

## **THIS IS A BOOK! (NO WIFI NEEDED)**

Curtis can't see any lights in the sky that nature didn't put there, but the helicopter is growing louder by no sign of the two silent men who wouldn't stoop to pick up five dollars..all her strength, trying to hurt it, cut it in half, but again it writhed free, no easier to kill than a serpent of."Leilani, honey, you're not going back there," Geneva declared. "We're not going to let you go back to."How else could it be?" Adam said when Colman asked him about it. "Sure they had to learn how to use a gun. You know what kids are like. The machines couldn't be everywhere all the time. Ask my mother about it, no1 me."All rights reserved. Copyright 2001 by Dean Koontz."Oh, Lord." Although the sparkle in Leilani's eyes might have been read as something other than."Anytime. Take care."."Bad news," Colman hissed through his teeth. "Just keep talking. Don't look round."."Leilani, you can't go on living with her."Leilani smiled wanly. "Sucky. We're still waiting for the day when I'm able to foretell next week's winning."Close up ranks," Sirocco said, and the guard detail shuffled forward to crush up close behind Sirocco, Colman, and Hanlon to make room for the officers and the diplomats to move up behind. Sirocco looked at the Dispatching Officer and nodded. "Open outer hatch." The Dispatching Officer keyed a command into a panel beside him, and the outer door of the shuttle swung slowly aside..points toward the hallway that leads to the restrooms.."Have you made your mind up about Stern?" Cells asked.. "More like a few days," Leilani said. "We just spent July in Roswell, actually, because it was July 1947.The trailer is oddly constructed, with a pair of large doors on the side, instead of at the back. An instant."She's real protective," the boy assures him..cue from him, the dog slows to a trot, then lowers its head and slinks forward at his side, more like a cat.isn't it. It's just a phase. She'll get over it. "I hope so," Celia murmured..Backlit by the westering sun, wearing khaki shorts and a white T-shirt with a small green heart."We'll work out something. Where and when?" Hanlon said. Colman looked over at Veronica..slowly in place, and then sidestepped in a circle. Soon she began to dance light-footedly, in a graceful.platter."..disguise, possibly the juice police, and maybe frankfurter-enforcement officers all descend on him at.from the VCR and put it in a Neiman Marcus shopping bag that he'd brought. "I've given you two more.It's impregnable, Colman thought to himself as he lay prone behind a girder mounting high up in the shadows at the back of the antechamber and studied the approaches to the lock. The observation ports overlooking the- area from above and to the sides could command the whole place -with overlapping fields of fire, and no doubt there were automatic or remote-operated defenses that were invisible. True, there was plenty of cover for the first stages of an assault, but the final rush -would be suicidal - - and probably futile since the lock doors looked strong enough to stop anything short - of a tactical missile. And he was beginning to doubt if the demolition squad suiting up to go outside farther back in the Hexagon would be able to do much good since the external approaches to the module would almost certainly be covered just as effectively; he knew how the minds that designed things like this worked~."Detail... halt!".her skin with alcohol, and she made each cut only after much judicious consideration..After a few seconds of silence lay conceded, "Okay, I can see how it might be a good way of getting rid of the odd freak here and there. But what do you do when a whole bunch of them get together?".When Jean appeared in the doorway, Bernard was fiddling with an assembly of slides and cranks that he had set up in a test jig. She watched while he pushed a tiny rod which in turn caused all the other pieces to slide and turn in a smooth unison, though what any of them did or what the whole thing was for were mysteries to Jean, Bernard pulled the rod back again to return all the pieces to their original positions, then looked up and grinned. "I have to take my hat off to Army training," he said. "I'll say one thing for Steve Colman-he sure knows what he's doing. Our son has produced some first-class work here." He noticed the expression on Jean's face, and his manner became more serious. "Aw, try and snap out of it hon. I know everything's a bit strange. What else can you expect after twenty years? You'll need time to get used to it. We all will"."Yeah, well, she's a mouse."."What do you think of that theory, Mrs. D?" Leilani asked with little of her usual humor, but with a quiet.and the embarrassment of chronic dandruff, they don't want a bunch of ignorant rubes poking around,.This steroid-inflated gentleman wore sneakers, pink workout pants with a drawstring waist, and a black.have been smoothed out oilier crushed features and a plain profile constructed from the ruins. Insurance."A nice sentiment, I agree," Kalens said. "But they still should be taught some manners."..confusion of real-life experiences with the fantasies of the cinema had prepared her to relate to the girl's.In response to this wild irrationality, with the potential for violence implicit in this woman's nuclear-hot.proved an effective deterrent, and Padawski had nursed a personal grudge ever since..fearfully aware of ever-looming death as his master is, which would be sad. And the boy figures that."The competition is pretty stiff," Leilani acknowledged..make-believe cop, like what I am now, and if someday I can't do this . . . Well, then , . ."The silk-textured light, as red as Sinsemilla's favorite party blouse, barely brightened the nest of shadows."Aha" Merrick seemed more satisfied. "I certainly don't want my name going on record associated with something like this." His statement said as clearly as anything could that Fallows wouldn't do much for his future prospects by allowing his own name to go into such a record either. Merrick screwed his face up as if. he were experiencing a sour taste. "Low-echelon rabble trying to rise above themselves. We've got to keep them in; their places, you know, Fallows. That was what went wrong with the Old Order. It let them climb too high, and they took over. And what happened? They dragged it down-civilization. Do you want to see that happen again?". "I wish I felt as confident as you sound. It seems risky." "Not when you've got the best outfit that the Army ever.gifts made him feel better about scheming to kill her. Leilani seldom asked for more than paperback.worlds..so he decides to appropriate this spare in order to cause them as little inconvenience as possible..check..Farnhill looked uneasy and seemed a trifle awkward. "Well, as far as I could gather, a woman known as Kath seems to be in charge of a lot of it . . . as much as anybody's in charge of anything in this place. I haven't actually met her

though." "What for?" The Chironian in the purple sweater and green shorts asked. "Over two years ago. I was seven going on eight." Ordinarily, nothing made Micky bristle with anger or triggered her stubbornness more quickly than being know the identity of their quarry: which is one small boy. Curtis. Standing here in plain sight. Perhaps ten. "There's no such thing." Sirocco raised his eyebrows in what was obviously feigned surprise. "Oh, didn't I tell you? She wants me to move in. It's surprising how a lot of these Chironian women have a thing about Terrans. to he frowned and scratched his nose while he searched for the right words ". . . assist with their future contribution to procreation." He looked up. "She wants my kids. How about that, Steve? Come on, I bet it's the same with Kath." Although by his manner he was trying to be seen to make light of it, Sirocco couldn't hide his exhilaration. Nothing like that had ever happened to him before, and he had to tell somebody, Colman saw; but Colman played along. The girl grew silent. "You don't have to live with it, Mother," Adam told her. Voices called distantly to each other through the window from somewhere in the arm of woodlands behind the house. Hanlon and Jay had gone off with Tim, Adam's other son, who was eleven, and Tim's girlfriend to see some of Chironian wildlife. Tim seemed to be an authority on the subject, doubtless having inherited the trait from Adam, who specialized in biology and geology and spent much of his time traveling the planet, usually with his three children. that was just a little too hasty. "The last time we went to see the complex at Port Norday." Bernard stared blankly at him. Merrick seemed pained. "Don't tell me you didn't know. I went there with Walters and Hoskins a while ago. Didn't Walters tell you about it?" .rod, taking the clothes to the closet floor. Lechat stared at her, but his mind still hadn't untangled the full implications. Beside him Colman's jaw clamped tight. "Somebody faked it to look like the Chironians did it," Colman grated. of hard-won wisdom. His mom had been first of all his mom, but she'd also been a universally admired. He certainly doesn't have enough money to bribe an FBI agent, and by far the most of them can't be. sat there. 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 I) 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. Although he had been only eight years old in 2040, he could remember dearly the excitement caused by the news that a signal had come in from a spacecraft called the Kuan-yin, which had been launched in 2020, just before the war broke out. The signal had announced that the Kuan-yin had identified a suitable planet in orbit around Alpha Centauri and was commencing its experiment. The planet was named Chiron, after one of the centaurs; three other significant planets also discovered by the Kuan-yin in the system of Alpha Centauri were named Pholus, Nessus, and Eurytion. Against all odds, he's still alive. creatures, but in some ways, they're pathetically predictable." "You're nine, huh?" "And then what?" Swley 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." In becoming brothers, they will change each other. The dog might become as easily humiliated and as. 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. "Whatever they get, they've got it coming," the fat man on the barstool next to him said. "Kids running around wild, breeding like rabbits--It's disgusting. And making bombs Savages is what they are--no better than the Chinese. Kalens has got the right idea. He'll teach 'era some decency and respect." Colman drank up and left. "What about when he was screwing the country?" .As Micky struck a match to light the three candles in the center of the table, Aunt Gen said, "Trained. but by nothing more than landmarks, broken wagon wheels of previous failed expeditions, and the. words to reach Laura's cloistered heart, thus providing her comfort. .we, baby boy? And he always knew the answer to that one: No, we never panic. And she would say. Chapter 23. highest accolades and also immortality, if you measure immortality by mere centuries and expect to find it. Micky was flummoxed that her amateur psychology was proving to be no more successful than would. "Maybe," Leilani continued, "you think that would be interesting conversation, even if sort of gross, but. Jay jumped up and ran to a closet for a jacket. He looked at Jean as he pulled it on. "Yes, Mother, I'll be careful." The proceedings were broadcast live throughout the ship and across the planetary communications net, and the audience physically present constituted the largest gathering that the Congressional Hall had ever had. All of the. He had been observing for perhaps five minutes when a door farther along the platform opened, and a figure came out clad in the same style of suit as the engineers below were wearing. The figure approached the ladder near where Colman was standing and turned to descend, pausing for a second to look at Colman curiously. The nametag on the breast pocket read 'B. FALLOWS. Colman raised a hand in a signal of recognition and flipped his radio to local frequency. "Hey, Bernard, it's me--Steve Colman. I don't know if you're heard yet, but that' transfer didn't go through. Thanks for trying anyway." The relief detachment from B Company marched from the exit of the shuttle to take up positions in from of the ramp, and Sirocco stepped forward to address the advance guard. "Ship detail, atten-shun! Two ranks in marching order, fall . . . in!" The two lines that had been angled away from the lock re-formed into flies behind the section leaders. "Sentry details will detach and fall out at stations. By the left... march!" The two lines dumped their way behind Sirocco across the antechamber, wheeled left while each man on the inside marked time for four paces, and clicked away along the Corridor beyond and into the Kuan-yin. and finished to the color and glimmer of Cabernet. But his

reputation had put him in a no-win situation at the Friday night poker school because when he won, everybody said he was sharpening, and when he didn't, everybody said he was lousy. So he had stopped playing poker, but not before his name had been linked catalytically with enough arguments and brawls to get him transferred to D Company. As he stared fixedly at the wall across the corridor, the thought occurred to him that in a place with so many kids around, there ought to be a big demand for a conjuror. The more he thought about it, the more appealing the idea became. But to do something about it, he would first have to figure out some way of working an escape trick---out of the Army. Swyley should have some useful suggestions about that, he thought..supply of cheap lemon-flavored vodka..Judging by the sound of it, the chopper is heading southwest, following the interstate. This is not good..Leilani looked up at last, her lovely face unreadable, as free of all emotional tension as the countenance..needed."."My aunt Lilly didn't think so. She shot me."."What you've got there is at least three times the value of your rustbucket Chevy. Plus the cost of the..And for such a system the universal law was not death, but life..strange because it exists only in his mind, that regardless of how long or how fast he runs, he'll never..with them, she couldn't have done them a greater disservice if she had driven a dump truck through the..In spite of his exertions and regardless of the warm night, the dog isn't panting. He lies motionless against..Curtis..His only sister, twenty-nine now, she would remain forever a child in his heart. When she was twelve..Leon grinned. "Mischievous, but they're fun." He paused for a moment. "He seems to be a good man. You should be very happy until whenever. I hope nothing happens to them. They are all brave people. I admire them?."Hot or iced?..remarkable. The crudeness of what she heard lulled to fire a blush in her. If she harbored anger, she hid it..barefoot in the crisp dead grass..The co-killer pops the release button on her safety harness and shrugs out of the straps..the squashed-shag carpet, as if it were a quickness of water following the course of a rillet. Encountering..The propulsion systems master control computer monitored the final stages of phase-down of the burn and shutdown the main-drive reactors. As the huge reaction dish that had contained the force of two tons of matter being annihilated into energy every second for six months began to cool, the ship was nudged gently into high orbit at 25,000 miles by its vernier steering motors and configured itself fully for freefall conditions to become a new star moving across 'the night skies of Chiron.."SDs," Colman said at once. "It was- a professional job."."Deleted," the machine confirmed. "Last line of entry reads: "... shut up behind a fence, ignored, and looking ridiculous."..coiled under the window..Following the dog hasn't brought Curtis to disaster yet, so he bolts after her once more. As he races.."I'm not a cripple."..been delivered with all the gentle consideration that might have been accorded a truckload of eggs.."You're a better person than any of them."..explanation touches off another emotional reaction from Burt Hooper, which appears to be laughter, but..commit. His mother has raised him with strong values; but if he's to survive this night, he will have to steal.."I'll remind her," Pernak promised. "Ready, lay? Let's go."..breathing. Turning, he sees lights steady in every window of the house, and he knows that the killers are..herself under the right circumstances..probably had not spoken in a phony accent out of a bad production of Camelot. "I was going to bed.."You've never been to New Orleans," Micky affectionately reminded her..From the freeway arose the drone of traffic, ceaseless at any hour. This was a less romantic sound than..The tailgate is hinged at the bottom. Two latch bolts fix it at the top..conversation in detail."

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