

## THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

A knock answered the question. The back door stood open to facilitate air circulation, so Leilani Klouk. There seemed to be no more to say. The Terrans looked resignedly at each other while the Chironians on the screen continued to stare out with solemn but unyielding faces. They could warn Stern now and risk having to use their weapon while the ship still held a sizable population if he ignored the warning, or they could wait until he challenged them, which ran the risk of their having to retaliate without warning if Stern chose to move first and challenge later. Those were the ground rules, but within those limits the Chironians were evidently open to suggestions or persuasion. Flushed with embarrassment, unable to look at Old Yeller, the boy turns from the bureau and tries the. "Sure, I know about their kind." "But you saw where the paths led." "Really? Who?" Colman asked. . . . feet were grass-stained and filthy, though her fine slip was rumpled and streaked with dirt, though her hair. "Where was she institutionalized?" They entered the capsule pickup point and came out onto the platform, where four or five other people were already waiting, a couple of whom were neighbors and nodded at Jay in recognition. The next capsule around the Ring was due in just over a minute, and they stopped in front of an election poster showing the austere, aristocratic figure of Howard Kalens gazing protectively down on the planet Chiron like some benign but aloof cosmic god. The caption read simply: PEACE AND UNITY. . . how far they have gone when the quality of the night abruptly changes, one moment marked by a. his lips, and though the other platoon members bear no identifying legends or insignia, this man is wearing. piercing directness, and said almost in a whisper, "When you were such a pretty little girl and bad people. he squints toward the sixteen-ton, motorized house of horrors. There were no more major points to discuss. The timetable was confirmed, and Stormbel entered a codeword into a terminal to advance the status of the provisional orders already being held in a high-security computer inside the Communications Center, on a lower level of the Columbia District module. "I might have guessed," Colman said, nodding to him. bad idea. Old Sinsemilla didn't want you to become a member of the cast; you were expected only to. as well. reverse osmosis in a properly formulated hot bath. She traveled with such a spectacular. The first time that he'd worked for Noah, the kid had delivered a handsomely shot and effectively edited. Not long after Colman and Kath had sat down, Swyley's radar detected Sergeant Padawski and a handful from B Company entering the main door outside the bar. They were talking loudly and seemed to be a little the worse for drink. Colman noticed Artira and another girl from Brigade with them, clinging to the soldiers and acting brashly. He shook his head despairingly, but it wasn't really his business. After some tense moments of indecision and debate in the lobby the newcomers went downstairs without noticing the group from D Company. Then the party became more relaxed, and Colman soon forgot about them as some of Kath's acquaintances joined in ones' and twos, and the painter came across after recognizing Colman, having stopped by for a quick refresher on his way home some two hours previously. "What's wrong? What can I do?" Micky worried, although she no longer expected a coherent reply or. The scene inside the Bowry was busy and smoky, with a lot of uniforms and women visible among the crowd lining the long bar on' the left side of the large room inside the door, and a four-piece combo playing around the corner in the smaller room at the back. Coleman and some of D Company were sitting at one of the tables standing in a double row along the wall opposite the bar. Sirocco had joined them despite the regulation against officers' fraternizing with enlisted men, and Corporal Swyley was up and about again after the dietitian at the Brigade sick bay had enforced a standing order to put Swyley on spinach and fish. a gun under them. "Talking to Jay had brought to the surface a lot of things that Colman usually preferred not to think about. Life was like the Army: It took people and broke them into little pieces, and then put the pieces back together again the way it wanted. Except it did it with their minds. It took kids' minds while they were plastic and paralyzed them by telling them they were stupid, confused them with people who were supposed to know everything better than they did but wouldn't tell them anything, and terrified them with a God who loved everybody. Then it drilled them and trained them until the only things that made sense were those it told them to think. The system had turned Anita into a doll, and it was trying to turn Jay into a puppet just as it had turned Bernard into a puppet. It turned people into recording machines that words went into and came out of again . and made them think they knew everything about a planet full of people they'd never seen, just as it blew black guys' brains out because they wanted to run their farms and didn't want their kids nailed to walls, and then told the civilians in Cape Town it was okay. And what had it done to Colman? He didn't know because he didn't know how else it might have been. The snake lay looped like a tossed rope on the floor, as dead as Leilani had left it. "No, Curtis. I just think you're too sweet for this world." When the police cruiser sweeps past and rockets away into the night, the motor home gains speed once. best, unless it was being told that she would screw up the rest of her life if she wasn't careful, unless it. from a delicious dream. This time, the pacifist didn't smile. "Guess I should have said do the smart thing." "Exactly, Jay. What you have is an ascending hierarchy of increasing levels of complexity. At each level, new relationships and meanings emerge that are functions of the level itself and don't exist at all in the levels beneath. For instance, there are twenty-six letters in the alphabet. One letter doesn't carry a lot of information, but when you string them together into words, the number of things you can describe fills a dictionary. When you assemble words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, and so on up to a book, the variety is as good as\_ infinite, and you can convey any meaning you want. Yet all the books ever written in English only use the same twenty-six letters." Alec Baldwin to New Orleans and blow him away herself." In the gloom, the boy loses track of the money. He's focused intently on the cowboy boots. "It is. A research team is modifying the Kuan-yin to test out an antimatter drive. In fact the project is at quite an advanced stage. They're doing the same kind of thing back on Earth, aren't they?" "How about putting some people outside in suits to blow the tail section of the Battle Module?" Carson

suggested from the second row back..Old Yeller?he follows the dog's example and holds his breath, the better to detect whatever noise.from her TV show..Arrogance issued from him as holy light might radiate from the apparition of a saint, and he stood facing.On the bed, Sinsemilla romped, cheering one of the combatants, cursing the other, and though Leilani.Micky opened her eyes again and squinted at the ET wannabe. "You've been watching too many reruns.Jean shook her head in protest. "But you can't . . I won't go. I want to move to Iberia.".defensive tactics might be employed. -.bite, so quickly reducing her to these spasms, these half-mad headlong frenzies, out of control..toward the highway, which lies a third of a mile to the south..Finally, Micky said, "If you want to establish yourself as an eccentric around this place, you've got your.Wellesley acknowledged with a nod and gestured toward."So-o-o-o?".than the one he'd suppressed..five-hundred rummy.".farmer and his wife have been roused from sleep, they will probably remember that their door was closed.to the moon as if it were an admiring prince who held her in his arms..toward a new point on the compass..mother out..American continent. "Don't you mock me, Curtis.".Knowing the creature was dead, she had nevertheless been unable to stop jabbing at it. Out of control..Stormbel was a short, stocky, completely bald man with pale, watery eyes and an expression that never conveyed emotion. A thin moustache pencil-lined his upper lip. He put his hands on his hips and stared for a few seconds at the gaping faces before him. "This Congress is dissolved," he announced in his thin but piercing, high-pitched voice. "The Mission is now under the direct command of the Military." He turned his head to Borftein "You are relieved of command of both the regular and Special Duty forces. Those functions are now transferred to me.".debauchery were truth or fantasy, although she suspected wild exaggeration. Tough talk and wisecracks.the gloom, drew taut with shock; the startled eyes flared so wide that white shone around the full.attendant's shoes in Celia's bag; the wig went into place easily over her new haircut; the coat went over her uniform, and she tied the scarf over the wig while Celia took over the job of putting bottles, jars, brushes, and tubes into the bag to keep up the background noise. Veronica pointed at the closet in which she had hidden the fatigues and nodded once, following it with a confident wink just before she put on Celia's glasses. Then she finished filling the bag while Celia disappeared into the shower..authorities have realized that the fire at the farmhouse was arson, and if autopsies have revealed that the.deception. Perfect poise is the key to survival. Mom always said so, and Mom knew her stuff..Sterm studied the amber liquid for a few seconds while he swirled it slowly around in his glass, and then looked up. "However, I am sure that you did not travel twenty thousand miles to discuss matters such as that.'.The voyage of the Mayflower II had ended..and when you're a nine-year-old girl, even an unusually smart one with a gift for gab, you can't just pack.forbidding than this one, he knows that sprinting flat-out through such terrain in twenty-percent humidity,.Fulmire looked uneasy but in the end was forced to nod his agreement. "But such a situation could only come about if an emergency condition had already been in force to begin with," he warned. "It could not be applied in any way to the present circumstances.".Jay drank some more of his coffee, stared at his cup in silence for what seemed a long time, then said without looking up, "I've been thinking on and off... you know, I think I'd like to get into the Army. What would be the best way of going about it?".by an awareness of the bond of imperfection that all the sons and daughters of this world share without.Faced with a question slanted like that, Fallows could only reply, "Well... no, I suppose not.".What had surprised him even more was the quality of everything they had provided. The closets, drawers, and vanity that formed one wall of the room by the entrance to the bathroom were old-fashioned in style, but built from real, fine-grained wood, expertly carved. The doors 'and drawers fitted perfectly and moved to the touch of a finger. The fabrics and drapes were soft and intricately woven rather than having been patterned by laser impregnation; the carpets were of an organic self-cleaning, self regenerating fiber that felt like twentieth-century Wilton or Axminster; the bathroom fittings were molded from a metallic glazed crystal that glowed with a faint internal fluorescence; the heating and environmental system were noiseless. On Earth the place would have cost a hundred thousand at least, he reflected. He wasn't sure if the Chironians still owned the complex and had leased it to the Mission for some' period, or what, but the letter from Merrick assigning him to quarters allocated on the surface hadn't mentioned rental payments. In his eagerness to get down from the Mayflower II, Fallows, after some moments of hesitation, had decided not to ask..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.".Bernard sat forward, his expression suddenly serious. "No, I didn't," he said. "Is that what they've been doing to it? How did..". His voice trailed away silently..".You can say that again," Bernard agreed..Colman said nothing, but instead allowed Swley to read the question in his head. Sure enough, Swley explained, "They don't make bombs or organize armies. It's too messy, and too many of the wrong people get hurt, they go for the grass roots. They start people thinking and asking questions they've never been taught how to ask before, and they'll take away the foundations piece by piece until the roof falls in." He paused and continued staring at the wall. "You're an engineer, and she runs part of a fusion complex. If you want out, you've got a place to go. That's what she's telling you.".Looking down at her tortured hands, Geneva said, "Why didn't you come to me back then, Micky?".Sterm's eyes smoldered. "I want a full record kept of every officer who deserts," he reminded Stormbel "The ones in the Government Center, the one in Vandenberg, Lesley in the Hexagon, that one there-all of them." His voice was calm but all the more menacing for its iciness. "They will answer for this when the time comes. General, detach the Battle Module immediately and proceed as planned.". "They've still got the Army... and a lot of nasty hardware up here," Lechat reminded him..starship bridge has been violated. He might be eleven or even twelve, but he's somewhat small for his.In spite of the girl's jocular tone, her words were wasps, and the truth in them appeared to sting her,.Noises in his wake suggest that the killers

are trying to track him. Contentious voices quickly arise as the in an arctic sea..that tempered her and made her tough, that ensured her survival, that motivated. Drink often fueled her."If you're going to lose anyway, you might as well win," Swyley replied. "If you win the wrong way, you lose, and if you lose either way, you lose. So why not enjoy it?""From a white back. But not anymore, I guess, by the look of it."..unconsciousness, she would sometimes repeat this mantra in a singsong voice, a hundred times, two..complete nut. UFOs are only one of his interests. But since marrying old Sinsemilla, he's pretty much..drove a rustbucket, never traveled, and bought his clothes at warehouse-clubs. Providing for Laura was,..away," and with vodka she tried but failed to rinse the taste of that admission from her mouth..Otto smiled humorlessly. "Take a look at the other lunatics around you," he suggested. "What happened to all the people? Where did your army go? They're all Chironians now. And you have nothing to offer them but protection from the fear that you would manufacture in their minds. But they have Chironian minds. They see that the fear is your fear, not theirs; and it is you who are in need of protection, not they."."Am I supposed to feel that way?""..because of their roaring engines and their wind wakes, which buffet the transport..He grinned at the joke as he, turned to lead the way. Farnhill didn't seem to appreciate the humor..Jay shrugged. "Maybe he figures he's got a better than even chance of outshooting them. Maybe he's just crazy."..The Lion-yin's lower orbit put it out of synchronism with the Mayflower 11 and resulted in the two vessels being shielded from each other by Chiron's mass for a period of thirty-two minutes every three-and-a-quarter hours. The sixteen Devastator missiles would be launched from the Battle Module while the Mayflower II was screened from the Kuan-yin's retaliatory fire. One salvo would be programmed to follow planet-grazing courses that would bring them up low and fast from points all around Chiron's rim, while the second salvo, launched a few minutes earlier, would swing wide and out into space to come back in at the Kuan-yin from various directions at the rear, the flights being timed so that they all converged upon the Chironian weapon simultaneously. A mass the size of the Kuan-yin could not maneuver rapidly, and the worst-case simulations run on the computers had shown an overwhelming margin in favor of the attack, whatever..He dries his hands thoroughly on paper towels, but then holds them under one of the hot-air blowers,..wishes are merely wishes, swimming only the waters of the mind, and now one of the SUVs guns its."What About her?""..Smiles and grins relieved the solemn atmosphere that had seized the room.. From the direction of the table, Jean emitted an audible sigh of relief. Bernard grinned up at the screen. "Thanks." he said. "We're all glad to hear it. Talk to you again soon." Kath gave a quick smile and vanished from the screen..Running with this strange blind exuberance, he loses all sense of distance and time, so he doesn't know."Well," he lied, "I'm not hiding anything under this one except a yellowed undershirt I should've thrown..Colman could only shake his head. "I don't know. Neither did Jay. That's what Fallows and whoever this other guy is want to find out."..Lechat stared at the Director's seat next to him, and while he was still turning his head perplexedly from one side to the other, the first approving murmurs and ripples of applause began coming from among the members an one by one they realized what it meant. The applause rose to an ovation as at last Lechat, looking a little awkward but with a broad smile breaking out across his face, stood up again and moved to stand before the Mission Director's seat, which under the emergency proviso had become his automatically. Wellesley had wanted it so, even if Lechat's term of office would be measured only in minutes..with the moon retiring behind blankets of clouds in the west and the sun still fast abed in the east,..fifteen years, but her voice had no sentimental effect on him. Lilly had shot Noah's dad in the head, killing..The Chironians would watch and wait until Only the lunatic core was left, stripped bare of its innocent protectors. Eventually only two kinds would be left: There would be Chironians, and there would be Kalenses And Colman no longer had any doubts as to which he would be..Until now, Micky hadn't noticed this deformity. "Everyone's got imperfections," she said..OUTSIDE DAWN WAS creeping into the sky as Stanislaw sat before a portable communications panel in one corner of the mess hall of the Omar Bradley Block, frowning at the mnemonics appearing on the screen and returning coded commands with intermittent movements of his fingers. Sirocco was watching from below the platform that he had been using for the briefing, while the rest of D) Company, many of them in flak vests and fatigue pants, sat talking in groups or just waiting among the rows of seats scattered untidily to face the platform. The doors and approaches to the building were all covered by lookouts, so there was no risk of surprise interruptions..away. I'm never going to forget the way he looked." The girl's voice grew softer but also more."I pretend to," Leilani said quietly. "Around Dr. Doom, I play along with his story, all agog over Luki..Although domesticated, this animal nevertheless remains to some degree a hunter, as the boy is not, and."Sometimes," Shirley answered. "Ci teaches English mainly, but mostly down on the surface. That is, when she's not working with electronics or installing plant wiring underground somewhere. I'm not all that technical. I grow olives and vines out on the Peninsula, and design interiors. That's what brought me up here--Clem wants the crew quarters and mess deck refitted and decorated. But yes, I teach tailoring sometimes, but not a lot."."We all did. And it doesn't change when you get older. It gets worse. Guys still get into gangs and make rules to keep all the other guys out because it makes the guys who are in feel better than the ones they keep out." . !-...,'~You got it wrong," Colman told them. "It's not the little ones at all." He widened his eyes in a parody of lewd anticipation and grinned. "Think of all those grandmothers." Terry and Paula laughed..Cozy in the dark SUV, in the embracing scent of new leather and the comforting smell of the damp but..Trust. They are bonding: He has no doubt that their relationship is growing deeper by the day, better by..kitchen staff, realizing that these two cowboys have no law-enforcement credentials, object to their."Ah, why don't we wrap it up and have the next one up in Rockefeller's," Hanlon suggested. "That was where Sirocco said he was going."..for what. Then he uses the palms of his hands to smooth back the hair at the sides of his head..Leilani knocked on the bedroom door. Unlike her mother, she had a respect for other people's personal..without permission in writing from the publisher. For information address: Bantam Books.

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