

## GODS AND HEROES

The first time that he'd worked for Noah, the kid had delivered a handsomely shot and effectively edited. Jay grinned, just a trifle sheepishly. "Er. . . would you get mad if I asked Steve to come along too?" "There's half a pie left," Geneva offered cheerily. Colman sighed. "So I kept running away and getting into all kinds of stupid trouble, and in the end did most of my growing-up in centers for problem kids that the State ran. Sometimes they tried moving me in with families in different places, but it never worked out. The last ones tried pretty hard. They adopted me legally, and that's how I got my name. Later we moved to Pennsylvania . . . my stepfather was an MHD engineer, which was probably what, got me interested . . . but there was some trouble, and I wound up in the Army." the dark, and he knows that the Hammond place has been set ablaze. Reduced to blackened bones and. On all sides of Curtis, remote-released locks electronically disengage with sharp double-beep signals. "Yep." "Yours'~ "Nope." Stormbel made a signal to somewhere in the background and announced, "Sixty-second countdown commenced." fence. She wanted to glance down, afraid the pickets might trip her, but she kept her attention on her. "A phase-change, evolving its own new laws," Pernak confirmed, nodding. "Lots of thorns, though," Micky noted. The proceedings were broadcast live throughout the ship and across the planetary communications net, and the audience physically present constituted the largest gathering that the Congressional Hall had ever had. All of the. consisting of the words "Bantam Books" and the portrayal of a rooster, is Registered in U.S. Patent and. Popping open a Budweiser, Micky returned to her chair. "Aunt Gen, this sensitive junkie from Chicago . . . want to make a life's work out of swabbing up puke and urine, but she could do what needed to be done. There's some kind of trouble at Brigade-something about Portney being kicked out and Wesserman locking up some SDs at gunpoint." "Not fear anymore. But. . . most days I still don't feel clean." "I'm still with you." "So why bother?" Jay asked. "What's it to you if somebody else's house needs painting or not?" .that?" Obviously something unusual was going on. Unwilling to leave the subject there, Bernard said, "And Walters too maybe? Perhaps he could use a refresher too," "I said you were in too much of a hurry," Jean said to Bernard. "Just think, all that work for nothing. We should have waited a bit longer for those Chironians to get round to us." The shower wasn't as safe as the tub. Whenever she took off her leg brace, she was hesitant to risk. PAUL LECHAT, ONE Of the two Congressional members representing the Maryland residential module on the Floor of Representatives, which formed a second house and counterbalanced the Directorate, had a reputation as a moderate on most of the issues debated in the last few years of the voyage. Although not a scientist, he was a keen advocate of scientific progress as the only means likely to alleviate the perennial troubles that had bedeviled mankind's history, and an admirer of scientific method, the proven efficacy of which, he felt, held greater potential for exploitation within his own profession than tradition had made customary. He attempted therefore always to define his terminology clearly, to accumulate his facts objectively; to evaluate their implications impartially, and to test his evaluations unambiguously. He found as a consequence that he saw eye-to-eye with every lobbyist up to a point, empathized with every special-interest to a certain degree, sympathized with every minority to a limited extent, and agreed with every faction with some reservations. He was wary of rationalizings, cautious of extrapolatings, suspicious of generalizings, and 'skeptical at dogmatizings. He responded to reason and logic rather than passion and emotion, kept an open mind on controversies, based his opinions on the strictly relevant, and reconsidered them readily if confronted by new information. The result was that he had few friends in high places and no strong supporters. graciousness personified, who makes every phase of the work a delight? and who will think that this. "Serial killers," Curtis gasps, pointing toward the motor home, which is more than twenty vehicles behind. "So then ... do you think I'm 'not quite right'?" he asks, fiercely gripping the edge of the counter, still half. "Oh, just ask the computers anywhere how to get to Shirley-with-the-red-hair's place---Ci's mother. They'll take care of you." "We get them," Nanook agreed. "But not a lot. People usually get to learn very early on what's acceptable and what isn't. They've all got eyes, ears, and brains." The loud drumming of fear with which he has lived for the past twenty-four hours has subsided to a faint. The Battle Module was not intended to be part of the Mayflower its public domain, and restriction of access to it had been one of its primary design criteria. Personnel and supplies entered the module via four enormous tubular extensions, known as feeder ramps, that telescoped from the main body of the ship to terminate in cupolas mating with external ports in the Battle Module, two forward and two aft its midships section. One pair of feeder ramps extended backward and inward from spherical housings Zn the forward ends of the two ramscoop-support pillars, and the other pair extended forward and inward from the six-sided, forward most section of the Spindle, called, appropriately enough, the Hexagon. As if having to get through the feeder ramps wasn't problem enough, the transit tubes, freight handling conveyors, ammunition rails, and other lines running through to them from the Spindle all came together at a single, heavily protected lock to pass through an armored bulkhead inside the Hexagon. Aft of the bulkhead, the lock faced out over a three-hundred-foot long, wedge-shaped support platform upon which the various lines and tubes converged through a vast antechamber amid a jungle of girder and structural supports, motor housings, hoisting machinery, ducts, pipes, con-. Jay and Colman stared at each other as they both came to the same, obvious conclusion at the same time. "That's it," Jay murmured. previously been treacherous, arms pump-pump-pumping like the connecting rods on the driving wheels. cockroaches, they would probably be small enough that Noah might just be able to wrestle them into. in an arctic sea. Although the sky was a furnace grate, although Micky was slick with coconut-scented lotion and sweat. "You said you've only got until your next birthday, and then all bets are off." everyone was beautiful and rich and happy. Leilani didn't actually search for the passageway, but based. "We're not negotiating, Sherlock." hunger, and though the flood of saliva is bitter, it fails to diminish his appetite. choose between comfort and being a sex object, I'll

choose comfort every time." Although it seemed unrelated to Leilani Klonk, Micky recalled something that her aunt Geneva had said. "It seems to have gone down," he said. "Even the standby channels." Information that all five human senses combined, so he doesn't nudge her out of the way. "That's so true," Eve agreed. "He was a brave boy; but no brave boy surrenders this easily to his misery. Cool tin-kitchen, in the scarlet light of the retiring sun, Leilani's lace shone as much with enchantment as to Curtis's right lies a pivot-hinged door with an inset oval of glass. The porthole is too high to provide a. "We are aware of that," Otto said. LEIGHTON MERRICK FORMED his fingers into a fluted column to support the Gothic arch of his brows down at the desk while he chose his words. "Ah, I've been looking over your record, Fallows," he looked up. "It shows a consistent attention to detail that is very pronounced . . . everything thorough and complete, and properly documented. It's commendable, very commendable . . . the kind of thing we could do with more of in the Service." Been familiar with that strategy. . . and earn her approval. . . arrive at a destination, but will race perpetually through alternating stretches of moon-dazzled meadow. "Son-of-a-something, anyway," Anita added. They all laughed. When he glanced back, he noticed a Lincoln Navigator pulling away from the curb across the street, no. He shudders. He does not touch the coins. Jean seemed to dismiss the subject from her mind. She looked uncertainly at Bernard for a few seconds, and then said, "It's not really anything to do with that. It's—oh, I can't put this any other way—it's you." "A highly efficient directional microphone was synchronized with the camera," Noah explained. "We've. . . with this approach when you were dealing with schoolteachers and ministers and sweetly daffy. But a stepfather who had committed eleven murders? Who killed elderly women? And a little boy in a. "How can they when there are hardly any around to start with?" Juanita asked him. "We told you—if they're like that, they don't last very long." "Hi," the paunchy man greeted amiably. "I'm Clem. These are Carla and Hermann, and Francine and Boris. The big guy here is Cromwell, and the little lady up top is Amy. Well, I guess. . . welcome aboard." "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. . . command chair. She won't be able to release those restraints and clamber out of the seat in time to block. Once, when an outlaw mouse scurried from room to room and along hallways, eluding a comic posse of. "How are they going—to pay you?" Jay asked. "I second the motion," a voice called out promptly. . . coming in. "Grasp. She lacks the cultural references to make sense of it. Her tail stops wagging, but only because she. "She's on the payroll of your husband's charitable foundation." He expects the guy to come directly to the bedroom, and he's ready to use the door as a battering ram. He remembered back to when he had been sixteen and gave a senator's son nothing more than he'd had coming to him. A pair of sheriff's deputies had taught him a painful lesson in "respect" in a cell at the town jailhouse, and the Army had been trying to teach him "respect" ever since. But that had been Earth-style respect. He was beginning to feel that perhaps he was learning the true meaning of the word for the first time. True respect could only be earned; it couldn't be extorted. A real leader led by the willingness of his followers, in the way that the people at the fusion complex followed Kath or Adam's children followed him, not by command. The Chironians could turn their backs on each other in the way that people like Howard Kalens would never know, as Colman could on his platoon. These were his kind of people. It was uncanny, but he was starting to feel at home here—something he had never really felt anywhere before in his life. . . out of sassy altogether, leaving them feeling more pity than delight. "Better than tofu and canned peaches on a bed of bean sprouts," Leilani said as she settled in a chair. . . in the other as she ascended in a pale green levitation beam. . . respite from torment, no relief from the expectation of attack, not even when Sinsemilla is. Sinsemilla's left hand was clenched. She opened it to reveal a wad of bloody Kleenex that Leilani hadn't. At once their faces split into broad smiles, and they walked over. The redhead shook his hand warmly. "I see you've already met Wellington. I'm Shirley. This is my daughter, Ci." Banishing doubt, seizing hope with a desperation grip, Curtis swallows hard and prepares himself for an. Instead of a bath, she took a shower. Her soap of choice? a cake of Ivory? worked well enough to. Affixed to the door is a stainless-steel plaque with laser-cut letters: . . back in time by an evil machine intelligence to track down and destroy the mother of its most effective. Yeller will understand this to be an admonition against eating the sausages. Rickster, liberator of ladybugs and mice, stood in the middle of his room, in bright yellow pajamas. Sirocco tossed out a hand, signaling that he disclaimed responsibility. "Oh, he saw the way she was talking to you when you were on ceremonial at that July Fourth exhibition last year. That was one thing. Do you remember that?" She hated searching for her mother like this. She never knew in what condition Sinsemilla would be. As the Windchaser slows steadily, Curtis slides shut the window and takes up a position at the bedroom. To her own ear, she had sounded as false as George Washington's wooden teeth, but Dr. Doom had. "Anytime. Take care." "What makes you imagine that I could?" An intrigued and thoughtful look came over Swyley's face as he listened. He said nothing, which meant that he didn't agree. Sinsemilla was highly amused. Words whooped from her on peals of laughter. "It's not poisonous, you. Eventually, Geneva asked, "What are we going to do?" "Go, thingy, go, go!" "Dear God," Micky whispered, "what am I going to do?" Surely one of the men will make at least a halfhearted attempt to search for the five bucks. "I would prefer not to use that term," the major answered. "The legal ramifications are not for me to comment on. But our own authorities will naturally wish to conduct an inquiry, and the weapons will be needed as evidence." "Micky." "You'd better believe it," Lechat promised. The propulsion systems master control computer monitored the final stages of phase-down of the burn and shutdown the main-drive reactors. As the huge reaction dish that had contained the force of two tons of matter being annihilated into energy every second for six months began to cool, the ship was nudged gently into high orbit at 25,000 miles by its vernier steering motors and configured itself fully for freefall conditions to become a new star moving across 'the night skies of Chiron. Jay drank

some more of his coffee, stared at his cup in silence for what seemed a long time, then said without looking up, "I've been thinking on and off... you know, I think I'd like to get into the Army. What would be the best way of going about it?". With sorrow banished in a blink, anger and fear were in equal command of her. "You don't own me!". her nook was a private place. But the snake won't allow even a pretense of privacy. She'll have no waited neither a lady nor a tiger, but an altogether unique specimen. Leilani would have preferred the Stern's eyes smoldered. "I want a full record kept of every officer who deserts," he reminded Stormbel "The ones in the Government Center, the one in Vandenberg, Lesley in the Hexagon, that one there--all of them." His voice was calm but all the more menacing for its iciness. "They will answer for this when the time comes. General, detach the Battle Module immediately and proceed as planned." "Well, that was up to you. We told you." anger might overwhelm her. She wanted to lash out at someone on Leilani's behalf, take a hard satisfying. He glances back into a blaze of headlights and sees the white-haired woman gazing out and down at him. January 8, 2081. different, and he travels under the name Jordan? call me Jorry? Banks. If you use his real name, he'll. The brow of the cab gleams as white as skull bone. One loose corner of black canvas flaps like the. Just then Jerry Pernak came around a comer accompanied by his fianc?, Eve Verritty, and two more Chironians. A cart was following them with a few odds and ends inside. He gaped at Bernard and Jay in surprise, then grinned. "Hey! So Jay dragged you out to see the sights, eh? Hello, Jay. Started making friends already?" Introductions were exchanged with smiles and handshakes. The two new Chironians were Sal, a short, curly-headed blonde who pursued research in physics at a university not far from Franklin, and Abdul, a carpenter and also one of the Founders, who lived in a more secluded area inland and looked Eskimo. Abdul's grandson, he informed them proudly, had hand-carved the original designs from which the programs for producing the interior wood fittings used at Cordova Village had been encoded. He was delighted when Bernard praised their quality and promised to tell his grandson what the Terran had said.. In the Sharmer case, Bobby didn't catch the jolly approach of the Beagle Boys with their sledgehammer. When Curtis follows the dog, he peers across the kitchen and the lounge, toward the cockpit. The. "We have to do something," Marcia Quatrey insisted. "Even if it means putting the whole town under martial I law, some form of official recognition is imperative. This has gone on far too long as it is." "It came in about fifteen minutes ago," the waiter said. He shook his head sadly. "Bad news. There's been a shooting down there . . . in Franklin somewhere. At least one dead--one of our soldiers, I think. It was at some place called The Two Moons." "That has to give us the rest of the ship and the surface," Swyley said. "If the Army gets its act together and grabs Stern before he gets a chance to head this way, then we might not have to go in there at all." "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.. campground. Not even a real rest stop with bathrooms or a picnic table, or anything. Just this lonely wide. bred anger, because inevitably anger left her tossing sleepless in the sheets.. "I don't think it ever did. What I was afraid of was in my own head. None of it was out there." She took in the sight of her husband--his arms tanned and strong against the white of the casual shirt that he was wearing, his face younger, more at ease, but more self-assured than she could remember seeing for a long time--propped loosely but confidently against the frame of the door, and she smiled. "Kalens may have to hide himself away in a shell," she said. "I don't need mine anymore." "Believe in life after death?" their rejection of all values and obligations, motivated by the pure self-interest of parasites to whom the. Leilani pretended puzzlement. "Stop what?" "That's a name for a boy or a mouse. So it's probably Michelle. Most women your age are named." "Who are they?" Jay asked as he sensed Colman's tensing up.. Celia set her glass on the table and found that she needed a moment to reorient her thoughts, even though she had known this was coming. "I'm concerned over this latest threat to evict Chironians from Phoenix. It's not the bluff that many people think. Howard is serious." rants of anger, self-loathing, self-pity. If these words filtered through the prison of the damped brain in. When she rounded the end of the bed, she saw the pet-shop terror where she had left it, stacked in. On their barstools and chairs, the cowboys turned, and with their glares they herded him toward the. A crash rocks the room, rattles cookware. Someone slamming through the swinging door from the. feelings tumultuous and unresolved, emotions so powerful that the mere recognition of them, after long. black sky and the black land meet, where the sharper facets of quartz-rich rocks reflect the glitter of. After a while, Geneva said, "Leilani's not the only child I was talking about a moment ago." "I know." protect him.. He stares at his reflection in one of the mirrored doors and isn't proud of what he sees. Pale face. Eyes. The two Chironians frowned at each other. "Owns it?" Juanita repeated. Her voice suggested that the notion--was a new one. "I'm not all that sure what you mean. The people who work here, I guess." while positively thinking herself into a C-cup instead of brooding about all the many problems in her life, didn't feel wounded by this exposure, as she would have expected, didn't feel mortified or in the least. isn't the direction that they ought to be taking.. The woman stopped and ran her eye curiously over their faces for a moment while they shuffled and straightened up self-consciously. "You don't have to stand around out here like this as far as we're concerned, you know," she said. "You can come on inside if you want. How about a coffee, and maybe something to eat?" The faces turned instinctively toward Colman as he rejoined them.. ATTHE TOPOF THE SLOPE, dog and boy? one panting, one gasping? halt and turn to look back. Sensing that this guy won't be rattled by the serial-killer alert? or by much else, for that matter? Curtis. "My pleasure." thought that Burt Hooper was simply rude. "I'd help you if I could." Driscoll didn't have a ready answer to that. Besides, he was too conscious of the desire for a cigarette to be philosophical. He turned his head to look first one way and then the other along the corridor, and then looked back at the robot. "Can you tell if any of our people are near here?". The long bar lay to the right of the door. In a row down the center of the

room, each of eight plank-top. Jay appeared more reassured, and his eyes brightened a fraction with the relief of having been spared long explanations. "It's all screwed up," he replied simply...standing on it.

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