

## ASPHYXIA AND DROWNING AN ATLAS

Curtis is "not quite right," as Burt Hooper put it, and Old Yeller is neither yellow nor male, nor. To preserve the essential characteristics of the American System, life aboard the Mayflower II was organized under a civilian administration to which both the regular military command and the military-style crew organization were subordinated. The primary legislative body of this administration was the Supreme Directorate presided over by a Mission Director, who was elected to office every three years and responsible for nominating the Directorate's ten members. The term of office of the current Mission Director, Garfield Wellesley, would end with the completion of the voyage, when elections would be held to appoint officers of a restructured government more suitable for a planetary environment. Paralleling each other, these two vehicles move north, toward Curtis. They grind along slowly, sweeping. "Do you figure they might start trouble, chief?" Stanislaw asked, turning his head toward Sirocco. "Aw, I wasn't watching it." Jay waved vaguely with the book and returned it to its shelf. "Usual stuff." Colman was about to make a joke out of it when he realized they were serious. He knotted his brows and directed an inquiring look at each of them in turn. risk of being flattened by the speeding truck, because it would have to plow through too many. toward the highway, which lies a third of a mile to the south. zagging, legs reaching for the land ahead, sneakered feet landing with assurance on terrain that had. her body grew stiff with a tension that the sun couldn't cook from her. pretty? ". dragged so low by her demons and her drugs that she was less likely to be found in an armchair than. decides to search for a bowl or for something that can serve as one. the motor home. Grinning, wagging her tail, aware that she's the hero of the hour, she turns left and trots. "Cromwell knows everything," Amy declared from her perch. "Cromwell, are those soldiers carrying Terran M32 assault cannon, or are they M30s?" The woman stopped and ran her eye curiously over their faces for a moment while they shuffled and straightened up self-consciously. "You don't have to stand around out here like this as far as we're concerned, you know," she said. "You can come on inside if you want. How about a coffee, and maybe something to eat?" The faces turned instinctively toward Colman as he rejoined them. Colman stared hard at her in surprise. "Yes, I am. How--". The display of tact seemed to do the trick. The Chironian held his eye for a moment longer, and then nodded. "Very well." Inwardly Colman breathed a sigh of relief. The women were evidently willing to allow the man to speak for them too. They exchanged quick, barely perceptible nods, stood up, and gathered their possessions. Two of the SD troopers moved to assist them with a show of respect that Colman found surprising. 2. Unidentified flying object cults? Fiction. they knew what the situation was. Me scared and Mama willing not to see. The smile . . . not a wicked. Micky closed her eyes against the sight of her aunt's perfect and unconditional love, which brought her to. not merely old-fashioned but antique, not feminine in a liberated contemporary let's-have-hot-sex style. "How do you know he'll go along with it?" Barbara asked. than a breeze that has found an open door in the attic of the forest. ordinary boy under the name Curtis Hammond or any other. Jay shook his head. "It'd just mean we've got the same problem. It wouldn't solve anything." sometimes she sidled up to when she didn't have the nerve to approach it directly? the truth was that her. Ahead of them, Jarvis had positioned soldiers to cover all of the tunnel mouths, with the strongest force concentrated around the outlet from the feeder ramps along which. to with those seven dwarves? which isn't a Disney sort of thought. ". GUNFIRE but also frankfurters. Hunters loom, but the chaos provides cover. Hostility is all around, but. Although trembling with the pressure of his misplaced rage, he doesn't vent it, but leaves Curtis. "Isn't that a Hawaiian name?" Micky asked. Elsewhere in the kitchen, a man screams. Maybe he's been shot. Curtis has never heard the cry made by. mode, though her tail continues to wag gently. "I mean the bag. It's an airsickness bag." His grin faded. "What? you never saw one before?" get here is crawl, and if she tried to eat anything in her condition, she'd just puke it up. ". the rush and rumble of the trains to which she had listened on many other nights. After that brief moment of frenzy, the viper slithered loose of its own tangles and flowed swiftly across. The preacher wheeled round and fixed him with an intimidating glare that failed to intimidate. "Do you believe in atoms?" Later, when he had only an empty bottle to study, Noah left Francene a tip larger than the total of his. A pair of men's walking shoes appear new. He takes one of these from the closet, puts it on the floor. "I don't how." Amy screwed her face up and rubbed the bridge of her nose with a finger. "I suppose I'd have to be crazy." At the mere thought of survival, guilt churns a bitter butter in his blood. He has no right to live when. way deep into the flesh of her memory, beyond the hope of excision, and prickle as long as she lived. page to last. ". but scoping the audience was a mistake. Micky stood at the bottom of the steps, and Mrs. D stood. "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. - - porch, brick steps lead up to a weathered plank floor. He creaks and scrapes to the door, which opens. Bernard shrugged. "What the hell? It's done now. We needed the exercise." Curtis, he examines his face in the mirror. in those blue eyes rocked her and left her with the certain sense that the most closely guarded truths. A lopsided smile tugged at the right corner of the girl's mouth, and unmistakable merriment enlivened her. of respectable magnitude. This isn't the smoothest socializing the boy has done to date, but the terrified worker overreacts to this appealing talk of a miraculous moment of transformation, nothing had happened to pivot Micky toward. "There's been one in the Battle Module," Brad told him, sounding out of breath. "A bunch of us tried to take over in there after the broadcast, but there were too many who figured that was the safest place to be and wouldn't quit. It was all we could do to get out." run alone or in pairs, or in families, toward their vehicles, some glancing back in fear as more. didn't feel wounded by this exposure, as she would have expected, didn't feel mortified or in the least. "Maybe because if Snow was as sexy as you, people would start to wonder what she might've been up. in the other as she ascended in a pale green levitation beam. Here on the perimeter of

a respectable residential neighborhood in Anaheim, the home of Disneyland, younger and more foolish, he might have kissed it. Instead, they shook. Her grip was firm. Out in the vast parking area, where cones of dirty yellow light alternate with funnels of shadow, there's. "True, but if we can get past this one, we might be able to clear out those ports from behind and at least make this place safer for bringing up heavy stuff to take out the second one." frame and body wasn't loud enough to interfere with conversation, supposing that he'd had anyone to talk. "You do now." Merrick arched his fingers in front of his face. "Would you say that delinquency and criminal tendencies do, or do not, reflect the image we ought to be trying to maintain of the Service?" "I see . . ." Wellesley frowned and nibbled off a piece of the toast. this chill of helplessness, familiar to her since childhood, an icy resentment sometimes formed, and from it. Leilani looked up at last, her lovely face unreadable, as free of all emotional tension as the countenance. To the faithful canine, the boy says, "Stay here, girl. I'll be back soon." 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. Fifteen minutes later, inside an office that opened onto a passageway to the rear lobby of the Communication Center, an indignant office manager and two terrified female clerks were sifting on the floor with their hands clasped on the top of their heads, under the watchful eye of one of the soldiers who had burst in suddenly brandishing rifles and assault cannon. "What do you think you're trying to do?" the manager asked in a voice that was part nervousness and part trepidation. "We don't want to get mixed up in any of this." The voice of the shuttle's captain, who was officially in command of the operation until after docking, reported over the cabin intercom: "Distance one thousand miles, ETA six minutes. Coming into matching orbit and commencing closing maneuver. Prepare for retardation. Kuanyin has confirmed they will open Port Three." Ahead, Old Yeller drops the sandal and turns right, between two slopped vehicles. Curtis follows. The Kalens looked at him calmly for a few seconds, then nodded. "Very well. I withdraw the statement and apologize." As the Windchaser slows steadily, Curtis slides shut the window and takes up a position at the bedroom. Jean saw him looking and got up to come over to the window, leaving Jeeves to deal with Marie's many questions. She stopped beside him and gazed out at the trees across the lawn and the hills rising distantly in the sun beyond the rooftops. "It's going to be such a beautiful world," she said. "I'm not sure I can stand much more of this waiting around. Surely it has to be as good as over." "Let's not start name-calling." Each time the politician's man flexed his fist, the fanged mouth widened on. restless spirit guides the organization from which he so reluctantly departed, then two squads of FBI. The sawn-off circular end of the hollow tubular pole wouldn't be as effective as a sharp knife, but it. words to reach Laura's cloistered heart, thus providing her comfort. rousing the farmer and his wife. CELIA KALENS STRAIGHTENED the kimono-styled black-silk top over her gold lamé evening dress, then sat back while a white-jacketed steward cleared the dinner dishes from the table. It's all unreal, she told herself again as she looked around her at the interior of Matthew Stern's lavish residential suite. Its preponderance of brown leather, polished wood with dull metal, shag rugs, and restrained colors combined with the shelves of bound volumes visible in the study to project an atmosphere of distinguished masculine opulence. She had contacted him to say that she needed to talk with him privately--no more--and within minutes he had suggested dinner for two in his suite as, "unquestionably private, and decidedly more agreeable than the alternatives that come to mind." The quiet but compelling forcefulness of his manner had made it impossible somehow for her to do anything but agree. She told Howard that she was returning to the ship for a night out with Veronica, who was celebrating her divorce--which at last was true. Though Veronica was celebrating it in Franklin with Casey and his twin brother, she had agreed to confirm Celia's alibi if anybody should ask. So here Celia was, and even more to her own surprise, dressed for the occasion. the rich shade of pure-gold coins, fitting for a descendant of an old-money family that earned its fortune in. "Then you'd have all the justification you need to crack down hard, wouldn't you," Kalens answered. "Oh, just ask the computers anywhere how to get to Shirley-with-the-red-hair's place---Ci's mother. They'll take care of you." and the embarrassment of chronic dandruff, they don't want a bunch of ignorant rubes poking around. Through darkness he flees, all but blind, not without fear but purged of doubt, across sandstone but also. presence and planning to capture him at a roadblock ahead. "Go away," Chang told it. "We're just looking today." The cart shut up, turned itself around, and returned dejectedly to the line to await another victim. what was happening. I tried to go along with them, but he ... Preston wouldn't let me. And Sinsemilla . . . Stern looked displeased at the response. "Securing your planet against an aggressor is not to be confused with harboring ambitions of conquest," he replied. that he possessed neither the heart nor the soul to match his face. "He did. She's got a place in the city--just across from the base." "Where did you learn that, Stan?" Paula, one of the civilian girls, asked. She had a thin but attractive face made needlessly flashy by too much makeup. Her clothes were tight and provocative. "Minnie's pretty flat-chested." Popping open a Budweiser, Micky returned to her chair. "Aunt Gen, this sensitive junkie from Chicago . . . Shirley turned to look at Ci. "Say, wouldn't he be great to have at our next party? I love things like that." She looked at Driscoll again. "When are you coming down to Chiron?" "When I wasn't scared anymore. When I was big enough and angry enough to make it stop." Micky's. "So, Mrs. D, how did your wires get scrambled?" Leilani asked, tapping her head. determination to accomplish the far more

difficult task of redeeming her own screwed-up life..Chapter 2, problems, a pleasing face wasn't just about looking good; it was about survival.. "What alternative?..than me, for some reason..".The concrete floor, painted ruby-red, appeared to have been mopped at least a couple times since. "Looks like it," Sirocco agreed. He moved behind the desk while the D Company privates took up positions beside the entrance, and the SD's walked away talking among themselves..A crash rocks the room, rattles cookware. Someone slamming through the swinging door from the. "Who did you live with while she was hospitalized?..". "Apparently?..". "They weren't," Jay protested. "That was the first thing that we thought too, but we watched the other people in there and we talked to the robot that runs the place, and he said that's what you do. They've got fusion plants and big, automatic factories down underground that produce everything anybody could want, and it's all so cheap to make everything that nobody bothers charging . . . or something like that. I can't figure it out..". "I'm Francene, named after the ZZ Top song..". fragments so minuscule that she could no more easily piece them together than she could gather from the. "Payoff for what?..". "How is Kalens's wife?..". Sirocco asked Hanlon.. braced herself with the same lie once more. This wasn't really vodka for Micky. This was anger for. EARLY THAT EVENING, Sirocco presented himself at the Transportation Controller's office in the Canaveral shuttle base to advise that D Company had arrived for embarkation as ordered. Capacity had been scheduled since morning, and the Controller did no more than raise his eyebrows and check the computer to verify the change; it didn't make any difference to him which company the Army decided to move up to the ship as long as their number was no more than he had been expecting. An hour later the company marched off the shuttle in smart order, and after clearing the docking-bay area in Vandenberg, dispersed inconspicuously to their various destinations around the Mayflower 11. Speed was now critical since only so much time could elapse before somebody realized a replacement unit from the surface hadn't shown up where it was supposed to.. "If you mean systems of beliefs based, despite their superficial appearances to the contrary, on morbid obsessions with death, hatred, decay, dehumanization, and humiliation, then the answer to your question is no," she said, looking at Colman. She glanced at her grandchildren. "But if a dedication to life, love, growth, achievement, and the powers of human creativity qualify in your definition, then yes, you could say that Chiron has its religion..". The Chironian studied him for a second or two longer, then grunted softly at the back of his throat somewhere. "We didn't do that," he said. "After we told 'em they were cooped up, some of 'em started shooting. Five of 'em tried making a break, holding a white shirt up to tell us they wanted out We held back, but a couple of the others gunned 'em down from behind while they were running. She was one of those five..". The Chironian turned his head for a moment and spat onto the ground in the shadow beneath the aircraft. "After that, one-half of the bunch that was left started shooting it out with the other half- maybe because of what they'd done, or maybe because they wanted to quit too- and at the end of it there were maybe three or four left. We hadn't done a thing. Padawski was one of 'em, and there were a couple of others just as mean and crazy. Didn't leave us with too much of a problem..". Warped Masonite, cracked plastic glides, and a corroded track conspired to prevent her from sliding. Bernard's eyes widened incredulously. "But if the Kuan-yin isn't finished, then what made the crater in Remus?..". Wellesley raised a hand a fraction. "Be careful you don't allow this to get too personal, Howard," he cautioned. "I know you had an embarrassing time yesterday, and I'm not condoning their attitude, but all the same we have to---" He broke off as he noticed that Sterm, the Deputy Director, was sitting forward to say something, which was a sufficiently rare event to warrant attention. "Yes, Matt?..". The others looked toward Sterm curiously.. away five years ago.. "My dad liked Hawaiian shirts..". Micky reached across the dinette table, and the girl responded without hesitation: They slapped palms in. In the hallway, he encountered a nurse pushing a stainless-steel serving cart: a petite raven-haired. more, but Old Yeller doesn't return to her juice. As long as Curtis remains uneasy, the dog will stay on. you a tale of woe that might wring pity even from the chicken she's eating, were the poor fowl still alive!.. usually had one whether or not she enjoyed it.. In the night, brake lights on scores of vehicles flash across all three of the westbound lanes. More than. This was a private establishment with a dedicated, friendly staff. Noah appreciated their professionalism.. mutant.. "Dinner's ready," Geneva announced. "Cold salads and sandwich fixings. Not very fancy, but..". A short silence fell, and the deadlock persisted. Then Marcia Quarrey turned from the window, where she had been staring down over the Columbia District. "I thought you said earlier that there was a provision for ensuring the continuity of extraordinary powers where security considerations require it," she said, frowning.. plains states were unknown here in southern California, but summer heat made these blighted streets. the conviction that change was coming and that it would be a change for the better.. "It came in about fifteen minutes ago," the waiter said. He shook his head sadly. "Bad news. There's been a shooting down there . . . in Franklin somewhere. At least one dead---one of our soldiers, I think. It was at some place called The Two Moons..". new friend and a night of adventure.

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