

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

'~That could be a good place to start," Kalens suggested to Wellesley.'.Nearing the end of the kitchen, he encounters several workers crowding through an open door..mottled as a boiled lobster, he at last clears his throat of food only to fill it with laughter, making such a."It might not want to die that easily," Lechat pointed out. "You should listen to what's going on a few blocks from here right now in the room I just came from."..ON THIS, THE eve of the last Christmas that we shall be celebrating together before our journey ends, I have chosen as the subject of my seasonal message to you the passage which begins, 'Suffer little children to come unto me' The voice of the Mission's presiding bishop floated serenely down from the loudspeakers around the Texas Bowl to the congregation of ten thousand listening solemnly from the terraces. The green' rectangle of the arena below was filled by contingents from the crew and the military units standing resplendent and unmoving in full dress uniform at one end; schoolchildren in neat, orderly blocks of freshly laundered and pressed jackets of brown and blue in the center; and, facing them from the far end on the other side of the raised platform from Which the bishop was speaking, the ascending tiers of benches that held the VIPs in their dark suits, pastel coats, and bemedaled tunics. The voice continued. "The words are appropriate, for we are indeed about to meet ones whom we must recognize and accept as children in spirit, if not in all cases in body and mind ..".Although the finest restorative surgeon couldn't have rebuilt her beauty, the worst of the horror might."Oh, just ask the computers anywhere how to get to Shirley-with-the-red-hair's place---Ci's mother. They'll take care of you."..Two stools away, Burt Hooper chokes violently on his waffles and chicken. His fork clatters against his..said, "Into your gall bladder?"..difficult to believe that a mere bullet wound could be the cause of such horrendous, tortured shrieks.."I never said there was," Nanook answered..Book design by Virginia Norey.drinking pina coladas on a palm-shaded terrace in Heaven, what will they be serving in Hell?"..".Hot or iced?"..childhood, her defenses against a cruel life had been anger and stubbornness. She'd seen herself as the..But Micky's tendency wouldn't cause her to wander off forever into the spooky woods where Sinsemilla..just for the kick of tricking the machine..hours at the Haven of the Lonesome and the Long Forgotten were drawing toward a close, and a..He wheels around, facing the way that he came, ready to brain the first of them with the juice container..followed seemed to be charged with some supernatural energy, as the aura of an elemental spirit might."This planet has escaped such a fate until now, but its population will grow. It has a chance to profit from what Earth has- learned, and to plant the seeds of a strong, unfl'e4 and unshakable order now, before the diseases of disunity have had a chance to germinate and become virulent. The same forces that are already unleashed upon Earth are only two years away from reaching Chiron in the form of the vanguard of the Eastern Asiatic Federation. In just two years' time, your choice will be either to submit to the domination of those who would enslave this planet, or to confront them with a unified strength that would make Chiron impregnable. Your choice is weakness or strength servility as opposed to dignity; slavery as opposed to freedom; ignominy as opposed to honor; and shame as Opposed to pride. Weakness or strength. I offer the latter alternatives".."Then I held poor scared thingy a long time in the dark, the two of us here on the bed, and after a while..by an awareness of the bond of imperfection that all the sons and daughters of this world share without..Fallows left the monitor room, crossed the floor of the Drive Control Subcenter, and exited through sliding double doors into a brightly lit corridor. An elevator took him up two levels to another corridor, and minutes later he was being shown into an office that opened onto one side of the Engineering Command Deck. Inside, Leighton Merrick, the Assistant Deputy Director of Engineering, was contemplating something on one of the reference screens built into the panel angled across the left corner of the desk at which he was sitting..Not trusting herself to speak, Micky shook her head, which was the first admission she had ever made."When I tell you old Preston is a killer, not a diddler," said Leilani, "you can't wrap your mind around it. I exploits vicariously, through the pages of books. Young heroes of adventure stories, from Treasure bland..Leilani..Geneva shifted position on the edge of the bed and took Micky into her arms. The great warmth of her..mishap and calamity, she had added supplies to the basic kit. She kept it always near at hand.."Sure they can. Even before Dr. Doom, Sinsemilla was footloose. She says we lived in Santa Fe, San..anymore, and he kept talking until he was wrung dry of words..in the memory of her love, her toughness, her steely resolution. His wretched sobbing subsides..Oh, Lord, he's put his foot wrong again, stepped in a pile of doo-doo, figuratively speaking, but he can't."We could probably arrange a visit for you too," Chang offered. "There's a large fusion complex along the coast that supplies power and all kinds of industrial materials for most~ of Franklin. Another one's due to be built soon, and they'll be needing people too. I could arrange for you to go and see it, ff you think you'd be interested.".."Payoff for what?"..dedicated his life to the saucer circuit. He has this honking big motor home, and we travel all around the."Thanks. They must be real. Even the best implants don't look that natural. Unless there's major..Along with most of his generation he had been fired by the vision of the New Order America that they were helping to forge from the ashes and ruins of the old. Even stronger than what had gone before, morally and spiritually purer, and confident in the knowledge of its God-ordained mission, it would rise. again as an impregnable sanctuary to preserve the legacy of Western culture from the corrosive flood of heathen decadence and affluent brashness sweeping across the far side of the globe. So the credo' had run. And when the East at last fell apart from its own internal decay, when the illusion of unity that the Arabs were trying to impose on Central Asia was finally exposed, and when the African militancy eventually expired in an orgy of internecine squabbling, the American New Order would reabsorb temporarily estranged Europe, and prevail. That had been the quest..She'd better get a fix on the creature while it was stunned. She backed away, dropped awkwardly to..Two escapees and one guard had been killed at the west gate and two guards had been badly wounded inside the Detention Wing. Six of the female personnel who had been under detention, Anita among

them, were unaccounted for..put it, but because of a self-destructive impulse..thing? Sundays on Wednesday." At first Noah didn't get it..Besides, Leilani didn't want to purge herself of all her toxins. She was comfortable with her toxins. Her.A tire blows, the trailer bounces, the stacks bark as loud as a mortar lobbing hundred-millimeter rounds.Wanting to justify his mother's pride in him, he struggles to regain control of himself. Later, if he lives,.The camera pulled back and angled down even more severely to reveal Noah's Chevrolet parked at the.playful, she bounds forward, snatches a muzzleful of plaid, and jerks the stranger off his feet. The man.The woman lay prone, upper body raised slightly on her slender forearms, head hung. Her face was an.Leilani didn't glance back again. She made a point of crossing the rest of the yard and negotiating the.mother anywhere." Micky reached across the dinette table, and the girl responded without hesitation: They slapped palms in."I guess I'll have to think about it," Jay conceded. Hanlon ordered three hamburger dinners, and the two sergeants spent a half hour talking with Jay about Army life, football, and how Stanislaw could crash the protected sector of the public databank. Finally Jay said he had to be getting home, and they walked with him up several levels to the Manhattan Central capsule point..When it rains, it pours, his mother had said. She never claimed that the thought was original with her..Sirocco shrugged noncommittally. "Can't say. I wouldn't worry too much about it. If you stick close to Steve and Bret and do what they tell you, you'll come through okay." Although they couldn't claim to be campaign veterans, Colman and Hanlon were among the few of the Mission's regulars who had seen combat, having served together as rookie privates with an American expeditionary unit that had fought alongside the South Africans in the Transvaal in 2059, the year before they had volunteered for the Mayflower II. The experience gave them a certain mystique-especially among the younger troops who had matured-in some cases been born and enlisted--in the course of the voyage..On their arrival, they leaned from Maddock that there was little need for them to have bothered making the arrangements with Sirocco. Border security around Phoenix was disintegrating, with most of the SDs being pulled back to protect the shuttle base, the barracks, and other key points, and the regular troops who were left scattered thinly along the perimeter doing little to interfere with the civilian exodus. A whole platoon of A Company had marched away en masse while their officers could do nothing but watch helplessly, and the depleted remainder had been merged with the remnants of B Company to bring them up to strength. More SDs were disappearing too. The only thing holding D Company together was personal loyalty to Sirocco after his appeal a couple of weeks earlier. There wasn't really anything to prevent Chironian air vehicles from landing inside phoenix, but the Chironians seemed to be allowing Terran rules to self-destruct and were respecting the proclaimed airspace. Maddock indicated the trees beyond the construction site just outside the border, behind which lights were showing and Chironian fliers descending and taking off again in a steady procession. "No need for you to walk very far," he told them. "I can call Kath and have her send a cab over. What's her number?".Sooner rather than later, they are likely to find the spoor they seek. Then they will pick up speed..He's rapidly losing confidence. Lacking adequate self-assurance, no fugitive can maintain a credible.Leilani, but he better stay on his side of the fence.".Doggedly returning to her initial question, Leilani asked, "So the guy who killed Mr. D?was he caught?". "A communications specialist at Brigade.". "Ghost Riders in the Sky" is followed by "Cool Water," a song about a thirst-plagued cowboy and his.Congress?sometimes he calls it the Parliament of Planets?and those plans will take time to carry out..advises.. "And you're saying the Big Bang was something like that?". "I'm getting to know them.".would find courage in a bottle. To form a strategy and to follow through successfully with it, she would.fallen fence with as little hitching of her braced leg as possible. When she concentrated on physical." ? but a bunch of hoey that maybe has a second and more serious purpose," Micky suggested.. "Like what?" Nanook asked.. "Oh, in that case it just has to be true, doesn't it. Now tell me that Swyley's color-blind.".Micky leaned forward from the angled back of the lounge chair. "Leilani?".roaming room to room, gazing out a series of windows at the millions of points of light that blossomed.to conserve electricity." .fifty or a hundred thousand volts of electricity through her brain, but it didn't help.".Karla giggled, said something indecipherable, and pulled Sharmer inside, closing the door behind them..he now tied in a hangman's knot. "What answer?" he asked, recalling the Circle of Friends thug with the.Hiding in the tiny toilet enclosure is out of the question. The owners just came from the restaurant, and.just walking back into the bedroom to wait when she heard the door on the far side of the lounge open, and immediately the suite was filled with the sounds of bodies moving around and voices calling to each other. A few seconds later Colman appeared in the doorway from the lounge. Celia started to move toward him instinctively, but he checked her by throwing the roll of packing that Veronica had brought at her face. "You're in the Army," he said gruffly as she caught it. "Move your ass.". "You look as if you might know something about it," Lesley said to Colman. "Is there something down on the surface that hasn't been made public knowledge?".Sirocco looked back at the orders and resumed, ""The advance guard will fan out to form two files, of ten men each, aligned at an angle of forty-five degrees off either side of the access lock and take up station behind their respective section leaders. Officer in command of the guard detail will remain two paces to the left of the lock exit. Upon completion of the opening formalities, the guard will be relieved by a detail from B Company who will position themselves at the exit ramp, and will proceed through the Kuan-Yin. to post sentry details at the locations specified in Schedule A, attached. The sentry details will remain posted until relieved or given further orders. Are there any questions so far?". "He's a broad-spectrum, three-hundred-sixty-degree, inside-out, all-the-way-around, perfect, true, and.people right out of bed, Preston. You told us stones like that. Well, gee, then for sure if I'm wearing these." "Is she a friend of yours?" Kath inquired..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. Celia managed a smile. Sirocco had seen no reason to mention to the troops her part in the Howard Kalens affair and had told them simply that the object of the exercise was to broadcast some new facts which would be enough to put an end to Sterm. "I'm not sure what I'm supposed to say," she told Hanlon. "I'll never be able to thank you both enough. I think I'm beginning to see a whole new world of people that I never imagined existed." with a primitive need that she didn't dare contemplate...engaging in dangerous exploits and heroic deeds...speaking in her capacity as self-appointed temperance enforcer on assignment to Michelina Bell-song...the police...backyard fence. But if you do run into him, don't call him Preston or Maddoc. These days he looks a lot. The Chironians replied readily enough to questions about their population growth and distribution, about growth and performance of the robot-operated mining and extraction industries and nuclear-driven manufacturing and processing plants, about the courses being taught in their schools, the researches being pursued in their laboratories, the works of their artists and composers, the feats of their engineers and architects, and the findings of their geological surveys of places like the sweltering rain forests of southern Selene or the far northern ice-subcontinent of Glace. Sinsemilla sat in bed, atop the toad-green polyester spread, reclining regally against a pile of pillows. She. "She gets eighty-six thousand a year," Noah said. Welcome Wagon gifts and valuable discount coupons that come with membership. Sinsemilla also buys. For longer than she could remember, Micky hadn't allowed herself to be emotionally affected by anyone. "You bitch" Celia protested. "I want to hear about it now." With Sterm playing what was nominally the leading role, Stormbel could afford nothing that might be seen as a concession of inferiority, which required his half of the machine to perform flawlessly, precisely, and in a way that was beyond criticism. That was what made mistakes doubly intolerable at this particular time. But what made the whole thing completely baffling and all the snore galling was that the escorts and their charge had not only checked in on time, but had actually boarded the return shuttle-having passed safely through all the riskier parts of the agenda-before vanishing without a trace. They had definitely boarded and taken their seats, and it had been only a matter of minutes before lift-off when one of the flight-crew noticed that suddenly they weren't there-any of them. The SD guards at the boarding gate had all known what Celia Kalens looked like, and they had been under special instructions to watch for her, but none of them had seen her when the escorts came out of the shuttle after somehow losing her; and shortly after that, the escorts had disappeared into the base and were never seen again. Nobody remembered seeing. "I wish I'd heard them back when I could've helped you." "That was all a long time ago, Aunt Gen." This was a girlish merriment, sweet and musical, almost shy. Noah grimaced. "You're disgusting." First, he wanted to visit this special site, a couple miles away, where some guy named Carver or Carter. "This zwieback crap." Micky said, "He abandoned my mother and me when I was three." The nebula was hovering over Geneva's motor home, casting a power pall just like alien ships always did in. "I need more than a few right now. How much did your Navigator cost?" Noah asked. "I try," Geneva said, "but my mind spins around it till I feel like something inside my head's going to fly." So everyone becomes a law unto himself," Merrick concluded, the tattoo snake. "At least take a look at his peace offering." nearer southbound lanes, cars overtake the auto transport and, from time to time, large trucks pass, as. "I'm not suicidal. I'm just a wiseass." Celia found herself staring into eyes that mirrored for a split second the calm, calculated, ruthlessness that lay within, devoid of disguise or apology, or any hint that there should be any. A chill quivered down her spine, but she felt also the trapdoor in her mind straining as a need that lay imprisoned behind it, and which she was still not ready to face, responded. Sterm's eyes were challenging her to deny anything that he had said. She was unable to make even that gesture. A thumb-turn lock frees the window. Gingerly, the intruder raises the lower sash. He slips out of the evening. She must have left before it happened." Beside Sirocco, Colman breathed an audible sigh of relief. "Luck," Micky clarified. "The angle of the shot was severe. The slug literally ricocheted off her skull, He isn't aware of my associate in the attic." diner, gift shop, and according to one highway sign glimpsed earlier, a "full range of services," whatever. having pretty much learned the repeating chorus and also each verse as he first heard it. Ghost riders in. These are not rich people, and he feels guilty about taking their money. One day, if he lives long enough, although other tanks contain gasoline, which is without doubt a valid ticket to an apocalypse. If the. "Yeah, right. You're part alien." Borftein looked surprised, hesitated for a second or two, and then nodded as he realized what Lechat wanted. lie rose slowly to his feet and paused to collect his words. "I am proud to have been accepted as worthy of command by the troops whose valor, determination, and fighting ability we have all witnessed," he said. "I will not attempt to elaborate with speeches what we owe, since words could never express our debt. They have all discharged their duties in a manner true to the best traditions of the Service, and many of them with a bravery beyond the call of duty." He paused, and his face became more solemn. "However, although we can never and will never forget, our commitment to the new future of understanding that we are beginning to glimpse leaves no place for the perpetuation of an organization dedicated to ways that belong to the world we have all left behind us. All military personnel are therefore relieved of further obligations to the Mission's military command and discharged with full honors, and that command is disbanded forthwith." The hall remained quiet while Borftein sat down. It was a moment of final realization and resignation for many of the Terrans; while the future held its prospects and promises, there would be new and strange changes to adapt to, with the sacrificing of much that was familiar. "So are you," Colman insisted. "Chironian genes were dealt from the same deck as all the rest. So the codes were turned into electronics for a while, and then back into DNA. So what? A book that gets stored in the databank is still the same book when it comes out." about. What we're dealing with here is Darth Vader with lots of Larry, Curly, and Moe blood in his tip? "No," the boy answered after a moment's reflection. "I could say fairies make the flowers up there grow, but the fact that the flowers are growing wouldn't prove that the fairies exist, would it?" time-distorting August heat, they were as silent as the trinity of flames bright upon the

smokeless wicks."Oh, okay," lay said. "Their laws couldn't tell them anything about the cold universe before that instant. Flame physics only came into existence when the flame did." He remembered back to when he had been sixteen and gave a senator's son nothing more than he'd had coming to him. A pair of sheriff's deputies had taught him a painful lesson in "respect" in a cell at the town jailhouse, and the Army had been trying to teach him "respect" ever since. But that had been Earth-style respect. He was beginning to feel that perhaps he was learning the true meaning of the word for the first time. True respect could only be earned; it couldn't be extorted. A real leader led by the willingness of his followers, in the way that the people at the fusion complex followed Kath or Adam's children followed him, not by command. The Chironians could turn their backs on each other in the way that people like Howard Kalens would never know, as Colman could on his platoon. These were his kind of people. It was uncanny, but he was starting to feel at home here--something he had never really felt anywhere before in his life.."Watch it, watch it!".you?some political nut? I thought you were just a sad-ass gumshoe grubbing a few bucks by peeping in.Exhibiting rhinoscerosian contempt for Mr. Hooper, Donella turns away from him. "Don't you pay any

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