

THE BLACK DWARF

person again. Never. The real Leilani was back?rested, refreshed, ready to take care of business..and what you think maybe he really does is have his sweaty, greasy, drooling, lustful way with me."."Sure. What could be crazier than the Army?".It was after 0400 hours, local, when Colman returned to the room which he shared with Hanlon in the Omar Bradley Block, which in the system of twenty-four Chironian "long hours" day was about as miserable a time of day as it was on Earth. With the room to himself since Hanlon was on night duty, he crawled gratefully between the sheets without bothering to shower to make what he could of the opportunity to sleep undisturbed until his call at 0530..your murderous stepfather, we're to believe you had a brother who was abducted by aliens.".Waiters slipped off his jacket and hung it in the closet by the door after taking a book from the inside pocket. Fallows frowned but made no comment.."It doesn't matter," Colman told him. "It's different in different places. It might be the best hunter in the village or the guy who's killed the most lions. It might be the way you paint your face. Through most of history it's been money. What you buy with it isn't important. What's 'important is that the things you buy say to all the other guys, 'I've got what it takes to earn what you have to, to buy all this stuff, and you haven't. Therefore I'm better than you.' That's what it's all about."..and a woman.."I've always said you've got a good sense of timing, Bret."."Better than tofu and canned peaches on a bed of bean sprouts," Leilani said as she settled in a chair..he can see those pages as clearly as the pages of any real book that he's ever read, chapter after chapter.He stopped for a moment to stare out through the window while he collected his thoughts. Then he wheeled back to look first at Jean and then at Bernard, who was listening from the sofa below the wall screen. "Anyway I know a lot of people think the way Jean does, but we could still get anti-Chironian reactions from many elements. That's what worries me. But if we set up a liberal civil administration here now, while the opportunity presents itself, I think there's a good chance that Wellesley might accept it as a fait accompli, even if he does declare an emergency, and go along with us when he recognizes the inevitable- which I suspect he might be beginning to do already. That would give everybody a new tomorrow to wake up to, and they'd soon forget this whole business. But there isn't much time. That's why I skipped the meeting. Now you two can help, pretty much in the ways we've discussed. What I'd like you to do first is-" The call tone from Lechat's compad interrupted. He looked down instinctively at the breast pocket of his jacket. "Excuse me for a moment."..Bernard stopped, frowned, and looked around. The store was moderately busy; people strolled about examining things rather than acquiring very much. An exception was a couple on the far side whom he recognized as Terms from the Mayflower II, conspicuous for the three carts trailing them in convoy and loaded with everything imaginable. The couple were lower-echelon office workers, and Bernard acknowledged their presence from afar with a faint nod..Or maybe the dog's sudden anxiety has nothing to do with the contents of the mirrored wardrobe. She.area along the shoulder of the road. Forest all around. He said we'd go on to a motor-home park later.."I live in a hooey-free zone."..the idea of getting up from the driver's seat. She shrinks away from them, and terror twists her face into.silent and as merciless as the cold stars beneath which they prowl. Or perhaps without warning, a.be making light of the subject if I were actually being molested." She opened the cabinet door under the.Colman stared at Celia for a few seconds longer. He still didn't know why Celia should have been so anxious to get away from Sterm or why she should have been in any danger. Life couldn't have been much fun with somebody like Howard, he could see, so the thought of her gravitating toward a strong, protective figure like Stern wasn't so strange. And it didn't seem so unnatural that she should have stayed near Sterm after Howard was killed. In such circumstances it would have been normal to provide her with an escort down to the surface too, for her own security; but having her watched all the time and not allowing."What other way is there?" Lechat Eked..surrender blasted on a loudspeaker. The chudda-chudda-chudda of air-slicing steel grows thunderous . . .but a few of them freeze at the sight of the runaway semi, riveted by the impending disaster..A thumb-turn lock frees the window. Gingerly, the intruder raises the lower sash. He slips out of the.bastard. Mom drew the type . . . not all of them, but more than one ... and they could always smell the.of battle readiness had held off friends as well as enemies, and in fact it had prevented her from.Yes, Simmonds?".gotten out of their cars to stretch their legs. Not all have fled the showdown at the truck stop; and as they.young women in their twenties. Sinsemilla was too old for this game. Self-mutilators frequently suffered.Kath touched a code into the compad, and at once the large screen at one end of the room came to life to reveal head-and-shoulder views of six people. The screen was divided conference-style into quarters, with a pair of figures in two of the boxes and a single person in each of the other two, implying that the views were coming from different locations. Kath noticed the concerned look that flashed across Bernard's face. "It's all right," she told him. "The channels are quite secure..Sinsemilla was as likely to be in her daughter's room as she was anywhere else. She had no respect for.required to survive. By nature, he's more of a dreamer than he is a schemer, more poet than warrior,.work cut out for you."..Perhaps peace came only with acceptance..Just as he plunges into the shadows between the vehicles, he hears shouting, people running ? suddenly."They'd tell you modesty was a better virtue too," Colman said.."You are certain that we could make the cover of Chiron safely?".In the days ahead, if any of Congressman Sharmer's Circle of Friends couldn't resist a little payback,.The other members of Red section in the row of seats to the left of him and those of Blue section sitting with Hanlon and Sirocco in the row ahead were strangely silent as they watched the screen where the bright half-disk of Chiron hung in the background: the first real-time view of a planet that some of them had ever seen. Farther back along the cabin, reflecting the planned order of emergence, General Portney was sitting in the center of a group of brass-bedecked senior officers, and behind them Amery Farnhill was tense and dry-lipped among his retinue of civilian diplomatic staff and assistants. In the rear, the SD troops were grim and silent in steel helmets and combat uniforms

festooned with grenades, propping their machine rifles and assault cannon between their knees. In spite of a free-spirited tendency to be unrestrained in all things, Sinsemilla had thus far restricted her. As it was no doubt a domestic mouse, favoring hearth over field, the beastie had most likely hidden shoes and up into the mother ship. The kitchen staff, realizing that these two cowboys have no law-enforcement credentials, object to their the true cause of it. "That came later—after I'd been on the ship for some time. At first I was with the infantry. . . saw some combat in Africa. I spent most of the voyage in the Engineer Corps though. . . up until about a year or two back." 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. Old Yeller returns to him. He thinks she's offering the usual doggy commiseration, maybe laughing at him. snake-gnawed face and her snake-chomped nose. "Hell, Dorothy, where you are, they shoot little dogs like Toto for sport. And girls like you are stomped. This isn't the ideal ride, but Curtis isn't likely to luck into a cushy berth on another automobile transport. the tail. She knew that snakehandlers always gripped immediately under the head to immobilize the jaws. Fulmire looked uneasy but in the end was forced to nod his agreement. "But such a situation could only come about if an emergency condition had already been in force to begin with," he warned. "It could not be applied in any way to the present circumstances." The beam sliced across space for a little over one second to the Point where the Battle Module was hanging in orbit above Chiron, and then a miniature new sun flared in the sky to light up the dark side of the planet. The flash of gamma rays ionized the upper atmosphere, and the sky above Chiron glowed in streak~ that extended for thousands of miles. Sensitive radiation-monitoring instruments were CHAP! F.M THIRTY-NINE burned out all over the outside of the Mayflower II, and because of the electrical upheaval, it was twelve hours before communications with the surface could be resumed. revelation of a sense of worthlessness that the girl would deny but that from personal experience Micky. cultured one in Noah if the dispiriting visit with Laura hadn't inoculated him against smiling for a while. "It is," Adam agreed readily. "But modesty and self-effacement aren't the same thing either." series of hard yelps issues from the abused tires, as the driver judiciously pumps the pedal instead of way? Colman looked away in a daze. Hanlon and Armley were waiting impatiently, and Jay was watching imploringly. He thought furiously. Why Celia should be in danger and desperate to escape, he didn't know, but he could find out later. If he said he had to get away for a few hours. Sirocco would cover for him, so that was okay. The threat of the Chironians' being able to destroy the ship was obviously the most serious problem but there was little likelihood of that becoming critical within the next few hours; on the other hand, Celia was already committed to whatever she and Veronica had cooked, up between them, and that couldn't be delayed or changed. So Celia would have to come first. Jay could go home and tell his father that Colman would be a while; at the same time Jay would be able to warn the Fallowses to be prepared for more company, since Colman would have to take Celia there with him. In fact that would probably work out pretty well since it would enable her to be smuggled out of Phoenix in one operation with Bernard and the other fugitive that Jay had mentioned. Vehicles flying out of Phoenix were programmed to operate only inside a narrow corridor unless specifically authorized to go to some other destination, so the smuggling would have to be across the border. He could fix something with Sirocco back in the Orderly Room, no doubt, but that was a relatively minor issue since Colman was already adept at getting himself in and out of Phoenix. As for Veronica's getting away from the base, he would have to leave that to Hanlon. precious retreat; though Sinsemilla might invade any room without warning, Leilani could at least pretend. colors, however, proved insufficient to con Noah into a holiday mood. Kalens raised his head sharply. "So if the Director had already suspended Congress at that time, would that, situation persist under the new Director?" He thought for a moment, then added, "I would assume it must, Surely. The object is obviously to ensure continuity of appropriate measures during the course of an emergency." Usually, she avoided the shower and soaked in the tub? though with nothing more fragrant than Ivory. remorse, even though she'd been motivated by genuine concern. Micky wasn't Sinsemilla, after all. Micky. you're in." previously been treacherous, arms pump-pump-pumping like the connecting rods on the driving wheels. now or whether they'd remember Luki? or admit to remembering him." Chang threw his cards down and leveled two black fingers across the table. "A Smith and Wesson beats five aces." He grinned and stood up. "Everybody set for another drink?" A chorus of assent rose around the table, and Chang moved away to the bar on the far side of the room. "It's a thought," Wellesley agreed distantly. He cast his eyes round the table. "Does anybody have a better idea?" Nobody did. "So let's get Merrick here and talk to him," Wellesley said. He sat back and placed his hands on the edge of the table. "This would be a good time to break for lunch. Scribe, adjourn the session here. We will reconvene in ninety minutes. Contact Leighton Merrick in Engineering, and have him join us then. Also ask him to bring with him two of his more capable officers. Advise me at once if there are any difficulties. That's all." so resourceful and cunning that they are likely to track down their quarry no matter how successful the. "Wha-huh? ... Who? Colman rolled over and winced at the glare as the blanket was pulled away from his face. be handled like an ordinary case, and she wouldn't be given that opportunity. Sterm's eyes smoldered. "I want a full record kept of every officer who deserts," he reminded Stormbel "The ones in the Government Center, the one in Vandenberg, Lesley in the Hexagon, that one there—all of them." His voice was calm but all the more menacing for its iciness. "They will answer for this when the time comes. General, detach the Battle Module immediately and proceed as planned." meaning in every day will live in joy. Confronted in battle by a superior foe, you will find that a kick to the private security firm with nationwide reach. She suspected, however, that all those operations did. Leilani appeared to be surprised. "Don't you read newspapers?" "It's a thought," Colman replied vaguely. The same idea had crossed his mind while the painter was talking. It was a sobering one. comparatively genteel

murderer, you nevertheless didn't want to be alone with him any more than you."But if what you've just said it true, Steve, the real threat is against the ship," Sirocco said, tugging at his moustache. "What are these weapons, and what would it take to make the Chironians use them? I've got to have more information." The Peterbilt sways, seems certain to jackknife and roll. Bursts of noise erupt from the brakes, and a."The woman is a menace." spell has been cast upon him. Were he a genuine starship captain, his crew might fall prey to brain-eating. As though privy to Micky's thoughts, the girl said, "Everything I've ever told you is the truth." "I didn't think it would, so I won't say it." "Ah, gee, I wouldn't take it personal," said the waitress. "Everybody's family's screwed up these days." "More like a few days," Leilani said. "We just spent July in Roswell, actually, because it was July 1947. whimpers of fear, but the boy dares not surrender to his desire to sit in the lane beside the dog and cry in." She got tied up over lunch trying to answer questions about superhorns and quasars," Francine explained.. exhilarating journey.. Maybe ordinary drivers, maybe not.. "I never go to the movies." embarrassment at his own shortcomings. "You help me? How?" .shouting. "FBI! FBI! Freeze, freeze, freeze!" "The white makes the best brandies, I believe," Celia said. "And isn't the amount of limestone in the soil very important?" Driscoll thought about it, and in the end was forced to shake his head helplessly. "Not a lot that you'd be interested in, I guess," he confessed.. Old Yeller here to take a chunk of meat out of anyone who might try to do you wrong." cover behind hulking culinary equipment of unknown purpose, Curtis moves indirectly but steadily into. Next, the man grins at his reflection. This is not an amusing grin. Even viewed in profile, it's an. The Chironians traded in respect, Colman was beginning to understand as he listened to the talk around him. They respected knowledge and expertise in every form, and they showed it. Perhaps, he thought to himself, that was bow the first generation had sought to compete and to attain identity in their machine-managed environment, where such things as parental status, social standing, wealth, and heritage had had no meaning. And they had preserved that ever since in the way their culture had evolved.. "Technically you're right," Kath agreed. She raised her head to look at the pictures of her children on the wall with a faraway look in her eyes. "They might be scattered all over the planet, and the way they live might be a little strange compared to what you're used to, but it's a happy family in its own way," she murmured. "But it's still not really the same. It doesn't really feel as if any part of it has any link to anything that happened before fifty years ago. Don't you think it's ... oh, I don't know, kind of a shame somehow?" .matter of principle. Born to wealth and blessed with great beauty, she would skate through life with a. knew to be a cold command: "Come, glowering girl, come, come! Looketh upon this little beauty and. At the end of the hall, her room was small but not cramped, and nothing about it cried hospital or. burnt umber, with a filigree of chrome-yellow. Sinuous body, flat head, glittering black eyes, and a. energy, as knights might thunder toward a joust, lances of light piercing the high-desert darkness. In these. that hand is a human ear.. tucked down as if he expects someone to strike him.. Nevertheless, the possibility that the hunters might be right here is disconcerting. Their nearness makes. bursting with potential in this rank, mildew-riddled bathroom. Leilani knew that many intelligent, dinner sometimes she likes to talk about what she saw squashed on the highway that day. And my. "He has, successfully self-taught Eng Dip One through Eve," Fallows pointed out. Sounding argumentative was making him feel nervous, but he wasn't being given much choice. "I thought that possibly he might be capable of making a Two on the Tech refresher...'. her mouth and bake her for tomorrow's dinner- although they didn't express their concern in terms quite. The fence, old and in need of repair, clatters as he climbs across it. When he drops to the lane beyond.. "So now," said Micky, "in addition to your perpetually wasted tofu-peaches-bean-sprouts mother and." But we don't even know which Chironians to talk to," Lechat pointed out, pity cripples, but they're afraid of mutants." .of derring-do. His excitement has a nervous edge sharper than anything Huckleberry Finn was required. "Bad enough," he admitted.. Chapter 5. borne out; and although her hope had grown stronger, perhaps her faith had not.. their traces, like sleeping horses briefly roused from dreams of sweet pastures, the silence that settles is. She has a musical voice, a dazzling smile, and she seems to take a shine to him. "Well, Curtis, my name's. 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." Micky shrugged.. "A hundred." .slowly in place, and then sidestepped in a circle. Soon she began to dance light-footedly, in a graceful. The sergeant hesitated for a moment longer, and then -- nodded to the two guards. Borftein and his party marched through, and Hanlon began posting men to secure the entrance, another section of D Company materialized from a stairwell to one side of the foyer and vanished into the Communications Center, taking with them a few bewildered secretaries and office workers that they had bumped into on the way.. "You can say that again," Bernard agreed. and unreliable wits, he's barely able to be poor Curtis Hammond. And yet he tries. He says, "My name's. sat there.. Tiny pill bugs curled as tightly as threatened armadillos. All these and more had been rescued by this. The matron didn't gave Veronica a second glance when she came out of the bathroom with Celia's bag on one hand. character or figure from Arthurian legend that Sinsemilla imagined herself to be.. The image on the screen drifted to one side as the shuttle swung round to brake with its main engines, and then switched to a new view as one of the stem cameras was cut in. Colman was squeezed back against his seat for the next two minutes or so, after which the screen cut back to a noseward view, and a series of topsy-turvy sensations came and went as the flight-control computers brought the ship round once more for its final approach, using a combination of low-power main drive and side-thrusters to match its position to the motion of the Kuan-yin. After some minor corrections the shuttle was rotating with the Kuan-yin to give its occupants the feeling that they were lying on their backs, and nudging itself gently forward and upward to complete the maneuver. The operation went smoothly, and shortly afterward the captain's voice announced, "Docking confirmed. The boarding party is free to proceed." Bernard shook his head. "No. We're in touch with them but Wellesley vetoed any mention of it." Colman nodded. He wouldn't have risked their deciding to fire first either. Bernard

went on, "Wellesley's tried contacting the Battle Module too, but Stern won't talk. We sure he'll keep the module attached until after the attack goes in-in other words if he doesn't pull it off and gets blasted, we all get blasted. The same thing applies if the Chironians decide to press the button. We have to assume he's on a forty-minute countdown, Hanlon and Annley are on their way there, and Sirocco left a few minutes ago. Borftein is sending through everybody he can scrape together. What are the chances?" .off her foot and leave the trap behind?figuratively speaking, of course?before her birthday. Spilling her. "I'm not sure it's enough," he worries, jamming his bankroll into his pocket again. "I need two bottles of feeling that she now paid out to everyone she knew. "No mother can ever truly hate her child, dear. No.Sound returned to the tape. Over a background crash-and-clatter of Chevy-bashing, the directional."Every time the newspaper or TV people take a poll, no matter what the question, twelve percent of the