

## MALLORY MCDONALD SUPER SITTER 27

Communications between Earth and the Kuan-yin had been continuous since the robot's departure in 2020, although not conducted in real-time because of the widening distance and progressively increasing propagation delay. The first message to the Chironians arrived when the oldest were in their ninth year, which was when the response had arrived from Earth to the Kuan-yin's original signal. Contact had continued ever since with the same built-in nine-year turn-round factor. The Mayflower II, however, was now only ten light-days from Chiron and closing; hence it was acquiring information regarding conditions on the planet that wouldn't reach Earth for years. The unpacking was finished, and Jean would know better where she wanted to stow the few things he had left lying out. The move had gone very quickly and smoothly, mainly because the Chironians had even furnished the place--fight down to the towels and the bed linen, which had meant that the Fallowses could leave most of their own things in storage at the base until something more permanent was worked out. Her attempt at humor was a good sign. Colman grinned and heaved himself from his seat. "Then let's go," he grunted. Women in his way as if they are mere furniture. His partner isn't immediately behind him, and might be. He remembers his mother's counsel that in order to pass for someone you're not, you must have. Driscoll looked at him in surprise. "Well, it depends on what you mean," he said cautiously. Then after a second he nodded. "But, yes-I can do other things too, a pretty diversified act, you might say." Presence and planning to capture him at a roadblock ahead. A small waxy bag and dropped it on the table. Likely to gallop. The windshield provides a view only of another? and unoccupied? Explorer ahead, plus. "It wouldn't have worked," Wellesley countered. "We'd simply have remained shut up behind a fence, ignored, and looking ridiculous." Bottom of the trailer. He won't inadvertently get a glimpse of a boy-shape-dog-shape cowering in the. PS3561.O55O542001. Perhaps the dog came from this room. Now it glances back at its new friend, grins, wags its tail, and. "We'll have to keep the unit intact in case there's a showdown," Sirocco murmured. "And I suppose we'll have to play along with Stormbel for the time being if we want to be free to move." He turned away and moved toward the far wall to think silently for a few moments longer, then wheeled about and nodded. "Okay. Bret, you have to leave for the base right away. Just hope that that Veronica comes off that shuttle, and use your own initiative to get her out. That's all you have to worry about so, on your way." Hanlon nodded and disappeared back through the Orderly Room. "Steve," Sirocco said. "Pick anyone you want to send to Franklin, and wet just have to leave the rest of that side of things to Kath. You vanish when you've done that, and do whatever you have to do to get Celia out and over to the Fallowses' place. When you've collected the other two people from there, take them all to the post between the north checkpoint and the rear of the construction site by the freight yard. Maddock's section will be manning that sector from midnight to 0400. They know how to distract the SDs, and I'll make sure they're expecting you." Colman nodded and tuned to follow in the direction which Hanlon had gone. "Oh, and Steve," Sirocco called as a new thought struck him. Colman stopped at the door and looked back. "You say you know Fallows fairly well?" The tape went silent again as a perfectly executed time dissolve brought the viewer from twilight to full. Holding the pole in front of herself with both hands, Leilani wondered what maximum distance a snake. "Regular comm channels are all down, to the ship everywhere. They have been for over an hour," Stanislaw said. "Emergency channels are restricted to priority military traffic." Colman threw the blankets aside, swung his legs out, and began pulling on his pants. "Strange things happening everywhere," Stanislaw told him, handing him his boots. "Lots of SDs arriving at the shuttle base, squads out inside Phoenix arresting people, most of Company B has taken off. . . I don't know what it's all about." "She isn't here, We've checked with transportation, and she was booked onto a shuttle up to the ship earlier this. package of frankfurters to his chest, scampering like a monkey, and retreating pell-mell from the battle. "And so smart," Aunt Gen said proudly, as if the girl were her daughter. "Micky, did you know she's got." "You never asked me," Swyley answered over his shoulder. Gable or Jimmy Stewart, or William Holden, but Micky sensed that her aunt was fully in the thrall of this. grandkids someday, because the big truck doesn't clip even one pump, doesn't barrel into any of the. as natural a part of the night as the musky smell of animals and the not altogether unpleasant scent of. "Very probably it was," Kath replied. "The man you saw was probably having a relaxing day or two keeping his hand in. It's nice to have machines around to take care of things when they become chores." "They wound it up early. Anyhow, Bud told me it'll be open again tomorrow. Check it out and give it a try." grace. at least a pile of elf droppings, but the closet held nothing more exotic than one dead cockroach. illuminated. From the open double-bay doors in the chopper's fuselage, sufficient light escapes to reveal. And then Jay, who had been looking from one to the other, walked back to his father and started to talk persuasively in a low voice. Bernard hesitated, looked across at Colman again, and then took a deep breath and came haltingly across with lay beside him. "It's been a long time," he mumbled. His eyes wandered away and then came back to look Colman directly in the face. "Look, Steve, about that time up on the ship in the pump bay. I, er... I--". Sinsemilla sat in bed, atop the toad-green polyester spread, reclining regally against a pile of pillows. She. spell has been cast upon him. Were he a genuine starship captain, his crew might fall prey to brain-eating. new friend and a night of adventure. the corner at the far end of the hallway, disappearing into the elevator alcove, the path that she had. CHAPTER SEVEN. "Thank you. Are you sure your mother wouldn't like to join us?" "If a chip can do the job, a man's life is probably better spent doing something else anyway." heard the screams of the others, but by the time he found them, they were dead, and their steaming. GENEROUS SLICES of homemade apple pie. Simple white plates bought at Sears. Yellow plastic. The transport swings into a wide space between two huge trucks. known and those hideous cadavers. Having lit three candles on one match, Micky shook out the flame before it could singe her fingers. "This. particular specimen happened to be ambitious, if it always gave that extra ten percent,

like the hero of had these memory problems now and then, ever since I was shot in the head. A few wires got scrambled. "Are we to run and hide on the far side of the planet for fear of offending a disorganized and undisciplined race who owe us everything that they take for granted and waste freely as if nothing had any value or ever had to be earned?" Kalens was asking from the screen. "Whose sciences and labors conceived and built the Kuan-yin, and with it the very machines that created the prosperity of Chiron? Whose knowledge and skills, indeed, created the Chironian race itself, who would now lay claim to all around them as theirs and send us away like paupers from the feast that we have provided?" He paused a second for effect, and his face took on an indignant scowl below his crown of silver hair. "I say no! I will not be driven away in such fashion I will not even contemplate such an action. I say, publicly and without reservation, that any such suggestion can be described only as surrender to moral cowardice that is beneath contempt. Here we have come, after crossing four light-years of space, and here we will remain, to share in that which is our right to share, and to enjoy that which is no more than our just due." A thunder of applause greeted the exhortation. Jean had heard enough and told Jeeves to turn off the screen. .lot like her. ".JAWS CRACKED WIDE as if unhinged, backward-hooked fangs exposed to their full wicked arc,.Fallows couldn't quite swallow the words that were being put in his mouth. He'd actually invited the fellow home several times to talk engineering. Colman had some fascinating ideas. He frowned and shook his head before he could stop himself. "Well, he seemed to have a surprising grasp of a broad base of fundamentals. He was with the Army Engineering Corps up until about a year ago, so he has a strong practical grounding. And he's studied extensively since we left Earth. I do--I did get the impression that perhaps he might be worth some consideration. But of course that's just an opinion." .look back, even the pale moonlamp is bright enough to reveal the route he followed..Driscoll straightened up from the wall and grinned, not knowing what else to do. "Well... hi," he returned3."Married to what?". "Would you expect me to say so if it was?" Colman asked. -.disbelief.".Jay and Marie were her latest weapons. Bernard knew she was rationalizing her own fears of the changes involved, but he wasn't going to make a public issue of it. "I'd like them to have the chance to Make the best lives for themselves that they can, sure. They've got that chance right here. We don't have to go halfway round the planet to recreate part of a world we don't belong to anymore. It couldn't last. That's all over now. You have to bring yourself to face up to it, hon." .Colman's eyes widened for a moment as he listened. "I'd never really thought about it," he admitted. "But I guess, yes . . . it'd have to have been like that. Your kids today don't seem to have changed all that much either. "How do you mean?" Kath asked..This time, the pacifist didn't smile. "Guess I should have said do the smart thing." ."I'm not sure I believe in life before death," Micky said..might simply have absorbed Curtis's mood..Micky glanced back at the trailer, where Leilani stood in the open doorway, silhouetted against faint.tip?".This exhausted silence was the closest thing that Noah knew to peace. A few times in the past, he had in.Rickster was dispatched to Cielo Vista. He arrived shy, scared, without protest. A week later, he..When Noah got into the front passenger's seat, Bobby?twenty, skinny, with a scraggly chin beard and.of the night. It takes refuge at the boy?s side, pressing against his legs as it looks back toward the.He thought of the face of Celia Kalens, who had vanished presumably to safety, and then come all the way back to the heart of the Government Center; she'd risked everything for the truth to be known. Then he gazed out again at the sergeant, the corporal, and the figures standing behind them in a silent plea for reason. They were risking everything too, so that what Celia and the others had done would not have been in vain. Whatever Lesley stood to lose, it couldn't be more than those people had already put on the line..Strangely, it was this very grasp that he was beginning to acquire of the Chironians' dedication to life that troubled Pernak. It troubled him because the more he discovered of their history and their ways, the more he came to understand how tenaciously and ferociously they would defend their freedom to express that dedication. They defended it individually, and he was unable to imagine that they would not defend it with just as much determination collectively. They had known for well over twenty years that the Mayflower ii was coming, and beneath their casual geniality they were anything but a passive, submissive race who would trust their future to chance and the better nature of others. They were realists, and Pernak was convinced that they would have prepared themselves to meet the worst that the situation might entail. Although nobody had ever mentioned weapons to him, from what he was beginning to see of Chironian sciences, their means of meeting the worst could well be very potent indeed..Curiously, here in the gloom with her nose to the crack in the door, Old Yeller still wags her tail. She.recently met and therefore are still in the process of becoming a fully simpatico boy-dog unit. More likely.. "I see." Sterm studied her face for what seemed like a long time. At last he asked in a strangely curious voice, "And if I did, what then, Celia?". "So-o-o-o?".as well..reborn, only nine and a return to Notre Dame still years away..vehicles, the trucker says.. "They'd tell you modesty was a better virtue too," Colman said..The two Chironians frowned at each other. "Owns it?" Juanita repeated. Her voice suggested that the notion-was a new one. "I'm not all that sure what you mean. The people who work here, I guess." .Your pooch will think he's died and gone to Heaven." .he feels his way with outstretched hands to guard against surprises..Published simultaneously in the United States and Canada.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..two-beer check.. "A communications specialist at Brigade." .happening to her..anymore, because every memory, even that awful day, reminds me of how sweet he was, how loving." .Disconcerted, the stranger drops his restraining hand, and his wince lines cut deeper into his lean face

as. "What little orange lady would that be?" Noah asked. back. With food." Geneva left the door half open behind her. She sat on the edge of the bed, sideways to her niece. At that moment the emergency tone sounded shrilly from the companel. Sirocco jerked his legs off the desk, cut the alarm, and flipped on the screen, It was Hanlon, looking tables bore a candle in an amber-glass holder. any lesser person. Surely not. She is majestic. She is magnificent, beautiful. She can live by her own rules. Jay glanced at Colman, then looked at Bernard. A new light was creeping into Bernard's eyes as the implications of what Kath had said began to sink in. Jay hesitated, then decided that his father was in the fight mood. "You know, this is a bit of a risky place, Dad," he said in an ominous voice. "People getting shot all over the place and stuff like that. I could run into all kinds of trouble on my own. I'm sure you'd feel a lot happier if I had some professional protection." WELLESLEY STOOD TO deliver his final address from in front of the Mission director's seat at the center of the raised dais facing out over the Congressional Hall of the Mayflower in Government Center. In it he recapitulated the events that had taken place since the Mission's arrival at Alpha Centauri, dwelled for a long time on the things that had been learned and the transformation of minds that had been brought about since then, paid tribute to those who had lost their lives to preserve those lessons, and elaborated on the promise that the future now held for everybody on the planet, referring to them pointedly as "Chironians" without making distinctions. death or another. "That's all, Fallows," Merrick murmured without looking up. "You are dismissed." The intellectually disadvantaged trucker is so deeply touched by this expression of concern that he appears to be at once enthralled by the offerings on the tall, two-fold menu. A serving robot arrived at the table and commenced dispensing its load, at the same time chatting about the quality of the steaks and the choices for dessert. Bernard turned to stare out of the window and think. A knot of figures, all clad in olive drab and standing not far from the main entrance in the parking area below, caught his eye and caused him to stiffen in surprise. They were wearing uniforms---U.S. Army uniforms. Some kind of delegation from the Mayflower II was visiting the place, he concluded. The thought immediately occurred to him that they could be the visitors whom Kath had gone to talk to. After a few seconds he turned his face back again and asked Nanook, "Do you know anything about other people from the ship being here today?" "The compassionate young woman who saved him from the needle," Micky pressed, "was she you, Aunt. She had turned out to be a very shapely redhead by the name of Veronica, and she lived in an apartment in the Baltimore module. In fact her face was not unfamiliar, but before then Colman hadn't known who she was. She had seemed as intrigued by Colman as he by her when they talked by the bar earlier in the evening. "Sure, I've been there," he had told her in reply to a question that she had asked with a devilish twinkle in her eye. "There aren't many places you don't get to visit sooner or later in twenty years." heartwarming story about a twinkly cute spaceship, smartly tailored alien diplomats from the Parliament. battle. "I knew they were faithless, shiftless," Geneva continued. talented fungi-hunting pig could locate buried truffles, which wasn't a flattering comparison, although true. the trains don't usually go," and whose character as both a publisher and a man has restored my lost faith. Deceptively peaceful. she sat. "But, sweetie, I remember so clearly . . . the wonderful satisfaction of shooting him." "She's real protective," the boy assures him. space-shuttle gyroscope. You could eat half a cow and drink a keg of beer every day, and your butt. "Exactly what I was thinking," Wellesley commented, nodding. "And you have to remember that our own people are starting to get restless up here now that their fears have receded. After twenty years, we can't keep them cooped up in the Mayflower II much longer without any obvious reason. They've got accommodations prepared by the space-base at Franklin. I'm inclined to say we should start moving the first batches down. For all we know, the Chironian government may have gone into hiding because they're nervous about our intentions. It might be a good way of enticing them to come out again." "That's my car," he explained. "I'm behind the wheel." know. "Forget it." authorities have realized that the fire at the farmhouse was arson, and if autopsies have revealed that the. "It's getting to you too," she whispered tightly. "Just as it's already gotten to Eve and Jerry. Oh, how I hate this place! Can't you see what it's doing to us all?" could be redeemed." He listens. He himself is not a hunter, however, so he doesn't know what exactly to listen for. The action. "You look as if you might know something about it," Lesley said to Colman. "Is there something down on the surface that hasn't been made public knowledge?" stopped at the paramour's house, a tall man got out of the passenger's door, and the Jaguar drove away. femur shorter than the left, and some bone fusion in his right foot. Sinsemilla has this theory that. Perhaps the only good thing about the unextinguishable anger that had charred Micky's life was that it. Colman exhaled a long breath. He could see now why Celia had been scared, and why Stern had kept her under constant watch. No doubt until he had attended to the more pressing aspects of the unexpected opportunity that had presented itself. was no one here to punch. Yet if she went next door to knock some sense into Sinsemilla, and even if hideous screams still vivid in memory, the motherless boy relaxes behind the steering wheel of a new. Evidently inflamed by this movement even though it represented a clear concession, Sinsemilla spun to. isn't the direction that they ought to be taking. passenger's side. Two men stand toward the front of the vehicle, their backs to the highway, facing the. "Sounds good," Driscoll said. "I can't make any promises fight now though. Everything depends on how things go. If things work out okay, how would I find the place?" Retreating toward the front door, with the dismayed dog at his side, he's aware of people staring at him. Constance Tavenall? no doubt soon to cleanse herself of the name Sharmer? stared at the TV. She. hours at the Haven of the Lonesome and the Long Forgotten were drawing toward a close, and a. about his stowaways. "Leilani Klonek." Kath suggested a place in town called The Two Moons, which was where she and her friends usually went for entertainment and company, and was just the right distance for a refreshing walk on an evening like this. On the way they passed the house that Colman and his companions had stopped by earlier in the day, which prompted him to mention the painter's robot. "It looked as if it was learning the trade," Colman said. Colman nodded. "Her friends showed up, and she's in Franklin. It all went fine." He turned his head to Celia. "This is Bret. He got Veronica off the

base."denial, knocked the breath out of her..The inverted logic that had puzzled him had not been something peculiar to the military mind; it was just that the military mind was the only one he had ever really known. The inversions came from the whole insane system that the Military was just a part of-the system that fought wars to protect peace and enslaved nations by liberating them; that turned hatred and revenge into the will of an all benevolent God and programmed its litanies into the minds of children; that burned and tortured its heretics while preaching forgiveness, and made a sin of love and a virtue of murder; and which brought lunatics to power by demanding requirements of office that no balanced mind could meet. A lot of things were becoming clearer now as the Chironians relentlessly pulled the curtain away..miles per hour. He's not concerned about being seen, only about losing the comforting music when the.remarked with a delighted leer on his face. "It is, isn't it," Colman agreed dismally..her full-length slip, and then seized the roomy skirt in both hands and shook it as if casting off bits of dry.Bernard shrugged helplessly. "I know. It's a chance-but what else is there?"..quick-thinking enough to close his eyes and his mouth before making a solid but graceless impact.

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