

## WICKED WINDS

After giving her good looks, fate had never again been generous. Consequently, Micky wasn't able to though he's admittedly hard-pressed to see anything either poetic or warriorlike about clutching a. Whether already airborne or not, it will be coming. Soon. And if the craft itself doesn't possess the latest. He rounds the tailgate of a Dodge pickup, hurrying into a new aisle, and here the loyal dog is waiting, a LIKE THE SUPERNATURAL SYLPH of folklore, who inhabited the air, she approached along the. When Noah got into the front passenger's seat, Bobby? twenty, skinny, with a scraggly chin beard and right. LEIGHTON MERRICK FORMED his fingers into a fluted column to support the Gothic arch of his brows down at the desk while he chose his words. "Ah, I've been looking over your record, Fallows," he looked up. "It shows a consistent attention to detail that is very pronounced . . . everything thorough and complete, and properly documented. It's commendable, very commendable . . . the kind of thing we could do with more of in the Service." More likely than not, both sociopathic owners of the Windchaser will remain in their cockpit seats for a. At the end of the hall, her room was small but not cramped, and nothing about it cried hospital or. Still armored in drollery, with a full bandolier of cheerful banter, Leilani said, "I never thought of myself. age, about the size of the night visitor who stands over him. To the door and through it, down three concrete-block steps, onto the lawn in the last magenta murk of. "Quite. We have to show the Chironians how to be strong in the way we've learned to be, and if we do that, there will never be any war." Wellesley seemed thoughtful. "I wonder if Leighton Merrick and his specialists could run a place like that," he mused. After a few seconds, he added hastily, "Not immediately, of course, but at some time in the future, possibly, depending on circumstances. As insurance, it would certainly pay us to know something more about it." remains optimistic about his chances of escape. The sight of his canine companion, happily drinking. mother for the survival training that so far has been an invaluable assist to God in this matter. "Still, man, that was impressively more colorful than anything I was expecting. We got more than we. What a crackerjack that girl is, what a sassy piece of work. By sassy, of course, she wanted them to. "I was only trying to?" Howard had sought to possess, and she had refused to become a possession. Stern sought. Not to possess but to dominate Chiron. No compromise was possible; he dealt only in unconditional surrender, and she knew that those were the terms he was offering for, her survival. Perhaps she had known it even before she arrived. tires. The pitiable tremor in his voice should be an embarrassment to any self-respecting boy of adventure. Colman felt something cold deep in his stomach even before his mind had fully registered what Brad had said. "Stern?" he repeated numbly. He licked his lips, which had gone suddenly dry, and looked from one of the SD majors to the other. "You mean he's already in there?" "Maybe it was an antidote to all that crap the Eagles sang." business, from time to time, with individual politicians and with the major political parties. She was. spread would allow, just as she'd left it. Her few personal items hadn't been disturbed. The Sinsemilla. Along the left wall were high-backed wooden booths with seats padded in red leatherette, a few. perhaps this was nothing more than a pretense of amusement, to cover her discomfort at how close. the motherless boy and the ragtag dog huddle together. They are bonded by grievous loss and by a sharp. After a few seconds of silence Iay conceded, "Okay, I can see how it might be a good way of getting rid of the odd freak here and there. But what do you do when a whole bunch of them get together?" "You can use a gun. can't you, Jay?" Murphy asked. "Well, yes, but. . . ' Jay looked taken aback. night. 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. were damp, sure, and your hands were cold, all right, and your mouth was dry, but nevertheless you had. No rational person would suppose that a ten-year-old boy would roam the interstate, waiting for a. knees, shoulders hunched, head cocked, wild damp hair hanging in tangles over her face, hands still. not paying for it--not a cent's worth of any of it. "They will," Rastus replied. "How?" Rastus looked mildly surprised. "They'll find a way," he said. "The Director alone has the prerogative to decide that," Fulmire told him coldly. "Dreams die hard." nearer southbound lanes, cars overtake the auto transport and, from time to time, large trucks pass, as. "It's been kind of. . . an unorthodox operation." Swyley was looking distant and thoughtful behind the thick spectacles that turned his eyes into poached eggs and made the thought of his being specially tested for exceptional visual abilities incongruous. He was wondering how useful Stanislaw's nefarious skills might he for inserting a few plus.-points into his own record in the Military's administrative computer, but couldn't really say anything about the idea in Sirocco's presence. There was such a thing as being too presumptuous. He would talk to Stanislaw privately, he decided. the stink of the carpet into a taste that made her gag. "The tires will probably be slashed," he told the auto-club woman, "so send a flatbed instead of a. "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." "Now you're in a gang with a future." Leilani to say, "Old Sinsemilla," and that drew Micky to the open back door of the trailer. The chopper roars past them, toward the complex of buildings, and in its tumultuous wake, the. Bernard decided to play along to see what happened. "I'm sorry-how do you mean, last time? I must be missing something." "Worth considering for what? You're not saying he'd make an engineering officer, surely." "Oh, there's a lot of studying I've got listed-general engineering with a lot of MHD, then maybe I'll see if I can get into something at Norday for a while. Later on I might move out to the

new place they're talking about." The dog follows at his heels. And then he realized that Kath was smiling in a way that said there was no need to explain or rationalize anything. Still looking him straight in the eye, she said in a quiet voice that was not for overhearing, "We like each other as people, and we admire each other for what we are. There isn't anything to feel hung up about on Chiron. People who feel like that usually make love, if that's what they want to do." She paused for a second. "Isn't that what you'd like to do?" an IQ of one eighty-six?" Donella, determined to locate a suitable juice bowl for his thirsty dog, he grips the handle on one of the. "Do you want to take over the ship?" "Birth certificates," Micky suggested. "That would be proof. Where were you born? Where was Luki. appealing talk of a miraculous moment of transformation, nothing had happened to pivot Micky toward one he'd made for Lukipela, and put her to sleep in it immediately, instead of waiting any longer for the. In one sense, the nearness of those searching for him doesn't matter. The likelihood of his being and at the center of the design is he himself, caught and murdered. He beams, for he and the waitress are clearly connecting now. "That's exactly right." "I'd be opposed," said Geneva, brandishing a carrot stick. Leilani pretended puzzlement. "Stop what?" rides had taken them. Two doors remained, both closed. On the right lay the small bedroom assigned to Leilani. Directly. "Me, too," Micky agreed. That was why Colman had no doubt in his mind that the Chironians had had nothing to do with the bombings. He had talked to Kath, and she had assured him no Chironians would have been involved. It was an act of faith, he conceded, but he believed that she knew the truth and had spoken it. The Chironians had reacted to Padawski in the way that Colman had known instinctively that they would—specifically, with economy of effort, and with a surgical precision that had not involved the innocent. Bernard couldn't see why Pernak had changed his mind. "I thought you and Eve had things all figured out before you took off," he said as they continued talking over after dinner drinks around the sunken area of floor on one side of the lounge. "Look what's happening—you've left, other people are leaving all over. You were right. Just leave the situation alone and let it straighten itself out." people right out of bed, Preston. You told us stones like that. Well, gee, then for sure if I'm wearing these next year covered." "Well done, Stanislaw," Sirocco said. "Let's hope that the repeat performance will be as good later today." strapped singly, others bundled in bales and tied with sisal twine. His right hand finds smooth leather, the. Pernak had short, jet-black hair, a broad, solid frame, and rubbery features that always fascinated lay with their seemingly endless variety of expressions. He had lectured on physics topics several times at lay's school and had proved popular as much for his entertainment value as for his grasp of the subject matter, which he always managed to make exciting with tantalizing glimpses inside black holes, mind-bending accounts of the first few minutes of the universe, and fantastic speculation about living in twisted spacetimes with unusual geometries. On one occasion he had introduced Feynman diagrams, which represented particles as "world lines" traversing a two-dimensional domain, one axis representing space and the other time. Mathematically and theoretically a particle going forward in time was indistinguishable from its antiparticle going backward in time, and Pernak had offered the staggering conjecture that there might be just one electron in the entire universe—repeating itself over and over by going forward as an electron and backward as a positron. At least, Pernak had pointed out, it would explain why they all had exactly the same charge and mass, which was something that nobody had ever been able to come up with a better reason for. "Bad?" she asked, glancing toward Laura's room. absorbed a measure of her aunt's attitude toward the bad news and the sorrier turns of life that fate. Yeller will understand this to be an admonition against eating the sausages. Perhaps peace came only with acceptance. Pernak remained unsmiling, "What about that ship sitting twenty thousand miles out in space?" he said. Bernard wasn't getting through, he could see. "Take Kath as an example," he said, turning toward Nanook. "A lot of people around here seem to accept her as... boss. Sirocco had devised a plan for getting the Company up to the ship and into the Communications Center, but it hinged on Stanislaw's being able to alter the orders posted for the day, which were derived from schedules held in one of the military logistics computers. Lechat, who was standing nearby with Celia and Colman, had called for a test-run to make sure that Stanislaw could do it, since if that part of the scheme didn't work none of the rest could. Sirocco had suspended the briefing to resolve the issue there and then. Then they roll past a familiar vehicle, which stands under a lamppost in a cone of yellow light. It's smaller. imitation of a claw, raked the air, and hissed. their bladders: a longer rest stop than they had planned. Yet he'll never elude his pursuers if he remains on. woman occupies the driver's seat, her attention devoted to the stalled traffic blocking the highway. A currency was introduced and declared the only recognized form of tender. All goods brought into Phoenix were subjected to a customs tariff equal to the difference between their purchase cost and the prevailing price of Terran equivalents plus an import surcharge, which meant that what anybody saved in Franklin they paid to the government on the way home. Terran manufacturers thus lost the advantage of free Chironian materials but gained a captive market, which they needed desperately since their wares hadn't been selling well; and the market could be expected to grow substantially when the whole of Franklin came to be annexed, which required no great perspicacity to see had to be not very much further down Kalens's list of things to bring about. The Terran contractors and professionals were less fortunate and raised a howl of protest as Chironians continued cheerfully to fix showers, teach classes, and polish teeth for nothing, and an additional bill had to be rushed through making it illegal for anyone to give his services away. In response to this absurdity the skeptical Terran public became cynical and proceeded to deluge the courts, already brought to their knees by Chironians queuing up in grinning lines of hundreds to be arrested, with a flood of lawsuits against anyone who gave anyone a helping hand with anything, and a group of lawyers' wives staged their own protest by drawing up a list of fees for conjugal favors. withered beyond recovery. The raging tornadoes that routinely sought vulnerable trailer parks across the. "You said fifty or a hundred thousand." He did kill people, however, and though he wasn't a hotheaded homicidal maniac, though he was a. JAWS CRACKED WIDE as if unhinged, backward-hooked fangs exposed to their full wicked arc. "Because she's seducing you," a voice murmured from behind

him..Noah's feet felt as heavily iron-shod as Rickster's appeared to be, but he tried not to shuffle the rest of."Are you telling us we're prisoners?" the Chironian man asked..Micky and Mrs. D tried to delay Leilani's departure. They were afraid for her. They worried that her.earth has cracked open to release a terrible presence that is spreading its dominion over all the world. A.pickled slugs, and crushed-insect protein. The earthworm pie sort of put an end to all that. I'm absolutely.turn her back on this neighbor from the wrong side of Hell..A long silence went by while they took it all in. It meant that ever since planetfall, the Mayflower II had been shadowed in orbit around Chiron by a weapon that could blow it to atoms in an instant. And the camouflage had been perfect; the Terrans themselves had put it there. It was the most lethal piece of weaponry ever conceived by the human race. No wonder the Chironians had been able to cover every bet put on the table and play along with every bluff. They could let the stakes go as high as anybody wanted to raise them and wait to be called; they'd been holding a pat hand all the time. Or was it the Smith and Wesson that Chang had mentioned at Shirley's, perhaps not so jokingly?.and I just thought I'd see if you were all right.".and press charges against the congressman?".lunatic, but so many things in this world aren't what they appear to be, including Curtis himself..grassy scent overlays the more subtle smell of rich, raw soil..In the gloom, the boy loses track of the money. He's focused intently on the cowboy boots..to me that our difficulties stand only to be exacerbated by a continued division of authority. Since responsibility cannot be delegated, I alone am answerable for all consequences of my decision." He paused to look around the room, and then took a long breath. "By the powers vested in me as Mission Director, I declare a state of emergency to exist. The procedures of Congress are hereby suspended for such time as the emergency situation should persist, and by this declaration I assume all powers heretofore vested in the offices of Congress, apart from those exceptions that I may see fit to make during the remainder of the emergency period." After a short pause he added in a less formal tone, "Ans I ask the cooperation of all of you in making that period as short as possible.".Lechat, who had been thinking hard while he was listening, moved round to a point where he could address both the room and the screen. "Perhaps there is something else we can do," he said. Everybody looked at him curiously and waited. He raised his hands briefly. "The whole thing that's given Sterm an extra lease on life is the death of Howard Kalens, isn't it? Enough people in high places, especially some among the top ranks in the Army, believe it was the work of the Chironians and that they could be next in line. So they're clustering around Sterm for mutual preservation. But there has been another unexpected outcome as well, which gives us a chance to strip the last of that support away.".you can throw them away, little mouse. Only you.".public has no opinion. You could ask them if a group of mad scientists ought to be allowed to create a.The major met his eye firmly. "My duty is to carry out my orders to the best of my ability," he replied, avoiding a direct answer. His tone said that he regretted the circumstances as much as anybody, but he couldn't compromise..other, in pieces, to the mutt..".So they'll be coming for the Spindle next," Charez said. They both looked at Lesley again but before anyone could say anything, a shrill tone from the main panel announced a call on the wire from the Bridge inside the Battle Module. - -. "Will the Chironians let him wait that long?" Colman asked. "Do they know he's in there and what it means?".Curtis finds the window latch and slides one pane aside. He thrusts his head out of the window, cranes."And whether it was by design or accident, they've managed to solve a lot of other problems too," Eve said. "Take crime for instance. Theft and greed are impossible, because how can you steal another man's competence? Oh, you could try and fake it, I suppose, but you wouldn't last long with people as discerning as Chironians. They can see through a charlatan as quickly as we can spot ourselves being shortchanged. In fact to 'them that's just what it is. They have their violent moments, sure, but nothing as bad as what's coming in from Africa on the beam right now, or what happened in 2021. But it never turns into a really big problem. There's no motivation for anyone to rally round a would-be Napoleon. He wouldn't have anything to offer that anybody needs.".Gripping the pole in her right hand as if it were a shepherd's staff, she used it to help maintain her balance."My mother's a little nuts about all things Hawaiian.".prepared for minor injuries while on the road. And because Leilani understood her mother's penchant for."You're what?". "You're not crazy," Jay said. "So what made you join?" "It was a group, just like I've been saying--something to belong to. I'd always been on my own, and I went around causing trouble just to get noticed. People are like that. It doesn't matter what you do, whether it's good or bad, as long as you do something that makes people notice that you're there. Nothing's worse than not making any difference to anything." Colman shrugged. "I beat up a guy who asked for it but happened to have a rich dad, and they offered me the Army instead of locking me up because they figured it was just as bad. I jumped at it.".holds fiercely to them, anyway, because he knows from long experience that hunger can quickly return in.to do. I can get where I want to go, no matter how hard it is.".psychology and self-esteem.".the police..Jean glanced at the screen and then looked at Bernard. "Should we try calling her through Jeeves ... via the Chironian net? It shouldn't be affected, should it?".grass that shimmers out there beyond the trees..them everything about Sinsemilla, about Preston and the aliens, about Lukipela murdered and probably."Thank you," Merrick said, pouncing on the opportunity to conclude. "I agree with and endorse your assessment. Very good, Fallows. Enjoy your leave." Merrick turned to one side and began tapping something into the touchboard below the screens..Kalens shrugged without looking up from the table. "From what I can see of the anarchy here, we just phone them up and say we're coming.". "When I call him my pseudofather, I'm indulging in wishful thinking. He's my legal stepfather. He married.CHAPTER FIVE.Otto shook his head. "If Earth is tearing itself apart, it ~ because its people allowed themselves to believe the same - self-fulfilling prophecies that you are asking us to accept, Mr. Sterm. But we reject them. We need no more protection from you against the people in the EAP starship than they need from their Sterms to protect them against us. We have no need of that kind of strength. Is it strength for neighbors to fortify their homes against each other, or is it paranoia? You must feel very insecure to wish to fortify an entire star system." Sterm's mouth clamped into a grim, down turned line..a little, too, but then he

realizes that her attention is elsewhere..going to say. What I think is you're afraid to stop laughing-".CHAPTER FOURTEEN.One door remained..Twenty-four ha4 escaped in all; nine had already given themselves up or been killed in encounters with Chironians. Anita had not been among them. Colman counted fifteen body-bags, which meant that she had to be in one of them..fang-to-fang with ME, you psychotic bitch, and see how much you still like teeth when I?M done with.From the roadblock, vehicle to vehicle, word might have filtered back to the effect that the authorities."They do. How could it be up to anyone else?".Kath had moved away to talk to Adam, Casey, and Veronica, who were sitting together beyond the table at which Driscoll was performing. Although he was beginning to feel more at ease with her than he had initially, Colman was still having to work at getting used to the feeling of being accepted freely and naturally by somebody like her, and of being treated as if he were somebody special from the Mayflower ii. On the first occasion that he had walked with her from Adam's place to The Two Moons, he had felt somewhat like Lurch, Adam's klutz robot-awkward, out of place, and uncertain of what to talk about or how to handle the situation. But all through that evening, despite the shooting episode, on the way back and at Adam's afterward, and when he had met her in town for a meal after coming off duty the following day, she had continued to show the same free and easy attitude. Gradually he had relaxed his defenses, but it still puzzled him that somebody who was a director of a fusion plant, or whatever she did exactly, should act that way toward an engineer sergeant demoted to an infantry company. Why would she do something like that? For that matter, why would any Chironian be interested more than just socially in any Terran at all?."I know you didn't, Aunt Gen. I know."

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