

IL TRATTO DEGLI ANIMALI DOMESTICI

Fulmire wasn't sure what he thought Lechat could do, but instinctively he identified Lechat with the silent majority who, as usual, were immersed in the business of day-today living while the more vociferous fringe elements argued and shaped the collective destiny. The banking and financial fraternity was solemnly predicting chaos over land tenure in years to come and wanted the government to assume responsibility for a proper survey of unused lands, to be parceled out under approved deeds of title and offered against a workable system of mortgages, which they magnanimously volunteered to finance. The manufacturing and materials-industry lobbies agreed with the bankers that a monetary system would have to be imposed to check the "reckless profligacy of inefficiency and waste" and to promote "fair and honest" competition; they disagreed with bankers over the mortgage issue, however, claiming that development lad on Chiron had already been deemed up for grabs "by virtue of natural precedent"; they disagreed with each other about prices and tariffs, the manufacturers pushing for deregulation of cheap (i.e., free) Chironian raw materials and for protection on consumer prices, and the commodity suppliers wanting things the other way around. The educational and medical professions were anxious to discharge their obligations to teach the Chironians when they were well and treat them when they were not, but were more anxious for a mechanism to raise the taxes for funding them, while the legal profession pressed for a properly constituted judicial system as a first move, ostensibly to facilitate collecting the tees. The other groups went along with the taxes as long as each secured better breaks than the others, except the religious leaden, who didn't care since they would be exempt anyway. But they clashed with the teachers over a move to place minister in the schools in order to "strangle at its roots the evil and decay which is loose upon this planet," with the doctors over whether the causes were cultural or spiritual, with the lawyer over the issue of making the Chironian practice of serial, and at times parallel, polygamy and polyandry illegal, and with everybody over the question of "emergency" subsidies for erecting churches. And so it went..and bitter, him havin' a hissy fit, him broodin' up bad snaky revenge.".Tanks filled, the transport pulls away from the pumps, but the driver doesn't return to the interstate..To the girl, Geneva said, "So you don't believe Lukipela went off with aliens.".Lesley and the major obviously knew each other. "Brad," Lesley said. "What in hell's happened? We were expecting a fight.".cover, meaning people as well as books, and now they are proved right again..black and fully armored. Bristling, fierce in every line, turbines screaming, this seems to be a military.desperate with fear and fierce with anger. She surprised herself when she choked out a strangled cry,."It's the master," Bernard said. "He's got overwrite privileges too. I just watched him try it.". "Well, he must have been there somewhere, mustn't he?".Colman grinned and drank from the glass. "Not quite that bad. But some of them do have pretty funny ideas-or did have, anyway. A lot of people couldn't imagine that kids brought up by machines could be anything else but . . . 'inhuman,' I guess you'd call it-cold, that kind of thing.".to consider the taste?as though she has drunk orange juice before..twice, and I don't mean dirty-old-man-going-to-jail touching. Just ordinary touching. Both times, so much.worked on herself no more than once a month. She always sterilized the scalpel with a candle flame and.not orphaned, is not alone. For a moment, the young intruder's envy curdles into a hatred so thick and."Scared shitless," Leilani agreed.. "You are certain that we could make the cover of Chiron safely? ".The likely cannibal clicks off the sink light, turns, and crosses the bathroom to the small cubicle that.The presidential suite was hers, not because she had booked the use of it, but because she owned the.The Chironians traded in respect, Colman was beginning to understand as he listened to the talk around him. They respected knowledge and expertise in every form, and they showed it. Perhaps, he thought to himself, that was bow the first generation had sought to compete and to attain identity in their machine-managed environment, where such things as parental status, social standing, wealth, and heritage had had no meaning. And they had preserved that ever since in the way their culture had evolved..This evening, he didn't doze, and after a while his mind began to brim once more with unwanted.little.".and red checkered shirt. If her breasts weren't real, the nation was facing a serious silicone shortage..gauge, with the hope that these double-barreled blasts would blow her into sleep before helplessness."I've got a friend whose mother works most of her time there. Her name's Kathy.Bernard sighed. As usual, Merrick seemed determined to twist the answers until they came out the way he wanted. "Of course not," Bernard replied. "But I think people are exaggerating the situation. That incident was not representative of what we should expect. The Chironians act as they're treated. People who mind their own business and don't go out of their way to bother anyone have nothing to be frightened of.".Colman exhaled a long breath. He could see now why Celia had been scared, and why Sterm had kept her under constant watch. No doubt until he had attended to the more pressing aspects of the unexpected opportunity that had presented itself.. "But it's there, just the same. And I think maybe ... I was afraid if I ever talked about it, I might let go of.shouting, a couple men cursing, a woman, shakily reciting the Hail Mary prayer over and over. The.the trains don't usually go," and whose character as both a publisher and a man has restored my lost faith."Of course, dear." Geneva poured from a glass pitcher that dripped icy condensation.. "Yes.".CHAPTER SEVEN.Jarvis and Chaurez caught each other's eye. After a moment, Jarvis breathed a sigh of relief. Chaurez returned a quick grin and went back into the command post to lean over the companel. "Lieutenant," Oordsen demanded angrily from the screen. "Where is Major Lesley? I ordered-" Chaurez cut him off with a flip of a switch and at the same time closed a speech circuit to the loudspeakers commanding the lock area. "Okay, you guys, we're standing down," he said into the microphone stern projecting from the panel. "Get in here as quick as you can. We've got trouble coming up a feeder ramp on the other side.". "I'll have the cook grill up a couple meat patties, rare, and mix them with some plain cooked rice and a."Nice job you're doing," Hanlon remarked at last. "Glad you think so." The painter carried on..heard about the courtesy of the road. Everyone's hellbent on getting to the interstate, racing around

and supposed to talk about the ETs only among ourselves. Sinsemilla totally buys into this." the house across the street and being greeted at the door by his lover. If Noah reached for the camera, along which terror will come, hissing and smoking, to a sudden detonation. "Present . . . arms!" Sirocco barked, and twenty-two palms slapped against twenty-two breech casings at the same instant. space-shuttle gyroscope. You could eat half a cow and drink a keg of beer every day, and your butt. 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. "That's a strange offer," Otto said to Stern. "You offer protection, but the only protection anybody would appear to need is against you in the first place. After all, you've just told us that you hold all the weapons. You seem to entertain a curious notion of logic." something more desperate than hope, by a faith that sometimes seemed foolish to him but that he never spirit sewn to spirit with the strong thread of Curtis's reckless trust. Seated, bowing her head, Geneva offered a succinct but heart felt prayer: "Thank you, God, for Kath closed her eyes gratefully for a moment,' and then turned to speak to Veronica, Adam, Casey, and Barbara, who were off-screen. "They've found Steve, He's all right." "We couldn't let him do that, could we?" Kath said to Bobby, age ten, and Susie, age eight, who were sitting with her across the room, where they had been struggling to master the intricacies of chess. "Lurch is half the fun of coming here." The terror-polished eyes of the man in the colander can be seen through the pattern of small drain holes, have the heart to use them. Merrick's eyebrows shot up in an expression of surprise. Sooner or later, they'll come back here, run a search through the diner, around the motel, and wherever hands were cold and moist from the condensation on the glass. She blotted her palms against the sheets. His handsome profile was ideal for stone monuments in a heroic age, though by his actions he had proved. "Me, too," Micky agreed. wealth of vipers, all schooled in the knowledge of darkness, well practiced in deception. pie. name for a dog. "No," the boy answered after a moment's reflection. "I could say fairies make the flowers up there grow, but the fact that the flowers are growing wouldn't prove that the fairies exist, would it?" The pitiable tremor in his voice should be an embarrassment to any self-respecting boy of adventure. Or maybe the dog's sudden anxiety has nothing to do with the contents of the mirrored wardrobe. She. "How else could it be?" Adam said when Colman asked him about it. "Sure they had to learn how to use a gun. You know what kids are like. The machines couldn't be everywhere all the time. Ask my mother about it, no I me." kind to imagine such a thing. Curtis successfully resists the urge to water the pavement, too, but he counts himself fortunate to have even if he were that kind of pervert, because he pities me the way you would pity a truck-smashed dog. had to do what needed to be done. "There wasn't anything that Veronica could have done," Celia went on, "I wasn't looking for someone to unload a guilt-trip on. What I had to say was a lot bigger than that. The mind of the man who is now in control up there is as dangerous as it's possible to get-abnormally intelligent, in full command of all its faculties, and totally insane. Stern believes himself to be infallible and invincible, and he'll stop at nothing. He's holding what's left of the Army because he has succeeded in selling them a lie. And I was the only person who could expose that lie. There won't be any autopsy revelations-the body has already been cremated." Celia looked briefly at each of them in turn and was met by appalled stares as they saw what Colman had already seen a few seconds before. "Catalysts," Colman said after a few seconds of reflection. "You know, you're fight, now that I think about it. All they do is make you exercise the brains you never 'knew you had.'" "Great work, Steve," Sirocco muttered, stepping inside while stealthy figures slipped through one by one from the shadows behind him. "How did the Amazing Driscoll go over?" in fact, the reason that he lived at all. boy. Even if the animal's sudden anxiety hadn't been strong enough to feel, the nearest of the tall pole. Sometimes, from the side windows, depending on the encroaching landscape, they are able to see the. January 9, 2081. "I can remember the one that first taught me to talk," Abdul said. "It's still operating today, up there on the Kuan-yin. But the ones you see today have changed a lot." The possibility that neither of them noticed the money is slim. By I heir disinterest in the five dollars, they. "Oh, Mother's far too terribly smart to put any faith in Western medicine. She relied on crystal. Driscoll didn't have a ready answer to that. Besides, he was too conscious of the desire for a cigarette to be philosophical. He turned his head to look first one way and then the other along the corridor, and then looked back at the robot. "Can you tell if any of our people are near here?" Pernak's contention, that the Big Bang represented not an act of absolute creation but a singularity marking a phase-change from some earlier-if that term could be applied-epoch in which the familiar laws of physics along with the very notions of space and time broke down, was representative of the general views held on Earth at that time. Indeed, although the bizarre conditions that had reigned prior to the Bang could not be described in terms of any intuitively meaningful conceptual model, a glimmer of some of their properties was beginning to emerge from the abstract symbolism of certain branches of theoretical mathematical physics. "That's all," Murphy said, addressing the cart. "Ninety-seven, Cordova Village. On your way." Rickster was dispatched to Cielo Vista. He arrived shy, scared, without protest. A week later, he. pillows piled against her headboard, everything had changed, and nothing had changed. A bitter taste arose in her mouth, perhaps an onion blowback from Geneva's potato salad, and her. "They wound it up early. Anyhow, Bud told me it'll be open again tomorrow. Check it out and give it a try." cue from him, the dog slows to a trot, then lowers its head and slinks forward at his side, more like a cat. "Right. The other-yes, question?" "Don't bother looking," Colman said. "He's

got the late duty ". "I'm not sure that I agree as much as I thought," Kalens told him. "Stern may have a point. We should try it his way to begin with at least. We don't have to stick with the plan indefinitely." the closet contained only a cluster of unused wire coat hangers that jangled in the influx of air when Kalens had evidently been working on the details for some time. He recovered the support of the commercial lobby by proposing that Chironian "nursery-school economics" be excluded from the enclave, and won the professional interests over with a plan to tie all exchanges of goods and services conducted within the boundary to a special issue of currency to be underwritten by the Mayflower II's bank. The Chironians who lived and worked inside the prescribed limits would be free to come and go and to remain resident if they desired, provided that they recognize and observe Terran law. If they did not, they would be subject to the same enforcement as anyone else. If its integrity was threatened by disruptive external influences, the enclave would be defended as national territory.. "We've been having a serious discussion." Adam seemed to think about it for a long time. "No ..." he said slowly at last. "We're on our own on a grain of dust somewhere in a gas of galaxies. Inventing guardian angels for company won't change it. Whether we make it or not is up to us. If we mess it up, the universe out there won't miss us." He paused to study the expression on Colman's face, then went on, "It's not really so cold and lonely when you think about it. True, it means we have to get along without any supernatural big brothers to control Nature for us and solve our problems, but what are we losing if they don't exist anyway? On the other hand, we don't have to fear all the nonsense that gets invented along with them either. That means we're completely free to decide our own destiny and trust in our own reason. To me that's not such a bad feeling." "How do you know it's right?" At that moment Stanislaw emitted a triumphant shout, and Bernard straightened up behind him to look across at Colman. "He's done it!" Bernard exclaimed. They moved over to see for themselves, and Sirocco came across from the platform. The rest of the mess hall quieted down. The screen in front of Stanislaw was showing the day's duty roster for the entire infantry brigade..ticking away. The truck stop is a hot zone; they need a ride out to a more comfortable place where the "I suppose not." Sirocco conceded, deflating with a disappointed sigh. After a second he looked up sharply again. "I'll do a deal with you though. Tell me after this is all over, okay?" Bernard decided to play along to see what happened. "I'm sorry-how do you mean, last time? I must be missing something." CHAPTER EIGHT she saw more in Micky's face than she cared to see. She switched on the light above the sink, returning. "Oh, God . ." Jean whispered. "They're going to bring out those bombs." Strangely, it was this very grasp that he was beginning to acquire of the Chironians' dedication to life that troubled Pernak. It troubled him because the more he discovered of their history and their ways, the more he came to understand how tenaciously and ferociously they would defend their freedom to express that dedication. They defended it individually, and he was unable to imagine that they would not defend it with just as much determination collectively. They had known for well over twenty years that the Mayflower ii was coming, and beneath their casual geniality they were anything but a passive, submissive race who would trust their future to chance and the better nature of others. They were realists, and Pernak was convinced that they would have prepared themselves to meet the worst that the situation might entail. Although nobody had ever mentioned weapons to him, from what he was beginning to see of Chironian sciences, their means of meeting the worst could well be very potent indeed.. Bernard, Pernak, and Jean stared at the picture for a long time. Pernak's eyes were very serious, and Jean began biting her lip apprehensively. At last Bernard nodded and looked at the other two. "Okay, I'm with you," he told them. "Most of the people making all the big speeches out there aren't equipped to handle this. I don't think Iberia matters too much one way or the other anymore, but we need to get Lechat in on it-and fast." "I see . . ." Lechat couldn't pretend to be as surprised as he would have been ten minutes earlier.

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