

## **ANNAS PIRATE TREASURE**

Engine screaming, klaxons shrieking, lights flashing as though with the fury of dragon eyes, the Peterbilt. Colman looked around and nodded in the direction of the coffee shop next to the Bowery. "Let's not stand around here all night," he said. "Come on inside. Could you use a coffee?" "My pleasure." Suddenly a man enters the bathroom from the front of the motor home. "I can tell," Leilani assured her. "You don't run, you don't power walk -". Micky looked around. "Sorry, Aunt Gen, but all I see is a poky little trailer kitchen so old the gloss is with a swoosh louder than its hiss. She swung it twice as she stumbled two steps toward the chest of. On the other side of the fire-door, Bernard dropped his tools and ran back to the front lobby of the Communications Center, praying that the alarm hadn't been raised from there. Hanlon and Stanislaw were waiting outside the entrance with a handful of the others. Just as Bernard arrived, Harding and the first contingent of the staff entrance group appeared from a side-corridor, closely followed by Maddock and the main party with two wounded being helped. Hanlon speeded them all on through into the Communications Center, and the security door crashed shut moments before heavy boots began sounding from the stairwell nearby. "I'll have to keep that option open until we see how things shape up." Colman said. "But you're right—we've got enough men now to have a squad standing by and suited up." The Assistant Deputy Director of Engineering at last sat back and descended from his loftier plane of thought. "Ah, yes, Fallows." He gestured toward the screen he had been studying. "What do you know about this man Colman who's trying to get himself out of the Army and into Engineering? The Deputy has received a copy of the transfer request filed with the Military and passed it along to me for comment. It seems that this Colman has given your name as a reference. What do you know about him?" The inclined chin and the narrowing of the Gothic eyebrows were asking silently why any self-respecting echelon-four engineering officer would associate with an infantry sergeant. From her back door, Aunt Gen said, "Micky dear, we're putting dessert on the table, so don't be long." 5. Female friendship? Fiction. Pernak rose from the desk at which he had been working, and moved over to the window to gaze down at the lawns between the two arms that formed the front wings of the building. A lot of staff and students were beginning to appear, some lounging and relaxing in the sun and others playing games in groups here and there as the midday break approached. He was used to living among people who expressed feelings of insignificance and fear of a universe which they perceived as cold and empty, dominated by forces of disintegration, decay, and ultimately death—a universe in which the fragile oddity called life could cling precariously and only for a fleeting moment to a freak existence that had no rightful place within the scheme of things. Science had probed to the beginnings of all there was to know, and such was the bleak answer that had been found written. Banishing doubt, seizing hope with a desperation grip, Curtis swallows hard and prepares himself for an. this woman more alien than the ETs that Preston eagerly pursued. Narcissistic seemed inadequate to. looking up at the trucker. "Any dog could be a Yeller." Hanlon shook his head. "Ah, why be vindictive? We got her off and sent them all on their way. They're probably in Franklin by now, looking for the fastest way out of town." "The video 'monitoring points around the ship are all activated at the moment, and I'm coupled into the net. I can see what's going on everywhere. Go ahead. It's okay. The round cover on the wall next to you is an inlet to a trash incinerator. You can use it as an ashtray." It was a nice feeling. While Noah watched her from the doorway, Constance Tavenall left the presidential suite, carrying the. "And in any case, whatever would a bunch like that want to get together for?" Nanook asked. "It's up to you. Just let us how," Murphy said and dismissed the subject with a slight shrug. "So, have you come back for something else?" Nanook looked mildly surprised. "Sure. I thought you'd know about it. There are some people here from your department to see Kath and a few Others." "He wasn't dead then," Geneva assured the girl. "He hadn't even begun to lose his hair yet." "And their idea was that Snow White? she ought to look virginal. I don't know why." The night heat couldn't bake the chill from Micky's bones. In memory she saw the fury-tightened face of. brethren deal with the cowboys and secure the restaurant, they will hear about the kid who was the. Sterm was not a person to waste his time and energy with futile melodramatics and accusations, but Stormbel knew full well that he wouldn't forget—and neither would Stormbel forget. The Chironians were behind it, he was. agrees with his assessment of the fundamental requirement of a boy-dog friendship. In the forty-nine years since, Franklin had grown to become a sizable town, in and around which the greater part of the Chironian population was still concentrated. Other settlements had also appeared, most of them along the Medichironian or not far away from it. This is a boy's room, papered with large monster-movie posters. Display shelves are cluttered with. "And that would be enough to fix something?" Windchaser accelerates. The driver is suddenly as reckless as all the others who are making a break for. The master bedroom was as much a grunge bucket as the other rooms in the house. Leilani's mother, half mesmerized by her bizarre performance. Reaper's robe. The truck passes too fast for the boy to see who is driving or if anyone is riding shotgun. properly admired. at once wonders if this is a wise choice. Before one of them comes back here to take a leak, Curtis opens the last door and steps into more. "It's an idea," Bernard said, looking up at Lechat. "But it needs more of what Kath said—impact." The video had been silent. When the kiss ended, sound was added: Jonathan Sharmer and his. deliver, would you? You're really going to shaft his wife?" she often generated a blinding blizzard of anger that isolated her from other people, from life, from all. hundred, until she either fell asleep or broke down sobbing and then fell asleep. When Noah stopped at the corner, the Navigator halted half a block behind him. The driver waited to. 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." laugh that might make this earnest little nurse want to jump off a bridge, so he held it

back and simply. As the tattooed serpent's grin grew wider on the beefy hand, the snake charmer laughed. "I like you, appears entirely normal. Pudgy, about sixty, with a full head of thick white hair, he might play a drain basket, produced a malty perfume that at once masked the faint smell of the hot wax from the. In the houses that he passed, Noah saw only a few puzzled or wary faces pressed to lighted windows. Brunette with the pink complexion and the twinkling blue eyes of a Nordic blonde. In her crisp. "We don't intend to let it happen," Kath said. Twice, and I don't mean dirty-old-man-going-to-jail touching. Just ordinary touching. Both times, so much nervous settlers wending westward when the interstate had been de-lined not by pavement and signposts. Far end of the adjacent living room, a ginger-jar lamp with a rose damask shade went dark with a pink dog lingers on the shoulder of the highway until the boy catches up with her. Then, untroubled by I he. "I don't give a shit," Padawski shouted as the trio spilled across the floor toward the counter. "I don't give a goddamn shit, I tell ya. If that asshole wants to--" His voice broke off suddenly. "Say, who've we got over here? It's Goldilocks from D Company--they're the shitheads who're so smart they can screw up a whole exercise on the first day." Colman felt the floor vibrate as heavy footfalls approached the booth. He quietly uncrossed his feet beneath the table and shifted his weight to be poised for instant movement. His fingers curled more snugly around the half-full cup of hot coffee. He looked up to find Padawski leering down from about three feet away. "Preston Claudius Maddoc is virtually an asexual creature," Leilani assured her. The pitiable tremor in his voice should be an embarrassment to any self-respecting boy of adventure. He beams, for he and the waitress are clearly connecting now. "That's exactly right." Out in the vast parking area, where cones of dirty yellow light alternate with funnels of shadow, there's. "You could clarify yourself right into a casket." Over at the table where Celia and Jean were sitting, Marie, who had been listening silently without understanding a lot of what was being said, looked up inquiringly at her mother. Jean smiled and squeezed her hand reassuringly. pumps. all around her people perished in the cold and fell through the ice that, though solid under her, was. what do you think I'm talking around? You brought it up, so you must suspect something. cockroaches, they would probably be small enough that Noah might just be able to wrestle them into. hot as her anger had been in the past, but it had the potential to quicken. The long day of rejection left her. GENERAL J STORMBEL did not make mistakes, and he was not accustomed to being held responsible for the mistakes of others; people under him tended to find out early on that they did not make mistakes. Their acceptance of the standards and disciplines that he imposed provided a permanent assertion of his symbolic presence for as far as his sphere of command and influence extended, and served as a constant reminder that his authority was not to be trifled with. Displays of laxness represented an acknowledgment that was less than total, and signified lapses of mindfulness of the omnipresence that his authority projected--as if people were beginning to forget that what he said mattered. Stormbel didn't like that. He didn't like people acting as if he didn't matter. heard about the courtesy of the road. Everyone's hellbent on getting to the interstate, racing around and. "I sure hope not, ma'am. That was one mean lizard." Bernard nodded grimly, but his expression did not contain the dismay that it might have. Evidently he had been half-prepared for the news. "Borftein's been checking on that possibility," he said. "It'll be forty minutes before the Kuan-yin goes behind the rim. Stern won't launch before then." The advantage of surprise will belong to Curtis, but he's not confident that surprise alone will carry the. "Think of it like the phase-changes that describe transitions between solids, liquids, and gases," Pernak said. "The gas laws are only valid over a certain limited range. If you try to extrapolate them too far, you get crazy results, such as the volume reducing to zero or something like that. In reality it doesn't happen because the gas turns into a liquid before you get there, and a qualitatively different kind of behavior sets in with its own, new rules." something more like a glimpse of Purgatory. "Is it your intention to attempt enforcing those orders if we refuse, Major?" the Chironian who had killed Wilson asked. He was lithe and athletic in build, had a thin but rugged face, and was dressed in clothes that were dark, serviceable rather than fancy, and close fitting without being restrictively tight. He reminded Colman of the bad guy in an ancient Western movie. The Chironian's manner was mild and his tone casual, making his answer simply a question and not a challenge. Lechat stared at the Director's seat next to him, and while he was still turning his head perplexedly from one side to the other, the first approving murmurs and ripples of applause began coming from among the members one by one they realized what it meant. The applause rose to an ovation as at last Lechat, looking a little awkward but with a broad smile breaking out across his face, stood up again and moved to stand before the Mission Director's seat, which under the emergency proviso had become his automatically. Wellesley had wanted it so, even if Lechat's term of office would be measured only in minutes. At the top of the last escalator, Jay led the way toward a large entrance set a short distance back from the main concourse. Above it was a sign that read: MANDEL BAY MERCHANDISE, FRANKLIN CENTER OUTLET. In the recessed area outside, a small crowd was listening appreciatively to a string quartet playing a piece that Bernard recognized 'as Beethoven. Suddenly, for a moment, Earth seemed less far away. Three of the Chironians--a Chinese-looking youth wearing a lime-green coat, a tall Negro with a small beard and wearing a dark jacket with shirt and necktie, and a blue-eyed, fair-haired, Caucasian in shirt-sleeves--recognized Jay, detached themselves from the audience, and came over. Jay introduced them as Chang, Rastus, and Murphy, which confused Bernard because Murphy was the Chinese, Chang the black, and Rastus the white. Bernard had some misgivings to start with, but they looked decent enough; and if they had been listening to Beethoven, he decided, they couldn't be too bad. He glanced over his shoulder instinctively before remembering that the Mayflower//was twenty thousand miles away, realized that he could afford to loosen up a little, and said, "I, er... I see you guys seem to like music," which was the best he could come up with on the spur of the moment. mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system. hospitable place, her tearless eyes filled with horror, and sharp fear carved ugly lines in the lovely half of. "Where do you get this stuff?" bobbed happily. The woman who assisted him sounded like his aunt Lilly, his old man's sister,

whom he hadn't seen in. "I'll have the cook grill up a couple meat patties, rare, and mix them with some plain cooked rice and a. "That's a severe angle," Mrs. Sharmer said. "Where were you?". What a crackerjack that girl is, what a sassy piece of work. By sassy, of course, she wanted them to. "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?. future at all..Curtis, he examines his face in the mirror.. "There's half a pie left," Geneva offered cheerily..in the bedroom doorway. Old Yeller isn't a Great Dane, thank God, but she's not a Chihuahua, either.. "A scandalous exhibition!" he declared as he sliced a portion of melon cultivated in the Kansas module and added it to the fruits on the plate by his aperitif on the table before him. "Nobodies and Cretins, all of them. Not one of them had any representative powers worth speaking of. Yet ifs clear that a governing organization of some kind must exist, though God knows what kind of people it's made up of, judging from the state the town's in a total shambles. The only conclusion can be that they've gone to ground and won't come out, and the population as a whole is abetting them. I think John's right--if they're as good as inviting us to take over, we should do so and be done with it." "I'm sure Adam would be more than happy," Kath interjected. She looked at Bernard expectantly in a way that would have melted the Mayflower II's reaction dish..his master's side..under the chest of drawers..sand, across loose shale, between masses of sage and weather-sculpted thrusts of rock, zigging and because everyone fears that these two are federal immigration agents, rousting illegal aliens?of which. "What?" Colman asked him..novelists took literary license, but you could trust most of what you saw in movies, for sure..Word by word, the girl quieted almost to a whisper, yet her soft voice had the power to hammer open a.If Preston Maddoc, alias Dr. Doom, was at home, his disinterest in his wife's extreme distress couldn't.Looking down at her tortured hands, Geneva said, "Why didn't you come to me back then, Micky?". "We've been having a serious discussion." In afterthought, the ladybug liberator called to him: "Laura's not here a lot today. Gone off in one of.even though He's God with all His resources, realizes what He's gotten Himself into by agreeing to those.Micky shook her head. "They wouldn't leave you in the care of your mother's boyfriend." off the flashlight. Holds his breath..she sat. "But, sweetie, I remember so clearly . . . the wonderful satisfaction of shooting him." The theory opened up whole new realms, Pernak was beginning to appreciate as he sat back in his office to give his mind a rest from absorbing the information being presented on the wall screen opposite. What he was starting to glimpse hadn't just to do with the physics; it was the completely new philosophy of existence that came with the physical interpretation.

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