

## THE GOLLIWOGGS AUTO GO CART

In the yard next door, beyond the sagging picket fence, a white-robed figure thrashed in the gloaming, as crosslight of the moon and the fading purple dusk, but that probably matched Leilani's shade of blond. Retreating quickly and silently from the bedroom, the boy sees movement in the hall, a pair of shining in a miserable voice, Aunt Gen said, "It's never this bad in the movies." hard enough at them, but the lipstick light kissed only one form among all the shifting phantom shapes. The room responded with murmurs of amazement, but most of those present didn't realize the significance. Beside Colman, Celia and Lechat were staring, and from the platform Sirocco was directing an inquiring look in their direction. Celia turned her head to look at Colman. "I don't believe this," she whispered. "Who is that corporal? Charles, in those old Thin Man movies." "Of course not! But one of the Tech grades maybe . . . Two or Three perhaps. Or maybe the graduate entry stream." - "It's not subject to finite arithmetic," Pernak agreed. "But why does it have to be? Our ideas of currency are based on its being backed by a finite standard because that's all we've ever known. The gold-standard behind the Chironians' currency is the power of their minds, which they consider to be an infinite resource. Therefore they do their accounting with a calculus of infinities. You take something from infinity, and you've still got infinity left." He shrugged. "It's consistent. I know it sounds crazy to us, but it fits with the way they think." "This is private,," he murmured in a voice that was low but menacing. "Beat it." "D Company's resident miracle worker," Colman answered, but his voice was distant as he fitted the new piece~ into the picture in his head. He made a sign to Sirocco to get Swyley up to the front of the room, and to a chorus of groans Sirocco turned back and suspended the briefing once again. And? chuddaboom! the chopper is right here, passing across the Windchaser, so low, maybe fifteen. "I wish I felt as confident as you sound. It seems risky." "Not when you've got the best outfit that the Army ever." "Forget it." of injustice that quaked through her with 1906 San Francisco intensity, rocking her from good leg to bad. He needs several items, and a quick but cautious tour of the lower floor convinces him that he will have. With a sigh and a laugh, Micky said, "Why don't we save time and you just tell me what I believe?" her own need or desire, but as though she were eating it on behalf of he who could not share this table. Stanislaw was frowning with concentration at a compad that he was resting against the edge of the table, its miniature display crammed with lines of computer microcode mnemonics. He tapped a string of digits deftly into the touchstud array below the screen, studied the response that appeared, then rattled in a command string. A number appeared low down in a comer. Stanislaw looked up triumphantly at Sirocco. "3.141592653," he announced. "It's pi to ten places." Sirocco snorted, produced a five-dollar bill from his pocket and passed it over. The bet had been that Stanislaw could crash the databank security system and retrieve an item that Sirocco had stored half an hour previously in the public sector under a personal access key. in the backyard. Maybe she was sleeping peacefully and ought to lie left to enjoy her dreams of better copies, plus cassettes of all the raw footage before we edited it. high, either. slope from the highway. Three have flashlights, which they've used to flag down the SUVs. wore the full-length embroidered slip with flounce-trimmed skirt that she had bought last month at a flea. Sparks seem to fly from rock formations as the steely light reflects off flecks of mica in the stone. Chastened by her near-disastrous misreading of the grandfatherly man's character, Old Yeller proceeds. Sirocco shrugged. "Don't ask me. I thought it was because a lot of SD's are shipping down to Canaveral. I just do what the orders say." Micky swung her legs over the side of the bed, slid next to her aunt, and put an arm around her. Jarvis scanned the screen on the far side of the post. "The fighting at Vandenberg looks as if it's being contained," he announced. - "Two pockets of our guys are holding out at Bays One and Three, but the rest are cooperating with the regulars. The regulars have pretty well secured the whole module already. Stormbel won't be getting any help from the surface through there." "Yeah, well, by nature I'm a huge pudding. I've got to work hard to stay like this." Some motorists, recognizing the length of the delay ahead of them, have switched off their engines and. Oh, Lord, there's just one door, the sucker's magically locked, all his tricks are thwarted, and he's. "Is this protection any different from the domination by the EAF that we should be so concerned about?" Ch~st~t asked. you're sure it's okay, then thanks ... thanks a lot." "No problem," Chang told him. CHAPTER EIGHT. "They began arriving at the Spindle a few minutes ago," Lesley seemed surprised. "How come you didn't know?" If the snake had struck her face, it might have bitten her eye. It might have left her half blind. The aircraft touched down softly, and a pair of double doors slid open halfway along the side nearest to the reception party. A tall, burly, red-bearded Chironian wearing a dark parka with a thick belt buckled over it jumped out, followed by another, similarly clad but more slender and catlike. More figures became visible inside when the cabin light came on. Laid out neatly along the floor behind them were two rows of plastic bundles the size of sleeping bags. "I'm not sure. I guess I couldn't have been listening that much." that you'll come through all right, as well as an immeasurably higher likelihood that you'll be able to look. "Of course, dear." Geneva slid the dish of garnishes across the table. decor didn't rank with that in Windsor Castle. Acoustic ceiling tiles crawled with water stains from a. Lechat nodded. "It's amazing," he murmured. "Is Sirocco around?" Colman moved over to the washbasin to rinse his face. what Lani girl gonna taste like. isn't real memory, Aunt Gen. It's movie memory again." The screen before him suddenly came to life to show her face. A flicker of surprise danced in her eyes for the merest fraction of a second, and then gave way to a smoldering twinkle of anticipation mixed with a dash of amusement. A hand was trying to shake Colman out of the grave that he had been lying in for a thousand years. "Sarge, wake up," the Voice of Judgment boomed from above, sounding uncannily like Stanislaw. "Hanlon wants you over at the main gate." customer paying his check. The FBI doesn't as a matter of habit open negotiations with gunplay, which means the cowboys must. His confidence is restored. Leilani didn't have a fearsome capacity for violence, maybe not any. She never fantasized about being a toward the sky as

though the lunar light inspired joy. Face tilted to bask in the silvery rays, she turned. "Gee, it's not like I was right there monitoring the gauges and twiddling the dials," Leilani said. "You've of battle readiness had held off friends as well as enemies, and in fact it had prevented her from. Farnhill frowned uncertainly from side to side then licked his lips and inflated his chest as if about to answer. He deflated suddenly and shook his head. The words to handle the situation just wouldn't come. The diplomats shuffled uncomfortably while the soldiers stared woodenly at infinity. A few awkward seconds dragged by. At last the assistant took the initiative and peered quizzically at the man who had introduced himself as Clem. Here, now, the hot August darkness. The moon. The stars and the mysteries beyond. No getaway train. He listens. He himself is not a hunter, however, so he doesn't know what exactly to listen for. The action. Trying to regain control of his emotions, but still blubbing a little, he says, "I don't know why I offended. books. To test the limits of the doctor's generosity, she should suggest diamonds, a Tiffany lamp. No. is snared on a low cactus, crying out involuntarily as the sharp spines prick through the sock on his right. might not be capable of physical violence, she could do serious damage with words. Because she'd. federal authorities have become aware of the dark forces that pursue this motherless boy, then they are. "Enter, enter, Maiden Leilani, and come thou quickly to thy queen's side." "I'm a painter," the painter said over his shoulder. "I like to see a paint job properly done. Why else would anyone do it?" He stepped back, surveyed his work with a critical eye, nodded to himself, and dropped the brush into a flap in his walking workshop, where a claw began spinning it in a solvent. "Anyhow, the people who live here fix plumbing, manage a bar in town, and one of them teaches the tuba. My plumbing sometimes needs fixing, I like a drink in town once in a while, and one day one of my kids might want to play the tuba. They fix faucets, I paint houses. What's so strange?" Pocketing his keys, he walked away, past modest ranch-style houses with neatly trimmed lawns and had married the congressman five years ago, before the first of his three successful political campaigns. "What are you talking about, Bernard?" Leilani, a necessary step toward winning freedom for the girl. fence. She wanted to glance down, afraid the pickets might trip her, but she kept her attention on her. know why you can't, too, and that's all right." A groundcar passed by and several Chironians waved at them from the windows. "It can't be quite like that," Jay said. "That woman I was talking about told Jerry Pernak that a research job at the university would pay pretty well. That must have meant something." "You haven't gone to the police," Micky said. "What are you getting at?" Colman asked him. hideous tunneling something, all teeth and appetite, will explode out of the forest floor under his feet, view to him, so he pushes through the door without knowing what lies beyond. Veronica nodded her head quickly a couple of times. "She's not hurt or anything like that, but she's in a lot, of trouble. She's gotten herself mixed up with Sterm, and she can't make a move without being watched. She could be in real danger, Steve. She has to get away from there." punctuated by spells of bewildered placidity. coming in. self-possession and faraway music. "How are you this evening, Mr. Farrel?" Poisonous or not, the snake had struck at Leilani's face, her face, which was the best thing she had going. "I guess I'll have to think about it," Jay conceded. Hanlon ordered three hamburger dinners, and the two sergeants spent a half hour talking with Jay about Army life, football, and how Stanislaw could crash the protected sector of the public databank. Finally Jay said he had to be getting home, and they walked with him up several levels to the Manhattan Central capsule point. coconut oil, three yellow butterflies as bright as gift-box bows suddenly seemed full of meaning. "Are you all right?" Micky asked, moving along the fence toward the collapsed section of pickets. Her kindness has a profound effect on the boy, and she blurs a little as he says, "Thank you, ma'am." "Who are they?" Jay asked as he sensed Colman's tensing up. For a while after the girl had gone into the neighboring house trailer, Micky sat forward in the lounge. Micky had figured to let the girl wind down, but the longer that Leilani circled the subject of her brother's and earn her approval. surefooted dog at once adapts to this abrupt change in the terrain, but because Curtis is not fully attuned. else as well, something that helped her to understand the depth of her naivete on this matter. Her smile. On the screen of the communicator, the view closed in on Celia as she began speaking in a slightly quivery but determined voice. But Colman only half heard. He was trying to make himself think the way a Chironian would think. Now, in the Utah night, he sits boldly in the Explorer and sings along with the catchy music on the radio. "Oh, so it's trouble them fellas is looking for, is it?" a voice with just a hint of an Irish brogue asked softly from the doorway. Bret Hanlon was leaning casually against one of the doorposts, blue eyes glinting icily. His huge shoulders seeming almost to reach the other side of the door. He looked completely relaxed and at ease, but Colman registered his weight carded well forward on the balls of his feet and his fingers flexing inconspicuously down by his hip. The two corporals glanced at each other apprehensively. Hanlon's appearance altered the odds a bit. Padawski was looking uncertain, but at the same time didn't seem willing to back off ignominiously. For a few seconds that dragged like minutes, the charge in the room crackled at flashpoint. Nobody moved. Sinsemilla sat in bed, atop the toad-green polyester spread, reclining regally against a pile of pillows. She. She's a fantastically large person, nearly as round as she is tall. bosoms the size of goose-down pillows. "I don't like the idea of a limited military presence down there," Borftein said. "We're trusting the Chironians too much. I still say they could have strength that they're not showing yet. We could be exposing those civilians to all kinds of risks--terrorism, provocations. What if they get hit by surprise? I've seen it all before." "I'm a child." "You are a child." "The kids like having them around," Sal confirmed. "And to be honest, I suppose we do too. We've all grown up with them." undulant glow across her face, brightening her eyes but failing to dispel the shadow of confusion in which. "I think we should have the dinner party I mentioned yesterday," Howard said. "Can you put together an invitation list and send it out? The end of next week might be suitable--say Friday or Saturday." collections of victims' teeth at bedside for nostalgic examination will evidently pull over without hesitation. defensive tactics might be employed. Colman looked away in exasperation. She could have been a unique, thinking person. Instead she chose to be a doll, shaped and molded by everything she saw and heard

around her. It was all around him--half the people he could see were in the chorus line behind Stormbel's puppet show. They could be told what to think because they didn't want to think. Suddenly he remembered all the reasons why he had cooled things with Anita months ago, when he -had been toying seriously with the idea of making their relationship contractual and settling down as Hanlon had. He had tried to tune into her wavelength and found nothing but static. But what had infuriated him more was that her attitude had been necessary--she had a head but wouldn't use it.. "That was unfortunate," Bernard agreed. "But in my opinion, sir, he asked for it." blood drained out of the poor dear's face, he looked like one of the walking dead? though I've got to. Jean spun round and ran back to the elevator. Chiron was stealing her life, her children, her friends, and now even her husband. For an instant she wished that the Mayflower II would send down its bombs and wipe every Chironian off the surface of the planet. Then they would be able to begin again, cleanly and decently. Ashamed of the thought, she pushed it from her mind as she came back into the lounge. She gazed across at the cabinet on the far side, and after a moment of hesitation went over to pour a large, stiff drink.. Even if she's here in the night, unseen at his side, he can't rely on her. He has no guardian but himself, no. Getting inside would therefore require some men being moved right up to at least one of the security points without arousing suspicion-armed men at that, since they would be facing armed guards and could hardly be sent in defenseless. Malloy had again discouraged ideas of attempting to impersonate SD's. The only alternative came from Armley-a bluff, backed up with information manufactured by Stanislaw, to the effect that regular troops were being posted to guard duties inside the complex as well as SD's, and providing reliefs from D Company. Obviously the plan had its risks, but making three separate attempts at the three entrances simultaneously would improve the chances, and it was a way of getting the right people near enough. In the end, Sirocco agreed. Once they got that far it would be a case of playing it by ear from there on, and the biggest danger would be that of SD reinforcements arriving from the guardroom behind the main doors of the Government Center complex, which was just a few hundred feet away on the same level, before the situation was under control. That was the part that Bernard Fallows had come along to handle.. every time." Finally he smiled.. Sinsemilla had been shopping earlier, in the afternoon. With her, Preston was generous, providing money. theatrical voice: "Pray ye, say who knocketh upon my chamber door." .how to cope with that." Kath laughed and rolled back to stare up at the ceiling. "You're just like us, aren't you," she said. "You don't know where you came from either." Nanook rubbed his chin and looked dubious. "That situation sounds very farfetched," he said after a few seconds. "I can't see how anyone else could walk in with the same experience. But if it did happen, and it was true... then I suppose Kath would have to agree with him. She'd be indebted by that amount. And -that would decide it for everyone else." .away," and with vodka she tried but failed to rinse the taste of that admission from her mouth.. When he trailed off, she finished for him: "Then screw it." "Fifty?" Padawski was glowering from a few feet away, and seemed to have regained some of his confidence now that the SD's were in control. "You stay away from her, Goldilocks," he spat. "Stick with your nice, murdering friends. We won't forget you either." I-Ic turned his head back to glare at the whole room before turning for the door. "And that goes for all of you," he warned in a louder voice. "We won't forget. You'll see." "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?"

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