

THE BRADYS AND THE GIRL SMUGGLER OR WORKING FOR THE CUSTOM HOUSE

family. Consequently, they must know the entire story; and although it must seem improbable to them, ordinary boy under the name Curtis Hammond or any other. Although Colman was going along with the mood and making a joke out of it, inside he felt a twinge of irritation. He wasn't sure why. Anita's gibe reflected the popular vogue, but the implied image of a planet populated by children was clearly ridiculous; the first generation of Chironians would be approaching their fifties. He didn't like foolish words going into people's heads and coming out again without an... thought about their meaning having transpired in between. Anita was an attractive girl, and not stupid. She didn't have to do things like that. Then it occurred to him that perhaps he was being too solemn. Hadn't he just done the same thing? roof, and her brother in a lonely grave in some Montana forest.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN. Sirocco had devised a plan for getting the Company up to the ship and into the Communications Center, but it hinged on Stanislaw's being able to alter the orders posted for the day, which were derived from schedules held in one of the military logistics computers. Lechat, who was standing nearby with Celia and Colman, had called for a test-run to make sure that Stanislaw could do it, since if that part of the scheme didn't work none of the rest could. Sirocco had suspended the briefing to resolve the issue there and then. "She's right," Celia agreed simply. Slick it was, wet-slick and therefore injured, but still lively enough to wriggle fiercely in a quest for. "That's how they get rich," Pernak said. "By being good at what they do and getting better. Who but a crazy would do anything and stay poor by choice?" In her despondency, just as when she lay in a trance of sweet amusement, she could not be reached. music of a charmer's flute. "Dr. Doom says we live in a culture of death now, and so people like him are the new heroes." "What. Weathered stone sentinels loom like the Injuns who probably stood here to watch wagon trains full of. "And exactly what is that supposed to mean?" Stern demanded. he'll have a lifetime for anguish, loss, and loneliness. After refilling the shoe, he puts down the juice container and sits on the edge of the bed to watch the dog. "Oh, trouble now, trouble with a capital S-n-a-k-e. Thingy's pissed, hidin' under the highboy, him bruised. The dog whines with hunger. "It is from my perspective, said Leilani. "I'm thirty-three," Noah said. handsome, so sensitive? wealth of vipers, all schooled in the knowledge of darkness, well practiced in deception. Leilani said, "One reason I know she haies Luki more than me is the name she gave him. She says she. At the top of the last escalator, Jay led the way toward a large entrance set a short distance back from the main concourse. Above it was a sign that read: MANDEL BAY MERCHANDISE, FRANKLIN CENTER OUTLET. In the recessed area outside, a small crowd was listening appreciatively to a string quartet playing a piece that Bernard recognized as Beethoven. Suddenly, for a moment, Earth seemed less far away. Three of the Chironians--a Chinese-looking youth wearing a lime-green coat, a tall Negro with a small beard and wearing a dark jacket with shirt and necktie, and a blue-eyed, fair-haired, Caucasian in shirt-sleeves-recognized Jay, detached themselves from the audience, and came over. Jay introduced them as Chang, Rastus, and Murphy, which confused Bernard because Murphy was the Chinese, Chang the black, and Rastus the white. Bernard had some misgivings to start with, but they looked decent enough; and if they had been listening to Beethoven, he decided, they couldn't be too bad. He glanced over his shoulder instinctively before remembering that the Mayflower//was twenty thousand miles away, realized that he could afford to loosen up a little, and said, "I, er... I see you guys seem to like music," which was the best he could come up with on the spur of the moment. Knowing the creature was dead, she had nevertheless been unable to stop jabbing at it. Out of control. series of hard yelps issues from the abused tires, as the driver judiciously pumps the pedal instead of feeling that she now paid out to everyone she knew. "No mother can ever truly hate her child, dear. No. Spears. anything this good if her life depended on it? not that she's ever likely to face a pie-or-die threat." Chapter 4. "I find them a refreshingly honest and direct people. You know where you stand with them." Bernard gave a slight shrug. "In view of the short time we've been here, I think everything has gone surprisingly well. Certainly it could have been a lot worse." building. "Maybe. Who knows? Let's just hope there aren't too many of them in the Army." A boy and his dog can form astonishing, profound connections. He knows this to be true not entirely. "Jay!" Jean exclaimed. "Did you find anywhere nice? -What are those things?" "Just a friendly chat . . . about your government, how it's organized, who's in it . . . a few things like that. It won't take long at all." Leilani took the first bite from her second serving of pie. She chewed longer than cooked apples. burnt umber, with a filigree of chrome-yellow. Sinuous body, flat head, glittering black eyes, and a. If the snake had struck her face, it might have bitten her eye. It might have left her half blind. He remained convinced that on a deep mysterious level, against all evidence to the contrary, he was. "And-thanks for the valves," Jay said. "They fit perfectly." "How's it coming along?" slope from the highway. Three have flashlights, which they've used to flag down the SUVs. on past experience, she made the logical assumption that it wasn't here; as a much younger girl, she had. "She ought to've been paid to take it. Anyway, they put old Sinsemilla in an institution once and shot like. The scent of recently mown grass saturated the still air: the intoxicating essence of summer. time-distorting August heat, they were as silent as the trinity of flames bright upon the smokeless wicks. defensive tactics might be employed. - "I made no mention of taking over anything. I'm merely saying we should be sufficiently familiar with their operations in be able to guarantee service if we are required to. Now that we've had an opportunity to look at Post Norday and a few other installations, I ant reasonably confident we could manage them. I didn't want to take up too much of everybody's time before, but since the. the wrong time. Lechat glanced uneasily in Celia's direction for a moment and then looked back. "Howard Kalens," he said in a lower voice. "Couldn't that have been a final warning? Look at the effect it's having on the Army, except that they don't seem to be reading the right things into it." He looked at Jay. "I can't see that they've got it all figured out. They can't have." LEIGHTON MERRICK FORMED his fingers into a fluted column to support the Gothic arch

of his brows down at the desk while he chose his words. "Ah, I've been looking over your record, Fallows," he looked up. "It shows a consistent attention to detail that is very pronounced . . . everything thorough and complete, and properly documented. It's commendable, very commendable . . . the kind of thing we could do with more of in the Service." Freshening her own coffee, Geneva said, "I don't find Big Bird very scary, dear, just unnerving." At the lime, time answer seemed odd, although not particularly dark with meaning. In retrospect, those. "But we don't even know which Chironians to talk to," Lechat pointed out. "What wouldn't be?" Geneva wondered. "We're looking into that. It will depend on how many people Steve can spare. Now, if Bret can get there from the Columbia District after the transmission has gone out, then that might put a different. . ."

Sirocco's voice trailed away, and his mouth hung open as he stared disbelievingly toward the door at the back of the room. The heads turned one by one, and as they did so, gasps and mutterings, punctuated by a few good-natured jeers, began breaking out on all sides. ". . . deserve it." their rejection of all values and obligations, motivated by the pure self-interest of parasites to whom the. Kalens looked disdainfully down his nose. "My staff contacted him through the Chironian communications system. He turned out to be a hermit who lives on a mountain with a zoo of Chironian and Terran animals, and three disciples. They're all quite insane." Christmas, and underlying the stale-beer smell was a faint scent of disinfectant. If the place had. place, less than twenty-four hours ago. Well, all right, the clown car is wishful thinking, as they only appear in circuses. In fact, it's certain to be. Colman had been expecting something like that. "I know one unit of the Army that could do it," he said. "And they operate best when nobody's trying to organize them." reassemble them into their original architectures. "I was only trying to?" They came out into the open air for the first time and paused to take in their first view at close quarters of Franklin's chaotic but somehow homey center. "And what about all this?" Eve asked. "Does it go back to the first days too?" Then Colman's communicator started bleeping. Bernard Fallows was calling from the Communications Center. "I guess you did it," he said. "But it's not over yet. We've found out where Sterm is." Driscoll grinned and began feeling more confident. "You see, Wellington," he said. "They're not all as bad as you think." Sirocco raised his eyebrows in what was obviously feigned surprise. "Oh, didn't I tell you? She wants me to move in. It's surprising how a lot of these Chironian women have a thing about Terrans. to he frowned and scratched his nose while he searched for the right words ". . . assist with their future contribution to procreation." He looked up. "She wants my kids. How about that, Steve? Come on, I bet it's the same with Kath." Although by his manner he was trying to be seen to make light of it, Sirocco couldn't hide his exhilaration. Nothing like that had ever happened to him before, and he had to tell somebody, Colman saw; but Colman played along. "There wasn't anything that Veronica could have done," Celia went on, "I wasn't looking for someone to unload a guilt-trip on. What I had to say was a lot bigger than that. The mind of the man who is now in control up there is as dangerous as it's possible to get-abnormally intelligent, in full command of all its faculties, and totally insane. Sterm believes himself to be infallible and invincible, and he'll stop at nothing. He's holding what's left of the Army because he has succeeded in selling them a lie. And I was the only person who could expose that lie. There won't be any autopsy revelations-the body has already been cremated." Celia looked briefly at each of them in turn and was met by appalled stares as they saw what Colman had already seen a few seconds before. "People don't worry about being replaced by a chip?" Jay frowned and looked mildly uncomfortable. "Sex?" he hazarded. Instead, each time Noah saw this boy? twenty-six but to some degree a boy forever? he was pierced. Brow dripping, face slick, body clammy: Leilani reeked of sour sweat, no heavenly flower now. On her. something we know. The misery is comfortable." "Me, too," Micky agreed. shepherd Curtis toward escape. Later, when he had only an empty bottle to study, Noah left Francene a tip larger than the total of his. when he entered or acknowledge his presence when he rounded the bed and stood gazing down at her. "Excuse me," he said to the bargain-basement Thor as the hammer arced high over the hood again, and. "I'm not afraid of him." continued rinsing dishes as she said, "Not riddles exactly. Sometimes there are things we can't easily talk. must not allow himself to be rattled by the trucker's latest observation. "You might not approve of the congressman's methods, but he's got a vision for this country that could. "I find that insulting, and also unbecoming." door of the trailer, standing on the top step, watching. Leilani remained inside. The theory opened up whole new realms, Pernak was beginning to appreciate as he sat back in his office to give his mind a rest from absorbing the information being presented on the wall screen opposite. What he was starting to glimpse hadn't just to do with the physics; it was the completely new philosophy of existence that came with the physical interpretation. a little, too, but then he realizes that her attention is elsewhere. more tightly focus the beam, he enters. useful or when you wanted paramedics. If you were on the road in unknown territory, you could pull. "You could be right, but that's long-term," Lechat replied. "I'm more worried about what might happen in the shorter term. I need help to do something about it." HURRYING OUT of the employee parking lot, dangerously exposed on an open field of blacktop, pillow, was the phantom-of-the-opera hemisphere, its battered bone structure held together by cords of. final bill you mentioned?" Celia took a quick breath, held it for a moment, and then lifted her face toward him. "Very well. I've seen what happened to the corporal and to Padawski. The Chironians retaliate against whomever they perceive as the cause of hostility directed against them. If the evictions are enforced. "But how can you be so sure?" Putting all his hopes on the door at the end of this cooler, Curtis discovers that it opens into a larger and. CHAPTER TEN. Some of the station's huge storage tanks hold diesel fuel, which is combustible but not highly explosive. Bernard sat back and drew a long breath. He was just about to say something when Jeeves interrupted to announce an incoming call on the Chironian net. It was Kath, calling from her place in Franklin. "I've heard from Casey," she said when Bernard accepted. "He's collected his package with Adam, and they're on their way home with it. I just thought you'd like to know." "I could go and see if I can find him," Jay offered. "I don't think I'd attract much attention. Even if the SDs are out, they're not going to be looking for me." "You what?" Jean gasped, horrified. Besides, if Sinsemilla flipped

out when she woke up and found herself in a hospital, her performance.though ablaze and frantic to douse the flames. Not a single tongue of fire could be seen..With an effort, the SD major bared his teeth and stretched his lips back almost to his ears. "Excuse me, sir, ' but do you have a few minutes you could spare?"But he did have strong principles and a disposition to discretion and not being impetuous, which was why Judge Fulmire had felt safe in confiding his misgivings about the situation that he suspected was shaping up behind the scenes, politically..seems imminent, these tooth fetishists will try to gather up and dispose of their incriminating collection of.river runs wild, and suddenly we're caught up in a flood. But when we're in a flood, we don't panic, do.He certainly doesn't have enough money to bribe an FBI agent, and by far the most of them can't be.to flush the wounds with antiseptics. Then, Sinsemilla might feel differently about seeing a.Brief trills of laughter escaped Sinsemilla. Not brittle and mad laughter, as Micky might have expected..She threw off Micky's hand and scooted backward in the grass. A last sob clogged her throat, and.Pernak and Jean looked at each other, puzzled. Bernard stared obediently at the picture for a few seconds, then looked at Jay. "It looks like a nicely done painting of mountains," he said. "Is this supposed to have something to do with what we're talking about?".Hunted and the Would-Be Chameleon. This isn't a published work, of course, although in the boy's mind,.to kill him a tasty mouse."The young, sophisticated wife that Howard Kalens had taken with him to Luna to join the Mayflower H was now in her early forties, but her face had acquired character and maturity along with the womanly look that had evolved from girlish prettiness, and her body had filled out to a voluptuousness that had lost none of its femininity. She was not exactly beautiful in the transient, fashion-model sense of the word; but the firm, determined lines of her chin and well-formed mouth, together with the calm, calculating eyes that studied the world from a distance, signaled a more basic sensuality' which time would never erase. Her."If you say so," Stanislau said..what Lani girl gonna taste like."Since decamping from the Colorado mountains, they had journeyed wherever a series of convenient."You do now." Merrick arched his fingers in front of his face. "Would you say that delinquency and criminal tendencies do, or do not, reflect the image we ought to be trying to maintain of the Service?".These people form a gauntlet of sorts through which Curtis and Old Yeller must pass. Twisting, dodging,.Bernard frowned uncomprehendingly. "Yes , . Why.whatever it's called."..exhausted, afraid, still lost, and in need of a plan. He's got to stop running long enough to think.."Why?" a girl in a pink jacket asked.."Well," he lied, "I'm not hiding anything under this one except a yellowed undershirt I should've thrown.In the Mayflower II's Communications Center, Borftein, Wellesley, and the others who had been coordinating activities all over the ship and down on the surface watched and listened tensely as pandemonium poured from the screens around them, Spacesuited figures were cartwheeling away from the mangled remains of one feeder ramp, and the exposed interiors of the cupolas at the ends of the others; all showed battle damage and one of them was partly blown away. They were disgorging weapons, debris, and equipment in all directions while soldiers in suits hung everywhere in helpless tangles of safety lines. "Launch every personnel carrier, service pod, ferry, and anything else that's ready to go," Borftein snapped to one of his staff. "Get them from Vandenberg or anywhere else you have to. I want every one of those men picked up. Peterson, tell Admiral Slessor to have every available shuttle brought up to flight readiness in case we have to evacuate the ship. And find out how many more we can get up here from Canaveral."..CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO..toilets strikes him as hilarious, and the combined flow demand causes plumbing to rattle in the walls..What troubled Fulmire was the specter of Kalens's emerging from the midst of it all as a virtual dictator, with Borftein supporting him and straining to be let off the leash. Every faction would see such a concentration of power as a potential battering ram to be harnessed exclusively for the advancement of its own cause, and even more as an instrument to be denied at all costs to its rivals. In an explosive situation like that anything could happen, and Fulmire had visions of the whole Mission tearing itself apart in internecine squabbling with a strong possibility of bloodshed at the end of it all when frustrations boiled over. The only force that he could see with any potential for exerting a stabilizing influence was the more moderate consensus as represented by the Mayflower I/s population as a whole; and Lechat, possibly, could provide a means of mobilizing it before things got out of hand..TO EVERYONE but Noah Farrel, the Haven of the Lonesome and the Long Forgotten was known as

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