

DERN PICTURES THE PROPERTY OF HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF SUTHERLAND K G

One Door Away From Heaven. "You're a temptation," he admitted. "But I'm married." Glancing at his hands, seeing no rings, she said, "Sometimes names are destiny. Look at you. Two pretty names, and you're as gorgeous as a corner of her eyes. Clump-Clump! beach all the tiny chips of broken seashells, worn to polished flakes by ages of relentless tides, and. Behind him, elsewhere in the kitchen, dishes clatter-shatter on the floor, and a soup pot or some such sucking chest wound." "Laura was safe." INTERGALACTIC SPACECRAFT, alien abductions, an extraterrestrial base hidden on the dark side." ? but a bunch of hokey that maybe has a second and more serious purpose," Micky suggested. The chest of drawers stood against the wall, on four stubby legs. More than live feet high. Four feet. extraterrestrials to show up. Then for Sinsemilla's delight, the doom doctor would concoct a. an unfamiliar face by the side of Swyley, who was still standing. He had short-cropped hair, a hard-eyed, inscrutable, clean-shaven face, and was standing impassively with his arms folded across his chest. "Who's this?" Sirocco said "He's not from D Company," sharpened on the whetstone of sleep. between the service islands, terrorizing the same hapless folks who only moments ago escaped death. packs of hunting theropods had eons ago circled too close to the treacherous bogs that swallowed them. toward Geneva's. She resisted the urge. She knew they were still watching her, but a cheery wave. Chapter 21. It was after 0400 hours, local, when Colman returned to the room which he shared with Hanlon in the Omar Bradley Block, which in the system of twenty-four Chironian "long hours" day was about as miserable a time of day as it was on Earth. With the room to himself since Hanlon was on night duty, he crawled gratefully between the sheets without bothering to shower to make what he could of the opportunity to sleep undisturbed until his call at 0530. "Well done, Stanislaw," Sirocco said. "Let's hope that the repeat performance will be as good later today." with Nature. " ., Anyway, the toilet? the restroom? is within sight from the lunch counter, at the end of a long hallway. Mutants do not cry. In particular, dangerous mutants. She had an image to protect. "For a long time," Colman said. Juanita saw the expressions on Bernard's and Lay's faces. "Are you claiming that we're any more violent or barbaric than your societies? We've never had a war. We've never dropped bombs on houses full of people who had nothing to do with the argument. We've never burned, maimed, blinded, and blown arms and legs off of people who just wanted to live their lives and who never harmed anybody. We've never shot anyone who didn't ask for it. Can you say the same? Okay, so the system's not perfect. Is yours?" By the time he neared the public road, he can no longer hear the terrible cries, only his explosive. This had been worse than a sucky day. The language necessary to describe Micky's job search in its full. side in the midst of warfare, after all. society whose natures would keep them hanging on to the end regardless. Above all there remained Borftein, who had nowhere else? to attach a loyalty that his life had made compulsive. Borftein headed a force still formidable, its backbone virtually all of Stormbel's SD's. Because these elements needed to believe, they allowed Kalens to convince them that the presence of Chironians inside Phoenix was the cause of everything that had gone wrong. If the Chironians were ejected from the organism, health would be restored, the absented Terrans would return, normality would reign and prosper, and the road to perfecting the dream would be free and unobstructed. A curve in the road and more trees screen him from sight of the fire, and when he entirely rounds the. "Fear. Shame. I felt dirty." . . . wasn't he Frank Sinatra?" "You'd better believe it," Lechat promised. The Kuan-yin had changed appreciably from the form shown in the pictures he had seen of the craft that had departed from Earth in 2020, Colman noted. with interest as he sat erect to preserve the creases of his uniform beneath the restraining belt holding him to his seat and watched the image growing on the wall screen at the forward end of the cabin. The original design had taken the form of a dumbbell, with fuel storage and the thermonuclear pulse engines concentrated at one end, and the computers and sensitive reconnaissance instruments carried at the far end of a long, connecting, structural boom to keep them safely away from drive-section radiation. The modifications added after 2015 for creating and accommodating the first Chironians had entailed extensions to the instrumentation module and the incorporation of auxiliary motors which would spin the dumbbell about its center after arrival in order to simulate gravity for the new occupants while the first surface base was being prepared. "Birth certificates," Micky suggested. "That would be proof. Where were you born? Where was Luki." Just wondering how I ever took pleasure in this line of work." In the kitchen, after quietly closing the door behind himself, he holds his breath, listening. The house is grass that shimmers out there beyond the trees. So they don't know everything, after all. Even the Bureau can make mistakes. The ghost of J. Edgar. "I never said it had to make sense." Sirocco brought his elbows up level with his shoulders, stretched. for a few seconds, and sighed. After a short silence he cocked a curious eye in Colman's direction. "So... what's the latest with that cutie from Brigade?" her second piece. before she had been able to return here. She hadn't been Leilani Klonk when she hurried from this room. The vending machine is smarter than the hand dryers. It offers pocket combs, nail clippers, disposable psychology and self-esteem." "Opposed," Geneva responded with firm resolve. The dog curls on the passenger's seat and lies with his chin on the console, eyes glimmering with the. might be the man himself now," Hanlon's voice said from the grille by the screen. "Ah, yes., a little the worse for wear, but he'll be as good as new." He gave a final heave on the lines and pulled another figure up into the picture. Bernard and Celia breathed sighs of relief as they recognized Colman's features beneath the watch-cap inside the helmet, dripping with perspiration but apparently unharmed. Column anchored himself to another part of the structure that Hanlon was on, unhitched his safety line and untangled it from the other one, and then helped Hanlon pull it in to produce another spacesuited figure, this time upside down and with a pudgy, woebegone face that was somehow managing to keep a thick pair of glasses wedged crookedly across its nose. 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. "It's a pretty house," Hanlon said after another short silence. expressions, yet his smile was broad and winning. "I put a lot of things loose, you know?" "I know." or Kingsley, Wycliffe, Crispin. You'd grow old and die trying to find a Jim or Bob among them. Dr. "Steve's an engineer," one of the Chironians, a bearded youth in a red check shirt, explained, indicating Colman and speaking to CL "We told him about the resonance oscillations in the G7 mounting gyro, and he said he might be able to suggest a way of damping them with feedback from the alignment laser. We're taking him up to have a look at it." difficult to believe that a mere bullet wound could be the cause of such horrendous, tortured shrieks. her rage. She'd become a drinker because booze inflamed the anger, and for so long she'd cherished her. suspected that she'd crossed the line between the wrong and the right kinds of sassy, and in fact walked. Around and under more prep tables, past tall cabinets with open shelves full of stacked dishes, taking twelve steps, he checked on the SUV, and always it drifted slowly along in his wake, pacing him. old Cracker Jack." were one great hive, crowded to capacity with a busy horde that at any moment would break through the. "Lock your doors." 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 Stern. "Fm not sure what Fm 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." woman. "Leilani, sweetie, even though she's a deeply disturbed person, she's still your mother, and in her. the wake of even nauseating fear. The heart may heal slowly, but the mind is resilient and the body ever. Lechat hesitated and looked uncertainly in Celia's direction. She returned an almost imperceptible nod. Lechat looked back at the screen. "Shall we just say that we can prove conclusively not only that the Chironians were blameless, but that Stern himself arranged for the evidence to be falsified to suggest otherwise," he said. cotillion. He breaks out of a run into a fast walk, striving to quiet both his footfalls and his breathing. Taking its. Regardless of the inconsequential nature or the questionable validity of the triggering offense, an. Celia's eyes widened as many things suddenly became clearer. "You ..." Her voice caught somewhere at the back of her throat. "You knew this was going to happen- Howard, Phoenix, everything. You were manipulating all of them from the beginning, even Wellesley. You knew what would happen after the landing but you endorsed it." Sirocco tweaked his moustache pensively. "It's a problem knowing where to start. You know the kind of thing I'd like to get out and see the whole planet. The Barrier Range is as big as the Himalayas, there's Glace . . . a Grander Canyon out in Oriena . . . there's so much of it. But you have to do something useful, I suppose, as well as just go off enjoying yourself. But I think there's a lot of survey work waiting to be done yet. What I might try and do is get in touch with that geographical society that Swley was taking such an interest in before he and Driscoll pulled their vanishing act." Sirocco stared at his feet for a second as if trying to make up his mind whether or not to mention something. "And then of course there's Shirley," he added nonchalantly. convey that he was as confused about what Wellesley was doing as they were. Wellesley looked slowly around the hall one last time. "And now, by virtue of those same powers, I both tender and accept my resignation on the grounds of retirement. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you all. Thank you." And with that, he stepped down from the dais and walked away to sit down in an empty chair to one side. "Was your father like that too?" "This July third, just passed, made eighteen years." "Two of your officers are heading this way. I thought you ought to know." Colman said nothing, but instead allowed Swley to read the question in his head. Sure enough, Swley explained, "They don't make bombs or organize armies. It's too messy, and too many of the wrong people get hurt, they go for the grass roots. They start people thinking and asking questions they've never been taught how to ask before, and they'll take away the foundations piece by piece until the roof falls in." He paused and continued staring at the wall. "You're an engineer, and she runs part of a fusion complex. If you want out, you've got a place to go. That's what she's telling you." The dog peers at something in the oily Muck gloom under the big truck. Instead of growling again, he. having pretty much learned the repeating chorus and also each verse as he first heard it. Ghost riders in. seen not at all, but always reappearing, the two of them bonding more intimately the farther they travel, confidently as in the most remote and well-disguised bolt-hole. Neither geography nor distance is the key. front of the motel. In a minute, the laughter trailed away, and the waltz spun to a conclusion. The woman allowed her. "My department?" embroidered on the left breast, Leilani entered in a rattle and clatter of steely leg brace, though she had. Maybe ordinary drivers, maybe not. Geneva shook her miswired head. "I don't watch anything on TV except old movies." ten. One boy with Tinkertoy hips put together with monkey logic, thrown down into a lonely grave, Brow dripping, face slick, body clammy: Leilani reeked of sour sweat, no heavenly flower now. On her. comfort: "In misfortune lies the seed of future triumph." "Girl, don't say such things!" Geneva admonished. "Someone will believe you. We were playing. morning. the interstate before fleeing north into the wildland. The two Chironians frowned at each other. "Owns it?" Juanita repeated. Her voice suggested that the notion was a new one. "I'm not all that sure what you mean. The people who work here, I guess." eventually be her salvation. Or damnation. along the hallway to another door that stands ajar. folks, but it's a warm bath for others. You'll find work, sweetie." companies, however, decline to pay for expensive plastic-surgery when the patient also suffers serious. The shower wasn't as safe as the tub. Whenever she took off her leg brace, she was hesitant to risk. Bernard sat back and drew a long breath.

He was just about to say something when Jeeves interrupted to announce an incoming call on the Chironian net. It was Kath, calling from her place in Franklin. "I've heard from Casey," she said when Bernard accepted. "He's collected his package with Adam, and they're on their way home with it. I just thought you'd like to know." With the lights come screams, soul-searing even at a distance, not just shouts of alarm, but shrieks of tongue stuck to the roof of her mouth. "Hey, guys, Goldilocks has got a new girlfriend Take a look. Is there something you wanna tell us, Colman? I've always had my doubts about you." The two corporals guffawed loudly, and one of them lurched against a table behind. The man sitting at it excused himself and left hurriedly. In the background, the owner was coming round the counter, looking worried. Curtis doesn't want a refuge. He wants to find an escape hatch. And quickly. "I bet he did," Marie declared. As she drew closer, she noticed that the hatbox was perforated by two parallel, encircling lines of small. In response to this wild irrationality, with the potential for violence implicit in this woman's nuclear-hot. "I'm not that hung up about it," Colman insisted, not for the first time. "Maybe it is like some of the guys think, and maybe it's not. Anyhow, there can't be one left our age who isn't a great-grandmother already. Look at the statistics." With a cause, a crusade, a challenge, and a purpose-an empire to rebuild beyond the Earth and a world to conquer upon it--there were few of Fallows's age who didn't remember the intoxication of those times. And with the Mayflower H growing in the lunar sky as a symbol of it all, the dream of flying with the ship and of being a part of the crusade to secure Chiron against the Infidel became for many the ultimate ambition. The lessons of discipline and self-sacrifice that had been learned during the Lean Years served to bring the Mayflower H to completion two years ahead of its nearest rival, and so it came about that Bernard Fallows at the age of twenty-eight had manfully shaken his father's hand and kissed his tearful mother farewell before being blasted upward from a shuttle base in Arizona to join the lunar transporter that would bear him on the first stage of his crusade to carry the American New Order to the stars. as though this were a manic ghost that had no patience for the eerie but tedious pace of a traditional. "You're getting it all wrong," Nanook said, smiling faintly to be reassuring. "It's not So bad. Things like that don't happen all the time--in fact, hardly ever. Just sometimes." COLMAN LEFT THE Fallows house shortly before midnight with Bernard, Lechat, and Celia. There were more people about in Phoenix than he had anticipated, and the party reached the post that Sirocco had specified without need for elaborate precautions. In addition to the sharp crack of gunfire, Curtis hears lead slugs ricocheting with a whistle or with a. In the dark, as the big Windchaser begins to move, Curtis sits on the bed and feels along the base of it. are tall, made taller by their Stetsons. Both wear their blue jeans tucked into their cowboy boots. Noah drew comfort from the beer. on his helmet, and took his M32 from the rack. It was approaching 0200, time to relieve the sentry detail guarding Kalens's residence a quarter of a mile away. "Well, it's time we were leaving," he said to Sirocco, who was lounging with his feet up on the desk, and Colman, sprawled in a corner, both red-eyed after a long and exhausting day. "I'll try to shout quietly. I'd hate to be disturbing His Honor in his sleep." children, gave them the freedom of her indifference; yet she was sensitive to any indication that her. A serving robot arrived at the table and commenced dispensing its load, at the same time chatting about the quality of the steaks and the choices for dessert. Bernard turned to stare out of the window and think. A knot of figures, all dad in olive drab and standing not far from the main entrance in the parking area below, caught his eye and caused him to stiffen in surprise. They were wearing uniforms--U.S. Army uniforms. Some kind of delegation from the Mayflower II was visiting the place, he concluded. The thought immediately occurred to him that they could be the visitors whom Kath had gone to talk to. After a few seconds he turned his face back again and asked Nanook, "Do you know anything about other people from the ship being here today?" "Very well," he said. "Stanislau has had his encore. Now let's get back to business..He turned his head back to look at her. "Yes?" ease out of his way, facilitate his passage, use their bodies to further block the cowboys' view of him, and. The hunter has a handsome, potentially genial face. If he were to smile instead of glower, put on a mask. "I mean the bag. It's an airsickness bag." His grin faded. "What? you never saw one before?" Fingertips steepled toward the bridge of her nose, Geneva half hid her face in a prayer clasp, as if the. "Okay. Get back here when you're through." "I've served over seven years, which puts me on a quarter-to-quarter renewal option. Therefore I owe you a maximum of three months. Okay, I'm giving it. But I also have more than three months of accumulated leave from the voyage, which I'm commencing right now. You'll have that confirmed in writing within five minutes." He stood up and walked to the door. "And you can tell Accounting not to worry too much about the back pay," he said, looking back over his shoulder. "I won't be needing it." "I guess so. So what was the rest of it?" "Very wise, Sergeant. But then, some of them can be very discreet. Theoretically speaking, that would put them in a rather different category, don't you think?" realized that sympathy, as this girl had shown it to her, did not have to contain any element of

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