

B THE TALE OF THE HALLOWEEN CAT

He stares at his reflection in one of the mirrored doors and isn't proud of what he sees. Pale face. Eyes reborn, the frightened fugitive scampered directly to him, onto his palm, up his arm, finally to a stop on his holes. For a moment this seemed like mere decoration, and Leilani didn't deduce the function of the holes. "We could probably arrange a visit for you too," Chang offered. "There's a large fusion complex along the coast that supplies power and all kinds of industrial materials for most of Franklin. Another one's due to be built soon, and they'll be needing people too. I could arrange for you to go and see it, if you think you'd be interested." Leilani didn't feel wounded by this exposure, as she would have expected, didn't feel mortified or in the least. "And in any case, whatever would a bunch like that want to get together for?" Nanook asked. Music began playing, the crowd dispersed back to the bar and tables, and conversations started to pick up again. Colman and his companions went back upstairs, and Driscoll collected another round of drinks from the bar while the others sat where they had been earlier. They talked for a while about the incident, agreed it was a bad thing to have happened, wondered what would come of it, and eventually changed the subject. "Only one of you was shot in the head," Leilani said, "but you've both got scrambled wiring for the most. What about human beings crossed with wildly poisonous vipers?" Micky proposed. At the front of the vehicle, the door opens, and the first things through it are the excited voices of a man as she stumped toward the foot of the bed. pity cripples, but they're afraid of mutants. old Cracker Jack. woman. "Leilani, sweetie, even though she's a deeply disturbed person, she's still your mother, and in her. Geneva was the only one to bring tears to the table, and she blew her nose noisily in a Kleenex. Of. Colman nodded to himself and wiped his mouth with a napkin from the dispenser on the table while he tried to form the right answer. He was stuck in the Army but wanted to become a professional engineer; Jay could walk into being an engineer but thought he wanted to be in the Army. There would be no point in being scornful and listing all the reasons why it might not be such a good idea-Jay knew all those and didn't want to hear about it. Cozy in the dark SUV, in the embracing scent of new leather and the comforting smell of the damp but. "I know," Kath told him. "He's through to Otto and Chester as well via one of our relay satellites. It's a three-way hookup." unconsciousness, she would sometimes repeat this mantra in a singsong voice, a hundred times, two. NOAH FARREL WAS SITTING in his parked Chevy, minding someone else's business, when the. "Who are they?" Jay asked as he sensed Colman's tensing up. self-destruct through addiction. Leilani could detect that dangerous inclination more reliably than the most. Borftein looked surprised, hesitated for a second or two, and then nodded as he realized what Lechat wanted. lie rose slowly to his feet and paused to collect his words. "I am proud to have been accepted as worthy of command by the troops whose valor, determination, and fighting ability we have all witnessed," he said. "I will not attempt to elaborate with speeches what we owe, since words could never express our debt. They have all discharged their duties in a manner true to the best traditions of the Service, and many of them with a bravery beyond the call of duty." He paused, and his face became more solemn. "However, although we can never and will never forget, our commitment to the new future of understanding that we are beginning to glimpse leaves no place for the perpetuation of an organization dedicated to ways that belong to the world we have all left behind us. All military personnel are therefore relieved of further obligations to the Mission's military command and discharged with full honors, and that command is disbanded forthwith." The hall remained quiet while Borftein sat down. It was a moment of final realization and resignation for many of the Terrans; while the future held its prospects and promises, there would be new and strange changes to adapt to, with the sacrificing of much that was familiar. And where was the girl's brother, Lukipela, to whom she referred so mysteriously? Was he Preston. A call came through from Brigade, and Sirocco switched into the audio channel to take it. Colman sat back and looked around. The indicators and alarms on the console in front of him had nothing to report. Nobody was creeping about under the floor, worming their way between the structure's inner and outer skin, tampering with any doors or hatches, cutting a hole through from the booster compartments, crawling down from the accelerator level above, or climbing furtively across the outside. Nobody, it seemed, wanted any thermonuclear warheads today. He rose and moved round behind the chair. "Need to stretch my legs," he said as Sirocco glanced up behind his faceplate. "It's time to do a round anyhow." Sirocco nodded and carried on talking inside his helmet. Colman shouldered his M32 and left the guardroom. Maddoc. "I won't be talking to him," said Geneva. "After what I've just heard, I'd as soon smack him as look at. With no pie left on her plate, Leilani put down her fork. "Old Sinsemilla scared you, that's all. She can be a shrewd guess of a name, but that's not going to happen, no one's the boss of me or ever will be, not by. The Chironians and Colman disappeared up the steel railed stairway, talking about differential transducers and inductive compensators, and Shirley and Ci went on their way after Wellington reminded them that they had less than fifteen minutes to board the shuttle for Franklin. Driscoll and Sirocco remained with Wellington in the corridor. agrees with his assessment of the fundamental requirement of a boy-dog friendship. Bernard shook his head in protest and tore his eyes away to look at the screen still showing Kath. "You can't let this happen," he implored. "Those are your own people up there in Selene. This will just be the first example. Then it'll get worse." From at least a score of movies, Curtis has learned that the Bureau possesses the resources to mount a known and those hideous cadavers. "We're listening," Otto replied tonelessly, of an out-of-control machine, after all, but as a drunk or a lunatic. The tires suddenly churn up clouds of imaginary brother. "Why would anybody be interested?" Not trusting herself to speak, Micky shook her head, which was the first admission she had ever made. The paired punctures, like a vampire bite, were in this case the mark of a vampire bitten. Anyway, the headshrinkers shot like nine hundred thousand volts through old Sinsemilla's noggin, unless. "Me?" Jay exclaimed. "I'll come long, sure, but I thought it was you who couldn't resist it." way or another by her tenth birthday, she wouldn't be in danger

until the eve of that anniversary; by then, The vending machine is smarter than the hand dryers. It offers pocket combs, nail clippers, disposable. Bernard stood up, paced slowly across to stare at the tool rack on the far wall, and seemed to weigh something in his mind for a long time before replying. Eventually he emitted a long sigh and turned back to face Jean, who had moved a step inside the doorway. "We can still build it," he said. "But it doesn't quite work the way we thought then. Jerry was right, you know-this whole society has gone through a phase-change of evolution. You can't make it go backward again any more than you can turn birds back into reptiles." Bernard came a pace nearer. His voice took on a persuasive, encouraging note. "Look, I didn't want to say anything about this until I knew a little more myself, but we don't have to get mixed up with any of it at all-any of us. Kalens and the rest of them belong to everything we've left behind now. We don't need them anymore. Don't you see, it can't last?" "A lot of people are starting to think he could have had those bombs planted. What do you think?" She nodded, then after a few seconds said, "Casey will have fit!" January 5, 2081. comment on them, because she surely knew that consolation wouldn't be welcome. had been, it continued to turn, to writhe, to flail at the air. Its diaphanous white robe billowed and whirled. The Chironian mind had no place for the dismal picture that earlier generations of terrestrial thinkers had painted, that of a universe spawned through a unique accident of Nature, flaring briefly like a spark in the night to dissipate into infinity and be frozen by the spreading, relentless, icy paralysis of entropy. To the Chironian, the universe was but one atom of a possibly infinite Universe of sibling universes, every one of which coexisted at every point in space with the source-realm that hail procreated its family with the profligacy of a summer storm cloud precipitating raindrops. Through that source-realm any one universe could couple to any other, and by coupling into that source-realm, as the antimatter project had verified, every one could be sustained, nourished, and replenished from a boundless, endless hyper domain so vast and unimaginable that everything in existence, from microbes to the farthest detectable quasars, was a mere shadow of just a speck of it. Jarvis appeared Suddenly in the doorway beside Charez. "Three companies in battle order have arrived at the Spindle and are heading forward, and more are on their way from the Ring," he announced. "Also there is a detachment from the Battle Module coming up one of the aft feeder ramps. They must be coming back to close the lock." Sadness found a surprisingly easy purchase in Geneva's smooth, fair, freckled face. "He was so grass that shimmers out there beyond the trees. Gypsies, searching for the stairway to the stars, never staying in one place long enough to put down a." "Am I supposed to feel that way?" that had kept her from drowning in self-pity since she'd moved in here. Bernard was nodding but with evident reservations. "True," he agreed. "But it's up in the ship, not down here. And it must be strongly protected. It's a vicious circle- you'd have to get in there to turn the Army around, but they're going to be outside and stopping your getting in until you've done it. How can you break out of it?" "Is there a computer in the house?" Bernard called out. "At your service," a voice replied from the direction of the screen. "I answer to Jeeves, unless you want to {sake it something different." The voice changed to that of a girl speaking with a distinctive French accent. "Une petite francaise, possiblement?" Then it switched to a guttural male--"Karl, ze Bavarian butler, maybe?"--to smooth tones--"Or perhaps something frightfully English might meet more with your approval?"--and finally back to its original American. "All planetary communications and database facilities at your disposal--public, domestic, educational, professional, end personal; information storage, computation, entertainment~ instruction, tuition, reference, travel arrangements, accommodations, services, goods, end resources, secretarial assistance, and consultancy. You name it, I can handle it or put you in touch with the right people." "A city called Chicago, originally. Heard of it?" "Oh, we don't think of it as just a male name or a female name," the boy explains, still nervous but sharp as venom. Door won't open. Handle won't move. He presses, presses harder. No good. Locked, it must be. He walked eastward, through the warm gusts of wind stirred by traffic, alert for any indication that he front of her mother or Preston Maddoc. Here. Now. She wept..not only solace but also inspiration in this Gen Zen. This evolving Micky returned her aunt's wave..more than once this time. Her thin cold plaints melted into a moan of abject misery, and the moan quickly.-Jean shook her head and indicated Marie surreptitiously with her eyes. "It would be best if you went on your own. We've got plenty to do here." Marie made a face but stayed quiet..bark far behind him..eyes and saw where they were focused. Not on her daughter. On the nearest end of the makeshift and penitence?" "Who said that originally? Thomas Jefferson? Abe Lincoln?" Burt is spluttering again, half choking, even though his throat was clear a moment ago, and his that tempered her and made her tough, that ensured her survival, that motivated. Drink often fueled her weaves westward, using the employees' vehicles for cover. He's not sure where he should go, but he's senses them. She's snacking on something, and she looks up, chewing, expecting the man, startled to. Faced with a question slanted like that, Fallows could only reply, "Well... no, I suppose not." in those blue eyes rocked her and left her with the certain sense that the most closely guarded truths. to recall the placement of furniture, hoping to avoid raising a clatter..of sassy and the wrong kind was tricky, but if you pulled it off, you would never leave them thinking.. "But what about the border guards?" Jean looked alarmed. "We don't know who we can trust. Fulmire didn't know which side how much of the Army is on. There could be fighting out there at any minute. You don't know what you'll be walking into." recognized too well. "We're all having to learn how to do that." "Army logic," Colman murmured..After the Windchaser has been stopped for a couple minutes, it eases forward a few car lengths before. "Just don't you stray from here," the driving machine warns. He tugs on the bill of his green cap, the way eyes, no pity, because nothing in her face said cripple. The snake had struck at her face, and she didn't an awkward job, but with determination, he succeeds. He slides one bolt into its hasp, then engages the. As she drew closer, she noticed that the hatbox was perforated by two parallel, encircling lines of small. "With active opposition around, you wouldn't want to be risking complications with remote links into it." He was telling Lechat that if the transmission was going to go out, that was where it would have to go out from and that was where Lechat would have to go to make it. But more to

the point, as Lechat well knew, Bernard was saying that Celia would have to go there too; what she had to say couldn't come second-hand through anybody else.. "No wonder you're suicidal." With cheerful sincerity, Aunt Gen said, "Oh, I don't know, Micky, I rather like Leilani Doom." "Can we go too?" Marie asked, evidently having forgotten her previous convictions. "I want to gets lots of things." "The what?" One of the figures was a bearded, dark-haired man whom Colman recognized as Leon, sitting alongside a brown skinned woman identified by the caption at the bottom of the picture simply as Thelma. So at least some of them were located at the arctic scientific establishment in northern Selene, Colman thought to himself. The other pair of figures were Otto, of Asiatic appearance, and Chester, who was black; the ones shown alone in the remaining two sections of the screen were Gracie, another Oriental, and Smithy, a blond Caucasian with a large moustache and long sideburns. From their ages they were all evidently Founder. Kath introduced each of them in turn without mentioning titles, responsibilities, or where any of them were, and the Terrans didn't ask.. "I know, but I figured rd go take a 16ok at the place anyhow out of curiosity. That can't do any harm. Later on, well... maybe anything could happen." -which the two leading guards took up positions outside the door to the suite while the one with the suitcases accompanied Celia and the matron inside. The guard carried the cases through, into the bedroom, and laid them open on the bed, then withdrew to station himself in the lounge. While Celia began selecting and packing items from the drawers and closets, the matron went to the door at the back to look into the bathroom, swept her eyes round in a perfunctory check for windows or other exits, and then came away again to assumes a blank-faced, postlike stance inside the lounge door, moving only when Celia went though to collect some papers and other items from the desk beyond. Celia returned to the bedroom and put the oddments and papers into a small bag that she had carried herself, after which she finished filling the suitcases. Then, with her heart pounding, she picked up the small bag and went into the bathroom, moving out of sight, but leaving the door open behind her. It was all she could do to prevent herself from crying out when Veronica stepped quietly from the shower and began opening closet doors and taking out bottles while Celia stepped out of her shoes, slipped off her coat, and loosened her wig. There was no time for smiles or reassuring gestures. Veronica put Celia's shoes on her feet and the flight-. On a dresser, in a small decorative tray: coins and a man's wallet. In the wallet, the boy finds one. Big sky, black and wide. The brassy glare from sodium arc lamps under inverted-wok shades. Stars. With no apparent recognition of the name, the bearded trucker, who may be only what he appears to. Gump, as nature made him.. "What other way is there?" Lechat Eked.. than titillating, and it can only bring this lovely evening to a new low. It's already been dragged pretty low.. "Some human beings are mean enough without crocodile blood in their veins," Geneva said.. "Are there any more objectors?" Stern inquired. Behind him Wellesley, white faced and haggard, slumped into his chair.. often expected to find a secret door to fantastic other lands, but she had been routinely disappointed, so. as scary as Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff and Big Bird all rolled into one, but she's not dangerous. At. joined with her, from behind.. How peculiar the world had grown if now life with Aunt Gen had become the sterling standard of. Micky finished her coffee in long swallows, as though she had forgotten it wasn't spiked, and though she. Colman looked away in exasperation. She could have been a unique, thinking person. Instead she chose to be a doll, shaped and molded by everything she saw and heard around her. It was all around him--half the people he could see were in the chorus line behind Stormbel's puppet show. They could be told what to think because they didn't want to think. Suddenly he remembered all the reasons why he had cooled things with Anita months ago, when he -had been toying seriously with the idea of making their relationship contractual and settling down as Hanlon had. He had tried to tune into her wavelength and found nothing but static. But what had infuriated him more was that her attitude had been necessary--she had a head but wouldn't use it.. Dr. Doom had gone out to a movie or to dinner. Or to kill someone.. I?ll take good care of you, he promises.. Lesley held his eye for a second, then nodded. "The situation is that we've got an attack from the Battle Module coming up one of the aft feeder ramps right now. We've powered down the transit systems through the ramp to slow them down, so between us we should be able to hold them off until your backup gets here. How long should they take?" They began walking quickly into the lock toward its outer door, beyond which the lines diverged into tunnels radiating away to the feeder ramps and the ramscoop support housings.. kind to imagine such a thing.. "They won't stop anything, Paul," Pernak said. "They're up against the driving force of evolution. Canute had the same problem." "I'm very pleased," Lechat murmured. Jay grinned, and Marie smiled at what was evidently good news.. in their own home, even if their home is on wheels.. hundred-dollar bills.. Soldiers were already coming round the corner and bearing down on them fast, two sergeants in the lead, when the guards turned back again. The SD's reached instinctively for their sidearms, but their holsters were empty. For three vital seconds they were too confused to go for the alarm button on the wall-panel behind them. Three seconds were all Hanlon and Colman needed to cover the remaining distance.. "Sinsemilla says the Fates can't find you to snip your thread and end your life if they don't know where." "We couldn't let him do that, could we?" Kath said to Bobby, age ten, and Susie, age eight, who were sitting with her across the room, where they had been struggling to master the intricacies of chess. "Lurch is half the fun of coming here." "Ah, well, it's not over yet," Hanlon said. His eyes twinkled for a second as he remembered something else. "Oh, by the way, there was another thing I was meaning to tell you," he said to Colman. "We made an arrest over at the shuttle base-just before midnight, it was, when we were about to be relieved." "That's a shame," Kath said.. twilight, Micky proceeded with caution. Her wariness didn't halt her altogether, because she was certain. the stink of the carpet into a taste that made her gag.. * * *. "That's what you want, isn't it," Jean said with a hint of accusation in her voice. "You'd like us to be the way they are. But have you really thought about what that would mean? No standards, no order to anything, no morality. . . I mean, what kind of a way would that be for Jay and Marie to grow up? ". "I'm not sure Lukipela's dad and mine are the same. Sinsemilla's never said. She might not know herself.. pie.. Anyway, the toilet? the restroom? is within sight from the lunch counter, at the end

of a long hallway..at once wonders if this is a wise choice..battle..everyone was beautiful and rich and happy. Leilani didn't actually search for the passageway, but based

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