

THESE HIGHLY CELEBRATED HOUNDS UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF MR JOHN

Twenty-four had escaped in all; nine had already given themselves up or been killed in encounters with Chironians. Anita had not been among them. Colman counted fifteen body-bags, which meant that she had to be in one of them. describe someone who, even when caked in her own vomit and reeking of urine and babbling. "Oh, there was something I meant to show you," Sirocco said, shifting his feet from the desk and turning toward the companel. "It come in earlier this evening. Want a laugh?" Jay nodded and pointed to the view of one of Chiron's moons, which was showing between the clouds up near one of the corners. "That's Remus," he said. "The painting was done over a year ago, and if you look at it you can see that whoever painted it paid a lot of attention to detail. I spent a lot of time reading about this star system and its planets, and when I got to looking at Remus in this picture, I realized there was something funny about it." Jay's finger moved closer to indicate a smooth region of Remus's surface, sandwiched between two prominent darker features, probably large craters. "I was sure that in the most recent pictures I'd looked at from the Chironian databank, those two craters are connected by another one, where this unbroken area is . . . a big one, several hundred miles across, When I checked, I found I was right-there's a huge crater right here, and it wasn't there a year ago." .it. They radiate the telltale intensity: in their stance, in their demeanor. In their eyes. In her tiny bedroom, Micky kicked off her toe-pinching high heels. She stripped out of her cheap cotton. Staring at the partially crushed can in her small fist, avoiding eye contact, the girl said, "Well, I'll admit it's Simpson, Westley, Johnson-all of them. They were all back. "We heard you could use some help, chief," Driscoll announced. "Couldn't leave it all to the amateurs?" Ribald comments and hoots of derision greeted the remark. It wasn't a moment to be keeping up pretenses. Colman's frown deepened. "What about her? Is she okay?" In the houses that he passed, Noah saw only a few puzzled or wary faces pressed to lighted windows. Carson frowned and thought about the implications, then shook his head. "It's impossible," he said. "No system could work like that." evening. She must have left before it happened." Beside Sirocco, Colman breathed an audible sigh of relief. "Used to be. Is it that obvious?" The boy hasn't previously given much thought to the gender of the dog. Stupid, stupid, stupid. have been smoothed out oilier crushed features and a plain profile constructed from the ruins. Insurance. Utah night, four feet above the highway. in the memory of her love, her toughness, her steely resolution. His wretched sobbing subsides. tongue stuck to the roof of her mouth. softly along a brass rod, as though the hanging skeleton, animated by sorcery, is flexing its bony fingers in. "Her mother's dying too," Jay had replied dryly. Colman got Adam talking about his work and about the physical and biological environment of the planet generally. Chiron was practically the same age as Earth, Adam said, having been formed along with its parent star by the same shockwave that had precipitated the condensation from interstellar gas clouds of the Sun and its neighbors. It. Puzzled, lay broke the sealing 'tape and opened the box to reveal a layer of foam padding and a piece of folded notepaper. Beneath the padding, nestled snugly in tiny foam hollows beneath a cover of oiled paper, was a complete set of components for the high-pressure cylinder slide valves, finished, polished, and glittering. The note read: and Sinsemilla waltzing with the moon was less like a mere refreshing breeze than like sudden immersion. "The potential's there." plain grub. Micky wished this would prove true; but she might be setting herself up for disappointment. Faith in the. "Where did you learn that, Stan?" Paula, one of the civilian girls, asked. She had a thin but attractive face made needlessly flashy by too much makeup. Her clothes were tight and provocative. even any response whatsoever. The boy follows his spry companion into this tented blackness. Pulling the tailgate up from the inside is. Sheltering against a weathered outcropping of rock, he wishes desperately that his mother were with. blood of others was the staff of life. "Not as much as being shut up inside a box with two people who can't stand each other," Adam replied. "What sense would that make when they've got a family of a hundred thousand outside?" side in the midst of warfare, after all. Jay nodded and smiled. "You're right. We did." Apparently neither as a reply nor as an expression of physical pain, the dancing woman let out a pathetic. wearing either black vests or black windbreakers with the letters FBI blazing in white across their chests. Colman came out of the Omar Bradley Block and began walking quickly toward the main gate. Vehicles were landing and taking off continually in the depot area while ammunition boxes were hastily unloaded from ground trucks; the barracks area seemed to be alive with squads doubling this way and that, and officers shouting orders. Sandbagged weapons pits that hadn't existed hours earlier had appeared at strategic places, and new ones were still being dug. "I don't think you're taking enough account of the psychological effects on our own people," he said when he finally looked up. "Morale is high now that we're nearly there, and I don't want to spoil it. We've encouraged a popular image of the Chironians that's intended to help our people adopt an assertive role, and we've continually stressed the predominance of younger age groups there." He shook his head. "Heavy-handed methods are not the way to deal with what would be seen now as essentially a race of children. We'd just be inviting resentment and protest inside our own camp, and that's the last thing we want." LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS after the close call in Colorado, with the house fire and the southwest. The westbound lanes are blocked by police vehicles that form a gate, and traffic is being. "The best thing would be to blow that door with a salvo of AP missiles before we move, and hope they jam it open," he murmured to Swyley, who was lying next to him, examining the far bulkhead through an intensifier. "Then maybe drench the lock with incendiary and go in under smoke." smells threatening or at least suspicious. Leilani dressed in a pair of summer-weight cotton pajamas. Midnight-blue shorts and matching. 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. "Zangreni needs stimulants to catalyze her~ psychic currents. That's how she make

predictions." "Ooh... I wouldn't want to do that," Amy said. "...I told you once already, it's none of your business anymore. Leave me alone. I don't want to talk to you. Just-go away and leave me alone." "Yes--some kind of industrial complex, wasn't it?" "It's a centralized, fusion-based facility, that provides gen- Colman's eyebrows arched in surprise. "True, but-wow! I had no idea that anything here was that advanced." Experiments and research into harnessing the potential energy release of antimatter had been progressing on Earth since the first quarter of the century, primarily in connection with weapons programs. The attraction was the theoretical energy yield of bringing matter and antimatter together- one hundred percent conversion of mass into energy, which dwarfed even thermonuclear fusion. For bombs and as a source of radiation beams, the process had devastating possibilities, and it had been appreciated for a long time that such a beam would offer a highly effective means of propelling a spacecraft.. "I don't see the strings." Doggedly returning to her initial question, Leilani asked, "So the guy who killed Mr. D? was he caught?" Spears.. the answers to them could be learned only by earning her complete trust, and that her trust could be. "The woman is either nuts or higher than a Navajo shaman with a one-pound-a-day peyote habit." Colman grinned and drank from the glass. "Not quite that bad. But some of them do have pretty funny ideas- or did have, anyway. A lot of people couldn't imagine that kids brought up by machines could be anything else but . . . 'inhuman,' I guess you'd call it-cold, that kind of thing." "And Alec Baldwin," Micky assured Leilani, "wasn't the man who held up Aunt Gen's store." heart.. "She gets eighty-six thousand a year," Noah said.. Leilani's mother, half mesmerized by her bizarre performance.. "Classified information," Colman murmured. Then he squeezed her arm one more time and turned to follow after the others.. Chapter 12. part misery and part fury, as she jabbed the lance hard at the coiled target.. MRS. GRAYFORD, THE plump, extravagantly dressed wife of Vice-Admiral Crawford, Slessor's second-in-command of the Mayflower H's crew, closed the box containing her new set of Chironian silver cutlery and added it to the pile of boxes on the table by her chair. Among other things the jumble included some exquisite jewelry, an inlaid chest of miniature, satin-lined drawers to accommodate them, a set of matching animal sculptures in something not unlike onyx, and a Chironian fur stole. "Where we'll end up living, I've no idea, but I'm sure these will enhance the surroundings wherever it is. Don't you think the silver is delightful? I'd never have thought that such unusual, modern styling could have such a feel of antique quality, would you? I must return to that place the next time I go down to Franklin. Some of the tableware there went with it perfectly." At once, the dog lets go of the man's shorts and seizes the castoff footwear. Grinning around a mouthful. Then Colman's communicator started bleeping. Bernard Fallows was calling from the Communications Center. "I guess you did it," he said. "But it's not over yet. We've found out where Sterm is." Then the tramp of marching footsteps growing louder came from beyond the main doors. A second later the doors burst open, and General Stormbel stomped in at the head of a group of officers leading a detachment of SD troopers. With dispatch, the troopers fanned out, closed all the exits, and posted themselves around the walls to cover the assembly, while Stormbel and the officers marched down the main aisle to the center of the floor and turned to face the Congress from in front of where Wellesley was still standing. Borftein leaped to his feet, but checked himself when an SD colonel trained an automatic on him. He sank into his seat, a dazed expression on his face.. "That's tough. But my useless dad skipped the day I was born." "So are you," Colman insisted. "Chironian genes were dealt from the same deck as all the rest. So the codes were turned into electronics for a while, and then back into DNA. So what? A book that gets stored in the databank is still the same book when it comes out." He can only imagine the daunting quantity of energy required to be Donella, the waitress whose knees, shoulders hunched, head cocked, wild damp hair hanging in tangles over her face, hands still. Rinsing the dishes and the flatware, stacking them in the sink to be washed later, Micky said, "The time-distorting August heat, they were as silent as the trinity of flames bright upon the smokeless wicks. among many courses of action was the right one and the wisest, she ultimately made her decision based. use.. A groundcar passed by and several Chironians waved at them from the windows. "It can't be quite like that," Jay said. "That woman I was talking about told Jerry Pernak that a research job at the university would pay pretty well. That must have meant something." not merely old-fashioned but antique, not feminine in a liberated contemporary let's-have-hot-sex style, January 9, 2081. In the distance rose the lulling rumble-hum of freeway traffic, a not unpleasant drone that might be. Sterm looked displeased at the response. "Securing your planet against an aggressor is not to be confused with harboring ambitions of conquest," he replied.. Then movement catches his eye, not immediately under the rig but along the side of it, in the lamplit. heard about the courtesy of the road. Everyone's hellbent on getting to the interstate, racing around and. rants of anger, self-loathing, self-pity. If these words filtered through the prison of the damped brain in. "Sorry to hear that." Colman slowed and rubbed his chin. He wasn't in the mood. "You go on, Bret," he said. "I think I'm just gonna wander around. I guess rd rather he on my own for a while." bones.. unreal as a funhouse, and yet repeatedly she had encountered reflections of herself so excruciatingly. This humble scene at Geneva's kitchen table was a fresh breeze of reality, clearing away the lingering. "On what I'm doing." The Chironian looked apologetic. "I could talk to him about the marine biology on the east coast of Artemia, putting roofs on houses, or Fermat's theorems of number theory," he offered. "Do you think he might be interested in anything like that?" behind it. Her sweaty hands had slipped on the polished steel, but surely some damage had been done to. Jay drank some more of his coffee, stared at his cup in silence for what seemed a long time, then said without looking up, "I've been thinking on and off... you know, I think I'd like to get into the Army. What would be the best way of going about it?" "Why do people follow leaders?" Pernak replied. "For collective-strength. What do you need collective strength for? Because strength ultimately gets to control the wealth and to impose ideas. But why does a race of millionaires need leaden if it already has all the material wealth it needs, and isn't interested in imposing ideas on anyone because nobody ever taught it to? The Chironians don't. There isn't anything to scare them with. You won't start any crusades down there because they

won't take any notice." he'd lost her. Until then, she'd been a radiance, the one brightness in a family that otherwise lived in. "Luck," Micky clarified. "The angle of the shot was severe. The slug literally ricocheted off her skull. Lesley accepted automatically and found himself looking at the features of Colonel Oordsen, one of Stormbel's staff, looking grim faced and determined, but visibly shaken. "Activate the intruder defenses, close the inner and outer locks, and have the guard stand to, Major," he ordered. "Any attempted entry from the Spindle before the locks are closed is to be opposed with maximum force. Report back to me as soon as the bulkhead has been secured, and in any case not later than in five minutes. Is that understood?" To her surprise, sitting across the dinette table from Geneva, Micky began to weep. No racking sobs. bark far behind him. suite. 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 ..". The scale of these events and the rapidity with which they are unfolding allow for no measurable effect of. to stiffen your spine, work up some spit, open the damn door, go in there where the beast was, and you. anything this good if her life depended on it? not that she's ever likely to face a pie-or-die threat." Martian light and the dead snake, there was a peaceful quality to the moment that she savored for its. But no Borftein was present to save the situation at the side entrance. "I don't know anything about it," the SD Officer of the Day said from the screen in reply to the call the guard there had put through. "Those orders are incorrect. Detain those men." The guard on duty at the desk produced a pistol and trained it on Maddock, who was standing where he had been stopped ten feet back with Harding and Merringer. In the same instant the two SD's standing farther back covered them with automatic rifles. The muscles of Stern's face tensed; he quivered visibly with the effort of suppressing his rage. "I was willing to bargain," he grated. "Evidently we have failed to impress upon you the seriousness of our intentions. Very well, you leave me no further choice. Perhaps a demonstration will serve to convince you." He turned to Stormbel. "General, advise the status of the missile now targeted at the Chiron scientific base in northern Selene." "Baby, baby," Sinsemilla said, "look at this, look, look. Baby, look, see, look." She extended her hand. Go, pup, he says or only thinks. night. The restaurant employees are protesting less, maybe because the hunters' steely indifference to every. night on the same street. and pigheadedness. Too useful. "That would be the murderer," Micky interrupted without a wink or a smirk, as though she'd never think. Lechat was nodding slowly to himself. "And within hours he'd arranged for somebody to make it look like an outside operation, and by the next morning he'd had the takeover all planned, with the Chironians as a pretext. Everything fits. But who would have done it?" The Chironian, by contrast, saw a rich, bright, vibrant universe manifesting at every level of structure and scale of magnitude. The same irresistible force of self-ordering, self-organizing evolution that had built atoms from plasma, molecules from atoms, then life itself, and from there produced the supreme phenomenon of mind and all that could be created by mind. The feeble ripples that ran counter to the evolutionary current were as incapable of checking it as was a breeze of reversing the flow of a river; the promise of the future was new horizons opening up endlessly toward an ever-expanding vista of greater knowledge, undreamed-of resources, and prospects without limit. Far from having probed the beginnings of all there was to know, the Chironian had barely begun to learn. rarity. The presidential suite was hers, not because she had booked the use of it, but because she owned the. sex organs is generally effective. he knows. He's confident I'll never leave the neighborhood with my camera or the film. Playing with me. He grinned at the joke as he, turned to lead the way. Farnhill didn't seem to appreciate the humor. Marie, who had been exploring the house, emerged from the elevator. "The basement is huge!" she told them. "There are all kinds of rooms down there, and I don't know what they're for. I could have my own room to draw things in. And did you know there's another door down there that leads out to a tunnel? I think it might go through to where the .cab stops because it's got a thing like a conveyer running along next to it. Perhaps we needn't have carried all those things over and in through the front door at all". next year covered. Old Yeller here to take a chunk of meat out of anyone who might try to do you wrong. "Oh, the alien-contact thing." 1. Physically handicapped children? Fiction. the interstate. beyond the next door, he finds logic rewarded. A warm breeze, free of kitchen odors and the smell of. ticking away. The truck stop is a hot zone; they need a ride out to a more comfortable place where the. The small group of Chironians watching from a short distance away and the larger crowd gathered behind them in the rear of the antechamber applauded enthusiastically and beamed their approval. They weren't supposed to do that. It didn't preserve the fight atmosphere. be making light of the subject if I were actually being molested." She opened the cabinet door under the. "I've kept copies in case anything happens to yours." Around and under more prep tables, past tall cabinets with open shelves full of stacked dishes, taking. Quarrey sighed and shook her head. "You can have Franklin and the whole area around it as a thriving productive resource and an affluent market, or you can have it in ruins," she said. "Given the choice, which would you prefer? Well, it's not as if we didn't have the choice, is it? We have." "Take the kids for a walk round the Grand Canyon module," Walters suggested. "It's being resculpted again-lots of trees and rocks, with plenty of water. Should be pretty." In his peripheral vision, he repeatedly glimpses movements ghostly stalkers flanking him. Each time that. Karla giggled, said something indecipherable, and pulled Sharmer inside,

closing the door behind them..she devised elaborate acts of revenge on her mother and on Dr. Doom. This night, in spite of what here, imaginary goblins had eaten her as neatly as a duchess might eat pudding with a spoon. Currently Donella wrinkles her nose. This is virtually the only part of her face that she can wrinkle, because

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