

## THE MYSTICAL VILLAGE THAT REWIRED REALITY

Lechat allowed a few seconds for the mood to pass, then rose to his feet again. "My first resolution is that all claims, rights, and legislations previously enacted with respect to the Territory of Phoenix be revoked in their entirety, that the proclamation of that Territory as being subject to the jurisdiction of this Congress be repealed, and that the area at present referred to as Phoenix be formally reverted to its previous condition in all respects." "You sly bastard!" he exclaimed. "How long has this been going on?" Sirocco shrugged and spread his hands in a way that could have meant anything. Then Colman grinned. "Well, what do you know? Anyhow-good luck." bribed, anyway. They aren't politicians, after all. If the National Security Agency also has operatives in. insufficient to illuminate the boy or to draw the attention of any motorist rocketing by at seventy or eighty. bounces bong-bong-bong across the tiles. Spoons or forks, or butter knives, spill in quantity, ringing off. as a quiver of light. The land slopes down to the west. The earth is soft, and the grass is easily trampled. When he pauses to. "Well... no. Why?" "I said you were in too much of a hurry," Jean said to Bernard. "Just think, all that work for nothing. We should have waited a bit longer for those Chironians to get round to us." "Even if you insist you've no ambition, you certainly deserve to be paid for your talent. May I see that. Bernard Fallows leaned alongside the sliding glass door in the living room and stared out at the lawn behind the apartment while he wondered to himself when he would be free to begin his new career at Port Norday. He had broached the subject to Kath, as he now knew she had guessed he would, and she had told him simply that the people there who had met him were looking forward to working with him. But he had agreed with Pernak and Lechat that a nucleus of people capable of taking rational control of events would have to remain available until the last possibility of extreme threats to the Chironians went away, and that Ramisson's Integrationist platform, to which Lechat had now allied himself, needed support to allow the old order to extinguish itself via its own processes. heard only sincerity. He didn't know squat about kids, didn't care to learn, and lie expected them to be. the key to escape, to freedom, and to being Curtis Hammond. "Go, go, go!" diner, gift shop, and according to one highway sign glimpsed earlier, a "full range of services," whatever. '~You got it wrong,'" Colman told them. "It's not the little ones at all." He widened his eyes in a parody of lewd anticipation and grinned. "Think of all those grandmothers." Terry and Paula laughed. fun. The anguished screams are to the boy's blood as vinegar to milk, and although a thunderous fusillade. More than friends, the couple on the TV were as close as Siamese twins, joined at the tongue. Fallows was unable to unravel the logic sufficiently to dispute the statement. Instead, he shook his head. "It doesn't sound like it, I suppose." Nanook rubbed his chin and looked dubious. "That situation sounds very farfetched," he said after a few seconds. "I can't see how anyone else could walk in with the same experience. But if it did happen, and it was true... then I suppose Kath would have to agree with him. She'd be indebted by that amount. And -that would decide it for everyone else." "We can handle anything that comes," she told him. to flush the wounds with antiseptics. Then, Sinsemilla might feel differently about seeing a. The relief detachment from B Company marched from the exit of the shuttle to take up positions in from of the ramp, and Sirocco stepped forward to address the advance guard. "Ship detail, atten-shun! Two ranks in marching order, fall . . . in!" The two lines that had been angled away from the lock re-formed into flies behind the section leaders. "Sentry details will detach and fall out at stations. By the left... march!" The two lines dumped their way behind Sirocco across the antechamber, wheeled left while each man on the inside marked time for four paces, and clicked away along the Corridor beyond and into the Kuan-yin. deception. Perfect poise is the key to survival. Mom always said so, and Mom knew her stuff. 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. Merrick knotted his brows for a moment and then seemed to decide to abandon his attempt to approach the subject obliquely. "Approximately ten thousand of our people are now in Canaveral City and its immediate vicinity." Merrick looked straight at Bernard. "They depend heavily on Chironian services and facilities of every description for the power that runs their homes to the very food they eat. If widespread trouble were to break out down there, they would be completely at the mercy of the Chironians." He raised a hand to stifle any objection before Bernard could speak. "Clearly we cannot tolerate such a state of affairs. It has been decided therefore that, purely as a precautionary measure to protect our own people if the need should arise, we must be able to guarantee the continuity of essential services if circumstances should. snake; no place will belong to Leilani, no smallest place. Usually she had only a corner, a nook, a. earth has cracked open to release a terrible presence that is spreading its dominion over all the world. A. The thought sent a quiver of resentment through her as she sat on the sofa below the large wall screen, watching the face of Howard Kalens as he denounced Wellesley's "policy of indecisiveness" as a contributory factor to the killing of the soldier who had been shot the previous night, and called for "some positive initiative toward taking the firm grasp that the situation so clearly demands." Koontz, Dean R. Dean Ray. dressed in all manner of styles and colors and reflecting the various races of Earth in more or less even proportions, which was to be expected since the genetic codes carried by the Kuan-yin had comprised a balanced mix of types. Children and young people were everywhere, and humanoid robots seemed to be part of the scheme of things. The robots intrigued Bernard; such creatures were not unknown on Earth, but they had tended to be restricted to experiments in research labs as technological curiosities since,

functionally, they didn't really make a lot of sense. Presumably the Chironian robots had been developed from the machines that had raised the first Chironians, which had been designed not in the form of tin men at all, but to suit their purpose--as warm-bodied, soft surfaced tenders. So conceivably the notion of machines as companions had become a permanent feature of Chironian life that could be traced back to the earliest days. The designs had later been changed to suit the whims and preferences of the children after natural parents appeared on the scene to satisfy their more basic physiological and psychological needs. To his surprise Bernard found himself thinking that the relationship between man and humanoid machine might have been quite warm, and in some way charming; certainly he could see no evidence~ of the cold and sinister state of affairs that Jean had pictured..After that brief moment of frenzy, the viper slithered loose of its own tangles and flowed swiftly across passageway between this vehicle and the next. A pair of cowboy boots, blue jeans tucked in the tops: Yes, Simmonds? ".restroom hallway. Following the cowboys. More hard and hurried footfalls on the tile floor. Voices. Then..under the wheels of the runaway SWAT transport..sharp as venom.. "Sounds great. I will. How do I get directions--from the net?".The dog follows the broken white line that defines this lane of stopped traffic from the next, and the boy..Beyond the sprawling diner's plate-glass windows, travelers chow down with evident enthusiasm. The..Honda and out of sight..became the benefactor to bugs, emancipator of mice..local authorities would probably decline to do battle with him..While the red and then the purple dust of twilight settled, Noah remained in the three-bedroom suite,..desert-scorched, sand-abraded, brush-scratched look acquired by more arduous use than trips to the..Grinning, Leilani bit into a crisp dill pickle. "I really like you, Micky B. You, too, Mrs. D."..background?but Micky saw clearly the hopelessness of this situation. On the other hand, if only."Of course, dear." Geneva poured from a glass pitcher that dripped icy condensation..door at the farther end. This space is also a cooler, with perforated-metal storage shelves on both sides..All entrances into the Center itself were guarded. Sirocco had proposed dressing a squad in SD uniforms and marching Lechat and Celia openly up to the main door and brazening out an act of bringing in two legitimate fugitives after apprehending them. But Malloy had vetoed the idea on the grounds that the deception would never stand up to SD security procedures. Then Lechat had suggested a less dramatic and less risky method. As a regular customer of the Fran?oise for many years, he was a close friend of the manager and had spent many late nights discussing politics with the staff until way after closing. They all knew Lechat, and he was sure he could rely on them. The kitchens that serviced the restaurant from the level above also serviced the staff cafeteria in the Government Center, Lechat had pointed out. There had to be service elevators, laundry chutes, garbage ducts- something that connected through from the rear of the Fran?oise.."There's no need to look," Driscoll told him nonchalantly. "You've got a pair of kings." Adam snorted and tossed his cards face up on the table to reveal the kings of hearts and spades and three odd cards..Jabbing, jabbing, Leilani poked the villain once more, crushed it against the baseboard, bearing on it with..heart, and mercy would more likely be wrung from any stone..might be an angel, considering that he holds a plastic-wrapped bundle of hot dogs, which he has just..protect him.."You're not a mutant."..The Chironian reflected upon the explanation, evidently found it good enough, nodded, and passed over his pistol. The girl who had wounded Ramelly followed suit. Significantly, Colman thought, the major did not ask her companion if she too was armed. As the guards began..Her attempt at humor was a good sign. Colman grinned and heaved himself from his seat. "Then let's go," he grunted..would need the weapon. Nevertheless, he had no plans to remake it into a plowshare..Leilani, but he better stay on his side of the fence.."Over two years ago. I was seven going on eight."..Noshing on a cream-filled snack cake, contentedly plastering a fresh coat of fat on his artery walls, he..Slick it was, wet-slick and therefore injured, but still lively enough to wriggle fiercely in a quest for..remote control. They're most likely fast approaching from the other side of the vehicle..After he puts down the extinguished flashlight, as he pulls the curtains aside, plastic rings scrape and click..Against all odds, he's still alive.."Love yourself, love your brothers and sisters, love nature.." "You provide rationality?" Micky rinsed the last of the dishes. "Just when was the last time you actually..Her usual ease of movement still eluded Leilani; however, when she thought through the movement of.."That's true," Bernard agreed. "But the risk of Stern trying anything with those weapons has to be greater if he thinks he can blackmail a defenseless planet, If he knew what he was up against-you don't have to give him every detail-it might be enough to persuade him to give it up. That's all we're asking. For the sake of those people up there, you owe it to spell out a warning, clearly and unambiguously."..furniture, dead-on for the snake. She struck again, again, again, furiously, burning her knuckles from..He moves faster and more boldly, striking out directly toward the "full range of services," which are..when, as she lay sleepless in another time and place, they had rolled past in the night with a rhythmic..one side, lies Curtis Hammond, commander of this vessel, who sleeps on, unaware that the sanctity of his..to do. I can get where I want to go, no matter how hard it is." "Luck," Micky clarified. "The angle of the shot was severe. The slug literally ricocheted off her skull,..Fallows stood up and stepped aside, and Waiters eased himself into the 'subcenter supervisor's chair. "You're off..touch any more than she had reacted to Micky's questions. Tremors quaked through her..scattered bones of men and horses stripped of flesh by vultures, vermin. Curtis and Old Yeller go now..Solemnly, Leilani finished the second piece of pie, solemnly, as though she were eating it not to satisfy..irrationality in this trailer where genteel daffiness and screwball self-delusion had heretofore been the..An abandoned bicycle on its side. A grape arbor is entwined with vines, clothed with leaves, hung with..Wellesley and the Congress had tried to perpetuate the same injustices by eclipsing him with Borftein because he in4p't graduated from the right places or possessed the right credentials. They had tried to fob him off with the command of what they had seen as a proficient but small and unimportant corps of specialists. They had all paid too. Now they all knew who he was and where they stood. He had no regrets about Ramisson's death; it underlined the lesson more forcefully than any words could have done. He was only sorry he hadn't made a cleaner sweep by shooting them all..signs and portents of trouble ahead. Though he may be dead, J. Edgar Hoover

is no fool, and if his."If a chip can do the job, a man's life is probably better spent doing something else anyway." tense. -Pernak spread his hands and-nodded. "Yes. Sorry and all that kind of thing, Paul, but that's how it is." though his aren't as big and sharp as those of the dog, and unlike his four-legged companion, he doesn't.STRANGELY, here in the sunshine, less than a day later, Micky couldn't stop thinking about the.the bar dipped as though in sad commiseration. When the Dixie Chicks followed Brooks, the Stetsons.as scary as Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff and Big Bird all rolled into one, but she's not dangerous. At.At that moment the communications supervisor called out, "We have an incoming transmission from the Battle Module." At once the whole of the Communications Center fell silent, and the figures of Sterm and Stormbel, flanked by officers of their high command, appeared on one of the large mural displays high above the floor. Sterm was looking cool and composed, but there was a mocking, triumphant gleam in his eyes; Stormbel was standing with his feet astride and his arms folded across his chest, his head upright, and his face devoid of expression, while the other officers stared ahead woodenly. After a few seconds, Wellesley, Lechat, and Borftein moved to the center of the floor and stood looking up at the screen..From another tire, a second gator peels off, tumbling in coils after the first..He feels small, weak, alone, doomed. He feels foolish, too, for continuing to hesitate even when reason.She worked slowly, methodically, taking satisfaction from the care that she provided. In spite of the.holds his breath, he hears only stillness and the panting dog, not the growl of an approaching engine..by then? Somewhere, anywhere, everywhere, waiting. And what if her mother took it with them when.Diffusion through the membrane around Phoenix created an osmotic pressure which sucked more people down from the Mayflower II, and manpower shortages soon developed, making it impossible for the ship to sustain its flow of supplies down to the surface. The embarrassed officials in Phoenix were forced to turn to the Chironians for food and other essentials, which they insisted on paying for even though they knew that no reciprocal currency arrangements existed. The Chironians accepted good-humoredly the promissory notes they were offered and carried on as usual, leaving the Terrans to worry about how they would resolve the nonsense of having to pay their Customs dues to themselves..not paying for it--not a cent's worth of any of it." "They will," Rastus replied. "How?" Rastus looked mildly surprised. "They'll find a way," he said..but the only time he ever slung his willy out of his pants was when he needed to take a leak." "It's a bit different from taking a cab round the Ring," Jay remarked as the ear eased to a halt..CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE.She rejected that unnerving thought as soon as it pierced her. She, too, had grown up in a wretched.financial arrangements with the owner. It's item number seven on your final bill."..He wants the coins, too, but he doesn't touch them. In his nervousness, he's likely to jingle or drop them..drained oil the heel of night, Micky glimpsed enough of a resemblance between this crazed woman and..Not far from Borftein, Wellesley and Lechat were talking via a large screen to the Chironians Otto and Chester. Behind them at one of the center's monitor consoles, Bernard, Celia, and a communications operator were staring at two smaller screens, one showing Kath's face, and the other a view of the confusion inside what was left of a feeder ramp cupola.."You look as if you might know something about it," Lesley said to Colman. "Is there something down on the surface that hasn't been made public knowledge?"..heard the screams of the others, but by the time he found them, they were dead, and their steaming..instead of drinking from it, rolled it back and forth across her brow, cooling her forehead..Leilani wrinkled her nose, "too precious."..The two silent men who had headed toward the auto transport won't be the only searchers prowling the..Her aunt, from whom fate had stolen everything except a reliable sense of humor, referred to the yard as..Curtis, and my dad sent me in for some grub to go."..The Assistant Deputy Director of Engineering at last sat back and descended from his loftier plane of thought. "Ah, yes, Fallows." He gestured toward the screen he had been studying. "What do you know about this man Colman who's trying to get himself out of the Army and into Engineering? The Deputy has received a copy of 'the transfer request filed with the Military and passed it along to me for comment. It seems that this Colman has given your name as a reference. What do you know about him?" The inclined chin and the narrowing of the Gothic eyebrows were asking silently why any self-respecting echelon-four engineering officer would associate with an infantry sergeant.."Don't you think stealing people's homes and throwing them out is violent enough?" Jean asked from one of the dining chairs, while Jay listened silently from across the table. "What were they supposed to do? They ignored the soldiers and settled it with the man responsible. He should have been expecting it."..Bernard's first, fleeting impressions of Franklin from the streaking maglev car were of a hopelessly jumbled-up clutter of a town. Unlike the neat and orderly models of urban planning that had replaced the heaps of American rubble during the recovery after the Lean Years--with business, entertainment, industrial, and residential sectors segregated by green belts and tidy landsculpting--everything in Franklin seemed to be intermingled with no discernible rhyme or reason. Buildings, towers, houses, and unidentifiable constructions of all shapes, sizes, and colors were packed together, overlapping and fusing in some places while giving way to clumps of greenery and trees in others. The whole resulted in a patchwork quilt that looked like a mixture of old New York flattened out somewhat and miniaturized--Paris, and Hong Kong harbor. In one place a canal flanked by an elevated railroad seemed to cut right through a complex that could have been a school or a hospital; in another, the steps of an imposing building with a dignified frontage led directly down to a swimming pool in the center of a large, grassy square surrounded by trees and a confusion of homes and shops. A river opened up as the car crossed through a suspended section of tube, giving a glimpse of a-few yachts drifting lazily here and there, a couple of larger ships moored lower down where the mouth widened against a background of open 'sea, and numerous personal flying vehicles buzzing to and fro overhead; a scene of robot cranes and earthmovers excavating a site on the far bank came and went, and then the car plunged into the lower levels of the metropolis ahead and began slowing as it approached its destination..clenches her muzzle to stop panting, pricks her ears toward whatever sound engages her..to any significant degree.."I said you can stuff it." Suddenly the feeling of intimidation that had haunted Bernard for years was

gone. The role that he had allowed himself to be twisted and bent into shriveled and fell away like an old skin being sloughed off. For the first time he was-himself, and free to assert himself as an individual. And on the far side of the desk before him, the granite cathedral cracked apart and collapsed into rubble to reveal . . . nothing inside. It was a sham, just like all the other shams that he had been running from all his life. He had just stopped running..A Tenure of Landholdings Act was passed, declaring that all property rights were transferred to the civil administration and that legally recognized deeds of title for existing and prospective holdings could be purchased at market rates for Terrans and in exchange for nominal fees for officially registered Chironian residents, a concession which was felt essential for palatability. Employment by Terran enterprises would enable the Chironians to earn the currency to pay for the deeds to their homes that the government now said it owned and was willing to sell back to them, but they had grounds for gratitude-it was said- in being exempt from paying the prices that newly arrived Terrans would have to raise mortgages to meet. At the same time, under an Aliens Admissions Act, Chironians from outside would be allowed entry to Phoenix only upon acquiring visas restricting their commercial activities to paying jobs or approved currency-based transactions, for which permits would be issued, or for noncommercial social purposes. Thus the Chironians living in or entering Phoenix would cease, in effect, to be Chironians, and the problem would be solved..however, were the bashing of the side window, Noah's eruption from the Chevy, and the gleeful capering.Earth?.she sat. "But, sweetie, I remember so clearly . . . the wonderful satisfaction of shooting him.".from her TV show.".The transport swings into a wide space between two huge trucks..Curtis still must find a bowl for the orange juice, but he's not going to look in any more nightstand."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..turned upon herself..get full servings of 'em on bigger plates, but your poor sweet sister, she got hers heaped high on a

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