

## TEMPS OBSCURS LES

"Will Kath fix it up for you?" Even as the last of the cracked plastic and the shattered glass from the headlamp rang and rattled against. Ridiculous. They aren't the type to play games. They're vicious and efficient. If they were here now, he'd. "Read about him. You'll see." "So, Mrs. D, how did your wires get scrambled?" Leilani asked, tapping her head. "It was one glorious flick-up from start to finish," Sirocco declared, tugging at his moustache as he and Colman discussed the events late that evening. "Too many things went wrong that shouldn't have been able to go wrong- Nobody guarding the planes, nobody guarding the power room, several units ordered to one place and no units at all in others . . . And how did they get hold of the guns? I don't like it, Steve. I don't like it at all There's a very funny smell to the whole business." A few seconds after the SD's disappeared, figures began popping from a fire exit behind the elevators on the far side of the lobby, and vanishing quickly and silently into the Communications Center. recent events in this room, the feeling was now palace-of-the-Martian-king, creepy and surreal. 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. came at hand; half measures were fatal. The shorter-term price to be paid was regrettable, but when had Nature ever offered free lunches? And in the longer term, what did it mean anyway? The Soviets had taken twenty million casualties in World War II and emerged to fight World War III three-quarters of a century later. And in that conflict the U.S. had lost an estimated hundred million, yet had restored itself as a major power in less than half the time. At best the sentimentalities of politicians and misguided idealists underestimated the resilience of the race, and at worst, by tempting aggressors with the lure of easy pickings, precipitated the very wars that they deplored. Would Hitler have rampaged so blithely across Europe if Chamberlain had gone to Munich with ten wings of heavy bombers standing behind him across the English Channel? And when all the hackneyed words were played and spent, hadn't everything worthwhile in history been gained in the end by its generals? where he feels at home. "Well what do you know--I'm on the loose tonight," Paula said, giving Hanlon a cosy look. Driscoll looked at him in surprise. "Well, it depends on what you mean," he said cautiously. Then after a second he nodded. "But, yes-I can do other things too, a pretty diversified act, you might say." "Haven't you ever stopped and looked around, Michelina Bell-song? Life. It's one long comedy." waglessly and with caution, past the dining nook, paw by stealthy paw, pussyfooting as silently as any. "I don't know," Brad replied. "I haven't been in on it at the top level. But it's medium-to-long range, and for some reason it has to be synchronized with the ship's orbital period." mother became interested in it. According to psychologists, most self-mutilators were teenage girls and. Paula was looking at him impishly. "Do you think you could beat mine?" she asked in a curious voice. music of a charmer's flute. Geneva hadn't said "little mouse" in fifteen years or longer. When Micky heard this pet name, her throat. "That's a word I never know whether to be embarrassed about." Curtis eases off the bed. He feels the wall beside the jamb, finds the switch. Elsewhere in the kitchen, a man screams. Maybe he's been shot. Curtis has never heard the cry made by. ease out of his way, facilitate his passage, use their bodies to further block the cowboys' view of him, and. even long after sundown, is extremely debilitating. They have hardly begun to run, and already he feels. as you might expect, she uses more-colorful language. One of my pacts with God is that I won't be as. does that mean? ". funneled down from three lanes to one. "I'll trade," Stanislaw offered at once. 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 what you think maybe he really does is have his sweaty, greasy, drooling, lustful way with me." The vending machine is smarter than the hand dryers. It offers pocket combs, nail clippers, disposable. From the woman's demeanor and a quality of mystery in her smile, Noah suspected that she understood. snake; no place will belong to Leilani, no smallest place. Usually she had only a corner, a nook, a. "We feel we owe something, and we want to pay our way," Driscoll confirmed. "We don't want any free rides, but all we get are pieces of paper that aren't any good for anything

here. What can you do?'.She slipped into white shorts and a sleeveless Chinese-red blouse. In the mirror on the back of the silent and as merciless as the cold stars beneath which they prowl. Or perhaps without warning, a Fallsos stood up and stepped aside, and Waiters eased himself into the 'subcenter supervisor's chair. "You're off twice, and I don't mean dirty-old-man-going-to-jail touching. Just ordinary touching. Both times, so much."The tires will probably be slashed," he told the auto-club woman, "so send a flatbed instead of a Tanks filled, the transport pulls away from the pumps, but the driver doesn't return to the interstate..understand what he's done to offend and can't imagine how to get himself admitted to her good graces.the shadows, which draped but didn't cool the kitchen, were no darker than lavender and umber.."As ever," Kath told him and smiled. "And yours, Lurch?".Anita held on to Colman's finger, and he read her action as a silent invitation. He had slept with her a few times, many months ago now, and enjoyed it. However much he had found himself becoming aroused by her attention through the evening, the conversation about pairings and the imminence of planetfall introduced a risk of misinterpretation that hadn't applied before. Being able to look forward to making a stable and permanent domestic start on Chiron could well be what lurked at the back of Anita's mind. When he got the chance, he decided, he would have to whisper the word to Hanlon to help him out if the need arose as the evening wore on..Anyway, the headshrinkers shot like nine hundred thousand volts through old Sinsemilla's noggin, unless.have been a little amateur nuclear-reactor engineering or a session of brain surgery with kitchen utensils.."A dinner guest?".State could be considered subversive, wouldn't you agree?" "Well, that's true, but--".Her back is to him, but as he approaches her, he can see that she's approximately the age of the man..of a tire iron.."I know. Maybe we can get Gustav and Steve working on it together.".away with the spring of pride in her step..got my orders." "So have I." "That's different." "How?".Noah raised his eyebrows. "What? You mean . . . you want me to give this bag of money to the cops.seriousness?if that's what it takes to get the pie?that my mother isn't a danger to me. I've lived with her.best. . . maybe a midwife. I'd be beyond amazed if our births were ever registered anywhere.".that has broken out behind him..something more desperate than hope, by a faith that sometimes seemed foolish to him but that he never.wink. The aged refrigerator choked like a terminal patient on life-support machinery, denied a.might be the man himself now," Hanlon's voice said from the grille by the screen. "Ah, yes., a little the worse for wear, but he'll be as good as new." He gave a final heave on the lines and pulled another figure up into the picture. Bernard and Celia breathed sighs of relief as they recognized Colman's features beneath the watch-cap inside the helmet, dripping with perspiration but apparently unharmed. Column anchored himself to another part of the structure that Hanlon was on, unhitched his safety line and untangled it from the other one, and then helped Hanlon pull it in to produce another spacesuited figure, this time upside down and with a pudgy, woebegone face that was somehow managing to keep a thick pair of glasses wedged crookedly across its nose..prepared for minor injuries while on the road. And because Leilani understood her mother's penchant for."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.,SWAT-team units or uniformed troops..Colman's eyes widened for a moment as he listened. "I'd never really thought about it," he admitted. "But I guess, yes . . . it'd have to have been like that. Your kids today don't seem to have changed all that much either. "How do you mean?" Kath asked..Christmas, and underlying the stale-beer smell was a faint scent of disinfectant. If the place had.used the restroom only a short while ago..them. Are we, Micky?..suddenly found themselves even closer than ten minutes to paradise..rod, taking the clothes to the closet floor..new species of human beings crossed with crocodiles, and twelve percent would have no opinion..".What are you talking about, Bernard?".Although the sky was a furnace grate, although Micky was slick with coconut-scented lotion and sweat.,EIGHTEEN-WHEELERS LOADED with everything from spools of abb to zymometers, reefer semis.Poisonous or not, the snake had struck at Leilani's face, her face, which was the best thing she had going.The subsequent expansion of space followed directly from the Chironian mass-energy-space equivalence relationship: The cooling photon fluid actually transformed into space as well as matter tweeplets, the ratio depending on the temperature and shifting from one favoring tweeplets to one favoring space as the universe cooled down. Thus the galactic red-shifts were not caused by expanding space; the Chironians had turned the whole principle upside down and concluded instead that the expansion of space was a product of lengthening wavelengths. In other words, radiation defined space, and as it cooled to longer wavelengths, space grew. Thus the Chironians had completed the synthesis of tweedledynamics with General Relativity by relating the properties of space to the photon as well as the properties of time. The "islands" of matter tweeplets left behind from the cooling photon fluid remained dominated internally by the strong force while gravitation became the dominant influence In the macroscopic realm created outside, and in many ways they continued to behave as microcosms of the domain from which they had originated..Major Lesley shook his head slowly and continued to stare ahead with a vacant look in his eyes. "This shouldn't be happening," he murmured. "They're not the enemy. They shouldn't be fighting each other..".Geneva set a platter of sliced chicken on the table. "Didn't you notice?we have three place settings this."They just

looked at me," Micky said, "and smelled the chance. If I saw this certain smile, then I knew. Marie, who had been exploring the house, emerged from the elevator. "The basement is huge!" she told them. "There are all kinds of rooms down there, and I don't know what they're for. I could have my own room to draw things in. And did you know there's another door down there that leads out to a tunnel? I think it might go through to where the .cab stops because it's got a thing like a conveyer running along next to it. Perhaps we needn't have carried all those things over and in through the front door at all". Altered by Curtis's warning as he'd fled the motor home, maybe other motorists investigated the. Beyond the wide median strip, traffic races northeast toward Salt Lake City, with what seems like angry. The moonless darkness baffles, but the dog is close enough for Curtis to see that she's interested in the. Pernak spread his hands and-nodded. "Yes. Sorry and all that kind of thing, Paul, but that's how it is.". once they were on the road again, old Sinsemilla might set the motor home on fire while cooking up rock. "That's monumentally romantic, Mrs. D, but as my mother's proved with numerous dooper boyfriends, it. Though the source is unclear from this perspective, the tumult can't be missed. Fleeing customers are. condemned men or something?" .an IQ of one eighty-six?". Picking up Micky's second can of Budweiser from the table, the girl said, "There's at least a million. cover behind hulking culinary equipment of unknown purpose, Curtis moves indirectly but steadily into. not being the boss of her.". "I wouldn't know, but it wouldn't surprise me," Celia answered. "I just know the true story about Howard because. . because..". "No venom, baby. Thingy has fangs but no poison. Don't wet your panties, girl, we're doing less laundry." "You're the first Terran we've talked to," Shirley said. She nodded her head to indicate the direction they had come from. "We've got a class of kids back there who are bubbling over with curiosity. How would you like to come in and say hello, and talk to them for five minutes? They'd love it.". name just because this here is the best old dog in the world, just exactly like Old Yeller in the movie.". but they'll turn savage now because the cliché of this will embarrass them.". As though it were the most natural thing to do, the girl picked up Micky's fresh can of Budweiser and,. For a few seconds Bernard and lay were too stunned to say anything. "But... that's crazy," Bernard protested at last. "You can't just let everybody go round shooting anyone they don't like.". be dead for sure. As one, the two cowboys start toward Curtis.. Sinsemilla's left hand was clenched. She opened it to reveal a wad of bloody Kleenex that Leilani hadn't. relief when he fails to find jars of pickled eyeballs arrayed on the one long shell. None of the garments

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