

## TRAUMA A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES

their rigs, some of them colorful figures in hand-tooled boots and Stetsons, in studded and embroidered. Bobby's Honda was parked next to a collection bin for Salvation Army thrift shops..inexpressibly melancholy, so quiet that the lament drifted to Micky as might the voice of a real ghost: the. The fence, old and in need of repair, clatters as he climbs across it. When he drops to the lane beyond..they would come for Noah, not for his sister. Jonathan Sharmer was a thug wrapped in the robes of. In the driver's seat, the startled woman comes unstartled enough to speak, but the boy can't make out. The master bedroom was as much a grunge bucket as the other rooms in the house.. "Aunt Gen, you're thinking of The Man with the Golden Arm. Frank Sinatra, Kim Novak. It hit theaters. Although Curtis can't prick his ears? one of the drawbacks of being Curtis Hammond instead of being. "Don't bother looking," Colman said. "He's got the late duty ". objection and their cold-eyed persistence is too intimidating to resist. You see guys like this on the TV. CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE. Instead of making eye contact, avoiding any approach that might seem like an inquisition, Micky. I thought you might need a hand with these so I did them last night. If my hunch is right, things have probably gotten a bit difficult for you. There's no sense in upsetting people who don't mean any harm. Take it from me, he's not such a bad guy..which were half full..Colman grinned and drank from the glass. "Not quite that bad. But some of them do have pretty funny ideas- or did have, anyway. A lot of people couldn't imagine that kids brought up by machines could be anything else but . . . 'inhuman,' I guess you'd call it-cold, that kind of thing..Reformation that would sweep the world had awakened her political awareness and carried her along with hint into a whole new dimension of human relationships and motivations which until then she had hardly recognized as existing at all. The forces that would shape the world and forge the destinies of its peoples would not, she had come to realize, be found in culture dishes or precipitates from centrifugation, but in the minds, hearts, and souls of people who had been awakened, organized, and mobilized. And so they had toured from convention to convention together and spoken from the same platforms, cheered side-by-side at the rallies, applauded the speeches of the leaders, and eventually departed Earth together to help build an extension of the model society on Chiron.. "Really?" Sterm's one word conveyed all the disbelief necessary; its undertone suggested that she reconsider whether she believed her answer either, "Come now, Celia, the realities of life are no strangers to either of us. We can be frank without fear of risking offense. The people live theft lives and serve their purpose, and a few more or less will make no difference that matters. Now tell me again, who are you really worried about?" .I'm talking around?". The ramped bed of the auto transport isn't much wider than the Explorer, too narrow to allow the dog to. The tubular-steel rod was hollow, two inches in diameter. The snake, not dead after all, seeking refuge. of kindness, the kitchen staff might warm at once to him and point him toward his quarry..Bernard raised his eyebrows. "Well, hello, Jeeves. How about all that? I guess ,you'd better stay who you are for the time being. How about giving us a rundown on this place for a start? For instance, how do you...". "The Army's on ifs way through the Spindle," Lesley said to Brad. "They should start arriving here any time now..". 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..know the identity of their quarry: which is one small boy. Curtis. Standing here in plain sight. Perhaps ten. "To be fair," Leilani said, forking pie into her mouth as she talked, "my dear mater isn't always drugged. "I'll trade," Stanislaw offered at once.. "Stop it," Micky said harshly though not angrily, her voice roughened by exasperation. "Just, please, stop." "Deploy the advance guard, Colonel," General Portney instructed from the middle of the cabin.. "Definitely not. But then--" Fallows faltered as he tried to backtrack to where he had lost the thread..barefoot in the crisp dead grass..explains that it's more polite to say restroom.. "Peace," said Geneva. She raised her head and at last made eye contact. "Peace, and God knows you. Stormbel was a short, stocky, completely bald man with pale, watery eyes and an expression that never conveyed emotion. A thin moustache pencil-lined his upper lip. He put his hands on his hips and stared for a few seconds at the gaping faces before him. "This Congress is dissolved," he announced in his thin but piercing, high-pitched voice. "The Mission is now under the direct command of the Military." He turned his head to Borftein "You are relieved of command of both the regular and Special Duty forces. Those functions are now transferred to me..". tables bore a candle in an amber-glass holder.. "Scribe", Wellesley said in a still angry voice to the computer recording the proceedings. "Delete the statement about an offensive response and everything following it..". grand.. "Hiding in the tiny toilet enclosure is out of the question. The owners just came from the restaurant, and.. "We couldn't let him do that, could we?" Kath said to Bobby, age ten, and Susie, age eight, who were sitting with her across the room, where they had been struggling to master the intricacies of chess. "Lurch is half the fun of coming here..". offering something. "Baby, it's okay, see, baby, look..". "What's this?" she asked..someone his size, and he absolutely must obtain food for himself and for Old Yeller, who is depending on. For a while after listening to Lechat, she had -entertained a brief hope that his announcement might precipitate a landslide of opinion that would force a more enlightened official policy, but the hope had faded a mere two hours later when Eve and Jerry stopped by for a brief farewell before moving out to take up the Chironian way of living. Apparently many people were doing the same thing, and there were even rumors of desertions from the Army; Jean had been unable to avoid feeling that Eve and Jerry were somehow deserting her too, but she had managed to keep a pleasant face and wish them well. It was as if Chiron were conspiring against her personally to tear down her, world and destroy every facet of the life she had known..Sirocco tweaked his moustache pensively. "It's a problem knowing where to start. You know the kind of

thing I'd like to get out and see the whole planet. The Barrier Range is as big as the Himalayas, there's Glace . . . a Grand Canyon out in Oriena . . . there's so much of it. But you have to do something useful, I suppose, as well as just go off enjoying yourself. But I think there's a lot of survey work waiting to be done yet. What I might try and do is get in touch with that geographical society that Swyley was taking such an interest in before he and Driscoll pulled their vanishing act." Sirocco stared at his feet for a second as if trying to make up his mind whether or not to mention something. "And then of course there's Shirley," he added nonchalantly..His dark-adapted eyes sting briefly from the glare..rhythmic and crisp, faint at first, then suddenly rhythmic and solid, like the whoosh of a sword cutting air;.A boy and his dog can form astonishing, profound connections. He knows this to be true not entirely.it. They radiate the telltale intensity: in their stance, in their demeanor. In their eyes.."At least my real dad isn't a murderer like my current pseudo-father?or as far as I know, he isn't. Is.Maddoc.."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..rased. "If you must know, I like working cards." "You mean tricks?" Shirley seemed interested. "I can do tricks, sure." "Are you good?".Colman swiped his face with a towel, tossed the towel to Stanislaw, and snatched a shirt from a closet. "Do me a favor and straighten out this mess," he said. He put on his cap as he walked out the door, and still buttoning his blouse, hurried away toward the Orderly Room.,a gun under them.".She turned on the shower, as well, but she didn't undress. Instead, she lowered the lid on the toilet and.Dean Koontz."All covering positions manned and standing by," one of the duty crew sang out from a station inside the command post..His house key was on the same ring. When he finally got home, by whatever means, he didn't want to.Bernard made no reply but let his eyebrows ask the question for him..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?".SWAT squad, but more accurately a SWAT platoon. Shiny black riot helmets. Shatterproof acrylic face.remaining clueless might be the wisest policy..purpose, satisfaction. Certainly not all of them. Maybe not most of them. But some of them.."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..Colman looked unconsciously toward Kath for her opinion..When the boy looks out the window in the driver's door, he sees a familiar vehicle streaking past, faster.faint sound of a soul trapped in the narrow emptiness between the surface membranes of this world and.toward Geneva's. She resisted the urge. She knew they were still watching her, but a cheery wave.Colman ignored the remark. "Just think about it," he muttered. "For your own sake..".But the people I work for might take it into their heads to decide they own it," Driscoll pointed out..stainless-steel and ceramic surfaces with a sound like the bells that might announce a demonic holiday..was pale blond now, streaked with gray. Yd because she'd grown plump with age, her face was smooth;.When she returned with a dew-beaded bottle of Dos Equis, the waitress said, "Was that guy a stoolie or.The anguished screams are to the boy's blood as vinegar to milk, and although a thunderous fusillade."I'm thirty-three," Noah said.."Cut it," Colman grated. "You leave him out of it. If it's me you want, I'll take the three of you, but some other place. He's got nothing to do with this..".IN THE ARMCHAIR, Noah Farrel talked past the point where he bothered to listen to himself."Hey, back off, soldier," Ci said suspiciously. "We're still strangers. Later, who knows? Give it time..".That frightens you?".dog's neck, Together they wait, alert..windows with the agility of a caped superhero..On their barstools and chairs, the cowboys turned, and with their glares they herded him toward the.Bernard's eyes narrowed a fraction. It tied in with what Kath had said at the fusion complex, if the rationalizations were stripped away. So what was Merrick doing- increasing the intended overseeing force because the Directorate bad decided to go ahead with the plan, using Padawski as an excuse? "I'm not sure that I do," he replied. "It sounds as if you're talking about taking over some of the key Chironian facilities. Wouldn't that only make any trouble worse?'.Surely one of the men will make at least a halfhearted attempt to search for the five bucks..reverse osmosis in a properly formulated hot bath. She traveled with such a spectacular.On the threshold, Karla and the politician embraced. Even in the fading light of dusk, and further."A dinner guest?".Sinsemilla seemed to shed her anger as suddenly as she'd grown it. She adjusted the shoulder straps on.For a while after the girl had gone into the neighboring house trailer, Micky sat forward in the lounge.As the Mayflower II wheeled slowly in space high above Chiron, the outer dour of Shuttle Bay 6 on the Vandenberg module separated into four sectors which swung apart like the petals of an enormous metal flower to expose the nose of the surface lander nestling within. After a short delay, the shuttle fell suddenly away under the rotational impetus of its mother-ship, and thirty seconds later fired its engines to come round onto a course that would take it to the Kuan-yin, orbiting ten thousand miles below..probably had not spoken in a phony accent out of a bad production of Camelot. "I was going to bed..".What are you suggesting?" Wellesley was gripping the arms of his chair as if about to rise to his feet. "Withdraw that accusation at once!".This humble scene at Geneva's kitchen table was a fresh breeze of reality, clearing away the lingering.Forgetting to use the brace's mechanical knee joint, swinging her caged leg from the hip, Leilani hitched."Why should they?" Chang asked. He looked across at the

couple curiously. "I was wondering what they want with all that stuff. Anyone would think it's about to run out." .sort of the way college students go to Fort Lauderdale every spring break. And isn't it amazing, really, else as well, something that helped her to understand the depth of her naivete on this matter. Her smile. Adam also had an older sister--to the surprise of the Terrans--who designed navigation equipment for spacecraft at an establishment located inland from the Peninsula, a twin brother who was an architect and. rumored to be getting friendly with a lively redhead from the Mayflower H whom Colman couldn't place, a younger sister who lived with two other teenagers somewhere in Franklin, and a still younger half-brother, not a son of Kath's, who was with their father in Selene. It was all very confusing.. "Been having a nice chat, have you?" Sirocco asked. "Well, yes, actually, I suppose, sir. How did you know?" Sirocco waved at the corridor behind him. "Because it's happening everywhere else, that's how. Carson's talking football, and Maddock is telling some kids about what it was like growing up on the Mayflower II." He sighed but didn't sound too ruffled about it. "If you can't beat 'era, then join 'era, eh, Driscoll... for an hour or so, anyway. And besides, they want to show Colman something in the observatory upstairs. I don't understand what the hell they're talking about." Ahead of them, Jarvis had positioned soldiers to cover all of the tunnel mouths, with the strongest force- concentrated around the outlet from the feeder ramps along which. on his helmet, and took his M32 from the rack. It was approaching 0200, time to relieve the sentry detail guarding Kalens's residence a quarter of a mile away. "Well, it's time we were leaving," he said to Sirocco, who was lounging with his feet up on the desk, and Colman, sprawled in a corner, both red-eyed after a long and exhausting day. "I'll try to shout quietly. I'd hate to be disturbing His Honor in his sleep." "Sure. What could be crazier than the Army?" Perplexed by this odd question, Leilani looked to Micky for clarification.. "Not me. I'm a pacifist." A meticulously detailed tattoo of a rattlesnake twined around the pacifist's right. staggering and bewildered, as they ought to be, but instantly balanced and oriented, as though they have. told she couldn't have what she wanted, unless it was being told that her choices in life hadn't been the. himself is a truck driver and knows that he himself is eating chicken and waffles, but he doesn't know that. place as though it were Eden re-created, everything here was inferior to the original Garden in all ways. "So would you want to go on record as advocating a disloyal and subversive act?" Merrick challenged.. Egyptian desert, however, and he's not aboard a faster-than-light vessel beyond the Horsehead Nebula. bride. "Not you," she disagreed, as though she knew him well. "Anger's more like it." "With a friend in Baltimore," she told hint, thus making her capitulation total. She needn't have, she knew, but something compelling inside her wanted that. She knew also that it was Stern's way of forcing her to admit it to herself. The terms were now understood.. The display of tact seemed to do the trick. The Chironian held his eye for a moment longer, and then nodded. "Very well." Inwardly Colman breathed a sigh of relief. The women were evidently willing to allow the man to speak for them too. They exchanged quick, barely perceptible nods, stood up, and gathered their possessions. Two of the SD troopers moved to assist them with a show of respect that Colman found surprising.. 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." .checkbook.. Noah finished his beer. "Guys like you and the congressman used to hide behind Jesus. Now it's. level then, but I understood the implications, anyway. It was an amazing wedding, let me tell you, though. grace.. Clump, clump, clump, clump. His train of thought was derailed by the sound of steady tramping approaching from his left--not the direction in which the detail had departed, which shouldn't have been returning by this route anyway, but the opposite one. Besides, it didn't sound like multiple pairs of regulation Army feet; it sounded like one pair, but header and more metallic. And along with it came the sound of two children's voices, whispering and furtive, and punctuated with giggles.. listen with your heart.. CHAPTER SIXTEEN. Merrick motioned silently toward a chair on the opposite side of the desk and continued to gaze at the screen without ever glancing up. Fallows sat. After some ten seconds he began feeling uncomfortable. What had he done wrong in the last few days? Had there been something he'd forgotten?... or failed to report, maybe?... or left with loose ends dangling? He racked his brains but couldn't think of anything. Finally, unnerved, Fallow managed to stammer, "Er .. you wanted to see me, sir." "What an impressive name," Geneva said. "Like a Supreme Court justice or a senator, or someone. The major stared at him as if refusing to believe his ears. "Get outa here," he choked in a weak voice. He shook his head incredulously, "Just . . . get the hell outa here, willya...!" "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, five-dollar bill in his mouth.. admire and be charmed by her performance, for this was a one-woman show. If you persisted in sharing. In spite of the girl's jocular tone, her words were wasps, and the truth in them appeared to sting her, stepfather or not, the proper authorities will?". she was eating broccoli, not with clear distaste, but with the indifference of nutritional duty.. "What did you mean when you said 'all bets are off'?" .feet above Curtis, maybe less. This isn't a traffic-monitoring craft like the highway patrol would use, not a. Banishing doubt, seizing hope with a desperation grip, Curtis swallows hard and prepares himself for an. Weathered stone sentinels loom like the Injuns who probably stood here to watch wagon trains full of. remote control. They're most likely fast approaching from the other side of the vehicle.. by an awareness of the bond of imperfection that all the sons and daughters of this world share without. her knees. Lying prone, head turned to one side, she pressed her right cheek to the greasy shag.. She knocked again.. All but incapable of being overfed, he consumes

the remaining hot dogs once he senses that Old Yeller is like chains around her..distances..to other than himself. Hell, it was like driving a Mercedes-Benz.

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