FARIA

Now, one more lesson...

(tossing one stick to Edmund)

...En garde!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

They commence to FENCE. Suddenly, in a lightning fast move, the Abbe SIDE-STEPS one of Edmund's LUNGES, and PUSHES Edmund's STICK OUT AND AWAY, with his own. Then still pressing Edmund's stick and keeping it out of position, the Abbe executes A TURN that puts his BACK to Edmund, and only at the last moment, puts his stick over his LEFT SHOULDER...putting, what would be his blade, at Edmund's throat, WHILE HIS BACK IS TURNED to Edmund!!

EDMUND

(stunned)

How...did...you do...that?

ABBE FARIA

With great speed and skill, for it is a very dangerous maneuver and therefore should never be attempted unless you are truly desperate. Now, I will take you through it slowly...Lunge!

CUT TO:

FERNAND LUNGING

and IMPALING a middle-aged NOBLEMAN through the HEART in, what is obviously, a DUEL. Fernand allows his SECONDS to place a CLOAK over his shoulders, and steps into a waiting COACH.

INT. THE MONDEGO TOWN HOUSE IN PARIS - ON FERNAND - A COUPLE OF HOURS LATER

Fernand ENTERS and LOOKS UP to the top of the staircase where he SEES Mercedes STANDING there, LOOKING DOWN upon him.

FERNAND

(off-handedly, calling up to her)

...Oh, hello, my dear. What are you doing up so early?

MERCEDES

(frostily)

Waiting with the rest of Paris to hear news of your latest duel.

(afraid to hear the answer)

...Is...is the Viscount Tourville dead?

FERNAND

(climbing up the stairs)

Unless his heart is placed somewhere other than the left side of his chest, yes, I suspect he is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES

(crossing herself)

God grant him Peace. He was a good and kind man, who did no more than defend the honor of his family.

FERNAND

(arriving at the top)

And much good it did him! It absolutely confounds me! Madame Tourville and I were happy in our passion...You were happy in your ignorance. Now comes the Viscount's valiant defense of his honor, and you are pained, she is ruined and he is dead. I am the King Of Sweden, if you can tell me one person in this entire affair whose condition has been bettered by the Viscount's righteous indignation!

MERCEDES

Don't flatter yourself, Fernand. I was neither ignorant nor happy...having known about the last three women.

Fernand PAUSES, absorbing the fact that Mercedes has known of his infidelities for several years.

FERNAND

(sincerely)

Please believe me when I tell you that I never wanted you to be hurt...though I cannot imagine this has been a shock to you. The combination of The City Of Paris, and Me, is hardly what I would call a recipe for Fidelity...and you knew that when you married me.

MERCEDES

(softly)

What I knew...was that you weren't really in love with me...Yet I did think that because we were old friends, you would never humiliate me.

FERNAND

I'm sorry for that...On the other hand, humiliation is something we both have suffered. It was no great pleasure for me, in the first years of our Marriage to continue to come upon you mourning at the window for the Fabled Edmund.

(impatient to move to the next level)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FERNAND (cont'd)

...However, since my attempts at keeping things from you have been such a failure, there seems little point in attempting any further charade...Its actually quite liberating!

MERCEDES

Don't uncork the Champagne just yet. When I have finished what I have to say, you may still see an advantage to discretion.

FERNAND

(drily)

Really.

MERCEDES

If Paris now sees me as an Object of Ridicule, or worse, Pity, I can endure that. But our son deserves nothing but happiness. He believes you to be a perfect father and husband...And I'm willing to pay to make sure that illusion is not torn from him!

FERNAND

(unimpressed)

In what currency, exactly?

MERCEDES

Restraint! Here is my proposal: If you guarantee that no word of your affairs, present or future, ever reaches the ears of our son, then I will promise to stand at your side forever as your Loyal, Smiling Wife and Hostess, giving such a performance of happiness, that even you will occasionally believe me!

FERNAND

(thinking himself invulnerable)

And if I refuse to make such a commitment?

MERCEDES

Then I will play for you, the entire Repertory Of The Wronged Wife: If there is a Door to be Slammed, I'll Slam it! A Scene to be Made, I'll Make it! A Mistress's Face to be Slapped, I'll Slap it...until every noble family in Paris agrees, that they would rather invite the Pox into their house, than Mondego and his Damned Wife!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She's got him! He looks deeply into her and knows she means every word.

FERNAND

Very well...I agree...Your vehemence is quite astonishing, my dear.

MERCEDES

(her eyes locked on his)
Desperate People...Desperate Measures...

CUT TO:

TWO OTHER DESPERATE PEOPLE - SEVERAL MONTHS LATER

Edmund and the Abbe, their SHREDDED CLOTHING, now barely covering their nakedness, are digging in the Tunnel by candle-light. The Abbe is slightly ahead of Edmund. Suddenly he STOPS.

ABBE FARIA

(holding up his hand and
feeling the dirt with his
fingers)

Edmund! Feel the dirt! I can't tell if
its just cold...or...

EDMUND

Or what?

ABBE FARIA

(turning back to Edmund, a
joyful look on his face)
...or damp, Edmund. I think it may be
damp!

Edmund FEELS the dirt between his FINGERS as well.

EDMUND

I can't tell either.

ABBE FARIA

My calculations would tell us when we
could expect to feel some trace of the
sea. Whenever we do, it means we're only
months away...seven or eight perhaps.

EDMUND

Shall I go back and get your notes?

ABBE FARIA

Yes...yes...do that!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The BOOM! of a CANNON is HEARD.

EDMUND
(looking up)
The cannon. Another foggy night.

ABBE FARIA
As if any ship was in danger of coming
close to this Godforsaken island. Now, on
your way! I'll wait for you here.

THE ABBE'S CELL - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

After GRABBING the Abbe's CALCULATIONS, Edmund LOWERS himself
back down through the hole in the FLOOR, and reaches up to
REPLACE THE STONE.

THE TUNNEL

As Edmund scrambles back toward the Abbe, another BOOM is
HEARD. He notices that this one is accompanied by the FALLING
of some light DUST and PEBBLES. He goes on.

Another BOOM!...And a LARGER AMOUNT of RUBBLE rains down upon
him. Edmund is getting a little ALARMED and INCREASES his
speed.

Another BOOM!...And a CURTAIN of ROCKS comes down, one
HITTING his HEAD AND KNOCKING HIM FLAT. He PICKS HIMSELF UP,
and BLEEDING badly from the TEMPLE, starts crawling through
the rubble, CALLING for the Abbe.

As he turns a corner, he SEES a huge PILE OF STONES AND
BOULDERS, and the Abbe's BLOODY HAND, motionless, PENETRATING
through it.

BOOM! More RUBBLE rains down. Edmund furiously CLAWS enough
at the DEBRIS to REVEAL the UPPER HALF of the Abbe lying face-
up. He gets his HANDS UNDERNEATH the Abbe's ARMPITS, when the
old man OPENS his EYES:

ABBE FARIA
(gasping)
Its too late for me! I cannot move...Save
yourself!

Edmund ignores him, trying to pull him from the rubble.
Another cannon BOOM! brings another SHOWER OF STONES AND
DEBRIS upon them, but Edmund FLINGS his BODY over the Abbe to
protect him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBE FARIA

Think of your revenge! Do Mondego and Villefort live, because you insist on dying with me?

EDMUND

(continuing to tug)
I will depend on your God to save us.

ABBE FARIA

(managing a weak smile)
You now believe in God?

EDMUND

Of course not...But you do...and I see no reason to choose this particular moment to stand in the way of your faith...So you pray...And I'll PULL!

And with a last Herculean effort, Edmund yanks the Abbe FREE! Supporting him under the arms, Edmund now crawls BACKWARD up the tunnel, DRAGGING the Abbe after him, amidst the SOUND of intermittent BOOMS! As Edmund pulls him along we see the old man's MOUTH MOVING in PRAYER.

THE ABBE'S CELL

Edmund, already in the cell, finishes LIFTING the Abbe through the HOLE and tries to make him comfortable on the FLOOR.

ABBE FARIA

(gasping a little for air)
I think my lungs...are punctured..Not much time to talk...Listen to me...All that has happened...to you...has happened for a Reason...

EDMUND

(lashing out in frustration)
What reason could there be for your death...except the random chaos of a Godless world!

ABBE FARIA

(his eyes flashing in anger)
You fool! The truth is exactly the opposite! Now attend to what I say...and stop talking like...that shallow young man I met seven years ago...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Edmund is duly intimidated by the Abbe's rare burst of anger. Silently, he NODS. The Abbe now GESTURES to some VOLUMES standing on the FLOOR, in the corner.

ABBE FARIA

(his breathing coming harder)
First...under those books...there is a
loose stone...remove it and bring me what
you find....underneath.

Edmund goes to the BOOKS, and pushes them aside. He LIFTS the STONE and retrieves a folded DOCUMENT, wrapped in waterproof SEALSKIN. He then is in the middle of carefully replacing the STONE when...

ABBE FARIA (cont'd)

(feeling his life ebbing out of
him)

QUICKLY!

Edmund hastens to the old man.

ABBE FARIA (cont'd)

To begin with...I lied to you...all those
years ago...when I said I didn't know
where Spada hid his Treasure...Of course
I knew...I hid it!

(starting a chuckle that turns
into a coughing fit)

...I didn't...tell you because I had
vowed only to reveal that secret to...to
someone who would use the Treasure for
Good...But it wasn't until you risked
your life ...and your only chance for
revenge, simply to save mine, that I knew
what I had always hoped: that....you
...are possessed of a great Nobility...A
Nobility of Soul.

Edmund starts to PROTEST the SOUL business, but the Abbe STOPS him with a GESTURE of his HAND.

ABBE FARIA

I...have... decided...therefore...to
give you what you already have in your
hand, the map to Spada's Treasure...But
there is...a Promise involved...A Promise
to use that Wealth on behalf of the
Weak, the Innocent...and for the General
Good Of Mankind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDMUND

I...I cannot accept your gift, Abbe. For I will certainly use it to achieve my revenge.

ABBE FARIA

(again, a weak smile)

Edmund, God will either allow your Revenge, or He will not...And if He forbids it, then not even Spada's Treasure will bring it to you...It is the GOOD you do, with which the Promise is concerned.

EDMUND

(reluctantly)

Then I must tell you, dear, dear Friend...that I no more believe in "Good" than I believe in "God". I cannot make your Promise.

ABBE FARIA

(failing fast)

You...don't have to...make the Promise...I made it for you...as you pulled me...through the tunnel... All...you have to do...is keep it...

The Abbe BREATHES his last. Edmund tries to revive him, but seconds later it is clear he is gone. Edmund CRADLES him in his arms, gently ROCKING him...Suddenly, Edmund is PARALYZED by the SOUND of approaching FOOTSTEPS. The slot at the bottom of the cell door opens to allow a BOWL of gruel.

MAURICE (O.S.)

Your food, Old Priest.

Edmund PICKS UP the Abbe, and lays his body on the SLAB. He is wiping away the blood and dust that profane the Abbe's body, when he HEARS Maurice calling in the corridor for the TURNKEY.

MAURICE (O.S.)

Claude! Claude come down here with your keys! I think the Old Priest has crossed the river!

THE CORRIDOR

CLAUDE, having grown older and fatter, and holding his KEYS and a BOLT OF SAILCLOTH, meets the similarly older Maurice in the corridor. Together, they continue down the corridor to the Abbe's Cell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAUDE

What makes you think he's dead?

MAURICE

In thirteen years, its the first time he
hasn't said "Thank you" through the door.

The men now enter the Abbe's cell, EMPTY save for the Abbe's
possessions and his now pristine BODY, lying on the slab. The
TURNKEY UNFOLDS the SAIL CLOTH and produces a large SEWING
AWL from his belt.

CLAUDE

We'll sew him into the sack now, but then
we must tell Dorleac...He's always had a
particular interest in the Old Priest,
even though he wasn't much of a screamer.

CUT TO:

THE NEXT CELL

where Edmund crouches next to the WALL, LISTENING. HEARING
the cell door SLAM, Edmund REMOVES the STONE in the WALL and
RE-ENTERS the Abbe's cell. He SEES on the slab, the sewn
sailcloth SACK, wherein lies the Abbe...

A STUNNING IDEA occurs to him. A desperate GAMBLE that must
result in either quick FREEDOM or slow DEATH!

Seizing the Turnkey's KNIFE that LAYS ON THE FLOOR, he
quickly CUTS OPEN the SACK...and gently lifts the dead Abbe
out from it.

EDMUND'S CELL - A HALF HOUR LATER

Edmund has just finished PLACING the Abbe's body on his
sleeping slab, and now covers him entirely with his tattered
BLANKET. He then STUDIES THE MAP, muttering aloud, "THE
ISLAND OF MONTE CRISTO". Just as he puts the MAP back in his
shirt, however, he HEARS MAURICE yelling once more in the
corridor.

THE GUARD

Claude! You avalanche of fat, where are
you?

He quickly removes the LOOSE STONE that gains him entry to
the ADJACENT CELL(the one from which the Abbe first appeared
all those years ago).

He MOVES to the far wall of that cell and removes the LOOSE
STONE there, gaining entry to the NEXT CELL. All the while,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

the CAMERA TRACKS HIM, as he FRANTICALLY MOVES from Cell TO Cell...And all the while, we HEAR MAURICE AND CLAUDE who are AD LIBBING, as they walk in the CORRIDOR, on a PARALLEL COURSE with Edmund, although they are several CELLS behind.

Finally, Edmund CRAWLS through the last hole and into the ABBE'S CELL. He REPLACES the STONE and then leaps onto the SLAB, and using the AWL AND TWINE, also left on the floor, SEWS HIMSELF into the SACK, with a few quick STITCHES...just as Maurice and Claude ENTER THE CELL!

As the men PICK UP the SACK on either end, AD LIBBING their wonder at how heavy the thin old man turned out to be, DORLEAC BURSTS into the CELL, followed by PASCAL, who is now a STRAPPING TWENTY-THREE YEAR OLD.

They WATCH Claude, Maurice and the SACK EXIT, but they themselves remain in the CELL...Dorleac's mood DARKENING rapidly as he LOOKS AROUND the CELL.

DORLEAC

(to Pascal, as he maliciously
sweeps test-tubes and beakers
crashing to the floor)

Do you know why that crazy old priest was
locked up in here?

Pascal SHRUGS.

DORLEAC (cont'd)

(snorting his disgust at
Pascual's ignorance)

...He was here because it was rumored
that he knew the whereabouts of a Great
Treasure...

(ruefully)

...The times I searched this cell for
that wretched map...

(a huge sigh, and then turning
to go)

...God knows if it ever really existed at
all.

Suddenly his EYES FALL on the DISPLACED BOOKS and the slightly ASKEW FLOOR-STONE that Edmund, in his haste to answer the Abbe's summons, neglected to restore completely. Almost afraid, Dorleac SLOWLY approaches the STONE and LIFTS it.

DORLEAC (cont'd)

It's empty!

His eyes dart wildly, as he DROPS THE STONE, puts his HAND to his TEMPLE, processing what has happened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DORLEAC (cont'd)

(eureka!)

I understand now! There is a map! And when the old priest knew he was dying, he hid it on his person, so that I would never find it!

He GRABS Pacal by the SHOULDERS.

DORLEAC (cont'd)

(in wild-eyed desperation)

You must stop them, Pascal...before they throw him into the sea!

Knowing full well what awaits him if he fails, Pascal TAKES OFF!

DORLEAC (cont'd)

(yelling after him)

That damned priest is going to Hell with my map!

PASCAL

RUNNING first UP ONE CORRIDOR, then DOWN ANOTHER!

ON CLAUDE AND MAURICE

carrying the SACK up the FIRST STONE STAIRCASE. They come to a LANDING, and REST for a moment before continuing up the SECOND FLIGHT OF STAIRS which goes off at a RIGHT ANGLE to the FIRST.

INSIDE THE SACK - ON EDMUND

TERRIFIED that they are stopping...and RELIEVED when they begin again.

ON PASCAL

dashing UP A THIRD CORRIDOR! He comes to the BASE of the FIRST STAIRCASE, ready to SHOUT, but he is just in time to see the thinning LIGHT from the CLOSING DOORWAY a hundred fifty feet above him.

EXT. ON CLAUDE AND MAURICE - NIGHT

OUTSIDE now, hauling the SACK up the STAIRS to the BATTLEMENTS.

INSIDE THE SACK - ON EDMUND

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

almost ORGASMIC to be BREATHING OUTSIDE AIR, for the first time in thirteen years!

EXT. THE BATTLEMENTS OF THE CHATEAU D'IF - NIGHT

In the FOG, the men wrestle the sack half-way through a BATTLEMENT, in effect, ARCHING EDMUND'S BACK over the wall. They then affix a CANNON BALL to the FOOT of the sack.

INSIDE THE SACK - ON EDMUND

SMILING, knowing he is seconds from FREEDOM! But then

PASCAL (O.S.)

Stop!

Edmund's face FREEZES IN TERROR!

PASCAL

bounding up the stairs to the BATTLEMENTS, and joining Claude and Maurice.

PASCAL

(out of breath)

M. Dorleac orders that you stop immediately!

Claude and Maurice LOOK at each other in puzzlement.

CLAUDE

But why?

PASCAL

I don't know...Something about a map.

DORLEAC (O.S.)

Nothing about a map!

They turn to see Dorleac mounting the parapet.

DORLEAC (cont'd)

I simply want to inspect the body for health reasons. Stand back, God knows what the old fool died of.

Claude, Maurice and Pascal retreat, leaving the SACK, and Edmund ARCHED over the wall...as Dorleac approaches the sack.

INSIDE THE SACK - ON EDMUND

DEVASTATED. He knows now that his escape attempt has failed. He takes the little time he has left to LOOK UP through a small GAP in the stitches.

EDMUND'S POV - A SLIVER OF STAR-FILLED SKY

now visable through the dissipating FOG...probably the only piece of sky he'll ever see...And then it is BLOCKED by Dorleac's HANDS beginning to TEAR APART the STITCHES! We SEE the GRASPING, AVARICIOUS expression on Dorleac's FACE turn to SHOCK AND HORROR just before

EDMUND

convulses his BACK and BRINGS UP HIS KNEES!

ON DORLEAC

LEANING OVER the SACK...as both are TIPPED OVER and flung down into THE SEA!

UNDERWATER

We SEE both DORLEAC and the SACK PIERCE THE SURFACE, but as Dorleac RISES OUT OF FRAME, we FOLLOW the weighted SACK in its PLUNGE toward BOTTOM...until at last, we see a KNIFE BLADE, CUTTING through the stitches, and Edmund shaking himself loose from the sack. Up he goes until he BREAKS THROUGH THE SURFACE...A FREE MAN!

In the distance he SEES a SHORT, DARK LINE, hugging the horizon, and correctly assumes it's some sort of ISLAND a few miles away. He begins to SWIM toward it and SAFETY, when he notices Dorleac, off to his LEFT and swimming IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. They literally PASS each other, with barely ten yards and a sidelong glance between them...both FIXATED on their GOALS: Edmund the ISLAND, Dorleac the CHATEAU D'IF.

But Edmund is only past Dorleac by some fifty feet when he stops to TREAD WATER for a moment, torn between getting to SAFETY as fast as possible...or REVENGING himself on the fast DISAPPEARING Dorleac...He CHOOSES REVENGE! He LAUNCHES himself at Dorleac and an AQUATIC DEATH RACE ensues, ending in EDMUND flinging himself on Dorleac and holding him from behind in a CHOKE HOLD.

EDMUND

(calling back Dorleac's remark
about the Innocent years ago)

If you think the Innocent are so

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDMUND (cont'd)
marvelously bewildered...wait til you
meet the Dead!

And he SLITS his THROAT.

Exhausted, Edmund then makes for the ISLAND.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ISLAND - CLOSE ON EDMUND - DAY

as he lays face down, unconscious in the sand, while wavelets
lick at his calves. Slowly his EYES crack OPEN, and he ROLLS
OVER on his back, only to RECOIL at the sight of EIGHT VERY
SINISTER, PIRATICAL-LOOKING CHARACTERS, STARING DOWN AT HIM!

THE BEACH - TWILIGHT

Edmund sits ALONE, his knees encircled by his arms,
pretending not to notice that he is obviously the subject of
a great deal of muttered conversation by the unsavory band
sitting around a FIRE some twenty feet away.

At last, a BIG BRUTE APPROACHES him and SQUATS down OPPOSITE.

THE LEADER
(friendly enough)
So, mi amiche..Ordinarily, I would ask
your name, but in view of your shredded
clothing and the fact that the Chateau
D'If is only two miles from this island,
it's unlikely that anything you say will
be the truth.

Edmund says nothing.

THE LEADER
So much for your story...As for me, I am
Luigi Vampa, a Smuggler and Thief. My men
and I have come to this island to bury
alive one of our number, who attempted to
keep some stolen gold for himself,
instead of sharing it with his comrades.

Luigi GESTURES to the GROUP, who split apart, revealing
behind them, a MAN, lying on his side, TRUSSED UP in ropes,
like a pig ready for the spit.

LUIGI
Interestingly enough, his old friends
were being rather insistent that I grant
him mercy...which, of course, I cannot do
or I would quickly lose control of the
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUIGI (cont'd)
whole crew...That's why you are such a
fortunate find!

EDMUND
Why's that?

LUIGI
Its simple. You provide me with a way to
show a little mercy to Jacopo, the maggot
you see tied up over there...while at the
same time, not appearing weak... And, as
a special treat, the lads will get to see
a little sport as well.

EDMUND
I appear to be quite a fellow. How do I
accomplish all this, exactly?

LUIGI
(happily)
We watch you and Jacopo fight to the
Death...If Jacopo wins, we welcome him
back to the crew. If you win, I've given
Jacopo a chance to live, even if he
didn't take advantage of it, and you take
his place on the boat.

EDMUND
What if I win, and I don't want to be a
smuggler?

LUIGI
Then we slit your throat, and we're a
little shorthanded.

EDMUND
(dryly)
Upon reflection, I find smuggling is the
life for me, and will be delighted to
kill your friend, the maggot.

Luigi SMILES. He cannot help but like this stranger.

LUIGI
(still smiling)
Oh, by the way, I should tell you, that
Jacopo is the best knife-fighter I've
ever seen...

EDMUND
(smiling right back)
Perhaps you should get out more.

Enjoying this immensely, Luigi RISES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUIGI

(shouting to the crew)

Release Jacopo and give him back his knife!

(turning back to Edmund, and throwing him his knife)

...And then, we'll Let the Games Begin.

The two combatants SQUARE OFF, surrounded by the cat-calling crew. JACOPO is shorter than Edmund, but much QUICKER...Edmund, on the other hand, is SMARTER, and has been taught knife-fighting by the Abbe. In a few moments, to everyone's surprise, except Edmund's, Jacopo is ON HIS BACK in the sand, with Edmund's KNEES pinning down his ARMS...and Edmund's BLADE AT JACOPO'S EYE.

Edmund brings his FACE DOWN CLOSE to the terrified Jacopo.

EDMUND

(whispering)

As you hope to live, do not so much as move an eyelash!

Edmund RISES, and turns to Luigi, who is, at this point, duly impressed with Edmund's fighting skill.

EDMUND

Signor Vampa! I can, of course, kill the best knife-fighter you've ever seen...but I have an alternate suggestion.

LUIGI

I'm listening.

EDMUND

I suggest that you allow Jacopo to live. After all, he's already been punished with the anticipated horror of being buried alive. The men who wanted to see some sport, have seen it...The men who wanted mercy for Jacopo will now see it granted...And what's more by keeping both Me and Jacopo, you will have yet another skilled sailor...and fighter for your crew.

The crew NODS to each other, much impressed with Edmund's conciliatory LOGIC. Their new found harmony is not lost on Luigi. He SMILES broadly, proud of his new protege.

LUIGI

Done!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

A SMUGGLER
What is his name, Luigi?

The others join in the request.

LUIGI
His name?
(improvising)
...Why, we shall call him, "Zattara".

The men CHUCKLE APPROVINGLY, and start to walk back toward the CAMPFIRE.

EDMUND
That sounds fearsome enough.

LUIGI
(smiling)
It means...Driftwood.

Edmund NODS...a very slight smile tugging at his lips, as he WATCHES Luigi walk away.

With a HEAVY SIGH OF RELIEF, Jacopo picks himself up off the sand and walks over to Edmund, who is still watching Luigi.

JACOPO
(with true Italian drama)
I swear on my dead relatives...and even
on the ones who aren't feeling so
good...I am your man forever!!

EDMUND
(still staring straight ahead)
Yes....I know.

MARSEILLES HARBOR - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

MATTE OVER: THREE MONTHS LATER

EXT. THE SMUGGLERS' ANCHORED BOAT - ON EDMUND

as he STANDS ALONE at the RAIL, under the star-filled sky, Edmund has his HAIR now cut to a neat shoulder length. His BEARD, while still full, is several inches shorter than it was, and he has exchanged his TATTERED SHIRT, for the traditional striped PULLOVER of the mariner. He is now JOINED at the rail by Luigi, carrying a PURSE filled with COINS.

LUIGI
(giving Edmund the purse)
Well, mi amiche, its too bad. I've
enjoyed having you with us these three
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUIGI (cont'd)
months...and you've become a great
favorite with the lads. But once a voyage
is over, anyone of us has a right to
go...That's our custom.

(gesturing to the lights of the
town)
Is this where you'll spend your share?

EDMUND
Yes...but not on what you'd think.

LUIGI
(nodding)
You always looked like a man with a
greater plan.

EDMUND
(ignoring Luigi's observation)
And what are your plans, Luigi?

LUIGI
(a sigh)
Oh, I don't know. I may be getting too
old to keep ducking cannon balls. Maybe
we'll stay ashore for awhile...at least
long enough for me to think of something
legitimate to do...
(and then with real sadness)
...It is unlikely, Zattara, that we will
ever see each other again.

EDMUND
Don't be too sure...One day, I may come
find you. A man is always in need of a
good friend.

LUIGI
(nodding)
Truly.

Luigi THROWS HIS ARMS AROUND Edmund, giving him a quick BEAR
HUG, which Edmund returns, and then Luigi is gone.

Edmund stands alone and silent for a couple of beats...and
then

EDMUND
(a whispered command)
Jacopo!

In a flash, Jacopo is AT HIS SIDE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDMUND

(handing him the purse)

Take this money and buy a small boat,
something just the two of us can
handle...But before that, I want you to
pay a call on someone...

CLOSE ON A NAME PLATE THAT READS, MORELL - NIGHT

The CAMERA WIDENS TO REVEAL Jacopo standing at the DOOR of a
modest house. After KNOCKING with increasing fury, the DOOR
finally OPENS, and a lovely girl of about eighteen, M.
Morell's granddaughter, Julianne (who we met earlier, when she
was but five years old) APPEARS, holding a LANTERN.

JACOPO

Your pardon, Mademoiselle...I wish to
speak to M. Morell.

JULIANNE

(a little annoyed)

My grandfather is not well, Monsieur, but
even if he were, he would not receive
visitors at eleven o'clock in the
evening.

JACOPO

And rightly so, Mademoiselle...And yet,
perhaps he might make an exception for a
man who was seeking...Edmund Dantes.

Julianne's FACE tells us she has heard the name of Edmund
Dantes before. And off her REACTION we

CUT TO:

M. MORELL'S BEDCHAMBER - A HALF-HOUR LATER

M. Morell, older and frailer than the man we remember years
ago, sits in a chair by the fire, a lap-rug covering his
legs. Jacopo sits opposite him.

JACOPO

...But how can you be so sure he's dead.

M. MORELL

Because for two years afterward, I spent
much of my savings hiring people to make
enquiries all over Europe...and there was
never a trace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACOPO

And there were no relatives who knew his whereabouts?

M.MORELL

There were no relatives period. He had an invalided father who died of a broken heart a year after he was taken...and a fiancée, who's heart evidently remained intact, since she wed his best friend not two months after his arrest.

We can tell from Jacopo's FACE, that he realizes this will be a significant piece of BAD NEWS for Edmund.

JACOPO

Is she still here in Marseilles?

M.MORELL

Her? No! Her husband is now quite high in the Foreign Ministry. What's more the death of his older brother, made him a Count. So she is now a Countess living in Paris with her husband and son. She did considerably better than she would've done with Edmund, poor devil.

JACOPO

And those trumped up charges you spoke of earlier, who was responsible for that?

M.MORELL

Who knows? They were strange times. M. Villefort, the man who had Edmund arrested, also quickly left for Paris in order to assume high office in the Secret Police...Of course, the shock of his father's murder may have also spurred his departure.

JACOPO

(surprised)

Did you say, "Murder"?

M. MORELL

(nods)

As I said, they were strange times.

Jacopo LOOKS ABOUT the BARREN and THREADBARE Bedchamber.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACOPO

I hope, Sir, you will forgive me when I note, that you appear to have fallen on some difficult times.

M.MORELL

(smiling weakly)

Yes, its true. When Napoleon escaped from Elba, all the Insurance Underwriters refused protection to merchant ships. We were forced to sail our one ship, the "Pharaon" without insurance. When she was lost, I was wiped out...Nonetheless...

We HEAR the rest of MORELL'S SPEECH OVER

A BEACH ON THE ISLAND OF MONTE CRISTO - A FEW WEEKS LATER

Edmund and Jacopo DRAG a BOAT onto the shore where Edmund leaves Jacopo with the boat and begins to HIKE into the INTERIOR of the island.

M.MORELL

...whenever I find myself in too much despair over my lot...

Edmund, carrying an unlit TORCH, is now deep into the rocky center of the island, and finds a CAVE...

M.MORELL

...I think of poor Edmund, that dear young man, against whom it seemed, even the Angels conspired...

Edmund, now in the interior of the CAVE, LIGHTS the TORCH, and proceeds deeper into its core...

M.MORELL

...stripped of the only three things he possessed: his freedom, his love, and his life...For surely...

Edmund turns a CORNER, and suddenly illuminated by his torch, is a VAST CHAMBER FILLED WITH GOLD COINS, JEWELS AND OTHER RICHES as far as the eye can see!

Edmund, his ARMS STRETCHED UP, YELLS IN TRIUMPH AND JOY, as we hear Morell's last line in ironic counterpoint:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

M.MORELL

...never was a better man born under a worse star, than was Edmund Dantes.

CUT TO:

THE BEACH ON THE ISLAND OF MONTE CRISTO - THAT NIGHT

After he and Edmund have loaded treasure on board the boat all day, Jacopo SITS at the FIRE, watching Edmund stand before the last few CHESTS, pensively running his fingers through the COINS...Jacopo plainly has SOMETHING ON HIS MIND.

JACOPO

So, Zattara, what happens now?

EDMUND

(his answer growing more intense as he talks)

...Our enemies are powerful men, so we must start by using the money to buy the trappings of Nobility: Houses, coaches, servants...That will give us access to the Upper Reaches of Society, where we will then lend the money to every inbred, dissipated, extravagant aristocrat we can find...In that way, using the threads of Debt and Obligation we will bind to us every House Of Influence in Europe...and it is only after that, when we are sure of our power....that we will find Mondego and Villfort!...

(realizing he has allowed vengeance to eclipse love)...

...And then, when all the bloody work is done...I will find Mercedes.

There is a LONG PAUSE while Jacopo works up his COURAGE.

JACOPO

You won't need to find them...They are all in Paris.

EDMUND

(whipping around to face Jacopo)

What do you mean, they're all in Paris?

(beaming)

...Mercedes too?

JACOPO

(averting Edmund's eyes)

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Confusion CROSSES Edmund's face.

EDMUND

But wait...You told me M. Morell didn't
know where any of them were!...What's
amiss here!

He STRIDES to Jacopo and LOOMS over him.

EDMUND (cont'd)

Out with it!

JACOPO

(looking up)

You must be strong, Zattara.

EDMUND

(alarmed)

She's ill!

JACOPO

She's married...to Fernand Mondego...They
have a child.

Edmund REACTS like he's been STRUCK...and TURNS AWAY.

EDMUND

(after several beats, his back
still to Jacopo, he says
softly)

Did M. Morell say how long...how long
after I was imprisoned...did she...marry?

JACOPO

(wishing he were dead rather
than answer this question)
...About two months.

EDMUND

(his back still to Jacopo, in a
virtual whisper)

Two months?...

(turning to Jacopo,
plaintively)

...Did you say, just two months?

Jacopo, the pain plain on his own face, reluctantly NODS.

A runaway TEAR ROLLS down Edmund's CHEEK. Edmund PICKS IT off
his CHEEK with the TIP of his INDEX FINGER, and EXAMINES it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDMUND (cont'd)

This tear, Jacopo...Observe it carefully,
for it is my last. I have no more in
me...Mercedes was the last slender thread
that bound me to the rest of humanity...
I cut that thread now!...He who lived in
this body, I now declare Dead...

CAMERA PUSHES SLOWLY in on Edmund as he BITES out the rest of
these bile-laden words:

EDMUND (cont'd)

...And he who is now born into it, I
dedicate to to the Death of all who have
wronged me: Villefort...Mondego...and if,
for one moment, I thought that God
existed...I'd kill Him too!

EXT. THE TOWN-HOUSE OF FERNAND, COUNT MONDEGO - ESTABLISHING -
NIGHT

MATTE OVER: "THREE YEARS LATER"

INT. FERNAND'S BEDCHAMBER - ON FERNAND - EVENING

as he PREENS before a LONG MIRROR.

A KNOCK on the door, produces an IRRITATED SIGH...and a
RELUCTANT INVITATION.

Mercedes ENTERS. At thirty-six, she is even more beautiful
than when we last saw her.

FERNAND

(wearily)

What is it, Mercedes?

By now she is used to his callousness, so she ignores it and
gets to the business at hand.

MERCEDES

Albert wishes to talk to us.

FERNAND

(coldly)

So you've told me...As you see, I'm going
out and I'm already late. Tell him, we'll
see him tomorrow.

MERCEDES

You've told him that three days in a row.
May I remind you, Fernand, that in Paris

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES (cont'd)
there are Mistresses aplenty...but you
have only one son.

There's another KNOCK on the door.

MERCEDES
Its Albert.

THROWING UP HIS HANDS in EXASPERATION, Fernand relents.

FERNAND
Come in!

Albert ENTERS, a charmingly handsome boy only several weeks
away from his sixteenth birthday.

FERNAND
...And for Godsake, be brief!

It is clear, that while Albert is somewhat FRIGHTENED of his
father, he also WORSHIPS him.

ALBERT
I will, Father. Several of my friends are
going to Rome for two weeks during the
Carnival season...and I would like to
accompany them.

MERCEDES
(horrified, looking first at
Fernand and then at Albert)
Are you out of your mind! You're only
fifteen!

ALBERT
Almost sixteen! And I'm glad you brought
that up. Since you'll owe me a birthday
present anyway, I thought this would do
nicely.

FERNAND
(impatient to go, consulting
his pocket-watch)
Oh, let him go, Mercedes...Its time he
saw a bit of the world.

MERCEDES
(realizing she's losing, and
trying to salvage something)
Is there at least a grown person to
chaperone you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALBERT

(cheerfully offering what he
can)

Jacques D'Esquoyne is nineteen.

FERNAND

(to Mercedes)

There you are! Nineteen. Grown up enough!
Besides, I was only a few years older
than Albert when I went to sea for THREE
MONTHS...and he's going for just a few
weeks!

MERCEDES

When you went to sea you were surrounded
by responsible people: Captain
Leclerc...and...

She STOPS herself...but Fernand finishes her speech.

FERNAND

...and Edmund?...Oh, yes, now there was a
responsible young man!

Fernand turns to his BEWILDERED son, who is unfamiliar with
this new name that has entered the conversation.

FERNAND

(in mock amazement)

Has your mother never told you about
Edmund Dantes? He was your mother's
fiancee, wasn't he, my dear?

MERCEDES

(softly)

Yes.

FERNAND

(back to Albert)

He was arrested for High Treason and
Murder. A Pillar Of Society was our
Edmund...yes, indeed!

(to Mercedes)

If I could survive three months at sea
with Edmund Dantes, I'm certain two weeks
in Rome with his companions will not
prove fatal to our son.

(to Albert)

Albert, you have our permission to go...

(leaning over and whispering in
Mercedes ear)

And now that our son has what he
wants...please allow me to procure the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FERNAND (cont'd)

same...

(back to a normal voice)

I bid you both a Good evening.

And with that, Fernand leaves the room. Albert and Mercedes stand opposite each other, silent for a beat. Albert knows that she is very upset, but with the adventure dangling before him, he can offer only a small consolation.

ALBERT

It'll be alright, Mother...and I promise
to be back for my Birthday Dinner.

She NODS and TURNS AWAY before he sees her tears...But he is already out the door. The CAMERA FOLLOWS him as he strides to the TOP of the STAIRCASE and LOOKS DOWN at the three YOUTHS who hope to be his traveling companions. There is a moment of silent tension as the boys wait to hear the verdict...And then

ALBERT

(raising his arms in victory)
Rome!

He RUSHES down the stairs, as his friends RUSH up to MEET HIM.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROME/A SMALL PIAZZA - NIGHT - TWO WEEKS LATER

It is filled with MASKED REVELERS, MUSIC, DRINKING ETC. Into all this, stroll Albert and his friends, themselves COSTUMED AND MASKED. Open wine bottles in hand, they happily allow themselves to be SEPARATED FROM EACH OTHER, by the CROWD.

Albert is taking a TUG FROM HIS BOTTLE, when, amazingly, a YOUNG WOMAN who, despite her mask, is easily seen as strikingly beautiful, comes up to him and KISSES HIM passionately on the lips...and then HURRIES AWAY through the crowd.

Albert tries to FOLLOW, but LOSES her. About to give up, he CATCHES SIGHT of her again, and tries to get to her, but once more, she DISAPPEARS.

Suddenly, she appears once more, at the PERIPHERY OF THE CROWD...only this time she BECKONS to him. She WAITS, as he comes toward her, but just as he almost has her, she FLEES INTO A DARKENED STREET. Albert RUNS after her, in time to SEE a WISP OF HER BALL GOWN disappear AROUND A CORNER. He CALLS for her to STOP, but to no avail.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We SEE him disappear AROUND THE SAME CORNER, and HEAR him begin to CALL AGAIN...but the CALL is STOPPED IN HIS THROAT!

INT. SOMEWHERE IN THE CATACOMBS UNDERNEATH ROME - TWO HOURS LATER

Albert stands, his back to the wall, his ARMS SHACKLED to two RINGS above him. He has been ROUGHED UP a bit, but still LASHES OUT at the indistinguishable SHAPES that sit and stand in the SHADOWS around him.

ALBERT

Who are you? And why have you done this?

A VOICE

We are bad men...and for the money. Next question.

ALBERT

My money is in my waistcoat.

A VOICE

Not anymore...Besides its not your money we're interested in...its your father's. You are, are you not, the only child of Count Mondego?

ALBERT

(pretty brave for sixteen)
So its ransom! Well, send your note and be damned!

A VOICE

(in mock weariness)
Ah, I wish it were that easy...But you see the note won't get to your father for two weeks, and even then there'll be endless debating about whether we've killed you already...A note simply doesn't have the impact...

We can SEE Albert's getting just a tad CONCERNED.

A VOICE

I notice that you're wearing a ring...Perhaps, if we sent the ring...

ALBERT

(relieved)
Yes, the ring! It bears the Mondego Crest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A VOICE
(continuing)
...while still attached to your finger.

The SHAPES in the shadows MURMUR their APPROVAL and CHUCKLE with ANTICIPATION.

Albert is ashamed of himself. By letting these curs see his relief, he has allowed them to know his fear...and now, they are enjoying his discomfort. He promises himself, they will no longer.

ALBERT
Listen to me, vermin...I am Albert, son of Fernand, Count Mondego...and you have had your last laugh at my expense...Do your worst!

A VOICE
As you say.
(calling out)
Peppone! Draw your knife and accommodate the young man!

There is silence as a man, obviously Peppone, begins to MOVE out of the shadows...But suddenly, from ANOTHER PART of the room, ANOTHER MAN MOVES more quickly into the light. TALL, ELEGANTLY DRESSED IN BLACK, and wearing A SHORT TRIM FULL BEARD, it is EDMUND!

EDMUND
Another step, Peppone...and you die before your boot heel touches the floor!

Peppone, alarmed, quickly WITHDRAWS once more into the shadows, as ALL HEADS turn to LOOK at the NEWCOMER, obviously STUNNED at his arrival.

A VOICE
Your Grace!

The MAN to whom the VOICE obviously belongs, runs into the light and throws himself on his KNEES, before Edmund, KISSING HIS HAND. As Edmund looks down upon him, we see that the VOICE is LUIGI VAMPA!

EDMUND
(gravely, to the man at his feet)
You have broken your agreement never to cause harm to a friend of mine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUIGI
(horrificed)
Your Grace, I beg you overlook this
tragic mistake! Had we but known he was
your friend...

EDMUND
(his anger still intact)
I do not know the boy...but his father is
my oldest friend...Now release him!

LUIGI
Of course!
(to his men)
Idiots!

Several of the men run to release Albert from his bonds. As
they do so, Edmund walks over to the young man. Albert makes
a short bow in greeting.

ALBERT
You have my sincere thanks. May I ask who
you are?

EDMUND
(smiling warmly)
For the present time, Your Friend...For
the next few days, Your Host...And for
the short time that formality stands
between us, I am...
(inclining his head)
...The Count Of Monte Cristo.

And OFF OF ALBERT'S IMPRESSED REACTION,

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON AN ORNATE COFFEE POT - THE NEXT MORNING

as it TILTS, POURING coffee into an ELEGANT CUP. We WIDEN to
SEE Edmund sitting alone at his BREAKFAST TABLE, in a silk
dressing gown, pick up the cup and sip it. Jacopo ENTERS, but
Edmund is ALL BUSINESS, any trace of the innocent and buoyant
Edmund we knew at the beginning of the film, totally gone.

JACOPO
He's still sleeping...You can't blame
him. He had a rough night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDMUND

(unmoved)

Wake him...But don't bring him in until
I've done with Luigi.

Jacopo NODS and LEAVES, just as Luigi ENTERS.

EDMUND

Were our enquiries in Marseilles
successful?

LUIGI

(beaming, he plops down on an
arm-chair)

Better than you had hoped!

Luigi REACHES for a CIGAR out of a box on an end-
table...Edmund ARCHES an EYEBROW at his IMPERTINENCE and
Luigi quickly WITHDRAWS HIS HAND. The Count is a scary guy.

LUIGI

...We not only have the information...We
have the witness himself!

EDMUND

(pounding his fist on the
table)

Hah!

He SPRINGS TO HIS FEET, and begins to PACE.

LUIGI

(thrilled to be scoring)

I can have him wrapped in a carpet and
unrolled at your feet in half-an-hour!

EDMUND

Not yet! I want you to follow me to Paris
and then wait for my word.

Luigi NODS.

EDMUND

You've done well, Luigi.

Luigi REACHES once more for the CIGAR, and unimpeded, SNAGS
it. In one motion, he BITES off the tip, LIGHTS A MATCH off
his UNSHAVEN FACE, TAKES A PUFF, and GETS TO HIS FEET.

LUIGI

(indicating the cigar)

That's because you pay well, Zattara.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Luigi gives him a WINK, and saunters out. For a moment, Edmund is LOST IN THOUGHT, but he is interrupted by the ENTRANCE of Albert, a little worse for wear, but looking well enough.

Edmund quickly undergoes an instant TRANSFORMATION TO GRACIOUSNESS.

EDMUND

Albert! Come in! Come in! Take some breakfast!

Albert, a little hesitant, approaches the table, and tentatively sits down.

EDMUND

How are you, my boy? You've had quite an experience...Coffee?

Albert NODS, and Edmund pours him a cup.

ALBERT

Thank you, Monsieur...I...I am greatly in your debt.

EDMUND

(warmly)

Not at all.

ALBERT

I confess, however, that...while I cannot thank you enough for all that you've done...I remain somewhat puzzled.

EDMUND

(as if he were surprised to hear it)

Really?...How so?

ALBERT

Well, for one thing, how you came to know of my kidnapping?

(with a charming innocence)

Its...Its as if it were a miracle!

Edmund just stares at him for a moment...unnerving Albert.

ALBERT

Monsieur?

EDMUND

(snapping out of his reverie)

...I'm sorry...For a moment you reminded

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EDMUND (cont'd)

me of someone...Where were we? Oh yes,
your puzzlement...Well, I'm sorry to tell
you that your rescue was a lot less
miraculous than it seemed.

ALBERT

In what way?

EDMUND

I have found it to my advantage to keep
many connections, some of which extend to
the less exalted members of our society.
It was through these connections that I
heard that the son of Count Mondego had
been taken...and who it was who took
him...From there it was an easy thing to
claim that your father and I were old
Friends...when in fact, alas, the Count
Mondego and the Count of Monte Cristo
have never even met.

ALBERT

Then why even interest yourself in my
rescue

EDMUND

(smiling)

Because I have been a great admirer of
your father for years, and you may
believe me when I say it is my fondest
dream, that one day he and I may come
face to face.

ALBERT

(his face bright with pleasure)

Well, then...Why not visit us as soon as
I get back to Paris!

EDMUND

I wish I could...but I am awaiting word
regarding a certain financial opportunity
which will require me to embark on a
voyage quite quickly.

ALBERT

But you must come! My father will want to
thank you personally!

Edmund makes a great show of being torn. Finally...

EDMUND

(calling out)

Jacopo!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JACOPO
(quickly appearing)
Your Grace?

EDMUND
The Spada Matter...When are we to receive
the...

JACOPO
...the Map, Your Grace?

Edmund FEIGNS a look of ANGER at Jacopo's INDISCRETION.

EDMUND
(sharply correcting Jacopo)
...the Document.

Jacopo now FEIGNS NERVOUSNESS at his master's displeasure.

JACOPO
It first arrives in Marseilles, which...

EDMUND
(interrupting)
Would there be time to send word to our
agents in Marseilles to divert the
Document to someplace else...say Paris?

ALBERT
(jumping in)
Of course its possible! You can stay with
us until your business commands you
elsewhere...And what's more it means
you'll be in Paris just in time...

EDMUND
Just in time for what?

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A BIRTHDAY CAKE - THREE WEEKS LATER

We WIDEN to SEE we are in the KITCHEN of the MONDEGO TOWN-
HOUSE, as a PASTRY COOK, puts the finishing touches on the
CAKE.

THE DRAWING ROOM

Its Albert's BIRTHDAY DINNER where about thirty dignitaries
and V.I.Ps, along with the Mondego family, mill about. Among
the guests: VILLEFORT and his WIFE, VALENTINA.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Valentina TAKES MERCEDES ASIDE, and surreptitiously INDICATES an older gentleman, M. COLBERT and his WIFE, engaged in conversation with some other guests across the room.

VALENTINA

I cannot believe that you invited Colbert and his wife, knowing we would be here!

MERCEDES

(having no time for this nonsense)

Oh for Heaven's sake, Valentina. What would you have Fernand do? Make an enemy of the Head Of The Secret Police?

VALENTINA

An office that antique has held long enough!...Well, no matter. When the time is right, Villefort will push him aside!

MERCEDES

(a little disgusted by the whole thing)

I have no doubt.

She and Valentina move to a small knot of people that includes, Villefort and Fernand , as well as a few others.

FERNAND

(in the middle of telling the group of Albert's adventure)

...According to Albert, he just appeared there in the catacombs, and without even raising his voice, caused Albert's release!

The group MURMURS their APPRECIATION of the tale.

VILLEFORT

He sounds like a very interesting man. Its strange I've never heard of him.

FERNAND

(leaning into Villefort's ear and whispering)

More interesting than you know. I will tell you more in private.

A SERVANT (O.S.)

(announcing)

The Count Of Monte Cristo!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

All eyes TURN to Edmund as he comes into the room. Albert RUSHES over to him, pumping his hand. Edmund appears to be delighted to see him, and instantly CLAPS A HAND AROUND HIS SHOULDER. Albert INTRODUCES him to the Villeforts first.

ALBERT

Mdme. and M. Villefort...May I present
the Count Of Monte Cristo.

Edmund kisses Valentina's hand...and bows to Villefort. As their EYES MEET. Edmund allows himself a MIRTHLESS smile.

VILLEFORT

I never thought to have the honor of
meeting you, my dear Count, although I
have, of course, known of you for years.

EDMUND

How kind of you to say so.

ALBERT

M. Villefort is the Deputy Director of
the State Police.

EDMUND

Ah.

ALBERT

(proudly)

And here is my father. Father, may I
present the Count Of Monte Cristo.

Fernand and Edmund bow to each other.

EDMUND

(pointedly)

If I could tell you sir, the years I have
spent thinking of this meeting...Your son
may have told you that I've followed your
career with fanatical interest.

Fernand, suspecting nothing, is terribly flattered.

FERNAND

You do me too much honor....when it is I
who should honor you, for your gallantry
on my son's behalf. Our home is yours for
as long as you care to make it so. May I
present my wife...

Since she SAW Edmund enter the room, Mercedes has been FROZEN
in place, her hand about to pluck a wine glass from a butlers
tray. Its not that she recognizes him exactly, but there is

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

something very FAMILIAR about him. She SNAPS OUT OF IT and offers her hand.

For an instant, we SEE the love that Edmund once bore her, flicker in his EYES...But then, as he remembers how quickly she turned to Mondego after his imprisonment, his EYES HARDEN. He kisses her hand.

EDMUND

Countess.

MERCEDES

(her eyes never leaving his)
You would have to be a mother to really know the service you have done me, Monsieur. I shall never forget you for it.

EDMUND

If a Permanent Place In Your Mind is the Return for such a small deed, then I will never make a better investment.

The ladies around them TITTER their APPROVAL at Edmund's speech.

FERNAND

Albert, why don't you take the Count around to meet your other guests.

Albert does so.

FERNAND

(to Villefort)

And why don't you and I take a walk onto the balcony for a moment.

Fernand and Villefort stroll away, leaving Mercedes in the hands of the PRATTING Valentina. Mercedes IGNORES her, her EYES FIXED on Edmund, as Albert INTRODUCES him to M. COLBERT.

THE BALCONY

Fernand and Villefort stare into the night, both PULLING ON CIGARS.

FERNAND

You know, Villefort, we've come a long way together. One could almost mark the rise in our fortunes, from that business with Napoleon's letter, years ago.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VILLEFORT

Yes, we certainly did each other a great deal of good back then.

FERNAND

(turning to Villefort)

I believe we can be of use to each other again...in a way that can make us both rich beyond our wildest dreams.

VILLEFORT

You have my complete attention.

FERNAND

Naturally, when my son came back from Rome, he babbled incessantly about Monte Cristo...One of the things he said, without knowing its significance of course, was that the Count was awaiting a Map of some kind, that was coming from Marseilles...And that the Count mentioned that Map in conjunction with, what he called, "the Spada Matter".

VILLEFORT

"Spada Matter"? You don't think he meant Enrique Spada!

FERNAND

Who else?...I believe this Monte Cristo will momentarily be in possession of a Map that will reveal the location of the Great Treasure Of Enrique Spada!

VILLEFORT

(really excited)

What do you propose?

FERNAND

Simply this: I propose to gain possession of that Map, and when I do, set sail immediately and snatch the Treasure, before the Count realizes what happened.

VILLEFORT

And my role in all of this?

FERNAND

If all goes well, I will return with a boat laden with Riches...I shouldn't like the vessel inspected once we are in Port. The King is rich enough...All you have to do is make sure there are no inquisitive

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FERNAND (cont'd)

Inspectors around when we come into
Port...and 25% of the Treasure is yours!

VILLEFORT

Sweet Jesus, Mondego! You are a man of
rare Vision!

Fernand inclines his head in thanks.

VILLEFORT (cont'd)

Tell me, how will you get this Map?

FERNAND

(a smug smile)

For the last three days...

We HEAR the rest of FERNAND'S SPEECH OVER

EXT. THE ROAD TO PARIS - NIGHT

TWO HORSEMEN wait in the WOODS on the side of the ROAD.

FERNAND

...I've had agents, disguised as
highwaymen, watching all the main roads
to Paris from the South...

The HORSEMEN HEAR HOOFBEATS and turn to see a RIDER
approaching in the distance. They draw their PISTOLS, and
step out onto the ROAD, side by side, BLOCKING IT.

The APPROACHING RIDER slows his canter to a walk, as he SEES
what he is up against.

FERNAND (cont'd)

...My men have orders to intercept Monte
Cristo's courier, and sieze the map...

The RIDER REARS his HORSE and BURSTS between the two
horsemen, FURIOUSLY GALLOPING down the OPEN ROAD!

The TWO HORSEMEN THUNDER after him, FIRING their PISTOLS.

FERNAND (cont'd)

...by any means neccessary.

The DESPERATE CHASE continues, with the PURSUERS again FIRING
their PISTOLS. Finally

ON THE TWO HORSEMEN

as they ROUND A BEND, and SEE that one of their SHOTS must've
found its mark. The RIDER lies on the ROAD, some fifty feet
in front of them, his horse standing near the body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The HORSEMEN PULL UP, DISMOUNT and approach the RIDER, who has BLOOD running out of the CORNER of his MOUTH. They go through his clothes, come up with the MAP, in a leather packet worn under the RIDER'S shirt, MOUNT UP, and continue down the road at a gallop...while we HOLD on the FALLEN RIDER...After a beat he RISES, WIPES the false BLOOD from the corner of his mouth, and, his job done, leisurely MOUNTS his horse and proceeds to walk his horse back in the OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

BACK TO MONDEGO AND VILLEFORT

VILLEFORT

Bravo Mondego! It sounds foolproof!

FERNAND

(pleased)

Thank you.

Mercedes ENTERS onto the BALCONY.

MERCEDES

Forgive me, Fernand, but you have to give Albert's Birthday Toast before Dinner can be served.

FERNAND

(a little annoyed, but

acknowledging his obligations)

Yes...Very well.

Fernand takes Mercedes arm, and, with Villefort, they join the crowd filing into the DINING ROOM. As soon as Fernand sees Mercedes to her seat at the foot of the table, a SERVANT comes up to him and WHISPERS in his EAR. He LOOKS toward the DOOR.

FERNAND'S P.O.V. - ON ONE OF THE HORSEMEN

standing in the vestibule, still covered by trail-dust. He NODS to FERNAND. Fernand NODS BACK, and WALKS back to Mercedes.

FERNAND

(talking to her under his
breath)

Something has happened that demands my
immediate attention. I'll be locked in my
study for a little while.

MERCEDES

(keeping her voice down, but
agitated nonetheless)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES (cont'd)

But what of Albert's Toast? Everyone's expecting it! More important, he's expecting it!

FERNAND

(coldly)

You give it, my dear...I'm sure you'll do wonderfully.

MERCEDES

But you're his father! You know how he admires you!

FERNAND

Then he will forgive me for attending to more pressing business! Now please give my Excuses to our guests, and tell them that I'll rejoin them presently.

Fernand LEAVES the ROOM.

ON EDMUND

as he WATCHES Fernand talk to the HORSEMAN at the DOOR and then LEAD him away. A SMALL SMILE, tells us that he is satisfied that his Plan is working, at least so far. His smile DISAPPEARS, however, when he NOTICES Albert's CRUSHING DISAPPOINTMENT, as he too, WATCHES his father LEAVE.

Mercedes RISES from her seat, and NERVOUSLY CALLS for everyone's ATTENTION. She knows very well, that much as Albert loves her, he is an adolescent boy, and her halting words will be a poor substitute for the COMPLIMENTS OF A MAN..

MERCEDES

Ladies and Gentleman. Unfortunately, my husband has had to deal with some Affairs Of State...and so he will be absent from our Dinner for some little while...

There are various MUTTERINGS of disappointment as Albert SITS in DESPAIR, his eyes fixed on his plate.

MERCEDES

...And so...it has been left to me...

Edmund quickly STANDS UP.

EDMUND

(charmingly)

...to introduce you all to the Count Of Monte Cristo yet again!

(turning to a startled Mercedes)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDMUND (cont'd)

I appreciate the kindness, Madame, but I have spent the better part of this evening being introduced to your guests, and I'm sure they've had quite enough.

PROTESTATIONS all around.

EDMUND

(to the assemblage)

Nonetheless, I must inflict myself upon you one more time. You see, I had the audacity to beg the Count to allow me to give the Birthday Toast to Albert.

Albert LIFTS his head, a delighted SMILE spreading across his face.

EDMUND

Count Mondego had been prepared to ignore those Affairs Of State, in order to Toast Albert, but I was so insistent, and such is the graciousness of our Host, that he reluctantly gave up his Fatherly Right, in order to accommodate a guest, even one as boorish as myself.

APPLAUSE all around for Count Mondego, as Mercedes, SLIPS back into her chair, thoroughly CONFUSED.

EDMUND

You have, no doubt, heard this evening of how, in Rome, I "bravely" came to the rescue of Albert...But let me tell you about some real courage. When I first came down into the catacombs, I hid myself in the shadows for a few moments. Young Albert was chained to a wall, and had just been told that his finger was to be sent to his father as evidence of his abduction...

GASPS from the LADIES. EXCLAMATIONS of INDIGNANCE from the MEN.

EDMUND

..The boy's reply to all this was, "I am Albert, son of Fernand, Count Mondego...Do your worst!"

GREAT APPLAUSE.

EDMUND

Albert has told me that his mother feared that something might happen to him in

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDMUND (cont'd)

Rome.. "After all, he was only a boy", she said...Well, she was right...and she was wrong...Something did happen to him, but the person I saw face down those cut-throats was no boy...

(to Albert)

And I will go further...In all my years of travel, I have never seen anyone who was more of a Man...than Albert Mondego.

(to the assemblage)

I give you Albert!

The WHOLE TABLE SPRINGS TO ITS FEET with a thunderous "ALBERT" and EMPTIES THEIR CUPS.

Albert sits in his seat, his face RADIANT.

Mercedes LOOKS at Edmund, OVERWHELMED WITH GRATITUDE.

THE DINING ROOM - A HALF HOUR LATER

The dinner is in full swing, Fernand having returned. Edmund is seated next to a DRUNK Valentina, and begins to DRAW HER OUT.

EDMUND

(indicating Villefort, across and up the table from them)

Your husband is a remarkable man, Madame.

VALENTINA

Its true! I am astonished you can tell all the way from here.

EDMUND

One would have to be blind not to see his brilliance! His prospects must be without limit.

VALENTINA

Ah, you would think so, Monsieur, but such is not the case.

EDMUND

(in mock astonishment)

You cannot be serious! I would think a Comet could be stopped more easily than your husband's career!

VALENTINA

(ruefully)

M. Colbert could stop anything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDMUND
(innocently)
M. Colbert?

VALENTINA
(indicating Colbert)
That old Relic. I will confide in you.
Colbert hates my husband and impedes his
advancement at every turn! Why, he has
destroyed my husband's sleep.
Monsieur...Destroyed it! A night does not
go by that he does not dream horrible
dreams...and I am sure it is all due to
his anguish at being treated in this
fashion.

EDMUND
(thinking hard)
Yes...I'm sure.

ON MERCEDES

as she WATCHES Edmund from her seat. Suddenly, a STUNNING
REVELATION comes over her face.

MERCEDES POV- THE CAMERA MOVING IN ON EDMUND

as he absently CURLS THE BACK OF HIS HAIR AROUND HIS
FINGER...a habit of only one person she has ever seen!

ON MERCEDES

as she puts her HAND TO HER BREAST and COLLAPSES to the
floor, UNCONSCIOUS!

CUT TO:

DRAWING ROOM OF THE MONDEGO HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

Mercedes stands, composing her dress and herself, as Edmund
ENTERS.

MERCEDES
Ah, Count. Thank you for leaving your bed
so early in the morning, but I wanted to
have a few moments alone with you.

EDMUND
(politely , but not warmly)
Not at all. How are you feeling?

MERCEDES
Embarrassed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDMUND

There's no need...I'm happy to see you restored.

MERCEDES

I wanted to thank you for what you did for Albert. You gave him a Birthday he will never forget.

EDMUND

You...and Count Mondego must be very proud of him.

MERCEDES

(averting his eyes)

...Yes...yes we are...There is yet another reason why I asked to see you..

(indicating a chair)

Please sit down.

He does, and she takes the seat opposite.

MERCEDES

You...you remind me of someone...someone who was very dear to me...a long time ago.

EDMUND

Well then, I'm flattered. What happened to him?

MERCEDES

(never taking her eyes off his)

He was arrested for Treason...and Murder.

EDMUND

(flippantly)

On second thought, perhaps I shouldn't be so flattered.

MERCEDES

(eyes still on his)

I never believed the charges.

EDMUND

(his voice carrying the barest trace of sarcasm)

No, of course not...Is he still alive, this man you once held so dear?

MERCEDES

They said he was executed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDMUND

(unable to resist the barb)
I see...And yet, judging from how long
you and your husband have been married,
your grief over this young man would seem
mercifully short-lived.

MERCEDES

(softly, lowering her eyes)
Yes...so it would seem.

EDMUND

(cruelly making light of her
situation)
Well then, there you are! All's well that
ends well!

But Mercedes expression does not change.

MERCEDES

Are you?

EDMUND

(pleasantly)
Am I what?

MERCEDES

(evenly)
Are you Edmund Dantes?

EDMUND

Ah, the young man you spoke of. I should
think that hardly likely.

MERCEDES

(unshakable)
Nevertheless...Are you?

EDMUND

(flatly)
No.

MERCEDES

(an Iron Lady)
Swear it!

EDMUND

I swear it.

MERCEDES

As you believe in God, swear it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EDMUND

Even better...As I believe in God, I swear it.

Mercedes emits a DEEP SIGH OF SORROW, which, in his bitterness, Edmund misinterprets.

EDMUND

(callously)

You see, you sigh with relief, for deep within you, you know that if this man ever came back into your life, he would turn your world into chaos... Be satisfied, Madame, that your Edmund Dantes is dead.

A TEAR rolls down Mercedes' cheek, SURPRISING AND CONFUSING EDMUND. Mercedes BOWS her HEAD to conceal her weeping. There is a moment of SILENCE, and then it is suddenly SHATTERED by the ENTRANCE of Fernand. Edmund RISES from his chair.

EDMUND

Ah, Count Mondego. This is fortunate, for as long as you both are here I'll take this opportunity to say Goodbye.

MERCEDES

(stricken, the words reflexively tumbling out)

Oh, no, must you?

Fernand takes a little notice of Mercedes reaction, but he has bigger fish to fry.

FERNAND

We've barely spent a moment together...Still, I hope its Good News that takes you away from us.

EDMUND

I regret that it is not. Some documents that were to reach my hands were stolen by highwaymen, and I must quickly employ all my resources to recover them. I would like to say goodbye to Albert if I may.

FERNAND

I'm afraid he's gone riding.

EDMUND

In that case, please give him....my Respects.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Edmund BOWS and LEAVES. As soon as the door closes, Fernand SMILES and turns to Mercedes.

FERNAND

I must leave Paris at once!

MERCEDES

But why?

FERNAND

Its best you do not know...
But I will tell you this: The Count Of
Monte Cristo leaves this house, the
Richest Man In Europe...When I return,
that will no longer be the case!

EXT.VILLEFORT'S TOWN-HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - THAT NIGHT.

INT. VILLEFORT'S BEDCHAMBER

The wind HOWLS, as the CURTAINS SNAP AND UNFURL eerily away
from the windows. It is a good night for ghosts.

In his bed, Villefort tosses and turns fitfully. Finally his
EYES OPEN, as if he SENSES something is in the room. He LOOKS
to the FOOT of the BED, and there he SEES the FORM of a
SMALL, BENT MAN, standing in the SHADOWS.

VILLEFORT

(crying out)

Who's there?

THE APPARITION

Your murdered father.

VILLEFORT

(thunderstruck)

This is a dream!

COLONEL VILLEFORT

Is this a dream then?

He HOLDS ALOFT a WALKING STICK, that CASTS A GIANT SHADOW OF
NAPOLEON'S PROFILE on the wall.

VILLEFORT

No! This cannot be!

Villefort FUMBLES TO LIGHT A CANDLE on his bedside table.

COLONEL VILLEFORT

(thundering)

DON'T TOUCH THAT CANDLE! For there is

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL VILLEFORT (cont'd)
nothing in your dark soul that can stand
the light!

Villefort RECOILS from the candle.

VILLEFORT
(biting back his hysteria)
What...What is it you want?

COLONEL VILLEFORT
To forgive you.

VILLEFORT
Forgive me?...For what? I have never...

COLONEL VILLEFORT
YOU FOOL! DO YOU IMAGINE THERE ARE
MYSTERIES IN HEAVEN! You murdered your
own father...and The Devil reserves a
special place for such as you! Your only
hope of escape is to make confession to
me. Now, DOWN ON YOUR KNEES!

VILLEFORT
(quivering with fear)
I...I...

COLONEL VILLEFORT
AS YOU HOPE FOR SALVATION!

For a beat, Villefort remains PARALYZED, but then...

VILLEFORT
Yes...Yes...For it has weighed on my soul
for too long.

He slides off the bed and DROPS to his KNEES.

VILLEFORT
Forgive me, my father...for I knowingly
was the cause of your death...I sent
Fernand Mondego to kill you, and have
twisted in hellfire since.

COLONEL VILLEFORT
Why did you kill me?

VILLEFORT
Because I feared that one day you would
ruin us all.

COLONEL VILLEFORT
Because I was for the Emperor?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VILLEFORT

Yes.

COLONEL VILLEFORT

And because you sought Power and
Position?

VILLEFORT

Yes.

COLONEL VILLEFORT

You are forgiven, my son.

VILLEFORT

(sobbing, his hands clenched)
Thank you...Thank you...

ANOTHER APPARITION (O.S.)

But wait!...There was a boy, an innocent
sailor, Edmund Dantes.

Villefort's head WHIPS around to see yet ANOTHER FORM in the
SHADOWS.

VILLEFORT

(totally beaten)
Yes....Who are you?

THE SECOND APPARITION

...And yet you sent him to rot and die in
the Chateau D'If...Why?

VILLEFORT

Because he carried a letter to my father
which would have brought down my family.

THE SECOND APPARITION

So to serve your ambition, he was plucked
from the arms of his betrothed, and sent
to cough out his life in that horrid
Island Prison.

VILLEFORT

Yes...yes...And I beg his forgiveness!

THE SECOND APPARITION

From what I remember of Edmund Dantes, he
would grant you that forgiveness...

And with that, the SECOND APPARITION LIGHTS a CANDLE,
holding it so it reveals everything but his FACE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EDMUND

...But the Count Of Monte Cristo cannot!

Jacopo, who has played the part of VILLEFORT'S FATHER, also now LIGHTS A CANDLE.

Villefort SPRINGS TO HIS FEET.

VILLEFORT

Monte Cristo! What have you to do with Edmund Dantes??

EDMUND

Do you remember a piece of advice you gave that poor young man: EXECUTE YOUR ENEMY AND ONE NIGHT HE MAY APPEAR IN YOUR DREAMS...BUT ONLY EXILE HIM AND ONE NIGHT HE MAY APPEAR IN YOUR HOUSE!...Well...

Edmund PUTS THE CANDLE to his FACE...a FACE as CLEAN-SHAVEN as the day he was arrested!

EDMUND (cont'd)

...Here he is!

VILLEFORT

(barely able to speak)
Edmund Dantes!!

EDMUND

No, M. Villefort, Edmund Dantes died, as you wanted, a long time ago...but not before The Count Of Monte Cristo was born!

VILLEFORT

(whining)
What will you do to me?

EDMUND

(all innocence)
I?...Nothing...
(but then his tone changes)
I won't have to. I'll let the scandal destroy you...you, who so feared scandal that you were willing to wade in blood to avoid it.

For an instant, Villefort is horrified...but then an ARROGANT SMILE plays across his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

VILLEFORT

Scandal? Surely you're not talking about that fantastic tale you'll claim I told you. In Court, who do you think they'll believe? Me, the Deputy Director of The Secret Police...or you, a Traitor, Murderer and Fugitive from Justice...not to mention your accomplice here, who's background, I'm sure, is equally tainted.

EDMUND

Mmmm, that's a good point. How fortunate for me that I took the precaution of having M. Colbert accompany us.

To Villefort's SHOCK, his rival, Colbert steps out from the SHADOWS.

COLBERT

(enjoying this immensely)
You see, Villefort, earlier this afternoon, Monte Cristo brought me a man who claimed to be in the alley when Mondego murdered your father...after telling the old man he was killing him basically at your request. His word, of course, was not enough to arrest you, but it was enough to coax me into accompanying the Count to your house...And I assure you, the Court will have no difficulty believing what I heard spoken here tonight.

Villefort's head is BOWED in DEFEAT.

EDMUND

M. Colbert's men have surrounded the house, so there is no escape...But, as always in life, there are choices.

Edmund STRIDES out of the room, followed by Jacopo and Colbert, the latter being careful to CLOSE THE DOOR behind him. As Edmund, PULLS ON his gloves, a SHOT is HEARD from behind the door. His face showing NO EMOTION, Edmund descends the STAIRCASE, Jacopo behind him.

Awakened by the shot, Valentina RUNS out of her BEDCHAMBER, only to be held back by two of Colbert's men.

VALENTINA

(hysterical)
What has happened? Count! Colbert! What have you done to my husband!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Edmund just keeps walking down the stairs. When he reaches the bottom, Colbert SHOUTS DOWN at him:

COLBERT
Monsieur Le Count!...France owes you a great deal.

Edmund STOPS, his back still to Colbert. For a beat, he seems to be considering the Irony of that understatement...and then, having said nothing, walks out the door.

INT. MONDEGO HOUSE - AN HOUR LATER

Mercedes, having been awakened by a servant, and in her dressing gown, now hurriedly glides down the staircase to the drawing room. She flings open the double doors, and then STANDS ROOTED to the spot...as Edmund, who stands by the mantle, peering at the fire, turns to face her, CLEAN-SHAVEN.

MERCEDES
(softly)
My God! It is you!...By His Greatest Miracle, somehow, its you!

She RUNS into his ARMS, and begins to cover his face with KISSES. Gently, he tries to stop her, but finally, firmly, he holds her away.

EDMUND
Mercedes...Mercedes...Listen to me!
You've got to listen!

Finally, she lets her arms fall to her sides.

EDMUND
In a few minutes, I'm going to leave, and I'm never coming back.

MERCEDES
(trying to embrace him again)
But you love me!...I know you love me!

EDMUND
(gently)
No...I don't love anything anymore.

MERCEDES
I don't believe that.

EDMUND
You will in a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES

If you don't love me, then why are you here?

EDMUND

Because in a few days I've got to do something...and I want you to know the reason why.

Mercedes shakes her head in puzzlement.

EDMUND

...But first, I want to tell you that three years ago, when I heard you had married Fernand only a short time after my arrest, I believed that you were indifferent to my fate. But now, I realize that, at the time, you had no idea that I was still alive...In any event, that's all behind us now... What's important is that you hear why I do what I'm about to do.

This second allusion to Edmund's intentions, begins to sound ominous to Mercedes.

MERCEDES

(putting her hand to her throat)

You're beginning to frighten me, Edmund...What is this thing you're planning to do?

EDMUND

(evenly)

Kill your husband.

MERCEDES

(shocked)

Kill Fernand?...Why? He was your friend! I heard him defend you to M. Villefort the morning after you were arrested.

EDMUND

That was a charade. It was Fernand who betrayed me to Villefort in the first place. They were working together. Villefort confessed it all this evening.

MERCEDES

(like she's been hit with a poleaxe)

What?...Fernand betrayed you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDMUND

(nodding)

And for that, I swore his death years ago...And now the time has come.

MERCEDES

Edmund, listen to me, you cannot kill Fernand...You must not, I beg you!

EDMUND

(hardened by her defense of Fernand)

Spare me how much he means to you, Mercedes...

MERCEDES

(astonished)

"Means to me"! You think I love Fernand Mondego?...I never loved him...My pleas are for Albert!

(desperately pleading)

Edmund, I know you care about the boy... He worships Fernand. To lose his father would be a terrible blow!

EDMUND

(unmoved)

I'm sorry. Fathers are hard to replace. Mine died of a broken heart, because of your husband.

MERCEDES

(angry now, as she protects her young)

But not because of my son!!...Is that Justice?

EDMUND

(softly)

I wouldn't know. It's been so long since I've seen Justice, I'm afraid I've forgotten its face...Goodbye, Mercedes.

MERCEDES

(flatly)

You were right this morning. Edmund Dantes is dead.

Edmund gives a SLIGHT BOW of his head, and makes for the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MERCEDES

(calling after him)

Thank God, Fernand has left Paris and nobody knows where he's gone!

EDMUND

(turning back to her)

He's gone to steal some treasure, which he knows belongs to me...As for where he's going? I'm on my way there now. Although he doesn't know it, your husband is sailing to the Chateau D'If.

MERCEDES

(gasping)

The Prison?

EDMUND

I bought it from the government, several years ago. Its cells have been empty since I escaped...But by this time tomorrow, it will have a temporary population of one.

MERCEDES

(as if she were in a trance)

No...it will have a population of two.

EDMUND

(clearly unprepared for this)

What do you mean!

Mercedes REPLY is HEARD OVER

THE DECK OF A BOAT - A FOGGY NIGHT -AT THE SAME TIME - M.O.S.

Fernand and Albert stand at the BOW, trying to PEER through the fog-enshrouded night.

MERCEDES (V.O.)

Fernand asked Albert to come along. He said he needed his help...

A GROUP of SAILORS, with clear, foul intent, begin to move toward them from the REAR.

MERCEDES

Naturally, Albert was delighted. He would do anything for his father...

Albert HEARS something behind them. Fernand and he attempt to draw their swords, but they are SWAMPED by their assailants!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As they are hustled below, Albert doesn't notice LUIGI VAMPA looking on.

BACK TO MERCEDES AND EDMUND

MERCEDES

(frantic)

Edmund, you must let me come with you! I can explain to Albert why this is all happening...about how Fernand betrayed you! I'm the only one he'll believe. Its the only way to stop him from defending Fernand...or avenging him later!

She SLIPS to her KNEES, SOBBING.

MERCEDES

Please, Edmund, I beg you to take me to Albert! ...From the night they took you away...Albert's been the only real thing I've ever had!

Edmund LOOKS down upon her, about to RAISE HER by her WRISTS, when he SEES the SILK RING she herself put on her finger and SWORE NEVER TO TAKE OFF, all those years ago!

EXT. A SCHOONER - ESTABLISHING - EARLY EVENING

as it CUTS THROUGH the sea.

INT. MERCEDES' CABIN

Mercedes in her DRESSING GOWN is pensively LOOKING out the STERN WINDOW, when she HEARS a KNOCK at the door.

MERCEDES

Yes, come in

Edmund ENTERS. He has doffed his elegant clothes for those more nautical since he is actually skippering the ship.

EDMUND

Jacopo said you wanted to see me.

MERCEDES

Yes...that's right...Please...sit down.

EDMUND

(obviously ill-at-ease)

I'm afraid I can't right now. I have...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES
(a little desperate)
Please!

Reluctantly, Edmund places himself in a CHAIR, his back held RIGID. Mercedes, SITS on the foot of the BED, FACING him. There is an AWKWARD SILENCE. Finally...

MERCEDES (cont'd)
(exasperated)
Are we not to talk, Edmund? After sixteen years, are we not to talk? Is there nothing you want to ask me after all this time? How can this be, when I have the world to ask you!

EDMUND
(a pause...then almost accusatory)
Have you really been wearing the ring all these years?

MERCEDES
I have.

EDMUND
Hasn't Fernand noticed it?

MERCEDES
The ring is Silk. Fernand only notices Flesh and Gold.

A PAUSE again, after that quick clash of verbal swords.

EDMUND
(softer now)
Why have you worn it?

MERCEDES
(matter-of-factly)
Because I love you. And although that's not what you think...deep down, it's what you know.

EDMUND
(a beat...and then starting to rise)
You must excuse me, I have duties.

MERCEDES
(evenly)
No you don't. Besides, it's my turn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Edmund slowly settles back in his seat.

MERCEDES (cont'd)
Was it very hard?

EDMUND
...You mean...Prison?

She NODS. Edmund takes a beat to ABSORB this. He's never been asked this question, let alone answered it. To do so would be to admit PAIN, WEAKNESS and FEAR. He LOOKS away for a moment, and then, to his own astonishment...

EDMUND (cont'd)
Yes...It was...
(having trouble)
...very hard.

Her SAD SMILE offers the COMFORT of a MADONNA

EDMUND (cont'd)
(softly)
Was it very hard for you?

It's not lost on Mercedes that this is the first time that he's evidenced care for her...or for that matter anything other than his mission of REVENGE. Her eyes begin to FILL with tears.

MERCEDES
You mean...Fernand?

Edmund NODS

MERCEDES (cont'd)
(softly)
Yes...It was very hard.

They SIT and LOOK at each other in SILENCE...The GULF between them shrinking...shrinking...shrink...

EDMUND
(bolting up from the chair)
NO!! I will not let this happen!

He CROSSES to the WINDOW, keeping his back to her. She springs up and follows him.

MERCEDES
Won't let what happen, Edmund? Feel something other than Hate?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EDMUND

Weaken! After sixteen years, I will not weaken! I swore Mondego's death for what he did to me...to us, and I will kill him!

MERCEDES

(solemnly)

You will certainly try, Edmund...And, indeed, the one sure thing is that by this time tomorrow, one of you will be dead...But f it's you...

(starting to break down)

...If it's you...

He TURNS around to her, knowing she's in pain.

MERCEDES

(getting a hold of herself)

...Then...then these few hours are the only hours we'll ever have...Let's spend them alone together...without my Pleas, without your Rage. Leave Fernand and Villefort outside, Edmund..and I will even leave Albert. Nothing in this room...but what was there at our beginning: You, Me, and God.

EDMUND

(ruefully laughing)

Ah, God again! Can I never escape Him?

MERCEDES

(softly)

No, Edmund...He is everywhere...

(putting her hand to his cheek,
and then sliding it to the
back of his neck)

...Even in a kiss...

(bringing his lips toward hers)

...Seek Him there.

And they feast.

EDMUND AND MERCEDES - HOURS LATER

as they lie in BED. Edmund is asleep, his HEAD on her BREAST like a CHILD...the MARKS of the LASH, clearly seen on his bare back. Mercedes is AWAKE, gently SMILING DOWN at him, as she STROKES his HAIR.

THE BATTLEMENTS OF THE CHATEAU D'IF - THE NEXT AFTERNOON

Claude, Pascal and Maurice anxiously LOOK down upon the the PASSENGERS that are DISEMBARKING from the DINGHY....But it isn't until Edmund LOOKS UP at them with a PLEASANT SMILE and a LITTLE WAVE, that serious pants-soiling begins...(figuratively speaking).

INT. DORLEAC'S OLD OFFICE

Edmund STRIDES in followed by JACOPO and LUIGI VAMPA and SEATS himself behind Dorleac's DESK. Luigi and Jacopo on either side of him, precisely as Claude and Maurice flanked Dorleac sixteen years before. Edmund NODS to one of Luigi's men standing at the door.

A moment later, Claude, Pascal and Maurice are brought QUAKING before him.

EDMUND

Do you have any idea why I didn't have you all killed when I first bought this island three years ago?

All of them stop their trembling long enough to SHAKE their HEADS.

EDMUND (cont'd)

The answer is, if I had, you would not be here today...

(gravely)

...And I wanted you to be here today...very badly...

Edmund STANDS, and they're really QUAKING now.

EDMUND (cont'd)

...Because I wanted you to be feeling everything you're feeling now.

They FALL to their KNEES, their HANDS CLENCHED, SOBBING.

EDMUND (cont'd)

(changing tone)

However...you are fortunate, for Greater Business awaits me. So you will be off the island in three days or I will have you all shot.

CLAUDE

...But we have no boat, Your Grace!

CONTINUED:

EDMUND

Build one.

(indicating Luigi)

This gentleman will see to it that you have lumber. If you are as proficient in Carpentry as you are Cruelty, than you are assured a safe voyage, weather permitting...but if, as I suspect, your vessel proves less than seaworthy, I, and several local sharks, shall be delighted.

Edmund LEAVES, calling for Jacopo to FOLLOW.

INT. THE ABBE'S CELL

Left exactly as we last saw it. The CAMERA PANS SLOWLY OVER the scientific equipment, the books, the charts and formulas on the walls etc.

EDMUND AND MERCEDES

as they stand side by side LOOKING about them in WONDERMENT.

EDMUND

When I bought this all, I had everything restored the way it was.

(turning to Mercedes)

I'll send Albert to you. Will you be alright if I leave you now?

MERCEDES

(serenely, alluding to the spirit of the Abbe that they both feel)

No harm could come to me here.

EDMUND

(softly agreeing)

No.

Edmund leaves and steps into the CORRIDOR where Jacopo STANDS, FACING HIM.

JACOPO

(putting a hand on Edmund's shoulder)

So finally, the Last Act of the Play eh, Zattara.

They WALK together down the CORRIDOR. Edmund STOPS at a CELL and peeks in to SEE Albert PACING like a LION.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDMUND

(whispering to Jacopo)
I'd wager my life he had no idea he was
on a mission of thievery. Take him to his
mother...But be careful when you go in...
The boy has courage.

EDMUND'S OLD CELL

An unshaven Fernand sits on the slab, BLINDFOLDED, his HANDS
TIED BEHIND HIS BACK. He PICKS UP HIS HEAD at the sound of
the key in the door. Edmund ENTERS.

EDMUND

Greetings, Mondego.

FERNAND

(nodding slowly, a rueful smile
appearing)
Monte Cristo.

EDMUND

...Can you imagine why you are here?

FERNAND

(not particularly shaken)
I assume you found out about my scheme.

EDMUND

(almost friendly)
Here, let me remove your blindfold and
bonds...

He helps Fernand STAND UP, and then moves BEHIND him, out of
Fernand's view, and UNTIES HIS BLINDFOLD.

EDMUND (cont'd)

(still friendly enough)
No, my dear Mondego, not "found out"
about it...Conceived it. The mention of
Spada in front of Albert, the Map-bearing
courier who your men thought they
shot...all of it staged. Of course, the
whole plan depended upon you being as
dishonorable as I knew you to be...and
you were.

For the first time since we have met Fernand, we SEE FEAR on
his FACE. Edmund REMAINS BEHIND him, UNTYING Fernand's HANDS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FERNAND

But you hardly know me...And why go to such lengths to induce me to steal your treasure?

Edmund gives no answer. Instead, he TURNS Fernand to the ALMOST- FADED "GOD WILL GIVE ME JUSTICE" he had scratched out on the wall.

EDMUND

I wrote this on the first day I was imprisoned here. . Naive, I admit...
...But then, I was naive in so many ways...

(spinning Fernand around to face him)

...sixteen years ago!

Fernand's EYES become WIDE AS SAUCERS.

FERNAND

Edmund!!

EDMUND

Yes, "Edmund"...And see how, with that one name, all your questions are answered.

(Edmund dryly continues)

My, my, you seem every bit as shocked as our deceased friend, Villefort.

FERNAND

(now even more shocked)

Did...you...say...deceased?

EDMUND

(offhandedly)

I'm afraid so. After being confronted with the evidence of his crimes, he chose to shoot himself...An option that will not be available to you.

FERNAND

(impressed, despite his situation)

My compliments, Edmund. When we were boys, I never dreamed you capable of this.

EDMUND

(a mirthless smile)

When we were boys, I wasn't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FERNAND

(now beginning to recover his poise)

So what are your plans for me?

EDMUND

(gravely)

Because of you, I lost my love, my father, and half my life...I intend to kill you with my own hands, and nothing in this world will stop me.

FERNAND

And how, exactly do you intend to do that? You're simply not a Murderer, Edmund.

EDMUND

No, but I am a gentleman, and that's almost the same thing..And so I will kill you as a gentleman would.

FERNAND

(his class prejudice rearing its head)

You, the former Cabin Boy, a gentleman? I told you years ago: Such things are a matter of Blood.

EDMUND

Well, we'll have ample opportunity to inspect yours presently. Jacopo will bring you your sword.

For the first time, Fernand SMILES WIDELY, his COURAGE and ARROGANCE now in FULL FLOWER.

FERNAND

Did you say "sword", Edmund?
(in mock concern)

I certainly hope someone has taught you its use since the last time we came against each other.

EDMUND

(again, the mirthless smile)
Someone has.

Edmund LEAVES...And OFF FERNAND'S CONCERNED REACTION

CUT TO:

THE BATTLEMENTS - DUSK - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Edmund, STANDS waiting, SWORD IN HAND, the WIND blowing through his HAIR, as Fernand, similarly armed, completes the climb to the parapet. Their BLOOD IS SO UP, they dispense with such niceties as salutes and they just RUN at each other, CLASHING TOGETHER as Jacopo and Luigi and his crew look on.

Edmund and Fernand are in the full heat of Battle. They are evenly matched and we can see that both know that they are in the fight of their lives, as they move back and forth along the PARAPET...At one point, in fact, Edmund FALLS through A SPACE between the BATTLEMENTS, only to save himself by holding onto A LEDGE on the outside and RETURNING to the PARAPET through the next BATTLEMENT SPACE

Suddenly the VOICE OF MERCEDES is HEARD O.S. SCREAMING for Albert to STOP!

Edmund makes the mistake of TURNING toward Mercedes'VOICE, momentarily LETTING DOWN HIS GUARD and giving Fernand a golden opportunity to LUNGE at his CHEST. At the last instant, however Edmund manages to PARRY Fernand's blade , and it goes DEEP INTO EDMUND'S SWORD-ARM.

For an instant, both men PAUSE, as they absorb what has just happened.

ON JACOPO AND LUIGI

as they LOOK at each other ANXIOUSLY, reacting to Edmund's WOUND.

JACOPO

How long does he have?

LUIGI

Before his arm starts to stiffen? Three maybe four minutes at most.

Smelling the kill, Fernand LAUNCHES A FURIOUS ATTACK, DRIVING Edmund STEADILY BACK.

We SEE now that Edmund's arm is virtually USELESS. He KNOWS as he RETREATS closer and closer to the TOWER WALL behind him, that he is running out of time and ground.

ON FERNAND

SMILING now, as he realizes that in only a few feet, Edmund will have his BACK TO THE WALL.

ON EDMUND

using every ounce of skill left him to PARRY Fernand's attack. He knows he must make a DECISION and he does!...With a desperate effort, he SIDESTEPS Fernand's next LUNGE, and employs the ABBE'S LAST LESSON, winding up with his BACK TO FERNAND...and his SWORD AT HIS THROAT!

Slowly, Edmund UNCURLS himself, his blade still at Fernand's THROAT.

Fernand is SHOCKED! Slowly, he DROPS his sword, and seeks to BACK-UP from Edmund's blade. Edmund lets him do this for a few feet, seeing that Luigi and his men are right behind Fernand, and will stop his escape.

But then, FROM NOWHERE, Albert RACES BETWEEN Edmund's BLADE and Fernand, BARRING Edmund from harming his father!

EDMUND

(gravely)

Albert...stand aside!

ALBERT

M. Dantes, my mother tells me you have been greatly wronged by my father...But my father he remains, and I will not allow his death at your hands!

EDMUND

Your courage does you credit, Albert. Your father doesn't deserve such a son...But I ask you again to step aside!

ALBERT

I cannot.

EDMUND

Fernand! Order the boy to step aside! Don't disgrace yourself further by attempting to trade your life for that of your son!

Fernand does not respond. For several beats no one moves, and we HEAR nothing but the HOWLING of the WIND...And then

MERCEDES

...He is not Fernand's son.

All three men TURN TO MERCEDES, FLABBERGASTED, but none so much as Edmund who keeps LOOKING from Mercedes to Albert and back again...the BEGINNINGS of a SMILE pulling at the corners of his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES

I was already pregnant when I married Fernand. I thought you dead, and it was the only way to conceal the truth of Albert's birth.

There is yet another beat of silence...ended, finally, by Fernand, in a curiously philosophical tone.

FERNAND

...Well, there it is! What else is to be expected in a world where Cabin Boys are Counts?...You know, Mercedes, over these last days, I've lost quite a lot: a Treasure, My Wife, My Honor, My Son.

MERCEDES

(softly)

And yet, Fernand, you lost nothing you ever really had.

Fernand INCLINES HIS HEAD, acknowledging the hit.

FERNAND

My, but this is all terribly Romantic, isn't it: The Scoundrel brought down...The Lovers, at last together...
(through gritted teeth)
...for all Eternity!

Fernand WHIRLS AROUND to LUIGI, who is STANDING BEHIND HIM, and with one hand, gives him a QUICK PUSH BACK, while with the other, PLUCKS a DOUBLE-BARRELED PISTOL from LUIGI'S BELT...and SHOOTs Mercedes!...He TURNS NOW to FIRE the second BARREL at Edmund.

Edmund, SCREAMING at the SIGHT OF MERCEDES CRUMPLING TO THE GROUND, PULLS Albert from between himself and Fernand, and with his LAST OUNCE OF STRENGTH, DRIVES HIS SWORD CLEAN THROUGH FERNAND'S THROAT, as the PISTOL BALL, flies past!

The PAIN from his WOUNDED SWORD-ARM, forces Edmund to LET GO of the SWORD, leaving it like a SKEWER in the still ASTONISHED and STAGGERING FERNAND.

In one motion, Luigi SPINS Fernand around to FACE HIM, SPITS in his FACE...LIFTS him above his head...and CASTS HIM INTO THE SEA!

Edmund, and everyone else, races to Mercedes, lying on ground. As Edmund CRADLES HER in his arms, and Albert kneels over her, Jacopo, LOOKS carefully at the ABDOMINAL WOUND and

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

with his EYES, tells Edmund the TRUTH. TEARS fall from the eyes of all three men, as Mercedes OPENS hers.

EDMUND

(distraught)

Oh my Mercedes, look what I've done to you..Me, and my obsession for revenge!

She says nothing...but manages a SMALL SMILE, PUTTING one of her HANDS INTO ALBERT'S, and THE OTHER INTO EDMUND'S.

MERCEDES

(to Edmund)

I'll wait for you...on the hill.

And then she dies. Edmund sobbing, HOLDS her lifeless body tight to his.

MARSEILLES - ESTABLISHING - DAY

MATTE OVER: FOUR MONTHS LATER

DOCKSIDE - CLOSE ON THE WORD, PHARAON

We WIDEN TO SEE that it is painted on the BOW of a SHIP tied to the dock .A small CROWD has gathered on the DOCK to ogle this new arrival.

Julianne, now twenty-one, with her grandfather, the even more aged, M. Morell in tow, ELBOWS the CROWD aside, till they get to the FRONT. Morell is WIDE-EYED as he scans the ship from stem to stern.

JULIANNE

(excited beyond words)

I told you, Grandfather. It's the Pharaon, isn't it?...Just as I said!

M. MORELL

(in wonderment)

Plank for plank.

He is INTERRUPTED by LUIGI VAMPA, dressed in a CLEAN, CRISP NAVAL UNIFORM.

LUIGI

M. Morell, I believe this ship is yours.

M.MORELL

What do you mean...mine?

LUIGI

It has been meticulously constructed in Calais after the ship you lost.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUIGI (cont'd)
(handing some documents to the
old man)
These are its papers...And I am its
Captain, Luigi Vampa.

Luigi BOWS.

M. MORELL
(bewildered)
But I don't understand...Who built
it?

LUIGI
I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to
say...but whoever it is, has also asked
me to deliver this.
(handing the old man a
monumental diamond)
You are to use the gem to start up your
shipping company once again.

M. MORELL
(beyond stunned)
But why has this been done?

LUIGI
I've been told that, should you ask that
question, I am only to say, "Because of
the kindness you showed to Edmund
Dantes...And now sir, what cargo do we
carry, and where do we sail?"

Morell and Julianne LOOK AT EACH OTHER in CONFUSION...and
then EMBRACE in pure JOY.

THE HILLSIDE OF EDMUND AND MERCEDES - A HALF HOUR LATER

Albert, Jacopo and Luigi WATCH Edmund from afar, as he
finally TURNS from Mercedes' FLOWER-COVERED GRAVE and
approaches them.

EDMUND
So, Luigi, did you deliver the Pharaon to
M. Morell?

LUIGI
I have never seen a happier man, Zattara!

Edmund BEAMS

EDMUND
Nor a better one. I think the Abbe would
approve of our first expenditure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUIGI

Jacopo and I will go back to town now,
Zattara. We will meet you with the coach.

Jacopo and Luigi LEAVE.

Edmund and Albert WALK to the CREST of the HILL. After a
moment...

EDMUND

It's not that I hear her voice when I
visit her...It's that I feel it.

ALBERT

I understand, Father.

Edmund LOOKS at his son, GRATEFUL for the understanding, and
then returns to his musings

EDMUND

(sighing)

I don't know...perhaps it's not her voice
at all...Perhaps's it's...

ALBERT

God's?...But you don't believe in God.
Mother said you told her that.

EDMUND

Yes, I did tell her that. And yet,
nowadays, I find myself thinking that
Something has to be responsible for the
fact, that for every Villefort and
Mondego...there is a Mercedes, and an
Abbe Faria...a M. Morell...

(looking into his son's eyes)

...and an Albert.

Albert looks back at him with a son's love.

ALBERT

...and a Count Of Monte Cristo.

EDMUND

(smiling)

...Who, with his son, will travel the
world, bringing our Great Fortune to bear
in the service of our Fellow Man, and so
will I keep the Abbe's Promise... And,
one day, when you are the Count of Monte
Cristo, I ask that you do the same.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALBERT
(very seriously, looking into
his father's eyes)
You and the Abbe may count on that,
Father.

Edmund SMILES at Albert, and they walk down the hillside
together...THE CAMERA HOLDING on their BACKS as they CONTINUE
THE CONVERSATION.

EDMUND (cont'd)
As to whether those who come after us
will use the Treasure for Good....Well,
we can only trust they will...

ALBERT
Faith is often rewarded, Father.

Edmund PUTS his ARM around his son's SHOULDERS.

EDMUND
(softly)
Yes....I have found that.

And as they walk, we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.- THE CHATEAU D'IF - ESTABLISHING

TO:

EDMUND'S CELL

TO:

THE WALL

upon which it is WRIT:

GOD WILL GIVE ME JUSTICE!

FADE OUT

(CONTINUED)