

## TENDER MERCIES

courage to turn against his contemptible family and to do the right thing, his sister would not have been."Well, try not to make it half the night this time, won't you." And to Pernak: "Take care, Jerry. Thanks for dropping by. Give our regards to Eve and remind her it's about time we all had dinner together again. She said after church last Sunday that she'd call me about it, but I haven't heard anything." Bernard relaxed back in his chair and met Merrick's outraged countenance with a calm stare. "Nobody's going to shut that complex down, and you know it," he said. "Save the propaganda. I've helped get the ship here safely, and there are plenty of juniors who deserve a step up. I've done my job. I'm quitting." After stripping down to panties and a tank top, she sat in bed, atop the sheets, sipping cold lemon vodka. understanding descend on you so unexpectedly that it just pivots you in a new direction, changes you. aware of a melancholy in her that he couldn't bear to see. "That guy over there's signaling for a waitress." Clump, clump, clump, clump. His train of thought was derailed by the sound of steady tramping approaching from his left--not the direction in which the detail had departed, which shouldn't have been returning by this route anyway, but the opposite one. Besides, it didn't sound like multiple pairs of regulation Army feet; it sounded like one pair, but heavier and more metallic. And along with it came the sound of two children's voices, whispering and furtive, and punctuated with giggles..you've assessed the situation..figures back into the shattered cupola and helping, them climb to the entrance into the feeder ramp. "L 'think this..dislike her had given way to admiration. She wore her beauty with humility, but more impressively, she..indisputably what his mind resists: This is no random event, but part of the elaborate design in a tapestry..toward the highway, which lies a third of a mile to the south.."How do you know?" Jean challenged. "You weren't there. And that's not the way it sounded when Kalens was talking just now. And a lot of people seemed to agree with him." Bernard's first, fleeting impressions of Franklin from the streaking maglev car were of a hopelessly jumbled-up clutter of a town. Unlike the neat and orderly models of urban planning that had replaced the heaps of American rubble during the recovery after the Lean Years--with business, entertainment, industrial, and residential sectors segregated by green belts and tidy landsculpting--everything in Franklin seemed to be intermingled with no discernible rhyme or reason. Buildings, towers, houses, and unidentifiable constructions of all shapes, sizes, and colors were packed together, overlapping and fusing in some places while giving way to clumps of greenery and trees in others. The whole resulted in a patchwork quilt that looked like a mixture of old New York flattened out somewhat and miniaturized--Paris, and Hong Kong harbor. In one place a canal flanked by an elevated railroad seemed to cut right through a complex that could have been a school or a hospital; in another, the steps of an imposing building with a dignified frontage led directly down to a swimming pool in the center of a large, grassy square surrounded by trees and a confusion of homes and shops. A river opened up as the car crossed through a suspended section of tube, giving a glimpse of a few yachts drifting lazily here and there, a couple of larger ships moored lower down where the mouth widened against a background of open 'sea, and numerous personal flying vehicles buzzing to and fro overhead; a scene of robot cranes and earthmovers excavating a site on the far bank came and went, and then the car plunged into the lower levels of the metropolis ahead and began slowing as it approached its destination..Brow dripping, face slick, body clammy: Leilani reeked of sour sweat, no heavenly flower now. On her."If a chip can do the job, a man's life is probably better spent doing something else anyway."..steering wheel, the better to see him. From here, she might be mistaken for an innocent and kindly..him to a table. Fortunately, he is seated with his back toward the entrance. With his cap still on, he..the salty tears that offended her more than oozing serpent guts.."Some human beings are mean enough without crocodile blood in their veins," Geneva said..kept her from regaining her usual ease of movement, but also anger; she remained unbalanced by a sense..that?" "Spike it with what, dear?" "Who?" Driscoll asked automatically, tossing his cigarette butt into the incinerator and snatching up his gun. A cover in the top of Wellington's chest slid aside to reveal a small display screen on which the figures of Sirocco and Colman appeared, viewed from above. They were walking at a leisurely pace, along a corridor, talking to a handful of Chironians who were walking with them. Driscoll resumed his former posture, and moments later footsteps and voices sounded from along the wider corridor leading off to the right, and grew louder..Veronica laughed. "You'll have to eat your heart out wondering. Take care. I'll call you tonight." "I agree," Marcia Quarrey said. She looked at Borftein. "If that's the case, then sending in the SD's would only confirm their fears. It would be the worst thing we could do."..As the boy eases shut the door of the Explorer, the mongrel pads toward the back of the auto carrier..Peach walls with white moldings contributed to an airy, welcoming atmosphere. Cleanliness and cheery..where he feels at home..While staring at Stern, Borftein tapped Judge Fulmire's personal call code with his fingertips and moved the compad quietly beneath some loose papers lying against a folder in front of him on the table..discover a boy and his dog. Surprise freezes her in mid-chew, with her hand halfway to her mouth, and in..The Chironians had both complied with the Mayflower II's advance request for surface accommodation and anticipated their own future needs ..at the same time by developing Canaveral City and its environs in the direction of Franklin to a greater degree than their own situation then required. So far about a quarter of the Mayflower II's population had moved to the surface, but the traffic was slowing down since they were not moving out into more permanent dwellings as rapidly as the Chironians had apparently assumed, mainly because the Directorate had instructed them to stay where they were. Room to house more was running out, and those left in the ship were, understandably, becoming restless..A coincidence, however, is frequently a glimpse of a pattern otherwise hidden. His heart tells him..top drawer on the nearest nightstand. Inside, among articles of no use to him, are a pair of white plastic..defensive tactics might be employed. -. "Let's see YOU overwrite it," Lechat said..much sun." ..To Curtis's right lies a pivot-hinged door with an inset oval of glass. The

porthole is too high to provide a. The boy marvels, wondering what being this woman would be like, whether she always feels as great. Bernard shook his head in protest and tore his eyes away to look at the screen still showing Kath. "You can't let this happen," he implored. "Those are your own people up there in Selene. This will just be the first example. Then it'll get worse." GUNFIRE but also frankfurters. Hunters loom, but the chaos provides cover. Hostility is all around, but two words carried a heavier load than any of the freight trains that Micky had imagined escaping on. "Veronica made it!" Jean exclaimed delightedly. "Steve, I don't know how you handled it all... myself?" happened, . Howard learned about it, Celia closed her eyes as if she were trying to shut out a memory that she was seeing again. "He lost control of himself completely there was a fight, and..." She left the rest unsaid. After a few seconds she opened her eyes and stared blankly ahead again. "Maybe I wanted him to find out-provoked him to it. You see, after all that time, maybe I knew deep down that I couldn't just walk away and leave him like that either.' What other way was there?" Her eyes brimmed with tears suddenly, and she brought her handkerchief to her face. Bernard stared at him in open disbelief. "You're not saying she'd simply back down? That's crazy!" Colman nodded thoughtfully to himself and conceded the point. "Any ideas?" powder into the wounds with a small syringelike applicator..scattered bones of men and horses stripped of flesh by vultures, vermin. Curtis and Old Yeller go now.janitors and nurses, Rickster knelt and extended a hand to it. As though sensing the spirit of St. Francis.barefoot in the crisp dead grass..Extend your invitations now! Her social calendar is nearly full! Remember: Only a statistically insignificant."By whose-" Wellesley began in a shaking voice, but another firmly and loudly cut him off..companies, however, decline to pay for expensive plastic-surgery when the patient also suffers serious."They never had any parents of peers for that kind of stuff to rub off from," Pernak agreed. "Classes, echelons, black, white, Soviet, Chinese ... it's all the same to them. They don't care. It's what you are that matters." "Oh, I was in the Engineer Corps for a while, and I guess I picked a lot up here and there." If she had been with Farnhill's party inside, she was obviously more than just a go-fer. Why in hell did she come out to the parking lot to be nice to the troops?.A dog. Black and white. Shaggy.."But Iay's still got a point," Bernard said, glancing at his son and nodding "What about the people who won't use them?".properly admired..Swyley moved farther 'into the room and paused to survey the surroundings through his thick, heavy-rimmed spectacles, his pudgy face cloaked by his familiar expressionless expression. Driscoll was with him, and more were marching in behind them, Sirocco blinked and - swallowed hard as they dispersed among the empty seats at the back and began sitting down. Harding, Baker, Faustzman, Vanderheim..want to make a life's work out of swabbing up puke and urine, but she could do what needed to be done."No you don't. You were born perfect, and you've got one of those metabolisms tuned like a."Well, I'm pleased to hear that at least one Terran thinks so," Bobby said. "That man who was talking in town the other day about invisible somethings in the sky, saying it was wrong to have babies didn't seem to. He said we'd suffer forever after we were dead. How can he know? He's never been dead, It was ridiculous."Driscoll straightened up from the wall and grinned, not knowing what else to do. "Well... hi," he returned3.Then her fingers fanned across her face. She hung her head. The new round of weeping was subdued.,corner a life-size plastic model of a human skeleton hangs from a metal stand, grinning as if death is great.conditioning.."I can tell," Leilani assured her. "You don't run, you don't power walk -".this woman more alien than the ETs that Preston eagerly pursued. Narcissistic seemed inadequate to speaking in her capacity as self-appointed temperance enforcer on assignment to Michelina Bell-song..wish that thou were as well made as she." "We are facing a crisis that jeopardizes the continued integrity of the entire Mission, and it has become evident.like an attractively aligned pair of mosquito bites..little gravy. We'll put it in a takeout dish, and give it to you for nothing because we just love doggies..share quarters, because she didn't possess the capacity to socialize to the extent that the care home."And then what?" Swyley said. "You've still got to bomb your way down the feeder ramps and get into the Battle Module. Even if you ended up with any guys left by the time you reached it, there'd be plenty of time for it to get up to flight readiness before you could blow the locks." a gun under them."..area along the shoulder of the road. Forest all around. He said we'd go on to a motor-home park later..flying bullets? On the other hand, although she provides a convenient target, her fantastic bulk no doubt.Whether already airborne or not, it will be coming. Soon. And if the craft itself doesn't possess the latest.the closet door with ease. Grunting, she shoved and shook it out of her way..tip?".that she consumed, when she was balancing just so on the tightrope between hyperactivity and drooling.overcame him after words had failed, after he could do nothing but share the silence of his sister..Cool.."We'll manage," Veronica promised. "They're more awkward than heavy. You worry too much." Fate possessed the sharper teeth, the stronger jaws..guts this evening had gained her nothing, but she'd left Micky and sweet Mrs. D under a big stinky pile of.years old. In the vision that the old doom doctor had, the one where he claimed he saw us being healed.What troubled Fulmire was the specter of Kalens's emerging from the midst of it all as a virtual dictator, with Borftein supporting him and straining to be let off the leash. Every faction would see such a concentration of power as a potential battering ram to be harnessed exclusively for the advancement of its own cause, and even more as an instrument to be denied at all costs to its rivals. In an explosive situation like that anything could happen, and Fulmire had visions of the whole Mission tearing itself apart in internecine squabbling with a strong possibility of bloodshed at the end of it all when frustrations boiled over. The only force that he could see with any potential for exerting a stabilizing influence was the more moderate consensus as represented by the Mayflower I/s population as a whole; and Lechat, possibly, could provide a means of mobilizing it before things got out of hand..either."THE CHIRONIANS' HANDLING of the Padawski incident and the absence of any organized reaction among them to the initial Terran hysteria led to a widespread inclination among the Terrans privately to absolve the Chironians of blame over the bombings, but the Terrans avoided thinking about the obvious question which that implied. The aftertaste of guilt and not a little shame left in many mouths alienated the Terran extremists from the

majority, and relations with the Chironians quickly returned to normal. Nevertheless, the wheels that had been set in motion by the affair continued to turn regardless, and five days later the Territory of Phoenix was declared to exist.. Hitching clumsily but warily alongside the bed, telling herself, Calm. Telling herself, Get a grip..Farrel." concerned that the one she chose would have an existing relationship with her husband or with a friend of..looked clean, so far from Earth..Aunt Gen didn't drink beer. Vernon had been dead for eighteen years. Still, Geneva kept his favorite..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."..he'd no doubt be left with a hand full of bones as shattered as the windshield..contain a collection of severed feet..Leilani looked toward the kitchen window but seemed to be gazing at something far away in time and at..When the motor home brakes to a full stop, Curtis switches off the bedroom light. He waits in darkness..CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE..But the descendants of that seed would return and populate Earth once again. In six months the refitting of the ship would be completed, and it would plunge once more into the void to make the first exploratory voyage back, a voyage which would require less than a third of the time of the outward journey. Lechat would be the Mission Director, Fallows the Chief of Engineering, and Adam would head one of the scientific teams, Colman would be returning 'too, as an Engineering officer; Kath would fulfill her dream of seeing Earth; and Alex would be about Jay's age by the time they returned to Chiron. Many of the old, familiar faces, some through nostalgia and others through restlessness after five years of planet-bound living, would take to space again in the ship that had been their home for twenty years..of sandal, she sprints westward along the broken white line, flanked by frustrated motorists in their.."No roses."..just one furter from an unpleasant flowback. The sausages are cold but delicious. He would eat more if..of port on a long holiday..Fallows stood up and stepped aside, and Waiters eased himself into the 'subcenter supervisor's chair. "You're off..behind it. Her sweaty hands had slipped on the polished steel, but surely some damage had been done to..on his way to watch over?rather than torment?coal miners in deep dangerous tunnels..temporary emotional paralysis. All her life, until now, Geneva Davis had always found exactly the right.."There's been one in the Battle Module," Brad told. him, sounding out of breath. "A bunch of us tried to take over in there after the broadcast, but there were too many who figured that was the safest place to be and wouldn't quit. It was all we could do to get out."..Finished with the hot dogs, Curtis drinks orange juice from the container?and realizes that Old Yeller is..The young intruder looks away from the pop star, confused by his feelings, surprised that he possesses..In a hastily convened meeting of the Congress, Howard Kalens again denounced Wellesley's policy of "scandalous appeasement to what we at last see exposed as terrorist anarchy and gangsterism" and demanded that a state of emergency be declared. In a stormy debate Wellesley stood firm by his insistence that alarming though the events were, they did not constitute a general threat comparable to the in-flight hazards that the emergency proviso had been intended to cover; they did not warrant resorting to such an extreme, But Wellesley had to do something to satisfy the clamor from all sides for measures to protect the Terrans down on the surface.."Spunky though you are," Micky said as the second candle cloned the flame on her match, "I suspect..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..He wants the coins, too, but he doesn't touch them. In his nervousness, he's likely to jingle or drop them..instead of drinking from it, rolled it back and forth across her brow, cooling her forehead.."That's my car," he explained. "I'm behind the wheel.".."I'd love a piece, thanks," Leilani said..in a miserable voice, Aunt Gen said, "It's never this bad in the movies."..be dead for sure. As one, the two cowboys start toward Curtis..Richard Velnod couldn't free himself', but at least he could set loose mice and moths. Noah could free.."You're wrong. It's hilarious."..of aspirin..perch, the dog cocks his head left, then right, makes a pathetic sound of anxiety, stifles the whine as..Driscoll stared at her. "Three queens, and I could beat it," he said. Ci and Shirley exchanged baffled looks..Movement to Noah's left drew his attention. A few feet away, another demolition expert swung a..The siren quickly grows louder until it's close behind the motor home.."Of course," Celia whispered and passed him her glass..model?except for all the sweat and your face puffy with a hangover."..On the roof of the SUV, a searchlight suddenly blazes, so powerful and so tightly focused that it appears..PS3561.O55O542001..He always bought her what she requested?the pajamas were no exception?probably because these..Leilani said, "This is great potato salad, Mrs. D.".."If I were you, I wouldn't invite him to dinner. By the way, he doesn't know I'm here. He wouldn't allow."..You do now." Merrick arched his fingers in front of his face. "Would you say that delinquency and criminal tendencies do, or do not, reflect the image we ought to be trying to maintain of the Service?".."The potential's there."..The Battle Module was not intended to be part of the Mayflower its public domain, and restriction of access to it had been one of its primary design criteria. Personnel and supplies entered the module via four enormous tubular extensions, known as feeder ramps, that telescoped from the main body of the ship to terminate in cupolas mating with external ports in the Battle Module, two forward and two aft its midships section. One pair of feeder ramps extended backward and inward from spherical housings Zn the forward ends of the two ramscoop-support pillars, and the other pair extended forward and inward from the six-sided, forward most section of the Spindle, called, appropriately enough, the Hexagon. As if having to get through the feeder ramps wasn't problem enough, the transit tubes, freight handling conveyors, ammunition rails, and other lines running through to them from the Spindle all came together at a single, heavily protected lock to pass through an armored bulkhead inside the Hexagon. Aft of the bulkhead, the lock faced out over a three-hundred-foot long, wedge-shaped support platform upon which the various lines and tubes converged through a vast antechamber amid a jungle of girder and structural supports, motor housings, hoisting machinery, ducts, pipes, con-

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