

## ARCHAEOPTERYX

absorbed a measure of her aunt's attitude toward the bad news and the sorrier turns of life that fate. Between a Chevy pickup and a Volkswagen, a jolly-looking man with a freckled face and a clown's. Micky had evolved a disturbing theory about these wild tales of Sinsemilla and Dr. Doom. If she stated. At least the Chironians were not acting standoffish, which eased the monotony. An hour or two earlier, Colman himself had enjoyed a long conversation with a ~couple of fusion engineers from the complex, who, to his surprise, had seemed happy to answer his questions about it. They had even offered him a quick tour. He found that strange, not because of the Chironians' readiness to accommodate anybody regardless of rank or station--he was getting used to that by now--but because he had no doubt at all that they had been as aware of the demands of military discipline as he. Yet they had deliberately acted as if they knew less than they did, even though they were far too smart to believe that he'd be taken in. The Chironians did it all the time. The man at Canaveral base had practically offered Sirocco a place with a geographical survey team even though he knew that Sirocco was in no position to accept. The more Colman thought about it, the more convinced he became that the Chironians' actions couldn't all be just a coincidence. "Me?" Jay exclaimed. "I'll come long, sure, but I thought it was you who couldn't resist it." Micky closed her eyes against the sight of her aunt's perfect and unconditional love, which brought her to. The murmurs from across the street rose suddenly to catcalls and jeers, accompanied by waving fists and the brandishing of sticks that appeared suddenly from somewhere. Colman turned and saw the black limousine that Howard Kalens had had brought down from the Mayflower II appear at an intersection a block farther along the street and stop near a group of officers standing nearby. Major Thorpe detached himself from the group and walked across. Colman could see Kalens's silver-haired figure talking to the major from the rear seat. Somebody threw a rock, which landed short and clattered harmlessly along the pavement past the feet of the officers. More followed, and several Terrans moved forward threateningly. Unprepared for the girl's admission, Micky stumbled a few words further. " ? because you . . . because. CHAPTER TEN. Kath appeared in the hallway just as those due to leave were filing out the door. While the farewells and "good luck's were being exchanged, she drew close to Colman and clung tightly to his arm for a moment. "Come back," she whispered. faintly like zinc and powdered copper; Thursday, like fruitcake, which seemed to Leilani to be the most. combing this part of the West in close coordination with the cowboys, then these FBI agents must also. attempt to add some dark glamour to the image of Ms. Leilani Klonk, flamboyant young mutant. "No, sir. Why would I?". "A shuttle's lifting off from Bay Five at 2130," she said. "I'll be coming off it about thirty minutes before it leaves. All I need, is to get over into Chironian territory. I can make it on my own from there." The Lion-yin's lower orbit put it out of synchronism with the Mayflower I1 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. bristling with weapons, Curtis follows her. called herself Sinsemilla as long as I've known her." Leilani settled into a hideous orange-and-blue chair. "Serial killers," Curtis gasps, pointing toward the motor home, which is more than twenty vehicles behind. "Yeah," Noah acknowledged without enthusiasm. run alone or in pairs, or in families, toward their vehicles, some glancing back in fear as more. Jean forced a smile. "Just remember that," she said. too, and lowers the barrier, which is well oiled and rattle-free. He could have stepped onto the bumper. "They're messing us around," General Johannes Borftein, Supreme Commander of the Chiron Expeditionary Force--the regular military contingent aboard the Mayflower II--told the small group that had convened for an informal policy discussion with Garfield Wellesley in the Mission Director's private conference room, located in the upper levels of the Government Center in the module known as the Columbia District. His face was sallow and deeply lined, his hair a mixture of grays shot with streaks of black, and his voice rasped with a remnant of the guttural twang inherited from his South African origins. "We've got two years to get this show organized, and they're playing games. We don't have the time. We haven't seen any evidence of a defense program down there. I say we go straight in with a show of strength and an immediate declaration of martial law. It's the best way." in the other as she ascended in a pale green levitation beam. an awkward job, but with determination, he succeeds. He slides one bolt into its hasp, then engages the. He is pleased by his ability to function in spite of his fear. He's also pleased by his resourcefulness. tube top stretched so extravagantly that it might kill bystanders if it snapped, she was temptation. "Dr. Doom says we live in a culture of death now, and so people like him are the new heroes." "What. stood on the cart. there's no relief in even one voice among them? only shirk anxiety, urgency, wariness. from one point of contentment to another, even from happiness to happiness, in lives with meaning. Although Jean felt sympathy for the soldier, the course that Kalens seemed to be advocating, with its prospect of more trouble and, inevitably, more killing, worried her even more. Why did it always have to be like this? she asked herself. All she wanted was to feel comfortable and secure, and to watch her children grow up to become decent, respectable, responsible adults who would weave themselves into the reassuring cocoon of familiarity around her--as much for their own future well-being as for hers. That much was hers to expect as her due because she had made sacrifices to earn it. It threatened nobody. So why should other people's squabbles which were not of her making now threaten her with

sweeping it all away? "It's getting to you too," she whispered tightly. "Just as it's already gotten to Eve and Jerry. Oh, how I hate this place! Can't you see what it's doing to us all?" .police roadblock to stop traffic and provide an opportunity to steal from motorists. Therefore, Curtis. Twenty-four had escaped in all; nine had already given themselves up or been killed in encounters with Chironians. Anita had not been among them. Colman counted fifteen body-bags, which meant that she had to be in one of them. "The Chironians didn't kill Howard," Celia said. "I did." A silence descended like steel doors slamming down around the room. Those two simple words had extinguished, all thoughts of the Kuan-yin, weapons, and antimatter instantly. Every head turned disbelievingly to Celia as she sat staring ahead. Lechat rose from his chair and walked slowly across to stand beside the table; after some hesitation the others followed one by one. Celia started talking just as Lechat was about to say something, her voice toneless and distant, and her eyes unmoving as if she were speaking to the cup in her hands. "I couldn't have spent my life with a man who had closed his mind to reality. You can't know what it was like. He had manufactured his own fantasy, and I was supposed to share it and help him sustain it. It was impossible." She paused to gulp some of the coffee. "So, the thing with Stern up here?" she tapped her right temple? "and sometimes old movies seem as real to me as my own past." .stocked with a plastic tumbler and an ice bucket. In the bottom drawer of her small dresser, she kept a. Micky observed. "Flat as a slice of the Swiss cheese on that platter." .far end of the adjacent living room, a ginger-jar lamp with a rose damask shade went dark with a pink. Woody Alien. has taught you to think. I feel bad about that, Micky B, about whatever you went through. "Utah night, four feet above the highway. Kalens looked at him calmly for a few seconds, then nodded. "Very well. I withdraw the statement and apologize." At that moment the emergency tone sounded simultaneously from both their communicators, and warning--bleeps and wails went up from places in the labyrinth all around. They looked at each other for a second. The noise died away as Colman fished his unit from his breast. "Sucky day, Aunt Gen." .you a tale of woe that might wring pity even from the chicken she's eating, were the poor fowl still alive! .At the open window, the night lay breathless. Fallows appeared surprised. "I thought it was closed off for another two days. Isn't the Army having an exercise in there or something?" Behind him, elsewhere in the kitchen, dishes clatter-shatter on the floor, and a soup pot or some such. precious pearl, might have opened its shell to feed in this guarded fashion. In the palm of the lower hand. "Looks like it," Sirocco agreed. He moved behind the desk while the D Company privates took up positions beside the entrance, and the SD's walked away talking among themselves. More likely than not, both sociopathic owners of the Windchaser will remain in their cockpit seats for a. "You can't control me with a name!" .still attract men if you've got great boobs. That's been my observation, anyway. Men can be lovely. have had a dirtier mouth if he'd spent the past few years licking the streets of Washington, D.C. He called. Tweaked by puzzlement, her classic features had a pixie charm. "Excuse me?" .Lechat told Fulmire that he no longer thought it advisable to attempt setting up a Terran community alongside the totally unfamiliar experience of Franklin--at least, not immediately. The Terrans would need time to readjust, and in the meantime they would cling to their Own familiar ways and customs. The proximity of Franklin would only cause tensions. Lechat believed, therefore, that the migration to the surface should be halted completely, the existing plans abandoned, and a new Terran settlement established elsewhere for the transition period. An area called Iberia, on the south coast of western Selene, would be a suitable place, he thought. Lechat didn't know what would happen after that and doubted very much if anything could be predicted with confidence, but for the nearer term it would be the answer both to giving the general population a chance to settle in without disruptive influences, and the extremists an opportunity to cool down and do some more thinking. .her practical survival advice? had been passed from believer to believer, much the way that folk tales. MRS. GRAYFORD, THE plump, extravagantly dressed wife of Vice-Admiral Crawford, Slessor's second-in-command of the Mayflower H's crew, closed the box containing her new set of Chironian silver cutlery and added it to the pile of boxes on the table by her chair. Among other things the jumble included some exquisite jewelry, an inlaid chest of miniature, satin-lined drawers to accommodate them, a set of matching animal sculptures in something not unlike onyx, and a Chironian fur stole. "Where we'll end up living, I've no idea, but I'm sure these will enhance the surroundings wherever it is. Don't you think the silver is delightful? I'd never have thought that such unusual, modern styling could have such a feel of antique quality, would you? I must return to that place the next time I go down to Franklin. Some of the tableware there went with it perfectly." .supermarket. CHAPTER SEVEN. "You've got it." Kath smiled. .not as amusing as a good dumb-blond joke, which I enjoy even though I'm a blond myself, and it isn't. CHIRON WAS ALMOST nine thousand miles in diameter, but. looking up at the trucker. "Any dog could be a Yeller." .suddenly found himself holding a half-eaten treat rendered crunchier but inedible by sprinkles of. know who these brash intruders are, or makes a clatter of pots that might draw attention, probably. "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." . "Is that a proposal?" Wellesley asked. "You're proposing to plan for contingencies involving a first use of force?" "Intruder defenses primed and ready to activate." "Why do a lot of cops from back then like ZZ Top?" he wondered. .of smoldering summer-evening light, behind the smoky reflections of the layered kitchen shadows, .soldiers seeking shelter in an unexpected firefight, and saying their prayers, each of them determined to. "Aunt Gen always cheats," Micky confirmed. .At a table stacked with clean plates, Curtis stops and, though still crouching, dares to raise his head. He. way deep into the flesh of her memory, beyond the hope of excision, and prickle as long as she lived. .restaurant kitchen. .might be an angel, considering that he holds a plastic-wrapped bundle of hot dogs, which he has just. since. .The screen before him suddenly came to life to show her face. A flicker of surprise danced in her eyes for the merest fraction of a second, and then gave way to a smoldering twinkle of anticipation mixed with a dash of amusement. .Interstate 15, on which they speed southwest, isn't deserted even at this hour, but neither is it busy. .other than it was more amusing

than talking about a miserable day of job-hunting..There's some kind of trouble at Brigade-something about Portney being kicked out and Wesserman locking up some SDs at gunpoint.".sagebrush or a gnarled spray of withered weeds, it cuts loose twisted shadows that leap into the night.."What's that?".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..when she assumes a blocking stance directly in his path. "Honeylamb, I'll admit this here's not a five-star.Although domesticated, this animal nevertheless remains to some degree a hunter, as the boy is not, and."Sinsemilla says the Fates can't find you to snip your thread and end your life if they don't know where.pillow, was the phantom-of-the-opera hemisphere, its battered bone structure held together by cords of.In the week following Lechat's brief term as Director, the laser link from Earth had brought news of the holocaust engulfing the whole planet. Then the signals had ceased, and for five years there had been nothing. No doubt many pockets of humanity had managed to survive, but mankind's first attempt to establish an advanced civilization had ended in failure - or almost in failure, for it had served its purpose; it had lifted humankind from its primitive, animal beginnings to a level where human, not animal, values could evolve, and it had hurled a seed of itself outward to take root, grow, and blossom at a distant star. And then it had died, as it had to..on his helmet, and took his M32 from the rack. It was approaching 0200, time to relieve the sentry detail guarding Kalens's residence a quarter of a mile away. "Well, it's time we were leaving," he said to Sirocco, who was lounging with his feet up on the desk, and Colman, sprawled in a corner, both red-eyed after a long and exhausting day. "I'll try to shout quietly. I'd hate to be disturbing His Honor in his sleep."."Really. It's a rosebush."..it became an astringent syrup as it went down.."We're all having to lean how to do that."..He would like to take a hot bath and have time to heal, but he will have to settle for clean clothes.."Too bad. How come?".Jay looked uncomfortable and massaged the top of his forehead with his fingers. "I know you're not going to believe this, Ms," he said. "But they're not going to cost anything. Nothing seems to cost anything. I don't understand it either, but--"-.believes in all of it, and more," Leilani reported.."Amazing," the robot replied in a neutral voice.."It's impossible!" Avery Farnhill protested to a full meeting of the Directorate in the Mayflower II's Government Center. "They know we're acting with our hands tied and they're taking advantage by being deliberately evasive. The only way we'll get anywhere is if you allow us to get tougher."..woman occupies the driver's seat, her attention devoted to the stalled traffic blocking the highway..rarity..Hammond place..arrive at a destination, but will race perpetually through alternating stretches of moon-dazzled meadow.capsules of vitamin supplements, and spent a lot of time worrying about global warming. She had been.Colman grinned. "Good thinking. We were starting to talk shop." Re inclined his head to where Veronica was still talking animatedly between Kath's twin sons and evidently enjoying herself. "Somebody seems to be quite a hit over there."..as if satisfied that everything was now clear. It wasn't. "Why? What happens with them?" Bernard asked. Nanook hesitated for a moment as if reluctant to risk being offensive by explaining the obvious. He shrugged. "Well . . . usually somebody ends up shooting them," he replied. "So it never gets to be .a real problem."..For once, no sparkle of humor enlivened Leilani's blue eyes, no thinnest paring of a wry smile curled.Old Yeller here to take a chunk of meat out of anyone who might try to do you wrong."..Then they roll past a familiar vehicle, which stands under a lamppost in a cone of yellow light. It's smaller

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