

# OAK A COMPOSITE NOVEL OF AMERICAN POLITICS BY FOURTEEN AMERICAN A

Suddenly, from the outer entrance to the foyer behind Hanlon, a firm, authoritative voice ordered, "Stop that!" The sergeant looked up from the panel just as he was about to place the call, and his jaw dropped open in astonishment. Borftein was striding forward toward the desk with Wellesley on one side of him, Lechat on the other, and a squad of soldiers in tight formation bringing up the rear. Celia and Malloy were between them. The two SD guards glanced uncertainly at each other. "Don't tarry, child!" the queen commanded. "Come hither at once and lay thine eyes upon this treasure." "What happens if you win the right way?" Kath asked him. concern for the insect be addressed seriously. He is the most-wanted fugitive in the fabled West, surely the most desperately sought runaway in the. Colman shrugged and nodded his head unconsciously in the direction of Bobby and Susie. "They've got heads on their shoulders, they've got confidence in their own thinking, and they trust their own judgments. That's good." Bouncing on the bed, giggling prettily, old Sinsemilla relived the comic moment: "Snake goes boing! rest against the toe of one of the boots. The parking-lot light is bright enough that from a distance of a. better if they thought the way the rules said they should, and no good if they didn't." "Oh, I figured you'd be around here somewhere." "Is this the guy who makes trains?" Anita asked. "Yeah. This is Jay. He's okay... and smart." "That's a gamble we'll have to take," Sirocco said. "Stern will hardly order them to fire on the rest of the ship if he's in it." question: "Were you?" great resources and urgency across the West. He's probably returning from a late dinner, with a thermos. brain several times. Probably, if they'd done it just once more, old Sinsemilla would've developed a taste. "No, no." Micky hesitated. "Well, yes, that is what I'm doing. But I meant maybe you're talking around. With a sigh and a laugh, Micky said, "Why don't we save time and you just tell me what I believe?" Face. Eyes. So much to lose. Get out. Leave. But they'd bring her back. And where would the snake be. that? This time, Micky resisted being charmed. "That's not funny, Leilani." "Just . . . what are you getting at?" Bernard asked, sounding disbelieving of his own ears and suspicious at the same time. Micky crazily thought of killer bees, which might also have caused the shrieking figure to perform these. beneath interlaced boughs that have provided only an occasional brief glimpse of the night sky. Geneva's backyard. The nylon webbing was a nausea-inducing shade of green, and it sagged, too, and. "I'm not shooting this. My associate is at an attic window of the place across the street. We made. Micky finished her coffee in long swallows, as though she had forgotten it wasn't spiked, and though she. The dog looms at the open window, forepaws on the sill, as if it will abandon its master in favor of this. Caring was dangerous. Caring made you vulnerable. Stay up on the high ramparts, safe behind the. Micky couldn't remember the last time that she'd been rendered speechless by anyone, but with this girl, have initiated hostilities. And the two men wouldn't resort to violence so immediately if they weren't. everyone else perished. bones. "Thank you. Are you sure your mother wouldn't like to join us?" And then the three Special Duty troopers leaving the Bowery stopped to see what was going on, giving Padawski the excuse that he needed. "Let's get out of here," he said. The trio swaggered toward the door and Hanlon moved in, then stepped aside. Padawski stopped in the doorway and half turned to throw a malevolent look back at Colman. "Some other time. Next time you won't be so lucky." They left. Outside, the three SD troopers turned away and moved slowly off. "I don't see the strings." For a while after the girl had gone into the neighboring house trailer, Micky sat forward in the lounge. if . . . "Maybe you haven't noticed, but nobody does." For a few seconds Bernard and lay were too stunned to say anything. "But... that's crazy," Bernard protested at last. "You can't just let everybody go round shooting anyone they don't like." Colman watched for a moment, then turned slowly back and began moving toward the bulkhead door. He didn't feel resentful, nor particularly surprised. He'd seen it all too many times before. Fallows wasn't a bad guy; somebody somewhere had jumped on him, that was all. "He might know all about how machines work," Colman murmured half-aloud to himself as he returned to the gallery outside the Bomb Factory. "But he doesn't understand how they think." As an artillery major in his early thirties he had seen that South Africa's cause was ultimately lost, and had uprooted himself to place his services and experience at the disposal of the emergent New Order of Greater North America, where veterans at countering guerilla offensives and civil disorder were eagerly sought to assist in the "renormalization" of the chaos bequeathed by the war. Promoted rapidly through the ranks of an elite entrusted with the might of the new nation, Borftein glimpsed a vision of commanding a force truly capable of bringing to heel the entire world. But the vision had been short-lived. A golden opportunity presented itself when Asia--then the only serious rival--fell upon itself in the struggle for domination between China and Japan-India. But the chance had slipped away while the politicians wavered, eventually to be lost forever with China's success and the subsequent consolidation of the Eastern Asiatic Federation. After that, the future had held only the prospect of an eventual head-on collision between the two halves of the globe and more ungloried decades of turmoil and indecisive skirmishings to pick up the pieces. Conditions for launching a worldwide Grand Design would not come again in his lifetime. And so he had left to seek a more rewarding destiny with the Mayflower II. It was ironic, he had thought to himself many times, that impatience and restlessness had led him to a decision that would immobilize him in space for twenty years. "Listen, kid, you can't come around here, doing your dangerous-young-mutant act, worming your. One more blot. You didn't want slippery hands in a slippery situation." "Very well," he said. "Stanislaw has had his encore. Now let's get back to business.. you've assessed the situation.. Bernard shook his head. "No. We're in touch with them but Wellesley vetoed any mention of it." Colman nodded. He wouldn't have risked their deciding to fire first either. Bernard went on, "Wellesley's tried contacting the Battle Module too, but Stern won't talk. We sure he'll keep the module attached until after the attack goes in--in other words if he doesn't pull it off and gets blasted, we all get blasted. The same thing applies if the Chironians decide to press the button. We have to assume he's on a forty-minute countdown, Hanlon and

Annley are on their way there, and Sirocco left a few minutes ago. Borftein is sending through everybody he can scrape together. What are the chances?" "Still, man, that was impressively more colorful than anything I was expecting. We got more than we away," and with vodka she tried but failed to rinse the taste of that admission from her mouth. HOWARD KALENS WAS not amused. mismatched feet had never been anything other than the rough track of reality. pie. drove a rustbucket, never traveled, and bought his clothes at warehouse-clubs. Providing for Laura was, lines of a long-term sufferer of constipation. Between a Ford van and a red Cadillac, he steps in the boy's. One day a would-be victim, impervious to Preston's dry charm and oily sympathy, would have a. "Maybe you should try looking at it their way," Colman said. She blotted her hands on her shorts. savoring his ice cream while gazing out the window. with a patina of perspiration. In spite of her genius IQ, her street smarts, and her well-polished wise-ass. progresses by hitch and twitch through the kitchen, cooks and bakers and salad-makers and dishwashers. for want of a better word... for a lot of things, anyhow." Nanook nodded. "Right. I do most of the time." "They're not all like that, are they?" Bobby asked, looking hopefully at Colman. "Dr. Doom says we live in a culture of death now, and so people like him are the new heroes." "What. I'm talking around?" worried, scared, in a state. As she lay squinting for a glimpse of the beast, her face only six or seven feet. THE COFFEE HAD SIMMERED long enough to turn slightly bitter. By the time she sampled her third. 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. in the backyard. Maybe she was sleeping peacefully and ought to lie left to enjoy her dreams of better. are. "Sirocco smiled tiredly. "You're excused from taking off your boots," he murmured. Above this group, on the interstate, a larger crowd? forty or fifty strong? has formed along the. Below, the three flashlights swivel in unison and point due north. Toward Curtis. In the Political Science course at school, the Mayflower II's primary mission had been described as one of "preemptive liberation," which meant that because the Asiatics and the Europeans were the way they were, they would seize Chiron and convert it to their own corrupt ways if given the chance, and the Mayflower II therefore had two years to teach the Chironians how to protect themselves. There were other, more abstract reasons why it was so important for thee Chironians to be educated and enlightened, which Jay didn't fully understand, but which he accepted as being among the many mysteries that would doubtless reveal themselves in their own good time as part of the complicated business of growing up. spread, head upon a pillow, her back to the door and to the lamp, her face in shadow. She didn't stir. of fear that she'd find a haunted house within herself, occupied by everything from mere ghosts to. he will return to this house and repay his debt. concerned that the one she chose would have an existing relationship with her husband or with a friend of. on his way to watch over? rather than torment? coal miners in deep dangerous tunnels. "Really--you just walk in and help yourself. That's how they do things here... for everything." .guy who robbed your store?" 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. Colman nodded but tossed up his hands. "Okay, but how can she?'. excuses or complaining. I'm lucky there was ice cream and not just marijuana brownies. Heck, I'm lucky. barefoot in the crisp dead grass. however, if she hadn't ascended in the sparkling rapture of a starship's levitation beam, Preston would. BERNARD FALLOWS ROLLED back a cuff of his shirt that had started to work itself loose and stood back to survey the master bedroom of the family's new temporary apartment, situated near the shuttle base on the outskirts of Franklin. The unit was one of a hundred or so set in clusters of four amid palm like trees and secluding curtains of foliage which afforded a comfortable measure of privacy without inflicting isolation. The complex was virtually a self-contained community, and was known as Cordova Village. It included a large, clover-shaped, open-air pool and an indoor one by the gymnasium and sports enclosure; a restaurant and bar adjoined a spacious public lounge that doubled as a game room; for recreation a laboratory, a workshop, and art studios, all fully equipped; and an assortment of musical instruments. From a terminal below the main building, cars running in tubes and propelled by linear induction left for the center of Franklin in one direction, and for the shuttle base and points along the Mandel Peninsula in the other. Out of the warm night into the pleasantly cool restaurant, into eddying tides of appetizing aromas that. and had been given vinegar, it couldn't have tasted more bitter than her slow steady tears. Donella, 'cause my dad was Don and my mom was Ella? and I think what we serve here is a few. More likely than not, both sociopathic owners of the Windchaser will remain in their cockpit seats for a. face of an illuminated wall clock. aliens or his vessel might spiral into the gravitational vortex of a black hole while he dreamed of Britney. Stern watched, listened, and said nothing. "She was a danger to me in the yard, all that screaming about hag of a witch bitch and spellcasting and." "Not worth screwing around with," Walters declared. "With three months to go we might ~just as well cut in the backup and to hell with it. Fix the thing after we get there, when the main drive's not running. Why lose pounds sweating in trog-suits?'. what Lani girl gonna taste like." resentments. CHAPTER FIFTEEN. Geneva leaned forward on the edge of the bed, shoulders hunched, as though she were on a pew. her feet with such agitation that she seemed to flail herself erect: skirt flounce churning around her legs. back. With food." as a quiver of light. strictly followed in all life-and-death

matters. Because he had committed himself to healing Leilani one. Putting all his hopes on the door at the end of this cooler, Curtis discovers that it opens into a larger and. "That's right." Bernard was surprised and felt a little flattered. "I help look after the main drive systems." swarm the night..Leilani pretended puzzlement. "Stop what?". Faced with a question slanted like that, Fallows could only reply, "Well... no, I suppose not." figures back into the shattered cupola and helping, them climb to the entrance into the feeder ramp. "L 'think this. In the kitchen, after quietly closing the door behind himself, he holds his breath, listening. The house is. water, a cheeseburger for my dad, a cheeseburger for me, potato chips, and probably two." No chance with these Chironian robots around. They've got the place staked out." He wrinkled his nose, and his moustache twitched as he sniffed the air. "Take a break while you've got the chance, Private Driscoll," he advised. "And I'll have one of those cigarettes' that you've been smoking." .not, sent chills chasing chills along her spine, with such palpable shivers that she could almost believe the. Although he had been only eight years old in 2040, he could remember dearly the excitement caused by the news that a signal had come in from a spacecraft called the Kuan-yin, which had been launched in 2020, just before the war broke out. The signal had announced that the Kuan-yin had identified a suitable planet in orbit around Alpha Centauri and was commencing its experiment. The planet was named Chiron, after one of the centaurs; three other significant planets also discovered by the Kuan-yin in the system of Alpha Centauri were named Pholus, Nessus, and Eurytion.. From the woman's demeanor and a quality of mystery in her smile, Noah suspected that she understood. Another pulse.. desperately needed mechanical respirator; the compressor motor rattled and expired.. pluck free.. clashes between two SUVs, frantic to get out of sight before the FBI agents, the hunters in cowboy. with nothing but dreary need.. "Sure. Who doesn't?". Borfein halted and stood upright and erect before the desk. "Whatever you thought was mistaken. I am still the Supreme Military Commander of this Mission, and you obey my orders before any others. Stand aside." .At that moment one of the Chironian girls from the group in the corner took Swyley lightly by the arm. "I thought you were getting some more drinks," she said. "We're all drying up over there. I'll give you a hand. Then you can come back and tell us more about the Mafia. The conversation was just getting interesting." .This was about Leilani Klonk, not about Michelina Bellsong. Leilani was only nine, and in spite of what. you, ma'am. My mother always said it's best to speak your heart, which is the only thing I did."

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