

~~Cristo.~~

~~They bow/ curtsey.~~

~~FERNAND:~~

~~Count. Thank you for the invite. A lavish affair for sure. My wife, Madame Mondego.~~

~~Silence.~~

~~DANTES:~~

~~Madame... Mondego?!~~

~~FERNAND:~~

~~-and our Daughter, Alberta.~~

~~DANTES is pale and still.~~

~~MERCEDES:~~

~~Count. I do love a masked ball - it makes you focus so much more on the ... eyes...~~

~~Just before any spark of recognition takes hold.~~

~~JACOPO:~~

~~Monsieur, Madame - please forgive the Count, he is not feeling himself right now. Please, make yourselves comfortable.~~

~~ALBERTA:~~

~~Merci.~~

~~The MONDEGOS move into the ball and mingle.~~

~~DANTES:~~

~~Get Haydee. Now.~~

~~JACOPO:~~

~~That was her - the girl?~~

~~DANTES nods.~~

~~JACOPO:~~

~~Well... that complicates things. Listen - promise you won't kill anyone? Please? - things are in motion. Don't let a red mist cloud your mind. Mondego is number three - oui? One, two - then three.~~

~~DANTES nods. He has fallen into a dark mood. He watches the MONDEGOS dance. Presently a young woman arrives. HAYDEE is DANTES' date for the~~

evening.

HAYDEE:

I wasn't ready.

DANTES:

I needed you.

HAYDEE:

You promised you would never order me around.

DANTES:

I did - there is a difference between need and command though, don't you think?

HAYDEE:

Allowing me to think? I'm so lucky.

DANTES:

Dance with me.

*HAYDEE assents and they take the floor. DANTEs is distracted by the MONDEGOS throughout.*

~~CHORUS:~~

~~Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait!~~

~~What?~~

~~Who's that?~~

~~She's from the bit we skipped.~~

~~What do you mean?~~

~~She was a slave girl that he freed.~~

~~'cause he's soft.~~

~~'cause she's pretty!~~

~~'cause she's a vital part of his master revenge plan and without her he can't nail down one of his three dishes to be served cold?~~

~~Don't mix metaphors.~~

~~So she's his right hand man?~~

~~Woman.~~

~~No - Jacopo is his right hand man.~~

~~Well then - she's his left hand woman!~~

~~D'accord?~~

~~Agreed.~~

~~Continue...~~

DANTES:

We have to give you a new name until it's over.

HAYDEE:

Very enigmatic - may I choose?

DANTES:

Be my guest.

HAYDEE:

How about Artemis?

DANTES:

Goddess of the hunt?

HAYDEE:

You know - you're very well read - for a lucky sailor.

DANTES:

I like it. It fits. (*dancing so she can see the MONDEGOS*) Tell me - do you recognise that man?

HAYDEE:

Not with the mask.

DANTES:

What if I told you he was the Count of Morcef, Fernand Mondego?

HAYDEE:

I would walk over there, slit his throat and bathe in his blood. But - you tease me?

DANTES:

Do I?

ALBERTA:

Count. Mind if I cut in?

DANTES:

Of course not. Artemis - go and cool down.

*HAYDEE takes her place with JACOPO - she is murderous.*

ALBERTA:

I am an admirer, Count. I have been following your rising star. Your philanthropic work is... well, it's so generous.

DANTES:

How old are you, child?

ALBERTA:

Fourteen - hardly a child. (*They dance a while*) Papa says you're all money and no class.

DANTES:

Really? But he's never met me.

ALBERTA:

But he has heard of you. Who hasn't heard of the Count of Monte Cristo?

DANTES:

Indeed.

ALBERTA:

I think there's much more to you than that.

DANTES:

We should meet again - less formally - and then you can find out.

ALBERTA:

If you like the opera - I could arrange for you to watch?

DANTES:

That would be my honour - excuse me...

*HAYDEE, who has been seething at the side of the dance ends a heated debate with JACOPO and decides to throw caution to the wind, pulling her knife she heads for FERNAND. She moves quickly. DANTE breaks from his dance and pulls her away before anyone notices.*

DANTES:

Haydee - HAYDEE! Look at me. Patience - our desires