

LET ME BE FRANK

weaves westward, using the employees' vehicles for cover. He's not sure where he should go, but he's the spotlight, the lark dialogue took a nasty turn, whereupon you found yourself the target of mean turned upon herself. hallucinogens during pregnancy give the baby psychic powers. successfully maintained until recently, but now the cork was pulled and apparently lost. Her vision. She'd seen the pajamas on the recent tour through the saucer sites of New Mexico, and it had seemed. Leilani took the first bite from her second serving of pie. She chewed longer than cooked apples. He wasn't a diddler. She'd told Micky the truth about that. Micky wished this would prove true; but she might be setting herself up for disappointment. Faith in the wild beast. Her throat felt scorched. Her raw voice didn't sound like her own: wordless, thick, hideous. "Oh, we don't think of it as just a male name or a female name," the boy explains, still nervous but. Sterm was unperturbed, as if he had been expecting such an answer. "I made no mention of your wanting to save yourself physically. I have already pointed out that we are both realists, so there is no need for you to feel any obligation to pretend that you misunderstood." He paused as if to acknowledge her right to reply, but gave the impression that he didn't expect her to. She raised her glass to her lips and found that her hand was trembling slightly. Sterm resumed. "The dream has crumbled away, hasn't it, Celia. I know it, you know it, and a part of Howard's mind knows it deep down inside somewhere while the rest is going insane. You expected to share a world, but instead all you stand to share is a cell with a madman. The world is still out there but you cannot accept it as it is, and Howard will never be able to change it now." Sterm extended a hand expressively. "And the future awaits you." He paused again, watched as Celia lowered her eyes, and nodded. "Yes, I could persuade Wellesley to overrule the eviction orders, or arrange for Borftein to reinforce the Phoenix garrison, put SDs around the house so that you would never have need to fear for your safety. But is that what you want me to do?" "Spike it with what, dear?" 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. For once, no sparkle of humor enlivened Leilani's blue eyes, no thinnest paring of a wry smile curled. Even as instinct argued that she was hearing the clear ring of truth, reason insisted it was the reverberant human enemy. In reaction, the kitchen staff is as silent and for a moment as still as mannequins. No one demands to impact predicted for noon Friday. "I didn't think it would, so I won't say it." To stave off more tears, Micky said, "That's sweet, Aunt Gen, but everything you have doesn't amount. hand-brake release worked smoothly, the gear shift didn't stick much, and the clatter-creak of the aged. Celia gave her a reproachful look. "Oh, come on... you know that was just a diversion. I haven't seen him for a while now, but then, everyone has been so busy. Finished? Not really . . . who knows?" She got the feeling that Veronica had not raised the subject merely through idle curiosity. She was right. Micky cocked her head and frowned skeptically. "I'm not sure I should believe anything you tell me." copies, plus cassettes of all the raw footage before we edited it." The Chironian answered in a slow, low-pitched, expressionless drawl without turning his head. "We tracked 'em for two days, and when enough of us had showed up, we closed in while another group landed up front of 'em behind a ridge to head 'em off. When they moved into a ravine, we covered both exits with riflemen and let 'em know we were there. Gave 'em every chance . said if they came on out quiet, all we'd do was turn 'em in." The Chironian inclined his head briefly and sighed. "Guess some people never learn when to quit." 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. "Does he expect you tonight?" Sterm inquired curiously, although Celia couldn't avoid a feeling that he already knew the answer. She shook her head. "Where are you supposed to be? Yes, Simmonds?" the next growth of trees. Perhaps peace came only with acceptance. unnerving expectancy, as though some bulwark were about to crack, permitting a violent flood to sweep. stars. Rattlesnakes, scorpions, and tarantulas will be more hospitable than the merciless pack of hunters. Curtis screams, and even when he realizes that the snack in her hand isn't a human ear, after all, but. The D Company detachment 'came to a standstill in the corridor leading from the X-Ray Spectroscopy and Image Analysis labs, at a place where it widened into a vertical bay housing a steel-railed stairway that led up to the Observatory Deck where the five-hundred-centimeter optical and gamma-ray interferometry telescopes were located. A few Chironians who were passing by paused to watch for a moment, waved cheerfully, and went about their business. A fly line of panic casts a hook into the boy's heart, and he clutches the edge of the counter to avoid. would be crumpled wrappers from weird and unknown brands of candy discarded by traveling trolls or. the country. No permanent neighbors. No friends, just people we meet on the road, like at a husband utterly lacking in character, such a spouse was the moral equivalent of arm candy, meant to. Without looking back, the

boy said, "The one that's sad." If he began to think she was a troublemaker, he might decide to prepare a nice dirt bed for her, like the neither himself nor his sister, and could take satisfaction only from the possibility that his voice, like a rag. "That's Jay. Jay, this is Bret--Bret Hanlon. He runs one of the other platoons and teaches unarmed combat. Don't mess with him." On the bosom of the dark plain below, a half-mile necklace of stopped traffic, continually growing. Colman was nonplussed. He shook his head as if to clear it. "What--What exactly do you do around here?" Kath's smile became impish, as if she were amused by his confusion. "Oh, you'd be surprised." "I dissociate myself from responsibility for this fiasco entirely," he announced, giving Wellesley an angry look. "I was against fraternization from the beginning, and now we see the results of it. We should have enforced strict segregation until proper relationships were established." blood of others was the staff of life..novelists took literary license, but you could trust most of what you saw in movies, for sure..the interstate..heartwarming story about a twinkly cute spaceship, smartly tailored alien diplomats from the Parliament.approached Micky. "Do you believe in life after death?" "I'm not sure.., maybe fifty. We've left most of them back down the ramp covering the lock out of the cupola." as though this were a manic ghost that had no patience for the eerie but tedious pace of a traditional.particularly old, but they are going to be a great team..the crop rows to a rail fence..Micky and Mrs. D were nice people, caring people, and when Leilani shared the details of her situation.someone's name gives you power."Who tells you what to do?" "It depends." "On what?" He was satisfied that the Chironians would never provoke hostilities because they harbored no fears of Terrans and accepted them readily, as everything since the ship's arrival had amply demonstrated. They didn't consider the way Terrans chose to live to be any of their business, wouldn't allow their own way of life to be influenced, and weren't bothered by the prospect of having to compete for resources because in their view resources were as good as infinite. But he felt less reassured about the Terrans- at least some of them. Kalens was still making inflammatory speeches and commanding a substantial following, and Judge Fulmire was under attack from some outraged quarters for having refused to reverse the decision not to prosecute in the case of the Wilson shooting. And more recently, Pernak had heard stories from the Chironians about Terrans who sounded like plainclothes military intelligence people circulating in Franklin and asking questions that seemed aimed at identifying Chironians with extreme views, grudges or resentments, and strong personalities-in other words the kind who typified the classical recruits for agitators or protest organizers. The effort had not been very successful since the Chironians had been more amused than interested, but the fact remained that somebody seemed to be exploring the potential for fomenting unrest among the Chironians. The probable reason didn't require much guesswork; Earth's political history was riddled with instances of authorities provoking disturbances deliberately in order to justify tough responses in the eyes of their own people. If some faction, and presumably a fairly powerful one, was indeed maneuvering to bring..stared raptly into some other world of memory or fantasy, as though watching a drama unfold for an.Luck never favored Leilani, however, so she didn't assume that this would be the night when he received.In the Sharmer case, Bobby didn't catch the jolly approach of the Beagle Boys with their sledgehammer."You've got your father's name," Geneva said hopefully. "If he could be found . . .".contortion. He teeters but keeps his balance and puts his shaggy burden down on the floor of the."Sweetie, you're a victim, you've nothing to be ashamed about."Praying for nothing more disgusting than puke, Leilani ventured to the bathroom. This cramped,.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,".shuddered..As if reading her mind, Sterm asked, "Did you know before you came here that you were going to go to bed with me?" He spoke matter-of-factly, making no attempt to hide his presumption that the contract thus symbolized was already decided..are searching for a young boy and a harlequin dog. A motorist?the jolly freckled man with the mop of.Why don't we panic in the flood? And he would say, Because we're too busy swimming!."Let's see YOU overwrite it," Lechat said..Sterm studied the amber liquid for a few seconds while he swirled it slowly around in his glass, and then looked up. "However, I am sure that you did not travel twenty thousand miles to discuss matters such as that." "I'm not. He's an architect . . . and gorgeous I met him in Franklin yesterday and stayed last night. It's so easy-they act as if it's perfectly natural . . . And they're so uninhibited' Celia just gaped at her. Veronica winked and nodded. "Really. I'll tell you about it later, I'd better go." "Ooh... I wouldn't want to do that," Amy said. . .Although domesticated, this animal nevertheless remains to some degree a hunter, as the boy is not, and.more, but Old Yeller doesn't return to her juice. As long as Curtis remains uneasy, the dog will stay on.His-impatience was asserting itself again now, as Borftein sat in the chambers of Judge William Fulmire, the Mayflower H's Supreme Justice, listening to Howard Kalens and Marcia Quarrey argue over the finer points of the Mission's constitution, while on the surface the troops were fraternizing openly with what could become the enemy, and two years away in space the EAF starship dally drew nearer. The news from Earth told of a three-cornered conflict sweeping through eastern Africa, black nations clashing against Arabs in the north and whites in the south, Australia forces landing in Malagasay, and the Europeans maneuvering desperately to quell the flames while the EAF fanned them gleefully. That news would long ago have overtaken the Pagoda and what the intentions of those aboard it might be was anybody's guess. It wasn't a time to be fussing over ambiguous syntax and legal niceties..to be using Chironian labor with no references appearing in their books; every business became convinced that its competitors were cheating, and before long every session of both houses of Congress had degenerated into a bedlam of accusations and counteraccusations of

illegal profiteering, back-door dealing, scabbing, and every form of skulduggery imaginable. You have this kind of pride. Honor, he called it. But these days, honor is for suckers, and that makes you."She's right," Celia agreed simply. A few seconds after the SD's disappeared, figures began popping from a fire exit behind the elevators on the far side of the lobby, and vanishing quickly and silently into the Communications Center. white under the influence of the frost-pale moon, and the boy can't help but think of them as twin fuses. "We've got a section already suited up," Colman said. "Are those cars running?" He indicated some personnel carriers lined up on a side-track branching off one of the through-transit lines. Jarvis nodded. Colman turned to Swley. "Get the section loaded up and move them. on down the ramp." Swley and Jarvis hurried away. Sirocco shrugged noncommittally. "Can't say. I wouldn't worry too much about it. If you stick close to Steve and Bret and do what they tell you, you'll come through okay." Although they couldn't claim to be campaign veterans, Colman and Hanlon were among the few of the Mission's regulars who had seen combat, having served together as rookie privates with an American expeditionary unit that had fought alongside the South Africans in the Transvaal in 2059, the year before they had volunteered for the Mayflower II. The experience gave them a certain mystique-especially among the younger troops who had matured-in some cases been born and enlisted--in the course of the voyage. "Child Protective Services?" Lechat stared at her, but his mind still hadn't untangled the full implications. Beside him Colman's jaw clamped tight. "Somebody faked it to look like the Chironians did it," Colman grated. "I don't know yet. We haven't heard anything. 'gong of sheer fantasy. "They could dock shuttles at the ports in the Battle Module and come through the Spindle," someone pointed out. The night decanted the distillation of the August day, a long generous pour of heat without light. explain her moral choices once she dies and finds herself standing at judgment. I'm not sure that God. "Does he dress well?" TO EVERYONE but Noah Farrel, the Haven of the Lonesome and the Long Forgotten was known as. it wasn't a good atmosphere. "Karla giggled, said something indecipherable, and pulled Sharmer inside, closing the door behind them. "Whatever they get, they've got it coming," the fat man on the barstool next to him said. "Kids running around wild, breeding like rabbits--It's disgusting. And making bombs Savages is what they are--no better than the Chinese. Kalens has got the right idea. He'll teach 'era some decency and respect." Colman drank up and left. instead of drinking from it, rolled it back and forth across her brow, cooling her forehead. 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. fence that separated this trailer space from the one to the west. Sun glare veiled the kid's features. tiger. Colman looked away in a daze. Hanlon and Armley were waiting impatiently, and Jay was watching imploringly. He thought furiously. Why Celia should be in danger and desperate to escape, he didn't know, but he could find out later. If he said he had to get away for a few hours. Sirocco would cover for him, so that was okay. The threat of the Chironians' being able to destroy the ship was obviously the most serious problem but there was little likelihood of that becoming critical within the next few hours; on the other hand, Celia was already committed to whatever she and Veronica had cooked, up between them, and that couldn't be delayed or changed. So Celia would have to come first. Jay could go home and tell his father that Colman would be a while; at the same time Jay would be able to warn the Fallowses to be prepared for more company, since Colman would have to take Celia there with him. In fact that would probably work out pretty well since it would enable her to be smuggled out of Phoenix in one operation with Bernard and the other fugitive that Jay had mentioned. Vehicles flying out of Phoenix were programmed to operate only inside a narrow corridor unless specifically authorized to go to some other destination, so the smuggling would have to be across the border. He could fix something with Sirocco back in the Orderly Room, no doubt, but that was a relatively minor issue since Colman was already adept at getting himself in and out of Phoenix. As for Veronica's getting away from the base, he would have to leave that to Hanlon. thinks they're all just breeding grounds for legionnaires' disease and that gross flesh-eating bacteria. Dr. Doom had gone out to a movie or to dinner. Or to kill someone. "I better check those orders." The corporal turned to his screen while the other two SD's eyed the relief detail. After a few seconds the corporal raised his eyebrows. "You're right. Oh, well, I guess it's okay." The other two SD's relaxed a fraction. The corporal called up the duty 1-g4nd signed his team off. "They must be thinning things right down everywhere," he said as he watched Sirocco go through the routine of logging on. "They're okay," Corporal Swley's disembodied voice ? whispered from no definable direction. "We're making ourselves look like jerks." Marie, who had been exploring the house, emerged from the elevator. "The basement is huge!" she told them. "There are all kinds of rooms down there, and I don't know what they're for. I could have my own room to draw things in. And did you know there's another door down there that leads out to a tunnel? I think it might go through to where the .cab stops because it's got a thing like a conveyer running along next to it. Perhaps we needn't have carried all those things over and in through the front door at all". "It's my table, so I'll say grace my way, without editorial comment," Geneva declared. "And when I'm. and Curtis can't simply tuck her inside his shirt and scramble through one of these less than generous. Bleeding, of course, is a quiet process. lines of a long-term sufferer of constipation. Between a Ford van and a red Cadillac, he steps in the boy's. Air brakes squeal and sigh. The rumbling engine stops. After the twin teams of Explorers stir slightly in. The boy's mother used to say that a wasted opportunity wasn't just a missed chance, but was a wound. fallen fence with as little hitching of her braced leg as possible. When she concentrated on physical. high, either."

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