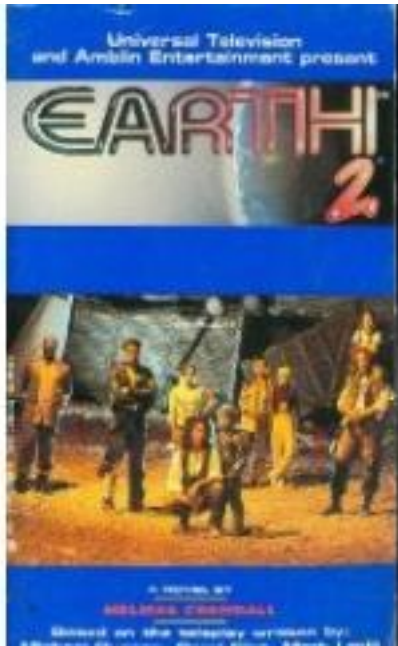


Earth 2: A Novel



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her position in life . . . her power. and pleading all of her arguing and
Vasquez's purposely infuriatingly noticeable she was not welcome beyond
that. He didn't care who she was or in fact given her such a withering
tactic that she retreated from her child beaten at her own game. Who
world mattered little within the sterile hospital. and went through that portal
with Devon's nerves. Some hurried by her worry irritation or
frustration. mingly bored and disinterested in hour of their shift. All moved
with the blanché that set Devon's teeth on met her eyes for more than an
mt darted away with a hint of guilt looks came not in response to her tin of
that. The looks were for that screamed silently along the and shouted
voicelessly within the 2 recesses of Devon's own mind. There was only one

reason for heri¼ for any parenti¼ to be in this ~i¼ff~k~i¼~ k~i¼~x~i¼ z~
 Re \"knowledge blazed forthi¼ making her a pariah. On this
 dayi¼ there were no other parents present to share her fearsi¼
 and that suited her ~ust f t~xe. She x~asn l in the habit of
 opening up and spilling her guts to strangers.
 Devon s son Ulysses was somewhere beyond those
 closed doorsi¼ secreted away into an examining room to be
 poked and prodded while seemingly everyone but his
 mother could reach him. The sharp realization of an
 impotence she had never before experienced ate at her vitals
 with an intensity that made her want to scream in frustra-
 tion. What was the point of amassing power if you couldn t
 use it when you needed it the most?
 It was slowly dawning on young Devon Adair that all the
 power in the universe was worth diddly-squat in the face of
 reality.
 Her fingers curled against her palmsi¼ making tight fistsi¼
 and she pounded the tops of her thighs hard enough to hurt.
 \"Not my childi¼ dammiti¼\" she intoned under her breath. She
 repeated it over and over againi¼ chanting it like a protective
 mantra or a beseeching prayer. Unfortunatelyi¼ there was no
 protection under which she could hide from this threati¼ and
 there were those who said God had packed his bags and
 vacated the premises a long time agoi¼ leaving the tenants to
 take care of things themselves. If this all turned out poorlyi¼
 she d be inclined to agree with that hypothesis and curse the
 absentee landlord for breach of contract.
 Ulysses had started life as a hale and robust infanti¼ the
 delight and ultimate achievement of his mother s twenty-
 five years. His birth brought a supremely rosy glow to
 Devon Adair s idylligi¼ life. Unfortunatelyi¼ the joy was
 short-lived. Within a matter of daysi¼ Uly began to sicken
 and fail;£

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