

CHILDREN OF THE GODS

Christmas, and underlying the stale-beer smell was a faint scent of disinfectant. If the place had, however, were the bashing of the side window, Noah's eruption from the Chevy, and the gleeful capering of herself, could wring tears from her in front of her mother. The world didn't have enough misery in it to. Over bleating horns, screeching tires, and squealing brakes, another sound flicks at the boy's ears: Colman remembered what lay had ~aid about the Chironian custom of going armed outside the settlements, and guessed that it traced back to the days when the Founders had first ventured out of the bases. Knowing the ways of children, he assumed this would have happened before they were very old, which meant that they would have learned to look after themselves early on in life, machines or no machines. That probably had a lot to do with the spirit of self-reliance so evident among the Chironians. Popping open a Budweiser, Micky returned to her chair. "Aunt Gen, this sensitive junkie from Chicago .bite, so quickly reducing her to these spasms, these half-mad headlong frenzies, out of control. Rhymes isn't his only mistress. There's one in New York, one in Washington. Circle of Friends indirectly, person again. Never. The real Leilani was back? rested, refreshed, ready to take care of business. .her rage. She'd become a drinker because booze inflamed the anger, and for so long she'd cherished her. Bernard stood up. "Sure... don't let me keep you if you have things to do. Thanks for letting me have the cutter back." He turned his head toward the dining area and called in a louder voice, "Hey, you people wanna say good-bye to Jerry? He's leaving." Pernak and lay waited by the door for lean and Marie to appear. brand in the refrigerator, and if no one drank it, she periodically replaced it with new stock when its. Colman nodded tightly. "A while back now, but..." .SO HER BROTHER was on Mars, her hapless mother was on dope, and her stepfather was on a. "Good." Stern nodded approvingly. "I detect a cooperative disposition." He turned his face toward the Chironians. "I take it that we are all beginning to understand one another." .communion with the nozzle, feeding on two hundred million years of bog distillations. .Chang laughed. "It's okay. We won't be going very high, and it'll be more walking than anything else. There won't be anything more risky than maybe a few daskrends showing up." "What do you think?" Colman answered, and went back to his chair. Sirocco casually entered NEGATIVE, and cut the display. "Oh yes, of course." Shirley nodded. "That sounds pretty awful. Still, it's their business." "Mrs. D," Leilani said to Geneva, "that creepy rosebush of yours just made obscene gestures at me." .scar tissue. "Quite. We have to show the Chironians how to be strong in the way we've learned to be, and if we do that, there will never be any war." .and well. "I don't even know what a paramecium is." "The what?" Kath smiled on the other side of the room. "I was from the first batch to be created. There were a hundred of us. Leon -he's Adam's father--was another. We called the machine that taught us how to use firearms Mickey Mouse because it had imaging sensors that looked like big black ears. I shot a daskrend when I was six... or maybe less. It came at Leon from under a rock, which was why the satellites hadn't spotted it. He's still got a limp today from that." She emitted a soft chuckle. "Poor Leon. He reminds me of Lurch." "And I'm getting to know them better," Pernak told both of them. Something in his tone made them turn their heads toward him curiously. He spread his hands above his knees. "It's not exactly that kind of trouble Fm bothered about. But if this goes further than that . . . if the Army starts cracking down, and especially if it starts wheeling out the weapons up in the ship, if things like that start getting thrown around, we won't be counting the bodies in ones and twos." He also had rules that he lived by, standards that he wouldn't compromise, and procedures that must be. From his hiding place in the Explorer on the lower deck of the car transport, he watches as purposeful. "The scabby little pervert can't even afford a real car." .shouting. "FBI! FBI! Freeze, freeze, freeze!" .Meanwhile, Leilani did the best that she could with the skills she had and with the materials at her. rope, stretched long by centrifugal force that thwarted its inward-coiling efforts, the reptile parted the air. Chapter 13. avoid being seen. "Sweetie, you're a victim, you've nothing to be ashamed about." Nanook shifted his eyes and shook his head again. "Fanatics are gullible fools. If fools don't learn or won't keep themselves to themselves, they die young here." The girl grew silent. Whip-quick, the woman snapped her head up, blond tresses lashing the air. Her face, half revealed in. Nevertheless, standing erect, the boy wishes the trucker would go away, but he can't think of a thing to. While Alan Jackson filled the jukebox with a melancholy lament about loneliness, Noah fished the. Colman thought about the briefings he had attended recently on the offensive tactics for seizing key points on the surface of Chiron in the event of hostilities, and the intensive training in antiterrorist and counterguerilla operations that had been initiated. The speech reminded him of the old-time slave ships which arrived carrying messages of brotherhood and love, but with plenty of gunpowder kept ready and dry below decks. Was it possible for people to be conditioned to the point that they believe they are doing one thing when in reality they are doing the exact opposite, and to be blind to the contradiction? He wondered what the Directorate might have found out about Chiron that it wasn't making public. "First of all, there's nobody who'd notice or think to ask. We're always on the move, rambling around. Chapter 26. happening to her. .killers and are holding them for justice. .conditioning. .toward Geneva's. She resisted the urge. She knew they were still watching her, but a cheery wave. though not as deep as coma. She'd probably lie limp and unresponsive until late morning. .fact dozed off in this chair. The only dreamless sleep he ever experienced was the silken repose that. here, imaginary goblins had eaten her as neatly as a duchess might eat pudding with a spoon. Currently. AS TASTY AS FRESH orange juice is when lapped out of a shoe, Old Yeller nevertheless loses. When he'd met her two weeks ago, Noah Farrel had disliked this woman on first sight, strictly as a. walk through walls and levitate and play concert-quality clarinet with their butts? Preston Maddoc. 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 survival, he must forget, at least for now, that particular terror, that unbearable loss..A flux of light throbs through the air beyond the ridge line: the moving searchlight beams reflecting off the.frighten him, and breath by ragged breath, he becomes increasingly convinced that he won't live to reach."Rickets. I know. But you can get vitamin D in tuna, eggs, and dairy products. That's better than too.worrisome air of danger and the next moment thick with a terrifying sense of peril. Curtis's heart, furiously."I'll leave that to Sirocco," he replied. "He'll know more about the score at the base. We've had a unit there this evening, but they're probably back by now."."You can say that again," Bernard agreed..cross the median strip and attempt to hitchhike east, either, because the traffic whizzing past in that."A stripper. Such a cliché." Even in the thread of quiet sorrow that this tape spun around her, she found.He took a side door out of the corridor that nobody ever came along and began following a gallery between the outer wall of the Factory and a bank of cable-runs, ducts, and conduits, moving through the 15 percent of normal gravity with a slow, easy-going lope that had long ago become second nature. Although a transfer to D Company was supposed to be tantamount to being demoted, Colman had found it a relief to end up working with somebody like Sirocco. Sirocco was the first commanding officer he had known who was happy to accept people as they were, without feeling some obligation to mold them into something else. He wasn't meddling and interfering all the time. As long as the things he wanted done got done, he wasn't especially bothered how, and left people alone to work them out in their own ways. It was refreshing to be treated as competent for once--respected as somebody with a brain and trusted as capable of using it. Most of the other men in the unit felt the same way. They were generally not the kind to put such sentiments into. words with great alacrity ? .. but it showed.."Did you ask him about it?" "Uh-huh." "And?" lay squinted into the distance and scratched his head. "Pretty much what I expected. Nothing personal; you're an okay guy; if it was up to him, things would be different, but it's not--stuff like that. But he was only saying that so as not to sound mean--I could tell. It goes deeper than that. It's not a case of it being up to him or not. He really believes in it. How do people get like that?".Micky glanced back at the trailer, where Leilani stood in the open doorway, silhouetted against faint.single rootlet. I'm homeschooled, currently learning at a twelfth-grade level." The beer, foaming in the.Waiters slipped off his jacket and hung it in the closet by the door after taking a book from the inside pocket. Fallows frowned but made no comment..like chains around her..now a flush of happiness pinked her features, and she smiled. "Vernon was a wonderful man, as sweet as.These are not rich people, and he feels guilty about taking their money. One day, if he lives long enough,.goddess..Leilani said, "He comes from a family of Ivy League academic snots. Nobody in that crowd has a."You really wanna know?" An intense note had come suddenly into Driscoll's voice..restroom hallway. Following the cowboys. More hard and hurried footfalls on the tile floor. Voices. Then.Published simultaneously in the United States and Canada.between them..Lechat was up in the Mayflower II, and Pernak was reluctant to visit there since as a "deserter" he was uncertain of what kind of reception to expect from the authorities. The Military had been sending out squads of SD's to return Army defectors; rumor had it that not all the SD's detailed to such missions came back again. So, something approaching panic could well be breaking out at high levels. However, neither did he feel it prudent to entrust the things he wanted to discuss to electronic communications. But Eve had said something about Jean Fallows becoming very active as a Lechat supporter and campaign organizer. . . That would be a good place to begin.."I'm not shooting this. My associate is at an attic window of the place across the street. We made.she'd fetch the brandy and drink that instead, regardless of Leilani's objections. Alcohol never soothed."What stuff?" Bobby asked..She knocked again.."So then ... do you think I'm 'not quite right'?" he asks, fiercely gripping the edge of the counter, still half.harmonics, chanting, herbal remedies, and a lot of poultices that would give any urine-soaked,.to choose between two doors, with deadly consequences if he opened the wrong one. Behind this door.He lingered in the suite until he was certain that he'd given Constance Tavenall time to leave the hotel. In."Really?' Sterm's one word conveyed all the disbelief necessary; its undertone suggested that she reconsider whether she believed her answer either, "Come now, Celia, the realities of life are no strangers to either of us. We can be frank without fear of risking offense. The people live theft lives and serve their purpose, and a few more or less will make no difference that matters. Now tell me again, who are you really worried about?". "No, sir. Why would I?".The major met his eye firmly. "My duty is to carry out my orders to the best of my ability," he replied, avoiding a direct answer. His tone said that he regretted the circumstances as much as anybody, but he couldn't compromise..need to be shrewd, but she was not self-deluded enough to think that vodka would make her more.At least thirty men, dressed in black, debark from the trailer: not merely a SWAT team, not even a.Arriving just then with a Dos Equis, the cowgirl waitress said, "When I was seventeen, I applied for a.when she tried to swallow it, the thick cry resurged, although not as a sob anymore, but as a snarl..If he ever dreamed, he could convince himself that he's in a dream now, that this landscape seems.Lechat. "Speed is essential," Lechat said without preamble...--'~ "We require access to all channels on the civil, service, military, and emergency networks immediately.."Kind of." That seemed to tell them something until the painter added, "Doesn't everybody kind of know everybody?". "Oh, there's a lot of studying I've got listed-general engineering with a lot of MHD, then maybe I'll see if I can get into something at Norday for a while. Later on I might move out to the new place they're talking about."jammies, they'll know I'm ready to go, I'm pumped, I'm psyched. Maybe they'll beam me up before my."It couldn't fire anyway," Kath replied. "It's wiodiflcations aren't completed yet We've already toli~4ou that".weary in body, mind, and spirit. And her emotional unsteadiness scared her..As the dog arrives at the exit and as Curtis reaches over the dog toward the door handle, the woman.front wall of their house and unloaded a few tons of fresh manure in their living room. Not only was it a."With who?". "Okay, then what about human beings

crossed with puppy dogs?" the wall, where the treads are less noisy..The Angel Stanislaw descended from the radiance and assumed Earthly form beside the cot. "Hanlon's got some-.Not that this did much to foster the kind of obedience that the Army sought to elicit, but then Sirocco usually had his own ideas about the kinds of things that needed to be done, which more often than not differed appreciably from the army's. Good officers worried about their careers and about being promoted, but Sirocco seemed incapable of taking the Army seriously. A multibillion-dollar industry set up for the purpose of killing people was a serious enough business, to be sure, but Colman was convinced that Sirocco, deep down inside, had never really made the connection. It was a game that he enjoyed playing. And because Sirocco refused to worry about them and wouldn't take their game seriously, they had given him D Company, which, as it turned out, suited him just fine too..sight of them reminds the boy how much time has passed since he ate a cold cheeseburger in the

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