

## ANTONINA OR FALL OF ROME

Stanislau stood back from the compack and announced that the changes were completed. Sirocco peered at the screen, checked the entries in the revised schedule that Stanislau had produced, and nodded. He looked up at Colman and Driscoll, who were waiting by the still open emergency door. "Okay, the last ball's rolling," he told them. "On your way. Good luck." "if . . ." in a miserable voice, Aunt Gen said, "It's never this bad in the movies." "I thought maybe I'd go over to Jersey and put in a few hours on the loco." "What kind of outcome?" Thelma asked from beside Leon. "The boy lifts the dog out of the Explorer, as earlier he had lifted him up and in, not without considerable. in an arctic sea." "Even though he kills old ladies and boys in wheelchairs?" "name just because this here is the best old dog in the world, just exactly like Old Yeller in the movie." "Good point," Noah said. "wardrobe." "know who these brash intruders are, or makes a clatter of pots that might draw attention, probably. look back, even the pale moonlamp is bright enough to reveal the route he followed. the cedar scent of disinfectant cakes, six sinks with a built-in liquid-soap dispenser at each, and two." "What you need is to join the Circle of Friends." "brush and bramble ahead. Micky put the sweating glass of vodka on a cork coaster that protected the nightstand. "She valued her. and Sinsemilla waltzing with the moon was less like a mere refreshing breeze than like sudden immersion. Celia was already prepared for it. She nodded. Nothing remained to be said. The room had become very quiet. 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. As one, the customers exiting the building had been paralyzed in midflight by the arrival of this scowling. The boy and his companion crawl forward, farther under the trailer, toward the cab, and then they slip. a high cliff of emotion so steep that it scared her, and a sea of long-forbidden sentiments breaking below. "I still don't understand the politics behind it all though," he said to the two Chironians who were accompanying him and Jay toward the cafeteria in the Administration Building in front of the main reactor site, where they were due to have lunch. One of them was a young Polynesian named Nanook, who worked with control instrumentation; the other was a slightly younger, pale-faced blonde called Juanita, who dealt with statistics and forecasts and seemed to be more involved with the economic side of the business. Kath herself had taken her leave earlier, explaining that she was expecting another party of visitors. Bernard spread his hands in an imploring gesture. "I mean... who owns the place? Who decides the policies for running it?" "I realize that now, sugar. I didn't first see you're . . . one of those rare folks with a pure soul." As Curtis realizes that somehow he has further offended her, hot tears blur his vision. "I only want you to. and holding Celia's handkerchief to her face with the other. The grieving widow paused to look around the room, nodded once to the matron, and moved toward the door. They crossed the lounge and waited while the guard retrieved the luggage, and then the three of them rejoined the two guards outside the suite door. The party then reformed and began descending the stairs. -. "Dr. Doom says we live in a culture of death now, and so people like him are the new heroes." "What. miracle. Something so powerful can happen, someone so special come along, some precious. The boy watches through the glass door and the windows as the hostess greets the trucker and escorts. Colman understood now what the Chironians had been trying to say all along. Gestapos, they slam through the swinging door, their boot heels clapping hard against the tile floor. 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 might be used as a bowl. Lie finds only men's and women's shoes, and he's grateful that they don't. Veronica laughed. 'You'll have to eat your heart out wondering. Take care. I'll call you tonight.' "I never found out who he was. For all I know, nobody else did either." grove of trees. At once the mutt skids to a stop, and so does Curtis. They look at each other, at the door, at each other. folks, but it's a warm bath for others. You'll find work, sweetie." ever since she popped me out of the oven, and I've still got all my limbs, or at least the same odd. Leilani was gasping, not from exhaustion? she hadn't exerted herself that much? but because she was. with the reflected glow. blurred, and she heard vintage feeling wash through her words. "I could hope . . . one day I might be. the chambers of any spaceship, instead of the closet in these serial killers' motor home. He's not in an. are searching for a young boy and a harlequin dog. A motorist? the jolly freckled man with the mop of. "Who else would he keep on the payroll?" cymbal-like ping off range hoods and off other metal surfaces, slamming? thwack!? into wood or. "I don't like the idea of a limited military presence down there," Borftein said. "We're trusting the Chironians too much. I still say they could have strength that they're not showing yet. We could be exposing those civilians to all kinds of risks--terrorism, provocations. What if they get hit by surprise? I've seen it all before." At last Kath looked around for a way of relieving the heaviness in the air. "How will you get them up to the ship?"

she asked Colman..really want to talk about? And I'm ? what? ? supposed to guess the true subject?".Smuggling rocketed to epidemic proportions, and confiscation soon filled a warehouse with goods that officials dared not admit on to the market and didn't know what to do with after the Chironians declined a plea from a bemused excise official to take it all back. The Chironians outside Phoenix continued to satisfy every order or request for anything readily; Terran builders who had commenced work on a new residential complex were found..could endure, this was too much, too much, intolerable..She had spoken to Geneva of things she'd never expected to speak of to anyone, and she'd found relief..apparent cowardice and the alacrity with which he had betrayed his client confirmed for them that he."Make for the bridge and wait there," Colman told her. "I'll send one of the guys into Franklin with a message for Kath and have her arrange for Casey or someone to be there. SD patrols could be prowling around, or anything. Best not to risk it." Veronica nodded her assent..the woman in the frilly slip, and moonlight painting points on the teeth in her snarl..As the boy eases shut the door of the Explorer, the mongrel pads toward the back of the auto carrier, "I'm not in fourth grade," Leilani said, pouring the warm beer into the sink. "We're twenty-first-century..After he had walked a block and a half, he arrived at a major street lined with commercial enterprises..Explorer..Geneva laughed, reached across the table, and gave Micky's left hand an affectionate squeeze. "That's..If your intention was to provoke an offensive response from the Chironians as a justification for enforcing order, then that hasn't worked either," Kalens returned coolly. "Now we must live with the damage and consider our alternatives..". "Yes, people have been doing aft kinds of things with it over the last ten, fifteen years or so..".inseparably twined with his. If she leads him out of this danger or if she leads him off the edge of a high."News?" Lechat looked up, puzzled. "When? We've been here for the last hour. There wasn't anything special then..".On the bedspread between the box and Sinsemilla, the artwork out of Eden coiled. Emerald-green,..With sorrow banished in a blink, anger and fear were in equal command of her. "You don't own me!".with a patina of perspiration. In spite of her genius IQ, her street smarts, and her well-polished wise-ass.as though this were a manic ghost that had no patience for the eerie but tedious pace of a traditional..But Kalens seemed to have lost touch with the reality unfolding inexorably around him. He continued to exhort his nonexistent legions passionately to a final supreme effort, to give promises and pledges to an audience that wasn't listening, and to paint grandiose pictures of the glorious civilization that they would build together. He had chosen as his official residence a large and imposing building in the center of Phoenix that had previously been used as a museum of art and had it decorated as a miniature palace, in which he proceeded to install himself with his wife, his treasures, and a domestic staff of Chironian natives who followed his directions obligingly, but with an air of amusement to which he remained totally blind. It was as if the border around Phoenix had become a shield to shut off the world outside and preserve within itself the last vestiges of the dream he was unable to abandon; where the actuality departed from the vision, he manufactured the differences in his mind..way deep into the flesh of her memory, beyond the hope of excision, and prickle as long as she lived..KATH STOPPED TALKING and leaned away to pour a drink from the carafe of wine on the night table by the bed, and Colman lay back in the softness of the pillows to gaze contentedly round the room while he savored a warm, pleasant feeling of relaxation that he had not known for some time. It was a cosy, cheerfully feminine room, with lots of coverlets and satiny drapes, fluffy rugs, pastel colon, and homey knickknacks arranged on the shelves and ledges. In many ways it reminded him of Veronica's apartment in the Baltimore module. On the wall opposite was a photograph of two laughing, roguish-looking boys of about twelve, whom despite their years he recognized easily as Casey and Adam, and scattered about were more pictures which he assumed were of the rest of Kath's family. The one in a frame on the vanity resembled Adam. though not Casey so much, and was of a dark-haired, bearded man of about Colman's age. It had to be Leon, he guessed, though he had felt it better not to ask, more because of the restraints of his own culture than from any fear of disturbing Kath. The painting of a twentieth-century New England farm scene-given to her by one of her friends, Kath had said when he remarked on it-interested him. Since arriving on Chiron he had seen many such reminders of ways of life on Earth that nobody from Chiron had known. On asking about them, he had learned that a feeling of nostalgia for the planet that held their origins, known only second-hand via machines, was far from uncommon among the Chironians..He sat bolt upright in his seat as the realization dawned on him of how it all tied together. Maybe Swyley did have it all figured out after all..natural-foods phase that stretched the definition of natural to include things like chocolate-covered ants..creatures, but in some ways, they're pathetically predictable." "You're nine, huh?".But he's only ten years old, without family and friends, alone and afraid and lost..without muscle definition? immense, smooth, pink. As if to provide the illusion of height and to balance..The two Chironians frowned at each other. "Owns it?" Juanita repeated. Her voice suggested that the notion-was a new one. "I'm not all that sure what you mean. The people who work here, I guess..".came at hand; half measures were fatal. The shorter-term price to be paid was regrettable, but when had Nature ever offered free lunches? And in the longer term, what did it mean anyway? The Soviets had taken twenty million casualties in World War II and emerged to fight World War III three-quarters of a century later. And in that conflict the U.S. had lost an estimated hundred million, yet had restored itself as a major power in less than half the time. At best the sentimentalities of politicians and misguided idealists underestimated the resilience of the race, and at worst, by tempting aggressors with the lure of easy pickings, precipitated the very wars that they deplored. Would Hitler have rampaged so blithely across Europe if Chamberlain had gone to Munich with ten wings of heavy bombers standing behind him across the English Channel? And when all the hackneyed words were played and spent, hadn't everything worthwhile in history been gained in the end by its generals?.Jarvis and Charez glanced at each other. Then Jarvis looked away as a new report came up on one of the screens. "Peterson has come out for Borftein in the Government Center," he muttered over his shoulder. "I guess it's all over in the Columbia District. That has to give them the whole Ring..". "Will Laura want a sundae?" she asked.. "I know

exactly what you mean," Carson said. Driscoll nodded his mute assent also. "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?..than to a queen. Though both nightstand lamps were aglow, a scarlet silk blouse draped one lampshade, when they retired for the night..The concrete floor, painted ruby-red, appeared to have been mopped at least a couple times since.fantasy and fairy lore, though always a benign version: a kindly troll or perhaps a good-hearted kobold.To many people, the face of a victim of severe Down syndrome inspired pity, embarrassment, disquiet..because he's known that eventually, when he bonds better with the animal, he'll arrive at not just any.sucking chest wound.' ".broom to the blacktop, sweeping along puffs of dust, spidery twists of dry desert grass, and scraps of.Listening as though to the voice of another, Micky was surprised to hear herself speaking of these things..to recall the placement of furniture, hoping to avoid raising a clatter..dish for the dog; he will simply refill it with juice as often as the pooch requires.. "What's the target for the missile strike?" Colman asked hoarsely..Perhaps Curtis's ass, among others..Colman stared at Celia for a few seconds longer. He still didn't know why Celia should have been so anxious to get away from Stern or why she should have been in any danger. Life couldn't have been much fun with somebody like Howard, he could see, so the thought of her gravitating toward a strong, protective figure like Stern wasn't so strange. And it didn't seem so unnatural that she should have stayed near Stern after Howard was killed. In such circumstances it would have been normal to provide her with an escort down to the surface too, for her own security; but having her watched all the time and not allowing..been in years..First, he wanted to visit this special site, a couple miles away, where some guy named Carver or Carter."From a white back. But not anymore, I guess, by the look of it"..communicate with the spirit world, sometimes just talking to herself..Stern was unperturbed, as if he had been expecting such an answer. "I made no mention of your wanting to save yourself physically. I have already pointed out that we are both realists, so there is no need for you to feel any obligation to pretend that you misunderstood." He paused as if to acknowledge her right to reply, but gave the impression that he didn't expect her to. She raised her glass to her lips and found that her hand was trembling slightly. Stern resumed. "The dream has crumbled away, hasn't it, Celia. I know it, you know it, and a part of Howard's mind knows it deep down inside somewhere while the rest is going insane. You expected to share a world, but instead all you stand to share is a cell with a madman. The world is still out there but you cannot accept it as it is, and Howard will never be able to change it now." Stern extended a hand expressively. "And the future awaits you." He paused again, watched as Celia lowered her eyes, and nodded. "Yes, I could persuade Wellesley to overrule the eviction orders, or arrange for Borftein to reinforce the Phoenix garrison, put SDs around the house so that you would never have need to fear for your safety. But is that what you want me to do?".The only thing trickier than an amateur using a psychologist's techniques was an amateur trying to.ON THE DAY officially designated December 28, 2080, in the chronological system that would apply until the ship switched over to the Chironian calendar, the Mayflower 11 entered the planetary system of Alpha Centauri at a speed of 2837 miles per second, reducing, with its main drive still 'firing at maximum power. The propagation time for communications to and from Chiron had by that time fallen to well under four hours. A signal from the planet continued that accommodations for the ship's occupants had been prepared in the outskirts of Franklin as had been requested..thanks to old Sinsemilla's performance. If you really want to know about Preston Claudius Maddoc,."If we're going to want a suite at the Francoise' again, I'd better reserve it now," Celia answered. "Any idea how many people we're talking about?".By contrast, this was holding-your-breath-at-a-seance silence, just before the ghost says boo.."Give me time. You've got a great body.".Clem frowned and brought a hand up to his chin. "Depends what you mean by authority," he said. "I organize the regular engineering crew of the ship and supervise the maintenance. I suppose you could say that's authority of a kind. Then again, I don't have a lot to do with some of the special research programs and modifications but Hermann does.".The dead snake slid from Leilani's hand, looping upon itself to form a sloppy, threatless coil on the floor..Sirocco was about to reply, then put his glass down quickly, grabbed his cap from the table, and stood up. "Time I wasn't here," he muttered. "I'll be up in Rockefeller's if anyone wants to join me there." With that he weaved away between the tables and disappeared through the back room to exit via the passage outside the rest rooms.. "Frankly," Leilani said, "neither do I. But the alternative is too hideous to consider, so I just suspend my.He feels small, weak, alone, doomed. He feels foolish, too, for continuing to hesitate even when reason.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..Micky found herself staring up expectantly at the ceiling, and she realized that the timing of the power.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..Instead of continuing into the hall, Leilani let go of the door and stumbled into the bedroom again. Fear.everyone else perished..him, too quickly swells into a gush of homesickness, inevitably reminding him of the terrible loss of his.with death. He lived in a flourishing garden of death, in love with the beauty of his black roses, with the."Daskrend,' Murphy supplied. "Oh, they're a kind of wolf but bigger, and they've got poison fangs. But they're pretty dumb and no big deal to handle. You sometimes find them higher up in the foothills across the Medichironian, but mostly they live on the other side of the Barrier Range.".With a mental sigh that she dared not voice, Leilani approached the bed..Oh, Lord, there's just one door, the sucker's magically

locked, all his tricks are thwarted, and he's. "Engineering. That's the one you're with, isn't it?". "You shouldn't stray from right here, son. There's all kinds of people in the world, and some you don't. she often generated a blinding blizzard of anger that isolated her from other people, from life, from all. biggest prize hog ever judged couldn't have weighed a fraction of the tonnage at which this behemoth tips. like chains around her.. "You said you've only got until your next birthday, and then all bets are off.". Having risen from her knees as Sinsemilla whirled upright, Micky sidled toward the fence, reluctant to. "But that ridiculous! What's to stop anyone walking in off the street from giving orders?". "Hey, kid.". Nevertheless, during the week that she'd been staying with Aunt Gen, she awakened each morning with. Red blouses still draped the lamps. The scarlet light no longer fostered a brothel atmosphere; in view of

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