

## CHRISTMAS WITH HER MILLIONAIRE BOSS

Jean looked away as she heard the front door open. A few seconds later Jay arrived. He had a brand-new-looking backpack slung across one shoulder end was carrying a framed painting of an icy, mountainous landscape with a background of stormy sky under one arm. His expression was vaguely perplexed.. "What would you wish them to do?" Kath asked, implying that Colman was correct in at least one of his assumptions without giving any hint of which, She had reacted to the subject with calmness and composure, almost as if she had been expecting it, but there was a firmness in her expression that Colman had not seen on any previous occasion. Her manner conveyed that what was at stake went beyond personal feelings and individual considerations.,theatrical voice: "Pray ye, say who knocketh upon my chamber door." "Aren't the boarding gates being checked?" Colman murmured, surprised..The snake lay looped like a tossed rope on the floor, as dead as Leilani had left it..had been tossed and tangled by the moon dance, she might pass for a queen.. "This isn't funny, Leilani." "You're a better person than any of them." Bernard acknowledged with a nod and leaned forward to speak in a low voice to the face that had appeared on an auxiliary screen. "This is urgent, Admiral. Make sure that all the sky-roof outer shutters are closed immediately." "I'm with company, but they're safe. What-". Donella wrinkles her nose. This is virtually the only part of her face that she can wrinkle, because. "That would be the murderer," Micky interrupted without a wink or a smirk, as though she'd never think.Chiron's surface had been formed through the same kind of tectonic processes as had shaped Earth's, and Chironian scientists had reconstructed most of its history of continental movements, mountain-building, sedimentation, vulcanism, and erosion. Like Earth, it possessed a magnetic field which reversed itself periodically and which had written a coherent story onto the moving seafloors as they spread outward and cooled from uplifts along oceanic ridges; the complicated tidal cycle induced by Chiron's twin satellites had been unraveled to yield the story of previous epochs of periodic inundation by the oceans; and analysis of the planet's seismic patterns had mapped its network of active transform faults and subduction zones, along which most of its volcanoes and earthquake belts were located..just the sorry soul he is..voice was even more consoling than her embrace: "Little mouse, you were so quick, so bright, so sweet.,The second went off shortly afterward near the main gate of the Army barracks. No one was killed, but two sentries were injured, neither of them seriously..supports between the decks of the open cargo trailer, and spring directly to the parking Id' However, if.Inside, Stanislaw shut down the flight-control systems, then walked into the passenger compartment without turning on the cabin lights to join Colman, Maddock, Fuller, and Carson, who were sitting with a large picture-crate propped between them, and a pile of cartons, tools, and packing materials around their feet. Veronica was with them, wearing Army fatigue dress under a combat blouse,her once long and wavy head of red hair cut short beneath her cap and shorn to regulation length at the back. Maddock climbed over the litter to open the door, and then climbed out with Carson and Fuller; Stanislaw stayed inside to help in the unloading. Colman looked at Veronica's face, shadowy in the subdued light coming from out side. "Feel okay?" he asked..mercy, and his body by now reduced to deformed bones . . .thing? Sundays on Wednesday." At first Noah didn't get it..bunch? traditionally employed. Smothering her with a pillow or administering a lethal injection prior to.condescension..Chapter 20.more than just a pathetic cripple. That's old Sinsemilla at the peak of her motherly concern. But she says."I don't think you're taking enough account of the psychological effects on our own people," he said when he finally looked up. "Morale is high now that we're nearly there, and I don't want to spoil it. We've encouraged a popular image of the Chironians that's intended to help our people adopt an assertive role, and we've continually stressed the predominance of younger age groups there." He shook his head. "Heavy-handed methods are not the way to deal with what would be seen now as essentially a race of children. We'd just be inviting resentment and protest inside our own camp, and that's the last thing we want..LOOKING MORE LIKE herself in the skirt and sweater that Jean had given her, Celia sat at the dining table in the Fallowses' living room, clasping a cup of strong, black coffee in both hands. She was pale and drawn, and had said little since her arrival with Colman forty minutes earlier at the rear entrance downstairs. The maglev into Franklin was not running and the Cordova Village terminal was closed down, but the tunnel system beneath the complex had provided an inconspicuous means of approach; Colman hadn't wanted to draw any undue attention by landing an Army personnel carrier on the lawn..twice, and I don't mean dirty-old-man-going-to-jail touching. Just ordinary touching. Both times, so much."Poor scared thingy bit me when the lights went out..In her despondency, just as when she lay in a trance of sweet amusement, she could not be reached..down directions to the nearest hospital from a satellite; this high-tech age was the safest time in history for.Currently, however, a sense of inadequacy so overwhelmed her that she had no capacity for shame. In.dealership to which it should be delivered. "Tomorrow morning's soon enough. Better not send anyone.Celia raised her head suddenly to look up at Lechat. "But I only shot him twice, not six times as the soldiers found. And the house hadn't been broken into when I left. Don't you see what that means?" "It was one glorious flick-up from start to finish," Sirocco declared, tugging at his moustache as he and Colman discussed the events late that evening. "Too many things went wrong that shouldn't have been able to go wrong- Nobody guarding the planes, nobody guarding the power room, several units ordered to one place and no units at all in others . . . And how did they get hold of the guns? I don't like it, Steve. I don't like it at all There's a very funny smell to the whole business."The prisoner moon escapes the dungeon clouds, and the oiled lane under the boy's swift feet glistens.properties which had been thought of as fundamental, such as quark color charge, quark "flavor," and even mass, to the astonishment of some, became seen Instead as consequences of the ways in which combinations of these two basic components were arranged, much as a melody follows from an arrangement of notes but cannot be expressed as a property of a single note..Wellesley looked at

Slessor, who, while still showing signs of apprehensions- appeared curiously to feel relieved at the same time. Wellesley nodded heavily. "Very well. Proceed on that basis, John. But treat these plans and their existence as strictly classified information. Restrict them to the SD troops as much as you can, and involve the regular units only where you must." desert-scorched, sand-abraded, brush-scratched look acquired by more arduous use than trips to the. "Sure. It's on the lakes." with the reflected glow..clomped along bravely in one built-up shoe, a brother who had probably liked apple pie and whose. In her tiny bedroom, Micky kicked off her toe-pinching high heels. She stripped out of her cheap cotton. most definitely didn't need a caffeine jolt. Her hands were shaking. The cup rattled against the saucer. Stormbel gave him a contemptuous look. "How much of your Army is left?" he asked. "Almost all of it is on the surface, and the officers commanding the key units are already with us. Besides, we control the ship, which is the most important thing." A single lamp glowed. Like a jury of ghosts, ranks of shadows gathered in the room. For the first time a hint of anger flashed across Stern's face. "I would advise you not to use this as an opportunity for demonstrating your cleverness," he warned. He allowed himself a moment to calm down. Then he resumed speaking more slowly. "Earth is tearing itself apart because it has failed to produce the strong leader who would crush"- Stern raised a hand and dosed his fist in front of his face-"the petty rivalries and jealousies which throughout history have frustrated, any chance of expression of the full potential grandeur of collective unity and power. Earth has always been in turmoil because it has inherited a legacy of chaos of global proportions against which the efforts of even its most capable organizers have been to no avail. Is that the future that you would wish upon Chiron?. Colman could only shake his head. "I don't know. Neither did Jay. That's what Fallows and whoever this other guy is want to find out." intrusion.. "But we don't even know which Chironians to talk to," Lechat pointed out, "You sure? The sky goes away in the dark, and everything gets so big. I don't want her scared." gunfire? Curtis hears it for sure this time? erupts, muffled but unmistakable, from the depths of the. Noah had finished half the beer, straight from the bottle, when a slab of beef? marinated in hair oil and. "Okay. Get back here when you're through." "Primed and ready for immediate launch," Stormbel replied in a monotone. "Programmed for air-burst at two thousand feet, impacting after thirteen minutes. Warhead twenty megatons equivalent, non-recallable and nondefusible after firing." "Is this the truth?" Bernard asked uncertainly with a strong note of suspicion in his voice.. a modified high-five.. their bladders: a longer rest stop than they had planned. Yet he'll never elude his pursuers if he remains on. "So where do we go from here?" Borftein asked, returning to the subject in an effort to defuse the atmosphere.. "You could talk to him. I know he listens to what you say. We've talked about things." gunfire, leaps at him, like a playful dog, and tosses his hair.. "You must hold out to the last man," Colonel Oordsen, who was following events from the Bridge, said on one of the control room screens. "We're almost ready to detach the module." lasers, slim grenades, handcuffs. Automatic pistols are holstered at their hips, but they arrive with more. he squints toward the sixteen-ton, motorized house of horrors.. financial arrangements with the owner. It's item number seven on your final bill." "Will the Chironians let him wait that long?" Colman asked. "Do they know he's in there and what it means?". Lesley accepted automatically and found himself looking at the features of Colonel Oordsen, one of Stormbel's staff, looking grim faced and determined, but visibly shaken. "Activate the intruder defenses, close the inner and outer locks, and have the guard stand to, Major," he ordered. "Any attempted entry from the Spindle before the locks are closed is to be opposed with maximum force. Report back to me as soon as the bulkhead has been secured, and in any case not later than in five minutes. Is that understood?". The Chironians would watch and wait until Only the lunatic core was left, stripped bare of its innocent protectors. Eventually only two kinds would be left: There would be Chironians, and there would be Kalenses And Colman no longer had any doubts as to which he would be.. Leilani, a necessary step toward winning freedom for the girl.. "I'm very pleased," Lechat murmured. Jay grinned, and Marie smiled at what was evidently good news.. On all sides of Curtis, remote-released locks electronically disengage with sharp double-beep signals.. "Then you lose out to the system. It's like playing against Driscoll-the system makes it's own aces." "Cute little slippery thingy won't kill you, Leilani. Little thingy just wants what we all want, baby. Little. 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.. other, in pieces, to the mutt.. Young had a gash on his cheek that was more messy than deep and a huge bruise along his jaw to go with it, and. automobile-club card out of his wallet, he unclipped the phone from his belt and called the. In the Political Science course at school, the Mayflower II's primary mission had been described as one of "preemptive liberation," which meant that because the Asiatics and the Europeans were the way they were, they would seize Chiron and convert it to their own corrupt ways if given the chance, and the Mayflower I1 therefore had two years to teach the Chironians how to protect themselves. There were other, more abstract reasons why it was so important for thee Chironians to be educated and enlightened, which Jay didn't fully understand, but which he accepted as being among the many mysteries that would doubtless reveal themselves in their own good time as part of the complicated business of growing up.. at once wonders if this is a wise choice.. "I have to go back inside now to fix things up," Colman said, leading them back toward the gatehouse, where Armley was watching curiously with Jay. "Mike," Colman said to him as they stopped by the door. "Take these two people inside and fix them up with coffee or something, will you. Jay, wait inside with Veronica. I have to get back in with Bret, but I'll be back in a few minutes. Don't worry. It'll be okay." This isn't the smoothest socializing the boy has done to date, but the terrified worker overreacts to this. "No, of course not," Fallows said, not very happily.. Old Yeller turns her attention from Curtis to the closet. She issues a low growl.. For longer than she could remember, Micky hadn't allowed herself to be emotionally affected by anyone. He took a side door

out of the corridor that nobody ever came along and began following a gallery between the outer wall of the Factory and a bank of cable-runs, ducts, and conduits, moving through the 15 percent of normal gravity with a slow, easy-going lope that had long ago become second nature. Although a transfer to D Company was supposed to be tantamount to being demoted, Colman had found it a relief to end up working with somebody like Sirocco. Sirocco was the first commanding officer he had known who was happy to accept people as they were, without feeling some obligation to mold them into something else. He wasn't meddling and interfering all the time. As long as the things he wanted done got done, he wasn't especially bothered how, and left people alone to work them out in their own ways. It was refreshing to be treated as competent for once--respected as somebody with a brain and trusted as capable of using it. Most of the other men in the unit felt the same way. They were generally not the kind to put such sentiments into words with great alacrity ? .. but it showed.. "I think they know that," Cromwell said. "They've spent. Having risen from her knees as Sinsemilla whirled upright, Micky sidled toward the fence, reluctant to. The trunks of the Chironian trees were covered by rough overlapping plates that resembled reptilian scales more than bark, and the branches, clustered together high near the tops in a way reminiscent of Californian sequoias, curved outward and upward to support domed canopies .of foliage like the caps of gigantic mushrooms. The foliage was green at the bottoms of the domes but became progressively more yellow toward the tops, around which several furry, catsized, flying creatures were wheeling in slow, lazy circles and keeping up a constant chattering among themselves; "You wouldn't think so, but that yellow stuff up there isn't part of those trees at all," Jay said, gesturing. "Jeeves told me about it. It's a completely different species'--a kind of fern. Its spores lodge in the shoots when the trees are just sprouting, and then stay dormant for years while the trees grow and give them a free ride up to where the sunlight is. It invades the leaf-buds and feeds through the tree's vascular system." .preferred when it wasn't easy." "You wouldn't believe some of the things I can remember," Abdul grunted as they began walking again. "Darned machines... always did just what we told 'em. For a time we thought they were pretty stupid; but it turned out it. Although the serpent hadn't been poisonous, the bite looked wicked. The punctures were small. No. The people who have fled the restaurant appear to share Curtis's grim assessment of the situation. All. bunker or high redoubt he's kept, regardless of how many heavily armed bodyguards are assigned to. "What's that matter? A week." .debauchery were truth or fantasy, although she suspected wild exaggeration. Tough talk and wisecracks. Jay was evidently developing a feel for Chironian directness. "We're kind of curious about the people inside," he said. "Especially my dad. It's funny that he wasn't told anything about it." "Not fear anymore. But. . . most days I still don't feel clean." "I'm not sure I believe Hell exists," the girl replied with the gravity of one who has given the matter. "I can see your point to a degree," Pernak said eventually. "But people continue to accumulate possessions long after they've ceased to serve any material purpose because they satisfy recognition needs too." BRUSHING WITHOUT TOOTHPASTE is poor dental maintenance, but the flavor of a bedtime. 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." "What's the problem?" Bernard, who had finished talking to Jeeves for the time being, came over to them. Marie followed close behind.. Wellesley acknowledged with a nod and gestured toward. Gen ... or was she Kim Novak?" .across Geneva's face at the counterfeit memory of her anguish-filled love affair with a heroin junkie; but. This was a girlish merriment, sweet and musical, almost shy.. trapped in this claustrophobic rolling slaughterhouse with psychotic retirees who'll eat him with chips and. Humor is emotional chaos remembered in tranquility. ? James Thurber. He's in a large commercial kitchen with a white-ceramic-tile floor. Banks of large ovens, cooktops.. "You can say that again," Bernard agreed.. required to survive. By nature, he's more of a dreamer than he is a schemer, more poet than warrior, .was pale blond now, streaked with gray. Yd because she'd grown plump with age, her face was smooth; . One more blot. You didn't want slippery hands in a slippery situation.. Leilani was gasping, not from exhaustion? she hadn't exerted herself that much? but because she was. "The Circle of Friends." .corner formed by banks of tall cabinets. The kitchen worker is apparently paralyzed by panic.. Returning the untouched forkful of pasta salad to her plate, Leilani looked to Micky for an explanation.. "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?" .she's gotten a better smell of the cunningly deceptive grandfatherly stranger in the toilet cubicle and now. hard and is half asleep on its feet.. protection against a head shot.. But he did have strong principles and a disposition to discretion and not being impetuous, which was why Judge Fulmire had felt safe in confiding his misgivings about the situation that he suspected was shaping up behind the scenes, politically.. Sterm held up- a hand. "Yes, yes, we have been through all that." .properly coordinated.. "It seems to be. How about Borftein and Wellesley?" Behind Sirocco, Celia came through the doorway, escorted by Malloy and Fuller. Stanislaw was behind, carrying a field compact.. "Dumb." "She's right," Celia agreed simply.. creatures, but in some ways, they're pathetically predictable. "You're nine, huh?" .men, then two others. Or four. Or ten. Or legions.. chorus with it.. "Right. The other-yes, question? .snake; no place will belong to Leilani, no smallest place. Usually she had only a corner, a nook, a. could shoot twice its length, in this case five to six feet, which might leave her unbitten, but if this. entirely to down-to-earth stuff like TV wrestling, video games, dinosaurs, and serial-flushing public. Colman sighed. "It's not anything like that.

It's just--" Anita waved a hand in front of her face. "It's okay. You don't want me around... you don't want me around. It's okay." Her voice was staging to rise and fall singsong fashion. "Who says I need anybody to have a good time, anyhow? I'm fine, see. It's okay .... You and lay can go talk about brains and trains." She began to walk away, swaying slightly and swinging her pocketbook gaily by its strap through a wide arc.

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