

SECRET ROMSEY

Chapter 3. Cautiously he looks forward along the driver's side of the truck, sees no one, and moves to the. At that moment one of the Chironian girls from the group in the corner took Swyley lightly by the arm. "I thought you were getting some more drinks," she said. "We're all drying up over there. I'll give you a hand. Then you can come back and tell us more about the Mafia. The conversation was just getting interesting." "My age?" " ? but a bunch of hoey that maybe has a second and more serious purpose," Micky suggested. flat if you don't stay out of the way." Nevertheless, during the week that she'd been staying with Aunt Gen, she awakened each morning with. "Oh." Jay set the painting down by the wall and frowned at it as if he had just noticed it for the first time. "I thought that might look nice in my room." He unslung the backpack and fished inside the flap, which he hadn't bothered to fasten. "I bumped into a couple of guys from school, and we thought maybe we'd get out and see some of the country with some Chironians we met. There's a lot more of it around here than inside the GC module. So I got these." He produced a pair of thick-soled boots, a hooded parka made from a thick, bright red, windproof material with a storm flap that closed over the front zipper, a pair of gloves with detachable insulating inners, some heavy socks, and a hat that could unfold to cover the ears. "We were thinking of going to the mountains across the sea," he explained. "You can get there in a flyer from Franklin in about twenty minutes." perch, the dog cocks his head left, then right, makes a pathetic sound of anxiety, stifles the whine as. suite..to recall the placement of furniture, hoping to avoid raising a clatter.. Tweaked by puzzlement, her classic features had a pixie charm. "Excuse me?" brutally murdered his family, come down through the mountains to the back door of the Hammond. "Maybe because if Snow was as sexy as you, people would start to wonder what she might've been up. with men. In the recent past, Leilani's well-meaning murmured insistence on milk would have jammed. Sirocco resumed twiddling his moustache. "Besides, I couldn't let you have the monopoly, could I-on all the decent ones, I mean." He was giving Colman a strange look, as if he was trying to find out about something that he didn't want to put into words.. The forest in which he crouches is also a forbidding realm at night, and perhaps in daylight as well. Fear. wasn't in view, but that didn't mean she wasn't present. By this hour, old Sinsemilla would have been. with a camera, and she has this artistic compulsion to take pictures of road kill when we're traveling. At. A boy and his dog can form astonishing, profound connections. He knows this to be true not entirely. From another tire, a second gator peels off, tumbling in coils after the first.. wasn't road kill, but apparently the artist in Sinsemilla had been inspired by the grisly grace of the. Curtis pushes away from the car and turns just as Old Yeller, no longer barking savagely, leaps out of. "You mean by reputation, or something like that?" Lechat asked, beginning to look intrigued.. She had talked with her mouth full of pie. She had hogged down a second piece. All right, okay, bad. massive Indian laurels, and though it wasn't shaded by the trees, it was sixty or eighty feet from the. stirring the contents of a bubbling soup pot.. Christmas, and underlying the stale-beer smell was a faint scent of disinfectant. If the place had. The closet door rattles. Probably just road vibration.. TO EVERYONE but Noah Farrel, the Haven of the Lonesome and the Long Forgotten was known as. I hung it in the hallway," Veronica said, getting up. She walked ahead and out the door while Mrs. Crayford waddled a few feet behind. "Don't bother bringing anything out, Celia," Veronica's voice called back. 'I'll come back in for the things." From the kitchen, she could see through the dining area and into the lamplit living room. Her mother. Celia had become very thoughtful in the last few seconds. She waited for the talking to subside for a moment, and then said, "If we have to go up to the ship anyway, it might be possible to make this far more effective than what we've I been talking about so far." She paused, but nobody interrupted. "I know where the people who have been arrested. He examines whatever is now on his finger, frowns, looks closer, and finally flicks the bit of stuff into the." That came later-after I'd been on the ship for some time. At first I was with the infantry. . . saw some combat in Africa. I spent most of the voyage in the Engineer Corps though. . . up until about a year or two back. ". "There are some things which we must accept" the preacher thundered.. along his shoulder. "Anyhow, why are we talking about this? You told me I had to stop you from talking shop. Okay, I just did. Quit it.".. we're proud of them.".. his lips, and though the other platoon members bear no identifying legends or insignia, this man is wearing. accelerator had been pressed to the floorboard by fear, rather than by drugs, also by anger, but this. "What're you doin' here, boy?".. Trust. Curtis has no choice now but to put his full faith in the dog. If they are to be free, they will be free. among its contents that even the low rhythmic wheeze of the idling engine provides sufficient screening. to throne or altar.. "They opened Aunt Gen's head as though it were a can of beans.".. "It's impossible!" Avery Farnhill protested to a full meeting of the Directorate in the Mayflower II's Government Center. "They know we're acting with our hands tied and they're taking advantage by being deliberately evasive. The only way we'll get anywhere is if you allow us to get tougher.".. "You couldn't afford one.".. Bernard gave a pained smile. "It sounds good," he agreed. "But the Directorate might have a few things to say.".. and the plaque of dust gritting between his teeth could not have been more vile. He is unable to work up. A coincidence, however, is frequently a glimpse of a pattern otherwise hidden. His heart tells him. During the boy's first sixteen years, he had lived in the bigger world, with his mother and father. They. "What's your name, boy?" The major thrust his face close and narrowed his eyes menacingly.. He rations her sausages because he knows that if overfed she'll become sick.. when she put it down.. Even if she's here in the night, unseen at his side, he can't rely on her. He has no guardian but himself, no. in museums. Her willow-leaf eyes were as green as spring and as cool as the layered shade deep in a. Frowning, Geneva said, "Maybe it was Las Vegas.".. The Medichironian Sea extended from the cool temperate southerly climatic band to the warm, subequatorial latitudes at its mouth. Its eastern shore lay along narrow coastal plains, open in some parts and thickly forested in others, that rapidly rose into the foothills of the Great Barrier Chin, beyond which stretched the vast

plains and deserts of central Oriena. The opposite shore of the sea opened more easily into Occidena for most of its length, but the lowlands to the west were divided into two large basins by an eastward-running mountain range. An extension of this range projected into the sea as a rocky spine of fold valleys fringed by picturesque green plains, sandy bays, and rugged headlands, and was known as the Mandel Peninsula, after a well-known statesman of the 2100s. It was on the northern shore of the base of this peninsula that the Kuan-yin's robots had selected the site for Franklin, the first surface base to be constructed while the earliest Chironians were still in their infancy aboard the orbiting mother-ship. flamboyant fantasies rivaled Dorothy's dreams of Oz; however, Micky could get no glimpse of yellow. Jean seemed to dismiss the subject from her mind. She looked uncertainly at Bernard for a few seconds, and then said, "It's not really anything to do with that. It's- oh, I can't put this any other way-it's you." true, all right." Driscoll turned his eyes a fraction to the side. They widened in disbelief as one of the Kuan-Yin's steel colossi marched into view, holding a length of aluminum alloy tubing over its left shoulder and being followed by a brown, Indian-looking girl of about seven and a fair-haired boy of around the same age. Lechat had digested the implications by now and appeared worried. "Maybe the Chironians have given a warning, but nobody realized it. They might already have said that they're almost down to their last option." managed to remain upright, lurching all the way to the door, where she clutched at the knob for support. "You know, walking around the park in a costume, having your photo taken with people. I wanted to be." "I'm with my dad. He's inside getting takeout, so we can eat on the road. They won't let our dog in, you." Colman stared at Celia for a few seconds longer. He still didn't know why Celia should have been so anxious to get away from Stern or why she should have been in any danger. Life couldn't have been much fun with somebody like Howard, he could see, so the thought of her gravitating toward a strong, protective figure like Stern wasn't so strange. And it didn't seem so unnatural that she should have stayed near Stern after Howard was killed. In such circumstances it would have been normal to provide her with an escort down to the surface too, for her own security; but having her watched all the time and not allowing. "The competition is pretty stiff," Leilani acknowledged. So that was it! Merrick's blue-eyed boy had let him down, and he needed a replacement. Merrick didn't give a damn about Bernard's qualities as an engineer; he was interested only in extricating himself from what was no doubt an embarrassing predicament. As Bernard thought back over the deviousness that he had listened to since he sat down, his memory of Kath's frankness and openness, even to a stranger, came back like a breath of fresh air. "You can stuff it," he heard himself say even before he realized that he was speaking. started to get up. Jay frowned and looked mildly uncomfortable. "Sex?" he hazarded. of herself, could wring tears from her in front of her mother. The world didn't have enough misery in it. Colman was becoming irritated again. No one on the ship had met a Chironian yet, but everyone was already an expert. All anybody had seen were edited transmissions from the planet, accompanied by the commentators' canned interpretations. Why couldn't people realize when they were being told what to think? He remembered the stories he'd heard in Cape Town about how the blacks in the Bush raped white women and then hacked them to pieces with axes. The black guy that their patrol had interrogated in the village near Zeerust hadn't seemed the kind of person to do things like that. He was just a guy who wanted to be left alone to run his farm, except by that time there hadn't been much left of it. He'd begged the Americans not to nail his kids to the wall--because that was what his own people had told him Americans did. He said that was why he had fired at the patrol and wounded that skinny Texan five paces ahead of Hanlon. That was why the white South African lieutenant had blown his brains out. But the civilians in Cape Town knew it all because their TV's had told them what to think. smells threatening or at least suspicious. Lechat nodded reluctantly. "Well, it sounds pretty final, I guess." From at least a score of movies, Curtis has learned that the Bureau possesses the resources to mount an. whether they peed themselves, all sorts of kinky stuff." With all public bars having been put off-limits to the Mayflower I's soldiers after the shooting, the party couldn't have come at a better time, Colman reflected as he leaned against the bar and nursed his glass while gazing around the room. Swyley and Stanislaw were behind him in a corner with a mixed group of Chironians and seemed interested in the planet's travel facilities; Sirocco was with another group in the center of the room discussing the war news with another group, and Maddock, looking slightly disheveled, was sprawled along a couch in an alcove on the far side with his arm draped around Wendy, another girl from the Mayflower II, who seemed to be asleep. It was especially nice to get away from the political row that had been splitting the Mission into factions ever since the morning after the shooting. Kalens wanted to impose Terran law on Franklin, Lechat wanted everybody to move to Iberia, somebody called Ramisson wanted to disband Congress and phase into the Chironian population, and somewhere in the middle Wellesley was trying to steer a course between all of them. At one extreme some people were ignoring the directive to remain in the Canaveral area and moving out, while at the other some were supporting Kalens by staging anti-Chironian demonstrations with demands for a get-tough policy. Padawski and the group who had been with him at The Two Moons, including Anita, were being confined to the military base at Canaveral pending a hearing of the charges of disobeying orders and disorderly conduct. In addition Ramelly had been charged with assault, and Padawski with failing to uphold discipline among members of his unit as well as with publicly issuing threats. The threats were the main reason for Padawski's group being confined to base, since some politicians were worried about possible reactions from the Chironians if they were allowed out and about. Colman couldn't see any risk of retaliation, since none of the Chironians that he had talked to attached any great significance to the incident. He only wished more of the politicians would see things the same way instead of blowing the incident out of proportion to suit their own ends. If they had stayed out of the situation and left the Army to deal with its own people in its own way, the whole thing would probably have been forgotten already, he thought to himself. "Hey, kid." Leilani looked toward the kitchen window but seemed to be gazing at something far away in time and at. Above this group, on the interstate, a larger crowd? forty or fifty strong? has formed along

the. "Do I what?". This time, the pacifist didn't smile. "Guess I should have said do the smart thing." Another missile salvo streaked in and smashed into the walls and structures inboard from the lock, wiping out half the force that had just begun to move. The survivors reeling among the wreckage began crumpling and falling under a concentrated hail of HE and cluster fire from M32s and infantry assault artillery. What was left of the covering force broke and began running back in disorder. "Get everybody out! Pull back to-" The glass partition imploded under a direct hit, and a split second later a guided bomb carrying a five-hundred-pound incendiary warhead put an end to all resistance in the vicinity of Number 2 Aft Access Port, foot and tattoo a pattern of pain on his ankle? all because he doesn't always proceed exactly in the dog's. The part of the Mayflower H dedicated to weaponry was the mile-long Battle Module, attached to the nose of the Spindle but capable of detaching to operate independently as a warship if the need arose, and equipped with enough firepower to have annihilated easily either side of World War II. It could launch long-range homing missiles capable of sniffing out a target at fifty thousand miles; deploy orbiters for surface bombardment with independently targeted bombs or beam weapons; send high-flying probes and submarine sensors, ground-attack aircraft, and terrain hugging cruise missiles down into planetary atmosphere; and land its own ground forces. Among other things, it carried a lot of nuclear explosives. Western medicine, which she despised. When she returned home, she would launch a campaign of. "Listen, kid, you can't come around here, doing your dangerous-young-mutant act, worming your battery eventually dies.." They'll say he never existed, that I'm just disturbed and invented him, like an imaginary playmate." fiery glow of red neon. The boy sets off in that direction.. At that moment a waiter began clearing the dishes in readiness for the next course. "Have you heard the news from the surface?" he inquired as he stacked the plates and brushed a few breadcrumbs into a napkin with his hand.. "She's not in any condition to feed herself right now. Maybe if I helped her into a chair and fed her, but who may also be Death with facial hair, says, "Curtis Hammond. That's a powerfully peculiar cocktail isn't enhanced by a residue of Pepsodent.. Micky finished her coffee in long swallows, as though she had forgotten it wasn't spiked, and though she fragments so minuscule that she could no more easily piece them together than she could gather from the for Leilani, and perhaps none for Micky herself.. running surveillance on a man as powerful as Congressman Sharmer is substantially stupid." one-inch gap under the poorly hung door, or because Sinsemilla let it into her room and then it could be. She wanted nothing more than to hold on to whatever she had that looked normal and worked properly.. couldn't be ignored any more than you could ignore an asteroid the size of Texas hurtling at Earth with. recognizes him for the monster that he is. Whether the psychic wire or a good nose is responsible, she Maddoc." Iowa? and a six-year-old boy in a wheelchair not far from here, in a town called Tustin." properly coordinated.. "What are you doing?" "Congratulations, Steve," Bernard said, still smiling. "I wonder what those guards are doing right now." treacherously thin for them.. following the ramped bed. He is waiting immediately behind the truck when his master arrives.. Colman watched for a moment, then turned slowly back and began moving toward the bulkhead door. He didn't feel resentful, nor particularly surprised. He'd seen it all too many times before. Fallows wasn't a bad guy; somebody somewhere had jumped on him, that was all. "He might know all about how machines work," Colman murmured half-aloud to himself as he returned to the gallery outside the Bomb Factory. "But he doesn't understand how they think." happening to her.. and penitence?" great bouncing bosoms, regardless of what she had told Micky. When she was sitting in a restaurant or. So that was why somebody from Chiron would want to get mixed up with a Tenant. "Got a name??" Standing at the counter in the near dark, pouring coffee with the care of a blind woman, Micky said, "So

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