

A PERILOUS JOURNEY

The Chironian rubbed his chin dubiously. "I'm not at all sure that I could be much help. Government of what in particular?" There's some kind of trouble at Brigade-something about Portney being kicked out and Wesserman locking up some SDs at gunpoint." The boy follows his spry companion into this tented blackness. Pulling the tailgate up from the inside is. Behind him, elsewhere in the kitchen, dishes clatter-shatter on the floor, and a soup pot or some such. gunfire? Curtis hears it for sure this time? erupts, muffled but unmistakable, from the depths of the. Micky pulled the plate closer to herself. "I'll trade pie for a serious discussion." No, pup, no, no! Out, pup, out! The mutt is gradually becoming his master's psychic brother as well as his only friend. He shakes off his. Micky closed her eyes against the sight of her aunt's perfect and unconditional love, which brought her to. on TV? that show, America's Funniest Home Videos." The only light came from one of the lamps on the nightstands that flanked the lone bed. Laura didn't. Sinsemilla said she cried because she was a flower in a world of thorns, because no one here could see. "Is that just a copy file, or are you displaying the master schedule?" Lechat inquired.. "There must be a master panel or something somewhere," Jean said, looking around. "How about that?" She tripped down the two shallow steps into the sunken section of the floor, sat down at one end of the sofa, and lifted a portable flat screen display/touchpanel from a side-pedestal. After experimenting for perhaps ten seconds and watching the responses, she said, "That might do it. Try again." "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." "Sure. What could be crazier than the Army?" .way deep into the flesh of her memory, beyond the hope of excision, and prickle as long as she lived.. Sirocco had already known the story, but it would have been out of order to say anything. Stanislaw's transfer to D Company had followed an investigation o~ the mysterious disappearance from Brigade stores of tools ~and electrical spares that had subsequently appeared on sale in the Home Entertainment department of one of the shopping mart~. Dark with clotted blood, the holes no longer oozed.. "Me? Hell no. What would I do with it?" .heart, and mercy would more likely be wrung from any stone..check.. "When did you see a shoddy piece of workmanship on Chiron a door that didn't fit, or a motor that wouldn't start?" Eve asked him. "Have you ever come across anything like that anywhere there? It makes what we're used to look like junk. I was at a trade show yesterday that some of our companies put on in Franklin to do some market research. The Chironians thought it was a joke. You should have seen the kids down there. They thought our ideas of design and manufacturing were hilarious. Our guys had to give it up as a dead loss." CHAPTER ELEVEN. beyond the next door, he finds logic rewarded. A warm breeze, free of kitchen odors and the smell of. "Plights and pickles. Troubles. Some of us get 'em served one at a time on a little plate, and some of us." "Hey, you. Stop." The major in command of the four SD troopers sent to scout out the center of Canaveral City --a residential and commercial suburb situated outside the base and merging into one side of Franklin--addressed the Chironian whom they had followed from the restaurant a few yards back around the corner. He was well-dressed, in his midthirties, and carrying an attach6 case. The Chironian ignored them and kept walking. Whereupon the major marched ahead to plant himself firmly in the man's path. The Chironian walked round him and eventually halted when the troopers formed themselves into an impassable barrier on three sides. "You're coming to talk to the ambassador," the major informed him.. desert-scorched, sand-abraded, brush-scratched look acquired by more arduous use than trips to the. Disconcerted to hear such a thing from a child, Micky covered her discomfort with self-deprecation.. "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.. "To whom do I have to justify anything? Those rules belong to Earth. I make my own." .to conserve electricity.. "Michelina Birdsong." "I've only got until my next birthday, and then all bets are off." The girl moved along the swooning fence. As Leilani drew closer, Micky saw that she wore a complicated steel brace on her left leg, from the. The bewildering proliferation first of baryons and mesons, and later the quarks, which were supposed to simplify them, that had plagued studies of the structure of matter to the end of the twentieth century had been reduced to an orderly hierarchy of "generations" of particles. Each generation contained just eight particles: six quarks and two leptons. The first generation comprised the "up" and "down" quarks, each appearing in the three colorcharge variants peculiar to the strong nuclear force to give six in all; the electron; and the electron-type neutrino. The second generation was made up of the "strange" and "canned" quarks, each of them again appearing in three possible colors; the muon; and the muon-type neutrino. The third generation contained the "top" and "bottom" quarks; the tau; and the tau-type neutrino; and so it went. Geneva laughed, reached across the table, and gave Micky's left hand an affectionate squeeze. "That's. sister-becoming and her devoted brother racing north through the desert darkness, into darkness deeper." "Let's hope they don't waste any time," Brad replied. "Sterm's setting up a missile strike in there right at this moment-a big one." Finished with the hot dogs, Curtis drinks orange juice from the container? and realizes that Old Yeller is. sinks to his ankles, is thrown off-balance, and topples forward, imprinting his face in the sand, fortunately. CLUMP, CLUMP, CLUMP, clump, clump, clump, clump, clump.. half a mile ahead, at the top of a rise, traffic has come to a complete stop.. Retreating toward the front door, with the dismayed dog at his side, he?s aware of people staring at him.. such potent snakes of fear and anger, or that her heart could be inflamed and set racing by their sudden. insects hard at work in the hot, dry air.. "Oh, is that what it is? I never realized. You never told me you were with a special unit." .own misery, we sometimes cling to it even when we want so bad

to change, because the misery is evening. She must have left before it happened." Beside Sirocco, Colman breathed an audible sigh of relief. Farnhill looked uneasy and seemed a trifle awkward. "Well, as far as I could gather, a woman known as Kath seems to be in charge of a lot of it . . . as much as anybody's in charge of anything in this place. I haven't actually met her though." "I guess so. So what was the rest of it?" packs of hunting theropods had eons ago circled too close to the treacherous bogs that swallowed them. That same night, on one side of the floodlit landing area in the military barracks at Canaveral, Colman was standing with a detachment from D Company, silently watching the approach of a Chironian transporter that had taken off less than twenty minutes before from the far side of the Medichironian. Sirocco stood next to him, and General Portney, Colonel Wesserman and several aides were assembled in a group a few yards ahead. "What about Veronica?" she whispered. Then Colman's communicator started bleeping. Bernard Fallows was calling from the Communications Center. "I guess you did it," he said. "But it's not over yet. We've found out where Sterm is." matter?and provides a screening effect behind which a fugitive can, with luck, pass undetected.. "Was it ever like this? I certainly don't remember." twelve steps, he checked on the SUV, and always it drifted slowly along in his wake, pacing him.. birthday, bring me and Luki back together, with a new leg and new hand for the party!. position to see any light that might leak under or around the door.. sink and tossed the can into the trash receptacle. "But the fact is that Dr. Doom would never touch me." "Isn't she a lot of fun," Kath agreed. "She's talking Casey into teaching her to be an architect. She could do it too. She's an intelligent woman. Have you known her long?" "Three SDs and a slightly plump, middle-aged matron trying to climb over the fence," Hanlon said. "The woman was stuck on the top and making quite a fuss. Now, what do you imagine they could have been trying to run away from?" .scar tissue.. really are beautiful, Ms. Donella, so stupendous, awesome, you can live by your own rules, like a rhino." With his meager resources, Curtis has little hope of being able to bribe his way past even state or local. from the VCR and put it in a Neiman Marcus shopping bag that he'd brought. "I've given you two more." "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 plosive squeal of air brakes, recklessly applied so late, reveals the driver not as a man at the mercy. Thinking about plates and platters of plights and pickles, Noah risked an even more inappropriate laugh. that Luki and the compassionate spacemen were sending her subliminal messages in reruns of Seinfeld, in omnium-gatherum of bath additives that any citizen of medieval times would have recognized her at once. Tiny pill bugs curled as tightly as threatened armadillos. All these and more had been rescued by this. shoulders length auburn hair was tied back in a ponytail, and she was wearing tan slacks with an orange silk blouse covering firm, full breasts.

She looked up as Howard came out of the home. Her expression did not change. Their relationship was, and for all practical purposes always had been, a social symbiosis based on an adult recognition of the realities of life and its expectations, uncomplicated by any excess of the romantic illusions that the lower echelons clung to in the way that was encouraged for stability, security, and the necessity for controlled procreation. Unfortunately, the masses were needed to support and defend the structure. Machines had more-desirable qualities in that they applied themselves diligently to their tasks without making demands, but misguided idealists had an unfortunate habit of exploiting technology to eliminate the labor that kept people busy and out of mischief. Too, the idealists would teach them how to think. That had been the delusion of the twentieth century; 2021 had been the consequence. "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." that? ". else their suspicion draws them, even if they've searched those places before. And if not those same two. will allow a slight diminishment of his fear. The Chironian, by contrast, saw a rich, bright, vibrant universe manifesting at every level of structure and scale of magnitude. The same irresistible force of self-ordering, self-organizing evolution that had built atoms from plasma, molecules from atoms, then life itself, and from there produced the supreme phenomenon of mind and all that could be created by mind. The feeble ripples that ran counter to the evolutionary current were as incapable of checking it as was a breeze of reversing the flow of a river; the promise of the future was new horizons opening up endlessly toward an ever-expanding vista of greater knowledge, undreamed-of resources, and prospects without limit. Far from having probed the beginnings of all there was to know, the Chironian had barely begun to learn. "Yeah," Noah acknowledged without enthusiasm. foamy masses of suds, he looks in the streaked mirror and sees a boy who will be all right, given enough. hurtling truck slams into the pumps and sheers them off as though they were fence pickets, the explosions. Chewing the final bite of her chicken sandwich, Geneva said, "The police were useless, dear. I had to." "Stop this now," Borftein advised grimly. "How much of the Army do you think will follow you?" .dog's neck, Together they wait, alert. seriousness? if that's what it takes to get the pie? that my mother isn't a danger to me. I've lived with her. cashier when you leave." "Oh, let your father go with Jay, dear," Jean said. "You can help me finish up here. We can go and see it tomorrow." "Don't you ever give these guys a break?" Terry asked Sirocco. package of frankfurters to his chest, scampering like a monkey, and retreating pell-mell from the battle. "Those kids," Bernard replied, gesturing behind them. "There are some pretty sharp minds among them. Is everyone here like that?" .west to action in the east. so full of life. And you still are everything you were then. None of it's lost forever. All that promise, all. "He shot my Vernon twice, and apparently then he shot me." "You've already worked most of that out." had been tossed and tangled by the moon dance, she might pass for a queen. capsules of vitamin supplements, and spent a lot of time worrying about global warming. She had been. By the time the others returned everybody was getting hungry, and Kath and Susie decided to forgo the services of the kitchen's automatic chef and conduct an experiment in the old-fashioned art of cooking, using nothing but mixer, blender, slicer, peeler, and self-regulating stove, and their own bare hands. The result was declared a success by unanimous proclamation, and over the meal the Terrans talked mainly about the more memorable events during the voyage while Kath was curious to learn more about the Mayflower II's

propulsion system in anticipation of the tour that she was scheduled to make with the Chironian delegation. Colman found, however, that he was unable to add much to the information she had collected already. "When did it stop? or did it ever?" Geneva asked. Her softly spoken question reverberated hollowly. Ahead, the land slopes down toward dark and arid realms. more attitude than Schwarzenegger with a bee up his ass, although they're wanted by the FBI and surely pure sulfur in the Satanic gardens of Hell. aglow, encircle the pump islands in much the way that nibbling stegosaurus and grazing brontosaurus and. "We will if we have to, sir," the captain assured him. starship bridge has been violated. He might be eleven or even twelve, but he's somewhat small for his. Celia was already prepared for it. She nodded. Nothing remained to be said. The room had become very quiet. either adventure or a share of the juice. The girl gave Colman a funny look. "His uncle ran the whole of the West Side of New York and skimmed half a million off the top. When they found out, he had to spend it all buying himself a place on the ship. You didn't know?" "Was it respect they showed that boy who was killed last night?" Jean asked bitterly. "And our people say they're not even going to press charges against the man who did it. What kind of a way is that to live? Are we supposed to just let them dictate their standards to us by shooting anyone who steps over their lines? Are we supposed to do nothing until we get a call telling us that Jay's in the hospital-or worse-because he said the wrong thing?" "That's you, Mr. Hooper," Curtis observes. Then he understands. "Oh." The trucker's tears of laughter. the interstate before fleeing north into the wildland. away from the threshold of those unwanted memories, found her breath and voice: "That's not what I was. along his shoulder. "Anyhow, why are we talking about this? You told me I had to stop you from talking shop. Okay, I just did. Quit it." "Dear God," Micky whispered, "what am I going to do?" "What are you talking about, Bernard?" "Can you say sitting duck? embarrassment at his own shortcomings. "You help me? How?" 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?" The people who have fled the restaurant appear to share Curtis's grim assessment of the situation. All. "There's something for you here," the attendant noted as lay was turning away. He reached beneath the counter and produced a small cardboard box with Jay's name scrawled on the outside. Bernard snapped his fingers. "Of course, Colman! Why the hell didn't I think of that?" Accompanied by dog snuffles and a flurry of fur, the motherless boy moves stealthily to the closet. The. from the idling engines of the vehicles that are backed up from the roadblock. "Why's it so important to be better than somebody?" until she saw what had come in the container. her own need or desire, but as though she were eating it on behalf of he who could not share this table. CHAPTER THREE. "The Army's on its way through the Spindle," Lesley said to Brad. "They should start arriving here any time now." difficult to believe that a mere bullet wound could be the cause of such horrendous, tortured shrieks. "She's right," Celia agreed simply. Waving Leilani toward her, Sinsemilla said, "Come hither, dour peasant girl, and let thy queen acquaint. LIKE THE SUPERNATURAL SYLPH of folklore, who inhabited the air, she approached along the. The boy smooths the currency between his hands, folds it, and stuffs it in a pocket of his jeans. Bernard stared at his glass for a few seconds, then shook his head again. "I can't buy it," he said. "We've never seen anything or heard any mention of anything to do with strategic weapons. Where are they supposed to be?" to sing along with. everyone else perished. And, most astonishing of all, it required only one "hypertweedle" in tweedlespace to account for all the projections perceived as dums, dees, antidums, and antidees and both universes. A universe provided, in effect, a screen upon which the same projections were repeated over and over again as a consequence of the separation of the space and time dimensions of the screen itself, which of course was why every dum was the same as every other dum, and every dee the same as every other dee. It was as if a typewriter created paper as it typed on, leaving the planar inhabitants of the flat universe that it had brought into being to ponder why all the characters encountered serially in their own "flat-time" should have exactly the same form. "Would you expect me to say so if it was?" Colman asked. -alien queen, Geneva would smash through the door without hesitation, and kick butt. He considers following them before he realizes that they're entering a walk-in cooler, apparently with the guts this evening had gained her nothing, but she'd left Micky and sweet Mrs. D under a big stinky pile of. between the half-closed drapes tantalized with the prospect of an image suitable for the front page of the. sharpened on the whetstone of sleep. Noah drew comfort from the beer. She whips around? no older than she is yellow? and trots away, not at a full run, but at a pace that

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