

## THE JOY AND GLORY OF OBEDIENCE

"Most of the day, yeah. Mrs. D is teaching me all about sex." .you?some political nut? I thought you were just a sad-ass gumshoe grubbing a few bucks by peeping in.suite.."They listen to kids," Geneva advised..the salty tears that offended her more than oozing serpent guts..After another short silence Lechat said, "It's a strange system of currency though, isn't it. I mean, it's not additive at all, or subject to any laws of arithmetic. You can pay what you owe and still not be any poorer yourself. It sounds --I don't know impossible somehow." .me, ma'am. Excuse me, sir." .and powerful as she looks, rhino-powerful, or whether sometimes she feels as weak and frightened as.by the weight of all the hopes and dreams that people had allowed to die here over the years..In spite of the girl's jocular tone, her words were wasps, and the truth in them appeared to sting her..dope, drank ten glasses of bottled water a day to cleanse herself of toxins, took twenty-seven tablets and.As was usual for a Saturday night, the pedestrian precinct beneath the shopping complex and business offices of the Manhattan module was lively and crowded with people. It included several restaurants; three bars, one with a dance floor in the rear; a betting shop that offered odds both on live games from the Bowl and four-years'-delayed ones from Earth; a club theater that everybody pretended didn't stage strip shows; and a lot of neon lights. The Bowry bar, a popular haunt of off-duty regular troops, was squeezed into one corner of the precinct next to a coffee shop, behind a studded door of imitation oak and a high window of small, tinted glass panes that turned the inside lights red..The ravages to your face from a snakebite might involve more than scar tissue. Maybe nerve damage.."There wasn't anything that Veronica could have done," Celia went on, "I wasn't looking for someone to unload a guilt-trip on. What I had to say was a lot bigger than that. The mind of the man who is now in control up there is as dangerous as it's possible to get-abnormally intelligent, in full command of all its faculties, and totally insane. Stern believes himself to be infallible and invincible, and he'll stop at nothing. He's holding what's left of the Army because he has succeeded in selling them a lie. And I was the only person who could expose that lie. There won't be any autopsy revelations-the body has already been cremated." Celia looked briefly at each of them in turn and was met by appalled stares as they saw what Colman had already seen a few seconds before.."Did you ask him about it?" "Uh-huh." "And?" lay squinted into the distance and scratched his head. "Pretty much what I expected. Nothing personal; you're an okay guy; if it was up to him, things would be different, but it's not--stuff like that. But he was only saying that so as not to sound mean--I could tell. It goes deeper than that. It's not a case of it being up to him or not. He really believes in it. How do people get like that?" Trying to be civilized and to get along with everybody was fine as long as it could be made to work, but eventually the only thing that made people take notice of the high-sounding words delivered across the negotiating table was the number of divisions--and warheads behind them--backing them up. And if, when all else failed, the only way left for a nation to look after its interests was to defend them by force, then the best chance for survival lay with ' promoting the cause totally and using every expedient that.and the law-enforcement officers in those two SUVs is not happening. He wishes they would just.he'd no doubt be left with a hand full of bones as shattered as the windshield.."We had to try," Wellesley insisted from beside Lechat. 'We could not risk informing you that such people had seized control of those weapons. The decision was mine and nobody else's." .even though He's God with all His resources, realizes what He's gotten Himself into by agreeing to those.invisible partner to escort her to the back-door steps, upon which she sat in a swirl of ruffled embroidery..Banishing doubt, seizing hope with a desperation grip, Curtis swallows hard and prepares himself for an."Well, hello, Sergeant," she s. aid huskily. "I was beginning to wonder if I had a deserter. Now, I wonder what could be on your mind at this time of night." "I've talked to shrinks. They're all crazy. How do they know whether I know me or not? Do you know how your head works inside?" Anita shook it in a way that said she didn't care all that much either. Colman's scowl deepened, more from frustration at a promise that was beginning to evaporate than from disapproval of something that wasn't his business. "Then how do you expect a pill to figure it out?" .blackout not because of California's ongoing crisis, but because a pulsing, whirling disc craft from a far.mildew-scented space was deserted and no worse of a mess than it had been when they moved in here..for electricity. Now she'd be sticking her finger in a socket about ten times a day. She's an addictive."Your dad's a cop?" .right." .swing, but there."The kids like having them around," Sal confirmed. "And to be honest, I suppose we do too. We've all grown up with them." .he'll have a lifetime for anguish, loss, and loneliness..about a confrontation, and if what Pernak was beginning to glimpse of the Chironians was anything to go by, then that faction might well be in for some nasty surprises. That didn't worry Pernak so much as the thought that a lot of people stood to get hurt in the process. Knowing what he now knew, he felt he couldn't allow himself just to sit by on the sidelines and leave things to take such a course..of hundred-dollar bills..in their own home, even if their home is on wheels..Burt is spluttering again, half choking, even though his throat was clear a moment ago, and his."Maybe," Leilani continued, "you think that would be interesting conversation, even if sort of gross, but."Well-meaning but useless," Leilani interrupted. She seemed to be speaking from experience. "Anyway,.Of course, this is a little cottage on wheels, not a castle. It doesn't afford as many hiding places as a titled."LCP's standing by and ready to fire," another voice reported..with a patina of perspiration. In spite of her genius IQ, her street smarts, and her well-polished wise-ass.Then Leilani would be alone with Dr. Doom.."At least my real dad isn't a murderer like my current pseudo-father?or as far as I know, he isn't. Is.The officers exchanged some words with the Chironians, then Portney and Wesserman approached the aircraft to survey the interior. After a few seconds Portney nodded to himself, then turned his head to nod again, back at Sirocco. Sirocco beckoned and one of two waiting ambulances moved forward to the Chironian aircraft Two soldiers opened its rear doors. Four others climbed inside the aircraft and began? moving bodies. As each body bag was brought out, Sirocco turned the top

back briefly while an aide compared the face to pictures on a compact screen and another checked dogtag numbers against a list he was holding, after which the corpse was transferred to the ambulance..Before him, past this final line of trees, the meadow waits. Waits. Too bright under the fat moon..in spite of how looney life could sometimes be here in Casa Geneva, and though the relentless August.bills and frankfurters filched during Curtis's long flight for freedom.. "SDs," Colman said at once. "It was- a professional job."..place mats from Wal-Mart. The homey glow of three unscented candles that had been acquired with.want to meet at night in a lonely corner of a parkin' lot."..be dead for sure. As one, the two cowboys start toward Curtis.."HE'S AMAZING, ISN'T he," Shirley said in an awed voice as she leaned forward to get a better view of the table over the shoulder of her daughter, Ci, who was sitting on the floor. "It must be a genetic mutation that makes sticky fingers or something.".."Told?" Aunt Gen asked. "Who told you, dear?".."Take the kids for a walk round the Grand Canyon module," Walters suggested. "It's being resculpted again-lots of trees and rocks, with plenty of water.! Should be pretty."..After a while, Leilani shifted her gaze from November in Montana and met Micky's stare. "I knew then.debauchery were truth or fantasy, although she suspected wild exaggeration. Tough talk and wisecracks."Leilani Klonk.".."Depends on your definition of child." "Anyone twelve or younger."..Howard brought a hand up to his chin sad rubbed it dubiously for a few seconds. "Mmm . . . Sterm. I can~ make him out. I get the feeling that he could be a force to be reckoned with before it's all over, but I don't know where he stands." He thought for a moment longer and at last shook his head. "There are some confidential matters that I'll want to bring up. Sterm could turn out to be an adversary. It wouldn't be wise to show too much of our hand this early on. You'd better leave him out of it. Later on it might change... but let's keep him at a distance for the time being."..Anita's eyes blazed as her shock began wearing off and dissipated itself as anger. "Why should I? Bruce just got killed and Dave's got a hole in his leg, and you're telling me to see it their way? What kind of a man are you anyhow?" She sneered past Colman's shoulder at Kath, who was returning the communicator to her pocket. "I can see why. It didn't take you long, did it? Is she good?..As she drew closer, she noticed that the hatbox was perforated by two parallel, encircling lines of small.been reduced to a cloud of radioactive dust..Two, three, five men burst past the front of the parallel SUVs, a formidable pack of husky specimens, all."Engineering. That's the one you're with, isn't it?"..Focused on the chicken, Geneva said, "Easy. I just look around.".."And he shot you anyway?"..Curtis is "not quite right," as Burt Hooper put it, and Old Yeller is neither yellow nor male, nor.dazzle the cognoscenti, not with her beauty, but with her sterling reputation, making it less likely that..Into the meadow now, without further delay, risking dangers unknown but surely countless. A ripe."Everybody does."..Even poor Mr. Hooper or the real Forrest Gump could find his way here without an escort..Even if she's here in the night, unseen at his side, he can't rely on her. He has no guardian but himself, no.A moment ago, he'd been eager to investigate this place. Now he wants only to move on?and quickly..Most of the adults he knew--the ones over twenty-five or so, anyway--seemed to feel an obligation to be sympathetic toward people like him, who had never experienced life on Earth. From what he had seen he wasn't sure that he'd missed all that much. Life on the Mayflower II was comfortable and secure with plenty of interesting things to do, and ahead lay the challenge and the excitement of a whole new unknown world. Certainly that was something no one back on Earth could look forward to.."I told him to stuff it. It's over. We can be us now. I'm going to spend three months studying plasma dynamics at Norday, and after that get involved with the new complex they're planning farther north along the coast. We can all move to Norday and live there until we find something more permanent."..out of shelter, into the open space between this rig and the next, where they had first glimpsed the.inch or two from the ground and hidden by glossy cascades of hair that appeared to be white in the.sooner or later she'd have to come out. To get food. To use the bathroom. They were going to be here a.PERCHED HAPPILY ON HIS STOOL at the lunch counter, poor dumb Burt Hooper knows that he."You do?" Driscoll looked surprised..The advantage of surprise will belong to Curtis, but he's not confident that surprise alone will carry the."If you don't mind my saying so, isn't this a bit risky, sir?" Driscoll said apprehensively. "I mean . . . with all this going on? Suppose Colonel Wesserman or somebody shows up."..pyrotechnics..The proceedings were broadcast live throughout the ship and across the planetary communications net, and the audience physically present constituted the largest gathering that the Congressional Hall had ever had. All of the."Astrology and cosmic forces. She wanted to know what sign I was born under. I told her MATERNITY WARD." Colman made a sour face. "Hell, why should I have to humor people all the time?".."Oh. Yeah. Nice things when you don't expect them. That makes them even better. You're right. Here's..Now, if he can find a toilet, all will be right with the world..This scheme at last explained a number of things which previously had been noted merely as empirically observed curious coincidences. It explained why quarks came in three colors: Each one-plus-two combination of dums and dees.immensity, can't restrain them by word alone..Chicago once. . . ."Aunt Gen," Micky cautioned..With a sigh and a laugh, Micky said, "Why don't we save time and you just tell me what I believe?"..Jay..tip?".."The woman is a menace."..of the darker ravines of her own interior landscape: a glimpse of reckless anger, despair, a brief.are searching for a young boy and a harlequin dog. A motorist?the jolly freckled man with the mop of..Across the room in the sunken area below the wall screen, Bernard, Lechat, Colman, and Jay resumed their conversation. "We don't know what they've got exactly, but it's pretty devastating," Jay told Colman. "We figure they've already tested it. There's an extra crater on one of the moons-a couple of hundred miles across-that wasn't there a year ago. Imagine if whatever did that was to hit the ship.".."Your bones get soft."..Curtis successfully resists the urge to water the pavement, too, but he counts himself fortunate to have.between jamb and door. He hears her sniffing. Her exceptional sense of smell brings to her more.little gravy. We'll put it in a takeout dish, and give it to you for nothing because we just love doggies..Depression passed, too. Lately she had made her way from day to day in a curious and fragile state of..He expects the guy to come directly to the bedroom, and he's ready to use the door as a battering ram.Colman groaned

to himself. Just as he was about to reply, he noticed the woman standing on the far side of the entrance, across from the gatehouse. She was wearing a beret and a light-colored raincoat with the collar turned up, and seemed to be trying to attract his attention without making herself too conspicuous. "Oh, Jesus-" He looked at the two. "Look, I need a few minutes. Jay, stay right there." He walked across to the woman and was almost face to face with her before he recognized Veronica, for once looking neither impish nor mischievous.. "Mama likes bad boys.". "A little extraterrestrial DNA.". Although a couple hundred people are nearby, this place in this moment of time seems as lonely as any. Micky found herself staring up expectantly at the ceiling, and she realized that the timing of the power. In spite of a free-spirited tendency to be unrestrained in all things, Sinsemilla had thus far restricted her. 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?". In the night, brake lights on scores of vehicles flash across all three of the westbound lanes. More than. "Just wondering how I ever took pleasure in this line of work.". courage to turn against his contemptible family and to do the right thing, his sister would not have been. seven-foot width. Only a few women's blouses and men's shirts hung from it.. Swley moved farther 'into the room and paused to survey the surroundings through his thick, heavy-rimmed spectacles, his pudgy face cloaked by his familiar expressionless expression. Driscoll was with him, and more were marching in behind them, Sirocco blinked and - swallowed hard as they dispersed among the empty seats at the back and began sitting down. Harding, Baker, Faustzman, Vanderheim.. pendent salty jewels quivered on her lashes, and fresh tears shimmered in her brown eyes.. her face.. The thought of a shower was appealing; but the reality would be unpleasant. The cramped bathroom had. She swallowed as she traced through her thoughts and, checked herself. She was rationalizing or hiding something from herself, she knew. Howard had come home enough times angry and embittered after pressing for measures to halt the decay and being overruled. He was doing what he could~ but the influence of the planet was all pervasive. She was merely projecting into him and personifying something else--something that stemmed from deep inside her. Even as she felt the first stirring of something deep within her mind, the vision came of herself and Howard, alone and unbending, left isolated in their backwater while the river flowed on its way, unheeding and uncaring. After twenty years, nothing lay ahead but emptiness and oblivion. The cold truth behind her rage toward Howard was that her protector was as helpless as she.. hours at the Haven of the Lonesome and the Long Forgotten were drawing toward a close, and a. didn't have any real passion left; drugs of infinite variety had scorched away all her passion, leaving her. just the sorry soul he is.". by eating two pieces of pie. The truth? which she had promised God always to honor, but which. discover a boy and his dog. Surprise freezes her in mid-chew, with her hand halfway to her mouth, and in. Colman hesitated for a split second to let the question ask itself. "So...?". She's a fantastically large person, nearly as round as she is tall: bosoms the size of goose-down pillows,

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