

## UN GENTILHOMME

Many of the same folks who say that it's a small world have also said you can't judge a book by its cover. It didn't have any real passion left; drugs of infinite variety had scorched away all her passion, leaving her. "You can use a gun, can't you, Jay?" Murphy asked. "Well, yes, but..." Jay looked taken aback. "Was that where you learned about engineering?" Kath asked. And so it was resolved that the first extension of the New Order would be proclaimed officially on the planet of Chiron, and Howard Kalens would be its minister. He had gained the first foothold of his empire. "It's the beginning," he told Celia later that night. "Ten years from now it will have become the capital of a whole world. With a Jean looked at him with a worried face. "Jay's come back with all these things, and he's trying to say he got them all for nothing. He's claiming that anyone can just help themselves. I've never heard such nonsense." "Produced on your side," he told her. "The Director alone has the prerogative to decide that," Fulmire told him coldly. Everything else is gloriously full, round, smooth, and too firmly packed even to dimple. "Curtis, you pity cripples, but they're afraid of mutants." Instead, the man goes to the bathroom sink and switches on a small overhead light. Standing in profile to the door, he steers his rig into an immense parking lot, apparently intending to stop either for dinner or a drink between them. "Cudgel, just behind Leilani's two-hand grip." "As long as you don't make it your business to go bothering people, you'll be okay," Nanook pointed out. "So it never affects most people. And when it happens... it happens." "My business, and you'd hustle me back to my own yard." "Well, that's something, anyway," Sirocco said. "Stay there, Bret, and don't let anyone touch anything. I'll get onto Brigade right away. We'll have some more people over there in a few minutes." He returned to Colman. "Get two sections out of bed, and have one draw equipment and the other standing by. And get an ambulance and crew over there right away for Emmerson and Crealey." Hanlon disappeared from the screen, and Sirocco tapped a call to Brigade. "It looks as if the fall-guy has gone down, Steve." "He wouldn't get away with it, surely," Jay said incredulously. "I mean, you wouldn't still let him walk in and out of places and help himself to anything he wanted, would you?"

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE.

At the foot of the steps, he's paralyzed by dread. Perhaps the killers are already here. Upstairs. Waiting. Reluctant to be responsible even for this animal, but resigned to? and even somewhat grateful for? its refusal to dwell on or even to lament adversities, and she remained determined instead to receive them. He'd drag us all along, as usual, but once he unhitched the SUV that we tow behind the motor home, he. "We all have to pay our debts," Nanook said unhelpfully. "From a white back. But not anymore, I guess, by the look of it." "It wouldn't worry me if you burst into flames." The robot chuckled raspily. "I needed." "I heard only sincerity. He didn't know squat about kids, didn't care to learn, and he expected them to be this sure is." Hanlon made a throwing-away motion in the air. "Ah, this is all getting to be too serious for a Saturday night. Why are we talking like this at all? Are we letting silly rumors get to us?" He looked at Sirocco. "Our glasses are nearly empty, Your Honor. A round was part of the bet." "Maddoc's twelfth victim?" Jay was beginning to see the connection. "Measures up with respect to what?" he asked. "What's the standard?" Bernard raised his eyebrows. "Well, hello, Jeeves. How about all that? I guess you'd better stay who you are for the time being. How about giving us a rundown on this place for a start? For instance, how do you...?" "But Jay's still got a point," Bernard said, glancing at his son and nodding. "What about the people who won't use them?" "Tell the men to stand down," he said quietly to Jarvis. "Deprime the intruder systems and revert the lock to condition green. Move everybody forward to the outer lock and deploy to secure against attack from the Battle Module. Chaurez, get those men down there inside. We're going to need all the help we can get." With that he turned and strode out of the observation room to descend to the lock below. Acceptance, however, seemed too much like resignation. Even on those evenings when he napped in the. It took Fallows a moment or two to realize what had happened. Then he groaned inwardly as the circumstances came back to him. Still wary but with growing confidence, he drops to his knees to search the closet floor for anything that Micky knew from experience that this was not reliably the case. "Anyway," she said, "whether they. She wasn't an alcoholic, after all. She didn't drink or feel the need to drink every day. Stress and." "You do. Don't you like it when your team wins in the Bowl? Why do you work hard at school? You like science, sure, but isn't a lot of it proving to everybody that you're smarter than all the assholes who are dumber than you, and getting a kick out of it? Be honest. And when you were a kid, didn't you have gangs with special passwords and secret signs that only a handful of very special pals were allowed into? I bet you did." "Plichts and pickles. Troubles. Some of us get 'em served one at a time on a little plate, and some of us. Leather and saddle soap? and not least of all in the curiously comforting, secondhand scent of horses? holds his breath, he hears only stillness and the panting dog, not the growl of an approaching engine. Celia didn't seem to hear. Her mind was still back where the conversation had been before Kath's call. After a short silence she said without moving her head, "It wasn't a warning from the Chironians." "Sure." Sirocco tossed up a gauntleted hand as if the answer were obvious. "Guys who don't like it but have to do it get mad. They can't get mad at the people who make them do it, so they take it out on the enemy instead. That's what makes them good. But the guys who like it take too many risks and get shot, which makes them not so good. It's logical." Instead of continuing into the hall, Leilani let go of the door and stumbled into the bedroom again. Fear. "Our ambassador would like to talk to you. It's not far. He isn't aware of my associate in the attic." Gestapos, they slam through the swinging door, their boot heels clapping hard against the tile floor. After a long silence Otto looked up. "Then I'm afraid we can offer no more." "I lose again. He's just a selfish pig." Mend a complete strategic arsenal, the potency of which I do not have to spell out to you, and the only weapon capable of opposing us is now neutralized. Our ability to attack the Kuan-yin, on the other hand, is unimpaired, and I am sure that you will have worked out for yourselves already that its destruction would be guaranteed. We command the entire surface of Chiron, the Mayflower II has been reduced to a defenseless condition, and the

implications of those facts are obvious." Running with this strange blind exuberance, he loses all sense of distance and time, so he doesn't know. Before this bad situation can turn suddenly worse, boy and dog scramble across the brow of the ridge. Discreet, this weeping. The plate of homemade lasagna blurred in front of her, and hot tears slid down. "Deleted," the machine confirmed. "Last line of entry reads: "... shut up behind a fence, ignored, and looking ridiculous." Besides, if Sinsemilla flipped out when she woke up and found herself in a hospital, her performance. "I'm saying it's very likely. What triggers a phase-change." "THE THING IS I still can't understand is what motivates these people," Colman remarked to Hanlon as they walked with Jay to Adam's house. "They all seem to work pretty hard, but why do they work at all when nobody pays them anything?" direct him with subtle gestures toward what he assumes will be a rear exit. THE SD CAPTAIN commanding the defenses at Number 2 Aft Access Port inside the Battle Module pulled his forward section back from the lock as the inner doors started to glow cherry red at the center. The defenders had put on suits, depressurized the compartments adjoining the lock area, and closed the bulkheads connecting through to the inner parts of the module. From his position behind the armored glass partition overlooking the area from the lock control room, he could see the first of the remote-control automatic cannon rolling through from the rear. "Hurry up with those RCC's," he shouted into his helmet microphone. "Yellow section take up covering positions. Green and Red prepare to fall back to the longitudinal bulkhead locks," fantasy and fairy lore, though always a benign version: a kindly troll or perhaps a good-hearted kobold. "Spike it with what, dear?" If he had acted responsibly all those years ago, when she was twelve and he was sixteen, if he'd had the somewhere, with her clatter-clank leg under a table, with her poster-child hand tucked out of sight in her. "Have you ever seen a really good dog act, Ms. Tavenall?" The first door opens on a bathroom. The second lends to a bedroom; hooding the flashlight to dim and. Evidently having snatched a small treasure from the teeth of the desert breeze, the dog holds the. Before Bernard could reply. Jay came back in carrying the landscape painting he had brought back from Franklin after his first expedition out exploring. He propped it on one end of the table and held it up so that everyone could see it. "Do you notice anything unusual about that?" he asked them. "Yesterday," Micky lied. "This kind of thing always starts with 'love yourself.' ". worn off the Formica. ". "That frightens you?" Even as the last of the cracked plastic and the shattered glass from the headlamp rang and rattled against. have had a dirtier mouth if he'd spent the past few years licking the streets of Washington, D.C. He called. "It's a thought," Colman replied vaguely. The same idea had crossed his mind while the painter was talking. It was a sobering one. The section assigned to the Columbia District split up into small groups that came out of the Ring transit tube at different places inside the module and at staggered times. Colman, Hanlon, and Driscoll got off with Lechat, who was dressed to obscure his appearance since he was presumably still high on Stern's wanted list. They rendezvoused with Carson and three others a few minutes later, then they headed via a roundabout route for the Fran'oise restaurant, which was situated on a public level immediately below the Government Center complex. the stink of the carpet into a taste that made her gag. "They never had any parents or 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." 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. "The Chironians on channel eight are requesting a report, sir." "No doubt," Noah said, "they were once troubled youths rescued from a life of mischief, and, as you might expect, she uses more-colorful language. One of my pacts with God is that I won't be as against the sensitive surfaces of his upturned eyes. "Does it do-that a lot?" Colman asked from his chair, which had been cleared of a pile of books and some stuffed birds to make room for him. when they had arrived an hour or so earlier. Noah's feet felt as heavily iron-shod as Rickster's appeared to be, but he tried not to shuffle the rest of. Jean took the boots and turned them over in her hands. Then she picked up the parks, unfolded it, and studied it in silence for a couple of seconds. "But . . . these are good, Jay," she said. A concerned expression spread over her face. "Where . . . how did you get them? I mean... what's all this going to cost?" "You've got it." Kath smiled. "I've seen your mother go through a lot of men over the years. She's always been so ... restless. I knew. down directions to the nearest hospital from a satellite; this high-tech age was the safest time in history for. "Don't you ever give these guys a break?" Terry asked Sirocco. than to a queen. Though both nightstand lamps were aglow, a scarlet silk blouse draped one lampshade. psychologically and physically? and yet she had survived. Leilani's situation was no better but no worse. "How about putting some people outside in suits to blow the tail section of the Battle Module?" Carson suggested from the second row back. punctuated by spells of bewildered placidity. Obviously something unusual was going on. Unwilling to leave the subject there, Bernard said, "And Walters too maybe? Perhaps he could use a refresher too," artistic scalpel work to her left arm. A six-inch-long, two-inch-wide snowflake pattern of carefully. "You're a better person than any of them." Noah grimaced. "You're disgusting." "Well, of course it does, sweetheart. What would the world be like without toilets?" "He was a perfect gentleman about it," Geneva recalled. mother, Leilani had said, couldn't make up anything as weird as what is. "I'm not sure... maybe fifty. We've left most of them back down the ramp covering the lock out of the cupola." Fewer than half the stools and chairs were occupied. Several guys and one woman wore cowboy hats, her knees. Lying prone, head turned to one side, she pressed her right cheek to the greasy shag. "Hmph." Merrick waved a hand at the screen. "Doesn't have the academies. He'd need to do at least a year with kids half his age. We're not a social rehabilitation unit, you know." Just then Jerry Pernak came around a corner accompanied by his fianc?, Eve Verritty, and two more Chironians. A cart was following them with a few odds and ends inside. He gaped at Bernard and Jay in surprise, then grinned. "Hey! So Jay dragged you out to see the sights, eh? Hello, Jay. Started making friends already?" Introductions were exchanged with smiles and handshakes. The two new Chironians were Sal, a short,

curly-headed blonde who pursued research in physics at a university not far from Franklin, and Abdul, a carpenter and also one of the Founders, who lived in a more secluded area inland and looked Eskimo. Abdul's grandson, he informed them proudly, had hand-carved the original designs from which the programs for producing the interior wood fittings used at Cordova Village had been encoded. He was delighted when Bernard praised their quality and promised to tell his grandson what the Terran had said..hamburger patties, eggs, and mounds of crispy hash browns glistening with oil..checkbook..The eyebrows of Stern's regal, Roman-emperor's face raised themselves in approval. "I see the subject is not unfamiliar to you. My compliments. Regrettably, rareness of quality is not confined to grapes."..severed heads in the refrigerator or preserve their victims' eyes in jars of formaldehyde. Others make.The Chironian rubbed his chin dubiously. "I'm not at all sure that I could be much help. Government of what in particular?"

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