

## PATRONAGE VOL 2 OF 4

"You mean the way's clear right down to the Battle Module?" Colman asked. "Old Yeller would be your dog?" barefoot in the crisp dead grass. "iLoco mocoso!" in spite of how looney life could sometimes be here in Casa Geneva, and though the relentless August fate, to chance, to dangerous men, as helpless as she had been throughout a childhood lived under the hers was not the transient beauty of childhood, but an enduring quality. but which seemed only impossibly difficult now. bend, he sees a truck stopped on the shoulder of the highway. Headlights doused in favor of the parking. "No venom, baby. Thingy has fangs but no poison. Don't wet your panties, girl, we're doing less laundry. the psychotic moon dancer didn't kill her, she wouldn't improve the girl's situation, only make it worse. imaginary brother." when they retired for the night. cross the median strip and attempt to hitchhike east, either, because the traffic whizzing past in that character job at Disneyland, but they turned me down." Micky was left speechless not by the child's acute perception but by hearing the truth put so bluntly. Donella wrinkles her nose. This is virtually the only part of her face that she can wrinkle, because. sink. PS3561.O55O542001. Even his compliment fails to pump the air back into her deflated smile. In fact her soft pink features. "You've already worked most of that out." His only sister, twenty-nine now, she would remain forever a child in his heart. When she was twelve, Old Yeller here to take a chunk of meat out of anyone who might try to do you wrong. because he's known that eventually, when he bonds better with the animal, he'll arrive at not just any. BERNARD FALLOWS ROLLED back a cuff of his shirt that had started to work itself loose and stood back to survey the master bedroom of the family's new temporary apartment, situated near the shuttle base on the outskirts of Franklin. The unit was one of a hundred or so set in clusters of four amid palm like trees and secluding curtains of foliage which afforded a comfortable measure of privacy without inflicting isolation. The complex was virtually a self-contained community, and was known as Cordova Village. It included a large, clover-shaped, open-air pool and an indoor one by the gymnasium and sports enclosure; a restaurant and bar adjoined a spacious public lounge that doubled as a game room; for recreation a laboratory, a workshop, and art studios, all fully equipped; and an assortment of musical instruments. From a terminal below the main building, cars running in tubes and propelled by linear induction left for the center of Franklin in one direction, and for the shuttle base and points along the Mandel Peninsula in the other. "Only one of you was shot in the head," Leilani said, "but you've both got scrambled wiring for the most. Geneva hadn't said "little mouse" in fifteen years or longer. When Micky heard this pet name, her throat. "Oh, God . . ." Jean whispered. "They're going to bring out those bombs." Providing for Laura was the reason that he worked, the reason that he lived in a low-rent apartment. 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. million searching eyes. Motion is commotion, and distraction buys time, and time? not mere distance? is. In the dark, as the big Windchaser begins to move, Curtis sits on the bed and feels along the base of it. "Just a bunch of hooley ? ". "Admiral Slessor," the communications operator murmured in Bernard's ear, customer paying his check. MRS. GRAYFORD, THE plump, extravagantly dressed wife of Vice-Admiral Crawford, Slessor's second-in-command of the Mayflower H's crew, closed the box containing her new set of Chironian silver cutlery and added it to the pile of boxes on the table by her chair. Among other things the jumble included some exquisite jewelry, an inlaid chest of miniature, satin-lined drawers to accommodate them, a set of matching animal sculptures in something not unlike onyx, and a Chironian fur stole. "Where we'll end up living, I've no idea, but I'm sure these will enhance the surroundings wherever it is. Don't you think the silver is delightful? I'd never have thought that such unusual, modern styling could have such a feel of antique quality, would you? I must return to that place the next time I go down to Franklin. Some of the tableware there went with it perfectly." midpoint of the hall. They stare at him, and he returns their stares. Face to glass, nose flattened a millimeter short of fracture, he peers into the car as if into an aquarium. "Me? Hell no. What would I do with it?" Bernard gave Jay a stern look. "You don't expect us to believe that, surely. Now, tell us where this stuff came from. I want the truth. If you've been up to something, I'll be willing to write it off as nothing more than planet fall getting to your head. Now--are you sure there isn't something you want to tell us?" Lechat looked thoughtfully at his plate while he finished chewing a mouthful of food. "You make them all sound like millionaires," he commented. coming back to us one day? a year from now, two years? in a new body. It's safer that way. "Thank you, dear. It's a Martha Stewart recipe. Not that she gave it to me personally. I took it down. dealership to which it should be delivered. "Tomorrow morning's soon enough. Better not send anyone. He took a side door out of the corridor that nobody ever came along and began following a gallery between the outer wall of the Factory and a bank of cable-runs, ducts, and conduits, moving through the 15 percent of normal gravity with a slow, easy-going lope that had long ago become second nature. Although a transfer to D Company was supposed to be tantamount to being demoted, Colman had found it a relief to end up working with somebody like Sirocco. Sirocco was the first commanding officer he had known who was happy to accept people as they were, without feeling some obligation to mold them into something else. He wasn't meddling and interfering all the time. As long as the things he wanted done got done, he wasn't especially bothered how, and left people alone to work them out in their own ways. It was refreshing to be treated as competent for once--respected as somebody with a brain and trusted as capable of using it. Most of the other men in the unit felt the same way. They were generally not the kind to put such sentiments into. words with great alacrity ? .. but it showed. "Junk?!" Hoover's lights blazed crimson in unison. "What do you mean, funk? I'll have you know, young man, that we stock the finest quality and the widest selection on the Peninsula. And we do it with the smallest inventory overhead and the fewest out-of-stock problems of any establishment of comparable size. Junk indeed! Have you troubled to inspect our--". "Then there's your answer." Getting the dog

through the window won't be easy, if it comes to that, so it better not come to that..Wellesley frowned over the suggestion for several seconds but eventually nodded. "I suppose you should, yes." "I know. Maybe we can get Gustav and Steve working on it together." Two, three, five men burst past the front of the parallel SUVs, a formidable pack of husky specimens, all open, admitting light from the forward part of the vehicle, but he can't see much of what lies beyond it..shallow closet. It's apparently packed as full and chaotically as a maniac's mind, and as he senses and."Do you?".dinner, and she'll repay you with emotional devastation! Serve her chicken sandwiches, and she'll give.Chapter 8."Well, hello, Sergeant," she s. aid huskily. "I was beginning to wonder if I had a deserter. Now, I wonder what could be on your mind at this time of night." .was." .say to make him leave. "Where's your folks, son?" the man asks..Jay appeared more reassured, and his eyes brightened a fraction with the relief of having been spared long explanations. "It's all screwed up," he replied simply..follows, pulling the door shut behind them, staying low to avoid being seen through the windshield..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?".CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN.Stormbel was a short, stocky, completely bald man with pale, watery eyes and an expression that never conveyed emotion. A thin moustache pencil-lined his upper lip. He put his hands on his hips and stared for a few seconds at the gaping faces before him. "This Congress is dissolved," he announced in his thin but piercing, high-pitched voice. "The Mission is now under the direct command of the Military." He turned his head to Borftein "You are relieved of command of both the regular and Special Duty forces. Those functions are now transferred to me." "Well, give us a call when you do, and we'll fix something up. I live in Franklin, so there shouldn't be too much of a problem. That's where we usually get together." .Curtis pushes open the bedroom door. You first, girl..Jean shook her head in protest. "But you can't . . I won't go. I want to move to Iberia." .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.Chapter 1.Hanlon detached himself from a group and sauntered over to Colman, Celia, and Lechat. Things had been so hectic that an opportunity for a few quick words with them had not presented itself since Colman's return. "Well, I see there's no need to ask how things went on your side, Steve. I take it that Veronica's in safe hands now." .little gravy. We'll put it in a takeout dish, and give it to you for nothing because we just love doggies..In Rickster's soft features, as well as in his earnest eyes, were a profound natural kindness that he hadn't.of great age and immeasurable wisdom. Nevertheless, he wishes he had been brave for her.."But what about the border guards?" Jean looked alarmed. "We don't know who we can trust. Fulmire didn't know which side how much of the Army is on. There could be fighting out there at any minute. You don't know what you'll be walking into." .place as though it were Eden re-created, everything here was inferior to the original Garden in all ways.can least afford to do so.."Forget it," Colman interrupted. "It happens to everyone. Let's leave it with all the other stuff that's best left .up there." .Celia didn't seem to hear. Her mind was still back where the conversation had been before Kath's call. After a short silence she said without moving her head, "It wasn't a warning from the Chironians." .treasure, and they won't be distracted..He's at too great a distance for those beams to expose him. And in the absence of a moon, although he.witnesses..The thought sent a quiver of resentment through her as she sat on the sofa below the large wall screen, watching the face of Howard Kalens as he denounced Wellesley's "policy of indecisiveness" as a contributory factor to the killing of the soldier who had been shot the previous night, and called for "some positive initiative toward taking the firm grasp that the situation so clearly demands." .Nobody talked any more about annexing Franklin. Howard Kalens's chances of being elected to perpetuate the farce plummeted to as near zero as made no difference, and Paul Lechat, recognizing what he saw as a preview of the inevitable, dropped his insistence for a repeat performance in Iberia; at least, that was the reason he offered publicly. Ironically, the Integrationist, Ramisson, emerged as the only candidate with a platform likely to attract a majority view, but that was merely in theory because his potential supporters had a tendency to evaporate as soon as they were converted. But it was becoming obvious as the election date approached that serious interest was receding toward the vanishing point, and even the campaign speeches turned into halfhearted rituals being performed largely, as their deliverers knew, for the benefit of bored studio technicians and indifferent cameras..veins." "Some human beings are mean enough without crocodile blood in their veins," Geneva said..He puts one eye to the inch-wide gap and studies the bathroom beyond, which separates the bedroom."Hmph." Merrick waved a hand at the screen. "Doesn't have the academies. He'd need to do at least a year with kids half his age. We're not a social rehabilitation unit, you know." "Except for the shooting." .case one of the congressman's minions coiled in a car outside, waiting to follow the woman, Noah must.About all he was good with outside things like that was cards. He couldn't remember exactly when his fascination with them had started, but it had been soon after Swyley, then a fellow private, had taught him to shuffle four aces to the top of a deck and feed them into a deal from the pall. Finding to his surprise that he seemed to have an aptitude, Driscoll had borrowed a leaf from Colman's book and started reading up about the subject. For many long off duty hours he had practiced top-pass palms and one-handed side-cuts until he could materialize three full fans from an."Hi," the paunchy man greeted amiably. "I'm Clem. These are Carla and Hermann, and Francine and Boris. The big guy here is Cromwell, and the little lady up top is Amy. Well, I guess... welcome aboard." ".Shot dinnerware explodes in noisy disharmonious chords; bullet-plucked metal racks produce jarring.Sterm looked displeased at the response. "Securing your planet against an aggressor is not to be confused with harboring ambitions of conquest," he replied.."I've got two sisters you can't get in trouble with," Stanislaw offered..81354?dc21 2001049952.Hanlon

walked over and sat down in the booth as business returned to normal. "They hew you were here, Steve. I heard them talking in the back of Rockefeller's. So I thought I'd come back down and hang around." "A payoff from your husband, ten thousand bucks, offered by one of his flunkies." He wants the coins, too, but he doesn't touch them. In his nervousness, he's likely to jingle or drop them, figures back into the shattered cupola and helping, them climb to the entrance into the feeder ramp. "L think this. Then, slowly, she realized what her mind had responded to unconsciously in the faces of the three children in the Chironian sculpture. The artist had been not merely an expert, but a master. For fear was there too, not in any way that was consciously perceptible, but in a way that slipped subliminally into the mind of the beholder and gripped it by its deepest roots. That was why she had felt disturbed all the way back from Franklin. But there was still something else. She could feel it tugging at the fringes of awareness-something deeper that she hadn't grasped even yet. She turned her eyes to the sculpture again. Her short-cropped hair glows supernaturally white. astute. "I thought it would be at least one ninety," Micky replied. lasers, slim grenades, handcuffs. Automatic pistols are holstered at their hips, but they arrive with more. The killers had been even closer on his trail than he'd feared. What he sensed, stepping into that upstairs. Yet he realizes that until he trusts the dog implicitly, their bonding cannot be completed. Until then, they. He wondered how he might have made out if he'd had a start like that. And what would a guy like Colman be doing, who knew more about the Mayflower II's machines than haft the echelon-four shot-noses put together? If that was the way the computers had brought the first kids up, Driscoll reflected, he could think of a few humans who ~ could have. used some lessons. never seen their faces clearly. With sorrow banished in a blink, anger and fear were in equal command of her. "You don't own me!" "I just did." of the night. It takes refuge at the boy's side, pressing against his legs as it looks back toward the. her skin with alcohol, and she made each cut only after much judicious consideration. At the mere thought of survival, guilt churns a bitter butter in his blood. He has no right to live when. Pleadingly, Micky said, "Will you stop stuffing your face with pie and talk to me?" moment and in the firm grip of the real. "Hot or iced?" The likely cannibal clicks off the sink light, turns, and crosses the bathroom to the small cubicle that. "I never eat it," Leilani said. "The last time old Sinsemilla served it was Monday. So come on, tell me, circling the truck-stop complex, and into the civilian car park where no big rigs are allowed, the boy. Pernak's contention, that the Big Bang represented not an act of absolute creation but a singularity marking a phase-change from some earlier-if that term could be applied-epoch in which the familiar laws of physics along with the very notions of space and time broke down, was representative of the general views held on Earth at that time. Indeed, although the bizarre conditions that had reigned prior to the Bang could not be described in terms of any intuitively meaningful conceptual model, a glimmer of some of their properties was beginning to emerge from the abstract symbolism of certain branches of theoretical mathematical physics. mode, though her tail continues to wag gently. "What little orange lady would that be?" Noah asked. He remembers his mother's counsel that in order to pass for someone you're not, you must have. "I don't know," was all that Bernard could reply. "If they have, they haven't published it. But does it seem likely? Would Stern be moving the way he is if they had? But you have nothing to lose by spelling it out to them. It has to be worth a try." 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 skulduggery imaginable. tightened so much that a swallow of lemony vodka seemed to thicken as she drank it. Crisp in her mouth. To Micky, Aunt Gen said, "Isn't she something?" "She's an absolute, no-doubt-about-it, fine young. hideous and distressing story, but they could do nothing to help her. Leilani knew better than anyone that. Their only hope lies in the vastness of the high desert to the north of the interstate, out there where the. No sooner had Leilani's defenses cracked than they mended. Her eyes glazed with emotion at the. "Do you deny that by exposing civilians you hoped to precipitate an incident that would have justified sending in troops?" The FBI doesn't as a matter of habit open negotiations with gunplay, which means the cowboys must. "Not fear anymore. But. . . most days I still don't feel clean." Constance Tavenall? no doubt soon to cleanse herself of the name Sharmer? stared at the TV. She. "What's the problem?" Bernard, who had finished talking to Jeeves for the time being, came over to them. Marie followed close behind. Indicating the can of Budweiser on the table, the girl said, "If beer's good enough for Micky, it's good. peers between two towers of dishes, and sees one of his pursuers about fifteen feet away. The beer provided icy solace. "How do you stay so upbeat?"

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