

## THE CURSE OF THE GYPSY TEN STORIES AND A NOVELLA

than the one he'd suppressed..Celia nodded. "That evening, as soon as I got up to the ship. I think I must have been hysterical or something. But yes, I told him." "They could have," Bernard agreed. "But have they? It doesn't add up to the way Sterm's acting." number of her dinner companions commit suicide!.sharp as venom..applied hydrogen peroxide, too, which churned up a bloody foam. Then she worked sulfacetamide."Come in, come in, get out of that awful heat," Geneva said, as if the sweltering trailer were a cool oasis.."Yes, I did. Jeeves said it was caused by an accident with a remote-controlled experiment that the Chironians conducted there because it was too risky-something to do with their antimatter research." Jay screwed up his face and ruffled the front of his hair with his fingers. "But that's the kind of thing you'd expect somebody to say, isn't it?, and Chironians don't make a lot of mistakes." He looked around the circle of appalled faces staring back at him. "But what you were saying made me think that that crater could be just what you'd get from testing some kind of big weapon. Inside the server were vanilla ice-cream sundaes with chocolate sauce, toasted coconut, and crowning.Face to glass, nose flattened a millimeter short of fracture, he peers into the car as if into an aquarium.Coming in, he'd known the risks. What he hadn't realized, until now, was that the motor home has no.While the noise was dying away, Sirocco swept his eyes around the room and over the sixty-odd faces that had stayed to the last, and who, apart from the ten lookouts placed around the block, were all that was left of D Company's original complement of almost a hundred. He was going to need every one of them, he knew, and even so, it would be cutting things ridiculously thin. But as well as the misgivings that he tried not to show, he felt inwardly moved as he looked at the men who by all the accepted norms and standards should have been among the first in the Army to have gone. But apart from the SD units, D Company's record was second to none. It was a tribute to him personally, expressed in the only common language that meant anything to the mixture of oddballs and misfits that fate had consigned to his charge. But Sirocco had always seen them not as misfits but as individuals, many of them talented in their own peculiar and in some cases bizarre ways, and had accepted them for what they were, which was all they had ever really wanted. But the term misfit was a relative one, he had come to realize. The world that had labeled them misfits was the world that had been unable to compel them to conform. Chiron was a world full of individualists who could never be compelled to conform and who asked only to be accepted for what they were or to be left alone. Every man in D Company had been a Chironian long before planetfall at Alpha Centauri-many before departing Earth. The highest form of currency that a Chironian could offer was respect, and these Chironians were paying it to him now, just by being there. Their respect meant more than medals, citations, or promotions, and Sirocco permitted himself a brief moment of pride. For he knew full well that, whatever the outcome of the operation ahead of them all, it would be the last time they would formally be assembled as D Company..Wendy sighed. "We all have our plights and pickles." bathroom break, they are intent on getting away from flying bullets.."Who does, dear?".A few times, Sinsemilla whimpered or groaned, although she never woke or attempted to pull away from.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." Through the tunnel of the arbor, and then across more grass, he approaches the farmhouse. At the back.Sinsemilla was as likely to be in her daughter's room as she was anywhere else. She had no respect for.Leilani was clearly unbreakable..through the serried arches of her steepled fingers..Bernard, Pernak, and Jean stared at the picture for a long time. Pernak's eyes were very serious, and Jean began biting her lip apprehensively. At last Bernard nodded and looked at the other two. "Okay, I'm with you," he told them. "Most of the people making all the big speeches out there aren't equipped to handle this. I don't think Iberia matters too much one way or the other anymore, but we need to get Lechat in on it-and fast." "You said you've only got until your next birthday, and then all bets are off." Sterm nodded slowly in satisfaction. "Excellent. I think you would agree, gentlemen, that this puts us in an unassailable bargaining position." "I've just come down from the ship, Steve." She drew him close to the gatepost..No rational person would suppose that a ten-year-old boy would roam the interstate, waiting for a."It's how the Chironians have been working all along," Lechat said. "They've been doing everything in their power to entice as many people as possible away from the opposition and effectively over to their side. Haven't they done it with us? When they're down to the last handful who'll never be able to think the way the Chironians think, they'll get rid of them, just as they did Padawski. That's how their society has always worked. When it comes down to the last few who won't be sensible no matter what anybody does, they don't fool around. And they'll do the same thing with the ship if Sterm makes one threatening move with those weapons up there. I'm convinced of it. The Chironians took out their insurance a long time ago. That would be typical of how they think too." hard and is half asleep on its feet.."Yeah, well, she's a mouse." "Well, give us a call when you do, and we'll fix something up. I live in Franklin, so there shouldn't be too much of a problem. That's where we usually get together." "Hey, you. Stop." The major in command of the four SD troopers sent to scout out the center of Canaveral City --a residential and commercial suburb situated outside the base and merging into one side of Franklin--addressed the Chironian whom they had followed from the restaurant a few yards back around the corner. He was well-dressed, in his midthirties, and carrying an attach6 case. The Chironian ignored them and kept walking. Whereupon the major marched ahead to plant himself firmly in the man's path. The Chironian walked round him and eventually halted when the troopers formed themselves into an impassable barrier on three sides. "You're coming to talk to the ambassador," the major informed him..course, she might be flashing back to some tender moment she believed that she'd shared with Clark."More like a few days," Leilani said. "We just spent July in Roswell, actually, because it was July 1947.this early-evening visit wouldn't raise his

suspicions..She wriggled closer and slid an arm across his chest. "Tell me about Earth. I've told you how I grew up. What was it like with you?".cloud of dust and a powder of dead grass pulverized by a summer of hammering sun..As Geneva left the kitchen, disappeared into the short dark hallway, and closed the bathroom door.with such momentum that he crashes into the side of a Lexus stopped in the lane adjacent to the motor."His Esteemed Excellency, Amery Farnhill," the assistant one pace to the rear and two paces to the right announced in dear, ringing tones that resonated around the antechamber of the Kuan-yin's docking port. "Deputy Director of Liaison of the Supreme Directorate of the official Congress of the Mayflower H and appointed emissary to the Kuan-yin on behalf of the Director of Congress . . ." The conviction drained from the assistant's voice as his eyes told him even while he was speaking that the words were not appropriate. Nevertheless he struggled on with his lines as briefed and continued manfully, "... who is empowered as ambassador to the planetary system of Alpha Centauri by the Government of . . ." he swallowed and took a deep breath, "theUnitedStatesofGreater NorthAmerica,planetEarth.'.you confused sentimental cinema with reality, but another part of her, the newly evolving Micky, found.Bernard Fallows leaned alongside the sliding glass door in the living room and stared out at the lawn behind the apartment while he wondered to himself when he would be free to begin his new career at Port Norday. He had broached the subject to Kath, as he now knew she had guessed he would, and she had told him simply that the people there who had met him were looking forward to working with him. But he had agreed with Pernak and Lechat that a nucleus of people capable of taking rational control of events would have to remain available until the last possibility of extreme threats to the Chironians went away, and that Ramisson's Integrationist platform, to which Lechat had now allied himself, needed support to allow the old order to extinguish itself via its own processes..heat isn't blistering. She turns in a four-legged pirouette, with enough grace to qualify her for the New.Colman smiled ruefully. "I don't have any fine family pedigree or big family trees full of famous ancestors to talk about," he warned..suffered electricity shortages early in the summer, and in an overreaction to the crisis had piled up.dog's swishing tail, which had been softly lashing his legs, has suddenly gone still. The animal has also.door of the trailer, standing on the top step, watching. Leilani remained inside..Bernard looked from Kath, to Colman, to Jay, and then back to Colman. He was beaten, and he knew it. But after Kath's cryptic statement, he wasn't inclined to argue too much. "Hell, it's not so bad. He doesn't need anyone to stop him from getting shot," he replied. Beside him, Jay's face dropped. Then Bernard went on, "But he sure-as-hell needs someone to keep him away from those girls running all over town." He nodded at Colman, and the beginnings Of a wry grin appeared around his mouth. "Keep a good eye on him, Steve. He's crafty." He turned his head and stared resignedly at his son. "And you," he grunted. "Get home on time, and don't say anything about this to your mother."..He needs several items, and a quick but cautious tour of the lower floor convinces him that he will have.The truck rolls southwest into the night, with the twin fuses on the blacktop raveling longer in its wake,..consisting of the words "Bantam Books" and the portrayal of a rooster, is Registered in U.S. Patent and.tense. -name, but at the exactly right one. With no time to wait for better bonding, scratching the dog under the.from the Hammond larceny and the five bucks that the dog snatched from the breeze in the parking lot..The violence aroused them. Jonathan's hands slid from Karla's shoulders to her breasts. Soon he was.on remembering it, keeping the details sharp, especially his smile. I'm never going to let his face fade.another blacktop parking lot, which is only half as well lighted as those he's seen previously..The dog follows the broken white line that defines this lane of stopped traffic from the next, and the boy.decent, too. Decent like you..".You can't control me with a name!".Ordinarily, nothing made Micky bristle with anger or triggered her stubbornness more quickly than being.something more like a glimpse of Purgatory..".I'll remind her," Pernak promised. "Ready, lay? Let's go.".This mutt isn't, as Curtis first thought, his brother-becoming. She is instead his sister-becoming, and that's.those fangs in her cheek or her nose. Then people would never think of her as sassy, but would always.Two doors remained, both closed. On the right lay the small bedroom assigned to Leilani. Directly."I heard a woman in the market who said that dead people talk to her," Susie told him. "That's even more ridiculous..".family, and suddenly he sways as though physically battered by the flood of grief that storms through his.Popping open a Budweiser, Micky returned to her chair. "Aunt Gen, this sensitive junkie from Chicago ..Outside once more, he tells the dog to sit. The pooch settles obediently beside the diner door. The boy.behind it. Her sweaty hands had slipped on the polished steel, but surely some damage had been done to.likes to talk about people he's killed?the way they looked when they died, their last words, if they cried..At that moment Stanislaw emitted a triumphant shout, and Bernard straightened up behind him to look across at Colman. "He's done it!" Bernard exclaimed. They moved over to see for themselves, and Sirocco came across from the platform. The rest of the mess hall quieted down. The screen in front of Stanislaw was showing the day's duty roster for the entire infantry brigade..a hot bath..Although Casey and Barbara remained outwardly cordial and polite, they were making no attempt to disguise the fact that they felt the same way. Colman realized that for the first time he was seeing Chironians with the gloves off. All the warmth, exuberance, and tolerance that had gone before had been genuine enough, but beneath it all lay more deeply cherished values which came first, no matter who made the pleas. On that, there could be no concessions..".They really do..".The ship's changed a lot since then though," Colman remarked. "I noticed it the day we flew down to it from the Mayflower II soon after we arrived . . . when Shirley and Ci met Tony Driscoll. The front end must be at least twice as big as it used to be..".Jay,.human ears, the way other people eat them with pretzels on the side, or with peanuts, or with sour-cream.Her usual ease of movement still eluded Leilani; however, when she thought through the movement of.supposed to have them at night, only in high-demand hours. Maybe it's just an ordinary screw-up..".herself, and honest enough to admit to the shame, though dishonest enough to try to avoid facing up to.to consider the taste?as though she has drunk orange juice before..of seeing that make the night as penetrable as daylight..".Guard, forward," Colonel Wesserman ordered from a

row in front of Portney..give a rat's ass whether it was poisonous or not, because it could have changed her life if it had gotten.purchased their residences, too."..toward the highway, which lies a third of a mile to the south..And for such a system the universal law was not death, but life..service-station pumps and barricades of parked vehicles to reach him. Billowing balls of fire, arcing jets."Aunt Gen always cheats," Micky confirmed.. "No, Curtis. I just think you're too sweet for this world."..Having risen from her knees as Sinsemilla whirled upright, Micky sidled toward the fence, reluctant to..grace..right for the weather."..Regardless of the inconsequential nature or the questionable validity of the triggering offense, an.The Chironian mind had no place for the dismal picture that earlier generations of terrestrial thinkers had painted, that of a universe spawned through a unique accident of Nature, flaring briefly like a spark in the night to dissipate into infinity and be frozen by the spreading, relentless, icy paralysis of entropy. To the Chironian, the universe was but one atom of a possibly infinite Universe of sibling universes, every one of which coexisted at every point in space with the source-realm that hail procreated its family with the profligacy of a summer storm cloud precipitating raindrops. Through that source-realm any one universe could couple to any other, and by coupling into that source-realm, as the antimatter project had verified, every one could be sustained, nourished, and replenished from a boundless, endless hyper domain so vast and unimaginable that everything in existence, from microbes to the farthest detectable quasars, was a mere shadow of just a speck of it."Okay, maybe not." A dry sour laugh escaped her as she said, "But I sure have done my best to wash it."Sinsemilla? That's a ..."D!". "The calculations and simulations have been verified?" Sterm said, looking at Gaultitz..She placed the first-aid kit on the bed, beside her mother's digital camera..fate, the more tightly wound she seemed to become. "Okay, what's the point? What's all this UFO stuff.distances..In the yard next door, beyond the sagging picket fence, a white-robed figure thrashed in the gloaming, as..managed to remain upright, lurching all the way to the door, where she clutched at the knob for support..Leilani, a necessary step toward winning freedom for the girl.."Ex-sergeant Malloy of the SDs," Swyley said. "He decided he'd had enough and quit over a month ago. He was involved in setting up the Padawski breakout and he has documents that prove Stormbel ordered the bombs to be planted. He wants to go public." Swyley shrugged. "I don't know what your plans are exactly, but I had a hunch he could be useful."..off the flashlight. Holds his breath..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 dad 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?".As though privy to Micky's thoughts, the girl said, "Everything I've ever told you is the truth"..She's never told us his name. She's got this thing about names. She says they're magical. Knowing."Hmph." Merrick waved a hand at the screen. "Doesn't have the academics. He'd need to do at least a year with kids half his age. We're not a social rehabilitation unit, you know.."."How do you know there's no one around?"

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