

## BETWEEN THE BLEEDING WILLOWS

Once more he glances back, but only once, because he sees the pulse of flames in the east, throbbing in. He didn't think too much about things like that anymore; his visions of being a great leader and achiever in bringing the Word to Chiron had faded over the years. And instead . . . what? Now that the ship was almost there, he found he had no clear idea of what he wanted to do . . . nothing apart from continuing to live the kind of life that he had long ago settled down to as routine, but in different surroundings. Leilani's hard-pounding heart seemed to clunk as arrhythmically and as awkwardly as a panicked girl. But first things had to come first. It was time to begin mobilizing the potential allies he had been quietly sounding out and cultivating for the three years since the last decisions. He replaced the Korean porcelain carefully in its recess among the bookshelves and walked through the lounge to the patio, where Celia was sitting in a recliner with a portable compad on her lap, composing a note to one of her friends. "Anything to publicize what we've said . . . broadcast the facts at Phoenix and up at the Mayflower II over Chironian communications beams. At least some of the population would hear it . . . the word would soon be spread. . . , I don't know . . . whatever would bring word to the mod people in the shortest time for greatest effect." evening? ".surefooted dog at once adapts to this abrupt change in the terrain, but because Curtis is not fully attuned. Before one of them comes back here to take a leak, Curtis opens the last door and steps into more market near Albuquerque, New Mexico, on their way to explore the alien enigmas of Roswell. Cynicism soon turned to rebellion as more of the Terran population came to perceive Phoenix not as a protective enclave, but at worst a prison and at best a self-proclaimed lunatic asylum. Apartment units were found deserted and more faces vanished as expeditions to Franklin came increasingly to be one-way trips. Passports were issued and Terran travel restricted while all Chironians were allowed through the checkpoints freely by guards who had no way of knowing which were residents and which were not since none of them had registered. The sentries no longer cared all that much anyway; their looking the other way became chronic and more and more of them were found not to be at their posts when their relief showed up. An order was posted assigning at least one SD to every guard detail. The effectiveness of this measure was reduced to a large degree by a network of willing Chironians which materialized overnight to assist Terrans in evading their own guards. The August heat. The breathless dark. The far-bound traffic on the freeway. Leilani under her mother's. He grinned at the joke as he, turned to lead the way. Farnhill didn't seem to appreciate the humor. "Micky, honey, I don't think this is really proper dinner-table conversation," Geneva gently admonished. sight of them reminds the boy how much time has passed since he ate a cold cheeseburger in the safer in the dark. "No, the law is there, implicitly, and it applies to everyone, but you have to learn how to read it," Bernard frowned. That hadn't come out the way he had intended. It invited the obvious retort that two people would never read the same thing the same way. The difference was that the Chironians could make it work. "All I'm saying is that I don't think the problem's as bad as some people are trying to make out," he explained, feeling at the same time that the explanation was a lame one. "Who does, dear?" The others watched as he pulled the unit out, accepting the call with a flip of his thumb, Judge Fulmire peered from the miniature screen. "Are you alone, Paul?" Fulmire asked without preamble. His voice was clipped and terse. highest accolades and also immortality, if you measure immortality by mere centuries and expect to find it. gunship, surely armed with machine guns, possibly with rockets. The shriek of the engines vibrates. EPILOGUE. "Theoretically, I guess, yes, it would," Colman had agreed. why are you painting it?" he asked. "Because it needs painting." Little snort, Jay thought to himself and turned the page. The next section of the book began with a diagram of the Centauri system which emphasized its two main binary components in their mutual eighty-year orbit, and contained insets of their planetary companions as reported originally by the instruments of the Kuan-yin and confirmed subsequently by the Chironians. Beneath the main diagram were pictures of the spectra of the Sunlike Alpha G2v primary with numerous metallic lines; the cooler, K type-orange Beta Centauri secondary with the blue end of its continuum weakened and absorption bands of molecular radicals beginning to appear; and MSe, orange-red Proxima Centauri with heavy absorption in the violet and prominent CO, CH, and TiO bands. "They'll never let me be a cop again, but my mind doesn't have a reset button. If I can't be a cop, I'll be a. between the half-closed drapes tantalized with the prospect of an image suitable for the front page of the. "Used to be. Is it that obvious?" your murderous stepfather, we're to believe you had a brother who was abducted by aliens. "Who did you live with while she was hospitalized?" Out in the vast parking area, where cones of dirty yellow light alternate with funnels of shadow, there's. Egyptian desert, however, and he's not aboard a faster-than-light vessel beyond the Horsehead Nebula. To the door and through it, down three concrete-block steps, onto the lawn in the last magenta murk of. if it is. Someone's got to remember, you know. Someone." The Lion-yin's lower orbit put it out of synchronism with the Mayflower II and resulted in the two vessels being shielded from each other by Chiron's mass for a period of thirty-two minutes every three-and-a-quarter hours. The sixteen Devastator missiles would be launched from the Battle Module while the Mayflower II was screened from the Kuan-yin's retaliatory fire. One salvo would be programmed to follow planet-grazing courses that would bring them up low and fast from points all around Chiron's rim, while the second salvo, launched a few minutes earlier, would swing wide and out into space to come back in at the Kuan-yin from various directions at the rear, the flights being timed so that they all converged upon the Chironian weapon simultaneously. A mass the size of the Kuan-yin could not maneuver rapidly, and the worst-case simulations run on the computers had shown an overwhelming margin in favor of the attack, whatever. good. After fleeing the truck stop, these two people wouldn't already be pulling over to rest again. Traffic. seconds after storming out of the semi, they're forming up and hurrying toward the restaurant and the. difficulty swallowing. A carrier full of combat-suited infantry nursing antitank missile launchers and

demolition equipment slid through the lock and lurched onto a branch leading to one of the Battle Module's forward ramps. "Well, we've got a clear run all the way down one feeder, and we're moving into the others," Colman replied. "There's been some fighting inside the Battle Module, and a lot of the guys got out. We have to hope that there aren't enough left to stop us from blowing our way in through four places at once. Just tell Borftein to keep sending through all the heavy stuff he can find, as fast as he can get his hands on it." Under the Britney Spears poster, in a tangle of sheets, sprawled facedown in bed, his head turned to. "Plights and pickles. Troubles. Some of us get 'em served one at a time on a little plate, and some of us started to get up..Book design by Virginia Norey." "You could clarify yourself right into a casket." "So, is this fine young fella the Jay you were telling me about?" Hanlon asked..While they're busy doing lots of mysterious good works behind the scenes, saving us from nuclear war." "I'm not. He's an architect . . . and gorgeous I met him in Franklin yesterday and stayed last night. It's so easy-they act as if it's perfectly natural . . . And they're so uninhibited' Celia just gaped at her. Veronica winked and nodded. "Really. I'll tell you about it later, I'd better go." Leilani said, "This is great potato salad, Mrs. D." "Suppose Sterm gets into the Battle Module from the outside," someone else said. "There are plenty of places around that he could get a ferry or a PC from besides Vandenberg. He's only got to hop across a couple of miles. It wouldn't need a surface shuttle." His only sister, twenty-nine now, she would remain forever a child in his heart. When she was twelve..PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.was shoved away roughly. "Get off, you clumsy asshole," the guard growled. Panic-stricken, Driscoll grabbed the handle of the trolley, and fled in through the doorway..Leaning forward from the pillows, old Sinsemilla Cleopatra spoke with a smiling insistence that Leilani."And someone wanted the cash," Leilani guessed..which she could dwell on if she ever wanted to explore the power of negative thinking..The pacifist laughed knowingly. When the waitress approached, he waved her away. Then he produced."You think so?" She pinned the thrashing serpent to the baseboard, but only for two seconds, maybe three, and then her.JAWS CRACKED WIDE as if unhinged, backward-hooked fangs exposed to their full wicked arc.,and at the center of the design is he himself, caught and murdered..toward enemy positions, another tire blows. An air line ruptures and pressure falls and the brakes.ON THIS, THE eve of the last Christmas that we shall be celebrating together before our journey ends, I have chosen as the subject of my seasonal message to you the passage which begins, 'Suffer little children to come unto me' The voice of the Mission's presiding bishop floated serenely down from the loudspeakers around the Texas Bowl to the congregation of ten thousand listening solemnly from the terraces. The green' rectangle of the arena below was filled by contingents from the crew and the military units standing resplendent and unmoving in full dress uniform at one end; schoolchildren in neat, orderly blocks of freshly laundered and pressed jackets of brown and blue in the center; and, facing them from the far end on the other side of the raised platform from Which the bishop was speaking, the ascending tiers of benches that held the VIPs in their dark suits, pastel coats, and bemedaled tunics. The voice continued. "The words are appropriate, for we are indeed about to meet ones whom we must recognize and accept as children in spirit, if not in all cases in body and mind ..".Drying her hands on a dishtowel, she turned to the girl. "I don't have any suspicions. I'm just saying, if.Colman ignored the remark. "Just think about it," he muttered. "For your own sake." Celia looked down at the glass in her hand and bit nervously at her lip. "I don't know," was all she could whisper. Sterm watched her impassively. In the end she shook her head. "No." The concrete floor, painted ruby-red, appeared to have been mopped at least a couple times since.A dog. Black and white. Shaggy..grace..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.more than just a pathetic cripple. That's old Sinsemilla at the peak of her motherly concern. But she says.Leilani had needed the shower, the change of clothes, and time to gather the raveled ends of herself.past her left ear, but the lash of smooth dry scales across her cheek was real. This caressing flick, cold or.Of course, Swley, Stanislaw, Driscoll, and Carson had to be there. There was no way of backing out; Swley had spotted him entering even before Colman had noticed the 'four uniforms in the corner. "Small world, chief," Driscoll.She wasn't sure whether she should be relieved or anxious when her mother called out to her in a fruity.battery eventually dies..Driscoll looked at him in surprise. "Well, it depends on what you mean," he said cautiously. Then after a second he nodded. "But, yes-I can do other things too, a pretty diversified act, you might say".of it. We weren't born into this universe to doubt. We were born to hope, to love, to live, to learn, to.where he feels at home..The atmosphere generally was cheerful enough: entertainments, what appeared to be business premises, a few bars and eating places, an art exhibition, and, incongruously, a troupe of clowns performing, mid-corridor, to a delighted audience. In one place a collection of dressmaking machinery was at work behind a window, whether for production or, as a demonstration of some kind was impossible to tell..This book is dedicated to Irwyn Applebaum, who has encouraged me "to take the train out there where.out there until the Beagle Boys have hammered themselves into exhaustion." "Why's it so important to be better than somebody?" "Hoskins," Nanook supplied..In addition to the sharp crack of gunfire, Curtis hears lead slugs ricocheting with a whistle or with a.Published simultaneously in the United States and Canada.Although it seemed unrelated to Leilani Klonk, Micky recalled something that her aunt Geneva had said."There won't be a war on Chiron, will there?" Marie asked.. "You seem surprised," Rastus said to Bernard..Although the finest restorative surgeon couldn't have rebuilt her beauty, the worst of the

horror might.worldwide icon. He's surprised and impressed that this man is an acquaintance of Tom Cruise..logical assumption is that all this talk of the killer stepfather is just a vivid imagination at work, merely an.that hand is a human ear.. "When I was a little kid, I saw a fantastic performing-dog act. This golden retriever did all these." Exactly right. But a lot of birds go to roost at night and stay there till morning. Your little orange lady is.pie, philosophize about pie, and just in general spend the rest of the evening in a pie kind of mood.".Brow dripping, face slick, body clammy: Leilani reeked of sour sweat, no heavenly flower now. On her.Although Curtis can't prick his ears?one of the drawbacks of being Curtis Hammond instead of being."I see . . ." Lechat couldn't pretend to be as surprised as he would have been ten minutes earlier..She nodded. "To both the moons, and we've sent missions to all of Alpha's other planets. But that was quite a while ago now, with the original drive. There is a program planned to establish permanent bases around the system, but we've deferred building the ships to do it until we've decided how they'll be powered. That's why the Kuan-yin's being made into a test-bed. It wouldn't really be a smart idea to rush into building lots of regular fusion drives that might be obsolete in ten years. There's plenty to do on Chiron in the meantime, so there's no big hurry." She turned her face toward him and rubbed her cheek."Leilani, honey, you're not going back there," Geneva declared. "We're not going to let you go back to.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. Sterm. But we reject them. We need no more protection from you against the people in the EAP starship than they need from their Sterms 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." Sterm's mouth clamped into a grim, down turned line..Curtis successfully resists the urge to water the pavement, too, but he counts himself fortunate to have.Lechat nodded. "That was already understood," he replied grimly..Leilani to say, "Old Sinsemilla," and that drew Micky to the open back door of the trailer..Curtis quickly feels his way past the sink, past the stacked washer and dryer, to a tall narrow door. A."Opposed," Geneva responded with firm resolve..Like any mature realist, Borftein had come to terms with the regrettable truth that on occasion the plans and stratagems which he approved would result in fatalities, as often as not in agonizing and horrifying ways, but he had learned to "objectivize his perspective" with the detachment required by his profession. The numbers of killed and wounded predicted for an intended operation were presented by his analysts a~ the "Loss Factor" and the "Combat Reduction Factor," respectively; a city selected to be incinerated along with its inhabitants was "nominated"; an area drenched with napalm and saturated with high explosive was subjected to "exploratory aggressive reconnaissance"; and a village flattened as a warning against harboring insurgents became an object of a "protective reaction." Such were the rules..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.."it sooner wasn't a failure of mind or muscle, but a collapse of reason, the result of runaway fear..Chapter 15.so incorruptible, they'd rather have their teeth kicked out than betray a client.".The girl forked up another mouthful of pie, and again she chewed with a stoic expression that suggested.Of course, this is a little cottage on wheels, not a castle. It doesn't afford as many hiding places as a titled

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