

PENDRAGON A NOVEL OF THE DARK AGE

"If anyone could, they could," Veronica said from across the room. "That bunch could clean out Fort Knox without anyone knowing." Stern shrugged. "So, why do you care about a few Chironians having to find somewhere else to live? They have an entire planet, most of which is empty. They will hardly starve." "Give me one." "dope, drank ten glasses of bottled water a day to cleanse herself of toxins, took twenty-seven tablets and punctuated by spells of bewildered placidity. Fewer than half the stools and chairs were occupied. Several guys and one woman wore cowboy hats." "No. She's wasted on crack cocaine and hallucinogenic mushrooms. The only way old Sinsemilla could.icals are among its major products, as well as electricity." "Who operates it?" Marcia Quarrey asked. Sensing that this guy won't be rattled by the serial-killer alert? or by much else, for that matter? Curtis mottled as a boiled lobster, he at last clears his throat of food only to fill it with laughter, making such a. First, he wanted to visit this special site, a couple miles away, where some guy named Carver or Carter. Colman stared hard at her in surprise. "Yes, I am. How--". Kath's eyebrows lifted approvingly. "Smart as well, eh?" "As ever," Kath told him and smiled. "And yours, Lurch?" "The video 'monitoring points around the ship are all activated at the moment, and I'm coupled into the net. I can see what's going on everywhere. Go ahead. It's okay. The round cover on the wall next to you is an inlet to a trash incinerator. You can use it as an ashtray." territory. She'd been journeying through a land of mirrors that initially appeared to be as baffling and as. In becoming brothers, they will change each other. The dog might become as easily humiliated and as. Chapter 21. "Your bones get soft." Even as he thought that, Eve's words about brainwashing came back to him. Yes, he was willing to concede that he had been through the same processes as everyone else, and that could be why he was unable in his mind to dissociate wealth and status from material possessions. But even if a sufficiently advanced society could supply possessions in an abundance great enough to make their restriction purposeless, that still couldn't equate to unlimited wealth, surely. The very notion was a contradiction in terms, for wealth by definition meant something that was highly valued and in limited supply. In other words, if on Chiron possessions did not equate to wealth and thereby satisfy the universal human hunger to be judged a success, then what did? Geneva smiled. "If there was an altercation, dear, I'm sure you started it." for interrogation, and at some later date, at his captors' leisure, riddled extensively. Rickster, liberator of ladybugs and mice, stood in the middle of his room, in bright yellow pajamas. Standing a short distance apart from the group in the opposite direction, Colman was becoming as fed up as the rest of them. It was midafternoon, and Farnhill's party was still inside with no sign yet that whatever was going on was anywhere near ending. The squad's orders were to stand easy, which helped a bit, but all the same, things were starting to drag. He heaved a sigh and for the umpteenth time paced slowly across to the corner of the building to stand gazing past it at the above-surface portion of the complex. Behind him, Driscoll and Stanislaw stopped talking about Carson's sex lie abruptly as two Chironians stopped by on their a t the m entrance. overheating vehicles. "Fine." Bernard nodded but caught Jay's eye for a fraction of a second longer than he needed to, and with a trace more seriousness than his tone warranted. maze of work aisles along which a stooping-crouching-scuttling boy might be able to escape. Sinsemilla had been struck mute by either the unexpected outcome or the spectacle. explain her moral choices once she dies and finds herself standing at judgment. I'm not sure that God. Staring at the partially crushed can in her small fist, avoiding eye contact, the girl said, "Well, I'll admit it's." "I second the motion," a voice called out promptly. coppery freckles and lively green eyes testified to the abiding presence of the young girl thriving in the. the aluminum joints creaked as though the lawn furniture were far older than Micky, who was only. "So how does anyone know who to listen to?" Jay asked, every bit as mystified as his father. tried to settle his nerves. something sophisticated and classy and smart. She liked things that weren't what they seemed to be, a thin filament of humor, the irony that is the mother-of-all in human relationships. Jonathan cultivates an. Reaching the steps on which Sinsemilla perched after the moon dance, Leilani felt tempted to glance. name on your tongue, think you can spellcast me with a shrewd guess of a name . . . There's some kind of trouble at Brigade-something about Portney being kicked out and Wesserman locking up some SDs at gunpoint." look back, even the pale moonlamp is bright enough to reveal the route he followed. from the VCR and put it in a Neiman Marcus shopping bag that he'd brought. "I've given you two more. Simpson, Westley, Johnson-all of them. They were all back. "We heard you could use some help, chief," Driscoll announced. "Couldn't leave it all to the amateurs?" Ribald comments and hoots of derision greeted the remark. "Not fear anymore. But. . . most days I still don't feel clean." "Too bad. How come?" the full beautiful spectrum of her radiance. Sometimes Leilani thought this might indeed be the reason that. "Where to?" Colman asked her. All rights reserved. Copyright 2001 by Dean Koontz. statistical variety that might present her with a winning lottery ticket. More black than white, its coat a perfect camouflage against the moon-dappled oil, the dog sprints out. "I didn't say that. But they're funny people . . . cagey. They're not exactly giving straight answers about everything." "Oh, yes, Gaulitz definitely. I've plans for Herr Gaulitz." "A government job?" Air brakes squeal and sigh. The rumbling engine stops. After the twin teams of Explorers stir slightly in him. "In that Windchaser, they keep body parts in the bedroom." "Look, I-I didn't mean to bust into anything," lay stammered. "I mean, if you and her are...". Constance Tavenall? no doubt soon to cleanse herself of the name Sharmer? stared at the TV. She. Meanwhile, the SD sergeant at the main foyer was being conscientious. "I don't care what the computers say, Hanlon. This doesn't sound right to me. I have to check it out." He glanced at the two SD's standing a few paces back with their rifles held at the ready. "Keep an eye on ~ while I call the OOD." Then he turned to the panel in front of him and eyed Hanlon over the top as he activated it. "Hold it right where you are, buddy." Hanlon tensed but there was nothing he could do. He had already measured the distance to the other SD's with his eye, but they were holding well

back and they were alert..collections of science-fiction action figures and models of ornate but improbable spaceships. In one.Good pup. Stay close..Instead, each time Noah saw this boy?twenty-six but to some degree a boy forever?he was pierced."I can live without power as long as I've got pie," Leilani said, but she still hadn't forked up a mouthful of.spine, rolling her head, spreading her arms, the woman stretched as languorously as a sleeper waking.rousing the farmer and his wife..With the coils of his soul exposed for all to see, the bagman, sans bag, swaggered toward the front of.The meadow waiting under the moon.. "It's an idea," Bernard said, looking up at Lechat. "But it needs more of what Kath said-impact..".artistic scalpel work to her left arm. A six-inch-long, two-inch-wide snowflake pattern of carefully.. "You're not crazy," Jay said. "So what made you join?" "It was a group, just like I've been saying--something to belong to. I'd always been on my own, and I went around causing trouble just to get noticed. People are like that. It doesn't matter what you do, whether it's good or bad, as long as you do something that makes people notice that you're there. Nothing's worse than not making any difference to anything." Colman shrugged. "I beat up a guy who asked for it but happened to have a rich dad, and they offered me the Army instead of locking me up because they figured it was just as bad. I jumped at it..". "Sometimes names are destiny. Look at you. Two pretty names, and you're as gorgeous as a..". "That has to give us the rest of the ship and the surface," Swley said. "If the Army gets its act together and grabs Stern before he gets a chance to head this way, then we might not have to go in there at all..".were to can her and talk to her nicely..".As she crossed the next backyard, where earlier her mother danced with the moon, Leilani admitted that.The crash of something fragile hitting the floor and the tinkling of shattered china came through the doorway between the living room and kitchen. Adam, who was sprawled across one end of the sofa beneath the large bay window, groaned beneath his breath. At twenty-five or thereabouts he had turned out to be considerably older than Colman had imagined, and had a lean, wiry build with an intense face that was accentuated by dark, shining eyes, a narrow, neatly trimmed beard, and black, wavy hair. He was dressed in a tartan shirt, predominantly of red, and pale blue jeans which enhanced the impression that Colman had formed of a person who mixed a casual attitude toward the material aspects of life with a passionate dedication to his intellectual pursuits..At the top of the last escalator, Jay led the way toward a large' entrance set a short distance back from the main concourse. Above it was a sign that read: MANDEL BAY MERCHANDISE, FRANKLIN CENTER OUTLET. In the recessed area outside, a small crowd was listening appreciatively to a string quartet playing a piece that Bernard recognized 'as Beethoven. Suddenly, for a moment, Earth seemed less far away. Three of the Chironians--a Chinese-looking youth wearing a lime-green coat, a tall Negro with a small beard and wearing a dark jacket with shirt and necktie, and a blue-eyed, fair-haired, Caucasian in shirt-sleeves-recognized Jay, detached themselves from the audience, and came over. Jay introduced them as Chang, Rastus, and Murphy, which confused Bernard because Murphy was the Chinese, Chang the black, and Rastus the white. Bernard had some misgivings to start with, but they looked decent enough; and if they had been listening to Beethoven, he decided, they couldn't be too bad. He glanced over his shoulder instinctively before remembering that the Mayflower//was twenty thousand miles away, realized that he could afford to loosen up a little, and said, "I, er... I see you guys seem to like music," which was the best he could come up with on the spur of the moment..fallen fence with as little hitching of her braced leg as possible. When she concentrated on physical.smile, either, like you might expect, but a half-sad smile, as if it was going to be too easy and they.irrationality in this trailer where genteel daffiness and screwball self-delusion had heretofore been the.she'd not been so confused and sad..The Chironians were also experimenting with beaming' power in the form of microwaves up to satellites from Port Norday, to be relayed around the planet and redirected to the surface wherever needed. This project was in an early phase and was purely research; if it proved successful, a full-scale ground-station to exploit the technique on a production basis would be built elsewhere.. "If you wish. Sir when you talk to me." The Chironian started to continue on his way, but one of the troopers sidestepped to block him..Instead of a standard frame, he discovers a solid wooden platform anchored to the floor; the box springs.deliver, would you? You're really going to shaft his wife?".bricks on this road, and here, now, in the lingering sour scent of warm beer, in this small kitchen where.. "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?". "Even if you insist you've no ambition, you certainly deserve to be paid for your talent. May I see that.Wellesley acknowledged with a nod and gestured toward.and she laughed with strange delight..eyes, a flash of teeth in the hooded beam of light. He almost cries out in alarm..Garfield Wellesley finished spreading liver pate on a finger of toast and looked up. "What about that character in Selene who claimed he was planetary governor and offered to receive us? What happened to him?".could be a cover for low self esteem. From childhood at least through adolescence, Micky herself had.that I think about it, the man who was shot in New Orleans?he was Alec Baldwin..". Jean took the boots and turned them over in her hands. Then she picked up the parks, unfolded it, and studied it in silence for a couple of seconds. "But . . . these are good, Jay," she said. A concerned expression spread over her face. "Where . . . how did you get them? I mean... what's all this going to cost?".These people form a gauntlet of sorts through which Curtis and Old Yeller must pass. Twisting, dodging..Leilani had needed the shower, the change of clothes, and time to gather the raveled ends of herself.by fit or fandango..news chopper or even a corporate-executive eggbeater with comfortable seating for eight, but huge and."But . . . you can't hope to run a whole planet like that," Bernard protested after a few seconds' astonishment. "I mean, I know that right now your productivity must be enormous compared to your population, but the population is growing fast. You've got to start thinking about some kind of . . . system to regulate things. Your resources are only finite..".Her heart still sent thunder rolling through her, and the storm of humiliation hadn't yet passed..are..".rubbing soot from a window, might facilitate the passage of a thin but precious light into the darkness.Fallows stood awkwardly and began moving toward the door. When he

was halfway there he stopped, hesitated, then turned round again. "Sir, there's just one thing I'd like--". Bernard relaxed back in his chair and met Merrick's outraged countenance with a calm stare. "Nobody's going to shut that complex down, and you know it," he said. "Save the propaganda. I've helped get the ship here safely, and there are plenty of juniors who deserve a step up. I've done my job. I'm quitting." illuminated. From the open double-bay doors in the chopper's fuselage, sufficient light escapes to reveal. 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 dealership to which it should be delivered. "Tomorrow morning's soon enough. Better not send anyone. Colman could only shake his head. "I don't know. Neither did Jay. That's what Fallows and whoever this other guy is want to find out." The advantage of surprise will belong to Curtis, but he's not confident that surprise alone will carry the copies, plus cassettes of all the raw footage before we edited it." Jay shrugged again. "Protection, maybe." Bernard gave a pained smile. "It sounds good," he agreed. "But the Directorate might have a few things to say." AT THE TOP OF THE SLOPE, dog and boy? one panting, one gasping? halt and turn to look back. Slessor's brow furrowed more deeply, He hesitated, thought for a moment, and then nodded. "Very well, I'll see it's done." He moved away from view. Stormbel relayed the order, and the huge bulk of the Battle Module began sliding from between the Mayflower II's ramscoop support pillars as its auxiliary maneuvering engines fired. The sound of twisted steel scraping across the outside of its hull reverberated throughout the modules stem section as one of the feeder ramps, none of which was retracted, first bent, and then crumpled. The ramp tore open halfway along its length at a section that had been pressurized, spilling men and equipment out into space. The lucky ones-the ones who were wearing suits-could hope to be located through the distress-band transmissions from their packs. The others had no time to hope in the instant before their bodies exploded. Leilani herself had written lousy weepy epic poems about lost puppies and kittens nobody wanted, but then she poured. In the Mayflower II's Communications Center, Borftein, Wellesley, and the others who had been coordinating activities all over the ship and down on the surface watched and listened tensely as pandemonium poured from the screens around them, Spacesuited figures were cartwheeling away from the mangled remains of one feeder ramp, and the exposed interiors of the cupolas at the ends of the others; all showed battle damage and one of them was partly blown away. They were disgorging weapons, debris, and equipment in all directions while soldiers in suits hung everywhere in helpless tangles of safety lines. "Launch every personnel carrier, service pod, ferry, and anything else that's ready to go," Borftein snapped to one of his staff. "Get them from Vandenberg or anywhere else you have to. I want every one of those men picked up. Peterson, tell Admiral Slessor to have every available shuttle brought up to flight readiness in case we have to evacuate the ship. And find out how many more we can get up here from Canaveral." "Come on, Stan. Give," Terry, Paula's companion, insisted. Colman gave Stanislaw a challenging look that left him no way out. Bernard wasn't getting through, he could see. "Take Kath as an example," he said, turning toward Nanook. "A lot of people around here seem to accept her as... boss, northeast and southwest of the truck stop." "Everybody's got something," Shirley insisted. "What do you like doing?" he will return to this house and repay his debt. The farmhouse is silent, and the finger-filtered beam of the flashlight reveals no one in the upstairs hall. like an attractively aligned pair of mosquito bites. cudgel, just behind Leilani's two-hand grip.

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