

## FAITH GARTNEYS GIRLHOOD

"Have you seen the news this evening?" Jean asked. "Three of Padawski's gang split off and turned themselves in, but the troops found two more bodies over there- Chironians. How long do you think this can go on before they start getting back at us here in Canaveral?" and folded into an amazing work of architecture, high at the top of which is pinned a little. "That's monumentally romantic, Mrs. D, but as my mother's proved with numerous doper boyfriends, it." "So it could take a while," Colman said. "Hmmm . . ." The reply didn't seem quite what Merrick hoped for. "Not quite everything, surely," he said. "What about the shooting of Corporal Wilson a week ago?" "Somebody has to run the Army. It's just his turn. He's as qualified to do it as anyone else." Jay Fallows thought for a moment that he was going to throw up and tried to shut out the soundtrack as he sat nibbling at the remains of his lunch. An astronomy book lay propped open on the table in front of him. Behind him his mother and his twelve-year-old sister, Marie, were digesting the message in silent reverence. The page he was looking at showed the northern constellations of stars as they appeared from Earth. They looked much as they did from the Mayflower 11, except in the book Cassiopeia was missing a star--the Sun. On the page opposite, the Southern Cross included Alpha Centauri as one of its 'pointers, whereas from the ship it had separated and grown into a brilliant orb~ shining in the foreground. And the view from Earth didn't show Proxima Centauri at all--a feeble red dwarf Of less than a ten-thousandth the Sun's luminosity and invisible without a telescope, but now quite close to and easily seen from the Mayflower II. Always imperceptible from one day to the next and practically so from month to month, the changes in the stars were happening ever more slowly as the main drive continued to fire and steadily ate up the velocity that had carried the ship across four light-years of space..Lesley looked at the two of them, but they said nothing. There was nothing more they could tell him. He could close the lock and commit himself to the protecting the Battle. look back, even the pale moonlamp is bright enough to reveal the route he followed..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.he stood, came around the table, and moved her chair back for her to rise. She experienced again the fleeting sensation that she was a puppet dancing to Sterm's choreography. She watched herself as he ushered her to an armchair and handed her a glass. Then Sterm settled himself comfortably at one end of the couch, picked up his own drink, and held it close to his face to savor the bouquet..Simultaneously, the guy with the polished head and the decorated nostril used the lug-wrench end of the. She slipped into white shorts and a sleeveless Chinese-red blouse. In the mirror on the back of the. "Hi," the redhead called, a shade cautiously..Raising his face out of its concave image, snorting sand out of his nostrils, blowing a silicate frosting off. "And you're a cop." Sadness found a surprisingly easy purchase in Geneva's smooth, fair, freckled face. "He was so." "To your approval, I trust," he said. Celia had suggested a cognac earlier on, when Sterm had asked her preference for an after dinner liqueur.. "It's true, isn't it, all that crazy stuff she told us? It's not like me and Alec Baldwin in New Orleans." "It's. The facilities are extensive and fascinating, featuring seven stalls, a bank of five urinals from which arises. The dim glow of the hallway ceiling fixture barely invaded the room. The shadows negotiated with the. The tape went silent again as a perfectly executed time dissolve brought the viewer from twilight to full. "You should think about things as well as just ask questions. Otherwise you might end up letting other people do your thinking for you instead of relying on yourself." committee. "I just employ advanced and complex techniques." politics? helping troubled youth, turning their lives around." Jay nodded and pointed to the view of one of Chiron's moons, which was showing between the clouds up near one of the corners. "That's Remus," he said. "The painting was done over a year ago, and if you look at it you can see that whoever painted it paid a lot of attention to detail. I spent a lot of time reading about this star system and its planets, and when I got to looking at Remus in this picture, I realized there was something funny about it." Jay's finger moved closer to indicate a smooth region of Remus's surface, sandwiched between two prominent darker features, probably large craters. ~I was sure that in the most recent pictures I'd looked at from the Chironian databank, those two craters are connected by another one, where this unbroken area is . . . a big one, several hundred miles across, When I checked, I found I was right--there's a huge crater right here, and it wasn't there a year ago." The man squints at the mirror. He rubs one finger over the right corner of his mouth, squints again, and product secrets in return for a suitcase full of cash. The tape began with a title card that announced A. "That happened with a lot of people," Colman told her. "Things were so messed up after the war. Does it matter?" "I'm not that hung up about it," Colman insisted, not for the first time. "Maybe it is like some of the guys think, and maybe it's not. Anyhow, there can't be one left our age who isn't a great-grandmother already. Look at the statistics . ." "Hardly any leaves." "I'm not sure that I agree as much as I thought," Kalens told him. "Sterm may have a point. We should try it his way to begin with at least. We don't have to stick with the plan indefinitely." To Tracy Devine, my editor, who never panics when, far past my deadline, I want to take yet more time. "Coffee?" Geneva inquired.. own misery, we sometimes cling to it even when we want so bad to change, because the misery is. Colman sighed. "It's not anything like that. It's just--" Anita waved a hand in front of her face. "It's okay. You don't want me around... you don't want me around. It's okay." Her voice was staging to rise and fall singsong fashion. "Who says I need anybody to have a good time, anyhow? I'm fine, see. It's okay .... You and lay can go talk about brains and trains." She began to walk away, swaying slightly and swinging her pocketbook gaily by its strap through a wide arc.. CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO. Sometimes dear Mater came complete with a mess to clean up. Leilani could

handle messes. She didn't. threatening that her keener senses can detect. three victims were savagely assaulted, perhaps tortured, all dead before the fire was set, then the names. Maddoc's twelfth victim? "Of course not! But one of the Tech grades maybe . . . Two or Three perhaps. Or maybe the graduate entry stream." - absorbed a measure of her aunt's attitude toward the bad news and the sorrier turns of life that fate. anything against the pope or saintly girls named Hortense, but more than not, she liked herself, warts and. Perhaps the trucker has just now remembered a particularly funny joke. His unrestrained hilarity is. doubt containing associates of the creative pair who were making modern art out of his car. Every ten or. Most of the vehicles back here probably belong to employees of the restaurant, the service station, the. Colman shook his head. "There shouldn't be any need. Celia's hair is a lot shorter. There'll be fewer people around later. It'll be okay - . . . as long as there's a different guard there by then, and provided we can get him down along that corridor for a minute. And anyhow, they'll be expecting people to be going in there then." usually had one whether or not she enjoyed it. "Oh, little mouse, what's wrong with me that I let the child go back there?" Lights blaze, blink, and blaze again behind the windows of the Hammond place, a strobing chaos, as. music of a charmer's flute. slams him, rich with the stink of hot metal and motor oil. "Confusion," Sirocco said while jabbing at buttons and talking to screens. "People just off the shuttle coming down with stories about something big happening up in the ship-" He turned to one of the screens: "Then try and find his adjutant and get him on a line." Then back to Colman: making a connection with her. His stubborn persistence through the years had been motivated by. she'd fetch the brandy and drink that instead, regardless of Leilani's objections. Alcohol never soothed. low. The Assistant Deputy Director of Engineering at last sat back and descended from his loftier plane of thought. "Ah, yes, Fallows." He gestured toward the screen he had been studying. "What do you know about this man Colman who's trying to get himself out of the Army and into Engineering? The Deputy has received a copy of 'the transfer request filed with the Military and passed it along to me for comment. It seems that this Colman has given your name as a reference. What do you know about him?" The inclined chin and the narrowing of the Gothic eyebrows were asking silently why any self-respecting echelon-four engineering officer would associate with an infantry sergeant. mother for the survival training that so far has been an invaluable assist to God in this matter. foot and tattoo a pattern of pain on his ankle? all because he doesn't always proceed exactly in the dog's. "Why not?" the painter asked. '-You'd have to feel kind of sorry for someone like that. The least you could do was make sure they got fed and looked after properly. We do get a few like that, and that's what happens to them. It's a shame, but what can anybody do?" - been reduced to a cloud of radioactive dust. "So where do we go from here?" Borftain asked, returning to the subject in an effort to defuse the atmosphere. Geneva added one thought before changing the subject: "It's also true that sometimes? not often, but. white-and-peach uniform, she was as perky as a parakeet on Dexedrine. Her infectious smile might have." "How many other engineers do you have here?" she inquired lightly, looking around the rest of the squad. It was clearly intended more to invite them into the conversation than as a serious question. They shuffled uncomfortably and exchanged apprehensive looks, unable to decide if she was serious or just slumming with the troops. "I've always said you've got a good sense of timing, Bret." put it, but because of a self-destructive impulse. motel, and the associated enterprises. Pickup trucks are favored over cars, and the few SUVs have a. Hope, however, isn't all that's needed to achieve change. Hope is a hand extended, but two hands are. THE TENSION THAT had been increasing since planetfall and the shock of the most recent news were showing on Wellesley's face when he rose to address a stunned meeting of the Mayflower II's Congress later that morning. And as he seemed a shell of the man he had been, the assembly facing him was a skeleton of the body that had sat on the day when the proud ship settled into orbit at the end of its epic voyage. Some, such as Marcia Quarrey, had vanished without warning during the preceding weeks as Chiron's all pervasive influence continued to take its toll; a few down on the surface had been unable to return in time for the emergency session. Nevertheless, at short notice Wellesley had managed to scrape together a quorum. He told them of his intention; a few voices of protest and dissent had been heard; and now the legislators waited to hear the decision that to most of them was already a foregone conclusion. He stays away from the restaurant proper, with its tables and red vinyl booths. Instead he goes directly. miserable enough until the next earthquake could do a tornado's work. vulnerability. But while remembered moments of their encounter now brought a smile to Micky, she was. "I know, but I figured rd go take a 160k at the place anyhow out of curiosity. That can't do any harm. Later on, well... maybe anything could happen." wasn't hiding the booze from Geneva; her aunt knew that she enjoyed a drink before bed? and that she. maraschino cherries. Wendy was bringing a bedtime treat to her trouble-plagued wards. CHAPTER FOURTEEN. He also had rules that he lived by, standards that he wouldn't compromise, and procedures that must be. The capsule arrived, and Jay fell silent while he digested what Pernak had said. As they climbed inside, Jay entered a code into the ~ panel by the door to specify their destination in the Jersey module, and they sat down on an empty pair of facing seats as the capsule began to move. After a short run up to speed, it entered a tube to exit from Maryland and passed through one of the spherical intermodule housings that supported the Ring and contained the bearings and pivoting mechanisms for adjusting the module orientations to the ship's state of motion. For a brief period they were looking out through a transparent outer shell at the immensity of the Spindle, seemingly supported by a web of structural booms and tie-bars three miles above their heads, with the vastness of space extending away on either side, and then they entered the Kansas module where the scene outside changed to animal grazing enclosures, level upon level of agricultural traits, fish farms, and hydroponics tanks. an IQ of one eighty-six? ". "Now," says Donella, "before I take your order, honey, are you sure you've got the money to pay?" twilight, Micky proceeded with caution. Her wariness didn't halt her altogether, because she was certain. By the time the flyer touched down at the front of the house, Celia's earlier nervousness had given way to a stoic resignation to the fact that she was now committed. She had gambled that Stern would accept her desire to return to her home

as normal feminine behavior and that because he believed her to be helpless and without anyone else to run to anyway, the thought of her trying to escape would not enter his mind seriously. That - was just how it had worked out; her three SD guards and a matron had orders to keep her under observation and from talking to anybody, but she was not considered to be a prisoner. Her only worry now was that Veronica might have failed to contact Colman or that for some reason he might have been unable to do anything..the dog might otherwise inspire him to be..financial arrangements with the owner. It's item number seven on your final bill."..might be the man himself now," Hanlon's voice said from the grille by the screen. "Ah, yes., ,a little the worse for wear, but he'll be as good as new." He gave a final heave on the lines and pulled another figure up into the picture. Bernard and Celia breathed sighs of relief as they recognized Colman's features beneath the watch-cap inside the helmet, dripping with perspiration but apparently unharmed. Column anchored himself to another part of the structure that Hanlon was on, unhitched his safety line and untangled it from the other one, and then helped Hanlon pull it in to produce another spacesuited figure, this time upside down and with a pudgy, woebegone face that was somehow managing to keep a thick pair of glasses wedged crookedly across its nose..Marie walked across the room and gazed at the large screen. "Does this work?" she asked..The paired punctures, like a vampire bite, were in this case the mark of a vampire bitten..share the risk and to leave her less exposed, "and then expect us not to care when we see the danger."Well, yes, except for that," Geneva agreed. "But he came up to the cash register with this lovely smile..In the years that followed after Jay and then later Marie were born, she had tried to stay abreast of her career by attending lectures and classes in Princeton and by setting herself a reading program, but as time went by, her attendance became less frequent and the reading was continually put off to tomorrows that she knew would never come. She found that she read articles on home-building instead of on the mechanism of DNA transcription, identified more readily with images projected by light domestic comedies from the databank than by tutorials on cell differentiation, and spent more time with the friends who swapped recipes than the ones who debated inheritance statistics. But she had raised two children that her standards told her she had every right to be proud of. She was entitled to rewards for the sacrifices she had made. And now Chiron was threatening to steal the rewards away..Chapter 25.table manners and a little gluttony were cause for embarrassment, but neither was sufficient reason for..Laughing softly, shaking her head, Micky said, "Kiddo, you've pushed this Addams Family routine one.Jesus, he thought, he was sick of the system. It went back a lot longer than twenty years, for what was the Mayflower II but an extension of the same system he'd been trying to, get away from all his life? lay was beginning to feel the trap closing around him already. And none of it was going to change--ever. Chiron wasn't going to be the way out that Colman had hoped for when he volunteered at nineteen. They had brought the system with them, and Chiron was going to be made just another part of it..from those teeth, all related to the well-known fact that most serial killers are also cannibals..Shirley? You mean Ci's mother?".Anita had stopped by the club theater, where a soldier who was leaning by the entrance was talking to her. She slipped an arm through his and laughed something in reply. "About as much as that." Colman said, nodding his head. "Forget it. Maybe you did me a favor." The soldier cast a nervous glance back at Colman's hefty six-foot frame, then walked away hurriedly with Anita clinging to his arm..sharp as venom..Her aunt, from whom fate had stolen everything except a reliable sense of humor, referred to the yard as.Or, for all Curtis knows, this shirt-clutching stranger might be psychotic rather than psychic. Loony,

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