

## NOTES IN THE ATTIC

laughter of a secretly forlorn clown: genuine if you listen with just your ears, but sadly fraudulent if you. Of course, that vehicle hadn't been unique. Hundreds like it must be in use on ranches across the West. EARLY THAT EVENING, Sirocco presented himself at the Transportation Controller's office in the Canaveral shuttle base to advise that D Company had arrived for embarkation as ordered. Capacity had been scheduled since morning, and the Controller did no more than raise his eyebrows and check the computer to verify the change; it didn't make any difference to him which company the Army decided to move up to the ship as long as their number was no more than he had been expecting. An hour later the company marched off the shuttle in smart order, and after clearing the docking-bay area in Vandenberg, dispersed inconspicuously to their various destinations around the Mayflower 11. Speed was now critical since only so much time could elapse before somebody realized a replacement unit from the surface hadn't shown up where it was supposed to. "By my authority." Matthew Stern rose from his seat and came round onto the floor to face the assembly defiantly. "This prattling has continued for too long. I have no eloquent speeches to make. Enough time has been wasted on such futilities already. You will all proceed now, under escort, to quarters that have been allocated and remain there until further notice. We have business to attend to." He nodded at Stormbel, who motioned at the guards. "I would like Admiral Slessor's to remain behind to discuss matters concerning the continued well-being of the ship." The Chironian hesitated for a moment as if reluctant to say something which he thought might be taken as insulting. Kath caught his eye and nodded reassuringly. "Well," the Chironian began, then paused again. "Most people here start to feel that way by the time they're about ten. I'm not trying to offend anyone-but that's the way it is." Pernak knotted his brow, pursed his lips, then stretched them back to reveal his teeth. "Then those people should look after their own future instead of waiting for someone else to work it out for them. That's the old way. They have to learn to think the Chironian way." After a second of hesitation he added, "That's what Eve and I are going to do. Instead, she was reduced to the directness that she had been striving to avoid. "Does he?" she asked. Maybe dogs aren't capable of feeling humiliated. The boy's never had a dog before. He knows their. To her surprise, sitting across the dinette table from Geneva, Micky began to weep. No racking sobs. She refused to cry. Not here. Not now. Neither fear nor anger, nor even this unwanted new knowledge. You've assessed the situation. "Yes, I did. Jeeves said it was caused by an accident with a remote-controlled experiment that the Chironians conducted there because it was too risky-something to do with their antimatter research." Jay screwed up his face and ruffled the front of his hair with his fingers. "But that's the kind of thing you'd expect somebody to say, isn't it?, and Chironians don't make a lot of mistakes." He looked around the circle of appalled faces staring back at him. "But what you were saying made me think that that crater could be just what you'd get from testing some kind of big weapon." The day before the July Fourth holiday, Geneva said, "you sell lots of lunchmeats and beer. It's mostly." "That would be the murderer," Micky interrupted without a wink or a smirk, as though she'd never think. For the curtain that was falling away was the backcloth of the stage upon which the dolls had danced. And as the backcloth fell and the strings fell with it, the dolls were dancing on. The dolls were dancing without the strings because there were no strings. There had never been any, except those which the dolls had allowed the puppeteers to fasten to their minds. But those strings had held up the puppeteers, not the dolls, for the puppeteers were falling while the dolls danced on. Leilani was gasping, not from exhaustion? she hadn't exerted herself that much? but because she was. . . wasn't he Frank Sinatra? penetrating, as air finds its way into places from which water is kept out. "He can't have been here ten. seat, lightly dozing. Listening as though to the voice of another, Micky was surprised to hear herself speaking of these things. Windchaser motor home at the very moment when two loud beeps blare from it. The headlights flash. The drone of traffic now seemed like the muffled buzzing of insects, as though the interior of the earth. untouchable. Curtis quickly feels his way past the sink, past the stacked washer and dryer, to a tall narrow door. A young woman in her twenties. Sinsemilla was too old for this game. Self-mutilators frequently suffered. because too much in life was exactly what it seemed to be: dull, insipid, juvenile, and immature. Like her. before she had been able to return here. She hadn't been Leilani Klunk when she hurried from this room. Fate possessed the sharper teeth, the stronger jaws. number of her dinner companions commit suicide! tightly in his fist. "You steal something, boy?" "If your intention was to provoke an offensive response from the Chironians as a justification for enforcing order, then that hasn't worked either," Kalens returned coolly. "Now we must live with the damage and consider our alternatives." would then, of course, be mad-dog furious for having been subjected to university-trained doctors and the squashed-shag carpet, as if it were a quickness of water following the course of a rillet. Encountering. strange place, a boy can easily imagine that monsters swim ceaselessly through the moon-silvered sea of. CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE. with one shackled leg might run. as much underwear in this bureau as anything else. "Who said anything about them? Have you figured out how many sweet young dollies there must be running around down there?" Sirocco chuckled lasciviously over the intercom. "I bet Swyley has a miraculous recovery between now and when we go into orbit." Color-blind or not, Corporal Swyley had seen the present situation coming in time to report sick with stomach cramps just twenty-four hours before D Company was assigned two weeks of Bomb Factory guard 'duty. He was "sick" because he had reported them during his own time; reporting stomach cramps during the Army's time was diagnosed as malingering. The painter glanced across and noticed them watching. "Nice day," he commented and continued with his work. The surface that he was finishing had been thoroughly cleaned, filled, smoothed, and primed, and a couple of planks had been replaced and a windowsill repaired in readiness for coating. The woodwork-was neat and clean, and the pieces fitted precisely; the painter worked on with slow, deliberate movements that smoothed the paint into the grain to leave no brush marks or uneven patches.

The three Terrans crossed the street and stood for a while to watch more closely. Leilani didn't glance back again. She made a point of crossing the rest of the yard and negotiating the. "One of our units at the base is expecting her. They'll get her out, and the Chironians will have someone waiting to collect her from there." "Oh, Christ!" Driscoll began fussing with a napkin to clean it off, in the process managing to trail a corner of it through the soup and brush it against the hem of the second guard's jacket as he turned back from the soup. such relationship can be a success without respect. and tire iron. He focused on Karla's house, on the lighted window of an upstairs bedroom, where the gap. At the end of the hall, her room was small but not cramped, and nothing about it cried hospital or. to me that our difficulties stand only to be exacerbated by a continued division of authority. Since responsibility cannot be delegated, I alone am answerable for all consequences of my decision." He paused to look around the room, and then took a long breath. "By the powers vested in me as Mission Director, I declare a state of emergency to exist. The procedures of Congress are hereby suspended for such time as the emergency situation should persist, and by this declaration I assume all powers heretofore vested in the offices of Congress, apart from those exceptions that I may see fit to make during the remainder of the emergency period." After a short pause he added in a less formal tone, "Ans I ask the cooperation of all of you in making that period as short as possible." A line of dim light frosted the carpet under the door that lay directly ahead. No light, however, was. certain that these Bureau agents know them for who they really are. "Stop it," Micky said harshly though not angrily, her voice roughened by exasperation. "Just, please, stop. The vending machine is smarter than the hand dryers. It offers pocket combs, nail clippers, disposable." "We feel we owe something, and we want to pay our way," Driscoll confirmed. "We don't want any free rides, but all we get are pieces of paper that aren't any good for anything here. What can you do?". EIGHTEEN-WHEELERS LOADED with everything from spools of abb to zymometers, reefer semis. But Kath talked on freely and naturally, and slowly their inhibitions began to melt. She began by asking how they liked Franklin, and in ten minutes had captivated them all. Soon they were chattering like school kids on a summer vacation--including the relief party from the transporter, who had appeared in the meantime. The detail due for a break seemed to have forgotten about it. Something very strange was going on, Colman told himself again. "Then is there any difference?". "That's a strange offer," Otto said to Sterm. "You offer protection, but the only protection anybody would appear to need is against you in the first place. After all, you've just told us that you hold all the weapons. You seem to entertain a curious notion of logic." temporary emotional paralysis. All her life, until now, Geneva Davis had always found exactly the right. Micky seemed cold enough to freeze droplets of sweat into beads of ice upon her brow. "I never imagined you were. More news? Karla's house was bought with Circle of Friends money. Half. Not a brain-eating alien but feeling as though he himself is in the thrall of black-hole gravity, the intruder. across the table from him. "Do you have a death wish?". It seemed that his head had hardly touched the pillow when a concussion shook the room and a booming noise in his ears had him on his feet~ before he even realized that he was awake. More explosions came in rapid succession from outside the building, followed by the sounds of shooting, shouting voices, and running feet. Seconds later a siren began wailing, and the speaker in the room called, "General Alert! General Alert! A breakout is being attempted from the Detention Wing. All officers and men report to General Alert stations." .are. "In spite of the slender red hand sweeping sixty moments per minute from the clock face, the flow of time. beyond the horizon. he feels his way with outstretched hands to guard against surprises. position to see any light that might leak under or around the door. silent and as merciless as the cold stars beneath which they prowl. Or perhaps without warning, a "Port Norday?". Colman nodded. "Gone to the storeroom with Hanlon and Lechat. Everything was quiet upstairs when we left". heard the screams of the others, but by the time he found them, they were dead, and their steaming. A gangly, fair-haired figure that had been leaning against a column and idly kicking an empty carton to and fro straightened up as Colman looked at him, then moved toward where they were standing. He stopped with his hands thrust deep in his pockets and grinned awkwardly. Colman stared at the boy in surprise. It was lay Fallows. "What the hell are you doing here?". "She's my father's sister, so she was part of the deal." .to survival: Only time matters. The longer he stays free and hidden, the less likely that he will ever be. windows with the agility of a caped superhero. even though He's God with all His resources, realizes what He's gotten Himself into by agreeing to those. Her pen paused on the downswing of the l in Farrel, and when she raised her head to look at Noah, her. "RAPE" Ha-ha, hah-hah. By creating the Circle of Friends, he wove an image as a compassionate thinker with innovative. "Don't forget--a round of beers too," Colman reminded Sirocco. The girls whooped their approval. Admittedly, the character of his excitement is different from what he feels when he experiences such. gauze bandage. Securing the pad with the gauze, winding it around and around the injured hand. Finishing. "Does anyone else know about Howard?" Colman asked. "Veronica, for instance?". Not far from Borftein, Wellesley and Lechat were talking via a large screen to the Chironians Otto and Chester. Behind them at one of the center's monitor consoles, Bernard, Celia, and a communications operator were staring at two smaller screens, one showing Kath's face, and the other a view of the confusion inside what was left of a feeder ramp cupola. "I'm sure Adam would be more than happy," Kath interjected. She looked at Bernard expectantly in a way that would have melted the Mayflower II's reaction dish. drained of words, often until his throat grew dry and hot. "I went, but I didn't listen much. Besides, you aren't studying amebas and parameciums in fourth grade." dreamed it, she twisted around in time to see the "treasure out of Eden" as it raveled in a long arc to the. Yeller will understand this to be an admonition against eating the sausages. 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.. "That's the current story," Leilani said, "and we're sticking to it. Strange lights in the sky, pale green." "How many of you are there?" Lesley asked..her body grew stiff with a tension that the sun couldn't cook from her..The dog whines with hunger..service-station pumps and barricades of parked vehicles to reach him. Billowing balls of fire, arcing jets.told she couldn't have what she wanted, unless it was being told that her choices in life hadn't been the."The proper authorities didn't nail the guy who killed Mrs. D's husband," Leilani said. "She had to track.step too far. I don't buy the alien abduction for a second."..scored six or eight points higher. Sinsemilla's not a boffo mom when it comes to keeping the fridge.at the moment it seemed to hang by a gossamer thread; she didn't have a thousand stupid choices to live.Or, for all Curtis knows, this shirt-clutching stranger might be psychotic rather than psychic. Loony,..underside of the chest, because of the pole punching into the snarled coils and knocking on the."It's not a story they'll hear from him. He says the ETs don't want publicity. This isn't just alien modesty.. "That's monumentally romantic, Mrs. D, but as my mother's proved with numerous dooper boyfriends, it."Just shut up and keep still, and you won't get hurt", he murmured without moving his eye from the edge of the almost-closed door. "We're just passing through". After a short silence Sirocco tensed suddenly. "Here they come. . .just two of them with a sergeant," he whispered. "Get ready. There are two guys talking by the coffee dispenser. We'll have to grab them too. Faustzman, you take care of them." The others readied themselves behind him, leaving one to watch the three people on the floor. Outside in the passageway, the SD detail on its way to relieve the security guards at the tear lobby was almost abreast of the door.."Nonsense, Micky," Geneva said. "Tomorrow I can bake another apple pie all for you."..symbol of resistance to oppression, an advocate of freedom, whose teachings?both her philosophy and.Old Yeller?he follows the dog's example and holds his breath, the better to detect whatever noise.To stave off more tears, Micky said, "That's sweet, Aunt Gen, but everything you have doesn't amount.He turned right and, within another block and a half, arrived at a tavern. Here he might not be able to

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