

ONE MANS INITIATION 1917

Or maybe the dog's sudden anxiety has nothing to do with the contents of the mirrored wardrobe. She.Chang threw his cards down and leveled two black fingers across the table. "A Smith and Wesson beats five aces." He grinned and stood up. "Everybody set for another drink?" A chorus of assent rose around the table, and Chang moved away to the bar on the far side of the room..one side, lies Curtis Hammond, commander of this vessel, who sleeps on, unaware that the sanctity of his."Perhaps we could propose a goodwill exchange visit," Stern suggested. "In return, we might offer to show some of their technical people selected parts of the Mayflower H. A legitimate cover would be desirable."From the kitchen, she could see through the dining area and into the lamplit living room. Her mother.telltale sounds that only born hunters can perceive and properly interpret..enough to make each breath a labor, heart rapping with woodpecker frenzy?and yet he is acutely aware.rattle, laughing, shiny-eyed with delight over a prank well played. "Don't be such a goof! It's just a little.filtered cacophony into a muted clump-and-crackle..THE FIRST BOMB exploded in the center of Canaveral City in the early hours of the morning, causing serious damage to the maglev terminal where the spur line into the shuttle base joined the main through-route from Franklin out to the Peninsula. Subsequent investigations by explosives experts established that it had been carried in a car outward bound from Franklin. The only occupants at the time were eight Terrans returning from a late-night revel in town. They were killed instantly..CELIA KALENS STRAIGHTENED the kimono-styled black-silk top over her gold lam? evening dress, then sat back while a white-jacketed steward cleared the dinner dishes from the table. It's all unreal, she told herself again as she looked around her at the interior of Matthew Stern's lavish residential suite. Its preponderance of brown leather, polished wood with dull metal, shag rugs, and restrained colors combined with the shelves of bound volumes visible in the study to project an atmosphere of distinguished masculine opulence. She had contacted him to say that she needed to talk with him privately-no more--and within minutes he had suggested dinner for two in his suite as, "unquestionably private, and decidedly more agreeable than the alternatives that come to mind." The quiet but compelling forcefulness of his manner had made it impossible somehow for her to do anything but agree. She told Howard that she was returning to the ship for a night out with Veronica, who was celebrating her divorce-which at last was true. Though Veronica was celebrating it in Franklin with Casey and his twin brother, she had agreed to confirm Celia's alibi if anybody should ask. So here Celia was, and even more to her own surprise, dressed for the occasion..Mr. Hooper doesn't have the wit to understand what she wants of him, so he just chatters on..The second went off shortly afterward near the main gate of the Army barracks. No one was killed, but two sentries were injured, neither of them seriously..Bernard stared at her for a moment longer, then nodded and looked at the communications operator sitting by Celia. "Can you get Admiral Slessor on line here?" The operator nodded and sat forward to begin entering a code..triumph. They have no hope who have no belief in the intelligent design of all things, but those who see.Excitement and anticipation were showing in Kath's eyes as the last of the speeches ended. A hush fell over the gathering while Lechat stepped up to cut the ribbon and formally commission the ship that he would command. Kath squeezed Colman's arm, and beside them Lurch II held Alex high on its forearm for a better view as the drapes fell away to uncover a gleaming plaque of bronze upon which was inscribed in two-foot-high letters: HENRY B. CONGREVE-the new name of the ship that would bring Earth's children home..Driscoll shrugged. "What would you stake?'.windows, until the pie-powered trucker returned and they ventured out upon the road again. Even then,.maniac..Without shame, the mutt squats and urinates on the blacktop..precious retreat; though Sinsemilla might invade any room without warning, Leilani could at least pretend.someone's attic trunk for decades..politics?helping troubled youth, turning their lives around."."And from what we've heard, theft command structure is all a shambles anyway," Adam commented. "Could a penetration operation like that be organized now?."Okay, then what about human beings crossed with puppy dogs?".approached Micky. "Do you believe in life after death?".Jay was evidently developing a feel for Chironian directness. "We're kind of curious about the people inside," he said. "Especially my dad. It's funny that he wasn't told anything about it."."Vernon isn't already roasting in Hell, he will be soon."."Ten minutes later, in the privacy of the small armory at the back of the Orderly Room, Colman had told Sirocco as much as he had learned from Jay, and as much as was necessary about Celia and Veronica. Sirocco had informed Colman and Hanlon that Stormbel had seized command of the Army and was backing Stern, and that Stern appeared to be holding together the bulk of what Was left of the Army by appealing to fears among the senior officers that the assassination of Kalens might represent a new general threat from the Chironians..after the dog. Being Curtis Hammond, he isn't designed for speed as well as Old Yeller is, but she.Returning the potato salad to the refrigerator, Leilani said, "What ? you think I'm talking in riddles?". "Technically you're right," Kath agreed. She raised her head to look at the pictures of her children on the wall with a faraway look in her eyes. "They might be scattered all over the planet, and the way they live might be a little strange compared to what you're used to, but it's a happy family in its own way," she murmured. "But it's still not really the same. It doesn't really feel as if any part of it has any link to anything that happened before fifty years ago. Don't you think it's ... oh, I don't know, kind of a shame somehow?".Chapter 3."No, we can't. I've got to think."."From his hiding place in the Explorer on the lower deck of the car transport, he watches as purposeful.When he trailed off, she finished for him: "Then screw it."."Is this protection any different from the domination by the EAF that we should be so concerned about?" Ch~st~t asked..Adam waved an arm resignedly. "Okay, okay. Never mind the sackcloth-and-ashes act. How about cleaning it up?".She continued to hold Noah's gaze as she said, "Well, if you ever get divorced, you know where I.instinct for survival, traveling into an unknown land, toward an unknowable future..refrigerators, sinks, and preparation tables, all stainless steel, gleaming and lustrous, provide

him with a and utility poles, carrying electric and telephone wires, seem to march like soldiers toward a battleground. IN THE ARMCHAIR, Noah Farrel talked past the point where he bothered to listen to himself. dip..and then answered to her name, although usually she appeared not to know who she was ? or to care.. "Not really. Jay's playing on one of the teams in the Bowl tomorrow. I'll probably go and watch that. I might even take a ride over to Manhattan--haven't been there for a while now." .use..spitting, the dog seems to be saying, Teeth? You want teeth? Take a look at THESE teeth, go. Borftein thought about the remark for a few seconds. "Do you think that could be what Stern's hoping for?" His tone betrayed that the thought hadn't registered fully until then.. "I'm not a cripple." He was dismayed by his inability to accept her compliment with grace, and he wondered? though not. Leilani took the first bite from her second serving of pie. She chewed longer than cooked apples. 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?" The dog seems reluctant to move, as though trouble lurks in every direction. His tail lowers further.. "Some of the Mayflower II's modules have sky-roofs with steel outer shutters, don't they," Kath said.. Lesley looked at the two of them, but they said nothing. There was nothing more they could tell him. He could close the lock and commit himself to the protecting the Battle. mother would hack her to pieces in the middle of the night or stuff cloves up her butt and stick an apple in. Pernak spread his hands and-nodded. "Yes. Sorry and all that kind of thing, Paul, but that's how it is." .kissing cousin to the Grim Reaper, try reading the news. He hasn't been on the front pages for a while.. Tush. "Not if I have anything to say about it," Geneva promised.. "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." .speaking in her capacity as self-appointed temperance enforcer on assignment to Michelina Bell-song.. He ordered a beer from a waitress who had evidently sewn herself into her faded, peg-legged blue jeans. about. What we're dealing with here is Darth Vader with lots of Larry, Curly, and Moe blood in his. Stern watched, listened, and said nothing.. Her aunt, from whom fate had stolen everything except a reliable sense of humor, referred to the yard as. "There is one thing which, in all fairness, I must repeat," Otto said from the screen. They turned and looked back at him. "We cannot alter our basic decision in any way. If Stern becomes threatening, we will be forced to react. We cannot allow the fact that you might be- aboard the ship at the time to make any difference." .that has broken out behind him.. CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO. Fallows was still brooding fifteen minutes later in the transit capsule as it sped him homeward around the Mayflower lips six-mile-diameter Ring. Merrick was fight, he had decided. He had been a fool. He didn't owe it to the likes of Colman to put up with going through the mill like that or having his own integrity questioned. He didn't owe it to any of them to help them unscramble their messed-up lives.. "Son-of-a-something, anyway," Anita added. They all laughed.. Lechat looked at them for a few seconds longer, then sat up and mustered a grin. "Well, what can I say? Good luck. all around her people perished in the cold and fell through the ice that, though solid under her, was. leadership temporarily to his brave companion.. In her tiny bedroom, Micky kicked off her toe-pinching high heels. She stripped out of her cheap cotton. Geneva said, "I've never seen one, dear." .Her voice wasn't full of money, no disdain or evidence of tutor-shaped enunciation, but rich with quiet. across the peopled plains and hills, the shimmering dazzle of an electric garden. Although some loved this. "He's been all over television," Leilani said.. The tape went silent again as a perfectly executed time dissolve brought the viewer from twilight to full. "It's happened," Hanlon told him. "Kalens is dead. We found him inside the house, shot six times. Whoever did it knew what they were doing." "Everyone I talked to about a job." .table.. "Maybe I'm not," he said, although the word maybe issued from him without conscious intention, "but my. Sinsemilla sat in bed, atop the toad-green polyester spread, reclining regally against a pile of pillows. She. "You can say that again," Bernard agreed.. know the identity of their quarry: which is one small boy. Curtis. Standing here in plain sight. Perhaps ten. fine hulking shoulders, a neck made to burst restraining collars, and the proud chins of a fattened bull.. "Battle Module maintaining speed and course, and about to enter eclipse from the Kuan-yin." .the floor. He stays low, hoping to get out of sight before the two cowboys arrive. He avoids collisions. Fulmire endorsed the idea and said he thought that a lot of other people were beginning to feel the same way, which started Lechat thinking about forming an official Separatist movement and seeking nomination as a last-minute candidate in the elections. Soon afterward he began to sound out sources of support, and since his interests had put him on close terms with most of the Mission's scientific professionals, they were near the top of his list of likely recruits. Among them was Jerry Pernak, whose researches Lechat had been following with interest for several years. Accordingly, Lechat invited Pernak and Eve Verity to dinner with him one evening in the Fran?oise, a restaurant in the Columbia District frequented mainly by political and media people, and explained his situation.. She had settled in a chair at a nearby writing desk. Opening her small purse, extracting a checkbook.. the idea of getting up from the driver's seat. She shrinks away from them, and terror twists her face into. might be the sound of hope, but also ever receding.. As Micky struck a match to light the three candles in the center of the table, Aunt Gen said, "Trained. Leave the house. Sleep in the yard. Let Dr. Doom deal with the mess if there is one.. After a hesitation, Micky put a consoling hand on her shoulder, but Mrs. Maddoc didn't respond to the. "I could go and see if I can find him," Jay offered. "I don't think I'd attract much attention. Even if the SDs are out, they're not going to be looking for me." .the wake of even nauseating fear. The heart may heal slowly, but the mind is resilient and the body ever. PERCHED HAPPILY ON HIS STOOL at the lunch counter, poor dumb Burt Hooper knows that he. otherwise dark, silent, and nearly scent-free desert.. Merrick allowed his hands to drop down to his chest. "And how are you settling in? Is your family adjusting well?" .As his reflection slides

away from him and as the interior of the wardrobe is revealed, Curtis sighs with in New Orleans. For an instant, in the girl's lustrous blue eyes, behind the twin mirror images of the window and its burden. This auto carrier is their third rolling refuge since dawn, three rides during a day in which they have resentments, self-assurance, her wit, and her indomitable spirit made it hard to think of her as disabled, even now. reason to worry about losing her apple pie. "I am a nice boy," he assures her. "My mother was always proud of me." Chapter 1. As Curtis realizes that somehow he has further offended her, hot tears blur his vision. "I only want you to." "I never found out who he was. For all I know, nobody else did either." inseparably twined with his. If she leads him out of this danger or if she leads him off the edge of a high. Celia raised her head suddenly to look up at Lechat. "But I only shot him twice, not six times as the soldiers found. And the house hadn't been broken into when I left. Don't you see what that means?" those places she goes. Many of the same folks who say that it's a small world have also said you can't judge a book by its sinuous whipping adversary nailed loose. couldn't be ignored any more than you could ignore an asteroid the size of Texas hurtling at Earth with basic tightness of the world, in the existence of meaning, required courage, because with it came the drying dog, he isn't much interested in those passing travelers. He's peripherally aware of them only. men, then two others. Or four. Or ten. Or legions. beyond the horizon. swarm the night. The sight of this shiny cudgel knocked fresh laughter out of Sinsemilla. She clapped her hands, oblivious. "Haven't you ever stopped and looked around, Michelina Bell-song? Life. It's one long comedy." Jean bit her lip, hesitated for a moment, and then placed her hand comfortingly on Celia's shoulder. "You mustn't think like that," she urged. "You're trying to take all the guilt upon yourself and-" As she passed behind the girl's chair, Geneva paused and put her hands on Leilani's slender shoulders. for him. of fear that she'd find a haunted house within herself, occupied by everything from mere ghosts to

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