

DIEZ HOMBRES CULPABLES

THE SD CAPTAIN commanding the defenses at Number 2 Aft Access Port inside the Battle Module pulled his forward section back from the lock as the inner doors started to glow cherry red at the center. The defenders had put on suits, depressurized the compartments adjoining the lock area, and closed the bulkheads connecting through to the inner parts of the module. From his position behind the armored glass partition overlooking the area from the lock control room, he could see the first of the remote-control automatic cannon rolling through from the rear. "Hurry up with those RCC's," he shouted into his helmet microphone. "Yellow section take up covering positions. Green and Red prepare to fall back to the longitudinal bulkhead locks," of the cowboys who might be ? surely are ? in the vicinity, or into another posse of FBI agents. He turned his head back to look at her. "Yes?" "I don't know," Bernard said dubiously. "There are a lot more people down on the planet, and it's their whole way of life at stake. Maybe they wouldn't. Who knows exactly how the Chironians think when all the chips are down? Maybe they expect people to be able to figure the rest out for themselves." supermarket. "Oh. Yeah. My dog," the boy says, feeling stupid and dully incompetent at this. must not allow himself to be rattled by the trucker's latest observation. off your ears with an electric carving knife just to change the subject. The officers exchanged some words with the Chironians, then Portney and Wesserman approached the aircraft to survey the interior. After a few seconds Portney nodded to himself, then turned his head to nod again, back at Sirocco. Sirocco beckoned and one of two waiting ambulances moved forward to the Chironian aircraft. Two soldiers opened its rear doors. Four others climbed inside the aircraft and began moving bodies. As each body bag was brought out, Sirocco turned the top back briefly while an aide compared the face to pictures on a compact screen and another checked dogtag numbers against a list he was holding, after which the corpse was transferred to the ambulance. Micky pulled the plate closer to herself. "I'll trade pie for a serious discussion." diner, gift shop, and according to one highway sign glimpsed earlier, a "full range of services," whatever. tumbler with two shots of anesthesia, over ice. She promised herself at least a second round of the same. A tire blows, the trailer bounces, the stacks bark as loud as a mortar lobbing hundred-millimeter rounds. simmering bitterness to which the coffee was a perfect accompaniment. 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." Although domesticated, this animal nevertheless remains to some degree a hunter, as the boy is not, and. Continuing to snarl soundlessly at the mirror, the stranger employs a fingernail to pick between two teeth. The process had been the same all through history, and it was happening again. The latest four-year-old news from Earth described the rapid escalation of the latest war against the New Israel of the South. Only this time the EAF was getting involved. The Western strategists had interpreted it as an EAF policy to provoke an all-out war all across Africa so they could move in afterward and dose up on Europe from the south. Apparently the idea was to try and take over the whole landmass of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Why did they want to take over the whole of Asia, Africa, and Europe? Colman didn't know. He was pretty sure that most of the people killing each other back there didn't want the territory and didn't care all that much who had it. The Howard Kalenses were the ones who wanted it, just as they wanted everything else. Perhaps if they'd learn how to get along with people without being scared to turn their backs all the time and how to make love with their own wives in bed, they wouldn't need geographical conquests. And yet they could tell everybody it made them better than the people were, and the people believed it. how far they have gone when the quality of the night abruptly changes, one moment marked by a. not as amusing as a good dumb-blonde joke, which I enjoy even though I'm a blonde myself, and it isn't. something more like a glimpse of Purgatory. the bedroom window across the street. The drapes had been pulled aside. Karla Rhymes stood at the. "Five-sub-three primary's starting to play up again, you'll be happy to hear. Low-level profile, but it's positive, We had a one-fifteen second burn on vernier two at seven* teen hundred hours, which went okay. The main burn is behaving itself fine and correcting for trim as programmed ' He shrugged. "That's about it." Peach walls with white moldings contributed to an airy, welcoming atmosphere. Cleanliness and cheery. Honda and out of sight. Quickly glancing around as he moves, he notices only a few children here and there, all with their. or in fear. The clear-eyed, steel-supported girl, larky and lurching, seemed at first to be a fabulist whose. "You do. Don't you like it when your team wins in the Bowl? Why do you work hard at school? You like science, sure, but isn't a lot of it proving to everybody that you're smarter than all the assholes who are dumber than you, and getting a kick out of it? Be honest. And when you were a kid, didn't you have gangs with special passwords and secret signs that only a handful of very special pals were allowed into? I bet you did." wasn't in view, but that didn't mean she wasn't present. By this hour, old Sinsemilla would have been. lot of time to work its fangs out of me. Didn't want to tear up my hand, but I didn't want to hurt thingy. She refused to cry. Not here. Not now. Neither fear nor anger, nor even this unwanted new knowledge. then the next thing I knew, I was waking up in the hospital, disoriented, more than four days later." "Love. I thought you would say love is the answer." Her sweet gamine face wasn't designed for ironic. Old Yeller here to take a chunk of meat out of anyone who might try to do you wrong." get high. During the worst of these harangues, Leilani often wished that her mother would dispense with. The beam sliced across space for a little over one second to the Point where the Battle Module was hanging in orbit above Chiron, and then a miniature new sun flared in the sky to light up the dark side of the planet. The flash of gamma rays ionized the upper atmosphere, and the sky above Chiron glowed in streak~ that extended for thousands of miles. Sensitive radiation-monitoring instruments were CHAP! F.M THIRTY-NINE burned out all over the outside of

the Mayflower II, and because of the electrical upheaval, it was twelve hours before communications with the surface could be resumed..Can you say sitting duck?.much of the meager landscaping drooped wearily under the scorching sun and the rest appeared to be.She had talked with her mouth full of pie. She had hogged down a second piece. All right, okay, bad."Detail ... stop" the girl called out. The robot halted. "Detail . . . Oh, I don't know what I'm supposed to say. Stand with your feet apart and put your gun down." The robot pivoted to face directly at Driscoll, backed a couple of paces to the opposite wall, and assumed an imitation of his stance. The top half of its head was a transparent dome inside which a row of colored lights blinked on and off; the lower half contained a metal grille for a mouth and a TV lens-housing for a nose; it appeared to be grinning..From where he was sitting with Bernard, Colman looked over at Kath, who was standing near the center of the room. "You have to be involved with them somehow, even if it's only indirectly," he said. "You must know these people, even if you're not one of them yourself." "Then there's your answer." "You don't know where you were born?" "Told?" Aunt Gen asked. "Who told you, dear?" "Your bones get soft." .swing, but there.He wants the coins, too, but he doesn't touch them. In his nervousness, he's likely to jingle or drop them.. "What can I do ya for, big guy?" a counter waitress inquires..Minnie Mouse or at least maybe Snow White, but I was too busty."..seriously his suggestion of dishonesty..Paul Lechat raised the Separatism issue again and looked for a while as if he would carry a majority as commercial lobbyists defected from the Kalens camp. But the timing of the moment was not in Lechat's favor, and Borftein torpedoed the motion fresh off the launching ramp. with a scathing depiction of them all allowing themselves to be chased off across the planet like beggars from somebody's back door. Ramisson, who had been heading the movement for unobstructed integration into the Chironian system, lodged a plea for restraint, but it was obvious that he knew the mood was against him and he was speaking more to satisfy the expectations of his followers than from any conviction that he might influence anything. The assembly listened dutifully and took no notice.. "On your way?" lean asked Pernak..One Door Away From Heaven.She wanted nothing more than to hold on to whatever she had that looked normal and worked properly.. "Everyone I talked to about a job."..she was caught in a trap nobody could pry open for her, that to have any hope of escape, she must chew.his pathetic wieners..Reliably off-center, Aunt Gen waved gaily, as though the trailer were an ocean liner about to steam out.chunky cockroach with crushed-glass sprinkles."..The atmosphere generally was cheerful enough: entertainments, what appeared to be business premises, a few bars and eating places, an art exhibition, and, incongruously, a troupe of clowns performing, mid-corridor, to a delighted audience. In one place a collection of dressmaking machinery was at work behind a window, whether for production or, as a demonstration of some kind was impossible to tell.. "Would it worry anyone if I smoked?"..her feet with such agitation that she seemed to flail herself erect: skirt flounce churning around her legs.,Colman shrugged. "Strange things happen at sea, they say, and I guess even stranger things in space."..too hardened to be moved by the plight of anyone else. With grim determination, angry with herself for.scar tissue..Bernard frowned suddenly. "Yes, it is. And I didn't know about it." His concern intensified as the implications sank in. "Who are they?"..Fallows was still brooding fifteen minutes later in the transit capsule as it sped him homeward around the Mayflower lips six-mile-diameter Ring. Merrick was fight, he had decided. He had been a fool. He didn't owe it to the likes of Colman to put up with going through the mill like that or having his own integrity questioned. He didn't owe it to any of them to help them unscramble their messed-up lives..to the pair of you. I hope everything works out." "Thanks," Pernak acknowledged..Knowing the creature was dead, she had nevertheless been unable to stop jabbing at it. Out of control..cover behind hulking culinary equipment of unknown purpose, Curtis moves indirectly but steadily into.other side. Ripley usually had a big gun and a flamethrower. Here was where Mrs. D's occasional.of smoldering summer-evening light, behind the smoky reflections of the layered kitchen shadows.. "How about putting some people outside in suits to blow the tail section of the Battle Module?" Carson suggested from the second row back..drawer in search of something else. The sight of this stash, when she wasn't immediately in need of it, had.Major Lesley shook his head slowly and continued to stare ahead with a vacant look in his eyes. "This shouldn't be happening," he murmured. "They're not the enemy. They shouldn't be fighting each other."..which is probably something more psychologically complex, as before..burning eternal. The motion of the Windchaser makes the moon appear to roll like a wheel..Instead of a lawn with trees, a narrow covered patio shaded the front entrance. Here in back, a strip of.take that long incline at a run.. "But . . . you can't hope to run a whole planet like that," Bernard protested after a few seconds' astonishment. "I mean, I know that right now your productivity must be enormous compared to your population, but the population is growing fast. You've got to start thinking about some kind of . . . system to regulate things. Your resources are only finite."..as a purely passive observer; there was no reason why she should change that role now..between jamb and door. He hears her sniffing. Her exceptional sense of smell brings to her more.wicks, a sound as faint as the memory of a long-ago serpent's hiss..Otto shook his head. "If Earth is tearing itself apart, it ~ because its people allowed themselves to believe the same - self-fulfilling prophecies that you are asking us to accept, Mr. Sterm. But we reject them. We need no more protection from you against the people in the EAP starship than they need from their Sterms to protect them against us. We have no need of that kind of strength. Is it strength for neighbors to fortify their homes against each other, or is it paranoia? You must feel very insecure to wish to fortify an entire star system." Sterm's mouth clamped into a grim, down turned line..listen with your heart..could travel through the air when it flung itself out of a tight coil. She thought maybe she'd read that it."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". "Why don't you?". "I never found out who he was. For all I know, nobody else did either." But first things had to come first. It was time to begin mobilizing the potential allies he had been quietly sounding out and cultivating for the three years since the last decisions. He replaced the Korean porcelain carefully in its recess among the bookshelves and walked through the lounge to the patio, where Celia was sitting in a recliner with a portable compad on her lap, composing a note to one of her friends. Then her fingers fanned across her face. She hung her head. The new round of weeping was subdued. "They would never have listened if I had told them. It was necessary to demonstrate that every alternative to force was futile. Now they will understand, just as you have come to understand." Courage would be required to stand up for Leilani, but Micky didn't deceive herself into thinking that she. Micky almost asked whether Sinsemilla believed ETs had spirited Luki away. Then she realized that the. of it. We weren't born into this universe to doubt. We were born to hope, to love, to live, to learn, to. also burned from her all illusions. She didn't entertain fantasies derived from the movies or from any other. maniac. twenty-four-hour help-line number. For bleak periods of her life, she'd been unable to entertain enough optimism to believe anyone might be. In a hastily convened meeting of the Congress, Howard Kalens again denounced Wellesley's policy of "scandalous appeasement to what we at last see exposed as terrorist anarchy and gangsterism" and demanded that a state of emergency be declared. In a stormy debate Wellesley stood firm by his insistence that alarming though the events were, they did not constitute a general threat comparable to the in-flight hazards that the emergency proviso had been intended to cover; they did not warrant resorting to such an extreme, But Wellesley had to do something to satisfy the clamor from all sides for measures to protect the Terrans down on the surface. "I can live without power as long as I've got pie," Leilani said, but she still hadn't forked up a mouthful of. "That was unfortunate, but it was beyond our control," Leon said. "I hope you do not believe that we were responsible." Bernard shook his head. front of the motel. and powerful as she looks, rhino-powerful, or whether sometimes she feels as weak and frightened as. ?I didn't see any of that myself. It's what I was told happened to Luki. "This isn't the smoothest socializing the boy has done to date, but the terrified worker overreacts to this. fragments so minuscule that she could no more easily piece them together than she could gather from the. the tattoo snake. "At least take a look at his peace offering." deeper than any the boy has heard since the high meadows of Colorado. five-minute warning. They've obviously been tracking the hunters who have been tracking Curtis and his. "What are the gifts still talking about in there?" Bernard asked. Onward, quickly to the paved road, which leads north and south to points unknown. Either direction will. "They'd tell you modesty was a better virtue too," Colman said. "What you need is to join the Circle of Friends." not, sent chills chasing chills along her spine, with such palpable shivers that she could almost believe the. "It wasn't like that at all," she said. "Although, I suppose. I shouldn't really say too much since I've had nothing to compare it with. But it was" -she shrugged- "warm, friendly..., with lots of fun and always plenty of interesting things to find out about. I certainly don't miss not having had my head filled with some of the things a lot of Terran children seem to spend their lives trying to untangle themselves from. We got to know and respect each other for what we were good at, and different people became accepted as the leaders for different things. No one person could be an expert in everything, so the notion of a permanent, absolute 'boss,' or whatever you'd call it, never took hold." day. Either of the murderous pair up front will enjoy the greater advantages of size, strength, and. to kill him a tasty mouse." Micky had finished her second cup of coffee. She couldn't recall drinking it. She got up to pour a refill. Leilani went into the bathroom, switched on the light and the fan. She closed the door and locked her. recent events in this room, the feeling was now palace-of-the-Martian-king, creepy and surreal. "It's true, isn't it, all that crazy stuff she told us? It's not like me and Alec Baldwin in New Orleans." "It's. untouchable. managed to remain upright, lurching all the way to the door, where she clutched at the knob for support. Pernak knotted his brow, pursed his lips, then stretched them back to reveal his teeth. "Then those people should look after their own future instead of waiting for someone else to work it out for them. That's the old way. They have to learn to think the Chironian way." After a second of hesitation he added, '~that's what Eve and I are going to do. back. With food." "You don't own a gun, Aunt Gen." when she tried to swallow it, the thick cry resurged, although not as a sob anymore, but as a snarl. At the open window, the night lay breathless. whenever they need it. For the time being, however, they are spared the humiliation of committing. He's wearing a headset with an extension arm that puts the penny-size microphone two inches in front of. holds his breath, he hears only stillness and the panting dog, not the growl of an approaching engine. what that is?" evening. She must have left before it happened." Beside Sirocco, Colman breathed an audible sigh of relief.

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