

A SEASON OF SPELLS

her feet with such agitation that she seemed to flail herself erect: skirt flounce churning around her legs, EIGHTEEN-WHEELERS LOADED with everything from spools of abb to zymometers, reefer semis. In the main ground-floor hall, past the nurses' station, Noah encountered Richard Velnod. Richard. IN THE ARMCHAIR, Noah Farrel talked past the point where he bothered to listen to himself. fabulous bulk will allow, bringing her face closer to his, and she whispers these teaberry-scented words: Faced with a question slanted like that, Fallows could only reply, "Well... no, I suppose not." the day." The unpacking was finished, and Jean would know better where she wanted to stow the few things he had left lying out. The move had gone very quickly and smoothly, mainly because the Chironians had even furnished the place--fight down to the towels and the bed linen, which had meant that the Failowses could leave most of their own things in storage at the base until something more permanent was worked out. "How's that work?" "What little orange lady would that be?" Noah asked. Bernard shook his head and gestured in the direction of the couple from the Mayflower H, who were glancing furtively around them while a handling machine by the exit unloaded their carts onto a conveyer that looked as if it fed down to the level below. "But look what's happening," he said. "How long can you keep up with that kind of thing? What happens when everyone starts acting like that?" "And by implication that he was mixed up in the bombings and the Padawski escape too," Bernard threw in. Now the only place I can see his face is in my mind. But I take time every day to concentrate on his face, hesitancy and trots at the boy's side. "A payoff." anymore, that she was the pope or maybe some pure and saintly girl named Hortense? She didn't have. Bernard stood up, paced slowly across to stare at the tool rack on the far wall, and seemed to weigh something in his mind for a long time before replying. Eventually he emitted a long sigh and turned back to face Jean, who had moved a step inside the doorway. "We can still build it," he said. "But it doesn't quite work the way we thought then. Jerry was right, you know--this whole society has gone through a phase-change of evolution. You can't make it go backward again any more than you can turn birds back into reptiles." Bernard came a pace nearer. His voice took on a persuasive, encouraging note. "Look, I didn't want to say anything about this until I knew a little more myself, but we don't have to get mixed up with any of it at all--any of us. Kalens and the rest of them belong to everything we've heft behind now. We don't need them anymore. Don't you see, it can't last?" "No, I'm not. I'm going to talk about air-conditioning for." "Is this the truth?" Bernard asked uncertainly with a strong note of suspicion in his voice. seen not at all, but always reappearing, the two of them bonding more intimately the farther they travel. "How long were you up on the Kuan-yin before they moved you down to the surface, Kath?" Red blouses still draped the lamps. The scarlet light no longer fostered a brothel atmosphere; in view of. sort of the way college students go to Fort Lauderdale every spring break. And isn't it amazing, really, time is his ally. The longer he eludes that savage crew, the fainter his trail becomes? or at least this is. "I'm always working on a screenplay in my head. In film school, they teach you everything's material, and. hours of punching babies and nuns, the pacifist said, "The congressman isn't unreasonable. By taking his. Curtis Hammond, the original, might have allowed her to have juice in the past. The current Curtis. "But how can you be so sure?" wish that thou were as well made as she." CHAPTER FIFTEEN. "She's coming down to the surface later this evening to pick up some papers and things from the house after it's dark. But she'll be under escort. We've worked out a plan, but it needs someone to get me into the house first, before they arrive, and to get her away afterward. Also I'll need a way of getting out of the shuttle base later--it's being closed off. You're the only person she'll trust. Can you get away inside the next hour, say?" "It's a bit different from taking a cab round the Ring," Jay remarked as the ear eased to a halt. three victims were savagely assaulted, perhaps tortured, all dead before the fire was set, then the names. Minnie Mouse or at least maybe Snow White, but I was too busy." "Ah." Leilani's eyes widened. "You're the twelve percenters." Realizing the full horror of the girl's situation, Aunt Gen was reduced to stunned silence and to at least a. with less pain than usual, but the thorns still pierced her, each a terrible memory that she could never. "A communications specialist at Brigade." "Even if we assume that I know what you mean, I don't think you'd expect me to answer." So now they both knew, and knew that the other knew. Each had tested the other's discretion, and both of them respected what they had found. Nothing more needed to be said. Constance Veronica Tavenall-Sharmer, wife of the media-revered congressman who disbursed payoffs. you want to talk about anything instead of just around it, I'm here." He boosts himself against the sill. Leaning out, he squints into the wind, toward the front of the motor. Chapter 8. remains optimistic about his chances of escape. The sight of his canine companion, happily drinking. "Aunt Gen and Uncle Vernon owned a little corner grocery," Micky explained, "which is like being. More likely than not, both sociopathic owners of the Windchaser will remain in their cockpit seats for a. was, by the current definition, a good citizen. The colonization of Chiron was over. "Really. It's a rosebush." When the police cruiser sweeps past and rockets away into the night, the motor home gains speed once. away. I'm never going to forget the way he looked." The girl's voice grew softer but also more. shoulder straps and bodice, as well as on the deep flounce that hemmed the skirt. The garment appeared. truck stop. If they're sitting at the far end of the vehicle, facing away from the bedroom, they aren't in a. Lechat nodded. "That was already understood," he replied grimly. put it, but because of a self-destructive impulse. In most boys' books the world over, and in those for grownups, too, adventure always involves treasure. Many of the same folks who say that it's a small world have also said you can't judge a book by its. "That's what you want, isn't it," Jean said with a hint of accusation in her voice. "You'd like us to be the way they are. But have you really thought about what that would mean? No standards, no order to anything, no morality. . . I mean, what kind of a way would that be for Jay and Marie to grow up?" the answers to them could be learned only by earning her complete trust, and that her trust could be. Bernard nodded grimly, but his expression did not contain the

dismay that it might have. Evidently he had been half-prepared for the news. "Borftein's been checking on that possibility," he said. "It'll be forty minutes before the Kuan-yin goes behind the rim. Stern won't launch before then." Jean seemed to dismiss the subject from her mind. She looked uncertainly at Bernard for a few seconds, and then said, "It's not really anything to do with that. It's- oh, I can't put this any other way-it's you." Adam had not seemed especially surprised when Hanlon expressed reservations about the wisdom of such an attitude, and had replied to the effect that on Chiron personal affairs were considered personal business. Some couples might choose to remain exclusively committed to each other and their family, others might not, and it wasn't a matter for society or anybody else to comment on. As far as he was concerned, Adam had ~aid, the notion of anybody's presuming to decree moral standards for others and endeavoring to impose them by legislation was "obscene." Celia had become very thoughtful in the last few seconds. She waited for the talking to subside for a moment, and then said, "If we have to go up to the ship anyway, it might be possible to make this far more effective than what we've been talking about so far." She paused, but nobody interrupted. "I know where the people who have been arrested." Then there is no reason for us to allow unseemly haste to lower the quality of the evening," Stern said, sitting forward and reaching with a leisurely movement of his hand for the decanter. "A little time ripens more than just fine cognac. Will you join me in a refill?" "Yes, dear, who did he whack?" Aunt Gen asked with bright-eyed interest. Perhaps her occasional. "Of course not! But one of the Tech grades maybe . . . Two or Three perhaps. Or maybe the graduate entry stream." -.notches above plain grub." Predators on the wooden highways overhead might be stalking him, leaping gracefully limb to limb, as. The woman stopped and ran her eye curiously over their faces for a moment while they shuffled and straightened up self-consciously. "You don't have to stand around out here like this as far as we're concerned, you know," she said. "You can come on inside if you want. How about a coffee, and maybe something to eat?" The faces turned instinctively toward Colman as he rejoined them.. "I'll have the cook grill up a couple meat patties, rare, and mix them with some plain cooked rice and a. He thought it as he and Sirocco sat entombed in their heavy-duty protective suits behind a window in the guardroom next to the facility's armored door, staring out along the corridors that nobody had come along in twenty years unless they'd had to. Behind them PFC Driscoll was wedged into a chair, watching a movie on one of the companel screens with the audio switched through- to his suit radio. Driscoll should have been patrolling outside, but that ritual was dispensed with whenever Sirocco was in charge of the Bomb Factory guard detail. A year or so previously, somebody in D Company had taken advantage of the fact that everyone looked the same in heavy-duty suits by feeding a video recording of some dutiful, long forgotten sentry into the closed-circuit TV system that senior officers .were in the habit of spying through from time to time, and nobody from the unit had done any patrolling since. The cameras were used instead to afford early warning of. unannounced spot checks.. Fallsow stood awkwardly and began moving toward the door. When he was halfway there he stopped, hesitated, then turned round again. "Sir, there's just one thing I'd like--". tried to settle his nerves.. This humble scene at Geneva's kitchen table was a fresh breeze of reality, clearing away the lingering. Her voice wasn't full of money, no disdain or evidence of tutor-shaped enunciation, but rich with quiet. "What about his adjutant?" Sirocco asked.. could have charmed the snake of Eden into a mood of benign companionship. Gen's once golden hair. either adventure or a share of the juice.. "That's my whole point," Bernard told them. "They're. but one: If you counted snakes an asset, then not merely a single serpent lurked within this foliage, but a. Two big SUVs, modified for police use, with racks of rotating red and blue emergency beacons on their. or in fear. The clear-eyed, steel-supported girl, larky and lurching, seemed at first to be a fabulist whose. The ravages to your face from a snakebite might involve more than scar tissue. Maybe nerve damage.. That piece of furniture and all else upon it remained shadowy shapes, but the bottle had a strange.. "Still, man, that was impressively more colorful than anything I was expecting. We got more than we. Micky had figured to let the girl wind down, hut the longer that Leilani circled the subject of her brother's. "She's right," Celia agreed simply.. Sheltering against a weathered outcropping of rock, he wishes desperately that his mother were with. candleglow.. Snake; under there somewhere. When Leilani held her breath, she could hear the angry hissing. The. One more blot. You didn't want slippery hands in a slippery situation.. canopy and angles toward the buildings, downshifting with a hack and grind of protesting gear teeth.. "I'd love a piece, thanks," Leilani said.. when the battering stopped, had squirmed inside the pole. By this pipeline, it traveled unseen from. mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system.. away five years ago." "My dad liked Hawaiian shirts.".. around in your new Corvette by Thursday. I'm sort of stuck with her, if you see what I mean, and I know." "So far, you're not registering high on my terror meter.".. insects hard at work in the hot, dry air.. Sadness found a surprisingly easy purchase in Geneva's smooth, fair, freckled face. "He was so. Jay shrugged. "Maybe he figures he's got a better than even chance of outshooting them. Maybe he's just crazy.".. Colman stared hard at him for a few seconds. "What do you think you'd get out of it?" he asked.. properties which had been thought of as fundamental, such as quark color charge, quark "flavor," and even mass, to the astonishment of some, became seen Instead as consequences of the ways in which combinations of these two basic components were arranged, much as a melody follows from an arrangement of notes but cannot be expressed as a property of a single note.. The kitchen had seemed quiet before, but the fridge had been making more noise than Micky realized.. haloed by red lamplight, glittery-eyed with excitement. "Thingy, him a hard-ass stubborn little crawly. Luki and I have the same last name, but that doesn't mean anything. It's not actually our father's name.. time, she's satisfied with takin' on a joint, keeping a nice light buzz, maybe floating on a Quaalude. She. "Maybe. Who knows? Let's just hope there aren't too many of them in the Army.".. this bed.. Staring at the partially crushed can in her small fist, avoiding eye contact, the girl said, "Well, I'll admit it's." "Was it respect they showed that boy who was killed last night?" Jean asked bitterly. "And our people say they're not even going to press charges against the man who did it. What kind of a way is that

to live? Are we supposed to just let them dictate their standards to us by shooting anyone who steps over their lines? Are we supposed to do nothing until we get a call telling us that Jay's in the hospital-or worse-because he said the wrong thing?" "Why don't you piss off," he growled at last. "What's your name, boy?" The major thrust his face close and narrowed his eyes menacingly. The debate continued for some time, but Wellesley was still the Mission Director and final authority, and in the end his views prevailed. "I'll go along with you, but I have to say I'm not happy about it," Borftein said. "A lot of them might be still kids, but there are nearly ten thousand first-generation and something like thirty thousand in all who have reached or are past their late teens--more than enough adults capable of causing trouble. We still need contingency plans based on our having to assume an active initiative." "telling them what to do?" "Why should they?" "Leilani, you can't go on living with her." Inside, the technicians and other staff were still recovering from being invaded by armed troops and the even greater shock of seeing Wellesley, Celia Kalens, and Paul Lechat with them. They stood uncertainly among the gleaming equipment cubicles and consoles while the soldiers swiftly took up positions to cover the interior. Then Wellesley moved to the middle of the control-room floor and looked around. "Who is in charge here?" he demanded. His voice was firmer and more assured than many had heard it for a long time. Face to the sun, eyes closed, striving to empty her mind of all thought, yet troubled by insistent. She knocked again. he had them. Being Curtis Hammond requires a remarkable amount of energy. She might remain in this state for five or six hours, in rare cases even as long as eight or ten. Stern's eyes took on a distant light, and his breathing quickened visibly. "I will build this world into the power that Earth could never be-an unconquerable fortress that even a fleet of EAF starships would never dare approach. suspected that she'd crossed the line between the wrong and the right kinds of sassy, and in fact walked. Bernard was nodding but with evident reservations. "True," he agreed. "But it's up in the ship, not down here. And it must be strongly protected. It's a vicious circle- you'd have to get in there to turn the Army around, but they're going to be outside and stopping your getting in until you've done it. How can you break out of it?" The siren quickly grows louder until it's close behind the motor home. Celia nodded. "That evening, as soon as I got up to the ship. I think I must have been hysterical or something. But yes, I told him." "lie's hysterical." Noah shoved the bag into a pants pocket. December 31, 2080. "Those for?" Lechat invited. All of the members' hands went tip. "Against?" There were no hands. "The resolution is passed," Lechat announced. Phoenix had officially become a part of Chiron once again. Bernard managed a weak smile. "That's a nice thought, but I've got a job to do. We're still going to be busy for a while. Thanks anyway." He thought for a few seconds. "I hope you're not planning anything too tough out them. I mean, Jay hasn't exactly had a lot of practice at that kind of thing. He's never even seen a planet before." Jay winced under his breath and looked away. The pitiable tremor in his voice should be an embarrassment to any self-respecting boy of adventure. "What have we achieved?" Borftein asked contemptuously. high, either." families. He'd been hoping for more kids, lots of kids, so he won't be so easy to spot if the wrong people. Hanlon shook his head. "Ah, why be vindictive? We got her off and sent them all on their way. They're probably in Franklin by now, looking for the fastest way out of town." light instead of retreating from it. see the window-basher. The guy grinned and winked. But Bernard suspected that the Chironians were fully capable of dealing with the problem without the Army. The Chironian population seemed to have evolved experts at everything, including some very capable marksmen and backwoodsmen who in years gone by had been called on occasionally to discourage, and if necessary dispose of, persistent troublemakers. Van Ness, for instance-the man who had dropped Wilson with a clean shot from the back of a crowded room-was obviously no amateur. It had turned out that Van Ness besides being a cartographer and timber supplier, was also an experienced hunter and explorer and taught 'armed- and unarmed-combat skills at the academy in Franklin that Jay had visited. In fact Colman had spent an afternoon in the hills farther along the Peninsula observing some of the academy's outdoor activities, and had returned convinced, Jay had said, that some of the Chironians were as good as the Army's best snipers. "I don't how." Amy screwed her face up and rubbed the bridge of her nose with a finger. "I suppose I'd have to be crazy." campground. Not even a real rest stop with bathrooms or a picnic table, or anything. Just this lonely wide. ON THE DAY officially designated December 28, 2080, in the chronological system that would apply until the ship switched over to the Chironian calendar, the Mayflower 11 entered the planetary system of Alpha Centauri at a speed of 2837 miles per second, reducing, with its main drive still firing at maximum power. The propagation time for communications to and from Chiron had by that time fallen to well under four hours. A signal from the planet continued that accommodations for the ship's occupants had been prepared in the outskirts of Franklin as had been requested. Over his glass, Colman watched as three Special Duty troopers made their way to the bar. They stood erect and intimidating in their dark olive uniforms, cap-peaks pulled low over their faces, and surveyed the surroundings over, hard, jutting chins. Nobody met their stares for long before looking away. One of them murmured an order to the bartender, who nodded and quickly set up glasses, then grabbed bottles from the shelf behind. The SD's were the elite of the regular corps, handpicked for being the meanest bastards in the Army and utterly without humor. They reminded Colman of the commando units he had seen in the Transvaal. They provided bodyguards for VIPs on ceremonial occasions--there was hardly any reason apart from tradition in the Mayflower II's environment--and had been formed by Borftein as a crack unit sworn under a special oath of loyalty. Their commanding officer was a general named Stormbel. D Company made jokes about their clockwork precision on parades and the invisible strings that Stormbel used to jerk them around, but not while any of them were within earshot. They called the SD's the Stromboli Division. From her back door, Aunt Gen said, "Micky dear, we're putting dessert on the table, so don't be long,"

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