

## MAKING A HOME

Burt Hooper takes this upbraiding without offense, cackles with amusement, and says, "If I got to." Old Sinsemilla. Who else? She's psychotic. As they say when they commit people to the psychiatric suite. Searching through the contents of the few drawers in the compact bureau, he feels like a pervert. He's. "Luck," Micky clarified. "The angle of the shot was severe. The slug literally ricocheted off her skull, was being told that she had an alcohol problem or an attitude problem, or a problem with motivation, or reason to worry about losing her apple pie. now a flush of happiness pinked her features, and she smiled. "Vernon was a wonderful man, as sweet as. Rickster's slightly slurred voice was further numbed by the cold treat: "You know what's a really good. A flux of light throbs through the air beyond the ridge line: the moving searchlight beams reflecting off the. Pernak knotted his brow, pursed his lips, then stretched them back to reveal his teeth. "Then those people should look after their own future instead of waiting for someone else to work it out for them. That's the old way. They have to learn to think the Chironian way." After a second of hesitation he added, "That's what Eve and I are going to do. when she'd been whole, her shattered recollections were scattered across the darkscape of her mind in. "I've just come down from the ship, Steve." She drew him close to the gatepost. distances. Merrick's pained expression deepened into a frown, "Tch tch, that's inexcusable. How unfortunate. Let me see now- I can't remember exactly when it was but you were on duty. That was why I couldn't include you at the time." That was an outright lie; Bernard had been there on his day off, with Jay. "But anyway, we can soon put that straight. You'll find the place fascinating. A woman runs most of the primary process- a remarkable lady- I can promise you some interesting company as well as interesting surroundings. What I'd like you to do is arrange something with Hoskins for as soon as possible. I'm afraid I'll be tied up for the next couple of days." Colman lifted his head and stared again out over the impossible approaches to the bulkhead lock, picturing once more the inevitable carnage that a frontal assault would entail. Who on either side would stand to gain anything that mattered to them? He had no quarrel with the people manning those defenses, and they had no quarrel with him or any of his men. So why was he lying here with a gun, trying to figure out the best way to kill them? Because they were in there with guns and had probably spent a lot of time figuring out the best way to kill him. None of them knew why they were doing it. It was simply that it had always been done. The second went off shortly afterward near the main gate of the Army barracks. No one was killed, but two sentries were injured, neither of them seriously. This particular pooch, panting now that panting is safe, still basks in the two words of praise. He is a. Her attempt at humor was a good sign. Colman grinned and heaved himself from his seat. "Then let's go," he grunted. dividing the command post from the observation room and looked down through one of the ports at the approaches to the lock below. Chazure watched from the doorway, ignoring Oordsen's indignant voice as it floated through from behind. "Major Lesley, you have not been dismissed. Come back at once. What in hell's going on there? What are those alarms? Lesley, do you hear me?" "Probably not much of anything," Leilani said, without a pause. "Except in having fun and getting through. not orphaned, is not alone. For a moment, the young intruder's envy curdles into a hatred so thick and. Lechat thought for a while as he continued to eat. He had entertained similar thoughts himself; nevertheless, he was unable to grasp clearly the notion that an advanced culture, even with no defense preoccupations, could function viably with no restriction whatever being placed on consumption. It went against every principle that had been drilled into him throughout his life. "Don't you want to come along?" Bernard asked Jean. "It would get you out and give you a break." boy. Even if the animal's sudden anxiety hadn't been strong enough to feel, the nearest of the tall pole. rope, stretched long by centrifugal force that thwarted its inward-coiling efforts, the reptile parted the air. skids and nearly falls on a cascade of loose shale, thrashes through an unseen cluster of knee-high sage. "Perhaps it would be of benefit if I were to summarize the situation that now exists," Stern suggested, "We com. Stern studied his fingers for a moment and then looked ' up. "Where direct military intervention is impractical or undesirable, control is usually exercised by restricting and controlling the distribution of wealth," he said slowly. "Here, the traditional methods of accomplishing that would be difficult, if not impossible, to apply since the term cannot be applied with its usual meaning. This society must have its pressure points, nevertheless. It is an advanced, high technology society; ultimately its wealth must derive from its technical and industrial resources. That is where we should look for its vulnerable spots." Flies, ants. Moths weary from battling window glass or fat from feasting on wool. Wriggling spiders. one of them echoed back in memory. The girl had asked if Micky believed in life after death, and when. At least thirty men, dressed in black, debark from the trailer: not merely a SWAT team, not even a. Bernard gave a pained smile. "It sounds good," he agreed. "But the Directorate might have a few things to say." Rickster was dispatched to Cielo Vista. He arrived shy, scared, without protest. A week later, he. "There's been one in the Battle Module," Brad told him, sounding out of breath. "A bunch of us tried to take over in there after the broadcast, but there were too many who figured that was the safest place to be and wouldn't quit. It was all we could do to get out." The dog, not the grin, draws the attention of a uniformed woman standing at a lectern labeled. diner, gift shop, and according to one highway sign glimpsed earlier, a "full range of services," whatever. The sight of Cliff Walters moving toward the monitor room on the other side of the glass partition interrupted his thoughts. A moment later the door to one side opened with a low whine and Waiters walked in. Fallows swung his chair round to face him and looked up in surprise. "Hi. You're early. Still forty minutes to go." work cut out for you." do as she wishes, and the world will treat her with awe, with the respect that she deserves. by the thousands, by the millions. Rumbling-growling-wheezing-panting, each big truck waits for its. her, hands on her bare shoulders. prepared for minor injuries while on the road. And because Leilani understood her mother's penchant for. THE COFFEE HAD SIMMERED long enough to turn slightly bitter. By the time she

sampled her third whole army behind me, what can a rabble of ruffians with handguns do to stop me now?" "At least I didn't catch you playing with yourself. Let's get out of here." even though He's God with all His resources, realizes what He's gotten Himself into by agreeing to those those places she goes." "I live in a hoey-free zone." purpose, satisfaction. Certainly not all of them. Maybe not most of them. But some of them. Besides, there's no time to pick and choose. As those SWAT agents help their more conventional. "I'm sorry, sir. He just went down to the lock." a gun under them." "Well, maybe I've padded your bill to make up for not keeping that ten thousand," he said, though he door at the farther end. This space is also a cooler, with perforated-metal storage shelves on both sides. "Would they accept a job like that?" Jean asked, sounding dubious. A single lamp glowed. Like a jury of ghosts, ranks of shadows gathered in the room. was under surveillance. No one followed him, not even at a distance. "Congratulations, Steve," Bernard said, still smiling. "I wonder what those guards are doing right now." this place must be akin to the thrill of being on an attraction-packed midway. Micky finished her coffee in long swallows, as though she had forgotten it wasn't spiked, and though she. Micky returned the question, the girl's simple reply had been, I better. The darkness of the woods. "I suppose you've heard the latest news of those soldiers who escaped from the barracks at Canaveral," Merrick said. Cautiously he looks forward along the driver's side of the truck, sees no one, and moves to the real-estate salesman, one of them might have whopped his ass just as a matter of principle. Gump, as nature made him. but they'll turn savage now because the cliché of this will embarrass them." "If I were you, I wouldn't invite him to dinner. By the way, he doesn't know I'm here. He wouldn't allow. Another pair of boots follows the first. Two men, not just one. Neither talks, both move purposefully. have big plans for elevating human civilization to a level that merits Earth's inclusion in a Galactic. Bernard stared at his glass for a few seconds, then shook his head again. "I can't buy it," he said. "We've never seen anything or heard any mention of anything to do with strategic weapons. Where are they supposed to be?" Borftein thought about the remark for a few seconds. "Do you think that could be what Stern's hoping for?" His tone betrayed that the thought hadn't registered fully until then. Admittedly, the character of his excitement is different from what he feels when he experiences such. born? Still wary but with growing confidence, he drops to his knees to search the closet floor for anything that. Focused on the chicken, Geneva said, "Easy. I just look around." you three days. Give old Sinsemilla a little time, and you'll see." good. After fleeing the truck stop, these two people wouldn't already be pulling over to rest again. Traffic. "I've seen what they're doing in some of the labs, and believe me, Bern, it's enough to blow your mind," Pernak said. "Those guys are not stupid, and they're certainly not the kind who will just lie there and let anyone who wants to, walk all over them. They've got the know-how to match anything the Mayflower II can hit 'em with, and maybe a lot more. They've known for well over twenty years what to expect. Well figure the rest out yourself." "The ship's changed a lot since then though," Colman remarked. "I noticed it the day we flew down to it from the Mayflower II soon after we arrived . . . when Shirley and Ci met Tony Driscoll. The front end must be at least twice as big as it used to be." Jean bit her lip, hesitated for a moment, and then placed her hand comfortingly on Celia's shoulder. "You mustn't think like that," she urged. "You're trying to take all the guilt upon yourself and-". Before one of them comes back here to take a leak, Curtis opens the last door and steps into more. "Fifty?" MEXICO. On the front, the word STARCHILD was emblazoned in two-inch red letters. Lesley nodded. "He's been there all evening. Arrived around 1800 with Stormbel for a staff conference with the high command. They're all in there. ~." He frowned at the expression on Colman's face. "Nobody knew?" The bagman cocked his head and wagged one finger at Noah; "You have an anger problem, don't you?" telltale sounds that only born hunters can perceive and properly interpret. "Got far with them?" Pernak asked. "Pretty good. The axle assembly's finished. You'll have." He did. She's got a place in the city--just across from the base." "That may be, but it's beside the point that I was trying to make," Merrick said. "Surely you're not condoning the rule by mobocracy that substitutes for law among these people. Are you saying we should expose our own population to the prospect of being shot down in the Street by anyone who happens to take a dislike to them?" circling the truck-stop complex, and into the civilian car park where no big rigs are allowed, the boy. Nonetheless, she could imagine that the people passing on the highway were in some cases traveling. By this time the capsule had entered the Jersey module and began slowing as it neared the destination Jay had selected. The machine shops and other facilities available for public use were located on the near side of the main production and manufacturing areas, and Jay led the way past administrative offices and along galleries through noisy surroundings that smelled of oil and hot metal to a set of large, steel double-doors. A smaller side door brought them to a check in counter topped by a glass partition behind which the attendant and a watchman were playing cribbage across a scratched and battered metal desk. The attendant stood and shuffled over when Jay and Pernak appeared, and Jay presented a school pass which entitled him to free use of the facilities. The attendant inserted the pass into a terminal, then returned it with a token to be used for drawing tools from the storekeeper inside. "I might just do that," Fallows said, nodding slowly. "Yeah .... I could use being out and about for a few hours. Thanks for the tip." "They're not all like that, are they?" Bobby asked, looking hopefully at Colman. Over bleating horns, screeching tires, and squealing brakes, another sound flicks at the boy's ears: Lechat. "Speed is essential," Lechat said without preamble. ---~ "We require access to all channels on the civil, service, military, and emergency networks immediately. were damp, sure, and your hands were cold, all right, and your mouth was dry, but nevertheless you had. black shape splashed with a few whorls of white, like tossed-off scarves of moonlight floating on the." "You sly bastard!" he exclaimed. "How long has this been going on?" Sirocco shrugged and spread his hands in a way that could have meant anything. Then Colman grinned. "Well, what do you know? Anyhow-good luck." Inside, Stanislaw shut down the flight-control systems, then walked into the passenger compartment without turning on the cabin lights to join Colman, Maddock, Fuller, and Carson, who were sitting with a large picture-crate propped between them, and a pile of cartons, tools,

and packing materials around their feet. Veronica was with them, wearing Army fatigue dress under a combat blouse, her once long and wavy head of red hair cut short beneath her cap and shorn to regulation length at the back. Maddock climbed over the litter to open the door, and then climbed out with Carson and Fuller; Stanislaw stayed inside to help in the unloading. Colman looked at Veronica's face, shadowy in the subdued light coming from outside. "Feel okay?" he asked. "to Sundaes on Wednesdays." "You turning yourself loose?" Rickster asked. "Yeah. Yeah, I'm leaving." of the crate, Stanislaw went in with a compad, Maddock started yelling at Carson, and Fuller came out. seat, lightly dozing. he stood, came around the table, and moved her chair back for her to rise. She experienced again the fleeting sensation that she was a puppet dancing to Sterm's choreography. She watched herself as he ushered her to an armchair and handed her a glass. Then Sterm settled himself comfortably at one end of the couch, picked up his own drink, and held it close to his face to savor the bouquet. lost. So any nine-year-old smartass who was judgmental enough to tell Michelina Bellsong that she'd had cartilage rotted away by cocaine, with a lush crop of hallucinogenic mushrooms growing on the surface of. As their speed continues to fall precipitously to fifty, then below forty, under thirty, as the brakes are. One door remained. "Don't bother looking," Colman said. "He's got the late duty ". place as though it were Eden re-created, everything here was inferior to the original Garden in all ways. She had a friend called Veronica, who lived alone in a studio apartment in the Baltimore module and was very understanding. Veronica could always be relied upon to move out for an evening on short notice, and Colman had wondered at times if she really existed. Acquiring exclusive access to a studio wouldn't have been all that difficult for a VIP'S wife, even with the accommodation limitations of the Mayflower H. She had never told him whether or not he was the only one, and he hadn't asked. It was that kind of a relationship. slips across the threshold as flu-idly as a supernatural familiar ready to assist with some magical. "Which you're wearing," Noah guessed, pointing at the guy's. by eating two pieces of pie. The truth? which she had promised God always to honor, but which. With two types of component or anticomponent to choose from for each triplet, a triplet could comprise either three of a kind of one type, or two of one kind plus one of the other. In the latter case there were three possible permutations of every two-plus-one combination, which yielded the three color charges carried by quarks. The three-of-a-kind combinations could be arranged in only one way and corresponded to leptons, which was why leptons could not carry a color charge and did not react to the strong nuclear force. CHAPTER THIRTY. "THE THING IS I still can't understand is what motivates these people," Colman remarked to Hanlon as they walked with Jay to Adam's house. "They all seem to work pretty hard, but why do they work at all when nobody pays them anything?" Merrick nodded gravely. "An officer who abets an act contrary to the best interests of the Service is being disloyal, and a citizen who acts against the interests of the." The video 'monitoring points around the ship are all activated at the moment, and I'm coupled into the net. I can see what's going on everywhere. Go ahead. It's okay. The round cover on the wall next to you is an inlet to a trash incinerator. You can use it as an ashtray." LIKE THE SUPERNATURAL SYLPH of folklore, who inhabited the air, she approached along the heads and enormous eyes? the whole package. Mrs. D, may I have one of those radishes that looks like. "I thought it would be at least one ninety," Micky replied. Vernon isn't already roasting in Hell, he will be soon." "Mrs. D, you don't mind she- calls your brother a selfish pig?" "Sadly, dear, it's true." After a short silence Colman said, "About all these robots--exactly how smart are they?" faint sound of a soul trapped in the narrow emptiness between the surface membranes of this world and. campground for an evening, and we never see them again. Sinsemilla long ago chopped loose her family. that Luki and the compassionate spacemen were sending her subliminal messages in reruns of Seinfeld, in. Two stools away, Burt Hooper chokes violently on his waffles and chicken. His fork clatters against his. Colman grinned. "Good thinking. We were starting to talk shop." Re inclined his head to where Veronica was still talking animatedly between Kath's twin sons and evidently enjoying herself. "Somebody seems to be quite a hit over there." "Oh, just ask the computers anywhere how to get to Shirley-with-the-red-hair's place---Ci's mother. They'll take care of you." regular first name. They're worse about names than old Sinsemilla. They're all Hudson, Lombard, Trevor. might be the sound of hope, but also ever receding. "Too bad. How come?" The snake wasn't huge, between two and three feet long, about as thick as a man's index finger, but

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