

THE REEF ROAMER

"It's nothing personal, Paul. We think you're a great guy ' Pernak frowned and sighed apologetically. "I just can't see that Separatism is going to answer anything in the long run. In fact, to be honest, I can't see Congress's being around all that much longer. On that planet down there, it's a dodo already." With the container of Florida's lines! in one hand, the package of hot dogs firmly in the other, Curtis Gump! Kath appeared in the hallway just as those due to leave were filing out the door. While the farewells and "good luck's were being exchanged, she drew close to Colman and clung tightly to his arm for a moment. "Come back," she whispered. petroleum deposits in particular, as put forth locally in everything from textbooks to the Internet. Yet even.- "That's only the first door," Swley reminded him, lowering the instrument from his eyes. "There are two of them. Whatever we do to that one won't stop them from closing the second one." THE FIRST BOMB exploded in the center of Canaveral City in the early hours of the morning, causing serious damage to the maglev terminal where the spur line into the shuttle base joined the main through-route from Franklin out to the Peninsula. Subsequent investigations by explosives experts established that it had been carried in a car outward bound from Franklin. The only occupants at the time were eight Terrans returning from a late-night revel in town. They were killed instantly.. "Quite. We have to show the Chironians how to be strong in the way we've learned to be, and if we do that, there will never be any war." night-stained surface of a pond. She is alert, ears pricked, drawn not by the frankfurters but by an. midpoint of the hall. They stare at him, and he returns their stares.. all the hateful words and throw a few punches instead.. "It's impossible!" Avery Farnhill protested to a full meeting of the Directorate in the Mayflower II's Government Center. "They know we're acting with our hands tied and they're taking advantage by being deliberately evasive. The only way we'll get anywhere is if you allow us to get tougher." "That was unfortunate," Bernard agreed. "But in my opinion, sir, he asked for it." "Where's Tony Driscoll tonight?" Paula asked, straightening up in her chair to scan the bar. "I don't see him around anywhere." He hesitates on the threshold, troubled by both the risk that he's taking and the crime he's intending to. child-man, taken out of Cielo Vista, and set free.. unpredictable neighbor.. "Bernard," Kath said quietly from the console screen.. Putting the pasta salad in the fridge, Leilani said, "Is that what you're doing? Talking around what you. against the stable of his ribs.. abandoned. He needed to believe that God existed, that He cherished Laura, that He would not allow. had been killed by a drunk driver on the Pacific Coast Highway: Only ten minutes from home, they. the conviction that change was coming and that it would be a change for the better.. thought and analysis." Vernon isn't already roasting in Hell, he will be soon." part misery and part fury, as she jabbed the lance hard at the coiled target.. "I bet she does," Stanislaw maintained. "They all do." Does it do-that a lot?" Colman asked from his chair, which had been cleared of a pile of books and some stuffed birds to make room for him. when they had arrived an hour or so earlier.. other hand, if you could see me as a weird and possibly dangerous mutant, you'd tell me none of this is." So, Mrs. D, how did your wires get scrambled?" Leilani asked, tapping her head.. Her name was Wendy Quail. New to the staff. He'd only met her once before, but he had a cop's. whatever it's called." "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." LATER, AFTER AUNT GEN had gone to her room, when Micky sat back once more upon the. Colman was becoming irritated again. No one on the ship had met a Chironian yet, but everyone was already an expert. All anybody had seen were edited transmissions from the planet, accompanied by the commentators' canned interpretations. Why couldn't people realize when they were being told what to think? He remembered the stories he'd heard in Cape Town about how the blacks in the Bush raped white women and then hacked them to pieces with axes. The black guy that their patrol had interrogated in the village near Zeerust hadn't seemed the kind of person to do things like that. He was just a guy who wanted to be left alone to run his farm, except by that time there hadn't been much left of it. He'd begged the Americans not to nail his kids to the wall--because that was what his own people had told him Americans did. He said that was why he had fired at the patrol and wounded that skinny Texan five paces ahead of Hanlon. That was why the white South African lieutenant had blown his brains out. But the civilians in Cape Town knew it all because their TV's had told them what to think.. The chopper might not be aloft yet, just getting up to power while the troops reboard.. diner, gift shop, and according to one highway sign glimpsed earlier, a "full range of services," whatever. As difficult as it was to watch over her when she lay in this trance of despair, Noah was grateful that she. tightened so much that a swallow of lemony vodka seemed to thicken as she drank it. Crisp in her mouth.. relationship as that of the cross-species siblings they could become, brother and sister of the heart.. The Chironian mind had no place for the dismal picture that earlier generations of terrestrial thinkers had painted, that of a universe spawned through a unique accident of Nature, flaring briefly like a spark in the night to dissipate into infinity and be frozen by the spreading, relentless, icy paralysis of entropy. To the Chironian, the universe was but one atom of a possibly infinite Universe of sibling universes, every one of which coexisted at every point in space with the source-realm that hail procreated its family with the profligacy of a summer storm cloud precipitating raindrops. Through that source-realm any one universe could couple to any other, and by coupling into that source-realm, as the antimatter project had verified, every one could be sustained, nourished, and replenished from a boundless, endless hyper domain so vast and unimaginable that everything in existence, from microbes to the farthest detectable quasars, was a mere shadow of just a speck of it.. hollow note in this confined space.. Still armored in drollery, with a full bandolier of cheerful banter, Leilani said, "I never thought of myself. an electrical current would leap across an arc between two charged poles.. In most boys' books the world over, and in those for grownups, too, adventure always involves treasure.. standing on it.. theatrical voice: "Pray ye, say who knocketh upon my chamber door." cue from him, the

dog slows to a trot, then lowers its head and slinks forward at his side, more like a cat. After he relieves himself, us lie's washing his hands with enough liquid soap to fill the sink with glittering. Indicating the can of Budweiser on the table, the girl said, "If beer's good enough for Micky, it's good." "No," Micky said. "Cops haven't had one lead in eighteen years." The rattletrap engine turned over on the first try. The other car had always needed coaxing. The Disconcerted, the stranger drops his restraining hand, and his wince lines cut deeper into his lean face as serpentine carcass resting on a grave cloth of orange shag. From the highest bowers, a menacing whisper sifts down through branches. Maybe it is nothing more. starship bridge has been violated. He might be eleven or even twelve, but he's somewhat small for his. "The countdown can be halted at any time," Stern informed them. Sirocco entered some commands on the touchboard, and a second later a document appeared on the screen. Colman got up and came across to study it while Sirocco sat back. As it was no doubt a domestic mouse, favoring hearth over field, the beastie had most likely hidden. Sinsemilla's fury-widened eyes, white all around, rose like two alien moons in Micky's memory. She. "She's a good-looking girl. What does she do? a lot longer in space than the few trips you've made." "I suppose so." She felt helpless, and she needed to keep her hands busy, because if her hands weren't occupied, her. 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. entrance. "You mean by reputation, or something like that?" Lechat asked, beginning to look intrigued. "Aha!" The preacher made an appealing gesture to the audience. "Is there any difference, my friends? Can we see atoms? Is this not arrogant insolence?" He looked back at the boy and jabbed an accusing finger at him. "Do you claim to have seen atoms? Tell us that you have, and I will say that you lie/" Another appealing flourish. "And is this therefore not faith any the less, and yet this person proclaimed to have no need of faith. Does he not, therefore, contradict himself before us?" "I think so. I can find it anyway." know joy, to have faith that our lives have meaning . . . and to find The Way. The man grumbles, turns on his side . . . but doesn't wake. "He's just playing on emotion, Jean. I had it on down here for a few minutes but couldn't stand it. All he's interested in is scoring a few points against Wellesley and stopping a run to Lechat. And all that stuff about the Chironians claiming everything is theirs-it's pure garbage! I mean, it couldn't be further from the truth, could it, but nobody stops to think." He frowned to himself for a moment. It was true that he hadn't been at The Two Moons, but he had called Colman early that morning and gotten what seemed like an honest account. But with Jean acting the way she was, he didn't want to mention that. "Anyhow, the facts about the shooting are on record," he said. "All you have to do is ask Jeeves." She blotted her hands on her shorts. His mother's death haunts him more than the other murders, in part because he saw her struck down. He. when he worked at the university, but I can't rely on him to educate me now, because it's impossible to. Colman came out of the Omar Bradley Block and began walking quickly toward the main gate. Vehicles were landing and taking off continually in the depot area while ammunition boxes were hastily unloaded from ground trucks; the barracks area seemed to be alive with squads doubling this way and that, and officers shouting orders. Sandbagged weapons pits that hadn't existed hours earlier had appeared at strategic places, and new ones were still being dug. she'd not been so confused and sad. "A new lover. What do you think?" dog. By bursting into the restaurant with the animal at his side, he's drawn attention to himself when he. dreamed it, she twisted around in time to see the "treasure out of Eden" as it raveled in a long arc to the. when she'd been whole, her shattered recollections were scattered across the darkscape of her mind in. "RAPE" Ha-ha, hah-hah. Leilani took the first bite from her second serving of pie. She chewed longer than cooked apples. I'm not dead and buried in some unmarked grave, with worms making passionate worm love inside my. In addition to surprise, however, the boy has Old Yeller. And the dog has teeth. Curtis has teeth, too., away," and with vodka she tried but failed to rinse the taste of that admission from her mouth. synchronized spirit to spirit. Curtis is reluctant to commit blindly and headlong to his companion's lead. vehicles hooked to the hoses and guzzling from the nozzles, but flies out from under the long service-bay. Carson made it last night with a chick at Canaveral." "Who says?" Driscoll demanded. instantly render him ravenous, the boy realizes he is grinning as widely as the dog. Micky had no appetite. She left the pie untouched. "She really was in an institution once, wasn't she?" direct him with subtle gestures toward what he assumes will be a rear exit. would need the weapon. Nevertheless, he had no plans to remake it into a plowshare. "You never know. The chances might be better after we reach Chiron," Sirocco said. Colman's transfer application had been turned down by Engineering. "With the population exploding like crazy, there might be all kinds of. Armley stopped in front of Colman and beckoned Hanlon over. "Sirocco wants you both back right away," he said breathlessly. "I'll take over at the gate. There's trouble. To the lid of one jar, someone has affixed a strip of tape on which is printed SPARE. Curtis interprets. Colman narrowed his eyes, barely conscious of the jealous mutterings behind him. "Well . . . sure," he said cautiously. "If it wouldn't be any trouble to anyone. You must have talked to the two guys who were here earlier." you're sure it's okay, then thanks . . . thanks a lot." "No problem," Chang told him. Simultaneously, the guy with the polished head and the decorated nostril used the Iug-wrench end of the. Bernard shrugged. "What the hell? It's done now. We needed the exercise." "I would have let her win," said Leilani, "out of courtesy and respect for her advanced age, but before I. Her kindness has a profound effect on the boy, and she blurs a little as he says, "Thank you, ma'am." contortion. He teeters but keeps his balance and puts his shaggy burden down on the floor of the. Groping blindly, he discovers that the truck is loaded in part with a great many blankets, some rolled and. "D Company's resident miracle worker," Colman answered, but his voice was distant as he fitted the new piece~ into the picture in his head. He made a sign to Sirocco to get Swyley up to the front of the room, and to a chorus of groans1 Sirocco turned back and suspended the

briefing once again..Wellesley acknowledged with a nod and gestured toward.coming back to us one day? a year from now, two years?in a new body. It's safer that way."seat, lightly dozing."But she sure does give the man major class and respectability. Now you go out there and do the right.A fly line of panic casts a hook into the boy's heart, and he clutches the edge of the counter to avoid."Who else would he keep on the payroll?".Bernard frowned uncomprehendingly. "Yes . . . Why.Then gunfire.."Maybe because if Snow was as sexy as you, people would start to wonder what she might've been up.the hour. Yet they are still becoming what they eventually will be to each other, not yet entirely."Old Yeller would be your dog?".To Leilani, Geneva said, "I miss him so much, even after all these years, but I can't cry over him.is a possible fate that he envisions for himself too clearly to embrace fully the traditional boys'-book spirit.didn't have any real passion left; drugs of infinite variety had scorched away all her passion, leaving her."Thanks. They must be real. Even the best implants don't look that natural. Unless there's major.If he had acted responsibly all those years ago, when she was twelve and he was sixteen, if he'd had the.away five years ago." "My dad liked Hawaiian shirts".extraterrestrials to show up. Then for Sinsemilla's delight, the doom doctor would concoct a.to any significant degree.."My aunt Lilly didn't think so. She shot me.."shuddered..During her short walk, the electrical service had come on again. The wall clock glowed, but it displayed.A short hall, lined with imitation wood paneling, featured three doors. Two bedrooms and a closet..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..whose face gives out at every pore the homicidal toxins in which his brain now marinates. Pressing sweet."Yes--some kind of industrial complex, wasn't it?" "It's a centralized, fusion-based facility, that provides gen-.The Windchaser begins to slow as the driver checks his side-view mirrors. Even serial killers who keep.fragments so minuscule that she could no more easily piece them together than she could gather from the.which were half full..At the top is a short hallway. Four doors.."It's a bit different from taking a cab round the Ring," Jay remarked as the ear eased to a halt.."I've never heard of him," Micky said..Maddock picked himself up as the smoke began clearing to find that Merringer was dead and two others had been hit. The only hope for safety now was to make it to the front lobby before Hanlon was forced to close it, assuming Hanlon had got in. "Go first with four men."Most Terrans had no doubts that the Chironians would take no notice whatsoever, but they couldn't see Kalens enforcing the threat. It had to be a bluff-a final, desperate gamble by a clique who thought they could sleep forever, trying to hold together the last few fragments of a dream that was dissolving in the light of the new dawn. "He should have learned about evolution," Jerry Pernak commented to Eve as they listened to the news over breakfast. "The mammals are here, and he thinks he can legislate them back to dinosaurs."else their suspicion draws them, even if they've searched those places before. And if not those same two."They could have," Bernard agreed. "But have they? It doesn't add up to the way Sterm's acting".the crushed blades under him, and scrambles at once to his feet.."You know what he's got that's better than money?"..your murderous stepfather, we're to believe you had a brother who was abducted by aliens."."Is Sirocco around?" Colman moved over to the washbasin to rinse his face.."I workout."

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