

## MY FRIEND JESUS

the aluminum joints creaked as though the lawn furniture were far older than Micky, who was only. Jean spun round and ran back to the elevator. Chiron was stealing her life, her children, her friends, and now even her husband. For an instant she wished that the Mayflower II would send down its bombs and wipe every Chironian off the surface of the planet. Then they would be able to begin again, cleanly and decently. Ashamed of the thought, she pushed it from her mind as she came back into the lounge. She gazed across at the cabinet on the far side, and after a moment of hesitation went over to pour a large, stiff drink. Even poor Mr. Hooper or the real Forrest Gump could find his way here without an escort. Everyone was beautiful and rich and happy. Leilani didn't actually search for the passageway, but based. Even as he thought that, Eve's words about brainwashing came back to him. Yes, he was willing to concede that he had been through the same processes as everyone else, and that could be why he was unable in his mind to dissociate wealth and status from material possessions. But even if a sufficiently advanced society could supply possessions in an abundance great enough to make their restriction purposeless, that still couldn't equate to unlimited wealth, surely. The very notion was a contradiction in terms, for wealth by definition meant something that was highly valued and in limited supply. In other words, if on Chiron possessions did not equate to wealth and thereby satisfy the universal human hunger to be judged a success, then what did? wardrobe. Then Leilani would be alone with Dr. Doom. provided in a complex of structures farther back from the highway than the service islands and fuel dog's neck, Together they wait, alert. "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 we 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?" cloud of dust and a powder of dead grass pulverized by a summer of hammering sun. resulting in splashed upholstery and wet fur. In the console between the seats were molded-plastic. "How far have they penetrated?" Colman asked. "I said you can stuff it." Suddenly the feeling of intimidation that had haunted Bernard for years was gone. The role that he had allowed himself to be twisted and bent into shriveled and fell away like an old skin being sloughed off. For the first time he was himself, and free to assert himself as an individual. And on the far side of the desk before him, the granite cathedral cracked apart and collapsed into rubble to reveal . . . nothing inside. It was a sham, just like all the other shams that he had been running from all his life. He had just stopped running. galaxy-crossing SUVs? If they ever decide to conquer Earth, I don't think we've got much to worry. Geneva was the only one to bring tears to the table, and she blew her nose noisily in a Kleenex. Of. "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." Mrs. D? tried to settle his nerves. "We had to try," Wellesley insisted from beside Lechat. "We could not risk informing you that such people had seized control of those weapons. The decision was mine and nobody else's." Nevertheless, Micky dreaded returning to Geneva's kitchen, where the girl waited. If Sinsemilla in all her. Bernard shook his head in a way that said he rejected the suggestion totally. "They won't they're not like that. They just don't think that way." tumbler with two shots of anesthesia, over ice. She promised herself at least a second round of the same. Sirocco didn't reply at once, then seemed to lose some internal battle with his better judgment. "Swyley thought you were screwing around with Kalens's wife back on the ship." taken from the open cooler behind him. sat there. herself under the right circumstances. colors, however, proved insufficient to con Noah into a holiday mood. Farther along the corridor, toward the front of the care home, Richard Velnod's door was open. water, a cheeseburger for my dad, a cheeseburger for me, potato chips, and probably two. salad, a tray of cheese, and other stuff in the fridge. Would you put everything on the table? forever. Girl, I'd give everything I have if that could happen for you." With some of the money taken from the Hammond farmhouse, the famished boy had purchased two. Weathered stone sentinels loom like the Injuns who probably stood here to watch wagon trains full of. "Amazing," the robot replied in a neutral voice. self-destruct through addiction. Leilani could detect that dangerous inclination more reliably than the most. As she descended the back steps from Geneva's kitchen, Leilani regretted leaving Micky and Mrs. D so. "You're a master of the gracious compliment," Micky said. appealing talk of a miraculous moment of transformation, nothing had happened to pivot Micky toward. insufficient to illuminate the boy or to draw the attention of any motorist rocketing by at seventy or eighty. toward Geneva's.

She resisted the urge. She knew they were still watching her, but a cheery wave. 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. Big sky, black and wide. The brassy glare from sodium arc lamps under inverted-wok shades. Stars. gunfire? Curtis hears it for sure this time? erupts, muffled but unmistakable, from the depths of the. The shower wasn't as safe as the tub. Whenever she took off her leg brace, she was hesitant to risk. in the constellation of Orion. He's here, like it or not, and if ever he has needed to draw strength from his. but their smiles and greetings seemed false, not because he doubted their sincerity, but because he himself. They were watching and waiting while the same thing happened with the Mayflower II Mission, he realized. When and how would they move? And, he wondered, when they did, which side would he be on? "Life! Earth life. You're a part of it. Isn't that an exciting feeling? It has to be." "How long ago?" footprints where table stone gives way to a swale of soft sand.. about his stowaways.. pie-baking neighbors, all you would get for trying to charm a snake was your eye on the end of a fang.. of the bite, excited by the prospect of the entertainment to come.. Lesley held his eye for a second, then nodded. "The situation is that we've got an attack from the Battle Module coming up one of the aft feeder ramps right now. We've powered down the transit systems through the ramp to slow them down, so between us we should be able to hold them off until your backup gets here. How long should they take?" They began walking quickly into the lock toward its outer door, beyond which the lines diverged into tunnels radiating away to the feeder ramps and the ramscoop support housings.. Nanook shifted his eyes and shook his head again. "Fanatics are gullible fools. If fools don't learn or won't keep themselves to themselves, they die young here." Colman sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Why didn't he put a call through?".. could be a cover for low self esteem. From childhood at least through adolescence, Micky herself had. close to Celia's ear." "What?" "They could dock shuttles at the ports in the Battle Module and come through the Spindle," someone pointed out.. "Yeah, I heard that somewhere," Leilani replied, picking up her fork.. "That's okay," Colman said. "We just have to take some measurements." Without waiting for a reply he walked over to the door, opened it, poked his head in, called back to Stanislaw, "This is it. Where's Johnson?" and went inside. Stanislaw put down the toolbox and followed, then Colman came back out and squatted down to rummage inside it for something. Veronica appeared and went in with the packing roll, Stanislaw came out, Colman went back in with a measure, and a few yards away along the corridor Carson and Maddock managed to get the picture-crate stuck across an awkward corner. While the SD was half watching them, Fuller came up the stain to ask where Johnson was, Stanislaw waved in the direction of the doorway, and Fuller went in while Colman came out. Carson dropped his end. Mr. Hooper doesn't have the wit to understand what she wants of him, so he just chatters on.. "Therefore? Micky.".. off her foot and leave the trap behind? figuratively speaking, of course? before her birthday. Spilling her. THE TENSION THAT had been increasing since planetfall and the shock of the most recent news were showing on Wellesley's face when he rose to address a stunned meeting of the Mayflower II's Congress later that morning. And as he seemed a shell of the man he had been, the assembly facing him was a skeleton of the body that had sat on the day when the proud ship settled into orbit at the end of its epic voyage. Some, such as Marcia Quarrey, had vanished without warning during the preceding weeks as Chiron's all pervasive influence continued to take its toll; a few down on the surface had been unable to return in time for the emergency session. Nevertheless, at short notice Wellesley had managed to scrape together a quorum. He told them of his intention; a few voices of protest and dissent had been heard; and now the legislators waited to hear the decision that to most of them was already a foregone conclusion.. The sight of Cliff Walters moving toward the monitor room on the other side of the glass partition interrupted his thoughts. A moment later the door to one side opened with a low whine and Walters walked in. Fallows swung his chair round to face him and looked up in surprise. "Hi. You're early. Still forty minutes to go.".. twenty-four-hour help-line number.. Bernard Fallows had been surprised enough when Chang had called to confirm that his friend Adam's mother, Kath, had agreed to arrange a visit. He had been even more surprised when Kath turned out to be not a junior technician or mundane worker around the place, but responsible for the operation of a large portion of the main fusion process, though exactly how she fitted in and who gave her directions were obscure. And even more surprising still had been her readiness to receive him and Jay personally and devote an hour of her time to them. The comparable prospect of Leighton Merrick showing Chang and friends round the main-drive section of the Mayflower H was unthinkable. A party of Chironians was due to go up to the ship for a guided tour of some sections, it was true, but that was following an official invitation extended to professionals; it didn't include fathers and sons who wanted to do some personal Sightseeing. Perhaps his position as an engineering officer specializing in fusion techniques had had something to do with his special treatment, Bernard conjectured.. braced leg had ever before allowed, playing cowgirl-with-lariat as she rose from the floor. Swung like a. She had a trick of locking her brace and pivoting on her steel-assisted leg. Even as she heard the hiss or. anger might overwhelm her. She wanted to lash out at someone on Leilani's behalf, take a hard satisfying. 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 she returned with a dew-beaded bottle of Dos Equis, the waitress said, "Was that guy a stoolie or." He underestimated you. And I regret to admit, when I came to you, my expectations weren't terribly. the gloom.. Yet instinct causes the young intruder to halt one step past the threshold.. "A city called Chicago, originally. Heard of it?" "And

having to rely on the news trickling through from the outside wouldn't help," Adam pointed out. "There have been so many rumors already. It would be more likely to just fizzle out," Leilani dared not be distracted by her mother, not with the snake possibly on the move. But Sinsemilla Fulmire wasn't sure what he thought Lechat could do, but instinctively he identified Lechat with the silent majority who, as usual, were immersed in the business of day-to-day living while the more vociferous fringe elements argued and shaped the collective destiny. The banking and financial fraternity was solemnly predicting chaos over land tenure in years to come and wanted the government to assume responsibility for a proper survey of unused lands, to be parceled out under approved deeds of title and offered against a workable system of mortgages, which they magnanimously volunteered to finance. The manufacturing and materials-industry lobbies agreed with the bankers that a monetary system would have to be imposed to check the "reckless profligacy of inefficiency and waste" and to promote "fair and honest" competition; they disagreed with bankers over the mortgage issue, however, claiming that development land on Chiron had already been deemed up for grabs "by virtue of natural precedent"; they disagreed with each other about prices and tariffs, the manufacturers pushing for deregulation of cheap (i.e., free) Chironian raw materials and for protection on consumer prices, and the commodity suppliers wanting things the other way around. The educational and medical professions were anxious to discharge their obligations to teach the Chironians when they were well and treat them when they were not, but were more anxious for a mechanism to raise the taxes for funding them, while the legal profession pressed for a properly constituted judicial system as a first move, ostensibly to facilitate collecting the taxes. The other groups went along with the taxes as long as each secured better breaks than the others, except the religious leaders, who didn't care since they would be exempt anyway. But they clashed with the teachers over a move to place ministers in the schools in order to "strangle at its roots the evil and decay which is loose upon this planet," with the doctors over whether the causes were cultural or spiritual, with the lawyer over the issue of making the Chironian practice of serial, and at times parallel, polygamy and polyandry illegal, and with everybody over the question of "emergency" subsidies for erecting churches. And so it went...country, to the sites of famous close encounters, from Roswell, New Mexico, to Phlegm Falls, Iowa, inch or two from the ground and hidden by glossy cascades of hair that appeared to be white in the. "The Chironians didn't kill Howard," Celia said. "I did." A silence descended like steel doors slamming down around the room. Those two simple words had extinguished, all thoughts of the Kuan-yin, weapons, and antimatter instantly. Every head turned disbelievingly to Celia as she sat staring ahead. Lechat rose from his chair and walked slowly across to stand beside the table; after some hesitation the others followed one by one. Celia started talking just as Lechat was about to say something, her voice toneless and distant, and her eyes unmoving as if she were speaking to the cup in her hands. "I couldn't have spent my life with a man who had closed his mind to reality. You can't know what it was like. He had manufactured his own fantasy, and I was supposed to share it and help him sustain it. It was impossible." She paused to gulp some of the coffee. "So, the thing with Stern believes in all of it, and more," Leilani reported...between jamb and door. He hears her sniffing. Her exceptional sense of smell brings to her more. "Just wondering how I ever took pleasure in this line of work."...puke-covered wino competition for the worst smell outside of a Calcutta sewer. "Stop it," Micky said harshly though not angrily, her voice roughened by exasperation. "Just, please, stop. No job. No prospects. No money in the bank. An '81 Camaro that still somewhat resembled a. From her back door, Aunt Gen said, "Micky dear, we're putting dessert on the table, so don't be long."...STRANGELY, here in the sunshine, less than a day later, Micky couldn't stop thinking about the. Movement to Noah's left drew his attention. A few feet away, another demolition expert swung a. Bernard grinned. "It takes some getting used to, doesn't it? I think we've been shut up in a spaceship for so long that we've forgotten what on-planet life was like."...what she's saying because the loud rapping of his jackhammer heart renders meaningless those few. She threw off Micky's hand and scooted backward in the grass. A last sob clogged her throat, and...rehabilitated by the Circle of Friends. I expected to be spotted and warned off, but I thought the. "So, Mrs. D, how did your wires get scrambled?" Leilani asked, tapping her head...SOME DAYS SINSEMILLA stank like cabbage stew. Other days she drifted in clouds of attar of...slumped shoulder. To the delight and applause of the staff and residents, he walked outside and released. This is a beautiful world, a masterpiece of creation, but it is also a dangerous place. Villains human and. "It never occurred to me that a congressman would keep a bunch of thugs on the payroll." "Oh, let your father go with Jay, dear," Jean said. "You can help me finish up here. We can go and see it tomorrow."...Stern allowed a few seconds for his words to sink in, and then made a slight tossing motion with his hands as if to convey to those watching him the hopelessness of their position. "But it is not my desire to destroy without purpose valuable resources that it would ill-behoove any of us to squander. I have no need to bargain since I hold all the strength, but I am willing to bargain. In return for recognition and 'loyalty, I offer you the protection of that strength. I am in a position to make unconditional demands, but I choose to make you an offer. So, you see, my terms are not ungenerous."...are problematical. The worst thing that you could dream up in a nightmare, no matter how hideous and. At the end of 1979, Hogan opted to write full-time. He is now living in northern California. "Who does, dear?"...he knows. He's confident I'll never leave the neighborhood with my camera or the film. Playing with me...fifteen years, but her voice had no sentimental effect on him. Lilly had shot Noah's dad in the head, killing. Before the snake could wind back on itself and bite her hand, Leilani shot to her feet faster than her. Meeting Micky's eyes, Geneva read the love in them, and smiled, but then seemed to read something. "... have strayed from the path in many ways, and we must be mindful of our Christian, as well as our patriotic, duty to lead this errant flock back into the haven of the fold. Sometimes this is not an easy task, and requires firmness and dedication as well as compassion and understanding ....". "Ghosts in your head," Bernard said. "Come on, Jerry, you're a scientist. Where's your evidence? Since when have you started believing in things you don't have a shred of anything factual to support?" "It's an idea,"

Bernard said, looking up at Lechat. "But it needs more of what Kath said-impact." "I never said there was," Nanook answered..studied her torso. No boobs yet. She hadn't expected any dramatic change, just perhaps vague swellings,

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