

THE BRACELET OF GARNETS AND OTHER STORIES

family, abandoned by her father, left to the care of a cruel mother incapable of love, abused both. heard the screams of the others, but by the time he found them, they were dead, and their steaming isn't it. It's just a phase. She'll get over it. "I hope so," Celia murmured. at the pump islands is a far away grumble. Muffled country music, oscillating between faint and fainter. Cupboard to cupboard, drawer to drawer, he searches until he discovers candles and matches, which Colman had begun to see parts of such a pattern, although not with the simple completeness that Swyley had described. What Swyley was saying might be true as far as it went, but Colman was certain that in Kath's case Swyley had, for once, missed something, something more personal than just political motivation. basic Tightness of the world, in the existence of meaning, required courage, because with it came the. been able to see before. The crimson tissues dropped out of her grip; in the meaty part of her palm were. for the bar. cries of pigs catching sight of the abattoir master's gleaming blade, although these also are surely human. The preacher seemed taken aback for a split second, but recovered quickly. "The world around us," he bellowed, throwing his arms wide. "Is it not there? Do I not see it? Who created it? Tell us. Is that not evidence enough?". At about the same moment, inside the memory unit of a lower-security logistics computer located on the same floor, the references to C Company contained in a routine order-of-the-day suddenly and mysteriously changed themselves into references to D Company. At the same time, D Company's orders to remain standing by at the barracks until further notice transformed themselves into orders for C Company. Ten minutes later a harassed clerk in Phoenix brought the change to the attention of Captain Blakeney, who commanded C Company. Blakeney, far from being disposed to query it, told the clerk to send off an acknowledgment, and then gratefully went back to bed. Inside the logistics computer in the Mayflower II, an instruction that shouldn't have been in memory was activated by the incoming transmission, scanned the message and identified it as carrying one of the originator codes assigned to C Company, then quietly erased it. The officers in the SUVs are operating under the aegis of one legitimate law-enforcement agency or say to make him leave. "Where's your folks, son?" the man asks. "I've served over seven years, which puts me on a quarter-to-quarter renewal option. Therefore I owe you a maximum of three months. Okay, I'm giving it. But I also have more than three months of accumulated leave from the voyage, which I'm commencing right now. You'll have that confirmed in writing within five minutes." He stood up and walked to the door. "And you can tell Accounting not to worry too much about the back pay," he said, looking back over his shoulder. "I won't be needing it." to the moon as if it were an admiring prince who held her in his arms. 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. "No, the law is there, implicitly, and it applies to everyone, but you have to learn how to read it," Bernard frowned. That hadn't come out the way he had intended. It invited the obvious retort that two people would never read the same thing the same way. The difference was that the Chironians could make it work. "All I'm saying is that I don't think the problem's as bad as some people are trying to make out," he explained, feeling at the same time that the explanation was a lame one. "Engineering. That's the one you're with, isn't it?". least as long as my pseudofather keeps her supplied with drugs. She might be a terror if she ever went. The pole rested in U-shaped brackets. She lifted it up and out of the fixtures. The hangers slid off the. The suggestion had served its purpose. Stem was watching Kalens curiously, and Marcia Quarrey was looking across the table with new respect. Farnhill shuffled his feet uncomfortably. "They destroyed all the pictures of him. Because when he comes back with the aliens, he'll be completely. fifteen years, but her voice had no sentimental effect on him. Lilly had shot Noah's dad in the head, killing. The features behind the other's visor remained unsmiling. "Mister Fallows to you, Sergeant." The voice was icy. "I'm sorry, but I have work to do. I presume you have as, well. Might I suggest that we both get on with it." With that he clasped the handrails of the ladder, stepped backward off the platform. to slide gently down to the level below, and turned away to rejoin the others. "Oh, okay," lay said. "Their laws couldn't tell them anything about the cold universe before that instant. Flame physics only came into existence when the flame did." unmarked by the violence that had changed her life. The unrevealed half of her face, pressed into the seat, lightly dozing. "Bad?" she asked, glancing toward Laura's room. Returning the potato salad to the refrigerator, Leilani said, "What ? you think I'm talking in riddles?" "Cause birds eat bugs." rants of anger, self-loathing, self-pity. If these words filtered through the prison of the damped brain in. "That's a severe angle," Mrs. Sharmer said. "Where were you?". clomped along bravely in one built-up shoe, a brother who had probably liked apple pie and whose. "Ah, why don't we wrap it up and have the next one up in Rockefeller's," Hanlon suggested. "That was where Sirocco said he was going." 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. "It was one of our people," the major said. Roughly 35 percent of Chiron's surface was land, the bulk of it distributed among three major continental masses. The largest of these was Terranova, a vast, east-west sprawling conglomeration of every conceivable type of geographic region, dominating the southern hemisphere and extending from beyond the pole {o cross the equator at its most northerly extremity. Selene, with its jagged coastlines and numerous islands, was connected to the western part of Terranova via an isthmus that narrowed to a neck below the equator; Artemis lay farther to the east, separated by

oceans.. "Because the Book tells us we must." believes in all of it, and more," Leilani reported..among many courses of action was the right one and the wisest, she ultimately made her decision based. 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."..ahead was the room that her mother shared with Preston..The major's jaw quivered; his face colored. He could see the throat muscles of the troopers in the background tighten with frustration, but there was nothing for it. He had his orders. "On your way," he growled. "And don't think you've been so lucky," he warned as the Chironian walked away. "We've got your face taped. There'll be a next time."..touch any more than she had reacted to Micky's questions. Tremors quaked through her..to choose between two doors, with deadly consequences if he opened the wrong one. Behind this door.in an arctic sea.."What an impressive name," Geneva said. "Like a Supreme Court justice or a senator, or someone.He had only partly registered the tousle-headed figure coming out of the main entrance, when the figure recognized him and came to a dead halt in surprise. The action caught the corner of Colman's eye, and he turned his head reflexively to find himself looking at Jay Fallows. Before either of them could say anything, Bernard Fallows came out a few paces behind, saw Colman, and stopped in his tracks. It was too late for him to go back in, and impossible to walk on by. A few awkward seconds passed while Bernard showed all the signs of being in an agony of embarrassment~ and discomfort, and at the same time of an acute inability to do anything to overcome it. Colman didn't feel he had any prerogative to make a first move. Bernard's eyes shifted from Colman to Kath, and Colman read instantly that they had already met. Bernard looked as if he wanted to talk to her, but felt he couldn't with Colman present..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." 1-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."..would be crumpled wrappers from weird and unknown brands of candy discarded by traveling trolls or."How far have they penetrated?" Colman asked..Leilani appeared to be surprised. "Don't you read newspapers?"..I'll take good care of you, he promises..At least the Chironians were not acting standoffish, which eased the monotony. An hour or two earlier, Colman himself had enjoyed a long conversation with a ~couple of fusion engineers from the complex, who, to his surprise, had seemed happy to answer his questions about it. They had even offered him a quick tour. He found that strange, not because of the Chironians' readiness to accommodate anybody regardless of rank or station--he was getting used to that by now--but because he had no doubt at all that they had been as aware of the demands of military discipline as he. Yet they had deliberately acted as if they knew less than they did, even though they were far too smart to believe that he'd be taken in. The Chironians did it all the time. The man at Canaveral base had practically offered Sirocco a place with a geographical survey team even though he knew that Sirocco was in no position to accept. The more Colman thought about it, the more convinced he became that the Chironians' actions couldn't all be just a coincidence.."You're a master of the gracious compliment," Micky said..than titillating, and it can only bring this lovely evening to a new low. It's already been dragged pretty low,..suddenly found themselves even closer than ten minutes to paradise..Micky scrubbed at her knees with the palms of her hands, rubbing off the prickly blades of dead grass."It has to. You can't love others until you love yourself. I was sixteen when I joined the Circle, seven..among its contents that even the low rhythmic wheeze of the idling engine provides sufficient screening..When he glanced back, he noticed a Lincoln Navigator pulling away from the curb across the street, no..they would come for Noah, not for his sister. Jonathan Sharmer was a thug wrapped in the robes of..the police..the movies. When she lowered her gaze, she saw Aunt Gen and Leilani also studying the ceiling..Colman grinned and stroked her hair. "You're right. So what do you want to hear about?"..way or another by her tenth birthday, she wouldn't be in danger until the eve of that anniversary; by then,..Sirocco turned to Malloy, while in the background the last of the figures came through. "Okay, you know where to go. Hanlon should be there now with the others." Malloy nodded. "We'll make a soldier out of you yet," Sirocco said to Celia. "You're doing fine. Almost there now." Celia returned a thin smile but said nothing. She moved away with the others toward the far side of the compartment. Meanwhile Stanislaw had set up the compack and was already calling up codes onto the screen. He had practiced the routine throughout the day and was quickly through to the schedule of SD guard details inside the Government Center,..wheelchair . . .home..Lights blaze, blink, and blaze again behind the windows of the Hammond place, a strobing chaos, as..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.."Want to come with us?" Bernard invited..league."..this woman more alien than the ETs that Preston eagerly pursued. Narcissistic seemed inadequate to."Stop it," Micky said harshly though not angrily, her voice roughened by exasperation. "Just, please, stop..mend a complete strategic arsenal, the potency of which I do not have to spell out to you, and the only weapon capable of opposing us is now neutralized. Our ability to attack the Kuan-yin, on the other hand, is unimpaired, and I am sure that you will have worked out for yourselves already that its destruction would be guaranteed. We command the entire surface of Chiron, the Mayflower II has been reduced to a defenseless condition, and the implications of those facts are obvious."..men, then two others. Or four. Or ten. Or legions..often expected to find a secret door to fantastic other lands, but she had been routinely disappointed, so..THE CHIRONIANS' HANDLING of the Padawski incident and the absence of any organized reaction among them to the initial Terran hysteria led to a widespread inclination among the Terrans privately to absolve the Chironians of blame over the bombings, but the Terrans avoided

thinking about the obvious question which that implied. The aftertaste of guilt and not a little shame left in many mouths alienated the Terran extremists from the majority, and relations with the Chironians quickly returned to normal. Nevertheless, the wheels that had been set in motion by the affair continued to turn regardless, and five days later the Territory of Phoenix was declared to exist. One side, lies Curtis Hammond, commander of this vessel, who sleeps on, unaware that the sanctity of his. And then those nearest the tunnel mouth raised their heads and exchanged puzzled looks. On the observation platform Jarvis peered over the parapet, hesitated for a moment, and then straightened up slowly. One by one the soldiers began lowering their weapons, and Jarvis came back down to the floor of the lock. targets in a shooting gallery if it's on the wrong corner." Can you say sitting duck? resisted, though strictly for her own fortification. across Geneva's face at the counterfeit memory of her anguish-filled love affair with a heroin junkie; but whether they peed themselves, all sorts of kinky stuff." stepfather or not, the proper authorities will?" The two men walk westward from the back of the semi? in the general direction of the automobile. and she went inside. commotion. Dim gray rectangles float in the dark: curtained windows. He crosses the room toward them, struggling. "Aunt Gen, you're thinking of The Man with the Golden Arm. Frank Sinatra, Kim Novak. It hit theaters. GUNFIRE but also frankfurters. Hunters loom, but the chaos provides cover. Hostility is all around, but. Kath looked at the other Chironians for a few seconds and seemed to consider the proposition, but Colman got the feeling that she had already been prepared for it—possibly since receiving the message that Bernard and Lechat wanted to talk with her. Then she moved over to a side table on which a portable compad was lying, stopped, and turned to face Bernard again. "It isn't a matter for me to decide," she said. "But the people concerned are waiting to talk to you." Bernard and Lechat exchanged puzzled looks. Kath seemed to hesitate for a second, and then looked at Lechat. "I'm afraid we have been taking an unpardonable liberty with you. You see, this was not entirely unexpected. The people you wish to speak with have been monitoring our discussion. I hope you are not too offended." always ends badly with junkies." "And exactly what is that supposed to mean?" Stern demanded. she devised elaborate acts of revenge on her mother and on Dr. Doom. This night, in spite of what. At one time, she'd been proud of her beauty. Now she wondered why she had taken so much pride in. "Dry as a cracker." "It could open up possibilities that'll blow your mind," Pernak resumed. "Suppose, for instance, that we could get to understand those laws and. create our own concentrations on a miniature scale to inject energy from let's. call it a hyperrealm, into our own universe—in other words make 'small bangs'—mini white holes. Think what an energy source that would be. it'd made fusion look like a firecracker." Pernak waved his hands about. "And how about this, Jay. It could turn out that what we're living in lies on a gradient between some kind of hypersource that feeds mass-energy into our universe, and some kind of hypersink that takes it out again—such as black holes, maybe. If so, then the universe might not be a closed thermodynamic system at all, in which case the doom prophecies that say it all has to freeze over some day might be garbage because the Second Law only applies to closed systems. In other words we might find we're flame people living in a match factory." Although it seemed unrelated to Leilani Klunk, Micky recalled something that her aunt Geneva had said. As their speed continues to fall precipitously to fifty, then below forty, under thirty, as the brakes are. "Don't leave them at the post," Sirocco said. "Go with them to Kath's, find out as much as you can about what the hell the situation is, and then get back here as soon as you can. That way, maybe we'll be able to figure out what needs to be done." caring staff and comforts, to be an unnatural condition for any form of life. package of frankfurters to his chest, scampering like a monkey, and retreating pell-mell from the battle. Bernard stared at his glass for a few seconds, then shook his head again. "I can't buy it," he said. "We've never seen anything or heard any mention of anything to do with strategic weapons. Where are they supposed to be?" 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 II therefore had two years to teach the Chironians how to protect themselves. There were other, more abstract reasons why it was so important for the 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. "And Gaulitz, presumably," Celia said, referring to one of the Mission's senior scientists. "That's in the bag? Then you've completely destroyed him, Mr. Farrell." A hand descended on his arm and slid upward to tease the back of his neck. He turned round to find that Kath had come back. "You're starting a bachelors' party here," she said. "I have to break that up before the idea catches on." "How about that?" Hanlon shouted delightedly. "The guy did it!" At the open window, the night lay breathless. spicy cologne, wearing black jeans and a LOVE is THE ANSWER T-shirt? slipped into the booth, mutant girl? would mobilize government social workers to consider placing Leilani temporarily in foster. Adam waved an arm resignedly. "Okay, okay. Never mind the sackcloth-and-ashes act. How about cleaning it up?" with such momentum that he crashes into the side of a Lexus stopped in the lane adjacent to the motor. "He's just playing on emotion, Jean. I had it on down here for a few minutes but couldn't stand it. All he's interested in is scoring a few points against Wellesley and stopping a run to Lechat. And all that stuff about the Chironians claiming everything is theirs—it's pure garbage! I mean, it couldn't be further from the truth, could it, but nobody stops to think." He frowned to himself for a moment. It was true that he hadn't been at The Two Moons, but he had called Colman early that morning and gotten what seemed like an honest account. But with Jean acting the way she was, he didn't want to mention that. "Anyhow, the facts about the shooting are on record," he said. "All you have to do is ask Jeeves." "Well, it sure doesn't pay any money." Colman turned his head toward Hanlon. "What do you say, Bret?" Sirocco shrugged. "Well, Kalens's wife is always going places with Veronica, so they're obviously good friends. Swyley noticed something funny between you and Veronica at that party we went to at Shirley's, and

that was the connection he figured out," Sirocco shrugged again. "I mean, it's none of my business, of course, and I don't want to know if it's true or not. He paused and looked at Colman hopefully for a second. "Is it?".on remembering it, keeping the details sharp, especially his smile. I'm never going to let his face fade. There was no repentance or remorse in her eyes when she looked at him. "It's none of your business anymore," she hissed. "How I choose to have fun is my affair and my life.".The night heat couldn't bake the chill from Micky's bones. In memory she saw the fury-tightened face of. State could be considered subversive, wouldn't you agree?" "Well, that's true, but--". "I could go and see if I can find him," Jay offered. "I don't think I'd attract much attention. Even if the SDs are out, they're not going to be looking for me."

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