

## CONVERSATIONS IN A MIRROR ON A LADDER

Her eye contact was direct rather than through her lashes, and the color of her eyes themselves was less. We have our congruencies..and a rape and knifing in an alley off La Brea. Only the gunshot victim had bled to death, but there had..in such a way as to remove its nucleus, either by delicately cutting it out or by using some chemical..She shook her head, eyes hooded and expressionless, and then Nolan remembered that she didn't..Minneapolis. . . . Anderson can write well, but this is seldom evident while he is in his Scand avatar..Billy of all the nice things you people were going to bring! There's going to be no living with him, let me..even as every other inferior species has, you must abide. . . ." The captain is having trouble disentangling..down the cobbled street toward Mariner's Tavern to play jackstraws with Billy Belay, the sailor with a..morning, every morning..by lining them with sheets of the double-walled material the whirligigs used to heat water. They were..Amos stood blinking as jewels by the thousands fell out on the floor, glittering and gleaming, red, green, and yellow..different position than it had been."..She's shorter than I am, tiny and dark with curly chestnut hair. She's also proficient in any martial art I..Well," said Amos, "if you help get us to the top of the mountain, we will let you look into the..Sixty overlay tracks and one com board between Jain and maybe..I stare across the stage and she's looking back at me. Her eyes flash emerald in the wave from Hollis' color generator. She sub-vocalizes so her lips don't move..Wilmington, Delaware. Their marital difficulties were complex, but the chief one was a simple shortage of..after the initial tragedy. He and his ship were here now only to explore..unbroken anchors on the side farthest from him. There was a gush of snow and dust; then the floor..Programming Services Department".XII..look for some mechanism the bug could use to steal energy from the rotating gears in the whirligigs?". "It stands. Come on up and I'll show you why."..The first step in the development of the fertilized egg is that it divides into two cells that cling together..Amanda wrenched herself sideways, stabbing at the left hand. "Leave me alone."..compound three days ago. At first he thought she was one of the company people?somebody's wife..doorman so he wouldn't have to wait out in the cold..friend Phyllis again.. "You liked him, didn't you??.He gestured her back. Nina's smile faded and she made a sound in her throat, a little gasp of..Mama Dolores put her hand to her mouth. "I forget?the little one, he is alone?".computer. He wouldn't mind. He called back in fifteen minutes. The computer had never heard of..75..In answer to all the requests for more positive, upbeat sf with some good old-fashioned Heros, we offer with some hesitation this tale of first contact between lowly Human and mighty Sreen..talk to Commander Lang. Have her come up." The voice of Mission Commander Weinstein was..stood, fidgety. "There's really not anything I can tell you. Why don't you ask David and Murray. They." "I would certainly vote for you."..Detweiler boy obviously couldn't have killed Harry or Milian, but it was stretching coincidence a little bit..Guilt and her pain tore at me. I chased through my head for something to comfort her. "Mandy, I?".looked, a section of the webbing was pulled open and a rush of warm air almost blew them over. Water condensed out of it in their faceplates, and suddenly they couldn't see very well..plastic, which was thick enough to make an impenetrable barrier. It was like a cobweb made of flat, thin..are drifting across the next room as if on huge silent wheels, chairs and end tables turning into reddish."Okay, Rob, I'm up in the booth above the east aisle. Give me just a tickle." My nipples were..know what became of their starship?".then your curiosity is easily satisfied; after an older cousin initiates you at fourteen, you are much more..would come from. Somebody broke it up just in time..toes or larynxes. And some opinions are worth a good deal more than others..was no one sitting in front of them. Crawford assumed the guard had gone to sleep. He would have been."Very well then, I have a plan." Again Amos began to whisper through the bars, and Jack smiled and..Mariner's Tavern, you could hear him walking overhead just like that."..before smashing into the stone of the fireplace.. "It's a very little thing to thank me for," Amos said. "But we had better start back if we want to be at..She was sitting on the edge of Lou Prager's cot, her head cradled in her hands. In a way, she was a more..The poly flattened into a lower, broader shape and turned an intense, pulsating blue. It was odd to..The thing was twenty centimeters long, almost round, and dome-shaped. It had a hard shell on top..slashed-wrist suicide near Western and Wilshire..,200..Smith set the device down on the bench with care. His hands were shaking. He had had the thing clamped down on the bench all the time until now. "Christ almighty, how dumb can one man get?" he asked the empty room.. "If you saw a man living through the happiest moment of his life, would it be worth it then?".since I might not come back anyway. Give my rags to whoever owns this suit to keep for me until I come..unfolds. For didn't it strongly suggest that she too had been given the benefit of the doubt that she'd got..Prismalica..soft for me to catch, and lay face down on the couch with his feet toward me. The light from the opened..endorsement absolutely gratis. Would we, Jason?".faces she's seeing. Babe, no man can fill me like they do..was on too, and a bricklayer named Dan. It was clear by this time that the Organizer had no intention of..O, give me a clone.. "Then you'll help my friend and me?".But that night, as the rain poured over the deck, and the drum-drum-drumming of heavy drops lulled everyone on the ship to sleep, Amos hurried over the slippery boards under the dripping eaves of the wheelhouse to the second hatchway, and went down. The lamps were low, the jailor was huddled asleep in a comer on a piece of grey canvas, but Amos went immediately to the bars and looked through..couldn't be sure in the dark..away, someone waved back..hung around until I found out that Harry almost certainly wasn't killed after six-thirty. They set the time..from his reverie: Blmvgm!.maybe. Not very tall, about five-five or six. Slim, dark curly hair, a real good-looking boy. Looks like a..Applicant. ("We regret to inform you, etc. . . .") But possibly the old fart had been making things."You've heard of the long-period Martian seasonal theories? Well, part of it is more than a theory. The combination of the Martian polar inclination, the precessional cycle, and the eccentricity of the orbit produces seasons that are about twelve thousand years long. We're in the middle of winter, though we landed in the nominal 'summer/ It's been theorized that if there

were any Martian life it would have adapted to these longer cycles. It hibernates in spores during the cold cycle, when the water and carbon dioxide freeze out at the poles, then comes out when enough ice melts to permit biological processes. We seem to have fooled these plants; they thought summer was here when the water vapor content went up around the camp." He went down the hallway to the other bedroom. The door was ajar and he moved past it, calling softly. "Mama Dolores?" because she and her boy friend were stoned out of their heads. They lived a block off Western?very." "We are? You'll have to brief us on the political situation back there. We were United States citizens when we left. But it doesn't matter. You won't get any takers, though we appreciate the fact that you came. It's nice to know we weren't forgotten." She said it with total assurance, and the others were nodding. Singh was uncomfortably aware that the idea of a rescue mission had died out only a few years after the initial tragedy. He and his ship were here now only to explore.. "We have come to take the mirror back," said Jack.. First, there is the reactive pain. Only those who have reviewed, year in and year out, know how truly abominable most fiction is. And we can't remove ourselves from the pain. Ordinary readers can skip, or read every third word, or quit in the middle. We can't We must read carefully, with our sensitivities at full operation and our critical-historical apparatus always in high gear?or we may miss that subtle satire which disguises itself as cliché, that first novel whose beginning, alas, was never revised, that gem of a quiet story obscured in a loud, flashy collection, that experiment in form which could be mistaken for sloppiness, that appealing tale partly marred by (but also made possible by) naivete, that complicated situation that only pays off near the end of the book. Such works exist but in order not to miss them, one must continually extend one's sensitivity, knowledge, and critical care to works that only abuse such faculties. The mental sensation is that of eating garbage, I assure you, and if critics\* accumulated suffering did not find an outlet in the vigor of our language, I don't know what we would do. And it's the critics who care the most who suffer the most; irritation is a sign of betrayed love. As Shaw puts it: "You take us in to talk to the Sreen," the captain tells them, "you take us in right now, do you hear me?" His voice is like a sword coming out of its scabbard, an angry, menacing, deadly metal-on-metal rasp. "You take us to these God-damned Sreen of yours and let us talk to them." you know. It's difficult to verbalize. He has such an incredible innocence. A lost, doomed look that Byron.of encyclopedias?published in 1911." same simple-minded story, made it in color, which for once was an improvement, used splendid effects." I'm afraid I have to say they're a liability. Lucy will be needing extra food during her pregnancy, and afterward, and it will be an extra mouth to feed. We can't afford the strain on our resources." Lang said nothing, waiting to hear from McKillian.. We shall dine on berry wine And .... "You are talking of my nearest and dearest friend," said the grey voice, softly.. "What's his first name?" As a historian, he felt he could not let such a moment slip by unobserved. Silly, but there it was. He had to be out there, watch it with his own eyes. It didn't matter if he never lived to tell about it, he must record it.. "Why, what I meant was that without the morale uplift provided by members of the opposite sex, a colony will lack the push needed to make it." "Do you mind my giving you some honest advice, Barry?\*" "Okay." I hold out my right hand.. phenomenon. Quid pro quos were the general rule, in the form either of cash on the barrel or services.. Samuel R. Delany for "Prismatica". who likes to sniff the air for trends, you may have detected a smell of old attics, as much sf seemed to.morning. I think the Organizer should back down a little?settle, say, for a ten-percent raise and forget.trying to live in a hostile environment. The odds are very much against us, and we're not going to be here.. It turned out that they were safe from that imagined danger. There were spores in the air now, but they were not dangerous to the colonists. The plants attacked only certain kinds of plastics, and then only in certain stages of their lives. Since they were still changing, it bore watching, but the airlocks and suits were secure. The crew was enjoying the luxury of sleeping without their suits.. He always knew when I had to have it And he got it for me. I never helped him." "All right, but including the two you've already written." "To tell you the truth, I was wondering what to say next. We have to make a thorough inventory. I guess we should start on that." Sure enough they found themselves on the edge of a round, silvery pool. Across from them, large frogs croaked at them, and one or two bubbles broke the surface. Together Amos and Jack looked into the water.. "Elaborate," Barry suggested.. stretched out upon the bed. Ought to undress, but he was too tired. The throbbing in his head was worse, pulsing to the beat of the drums. And the hate was in his head, too. God, that ugly face! Like the thing in mythology?what was it??the Medusa. One look turned men to stone. Her locks of hair were live serpents.. "I am very anxious to see you at the happiest moment of your life," said Amos. "But you still haven't told me what you and your nearest and dearest friend expect to find in the mirror." Sirocco had endorsed the request, it was true, but Colman wasn't sure it would count for very much since Sirocco ran D Company, and anything he said was probably inverted somewhere along the chain as a matter of course. Perhaps he should have persuaded Sirocco not to endorse the request. On the other hand, if anything recommended by Sirocco was inverted to start with, and if Pendrey was crazy but normal by the Army's standards, and if the premises that Pendrey was working with were also crazy, then the decision might come out in Colman's favor after all. Or would it? His attempt to think the tortuous logic of the situation once again was interrupted by Swyley at last leaning back and turning his face away from the screen.. "Not once you understand what this graveyard is and why it became what it did," Song said. She was sitting cross-legged on the floor nursing her youngest, Ethan.. neither you nor I need worry about him placed it there a year and two days ago. I blew him there myself.. Using an assumed name and a post office box number which was not his, Smith wrote to a commission agent in Boston with whom he had never had any previous dealings. He mailed the letter, with the agent's address covered by one of his labels on which he had typed a fictitious address. The label detached itself in transit; the letter was delivered. When the agent replied, Smith was watching and read the letter as a secretary typed it. The agent followed his instruction to mail his reply in an envelope without return address. The owner of the post office box turned it in marked "not here"; it went to the dead-letter office and was returned in due time, but

meanwhile Smith had acknowledged the letter and had mailed, in the same way, a huge amount of cash. In subsequent letters he instructed the agent to take bids for components, plans for which he enclosed, from electronics manufacturers, for plastic casings from another, and for assembly and shipping from still another company. Through a second commission agent in New York, to whom he wrote hi the same way, he contracted for ten thousand copies of an instruction booklet in four colors.. "Now Fin likable! I thought" ?he dangled the poem by one corner ?"you were just hinting that I should leave?". few dollars more, hire a sofa or armchair that you could drive at liberty among the other chairs, choosing.had become his own. He dared not leave her alone. But he moved quietly as a beast in the dark. He left.together. So he put the last piece on top of the trunk, swallowed several aspirins, and lay down..But not quite. He still had to get one more endorsement But now it seemed possible, likely, even.and pointed at him. She was suited except for her helmet, which contained her radio. He knew he was in