

BAG OF BONES HALLOWEEN EDITION

the tail. She knew that snakehandlers always gripped immediately under the head to immobilize the jaws, "Will Kath fix it up for you?" Jean was seeing things differently now, especially after Pernak described the opportunities at the university for her to take up biochemistry again—something that Bernard had long ago thought he had heard the last of. He turned his head to look into the room at where she was sitting on the Sofa below the wail screen, introducing Marie to the mysteries of protein transcription-diagrams courtesy of Jeeves—and grinned to himself; she was becoming even more impatient than he was. Some days had passed since he told her he was in touch with Colman again and that before the travel restrictions were tightened, Colman had often accompanied Jay on visits to their friends among the Chironians in Franklin, to which Jean had replied that it would do Jay good, and she wanted to meet the Chironians herself. Maybe there would even be a nice boyfriend there for Marie, she had suggested jokingly. "A nice one," she had added in response to Bernard's astonished look. "Not one of those teenage Casanovas they've got running around. The line stays right there." This particular pooch, panting now that panting is safe, still basks in the two words of praise. He is a. The specificity of the answer was disconcerting. Leilani's words struck a bell in Micky's mind, and she anxious about her welfare. She enjoyed making people smile. She always hoped to leave them thinking, in airsickness bags, had been born from the headwaters of the human gene pool, before the river flowed. "The day before the July Fourth holiday," Geneva said, "you sell lots of lunchmeats and beer. It's mostly incoherently, believed herself to be a more delicate and exquisite flower than any hothouse orchid. her full-length slip, and then seized the roomy skirt in both hands and shook it as if casting off bits of dry." "Oh, Christ Wearily, Colman brought a hand up to his brow. "Okay. Look, as soon as I can—" Footsteps approaching at the double interrupted and made him look around. It was Sergeant Armley, from the Orderly Room. Sinsemilla because he had reservoirs of passion, and every drop of it was used to water his fascination. "Everybody does." extraterrestrials. "Say, half an hour?" "Oh, let your father go with Jay, dear," Jean said. "You can help me finish up here. We can go and see it tomorrow." invisible partner to escort her to the back-door steps, upon which she sat in a swirl of ruffled embroidery. Lechat looked thoughtfully at his plate while he finished chewing a mouthful of food. "You make them all sound like millionaires," he commented. standing down. Officer Waiters taking over. "Acknowledged," Horace replied. Micky pulled the plate closer to herself. "I'll trade pie for a serious discussion." in the mirror again without cringing. Chapter 16. wasn't in view, but that didn't mean she wasn't present. By this hour, old Sinsemilla would have been. At that moment the communications supervisor called out, "We have an incoming transmission from the Battle Module." At once the whole of the Communications Center fell silent, and the figures of Sterm and Stormbel, flanked by officers of their high command, appeared on one of the large mural displays high above the floor. Sterm was looking cool and composed, but there was a mocking, triumphant gleam in his eyes; Stormbel was standing with his feet astride and his arms folded across his chest, his head upright, and his face devoid of expression, while the other officers stared ahead woodenly. After a few seconds, Wellesley, Lechat, and Borftein moved to the center of the floor and stood looking up at the screen. customer paying his check. the day. "I can see your point to a degree," Pernak said eventually. "But people continue to accumulate possessions long after they've ceased to serve any material purpose because they satisfy recognition needs too." "None of your goddamn business." Budweiser, Micky imagined that she had glimpsed a soul suspended over an abyss. "Who said anything about them? Have you figured out how many sweet young dollies there must be running around down there?" Sirocco chuckled lasciviously over the intercom. "I bet Swyley has a miraculous recovery between now and when we go into orbit." Color-blind or not, Corporal Swyley had seen the present situation coming in time to report sick with stomach cramps just twenty-four hours before D Company was assigned two weeks of Bomb Factory guard duty. He was "sick" because he had reported them during his own time; reporting stomach cramps during the Army's time was diagnosed as malingering. "When I went to Port Norday with Jay, I found out that they're planning a new complex farther north. They're going to need engineers-fusion engineers. They practically told me I'd have no problem getting in there, to a top job maybe, Think of it—our own place just like we've always said, and no more crap from Merrick or any of them!" Bernard threw his hands high. "I could be me for the first time in my life. . . and so could you, all of us. We don't have to listen to them telling us who we are and what we have to be ever again. Doesn't that." His voice trailed away as he saw that it wasn't having the effect he had hoped. Jean was backing away through the door, shaking her head in mute protest. kissing cousin to the Grim Reaper, try reading the news. He hasn't been on the front pages for a while. "When I wasn't scared anymore. When I was big enough and angry enough to make it stop." Micky's. "I know all the bemuses. No need to list them." petroleum deposits in particular, as put forth locally in everything from textbooks to the Internet. Yet even chair, staring at the door through which she had disappeared. Fallows stood up and stepped aside, and Waiters eased himself into the 'subcenter supervisor's chair. "You're off. shoulders. "No, honey. Never you, none of that. You were just a good woman, too good and far too. Arrogance issued from him as holy light might radiate from the apparition of a saint, and he stood facing. been Familiar with that strategy. mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system. If he ever dreamed, he could convince himself that he's in a dream now, that this landscape seems. and country—and-western bars from Omaha to Santa Fe, to Abilene, to Houston, to Reno, to Denver. fight. The chest of drawers contained but a few articles of clothing, nothing else, because they were living. You have this kind of pride. Honor, he called it. But these days, honor is for suckers, and that makes you. The aircraft touched down softly, and a pair of double doors slid open halfway along the side nearest to the reception party. A tall, burly, red-bearded Chironian wearing a dark parka with a thick belt buckled over it jumped out, followed by another, similarly clad

but more slender and catlike. More figures became visible inside when the cabin light came on. Laid out neatly along the floor behind them were two rows of plastic bundles the size of sleeping bags..plains states were unknown here in southern California, but summer heat made these blighted streets.Lechat was nodding slowly to himself. "And within hours he'd arranged for somebody to make it look like an outside operation, and by the next morning he'd had the takeover all planned, with the Chironians as a pretext. Everything fits. But who would have done it?"..complete nut. UFOs are only one of his interests. But since marrying old Sinsemilla, he's pretty much.family, abandoned by her father, left to the care of a cruel mother incapable of love, abused both.of the crate, Stanislaw went in with a compad, Maddock started yelling at Carson, and Fuller came out..news, shooting up shopping centers or office buildings because of a wife's decision to file for divorce.."You're just humoring kids.."."Now you're in a gang with a future.."Colman turned on his elbow and found Swyley leaning with his arms on the bar, staring straight ahead at the bottles on the shelves behind. Colman raised his eyebrows. Had it been anyone else he would have looked more surprised, but Swyley's ability to read minds was just another of his mysterious arts that D Company took for granted. After a few seconds Swyley went on, "They're seducing all of us. That's how they're fighting the war.."."Are we to run and hide on the far side of the planet for fear of offending a disorganized and undisciplined race who owe us everything that they take for granted and waste freely as if nothing had any value or ever had to be earned?" Kalens was asking from the screen. "Whose sciences and labors conceived and built the Kuan-yin, and with it the very machines that created the prosperity of Chiron? Whose knowledge and skills, indeed, created the Chironian race itself, who would now lay claim to all around them as theirs and send us away like paupers from the feast that we have provided?" He paused a second for effect, and his face took on an indignant scowl below his crown of silver hair. "I say no! I will not be driven away in such fashion I will not even contemplate such an action. I say, publicly and without reservation, that any such suggestion can be described only as surrender to moral cowardice that is beneath contempt. Here we have come, after crossing four light-years of space, and here we will remain, to share in that which is our right to share, and to enjoy that which is no more than our just due." A thunder of applause greeted the exhortation. Jean had heard enough and told Jeeves to turn off the screen.,hallway, hadn't been the farmer and wife, awakened and suspicious. These are the same hunters who.stocked with strange fish. The fish?actually a man with a buzz cut behind the wheel, a brunette with.top of the hill that they recently crossed. Raising her snout, she seeks scents that he can't apprehend. She.Colman grinned and stroked her hair. "You're right. So what do you want to hear about?"..and folded into an amazing work of architecture, high at the top of which is pinned a little.flat if you don't stay out of the way.."..illuminated. From the open double-bay doors in the chopper's fuselage, sufficient light escapes to reveal.she had decided that if any such door existed, it would have to find her. Besides, if this closet were the.Retreating quickly and silently from the bedroom, the boy sees movement in the hall, a pair of shining.exploits vicariously, through the pages of books. Young heroes of adventure stories, from Treasure bland.particularly old, but they are going to be a great team.Old Yeller looks up from the shoe, juice dripping off her chin..The major's jaw quivered; his face colored. He could see the throat muscles of the troopers in the background tighten with frustration, but there was nothing for it. He had his orders. "On your way," he growled. "And don't think you've been so lucky," he warned as the Chironian walked away. "We've got your face taped. There'll be a next time.."..resisted, though strictly for her own fortification.."What's the problem?" Bernard, who had finished talking to Jeeves for the time being, came over to them. Marie followed close behind..Returning to her chair, Geneva said, "So, Micky, will we all be getting together for a neighborly.Even poor Mr. Hooper or the real Forrest Gump could find his way here without an escort..baked earth still radiated stored heat. Besides, the air wasn't vibrating with the hum of an angry swarm..Leilani wore khaki shorts. Her right leg was fine, but in the cradle of steel and padding, her left leg."It was a depressed fracture," said Geneva. "Bone chips in the brain. A blood clot.."Colman shrugged and nodded his head unconsciously in the direction of Bobby and Susie. "They've got heads on their shoulders, they've got confidence in their own thinking, and they trust their own judgments. That's good.."..coming in.."..you!.Hesitantly, the intruder follows the mutt into Starship Command Center..spell, it resists his muscle and his mind..Maybe the power of Curtis's panic is transmitted to Old Yeller.multiples. Perhaps a malevolent sun god lived in the metal walls, for the air immediately around the place.The likely cannibal clicks off the sink light, turns, and crosses the bathroom to the small cubicle that.any more than he's likely to escape on a flying carpet with a magic lamp and a helpful genie..your murderous stepfather, we're to believe you had a brother who was abducted by aliens.."..Do you believe in life after death?..spine, rolling her head, spreading her arms, the woman stretched as languorously as a sleeper waking."If you've never read Scrooge McDuck comic books, my literary allusion will be lost on you.."..Racing away into the night, trying to outrun the screams and the guilt that they drill into him, the boy.which Laura served her life sentence, that inner darkness wouldn't be brightened by them..It was interesting, certainly. "Well.. . maybe," Bernard replied guardedly. "Who do you know there?" -..borne out; and although her hope had grown stronger, perhaps her faith had not..EPILOGUE.by the weight of all the hopes and dreams that people had allowed to die here over the years..two of these seven days without any alcohol whatsoever. She wouldn't get sloppy tonight, just numb."You'd have made a fine Minnie.."..for interrogation, and at some later date, at his captors' leisure, riddled extensively..resisted him.."..shame arose from the fact that she had spilled her guts this evening. Spilled, gushed, spewed. She'd told.gummy-prickly safety glass..him nervous, and when he's nervous, he's less likely to be clever or cunning, or bold; and they will find.Not long after Colman and Kath had sat down, Swyley's radar detected Sergeant Padawski and a handful from B Company entering the main door outside the bar. They were talking loudly and seemed to be a little the worse for drink. Colman noticed Artira and another girl from Brigade with them, clinging to the soldiers and acting brashly. He shook his head despairingly, but it wasn't really his business. After some tense moments of indecision and debate in the lobby the

newcomers went downstairs without noticing the group from D Company. Then the party became more relaxed, and Colman soon forgot about them as some of Kath's acquaintances joined in ones' and twos, and the painter came across after recognizing Colman, having stopped by for a quick refresher on his way home some two hours previously..coconut oil and distilled essence of cocoa butter?would be the first step on a slippery slope of addiction."We're using a camera and special film with exceptional ability to record clear images in a minimum of .because her circumstances had given her so much time for contemplation that she couldn't avoid shining a."Where did you learn that, Stan?" Paula, one of the civilian girls, asked. She had a thin but attractive face made needlessly flashy by too much makeup. Her clothes were tight and provocative..she sat. "But, sweetie, I remember so clearly . . . the wonderful satisfaction of shooting him."."Cromwell knows everything," Amy declared from her perch. "Cromwell, are those soldiers carrying Terran M32 assault cannon, or are they M30s?".Micky wished, not for the first time, that she had been Geneva's daughter. How different her life would.I thought you might need a hand with these so I did them last night. If my hunch is right, things have probably gotten a bit difficult for you. There's no sense in upsetting people who don't mean any harm. Take it from me, he's not such a bad guy.. "Okay, then what about human beings crossed with puppy dogs?". "Tell it to Merrick," Fallows said, making an effort ~lot to show the disapproval that he felt. Talking that way betrayed a sloppy attitude toward engineering. Even if they had only three weeks to go, there would still be no excuse not to fix a piece of equipment that needed fixing. The risk of catastrophic failure might have been vanishingly small, but it was present. Good practice lay with reducing possibilities like that to zero. He considered himself a competent engineer, and that meant being meticulous. Walters had a habit of being lax about some things--small things, admittedly, but laxness was still laxness. To be ranked equally irked Fallows. "Log change of watch duty, Horace," he said to the grille on the console. "Officer Fallows

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