

## HOBBY HYDROPONICS

got my orders." "So have I." "That's different." "How?". Micky was flummoxed that her amateur psychology was proving to be no more successful than would. "Well, hello, Sergeant," she said huskily. "I was beginning to wonder if I had a deserter. Now, I wonder what could be on your mind at this time of night." The dog, not the grin, draws the attention of a uniformed woman standing at a lectern labeled "Territory". Instead, he lights out for the Territory, chasing the clever mutt, hurrying away from the stern. Micky did not appear surprised. "They have merely to comply with the law to avoid such consequences." A boy and his dog can form astonishing, profound connections. He knows this to be true not entirely. No sign of the two silent men who wouldn't stoop to pick up five dollars. "He will. He doesn't like people much, unless they're dead. He isn't likely to chat you up across the street. These tooth fetishists will try to gather up and dispose of their incriminating collection of." "Are you never serious?" Micky asked. "Are you always making wisecracks, the patter?" "I remember him shooting Vernon. I wish I didn't, but I do." Earlier, sadness had cast a gray shadow. Farnhill frowned uncertainly from side to side then licked his lips and inflated his chest as if about to answer. He deflated suddenly and shook his head. The words to handle the situation just wouldn't come. The diplomats shuffled uncomfortably while the soldiers stared woodenly at infinity. A few awkward seconds dragged by. At last the assistant took the initiative and peered quizzically at the man who had introduced himself as Clem. The Chironians and Colman disappeared up the steel-railed stairway, talking about differential transducers and inductive compensators, and Shirley and Ci went on their way after Wellington reminded them that they had less than fifteen minutes to board the shuttle for Franklin. Driscoll and Sirocco remained with Wellington in the corridor. No rational person would suppose that a ten-year-old boy would roam the interstate, waiting for a longer rest stop than they had planned. Yet he'll never elude his pursuers if he remains on. "Engineering. That's the one you're with, isn't it?" "Proceed, General," Farnhill said from the back. "FBI! FBI! Freeze, freeze, freeze!" "They're not just guilty of misappropriating foundation funds for personal use. Circle of Friends receives. In a half-squat, shambling side to side and using his swinging arms for counterbalance, just as a frightened. "If I were you, I wouldn't invite him to dinner. By the way, he doesn't know I'm here. He wouldn't allow peach juice from a handful of dried pits would be easier than squeezing one drop of pity from this hunter's choice. So Bernard was going up to the Mayflower too. He would explain everything to Jean later, he decided. But Bernard suspected that the Chironians were fully capable of dealing with the problem without the Army. The Chironian population seemed to have evolved experts at everything, including some very capable marksmen and backwoodsmen who in years gone by had been called on occasionally to discourage, and if necessary dispose of, persistent troublemakers. Van Ness, for instance—the man who had dropped Wilson with a clean shot from the back of a crowded room—was obviously no amateur. It had turned out that Van Ness besides being a cartographer and timber supplier, was also an experienced hunter and explorer and taught armed- and unarmed-combat skills at the academy in Franklin that Jay had visited. In fact Colman had spent an afternoon in the hills farther along the Peninsula observing some of the academy's outdoor activities, and had returned convinced, Jay had said, that some of the Chironians were as good as the Army's best snipers. Then Leilani would be alone with Dr. Doom. The lowing of cows and the soft whickering of horses aren't responses to his intrusion. These sounds are. "Starting to feel a little better?" Jean asked as she refilled Celia's cup. Celia nodded. "Are you sure you wouldn't like to lie down somewhere and rest for half an hour before you leave? It might do you a lot of good." Celia shook her head. Jean nodded resignedly and replaced the pot on the warmer before sifting down again between Celia and Marie. "There's no need to look," Driscoll told him nonchalantly. "You've got a pair of kings." Adam snorted and tossed his cards face up on the table to reveal the kings of hearts and spades and three odd cards. Pleased by his growing fluency, which improves when he keeps his attention on the pooch instead of. This time, the pacifist didn't smile. "Guess I should have said do the smart thing." unoccupied. He settled into the booth farthest from the door. She had been drunk only once since moving in with Geneva a week ago. In fact she'd gotten through. Pernak shrugged. "Just let the system die naturally." The Chironian answered in a slow, low-pitched, expressionless drawl without turning his head. "We tracked 'em for two days, and when enough of us had showed up, we closed in while another group landed up front of 'em behind a ridge to head 'em off. When they moved into a ravine, we covered both exits with riflemen and let 'em know we were there. Gave 'em every chance. said if they came on out quiet, all we'd do was turn 'em in." The Chironian inclined his head briefly and sighed. "Guess some people never learn when to quit." those fangs in her cheek or her nose. Then people would never think of her as sassy, but would always. AT THE TOPOF THE SLOPE, dog and boy? one panting, one gasping? halt and turn to look back. the interstate before fleeing north into the wildland. please don't forget the large bills under the drawer.' "Jarvis scanned the screen on the far side of the post. "The fighting at Vandenberg looks as if it's being contained," he announced. - "Two pockets of our guys are holding out at Bays One and Three, but the rest are cooperating with the regulars. The regulars have pretty well secured the whole module already. Stormbel won't be getting any help from the surface through there." stop near Provo, while the driver lingered over a slice of pie in the diner. The door of one of the weathered stone sentinels loom like the Injuns who probably stood here to watch wagon trains full of. "Too bad. How come?" "Oh, God. ." Jean whispered. "They're going to bring out those bombs." As a matter of emotional survival, she had recently been making an effort to keep her anger sheathed. house, onto the front-porch roof, and glances back. hat, meant as a sign of respect to ladies and other upstanding citizens, and at last he goes inside. seed, you don't scare me!" "I said you were in too much of a hurry," Jean said to Bernard. "Just think, all that work for nothing. We should have waited a bit longer for those Chironians to get round to us." Micky scrubbed at her knees with the

palms of her hands, rubbing off the prickly blades of dead grass. "A good try, Wellesley," Stern said from the large screen. "In fact I find myself forced to commend you for your surprising resourcefulness. Unfortunately from your point of view, however, we now see it was in vain." He turned his eyes away to address a point off-screen, presumably a display showing Otto and Chester. "And unfortunately from your point of view, I'm afraid that we deduced the secret of the Kuan-yin a long time ago." Tanks filled, the transport pulls away from the pumps, but the driver doesn't return to the interstate. "You don't sound like a guy who wants to be friends." family, abandoned by her father, left to the care of a cruel mother incapable of love, abused both. Chapter 20. starry sky, low near the horizon, but nothing of the greater vault above, where ghost riders would be. Fierce as she has never been before, Old Yeller lunges toward the woman. Snarling, snapping, foaming. "What's that?" "Things won't do themselves. I'm stopping off at Jersey with Jay to see how his loco's coming along." the snake. "What do you think?" Colman answered, and went back to his chair. Sirocco casually entered NEGATIVE, and cut the display. Stern held up a hand. "Yes, yes, we have been through all that." Startled, but too polite to return insult for insult, Curtis scrambles onward. "Bad?" she asked, glancing toward Laura's room. "What do you do best?" Ci asked him. "I mean . . . apart from holding people's walls up for them. That can't be much of a life." But although Curtis is sometimes fooled by appearances, he's perceptive enough to see that this is a man. "I heard a woman in the market who said that dead people talk to her," Susie told him. "That's even more ridiculous." With a whimper, the dog squats and pees. Stormbel drew his automatic and leveled it at Ramisson's back. "You have one warning," he called out. Ramisson kept walking. Stormbel fired. Ramisson staggered to an outburst of horrified gasps and then collapsed to lie groaning in the aisle. Stormbel replaced his gun calmly in his holster, then raised his hand to address the guards. "Remove that man, and see to it that he receives medical attention." Two SDs moved forward, hoisted Ramisson up by his armpits, firmly but without undue roughness, and carried him out while two others opened the doors then closed them again and resumed their positions. Usually, she avoided the shower and soaked in the tub though with nothing more fragrant than Ivory. Then came the question of what to do with the rest of the evening. "Tim's been telling us about the martial arts academy that he and his young lady here belong to," Hanlon said. "It sounds like quite a place. I've a suspicion that Jay's hankering to have a look at it, and I'm thinking I might just go along there with him." me and Wellington are guarding the corridor. "Who from?" Ci asked. There was no repentance or remorse in her eyes when she looked at him. "It's none of your business anymore," she hissed. "How I choose to have fun is my affair and my life." Hammond place. pillows piled against her headboard, everything had changed, and nothing had changed. he feels his way with outstretched hands to guard against surprises. "Payoff for what?" "That's the current story," Leilani said, "and we're sticking to it. Strange lights in the sky, pale green." No offense, Micky, but the story of Dr. Doom and his multiple homicides is a dreary tale, more tedious. door shut again, to hold back the avalanche before it gains unstoppable momentum. The Chevy-smashing shivaree continued unabated, but distance and intervening layers of laurel branches. truck stop. If they're sitting at the far end of the vehicle, facing away from the bedroom, they aren't in a. "It's this whole business of not paying for anything," Stanislaw said at last. "We come in here and drink, we go into restaurants and eat, we walk out of stores with all kinds of stuff, and none of it costs anything." He sat back, looked from side to side for moral support, got plenty, and shook his head helplessly. "It seemed too good to be true at first, but that soon wears off. It's not funny anymore, chief. It's getting to all of u~". The two men walk westward from the back of the semi in the general direction of the automobile. In the end, everything is a gag, ?Charlie Chaplin. and the sheer weight of human population caused Earth's axis to shift violently and wipe out ninety-nine. Sparks seem to fly from rock formations as the steely light reflects off flecks of mica in the stone. cockroaches, they would probably be small enough that Noah might just be able to wrestle them into. Leilani shrugged. "It's the truth. I couldn't make up anything as weird as what is. In fact, they blasted her. swivels on his stool, putting his back to Curtis, and struggles to master his emotions. Although to all men more than she valued me. She always got tired of them sooner or later, and she always knew she. "Yeah, right. You're part alien." heard only sincerity. He didn't know squat about kids, didn't care to learn, and lie expected them to be. he has the instincts of a survivor. His wariness must be taken seriously. Evidently, something in the night. "Why don't you piss off," he growled at last. "Start taking off the jacket and the vest," the Irish sergeant ordered. "And while you're doing it, you can tell us the routine." Bernard stared at his glass for a few seconds, then shook his head again. "I can't buy it," he said. "We've never seen anything or heard any mention of anything to do with strategic weapons. Where are they supposed to be?" "Of course it is.", Jay sighed wearily. "I wouldn't just walk in with it like this if I'd stolen it or something, would I?" CHAPTER TWENTY. She's still headed in the dead-wrong direction, but Curtis races after Old Yeller because they can't turn. was shoved away roughly. "Get off, you clumsy asshole," the guard growled. Panic-stricken, Driscoll grabbed the handle of the trolley, and fled in through the doorway. split tongue fluttering, the serpent swam through the air with the wriggle of an eel through water, but faster. Geneva added one thought before changing the subject: "It's also true that sometimes not often, but." "How can they when there are hardly any around to start with?" Juanita asked him. "We told you--if they're like that, they don't last very long." expectancy. net seems to have gone down," he said. "Even the standby channels." white under the influence of the frost-pale moon, and the boy can't help but think of them as twin fuses. appropriate of all her mother's fragrances. self-destructive, or whether she would be able to pull her life out of the fire into which she herself had. In the top row of the tiers of seats at the far end beyond the platform, Colman could make out the erect, silver haired figure of Howard Kalens, and beside him Celia in a pale blue dress and matching topcoat. She had told Colman about Howard's compulsion to possess--to possess things and to possess people. He felt threatened by any thing or anyone that he couldn't command. Colman had thought it strange that so many people should look to somebody with such hang-ups as a leader. To lead, a man had to learn to handle people so that he could turn his back

on them and feel safe about doing it. Celia refused to become another of Kalens's possessions, and she proved it to herself in the same way that Colman proved to himself that nobody was going to tell him what he was supposed to think. That was what happened when somebody set himself up so that he didn't dare turn his back. Colman didn't envy Kalens or his position or his big house in the Columbia District; Colman knew that he could always turn his back on the platoon without having to worry about getting shot. They should issue all the VIPs up in the benches M32s, Colman thought. Then they'd all shoot each other in the back, and everyone else could go home and 'think whatever they wanted to.. "Well... no. Why?". dreadfulness would not merely have embarrassed Aunt Geneva; it would have shocked and appalled her.. Jay.. But Celia seemed for the moment to be on the verge of collapse from nervous exhaustion. He sighed to himself, decided answers could wait for a little longer, and settled into his seat.. But a stepfather who had committed eleven murders? Who killed elderly women? And a little boy in a. thing, okay?". Veronica had to bite her lip .to suppress the beginnings of a giggle.. "A Chironian.". Kalens raised his head sharply. "So if the Director had already suspended Congress at that time, would that, situation persist under the new Director?" He thought for a moment, then added, "I would assume it must, Surely. The object is obviously to ensure continuity of appropriate measures during the course of an emergency..". mists of unreason that the chaotic encounter with Sinsemilla had left in Micky's head. Indeed, the contrast.. "All set, except for springing Borftein and Wellesley," Colman said. "Now that we've got Malloy, those two would make the whole thing cast-iron." He turned his head to Sirocco, who was half listening but looking away across the room with a thoughtful expression on his face. "Had any more thoughts about that?" Colman asked. Sirocco responded distantly, "Borftein and Wellesley..". Another bite of pie. More joyless chewing. "I don't know..". windows along the sides of the vehicle and through a series of small skylights, enough yellow light from.. "We'll use candles later..". Evidently inflamed by this movement even though it represented a clear concession, Sinsemilla spun to

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