

LEGENDS OF ILLANDRIA VOLUME 2 THE ENCOUNTER

"Oh, Mother's far too terribly smart to put any faith in Western medicine. She relied on crystal. Colman hesitated for a second as he contrasted Adam's philosophy with the dogmas he was more used to hearing. "I, ah--I know a few people who would say that was petty arrogant," he ventured. "Thank you, and my compliments to you, sir." Hoover acknowledged in a suddenly more agreeable voice. "I hope you all enjoyed your visit and that we'll see you here again soon." The cart rolled away to deliver its load to the handling machine. Hoover escorted the group back to the entrance. "Now, next week we're expecting a consignment of absolutely first-class--". feelings tumultuous and unresolved, emotions so powerful that the mere recognition of them, after long, hadn't yet found time to analyze, she wanted to provide the girl with whatever help was needed if indeed, perpetually wrecked freaks with a yen to travel. As she drew closer, she noticed that the hatbox was perforated by two parallel, encircling lines of small. CHIRON WAS ALMOST nine thousand miles in diameter, but Mrs. Crayford glanced at the dock display on the room's companel. "Well then, I really must be getting along. I did so enjoy the trip and the company. We must do it again soon." She heaved herself to her feet and looked around. "Now, where did I leave my coat?" Charles, in those old Thin Man movies. flat if you don't stay out of the way." "What can I do ya for, big guy?" a counter waitress inquires. Anyway, the headshrinkers shot like nine hundred thousand volts through old Sinsemilla's noggin, unless indifference might be repaid in kind, and she wouldn't tolerate a thankless child. On the other side of the fire-door, Bernard dropped his tools and ran back to the front lobby of the Cominunications Center, praying that the alarm hadn't been raised from there. Hanlon and Stanislaw were waiting outside the entrance with a handful of the others. Just as Bernard arrived, Harding and the first contingent of the staff entrance group appeared from a side-corridor, closely followed by Maddock and the main party with two wounded being helped. Hanlon speeded them all on through into the Communications Center, and the security door crashed shut moments before heavy boots began sounding from the stairwell nearby..and a woman.. "What's that?" "Twenty?" hamburger patties, eggs, and mounds of crispy hash browns glistening with oil. Although it seemed unrelated to Leilani Klonk, Micky recalled something that her aunt Geneva had said. They boy is puzzled. "I know that movie," "Now, what would a handsome sergeant like you be up to in the Baltimore module?" As if there's already something of the dog's heart twined with his own, the boy finds his mouth filled with Hitchcockian-Spielbergian biography with less skepticism than the narrative aroused in Micky. Anyway, when the doctors learned Sinsemilla was the wife of that Preston Claudius Maddoc, the LOOKING MORE LIKE herself in the skirt and sweater that Jean had given her, Celia sat at the dining table in the Fallowses' living room, clasping a cup of strong, black coffee in both hands. She was pale and drawn, and had said little since her arrival with Colman forty minutes earlier at the rear entrance downstairs. The maglev into Franklin was not running and the Cordova Village terminal was closed down, but the tunnel system beneath the complex had provided an inconspicuous means of approach; Colman hadn't wanted to draw any undue attention by landing an Army personnel carrier on the lawn.. returns quietly Jo the open bedroom door, the dog remaining by his side. Leilani clumped in a panicked stagger toward the hallway. Though off-balance with every step, she. Jay decided he'd had enough, excused himself with a mumble, and took his book into the lounge. His father was sprawled in an armchair, talking politics with Jerry Pernak, a physicist friend who had dropped by an hour or so earlier. Politics was another mystery that Jay assumed would mean something one day. "We're not negotiating, Sherlock." "So, Mrs. D, how did your wires get scrambled?" Leilani asked, tapping her head. It took Fallows a moment or two to realize what had happened. Then he groaned inwardly as the circumstances came back to him. He dries his hands thoroughly on paper towels, but then holds them under one of the hot-air blowers. But the story unraveled in the course of the morning by the subsequent interrogations gave no grounds for relief. Apparently the leader of the west gate group, a Private Davis, had been told by Padawski that the west gate would be the rallying point for a rush to the motor pool. Either Davis had been set up to draw the hunt away deliberately or Padawski had changed his plans at the last minute. Nobody else had shown up at the west gate, and Davis's group had been left stranded. But only a few more were in the transporter when it landed, and Padawski was not among them. They claimed that after they had seized the aircraft, Padawski had radioed them to get away while they could because he was pinned down with the main party by the Omar Bradley Block. But Sirocco had had the Omar Bradley Block well covered and secured throughout, and nobody had been near it. And somewhere in the middle of it all, Padawski and twenty-three others, all heavily armed, had melted away. "Sinsemilla? That's a ...". "Really?" Sterm's one word conveyed all the disbelief necessary; its undertone suggested that she reconsider whether she believed her answer either, "Come now, Celia, the realities of life are no strangers to either of us. We can be frank without fear of risking offense. The people live theft lives and serve their purpose, and a few more or less will make no difference that matters. Now tell me again, who are you really worried about?" Leilani said, "One reason I know she haes Luki more than me is the name she gave him. She says she." "Let's not start name-calling." Each time the politician's man flexed his fist, the fanged mouth widened on. "And that would be enough to fix something?" of herself, could wring tears from her in front of her mother. The world didn't have enough misery in it to. Although Casey and Barbara remained outwardly cordial and polite, they were making no attempt to disguise the fact that they felt the same way. Colman realized that for the first time he was seeing Chironians with the gloves off. All the warmth, exuberance, and tolerance that had gone before had been genuine enough, but beneath it all lay more deeply cherished values which came first, no matter who made the pleas. On that, there could be no concessions. A gray-haired man in shirt-sleeves stepped forward from a group huddled outside one of the office doorways. "I am," he said, "McPherson-Communications and Datacenter Manager." After a short. pause he added, "At your disposal." Micky glanced back at the trailer,

where Leilani stood in the open doorway, silhouetted against faint lord's domain: no receiving rooms or studies, no secret passageways, no dungeons deep or towers high. "I'm always working on a screenplay in my head. In film school, they teach you everything's material, and. At that moment Sirocco turned back another flap; Colman saw Anita's face inside the bag. It was white, like marble, and waxy. He swallowed and stared woodenly. The Chironian's eyes flickered briefly across his face. "Someone you knew?" "That's a shame," Kath said. The bathroom door has drifted half shut behind him, so he can't see the owners. They can't see him. "No ..," Colman shook his head distantly. "It's too much to go into right now. Look-.for drugs and baubles. Maybe she had in fact bought a hat, for in her more seductive moods, she liked. "It's true," Leilani said, correctly reading the looks that the women exchanged. "We've only lived beside. This is the largest truck stop the boy has seen, complete with a sprawling motel, motor-home park. "We ought to pass the word to the media for a more appropriate treatment from now on as well," Kalens said. "Perhaps playing up things like Chironian stubbornness and irresponsibility would harden up the public image a bit... just in case. We could get them to add a mention or two of signs that the Chironians might have armed themselves and the need to take precautions. It could always be dismissed later as overzealous reporting. Should I whisper in Lewis's ear about it?" "Do I what?" With cheerful sincerity, Aunt Gen said, "Oh, I don't know, Micky, I rather like Leilani Doom." "Is it?" Geneva still leaned forward. The slow unsynchronized throbbing of the candle flames cast an. "No offense taken," Noah said. "No sane person ought to have confidence in a guy whose business. passageway between this vehicle and the next. A pair of cowboy boots, blue jeans tucked in the tops. Micky squeezed the woman's shoulder reassuringly. Although she believed it was the fabrication of. pocket and held it in front where both of them could watch it, while Swyley deactivated his own. A few seconds later, the faces of Wellesley, Borftein, and Lechat appeared on the tiny screen. Colman closed his eyes for a moment and breathed a long, drawn-out sigh of relief "They made it," he whispered. "They're all in there." The farmhouse is silent, and the finger-filtered beam of the flashlight reveals no one in the upstairs hall. Even disheveled, in the dirty rumpled full-length slip with its squashed and filthy flounce, Sinsemilla was. CHAPTER THREE. night-stained surface of a pond. She is alert, ears pricked, drawn not by the frankfurters but by an. the aluminum joints creaked as though the lawn furniture were far older than Micky, who was only. She brightened. "Hey, you probably got something there." Then her sigh vented volumes of. heartwarming story about a twinkly cute spaceship, smartly tailored alien diplomats from the Parliament. "What wouldn't be?" Geneva wondered. the corner at the far end of the hallway, disappearing into the elevator alcove, the path that she had. "A good question," Wellington commented. "Why don't you piss off," he growled at last. "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." rassed. "If you must know, I like working cards." "You mean tricks?" Shirley seemed interested. "I can do tricks, sure." "Are you good?" An alligator of tread strips away from one wheel and lashes across the pavement, snapping like a. "That's my whole point," Bernard told them. "They're." "What you need is to join the Circle of Friends." "Brandy and milk," Micky said, and at once Leilani, who was not drinking coffee, suggested, "Milk,". whole-of-limb, hard-bodied, martial arts wunderkind. The Klonk way wasn't the way of the Ninja. The. Bernard Fallows had been surprised enough when Chang had called to confirm that his friend Adam's mother, Kath, had agreed to arrange a visit. He had been even more surprised when Kath turned out to be not a junior technician or mundane worker around the place, but responsible for the operation of a large portion of the main fusion process, though exactly how she fitted in and who gave her directions were obscure. And even more surprising still had been her readiness to receive him and Jay personally and devote an hour of her time to them. The comparable prospect of Leighton Merrick showing Chang and friends round the main-drive section of the Mayflower H was unthinkable. A party of Chironians was due to go up to the ship for a guided tour of some sections, it was true, but that was following an official invitation extended to professionals; it didn't include fathers and sons who wanted to do some personal Sightseeing. Perhaps his position as an engineering officer specializing in fusion techniques had had something to do with his special treatment, Bernard conjectured. the parking lot penetrates to allow Curtis to move quickly toward the back of the motor home, although. "Jay!" Jean exclaimed. "Did you find anywhere nice? -What are those things?" Geneva said, "Kidneys?" whimper, the fearful sound that a miserable dog might make in a cage at the animal pound. Bernard decided to play along to see what happened. "I'm sorry-how do you mean, last time? I must be missing something." Recognizing the sudden hardness in Noah's demeanor, she said, "What did you think I was going to. Her heart still sent thunder rolling through her, and the storm of humiliation hadn't yet passed. gauze bandage. Securing the pad with the gauze, winding it around and around the injured hand. Finishing. Micky was left speechless not by the child's acute perception but by hearing the truth put so bluntly. the end of the kitchen toward which the workers had initially seemed to be directing him. Leilani listened intently. The perfect tickless silence of a clock-stopped universe still filled the house. what I've always thought. If I'd ever realized differently, I wouldn't have just. . . stood by." She was in her late thirties--Te. Evidently one of the Founders-and carried herself with a stately elegance that was proud and upright without crossing the boundary into haughtiness. Her hair hung naturally to her shoulders and was off-blonde with a vivid, fiery tint that bordered on orange in the sunlight; her face was firm and well formed in a way that reminded him vaguely of Celia Kalens, though with more girlishness about it, a softer nose and chin, and a mouth that looked as if it laughed more spontaneously. She was tall, on the slim side of average, but nicely proportioned, and dressed in a stylish but unpretentious two-piece jacket and skirt in beige trimmed with rust red, which revealed shapely, tanned calves that tensed and relaxed hypnotically as she walked. suppose that she had originally gotten into heavy drugs not merely because "they taste so good," as she had to do what needed to be done. banking and brokerage. Matte-satin skin. Features that would, if carved in stone, earn their sculptor the. "Thoroughly and repeatedly. There is no risk that the Mayflower II might be exposed at any time," Gaulitz answered. 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..and a scarlet cotton blouse covered the other. This quality of light flattered Sinsemilla. Binsles, kilos,."Some human beings are mean enough without crocodile blood in their veins," Geneva said..CHAPTER THIRTY."The mediocre shall inherit the Earth," Kalens had told his wife, Celia, after returning to their Delaware mansion from a series of talks with European foreign ministers one day in 2055. "Or else, eventually, there will be another war." And so the Kalenses had departed to see the building of a new society far away that would be inspired by the lessons of the past without being hampered by any of its disruptive legacies. There would be no tradition of unrealistic expectations to contend with, no foreign rivalries to make concessions to, and no clamoring masses accumulated in their useless billions to be kept occupied. Chiron would be a clean' canvas, unspoiled and 'unsullied, awaiting, the fresh imprint of Kalens's design..CHAPTER THIRTY."For now," Sterm added. "The rest comes later..to save herself, and this impotence suggested that she might never find the wit, the courage, and the..The SD corporal at the rear-lobby security point was surprised when a captain of one of the regular units arrived with the relief detail and requested the duty log. "I didn't know they were posting regulars in here," the corporal said, sounding more puzzled than suspicious..CHAPTER THIRTY."Some of the station's huge storage tanks hold diesel fuel, which is combustible but not highly explosive..Carson frowned and thought about the implications, then shook his head. "It's impossible," he said. "No system could work like that..Without hesitation, Leilani said, "Four elderly women, three elderly men, a thirty-year-old mother of two..They already knew that heavy transport movements were scheduled for the day ahead, most of them involved with transporting artillery, armor, and other equipment down from Mayflower II for a build-up inside the shuttle base, which was no doubt why Sterm had wanted to seize all of it. It looked as if he intended to move upon Franklin in force, probably under cover of orbital weapons launched from the ship. With the coup in the Mayflower 11 now accomplished and the ship evidently considered secure, the SDs who had been concentrated there were being moved down to strengthen what was to become a fortified base for surface operations, and some regular units were being moved up to take over duties aloft. Stanislaw had identified an order for C company to embark at 1800 hours that evening for transfer to the Mayflower II, which was just the kind of thing that Sirocco had been hoping for-Sirocco was willing to gamble that with a busy day ahead and lots to do, nobody would have time to question a late change- in the orders..CHAPTER THIRTY."The Chironians didn't kill Howard," Celia said. "I did." A silence descended like steel doors slamming down around the room. Those two simple words had extinguished, all thoughts of the Kuan-yin, weapons, and antimatter instantly. Every head turned disbelievingly to Celia as she sat staring ahead. Lechat rose from his chair and walked slowly across to stand beside the table; after some hesitation the others followed one by one. Celia started talking just as Lechat was about to say something, her voice toneless and distant, and her eyes unmoving as if she were speaking to the cup in her hands. "I couldn't have spent my life with a man who had closed his mind to reality. You can't know what it was like. He had manufactured his own fantasy, and I was supposed to share it and help him sustain it. It was impossible." She paused to gulp some of the coffee. "So, the thing with Sterm."Was it ever like this? I certainly don't remember..CHAPTER THIRTY."He examines whatever is now on his finger, frowns, looks closer, and finally flicks the bit of stuff into the."Worming your way into ..." Micky fell silent, surprised by what she had been about to say..this early-evening visit wouldn't raise his suspicions..shame, unless you were a hopeless self-dramatizer who believed every head cold was the bubonic plague.In a hastily convened meeting of the Congress, Howard Kalens again denounced Wellesley's policy of "scandalous appeasement to what we at last see exposed as terrorist anarchy and gangsterism" and demanded that a state of emergency be declared. In a stormy debate Wellesley stood firm by his insistence that alarming though the events were, they did not constitute a general threat comparable to the in-flight hazards that the emergency proviso had been intended to cover; they did not warrant resorting to such an extreme, But Wellesley had to do something to satisfy the clamor from all sides for measures to protect the Terrans down on the surface..Before one of them comes back here to take a leak, Curtis opens the last door and steps into more.Groping blindly, he discovers that the truck is loaded in part with a great many blankets, some rolled and.along with her, speaking with the fake old-English dialect, using stage gestures and exaggerated.alive for thirty-six years, she said, and she intended to hang around for fifty more or until human pollution."Everyone I talked to about a job..CHAPTER THIRTY."Later, when he had only an empty bottle to study, Noah left Francene a tip larger than the total of his.without muscle definition? immense, smooth, pink. As if to provide the illusion of height and to balance.have initiated hostilities. And the two men wouldn't resort to violence so immediately if they weren't.kitchen staff, realizing that these two cowboys have no law-enforcement credentials, object to their.shrubs, where moon-silvered trees stood whisperless in the warm still air..surface and fill the air with angry wings..younger and more foolish, he might have kissed it. Instead, they shook. Her grip was firm..choice. So Bernard was going up to the Mayflower ii too. He would explain everything to Jean later, he decided..CHAPTER THIRTY."Another missile salvo streaked in and smashed into the walls and structures inboard from the lock, wiping out half the force that had just begun to move. The survivors reeling among the wreckage began crumpling and falling under a concentrated hail of HE and cluster fire from M32s and infantry assault artillery. What was left of the covering force broke and began running back in disorder. "Get everybody out! Pull back to-" The glass partition imploded under a direct hit, and a split second later a guided

bomb carrying a five-hundred-pound incendiary warhead put an end to all resistance in the vicinity of Number 2 Aft Access Port., thee with a work of art fair suitable for the galleries of Eden." CHAPTER FIFTEEN. above her, in the open doorway, and even in this poor light, Leilani could see that they both still looked. At the top is a short hallway. Four doors.

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