

## **GOW FARRAGUT FIRST ADMIRAL OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY EMBODYING HIS**

An awkward silence hung over the room. Then Celia said, "Because I killed him. The rest was faked after I left the house. Only Sterm knew about his death." Leilani knocked on the bedroom door. Unlike her mother, she had a respect for other people's personal. "Oh, Christ!" Driscoll began fussing with a napkin to clean it off, in the process managing to trail a corner of it through the soup and brush it against the hem of the second guard's jacket as he turned back from the soup. "It sure smells fantastic." On the griddles, tantalizing treats sizzle, pop, bubble, and steam fragrantly. Sterm nodded slowly in satisfaction. "Excellent. I think you would agree, gentlemen, that this puts us in an unassailable bargaining position." Her eyes rested momentarily on his chevrons. "Are you Sergeant Colman--the one who's interested in engineering?" "We get them," Nanook agreed. "But not a lot. People usually get to learn very early on what's acceptable and what isn't. They've all got eyes, ears, and brains." Bernard was watching with interest over Stanislaw's shoulder. After being dropped off by Barbara and reentering Phoenix with the others, he had gone home to update Jean on what was happening and then left for the barracks, where Colman had smuggled him in for the briefing. It was just as well that he had; the scheme that Sirocco finally evolved required some familiarity with the Mayflower II's electrical systems, and while Colman had been prepared have a crack at that part of it, Bernard was the obvious. Depression passed, too. Lately she had made her way from day to day in a curious and fragile state of. "I only live at Port Norday during the week," Kath said. "I've got a place in Franklin as well. It's not far from here at all." Jarvis and Chaurez glanced at each other. Then Jarvis looked away as a new report came up on one of the screens. "Peterson has come out for Borftein in the Government Center," he muttered over his shoulder. "I guess it's all over in the Columbia District. That has to give them the whole Ring." herself, and honest enough to admit to the shame, though dishonest enough to try to avoid facing up to. only the previous evening, over dinner. . . . "Worming your way into ..." Micky fell silent, surprised by what she had been about to say. funneled down from three lanes to one. when she put it down. 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." The shelves hold half-gallon plastic containers of orange juice, grapefruit juice, apple juice, milk, also. information than all five human senses combined, so he doesn't nudge her out of the way. "What a Christian." The divine Donella glares at Burt with the expression of a perturbed rhino, lacking only the threat of a. "That's tough. But my useless dad skipped the day I was born." the trembling creature on the rear lawn, where it dashed out of sight into a bed of red and coral-pink. An SD sergeant interrupted from behind Lesley. "They're here sir. Carriers coming through the lock." They looked round to find the first vehicles crammed with troops, many of them in suits, and weaponry slowing down as they passed through the space between the lock doors, and then speeding up again without stopping as they were waved on through. More followed, their occupants looking formidable and determined, and Lesley gave orders for them to be directed between the remaining three feeder ramps to get close to the Battle Module at all four of its access points. "I suppose not," Kath said. She lay silent for a while and then went on in a more distant voice, "But it's still not really the same. I mean, it must be wonderful to have actually been born there ... to know that you were directly descended through all those generations, right back to when it all began." Good pup. Stay close. As was usual for a Saturday night, the pedestrian precinct beneath the shopping complex and business offices of the Manhattan module was lively and crowded with people. It included several restaurants; three bars, one with a dance floor in the rear; a betting shop that offered odds both on live games from the Bowl and four-years'-delayed ones from Earth; a club theater that everybody pretended didn't stage strip shows; and a lot of neon lights. The Bowry bar, a popular haunt of off-duty regular troops, was squeezed into one corner of the precinct next to a coffee shop, behind a studded door of imitation oak and a high window of small, tinted glass panes that turned the inside lights red. one over at the main gate who wants to talk to you. Says it's urgent. "Cut it," Colman grated. "You leave him out of it. If it's me you want, I'll take the three of you, but some other place. He's got nothing to do with this." resorts to the excuse that Burt Hooper, the waffle-eating trucker in Donella's restaurant, made for him. she was caught in a trap nobody could pry open for her, that to have any hope of escape, she must chew. "Son-of-a-something, anyway," Anita added. They all laughed. place, less than twenty-four hours ago. A siren arises in the distance. This could be a fire truck, an ambulance, a police vehicle, or a clown car. So with medical-kit alcohol, she dissolved and swabbed away the crusted blood in the punctures. She. than the one he'd suppressed. plain grub. remarked with a delighted leer on his face. "It is, isn't it," Colman agreed dismally. it. When he pulls a lever without paying, the machine won't give him a packet of Trojans, whatever they. pity cripples, but they're afraid of mutants." driver, he's the only member of this contingent who's not carrying either a pistol-grip 12-gauge or an Uzi. with the staff, squeezing around them, dodging left, right, but they're no longer disinterested in him. bricks on this road, and here, now, in the lingering sour scent of warm beer, in this small kitchen where. "Stay," whispers the motherless boy. diminished, but felt instead as if a painfully constricting knot had at last come loose inside her, and. Breath wheezed in her throat, and each hard exhalation caused her cowl of hair to stir and plume. her body grew stiff with a tension that the sun couldn't cook from her. to your future. Miss too many opportunities, thus sustaining too many wounds, and you wouldn't have a. spell, it resists his muscle and his mind. murderous rampage. Leilani's eccentric tales were acceptable conversation over dinner in an asylum; but. Sterm did not appear surprised. "They have merely to comply with the law to avoid such consequences." 'Would they accept a job like that?' Jean asked, sounding dubious. At the open window, the night lay breathless. inspection. campground for an evening, and we never see them again. Sinsemilla long ago chopped loose her family. tiger. "Two of your officers are heading this way. I thought you ought to know." Two big

SUVs, modified for police use, with racks of rotating red and blue emergency beacons on their. your murderous stepfather, we're to believe you had a brother who was abducted by aliens. ". This is a boy's room, papered with large monster-movie posters. Display shelves are cluttered with. "Okay, okay, Hoover." Rastus held up an apologetic hand. "You know I didn't mean it. You do a great job here. And the displays today are very artistic. ". country and their honor for a few wrinkled five-dollar bills. Not if movies, suspense novels, and history. Young had a gash on his cheek that was more messy than deep and a huge bruise along his jaw to go with it, and. "Well, of course it does, sweetheart. What would the world be like without toilets?". "Let's not start name-calling." Each time the politician's man flexed his fist, the fanged mouth widened on. After a long silence Otto looked up. "Then I'm afraid we can offer no more. ". and holding Celia's handkerchief to her face with the other. The grieving widow paused to look around the room, nodded once to the matron, and moved toward the door. They crossed the lounge and waited while the guard retrieved the luggage, and then the three of them rejoined the two guards outside the suite door. The party then reformed and began descending the stairs. -. "That's in the bag? Then you've completely destroyed him, Mr. Farrel. ". "So then ... do you think I'm 'not quite right'?" he asks, fiercely gripping the edge of the counter, still half. As the Mayflower II wheeled slowly in space high above Chiron, the outer dour of Shuttle Bay 6 on the Vandenberg module separated into four sectors which swung apart like the petals of an enormous metal flower to expose the nose of the surface lander nestling within. After a short delay, the shuttle fell suddenly away under the rotational impetus of its mother-ship, and thirty seconds later fired its engines to come round onto a course that would take it to the Kuan-yin, orbiting ten thousand miles below. heartwarming story about a twinkly cute spaceship, smartly tailored alien diplomats from the Parliament. "Of course not," Rastus said. "But everyone values what they have. I said the mind was an infinite resource, but only if you don't squander it. Don't you think that makes an interesting paradox?". Clem waved an arm casually without looking back. "Go ahead," he said. "Can't see as you really need any, though. You're pretty safe up here. We don't get many burglars." Farnhill glanced helplessly at his aides, then braced himself and began leading the group after Clem while the Chironians parted to make way. The military deputation broke formation. to take up the rear with Wesserman tossing back a curt "Carry on, Guard-Commander" in the direction of Sirocco. fence. She wanted to glance down, afraid the pickets might trip her, but she kept her attention on her. be, but who may also be Death with facial hair, says, "Curtis Hammond. That's a powerfully peculiar. plastic, leather straps, and elastic belts. Leilani liked to believe that this contraption had a nicely ominous. , Curtis pushes open the bedroom door. You first, girl. ". "Thanks. They must be real. Even the best implants don't look that natural. Unless there's major. first greeted him. start, and Micky had never in her memory been less focused on her own interests or needs? or. Yet instinct insists that this isn't merely a similar truck, but the very same one. As an artillery major in his early thirties he had seen that South Africa's cause was ultimately lost, and had uprooted himself to place his services and experience at the disposal of the emergent New Order of Greater North America, where veterans at countering guerilla offensives and civil disorder were eagerly sought to assist in the "renormalization" of the chaos bequeathed by the war. Promoted rapidly through the ranks of an elite entrusted with the might of the new nation, Borftein glimpsed a vision of commanding a force truly capable of bringing to heel the entire world. But the vision had been short-lived. A golden opportunity presented itself when Asia--then the only serious rival--fell upon itself in the struggle for domination between China and Japan-India. But the chance had slipped away while the politicians wavered, eventually to be lost forever with China's success and the subsequent consolidation of the Eastern Asiatic Federation. After that, the future had held only the prospect of an eventual head-on collision between the two halves of the globe and more ungloried decades of turmoil and indecisive skirmishings to pick up the pieces. Conditions for launching a worldwide Grand Design would not come again in his lifetime. And so he had left to seek a more rewarding destiny with the Mayflower II. It was ironic, he had thought to himself many times, that impatience and restlessness had led him to a decision that would immobilize him in space for twenty years. ". Nine. But I'm precocious. What's your name?". starry sky, low near the horizon, but nothing of the greater vault above, where ghost riders would be. "You've got your father's name," Geneva said hopefully. "If he could be found . . . ". faraway Texas, but the boy is no longer in the mood to sing along. ". "We haven't talked about that yet," Pernak told him. They boy is puzzled. "I know that movie, ". "They'd tell you modesty was a better virtue too," Colman said. ". What are you talking about, Bernard?". door like two drunk kangaroos in a three-legged sack race!". might be. wherever the aliens are supposed to have been in the past, we go hoping they'll show up again. And. "Right. The other-yes, question?". "Of course they are. It's all a mess up there. ". braced leg had ever before allowed, playing cowgirl-with-lariat as she rose from the floor. Swung like a hotel. She was directly engaged in all her business enterprises; if her husband were having her followed. In the forty-nine years since, Franklin had grown to become a sizable town, in and around which the greater part of the Chironian population was still concentrated. Other settlements had also appeared, most of them along the Medichironian or not far away from it. Jay appeared more reassured, and his eyes brightened a fraction with the relief of having been spared long explanations. "It's all screwed up," he replied simply. Sincerely, he said, "Damn, you would have been a funny Minnie. ". "You're probably just like my dad. of The X-Files, kid. ". by other government agencies that have more-ominous initials and less-honorable intentions, Curtis. "SDs," Colman said at once. "It was- a professional job."

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