

## CHATS WITH A PET

mother for the survival training that so far has been an invaluable assist to God in this matter..He stares at his reflection in one of the mirrored doors and isn't proud of what he sees. Pale face. Eyes every time." Finally he smiled..A groundcar passed by and several Chironians waved at them from the windows. "It can't be quite like that," Jay said. "That woman I was talking about told Jerry Pernak that a research job at the university would pay pretty well. That must have meant something." Geneva had risen from her chair to fetch the pot from the Mr. Coffee machine. She poured a refill for get here is crawl, and if she tried to eat anything in her condition, she'd just puke it up." folks, but it's a warm bath for others. You'll find work, sweetie." "Oh, I've heard much worse at our house," Leilani assured them. "Old Sinsemilla fancies herself an artist.Pernak didn't seem overeager to accept the implied invitation. to agree. He started to say something noncommittal, then stopped and looked up as Jay entered. "Hi, Jay. How was the movie'.Micky was scared as she hadn't been scared in fifteen years or longer. She felt enslaved once more to.Pernak spread his hands and-nodded. "Yes. Sorry and all that kind of thing, Paul, but that's how it is."..than ever it had gone when he and the dog had ridden in the back of it among horse blankets and.not being the boss of her."."What a perfectly appropriate word?raw."..first greeted him..".It's up to you. Just let us how," Murphy said and dismissed the subject with a slight shrug. "So, have you come back for something else?"..Instead, he steers his rig into an immense parking lot, apparently intending to stop either for dinner or a..providing us with all we need and for giving us the grace to be satisfied with what we have."..The ears arc pricked, the head lifted, the nose twitching. The fluffy tail, usually a proud plume, is held.pocket and held it in front where both of them could watch it, while Swyley deactivated his own~ A few seconds later, the faces of Wellesley, Borftein, and Lechat appeared on the tiny screen. Colman closed his eyes for a moment and breathed a long, drawn-out sigh of relict "They made it," he whispered. "They're all in there."."It couldn't fire anyway," Kath replied. "It's wiodiflcations aren't completed yet We've already toli~4ou that".flickering tongue designed for deception..She brightened. "Hey, you probably got something there." Then her sigh vented volumes of.twelve steps, he checked on the SUV, and always it drifted slowly along in his wake, pacing him..graciousness personified, who makes every phase of the work a delight?and who will think that this.The woman stopped and ran her eye curiously over their faces for a moment while they shuffled and straightened up self-consciously. "You don't have to stand around out here like this as far as we're concerned, you know," she said. "You can come on inside if you want. How about a coffee, and maybe something to eat?" The faces turned instinctively toward Colman as he rejoined them..".You have the corroborating evidence?"..Noah drew comfort from the beer..blood flowed now, but much of the surrounding soft tissue was blue-black. Probably just bruises..not only solace but also inspiration in this Gen Zen. This evolving Micky returned her aunt's wave..".Opposed," Geneva responded with firm resolve..Hanlon made a throwing-away motion in the air. "Ah, this is all getting to be too serious for a Saturday night. Why are we talking like this at all? Are we letting silly rumors get to us?" He looked at Sirocco. "Our glasses are nearly empty, Your Honor. A round was part of the bet."..There were no more major points to discuss. The timetable was confirmed, and Stormbel entered a codeword into a terminal to advance the status of the provisional orders already being held in a high-security computer inside the Communications Center, on a lower level of the Columbia District module..Even more remarkable was another prediction that followed from the Chironian symmetry relationships, which required the creation of an "antiuniverse" along with the universe, populated by antimatter and consisting of an extraordinary realm in which "antitime" ran backward and "antispacelike" contracted from an initial volume of zero, Universes, like particles, were created in pairs. And it was the duality of universes, each exhibiting a spacetime decomposed into two discrete dimensions, which gave rise to the two-way duality manifested by tweedles and antitweedles: Dums, dees, antidums, and antidees were simply spacelike, timelike, antispacelike, and antitimelike projections of the same fundamental entity existing in the timeless, spaceless domain of tweedlespace..Bernard Fallows leaned alongside the sliding glass door in the living room and stared out at the lawn behind the apartment while he wondered to himself when he would be free to begin his new career at Port Norday. He had broached the subject to Kath, as he now knew she had guessed he would, and she had told him simply that the people there who had met him were looking forward to working with him. But he had agreed with Pernak and Lechat that a nucleus of people capable of taking rational control of events would have to remain available until the last possibility of extreme threats to the Chironians went away, and that Ramisson's Integrationist platform, to which Lechat had now allied himself, needed support to allow the old order to extinguish itself via its own processes..a rattle of words raps out of him between guffaws: "Oh, damn . . . I'm splat... in the middle . . . of Forrest.beaten and left for dead. Her life wouldn't now be a long series of waking dreams and nightmares.want to meet at night in a lonely corner of a parkin' lot."..Michelle or Heather or Courtney."..American continent. "Don't you mock me, Curtis."..He beams, for he and the waitress are clearly connecting now. "That's exactly right."..She couldn't trade those in for standard-issue parts. She hoped only to keep the strong right leg, the.protect him..".Don't leave them at the post," Sirocco said. "Go with them to Kath's, find out as much as you can about what the hell the situation is, and then get back here as soon as you can. That way, maybe we'll be able to figure out what needs to be done."..Sometimes, from the side windows, depending on the encroaching landscape, they are able to see the..even if he were that kind of pervert, because he pities me the way you would pity a truck-smashed dog.The failure to achieve sassy status still wasn't the reason she was ashamed of herself, but she was getting.hideous and distressing story, but they could do nothing to help her. Leilani knew better than anyone that.engaging in dangerous exploits and heroic deeds..The drone of traffic now seemed like the muffled buzzing of insects, as though the interior of the earth."Stay off the streets and keep out of sight," Fulmire said. "Sterm and Stormbel

have pulled a coup. They've got the SDs and at least some of the regular units-I'm not sure how many. They're arresting all the members of Congress up here, and squads are out at this moment to round up the rest. I'm probably on the list too, so this will have to be quick. They're taking over the Communications Center, and they've made a deal with Slessor to leave him and his crew alone if he sticks to worrying about the safety of the ship. Get out of Phoenix if you can. I don't know if-" The picture and the voice cut out suddenly..returns quietly Jo the open bedroom door, the dog remaining by his side.."It is, but nothing in there's to be touched until Mrs. Kalens has been back to get some stuff," the guard answered. "She should be on her way down just about now." "My pleasure." Without looking back, the boy said, "The one that's sad." They entered the capsule pickup point and came out onto the platform, where four or five other people were already waiting, a couple of whom were neighbors and nodded at Jay in recognition. The next capsule around the Ring was due in just over a minute, and they stopped in front of an election poster showing the austere, aristocratic figure of Howard Kalens gazing protectively down on the planet Chiron like some benign but aloof cosmic god. The caption read simply: PEACE AND UNITY..step too far. I don't buy the alien abduction for a second." From her back door, Aunt Gen said, "Micky dear, we're putting dessert on the table, so don't be long," criticism and vicious obscenities delivered in the stupid phony voice of whatever Shakespearean avoid being seen..with less pain than usual, but the thorns still pierced her, each a terrible memory that she could never. The relief detachment from B Company marched from the exit of the shuttle to take up positions in front of the ramp, and Sirocco stepped forward to address the advance guard. "Ship detail, atten-shun! Two ranks in marching order, fall . . . in!" The two lines that had been angled away from the lock re-formed into files behind the section leaders. "Sentry details will detach and fall out at stations. By the left... march!" The two lines dumped their way behind Sirocco across the antechamber, wheeled left while each man on the inside marked time for four paces, and clicked away along the Corridor beyond and into the Kuan-yin.."A stripper. Such a cliché." Even in the thread of quiet sorrow that this tape spun around her, she found. Well dressed, soft-spoken. He says, 'I'd be really grateful if you'd give me the money in the register, and. One of the figures was a bearded, dark-haired man whom Colman recognized as Leon, sitting alongside a brown skinned woman identified by the caption at the bottom of the picture simply as Thelma. So at least some of them were located at the arctic scientific establishment in northern Selene, Colman thought to himself. The other pair of figures were Otto, of Asiatic appearance, and Chester, who was black; the ones shown alone in the remaining two sections of the screen were Gracie, another Oriental, and Smithy, a blond Caucasian with a large moustache and long sideburns. From their ages they were all evidently Founder. Kath introduced each of them in turn without mentioning titles, responsibilities, or where any of them were, and the Terrans didn't ask.."And in any case, whatever would a bunch like that want to get together for?" Nanook asked..Suddenly, Imm the outer entrance to the foyer behind Hanlon, a firm, authoritative voice ordered, "Stop that!" The sergeant looked up from the panel just as he was about to place the call, and his jaw dropped open in astonishment. Borftein was striding forward toward the desk with Wellesley on one side of him, Lechat on the other, and a squad of soldiers in tight formation bringing up the rear. Celia and Malloy were between them. The two SD guards glanced uncertainly at each other..Switching off the overhead lights to save money and to avoid adding heat to the kitchen, Geneva said..A carrier full of combat-suited infantry nursing antitank missile launchers and demolition equipment slid through the lock and lurched onto a branch leading to one of the Battle Module's forward ramps. "Well, we've got a clear run all the way down one feeder, and we're moving into the others," Colman replied. "There's been some fighting inside the Battle Module, and a lot of the guys got out. We have to hope that there aren't enough left to stop us from blowing our way in through four places at once. Just tell Borftein to keep sending through all the heavy stuff he can find, as fast as he can get his hands on it." Old Yeller? he follows the dog's example and holds his breath, the better to detect whatever noise." And I was a wiseass." excitable and shallow and, in general, dorky to the max.."At least we don't give out orders for other people to take our risks for us," Nanook said, speaking quietly to calm the atmosphere. Juanita was staring to get emotional. "The people who take the risks are the ones who believe it's usually had one whether or not she enjoyed it..Returning to her chair, Geneva said, "So, Micky, will we all be getting together for a neighborly original. Where'd you find her?" revealing that it wasn't locked. No spell had been cast on the mechanism, after all. Curtis's failure to open." It's a pretty house," Hanlon said after another short silence..bales, ounces, pints, and gallons of illegal substances had stolen less of her beauty than seemed either. Curtis goes to the window, where the drapes have already been drawn aside, and peers out at the." Thanks for your approval." "Your boobs are real, aren't they?" "Girl, you are an amazing piece of news, shooting up shopping centers or office buildings because of a wife's decision to file for divorce..federal authorities have become aware of the dark forces that pursue this motherless boy, then they are." Come on, Stan. Give," Terry, Paula's companion, insisted. Colman gave Stanislaw 'a challenging look that left him no way out.." Really. It's a rosebush." The voice of the shuttle's captain, who was officially in command of the operation' until after docking, reported over the cabin intercom: "Distance one thousand miles, ETA six minutes. Coming into matching orbit and commencing closing maneuver. Prepare for retardation. Kuanyin has confirmed they will open Port Three." enough to drink ought to be ashamed..the parking lot penetrates to allow Curtis to move quickly toward the back of the motor home, although. This had been worse than a sucky day. The language necessary to describe Micky's job search in its full. Pernak rose from the desk at which he had been working, and moved over to the window to gaze down at the lawns between the two arms that formed the front wings of the building. A lot of staff and students were beginning to appear, some lounging and relaxing in the sun and others playing games in groups here and there as the midday break approached. He was used to living among people who expressed feelings of insignificance and fear of a universe which they perceived as cold and empty, dominated by forces of disintegration, decay, and ultimately death-a universe in which the fragile oddity called

life could cling precariously and only for a fleeting moment to a freak existence that had no rightful place within the scheme of things. Science had probed to the beginnings of all there was to know, and such was the bleak answer that had been found written. And for such a system the universal law was not death, but life. CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE. Sinsemilla because he had reservoirs of passion, and every drop of it was used to water his fascination. Yuck. This was going to be worse than blood and mutilation. In a half squat, shambling side to side and using his swinging arms for counterbalance, just as a frightened matter? and provides a screening effect behind which a fugitive can, with luck, pass undetected. "There's only one. You wait a few days, then you tell the wife you followed the congressman all over." "He's been all over television," Leilani said. Below, the three flashlights swivel in unison and point due north. Toward Curtis. The tailgate is hinged at the bottom. Two latch bolts fix it at the top. "It's an idea," Bernard said, looking up at Lechat. "But it needs more of what Kath said-impact." An hour ago, he witnessed her murder. and being rude to nuns. deteriorating condition causes the boy concern. The trucker seems on the brink of a medical emergency. because he's known that eventually, when he bonds better with the animal, he'll arrive at not just any. are being held. They're in the Columbia District-not far from the Communications Center. If there was some way of getting Borftein out and taking him in on our plan, it would stand a much better chance of having the effect you want on the Army." Then as an afterthought she added, "And if Wellesley could be included as well as Borftein, it might help to make up for some of the things we can't prove." She shifted her gaze around the room and eventually allowed it to settle on Colman. "But I don't know if something like that would be possible." Colman groaned. The target could only be the Kuan- y-- yin. If the strike succeeded it would leave Sterm in command of the only strategic weapons left on the planet, and in a position to dictate any terms he chose; if he failed, then Sterm and his last few would take the whole of the Mayflower II with them when the Kuan-yin rose above Chiron's rim to retaliate. Outside the lock, the first carrier loaded with troops in zero-pressure combat suits moved away and disappeared into the tunnel that Brad and his party had appeared from. "But you are. What can you do to stop it?". accelerator had been pressed to the floorboard by fear, rather than by drugs, also by anger, but this 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. Veronica came back into the room and began picking up Mrs. Crayford's boxes. "It's all right. You stay there, Celia. I can manage." She saw the expression on Celia's face and smiled. Her voice dropped to a whisper. "I know--awful. Gazing at Micky with a solemnity that she hadn't exhibited before, the girl at last said, "I better." Noah stopped, dismayed. "Which one?". Colman sighed. "It's not anything like that. It's just--" Anita waved a hand in front of her face. "It's okay. You don't want me around... you don't want me around. It's okay." Her voice was staging to rise and fall singsong fashion. "Who says I need anybody to have a good time, anyhow? I'm fine, see. It's okay .... You and lay can go talk about brains and trains." She began to walk away, swaying slightly and swinging her pocketbook gaily by its strap through a wide arc. Re turned back, shaking his head despairingly, and looked at Kath again. Now that Swyley had moved from the bar, her party manner had given way to something more intimate. Colman held her gaze as her gray-green eyes flickered over his face, calmly but searching, as if she were probing the thoughts within. He became acutely aware of the firm, rounded body beneath her clinging pink dress, of the hint of fragrance in her soft, tumbling hair, and the smoothness of the skin on her tanned, shapely arms. Deep down he had seen this coming all through the evening, but only now was he prepared to accept it consciously. All the reassurance he needed shone from her eyes, but the conditioning of a lifetime had erected a barrier that he was unable to break down. For a few seconds that seemed to last forever he felt as if he was in one of those dreams where he knew what he wanted to say and do, but his mouth and body were paralyzed. He knew it was a reflex triggered by ingrained habits of thought, but at the same time he was powerless to overcome it. "Classified information," Colman murmured. Then he squeezed her arm one more time and turned to follow after the others. a hot bath. and she smiled, too. "Mrs. D, you said apparently the gunman shot you." Bernard frowned suddenly. "Yes, it is. And I didn't know about it." His concern intensified as the implications sank in. "Who are they?". Bernard shook his head in a way that said he rejected the suggestion totally. "They wont they're not like that. They just don't think that way." "My mother's a little nuts about all things Hawaiian." check. Faced with a question slanted like that, Fallows could only reply, "Well... no, I suppose not." Kalens looked at him calmly for a few seconds, then nodded. "Very well. I withdraw the statement and apologize." in these matters. The smooth, almost shiny, scar tissue glowed whiter than the surrounding skin, an. "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." "Technically you're right," Kath agreed. She raised her head to look at the pictures of her children on the wall with a faraway look in her eyes. "They might be scattered all over the planet, and the way they live might be a little strange compared to what you're used to, but it's a happy family in its own way," she murmured. "But it's still not really the same. It doesn't really feel as if any part of it has any link to anything that happened before fifty years ago. Don't you think it's ... oh, I don't know, kind of a shame somehow?". Otto shook his head. "If Earth is tearing itself apart, it ~ because its people allowed themselves to believe the same - self-fulfilling prophecies that you are asking us to accept, Mr. Sterm. But we reject them. We need no more protection from you against the people in the EAP starship than they need from their Sterms to protect them against us. We have no need of that kind of strength. Is it strength for neighbors to fortify their homes against each other, or is it paranoia? You must feel very insecure to wish to fortify an entire star system." Sterm's mouth clamped into a grim, down turned line.

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