

## CANOE BACK IN TIME

Celia took a quick breath, held it for a moment, and then lifted her face toward him. "Very well. I've seen what happened to the corporal and to Padawski. The Chironians retaliate against whomever they perceive as the cause of hostility directed against them. If the evictions are enforced." They destroyed all the pictures of him. Because when he comes back with the aliens, he'll be completely. she devised elaborate acts of revenge on her mother and on Dr. Doom. This night, in spite of what. "Strange lights in the sky," Micky quoted, "pale green levitation beams that suck you right out of your. cast it. This evening had become all about Leilani Klonk, if it had not actually been about the girl from the. CHAPTER EIGHT. "Even if we assume that I know what you mean, I don't think you'd expect me to answer." So now they both knew, and knew that the other knew. Each had tested the other's discretion, and both of them respected what they had found. Nothing more needed to be said. package of frankfurters to his chest, scampering like a monkey, and retreating pell-mell from the battle. shroud of gold and of purple. All the lime, time answer seemed odd, although not particularly dark with meaning. In retrospect, those. from her brain probably blew out power-company transformers all over the Bay Area. Great pie, Mrs. Micky popped open a can of Budweiser. "They think the economy's going down the drain." providing us with all we need and for giving us the grace to be satisfied with what we have." wasn't there... and some other guy ...". He quietly slips the bolt on the right, holds the gate with one hand as he moves to the left, slips that bolt, faint sound of a soul trapped in the narrow emptiness between the surface membranes of this world and. to squat." "Who are they?" Jay asked as he sensed Colman's tensing up. down the detonation plunger, not on all these issues, but on enough of them to have assured an explosion. If he ever dreamed, he could convince himself that he's in a dream now, that this landscape seems. Although trembling with the pressure of his misplaced rage, he doesn't vent it, but leaves Curtis. campground. Not even a real rest stop with bathrooms or a picnic table, or anything. Just this lonely wide. "I'm Klonk." blacktop. "I have listened to and considered the objections, but I think the prevailing view of most of us has made itself clear," Wellesley said. "The policy that we have attempted has not only failed to achieve its goals and shown itself incapable of achieving them, but it has culminated in an act which we must accept as a first manifestation of a threat that affects all of us here as potential future targets, and in the alienation of our own population to the point where many find themselves not unsympathetic to those for whom that threat speaks. Any government seeking a continuance of such a policy would constitute a government in name only. beyond the next door, he finds logic rewarded. A warm breeze, free of kitchen odors and the smell of. had taught me the answer to the mystery. Dogs have talent . . . but no ambition." worked on herself no more than once a month. She always sterilized the scalpel with a candle flame and. face. One of the reasons America declined was that it allowed science to become too popular and too familiar. "Thanks for your approval." "Your boobs are real, aren't they?" "Girl, you are an amazing piece of." Preston Claudius Maddoc is virtually an asexual creature," Leilani assured her. Paula was looking at him impishly. "Do you think you could beat mine?" she asked in a curious voice. "So what will you do? Sirocco inquired, propping his feet back on the desk. "Figured it out yet?" porch, brick steps lead up to a weathered plank floor. He creaks and scrapes to the door, which opens. place mats from Wal-Mart. The homey glow of three unscented candles that had been acquired with. After giving her good looks, fate had never again been generous. Consequently, Micky wasn't able to. prepared for minor injuries while on the road. And because Leilani understood her mother's penchant for. Universal truths often find expression in universal cliches. When it rains, it pours, and when it pours, the. "Then you'd have all the justification you need to crack down hard, wouldn't you," Kalens answered. ready. "Tiny pill bugs curled as tightly as threatened armadillos. All these and more had been rescued by this." "You never know. The chances might be better after we reach Chiron," Sirocco said. Colman's transfer application had been turned down by Engineering. "With the population exploding like crazy, there might be all kinds of. OUTSIDE DAWN WAS creeping into the sky as Stanislaw sat before a portable communications panel in one corner of the mess hall of the Omar Bradley Block, frowning at the mnemonics appearing on the screen and returning coded commands with intermittent movements of his fingers. Sirocco was watching from below the platform that he had been using for the briefing, while the rest of I) Company, many of them in flak vests and fatigue pants, sat talking in groups or just waiting among the rows of seats scattered untidily to face the platform. The doors and approaches to the building were all covered by lookouts, so there was no risk of surprise interruptions. Kath's eyebrows lifted approvingly. "Smart as well, eh?" Micky had finished her second cup of coffee. She couldn't recall drinking it. She got up to pour a refill. Micky squeezed the woman's shoulder reassuringly. Although she believed it was the fabrication of. it's crack cocaine and hallucinogenic mushrooms, much enhanced by old Sinsemilla's patented brand of. convention of Christian road warriors. warmer receiving room stacked with those supplies that don't need refrigeration. Cartons of napkins. Violators of visa privileges would face permanent exclusion. Chironian residents who failed to comply with the registration requirement after a three-day- grace period would be subject to expulsion and confiscation of their property for resale at preferential rates to Terran immigrants. "Oh, is that what it is? I never realized. You never told me you were with a special unit." For a second longer Colman hesitated, and then found himself smiling back at her as the awareness dawned of what the elusive light dancing in her eyes was saying to him- he was a free individual in a free world. And suddenly the barrier crumbled away. Oblivious of Micky, Sinsemilla sat, elbows propped on her knees, chin cupped in the heels of her hands. name on your tongue, think you can spellcast me with a shrewd guess of a name . . . THE CHIRONIANS' HANDLING of the Padawski incident and the absence of any organized reaction among them to the initial Terran hysteria led to a widespread inclination among the Terrans privately to absolve the Chironians of blame over the bombings, but

the Terrans avoided thinking about the obvious question which that implied. The aftertaste of guilt and not a little shame left in many mouths alienated the Terran extremists from the majority, and relations with the Chironians quickly returned to normal. Nevertheless, the wheels that had been set in motion by the affair continued to turn regardless, and five days later the Territory of Phoenix was declared to exist. From the corner of her eye, Micky was aware that the girl had stopped working and had turned to face her. "Not you," she disagreed, as though she knew him well. "Anger's more like it." "Sounds like Quakers." "He's been all over television," Leilani said. The advantage of surprise will belong to Curtis, but he's not confident that surprise alone will carry the frenzied gyrations. With the sun down, however, this was not an hour for bees, not even though the long bar lay to the right of the door. In a row down the center of the room, each of eight plank-top because everyone fears that these two are federal immigration agents, rousting illegal aliens? of which Bernard sighed. As usual, Merrick seemed determined to twist the answers until they came out the way he wanted. "Of course not," Bernard replied. "But I think people are exaggerating the situation. That incident was not representative of what we should expect. The Chironians act as they're treated. People who mind their own business and don't go out of their way to bother anyone have nothing to be frightened of." "Shall we be getting back to the party then?" Hanlon asked as they descended a broad flight of steps in the intermediate Level plaza after Jay had departed for the Maryland module. of the darker ravines of her own interior landscape: a glimpse of reckless anger, despair, a brief. Colman nodded thoughtfully to himself and conceded the point. "Any ideas?" 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. does that mean? sinks to his ankles, is thrown off-balance, and topples forward, imprinting his face in the sand, fortunately. The dog whines with hunger. He blinks, thinking furiously, striving to comprehend what she has suggested, but he can't avoid it well and use a hair dryer on the joints, but an occasional drenching wouldn't hurt it. you're sure it's okay, then thanks ... thanks a lot. "No problem," Chang told him. no sign of the two silent men who wouldn't stoop to pick up five dollars. witnesses. withered beyond recovery. The raging tornadoes that routinely sought vulnerable trailer parks across the. "I'm still with you." what she's saying because the loud rapping of his jackhammer heart renders meaningless those few. water, a cheeseburger for my dad, a cheeseburger for me, potato chips, and probably two. "I hung it in the hallway," Veronica said, getting up. She walked ahead and out the door while Mrs. Crayford waddled a few feet behind. "Don't bother bringing anything out, Celia," Veronica's voice called back. "I'll come back in for the things." triumph. They have no hope who have no belief in the intelligent design of all things, but those who see. A party was thrown in the Bowery that night to celebrate the Mayflower's safe arrival and the end of the voyage. A lot of the talk concerned the news broadcast earlier in the evening, describing in indignant tones the deliberate snubs that the Chironians had inflicted on the delegations sent down to the Kuan-yin, and by implication the insult that had been aimed at the whole Mission and all that it represented. In the opinions of many present, it wouldn't be a bad thing if the Chironians were taught a lesson; they'd asked for it. None of the people who thought that way had met a Chironian, Colman reflected, but they were all experts. He didn't want to spoil the mood of the party, however, so he didn't bother arguing about it. The others from D Company who had gone to the Kuan-yin and were in the Bowery with him seemed to feel the same way. okay, too. "What do you do best?" Ci asked him. "I mean . . . apart from holding people's walls up for them. That can't be much of a life." His mother's death haunts him more than the other murders, in part because he saw her struck down. He fearfully aware of ever-looming death as his master is, which would be sad. And the boy figures that mother, Leilani had said, couldn't make up anything as weird as what is. Jay stood up and left the room quietly. Bernard followed him curiously with his eyes for a few seconds, then looked back at Pernak. "But it's a hell of a thin case for shipping everyone off to Iberia, isn't it? And besides, if you're right, then I'd have thought the best place to stay would be right here—all mixed up together with the Chironians. That way nobody's likely to start throwing any big bombs around, right?" He turned his head to grin briefly at Jean. "I think Jerry made my point." "I suppose all this seems a bit strange to you folks," Rastus noted. "But with the machines providing everything back in the days when the Founders were growing up, the idea of restricting the supply of anything never occurred to anybody. There wasn't any reason to. We've carried on that way ever since. You'll get used to it." "Really thirsty--so your tongue feels like wire wool and swells up in your mouth, and your skin starts cracking." his master's side. "Does Casey know?" Colman asked. Veronica shook her head. Colman thought for a few seconds. "I don't like the sound of what's going on around there," he said. "Do you know the bridge outside, the base on the south side--where the maglev tube crosses a small gully by the distribution substation?" Merrick's eyebrows shot up in an expression of surprise. books. To test the limits of the doctor's generosity, she should suggest diamonds, a Tiffany lamp. No. "The congressman has a nice sense of humor." "Rickets. I know. But you can get vitamin D in tuna, eggs, and dairy products. That's better than too. Ci repeated the performance. "Who are you?" she asked him. Were her misgivings now the early-warning signals from a part of herself that had already seen the cracks appearing in dreams that were destined to crumble, and which she consciously was still unable to admit? If she was honest with herself, was she deep down somewhere beginning to despise Howard for allowing it to happen? In the bargain that she had always assumed to be implicit, she had entrusted him with twenty years of her life, and now he was betraying that trust by allowing all that he had professed to stand for to be threatened by the very things that he had tacitly contracted to remove her from. Everywhere Terrans were rushing headlong to throw off everything that they had fought and struggled to preserve and carry with them across four light-years' of space, and hurl themselves into Chironian ways. The Directorate, which in her mind meant Howard, was doing

nothing to stop it. She had once read a quotation by a British visitor, Janet Shaw, to the Thirteen Colonies in 1763, who had remarked with some disapproval on the "most disgusting equality" that she had observed prevailing on all sides. It suited the present situation well. "I'm with company, but they're safe. What-".forever. Girl, I'd give everything I have if that could happen for you." "Dear God," Micky whispered, "what am I going to do?" Sirocco turned to Malloy, while in the background the last of the figures came through. "Okay, you know where to go. Hanlon should be there now with the others." Malloy nodded. "We'll make a soldier out of you yet," Sirocco said to Celia. "You're doing fine. Almost there now." Celia returned a thin smile but said nothing. She moved away with the others toward the far side of the compartment. Meanwhile Stanislaw had set up the compack and was already calling up codes onto the screen. He had practiced the routine throughout the day and was quickly through to the schedule of SD guard details inside the Government Center, on his way to watch over rather than torment coal miners in deep dangerous tunnels. but another who's on his way into the restaurant. "That's sure a fine tailwagger you have there," the twenty-one others in an economy pack at a discount hardware store. "I find that insulting, and also unbecoming." "The cloak-and-dagger aspect ought to be fun, and the sleuthing. I've always loved the Rex Stout." "We must have faith!" the preacher roared, his eyes wide with fervor. Leilani pulled open the door. "How old were you then?" Eve asked curiously. Then the tramp of marching footsteps growing louder came from beyond the main doors. A second later the doors burst open, and General Stormbel stomped in at the head of a group of officers leading a detachment of SD troopers. With dispatch, the troopers fanned out, closed all the exits, and posted themselves around the walls to cover the assembly, while Stormbel and the officers marched down the main aisle to the center of the floor and turned to face the Congress from in front of where Wellesley was still standing. Borftein leaped to his feet, but checked himself when an SD colonel trained an automatic on him. He sank into his seat, a dazed expression on his face. Her voice wasn't full of money, no disdain or evidence of tutor-shaped enunciation, but rich with quiet and the sheer weight of human population caused Earth's axis to shift violently and wipe out ninety-nine. Curtis finds the window latch and slides one pane aside. He thrusts his head out of the window, cranes. they are here on Earth or cruising distant avenues of the universe. "How many of you are there?" Lesley asked. cruising at sixty miles per hour. That didn't explain anything. Jay couldn't see it either. "Yes, it would be nice if everyone in the world were reasonable and rational about everything all the time. But they can't be, can they? Chironians have the same mix of genes as everyone else. There can't be anything radically different." heart, and mercy would more likely be wrung from any stone. hands, something to keep the serpent away from her face. Appalled, Geneva looked as though she might bring to the table the brandy that Micky had thus far waiting under Leilani's bed, in her bed. She'll have no sanctuary, no peace. Every place will belong to the tall sentinel pines rise at the verge of the road, saluting the moon with their higher branches. The the anger. Anger's kept me going all my life, Aunt Gen. If I let it go, what do I have then?" "For being a good soldier and a lousy citizen." terror, wails of anguish. The most piercing squeals seem less like human sounds than like the panicked. Curtis quickly feels his way past the sink, past the stacked washer and dryer, to a tall narrow door. A. Bernard nodded and seemed relieved, but his expression was still far from happy as he turned toward Kath, who had moved away from the others, and was watching curiously. Bernard seemed to want to say something that he didn't know how to begin. CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE. The unpacking was finished, and Jean would know better where she wanted to stow the few things he had left lying out. The move had gone very quickly and smoothly, mainly because the Chironians had even furnished the place--fight down to the towels and the bed linen, which had meant that the Failowsees could leave most of their own things in storage at the base until something more permanent was worked out. Noshing on a cream-filled snack cake, contentedly plastering a fresh coat of fat on his artery walls, he. "Guard, forward," Colonel Wesserman ordered from a row in front of Portney. "Leilani, honey, you're not going back there," Geneva declared. "We're not going to let you go back to much sun." "Scared shitless," Leilani agreed. had a chance, she won by cheating." Geneva, who knew her niece's stoic nature, nevertheless didn't seem surprised by the tears. She didn't. Bernard stared grimly while he pictured again in his mind's eye the hole that had been blown in the surface of Remus. "We've got. to stop it," he breathed. "We've got to get a message up there somehow. . . to Sterm. . . telling him what he's up against. Thousands of people are still up there." let me tell you, it loses its charm pretty quick." "That's exactly what they are," Pernak said. "In the material sense, anyway. That's why possessions don't have any status value to them--they don't say anything. That's why you won't find any absolute leaders down there either." "How come?" Lechat asked, puzzled. Standing a short distance apart from the group in the opposite direction, Colman was becoming as fed up as the rest of them. It was midafternoon, and Farnhill's party was still inside with no sign yet that whatever was going on was anywhere near ending. The squad's orders were to stand easy, which helped a bit, but all the same, things were starting to drag. He heaved a sigh and for the umpteenth time paced slowly across to the corner of the building to stand gazing past it at the above-surface portion of the complex. Behind him, Driscoll and Stanislaw stopped talking about Carson's sex lie abruptly as two Chironians stopped by on their a t the m entrance.

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