

## FIN DE SIICLE PIICE EN 4 ACTES

"The gate's going to be a lot bigger than last night," Jain had said. "Can you handle it?" Nolan lay back and waited for sleep to come, shutting out the sound of the drums, the sight of the shadowy shape beside him. Only a few hours until morning, he told himself. And in the morning, the nightmare would be over. When the ship finally did show up, it was no longer a NASA ship. It was sponsored by the fledgling International Space Agency. Its crew came from all over Earth. Its drive was new, too, and a lot better than the old one. As usual, war had given research a kick in the pants. Its mission was to take up the Martian exploration where the first expedition had left off and, incidentally, to recover the remains of the twenty Americans for return to Earth. I led the Admiral into my office and fired up Zorphwar on the tube. damage, I have to check on that?" She struggled to get up but Lang held her down. Then Darlene gasped. CENTRAL ARENA - Nolan smiled at the sound, then nodded at Mama. I'm going to turn in now. You take good care of. The purplish cloud broke. "Well, you may rest assured you aren't going to!" the wealthy merchant. to do now for people with special ability and training (low though that pay necessarily is). It's true that the passion, Rob. ... It seems to build. Suddenly Amos felt his eyes grow heavy, his head grow light, and he slipped down in his chair. That's what got me the job with Alpertron, Ltd., the big promotion and booking agency. I'm on the concert tour and work their stim board, me and my console over there on the side of the stage. It isn't that much different in principle from playing one of the instruments in the backup band, though it's a hell of a lot more complex than even Nagami's synthesizer. It all sounds simple enough: my console is the critical link between performer and audience. Just one glorified feedback transceiver: pick up the empathic load from Jain, pipe it into the audience, they react and add their own load, and I feed it all back to the star. And then around again as I use the sixty stim tracks, each with separate controls to balance and augment and intensify. It can get pretty hairy, which is why not just anyone can do the job. It helps that I seem to have a natural resistance to the sideband stopover radiation from the empathic transmissions. "Ever think of teaching?" said the school voc counselor. "No," I said. "I want the action." maybe I shouldn't even touch it. Something in Barry's manner finally conveyed the nature of his distress. The light dawned: "You have. Two weeks of research left them knowing no more. They had to abandon the Matthews for the time, about your job, Barry? Doesn't that give you opportunities to develop communication skills?" unmoving. And covering all the derricks was a translucent network of ten-centimeter-wide strips of good. I told him so. where do they come from? Where are the little pigeons? Are they hidden somewhere?" He stopped. "Then," called Amos, "you could help us get there too?" by the door. Then he was gone. coming down with another bout of fever. Then, as the harsh heat of the rum scalded his stomach, he. \*I'm sorry to hear it. "Tomorrow. I've got a date with Jantce tonight." She reached in her desk drawer and pulled out my bank statement. She dropped it on the desk with a papery plop. "Don't worry," I assured her, "I won't spend much money. Just a little spaghetti and wine tonight and ham and eggs in the morning." She humphed. My point "Anything else?" the touch, limbs that could writhe in boneless contortion to squeeze the breath from a man and crush him. Saturday morning, the third day since Miss Herndon died, I had a talk with Lorraine and Johnny. If Detweiler wanted to play cards or something that night, I wanted them to agree and suggest I be a fourth. If he didn't bring it up, I would, but I had a feeling he would want his usual alibi this time. I sighed. Miss Tremaine closed the pad. "Okay. No to Mrs. Car-mknael and make appointments for Bushyager and Bloomfeld." She lowered her eyelids at me. I spread my hands. "Would Sam Spade go looking for a French poodle named Gwendolyn?" anything anyone said. The skit had been both essentially truthful and unjustifiably cruel. Too much. 124. meadows, with red and white houses, and far off a golden castle against a blue sky. Wilmington, Delaware. Their marital difficulties were complex, but the chief one was a simple shortage of. "That's what I want to do in the morning," Song said. "Unless Mary will let us take a look tonight?" of a girl in the same rooming house on the 19th. He'd been in the pink of health when he moved in, sick. 81. t Or oddities that entered the curriculum decades before and refuse to be dislodged, like "To a Waterfowl." For some reason students often end up with the most sophisticated, flawed, or least-accessible works of great writers: twelve-year-olds reading Romeo and Juliet, for example, or Silas Marner. As the four of us stood there staring at him, he raised his eyes still higher, and their blackness seemed to intensify, to throw forth fire. It was the briefest of illusions, for a moment later he turned, climbed back into his palanquin and clapped his hands. We stared after it as the four black bearers bore it away. we saw your light. "I think a baby around here would be fun. Two should be twice as much fun. I think I'll start. Come on, Matty." marks a leader. She took a deep breath and came fully awake for the first time that day. 82. keep tight purse strings. Better watch it, kid. If she finds out, you'll be back on the streets again. And you. "I don't even like to think about it," said Jack. "Once he asked me to unzip the leather flap at the end. dead-letter office and was returned in due time, but meanwhile Smith had acknowledged the letter and. That you've got to be going. Outside, the water lapped at the ship, and after a moment Jack said, "A river runs by the castle of the. Pramatica by Samuel R. Delany 243. "What did you say to him?" asked Jack. comments. Lucy, if you were expecting some sort of reprimand, forget it. We'll take steps first thing in the. Mary Lang let it work itself out, only interfering when it got violent. She herself was not immune to the frenzy but managed to stay aloof from most of it. She went to the shelter with whoever asked her, trying not to play favorites, and gently tried to prod them back to work. As she told McKillian toward the first of the week, "At least we're getting to know one another." spectators? "Sure," I say. "Easy." But momentarily I'm not sure and I realize how tightly I'm gripping the. The scene outside was deceptively quiet as Colman lifted a flap and peered out, keeping his head well back from the edge of the canopy. The hillside below the post fell steeply away, its features becoming rapidly indistinct in the feeble starlight before vanishing completely into the featureless black of the gorge

beneath. There was no moon, and the sky was clear as crystal. When his eyes had adjusted to the gloom, Colman shifted his attention to the nearer ground and methodically scanned the area in which the twenty-five men of the platoon had been concealed and motionless for the past three hours. If they had undercut their foxholes and weapons pits the way he had shown them and made proper use of the rocks and vegetation, they would stand a good chance of escaping detection. To confuse the enemy's tactical plots further, D Company had deployed thermal decoys a half mile back and higher up near the crest, where, by all the accepted principles, it would have made more sense for the platoon to have positioned itself. Auto timed to turn on and off in a random sequence to simulate movement, the decoys had been drawing sporadic fire for much of the night while the platoon had drawn none, which seemed to say something about the value of "the book" as rewritten by Staff Sergeant Colman. "There are two ways to do anything," he told the recruits. "The Army way and the wrong way. There isn't any other way. So when I tell you to do something the Army way, what does it mean?".has been defiled.".of their way and showed an orange belly..there was no verbal swordplay and no pretense about her, which was as attractive in its way as.The jailor fingered his key again, then said, "Nothing of interest at all.".and was being studied. But it had to be classed as extremely remote..company as much as yours.".The day before, Monday, the 25th, a girl had miscarried and hem-orrhaged. She had bled to death because she and her boy friend were stoned out of their heads. They lived a block off Western?very near the Brewster-and Detweiler was at the Brewster Monday.."Fine," I say. I walk past her..I know it's painful to be told that something in which one has invested intense emotion is not only bad art but bad for you, not only bad for you but ridiculous. I didn't do it to be mean, honest Nor did I do it because the promise held out by heroic fantasy?the promise of escape into a wonderful Other world?is one I find temperamentally unappealing. On the contrary. It's because I understand the intensity of the demand so well (having spent my twenties reading Eddison and Tolkien; I even adapted *The Hobbit* for the stage) that I also understand the absolute impossibility of ever fulfilling that demand. The current popularity of heroic fantasy scares me; I believe it to be a symptom of political and cultural reaction due to economic depression. So does Robin Scon Wilson (who electrified a Modem Language Association seminar by calling *Dune* a fascist book), and Michael Moorcock (see his jacket copy for Norman Spin-rad's *The Iron Dream*, a novel which vehemently denounces the genre in the same terms Wilson doesf), and the writers of *Bored of the Rings*, the Lampoon parody, from which came "Arrowroot, son of Arrowshirt". "Nothing. Just routine." Obviously he thought I was a police detective. No point in changing his mind. "Where was he last night when the Hernddn woman died?". "I've met her friends.".the Sreen, of course. The Sreen have been very arbitrary and high-handed from the start, snatching our.entire Computer Products Division..maintain her tough, competent show of strength. In a way, it was a strong thing to do, to expose.allowed it.. "So. We have a thing here that eats plastic. And seems to be made of plastic, into the bargain. Any.wheezing launch, he stood beside the crib in the spare bedroom and gazed down at his son with an.Window 28 was the window that issued licenses: he had passed!."The other end of the rainbow?" asked Hidalgo..pretty nice package: a fifteen-percent across-the-board hourly rate increase; full-paid hospitalization;.variety of problems with your ship such as invasion by mind-warping beings, power-system failure, and.return.".emerged that for most of her childhood, Amanda Selene Gail had been two personalities, Amanda Gail.doorman saying he would be by to collect his you-know-what at half past twelve the next night.?That it?" Mr. Morone asked..Crawford looked away from the madly whirling rotors of the windmill farm. He was with the rest of the crew, sitting in the dome with his helmet off. That was as far as Lang would permit anyone to go except hi the cramped sleeping quarters. Song Sue Lee was at the radio giving her report to the Edgar Rice Burroughs. In her hand was one of the pump modules she had dissected out of one of the plants. It consisted of a half-meter set of eight blades that turned freely on.Laughton riding those bells or Igor stealing that brain from the laboratory. "He's good-looking and he's a.passion. . . ." (Music in London, v. i, Constable ft Co., Loo-don, 1956, pp. 51-52).Darlene's voice trailed off into an incoherent babbling, and she sank back. Nolan kept his hand on.you will if you stay here long enough?they know genetics. They really know it We have a thousand."If you say so," said Amos. He went to the trunk, walked all around it three times, then gingerly lifted the lid. He didn't see anything, so he lifted it further. When he still didn't see anything, he opened it all the way. "Why, there's nothing in ..." he began. But then something caught his eye at the very bottom of the trunk, and he reached in and picked it up..a rescue mission now, easier to sell. But the design will need modification, if only to include five more.and pointed at him. She was suited except for her helmet, which contained her radio. He knew he was in.LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, our guest of honor tonight-Henry B. Congreve." The toastmaster completed his introduction and stepped aside to allow the stocky, white-haired figure is black tie and dinner jacket to move to the podium. Enthusiastic applause arose from the three hundred guests gathered in the Hilton complex on the western outskirts of Washington, D.C. The lights around the room dimmed, fading the audience into white shirtfronts, glittering throats and fingers, and mask like faces. A pair of spotlights picked out the speaker as he waited for the applause to subside. In the shadows next to him, the toastmaster returned to his chair.."Okay, Rob, I'm up in the booth above the east aisle. Give me just a tickle." My nipples were sensitized to her tongue, rough as a cat's..charger. The Lunamere's main attraction in winter was that it froze over, making sixteen kilometers of ice.plant that sprouted up half a meter, then extruded two stalks parallel to the ground. At the end of each.recognized that the room was chilling..hours poring over them.". "You." She points at me. "Here." She indicates the rock face. The words are simple commands given.An aeon went by. There was no sound except the whistling of the wind in the scaffolding. Then a.56.sunup, loading cargo all day for the boats that went downriver, squinting over paperwork while night."Since ... I was a kid." He grinned. "You think it was one of those brews the old witch-woman gave me caused it? Maybe I could sue for malpractice.".something for her, which X seriously doubt. Still want to go through with it, Lucy?".The inner nest was free-form. The New Amsterdamites had allowed it to stay

pretty much the way the whirlbirds had built it, only taking down an obstruction here and there to allow humans to move around. It was a maze of gauzy walls and plastic struts, with clear plastic pipes running all over and carrying fluids of pale blue, pink, gold, and wine. Metal spigots from the Podkayne had been inserted in some of the pipes. McKillian was kept busy refilling glasses for the visitors who wanted to sample the antifreeze solution that was fifty per cent ethanol. It was good stuff, Captain Singh reflected as he drained his third glass, and that was what he still couldn't understand..secret..Song had taken one apart as well as she could. She was still shaking her head in disbelief. She had not been able to excavate the long insulated taproot, but she could infer how deep it went. It extended all the way down to the layer of permafrost, twenty meters down..Aubade.When Amos woke up, he was lying on the floor of the ship's brig inside the cell, and Jack, in his underwear?for the sailors had jumped on him when he came back in the morning and given the jailor back his clothes?was trying to wake him up..Selene laughed. She spun across the sand in time to some music only she could hear and grinned."What do you think that feels like, here?" She grabbed a handful of white nylon in the general area of..into the slot of a gray machine which responded with an authoritative chunk. She slid the validated license.easily. What I don't know, I could learn. Some of the systems are computer-driven; give it the right.around, clicking his tongue softly. His eyes caught on something at the end of the couch. He smiled. At.to the trunk, lifted the lid, and tossed it in..The adults were standing separately around the space while tiny helicopters flew around them, wrapping them from head to toe in strips of webbing like human maypoles..followed a dotty old woman home from her latest nervous breakdown. Let's make a deal, shall we?".We played gin the rest of the afternoon and talked-talked a lot Detweiler seemed eager to talk or, at.court on Las Palmas, or not far away.. "Good for you," he said when Amos had climbed onto the deck and given him the glass. "Now come have lunch with me, but for heaven's sake get out of that circus tent before I get another headache."..help you?".I know I don't have any right to feel this, but I'm pissed, and so I move away in the bed. "I don't."Then it's good I am going to get it for you," said Amos, "because even with your sunglasses, it would give you a terrible headache."..look for some mechanism the bug could use to steal energy from the rotating gears in the whirligigs?".No sweat. That was a laugh. All he'd done since he got here was sweat. Patrolling the plantation at sunup, loading cargo all day for the boats that went downriver, squinting over paperwork while night closed down on the bungalow to imprison him behind a wall of jungle darkness. And at night the noises came?the hum of insect hordes, the bellow of caimans, the snorting snuffle of peccary, the ceaseless chatter of monkeys intermingled with the screeching of a milling mindless birds..I try to change the subject. "Your father didn't come down to the first concert, did he? Is he coming tonight?".overloads are handled by adjusting the work load in the Computer Center. However, at three thirty.and who must engage in all the complex phenomena, both physical and chemical, involved in sexual.from him. But why am I the Prince of the Far Rainbow? That is exactly the question asked me a year ago.and coat..ears strained for the signs of his approach. There were none..is really a novel on the plan of A for Anything and Hell's Pavement, only much compressed..of Examiners, he wondered if maybe he'd managed to squeak through. He didn't see how he could have..man by the right arm, and somebody else grabbed him by the left, and they pulled him down on his back,

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