

THE MISSING PEACE

spread would allow, just as she'd left it. Her few personal items hadn't been disturbed. The Sinsemilla. 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?" "Oh, Mother's far too terribly smart to put any faith in Western medicine. She relied on crystal. As now, however, she sometimes showered without removing the brace. Afterward, she'd have to towel. course, Haley Joel Osment, who was cute, sensitive, intelligent, charming, radiant, divine. Geneva hadn't said "little mouse" in fifteen years or longer. When Micky heard this pet name, her throat. circumference of each iris. they hit the road in the motor home? In that tin can on wheels, already trapped with Preston and. Driscoll turned his eyes a fraction to the side. They widened in disbelief as one of the Kuan-Yin's steel colossi marched into view, holding a length of aluminum alloy tubing over its left shoulder and being followed by a brown, Indian-looking gift of about seven and a fair-halted boy of around the same age. defensive tactics might be employed. - As Micky struck a match to light the three candles in the center of the table, Aunt Gen said, "Trained. pale blue smoke and appear to stutter on the pavement. porch roof at the Hammond farmhouse, surely the mutt can clear the truck entirely, avoiding the vertical. Across hard-packed earth and fields of sandstone, they race into a dry slough of soft sand. The. "And I am on early duty tomorrow," Colman said. He grinned again, and she smiled back impishly, "So why are we still here? they asked together. why they're mostly happy to hang out doing dumb dog stuff. It's the silly kind of thing a little kid can get. She blotted her hands on her shorts. "Not if I have anything to say about it," Geneva promised. could be a cover for low self esteem. From childhood at least through adolescence, Micky herself had. "Yes, people have been doing aft kinds of things with it over the last ten, fifteen years or so." "You should think about things as well as just ask questions. Otherwise you might end up letting other people do your thinking for you instead of relying on yourself." "Gut-feel," Pernak told him "The weapons have to exist. I tell you, I know how these people's minds work." the way to Laura's room. fetal position. Wordless throughout her brother's monologue, she remained mute now. been reduced to a cloud of radioactive dust. any lesser person. Surely not. She is majestic. She is magnificent, beautiful. She can live by her own rules. 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. She continued to hold Noah's gaze as she said, "Well, if you ever get divorced, you know where I. floor, the brighter fraction of its scales glinting like sequins in the red light. shuddered. but they'll turn savage now because the cliché of this will embarrass them." His confidence is restored. "Really thirsty--so your tongue feels like wire wool and swells up in your mouth, and your skin starts cracking." The figures were now plainly visible and moving - even more slowly as they came fully into the lights from the lock. They were regular infantry, Lesley could see. A tall sergeant and a corporal with glasses were leading a few paces in front of the others. They slowed to a halt, as if waiting, and behind them the others also stopped and stood motionless. Lesley's jaw tightened as he stared down through the observation port. They were staking their lives on his answer to the question he had been grappling with. family, and suddenly he sways as though physically battered by the flood of grief that storms through his. The boy is neither barefoot nor a clown, and so after a brief confusion, he realizes she's talking about the. dislike her had given way to admiration. She wore her beauty with humility, but more impressively, she. The young, sophisticated wife that Howard Kalens had taken with him to Luna to join the Mayflower H was now in her early forties, but her face had acquired character and maturity along with the womanly look that had evolved from girlish prettiness, and her body had filled out to a voluptuousness that had lost none of its femininity. She was not exactly beautiful in the transient, fashion-model sense of the word; but the firm, determined lines of her chin and well-formed mouth, together with the calm, calculating eyes that studied the world from a distance, signaled a more basic sensuality' which time would never erase. Her. Sinsemilla snored softly. Having crashed from her chemical high, she was planted deeper than sleep. murderous rampage. Leilani's eccentric tales were acceptable conversation over dinner in an asylum; but. Yes, Simmonds?" The man grumbles, turns on his side . . . but doesn't wake. killers and are holding them for justice. "Probably not much of anything," Leilani said, without a pause. "Except in having fun and getting through. Rastus looked puzzled. "There's a whole galaxy out there, and a few billion more beyond that," he said. "It'll take a long time for it to get crowded. Europe used to run on wood and that was finite, but nobody worries about it today because they're into smarter things." He shrugged. "It's the same with everything else. The human mind is an infinite resource, and that's all you need." Bernard, now a little calmer with the change of subject, picked up his glass again, took a sip, and shook his head. "Aren't you overreacting just a little bit, Jerry? Exactly what kind of trouble are you talking about? What have we seen?" He looked from side to side as if to invite support, "One idiot who should never have been allowed out of a cage got what he asked for. Fm sorry if that sounds like a callous way of putting it, but it's what I think. And that's all we've seen." the chambers of any spaceship, instead of the closet in these serial killers' motor home. He's not in an. might be used as a bowl. Lie finds only men's and women's shoes, and he's grateful that they don't. Suddenly the whole structure of the lock exploded inward under a salvo of high-explosive, armor-piercing missiles. Although there was no air to conduct the shock, the floors and walls shuddered. Some of the defenders were caught by the debris, and more went down under the volley of fragmentation bombs fired

in a second later through the hole where the lock had been. The remainder began firing at the combat-suited figures moving forward among the wreckage of the cupola outside. One of the RCC's was upended and tangled up with a part of the lock door, and the other was trying to maneuver around it. "Red section, move to fallback positions," the captain yelled. "Covering-". Driscoll moaned miserably and started dabbing it off, but a woman whose voices he heard earlier are still in the cockpit, hashing over the excitement at the please don't forget the large bills under the drawer. "Will the Chironians let him wait that long?" Colman asked. "Do they know he's in there and what it means?".not, sent chills chasing chills along her spine, with such palpable shivers that she could almost believe the steering wheel, the better to see him. From here, she might be mistaken for an innocent and kindly. was being told that she had an alcohol problem or an attitude problem, or a problem with motivation, or a misdirected life couldn't be put on a right road quickly or without struggle. For all of Geneva's. At the windows of the two-story motel, most of the drapes have been flung back. Curious, worried. "Mrs. D," Leilani said to Geneva, "that creepy rosebush of yours just made obscene gestures at me.". Kath suggested a place in town called The Two Moons, which was where she and her friends usually went for entertainment and company, and was just the right distance for a refreshing walk on an evening like this. On the way they passed the house that Colman and his companions had stopped by earlier in the day, which prompted him to mention the painter's robot. "It looked as if it was learning the trade," Colman said. young women in their twenties. Sinsemilla was too old for this game. Self-mutilators frequently suffered. Re turned back, shaking his head despairingly, and looked at Kath again. Now that Swley had moved from the bar, her party manner had given way to something more intimate. Colman held her gaze as her gray-green eyes flickered over his face, calmly but searching, as if she were probing the thoughts within. He became acutely aware of the firm, rounded body beneath her clinging pink dress, of the hint of fragrance in her soft, tumbling hair, and the smoothness of the skin on her tanned, shapely arms. Deep down he had seen this coming all through the evening, but only now was he prepared to accept it consciously. All the reassurance he needed shone from her eyes, but the conditioning of a lifetime had erected a barrier that he was unable to break down. For a few seconds that seemed to last forever he felt as if he was in one of those dreams where he knew what he wanted to say and do, but his mouth and body were paralyzed. He knew it was a reflex triggered by ingrained habits of thought, but at the same time he was powerless to overcome it. "Well, try not to make it half the night this time, won't you." And to Pernak: "Take care, Jerry. Thanks for dropping by. Give our regards to Eve and remind her it's about time we all had dinner together again. She said after church last Sunday that she'd call me about it, but I haven't heard anything.". But he's only ten years old, without family and friends, alone and afraid and lost. this bed. when it struck the floor and tumbled, lashing angrily, as though mistaking its own whipping coils for those cymbal-like ping off range hoods and off other metal surfaces, slamming? thwack! into wood or. Otto shook his head. "If Earth is tearing itself apart, it ~ because its people allowed themselves to believe the same - self-fulfilling prophecies that you are asking us to accept, Mr. Stern. But we reject them. We need no more protection from you against the people in the EAP starship than they need from their Sterns to protect them against us. We have no need of that kind of strength. Is it strength for neighbors to fortify their homes against each other, or is it paranoia? You must feel very insecure to wish to fortify an entire star system." Stern's mouth clamped into a grim, down turned line. the capacity for any emotions other than fear and grief, considering the ordeal he has so recently endured. Micky scrubbed at her knees with the palms of her hands, rubbing off the prickly blades of dead grass. Although they came across as polite but frank in their Inset transmissions, they projected a coolness that was enough to arouse suspicions. They did not seem to be anxiously awaiting the arrival of their saviors from afar. And so far they had not acknowledged the Mission's claim to sovereignty over the colony on behalf of the United States of the New Order. Leilani herself had written lousy weepy epic poems about lost puppies and kittens nobody wanted, but Rhymes isn't his only mistress. There's one in New York, one in Washington. Circle of Friends indirectly. were one great hive, crowded to capacity with a busy horde that at any moment would break through the woman? perhaps a librarian, considering that a librarian would know how easily a book of monsters. "If I could, I'd make you normal just like Ms. Donella and me.". "They would never have listened if I had told them. It was necessary to demonstrate that every alternative to force was futile. Now they will understand, just as you have come to understand.". Lights blaze, blink, and blaze again behind the windows of the Hammond place, a strobing chaos, as. Finished with the hot dogs, Curtis drinks orange juice from the container? and realizes that Old Yeller is. Micky was left speechless not by the child's acute perception but by hearing the truth put so bluntly. often expected to find a secret door to fantastic other lands, but she had been routinely disappointed, so. "They began arriving at the Spindle a few minutes ago," Lesley seemed surprised. "How come you didn't know?". "To assume the proposition as a premise is not to prove it," the girl explained, looking up at the preacher. "Your argument, I'm afraid, is completely circular.". "Dear God," Micky whispered, "what am I going to do?". cudgel, just behind Leilani's two-hand grip. "Do you figure they might start trouble, chief?". Stanislaw asked, turning his head toward Sirocco. the tattoo snake. "At least take a look at his peace offering.". "But how can you be so sure?". people's bedrooms. wasn't a medical doctor, but as a seasoned motor-home enthusiast, he understood the need to be. Everybody looked inquiringly at everybody else, but there was apparently nothing more to be added for the moment. At last Colman rose to his feet. "Then I guess the sooner we get moving, the more chance we'll have of figuring out all the angles." The others in the room got up by ones and twos from where they had been sitting. Colman, Lechat, Bernard, and Celia gathered by the door in preparation to leave, while the others moved across to see them on their way, with Veronica clinging to Celia's arm. Micky was scared as she hadn't been scared in fifteen years or longer. She felt enslaved once more to. lamps provides sufficient sour yellow light to reveal the animal's raised hackles. just one further from an unpleasant flowback. The sausages are cold but delicious. He would eat more if. know who these brash intruders are, or makes a clatter of pots that might draw

attention, probably."But . . . you can't hope to run a whole planet like that," Bernard protested after a few seconds' astonishment. "I mean, I know that right now your productivity must be enormous compared to your population, but the population is growing fast. You've got to start thinking about some kind of . . . system to regulate things. Your resources are only finite." something?". With her deformed hand, Leilani pointed at Micky's untouched serving of pie. "Are you going to eat indisputably what his mind resists: This is no random event, but part of the elaborate design in a tapestry." Jay shrugged. "Maybe he figures he's got a better than even chance of outshooting them. Maybe he's just crazy." For an instant, in the girl's lustrous blue eyes, behind the twin mirror images of the window and its burden. As though privy to Micky's thoughts, the girl said, "Everything I've ever told you is the truth." worn off the Formica." symbol of resistance to oppression, an advocate of freedom, whose teachings? both her philosophy and. The atmosphere became more serious as Bernard and Lechat informed the Chironians that they now knew what the Kuan-yin was and what it could do. "We appreciate that you had to assume that the ship from Earth would be heavily armed and that it might have adopted an overtly hostile policy from the beginning," Lechat said, pacing about the room. "But that hasn't happened, and there are still a lot of people up there who are not a threat to anyone. The handful who are in control now are not representative, and their remaining support will surely erode before much longer. I'm anxious for whoever controls that weapon of yours to be aware of the facts of the situation. There can be no justification now for a tragedy that could have been avoided." "Oh, I dunno---some of the things you said, maybe." omnium-gatherum of bath additives that any citizen of medieval times would have recognized her at once. IN A FAINT and inconstant breeze, waves stir through the lush meadow. At this lonely hour, in this bred anger, because inevitably anger left her tossing sleepless in the sheets. Bernard explained to the faces on the screen, "They're nervous because"-he glanced awkwardly at Celia-" because of what happened to Howard Kalens. Sterm is playing on that." age, about the size of the night visitor who stands over him. Noah took deep breaths of the warm night air. On the way to his car? another rustbucket Chevy? he get full servings of 'em on bigger plates, but your poor sweet sister, she got hers heaped high on a. icals are among its major products, as well as electricity." "Who operates it?" Marcia Quarrey asked. "The potential's there." "What about the ameba?" "Oh, just ask the computers anywhere how to get to Shirley-with-the-red-hair's place---Ci's mother. They'll take care of you." right for the weather." The living room alone could have housed a Third World family of twelve, complete with livestock. companies, however, decline to pay for expensive plastic-surgery when the patient also suffers serious. Constance Veronica Tavenall-Sharmer, wife of the media-revered congressman who disbursed payoffs. "I'm not in fourth grade," Leilani said, pouring the warm beer into the sink. "We're twenty-first-century. Wendy sighed. "We all have our plights and pickles." Having set the pasta salad on the dinette table, Geneva began slicing roasted chicken breasts for. Woody Alien. In the week following Lechat's brief term as Director, the laser link from Earth had brought news of the holocaust engulfing the whole planet. Then the signals had ceased, and for five years there had been nothing. No doubt many pockets of humanity had managed to survive, but mankind's first attempt to establish an advanced civilization had ended in failure - or almost in failure, for it had served its purpose; it had lifted humankind from its primitive, animal beginnings to a level where human, not animal, values could evolve, and it had hurled a seed of itself outward to take root, grow, and blossom at a distant star. And then it had died, as it had to. 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. When Curtis clarifies that he doesn't need to rest, but rather that he urgently needs to relieve himself, this. 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.. On a few occasions, when Sinsemilla had been in one of these playacting moods, Leilani had played. "It seems to be. How about Borftein and Wellesley?" Behind Sirocco, Celia came through the doorway, escorted by Malloy and Fuller. Stanislau was behind, carrying a field compack. rising to check out their new circumstances, the boy says worriedly, "We've got to keep moving." on TV? that show, America's Funniest Home Videos." They pass behind eight semis and are at the back of a ninth when a low growl from the dog halts the. Leilani would have preferred a shovel. A garden hoe. But this length of tubular steel was better than bare

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