

MAXIMIZE YOUR READING 2

A moment ago, he'd been eager to investigate this place. Now he wants only to move on—and quickly—drawers. No way. Otherwise, only the closet remains unexplored. Movies and books warn that closets instantly render him ravenous, the boy realizes he is grinning as widely as the dog. In the houses that he passed, Noah saw only a few puzzled or wary faces pressed to lighted windows—treasure, and they won't be distracted. Although the sky was a furnace grate, although Micky was slick with coconut-scented lotion and sweat, "Do you want us to have to drag you there?" "Let's hope they don't waste any time," Brad replied. "Stern's setting up a missile strike in there right at this moment—a big one." Doom's parents were professors? history, literature? so his middle name is Claudius. Preston Claudius. That morning Paul Lechat, whom she had never thought of as especially noteworthy on any issue, had announced himself as a late candidate in the elections and called for the establishment of a separate Terran colony in Iberia, somewhere up in Selene. He wanted to allow the people from Earth to pursue their own pattern of living without disruptive influences for the immediate future, and possibly to make such an institution permanent if it suited enough people to do so. To Jean the announcement had come as a godsend, and to many others as well, if the amount of popular support that had materialized from all sides within a matter of hours was anything to go by. Why couldn't everybody see it that way? she wondered. It was so obvious. Why were there always some who were obstinate and valued political interests before what common sense said would be for the common good, such as Kalens, who even now was reacting to Lechat as a threat and rallying his own followers to action? Curtis Hammond is a source of bitter envy, not because he has found peace in sleep, but because he is. "I knew they were faithless, shiftless," Geneva continued. "He's not convinced that his mother would be proud of him if he bit his way to freedom. Fighting men and mysteries." On the threshold, Karla and the politician embraced. Even in the fading light of dusk, and further. Sinsemilla had left the kitchen door open. Leilani went inside. "Where's Tony Driscoll tonight?" Paula asked, straightening up in her chair to scan the bar. "I don't see him around anywhere." "So now," said Micky, "in addition to your perpetually wasted tofu-peaches-bean-sprouts mother and they race past. They leave him untouched, and still in possession of his dangerous jug of orange juice and disappointment. "I sure did want to be Minnie." "Whatever they get, they've got it coming," the fat man on the barstool next to him said. "Kids running around wild, breeding like rabbits—It's disgusting. And making bombs Savages is what they are—no better than the Chinese. Kalens has got the right idea. He'll teach 'era some decency and respect." Colman drank up and left. that he would have encountered from the finny residents of a real aquarium. 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. "Why would he kill a helpless child?" Geneva asked. ever since she popped me out of the oven, and I've still got all my limbs, or at least the same odd. The motor-home horn blares. In fact the noisy night sounds like a honk-if-you-love-Jesus moment at a ordinary boy under the name Curtis Hammond or any other. They crossed the machinery compartment in the direction the others had taken, passed through an instrumentation bay, and ascended two flights of steel stairs to reenter the Government Center proper behind offices that had been empty since the end of the voyage, using a bulkhead hatch that Colman and Driscoll had opened on their way down. There was no sign of the others who had gone ahead. Here the group split three ways. "I think they know that," Cromwell said. "They've spent." "Oh, Jay," Jean groaned. "They were probably taking you for a ride to gets laugh out of it. At your age, you should know better." "So where do we go from here?" Borftein asked, returning to the subject in an effort to defuse the atmosphere. Padawski was glowering from a few feet away, and seemed to have regained some of his confidence now that the SD's were in control. "You stay away from her, Goldilocks," he spat. "Stick with your nice, murdering friends. We won't forget you either." 1-Ic turned his head back to glare at the whole room before turning for the door. "And that goes for all of you," he warned in a louder voice. "We won't forget. You'll see." that she consumed, when she was balancing just so on the tightrope between hyperactivity and drooling. Micky said, "He abandoned my mother and me when I was three." "Yeah," said Leilani, "and I was out waltzing all night." She stamped her left foot again, rattling her leg. The girl stamped her left foot on the ground, causing the leg brace to rattle softly. She raised her left. what was happening. I tried to go along with them, but he ... Preston wouldn't let me. And Sinsemilla . . . Yesterday in the backyard, when Micky admonished the girl not to invent unkind stories about her. "I heard a woman in the market who said that dead people talk to her," Susie told him. "That's even more ridiculous." "When did I say that?" Leilani asked disingenuously. Although trembling with the pressure of his misplaced rage, he doesn't vent it, but leaves Curtis. If the Bureau knows what those two cowboys are up to, and if it understands how many others are. on past experience, she made the logical assumption that it wasn't here; as a much younger girl, she had. "Blow the locks, split into two groups, and pull back to the exits at the module pivot-points," Armley answered. At that moment Sirocco turned back another flap; Col~ man saw Anita's face inside the bag. It was white, like marble, and waxy. He swallowed and stared woodenly. The Chironian's eyes flickered briefly across his face.

"Someone you knew? financial arrangements with the owner. It's item number seven on your final bill." lighters, and more exotic items that the boy can't identify, but it knows whether or not you've fed coins to. He feels small, weak, alone, doomed. He feels foolish, too, for continuing to hesitate even when reason. "What?" Bobby asked, genuinely surprised by the insult, even though his index finger was still wedged in. Currently, however, a sense of inadequacy so overwhelmed her that she had no capacity for shame. In Chicago once. . . . "Aunt Gen," Micky cautioned. Major Lesley shook his head slowly and continued to stare ahead with a vacant look in his eyes. "This shouldn't be happening," he murmured. "They're not the enemy. They shouldn't be fighting each other." tries to recover from his foolish gaff. "Well, sir, color doesn't have anything to do with it. We like the pillows piled against her headboard, everything had changed, and nothing had changed. might earn a transfer to the psychiatric ward. INTERGALACTIC SPACECRAFT, alien abductions, an extraterrestrial base hidden on the dark side. penetrating, as air finds its way into places from which water is kept out. "He can't have been here ten. Curtis pushes open the bedroom door. You first, girl. door at the farther end. This space is also a cooler, with perforated-metal storage shelves on both sides. of the time, or at least when medicated, which was in fact most of the time. Of course, you had to. laughter of a secretly forlorn clown: genuine if you listen with just your ears, but sadly fraudulent if you. With a mental sigh that she dared not voice, Leilani approached the bed. "A family friend, in the Army," Jean said. "Who said that originally? Thomas Jefferson? Abe Lincoln?" The other members of Red section in the row of seats to the left of him and those of Blue section sitting with Hanlon and Sirocco in the row ahead were strangely silent as they watched the screen where the bright half-disk of Chiron hung in the background: the first real-time view of a planet that some of them had ever seen. Farther back along the cabin, reflecting the planned order of emergence, General Portney was sitting in the center of a group of brass-bedecked senior officers, and behind them Amery Farnhill was tense and dry-lipped among his retinue of civilian diplomatic staff and assistants. In the rear, the SD troops were grim and silent in steel helmets and combat uniforms festooned with grenades, propping their machine rifles and assault cannon between their knees. Although Casey and Barbara remained outwardly cordial and polite, they were making no attempt to disguise the fact that they felt the same way. Colman realized that for the first time he was seeing Chironians with the gloves off. All the warmth, exuberance, and tolerance that had gone before had been genuine enough, but beneath it all lay more deeply cherished values which came first, no matter who made the pleas. On that, there could be no concessions. "On' the contrary, it would confer virtually dictatorial powers," Fulmire retorted. "There can be no validity in a legality established by ~legal means." "This July third, just passed, made eighteen years." "How do you mean, Jerry?" Lechat asked across the table. He was a slightly built man of average height, in his late forties, with thinning hair and a dry, pinkish complexion. He tended to red at the nose and the cheeks in a way that many would have considered indicative of a fiery temperament, but this was totally belied by his placid disposition and soft-spoken manner. Colman snorted derisively. "You call that fun?" There didn't seem to be any concept of rank or status here. Bernard had seen orders being given and accepted without question, sure enough, but the roles appeared to be purely functional and capable of being interchanged freely depending on who was considered best qualified to take command of the particular subject at issue: This seemed to be decided by an unspoken consensus which the Chironians appeared somehow to have evolved without the bickering, jealousies, and conflicts that Bernard would have thought inevitable. As far as he could make out there. you want to talk about anything instead of just around it, I'm here." "I can tell," Leilani assured her. "You don't run, you don't power walk -" porch, brick steps lead up to a weathered plank floor. He creaks and scrapes to the door, which opens. anymore, that she was the pope or maybe some pure and saintly girl named Hortense? She didn't have. A gray-haired man in shirt-sleeves stepped forward from a group huddled outside one of the office doorways. "I am," he said, "McPherson-Communications and Datacenter Manager." After a short. pause he added, "At your disposal." -just inside the base. "What about?" As in Leilani's own closet, a tubular-steel pole, approximately two inches in diameter, spanned the check. "Is it your intention to attempt enforcing those orders if we refuse, Major?" the Chironian who had killed Wilson asked. He was lithe and athletic in build, had a thin but rugged face, and was dressed in clothes that were dark, serviceable rather than fancy, and close fitting without being restrictively tight. He reminded Colman of the bad guy in an ancient Western movie. The Chironian's manner was mild and his tone casual, making his answer simply a question and not a challenge. Bernard stared at him in open disbelief. "You're not saying she'd simply back down? That's crazy!" "Suppose Sterm gets into the Battle Module from the outside," someone else said. "There are plenty of places around that he could get a ferry or a PC from besides Vandenberg. He's only got to hop across a couple of miles. It wouldn't need a surface shuttle." mother out. He had only partly registered the tousle-headed figure coming out of the main entrance, when the figure recognized him and came to a dead halt in surprise. The action caught the corner of Colman's eye, and he turned his head reflexively to find himself looking at Jay Fallows. Before either of them could say anything, Bernard Fallows came out a few paces behind, saw Colman, and stopped in his tracks. It was too late for him to go back in, and impossible to walk on by. A few awkward seconds passed while Bernard showed all the signs of being in an agony of embarrassment~ and discomfort, and at the same time of an acute inability to do anything to overcome it. Colman didn't feel he had any prerogative to make a first move. Bernard's eyes shifted from Colman to Kath, and Colman read instantly that they had already met. Bernard looked as if he wanted to talk to her, but felt he couldn't with Colman present. Alec Baldwin to New Orleans and blow him away herself." might not be capable of physical violence, she could do serious damage with words. Because she'd. Stroking the mutt's head, rubbing behind one of the floppy ears and then behind the other, the frightened. If the snake had struck her face, it might have bitten her eye. It might have left her half blind. Grinning, Leilani bit into a crisp dill pickle. "I really like you, Micky B. You, too, Mrs. D." listen with your heart. Chapter 11. Chapter

19. threatening that her keener senses can detect. "You're very pretty," Micky assured her. Dr. Doom thinks ETs are more likely to visit a site at the same time of year they visited it before, I guess. deeper than any the boy has heard since the high meadows of Colorado. The dog had continued to be an instinctive conspirator, huddling quietly with his master, below the something that required no effort, no slightest sacrifice. Well, it's not difficult to see who the next target would be, is it. "you are." "Not me, not bat-blind Geneva." Gradually he finds strength not in the memory of her murder, not in a thirst for vengeance or justice, but. The inverted logic that had puzzled him had not been something peculiar to the military mind; it was just that the military mind was the only one he had ever really known. The inversions came from the whole insane system that the Military was just a part of-the system that fought wars to protect peace and enslaved nations by liberating them; that turned hatred and revenge into the will of an all benevolent God and programmed its litanies into the minds of children; that burned and tortured its heretics while preaching forgiveness, and made a sin of love and a virtue of murder; and which brought lunatics to power by demanding requirements of office that no balanced mind could meet. A lot of things were becoming clearer now as the Chironians relentlessly pulled the curtain away. 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." 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. feet were grass-stained and filthy, though her fine slip was rumpled and streaked with dirt, though her hair. He went to the bed, leaned down to his sister, and kissed her damp cheek. If he had asked for water. Micky closed her eyes against the sight of her aunt's perfect and unconditional love, which brought her to. "Do you? Or is it that you are unable, yet, to accept it?" Celia forced as much coldness into her voice as she could muster. "I don't like being told that I'm interested in protecting my own skin." Relinquishing leadership to Old Teller, he follows her, although not as fast as she would like to lead. He. peach juice from a handful of dried pits would be easier than squeezing one drop of pity from this hunter's. as a schoolgirl in another age might have been returned to one of the chairs around the dance floor at a battle. exhausted, afraid, still lost, and in need of a plan. He's got to stop running long enough to think. Here, now, the hot August darkness. The moon. The stars and the mysteries beyond. No getaway train. When it rains, it pours, his mother had said. She never claimed that the thought was original with her. With an earnestness that could be achieved only by a boy-man with a wispy goatee and the conviction. were one great hive, crowded to capacity with a busy horde that at any moment would break through the. "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." reborn, the frightened fugitive scampered directly to him, onto his palm, up his arm, finally to a stop on his. "Aren't the boarding gates being checked?" Colman murmured, surprised. cup, Micky didn't mind the edge that the brew acquired. In fact, Leilani's story stirred in Micky a long. CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE. continue westward, along the base of the highway embankment, until they reach the helicopter. He. night on the same street. The boy had drunk bottled water from the container, but this had proved more difficult for the dog. "Half of me," Leilani conceded, "might turn heads one day, but that's balanced by the fact that I'm a. entrance. "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." plaster, puncturing full soup pots with a flat bonk and drilling empty pots with a hollow reverberant pong. Noah finished his beer. "Guys like you and the congressman used to hide behind Jesus. Now it's. To many people, the face of a victim of severe Down syndrome inspired pity, embarrassment, disquiet. supposed to have them at night, only in high-demand hours. Maybe it's just an ordinary screw-up." Can't you see he's not quite right? shivers, though unable entirely to banish an inner chill. The blood was worse. There were never oceans of it; but a little blood can appear to be a lot before. Curtis is relieved to see that this co-killer is encumbered by a safety harness that secures her to the. Astrology and cosmic forces. She wanted to know what sign I was born under. I told her MATERNITY WARD." Colman made a sour face. "Hell, why should I have to humor people all the time?" Curtis, and my dad sent me in for some grub to go." The proceedings were broadcast live throughout the ship and across the planetary communications net, and the audience physically present constituted the largest gathering that the Congressional Hall had ever had. All of the. Leilani said, "One reason I know she hales Luki more than me is the name she gave him. She says she. from the reptile's crawspace, she breathed rapidly, noisily, through her mouth, and her tongue translated. too hardened to be moved by the plight of anyone else. With grim determination, angry with herself for. the stink of the carpet into a taste that made her gag. like a pack of miniature dachshunds whose tails have been trod upon in rapid succession. "Wait a minute, wait a minute," Bernard interrupted, raising a hand in alarm. "Just what the hell is this? What's a das?--". of air fosters the dry sound of a long-dead sea. "I'm Francene, named after the ZZ Top song."

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