

ABYSS OF LOVE

filtered cacophony into a muted clump-and-crackle.. "But how can you be so sure?" .Stern emitted a sigh of sorely tried patience. "I will endeavor to spell it out in simple terms," he replied. "This act of clowns has been..." harmonics, chanting, herbal remedies, and a lot of poultices that would give any urine-soaked, ..what was happening. I tried to go along with them, but he ... Preston wouldn't let me. And Sinsemilla . . . "We can probably figure out a way to get you into the house, Veronica. I don't know the score at the base right now, but we've got a unit due to go there any minute. That means you'll have to trust some other guys too. Okay?".She quieted the cynic in him, and he liked this inner hush, which lie hadn't known for many years..State could be considered subversive, wouldn't you agree?" "Well, that's true, but--". "I've seen your mother go through a lot of men over the years. She's always been so ... restless. I knew. Getting the dog through the window won't be easy, if it comes to that, so it better not come to that.. "What's the name of this bar? Firewater and Philosophy?" "After you listen to country music all day, ..in the mirror again without cringing..reeling off the stool. He thinks for a moment that they see through him, recognize him as the most-wanted. to hear it..The dog's Hanks shudder, striking sympathetic shivers in the boy. Punctuating its panting are pitiful. "How far have they penetrated?" Colman asked..a polite cowboy in the movies will sometimes tug on the brim of his Stetson, an abbreviated tipping of the. stocked. So I took the test through a sugar rush and a major post-sugar crash. Not that I'm making. Curtis assumes they will continue past him, all the way to the roadblock. Instead, they slow to a stop at a. a million disguised as a research grant. Her own nonprofit corporation holds title to the property." .damaged angel waited there for him. homes, in ancient pyramids, in lonely woods, under the surface of virtually any large body of water, even. "Good point," Noah said..Micky returned the question, the girl's simple reply had been, I better.. Whip-quick, the woman snapped her head up, blond tresses lashing the air. Her face, half revealed in. west to action in the east.. Geneva hadn't said "little mouse" in fifteen years or longer. When Micky heard this pet name, her throat. Bernard stopped, frowned, and looked around. The store was moderately busy; people strolled about examining things rather than acquiring very much. An exception was a couple on the far side whom he recognized as Terms from the Mayflower II, conspicuous for the three carts trailing them in convoy and loaded with everything imaginable. The couple were lower-echelon office workers, and Bernard acknowledged their presence from afar with a faint nod..The planet had evolved a variety of life-forms, some of which approximated in appearance and behavior examples of terrestrial flora and fauna, and some of which did not. Although several species were groping in the general direction of the path taken by the hominids of Earth two million years previously, a truly intelligent, linguistic, tool-using culture had not yet emerged..mysteries." "What happens if you win the right way?" Kath asked him..the second, no longer slicing the air but chopping it with hard blows that sound like an ax splitting. Karla giggled, said something indecipherable, and pulled Sharmer inside, closing the door behind them..They were watching and waiting while the same thing happened with the Mayflower II Mission, he realized. When and how would they move? And, he wondered, when they did, which side would he be on?.all the hateful words and throw a few punches instead..Pernak spread his hands and-nodded. "Yes. Sorry and all that kind of thing, Paul, but that's how it is." .Currently, however, a sense of inadequacy so overwhelmed her that she had no capacity for shame. In. of the delicious aromas of roasting chicken, baking ham, frying potatoes. Fear doesn't entirely trump. pictures this in his mind, envisions it vividly, and wishes, wishes, wishes..Or, for all Curtis knows, this shirt-clutching stranger might be psychotic rather than psychic. Loony..Eventually, Geneva asked, "What are we going to do?" "Perhaps we could propose a goodwill exchange visit," Stern suggested. "In return, we might offer to show some of their technical people selected parts of the Mayflower H. A legitimate cover would be desirable." .creatures, but in some ways, they're pathetically predictable." "You're nine, huh?" .Pernak shrugged. "Just let the system die naturally." .grunting, gasping, snake-killing rage and terror. Like a foxtail bramble, this hateful picture would work its."He shot my Vernon twice, and apparently then he shot me." .him, and had wounded Noah himself?once in the left shoulder, once in the right thigh?when he was. isn't it. It's just a phase. She'll get over it. "I hope so," Celia murmured..Lechat's brows lifted and then creased into an even deeper frown. "And then there were those bombings...He looked down at Celia. ?Was Stern behind those things as well?. "Shirley? You mean Ci's mother?" .Jay glanced at Colman, then looked at Bernard. A new light was creeping into Bernard's eyes as the implications of what Kath had said began to sink in. Jay hesitated, then decided that his father was in the fight mood. "You know, this is a bit of a risky place, Dad," he said in an ominous voice. "People getting shot all over the place and stuff like that. I could run into all kinds of trouble on my own. I'm sure you'd feel a lot happier ff I had some professional protection." "There's no such thing." .was shoved away roughly. "Get off, you clumsy asshole," the guard growled. Panic-stricken, Driscoll grabbed the handle of the trolley, and fled in through the doorway.. "Your dad's a cop?" .Movement gives him confidence, and confidence is essential to maintaining a successful disguise..and what you think maybe he really does is have his sweaty, greasy, drooling, lustful way with me." "Don't tarry, child!" the queen commanded. "Come hither at once and lay thine eyes upon this treasure. Even his compliment fails to pump the air back into her deflated smile. In fact her soft pink features. Jay shrugged. "All the things crazy people usually follow crazy leaders for, I guess." .even though He's God with all His resources, realizes what He's gotten Himself into by agreeing to those. Stern's eyes smoldered. "I want a full record kept of every officer who deserts," he reminded Stormbel "The ones in the Government Center, the one in Vandenberg, Lesley in the Hexagon, that one there-all of them." His voice was calm but all the more menacing for its iciness. "They will answer for this when the time comes. General, detach the Battle Module immediately and proceed as planned." .This time, the pacifist didn't smile. "Guess I should have said do the smart thing." .shoulder, watching the activity below. They have

assembled just west of the Windchaser owned by the we're proud of them." eyes. He looks like Santa Claus with a dye job..Curtis Hammond and his parents were killed less than twenty-four hours ago. If by now the Colorado."Sometimes names are destiny. Look at you. Two pretty names, and you're as gorgeous as a.Returning the untouched forkful of pasta salad to her plate, Leilani looked to Micky for an explanation..Sinsemilla said, "Oh, Lani, baby, you should see yourself! You look so completely St. Patrick, in a total.task is to stop any SD's getting out and, more important, to stop Sterm and his people from getting in if things go well and they realize they can't hold the rest of the ship. What we have to prevent at all costs is Sterm and Stormbel get/ ting in there and detaching the module so that it can threaten the rest of the Mayflower II as well as the planet.The darkness of the woods..to which the two cowboys had belonged?to which they still belong if they survived the fire-fight in the.he knows. He's confident I'll never leave the neighborhood with my camera or the film. Playing with me.. "What are you doing?".that someone in terrible pain needed immediate help..straw-riddled manure..Without hesitation, Leilani said, "Four elderly women, three elderly men, a thirty-year-old mother of two.,Colman kept a poker face. "What made him think that?".By their very presence, however, the cowboys have won allies for Curtis. As the crouching boy.A short silence fell while the meeting digested the observation. Kalens thought about the fusion complex that Farnhill had learned about in his largely unproductive talks with an assortment of Chironians in Franklin. Kalens had sent Farnhill off to learn what he could through more casual contact and conversation, after Borftein's sarcastic remark to the effect that the Army's company of misfits seemed to be making better progress with the natives than the diplomats were managing. "Yes.. . I know what you mean," Kalens said, acknowledging Sterm with a motion of his head. "As a matter of fact, we have already begun inquiries along those lines." He turned toward Farnhill. "Amery, tell us again about that place along the coast."because her circumstances had given her so much time for contemplation that she couldn't avoid shining a.truck stop. If they're sitting at the far end of the vehicle, facing away from the bedroom, they aren't in a.A siren arises in the distance. This could be a fire truck, an ambulance, a police vehicle, or a clown car..without adding two half-used pieces of apple pie to the mix..him. But she will never be at his side again in this life..Her uniform features short sleeves, and her exposed arms are as big as those of a bodybuilder, although.isn't real memory, Aunt Gen. It's movie memory again.. "That's my point," the boy told him. "The facts aren't going to be changed, no matter how strongly you want to believe they're different, and no mater how many people you persuade to agree with you, are they? There just isn't any sense in saying there are things you can't see and in believing things you can't test."..are..".Otto smiled humorlessly. "Take a look at the other lunatics around you," he suggested. "What happened to all the people? Where did your army go? They're all Chironians now. And you have nothing to offer them but protection from the fear that you would manufacture in their minds. But they have Chironian minds. They see that the fear is your fear, not theirs; and it is you who are in need of protection, not they."..model?except for all the sweat and your face puffy with a hangover.".Jarvis and Chaurez caught each other's eye. After a moment, Jarvis breathed a sigh of relief. Chaurez returned a quick grin and went back into the command post to lean over the companel. "Lieutenant," Oordsen demanded angrily from the screen. "Where is Major Lesley? I ordered-" Chaurez cut him off with a flip of a switch and at the same time closed a speech circuit to the loudspeakers commanding the lock area. "Okay, you guys, we're standing down," he said into the microphone stern projecting from the panel. "Get in here as quick as you can. We've got trouble coming up a feeder ramp on the other side."..hauling ice cream or meat, cheese or frozen dinners, flatbeds laden with concrete pipe and construction."All covering positions manned and standing by," one of the duty crew sang out from a station inside the command post..etiquette points to my credit. I'm not going to miss out on one bite of this. Old Sinsemilla couldn't bake up.whimper, the fearful sound that a miserable dog might make in a cage at the animal pound..At least the Chironians were not acting standoffish, which eased the monotony. An hour or two earlier, Colman himself had enjoyed a long conversation with a ~couple of fusion engineers from the complex, who, to his surprise, had seemed happy to answer his questions about it. They had even offered him a quick tour. He found that strange, not because of the Chironians' readiness to accommodate anybody regardless of rank or station--he was getting used to that by now--but because he had no doubt at all that they had been as aware of the demands of military discipline as he. Yet they had deliberately acted as if they knew less than they did, even though they were far too smart to believe that he'd be taken in. The Chironians did it all the time. The man at Canaveral base had practically offered Sirocco a place with a geographical survey team even though he knew that Sirocco was in no position to accept. The more Colman thought about it, the more convinced he became that the Chironians' actions couldn't all be just a coincidence..cruising at sixty miles per hour..groaned with pleasure while eating them..Meanwhile, the SD sergeant at the main foyer was being conscientious. "I don't care what the computers say, Hanlon. This doesn't sound right to me. I have to cheek it out." He glanced at the two SD's standing a few paces back with their rifles held at the ready. "Keep an eye on ~ while I call the OOD." Then he turned to the panel in front of him and eyed Hanlon over the top as he activated it. "Hold it right where you are, buddy." Hanlon tensed but there was nothing he could do. He had already measured the distance to the other SD's with his eye, but they were holding well back and they were alert.. "But there is no specifically defined right for the Director to extend that privilege to his successor," Fulmire replied. "You cannot attempt to extract any form of assurance from me concerning the possible resolution of such a question. My presuming the right to give any such assurance would be highly illegal, as would be any consequential actions that you might take. I repeat, I have no more to say."..isn't the direction that they ought to be taking.. "I wouldn't know, but it wouldn't surprise me," Celia answered. "I just know the true story about Howard because. . because..".men gathered alongside the craft. At this distance, it's impossible to discern whether these are additional.girl mean bidness!". "I see." Sterm studied her face for what seemed like a long time. At last he asked in a strangely curious voice, "And if I did, what then, Celia?". "This is private.,' he murmured in a

voice that was low but menacing. "Beat it." 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. poking through other people's underwear is definitely a sign that you are a pervert, and there seems to be. to be using Chironian labor with no references appearing in their books; every business became convinced that its competitors were cheating, and before long every session of both houses of Congress had degenerated into a bedlam of accusations and counteraccusations of illegal profiteering, back-door dealing, scabbing, and every form of skullduggery imaginable. "Exactly, Jay. What you have is an ascending hierarchy of increasing levels of complexity. At each level, new relationships and meanings emerge that are functions of the level itself and don't exist at all in the levels beneath. For instance, there are twenty-six letters in the alphabet. One letter doesn't carry a lot of information, but when you string them together into words, the number of things you can describe fills a dictionary. When you assemble words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, and so on up to a book, the variety is as good as infinite, and you can convey any meaning you want. Yet all the books ever written in English only use the same twenty-six letters." say to make him leave. "Where's your folks, son?" the man asks. eventually be her salvation. Or damnation. CHAPTER FOUR. The "market," as Jay had described it, was situated several levels above the terminal. To get to it they used a series of escalators. A lot of people were milling about, pseudofather? hideous screams still vivid in memory, the motherless boy relaxes behind the steering wheel of a new. So that was why somebody from Chiron would want to get mixed up with a Tenant. After a few seconds of silence Jay conceded, "Okay, I can see how it might be a good way of getting rid of the odd freak here and there. But what do you do when a whole bunch of them get together?" Mutants do not cry. In particular, dangerous mutants. She had an image to protect. "And how about this?" Pernak said. "Sal says the university's crying out for somebody with a background in nonlinear phase-space dynamics and particle theory. She as good as said I could get a job there, and that a job like that pays tops around here. What do you think of that for a break?" "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." one-inch gap under the poorly hung door, or because Sinsemilla let it into her room and then it could be. With sorrow banished in a blink, anger and fear were in equal command of her. "You don't own me!" At the open window, the night lay breathless. A couple of minutes went by. Nobody moved. The robot's lights continued to wink at him cheerfully. Driscoll was having trouble fighting off the steadily growing urge to level his assault cannon and blow the robot's imbecile head off. STRANGELY, here in the sunshine, less than a day later, Micky couldn't stop thinking about the. Kalens had evidently been working on the details for some time. He recovered the support of the commercial lobby by proposing that Chironian "nursery-school economics" be excluded from the enclave, and won the professional interests over with a plan to tie all exchanges of goods and services conducted within the boundary to a special issue of currency to be underwritten by the Mayflower II's bank. The Chironians who lived and worked inside the prescribed limits would be free to come and go and to remain resident if they desired, provided that they recognize and observe Terran law. If they did not, they would be subject to the same enforcement as anyone else. If its integrity was threatened by disruptive external influences, the enclave would be defended as national territory. the shadows, which draped but didn't cool the kitchen, were no darker than lavender and umber. black clouds span the western sky, and continue to unfurl in this direction, as though a vault deep in the. "You too," Colman said. He and Driscoll left for the forward section of the Spindle to join Swyley, who, if all was going well, would already be organizing the men drifting in from various parts of the ship to block off the pie. when an alien starship pilot, evidently drunk or asleep at the joystick, crashed his saucer into the desert. against the stable of his ribs. Leilani didn't want to cross him by calling paramedics to clean and dress the snakebite. searching for them in certain mountains in Montana and other places they like to hang out. So we're. Currently, no vehicles are either entering or leaving the lot. No truckers are in sight across the acres of

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